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# Reducing the Physical Workload

Tired of moving heavy dog Agility equipment?

Would you like to relieve your club members of the burden of shifting heavy equipment when moving it at every training session and event?

Let's get wheels rolling! But before you rush in and spend thousands of dollars on state-of-the-art equipment, take a moment to consider a few things. It's time to deal with the elephant in the room: the tunnel sand bags. Here's a little math.

The ideal weight for each tunnel sandbag would be between 12-15kg. So, on the low end, a pair of tunnel sand bags equals 24kg. A five-metre rigid tunnel requires an optimum of five sets of tunnel sand bags, which equals 120kg.

An Agility ring would have on average three rigid tunnels, each with five sets of tunnel sand bags, a total of 360kg.

If your show has two Agility rings with three different courses per day that's 2.16 tonnes on the low end or 2.7 tonnes on the high end to be moved each day at your show. And many clubs run more than two Agility rings.

There is a common saying 'work smarter not harder'. Working smarter sounds appealing, but it's not always straightforward. If you work hard, with the right people you almost always get the job done. To work smarter, you need a deliberate plan and not every plan yields the expected results due to various factors.



A Frame Mover

It's like when you bake a cake, you can't replace the flour with sugar and hope for the best. Introducing new innovations to your club is similar. You need a process and to choose your new equipment wisely.

Creating a structured process for problem-solving and generating solutions can be immensely beneficial. Here's a basic framework that often works well:

**Identify the Issue:** Clearly define the problem. Work out whether it is a real issue or just a one-off.

**Gather Information:** Collect all relevant data, facts, and information related to the problem. This might involve research, surveys, or discussions with stakeholders. Have a look at what other clubs have done to solve similar problems, both their successes and failures. Sometimes you can learn more from the piece of equipment laying in the back of the gear shed that never gets used than the equipment the club uses all the time.

**Generate Possible Solutions:** Brainstorm various ideas without evaluating them initially. Encourage creativity and diverse perspectives during this phase.

**Evaluate and Select Solutions:** Assess each solution based on feasibility, effectiveness, and alignment with goals. Narrow down the options to the most viable ones.

**Evaluate Solutions:** Consider factors such as feasibility, effectiveness, risks, costs, and benefits.



Wing Jump trolley.

Here are some of the things I consider when evaluating new equipment or processes:

- Reliability
- Easy of use: will people use it? Get feedback all aspects of the proposals.
- Price
- Pinch points, such as distance or contours (is the gear shed up a hill?)
- Storage space
- People: Do you have enough people with the physical abilities and practical skills to operate the equipment?
- Life cycle, including how long it will last, running costs and maintenance.
- Potential hazards and risks.
- Looks: an attractive item has a higher chance of being stolen.
- Versatility: equipment that can perform a variety of tasks under a variety of operating conditions and in anticipation of changing future requirements.
- Weight of construction materials.
- Is it better, or could the solution do more harm than good?

**Make the Decision:** This can be the hardest part getting the Club Committee to first agree to a course of action and then make a decision. When it comes to the final vote things can change and so often the final decision gets deferred. So, make sure you are well prepared.

**Develop a Launch Plan:** Outline the steps required to implement the chosen solution. Define roles, set deadlines, and allocate resources as needed. A bad launch of any new idea can put the whole project in the toilet before the idea has even been tried. Monitor progress closely and address any issues that arise during the implementation phase.

**Monitor and Evaluate:** Continuously assess. Track progress and effectiveness. Be ready to adjust if needed.

However, it's essential to recognise that not all innovations require an extensive process. For simpler or routine issues, a quicker, intuitive approach might suffice. Adapting the level of detail in the decision-making process based on the significance and complexity of the issue is crucial.

And now to the launch plan — how do we get club members to adopt a new way of doing things?

**State your case.** Clearly communicate the advantages and benefits of the new way. People are more likely to adopt a change if they understand the positive impact it will have for them.

**Get influencers on board.** Involve senior instructors/club members early in the process. Pick a well-respected club member and make them the champion/influencer. Their support and involvement can influence others to embrace the change.

**Customise training.** Offer training, workshops, or resources to help people learn the new method. Support them during the transition phase to build confidence.

**Make it routine.** Arrive early to training and implement the new way yourself before anybody has a chance to do the task the old way. Do this for few a weeks in the early stages.

**Highlight quick wins.** Highlight the successes and positive outcomes to build momentum.

**And make it fun.** 🐾

Wayne Turner



Two hand trolleys and a ride-on mower pulling a trolley



## Principles to Remember

### Do

- Win hearts and minds by emphasising how the new technology benefits the club and makes members' jobs easier.
- Encourage adoption by rewarding members in ways that are most meaningful to them.
- Build the new technology into the routines and rhythms of the training sessions as soon as possible.

### Don't

- Pick a technology that's not more complicated than it needs to be. For swift adoption, select an approachable and intuitive system.
- Overlook the importance of getting your most influential club member on board early in the process; they will help you bring around others.