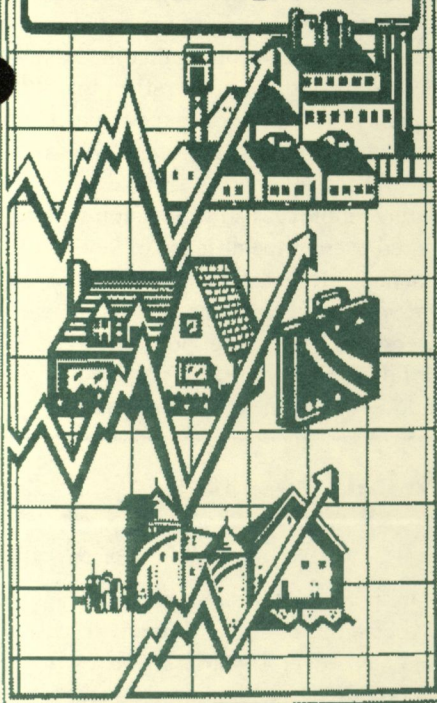


June / July 1999



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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

U.S. Member 'Action Call' Possible

Pesticide & Labor Legislation Gain Momentum

With movement in both Houses of Congress on legislation intended to remedy possible pesticide elimination and labor shortages, TPI's U.S. members may be asked to call their elected officials.

FQPA Bill is H.R. 1592

Just a week after the TPI Board visited officials in D.C., more than 50 Representatives (and counting) became co-sponsors of the "*Regulatory Fairness and Openness Act of 1999*." This bill will require the EPA to use science and not supposition when registering new and existing chemicals.

Because turf farms represent a relatively small market for pesticides, there is real concern that many effective chemicals could be lost to the industry under EPA's current analysis methods.

In conjunction with its coalition partners, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), TPI may call on all or a portion of the U.S. membership to seek support for this bill's passage.

ITPF Silent Auction Needs Items for Michigan Event

Turfgrass producers and exhibitor / demonstrators are invited to contribute items to this year's Foundation fund-raising silent auction that will be held during TPI's Summer Convention in Lansing, Michigan.

Turf equipment (new or good-quality used), as well as use of vacation homes, or other items of interest would be welcomed additions to the auction. All contributions can be a tax deduction for the donor.

To discuss ideas for an auction item, contact Tom Ford at the TPI office by calling 800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898.

Guest Worker Program

Although a specific bill has yet to be drafted, progress is also being made in creating a workable, long-term program that will enable farms to employ legal aliens through a formal guest worker program.

Partnering with the National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE), TPI members may also be asked to seek support from their Senators and Congressmen. At the very least, members should make their federal officials aware of the problems they are having locating and keeping a legal work-force.

More and more TPI members are reporting that the combined actions of the Department of Labor, Immigration and Naturalization Service and Social Security Administration are causing them to lose otherwise qualified employees.

Members Are Effective

In the past, TPI members have been very effective in getting their point across to elected officials and they may be called upon to address these two items. If calls are deemed essential, TPI will contact the members and provide all relevant details that need to be presented.

Update Info with TPI Renewal

When renewing your TPI membership for 1999-2000, be sure to update all portions of your record, especially sod types, cuts, etc.

Just added to this year's record will be "*washed sod*," and "*big slabs*." If you produce either of these items, note them on your renewal form.

TPI's website lists information about members that buyers find helpful in locating suppliers. Up-to-date information is essential to everyone.

Observations on Success

Ronald Nixon, Cowikey Turf

We have an established sod farm that enjoys good name recognition in our market area. But that doesn't make us invincible, for over the years, several farms in our position have failed after many successful years. This past year has been challenging, for big roll harvesting has cost us sales into new home construction and our work force (which had been stable for several years) suffered as many of our key people left. In one year's time, a strong company became vulnerable to competitive forces. This forced us to examine what has made us successful.

I know the price of our product wasn't the deciding factor, for over the years we've included extra cost in the initial quoted price (for delivery, pallets, etc.) which made our price appear higher. This helped customers realize the true cost of sod, but purposely slowed new customers.

I know that quality was not the deciding factor, for over the years the quality of turfgrass sod has risen and we no longer always have the best sod. Fortunately we still enjoy a reputation of producing a good product.

We know that delivery service is very important, but another farm always

offered more service than we did, even though we are good. We no longer have the newest innovations, for we would have to cut something that is working in order to try something new. But I haven't forgotten how much sod was sold because we could forklift pallets to the backyard when others could only unload at the curb.

It is obvious that the way the office was run and the personality of personnel had nothing to do with the success of this business. For the phone had been answered haphazardly and I am afraid that people felt that we had an attitude of indifference about sod sales. I have always made a point not to promise until we knew we could deliver what we said. This keeps us from accepting all orders.

It was a good price and product, with eagerness to provide service that got us in the market place, but that was years ago. I do realize that not meeting reasonable standards in any of these areas would bring on company failure. If not the best price or the best product or great customer relations, then what has sustained us for many years?

The answer is so boring, but it is backed up by the true source when customers tell us that they are not

surprised and get what they expected from us. The answer is consistency. It is finding a level of product that is sustainable and having the price reflect that level of quality. It is providing service at a level that you can do everyday (consistency for the long term). It takes cross training employees so production will be assured even in the absence of key personnel. It means investing for the long term with good facilities and equipment. Success may be boring, but failure is painful. I'll see you successful sod producers at the next TPI conference.

What to Make of the Economic Signs?



In many areas, economic growth is expected to continue through at least the next several quarters. That's the good news. The bad news is that low interest rates will not stay as low as they are now for long.

There is a natural inclination to take advantage of low interest rates by borrowing money for business expansion. Experience has shown that expansion, regardless of the interest rate at which it's financed, can have adverse consequences as the economy slows down. Left with increased debt and 'excess inventory,' businesses may see price reduction as their sole alternative for survival.

Does this mean you shouldn't borrow now while interest rates are so low? Not necessarily. Financing field equipment, office equipment (i.e. copiers, computer systems), etc. may make perfect sense for you. Likewise, refinancing current debt may save you a great deal of money.

What must be considered in borrowing for expansion are the long-term consequences. You'll need to take into account: the market outlook in your area; the competition's expansion plans; the level of income that will have to be maintained in order to service your new debt and possible land-use and income-generating alternatives available to you in slower economic times.

Effective Advertising...Do You Read Me?

An ad or company listing in the local yellow pages may be your only paid advertising effort. With this in mind, it is important to make effective use of your space. A good starting point is to look through the yellow pages to find several ads that are eye-catching, readable or appeal to you for other reasons.

Incorporate the format(s) you like into your own ad. Show the ad you've prepared to others and ask for feedback before you submit the ad for placement. Here are a few tips to get you started:

Borders tend to increase read-ability

Bold type should be used sparingly

Reversed type is more difficult to read, but works best with fewer words in larger, bold type

WORDS IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS ARE HARDER TO READ than Upper and Lower Case

Even text-only ads can be more effective with an additional line of information:

Quality Grass

Family-Owned, Delivery Available
123 Main Street.....555-1212

Finally, be sure to ask about cross-reference(s). If your ad appears under "Sod," ask that "Turf" or "Turfgrass" heading be included with reference to "Sod" listings (ie. "See Also Sod.")

U.S. Requires Reporting on Newly Hired Employees

Welfare reform legislation enacted in 1996 provided new measures to ensure that children receive financial support from both parents. New hire reporting is one way to save taxpayer dollars by reducing government spending on welfare and helping to prevent unemployment insurance and worker's comp. fraud.



Under the new provisions, **employers must report each newly hired employee to their state new hire agency.** New hire reports are matched against child support records at the state and national levels to locate parents who are not paying child support. The new hire report must include the following information:

- * Employee name, address and Social Security number
- * Employer name, address and Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)

The new hire report could be a photocopy of an employee's W-4 form. The federal regulations require employers to report new hires to their states within 20 days. (Some states have established more stringent reporting requirements and/or may require additional data.) This information is not shared with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

TPI has copies of a brochure entitled "New Hire Reporting" that gives more details on compliance. The brochure also contains the phone numbers for each state office handling new hire reporting. Please call TPI to receive your free copy of this brochure: 800/405-8873 or 847-705-9898.

If you have further questions, call the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OSCE) Information Line for new hire reporting and child support information: 202/401-9267, 7:30 am to 5:30 pm Eastern Time. Or visit their website at www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse

Better Listening Builds Better Communication

Here's new evidence that it's worth keeping your communication skills as sharp as possible. According to fresh data from OfficeTeam, employees waste 14% of every 40-hour work week due to unclear communication. That adds up to seven weeks a year!

If you feel like you're missing, misinterpreting or miscommunicating important information, take these steps:



Be available.

Don't bury yourself in your office/home/field at lunch-time or avoid other places where information is exchanged.

Listen to learn. You can't gather information effectively if you do most of the talking.

Don't interrupt. Let the other person finish a thought or sentence. When you interrupt, you're saying that what you have to say is more critical. If you finish others' sentences for them, you assume that you think identically - remember, even subtle differences may be important.

Refrain from making hasty judgments about what is being said. Premature judgments close your mind to further information. Don't argue mentally with what people are saying or you may miss a point they're trying to make. Likewise, avoid formulating your responses until the other person is finished speaking.

Always paraphrase and repeat. When the other person is finished speaking, paraphrase what you heard and repeat it back to the person. This does two things: 1) It helps you understand what the person is saying; and 2) It tells the other person that you were really listening - and paying attention.

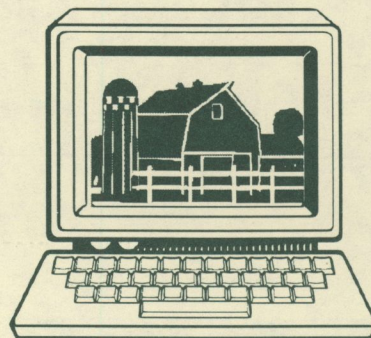
Shrewder Computing

TPI Website...

Instant Grass-ification

In an ongoing effort to build a 'resource-full' storehouse of information, TPI is expanding its website. New features include a **TPI members-only** section with a bulletin board for information sharing. A simple on-line registration process asks you to enter your company contact info and member number to get your member password.

Once in the members-only section, another brief log-in procedure will give you access to the bulletin board. Once you've 'registered' and received the password, you'll have full access to the site. The next time you enter the members-only section or the bulletin board, you'll simply enter (or confirm) your password...you only have to go through the registration process once.



TPI will soon be adding downloadable clipart and resource documents to the members-only section. Also coming soon: On-line conference registration, dues renewal and product order forms as well as an expanded links section.

As always, TPI's site is banner-free for faster access and retrieval of information. Remember... TurfGrassSod.org is your site for Instant Grass-ification!

TPI Action

EPA's request of TPI for use information on chlorpyrifos (Dursban 50W) demonstrates two important elements: 1) the EPA is beginning to get TPI's message that sound data is essential to their registration and re-registration processes; and 2) TPI is now recognized by the USEPA as a reliable source of data.

Surveys completed by TPI members provided highly reliable and up-to-date information that in the case of chlorpyrifos demonstrated that workers are not exposed nearly as much as EPA's own assumptions would have concluded.

Although no one can predict what bureaucrats may do with the information they collect (particularly in the case of the EPA), having the opportunity to provide answers to their questions is important to the process.

The EPA official who is handling the re-registration of Dursban 50W expressed a real appreciation for the facts TPI provided and assured us that as more chemicals come under review, the organization would be contacted again.

TPI is revisiting the U.S. crop insurance program in light of a potential major overhaul of the entire issue by Congress. Although a formal recommendation from TPI's committee to no longer pursue development of a sod-specific crop insurance program was accepted by the Board of Trustees, new developments in Washington have caused TPI to bring its concerns before the federal officials. At present, TPI is not taking a position for or against a program, it is simply gathering information that can be shared with the appropriate committee(s).

Growers using 'farm labor contractors' beware At least in the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals (Florida, Georgia and Alabama), "joint employer liability" was found to exist even though the farm owner did not directly supervise the workers or make management decisions, had no control over the rates or methods of payment to the workers and was not responsible for taxes. A summary and analysis of the court's overly broad decision can be obtained by calling TPI.

**To Receive Additional Information On Any of These Items
Contact the TPI Office**

Phone: 800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898

Fax: 847/705-8347 or E-mail to Turf-Grass@MSN.COM

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

**Turfgrass Producers International
1855-A Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008**

Jest For The Fun Of It

Turfgrass Business Daffy Definitions:

Aerator = hole-y roller

Big Roll = What hangs over your belt

Capital Gains Tax = Accrual and unusual punishment

CPA = Constant Pain in the Ankle

Cool-season = the entire week after you forget your wedding anniversary

Fertilizer Spreader = Advertising Agency, or some Fishermen

Fork-lift Demonstration = Dinner

IRS = Infernal Revenue Service

Sod Pluggers = TPI Marketing Tools

Spreadsheet = Make the bed

Taxes = One of life's two certainties
(and the only one for which you can get
an automatic extension)

Three-point-hitch = Bride, Groom and the
Groom's Mother-in-law

Water Restrictions = Drought Intolerance



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