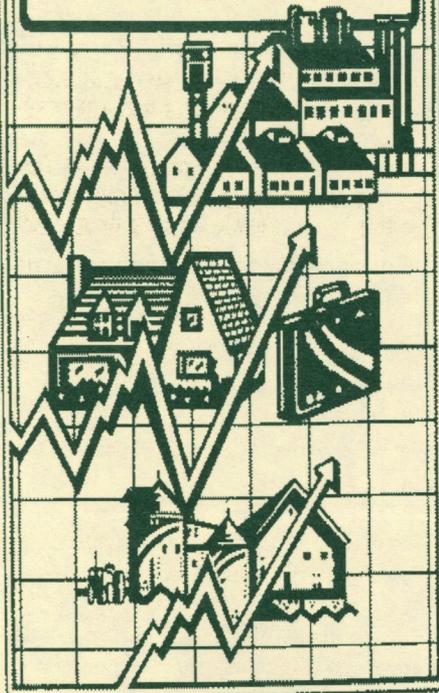


Apr/May-'01



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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT



Turfgrass Producers International

TPI & ITS Team up for Added Value in Toronto

Members will soon receive complete information and registration forms for the TPI 2001 Summer Convention and Field Day, scheduled July 18-22 in Toronto, Canada. Coming from all over the world, members find TPI events are "THE" place to experience firsthand the latest in turfgrass production equipment advancements, valuable industry information and, of course, meet existing friends while getting to know others.

This year's event will also present a rare opportunity to participate in an educational symposium the latest scientific research will be transformed into on-farm practices as scientists participating in the International Turfgrass Society (ITS) present their findings. Topics include "Irrigation Management," "Production Techniques," "Insect Management," "Plant Growth Regulators" and more. Check your mail

in a few weeks for more information. Meanwhile, here is a schedule preview.

July 18—Pre-Convention Tours

AM: Greenhorizons Cambridge Farm

PM: University of Guelph research facility (includes lunch)

July 19—Welcoming Reception & Exhibits in hotel

July 20—

Field Day Tour of Zander Sod Co. and M. Simsky sod farms (includes lunch at Kesmac, Inc.)

TPI Dinner Cruise on Lake Ontario

July 21—Field Day of static and all-day area-based demos

July 22—TPI/ITPS Educational Symposium: "Irrigation Management,"

"Bluegrasses and Buffalo Grasses," "Insect Management," "Production Techniques," "Plant Growth Regulators," "Warm Season Breeding" and "Cool Season Breeding."

TPI Technology Update: Website and E-mails

A number of technological updates were implemented recently at TPI to better serve the members. The following information should help members get the most value out of these new systems and procedures.

TPI Website—During the recent change of the TPI Website's provider, there may have been some difficulty accessing the "Members Only Section," due to some confusion in upper- and lower-case sensitivity. Regardless, here are the procedures you need to follow to gain access to that section after arriving at the TPI Website (www.TurfGrassSod.org):

- 1— Left click: Members Only Section
- 2— User Name: Turfgrass2000
(Note: 2000 contains all numerical characters, no alphabetical)
- 3— Password: TPI2KMEM
(Note: All characters are uppercase; only the 2 is numerical)

TPI Staff E-Mail Addresses—As part

of the TPI technological update to respond faster and more efficiently to members, staff members now have their own e-mail addresses. Although this helps assure members their information will be received by the appropriate staff person, it is a good idea to key in the "Subject" section when sending an e-mail message. Otherwise, in the event your electronic address is not immediately recognize-able as a TPI member, your e-mail may be deleted as a virus suspect.

TPI Staff E-mail Address

General

info@TurfGrassSod.org

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dfender@TurfgrassSod.org

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BEARD
COLLECTION

Planning Ahead Can Increase Your Referrals

You can increase your chances of getting referrals by making "referral mind-set" part of your presentations, according to Bob Burg, author of *Endless Referrals* and sales consultant who teaches business networking and positive persuasion techniques. He suggests three ways to achieve that goal.

1- Plant referral seeds early. Do you wait until your presentation ends and switch suddenly to asking for referrals? If so, you probably feel tense and customers are likely to begin getting edgy. The solution is to present referral requests later. You can deliver a subtle message as you praise them after they ask a question. For example:

—Show that yours is a referral-based organization by saying, "I was asked that very question by a customer who was referred to me several months ago."

—Tell them how much you value those who refer you to others: "One company referred to me by a valued customer asked the same question."

—Suggest what's in it for them: "I'm fortunate to get so many referrals because it lets me focus on servicing customers like you instead of spending so much time looking for new ones."

2- Answer referral refusals with testimonials. Customers might be

worried because of one bad experience, so they tell you they don't give referrals. To counter that, ask customers if they would be willing to write a letter that includes sections that answer typical objections, such as, "What I liked most..."

You might also tell the hesitant customer, "Others I've dealt with felt the same way but here's what we discovered." At that point produce the letters, indicating any specific sections that refute refusals. Also use "affinity" referral letters. For example, if your customer is a builder and sees a letter from another builder, he will be more likely to accept it because they're both in the same trade. You may already have some useful letters in your company files.

3- Reduce the referral universe. This idea comes from Tom Hopkins, author of *How to Master the Art of Selling* (Warner Books, 1994). He says most salespeople ask customers whether they know anyone who might want his product? The usual response is, "Not now, but I'll call you." Few, if any, ever call because the question "pressures" them to mentally review the needs of too many people.

Hopkins' solution is to lessen the pressure by asking about those they golf with or people they know well in groups they belong to. By doing so, you reduce to manageable size the number of people they must consider. They're more likely to supply prospects' names.

Are You Selling Value?

The following quiz can help determine if you're focused on offering prospective customers the value of a total solution, not just the lowest price. Pick "Yes" or "No"

- 1- I'm interested in building strong business relationships, not one-time sales.
 - 2- I demonstrate to my prospects how I can offer lower risk than competitors.
 - 3- I explain the high-quality features of my product and service.
 - 4- I tell prospects about the superior and prompt service my company provides.
 - 5- I relate how each of my products and services can meet my prospects' needs.
 - 6- I provide prospects with testimonials and case studies to support my claims.
 - 7- I follow up promptly to ensure delivery and installation went smoothly.
 - 8- I encourage customers to contact me if they have questions or concerns.
 - 9- I get my prospects involved in the presentation so they can experience my product or service firsthand.
 - 10- I volunteer to train my prospects to use the product or service and anyone else who will be using it.
- "Yes" Scores: 10 = Congratulations; 7-9 = good, but make 10 your goal; less than 7 = review your offerings for added value.

Filling Portable Gas Cans Can Be Hazardous

Fires spontaneously ignited when people attempted to fill portable gasoline containers (gas cans) in the backs of pickup trucks equipped with plastic bed liners or in cars with carpeted surfaces. These situations have caused serious skin burns and other injuries that could have been avoided, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

These fires result from the build-up of static electricity. The insulating effect of the bed liner or carpet prevents the static charge generated by gasoline flowing into the container or other

sources from grounding. The discharge of this build-up to the grounded gasoline dispenser nozzle may cause a spark and ignite the gasoline. Both ungrounded metal (most hazardous) and plastic gas containers have been involved in these avoidable incidents.

Construction workers and others in small businesses who often work with gasoline-powered equipment commonly use portable gasoline containers. Homeowners use gasoline cans for their lawnmowers and other equipment.

To prevent this type of incident, here

are some safe guidelines to follow:

- ✓ Before filling, always remove the containers from the vehicle and place them on the ground at a safe distance from the vehicle (provides path to dissipate static charge to ground).
- ✓ Touch the container with the gas dispenser nozzle before removing the container lid (provides another path to dissipate static charge to ground).
- ✓ Maintain nozzle contact with container inlet when filling (to dissipate static charge build-up from gasoline flow).

Marketing Tip

By Dave Slater
Slater Turf Farm
Tryon, NC

A Few Ideas to Keep Your Name Memorable

Over the last few weeks, I have been wondering just what my marketing tip is to be. The *Business Management* newsletter editor has been ever so gracious to call me, kindly reminding me of my commitment and the newsletter's impending deadline. But instead of a single tip, I have several to share for your consideration.

As obvious as they might seem to some, baseball-type caps are often a popular give-away item. With the farm name, logo and year imprinted, it's great advertising, depending on who is wearing them. Of course it's the best advertising if your customers are wearing them. Adding the current year adds a bit to the pride of the wearer who is our customer.

More of a long-range marketing effort we're involved in is hosting high school and college classes as often as possible. These students enjoy taking a field trip to the turfgrass sod farm and learning about the turf industry from the perspective of the sod producers. We consider it an excellent opportunity to educate future customers. We give them a tour of the operation, explaining the functions of the various pieces of equipment, grasses and the office. In addition to educating them about the turfgrass basics, we often make it even more palatable by serving lunch. When they leave our farm, they take with them some educational reference materials on which the farm name is printed.

A related marketing effort is found in the opportunities to serve your community, local school, churches and local professional associations. Many of you already do this and know how often you find yourself in the position of "turf expert," answering questions for someone sitting next to you and, sometimes, for the entire group. Although there is no way of knowing whether those contacts will result in sales for your farm or for your competitors, your image is greatly enhanced as the local expert and that can help put you a step ahead of your competition.

Another marketing element that you

can't afford to ignore is the importance of keeping your grounds mowed and looking attractive. Keep your shop swept and trashcans emptied. Keep the equipment washed and clean. When customers come to pick up sod or to get quotes, it's natural for them to be looking around and judging you and your operation. A clean shop and attractive entrance is a marketing plus.

Websites can be a good marketing tool, more so if you promote your web address everywhere possible, such as letterhead, trucks and on the side of give-away pens and other inexpensive premiums. Be sure to change your give-away premiums from time to time. Everybody likes to get "freebies," including customers who seem to appreciate having a pen or other useful items with the reminder of your name, phone number and web address.

Water bottles, which we gave away for awhile, are another good give-away, although we found them to be too big and bulky. We discovered another popular give-away item at trade shows is the triangular-shaped pens. At one trade show, a customer came back for another pen and said, "These are great pens because they won't roll off the desk!"

I'm trying to find a source for six-inch, all-wood rulers to use as my next give-away premium. It will have the standard farm name, phone number, etc. information and it will also include the recommended mowing heights for the turfgrasses we sell. Mowing heights are very important to us as turfgrass sod producers; the ruler will help educate and emphasize the importance of mowing heights to the customer.

But first, I have to find a source for this exact item because my current premium supplier can't find it. If anyone can suggest a source where I might a six-inch, all-wooden ruler, please call me. It's important that the ruler be wooden throughout so that when they are lost, they will be environmental friendly and safely deteriorate in the ground.

Shrewder Computing

Using Math for Web Searches

Don't worry if you don't know what a "Boolean search" is when you click into your on-line search engine. When you need to find information on the Internet, all you need to know is some basic math. Here are some tips that work on almost any search engine:

Be Specific—If you want to know about using Excel software, key in "Excel." If you are looking for something more specific, such as "How to learn Excel to figure out taxes," key it all in.

Use Addition—If you want the search engine to find all of the words you enter, use the plus sign (+) before each word. For example, if you want to find web pages that mention "+listening +communication," only pages that have both words will appear in your search results.

Use Subtraction—The minus symbol (-) is generally most useful when you get a lot of results that aren't related to your topic. Using the minus symbol lets you search for some words but excludes others, thus narrowing your search. For example, if you want pages that mention listening and communication but not speaking, then your search would look something like: +listening +communication -speaking.

Use Multiplication—In search engine language, multiplication means using quotation marks around specific phrases. Simply using the plus (+) or minus (-) symbols will bring pages that include and exclude certain words but not necessarily what you're after. If you're looking specifically for the "role of listening in communication," put the phrase in quotation marks and the search engine will pull up pages that group the terms in that exact order.

TPI Action

TPI TRACKS MULTIPLE & MIXED CONCERNS at the U.S. federal level, as well as some state issues. Examples include:

Labor shortage--continued efforts to reform the H-2A temporary seasonal worker program are again on the federal agenda; however, Republicans don't want to address legalization of current illegal workers and Democrats want to make costs for wages, housing and transportation so high it's economically unreasonable. No one expects an effective solution to pass during this growing season.

Pesticide availability--or more accurately, pesticide losses, brought about by implementation of FQPA (Food Quality & Protection Act) continue to be monitored, with a speciality pesticide association meeting scheduled for late May. Sod farms, because they are farms and a relatively small market may lose more and more chemicals because of profit, politics and public relations.

NY State wants their sod farms to report all pesticide use to customers, creating a paperwork nightmare that provides scientifically meaningless detail.

Other items TPI is tracking include: **minimum wage increases; estate tax elimination; cash vs. accrual accounting; crop insurance; methyl bromide availability; repeal of ergonomic requirements; invasive plants; water policies.**

2001-02 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS will be arriving soon, and the good news is that dues rates remain at last year's level for all classes and all locations. All members are encouraged to renew immediately so as not to miss any important information or special mailings. Be sure to update all of the firm's contact information, including e-mail and website listings, as more and more information will be sent in this manner in the future. U.S. Class A members who renew before July 1 will receive an additional \$1,000 (up to \$20,000 maximum) of AD&D insurance benefit, while those who renew after July 1 receive just a \$5,000 first-year base. Also, the "user name" and "password" to TPI's website members only section will be changed, and accessible only to renewed members.

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: info@TurfGrassSod.org

Website: <http://www.TurfGrassSod.org>

Jest For The Fun Of It

Why You Should Hear The Whole Story

Farmer John was injured when a semi-tractor ran a stop sign and slammed into the side of his pickup truck. Then, he has to sue the trucking company to pay for his medical bills. Now, he's in court where the trucking company's wily defense attorney is arguing with him...

Attorney: "John, didn't you tell the police officer at the scene that you were fine?"

John: "Well, here's what happened. I had just loaded my cow Ethel into the trailer hitched to the back of my truck..."

Attorney: "Objection! I didn't ask for your life story. Just answer "Yes" or "No."

Judge: "I'm going to let the witness respond in his own way. Please continue."

John: "Like I was saying, I was driving down the road with Ethel in the trailer when this semi-truck ran the stop sign and plowed into my truck. I was thrown out on one side of the road and Ethel landed on the other, just moaning and groaning. When the policeman got there, he checked on Ethel first and suddenly he pulled his revolver and shot her. Next, he came over and told me, "Your cow was hurt so bad I had to shoot her...so, how do you feel?"

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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