

June/July 2002



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TPI Summer Convention & Field Day—July 15-19, 2002 Ft. Collins, CO

ITPF Al Gardner Memorial Golf outing; Early-Bird Reception; CSU/Seed Depository Tour; Banquet in the Mountains; Ag Interest Tour; Carnival Evening on the Farm; Open Exhibits & Equipment Demos; TPI Annual Business Meeting

Midwinter Conference February 26-28, 2003

Birmingham, England

Committee Meetings; JCB Tour; Educational Sessions; Exhibitions; ITPF Banquet in England's Castles & Gardens

Visit www.TurfGrassSod.org for more.

**BEARD
COLLECTION**

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

USEPA Sets Sept. 9 Deadline For Methyl Bromide 'Critical Use Exemption' Applications

TPI Member Representatives in all 50 U.S. states have been advised that the just-released 27-page application of the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to seek a Critical Use Exemption (CUE) of Methyl Bromide is now available from the TPI Rolling Meadows, IL office. In addition, copies of the May 10, 2002 Federal Register providing official background and deadline dates are available.

Virtually all uses of methyl bromide will be phased out effective January 1, 2005 with one of the few remaining ways to access this material being approval of a special "critical use exemption." As of now, these exemptions will be granted for just one year at a time. The deadline for filing a completed CUE application has been fixed by the USEPA

as September 9, 2002.

Because of the volume of site and crop specific information, as well as a considerable amount of private financial details required for the CUE application, the TPI Board of Trustees determined that the association will not complete an industry-wide application for critical use.

Individual TPI members, area-based (state or regional) groups or others who want to file a completed CUE application with the USEPA can obtain a copy of the form from TPI. In addition, to the extent possible, TPI will provide assistance or offer advice to those completing the form.

The USEPA website related to this matter is: <http://www.epa.gov/ozone/mbr/cueqa.html>



How To Increase Your Referral Rate

One of the best customer prospecting techniques is to ask current customers for names of individuals who could use your products. And even if you don't make the sale, you can still ask for a referral. Example: "I understand you don't want to make a decision right now. But since you've had a chance to see what we offer, who do you know that you think I could help?"

Of course if you're talking to a landscape contractor, you may have to qualify that you're not looking for his competitors but, instead, someone who handles jobs he prefers not to, or perhaps jobs that are beyond his company's capabilities.

The best way to get referrals is to also give them. But what's your first step? In networking situations such as sales calls, social gatherings or trade shows, you may want to ask people this question: "How will I know if I find a good prospect for

you?" This tells your customer or prospect that you're serious about referrals. It also lets him know you're serious about contributing to his success. Chances are that he'll probably reciprocate by asking you the same question. You'll not only build a better relationship of mutual trust and respect for each other, but you'll also improve your odds of getting more, as well as better, referrals.

Trade shows are a great place to network and plant the seeds of referrals. When talking with customers and prospects there, try asking, "What do you like best about our products/services?" Then ask, "Please tell me more about that." As the individuals elaborate, they generally become more articulate and attached to their reasons for liking your products/services.

In addition, this tends to make them more likely to spread the word, voluntarily telling others why they like to do business with you.



Increasing Costs Justify Price Updates

Turfgrass growers are a unique, special breed of farmer, business person, entrepreneur and gambler.

We grow a specialized crop you can't eat, a product that people seem to want more than need. And we can help reinforce their desire for instant "grassification," beauty and a finished look to their new home. Even though the house construction may be completed, until the sod goes down it's not a finished product.

As business people and entrepreneurs, we know the market for our products but we don't always get the pricing right. We gamble on the weather and the intangibles that are not within our control, and we have faith and hope for the best.

If we're going to be "Taking Care of Business," our price would increase along with the ever-increasing costs of labor, seed, fertilizer, fuel and equipment. Taking care of business is making a profit on your product and a return on your investment.

As professional sod producers, we know how to grow a good product. We know where the market is. And we should know how to price the product accordingly.

Our experience over the past few years in the market has been good. We have enjoyed the continued expansion of

suburbs, new home construction, as well as apartments and commercial buildings. The demand for turfgrass has been positive.

Meanwhile, after growing corn, soybeans or wheat, some newcomers to the sod business think they have found Nirvana. In their enthusiasm for the business, they spread the word that sod is the hot cash crop, even a non-perishable crop.

Although sod may have a longer in-ground life than food crops, as experienced producers we know that sod, especially bluegrass, is prone to more problems the older or more mature it gets. Sod webworm is one of our worst enemies and has to be treated with expensive chemicals.

Fungus is a often a problem during the hot, humid summer while water availability also becomes a challenge. Whole areas in a bluegrass field can flash-out due to transition from cool rainy weather to hot, humid weather.

Also in older grass, thatch build-up becomes a problem and increases the probability of damage from grubs and fungus.


Prolonged rain that prevents mowing properly can necessitate having to mow and bale off the grass. This can cause

the grass to become "stemy" which is usually a set-back.

In my estimation, anyone who thinks sod is a non-perishable product is not very experienced or knowledgeable in the sod business.

Mis-information glorifying the positives and misrepresenting the negatives only serves to entice more growers into the business, further increasing supply beyond demand. This obviously drives prices down. The real horror will be when a slow-down comes—and it always does—the fertilizer will hit the fan and business becomes unnecessarily tough.

We don't need to promote more turf producers. We need to promote more existing producers in joining TPI. Together, we promote turfgrass for lawns and its increased property value, erosion control, the beauty of instant grassification and its many environmental benefits.

The way I understand it, taking care of business is paying attention to our own business. It's working with our fellow growers to reaffirm the fact that through hard work, long hours and close attention and care to our product, we have earned the right to make an honest profit. It's a serious matter and if anyone doesn't agree with me, it's only because I haven't explained it properly. 

Distinguishing Between Questions from Objections


If a prospect asks a question at the very end of the sales call, it can sound like an objection. Sometimes it is; more often, though, when prospects throw last-minute questions your way, they're really saying, "Please clear up this one area of concern before I give my approval." For instance, "Your delivery trucks were always late arriving at the jobsite."

When you respond, you should:

- **Answer the objection.** "Although we have had some problems with late deliveries in the past, we've had a new system in place for six months. During that time, we haven't experienced any problems."

- **Make a positive statement.** "In fact, during the past six months, we've collected some very positive responses from customers who have been impressed not only with our drivers

arriving on time but also with their concern for working closely with customers."

- **Close the deal again.** "If that answers your question and sets your mind at ease, let's take a few minutes now to talk about when you'd like us to deliver." 


Caution: If you fail to fully address the concern, or to regain your prospects' commitment, you may lose the sale.

Follow-Up

After making the sale, be sure to follow-up to find out if the order was delivered on time, in good shape and where the customer wanted it. Failure to follow-up could leave a disgruntled customer free to seek other options...and tell others about his unsatisfactory experience.

Retirement Options

No matter what size business you own, a retirement plan can help you gain significant tax advantages, as well as attract and retain great people. Your company gains an immediate tax deduction for the amount you contribute each year. Pay no federal income tax on amounts contributed, and all plan participants could actually earn more through tax-deferred accumulation of income and investment gains. And, just as important, the right plan could be the key to giving both you and your employees the secure retirement you've earned.

For information on how to choose a retirement plan, visit the website www.selectaretirementplan.org—an interactive educational resource for small business owners created by the U.S. Chamber, the Department of Labor, Merrill Lynch, and the Small Business Administration. 

Marketing Tip

By Jeffrey Dobkin
The Danielle Adams
Publishing Company
Merion Station, PA

Increase Your Advertising Response by 10 Times!

All my ads say the same thing: "Call," "Write," or "Come in." If a customer hasn't done any of these, we didn't get his business. The advertisement has to stimulate this response, or the ad fails.

Writing every ad begins the same way: write your objective in the upper right-hand corner of a blank sheet of paper—nothing kills an ad faster than not having an objective—and be sure it includes one or more of the words: *call*, *write* or *come in*. The purpose of your ad is to create a response. With your objective clearly in mind, draft your entire ad (every line, every word, every graphic) to help increase response rate.

Establishing an Objective

Here's an example of how important it is to establish your ad's objective. After a discussion with the owner of a large real estate company whose sales were slipping, I sketched a consulting agreement that called for 10 hours of meeting with him to outline a plan to increase his sales. He was quite skeptical about how I could help him (with 50 years of selling real estate) sell more houses. But we spent a good deal of time reviewing his local newspapers' real estate ads and listings for houses. When I asked him the objective of those very expensive ads, he said, "To sell houses." When I asked him the purpose of the individual listings, he again replied, "To sell houses."

The objective of those ads was not to sell a house. I've never known of anyone who sees a four-line listing and sends a down payment. Prospects see the ad and—if it works—they pick up the phone. Rule number one: The objective of an ad usually is to generate phone calls, not to sell the product—that part comes later if you do your job right.

Triple Your Response

I proposed a format change in each of the realtor's listings: "Call now," or "For information call!" And we gave the phone number in a multitude of places. After prospects read our ads—with all the boxes saying "Call now" and the phone number showing repeatedly, my client's phone calls tripled in the very first week.

The acronym AIDA in writing direct mail copy also holds true for advertisements. Attend attention, generate Interest, stimulate the Desire, and ask for Action. You have about two to three seconds to entice the reader to stop, look at your ad and read your headline, which brings us to the second rule of creating an effective ad: *The headline is by far the most important line in the ad.*

Ten Times Your Response

Create a headline that will stop the reader, capture his attention and force him to read the rest of the ad. *The headline is the ad for your ad.*

If you spend 25 hours writing your ad, make sure to spend 10 of them on the headline. The difference between the effectiveness of an ad with a poor headline and one with a great headline can be 10 times the response rate. Imagine getting 10 responses from an ad, keeping all other elements the same and then changing the headline to get 100 responses.

Don't write just one or two headlines and pick one; write 80 or 100, or even more if none look good. You might even ask friends and family to come up with ideas.

Types of Headlines

The most powerful headlines you can write contain your reader's biggest benefit. Whether it's an unusual product or quality, or service, promote whatever makes your product unique and different. This is called your Unique Selling Position and can be an effective headline if you can show it as a reader benefit, such as "*#1 Choice*," "*Easiest to Do Business With*," or "*Best Guarantee*,"

Attention-Grabbing Words

Some words really work "magic" in advertising. Despite its overuse, the word "FREE" remains one of the most effective ways to generate ad response when used in the headline or subhead. Increase its value by using it in the first line of text and again in closing. To landscape contractors, you might want to promote "FREE New Sod Care and Maintenance Booklets with All Orders."

Shrewder Computing

How Do I Attract Users To My Website?

So your business has a well-designed website that's useful. But how do you get people to come to it? Here are five steps you can take right away:

1. Search engines use description, page title, and keyword meta tags to categorize, prioritize and rank your website. Make sure your website includes these in your html. For tips on how to effectively use html meta tags visit

<http://searchenginewatch.internet.com/webmasters/meta.html>

2. Register your website with web search engines and directories.

There are thousands of search engines out there, but be sure to register with the main ones such as Yahoo, Lycos, Alta Vista, HotBot and Excite. You may also want to consider using a submission service such as www.Register-It.com or www.submitcorner.com.

3. Search for industry wide linking pages or "vortals" (a website that provides information and resources for a particular industry) by surfing the Internet for the key sites in your field—then set up reciprocal links with these sites.

4. On-line advertising, such as purchasing banner space on a high traffic site, is another consideration for promoting your site. If you don't have the budget for banner advertising, consider joining a banner- or link-exchange program such as www.LinkExchange.com. Basically, these programs comprise mutual banner ad placement on participating websites. For more information on on-line advertising <http://www.iab.net/advertise/adsources.html>.

5. Always include your e-mail and website address on your organization's business cards, stationery, newsletters and printed publications. If you hand someone a business card with your e-mail and website address located on it, the service or product you offer suddenly becomes a lot more accessible, credible and attractive.

TPI Action

Visit www.TurfGrassSod.org Website

For Expanding Details on Summer & Winter Meetings

Gaining insights, and information about TPI's upcoming meetings just got easier! Now members can click on "Events" at the site's home page and review meeting details, as well as visit a growing number of hot-linked sites that relate to each of the meetings.

The TPI website should be particularly useful to members who suffer from "DMS" (delayed mail service), as the site information will be routinely updated and expanded. Although the site is not setup to accommodate on-line registration, a form will be available for printing and faxing. Currently, information about **2002 Summer Convention & Field Day in Ft. Collins, Colorado** and **2003 Midwinter Conference in Birmingham, England** are available.

Seasonal Labor Reform Gaining 'Traction'

Democrats and Republicans are starting to come together to fix the highly flawed H-2A Seasonal Ag Labor laws. TPI, in support of other associations seeking reforms received encouraging news that the issue may start to move through the process in the very near future.

U.S. TPI members may be called upon to contact their Senators and/or Congressmen as Senate and House votes become necessary. In the past, TPI members have demonstrated a remarkable ability to generate support for their issues with limited, but well-placed letters, calls and faxes. Because of the 9-11 and anthrax scares, mail service to government offices is taking upwards of two months to be processed, so members could be called on the call or fax their officials. Details will be released as they become available.

Have You Renewed Your TPI Membership?

Renewal notices for the 2002-03 membership year have been sent to all current TPI members. If you did not receive this important mailing, please contact the TPI office for a duplicate copy so you can ensure uninterrupted benefits and important mailings, etc.

To receive additional information on any of these items, Contact the TPI Office

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

Fax: 847/705-8347

e-mail: info@TurfGrassSod.org

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

Water Awareness

Turfgrass Benefits

Because the benefits of well-maintained green landscapes (including turfgrass lawns) are not widely understood, this area has become an easy target for water conservation.

Published in the *Journal of Environmental Quality*, research of Dr. J.B. Beard and Dr. R. L. Green provides strong evidence of the main important benefits provided by turfgrass and divides them into three category.

Functional benefits: soil erosion and dust stabilization; groundwater recharge and surface-water quality; organic chemical decomposition; soil improvement and restoration; heat dissipation and temperature moderation; and noise abatement and glare reduction. Other benefits also include decreases in noxious pests, allergy-related pollens and human exposure to disease; safety in vehicle operation and equipment longevity; security for vital installations, reduced fire hazards and improved wildlife habitat.

Aesthetic benefits: increased property values; improved mental health via a positive therapeutic impact; a sense of community pride and social harmony; quality of life; general beauty and a complement to trees and shrubs in the landscapes.

Recreational benefits: low-cost surfaces; physical health; mental health; safety cushion and spectator entertainment.



Business Management

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