

Dec./Jan. 2005



# BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

Cancun, Mexico—February 2-4, 2005

## TPI Midwinter Conference with All of the Right Elements!

### ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

Taking Care of Business . . . . . Page 2

*SOD is the "SARS" of the Plant World*

Five Ways to Make Non-Verbal Messages

Exciting . . . . . Page 2

Put Callers at Ease . . . . . Page 2

Marketing Tip . . . . . Page 3

*Strategies to Negotiate Sales*

Shrewder Computing . . . . . Page 3

*Spyware & Adware—New Threats to Your  
Computer*

TPI Action . . . . . Page 4

*—New Member Benefits*

*—2004 TPI Media Exposure Exceeds Last  
10 Years Combined!*

How Hot Does Artificial Turf Get? . . . Page 4

### How to Manage with Questions

The art of management often involves asking questions. Here's a list of 10 you might want to ask as part of your daily routine and it'll teach your people that their opinions matter.

What made you mad today?

What took too long?

What caused complaints today?

What was misunderstood today?

What cost too much?

What was wasted?

What was too complicated?

What is just plain silly?

What job involved too many people?

What job involved too many actions?

The momentum is building rapidly as we draw closer to the 2005 TPI Midwinter Conference dates where an estimated 800 individuals from about 250 turfgrass sod farms and 70+ exhibiting companies, as well as respected research scientists and other industry professionals are expected! The combined wealth of knowledge about the turfgrass sod business that will be shared during the Conference is far beyond the scope of any other event in the world.

### Information Sharing

From the Midwinter Conference program's structured educational sessions, to the Roundtable Forums and numerous opportunities to visit with other turf producers, manufacturer and supplier representatives, attendees will gain valuable information they can take home and put to immediate use.

Topics of each education session have been selected on the basis of member requests for more information.

Education presenters have been chosen for their highly respected credentials. The education program's format includes interactive panels, break-out sessions, a "Show and Tell" by member producers, "Meet the Speakers" sessions, and a local turf farm tour.

During the Exhibits & Welcoming Reception and Exhibits with Lunch programs, attendees will have ample time to meet one-on-one with manufacturer and supplier representatives to discuss concerns and find out what's new.

### Leisure Time & Socializing

This year's Midwinter Conference has plenty of free-time built into the schedule to allow attendees to enjoy the beautiful scenic location and relaxed atmosphere. You can spend time with your family,

employees and other members just sitting back, enjoying the company. Or reward your senses with the gentle ocean breeze, a swim in the clear turquoise waters, or just taking a walk along beautiful sandy beaches. You can also float through underground rivers, swim with dolphins, enjoy botanical gardens, the sea aquarium and much more.

### ITPF Banquet & Awards

#### On the Beach

This always enjoyable event will begin with a cocktail reception, followed by the TPI Awards presentation, dinner and entertainment. The themed evening will take place on the Hilton Cancun Beach Resort beach where there will be authentic Mexican decor and entertainment.



### Have You Received Your New TPI Member Directory & Web- site "Members Only" Codes?

The 2004-2005 TPI Membership Directory was mailed prior to this newsletter. If you don't receive your copy within a week or two, or if you need an additional copy (\$10/copy), contact the TPI office. On the inside back cover, you'll find a photo summary of the 2004 TPI Summer Convention & Field Days at host farm Sporting Valley Turf.

TPI Website Codes: If you do not have the current User Name and Password for access to the "Members Only" section of the TPI website, please call the TPI office. And be sure to check for new information, especially in the "Pressroom."

*—email*

## SOD is the "SARS" of the Plant World

The above headline is a direct quote taken from a recent article in *the Landsculptor*® magazine, "a publication of the Michigan Green Industry Association." The article was written by Dr. David L. Roberts, extension specialist and district horticulture agent, Michigan State University. In his article, Dr. Roberts' included statements such as, "Strict measures need to be implemented to ensure that SOD does not become established in Michigan" and "suspect cases of SOD need to be confirmed by a diagnostic system so that the whereabouts of P. ramorum can be determined for management and eradication."

These statements were not intended to be disparaging to turfgrass sod, although taken out of context they read to be the end of the turfgrass sod industry. In fact, the article was written in reference to "Sudden Oak Death (S.O.D.)"

Apparently Sudden Oak Death is a disease that has killed tens of thousands of oak trees and even other woody-type plants along the west coast of the U.S. since 1995. It seems to have been inadvertently shipped from a California nursery to approximately 40 other states.

And now there is a call to arms to try to contain the spread of the disease.

We should all be concerned about the spread of such a deadly disease and lend our full support to stopping its spread. But somewhere along the way, someone shortened the name of Sudden Oak Death to SOD.

As a turfgrass sod producer and president of the Michigan Sod Growers Association, my focus has been diverted from supporting the fight against Sudden Oak Death to protecting the good name of our product. Public perception of "SOD" killing oak trees or a less than informed landscape contractor telling his customers, "You should not install sod because it could have the oak disease," could be devastating to the turfgrass industry. Confusing the public will not help the fight to control Sudden Oak Death, nor will associating turfgrass sod with the disease save a single oak tree.

Shortening Sudden Oak Disease to "SOD" will only force sod producers to be on the offensive, distracting everyone from the true task at hand which is stopping the spread of Sudden Oak Death and promoting the spread of "SOD."

As turfgrass sod producers, we must get the word out to the university scientists and extension agents, government regulatory officials, leaders in the forestry and landscape industry, local and federal department of agriculture officials, and anyone else who might listen to the message that the term "SOD" to describe a deadly disease is not in any way related to turfgrass sod producers.

*(Editor's note: TPI Media Relations Coordinator Jim Novak contacted "the Landsculptor" Editor Diane Andrews with our concern. She responded with a promise to print TPI's concerns in the magazine's "Letter to the Editor." She also spoke with Dr. Roberts and found him "very sympathetic regarding this matter."*

*Jim Novak found the acronym dates back to 1995 on the U.S.' west coast. Bryant is the first to speak out about it and alert other TPI members. He urges all TPI members to take action and contact their local, state and national Department of Agriculture and Forestry to express the concern that such an acronym could potentially send a negative message to the general public.*



## Five Ways to Make Non-Verbal Messages Exciting

Often it is what's not said, verbally, that can make a big difference. Here are five ways to use body language that will make you more exciting and attractive to buyers and more successful in sales:

**Smile**—Most young workers learn by doing and have little patience for detailed, lengthy directions. So offer them a brief overview of a new duty or task, then let them dive in and see how they fare. You can always go back and offer additional instructions if they're struggling with the assignment.

**Make Eye Contact**—It's tempting to focus on paperwork or your product. But there's no better way to say "I'm interested. I want to help; and I can help." Especially when combined with a smile, eye contact is very powerful.

**Nod**—When you're listening to a customer speak, you can't always verbally

confirm and assure them that you're listening and understanding. Head nodding is an important nonverbal gesture that can do both.

**Lean forward**—When you're sitting, don't rely on the chair's back to help you sit up straight; use your own back. That effort shows your enthusiasm, work ethic and interest in the customer. Leaning back can make you seem lazy or uninterested.

**Use Open-Hand Gestures**—The open hand, particularly the palm, is used for

solemn ceremonies, such as swearing in courtroom witnesses. Use open-hand gestures to reflect your honesty and increase your credibility. You'll immediately increase the power of your connection with customers when you make a conscious effort to use open-hand gestures when you communicate.

*Source: The Competitive Advantage, as adapted from The Certifiable Salesperson, Tom Hopkins and Laura Laaman, John Wiley & Sons Inc.*



### Put Callers at Ease

Most people aren't comfortable on the phone, wondering if the person on the other end is really listening. To project warmth during telephone conversations, try these tips:

- ♦ Laugh out loud instead of just

smiling, respond verbally instead of nodding and put warmth in your voice.

- ♦ Give the caller your undivided attention. Don't fiddle with objects on your desk or read or write e-mails while talking on the phone. People can hear or sense when they're not getting your full attention and they resent it.

# Marketing Tip

By John Patrick Dolan  
Attorney, Author,  
Consultant

## Strategies to Negotiate Sales

One of the most important aspects of effective sales negotiation is that everyone leaves the table satisfied. To achieve that, regardless of what or to whom you're selling you need a reliable negotiation strategy. Think of your strategy as your master plan, or systematic approach. Any strategy is only as strong as the techniques and tactics used, so think of tactics as the tools for implementing your negotiation strategy.

Consider the following five strategies to negotiate effectively.

### Be Prepared

All effective negotiations start before you actually sit down at the bargaining table. Take time to consider your counterpart's situation with regard to what they need from the deal. Also, define what you can and cannot compromise. Develop a comprehensive view of the situation. Preparation and planned alternatives will help you stay relaxed through the negotiation.

### Set Negotiating Standards

If you want to reach a mutually beneficial agreement, everyone has to play the negotiation game by the same set of rules. Objective negotiating standards are like a set of rules established before the process starts. Sometimes these standards are set by the organization, or by a government law. In most cases, you can set your own rules.

### Work With the Other Party

In order for negotiations to conclude with all parties feeling good about the agreement and about each other, everyone involved must strive for mutually beneficial solutions. When you approach the situation with this attitude of mutual satisfaction, the other party will usually disarm. People become defensive when they feel you're out to swindle them but if the other party knows you want to play fair, they generally try to play fair as well.

However, some people, regardless of how you approach negotiations, won't play by the same high standards. Don't drop to their level, no matter how tempting it might be.

### Finalize All Agreements

Ask plenty of questions to avoid overlooking important details. Perhaps more

important, listen to the client's responses and concerns. If they are worried about delivery, quality and replacement, payment terms or other contract elements, then address these issues with care. When the terms are settled, make sure everyone's perceptions match, and recap all the important details.

It's always a good idea to put the agreed to terms in writing, whether a simple sales receipt or agreement contract. And don't sign off until both parties understand and agree to all the key points so as to address all details, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant.

### Follow Through

Once you've negotiated the sale, developed mutually beneficial solutions, and signed the agreements, you must follow through on your part. This means you do what you said you would do, when you said you would do it, and in the manner you said it would be done.

If you agreed to deliver at a specific time on a certain day, then make sure it's done. If for some reason you can't follow through as expected, make sure you contact the customer as far in advance as possible and be prepared to suggest alternative arrangements that could include a different time and/or date or even a discount.

### Negotiating Conclusions

Negotiation is a process of give-and-take for everyone involved. When you follow a strategy, you can focus on finding solutions, rather than winning a position. Preparation gives you a comprehensive view of the situation, and standards serve as guidelines for compromise.

Remember to work with, not against, your counterpart, and finalize all the details you've agreed upon. Most important, once you've completed the negotiation process, keep your word and follow through with the deal.

John Patrick Dolan, a 27-yr. veteran law attorney, is a recognized international authority on negotiation and conflict resolution and author of 12 best selling books including *Negotiate Like the Pros*. For more information visit [www.negotiatelikethepros.com](http://www.negotiatelikethepros.com)



# Shrewder Computing

## Spyware & Adware New Threats to Your Computer

The surge in new types of destructive software that invade your computer significantly reduces the effectiveness of any virus-checker software you might currently be using. Usually called "spyware" or "adware," these malicious programs can transmit information about the contents of your computer to a third party and insert ads into your Internet browser.

Computer manufacturers report Spyware as the No. 1 reason people call tech support. In its most innocuous form, it slows down computer processing speed. But it can have far more costly consequences, including theft of a company's bank information and customer account information.

Most spyware installs on your computer only after receiving the user's permission. For example, many file-sharing programs come with a number of applications that monitor your use of the Internet. Because few people read those licensing agreements before clicking "Accept," they may have unknowingly agreed to allow a software developer to control their computer, remotely.

Adware interferes with other programs, changing their behavior, slowing them down and forcing you to view unwanted advertising.

Solution? Write an employee policy outlining what constitutes appropriate use of the Internet. Reading news on-line might be acceptable, but down-loading file-sharing programs is not.

Next, if your computer system is networked, restrict users from installing non-preapproved software.

Update Internet browsers and other programs regularly to utilize their latest security patches.

Run a diagnostic program like Ad-aware, Webroot's Spy Sweeper or HijackThis to help purge certain kinds of spyware.

# TPI Action

**New Member Benefits**—In the near future, U.S. members in most states will be contacted with the opportunity to participate in two new member programs.

—**Workplace Banking**, from U.S. Bank, will offer members the opportunity to provide their seasonal employees with the opportunity to obtain banking services, establish credit and, of major importance, the ability to send money to their families back home, at low-cost fees, compared to the more costly means currently available.

—**Seasonal Worker Health Care Assistance Plan**, from American Plantsman Insurance, will offer members three medical benefit options for their seasonal employees. Options include (at different benefit levels) doctor office visits, hospitalization, prescription drugs, and even vision and dental for workers and their families.

## 2004 TPI Media Exposure Already Exceeds the Last 10 Years Combined—

—Total media impressions resulting from a nationally syndicated three-part TV broadcast on *US Farm Report* (190 TV stations) and recognition of TPI on the syndicated radio show, *National Farm Report* (240 Radio stations) exceeded 30 million viewers/listeners. These two broadcasts alone generated more media impressions than all of TPI's past PR efforts combined over the last 10 years.

\* See details in an upcoming issue of Turf News.

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](mailto:info@TurfGrassSod.org)

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

## How Hot Does Artificial Turf Get?

The following excerpt was taken from a 12-hr. temperature comparison of five different surfaces, by Dr. Frank Williams, Brigham Young University.

Time (pm)	1:00	2:00	3:00
<b>Artificial Turf</b>			
Surface (Dry)	174	180	174
Air 2-in.	122	122	120
Air 6-in.	104	100	102
Air 5-ft.	100	98	101
Shade	76		
<b>Surface White</b>			
Line	159	150	145
20 min after wet			171
<b>Natural Turf</b>			
Surface	84	93.5	88
Air 6-in.	100	96	98
Air 5-ft.	93	96	97
<b>Asphalt</b>			
Surface	134	138	141
Air 6-in.	99	100	102
Air 5-ft.	99	98	102
<b>Soil</b>			
Surface	131	131	133
Air 6-in.	100	100	102
Air 5-ft.	98	100	102
<b>Concrete</b>			
Surface	108	113	123
Air 6-in.	98	99	102
Air 5-ft.	96	98	101

## Business Management

**Turfgrass Producers International**  
1855-A Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008  
e-mail: [info@TurfGrassSod.org](mailto:info@TurfGrassSod.org)

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