

April/May 2005



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Your Voice Counts at the TPI Annual Business Meeting

All TPI members are encouraged to attend the 2005 TPI Annual Business Meeting (Wednesday, July 27) where your participation helps to determine TPI's direction for the coming year and beyond. The event is scheduled for 11:30 am – 12:30 pm during the Summer Convention & Field Days.

In addition to electing new Board of Trustees and Officers, attendees will be provided detailed reports of TPI's past year, and new items will be addressed.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

The Value of Sharing

Regional Turf Meeting Scheduled for TPI Summer Convention

All members are invited to participate in a special Regional Turf Group Breakfast meeting scheduled for Wednesday, July 27 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am, during the 2005 TPI Summer Convention & Field Days. There is no charge for this breakfast forum. Whether you belong to a regional turf group, are considering joining one or would like to begin one, plan on attending. There are no limits on the number of members from any regional turf groups, although the meeting is limited to one individual from each TPI member turf farm or operation. Look for the appropriate box on your Summer Convention registration form where you can indicate that you plan to attend this event.

The purpose of this meeting is for participants to explore how TPI and regional turf groups can work together more effectively, sharing information and resources, programs, challenges and solutions, and achieve greater overall benefits from their time and efforts.

Instead of leading the direction of the meeting, TPI hopes to serve as a catalyst or facilitator to encourage attendees to voice common or special issues being faced by producer groups at a more local level. Ideally, this forum will provide the means for smaller groups to establish a networking relationship with others.

In a recent TPI Board meeting, it was

reaffirmed that although there are member issues best handled at the national and international level, there as many that are more effectively handled at the local or regional levels. Often times, what are new challenges for one group have already been addressed successfully by others. Therefore, there are potentially significant efficiencies of time and effort to be gained by working together.

Even though TPI sponsors the forum's meeting space and refreshments, the group's direction is up to participants. However, the Board will consider any proposal that might come from these meetings, seeking assistance. For instance, matters such as providing governance documents would be accomplished immediately; whereas other issues, such as conducting a localized survey or a specific service (such as collecting dues or organizing a conference) would be more complex, potentially involving some compensation to TPI.

"There are issues more effectively addressed by TPI at the national and international level and there are others which are best handled at the regional level," said TPI Executive Director Kirk Hunter. "What we hope to accomplish is for members to help define various issues so all of us can achieve better results with less investment of time and dollars."



Membership Renewal Coming—Is Your Contact Information Correct?

When you receive your TPI membership renewal notice, pay close attention to the accuracy of your contact information (e-mail, phone, Fax, etc.). Why? The same information you provide TPI is a published on the TPI website for current and potential customers to more easily contact you.

New for this year: Class "A" (turf producer) member classification will be based on "acres in production," replacing the former "acres harvested."

Be sure to review your completed form carefully so you don't miss out on important information. Please double-check your e-mail addresses.



Taking Care of Business

By Tom Reilly
Tom Rielly Training
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When You Can't Compete on Price...

Your competition sells good stuff; you sell good stuff. Their service is acceptable; your service is acceptable. Their prices are competitive; your prices are competitive. In other words, the buyer looks at your package and the competitor's package and sees parity along the product dimension and company dimension. What's a salesperson to do?

The same product from the same company presented by two different salespeople appears two different solutions altogether. Two Fortune 500-type companies asked how much value their salespeople bring to the table. They discovered that 35-37 percent of the value customers receive is perceived coming from the people with whom they do business. Do you bring that much value to the table? If you left your company tomorrow and went to work for a really good competitor, how much business would you take with you? If your answer is "little" or "none," I would argue that you're not bringing much value to the customer.

When products are similar or the same, and the suppliers' services rival each other, the only thing left to differentiate a solution is the salesperson. How much are you worth to the customer? A business owner told me that he wanted to be routinely 10 percent higher than the competition. "If the buyer doesn't feel I'm at least 10 percent better than the

competition, I need to know about it," he said.

If you couldn't sell at a cheaper price, how would you communicate your value to the customer? If you couldn't argue that your service was any better than the competition, how would you sell? If you couldn't rely on product differentiation, what would you use as an advantage? You would have only yourself left to sell.

You must be able to answer this question for the customer, "Why should the buyer want to do business with me as a salesperson?" You are the "product" over which you have the most control. You may not be able to do anything more about increasing your product's quality or your company's service level, but you can do something about your performance. One study found that the salesperson's competence is the number one factor accounting for overall customer satisfaction. All other things being equal, would the customer pay to do business with you, as a salesperson? Following are some ways you can increase your value to the customer:

Study—Become a serious student of your profession. Increase the value of your knowledge. Study your market, your company, your customers, your products and your profession. Become an expert. Learn so much about your business that the customer can't afford

not to do business with you. Become the benchmark by which all other turf producer salespeople are judged.

Follow Up—The number one complaint buyers have about salespeople is a lack of follow-up. Guarantee your follow-up. Advise customers that this is part of your value-added service. Assure them that you will be there after the sale to guarantee their complete satisfaction with your solution. Promise them accessibility before, during and after the sale. Promise a lot, but always deliver more than what you promise.

Seek to Add Value, Not Cost—Diligently look for ways to add value with your performance. The customer must perceive you as part of his profit center, not his cost center. Help the customer achieve greater efficiency, higher productivity and company image. Help the customer gain maximum performance from your solution. Work as hard to keep the business as you did to get the business. Look for ways to re-create value at every turn.

So, if you couldn't compete on your price, your product or your company's service, how would you compete? Would your customers be willing to pay more to do business with you, the salesperson? You may be the most significant competitive advantage that your company offers.



Seven Traits of Effective Leaders: How Many Do You Share?

Are leaders born or made? Can you learn superior leadership skills? No one is sure but experts have noticed seven specific actions that successful leaders carry out, regardless of the organization or cause they lead.

Effective leaders...

...Make others feel important. If your goals and decisions are self-centered, followers will lose their enthusiasm quickly. Emphasize their strengths and contributions, not your own.

...Promote a vision. Followers need a clear idea of where you're leading them, and they need to understand why that goal is available to them. Your job as a leader is to provide vision.

...Follow the golden rule. Treat your followers the way you enjoy being treated. An abusive leader attracts few loyal followers.

...Admit mistakes. If people suspect that you're covering up

your own errors, they'll hide their mistakes, too, and you'll lack valuable information for making decisions.

...Criticize others only in private. Public praise encourages others to excel, but public criticism only embarrasses and alienates everyone.

...Stay close to the action. You need to be visible to the members of your organization. Talk to people, visit other offices and work sites, ask questions and observe how business is being handled. Often you will gain new insights into your work and find new opportunities for motivating your followers.

...Make a game of competition. The competitive drive can be a valuable tool if you use it correctly. Set individual goals and reward members who meet or exceed them. Examine your failures and celebrate your group's successes.

(Source: *The Toastmaster*)



Marketing Tip

By John Graham
Graham Communications
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Market-Driven Fits the Times; Sales-Driven Just Doesn't Do It

Even though a marketing-driven strategy makes sense to most salespeople, there is a reluctance to let go of the tried and true sales-driven approach, despite obvious diminishing returns.

The difference between sales-driven and marketing-driven selling is anything but subtle. The sales-driven approach remains: *Go find someone to talk to. Get out there, get in front of prospect, and get the orders.* Sales-driven selling is more a function of sheer luck than skill; it's being in the right place at the right time (another supplier failed to deliver on time or made one too many mistakes, etc.).

Marketing-driven takes a different tact. Although sales is the key goal, its primary focus is on creating customers first. And it's not a con game just to get the order.

Sales-driven companies send the wrong messages to their employees, customers, prospects and everyone else. The problem with a sales-driven company is its willingness to do everything and anything to make the numbers. Their ads use buzz words like "customer driven," "customer service," and "customer satisfaction," but behavior tells a different story.

The essential problem with sales-driven selling is that customers see through the scam. More to the point, we can identify it instantly in others—though not always in ourselves. Customers know when they are being conned.

There are marked differences between sales-driven and marketing-driven selling.

Here are some traits:

Salesperson's Basic Approach

Sales-driven—figure out a way to get through the door.

Marketing-driven—be invited through the door as a result of being viewed as a valued resource.

Salesperson's Strategy

Sales-driven—build a "personal relationship" as quickly as possible.

Marketing-driven—be perceived as a competent, helpful advisor.

Salesperson's Goal

Sales-driven—sell something, i.e., get

an order.

Marketing-driven—create a customer, i.e., someone who wants to do business with you.

Salesperson's Prospects

Sales-driven—lucky breaks, being in the right place at the right time, cold calls.

Marketing-driven—a steady flow of new business by identifying and cultivating prospects carefully and continuously.

Salesperson's Behavior

Sales-driven—contacts the customer when there's something to sell.

Marketing-driven—stays close to the customer with ideas and suggestions for achieving customer's goals.

Salesperson's Agenda

Sales-driven—sell what salesperson wants customer to buy.

Marketing-driven—demonstrate that you are a consultant.

Salesperson's Mission

Sales-driven—get an order as quickly as possible.

Marketing-driven—build long-term value.

If you and your salespeople are to be respected as professional business people, it will be your commitment to being seen as experts who are valued because of what you bring to your customers that gives you such status.

The differences between sales-driven and marketing-driven selling are deep. One begins and ends with the order, while the other begins and ends with value to the customer.



TPI Office Location to Change

Effective May 20, 2005 the TPI office mailing address and telephone/fax numbers will change to:

Turfgrass Producers International
2 East Main Street
East Dundee, IL 60118

Telephone:
800/405-8873 (toll-free U.S./Canada)
847/649-5555
Fax: 847/649-5678

Shrewder Computing

Fight Phishing—

On-line financial transactions are becoming more commonplace. And so are incidents of on-line fraud using forged e-mails which has spawned its own term: "phishing."

Phishing uses authentic looking but fraudulent (or "spoofed") e-mails that appear to come from legitimate sources. By asking you to reply with details such as your bank account, PIN or Social Security number, or user-name and password to your on-line accounts, phishers try to get your sensitive personal information.

More convincing are phishing e-mails that include a link to a "copy-cat" website that mimics every detail of the entity the messages are pretending to represent. These e-mails instruct you to click on the link, log in to "your account" and update your information. In reality, the phishers capture your data and use it to access your real account.

One way to protect yourself from these attacks is not to click on links or attachments in e-mails that ask you to provide any type of information about any of your accounts. Better to delete the e-mail than to pursue.

If you use e-mail to communicate with your customers—especially if you conduct any type of on-line commerce—you also need to take steps to protect them. Tell them it is your policy to never ask for their account information via e-mail.

Electronic communications are still a great way to keep in touch with customers. Just remember to avoid putting them in a situation where they wonder if an e-mail that comes from you is authentic.

Because e-mail is so easy to forge, no responsible institution relies on it to gather or verify personal account information.

(Source: USchamber.com)

TPI Action

Donkey Forklift to be Auctioned at Summer Convention & Field Days!

Quality Corporation has agreed to provide a Donkey forklift to be auctioned at the 2005 TPI Summer Convention Field Days. Proceeds from the auction will be used to fund turfgrass research through the International Turf Producers Foundation (ITPF). Details will be available in the May/June issue of *Turf News*.

TPI Purchases Office Building

In November of 2004, the TPI Board voted to purchase a building in which to re-locate the TPI office. Owning our own building is a great investment compared to the rental fees TPI has been paying until now. Remodeling of the building is scheduled for completion in mid May when the TPI office will be moved. See page 3 for the exact date for the new address, phone and fax numbers

TPI Study Tour to Italy Still Has Openings

Just a reminder about the TPI Italian Study Tour set for October 28 to November 8, 2005: registrations are still being accepted on a first-come, first served basis until trip capacity reaches 70 participants or June 30. Contact the TPI office for copies of the brochure.

TPI Promotes Benefits at Mid-Winter Sod Grower Education Seminar

TPI's Executive Director Kirk Hunter and Media Relations Coordinator Jim Novak, participated in the recent Annual Mid-Winter Sod Grower Education Seminar in Lemont, IL. Following Hunter's opening remarks, Novak presented an overview of TPI's accomplishments and several projects currently in the works. The seminar agenda, hosted by the University of Illinois and the Midwest Sod Council (MSC), featured a range of topics including sod field fertility, grass genetics, herbicides and sod rooting.

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>

Artificial vs. Natural?

In a 2004 NFLPA Opinion Survey, players were asked, "What type of surface do you prefer to play on?" Here are their responses:

Club	Real Grass	Artificial Turf	No Pref.
Arizona Cardinals	95.9%	2.0%	2.0%
Atlanta Falcons	76.5%	7.8%	15.7%
Baltimore Ravens	70.2%	14.9%	14.9%
Buffalo Bills	78.6%	10.7%	10.7%
Carolina Panthers	86.3%	3.9%	9.8%
Chicago Bears	91.2%	0.0%	11.1%
Cincinnati Bengals	78.4%	N/A	5.9%
Cleveland Browns	86.4%	3.4%	10.2%
Dallas Cowboys	85.7%	7.1%	7.1%
Denver Broncos	91.2%	5.9%	2.9%
Detroit Lions	70.6%	21.6%	7.8%
Green Bay Packers	97.5%	0.0%	2.5%
Houston Texans	92.5%	0.0%	7.5%
Indianapolis Colts	82.1%	8.9%	8.9%
Jacksonville Jaguars	90.5%	2.4%	7.1%
Kansas City Chiefs	89.1%	5.5%	5.5%
Miami Dolphins	94.6%	5.4%	0.0%
Minnesota Vikings	78.4%	15.7%	5.9%
New England Patriots	87.5%	1.8%	10.7%
New Orleans Saints	93.0%	7.0%	0.0%
New York Giants	76.1%	8.7%	15.2%
New York Jets	70.5%	6.8%	22.7%
Oakland Raiders	93.9%	3.0%	3.0%
Philadelphia Eagles	91.7%	2.1%	6.3%
Pittsburgh Steelers	84.6%	7.7%	7.7%
St. Louis Rams	70.8%	12.5%	16.7%
San Diego Chargers	95.3%	2.3%	2.3%
San Francisco 49ers	84.4%	4.4%	11.1%
Seattle Seahawks	79.6%	14.3%	6.1%
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	76.3%	7.9%	15.8%
Tennessee Titans	93.2%	0.0%	6.8%
Washington Redskins	90.0%	2.5%	7.5%

Business Management

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