

# **BUSINESS** MANAGEMENT

**Turfgrass Producers International** 

### **ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS**

Taking Care of Business . . . . . . . Page 2

- E-mail Protocol
- Looking for a Team Player

Safety Management . . . . . . . Pages 3-4

- Safe Lifting to Prevent Back Injuries
- Back Injury Prevention Training for
- Use These Safe Lifting Tips
- Employee Back Injury Prevention Do's and Don'ts
- Safe Driving Will Reduce Accidents
- Low Cost Safety Ideas You Can Use
- Safety Management Checklist for Supervisors

- 10 Lessons for Living a Better Life

Shrewder Computing..... Page 5

- Shortcut Key Strokes

TPI Action ..... Page 6

- Susan Hall Joins TPI Staff as Membership & Marketing Mgr.
- TPI Participates in Recent Turfgrass Growers Association, UK
- History of Turfgrass Producers International CD Coming Soon

2006 NFLPA Opinion Survey

Excerpts ...... Page 6

### **TPI 2008 Midwinter Conference** Orlando, FL, February 4 – 8

Monday—Group & Committee Meetings

Tuesday-Prayer Breakfast Nautical Tour Lawn Inst. Mem. Golf Tournament Early Bird Reception

Wednesday-Women's Forum Seminar

**Exhibits Reception** 

Thursday-Gen. Ed. Session #1 **Exhibits Lunch** 

Lawn Inst. Banquet, Awards & Fundraiser at Sea World

Friday-Gen. Ed. Session #2

Roundtable Forum Farm Tour

TPI Benefits Far Out-Pacing Member Dues

If you're among those who misplaced your TPI membership renewal notice, or don't remember mailing it with your check, contact the TPI office right away to resolve the issue so your member benefits continue uninterrupted. Even though TPI membership currently stands at an all-time record high of 1,174 (as of 5/31/07), there are individuals who have vet to renew for the 2007-08 fiscal year. September 1st is the cut-off!

Ironically, while today's business costs continue soaring upward, your TPI Board is pleased to announce member dues for 2007-08 have increased only two percent. Meanwhile, new member benefits are being added and many of the existing ones are being expanded. Turf News, for example, achieved a record high 600-page year, averaging 100 pages per issue in addition to two largest-ever 128-page editions! Back issues of Turf News (except the six most recent issues) are available electronically in the "Members Only" section of the

In addition to Turf News, TPI members have free access to more than 100,000 articles and documents relating to turfgrass research and other industry topics through the Turfgrass Information File (TGIF) at Michigan State University. Recently, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) began digitizing their publication Golf Course Management (starting with their first issues produced in 1933), a great TGIF database enhancement.

During the past year and a half, the TPI website has grown from 35 to more than 120 pages of useful information and resources for a wide range of individuals and businesses. Consider the value of the free listing of all members and products, informative "how-to" brochures and resources you can use to develop your own customized marketing pieces, research and other educational

articles, industry information including event calendars, research and business management, press releases and the list goes on.

TPI's Business Management newsletter has been expanded from four to six pages with its new "Safety Management" section; a great source for marketing ideas, computer tips, hiring and training techniques and more.

TPI Midwinter Conferences combine education and exhibits to bring the latest information direct to members. Research scientists and other industry experts share a wide range of useful "take-home" knowledge. TPI Summer Conventions & Field Days demos allow members an up-close view of the latest technology and production methods. In addition to one-on-one discussions with manufacturer and supplier reps, the information exchange with other members is some of the most valuable information available.

The TPI Membership Directory provides a convenient take-along source of contact information on all current members, whether turf producers, manufacturers and suppliers, or researchers. It also includes lots of interesting TPI history, bylaws, member benefit listing and much, much more.

TPI member benefits include access to medical and seasonal worker insurance programs, reduced-fee bankcard programs and more.

The Lawn Institute's research and education efforts continually deliver turfgrass facts about sound agronomic principles to consumers, media and industry.

Consider these member benefits-plus many not listed and the behind-the-scenes efforts like PR, lobbying efforts and your association's involvement with other industry groups—when renewing your membership.

# **Taking Care of Business**

By Dr. Julie Miller Tel: 425/485-3221,

www.businesswritingthatcounts.com

### E-Mail Protocol

The blessing and the curse of the digital revolution! Between e-mail, instant and text messaging, cell phones, Blackberries and the Internet, we are drowning in data overload. Moreover, the constant interruptions cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$558 billion annually. This staggering number does not account for the cost of poorly written e-mails that land companies and employees in hot legal trouble, destroy long-term client relationships, and ruin reputations-just review Mike Brown's e-mails (former FEMA chief) as Hurricane Katrina raged and you will understand. Add to this mix a lack of civility and common sense and you have an explosive brew. Writing online is still, as author Patricia O'Conner writes, in its Wild West stage . . . with everybody shooting from the hip and no sheriff in sight.

What to do? For starters, treat e-mail writing as writing not as casual conversation. Whether words are written in the sky, sent by carrier pigeon or via the Web, words must connect with the reader. Good writing allows this to happen; poor writing does not.

Therefore, establish some law and order by developing an e-mail protocol, whether you are a multi-national or a single shingle firm. Simply stated it's "the way we do business around here" in terms of communicating via e-mail with co-workers and customers. It is a code of behavior, a set of standards as to how you will frame your words, manage your inbox, even extend your brand.

Consider this story: Within a software company's accounting department, an employee had received a query by one of its international clients regarding an invoice. The client had asked how she was handling the invoice, as the company was anxious to receive the product. The employee's response? "handling it." Note that the response was in lower case with no greeting or closing. The client's response? Not pleasant-the client pulled his account, citing irreconcilable differences. And the result? Loss of revenue, loss of client, loss of reputation. Though we cannot account for the human factor, if a protocol had been in effect, the calamitous outcome might have been avoided because standards would have been in place as to how to respond to the client.

Below is a short list of questions to visit at your next meeting. Your answers could be the beginning of a company-wide document.

#### How do you greet and close messages?

Companies are crafting a series of key phrases used solely for openings and closings. Remember, you would never call without greeting someone. Why would you not in your e-mails?

## What does your e-mail signature say about your company?

It is an extension of your company's brand. Professional with no cutesy sayings, it should contain all contact information. Establish a standard for font style and size-Verdana and Arial remain the ones most commonly used. Also, because you have limited real estate, consider placing your signature block horizontally rather than vertically.

# What is the company policy around blind copies?

Some companies only use them for e-blasts; others state they are strictly forbidden. Discuss why, when and how you will use them. Caution: Some computer programs allow all those who you do not want to see your e-mail to view it if the recipient hits "reply all."

#### Do you have a message for the out-ofoffice auto-responder and when do you turn it on?

Four hours? One day? A large bank requires if an employee is immersed in an important project, it must be turned on if he/she is gone from the office for more than one hour. Other companies insist they are available 24/7 for their clients, thus no autoresponder.

### How many e-mails before you pick up the phone?

The rule of thumb seems to be three. If the issues are not resolved, pick up the phone or walk down the hall.

What is your company's policies about writing business letters, accessing confidential information, or handling racial or sexual harassment? Your e-mail policy should be compatible with these documents.

#### How often do you check e-mails?

Some companies set their programs so e-mails are only called up hourly, thus reducing down time and increasing productivity. Others require employees to check their e-mails a minimum of four times a day.

#### How soon do you return e-mails?

Within four hours? 24 hours? Some companies' policy state all e-mails need answering within the same business day.

#### Do you use emoticons?

Buzzing bees, dancing bears, smiley faces. Suggestion: Heartily rule against it.

# How will you insure employees understand your protocol?

For example, who is the contact person when questions arise? How will updates be handled? Will you schedule training?

E-mail has become the biggest productivity drain in businesses today. Getting a handle on this daily data dump by establishing procedures-etiquette if you will-will make you and your company stand above the crowd. And, possibly bring law and order to the untamed world of Internet communication. What are your "best practices"?

About the Author—Dr. Julie Miller, founder of Business Writing That Counts, is a national consultant and trainer who helps professionals reduce their writing time while still producing powerful documents. Some of her clients include Microsoft, Washington Mutual Bank, Verizon Wireless, and Cisco Systems.

#### Looking for a Team Player

During a recent seminar, a hiring manager asked how to determine to what degree candidates are team oriented. *Suggestion*: When you ask team related questions during the interview process, listen for how often the candidate uses "I" instead of "we" as a good indication of how team oriented someone is. *Source*: Bob Losyk, President & CEO of Innovative Training Solutions at 800/995-0344 or www.boblosyk.com

# **Safety Management**

### Safe Lifting to Prevent Back Injuries

Editor's note: Back injuries often result from improper lifting. James Meyers, a researcher with the University of California Agricultural Ergonomics Research Center, notes that the cost of a first time employee back injury can be as high as \$10,000, with a repeated back injury costing as much as \$300,000. Employers—including turfgrass sod producers—typically pick up the bulk of these costs in the form of insurance claims, lost time, the need to recruit and hire replacement workers, and potential insurance premium increases. In our June/July 2007 issue of "Safety Management," we gave you some tips on what you can do to reduce the risk of employee back injuries. Use the following safety training lesson with the illustrations at the bottom of this page to train your workers in safe lifting practices.

### Back Injury Prevention Training for Employees

- ✓ Back injuries can be very painful and can last a lifetime.
- ✓ Back injuries often recur. This can result in difficulty or an inability to do your job and in high medical costs.
- ✓ One common way back injuries occur is by improper lifting.
- ✓ Lifting a load that weighs 50 pounds or more will greatly increase your risk of a back injury.

### se These Safe Lifting Tips

- ✓ Size up the load before you pick it up. If the load appears to be heavy, awkward or bulky, ask for help.
- ✓ Move your feet apart and put one foot slightly in front of the other.
- ✓ Make sure you are wearing sturdy shoes or boots with non-slip
  soles.
- ✓ Ensure that you can grasp the load securely.
- ✓ Check to make sure your travel path is clear of obstructions and that there are no slip and trip hazards.
- ✓ Get the load as close to your body as possible—keep it close when lifting.
- ✓ Bend at the knees—NOT from your waist.
- ✓ Get a good grip on the load, then lift steadily with your knees—NOT with your back.
- ✓ Keep your back as straight as possible when you pick up the load, when you are carrying it and when you put it back down.
- ✓ Don't jerk the load or twist your body when lifting.
- ✓ Don't carry loads higher than chest high.
- ✓ If you have a lot of lifting to do during the day, try to alternate it with lighter tasks.

- ✓ If possible, avoid carrying a load for a distance of more than 10 feet without using a lifting device.
- ✓ Use a forklift or other lifting device for heavy loads that could result in severe injury to your back.
- Report work-related back strains or sprains to your supervisor. Prompt medical evaluation may prevent the injury from becoming worse.

### Employee Back Injury Prevention Do's and Don'ts **DO**:

- ☐ Ask a co-worker for help when you need it.
- ☐ Use the manual and mechanical lifting devices we provide.
- ☐ Stay in good physical condition. Regularly exercise to maintain fitness and strength. Warm-up "stretching" exercises are a good way to start your day.

#### DON'T:

- ☐ Pick up a heavy load, then carry it on top of your head. You could injure not only your back but also your head, neck and shoulders.
- ☐ Jump on or off a truck or other equipment while carrying a load.
- ☐ Continue to lift loads if you have been injured.

### Safe Driving Will Reduce Accidents

The 2006 TPI Membership Turfgrass Sod Farm Survey found that the majority of sod farms responding (53 percent) deliver sod to customers within 30 to 75 miles. This is a significant increase over the 42 percent reported in the 2001 survey.

Regardless of the number of miles or kilometers your drivers travel, being on the road presents a number of risks. Operating a truck or truck-trailer presents even more challenges. Among these are the need to allow extra room between your vehicle and others, ensuring that your trailer hook-up and load are both secure, and allowing extra room for turns. Here are some safe driving tips to pass onto your employees:

- Always perform a pre-trip vehicle inspection. Visually inspect your truck. Check all fluids, lights, tires (both pressure and condition), windshield wipers and other parts that can be visually inspected. Make sure your emergency road kit and first aid kit are in place.
- ✓ Check your trailer and truck-trailer hook-up. Ensure that the hookup is secure and that the load you are hauling is evenly distributed and securely in place.
- ✓ Know your vehicle's weight capacity. Don't haul a load heavier than the truck can handle.













By Barbara Mulhern Safety Advisor/Consultant 608/848-3758 or bamu100@aol.com

- ✓ Buckle up before you get onto the road. Ensure that any passengers are also wearing their seat belts.
- ✓ Drive defensively. Be on the lookout for angry drivers, children or animals suddenly darting onto the road or other hazards that could result in an accident.
- ✓ Don't drive faster than the posted speed limit. Follow all other traffic laws.
- ✓ Slow down when road conditions or visibility is poor.
- ✓ Keep a safe distance from other vehicles—at least one truck or truck and trailer length of space for each 10 miles of speed between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- Avoid potential distractions. Stay off your cell phone unless you need emergency assistance and are unable to safely pull off the road to make a call. Don't read maps or engage in other distracting activities when driving.
- ✓ Do not drive if you are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Know that certain prescription medications may make you drowsy. If you are too sleepy to drive, pull off to the side of the road when you can safely do so.
- ✓ Be especially careful when backing up. Do not back up unless you have to. If you do need to back up a truck, try to have a spotter available to guide you.
- Keep an eye out for upcoming hazards. For example, if you know you may need to stop at a traffic light and the road is wet or slippery, start slowing down well in advance.
- √ Try not to stop suddenly in order to avoid being struck from the
  rear
- Don't drive aggressively. If you are angry or under a lot of stress, it's a good time to stay OFF the road.

### Low-Cost Safety Ideas You Can Use

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles on free or low-cost safety ideas you can use.

You're a small turfgrass sod producer without a lot of resources to devote to safety. Yet you know that safety is important, and you want to protect your employees from injury. What can you do to reinforce safety that doesn't take a lot of money or time? Here are a few ideas:

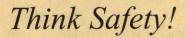
- ✓ Keep a small digital camera on you at all times. Take photos when you spot a hazard or a potential hazard—a broken taillight on a truck, a missing safety guard or shield, or an employee running across wet, slippery ground. Make 5x7 or 8x10 enlargements of these photos, then post them where employees will see them with a big note underneath that says: "Can you identify these safety hazards?" Rotate the photos on a regular basis.
- ✓ Take still more photos. This time, look for employees who are acting SAFELY. Show a worker buckling up as he gets into his truck, a worker carefully checking a work site for any hazards, an employee wearing his required safety glasses while working in the shop. Enlarge and post these photos with a note congratulating these employees for their safe actions. Rotate the photos once a month.
- Reward employees for safe behaviors. When you or a supervisor spot a worker taking a safe action without being asked (such as

- helping a co-worker lift a bulky item or replacing a worn slow-moving vehicle emblem on a tractor), give the employee a small gift card to local fast food restaurant or discount store, a baseball cap with your company's logo or another small "prize." Be sure to verbally thank the employee, too, for setting a good example for other workers.
- ✓ Use paycheck stuffers. Write a short safety "reminder" on a small piece of paper, make copies and include it with your employees' paychecks. Coming up with new reminders each pay period would be a good project for your company's safety committee members. These reminders can be just one short sentence. A few examples: "Walk, don't run." "Put your tools away." "Wear your hearing protection." *Note*: If you don't have time to come up with these safety reminders, use the TPI Safety TIPS that appear in each issue of "Safety Management."
- ✓ Set a safe example. Think each time you get into your truck, pull out onto the highway or show up at a work site. Are you exhibiting the safe behaviors you want your employees to demonstrate? Leading by example doesn't cost anything but it can have a big impact on how safely your employees act.

# Safety Management Checklist for Supervisors

**Note:** Your supervisors are the key link between top management and employees at your turfgrass sod operation. If your supervisors don't set a good safety example, you can't expect the employees they supervise to work safely. This checklist is designed to assist your supervisors in preventing injuries among the workers they supervise.

- ✓ Our company has written safety rules that I have clearly communicated to the employees I supervise.
- ✓ I verbally communicate all safety policies and rules in a language and manner our workers understand.
- ✓ I fairly and consistently enforce safety rules. I document any infractions in writing.
- ✓ I lead by example. I use the personal protective equipment (PPE) the workers I supervise are required to use. I do not take shortcuts or in any other manner set a poor safety example.
- ✓ Work sites are inspected daily for the presence of any hazards. I document these hazards, share the information with the employees I supervise, and take action to reduce the risk of injury to our workers and to customers.
- √ The equipment we use is in safe and operable condition. I do not allow workers to operate equipment that is in need of repair. Equipment safety checks are made on a daily basis.
- ✓ I stress to the workers I supervise that all safety guards, shields and
  other safety devices must remain in place. Removing a safety
  device without authorization is grounds for disciplinary action.
- √ I hold regular, brief safety training meetings with the employees I supervise. Employees are encouraged to discuss any safety concerns.





# **Marketing Tip**

By Scott Hunter The Coaches Corner scott@thpalliance.com

### 10 Lessons for Living a Better Life

Have any of you read Og Mandino's book *The Greatest Salesman in the World?* I met Og at my first National Speakers Association convention more than 20 years ago. What an amazing man. His books have sold more than 50 million copies and have been translated into 25 languages. Even though he has been dead more than 10 years, this book still sells more than a million copies annually.

On the 10th anniversary of his passing, *Success* magazine published a summary of what this wonderful little book is about. It's worthwhile reminding ourselves of the 10 lessons in the book.

1. Today I begin a new life. Meaning: leave the past behind and enter boldly into the future. Forget past mistakes, both yours and others, and move on. You can either be right or be happy. So give up the need to be right by forgiving both yourself and others and get on with it and choose to be happy.

2. I will greet this day with love in my heart. Meaning: true success is rooted in love for others, for self, and for the world. Mandino believed that "only the unseen power of love can open the heart of men," and without it you are destined to remain nothing but a "peddler in the market place."

And don't miss the part about love for self. For many people, that is the biggest challenge, but one that must be accomplished if true success is to be achieved.

#### 3. I will persist until I succeed.

Meaning: successful people refuse to give up. All too often, when first we don't succeed, we lose faith and stop. To succeed, Mandino writes, you have only to "take another step."

And if that should fail, then "take another, and yet another." The greatest people never accept defeat.

#### 4. I am nature's greatest miracle.

Meaning: Every person is unique and individual. Uniqueness is a trait to be proud of: "I am rare, and there is value in all rarity: therefore, I am valuable." This may be the one lesson that stops more people than any other. We spend so much time comparing ourselves UNFAVORABLY to others that it's hard to look in the mirror and be truly proud of who we are.

5. I will live this day as if it is my last.

Meaning: to achieve greatness, you must make every day count. Wasting time means wasting your life and it will get you nowhere. Og states: "I have but one life and life is naught but a measurement of time...If I waste today, I destroy the last day of my life."

### 6. Today I will master my emotions.

Meaning: Mandino had learned the value of a positive attitude, and understood that "unless my mood is right, the day will be a failure."

- 7. I will laugh at the world. Meaning: you must learn to laugh at the world and also to laugh at oneself. "I will laugh at myself, for man is comical when he takes himself too seriously."
- 8. Today I will multiply my value a hundredfold. Meaning: Mandino stressed the importance of goals for succeeding in life: "I will be my own prophet and though all may laugh at my utterances they will hear my plans, they will know my dreams; and thus there will be no escape for me until my words become accomplished deeds."
- **9. I will act now.** Meaning: success is built on action: "My dreams are worthless, my plans are dust, my goals are impossible. All are of no value unless they are followed by action."

And finally:

10. I will pray for guidance. Meaning: religion was deeply important to Mandino, but he felt prayer should ask only for guidance and never for goods. Doing so teaches you to help yourself: "Only for guidance will I pray, that I may be shown the way to acquire [success], and my prayer will always be answered."

And if you have any arguments this week, please don't send them to me. Just go back and read lesson 7. You're taking life much too seriously.

Those are Mandino's 10 lessons. If you now want to hear my 8, go to: http://www.thpalliance.com/artofsuccess

Scott Hunter's past newsletters are available at: <a href="http://list.thpalliance.com/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=thecoachscorner">http://list.thpalliance.com/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=thecoachscorner</a>
There, you can also view a wide range of his articles, publications and CDs available for purchase.

# **Shrewder Computing**

Shortcut Key Strokes

Shift + F10 = Same as right-clicking an object

Ctrl + Esc = Opens the Start menu Shift (hold down the Shift key while you insert a CD-ROM) = Bypasses the auto-run feature

Alt + Underlined letter in menu =
Opens the menu

Alt + F4 = Closes the current program

Ctrl + F4 = Closes the current window in a program

Alt + F6 = Switches between multiple windows in the same program

Ctrl + Tab = Switches between multiple tabbed windows in the same program

Shift + Delete = Deletes selection immediately, without it hitting the Recycle Bin

#### Microsoft Word Shortcuts

Ctrl + A = Selects the file contents

Ctrl + C = Copies selection

Ctrl + X = Cuts selected text

Ctrl + V = Pastes selected text

Ctrl + P = Prints opened file

Ctrl + F = Opens Find/Change box

Ctrl + B = Bolds highlighted selection

Ctrl + I = Italicizes highlighted selection

Ctrl + K = Inserts link to a Web siteCtrl + U = Underlines highlighted

selection

Ctrl + Y = Repeats last action performed

Ctrl + Z = Undoes last action

Ctrl + End = Moves the cursor to end of the document

Ctrl + Home = Moves the cursor to beginning of the document

#### Mouse Shortcuts

Double-click = Selects a word Triple-click = Selects a paragraph Ctrl + Mouse Wheel = Zooms in (by rotating wheel forward) and out (by rotating wheel backward)

### **TPI Action**

Susan Hall Joins TPI Staff as Membership & Marketing Mgr.

TPI is pleased to announce Susan M. Hall has been hired as Membership and Marketing Manager, replacing Terri Berkowitz who resigned recently. Susan will be the new contact for all *Turf News* advertising, and TPI Conference and Convention exhibitors and sponsors, beginning July 30, 2007. Susan's e-mail will be *shall@TurfGrassSod.org* The next issue of *Turf News* will have more complete information about Susan.

TPI Participates in Recent Turfgrass Growers Association, UK

TPI Executive Director Kirk Hunter reported excellent activity at the TPI information exhibit during TGA's biannual event hosted by County Turf at one of its farms in North Lincolnshire. Despite travel challenges and road closures due to local flooding, turnout for the event was "superb." Hunter also devoted several days with member growers and the TGA council, in addition to exhibiting at the event. More information will be published in the next issue of *Turf News*.

History of Turfgrass Producers International CD Published!

In celebration of TPI's 40th Anniversary, a CD documenting the association's four decades of growth will debut at a special event during TPI Summer Convention. A copy of the CD will be distributed to attendees; copies will be sent to all members, soon after returning from the Convention. The 202-page historical electronic publication was edited by retired *Turf News* Editor Dr. Wendell Mathews and former TPI President Walt Pemrick.

To receive additional information on any of these items, contact the TPI Office at Tel: 800/405-8873 or 847/649-5555 Fax: 847/649-5678, or e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@TurfGrassSod.org">info@TurfGrassSod.org</a> Website: <a href="http://www.TurfGrassSod.org">http://www.TurfGrassSod.org</a>

#### Artificial vs. Natural?

In a 2006 NFLPA Opinion Survey, players were asked, "What type of field do you prefer to play on?" Here are their responses:

Real	Artificial	No
Grass	Turf	Pref.
81.6%	6.1%	12.2%
47.7%	31.8%	20.5%
54.8%	38.1%	20.5%
51.9%	44.2%	3.8%
85.1%	6.4%	8.5%
83.8%	5.4%	10.8%
68.6%	5.4%	7.8%
		6.1%
		14.6%
		2.6%
30.9%	54.5%	14.5%
	Control of the Contro	8.0%
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		2.4%
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		6.8%
		2.0%
		11.5%
		12.2%
		14.0%
		12.2%
		10.0%
94.6%	0.0%	5.4%
	Grass 81.6% 47.7% 54.8% 51.9% 85.1% 83.8% 68.6% 81.6% 61.0% 84.6%	Grass Turf 81.6% 6.1% 47.7% 31.8% 54.8% 38.1% 51.9% 44.2% 85.1% 6.4% 83.8% 5.4% 68.6% 5.4% 61.6% 12.2% 61.0% 24.4% 84.6% 12.8% 30.9% 54.5% 70.0% 22.0% 92.3% 3.8% 58.5% 34.1% 85.7% 7.1% 78.0% 19.5% 84.4% 4.4% 81.6% 7.9% 64.7% 21.6% 51.1% 28.9% 75.6% 11.1% 86.8% 7.9% 80.8% 15.4% 79.5% 13.6% 66.0% 32.0% 75.5% 12.2% 58.0% 28.0% 75.6% 12.2% 85.0% 5.0%

### **Business Management**

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