



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

AMERICAN SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

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[April/May]

July 31-August 2
ASPA SUMMER CONVENTION
PLANNED FOR PORTLAND, OREGON

"Plan On Portland" is the new theme for ASPA's 1991 Summer Convention, scheduled for July 31-August 1, with the Red Lion Lloyd Center serving as the headquarters hotel. JB Instant Lawn and Turf-Seed, Inc., will serve as coordinating hosts for the Convention and Field Day activities.

Although the '91 Convention had been scheduled for Santa Barbara and Camarillo, CA, that area's very severe drought caused ASPA's plans to dry up as well. The California Sod Producers Association and host farm, Pacific Sod, encouraged ASPA's relocation of the convention and promised a return date, when conditions are more favorable.

Complete information and registration forms will be mailed to ASPA members in the next few days. Highlights of the Portland convention will include: Wednesday, July 31 -- committee meetings, educational session and business meeting, in the hotel, followed by equipment displays and a "down home" barbecue on the home farm of Paul Jensen, just outside of Silverton.

Thursday, August 1 -- full day of equipment and supply displays and demonstrations on the JB Instant Lawn farm. Continental breakfast on the farm and a lamb and steak barbecue lunch sponsored by Turf Merchants Int'l and Mid-Valley Ag. Evening free to experience Portland.

Friday, August 2 -- tour of Oregon Tree & Turf farm with a continental breakfast, followed by extensive tour of Turf-Seed Inc.'s 110-acre research facility and lunch.

To save about half the cost on airfare, plan to stay over Saturday, August 3. ASPA's official travel coordinator, Conventions In America, can assist with airline reservations. Dial 1-800-535-1492 and give them ASPA account #457 for prompt service.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is provided with the understanding that this publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting or other professional service. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. Published bi-monthly for members of the American Sod Producers Association, under the auspices of the ASPA Business Management Committee. We invite your comments and recommendations.

RECESSION SELLING:
IMPROVED TECHNIQUES CAN BE WINNERS

"Selling Your Way Out of a Recession," was printed in the February, 1991, issue of Small Business Reports, while "Secrets of selling in tough times," was printed in the February issue of Boardroom Reports. Both pieces offered excellent ideas that can be modified for turfgrass sod sales in a recession economy. These new techniques can turn an otherwise marginal season into a real winner...but you have to give them a try.

Here is a combination of the suggestions the two articles offered:

1. See More Prospects...Be Agressive: while many sales people slow down during recessions, thinking there aren't any orders anyway, an aggressive posture and plan to see more people will put you in front. There will always be available sales. If you're making more calls, you improve your chances of success.
2. Focus on New Customers...Focus on Value: many turfgrass sod producers rely heavily on a few customers who serve a limited market. When those areas, such as housing for example, slow-down, sales can drop. But, by looking for a whole new source of customers and focus their attention on value, you can generate new leads and sales. If you've sold only wholesale, consider some retail. What about direct sales to schools, parks, cemeteries, highway projects, etc. Make sure you impress these new clients with the immediacy of turfgrass sod and the value of knowing that what they install with sod is what they'll have, not the unknowns of seeding.
3. Look to Yourself...Eliminate Negatives: polish the image of your company (and yourself) to keep ahead. If you are creating negative messages, or allowing your staff to, it's almost a losing battle. Take a look at even the small things like company signs, vehicle appearance, logos, letterhead, uniforms, brochures and displays. Your fresh and positive appearance will be reassuring to both old and new customers.
4. Expand Your Abilities...Increase Your Commitment to Service: when you're busy, there's never enough time to attend an ASPA meeting, or take that college course...now may be the best time you ever have. Improve your abilities to handle new commitments, and freshen up your skills on old ones. This could be anything from welding or writing to planting and selling. At the same time, let your customers know you are committed to providing improved service. Try iron-clad delivery guarantees (it's on time, or it's on us), faster responses to customer questions, improved varieties. If you can't think of anything, ask your customers what they would like.
5. Keep The Pressure Up...Develop Contingency Plans: write down your goals and objectives, determine how you're going to measure success and then continually monitor your progress. This could be sales, new customers, hours or dollars spent per acre harvested, etc. At the same time, know what steps you'll take, and in what order, if your goals aren't achieved. Don't wait until it's too late to begin thinking the unthinkable...have a plan that you can turn to at every step.
6. Increase (Don't Cut) Expenses that Generate Sales: everyone agrees that it takes money to make money, but too many businesses cut expenses across the board during recessions...they cut the sales generating expenses as much as the expenses that don't generate sales. Be cautious in cutting things such as advertising or sales commissions. Review what expenses make money for your operation and consider raising these costs so you can generate more sales, income and profit.



AMERICAN SOD PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

The following products have been developed by ASPA Committee Members to assist in your marketing program. These items are available as a benefit only to ASPA members.

PUBLICATIONS

"TURF INSTALLATION GUIDE"

A four-color brochure that provides a step-by-step approach to the beauty and simplicity of turfgrass sod installation. Companion piece to "Why Are Most Lawns Now Sodded?" Can also be supported by the use of "Tech Sheets," to match your available varieties of sod. Specify flat or folded when ordering.

Price: \$75 for minimum order of 500; \$250 per 2000 piece unbroken box

"WHY ARE MOST LAWNS NOW SODDED?"

A four-color brochure that answers many of the common questions about turfgrass sodding and illustrates the beauty of instant lawns in a variety of applications. Companion piece to "Turf Installation Guide." Can also be supported by the use of "Tech Sheets," to match your available varieties of sod. Specify flat or folded when ordering.

Price: \$75 for minimum order of 500; \$250 per 2000 piece unbroken box

"THE DREAM LAWN IS YOURS IN HOURS WITH SOD"

A four-color brochure that describes the ease of lawn sodding and points out its superior characteristics as a beautiful, lasting ground cover. Specify flat or folded when ordering.

Price: \$75 for minimum order of 500; \$250 per 2000 piece unbroken box

"SELF-SCORING METHOD: HOW TO ESTABLISH YOUR LAWN"

A four-color brochure for use by customers to personally determine the advantages of turfgrass sodding over seeding or hydro-seeding lawn establishment methods. Can also be supported by use of "Tech Sheets" to match your available varieties of sod. Specify flat or folded when ordering.

Price: \$75 for minimum order of 500; \$250 per 2000 piece unbroken box

"CONTRACTOR ESTIMATOR for Turfgrass Sod and Seed Installation"

A simplified pricing worksheet contractors and turfgrass sod producers can use to determine the profitability of sod installation compared to seeding. Reverse side shows advantages of sodding over other establishment methods.

Price: \$5 for minimum order of 100; 500 sheet ream \$20

"TECH SHEETS"

Brief, concise descriptions of specifications and maintenance recommendations for eight leading turfgrass sod varieties — Bermudagrass, Bluegrass, Centipedegrass, Fine Fescue, Tall Fescue, Ryegrass, St. Augustinegrass and Zoysiagrass. Designed to accompany other fliers or used separately.

Price: \$15 for minimum order of 500 of any single variety

"GUIDELINE SPECIFICATIONS TO TURFGRASS SODDING"

A detailed guide for site specification writers; containing model specifications on turfgrass sod, grass sod selection, as well as installation and maintenance. Particularly useful to government purchasing agents, landscape architects and contractors.

Price: \$2 each; \$15 per order of 10

"JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL TURFGRASS" (1989, 1990 & 1991 editions) **NEW 3rd Edition!**

ASPA publication providing information and tools designed to educate the public on the environmental benefits of turfgrass.

Price: \$3 each

"LAWN AND SPORTS TURF BENEFITS"

Produced by The Lawn Institute's Eliot and Beverly Roberts, this publication covers the areas in which turf benefits mankind and improves the environment.

Price: \$5 each

"FARMLAND & URBAN SOIL CONSERVATION RESULTING FROM CULTIVATED TURFGRASS"

This publication outlines the studies proving that turfgrass sod farming is not a soil depleting activity — but actually enhances the farmland upon which it is grown.

Price: \$2/each; \$15 per order of 10

"TURFGRASS SOD FARM EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK"

A guide to developing your own firm's employee handbook, with samples compiled from various members' firms. Numerous topics are covered including legal concerns regarding employees.

Price: \$5 each

AUDIO/VISUAL

"TURF'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENVIRONMENT" (35mm slide set)

Environmental benefits and inter-actions of turfgrass are carefully documented, and clearly illustrated in this unique slide-show prepared for ASPA by Dr. James Beard of Texas A&M University. Because of the slides' content, no additional script is required for their use.

Price: \$50 for complete set of 47 slides

ASPA PLAQUES

ASPA MEMBERSHIP PLAQUE OR ASPA ETHICS PLAQUE

Solid wood, 10-inch by 8-inch plaque, with brass plate designating Membership in ASPA or listing the Code of Ethics subscribed to by all ASPA Members

Price: \$15 per plaque

ORDER FORM

ITEM		COST	QUANTITY ORDERED	YOUR COST
Turf Installation Guide	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded	\$75 for 500 or \$250 for 2000		
Why Are Most Lawns Now Sodded?	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
The Dream Lawn is Yours in Hours with Sod	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
Self-Scoring Method: How to Establish Your Lawn	<input type="checkbox"/> Flat <input type="checkbox"/> Folded			
Contract Estimator for Turfgrass Sod and Seed Installation		\$5 for 100 or \$20 for 500		
Tech Sheets	Bermudagrass	\$15 for 500 any single variety		
	Bluegrass			
	Centipedegrass			
	Fine Fescue			
	Ryegrass			
	St. Augustinegrass			
	Tall Fescue			
	Zoysiagrass			
Guideline Specifications to Turfgrass Sodding		\$2/ea.-\$15 for 10		
Journal of Environmental Turfgrass	<input type="checkbox"/> 1991 ed. <input type="checkbox"/> 1990 ed.	\$3/each		
Farmland & Urban Soil Conservation Resulting From Cultivated Turfgrass		\$2/each \$15 for 10		
Lawn & Sports Turf Benefits		\$5/each		
Turfgrass Sod Farm Employee Handbook		\$5/each		
Turf's Contribution to the Environment		\$50/set		
ASPA Membership Plaque		\$15/each		
Code of Ethics Plaque				
			*SHIPPING	\$
TOTAL PURCHASE				\$

*SHIPPING INFORMATION

For shipping charges, use the following:

U.S. Orders:

Under \$50 \$3
 \$51 - \$100 \$5
 \$101 - \$150 \$7
 \$151 - \$200 \$9
 \$201 - \$250 \$12
 over \$250 \$18

CANADIAN & INTERNATIONAL ORDERS — leave the shipping section blank - you will be billed for shipping charges after shipment is sent.
 PLEASE CHECK THE FOLLOWING:

- ☐ Ship fastest method regardless of cost.
☐ Ship most economical method (approximately 8-10 weeks for delivery)

Charge to:

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Expiration Date _____

SIGNATURE _____

Ship to:

NAME _____

FIRM _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE/PROV _____

ZIP _____

Phone _____ / _____

ALL ORDERS MUST BE PREPAID. U.S. FUNDS ONLY.

Payment is not tax-deductible as a charitable contribution, but may be deductible as an ordinary and necessary business expense.

COPING WITH A DOWN MARKET

Prepared by John Boyd, Business Management Committee Member
Kidwell Turf Farms, Inc., Petersburg, Virginia

During the past several months, there has been much attention and focus within the turfgrass sod industry on the subject of the current recession and the expected downturn in the marketplace this year. Today, considerable controversy regarding the duration and severity of the situation still remains. Individual responses to the challenges ahead and the spirit of optimism for new opportunities seem equally uncertain. However, in spite of all the undesirable attributes associated with the present economy, we should not lose sight of the saying that "every cloud has a silver lining." Many new opportunities and innovative changes are born out of difficult times.

As we officially begin the 1991 season, each of us will be faced with a number of difficult decisions and obstacles. Unlike experiences in previous years, changes may be necessitated that represent a departure from traditional methods in order to maintain a positive level of business activity. A period of economic decline following many years of growth and prosperity can be viewed as a "Final Exam." Those companies that are well managed and have periodically subjected themselves to self-evaluations and course corrections will be prepared to weather the storm; whereas, those that wait until the last minute to "Cram," will likely not survive. The answers to "Coping with a Down Market" should by design be found in the company's long-range business strategy and plan.

The following items highlight areas of considerations as steps towards maintaining positive business activity during recessionary times:

1. Determine existing and "new" market potential for your area.
2. Assess your combined market share for each market segment. Limit or possibly reduce your production level to meet anticipated market share.
3. Determine your present capabilities and limitations in serving existing and "new" market segments.
4. Examine your total cost of doing business in each market segment.
5. Analyze your competition from the standpoint of market segments served, capabilities, limitations and pricing for equivalent products and services.
6. Based on items 1-5, revise your existing/develop a new marketing strategy with realistic, yet competitive, pricing guidelines.
7. Work aggressively to broaden your customer base through direct/indirect selling, evaluation of other income sources by providing other services, capitalizing on specialized customer needs (i.e. environmental) and heightening market activities.
8. Control all production and business costs; routinely examine expenses/methods/procedures, etc., in an attempt to identify opportunities for reducing costs.
9. Carefully evaluate your customers and their ability to pay before establishing credit.
10. Work hard to understand the turfgrass sod industry of which you are a part. Remember, that in the eye of the customer, each of us is an ambassador for our industry. Take an active role in being a part of the solution and not the problem.

MEMBER MARKETING TIP:

Prepared by Donald Grant, Business Management Committee Member
Winding Brook Turf Farm, Inc., Wethersfield, Connecticut

By offering your customers alternative materials such as pallatized concrete pavers or bagged marble chips, projects can continue until the weather breaks or materials needed for sod installation arrive. By allowing your customers to select a variety of materials from you, you encourage 'one-stop shopping' for as many supplies as you offer to a given project. As an added benefit, your company may well be able to reduce its freight costs for sod by using these materials as back-hauls from their points of origin.

Lifeboat Drill

HOW TO KEEP YOUR COMPANY AFLOAT

Before you just arbitrarily lay people off during business slow-downs, you may want to consider running a "Lifeboat Drill," in the privacy of your office. It's a simple way to consider many different options, before actually acting on any one.

Here's how it works: imagine that you and everyone else on your payroll is awash at sea. You make it to the lifeboat (your company), but because of it's limited capacity, you can only bring in a limited number of other people or the lifeboat will sink (you'll go out of business).

Before you bring in a single person, you have to think about the jobs you need to have done, and who can do them...knowing that you'll not be able to keep everyone. You may want to consider redefining some jobs, assigning totally new tasks to old employees and so on. You may even find that what you do changes dramatically.

As with any drill, this should be practiced well before there's an actual need. It may save your "ship."

IRS TACTIC MAY HELP

COLLECT PAST-DUE BILLS

If a customer threatens to default on a debt, but the amount is too small to merit a lawsuit, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) may have a means for you to collect, according to Mark Goloby, writing in "Business Credit" magazine.

If you write off the debt and report this to the IRS, the Tax Code requires that the debt then becomes taxable income to the debtor. The customer may prefer to pay you to avoid paying the IRS and possibly inviting a closer examination of his financial conditions by the tax collectors.