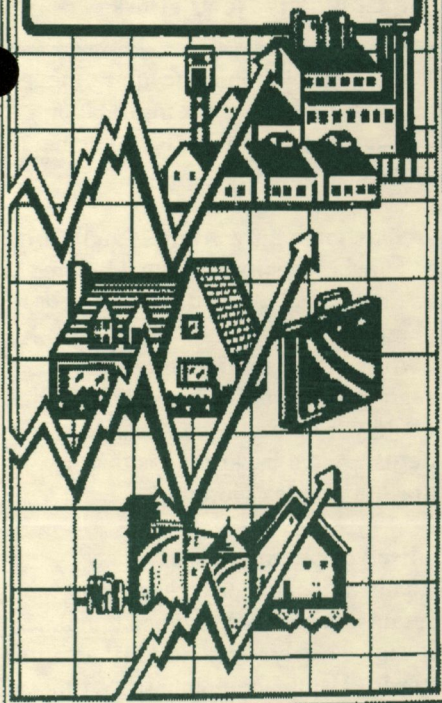


Aug / Sept 1997



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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

Spanish & English Versions

Migrant or Seasonal Labor Hiring Requires Completion Of New Form

Agricultural employers are required to disclose specific terms and conditions of employment to migrant workers, at the time of recruitment or the individual's first day of work. Seasonal workers may request this information at any time.

TPI members can obtain a free copy of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) form WH-516, "Worker Information--Terms and Conditions of Employment," by calling the TPI office at either 800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898. The DOL has also recently released a Spanish version of the form to help satisfy the requirement that the disclosures must be

in a language common to the worker.

The new disclosure form also satisfies requirements for workers' compensation coverage as specified in the Adams Fruit reversal law which TPI lobbied jointly for with the National Council of Agriculture Employers (NCAE).

In addition to place and period of employment, the form requires that wage rates, insurance coverages and housing questions be placed in writing at the time of recruitment. Employees may also request an update of this information at anytime following employment.

Tax-Advantage Maui Meeting... Register in '97 for Current-Year Write-Off

By completely registering for TPI's February 11-13, 1998 Midwinter Conference in Maui before December 31, 1997, U.S. members will be able to write-off at

least a portion of the meeting costs on their 1997 federal tax return.

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service tax codes allow businesses to deduct a significant portion of the costs associated with attending conventions as a necessary business cost. TPI recommends that all members consult with their personal tax advisers (regardless of home country) to determine the most advantageous methods of handling business meeting costs.

Complete program information and registration materials, that can be used to finalize sign-ups, were presented in the July/August issue of "Turf News" magazine.

In addition to registration fees, which range from \$200 for members and \$100 for spouses to \$75 for youths, members may also want to consider pre-paying all or a portion of their expected hotel costs. Rooms range from \$175 to \$215 per night, a special TPI rate for this high-season, ocean-front hotel.

"Better Homes & Gardens," Aug. '97

A helpful and informative turf-positive article that all producers should "clip and post" has been printed in the August, 1997 issue of "Better Homes & Gardens" magazine, page 56.

Based on information provided by TPI's Turf Resource Center, the column headed "Lawn Myths," is part of the publication's environmental section. It addresses grass clippings, pesticides and watering in a pro-turf approach.

Because of the high level of credibility the magazine has, this would be an excellent article to have on display at a farm's retail sales office or at garden centers that sell turfgrass sod to homeowners.

Marketing Tip

How to Put Pizzazz into Presentation hand-outs, Customer Proposals, and Company Newsletters

When you need to put together proposals for potential customers, presentations or newsletters, an eye-catching, well-organized production will help you make your case with greater impact.

While state-of-the-art presentation software eliminates the headache of hand-lettering and drawing, computer programs can't turn the average sod farmer into a professional designer. But, by taking advantage of these seven basics developed over the years by graphics pros, you can make your presentations spring to life...

* Add a graphic to each page.

A clip-art image catches the eye and raises interest in the text. You can also create interest by placing words inside a circle, box or triangle.

* Contrast typefaces.

Don't hesitate to drive home key points with a contrasting typeface. Experiment to see which typefaces offer the maximum impact. Also, try **boldfacing**, under-scoring or *italicizing* key words and sentences.

Caution: While you should indeed experiment with different typefaces, don't go overboard. A "busy" layout will only annoy and confuse. Limit yourself to four typefaces and effects per page. These design elements are intended to enhance your message, not detract from it.

* Use color to full advantage.

With color ink-jet printers now costing as little as \$250, there's no excuse not to use color in your presentation. Color

makes a presentation more appealing, and can help convey complex information more easily - particularly if you intend to use charts or graphs.

For maximum attractiveness and clarity, use "pure" colors rather than "dithered" hues made-up of dot patterns.

* Aim for maximum contrast.

Foreground text and images should stand out boldly from background shades and patterns. Avoid backgrounds that may distract or perplex viewers.

* Use your templates.

Virtually all computer presentation programs include predesigned templates that can be easily modified to fit a variety of needs. Using a template saves time and adds a polished, professional look to any presentation.

Most presentation software publishers offer optional templates for special needs. Other template sources include third-party software publishers, on-line services and the Internet.

* Personalize your presentation.

By placing your company logo in the lower right corner of each page, overhead projector transparency or slide, you'll subtly remind the audience who created the presentation. This little addition - borrowed from TV - can be a powerful tool, particularly when you are one of several firms bidding for a project/job.

* Keep it Simple.

In terms of in-person presentation hand-outs, overhead projector transparencies or slides, your visual presentation is designed to enhance and reinforce your spoken words - not replace them. So limit each page, transparency or slide to no more than seven lines of text and one or two graphics.

* Keep a Resource File.

Use the talents of others to help you. Keep a file of brochures, newsletters or promotional materials that catch your eye. Refer to your file and borrow good ideas for your own use.

What are they telling about you?

Ron Nixon, Cowikee Turf, Eufaula, Alabama

Yesterday was a day when a great question of mine was answered. It started out as I went to a dealership to check on a small truck. The clean up person had the truck I was to look at in back, but before I could walk to the truck he jumped behind the wheel, stomped on the accelerator and raced around the building to the parking lot.

As I met him walking across the car lot, I asked if he liked driving the truck. His answer was a mumble of bad attitude. While test driving the truck with the sales manager I mentioned to him how harshly the clean up man drove the truck. His response was a statement of racial and cultural slurs.

At the end of the day I was at some friends' sod farm where I was surprised to learn that they have a company sponsored meal for all employees every month. As I was trying to find out what benefits this possibly could have, they shared how the cooperation between worker groups changed from what it was when they bought the farm.

Now you find the employees working together as a team as they do their jobs. They assured me that there had not been major personnel changes in the employees. The major personnel change came from the change in management. The new owners have a "let's get along and work together for the good of the industry" attitude. The former owner had been confrontational to other sod producers.

There was only one conclusion to come to. Your employees are a reflection of the work environment that is created by your leadership. This is such a hard lesson for me to accept, but I can see the truth of it at our farm and in the actions of those that work under my supervision.

Positive traits such as hard work, commitment, and honesty do show themselves, but so do the negative character traits as well. So when the next business man starts talking about how sorry his employees are, he may be describing his own management!

Seeking Professional Help: Investment Advisors

Investment Advisors

Choosing an investment advisor can be kind of likened to choosing a girlfriend. ...you must be able to trust her.

The harder you work for your money, the more you have to trust them (in either case.) Pick one that knows what sod farming is or at least what farming is about - one that understands the "lots of money one year, and no money the next year" syndrome. You may not want to have to explain to the investment advisor why you invested \$ 80,000 in a field forklift rather than into the S. Hark Land Development Company. Don't let your business suffer to keep your new girlfriend happy!

Why should you always go to their place? She must be willing to travel to your place of business as your time is every bit as valuable (or more) as their times is.

Some basic "rules" may apply in your selection process:

- No family members!
- Establish trust.
- Reach a mutual understanding.
- "Date" a few before you get married.
- Find one that offers advice, but isn't upset for a month if you don't take it.

By Dale Barrie, Tuf Turf Sod Farm
St. Albert, Alberta, Canada

It is also important to think about how "involved" you want to get. Do you want to communicate every day or a couple of times a year? Also, what has their past experience been, and with whom? Anything disagreeable that you discover should be considered a "disease" that can put your personal or business empire at risk.

Education is another topic that relates heavily here. Was Investment Advising a "design and build" program they educated themselves for, or was it a bright light at the end of the tunnel when the used car sales career did not work out?

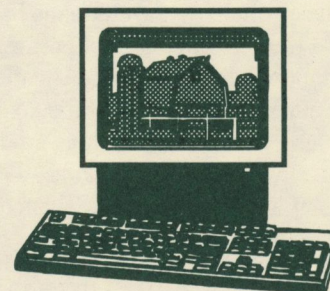
You also may want to ask if they have a financial interest in any of the investments they suggest placing *your* financial interest in? If not, why not? In addition, how many others does he/she date? Are there 3 others...maybe 200??? This can be important because if an Investment Advisor has too many clients, the amount of time which they can devote to your account might be insufficient. If they have too few clients, the advisor may constantly be after you for more business.

In closing, trust and comfort level are essential to selecting a financial advisor. These should always be sought among advisors having an adequate education and a knowledge of your business.

Shrewder Computing

Adding graphics to your text files for correspondence, fax cover sheets, newsletters, etc. can add interest and little, if any cost. Many PC's have graphics available in clip-art or other resource files. In addition, a sign or printing company in your area may be able to scan graphics for you and make a disk for your later use.

TPI staff has had the TPI logo scanned in this way, and you can too. Once you have your logo or other graphic on disk, you can incorporate it into a variety of publications. TPI uses letterhead paper, (printed with the logo in green ink) but many letters and fax covers are printed with the scanned logo, reducing the use of the costlier "letterhead" paper.



The cost of calling long distance has been dropping steadily as competition among carriers has intensified. Yet, the cost to obtain the phone number for a distant person or business has risen.

Each long-distance request for a phone number costs 85 cents to \$1.10, depending on the carrier. Just one request per day can add up to about \$20 a month.

Now you can use Internet directory assistance - at local call rates - to locate personal and business numbers. Here's a quick site list:

Big Book www.bigbook.com
Big Yellow www.bigyellow.com
InfoSpace www.infospace.com
Switchboard
www.switchboard.com

Business Briefs

Successful phone selling.

If a sales call fails, don't let the negative experience leak into the next call. Regain your composure - and confidence - by taking a deep breath and then smile. We've mentioned before that a smile can be "heard" over the phone...so be ready to smile even before the person you call picks up the phone.

Smart selling.

Whenever you get an incoming telephone inquiry, get the person's name and phone number immediately - just in case you're disconnected.

Costly horseplay.

An employee was injured on the job when hit in the eye with an object thrown by another employee as an act of horseplay - though an innocent bystander. The employee sought workers' compensation benefits, but the company said the injury was not work-related. Court: The employee was acting in the course of her employment when injured, so the injury was job-related and she was entitled to benefits. Whether or not the company tolerated horseplay or enforced a policy against it had no bearing on her right to collect benefits.

TPI Action

The National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) has recovered over \$55,000 in federal funding, thanks to TPI's "quiet" assistance in both the U.S. House and Senate, for the second consecutive year. After presenting formal testimony to the House and Senate ag appropriations committees, the case for preserving NTEP's annual funding was personally presented to key legislators so they could better understand the importance of this program to the entire turfgrass industry. Because of TPI's liaison on Capital Hill, individual members did not have to ask to write or call their own legislators to gain support for this action.

TPI Strongly Supports New Streamlined Temporary Alien Worker Program being introduced by House Ag. Committee Chairman Bob Smith (R-OR), to assure members of an adequate workforce. To combat a declining labor pool and estimates of up to 50% of current ag workers identified as illegal, this legislation would create a 2-year pilot program allowing up to 25,000 temporary workers into the U.S. TPI has signed-on to a letter seeking additional co-sponsors to Smith's bill that was designed with input from the National Council of Agricultural Employers of which TPI is an executive committee member. TPI members may be called upon to gain greater support as this bill starts to move through Congress.

Turf Producers Could Be Caught In a 'Food Quality Protection Act' Trap that reduces the number of chemicals available for turfgrass sod production, even though grass is not a food product. The U.S. EPA, in implementing the "FQPA" has determined that all humans have a single "risk cup," into which can be placed only a limited amount of exposure. Absent technical data, the EPA will make assumptions that may force chemical firms to choose which products they will continue to offer the marketplace. If chemical firms do not perceive a sufficient return on investment on their product, research and labeling costs, they may again choose to withdraw chemicals. TPI is expanding its efforts to advise chemical firms of its concerns and will encourage them to maintain current products and develop more efficient ones that help to protect the environment with turfgrass.

On-Farm Environmental Practice Guidelines are being sought by TPI's Business Management Committee in order to assemble a comprehensive set of guidelines. Members are encouraged to send information, samples and suggestions directly to the TPI office so they can be incorporated into this new membership benefit.

Jest For The Fun Of It

Notable Quotables / Capsule Sermons

Mistakes are the usual bridge between inexperience and wisdom.

Money was invented so that we would know exactly how much we owe.

Be bold in what you stand for and careful in what you fall for.

When you hold a conversation, don't forget to let go of it once in a while.

The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.

Keep your temper...nobody else wants it.

Following the path of least resistance is the reason rivers and men go crooked.

No rule of success will work if you don't.

Computer Terms for Rednecks

Byte - what the dog done to cousin Jetho

Modem - whatcha do when the grass gits too high

RAM - whatcha hafta do when the gate won't open

Superconductor - Amtrack's employee of the year

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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