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BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Turfgrass Producers International

TPI Member Action Needed

AgJOBS Bill Facing Organized Opposition

Labor unions and farm worker advocates are telling Congress and the media that passage of legislation to create a reliable and stable agriculture workforce will result in Americans losing jobs to foreigners, a reduction in pay and slave-like treatment for those who do get jobs. In an election year, U.S. Representatives and Senators need to hear the farmers' side of the story and have the facts.

Strongly supported by TPI, the AgJOBS legislation, passed by the Senate and ready for consideration by the House will create a national, computerized registry of qualified and available farm workers. Farms needing workers could rely on the registry to identify qualified and legally documented workers. U.S. workers would get preferential hiring treatment and all workers would be paid prevailing wages that exceed minimum wages. Housing and transportation benefits would be available for U.S. and temporary foreign workers. The legislation would also expand the Head Start program for farm workers.

In July, some 35 members participating in TPI's first "Day On The Hill," told their Senators and Representatives how important passage of this bill would be. Just days after those Hill visits, the Senate passed the legislation and moved it to the House.

All TPI members are encouraged to immediately contact their Senators and Representatives and ask them to pass the AgJOBS bill before adjourning the current session.

TPI can provide complete information about this program and its benefits to both workers and employers to members who want more detail, or the organization can mail elected officials background details that support this legislation. Failing to take an active role in passing this bill, the unions and farm labor advocates will press their emotional and non-factual case to the point where the legislators will not see a need to act favorably on this legislation.

PowerPoint Workshop **Recently Added to** **TPI Midwinter Conference**

The point is...a special TPI-Microsoft PowerPoint workshop has now been added to the 1999 Midwinter Conference schedule. PowerPoint is a software program which assists in the development of presentations for sales efforts, education and public relations programs.

Workshop attendees will learn to easily produce presentations including visual aids, printed handouts for the audience and notes for the presenter's use. Norman Harrison, University of Florida, will present the workshop in laymen's terms with practical applications.

This optional, added-fee workshop will be held Friday, February 5, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm. The workshop is scheduled at the same time as the Busch Gardens tour and is limited to the first 40 registrants.

Watch your mail for the next TPI Midwinter Conference promotional mailing, which will include complete PowerPoint workshop details. Plan to attend and you'll Get the Point!

PR Program Needs Your Info & Photos

To document the economic value of turfgrass sod, TPI's PR program needs information and photos that can be used as the basis of articles in leading trade publications. Contact Doug Fender at TPI or Chad Ritterbusch at Selz/Seabolt Communications (312/372-7090) for more information and an opportunity to display your firm's accomplishments.

Marketing Tip

Art Campbell, Campbell Sod
Rossville, Kansas

The Decision Makers...

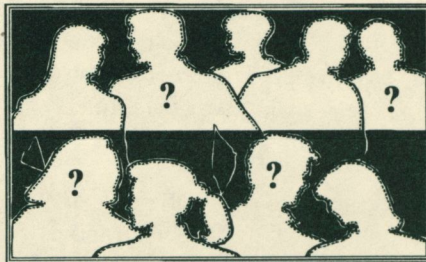
Sometimes it is hard to find, in residential or commercial sales, who is actually the one who will make the final purchase decision.

In a residential sale, it is very important to know why the product is being sold to the customer and how the product is being utilized. In a residential atmosphere you may assume that the husband makes the final decision. Don't! In today's society the husband, wife or both may make the final decision.

On the commercial side, the decision maker could be the CEO or owner of the business, the maintenance contractor, the landscape architect or contractor. On a commercial job it is extremely important to find out who will make the final deci-

sion in purchasing the sod. In many instances, this is not a clear-cut situation.

It is important in any situation to understand the feelings of all parties involved. One of the hardest sales to make is when you are dealing with a committee or group of decision makers. Each one will have their own idea of how the job should be done, which products should be used, what



price should be paid for sod and how that cost fits in the overall budget. If at all possible, it is to your benefit to be at their

committee meeting to assist them in making a good, sound decision.

It is equally important in residential and commercial sales to contact all interested parties as quickly as possible. As they say, "the early bird catches the worm." Sometimes you have to go through channels to simply ask who will make the final decision for your product. At the time you meet with the decision maker, it is always pertinent at the end of the conversation to "Ask For The Sale." Ask what you need to do to make the sale and when a decision will be made.

Just remember, in the final analysis, no sale can be made without the decision maker. The sooner you have the opportunity to visit with the person who will make the final decision, the quicker your sale will be made, the more time you will save and the more sales you can produce each year.

Small Business Legal Plans Available in U.S. + Leading By Example

Two companies are now marketing group legal services to small-businesses in the U.S. They're offering plans that include unlimited calls to lawyers and business consultants as well as discounts on products such as casualty insurance, which until recently were sold primarily to large corporations and associations.

"We're bundling together a whole menu of services for small-business owners," says Sandra DeMent, president of Advisory Communications Systems (ACS). DeMent's company has arrangements with about 16,000 lawyers nationwide. For an \$89 quarterly fee, you can call a lawyer as many times as you want about matters such as debt collection and advice on firing an employee. In addition, lawyers will write letters for you on their letterhead.

If you have a tax question or other financial problem, your call will go to staff consultants with the national accounting firm Ernst & Young. It's all included in the fee.

"We're also working with retailers to provide our members with deep discounts on a whole line of services and

products," DeMent says. Philadelphia-based Reliance National Insurance Co. provides all the ACS services free when you buy small-business liability and workers' compensation policies from Reliance. ACS small-business plans also include unlimited calls to lawyers to discuss personal legal problems.

The second firm, Prepaid Legal Services (PLS), has joined forces with the Atlanta-based Fran Tarkenton Small Business Network to provide a wide array of legal & other services for small companies. "You just pick up the phone and talk to a lawyer or business consultant without worrying about how much it's going to cost you," says Jeff Cordle of Tarkenton/PLS, adding that "it's like having these people on a retainer."

The Tarkenton/PLS legal plan costs \$69 a month and includes many other services and products that are free or discounted. Included are things such as calls to accountants, group insurance coverage, call-in help for establishing a website, and free software.

Tarkenton's plans are limited to businesses that have no more than 20

employees and gross no more than \$2 million a year. Not all parts of the plan are available in all states. For more information on services and prices, call ACS at 800/535-1182 and Tarkenton/PLS at 800/796-1118. Regional and local legal-service companies can usually be found in the yellow pages under "Legal Services."

Lead by Example

As a leader, it is important to set a good example for employees. Your staff will take their cue from you; if you act in an unprofessional manner, they will follow suit. This is particularly important for employees who have direct contact with your customers.

Monitor yourself for these nine things, and make sure you're not guilty of them at any time: rumors, sexism, racism, ethnic jokes, horseplay, obscenities, practical jokes, sarcasm and gossip.

Remember, horseplay and practical jokes can be dangerous and costly. What's more, even private conversations can be overheard or related to others; and if offense is taken, it's your business and your reputation on the line.

Taking Care of Business: Use Your Government, You're Paying For It

Arthur Milberger,
Milberger Turf Farms
Bay City, Texas

Texas just recorded the driest May through July period since 1937, not to mention one of our longest-running heat waves. Water well engines burned diesel 24 hours a day, nonstop for several months, while our fields fell behind critical subsoil moisture.

For the last 49 years, our farms pumped underground water from our private wells, and given our annual rainfall of 42+ inches, this was always adequate. In years past, I thought we were cursed with those ugly irrigation canals running through our turf fields. A state government agency called the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) owned these eyesore canals.

During this drought, my eyes turned to those now, not-so-ugly water-filled canals. I called the LCRA for help with our water supply. To my surprise, within hours the LCRA began pumping thousands of gallons of water into our deplet-

ing reservoir systems. No red-tape, no bureaucratic fuss, there was just old-fashioned service with a smile.

Like most of you, I don't particularly care to do business with the government because of their lack of accountability to the real world. Our farm took a certain amount of comfort and pride in not relying on a government agency for something as precious as water. However, the LCRA is a unique creation of our Texas government, controlling and operating several power plants and corralling the Colorado River from the Highland Lakes and dams downstream to the irrigation districts on the Gulf Coast.

While LCRA is a state agency, it has no taxing authority and is self-sufficient. The LCRA, like all of us, must produce to survive. Maybe we should consider curtailing the taxing authority of some of our other governmental agencies...thereby replacing bureaucracy with efficiency.

Leadership Idea Files

Strategies for Better Management

1. Be responsible for your employees successes and failures. The best managers firmly believe that they are ultimately responsible for the outcome of everything they manage. If an employee does a great job, you are responsible; if an employee fails miserably and has to be fired, you are equally responsible.

2. Lower your expectation of others. Accept the fact that not everyone can perform the way you did when you were in their position. That's why you're a manager and your employees are not. Do not set your employees up to fail by setting expectations too high.

3. Allow people to improve their jobs. Don't set ironclad rules as to how people can do their jobs; allow them flexibility to improve and increase their productivity. You'll be surprised how many employees can improve their jobs once you encourage and motivate them to think creatively.

4. Challenge your assumptions. Step outside yourself and look at the way you think. Do you always expect employees to take advantage of you? Do you think people are generally lazy? Don't get into "thinking ruts" that affect your ability to manage.

5. Establish written performance standards. Show and tell your employees exactly what you expect from them. They can't strive for excellence if they don't know what your definition of excellence is.

6. Walk the walk and talk the talk. In other words, lead by example. Don't break your own rules; do the things you tell your employees to do...consistently.

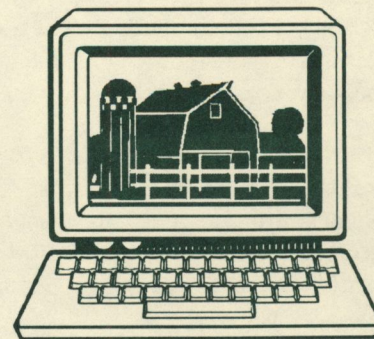
7. Motivate employees to take action. At every level, empower employees to make decisions and take appropriate actions. Forcing employees to come to you for every decision, wastes time and causes your employees' morale to suffer.

Shrewder Computing

Microsoft Word and Excel Users: Free (or cheap) Add-Ons!

Both Word and Excel are deep into their development cycles and, thus, loaded with functionality. Even so, both can still benefit from a little tweaking.

One of the easiest ways for you to enhance performance is by adding software helpers that energize Word and Excel and make them work harder, smarter and faster. A wide variety of add-ons are now available to you via the Internet for immediate downloading and use.



Three great sites to check-out:
<http://www.softseek.com>
<http://softsea.com>
<http://www.thefreesite.com>

Bear in mind:

1. Read the software descriptions carefully to make sure you're getting what you really want.
2. Look for informational boxes that tell you such things as how big the file is and whether it's freeware (no charge) or shareware (free for a trial period). It's irritating to find you've downloaded a demo or trial version when you thought you were getting a fully functional program.
3. If you find particularly useful programs or websites, please let TPI know, so we can pass the word to others. E-mail your feedback to: Turf-Grass@msn.com

TPI Action

Participate in TPI's Board of Trustee Nominating Process by forwarding the names of individuals you would like to see on the Board (as well as your own name) to Nominating Committee Chairman David Doguet (phone: 512/328-2014 or fax: 512/328-8013). Qualifications include Class A (producer) membership in TPI and a willingness to participate in four meetings every year. The Nominating Committee will meet during TPI's Midwinter Conference in Tampa, thus, names should be presented as soon as possible for complete consideration.

ITPF's Annual "2-Cents Worth" Campaign is once again seeking contributions from all TPI members, as a means to increase support for turfgrass sod-specific research. For the third consecutive year, the Foundation is asking members to contribute *an amount at least equal to just 2-cents for each pallet or big roll of turf sold during the last year.* Page 18 of the September/October "Turf News" magazine contains a contribution form, or members may simply send their contributions to ITPF at the TPI office address listed below.

2003 Midwinter Conference in England...Would You Favor or Oppose? TPI's Board of Trustees would like to receive a broad-base of member reaction to this question and invites everyone to call the TPI office (800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898) to give their opinion. The final decision will have to be made in the very near future (perhaps at the Tampa meeting) in order to secure proper hotel space and make all of the necessary arrangements.

TPI Needs Your "Grass-Positive" Landscape Ordinances that can become a worldwide model for other areas. Areas such as Las Vegas are currently considering an anti-turf approach to water conservation that would harm both the environment and the turf industry. With your input, such actions could be addressed in a positive and meaningful way. Send ordinances to TPI today.

To Receive Additional Information On Any of These Items

Contact the TPI Office

Phone: 800/405-8873 or 847/705-9898

Fax: 847/705-8347 or E-mail to Turf-Grass@MSN.COM

Jest For The Fun Of It

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."
Thomas Edison

"I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish that He didn't trust me so much."
Mother Teresa

"If you can't be a good example, then you'll just have to be a horrible warning."
Catherine Aird

"Son...Never keep up with the Joneses. Drag them down to your level. It's cheaper."



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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