2) Are your drivers safe and courteous? Since your logo is (or should be) printed boldly on your trucks, they and their drivers are likely moving advertisements. This makes it especially important to drive carefully and obey all traffic rules.

It’s also important for your employees to avoid arguments with a customer’s neighbor concerning traffic-related matters. Neglecting to do so can often result in losing a valuable customer—regardless of whether the employee is right or wrong.

3) Do your drivers show courtesy toward other motorists and pedestrians? Or do they cut people off and then smirk at them? Rude and unnecessary traffic-related practices have a negative impact on the company’s reputation.

4) Are your drivers’ job-site parking practices considerate? Do they park away from driveways and the flow of traffic, or do they cause troublesome traffic jams by parking on busy highways during rush hour?

5) Do your employees wear near and appropriate uniforms? With their name and company name embroidered on a pocket or on the backs of the shirts? Or do your people look like skid row characters rather than competent and reliable landscape workers because of their unwashed, unkempt hair and ragged and dirty clothes?

6) Do employees cooperate with each other? Do they work together in harmony, efficiently and quietly, or do they quarrel with each other about who does what, where and how?

7) Are your employees considerate of your customers? Your answer to this question must be “no” if workers don’t bother to:

- carry empty trash cans from the curb to the garage (or another location designated by the customer) simply because it’s too much trouble or they’re too busy keeping to their production schedule;
- bag lawn clippings, pulled weeds and other trash and dispose of it properly and neatly, as directed by the customer. Or (even worse) do they leave it lying around in a pathway or garage?

8) Do you train your workers to be considerate and responsible? For instance:

- always moving garden furniture, croquet and other games, children’s toys, and similar items on lawns before mowing, and—if appropriate—replacing them;
- always carefully covering all items which can’t be moved before spraying;
- always neatly coiling and storing hoses near a faucet or some other practical place as designated by the customer, if you are responsible for watering.

9) Do you offer your customers more than the usual services? Sodding, seeding, liming, irrigation and installation work are good examples. This is an important way in which many companies hold their important “steady customers” and keep them loyal as well as generating considerable trade and profit. You might also put together a complete lawn care program including preventive disease control and keeping customers’ landscapes looking good all year round.

You may feel that angling for and obtaining such added business isn’t worth the trouble, but neglecting to do so carries the risk of losing “steadies” to the competition—especially when cut-rate fees are offered.

10) Are problem customers handled tactfully? Smart companies do their utmost to answer complaints (see sidebar). Customers will usually prompt spread the word to others about their experiences. These verbal reports can be negative and result in the loss of a “steady” plus other potential or actual customers. Or they can be positive and have the opposite effect on business.

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