During tough economic times, it’s not unusual for companies to make cuts. But how company executives should do this isn’t always spelled out. Should managers strip out service bells and whistles? Shave time on job sites? Lower sales force incentives? Reduce head count?

And what about product purchasing? When it comes to eliminating weeds, insects and diseases for client accounts, as well as feeding turf and ornamentals with nutrients or using growth regulators, a lawn care operator (LCO) can’t just cut corners. Switching products to save money without doing enough research could lead to poor aesthetics and customer callbacks, which continued on page 8.
increases labor costs — a lawn care business’ largest expense.

LCOs have to do their homework and understand current trends when selecting the right products. As regulation and legislative challenges mount, in addition to the increasing cost to bring new products to market, manufacturers focus on innovation that meets the growing sustainability trend and LCOs’ need for speed — and results.

It’s called doing more with less, or more with the same. And driving efficiency can boost the health of clients’ landscapes and the bottom line.

LCOs should start by touting turf’s cosmetic and environmental positives. “We must make an uneducated public understand the true risks versus the reward of healthy turf that stops erosion, runoff and loss of topsoil, and provides oxygen just like trees do,” suggests Russ Mitchell, product and marketing director, Quali-Pro/MANA, Raleigh, NC.

Jose Milan, head of strategy, Syngenta Lawn & Garden, Greensboro, NC, sees the silver lining in the situation. “I would say our industry has more opportunities than threats,” he says. “We provide so much value from every perspective. For example, environmentally, plants are natural air filters; economically, they add to the value of our homes; and socially, green spaces increase our social well-being.”

Doza recommends LCOs become involved at the local level. “As you read your community newspaper, or get the latest local gossip when you stop for your morning cup of coffee, be aware of these types of grassroots efforts. As a lawn care professional, you are a proven steward of the land and have expansive knowledge regarding what is best for turf. These are the times to use your influence by participating in voluntary initiatives to ensure future regulations include best management practices that you can utilize.”

Ultimately, it’s about being vocal — as Jason Kuhlemeier, manager, insecticides, Research Triangle Park, NC’s Bayer Environmental Science, calls it, “being seen and heard.” He suggests LCOs try sending short, well-written messages to local legislators: “Make sure they know about you and your business.”

Doug Houseworth, manager of technical support, Arysta LifeScience Turf & Ornamentals, Cary, NC, concurs. “You have to be willing to state your case,” he says. “If you’re not, then you’re toast in this industry.”

“And if you need access to university research or other industry facts, contact your local distributor for tools to help you further your cause and save your livelihood,” Doza adds.

Finally, proper product use is crucial. “The best thing LCOs can do to protect their access to these tools is to continue to steward them carefully by reading and following label directions,” says Brian Rund, director, branding and marketing services, Nufarm Americas, Burr Ridge, IL. “Take advantage of the resources available. The face of the industry is the person in the field, so it’s key we do as much as we can to make those points of contact as professional and responsible as possible.” — NW
Efficient business = good business

Today, LCOs deal with rising fuel, material and labor costs — all of which dip into profits.

“Plus, the recession means their customers are eliminating services to accommodate their own shrinking budgets,” says Jeff Novak, marketing manager at Agrium Advanced Technologies, Loveland, CO. “But by using products that require fewer applications and deliver nutrients and pesticides gradually and consistently over a longer period of time, landscapers can realize cost and time savings.”

As a result, pesticide and fertilizer manufacturers are working “to strike a balance between minimal chemical impact on the environment with maximum effect on the customers.”

MORE CONCENTRATED FORMULATIONS HAVE REDUCED BOTH PLASTIC AND CORRUGATED WASTE AS WELL AS REDUCED LOGISTICS COSTS FOR OUR CUSTOMERS.”

— KERRY OVERTON, MONSANTO

POSITIVE THINKING

What’s your crystal ball read for your 2010 sales?

- 12% Would not reveal sales projections
- 6% Down slightly
- 59% Up slightly
- 23% Up significantly from 2009
- 6% Don’t know
- 18% 2011
- 23% 2012
- 53% This year

Eighty-two percent of pesticide and fertilizer manufacturers report good news in the form of increasing sales this year: In fact, 23% say numbers will be up significantly over 2009. These positive P&L predictions are probably why more than half of manufacturers say the economic rebound will happen next year, while another 18% feel confident saying it will bounce back this year. — NW

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target pest while meeting the needs of key customers,” says Bob York, senior marketing manager for BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals, Research Triangle Park, NC. “This is just good business.”

There are many factors driving this trend:

1. Regulation requirements. “The regulatory environment, as well the economy, has most manufacturers looking at ways to maximize the value proposition for the end-user — while making the most efficient use of the active ingredients,” explains Roger Storey, vice president, turf and ornamental business, SePRO Corp., Carmel, IN.

2. Environmental concerns. This is often the root cause behind the deregistration of high-use, low-cost compounds that LCOs have used for decades, points out Adam Manwarren, turf and ornamental product manager for FMC Professional Solutions, Philadelphia. This is driving replacement products that embrace lower use rates.

3. Improved technologies. Manufacturers better understand the synergistic affects of various active ingredients today. While LCOs have historically tank-mixed products on their own, manufacturers are now combining just the right amounts of various combinations and selling these

**COVER STORY**

**WANTS AND NEEDS**

If you could convince the powers that be to support your team with just one of these, which would it be?

- **41%** More marketing dollars
- **12%** None of the above
- **6%** More flexibility on pricing

Between wanting the additional marketing dollars to promote existing and new products and the extra sales reps to sell them, pesticide and fertilizer manufacturers were torn. An equal number (41%) chose each as the one thing they’d request more of if they could pick one. — NW

**continued from page 10**

**continued on page 14**

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THERE’S AN EXPECTATION ABOUT WHAT A LAWN SHOULD LOOK LIKE. SO IF YOU TAKE AWAY ALL OF THE TOOLS THAT LAWN CARE PROFESSIONALS CAN USE, I BELIEVE THERE’S GOING TO BE UPROAR AMONG THEIR CUSTOMERS.” — REINHOLD DRYGALA, CIVITAS

continued from page 12

new products at a cheaper rate than buying the two products on their own. “Sure, anyone can read two labels, put them in a tank together and go,” Manwarren says. “But it’s quite another thing to come up with a combination of two existing actives in just the right ratio that reduces the total active ingredient and takes care of multiple problems at the same time. If it’s one plus one equals two, that isn’t so special. But if we can make one plus one equal three, then we’re creating something different and innovative.”

4 More IPM. Manwarren points out the use of integrated pest management (IPM), the practice of avoiding blanket applications in favor of scouting for problem pests and then treating only those areas, is also teaching LCOs they can cut back their product use rates and get similar results in the landscape.

The ultimate goal is efficiency and efficacy. As Jose Milan, head of strategy for Syngenta Lawn & Garden, Greensboro, NC, explains, “it’s about providing value-driven solutions.”

Under pressure

During the eight years under President George W. Bush’s watch, the pesticide industry didn’t see much drama on the regulation and legislation fronts.

But the situation “is going to get worse: ‘The Obama administration has all but said so,” says Mike Bandy, technical/regulatory manager, turf products, The Andersons, Maumee, OH. “Their strategy seems to be focused on making it harder and harder for people to use our products. There’s not a lot of recognition of the values we provide.”

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The trend troubles pesticide manufacturers, who listed it as their second-biggest business obstacle after the economy in a recent Landscape Management survey.

“People have become accustomed to living in a pristine, clean, healthy environment,” Milan says. “They don’t realize that to maintain these environments, they need the products and services Green Industry companies provide. They get misinformation on the issues, and they vote based on their emotions versus knowledge or science.”

Increased concerns about protecting water from runoff and leaching have prompted government officials to pay closer attention to the Green Industry, Novak explains.

“Most of the scrutiny is not founded on science, but lawn care professionals face new regulations that restrict the type, application timing and amount of chemicals that can be used to maintain green, healthy turf and plants,” he says.

What will solve the problem? Many suppliers, like Mark Urbanowski, senior marketing specialist, turf, ornamental and technical products, Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, point to “sound regulations based on sound science.”

“Certainly, there will continue to be pressure on all segments of the industry,” says Brian Rund, director, branding and marketing services, Nufarm Americas, Burr Ridge, IL, “but we’re confident that good science — often generated by several parties working together — will prevail.”

More than half of lawn care pesticide and fertilizer manufacturers pointed to the economy as their largest business obstacle this year.

One of the key reasons is price. Product price competition has been driven by economic challenges, points out Jason Kuhlemeier, manager, insecticides, Bayer Environmental Science, Research Triangle Park, NC.

Manufacturers are competing in this challenging environment through continued product advancements. An overwhelming majority (82%) point to innovating and expanding into new chemical categories as their biggest business opportunity this year. — NW

What is your biggest business obstacle?

![Graph](image)

- **53%** The economy
- **23%** Legislators and regulators
- **12%** Lowball competitors
- **6%** None of the above

What’s your top business opportunity?

- **82%** Innovating and expanding into new chemical categories
- **12%** Cutting costs
- **6%** None of the above
- **6%** All of the above

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