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BASF

Circle No. 101
features

cover story

26. Squeeze more out of your time
Maintenance pros' secrets for boosting crew efficiency
By Jason Stahl

32. Marketing 101
Use "new" marketing concepts to drive your business
By Marc Bowers

tools of the trade

40. Truck talk
Contractors describe their "dream" trucks

46. Top trucks
What are manufacturers saying are the trends?

56. Truck accessories

grounds management center

34. Award-winning landscape management
The Homestead in Hot Springs, VA, an oldie but a goodie

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1 Based on available horsepower. 2 Based on properly and comparably equipped vehicles. Maximum payload capacity includes weight of driver, passengers, optional equipment and cargo. 3 Dependability based on longevity: 1981-1999 full-size light-duty truck company registrations. Excludes other GM divisions. All claims exclude other GM vehicles. ©2000 GM Corp. Buckle up, America!
**May 2001**

4-7 Western Chapter: International Society of Arboriculture Annual Conference / Modesto, CA; 530/892-1118

5-7 TOCA 12th Annual Meeting / Phoenix, AZ; 952/758-6340

7-8 55th Annual Southeastern Turfgrass Conference / Tifton, GA; 229/386-3416

7-18 Basic Tree Climbing School/Course / Middletown, NJ; Sponsored by the Committee for Advancement of Arboriculture; 732/431-7903

19-23 ASIC National Conference / Savannah, GA; 816/472-6100

**June**

2-9 Snow & Ice Symposium / Denver, CO; Sponsored by the Snow & Ice Management Association; 814/835-3577

15 Turf-Seed/Pure Seed Testing Field Day / Rolesville, NC; 919/556-0146

21-23 OPEI Annual Meeting / Ponte Vedra, FL; 512/442-1788

**July**

12-15 ANLA Convention & Executive Learning Retreat / Cleveland, OH; 202/789-5980, ext. 3010

16-17 PLCAA’s Legislative Day on the Hill & Arlington Renewal Project / Washington, D.C.; 800/458-3466

19-21 Turfgrass Producers International Summer Convention and Field Day / Toronto, Canada; 800/405-8873

20-22 EXPO 2001 / Louisville, KY; 800/558-8767

31 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day / West Lafayette, IN; 765/494-8039

**August**

4-8 Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Meeting / Myrtle Beach, SC; 515/289-2331

17-19 ALCA Design/Build Workshop / Atlanta, GA; 800/395-2522

19-25 International Garden Centre Tour / New York / Baltimore; 202/789-5980, ext. 3010

21 Cornell University Field Day / Ithaca, NY; 800/873-8873

**Events**

**WHAT, WHEN & WHERE**

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202/789-2900

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248/476-5457

American Society of Irrigation Consultants
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925/516-1124

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www.igation.org

National Arborist Association
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603-314-3390
www.natarb.com

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation
1100-H Brandywine Blvd.,
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Zanesville, OH 43702-3388
888/683-3445

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute
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Old Town Alexandria, Va. 22314
703/549-7600
opei.mow.org

Professional Grounds Management Society
720 Light Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
410/752-3318

Professional Lawn Care Association of America
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Marietta, GA 30068-2112
770/977-5322
www.plcaa.org

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment
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Washington, DC 20005
202/872-3860
www.acpa.org/rise

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Circle No. 106 on Reader Inquiry Card
Institutional blindness

Running "lean and mean" has a different meaning for each of you, but the one thing you have in common is a unique way of operating. In fact, some of your systems might even qualify as "crazy" to outsiders, but they work for you, right? Or do they? Maybe it's time to look at your system from the outside. That's what Toyota does. The Wall Street Journal recently profiled a Toyota efficiency expert who makes sure American parts manufacturers' systems can produce parts meeting Toyota's high quality standards. Inevitably, this expert solves quality problems by correcting inefficient, costly production systems. Sometimes, his solutions are remarkably simple.

One firm he visited claimed to have a "state-of-the-art" process. The managers and workers in this company probably congratulated themselves many times over on their high-tech equipment and streamlined methods. But what the expert saw was a system functioning well midweek and faltering on Monday and Friday. It encouraged waste and allowed costly inventory to clog the plant. Managers thought their system worked because they met their weekly numbers, but Toyota's expert wanted consistent, daily high levels of quality.

A real eye-opener
His simple suggestions opened the Americans' eyes and they were able to see that their "streamlined" system was actually uneven, wasteful and costly.

In another example, the expert showed managers of a highly mechanized painting line that a simple consumer hairdryer dried paint more quickly than their million-dollar robotic masterpiece. The company eventually dumbed down the system, scrapping robots for handheld sprayers, while saving money and increasing quality.

Would a fresh look at your operating systems help you improve your bottom line? How would your system look to an outsider — too complicated, too labor intensive, too inefficient?

Are you seeing any danger signs that your systems are failing, such as:

- a rise in customer complaints,
- an increase in employee resignations,
- too much new business and customer contact backlog,
- unfinished or substandard work done on site, or
- confusion finding any documents or people.

These are the obvious indicators. An eventual drop in long-time customers or employees, lower margins or profits or a rash of mistakes, breakdowns or man-made calamities are long-term indicators of trouble.

Even though you're well into the busiest time of the year, take time to look at your systems with an unbiased attitude. It will be hard to get honest answers from employees, so look for a qualified outsider who is knowledgeable about systems in general, service businesses or landscape operations. Encourage them to challenge your reasons for doing things and don't be defensive. There's probably gold in those questions because you'll uncover organizational weaknesses sooner, rather than later.

For more ideas on how to add a little productivity or efficiency to your efforts, read our cover story by Jason Stahl on page 26, "Squeeze more out of your time."

Contact Sue at 440/891-2729 or e-mail at sgibson@advanstar.com

Would a fresh look at your operating systems help you improve your bottom line? How would your system look to an outsider?
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Circle No. 107 on Reader Inquiry Card
Want to know how to make a quick $500? Squeal on a telemarketer, that's how. Entice a phone solicitor to call you and, in the process, break one of the many anti-telemarketing laws that are popping up, and — WHAM!!! — hit 'em with a lawsuit and collect your blood money.

A company in Utah will tell you how to do it. It will provide you with step-by-step instructions — just send a check or money order for $14.95.

There are snares aplenty for today’s telemarketers, including the increasing number of state laws restricting phone sales. Those state laws, combined with a federal law requiring companies to maintain a list of “no-call” consumers, might make you wonder if telemarketing is dying. Is it yesterday’s way to make a sale? Tired? On its way out?

It really works
Telephone solicitation — as much as some of us don’t like it — is thriving and remains a vital tool for the Green Industry, especially for professional lawn care companies. In fact, I’d bet that the telephone has been responsible for more lawn care sales than all other sales tools combined. And it’s still being used effectively.

For example, Joe Campanella and his partner, Tom Kelly, have had great success with telemarketing in building up Lawn Dawg, their four-year-old lawn care company based in Nashua, NH. They saw telemarketing as an excellent way to build their customer base, and they were right. They now have operations in Albany, NY, Woburn, MA, and Portland, ME.

For telemarketing to succeed, says Campanella, you need to plan and organize a campaign way ahead of time. He starts putting together Lawn Dawg’s marketing plan months before the winter selling season begins.

As Joe sees it (and not everyone’s going to agree), it’s not the phone calls that give telemarketing a bad rap, it’s telemarketers. Most are too aggressive, and when they try to sell on the first call, the person on the other end of the phone starts looking for a way out.

“The soft sell approach works best,” says Campanella. “You have to make that first contact quick and friendly. The person is not expecting your call and it may be an inconvenience. The homeowner is generally relieved if you get to the point right away.”

Not for everyone
Is that to say that telemarketing is for everybody who wants to grow their business in a big hurry? No way.

“Telemarketing is not fun,” admits Campanella.
And there are other valid reasons that phone solicitation may not be for you, the most obvious being that many of you get all the business you want without telemarketing. That’s great. You’ve developed systems to keep a large percentage of your customers, and you can attract enough new customers to continue growing without telephone canvassing.

But have you considered calling a customer and offering an add-on service like a grub treatment or a renovation? You may call it “upselling,” but it is telemarketing.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636 or e-mail at rhall@advanstar.com
ONE CUSTOMER SAID THE WAVE OF TRUCKS AND TRACTORS