

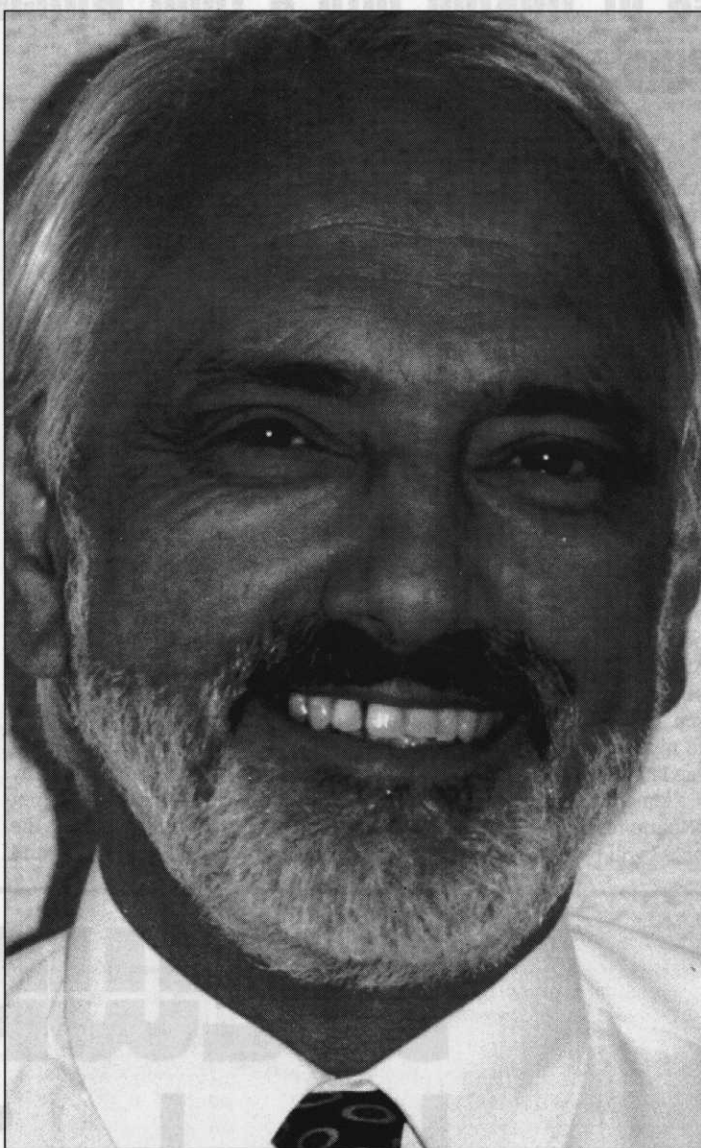
René Orban, Jacobsen UK Ltd

If you want to talk Marketing with a capital 'M', and by definition we are talking real marketing and not just the veneer that passes for marketing in many organisations – the word in the trade is that René Orban is your man.

"Marketing these days is so often seen as nothing more than a bit of sales promotion and a one-way conversation with an advertising agent", René told me, "though I regard it in a much more scientific light, of essentially being the task of market research linked inextricably to the sales side, with product development based on giving the client – the end user – what he really wants and not what so often happens – giving the client what the manufacturer wants to sell".

There is a base of solid experience to back up these comments, as I quickly learned when listening to this Belgian born son of a Canadian father and Russian mother, a world traveller who speaks fluent French, passable German and, of course, his English mother tongue – all this without a trace of any Midlands accent that might have been acquired during formative years spent in Coventry. Yes, it can safely be written that René Orban is a citizen of the world, a marketer whose career has been carved in tough international competition.

For the purpose of this pen portrait, we may safely skip over early post-school years and move to the first of René's sorties into the field of machinery. This began at Massey-Ferguson, where skills gleaned during training to become a Member of the Institute of Export (MIX) were quickly recognised and put to sterling use in his being hired as Massey's commercial manager, running the administrative side of the sales



programme at M-F's Coventry plant and later in their French factory, together with a programme of world-wide sourcing of materials and ideas.

In ten years, as the reader can imagine, a great deal of expertise was to come his way simply by being in a highly competitive market and in doing what he did so

well, but time does not stand still and at the age of 29 he left Massey-Ferguson for a three year marketing stint with Hymac, the building construction machinery company, promoting Hymac's sales and marketing programme in Scandinavia.

The lure of marketing agricultural machinery was still strong in

his bones however, and following the Scandinavian experience he returned to Massey-Ferguson, this time to follow the marketing path in M-F's European base in Switzerland, looking after Asia, Africa and the whole of the Far East and essentially seeking to improve the company's business developments and sales potential in those far-off lands. It was a case of increasing M-F's market share and it was successful.

Yet another foreign land was to be home when René subsequently moved to Paris in a different job



with a different company, this time as sales director Europe for Kubota. Here the task was to introduce a mini-excavator which was new to Europe and to develop Kubota's OEM (Original Equipment Manufacture) programme – again, success was the outcome.

Moving to more recent times, in November '89 René was attracted to a position with the multinational company Jacobsen Textron, joining their smaller offshoot Jacobsen UK as managing director. His objectives were simple: Jacobsen had come to Britain in 1986 to sell their products through a subsidiary company and though sales had come through progressively and altogether satisfactorily, Jacobsen had not established any clear direction with regard to sales methods and policies – the way it had sold in the UK was through both agents

**GIVING THE CLIENT
WHAT HE WANTS**

'We always wanted to be even more closely associated with greenkeepers – after all our main market is in golf – and the idea of linking into a fund which will benefit greenkeeper education is highly laudable.'

and direct selling – and the American parent company needed to be assured that there was a future for their continuing marketing operations in the UK.

René was the first appointed MD and he was quick to point to the excellent job done prior to his appointment. "It was just that from a management point of view the business wasn't being administered as a company", he explained. "When I came on board we quickly created a policy to only sell in the UK through a dealer network, which we have maintained to this day save for a brief period in Scotland. Fortunately, this is now 100% again with the appointment of Henry Sheach Grass Machinery Limited for Jacobsen Scotland. We have some excellent dealers, we've introduced a lot of product and sales training, we've formalised the way we do business and we've brought in a number of Jacobsen

products from America, products which we know from our market research to be right for the UK market. Above all we have given Jacobsen a credibility and professionalism that hitherto may have been missing here. We most certainly have that now, both in Jacobsen UK and in our superb dealer network".

"What do you do in your spare time", I asked. There followed a hollow laugh: "What spare time? I do a lot of reading – mostly, it seems, on airplanes – at the end of last year I set up the Australian Jacobsen company and I've just begun the task of directing European operations, working with the Swiss Orag company throughout all of mainland Europe for Jacobsen Textron. All this is in addition to my UK programme, so you can see I'm a busy man".

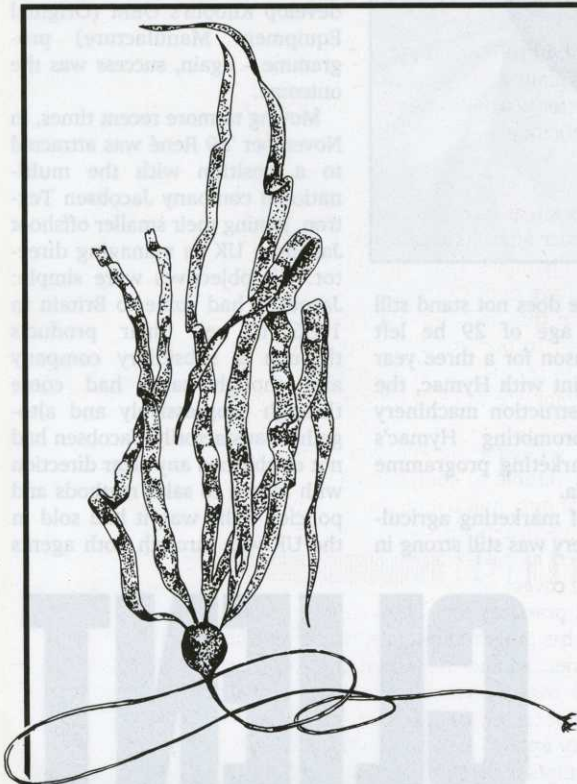
"Almost a workoholic?", I asked. "Not quite, but my role by the end of '93 will be to have co-ordinated

all the European sales and marketing activities and whereas Jacobsen are world market leaders in fine turf there are some enormous sales opportunities in the amenity market. In truth, my work with Jacobsen has been so interesting and so committed that I have almost become a workoholic, but I'm not obsessive or single-minded, so I discount the workoholic tag. In any business, over commitment doesn't allow for the opening of blinkers, for lateral thinking in a personal or business sense – in personal life one must enjoy oneself and hold a broad view and I think that's the same in business – apart from anything else, I'm really excited by the European connection, because there's obviously some vast changes happening both politically and economically which effect business – I'm not sure everyone fully realises the implications of sovereignty and

nationalism, but the narrowness witnessed in some quarters has got to be expanded and that will take new techniques. My personal expression will be through Jacobsen, for that is where I will explore and expand my mind and apply myself to creating new opportunities".

As a finale, René spoke generously in favour of chairman Roy Kates, who was instrumental in bringing Jacobsen UK and BIGGA together through BIGGA's Education and Development Fund and membership of the Golden Key Circle. "We always wanted to be even more closely associated with greenkeepers – after all our main market is in golf – and the idea of linking into a fund which will benefit greenkeeper education is highly laudable. Yes, we're very happy to play our part in the generation and growth of future experts".

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