



**David McInroy is Managing Director of Scottish Grass Machinery, one of Europe's top Textron dealers, based in Scotland. Here he talks about how to get the best from your dealer.**

# DEAL ME IN

## From leading to cutting edge

If Scottish Grass Machinery is to reach its target, to double turnover to £20 million by 2005, we must continue to listen to the specialist needs of our customers and manufacturers.

To achieve this high pace of growth, we will once more revolutionise what the right dealer will offer its customers.

We have developed a new way of doing business. If we are to revolutionise the market it is important that we bring together the manufacturer and customer to share information and at the same time listen to other experts in the golf industry. Our new approach is called 'From the Leading Edge to the Cutting Edge'.

Below: Eddie Adams (left), Head Greenkeeper at St Andrews Old Course, and Jimmy Kidd were at a recent Scottish Grass Machinery two-day course, entitled Caring for Golf Courses.



## What the dealer is doing

This new way of doing business was kicked off recently with our Cutting Edge conference. This brought together golf experts from all over the world to map out the future of the golf industry in Scotland.

Our panel of eight internationally renowned speakers gathered at the SGM Group's Inverkeithing headquarters in October to share information with more than 300 greenkeepers, Club Secretaries, Ground Convenors and Captains about a number of topics affecting the future growth of the golf industry. These included marketing, the environment, and the manufacture and supply of ground maintenance equipment.

Customers were given an insight

into how some of Scotland's top golf courses such as Meldrum House Golf Club, the Old Course at St Andrews and the courses at Gleneagles are promoted in Scotland and overseas.

By bringing the manufacturer, dealer and customer together in a forum for discussion, issues such as environmental factors affecting the golf industry put us in touch with customer needs.

## What the manufacturer is doing

At the same event Harold Pinto, Textron's Managing Director-International, explained Textron's new marketing strategy - the Jacobsen range for golf courses and the Ransomes range for local authority and municipal markets. The new Jacobsen Greensking VI golf green ride-on mower was also launched to the Scottish market.

We firmly believe in this new marketing approach. We have created a stand alone golf division which markets the Jacobsen products to the golf market, and a separate dedicated team marketing the Ransomes range to the local authority and municipal market.

By being in step with Textron's UK strategy, we will further improve our customer service by offering dedicated sales, service and support teams for the golf market and local authority and municipal market, who know the equipment for each industry inside out.

## Bringing manufacturer and end user together

A full range of machinery was on display at the conference, which allowed Textron to hear 'from the horses mouth' what the market thinks of their new range. Customers were also given the opportunity to test drive each of the products and Textron staff were on hand to answer any queries from customers.

Textron's Regional Manager Ian Bridges introduced each product including the Jacobsen, Ransomes, E-Z-GO, Cushman and Ryan brands. Product demonstrations were carried out on our mini golf course at the back of the dealership in front of a seated grandstand.

## What's in all of this for the customer?

Scottish Grass Machinery has had to change constantly, improve and find new, better ways of doing things. We have driven the ground maintenance industry forward in Scotland. Over the last few years we have concentrated on a much more professional, customer-focused way of doing business.

A year ago Scottish Grass Machinery recognised that our customers need a more flexible way of financing the cost of equipment, and of maintaining and servicing machinery. Backed by Bank of Scotland, SGM Finance was born to allow customers to control their costs with a contract with no hidden extras.

In one case we managed to save a golf club which was in serious financial difficulty from struggling on with old and broken machinery. We were able to supply them, after trade-ins, with £100,000 worth of brand new equipment at a monthly cost they could afford. And if our customers prefer, we can even build in payment holidays during the winter when no green fees are collected.

SGM Finance gives our customers new equipment with no capital outlay. Instead, there is a monthly payment which guarantees a fixed price for up to five years which covers servicing, maintenance and breakdowns.

In the case of a breakdown we guarantee a swift response and if we cannot fix the problem there and then, we supply the same standard of replacement machinery until the problem is fixed - that's guaranteed.

Scottish Grass Machinery ensures that customers can see for themselves the quality of our products. We have two staff who are constantly on the road taking products to our customers for demonstrations on golf courses all over the country. This ensures that all of our customers get the most out of our equipment and the best quality cut. We also provide a day's training which leads to a competency certificate for their operators.

Quality is something we take seriously at Scottish Grass Machinery. In November last year we were

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Above: Stuart Harley and Willie Reed test out two new SGM delivery vans. The green livery denotes SGM grass machinery, while the blue refers to SGM industrial.

awarded the prestigious BS EN 9002 1994 industry quality standard.

We then also recognised that the service levels that we introduced through SGM Finance could be applied to other related sectors - giving rise to SGM industrial. Our business diversified and our product range extended to provide our existing customers with a one-stop shop which as well as ground maintenance equipment includes precinct sweepers, tractors, snow-clearing gritters, woodchippers and shredders.

To accommodate this structure, we became the SGM Group with three divisions, grass machinery, finance and industrial.

### Investing in the future

Since moving to Inverkeithing in 1997 we have continued to invest in our premises, technology and most importantly rigorous training for our people. As well as regular in-house training, all of SGMs mechanics are given a minimum of two weeks off-site training at Textron's factory in Ipswich.

We have invested £30,000 in a giant-sized Kardex Industriever as

part of our constant drive to improve customer service. The machinery operates a carousel enabling quick and easy access to more than 15,000 stored parts.

This piece of equipment has dramatically improved the spare parts order processing and at the same time allows the company's 15 field service engineers to further enhance the first class after sales service they currently provide.

Time is of the essence in meeting customer demand. It now takes seconds to access a part using the Industriever. This means we are able to provide an even more efficient maintenance and support service to our customers. It has also reduced the floor space required for parts storage by around 70%, which we now use as additional workshop space.

Looking to the future, the creation of these new business innovations does not mean we have time to rest on our laurels. If we are to become a £20 million business, it is essential that we continue to move our entire industry from the leading edge to the cutting edge.

Below: Neil Henderson perfects the Old Course greens watched by SGM's Steven McInroy, while Eddie Adams tries out a piece of new machinery.

