

Successful business tips

Bob Higby, president of Independent AgriBusiness Professionals, spoke about what it takes for a business to be successful at an Independent Turf & Ornamental Distributors Association meeting in October. Service is key, but the biggest challenge for most companies is differentiating themselves from competition. The following are some of Higby's tips for success for distributors and manufacturers. Superintendents might benefit from a few of these, too.

- **Retain** qualified people, beginning with the owner's commitment.
- **Empower** employees.
- Have an **open-door management policy** with all employees.
- Make sure employees are aware of their **roles in the company's success**.
- Strive for very **little turnover**. As a result, customers see the same person regularly, and employees know customers' likes and dislikes and can build relationships more easily.
- **Meet regularly** with personnel.
 - Service people should **wear a uniform** with a name on it so customers know who that person is, what he does right or wrong, and what company he works for.
 - Focus on selling **marketing solutions** rather than products.
 - **Focus on your business**, not the competition.
 - Offer **competitive compensation/performance** packages. Pay for performance based on profit, not gross sales.
 - Sales reports should enable analysis and **inventory controls**.



Synthetic turf option

Synthetic turf is a viable option for tee boxes on driving ranges at public and private facilities. When debating whether to install synthetic turf, consider these five points:

- 1. Frequency of use.** Turf that doesn't wear out as fast as natural turf is attractive for busy driving ranges. Most facilities, especially in the Northeast, shut down ranges by December and, generally, don't reopen them until March or April. With synthetic turf tee boxes, ranges can stay open year round without maintenance downtime and are ready for practice on those rare 60-degree days in January.
- 2. Maintenance.** If you're spending too much time and money reseeding the range, consider switching to synthetic turf, the maintenance of which is almost nothing. A leaf blower is needed to clear any surface debris, and a "no chewing gum" rule is a good idea because it's not easy removing gum once it's embedded in the turf.
- 3. Durability.** Synthetic turf tee boxes can be used more often for longer periods of time. Because synthetic turf isn't at the mercy of inclement weather, superintendents can maintain the integrity of the range while reducing maintenance costs.
- 4. Turf composition.** There are two viable options when selecting fiber and infill. The first is to install a strong, durable polypropylene fiber that can be filled in with sand. The second is a durable, abrasive, dense nylon blade that will stand up to wear and tear. Sand infill isn't necessary with dense nylon tee box turf.
- 5. Drainage.** When tee box lines are spread across a larger surface area, it's useful to implement a drainage system to ensure quick water removal. A stone base composed of two to three inches of a larger, crushed stone measuring three-quarters of an inch is recommended. That layer is topped off with a 2-inch layer of a finer, angular stone followed by a fill of stone dust. The entire stone base then gets compacted with a vibratory plate or roller to give the turf a precise level base.

Source: Sprinturf, a designer and installer of synthetic turf systems in Wayne, Pa.