

A Professional Approach PARTNERS IN BUSINESS

By Gerry Sweda

"EVERYBODY WANTS TO BUY, BUT NOBODY WANTS TO BE SOLD." That phrase describes many buyers' attitude towards buying, and it's one we take very seriously as the sellers in the buyer/seller relationship. We are not interested in selling but we are interested in customers buying our products. Because we recognize that there is a difference, we chose to take a professional approach to selling — a partnership approach.

What's involved in a professional approach to selling? Well, for one thing, it means recognizing that selling a product to a customer which he/she doesn't need, want, or know how to use, might get a sale, but it won't result in a satisfied customer. Neither does selling a product that doesn't work or doesn't do what it was purchased to do. Putting sales ahead of happy, satisfied customers is not the goal of professional salespeople. It may bring short-term results, but it also may result in disastrous consequences. A salesperson who aspires to success realizes that it is not possible to succeed with one-time sales. Success comes from repeat sales and these come only from satisfied customers. GETTING A SALE IS NOT A PRIMARY GOAL OF A PROFESSIONAL, CAREER-MINDED SALESPERSON. A satisfied customer, who continues to buy, is the primary goal of a true sales professional.

A professional selling approach also involves the realization that selling includes much more than order-taking or re-stocking inventories. It includes the recognition that the value of an offering is not limited to the product itself.

Certainly, there was a time when products were easily recognizable and easily distinguishable from their competition. However, that is changing. New and improved technology, refined methods and scientific breakthroughs are complicating our lives to the extent that few of us are able to keep up with all of the improvements and changes taking place everyday.

Customers can easily become victims of such change. Because they cannot be expected to remain totally knowledgeable in the face of such confusion they need a dependable source of information. That source is a competent, experienced, knowledgeable and dependable sales rep... a professional salesperson, who encourages questions and inquiries; who welcomes the challenge of participating in solving customer problems; who appreciates the pressures of today's demands upon the superintendent; and who responds to the opportunity to be more than an order-taker by sharing valuable knowledge, experience and expertise as part of the overall value of an offering. "More than just products" has definite meaning to professionals who take great pride in their ability to be the best — as well as sell the best.

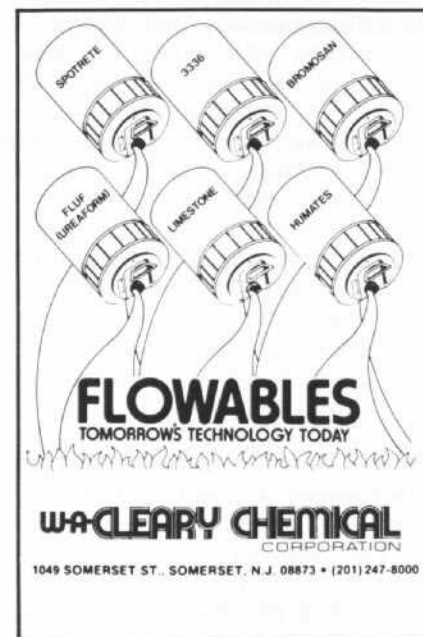
What do professional salespeople look for in their relationships with their superintendent customers? OPPORTUNITY. Opportunity to serve and to provide satisfaction, and opportunity to demonstrate that they too are hard working, dedicated, responsible individuals, with much to contribute.

And what do they ask for of their superintendent customers? COOPERATION. Cooperation by being honest and open with their reactions to the sales reps' recommendations. Cooperation by being open-minded to change, progress and new ways of doing things. Cooperation by remembering that most of all, salespeople seek respect. RESPECT for their efforts to be as professional in the work they do, as the superintendents are, that they are trying so hard to serve.

Success in life usually involves the efforts of others in one way or another. When it comes to success in selling, or in maintaining a golf course, it is certainly possible to do it without any contributions from others, but there are a lot of advantages to working together. It's one of the best ways of making tomorrow a better day for both of us.

Editor's note: Gerry Sweda is the Manager of Corporate Sales Training, O. M. Scott & Sons Company, Marysville, Ohio. As a former Golf Course Superintendent and a former sales rep, Gerry has a good understanding of both roles in the

buyer/seller relationship. His 12 year career in the golf course industry came to an end in 1973 when he first went to work for O. M. Scott as a ProTurf Tech Rep. Following four years of field sales, Gerry was promoted to the position of Regional Sales Manager which he filled until his most recent move to Manager of the Sales Training function. His background in the golf business as well as the business of selling, gives him a unique perspective on the needs and desires of both the person doing the purchasing, and the person doing the selling.



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