



Attractive sign and modern quarters advertise various services offered by Industrial Weed Control Company, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Tom Graham's Formula For Successful

INDUSTRIAL WEED CONTROL

QUALITY service has to be the foremost step in any successful service business. But it is by no means the only criteria for progress. Tom Graham has added several factors to this standby in building his Industrial Weed Control Company at Oklahoma City, Okla.

Graham believes a community businessman must also (1) be active in civic work, (2) make personal contacts in order to know his clients and their problems, and (3) develop and hold good employees. He's been doing industrial weed control for more than 20 years and has an additional 10 years tenure as a pest control operator.

Civic Interest

Graham is active in civic work because he enjoys coaching and

leading little league baseball and football and the numerous activities of the Oklahoma City Uptown Kiwanis Club of which he is president-elect. He finds many of his customers also participate in community ventures. A relationship logically develops with many and naturally carries over into business activities. In looking back over his 30 years as a businessman, Graham believes his interest in community affairs has been an extra plus in making his business a success.

Personal Contact

Most of Industrial Weed Control Company's contracts involve oil companies, where the big end of the work is to keep oil well sites and storage areas free of vegetation of any type. Bare

ground maintenance adjacent to wells and storage tanks is primarily a safety factor, though companies consider careful maintenance important as part of the image they project. Some selective herbicide spraying is also done on grounds adjoining well and storage sites. Prime customers for Graham's organization are major oil companies. Some rights-of-way maintenance is also done for utility companies.

In selling contracts to customers such as these, Graham relies on personal contact, a major step in his formula. He knows the oil company production superintendents well, usually on a first name basis. In most oil companies, superintendents who contract for pesticide application operate directly under district managers. No advertising as such is

done by Graham for industrial weed control, though he does make use of advertising specialties such as pocket secretaries, steel tapes and levels, and similar items.

Holds Employees

Qualified employees are needed in any business. Graham believes his long-time associates deserve much credit for the success of Industrial Weed Control Company. For example, he gives a large share of the credit for the firm's success to Paul E. Hunt. Hunt, an agricultural graduate of Oklahoma State University with majors in entomology and agronomy, has been with Graham 14 years. He serves as general manager and supervisor of all weed control and scheduling.

Graham believes employees are loyal and stay with the company as a result of good pay and a profit sharing plan. The profit sharing plan is modeled to a great extent after that developed by Sears-Roebuck and Co. Graham's plan includes depositing in a bank for investment certain funds from profits which are posted to the account of the individual employee. In addition to these company funds, an employee may also contribute additional funds, though this is optional in addition to the standard trust fund. The employee can contribute 6% of the first \$3600 of yearly salary. This is matched by the employer. Employees (he now has 19) are eligible after one year with the company.

Should an employee wish to quit, after three years with the company he can withdraw all of his own contribution plus 30 percent of that contributed by the company. After 10 years, he is entitled to the entire contributions of both himself and the company. A plan such as this or similar in nature helps develop responsible employees in the opinion of Graham.

Pest Control Operator

Graham started in business in the late 1930's as a pest control operator, a business which he continues today. World War II intervened and his wife held the business together during the mid-40's while he was overseas. Mrs. Graham still does work in the office. Following Navy service, Graham returned to the business. He started industrial weed control work in 1948 at the suggestion of DuPont Company representatives because there was a need for this type of service. Since that time, the industrial weed control area of the company has expanded to become the major segment of the

operation.

Today, Graham operates 10 trucks, most of which are equipped with 300-gallon tanks and John Bean spray pumps. Several trucks, however, carry 1000-gallon tanks. All spray pumps are operated by power take-off from the trucks. These are more expensive than gasoline engines to install, but because men often work alone and some distance from the headquarters, Graham feels the power take-off units are more trouble free.

Most herbicide applications on oil company industrial sites are

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Sprayman Claude Abbott, left, and Tom Graham visit prior to beginning the day's work schedule. Abbott has been with the firm for nine years.

Left to right in office of Industrial Weed Control Company are: Mrs. Tom Graham, Mrs. Darrell Nelson, and Graham. Radio contact with sprayman is the rule, with all trucks being radio-controlled.



and root rot fungi. The fumigant is allowed to remain in fallow soil from two to four weeks before the beds are prepared and seeded.

Pine seed when planted is not covered with soil. Seed is pressed into the top of the soft earth with a roller. Beds then are covered with chipped pine straw which serves as a mulch and helps to keep the seed moist and at ground temperature.

Seed Is Tested

To get the maximum number of plantable pine seedlings from the minimum linear footage of narrow beds, seed is tested for germination. Seeding is at a rate to produce 12,500 plantable trees per 100 linear feet of bed. If seedlings are planted too thick, they tend to be stunted and too spindly for commercial use. If seeded too thin, they develop large and are hard to handle. When seedlings are removed from beds for transplanting during late fall and winter, a 16 to 18-inch overall height is desirable, according to Jordan.

Once seeding starts in March or April it becomes necessary to protect new seed beds from birds. A "bird patrol" is on duty from dawn to dusk, one or two men patrolling beds constantly. A single bird may consume 400 pine seeds in less than a day, Jordan says. The bird watch keeps control by means of a 12-gauge shotgun until seeds sprout and the seed coats fall away. Normally this period is about six weeks.

When germination begins, beds are sprayed with a fungicide to keep down sporous infections. Grass in the bed is controlled chemically, as are such insect enemies as red spiders.

All Florida nursery beds are equipped with irrigation facilities. Fertilizer is applied as needed through the growing season, with formulas based on soil test recommendations. Before removal of seedlings, an application

of muriate of potash is used to "harden" the young trees. This is usually done in mid-October, to prepare the trees for lifting, grading, packing, shipping and transplanting.

Industrial Weed Control (from page 7)

made during the fall and winter, using a preemergence chemical. Spring and summer months are used for checking back on the degree of control. Two checks are made on each application site, and three checks on many. Follow-up spot treatments are made as needed. Graham operates largely in Oklahoma, northern Texas, the Texas Panhandle, Kansas, Illinois, and Kentucky.

Contract Procedure

Yearly open-end contracts (a set rate per square foot) are the rule. Graham generally charges one cent or more per square foot depending on conditions for the initial treatment. Maintenance charges for following years are one-half cent per square foot.

Besides industrial weed control business, Graham also serves as distributor for industrial chemicals and equipment. He represents DuPont, Dow, Allied, John Bean, Diamond Shamrock, and Amchem. Besides the main headquarters at Oklahoma City, he operates a branch office at Fairfax, Okla., in order to better serve outlying fields. This office is managed by Dale Lance.

Graham occasionally accepts a power line right-of-way contract but has in the past sublet these to an operator with helicopter equipment. His early jobs in the business were plant or industrial sites, farm fence rows, salvage yards, bottling works, and small airports. Once in the business, he moved into more extensive oil field contracts with major companies.

Latest phase of the business has been a growing need for aquatic weed control. Flood con-

trol dams in the area have created more lakes and ponds which develop weed problems. He has established Aqua-Trol, a water weed service, as a special division of the company. In a normal year, the company will treat 40 to 50 ponds and club lakes, many of which range from 75 acres up. A big factor in treating fishing lakes according to Graham is to strip treat over a period of time. He has found that this reduces oxidation and the threat to fish. To aid lake and pond owners and those responsible for keeping them free of weeds, Graham has published an information folder on aquatic weed control and the type service rendered by his company.

Up-to-minute Data

Keeping up with the industry requires constant effort. Graham says he depends on manufacturer representatives and individual plot work and trials for information. Most producers and formulators have their own weed control specialists who work directly with professional pesticide applicators.

In the business management area, Graham depends on a registered certified public accountant. He gets a monthly P and L statement from his CPA which has proved a great help in setting rates for service calls and application work.

Graham is a veteran in the business of industrial weed control. He has experienced the phenomenal growth in this phase of the pesticide use industry over a 20-year period. His feeling is that the non-crop areas of weed control will face increasing demands for service. People today expect more in the way of beautification and companies are image conscious. The aquatic weed control field is just beginning to open up, he believes, and promises to become a major segment of weed control throughout the country.