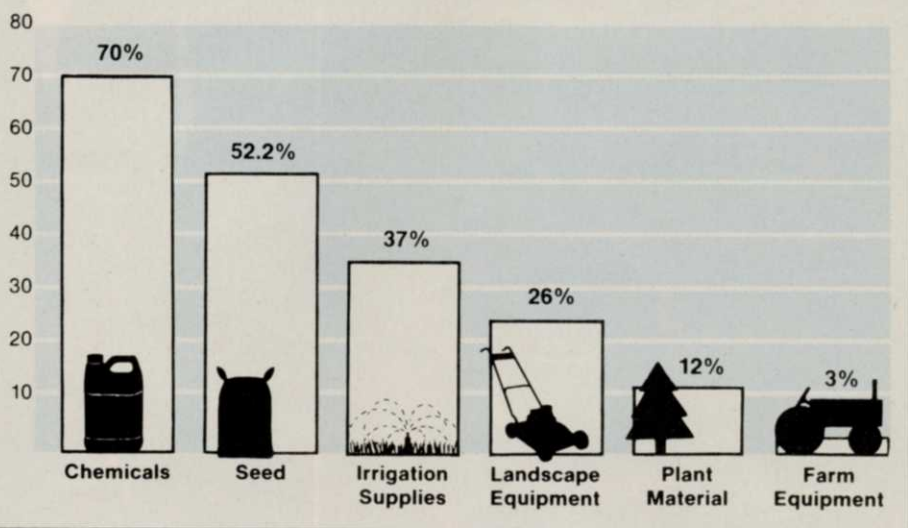


Great Expectations

Survey shows dealer/distributors increasing inventories, upgrading advertising and promotion to meet expected new sales demands.

What types of landscape supplies do you sell?



Dealers and distributors are expecting sales to increase in 1983 with more than 60 percent of those polled in an informal WEEDS TREES & TURF survey bolstering their inventories to meet the expected demand.

An increase in promotion and advertising is also evident as distributors gear-up for what they expect will be an upturn in business. Competition, however, is keen, with 85 percent of those participating in the survey agreeing price-cutting to get business and bids is becoming more prevalent.

"It seems that other dealer/distributors are bidding now that didn't seem to be interested before, and furthermore, are slashing prices to get this new business," said one distributor.

Most others concur.

"In several of our geographic areas, competition, primarily in-

involved in general agriculture, has come into the turf and ornamental field with lower-than-normal pricing," said another distributor.

Like it or not, some dealer/distributors have been forced into the price-cutting war.

"Our competition overstocked and now they are quoting ridiculously low prices. We have to react," said one disgruntled distributor.

Changing Business Practices

1. Increasing Promotion
2. Exhibiting More at Regional Shows
3. Adding Product Lines
4. Increasing Sales Force
5. Adding Educational Seminars for Customers

Others refuse to cut prices.

"It is common for our competition to do it, but one cannot cut prices and stay in business, so we're hanging tough," replied one.

Others said they are picking up new customers and keeping the old ones without price cutting.

Sixty-four percent are not interested in taking on new lines that compete with products they already carry.

The majority of questionnaires were answered by top management people. Seventy percent of the respondents were involved in some form of chemicals distribution and 65 percent in landscape equipment. Only 7.5 percent dealt with farm equipment. The golf course superintendent and parks and schools maintenance managers are the survey respondents' most important customers. The least-served categories were airports, arborists, estate gardeners and sod growers. Only 23 percent were involved in the homeowner market.

On the average, dealer/distributors collected \$821,050 annually in gross receipts from golf and landscape customers.

EQUIPMENT

Of the equipment distributors polled, 83 percent have seen business in their service departments pick up with an average turnaround time of four days for equip-

The golf course superintendent and parks and schools maintenance managers are the survey respondents' most important customers.

ment repairs. More than 70 percent offer on-location repair service for the equipment they sell.

Sixty-four percent are not interested in taking on new lines that compete with products they already carry.

"It just doesn't make sense to do it," explained one respondent.

Survey results show 94 percent of the turf seed distributors are not overstocked with any particular type of turfseed. Sixty-six percent offer a private label seed mixture or blend. Sixty-one percent of the turf seed distributor's customers are asking for new and/or improved varieties of turfseed.

More than 50 percent of the respondents have increased their sales force . . .

Less than 1 percent of the chemical distributors custom formulate their own line of chemicals for the landscape industry. The few who do are trying to "offer a unique product" or "to make money."

CHANGING BUSINESS

Everyone, to some extent, however, is changing his business to meet the growing demands on a growing market. The survey showed the highest increase was in the advertising and promotion areas. Decisions to exhibit at regional trade shows are on the increase as are adding product lines such as specialty items, seasonal supplies, more fertilizers and fungicides,

Customers ranked by importance

1. Golf Course Superintendents
2. Parks and Schools
3. Landscape Contractors and Lawn Care Companies
4. General Public
5. Irrigation Contractors
6. Sod Growers and Hotels and Resorts
7. Farmers
8. Estate Gardeners and Condo/Apartments
9. Arborists
10. Airports

sweepers, chain saws, brush cutters and mowers. More than 50 percent of the respondents have increased their sales force and the same amount have added educational seminars for customers.

Most dealer/distributors are asking for additional support from the manufacturer, especially in the advertising and service categories.

More companies are adding computer systems and reducing inventories of slow-moving items.

"We're trying to upgrade our technical sales support, while cost-cutting in other areas," said one respondent.

From all survey indications, the stage is set for an upswing in buying in equipment, seed and chemical areas. Dealer/distributors are gearing-up with well-stocked inventories and more effective advertising and promotion of their products. **WTT**

TRIM YOUR LABOR COSTS...

... with Atrinal® the spray that keeps your shrubs the way you trimmed them.

Just trim once in the spring. Then spray *once* with Atrinal. (Where the growing season is longer, you may want to spray again in early fall.) Now hang up your pruning shears for the rest of the year.

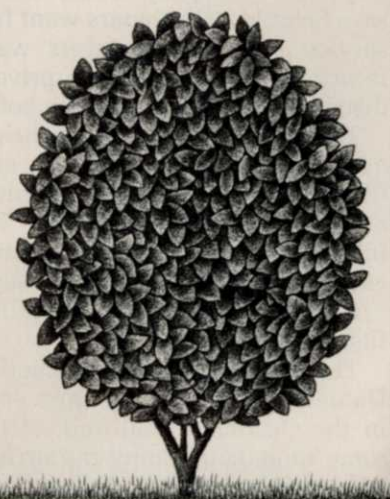
Atrinal systemic growth regulator inhibits apical bud growth, promoting lateral branching for lusher, fuller plants that keep their shape. Atrinal can also be used to suppress flowering and fruit set of ornamental olives and certain other species. And application is safe and easy.

For more information, write for the Atrinal Landscape Maintenance brochure.

Atrinal®

Maag, Inc.
P.O. Box 2408
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35403
205/758-1186

Atrinal can also be used for nursery and greenhouse crops.



Circle No. 134 on Reader Inquiry Card

A Pair of Aces

Two neighbors realize benefits of private over company-owned distributorships.

By Bruce Shank
Executive Editor

Dick Danielson and Dennis Schmid felt fortunate in 1978 when The Toro Company decided to sell its three final company-owned distributorships. They bought one and in five years made Toro Pacific double in size.

This June they were dealt a second ace when Cushman/OMC Lincoln sold its company-owned store, Cushman Motor Sales, to Danielson and Schmid. A pair of aces.

"Our success had been based greatly on manufacturers realizing privately-owned distributorships outperform company-owned ones," says Schmid. "Customers want full service and manufacturers want return on investment. The private distributor is able to provide both."

Today, Toro Pacific has its headquarters in City of Industry, and three branch offices in Cerritos, San Diego, and Palm Desert. "We intend to expand vertically, not geographically," Danielson says. "The addition of the Cushman line fits our goals well."

The day we visited Toro Pacific, Danielson was tying up loose ends in the Cushman deal and, at the same time, celebrating the arrival of his first grandchild. Schmid was

taking a well-deserved vacation with his family. The Toro Pacific staff was pleasant, and while casually dressed, gave the appearance of a big family.

Perhaps neighbors is a better term than family. Schmid and Danielson are neighbors. In fact, it was a neighborly chat that developed the idea of buying the Toro distributorship in the first place.

"Customers want full service and manufacturers want return on investment." Schmid.

Danielson worked for The Toro Company for 19 years, 14 in the irrigation division in Riverside. He joined The Toro Company after graduating from the University of Minnesota with a communications degree. In 1978, he was national sales manager of Toro Irrigation.

Schmid worked for Dearborn Chemical, a division of W.R. Grace. His education includes advanced degrees in both science and business. For 13 years he worked in Dearborn's sales and marketing department.

Both men are knowledgeable in sales and apply their expertise to

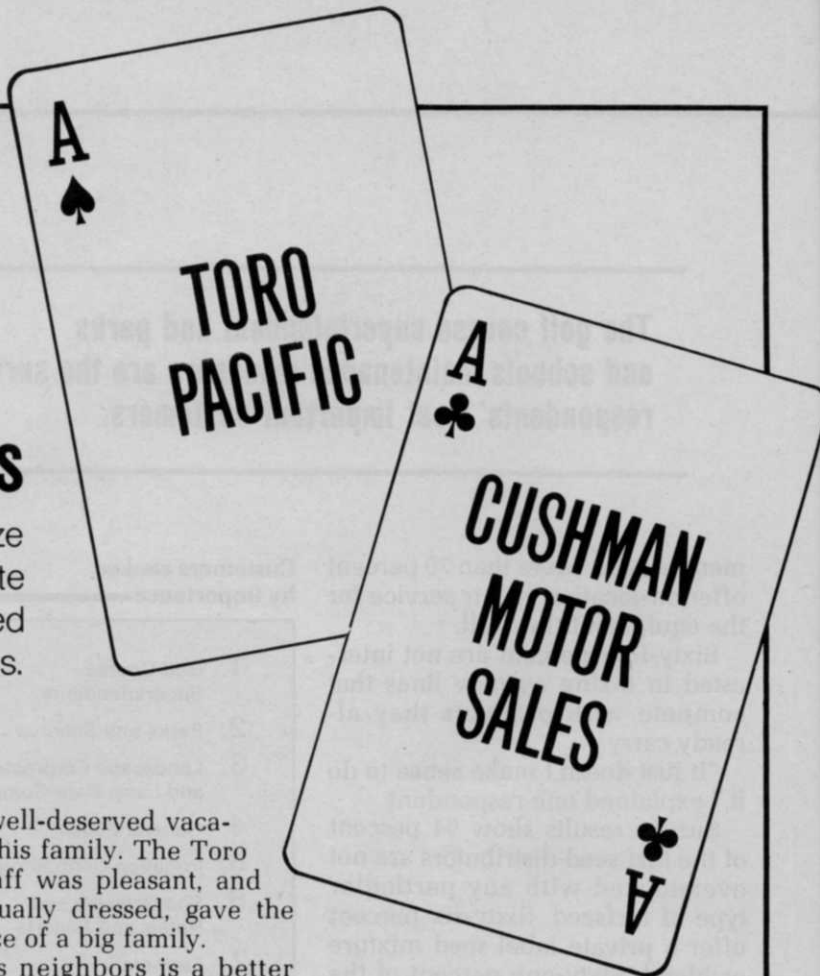
each of the three divisions of Toro Pacific. All 23 sales people receive individual sales training including a paid consultant. Six two-hour workshops are provided.

Outdoor power equipment sales is divided into consumer and commercial. A dealer network of 175 people sells consumer turf products. Toro Pacific provides support with parts, service, technical information and advertising. Commercial equipment is sold directly to users by Toro Pacific's own sales force in four locations.

Irrigation is the third division. "We have roughly 70 percent of the golf irrigation business in Southern California," says Danielson. "We are very careful not to compete with irrigation designers."

"Most irrigation is put in per specifications," says Schmid. "We provide designers specifying irrigation systems with details on Toro Irrigation products and help them any way we can. We do not compete with them in designing systems."

According to Schmid, the Irriga-



tion Division is a sales hybrid. "We sell direct to installers, golf courses and municipalities, but the lion's share is sold through 40 irrigation wholesale supply houses in the area."

Toro Pacific does not plan expansion into the chemical business. "We couldn't do justice to chemicals, seed or nursery plants," says Danielson.

"We doubled our sales in the first five years and we intend to double them again in the next five." Schmid.

In addition to Toro and Cushman products, Toro Pacific sells allied products from other manufacturers. These include golf accessories from Standard and Par Aide, spreaders from Lely and Vicon, aerators from Dedoes, Ryan, and Multicore, tractors from Mitsubishi, and Dihautsu and Sand Dancer turf vehicles.

Toro Pacific backs up its products with a service department of 8 mechanics and four radio-dispatched service technicians. The City of Industry office has 8,000 square feet of service area and more than 100,000 square feet of inventory and storage space.

The distributor's territory is from San Louis Obispo to the Mexico border in California, nearly 250 miles wide and 400 miles long. In that region are many dynamic buyers. Two are Environmental Care and Cal Golf and Tennis, both multi-million dollar buyers of turf equipment which are expanding outside California.

The future is bright for Toro Pacific. "We doubled our sales in the first five years and we intend to double them again in the next five," claims Schmid. "With the economy on the mend, an assortment of new products from Toro, and the addition of complementary product lines like Cushman, we will accomplish our sales goals."

WTT



Warren's Model T-7
Multi-Purpose
SPREADER

Warren's T-7 SPREADER

the **T** is for tough!

Tough enough ... to handle your most demanding jobs! No other broadcast spreader incorporates such rugged construction features as does the famous T-7. For example: the heart of any spreader is its drive mechanism. Our exclusive worm gear direct drive system is fully enclosed in a heavy duty metal casing to prevent annoying jams and assure years of smooth, trouble-free operation.



In addition, the T-7 features a virtually unbreakable polyethylene base and canister. All interior exposed parts are made of corrosion resistant stainless steel. And, the T-7 utilizes such "human engineered" features as a lightweight, compact, body-contoured design, see through safety lid, to prevent your breathing in harmful fumes of dust from the canister, and a precision calibrated top-mounted fingertip flow control knob.

The result: One tough spreader that's efficient, safe and easy-to-use!

Warren's
SEED-SPECIAL PRODUCTS DIVISION

P.O. Box 459
Suisun City, Ca. 94585
(707) 422-5100

Circle No. 160 on Reader Inquiry Card



Top: Machinery awaits repair outside the Porter Brothers service department.

Bottom: Joe Porter, president and chief executive officer of Porter Brothers, Inc.

Porter Brothers, Inc.

Planned growth, computers and communication keep North Carolina distributorship's sales better than ever.



By Maureen Hrehocik
Associate Editor

It all started back in 1949 with a company called the Carolina Chain Saw and Equipment Co., three employees and one product—McCulloch Chain Saws. Thirty-four years and a name change later, Porter Brothers, Inc. in Shelby, NC, an exclusively wholesale distributorship, does in excess of \$35 million annually, employs more than 120 people and represents such manufacturers as Jacobsen, Cushman, U.S.S. Fertilizer, Heckendorn, National, Turfco, Smithco, Mott, Snapper, Yazoo, Merry Tiller, Green Machine, McCulloch, Koehring, Flymo, Topper, Carlton and Giant Vac.

Joseph M. Porter is president and chief executive officer of the company. His brother, Paul, is chairman of the board. W. Robert Porter, now deceased, founded the company. His brother, James, served as vice president until his death in 1979.

It is Joe Porter, though, who is in the office on a daily basis carrying out the affairs of the company. He prefers people to call him "Joe" and delegates with a quiet authority and soft-spoken manner. He travels once a week, 50 weeks a year in the field to "get a pulse" on

Porter Brothers distributorship is divided into two areas: power tool (which is a wholesale operation and accounts for approximately 74 percent of business) and the turf division (products are sold directly to the user, mainly golf courses, making up the other approximately

Sales for 1983 are projected to be the best year yet for the company with only the chain saw and portable heater businesses lagging.

what's happening. Communication—to his customers and to his employees—is important to Joe Porter.

Porter Brothers is now a publicly-held company, owned by the RSI Corporation. Porter Brothers 1982 sales provided 44 percent of the parent company's total revenues. Sales for 1983 are projected to be the best yet for the company with only the chain saw and portable heater businesses lagging.

26 percent). Each area has a little more than 2,000 accounts. Chemicals and fertilizers are sold to turf customers only.

"We're a one-stop shopping center for a turf customer and for a dealer," Porter says.

The company's success is mirrored on the walls of its modest, but expansive, 8-acre Shelby headquarters. Various awards from almost every manufacturer line its walls, including the prestig-

ious Jacobsen Golden Reel Award. The company has been named for several years to the Jacobsen Golden Reel Club and at this year's GCSAA show in Atlanta was a repeat winner of the Professor Jake Award for outstanding distributor service.

The company distributes in an area that covers North and South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and east Tennessee.

"We're a one-stop shopping center for a turf customer and for dealers."

"We have enough geographic area," Porter explains. "Now we are trying to increase the market share in the area we're in. The market was getting mature in the power tool division in the southeast, so we moved into other territories. The southeast became one of the fastest growing recreation areas. When I was growing up, golf was for professional people, not the working man. That has changed."

National Golf Foundation statistics show North Carolina has 398 golfing facilities and 424 courses, ranking about 12th in the country in number of courses.

It is Porter Brothers continuing philosophy of "planned growth" that spawned the first decision to expand in the mid-50s.

"We knew that having one product (McCulloch Chain Saws) was limiting and that it was a seasonal product. We decided on planned growth. With our customer base we also decided lawn and garden equipment would be more compatible.

The Merry Tiller brand was added in 1953 and then Snapper followed in 1954 (which today, is Porter Brothers largest vendor.) In 1961 Jacobsen asked the company to take on turf products, originating the turf division.

By the mid-50's, the company had outgrown its Quonset hut-like facilities and moved in 1954. It

again outgrew its facility and moved to a third (and present) location, which, with warehouse space, encompasses 108,000-square-feet on eight acres. The company owns another 19-acre tract with a warehouse about two miles away.

Porter says the company is selective when choosing dealers.

"Our basis for success is keeping a good customer base," Porter explains. "We don't like to overcrowd. We make a selective appointment of dealers. They have to meet certain standards such as physical facilities, finances and buy minimum quantities."

To ensure a long-term relationship with his suppliers, Porter considers the venture a two-way street. "We must represent his entire product line. We want compatible products, not competing."

With more and more new products flooding the market, and with manufacturers coming out with similar products, this is sometimes a difficult area for distributors to handle.

"This (competing product lines) is a major problem. There are so many products and so many manufacturers making competing products, it's sometimes difficult to get an acceptable share of the market. We'd like to cherry-pick products, but we have to be fair. For example, Merry Tiller is a standard among tillers. Snapper, which we also represent, came out with an almost identical model of tiller. It makes it difficult. We're all trying to grow profitably."

"Service is a key aspect of our company," Porter continued. "We don't sell anything in cartons in the turf division. It is unpacked, inspected and shipped ready to go."

The company provides service through its dealers who are trained at Porter Brothers Field service representatives calling on customers every week.

"We conduct regular service clinics," Porter said. "We schedule calls on dealers regularly. We also solicit service business in the winter when the grass isn't growing."

The Power Tool and Turf divisions have separate sales staffs; 12 in turf and 14 in power tool. The salesmen live within the area they service. The company also has a small retail outlet for the convenience of those living in Cleveland County (North Carolina), but, according to Porter, he would like to get out of retail.

Porter Brothers also conducts service/user clinics with assistance from the various manufacturers.

Another, more direct way of service that Porter Brothers provides is toll-free numbers to the company for sales orders and questions answered by sales people who can give on-the-spot answers.

The company is entirely on-line with a computer system that allows sales people to tell the customer immediately the availability of the item they want.

"We try to plan ahead and use all systems available," Porter said.

Porter uses market research and attributes it to much of the company's success.

Customers appreciate thoroughness. We try to make it easy for you to do business with Porter Brothers."

Porter is very proud of his advertising and marketing program. According to him, this area is where a distributor "earns his stripes."

"We are marketing people," he says simply. "Delivery is important, but so is follow-up."

Porter uses marketing research and attributes it to much of the company's success. "More companies should use it," he says. Lack of adequate management did some dealers in."

"We're not experts in advertising, so we employed an agency in the '50s. "We advertise regionally, the manufacturer does it nationally, and we leave it up to the dealers to do it locally."

Advertising is used as an incen-
continued on page 98

tive with dealers.

Porter Brothers uses all media, but especially television because it is more effective in demonstrating how a piece of equipment works.

The company has also devised a PACE program, Promotional Advertising with Consumer Emphasis, that outlines numerous ways an individually-tailored advertis-

ing program can help each manufacturer.

"The key is to be innovative, use research and advertising and conduct on-going training programs. We're very promotion-minded and advertising-minded."

Porter sees the consumer now spending money, but demanding more value for that money.

"The parts business has definitely picked up," he says.

Porter says the American manufacturers are realizing the impact of imports in this country.

"For years, U.S. manufacturers were making an inferior product and foreigners got a foothold in the market. It started in the auto and electronics market and has now moved into the outdoor power equipment market. The U.S. is accepting it has a quality problem and is starting to try to correct it. The customer saw he could buy a better mousetrap elsewhere and did. The U.S. has got everything it takes to be a leader in this market. And in this cycle, manufacturers are recognizing the importance of a good, strong distributor. Manufacturers are offering better products, better selection and consumers have regained some confidence."

And while the economy is boosting his business, the geographical location of Porter Brothers is another "plus."

"There's been a diversification in manufacturing in North Carolina," Porter said. "When I was growing up, it was an agricultural and textile market. Now it's gotten to be one of the leading financial centers. Our educational system has also improved which bodes well for the future."

Porter grew up on a farm in Cleveland County in what he considers a rather "industrious" family atmosphere. He inherited his father's desire to be an entrepreneur. After a high school education, Joe Porter became an accountant for an automobile agency. His older brothers had been in sales and equipment. "I'd make the poorest salesman in the world," he confesses. Even though his management style was different than his brothers' he decided to join the company in 1951 and became president in 1975. He and his wife, Bea, whom he affectionately calls "mama", have been married 36 years and have two daughters and two grandchildren.

Porter is an avid golfer and was a founding member of the Outdoor Power Equipment Distributors Association.

"It's been a good 61 years," he says with a smile.

WTT



CUT ON DOTTED LINE

If you don't plan on seeding with **MUSTANG**, you may need this.

Why take chances? There's a new tall fescue whose superior turf quality, disease resistance and dark green color make it a breed apart from the others.

Mustang's high seedling vigor and excellent heat and drought resistance make it the one you can bet on. So, don't try your luck—try Mustang.

MUSTANG
TURF-TYPE TALL FESCUE



Produced by:
PICKSEED®
PICKSEED WEST Inc.
P.O. Box 888, Tangent, OR 97389 • (503) 926-8886

Available Fall, 1983
Call or write for the distributor nearest you.

Circle No. 168 on Reader Inquiry Card