

The Repackaging of Lawn Care

The original success of professional lawn care was packaging. Technology, clearly different from what homeowners used, was developed and vigorously marketed by a few progressive businessmen.

This package was accepted as unique and, like many new ideas, became contagious to both customers and small businessmen seeking a growth market in which to make their fortunes.

The lawn care package remains successful after 20 years and is predicted to stay that way for at least another 15 years.

But, rather than waiting for the package to get old, a few successful lawn care businessmen are reexamining its contents to either extend its life or to create a new formula.

The most common idea is to make other services available to current lawn care customers. Once a customer gets used to a company, he will be inclined to use it for other needs; such as structural pest control, carpet cleaning, and horticultural jobs like tree care, mowing, dethatching, lawn renovation, and aeration. The term 'full service' is spreading rapidly across the industry.

Those experimenting with repackaging have discovered something critical to success of new services, when you change the name of the company just for a particular service you weaken the connection between the customer and your original good work. Also, the customer wants to write one check to one company, not

two or three checks to different companies at the same address.

The investment and energy in repackaging has increased tremendously in the past two years as mid-size lawn care companies do technological battle with Chemlawn. These companies have reached a point where they too can afford Ph.D.s and marketing wizards to explore the limits of lawn care. They are now going directly to chemical and equipment manufacturers to develop new technologies to give them an edge over competitors.

The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow for mid-size companies is to go public. These companies must go public no later than the mid- to late-80's while the market growth rate is on the way up. If repackaging helps them go public faster, there is virtually no limit to what they will spend to develop new technologies for growth.

The lawn care package is changing. It will be many years before anyone can pin the label 'mature' on the lawn care industry.



Bruce F. Shank

Bruce F. Shank, Executive Editor

WT&T Editorial Advisory Board



Douglas Chapman
Horticulturist
Dow Gardens
Midland, Michigan



Kent Kurtz
Professor
Horticulture
Cal Poly - Pomona



Harry Niemczyk
Professor, Turfgrass
Entomology
Ohio State University
Wooster, Ohio



Roger Funk
Vice President
Davey Tree
Expert Co.
Kent, Ohio