TECHNICAL PERFECTION VS. COST

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

Letting the client know what can be done within the budget,
coupled with your technical knowledge,
are the keys to maintaining good client relationships.

The greens committee can't believe that the greens don't look like billiard tables with the money they allocate to you. The homeowner can't understand why his lawn doesn't look beautiful in the early spring. The apartment complex manager doesn't understand why you didn't spray pre-emergent materials on his property.

Do any of these sound familiar?

They are classic issues of technical perfection vs. cost.

Given enough money, almost anything is possible. Since most organizations don't have unlimited budgets, we can forget about the concept of throwing money at a problem to solve it.

In the lawn service industries the constant job of the superintendent is to achieve the best possible results within the constraints of a fixed operating budget.

There are some keys to doing this and they rest with the people who use the service.
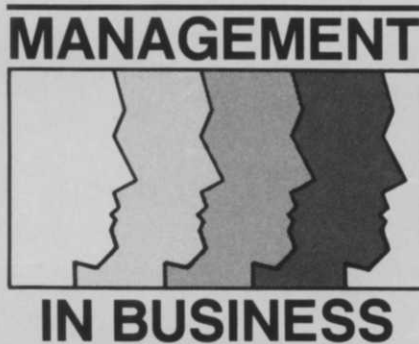
1. Expectations

"What do the people who are getting the service want?" is the question that starts the process.

Do they want perfectly dressed greens, a greener lawn, a better looking landscaping job?

What is the key for their decision to say yes to your services? Unless you know what they want you can't de-

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sign an agronomic program that makes any financial sense.

2. Expectations vs. reality

Many people have no idea of the costs involved in lawn services. In particular golf course committees are seldom made up of people with any type of agronomic background.

Their expectations must be addressed with factual information

With a given budget, you must be able to explain what is possible and impossible to obtain in terms of final results...explain the options.

about the costs required for technical perfection.

Unless you're working for an academic institution which has enormous grant funding, you won't be able to give technical perfection. (Being non-profit doesn't mean that you don't have to watch your budget.)

3. Options

There must be options offered to keep everyone involved happy. With a given budget, you must be able to explain what is possible and impossible

to obtain in terms of final results. You may want to hold a negotiating session where options are explained.

Certain results are preferable to others and they are the most important options for the buyer of the services.

4. Trade-offs

The general result of any lawn service organization is an impressive turf. There are going to have to be trade-offs to come up with the best possible looking turf and these are ones made on agronomic information.

Making the turf look acceptable to the end user is the key. You may know that the final result isn't the best possible but you also have to trade that off with the budget constraints within which you're working.

Working within the cost

The keys to technical perfection vs. cost revolve around your agronomic background, your programs for the turf, and the results desired by the people who pay the bills, the consumers of your services.

In the chemical lawn care arena the consumers generally don't care about what it is you do; they want a green lawn.

With golf courses, the expectations may be higher but the key is to get a clear picture of what the committee wants.

You should be prepared to explain what you can do within the budget that is being proposed.

In the maintenance end, you must make clear the services offered, particularly if you are in a bid situation.

Technical perfection vs. cost comes down to a very simple equation: knowledge of the agronomic possibilities together with the results expected by the end user are the two keys.

Letting the people know what can be done within the parameters of cost comes down to putting these two variables together in such a way that you have come the closest you can to technical perfection while keeping the cost acceptable. **WT&T**

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