

MARKETING MANUEVERS

As the landscape management market grows more competitive, companies need to gather more information to stay alive.

Here are some points not to be overlooked.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

Many companies in the green industries are excellent at collecting operating and financial information. Productivity, cash flow, financial strength and overall operating efficiency are addressed by most good managers of green industry organizations.

The marketing function and the information needed to successfully manage this function are extremely important areas that often are not tracked with the same amount of efficiency found in other operating areas.

As the green industries grow more competitive, collecting at least some basic types of marketing information becomes more important.

The key elements can be broken into two categories:

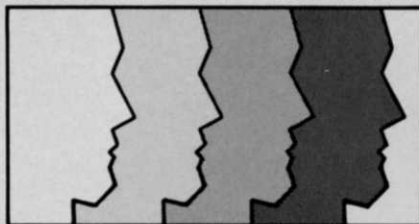
- external information (information concerning potential customers) and
- internal information (tracking of performance of various aspects of marketing).

External information

Outside information needed for planning marketing consists of demographic and geographic factors.

Demographic factors worth tracking in the residential market are aver-

MANAGEMENT



IN BUSINESS

age income, home value and median age of your current customers. These will help you to determine those customers you should target for the upcoming year based on last year's performance.

(This information is available through mailing houses, marketing survey companies and government publications.)

If you are working in the commercial side, you should be looking at the types of companies for whom you work, their size, and the key personnel involved in making the buying decision for that type of company. This will help you to put together a marketing plan to target companies similar to those you already service. This helps your source credibility in making new contacts, and gives you a good sense of the costs involved in working for the types of companies you now service.

Geographics will help you determine areas that see your vehicle and workers fairly often. In the residential market, the presence of your vehicles acts as both an advertising piece and gives a good sense of source credibility.

In the commercial area, your vehicles and workers can be seen on the property, and this also acts as both advertising and building source credibility. You should be aware of the geographic considerations of your current customer base because of factors other than marketing.

From an operating standpoint, you can tighten up your routes, have less travel time, and be able to get high productivity from your applicators

and workers. This will also affect your monthly and yearly financials since you will be more productive overall.

Once you have information on demographics and geographics, you should combine them to see if any current buying patterns occur.

Servicing a next-door neighbor or business is generally the best way to increase your sales. By knowing where you are and who you service, you can take excellent advantage of your customer base.

Internal information

Within this marketing information you should find ways to better control your sales and advertising efforts.

Servicing a next-door neighbor is a way to increase sales.

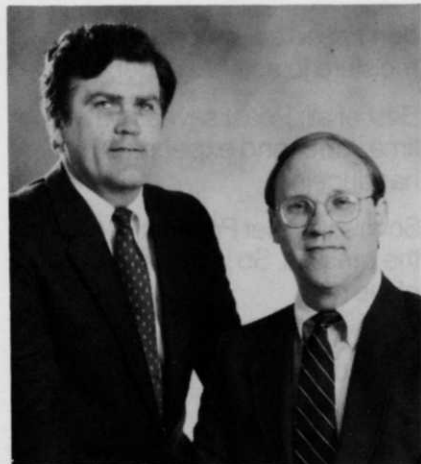
Some key figures should be collected in order to look at your overall marketing efficiency.

1. How was the lead generated? You should ask any customer calling how they heard about your company. This is not a completely accurate way of getting information since it relies on consumer recall. But it at least will yield some patterns, hinting whether your advertising dollars were well spent, and thus creating a basis for planning next year's campaign.

2. How many sales calls did your sales force make in a given period? (Day? Week? Month?) This will give you the average amount of time taken to contact a customer. You can then determine the need for a larger or smaller sales force.

3. What was the closing (conversion) ratio of the sales people? This, in addition to No. 2 above, will give you an idea of how effective a given individual is as a salesperson. Some people will have a high closure rate, but see few people. Some will have the reverse.

For a company to be successful,
continued on page 108



Wandtke and McGary are senior consultants with All-Green Management Associates in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. McGary focuses on marketing and management issues. Wandtke focuses on operations and financial questions.

ALLIGATORWEED from page 94
the leadership of Dr. Langeland, developed a herbicide program to meet that objective in 1983.

The first roundup

The program was introduced in the Scuppernong River where the problem was particularly severe. From boats, crews armed with hand-held sprayers applied Rodeo herbicide, a broad spectrum, post-emergence aquatic weed killer. The initial treatment was made during alligatorweed blooming in the spring, and was applied at a rate of 1.25 percent solution plus surfactant.

"Just a few weeks after the initial application, a substantial amount of mats and plants had already been eliminated," Langeland says. "We made a second application later in the year to control regrowth, and by the following year, found very few alligatorweed mats remaining. We were, in fact, highly successful in obtaining control of alligatorweed."

Another key factor, Langeland says, is the environmental compatibility of Rodeo. Tests have shown that the herbicide biodegrades rapidly and is activated on soil particles and sediment, has no effect on fish, humans or other mammals, and does not bioaccumulate in the food chain. This makes it safe to apply to water bodies used for recreation and commercial enterprises.

The management program has successfully and economically restored the Scuppernong as a fishing and recreation center for area residents. "Without busting our budget, we were able to reopen several miles of the Scuppernong to public boating, and eliminate the need for routine draglining at river bridges," Langeland says.

"In addition, we averted a major flood potential since, otherwise, there is always a high risk that the river can overflow due to the presence of a substantial number of alligatorweed mats obstructing water flow."

This program to control alligatorweed has been so successful that plans call for similar programs in other areas. "We are already applying Rodeo to small creeks and canal tributaries in the region," Langeland notes. "Once it has been eliminated from these waterways, reinfestation can only occur through vegetative reintroduction."

The last roundup

"Our goal is to completely eliminate the weed, maintaining alligatorweed populations at the lowest level possible by spot-spraying periodically,"

says Langeland. "We'd also like to make farmers more aware of the consequences of alligatorweed on their cropland and in drainage canals, and help them develop their own maintenance programs," Langeland concludes. "Through our cooperative efforts, we can maintain alligatorweed below problem proportions in the entire coastal plains." **LM**

COMING IN JUNE

2nd annual
report on
ATHLETIC TURF,
focusing on
the successful
maintenance of high
school fields.

MARKETING MANUVERS

from page 88

you should learn the best of the combination of Nos. 2 and 3 and use those salespeople who both see a large number of people and who are successful at closing the sale.

4. What is the retention rate for each individual salesperson? This is seldom done, but over a period of a season it will tell you which of your salespeople sold well and which oversold. If they oversold the customer, you will find a very low retention rate.

Those salespeople who were professional in explaining your services will have customers who remain with the company because the results will match their expectations. As with any type of management information, this list can grow considerably and be much more detailed.

The areas listed above are a starting framework. By gathering these types of marketing information you will have a much better understanding of your current customer base, who you should target in the future, and the internal efforts of your organization.

Your knowledge of these points will enable you to plan better and thus make your organization more competitive in the growing green industry marketplace. **LM**

EVENTS

APRIL

Texas Wildflower Day, April 24-25, Texas Women's University, Denton, Tex. Contact: Dr. Robert Collier, P.O. Box 22675-TWU Station, Denton, TX 76204; (817) 898-3326.

Turf & Landscape Institute, April 27-29, Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, Calif. Contact: Ed McNeill, 2492 E. Mountain St., Pasadena, CA 91104-3423; (818) 798-1715.

MAY

Mole Cricket Classic & Educational Seminar, May 4, Oak Mountain State Park, Birmingham, Ala. Contact: Judy Copeland, P.O. Box 70, Auburn, AL 36831-0070; (205) 887-6916.

Pest Control Workshop, May 7, Agricultural Center Auditorium, Sanford, Fla. Contact: Uday Yadav, University of Florida, extension service, Sanford, FL 32771; (305) 323-2500 ext. 182.

American Horticultural Society Annual Meeting, May 13-16, Omni Park Central Hotel, New York City, N.Y. Contact: Harriet Sweeney, AHS, P.O. Box 0105, Mt. Vernon, VA 22121; (703) 768-5700.

Western Chapter, International Society of Arboriculture Annual Conference, May 15-18, Santa Cruz Holiday Inn, Santa Cruz, Calif. Contact: Donald Blair, 1958 Latham St., Mountain View, CA 94040; (415) 967-4676.

North Carolina Turf & Landscape Field Day, NCSU Turf Field Center, Raleigh, N.C. Contact: J.M. Dipaola, Box 7620, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-7620; (919) 737-2657.

Hands-On Equipment Expo, May 15-16, Alameda County Fairgrounds, Pleasanton, Calif. Contact: Jim Kwiat, Sequoia Landscape Specialties, 236 Sequoia Ave., Walnut Creek, CA 94595. (415) 937-7973.

To ensure that your event is included, please forward it, at least 90 days in advance, to: Landscape Management Events, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130.