

A supplier's quote may differ greatly from your own for several reasons. Let's state a hypothetical case in which the vendor was an irrigation supply house and their quote did not include the copper pipe, copper fittings, or booster pump station because they weren't a supplier of it. Maybe the quotation originated from the

nursery and one species wasn't supplied because it wasn't in stock or available.

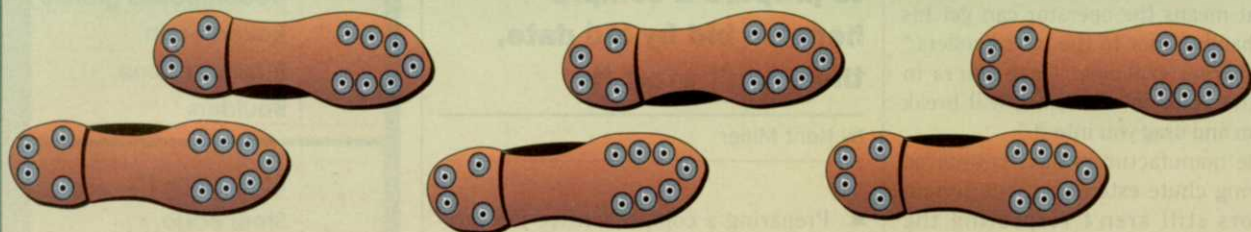
Margins today do not allow for errors or omissions. If you don't have the time to prepare a comprehensive bid by bid date, then don't start it. It is much easier to walk away from a bid date than it is to finish a bad job.

We jokingly say that a bad job only gets worse.

All joking aside, bad jobs cost money and typically originate from poor estimates.

—The author is vice president of *The Groundskeeper, Inc.* in Tucson, Ariz.

GOLF TURF MAINTENANCE IN HEAVY TRAFFIC AREAS



■ Here's some advice for curbing the ravages of heavy traffic on greens, tees and fairways from Randolph P. Russell, groundskeeper for the city of Austin, Texas.

Defining "heavy traffic" is elusive in itself, says Russell. Amount of wear-and-tear depends on the region, predominant weather patterns, and—perhaps most importantly—the varieties of grasses being used.

Generally, Russell says he notices that at least 45,000 rounds per year qualify a course for the "heavy traffic" category.

Avoiding the pitfalls of stressed out playing surfaces can be accomplished from tips learned at the "University of Experience:"

● Experiment with nitrogen levels, and don't be afraid to go beyond the norms. Greens recover better from

injury, and thatch build-up is not a problem.

● Consider a one-to-one nitrogen/potassium ratio.

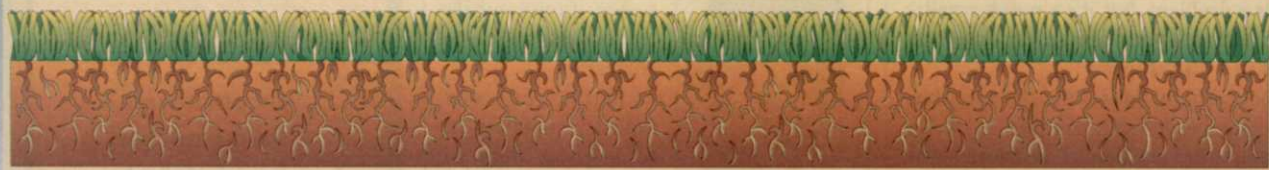
● Resist the temptation to use extremely low cutting heights, especially on putting greens, during periods of heat stress.

● Raise fairway cutting heights as winter approaches. This will improve root depth and not adversely effect playability if done thoughtfully.

● Consistent aeration is a must.

● Minimize verticutting done to thin ryegrass, especially in spring. Close mowing and occasional double-cutting can be more effective.

● Look at all chemical applications from a new perspective, testing where possible under present traffic conditions.



Marketing for small businesses: do-able concepts

'Marketing' is not a jungle of theory and insatiable devourer of time. It's a way to increase profitability.

by Adrienne Zoble

■ You don't have to be a marketing wizard with endless unscheduled hours in order to improve your marketing efforts.

An objective look at your business will almost always reveal already existing marketing opportunities. Here's how to diagnose and perform successful marketing tactics:

1) An analysis of current customers and your relationships with them will likely reveal several opportunities.

Do you discuss the job with the customer after its completion? Doing so will reveal strengths on which you can capitalize and weaknesses on which you can improve. In addition, it may well lead to



Adrienne Zoble: Marketing is 'do-able.'

additional business.

Do you make regular sales calls to existing customers? Don't presume a customer will call you. Sales calls to existing customers cost about 10 to 20 percent of what a sales call to a prospect costs.

Do you schedule strategic lunches or dinners with key customers? Such meetings can strengthen relationships, lead to new business and generate referrals. The

same can be said for writing thank-you notes for referrals, time and advice.

Do you have a way—other than sales calls—of keeping in touch with your clients? Quarterly newsletters are becoming the rule rather than the exception in the landscape contracting, lawn care and even golf maintenance segments of the green industry. They can keep your organization in the minds of customers and inform them of new products or services, company achievements and more.

2) Examining your company's written materials may reveal areas that need to be strengthened.

Does your logo/letterhead/brochure package convey the image you want it to convey? Look at your material as a prospect would see it. Letterheads and brochures should be kept current, clean and progressive; image is crucial to success.

How effective is the written word? It should position your business in relation to the competition, tell what sets you apart. It should be rich in customer benefits and not steeped in features.

3) Make sure your trade association memberships support your marketing efforts. After all, you pay the dues.

Do you or key staff members regularly attend meetings to take advantage of networking opportunities? Should you modify your schedule to assure adequate representation?

Can you take better advantage of speaking opportunities at association meetings? Can your company or golf course act as host? Is it possible to contribute articles or columns to association publications?

4) Public relations—editorial coverage in your hometown newspaper, to be specific—gives your business a credibility that advertising cannot match.

Do you regularly announce employee promotions or honors to local newspapers? Do you publicize company honors, special high-visibility jobs? If your company actively supports significant social/community endeavors like the Chamber of Commerce, how effective is the coverage you receive?

The importance of planning cannot be overstated. Effective marketing efforts are both carefully planned and consistently implemented.

—The author is president of Adrienne Zoble Associates in Somerville, N.J. and author of "The Do-Able Marketing Plan: Business Survival & Growth for the '90s." The workbook is available through her office by calling (908) 685-8008.

Planning strategies for the green industry companies

If you are bracing for an improved performance in 1992, a budget needs to be developed during these winter months.

by E.T.Wandtke

■ It's not uncommon in the lawn and landscape industries for owners to avoid the rigors of budget-making and budget-following.

As these owners look into 1992, they often say the economy will be better and their businesses will benefit accordingly.

If this is how you are looking at the performance of your company, you should start planning more.

What to plan—Here are types of plans you should be making:

● Your business plan should be prepared before you start the business. Annual updates thereafter are essential.

The business plan details why you are in business, what type of services you intend to offer, and your target market. It should include projections of future financial performance, and the persons you have enlisted to do the job.

Banks want to know this kind of information, as it identifies when times of potential stress (or periods of financial need) will occur in the life of your company.

● Your marketing plan—a key component of the business plan—needs to be revised and specified annually, usually

three to six months prior to the start of your next business year.

Developing a marketing plan may reveal how little you know about the market. Assumptions and beliefs are easy to come by, but facts and reliable information are not found as easily.

Other components of the marketing plan deal with competition, potential niche opportunities, and the market's economic outlook.

● Strategic plans usually cover a five-year period, and are updated each year, two to three months prior to budgeting. A strategic plan defines the strategy you will follow to achieve your five-year objective.

● The budget, which covers a 12-month period, is prepared two to three months prior to the upcoming business year.

The budget details what the company's financial performance is expected to be for each month of the year. Budget preparation takes time; you must examine the prior year's activity, and predict what you think will happen next year.

A budget needs to be developed during the winter months. Some companies dedicate one week of their winter season to budgeting. This is an ideal way of letting all of the employees in your company know the importance of planning.

● Your management plan, or people plan, is developed as part of the business plan and is updated on an annual basis.

Individual strengths and weaknesses of key employees are examined, as a way of defining the type of person who works best in the company. Accomplishments of key employees serve as the basic background

Preparing a budget

A budget is most easily prepared when the following items are listed:

- 1) Services to be performed, and number of customers per month.
- 2) Materials to be used.
- 3) Labor costs, including expected raises, projected overtime, bonuses and incentives, and the cost of fringe benefits.
- 4) Operating costs, including vehicles, equipment, maintenance and

repair, fuel and oil, and other equipment operating expenses.

5) Administrative or fixed expenses are budgeted, since they tend not to vary much from year to year unless a change occurs in the company's operation.

6) Other direct expenses, such as safety costs or license fees are planned based on when they will hit over the course of the year.

—E.T.W.