

pany managers, bought Barefoot from Toro. Norton became company president in 1986. In 1989 the Chicago-based investment firm Golder, Thoma & Cressey bought a majority share of the privately-held company. This past October Barefoot went public.

Barefoot Grass is now the third largest lawn care company in the United States, and still growing at an annual double-digit rate.

Norton says it's attracting new customers for each location. "We are still growing in Columbus, Ohio," says Norton. "If that's not the most competitive lawn care market in the United States, it's certainly one of the most competitive."

But mostly it's growing because of the proliferation of its market-targeted franchise and "branchise" operations—and, most recently, its acquisition efforts. (A "branchise" is a Barefoot franchise which is owned by a separate corporation but nonetheless managed by Barefoot through a management agreement.)

Barefoot is definitely in a buying mood. Says Norton, "we would have growth with-

System-wide customers & average annual revenues per customer

1986—133,000.....	\$169
1987—173,000.....	\$177
1988—206,000.....	\$182
1989—229,000.....	\$199
1990—258,000.....	\$206

out acquisition, but to maintain the level of growth we want, we have to look at acquisitions."

On January 3, Barefoot bought lawn care operations in Cleveland, Wooster, Akron and Canton—former properties of Lawnmark which generated 1991.

To make that deal work, Barefoot Grass also bought its Canton franchise. Otherwise the company would have found itself competing against one of its own franchise operations.

"The ideal acquisition for us is going to be in a market where we already have a presence so that when we add revenues, we can do it profitably," says Norton, "where we already have existing facilities, where we're making money, where we can add revenues without adding too much overhead."

In separate transactions in 1991, Barefoot purchased its "branchise" in Newark, N.J., (for about \$1 million), and will likely purchase "branchises" in Fort Lauderdale, Long Island, Harrisburg, Pa., and Boston by the end of 1992. This past year also saw the opening of "branchise" operations in Portland and Norfolk, Va., and the opening of franchises in Topeka, Kans., and Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

For the past several years about 88 percent of the company's net service revenues have come from standard lawn care services, and 12 percent from add-on services such as tree & shrub care, lawn aeration, liming and seeding.

—Ron Hall

10 easy steps in gaining a friend and supporter in the legislature

These suggestions from two experienced lobbyists can guide you to a successful meeting with your lawmaker.



■ Here's a recipe for meeting with and seeking the cooperation of your elected representative.

It's a step-by-step recipe built from the comments of Ed Graves and Norm Goldenberg. The two men advised lawn professionals who had gathered in Washington D.C. prior to meetings with their U.S. Senators and Representatives. More than 100 lawn professionals participated in these "Day on the Hill" events Feb. 23-24.

Graves is a senior consultant with Capitoline International Group, an issues management firm headquartered in Washington D.C. He's been lobbying on Capitol Hill the past eight years. Capitoline is employed the green industry

to present its case in the Capital.

Goldenberg, former owner of Alert Lear Pest Control, Miami, is chairman of the Government Affairs Committee for the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA). He's been involved with Florida and national legislative issues involving pest control/lawn care for the past 10 years.

Their suggestions will help you through that all-important initial meeting

Goldenberg urges LCOs to establish mutually beneficial relationships with legislators.

with your legislator—more likely, legislative aide or staff member. And don't be disappointed if a legislator can't meet you in person, says Goldenberg.

Gaining the ear and, hopefully, the support of a staff member can be productive. Lawmaker schedules are incredibly busy. They rely heavily on staff members for

information. Says Graves, "If you are able to convince the staff about your position, you're halfway home."

If you've no immediate plans to meet with your legislators or their staff members soon, file these suggestions and refer to them prior to such a meeting.

1. Have a legitimate reason for seeking a meeting. Are you responding to pending or proposed legislation? Do you want your representative to oppose a particular proposal? Or support another course of action?

2. Identify yourself as a constituent. "The fact that he's your representative and you're from out of town gives you every reason to ask for a meeting," says Graves.

3. Be concise. You'll have, at best, 15 to 30 minutes to present your views. Start with a brief description of the nature of your business and industry. Progress to the two or three points you want to make.

4. Be prepared. Have the facts at your fingertips. If your concern is a legislative proposal, know its, name, number and sponsor. More importantly, know its provi-

Ask your legislator to take action, says lobbyist Ed Graves.

continued on page 44

Friend from page 38

sions. If you oppose it, suggest alternatives.

5. Make an accurate assessment of the benefits that your business and industry offer your community—environmental and economic benefits, including the number of jobs they provide. “That’s the kind of message that gets to a member of Congress,” says Graves.

6. Leave time for questions and answers. Your legislator or their staffer will almost certainly want to ask some questions. If you have literature to leave behind, keep it in hand until after your talk, then present it, says Goldenberg.

7. Never burn your bridges. “Sometimes a heated argument is appropriate but that’s very rare,” says Graves.

8. Ask for support. “Don’t just leave, ask them to take some action that supports your efforts,” says Graves. Co-sponsor a bill? Communicate your views to a committee or subcommittee chairman.

9. Write a thank you letter to the representative or the staffer you met. In the letter reiterate several key points you made during your visit.

10. Seek a long-term relationship. A single meeting with a lawmaker will not accomplish much, adds Goldenberg. Offer yourself as a continuing source of accurate and useful information concerning your industry to your representative and staff members.

“You’re only a telephone call away,” adds Graves. “You can establish an ongoing relationship with them over the telephone, having met them.”

—Ron Hall

BEFORE YOU MEET A LEGISLATOR: A CHECKLIST

I want to discuss: _____
(Bill number, amendment, issue, etc.)

I am meeting with _____ **at** _____

Office location: _____

Telephone: _____

Material to take: _____

Three points to make: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Supporting statements/ideas: _____

Action requested/desired outcome: _____

Response from legislator: _____

Thank-you letter sent (date): _____

Additional follow-up action: _____

Source: PLCAA

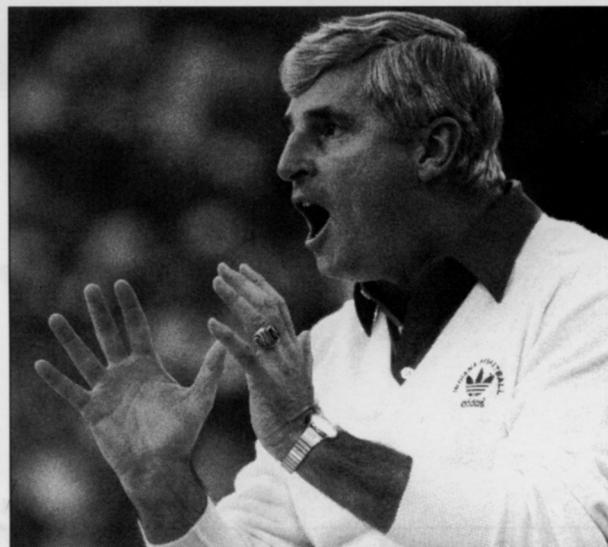
Coach Knight to speak at GIE/92

■ Bobby Knight, the sometimes controversial but remarkably successful basketball coach at Indiana University, will deliver the keynote address for the Green Industry Expo/92 in Indianapolis Nov. 16-19.

Knight, the winningest coach in Big Ten history, sought his 11th conference championship this season. Besides winning three national championships, he’s also coached gold medal-winning teams in both the Olympics and Pan American Games. In 1991 he was elected to the National Basketball Hall of Fame.

GIE/92 will be held at the Indiana Convention Center—part of the complex that houses the Hoosier Dome, home to the NFL’s Indianapolis Colts.

Coincidentally, PLCAA President Robert Andrews is an Indianapolis businessman, and a graduate of Indiana University.



Indy GIE/92 attendees will hear from Bobby Knight.