

# Investing in your image

## Improving your company's image is an intangible investment that can reap very tangible rewards.

by E.T. Wandtke

■ If you spent some time—and money—in 1991 investing in your company's image, 1992 could be a better year.

Making image investments is often one of the most often overlooked aspects of marketing. To be recognized in the market, you must spend money on image advertising or promotions. And most companies either do not develop a complete marketing plan, they only develop an advertising plan for the year.

Investing in your image is a commitment to become better recognized and to be looked upon as a responsible business in your geographical market. This type of investment is not intended to directly attract customers, nor is its purpose to retain customers. But it *will* help your

company to be better viewed as a reputable business.

Image investing can be either low key or aggressive, depending on the impression you want to make.

**Two approaches**—Some companies seek a “soft” community awareness, rather than high visibility. To achieve this, you can undertake projects like participating in a United Way fund drive, educating community youth through Junior Achievement, or collecting food and money for a homeless shelter.

On the other hand, aggressive image investing would include spending money to promote your market presence by sponsoring public service announcements (PSAs) on the radio or TV. Using either of these mediums will instantly create an awareness of your presence in the market.

While PSAs do cost less than advertising, they still require significant funds. If you are going to start an image investing program for your company, this is *not* the place to begin. It would be more beneficial to incorporate it into the total plan three or four years later.

**Environmental benefits**—Lawn care

and landscaping benefit the environment. Adding plants to a property, grass cutting, horticultural services for trees and shrubs—all help to renew the ecological process. Oxygen is purified by the grass and other foliar plants maintained or added to the properties you service.

To that end, have you ever sent a notice to the commercial or residential customer explaining these benefits? Your local extension service provides booklets on these types of benefits that you can summarize or reprint to pass along to customers.

Some companies have practiced image investing by targeting school children. Safety pamphlets, first-aid literature or nutrition booklets is an effective method of direct-image investing.

Image investing requires time and planning. Don't rush into an indirect image investing opportunity until you have examined all the potential ramifications. If the opinions suggested in this article do not immediately appeal to you as an area for indirect or direct image investing, get involved in activities to benefit all the people in your market.

—*The author is a principle in Wandtke & Associates, a management and marketing consulting firm based in Columbus, Ohio.*

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\* **Gather all the facts** relating to the turf area: who, what, booster groups, personnel, equipment, amount of time to perform certain duties. Define what you want.

\* **Formulate a plan** of operation: list irrigation problems, analyze soil recommendations, outline annual projects to match budget allocations, and outline a monthly plan.

\* **Implement and design a maintenance program**: buy the cheapest fertilizer possible to meet your needs and monitor mowing (frequency, height, equipment, methods, etc.).

\* **Have a month-to-month plan** that is flexible. “Evaluate as you go,” Doble says. “Assess it at year-end and address its shortfalls. Implement changes and re-address the budget for next year.”

Doble suggests using photographs to illustrate what you're going to improve and what improvements will be made.

Yes, these are rough times—both with the economy and with the public expecting more than what might be available. But that doesn't mean the job is impossible. It's just more of a challenge.

—*Jerry Roche*

Everday Play: 7 1/2 - 8 1/2 Feet

Serious Tournament Play: 8 1/2 - 9 1/2 Feet

9 Feet: Turf & Superintendent Stressed Out!

■ “Managing green speed for the sake of speed alone should not be attempted, certainly not at the expense of acceptable turf quality,” says George Manuel, agronomist with the United States Golf Association (USGA).

Manuel suggests that superintendents—and demanding golf course members—be more concerned with uniformity and consistency, which can be achieved by altering management practices.

“(Maintaining) green speeds above 9 feet