

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

at all times often results in serious problems and should be avoided," warns Manuel. "Extreme stress is placed on the turf, and jeopardizes its survival, especially during periods of difficult weather." Usual tactics for fast greens include mower maintenance and adjustment, plus manipulation of other cultural practices such as fertilization, irrigation, verti-cutting and rolling, which Manuel says has come back into vogue.

Manuel advises that, if super-fast greens are mandated at a course, the crew must make every effort possible to control or minimize other stress factors, any one

of which is a challenge:

- ✓ the effect of trees: shade, root competition and poor air circulation;
- ✓ moisture stress due to poor irrigation system;
- ✓ heavy traffic from both mowers and golfers;
- ✓ insect/weed/disease control;
- ✓ poor drainage or irrigation; and
- ✓ soil compaction.

A recent USGA green speed study revealed:

- Each change in nitrogen levels per 1000 sq. ft. annually created an inverse

speed change of three to five inches.

- Increased speeds of 8 to 10 inches were measured following daily mowings. Multiple daily mowing increased speeds up to 8 inches.

- Increase in speeds from double mowing was more significant on greens cut at 3/16 per quarter vs. 1/8 or 5/32.

- Weekly, light verticutting through the growing season increased speeds by an average of 7 inches.

- You can gain up to 6 inches with a single roll, and up to nine inches with double rolling.

Early application reduces incidences of lyme disease

■ Results of a nearly completed one-year field research study conducted by New York Medical College indicate that a single application of insecticide in early summer can reduce the risk of lyme disease by 70 percent to 90 percent.

Homeowners in Westchester and Fairfield counties have been directed to spray their lawns with insecticide in mid-June if they want to substantially reduce the risk of contracting lyme disease,

according to researchers at the college's Lyme Disease Center.

Three insecticides were tested and proven effective. The most effective, cyfluthrin, is not yet approved for lawn application in New York. Insecticides carbaryl and chlorpyrifos are, however, available. These insecticides were found equally reliable in liquid and granular formulations. The researchers emphasize that users should follow directions for the use

of these insecticides at the rates recommended for lawn insect control.

"We know from our earlier studies that there are infected ticks on 60 percent of the residential properties we examined in Westchester County," says Dr. Durland Fish, director of the college's center.

"Since alternatives to spraying are either ineffective or unavailable, the prudent course of action is to apply lawn insecticides," he adds.

Results of the study showed that the use of insecticide-treated cotton did not measurably reduce the number of ticks or the proportion of infected ticks at any of the residential, recreational and woodland study sites.

Fabrics shown to minimize weeds

■ Landscape fabrics, though generally unable to suppress all weed species, can greatly reduce the need for hand or chemical weeding, according to tests conducted at Auburn University.

In the first trial, the five fabrics tested were Dewitt Weed Barrier, Geoscape Landscape Fabric, Amoco Rit-a-weed, Phillips Fiber Duon 2.5 ounce and Easy Gardner Weedblock.

The Dewitt product was the only woven fabric.

The Geoscape, Amoco and Phillips products were mesh, while the Easy Gardner product was perforated polyethylene.

In the second trial, American Woven Fabrics Weed Barrier Mat, DuPont Tyvar 307 and Tyvar 312 were added. The only woven fabric was the American Woven product.

Results of the two experiments, below, were first published in the *Journal of Environmental Horticulture* by the Horticultural Research Institute.

EXPERIMENT 1: Number of seedlings after 30 days

Weed	Dewitt	Geosc.	Amoco	Phillips	EasyGard.	Control
yellow nutsedge	1.3	0.3	2.5	1.3	3.8	11.8
bermuda-grass	0.0	7.0	11.3	13.8	92.3	126.1
johnson-grass	0.8	1.7	7.5	8.0	5.3	21.0
pigweed	0.0	0.0	5.3	12.5	111.7	139.0
sicklepod	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3
morning glory	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.5

EXPERIMENT 2: Number of seedlings after 30 days

Weed	Dewitt	Geosc.	Amoco	Ph'lips	E.Gard.	Amer.	307	312	Cont.
y. nut.	1.0	0.8	2.5	3.3	1.8	0.3	0.0	0.0	8.3
berm.	0.5	0.0	8.3	7.8	20.3	0.0	0.0	0.3	48.8
j'son.	1.5	9.3	17.5	12.0	72.6	0.0	2.5	0.8	112.8