

CUSTOMER SERVICE TIPS

Training tips

by E.T. Wandtke

■ Training your employees is difficult. If you are the owner of the lawn service or landscape company, you often are perceived as not really understanding what your employees go through each day.

When you look at your employees as you start the training, do you see just blank stares? Do you have trouble getting your employees into the training session? Here are some tips which will help you have more exciting customer service training sessions.

1) Start each training session by asking your employees questions which you will provide the answers to during the session. Getting your employees to focus on what you are saying can be accomplished by using an electronic speaker system. Some trainers have found that by speaking softly, employees will quiet down quickly.

2) Present a paragraph summary of what you will be covering in the training. Everyone is eager to know what will be covered. Don't keep them in the dark.

3) When presenting ideas or suggestions, concentrate on the present and the future. These are the times when your audience will be applying your sugges-

tions. Avoid references to the past, whether they be good or bad. Training is a forward directed development of your employees.

4) Visual aids keep employees attention and can serve to emphasize a specific point. Using a story to emphasize a specific point is an additional method of improving employee retention of the idea which you are making.

5) Keep the training session under one hour. The mind begins to wander if you stay too long on one topic. It's better to have two training sessions of one hour each twice a week rather than one two-hour session once a week.

INFO CENTER

Useful literature and videos offered to LM readers

ON THE ECONOMY... "Preparing for, and Responding to a Down Economy," a 148-page textbook/workbook, is available from Smith Huston Inc. for \$49.00. Written by James R. Huston, the text includes chapters on strategic planning, field production, computers and budgeting. Its last chapter is titled "A Quick-Reference Checklist and Survival Kit." To order the soft-cover edition, send check to Smith Huston Inc., P.O. Box 4433, Oceanside, CA 92052. For more information, call (619) 726-2112.

BEING WATER WISE... A new consumer brochure that can be handed to customers is available from the California Association of Nurserymen. Specifically designed to offer California residents helpful advice and sound strategies for saving landscape water, the brochure features fun illustrations and 15 Water Wise tips. For a free copy, visit a participating C.A.N.-member nursery or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to C.A.N., 4620 Northgate Blvd., Suite 155, Sacramento, CA 95834.

SPRAY GUIDE... Hypro Corp. offers "Hypro Pumps Spraying Guide and Master Catalog" that includes information

on environmental considerations: pump types and drives, calculating pump flow and pressure requirements, hand-held spray gun performance, sprayer calibration, etc. For a copy of this catalog (Form 2500AG), write Hypro at 375 Fifth Ave. NW, New Brighton, MN 55112 or phone (612) 633-9300.

TREE VALUES... The Council of Tree & Landscape Appraisers has available three brochures that cost 30 cents each. They are titled "Tree Values," "The Tree Casualty Puzzle" and "When a Tree is Damaged or Destroyed." The first is a homeowner's guide; the second discusses steps taken in appraisal, including tax/insurance ramifications; the third is a guide for real estate, insurance, tax and legal professions. To order, send check to CTLA, 1250 I Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005; or phone (202) 789-2421 for more info.

COURTING SMALL CLAIMS... Did you know that you can have your day in a Small Claims Court and get monetary judgments against a defendant without paying a lawyer to defend you? A compact new guide points out the differing procedures, forms, claim limits and service fees

for local courts across the country. It covers the rights of plaintiffs, how to present evidence and how to collect judgments. It also includes a sample copy of a typical claim form. Send \$3.50 to Reymont Associates, P.O. Box 114, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276.

CHEMICALS REFERENCE... The 1992 Farm Chemical Handbook is now available for \$69.00 from Meister Publishing Company. Sections include pesticide dictionary, fertilizer dictionary, sine index, regulatory file, safety/application and bio-controls dictionary. To order, send your check to Farm Chemicals Handbook '92, 37733 Euclid Ave., Willoughby, OH 44094.

LANDSCAPE STANDARDS... "California Landscape Standards: Guidelines for the California Landscape Industry" is now available from the California Landscape Contractors Association, 2021 N Street, Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814. Sections deal with general requirements, site preparation, hardscapes, irrigation, lighting, planting, maintenance and interiorscaping. The 180-page book can be purchased for \$49.95 per copy.