

Ten years ago, virtually every trade journal in the lawn care industry shouted the praises of add-on sales, supplemental income and diversification.

We were encouraged to get into mowing, become an irrigation contractor, do landscaping and more. I remember going to a trade show where one exhibitor explained the profitability of chimney sweeping!

I think there were three reasons for this push toward building sales outside of chemical lawn care. First was the perception that our days were numbered because legislation that was just around the corner was going to put us out of business.

Second, "organics," whatever they are, were seen as the next great wave in lawn care.

Third, and probably the most legitimate, was concern over the seasonal nature of our businesses, and the need to have year-round cash flow.

Ten years later, I see lots of firms still seeking diversification. At the same time, I see many

firms reducing add-on offerings and spending more time focusing on traditional lawn care service. Successful people pursuing both avenues offer some sound advice that we all should consider before offering another service.

1) Is it profitable in and of itself, or will its cost need to be supported by the rest of your business?

2) What is the primary purpose of the add-on as far as the rest of your business is concerned? Why are you considering this? What will it actually contribute to your overall mission?

3) Does the add-on complement your current scheduling by providing an income source in slack periods? Or does it make a busy period even more hectic?

4) Does the new add-on require more man-

agement time, work hours, administration, and customer service than it's worth? In other words, does it bring in enough revenues to justify the extra work?

5) Will someone in your organization take "possession" of it? Someone needs to be enthusiastic about the new service to the point where they act as a ramrod for it.

6) Do you, or anyone on your staff, have expertise in the add-on service? Have you studied its ins and outs? Have you interviewed others who have been successful in adding this service? Do you have the equipment, or is significant capital outlay required to initiate the service?

7) If the service is to be sold to current lawn care accounts, do your turf specialists know how to identify customers who are possible candidates for such service?

8) Do not let your customers dream up add-on services for you. Either offer the service, or don't. Lots of energy can be spent on trying to provide something on a hit-or-miss basis when you're better off to simply refer the customer to a qualified firm.

Probably one of the key points in considering add-on services is to make certain that adding them does not distract from your primary purpose. Many firms have found that adding such services detracts from their ability to deliver basic lawn care. If basic lawn care is your bread-and-butter, do not jeopardize it by adding another service which you simply cannot perform without doing a lesser job at your primary source of income. In other words, keep your eye on the ball!

One final point. Every business owner should always be on the lookout for a new opportunity. Do not walk away from adding a new service until you have completely researched its possibilities. Look to both your customers and your employees for suggestions on what services you might add to your menu. Give all such ideas the attention they deserve. □

Extras, extras... read all about 'em!



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