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Nothing else keeps y

TEXTION

our course this clean.



1. What characteristics of last year's customers are the same? For example, do your customers live in the same area in the same type of house? Do they make the same type of trip? Are they the same age? These types of questions will help you profile your past customers.

2. Can you reach the profile you created with some action by the company and how much will it cost?

3. Who will be in charge of reaching these people?

4. If you take these simple questions seriously when you are doing your job, you will be able to extend your ability to the sales staff and determine who your most likely customers are going to be. Remember, your customers are most likely to buy what you are offering.

5. You must take care of questions early if you wish to prepare a plan. You need to know who your most recent customers are and understand the numbers behind how they bought your products. By putting this information together, you'll be able to forecast the way you will do business in the year ahead.

6. What was your cost per sale? Simply divide your total advertising cost by the number of sales.

7. Who is selling? Identify the salesperson who gave you the best information and note the type of leads that were utilized.

8. What are your leads worth? Using this type of information will help you set a more realistic goal for the year ahead. This simply means that you start with information on last year's performance and base your forecast on someone not linked to the previous year, but rather to actions you intend to take this year.

9. To make this a little easier, many companies take last year's sales and add 10 percent, using this number as the new goal in a sales area. This may work for some companies, but it doesn't indicate how the company is going to reach these new goals.

10. If you use a zero-based budgeting approach you will use information from last year and incorporate your management plan and it'll be into the forecast. Basically you're saying, "Last year we closed 80 percent of all leads we got through. We want to get 85 percent and 85 closer to get the number. This year we are going to be more aggressive in keeping out leads and expect to get more than 80 percent. We will close at least 120 new sales this year as a result of our new sales and marketing plan."

11. You intend to bring this number into the line for 1988 with the

Too many companies in the green industry underestimate the value of a well-constructed budget. Yet the most successful companies are forecasting as an integral part of their management. It's not just a goal to be reached in the long term but a goal they have a plan to reach before the year begins.

Without this notion of accountability, management cannot have a complete grip on the company. While some companies in the green industry will operate on a day-to-day basis, the competitive nature of the industry today requires that a forecast be done. The best way to do this is to follow a zero-based budgeting method. It is successful.

Generally, there are two ways green industry companies should go about forecasting this year's business. First, have a tendency to forecast only the last year's figures in addition to the method a zero-based budgeting system should be implemented.

12. Forecasting information is critical to the success of your business. It's important that the forecast be in a workable form. To make this information simple enough to use, it should be broken down into the key parts of the business. You need to know:

1. Your current sales. What is the current sales and what are the trends in your newspaper, radio, television, outdoor or advertising in the marketplace.

2. Leads by type. How many leads did you get from each of these advertising vehicles?

3. What are the closing rates by source? How many leads did you get from each source? How many of these leads did you close? How many of these leads did you lose? How many of these leads did you not follow up on?



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HOW WILL YOU DO THIS YEAR?

The first step in reaching your 1989 goals is to put together a zero-based budget.

by Dr. Rudd McGary

Too many companies in the green industry underestimate the value of a well-conducted business forecast. Yet the most successful companies use forecasting as an important management tool and are more likely to succeed in the long term because they have a plan to assess performance throughout the year.

Without this notion of accountability, management cannot have a complete grip on the company.

While some companies in the green industry still operate on a day-to-day basis, the competitive nature of the industry today dictates that a forecast be done. The path the company is to follow needs to be projected into the future if it is to succeed.

Generally, there are two ways green industry companies should go about forecasting this year's business. Most have a tendency to forecast judging by last year's figures. In addition to this method, a zero-based budgeting system should be implemented.

Management information

In order to forecast by using last year's information, it's important that the information be in workable form. Too often companies compile mounds of data and forget to turn it into usable information. Some of the key parts of information you need to note are:

1. Your source of leads. Was it referral, direct mail, yellow pages, television, newspaper, radio, teleselling, outdoor or advertising in this magazine?

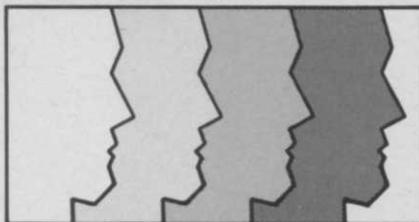
2. Leads by type. How many leads did you get from each of these advertising vehicles?

3. What was your closing ratio by source of lead? Did certain types of leads result in better sales closings? Referral leads almost always have the best closing ratio for a service company.

4. What was your cost per lead? This figure is the total cost of attraction divided by the number of leads it generates.

Rudd McGary, Ph.D., is a senior consultant with All-Green Management Associates, Columbus, Ohio.

MANAGEMENT



IN BUSINESS

5. What was your cost per sale? Simply divide your total advertising cost by the number of closes.

6. Who is selling? Identify the salesperson who gave you the best closing ratio and note the type of leads that were utilized.

7. When did your leads occur? Using this type of information will help us get to a zero-based budget. This simply means that you start with information on last year's performance and base your forecast on assumptions not linked to the previous year, but rather to actions you intend to take this year.

To make this a little clearer, many companies take last year's sales and add 10 percent, using this number as the new goal in a sales area. This may work for some companies, but it doesn't indicate how the company is going to reach these new goals.

If you use a zero-based budgeting approach you will use information from last year and interpolate your management time and skills into the forecast. Basically you're saying, "Last year we closed 80 percent of all leads we got through referrals. We had 80 referrals and 64 closes to get that number. This year we are going to be more aggressive in seeking out referrals and expect to get more than 150. If we do that and continue to close at 80 percent, we will close at least 120 new sales this year as a result of actions we take to increase referrals."

You then need to plug this number into the sales line for 1989, with the appropriate times and sequencing for referral leads that you know from last

year's information. This is only a part of the total sales figure, but it will give you a start on your sales numbers.

At the same time you put this number in place in the forecast, you must make sure that you have made someone in the organization responsible for getting and closing these leads. It's one thing to say you're going to get leads, it's another to get them and to make sure someone closes them. In other words, you need to make an action plan for this particular part of your sales.

Segmenting targets

Even before the process of forecasting begins, you need to consider the segments of the target you want to forecast. In order to forecast correctly you need to look at last year's information, this time with a different view than that above. The key parts of information are:

1. What characteristics of last year's customers are the same? For example, do your customers live in the same area in the same type of house? Do they make the same income? Are they the same age? These types of questions will help give you a profile of your past customers.

2. Can you reach the profile you construct with some action by the company and how much will it cost?

3. Who will be in charge of reaching these people?

If you take these simple questions seriously when you are doing your forecasting, you will be able to assign responsibility to the sales staff and determine who your most likely customers are going to be. Remember, consumers that are similar to your current customers are most likely to buy what you are offering.

You must take both sets of questions seriously if you wish to prepare a forecast. You need to know who your current customers are and understand the numbers behind how they became your customers. By putting this information together in a zero-based budget, you will be able to forecast the upcoming year and gain control from a management point of view. **LM**

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Attention: Always read the label before use and carefully follow all label directions and precautions.

Circle No. 118 on Reader Inquiry Card

THE UNSEEN KILLER

Subsurface drainage is one of the keys to keeping grass, trees and shrubs healthy. But without a few 'tricks of the trade' suggested here, it's difficult to monitor.

by Ricks H. Pluenneke, Ph.D.

Too often when the importance of internal soil drainage is mentioned, people misunderstand. That includes some professional engineers and landscape specialists. They tend to think in terms of the water they can see moving across the surface. So they work hard to improve that water's exit from properties with

concrete-lined ditches, proper slopes and surface improvements.

They don't realize that water is also slowly flowing downslope beneath the surface where it can run into concrete curbs and other obstacles that act as dams in its path, causing it to accumulate and kill plants growing there.

Plants as traps

Concrete ditches and drains help, but they still don't directly address some of the drainage problems we often build into our landscapes. Water often lies trapped in subsurface depressions. These are created by digging

holes in tight soils like clay, and then backfilling them with mixtures of sandy loam, organic material, gravel and all kinds of "improved" backfill combinations. These traps are often freshly-dug tree or shrub pits, recessed flower and groundcover beds, and similar areas in turf that have been "improved" by backfilling with "better" soil.

Soils, to varying degrees, are composed of organic material (humus), clay, sand and silt. The particles that make up clay are about 1,000 times smaller than those in a sand. Clays retain both the good (fertilizers) and bad (salts) extremely well. Sand does not.

Ricks Pluenneke is a plant science consultant to industry and institutions with an office and laboratory in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, area. He is also a Certified Professional Agronomist, Certified Professional Chemist and Certified Professional Crop Scientist.

Taking a look at the roots

How can you best cope with a situation where young tree roots are rotting from a lack of oxygen? Consider using raised beds for the shrubs or plant on slopes. Don't plant the trees quite so deep. Back off an inch or two, or even plant them in a raised-bed fashion. (I've named two approaches to this planting style "New Orleans" and "Semi-New Orleans," which is pictured here. Forgive me, New Orleans.)

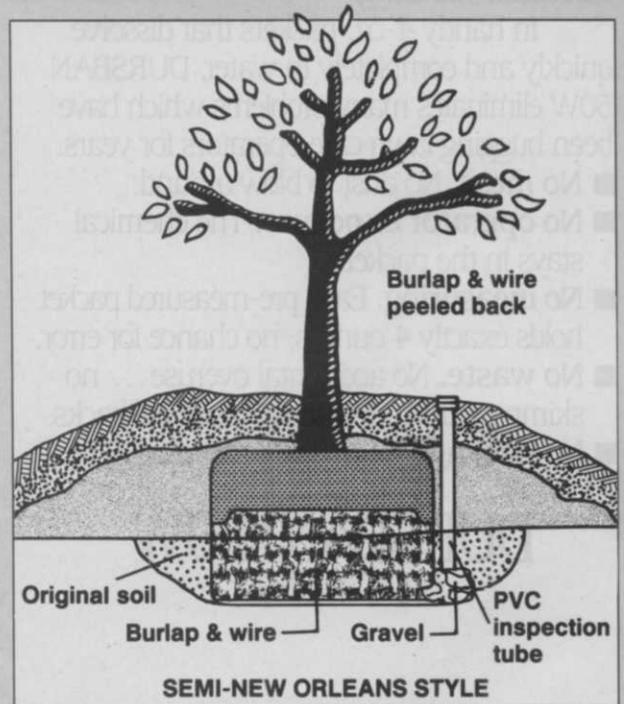
Inspection tube

Install a PVC inspection tube beside each tree when planting them so you can see if water is standing around the roots. Otherwise you may never know what's killing the plants. Water need only be present for 48 hours before damage begins. You may not see actual foliage damage until next spring or summer when those extra roots are needed by the plant. I've probably reinvented the wheel with PVC inspection tubes, but I've been on a crusade for them for years, trying to get landscape professionals to use the tubes more in tight, poorly-drained soils. They're simple, cheap and effective. I use another version on containerized plants too.

Cut a piece of PVC pipe (some people use four-inch diameter, others use smaller) to a length so that it will reach from the bottom of the hole to the surface, and preferably a couple of inches beyond. Put an end cap on it. Leave it white, paint it brown or green, etc. They are easy to put in at planting time, but hard to put in as an afterthought. Smaller versions are helpful in shrub beds and at other places in the landscape.

Backfilling helpful

When planting trees, consider putting the original soil back in the holes around the balls (and an inspection tube). Put a shovelful of gravel around the bottom of the



inspection tube. Use your organic mulch, peat moss or pine bark on the soil surface, surrounding the planted tree and extending out past the edge of the ball six to 12 inches. Check the inspection tube during irrigation and wet weather to see if water is standing around the ball excessively. If it is, find a way to siphon it out and/or cut down on watering.

-Dr. Pluenneke

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**Over-the-top
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Fertilizers and other salts are readily leached out of sands, so more frequent applications are normally needed. With regard to particle size, silt is intermediate to clay and sand, and has many of the good properties of both and fewer of the bad ones. The relatively large pore spaces in most sands allow water to be absorbed rapidly, but it's retained much longer by clay soils.

However, if a sandy soil is in a no-drain hole pot or has been used as "improved soil" in a poorly-drained hole in clay soil, salts cannot drain away. They will accumulate until they cause damage. In a properly constructed raised bed, they could freely drain away with excess water.

Water moves slowly through clay soil, since it has such small pore spaces between its tiny particles. It moves even slower if the soil has been compacted by equipment during construction, or even by excessive foot traffic (athletes, etc.), particularly when the soil is wet.

Low-salt diet

A high sodium content in the soil will

cause clay to collapse and become more dense, decreasing water movement through it. Irrigating with soft water (high in sodium and low in calcium) can increase this problem.

Let's assume you're putting in a new landscape and the existing soil is mainly clay. There may be some areas in the landscape where water tends to stand, so you order a few loads of a good sandy loam and smooth it out across the property, giving it a nice 6- to 8-inch layer of topsoil. Then a sprinkler system and sod, St. Augustine for example, are put in.

During the season you also dig holes two feet deep to plant red oaks and replace the soil that came out of the holes with a nice mixture of loam, peat moss and sand. You also dig two long beds along the front of the new building, 12 to 18 inches deep, replacing the soil with the same improved soil and plant shrubs there.

A year passes. The grass is nice and green, but some of the red oaks have what looks like fall foliage—in April. Two die by the following spring. Several shrubs are looking sick, too. The boss says water them more, so you do. In one or two locations, the St. Au-

gustine tends to develop disease problems in the spring. What's happening?

Let's make a slice down through the landscape so we can see what's happening. We find that beneath the surface, water stands for long periods in the porous soil of the tree pits like it does in a pot with no drain holes. It's practically impossible to overwater a plant that has reasonable drainage, but you have to water poorly-drained plants very carefully.

Water accumulation

Water accumulates in the tree pits, in this case from heavy irrigation of the lawn, and stands there for long periods during wet weather too. Young roots rot from lack of oxygen in the stagnant water. Disease problems may be favored, too. Similar things are happening in the shrub beds, where water from the roof adds to the situation. You can't see the problem, because the "improved" porous soil hides it. But it's there.

If you anticipate an excessively wet situation, plant trees and shrubs whose habitat normally includes wet sites along sloughs and creeks. The trees might include cedar elm, bald cypress, willows, sweetgum, birches and others.

The problem with the St. Augustine is from standing puddles (beneath the loam) that are contributing to disease problems. It's always better to fill in depressions in turf with soil similar to the original soil before putting the loam on top. Also, be sure to "scratch up" the surface of the original soil before applying the new one. This will help avoid an interface between the two.

We've gotten it into our heads that humans and animals use oxygen, but green plants make oxygen and use carbon dioxide. That's not right! Humans, animals and green plants use oxygen 24 hours a day. Green plants do use carbon dioxide and make oxygen when they have enough light to run photosynthesis. The roots of green plants constantly need oxygen—even to take up water.

That's why plants standing in a flooded field will commonly be wilted. It's also why the symptoms for overwatering and underwatering are often the same. It's practically impossible to overwater a plant if it has good drainage. If the roots remain in a supersaturated mess for even a day or two, some roots will likely die.

Don't underestimate the importance of a good constant oxygen supply to plant roots. Without it, root growth, proper nutrient and water uptake, and many other systems essential to the plant may be seriously affected. **LM**

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