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Training to communicate

by Ed Wandtke

 One activity you need to do this winter is train your employees to better communicate with customers.

All too often, companies in the green industry focus their winter training on technical knowledge, equipment familiarity, vehicle safety and building maintenance or clean-up. None of these help deal with the source of revenue: customers.

Face the challenge this winter and implement a customer communications program. Here are some topics I've found to be very helpful:

1. Asking customers for a referral;

2. Getting neighbors of customers to become customers themselves;

3. Reinforcing the quality of service when talking to customers;

Handling difficult questions;

5. Ending conversations without offending customers; and/or

6. Explaining the differences in service programs.

Training your employees to communicate is necessary, but many owners assume their employees are already effective.

Try getting your more experienced employees to stand up in front of other employees, and train the latter to answer the above questions.

Don't be surprised to see some reluctance among employees. Not all are good communicators.

Have a professional trainer polish your personnel. The profits from investing in effective customer communication will be seen this spring as your employees go back to working with that most important person in your business, the customer.

-The author is a principle at Wandtke & Associates Management Consultants, 2586 Oakstone Dr., Columbus, OH 43231. For more information, phone (614) 891-3111.

NORTON from page 26

Association of America.

"I'm proud to have been a director of PLCAA because I think it does a great job of representing the best interests of all lawn care companies, both large and small," says Norton.

On a personal level, business associates, including competitors, appreciate his wit, which can be warm or sharp—but always insightful. They value his observations and thoughts on the industry which he shares with other lawn care business people, particularly through his involvement with PLCAA.

"Its been an awful lot of fun and an experience I wouldn't trade for anything," says Norton of his involvement with lawn care.

Both he and the company he helps direct—Barefoot—do the marketplace, the industry, and themselves proud by delivering quality, customer-appreciated lawn services at a price that's fair to everybody.

Previous "Person of the Year" award winners: Jerry Faulring, 1984; Richard Lee Duke, 1985; Ron Giffen, 1986; Bill Fischer, 1987; Jim Marria, 1988; James Fitzgibbon, 1989; James Brooks, 1990; and Marty Erbaugh, 1991.

-Ron Hall



Useful literature and videos offered to LM readers

GOLF VIDEO... "Green Sanctuaries" is a new video that highlights the positive impact golf courses can have on the environment. It shows how the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System works on golf courses. For more information, write: Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System, 131 Rarick Rd., Selkirk, NY 12158; or phone (518) 767-9051.

PGMS MEMBERS... The complete updated 1992 Professional Grounds Manage-ment Society membership directory is now available, *free* to members, \$25 to non-members. For more information, call the PGMS at (410) 667-1833.

PESTICIDE REFERENCES... From the Florida Turfgrass Association comes the "Material Safety Data Sheets Handbook" (Vol. 1) and the "Complete Pesticide Label Handbook" (Vol 2). It includes a complete set of pesticide labels used in turf and ornamental management throughout Florida. Cost is \$175 to FTA members, \$200 to nonmembers, plus \$5.75 shipping. Send check or credit card number to FTA/Label Book Program, 302 S. Graham Ave., Orlando, FL 32803-6399.

BENEFICIAL ANIMALS... Thomson Publications has put together a list of beneficial animals used for biological pest control purposes. Each insect, mite or nematode is listed by description, pests controlled, handling and shipping procedures, application and usage, and where it can be obtained. It is available for \$16.50 from Thomson Publications, P.O. Box 9335, Fresno, CA 93791. Phone (209) 435-2163 or fax (209) 435-8319.

ON THE DISABILITY ACT...Richard I. Lehr, legal counsel for the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, has written "Guide to Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act." The guide is \$10 for PLCAA members, \$25 for nonmembers, plus \$2.50 shipping and handling. Send orders payable to PLCAA, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd. NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112.

EXPO VIEWING...A *free* 10-minute video about the International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo is now available. The tape highlights the 10th annual event coming next July, giving the viewer a feel for the Expo's size and scope. One copy per organization can be borrowed by phoning Laurie Dunlop at (800) 558-8767.

WATER-EFFICIENT LANDSCAPES...The California Landscape Contractors Association has developed an information kit on the Model Water-Efficient Landscape Ordinance, which goes in effect in that state Jan. 1, 1993. It contains the

entire actual Model Ordinance, an article by Marsha Prillwitz and Lynn Anderson-Rodriguez, an extension article on the landscape coefficient method, information on the WUCOLS project, and more. To order, send \$20 (CLCA members) or \$30 (nonmembers) to CLCA, 2021 N St., Suite 300, Sacramento, CA 95814. To order by MasterCard or Visa, phone (916) 448-2522.

WAGE WARES...The Associated Landscape Contractors of America has published its "Landscape Industry Wage and Benefit Study." The regionalized data is available by sending \$25 (ALCA members) or \$45 (nonmembers) to ALCA Publications Dept., 12200 Sunrise Valley Dr., Suite 150, Reston, VA 22091.

TRAINING MANUAL... The "Landscape Technician: Installation Training Manual" is a copyrighted guide for hands-on training for landscape installation personnel. Problems include plan reading, irrigation installation, plant installation, concrete installation, grading and drainage, brick on sand, sand box construction and seed and sod installation. The manual, which can be used in a classroom or a hands-on setting, sells for \$49.95 from Landscape Horticulture Center for Personnel Development (L.H.C.P.D.), 2509 E. Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 109, Westlake Village, CA 91362. Phone (805) 498-6916.







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GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS

DECEMBER

13-15: Sports Turf Managers Association Annual Conference & Exhibition, Indianapolis (Ind.) Convention Center. Phone: (312) 644-6610.

15-17: Missouri Lawn & Turf Conference & Trade Show, Holiday Inn Executive Center, Columbia, Mo. Telephone: (314) 882-4087.

15-16: Turfgrass and Ornamental Pest Control Workshop, Turfgrass Technology Center, Marion County Extension Office, Indianapolis, Ind. Telephone: (317) 846-7020.

18: Pesticide Safety for Landscape Contractors, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J. Telephone: (908) 932-9271.

JANUARY

3-8: Advanced Landscape Plant IPM Short Course, sponsored by Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland. Telephone: (301) 405-7665.

4-6: Ontario (Canada) Turfgrass Symposium, University of Guelph. Telephone: (519) 767-5000.

4-6: Mid-Atlantic Nurserymen's Trade Show, Baltimore Convention Center. Write: MANTS, P.O. Box 314, Perry Hall, MD 21128.



5-7: Michigan Turfgrass Conference, Holiday Inn South, Lansing, Mich. Telephone: (517) 321-1660.

6: Sacramento Valley Landscape & Nursery Expo, Sacramento (Calif.) Community Center. Telephone: (916) 442-4470.

7-8: Nevada Landscape Conference & Trade Show, Reno (Nev.) Hilton Hotel. Telephone: (702) 851-0423.

11-12: Arkansas Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show, Arkansas Statehouse Convention Center. Telephone (501) 663-8810.

11-13: Nebraska Turfgrass Conference, Holiday Inn Central, Omaha, Neb. Telephone: (402) 463-5418.

11-13: Great Lakes Trade Exposition, sponsored by Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, Amway Grant Plaza, Grand Rapids, Mich. Telephone: (517) 487-1282.

11-22: Cornell Turfgrass Management Short Course, Ithaca, N.Y. Telephone: (607) 255-1792.

12-14: California Nursery Industry Seminar, Cal Poly/San Luis Obispo. Telephone: (916) 567-0200.

13: Sports Turf Managers Association/South Florida Chapter meeting, site undetermined. Telephone: (305) 938-7477 or (305) 938-0217.

13-15: North Carolina Turfgrass Conference & Show, Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, N.C. Telephone: (919) 695-1333.

14-16: Mid-Am Trade Show, Hyatt Regency Chicago. Telephone: (708) 526-2010.

18-21: Virginia Turf & Landscape Conference & Trade Show, Richmond (Va.) Centre. Telephone: (804) 340-3473.

NEXT MONTH:



COVER STORY

Changing turf for changing landscapes

LM REPORTS

Utility vehicles

FEATURES

Growing your own bedding plants Selling used equipment Building retaining walls Growing your business up—not out

JOB TALK

Working within limits of customer budgets

This New Jersey landscape maintenance company follows a standard chemical program to keep customers happy.

In a sour economy, customers sometimes ask landscapers to cut corners. If they do, they usually end up regretting it. Less-thanexpected results almost always bring howls from customers, no matter how accommodating the landscaper was trying to be.

The key for landscapers, then, is to give customers the most



Steve Stys and Rhone-Poulenc's Rick Fritz discuss new techniques to manage weed infestations.

"bang" for their buck, while continually educating them on the vital role that products such as herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers play in plant health.

This is the approach taken by Steve Stys, president of Leonard Reinhardt Inc., a commercial landscape maintenance company in Clifton, N.J.

"Unfortunately, we are now in a situation where customers are looking almost exclusively at the cost of work, and are not giving enough consideration to what the results will be," says Stys. He believes the current recession is largely responsible for creating "brutal" competition among landscape companies.

"We usually deal with large clients such as condominium management groups which have set budgets. Out of necessity, I have learned to make sure their budgets cover the costs that are needed to ensure they have a beautifully managed landscape area.

"I've been called into several jobs midway through completion because the customer wasn't happy with his landscaper," Stys continues. "When I study the existing program, it's easy to pinpoint



Steve Stys believes in educating his customers, rather than just providing services and sending out bills.

important steps that were eliminated to lower the cost of the job. But when I try to set up a new program that will provide the desired result, the bottom line still seems to be money."

In order to meet customer needs, Stys developed customized maintenance programs for each client and began explaining the plans to customers in terms of long-range savings. "Many people still don't understand the need for chemicals and therefore are hesitant to pay for them. Often, all they know is what they hear on the news," says Stys.

"I think it's better to teach people about pesticides and how they are used rather than simply presenting them with invoices for completed work. It takes extra effort, but it makes for a happier customer. It's good business sense."

Stys has developed a standard chemical program which is written into his customers' contracts. This program begins with a spring clean-up and pre-emergence granular herbicide application. During the season, Stys applies a minimum of four fertilizer applications, two applications of Sevin insecticide, two additional herbicide applications, and—depending on individual sites—applications of Chipco Aliette fungicide as needed. During the fall, he completes the program with lime applications.

"I have found it is important for customers to understand what we are doing and why it is necessary," Stys says. "Many times, they don't have enough experience with pesticides to understand what you are telling them, so you have to explain the basics, including proper application techniques."

Stys prefers to use granular formulations when available to control his pest problems. Because he believes people are often concerned about liquid spray formulations drifting, he tries to avoid them. "I simply set the spreader settings, open the bag and pour it in. I don't have to worry about employees mixing liquids," says Stys.

For pre-emergence control of particularly troublesome crabgrass, dandelion, chickweed and nutsedge, Stys uses Chipco Ronstar G herbicide to control young weed seedlings during germination.

For Stys and other landscapers in his area, the challenge of providing top-quality results for clients with shrinking budgets is likely to remain for some time. But by combining customer education with the use of control products, they are taking a large step toward securing a niche in a very tight marketplace.

SPOTLIGHT

Get a load of this heavy equipment made for the golf/landscape market!

Several manufacturers responded to a recent LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT request for information about their heavy equipment lines.

For landscape managers who are considering the purchase of heavy equipment in the near future, here are some new machines hitting the market:

MELROE (Bobcat)

The Melroe Co. has introduced a new concept in skid-steer loaders—the Bobcat 7753—which it calls "the ideal lift-and-carry machine."

A longer wheelbase and added tread width combine to produce a smooth ride, easy handling and extra lift capacity. Maximum travel speed is 7 mph.

The 7753 has excellent digging ability, breakout force and axle torque characteristics. With a rated operating capacity of 1700 lbs. and a maximum tipping load of 3800 lbs., the 7753 is well suited for moving palletized materials, transplanting trees, augering postholes and preparing seedbeds. It has many construction and landscaping uses. And more than 30 attachments give the 7753 multi-job versatility on any site.

A new lift arm configuration gives it excellent lift height (115 inches to the hinge pin) and a maximum forward reach (28.9 inches). Dump angle is 43 degrees.

The 7753 incorporates many of the same design features that were first built into the Bobcat 50 Series.

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YEAGER-TWOSE

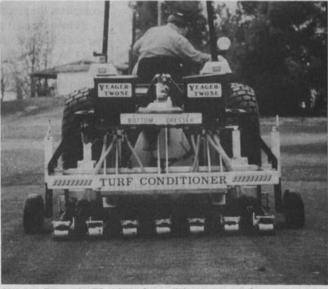
Yeager-Twose Equipment Division has a number of heavy machines designed for turf/landscape use, among them vibrating turf conditioners and vibrating plows.

The Model TC 10 turf conditioner has a 70-inch working width, 10-inch spacing and 2- to 8-inch controlled depth. Its shattering action beneath the soil surface allows free passage of moisture and air to roots. Its operation requires a 35 hp tractor. The Model TC 11 compact turf condi-



Melroe's Bobcat 7753 has extra lift capacity, smooth ride, easy handling.

tioner has hydraulic driven vibrating blades with bullets. Its working width: 27 inches. Blade spacing: 9 inch with adjustable 2- to 7-inch controlled depth. It requires a 13 hp tractor with 540 PTO and 3-point hitch. The Model BD 1000 bottom dresser attaches to the TC 10 turf conditioner and injects granular fertilizer, polymers, insecticides, gypsum, etc. in or below the roots at controlled rates from 5 to 500 lbs./acre while aerating. Hopper capacity



Yeager-Twose's TC 10 turf conditioner, great for applications in the golf/landscape industry.

is 2 cu. ft.

The Model 2020 VibraFlo bottom dresser also attaches to the TC 10. It injects sand, gypsum and other granules in or below the roots while aerating at rates to more than 2,000 lbs./acre. Its hopper capacity: 20 cu. ft.

Yeager-Twose vibrating plows include the Big K 14 and 20 pipe pullers, the Big K wire and cable plow attachment and the TC 11 vibrating sod cutter attachment.

The pipe pullers

attach to TC 11 turf conditioners; they plow in pipe to 14- and 20-inch depths with minimum surface disturbance. The sod cutter attaches to the TC 11 turf conditioner to cut sod to 18-inch widths. **Circle No. 192 on Reader Inquiry Card**

VERMEER

Vermeer Manufacturing has introduced a variety of products for use in the golf/landscape market.

The V-4150 and V-4750 are new fully hydrostatic trenchers specifically designed for operator ease. Operators can easily access their foot pedals. Both models have servo-controlled piston pumps in the hydrostatic system for better control and smoother ground drives, plus infinitely variable controls.

The Model 935 brush chipper has an automatic self-feed and a choice of two power selections, a 35 hp gas engine or 42 hp diesel. It is built to handle brush, limbs and construction debris up to 9 inches in diameter. Its 18-inch feed roller has a variable speed range up to 247 fpm, and its discharge chute can swing 270 degrees.

The Flextrak 115 vibratory plow is the only fully hydrostatic track machine of its kind featuring user-friendly automotivetype steering. The 116 hp unit is capable of making full power turns and can counterrotate within its own length.

The new Model 630B stump cutter cuts faster, deeper, wider, and extends farther than its predecessor. The 34 hp, 743 kg unit features a larger engine and bigger fuel tank. It also has a larger 46 cm cutting wheel which requires fewer rpms and less tooth speed. It cuts stumps down to 32 cm below ground, extends 102 cm and swings 142 cm wide without re-positioning. Curb clearance has also been increased to 21.5 cm.

Vermeer's 8000 tree spade is capable of transplanting trees up to 8 inches in diameter. It digs a giant tree ball that measures 54 inches deep and weighs 7500 lbs. The round, top-heavy shape of the ball measuring 80 inches in diameter enables operators to gather more critical root structure located near the ground's surface.

Circle No. 193 on Reader Inquiry Card

TELEDYNE PRINCETON

According to Teledyne Princeton, the Piggyback Material Handler is the strongest, most versatile machine of its kind. It can lift and load 3,000 to 5,500 lbs. with complete stability, since the load—



Vermeer's two new trenchers feature easy operation in a number of ways.

which can include turfgrass sod and other landscaping materials—is carried between the drive wheels.

5 P O T L I G H

"Work, area obstructions like curbs, logs, gravel, sand and mud can be navigated easily," Teledyne Princeton says.

The Piggyback has a hydrostatic steering system and a Direct Drive engine. You can choose engine sizes from 23 to 50 hp. Quick-mount attachments for the Piggyback include a two-stage mast, concrete forks, barrel clamp, hydraulic hole digger, scoop and side shifter.

Teledyne Princeton also offers the Maxi-Roll sod harvester. With this machine, two men can easily harvest "perfectly cut, high-quality sod in a fraction of the normal time and for a fraction of the normal cost," the company says.

Three cutting widths are available from three, 16-inch ribbons to one 48-inch slab. All widths can be cut in contnuous lengths of up to 100 ft. for maximum yardage.

The Maxi-Roll can also be used to lay



The 60-inch-wide Piggyback can carry loads from 3,000 lbs. up to 5,500 lbs.

acres of sod easily, simply by unrolling it.

Maxi-Roll features include a threepoint hitch, hydraulic connectors, remotemounted hydraulic controls and an adjustable cutterhead assembly.

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'STRICTLY GOLF'

NEW SECTION PREMIERS IN LM NEXT MONTH

"Strictly Golf" is required reading for the superintendent who wants to keep up with news and trends in the world of golf course maintenance.

Articles kicking off the first "Strictly Golf" section include:

• Golf Hole Re-Design: Do some of your holes have little "kinks" in them that you'd like to remedy? Listen as leading golf course architects emphasize design points and tell you what not to mess with.

• Coping with Wet Weather: 1992 was an extremely wet season in many parts of the U.S. last summer. Congressional Country Club superintendent Bill Black tells readers how he went about licking the problems.

• "A Course of a Different Texture:" Zoysiagrass is not for everyone. But it works perfectly for Alvamar Country Club in Lawrence, Kansas.



305 LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

LANDSCAPE

345

345 - KERR'S COST DATA FOR LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION by Norman L. Dietrich

Eleventh edition.

Gives you all the pricing data you need in one convenient source! Save hours on time-consuming research and calculations. Covers site, recreation and landscape development, plus specific data on materials, equipment, labor \$49.95

305 - LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT by James R. Feucht and Jack D. Butler

Learn important principles of installed landscapes - tree, shrub and turfgrass soils and fertilizers, improved planting and pruning techniques, integrated pest and disease management, spray-equip-ment calibration and care. \$42.95

370 - LANDSCAPE OPERATIONS: MANAGEMENT, METHODS & MATERIALS

by Leroy Hannebaum

Combines technical training in landscape science with easy-tounderstand accounting, business management, marketing and sales techniques – all in one handy vol-ume! Covers lawn installation, landscape planting and \$66.95 maintenance.

365 – LANDSCAPE PLANTS IN DESIGN

by Edward C. Martin

Annotated photographic guide to aesthetic and functional use of ornamental plants in landscape design. Trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers and turfgrasses are illustrated with over 1,900 black and white photographs. Contains a quick reference guide to particular design qualities, growing conditions. \$75.95

640

102 – LANDSCAPE PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D Enjoyable and educational! Dr. Rao has revised and updated his popular "Problem Management" columns and arranged them in a convenient, categorized format. Dr. Rao sheds light on a wide range of questions . \$39.95

TREES & SHRUBS

430 - DISEASES OF TREES AND SHRUBS by Sinclair, Lyon & Johnson

A comprehensive pictorial survey of diseases and environmental damage to trees and woody orna-mental plants in the U.S. and Canada. Up-to-date developments in fungal biology, taxonomy, bacteriology, virology, and envi-\$52.50 ronmental stress.

690 - INSECTS THAT FEED ON TREES AND SHRUBS by Johnson and Lyon

Essential information on readily identifying more than 650 insect pests and recognizing the injuries they cause. Enhanced with more than 200 color illustrations. \$52.50

720 - SHRUB IDENTIFICATION by George Symonds

Pictorial key to shrub identification. Contains more than 3,500 illustra-tions. Popular and botanical names are given to each shrub. Handy index tabs for quick \$19.50 reference.

750 - TREE IDENTIFICATION by George Symonds

Pictorial reference to tree identification. Illustrates leaves, buds, branches, fruit and bark. Like its sister publication, SHRUB IDENTI-FICATION, popular and botanical names are listed with index tabs for easy reference. \$17.95

630

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TURF



TURF

220 - CONTROLLING **TURFGRASS PESTS**

by Shurtleff, Fermanian, Randell No professional can be without this new comprehensive guide which provides the most recent information available on the identification, biology, control and management of every type of turfgrass \$56.95

235-LAWN CARE: A HANDBOOK FOR PROFESSIONALS by H. Decker, J. Decker

An invaluable guide for playing field managers, golf course managers, lawn care practitioners. Written by turfgrass professionals, this handy reference covers all aspects of turfgrass \$56.95 management.

640 - TURF IRRIGATION MANUAL by James Watkins

Keep pace with the latest developments in turf and landscape in rigation. Rotary sprinkler and golf course design systems, and expanded engineering and reference material make this a great reference for engineers, architect designers and contractors! \$32.95

620 - TURF MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

by Howard Sprague Practical guide to turf care under both healthy and poor conditions. Covers special turf problems in cool and warm regions, fertilizer use, regular turf care, weed and disease control. Includes useful seasonal schedules. \$26.60



630-TURFGRASS: SCIENCE AND CULTURE by James Beard

Used in many leading university turf programs, this comprehensive text and reference source includes findings of current research compiled from more than 12,000 sources.

\$62.95

690

110-TURF MANAGERS' HANDBOOK

by Daniel and Freeborg Second edition.

Entirely updated! Innovations resulting from research and practice have been added to reflect current techniques. Chapters on grasses, growth regulators and diseases have had extensive

GOLF

615-TURF MANAGEMENT FOR GOLF COURSES by James Beard

Ideal reference and "how to" guide, this fully illustrated USGA sponsored text details all phases of golf course operations - design and construction, turf management, course administration, irrigation, equipment and disease \$74.00 and pest control.

GENERAL

615

410 - DISEASES & PESTS OF **ORNAMENTAL PLANTS** by Pascal Pirone

Learn when and how to use the most effective fungicide, insecticides and other control methods on nearly 500 varieties of ornamental plants grown outdoors, under glass or in the home. This essential reference covers both diagnosis and treatment. \$55.00

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