

Minnesota Nurserymen's newsletter

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SIX METHODS FOR SUCCESS IN A SMALL STORE*

Robert E. Levinson

You can increase your store's potential for success by using the methods discussed below. In addition, use outside advisers such as your accountant, banker, and lawyer to help you over the rough spots.

1. CATER TO CUSTOMERS

Your number one job should be to please customers. Roll out the red carpet for them. They keep you in business. Learn their likes and make them feel you are interested. Give an extra bit of service. People will remember and tell others.

Be an expert on your products. Tell the truth about them even if it means a lost sale.

Build on existing customers. It is easier to increase their purchases than to draw in new people. Always thank customers.

2. BUILD AN IMAGE

A small retail or service firm needs steady and solid promotion. Part of building an image is using ads, handbills, and radio or TV spots. They set the stage.

Yet many a store suffers because the owner fumbles his role at the point of sale. There, use your personality to encourage people to think favorably of your store and its goods.

A clean, well-lighted store helps to create a favorable image of its merchandise.

3. ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK

The satisfaction customers get from trading with you will be only as good as your em-

ployees. So don't keep secrets from your staff. Give them facts about merchandise. Let them help decide what to put on sale and how to display it.

In teamwork, employees do their jobs without prompting. Teach them to know what to do, how to do it, and when to do it.

Praise employees in public. Correct them in private.

4. PLAN AHEAD

Teamwork makes it easy to plan ahead. Employees who can do a variety of jobs save your time for management work.

Watch the calendar for special events which require advance preparation. Use the 5-day weather forecast as a clue for planning special sales.

Train an assistant. Put him in charge and take a day off. This will help him learn.

Look ahead. Estimate your sales and cash flow for the next 5 years. Make plans for financing the store's growth.

5. LOOK FOR PROFIT VOLUME

The name of the game in a store is profit. A big sales volume does not necessarily mean a high profit volume. Profit depends on what is left after you pay your bills.

Keep expenses in line. Make a list of them--both fixed and variable expenses. Rent is an example of fixed expenses. You have to pay it even if you don't sell anything. Bags and wrapping paper are examples of expenses that vary with sales.

Determine your break-even point--the point at which sales volume and expenses are equal--and use it as a control tool. Your sales volume should be way beyond the point at which your revenue and expenses balance.

6. PAY YOUR CIVIC RENT

A store's opportunities for expansion are tied up with the growth of the community in

* Reprinted from Small Marketers Aids No. 127, May 1967, Small Business Administration, Washington, D. C. Robert E. Levinson is Executive Vice President and General Manager, The Steelcraft Manufacturing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.

which it is located. When a city has a reputation for "being a good place to live," it is more apt to hold residents and attract new ones.

You "pay your civic rent" when you take part in local clubs and other organizations that work to build the community.

One caution: Take on only what you can handle. It is better to use your management skills effectively on a few projects than to squander them on many.

NEEDS OF EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE*

Vincent K. Bailey

Change in today's fast-moving life is more pronounced in the field of ornamental horticulture than in many other endeavors. Our population is changing from an urban to a suburban one. The average wage earner (salaried and hourly) is moving onto lots that permit and require the use of ornamental material.

The advent of good highways and the increased use of automobiles have made it possible and desirable for industry to move into areas that require plant material and a good lawn. Corporations have found that it's good business to provide pleasant surroundings for their employees.

A shorter work week has provided the home owner with more leisure and given him incentive for improving his surroundings. Coupled with these facts is the consumer's continually increasing income. "Consumer after-tax income is increasing at an annual rate of about eight percent." ¹

The experts are predicting a doubled population by the year 2000, which is not far away. This fact alone will create the need for increased quantities of ornamental plant material as well as horticultural services to industry and the home owner.

The highway beautification program has been a major factor in stimulating interest in the aesthetic features of our environment. The rapidly increasing demand for parks and recreation areas has further stimulated this interest in ornamentals.

* Editor's Note: This paper was presented at a dinner meeting November 8 in Waseca, Minnesota. Members of the legislative building commission, Congressman Rodney N. Searle, Keith McFarland, Assistant Dean of the University's Institute of Agriculture, and representatives of four agriculture-related businesses were present.

¹ Nations Business, November 1967, page 8.

Use of cultured sod rather than seeding to obtain turf has increased markedly over the past 4-5 years. L. C. Snyder, head of the University's Horticultural Science Department, estimates that this business has grown in the past few years from nothing to a present-day annual volume of \$12,000,000.

What do these facts have to do with the building needs at Waseca? The change has been made to provide 2-year post high school education. I urge including ornamental horticulture education in the curriculum. A recent survey of florists; people involved in park systems, golf courses, and cemeteries; and people in the nursery industry indicated conclusively that these groups all need employees with the same basic scientific education. They need 200-300 additional employees annually. And they need employees with more scientific background than they've been able to use in the past.

If any further evidence of this need for better trained horticultural employees is needed, let me cite the interest of the U. S. Department of Education. In February 1967, I was asked to go to Washington to help set up a suggested curriculum in ornamental horticulture for junior colleges throughout the United States. The Department considered horticultural education of sufficient importance to make it the third area of concern in junior college education.

The school and facilities at Waseca can be adapted to provide this type of education, and very little building expenditure would be necessary. The present school is well situated to serve industry and to provide an opportunity for young folks who don't want to take a 4-year college course.

DATES TO REMEMBER

HORTICULTURAL SHORT COURSES

January-March 1968

- January 19 Christmas Tree Growers (This is put on by the School of Forestry, but many nurserymen come to it.)
- March 18 Garden Store Operators
- March 19 Turf Growers
- March 20 Shade Tree Maintenance
- March 22 Commercial Fruit Growers

SITE PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE

Dale Connolly, Rose Hill Nurseries, is using the following questionnaire when interviewing new customers who want complete landscape designs. Connolly came up with the form by adapting material presented at a landscape design short course to his own needs. During the worst of the spring rush, the form may not be used in detail, but it still is useful for analyzing a home properly even when all blanks are not completed.

Connolly feels that he has had good results in using the information gathered in this kind of interview, particularly since it gives him a good overall picture of what he is trying to accomplish with landscape materials.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

3. Phone _____

4. Approach area
Drive (type) _____
Number of cars _____
Off street parking _____
Privacy from street _____

Entrance walk _____
Entrance garden _____
Outdoor lighting _____

Types of materials desired
Shrubs _____ Evergreens _____ Combination _____

5. Service area
Clothes drying
 Permanent _____
 Temporary _____
 Existing _____
Children's play area _____
 Swing set _____
 Sand box _____
 Hard surface area _____
 Other _____

Trash or incinerator _____
Cutting flower garden _____
 General size _____
Vegetable garden _____
 General size _____
Outdoor lighting _____
Separate from living area _____
Other elements (tool shed, etc.) _____

6. Private or outdoor living area
Patio _____
 Size of groups _____
 Guest use _____
 Family use _____
 Shape _____
Outdoor cooking
 Fireplace _____
 Fire pit _____
 Portable grill _____
Water feature _____
 Pool _____
 Fountain _____

Outdoor lighting _____
Lawn games
 Types _____
Privacy desired _____
 Plantings _____
 Fencing _____
 Combination _____
Good views _____
Bad views _____
Other _____

7. Specific materials desired on property
 Trees _____ Shrubs _____

Evergreens _____ Other _____

8. Planting will be done by:
 Owner _____ Nursery personnel _____ Figure both ways _____

9. General
Children (ages) _____
Pets _____
 House or run needed or in _____
Probable maintenance _____
Type of soil _____
Basic type of design desired
 Straight line effect _____
 Curves _____
 Formal _____
 Informal _____
 No preference _____
 House color _____
 Anticipate any change _____

Can existing shrubs be moved _____
Shrub removal requirements _____
Additional walks planned _____
Bird attraction _____
Specific amount allowed for site development over a period of time _____
Amount allowed for immediate needs _____
Size of materials desired
 Start with smaller stock _____
 Medium _____
 More mature look _____
Other _____

THE IMAGE YOU CREATE

Mervin C. Eisel

A desk is a convenient collection point for correspondence, telephone messages, catalogs, bills, and a thousand other valuables. When at last you find time to sit down behind it, you're confronted by a jungle of paper.

Recently, a stack of envelopes appeared on my desk. I thumbed through them several times. It was obvious that some of the letters were from nurserymen, but some of the others puzzled me. Some were addressed in a barely legible script (my country cousin?). Then I remembered that all the letters were from Minnesota nurserymen. At this point, I changed shoes--I put myself in your customers' shoes and asked myself what image these envelopes create for nurserymen.

I evaluated each one and placed the envelopes in three piles: "professional nurserymen," "good businessmen," and "amateurs." There were 7 envelopes in the first pile, 21 in the second, and 11 in the third.

Envelopes in the "professional" group had typewritten addresses. They were printed in black or dark green ink and several had designs printed on them. Two of the envelopes were mint green with green ink. Envelopes in this group were distinctive and imaginative.

The envelopes in the "good businessmen" category were plain but neat. They were all printed and most had typewritten addresses.

Envelopes in the "amateurs" group were handwritten and had handwritten, pad stamped, or gummed label returns. One was a cheap, brown envelope.

Most of the envelopes were printed in a single color. Several were in black and dark green, an attractive combination. Four were printed in other two-color combinations. One envelope--printed in red and green--seemed garish.

By now, you've probably decided I'm not talking about your envelopes. But my next point almost certainly applies to all nurserymen. Why don't Minnesota nurserymen display the emblems of their professional organizations on their letterheads and envelopes? Only one nurseryman used both the symbol of the American Association of Nurserymen and the Minnesota Association on his envelope. One used the symbol of the Minnesota Nurserymen Association and the Twin City Nurserymen Association, and one used the Minnesota Nurserymen Association symbol alone. These symbols promote your professional image. (Your president, Ed Reed, discussed this point quite effectively at the convention in December.)

If you're sitting at your desk right now, take a close look at your stationery. Ask your-

self what a customer thinks when he receives your envelope in the mail. When your present supply is exhausted, you might want to make some changes!

Guess I'd better change my shoes and get back to the piles of paper on my desk.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

You can find helpful management and marketing information in recent publications of the Small Business Administration, Washington, D. C. The booklets listed below are available at no charge from the Small Business Administration, Rieman Building, 816 Second Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402.

Accounting Services for Small Service Firms. 7 pages. Irving M. Cooper. Small Marketers Aids No. 126, Small Business Administration, Washington, D. C.

Cooper is a member of a firm of certified public accountants, and this booklet concerns the information needed to set up a successful bookkeeping record. He charts how a firm can be analyzed to learn its true financial picture. He discusses the advice and assistance that a trained accountant can provide.

Checklist for Developing a Training Program. 7 pages. Leonard J. Smith. Management Aids No. 186. Small Business Administration, Washington, D. C.

"This aid is designed to help small businessmen who need to set up a systematic program for training their employees. The questions are designed to provide a step-by-step approach to the task of organizing and conducting a successful program of employee training." (Quoted from a summary of the leaflet.)

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