

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

Shared Interests



In his President's Message this month, STMA president Greg Petry discusses specialty chemical manufacturer PBI-Gordon's offer to include STMA membership applications in its promotional literature. This bodes well for STMA's new governing regime. Although they've been "in office" for only a little more than a month, it looks like Petry and the new board have already accomplished something substantial in this arrangement between STMA and PBI-Gordon. It's a perfect example of the teamwork required between commercial interest and professional trade organizations

if both want to grow through the '90s.

I suspect some will view this arrangement with trepidation, perhaps questioning the motives of commercial interests in "helping" the association, perhaps wondering if the association "sells" a piece of itself in the process. Those questions will always exist and they should be asked — each arrangement of this kind should be reviewed by both entities with eyes wide open. "Purists" will argue that once you give commercial interests a foothold in your organization, you lose control of your destiny. You'll be "used" as nothing more than a market, and tossed away once that market is saturated.

The bottom-line is making money, right? Would any commercial entity be interested in STMA if it didn't hold financial potential?

The answers to both questions are yes — and no. To view these affiliations in purely black-and-white terms, good or evil, one way or the other without degree, is both close-minded and naive. Yes, commercial interests want — no, need — to find new markets and new groups to sell to. They need to make money. They are also interested in groups and markets that offer money-making potential. But to see profit as their sole motivation is unfair and uninformed. There are "commercial" people and companies who have done as much to foster the growth of STMA as those in the general membership, people like Eugene Mayer of O.M. Scott & Sons, Bob Tracinski of John Deere. To paint them all with same brush, to simply assume that profit is their only motivation, is a form of elitist ignorance, a form of bigotry. It's also self-defeating.

As sports turf managers, and as an industry, you want to be seen as a viable market — it's where your power lies. Numbers, in terms of membership growth are important to the health of the organization, but true clout will stem from its economic strength — the collective buying power of its members. Quantify and solidify that, and you become a force to be reckoned with.

Arrangements like the one Petry mentions between STMA and PBI-Gordon aren't a "necessary evil," they're just plain necessary and will become more so in the future. Carefully planned and implemented, commercial affiliations and arrangements don't harm STMA. They help it grow.

Matthew Trulio

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JANUARY

31-Feb. 7 International Golf Course Show. Dallas, TX. Contact: GCSAA, (913) 841-2240.

FEBRUARY

3-6 California and Pacific Southwest Recreation and Park Conference. Anaheim, CA. Contact: California Park and Recreation Society (916) 446-2777.

7-8 29th annual Shade Tree Symposium and Trade Show. Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster, PA. Contact: Elizabeth Wertz (215) 795-2096.

20-23 Western Canadian Turfgrass Conference, Empress Hotel, Victoria, BC. Contact: Office of Continuing Education, University of Guelph, (519) 767-5000.

20-22 Southern Chapter Annual Conference, Jamboree and Trade-show. Clarion Inn, New Orleans, LA. Contact: Dwayne M. Carter (919)789-4747.

22-24 Western Pennsylvania Turf Conference & Trade Show. Pittsburgh Expo Mart/Radisson Hotel, Monroeville, PA. Contact: Eric Oesterling (412) 837-1402.

MARCH

5-8 45th Canadian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Show. Calgary Convention Centre, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Contact: Julie Law, (905) 602-8873.

APRIL

11-12 Southeast Turfgrass Conference, Tifton, GA. Contact: (912) 386-3353.

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