

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

How are we benefiting personally from the proven and known benefits of our products?

By Sid Raisch

When I meet people who read my articles, they frequently say, "It was like you wrote that for me." I tell them a lot of other people thought the same thing because these things I write about are fairly common. Why wouldn't they be?

After all, we all have pretty similar experiences in this business — with regional differences, mainly related to the weather. But outside of that it is at least 80 percent the same.

The topic for this article and most others is derived from testing out theories that I develop from experiences from working with clients. If the same thing comes up over and over you can bet that after the test period an article will eventually cover that topic.

One of those theories I've been testing is about how we benefit personally from the proven and known benefits our products. So I've asked about a dozen groups of garden center owners and managers on tours, in seminars and in their stores to raise their hand if there is a tree shading their air conditioning unit at their home.

Now think of your own air conditioning units at your home, and at your office. Are they shaded by a tree?

Well, why aren't they? Yes, I'm talking to you!

Practice, Practice, Practice

We all have read the same electric bill stuffers that our customers have. They know that a shaded A/C unit saves 15 percent on electric energy, and so do we. We've discussed this fact with our friends and customers. But there our own A/C unit sits out in the hot baking sun still today after all these years we've known this.

We have the high electric bill and complain about it. We have the tools. We have the trees on

hand. We have the advantage over our customers of an employee discount or wholesale cost.

I'm not sure which is the bigger problem: throwing money away to the electric company or not believing enough in the benefit of our own product to actually use it ourselves.

No wonder we don't sell more trees. We don't practice what we preach. Do you think if the customer saved money on electricity that they may feel more friendly toward investing more money on their landscaping?

Allow me to continue. When we do plant something at our own home, do we prepare the soil the way we would tell our customer to? I thought not. Oh, are we in too much of a hurry? Or do we not believe that the soil is really not good and the amendment will help the plant to get a good start, and to thrive?

No wonder so many customers leave without buying soil amendment. We don't practice what we preach. Do you think if their new plantings took off and impressed them that they might plant more? No wonder we don't sell more plants.

Please allow me just one more opportunity to beat up on you today. Think for a minute about what we know about how professionally designed landscaping adds to the value of commercial real estate. The benefits are well documented and we all know it.

Now think about the landscaping at your own garden center. Enough said? I thought so. What in the name of Robert Hendrickson, Ian Baldwin, Stan Pohmer, John Stanley and Sid Raisch are you waiting for?

To quote Mike McCabe, owner of McCabe's Greenhouse & Florist in Lawrenceburg, Ind., and president of OFA, "Garden centers don't need a

national promotion to advertise for them. They don't even invest in their own landscaping to advertise for them."

Let's think for a minute about what happens when we don't practice what we preach. Do you think it may have something to do with why our customers don't appreciate us or our product enough to buy more of it more often? I do.

Now, it is time to get up and out there and do something about this.

And don't even think about doing a half-baked job at it. Remember, it is *professionally designed* landscaping that increases commercial property value.

The increase of commercial property value does not just mean the selling price of the real estate. It also means the ability of that real estate to play an important role of marketing the product that is sold from it.

Let me know if you decide to finally practice what you preach. Tell me what you did about these things and what benefits you finally received. **LGR**



Sid Raisch is founder of Horticultural Advantage, a consulting firm to independent garden centers and service provider to The Garden Center Group. He has created the Advantage Development System to help client companies increase effectiveness to earn greater profits.

To learn more about developing your own advantage development system visit www.AdvantageDevelopmentSystem.com