

NSGA Marketing Recommendations

Purpose: educate and win-over influencers to create market conditions where NSGA members can thrive both in the short and long-term.

Limitations:

- Budget –the allocation of \$13K is insufficient to create impactful, far-reaching marketing campaigns, i.e. targeted Adwords, direct mail, industry organization sponsorships, etc.
- Personnel – building rapport with professional influencers often requires a personal touch. When dealing with municipalities, landscape architects and other professional decision makers, education is important but ultimately trust/relationship building is what changes the spec. It may not be practical or cost effective to have someone in a permanent business development role with the NSGA.
- Actionable market data – professional influencer data from the Edelman report is statistically insignificant, with only 6 respondents. We think we know the pain-points for professional influencers, but do we? The consumer data from the same report is somewhat more relevant, but even there the sample is somewhat small and spread out. How do we determine where best to focus limited resources?
 - TPI's influencer data is very strong, but Canada is under-represented, with only 2 respondents.

Recommendations:

1. Grow the NSGA brand and the **natural grass** mindshare in the Ontario market through cost effective and, whenever possible, free methods. Position the NSGA as a leading educational resource on ground covers and sustainability, making useful and impactful content available to our members, professional influencers and consumers.
2. Provide our membership base with the appropriate tools to connect and educate professional influencers in their markets:
 - Online access to directory of influencers in Ontario
 - Shared calendar of events from relevant organizations (i.e. CSLA/OALA. Landscape Ontario, FCM, etc.)
 - NSGA spec writing recommendations
 - Template sod technical sheet for growers
 - Benefits of natural grass info sheets – lawn, institutional, sport field
 - Lunch and Learn power point presentation template

- Presentation training for membership base?
- Forum for growers to share feedback from influencers in their areas, identify problems and share in determining solutions

Build strategic partnerships with other groups who have a similar stake in the promotion of natural grass or who are positioned to relay the message to a larger target audience:

- TPI, TWCA and/or A-List, CNLA, CSLA/OALA. FCM, Landscape Ontario
3. Utilize relevant market data to prioritize the approach to items 1 and 2, creating strong and cost-effective messaging and support materials. Explore opportunities to continue to gather feedback from our target groups directly, with limited investment, or sponsoring further TPI (FleishmanHillard) surveying in Canada. If the latter, we should also explore partnering with other TPI member growers in Canada to subsidize any investment.

TPI Opportunities:

TPI's marketing/communication strategy shares commonalities with the marketing priorities of the NSGA. In the interest of not re-inventing the wheel, the NSGA should aim to partner with TPI whenever possible to maximize our output, while minimizing the investment of resources.

1. Resources and educational materials
 - The new TPI website will include a 'Members-only toolkit' which will be accessible by the NSGA.
 - The NSGA should evaluate the full catalogue of materials made available by TPI and determine which would be most relevant in supporting the high-level purpose of our marketing program
 - The NSGA would request permission to use relevant resources on our website and make them available to our membership base, regardless of their affiliation with TPI.
 - In the interest of positioning and supporting both NSGA and TPI brands as a trusted source in the Ontario market, the NSGA request the opportunity to co-brand the materials that we will be repurposing, by attaching our logo alongside TPI
 - The NSGA would take on the minimal design costs associated with co-branding the materials – which would then be made available for our members online, and/or as physical copies as the case may dictate
 - Should TPI have any objections to co-branding, the NSGA would ask for permission to reproduce content on our own branded materials on a case-by-case basis, and as required
2. Social media/content generation
 - Are there opportunities to collaborate on social and blog content creation – including linking, cross-posting and cross-sharing

- What are our shared platforms? Are we able to review their plan and content calendar to determine what would be relevant?
- If the NSGA were to contribute towards the TPI social media budget, could we repurpose content and also the creation of more content relevant to influencers and consumers in our markets

3. Phasing out of “Turfgrass Sod”

- It’s clear from the FleishmanHillard research that the terminology “turfgrass” “sod” doesn’t resonate with decision makers – TPI are in the process of pivoting the messaging to “natural grass” – can TPI share with the NSGA any relevant Key Word data that they have identified for paid and organic seo purposes?

4. Market influencer research

- We’ve seen the FleishmanHillard report produced for TPI, but can we retain a summary of the key findings for our own purposes (provided there is a confidentiality agreement?)
- Would TPI be open to revisiting the surveying with a renewed focus on Canadian data – is this an initiative that could be contributed to/facilitated by the Canadian membership base, including the NSGA?
- What kind of investment would be required to produce a statistically significant survey of decision makers in Canada?