



For The Scott's Company, the \$2-billion lawn and garden company based in Marysville, Ohio, their slow-release plant fertilizer Osmocote was a longtime thorn in their side. The product had flourished in sales to commercial growers but languished in sales among home gardeners.

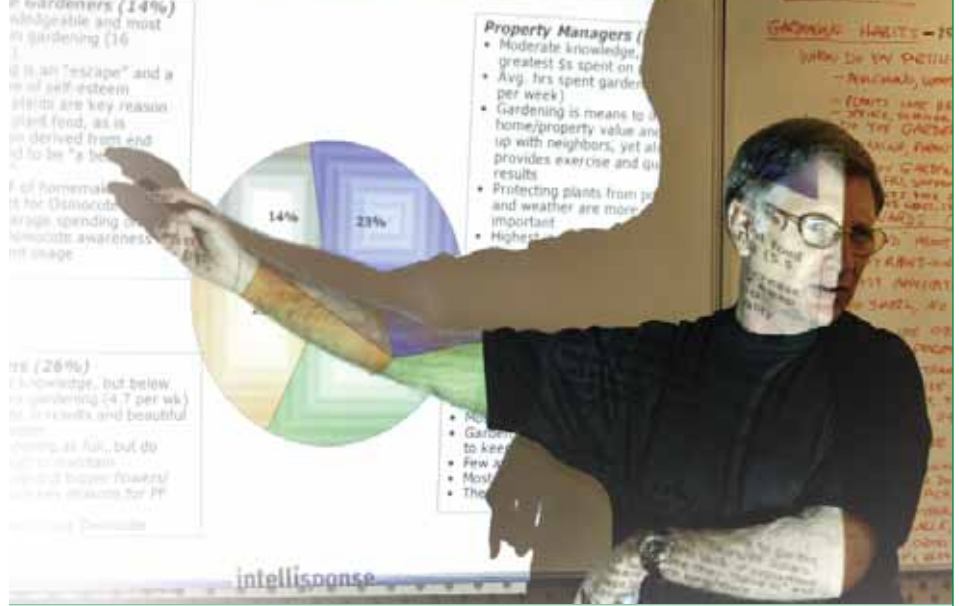
The problem clearly needed weeding out.

The solution: Entrust Kelley School MBAs, working in a new marketplace laboratory called Bloomington Brands, with the marketing decisions for the \$12-million consumer portion of the Osmocote brand.

Bloomington Brands was the brainchild of Kelley alumnus Bob Stohler, BS'64, MBA'69, who, as Scott's executive vice president-North America, was determined to improve Osmocote sales. By retiring to Bloomington while yet keeping his connections with Scott's, Stohler has become manager of Bloomington Brands, working with students in Kelley's Consumer Marketing MBA Academy. MBA candidates work 10-12 hours per week for a year in exchange for academic credit.

The partnership was launched late in 2003, with four handpicked students in marketing and finance becoming the charter leadership team. That group trained a second team of six students to develop a marketing plan for 2005.

The students are responsible for putting out all the daily fires of a company, thus gaining real-world experience while allowing Scott's executives to concentrate on other aspects of their business. In addition to working with Stohler, they consult directly with Kelley professor Jonlee Andrew, director of the Consumer Management MBA Academy.



Bob Stohler, BS'64, MBA'69, manager of Bloomington Brands, presents Osmocote® research data from student marketing efforts to executives at The Scott's Company. (Photo by Sam Riche. Reprinted with permission, Indianapolis Star)

The Scott's Company, meanwhile, continues to manufacture and distribute the product and own the trademark.

The students—most of whom are not homeowners and thus new to the use of garden products—have enjoyed getting down to earth with the inner challenges of running a company. Among their tasks: working with an advertising agency and developing marketing programs for such retailers as Wal-Mart and Home Depot.

“The 2004 student team has developed cost-saving initiatives, merchandising, display units for our home centers, and package designs,” says Keith Baeder, Scott's vice president of marketing for garden products. “Together we try to build value into the brand. This year is starting to show an impact. Big gains are expected for 2005.”

Baeder emphasizes that the “creative thinking of the students in addressing business issues is very positive. At a

Osmocote. “At Scott's we couldn't devote enough time and energy to the brand, based on its size in comparison to other brands,” he says. “But the students have put time and energy into their work.”

And when their ideas are flowing, the enthusiasm gets contagious. “We might be able to execute some of their ideas on other businesses as well,” he says.

In addition, notes Baeder, Scott's relationship with the Kelley School has real value as a tool for recruiting top students. “It's good to test-drive people before they come into an organization full-time. The Kelley students are among the brightest b-school kids around.”

Jim Hagedorn, chairman and CEO of Scott's Co., says the company has gained from outsourcing to the Kelley School. “We have benefited from having these bright young people working

“We have benefited from having these bright young people working with us.”

— Jim Hagedorn, chairman and CEO, The Scott's Co.

company, you can discount an idea before it comes out because of internal issues. The students aren't restricted as much, so the ideas bubbling up from the group are pretty neat in terms of how they're thinking.”

According to Baeder, Scott's is earning dividends from the substantial time the Kelley team is devoting to

with us and positioning Osmocote in new and interesting ways,” he says. “We've found this to be a terrific experience and hope that the Kelley School has gotten as much out of this collaboration as we have.”