

Nation's Business®

The Small Business Adviser

Managing Your Small Business

Nation's Business January

MARKETING

Getting To The Root Of Your Target Market

The most direct users of your commercial product may not be the best targets for your marketing efforts. That was the discovery of the founder of a company that sells preserved palm trees for use in shopping malls and commercial buildings.

Dennis Gabrick, president of Preserved TreeScapes International, in Oceanside, Calif., makes his trees from preserved foliage and bark rescued from trimmers. The trees are used instead of or in addition

scapers and contractors; architects and designers; and building owners, managers, and developers.

To reach them all, Gabrick attends a wide variety of industry events. In 1996 he participated in 13 trade shows. The company also belongs to several associations that represent the various groups.

In the early days, before he had many contacts, those memberships helped Gabrick get lists of contractors to approach about his product. In addition, the association contacts make it easy for the company to follow new construction and to track



Branching out your marketing efforts pays dividends, say Vito Milena, left, and Dennis Gabrick, vice president and president, respectively, of a preserved-tree firm.

to live trees as a way to reduce landscape-maintenance costs or in low-light areas that won't sustain real trees.

Gabrick learned that besides the building owners and managers he had originally targeted, there were other groups—for example, interior landscapers and their contractors—that incorporated his trees into their designs and thereby influenced the purchase of his products.

So he began learning about the related industries and ultimately made them his primary marketing targets. The company now has a three-pronged approach to getting new business: interior land-

buildings that are planning renovations. That's how Gabrick learned about his largest project to date—200 trees for the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas.

The company still makes direct sales calls at shopping malls, casinos, restaurants, hotels, and other commercial establishments, but most of its jobs result from its connections to those who plan, design, and build projects.

"You have to touch all the bases," says Gabrick, who expects his 10-year-old company's revenue for 1996 to be \$5 million. "It's important to know the entire industry and find out what its needs are." ■