

Kellogg Garden Products: 80 Years of Marketing and Branding

In 1925, H. Clay Kellogg discovered that the solid waste from wastewater treatment processes was great for amending the soil and growing more robust and healthy plants. He developed and began selling his “Nitrohumus” fertilizer to farmers. Kellogg Garden Products has been selling biosolids-based fertilizers that enhance landscapes and gardens ever since.

Over the years, Kellogg has built a strong brand and business based on several key principles:

- Integrity in the organization.
- Intense focus on quality.
- Customer support, customer intimacy.
- Successes and “learning experiences.”
- Innovation.



Altogether, Kellogg recognized the importance of understanding and meeting customer needs and applying its experience to developing more compelling products and improved customer service. This included soil amendments for Victory Gardens in the 1940s, professional baseball fields, the Getty Museum, and the tropical plants necessary for the Jungle Cruise ride at Disneyland.

Over the years, Kellogg has been a credible brand for selling products with biosolids as a main ingredient. Kellogg’s sanitation district partners had the wisdom to let Kellogg experiment with mixing other ingredients with the biosolids, which improved the compost and the composting process. This improvement resulted in more effective soil amendment products. These products were sold through specific markets and for specific applications, including top dressing lawns or products specifically designed for planting trees or shrubs. Biosolids became a valuable ingredient in Kellogg’s plan to help the customer create a beautiful landscape or garden.

Kellogg’s brand and success stem from multiple marketing activities including building strong sales channels, being known for on-time delivery, educating customers in the stores, training store employees, and other resources that provide information about the nature and health of soil. Company officials are credible soil health experts as demonstrated by their focus on quality, education programs, and the fact that they have specialized product lines. These sales and marketing skills and Kellogg’s brand loyalty are valuable assets to Kellogg and its sanitation district partners.

Through the contractual relationships with Kellogg, sanitation districts have helped to invest and build these important marketing assets. However, most sanitation districts are not yet clear on their role as investors in markets and brands.