



With his first job at All American Turf Beauty (AATB), the company his father started in 1976, **Kevin Johnson** earned \$48 delivering brochures in the Des Moines, IA, area. Johnson began his adult career at AATB in 1986 after graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in agricultural business. "Farming didn't appear attractive to me in the early 1980s — a time when farming was in crisis," he says. "I wanted to work outdoors and meet people. The family business allowed me to do that."

**Briefly describe your role with AATB today.** As president of our company, I'm heavily involved in strategic planning, budgeting, sales and marketing, employee training, and making sure we are getting the best pricing on a variety of employee benefits. As a management team, we get together one or two days each week to discuss current situations, problems and opportunities we need to take advantage of quickly.

**Describe your market — the regions and types of properties you serve.** Our service area comprises most of Iowa. Our average size lawn is about 7,000 sq. ft., with larger lawns in small towns, and smaller lawns in the core of our metropolitan areas. Ninety percent of our lawns are a mixture of cool-season grasses — mainly bluegrass, ryegrass and fine fescues. The other 10% are transitional warm-season that are more likely to grow in the southern parts of the state.

We're in a very competitive atmosphere with more than 700 registered companies licensed to do business in the state of Iowa. Mom-and-pop operations are predominant in small-town Iowa.

**What percentage of your company's revenue remains lawn care?** Lawn care and other related services — aeration, seeding and grub control — still comprise approximately 60% of our revenue.

**From a business standpoint, what is your impression of the 2010 spring lawn care season in your market compared to 2009?** 2010 has started strong. We've seen increased interest in lawn care compared to the previous two years. We feel good about achieving a 5% increase in the total square feet of area we treat in 2010

vs. 2009. This is the first time in several years we feel like we had a "normal" spring in terms of number of leads and sign-ups.

**Which of the services that your company offers have held up best during the recession?** When the economy is poor, we notice that people might reduce their spending on bigger-ticket items — irrigation systems, landscape lighting, Christmas lighting — but they still want to invest in having nice lawns.

**Most frustrating?** I am frustrated by being labeled as a "polluter of the environment" by so-called environmentalists who fail to understand and appreciate our contributions to providing healthy turf and safe areas for our children to play on. Most people don't

## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY:** All American Turf Beauty

**FOUNDED:** 1976

**TITLE:** President

**LOCATIONS:** Headquartered in Van Meter, IA; branch offices in Ames, Waterloo and Cedar Rapids, IA

**SERVICE AREA:** Most of Iowa

**EMPLOYEES:** 45 full-time

**INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:** Board member of the Iowa Professional Lawn Care Association; past president of the Iowa Sports Turf Manager's Association.

**2010 BUSINESS OUTLOOK:** "Bright. Expecting 5% growth in lawn care."

**WEBSITE:** [www.allamericanturf.com](http://www.allamericanturf.com)

realize the changes we have gone through in the past 30 years. Better products, better agronomic knowledge — all of which allow us to provide better results with less pesticides being used.

It's a win-win that doesn't get any press play. I don't compromise my health, my employees' health, my children's health or my pet's health just to make a buck, as I've heard some "environmentalists" claim.

**I DON'T COMPROMISE MY HEALTH, MY EMPLOYEES' HEALTH, MY CHILDREN'S HEALTH ... JUST TO MAKE A BUCK."**