



AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Arbor-nomics

TITLE: President and CEO

LOCATIONS: Headquartered in Norcross, GA; three Atlanta branches and one Nashville branch

EMPLOYEES: 50

SERVICES: Lawn care, tree and shrub care, grassy weed treatment, flea and tick control, overseeding, aeration, fire ant control, mosquito treatment, vegetation control, perimeter pest control

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Founding member of the Metro Atlanta Landscape Trade Association, past president of the Georgia Turfgrass Association, frequent speaker at industry conferences

HOBBIES: Walking; hiking in the mountains; watch, clock and knife shows; reading; opera; and going to German car races at Road Atlanta

FAMILY: Wife, Sharon, five children and seven grandchildren

WEBSITE: www.arbor-nomics.com

Richard Bare, president of Arbor-nomics, is a voracious reader. At the top of his list these days (and in the hands of his management team) is Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. "This book is like the Bible," he says. "If everyone followed its precepts, there would be no wars, divorce, discord, nothing. It is the final say on how to treat people — and it was written in 1936 and still applies today."

What lessons did you take from Carnegie's book? Don't criticize, condemn or complain. Make people feel important. Give people what they want. Become genuinely interested in other people. Give honest and sincere appreciation. Smile. Remember people's names. Be a good listener. In other words, be like your dog.

You're regarded as a marketer and salesman par excellence. Please tell us how you keep your message in front of clients. The trick to coming up with successful ideas is to test a few new ones every year. One of the ideas that has been the most successful for us has been SEO — search engine optimization. We urge customers to pay online, which gets people to our website. We highlight and ask them whether they would like other services, such as seasonal services. All they have to do is click on a box and get an estimate. We've increased our add-ons with virtually no investment.

What marketing programs have been duds? I'd have to say subdivision directory ads, just about any kind of print ad, and TV didn't work for us.

What's your secret to increased growth during a downtime? Our service. We interviewed 100 customers recently about why they liked us, and it came down to our great customer service. Not only does this encompass our customer service department, but it's also about our technicians. They each have their own route and treat it like their own business. They are knowledgeable and accountable. Some have been with us 15 years. We answer the phones in person and we do more than the customer expects. It's simple: we under-promise and over-deliver; it's gotten us on the *Inc.* 5000 list four years in a row!

What's the biggest change you have seen in the lawn care business since you founded your company 30 years ago? In Atlanta in 1980, 95% of the lawns were fescue, now fescue is 40%; Bermuda and zoysia are more prominent. We still have the basic components — fertilizer and weed control — but we're more sophisticated. We're able to respond to customers within 24 hours because of our computer systems. We don't get lost with our GPS systems. We can print invoices from air-conditioned trucks, and we can even type out notes when we are there so they can read our handwriting. We automatically have a record of every speck of it.

Another big change from 30 years ago is that almost all of our clients now have

mowing maintenance services and sprinkler systems, so that makes it easier on us.

WEB EXTRA

For more from Arbor-Nomics, visit www.landscape-management.net/arbor-nomics.

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