

GOTHIC GROUNDS MANAGEMENT

Growth tends to start with a clear vision of where you want to be. So says Ron Georgio, president of Gothic Grounds Management (GGM), headquartered in Valencia, CA. That original vision started more than 10 years ago, when Georgio's brother, Jon Georgio, president of Gothic Landscape Inc., had the foresight to know a bad economy was ahead. To survive, he knew a maintenance division was needed — and GGM was born.

Today, Ron Georgio says, GGM continues to always try and look to the future, the way his brother has.

"It comes down to what the end game looks like," he says. "We try to think as big as possible — and we're already talking about what we want our business to look like at the end of 2015."

Knowing those long-term goals helps workers also know their responsibilities, Georgio says.

"Sales are given very specific goals; branch managers are given specific retention goals; account managers are given specific expectations on enhancement sales; and my executive management team understands what they need to do to make our vision happen," he explains. "Everybody knows exactly where we're going and how we're going to get there. We've developed a formula — and if we all hit our goals, it's basically mathematically impossible that our company would not become what we envisioned it to be."

Besides this internal focus, the company is also



always looking to understand exactly what the customers' needs are, so that they can respond to them, says Georgio.

"We hired a team of master students from UCLA to contact our customers and drill down deeply on how we can better meet their needs," he says. "We got some very surprising, but helpful information from that. We also do regular monthly and annual customer surveys to find out what's important to them. One thing they've told us is that they want more in-house services, so we responded to that by adding arbor care and chemical treatments — two services we'd previously outsourced."

The company has continually seen growth over the years, and grew 14.4% in 2010. But Georgio says that this rapid pace of growth has meant extra effort on his part to keep that family culture with which the business started.

"We've grown from a couple million in 2000 to \$24 million in 2010, and are now projecting \$28 million for 2011," he says.

"We're a family company, and want to maintain that family culture," he concludes. "I block out time on my calendar regularly to make sure I'm visiting every team at every location. We currently have nine branches, and I try to get to each of them every single month." **LM**

WHAT'S AHEAD

"We're in the process of growing our arbor care division, and already see that expanding rapidly. While most people close their checkbooks in a down economy, we didn't do that in sales. We brought on a really talented sales director who strengthened our sales team across the board. They're gaining a lot of traction for 2011, and will continue to help push us forward."