

JAMES RIVER GROUNDS MANAGEMENT

A phenomenal snow year catapulted Glen Allen, VA-based James River Grounds Management Inc. to 20% growth last year. But President Maria Candler says that snow is never something that can be counted on or budgeted for, so the company always plans ahead for ways it can be strategically prepared to take care of as many customers as possible, should it wind up being a season of heavy snowfall. Last year, that planning paid off.

“Utilizing subcontractors and beefing up our snow removal possibilities were great ways to grow in 2010,” says Candler. “Snow can really give a nice padding to the bottom line, so it’s important to be ready.”

Because Candler wants her management team to really get an idea of how things are running, she often takes snow out of the P&L. This helps produce a steadier idea of the year’s performance.

“Even when we took that number away, we were still able to grow our business by 6% in 2010,” says Candler. “We’re excited about that number, since most businesses struggled to grow this year. We feel proud that we were able to achieve growth — even without Mother Nature’s help.”

Candler attributes the ability to grow to the company’s culture, noting that the entire structure of the organization has been built around

creating career ladders for employees.

“We look for people who have the desire to move up, and that puts positive pressure on our team to deliver,” she explains. “We make sure our people know we’re invested in them, and in return, they invest in the company. We’re a company that’s always poised to grow.”

While the company continues to push forward, Candler says it hasn’t been without some challenges. She says that sales are never the problem; even in this down economy, James River Grounds Management has been able to retain clients. Her biggest obstacle is in finding people who are willing to take on tough labor jobs — and she says she believes the government hasn’t made it any easier.

“That’s my biggest frustration right now,” she says. “The government is taking away a great resource for legal labor, and that’s hurting business.”

But Candler says that the company will weather these changes. “Innovation happens when things get tough, so we continue to persevere,” she says. “You get better when thrown into challenging situations — and at the end of the day, I don’t let negative influences stand in the way of where business is headed. Some great things have come out of this year, even though it hasn’t been the easiest business environment we’ve had.” LM

WHAT’S
AHEAD

“I don’t predict any drastic changes with the economy, so I think business will be a repeat of what we had last year: slow and steady. It’s not hitting it out of the ballpark like we used to, but in this economy, I’ll take 5% or 6% growth without snow padding the bottom line. That’s something to celebrate.”