You can’t grow if you’re not investing in your employees, says Matt Jesson, president and owner of Green Lawn Fertilizing in West Chester, Pa. When you learn he’s focused on growing his firm 15 percent to 20 percent a year, you understand why he holds a quarterly cross-training program for all of the company’s 65 employees.

“It gives everyone a better understanding of how their jobs affect the growth of the company and how they’re a part of a great company,” Jesson says. This year is the first full year he’s held the training sessions, dubbed “rodeos,” on a quarterly basis. They used to be conducted twice a year. The reason for the increase is to keep up with the natural changes that happen in the business every 60 to 90 days.

On a typical rodeo day, the company operates from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. After that, Green Lawn provides lunch, followed by three hours of education. Jesson kicks off with a presentation about the status of the business and key objectives, and he addresses questions and concerns. Next, employees rotate through stations, learning about various parts of the business, such as customer service, operations, sales and the firm’s new pest control division. The executive team and department managers speak at each station. The idea is to give employees a taste of the processes and procedures of each area and what challenges it’s facing. For example, the sales station might cover what the sales team is currently selling and why; customer service could address what type of service calls it’s been receiving.

TEAM BUILDING
The training program also builds relationships among coworkers.

“This is a good chance for our office reps to spend more time with the sales team and the technicians,” Jesson says. At the fall rodeo, to keep employees engaged, each department leader had 10 gift cards to hand out to employees who stood out during training.

SOD-LAYING TIPS
Here are a few pointers from Linda Bradley of Turf Mountain Sod in Hendersonville, N.C.

▶ All sod must make soil to root contact. Existing turf must be extremely sparse or topped with soil before laying the new sod. Roots won’t penetrate hard ground; till or loosen the top 2 in. to 3 in. of soil.

▶ Grade is important. There cannot be any water-holding spots, and water never should flow toward the building or home.

▶ Weeds can grow through the new sod, so it’s important to eradicate them before installation.

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