



## EDITOR'S NOTE

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# Boomerang boom

Last month when I started as editor of *Landscape Management* I traded notes with many people I'd met during my first time around in the landscape market. (Two years ago, after reporting on the Green Industry for four years, I switched markets to work as editor of *Paperboard Packaging*. Yes, there is a trade magazine for everything.)

One of the people I reconnected with was Chuck Carr. I knew him five years ago as owner and operator of Carr Landscape Management, a company he founded after leaving ValleyCrest in 2000. I was surprised to see he's now working in business development for ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance in the Conejo and Simi Valley area of California.

Carr is what HR experts refer to as a boomerang employee. These days many firms are looking to recruit these comeback kids, the *Wall Street Journal* and other news outlets report, dubbing them "alumni" and creating online networking groups to keep them connected.

Why did Carr go back? "I stayed on good terms with them, didn't burn any bridges, and when I decided I wanted something other than

what I could get from running my own business, they were the natural choice," he says.

It was smart of him to stay friendly with his former employer — and just as savvy for ValleyCrest to be willing to welcome him back.

Employees leave businesses for many reasons — more money, better flexibility, a perceived lack of opportunity for advancement. Some, like Carr, may be happy with the organization but leave to try something new. Many business owners or managers wouldn't consider taking back former employees, but there are a few good reasons to resist this instinct.

No. 1, there are savings in recruitment and training; some recruiters estimate the cost to hire a boomerang employee is one-third to two-thirds the cost of hiring a "virgin" worker. Another reason is the skills, experience and ideas the person will have picked up that could enrich your organization. Not to mention the potential morale boost that could come from the boomeranger sharing with others that the grass isn't always greener on the other side.

If you're someone who understands these benefits, experts say one of the most powerful things you can do to foster boomerang opportunities is to listen closely to top-performing workers' reasons for leaving (maybe it's something that could change over time, like a family situation) and let them know you'd be willing to welcome them back someday. Then, stay in touch.

I guess you could call me a boomerang member of the landscape industry. When the opportunity to work again in the landscape market came about, I was thrilled to join the *LM* team. I missed the candor, passion and willingness to share among the professionals who call the Green Industry their home, and I look forward to covering topics that will help you do your job more efficiently and improve profitability.

I'm happy to be back and I can confirm the grass *is* greener here.

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