



AT A GLANCE

NAME: Adam N. Linnemann

TITLE: president, entrepreneur, Rotarian, dad and husband

COMPANY: Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping Inc.

YEAR FOUNDED: 1994

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 18

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Landscape & Nursery Association of Greater St. Louis

HOBBIES: part-time police officer; vacationing in Mexico

FAMILY: wife, Sahra, and sons Nash and Wynn

WEBSITE: LinnemannLawn-Care.com

Starting your business as a teenager does have a few perks. **Adam Linnemann**, president of Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping, started with a push mower, riding lawn mower and wagon.

“I love talking with my clients, and at the time when I started, most of them were elderly,” Linnemann recalls. “I would spend sometimes 30 or 45 minutes with them after I cut their lawn, just socializing and enjoying a cold soda. If I was lucky, they would sometimes bake desserts.”

Linnemann doesn't have that extra time today, but he's still focused on making customers' experiences better.

How has the industry changed during your time working in it?

The competition has really increased. There are a lot of fly-by-night companies out now, guys trying to make an extra buck on the side or after hours from their full-time jobs.

Equipment is way more efficient and advanced. We used to use paper time cards; we are now using Exakttime PocketClocks for attendance. Back in 1994, when I started, I could buy gasoline for under \$1.

Why did you start your board of directors? To gain insight from an outsider's view. We have a technology person, a commercial banker and a Green Industry equipment supplier on our board.

My board has provided suggestions on offering a different selling tactic. They recommended “menu selling” — basically, offering different lawn maintenance packages in tiers. The higher the tier, the more of a discount the customer will receive.

What challenges do you see in the lawn care segment of the industry?

In general, it's been hard to find good qualified help. It's also been difficult to retain our in-the-field team members (laborers). Other issues we are facing is that the mild winter hurt our sales goal for the year and insects are bad and out in full force.

How are you addressing those challenges? The winter, we could not control. We have two available pesticide applicators this year to tackle the accounts if the weather dictates immediate action, and to also help meet and exceed our clients' expectations.

How has the economy affected your business, and how are you dealing with it? It hasn't affected us much at all, and by being mostly a maintenance company this has helped a lot. I would have

been scared if I strictly did landscape installs. We do a 70% maintenance, 30% install mix.

What's the best part of your job? Meeting new people and networking. Providing service to my community and globally is fun, and gives me a great feeling. It's also nice to know that I can pretty much go on vacation at any given time or take the afternoon off, thanks to our processes and procedures we have in place. It has taken 18 years of hard work and sweat to get to this point, but it's been well worth it.

What do you consider to be the most significant moment in your business career? There are two things: First, our first business acquisition. We bought out a lawn fertilization and weed control company that had almost 400

clients. It taught me to stick to my grass roots in marketing and customer communication. Second, being asked to speak at the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) conference was amazing. This was my first speaking event, and it was an awesome feeling and pleasure to be asked to participate. For me, it was a milestone that I hope continues to come around again in the very near future.

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