



EDITOR'S NOTE

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What you do have

So maybe you're not Scotts LawnService. Maybe you're a small lawn care operator, irrigation company, maintenance contractor or design/build firm. And maybe you saw the cover of this magazine and thought, "It would be easy to get to \$250 million backed by a \$3 billion parent company."

Let's face it: You probably don't have a 730-acre corporate headquarters, a \$50 million global research and development budget and marketing partnerships with brands like Ortho and RoundUp. And I'm guessing there's not a 10-person technical services team creating your agronomic programs.

Put that way, the deck seems to be stacked against small and midsize companies who compete against national firms. In this case, it's not just any national company, but the granddaddy of the lawn and garden industry. It may feel like the battle of David and Goliath, but it doesn't have to. I'm a big fan of the saying, "Start where you are; use what you have; do what you

can," sometimes attributed to tennis great Arthur Ashe. With that mindset, think about what you *do* have in comparison and contrast to a competitor like Scotts LawnService.

What you do have, if you compete on the lawn care side of the business, are many of the same challenges as Scotts: a tough regulatory climate, barriers to finding new customers the "old way" and a dearth of quality technicians. What you do have are many of the same opportunities, like the ability to add services, tackle new markets or focus on dominating one market to grow.

What you do have is a client base that wants the same thing as Scotts' customers do: a weed-free lawn. As Scotts LawnService President Brian Kura puts it, "When it comes down to it, the No. 1 reason people join our program and the No. 1 reason people leave is weeds." Sound familiar?

And what you do have is a stake in a market where, as Kura notes, "You're only as good as your people who interact with your customers." For big companies, there are many links in the chain between those at the top and the customer-facing associates. For your company, I'm guessing there aren't many—and, in fact, there may be no links at all. You may be it. You may be just a personal phone call or visit away from interacting with your clients.

So, how close are you to the customer? As close as you once were? As close as you could be? If you're not near the front line, are you confident in the people who are? If the answer's no, you may be losing your competitive advantage.

What you do have is a stake in a market where you're only as good as the people who interact with your customers.

Landscape Management

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