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Landscape MANAGEMENT

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Editorial staff

Associate Publisher/ Executive Editor	SUE GIBSON / 440/891-2729 / sgibson@advanstar.com
Senior Editor	RON HALL / 440/891-2636 / rhall@advanstar.com
Managing Editor	JASON STAHL / 440/891-2623 / jstahl@advanstar.com
Senior Science Editor	KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D. / danneberger1@osu.edu
Group Editor	VERNON HENRY / 440/826-2829
Art Director	LISA LEHMAN / 440/891-2785
Sr. Graphic Designer	LISA BODNAR / 440/891-3101 / lbofnar@advanstar.com

Reader advisory panel

JERRY GAETA	The Good Earth Inc. / Mt. Pleasant, SC
JUDSON GRIGGS	Landscape Design & Development / Sussex, WI
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JACK ROBERTSON	Jack Robertson Lawn Care / Springfield, IL
GEORGE VAN HAASTEREN	Dwight-Englewood School / Englewood, NJ

Business staff

Group Publisher	JOHN D. PAYNE / 440/891-2786 / jpayne@advanstar.com
Admin. Coordinator	DANIELLE HAGAN / 440/891-2734
Production Manager	KAREN LENZEN / 218/723-9129
Production Director	ROSY BRADLEY / 218/723-9220
Circulation Manager	DARRYL ARQUITTE / 218/723-9422
Green Book Coordinator	ANGELA PEARSON / 218/723-9418

Advertising staff

Group Sales Director	TOM GALLIGAN / 262/653-9523 Fax: 262/653-9524 3901 52nd Ave., Kenosha, WI 53144-1830 tgalligan@advanstar.com
Cleveland Headquarters	7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130-3369
Eastern Account Manager	HEATHER M. FOX / 440/891-3168 Fax: 440/891-2675 hfox@advanstar.com
Midwest Account Manager	GENE HOMAN / 440/891-2772 Fax: 440/891-2675 ghoman@advanstar.com
Western Sales Manager	GRETCHEN WAGNER / 760/837-3734 Fax: 760/837-3785 74563 Pepper Tree Dr., Palm Desert, CA 92260 gwagner@advanstar.com
Account Manager	ANTHONY LAVDAS / 440/891-3118 Fax: 440/826-2865 tlavdas@advanstar.com
Classified Showcase	LESLIE ZOLA / 440/891-2670; 800/225-4569 x670 lzola@advanstar.com
Directory Sales	JESSICA HENDRICKS / 800/736-3665 ext. 104

Marketing services

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Circle No. 106 on Reader Inquiry Card

BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The power of planning

Remember where you wanted to be by now? Are you there yet, or are you too busy putting out fires to think about plans for July, or 2001 or even 2010?

Harvard Business School once did a study of a graduating class and their progress 20 years later. While most students had goals at graduation, not all achieved them. It helped a lot if they had clear and specific goals at graduation, for there was a dramatically higher chance of achieving them. But what was even more remarkable was that 80% of those who actually wrote down their goals achieved them.

That's probably not so much a testament to being a purposeful, organized person (although that doesn't hurt) as it is an insight into the power of planning, for the act of writing a goal is very complex. It involves thinking it through and defining exactly what you hope to achieve, how you'll measure success and how you plan to get there. Writing formalizes it and makes it more of a commitment.

I was fortunate to sit with several landscape contractors at ALCA's Executive Forum as they discussed their problems dealing with growth, or in some cases, "hypergrowth." As they shared their concerns, some common threads emerged:

- ▶ Growth, like a virulent infection, can take over before you're aware you're in trouble.
- ▶ When you grow too fast, it can throw your whole operation into chaos.
- ▶ You might see hypergrowth on the horizon, but unless you have a solid plan to deal with it, you're going to have problems.
- ▶ If you can plan for growth, you can handle growth.

This group was smart, experienced and savvy (some even had five-year plans). Yet, growth ambushed them.

Planning for change

So what can you do? Don't plan all the time, but it does pay to plan regularly, and to be specific, foresighted and imaginative. A relative told me that the best mothers were those who were the most imaginative, because they imagined the potential problems and dangers that could happen to their children and tried to take steps ahead of time to avoid them. They aren't being overprotective, just anticipatory.

It's the same thing with your operation. You have to anticipate your competitor's tactics, hiring shortages, cash flow problems, good or bad weather, economic downturns and too much growth, too fast. You need a solid, specific plan that will get you from Point A to Point B. And you must take time to revise that plan, develop an emergency Plan B for those unexpected new fires to put out.

Those plans will make you ready to invest in a new service, tackle a long-term problem or move your quality up to a higher level. Those plans will give you the power to change.

Contact Sue at 440/891-2729 or e-mail at sgibson@advanstar.com



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events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

July

12 Maryland Turfgrass Research Field Day & Open House / Paint Branch Turfgrass Research Facility; John M. Krouse; 301/403-4234

13-15 International Irrigation Expo / Leon Guanajuato, Mexico; (461) 60427,25977,25985

13-16 ANLA Convention and Executive Learning Retreat / Vancouver, BC; 202/789-2900

13-16 ALCA Summer Leadership Meeting / San Diego, CA; 800/395-2522

15-18 Texas Turfgrass Association Conference and Show / Galveston, TX; 409/690-2201

18-21 Turfgrass Producers International Summer Conference and Field Days / Spokane, WA; 800/405-TURF

22-24 International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo / Louisville, KY; 800/558-8767

24-25 PLCAA Legislative Day On The Hill / Washington, D.C.; 800/458-3466

25-27 Penn Allied Nursery Trade Show / Fort Washington, PA; 800/898-3411

25 Midwest Regional Turf Field Day / West Lafayette, IN; 765/494-8039

30-3 Plant Growth Regulation Society of America meeting / Kailua-Kona, HI; www.griffin.peach-net.edu/pgrsa/

August

3 University of Illinois Turfgrass, Nursery, Landscape, and Trial Garden Field Day / Urbana, IL; 217/333-7847

8-12 APLD Summer Conference / Toronto, Ontario; 630/579-3268

9-10 Penn State Turfgrass Field Days / University Park, PA; 814/863-3475

10 Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association's Summer Field Day / Okemos, MI; 800/879-6652

14-18 Florida Turfgrass Association Annual Conference and Show / Gainesville, FLA; 800/882-6721

15 Cornell Field Day / Ithaca, NY; 607/255-1792

23 Michigan Turfgrass Field Day / Lansing, MI; 517/321-1660

30-2 CIPA Annual Conference / San Jose, CA; 707/462-2276

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