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January 2001

15-18 Michigan Turfgrass Conference / Lansing, MI; 517/321-1660; michiganturfgrass.org

16-17 Connecticut Nurseryman’s Association Winter Meeting / Waterbury, CT; 203/445-0110

17-19 Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show / Chicago, IL; 847/526-2010; www.midam.org

17-19 Idaho Horticulture Show / Boise, ID; 800/462-4769

18-20 GrowerExpo 2001 / Chicago, IL; 630/208-9080

18-20 Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition / Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 800/375-3642

22-24 Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show / Columbus, OH; Sponsored by the Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association; 800/825-5062

24-25 Maryland Turfgrass Conference & Trade Show / 301/345-4199

25 Northeastern PA Turf School & Trade Show / Wilkes-Barre, PA; 814/863-1368

25-27 Gulf States Hort Expo / Mobile, AL; 205/789-5980 ext. 3010

26 Western Tree Management Symposium / Arcadia, CA; 714/991-1900

29-30 Winter Conference / Lansing, MI; Sponsored by the Michigan Forestry and Park Association; 517/482-5530

31 Sacramento Landscape and Nursery Expo / Sacramento, CA; 530/458-3189

31-2 Iowa Nursery & Landscape Association Convention & Trade Show Des Moines, IA; 816/233-1481

February

1-4 PLCAA 6th Annual Management Conference / Port Canaveral, FL; 800/458-3466

1-4 ALCA Executive Forum / Tucson, AZ; 703/736-9666

1-4 ANLA Management Clinic / Louisville, KY; 202/789-5980, ext. 3010

TOCA

Associated Landscape Contractors of America 150 Eiden Street, Suite 270 Herndon, VA 20170 703/736-9666 www.alca.org

American Nursery & Landscape Association 1250 15th St. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20005 202/788-2900

Independent Turf and Ornamental Distributors Association 25250 Seeley Road Novi, MI 48375 248/476-5457

American Society of Irrigation Consultants P.O. Box 426 Byron, CA 94514-0426 825/516-1124

The Irrigation Association 8260 Willow Oaks Corporate Dr. Suite 120 Fairfax, VA 22031-4513 703/573-3551 www.igation.org

National Arborist Association The Meeting Place Mall, P.O. Box 1694 Amherst, NH 03031-1094 603/673-3311 www.natarb.com

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation 1100 H Brandywine Blvd., PO Box 3388 Zanesville, OH 43702-3388 888/683-3445

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute 341 South Patrick St. Old Town Alexandria, Va. 22314 703/549-7600 open.mow.org

Professional Grounds Management Society 720 Light Street Baltimore, MD 21230 410/752-3318

Professional Lawn Care Association of America 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd., NE, Suite C-135 Marietta, GA 30068-2112 770/977-5222 www.plca.org

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment 1156 15th St. NW. Suite 400 Washington, DC 20005 202/872-3860 www.acpa.org/rise

Sports Turf Managers Association 1375 Rolling Hills Loop Council Bluffs, IA 51503-8552 712/366-2669; 800/373-3875 www.aipm.com/stma

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That was our idea when we brought Walker people together (distributors, dealers, customers, employees, and suppliers) to celebrate the production of the 50,000th Walker Mower at the Walker Mowers Family Reunion in August 2000. For a small, family-owned manufacturing company in Colorado, it was a high moment. Our people made it happen—our people made the difference!

If you are looking for a proven, productive, high-quality riding mower, then it is time to contact your local Walker Mower Dealer. Get acquainted with the product and get to know the high-quality Walker people in your area.
Are you as successful as you want to be? If you're not getting the hourly rates you want, the clients you prefer or the good employees you need, you probably need to ask if your organization has a long-term future. Do you have a professional approach to business?

Let's define that first. I see a "professional" organization as one with two main elements:

- A solid business and operating foundation, and
- A desire to improve constantly.

These elements cover just about every piece in the organizational puzzle. But what is a "solid foundation"? Any successful company has:

- Products or services that work,
- Customers who want them,
- Systems producing those products or services profitably and efficiently,
- People who work better together than they do individually,
- Healthy (but probably not perfect) finances, sales and marketing and operations, and
- Long-term prospects for success.

Whether you're Jack's Lawns with $80,000 in revenues or General Electric with $253 billion, these principles apply.

It's pretty obvious if you don't have a solid foundation, but what if you are just doing "OK"? What if you do things "pretty well," but not exceptionally well? Do you have a long-term future?

That depends on how you define a successful future. You might make enough for beer money or become rich beyond your dreams. If you want to be comfortable in retirement or pass the business along to your family, you need more than beer money now.

Are you interested in improving? The editors of Landscape Management think that building first-class organizations is a process needing benchmarks as measures of progress. We've assembled a Best Practices panel of experts from the industry to help us develop these measures. Those folks know their stuff and you can benefit from their experience. If you're managing an in-house grounds organization, these benchmarks also apply.

What do they mean? Benchmarks give you a goal to shoot for and compare against. They will help you insure long-term growth, profitable and efficient operations, cultures that attract and keep good people and systems that deliver top quality services.

That "kaizen" thing

Hand-in-hand with building a strong foundation is the focus on constant improvement. The Japanese call it "kaizen," and it is a culture in which everyone in an organization participates. Once you start looking for improvements, you'll have the resources to take your organization to the next level. But the first step is deciding to get serious about making your organization first-class.

We start our Benchmarks series this month on page 30, with coverage of how to improve your organization's public perception. We'd love to hear your own ideas.

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

If you're not getting the hourly rates you want, the clients you prefer or the good employees you need, you probably need to ask if your organization has a long-term future.
ONE CUSTOMER SAID THE WAVE OF TRUCKS AND TRACTORS