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Circle No. 105 on Reader Inquiry Card
Even before the terrorists struck on September 11th, America's economy was taking a troubling turn. Add to that new fears of a disturbed, grieving nation and you have a recipe that can potentially weaken our economy even more. Those fears are your enemy because they threaten your operations now and in 2002, and they also threaten the strength of our nation's business.

Take action now

What can you do? First, take time immediately to assess your situation. Look at your current and future finances, customer situations, supply line, employees and operations. Where is your business going through the end of 2001 and what are your customers saying about next year?

It's so easy to imagine those customers still ordering services without a second thought, but Americans are now a more thoughtful people and each expenditure will get questioned in these precarious times. Don't be surprised to see maintenance budget reductions, project postponements or service schedule adjustments. Don't be shocked if office buildings have more vacancies, homeowners opt for basic over high-end packages or grounds renovation plans get simplified.

Instead, be prepared. The greatest danger to this industry and to individual organizations is letting fear immobilize you. Remember the Chinese proverb that says, "Customers are treasure, goods are but straw." Now is the time to be proactive, contact every customer and find out what you need to do to cement that relationship and get 2002 business commitments.

You may need to adjust pricing, offer new packages or even add non-landscape services to keep their business. You may need to slash expenses, drop unprofitable services or increase investments in equipment or customer service training.

The key is to make your organization as strong as possible going into this new economic climate, strengthening those precious customer relationships and contributing as much as possible to keeping this great economy rolling. You can't be complacent any more.

We're responding, too

What are we doing at Landscape Management? We also believe our nation's strength is her freedoms and her economy and we're dedicating ourselves to helping you make your organizations stronger. Watch each issue and our Web site (www.landscapemanagement.net) for new ideas on how to operate smarter, build customer loyalty, trim costs and develop dependable employees. You can start this month on page 15 and in more detail on our Web site.

We know you’re competitive, but this is one time when our industry must pull together, share ideas and proudly proclaim the value of its work. You can help by sending us your questions, ideas and comments. We'll share them in our pages and on the Web. Each idea you share may help our industry become stronger and by implication, our wonderful American way of doing business.

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

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A patented system called ‘Actio’ in all Carraro tractors lets the chassis articulate to all terrain types and each wheel independently grips the ground for superior balance and stability. The center of gravity is so low that it virtually hugs the turf. Each wheel being the same size means you get equal ground pressure on all 4 wheels, all the time.

Other neat features include a completely reversible seat and control system that changes direction in seconds, loads of attachments that mount front, back and even on top, as well as powerful, yet fuel minimizing, engines that help keep operations costs down.

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The show must go on

Where were you when America was attacked on September 11, 2001? Most of you were probably well into starting your busy day, taking care of your commercial and residential accounts. Chances are that once you found out about the planes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, you went on to do more important things, like calling loved ones to make sure they were unharmed. Some of you may have even gone home to hug your children. I know I did.

You'll never forget where you were when the news hit, though.

"I was at a meeting when it happened," says Bruce Allentuck, president of Allentuck Landscaping, Gaithersburg, MD. "Our production staff kept working, but half our office staff went home. The next day we received no calls whatsoever, and we didn't call anyone."

"We had crews down to the general area around the Pentagon, so we of course pulled them right back out of there," he adds.

There were some who were even closer to the disaster, literally a couple miles away. Matt Smoot, project director for the The Brickman Group, Alexandria, MD, was on the 13th floor of his office building watching the disaster in New York unfold on television with fellow employees.

"My boss heard a plane and said, 'Oh, that sounds awful loud,'" Smoot says. "I ran to the other side of the building, thinking nothing was going to happen, and that's when I saw the plane. It was barreling toward the ground, and then I saw a fireball."

Smoot then says that a couple of F-16 fighter jets flew over their building, making a "huge noise." Everyday one started making phone calls to find out what happened, some to crews who were out working. The property yard, Smoot said, is only one-quarter of a mile from the Pentagon.

"They had all those streets closed," Smoot says. "We told our crews to stay and wait to see what happened. It turns out we had to leave everything, including equipment and trucks, right where it was."

What happened the next day was probably what happened in landscape, lawn and grounds crews across the country. The crews simply picked up their equipment and proceeded as normal to finish their jobs. It's not surprising, given that people in the Green Industry are some of the hardest working around. It would have been nice to take a week off like the NFL players did, stating "our hearts just wouldn't be in the game," but let's face it, the show must go on, and that means taking care of our customers as well as we can.

As Smoot says of his employees, "Everyone seemed to be intrinsically motivated, and nobody appeared to be nervous or scared about going to work. Everyone seemed to gain a greater appreciation of our country, and how lucky we are to work every day."

A commercial customer recently called Smoot to request changing his flower colors to red, white and blue. If that doesn't make you feel proud to work, nothing will.

Contact Jason at 440/891-2623 or e-mail at jstahl@advanstar.com
ONE CUSTOMER SAID THE WAVE OF TRUCKS AND TRACTORS