

THE CULT OF GCI

A few weeks ago, in the middle of an otherwise routine sales meeting, I was startled to learn that I am a cult leader.

Allow me to explain...

We were talking about finding a new sales rep for a territory on Lawn & Landscape, GCI's sister publication, which happens to be the biggest, baddest magazine in the lawncare business. Someone suggested recruiting a salesperson from one of the other turf industry magazines and Russ Warner, my national accounts manager laughed and said, "I'm not sure he's cut out to be a member of the cult."

Huh?

"They (a competitor) tell advertisers that our group is like a cult where we've all drunk the GIE Media Kool-Aid," he said. "We all believe the same things, say the same things and are basically a bunch of zealots."

When I heard this astonishing bit of information, two things occurred to me:

1. We're apparently doing well if that's the only bad thing our competitors can find to say about us;

2. That's actually an amazing compliment.

I am, in fact, thoroughly delighted to be characterized as a cult leader. Why?

Because Nike's a cult. So is Apple. And Facebook.

In my book, being accused of being "culty" says a lot of good things about your organization. For example, it means your culture is so well-defined even your competitors see it...and are apparently envious of it. It also means that everyone has a clear, shared vision

of success. Everyone helps and protects each other. It suggests an organization that embraces doing things differently and breaking away from the pack. Mostly, it means you've created something enigmatic and attractive. It means your organization has charisma.

I look around the industry and see other successful groups with cult-like, charismatic traits. Here are a few along with a brief description of that "special something" that sets them apart:

The Augusta National maintenance team. "What happens on Magnolia Lane stays on Magnolia Lane."

The Latschaw Mafia. "You worked for Paul? Me too. I got your back."

The Toro Company. "Competitors? We have competitors?"

Penn State Alumni. "The password is "Nittany""

Grigg Brothers. "Hey... wanna see some science?"

Carolinas GCSA. "We're just another chapter...on steroids."

USGA Green Section. "We never talk about specific products...during work hours."

I kid because I love, but charismatic organizations like these can be very successful. I think that success usually starts with one person with a very clear vision who shares the same story with everyone he or she meets.

So the key to charismatic leadership – and reaping the rewards of culthood – is good communications. Can you tell your story, including what makes your operation unique, in a few sentences?

If you can, you too might be eligible for cult-leader status. **GCI**



Pat Jones
Editorial director and publisher

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GIE Media, Inc.

4020 Kinross Lakes Pkwy, 2nd floor

Richfield, OH 44286

Phone: 800-456-0707

Fax: 330-659-0823

EDITORIAL

Pat Jones

Publisher/Editorial director
pjones@gie.net

Mike Zawacki

Editor
mzawacki@gie.net

Kyle Brown

Associate Editor
kbrown@gie.net

Bruce Williams

Senior contributing editor

Katie Tuttle

Assistant Editor
ktuttle@gie.net

Bill Brown

Contributing editor

SALES

Russell Warner

National account manager
216-236-5802

Martha Corfman

Manager, books
330-523-5366

Ted Schuld

Account manager
216-236-5937

Maria Miller

Conferences manager
330-523-5373

Bonnie Velikonja

Classified sales
330-523-5322

Jodi Shipley

Marketing coordinator
330-523-5368

GRAPHICS / PRODUCTION

Andrea Vagas, Creative director
Jamie Winebrenner, Graphic Designer
Helen Duerr, Production director
Cara Clark, Production coordinator

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Richard Foster Chairman
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