



Bill Boykin, vice-president of Boyco, at IBM Corp.

The Right Place at the Right Time

Greg Boykin knows success takes a combination of knowledge, good employees, hard work and the customer's interest always at heart.

by Maureen Hrehocik, managing editor

Ask Greg Boykin about being in the right place at the right time.

Not that luck has taken the place of hard work for Boyco Landscape and Maintenance, Wilson, NC; but rather the businessman with the Midas touch is also a savvy entrepreneur.

Eleven years ago, the man with the build of a middle linebacker and the disposition of a friendly pup, was doing landscaping work around his father's construction jobs. Today Boykin is president of an over \$1 million company that is one of the most successful landscape maintenance companies in North Carolina.

IBM, Proctor and Gamble, and many of the businesses in Research Triangle Park, NC, right outside of Raleigh, number themselves among his clients.

"I was in the right place at the right time 11 years ago as far as the land-

scape maintenance market goes," he says. "A lot of people think all you need to do is get a rake and a lawnmower and you're in business. It just isn't so."

His business has also just recently become interstate with a contract from the Virginia Electric Company, VEPCO, which he got on a referral from Carolina Telephone and Telegraph, also a well-satisfied Boyco customer.

A strong commitment to quality work, knowledge in his field and a keen interest in the welfare of the people who work for him have melded into a business that's as profitable as it is satisfying for its owner.

The business

The bulk of Boyco's work is landscape management—mowing, pruning, fertilizing and weed control. The com-

pany also installs drainage systems, plants trees, shrubs, does brick and concrete walk work and is even into snow removal. Sixty-two employees are managed by 12 supervisors. Their territories are divided geographically instead of by specialty. There is only one specialty crew—for drainage and brick work.

Boykin's employees are a big part of why his company is special. Some might sniff at Boykin's hiring philosophy.

"We try to hire anybody and everybody," he says proudly. Disadvantaged youth, people in vocational rehabilitation programs and Vietnam vets score high on the list.

"We're willing to train people to do the job right," Boykin says. "We're usually rewarded with employees who are loyal to the company and their jobs."

With the vocational rehabilitation employees, the government helps pay their salary while they're being trained.

Due in large part to his hiring philosophy and for his continued free maintenance of the City of Wilson's athletic fields, Boykin received the highest honor of his life last year, the North Carolina Distinguished Service Award from Lt. Governor James C. Green. "It was certainly one of the



Attention to detail —a Boyco trademark.

highlights of my life," the 34-year-old says in a thick North Carolina accent.

Back to business

Most of the predominant grass in the area is bermudagrass. In the fall and winter it goes dormant producing unsightly brownish-yellow turf. "We usually overseed with rye, but in a lot of cases it just took too long to green-up."

That green-up problem launched Boyco into another area—that of lawn dyeing.

"We offer lawn-dyeing to clients as an option to overseeding. So far they've been very receptive. It's an expensive process, but some of our smaller clients prefer it."

Most of Boyco's clients are 100 acres and above. The company has a few residential accounts, but because of slow payment, Boykin is concentrating his efforts where the



Greg Boykin, president of Boyco.

money is—larger accounts that pay on time.

One of those, Research Triangle Park near Raleigh, is an excellent client, but maintenance-wise, Boykin describes it as "the armpit of the world. It's the absolute worst area to try to get anything to grow in. Being in the transition zone, keeping things green and growing is a never-ending battle."

He overseeds twice a year, in April and October with Kentucky 31, but poor drainage presents another problem.

"The area just doesn't perk," he reports. "It's a beautiful area but it gives us a run for our money."

Being a member of the North Carolina Industrial Council provides Boykin with another marketing tool. He is privy to all new industry moving into North Carolina. Before they even arrive, Boyco literature is sent out explaining the company's services to the prospective new client.

Hot dogs and turf

Boykin graduated from North Carolina State with a degree in landscape design and turf management. He worked with the City of Wilson's landscape planning department after he graduated.

"At \$500 a month I was about to starve to death," he chuckles now.

It was at that point that Boykin started landscaping his father's contracting jobs. Word got around and friends started asking him to do the same. He finally decided to start a business of his own with his brother, Bill, who is now a vice president with the company.

Boykin is a confident, gregarious man who feels just as much at home eating a few hot dogs at the local college hangout as he does driving a sparkling white Mercedes. He stays involved in the community. The city's three athletic fields are maintained free of charge by Boyco.

"I've always been interested in sports and the town I grew up in," he says. "I do it to support good will in the community."

The Rotary, a Monday morning call-in gardening question radio show and a "hacker's game" of golf get what little is left of his free time.

Spending time with his wife and two children, ages two and four, (and another one due next month) is what he enjoys the most.

The future

Boykin says he wants to move into the Richmond, VA, market because he "wants to work with bluegrass." There are also plans down the road to possibly start a branch in the New England area.

"Right now we just want to do what we do well," he says.

"I've seen a lot of good companies go under because of poor management or non-payment. We decided to hang around the companies who will pay their bills.

"Those who do good work will survive," Boykin continues, "those who cut corners will go under."

There have been some, even in Wilson, who see Boykin's success and think they can do the same thing. Wilson is the world's largest tobacco market. Because of that fact, per capita, it has the most millionaires in the U.S.

"Prospective landscape maintenance people come in and see all the big homes and think it'll be easy to become one of them (millionaires), but it takes a lot more than just mowing lawns to be successful."

Boykin is very conscious of professionalism in the business. He's also willing to share whatever knowledge he has to keep the industry "clean."

He is a member of the Professional Grounds Management Society, Professional Lawn Care Association of America and is very "pro" the state licensing test for professional landscapers.

"In this world, you reap what you sow," Boykin concludes. "There's enough business out there that people don't have to cut each other's throats."

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