

Intel, Mentor Graphics, Tektronics—the company has many giant-sized clients. The buildings are sharp, the landscape superb.

"We only offer service and quality—you can't do anything else. People today sometimes don't get a lot of service but if you offer it, they'll spend the money," says Akerman, while preparing an urgent quote for a potential client.

Northwest prepares to better serve clients in the future by beefing

up the company's design/build services.

"We believe the future is in design/build and we're heading that way," says Akerman.

One way he's doing that is by hiring landscape architects as part of the team instead of competing against them. "That way they can have their business. We're not in competition." That attitude has helped growth in the design/build end.—by Ken Kuhajda

Daniels. "We've never been a company to dwell on anything. We just go after something else."

Daniels is a proponent of team management. And he has assembled a good team: chairman Art Davis, vice-president Scott Forrester, secretary-treasurer Scot Davis, contract administrator Dan Tamminga and vice-president David Lindorfer.

"Our people have to be the tops," Daniels says. "We can't settle for less. Those guys have pushed me to my limits. When my alarm goes off at 5:45 a.m., I know there's 30 or 40 managers' feet hitting the floor at the same time."

Top managers at Davis work 10 to 12 hours a day, five days a week. That kind of a schedule might burn out many executives. But not the people at Davis.

Tamminga, who is married and has one son, does like it, though, when things get a little slower. "You have a higher frustration rate with the long hours," he says. "And the family puts a lot of pressure on. But what keeps me going is that I know there's a breather at the end of the

SHOOTING THE MOON

From zero to \$8.4 million in sales in just six years, Davis Landscape Contractors know no bounds.

Contrary to the controlled growth of Northwest, Davis Landscape Contractors of Gaithersburg, Md. has blown the top off its growth chart. Begun in 1981, Davis experienced

total sales of \$8.4 million this past season.

"We haven't set a limit on what 'the moon' is for Davis," notes the company president and CEO Chris



Fairview Park, where Davis crews must cope with turf, tree, shrub and water management.

LANDSCAPE PROFILE

year. I sort of re-evaluate in the slow season."

Lindorfer, a newlywed, says, "We all approach the burnout, usually in the fall. If this was a 12-month season, we wouldn't handle the pace. January and February are the two most important months, when everybody can get recharged."

\$1 million, 3 trucks

The Davises and Daniels started the company in Harrisburg, Pa. in 1980 with a \$1 million budget and three trucks. Gradually, the company's sphere of influence widened to Hilton Head, S.C., Gaithersburg, Md. and Raleigh, N.C.

The turning point was when Davis was awarded the \$300,000 Shady Grove Metro project in Rockville, Md. "We overcame, perhaps, the strictest and most complex governmental specifications in order to complete the job on time and within budget," notes Lindorfer. "The competition was expecting us to falter, but we didn't."

By 1984, sales exceeded \$2.3 million at the Gaithersburg branch alone, and \$3.4 million for the entire company.

A working philosophy

Bases of the company's working philosophy are quality, fair price and performance.

"We always keep our word," notes Scot Davis. "If I have to pull a crew out of Harrisburg to make a deadline in Washington, D.C., I'll do it. And I have."

Davis—called DLC by its employees—has a personnel recruiting program geared to high credentials. More than 45 employees have college degrees. Six are certified landscape architects and five have horticulture degrees.

"But," Daniels notes, "DLC also has a lot of fantastic employees who don't have college degrees. The executive, white-collar and blue-collar mix in this company is very balanced. More importantly, we promote from within, so most of our employees know what it's like to have been at the end of a shovel at one point in their lives."

"We sell opportunity."

Growth like DLC's means, obviously, some radical financing. Daniels says that the company's strong track record—from the very beginning—of predictability and

dependability allowed DLC to secure short-term working capital when needed. "But equally important is the line-by-line analysis and breakdown which has consistently come out very close to projected amounts," Daniels adds.

DLC management reviews work-in-progress reports monthly and income statements every 30 days.

"Many businessmen fail without the understanding and ability to project and forecast why and when

they need cash," says Daniels.

"Our system has explicitly shown our people where they are and where they are heading," notes Scot Davis. "Our people have the information in advance to evaluate a problem and the tools and company support to react quickly to resolve them."

There is no secret to the success at Davis Landscape Construction: it's as simple as "people plus performance equals profit."

—Jerry Roche



The Davis management team: (from left) vice-president Scott Forrester, contract administrator Dan Tamminga, president Chris Daniels and vice-president Dave Lindorfer at U.S. Fidelity & Guaranty Insurance.



U.S. Fidelity & Guaranty Insurance, one of Davis's more valued accounts.