

A fairy tale? Not hardly

Once upon a time, a young baby-boomer decided to go into business for himself. Lo and behold, this insightful youngster—he was barely out of college—chose landscaping, after conducting his own extensive market research.

He liked to be out-of-doors, he liked dealing with clients on a one-to-one basis. Sure, the hours were long and tough; walking a landscape with a string trimmer in hand or sitting on a mower for hours on end is not easy.

But this particular youngster liked the freedom of having his own landscape maintenance business.

By and by, the business began to grow. His reputation spread. He was getting phone calls from people he didn't know. Finally, working 18-hour days, he figured that it was time to add staff.

A few years later, 20 people were on the payroll. The recession was upon the country, but it seemed to have little effect on his business. While other small businessmen were throwing in the towel, his business was thriving in a relatively new "industry."

Not much later, this particular fellow—who was no longer young, but nearer the big four-oh—decided expansion was again necessary. A lot of big bucks, he thought, awaited the landscape design/build company that could afford the expensive heavy equipment and design staff. He spent many an hour burning the midnight oil before determining that he *could* afford the capital investment. His company became full-service: design, build, main-

tain (including pesticide applications and mowing).

The business flourished. This baby-boomer had made it.

Moral: Landscape contracting is about to enter another, more mature stage as baby-boomers' maintenance companies become full-service companies. The old line between design/build and maintenance is graying. Smart, energetic landscape managers with the proper resources might consider diversifying into design/build.

The end.



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