



It's our turn

Tom Oyler, the man who made Oyler's Landscaping and U.S. Lawns a leader in the Florida landscape/maintenance industry, couldn't be happier.

He's happy that the 1990s is the "decade of the environment."

People, says Oyler, gravitate to the biggest issues with which they all share a common interest. "The environment is an issue," says Oyler. "And guess what landscapers do? They work with the environment. You are perfectly positioned for the 1990s." And wouldn't it be nice for a change, Oyler asks, to be seen as the leaders in the environmental movement?

Speaking at a recent meeting of the Ohio Landscapers Association, Oyler presented a dozen other ideas to a packed house.

How can landscapers capitalize on the environment, and help preserve it? Well, there's composting and water audits for starters. Yes, it rains often in the Midwest, but is rain an iron-clad guarantee? Yard waste will be landfill non grata in 1993. Customers will need suggestions on what to do with it. How about selling rotating composters?

Lobbying and other offensive strategies are also necessary.

Oyler knows of a conversation with a city councilman that helped save Florida landscapers from having to pull permits for all kinds of irrigation installation or repair whatsoever. The councilman was simply unaware what problems such legislation would create for the industry.

Internally, all companies need a business plan. According to Oyler, many landscapers say business is great, but can't elaborate. "You need a short- (one-year) and long-term (five-year) plan, says Oyler. Develop measuring systems and use them. If you need help, ask your state association or find a consultant.

Network among community groups, like the Chamber of Commerce, and get your best people active in the community as well. Soon, they'll be coming to work with all kinds of ideas.

Are lower-priced companies dominating your market? Develop a measuring and estimating system. "Every piece of your equipment has a capacity," notes Oyler. "Every piece has a production rate the average guy can generate while using it." If you've calculated those rates, and measured the site, and know your break-even point per hour, you're in. The property manager will look at your 27-hour estimate, compare it with the competitor's 8-hour estimate, and wonder what the other guy is leaving out, and just what he's getting for his money.

And above all, *always* be ethical, and insist on quality.

It all worked for Tom Oyler.

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