

● Will you expand services beyond your old offering at this location?

● Will raw materials be drop-shipped to the branch?

● Who will handle off-loading and storage decisions when service personnel are in the field?

In answering these questions, you will need to look at the type of services which you will be offering and the experience of the personnel.

When?—The time to move into a new location is when the economics and financial benefits of a new location are very clear.

Reality has led me to suggest, though, that the off-season is the easiest time to open a new branch. Setting up a new branch during the off-season will allow flexibility in time schedules, since many employees will only be working part time.

However, opening a branch in the winter in the northern U.S. or Canada will mean that it will be idle for a few months until business really picks up in the spring. If your company can financially make it through the winter, this is the best alternative.

One admonition to the company that is short of space now: do not wait until next year to expand into a larger facility. A branch office or a satellite operation can be the most cost-efficient and effective solution to your problem.

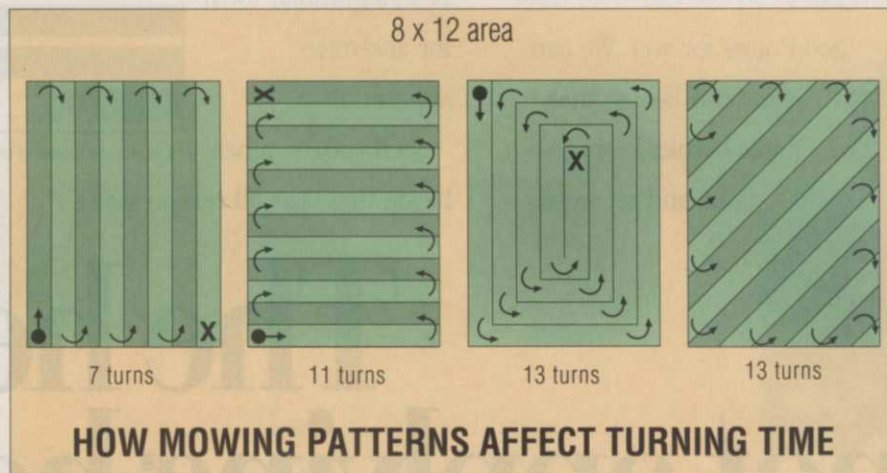
Ask your employees to help make the decision to expand and get them involved in making the new location successful.

Overwhelmed?—Opening a new branch is a traumatic time. People moving, equipment being re-assigned, routes being changed, customers being serviced by new technicians—all seem to overwhelm most owners.

Don't let the pressures caused by small details get to you. Make the new branch opening an exciting time for your business. Someone is being promoted; you can try something new at this location; and there will be a renewed excitement because everyone will be watching the new branch's performance. Take advantage of this excitement and pass its emotional high to everyone—employees and customers alike.

Make this event an uplifting experience for the company, and your profits and employee morale will thrive.

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Mowing patterns can make some difference

Besides speed, mowing patterns can help you control the beauty of an area, or the safety with which you're mowing.

■ There is an art, some say, to mowing grass. If you're in it for the money, here are some considerations:

● **Speed.** Use the pattern that will result in the fewest turns and longest straight stretches. A good example is a typical rectangular area measuring 8x12 units. If you mow lengthwise, you need only seven half-turns of the mower. However, if you mow crosswise, it'll take 11 half-turns. Mowing inward from the perimeter will require 13 quarter-turns while mowing horizontally requires 13 half-turns (see illustration).

● **Beauty.** If you're in one of the lucky few states that can still bag clippings without worrying about paying for their disposal, there's no problem. Or if you're using a mulching attachment or blade, there won't be any unsightly clippings either. But if not, you'll want to discharge clippings away from sidewalks, driveways and buildings.

● **Mulching.** If your mower is un-equipped for mulching yet you want to mulch as many clippings as possible, travel in a clockwise direction with right-hand discharges. If it's a left-hand discharge, you'll want to go counter-clockwise so you're mowing the clippings over and over again.

● **Safety.** Watch where you're discharging clippings. Avoid discharging them into pedestrian traffic.

"There's no way I can mow without people being around," says Tim Glover of Westerville (Ohio) Schools, who has 24 different locations, including two high school stadiums and middle school athletic fields. So he tries to balance mulching and safety. He uses three basic patterns for his side-discharge front-deck mowers:

1) When the grass is not extra high, I get the best appearance by going around the outside of an area, moving inward, blowing the discharge inward until it is mulched up.

2) When the grass is extra high (or wet), I start at the center of the area, moving outward, blowing the discharge inward. I try to avoid blowing outward for safety to people and cars, and to keep discharge off walks and roads.

3) With an odd-shaped area, I may save time by going back and forth, moving from one side of the area to the other.

—Any other mowing suggestions? Get your ideas in print by calling LM editors Jerry, Terry or Ron at (216) 826-2830, faxing us at (216) 891-2675 or writing LM, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130.



Tim Glover: uses three types of mowing patterns