

# Small businessman's needs are met by D.C.-based group

## NFIB is indeed a national voice for small businesses in the U.S.

■ The National Federation of Independent Businesses, a Washington-based organization for the small businessman, is "an unheralded alliance of little guys," describes *U.S. News & World Report* magazine.

William Thornton Jr. of Thornton Industries, Maineville, Ohio, outlined in a letter to *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT* benefits of belonging to the NFIB.

"Your editorial 'The plight of the small businessman' (Dec., 1991) was right on track. You are absolutely right that the number of landscape and lawn care companies, like all small businesses in this

country, is increasing. Small business is where most of the new jobs are created. The small and independent business is the growing part of our economy.

"You are right about small business men and women working long hours. And because of their limited time, they should be involved in the events that enable them to do more than they could on their own. It is important to be involved in events like the PLCAA Legislative Day or the recent ALCA/AAN Legislative Conference, and make these contacts with our legislators.

"Recently, NFIB has worked hard on such issues as these:

- parental leave,
- civil rights,
- unemployment compensation benefits extensions,

"NFIB is indeed a voice for small busi-



**Thornton: there's help for small companies at the NFIB.**

ness in Washington, D.C. and all 50 state capitals. The NFIB position is that of small business owners because it is only determined by regular votes of its members."

Typical new member dues in the NFIB is \$100, which includes a subscription to *Independent Business* magazine. For more information, phone (202) 554-9000 or write: NFIB, 600 Maryland Ave. SW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20024.

# Career tracking for valuable employees

## When your employees track their progress, everyone wins.

by E.T. Wandtke

■ Have you ever lost good workers to another organization, after they have been with you for a couple of years?

If so, did you consider why they left?

Over the years, I have heard many reasons why seasoned green industry employees have left their company. However, I still don't think the owner realized the true reason why the employee left.

Boredom...a change...unhappiness...not enough money—these are but a few reasons why employees leave an organization. But there *is* a way to stop this from happening!

**Symptoms vs. reasons**—To prevent this scenario, you must follow a few simple steps.

**1) Job description.** First, those "reasons" that employees leave are not truly reasons but symptoms of a lack of planning. What do I mean? Simple: you must anticipate what your employee's future needs will be, and make sure you find a way to meet these needs if you value that

employee. And the easiest way to start employee planning is to make sure you have a job description for each employee.

The job description should provide the employee with a blueprint to becoming successful in the company. List the skills the employee will need to do or to develop to do the job. Once a clear job description has been laid out, the employee now has something to shoot for.

**2) Career path.** Once you have established employee job descriptions, you must develop a career path for the employee to follow to reach supervisory and management positions. List the skills which you see as necessary for a supervisor or manager in your company. List the duties he or she is expected to perform and the responsibilities he or she will have. The key here is to tell employees exactly what skills and qualities you would like to see in an ideal manager.

**3) Employee development.** Now that you have developed a job description and a career path, listing the skills that are necessary to be acquired along the way, you are halfway toward developing a complete employee planning program.

The *employee* must:

a) Learn what is expected and the skills required. Often, this means only reading the job description.

b) Work to develop those skills which he or she does not possess. Skills necessary for advancement take time to master, but knowing what is required is half the battle.

c) Seek help if unable to master some of the tasks/skills required.

The *employer* has two additional responsibilities beyond creating a job description and developing a career path.

a) Recognize the skills that certain employees are lacking. This might seem obvious, but often when I ask, "Why won't Jim be a good manager?" I get: "I don't know" as an answer.

b) Provide a means for the employee to acquire the necessary skills. For example, I suggested one of my clients begin doing nightscaping, but the client's employees weren't trained to do this. It was then his responsibility to make sure there was a means by which these employees could be trained.

**Summary**—If more companies establish plans for employee development strategies, there will be less turnover in the green industry.

One thing I often hear is that a certain company might not need that many managers. My response is easy: if you have that many capable bodies, maybe you should be expanding and not trying to limit your internal growth.