

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

is a proud member of these green industry professional organizations:



Associated Landscape Contractors of America, 12200 Sunrise Valley Dr., Suite 150, Reston, VA; (703) 620-6363.

American Sod Producers Association, 1855-A Hicks Rd., Rolling Meadows, IL 60008; (708) 705-9898.

Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, 1421 Research Park Dr., Lawrence, KS 66049-3859; (913) 841-2240.

International Society of Arboriculture, P.O. Box 908, Urbana, IL 61801; (217) 328-2032.

International Turfgrass Society, Crop & Soil Environmental Sciences, VPI-SU, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0403; (703) 231-9796.



National Arborist Association, The Meeting Place Mall, P.O. Box 1094, Amherst, NH 03031-1094; (603) 673-3311.

National Golf Foundation, 1150 South U.S. Highway One, Jupiter, FL 33477; (407) 744-6006.

Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, 2021 Coffey Rd., Columbus, OH 43210; (614) 292-2601.



Professional Grounds Management Society, 120 Cockeysville Rd., Suite 104, Hunt Valley, MD 21031; (410) 584-9754.



Professional Lawn Care Association of America, 1000 Johnson Ferry Rd., NE, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112; (404) 977-5222.

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, 1155 15th St. NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 872-3860.



Sports Turf Managers Association, 401 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611-4267; (312) 644-6610.

Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association, 8400 Normandale Lake Blvd., Suite 500, Bloomington, MN 55437; (612) 832-5000.

AS WE SEE IT

JERRY ROCHE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Growing not always easy in this economic climate

Et tu! To grow or not to grow—that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler to be static, or to suffer the slings and arrows of expansion.

Okay, so I'm no Willie Shakespeare.

But in that first paragraph, you can read what happens when someone tries to be something he's not...it just doesn't work.

Growing (the subject of our cover story this month) is not easy, ever—much less in the current economic climate.

One of the great quotes I wrote down while researching the cover story is this: **"You cannot push growth; you have to release it."**

Another: **"The act of growing implies, at the least, paying attention to the world around you; learning from others; and changing yourself."**

In this context, paying attention to the world around you means knowing the market, knowing the general economic climate, and predicting what future services might be in demand.

Learning from others means getting critical feedback from customers. It's not enough—any more—to be content with a batch of kind comments. **You have to really work to pry information from your customers.** The information can then be used to improve your business and your standing with your customers. Mostly, though, it's information that you can learn from.

Learning from others also might mean getting critical feedback from your employees. **You cannot plot out a growth curve that might exceed the growth curve of your employees. They have to grow with the company.**

One of the reference books I read suggests this:

"Sit down with employees and explain how you think the business is going to grow in the next year, and how you believe this will affect the different jobs or departments. Then find out what each employee thinks of the scenario...and whether they

will be with you or against you."

Sound advice.

Once you've determined how you're going to improve and grow, sometimes the hardest part of the entire process is changing your business to accommodate the anticipated growth.

If you're lucky, you'll be able to grow without having to sink a lot of money into materials and equipment, at least initially. (If a branch office is necessary, you could be facing additional start-up costs approaching as much as \$500,000, according to one landscaper we talked to.)

Finally, after all the growth mechanisms are in place, you wake up every morning to the sound of chirping bluebirds. The phone is ringing off the hook. The sun is highlighted against a cloudless azure sky.

...But wait just a minute. All might not really be right with the world.

One expert says that **the most perilous time is when a company starts to succeed wildly, enjoys high earnings and shows rapid sales growth.** Those symptoms can breed mistakes that are masked by the company's outward prosperity.

When you're hustling to please all your customers and working long hours to keep pace with all the new sales, small things can start falling through the cracks. And then the pendulum begins to swing the other way. Maybe you hear more complaints; maybe you start losing employees; maybe your pre-tax profits plummet.

No, growing in this economic climate is not easy.

But it's possible—likely, even—if you follow some of the suggestions in our cover story.