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few extra dollars after all the expenses are figured in?

6) What might be the hidden or unknown drawbacks to the extra work you might get? If in the winter, is the ground frozen, or might your equipment bog down? What about underground utility lines?

Natural disasters can either be a finan-

cial boon or bust. Quick action may be necessary to capitalize on an unusual weather event. But moving too quickly or not considering all the ramifications of getting the work may cost you money in the long run.

—The author is a freelance writer based in eastern Pennsylvania, and a frequent contributor to LM.

'Working' a disaster: don't be a casualty!

Consider if you can make money by travelling out of state for extra work, and remember that different regulations may apply.

by Ed and Aaron Wandtke

■ Natural disasters may actually be rare opportunities for your company, if you are in the design/build, renovation, tree removal, pruning, maintenance or lawn care business.

How you deal with these occurrences can have a significant impact on your current and future business relationship with a customer. What issues should you consider: travel to a disaster-stricken area to help clean-up or rebuild? And how do you prioritize this opportunity?

Natural disasters—such as ice, floods and snow storms—in a single market or regionally, bring many opportunities for a green industry company to earn extraordinary income from special services. Your

decision to seek work in a disaster area may also affect the level of service you provide to your current customers. Establish a priority list, using the following criteria:

Priority 1: Work you can complete with existing staff, resources and equipment, for *existing* customers.

Priority 2: Work you can complete for new customers in the current market, with established personnel and equipment; this work does not affect service to existing customers.

Priority 3: Work that's available in the established market, for municipalities or state agencies, by current personnel and equipment, that will not affect the ability to service present or new customers.

Priority 4: Work you can perform in the main market for current customers using personnel or rental equipment you do not employ and own.

Priority 5: Work in other markets, for municipalities or state agencies, completed with current personnel and equipment that will not affect the ability to service present or existing customers.

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Preparation is the key to getting through a crisis

■ According to the American Red Cross, businesses should treat the following areas in their business plans. All involve crisis management:

1) Offsite relocation: Identify alternative sites for critical business functions. You should also determine which units or departments could relocate. Agreements can be made with real estate agents and others for back-up sites.

2) Management information systems: Know how to identify and secure key records, software and equipment. Key personnel should know how to access vital data, too.

3) Telecommunications: Identify back-up communication systems with employees, customers, vendors and shareholders. Then, talk to your communication system agent about getting back-up systems in place.

4) Utilities: Be prepared to handle temporary utility loss, including establishing procedures for shutting down the facility and releasing employees early.

5) Crisis communication: Establish a solid crisis communication plan. Designate an organization spokesperson, and identify the most effective ways to communicate with the media, the local community and government officials.

6) Human issues: Dealing with the emotional stress that accompanies a crisis is as important as physical recovery. Have a program in place.

For more information on how to cope with crises in your community, contact your local American Red Cross, a business management consultant and/or any national trade organizations to which your business belongs.



Your crews must be aware of the types of clean-up or replacement work they may encounter in a disaster area.

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How to price—During crisis time, management may want to charge a premium price for repair services. Long-term relationships are seldom developed when a company follows this practice.

Yes, short-term gains may be realized; however, in the long-term, customers will realize they are being charged more than a reasonable amount for the service they receive.

When you determine a price to repair damage caused by a natural disaster, it is critical that the total costs for personnel and equipment are taken into consideration.

Overtime and salary personnel may work extra hours and, therefore, may need to be considered for overtime or additional benefits. By reviewing your current costs for hourly rates and equipment utilization, a company can determine if any adjustment in its pricing is needed.

Is travel required?—Choosing between

traveling to a distant market or staying at home is a function of the number of skilled people you have on staff, the level of service committed to current customers, and the size of the opportunity at the distant location. Managing or performing work far from home base requires that you know the local laws, insurance regulations and lodgings available.

Many green industry companies look at disaster work as an opportunity to keep the employees working. However, a company needs to consider the liability it may be exposing the company to. Employees working in unfamiliar areas may encounter local resistance to their presence, a lack of things to do after hours, or fatigue from long work periods.

While working in New York to clear streets from a major ice storm last year, many companies coming into the state were surprised by the increase in auto insurance rates, workers compensation

premiums and the amount of the tax obligation levied as a result of working there. Profit was reduced significantly due to these unbudgeted expenses. A profit of 15 percent was reduced to 5 percent.

Be prepared—Timing is important if you want to profit in natural disaster work. A company needs to be prepared to react to opportunities when they arise. Be organized and disciplined, and have work teams at the ready to respond quickly. Too often, companies take on tasks that are too complex or difficult to perform. Other companies find management of the work crew to be excellent when working out of the office each day. However, when they go on the road, it becomes a total nightmare.

—The authors are principals in Wandtke & Associates, a business management consultant to the green industry located in Columbus, Ohio. To contact them, phone (614) 891-3111.

Communicating: with employees, co-workers and customers/clients

Learn from your conversations, and don't be afraid to use body language to convey your points.

■ Communicating is a contact sport, said Mike Jousan of Clear Communication Co., Scottsdale, Ariz. That is—"you've got to connect."

"Whatever your goals are in life, you'll reach them faster if you can communicate better," Jousan told New Jersey Turfgrass Expo attendees. But his presentation only scratched the surface of the self-help information available to landscapers and superintendents.

Of prime importance: "You are not only carrying a message, you are part of the message, and you can never separate yourself from the message," Jousan said.

He has what he calls the "1-10-100" rule: the same skills you use to talk to an employee, your dentist or spouse, you use to talk to groups of 10 or 100.

And he believes that good communication is an "equal opportunity" skill because anyone can do it.

Four simple things which Jousan suggests for any situation in which you must connect with another person or persons:

- Your voice has to be energetic.
- You must use eye contact: when all else fails, look at people.
- Use gestures: your hands enhance what you're saying.
- Your body language must be going forward in a positive fashion.

"Words, tone and body are the only things we use to communicate," Jousan says. "Words are 7 percent of the process, tone 38 percent, and body language 55 percent. So you must support your words, or they won't mean much."

Dr. Tony Alessandra and Dr. Phil Hunsaker, writing in "Communicating at Work," agree with Jousan. One of their beliefs is that perceived sincerity is directly proportional to eye contact.

Alessandra and Hunsaker say that, when conversing with others, you should use body language to convey openness, confidence and enthusiasm.

For instance, you convey openness with open hands and uncrossed arms. To be totally effective, you should not establish spatial barriers between yourself and others: move closer to them, lean forward if you're sitting.

They believe that the area within two feet

of you is the "intimate zone." From 2 to 4 feet extends the "personal zone;" from 4 to 12 feet, the "social zone;" and beyond 12 feet from you is the "public zone." Don't try to talk to someone 10 feet away in a personal manner, they suggest; you should be no farther than 4 feet from the person you're talking to.

You can convey confidence and authority by using relaxed and expansive gestures. You can convey enthusiasm with an inward smile, an erect body stance, alert eyes and a lively, well-modulated voice.

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Jousan: You've got to connect with your audience whether it's 1, 10 or 100 persons.

