

Breaking through business barriers

Dr. Nate Booth, head corporate trainer at Robbins Research International Inc., San Diego, told members of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America that all they need to break through their barriers is "confidence and competence."

Booth, speaking to about 200 landscapers at ALCA's Executive Forum, urged them to "transform changes into challenges" by using these four keys:

- ▶ have an empowering belief system;
- ▶ put yourself in a peak state;
- ▶ use the right strategy; and
- ▶ be on a team that supports you.

Also speaking at the Forum was Will Phillips, a trainer with Faust Management Corp., San Diego, who led participants through the steps of team building.

ALCA's 1996 officers are: President David Minor, Minor's Landscape Services; President-Elect Judson Griggs, Lied's Landscape Design & Development; Vice-President Cynthia Peterson, CCLP, McCaren Designs; and Secretary, Steve Glover, CLP, L&L Landscape Services. □

PLCAA recognizes substance abuse

PLCAA offers "Working Partners," a video training program dealing with substance abuse in the workplace.

Developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, the program includes a video, a trainer's manual and a participant's manual. Different types of substances including marijuana, inhalants, alcohol, steroids, crack, cocaine, ice and hallucinogens are discussed. The video "America in Jeopardy" and interactive group sessions are key parts of the program.

"Working Partners" is \$50 for PLCAA members and \$75 for non-members. Contact PLCAA at (800) 458-3466.

Comparing Companies

"Lawn & Order, Inc."		"Superior Lawn Care, Inc."
franchise	..... type of company	individually owned
serious and quiet	..... owner's demeanor	flamboyant free-spender
commercial	..... target market	high-end residential
90% turf, 10% tree	..... type of accounts	50% turf, 50% tree/shrub
three managers	..... key employees	four or five technicians
aggressive telemarketing	..... sales ploys	commission system
loose routes	..... productivity	high dollars per stop
low	..... debt	high
45%	..... cancellation rate	20%
10.7% of revenues	..... cost of materials	15.7% of revenues
31% of revenues	..... payroll costs	18% of revenues
15.2%	..... owner's salary	28.2%
18%	..... bottom-line profit	7%

helped, too.

But Grate Funn's independent operation won on other points, the study showed. In the Direct Payroll category, he was a clear winner, for instance.

The upper quartile and typical companies averaged 31 percent while his, due mainly to the commission system, was just 18 percent.

Grate's productivity led significantly. Although he didn't say so, it's likely his trucks command a greater dollar amount per stop, and his routes are tighter.

All companies were relatively the same in production vehicles and equipment, although Grate topped out a tad on the high side due to his "company" BMW.

Grate's big salary shot him into space, in this category, 13 percent higher than Ken's more sober 15.2 percent. (Grate justified his pay by pointing out that his beautiful second wife's favorite book is "Dun & Bradstreet.")

Ken's operating profit matched those of other upper quartile companies, almost 18 percent. Grate's was about 7 percent, equivalent to the typical company.

On the balance sheet, Ken and the typical companies were similar in assets and liabilities, while Grate had enough debt to send the SBA running.

Both men said the study revealed areas that they needed to strengthen.

Ken vowed to improve his hiring process and start a technician training program. He's also experimenting with new ideas to inject excitement and enthusiasm into his workers.

Grate decided to cut his salary and pay himself what he would pay a manager, then bonus himself at the end of the year according to the company's performance. He's also implementing a plan to get his company out of debt.

Lewis Browning, the study's author, said that neither man was right or wrong, but both had differing personal styles that made their companies very different. □

—Dick Bare is owner and operator of Arbor-Nomics Turf Inc., Norcross, Ga. To order a copy of the study, contact PLCAA, 1000 Johnson Ferry Road, Suite C-135, Marietta, GA 30068-2112. Telephone: (800) 458-3466. Cost is \$150 for PLCAA members; \$395 non-members.