



Jim Leszuk, president of Heritage LC, and assistant Karen Doyle.

A 'commercial' success

Connecticut's Jim Leszuk is glad he redirected his company away from the residential and toward the commercial lawn care market.

Heritage Lawns, Inc., headquarters in Plainville, Conn., made a bold move last year, and it paid off. After experiencing its first full season committed strictly to the commercial market, Jim Leszuk, Heritage's owner and president, is all smiles. Currently servicing only schools, industrial parks, condo complexes and businesses, Heritage is carving a niche for itself that seems to be working well.

In early 1996, Leszuk realized that Heritage Lawn's residential customers were once again the target of the national lawn care chains.

"Every spring we get a certain percentage of customers who just can't refuse the pricing tactics of these quota-based companies," says Leszuk. "I understand that times are tough. I'm just like everybody else; when someone offers you the same service for less money, you feel you owe it to yourself to try it."

"For years we'd have customers leave and then come back when the condition of their landscapes suffered. Every year we would lose a small percentage of customers and get

some new ones. But all the paperwork and marketing cost time and money.

"Every year it got harder and harder to compete in the residential market without sacrificing quality. This was not the way we wanted to go," says Leszuk.

After much thought and market research he decided to focus on commercial work. He sold his residential division.

"We have found in the commercial market that price is less likely to be the determining factor. The decision maker in a company is more likely to pay attention to results as it could be his reputation or even position on the line. If the properties look good, so does the manager," says Leszuk. "And the properties are looking better than ever."

"With diversification it seems quality suffers in so many cases, so by focusing on just one area of the market service could only get better."

Personal service

Heritage is now able to train their employees and purchase equipment specifically for commercial properties.

"We are big enough to handle 100-acre properties but small enough that our customers can call and speak to

me anytime they wish, and I will know what they are talking about," says Leszuk.

"I know all the properties. I keep in touch with my contacts. Personal service really means a lot to people and I take pride in the properties we service. Communication is key in this business especially where most of our programs are based on IPM (integrated pest management) methods."

Leszuk says his commercial clients appreciate the level of service Heritage is now able to offer them. That, of course,

bodes well for Heritage too.

"Overhead is down and referrals are up," says the owner.

"This move has really helped morale around here too. Although we miss our residential customers, it's nice not having to explain about dog spots or race race to a lawn 'full of weeds' and find one dandelion under the deck," he adds.

The shift allowed Heritage to strengthen its tree & shrub program and offer organic lawn care options. The company is also expanding its service area to western Massachusetts. **LM**



Heritage Lawn Care's offices are in Plainville, Conn., but the company is moving into western Massachusetts, too.