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on the record

BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Green and 'clueless'

How many managers in landscape, grounds or lawn care are absolutely "clueless" about smart operations, getting good prices and profits or running a professional organization? We asked some experienced professionals and they guessed between 50% and 90% of the industry operate that way.

That's appalling. I'm sorry to hear so many people risk their personal fortunes and careers without understanding what they're doing. I'm sorry that technical competency, business basics or elementary people management practices are not considered important in a business. No wonder so many Green Industry businesses are short-lived, under-performing, unprofessional jokes.

There's no excuse for ignorance. Extension services, retired business volunteers and even local government-funded business development programs provide education that is cheap, quick and easy to find. And that's not even considering local Green Industry associations.

You may think those "clueless" ones are unworthy competition, but they do compete by low-balling prices, hiring away employees and lowering the public's understanding of the valuable work you do.

Unless every person in your organization knows everything about field work, operations, finances, sales and marketing, mission and strategies, human resources and more, you need to keep training.

It's hard to share information, pay for programs and use otherwise billable time for training, but it must be done. I'd like to see every local, regional and national conference be a place where everyone, not just owners or managers, finds the information they need. When they feel part of something greater — an industry dedicated to self-improvement — they'll see a career worth developing.

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