

BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Be a player in the labor game

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his millenium, I'm planning ahead, and I mean it!" I vowed, along with millions of others. How about you? Will this be the year when you make plans instead of promises, or develop written business goals and a program to achieve them? I believe that you can achieve those things if you work for them.

So how will you work at hiring employees this year? I'm sorry to say if you don't have a plan in place right now, you're already out of this year's game. You might get lucky, but the best people will go elsewhere.

"What? I haven't even written our clever new want ads yet!" you shriek. "I'm still developing our internet search strategy. It's not too late — it's only February!"

Sorry, you're wrong. It's too late to start planning because right now, you should be planning for February 2001, 2002 and 2003. In fact, you should be planning all aspects of your business for the next five years, and not just your hiring plan. The "people" is critical to building your organization of the future.

That's one thing I've learned from the experts who contributed to our series on labor, which starts this month. I've also learned it from observing the most successful managers in our industry. They don't recruit, hire or retain people as an afterthought. They plan like hell for it.

Why? Because the numbers are stacked against you. The "available" workforce will shrink even more in upcoming years and you'll have to look for "non-traditional" workers and use new systems to keep them. It's going to be a lot harder in the future.

So here's my recipe for playing today's and tomorrow's labor game successfully:

► 1. *Think and act long-term.* Be purposeful and plan years ahead to have the organization, relationships and systems that feed people with potential to

you, and keep them there for the long term.

► 2. *Network like crazy.* Reach out to "nontraditional" employees and build creative alliances for hiring and training.

► 3. *Be a leader.* Everyone can't be a leader, but you can be the best at something. You can have an organization that grows its people along with its business — and you'll have to.

Too many of you tell me that the key factor keeping you from growing more is lack of good people. If this problem is so critical, you need to work hard — short-term and long-term — to solve it.

Our coverage this month starts on page 48. We'd love to hear your sources for people, your ideas for training and your methods of slowing turnover for future articles. If you have the time, please give me a call at 800/225-4569 x2729, or email me: sgibson@advanstar.com.

Welcome Jason Stahl

It's our pleasure to welcome Jason Stahl as managing editor of *Landscape Management* and our sister publication, *Athletic Turf*. Jason joins us with several years of experience in publications and is already learning plenty about the ins and outs of professional landscape work. He will cover many industry events and has already started developing several features on our industry, like his piece in *Industry Almanac*, page 32. You can reach him at 440/891-2623 or jstahl@advanstar.com.



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