

# let's hear it

YOUR OPINIONS, COMMENTS, & QUOTES

## Answer to labor problem is not H2B but higher wages

Will there be a labor shortage in the 2000 growing season? According to the February 2000 edition of *Landscape Management*, the answer is yes.

What's the solution? Well, according to your magazine and many landscape contractors, it's increase the number of H2B visas. This will insure a cheap labor pool.

Will there be a labor shortage in the year 2004 (the year today's high school seniors will graduate with their bachelor degrees in hand)? Undoubtedly, yes. What high school senior (or high school senior's parents) is going to invest four years and thousands of dollars to pursue a horticulture or arboriculture degree only to graduate to an entry level job in the Green Industry that starts at \$8 to \$10 per hour?

The solution to the labor shortage in the Green Industry for the 21st century is two-fold. First of all, close up the cheap labor pipeline: issue less H2B visas and crack down on the illegal workers that most contractors snicker about, then look the other way. Second, treat landscape work as a skilled trade. Starting salaries for gardeners, landscapers and tree workers should begin in the \$16 to \$20 per hour range, the same range at which apprentice electricians or

plumbers begin. Then, perhaps, young American students will consider landscaping as a career.

Of course, this is just a dream of mine. I've been involved in the Green Industry since 1980 and I've seen too many talented people leave for greener pastures. Cheap labor provides too good a profit to the contractors.

Henry Ford said it best: "I pay my autoworkers enough money so they can buy my cars." Do contractors pay their employees enough so that they can purchase a home that will need landscape services? I think not.

**Gary Grisko**  
City Forester

## Greed killed employee loyalty

Your article on employee loyalty ("Is Loyalty Dead?" page 7, March 2000) was interesting, especially in this age of rampant liberalism. As I have said for years, employee loyalty went down the tubes as greed and the quest for market dominance and power increased. What caused this was the influx of young, greedy MBAs who were put into management positions not knowing the business, people or the industry. Their focus on the bottom line and their own bonuses fueled their greed. This greed has ruined many great companies and marketing organizations in



America today. When all decisions are solely based on raising stock prices, a company is bound to become ruined. Look around at the merger mania going on today as a few slick managers ruin the company but reap the rewards of kickbacks, parachutes and excessive bonuses while the employees suffer. When is enough going to be enough? How can the owners or stockholders expect any degree of loyalty when the employees are just mimicking the management?

I've seen many loyal people leave companies because they were not given their bonus or commissions. This makes employees mad, and they in turn don't care about the company. So often, owners forget who is making the company grow.

The loyalty level increases with company stability and ex-

perienced people. Before there is a return of loyalty in the workplace, there needs to be the return of ethics to our society. We need more articles such as yours, and I hope many companies take heed in what you conveyed.

**Robert Kerr**  
Technical Sales Representative  
Cleary Chemical Corporation

## Likes "Ask the Expert" column

We like to read your "Ask the Expert" column. It's really wonderful. Do you know the average number of leaves a mature tree drops? We'd like to get some kind of a figure, if you have one. Keep up the good work!

**Doc & Katy Abraham**  
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