

I WANT YOU!

TO MAKE THAT EXTRA EFFORT

Rewards like these make several landscape professionals glad they emphasize regular crew training

BY PHIL FOGARTY

EDWARDSVILLE, PA

When General George S. Plantain walked into the office of Grasshopper Lawns to deliver a speech on leadership, the crew didn't know what to do. Accompanied by a tape recorded and adapted version of the speech from the movie "Patton" (complete with music and full combat gear), the "General" made an unforgettable impression.

Plantain's message: This is a great industry with a ton of opportunity. He told the staff that they belong to a quality oriented company that gets the job done and leads their market. Plantain went on to say that the company would crush the competition with superior products and service, then crush all of their customers' grubs, "using their guts to grease the spreaders."

"One thing is for sure," says Grasshopper Lawns' general manager Michael Kravitsky. "They will never forget this lesson and it was a lot of fun, too."

MILLERSBURG, OH

A commitment to training can get you a lot of attention. Kim and Char Kellogg of Grasshopper Property Maintenance, Millersburg, OH, found that out when their company was chosen by the Holmes County Chamber of Commerce as Small Business of the Year.

Grasshopper was selected for its involvement with Habitat for Humanity, not to



Michael Kravitsky, a.k.a. General George S. Plantain, commands attention from his troops.

mention its commitment to quality customer service through training and volunteer work.

Kim Kellogg explains, "We talk a lot about the curb appeal of what we do and we preach curb appeal to the community."

Kellogg even trains homeowners in Millersburg and throughout the county by contributing articles to local newspapers on how to keep things green and growing.

ROCKY MOUNT, NC

Joel Adams's company, Adams's Gardening Service, does it all for customers, including troubleshooting the entire property and home exterior.

"Once, we spotted a problem with a customer's windows while pruning and contacted the manufacturer and installer to follow through until there was a resolution. All this was before the customer ever knew the situation existed," Adams says.

Training for that kind of service is a daunting task, but through a Skills Development Series session, he realized he was making progress in another way. A co-worker offered to lead the team that week and, at the end of his lesson, told the group what regular training had done for his self-esteem.

Adams recalls, "As he told everyone how much better he felt about himself and how he had never worked before for a company that cared enough about its employees to teach them this kind of stuff, I hid the lump in my throat behind my coffee cup and listened."

Adams asks every person on his staff every day: "What have you done to teach someone else your job today?"

That's not a bad question for any of us. How are you planning to train so that this year is better?

The Skills Development Series has landscape and lawn companies raising the bar. Training is the only tangible way to create the future, and it's allowing these Green Industry companies to make amazing things happen.

A consistent and interactive training program will make a lasting impression, earn you some recognition, increase profits and change a few lives — not bad for a half hour each week!

— The author led the Skills Development Series training system, which was sponsored by American Cyanamid and Landscape Management. The author can be reached at pfogarty@stratos.net.