

BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Define your level of success

This is the sixth year we've listed the emerging leaders of our industry (see the LM 100, page 22), and each year, it's a pleasure watching many of you prosper as you grow. Our list covers several small, medium and large firms who have found various levels of success. Most likely, this success has been a goal for these organizations for a long time. In other words, it didn't come overnight. It's part of their plan.

But this year's list also includes 10 people who used to be leaders of our industry in its formative years, when national associations were just starting to figure out what their members needed and when words like "lawn care" and "hardscape" were new on our lips.

Although each of their stories is brief, I think you can sense that these folks are doing pretty well in their new lives outside of the Green Industry. While most of them said they miss the industry and their old friends, they also sound happy to be into something new.

So there is life after landscape!

And why shouldn't they enjoy it? Many of these people set and achieved their goals, then moved on. Many of them worked years to make their organizations successful and profitable, and they enjoyed that work. But now, they're doing something different and taking time to enjoy their families, act, run a bank, explore e-business, manufacture goods and more.

Good for them, I say. Most successful people succeed because they are achievement-oriented and because they clearly defined what they want, with a deadline. Sure, luck and hard work help too, but there's nothing more motivating than knowing where you're going and why you're doing it.

How will you know you've 'won'?

Are your goals clear and exciting to you? Can you define them simply, clearly, immediately? Do you have a deadline for success?

You may think that "make my business successful" is a good goal, but it's not. It can be if you define your intended market share, revenues, number of new customers or employees, net worth, awards you'll win or other measure of success. Use hard numbers, deadlines or benchmarks against which you can measure your progress, or lack of it. Then you'll know if you're on track.

High achievers write down their goals, share them religiously and post them visibly as a daily reminder. High achievers think about their goals often and focus on them like sprinters eyeing a finish line. High achievers live their goals, every day. And often, they reach those goals, sometimes ahead of their deadlines.

Try it. Live your own goals, and maybe you can sell out profitably or retire early to try that new project or lifestyle change. Maybe you'll surprise yourself with success and find yourself going in a new direction, setting challenging and fun new goals for your future.

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