

BY SUSAN GIBSON-PORTER / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

You're not recession proof

I don't think anyone's recession-proof. I've been through three recessions and I know they affect everyone and everything. —
J. Landon Reeve, Chapel Valley Landscape

Professionals in every landscape service and customer segment told *Landscape Management* recently that their particular offerings were "recession-proof." These are people representing commercial construction, commercial maintenance, chemical lawn care, residential construction, residential maintenance, irrigation, arbor care, even add-on special services.

They saw potential problems in the other guy's area, not theirs. Most admitted they've had some slowdown in business, or they foresee slowdowns coming. But what a great attitude to have — being positive about their services and the fact that they're still perceived to be a "necessity" to clients, not a "luxury."

Not to worry, they say. Many have survived other past recessions and saw how their businesses emerged intact and even stronger afterward.

I believe these experienced pros know what they're talking about and so should you. But you should also understand that this current economic situation has many of our best economists puzzled and involves a war against terrorists on our own turf.

Keep doing what you're doing

No one can say when the economy will turn around or how the war against terrorism will result. We don't even know for sure if *anyone* is "recession-proof." I'd be shocked if most of you don't survive this downturn well because I see so many intelligent, adaptive owners and managers who are willing to learn and open to change.

So how can you make your organization "recession-re-

sistant?" You can start by doing the things you should be doing all along, even when times are great:

- ✓ Look for ways to manage your costs better
- ✓ Price your work for profits
- ✓ Keep a constant eye on your bottom line, not just the top line
- ✓ Be customer-centered and responsive to their needs and concerns
- ✓ Build an organization where good employees want to stay and grow
- ✓ Constantly reinforce the value of your services, your professionalism and the benefits your clients receive.

New strategies for 2002

As business changes next year, you'll need to adjust your operations. Be prepared to market and sell more aggressively, understand your operations better than ever and ask for help. On page 20, we cover this situation more fully.

Remember, most of those Green Industry pros who've weathered previous recessions would agree with Landon Reeve's footnote: "This is still a very strong market. We have more opportunities than we could possibly handle."

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