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## Prepare to be successful

I worked for a very successful and wealthy man from 1978 to 1990, managing a landscape maintenance company he and a few partners owned. I created a successful and profitable operation for them. They only came around the business once each year to evaluate my performance and receive their "payouts."

In 1990, I decided I was crazy. I asked myself, "Why should I work my tail off for the benefit of others?" That's the day I decided I was going to own my own business and put all that money in my own pocket.

I sold that business to the TruGreen companies in 1999 and lived happily ever after. End of story, right? Not quite. The road I traveled from 1990 to 1999 was filled with many twists and turns. I learned many valuable lessons the hard way during that time.

Luckily, I found a few friends who helped me succeed by inspiring me to set myself apart from the crowd of failed companies. I'd like to share what I learned with those of you who also want to be successful and turn your business into something unique.

### Five foundations for success

I believe the following five things are the foundation for success. If you want your company to emerge from the crowd of common competitors, you must be prepared to do things differently.

An emerging company will recognize that:

- education is the foundation of professionalism,
- professionalism is the production of excellence,
- professionalism must be evident in all of your business operations and systems,
- being professional has nothing to do with your business's size, and

■ to become a true professional, you must learn, then teach.

*Education is the foundation of professionalism.* Schooling is important, but so is networking with other successful entrepreneurs. Sharing insights gained from experience is the mark of a true professional.

*Professionalism is the production of excellence.* In our line of work, there are too many individuals who work only to produce an income. The success and future of our industry depends on those who provide quality services and products that are priced fairly and profitably.

*Professionalism must be evident in all your business operations and systems.* Everything you do must reflect the best performance you're capable of. Money doesn't buy professionalism — commitment does.

*Professionalism has nothing to do with the size of your business.* The day you open the door, or the day you decide to stand out from your competitors, is the day you can be a true professional.

*To become a true professional, you must learn, then teach.* If education is the foundation of professionalism, teaching is the superstructure. As you gain fresh insights, you're obliged as a true professional to share this information with others.

If you want to succeed in any venture, you must commit to being the best. You must train yourself to seek and deliver excellence. As you do this, you prepare yourself to be successful and create the foundation upon which you can build a secure enterprise.

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