

BY SUE GIBSON PORTER / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

# Act now to keep America strong

**E**ven before the terrorists struck on September 11th, America's economy was taking a troubling turn. Add to that new fears of a disturbed, grieving nation and you have a recipe that can potentially weaken our economy even more. Those fears are your enemy because they threaten your operations now and in 2002, and they also threaten the strength of our nation's business.

### Take action now

What can you do? First, take time *immediately* to assess your situation. Look at your current and future finances, customer situations, supply line, employees and operations. Where is your business going through the end of 2001 and what are your customers saying about next year?

It's so easy to imagine those customers still ordering services without a second thought, but Americans are now a more thoughtful people and each expenditure will get questioned in these precarious times. Don't be surprised to see maintenance budget reductions, project postponements or service schedule adjustments. Don't be shocked if office buildings have more vacancies, homeowners opt for basic over high-end packages or grounds renovation plans get simplified.

Instead, be prepared. The greatest danger to this industry and to individual organizations is letting fear immobilize you. Remember the Chinese proverb that says, "Customers are treasure, goods are but straw." Now is the time to be proactive, contact every customer and find out what you need to do to cement that relationship and get 2002 business commitments.

You may need to adjust pricing, offer new packages or even add non-landscape services to keep their business. You may need to slash expenses, drop unprofitable ser-

vices or increase investments in equipment or customer service training.

The key is to make your organization as strong as possible going into this new economic climate, strengthening those precious customer relationships and contributing as much as possible to keeping this great economy rolling. You can't be complacent any more.

### We're responding, too

What are we doing at *Landscape Management*? We also believe our nation's strength is her freedoms and her economy and we're dedicating ourselves to helping you make your organizations stronger. Watch each issue and our Web site ([www.landscapemanagement.net](http://www.landscapemanagement.net)) for new ideas on how to operate smarter, build customer loyalty, trim costs and develop dependable employees. You can start this month on page 15 and in more detail on our Web site.

We know you're competitive, but this is one time when our industry must pull together, share ideas and proudly proclaim the value of its work. You can help by sending us your questions, ideas and comments. We'll share them in our pages and on the Web. Each idea you share may help our industry become stronger and by implication, our wonderful American way of doing business.

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