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Teaching old dogs new tricks

The success of any business lies in the quality of its people. Even with all the technology that's been developed, people are still needed. No computer or device can react with the passion and understanding of a human being, and this will never change.

Your ability to communicate with, teach and lead people will determine the success of your business and your life. It's never too late to learn how to get people to like you and do what you need them to do. With this in mind, I have two clichés I use almost weekly: "Treat people the way you want to be treated," and "little things make a big difference."

Details matter

My clients in The Winner's Circle frequently tell me their crews don't follow instructions. When I hear that, I always wonder if the crews have a clear understanding of the job they're supposed to do. Verbally describing what you want your crew to do at Mrs. Jones' house and drawing a sketch on a napkin from breakfast leads to confusion. Handing your team leader a highly detailed work order, an organized drawing and even some photos of the site eliminates many problems. Salespeople should be forced to put every last detail on their quotes so when a job is sold and a work order is generated, nothing is missed. Many successful companies I have worked with or visited send the team leader out to a job site prior to starting a project so they can see the whole picture and avoid potential difficulties.

Ask yourself, "If I sold my business for big bucks and

went to work for another landscape professional to stay active, what would I expect from the owner?" Chances are you would expect a lot more than you're currently doing in your own company! Treat people the way you want to be treated. Leaders know how to get people to do what they need them to and still be loved.

Little things get big results

So many little things make such a big difference that it's silly not to try them. For example, several times a year Grunder Landscaping cooks burgers and hot dogs on Fridays on our own company grill. It's amazing how much excitement is generated from \$150 worth of food.

On hot days, I'll turn on some music and make milkshakes for everyone. For once, it's me serving my staff, not them serving me, and they get a kick out of that!

Our managers are expected to stop and buy drinks and snacks while out monitoring jobs and help a new hire when he or she is struggling. Everyone is expected to help the last crew unload in the rain. Most of all, we constantly say, "Thank you."

Start treating your team the way you want to be treated and look for little things you can do for them. Soon, your old dogs will be jumping through hoops for you.

— Marty Grunder is the founder and president of Grunder Landscaping Co., a national award-winning company in Dayton, OH with annual sales of more than \$2.4 million. He is also founder of The Winner's Circle, a consulting company offering expert help in management, marketing and motivation. Contact Marty by calling (937) 847-9944 or visiting www.grunderswinnerscircle.com.