

BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

# It's all about me!

**I**f you're passionate about your business or organization, read on.

Your organization may be the perfect operating clone of your own personality, brains and drive. You probably eat, sleep and dream about it. Like many Green Industry professionals, success is your obsession. You are the organization.

So it's easy to say it's "all about me." After all, it's your business, staff and operation that has grown into a functioning, often profitable entity. You take the credit for success and stay awake at night worrying if things go bad. People expect you to navigate through all the storms.

And what's wrong with it being about me anyway, you say? Aren't I the one who bears all the risk, carries my employees' burdens and handles all our customers' fussy details? I'm the one sweating at the bank manager's desk, making the rules and dispensing justice, shouldering the responsibility for failure. Don't I have more to lose than anyone else?

You sure do. That's why you need to stop obsessing about you and start thinking more about THEM. If you've had only five minutes of quality training, you know your customers are both external and internal. If you expect to be successful in 2002, they will be far more important to your success than you.

Our 2001 State of the Industry research shows strong demand for your services through this summer in almost all segments of business (see page a1). But some slow-down is certain to occur as a result of the drop in corporate investment, the evaporation of many consumers' net worth from fallen tech stocks, and the uncertainty that plagues us all.

### It's all about them

Whether this economy moves up or down, you still need to serve your employees and customers first. Here's why:

■ Everyone's worried about the economy, including your employees. They need to be reassured, trained, secured, challenged and encouraged to take ownership of responsibilities. Now more than ever is the time to perfect your services and get your best employees on board long-term.

■ Your residential customers worry, too. If times get tougher, you need to remind them of the value you bring to their lives. When budgets tighten up, people's perceptions of value change. Look at events from their perspective and find ways you can become indispensable to them.

■ Your commercial customers need particular attention. How can you help ease their workload or give them more value for the same price? How can you become their partner, rather than just their vendor? If you're a grounds manager, ask how can you do more for less, pare your budget or enhance the appreciation of your services.

You probably already know that success depends on good relationships, in good times and in bad. You are crucial to your organization, but it's only by focusing on *them* that you'll ensure your organization's future.

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