

# Leadership insights

GROWING GREEN INDUSTRY LEADERS

SUPPLEMENT TO LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

## Show clients that you value their business

BY DAN FOLEY

- 1 Thank your clients.** Sincere words of thanks and appreciation are always welcomed by a customer.
- 2 Be the "best cost" provider.** Employ the best practices and use the best equipment. Don't overspend your customer's money. Do the job right the first time. Don't penalize customers with extra costs because of your internal errors. "Value engineer" the work with your clients to maximize results.
- 3 Be empathetic and considerate.** Think like a customer, and understand the client's situation and mindset. Implement the "partnership" approach. Always think "win/win."
- 4 Be professional.** Participate in industry events to continually gain knowledge. Educate the customer. Suggest new ideas/improvements to our clients. Be proactive. Not only should you always conduct yourself professionally, your appearance should say "professional," too.
- 5 Embrace the "we" culture.** Avoid the "not my responsibility" syndrome. All of us are accountable for

delivering on our service promise for our customers.

- 6 See quality from the customer's perspective.** Consistently produce phenomenal results in the customer's eyes. Discover the client's desired results. Follow up with our Quality Judging program.
- 7 Ask for feedback, listen, and take action.** Develop and use customer surveys, and ask questions such as —How are we doing? Is there anything else you need?
- 8 Be reliable and consistent.** Under promise and over deliver. Meet deadlines. Communicate in advance if a deadline needs to be extended.
- 9 Be committed to training all of your staff.** Don't practice on customers.
- 10 Communicate. Communicate.** The best communication is face to face, but don't hesitate to use the phone, e-mail or newsletters either. Train crew leaders to deliver customer visitation reports on every site visit. Remember, communicate. ■

*Dan Foley is owner of D. Foley Landscape in Walpole, MA.*

### From the front lines

#### Train your employees on importance of service

To deliver exceptional customer service, every employee in every department from top to bottom must understand the importance of that service and buy into a company's efforts to achieve it.

Architerra, based in Indian Creek, IL, takes employee training seriously, but it wasn't until 2000 that owner Tracey Lester realized the need to train employees on how they relate to clients.

The company joined JP Horizons' Training Challenge program with a steadfast vision for success.

"We knew we would be faced with eye rolls and deep sighs when we pitched it to the bunch, only because we had tried things in the past but the follow-through was lost," says Lester. "We held firm to our commitment, and awesome things started to happen."

Crew leaders became more involved with clients, company communication strengthened and employees developed training ideas. New excitement and leadership was prevalent throughout the company.

Architerra has created a training circuit to let employees know how they can improve and grow within the company. Employees gain confidence in their skills and their potential, and crew leaders gain trained individuals.

"This program will help us obtain our main goal, which is to provide the best in client satisfaction, quality service and overall performance," Lester says. ■

"There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them."

—Dr. Denis Waitley