



By the numbers

BY DAVID ZERFOSS / PRESIDENT HUSQVARNA

Delegation as a leadership skill

During my many years in the Green Industry, I've been privileged to work with hundreds of landscape contractors in various capacities, and I have developed a great admiration for those of you working in the field. You work hard, you take pride in your work and you are open to new ideas to grow your businesses.

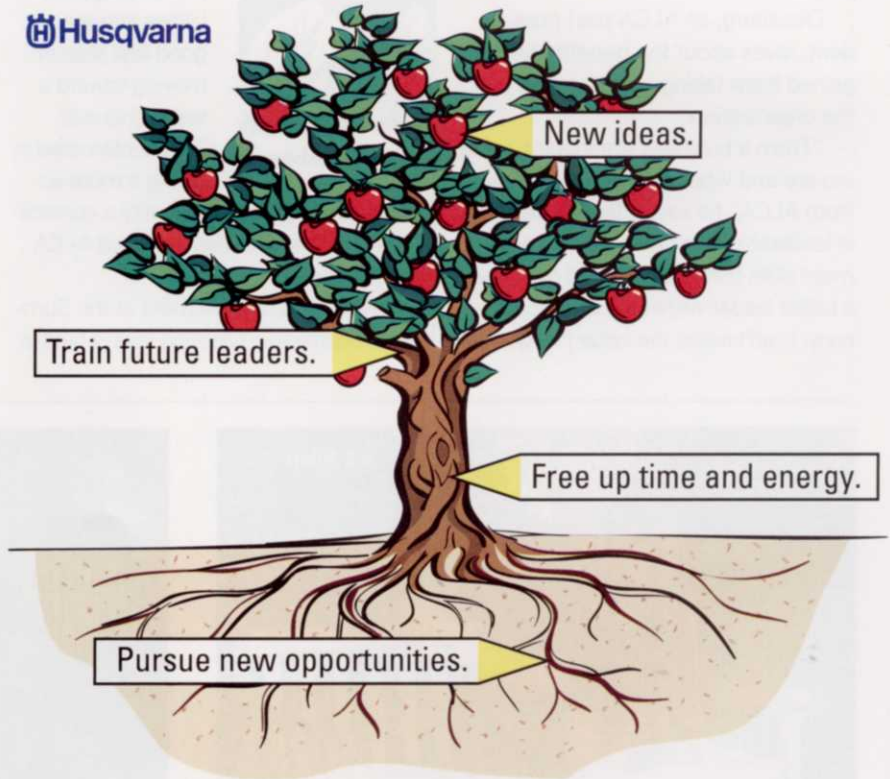
Why do you put in those long hours? If you're like me, you're trying to build something for your family and invest for a rewarding retirement. To accomplish this, you have to encourage breakthrough thinking among everyone in your company and also learn to delegate effectively to prepare your company for the future.

Delegating is one of the most overlooked keys to business success. It is also one of the most difficult skills for business owners to cultivate. You built your company from the ground up. Everything your company has achieved up to this point has your blood, sweat and tears all over it. It's difficult to let go and take even a small step away. But your company's future depends on your ability to let a few things go. Without effective delegation, your company will cease to grow and will eventually begin to fall behind.

We all know the obvious benefit of delegating tasks and responsibilities. Delegating spreads the work out and helps you do more with less. Just as a growing tree must send out new branches to support its new leaves and fruits, you too must be willing to let your company broaden its reach and reap new rewards in its own way.

There is another, less obvious benefit to effective delegation. By thoughtfully delegating assignments, roles and

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tasks to others within your company, you have a unique opportunity to cultivate your company's future leaders. Going back to the tree analogy, think of this as the thoughtful pruning, fertilizing and care that enables a tree to become stronger, more resistant to adversity and ultimately more productive. When you let your employees stretch their abilities and try new things, you give them valuable, on-the-job-training that will enable them to become strong and effective leaders in the future. You also empower them to be your company's new "branches," leading your company toward new opportunities for growth and success.

Learning to delegate effectively will also make you a stronger leader. We've

all heard the adage about a chain being only as strong as its weakest link. When we try to do everything ourselves, we often become our weakest links – overworked, burned out and lacking fresh insights. On the other hand, when we delegate and nurture, we fuel our companies with fresh perspectives and ensure that each link in our chain is as strong as the next.

Look around your organization. Who has leadership possibilities? Begin to delegate projects to these new leaders and encourage breakthrough thinking. Continue to develop and nurture them through their growth process, and watch your business grow to new heights. ■