



Chris Senske's first planning management task was to create a five-year sales and growth forecast for Senske Lawn & Tree Care, the company his parents founded more than 50 years ago. "I regularly go back to that graph paper I created more than 30 years ago, to refresh my vision of where the company is headed," says Senske, now president. It was just the first lesson of many he learned.

Your company is an industry pioneer, founded by your parents in 1947. What are the three most important business things they taught you?

Hard work, sacrifice and planning. From the very beginning, I was tasked with doing any job no one else would or had time to do.

How did you prepare yourself to be the company leader?

Had I known I was going to be put in the situation where I would run the business, I might have chosen a different educational track. I studied chemistry, mathematics and biochemistry. I might have benefited from a business and marketing education.

I ended up in the business quite by accident. I was preparing to go to graduate school when Dad needed to have someone watch over the business while he recovered from a serious surgery.

Is there another generation of the family being prepared to run the company? My son, Ben, is being trained as a supervisor. Like me, he worked summers in the business and

has done every job in the company operations — from customer service representative to tree climber. He loves the pest control side of the business the most and is learning both technical and management skills there.

What is your primary role within your company today?

My primary role now is to keep the management team energized, motivated and moving in the same direction. I spend half of my time interacting with the management team. The rest is spent looking for market growth opportunities, including organic growth, acquisitions and new service offerings.

What's your company's biggest business challenge?

Our biggest challenge is to keep everyone focused on profitable growth. The outcomes from continued

controlled growth benefit everyone in the organization. New opportunities, personal development, as well as the energy that come out of a company moving forward, all make continued growth a worthy goal.

How are you preparing the company for the next five to 10 years? We set a plan of growth for the next five years and a plan of action how to get there. We are in the first phase of that plan.

We are developing operating standards and removing fuzzy lines of responsibility so there are clear-cut goals for every team member. Daily, weekly and monthly goals, as well as progress made toward meeting those goals, are posted on the walls of each branch office for almost every position in the organization.

Our battle cry is "Every 1 Counts." We are training

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Senske Lawn & Tree Care, Kennewick, WA

FOUNDED: 1947

PRINCIPAL: Chris Senske, President

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 7

EMPLOYEES: 260

SERVICES OFFERED: Lawn care, tree and shrub care, weed control, pest control, holiday lighting

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: NPMA, past director of PLCAA, president of WSPMA

BUSINESS OUTLOOK: "Guarded optimism. With many companies giving away commercial services, our focus is on residential programs and finding commercial clients who want long-term relationships."

FAMILY: Married to Catie; two children, Sara and Ben; two grandchildren, Alyssa and Kaelyn

HOBBIES: Skiing, golf, officiating hockey, motorsports

WEB SITE: www.senske.com

every employee every week to look for ways to examine his job and the work environment around him.

THERE ARE FEW ENTERPRISES THAT OFFER SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE CUSTOMERS IN A WAY THEY WILL ENJOY THEIR HOME, WORK OR PLAY SPACES MORE THAN WE CAN."