

Realize your goals in the Working Smarter Cycle

If your people are happy and productive, your business will experience success. BY JIM PALUCH

TAKE AWAY

Industry innovation starts at the people level.

Earn employee buy-in by making them part of the planning process.

Success isn't defined by size or location, but rather the happiness of customers and employees.

I WAS HOPING for earthshaking, groundbreaking, industry-making innovation when I asked for input about your experiences during the past year. I pictured Dan Jacobs and the rest of the staff debating which new idea and industry leader would end up on the front cover of the magazine. I imagined stories about the company in Idaho that learned how to cut grass merely by driving by with a laser and not even needing to get out of the truck. I imagined the San Diego lawn care company that was able to make its five applications in a season in partnership with Google Earth, reducing their labor cost to almost zero and enabling its employees to aid the community by working at senior citizen centers throughout California ... for free!

Yes that's what I was hoping for, but what I received was the same ol' thing. And that's more than OK with me.

It's the same thing we've been hearing at JP Horizons for more than two decades: The most exciting changes happening in any company, regardless of size, location or industry, always come back to one important commonality, *the people*. The stories we heard the most about this past month were about people, and how they stepped up and became more interested and involved in their companies.

The best way to describe this process of improvement brought about by people can be

understood in the Working Smarter Cycle, which focuses on achieving a better quality of life. For a company, this may mean improved profitability. For an owner, it may mean a healthy balance sheet that allows the company to be purchased by the employees one day, thus creating opportunity for everyone. For the employee, it simply may mean being able to provide the current needs and future security for their deserving families.

The steps of the Working Smarter Cycle, starting in reverse order from quality of life, illustrate that happy customers come next. These are supported by efficient processes, which are made possible through a culture of trust in the company, which can only come from ... you guessed it ... people.

I become inspired when I read examples such as:

› The folks at Perm-O-Green Lawn Care, headquartered in Wichita Falls, TX, say, "This type of thinking and communicating is new to our team. It's great to watch everyone growing outside their comfort zones."

› Rochester, IN-based Sellers Landscaping, Lawn & Irrigation is challenging its team to look at how they can work smarter in their positions. The result is an incredible list of

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Discuss the Working Smarter Cycle with your leaders, and discuss what might keep a company from helping to grow people.

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Green from the go.

{our philosophy} since 1973



Same Name. Same Game. *"We didn't invent the wheel and we didn't reinvent it either. Instead, we focused on creating a philosophy to live by: one to work by and one to create and design products by. We found our inspiration from our concern for the environment, and have continued to create lines of lawn and garden products that are not only innovative, but also dedicated to our philosophy of promoting environmentally responsible products.*

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— Larry DeWitt, founder & ceo

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WORKING SMARTER



"THE MOST EXCITING CHANGES HAPPENING IN ANY COMPANY, REGARDLESS OF SIZE, LOCATION OR INDUSTRY, ALWAYS COME BACK TO ONE IMPORTANT COMMONALITY, THE PEOPLE"

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ideas that — if everyone commits to accepting personal responsibility and follow-through — could save the company incredible amounts of money that would benefit everyone.

► At Skinners Nurseries' corporate offices in Jacksonville, FL, the barriers that often result from people being on different floors or departments have melted away. Meeting each week and looking for ideas to work smarter helps them communicate more openly and productively. This creates a willingness to support one another, which, in turn, helps everyone to better serve the customer.

If the aforementioned companies continue in the direction they've started and intentionally move through the Working Smarter Cycle patiently, they'll be serving the happy customers every company needs to provide the quality of life every individual in this country deserves. **LMI**

The author is president of JP Horizons Inc. Visit www.jp horizons.com.