

Mariani Landscape continues to defy the odds. According to the Family Business Institute, only 30% of family-run firms make it to the second generation. Mariani Landscape has done that — and is hoping to get to the third-generation now that Frank Jr. has joined the company.

The company is not only surviving generational changes, it is thriving and was ranked No. 27 last year on *LM's* list of top landscaping companies in the country. *LM* spoke with owner **Frank Mariani** and **Carrie Woleben-Meade**, ASLA, LEED AP, director of the design/build division, to find out just how the company stays so strong for so long.



Frank Mariani leads the 27th largest landscape company in the country.

TRENDS

› **Value.** We need to educate our clients on the meaning of value. For us, value equals good service at a fair price. Anyone can do a job cheaply, but we're proud of the work we do, and we refuse to compromise on quality.

› **Sustainability.** We are seeing an increase in the client's willingness to commit to new projects. In addition, we're developing our native plant program, which will help us become a leader in sustainability. We practice this as much as we preach it. Recently, the firm adopted sustainable business practices, such as the use of bio-diesel to fuel trucks and its 100% organic lawn care program.

OBSTACLES

› **Distraction.** We need to keep associates energized to differentiate ourselves by keeping an intense focus on delivering a superior product. We need our team to believe in the products and services we offer so our customers will. Developing an energized workforce will also help us retain key associates as the economy picks up.

› **Focus.** A challenging market makes it easier for us to lose our focus on our core market. While they can be enticing, we need to let go of projects that don't fit.

› **Inefficiency.** In down economic times, we need to go lean to eliminate waste. Every extra dollar we can save goes straight to the bottom line. For example, we're using technology to help improve routing efficiency and tracking time.

› **H2B.** The unreliability of the H2B visa program makes it more difficult to maintain the skilled, legal workforce we've relied on

INSIDE INFO

Company: Mariani Landscape, MarianiLandscape.com

Founded: 1958

Headquarters: Lake Bluff, IL

LM Top 150 Ranking: 27, with revenue of \$35 million

Employees: 100 full-time/290 part-time

Key to being a maintenance leader: We provide unsurpassed customer service. A lot of companies talk about it, but we do our best to drill it into every employee at every level. Every team member represents the company in everything they do. It's difficult and takes a long time to build a great reputation — and only one mistake can ruin it. We strive to ensure that mistake never happens.

for many years. We're hoping Congress does the right thing and restores the returning worker exemption from the visa cap.

OPPORTUNITIES

› **Lean.** We have an opportunity to capitalize on our associates' increased focus on efficiency and revenue. The economy has made our staff more aware of how they use their time — and more aggressive with prospecting.

› **Revenue.** We have the ability to raise prices. Some of this comes through customers continuing to demand green maintenance practices incorporated into their programs.

› **Staycation.** Our goal is to take advantage of the continued desire for our residential market to make their homes their retreat. Instead of taking big vacations, many of our clients are spending that money on their homes, making them more appealing and more comfortable.