

# RUNNING A BETTER BUSINESS IN 2012

With so much focus on the recession, business owners sometimes forget what they're working for.

BY **DAN JACOBS** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I've been writing about business owners a long time. I never cease to be amazed at the ingenuity, resourcefulness and dedication they show when it comes to running their enterprises.

The challenges they face — from the small mundane daily issues to the large, seemingly intractable ones — make those of us content to sit behind a desk and write about it wonder why anybody would attempt to start and run a business. But run them you do, and most of you do it well.

*Landscape Management* has always touted itself as "the business book" for the Green Industry. Our objective has always been to help you run your businesses more efficiently and more profitably in hopes that you'd have more time to spend with your families and on the things you enjoy outside the office.

That's why we've spent so much time writing recently (and in this issue in particular) about the recession. For most of us, the economic worries have required us to put more focus on work and less on what we're working for.



For that reason (among many others) it might be hard to imagine, but in some ways this economic slowdown has been good for business. Before you start sending hate mail, let me explain. Yes, increased competition from low-bidders driving down prices, increased taxes and regulation, higher fuel costs, a lack of consumer confidence and cash flow worries (among many other factors) have made running your business more difficult. I get that. The publishing business, or for that matter any business, is dealing with a host of challenges.

Knowing that everyone else is going through the same thing isn't my point here. Misery might love company, but even the best company gets old after long. Instead, the point is this: If you've survived this prolonged recession, you are a better businessperson than you were when you went into it. Sure, it's been a trial by fire,

but I suspect your operations are leaner, more efficient and more profitable (at least on a per project basis). And when the downturn eases, when the housing market rebounds and when customers reopen their wallets, the lessons you've learned — been forced to learn — will serve you better.

So, while you continue to work at what you do best, we'll continue to do what we do best, which is tell your stories. Our goal is to help you do your jobs better by learning from those who are doing it well.

In this, our annual Business Planner issue, we talk with a number of contractors who've learned strategies to combat the issues bred in these weak economic times.

You'll hear from contractors on a variety of topics, which we've divided into four categories: Leadership, people, finances and social networking. Those areas are key to your continued growth no matter what state the economy is in.

Consider this our collectors' edition. The business planner (and for that matter the entire issue) is full of tips, tricks and strategies to not only help get you through this recession — no matter how long it lasts — but also to continue to grow in the midst of it.

And that, ultimately, will allow us to get back to what we're working for. **LM**