



AT A GLANCE

NAME: Robert Maffei

TITLE: President

COMPANY: Maffei Landscape Contractors

YEAR FOUNDED: 1991

STARTED IN THE INDUSTRY: 1987

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: PLANET; Cape Cod Landscape Association; Cape Cod Young Professionals

EDUCATION: Classes at Merrimack College and U. Mass.

HOBBIES: Fitness, mini-triathalons, bow hunting and fishing

FAMILY: Not married

WEBSITE: www.maffei-landscape.com

Robert Maffei, president of Maffei Landscape Contractors, remembers the day he went from a contractor running a small operation that would make him enough money to put himself through school to a full-time Green Industry business owner.

“We were working on the street corner at this nice insurance company that was having us put a new lawn in,” Maffei recalls. “We made a big deal about waving to everybody that drove down the road. And if a Willowbend (Country Club) truck drove down the road, ‘Drop your rake and wave.’ I’ve got to tell you, it was as corny as that.” Maffei was offered work at the new country club and went from about 10 employees to nearly 40 within a month. And he hasn’t looked back since.

Really? It was as simple as waving to passersby? My guys were almost to the point of making fun of me. I said, ‘We’ve got to be friendly. They’ve got to notice that we are here.’ Sure as hell, after about the fourth day of working on that property, a Willowbend pickup truck pulled over and out gets this guy who says, ‘I know who you guys are around town.’ That’s where our shot came from.

Any regrets about the decision? It became the smartest move. I knew I had this great, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I thought of it as an upside down pyramid. I had the opportunity to grab all of this revenue through these big golf course communities that were being built. I worked 100 hours a week for years. I knew if I could grab the revenue then, I had to build the infrastructure underneath

me or I’d die. Slowly but surely, the pyramid flipped the other way. It was a foundation and a base. It wasn’t just all that revenue pointed down on my shoulders.

How does your apprenticeship program help your organization? We want to bring a group of master craftsmen to the site and not jacks-of-all-trades. We absolutely explain to customers that in most landscape companies the guy cutting your lawn is the guy pulling your weeds. In my company we don’t mix it up like that. If there’s a bad job being done or a good job being done, I know exactly who did it and when. It makes my people more efficient.

If you’re more efficient, you can charge less and still

make money. If you’re more efficient at it, you’re probably better than everybody else. If that is the case you can charge more. Imagine if you can charge more and do it faster than everybody. That’s why we’re so into the philosophy of creating master craftsmen. We do it all the way through management.

How do you get employee buy-in? They all listen to the same radio station — WIFM What’s in It For Me? If you can’t bring “what’s in it for me” to them, don’t even bother wasting your breath. It’s going to be a waste of energy and time. Somebody’s going to be extremely passionate about the company, use all that passion until they’ve burned it out and

become frustrated, and you’ll have achieved nothing. You have to begin with the end in mind. And the end has to benefit each individual stakeholder.

What are you most proud of? I’m really proud of the team we’ve built and the hard work they’ve done in these tough times. A lot of people won’t be gritty in these times and they just flake out. It takes a lot to be successful in this climate.

“**YOU HAVE TO BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND. AND THE END HAS TO BENEFIT EACH INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDER.**”