



Chris Davitt

President of Ruppert Landscape, Laytonsville, Md.



Who's your mentor? Over the course of my life and career, my mentor has changed, but one is Craig Ruppert. That started when I first began working with Craig [at age 11]. There are just so many fundamental processes about work and life that Craig coached me on.

Additionally, my mother has always served as a mentor. She passed away a year ago, but she had the best outlook on life of anyone I've ever known. She could turn the most negative situation into a positive.

How did you meet company founder Craig Ruppert? He was a friend of my brother's. Craig worked construction during the day. Afterward, he'd pick up my brother and they'd work until dark. My brother grew tired of it, but I loved it. I was 11 years old and being treated like an adult. I remember I used to run with the lawn mower. Our plan at that point was to just outwork people.

What are some of the most notable changes you've observed at Ruppert over the years? Learning the art of personnel management was a big part of the company's development. When we were in the process of trying to outwork everyone, we didn't think being liked was part of the equation. We started attending seminars and learned the value of people management and the value of systems. Systems can turn good ideas into reality.

Of all the initiatives and deals you've been behind at Ruppert, which ones are closest to your heart? The most satisfying are always people related. I enjoy reminiscing about various people who were at a crossroads and had considered leaving the company. But with the company's help, they overcame their challenges, stuck with their career and are better off 20 years later. When the company helps an employee get through a situation, those are the most satisfying moments.

Earlier this year you announced you'll retire in January, at age 53. Why? And what do you plan to do in retirement? My wife, Kate, and I have six kids. We have two grandkids, and in the next few years we suspect we'll have several more. I like the idea that we can send our kids on a getaway, watch their kids and be a life coach.

I'd also like to run a marathon, travel and heat my house with wood that I've cut and split. I expect the novelty of that project to wear off within a year.

What are you proudest of? We've had a very active connection with many charities over the years, including Food For the Poor and Easter Seals. I think these connections have made us a better company.

OFF THE CLOCK

IF I KNEW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW, I WOULD... Have shown our kinder, gentler side earlier. It's part of running a good business.

I FEEL MOST COMFORTABLE...

Facing challenges. The bigger the challenge the better.

IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED FROM WORKING IN THE GREEN INDUSTRY, IT'S THAT ____. It involves people from all walks of life—and challenges that never seem to be the same.

I ALWAYS SAID SOMEDAY I'D ____.

I never said this out loud, but I think, in some grandiose imaginings, you go through life thinking you're going to make a big impact on the world. There's still plenty to do in that arena.

