



Terry Delany

owner, GroundSERV, Fayetteville, Ark.



Who's your mentor? (Green Industry consultant) Bill Arman. He taught me the importance of building a great culture. I used to rule things with an iron fist and be a mean dude. I felt I had to have a hand in everything and it just about killed me. That really changed when I started talking to Bill.

Tell us about your unique business model. We're really just a sales and marketing company that happens to be in property maintenance. We're professional middlemen. We had been strictly maintenance since 2005, and (during the recession) installation companies started going after the same maintenance contracts we were.

I changed our concept to be full-service exterior maintenance. We bought an expensive striping machine and realized we didn't know how to do (parking lot) striping. So I called another striping company, got a price from them, marked it up and made a profit. I said, "Hey, that's pretty cool." I still had 30 people on staff and was subbing out parking lot striping, sweeping, window washing—any exterior service that wasn't landscaping. We did this for several years and kept making money doing it.

Three years ago, I was struggling with the same thing everyone does: employees. I had to take a trip six hours each way in truck alone with no radio. I started thinking, "I'm making money subbing everything out, but I'm struggling to do landscape work with the employees I have." In a 12-hour drive I changed the entire business concept to go from 30 employees to 2 employees and a subcontracting model almost over night. I called Bill Arman. He said, "I've never seen it done, but heck, let's try it." We spent a month thinking through it. My other option was to walk away. I was so over the employee issues.

What have the results been? It took us three years to get really good at it. There's the whole legal aspect of working with subs. How do you qualify them and manage them? There's a lot to it. But I have no headaches any more. I sleep at night. Quality is up. Profits are up. I now have six employees: a business manager, a few account managers and a sales manager. We'll do about \$2 million (in 2013). We have between 30 and 40 subs at any given time.

What's your best advice for working with subs? The most important thing to remember is you want them to make money. A lot of people beat subs to death on price to get their mark-up up. Then they don't want to work with you anymore.

We created a document called "How We SERV," which is the 10 mandates we live by. It says we're committed to the success of our subs, which we call strategic partners. The minute you start investing in them, the profit will come naturally to you. That's the biggest key.

Visit the Web Extras section of LandscapeManagement.net to see Delany's "How We SERV" document.



OFF THE CLOCK

ARE YOU A SPORTS FAN?

I like to spend as much time getting away from sea level as I can. I'm a private pilot and master scuba diver.

SO DO YOU TRAVEL A LOT?

I travel to the Caribbean three to four times a year. There are maybe three or four islands I haven't visited yet. My favorite is Union Island—part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The people are so friendly; it's insane. It has beautiful white-sand beaches.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

I married Janelle six years ago. She's the complete opposite of me. She is very detailed. She's now a full-time, stay-at-home mom. We have Alexa, who's

two and a half. She's the reason I wake up in the morning and the reason I rush home at night.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BUSINESS BOOK?

"Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill. He studied millionaires and billionaires from back in the day and identified the common traits they all have. I've probably read that book 10 times.

