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Circle No. 128 on Reader Inquiry Card

HOW FAST IS TOO FAST?

Yes, you can grow too fast. As a matter of fact, you might be growing too fast right now. Here are some questions you can answer to tell you exactly how fast you're growing.

by Rudd McGary and Ed Wandtke

There is an excitement about having a growing company. That's one of the reasons why many owners point toward growth.

But there are also times when a company should look at consolidating its current position so that the growth to that point is solidified. At times growth—particularly if measured only by revenue—is not the best strategy for a company. The notion that increasing revenue will increase profitability traps many growth companies that fail to look at measurements necessary to ensure profitable growth.

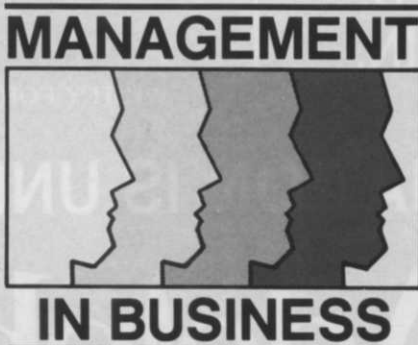
As growth continues, many issues are important to address. Some of the issues are cost-related but are often overlooked due to the company's rapid growth and profitability. Here are some keys:

1. Should you consider growth in profitability as an objective before growth in total revenue? Companies exist to make money, profits. Failure to do so will result in the company going under. For entrepreneurial types, the focus on accountability is not as exciting as growth in revenue. But determining ways that a company can be made more profitable at its current size is more than an exercise...it's a necessity.

We believe that a company should be profitable at any size, with the possible exception of the first year when start-up costs are incurred. Looking at profitability and determining ways to add profits is one way to look at growth.

2. Could any under-used assets add to the company's growth without adding costs? You can look at this question from two vantage points.

First, do you have vehicles or equipment that could be better used to increase sales? Companies sometimes buy an extra vehicle as a sort of insurance policy against down time, but at the same time they might be able to use the same piece produc-



tively. The same is true with certain pieces of equipment. Companies buy new types of equipment for specific jobs and then find that they have equipment standing around during part of the year.

Second, are your personnel productive enough? If you have a lawn care company and each of your applicators is doing \$60,000 per year, you have a lot of potential in revenue from these people. This under-use should be evaluated as much as the equipment and vehicles.

3. Do you have enough management talent to grow? This is often overlooked. The management talent needed to get you to your current size may not be the same type needed for your next growth objectives. This is particularly true in smaller companies, although it extends to larger companies as well.

Who will become managers in the organization? Do you have people internally whom you can promote? Do you have specialists in different areas who can manage them? These and other management questions aren't asked often enough. Generating the revenue for growth is possible—managing the growth is another question.

4. What is the cost, from a marketplace point of view, of growth in your marketplace? As your company grows, it will face more severe competition unless you are fortunate enough to be the only company in your area doing what you do. This is rarely the case. The more severe the competition, the more costly the marketing. Costs increase in advertising, per-

sonal sales efforts, promotion and/or management time. You need to be aware of these when determining your desired rate of growth. You may find that projected growth will, in fact, be too costly for you. That means you must rethink your growth objectives.

5. Finally, what financial needs will you have in order to grow? Will you need equipment, personnel, vehicles, operating space? All of these resources will have costs attached to them. How will you fund these? Can they be funded out of retained earnings, will you need to give up equity to raise cash, or will you borrow to finance them? These are the first questions to ask.

Then you need to know, particularly if you have chosen debt funding, whether or not you will be able to fund the debt that you incur. You need to be certain (or, at least as certain as you can be) that the money you spend will indeed attract new business. If you can't be certain of a growth in customers, you shouldn't be spending money simply because you have a "feeling" about the future.

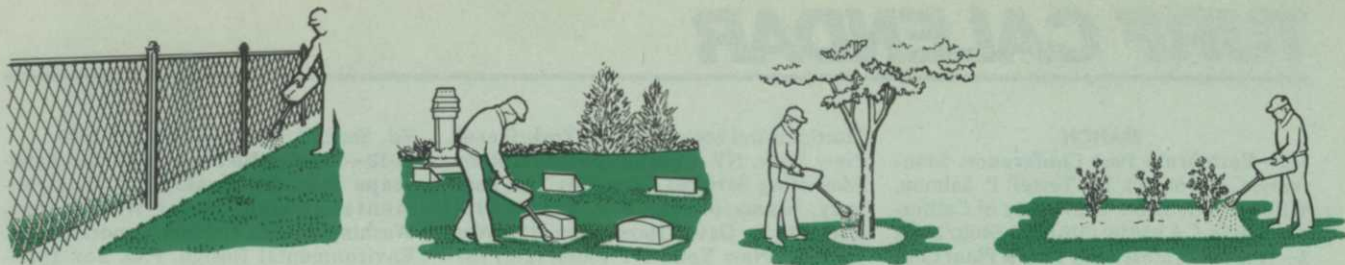
Summary

If you want to grow—and most companies do—you should look at the reality of your present position:

Are there areas that can be more productive without adding additional costs? Does the marketplace really offer the potential for growth that you want? What is the competition likely to do, and what will this cost you? Do you have the management capacity to grow or will you have to either promote or go outside the organization to ensure profitable growth? Is this the year when you should consolidate past gains and wait until next year for major expansion? And, finally, can you afford to grow?

All of these questions show that you need to do a lot of planning before you go through major growth. With this planning, and assuming that the marketplace offers true opportunities for growth, you can grow. Without asking—and answering—these questions, you may be growing too fast. It is a risk that all companies must face. **LM**

Wandtke and McGary are senior consultants with All-Green Management Associates in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. McGary focuses on marketing and management issues. Wandtke focuses on operations and financial questions.



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TURF CALENDAR

MARCH

1-3—**Vertebrate Pest Conference.** Monterey, CA. Contact: Dr. Terrell P. Salmon, Wildlife Extension, University of California, Davis, CA 95616; (916) 752-6409/2536.

2—**Annual Professional Turf & Plant Conference.** Nassau Suffolk Landscape Gardeners Association, Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, Uniondale, NY. Contact: Pat Voges, Orinoco Dr., Brightwaters, NY 11718; (516) 665-2250.

2-3—**Michigan Forestry and Parks Association Annual Winter Conference.** Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. Contact: Myrtle Jones, Life Long Education, Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1022; (517) 353-9407 or Dan Veresh, Dow Gardens, 1018 W. Main St., Midland, MI 48640; (517) 631-2677.

4—**ASTM Symposium on Vertebrate Pest Control and Management Materials.** Sheraton Hotel, Monterey, CA. Contact: Dr. William Jackson, Environmental Studies Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

4-5—**South Florida Landscape Trade Show.** Miami Expo Center, Miami, FL. Contact: Charlye Roberts, Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association, Dade County Chapter, 19160 N. Krome Ave., Miami, FL 33187; (305) 232-2035.

5-13—**1988 New York Flower Show.** The

Horticultural Society of New York, Pier 90, New York, NY. Contact: David Jacobson, Marketing Services Corp., 811 The Parkway, Mamaroneck, N.Y. 10543; (914) 698-1417 or David Harrington, 128 West 58th St., New York, NY 10019; (212) 757-0915.

6-10—**1988 Canadian Turfgrass Conference.** Harbour Castle Westin Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Mary Gurney, Canadian Golf Course Superintendents, Weston, Ontario M9N 1X3; (416) 249-7304.

9—**Sports Turf Conference.** Sports Turf Association-Canada, Hilton Harbour Castle Hotel, Toronto, Canada. Contact: Annette Anderson, Horticulture Department, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2W1; (519) 824-4120 ext. 2597.

9-10—**GreenShow '88.** Del Mar Race Track, San Diego, CA. Contact: Andy Mauro, GreenShow '88, Del Mar Fairgrounds, Del Mar, CA 92024; (619) 755-1161.

9-11—**Fire Protection for Safety Professionals.** Long Grove, IL. Contact: Robert Adamski, National Loss Control Service Corporation, Long Grove, IL 60049; (800) 323-9585 or (312) 540-2400.

10—**Commercial Landscape Maintenance Short Course.** Agricultural Center Auditorium, Sanford, FL. Contact: Uday Yadav, Agricultural Center, 250 W. County Home

Rd., Sanford, FL 32773; (305) 323-2500.

11-12—**Leaving No Stone Turned Landscape Industry Conference.** Environmental Design, Hotel Washington, Washington, DC. Contact: Sandra Lerner, Environmental Design, P.O. Box 15121, Chevy Chase, MD 20815; (301) 652-1212.

12-15—**Mid-Year Educational Conference, Buildings/Grounds Subsidiary.** Environmental Management Association, Twin Bridges Marriott, Arlington, VA. Contact: Jean M. Day, 1019 Highland Ave., Largo, FL 34640; (813) 586-5710.

15—**Association for use of Native Vegetation in Landscapes (ANVIL) Technical Conference.** Kishwaukee College, Malta, IL. Contact: Jim Safron, McGinty Bros., 3524 Long Grove Rd., Long Grove, IL 60047; (312) 438-5161.

20-22—**Midwest Aquatic Plant Management Society.** Marriott Hotel, Columbus, OH. Contact: Robert Johnson, MAPMS, P.O. Box 100, Seymour, IN 47274.

22-23—**West Virginia Vegetation Management Association Meeting.** Marriott, Charleston, WV. Contact: Richard Johnstone, Delmarva Power Co., Box 1739, Salisbury, MD 21801; (301) 546-6331.

27-31—**Annual Meeting, American Society of Golf Course Architects.** Princess Hotel, Hamilton, Bermuda. Contact: Paul Fullmer, 221 N. LaSalle St., Suite 3900, Chicago, IL 60601; (312) 372-7090.



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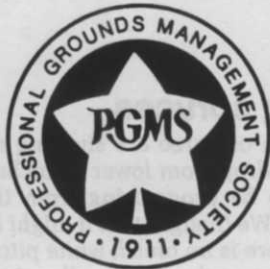
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LANDSCAPE MANAGER OF THE YEAR

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1987 Landscape Manager of the year
Michael Hugg

Entry forms are now being accepted by the Professional Grounds Management Society and Landscape Management magazine for their second annual "Landscape Manager of the Year" award.

Purpose of the award is to recognize superior job performance among landscape managers, to challenge those involved in the industry to achieve higher standards of excellence, and to bring national recognition to deserving managers.

Any person directly responsible for the professional maintenance of one or more landscapes is eligible to enter. Applicants will be judged according to job performance, honors and awards, procedures and philosophies, and contributions to the green industry. Applicants will be asked, at the time of entry, to submit four 5 x 7 black-and-white glossy photos and 10 color 35mm slides of current work areas with a short narrative on each.

(clip and mail)

Applicant's name

Title

Applicant's company

Official entry form should be sent to:

Name

Title

Company

Address

City/State

Zip Code

Mail to: PGMS, Landscape Manager of the Year, 1201 Galloway Ave., Suite 1E, Cockeysville, MD 21030

PROBLEM MANAGEMENT

by Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D.

Iron for turf

Problem: Is there any real advantage in using iron on turfgrass? If so, what would be the proper timing and amounts? (Pennsylvania)

Solution: Depending upon the soil properties, turfgrass species and geographic locations, there may be some advantage in using iron on turfgrass. Reports indicate that iron can improve the color and can possibly reduce the need for using high rates of nitrogen. There are a number of iron-containing products on the market. The product literature may suggest using iron three to four times a year to get maximum benefit.

Unpublished reports suggest that the results obtained from iron-containing products are quite variable. Some have had more success than others. Non-chelated iron products appear to be better than the chelated products. We have not seen any appreciable color difference over untreated Kentucky blue, rye and fescue mix turfgrass using several iron products on the market, even after applying four times a year. Some iron sources can be phytotoxic and a few can stain non-targeted areas.

So, as far as your question concerning "real advantages," the best thing to do is to try different products on a small scale in your area. Read and follow label specifications for details on rates, etc.

Soil compaction and trees

Problem: Older trees on the town commons are suffering from years of soil compaction. How can we help these trees recover? (Massachusetts)

Solution: Soil compaction is one of the major problems in heavy traffic areas like school grounds. There are only a few things that can be done to relieve compaction.

Where practical, try to correct compaction with hydraulic pressure. Soil-injecting root-feeding tools can be used. The key is to get the water pressure deep into the root zone to break the compacted soil. In most situations, the active roots of plants will be in the top 18 to 24 inches.

Another approach is to drill vertical holes in the ground using a soil auger and filling them with loose amendments like mulch or peat moss. If poor drainage appears to be a problem, filling these holes with pea gravel would be useful.

The most ideal way to handle these problems is to recognize the potential for compaction from traffic or construction, fill damage, etc. prior to its happening. Then, start providing corrective measures and treatments before the anticipated compaction occurs.

In situations dealing with fills or construction, installing dry wells around valuable trees is beneficial. Make sure to allow enough room for the tree trunk to grow. For the problems you are currently experiencing, apply water pressure using root-feeding injecting needles and/or the auger drilling method for the most practical solution. If prac-

tical, use a mulch over heavily-trafficked areas to minimize compaction.

Needle-dropping spruces

Problem: Spruce plants in our area are showing severe dieback and needle drop from lower branches. The problem appears to be progressing from the lower branches upwards. We thought that it might be *Cytospora* canker, but there is no bluish white pitching. We sprayed for mites and spruce gall aphids without much luck with this needle problem. Any idea what this problem might be and how do we manage it? (Pennsylvania)

Solution: Based on your description of the symptoms, the problem appears to be most likely related to fungal disease. Probably it is not *Cytospora* because you have not seen the bluish white resinous pitching on the trunk or branches which is typical of *Cytospora* canker disease.

Needlecast fungal disease caused by *Rhizosphaera kalkhoffii* appears to be the next best possibility. This disease is known to progress from the lower branches upward. Infected two-year-old needles drop usually in the second summer. Current-year needles may become infected in May/June months but symptoms don't occur until fall or next spring. At this time, the fungus produces small black fruiting bodies on the surface of needles—almost in a row—near the stomata. Healthy needles will have whitish stomatal opening. Infected two-year-old needles turn yellow in July and then change to purple by late August-early September and finally drop by late summer or fall.

Check the needles periodically for fruiting bodies of this fungus. Plant disease-free trees. Send in fresh representative samples to your county extension agents and verify the possibility of *Rhizosphaera kalkhoffii* before using fungicides. Application of benomyl, Daconil or Bordeaux mixtures when new growth begins or around early June and repeated again in late June is recommended to manage this disease. Continue the pest management you were providing thus far. Fertilization and watering as needed will improve plant vitality and maintains plant health.



Balakrishna Rao is Director of Lawn Care Technical Resources for The Davey Tree Co., Kent, Ohio.

Questions should be mailed to Problem Management, Landscape Management, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130. Please allow 2-3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.

Offensive advertising

To the editors:

I am a landscape contractor in Richmond, Va. and I also ride a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. I found the Scotts Pro-Turf advertisement printed in *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT* magazine (November 1987, page 28) to be discriminatory towards those of us who ride motorcycles. I do not feel that "the average person" considers a motorcycle rider "Big Trouble." This negative and prejudiced depiction of motorcyclists is unnecessary and harmful to all motorcycle riders.

Many motorcycle organizations contribute to charities, hold toy runs for children's hospitals, and are trying to change the public view that has been partially created through advertising such as this.

David Wilson

*Shipp & Wilson Landscaping
Glen Allen, Va.*

Where are the people?

To the editors:

I enjoyed your November "Outlook" column (Where are the people?). You probably opened some eyes to the problems facing the industry vis-a-vis future leadership.

Richard W. Lambert

*The Idea Bank
Tempe, Az.*

Cool suits for hot work

To the editors:

As a long-time subscriber to your magazine, I particularly enjoy the columns in which questions and inquiries are posed by your readers and responses provided by the staff. I am reasonably sure the sales and manufacturing community likewise takes great interest in these columns. I would like to pose a challenge to equipment manufacturers on behalf of the many thousands of people employed in our kind of work.

I am the parks director in the mid-Atlantic community of Hampton, Va. Among our many responsibilities is turf maintenance of all highway rights-of-ways, median strips, vacant lots, school grounds, parks, public buildings and so on. Our weather in June, July, August and September gets very hot and miserably humid. The fatigue factor affects our employees tremendously under these conditions.

In the past year, stock car drivers

on the Winston Cup circuit have taken to wearing what they refer to as "cool suits" and helmets. These are freon-charged and operate via hook-ups to a small compressor and electric motor. Recently I read where the average cost per suit is about \$2,800 and helmets run in the vicinity of \$400-\$600.

Why wouldn't it be possible for cool suits to be manufactured for use by landscape employees? A conservative estimate of the number of tractor operators or riding mower operators employed by highway departments, cities and parks departments, golf courses and so on would probably be in the 50,000 to 100,000 range, not to mention private companies. Given the economics of scale, it would seem likely to me the manufacturers of such wearing apparel could bring the price down into the range which could be considered by this industry as an item of clothing which could be placed on the employees to improve productivity, morale, employee health, etc. In the case of tractors and riding mowers, it would seem the necessary attachments for access to elec-

tricity and on-board compressors could become an optional or standard item.

In the interest of the landscape employee of the present and future, I would request the industry take serious consideration to the suggestion.

Thomas H. Daniel

*City of Hampton
Hampton, Va.*

Wrongo

To the editor:

Thanks for the press given to me in your September issue.

The 15 years of service for which I was given a plaque at the Lawn Seed Division meeting during the annual convention of the American Seed Trade Association was as secretary-treasurer of The Lawn Institute. It was not as the Lawn Seed Division's secretary-treasurer, as reported.

Robert A. Russell

*J&L Adikes, Inc.
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Oops! Our apologies.—Ed.

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PRODUCTS

Perennial ryegrass gets PVP certificate

Pickseed West recently announced that the USDA Plant Variety Protection Office has issued a PVP certificate for Fiesta II perennial ryegrass. The application was processed and protection granted for Fiesta II in record time.

According to Pickseed's Jerry Pepin, Ph.D., Fiesta II represents the latest and best efforts in variety development to date. It is a dark green col-

ored, fine-leaved variety that has a lower and slower growth habit than most perennial ryegrasses and is less stemmy in the spring.

It has excellent heat tolerance and summer performance.

Circle No. 197 on Reader Inquiry Card

'Bandage'-type wrap protects young trees

Guard-Tex Tree-Wrap provides excellent protection for newly-planted trees

and bushes from the elements, dogs, rabbits, mice and other gnawing animals, according to its manufacturer.

Easy to apply, self-adhesive Tree-Wrap protects tender bark against splitting, sun scald and freezing temperatures while allowing the bark to breathe, General Bandages says. Tree-Wrap is also easy to remove, and because it sticks only to itself, it will not strip tender bark or leave a gummy residue.

Landscape managers and nurserymen can also use Tree-Wrap for grafting operations, staking tomatoes and training vining vegetables, roses, espaliered trees and shrubs.

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Pesticide add-in eliminates odors

One pint of Mask-It in 1,000 gallons of spray mix converts a pesticide odor into a pleasant fragrance.

An unpleasant odor is translated in the public's mind to be toxic vapors of hazardous chemicals, Rockland Chemical Co. claims. No longer do the majority of lawn care clients believe that the pesticide's efficacy is proportionate to its odor, says Rockland. They are more concerned about possible health hazards and neighborhood annoyance, the company adds.

Mask-It helps solve all of these consumer concerns by eliminating the unpleasant odor associated with pesticide applications.

Circle No. 199 on Reader Inquiry Card

Granular herbicide now labelled for ornamentals

A new long-lasting granular weed

Circle No. 138 on Reader Inquiry Card