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## This is what really matters

**W**ho could blame you for going nuts in the spring? Everything happens at once and you have to be everywhere at the same time. This is one of the prices that you pay as a landscape contractor. You sacrifice time now and, as the season slows and things become less hectic, you tally your sales and give yourself a score.

But there's more to life than signing up and servicing another account, even now when there's no such thing as time. There's something called *family*.

That's one of the things that I like about Brent Flory, president of Freedom Lawns, Delphi, IN. He appreciates *family*.

When I started to write this column, I was going to tell you about how his landscape company (86% maintenance/14% construction) got off to such a great start with a new client. How he massed his seven fulltime employees into a team and swept over the 17 acres of the international headquarters of the Great Lakes Chemical Company in West Lafayette, IN.

As things worked out, I visited Flory's firm the first day that his crew — equipped with hand pruners, power edgers, Scag walk-behind mowers and a powerful 455 Toro 4wd — tackled the new account.

Brent had established two goals:

- ▶ to make a dynamite first impression with the new client.
- ▶ to set a standard of quality to meet each time his crews visit the site.

A year later, he still treats the headquarter's property like it was his own and this past winter Freedom Lawns earned even more work at the site.

"I'd love to have a few more accounts just like this one," he says unabashedly.



Brent Flory, right, president of Freedom Lawns, can hardly fit another hour into another busy spring season.

Flory approaches the marketplace with focused intensity and, early this spring, brought in business consultant Frank Ross to help him grow his company beyond its 1999 sales of \$590,000.

Sure, when Brent and I get together, we talk about his plans for expanding Freedom Lawns, but what he really likes to talk about is his family. He credits his wife, Marilyn, who helps out in the business, and he's obviously proud of his two daughters, one a collegiate runner, and the sons who are also fine young men and athletes.

In fact, when he talks about the industry or about his employees, you sense that he views them in much the same light — like family.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636  
or e-mail at [rhall@advanstar.com](mailto:rhall@advanstar.com)



There's more to life than signing up another account — there's family. —RH

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"Unless you spend time creating more efficient systems, you won't get more time for necessary things." DH



## Is this the best way to do it?

**I**n our business, we always ask, "Is this the best way to do it?"

As a young man in Iowa working for my father's nursery business I asked myself that question many times. When I went out on my own, I was able to indulge my passion for constant improvement. I'd like to share with you our way of doing things better in three important areas:

- ▶ time management
- ▶ staging
- ▶ per-person productivity.

### Time management

Dwight Hughes Nursery in Cedar Rapids, IA, specializes in 2-in. shade trees. We grow most of our own material, and the same people who do the growing landscape with those plants.

Time management is why we're successful at it.

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that you don't have time to make changes in your business. But unless you spend time creating more efficient systems, you'll never free up more time to do what's necessary.

Our firm has succeeded in expanding our business without adding to our four employees. Also, we've attracted some positive notice in the industry by drawing repeated press notices for our contributions in materials handling and robotics.

One of our time management strategies focuses on materials handling systems. To me, materials handling means everything from having the right vendors, to doing good maintenance on your equipment, to hiring and keeping people who will maintain quality equipment, to modifying, designing and redesigning the machines we use.

It's preferable to have a system handle materials and not a person. For fun, count how many wheels per person you have. Then compare your answer with our current count of 140 inflatable tires, or 35 wheels per person!

### Tools for productivity

We've been working for over a decade on the Tree Boss, a robotic, hydraulic, one-person tree handling system. It allows one person to pick up, tilt and move a tree either onto or off of a trailer. One person can unload 80 6-ft. evergreens from a supplier's trailer in an hour, leaving the trees positioned at the planting site or holding area. Contrast that with the time it takes to manually unload, carry and position trees.

The first version of the Tree Boss enabled us to double our nursery inventory and sales volume without adding people. The Tree Boss never calls in sick and doesn't participate in our pension-profit sharing plan. And one of them pays for itself in half a season.

### Staging takes smarts

In most Green Industry companies, staging eats up a lot of time. I know many companies that need more than an hour to stage their work in the morning. Our average time to get ready to roll is 12 minutes.

A big part of that is materials handling. With the Tree Boss, we can get our B&B shade trees loaded the night before, or we can do it early in the morning. Also, our shade house, poly house and open container holding area are close to each other and to our main building. We drive a truck up a main aisle and load it easily from both sides.

Some of our ideas are simple. For example, we

*continued on page 20*



# . . . A n d T h e C h e m i s t r y I s O n

*Between problem and solution there is innovation. And behind some of the most significant innovations in turf and ornamental have been the people of Bayer Corporation. More than any product, package or service, it's the people of Bayer Corporation that have made the greatest contributions to the turf and ornamental industry. Backed by the worldwide resources of Bayer AG, our market managers, our research and development people and our field representatives combine creative thinking with industry knowledge to offer solutions to some of the biggest problems you face.*

## People . . .

**S**ales Director Rich Burns and Marketing Director Dan Carrothers . . . together they've helped focus the efforts of Bayer Corporation Garden & Professional Care (GPC) on ensuring that our field force and our market managers have the industry insight, the product knowledge and the research support they need to respond quickly to the demands of the marketplace. And with the establishment of the Bayer Corporation GPC business unit in 1996, we made available to our managers, to our field representatives and to you – our customers – the worldwide resources of Bayer AG. As a result of this leadership and dedication to the turf and ornamental industry, we've been able to offer you more than just innovative products – we offer solutions.



## Plus Experience . . .

**A**nd the reason we can bring you these solutions is simple. We recruit the best people from all levels of the business, so our field force has experience and technical knowledge unmatched among basic manufacturers. Our 30-plus field representatives and managers have an average of 13½ years experience providing the products and services that help build relationships and grow businesses. Many of our sales and development representatives have advanced technical degrees, so you know their recommendations are based on scientific data, not marketing trends. Research Product Manager Doug Spilker, Ph.D., has several years of research-related experience in the green industry. Turf and Ornamental Market Manager Neil Cleveland has more than a decade of experience in all levels of the business before joining Bayer Corporation GPC as a field sales representative. They know you need more than just effective products to make your business successful. With the resources of Bayer Corporation GPC behind them, they can provide you with the support programs, the sales and application training, the product information and the chemistry you need to manage your business and solve your problems.





ly As Good As The People.



## Plus Chemistry . . .

**B**ut it's not just where our people come from that make the difference – it's what they do for you. We put people like Julie Spagnoli, Manager of Federal Regulatory Affairs, in Washington, D.C., to represent our interests and the interests of our customers to the EPA, as well as to key industry associations. Monty Eberhardt, Ph.D., Manager of Product Safety, works with agencies and associations on key issues such as the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA). Together, they and their staffs provide you with more than products . . . they help give your industry a voice.

## Equals Solutions.

**S**uccessful product development combines technical knowledge with innovative problem solving. Using their knowledge, our products and the ability to creatively analyze a problem, Manager Bruce Monke, Ph.D., and the Research and Development Group have brought you solutions like imidacloprid, the market-leading active ingredient in many of our most successful products and formulations. When you needed alternative delivery methods for these products, we came up with turf and ornamental solutions like soil injection for MERIT® Insecticide. When our distributors needed to free up warehouse space and reduce inventory, our packaging technologies group brought out the BAYLETON® Fungicide and MERIT mini-drums. But innovation is an ongoing process, so Bruce and his group are always looking for the next new products, formulations and use methods that will continue our record of solving problems for the turf and ornamental industry.



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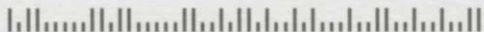


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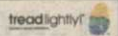
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# my way

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store fertilizer tablets in a dog food dispenser mounted on the wall. It takes a person seven seconds to fill a container with tablets from that dispenser compared to 47 seconds it took by hand. Also, we keep tools on wall racks in designated spots. Our shop has an ironclad rule: When you use a tool, you clean it and put it back where it belongs. We also use double-decker storage — equipment with wheels stays on the first floor and everything else is elevated.

## Per-person productivity

America is obsessed with the idea that bigger is better, but I don't have to tell this readership that volume and profit are two

different animals. So, we measure the health of our business in dollar volume per person. Each person represents a volume of \$125,000 to \$150,000 in landscape business, including materials. I don't see many businesses that generate more than \$100,000 of production per person per year.

Thinking in these terms helps you get moving in the right direction and also helps you know the importance of each worker.

If you're always asking the question, "Can we do this better," the answers will come. I thought of our sharp-pivoting 'airplane trailers' while sitting on a plane at O'Hare Airport, watching a tractor make tight turns while towing a jetliner.

The reward from your ideas is success.

You'll be generating more production per person, and you'll have fun in the process.

— Dwight Hughes is president of Dwight Hughes Nursery in Cedar Rapids, IA. He is recognized throughout the industry for innovation. Dwight is a board member of the American Nursery and Landscape Association's Horticultural Research Institute, and has attracted national attention for his work in developing robotic equipment for use in the Green Industry. His book and videotape, "Systems for Success," detail his thinking and methods. For more information, call 319-396-7038.

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