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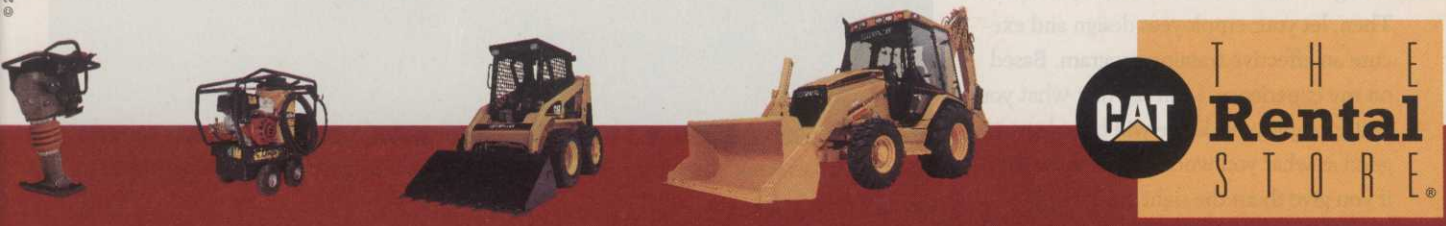
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RIGHT TOOLS. RIGHT PLACE. RIGHT NOW.

Get out of your employees' way

Turn your training over to your troops and watch them teach you a thing or two about learning together

BY PHIL FOGARTY

Does the conversation in your shop go like this: "I know we should be doing more training, but I just don't have the time to do it on a regular basis." Is this an impossible problem? No. Maybe you shouldn't do it.

Why is it that we as owners and general managers think that everything must be done our way for our companies to succeed? Of course, we might not have gotten where we are today if we didn't have a pretty healthy sense of self and a good shot of ego. But let's face it — we didn't invent this industry.

With all the training resources out there, all you may need to do is give good employees some of your time, encouragement and make them aware of your goals. The goals must be clear cut and attainable. Then, let your employees design and execute an effective training program. Based on my experience, I can say that what your better employees devise will be at least as good as what you would come up with — if you give them the right guidelines.

Get out of their way!

If there's anything that the Skills Development Series has taught us, it's to turn training over to the troops — today. It's a liberating moment for everyone in your organization. Your employees already know what they need to know and the last thing they need is for you to tell them what they don't know (and that some day

you will tell them — but now, just get out there and work until further notice).

Get out of the way and watch those people teach you a thing or two about learning together.

Cover the bases

Here are a few steps to make sure the program succeeds when you delegate it:



An in-house facilitator like this one is just the right person to delegate training responsibility among fellow employees.



One of the facilitator's key jobs is to get everyone involved by coaching and encouraging everyone to own the program.

► Assign an in-house facilitator to take on this cause. Pick someone who can get enthusiastic about training. It could be a key manager or an employee with potential who needs to be demonstrated. It's even a

great slot for a part-timer who can focus on teaching, teaching, teaching.

► Make sure the facilitator understands the value of getting others involved. He or she shouldn't be doing all training, or even half of it. The facilitator's job is to coach and encourage everyone to own the program.

► Make it flexible like Gerry Grossi's fine group did at Arborlawn in Lansing,

MI. Grossi's Spartan Irrigation runs its program simultaneously with Arborlawn's sessions. They customize and adapt but use the same format and information, and they do it at different locations.

► Mold it around schedules, if at all possible. Mountaineer Lawncare in Morgantown, WV, has sessions in the field (at lunch) for crews who must contend with long drives at rush hour.

► Become a spectator and cheerleader. Cullen Walker of WLM Work-A-Holics Landscape Management in Naples, FL, built bleachers for training and sits in a different spot each week so he can learn along with everyone. He may be doing the wave, as well!

► Promote the cause when it's your turn to teach. When you get to be the one up front, spend some of your "mike" time acknowledging the progress and reminding your team how important this program is to you and to the future of the company. **LM**

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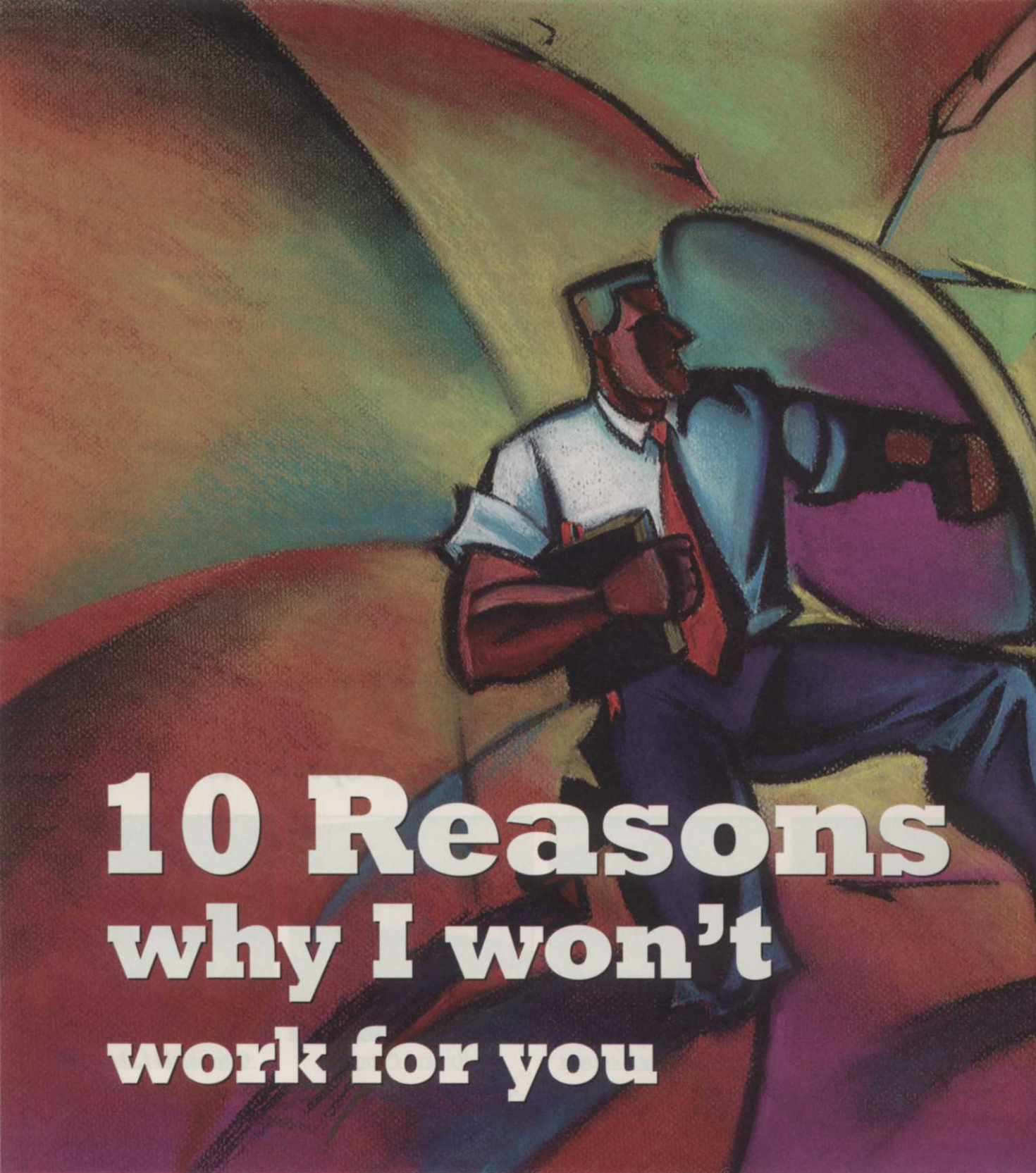
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Try looking at the world according to your employees. It could save your future

BY BILL HOOPES

When it comes to keeping good people, there's almost nothing you won't do to keep them on your team, right?

You're typical if you answered, "I'd do anything, within reason, to keep the really loyal and productive employees I have."

But when it comes to changing your workplace to encourage employee retention, what meaningful actions have you taken? If you'd like to change things but don't know how to start, you're fairly typical. Most of us dream about a better world but don't follow the dream with action. But if you don't do more than think a lot about revising the way you do things, there will be no improvement.

So let's set some realistic goals. You're a goal-oriented, entrepreneurial thinker, right? Let's set an objective: lower turnover by 50%.

How much would it be worth to your operation to reduce turnover by 50%? Most managers I work with would like to make it happen but aren't sure how to get it done.

It can be done. I've just completed a 15-year search for realistic solutions to the turnover problem, which I've identified and included below.

Why they leave

Solving a tough problem requires looking at it from a different or unfamiliar angle. For a change, look at motivation from a contrary view. Instead of jumping head-first into the turnover pool and confronting the issues from your point of view, look at it from the employees' view. Think about why they leave.

The short answer is because they're not motivated. We all become motivated when we desire something. Before we go for it, we must want it.

Here are two reasons why you must understand how to use motivation:

- ▶ You cannot achieve anything beyond your own capacity without other people.
- ▶ If your staff resents, distrusts or dislikes you, they will leave the minute they get the opportunity. Today, that opportunity is everywhere. So understand how motivation works and how to use it. You'll see your business environment from a whole new perspective, because you will understand why people do the things they do.

What's their motivation?

What controls our wants? At work or at home, we do things that make sense to us. We evaluate our options, decide and then act.

How does this apply in your workplace? If you want your employees to perform satisfactorily for extended periods of time and respond to your leadership, you must get into their heads.

If you want your employees to think positive thoughts that lead to positive behavior (like hitting goals or staying through a tough spring), you must provide a positive workplace environment. If you think they'll stay for dollars, you are mistaken. Employees must like their work to stay there.

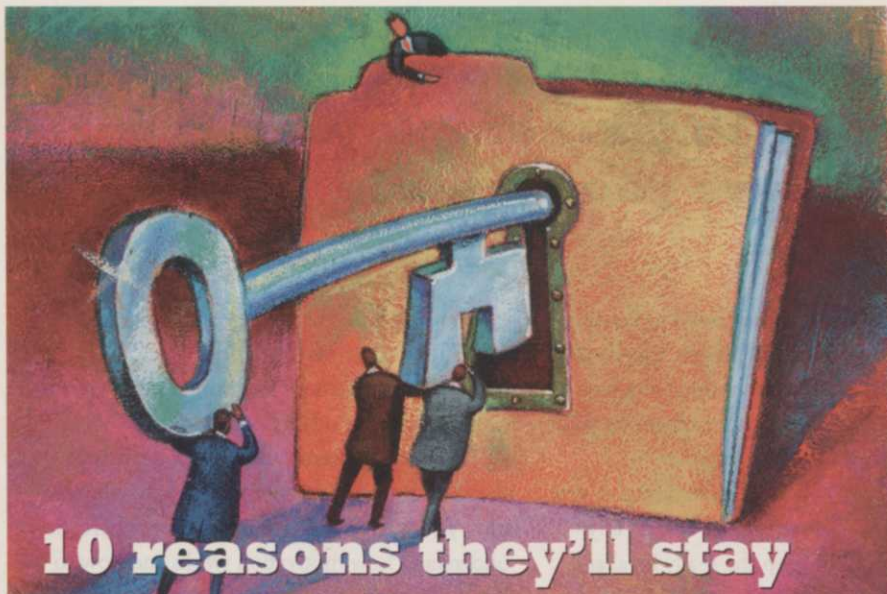
Notice I said that you have to "provide" a positive workplace environment. It doesn't happen automatically. You must create an environment that positively impacts employee motivation, and that comes down to building relationships that are mutually beneficial.

Take off those blinders and look around

The workplace has to "work" for both you and your employees, and that's not always easy.

Some managers still don't recognize the difference between situations that favor employers and

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10 reasons they'll stay

Follow this plan to cut employee turnover at your operation:

- 1 Improve the candidate-to-job match as you build your team — no square pegs in round holes.
- 2 Place a higher priority on training. Use the start-up program to “set the hook” and start building positive thoughts and feelings.
- 3 Build in some “people magnets.” Let employees do what they do well. Communicate often. Give the staff credit consistently. Share the results of success. Get out of the office and be around your people. Put some contests and fun into the job.
- 4 Give people a reason to believe. Stop flying by the seat of your pants. If you're organized and set an example, people will want to follow you because they see strong management. Talk constantly about company values and beliefs to build a sense of pride. Brag about your staff in public and in your advertisements.
- 5 Recognize and treat people as individuals. Identify individual talents and potential while you respond to their individual needs.
- 6 React to each employee's performance every day. Look for something to reward and don't send mixed signals.
- 7 Be fair to everyone. Don't play favorites. Tell your people why you want them to do it your way.
- 8 Be honest 100% of the time. Remember: If you lie, you die.
- 9 Set a positive leadership example. Put a smile on your face before you go through the door each morning. Never let the staff see you down. Positives create positives; negatives create negatives.
- 10 Balance your concern for tasks and people evenly. Try to be someone your staff just likes to be around.

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those that favor or motivate employees. At times, it's as if they're wearing blinders.

Are you certain that when you make a decision or establish plans, you are creating a situation where both you and your employees benefit?

Consider this example: A new hire arrives at work. At the moment, you are unavoidably involved with a customer. To handle the customer issue and avoid a delay in the start-up of the new person's training, you have a veteran handle the orientation.

Sounds simple. After all, you can't avoid the customer issue . . . it's all part of business, right? And since the training oc-



If weed-whacking is all this guy ever does, he's bound to leave his job.

curred and the customer was served, both you and your employee win, right?

Wrong.

You handled your problem but the employee got whatever the veteran felt like giving. As the manager in charge, you just committed the common mistake of seeing the world from a management perspective. We do it all the time. It's natural. Our needs must be filled, too.

When we consider the employee's need to understand the new job, company and expectations, we begin to rationalize. We pretend that no matter how the orientation is handled, the job will be done exactly as we would do it. This is wrong. No veteran

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will deliver the message as you would, at least not most veterans. Why? They don't have the ownership concern you do. So the orientation happens but the message is diluted or changed altogether. And who pays the price? You do.

It's all in the perception

Managers typically see their needs before the needs of the staff. When there is an exception to that rule, employees are more satisfied and turnover drops. I've seen turnover drop drastically when the manager in charge learns to see the workplace from the employees' viewpoint.



If this guy's boss is goofing off while he's working, he's likely to look for another place to work.

But the problem is that when workers quit, they never say, "I'm leaving because you get what you need (an easy life, lots of profit, a great future) and I don't get what I need." You won't hear that, but you may hear any of the 10 reasons below.

"Why I'm leaving"

In the last 15 years, I have tracked and explored the reasons employees have left. They are:

1 "This job isn't what you said it would be." Translation: You either failed to explain the job requirements, or you've had smoke blown in your face during a hiring interview. Under pressure to "fill the chairs," we try to see the best in people. If you hear this phrase, you've misread the job candidate or mislead yourself.

2 "I just can't do this job." Translation: More than likely, there has been a failure to provide adequate start-up training or the employee is simply bored by the work.

3 "All we do here is work." Translation: Typically, the manager has been unable or unwilling to control work hours.

This happens during a bad weather spring, when we fail to eliminate long days and/or Saturday work after promising we would.

4 "Nobody here knows what the heck is going on." Translation: From the employee's view, your operation is disorganized and inconsistent.

5 "All we ever hear is what's wrong." Translation: When I hear this, I usually find a manager who is totally task-oriented. When the task goals aren't met, there can be only one reason for him or her — lazy workers. This may not be true, but that's the employee's view . . . and that's the point.

6 "You never say thank you." Translation: Employees in this operation probably get little recognition and few rewards. Managers who don't give credit to the team and don't share rewards will lose 100% of the time.

7 "I don't fit in here." Translation: The workplace climate isn't people friendly. It may work for you, but what is it like for your employees?

8 "You always promise but never deliver." Translation: Many managers promise an employee whatever they have just to boost productivity, then fail to deliver. They are so stressed and beaten down they see no other way to get people to work hard than to "promise the world."

9 "You expect us to work while you 'goof off.'" Translation: Tired managers can develop a habit of showing up for the start of the day, then disappearing (at least they believe they've disappeared) to the golf course or other activity while the staff "delivers the goods." Whether you own the business or not, employees won't tolerate what they consider lazy leadership while being pushed to the limit themselves.

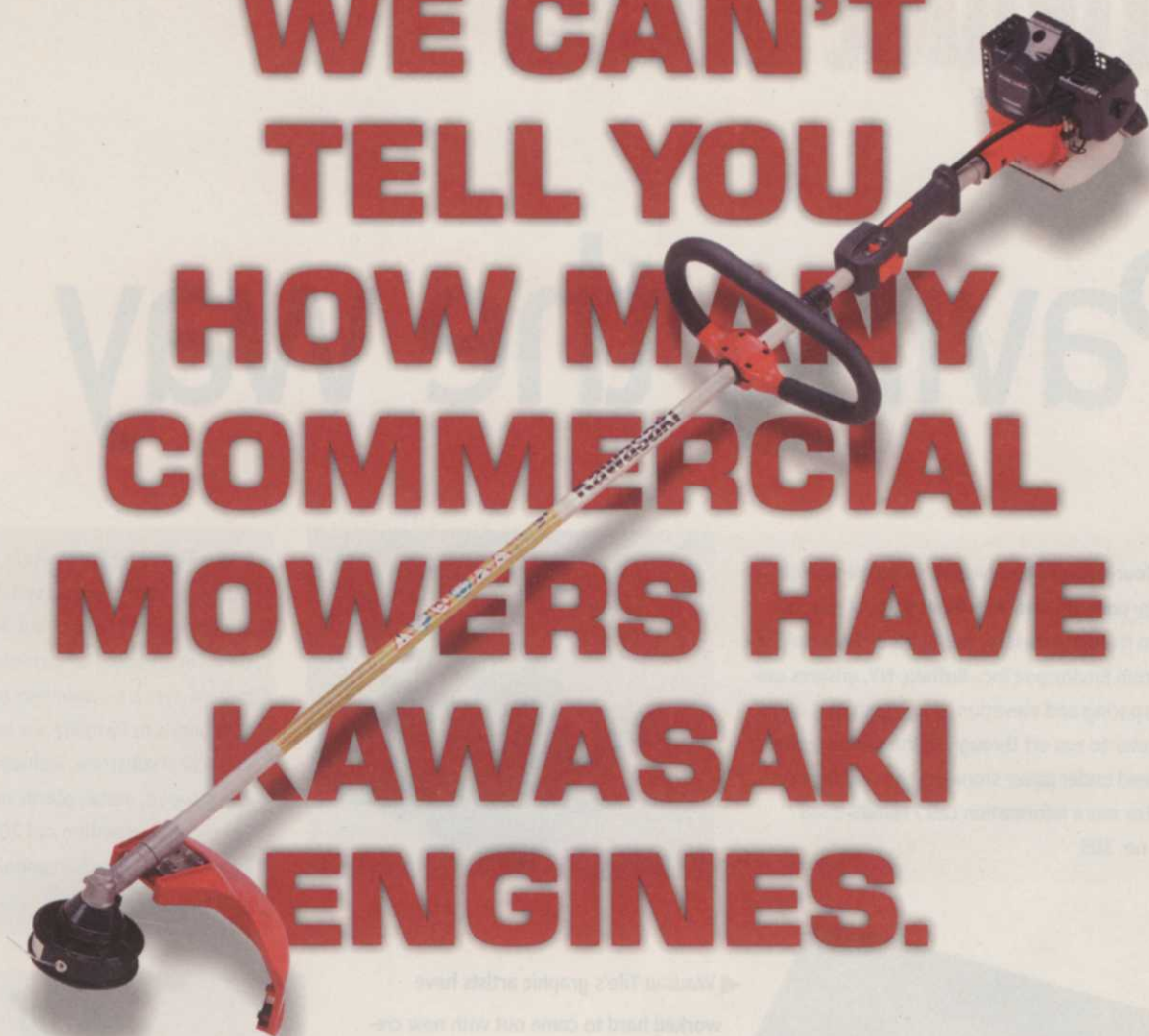
10 "It's just no fun working here." Translation: This is a typical "exit interview" comment from employees of "task-oriented" managers. To keep people, there must be a perceived balance between the manager's concern for people and tasks. When the employee doesn't sense the balance and feels that work is the only thing management thinks about, turnover rises.

Your employees may see situations you see as beneficial from a different perspective. When you understand motivation and its impact on employee actions, it's easy to see how negative feelings build. To reduce turnover, every manager must do all he or she can to see that the "world according to the employee" is filled with recognition, rewards and a sense of fairness.

If you show employees a nurturing environment with a bright, positive future full of new assignments, opportunities and fun, you'll discover the power of human motivation.

— The author is director of training and development at Scotts Lawn Service in Marysville, OH. This article is adapted from a presentation to be made at EXPO 2000 in Louisville, KY, this month. For more information about the workshop, contact PLCAA at 800/458-3466.

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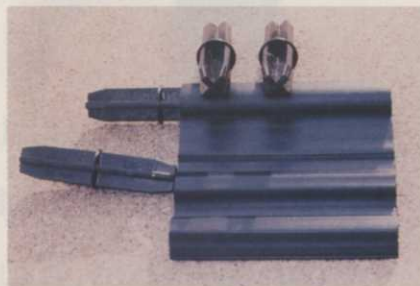
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Grace forms new paver unit

CAMBRIDGE, MA — Grace Construction Products has formed a new organization within its masonry products group to support the interlocking concrete paver segment of the construction industry, one of the fastest growing areas in concrete masonry according to industry sources such as the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute (ICPI) and the National Concrete Masonry Association (NCMA).

The new unit will be staffed by three paver sales specialists, one technical service field specialist and a technical services lab specialist based in Grace's Cambridge, MA cement, concrete and masonry research and development lab.