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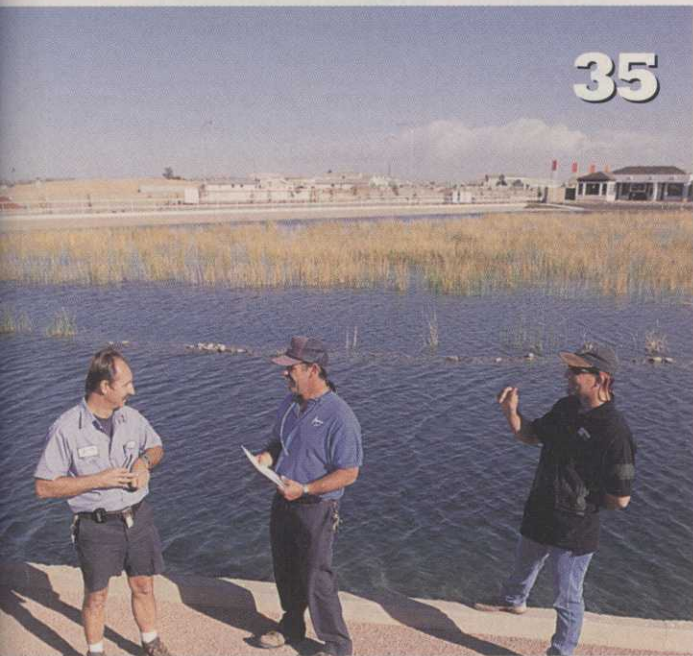
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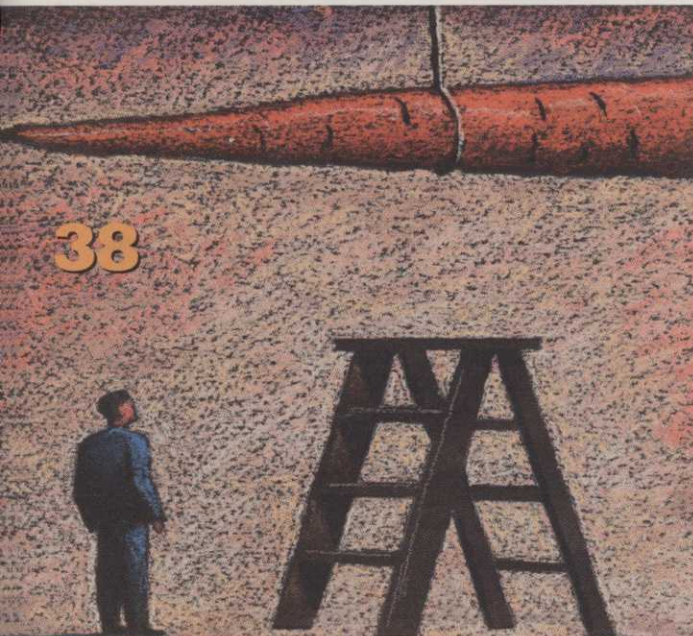


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30



35



38

Landscape MANAGEMENT

NOVEMBER 2000 / #11 / VOLUME 39

features

cover story

20. People of the Year 2000

See why we celebrate the careers of Bruce Hunt, Kevin O'Donnell and Terry Kurth

BY SUE GIBSON, RON HALL & JASON STAHL

30. Twenty Ways to Make Cold Calling Work

Want more commercial maintenance business? This might help jump-start those sales

BY MR. PER

35. Creating a Desert Wetland

This Arizona community wanted an oasis in the desert. Here's how the contractor and city made it happen

BY DON DALE

LABOR CRUNCH

38. They don't participate

It isn't easy, but you can involve just about everyone in training and employee projects

BY JIM PALUCH

grounds management center

40. Award-winning landscape management

Chene Park: Detroit's jewel

COVER IMAGES: RON GOULD (BRUCE HUNT); GREGG SUTTER (TERRY KURTH); JOHN WELSH (KEVIN O'DONNELL)

departments

columns, news & more

7. On the Record

Kick the habit

BY SUE GIBSON

8. Events

Who, what and when

9. Green Side Up

Slam dunk — landscape style

BY JASON STAHL

11. My Way

Marketing is a science

BY MARTY GRUNDER

14. Industry Almanac

Texas equipment ban update; dot-coms + parks = trees

tech center

42. Alternative medicine for turf

Promising new substances have activity on turf

BY DOUG BREDE, PH.D.

49. Jobtalk:

What labor problem? New equipment options

BY JAY LEMKE

52. LM Reports: The Tractor Factor

BY CURT HARLER/CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

55. Ask the Expert

Drought or beetle damage? Mysterious oak blight

BY BAL RAO, PH.D.

56. Products

ending notes

66. Cleanup Crew



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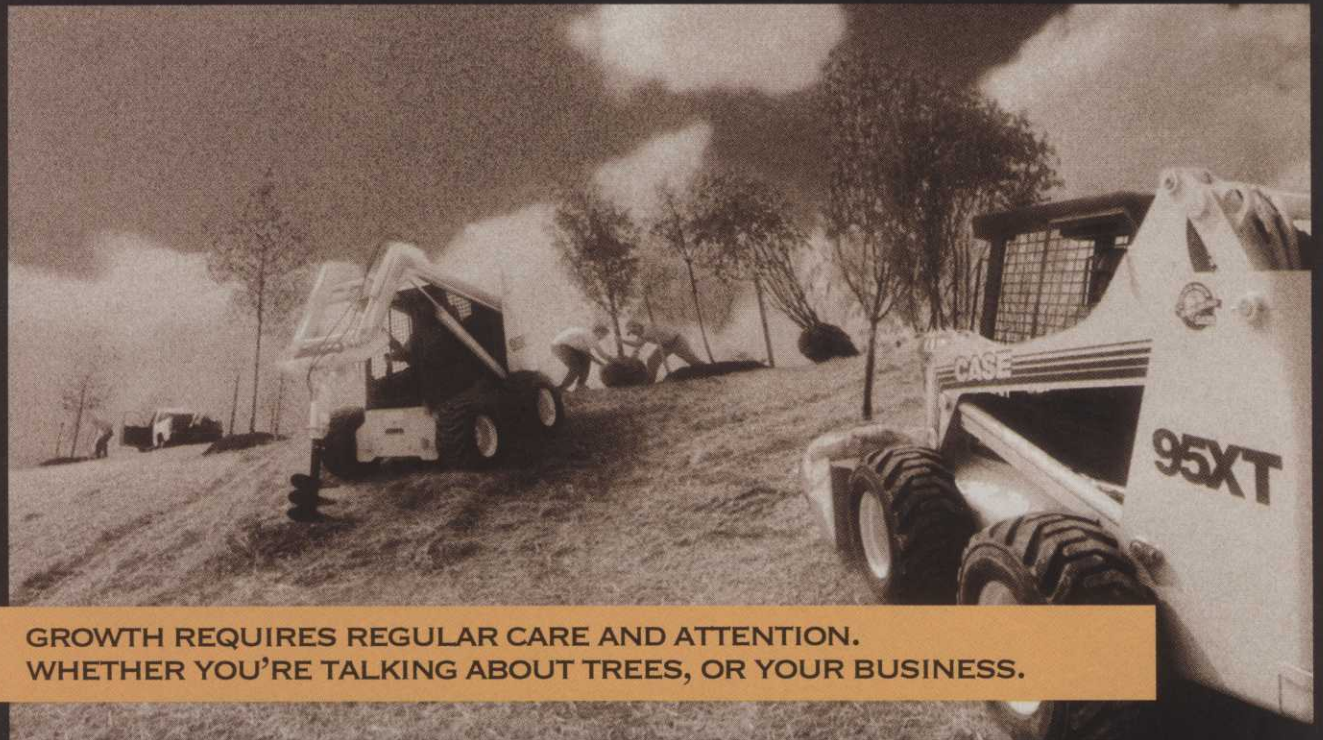
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BY SUE GIBSON / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Kick the habit

Some years back, I finally kicked the habit. It was one of the toughest things I've ever done. For years, I exhaled that last puff of the day and told myself, "I'm quitting tomorrow." But each new day dawned and that ingrained habit of coffee and cigarettes took over. It was easier to put off quitting.

Along the way, I tried every wacky trick: nicotine hoarding filters, going cold turkey, nicotine gum, New Year's Eve resolutions — but I couldn't quit, not until I really wanted to quit more than I wanted to smoke.

So how does this apply to your life as a professional landscape manager? While this is no advertisement for quitting, we all know how addictive nicotine can be, and I think our day-to-day habits are just as addictive and damaging to our operations.

There's a parallel between kicking ingrained habits and doing what you know you should do for yourself or your organization. Trying new things can be uncomfortable, painful and scary. But many of our old habits (like old shoes) should be changed. Here are a few examples:

Ignorance is bliss

Whether we deserve it or not, this industry has a reputation of not being too concerned with formal education in either technical or management topics. Unlike our golf and grower colleagues, this industry is perceived as being pretty easy to enter and frankly, I think too many people think they're experts just because they're in business.

You may not feel up to speed in horticulture or agronomy, basic business management, computing/Internet or human relations. So do something about it. In 2001, why not make formal education in the subject of your choice a personal requirement, then make it a habit? While you're at it, make that a requirement for your employees, too.

Same old, same old

Years ago, we all thought acupuncture was bizarre. Now, our insurance companies often pay for it as a viable treatment and even old-school physicians admit it works. There are new treatments entering the landscape world, just waiting for you to think outside the box. As Doug Brede's article on page 42 explains, some alternative materials may turn out to be just what the plant doctor ordered. Do you use the same products year after year? Maybe it's time to try looking for new solutions.

Business without a roadmap

I owned a business too and I know how easy it is to get wrapped up in the daily, weekly and monthly operations without coming up for air. But are you really going to enter another year of business without a solid, detailed plan for the year? What's your strategy for competing and getting more money for your services? How exactly will you become more profitable in 2001? Make yourself a roadmap and take the time this winter to define these goals clearly. It's one habit you won't regret breaking.

Contact Sue at 440/891-2729
or e-mail at
suegibson@advanstar.com



There's a parallel between kicking ingrained habits and doing what you know you should do for yourself or your organization.

events

WHAT, WHEN & WHERE

November

28-30 North Central Turfgrass Show / St. Charles, IL; Sponsored by the Illinois Turfgrass Federation; 312/201-0101

December

3-6 ASCA Annual Conference / Newport, RI; Sponsored by the American Society of Consulting Arborists; 301/947-0483

4-7 Ohio Turfgrass Foundation Conference and Show / Columbus, OH; 888/683-3445

7-8 MVTA Lawn and Turf Conference and Trade Show / Columbia, MO; Sponsored by the Missouri Valley Turfgrass Association; 573/882-2301

12-14 New Jersey Turfgrass Expo / Atlantic City, NJ; 732/821-7134

13 Turfgrass and Landscape Institute and Trade Show / Buena Park, CA; 800/500-SCTC

January 2001

8-10 Great Lakes Trade Exposition / Lansing, MI; Sponsored by the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association; 800/879-6652

8-10 Midwest Turf Expo / Indianapolis, IN; 765/494-8039

9-11 Eastern PA Turf Conference & Trade Show /

King of Prussia, PA; 814/863-3475

9-11 Congress 2001: Canada's International Horticultural Trade Show & Conference / Toronto, Canada; 905/875-1805

11 CLCA Leadership Conference / Oakland, CA; 800/448-2522

15-18 Michigan Turfgrass Conference / Lansing, MI; 517/321-1660

17-19 Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show / Chicago, IL; 847/526-2010

18-20 GrowerExpo 2001 / Chicago, IL; 630/208-9080

22-25 Grow and Mow Expo / College Park, GA; 706/632-0100

22-24 Central Environmental Nursery Trade Show / Columbus, OH; 800/825-5062

25 Northeastern PA Turf School & Trade Show / Wilkes-Barre, PA; 814/863-3475

31 Sacramento Landscape and Nursery Expo / Sacramento, CA; 530/458-3189

February 2001

1-4 PLCAA 6th Annual Management Conference / Port Canaveral, FL; 800-458-3466

1-4 ALCA Executive Forum / Tucson, AZ; 703/736-9666

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BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

Slam dunk, landscape style

An employee of Quail Hollow Country Club is eyeing one of the upstairs ballrooms suspiciously as she goes about her daily routine. And, from an outsider's point of view, it's understandable. So far as she can tell, the group inside is composed of adults. Yet the noise coming from the room suggests there's a bunch of crazy kids inside.

But they're not kids. They're all employees or owners of landscape companies, and they're all taking directions from Green Industry consultant Jim Paluch of JP Horizons, Inc., Mentor, OH. First, they're told to howl loudly like wolves. Then, the adrenaline-laced song "Dr. Who" starts playing, and everyone is asked to perform "The Wave." Paluch then asks if everyone can give the person closest to them a high five and a back rub.

These are guys who mow grass? Yes. But this is the Leadership Jam 2000, where landscape foremen and front line supervisors can learn new skills to advance their careers.

Radical ideas?

As Paluch paces around in front of these landscape professionals, he advocates workforce behavior that sadly would seem radical to some: saying to a fellow employee, "I want you to plant these trees because you're the most awesome tree planter," or simply smiling on the job.

"We're so into this, 'I'm the boss and work is serious,' thing," Paluch says. "If I smile, my employees will think I'm making money and ask for a raise. If I frown, they'll think we're not doing well."

Perhaps even more radical is what Leadership Jam speaker Steve Pattie, founder of The Pattie Group in Cleveland, OH, said to do for an employee who has had a fight with his wife. "Let him leave thirty minutes early and give him \$10 to buy flowers for her," he says. "It may

not solve anything, but he'll be happier coming to work."

But Paluch and his industry friends aren't just talking about how to treat employees better and build a better sense of teamwork, they're also talking about going the extra mile for customers. Marty Grunder, owner of Grunder Landscaping Co., Miamisburg, OH, tells landscape professionals to do something they may never have thought of. "If you finish a job a little early, ask your customer if he or she would like his or her car washed," he says. Now that's service.

Progressive thinking

An "old school" businessperson might watch these guys slam dunk on a miniature basketball hoop and say to himself, "This is nonsense. These people need to get back to work." But one gets the feeling that, in these high pressure days of too much work, too little help, this kind of employee gathering is just what the doctor ordered.

Every so often, we need to take a different approach to something, however radical it might be. Now's the time to do it because times are good — we can afford to take chances. Even if you experiment with some new workplace philosophy or way to deal with employees or customers and it fails, the work will still be there.

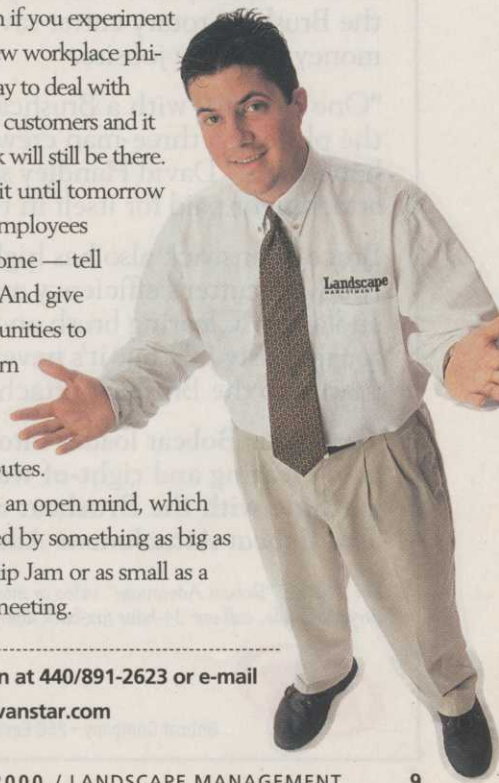
Don't wait until tomorrow to tell your employees they're awesome — tell them today. And give them opportunities to bond and learn more about each other's unique attributes.

This all takes an open mind, which can be created by something as big as the Leadership Jam or as small as a lunchroom meeting.

Contact Jason at 440/891-2623 or e-mail at jstahl@advanstar.com



These guys should be out mowing, not goofing off...or should they?



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