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AUGUST 2001 / #8 / VOLUME 40

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www.mnla.org

17-19 WALP Retreat / Coeur
d'Alene, ID; 800/833-2186

**17-19 Nursery/Landscape
Expo** / Dallas, TX; 512/280-5182;
www.txnla.org

**17-19 ALCA Design/Build
Workshop** / Atlanta, GA;
800/395-2522

**18 Certified Landscape
Technician Exam** / Joliet, IL;
Sponsored by the Illinois
Landscape Contractors
Association; 630/472-2851

**19-25 International Garden
Centre Tour** / New
York/Baltimore; 202/789-5980,
x3010

**21 Cornell University Field
Day** / Ithaca, NY; 800/873-8873

**22 Trees and Utilities
Seminar** / Alexandria, LA;
888/448-7337

**24-26 Farwest Show and
Ornamentals Northwest
Seminars** / Portland, OR;
800/342-6401; [www.nurs-
eryguide.com](http://www.nurs-
eryguide.com)

**25-29 American
Phytopathological Society
Annual Convention** / Salt Lake
City, UT; www.apsnet.org

25 Landscape Expo / Alberta,
Canada; 780/489-1991

29-1 CalScape Expo / San
Diego, CA; 707/462-2276;
www.cipaweb.org

**31 International Turf &
Golfing Conference and
Expo** / Dalian, China; 718/539-
4321

September

**5-8 42nd Western Region
Annual Meeting of the
International Plant
Propagators' Society** /
Seattle, WA; 360/687-5842

**9-11 ANLA Legislative
Conference** / Washington, DC;
www.anla.org

**11-12 MFPA Annual
Summer Educational
Meeting** / Walled Lake, MI;
517/482-5530

**12 Hampton Roads
Agricultural Research and
Extension Center Annual
Field Day** / Virginia Beach, VA;
757/363-3906

13 Southwest Palm Seminar
Yorba Linda, CA; Sponsored by
California State University;
909/880-5977

**13-14 Southwest
Horticultural Trade Show &
Conference** / Phoenix, AZ;
480/966-1610; www.azna.org

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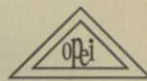
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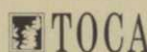
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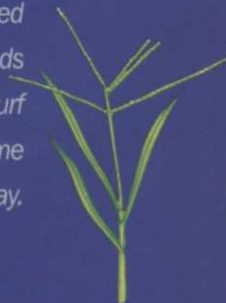
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His business runs him

Which is worse: too little work or too much? I suspect most of you think not having enough is worse, and you're right — it's horrible to scramble for business. In fact, it's a direct cause of many sorry practices:

- low-balling to "buy" business (and usually, unprofitable work).
- taking jobs outside your core business (construction, if you do maintenance, for example). This wreaks havoc on your costs, systems and customer or supplier relationships.
- accepting jobs that are too big but promise lots of money. These usually escalate into a nightmare of surprising costs, stresses and schedule crunches.
- adding new services unrelated to landscape. These may compound your operating problems.
- entering a new niche without understanding it, like adding a new branch or jumping from residential to commercial. You may be in for nasty cost, competition and operating surprises.

There's probably a direct correlation between the rate that cash flow ebbs away and the number of mistakes contractors make to correct it. In many cases, those quick solutions become long-lasting headaches.

He's out of control

I just had a conversation with a frustrated landscape installation contractor who is frantic for help. Just this year, he's added employees and taken on several new landscape installation jobs, as well as adding construction work that is not landscape related. He's doing a time-consuming installation *at cost* for "family," plus other miscellaneous jobs to give his employees work and keep his business going. He doesn't have time to create the designs he likes because he's on a treadmill every day, "running" his business.

But his problem is that his business is running him, he's working seven days most weeks, and he's burning out as fast as a Fourth of July firecracker.

Have you over-extended yourself? You may be doing it to "keep the business running," and, of course, it's great when the money keeps rolling in.

But ask yourself if you can do this more simply, more profitably and more enjoyably. You can, if you focus. Working yourself to a frazzle is not the best lifestyle, especially if you want to be creative and profitable. If the goal of a business is to be an organization doing good work and sustaining itself for the long haul, is this how it's done?

K.I.S.S.

If you're over-extended, force yourself to take a few days to regroup. Discover what you do best and how you can be profitable *at that one thing*. Most landscape organizations do not need 15 different services to maintain themselves — one or two (done well) suffices very well.

Find your core strength, then find how to get professional help to make it profitable. Local government and industry organizations offer lots of free advice, or you can pay accountants, attorneys and consultants for more specific help.

Do yourself a favor and simplify your operations. Get help making those few good things work. You'll be surprised at how satisfying that can be.

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



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