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Landscape MANAGEMENT

OCTOBER 2001 / #10 / VOLUME 40

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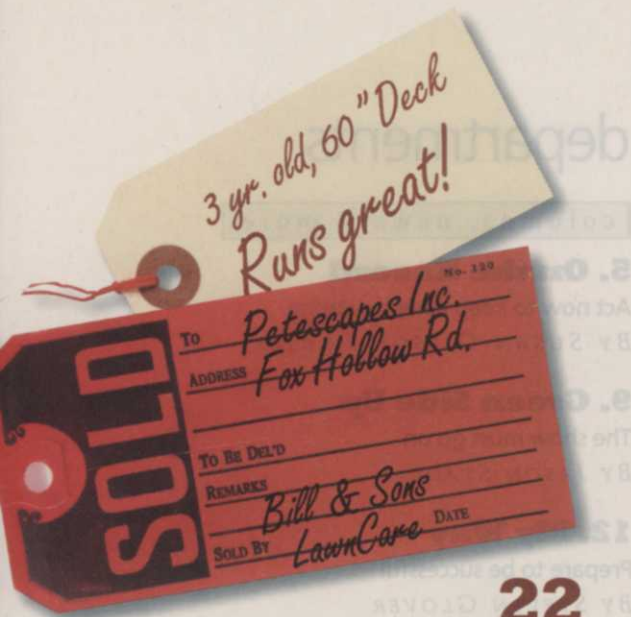
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Editorial staff

Associate Publisher / Executive Editor	SUSAN GIBSON PORTER / 440/891-2729 / sporter@advanstar.com
Senior Editor	RON HALL / 440/891-2636 / rhall@advanstar.com
Managing Editor	JASON STAHL / 440/891-2623 / jstahl@advanstar.com
On-Line Content Editor	LYNNE BRAKEMAN / 440/891-2869 / lbrakeman@advanstar.com
Senior Science Editor	KARL DANNEBERGER, PH.D. / danneberger1@osu.edu
Group Editor	VERNON HENRY / 440/826-2829
Art Director	LISA LEHMAN / 440/891-2785
Sr. Graphic Designer	JEFFREY LANDIS / 440/891-2702 / jjlandis@advanstar.com

Reader advisory panel

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GEORGE VAN HAASTEREN	Dwight-Englewood School / Englewood, NJ

Business staff

Group Publisher	JOHN D. PAYNE / 440/891-2786 / jpayne@advanstar.com
Admin. Coordinator	NICOLE CAPRARA / 440/891-2734 / ncaprara@advanstar.com
Production Manager	JILL HOOD / 218/723-9129 / jhood@advanstar.com
Production Director	ROSY BRADLEY / 218/723-9720 / rbradley@advanstar.com
Circulation Manager	DARRYL ARQUITTE / 218/723-9422 / darquitte@advanstar.com
Green Book Coordinator	MARY MOBLEY / 218/723-9127 / mmobley@advanstar.com
Vice President	TOM CONLON / 440/891-2619 / tconlon@advanstar.com

Advertising staff

Eastern Manager	JOSEPH SOSNOWSKI / 610/687-2356 Fax: 610/687-1419 150 Strafford Ave., Ste. 210 Wayne, PA 19087 jsosnowski@advanstar.com
Cleveland Headquarters	7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44130-3369
Western Manager	PATRICK ROBERTS / 440/891-2609 Fax: 440/891-2675 proberts@advanstar.com
Midwest Manager	KEVIN STOLTMAN / 440/891-2772 Fax: 440/891-2675 kstoltman@advanstar.com
Account Executive	MICHAEL HARRIS / 440/891-3118 Fax: 440/826-2865 mharris@advanstar.com
Display / Directory Sales	LESLIE ZOLA / 440/891-2670; 800/225-4569 x670 tzola@advanstar.com
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BY SUE GIBSON PORTER / EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Act now to keep America strong

Even before the terrorists struck on September 11th, America's economy was taking a troubling turn. Add to that new fears of a disturbed, grieving nation and you have a recipe that can potentially weaken our economy even more. Those fears are your enemy because they threaten your operations now and in 2002, and they also threaten the strength of our nation's business.

Take action now

What can you do? First, take time *immediately* to assess your situation. Look at your current and future finances, customer situations, supply line, employees and operations. Where is your business going through the end of 2001 and what are your customers saying about next year?

It's so easy to imagine those customers still ordering services without a second thought, but Americans are now a more thoughtful people and each expenditure will get questioned in these precarious times. Don't be surprised to see maintenance budget reductions, project postponements or service schedule adjustments. Don't be shocked if office buildings have more vacancies, homeowners opt for basic over high-end packages or grounds renovation plans get simplified.

Instead, be prepared. The greatest danger to this industry and to individual organizations is letting fear immobilize you. Remember the Chinese proverb that says, "Customers are treasure, goods are but straw." Now is the time to be proactive, contact every customer and find out what you need to do to cement that relationship and get 2002 business commitments.

You may need to adjust pricing, offer new packages or even add non-landscape services to keep their business. You may need to slash expenses, drop unprofitable ser-

vices or increase investments in equipment or customer service training.

The key is to make your organization as strong as possible going into this new economic climate, strengthening those precious customer relationships and contributing as much as possible to keeping this great economy rolling. You can't be complacent any more.

We're responding, too

What are we doing at *Landscape Management*? We also believe our nation's strength is her freedoms and her economy and we're dedicating ourselves to helping you make your organizations stronger. Watch each issue and our Web site (www.landscapemanagement.net) for new ideas on how to operate smarter, build customer loyalty, trim costs and develop dependable employees. You can start this month on page 15 and in more detail on our Web site.

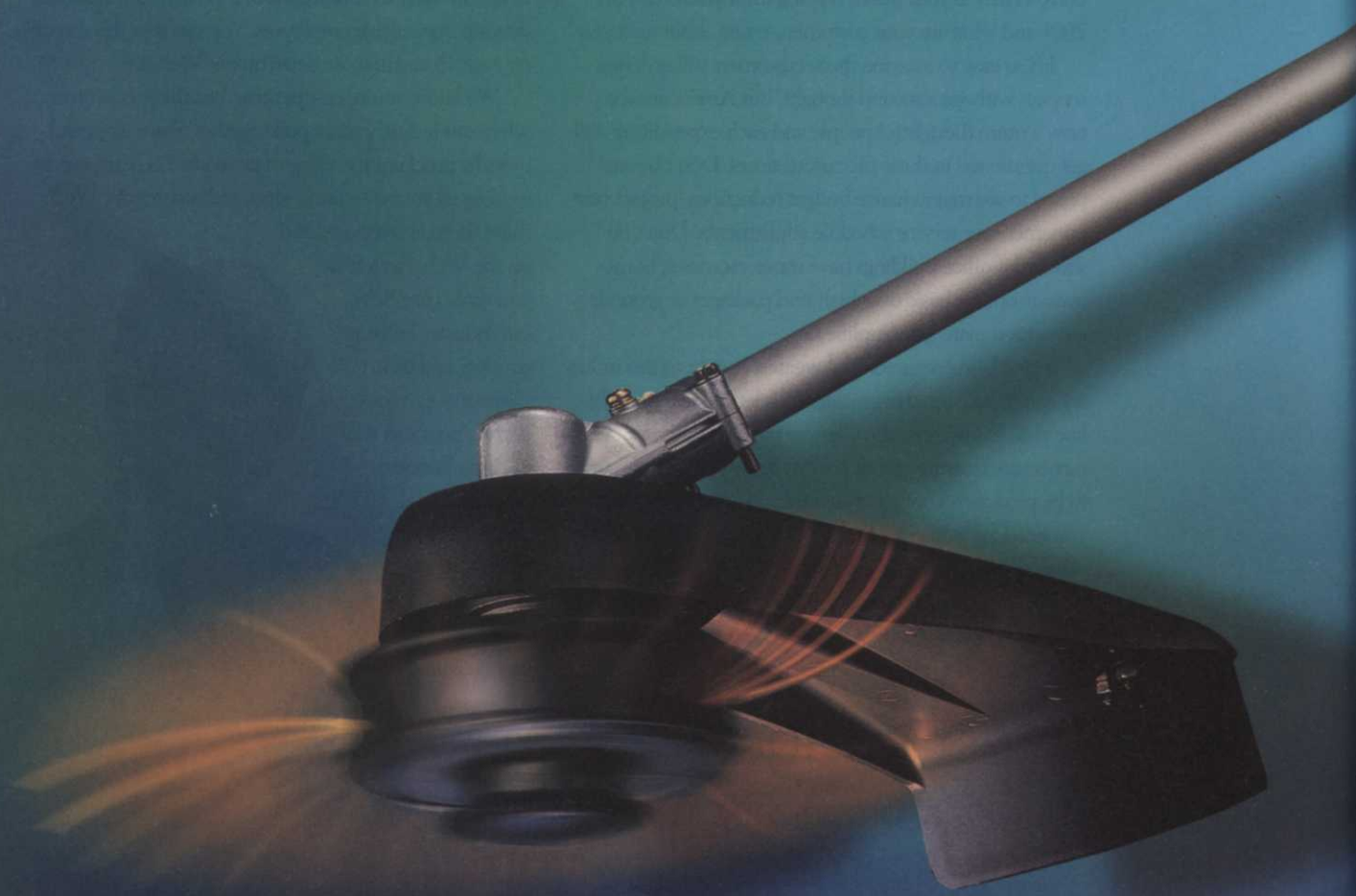
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The show must go on

Where were you when America was attacked on September 11, 2001? Most of you were probably well into starting your busy day, taking care of your commercial and residential accounts. Chances are that once you found out about the planes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, you went on to do more important things, like calling loved ones to make sure they were unharmed. Some of you may have even gone home to hug your children. I know I did.

You'll never forget where you were when the news hit, though.

"I was at a meeting when it happened," says Bruce Allentuck, president of Allentuck Landscaping, Gaithersburg, MD. "Our production staff kept working, but half our office staff went home. The next day we received no calls whatsoever, and we didn't call anyone."

"We had crews down to the general area around the Pentagon, so we of course pulled them right back out of there," he adds.

There were some who were even closer to the disaster, literally a couple miles away. Matt Smoot, project director for the The Brickman Group, Alexandria, MD, was on the 13th floor of his office building watching the disaster in New York unfold on television with fellow employees.

"My boss heard a plane and said, 'Oh, that sounds awful loud,'" Smoot says. "I ran to the other side of the building, thinking nothing was going to happen, and that's when I saw the plane. It was barreling toward the ground, and then I saw a fireball."

Smoot then says that a couple of F-16 fighter jets flew over their building, making a "huge noise." Every-

one started making phone calls to find out what happened, some to crews who were out working. The property yard, Smoot said, is only one-quarter of a mile from the Pentagon.

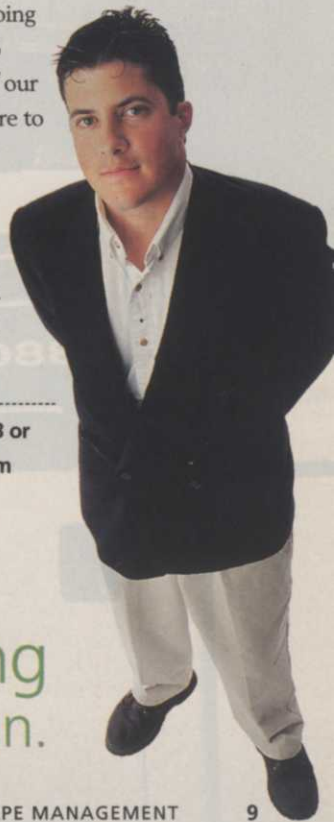
"They had all those streets closed," Smoot says. "We told our crews to stay and wait to see what happened. It turns out we had to leave everything, including equipment and trucks, right where it was."

What happened the next day was probably what happened in landscape, lawn and grounds crews across the country. The crews simply picked up their equipment and proceeded as normal to finish their jobs. It's not surprising, given that people in the Green Industry are some of the hardest working around. It would have been nice to take a week off like the NFL players did, stating "our hearts just wouldn't be in the game," but let's face it, the show must go on, and that means taking care of our customers as well as we can.

As Smoot says of his employees, "Everyone seemed to be intrinsically motivated, and nobody appeared to be nervous or scared about going to work. Everyone seemed to gain a greater appreciation of our country, and how lucky we are to work every day."

A commercial customer recently called Smoot to request changing his flower colors to red, white and blue. If that doesn't make you feel proud to work, nothing will.

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



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