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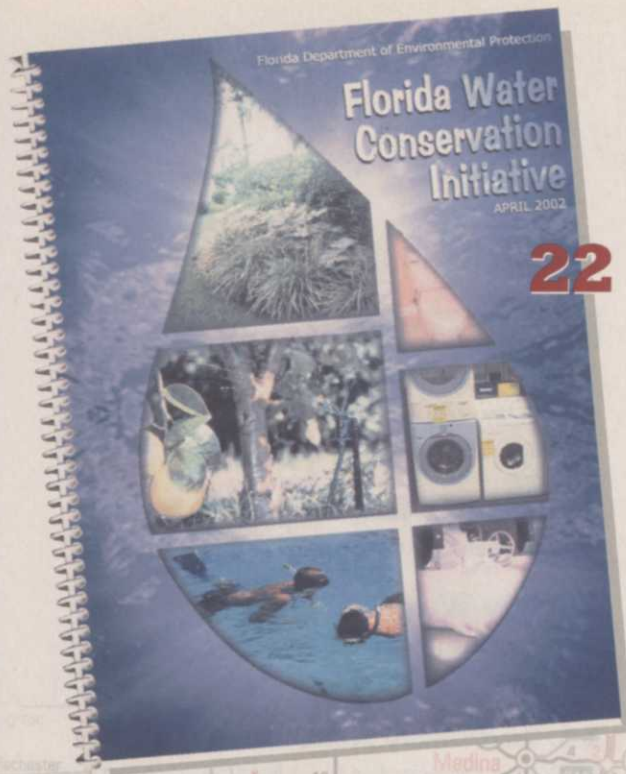
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Landscape MANAGEMENT

JUNE 2002 / #6 / VOLUME 41

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Editorial staff

Associate Publisher / Executive Editor	SUSAN PORTER / 440/891-2729 / sporter@advanstar.com
Editor-in-Chief	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	CARRIE PARKHILL / 440/891-3101 / cparkhill@advanstar.com
Graphic Designer	CATHY SECAUR

Reader advisory panel

DEBBY COLE	Greater Texas Landscapes / Austin, TX
JOHN GACHINA	Gachina Landscape Management / Menlo Park, CA
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Business staff

Group Publisher	JOHN D. PAYNE / 440/891-2786 / jpayne@advanstar.com
Admin. Coordinator	MINDY MOCZULSKI / 440/891-2734 / mmoczulski@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

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 kstolman@advanstar.com
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Marketing services

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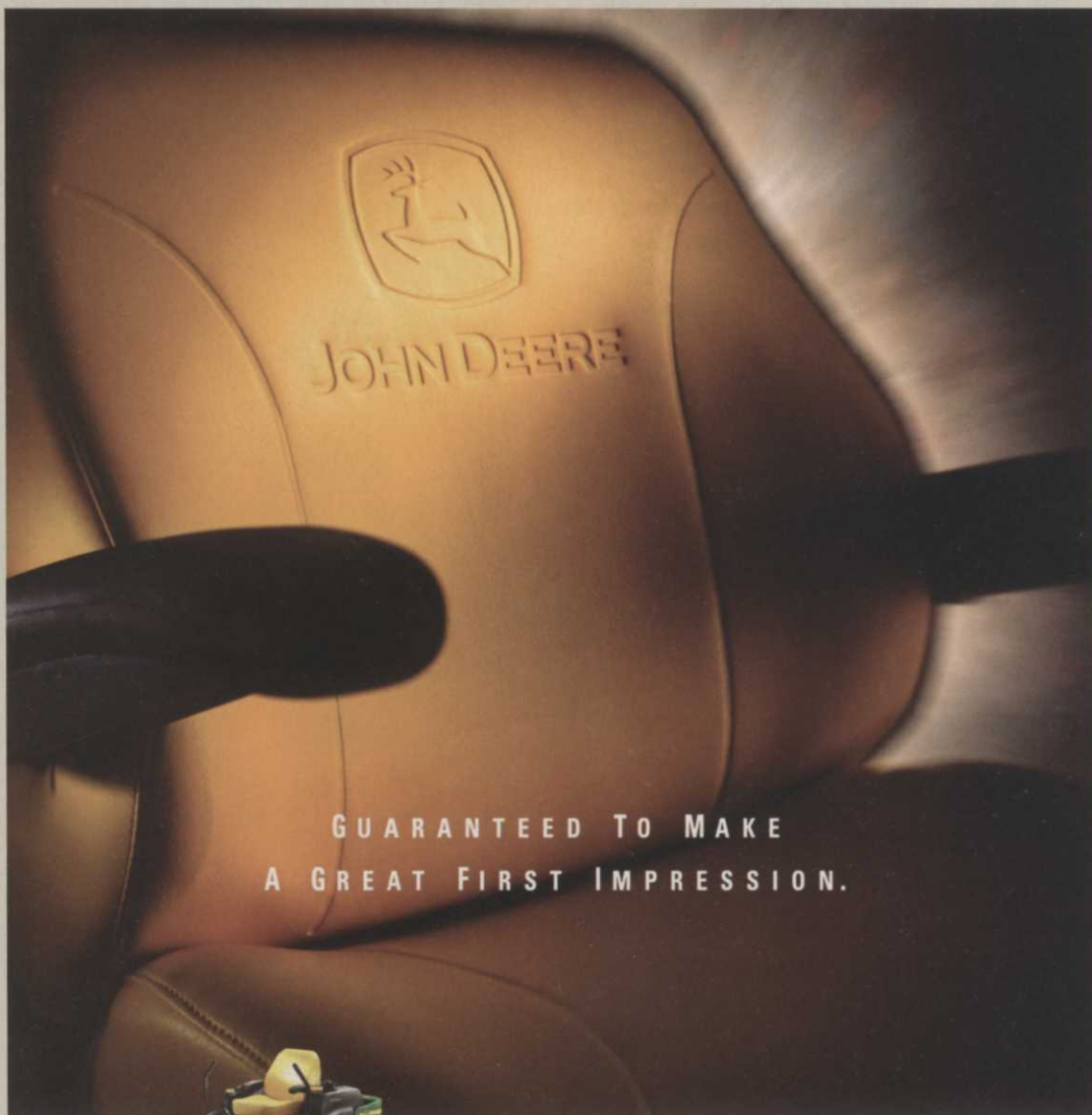
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Read about the latest trends in pavers and retaining walls, plus a comprehensive listing of the best products on the market

■ Corporate Capabilities

Descriptions and contact information on the best companies in the Green Industry

■ Let's Hear It

More eye-opening comments from readers on mowing rates

■ Patio and deck profits

Learn from the experts how to make money installing patios and decks

■ Owners speak out

Landscape/lawn care business owners speak their mind on hot topics in "Inside the Owner's Head"

■ **And news:** The latest news that's important to your business in Industry Almanac

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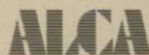
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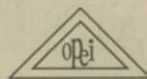
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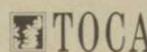
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Canada's industry under siege

Playing out in Canada is what lawn care business owners in the United States have long feared. Professional turfgrass and landscape application services there are under attack.

Every town in the country apparently has the green light to make whatever pesticide regulations it wants.

A ruling by Canada's highest court in the spring of 2001 gave the town of Hudson the right to ban professional lawn applications. That decision ended a 10-year battle between that town of 5,500 people and two lawn care companies that had been doing business there.

The floodgates fly open

A coalition of activist groups reacted like sharks smelling blood in the water. Vocal even before the ruling, they've intensified their efforts and are pestering cities across Canada to restrict or ban the activities of professional landscape services that use chemical pest controls.

At last count, about 50 towns in Quebec Province had passed some form of lawn care legislation. Imagine the confusion and waste for any company doing business in more than a few communities.

More cities are being targeted by these "crusaders," including Canada's most populated ones. The City of Halifax in Nova Scotia, which has about 70,000 households, will outlaw chemical lawn and garden care on residential properties on April 1, 2003. Toronto, Canada's biggest city in Ontario Province, is looking at bylaws. Ottawa and Vancouver are on the hit list, too.

Playing for keeps

These activist groups — the Sierra Club, the World Wildlife Fund, and others — mean to have their way. Their goal is to rid Canada of all chemical pest control product use, say the Green Industry people we've spoken to.

The activists started with the argument that pesticide use is unnecessary on turfgrass and landscapes for "aesthetic" or "cosmetic" purposes. We should ask, loud and clear, "Says who?"

That argument is just a smokescreen, say Canadian landscape professionals we talk to. The ultimate target is pesticide use in Canada's huge agriculture industry.

So, the activists started with the easiest group to pick on, the lawn care people. And, until recently, the battle has been pretty one-sided. They attacked; the lawn care people reacted. In recent months, however, the professional landscape industry has closed ranks. Owners who heretofore viewed each other as competitors joined forces to defend their profession. Dozens now attend town meetings when the topic of pesticide use is debated. The scary part is that they have to do this town by town, meeting by meeting.

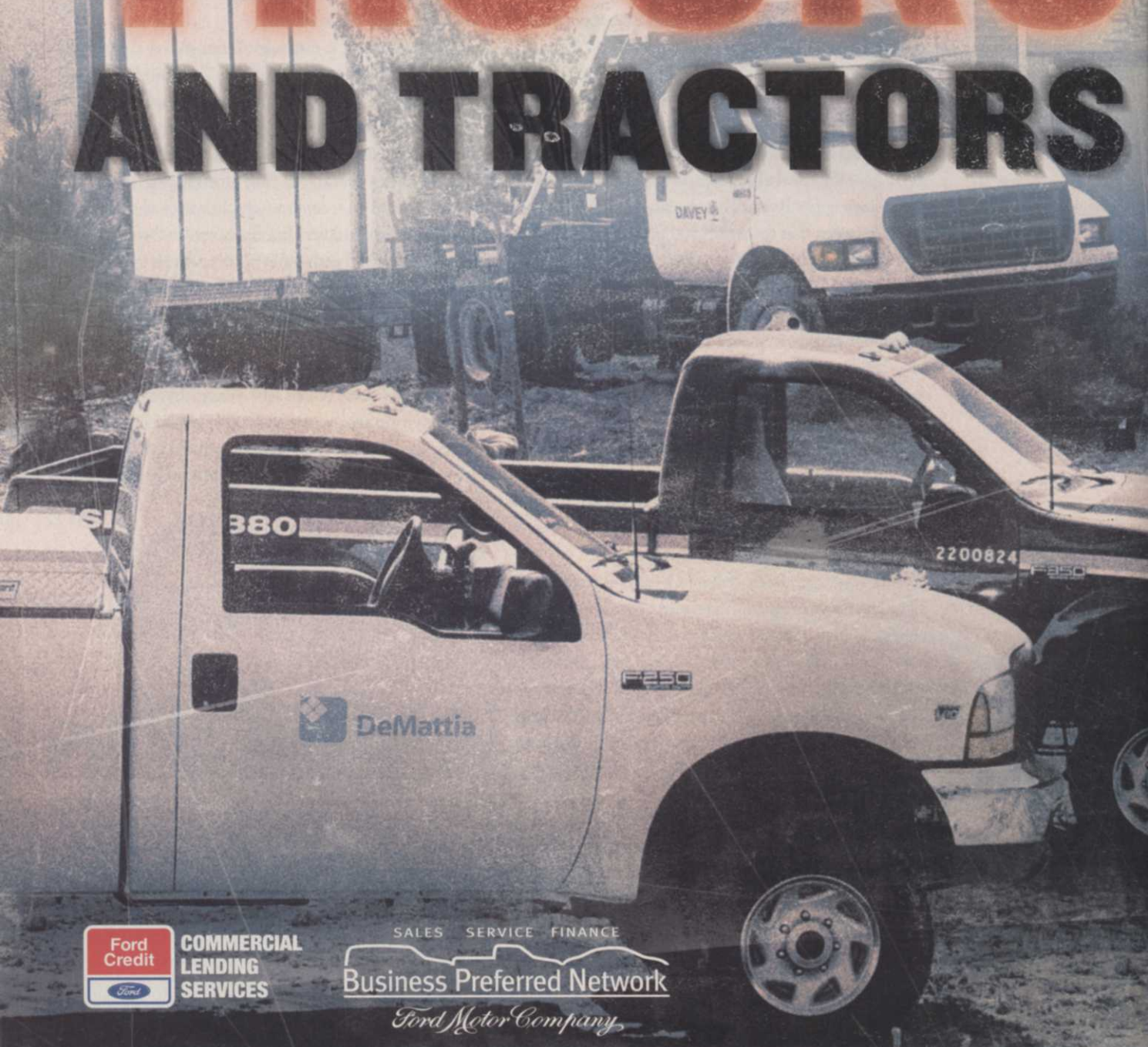
In spite of these efforts and a campaign to develop industry-wide acceptance and implementation of the principles of integrated pest management (IPM), the lawn care industry in Canada remains on the defensive . . . and pretty much on its own.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636 or e-mail at rhall@advanstar.com



The activists started with the easiest group to pick on, the lawn care people.

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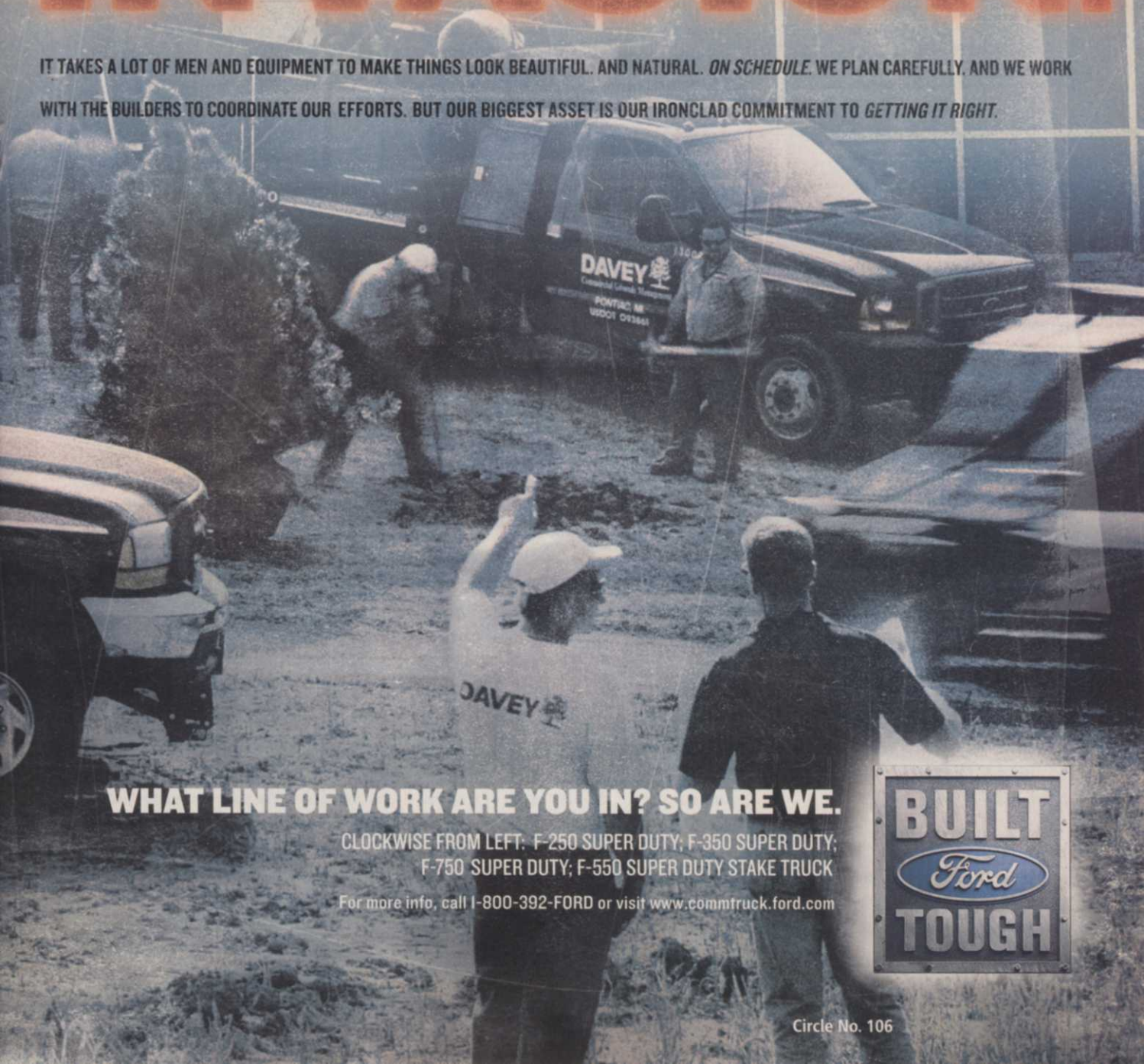
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inside the owner's head

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

It's the battle of revenue vs. expenses!

After a busy day, a landscape professional might lie in bed and ponder this question: Which is more important, generating revenue or controlling expenses?

Judging from the responses from members of The Owners' Network, this question could sustain a lengthy debate.

Watch those expenses

"I've shown more bottom line profit by controlling expenses rather than raising prices," says Michael Hatcher of Michael Hatcher and Associates, Memphis, TN. "Look at the income statement to determine which expenses carry the largest percent and attack that area of your cost expenses."

Brian Akehurst of Akehurst Landscape Service, Joppa, MD, is a proponent of watching expenses, too, but that's not the most exciting thing to do. "Since generating revenue is the easy part, I think a lot of owners catch themselves spending more time in that role," he says.

"I remember a quote from some famous coach that goes, 'Offense wins games, but defense wins championships,'" says Jerry Merrill of Weed Man East Idaho/Merrill Quality Landscapes, Rexburg, ID. "Without a detailed cost control system (defense), the championship (a good net profit number) is out of reach."

Go make money!

Scott Ziebol of LandCrafters, Inc., New Berlin, WI, says he's an offense-minded player. In his opinion, a cost efficient organization without adequate revenues will die.

"Generating revenue requires more time and attention, and when you stop focusing on it, it goes away," Ziebol says. "Even the most basic cost control systems, once in place, have their own inertia and can be incrementally improved."

Dan Rooney of Rooney Landscape, Rolling Meadows, IL, believes that owners are entrepreneurs at heart and want to build revenues. But to do that, he says, you need a sound budget. "I spend time preparing a budget, and I review it on a monthly basis. Get confident with your budget, then turn your attention on building your business."

Johnette Taylor of Roundtree Landscaping, Dallas, TX, keeps it simple with regard to this subject: "I focus my attention on ways to generate revenue. I leave controlling expenses to the bookkeeper."



Scott Ziebol (left) says go make money, while Mark Baldwin favors a more balanced method.



Rub your tummy and pat your head

Some landscape pros advocate giving equal attention to both generating revenues and cutting expenses. As Billy Holly of Central Coast Landscape and Maintenance, Santa Cruz, CA, says — it's like rubbing your tummy while patting your head.

"If you don't generate income, you'll have no expenses to control, so the income has to come first," Holly says. "However, don't dare

When cost control can backfire

Scott Ziebol pointed to the typical strategy during tough economic times as an example of why cost control can backfire. "When revenue drops and cost cutting is chosen as a correction, the first things to go are the important things necessary to support revenue production. These include things like customer service support, marketing, training."

He continues: "The next step is to try to beat more productivity out of the production staff while cutting things necessary to support them."

lose track of where your money is going."

"What's more important to a car, the tires or the engine? They both need to be in working order for the car to run properly," says Mark Baldwin of Mark J. Baldwin & Associates, Plymouth, MI. "If you have a selling machine with only fair production, or great production but no cost control, there will be problems."

Taylor, while admitting she's a revenue generator, also advises caution on one-way thinking. "Generating revenues is the fastest way to add to the bottom line, but you need to make sure you're not just making a sale. It has to be profitable."

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