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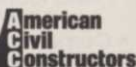
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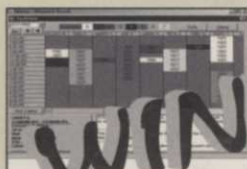
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best practices

GUIDELINES TO HELP AN INDUSTRY GROW

Consistency is the name of the game

BY BRUCE WILSON

Quality control is one of the many difficult issues that landscape contractors deal with on an ongoing basis. Most companies today can do quality work, but doing it consistently is another story. There are some tried and true best practices that can make this easier to manage.

► **Build a quality culture.** All of the individuals on your management team must keep their focus on quality by recognizing and supporting your quality initiative on an ongoing basis. You all must "walk the walk" and "talk the talk."

► **Develop a system to inspect your properties regularly.** Do this with your crew leaders. Use an inspection form that makes your review of the quality aspects of the work consistent. Establish a standard, and set a minimum acceptable score.

► **Reward quality work.** If you have an incentive plan that rewards production, balance it with a quality component. After all, if the work

done isn't of high quality, who cares if it was done in an efficient manner?

► **Use pictures to highlight your quality standards.** For example, take a picture of turf mowing showing the finished job looking the way you want it to be on all jobs. You



Bruce Wilson

can also contrast it by showing a poor job and labeling it as the "wrong way" to do a job. A picture is the easiest way to overcome the language barrier present in most of our workforces.

Maintaining a high quality standard is the key to success in this business.

can also contrast it by showing a poor job and labeling it as the "wrong way" to do a job. A picture is the easiest way to overcome the language barrier present in most of our workforces.

► **Make sure that your jobs are sequenced properly.** Proper job sequencing assures that the entire job gets serviced each time. Have a final

checklist that's filled out on completion of each visit.

► **Establish best practices for common tasks.** Take out the variability. "This is the way we do it

every time."

► **Make sure that your quality focus is aligned with client expectations.** Keep it simple. If you keep your focus on the big important tasks (green grass, no weeds, beautiful flowers), your clients will probably be happy. If you miss some other things, they are less likely to be a big issue.

There's one concept that I have believed throughout my career: maintaining a high quality standard is the key to success in this business. Quality is a key to contract retention, referrals and employee retention. Most employees in this industry are loyal to companies that have high quality standards. They take pride in their work and are motivated by recognition.

So, make sure to reward a job well done.

Sound off

As Bruce Wilson says, quality is a key to contract retention, referrals and employee retention. Often, it's what can separate you from your competition. How do you ensure that your company does quality work? Has it made a difference in your business? We'd like to know. Send your own personal tale of quality conquest to Managing Editor Jason Stahl at jstahl@advanstar.com, and we'll consider it for a future issue of LM.

To comment on this month's "Best Practices" column by Bruce Wilson, contact him at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com. Bruce spent 30 years with Environmental Care, Inc., before partnering with Thomas L. Oyler to form the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services (www.wilson-oyler.com).

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