



## The simple sales pitch

I received a lot of good feedback from my last column about the habits of successful salesmen. Thanks! There were many requests to provide more ideas on each of these habits, so here it goes.

The first habit is “keep the sales pitch simple.” In sales you’ll have greater success focusing on customer *benefits* over service *features*. For instance, telling the prospect that you’re better because you provide them with a dedicated account manager is good, but it’s only a feature. It’s not a benefit.

Demonstrating to the customer how this feature will get them answers when they want them or better—get them answers before they have to call you—is a benefit. When talking about valuable features, it’s imperative you marry them to a benefit statement.

For example, “When you work with us we dedicate an account manager to your property. He or she is your primary point of contact at all times. What this means is you’ll never be in the dark waiting for answers and, more importantly, you’ll get a plan showing you ways to manage your budget better and improve your property. Is this what you want?”

Let’s all agree that prospects are more interested in benefits that help them better manage their money, minimize their hassle and maximize their peace of mind than they are in the organizational structure of your company.

The successful salesman never forgets that customers are interested first and foremost in what’s in it for them. This is particularly true when it comes to talking about money. I said money, not price. The customer is spending money, but too many salesmen talk price instead of keeping the pitch simple and demonstrating how their services may help the customer spend money more effectively.

Here’s what I mean: Over the course of a few years, the landscape maintenance prospect will spend money in three ways with a contractor.

**1. Monthly maintenance:** This is not happy money and customers want to reduce it.

**2. Fixes (repair and replacement):** This is very unhappy money because it’s a “surprise.”

**3. Enhancement/improvement.** This is happy money and they like to spend more here.

The simplest pitch relates your service features to the prospect’s service experience. It may sound like this: “Our clients work with us because we help them manage their landscape dollars better. You’ll spend money in three ways with any contractor: **1.** monthly services; **2.** fixing, repairing and replacing things as they age like your irrigation system; and **3.** enhancement and property improvements. If you don’t spend enough on the first, you end up spending way more on the second, which leaves very little for the third. In your current situation where would you rather be spending your money?”

Now the effective salesman shuts up and gets the customer to talk.

That’s the purpose of your pitch: Get the customer talking about what he or she values other than the price of the monthly contract. If you can make this a habit, you’ll qualify better and separate the tire kickers from the buyers.

### Kevin Kehoe’s 6 habits of successful salespeople

1. They keep the sales pitch simple.
2. They’re grinders.
3. They’re direct.
4. They use a list.
5. They listen more than they talk.
6. They’re prepared for every call.

Read the original column from the November issue of *LM* at [ow.ly/r9MJl](http://ow.ly/r9MJl).

YOUR INSURANCE RESOURCE

## Prompt & efficient

### WHY FILING CLAIMS QUICKLY IS GOOD BUSINESS

**A**N EMPLOYEE IS carrying a bag of mulch and throws out his back. It's nobody's fault—just an everyday accident—but now he's out of work for a few weeks. Back injuries are one of many common claims in the Green Industry. Others include trip-and-fall injuries, equipment-related accidents and, of course, vehicle accidents, among others. The truth is, given the nature of the industry, even the safest businesses often have accidents or unexpected situations that require filing an insurance claim. If a claim is necessary, filing both timely and efficiently is beneficial to your business and to your employees.

Although the filing process is easier than ever, businesses sometimes put it off. Whatever the reason, delaying the process can be a big mistake. The faster you file your claim, the better off you'll be. Filing your claim quickly and efficiently has benefits for you and the possibly injured party.

Fortunately, these days most businesses do recognize the importance of filling claims promptly. Thomas Richey, vice president property/loss control for Hortica In-

urance & Employee Benefits says most insured businesses are aware of the consequences of late reporting. These include losing credibility with employees, hurting employer/employee relationships and even possible litigation.

Filing claims promptly helps maintain a strong business ethic and demonstrates that you care about your employees. In many horticulture businesses employees may be close-knit or even feel like family; maintaining that culture is important.

"The faster you get the injured employees care, the faster they are on the road to recovery," Richey says. "By doing this, there is a sense that the employer values their employee."

Of course, being prompt and fair with the treatment of your employees also can help avoid litigation costs. If injured parties go unacknowledged by your business, they may feel their only recourse is to contact an attorney. That can be avoided simply by getting the claims process rolling.

Today, the claims process is easier than ever. Online filing allows the insured to make the claim from the convenience of a computer. Those who prefer speaking to someone in person



simply have to pick up the phone. Given how easy the process is, there's no reason not to start it immediately. In fact, Richey says businesses should take advantage of same-day reporting. Avoid putting it off or even being "too late" to make a claim. "There is a statute of limitation which states the time frame in which an employee can make a claim," he says. "This time period varies from state to state."

#### What steps to take?

So how exactly should an accident or claims situation be handled? In the event of an accident, the very first step is to get prompt medical care for the injured. Emergency care always comes first. Once everyone has been cared for, the insured should make a call to his or her insurance carrier to begin the claims process. There's a lot of information required and the quicker you file, the more likely you'll be accurate.

The critical information

required at the time of filing, Richey says, includes the employee's name, address, date of birth, social security number, date of hire and wages; the date and time of accident; and nature of the injury. Be sure to have all of that information handy when contacting your insurance carrier.

Taking these actions quickly protects your business but also shows your employees that they matter to you and your company. Showing you value your employees protects the company culture and also may help prevent legal action.

"By showing this, the employee may think twice about getting representation," Richey says. "We have one insured who sends a gift basket out whenever one of her employees gets hurt. It's amazing how this one act has kept down the payout of each claim made. It's the little things that count the most and that includes prompt filing."

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## SMOOTH CRABGRASS

*Digitaria ischaemum*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This summer annual germinates when soil temperatures reach a consistent 55 F.
- ▶ It features rolled vernation and a prostrate growth habit.
- ▶ It can be distinguished from large crabgrass (*D. sanguinalis*) by the absence of hairs on the leaves and sheaths. Both species will grow under close mowing, but smooth crabgrass can survive and set seed at mowing heights as low as 0.25 in.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ When soil temperatures approach 55 F in late winter or spring, apply a preemergent crabgrass herbicide.
- ▶ Look for products containing the active ingredient dithiopyr. It provides season-long preemergent and early postemergent crabgrass control.
- ▶ Consult the appropriate product label for recommended rates for your area, as well as reseeding and overseeding recommendations.



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## CHAMBERBITTER

*Phyllanthus urinaria*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This summer annual is often found in ornamentals and landscape beds, but has recently become more problematic in turfgrass. It's also known as gripweed, leafflower or little mimosa, among other names.
- ▶ As a member of the spurge family, chamberbitter reproduces by seed found in the fruit attached underneath the branch.
- ▶ It's a small, erect plant with grooved stems, thin leaves and smooth margins. It grows from a well-developed taproot.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ In turf, apply a preemergent herbicide containing isoxaben prior to germination. For landscape or container-grown ornamentals, use a product containing isoxaben and trifluralin.
- ▶ Apply preemergent products labeled for chamberbitter first in early spring and again two to three months later for season-long control.
- ▶ Hand weed any plants that may have emerged prior to application.

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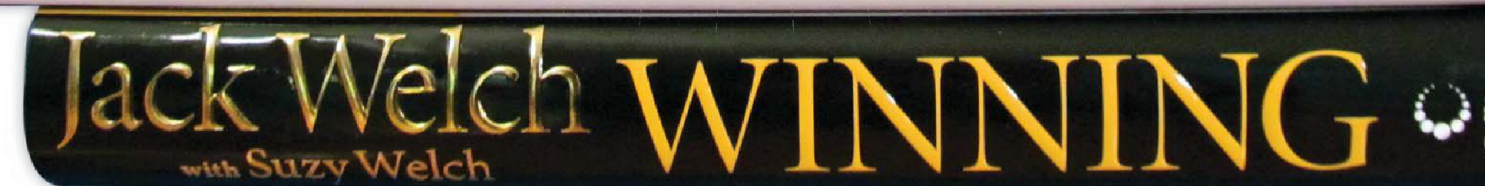
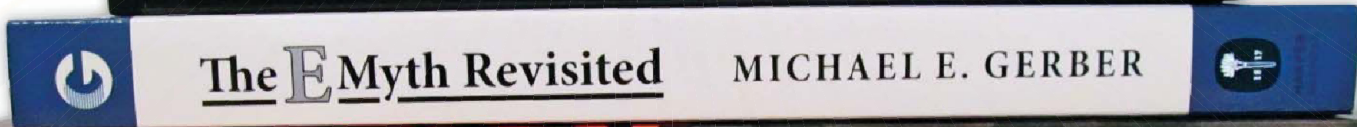




# 'THE BOOK THAT CHANGED MY BUSINESS'

Which titles have had the greatest impact on Green Industry companies? Four business owners share their must-reads.

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## By Bill Bemus

### PRESIDENT

Bemus Landscape, a \$21 million, full-service landscape company San Clemente, Calif.

***Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl is one of the most challenging books I've ever read. I**

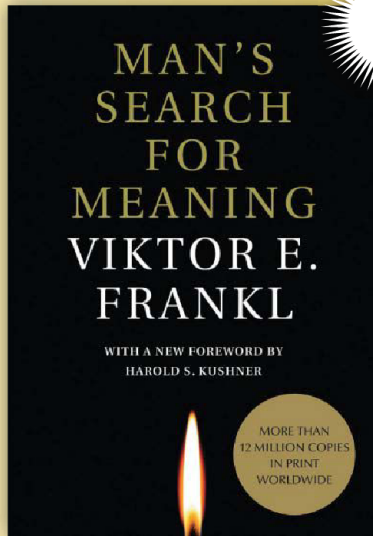
first became aware of Frankl about 20 years ago when as a company we studied another excellent book for business, Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist who, along with his parents, brother and wife, was imprisoned by the Nazis in September 1942. He suffered unspeakable deprivation and degradation until being liberated by American forces in April 1945. Of those imprisoned, he was the only member of his family to survive.

Frankl wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1945 and meant to publish it anonymously, not wanting to earn literary fame or profit from his experiences (he was persuaded otherwise by friends). The main part of the book, "Experiences in a Concentration Camp," describes (with a kind of eerie, clinical detachment) day-to-day life in the camp: the train ride to Auschwitz, being stripped of all clothes and valuables, the smoke from the crematorium chimneys, the cold and hunger, the guards and the deaths and suicides—the utter despair.

And yet, interspersed throughout this section are bolts of light: the ultimate freedom, no matter what the guards did, to choose his response (referenced by Covey extensively); the power of love; the necessity of having faith in the future; the power of hope; and, most importantly, the necessity of finding the why of existence.

Frankl says: "Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, 'I have nothing to expect from life any more.' What sort of answer can one give to that? What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, fur-



Amazon rating: 4.7 out of 5 stars

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thermore, we had to teach the despairing men that *it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.*"

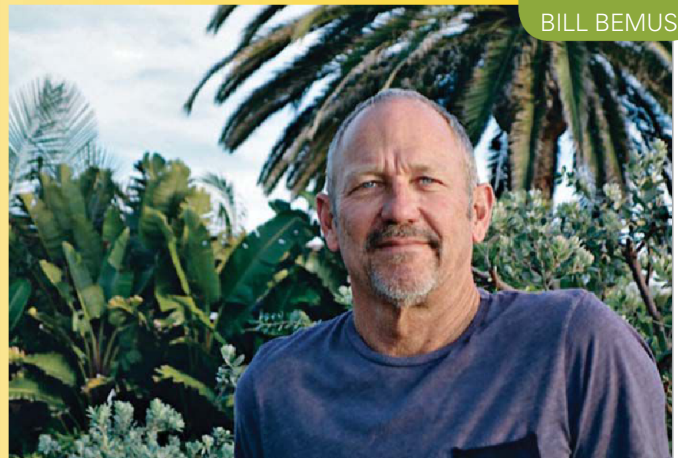
A second section to the book, "Logotherapy in a Nutshell," was added in 1962 in response to people wanting to understand more of his therapeutic doctrine. A third section, "The Case for a Tragic Optimism," was added as a postscript in 1984.

In this little book, the lessons and applica-

tions for any business or endeavor are myriad, but three in particular have been helpful to me as of late.

The first is to never give up or become hopeless in the face of adversity. Sometimes it feels like running a business—especially in California—is like playing solitaire. You start with a deck of 52 cards but the government removes a card from the deck every six months

BILL BEMUS



**“IN OUR INDUSTRY WE CREATE AND MAINTAIN BEAUTY, WE PROVIDE VALUABLE SERVICE TO OUR CLIENTS, WE PROVIDE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES; THESE ARE NOT INSIGNIFICANT THINGS.”**



## RECOMMENDED READING

or so and expects you to keep playing. That feeling of being victimized is unhealthy and needs to be resisted.

The second is to find or create meaning out of what seems to be mundane, day-to-day, trivial existence. In our industry we create and maintain beauty, we provide valuable service to our clients, we provide jobs and opportunities; these are not insignificant things.

Finally (and I will just quote Frankl here), "Don't aim at success—the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the byproduct of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: You have to let it happen by not caring about it."

When you reach a certain age (I'm 60) you begin to question what you've accomplished in life. Has it mattered that I've been here? Reading Frankl helped me understand that meaning and fulfillment are attainable without having to go far afield. Maybe it's moving past enlightened self-interest and into wholeheartedly trying to make a difference in people's lives; every businessman is connected to a lot of them.

## By Chris Joyce

### PRESIDENT

Joyce Landscaping,  
a \$9 million, full-  
service company  
Cape Cod, Mass.

**I tell anyone I know in business or any management structure, whenever we're talking about the frustrations of business, "You've got to read *Winning* by Jack Welch."**

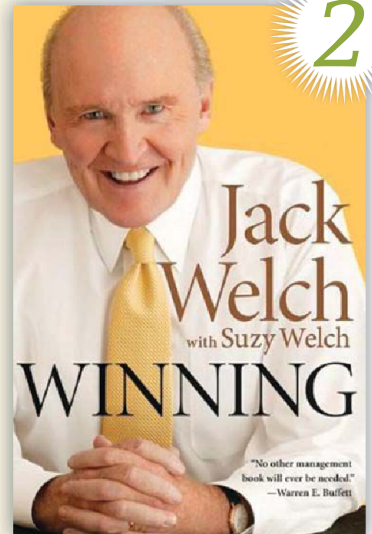
Welch is the former CEO of General Electric. He retired in 2001 and wrote a couple books. I think someone might have said to me, "You've got to read this book" or maybe I heard it on a news channel, but somehow I ended up with the book in 2007. That's when I read it for the first time. For me, who's not big into reading, it was riveting. I kept wanting more and more information he was discussing. I couldn't put it down. It doesn't get much activity anymore, though. I got lazy and bought it on CD. When I find myself in a rut I will throw it in my car and go through the discs. It energizes me.

I just love his approach and his stories. A lot of the stuff is human nature. It just represents itself differently. Basically, the title says it all. It's all about winning with people. In business you want to win and you win with people. It's simple.

The discussion on candor, which is in chapter 2, is probably the best chapter in the book. You have to have candid conversations with people. And that's probably our biggest challenge. Motivating people and understanding people is challenging. It gets frustrating at times.

He also talks about getting the right people on your team and how first you're the manager and then you have to be a leader yourself. You have to be a success individually before you can lead others. He breaks it up into your top 20, which is your top-end managers or your high performers. He delineates to your bottom 10, which you're going to push out of your organization, and then he says, "Your middle 70 is what you need to cultivate." Your middle 70 needs to be heard to be a part of the team. Instead of all decisions, policies and procedures being made from the top, he says to implement and develop a communication with

*continued on page 20*



**Amazon rating: 4.2 out of 5 stars**

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## RECOMMENDED READING

CHRIS JOYCE



*continued from page 18*

the middle 70 so they have a word and they have buy-in within the development of the business.

It made me realize I would constantly get frustrated with my middle group. After reading this book, it really made me open up my eyes and say: "That's human nature. That's what people are. Those people actually have a lot to offer." You have to cultivate those people through communication through your culture within your organization. The middle 70 is really what makes up your business. Successful, winning teams get the most out of their middle 70.

I find myself sometimes getting away from that (mentality) and that's when I have to revisit the book. I listen to it probably once a year when I find I have to kick myself in the ass a little bit. It actually is in my car right now.

—As told to Sarah Pfledderer

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