



CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

Wholesale Supplier To Landscape Professionals

Will you lead the change?

Two score and one years ago, I joined Christensen's and became an active participant in the metro Detroit green industry scene. I've also been an observer of the many changes that have occurred during my tenure. It has been fascinating to observe, as well as participate in.

The best and most succinct conclusion is - change will happen! The question is will you lead the change, follow the change, or resist the change and die. Each green industry owner or leader will decide. My question is how they will decide.



Within my segment of the industry - those that stock and sell nursery product - there have been many changes in the last four decades. Crazy growth of the 1970's in Plymouth, Canton, Northville, Wixom, West Bloomfield, etc. The bust of 1980 where sales plummeted 50% almost overnight. The entry of the 'corporate' nursery suppliers into the Detroit market. The addition of nursery stock producers near the SE Michigan market. Another 'bust' cycle of business in the 1990's to survive. Look at how all this has affected just my segment.

The customer has changed.

The 'boomers' are the ones that pushed the green industry forward. Those of us in the industry didn't create this, we just rode the wave of growth and success. The boomers created the 'landscaping expectations' within their neighborhoods and communities. God bless them!

Now the boomers are leaving the market, retiring. So how has that changed things? Here is one example. Up until the early 1990's, most landscape jobs were 80% green goods (trees, shrubs, sod, perennials, and annuals) and 20% hardscape (sprinklers, pavers, etc.). Presently, landscape involves 60 to 80% hardscape and the balance is green goods.

continued...



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Will you lead the change? continued

The market has changed.

Those that are following the boomers are not gardeners. They still acknowledge the 'landscape expectations' within their community but they don't want to physically work at it. They hire it done. They buy small lots, with big houses, to minimize their commitment of time and money to meet the 'landscape expectations'. They highly value and covet their time. Time - working outdoors on their yard isn't highly valued.



The green industry has changed.

Over the years, I've seen a number of landscape companies (both large and small) born; live a spectacular, short life; and die. Why?

There are many green industry companies that are started by good, solid landscape technicians that are not good at the game of business. They suffer from: not knowing what 'overhead' is; partners from hell; jealousy over money or power; inability to communicate effectively; rudderless, distracted leadership; taking all the money out of the company leaving a skin and bones corpse of a company; this list is endless. However, do you recognize any of these traits in your company or others in the green industry? Why?

Long term, successful, green industry companies possess many similar characteristics and traits. They are diligent in their management style. They are consistent in their goals. They have their 'heads up' and anticipate change. They keep good people within their company. They embrace and promote the entrepreneurial spirit within their company. They are good stewards of their resources. They know which customers are worth keeping and which customers to fire. They are not all things, to all customers. They understand the word 'NO' and when and how to apply it's use. They work. They work smarter, not harder. Why?

Change will happen!

And now I return to my original question - will you lead the change, follow the change, or resist the change and die?



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