

What About Me?

By Howard Eckel

Me, the employee! Most articles or seminars relate to the various aspects of business management: How profits can be improved, how to forecast and plan for the future.

What about the young arborist just getting started in his or her career?

What advice or counsel do you have for us?

In articles and talks I have concentrated for the most part on the business end of arboriculture, where I stress the need for strategic long-range planning. I am always mentioning to business owner/managers the old Yiddish saying: “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will do.”

The individual, whether he chooses one or not, will also travel a road during his lifetime. There is no reason individuals can’t use the same long-range planning format used by companies and major corporations to pick the right road for themselves. In fact I’d recommend it.

The rest of our lives can be left to chance or we can plan to influence the outcome. Trying to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life seems formidable to some. Planning for a future can be intimidating. However, most have an idea of what they want to do or like to do – at least this week. It is a starting point.

If picking a road to achieve a goal or dream is important for a business or individual, then a typical long-range strategic plan outline should work for either one.

A typical long-range strategic plan outline for a business or individual will address these steps:

- ▶ Define goals, dreams and objectives.
- ▶ Develop a Mission Statement. (Conduct and Ethics)
- ▶ Assess strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Define outside influences. (The environment)



Trying to figure out what you want to do with the rest of your life seems formidable to some.

- ▶ Develop strategies. (How you are going to reach your goals and dreams)
- ▶ Develop action plans. (Detail what you must do to make the strategies work.)
- ▶ Periodic review and adjustment.

Getting started: The dream

Define what you want to do with your life. Write down where you want to go with your career. What do you want to do for the next 30 to 40 years? Not being sure is okay. When we are young, there are many internal and external unknowns. It has been said that education is a lifelong process and you never know where that next great lesson will come from. As a result, it is very probable that when you are in your late 20s or early 30s you will change roads. Dreams and goals may change from your original choice. You may switch to another road. Most of us do. You will find the experiences gained will be useful in the future.

Mission statement

A typical mission statement for a business will include statements alluding to fair and equal treatment for employees, customers and vendors while pursuing a reasonable return on investments. Being good stewards of the environment is usually included. The mission statement for a business, especially those with multiple employees, is very important. I watched a corporate management team spend the best part of two weeks honing a one paragraph mission statement to reflect the way they wanted 3,000 employees to conduct themselves as they all traversed the same corporate road.

You, the individual, will have to debate with yourself as you develop and clarify a mission statement reflecting how you will behave and act as you travel down road you’ve chosen. Let me throw an “Eckelism” at you. “Lie to yourself and you will lie to anyone.” You have to be

It is very common for people to stay in activities they like and have an aptitude for. They are comfortable and happy. However, the pursuit of a goal or dream most always takes additional effort, knowledge and skill. The status quo doesn't get it done.

totally honest with yourself as you develop a personal strategic long-range plan. Otherwise the effort will fail. Honesty and integrity are a must in your personal mission statement. Look at the next step and you will understand why an honest assessment of how you conduct yourself as you pursue a future is key to success.

Strengths & weaknesses

The next step is an assessment of your strengths and weaknesses. What are you good at? What do you know? What don't you know? What needs more improvement and what weaknesses need to be overcome?

It is not a sign of weakness to raise your hand and say, "I don't know." It is a sign of strength! Second, please know that you won't overcome all your weaknesses. This second statement reinforces why corporations were created. Corporations assemble people representing the various expertise needed to address any and all tasks and problems that might arise. If you realize you will never master some skills, know it is okay to ask for help. Recognizing early on that you may never master a particular skill, but seek help, spells strength.

When reviewing skills you may lack, never overlook the basic qualifications and standards an industry favors or ultimately expects you to have.

Outside influences

Examine the environment you are trying to travel in. It sounds basic but I personally failed this criteria. I majored

in Nursery Management and minored in Landscape Design. Then I tried to make a living in Syracuse, N.Y. The average snowfall is something like 117 inches per year. Throw in rain and I had just 22 weeks where I could make a living for the 52-week year. Not a good environment! I relocated to Massachusetts and pursued arboriculture. Massachusetts is 98 percent covered by trees. People value trees there and are willing to take care of them – a good environment in which to make a career.

Environment should definitely include the employment vehicle you pick to travel the road. Can you hone and expand skills and knowledge to attain your dreams with this vehicle? This decision should not be made before you have in-depth discussions with your employer. Most will encourage and help you expand your skills as it is to the benefit of both parties.

Strategies

At this point the long-range plan requires patience and discipline. It is very common for people to stay in activities they like and have an aptitude for. They are comfortable and happy. However, the pursuit of a goal or dream most always takes additional effort, knowledge and skill. The status quo doesn't get it done.

You have defined your dream and goals in life. You have honestly assessed your strengths and acknowledged your weaknesses. The next step then is to fully understand what your goal or dream demands in terms of requirements. Meeting these additional requirements will involve developing specific strategies.

Just what does a specific strategy encompass? Could be enrolling in adult education course or a two- or four-year college program. It could involve an on-the-job apprentice-training program under a qualified crew leader combined with the training aides and tapes available from TCIA. You may chose to subscribe to "Cornell Recommends" or the county and state agricultural bulletins. Again, do not lie to yourself or avoid the difficult choice.

Actions plans

After determining your strategies, multiple action plans may be required for each strategy. The "how, what, when and

where" are organized in detail. Just how you accomplish each strategy is detailed. Taken as a whole, you may be buried in action plans. Borrow a technique from business. They rank and prioritize their weaknesses, leaving them to develop strategies and required actions by importance. Undertake the most critical



62" Large Rotating Grapple

Along with continuous rotation, our patented frame design out-performs the others! Add a hydraulic winch and you have the ultimate tree service tool - Stan Ogletree - President.



Patented Design (D-406,655)

Large Grapple Opens 3" to 62"
Mini Grapple Opens 3" to 54"

360 Degree Continuous Rotation
8,800 lb. Safe Working load
Universal Quick Attach
Standard Hydraulics

Optional: 9, 12 or 15 K. Hyd. Winch

**THREE GRAPPLE MODELS FOR
LARGE, SMALL & COMPACT LOADERS**

54" Mini Rotating Grapple

800-457-4613
www.beaversqueezergapple.com

Please circle 8 on Reader Service Card

The 7 Irrefutable Rules of Small Business Growth

By Steven S. Little



Starting a small business and making it a success isn't easy. In fact, most small businesses fail. This book presents the straight truth on small business success. It doesn't offer cure-alls – but outlines real, effective principles for

small business growth and success. If you're a small business owner or an entrepreneur, you'll find answers to all your most important questions on topics such as technology, business plans, hiring and much more.

Product code: SBG_BK

Softcover, 256 pgs.

Price: \$18.95 (Member: \$15.95)

Call 1-800-733-2622 or order online at www.tcia.org

weakness first. A frank conversation with your current employer may help you prioritize. Lay out a step-by-step action plans with a timeframe. Work to master the material then move on to the next subject area. Dodging the issue for any reason won't get it done

Periodic review and adjustment

Finally, do not fail to review your efforts periodically and compare your progress to the timeframe you originally set up. I'll bet your employer would be more than happy to work with you and give objective evaluations. Working in a seasonally influenced business such as ours makes periodic reviews easy to schedule.

Every 13 weeks ask yourself:

What have I learned?

What have I observed?

What mistakes have I made?

Take corrective action as required. Only you can do it! Action plans with realistic

timeframes tend to avoid procrastination. If you are a procrastinator, don't go into business for yourself. In fact, if you are not a self-starter, don't even start the planning process.

Always remember one of the great things about the profession of arboriculture is that there are many avenues available to you within the profession as you gain knowledge and experience. Production, supervision, sales, accident control, field training and management positions are all available to the willing. Everything you have taught yourself will be of use. I don't say it is easy. It will take self-discipline and extra effort. However, your dream is worth it.

Work safely.

Howard L. Eckel, a consultant and coach to the green industry, is retired executive vice president and general manager of the Davey Tree parent and Canadian companies.



The Most Trusted Name in Forestry Equipment

Exceeding Expectations Since 1970

NEW AND USED FINANCING AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE DELIVERY

<p>1993-1999 GMC & FORD DIESEL AERIAL LIFT OF CT. 50' WH. INSPECTED, PAINTED</p>	<p>2001 GMC 4700L ST400 DIESEL, 21,256 MILES, 7 SPEED, 14 RANGER, 60' WH.</p>	<p>1991 GMC CAB DIESEL, 17,815 MILES, 6 SPEED, AERIAL LIFT OF CT. 50' WH.</p>
<p>1994 GMC 484, 200 EPI GAS, FRONT WINCH, ALTEC LR-8, 60' WH, POLY ENGINE.</p>	<p>1991 GMC, GMC, FORD DIESEL & GAS, 14' & 16' CHP BOXES, PAINTED.</p>	<p>1992 FORD F350, 484, DIESEL, REBUILT TRANS, FRONT WINCH.</p>
<p>LOG LOADERS BUILT TO YOUR CUSTOM SPECS.</p>	<p>1991 GMC, CAB DIESEL, 10 SPEED, REBUILT ENG. JOHN 78.</p>	<p>NEW AUTHORIZED TAMMRAULF DEALER, WOOD SPLITTERS/PROCESSORS.</p>

The equipment shown above is only a small sample of what you can find at Mainka Enterprises

For the highest quality equipment from the name you can trust, call:

Mainka Enterprises
800-597-8283
www.mainkaenterprises.com

<p>1996 JOHN DEERE 290, JOHN DEERE DIESEL, 12" CAPACITY.</p>	<p>1996 JOHN DEERE 851, PERKINS DIESEL, 12" CAPACITY.</p>	<p>1996 JOHN DEERE 2400, 200 HP DIESEL, 18" CAPACITY.</p>
--	---	---

Please circle 26 on Reader Service Card