



**Hazeltine Nurseries
Venice, Fla.**

President:
Stephen Hazeltine

2007 Revenue:
\$19,000,000

Founded: 1983

Service breakdown:
21% maintenance
63% design/build/installation
16% irrigation

Client breakdown:
15% commercial
85% residential



Executive Tip:

"Focus on one priority at a time. Create processes and procedures to control your daily work load. Look to join professional management groups to network with other CEOs." – Stephen Hazeltine

DOING MORE WITH LESS

With a focus on efficiency and daily review of profit and loss statements, Hazeltine Nurseries has doubled revenue without increasing manpower.

Stephen Hazeltine is a rare example of a landscape contractor whose business actually grew in the midst of the current housing slump. With sales up 47 percent from the first quarter of 2007, the president of Hazeltine Nurseries in Venice, Fla., knows how to make the best of a bad situation. "Not to go against the grain, but the slowdown in the housing market has done nothing but help us," he says. "It forced us to look in other directions to see what we could take on to keep things rolling."

Part of what helped Hazeltine Nurseries thrive during the housing slowdown was the addition of more commercial landscape work to its service menu. But Hazeltine credits most of the company's recent success to its new focus on efficiency. By streamlining processes and keeping a close eye on details, Hazeltine Nurseries has grown from \$8.5 million in 2001 to \$19 million in 2007 – all while working with the same 140 employees. "About seven years ago we were doing less than half the work we're doing now with the same amount of people and just felt we had no control over where our company was going," he says. "By focusing on efficiency we realized we could get a heck of a lot more work done with same amount of people, and our revenues have gone up drastically."

One task that has encouraged this growth is the review of profit/loss statements on a daily basis within each company division. Each day, a spreadsheet figures the amount of profit based on the level of job completion, then gives an option to correct any loss before it becomes a lost job. "If we're doing a 10-day job, we'll know two days into it if we're profiting or losing," Hazeltine says. "That gives us time to streamline or revise the job before it's lost."

To help employees adapt to the changes within the company, Hazeltine staff partook in a 25-hour, on-the-clock training program. The training started with the company supervisors and worked its way down to the crew members until every employee received the same training. While it was difficult to devote one hour each day for 25 days to training, Hazeltine wanted to establish and implement the new efficiency standards as soon as possible. The program is expected to result in a 50-percent efficiency correction by the end of the year, which Hazeltine says is well worth the investment. "We didn't like doing it the way we did because we know how much people cost to operate," Hazeltine says. "But we knew the return would be staggering."

Establishing such defined processes and procedures is what Hazeltine says grew his business to where it is today. Keeping everything on track is the next step. "After 25 years in business we finally realized we had to take control of what was happening around us in order to grow the way we wanted to," he says. "It took too long to get here, but it's our past experience that has pushed us to move forward." – Emily Mullins



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