

large sums on building the fields but do not provide the resources necessary to keep them healthy and high performing.

What advice do you have for green industry professionals who want to become influential leaders themselves?

Schattinger: I have never had the goal of becoming an influential leader. My objectives were largely focused internally. How could we redefine our small part of the world in a way that would provide our customers new, better and healthier alternatives? How can we build a team that is willing to focus long-term and resist convenient compromise? What independent organization can we partner with to push us to meet ever higher standards? What suppliers can we work with that share our vision and our passion?



How do you feel that you influence other industry professionals?

Gardner: As trite as it sounds, actions always speak louder than words. First, I'm humbled that people in the Green Industry believe I'm influential. That being said, when you run any non-profit like Project EverGreen or the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA), you have to take the passion you have and instill it in others. Having been involved in non-profits for more than 25 years, you learn in a hurry that to compel people who are extremely busy in their own careers and businesses (especially today) to take those steps above and beyond for the good of the industry takes extraordinary diligence. I've always said it's not about me, but about how the people I work with every day react and innovate positively to today's challenges. That's the measuring stick by which I like to look at influence.

What do you feel has been your biggest contribution to the green industry so far? And what do you see as your role in the future of the industry?

Gardner: I'm from the Midwest. We don't spend a lot of time thinking about our biggest contributions. I'm too busy paying the mort-

gage, helping my adult-age kids (and grandkids) survive in this economy and finding the right door that leads to retirement at the right time. I'd suggest starting organizations like TOCA and Project EverGreen from scratch and seeing the hundreds of volunteers believe in the missions of those groups has made it all worthwhile. It's as simple as that.

Who has influenced you both personally and professionally?

Gardner: If I begin to recite that people in the Green Industry who influenced me, we'd run out of space. So I'm going to make this personal, which is how it should be from my perspective. Four people: My parents, who taught me that humor and smart work and a never-ending drive to be the best I could be left an indelible mark on my entire life. My brother, Dan, oftentimes known to my friends in this industry as my evil twin, for teaching me to always look for the good in people, even when it's at its most difficult moments. And my wife, Sandy, who constantly reminds me through her words and actions that there is nothing you can't do with the right attitude and belief in yourself.

Tell us something about yourself outside of work (hobby, sport or other personal interest) that influences your approach in your professional career.

Gardner: My hobbies are golf and music. I'm a bogey golfer who's always looking for that first hole in one and breaking 80. It's the most humbling, yet exhilarating sport I can imagine. It's like life: one good shot, one bad shot, two good shots, three bad ones—you get the picture. Every golf shot isn't the best, but as long as you try to make it your best, that's all that matters. And that goes for life's challenges as well.

And then there's music. I've been playing in a rock/blues/jazz band since high school. We wanted to start a band in high school, so we did. We needed a drummer so I said I'd be it. As an adult, a group of us decided to start another band (about 15 years ago). So we did. We did a Christmas CD to raise money for Project EverGreen and raised more than \$8,000 of clear profit for the organization. Thank goodness I have lots of friends who bought the CD. If you ever see the band play, I'm the schmuck in the back trying to keep the beat on my drum set. This also is similar to my goals in life: keep the beat and don't let anything get you too jazzed up that you miss the good notes.

What dreams do you have for the industry? What change(s) are necessary to make those dreams a reality?

Gardner: Dreams for the industry and changes needed to make it a reality? That's simple. Quit running your companies and organizations and associations with blinders on and look for the greater good of the Green Industry. Yes, that's very simplistic. A good friend of mine from a major Green Industry company likes to say that when Project EverGreen gets together for a board meeting, 35 people leave their "hats" at the door. We frankly don't have enough of that today. Many people wear their own hat and don't take it off unless absolutely necessary. That's got to stop.

We live in a great country with great resources and green spaces that are the envy of the world. Let's take all that's good in this industry and channel it to consumers with one positive voice. None of us has all the answers for what ails us. We can, however, turn the tide in our favor by using end-users throughout the green industry to be a conduit to consumers to show the professionalism of the industry.

I'm almost 60 years old. I've seen it all—well, at least quite a bit. And the best part is the brightest people in our industry have the wherewithal to shape consumer attitudes in a positive way. Will it happen overnight? Impossible. But you have to start somewhere and without starting we'll never get it done.

What advice do you have for green industry professionals who want to become influential leaders themselves?

Gardner: On my desk is a sign that reads "You can accomplish anything." Let's face it. I can't. But I can sure as heck try. I try to run about 15 miles per week; I use the word "run" loosely. If I get up at 5 a.m. each morning and run two or three miles, I've accomplished something for the day. My day's complete no matter what else I do. I'm only half-kidding.

My dad worked 7 days a week his whole adult life; he owned two businesses at once and had a 6th grade education. Boy, did he accomplish something every day. He had no choice. But he taught me you can accomplish anything every day. So whether it's something fairly insignificant like jogging a couple miles a day or creating a new product to revolutionize the industry, go for it. Failure's not an option and is overrated anyway, folks. Define your life each day and get after it.