

RETROFITTING YOUR BUSINESS

Article by Robin Westmiller
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With a little imagination, you can transform any backyard into a tropical “vacation” paradise that can be enjoyed without having to pack a single suitcase.

NEW—that one little word creates a sense of excitement like none other. When you are asked, “What’s new?” the last thing you want to say is “Nothing.” People are naturally drawn to the newest hi-tech gadgets, new store openings and new restaurant menus. Why should your company be any different?

Look around. What services are you performing that are old and outdated and should be replaced with new and exciting ones? More importantly, what aspects of your current or potentially new client’s landscape can you identify as being ripe for change? Performing the same services year after year might keep your business surviving, but incorporating new and exciting programs will help make it thrive.

Just ask Bill Kisich owner of Inspired Landscape Creations, Glendale, Arizona, who has reinvented himself and his company more than once since he began his career.

“Fourteen years ago, I started installing irrigation systems for homeowners in the Phoenix area, which is notoriously hot and dry. They were so pleased with my work, I was constantly being asked what I thought of their yards and to suggest plants and other material for them to install. So I started designing landscapes in addition to irrigation. Then, the recession hit and he was forced to downsize. Kisich noticed that the one division of his landscape company that suffered the least was irrigation. “When we weren’t installing big, new impressive irrigation systems with the landscape contracting side of the business, we began doing some very nice retrofits, taking existing systems and making them much more efficient.”

Understanding that some of his clients might not be able to afford the cost of an entire system, Kisich began to design his plans in phases. “The clients become very excited when I show them that they don’t have to install an entire landscape or irrigation system all at once. We put together a three to five year plan that we can do in phases. I’ll draw up the plans that show which part is installed first, how it connects to each phase, and how it can be purchased over time. We’ve had a great deal of success with our phase plans in the area of retrofitting.” “I believe beautiful landscapes can be functional and sensible. Balance is the key,” Kisich says. “One of the most exciting things I’ve been doing is working on my own irrigation program to reduce people’s water bills with the existing system they already have. Most of the time, the homeowners’ water rates are high simply because they’ve been irrigating improperly for years.”

According to another landscaper, Marcus Kerske of Gardens of Babylon in Nashville, Tennessee, approximately two years ago, they began a new landscape division called the “Personal Farmer.” “Our crews go out to the homeowner’s property and replace parts of their backyard landscape with cedar timber-framed raised-bed gardens. We offer our clients a selection of planting vegetables, fruits, herbs or installing compost bins. This spring has been a busy one with a demand for our vegetable gardens.

One other landscaper, Tommy Todd owner of Tommy Todd Landscape & Design, St. Petersburg, Fla. decided since homeowners were creating livable outdoor environments, they would offer their clients lighting and fireplaces to create an outdoor leisure area. There are a number of modular exterior fire products, including barbeque islands, fire tables, fire pits and fire urns, which create an exotic feel.

Reinventing yourself can be as simple as adding a word to your company’s name.

