

GreenSheet



RUPPERT
LANDSCAPE

Employee Newsletter

4th Quarter 2012

Planning for Our Future

By Chris Davitt



Simply put, a strategic plan outlines where an organization intends to go over the next few years or more and how it plans to get there.

It serves as a guide so that all employees are aware of the company's journey

and can play an active role in confirming its direction or suggesting an alternative. At Ruppert, we undertake this process in great detail every three to four years, and have just completed our next Five-Year Plan that will take us from now through 2017. The process involves an audit of our strengths and weaknesses, both of which offer us opportunities for improvement and help establish the threats to accomplishing our goals. By being aware of where our strengths lie, we are better able to capitalize on them; and by knowing what challenges we face, we are better able to mitigate any issues they may cause. Our ability to be introspective and use this knowledge to our advantage enables us to become more competitive, which helps to make our company stronger.

The benefits of strategic planning are far reaching...building consensus and ownership in the company's direction, ensuring that the company's resources are prioritized and used effectively and efficiently, assisting with benchmarking performance and stimulating change. For employees, it's good to know that Ruppert is constantly performing self-audits...measuring ourselves against our plan, making adjustments based on market changes and internal suggestions received, and looking for new and improved ways we can meet or exceed the goals we've set. That information should be being shared throughout your branch

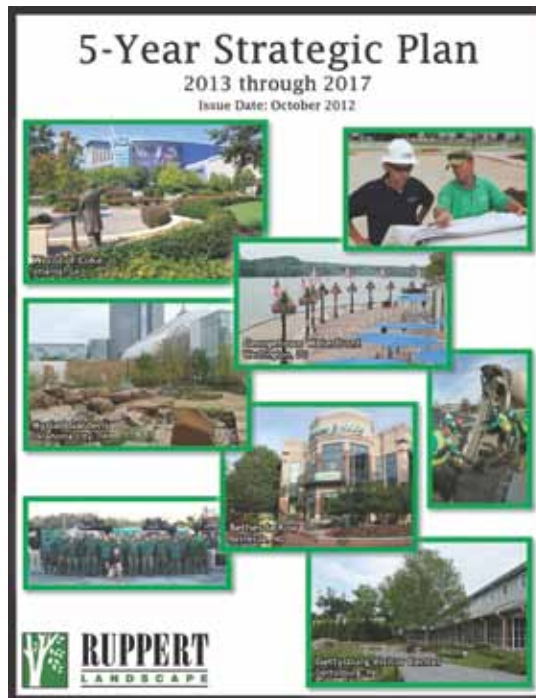
and will be covered more comprehensively at Management Development Day in February. For our customers, the value is great as well as they are the ultimate judge of our success.

By knowing what we offer and where our strengths and challenges lie, our customers can put us to better use in areas where they have needs. Although a strategic plan isn't something that's commonly shared with customers as an ordinary practice, we are willing to share our plan's principles because there is benefit for all.

A few of the initiatives from our Five-Year Plan include:

■ **Growing in the markets we already serve without expanding geographically.**

We feel there is significant opportunity for growth within our existing markets. This approach should make us more efficient, eliminating start up cost investments and increasing market density. Increased density enables a quicker response time and more effective pricing, both of which make it easier for us to become a customer's vendor of choice.



Branch Locations

continued on page 2

■ **Becoming an employer of choice.** Employee motivation and management has been one of our company's strengths over the years yet we believe there is opportunity to become significantly better. We want to continue our ability to attract the best and the brightest as we grow and motivate and make happy the team members we already have. This is an ongoing challenge and we are looking at it from all angles including seeking employee feedback, reevaluating and expanding our benefits and compensation programs, providing increased training and training topics, and looking at other organizations that do this well and replicating their ideas. So we'll be continuing to look at ways that we can exploit that strength, which will provide us with a strategic advantage over our competition.

■ **Focusing on innovation.** Innovation has been one of our company's values for many years. It's important because it aligns with our desire and that of our customers to find cheaper ways to provide a better product. By having innovation as a more visible part of our company, it reminds us that we're on a never-ending quest to provide more for less. It also supports another of Ruppert's fundamental principles that it's everyone's responsibility to provide input and look for new and improved



methods and products that will add value. You'll be hearing more about this and we'll be promoting it more because it supports two critical parts of the business: efficiency and employee involvement.

■ **Planning for succession.** This aspect is new to our Five-Year Plan as it's the first time we have managers reaching retirement age. The broader concept of hiring your replacement and training them to succeed you within the organizational structure is something we've always advocated. Whether a byproduct of retirement or growth, succession planning is something we'll formalize more to ensure the company gets stronger. The new twist is that there is also another generation of owners coming into the company, which involves a new level of planning, structure, development and rules and we're well on our way with that process. The energy we are putting into this process ultimately refines our people development skills and practices which should bring benefit to all employees.

There are dozens more initiatives that have the potential to expand our service offering to our customers, expand the training we provide to our employees and much more. If you're interested in learning more, please ask the manager for details about our Five-Year Plan.

Hopefully the ideas shared here will peak your interest and we'll look forward to rolling out the entire plan in February at Management Development Day.

The Benefits of Sound Advice

In late October, Ruppert held a meeting of its advisory board. The board, which was established nearly 30 years ago, provides the company with independent advice and support on its direction and goals. Our advisory board, which meets twice a year, brings with them experience in a variety of industries including banking, retail, commercial real estate and transportation. But perhaps more importantly, they add an objectiveness obtained by managing businesses that are far larger than ours and an overarching perspective on business, industry and the economy.

After presentations about each of our divisions and several corporate departments and a review of the Five Year Plan, there were discussions on strategic

planning, sales and marketing plans, branding, personnel management issues and the economy. This learning forum allows our organization access to an independent view of our company, which can only come with a distance from day-to-day operations; a venue in which to discuss issues of major significance; and advice on strategic issues or risks confronting the business.

We appreciate the ongoing support of our advisory board and to all who participated!



Maryland Landscape (MDL) hosted its annual Thanksgiving Feast for all of their employees. Each employee was given a turkey for their families to enjoy on Thanksgiving and years of service recipients were honored.

Georgia Landscape (GAL) successfully wrapped up their Tanger Outlet project in Galveston, TX. Since July, about 20 Georgia team members were working in TX, and they were welcomed back with a special appreciation luncheon upon their return in October.

Ruppert Acquires The Watchman Group

Ruppert has recently acquired The Watchman Group, Inc. based in Kensington, MD. The company specializes in project management and site development and is focused on sports field and golf course development; including building structures, site infrastructure and wastewater treatment facilities. The Watchman Group has built a reputation as being a customer-focused company that provides quality, high-end results. Company founder, Jim Wachter, has joined Ruppert as a Senior Project Manager.

“Not only will this bring more opportunities through our door, but it brings a level

of value-added services to our existing customers,” said Chris Davitt. “Jim brings over 30 years of industry experience and we have worked with Jim over the years in a consulting capacity and as a special project manager on several of our largest projects. We are thrilled to have him as a full-time addition to our team.”

“After having had the opportunity to work with Ruppert on many technically challenging projects, I have been impressed with their eagerness to perform the work at a high standard and with a level of detail that satisfies their customers and results in a superior product,” said Wachter. “The more

we worked together, the more obvious it became that our philosophies were aligned and that a long-term partnership would enable us to continue to produce high-quality work on a larger scale. I couldn't be happier to be a part of the Ruppert team and I am looking forward to the new opportunities that working with Ruppert will bring.”



Jim Wachter

Ruppert Hosts Industry Event

On September 27, Ruppert hosted 75 industry professionals at our corporate headquarters. The day-long event, known as “Face to Face” was sponsored by industry veteran turned consultant Jim Paluch. The event brings together company owners and managers from all over the United States who visit organizations and use them as a case study. Ruppert agreed to be the case study and our team shared information on the company's business practices, systems, people development initiatives and charitable giving practices. After brainstorming sessions, peer discussions and presentations on both sides, industry attendees and the Ruppert team had substantive takeaways that could be applied and/or used to refine their organizations processes, procedures and business systems. Thanks to all who participated!



Ruppert team members, **Chuck Whealton** and **Reid Altavilla** shared information on Ruppert's fleet and equipment with attendees in one of the group give and take sessions.



Over 75 industry professionals from all over United States attended the “Face to Face” event.

Preparing for Winter Weather

By Phil Key



As we head into the winter season, it's important to start thinking about winter weather and the preparations we can make now to ensure that we're ready. The 2013 Almanac is predicting that temperatures on the East Coast will be much colder this winter, meaning we'd better be prepared for snow and ice.

If you'll be out performing snow removal for your job, consider the following:

- Dress appropriately. Have your full compliment of your company uniform including sweatshirt, knit cap, and water resistant jacket. Unless they are treated with waterproofing, the standard leather work boots aren't going to keep your feet dry so consider investing in an inexpensive pair of waterproof boots preferably with a removable liner. In addition, waterproof gloves if you'll be out in the cold for several hours and wear layers of clothing to keep warm (you can always take it off). Also bring a change of clothes and an extra pair of socks in case you get wet.
- You should be bringing your lunch with you to work and since it's impossible to predict storm duration and intensity beforehand it makes sense to pack an extra meal. Working in cold weather burns a lot of energy so pack foods high in carbohydrates.
- Be sure your vehicle and equipment are in top operating order: full tank of gas, windshield wiper fluid filled, wiper blades checked and replaced if worn,



Ensure your vehicle is in good working order before the start of a snow event.

tires checked for good tread and proper inflation for maximum traction and anti-freeze levels at capacity.

- Get proper rest prior to a winter weather event. Snow removal is hard work and can be longer than normal shifts and odd hours. When you're out plowing or shoveling snow, be sure to have constant discussions with your boss about road and jobsite conditions and how you and your crew are holding up.
- Be sure you have your snow binder in your snow box. The snow binder contains guidelines on our processes and procedures; emergency contact information for Ruppert team members, customers and vendors; and individual plans for each jobsite.
- Review equipment operating procedures for snow blowers, salt spreaders and plows to ensure that you're up to speed with operation, maintenance and safety procedures well before a predicted weather event along with testing all equipment for proper operation.
- If your snow blowers or other power equipment are stored on site make sure you have starting fluid and a set of jumper cables/extra battery to get them started in cold weather.

In addition to personal and vehicle preparedness, be sure you're talking to your customer well in advance of the first weather event to develop a plan for their site. Waiting until the last minute makes it harder to plan and increases the likelihood that there will be miscommunications and misunderstandings. Consider the following as you help your customers prepare:

- Have a detailed conversation with your customer, setting expectations and parameters around when and where to mobilize. Consider things like whether your customer wants their property treated differently on a holiday versus a weeknight versus a weekend or at different times of the day; if there are critical areas that need to be designated to be kept clear at all times versus areas that can build up and be removed later; if there are specific expectations for properties with multiple tenants; setting

parameters around expectations with regard to weather forecasts prior to an event and after an event relative to refreezing as well as on-site time. These considerations will help ensure a good plan and one that is more cost effective for your customer.

- Use site maps to designate where snow should be piled and to measure square footage so you can establish a set application range and project costs.



Come up with your "A" plan for normal events and a "B" plan for more extreme weather events, which could include designating additional parking lots for snow or removing snow from the site entirely. Be sure to mark critical landscape areas where snow shouldn't be placed to minimize damage to landscape.

- Thoroughly inspect a site, looking for uneven concrete grades, manhole covers, speed bumps, and other areas that aren't plow friendly. Use snow stakes to mark obstacles. While there is an expense associated with this and some customers don't find them visually acceptable, they offer a great deal of protection and value when plowing a site.
- Make sure drains are open and that designated snow pile areas take into consideration runoff and the potential for refreezing, to minimize hazardous conditions.

Storms can be unpredictable so even with an ample dose of forethought and planning it is critical that you keep your customers informed of current conditions and intended action to meet the property's needs.



As we prepare for whatever the upcoming winter holds, increasing the communication and preparedness at all levels makes sense. Internally, we should also be thinking about coordinating with the landscape construction group to ensure that we have the necessary resources to assist if/when winter weather hits. The more planning and discussion we have within our ranks and with our customers, the better able we are to do our jobs and do them safely. For all of you that service our customers and are away from home during these snow events, we truly appreciate it. More importantly, our customers rely on you, and you always do a good job! Thank you and please do your part to help us stay safe and be prepared!

Typical contents for a snow box, prepared in conjunction with your shop manager, include: snow binder, windshield wiper fluid, antifreeze, transmission fluid, motor oil, hydraulic fluid, WD40 lubricant, white lithium grease, windshield de-icer and scraper, funnel, an assortment of fuses and a loaded grease gun.

Career Opportunities

Looking to move up the ladder or know someone in the industry seeking a position? Ruppert Landscape has the following positions immediately available:

Landscape Construction

VAL – Production Manager (1),
Field Manager (1), Driver (1)

Landscape Management

BAM – Area Manager (1),
Field Manager (2),
Summer Intern (1)

FRM – Enhancement Field Manager (1)

GAM – Field Manager (2)

GVM – Field Manager (2),
Asst. Field Manager (3)

LAM – Field Manager (2)

LOM – Enhancement Manager (1)

RIM – Area Manager (1),
Field Managers (1)

For more information or to apply, please contact the branch noted.

Ruppert Named ABC Metro Washington Subcontractor of The Year

In a ceremony held at the McLean Hilton (VA) on September 20th, The Associated Builders and Contractors' of Metro Washington and Virginia Chapters named Ruppert Landscape its Landscape Subcontractor of the Year in their 2012 Excellence in Construction Awards program. This is the eighth time Ruppert has received this award that is given by the associations' general contractor community to the subcontractor that maintains the highest standards for quality and craftsmanship on award winning projects.

"Teamwork and cooperation between general contractors, specialty contractors and material suppliers are prerequisites for building excellence into any construction project," said Metro Washington Chapter President Debra A. Schoonmaker. "The awards competition and awards, such as Landscape Subcontractor of the Year, serves to raise the level of construction standards throughout the industry by recognizing the workmanship of those who contribute and by showcasing the results of their dedication."

Bob Jones, Vice President and Director of Landscape Construction for Ruppert noted that the ABC award is one of the most meaningful honors a company can receive because the nominations and selection come from the contractors themselves. "It's gratifying to know that we have met or exceeded many of our customers' expectations and pleased to have been selected and recognized with this award."



Shown left to right are team members **Shane Carmadella** (MDL), **Angela Howes** (VAL), **Ken Thompson** (VAL), **April Rose** (VAL), and **Drew Dummann** (VAL).

Community Service

*“A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small bundle.”
~ Benjamin Franklin*

The **Georgia Landscape (GAL)** branch has been involved with several charitable efforts over the past couple months; **Paul Brooks (GAL)** and **Michael Brierley (GAL)** participated in the 9th Annual Charity Golf Tournament to benefit the Special Olympics of GA. Also, **Will Saxby, Zac Czapko, Patrick Luzier** and



Paul Brooks joined JE Dunn Construction's Dunn Run 5K, which benefits Kidz2Leaders, Inc. The Kidz2Leaders program focuses on changing the lives of prisoners' children in the metro-Atlanta area through mentoring and leadership to help break the cycle of incarceration. The program has worked with 400+ kids over the past 12 years.

The **Forestville Maintenance (FOM)** branch helped renovate the landscaping for the Pregnancy Aid Center located in College Park, MD. The job included installation of new plant material, transplanting existing material, debris removal, limbing up trees for better clearance and installing a river cobble drain. The center offers support to women and newborns in Maryland.

Many employees from the **Baltimore Maintenance (BAM)** branch made the trek to Point Pleasant, NJ to assist with Hurricane Sandy relief efforts. They brought with them clothes from a client-led drive at Park View Columbia, and food and cash donations for St. Gregory's Pantry, a local community food bank that serves the greater Point Pleasant area. The **BAM** team, lead by **Brandon Simmons**, included **Scott Distasio, Patty Pescrille-Brockmeyer, Wes Fouse, Chris Mawn, Erich Schupp, Josh Lawson** and **Jenn Rodriguez** also brought along family and friends to help. The group assisted at two homes, removing three feet of sand that had washed in with the storm. All participants were struck by the enormity of the need and how long the rebuild will ultimately take. They are

planning on continuing their efforts to assist. If you're interested in participating, please contact BAM.

Baltimore Maintenance also hosted a food drive benefiting the Moveable Feast program, which prepares and delivers nutritional food to people living with HIV/AIDS and Breast Cancer in the greater Baltimore area and Maryland's Eastern Shore.

The **Georgia Maintenance (GAM)** branch joined forces for a second year in a row with the Elaine Clark Center to help sponsor their annual Hustle for Hope fundraiser. **Syed Ali** and **Eddie Barron** both participated in the 5k run. The Elaine Clark Center serves children and young adults with special needs.



BAM Sandy Hurricane Relief efforts



FOM Pregnancy Aid Center Renovation



GAM Hustle for Hope

Major Milestones

A HEARTY
CONGRATULATIONS
AND BEST WISHES:

JUST MARRIED

Matt Jones (RIM) and his wife, Niccole, were married on October 6, 2012.



Niccole and Matt Jones



Regina and Joe Brydges

Regina Brydges (RIM) and her husband, Joe, were married on September 29, 2012.

Carl Weber (LAM) and his wife, Alicia, were married on November 17, 2012.



Carl and Alicia Weber



Brittney and John Cericole

John Cericole (PAM) and his wife, Brittney were married on October 20, 2012.

Wes Fouse (BAM) and his wife, Lindsay, were married on July 28, 2012.



Lindsay and Wes Fouse

Tim Depp (RAM) and his wife, Candace, were married on September 29, 2012.



Candace and Tim Depp

NEW HOMEOWNERS

Kevin Wetzonis (LAM) & **Michelle Ridings** (RAM) purchased a new home in Raleigh, NC.

PROUD PARENTS



Brennan and Chase Holtzinger

John Holtzinger (FRM) and his wife, Jamie, welcomed twin boys, Brennan and Chase, on September 7, 2012.

Jack Jones (FOM) and his wife, Allie, welcomed their first child, Lane Robert, on October 17, 2012.



Lane Robert Jones



Landon Curtis Facemire

Curtis Facemire (LAM) and his wife, Mary, welcomed their first child, Landon Curtis, on November 16, 2012.

Rafael Rodriguez (GAM) and his wife, Ashley, welcomed baby girl, Nalivah, on October 16, 2012. Nalivah has a big brother, Elijah, who is three.



Nalivah and Elijah Rodriguez

Matt Orr (GVM) and Melissa Ellstorm welcomed their first child, Lucas James, on September 13, 2012.



Lucas James Orr

OVERACHIEVERS



Charles Tankersley and Will Saxby

As part of their personal fitness goals set at the beginning of the year, **Charles Tankersley** (GAL) and **Will Saxby** (GAL) ran the Atlanta Marathon together on October 28th. Earlier in the year, Charles ran two half marathons and Will ran a half marathon in August. As an added bonus, The Atlanta Track Club (ATC), who hosted the marathon, donated \$132,125 to the 23 local nonprofit organizations.



Manuel Lopez

Manuel Lopez (LOM) earned his U.S. Citizenship on November 17, 2012.

Perry Greto (PAM), **Saul Magana** (PAM) and **Jeff Kostas** (PAM) all earned their Certified Landscape Technician (CLT) certifications.

Laytonsville Maintenance (LAM) was recognized with several Montgomery County Beautification Awards for their on-going work on Bethesda Row, Rockville Town Square, Human Genome Sciences, United Therapeutics, Jewish Community Center and the Silver Spring Metro Plaza. The branch also earned an LCA Grand Award and a PLANET Merit Award for Bethesda Row.

Movin' OnUp

Each employee should know that we are committed to his or her growth and development." ~ Ruppert Values, p. 2



Shawn Nestor



Eric Long



John Cericole

Shawn Nestor

(LAM) was promoted from Crewman to Field Manager and **Eric Long** (LAM) was promoted from Crewman to Asst. Field Manager. **John Cericole** (PAM) was promoted from Shop Mechanic to Shop Manager. **John Holtzinger** (FRM) was promoted from Field Manager to Enhancement Manager. **Christina Ridings** (CORP) was promoted from A/P Specialist to a Branch Administrator position for the Frederick Maintenance branch.



John Holtzinger



Christina Ridings

John Holtzinger (FRM) was promoted from Field Manager to Enhancement Manager. **Christina Ridings** (CORP) was promoted from A/P Specialist to a Branch Administrator position for the Frederick Maintenance branch.

Movin' Sideways

Kevin Wetzonis (LAM) transferred to Raleigh Maintenance and will continue his role as Enhancement Manager while **Dan Trocher** (FRM) will take over the Enhancement Manager position for the Laytonsville Maintenance Branch. **Michelle Ridings** (FRM) transferred to Raleigh Maintenance to continue her role as Branch Administrator. **Jonathan Medina** (PAM) has made the move from Crewman to fill the role of Shop Mechanic.



Kevin Wetzonis



Dan Trocher



Michelle Ridings



Jonathan Medina

NewFaces

WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING NEW LEADERS TO RUPPERT'S GROWING RANKS:



Eric Bross
(LOM)
Bus. Developer



Freddy Coronel
(LOM)
Field Manager



Logan Eschbach
(PAM)
Field Manager



Melanie Haynes
(RIM)
Branch Admin.



Jack Hendrickson
(BAM)
Field Manager



Walter Hoggard
(RAM)
Field Manager



Michael Jones
(GVM)
Bus. Developer



Mark Kaercher
(CORP)
Gen. Ledger Acct.



Mark Lipscomb
(BAM)
Asst. Field Mgr.



Joe Maes
(GAL)
Estimator/Proj. Mgr.



Santiago Rios Ayala
(LAM)
Asst. Field Mgr.



Chris Quinn
(PAM)
Field Manager



Jayme Whatman
(CORP)
Executive Asst.

A warm welcome to our new crewpersons:

Nicholas Balderson (LAM)

Tyler Bargmann (LAM)

Tyler Bourque (LAM)

Nicholas Brennan (GAL)

Wilfredo Gonzales (LAM)

Al Hammill (PAM)

Laine Waitman (PAM)

Nathan Webber (LAM)