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I’ve always loved history. I can’t count the number of enjoyable hours I’ve spent in my lifetime reading about military campaigns, inventors, monarchs, philosophers and statesmen. My roommate in college was a history major, and I would often neglect my own studies to read his textbooks instead.

So it has been a great pleasure to spend some time in the TCIA archives in preparation for the association’s 75th anniversary. One of the ways we can honor our founders is by remembering who they were and how their struggles to launch a new professional organization still guide our efforts today. By examining their stories and learning how they struggled to succeed, we gain a better understanding about our current challenges. By discovering who they were, we discover the spirit that contributed to the advancement of modern arboriculture.

In any long-standing institution like TCIA, there are significant figures we acknowledge for their prior contributions to tree care. It is an honor for those of us still working on the mission of TCIA to recognize that our work owes a debt to members in the 1940s, fifties and sixties. Without them, we could never have achieved so much. As I study the contributions of the early members of the association, I am struck by their determination, hard work and faith.

The phrase “we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us” is repeated often because it’s true. Anniversaries are a good time to take stock of who we are as leaders of organizations and where we learned the facts we hold as true. Without slighting our parents or teachers, much of this comes from writers, mentors, business owners and association volunteers who preceded us.

We plan to honor these elders in 2013. Aside from celebrations, TCIA would like to use this occasion to reflect on our history and 75 years of accomplishments.

Ideas or movements or organizations develop over time. When we join a cause or a company or an association we draw on the work of others. We owe it to those who came before us—arborists, inventors, researchers, competitors, trainers and teachers—to produce new ideas that advance the mission of modern commercial arboriculture. Even if those new ideas are a radical departure from the way things were done before, we still owe a debt to those who tried something and perhaps failed, because they help us avoid similar false steps.

What a humbling privilege it is to lead an organization with as rich and rewarding a history as this one. In 2013, we ask you to celebrate with us. Send us copies of your company histories, photos and documents. Share your memories of the people who helped you along your journey. Your history is important to preserve and understand for all of us.

Mark Garvin
Publisher
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Superstorm Sandy has slipped from everyday headlines, but for those in the tree care industry in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, the event remained in the news in late November and early December, even as the Pacific Northwest was being pummeled by 50- to 120-mph winds and up to 10 inches of rain.

For many more months, cleanup crews will be dealing with the mess left by Sandy, which came ashore in the New York-New Jersey area October 29.

The fact that the region rarely sees tropical-type storms, not to mention storms of this magnitude, is punctuated by the reality that 125 people were killed in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and more than $60 billion in damage had been recorded including damage to upward of 200,000 homes, according to Associated Press reports. The Associated Press reported in mid-November that utility companies in New Jersey had counted more than 113,000 downed trees, New York city more than 10,000 and many more thousands on Long Island. The numbers do not include other hard-hit areas such as Connecticut, Maryland, New York state and the Midwest through to the Canadian border that also felt Sandy’s fury.

In the past we’ve reported after the fact on other disasters such as the May 2011 tornados that all but leveled Joplin, Missouri. This time we reached out in the midst of the cleanup to TCIA members willing to share their experiences.

We heard a variety of anecdotes, including the typical ones of impatient customers unaware the phones were down and the roads were blocked and one (also heard in the wake of the Joplin tornados two years ago) of a customer wanting a written estimate, for a tree he had taken off his house himself, so he could make an insurance claim.

What was it really like on the front lines?

Ray Woytas, owner of 39-year TCIA member Greenwood Tree and Lawn Care Services, which services north Jersey, says everything started the morning before the storm hit. His business is about 80 percent residential with a significant amount of golf course work in the North Jersey area. More than a month after Sandy struck, Woytas still was running as many as eight three-person crews from sunup to sundown, although things had “calmed down” after the first two weeks.

Initially, he says, “We found extreme damage. Ours is a 40-year-old family business. My father and my uncle, now out of the business, say they have never seen anything like it. It was the worst-ever storm to hit New Jersey. We tried to prepare early that Monday, then sent everyone home telling them we would contact them when the storm was over. By 9 a.m. the next day we were up and going,” Woytas explains.

“The biggest challenge was the volume of work. Accessing the job the first week was also a challenge. It was so difficult to negotiate the neighborhoods and hard getting information out.” He explains that customers would call his office, getting no response since power was out for the first days after the storm. Eventually, he says, using computers to run the office, workers were able to get messages and emails.

“The sheer volume of calls was difficult to deal with,” Woytas adds.

He says, as did others interviewed, that the first order of business involved chain...
saws, bucket trucks and lifts. “We were not chipping at first, just trying to get trees off of houses and driveways to give people access to their homes. We had to leave the debris for later. It was a slow process,” Woytas recounts. Lift-wise, Woytas’ crews employed as many as four Altec trucks and one Teupen mini aerial lift.

A month into the effort, Woytas says his crews were heading back in with boom-equipped log trucks to clean away large debris and were running eight chippers nearly full time. “We’re running Morbark and some older Bandits,” he says. “We used everything we had, even in reserve.”

When asked what equipment he would have liked to have, Woytas says, “Employees. Good employees are hard to come by. With more, we could have done more work.” Other than that, Woytas says, a crane, which the company occasionally will subcontract, would be useful in storms, but that his business is not geared for tree removal, and a crane would be a large expense that would not fit his business model.

As far as new customers and finding new ways to make money from the storm, Woytas says his company had more than enough work from existing customers. Additionally, he says that the better wood from the storm cleanup has gone to sawmills in New York and Pennsylvania at a very limited cost or no cost. There is so much material that the market is glutted. “Chips we take to nurseries; we are just trying to get rid of it all as we can.”

When asked what he might do differently, Woytas says it would be to improve power backup at the main office to communicate better with customers.

When asked what recommendations he would make to other TCIA members, he says, “Make sure your equipment is ready. Don’t leave something sitting around and think you will never use it again. Make sure EVERYTHING is ready to go.”

The experiences were about the same for Kevin Wyatt, CTSP, arborist with accredited, 15-year TCIA member Emerald Tree Care, located in Scarsdale, New York. Emerald is a full-service residential, commercial and municipal business, which also does work with New York City and Central Park.

“We did one VIP house (that of a long-time, famed TV talk show personality) whose Westport home right on the shore required a 130-foot, 70-ton crane to clean up 35 damaged trees,” Wyatt says. “For the storm, we mostly took care of our own clientele,” he explains, even if that is “Mrs. Murphy who has us in to prune her apple tree. We did, however pick up business through referrals, and we expect those to turn into long-term customers. We’ve taken the information and put it in our database so we can revisit all properties we did work on.”

What he and the crews found were complete areas impacted by intense wind shear and one swath of destruction of about a quarter-mile wide where “any tree of any substance was torn out of the ground or snapped off,” Wyatt recounts, because, “Inland, on the uphill rises is where the...
wind really picks up. On the leeward side (opposite of the wind direction) there was mostly crown damage,” he adds. “On the northeast sides of hills is where the winds picked up velocity, peaking at the hill crest where everything was knocked over. Most were larger trees, maples and oaks that still had foliage, plus evergreens like Norway spruce and white pine.”

Challenges for Wyatt began about five days prior to the storm. “Calls started coming in Wednesday and Thursday before the storm calling for preventive work. (The storm hit the following Monday.) We worked the morning of the storm and did two removals. We laid the trees on the ground and will come back later. When the weather went south that morning, we called in the trucks and rode it out,” Wyatt continues.

“Calls started coming in Wednesday and Thursday before the storm calling for preventive work. (The storm hit the following Monday.) We worked the morning of the storm and did two removals. We laid the trees on the ground and will come back later. When the weather went south that morning, we called in the trucks and rode it out,” Wyatt continues.

Wyatt says he’s had three 75-foot Altec bucket trucks out every day along with a log loader as well as renting and using a 70-ton crane just about every day for the first few weeks. He says he would not purchase one because, “If I had a crane I would have to be doing regular takedowns, and our business is tree maintenance and preservation.” Also, he purchased two additional Bandit brush chippers, which have been in continual operation.

When asked what additional equipment he would like to have in the wake of this event, Wyatt says his equipment already matches what his company does. “I can’t focus on the storm to make investments. It was a blip in the screen. It happened, we handled it and will go forward,” he notes.

Wyatt’s process for the cleanup was this. “Do an assessment. There were trees in front and behind homes, along hills and in lakes. Assess accessibility and what equipment you can get to the jobsite safely, expeditiously and economically. The bottom line is always staring you in the face. Some jobs you can get to with a crane. Others are impossible. It took drawing on 30 years of experience to put it all together and get the jobs done,” he explains.

“It’s all about training and experience. With long days you can’t negate fatigue. Customers and employees may be anxious to get the job done, but my workers need safety and rest and to get fed,” he explains.

One of the problems that occurred was gas stations not being open, which made national news. “Fortunately, we had stockpiled fuel previously, so when power went out, we continued on without a blip.”

What recommendations does he have for others faced with emergency work? “Plan your work and work your plan. Natural disasters seem to be coming more frequently, so be prepared like the Boy Scouts. And, never, never lose sight of your clients. They are the bread-and-butter people who call on a regular basis. You are not in the business
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for the quick buck but for the long haul. Keep your relationships with your clients above the rest,” Wyatt concludes.

Don Vona is the owner of Dion’s Tree Service in Howell, New Jersey. When we talked, he and his six-person crew had been working grueling days, seven days a week for five straight weeks, getting home after 8 p.m. Their business is “mostly residential, with some builders and homeowner’s associations and a little local commercial. We cover Monmouth and Ocean County New Jersey, normally from east to west,” Vona says.

For the storm, “We focused on our town and the towns around us where most of our regular customers and recommendations come from,” he notes.

He says, “The snow damage from the nor’easter (that followed Sandy) was worse than the hurricane. Any trees with old leaves on them were torn up because the snow stuck to every available spot. And the weight of the extra heavy snow pulled the trees right out of the ground, stumps and all.”

The biggest challenge was, of course, the amount of tree damage “and the fact that we were without power for 12 days straight. We’re in the neighborhood, which is helpful and unifying, but running a business by cell phone and extension cords while confronting all these emergencies was certainly a challenge,” he recounts.

“The bucket truck has been essential for the massive amounts of trimming broken, hanging branches,” he adds. The company is coping with the existing chipper capability, but he says they could have used another bucket truck or two.

“We are leaving a majority of stumps to come back to when things calm down some,” he adds. In hind sight, is there anything he would have done anything differently? “I’ve been doing this for nearly 30 years,” Vona says, “The old way has worked pretty well so far.

“We haven’t taken deposits on jobs we’ve gotten because they’ve been too difficult to schedule. It makes the customer more comfortable and it gives us a little leeway if they call to complain about how long they’ve been waiting. They can’t say we’ve taken a deposit and not come back to do the work,” he notes.

“We’re giving our best price possible right off the bat because we haven’t the time nor the energy to haggle, and there’s no winning when a customer calls to say you’re competing against three kids from Missouri who just knocked on the door or one who asks you to match a price from a service we’ve never heard of and are pretty sure doesn’t have insurance,” he continues.

“I don’t mean to overstate the obvious, but initial response time is crucial. I had many customers tell me I was the first and/or the only service to call them back. When the power was out and the phones were down I changed the office voicemail to include my cell phone number and suggested customers contact me via text message to expedite contact,” he concludes.

Salt damage a residual factor

Ken Almstead is both CEO and a practicing certified arborist with 36-year TCIA member Almstead Tree and Shrub Care Co., a full-service tree care company founded in 1964, now with five locations and 125-employees in the tri state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

“There were two storms,” he says. “Most of the tree failures were along the coast. Our clients experienced severe flooding with 100-year waves and erosion. Sea walls and front yards were flooded or washed away.”

Continuing, “A lot of the trees and turf were impacted by the salt (from seawater). Evergreens, especially pines, were decimated on their northeast side. They’ll be brown on that side and green on the opposite side,” he adds. “Who knows if they will make it in the spring. Flooding also caused turf erosion, and a lot of turf is also brown from the salt.”

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failures, trees fell pointing southwest (a function of the strong northeast winds). Some trees that fell had defects, but most were full uproots, with huge root plates as much as 15-feet high and 20-feet across. Trees most prone to it were pin and red oaks and lindens, plus some tulip trees. They usually were with rock outcroppings and featured a shallow root system.”

Almstead says a lot of trees came down on houses. “We rent cranes, not own. We had cranes operating, three or four a day for a month, taking trees off houses and out of precarious situations. At first, we were making things safe. Now we are into managing the wood left behind… and the uprooted stumps.”

He says the unusually warm weather has helped recovery efforts, as about 100 of his employees remain in the field for 10 to 12-hour work days. “We’ve just started pulling back on that,” he says.

Almstead notes some interesting situations. “We had to rent a 225-ton crane to take a 110-foot hickory from the back of a house. It weighed 20,000 pounds after taking out the canopy, and we took it over the house, which was 120 feet away.”

“Then there was another uproot in Riverdale with lots of rock outcroppings. This one involved a large maple that uprooted along with a 6-ton boulder. The house has a glass façade downhill from the boulder. We had to rig a mechanism of winches and a 20-ton jack to get at the root plate.” Had the boulder broken away, Almstead says, “it would have taken out a quarter of the house.”
After Hurricane, or Superstorm, Sandy blew through at the end of October, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg was reported to have told a major newspaper that 7,000 trees had been knocked down in city parks.

“Stay away from city parks,” he said. “They are closed until further notice.”

Four weeks later, after tree damage never seen on this level before in the city, the Department of Parks & Recreation had reopened all the parks in four of the five city boroughs. NYC Parks was able to restore order thanks in large part to outside tree care companies, many TCIA members, that the city contracts with in emergencies.

“We use these vendors to help our own crews to help us get this done much quicker,” says Matthew Stephens, director of street tree planting for the Department of Parks & Recreation that oversees trees on sidewalks and in the parks.

“We ended up in the first week with 15,000 to 27,000 formal tree enquiries through our 311 line. Before this we had maxed out at 10,000, so this was basically two-and-a-half times bigger than anything that we’ve ever had before,” Stephens says.

The department had two emergency contracts in place, with Lewis Tree Service in West Henrietta, N.Y., and Dom’s Tree Service, Port Washington, N.Y., both TCIA members. The contracts call for the companies to supply bucket trucks, chippers and personnel. Once a storm occurs, the department makes an assessment of how much tree damage there is. In this case, fallen trees had closed city streets, destroyed homes, downed electrical wires and crushed cars. The department sets priorities according to safety issues – trees blocking the streets, trees that are still standing but about to fall, then utilities, then trees on cars.

“A good example is just how quickly they mobilized. To show up with 30 to 40 crews in 24 hours is nothing short of impressive. It’s mind boggling,” adds Stephens.

“The tree care companies that came in, for them it wasn’t just about responding to a storm, but it was people trying to help other people in dire circumstances,” says Matthew Wells, NYC Parks director of tree preservation. “Crews did an amazing job of taking that responsibility very seriously, and they were some of the few people who could help the homeowners and help get the city back to normal as quickly as possible.”

For many years, NYC Parks didn’t use contractors because it didn’t need to – it has its own bucket crews – and for budget reasons. Emergency crews are expensive. But in the past three years, a 2010 tornado in Queens, Hurricane Irene in August 2011, a major snow event, then Hurricane Sandy changed that approach.

NYC Parks relies on vendors when the work is much greater than it can deal with and that it has to have done right away, even though it has lots of additional help from various agencies such as the state Department of Transportation, the city sanitation department and the U.S. Forest Service, to name a few.

In terms of numbers, Sandy required 110 contract crews in the city, 35 bucket crews, 17 log loaders, four cranes and, perhaps most importantly, additional stations to work solely on chipping wood debris. Workers hauled most of the chips – and other debris – to a central location on Floyd Bennett Field, a former airport (where Amelia Earhart once launched record flights) and now a park with a central location in southeast Brooklyn. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) is currently working with the Army Corps of Engineers on the debris management task – some of the wood is being chipped, such as unprocessed logs, branches and stumps.

Thousands of trees were lost in parks, all of which, as the mayor announced immediately after the storm, were closed for safety reasons.

Says Stephens, “We have 600,000 street trees, we lost 10,000 trees. We have 2 million park trees; it gives you an idea of how much potential damage we had. It would have been very unwise to let people in.”

Wells notes that city contractors have to meet certain requirements, such as having liability insurance, a certified arborist on staff, and following ANSI standards.

“We need to know they can do the job in a safe manner,” he says. “We have to approve the subcontractors as well. We’re not just allowing anyone to show up and do tree work for us; that’s a risk for the public.”

NYC Parks offers two-year contracts...
Cities Look for Quality as Well as Speed in Contract Work

As with many municipalities, the Plymouth, Minnesota, Forestry Department relies on outside contractors for storms. Although Minnesota does not get the ferocious coastal storms, it does get damaging ice storms and the occasional tornado. Two years ago, a tornado 6-miles by 6-miles, bounced through the city.

“In 10 minutes after it cleared, we were already contacting the company we had contracted with. Right away, they said ‘yes,’ and were right there. It’s very helpful. At that moment, you don’t know how many areas are hit because the tornado bounces around,” says Paul Buck, city forester for the city of Plymouth, a suburb of about 70,000 people outside Minneapolis/St. Paul.

“We contract with only TCIA-accredited contractors for regular tree removal and trimming. We also have used them for storm damage. After storms, we contract equipment and operators at an hourly rate to supplement our city streets staff.” That hourly rate is as opposed to charging for the size of the tree or an hourly bucket and chipper rate.

“Our contract removals are based on dollars-per-diameter-inch while the trimming is based on dollars-per-hour for a bucket and chipper. In a storm situation, per tree unit pricing would be impractical as well as more dangerous to measure each damaged tree.

“In a storm situation, we shift the payment to a dollar per hour rate on contractor equipment (replace chipper with clam truck (log loader truck) along with grapple skidsteer and dump trucks) and operators,” says Buck.

Quality is key, even though it may hamper the city getting enough contractors.

“As part of our contract last year, we added that you had to be a TCIA-accredited company to bid on our contracts. Only six could even bid on it, so it limits you on one hand. But, on the other hand, one of the nicest things I’ve noticed, between the two of us (Buck and a co-worker) who work in the forestry department full time, we don’t have a lot of questions, or complaints, because the companies can (answer those) and explain what they’re doing.

“We may pay a little more but we get a lot of professional work out of it,” says Buck. “It saves us those calls, explaining how the tree is going to be removed. You can’t quantify that. It’s a huge relief when you’re in that kind of setting. Speed is of the essence, getting roads and parks open, and not having to go back to explain to each resident what is going to be done,” says Buck.

For the contracts, the Forestry Department requires insurance, a certified arborist on staff, and TCIA accreditation.

“We were looking for some kind of standard, to increase the professionalism. When TCIA said it had its new program (Accreditation), we wanted to show that we were getting the best companies for the money we spend. Also, as a municipality, you can’t just recommend one company to a resident. We haven’t done licenses within the city, so this is another tool; it takes the burden off the city. At some level, we can endorse them,” says Buck.

The city contracts out large trimming and removal jobs to companies that are big enough to have the equipment or can get ahold of it. For storms, the city doesn’t have the equipment to load and haul everything out. The equipment would just be sitting around waiting most of the time.

“My crew is mostly seasonal kids. We might take down some 8-inch elms in a park where there’s nothing around. Anything above that we leave to the professionals,” says Buck.

that can be extended for one year. Within that contract, specifics call for types of equipment used – for instance the bucket crew requires three workers, the chipper has to be of a certain size matched with a bucket truck.

“We do supervise the tree work in the field,” says Wells. “A supervisor will be checking the work, telling crews what work is needed and how to do it. If they’re not (doing proper work), they’re told what they’re doing wrong and, if they don’t listen, they might be asked not to work the job. That’s very rare, of course. Most people know what we need.”

The city issues payments to contractors’ crews on a unit rate, based on what is supplied, i.e. a bucket crew is paid so much for an eight-hour day. With a per-day rate, there is no incentive to remove more trees than necessary, he notes.

One tool that has proved valuable for tree removal is the city’s computer/software system, Storm Mobile. Parks Information Technology staff developed Storm Mobile in the past year and a half; Sandy was the first large event where park personnel used it. The new system allows for quick inspection, an upload of a work order into a hand-held computer for those in the field, and an accurate dispatch, so crews aren’t just “wandering around.”

“Most of it can be done live in the field,
LEGACY.

FOUNDER GARY VERMEER WOULD OFTEN FLY HIS PLANE TO PERSONALLY SERVICE MACHINES AND DELIVER PARTS.

SUPPORT AFTER THE SALE. At Vermeer, earning your confidence is not a pursuit we take lightly. That’s why you can count on your local Vermeer dealer for experienced service technicians and genuine Vermeer parts throughout the life of your machine. From periodic maintenance to keep your asset in peak condition, to advice on tooling and accessories for your next project, Vermeer experts are a call, click or text message away. To learn more, talk to your local dealer or log on to vermeer.com.
inspection to closing the work order. It allows us to be in real time, inspecting and closing work orders,” key to such a large municipality, says Wells, so that timely progress reports go to the key players such as the mayor, FEMA, and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM).

“Storm Mobile was designed, developed and tested within Parks. It’s been one of the most revolutionary IT projects we’ve developed in-house and we’re already looking to develop Storm Mobile 2.0, with a few adjustments for user interface as well as developing interfaces for the utility companies and other agencies within the city that help with storm efforts,” says Stephens.

Storm Mobile fits well with the city’s Office of Emergency Management. “Before the storm, we sit in that big room with fire, police, utility, sanitation, DOT – we’re all there ready, and can start coordinating operations,” says Stephens.

As of press time in early December, the work was hardly over, even after 24-hour shifts and 1,200 Parks Department officials and staff involved.

“We still have 50 contract crews working for us, that’s four weeks after the event. We hope we will be done in about another two weeks. We’re finished in the boroughs of the Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island, but Queens there’s still a lot to do,” says Wells, including mountains of paperwork to be submitted to FEMA for reimbursement.

Another way the contractors help is with Asian longhorn beetle management. In 1996 the city established quarantine zones for the beetle. The emergency response has to be in compliance with the Department of Agriculture’s directives for wood disposal in large areas of Queens and Brooklyn.

“The contract crews are good at taking that seriously as well; the debris has to be cut to a certain size, trucks need to be cleaned. It adds another level of difficulty,” says Wells.

So what have they learned from this storm?

“In the long term, we consider all of the specified things that didn’t go as planned, so in the future we are better able to respond, it’s less of a surprise, and we can anticipate where the response is needed,” says Stephens.

“The longer term issue is how we manage the urban forest. We need to think carefully about what we’re adding. That’s a very long-term goal.” For example, Parks will not be planting any Norway or silver maples, or pears in the future.

Recently NYC Parks launched a program to do young tree pruning.

“We have started a young tree pruning program that specifically targets those trees that have been planted for three years or longer to ensure the new trees structure is developing well with hopes that intervention at a young age will lessen any increased maintenance down the road.”

“When Sandy came around, we were so much further ahead of the game, because of the tornado and Irene. Even though it was large, having managed the other storms took out a lot of stress,” says Stephens.

One strategy or protocol Parks uses is ForSE, Forestry Storm Emergency. The idea is to continue to train for that document, using hand held computers, to keep people up to date with the protocol and procedures so that, “When we see a storm coming, it’s just a matter of getting into position,” says Wells.

One quirky aspect both Wells and Stephens agree on is that, in the aftermath of Sandy as Park officials repair sidewalks and replant trees, they have to deal with the tree fear factor.

“When trees fall, there can be a bit of hesitance on behalf of the property owner to have a new tree planted. Especially if the tree that fell caused property damage – the ‘it could happen again’ syndrome. Nonetheless, we go to great lengths to ensure site preparation is optimal and the right tree is chosen for the right spot to ensure it is long lived and any risk of tree failure is minimized as the tree grows to maturity,” says Stephens.

“We can show we can deal with tree damage quickly and effectively, and that makes a big difference,” says Wells. Part of that is due to the city’s TCIA contractors, who step into the fray after a storm, responding quickly and responsibly.
Introducing the Bandit Revolution™ cutterwheel system. Experience for yourself what the Revolution cutterwheel can do for you! From amazing chip containment that cuts time and money out of your stump removal project, to the exclusive design that allows for reduced wheel wear and superior cutting. The Bandit Revolution™ is the wheel of the future! Now available for tow-behind, self-propelled, or any other stump grinding applications from all manufacturers.

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**Spyder Manufacturing ArborBall**

The ArborBall from Spyder Manufacturing is a cutting edge health and fitness device using gyroscopic technology to produce centrifugal force equal to 35 pounds of torque that provides a great workout for the wrists, forearms and hand gripping muscles. This intense workout is not only fun, it’s perfect for developing every muscle tree care workers use in their arms on a daily basis, according to the company. The ArborBall is from a line of Pro Tools that, according to Spyder Manufacturing, a TCIA associate member company, have been approved by doctors and therapists for helping tendonitis, carpal tunnel and dexterity, increasing range of motion and vastly improving rehabilitation time. Add it to your daily routine and you won’t even realize you’re doing physical therapy, they say. Use it to increase hand-eye coordination, rope pulling muscles and wrist strength. It’s a portable gym, so just keep it with your gear and use it any time, any where.

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**Tigercat articulating carrier**

Tigercat’s newly designed AC16 articulating carrier is four-wheel drive with powerful traction effort for towing applications and tough terrain. The durable carrier, which can be mated to a Tigercat 234 or 250 series knuckleboom loader, is completely fabricated by Tigercat and uses robust, forest-duty components that are standard equipment on many Tigercat machines. The axles, brakes and transmission are common to the company’s drive-to-tree feller bunchers. Optional circle saw slasher hydraulics are available and a log bunk will be optional. The loader can be separated from the carrier if required.

Circle 92 on RS Card or visit www.tcia.org/Publications

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**Stihl MS201T chain saw**

Designed for tree trimming professionals looking for fuel-efficient, reduced-emission equipment, the new, top-handle Stihl MS201T chain saw uses advanced engine technology to reduce engine emissions to a remarkable 70 percent less than the previous model. In addition, the MS201T delivers 20 percent better fuel economy, providing longer run times between refueling, and an improved filtration system allows for 30 percent longer operation between filter maintenance. All this plus additional power. The MS201T is designed with user comfort in mind, featuring improved ergonomics to reduce operator fatigue, including reduced vibration. For “in-tree” cutting, the top-handle design provides good balance and is ideal for use in the confined conditions of “in-the-tree” work. The Master Control Lever from Stihl, a TCIA associate member company, provides easier starting, operating and stopping.

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**Loftness Tree Hammer**

Part of its VMLogix line of vegetation management equipment, Loftness’ new Tree Hammer is powered by a reliable PTO drive and cuts and mulches material up to 10 inches in diameter. The Tree Hammer is 101 inches wide with a cutting width of 80 inches. It is designed for tractors with up to 260 PTO horsepower and a Category II or III three-point hitch. The unit can be pushed or pulled behind a tractor to cut, mow or mulch material. The 21-inch rotor is mounted on 3-inch pilot ed bearings with anti-wrap protection. The rotor is available with fixed teeth or individually mounted hammers, which swing 360 degrees on double-tapered rolling bearings. A row of stationary teeth optimizes cutting performance, and a mulching door can be hydraulically opened or closed according to the application. To help prevent flying debris, the Tree Hammer 360 comes with steel deflector chains. Other standard features include a PTO shaft with slip clutch, a four-groove banded belt with spring-loaded tensioner, and adjustable skid shoes. Options include a shear bar, dual-belt drive, six-groove banded belts, and a hydraulic tree-pusher bar. Loftness is a TCIA associate member company.

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Yale Cordage takes part in international breakfast

Bill Putnam, president of Yale Cordage, custom and specialty rope manufacturer and TCIA associate member based in Maine, participated in Governor Paul LePage’s International Breakfast, hosted by the World Affairs Council of Maine and the Maine International Trade Center December 11, 2012, in Portland, Maine.

Putnam served on a panel to discuss his experience as one of the 13 Maine businesses and organizations that recently accompanied the governor on a trade mission to China, which matched Maine businesses with Asian importers and distributors to increase exports.

“Yale Cordage’s participation in the mission provided for a continuation of our strategy of global sales growth and will show positive results for 2013,” says Putnam.

Samson names new VP of sales, expands facility

Samson, performance rope manufacturer and TCIA associate member, named Joe Mazzacano vice president of sales and marketing effective January 1. Mazzacano has been with Samson for 14 years as vice president of finance, a role that has included responsibility for Samson’s marketing department. Samson has experienced rapid growth and Mazzacano’s knowledge of Samson’s worldwide distribution network, end users and market trends provide a solid foundation for this new role.

“Joe’s depth of experience in marketing and finance combined with his strong knowledge and leadership as a long-time member of our executive team will enable him to lead the organization in achieving its next phase of growth and business development,” said Tony Bon, president.

Samson also announced a major expansion of its Ferndale, Washington, manufacturing facility and corporate offices. The new space will significantly expand the Research and Development Department facilities while providing additional lab and manufacturing space.
Events & Seminars

January 7-10, 2013
Advanced Landscape Plant IPM PHC Short Course
Plant Sciences Bdg, U-Maryland, College Park, MD
Contact: (301) 405-3913; akeoiman@umd.edu

January 9-11, 2013*
Northern Green Expo 2013
Minneapolis Convention Center, Minneapolis, MN
Contact: MNLA MTGF; www.NorthernGreenExpo.org

Brainstorming Seminar with Jim Huston
Courtyard Marriott, Orlando, FL
Contact: tiffany@jrhuston.biz; visit www.jrhuston.biz

January 15-16, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
Ellicott City, MD
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

January 16, 2013*
A300 Integrated Pest Mgt. (IPM) Practitioners Summit
Embassy Suites, Buena Vista, Orlando, FL
Contact: Bob Rouse (603) 314-5380; rrouse@tcia.org

January 17, 2013*
Connecticut Tree Protective Assoc. Annual Meeting
Aqua Turf Club, Plantsville, CT
Contact: www.CTPA.org; 1-888-919-2872

January 22-23, 2013
NJ Plants-Professional Landscape & Nursery Trade Show
New Jersey Convention Center, Edison, NJ
Contact: www.NJPlantShow.com

January 27-28, 2013*
New York State Arborists Annual Conference
Crowne Plaza, Suffern, NY
Contact: www.nysarborists.com

January 27-29, 2013*
Wisconsin Arborists Association Annual Meeting
Green Bay, WI
Contact: www.waa-isa.org; exhibit Jeff (262) 538-1900

January 27-29, 2013
Brainstorming with Jim Huston
Iron Horse Resort, Winter Park, CO
Contact: tiffany@jrhuston.biz; visit www.jrhuston.biz

February 4-7, 2013
2013 Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course
Marriott City Center, Newport News, VA
Contact: (757) 523-4734; www.mahsc.org

February 6-8, 2013*
New England Grows
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Boston, MA
Contact: www.NewEnglandGrows.org; (508) 653-3009

February 10-12, 2013
Ohio Tree Care Conference
Dayton, OH
Contact: www.ohiochapterISA.org; (614) 771-7494

February 13-15, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
Lansing, MI
In conjunction w/ five-state tree climbing competition
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

February 17-18, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
Arcadia, CA
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

February 22, 2013
ISA Exams (All Exams & Tree Worker Written/Skills)
Lansing, MI
Contact: (517) 337-4999; www.asm-isa.org

February 24-26, 2013*
PennDel Shade Tree Symposium
Lancaster, PA
Contact: www.penndelisa.org; (717) 412-7473

February 27 & 28, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
McConico Building, Round Rock, TX
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

February 27-28, 2013
19th Annual ELA Conference & Eco-Marketplace
MassMutual Center, Springfield, MA
Contact: www.ecolandscaping.org

March 6-8, 2013
The Work Truck Show
Indiana Convention Ctr., Indianapolis, IN
Contact: 1-800-441-6832; www.ntea.com

March 20-21, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
Hilton Garden Inn, Bradley Int’l Airport, Windsor, CT
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

March 24-26, 2013*
Southern Chapter ISA Annual Conference
Memphis, TN
Contact: www.isasouthern.org

April 12-14, 2013
Midwest Urban Tree Care Forum (MUTCF)
Chicago, IL
Contact: www.midwesturbantreecareforum.com

April 17-18, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
West Palm Beach, FL
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

May 7-10, 2013*
Western Chapter ISA Annual Conference
Indian Wells, CA
Contact: www.wcisa.net

May 16-17, 2013
Certified Treecare Safety Professional/CTSP Workshop
Lansing, MI
In conjunction w/ five-state tree climbing competition
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

June 9-11, 2013*
Trees Florida
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Contact: www.treesflorida.org

July 31-August 1, 2013
PANTS Penn Atlantic Nursery Trade Show
Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: (732) 449-4004; www.pantshow.com

November 14-16, 2013*
2013 TCI EXPO Conference & Trade Show
Pre-conference workshops Nov. 13
Charlotte, NC
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; dcyr@tcia.org

* Indicates that TCIA staff will be in attendance
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You ready to PARTY!!! This month TCIA kicks off its 75th anniversary celebration. Founded in 1938 as the National Arborist Association, the name changed to the Tree Care Industry Association in 2003. While our records go back to the beginning, they are not always complete. For instance, in the photo at right, we know who H.M. Van Wormer is because a notation on the back of the photo identifies him, but it does not ID any of the others in the picture, whom we can guess are fellow Board members and their wives (as there were no women on the original Board).

So one thing we will be doing as part of the anniversary events is asking you to help us put names with the faces in many of our older photos, starting with this one. We have begun posting these photos online at www.tcia.org, where you can view them and email us via 75th@tcia.org with IDs.

Another thing we would like to do is ask you to share your memories, anecdotes and photos of the people/characters, events, equipment and/or practices from the past 75 years and we will post them on the website or share them with TCI readers.

Those memories will also help us put together a set of timelines showing the significant events, achievements and milestones that have occurred over the 75 years, for the association and the tree care industry. We’ll run portions of those timelines in TCI Magazine throughout the year, culminating in November at TCI EXPO 2013 in Charlotte, where we plan to have a history museum on the show floor and where we’ll present the entire timeline along with pieces of equipment – dare we call them artifacts – from different eras along the way.

We’re starting off the anniversary celebration with a bit of the history of our founding, at right, along with a list of the founding members, in some cases just a name and no company. We’d like your help in putting together a history of what companies they represented or, in some cases, went on to found.

To share photos or otherwise contribute to our timelines and other archival research, email 75th@tcia.org or call Jen Isham at 1-800-733-2622.
Our members have been striving to be the best for 75 years.

Join the Celebration

2013 will be full of special events, contests, giveaways, and promotions to commemorate TCIA’s 75th anniversary

Share in the fun at www.tcia.org

TCIA would like to thank all of our members — tree care companies and industry partners, who have worked, innovated and raised the bar for professionalism in tree care.

Your history is our history… Send us your photos and stories — we’ll share them on www.tcia.org!

Contact 75th@tcia.org

Hang around for the next 75, and see just how far you’ll go!
**Accidents Briefs**

_Taken from published reports._

**Landscape worker dies after 40-foot fall**

A landscape company employee died November 4, 2012, after falling more than 40 feet while cutting a tree during a cleanup job after Superstorm Sandy in Middlebury, Connecticut. Michael Pranulis, 53, of Naugatuck was up in a pine when he became entangled as it fell. Pranulis suffered head trauma and multiple broken bones. He was pronounced dead at a hospital in Waterbury, according to _The Republic_.

**Man injured by cut tree**

A man was seriously injured after a tree he was cutting November 4, 2012, near Wanatah, Indiana, barberchairs, fracturing his face. Mark Reinhardt, 59, of Valparaiso, Ind., was to undergo surgery to repair the multiple broken bones in his face.

Reinhardt was cutting a small tree that had a larger tree resting on top of it. As he was cutting into the trunk, the trunk broke in half, with half of it snapping back and striking him in the nose. Reinhardt, the property owner and three others were in the woods cutting down trees for firewood, according to _The Herald-Argus_ report.

**Homeowner killed by cut tree**

A homeowner was killed November 6, 2012, in Milford, New Hampshire, when a tree fell on him in what police described as a tree cutting accident. The man was dead when emergency crews arrived at the scene, according to an amherst.patch.com report.

**Landscape worker killed by cut tree**

A tree and landscape company owner died November 6, 2012, in East Brunswick, New Jersey, when a portion of tree he was attempting to saw through broke loose and struck him. Amadeo Guiterrez, 41, of North Brunswick, N.J., a part owner of a landscaping and tree service, was in the backyard of a home working on a tree that had been partially knocked over during Hurricane Sandy. The tree broke loose, causing a fatal injury.

Emergency responders and paramedics attempted to revive Guiterrez, but were unsuccessful, according to _The Star-Ledger_.

**Man killed by cut tree**

A man trimming trees November 6, 2012, in Hauppauge, New York, was killed when the tree he was cutting fell on him. Nicholas Lourikas, 66, of Centereach, N.Y., was cutting storm-damaged trees with another person behind a diner when Lourikas was struck in the head by a tree. He was transported by the Smithtown Fire Department to St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center in Smithtown where he was pronounced dead, according to a www.smithtownradio.com report.

**Worker hurt when tree falls from crane**

A tree worker was crushed and injured November 8, 2012, by a tree he was helping move at a residence near Sonoma, California. Jarrad Plasket, 33, of Sonoma, an arborist with a local tree service, moved under the tree as it was being lowered to the ground by a crane at a residence in unincorporated Sonoma County. The tree snapped in half and fell on top of him, causing major injuries.

Plasket was taken to Queen of the Valley Medical Center in Napa and transferred to the John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek where he was listed in critical condition. The tree company and a crane service had been hired by the homeowner to cut the tree in the backyard and put it in the front yard for removal, according to the _San Jose Mercury News_ report.

**Homeowner dies in fall from ladder**

A homeowner fell to his death from a ladder while trimming tree limbs at his home November 9, 2012, in White, Cherokee County, Georgia. Barron Clarence Smith, 52, died from blunt force trauma due to falling from a 20-foot ladder.

Sheriff’s deputies responded to the home after Smith’s wife had discovered her husband deceased in their yard. Investigators did not suspect foul play and were trying to piece together exactly what caused Smith to fall off the ladder, according to _The Cherokee Ledger-News_ report.

**Climber dies when tree fails**

A Kansas tree contractor died November 9, 2012, when the tree he was in failed while he was cutting it down at Stephen F. Austin University Azalea Garden in Nacogdoches, Texas.

John Frederick Goode, 39, of Louisburg, Kansas, was one of at least three workers removing trees that had died over the past

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### November 2012

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Accidents in the tree care industry that occurred during the month of November 2012. Graphic compiled from reports gathered by, or submitted to, TCIA staff.
year. Goode was secured about 65 feet up in the tree and had cut about 35 feet of the tree above him. The part of the tree he was tied to broke into about seven different pieces. Goode died at the scene.

Another worker said the tree was in bad shape, but it was tough to know how bad by looking at the bark, according to a KTRE-TV report. “He was professional,” the co-worker said of Goode. “One of the few to wear a climbing helmet, gloves and eye protection. That was just John. He was very meticulous about safety. He went up the tree and just didn’t catch it.”

Submitted by Rusty Denes, president of TCIA member Denes & Company of Kansas City, Missouri. Goode was a friend of Denes and a former TCIA member.

Man critical after fall from ladder

A man was in critical condition after falling off a ladder while trimming trees November 10, 2012, in Stonington, Connecticut. Faheem Abdul-Jabar, 50, of New London, Conn., a contractor, was working at home when he fell about 15 feet. He was unconscious when taken to Rhode Island Hospital, according to www.theday.com report.

Tree worker killed by cut tree

A York, South Carolina, man who traveled to New York to clear trees in the wake of Superstorm Sandy died November 12, 2012, after a tree fell on him on Long Island, N.Y. David Freberg, 36, who co-owned a tree service with his cousin, died in Suffolk County when a tree he was working on fell on him, according to The Herald of Rock Hill, S.C. The tree somehow bounced back and hit him, killing him instantly, according to a WBTV report.

Tree worker crushed by dump bed

A tree service worker was killed November 13, 2012, in Parma Township, Michigan, when a dump truck bed fell on him while he was delivering wood to a residence. Jeff Teague, 36, of Parma Township, was unloading wood when the bed of his older model Ford F600 became stuck in the upright position. Teague went underneath to fix the problem when the box dropped, crushing him between the bed and the frame. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Submitted by Cameron Smith, vice president of TCIA-member Johnny’s Tree Service Inc. in Jackson, Mich.

Trimmer electrocuted

A tree trimmer died November 16, 2012, while trimming trees outside a home in Hollywood, Florida, when he got too close to a power line and was electrocuted. His body remained in the tree until rescue crews could bring him down. A second worker suffered minor injuries, according to a CBS4 report.

Man Killed By Falling Tree

A man was killed November 17, 2012, after being struck by a tree he’d cut in Bath County, Kentucky. William Ray Evans, of Bath County, was cutting wood at his parents’ property in the Owingsville area. When he didn’t return to the house, his father went looking for him and found him under a fallen tree. The coroner ruled...
Evans’ death an accident, according to a www.lex18.com report.

Man dies after fall from ladder
A 54-year-old man died after falling about 18 to 20 feet from a ladder while trimming trees November 19, 2012, in southwestern Michigan. The Mattawan, Mich., man fell while trimming branches at a greenhouse in Kalamazoo County’s Texas Township, located near Kalamazoo. Investigators say he lost his balance and fell onto a pile of previously cut wood. He died at the scene, according to a Detroit Free Press report.

Man crushed by root ball of cut tree
A Brick township, New Jersey, man died on Thanksgiving, November 22, 2012, after a tree ball from a tree that had been uprooted by Superstorm Sandy fell on him. Vernon Hankins, 61, had cut up the fallen tree and was left with a large hole next to the uprooted stump. Apparently Hankins went into the hole and started cutting the tree’s exposed roots when the tree’s weight shifted and the stump righted itself, falling on top of Hankins, who became trapped with only his head and shoulders visible.

Police found numerous neighbors using shovels in an attempt to free Hankins. Firefighters used their equipment to pull the tree off of Hankins.

Police and medics immediately began life-saving efforts and Hankins was transported to Ocean Medical Center, where he later died from his injuries, according to an Asbury Park Press report.

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Kierson Boutte, owner of TCIA-member Boutte Tree, Inc., in Atlanta, Georgia, granted TCIA and TCI Magazine permission to re-print and re-purpose the following, a December 2, 2012, TreeBuzz.com post he wrote about a bad crane accident his company experienced, “in hopes that others may learn from our accident and avoid something life-threatening.”

Last Monday our crane operator (in-training) committed an error in judgment regarding the weight of a piece of wood and caused our 38-ton crane to fall onto a house, damaging the house badly. No-one was hurt, but it’s very easy to see how a tragedy could have occurred. I don’t know if I could live with myself if something really bad had happened.

There is, sadly, little new to be learned from the physical aspects of this accident, but from the point of view of managing a tree company and making training and safety decisions, there are a lot of valuable lessons, which may be enlightening to some. Though it’s painful for me to explain all of this, since the biggest mistakes leading to this accident were mine, I am forging ahead in the hopes that somewhere, someday, a company like mine will avoid a similar accident.

Here are the particulars:

Finding it extremely difficult to find an adequate crane operator for my tree business, even after doing multiple candidate searches and offering upward of $35 per hour (which is quite high for this region), I decided to embark on training one of my best climbers to be a crane operator instead. I chose him because of his great abilities as a tree climber, his almost accident-free record, and his very accurate ability to judge tree weights. He also seemed to be smooth with the controls on those few occasions where he had tried out the crane.

Therefore, being a decent climber myself, I started with easy jobs in which the hazards were few or easy to isolate and simply switched places with him. I would climb and he would operate. Since we use radio headsets to communicate, this was a great way to talk him through all of the hazards and decisions as he made them. I did not engage in a formal training class in an effort to pursue his being a CCO (certified crane operator), but I did spend some time during the morning meetings going over the physics with him and tried to provide some insights for him.

On the day of the accident, the crane was set up in the front yard. We were removing a 48-inch tulip poplar behind the house. I was training the operator (whose name I will omit for privacy purposes), and after a month or so of my climbing and him operating, I decided to let another very experienced climber climb on this day because my CDL driver had quit unexpectedly and I was needed to drive the grapple truck later in the day. So I stayed on the ground and helped chip the limbs until they were down to just trunk wood and then left, planning to return in an hour and a half.

The operator finished the last (very small) limb and then had lunch, beginning on the trunk wood about an hour after I left, starting with a 3,000-pound piece. The crane capacity at this radius was 3,800 pounds. This piece went fine, but on the second piece the diameter of the wood increased dramatically due to several large knots. Despite this, the operator only cut the piece slightly shorter than the previous piece.

And, despite the fact that the wood was over 3 feet in diameter and about 9 feet long, they decided to choke the piece rather low to avoid the knots. It was choked about 5 feet from the cut, or 4 feet from the top, and was choked with a single choker only. From the point of view of the operator, the piece was choked on the left side of the tree. The plan (worked out by radio) was for the climber to cut from the left side of the tree (again, we’re talking about looking at this tree from the point of view of the crane operator) and for the operator to swing right and cable up to gather the slack generated by the piece rotating, and move the piece away from the climber.
The cut was made, and the operator cabled up and swung right as planned. However, the piece was so out of balance and heavier than expected – approximately 5,000 pounds due to water weight in wood from autumn water-uptake and from the presence of the really big knots in the tree, that the operator was unable to gather up the rotating weight of the wood as it ended-over, shock loading the boom and causing the crane to lift up slightly in the front. It stayed like this for four or five seconds as the piece gyrated, then the boom and crane settled slowly down on the house.

The pick was right over the rear, so the crane rotated around the rear two outriggers. I showed up in the grapple truck literally 60 seconds later... like I mentioned no one was hurt.

We spent the next five hours doing all of the things one does: Cut power, talk to homeowner, bring in some big rental cranes, etc., etc. Our crane seemed to operate fine after it was leveled again, and we drove it straight to the shop to have the boom inspected.

But the following day and for nearly a week afterward I’ve been racking my brain and trying to wrap my mind around the mistakes, involving training and safety, that I made. It was painfully obvious that our climber, the crane operator, or anyone in the house could have been injured or killed, so the importance of preventing anything similar was obvious to all of us.

After all the accident forms had been filled out, and after I had a chance to talk to Peter Gerstenberger, senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards at TCIA, and everyone had had time to address the things that they thought were factors, we started the process of re-writing our safety manual. We initiated a training program with stricter standards and requirements for each position.

Before this accident I can honestly say that I was a very safety-conscious tree company owner, but that I placed less emphasis on formal credentials and training protocols than I did with on-the-job training and attitude. I started with a pick-up truck... so maybe that whole attitude prevented me from seeing the importance of formal training programs, since I “never needed” formal training myself.

Now I believe that it’s important to focus on hard work and on-the-job training, but that this was an example of a situation where more formalized training would have prevented an accident.

We found that:

1) The operator’s ability as a climber to judge weights didn’t help him enough to judge weights from the seat of the cab – the skill didn’t transfer the way it did for me when I went from climbing to operating, and yet with more formalized training it could have been transferred.

2) The climber respected the operator’s well-known ability to judge tree weights and offered his own opinion of the weight of the piece based on the operator’s assessment. In other words, both people involved in the decision on judging the tree section’s
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weight were relying more or less on the operator’s well-known abilities, which as stated above didn’t transfer well. Had the climber been trained better in estimating log weight, then perhaps he would have used a more independent method to calculate weight.

We implemented a method of using both the comparative method (judging the weight of the present pick by comparing it to the size of the previous pick) as well as an analytical method: using the green log weight chart and a diameter tape to estimate the pick weight.

3) The operator, though aware of the effects of dynamic loading, had very little experience or training in understanding what a difference just a small amount of dynamic loading can make. It was something that I explained to him, but never demonstrated with math or figures. In this case, had the pick been done with two slings to limit the effect of dynamic loading, I’m sure the crane would have been overloaded, but would not have tipped. It was the dynamic loading, working together with the overloading, that tipped the crane over.

You can see that I’m mentioning all of this because at the root of this problem is a failure to train.

There are companies out there that already have detailed training protocols and have implemented them satisfactorily... I applaud those companies for doing that.

But I know that there are some folks out there who will read this story and gain something from it – if it’s only a small change, then it will be worth it to me. I personally feel very badly that I neglected the safety of my workers and the general public in the name of expediency.

Furthermore, this accident prompted me to re-write my safety manual and rededicate myself to TCIA Accreditation. I feel a strong obligation now to invite outsiders in to observe and critique my business with the aim of preventing anything like this from ever happening again!
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Vince Winkler, president of Winkler’s Tree & Landscaping, Inc. in La Grange Park, Illinois, took a part-time job with a local tree care company when he was a sophomore in high school. He never looked back.

“It put me through high school and college,” he says. When he graduated from Western Illinois University in Macomb, Ill., in 1975, he started his own company with a partner, a couple of part-time employees and a truck. The partner left, and Winkler bought a second truck and hired a few more people. He joined TCIA in 1987 and opened a satellite office in Naperville in 1992.

His wife, Joan, has been working at the company since 1978, and their daughter, Shannon, for six or seven years. Another daughter, Diana, is a teacher.

Winkler has seen trends in tree care work come and go. After Dutch elm disease hit the Chicagoland area, a large part of the work was in removals and new plantings. Municipalities and property owners replaced the elms with ash trees, which were resilient to insects and diseases at the time. The next phase was maintaining the urban forest with tree pruning and fertilizing.

And then, in the early 2000s, the emerald ash borer moved in, and history began to repeat itself.

“In the Chicagoland area, we basically have Dutch elm disease replicated with the emerald ash borer,” he says. “In a lot of these towns, 30 percent of the trees are ash trees.” In addition, he says, there’s been an uptick in Dutch elm disease among the remaining elms.

A large part of the company’s work these days is fertilizing trees that haven’t been infected yet, to increase their vigor and their resistance to insects and disease. They fertilize with soil injections, trunk injections and by spraying the trunk. When they aren’t certain which nutrients the trees need, they do a lab analysis of the soil first.

“We will not treat a tree that’s diseased,” Winkler says. “It’s a waste of the customer’s money.”

The company also does pruning, removals, cabling and rodding, or bracing, and hazard tree evaluations, both visually and with a resistograph. In addition, they do a lot of work clearing trees and brush from local creeks, with a crane with specialized attachments.

Winkler’s business is split almost evenly between residential and commercial customers. Their motto, “Do it right the first time and be safe,” has led to 90 percent of their customers being repeat customers and referrals. The only advertising they do is on the Internet.

The company participates in a number of community events. They sponsor six or seven Little League and church baseball and basketball teams. In addition, they donate to various church and school fundraisers.

They’ve earned a good number of awards through the years. In 2001, the ISA awarded them the Excellence in Arboriculture Award for their “exemplary customer service and unwavering dedica-
tion to high quality tree maintenance.” They won the Good Guy Award from the Chicago Tribune for helping a homeowner in a property dispute with the railroad; the 2010 Super Service Award from Angie’s List; and the 2011 and 2012 Best Pick Award from EBSCO Research, which showcases companies that have been identified by homeowners as top-quality service providers.

In 2000, Winkler’s was one of only two companies to receive a Safety Award from the National Arborist Association, now TCIA.

The company has expanded to 40 full-time, year-round employees, many of them long term.

“There are a lot of guys who have been around here for a good, long time,” Winkler says. “People generally want to do a good job, and I treat them the way I’d want to be treated.”

When they ask for equipment they need, he buys it for them. When they ask for additional education, he sends them to tree-care oriented seminars and workshops. Winkler and his employees always attend the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association’s annual trade show.

The company’s fleet also has expanded, to some 30 trucks and 50 to 60 pieces of equipment. They have two mechanics on duty at the La Grange Park office and the computer technology needed to diagnose problems with the vehicles.

Safety has always been a priority for Winkler. “I am very strict on that,” he says. “My famous line is, ‘If you get hurt, I’m going to feel bad, but you’re going to feel worse, so take your time.’ And ‘if you think you’ll get hurt doing that pruning cut, don’t do it.’”

The first day of work, an employee is issued all his PPE and signs for it. He receives the rulebook on how to wear it and is shown how to wear it, if necessary, and then signs for that.

“There’s no excuse,” he says.

The company achieved TCIA Accreditation in April 2005, the first in Illinois, a fact that is touted on the company’s website. “I figured it was going to be the next big thing,” he says. “Everybody in the company worked on it, including the bookkeeper and the safety trainer. It took a couple of months. It wasn’t that hard. If you’re doing things right, it isn’t that hard.” They already had a business plan and an employee handbook, and most of their safety practices were in place. The biggest change they made was increasing the amount of documentation they did. It’s more work, Winkler says, “but it’s worth it.”

He has some words of advice for arborists who are just starting out with their own company.

“It looks easy to run a company, but take your time,” he says. “It’s nice to be able to buy a $250,000 truck, but why not buy a $25,000 one until you can afford it? Build up your client base first. If you’re just a couple of years out, there isn’t enough word of mouth, not enough jobs. It’ll take you 10 years to build up a client base enough to sustain you through the lean periods.”
Reflecting on the recent elections, I stumbled upon a strong parallel between the role of government and how certain small businesses operate. In the elections, much of the division or contention came down to the role of the federal government versus the roles of state and local governments. In the most general terms, it came down to whether the “feds” should govern on the global level, or reach down and exert policies that affect the state and local bodies. Interpretation of what issues should fall into which governing body varied greatly!

So where are the parallels?

Well, in my consulting career I have seen many companies govern themselves much like the way the U.S. Federal Government currently seems to govern. These companies govern, or manage, from the top down and the senior level managers want to get involved in every issue and challenge their company faces. They, like the feds, push rule after rule down the command-and-control hierarchy and attempt to regulate at every level. In my opinion, this style of government, or management, ultimately leads to the duplication of efforts (organizational waste), confusion, lack of clarity of purpose (organizational and individual), and most damaging, it leads to lack of accountability.

A healthy company, just like a healthy government, understands the roles involved in governing. It understands it is the role of certain positions to create, certain positions to execute, certain positions to report and reflect and so on, all without interference from the top. Senior leadership understands that one cannot create and manage in a vacuum and that an organization has to be vigilant and observant at every level in order to gain the insights to create great companies with great products and services. More importantly, a healthy company builds social and operating architectures that tolerate little waste and little confusion; they have clarity of purpose and absolute organizational accountability.

My 35-year experience of owning and overseeing multiple companies, in multiple market verticals, many at the same time, has taught me that an organization that has a “muddy” command and control structure quickly becomes leadership comatose and socially paralyzed. These organizations slide slowly into top-down dictatorships that rely on everyone and no one at the same time. Good employees come, but then go because they cannot find their personal sense of purpose within the organization. These organizations become “me-too” companies where most moves are defensive responses to the moves of their competitor’s, and innovative ideas get squashed by top level managers, who manage in vacuums of self-importance and often self-indulgence.

How is this happening to our country? How does this happen to a business? I personally place much of the responsibility at the feet of our educational system. Simply stated, I see evidence that our high schools, vocational schools, and universities are not producing “leaders.” Today’s educator’s teach “group mentality,” not “individualism,” and most certainly they are not teaching how both group mentality (team building) and individualism (entrepreneurialism and individual confidence) are used in business as tools to success. What qualifies me to make this statement? Nothing, other than that I escaped formal education and have instinctively avoided top down leadership and hierarchical command and control. Furthermore, being a huge proponent of collaboration at all levels, I firmly believe in building organizational structure, calling for leaders at every level to be instructed on their pivotal duties and then left unimpeded to lead.

Recently I found support for my hypotheses when I came across an article by Henry Mitzberg. Mitzberg, the Cleghorn Professor of Management Studies at McGill University in Montreal, writes, “I think the problem with the American economy is not economics, it’s managerial.” He went on to discuss an arti-
The Tree Care Industry Association has placed a call for public review of a revision draft for the current ANSI A300 (Part 4)-2008, the standard for lighting protection systems in trees, and a new ANSI standard, the proposed Part 8 - Root Management.


This is the first public review draft for this revision. The revised standard will be titled A300 Part 4-(201x) Lightning Protection Systems upon approval.

Items addressed include:
- Lightning protection objectives for trees
- Tree and site inspection
- Materials
- Installation practices
- Above-ground system
- Below-ground system
- Single ground rod system
- Multiple grounding system
- Horizontal grounding system
- Maintenance
- Grounding system selection based on site considerations
- Lightning protection systems flowchart
- Sample specifications

Part 8 - Root Management

The public review period for Part 8 - Root Management runs from December 21, 2012 to February 4, 2013. The review documents will be posted on www.tcia.org/business/business-resourcesansi-a300/current-projects. The document contains instructions for submitting comments. This is the third, and intended final public review draft, for Part 8.

Items addressed include:
- Root management flow chart
- Root management objectives
- Trunk, flare, and root inspection
- Root collar examination
- Root management practices
- Selective root pruning
- Selective root pruning – girdling roots
- Non-selective root cutting
- Managing the direction of root growth
- Alternatives to root pruning and cutting
- Managing trees to mitigate root damage or loss
- Managing roots in fill
- Sample specifications for RCX (root collar examination)

For additional information contact the Tree Care Industry Association via www.tcia.org or call 1-800-733-2622.

Tom Oyler is a motivational speaker on human dynamics, market positioning, customer service and branding with the Wilson-Oyler Group in Maitland, Florida. Founder and former president and CEO of a national landscape maintenance franchise company, Tom has vast experience as an entrepreneur, franchise executive, and business owner. He will be presenting a two-part session, “Who’s On Point? A Discussion About Driving Your Business,” and “Reaching Mark 5 in Your Business,” at Winter Management Conference in St. Kitts in February. For a full WMC schedule or to register, visit www.tcia.org and click on Meetings, or call 1-800-733-2622.

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ADVERTISEMENT
Another Successful TCI EXPO in Baltimore

TCI EXPO, the world’s largest tree care trade show and conference, wrapped up another successful event this year at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Maryland. More than 2,100 resolute tree care professionals braved Hurricane (Superstorm) Sandy to enjoy three days of workshops, seminars and demonstrations focused on the tree care industry... and to buy much needed equipment and supplies.

Attendees from across the world descended on Baltimore to take part in a variety of business, safety and arboriculture workshops and seminars; watch professional tree climbers demonstrate skills in a 30-foot tree on the show floor; and network with other tree care professionals.

Most also came to compare equipment and evaluate products – and the 183 exhibitors, including the biggest names in tree care, did not disappoint, sharing the latest tree care industry products, services and information.

“I am proud to be part of such a hard-working, dedicated group of professionals. Congrats on putting together another great show,” says Ken Groves, owner of Tree Doc, a 5-year TCIA member company located in Chadron, Nebraska.

“arboriculture students took part in skills tests in Federal Hill Park.

The classes that I attended were very beneficial and the speakers were good. The trade show was, as usual, very diverse and I picked up some new ideas along the way,” says attendee Ron Gunz, of TCIA member company Wachtel Tree Science in Merton, Wisconsin.

TCI EXPO was sponsored in part by TCIA’s PACT (Partners Advancing Commercial Tree Care) Crown partners Altec, Bandit Industries, Husqvarna, Morbark, Terex Woodsman and Vermeer. PACT Root and Seed partners included George Fern Exposition and Event Services, Liberty Financial Group, Inc., Buckingham, Fanno, HMI, Mauget, and Weaver Leather.

TCIA hosts 174 participants for Student Career Days

In addition to the trade show and conference, TCI EXPO hosted the 16th Annual Tree Care Industry Association Foundation Student Career Days (SCD), which wrapped up another successful competition, this year in Federal Hill Park in Baltimore. The three-day event, November 8-10, 2012, offered students enrolled in arboriculture, forestry and related programs an inside look at the field they’re studying.

SCD was well attended this year, with 174 students representing 20 colleges, universities and vocational programs from across the country. The students took full advantage of the opportunity to test their knowledge and participate in a variety of skills competitions.

They participated in friendly tree climbing competitions, took part in educational seminars, workshops and even a job and internship fair.

Mark Chisholm, certified arborist and three-time international tree climbing champion, was also on site to demonstrate climbing competition tips.
“It’s always a pleasure to teach the next generation some of the tactics and tips I’ve learned from my own career,” says Chisholm. “Industry events like these are how the long-term success of the profession is ensured.”

Events included tree climbing skills competitions and written exams. Among the big draws were a belayed scramble, a throwline toss, safety gear check, and a work climb in the trees of Federal Hill Park. Students worked to gain as many points as possible in the least amount of time.

“All the events at Student Career Days were tackled enthusiastically, particularly the belayed scramble,” says Tchukki Andersen, BCMA, CTSP, TCIA staff arborist and event coordinator. “Events like this provide a unique opportunity for students to challenge themselves, not to mention meet and network with potential employers.”

Overall winners from the event included Nathan Mode (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point) from the men’s division; Ellen Stollenwerk (Milwaukee Area Technical College) from the women’s division; and Tyler Snyder (Northlands Job Corps) from the vocational division. A full list of winners, and their scores, can be viewed at www.tciaf.org.


Student Career Days is hosted by Tree Care Industry Association Foundation, whose mission is to advance education and professional development in the green industry, improve safety and reduce accident rates in the tree care industry and to disseminate information key to practitioners and consumers about proper tree care.

As participants in the ideal recruitment platform, SCD Partners receive many rewards for welcoming collegiate and vocational students to the annual Student Career Days event. To learn more about becoming a sponsor of Student Career Days, contact Sarah Winslow, TCIA’s director of development, at 1-800-733-2622 or swinslow@tcia.org.

Morbark auctioned a stump grinder and Bandit auctioned a chipper, both to benefit the TREE Fund.

Conway Lopez, left, owner of TCIA member General Tree Service, Inc. in Bakersfield, California, and his brother, Jimmy Lopez, owner of Jimmy’s Tree Service in Bakersfield, took time at TCI EXPO to have their picture on the cover of TCI Magazine.

Stragglers found it hard to clear the show floor at the end of the day.

At left, John McClenahan picked up a copy of the November TCI in the EXPO lobby.

Michael Frankhauser checks a splice in the Knot & Rope Supply booth.
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A Silky representative demos a hand saw.

Jerry Morey was joined by some of his crew from Bandit at the Welcome Reception.

Pointing out the finer features on a Vermeer chipper.

Robb Fanno greets another happy Sawyer at his booth.
Student Career Days skills competition winners were recognized and presented prizes at the climbing tree on the trade show floor.

John Ball’s annual review of tree care accidents grabbed attendees’ attention, as usual.

Tchukki Andersen, left, co-author of TCIA’s SRT manual, with collaborator Tom Dunlap, long-time SRT proponent.

An Arbor Tech rep checks out Husqvarna’s latest offerings.

The Morbark “corral” on the show floor.

Instruction before the Student Career Days climbing.
The year 1911 has been dubbed the year that the modern safety movement began. It started after the disastrous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.

On March 25, 1911, fire broke out on the 8th floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in the Asch Building in New York. It was a sunny Saturday afternoon, nearing closing time of a long work week; people were already in the park down the block enjoying the day when a spark flashed in a pile of scrap. In just 34 harrowing minutes that fire caused the deaths of 146 young women and men.

The youngest victims were only 14 years old. They died because the fire suppression systems didn’t work. The external fire escape stairs failed and fell. At least one of the exit doors was locked. Those deaths raised a national cry for workplace safety. The modern safety movement began with the improvement of enforcing basic building codes and fire codes. Labor laws were written to protect children, and workers’ compensation laws were developed to protect workers injured on the job. That was the start. Safety training for employees began to evolve.

In 1931 H.W. Heinrich conducted a study and developed the injury pyramid that every Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) professional is familiar with. He estimated the ratio related to the occurrence of a unit group of 300 accidents of the same kind and involving the same person, that 29 times it would result in minor injury and one time would result in a major injury. Frank Bird conducted a separate study in 1969 and expanded the pyramid to the 600-30-10-1 model – for every 600 incidents 30 resulted in property damage, 10 in serious injury and 1 fatality.

In 2003, ConocoPhillips Marine conducted a similar study demonstrating a great difference in the ratio of serious accidents and near misses. The study found that for every single fatality there are at least 300,000 at-risk behaviors. These studies led to and reinforced the practice of behavior-based safety. All of these focus safety efforts on the front line employee and supervisor.

In 1970, Richard Nixon signed the OSH Act and prescriptive standards entered the mix. Today we deal with many national and international standards. Some are voluntary while others are not. But the majority of our safety programs at that time still focused on changing the behavior of the front line employee and supervisor.

The idea of “Safety by Design” was actually around prior to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, and has continued to gain ground into current times. The idea of safety by design was promoted in 1910 by Crystal Eastman in her book Work Accidents and the Law. She wrote about how the change to automatic coupling pins on railroad cars reduced the death rate among rail workers. Safety by design is gaining more and more interest as demonstrated in the reduced decibel levels generated by leaf blowers and other sound generating tools.

Process safety management entered the picture after the Union Carbide chemical release in Bhopal, India in 1984. A leak of methyl isocynate gas and other chemicals from the plant resulted in the exposure to hundreds of thousands of people, of whom thousands died. System safety soon followed where the attention is on the interaction between departments and phases of the development, production and delivery of the product. And since the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, we’ve taken safety more and more into Enterprise Risk Management.

We have made great strides since 1911. Death and injury rates are down in many countries from what they were 100 years ago. However, in a study released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, preliminary, fatal occupational injuries for 2010 show a minimal decline in workers dying from on-the-job injuries in 2010 compared with 2009. The report shows transportation-related fatalities continue to be the number one cause of on-the-job deaths followed by assaults and violent acts, contact with objects and equipment, falls, and exposure to harmful substances or environments. And we now know that the number of serious injuries has increased. Our efforts are stalled. Haven’t we learned anything from the past?

We’ve stalled at behavior-based safety because it is hard to change behavior and we keep relying on ill-trained supervisors to change those behaviors. So what next? The next step is establishing a Prevention Culture. A Prevention Culture is not a matter of a single system or philosophy – it is the instillation of a culture that permeates the organization based on the use of all available tools that have gone before, with the addition of:

- Changing the management processes
- Adopting Enterprise risk management thinking
- Changing the attitude throughout the organization – recognizing that safety is not a program or something that is only applied at work and then only when it is convenient
- Brand recognition and reputation
- Sustainability

Establishing a prevention culture will require everyone to embrace safety in every aspect of their lives. It is management valuing human lives and the quality of those lives, valuing the environment, and demonstrating that value in the decisions they make. Prevention is not just a program with a focus on the employees and supervisors. To establish a culture of prevention, a prevention focus must per-
meate the entire organization; in all departments; with all personnel; from the C-Suite to the entry-level employee. It requires changing the attitude throughout the organization. It takes everyone in the organization, starting with the CEO, recognizing that safety is not a program or something that is only applied at work and then only when it is convenient.

We have gathered the fruit on the ground and the low hanging fruit. We made rapid improvement when first embracing engineering changes, improving signage, implementing a system approach to safety. We began to stall at behavior-based safety – it is harder to change human behavior than it is to change a machine. Instilling a prevention culture will be even tougher because it must permeate the organization. But as Samuel Johnson said, “Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.”

It has to start with the CEO and top management. It starts with how the business is managed. It starts with a change in what the CEO and senior management value. It starts with understanding that safety is not an extra cost, but part of the strategic plan. Here are some ways that you and your management team can demonstrate your belief in and support of a prevention culture.

► Include training time and costs when you establish your annual budget.
► Insist on the completion of regularly scheduled safety sessions.
► Ensure that annual performance reviews are completed for all supervisors and managers.
► Include leading indicator behaviors, such as completed employee training, safety inspections, root-cause accident investigations and safety rules enforcement in the performance reviews.
► Include a review of safety activities with your staff each month.
► Ensure that your loss experience is analyzed routinely to identify trends.
► Attend conferences and webinars that increase your understanding of new safety and health management trends.
► Be visible in your support of the prevention culture – open the safety meetings yourself – talk with your employees – know what your loss experience is and understand the causes.

It is up to you – every one of you – to establish a culture of prevention in your organization, in your own lives, and in your community. The future is in your hands. Don’t bend your back to what is easy; reach for the top and strive for excellence in prevention.

Terrie S. Norris, CSP, ARM, CPSI, is risk control manager for Bickmore Risk Services and past president of ASSE (the American Society of Safety Engineers. Norris has more than 20 years of experience in the environmental health and safety arena serving both public entities and private industry. Norris will be making two presentations at Winter Management Conference in St. Kitts in February, “The Evolution of Safety: What’s Next?” and “Safety Leadership.” For a full WMC schedule or to register, visit www.tcia.org and click on Meetings, or call 1-800-733-2622.

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One of the most valuable assets that your organization owns is your brand, and yet so few really understand its economical, emotional and sustaining value. Even fewer know how to build, manage and increase its value.

Let’s begin by dispelling some myths around branding. To begin with a brand is NOT a logo, tagline, product, advertising or marketing campaign, company name or a spokesperson. While these are certainly key ingredients that help communicate, position and form the brand, they themselves are not the brand. Another misconception is that only big companies need to worry about branding. Whether you’re a one-person shop or a billion dollar organization you’ve got a brand, and hopefully you, rather than the competition, are controlling it.

Another major branding misconception is that the marketing person is responsible for building your brand. While your marketing representative will certainly play a key role in implementing brand strategies, everybody in your organization has a direct impact in building your brand. Every day each one of your employees and alliances either creates positive or negative brand equity. From your mechanic who keeps your equipment operating to the person who professionally answers your phone to your crews who show up on time and perform flawlessly.

So what is a brand? A brand is your promise, and all of the components of that promise that you deliver – or don’t deliver – to your stakeholders. It is a spoken and an unspoken covenant, as well as an expectation to fulfill in the mind of your stakeholders. Your stakeholders include your employees, customers, suppliers, investors, media, community and alliances. A brand is a business asset with a real value, and when nurtured, as with a tree, and managed properly, it will yield tremendous results and long-term benefits for all your stakeholders while growing in value.

To begin with a brand is NOT a logo, tagline, product, advertising or marketing campaign, company name or a spokesperson. While these are certainly key ingredients that help communicate, position and form the brand, they themselves are not the brand.

I was very fortunate to have been mentored by Jim Gregory, considered the global authority on branding and the creator of the Corporate Branding Index [CBI], which is the index that is used on Wall Street to calculate the value of a brand. Yes, brands have a real value for all companies whether public or private, large or small. I’ll share with you that, after having worked on more than 95 mergers and acquisitions in the green industry, a company’s brand is something we analyze very closely and for which we assign a very real value. The status and health of your brand can either add substantial equity and value to your company, or become a major liability. Branding is an investment and NOT an expense.

For those of you, who believe that branding is some sort of soft and fuzzy concept or marketing exercise, please reconsider. Branding is a business science and creating a master-brand requires education, experi-
They appreciate your patronage.

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ence and the ability to read and analyze market dynamics (macro and micro) and the minds of your stakeholders. For those non-believers here are some compelling facts, and numbers, about branding.

In down markets, leading brands outperform weak brands by a margin of seven to one, and in healthy markets by a three to one margin. Strong brands have an average retention rating of 96 percent, and are ranked as number one or two in revenues in their respective markets. If that’s not powerful enough for you, on average strong brands have 48 percent higher profits than their competitors, and enjoy a 46 percent market share. Their loyal customers are their greatest advocates and business developers, referring an average 3.1 referrals per customer!

You’re probably thinking all this branding comes with a big price tag and marketing budget. Think again. Companies with dominant brands have on average 29 percent lower sales and marketing costs (hint – it has a lot to do with their customers selling for them!)

Not convinced yet? Conduct some objective local research and scrutinize the winning brands in your area, and assess their position in your market. More than likely you’ll discover that they are the market leaders with high name awareness, a solid reputation and a healthy bottom line.

Two of my favorite business quotes involve branding. The first is from Warren Buffet, one of the most successful investors on the planet who said his secret to investing was, “I buy great brands!”

The other quote is from the former CEO of Disney, Michael Eisner, who shared, “A brand is a living entity and is enriched or undermined cumulatively over time, the product of a thousand small gestures.”

If you’re interested in learning how to increase your positive brand equity while generating value for all of your stakeholders, I’ll see you in St. Kitts!

Judith M. Guido is a principal in Guido & Associates, a leading industry consulting firm that has been successfully helping green industry companies grow their people and profits. She will be making two presentations at Winter Management Conference in St. Kitts in February, “Monopolizing Your Market in the New Economy” and “Building a Profitable Brand.” For a full WMC schedule or to register, visit www.tcia.org and click on Meetings, or call 1-800-733-2622.

TREE CARE INDUSTRY – JANUARY 2013
By Dave Bratt

It is to be expected… people learn that you are an arborist and, generally, in the interest of supporting a friend, they call you up when they have tree issues or other such needs. I suppose I always enjoy the assortment of tasks, and am happy to assist however I can, yet there is one such task that I don’t figure on trying again any time in the near future. Nothing against cats, mind you.

A friend asked me to give her daughter a call to see if I could assist her with a little dilemma. Apparently the family pet had gone off and gotten itself stuck in a tree in a patch of woods across the way, and no measure of calling could fetch it down. It was nearing the evening and I was running low on steam, but figured that I could put in some extra time for a good cause.

Upon arrival, and after analyzing the health and structural integrity of the 50-foot cherry that the kitty had made home, I decided the distressed creature was savable and strapped on my gear. Approaching its perch, I gently coaxed and gestured for the cat to trust its rescuer and inch its way into my open arms.

To no avail. I must not speak cat very fluently, for the stupid feline crawled farther out on the limb, while crying a most pitiful cry. I had climbed almost as far as I felt comfortable, considering the strong lean of the tree and relatively spindly limbs I was reaching. I judged I should be safe to adjust my position and reach out and grab the unaccommodating animal, but the first effort resulted in scratched-up arms and dwindling patience.

As I fumed, the cat decided to show me just how unimpressed he was with my valiant attempts and proceeded to urinate all over my fresh wounds, thereby adding insult to injury, not to mention risk of infection. I managed to persuade the cat that my way was best, and finally had the not-so-subdued animal in custody. The house pet instinctively dug its claws deep into my skin as it continued to loudly voice its complaint.

Utilizing my last reserves of self-control, I constrained my urge to wring the cat’s neck, instead tucking it under my arm quite forcefully, then we began the long descent and tried our best to work out our differences.

Upon reaching the ground, we both shook hands/paws and went our separate ways, with the kitty taking off across the road and immediately becoming one with the asphalt as a full cement truck made its way down the street… Just kidding, the cat made it home safely, yet I couldn’t help but think that it would have been a fitting end to the story.

The moral, if there is one, is probably there somewhere. Let me know if you find it.

Dave Bratt is owner of Dave’s Tree in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
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