

JP Horizons

People Solutions

Continuous Improvement at its Best!

8/16/13

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A Culture of Learning

One of my favorite parts of taking a group of professionals to view and discuss another company behind the scenes in what we call a Face 2 Face event, comes when we have the opportunity to visit a company that JP Horizons has worked with over a span of many years. I have discovered in almost 25 years of working with great companies that we usually learn much more from them than they ever learn from us. Our third Face to Face event coming up next week in Walpole Mass is taking place at a company like this. NatureWorks has been committed to continuous improvement for a very long time and their commitment to training, one of the most inspiring I have witnessed.

As one of the first companies to begin the Working Smarter Training Challenge in 2006, NatureWorks trained and sent feedback to us on their training progress for 156 weeks straight without fail. They then went on to continue their lean journey and education along with their consistent habit of training in the years that have followed. As one of the true Working Smarter superstar companies, NatureWorks has developed an amazing culture of continuous improvement and efficiency.



NatureWorks Kaizen Team

In planning for the Face 2 Face event it occurred to me that a great way to prepare the 60 people that will be part of this event would be to tell a few tidbits from their Working Smarter days with us while also benefiting the thousands of readers that will not be able to attend Face 2 Face. Planet, the Smart Company sponsors and JP Horizons all look forward to exposing the world to this innovative, hardworking, ever improving group of individuals that continue to find ways to Work Smarter year after year. Below are

several examples of learning feedback and great ideas that came back to us from the NatureWorks team through the years. I hope you find a few things that inspire your team to Work Smarter. And for those of us that will be in Walpole next week, the NatureWorks team is anxious to here our feedback on how they can keep getting better, Face 2 Face.

- Jim Paluch

[Getting a Head Start on Tomorrow](#)

Mary Sullivan from NatureWorks, said traffic in the morning used to slow them down, so now they are disciplined to have all of the fueling and paperwork done in the afternoon. The morning departure time is a direct reflection of the end-of-the-day efficiency.

- Crews are moving faster in the afternoon because they are looking to get home.
- When crews leave their site, they let the office know. By the time they return that afternoon, supervisors are prepared to help with issues and hold everyone accountable for the next day's preparations.



- Equipment is tagged for repair the night before, and anyone that tags for repair in the morning is penalized. There is a fun culture of accountability and competition as many key foremen become role models promoting standards in a positive way.

Weekly Training and Feedback that All Adds Up!

Each week after a group trains in the Working Smarter Training Challenge they send a note back to JPH on what they did or what they learned. Can you identify something valuable in each of these lessons learned?

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- One training facilitator at NatureWorks found a quote from a senior Toyota executive summarizing the reason for the company's relentless progress over the years as "Brilliant process management. We get brilliant results from average people managing brilliant processes.



Process mapping current conditions

We observe that our competitors get average or worse results from brilliant people managing broken processes." This facilitator pointed out that everybody wins when we focus on the processes... remain soft on the people and hard on the process!

- "The Builder/Destroyer Tips and Traps are beginning to become part of the mindset at NatureWorks. One of the construction crews mentioned that on the job site he caught himself saying to his supervisor that something could not be done. As soon as he said it, he realized he was being a destroyer and apologized and the group worked through a solution rather than giving up on it. He admitted that since they have been doing the Builder/Destroyer Tips and Traps, he catches himself and realizes he has a choice."

-

- "Lean is becoming a part of our company culture. People are identifying things that they do that are not value added and we find them starting to change their behaviors and find solutions to improve."



Communicating with foreman

- "We had a cake to celebrate completing the first quarter of the WSTC Step 2. We took a few minutes at the beginning of their training to recognize what they had achieved and accomplished over the past 13 weeks. They really had achieved the goals they set out for themselves back on week 1. It was pretty amazing to think it has been 65 weeks of Working Smarter and Lean Training."
- "This week we learned to create a Job Breakdown Sheet for training on specific tasks. The facilitator was very impressed with the Job Breakdown Sheets the group completed and thinks they are very usable. They could go into a Trainer's Manual today and be used by a trainer to train those tasks tomorrow. What the group seemed to find the most difficult about the Job Breakdown Sheet was to not go off on tangents. For example, one person did a Job Breakdown Sheet for Pruning a Tree. A major step was to select the right pruning tool. It would have been very easy for her to go into descriptions of each tool and what its uses are. But she recognized that it could be a separate training within itself."

The First of Many Kaizen Events

In this five day concentrated commitment to improvement the NatureWorks General Manager, Jennifer Guerin explained how each day progressed and the valuable take away for the team:

Day 1: Capturing the Current State

Two teams took a day to shadow two different foremen and crews. By observing and documenting the conditions in the field they were able to identify waste from the amount of extra steps that the crews had to take when getting everything ready in the morning, to the potential safety hazards identified through safety audits.

Valuable Takeaway: Completing spaghetti diagrams and each crew member wearing pedometers measuring the distance they walk in a day were invaluable!

Day 2: Defining the Future State

This started with truly understanding the current state. The team went back and reviewed the video and data that they had gathered the day before to get at the root causes of particular inefficiencies. When observing something that we are very familiar with we often think that we see what's going on at the first glance. Also observers that are familiar with the process have a more difficult time because they understand the whys, they rationalize it or they believe there are no solutions. And often the observer will start trying to fix it rather than truly understand it.



Kaizen implements

Valuable Takeaway: The team learned that by starting with a beginner's mind, and taking the time to look deeply at things that appear like simple problems on the surface that they were able to get a clear picture of the fundamental process improvements that they wanted to put in place in the future.

Day 3: Beginning to Change

The Kaizen teams met with the crews and communicated what they had learned so far. Then they opened it up to brainstorm ideas for how to improve different areas of their operations. After filling up countless flip chart pages they narrowed it down to actions that could be taken that week to change in a positive direction.

Valuable Takeaway: Small changes like moving the gas cans to a better place are the types of changes that take simple ideas and make them part of an efficient company culture.

Day 4: Standardizing Improvement

The teams focused on putting what they had learned and done into presentations that would communicate the way that these new processes created a path between the current state and the ideal future state.

Valuable Takeaway:
Standardizing things and making it into a repeatable process is what cements small changes into the culture of day-to-day operations.



Brainstorming solutions

Day 5: Measuring Success and Celebrating

After presenting the new processes and what had been learned to the rest of the company, the teams went back and audited the processes that they had worked to improve. By seeing what worked and what still needed to be improved upon the teams were able to build a plan for sustaining the momentum. The day ended with a special dinner and gifts for the Kaizen team.

Valuable Takeaway: Those who are always looking for a better way to do the small things are the ones who eventually become the best at what they do. Oh, and celebrating success is always fun!

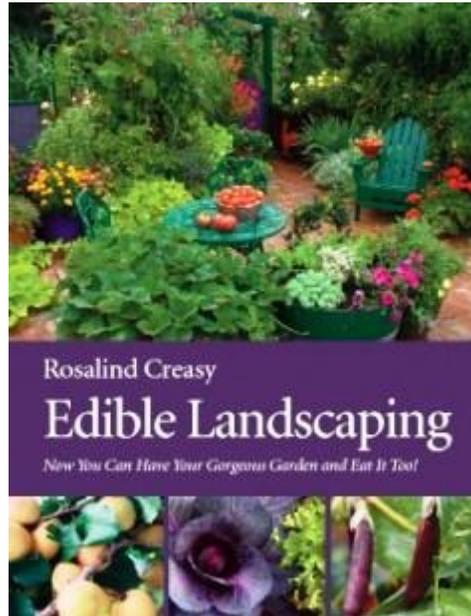


***Come Alive Outside EDGE Webinar
on September 6th***

Drawing People into the Landscape with Edible Landscaping

Featuring: Rosalind Creasy, author of Edible Landscaping
Date: September 6, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. EDT

Human life is deeply connected with plants, but for so many people these days, interaction with them is severely limited. There is no one better positioned to put people back in touch with plants than the Landscape Profession. One of the most irresistible ways to interact with plants is growing and eating edible fruits, vegetables and nuts! Anyone who grew up working in the garden with their parents or grandparents knows the joy of being outside and tending to the plants there until they were ready to eat. In this webinar, we will talk about how edibles can be integrated into an ornamental landscape in a way that makes the design more beautiful and entices people to come outside and interact with the plants in their yards.



There is no one better qualified to talk about edible landscaping than Rosalind Creasy. She began her career in horticulture in the 1970s as a landscape designer and restaurant consultant. By 1982 she had published her first book, *The Complete Book of Edible Landscaping*, which won the Garden Writers Association's Quill and Trowel award, was chosen as a Book of the Month selection, and hailed by the *Wall Street Journal* as the best garden book of 1982. Considered a classic, it coined the term "Edible Landscaping," now a part of the American vocabulary.

Join us as we talk about how you can incorporate edibles into your designs in such a way that you can capture business opportunities by making the world a better place. When children and adults alike are drawn outdoors by the beautiful spaces and plants that they have in their yard, our families and communities become healthier. As a wise person once said, "If you want children to eat spinach, plant spinach. If you want them to eat Brussels sprouts, plant Brussels sprouts!"

Register [here](#) for webinar.

2013 FACE TO FACE

Only ONE More FACE TO FACE this year!

September 12
Chapel Valley Landscape Company
Woodbine, Maryland



Few companies in the industry have such a long running and stellar reputation as **Chapel Valley Landscape Company**, and this is your opportunity to learn from decades of experience while observing a company that has risen to meet today's challenges and consumer interests as well. Serving the Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC region, Chapel Valley Landscape Company offers unparalleled design, installation and maintenance for both residential and commercial properties. Founded in 1968 by J. Landon Reeve IV, Chapel Valley has developed distinctive, award-winning landscapes that have been the hallmark of the company's commitment to creativity, quality and service. Landon is a past President of PLANET and he is excited to open the doors for a look behind the scenes in their first Face-to-Face event.

Face-to-Face is a unique, behind-the-scenes look and deep dive into the business operations of a successful landscape company. Attendees love these events because...

- They interact with other business leaders on a personal level.
- They take a small group tour of the facility in a systematic way that allows them to hear presentations from key personnel and to ask their most pressing questions.
- They have a chance to analyze the business and suggest improvements for the owner.

- They're shown rather than told what they can do to make their company better.

**[Download the registration form
and fax it back now!](#)**

In Partnership with PLANET and Smart Companies



**[Come Alive Outside
Tip of the Day](#)**

Sit quietly outside for 5-15 minutes. Soon you'll realize that you're surrounded by other beings. In nature, it's almost magical the way this happens. Their motion reveals them: A walking stick takes a few steps, compromising its camouflage. A black-throated blue warbler comes right up to you to investigate. The longer you stay still, the better.



Tip from "Fresh Ways to See Nature"
at chicagowilderness.org

Click [here](#) for a list of past Tips.

In partnership with PLANET and Smart Companies



Quotes

"Do not bother just to be better than your contemporaries or predecessors. Try to be better than yourself."

- William Faulkner

"The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement."

- Anonymous

"Best is the evil enemy of better"

- Anonymous LEAN axiom

"I know I am getting better at golf because I am hitting fewer spectators."

- Gerald Ford

"You cannot expect to achieve new goals or move beyond your present circumstances unless you change."

- Les Brown

"Don't find fault. Find a remedy."

- Henry Ford

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