

Everything done with Integrity – Arizona's first accredited tree care company

When John Eisenhower, president of Integrity Tree Service, Inc. in Scottsdale, Arizona, started the business in 1989, he chose the name Integrity because that word defined how he wanted the company to operate.

"We believed from the start that if we did everything above board, hired legal workers, paid all of our taxes, maintained the right insurance, and delivered quality work, customers would follow," says Eisenhower. "And we knew that a mindset of integrity would set the bar high for ourselves. Our calling card is quality pruning with an attention to detail. We emphasize that we have certified arborists on staff who adhere to the ANSI A300 pruning standards."

Of course, most consumers can't recognize the subtle differences between proper pruning and unprofessional hacking – and few have heard of the A300 standards – so Eisenhower works to educate consumers while selling tree work. He explains what proper pruning is during the on-site consultation stage. Included with proposals is information about pruning standards and practices. They also have an A300 summary sheet with definitions that they e-mail to potential clients along with proposals.

Word has indeed spread in the greater Phoenix area about a company that operates with professional integrity – from satisfied clients to landscape companies who refer work.

"Most of our business is word of mouth at this point," explains Eisenhower. "We dropped our ad in the Yellow Pages two years ago to put the money into strategic business planning. We don't spend any money on newspaper advertising either. We keep very busy through client referrals, and a number of landscape companies in the area have come to trust us with all of their customers' tree work. A couple of the larger ones have made us their 'go to' tree service."

When Eisenhower first heard about the Accreditation program launched by TCIA he knew its goals were a perfect match for the direction he wanted to take his company.

"The Accreditation process was in step with everything we wanted to accomplish, everywhere we wanted to go," he confirms. "We had been working pretty hard over the last



Integrity Tree Service, Inc. in Scottsdale, Arizona, became the first tree care company in the state to earn TCIA Accreditation.

year on a lot of the same items on the Accreditation checklist. We knew Accreditation would help hold our feet to the fire to bring our company to where we wanted to be. We had a strategic business plan and that plan dovetailed beautifully with Accreditation."

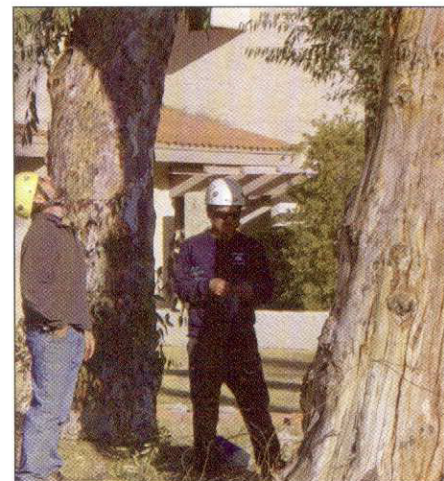
Of course, long-range planning is difficult for a small company. Setting up business systems that will improve profitability next month and next year doesn't necessarily help make payroll next week. For that reason, many smaller company owners don't think they can afford the time to become Accredited. Eisenhower disputes that notion.

Integrity is a small company, with just nine employees. Eisenhower believes that Accreditation is not only possible for small companies but that one of the greatest benefits will be enjoyed precisely because they are smaller companies.

He notes that large firms have employees whose job is to make sure the company follows all of the regulations, laws and rules that apply to a commercial tree care company. For

the smaller firm, that job often falls on the owner who just doesn't have the time. Accreditation can help.

"Accreditation has moved our business forward in a lot of areas," he says. "It opened my eyes to legal requirements from OSHA and the Department of Transportation. TCIA also



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provided lots of forms, templates and checklists that really simplified the whole process. That was a big benefit. Accreditation will help us with employee reviews, too, in letting the guys see where they are, helping them set personal goals, and pushing us all toward where we want to go. I can't say enough about the program and how excited we are with the credential."

Eisenhower did most of the work toward Accreditation himself, with the help of his field supervisors, but he also credits Bob Rouse [TCIA director of Accreditation] with helping move them along. "Bob was awesome. He was available by phone or e-mail

whenever I had any questions. We saw early on that TCIA was our partner in helping us achieve our company goals and we were simply borrowing from their years of experience in business management. When I brought the Accreditation checklist to our business consultant, he was very impressed with the depth and thoroughness of the program. He is a very sharp consultant and has developed a high level of respect for TCIA and the business help the association provides."

In preparation for his audit, Eisenhower can't guess at how many hours it took to become accredited, though he estimates it wasn't too many.

"I was a little scared when I set the on-site audit date, wondering if we would be ready,"

he says. "We didn't pass everything during the audit. There were a few critical action items we needed to complete and send in afterward. Then, a couple weeks later, we received final word that we were the first accredited company in the state.

"It makes the guys proud to be part of an organization that takes safety and quality work seriously," he stresses. "It also helps our small team pull together by gaining recognition that we are doing things right. A few years ago we included in our mission statement that we wanted to become the best tree service in Arizona. We still have a long way to go, but with Accreditation, I can sleep well at night knowing that we are doing everything we are supposed to do."

News from the Feds

Association health plans taken off life support

On Thursday, May 18, Senate Democrats blocked legislation that would have allowed associations like TCIA offer health insurance plans to members. The bill would have offered small businesses a way of purchasing

low-cost health insurance directly from TCIA.

The Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization Act got majority support (55-43) but needed 60 votes to move forward. Only three senators crossed party lines, with Democrats Mary Landrieu (LA) and Ben Nelson (NE) voting for the bill and Republican Lincoln Chafee (RI) voting against.

The bill would have mandated that Association Health Plans offer the same benefits that were provided to state employees in the five most populous states (California, Texas, New York, Florida or Illinois), but would have preempted state mandates in other states. This led 39 state attorneys general and organizations such as the American Cancer Society to oppose the bill.

News from the States

Call to action in New Jersey

New Jersey members who have an interest in good and safe tree care practices are asked to lend their support to help move along the Licensed Tree Expert legislation. Bills have been introduced in both chambers, but they need to be moved to committee level for hearings.

TCIA members involved in this effort ask you to contact your legislator and ask them to co-sponsor or at least support Senate bill S1199, sponsored by Senator Robert W. Singer. The assembly bill is A2589, sponsored by Assemblyman Ronald S. Dancer and John F. McKeon.

If anyone has a connection with any one on the following list of committee members, please contact them and ask for their support. It would also be helpful to contact the legislative aides and tell them you support the bills. The legislative aides will compile the list of those who support or oppose the bills. TCIA members working toward passage would like to have at least one hearing in either committee in June. Please contact:

Senate Commerce Committee

Nia H. Gill, Chair, District 34, Montclair, (973) 509-0388

Nicholas P. Scutari, Vice Chair, District 22, Linden, (908) 587-0404

Gerald Cardinale, District 39, Cresskill, (201) 567-2324

Raymond J. Lesniak, District 20, Union, (908) 624-0880

Robert W. Singer, S1199 sponsor, District 30, Jackson, (732) 901-0702

Assembly Regulated Professions and Independent Authorities

Wilfredo Carabello, Chair, District 29, Newark, (973) 350-0048

Brian P. Stack, Vice Chair, District 33, Union City, (201) 330-3233

Peter J. Biondi, District 16, Sommerville, (908) 252-0800

Patrick J. Diegnan, District 18, South Plainfield, (908) 757-1677

Douglas H. Fischer, District 3, Bridgeton, (856) 455-1011

James W. Holzapfel, District 10, Brick, (732) 840-9028

Vincent Prieto, District 32, Secaucus, (201) 770-1303

Joan M. Voss, District 38, Fort Lee, (201) 346-6400

Senate Commerce Committee

Democratic Aide, Linda Schwimmer, (609) 292-5215

Republican Aide, Olga Betz, (609) 292-5199

OLS Aide, David J. Lorette, (609) 984-0445

Assembly Regulated Professions Committee

Democratic Aide, Katrina Fuentes, (609) 292-7065

Republican Aide, Tasha M. Kersey, (609) 292-5339

OLS Aide, Laurence A. Gurman, (609) 984-0445

