

A Memorable Visit to 1 WTC



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This past October contractors participating in the Dynamic Concepts peer group visited New York City and toured 1 World Trade Center (1 WTC), the rebuilding of the site known as Ground Zero. The 104-story 1 WTC rises 1,776 feet over the Manhattan skyline. Sometimes called The Freedom Tower, it is the primary building on the 16-acre site in Lower Manhattan. It stands in tribute to the almost 3,000 people lost in the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. Three new office buildings also share the site of the original World Trade Center site.

It's hard not to feel the history and recall the devastation of 9/11. The long lines of visitors entering the site is a tribute to the nation's remembrance and fortitude.

Visitors to the site can tour the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. It is now open, so anyone visiting the site knows that a terrorist attack can't stop our nation or our way of life.

Cory Lay, GM of AA Tex Lawn Co. in Matthews, N.C., arranged the tour of Ground Zero just prior to the meeting of the Dynamic Concepts peer group. For Lay, a veteran of the first Gulf War, and Mike Bellantoni Sr. of Michael Bellantoni, Inc., White Plains, N.Y., a navy veteran, the visit had very special meaning.

"I believe every American should visit Ground Zero and see the magnitude of 9/11," said Lay. "Only seeing it on the news just doesn't do justice to how large of an area was effected. To see the area today speaks volumes to what a great country we live in. So many are working for our freedom and they do not get the recognition that is due. Now, I know I'll never forget."

AA Tex Lawn Co. is one of several hundred North American land care companies that participate in the Green Care for Troops program sponsored by Project

EverGreen. Green Care for Troops is a nationwide outreach program coordinated by Project Evergreen (<http://projectevergreen.org>) that connects local green industry professionals with men and women serving our country in the military away from home.

After the Ground Zero visit, the group traveled the short distance across the Hudson River to Allendale, N.J., where Borst Landscape & Design hosted the first of two days of meetings and business discussions. On the second day of the Dynamic Concepts peer meeting, we met at Chris James Landscaping in nearby Waldwick. Chris James Landscaping is also a member of Green Care for Troops. "We are happy to show our gratitude by providing free maintenance and lawn care services for them," said James.



[Click image to enlarge.](#)

(l. to r.) John Steele, Mike Bellantoni, Ron Lester, Mike Bellantoni, Jr., Matt Bellantoni, Rick Cuddihe, Cory Lay, Mark Lay at 1WTC.

Taking turns on the hot seat

The major part of the meetings was a unique session called "You're in the Hot Seat." Members came prepared to discuss their specific business issues and challenges, and to receive valuable feedback from the other members during their time in the hot seat. The members discussed a variety of issues that affect companies in our industry and took away suggestions that will help their businesses. Several of the hot seat topics are described below.

The group had a lively discussion and shared ideas for growing sales, improving marketing and choosing the right clients.

Every business plans to increase sales, however, not all customers offer contractors the right mix of work and profit earned. The group drilled into ways to target profitable jobs with existing clients and finding the right type of new customers. In talking through this topic, the group members concluded that their strategic marketing programs should be geared toward profitable work and the right clients.

How you purchase, finance or lease vehicles and equipment is important in today's business environment. Members shared their situations and discussed the best approach to streamlining fleet acquisitions. Preventative maintenance is a big expense and each member reported how they strive to keep their vehicles and equipment in top condition at the lowest cost.

Motivating managers who have been with the company for many years is always a challenge. A 15-year employee's compensation has been upgraded many times through the years. Long-term employees add value because of their experience and skills but like everyone else, they must be motivated. The group exchanged ideas on compensating and motivating valuable long-term employees.



Some markets are more mature than others and competitors have been operating in these markets for many years. This issue is very common outside highly populated cities, and especially in the U.S. Northeast, where companies that have been operating in the same market for 10-plus years have a huge number of competitors.

Group members discussed ways to profitably differentiate their businesses from competitors and grow revenue. Adding services, like lawn care was one key thought discussed. Members offered recommendations that worked in their own individual markets.

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