

As Our World Shrinks, Our Opportunities Expand



Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

One of my favorite movies is “The Incredible Shrinking Man.” I saw it as a boy and returned to it on DVD a year ago.

The 1957 movie tells of Scott Williams, a businessman, who, after being exposed to a mist from a radioactive cloud and months later to an insecticide, begins to shrink.

Initially, doctors are able to stop him from shrinking and Williams becomes a national celebrity. When the treatment becomes ineffective he starts to grow smaller again. The movie ends with Williams becoming so tiny that he escapes the basement through a hole in a window screen. Realizing he will continue to shrink to no more than an atom, Williams, looking to the sky and accepting his fate, reflectively takes solace in the fact that in terms of the vast universe, we’re all quite small – and “with God there is no zero.”

One year after the movie’s release, the world shrank – figuratively, of course. In October 1958, Pan Am instituted commercial jet travel in the U.S. with the flight of a Boeing 707. Within a few years, almost every major city on our globe became accessible within a day or two by air.

While technology continues to march on and shrink the globe in terms of inter-connectedness, it is greatly expanding the world in other respects, including opportunity. Of course, we must recognize and embrace technology to benefit from technology.

Specifically, I am referring to the technology embedded in the small devices that fit into the palm of our hands – our smartphones.

Society is becoming more mobile by the day (oops, make that by the minute). This has huge implications for all businesses, the landscape and lawn care business included. Tony Sagami’s recent “Connecting the Dots” newsletter

reminded me of this. Safami writes about financial matters in broad strokes.

Sagami, referring to research conducted by ZenithOptimedia, says that global media consumption increased from an average of 461.8 minutes a day in 2010 to 485.3 minutes a day in 2014, with it expected to rise to 506 minutes a day in 2017. Meanwhile, the Internet's share of overall media consumption will rise from 22.6 percent in 2014 to 28.6 percent in 2017.

In addition to consuming media, people are taking advantage of the conveniences that smartphones offer to enrich and streamline their lives, including researching, buying and paying for services and products while they are on the go. This same digital technology offers us, as professional service providers, incredible opportunities to market, sell, administer and run our businesses more efficiently.

This got me to thinking back almost three decades ago to the afternoon I spent with a landscape pro in Nashville. One of his biggest challenges, he told me at the time, was keeping track of his crews. On one occasion he discovered several of his technicians snoozing mid-afternoon in their service truck parked at the edge of a lake.

Later in the 1980s, a lawn care company owner near San Diego showed me the Motorola mobile radios (big, bulky affairs) he installed in his service vehicles to improve his company's efficiency and profitability.

Many of you have been in business long enough to remember when, in the 1990s and first decade of 2000, Nextel digital wireless took business communication and fleet tracking to a higher level yet. Nextel now seems like something from the Stone Age.

Like Scott Williams, The Incredible Shrinking Man, we may, in wonder, look to the heavens on a moonless night. But as we see the dot of a satellite pass through the stars, it may occur to us how much our planet has shrunk in terms of travel – but, thanks to technology, how much it has expanded our opportunities as individuals and business people.

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