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A Steady Climb From Zero to 60

By Heather Wood
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Maintaining a reputation and controlling growth can get you far. It has gotten Moore Landscapes through 60 years so far.

Victor Moore and his brother, Eric, have learned from their father what it takes to keep a business growing at a steady rate. They run the Northbrook, Ill.-based company their father started 60 years ago.

Victor started working for his father, Floyd, as a water boy at age 8. At that time, the company was called Moore's Landscape & Nursery. Now Victor oversees the company's strategy while Eric is more focused on fleet maintenance and association involvement, including serving as a past president of the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association.

The boys learned from their father how to gradually add bigger contracts to their plate, first maintaining residential accounts along Chicago's North Shore and later taking on multi-family installation projects.

Victor says he also has learned that civic contracts can be beneficial. Floyd Moore had won contracts with the city of Chicago in the 60s. The company became disillusioned, though, and the second generation of Moores got out of that market for a while.

"We didn't want to work for the city; our dad warned us they were slow in paying," Victor Moore says.



Floyd Moore, founder of Moore Landscapes.
Photos: Moore Landscapes

But the company eventually got back in the saddle. It started bidding on city projects again in the early 90s.

Moore Landscapes' municipal work includes maintaining the Chicago Park District floral gardens, a contract it has held for the past four years. Heeding the advice from his father, Victor knows what to expect with this type of contract, and the company is able to succeed. For those looking to tap into that market, he offers that you should be prepared for plenty of paperwork. Knowledge of city codes is important too, as the jobs involve working on the roads and in traffic. Also, you need a sizable amount of insurance and a large credit line because of the delay in payment. (Click [here](#) for more advice from Moore Landscapes about maintaining municipal projects.)

Moore Landscaping has learned the ins and outs to work efficiently on the civic projects.

"We would like to continue doing more work for city and park district," Victor says. "I think privatization is a trend that's going to continue."

LANDMARK DEALS. Partly because of the company's reputation, Moore Landscapes has been able to win contracts at some of Chicago's most notable landmarks, including the Sears Tower, where the company is testing green roof installations at the 90th floor level — a task that requires a lot of cable, Victor says.

The company also has connections to one of the newest Chicago landmarks. The company scored a contract to install landscaping on roof decks and on the ground the new Trump International Hotel & Tower, which opened to guests at the end of January. In the scheme of things, it's not a large project for the company, but it could prove to be memorable. "The Donald" called in person to negotiate the price with Vice President of Construction Christopher Coe, who wouldn't lower the bid. Trump still hired the company for the job.

"(Trump) wanted to make sure it was best price, and it was," Victor says.

HOLDING STEADY. Growth seems to be a constant for Moore Landscapes.

"We've been able to grow consistently, at almost 10 percent a year, and it's been organized somehow," Victor says.

The organized growth was helped by the addition of a chief operating officer position in

2006 and the hiring of Brian Stanley, formerly of Initial Tropical Plants.

"We want to continue to grow, but don't want to shoot ourselves in the foot and grow too fast," Victor says. "We've been doing pretty well – knock on wood."

Even though it was controlled, the growth resulted in Moore Landscapes becoming too big for its space. Having a large landscaping operation in the midst of homes wasn't working anymore.

"We were surrounded by residential development. Using the land for our landscape yard wasn't the best use," Victor says.

The company moved from Glenview to its current location in Northbrook in 2000 and the old property was developed into 66 townhomes. In addition to Northbrook, the company has satellite offices in Schaumburg, at the O'Hare International Airport and in Chicago, and more could be on the way. It's all about cutting down on travel time, Victor says.

That illustrates how far the company has come in 60 years. The size of a current Moore Landscapes satellite yard likely is larger than the company's original location: a garage that housed a one-man operation. Today it's a \$20-million company, which ranked No. 67 last year on Lawn & Landscape's list of the top 100 revenue-earners in the industry.

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