

Get to Know Marty Grunder



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Marty Grunder's work day extends well beyond his Dayton-based creative landscape design, installation and maintenance business, Grunder Landscaping Co., which has won numerous awards recognized for its high level of service and sustained growth.

As the founder of Marty Grunder! Inc., a business consulting company, he also provides speaking, training and consulting services to entrepreneurs and business leaders. He also wrote "The Nine Super Simple Steps to Entrepreneurial Success," which was named the Business Book of the Year at the 2003 Independent Publisher Book Awards.



Grunder enjoys pushing the envelope on Midwest landscape design, including creative solutions for water features and outdoor entertaining spaces. He is particularly proud of his Aileron installation, a 60-acre prairie oasis that includes the installation of more than 2,000 woody and herbaceous plants, theme gardens, 2 miles of meandering woodland trails and an island with boat access.

Year founded: 1984

Client mix: 85% residential, 15% commercial

Service mix: 62% design/build, 38% maintenance

Business motto: Fine Landscaping for Fine Homes!®

Grunder's entrepreneurial talents have been recognized with numerous awards. He is a two-time Ohio Young Entrepreneur of the Year award winner and the Young Entrepreneur of the Year for the entire Midwest, as selected by the

Small Business Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. He was also named by Ernst & Young as the Dayton/Miami Valley Entrepreneur of the Year in 2001. He has also received his Ohio Certified Nursery Technician Master Certification.

In addition to his role as a business leader, he sits on the boards of Park National Bank, the Dayton Development Coalition and is a member of the University of Dayton Business Advisory Council.



Proudest moment in the landscape business: I honestly can't say I have a proudest moment. I'm most proud of the people we have and how so many of them have grown personally and professionally at Grunder Landscaping Co. I see jobs we have completed daily and the clients we have delighted resulting from their efforts, not mine. We have a company that is much more than Marty Grunder now and that's what makes me most proud.

Biggest business challenge: Attracting and keeping great people. I don't allow my people to say, "We can't find good people." Instead, we talk about what we can do—maintaining a positive approach. Our high standards, the Obama administration's games with the H-2B program, recruiting and keeping excellent employees also continue to be challenges.

Best sources of landscape design/build inspiration: Touring other gardens and looking at the work of other design/ build contractors across the country.



Favorite plant or plant combination: I love to use Sedum ellacombianum. It's an excellent performer in Ohio. I also am fond of deciduous hollies and Bobo hydrangea.

Monday morning motivation: Seeing 55 people organized, hustling around the shop and working with a sense of purpose.

Business worry that keeps you up at night: An accident. Safety is a big priority. The last thing I want to do is visit a spouse or family member to tell them their loved one has been hurt. All accidents are preventable.



Landscape design mentor: That's easy: Frank Mariani from Mariani Landscape in Chicago. I've known Frank for more than 25 years. He showed me, by example, what was possible and he's inspired my whole team to be the best we can be. I would rather spend time listening to him than any other person in the world.

Editor's note: Read our piece, "Get to Know Frank Mariani" [here](#).

Favorite business or landscape design book: Dr. John Maxwell's "21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership." It's hands-down the best book on leadership ever written. John is a friend of mine who has taught me a lot as well.



Landscape design project that makes you smile every time you drive past it:

It would be Aileron. It's the single most impressive project we've ever worked on. [Aileron](#) is a special place in Dayton, Ohio, that entrepreneurs go to learn professional management. I am actually lucky enough to teach there. Aileron was founded by Clay Mathile, the former owner of the Iams Co. It's an incredible property: 130 acres with about 75 acres of natural prairie we installed and now maintain. Each time I'm on the property, I smile. It has been especially rewarding to see the prairie mature.

Describe your business in five years: I see us doing more of the same. I'll be right here developing leaders and still designing and selling. We have talented people who handle the other parts of the business, including administration, production and finance. This allows me to work in my strength zone, which is awesome. We are a 32-year overnight success story! Ha! I Despite our success, I still have a lot to learn. My wife reminds me of that all of the time.

Connect with Marty Grunder and Grunder

Landscaping Co.

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