

He likes running his own business

Certified Arborist John Stephenson enjoys most aspects of being a small business owner.

John Stephenson (B.S. 2000) is owner and general manager of Stephenson Tree Care, Inc. located in Madison. As a small business owner, John handles many different aspects of running a business. He sets up contracts for tree pruning and removal, diagnoses insect and disease problems, and handles pretty much all aspects of tree and shrub care. Working with him are six full-time and two part-time employees.

"The best part about my job is that I set my own schedule, interview and hire my own employees, and for the most part enjoy the challenges that come with dealing with and against competition and market forces," says John.

"Every day is a little different. And I feel good about being able to

help my customers with their tree related problems." The downside is all the paperwork associated with running a small business. "There are so many details to keep track of," says John. "And the devil is in the details. If you don't take the time to collect accurate field data, identify the objectives, and translate that into understandable work orders or proposals, your clients will see trouble from a mile away."



John Stephenson (right) and employee Will Martens do a pre-climb inspection and cable installation on "the old shade tree." The photo was taken by Steve Reinhart, also a FE&M alumnus who worked with John's company several weeks during the winter.

To prepare for a career in forestry, or any other career, John starts with basic principles of human relations. "Follow through with your commitments and never take advantage of anyone. Treat people with the respect that you would expect yourself and do not be afraid of hard work. What comes around goes around," he stresses. Also, "Network, network, network!" John advises students to "get their name out there" by joining relevant associations such as Society of American Foresters, International Society of Arboriculture, and Wisconsin Arborists Association.

John also suggests students keep in mind that the classes they are taking in college will soon be the foundation for their livelihood. So take full advantage of each class and instructor and

don't be afraid to ask for help. Lastly, speaking from experience, John suggests students "talk to professionals in your field of interest, since they like to talk about themselves. They can give you incredible insight into the workings of the profession and maybe save you time, angst, or indecision in regards to career choice and objectives."