

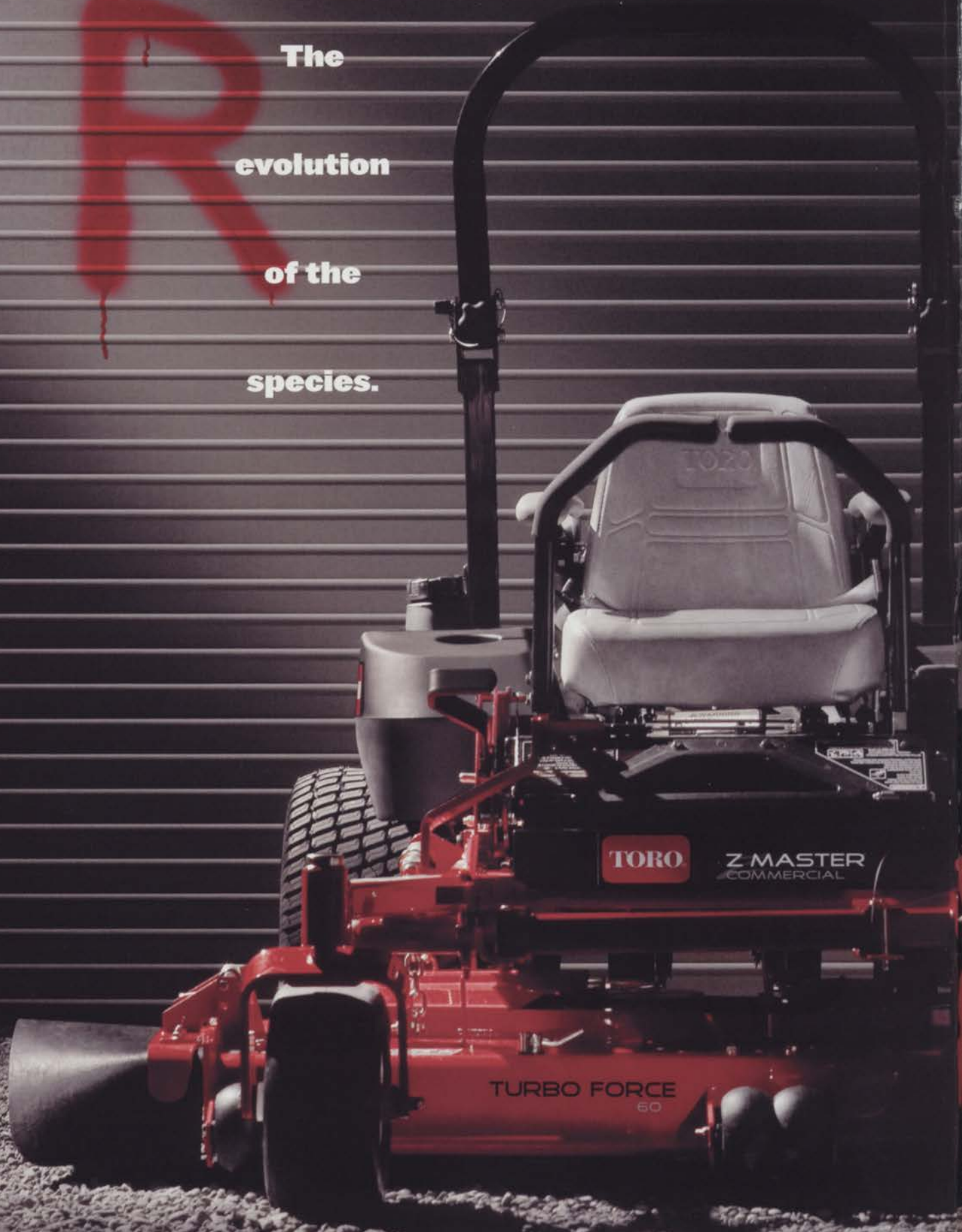
November 2003

Lawn & Landscape®

Consolidation **SHAKE OUT**

Five years
after the
mega deals,
the winners
and losers
share what
they learned.

**The
evolution
of the
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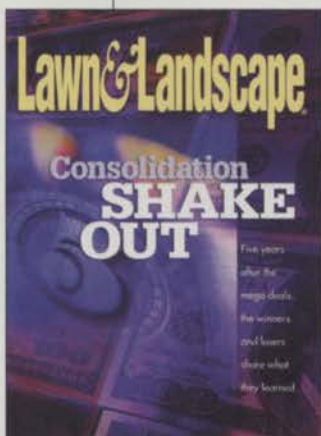
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TORO

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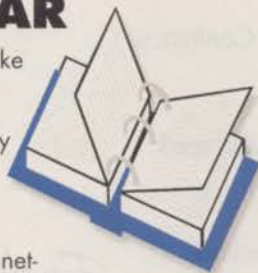
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Lawn & Landscape.com

Find this month's features, plus exclusive online stories, industry databases and more at www.lawnandlandscape.com.

ONLINE EVENTS CALENDAR

Check out our online listing of industry-related events, and make arrangements to attend upcoming conferences, courses and trade shows. Don't see your organization's event listed? Notify us and we will add your event to the *Lawn & Landscape* calendar. Visit <http://www.lawnandlandscape.com/events/> today so you don't miss out on educational opportunities and networking possibilities that could help you grow your business.



GREEN INDUSTRY EXPO COVERAGE

GIE
Today
News of Professional Products, People and Ideas

The Green Industry Expo (GIE) is recognized across North America as a premier event for lawn, landscape and grounds professionals. Extensive coverage of this year's expo, scheduled Nov. 5-8 in St. Louis, Mo., will be provided by *Lawn & Landscape* Online. Look on lawnandlandscape.com for a detailed review of the event's educational offerings, trade show highlights and field day demonstrations.

Lawn & Landscape
Online Extras

ONLINE EXTRAS

Browse *Lawn & Landscape* Online for a collection of exclusive Web stories relative to this month's issue:

- This month, visit *Lawn & Landscape* Online for information about man-made focus areas that can be used to add natural-looking features to landscape designs.
- Pick up some helpful tips for working with Hispanic laborers.
- Check *Lawn & Landscape* Online for information about insect and disease control for rhododendrons.
- Look for more details about tree diseases and conditions that may be impacting your daily work.

WEB TOOLS

DAILY NEWS

Green industry news updates every day. www.lawnandlandscape.com

INDUSTRY EVENTS

A comprehensive list of conferences, trade shows and seminars for the landscape professional. www.lawnandlandscape.com/events

BUSINESS FORMS

A diverse collection of forms to help you run your green business more effectively. www.lawnandlandscape.com/tools

MESSAGE BOARD

The industry's most interactive message board. www.lawnandlandscape.com/messageboard

INDUSTRY LINKS

A user-friendly index of the green industry, containing categorized information about contractors, dealers and suppliers. www.lawnandlandscape.com/links

ASSOCIATIONS

An easy-to-navigate directory of local, state, national and international industry associations. www.lawnandlandscape.com/associations

PRODUCT DIRECTORY

A growing compilation of industry products, complete with photos and manufacturer contact information. www.lawnandlandscape.com/product

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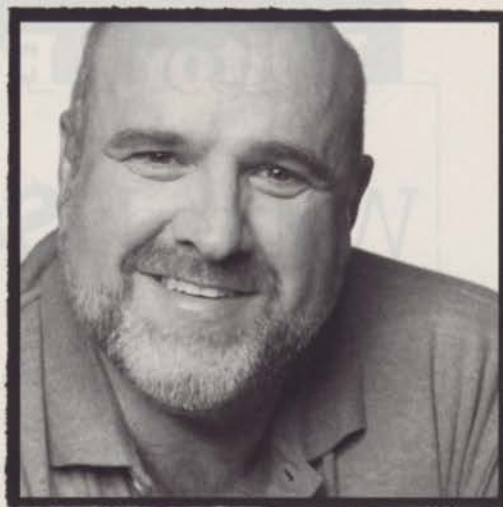
An interactive listing of industry manufacturers and suppliers. www.lawnandlandscape.com/marketplace

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Wanted: Sane Owners

You wear a lot of hats – being ultimately responsible for sales, marketing, invoicing, hiring, training, purchasing, scheduling, budgeting, facilities, service quality, business planning and general problem solving for clients and employees. On a bad day you might be involved in all of those areas before lunch.

I'd like to suggest two things that can help you sort out some of the insanity. No, I'm not going to talk about time management and delegation, although both can be important. What's more valuable is to see the underlying issues behind the classic trap most business owners find themselves in – trying to please everyone and focusing on day-to-day tasks.

As a business owner you are successful because you get things done for people. The tendency of

many effective people is to want to please people at any cost, which starts by saying things like, "Sure, I can have that done for you by next Thursday." The other person is pleased, you feel good, and all that's left is trying to figure out how to get it done by Thursday. If you say "Yes" too often, some commitments will be broken.

Briefly, this symptom is called being a "Yesaholic." It's an overbalance in wanting to help people. It's a balance issue because pleasing people leads to success while breaking commitments damages your reputation and business.

The solution? Two tips from the pros: First, give yourself more time. If you think you might be able to get something done by next Thursday, then promise the following Monday. This way if you can get it done by next Thursday, great – you've exceeded the other person's expectations. But if not, then you've bought the time needed to meet the more realistic deadline.

Second, say "No" when something doesn't make sense. Someone else's problem is not yours

until you make it so. And remember that "No" is a complete sentence that does not require a long (or defensive) explanation.

The other concept to unshackle yourself from doing too much is to buy a copy of *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael Gerber. This best-selling, classic business book has changed many companies. One of the most powerful concepts is seeing the power of grouping under Technician, Manager or Entrepreneur.

Gerber states that many businesses begin with the owner as the technician – mowing turf, scheduling jobs and selling and collecting for work done – all technical work.

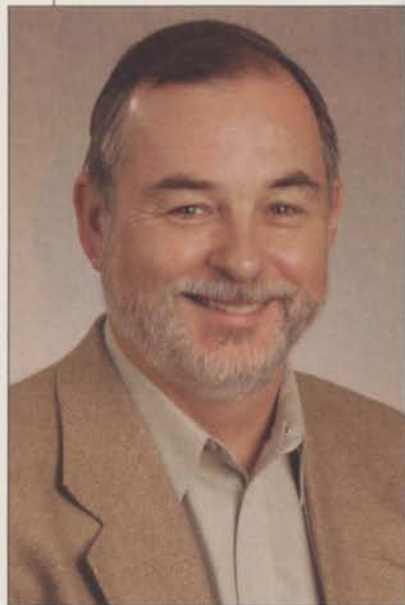
Management comes as the company grows and people and resources are added beyond what the owner can do himself or herself.

Entrepreneurial work is directing the business – what Gerber calls working "on" the business rather than "in" it. It is at this level that the owner is functioning as a true businessperson.

Everyone has to do technician and managerial work, but the most important work is done at the entrepreneurial level. For example, getting involved collecting on a past due invoice is technician work. Managerial work is making sure monthly statements have been produced correctly and on time. Entrepreneurial work is deciding if you should have a bookkeeper as an employee vs. outsourcing the work and whether your finance systems provide you with the right information fast enough to make the business decisions you need to make.

Obviously, it's important to collect on an overdue invoice. But the problem comes when owners stay so enmeshed in day-to-day technician work that they ignore their top-end business responsibilities.

Think about this: You can hire people to do the technician and managerial work. But only the owner can do the thinking and planning to make a business successful. ■



A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "Roger Staj".

Lawn & Landscape

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The Operating Room

Time for a Year-End Checklist

You only have a few more weeks before your year-end results become "water under the bridge." Hopefully you are looking at a record-breaking year in both growth and profits. If this is the case, you are doing a lot of the right things. However, don't get too complacent as there are a few more weeks left in the year. You still can incur some unnecessary expenses or have opportunities to increase profits even more. Here are a few thoughts for you to consider:

1. Are all of your clients ecstatic? Impress them with your service and quality so they are happy to renew their contracts or implement additional landscaping next spring. Personally talk to all of your clients as soon as possible. Inform them of what you are doing on their properties this month and suggest at least one additional service or item that you can provide as an extra to enhance their properties. The primary objective here is to get face to face with as many clients as possible before the winter doldrums set in.

2. Manpower requirements are probably diminished due to the limited workload this time of year. Do not hesitate to make additional and necessary hard decisions relative to labor. Remember, this is your biggest single expense and a

DON'T GET TOO COMPLACENT AS THERE ARE A FEW MORE WEEKS LEFT IN THE YEAR. YOU STILL CAN INCUR SOME UNNECESSARY EXPENSES OR HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE PROFITS EVEN MORE. — JACK MATTINGLY

couple of moves now will provide you with opportunities for success next year. Try to keep your labor on the lean side this time of year. Determine your backlog and the services you will provide and establish the budgeted man-hours to accomplish this work. How many people do you need to keep on the payroll?

For larger companies who have employees in the middle management arena, take a close look at your needs for this level of employee. I often see individuals working in this position who are marginal at best, but who are retained from year to year because of their tenure with the company. Do you want to put up with the same old things again next year and not be happy? This person is a drag on the overall objectives of the company. You know what you should do.

Jack Mattingly is a green industry consultant with Mattingly Consulting and can be reached at www.mattinglyconsulting.com or 770/517-9476.




I suggest you do it now and not wait until "after the holidays" or "after the first of the year."

3. Trade shows, conferences, seminars, etc. are abundant this time of year. All of them are excellent and are great opportunities to increase your technical and business knowledge. I suggest that every owner – no matter the size of your company – go to at least one function. I guarantee that you will learn something that will earn you many times more than what you spent to attend.

Many functions will be excellent for your employees to attend, as well. Review seminars descriptions closely to confirm that your employees will learn something that will help your company. Meet with all employees who will attend seminars and ask each of them to make a formal presentation to the staff when they return. This presentation should show what the employee learned and how the company might be able to implement these ideas. Specify the programs they are to attend. This way, you have an agenda that will produce beneficial results for the company. This now is a return on your investment.

4. By now, your equipment has been run hard and is dirty. Now is the time to develop a game plan for the winter to refurbish or repair your fleet. Do this in an organized manner to ensure you can complete everything by spring. You may have a mechanic or other employees assist in this. Assign specific duties and equipment to individuals along with written checklists of the necessary work. This will actually take some thought and organization and it may be helpful to gather a few employees and discuss how everything will take place. Set timelines and completion dates and hold each other accountable. With a system you will find that your equipment will look spiffy, employee morale will be better because they are operating good-looking equipment that runs well, and the image of your company will be that of a professional.

This also is the time to determine your new equipment needs and repair costs, and work the dollars in to your new 2004 budget. Contact your equipment dealers now, as you may find some favorable pricing this time of year.

Congratulations on a successful year. Tweak a few things in the weeks remaining and get off to a great 2004. 



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Where are the Deer?

I'm very excited for the opportunity to write this monthly column for *Lawn & Landscape*. As the founder and president of a multi-million-dollar landscape company that began with a \$25 lawnmower I bought at a garage sale, I believe I have a trick or two to share. In the coming months, I'll be addressing your sales and marketing concerns, so I think it's essential that we start at the beginning: your clients.

If you want your sales and marketing efforts to succeed, you must first know, in great detail, the types of clients you are pursuing and where you're likely to find them. Deer hunters understand this idea well. Where do they hunt for deer? In downtown Chicago? In the Caribbean? In a shopping mall? Of course not: They hunt for deer in the woods. Why? Because that's where the deer are.

This is, of course, painfully obvious, yet many landscapers fail to apply the same logic to their marketing efforts. When you don't know who and where your clients are, you're hunting for deer in the wrong places. Sure, once in a while, you'll get lucky and a deer will stray into your path, but this does not make the most of your time, energy and money spent.

Despite what we landscape contractors would like

to believe, a beautiful yard is not one of life's necessities. It is a luxury, and your clients are likely to be those who have invested their resources in their homes and now want yards to match. Think about where new housing developments are going up in your area, or where the older developments are whose landscapes are outdated or overgrown. Consider homes that are for sale whose value and appeal might increase if their yards were spruced up. Get to know local builders, realtors, and community leaders – people who can lead you, directly or indirectly, to these markets. Hang a map in your office and pinpoint the neighborhoods on which you should focus your efforts. Try canvassing them with a clever flyer. (For a free example, visit www.martygrunder.com.)

IF YOU WANT YOUR SALES AND MARKETING EFFORTS TO SUCCEED, YOU MUST FIRST KNOW, IN GREAT DETAIL, THE TYPES OF CLIENTS YOU ARE PURSUING AND WHERE YOU'RE LIKELY TO FIND THEM. — MARTY GRUNDER

Once you've established where your clients are and are likely to be, develop a profile of who they are. What do they do for a living? Where do they shop? What clubs do they belong to? Where do they eat out? What radio stations do they listen to? Which newspapers do they subscribe to? How old are they? Do they have kids? What do they do in their free time? If you can answer these questions, you can craft a more effective marketing plan and decide upon the venues you should use to implement it.

For example, if you discover your clients tend to support the arts, you might consider advertising at the local performing arts center. Or you might donate a paver patio to their silent auction, if in return they agree to give you their membership mailing list. Once you've gotten a new client or two from the list, you could price their jobs lower than you normally would, trading the loss in profit for the gain in recognition. You might place your company signs in these new clients' yards and ask them to write letters testifying to their satisfaction with your work. Then, send their letters to the rest of the neighborhood with an enticing offer for others to follow suit. With a little bit of savvy and initiative, you can establish your presence in the neighborhood and pave the way for future success.

Lastly, remember that a good reputation is always your best marketing tool. It speaks for itself. Treat your clients fairly and with great care, and through word-of-mouth alone you'll watch their number grow. **ll**

Marty Grunder is a speaker, consultant, author and landscape contractor. His company, Grunder Landscaping Co., is a multi-million dollar operation in Dayton, Ohio. His book, *The 9 Super Simple Steps to Entrepreneurial Success* is available at www.martygrunder.com and he can be reached at 937/847-9944.



Sure Thing #1:

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So, You Want to Be an Owner?

Over the years I've had the opportunity to consult with many rookie owners who were struggling with growing and developing a new business. I've also consulted with first-time owners facing a different problem – growing pains – the kind that stem from too much growth too quickly. In both cases, owners faced the same human resource challenge: the need to hire and retain the right people.

Time and again I watch talented technicians start companies without the faintest idea of how to prepare for or address the human resource component in the business. These owners quickly learn that ignorance is not bliss. They also learn the hard way that every business problem stems from a human resource problem.

While there's no way to anticipate or avoid all of the HR challenges that await a new business owner, there are some fundamental realities that, if understood and planned for prior to starting a company, can make owning a business more fulfilling and rewarding.

THE 10 BIGGIES. Let's take a look at the 10 things every owner must know about human resources.

1. You are who you hire. If you hire "employees from hell," you will soon have a "workplace from hell." The best way to avoid performance problems is not to hire them. Take the time to hire smart using an effective, legal, comprehensive and consistent process.

2. All it takes is one employee. One employee can bring down your business. From legal liabilities to workplace morale, one bad apple can start a downward spiral that leads to the end. Don't wait to address problems or issues.

3. Without trying, you create the culture of the organization. Culture is created by the attitudes and actions of a company's leaders — primarily the owner. It is shaped by what a company chooses to measure and control, how it handles crises, how managers coach and develop people, how employees are compensated and rewarded, and the processes used to select, promote, retain and terminate people. Take the time to define your company culture and then walk the talk.

4. A trusted adviser will make your life easier. It's lonely at the top, so develop a relationship with someone who can provide you with sound, objective and wise counsel.

Jean L. Seawright is president of Seawright & Associates, a management consulting firm located in Winter Park, Fla. For the past 16 years, she has provided human resource management and compliance advice to employers across the country. She can be contacted at 407/645-2433 or jpileggi@seawright.com.



5. People just aren't what they used to be. The workplace is more diverse than ever and Generation Xers and Ys are here to stay. Understand who these people are and how to motivate them. Accept the differences and learn to build consensus among all generations and cultures of workers.

6. Don't mess with employment regulations – discrimination, equal pay, overtime, minors, I-9s, FMLA, ADA, workers' compensation, unemployment, Drug-Free Workplace Act. Employment regulations govern nearly every employment decision you make. Consult an expert for advice before initiating a transfer, demotion, promotion, lay-off, termination, pay change, bonus plan, internal investigation, new benefit, employment policy or other decision. What you don't know can hurt you.

7. The No. 1 problem with most terminations is that they don't happen often enough. Avoid misdirected compassion — don't keep poor performers around out of sympathy. Your actions send messages to others (customers and employees) that you tolerate substandard performance. Result? You lose credibility.

8. Don't rely solely on your gut. Before you allow anyone to join your company, promote your image, interact with customers, make your bank deposits, use your equipment, copy your keys or represent you in any way, conduct thorough criminal, credit, reference, motor vehicle and other necessary background checks.

9. Train to retain. A key motivator for the younger workforce is the ability to grow personally and professionally. Provide your employees with opportunities to develop new skills and to assume new roles and responsibilities. Employees who are constantly learning and growing will be happier and more productive.

10. Avoid placing square pegs in round holes. This includes you. Learn about your personality and the personalities of your employees. Build upon strengths and place employees in positions where they can act naturally. Square pegs in round holes cause stress ... and stress (at best) lowers productivity. ■

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Sure Thing #2:

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BREAKING NEWS

Davey Tree Buys Tampa Company

The Davey Tree Expert Co. added another company to its growing list of industry acquisitions.

The Kent, Ohio-based organization expanded its commercial grounds management division by purchasing Top Gun Landscape, Tampa, Fla. — Davey's 12th acquisition in the past 18 months.

"Our primary objective has always been to find a company that fits Davey's strategic goals, and Top Gun does that," notes Karl Warnke, Davey Tree president and chief operating officer.

The recent deal unites Top Gun's staff—including the company's founder, Ed Bernard—with Davey's existing crew in the Tampa area. Under the acquisition's terms, former Top Gun accounts will now be serviced by Davey's Tampa commercial division.

Davey also has acquired the following companies in the past 18 months:

- Action Tree Expert Co., Naples, Fla.
- Boulder Tree and Landscape Co., Boulder, Colo.
- Charette Tree Service, Boston
- Denver Tree Specialists, Denver
- Environmental Turf Services, Pontiac, Mich.
- Horrigan Tree Industries, Chicago
- Kev's Tree Service, Hicksville, N.Y.
- National Shade, Houston
- Perennial Landscape, Indianapolis
- Quality Tree Care — Orlando, Fla.
- Thornton Grounds Care, Cincinnati
- Tree Care by Professionals—Houston

DAVEY



SERVICE SOLUTIONS

The Fast and the Furious

Mowing topped the list of this year's fastest growing service segments, according to a *Lawn & Landscape* survey of contractors.

Nearly 27 percent of contractors said turf mowing offered speedy growth, while landscape construction/installation services came in second with 15.5 percent of contractors picking this as their quickest growing service segment.

Hardscapes, fertilization and snow removal also made the list, with 9.2, 7.8 and 3.7 percent of contractors naming these services as revenue boosters, respectively.

What was your fastest growing service in 2003?

TOP 5 SERVICES	% OF CONTRACTORS
1. Turf mowing	26.5%
2. Landscape construction/installation	15.5%
3. Hardscapes	9.2%
4. Turf fertilization	7.8%
5. Snow removal	3.7%

Source: *Lawn & Landscape*

GARDENING TRENDS

What's In & Out for 2004 Landscapes

According to the Garden Media Group (GMG), a horticultural communication firm, the outlook for 2004 landscaping looks simple — literally.

"Clients are over-stressed and don't want the same pressure in their gardens," says Susan McCoy, GMG president. "There's a strong demand for gardening that meets low maintenance lifestyles."

According to Tres Fromme, planning and design specialist, Longwood Gardens, the biggest gardening trend today is simplicity. "Simple means bringing the calmness and serenity of dramatic uses of color and texture into the design," Fromme says, suggesting contractors pick one color and stick to it. "Once you pick a theme, it's easier to visualize and plan. An all white garden, for example, is very elegant and lights up a shady yard. Blue can be very healing, and pink gardens are cheerful. Or, work with similar colors, like pinks, lavenders and purples, to create harmony and give a sense of peace. Install 10 to 12 of one plant instead of two each of 10 different plants, and then plant them in a mass of color."

Steve Hutton, president of The Conard-Pyle Co., agrees. "Understatement is in," he says. "Think Japanese gardens instead of English cottage gardens. There is riot in everything we do. The riot does not need to be in our backyard. With simplicity, comes more of an emphasis on texture and subtle shades of the same color like green, purple or red in monochromatic schemes."



(continued on page 40)

Sure Thing #3:

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Market Trends

(continued from page 20)

NEWS TO NOTE

TruGreen Halts Research Efforts

DELAWARE, Ohio – A pioneering powerhouse of professional lawn care research has closed up shop.

The TruGreen Cos. Technical Center, Delaware, Ohio – a facility run by the country's largest lawn care company, TruGreen ChemLawn – has pulled the plug on an era of industry-guiding research.

"We are restructuring our business units and, at this point in time, we are phasing out the research area of business," explains Kirk Hurto, TruGreen's vice president of technical services. "Not everything has been done internally, but it is a matter of fact that [research operations] have been shut down. Right now we're reworking things to see how to move forward."

Some of the department's personnel – more than a dozen in number – have been reassigned within the TruGreen structure.

Calendar of Events

TO ENSURE

that your meeting date is published, send an announcement at least 12 weeks in advance to
Lawn & Landscape Calendar,
4012 Bridge Ave.,
Cleveland,
OH 44113.

NOV. 4-6 New York State Turfgrass Association Turf and Grounds Exposition, Rochester, N.Y. Contact: 518/783-1229

NOV. 5-8 Green Industry Expo, St. Louis, Mo. Contact: 888/303-3685 or www.gieonline.com.

NOV. 5-7 Penn State Golf Turf Conference, State College, Pa. Contact: 814/863-1017.

NOV. 5-8 California Landscape Contractors Association Annual Convention, San Antonio, Texas. Contact: www.clca.org.

NOV. 12-13 POWER EXPO 2003 - Landscape, Nursery & Turf Power Equipment Expo, Harrisburg, Pa. Contact: 800/898-3411 or www.plna.com.

NOV. 15 Ohio Commercial Pesticide Applicator Recertification Conference, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact: 614/292-4070.

NOV. 17-20 2003 Turf and Ornamental Seminar, West Lafayette, Ind. Contact: 765/494-8039 or www.mrtf.org.

NOV. 18-21 International Irrigation Expo, San Diego, Calif. Contact: 703/536-7080 or www.irrigation.org.

NOV. 19-22 2003 CLIP Users' Conference, Baltimore, Md. Contact: 800/635-8485 or www.clip.com.

DEC. 9-12 Ohio Turfgrass Conference & Show, Columbus, Ohio. Contact: 800/510-5296 or www.OhioLawnCare.org.

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Market Trends

Others, however, have opted to seek employment elsewhere. "Unfortunately, many of them have a forte in the research mode and are not interested in going into the operational side [of TruGreen]," Hurto adds. "We have employed the help of professionals to help them find suitable positions."

While some may question TruGreen's decision to halt in-house research, Hurto calls the move sensible. And although closing the technical center will save the corporation on research expenses, the company did not cut scientific studies from its budget based on cost.

"I'm not so naïve to say there's not a financial benefit to doing this," Hurto notes. "But, beyond the cost, we decided internal research was not a necessity from a business standpoint or an industry-wide perspective."

TruGreen will now rely on research developed by outside sources to continue to serve employees and customers. "We're not throwing data out," Hurto maintains. "We're just redirecting how we get it."

As he remembers the years of TruGreen-initiated research, Hurto acknowledges the accomplishments credited to the department.

Specifically, TruGreen's research group has contributed the conventional spray gun to the green industry at large. LESCO brought the product's rights back in the late '80s. Hurto's department did extensive testing relative to product chemistry and worker exposure as well.

While Hurto and others are no longer in the trenches of industry research, TruGreen will continue to keep its educated eyes on the pulse of upcoming developments. "We know what new chemistry is coming up," he mentioned. "We know what is coming down the pike in the next three to five years."

IN THE NEWS

TruGreen LandCare Gets New President

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - ServiceMaster announced the appointment of Robert Fates to the newly created position of president of TruGreen LandCare. TruGreen LandCare.

(continued on page 26)

On the WEB

Green Industry Expo -

www.gieonline.com

The Brickman Group -

www.brickmangroup.com

Grass Roots Consulting -

www.grassrootsconsulting.com

A.M. Leonard -

www.amleo.com

Berkeley Pumps -

www.berkeleypumps.com

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Market Trends

(continued from page 23)

"Becoming the leader of TruGreen LandCare gives Bob the opportunity to use his expertise in aligning people and processes to ensure that the LandCare team delivers customer service," explains Jonathan Ward, chairman and chief executive officer.

Fates, 57, developed five different businesses that were eventually sold to R.R. Donnelly & Sons, where he then served as senior vice president of Donnelly Logistics Services. Most recently, the entrepreneur served as chief operating officer for Inplex, an office services company. Previously, he had served as president of Paramount Technologies.

In other news, ServiceMaster sold Trees, Inc. to Asplundh Subsidiary Holdings for \$20.5 million.

Trees, Inc. was one of the original founding companies of LandCare USA, which was purchased by ServiceMaster to form TruGreen LandCare in 1998. This sales eliminates utility line clearing from the company's list of services.

(continued on page 39)

People

Rhodeside & Harwell promoted **Brad Garner** to associate of the landscape architecture firm.

Little Wonder and Mantis manufacturer Schiller-Pfeiffer hired **Stuart Bryan** as the company's new president.

At Tecumseh, **Paul Krishnan** was promoted to vice president of the engine and transmissions group.

Pete Johnson was named John Deere Landscapes area manager for California's Orange and San Diego counties.

Rick Ferguson joined Watts Industries as western regional sales manager for the backflow products division.

At Compuscapes, **Brent Totman** brings 25 years of green industry experience to the sales and management team.

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting made two personnel announcements: **Rick Baird** was named the national sales manager for the landscape irrigation industry and **Robert Shields** was named field technical specialist.

Shindiawa President **Tom Burch** is the newest member of the company's board of directors.

Tom Breier was named Midwest sales manager for Simplot Partners.



Rick Baird

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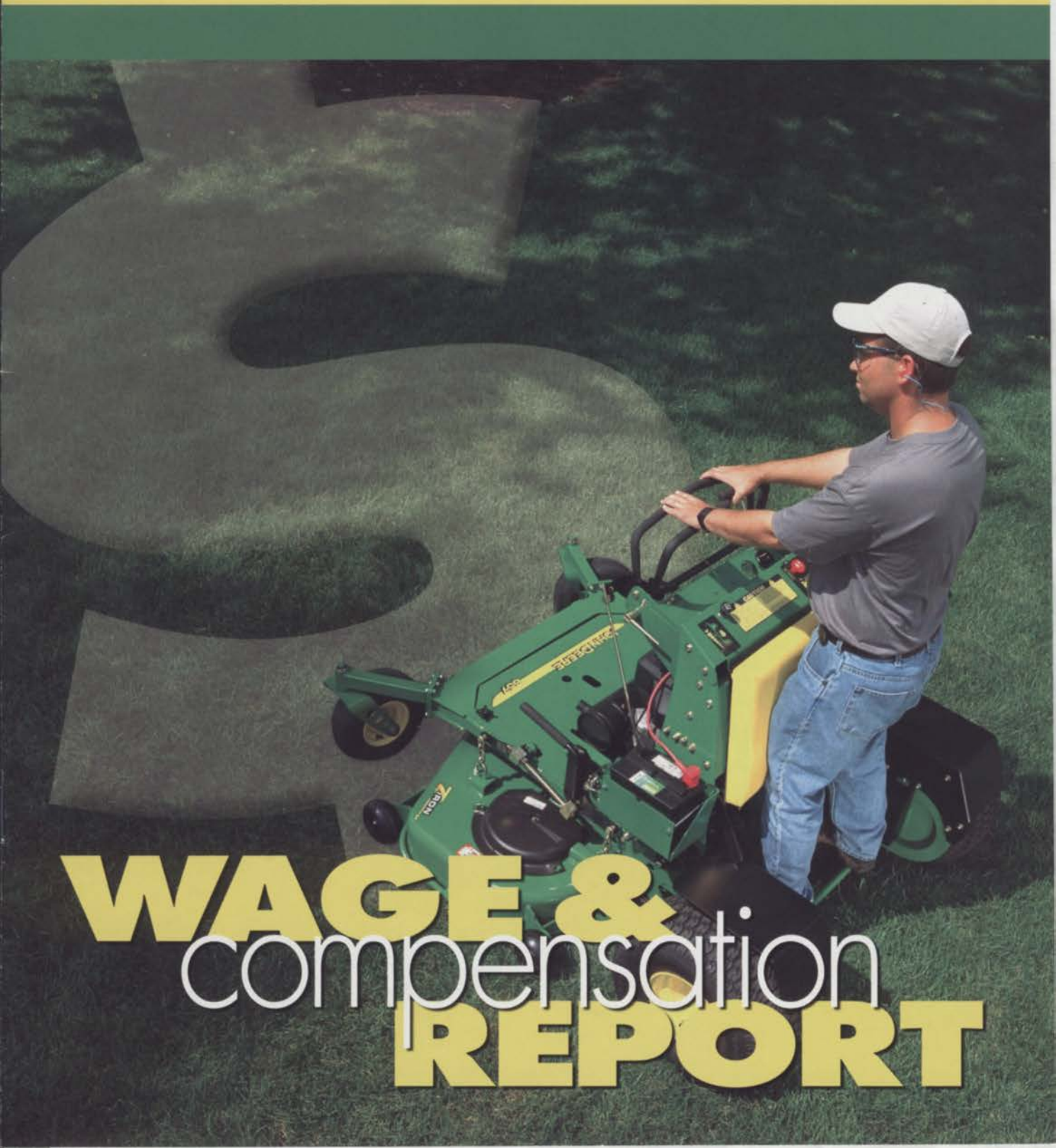
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2003

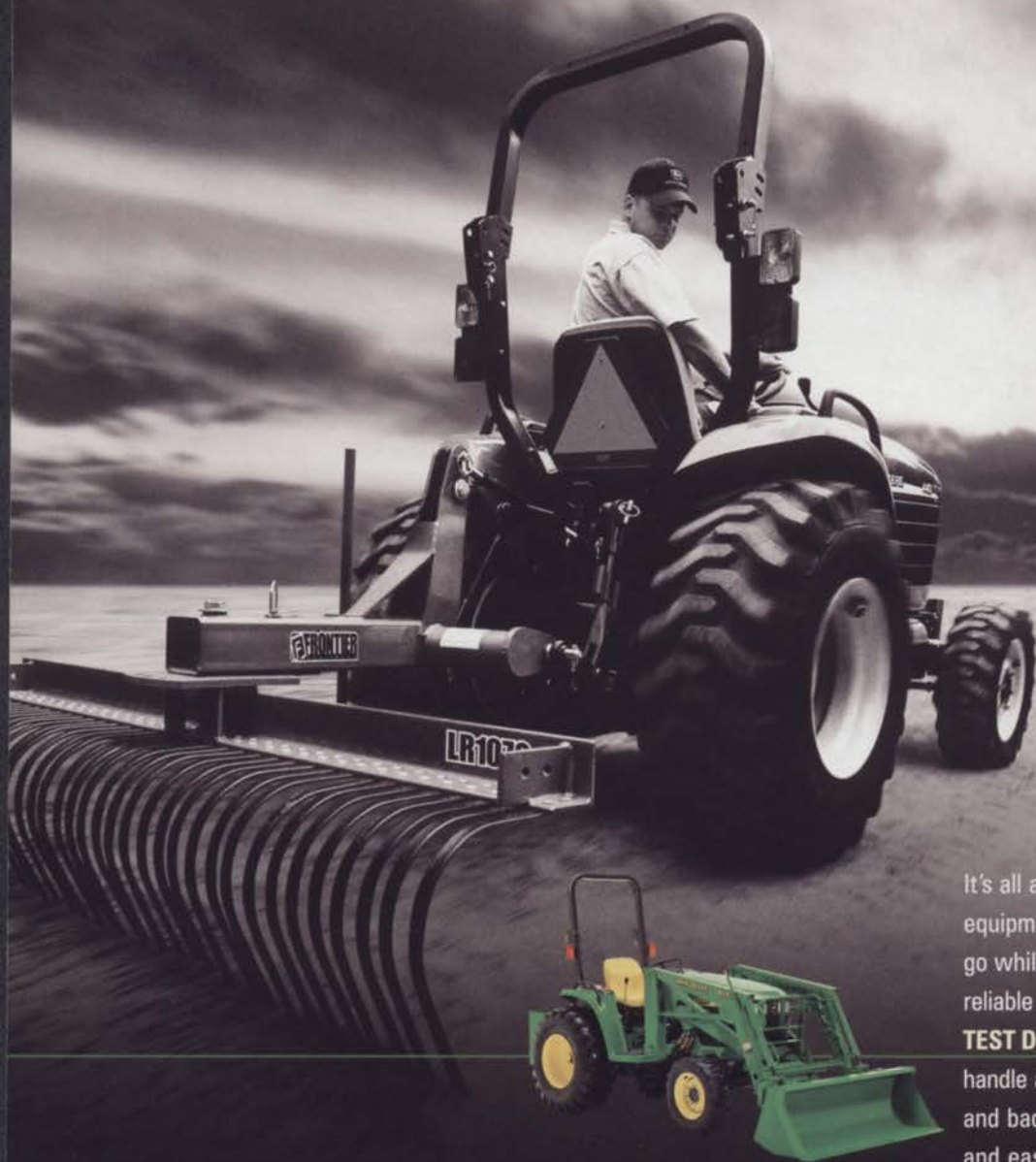
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WAGE & compensation REPORT



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John Deere is proud to sponsor the inaugural Wage & Compensation Report for *Lawn & Landscape* magazine. This timely review will help shed light on a critical aspect of the lawn and landscape industry and assist business operators and managers at all levels as they plan for and deal with increasing demands while trying to attract and retain qualified workers.

John Deere's commitment to the commercial landscaping industry began when we introduced our first lawn and garden tractor, the Model 110, more than 40 years ago. Since then, we've been paying close attention to how our customers get their work done – and dedicating an industry-leading percentage of our sales back into research and development so that they can get even more work done tomorrow. It's a strategy that has paid off for our company and our customers. In a June 2002 national survey, *Crain's Chicago Business* gave John Deere the top rank for its product quality.

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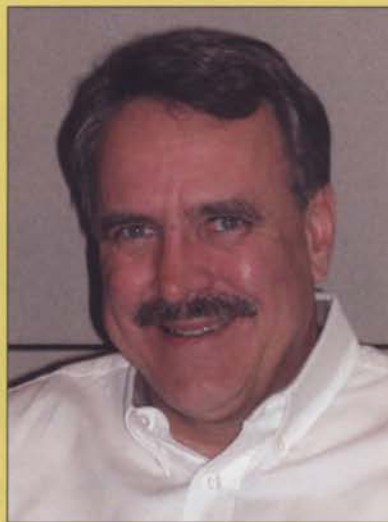
In addition to the right equipment, hiring and keeping the right people is a crucial element of your success. We believe that this study by *Lawn & Landscape* will help you plan for that future success.

As your grounds care needs change, John Deere will be right there with you. By offering reliable and efficient products that continually set the standards for commercial-grade landscaping equipment, our job is to make your job easier.

Best wishes for continued success,



John H. Carson
Manager, Commercial Customer Marketing



"In addition to the right equipment, hiring and keeping the right people is a crucial element of your success. We believe this study by *Lawn & Landscape* will help you plan for that future success."

- John H. Carson

in the GREEN

**Green industry wages and employment levels
buck the national trends.**



With almost universal attention focused on the war in Iraq, the issues of the economy and unemployment were downplayed in the American media in the first six months of 2003. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor unemployment rate was 6.4 percent in June, and this statistic doesn't count the number of people who gave up on their job searches. The unemployment rate hasn't reached this high point for more than nine years, since April 1994.

How does this affect the lawn and landscape industry? Does the green industry mirror national trends of layoffs, reduced benefits and decreased or stagnant wages?

Though other industries were reeling from the economic doldrums in 2003, the green industry maintained a cautious growth approach, rewarding workers with at least minimal wage increases. Some smaller companies sought alternative solutions to keep valuable employees on board.

In a Research USA Wage & Compensation survey conducted for John Deere, an interesting statistic emerged. On average, companies employ 13.5 full-time people and 11 seasonal workers. These statistics are flipped from the last year's *Lawn & Landscape State of the Industry* report, which showed averages of 11.7 year-round workers and 13.7 seasonal.

Based on annual revenue, companies with annual revenues between \$100,000 to \$499,999 and \$500,000 to \$999,999 maintained their employee rosters. However, companies exceeding \$1 million added an average of 18 employees from the previous year, according to the 2003 study.

Mark Clark, owner of Clark Landscape Group in Monroe, N.C., sums up the employee situation in his area this way: "The labor market is tight for skilled and dependable production team members, and I want to hold on to our team. Turn-over is costly."

Echoing those sentiments is Shawn Williamson, president of The Cutting Edge Landscaping in Granbury, Texas. "We find that it is very hard to maintain a work force that is reliable year after year, so we must be very consistent in wage increases and benefits," he says. "This is a large reason why we do keep the work force we have and have had the same employees for so long."

EMPLOYEE RETENTION. Retention drives wage and compensation. It's a simple equation: employee + training = experience. If an employee keeps changing, more training is necessary, which cuts into a company's profits. But, employees who stay longer contribute more experience and productivity to the company.

Based on 2003 Wage & Compensation survey results, larger companies retained more of their employees. Explanations for

BY DARLENE TAYLOR

"The labor market is tight for skilled and dependable production team members, and I want to hold on to our team. Turnover is costly."

- MARK CLARK, Clark Landscape Group

this trend run the gamut, including a greater opportunity for advancement, more stringent hiring practices through human resources departments, or even higher wages and more benefits.

"Potential team members won't come to work for you for poor wages, and people won't stay in a situation that they don't like for great wages," says James Reeve, president, Chapel Valley Landscape Company, Woodbine, Md. Reeve employs 275 year-round and 175 seasonal employees. "It is up to us to make sure they are in the right seat on the bus and get fairly paid."

Another larger player - CoCal Landscape in Denver, Colo. - employs 220 year-round and 180 seasonal workers. Tom Fochtman, vice president and co-owner, shares this philosophy: "In considering all levels of compensation, our goal is for our employees to be the most highly compensated in the industry," he says. "We feel that this is a very difficult industry - our people need to be paid well while they are gainfully employed at CoCal."

But often, smaller companies feel more of a pinch from employee retention issues and must use creative, intangible incentives that don't show up in paychecks. Bill Leidecker, president of Five Seasons Landscape Management, Columbus, Ohio, believes camaraderie helps retention. "We have parties during the year like many have, including Christmas, and a couple during the spring to keep a little humanity and humility in our workplace," he says. "It is these types of things that get cut out of budgets first - but it is these things that define an organization's culture and make it a fun place to work."

However, attracting and retaining workers isn't as easy as throwing a holiday party. One employment alternative is H2B, a government visa program that allows owners to hire Hispanic workers for a nine-month time period during the high season. The survey indicates that companies in the Mid-Atlantic states (Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York) and larger companies are more likely to participate in this program. Of the 4.4 percent of landscape contractors who use the H2B program, 11 percent of Mid-Atlantic contractors use the

program. Only 4.8 percent take advantage of H2B in the Southeast, followed by 4.1 percent in the West, 3.9 in the Northeast and 3.7 in the Southwest.

WAGE EXPENDITURES. A company's labor costs constitute 30 to 40 percent of overall revenues - sometimes higher. "Our direct labor in maintenance-related operations runs in the 50- to 55-percent range," Fochtman states. "Our direct labor in construction operations runs 20 to 22 percent."

But labor costs are a necessary expenditure, Williamson remarks. "Thirty percent of our gross income goes to payroll or compensation," he says. "It is a very high percentage, but we feel that without the work force, the company is nothing."

In general, companies increased wages in 2003, either to keep up with their competitors or to compensate employees for their experience. "Our increases averaged 5 percent," Leidecker says. "In past years, it has been more. The company has been outperforming the marketplace and industry averages since its inception. We achieve these results through our people and their wage increases reflect that."

Clark increased his production employees' wages by an average of 5.8 percent and bumped up supervisors' pay 7.1 percent. "I have a sound and reliable team with an excellent work ethic that shows good profitability, and it made increasing wages essential," Clark remarks. "You are only as good as your team, and I want to reward them for great effort." ■

RETENTION RATES

Percentage of companies reporting number of year-round employees by years of experience.

YEARS	PEOPLE			
	1-4	5-9	10-19	20 plus
Less than 1	31%	7%	3%	1%
1-2 years	36%	5%	4%	2%
3-4 years	35%	6%	3%	2%
5-9 years	37%	7%	2%	2%
10 plus years	38%	5%	2%	1%

Source: Research USA Wage & Compensation Survey

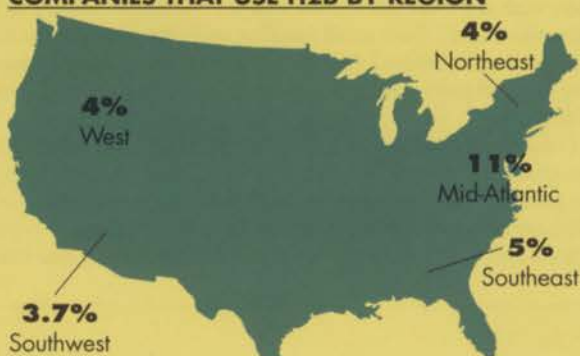
H2B EMPLOYEES

Companies that use the H2B visa program vary based on region and company size. Overall 4.4% of companies use the program.

COMPANIES THAT USE H2B BASED ON REVENUE

\$100,000 to \$499,999 revenue	1%
\$500,000 to \$999,999 revenue	10%
\$1 million plus revenue	12%

COMPANIES THAT USE H2B BY REGION



taking ROOT

Landscaping wages have grown well beyond the government's minimum wage level.

The federal government mandates a minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, but entry-level laborers earn an average of \$8 per hour, based on a Research USA Wage & Compensation survey sponsored by John Deere.

But pay depends on the place. Regional economic climates have a great impact on compensation, and survey results reflected a variegated pay scale. Workers in the Northeast earn nearly \$10 per hour, while laborers in the Southwest make closer to \$7.

What factors determine dollars per hour? Cost of living and local labor rates play into pay figures, but an employee's qualifications, certification, past experience and role in the organization also are considerations.

COST OF LIVING. Regional compensation differences reflect the relative cost of living in a particular area. For example, comparing the Consumer Price Index (CPI), established by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, prices for goods in Boston, Mass., are nearly 30 percent higher than in Dallas, Texas. Using these statistics, green industry wages in the Northeast are in line with the CPI.

Bill Leidecker, president of Five Seasons Landscape Management in Columbus, Ohio, uses the cost of living index along with other data to determine compensation. Similarly, Kurt Kluznik, president of Yardmaster in Painesville, Ohio, aligns his compensation with the local job market and the industry. "We try to be competitive and I don't recall needing any wage changes because we weren't competitive," he says. "There is always another company that will pay more during peak times. We try not to get into bidding wars."

Other factors that determine wage increases include budgets, sales growth, performance and tenure, explains Tom Fochtman, vice president and co-owner, CoCal Landscape, Denver, Colo. "We base increases and decreases on historical data, weather projections and the type of new work and jobs entering our back-

log," he says. "Raises are also based on performance, although tenure is considered, meaning an employee who has 'topped out' can receive a token increase on an annual basis."

Meanwhile, companies face employee retention problems along with a host of other challenges related to compensation. Shawn Williamson, president of The Cutting Edge Landscaping, Granbury, Texas, deals with overtime issues. "On average, our crewmembers may work a 62-hour week every week in peak season," he comments. "Looking at the whole work force, this creates a very large payroll. And after setting pay raises each year, the overtime rate we pay for extra summer hours also goes up with the wage increase."

SALARY SIZE. The survey reveals that an operations manager/vice president receives an average salary of \$40,300. The president/CEO/owner can expect \$50,000. And as company revenue grows, so does salary.

On average, salespeople earn about \$35,000 a year. Compensation for sales can take on any number of forms, including straight salary, salary plus a bonus, sal-



BY DARLENE TAYLOR

ary plus a commission, straight commission or any combination of these options. The average commission paid is 7.2 percent, according to survey results.

CERTIFICATION. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that their states require certification for lawn care technicians who apply pesticides. Remaining companies require only owners or managers to be certified.

At nearly half of the companies that responded, certified employees are compensated at a higher rate. Again, larger companies are more likely to increase pay for certified companies, and larger organizations also employ more certified workers. For instance, 37 percent of companies with \$100,000 to \$499,999 revenues pay certified employees more. However, 59 percent of the \$1 million-plus sized companies offer higher wages for certification.

Meanwhile, more than one-third of respondents do not employ certified workers. The majority of non-certified employees occur in the smaller sized companies.

Kluznik places high importance on certification. "Being certified is a strong indicator of employees' skills and commitment to the industry," he states. "We are big proponents of certification from the Associated Landscape Contractors of America."

Leidecker explains his certification compensation policy: "Those who have received certification will receive a one-time payout – a bonus," he describes. "The size of the payout depends on what the certification is. A certified landscape technician (CLT) certification is a big event in our company. A lawn care specialist receiving an additional license is another example of an important item, but not to the same degree. The payout would be different."

ATTRACT AND HIRE. What do potential employees look for in a company and, conversely, what do owners look for in new hires? Is compensation the bottom line in both parties' minds?

Williamson discusses the starting wage with potential workers, but he tries to downplay pay during the interview process.

Fochtman also tries to take the focus off of wages during recruiting. "We can tell through the interview process if a person is too focused on money, which often means they are more of an 'I/me' person who will not fit at CoCal," he says. "Being an award-winning firm that is growing and offering opportunities to our people is more important to us. We have many great people success stories at CoCal that go a long way in recruiting people."

In short, money isn't everything. Leidecker says potential employees look for qualities that are much more valuable. "Potential employees don't come looking for work because they have heard about

AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE BY POSITION

Landscape architect	\$22.36
Landscape designer	\$18.58
Mechanic	\$14.57
Salesperson	\$13.30
Crew foreman	\$13.03
Senior spray technician	\$12.59
Senior irrigation crewmember	\$12.35
Senior laborer	\$10.86
Senior mower operator	\$10.54
Entry-level spray technician	\$9.38
Entry-level irrigation crewmember	\$8.52
Entry-level mower operator	\$8.01
Entry-level laborer	\$7.93

Source: Research USA Wage & Compensation Study

our tremendous hourly pay, nor do they leave because they can make \$.50 an hour more down the street," he remarks. "They stay because we treat them with respect, offer them an opportunity to get ahead based upon their performance, and compensate them fairly along the way – in that order."

"We are better at developing talent than bringing in 'established talent,'" he adds. "Buying established talent hasn't worked well for us – too much baggage and too many bad habits."

Mark Clark, owner of Clark Landscape Group, Monroe, N.C., believes wages are important in attracting new hires, but he says supplying quality equipment, developing a rich company culture, showing employees appreciation and offering incentives are the keys to retaining valuable workers.

2003 WAGE WRAP-UP. In a year when unemployment continued to climb, labor and wages in the green industry remained relatively stable. Most owners rewarded hard-working and loyal employees with at least modest wage increases.

"Raises this year were lower than they have been, and this is due to the economy," Leidecker states.

But Williamson increased his wages more than in previous years. "We wish to keep up with the rising cost of living for our employees and keep our employees from looking for other avenues of employment," he says.

Clark also had a greater increase. "Our production levels are high, employee loyalty is good, and I want to share the success of the company with those who helped get us there," he states. ■

healthy CHOICE

Insurance and benefits take a bite out of the budget, but the investment pays off in worker retention.

Insurance has been described as a necessary evil by some and a godsend by others. Owners juggle different types of insurance — health insurance, workers' compensation, auto and property insurance. And this year, companies also are balancing double-digit increases and considering how they still can afford to offer the benefit to their employees.

PRICEY PREMIUMS. Shawn Williamson, president of The Cutting Edge Landscaping in Granbury, Texas, pays more than \$2,000 each month for workers' compensation insurance he says he has never used. But still, he won't cut the benefit. "The extreme risk factor and 'what ifs' are something you cannot look past — you can't skip having the coverage," he says.

"Insurance is a revolving problem because you give your employees a much-deserved raise and you can hardly afford the rising insurance rates that they, as employees, do not see and know about," Williamson adds.

Based on the Research USA Wage & Compensation survey conducted for John Deere, an average of 28 percent of companies furnish health insurance to hourly and seasonal workers. The Mid-Atlantic region topped all regions with 46 percent of its respondents offering health insurance, while southwest companies cover an average of 15 percent. Mirroring the trend in wage compensation, larger companies provided better coverage (see chart at right).

Meanwhile, health insurance is a recruiting tool for many owners, and cutting the benefit can be as costly as footing the bills for premiums. The coverage can differentiate a company from its competitors during the hiring process. But some contractors argue that the value of the benefit depends on an employee's age.

"The importance of insurance is directly proportional to age," says Bill Leidecker, president, Five Seasons Landscaping, Columbus, Ohio. "Someone a little older looking to get married or begin a family, or someone who was impacted by a situation where insurance was or was not in place, understands its benefits."

A double-digit increase in health insurance premiums isn't unusual, several company owners report. Richard Winnestaffer, CEO of WinnScapes in Columbus, Ohio, says accelerating premiums are an industry-wide problem. "We've seen considerable increases — 25 to 36 percent in the last three years," he notes.

Kurt Kluznik, president of Yardmaster in Painesville, Ohio, concurs. "Costs are skyrocketing with no end in sight," he remarks. "We are looking at a 35 percent health insurance increase right now. It forces us to change vendors far too often, which is a major inconvenience for the employees."

Indeed, researching options and other insurance companies at renewal is one solution to combat spiraling increases, but even this is a stopgap measure. This process can be time-consuming, and Kluznik points out that shopping around also creates a revolving door of providers.

Regardless, Tom Fochtman assesses coverage at renewal. "We raised deductibles in certain areas and re-evaluated coverage everywhere," says the vice president and co-owner of CoCal Land-

COMPANIES THAT OFFER HEALTH CARE

Health care premium coverage ranges depending on employees' roles and company size.

SEASONAL/HOURLY EMPLOYEES

\$100,000 to \$499,999 revenue	62%
\$500,000 to \$999,999 revenue	64%
\$1 million plus	69%

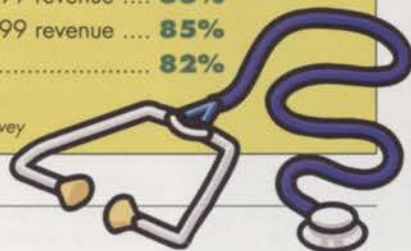
SALARIED EMPLOYEES

\$100,000 to \$499,999 revenue	64%
\$500,000 to \$999,999 revenue	73%
\$1 million plus	76%

MANAGEMENT

\$100,000 to \$499,999 revenue	83%
\$500,000 to \$999,999 revenue	85%
\$1 million plus	82%

Source: Research USA
Wage & Compensation Survey



BY DARLENE TAYLOR



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TOP 7 BENEFITS

Listed are the top seven benefits companies offer to salaried employees.

1. Paid vacation	46%
2. Paid holidays	45%
3. Use of company cell phone	45%
4. Year-end/holiday bonus	41%
5. Company-supplied uniforms	34%
6. Health insurance	32%
7. Performance bonus	30%

Source: Research USA Wage & Compensation Survey



Owners who reward workers with benefits like health insurance and perks like paid vacations and retirement programs earn back their investment through employee retention. Photo: John Deere Landscapes

scape, Denver, Colo. "When possible, we eliminated and/or reduced coverage. This motivates us to become more efficient, so we don't have to pass on all of the cost to our customers. Insurance is an overhead item."

Winnestaff's company follows a similar path. "We annually review policies and quotes from numerous other carriers," he describes. "We have decreased coverage by increasing deductibles. Historically, employees have absorbed the increases. However, because of the extent of the increases this year, the company is absorbing most of the cost."

Mark Clark, owner of Clark Landscape Group in Monroe, N.C., decided to keep his insurance coverage at the same level as last year, but at a cost. "We shopped for better rates and coverage, but renewed with our carrier with a 34 percent increase," he notes. "Other companies were just as high, if not higher. I do not want the risk of being underinsured. We have too much to lose."

BONUS BENEFITS. Compensation cannot be judged by wages alone. Many other tangible and intangible extras contribute to compensation. These items vary depending on the company, but a core group can be considered universal: paid holidays, paid vacations and health insurance.

The Research USA Wage & Compensation survey shows these three benefits as the top seven that owners provide to hourly and seasonal workers (see chart below).

Clark offers the basic line-up of paid vacation, paid holidays, year-end bonus and company uniforms. "At this point of our size and years in business, the benefits have just been part of the package," he says. "We are a conservative company controlling growth, quality, development and growing team members' skill levels." As the company grows, Clark foresees adding more benefits, such as a profit-sharing plan.

Fochtman supplies his workers with benefits including paid vacation, paid holidays and health insurance. Besides performance-based bonuses, 401(k) and personal/sick days, he also offers them health care extras like dental and vision coverage.

"I'm offering more this year than in past years," Fochtman explains. "I try to add to or change our plan every year. Benefits are important to remain competitive regarding hiring and retention. The basic plans we offer are adequate for our local industry, but the challenge is to enhance the program in an affordable way."

Kluznik offers flex time along with the core benefits. He finds that employees value that as much as the basics.

Benefits like this aren't seen in the balance sheet or the paycheck, but they are just as tangible, Williamson points out. "We have a personal ranch that I take my guys to during hunting season," he says. "It's an added bonus during the year." The little things go a long way toward maintaining high staff spirits, he adds. "Some employees are paid for their phone bills on their personal cell phones. The benefits always serve as mood lifters for employees."

Another benefit that is easy to administer is a recognition program, Leidecker suggests. "We recognize an employee of the month with a framed certificate and a \$25 gift certificate," he says. "We have awards at the end of the year at the Christmas party, including employee of the year, which is a vote among peers. It is the most prestigious award we give out and comes with \$500 and a nice, wooden plaque."

However, one benefit not yet universally embraced in the industry – evident by survey results – is the 401(k) plan. On average, 10 percent of hourly and seasonal employees, 13 percent of salaried workers and 14 percent of management staff members enjoy this benefit. And for employees who participate in the program, the company match can be lucrative. Sixty percent of the companies choose the dollar-for-dollar match and compensate employees for up to 3 percent of their contribution. In the Southwest, 90 percent of the companies use that matching.

After adding up the cost of benefits – both money-wise and time-wise – and assessing the impact these extras have on hiring and retention – do company owners believe benefits are essential?

"You either have to compensate your employees at a level that allows them to procure certain benefits they feel are important or do what is more traditional and provide them to the employee to some degree," Fochtman remarks. "We can purchase benefits more cost effectively, and then we have to figure a way to pass them on to our employees in a manner that does not hurt the company on the expense side."

Still, Clark says the investment earns him loyal workers. "The cost of providing these benefits is well worth the cost as it applies to employee retention," he notes. "We want to provide a great work environment for our team and we do not want to burn them out or treat them like a herd of cattle on a cattle drive. It is a two-way street – what you invest will pay dividends in return."

Leidecker offers this equation: "Forecasted payroll for 2003 – \$1.3million; anticipated cost of benefits – \$130,000; impact on our company – priceless." ■

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USE READER SERVICE #131

(continued from page 26)

IN THE NEWS

CLIP Announces Exclusive Partnerships

IJAMSVILLE, Md. — CLIP Software, Western Products and Fisher Engineering have joined forces in a co-marketing program to benefit snow removal professionals. The software developer and the equipment manufacturers have signed an agreement that gives Western and Fisher exclusive rights to distribute FREE CLIP Software demos through their national distributor locations.

Western Products and Fisher Engineering are the largest manufacturers of snowplows in the United States.

"We feel CLIP's new customized software program targeting the snowplow contractor will help these businesses grow," explains Rick Coolman, director of advertising and communications, Western Products and Fisher Engineering.

RETAIL REPORT

Home Depot Enters Manhattan

NEW YORK — Home Depot plans to open its first store in Manhattan next summer.

The Manhattan store, featuring two levels and a mezzanine, will open in the Chelsea, N.Y., neighborhood near a variety of other chain stores. The company is also eyeing other Manhattan spots for future stores.

Home Depot has been testing alternative formats, including landscape and urban stores, to reach new customers. These new ventures are an attempt to compete with efforts of the worldwide retailer's rival — Lowe's Cos. Lowe's plans to add more than 60 stores in the greater New York area in coming years.

EYE ON TELEMARKETING

Judge Blocks Do-Not-Call List

WASHINGTON — A federal judge ruled that the Federal Trade Commission overstepped its authority in creating the national do-not-call list against telemarketers.

The ruling came in a lawsuit brought by telemarketers who challenged the list of 50 million people who said they do not want to

Rich Dad, Poor Dad

by Robert Kiyosaki and Sharon Lechter

Who wouldn't like to believe that financial business success could be obtained by altering the way money is perceived? That's the basic principle taught by Robert Kiyosaki in *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*.

Kiyosaki, a personal-finance guru and lecturer has developed, in his book, a plan to change the common man's attitude toward his finances by relating the story of his own childhood experience observing both his middle-class father and his best friend's multi-millionaire dad. His message, based on these observations, is that the poor "work for money" while the rich "make money work for them."

"He has a different way of looking at money than how most people were taught," explains John Penton, president, Penton Enterprises, Papillion, Neb., who recommends the book. "Most people learn from school and their parents that you go and get a job and earn your money. [Kiyosaki] presents the obvious idea that there's more than just one type of income. More than just earned income,

there's also passive and portfolio income."

Most of the owner/operators in the green industry are working hard and doing a lot of the manual labor involved with running a business, Penton observes. But he says reading Kiyosaki's book taught him a new way to look at money so that he might do something with it that could make it earn more money.

"His dad had a good teaching job and taught for 20 years," Penton says. "He taught his son what most dads teach: get a job, save your money and retire. His friend's dad was the rich dad that taught him different lessons on how to treat money as more of a game than anything else. And how not to let money control you, like it does most people."

Kiyosaki's basic philosophy of generating a better bottom line through investments is outlined in detail in the 184-page book. The book makes a compelling argument for focusing on assets rather than work in order to accumulate capital and maybe even retire early.
— Will Nepper

To purchase this book or other books from Lawn & Landscape, visit us online at www.lawnandlandscape.com/store or call Megan Erickson at 800/456-0707.

receive business solicitation calls. The list was to go into effect Oct. 1.

U.S. District Judge Lee West said the main issue in the case was "whether the FTC had the authority to promulgate a national do-not-call registry. The court finds it did not."

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Billy Tauzin, R-La., and Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich., said they were confident the ruling would be overturned and believe Congress did give the FTC the necessary authority. "We will continue to monitor the situation and will take whatever legislative action is necessary to ensure consumers can stop intrusive calls from unwanted telemarketers," they said in a joint statement. The House committee authorized the list.

So, how would the do-not-call registry

have impacted the work of landscape professionals?

The green industry is not heavily driven by telephone sales. In fact, according to a *Lawn & Landscape* Online poll, nearly 71 percent of those polled said they have never used telemarketing to secure new accounts. However, some lawn care companies do rely on telemarketing to grow their customer base. Almost 22 percent of those polled said they had, at some point, resorted to telemarketing methods for new sales — and half of that group said they still use the telephone technique to seek sales.

Direct Marketing Association, one of the plaintiffs, said it was happy with the ruling, even though it "acknowledges the wishes of millions of U.S. consumers who have expressed their preferences not to receive tele-



L&L

Book Report

Market Trends

phone-marketing solicitations – as evidenced by the millions of phone numbers registered on the FTC list.”

DMA, U.S. Security, Chartered Benefit Services Inc., Global Contact Services Inc. and InfoCision Management Corp filed the suit.

The telemarketing industry estimates the do-not-call list could cut its business in half, costing it up to \$50 billion in sales each year.

More than a dozen states with do-not-call lists planned to add their lists to the national registry this summer, the FTC said.

Telemarketers would have to check the list every three months to see who doesn't want to be called. Those who call listed people could be fined up to \$11,000 for each violation.

IN THE NEWS

Pesticide Lawsuits Hit EPA

WASHINGTON – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has failed to adequately protect children from dangerous pesticides, according to two lawsuits.

One suit was filed by a coalition of conservation, public health and farmworker organizations, and the other by four states (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Massachusetts). The lawsuits charge that EPA is violating the 1996 Food Quality Protection Act, a bipartisan law requiring the agency to protect infant health.

Both lawsuits ask the court to force the EPA to comply with the Food Quality Protection Act's key provision requiring the agency to protect children 10 times more stringently than adults, unless it can show that children do not have special sensitivities. Congress inserted this "safety factor" in the law on the recommendation of the National Academy of Sciences, which found that children are more susceptible and more exposed to many toxic pesticides than adults.

A year ago, EPA's independent scientific review pesticide panel found that the agency erred by failing to apply the tenfold safety factor when reviewing the cumulative risks of organophosphate insecticides.

The lawsuit is a follow-up to NRDC's successful 1999 lawsuit that forced EPA to review the safety of specific high-risk toxic pesticides as mandated by the law. Since then, EPA has banned or severely restricted some pesticides.

What's in for 2004 Landscapes *(continued from page 20)*

Hutton recommends contractors use a sweep of one plant or mix shades of one plant. Mass planting – or color blocking – is a trend first noticed at the Dutch flower markets in the 1990s, says Elvin McDonald, garden editor, Better Homes & Gardens. "Single sweeps of color create peace in a chaotic environment," McDonald shares. "Homeowners have latched on to this concept because it is much easier to create and maintain a few mass plantings, rather than to have a garden designed around dozens of different plants and shrubs, each needing something different."

The biggest trend this season is mono-impact container gardening. According to McDonald, Americans are tired of maintaining mixed containers that end up looking overdone. "Plants in too many colors and textures look as tasteless as wearing plaids, stripes and prints together," McDonald says, recommending that landscape designers use one outstanding color in one large container reminiscent of the classic estate gardening style – simple yet elegant.

Jeff Gibson, marketing manager of Simply Beautiful annual and perennial flowers, agrees. "Put one color flower in several containers or plant several identical containers with different colors of complementary flowers – say pink and purple or yellow and peach," he says. "If you want to mix up the texture in one container, plant different flowers in the same color group. The trick is to stay in one color family per container for a peaceful and classic look. Less is definitely more."

Additionally, more clients want color for three or four seasons. Shrubs that provide all-season color are big sellers, and plant suppliers are responding with cool-weather annuals and perennials that emerge in late winter or can be planted for fall color. Early emerging bulbs have been around for years, but now contractors can find early blooming, cool-season biennials and perennials overwintering from the fall and blooming early in the spring. Cool-weather plants like Sorbet violas and Corona Cherry Magic dianthus can be planted in the fall and then they bloom again in early spring.

Water gardens continue to be popular, but because of the threat of the West Nile Virus, the trend is creating environments with running water. Small ponds incorporating waterfalls, water lilies and bright colored koi are just one example. Water also creates an eye-pleasing feature and an ear-pleasing sound to any outdoor corner, and brings a little 'fung shui' into the environment.

Another noticeable trend with home buyers is investing more money in their homes' exteriors rather than interiors. According to The Associated Landscape Contractors of America, a properly installed and maintained landscape gives homeowners a 100 to 200 percent return on their investment. Compare that with a reported 75 percent return on investment for a remodeled bathroom. A Virginia Tech University study estimates that "an attractive landscape increases the value of a home by an average of 7.5 percent, and reduces the time on the market by five to six weeks." In addition to an increase in value, good landscaping also increases a home's curb appeal and a buyer's attraction to the neighborhood.

The landscape is now regarded as an outdoor extension of the American home, not just a place to put a few shrubs around the home's foundation, GMG adds. Contractors should think of trees, shrubs and perennials as the backbone of a design and then accessorize.

2004 Landscaping Trends

IN	OUT
Simple Designs	Over the Top Designs
Color Harmony	A Riot of Color
Mono-impact Containers	Mixed Containers
Extending the Planting Season	Planting Just in Spring
Running Water	Still Water
Spirited Colors	Timid Colors
Landscape Renovation	Interior Remodeling

Source: Garden Media Group



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Nursery Market Report

RHODODENDRON RUNDOWN

Capistrano's Charms

Rhododendron 'Capistrano' is a hardy yellow plant bred especially for colder climates. Group plants in borders or with other shrubs, considering size, color and bloom season. Photo: Briggs Nursery

Boasting vibrant yellow blooms and large, dark green foliage, Briggs Nursery's Rhododendron 'Capistrano' is being celebrated as a breakthrough in breeding of unusual colors for colder climates. Reports name 'Capistrano' the strongest hardy yellow rhododendron developed to date.

"Cold-climate yellow rhododendron varieties have traditionally yielded washed-out tones," notes David Jarzynka, president/CEO of Briggs Nursery, Olympia, Wash.

Renowned rhododendron breeder David Leach introduced 'Capistrano' in 1994. Hardy to U.S. Department of Agriculture Zone 5, mature rhododendrons grow to a compact 5 feet tall and 6 feet wide.

For these novel characteristics, Briggs Nursery named 'Capistrano' its 2004 Plant of the Year. Here, find landscape uses for rhododendron, as well as planting and care tips from the American Rhododendron Society, Fortuna, Calif.

LANDSCAPE USE. Rhododendrons like 'Capistrano' are versatile. They can serve as specimen plants, function as parts of landscape borders or be grouped with other shrubs in fountain plantings.

Group rhododendrons for effect, considering size, color and season of bloom. Place taller-growing plants toward the rear of the planting, medium-sized ones in front and low-growing plants around the edges.

When laying out a planting, consider plant size. Plant with the finished size in mind, otherwise rapid-growing varieties will shade slower-growing ones. A too-aggressive variety may take more than its allotted space, which may mean moving out the ones being crowded.

SOIL REQUIREMENTS. Rhododendrons grow best in light, well-drained soils with good aeration and ample moisture during the summer. A soil high in organic matter or humus, such as decayed oak leaves, pine needles or other acid-type compost, is desirable. In hot or alkaline soil areas, use a fine grade or small particle pine bark.

Rhododendrons generally require an acidic soil with a pH of about 5.5.

PLANTING POINTERS. In favorable climates, rhododendrons can be planted almost any time of year with reasonable success. In colder areas, early spring planting is recommended with early fall planting the second choice. In hot areas, fall planting is preferred.

When planting, the top of the root ball should be at the surface of the ground or 1 to 2 inches above the surface in raised beds or less-than-ideal sites. Never plant rhododendrons deeper than they were grown in the nursery.

In light, sandy, acidic soil, which is ideal for rhododendrons, they may be planted in holes slightly larger than the root ball. Where native soil is less porous than the root ball

material, improve the soil by adding organic matter or perlite to make it more porous. Where the soil is clay or alkaline, plant on top of the ground in a mound made of soil, coarse peat moss, bark, sand or perlite.

In hot climates, root rot organisms flourish in wet soils and can kill rhododendrons. Under these conditions, raised planting beds that incorporate 50 percent or more fine pine bark can suppress *Phytophthora* root rot.

CARE CLUES. Water rhododendrons well in summer, especially the first year after planting, when the roots have not yet grown from the root ball into the surrounding soil.

Rhododendron roots are fine and take longer to grow into the surrounding soil than most other plants. Because of this, newly planted rhododendrons will get their water from the original root ball. If this ball is allowed to dry out, it is difficult to rewet.

(continued on page 46)





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Nursery Market Report

(continued from page 44)

Some foliage droop is normal in dry weather, especially on warm afternoons, but when leaves still show signs of drooping in early morning, plants are showing a need for water and should get a good soaking. In cold climates, watering or misting during warm days in spring or on windy days,

when roots are frozen, will keep plants in good condition.

A year-round mulch of organic matter helps conserve moisture and eliminates the need for weed cultivation. The coarser the mulch, the better for providing shade and reducing wind velocity over the roots. Mulch also helps to reduce temperature extremes in the root area.

IN BRIEF

Rhododendron 'Capistrano'

FLOWER COLOR:	Yellow
FLOWER/TRUSS DESCRIPTION:	Frilly edges, 2 inches across, pale, greenish-yellow with no markings. Dome-shaped trusses of 15.
BLOOM TIME:	Late midseason
HEIGHT (FEET) IN 10 YEARS:	4 feet
COLD HARDINESS TEMPERATURE:	-15F (-26C)
FOLIAGE DESCRIPTION/HABIT:	Leaves elliptic, flat, broadly acute apex, rounded base, 4½ inches long, dull, deep green. Dense, mounding habit.

Source: American Rhododendron Society

lawnandlandscape.com

Check out our November Online Extras for information on insect and disease control for rhododendrons.

In fertile soils, rhododendrons can be grown well without receiving further fertilization. But if plants are mulched with fresh sawdust or woodchips, there will be a nitrogen demand caused by these decomposing materials. In this case, add a fertilizer like ammonium sulfate.

Normally, little pruning is needed. If a plant grows out over a walk or needs to be restricted, it may be pruned back moderately without fear that the plant as a whole will be damaged. This pruning can be done during the blooming season. — Ali Cybulski

The author is Contributing Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com. For more information, see www.rhododendron.org.

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THE WORLD LEADER

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Design Notebook

Design Notes

When Initial Tropical Plants (formerly Rentokil), San Diego, Calif., began the formidable task of managing a tropical plant project for the San Diego Zoo, they hadn't expected to count dizzying heights and large birds among the challenges ahead.

The focus of the account is the three-story atrium housed at the center of the 20,000-square-foot Warner Building, the central administrative center of the zoo. The unique design of the building has each of the structure's three floors built around the atrium. The first-floor planting houses small animals and the entire atrium is flanked with lush tropical foliage. This tropical look also spills over into two banquet rooms, three restaurants and into 10 large exterior containerized plantings.

Pothos fill long planters on both sides of the atrium's windows. Other species showcased in the atrium include palms, Birds of Paradise and *Dracaena*. The external containers are home to impatiens, about six Mexican palms and a dozen snowbushes that are positioned off-set from the windows of the zoo's educational center, so that

PROJECT: San Diego Zoo

COMPONENTS: Three-story atrium in 20,000-square-foot administrative Warner Building, two banquet rooms, three restaurants and 10 exterior containerized plantings.

INSTALLED AND MAINTAINED BY: Initial Tropical Plants (formerly Rentokil at the time of installation), San Diego, Calif.

STAFF: Account serviced by one technician, Service Manager Kim Covey and overseen by Branch Manager Sandy Hammond

PLANTS INSTALLED INCLUDE: Pothos, Birds of Paradise, *Dracaena*, Mexican Palm and snowbush.

AWARDS: Merit Award for horticultural services from the California Interior Plantscape Association

each container's foliage is evident to those inside.

Primary challenges related to the project include the atrium's original installations and subsequent maintenance that requires Initial's technicians to hang from a harness three stories high, working from an 18-inch ledge.

The outside containers are not in heavy traffic areas and are relatively easy to maintain, unlike the restaurant plants that must overcome plenty of foot traffic and the hands of curious children.

Another challenge for Initial following the installation was the large birds that also inhabit the atrium. The birds became easily agitated during maintenance making a dangerous job even more perilous. The birds have since been removed from the atrium making maintenance tasks considerably easier for technicians assigned to the eight-hour-a-week job of maintaining the atrium. The restaurants, banquet rooms and exterior containers take only a few hours each.

"In the summer, we do the exterior twice weekly to give impatiens, palms and small underplantings the water they need," explains Sandy Hammond, San Diego branch manager. Hammond has been able to maintain the account's integrity through regular quality control checks. "We walk through once or twice a month, and we have a good rapport with the client because of our customer service and plant service." — Ali Cybulski

The author is a Contributing Editor to *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at acybulski@lawnandlandscape.com. Will Nepper also contributed to this story.

The technician who services this atrium at the San Diego Zoo must use a safety harness to maintain stability at the three-story level in the center of the 20,000-square-foot Warner Building. Photo: Initial Tropical Plants



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Tree Care Tips

TREE MALADIES

Diagnosing Diseases

Disorders like diseases interrupt normal metabolic processes in trees, such as water and nutrient movement, photosynthesis and respiration.

Diseases are caused by biotic (living) agents, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and phytoplasmas, and often produce characteristic symptoms, while disorders are caused by abiotic (non-living) agents like pesticides, soluble salts, compacted clay soils, water and temperature extremes. Like diseases, though, abiotic disorders produce common symptoms, such as wilt, leaf scorch, leaf blotch, stem cankers, stunt and death.

Disorder signs, on the other hand, are the physical evidence of causal agents and usually are used to describe pathogens (biotic causal agents). Common signs include conks or other fruiting structures, spores, mycelium and rhizomorphs. Theoretically, abiotic disorders could have signs also – for instance, the string trimmer striking the tree stem, the backhoe digging up roots 1 foot away from the tree trunk, mulch piled 24 inches up against the stem of a newly-planted tree, or the root collar flare buried 1 foot lower than the landscape grade.

THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS. The difficulty with diagnosing tree disorders is twofold: 1) Pathogens, abiotic agents

and often insects produce similar disorder symptoms. 2) Signs are usually not obvious. Diagnosing problems, therefore, involves the following critical steps:

1. Recognize the disorder symptoms.
2. Determine what agents produce those symptoms.
3. Discover which agents are present by looking or testing for signs and/or conducting a site analysis.

However, following these three steps doesn't mean that the challenge of correctly diagnosing problems is over. Most tree or shrub problems in the landscape are complexes or combinations of causal agents. These combinations commonly involve multiple abiotic causal agents or complexes with both biotic and abiotic agents. For example, the Eutypella canker may be obvious on the stem of the Norway maple, producing the characteristic symptoms and maybe even signs, but it often starts with sunscald or cracked bark that provides an entry wound for the fungus.

Determining what caused the problem is part of the diagnostic process. The cause is ultimately sought because that discovery provides the basis for control tactics. Often, control tactics are too late for the plant being diagnosed, but may be used to prevent problems with other trees.

On paper, the process is simple: 1) Identify the plant. 2) Determine what is abnormal about the tree, that is, determine what symptoms are present. 3) Get as much information as possible; information about the plant, the site, the weather, any activities that have occurred, and maintenance practices. 4) Consult references to determine which problems are common or possible, given the site and the symptoms they produce. Then, it is a matter of matching the symptoms you have observed, the site conditions and the plant to the problems.

Identifying the plant and determining what is abnormal about the plant actually go hand-in-hand. Himalayan pine always looks wilted; that is part of its character. Excelsior ash normally has a yellow or chlorotic appearance, especially the young shoots. Also, determine what is normal or at least not damaging for the region or particular site. A seemingly stunted fir tree may be normal for the elevation or latitude.

SYMPTOMS. Symptoms show how a plant reacts to a problem. Here are some common reactions and possible reasons for them.

Stunted growth

- Plant and root growth is abnormally reduced
- Leaves and flowers are few or abnormally small
- Abnormal wilting
- Scorching (browning of the leaf edge)
- Blotching (random dead areas throughout the leaves)
- Abnormal, non-green color to leaves (yellowing, reddening, purpling) or uneven leaf coloration

(continued on page 52)

To determine what caused a tree problem, first contractors must identify the plant and determine the symptoms.

Photo:

California
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Tree Care Tips

(continued from page 50)

- Early leaf coloration or leaf fall (substantially early (3-4 weeks) as compared to previous years or similar species)

- Uneven leaf fall (a portion of the tree defoliates before the rest of the tree's foliage)

- Leaves are blackened

- Leaves are abnormally twisted

Stems and Twigs

- Single branches wilting

- Flagging (leaves wilt on a branch, turn brown and hang on)

- Stagheading (branches without leaves, bark loosens)

- Cankers (open wounds that don't seal over; may be sunken areas under the bark)

- Abnormally loose bark (Abnormal as opposed to normal peeling such as with birches. Bark when tapped with a hammer sounds hollow, and is often abnormal.)

- Missing bark, cracks, dieback

- Witches' brooming (many shoots arising from what seems like a single point)

- Buds are dry/flakey/dead

- Normal trunk taper (basal flare) is absent

Decay

- Decay starts at a pruning or other wound

- Decay is all interior with no opening to the outside

- Decay is at the soil line

- Decay has an opening to the outside of the bark

COMMON PROBLEMS & CULPRITS.

There are some factors that will always negatively affect tree growth and health. As a cheat sheet, here are the most common tree problems and their culprits:

Very Common

- Soil problems (drainage, pH, compaction)

- Root damage (construction activities, cutting, filling)

- Improper planting (letting roots dry out, planting too deep)

- Improper cultural activities (too much mulch, string trimmer/mower damage to stems, turf competition, poor pruning)

- Transplant shock

Common

- Poor nursery stock (pot-bound, poor root system, wounds)

- Weather extremes (drought, heavy winds, extreme temperatures, frosts)

- Too much/too little irrigation

- Problem-prone plants: boxelder, silver maple, willows

Occasional

- Species not hardy to area, or "borderline" in hardiness

- Vandalism

- Late fertilization


- Late irrigation

- Deicing salt (spray and run off)

- Animal damage

- Girdling from wires, tags, ropes, tape

- Girdling Root Syndrome

- Herbicides - Cindy Ash and Gary Johnson 

The authors are extension agents with the Minnesota Extension Service Departments of Plant Pathology and Forest Resources. This information was printed with permission from the Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee (www.mnstac.org).

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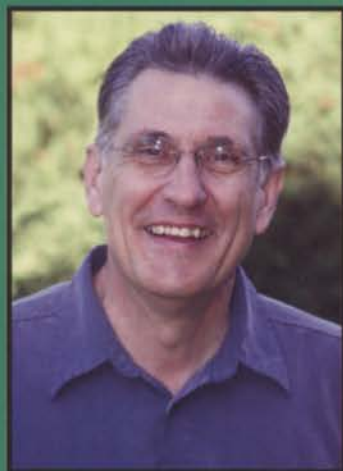
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USE READER SERVICE #29





Occasionally, a product comes along that is so new and different and popular that it becomes a household name. Think photo-copier, facial tissue, or flying disc, and a specific brand name pops into mind.

Now think spreader sprayer. From the chat rooms to the board rooms, all across America, people are saying: "It's gotta' be a Perma Green!" Enough said.

Tom Jessen,
President

GREEN MACHINE

The future of herbicide and fertilizer application is here – and, man, is it Green!

Heightened efficiency and ease of use have become increasingly higher priorities for lawn care operators (LCOs), and Perma Green Supreme has responded to those needs with the most effective spreaders the industry has ever seen.

Putting decades of business experience and innovation to work for their customers, Perma Green redesigned their original Ride-On spreader to incorporate new technologies. The latest incarnation – the Ride-On ULTRA Spreader/Sprayer – exceeds those needs and challenges LCOs to push their production targets and watch their bottom lines rise.

Perma Green President Tom Jessen remarks, "the ULTRA is a machine that LCOs will use every day, not only on large lawns, but also on normal, residential lawns."

ALWAYS AHEAD OF THE CURVE. Always leading the industry with revolutionary ideas, Jessen began experimenting with low-volume spraying in

the early 1980s, followed by creating and patenting a dual-hose injection gun system in response to the integrated pest management needs of the mid-80s. In 1994, Jessen patented a self-propelled walk-behind spreader-sprayer, yet he kept his eye on bigger and better products.

"In 1995 we recognized the need for a riding spreader/sprayer that was small, maneuverable, inexpensive and practical to use on a majority of lawns serviced by the average lawn care company," Jessen explains. Their original dream machine finally came together and has only become better over time.

"I believe that in the next five years, the majority of fertilizer professionally applied to turf will be done by machines Perma Green Supreme builds – period," Jessen asserts.

Already, LCOs have purchased more than 3,500 Ride-Ons. What drives LCOs to help Perma Green Supreme set new sales records every year? The innumerable technical and business advantages provided by the Ride-On ULTRA and its predecessors.

- **Increased Production.** In comparison to manual application routes statistics have shown an average 35-percent increase in production dollars for Ride-On routes, and an 11-percent reduc-



RIDE-ON® HIGHLIGHTS

- The Perma Green Ride-On is the only stand-on machine that features true articulating steering. This provides a comfortable ride and excellent hill-hugging stability.
- By adopting the spread-and-spray application method, a company eliminates the need for large spray tanks, hose reels, high-pressure pumps and larger vehicles to carry them, creating a substantial savings.
- Using Ride-On's reduces an LCO's potential liability from a pesticide spill because less liquid is carried.
- LCOs using Perma Green machines are perceived as more professional because they operate equipment that the average homeowner can't use. These companies also look smarter than other lawn care companies who work harder and longer to do the same job.

ULTRA-SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

Tom Jessen knows that the Perma Green Ride-On ULTRA Spreader/Sprayer is an invaluable tool to lawn care operators. "I first recognized our machine's potential when I started hearing 'love' and Ride-On' in the same sentence," Jessen says.

To strengthen that level of attachment, Jessen's team makes customer service a high priority.

"Perma Green's top priority is to help you get your machines up and running – if they break down – because they know how important it is to have equipment in good working order," says Tom Iverson, president, Four Seasons Lawn & Pest Control, Orlando, Fla. "Their customer service is the greatest. If you call with a question, someone always picks up the phone. If you have mechanical problems, someone is available who you can talk to."

Tom Charnock agrees. "The company always goes the extra mile, which is something you don't see today," says the president of The Turf Doctor, Clarence, N.Y. "Perma-Green knows that you don't just keep a spare machine around, so they'll overnight you any part that you need. From day one they've been good about any problem we've had."

"When everything's going well, every company is great," Iverson says. "It's when a problem comes up that you can separate the men from the boys and Perma Green is definitely ahead of the pack."

tion in service calls. The ULTRA's production speed is 3,000 square feet per minute on open ground, compared to 1,500 square feet per minute for an LCO pulling a hose, or 2,000 square feet per minute pushing a spreader.

- **Cost Control.** Increased production means decreased labor. The ULTRA can spread fertilizer and spray pesticides simultaneously, eliminating the need for two application trips over the same lawn. Additionally, the machine is designed to operate at full engine speed so the operator cannot exceed the calibrated application rate, thereby avoiding waste.
- **Improved Routing.** Because the ULTRA is highly productive on residential and commercial properties, LCO's no longer need separate routes for areas that require different equipment. One LCO can take each lawn as it comes in a more logical sequence.
- **Better Working Conditions.** The ULTRA's increased productivity can reduce operator fatigue, lower the number of hours an operator spends at each job, lessen his or her exposure to chemicals, and can create more profit for the owner, which is passed onto employees. ■

CONTACT PERMA GREEN

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AN ESSENTIAL LAWN CARE TOOL

Thousands of Ride-On owners around the country are experiencing the benefits of the Perma Green Ride-On ULTRA Spreader/Sprayer. Here's what a few of them had to say about this invaluable machine:

NO COMPARISON. "When you compare the ULTRA to its competition, there are so many differences. There are lots of other machines out there, but they command bigger price tags, they're over-engineered and they have specific uses. The Perma-Green machine is user-friendly, it's simple, and it's highly maneuverable. Also, their traction is phenomenal, and you can ride the ULTRA through conditions where you could not push a spreader without damaging the ground.

"We're increasing our productivity because of less fatigue, so we're easily able to do 25 percent more revenue." – *Tom Charnock, president, The Turf Doctor, Clarence, N.Y.*

A COMPANY THAT LISTENS. "We have an equipment specialist who works very closely with Tom [Jessen] and we have tested units along the way and offered suggestions and improvements. Perma Green responds very well to that. If someone suggests a worthwhile improvement, they'll introduce those changes.

"We've rarely had problems, but Perma Green has been very good at quickly finding solutions. They respond quickly to their customers and do everything they can to get you the part you need when you need it. We really enjoy our relationship with them." – *Barry Matthews, vice president, Spring Green Lawn & Tree Care, Plainfield, Ill.*

INCREASED EMPLOYEE RETENTION. "We have very little turnover in our company and my employees have said that with the amount of business we do, if it wasn't for the ULTRA, they would not have stayed.

"There are days when we'll take the machines with us and put out five tons of fertilizer. The Ride-Ons can put out about 12 bags an hour and you just can't do that manually – especially on a hot day. We've been using the Ride-Ons for five-and-a-half years and not only has our productivity increased 25 or 30 percent, but our workforce stays around a lot longer." – *Tom Iverson, Four Seasons Lawn & Pest Control, Orlando, Fla.*

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On Paper

Booster Offer

To increase sales, a lawn care operator (LCO) must often try to expand on the services a customer has already purchased. Gary LaScalea, president, GroGreen, Plano, Texas, accomplishes this with a simple, informative advertisement that his technicians can leave on customers' doorsteps along with their job invoices.

These mail-in advertisements briefly explain the importance of having trees and shrubs fertilized by providing basic information about the process, such as how it promotes root development. LaScalea says most people are too focused on their lawns to be aware of the application's importance, especially during the fall months when trees and shrubs attempt to recover from summer heat stress.

"A lot of our lawn customers don't have anything done to their trees and shrubs," LaScalea says. "So we are able to tell them that we offer this service and that this is a special introductory offer to have it performed."

For this offer, LaScalea says the price of the application is cut in half to \$34.95 – instead of the normal \$69.95. Afterward the price is re-established based on the size of the property. "We send those out for average size landscapes, about 5,000 square feet, because we know what kind of price we need to charge for the service to make it profitable," LaScalea says.

Because of the lower price, LaScalea says the special offer card has one of the best customer response rates of any service the company offers. He adds that the card is successful because it targets current customers and "anytime you have a customer and they see something that they might need, they go ahead and schedule it."

Despite raising the response rate for the tree and shrub service, slashing the cost of an application can have drawbacks if not done correctly, LaScalea warns. He says special offer cards are not given to people who are not already customers because of the potential cost to the company.

"For new customers, we have to go out and examine what type of trees and shrubs they have and see what the lawn looks like," LaScalea adds. "That price can become \$69.95 or \$89.95 because you have to spend more time with the customer."

For current clients, LaScalea says his technicians distribute the card with the first and seventh fertilizer appli-

cations to inform customers of the service. The LCO leaves the card with the lawn fertilization invoice so the customer can respond to the offer by filling out the card and mailing it in with their payment. GroGreen also provides a phone number so the client can just call to request the service if he or she prefers. – Kevin McConville

The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached via mwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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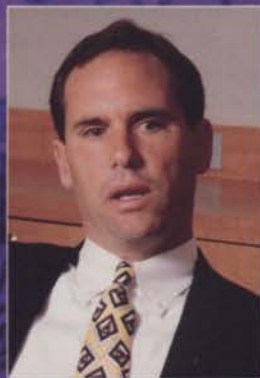
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by Nicole Wisniewski

Consolidation SHAKE OUT

(Left to right) Dave Slott, president, TruGreen-ChemLawn; Roger Braswell, owner, Power House Equipment, and former owner, Southern Tree & Landscape Co.; Chris Davitt, president, Ruppert Nurseries; Steve Coffey, former owner of Scapes; Craig Ruppert, chief executive officer, Ruppert Nurseries; Ed LaFlamme, owner, Grass Roots Consulting, and former owner, LaFlamme Services



Validation LIKE

*Five years
after the
mega deals,
the winners
and losers
share what
they learned.*

The news reports came fast and furious five years ago announcing that yet another landscape contractor had sold his successful business to a national giant.

These contractors sold their companies for numerous reasons – both strategic and opportunistic. As five-year noncompete agreements begin to expire, principals of the mega deals share firsthand perspectives on why they made their decisions and the lessons they learned along the way.

BOOM TIMES. Five years ago, the economy was booming. Banks lined up to loan money to consolidators or, specifically, to rollups – a group of businesses that merge to form one national presence and then continue acquiring companies or “rolling up” the industry to create a market leader, explains David Hartzell, managing director, Business Services Investment Banking Group, CIBC World Markets, Baltimore.

Rollups were born in other fragmented service trades, like the heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) and motorcoach industries. But to investors the landscape industry offered even greater growth and higher profit margins. “At the time, a good commercial maintenance business was growing 12 to 20 percent a year, while an HVAC company was only growing 1 to 2 percent a year and a motorcoach company was only growing 2 to 3 percent a year,” points out Ken Garcia, senior vice president, Anaerobics, Rochester, N.Y.

Consequently, Garcia and his team at Notre Capital Ventures Group, Houston, Texas, merged seven landscape companies to form Houston-based LandCare USA in 1997 with



Garcia as senior vice president and chief development officer.

"Our goal was to try and build one large company to service national customers and get the economies of scale you gain as a national company, such as insurance savings and purchasing power," Garcia says.

As one of the seven founding members of

LandCare USA, Roger Braswell, owner, Power House Equipment, Charlotte, N.C., and former owner of Charlotte, N.C.-based Southern Tree & Landscape Co., thought the idea was compelling. "I was intrigued and inspired by the concept," he says. "Being able to turn assets into a more liquid position, and have cash and stock in a public company was a motivation,

as well as being able to provide my employees with better growth opportunities."

Others thought the rollout provided a greater chance for business growth and development. "We looked at it as a way to go to the next level," adds Hal Cranston, former owner, Four Seasons Landscape & Maintenance, Foster City, Calif., and another one of LandCare's founding members. "We thought we'd work with other people's money for a change and leverage this business."

Shortly after LandCare began, TruGreen-ChemLawn started its landscape maintenance division through acquisitions. With two consolidators, competition for potential sellers was red-hot, driving up business values and giving those who may have never thought about selling their businesses before a reason to think again.

"Rollups were sexy at the time - it was definitely a gold rush in 1998," says Dave Slott,



"PEOPLE NEVER CALLED TO

BUY MY COMPANY BEFORE

AND NOW I HAD SEVERAL OFFERS AND

EACH ONE WAS GETTING BETTER THAN THE

NEXT. IT FELT LIKE THE RIGHT TIME TO

SELL." — Ed LaFLAMME

president, TruGreen-ChemLawn, Memphis, Tenn.

Cranston calls the period a seller's market. "Offers were at levels they won't be at for a long time," he says.

"People never called to buy my company before and now I had several offers and each one was better than the last," adds Ed LaFlamme, owner, Grass Roots Consulting, Huntington, Conn., and former owner of LaFlamme Services, Bridgeport, Conn. "It felt like the right time to sell."

On three occasions, buyers approached Tom Fochtman, president, CoCal Landscape, Denver, Colo., to purchase his business and the price rose each time. "Landscape companies aren't the easiest things to sell," he says. "If you created a brand and were in a bit of a leadership position in your market, then you were an acquisition candidate. This provided

(continued on page 64)

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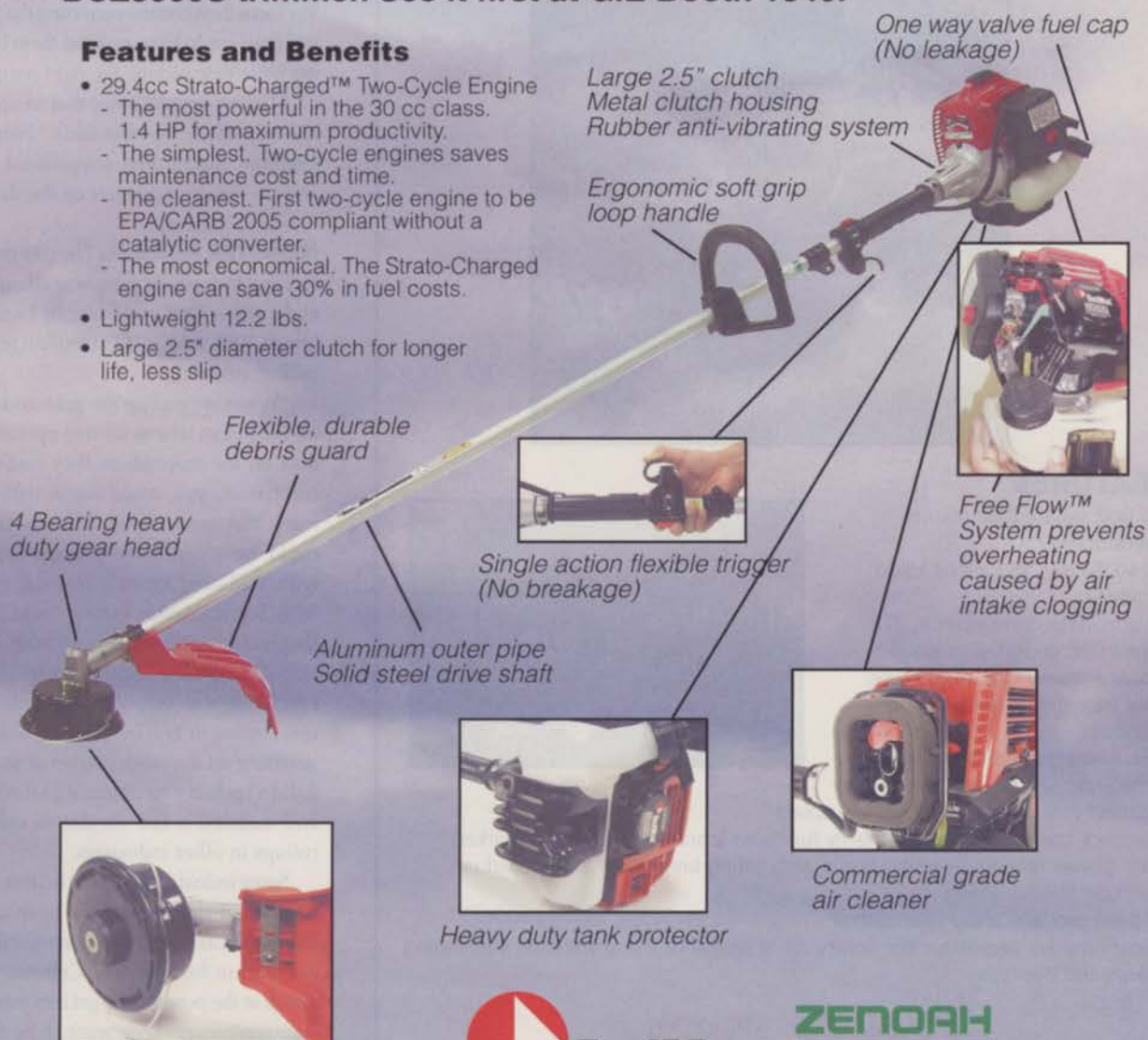


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exit strategies for a lot of owners that weren't available before. Some got out of the business quite attractively. For us, it wasn't the right time to sell, so we didn't."

As someone who's familiar with how the acquisition process works, Burt Sperber, founder and chief executive officer, ValleyCrest Cos., Calabasas, Calif., says dur-

ing this consolidation wave buyers overpaid for many of the companies they purchased. "I think a lot of hardworking owners got very lucky because they got paid a lot more than their companies were worth," he says. "Future owners can only dream that the same thing will happen to them one day."

The bidding wars escalated. "We'd offer

\$2 million, for instance," Garcia says. "Then, TruGreen would offer \$2.2 million and we'd offer \$2.5 million. It was ratcheting up the purchasing price for companies and after awhile, it just didn't make sense."

Some consolidators admit that mounting competition resulted in some poor buying decisions. "I wish we would have done a little more due diligence in the companies we acquired," Cranston says. "We could have really tried harder to make sure there was a fit. We acquired some companies we should not have acquired—we knew the owner would never be a team player. Both TruGreen and LandCare were making purchases they shouldn't have. The focus then became correcting the problems when we could have avoided them by spending more time picking the right companies."

"There's no guarantee that an acquisition will be perfect," Sperber adds. "People make mistakes. Sometimes, acquisitions don't fit and the return is pennies on the dollar."

MONSTER MERGER. The competitive offers and industry atmosphere changed overnight when TruGreen bought LandCare in March 1999, adding \$450 million to its \$820-million revenue.

"When we put up the map and put dots on the places where we had operations and dots on the map where they had acquired companies, you could see a national network that made sense," Garcia says. "We could have continued going head-to-head with TruGreen for only so long, especially with ServiceMaster behind them. They either had to crush us or work with us."

Suddenly, the rollout rush ended. Though LandCare was considered a financial success (selling to TruGreen for \$11 a share after debuting on the stock market at \$8 a share), it didn't achieve its ultimate goal of survival, and suffered a fate similar to comparable rollups in other industries.

Some industry observers believe the landscape market will never be open to rollups like LandCare again. "I don't think rollups can work in this industry," Cranston observes. "Look at the people who get into this business—entrepreneurs. They want to be their own boss and then all of a sudden you push them together and create a company with 25 of these individuals managing it and no majority shareholder. They have 25 different cultures, management systems and philosophies

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of how to run a business. How can you put them together and expect it to work?"

Hartzell, who in 1998 worked for Alex Brown, the investment bank that underwrote LandCare's public offering and was the mergers and acquisitions adviser on its sale to TruGreen, agrees. "People looked through the risks, and the banks were willing to give venture capitalists who said they could seamlessly create a market leader the benefit of the doubt," he says. "People thought they



"ROLLUPS WERE SEXY AT THE TIME — IT WAS DEFINITELY A GOLD RUSH IN 1998," — DAVE SLOTT

could make a lot of money, but they underestimated the difficulty of making a merger of many companies work."

"In my opinion, the investment group behind LandCare never intended to be a long-term player in the industry," adds Scott Brickman, president, The Brickman Group, Langhorne, Pa., who is knowledgeable about working with financial investors. "They saw an opportunity to roll up a fragmented industry and make a lot of money in a short period of time through financial engineering. The acquisition by TruGreen allowed them to get out and make some money."

The number of "spectacular rollup blow-ups" that happened at the time still makes banks hesitant to fund similar projects, Hartzell says. "Banks are much more skeptical about the rollup strategy, so it's hard to get a rollup financed today," he says. "I do see it opening up over the last year, though, as interest rates have come down. But it's definitely not like it was in 1997 and 1998 when you could get bank financing and go public on just a business plan."

But Cranston thinks that won't stop future rollup-inspired entrepreneurs from repeating history. "All of a sudden, it'll be a novel idea again" he says. "People will forget what happened in 1998."

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST. While TruGreen LandCare in its early stages was a rollup, Slott considers it an operating company today. And the owners have gained some knowledge from rapid consolidation times.

"We learned a lot about valuing businesses," Slott points out. "When we are ready to begin making acquisitions on the maintenance side again, we will bring more scrutiny to the valuation of companies."

Within the past two years, TruGreen LandCare sold off construction and line clear-

ing — two services it considered out-of-place in its menu — to fully focus on commercial maintenance. "Bid/build construction work was foreign to us," Slott says. "Sellers were unwilling to unbundle their bid/build construction from their maintenance so we took it on. We made some mistakes in that arena thinking



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that a small piece of the business can't hurt you that much. But we didn't have the learning curve or expertise because it was not the recurring revenue model we were used to."

Today, instead of centering on acquisitions, the company concentrates on organic growth.

Though TruGreen is dedicating time and manpower to its LandCare business (the company hired Robert Fates in September to run the division), industry observers believe that ServiceMaster cannot succeed in maintenance by borrowing off of what it's learned in lawn care.

"They are two different services," Cranston says. "In landscape maintenance, you want to be as close to the customer as you can. The fact that they are centralizing their operations and directing them from Memphis is a big negative. You have to call the shots locally with this service. You can't have someone from Memphis telling them what crew size they should use."

"Commercial maintenance doesn't fit the ServiceMaster model," LaFlamme agrees. "Something tells me they may have a five-

year plan in place to exit the business and they are going into their second or third year."

But TruGreen sees the similarities between its two businesses. "Both are labor-intensive, route businesses where density makes a difference," Slott explains. "Fifteen percent of TruGreen-ChemLawn clients are commercial, and that's where the synergies are between both services. We are presently offering LandCare customers lawn care services for that reason. And we love the maintenance industry and think the company has a tremendous amount of potential given all the work we've done to position ourselves for the future."

CREATING A SALABLE COMPANY.

The mega deals that happened via acquisitions by LandCare and TruGreen taught the industry some lessons. These teachings can be valuable to future sellers preparing for

1999	\$450 million
2000	\$700 million
2001	\$690 million
2002	\$517 million

TruGreen LandCare Revenue Years

the return of positive economic times.

Initially, the best way a seller prepares his or her business is to always be ready to sell, according to industry buyers.

"If you are always building a salable company and you've been approached by someone to buy it, then it's probably functioning pretty well," says Fochtman, who has made one acquisition and is currently working on a second.

But what specifics should a potential seller focus on to ready his business for future sale? Past sellers and current buyers offer suggestions.

"First, if a retiring owner doesn't have fam-

(continued on page 68)

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(continued from page 66)

ily interested in taking over the business, the best thing for the company may be to put it in other hands," Hartzell says. "The second big reason is increased competition. As leaders acquire companies in your market and they take market share away from you, it makes your life more competitive. As you lose market share, the value of your business decreases, so some owners sell early to retain business value. Others sell because they are having difficulty growing their businesses or retaining employees."

Some contractors have sold in the past and thought they were going to retain a leadership role in the buying company. But then they were gone – whether they left or were let go – and had no affect on the outcome of the business. For this reason, "a contractor should ask himself what his long-term goals are when he is thinking about selling his business," Brickman advises. "If you want to stay with the business and sell it to a place where your employees have long-term opportunities and will be treated well, then really look at who

you are selling to and make sure your philosophies mesh. If you are looking to sell your business, get the maximum dollar amount and then walk away, that's a different decision. There are some unhappy people out there



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ABOUT GOING IN ANOTHER DIRECTION."**

— ROGER BRASWELL

because they chose to sell and it ended up being the wrong decision for them."

Also, if a contractor wants to maximize his business' sale, he needs to come to a certain point of critical mass where his company becomes attractive to buyers. This is usually obtained at

\$600,000 to \$1.5 million in annual revenue because the owner isn't running the company alone at this stage and has key management in place to assist him, LaFlamme says.

Potential sellers shouldn't discredit the appeal of their service mix either. Buyers love the landscape maintenance business, Hartzell explains. "Public markets love predictability and contractual recurring revenue – and that's maintenance," he says. "Maintenance brings higher valuations for these reasons."

"At the business end of the day, design/build is worth less than maintenance," Garcia agrees. "People didn't get that in 1998 – there were few who focused on maintenance."

Beyond business makeup, a clean house – financially and operationally – is crucial. "You need to have consistency in profitability and growth," Garcia adds. "At the end of the day, what someone is buying is your future earnings. The only way for them to justify the purchase price is to predict what the business' future cash

(continued on page 72)

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Cover Story

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flow will be. As a seller, show consistency in growth and profits and the buyer will assume it'll be the same over the next three years. If you show sporadic growth, people won't be interested or they will offer you less value for your business because of the predictability factor."

Owning vs. leasing a facility is also important, LaFlamme says. "For instance, if a business owner leases a property on a short-term basis, he loses equity in his business because when he goes to sell his company, it doesn't have a permanent home. Buyers look for stability, security and if you own your property, you're better off."

Next, bring in a consultant or professional business valuator to review your company, Cranston advises. "Don't have the first person who walks in buy it and don't use a business broker," he says. "Ask someone you trust – an advisory board member or another contractor – to come in and give you an honest perspective. Most sole proprietors get tunnel vision and think they know it all, which

is why they need to look outside their company for new ideas and perspectives."

Steve Coffey, former owner of Scapes, Atlanta, Ga., and Washington D.C., recommends contractors do what he did before selling and talk to other contractors who have sold their businesses to gain their insight. "You need help going through it, whether it be from professionals or friends," he says. "There are a lot of moving parts in a deal and it's best to know what to expect."

SALES MISTAKES. According to Hartzell, there are four key mistakes sellers make.

First, they have unrealistic value expectations. "When you talk to an adviser about selling your business, make sure you check his or her reputation," Hartzell suggests. "Many advisers will promise you they can sell your business for \$20 million, but then end up selling it for \$10 million because that's what it was really worth. You have to be able to trust that your adviser is being honest.

Make sure you're getting objective advice and that you're checking advisers' references."

Next, sellers need to make certain they perform due diligence on buying companies. "It's not just a one-way street," Hartzell says. "A seller should ensure he is passing his company onto a business he knows something about."

Third, sellers and buyers both need to understand from the beginning that due diligence will be disruptive and take time. "It can't just be done during off-hours – it takes a commitment to the process," Hartzell says.

The fourth mistake sellers make is assuming business will be the same after the sale – it never is. "Once you sell control of the business, it's a different ball game," Hartzell says.

Braswell explains why. "You have to be willing to accept that you will no longer have control," he says. "For me, it was the public environment that I couldn't control that really got to me. I had to be willing to accept the consequences."

(continued on page 74)

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(continued from page 72)

For instance, Braswell says that he's seen contractors offer to take a certain price upfront for their business and then earn the rest over time based on the company's future performance. "But you no longer control the business' future performance since you sold it and the new owner can make decisions you can't override that can negatively affect the business' performance," Braswell explains. "Hence, you can't truly control the forward performance of the business. Instead, agree on a price and get all your compensation at the time you sell your business and close the deal."

Most of all, these deals take time, and like any important decision, Craig Ruppert, chief executive officer, Ruppert Nurseries, Laytonsville, Md., suggests sellers "think it through, take your time and listen to the people around you and the advice they give. No matter what decision you make, it's partly right and partly wrong. Every acquisition decision has positives and negatives and hopefully you receive more positives from the deal than negatives."

SHOULD YOU SELL? Deciding whether to sell is the most important question owners should ask themselves, as many who sold in the 1990s are now starting over again.

Instead of repeating steps they took years ago, some sellers are pursuing other industry interests. LaFlamme, for instance, is following his first love, which is consulting, writing and public speaking. "I learned how to market and sell and create my business the hard way before and now I want to help others reach those same goals," he says.

"Once you get in this business, it gets in your blood," adds Coffey, whose noncompete isn't up until next year, but is thinking about reentering the business as a mentor or adviser.

Cranston feels similarly. "I have no desire to work 60-hour weeks again," he explains. "I'm getting back in, instead, as a passive investor. I want to help mostly one and two-location type companies that do revenue between \$3 and \$6 million. I will meet with them one day a month, go through their operations, review their P&L statements and provide consulting on that basis."

The most difficult part about leaving the industry for sellers is lost industry relationships. "Many people who sold their businesses in hindsight wouldn't have if they

To ensure a solid merger or rollup, the slower, the better, according to industry buyers and sellers.

"If you hire an adviser and go through the whole process, I'd say it takes three to six months," explains David Hartzell, managing director, Business Services Investment Banking Group, CIBC World Markets, Baltimore, adding that about 80 percent of acquisitions are done in this time frame. "If the seller is already comfortable with one buyer's offer and thinks the price is fair, the process could take as little as two months. Then, I've seen an acquisition take up to 18 months because the first buyer couldn't get financing."

However, in the seller's market of 1998 and 1999, when more than 75 companies were purchased in less than two years, many contractors thought acquisitions happened too fast.

"There were times where we'd do three or four acquisitions a month," admits Ken Garcia, senior vice president, Anaerobics, Rochester, N.Y., and past senior vice president and chief development officer for Houston, Texas-based LandCare USA.

"Clearly, it was faster than we expected upfront," adds Dave Slott, president TruGreen-ChemLawn, Memphis, Tenn. "But we felt the timing was right, considering that we wanted to enter the landscape maintenance arena full time."

But for sellers who want out of a business, sometimes the process can't go fast enough. "The process can be very frustrating," says Steve Coffey, previous owner of Scapes, Atlanta, Ga., and Washington D.C. "The frustration is that everything you've ever worked for is being scrutinized and is under the microscope because there's a personal attachment that goes along with it. The other frustration is the time it takes. Four months is not a long time, but when your life is in the balance, it feels like a very long time." — Nicole Wisniewski

It Takes Time

had to do it over again," Braswell explains. "Now, they are free to go back and start over, and many have."

"When you spend your life developing a network of friendships, it's hard to think about going in another direction," adds Braswell, whose noncompete was up in June and who in addition to running his equipment-focused company, also is advising his previous partner, David Blakeley, on his reentry into the landscape market with Southern Shade Tree Co. "I see him avoiding mistakes this time that we made the first time around. Unfortunately, you can't just turn on a switch and have all your old clients back. We wouldn't be able to service them all at this level anyway. We have to build back up our resources slow and steady so we're not forced into unwanted growth."

Another landscape start-up is Ruppert Nurseries, formerly Ruppert Landscape Co., Ashton, Md., which sold to TruGreen-ChemLawn in August 1998.

The company started selling work again in August with the goal of building a business that is predominantly maintenance, according to President Chris Davitt. Making the decision to reenter the business took nearly all five noncompete years. "The reason it took years is because we had that luxury," Davitt says. "We were restricted in how much we could do with our noncompete, so we decided we would plan slowly and take our time deciding

if this was really what we wanted to do."

"Our plan isn't to become what we were before," Ruppert adds, explaining that Davitt will focus on day-to-day operations, while he will concentrate on future planning, financing, customer service and marketing. "We'll take that if it comes, but we'd rather do it well first and then if we get big, fine. But it's not our main goal. We're not interested in growing another business to sell it — that's not our motivation. Yet at the same time, you can never say never to anything."

Previous client relationships will aid gradual growth. "The fact that we still have a recognizable name in the market will make it easier — clients will remember us," Ruppert says.

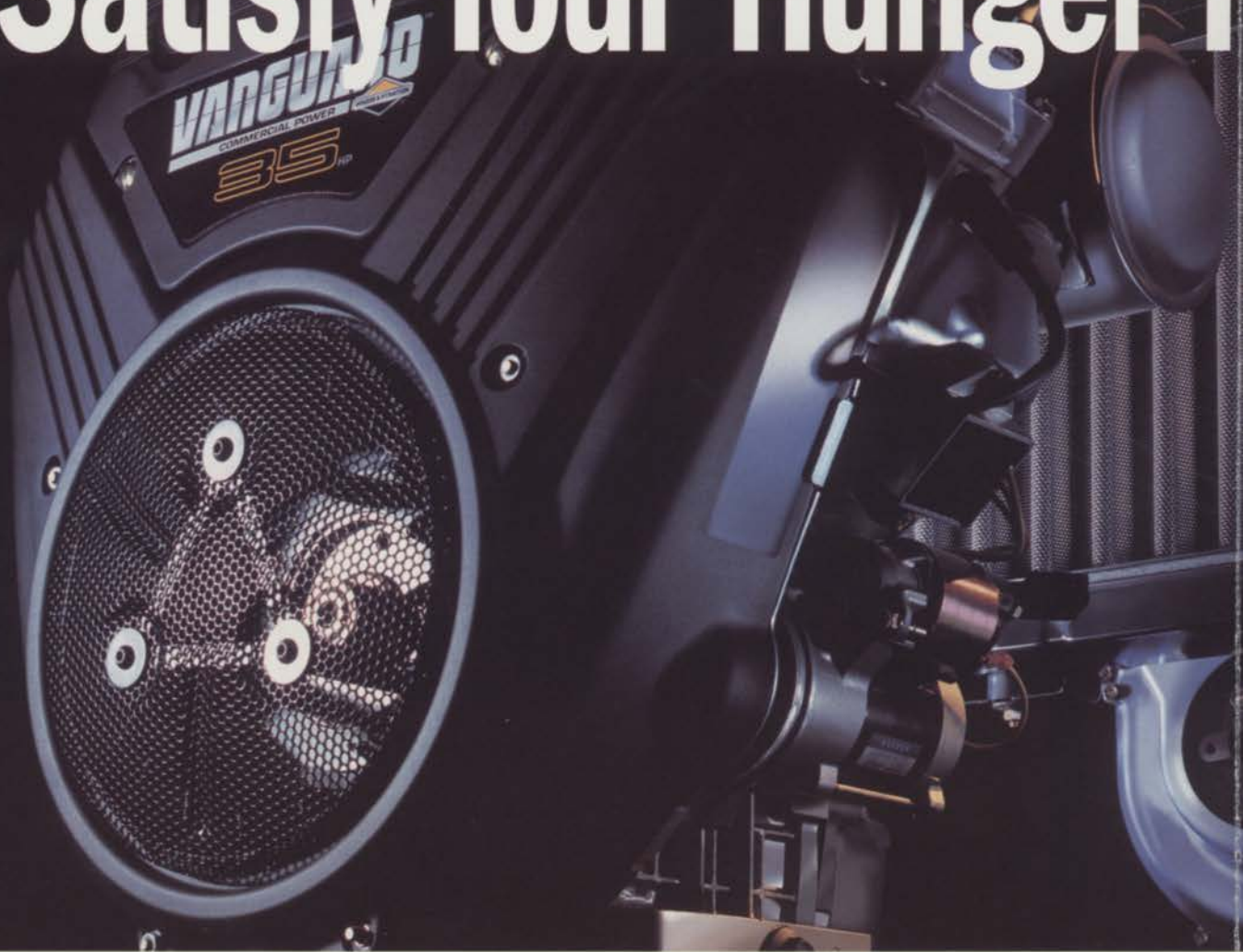
Owners like Ruppert, who have former client relationships, means a new level of competition for national companies. "Our plan would be to provide greater service than anyone in the market — it's the ultimate litmus test," Slott shares. "Any new competitors or former owners coming back into the market all bring more competition. We don't fear their previous relationships in the market, but we certainly view them as more than just regular competition. In the end, he who provides the better service will win." **LL**

The author is Managing Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at nwisniewski@lawnandlandscape.com.

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AIR CLEANER	.Cyclonic	ALTERNATOR	.20 amp
MUFFLER	.5" Round	LUBRICATION	.Full pressure
BEARING TYPE	.Steel backed aluminum bearings	EMISSIONS	.Carb/EPA approved

Air-Cooled BIG BLOCKS

	25 HP AC	27 HP AC	29 HP AC	31 HP AC	33 HP AC	35 HP AC
BORE	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm
STROKE	78mm	78mm	78mm	78mm	86.5mm	86.5mm
DISPLACEMENT	895cc	895cc	895cc	895cc	993cc	993cc
OIL CAPACITY	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters	2.3 Liters
COOLANT CAPACITY	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
WEIGHT	.125 Lbs without muffler; 134 Lbs with muffler					
DIMENSIONS	.15" x 20" x 28" or 388mm x 496mm x 718mm					
TORQUE FT-LBS	48	48	48	48	53	53

Liquid-Cooled BIG BLOCKS

	25 HP LC	28 HP LC	29 HP LC	31 HP LC	33 HP LC	35 HP LC
BORE	81mm	81mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm	85.5mm
STROKE	73mm	73mm	78mm	78mm	86.5mm	86.5mm
DISPLACEMENT	752cc	752cc	895cc	895cc	993cc	993cc
OIL CAPACITY	2.6 Liters	2.6 Liters	2.25 Liters	2.25 Liters	2.25 Liters	2.25 Liters
COOLANT CAPACITY	3.5 Liters	3.5 Liters	3.5 Liters	3.5 Liters	5.1 Liters	5.1 Liters
WEIGHT	148 Lbs	150 Lbs	150 Lbs	150 Lbs	153 Lbs	153 Lbs
DIMENSIONS	See Note #1	See Note #1	See Note #2	See Note #3	See Note #3	See Note #3
TORQUE FT-LBS	40	41	48	50	56	58

Note #1: 25.4" x 18.9" x 24.4" or 645mm x 480mm x 620mm
 Note #2: 25.4" x 18.9" x 25.2" or 645mm x 480mm x 640mm
 Note #3: 25.4" x 19.3" x 25.2" or 645mm x 490mm x 640mm



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Branching into holiday and lighting services has helped Del Vacchio Landscapes diversify its service offerings.



by Lauren Spiers

Exploring OPTIONS

Like many industry entrepreneurs, when Vince Del Vacchio was young, his urge for pocket money translated into mowing neighbors' lawns for a little cash. But when college rolled around, the future president of Del Vacchio Landscapes, Edgemont, Pa., realized that he really wanted to get his hands dirty.

"I got a degree in landscape design," Del Vacchio says. "I wanted some diversity in my work, so I switched my focus from maintenance to installation. I enjoyed doing things with my hands and having something to look at and leave behind."

Since then, diversity has been the name of Del Vacchio's game. After college, he expanded his services to include installation and has since added holiday

and low-voltage lighting to his service mix. Altogether, these endeavors have helped Del Vacchio Landscapes become a steadily growing \$500,000 company.

SPREADING THEIR WINGS. "Diversity lets you take care of your clients," Del Vacchio says. "Some customers will hire someone to mow their lawn but when they ask that person to rake their leaves they find out they don't do that. Offering different services lets you be the company that does it all for your customers."

As a small company in the early 1990s, Del Vacchio and his employees spent a few days each week mowing lawns and a few days installing small landscaping projects. By 1995, the company was bringing in \$80,000 in revenue and increased those figures by 25 to 35 percent each year.

"Growing that much was a big jump for us," Del Vacchio notes. "In 1997, we reached \$135,000, but we got up to \$190,000 in 1998 when we finally broke out into two crews." At that time, the company's workload was outgrowing its manpower, which prompted Del Vacchio

to hire more employees. Still, "we were big enough that we needed another crew, but hadn't gotten to the size where we could support two full crews," he says. The company's size allowed for only a couple of new hires, including a crew leader to oversee the mowing division. The result was a dedicated mowing crew and a smaller "catch-all" crew to handle other maintenance and installation work.

Now, the company has eight employees and still maintains a steady 10 percent growth annually. With the capacity to handle more work, recent years have brought new opportunities – and new challenges – for the firm.

"Labor is our biggest challenge, but we've been able to help that with H-2B," Del Vacchio says. "It's the crew leaders who are always challenging to find." Recruiting through existing employees and searching locally for qualified crew leaders helps. Del Vacchio hires about one new employee every year to fill certain positions, though implementing a new time and overhead management system in 2001 caused some turnover in that area.

Vince Del Vacchio keeps his hands in business management and landscaping while his wife Kathy oversees their holiday lighting franchise. Photo: Del Vacchio Landscapes



First Look

"We minimized overtime, but that was one of the changes we made too quickly," Del Vacchio notes. "We lost some employees because they saw that they were losing their overtime pay, but it created a much better culture in our company. Now we have the kind of people here who want to work a normal week and go home to their families."

The new budgeting and job tracking systems showed Del Vacchio how much overtime really was costing the company. Bonuses and profit-sharing ultimately replaced this money in crewmembers' pockets, but some employees resented the change and left before the benefits kicked in, Del Vacchio

(continued on page 82)

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Computer programs and sophisticated job tracking systems help many contractors increase efficiency and build profitable businesses. But when Vince Del Vacchio started using defined systems to track his company's hours and budgets, he didn't expect to be able to drop a whole day from his workweek.

"In 2001 we discovered from these systems that we could move from working five eight-hour days to four 10-hour days," explains the president of Del Vacchio Landscapes, Edgemont, Pa. "Our crewmembers like it because it gives them a three-day weekend when everything goes right, and if we do have weather or other issues to deal with, we still have Friday and Saturday to get our work done."

But one thing Del Vacchio learned from other operational changes was the importance of implementing the new system gradually, so customers weren't too shocked by the change.

"We implemented the new schedule over time - we didn't change all at once," Del Vacchio says. "There was a little pushback from people who wanted their lawns mowed as close to the weekend as possible, so we started scheduling theirs for Thursdays and that left us with a rain day. In terms of install work, sometimes people wonder why we're not showing up on Friday and we explain to them that if they want us to work Friday or work more than 40 hours, we can but we'll have to charge them for it."

As for efficiency, Del Vacchio notes that adding just two extra hours to the workday makes his crews highly productive. "The longer workday knocks off a lot of travel time and it's not much harder to work the longer days," he comments. "We just get off at 5:30 p.m. instead of 3:30 and get an extra day off. You get more jobs in a day and the percentage of windshield time is down because you're only leaving and coming back to the shop four times instead of five." - **Lauren Spiers**

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First Look

(continued from page 80)

explains. The company also lost a few clients in 1999 when it began to contract all customers in an effort to become more full-service.

"We didn't used to have all of our customers contracted and we decided to go for it in one fell swoop instead of easing them into it," Del Vacchio says. Prior to contracting customers, some of Del Vacchio's clients

would call only when their lawns needed attention. Del Vacchio knew that having contracts would help the company be more organized when the season started, but "we lost clients because some people felt that we didn't trust them," he says. "Also, some of the price shoppers left when they realized we would mowing once a week, rather than

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Check our November Online Extras for information on DelVacchio Landscapes' experience with Hispanic crewmembers and the company's plans to buy a new facility.

every other week like they were used to. We probably could have maintained more customers had we made the change over the course of a season or two."

WORKING HOLIDAYS. In 2001, the company further increased its service diversity by purchasing a holiday lighting franchise. "No one in our area was doing anything like that, so we saw the potential to do well," Del Vacchio says.

In addition to increasing potential sales, Del Vacchio saw that adding a wintertime service would keep his employees occupied during the off-season. "This keeps us busy through at least January if not February, and it's also something different," he notes. "Toward the end of the year, you get a little burned out doing the same things, so you can throw something like this into the mix."

To purchase the franchise, Del Vacchio invested the necessary capital and his wife Kathy moved from a part-time position with the company to a full-time sales and management position with the holiday division. Additionally, the company added onto their facilities by increasing storage capacity and building a room to prepare decorations and keep supplies organized and accessible.

Del Vacchio did go through a significant learning experience during the first two years of franchise ownership.

"The first year, our plan was to take our installation crew and turn it into a Christmas crew, which we did," Del Vacchio says. "To move our installation crew over to Christmas, we stopped selling installation work at the end of the year. But after Sept. 11, sales fell and we didn't sell as much décor as we planned, so we ended up short that year." After learning that lesson, in 2002 Del Vacchio continued to sell landscape installation work through the fall, which also made up for slow sales from a dry summer. For the décor team that year, the company brought landscape maintenance crewmembers over instead. Del Vacchio plans to do the same this year, and may hire additional employees to help out for the season.

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lspliers@lawnandlandscape.com.

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USE READER SERVICE #50

Routing & Tracking

by Lauren Spiers

GPS and routing technologies help contractors streamline their businesses.

When a company runs as a one- or two-person operation, employees are generally easy to manage. Fewer crewmembers means less equipment to track and client bases stay relatively small, which simplifies routing.

But for growing companies, increased workloads mean more accounts and employees to manage, and operations quickly can become disorganized.

Meeting the demands of busy schedules and growing companies has led many business owners to implement high-tech routing and tracking systems to keep up with company operations.

"There's a 'rule of seven' that says you can manage seven items without much difficulty—like seven digits in a phone number," notes Mike Ayars, president, Marathon Data Systems, Oakhurst, N.J. "If you have seven technicians, you have a sense of what they're doing, but if

business owners are managing a larger number than that, they start to rely on systems."

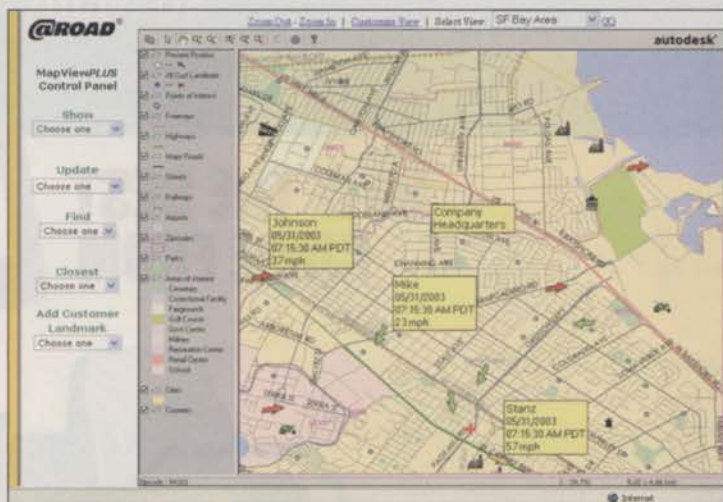
In particular, Ayars notes that global positioning satellite (GPS) technology is becoming a more popular option for service companies with several employees and vehicles to manage. Originally developed for the U.S. government, the global positioning system uses a series of satellites to identify the origins of electronic signals by their latitudes and longitudes. In the 1980s, GPS

was deregulated for civilian use and is now widely used in service industries for vehicle tracking. Moreover, some companies that work with GPS are adding new features to their service offerings to make the technology accessible on multiple business levels. The result is a trend known as mobile resource management (MRM).

TECHNO TRACKING. "MRM is providing the productivity and benefits of a network and computing with workers in the field," explains J.D. Fay, vice president of corporate affairs, @Road, Fremont, Calif. "These systems are useful for any company that has people who go out of their office and work in the field. It's not just fleet management—it's people management."

Fay explains that MRM integrates several publicly available services including wireless communication and the Internet to allow employees and managers to communicate with optimal efficiency. MRM users also benefit from GPS technology, which is the basis for these integrated services. For instance, a manager using a Web-based GPS system (operated through the Internet) to track a crew's progress may notice that the crew has spent 60 minutes on a property that only requires 30 minutes of maintenance. With MRM, the manager can send a text message to the crew telling them to move on or asking them what the problem is.

(continued on page 86)



Routing and mapping software help GPS users maximize crew efficiency and can print exception reports when routes aren't proceeding as planned. Photos: @Road

Route	Start	End	Distance	Time	Status
1	10/10/2003 10:00 AM	10/10/2003 11:00 AM	1.2	01:00	Completed
2	10/10/2003 11:00 AM	10/10/2003 12:00 PM	1.5	01:00	In Progress
3	10/10/2003 12:00 PM	10/10/2003 1:00 PM	1.0	01:00	Pending

Route	Start	End	Distance	Time	Status
1	10/10/2003 10:00 AM	10/10/2003 11:00 AM	1.2	01:00	Completed
2	10/10/2003 11:00 AM	10/10/2003 12:00 PM	1.5	01:00	In Progress
3	10/10/2003 12:00 PM	10/10/2003 1:00 PM	1.0	01:00	Pending

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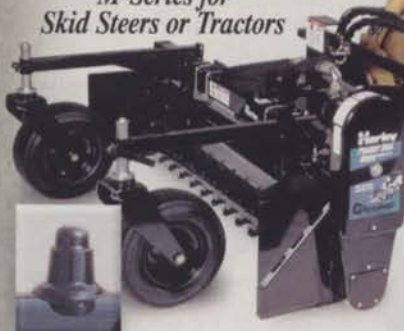
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USE READER SERVICE #52

Routing & Tracking

(continued from page 84)

November Nickett began using GPS as a way of tracking crews and their trucks to check productivity against planned routes.

"We didn't want to be 'Big Brother,' but lawn crews have a certain autonomy when they're out of the office," says Nickett, office manager, Nickett's Landscaping, Doylestown, Pa. "As long as they're productive, they can be left alone and you just expect them to do exactly what they're supposed to be doing as efficiently as possible."

Prior to installing GPS systems in a number of the company's trucks, Nickett would spend a day at a time following a crew on their route to judge their productivity. "We were getting too big for that," she continues. "That's what

prompted us to begin using GPS technology to track our crews."

The system Nickett uses relays data from the trucks' GPS units to the main office in real time, allowing Nickett to see exactly where each crew is, how fast they're driving, and the exact times they begin and end service calls. Sometimes known as an "active" GPS system, this type of data transfer is different from "passive" systems, which collect the same data but wait to download the information until the end of the day when the truck is back at the office.

"I chose to use the real time system because it's an available option and it lets me

(continued on page 90)

Most mobile resource management (MRM) providers tap into wireless technology with cell phones and text messaging and transmit data collected by GPS units through the Internet, bringing several easy-to-use technologies together. However, in terms of efficiency, many contractors rely on separate routing software to easily organize accounts into routes with minimal downtime.

"The amount of time I used to spend manually routing 1,100 mowing clients a week was outrageous because it changes all the time," Walker says. "If a client called to cancel or the weather changed our plans, I was spending a lot of time just routing and reconfiguring everything."

Now, Walker uses a software program that reorganizes routes in minutes if clients cancel or employees call in sick. "With our old routing system, you couldn't possibly change things quickly because you had the route set the day before," he says. "With this, if an employee calls in and we're a truck short and need to reconfigure everything, it only takes about 15 minutes to run the whole process."

Many MRM providers and software manufacturers are looking into combining GPS technology with routing software to create an even more convenient package.

"The advantage for the contractor in having a GPS system without routing software is simply that he will know where his vehicles are at all times, which might prevent employees from stopping at a convenience store or at home during work hours," notes Dave Tucker, chief executive officer, CLIP Software, Ijamsville, Md. In combination with routing software though, "the system becomes much more than a management tool," he continues. "This allows the company to see the work as it is getting done, along with all of the other information, such as the time budgeted and time spent on the property. This helps the company see any problems early on and it greatly increases the efficiency of office personnel because all the data entry is done automatically."

Bob Walker, president, Dependable Lawn Care, Chicago, Ill., is currently working with his routing software manufacturer as a routing-GPS guinea pig of sorts.

"The last piece of the puzzle for me is to have the GPS and routing system work together," Walker says. "Right now you can print out a report from the GPS and compare it to your planned route, but what we're working on now is having them speak to one another so we can ask the system, in combination, to only print the exceptions – the instances where something doesn't look right or the times are getting off. If the route ran the way it was supposed to, you wouldn't have to see that – just where things weren't quite right." – **Lauren Spiers**

Joining Forces

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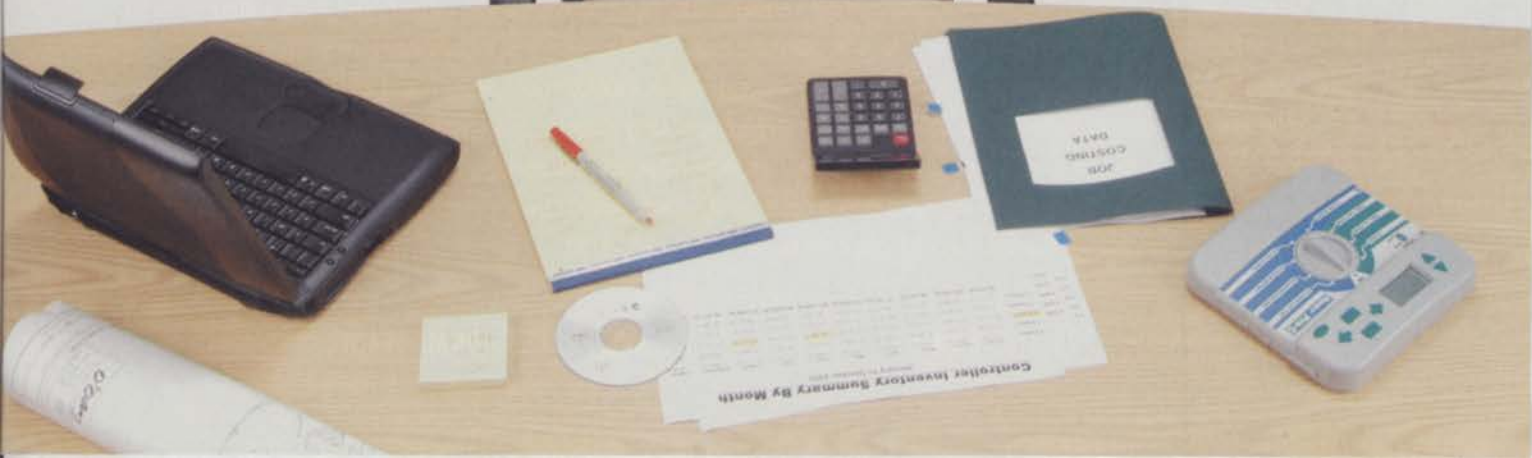
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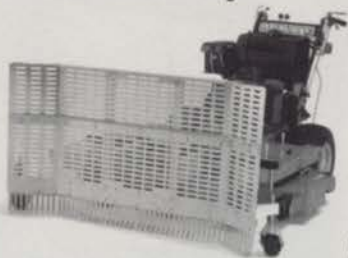
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USE READER SERVICE #116

Routing & Tracking

(continued from page 86)

see where my crews are right now," Nickett says. "A mechanic might ask me, 'Where's crew No. 2? I have to get them this repaired mower,' and I'm able to say, 'They're at this stop right now and when you get closer I can tell you exactly where they are.'"

This immediacy also came in handy when Nickett noticed discrepancies between employees' time cards and the information recorded by the GPS service. "I noticed a couple of time cards were off about 15 minutes on both sides of the day," she says. "They were clocking in at 8 a.m. and out at 4:30 p.m. and I had them starting at 8:15 and ending at 4:15. I got on the phone with the employee and said, 'Okay, I'm watching you pull up to your stop on this road - what does your clock say?' and explained that those are the times they need to record on the time sheets."

Other contractors also use their GPS systems to double-check productivity, but compare reports after the work is complete, rather than as it's happening.

"We use a post-time system to track trucks and as a tool to help us supervise," notes Bob Walker, president, Dependable Lawn Care, Chicago, Ill. "Because of the volume we do, we wanted to keep track of the trucks and make sure they were spending the proper amount of time at houses and they weren't goofing off between stops. All we have to do is download the route at the end of the day and they're held accountable for all the time that the system recorded."


Because Walker let the GPS system track employees' hours for him, he was able to eliminate some supervisory positions, thereby spending less money on personnel. "It's impossible to have a supervisor at every house, but with GPS you don't even have to have them out there," he explains. "The system is out there for you."

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS. Many contractors also rely on separate routing software to organize crews' scheduled stops in the most efficient order.

"We're well over 1,000 customers now and I couldn't do it by hand anymore," Nickett says. "Our routing software in combination with GPS has definitely contributed to our growth and efficiency."

Ayars mentions that some routing software that works in combination with GPS

(continued on page 92)



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USE READER SERVICE #57

Routing & Tracking

(continued from page 90)

technology offers the ability to compare scheduled and actual routes to find inefficiencies. "That's probably the most telling report of any in a GPS system," he comments. "It's one thing to click and find out where a tech is at a given time, but it's nicer at the end of the day or week to run a report that shows where everyone was supposed to be and where they were and find the

discrepancies." (See "Joining Forces" on page 86 for more information.)

Outlining business inefficiencies gives managers a solid idea of what operations they need to streamline for profitability. Routing software and MRM help companies do this effectively by minimizing downtime and maximizing productivity.

In terms of travel time between jobs, "two guys behind glass can't cut grass," comments Dave Tucker, chief executive officer, CLIP Software, Ijamsville, Md. "Travel time kills profits in three ways. First, you are not producing anything, so no income is coming in. Second, it costs to put a truck, equipment and labor on the road. Third, you have lost opportunity to do something else during that travel time."

Tucker explains that routing software optimizes routes for proximity and density, so crews spend less time driving to out-of-the-way accounts or using inefficient roads. Naturally, reduced travel time increases the amount of work a crew can complete in a day. "If an owner increases his routing efficiency, he immediately gains a certain amount of time and efficiency savings that he can sell with no increase in overhead," Tucker adds.

Walker has seen this firsthand. "I've seen an increase in productivity," he says. "We've pretty much got this mastered now and I would say the average mowing crew can do four or five more houses a day and every house is \$27 or \$28 per cut. Sometimes we run eight to 10 trucks, so it adds up."

This increased productivity eventually offsets initial GPS and MRM investments, which can be pricey. Manufacturers report that routing software can run from \$500 to

(continued on page 94)

A recent Lawn & Landscape poll asked: Do you use GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) technology to track vehicles and employee data? Here are the results:

Yes, we use GPS to track all of our vehicles	6.7%
Yes, we use GPS to track some of our vehicles	8.0%
No, but we are considering using GPS in the future	38.7%
No, we will never use GPS	33.3%
No, we are unfamiliar with GPS	13.3%

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Routing & Tracking

(continued from page 92)

\$2,000 or more depending on the complexity of the package, and MRM software that cooperates with GPS technology can cost upwards of \$6,000. Also, contractors should be aware that some MRM providers do not include GPS hardware, which is usually mounted in the company's vehicles and can cost \$300 to \$1,200 per unit. Many MRM providers offer subscriptions that can run from just \$15 to \$45 per month, per mobile worker, though some hardware may need to be purchased separately.

While some GPS systems may seem expensive, manufacturers note that contractors can recoup their investments quickly. "We've done a number of return-on-investment models from talking with our customers and found that a small company with 25 mobile workers can save \$275 per month, per worker in overtime and \$25 per month, per worker in fuel costs," Fay comments. "That company is making 318 percent back on its money every month."

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Data represents the last known location as of Mon May 12 11:00:07 PDT 2003

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Resources

Vehicle	Status	Date	Time	Location (Address/Cross Street, City, State Zip)	County
Wilson	Update	05/12/2003	07:44:52 (PDT)	855 MERCEDIAN AVE / BRAMHAM LN, SAN JOSE, CA 95124	SANTA CLARA
Clark	Update	05/12/2003	22:40:20 (PDT)	1 800 S / STATE HWY 92 E, HAYWARD, CA 94542	ALAMEDA
Reuter	Update	05/12/2003	08:04:11 (PDT)	Customer: @Road Building 1 4100 BAYVIEW PKY, HAYWARD, CA 94528	ALAMEDA
Parker	Update	05/12/2003	06:40:26 (PDT)	8055 AVALON AVE SAN JOSE, CA 95134	SANTA CLARA
Pete2	Update	04/23/2003	23:24:41 (PDT)	Customer: Pete's PIZZA 300 N. 1ST ST, SUNNYVALE, CA 95051	SANTA CLARA
Tom	Update	05/06/2003	20:32:28 (PDT)	Customer: @Road's Castle 1575 LAMAR AVE, SAN PABLO, CA 94603	SAN PABLO

Number of unit(s) displayed: 6


Number of unit(s) in Geotrace: 6

Result Pages: 7

Moreover, Ayars notes that because many of these services are Web-based – meaning subscribers can access their accounts via the Internet – companies no longer have the expense of housing a server in their own offices. "If you have a multi-branch operation, you can have all your information on one server based at our office," he explains. "That lets a contractor open a branch office with very little investment – they just need a PC and an Internet connection. And it lets technicians print out their service orders for the day from home if they

want to, because it's Web-based."

With GPS technology widely available, Nickett offers some purchasing advice: "GPS systems are only a cost center – you have to use the information it gives you to make the money back yourself," she says. "Get a trial period from your provider and do the math to figure out your bottom line return on investment."

The author is Assistant Editor for Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lspliers@lawnandlandscape.com. 

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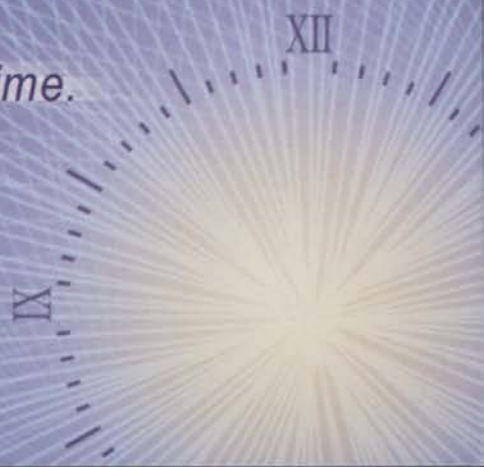
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LAWN & LANDSCAPE

YOUR SUCCESS IS OUR BUSINESS



It's about time.



President's LETTER



Our motto: "Your success is our business" has never been more true. When we started creating software, first for ourselves and then for others, we had the vision of being able to help other companies succeed. Within two years of starting the lawn maintenance company, Lawn-Wright was already starting to manufacture the Grass Gobbler grass catcher, then came CLIP, the Velke, the Stander and the Sentar. All from the humble beginnings of a lawn maintenance company being run out of a shed behind a gas station.

CLIP separated from Wright Manufacturing and Lawn-Wright to concentrate completely on technology. We have been dedicated to helping companies in the green industry succeed through the use of technology, information and service. We are proud that we have had a part in helping over 9,500 companies attain their success.

Because we know that software is a crucial part of running a profitable and efficient business, we have made a commitment to our customers that not only will we continue to develop CLIP with new technologies but that we will continue to serve our customers and be there for years to come.

Over the years, we have seen software companies come and go. We made a commitment to our first customer - Total Lawn Care (TLC) of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. - that we would remain committed to helping them. Sixteen years later, TLC is still using CLIP to continue its success.

As we look over the last 16 years, we can see a tremendous change in the technologies available to us. We have come a long way since the days of the XT Computer. Now with integrated mapping, cell phone and GPS technology, Web processing and publishing, PDA and Bar Code reader options, it seems like everything is changed, but the process remains the same - use information to attain goals.

CLIP continues to change and improve each and every day based on the desires and input from our customers. We live in an exciting time with all the new technology available to us. Our job is clear: Create more tools to help our customers succeed.

We know that success is defined differently for each company. For some it is growth from owner/operators to multi-million dollar businesses. For others, it is simply time to spend with loved ones. Yet, for others, it is control over their companies.

We continue to ask you, "What is your definition of success and how can we help you attain it?" because "Your success IS our business." - Dave Tucker

The CLIP

CLIP does more than just provide contractors with software solutions - it also helps them increase profitability, offer additional services with ease and create time to work **ON** the business instead of **IN** it.

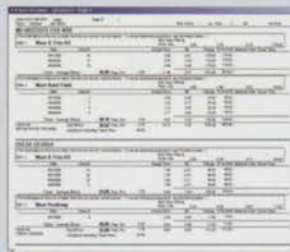
A landscape maintenance contractor wouldn't use a dilapidated, damaged mower with dull blades to cut his high-end clients' lawns. So, why would he rely on just pen and paper or an old personal computer with limited software options to manage the business end of his operation? asks Dave Tucker, president, CLIP - Sensible Software, Ijamsville, Md.

"Can you imagine a landscaper trying to run a professional business today with the lawn tractors and push mowers of the 1980s?" he asks. "It would be impossible because he would be at such a disadvantage. The same is happening with information technology. It is becoming the norm. Soon, the contractor who does not have these advantages will be put out of business. You cannot compete with a company that is using technology if you are stuck in the Stone Ages."

Just as more powerful and productive equipment boosts efficiency and productivity, CLIP software reduces contractors' after-hours office time by systemizing their operations.

PROFITABILITY BOOST. A service company's most basic and important task is to organize employees and customers. Understanding this, CLIP developed systems to track which customers are the best and most profitable and which employees are the most efficient and productive.

"Using these two measures, a service company can grow its profit margin exponentially, and that's what we're trying to help contractors do," Tucker says. "We have expanded from helping people get their crews and bills out to helping them maximize their profits through technology, information and service. We have continued to provide our customers with the latest technology, information avenues and personalized service to make them the most successful service companies in their sector."



The job costing report sorts all customers by dollars per hour.

Connection

CLIP does this by comparing all customers with a single number – dollars per hour. This one number tells the contractor everything he needs to know about this customer and his or her profitability to the company. "Since what the contractor is really selling is time, which is the most important measure he has, finding the lowest dollars per hour customers and increasing them to a more acceptable level can make that contractor's profits soar."

SERVICE SOLUTIONS. Additionally, CLIP continually looks at current technologies and finds ways to apply them to new products to help its customers. New products, including CLIPConnect, CLIPTrak and the CLIP snowplowing module, utilize cutting edge cell phone and global positioning satellite (GPS) technologies, as well as the latest in snowplowing contract ideas to protect snowplow contractors from the "feast or famine" extremes that that service can encounter.

For instance, CLIPConnect combines cell phone, Web site, XML and data base technologies to give the CLIP customer instant information from the field.

"Basically, all of the jobs for the day are uploaded to a Web site that is available from a cell phone," Tucker explains. "As crews start recording that they have started a job, the information is immediately available to the CLIP user to see on their screen. As the jobs are completed, all of the pertinent information, such as total job time, man-hours, employees, dollars per hour, profitability and such, is automatically and immediately available to the company. Then, the company can track – in real time – the crews as they get the jobs done. Also, new jobs can be uploaded throughout the day, giving crews new instructions or changes."

CLIP user Evan Saylor knows this all too well. CLIPConnect helps his crews maintain accurate job time and information, and helps him eliminate hours spent in the office managing excess paperwork. "CLIPConnect gathers all the information from each job and inputs it into the system from crews' cell phones or palm pilots so I don't have to data process my route sheets at the end of each day to figure out actual hours vs. budgeted hours, compare job time by dollar amounts and track job history," says the president of Hurst Landscaping, Womelsdorf, Pa.

Not only does this new system equal saved time for Saylor, but it also adds to his cost savings. Instead of three office people and walls covered in white boards to help him schedule and route crews efficiently, all he needs is one office manager.

CLIP also saves Saylor time in the off-season. Where it used to take him one whole month to get his 600 client contracts ready for renewal each year, now it takes him just one day. Because the CLIP software system is integrated with Microsoft Word and Excel, he can instantly pull client information and transfer it to contracts or mail databases.

TIME ON Your Side

Many contractors have a hard time justifying time spent doing anything besides serving their clients. But a couple of minutes spent doing something significant, such as implementing and learning new software, can mean hours saved later on.

Time savings is one of CLIP Software's hallmarks. "The CLIP user will find time savings immediately when he or she implements the system," says Dave Tucker, the Jjamsville, Md.-based company's president. Here are just a few before and after time comparisons made on some common contractor tasks.

ROUTING. Typically, a contractor will spend around 20 to 40 minutes per day for each crew to make sure each of its jobs are listed and are in the best routing order. CLIP will do all of that for 30 crews in less time and without user input. So, a savings of one to five hours per day, depending on the size of the company, can be expected immediately.

COMPILING & PRINTING BILLS. This process usually takes a landscaper about two to three days per month. CLIP does it all within minutes, plus it is accurate. Many companies forget to bill their customers because the paperwork is always the last thing to get done. We have found that most CLIP customers recoup their initial investment within the first few months just from missed billings. Why do work if you will not be paid for it?

RENEWING CONTRACTS. CLIP gives the company owner the information he needs to re-bid the proposals for the next year. This usually will take the landscaper three to 14 days, but with CLIP it can be done easily and accurately in a couple of hours.

FREEING THE BUSINESS OWNER.

The real time savings comes when company presidents don't have to take time out of their busy schedules to perform menial tasks. With this saved time, company owners can work on expanding their businesses, making them more efficient and profitable.





CLIPTrak - another product similar to CLIPConnect - tracks, monitors and communicates with any mobile workforce by automatically recording job start and end times based on vehicle positioning, requiring zero crew input.

As more landscape companies offer more service to their clients, CLIP provides them with the information tools to handle those additional offerings. "And by doing this, we find that we need to provide services to these other industries," Tucker says. "Some of the ones that we are currently in are landscaping and lawn care, maid services, pavement sweeping, pest control, interiorscapes, irrigation, pet sitting and janitorial services."

MANAGEMENT HELP. Pushing customers to increase systemization in their businesses is CLIP's main goal because they want their customers to obtain beach management - a concept that through systems, a business owner will work himself out of a job. "This will happen because as everything is in a system, the owner is no longer needed for each decision," Tucker explains. "This gives the owner the freedom to work on the business instead of being tied to working in it."

To help a business owner transmit company information to his employees, CLIP just released a new product called the CLIP Knowledge Base. This simple application takes the accumulated knowledge in a company and makes it easily accessible to everyone in the organization. "We have been using it in our company for over one year now and the results have been fantastic," Tucker says. "We are not asking each other the same questions any more, our customers are served much quicker and the whole organization runs much more smoothly. This is just a small example of the way we will continue to help our customers become more systemized."

Stay **Connected**
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New
Products



CLIP Connect



CLIP trak

In 2003, CLIP released new products utilizing GPS technology.

SHORTEN THE Learning Curve

Contractors do have to put some time aside to set up and learn how to use CLIP software, just as they would have to do with any other software program. But once this initial time investment is made, the savings start adding up on a daily basis, says CLIP President Dave Tucker.

Most companies should set aside at least two to three days to learn and set up CLIP. Afterward, a contractor can expect to save between five and 20 hours weekly and 20 to 30 hours monthly, quickly beating the time investment made at the front end.

The other factor to consider is that the time to learn and set up CLIP can be spent during the down time or a slow season, but saved time happens during the "busy" spring and summer months. Tucker explains: "Saving 20 to 40 hours per month during the spring is worth much more than taking 20 hours during the winter to learn and implement CLIP."

After implementing the system, contractors can breathe easy knowing they can continue to receive help from CLIP via online and print manuals, CD tutorials, e-mail forums, telephone support and tutorials, classes, annual conferences, site visits, Web site help and customized software.

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PERFECT Partners

Just by integrating the CLIP software package into their companies, contractors gain three key business boosts:

- 1. SYSTEMIZATION.** CLIP helps contractors systemize their companies. "The smaller company that is just starting out will have a lot of issues vying for his attention," explains CLIP President Dave Tucker. "With CLIP, at least an important part of his company will be taken care of, giving him time to concentrate on growing and serving his customer base."
- 2. INFORMATION NETWORK.** "By getting connected to the CLIP family, contractors will immediately have access to others who can mentor him and answer specific questions about anything from software to employee policies," Tucker points out.
- 3. BUSINESS JUMPSTART.** A contractor who uses the CLIP software package is three to five years ahead of someone who tries to "go it alone" - all the while maintaining profitability.

Considering business costs is the first step in profitably pricing lawn care services.

Pricing Lawn Care

by Lauren Spiers

What does a dollar buy these days? Truthfully, not a whole lot. Two postage stamps, a 20-minute phone call or half-a-gallon of gasoline – and not much else.

And with expenses like postage, utilities and fuel necessary to run a successful business, lawn care operators (LCOs) understand that the way to replenish funds after paying the bills is by charging the right prices for lawn care services.

"There's a fine line between making a profit and sounding like you're ripping somebody off," says Bob Hamer, owner, L&B Lawn Care, Greenville, S.C. "You always want to make as much as you can without becoming greedy." Hamer notes that lawn care services like fertilizer applications can be very profitable, sometimes allowing him to make 50 to 75 percent profit, easily covering his costs. Certainly, those numbers can change from region to region, but Hamer and other contractors agree that business costs are the bases for lawn care prices. From there, surveying competitors' fees provides key indicators by which LCOs can benchmark their prices.

TWO BAG MINIMUM. Many LCOs use the simple method of analyzing their overhead costs to determine what they must charge to recover expenses. From there, they apply a mark-up to their products and services, resulting in a minimum charge to make a trip to an average size lawn.

"In order for me to move my vehicle to a site, I have to secure a certain amount of money," explains Rob Palmer, owner, Weed Pro, Sheffield Village, Ohio. Palmer charges a minimum of \$28 for every lawn up to 3,000 square feet. From there, pricing goes up at a charge of \$3.50 per additional 1,000 square feet. "Minimums are set in place because even if it's a small stop, I have to maintain my margins," he explains.

Brad Culver agrees. "We have a stop charge built into our pricing," says the president of NitroGreen/Helena, Helena, Mont. "There are costs involved for having a truck, equipment and labor show up at several jobs during the day. We could visit 30 houses in a day and we need to recoup the cost of the travel time and everything in between." Culver has a lower minimum charge of \$25 for lawns up to 1,000 square feet, due to the smaller tracts sprouting up in his area. Also, Culver's

Knowing a technicians' speed of application is necessary for LCOs who base service prices on productivity. Photo: Vigoro Industries



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charge per additional 1,000 square feet decreases as the lawn size goes up.

"For lawns 7,000 square feet and lower, your cost per 1,000 is going to be much higher than for a larger lawn, because the stop charge is built into that," Culver notes. "The larger the lawn, the lower the additional price - almost like buying in bulk."

Other contractors have more standard minimum charges.

"Our pricing for our pesticide and fertilization program is based on square footage and that's pretty common across the board," notes Darryl Zellmer, president, Lawn Systems, West Bend, Wis. "We offer a \$32 minimum trip charge for the smallest lawns up to 3,000 square feet. From there, most contractors want to get \$3 per additional 1,000 square feet or more."

Of course, LCOs need to know more than square footage to determine minimums and cost-per-thousand charges. In January, after

(continued on page 102)

If lawn care operators (LCOs) had their way, every lawn in America would be perfectly square with no trees, swing sets or parking lot islands to negotiate. Technicians would be able to pull up to the site and start spreading and spraying their lawn-building pesticides and fertilizers in neat, straight rows.

Of course, that would be too easy. As it stands, such obstacles and broken-up lawns are very much an LCO's reality and they must have plans in place to adjust their pricing for accounts that require extensive maneuvering.

At Weed Pro, Sheffield Village, Ohio, Owner Rob Palmer and his estimating staff follow a difficulty scale for such situations. "Our difficulty factor goes up in 10-percent increments," he explains. "I might have a 1.0 for standard pricing on a residential lawn and 1.1 would move the price up 10 percent." For example, on a 5,000 square foot lawn, Palmer would charge his minimum \$28 for 3,000 square feet, plus \$3.50 for each additional 1,000 square feet. With some hilly terrain raising the difficulty level to 1.1, the total charge for that lawn would be \$38.50 rather than \$35.

Brad Culver, president, NitroGreen/Helena, Helena, Mont., also has started applying difficulty factors to certain types of lawns. "Many times it will take you twice as long to spray a 4,000 square-foot lawn than it does an 8,000 square-foot lawn if it's all chopped up and terraced," he says. "We haven't put a hard and fast price structure together for certain difficulty factors yet, but we're working on that. Right now, some of our lawns that have lots of trees to go around, several terraces, or the ones that require multiple pulls across the lawn can cost one-and-a-half to two times as much as a basic lawn." - **Lauren Spiers**

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Pricing Lawn Care

(continued from page 100)

most of Palmer's clients have renewed or signed on for service, he uses a computer program to map out the total area his technicians will treat in the coming season. The program breaks up the accounts according to the machine that will be used in each area.

"On commercial properties and on some residentials, I have mechanized spreader/

sprayer units that do fertilization and weed control at once," Palmer says. "Because of that, we're able to price very competitively."

Using production rates that he calculated on five different properties, Palmer knows that a technician can walk 1,000 square feet in just over a minute-and-a-half, but a riding unit takes care of the same area in just 36 seconds.

"The primary difficulty considerations on a property if it's rideable or walkable and how many times we have to move the vehicle," Palmer notes. On one 750,000 square-foot site, Palmer's technicians must move their spray truck several dozen times to complete the application. Because of this, Palmer values having a system that helps him recoup costs not covered by a basic trip charge. "If you have to move your truck 15 times, you really shouldn't go strictly off the square footage because you could be spending 10 minutes every time you move the truck," he explains. "If you move it 15 times, you've racked up almost 2½. When I

(continued on page 104)

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While offering very low service rates is a tempting practice to contractors just starting their companies and looking for work, experienced business owners advise against it.

"We don't sell on price — we sell on our service," comments Darryl Zellmer, president, Lawn Systems, West Bend, Wis. "If you know your business and it shows in your estimate and in the way you talk to the prospective client, the prospect will pick up on that and feel confident going with your service, even if you're the higher-priced guy."

However, Zellmer does see the advantages of offering low prices to drum up business.

"You can't be afraid to sell on price because everyone gets their foot in the door that way," he says. "But so many owners tend to keep the habit and it's a vicious cycle you have to break. Price shoppers are not loyal customers. You sell them on price and then they move on the next year and you gave them a deal for nothing. That cycle just keeps repeating itself and it doesn't help you." — **Lauren Spiers**

Pricing Paradox

USE READER SERVICE #68

Pricing Lawn Care

(continued from page 102)

treat a property, I know what my times are per 1,000 square feet, but all the things you have to recoup in that price are the extra things like moving the truck."

With a complete knowledge of how much square footage the company has to treat and the volume each technician can handle by method, Palmer accurately calculates his labor, equipment and materials costs and then adds in his margins. Additionally, he and other contractors follow competitors' prices to ensure that minimums and cost-per-thousand charges are on par with fair market prices.

"Over the years you shop your competition and get to know what everybody else is charging in the area," Zellmer says. "You have to know your costs and then cross-reference the two to come up with your price structure."

Hamer agrees but approaches his pricing a bit differently. "We have warm-season and cool-season grasses, like Bermuda and also fescue," he notes. "On a fescue lawn, we have six fertilizer applications with two lime

applications and one overseeding application, so on a contract like that I measure out the square footage and, in an Excel spreadsheet, I plug in my cost and come up with a price per thousand square feet."

On a regular fertilization and seed program, Hamer says his annual charge for a 10,000 square-foot fescue lawn would be about \$900, which includes the six fertilizer application, two rounds of liming and one overseeding. But Hamer's charges change depending on the size of the lawn and the amount of material needed for the year.

"We consider the application rate that's recommended for the type of grass, times the square footage of the yard," Hamer says. "On fescue, I would put out roughly 5 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet, so on a 10,000 square foot lawn we would use a full 50-pound bag, which costs about \$21." From there, Hamer looks at the cost of labor to apply the fertilizer, plus overhead. "On one yard you've probably got \$45 in time, mate-

rial and overhead, and then you need to make a profit," he continues. "People realize when they purchase lawn care services that they're paying for the service and the convenience, so I find I can charge \$80 for one application without any complaints. We always look at the fair market price in our area, but we've always found lawn care to be very profitable."

DEALS & DISCOUNTS. Staying informed of what other contractors are charging helps companies keep their own prices competitive. However, even clients who aren't typically penny-pinchers look forward to deals and discounts that their lawn care companies offer. Zellmer offers three programs so customers can choose the best package for their needs.

"We offer a seven-step program that includes a free inspection as the fourth visit," Zellmer says. "We have gold, silver and

(continued on page 106)

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USE READER SERVICE #70

Pricing Lawn Care

(continued from page 104)

bronze packages, and the lower packages eliminate some visits like the free inspection. That doesn't mean that if we show up to do fertilizer-only lawn that we won't spray any weeds that we see - that's just common sense. We're there to manage the lawn."

In addition to including a free inspection, Zellmer also offers 10-percent prepay discounts to clients who renew by December 1 or for new clients who sign on by March 1. After that deadline, the discount drops down to 5 percent for renewals until March 1 and new clients can receive a 5-percent discount until April 1.

Culver also offers prepay discounts, as well as reduced rates for senior citizens. "Senior citizens automatically get a 5-percent discount," he notes. "Then, if you wanted to prepay for four applications or four applications and aeration, you'd get a 6-percent discount. If you wanted to prepay for five applications or five applications with aeration, we offer a 10-percent discount."

For Zellmer, prepay discounts not only increase the number of repeat customers over several seasons, but certain promotions during the year also bring on new customers.

"We have referral discounts for our existing customers where both the referral and the person who referred them gets \$10 off their next application," Zellmer comments. "And they can also use that with any other discounts. We also offer some promotional discounts, usually in the spring and fall when we're trying to upsell to get more clients." Zellmer says that, on average, the company acquires 50 new clients during a promotion, which builds the client base and also compensates for any customers who decided to look elsewhere for service.

But for loyal customers who buy additional services, there are benefits as well.

"Our insect or disease control is on an as-needed basis, but if someone needs it, I may offer a discounted price," Hamer notes. "Instead of doubling my price on the job, be-

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cause I'm already there, I'll just charge for the material and make \$25 additional instead of \$45 or \$50." Though Hamer doesn't make as much profit in these situations, he finds that appreciative clients will come back year after year, helping the bottom line.

With so much to consider when putting together a lawn care pricing structure, Culver recommends that contractors stay open-minded from year to year. "Originally, 20 years ago, we had a set price for each size lawn and we've changed that over the years and become a little sophisticated in our pricing," he comments. "Your customers start to expect different things and the industry is always changing, so your pricing structure should always be evolving." **II**

The author is Assistant Editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine and can be reached at lsapiers@lawnandlandscape.com.



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USE READER SERVICE #73

by Lauren Spiers

Form, function and focus. All of these elements – especially the latter – are important for effective landscape design.

Coming into FOCUS

If an artist set up his or her easel to recreate a landscape you designed, what would the canvas look like with everything said and done?

Would gently curving walks radiate out from an inviting gazebo? Would the work of art be a solid green canvas thickly layered with paint to create different textures? Or would a geometric, symmetrical pattern result from the perfectly manicured shrubs and beds?

Because landscape designers and architects are really artists themselves, any of these different works of art is possible, but each shares a common element: Focus. Be it an architectural piece that anchors the landscape, bold texture that sets apart plants in a monochromatic design or a stately, formal garden that draws visitors' eyes up to the residence itself, focal points are of the utmost importance in every landscape.

"Without a focal point, there's no 'there' in the garden," stresses Tim Goodman, president, Goodman Landscape Design, Berkeley, Calif. "This

makes having a focal point one of the most important things in garden design."

FOCAL POINT PRIMER. "Focal points provide places for your eyes to rest when you're admiring a landscape," Goodman says. "If you have a lot of bright colors or too many trees or shrubs, you can overload the senses to the point that you're eye doesn't know where to stop or what part of the landscape is the most important."

To break up congested situations or brighten bland landscapes, Goodman and other designers have a number of focal points from which to choose.

"Focus areas can be different things to different customers," comments Frank Coleman, president, Visionscapes, Tucker, Ga. "For example, in a garden area, a focal point could be a beautiful fountain, a statue or a specimen tree. In a commercial setting, a focal point could be a large water feature in a courtyard or plaza."

Ange Zimmer, landscape designer, Fowlkes,
(continued on page 110)

Incorporating "passive use" and "active use" areas in a landscape creates focal points that clients can enjoy from a distance or up close and personal. Photo: Goodman Landscape Design

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USE READER SERVICE #74

Landscape Design

(continued from page 108)

Norman & Associates, Fort Worth, Texas, agrees that the list of focal point possibilities is endless. Zimmer uses everything from pottery to water features, statuary to special plantings to create focus areas in her designs. "Most of my clients have a favorite piece of sculpture they like or they enjoy birds or water, so we work with what the client desires and use those as focal points," she says. "I have some clients who travel and will bring home collections of pottery or other things and look for places to put them. I try to work the things they love into their spaces and when they find objects for us to work around, it can be really fun."

Dan Steigerwald also takes into consideration what his clients want to get out of their focus areas and what they want to use them for. "We encourage people to include focus areas in their landscapes," comments the president of Designsapes, East Patchogue, N.Y. "It's all part of active use and passive use design in a space. A passive use area is a



Pathways through a landscape guide visitors from one focus area to another and help the space flow. Photo: Goodman Landscape Design

quiet, reflective area that is good for viewing or sitting in. Active use areas are for entertaining, barbecuing or jumping in the pool. It's all about the client's style and their needs."

In many cases, especially on larger properties, Steigerwald will incorporate both active and passive use areas such as reflection ponds or meditation gardens, that are set off from more energetic patios or pool areas. And his clients are able to see certain design ideas on display at the company's specialized garden center (see "Feature Presentation" on page 104). Seeing their designer's ideas fully established and assembled be-

fore they're implemented into the landscape gives clients the opportunity to change their minds about some elements or mix and match others to achieve the outdoor living spaces they desire.

PLACEMENT POINTERS. Besides having innumerable objects and plants to choose from, designers also have the challenge of finding locations for landscape focus areas. Rather than just plunking a statue or tree in the middle of a client's backyard, placing such elements in specific lines of sight is an important practice.

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USE READER SERVICE #76

Landscape Design

(continued from page 110)

"Before placing any focal points, it's necessary to come up with the flow of the garden; the pathways that will lead through the space," Goodman notes. "From there, you can set focal points in certain places that will invite visitors down those paths to see where they lead. Imagination is sparked by the unknown," he adds, so having a pathway

disappear around a corner draws guests down the trail to see where it leads—perhaps to a hidden pergola or water feature.

Of course, having focal points in plain view also can be effective in many instances.

"By placing a focal point in an area that relates to a use—for instance, on axis with an architectural feature of the building—we can

create a sightline so you have someplace to look as you move through the space," Zimmer mentions. "For instance, if a set of French doors is the access to someone's back yard, you'll want to place something in that view to greet them as they come outside."

Additionally, Zimmer has her clients walk her through the interior of their homes as well as around the landscape site. "It's important to walk through the house and see what the client's views are," she notes. "A landscape can be enjoyed not only from the outside, but from the inside, so it's good to look through and find out what the customer sees from the inside and place focal points based on that information as well."

A design technique Coleman employs, especially on commercial properties, is to use focal points to draw guests' attention away from more unsightly but irreparable views.

"Many retail centers, for example, have power boxes, water meters or drainage issues that have to be hidden," Coleman comments. "In many cases, this can't be accomplished; this is where creating a focal point or focus area can draw your attention from the negative features to a water feature, seating area or flower garden accents."

Zimmer agrees, but also notes that some situations require no additional focal points at all. "Some areas are so small that they themselves are the focal point like a courtyard, for instance," she offers. "More natural designs may not need focal points either because other things may be the emphasis like a beautiful view. You don't want to detract from a natural surrounding that's already eye-catching—you risk getting too gaudy."

Goodman agrees, adding building facades to the list of views that require extra diligence when choosing the proper focal point. "A lot of times, the back yard can be a departure from the architecture of the house, but the landscaping in the front yard must be compatible with the house," he stresses. "An English garden in front of a house with very modern architecture, for instance, is incompatible because they both take away from each other. The garden would downplay the strong lines of the house and vice-versa."

"For much the same reason, it's also important to use focal points sparingly in front yards," Goodman continues. "Many times, when you're landscaping a front yard area,

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USE READER SERVICE #78

Landscape Design

(continued from page 112)

the focal point is the residence itself, so choosing plants, trees or sculptures of the right shape and size is essential to keep from detracting from the home itself."

FOCAL FLORA. Though focal points are designed to attract people's attention as they enjoy their landscapes, the remainder of the design space must be filled in as well. Regardless of whether the focal point is a large waterfall or a small ornamental tree, landscape designers use supporting plants differently than they would in a general planting area.

"Having a good sense of balance in design is very important," says Steigerwald. "If you feature a natural specimen, the use of natural space around it is very important. If we use a very graceful weeping birch or Atlas cedar, we would employ simple ground covers, gravel or mulch around it rather than hav-

(continued on page 124)

Many landscape designers and architects are artists at heart. Their creative minds' eyes have little trouble envisioning how finished designs will come together and their experience with certain plant types allows insight into how the entire garden will fill in over time.

But not all homeowners can think like artists.

To solve this problem, Dan Steigerwald maintains a garden center with several fully installed focal points and design possibilities. From fences to water features, plant beds to pergolas, Steigerwald's clients can meander the grounds with their designer on hand to answer questions about different design elements.

"The work we do is built in display form so clients can see different combinations of materials together, techniques of the work we do and that sort of thing," explains the landscape designer and president of Designsapces, East Patchogue, N.Y. "The idea is for customers to do a walk-through with us during the design process so they can say 'I like this patio with that retaining wall - does that go together?' It brings the whole design process to life from the blueprints."

After completing a walk-through and taking pictures of the homeowner's property, Steigerwald invites his clients to the Designsapces grounds to see the possibilities for their new landscapes. "They get to see everything in 3-D, which takes the guesswork out of their plans," he comments. "They'll say, 'That's not what we were really anticipating - we were thinking of something more like that design over there.' It avoids a lot of costly errors in the implementation of the plan." - **Lauren Spiers**

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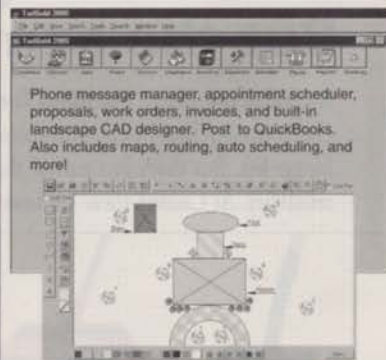
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THE STATE OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY



MICHAEL
WEISBURGER

Even before 9/11, an insurance industry survey showed that — after 10 years in decline — property-casualty rates were on the rise. Shortly afterward, the *Wall Street Journal* noted: “In response to Sept. 11, insurers are already raising prices...on some lines of commercial and industrial insurance. Nearly all such lines are seeing rate increases of more than 20%.” Some went a heck of a lot higher.

That same year, the U.S. property/casualty industry, the folks who handle your general liability insurance, racked up its first net loss in a century — a whopping \$7.9 billion. That’s in part why, according to industry watcher Standard & Poor’s, 35 insurers came under state regulatory supervision — something that happens when a company’s financial position becomes precarious, and a court orders liquidation, rehabilitation or receivership and supervision.

Small wonder that in a slow-economy, post-9/11 business environment more insurers are getting out of property/casualty or drastically cutting their coverage limits. For example, the situation in Alabama — an aggressive legal climate, new class action lawsuits and excessive judgments — has driven our insurance carrier to the conclusion that it is no longer possible to offer coverage there profitably. During the preceding five years, the company had to pay more than \$2 in claims in the state for every \$1 earned in premiums.

Cold comfort for our customers there to hear that it wasn’t the first insurer to depart Alabama; three others had already quit the state for the same reasons. But, as a successful businessperson, you know it makes no economic sense to run your operation at a loss. Meanwhile, we keep reading about skyrocketing

malpractice insurance premiums, the need for tort reform, terrorism insurance, the workers comp mess and other insurance downers.

Nevertheless, if you drive a car, mortgage your home — or run a business — you *need* insurance.

What’s a person to do?

Shop smarter. When you look to buy, look for value. Ask yourself what you’re getting for your money. Because, as the old saying goes, you get what you pay for. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the coverage complete? Or are you “saving” money by paying a lower premium, but for less protection than you really need?
- What’s your insurance company’s rating? There’s a huge difference between an A rated insurer and the one rated B who charges lower rates. It’s better to deal with a company forced to increase its rates than one that is likely to go out of business.
- Make sure your insurance company is an “admitted” carrier. This means that, in your state, you’ll be protected if your carrier runs into difficulty paying claims or, worse yet, goes out of business. Check with Best’s Insurance Reports, Standard & Poor’s or Moody’s Investor Service, all available in your local library.
- What kind of a reputation has the company earned for handling claims? What level of service can you expect from your broker or agent? Ask people you respect for answers to those important questions.

Any of this sound familiar? It should. It’s the same kind of advice we’ve been handing out to our herbicide and pesticide applicators for years. Around 70 years.

If you have questions of any kind, please don’t hesitate to give me a call. I would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Weisburger, CLU, ChFC
President, Weisburger Insurance,
White Plains, N.Y.
maweis@weisburger.com
800-431-2794

FROM HORSE-AND-BUGGY DAYS TO THE INTERNET AGE

THE WEISBURGER INSURANCE STORY

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, barely nine out of 100 family-owned businesses make it to the third generation. But Weisburger Insurance, the White Plains, N.Y.-based insurance broker, is no ordinary company. It is being run by a fourth-generation member of the family.

Benjamin Weisburger started selling life insurance in 1915... son David wrote the first-ever pest control insurance plan in 1934... grandson Mark helped shape Weisburger Insurance into the full-service firm it is today... great-grandson Michael, the current president, has his eye on what the family business will look like when the 100th anniversary rolls around.

"Our motto is: 'Dependable Service Since 1915,' and I don't expect that to ever change," says Michael. "Keeping what works is how we built our reputation. Keeping up with the times is how we stay in business."

A HISTORY OF SERVICE. Delivering dependable service means satisfying more than 4,000 customers with a staff of insurance professionals with hundreds of years of experience among them. Working direct or through brokers, the company prides itself on offering comprehensive insurance programs, competitive rates and prompt claims response.

Keeping what works means expanding Weisburger's long-time expertise in pesticide and pollution coverage in Pest Management to a wider audience of Green Industry professionals – lawn care operators, landscapers and the like. The new program has been a winner, enough so that a major trade association in the field recommends Weisburger to its members for their insurance needs.

Keeping up with the times means making more efficient use of the Internet. The weisburger.com Web site includes an extensive reference list of queries from the field answered by the firm's consulting entomologist... a resource center that offers papers on technical subjects available via fax-

on-demand... a Weisburger-produced library of brochures, checklists and tips to help clients' businesses run better. And it offers an automated loss control program – safety planning, training and all the necessary reports, documentation and OSHA requirements – that is comprehensive, effective, easy to use and affordable.

"Since 1999, we've had e-mail correspondence from Australia, Europe, India and the Far East – as well as from Canada and Mexico," Michael points out. "To repay the compliment, I've attended a British Pest Control Association meeting and been invited to speak to the AEPMA in Australia, the Japan Pest Control Association and the Federation of Asian and Oceania Pest Management Association."

Weisburger Insurance is a member of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, the Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, as well as a number of regional and state associations.

As allied members of the National Pest Management Association since its inception 70 years ago, Weisburger Insurance has been endorsed by the NPMA as the broker of choice for its members. Company representatives attend more than 100 local, regional and national industry meetings each year.

A BRIGHT FUTURE. Weisburger Insurance continues to defy the odds of family-business survival by staying true to its roots, offering the finest insurance coverage at the most competitive rates, while functioning within the context of a corporate culture based on personal integrity and professional excellence. It's a formula that has served Weisburger, the Green Industries and the Pest Management Industry well for nearly 70 years, and will continue to serve the industry well throughout the 21st century.



Weisburger Insurance has supported industry trade shows and educational events for many years. In fact, several generations of the Weisburger family have participated in shows, including David Weisburger (top photo, right).

WHAT'S NEW AT WEISBURGER INSURANCE?

Weisburger Joins Symbiot Network

Weisburger Insurance recently announced it has joined the Symbiot Landscape Network (SLN) as a P3 Partner (Purchase Power Partner).

The SLN alliance includes not only landscapers, but lawn care operators, arborists and other Green Industry maintenance and installation companies. SLN offers its members a range of national purchasing power, expanded sales opportunities and cross-country knowledge sharing that is tailor-made for the Green Industry.

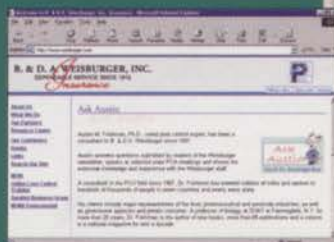
P3 Partners strive to offer SLN members advantages in buying products and services similar to those enjoyed by larger companies.



ASK AUSTIN

Noted entomologist, Dr. Austin Frishman has been a consultant to Weisburger Insurance since 1991 and is available to our customers with the click of a computer mouse.

Frishman answers questions submitted by readers of the Weisburger newsletter, speaks at selected industry meetings, and shares his extensive knowledge and experience with the Weisburger staff. A consulting entomologist since 1967, Frishman has traveled millions of miles and spoken to thousands of Green Industry and pest management professionals throughout the world. To ask Frishman a question, simply visit www.weisburger.com and click on the "Ask Austin" icon.



"We're delighted to join the Symbiot Landscape Network team," said Michael Weisburger, president of Weisburger Insurance. "As members of PLCAA and ALCA, we're used to bringing fellow members the best pos-

sible premium rates and the kind of service our family has been proud of since 1915."

More information is available at www.weisburger.com and at www.symbiot.biz

LOSS CONTROL TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE ON THE WEB

In a new service brought to it's markets by Weisburger Insurance (www.weisburger.com), Green Industry and Pest Management professionals can now limit their losses and run their businesses more effectively via SafetyStrategy systems, a low-cost, Web-based loss control training program.

Michael Weisburger, president of Weisburger Insurance, said his company pursued the addition of an online loss control training program to provide customers with a better and more timely loss control

service. In the past, Weisburger's 19-point safety program was provided to customers in the field.

"It's prohibitively expensive to provide on-site loss control services to all of our 4,000 accounts," he said. "We do on-site loss control surveys on some accounts, but for years we've been looking for a program that would provide such resources to our customers at a very inexpensive price. With the number of people using the Internet growing, we see it as an extremely economical way to get this information to people who want to reduce their chances of

losses, as well as actual losses."

With the SafetyStrategy system, customers are able to record the training each employee receives using their own private password. Reports are printed that allow owners to see how their staff is doing and to manage their company more effectively. In addition, news articles on various safety topics are posted every month to keep you informed about what is happening in the loss control arena.

"Not only can you train your employees and inspect your operations, but you can also access already writ-

Weisburger Staff Attending 14th Annual GIE

Weisburger Insurance executives and staff members will attend the 14th annual Green Industry Expo.

The Expo, sponsored by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, November 6-8.



Weisburger Insurance is a member of both trade associations. "We think it's important to meet with our customers face to face as often as possible – to find out what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong and, best of all, what we might never have thought of doing to improve our service."



ten company policies to use in your company, as well as dozens of documents as needed to manage any kind of safety issue from employee safety warnings to setting up safety committees," Weisburger says. "There's even an archive of safety topics you can review whenever you want."

To access this valuable new resource, visit www.weisburger.com and click on the SafetyStrategy icon. The regular subscription price for Weisburger accounts that enroll online at www.weisburger.com is \$20 per month. The cost to all others is \$25 per month.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH PROGRESSIVE INSURANCE

Throughout its history, Weisburger Insurance has been proud to provide the latest products and services for its customers throughout the United States. "We're always looking for new ways to enhance our service offerings and meet the insurance needs of our customers," President Michael Weisburger says.

PROGRESSIVE[®]
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"Constant innovation is a key part of our corporate culture."

The latest enhancement for Weisburger customers is a recently announced strategic partnership with the Progressive group of insurance companies, the largest monoline commercial vehicle insurer in the U.S. This partnership enables Weisburger Insurance to offer the Progressive companies' commercial auto coverage to its 4,000 customers in the green industries and pest management markets.

"Progressive is the third largest private passenger automobile insurer in the U.S., and is recognized as a leader in the industry," Weisburger says. "We're delighted to offer their coverage directly and 24/7 service to our customers both old and new."

The Progressive companies offer auto liability policies up to \$1 million on a wide range of vehicle types driven for business. One of the few carriers that is national in scope, the companies write commercial auto coverage in 41 states (all except Hawaii, North Dakota, South Dakota, South Carolina, North Carolina, West Virginia, Washington D.C., Massachusetts, New Jersey and New Hampshire). "We can already make direct quotes in 25 of those states," notes Weisburger, "and we're working hard to add to our list."

The Progressive companies have more than 350 claims offices and nearly 10,000 people dedicated to claims service countrywide, with 2,600 "immediate response vehicles" to handle claims.



LEADING LCOS SPEAK OUT: WHY WEISBURGER INSURANCE?

At Weisburger Insurance we work hard every day to answer that question. Our business has been family-run since 1915, and we've built our reputation by establishing a strong tradition of customer service and reliability unmatched in the Green Industry. But don't take our word for it. Consider the comments of our customers...



For those times when you need to take advantage of your insurer's claims service, responsiveness is key. Business can't stop while you take care of details. You've got to be able to count on your insurance company to quickly - and expertly - handle your claim. WeisburgerGreen is such a company. Our agent David Sirles really knows our business and takes care of our needs immediately. He's worked hard to save us time and money. Superior service with considerable cost savings - that's what WeisburgerGreen is all about.

- TOM JOHNSTON,

President, Royal Landscaping, Inc. and T&T Lawn Care and Landscaping, Inc.

For over 25 years, I've personally known the Weisburger family and consider them the most credible and versatile insurance broker in the industry. They understand the needs of the family-owned business since they are likewise a family-owned entity.

- TOMMY REEVES,

Vice President, Oldham Chemicals Co.



We're a new business offering lawn care and landscape services as well as tree surgery, and when we called WeisburgerGreen, they immediately offered exactly the comprehensive coverage we needed. We were approved and insured within two hours - much faster than other companies who can take weeks - and at a much better price. And with WeisburgerGreen we know we can depend on friendly people and excellent customer service.

- MINDI MCCRUMB

Advantage Lawn & Landscape Management, Inc.

Even though we're located on two separate coasts, B. & D.A. Weisburger has done an outstanding job meeting my insurance needs. All of my questions and concerns are promptly addressed. In today's business world it's gratifying to be able to communicate with a human instead of a recording, when you call Weisburger.

- SONNY KLIMOWICZ

Owner, Plant Healthcare Services





As an independent agent, I have a choice of companies to do business with. I stay with WeisburgerGreen because their professionalism and customer service is second to none. It's very easy to do business with WeisburgerGreen because the majority of our communication is via e-mail, and you can get a quote to a customer almost immediately. In addition, their underwriter is a very strong company, earning an "A" rating from A.M. Best. That's increasingly important in these times of economic uncertainty for many companies.

– **NANCY ZAOKINTZ**

Independent Agent, GSM Insurance

For the last several years, we've had a difficult time securing pollution liability insurance which is a necessity in our industry. No other insurance agent knew how to customize or even knew it existed until I contacted WeisburgerGreen. They were helpful in negotiating with my agent to get us the coverage we needed. Their knowledge of our industry was instrumental. In an hour they resolved what had been two years of frustration for me and secured what I needed. From a business owner's perspective, this peace of mind is well worth the premium.



– **JIM CAMPANELLA**

Lawn Dawg



In business these days, it's hard to find companies who carry through on the promises they make. WeisburgerGreen always delivers what they've promised - promptly and professionally. As a result of the quality service I've received, I've referred colleagues to Weisburger, and I've seen that no matter the size of the company, each and every customer is important to them.

– **WADE WALDEN**

Owner, Second Nature Lawn Care

In a current business climate that is filled with uncertainty and instability, it is refreshing to be able to rely on the strength and stability of B. & D.A. Weisburger Insurance. Their level of support and service is unparalleled by any other insurance carrier that our company has dealt with in our 50-year history. With Weisburger handling our insurance needs, that allows me to focus my attention and energy on running my company, instead of dealing with insurance concerns.



– **BRIAN J. VAN DAM**

President, Fulton Services

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Landscape Design

(continued from page 114)

ing it compete with a lot of busy plants."

In addition to balance, Goodman recommends considering the size, scale, texture and weight of each landscape element when choosing its placement. "Keeping focal points separate within a view is important, and altering the scale of those points also keeps them from competing with one another," he comments. Like Steigerwald, Goodman also

relies on simpler, low plantings around focal points to create natural extensions of those areas.

Swaths of a single color also create simple grounding effects around focal points and can draw a viewer's eye from one area to the next. "We call these 'transitional' or 'bridging' plants," Steigerwald mentions. "These materials can contrast in color and texture as you go along, so we'll have a mass of red barberry and some bluestar Juniper next to it. On their own they'll create their own interest, but soft masses of seven, nine or 13 plants, it's more the

Designers inspired by the outdoors often replicate natural plant, rock and water combinations in their designs. Photo: Goodman Landscape Design



lawnandlandscape.com

Check our November Online Extras for information on how designers make focal points they've created look completely natural in the landscape.

color than the individual plant that creates interest. That lets your eye move more smoothly along the bed and onto the next focal point."

Having these extra planting beds between focal points, however, can create extra maintenance as well.

"When we're planning the design for the area around focal points, we also make it a point to find out what kind of maintenance the client wants," Zimmer notes. "There are upkeep issues with wear and tear of plants and focal points in a public space, but less so in a private space. Also, depending on if the client wants color change-outs throughout the year, that can effect the amount of maintenance a site will require."

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at lspeiers@lawnandlandscape.com.

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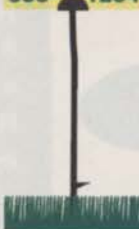


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USE READER SERVICE #110

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Human Resources

by Barb Wingfield

*Memo to
landscape
contractors:
Grow your
human assets
for a spike in
productivity
and profits.*

Nurturing plants is a must for survival in the landscape business. But how much time do you spend nurturing your employees? The root of the business, for most people, is their love for plants and the beauty they bring outdoors. But along with the plants come the customers, employees, vendors, government regulations and a less-than-ideal economy.

Lately, have you considered how much time you spend nurturing your employees? If you're like many business owners, it's probably not enough.

Let's look at one scenario. Christopher is the owner of a landscape company that is only a few years old but has shown steady growth. He has been consumed with making sure his customers are happy and searching for new ways to improve the business and increase the bottom line.

Christopher figured that someday he would address the role of his employees in the business. But he was too busy getting new business and filling out all the forms needed for workers' compensation and insurance. And he never saw the problems brewing before the volcano erupted.

His employees, Mike and James, had just returned from working on a key account, and he could hear verbal insults being thrown back and forth like a volleyball at a beach party. The insults were rapid and intended to hurt. He was beginning to understand the situation. Mike had made inappropriate comments to the client about James' mowing techniques. Mike had undermined his co-worker's ability and put doubt in the client's mind about the company's service.

As Christopher intervened, he found that other employees were taking sides, and verbal barbs were being exchanged among all the laborers. He couldn't believe what he was seeing and hearing. He was certain that his employees' bickering and name-calling was damaging his business's reputation.

He raised his voice to be heard over the employees. Quiet slowly engulfed the room, but not without a lot of cold, hard stares. Christopher was so stunned and angry that he did not know where to start to address the problem.

After a few moments, he decided he was too upset at that time to discuss what had happened. Instead, he announced in a stern voice, "Tomorrow morning, I am going to begin talking with each of you individually. This will take a few days. I am going to try to determine what the real problem is and how we are going to avoid situations like this in the future." Christopher turned around and walked away, leaving the employees standing there looking at one another.

Christopher's problem is similar to many other business owners who put off nurturing their employees until a crisis erupts. Many are simply short on time or ideas for planning a winning human-resources strategy and implementing it.

(continued on page 128)

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Human Resources

(continued from page 126)

Well, look no further for help. The following nine strategies, some adapted from my book, "Winning at Human Relations," will help you improve your work environment, one step at a time. The business-building questions at the end of each section are useful exercises for pinpointing weak spots and thinking about solutions.

Remember, the time and effort you put forth in your people *will* pay off, so keep at it. You'll reap rewards of a more pleasant, productive and profitable workplace.

1. RECOGNIZE WARNING SIGNS.

Many business owners fail to recognize the warning signs from employees who are not getting along or are unhappy with their supervisors. And by the time they do, it's often too late. "Employees don't quit com-



CHANCES ARE, YOUR EMPLOYEES LOVE THE WORK THEY DO. WHAT WILL MAKE THEM HAND IN THEIR RESIGNATION IS A DISAGREEMENT WITH THEIR SUPERVISOR ABOUT THE SCHEDULE, THE PAPERWORK OR A LACK OF APPRECIATION. — BARB WINGFIELD

panies — they quit bosses," according to the business management book, "First, Break All the Rules."

Chances are, your employees love the work they do. What will make them hand in their resignation is a disagreement with their supervisor about the schedule, the paperwork or a lack of appreciation.

Business-building question: Do you regularly talk to employees about their jobs and how they are doing?

2. RESOLVE CONFLICT.

Christopher had the right idea to take some time to cool down before he started to figure out what happened. But one common mistake owners and managers make is saying they are going to do something and then failing to follow through. Christopher announced he was going to talk to all the employees. Now, he must do it.

After talking to employees individually, Christopher's next step is to report back in a staff meeting, memo or e-mail how and when the problem will be resolved. A staff meeting is the preferred way to begin to restore team unity.

Hoping that conflict will resolve itself is only wishful thinking. And failing to address it will only build underlying tensions among your staff.

Business-building questions: How do you deal with conflict in your business? Do your employees feel they are taken seriously and that conflict is dealt with in a professional and timely manner?

3. KNOW WHEN TO COMPROMISE.

Compromising is helpful when you are dealing with family, employees, clients and all the other people you interact with daily. Unfortunately, many people think compromising is a sign of weakness.

In reality, compromise presents an opportunity to create a win-win situation for each person involved. Compromise also gives you the opportunity to use your

people skills to determine the best solution for everyone.

A helpful approach is to ask open-ended questions to determine what is important to each party and what each hopes to gain by working together. And remember that sometimes, what first appears to be the issue is just the symptom, not the real problem. Being patient is important as you begin to unearth key issues.

Business-building question: Is compromising part of your management leadership style?

4. LET SMALL IRRITATIONS PASS.

Have you ever felt a small irritation become a big deal? If so, you might want to examine how misplaced anger can affect you in business and personally.

Imagine you are having dinner with your spouse at a nice restaurant. Earlier in the day, you learned that your biggest account is moving out of state. Meanwhile, the restaurant server is slow and forgetful. All of a sudden, you are snapping at the server. This is misplaced anger, resulting from the news about the account.

(continued on page 130)

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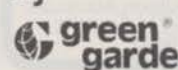
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Human Resources

(continued from page 128)

If you choose not to let small irritations pass, then you will seem to be out of control, not the server who provides poor service.

As an owner or manager, you must choose your battles wisely. There is a fine line between overlooking the frequently tardy employee and enforcing the rules in the P&P manual. Every work environment is different. The secret? Stay consistent.

Business-building question: Do you let small irritations become big deals?

5. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS. Separating business relationships from individual personalities is a key component in building a thriving business. Whether you are dealing with an employee, a supplier or your banker, focus on the job the individuals are doing, not their personalities or any quirks they might have. Look for the strengths they bring to the business, and focus on building a good working relationship with the person or the company you are interacting with.

Business-building questions: Can you think of someone who has a personality trait that irks you? Now, think past that trait and focus on the job the person is doing. Can you see a different aspect than you saw before?

6. PRACTICE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR.

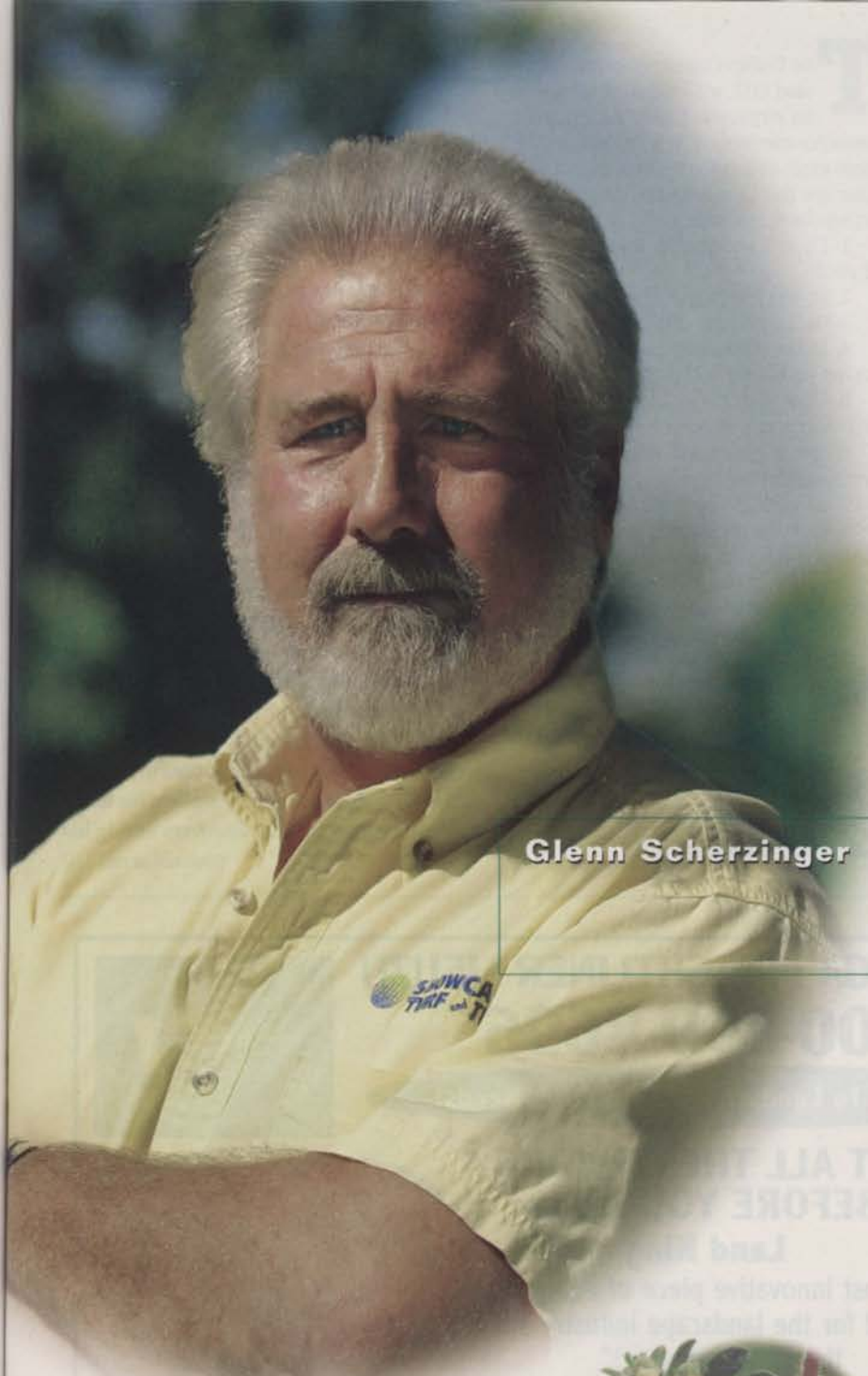
Through the media, we are well aware of the business scandals that have occurred recently. As small business owners, we sometimes look at large companies and think that such behavior can be found only at the top.

But that is not always the case. Small business owners may set a bad example and not even realize it.

Here's one case in point. Imagine that you are with one of your employees driving through a fast-food establishment when you are given two desserts without being charged. What would you do? Return and offer to pay? Or just keep driving and enjoy the dessert?

Now, fast-forward two weeks. The same employee is at your newest account installing plants. As the crew gets to the end of the job, he realizes more plants are needed, and the bid didn't account for these. The crewmember knows the close bidding process that led to obtaining this account. But he decides to stick in some

(continued on page 132)



Glenn Scherzinger

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Human Resources

(continued from page 130)

more plants for "free." Shouldn't be a problem to absorb the cost, right?

Remember, employees model their behaviors after their owners or supervisors. So, set a good example.

Business-building question: Is your ethical behavior a model for your employees?

7. CREATE & MAINTAIN A VARIETY OF RELATIONSHIPS. It is human nature to associate and socialize with people who have the same interests as we do. We feel more comfortable and relaxed in our relationships with these individuals.

But in building your business, developing more relationships outside of your comfort zone is wise. For instance, within your community, have you joined organizations to which other small business owners belong? If not, consider doing so. By becoming active in local community groups, as well as regional and national industry associations, you can share your

The Gallup Organization has created Q12, a 12-question survey for employers that identifies and measures elements of worker engagement most tied to the bottom line. Here are the 12 questions - try them with your employees.

1. Do you know what is expected of you?
2. Do you have the right equipment?
3. Do you do what you do best daily?
4. In the last week, have you received praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions count?
8. Does the mission of your company make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your associates committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, have you discussed your progress with someone?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Getting Engaged

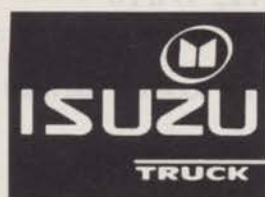
challenges and gain new insights to help grow your business.

Business-building questions: When attending industry meetings, do you make an effort to meet new people? Do you encourage your employees to network at industry events?

8. INVOLVE YOUR EMPLOYEES. Many times, owners or managers feel that as leaders, they must have all the answers to the problems in the business. They feel that if they were ever to say, "I don't know," they would look foolish or incompetent. But asking your employees for input is not only a wise practice, it also can help strengthen the bottom line.

Additionally, admitting you don't know and are searching for answers helps build staff loyalty. For example, Christopher would be wise to involve his employees in his next course of action to help strengthen his team. Depending on what he discovers during his

(continued on page 134)



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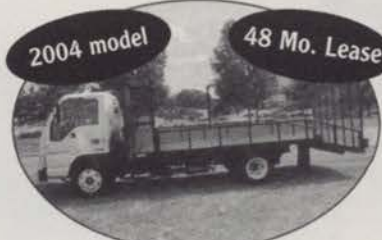
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Human Resources

(continued from page 132)

interviewing sessions, he also may want to consider using a consultant to provide training on conflict resolution, team building or communication assessment in the business.

Business-building questions: How do you involve your employees and solicit their feed-

back on various topics? Can you find more opportunities to ask for feedback?

employees will pick up on your attitude and begin to mirror that to your customers. According to the book, "What Do You Say When You Talk to Yourself?" the little voice in your mind produces 77 percent negative or counterproductive thoughts.

• Use the flip-side technique. When problems arise, always try to find humor in each situation.

• Share your positive attitude with others. If you are having a tough day, then find a way to do something positive for another person and give your attitude a quick boost.

Business-building questions: What attitude do you bring to work – a positive or a negative attitude? If negative, how can you change to be more positive?

Nurturing your employees is not a task that you can choose to do the first of the month and then ignore until a few weeks later. It is an everyday job that takes time and effort, but you will be glad you did. People are the most important part of the business environment. **II**

The author is president, Green Thumb Management, Kenton, Ohio, and can be reached at barb@greenthumbmanagement.com.



AS AN OWNER OR MANAGER, YOU MUST CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES WISELY AND DECIDE WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU. EVERY WORK ENVIRONMENT IS DIFFERENT. THE SECRET? STAY CONSISTENT.

— BARB WINGFIELD

9. REVIEW YOUR ATTITUDE. Have you thought lately about what attitude you bring to your business? Is your attitude positive and upbeat? Or is it full of doubt and negative thoughts? Positive or negative, your

Surprised? Without realizing it, we start thinking: "I am never going to get that bid; I always lose out to XYZ Co.," or "I bet Joe is going to be late again today." The list goes on and on.

Try these tips to keep a positive attitude:

• Concentrate on your winners and think of the positives in your life.

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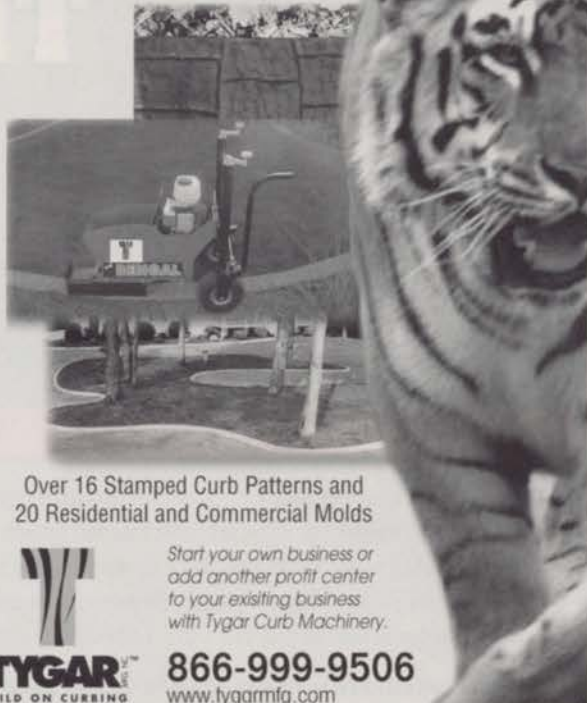
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by Will Nepper

SNOW PLOW Know-How

Contractors who educate themselves on snow plow basics save themselves from costly mistakes.

Contractors shopping for snowplows to supplement their businesses may find the task slightly more complicated than buying a family sedan and slightly less complicated than buying a new house. There is, to say the least, a lot to consider.

There's no generic answer to the question, "Which plow works for me?" The considerations for every business are different. Smaller businesses have to look at price differently than larger companies, and contractors in temperate climates have different options to weigh than those who see snow year-round.



One benefit of straight blade plows (pictured above and below, left) is that they have fewer moving parts. Hydraulics can offer the added benefit of up-and-down tilt. Photos: Snow Management Group

But a contractor who knows what questions to ask increases his or her chance of making snow removal a smart business opportunity rather than a blizzard of uncertainty.

PLOW BASICS. In the beginning there was the straight blade plow. When most people close their eyes and picture a snowplow, chances are the molding of a straight blade is what comes to mind. Hydraulics can give the added benefit of up-and-down tilt, but the straight blade is the most general, for snow removal contractors. After that, things get a little more complicated and significantly more specialized.

Another option is the V-plow. According to snowplow manufacturers this is a popular plow among snow removal companies because the blade is separated into two wings that can be adjusted to create multiple angles with many scooping capabilities to meet the needs of various jobs.

The V-plow has the capacity to pull its wings back, toward the vehicle to which it is attached, creating a v-shape that cuts through snow, stretching the boundaries of a straight blade, according to Scott Rynsoever, president, Machinability Snow Plows, Burlington, Ontario.

Still yet, there are box plows to consider, which provide the element of containment when moving snow. Though useful in industrial applications, Rynsoever says that box plows are less common among contractors that specialize in more than snow and ice removal.

V-plows and containment plows have added benefits that a basic straight blade plow does not. But they also come with the added liability of numerous moving parts and hydraulic systems that require special

(continued on page 138)



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Snow Plows

(continued from page 136)

care, up-keep, repair and a good stock of replacement parts. They're also more expensive. "I would say there is probably a 100 percent difference between comparably-sized V-plows vs. box plows," says Rynsoever. "Probably double the cost." He points out that price also is dependant on application, the type of mount used and

not conducive to production.

"If you're doing a couple of driveways for your neighbors and friends, a 7-foot straight blade would be perfect for the job," Allin says. "But with a V-blade you can scoop the snow and take it all the way out to the end of a driveway and turn around, put it in the scoop-forward posi-

"THERE'S ALWAYS A WEAK LINK IF YOU OVERSIZE SOMETHING. BIGGER ISN'T NECESSARILY BETTER, ESPECIALLY IF THE VEHICLE CARRYING YOUR PLOW ISN'T EQUIPPED TO CARRY AND MOVE LARGER EQUIPMENT." — SCOTT RYNSOEVER

whether or not the blade has a steel edge.

"If you're doing a boatload of residential properties, a V-blade is very efficient," says John Allin, president of Allin Cos., Erie, Pa. "Once you get past doing 10 driveways, you start to worry about production and a straight blade is

tion and tuck the corners in two passes — instead of a straight blade, which would take three or four."

"With a box plow you've got a little bit more containment," Rynsoever adds. "The sides are fixed and that containment will let you hold snow and more volume."

Eric Hartmann, vice president of operations, Tovar's Snow Plowing, Elgin, Ill. explains that Tovar's fleet is a 50-50 split between the standard 8 1/2-foot blades and containment plows because his crews need both for different circumstances. "Containment plows can be used in more wide-open, mall-type properties," he says. "They don't slow down in the big snows, and they do quite a bit of work."

For Hartmann, containment plows are more productive than some of the standard blade plows, "but we use a combination of both because every site requires different types of equipment."

NARROWING THE SCOPE. Once a contractor decides which type of plow meets his or her needs and budget, there are some details to consider. One of the most important points is the size of the vehicle that will carry the plow.

(continued on page 140)



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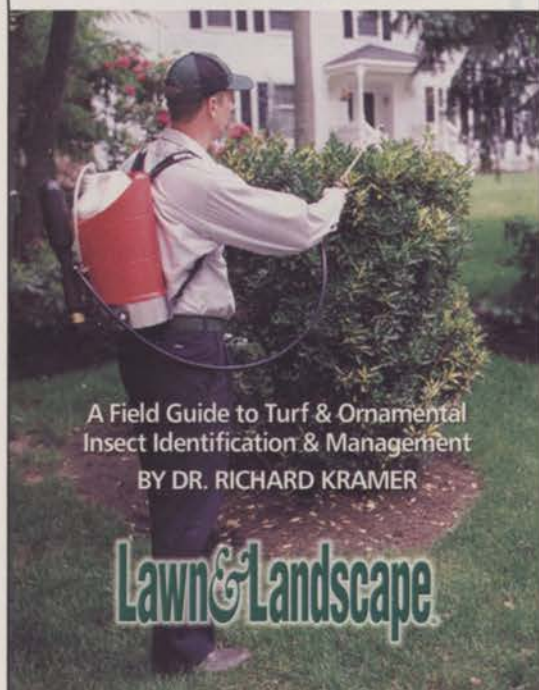


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Snow Plows

(continued from page 138)

"There's always a weak link if you over-size something," Rynsoever says. "Bigger isn't necessarily better, especially if the vehicle carrying your plow isn't equipped to carry and move larger equipment," he says. This is one of the more common mistakes made by new-to-the-market contractors, and it can threaten productivity,

as well as a vehicle's transmission, Rynsoever points out.

"You might have this plow that is great for the ½- to 1-inch snow fall, but once you get into the 4- to 8-inch range, you find that you're only using about 20 percent of the blade because you can't push any more."

(continued on page 144)



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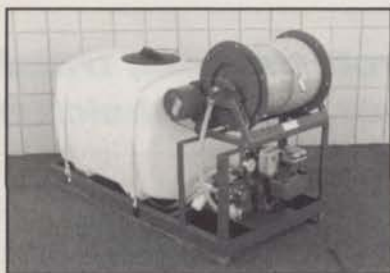
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It's always a good idea to give your snowplow a diagnostic check-up before sending it out to fight the elements. Here's a list of things to inspect before hitting the roads.

- ✓ Check all electrical connections to make sure they are not corroded. Pump connections, batteries, and wiring harness plugs should be checked as well. Clean the corruptions and apply dielectric grease to them.

- ✓ Take a look at the cutting edge. If there is one inch or less of edge, replace it now before sending the plow out.

- ✓ Check the A frame. If it's bent, replace it.

- ✓ Make sure that all trip springs are in place and adjusted properly.

- ✓ Inspect hydraulic hoses for chaffing and signs of wear. Replace hoses in poor condition.

- ✓ Examine the angle pistons and lift cylinder for rust. A fine emery cloth is good for removing rust.

- ✓ Finally, check the moldboard for rust. Rust causes snow to stick to the moldboard rather than slip off. If it looks like it needs it, give the moldboard a fresh coat of paint. Add a coat or two of wax after the paint has "cured" for about a month. — **Chuck Smith**

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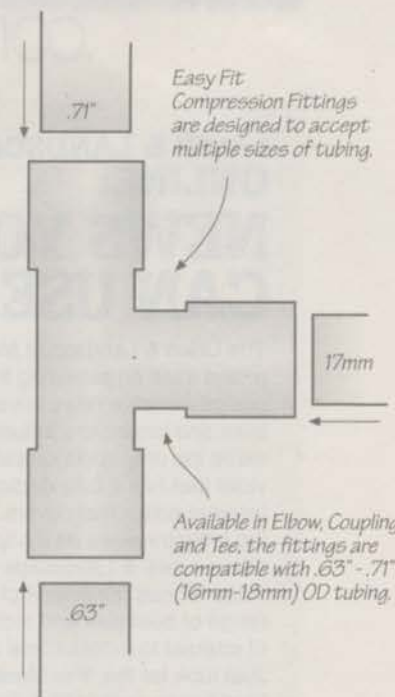
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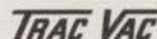
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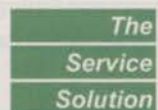
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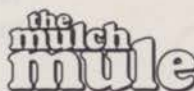
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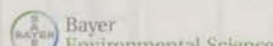
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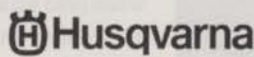
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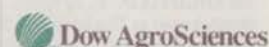
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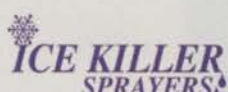
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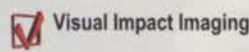
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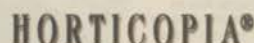
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Snow Plows

(continued from page 140)

In addition to this, Allin points out that over-sizing your equipment can also void the warranty on your truck. "If you buy a half-ton truck and put a 9-foot plow on the front of it, it might seem like a good move because you can move a lot of snow, but now the warranty is no good," he says. "Over-taxing trucks is something that goes on in

this industry a lot. They put a big plow on the front of the truck that pushes the load limit of the axle, and then they'll put a salt spreader in the back and overload it. Now all of a sudden you've added 6,000 pounds of weight to a pickup truck that was only designed to carry 2,000 or 3,000."

The material the plow moldboard is

made of adds to the weight factor. Steve Sepaniak, President, LLC, Spencerport, NY cites the advent of the stainless steel moldboard as a major improvement. "There are also the poly-, plexi-glass materials for the smaller vehicles."

Rynsoever says that many people make the mistake of confusing lighter plows with lower quality. "It depends on how it's engineered and what types of materials are being used," he says. "On our equipment we use a lot of high-yield materials that keep the weight down. It doesn't look heavy, but it's strong and it does the job."

SIMPLY THE BEST. The most consistent message springing forth from the experts with regard to buying a first snowplow is: "Keep it simple." Extra capabilities and specialized features can seem like a good idea when held up against the most basic straight blade plow but those distinctions always inflate the price and frequently mean more moving parts.

"Bells and whistles are great," Hartmann explains. "But they're not very realistic when there's 15 inches of snow and it's -2 F."

"More moving parts could slow you down," Hartmann says. "When you only get to plow 12 times a year, you want to make sure your equipment is going to work. If the conditions worsen, the simpler you keep it, the better off you'll be."

Sepaniak echoes this sentiment. "I think we're prone to gimmicks to some degree," he says, citing multiple moving parts as bad news for reliability. "Things are going to break, so simple is always better."

When moving parts are a consideration, determining the accessibility of replacements is important. Some less-common models have hard-to-find parts and that could delay contractors up when the conditions get rough, prolonging downtime and complicating otherwise simple jobs.

"Sometimes buying an off-brand plow could be a mistake," Allin points out. "Small contractors trying to make an intelligent decision should look at what plows are available in their market. Why buy a particular plow if there's no dealer within 200 miles?"

And if a nearby dealer does have the equipment you want, Rynsoever suggests checking out the product and the dealer to

(continued on page 146)

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USE READER SERVICE #126

Snow Plows

(continued from page 144)

ensure timely and effective customer service. "Talk to people using the product and find out what kind of success they've had with it and what they are using it for," he says. "Get their take on how the service and support has been and how the product has been working. And if there were issues, how promptly were they dealt with?" After-sale support, Rynsoever says, is far more important than initial cost. Without the support, a contractor may be stuck needing replacement parts in a blizzard, and if their dealer doesn't stock them, they're in trouble.

The quest for simplicity also applies to blade installation. Sepaniak considers the increasing ease of installation one of the most important improvements to plow technology over the years. "Removing plow blades from your truck used to be a major ordeal," he says. "Even after you removed the blade, you still had the framework on the front of your vehicle. Now it's more of a hitch-and-run process. You're dropping a whole pump,

frame and blade in the simplest of steps."

NETWORKING KNOWLEDGE. The final decision always rests on the shoulders of the contractor who must sift through all of the above considerations while keeping price a priority. Unfortunately significant gaps in price make it difficult for buyers to know ahead of time what kind of numbers they'll be facing.

Sepaniak says that straight blades can range from anywhere between \$920 and \$10,000. According to Wade Madsen, sales manager, Daniels Pull Plow, Barrington, Ill., the range for wing-blade plows is somewhere in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range with containment plows significantly steeper at \$2500 to \$19,000. V-plows, can run comparably high at around \$13,000 for a high-end 16-foot V-blade, offers Rynsoever. It is important to remember that plow pricing is no exact science and the numerous factors related to the type of plow and market fluctuations keep pricing averages elusive.

Though price has to be an important consideration for small businesses, going for the least expensive product could mean problems down the road. Allin says that, generally, cheaper plows have more downtime related to regular emergency maintenance. The more expensive, better quality plows cost more money up-front, that would probably go into maintenance on cheaper models anyway. This creates a "pay now or later" scenario, he stresses, which is a tricky gamble when extended downtime could be detrimental to business.

"I think a contractor who buys his first plow will probably buy one of the cheapest plows on the market," Allin explains. "But by the time he buys his second plow - he's become intelligent pretty fast." ■

The author is a Contributing Editor of Lawn & Landscape and can be reached at wnepper@lawnandlandscape.com.

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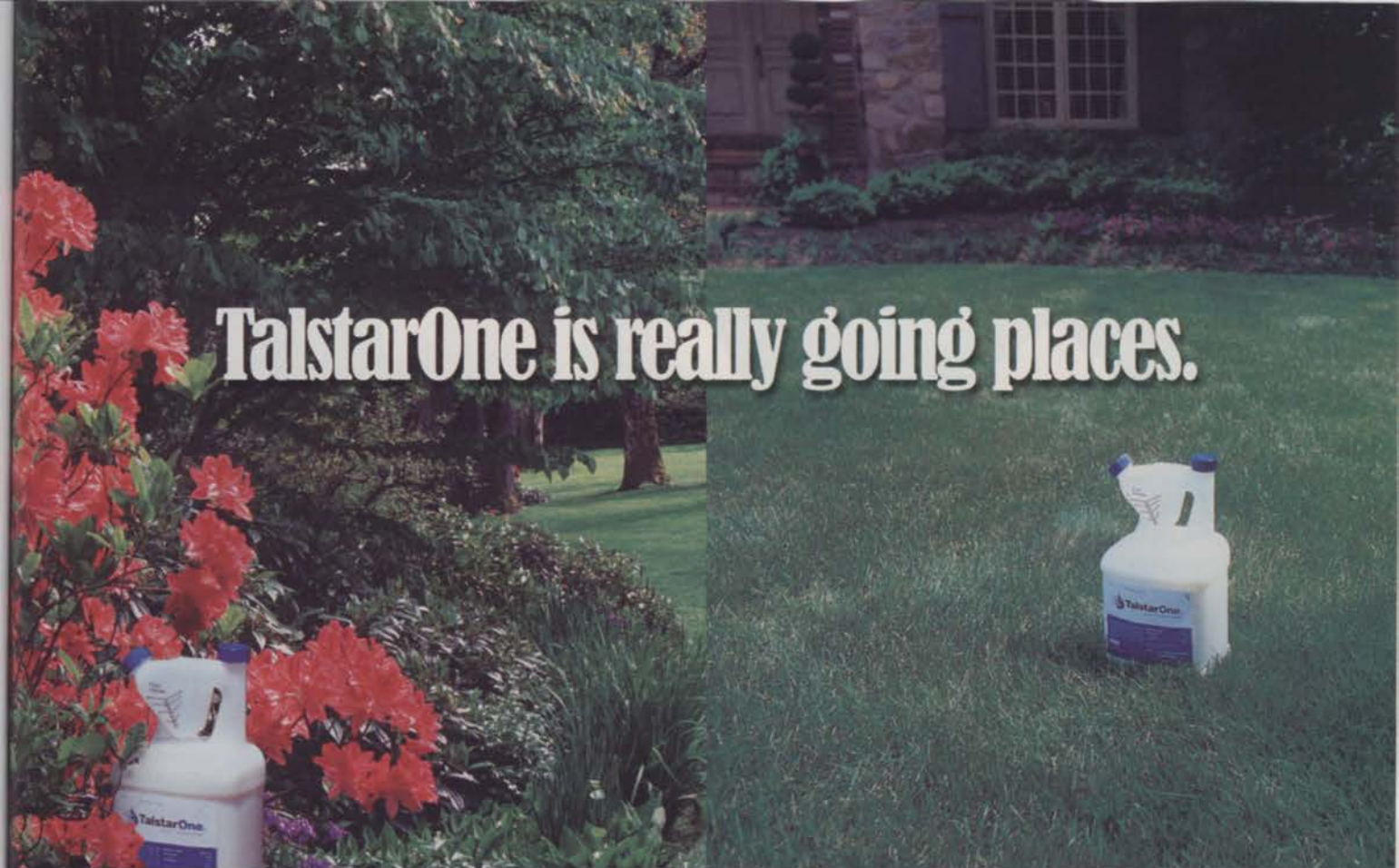
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USE READER SERVICE #85



Overhead Costs

by James Huston

G&A OVERHEAD

Without a systematic way to allocate general and administrative overhead costs, your company might find itself losing money that it can't account for. In part two of his series on establishing annual budgets, James Huston helps you categorize the often overlooked G&A details.

Quite often, contractors either overlook or have no systematic way to allocate G&A (general and administrative) overhead costs to their jobs, and it gets them into big trouble. Following are processes used to define G&A overhead costs, allocate them to divisions (when appropriate), and ensure that they are bid into jobs.

A G&A overhead budget is a fair market value budget. Not all categories in estimating G&A overhead will reflect actual cash flow expenses, nor will they be the same as the expenses expressed on a company's profit and

loss (P&L) statement. Consequently, those categories (as defined by tax law) are not necessarily the ones incorporated in the following examples for estimating purposes.

KNOW THE BASICS. Historical data is useful when preparing a G&A overhead estimating budget, but only as a point of reference. Just because there is a specific amount in last year's P&L statement doesn't mean that the same amount should be used for a projected budget. When examining the different G&A overhead categories discussed here, it will be important to think about whether or not the amount related to those

categories will increase or decrease over the next 12-month period and then make the appropriate adjustments for purposes of budget projections.

It is very important to exclude from G&A overhead any categories that can be directly tied to a job. Job-related expenses on specific bids should be included in direct costs and not in G&A overhead. This is why G&A overhead costs are often referred to as indirect costs.

Large corporations, generally those with more than \$10 million in gross annual sales (or more than seven or eight divisions), may want to have corporate as well as division

(continued on page 150)

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Overhead Costs

(continued from page 148)

G&A overhead budgets. The corporate budget would include the same categories as the division budget but these costs would be specifically for costs for the corporate G&A overhead staff and related expenses. Corporate G&A overhead would then be allocated to divisions and jobs being bid within those divisions as an addition to the division G&A overhead per hour (OPH) cost.

Corporate G&A overhead should be allocated to divisions in one of two ways:

1. Total corporate G&A overhead could be allocated to divisions as a lump-sum dollar amount, which individual divisions would add to their G&A overhead budgets as additional line items.

2. Total corporate G&A overhead could be divided by the sum total of all field labor hours contained in all divisions. This calculation would produce a corporate overhead per hour (COPH), which would then be added to the

per and magazine advertisements, company brochures, direct mail expenses, Web site development and garden, home and trade show expenses.

Bad Debts. Bad debts are money owed to a company by customers. It is assumed that this money will not be collected. Limiting bad debts to 1/2 to 1 percent of gross annual sales is a good practice. However, if there is a substantial bad debt (\$30,000 to \$50,000 from the past year or past few years), the entire amount cannot be included in the G&A overhead budget. The figure must be "capped" to prevent charging future clients for the "sins of the past" in G&A overhead.

Computers, Software, Hardware, and Digitizers. Included in this category are computer, software, hardware and digitizer purchases, and training costs for the use of the same. These amounts are generally depreciated over a three- to five-year period and include any anticipated upgrade expenses. Spread the cost of computer hardware over a three-year period to recoup expenses in that amount of time. Because of technological advances, expect to replace most computers after three years.

Donations. Donations are comprised of cash donations, labor, and/or equipment costs incurred for charitable work a company performs. In most cases, donations driven by tax accounting purposes should not be included in this category. Capping the total donation amount between \$500 and \$1,000 for G&A overhead estimating purposes also is a good rule of thumb. Anything more than that should be deducted from net profit. If too much is added to this category, it's really the clients who are making the donations, with the budgeting company merely taking the tax deduction.

Downtime Labor. These are the man-hours that field crews are paid when they are not working in the field or producing billable man-hours. Downtime labor can be calculated in man-hours and those man-hours are then multiplied by average wage. This can include paid labor man-hours for bad weather, equipment breakdown time, meetings and seminars, nursery watering

time, and busy work like fixing small tools or cleaning the office or yard area. Time spent on equipment repair is not included in downtime; it is incorporated as a portion of equipment costs.

Downtime Labor Burden. Multiplying the company / division field-labor burden by the dollar amount in downtime labor can help determine the amount for this category.

Dues and Subscriptions. This section includes dues, fees, subscriptions, and membership charges for various state and national associations or organizations as well as organizations like the local Chamber of Commerce and the Better Business Bureau. Professional magazine subscriptions, Dodge Reports and Green Sheets can also be included under this category.

Insurance. Record insurance for office contents, dental and medical insurance for G&A personnel here. This includes benefits for owners, secretaries, receptionists, administrative help, accountants, bookkeepers, estimators, field supervisors, and anyone else whose hours you cannot directly account for within specific bid calculations.

Interest and Bank Charges. Within the scope of this category is interest on credit cards and the company's line of credit. Start-up fees for establishing a line of credit and bank and credit card processing fees also belong here, as does interest on outstanding debts to suppliers.

If there is no line of credit, the company is using retained earnings to finance the business and provide working capital. This amount is normally equal to four or five weeks of payroll. Since this amount usually is tied up and being used by the company throughout the year, it should be multiplied by the current savings interest rate (as though it were deposited in a savings or money market account and drawing interest) and included with the interest portion as a cost of money expense.

Licenses and Surety Bonds. This includes the fees for state contractor and city business licenses (if applicable) and the cost of the surety bond (not a performance bond) on a license. However, in many cases city licenses for specific jobs should be included in general conditions for that job - not in G&A overhead.



QUITE OFTEN CONTRACTORS EITHER OVERLOOK OR HAVE NO SYSTEMATIC WAY TO ALLOCATE G&A OVERHEAD COSTS TO THEIR JOBS, AND IT GETS THEM INTO BIG TROUBLE.

division's overhead per hour (DOPH) for each division to produce a total overhead per hour (TOPH). The TOPH (which would be different for each division) would be used by divisions for estimating purposes.

THE G&A OVERHEAD BREAKDOWN.

Below is a list of categories that can be utilized when attempting to calculate G&A overhead. It is important to note that deciding which category is correct for an expense item is less important than ensuring that the item is included somewhere in G&A overhead. If necessary, the G&A overhead can be divisionalized. If there is more than one division and separate budgets are needed for each, the appropriate amount of G&A overhead expense can be added to its respective division. This can get complicated. In some cases it will take calculated guesses to arrive at a fairly accurate number. Following are some common G&A overhead expenses and their descriptions.

Advertising. This category contains expenses such as *Yellow Pages* listings, newspa-

Overhead Costs

Office Equipment. This includes new purchases, repairs, and service contracts for office equipment. It does not include any field equipment, G&A overhead vehicles, computers, telephones, radios, beepers, pagers, or digitizers. For new equipment to be purchased during the budget period, the cost should be divided by its useful life expectancy and included for one year in this category.

For office equipment presently on hand, items are listed using their replacement cost at new fair market value (FMV) prices. The FMV replacement cost is then divided by the useful life expectancy and that amount is entered in this category. Examples of office equipment include items like file cabinets and durable furniture, copy machines, refrigerators and microwaves, etc.

Office Supplies. Office supplies are consumable items that are used on a regular basis like pens, paper, paper clips, copier toner cartridges, postage and printing costs.

Professional Fees. Professional fees include CPAs or bookkeepers not on regular payroll, end-of-year tax preparation, outside payroll services, consultants, incorporated costs and legal fees. A reasonable legal fee amount is between \$500 and \$1,000 per year, which might cover having an attorney scrutinize policy manuals or write a few routine letters.

This fee does *not* cover costs for litigation. It is unreasonable to put this expense

into G&A overhead; consequently, it must come out of profits. Again, the premise is that it's not reasonable to charge next year's clients for the "sins of the past."

Radio Systems, Beepers/Pagers, and Car/Mobile Telephones. This category's parameters extend to maintenance and maintenance contracts, as well as repair.

Rent (Office and Yard). Fair market value should be employed here. For instance, if a similar facility were to be rented on the open market, how much would it cost? Quite often, monthly mortgage payments are much lower than fair market value. Even if the company's facility is paid for, it's reasonable to include a fair market value rent in the G&A overhead.

If the office or yard space is rented, enter that amount in this category instead.

Salaries for Office Personnel. Any personnel working in the office who cannot be defined as corporate officers, partners, sales staff or owners should be included here. This category most often applies to personnel like bookkeepers, office managers, secretaries, receptionists, estimators, designers and field supervisors. However, if a supervisor generally spends half of the day in the field supervising and the other half doing administrative work, 50 percent of his or her salary should be put in G&A overhead. The other 50 percent will be bid into jobs.

Salaries for Corporate Officers, Owners, and Partners. Officers' salaries should be calculated according to fair market value. If

(continued on page 154)

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Overhead Costs

(continued from page 151)

a corporate officer were working for another company, what salary could that person expect to be paid? If another person was hired to run a company in place of the owner, what should that person expect as adequate, reasonable compensation?

It is important to realize that this amount may not equal actual ("real") pay. However, the fair market value amount for that individual should be placed in G&A overhead for estimating purposes.

Salary Labor Burden. Determine this amount by multiplying the office labor burden percentage by the total salaries for office personnel and corporate officers. It applies to FICA, FUTA, SUTA, WCI, and so on.

Small Tools and Supplies. This includes any small (non-motorized) tools or supplies utilized throughout the year – for general use and not particular jobs. This includes items such as wheelbarrows, rakes, shovels, hoes, tarps, hand tools and other miscellaneous hardware.

Taxes (Equipment/Asset Tax or Mill Tax on Business). Some cities or counties will charge an asset tax, which is a percentage of the total value of a company's equipment and assets. Asset taxes on field equipment and facilities (office space and/or yards) are not included in this category. Only asset tax on office equipment (furniture, computers, etc.) is included.

Mill Taxes. These are general taxes based on sales. Though rare, they do exist and usually run no more than \$200 to \$300 per year.

This category does *not* include company or corporate state and/or federal income taxes, which should, instead, be paid out of net profit.

Telephones. This category can cover expenses such as monthly line charges, long distance, voicemail services, phone systems (including purchase and installation charges depreciated over a 5 to 10-year period), repairs, maintenance, DSL lines or Internet cable fees, and fax machines.

Training and Education. There is no pat answer as to how much should be spent on training and education. The key is to determine whether employees are being trained and educated properly to run the systems that are needed in a company. Applicable expenses may include books, audiotapes, video, workshop and seminar registration fees or continuing education.

Travels and Entertainment. This not only refers to the actual cost of traveling to seminars, workshops and convention, but also extends to hotel bills, meals (including those for clients), as well as gifts for clients and employees.

Uniforms and Safety Equipment. "Safety equipment" includes some items not included in small tools and supplies such as goggles, gloves, ear protectors, hard hats and cold weather gear.

Utilities. Monthly water, electric, and sewer bills belong here, as do heating, trash and janitorial service, and office security.

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The name of the publisher is: Richard J. W. Foster, 4012 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113-3399. The name of the editor is: Roger Stanley, 4012 Bridge Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44113-3399.

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

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Vehicles. This category pertains to vehicles used by G&A overhead personnel, including cars and pickup trucks. Mileage reimbursement for private vehicles also belongs here.

Yard Expense (Leasehold Improvements). This includes costs associated with maintaining nursery areas, installing mulch beds or drip irrigation, spreading gravel, putting up a fence, etc. Also included here are the various leasehold improvements that depreciate over time, such as carpeting and painting costs and partitions.

Storage yard or nursery area improvements may include similar costs. Again, these costs should be depreciated over the useful life expectancy of the improvement involved. Generally, labor expended for leasehold improvements is included in downtime labor.

Miscellaneous. List-

ings under this category should be kept to a minimum, preferably under \$500 (\$1,000 at most). Most expenses should be in the categories previously listed. Miscellaneous should not be used as a catchall. It is unwise to lump everything together here because G&A overhead expenses must be defined in order to have effective control of them.

IN SUMMARY. Contractors often overlook bidding G&A overhead costs into jobs. Fair market values for G&A overhead items are calculated based on historical data, if available. If good historical data isn't available or if a contractor is in a start-up situation, costs are estimated for the upcoming budget year.

Some G&A overhead categories tend to overlap (for instance, ad-

vertising and donations). This doesn't matter. The key is to be consistent with definitions, continuing to put the same item in the same category year after year. Because there is no accurate or practical way to put G&A overhead costs into a bid as a specific cost for doing the job, they are referred to as indirect costs as compared to direct costs. Often G&A overhead costs are divisionalized and allocated to separate divisions within the company. Each division will then allocate its portion of G&A overhead costs to jobs being bid throughout the year. **LL**

This article was adapted from James Huston's book, *How to Price Landscape & Irrigation Projects*. The author is president, J.R. Huston Enterprises, a member of the American Society of Professional Estimators and a certified professional landscape estimator. For further information on purchasing this book, please call 800/451-5588, e-mail jrhei@jrhuston.biz or visit www.jrhuston.biz.



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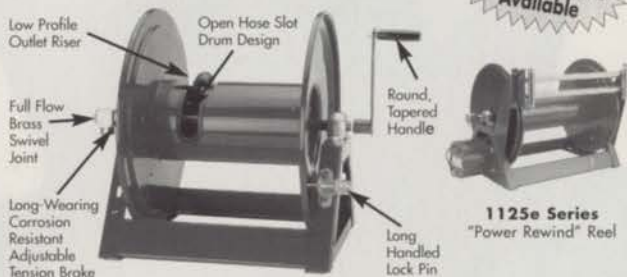
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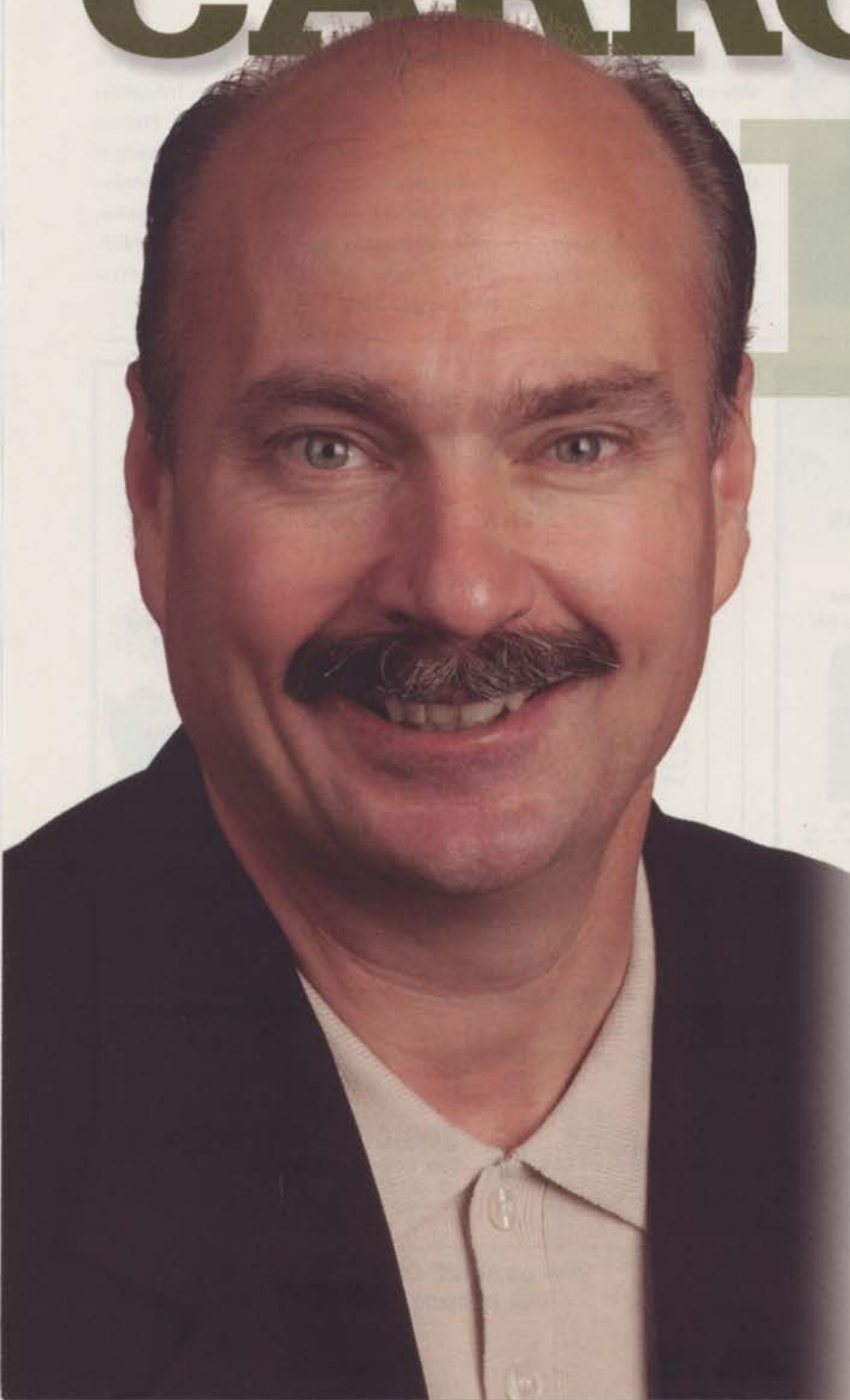


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by Cindy Code

CONVERSATION with **Dan** **CARROTHERS**



It's been quite a year for Bayer Environmental Science, which recently celebrated its one-year anniversary in June.

The blockbuster acquisition of Aventis by Bayer has been watched and analyzed by suppliers, end-users and analysts alike.

The acquisition brought together two large chemical suppliers. Of those, Aventis had a strong presence in the golf business, while Bayer's strength was in the lawn and landscape market. Together, the organization is poised to serve both end-user customers.

Dan Carrothers leads the professional turf business at Bayer ES. In an exclusive interview with *Lawn & Landscape*, Carrothers discussed the acquisition, merging two independent companies, challenges facing today's pesticide suppliers and his outlook on the future of the professional lawn and landscape industry.

LAWN & LANDSCAPE (L&L): Please comment on the viability of the professional lawn and landscape industry today and in the future.

DAN CARROTHERS (DC): From an opportunity perspective, this is a market that has the potential of growing from 20 to 80 million managed acres based on recent market research. Clearly, there are some really positive trends going on in this industry.

At the same time, however, our industry has to deal with some fairly significant regulatory and legal issues. One only has to look north to Canada to see some serious regulatory issues such as the banning of the cosmetic use of pesticides. Additionally, our industry is facing issues like labor and insurance costs that are making it difficult for the professional to remain profitable. On one hand, you have a market that is poised for great growth. On the other

One of the industry's most respected professionals talks about how the industry has grown and what it must do to move forward.

RS

hand, you have an industry that has some significant issues that have to be dealt with. How well we deal with some of these issues will determine how successful we are at capturing opportunity we see.

L&L: Whose role is it to deal with business and regulatory issues? Does it rest solely on the lawn and landscape professional or the manufacturer?

DC: We share the responsibility. From a basic manufacturer's perspective, it's incumbent upon us to make sure that the new technologies we are bringing forward fit in with new EPA philosophies and guidelines. We have to bring the most environmentally friendly, yet efficacious, products to market. We also must demonstrate to the lawn and landscape professional that these products can be used in an environmentally friendly way. We can and are adopting best practices in the course of using pesticides, which puts our products in the best light possible.

One example is the emergence of the Evergreen Foundation, whose mandate is to bring together an alliance of industry suppliers, associations and end-users to promote overall market understanding and growth. It's important for the industry to understand that we have a responsibility to not only maintain and grow the market, but also to recognize that all of us have a role in making sure that we are doing the best we possibly can in terms of safety and environmental compliancy.

L&L: What are Bayer's priorities? What do you want to communicate to the marketplace?

DC: Our goal and mantra, if you will, is to provide more focused energy and support on the key end users in the markets we serve. The lawn and landscape professional is someone we need to understand better. We need to understand what their businesses look like and how we can help. What that requires is dedicated field sales reps. To that end, we have identified three sales reps within Bayer who represent a new focus in terms of being able to be more intimate with the lawn and landscape professional. This enables us to provide a better degree of sophistication and expertise in terms of understanding their business models and where we can add value.

For example, if lawn and landscape professionals are struggling with labor and related issues, we can first understand the pressures they are under and second, we can work with them to provide business support. Going forward, one of our biggest goals

of the business and to discern where we can help. The fact that we are putting resources behind them sends a message that we do value them and we value the business that they participate in. We don't pretend to be experts in all facets of the lawn and landscape business. We play a key role in terms of the chemical side of the business, but we also recognize that this is not the biggest component of the business. Labor issues, rising insurance costs, water issues and related restrictions may outweigh some of the issues involving our products.

A couple of years ago, we introduced Grub Stake, a program to provide lawn care operators some business-related materials – direct mail, door hangers, marketing collateral – that they can use to help make their business more profitable. Additionally, our dedicated lawn care specialists are holding business sessions for lawn care operators to learn how they can calculate things like cus-

On... RESPONSIBILITY

"From a basic manufacturer's perspective, it's incumbent upon us to make sure that the new technologies we are bringing forward fit in with new EPA philosophies and guidelines."

is to be more focused with dedicated people who can call on our customers as well as ratcheting up the amount of service and support we can provide to them. We will only accomplish this with the help and support of our dedicated distribution partners.

L&L: What feedback have you received from the industry and what specific services can Bayer bring to the marketplace to ease the business responsibilities of lawn and landscape professionals?

DC: The feedback has been extremely positive. We've held a series of focus groups and key end-user roundtables to discuss the state

tomer lifetime value. These are just small examples, but I think this is how we are trying to go beyond the product.

L&L: What product portfolio expansion plans do you have?

DC: From a herbicide perspective, we've been lighter here than in other product areas. With the introduction of Revolver this year and a label for home lawn use, this is a new opportunity for us. Simply having all these products doesn't necessarily mean that we are going to be successful with them. By having a more intimate understanding of the lawn care operator's business, we can estab-

lish engines or programs that allow the professional lawn care operator or landscaper to use our products in a way that makes sense to them from a profitability and value perspective. Longer term, our No. 1 goal is to develop new technologies. I think professionals are quite aware of how difficult it is to bring new chemistry to the marketplace. Nevertheless, it is our responsibility.

One area that I think is fairly undeveloped is the tree care service business, particularly with some of these quarantine pests that are really starting to cause significant problems. We need to do a better job finding application technologies for some of these products so a lawn care professional or arborist can provide that service to a homeowner at a reasonable price and still profit.

L&L: How do you define success?

On...VALUE

"The value is in the eyes of the beholder. If we are not providing enough value in product or service, then shame on us."

DC: Success is when our end-user and distributor customers' businesses are growing, and growing profitably. We cannot be successful on a sustained basis without them. It just won't work. For me, that is the ultimate end success and that's why we are going to have to really grapple with some of these tough issues these professionals face. We are going to have to do everything that we can to try to knock down some of those barriers that are going to prevent us from growing from 20 to 80 million acres. Five years from now, we want to say that the lawn and landscape business has grown because we've helped to resolve some of these tough issues.

L&L: What is your management style?

DC: People first. It's all about people. We are fortunate to have great products, but it's the people who turn those products into successes. It's people that put the products into the hands of the right customers and help make them successful. It's also people who help you work through the issues and the road blocks that inevitably come up.

My management style is to hire the absolute best people you can and do everything

possible to retain them. Give them opportunities for growth and development and stay out of their way. I would also say that my style is to spend a lot of time thinking about the customer – the person at the end of the day who uses our product. I do try to gain a much better understanding of what our role is in their businesses. I think people are the most important resource and asset, and I particularly enjoy being around people. I think I have a pretty positive outlook on life, and, at times, I think it can be contagious.

L&L: Who are some of your mentors?

DC: My biggest mentor is my father. He wasn't a marketer or anything like that, but he was a huge influence on me. The concept of people first was very much his mantra. He was a successful man and his success really stemmed from the fact that he understood

how important people were. He respected people and he got that respect in return.

From a professional business perspective, Helmut Schramm, who currently heads up the Bayer consumer business on a global basis, has the ability to zero in on three or four things that are absolute, key drivers in the business. Also, Josh Weeks, who heads the professional group for Bayer, is the epitome of "people first" and has a style about him that really is genuine and sincere. So I have been fortunate. I have had some very good bosses throughout my career – including my father – who have really mentored me.

L&L: What's your position on consolidation and how it affect the industry? Is there more consolidation in our future?

DC: With consolidation, people are concerned about having fewer options. Looking at the professional business today, competition is alive and well. I don't believe that competition in any way has been lessened. In fact, one might argue it has intensified because the competitors are stronger and bigger. As a result, there are still many options. Stepping back, you have to look to the agri-

cultural market to understand consolidation. Quite frankly that is where most of these – at least in our business – start from. In that industry, size matters. Let's look at a company that's doing \$1 billion in sales and is spending 10 percent of that in research and development. Over a five-year period, they have put \$500 million into their research program. Conversely, you see a \$10 billion company that even if they put 5 percent into R&D over a five-year period, you would have \$2.5 billion dollars after the five-year program is over. The probability of success is five times greater with company B in this case than company A. So size matters. When you take that to our business, the logic holds true.

L&L: How will the proliferation of generic products on the market affect your business?

DC: We are a basic manufacturer. We are basic in R&D. We develop and commercialize new technology. That is our role. At some point, these technologies come off patent and we don't in any way begrudge anyone for wanting to seek out the best value. However, it's important to understand what total value is. For instance, does the generic use the same active ingredient? Where is it sourced from? Are the formulations the same? Is the label the same? Is the label the most recent label? Does it have the most recent applications on it? Does it have the most recent weeds, insects and diseases on it? Those are all things to consider when choosing between branded and generic products.

Beyond that, I recommend a careful look at the associated services. For instance, do you use the field sales force for support to help you grow your business and to help call on customers and solve complaints? Have you or do you use the development and technical service reps available to help with many of the technical issues? Are you utilizing the regulatory legal people who are associated with supporting those products? If the answer is "No" to every question and you are convinced that the products are equal, then your decision becomes much easier. If the answer is "Yes" to one or more questions, then the decision becomes different. The value is in the eyes of the beholder. If we are not providing enough value in product or service, then shame on us. **L**

The author is Business Director – Corporate Accounts for Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at ccode@lawnandlandscape.com.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Heavy Metal

Equipment is a landscape contractor's most valuable asset – besides, of course, the people who operate it. And like hiring qualified employees, contractors must carefully weigh equipment qualities when making purchase decisions and consider the "full package" – serviceability, parts availability, quality and the dealer's reputation.

"We found that cutting corners on equipment creates problems down the road," says Kory Ballard, vice president, Perficut Lawn & Landscape, Des Moines, Iowa. This in mind, consider these equipment qualifications before filling your next fleet order.

TIME TO TRADE. Clock too many hours on a machine and downtime will put a damper on productivity. When is it time to retire equipment?

"Generally, I will buy a new mower at 1,700 hours," notes Peter Donovan, president, Earthworks Landscaping Co., Wakefield, Mass. "I would think about selling a machine after 1,500 hours. After 1,500, the machine begins to nickel and dime you to death."

Repair costs are easy to figure by glancing at service invoices, but contractors might gloss over lost productivity costs, Donovan points out. "What did the machine actually cost you in production – what production did you lose?" he remarks. "The stress of employees – you have to put a dollar amount on that, too."

Donovan plans in advance for this downtime by purchasing extra hand-held equipment. "I always have two spares, so if someone breaks one, we can put it away for the day and get one that works," he explains.

PRICE POINT. Quality costs, and most contractors realize if they shop for equipment with only price in mind, they will spend time and money doctoring equipment.

"We normally buy the better equipment because it lasts longer for us," says Steve Rak, vice president, Southwest Landscape Management, Brecksville, Ohio. "We'll spend top dollar for a mower if it will perform better because, sometimes, price reflects quality."

On the other hand, Rak knows his smaller tools have shorter life spans, so he won't spend as much. "When it comes to two-cycle, we'll go with a less expensive model because we replace those every couple of years," he notes.


Some dealers offer volume discounts to contractors who purchase several machines at one time, and while these deals shouldn't dictate a purchase, they do help soften the bill, says Maurice Dowell, president, Dowco Enterprises, Chesterfield, Mo. "When we buy, we usually buy in some kind of quantity, so (volume discounts) do work well for us," he comments. "And I think dealers also look at the fact that even if you are only buying four trimmers, in the spring you're back buying more equipment, so they recognize this and reward you as such."

AT YOUR SERVICE. The most important component of an equipment purchase isn't made of metal or hot-wired with horsepower. Without service and support, machines can be sitting ducks.

"We don't have a mechanic on staff, so we find a dealer who will service our equipment," Rak says. "If I have a mower that goes down, our dealers will have it fixed for me by the next day, or they will fix it while we wait. We've been to places where they get it to us in a week, and for us, that's downtime."

Part of providing top-notch service includes carrying a vast parts inventory. Donovan relates a time when a contractor friend needed a mower belt and shopped for the best price all day. "If you charge \$40 per man-hour, that is \$800 the crew had to generate that went out the window while he was searching for a belt that was \$5 cheaper," he relates.

LOCATION, LOCATION. Driving long distances to find equipment, drop off machines for service or pick up extra parts costs contractors when they lose field time. "We try to use vendors that are close to our shop," Dowell says. "There are times when we have warranty work, and that's windshield time. Our dealer is 10 minutes from our office – that works well."

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY. Many dealers offer demo equipment so contractors can try out machines before they commit to a purchase. This also allows crews an opportunity to test out equipment, Rak points out. "The guys on our crews like to try out equipment, and they tell me if they like it or not – it makes a difference in our purchase decisions," he says. 

The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and Editor of Commercial Dealer magazine can be reached at khamphshire@lawnandlandscape.com.

REPAIR COSTS ARE EASY TO

FIGURE BY GLANCING AT SERVICE

INVOICES, BUT CONTRACTORS

MIGHT GLOSS OVER LOST

PRODUCTIVITY COSTS. 'WHAT DID

THE MACHINE ACTUALLY COST YOU

IN PRODUCTION — WHAT

PRODUCTION DID YOU LOSE? THE

STRESS OF EMPLOYEES — YOU

HAVE TO PUT A DOLLAR AMOUNT ON

THAT, TOO." — PETER DONOVAN

TRENCHLESS TECHNOLOGY

HDD for Landscaping

Horizontal directional drilling (HDD) plays a vital role in underground utility construction, but, to date, this trenchless technology has had little impact in the landscaping market.

Utility companies routinely use directional drilling equipment to install underground pipe and cable in areas where limiting surface disturbance is necessary and where job conditions make excavations impossible. These machines also are well suited for the trenchless installation of pipe for water distribution and irrigation systems.

So why aren't landscaping contractors using directional equipment? Many landscaping professionals simply do not recognize the procedure's value to their work, and many irrigation system specialists prefer to install pipe in open trenches where they can see their work.

However, HDD can be the least-disruptive and most cost-efficient way to make many needed improvements and can preserve landscaping when utility construction is necessary, believes Corey Potter, product manager, The

Depending on the equipment's power and soil conditions, compact utility HDD units can install pipe well in excess of 1,000 feet and as large as 36 inches.

While drilling the pilot hole, the operator alters the bore path direction by changing the slant-faced drill bit orientation. To go straight, the drill string is rotated while applying forward thrust. To make a direction change, rotation is stopped and the slanted face of the bit is positioned to face away from the desired direction change. Pushing pipe and drill head forward without rotation causes the head to move away from the slanted face.

Walk-over electronic tracking and guidance equipment provides information needed to guide the drill head. A basic system includes a radio transmitter called a beacon, which is mounted in a protective housing in the boring head, and a hand-held receiver operated by a crew member who walks directly above the head and bit as a bore progresses. The transmitter sends radio signals to the receiver, which processes them and displays information on a window on the top of the receiver. Data either is relayed to the drill operator by two-way radio, or displayed on a remote receiver at the operator station.

"One misconception those not familiar with directional equipment may have," says Potter, "is that the compact machines used for utility work can only install small-diameter material. But the pilot bore can be enlarged by backreaming so that larger sizes of PVC and HDPE can be pulled into place."

In Wichita, Kan., directional drilling was used to install 400 feet of 12-inch-diameter restrained-joint PVC pipe under a creek, as part of a city water system extension. Because the installation had to be at least 10 feet below the creek bottom, the average bore depth was 22 feet.

After completing the pilot bore under the creek, the hole was enlarged by a series of passes using a 14-inch backreamer, followed by 20-inch cutting and compaction reamers. Sections of pipe were coupled with restrained joints, attached to the drill string, and pulled back through the bore hole. The crossing was completed in four days.

If excavations had been made to install the pipe, the creek would have had to be dammed and the banks shored, which would have taken weeks and cost twice as much.

Ditch Witch directional drilling equipment ranges from compact models designed for service-line work to powerful 70,000-pound pullback systems. The company's Subsite Electronics division designs and manufactures electronic tracking and guidance systems for Jet Trac directional drilling equipment. In addition, the company manufactures a full line of Ditch Witch trenchers, vibratory plows, and related accessories. — *Jeri Kannenwischer*

The author is public relations manager for Ditch Witch, Perry, Okla., and can be reached at jkannenw@ditchwitch.com.

"DIRECTIONAL DRILLS CAN REPLACE INADEQUATE OR FAILING WATER PIPE, INSTALL NEW WATER DISTRIBUTION LINES, AND MAKE TRENCHLESS INSTALLATIONS OF UNDERGROUND CONDUIT FOR ELECTRICAL CABLE TO POWER LIGHTING ALONG ROADWAYS, IN PARKING LOTS, AND TO ILLUMINATE OTHER OUTDOOR AREAS." — COREY POTTER

Charles Machine Works, manufacturer of Ditch Witch horizontal directional drilling equipment.

"Directional drills can replace inadequate or failing water pipe, install new water distribution lines, and make trenchless installations of underground conduit for electrical cable to power lighting along roadways, in parking lots, and to illuminate other outdoor areas," Potter explains.

Directional drilling permits utilities to bring new or enhanced services to facilities without destroying established landscaping. New installations can be made under irrigation systems that already are in place, beneath existing utility lines, and under ponds, lakes, and streams.



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Stihl Planting Auger

- Specialized auger model 45EAD can be used for mass flower plantings, small post

Briggs & Stratton Vanguard Big Block Air-Cooled Engines

- Available in 25-, 27-, 29-, 31-, 33- and 35-hp models
- V-Twin/Overhead Valve (OHV) technology provides balance and low vibration to minimize wear and tear on components and equipment
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- Full-pressure, large capacity oil lubrication system with spin-on filter lowers oil temperature, extends engine life and reduces maintenance requirements
- Low fuel consumption means less frequent fueling stops
- Weighs 125 pounds without muffler and 134 pounds with muffler
- Comes with a two-year engine warranty for commercial use applications

Circle 203 on reader service form



- and sign holes or deep root fertilization
- Gasoline-powered engine lets you work in places without electricity
- Anti-vibration system allows comfortable use for long intervals
- Balanced design features well-spaced handles

Circle 200 on reader service form

Fiskars Broom

- One in a new line of long-handled tools
- Aluminum handle makes broom lightweight and reduces risk of splinters and blisters
- Ergonomic design improves comfort and posture, reducing backaches
- Maneuverable head sweeps away debris around objects and in tight corners

Circle 201 on reader service form

Echo PE-230 Power Edger

- Commercial-duty edger with unique pivot mechanism for quick adjustment to any cutting depth
- Has large wheels with solid rubber tread
- Vibration-reducing engine mount

Grasshopper Multipurpose Blades



- For all Grasshopper zero-turn, front-mount power units
- 48- and 60-inch blades move dirt, sand, gravel, snow and ice
- Adjustable blades allow operation straight ahead or 25 degrees to the left or the right
- Easy-to-use control lever permits pre-set height adjustment
- Uses self-contained hydraulic system for lift and variable left-to-right angling

Circle 204 on reader service form

and cushioned handles for lasting comfort

- Conveniently located on/off switch and throttle for easy operation
- Gear case with replaceable tool steel wear plate for added protection

Circle 202 on reader service form

Pro Cruiser SnapperZRider Mower

- Mid-mount, rear-engine, zero-turn riding mower
- Features 23- or 25-hp Kohler Command air-cooled engine
- 52- and 61-inch cutting decks available
- Joystick-controlled speed and direction features
- Two-year commercial warranty

Circle 205 on reader service form

Products

Dixie Chopper's 50-hp Riding Mower

- Model XXWD5000-72
 - Features a turbo-charged, 50-hp diesel engine
 - 72-inch cutting deck mounted to six-rail tubular steel frame
 - Operates at speeds up to 13 mph forward and in reverse
 - Ideal for maintenance of large properties
- Circle 206 on reader service form



Hiniker Trip-edge Snowplow Line

- New line of extreme-duty, trip-edge snowplows for pickup trucks
- Uses a split trip-edge with a 9-inch high pivot point
- Built to provide protection from higher

obstacles such as curbs and concrete parking barriers

- High-density polyethylene moldboard reduces friction and provides corrosion-free plowing surface
- Two versions available: 7000 series and 8000 series

Circle 207 on reader service form

Razor-Back Professional Shovel

- 48-inch fiberglass-handled shovel
- Exclusive, raised-backbone head
- Redesigned steel reinforced head-to-handle connection

- Blade forged from tempered, tough 14-gauge steel

- Available in open- or closed-back models
- Ideal for various lawn and landscape applications

Circle 208 on reader service form



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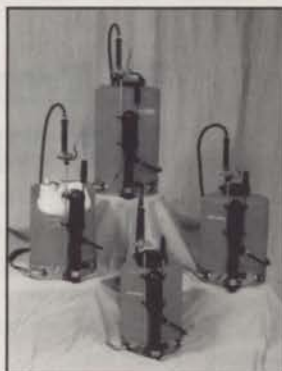
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Products

TS200 Two-wheel Mower Sully

- Heavy-duty steel construction
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 - Easily attaches in minutes to most mid-sized commercial mowers
 - Available in 15- and 18-inch arm lengths
- Circle 209 on reader service form**

Encore Z60 Rider Mower

- One of the Z-Series zero-turn riding mowers from Encore
 - 60-inch cutting deck
 - Heavy-duty steel frame and bumper
 - Operates at 8.5 mph
 - Features a 25-hp Kawasaki engine
- Circle 211 on reader service form**



Wright's Sentar Mower

- The combination of a compact, sit-down zero-turn riding mower and a flexible stand-up mower
 - Ideal for medium to large lawns
 - Operator can shift from standing to sitting and back again while mowing
 - Easy to maneuver
 - 48-, 52- and 61-inch cutting decks available
- Circle 212 on reader service form**

Cole Hersee Solenoids

- Electromechanical solenoids
- Choose from a newly expanded line
- Lightweight, rugged and reliable
- Corrosion-resistant

Gandy Turf Rollers

- Built for long-lasting service in smooth turf maintenance
 - Available in 7 sizes from 2 to 12 feet in width
 - Feature solid shafts and heavy-duty, 11-gauge steel drums with rolled edges
 - Five sizes in 2-, 3- and 4-foot widths featuring flip-handle lawn rollers
 - Unique handles flip one way for tractor hitch
- Circle 210 on reader service form**



Fanfare Trailing Impatiens from Ball Horticulture

- Ideal for shaded properties
 - Combine well with other shade-loving plants like hostas or ferns
 - Unique trailing habit allows them to spread vigorously
 - Heat tolerant
 - Available in three colors: fuchsia, orange and lavender
- Circle 213 on reader service form**

EZ-Trench EZ8000 Bedscaper

- Can create beautifully curved landscape beds or be used as a mini-trencher
 - Caster steering allows easy, convenient maneuverability
 - Progressive cutting blade cuts through hard soils
 - Adjustable depth allows trenching from zero to 8 inches deep or height adjustment for refreshing beds
- Circle 214 on reader service form**

RedMax G2500TS Chain Saw

- Lightweight top-handle chain saw
 - Chain brake is dual-activated
 - Weighs 6.4 lbs
 - Dust-free air intake
- Circle 215 on reader service form**

Hyundai Robex-7 Series Excavators

- Deliver power, productivity and precision
 - Feature improved Computer Aided Power Optimization (CAPO) management system exclusive to Hyundai
 - Include Cummins Tier II electronic control engines
 - Completely redesigned cabs
 - Advanced operator and machine features
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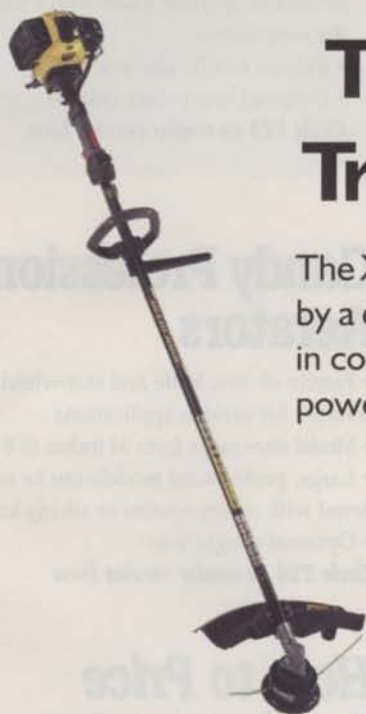


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- Five forward speeds for hill climbing and one for reverse
- Delivers maneuverability for tight spaces

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Honda 4-stroke Trimmer

- HHT25S LTA model
- Inclined trimmer features advanced engine technology
- Designed to be operated and stored in any position
- Lower noise, weight and vibration decrease operator fatigue
- Full-cover engine design reduces snagging on branches or other objects during operation
- Loop handle allows comfortable use

Circle 219 on reader service form

Galbreath Trailer Hoist

- Model AC2
- Cuts container-handling time in half
- Features a dual cable hoist system that enables the loading, transporting and unloading of containers in a single trip
- Eliminates the inconvenience of connecting and re-connecting
- Features Galbreath hoist technology
- Can accommodate most manufacturers' containers

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TerraMarc Load-n-Lift Hydraulic Trailers

- Ideal for a variety of low-clearance, compact and mobile equipment
- Completely lower deck to the ground for ease in loading/unloading

- Optional electric hydraulic or manual hand pump

for one-person operation

- Available in two models: single- and double-axle

- Deck widths range from 51 to 77 inches
- Designed for lifting, loading and hauling

Circle 221 on reader service form



Leyman LFS 900 Tail Lift

- Features convenient and safe lift gate technology
- 900-pound capacity
- Standard features include an aluminum platform, pump and motor and handheld remote control
- Has easy-to-operate mechanical system

Circle 222 on reader service form

Star Self-dumping Hopper

- Can be used with both straight-mast and extendable-reach forklifts
- Rugged, long-lasting hopper constructed of 3/16-inch steel plates



- Ideal for removing heavy materials
- Can be released to dump from the ground or operator's seat with a tug on the rope release
- Release handle also available
- Optional heavy-duty casters

Circle 223 on reader service form

Gandy Professional Aerators

- Family of core, knife and star-wheel aerators for various applications
- Model sizes range from 34 inches to 8 feet
- Large, professional models can be ordered with coring spoons or slicing knives
- Optional weight tray

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How to Price Landscape & Irrigation Projects

- Complete learning system written for the seasoned contractor or college classroom
- More than 600 pages, comprising 56 chapters
- Written by green industry consultant Jim Huston
- Step-by-step, hands-on guide provides a comparative analysis of the six most common estimating methods used today
- Complemented by a set of six audio CDs and a Microsoft Excel CD

Circle 225 on reader service form

DeWALT DC500 Wet-Dry Vacuum

- Cordless/corded portable wet-dry vacuum designed specifically for professional contractors
- Runs on battery packs or electrical outlet
- Wet/dry filter provides effective dust collection



- Two-gallon size
- Produces ample power to pick up drywall and concrete

dust, fasteners, water, sawdust, wood chips and other debris

- Battery and charger sold separately

Circle 226 on reader service form

PowerVac Collection Systems from Grasshopper

- Engineered especially for the MidMount Series
- Add no overall height to the mower while retaining maximum visibility
- Can vacuum, mulch or side discharge using the same deck for consistent, high-quality results
- Powered by right-hand spindle to eliminate noise and maintain auxiliary motor
- One person can easily remove the entire collection system in minutes

Circle 227 on reader service form

Yazoo/Kees Floating Deck Kutter Hydro

- Intermediate walk-behind mower
- Rear-engine design allows the unit to be very compact – only 70 inches
- Wide wheelbase and low center of

gravity make it extremely stable

- 48- and 52-inch decks available
- Patent-pending, foot-activated height adjustment system allows for varied cutting range without moving wheel motors or adjusting casters
- Options include a quick-detach 3-bushel grass catcher or 5-bushel leaf catcher

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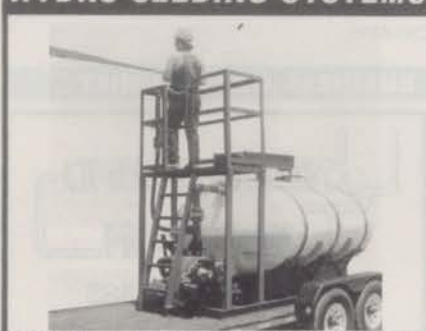
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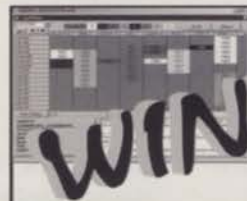
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How We Do It

Customer Appreciation Day at the Acres Group

This August, the Acres Group celebrated its 20th anniversary with a customer appreciation day at its Wauconda, Ill., facility. Our goal for the event was to show our customers, vendors and employees how important they are to our success.

Planning for the event began 10 months in advance. In late 2002, our senior staff sat down to determine some of the details. We wanted to set a date early in order to inform our employees and get the word out so our customers could mark their calendars. From previous experience at one of our nurseries, we learned that giving plenty of notice is crucial because people schedule vacations and meetings well in advance.

Before sending out invitations, we organized the staff into 12 committees that handled specific areas of the event. Each chairperson recruited two to seven other Acres employees to support their area of the party. For example, the children's area chairperson was responsible for coordinating a treasure hunt, face painting, balloon animals and the moonwalk. Throughout the planning, all three Acres' locations communicated frequently through phone calls and e-mails. That contact, along with some sit-down meetings, kept everyone informed of the event's progress.

Also important was having enough food for all the attendees. We brought in the world's largest transportable barbecue pit to attract more guests and ensure that


plenty of ribs, chicken and hot dogs were available. We also provided vegetable and fruit trays, popcorn, snowcones, a soda and water tent, and a more limited beer and margarita tent for the adults.

But the biggest hits at the event were features that any size company could have. On our "midway," we organized supervised skid-steer and zero-turn mower rides. Another popular area was the top 10 plants station, which featured the most popular shade trees, evergreens, perennials and ornamentals, and a knowledgeable staff to talk about the plant material. This area helped us secure many new sales from our clients.

Our total attendance was about 800 people including employees and their families, current and past customers, and several vendors. Our Executive Assistant Char Cobb handled two mass-mailings of more than 1,000 invitations. We sent one round of invitations about five months before the event and the other about two months out, so our guests wouldn't forget. Cobb kept track of RSVPs and called every invitee to confirm their attendance and answer questions.

During the event, senior staff members policed the crowd, supervised events and were prepared with first-aid in case of any accidents. All employees who worked at the event were compensated for their time, including the full day of set-up prior to the party and any time spent on clean-up afterward. To give employees a chance to have some fun as well, we required committee chairpeople to schedule their staff members in shifts.

Companies planning to host a customer appreciation day should expect to pay at least \$20 per guest in direct costs to cover food and entertainment. At Acres, we approached our vendors about pitching-in to cover some of the expense. We had five levels of sponsorship – diamond, platinum, gold, silver and bronze – so both small and large vendors were able to contribute. Acres highly values vendor relationships and those companies were happy to do something for us in return for years of loyal business. Our sponsors ultimately paid for about 90 to 95 percent of the cost of the event.

All of Acres' employees, vendors and customers grow with the company every year and the 20th anniversary party/customer appreciation day allowed us to show our sincere gratitude. – *Sherm Fields* 

The author is vice president of sales and marketing, Acres Group, Roselle, Ill., and can be reached at 630/307-0700.

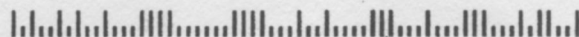
5 KEYS TO A *Customer Appreciation Day*

1. **Begin planning far in advance so all materials can be secured and guests have time to mark their calendars.**
2. **Develop committees to handle specific areas of the event and allow senior staff members or managers to find other employees to support those efforts.**
3. **Send two rounds of invitations to keep the event top-of-mind and initiate follow-up calls to answer questions.**
4. **Take the necessary safety measures to handle large crowds and potentially dangerous attractions.**
5. **Use the day to talk with your customers, vendors and employees to strengthen relationships and ensure loyalty throughout the organization.**



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- ☐ 3. Lawn Maintenance Contractor
- ☐ 4. Ornamental Shrub & Tree Service
- ☐ 5. Irrigation Contractor
- ☐ 6. Landscape Architect
- ☐ 7. Other Contract Services (please describe) _____

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- ☐ 15. Trade Association, Library
- ☐ Others (please describe) _____

2. What best describes your title?

- ☐ Owner, Pres., Vice Pres., Corp. Officer
- ☐ Manager, Director, Supt., Foreman
- ☐ Agronomist, Horticulturist
- ☐ Entomologist, Plant Pathologist
- ☐ Serviceman, Technician, Crew member
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3. What services does your business offer? (please check all that apply)

- ____ 1. Landscape Installation
- ____ 2. Landscape Maintenance
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- ____ 4. Mowing and related maintenance
- ____ 5. Irrigation Installation
- ____ 6. Irrigation Maintenance
- ____ 7. Turf pesticide application
- ____ 8. Ornamental/tree pesticide application
- ____ 9. Turf fertilization
- ____ 10. Ornamental/tree fertilization
- ____ 11. Tree Pruning
- ____ 12. Snow Removal
- ____ 13. Intiorscape
- ____ 14. Other _____
- ____ 15. Landscape Design

4. How many full-time (year-round) employees do you employ?

5. What year was your business founded? _____

6. What were your company's gross revenues for 2002?

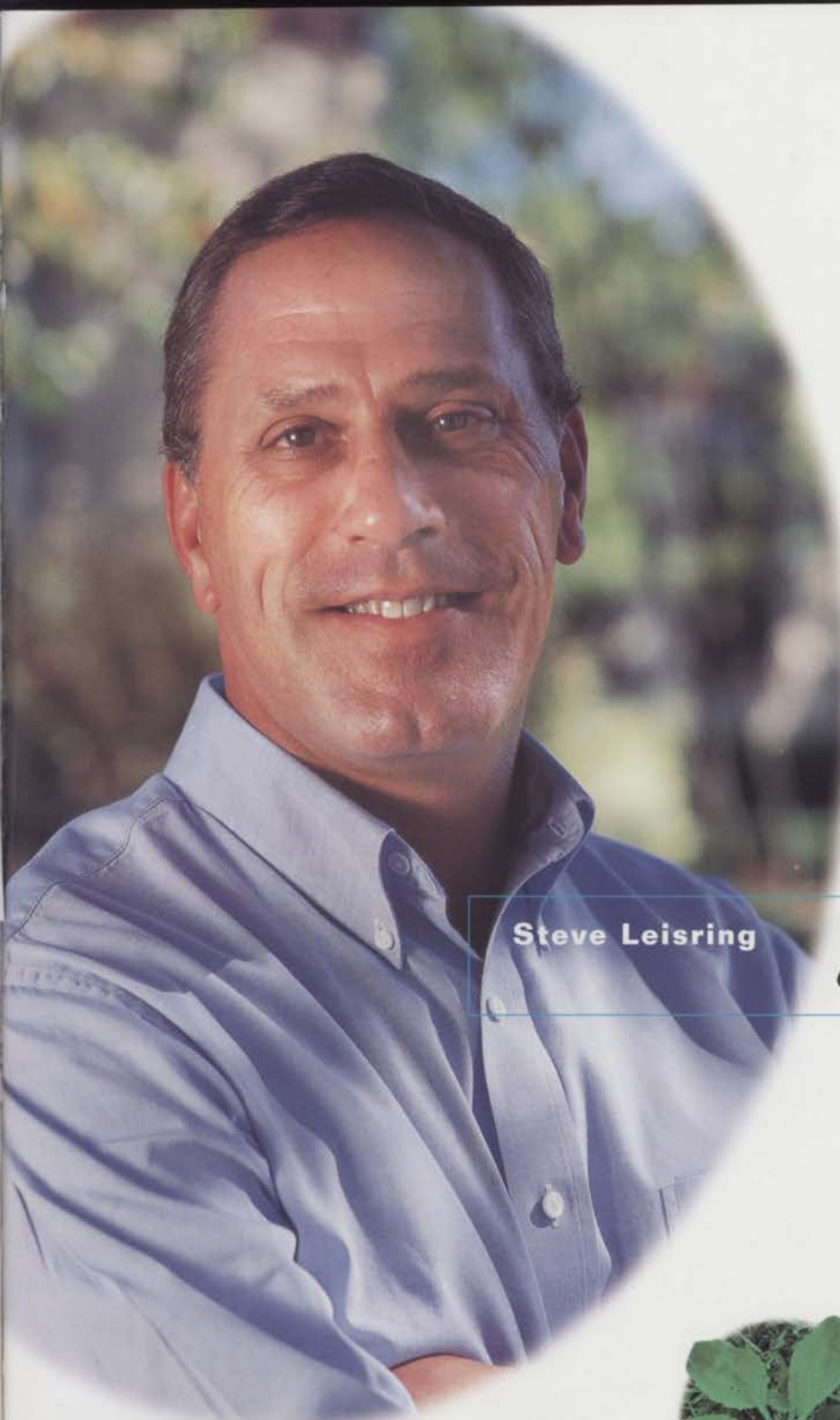
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7. Please indicate your approximate business mix:

- 1. Residential % _____
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Specify types _____

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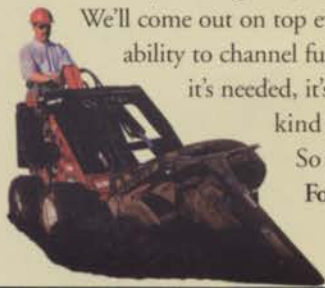
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Leadersh

Dear Lawn & Landscape Professionals:

We at Bayer Environmental Science are proud to be part of an industry that produces sterling leaders such as those profiled in the pages ahead. Leadership is a vital part of any industry, but particularly valuable to the turf and ornamental profession. Our industry faces a time of tremendous growth and expansion, yet one filled with many challenges in the years ahead.

Our goal at Bayer is to do everything we can to help you meet the challenges confronting you in terms of technical support,

product information, and end-user education. Toward this end, we've recently made some dramatic changes in our overall structure. In an effort to better serve the lawn and landscape/grounds maintenance industry, we have expanded and repositioned existing sales and marketing resources.

We have created a new national sales region dedicated to lawn and landscape/grounds maintenance professionals and headed by a separate sales manager. In addition, a key account manager will focus on certain headquarter lawn and landscape customers and coordinate support for branches.

Seven additional lawn and landscape representatives and a key accounts manager will join the three lawn and landscape sales representatives already in place: Jennifer Remsberg, Todd



Dan Carrothers

hip Defined

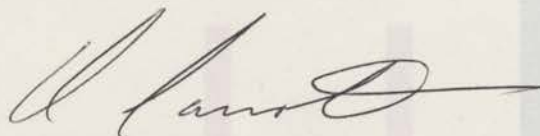
Himmelberger and Dave Ravel. Our people are our greatest assets. By concentrating on the lawn and landscape market, our sales representatives will magnify their ability to listen to our customers and address turf and ornamental opportunities and issues as they arise.

Additionally, we are continuing the highly successful programs that support you and your businesses: the Accolades rewards program, the Bayer Academy, and the Bayer Speakers Bureau, now updated with new offerings for 2004 (see pages 52 to 57).

Sometimes hard to define, leadership is often perceived as the ability to make a difference. The 2003 *Lawn & Landscape* Leadership Award winners have definitely made a difference in the lives of their customers and their communities. We at Bayer hope to make a difference in your professional lives, as well.

"Sometimes hard to define, leadership is often perceived as the ability to make a difference. The 2003 *Lawn & Landscape* Leadership Award winners have definitely made a difference in the lives of their customers and their communities. We at Bayer hope to make a difference in your professional lives, as well."

Best wishes for a successful year,



Dan Carrothers

Vice President

Chipco Professional Products

Bayer Environmental Science



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Grassroots

As America grew and evolved after World War II, the lawn care industry underwent a similar evolution.

The suburbanization of the U.S. following World War II is one of the primary factors that contributed to the rapid growth of the modern lawn care market.



Growth



The green industry is emerging from the market boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s. While this may have been the industry's first opportunity to attract the public's attention, it had already taken shape several years prior.

"The development of the lawn care and landscaping industry goes back as long as people deemed plant life acceptable," said Marty Erbaugh, chairman of the board, LESCO, Strongsville, Ohio.

The roots of this industry can be traced back to the practice of gardening in England and Europe centuries ago. An English gardener, John Davey, who had been landscaping cemeteries prior to the turn of the century, gets some of the credit for the public's acceptance of lawn care and landscaping.

From his early work at cemeteries, Davey was invited to tend to the lawns of estates. The impact of his work is still seen in the industry today. Davey Tree Company, created by John Davey in 1880, now has 90 offices across 43 of the United States and six Canadian provinces.

SUBURBANIZATION SPURS GROWTH. The suburbanization of America is one of the primary factors, which can be attributed to the rapid growth of the lawn care industry. Communities in what were rural and agrarian areas began to expand, resulting in residential developments.

In his book, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, author Joel Garreau summarized three waves of U.S. suburbanization following World War II.

1) Suburbanization: The post World War II era, when people moved their homes out of the traditional idea of what constituted a city.

2) The "mall of America": When people moved marketplaces near these new homes in the 1960s and 1970s. Then we wearied of returning downtown for the necessities of life, so we moved our marketplaces out to where we lived.

3) Job movement: The current trend to move place of employment to the suburbs.

Today, Garreau writes, we have moved our means of creating wealth, the essence of urbanism — our jobs — out

to where most of us have lived and shopped for two generations.

"There was a migration of urban dwellers to suburban communities in unprecedented numbers starting in the 1950s and 1960s," said Russ Frith, president and CEO, Lawn Doctor, Marlboro, N.J. "People now had lawns that were much bigger than anything they had in the city. All of these lawns needed to be mowed and trimmed, which was a boon for the industry."

Large front lawns are a uniquely American phenomenon. "Residents moving out to the suburbs stereotypically fit into the upper-and middle-income brackets," Erbaugh said. "This group, by and large, considered their landscape to be the principal feature of their property. A combination of available income and a deficit in leisure time resulted in a tremendous opportunity for the lawn and landscape industry."

Erbaugh noted that there were two distinct types of suburbanites — the do-it-yourself group and the do-it-for-me market. The focus of the green industry was to get the attention of the do-it-yourself homeowner and convince them that they could not only maintain their lawns more efficiently, but also for less money.

DUAL-INCOME FAMILIES. The emergence of the dual-income household had a significant impact on the lawn care market. The percentage of dual-income families has more than doubled in the last 25 years. In nearly 80 percent of households, both spouses work. With an increase in disposable income and a time crunch, the green industry has benefited.

"The service industry as a whole has expanded dramatically with the increase in dual-income households," Frith said. "There was increased pressure to create time for leisure opportunities. As a result, there was an increasing willingness to pay for services to help create this much sought after leisure time," Frith added.

"People look at taking care of their lawn as something they have to do, but aren't necessarily interested in doing themselves," said Bill Hoopes, director of Scotts

By Jason Parry



LawnService Training, Marysville, Ohio. "We showed them that we could do it better and less expensively than they could, while providing them more leisure time in the process."

AFFORDABILITY. Although the number of new suburbanites with higher incomes continues to increase, many believed lawn and landscape services were only for the upper class, not them. The green industry quickly addressed the perception problem.

"The public had initially viewed this service as one that was exorbitantly expensive," Frith said. "Once people began to notice that they were getting a fair value and did not have to devote the time to service their lawns, it immediately began to develop mass appeal."

By appealing to this segment of society, the green industry was able to expand its market share, ensuring a place in the evolving migration into the suburbs.



"As a result of consolidation, the industry itself became much more competitive with the focus on marketing and quality rather than referrals and price cuts." — Bill Hoopes

CONSOLIDATION. The growth of this industry resulted in profitability and growth among several of the industry's pioneers. None exemplified this better than TruGreen-ChemLawn.

ChemLawn has a lineage that started in the mid-1970s. The company originally started as a small private company created by Dick Duke in 1974 called ChemGreen, which became TruGreen in 1979 and shortly after settled into their corporate headquarters in East Lansing, Mich.

TruGreen became a partner in the ServiceMaster Quality Service Network in 1990 after being acquired by its parent company. Just two years later, TruGreen purchased ChemLawn making this business unit the nation's largest professional lawn care provider in the nation. This set the stage for future industry development — consolidation.

"The history of ChemLawn is the history of the lawn industry," Hoopes said. "ChemLawn set the standard right down to creating the equipment used."

Hoopes believed that the success experi-

enced by ChemLawn was largely due to their intense focus on quality service. ChemLawn had the first lawn care service research department, providing the green industry with useful insights. Scotts LawnService started its research division in 1997.

But there were other factors that contributed to ChemLawn's success. "ChemLawn did a tremendous job of consolidating the industry," Erbaugh said. "They narrowed the field of competitors and basically just outmarketed their competition."

Consolidation was an essential ingredient in the industry's growth. "Prior to 1980, there was an abundance of small unsophisticated companies with services ranging from good to terrible," Hoopes said. "As a result of consolidation, the industry itself became much more com-

petitive with the focus on marketing and quality rather than referrals and price cuts."

But consolidation just narrowed down the number of competitors. ChemLawn changed the way the industry marketed itself.

According to Hoopes, initially the focus was on securing referrals. In the newly populated suburban areas, this could be extremely beneficial to a company once it had secured a niche in a designated area.

ChemLawn went beyond this by exploring direct mail and telemarketing efforts, which resulted in huge pay-offs in throughout the 1980s. They stood above their competitors on the success of their marketing campaign. These marketing strategies eventually became the industry standard.

PLENTY TO GO AROUND. But TruGreen-ChemLawn was not the only company benefiting in the lawn care industry. In spite of three recessions and two "slow-downs," the industry's overall productiv-

ity and profitability did not slow. "Success of the lawn care industry happened in spite of business conditions," Hoopes said. "People wanted convenience and expertise. They saw the guy down the street getting his lawn done and said 'Do it for me too.'"

The increased demand resulted in new lawn care and landscaping service providers sprouting up all over the map. This offered to the industry an extended pool of prospective clients. The fervor of the industry threw many standard business practices right out the window. "The industry was growing so fast, we didn't care about sharing information," Erbaugh said. "It was definitely a great time to get into the lawn care business."

PROFESSIONALISM. The industry as a whole was growing by leaps and bounds in the latter half of the 1970s. Where this group would normally end up at trade shows designed for golf course superintendents, they now began to branch off. This led to the formation of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA).

Organized in 1979, PLCAA came about as a result of having suppliers talking about nothing but lawn care. This group needed different product tweaks and spoke an entirely different vernacular than the golf course superintendents. PLCAA helped to navigate the course for the evolution of this industry. The lawn care industry grew in tandem with PLCAA and the two groups got to enjoy the fruits of their labors as their first trade show came into focus in 1980 in Louisville, Ky.

ISSUES FOR CONTINUED GROWTH. The success of this industry was fueled by several key events. Suburbanization, the emergence of dual-income families and affordability of service are three of the central issues that have allowed the lawn care industry to not only sustain itself, but also remain profitable.

"At the end of the day, you are still selling leisure time and cosmetic appearance," Frith said. "By focusing on service and marketing ourselves correctly, we were able to capitalize on a worthwhile opportunity," he added.

The author is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee, Wis.

Through Their Eyes

Two prominent lawn care professionals share their thoughts on the market's evolution.

RUSS FRITH, President

Lawn Doctor, Marlboro, N.J.

With a bit of humor, Russ Frith admits that his entry into the lawn care had a humble beginning as a frustrated do-it-yourselfer.

It was 1978 when Frith bought his first home in the suburbs of Warminster, Pa., having spent all of his years as a city dweller. The first project for this new homeowner was the task of servicing his lawn. Not enjoying the success he had anticipated, Frith noticed a piece of direct mail hanging from his front door encouraging him to give Lawn Doctor a try. He did just that and the rest is history.

Having spent the previous seven years as the marketing manager at Cottman Transmissions, Frith was hired as the director of marketing with Lawn Doctor in 1978. Two years later he was promoted into the role of vice president, followed by an executive vice president title in 1980. It was 20 years ago that Frith took the reins of the company as president and CEO.

Serving as Lawn Doctor's chief since 1983, Frith has enjoyed his tenure while adapting to the dynamics of an ever-changing business. "There have been plenty of changes in the green industry," Frith said. "The level and intensity of competition and a significant increase in industry regulation have been two of the major changes we have dealt with."

Some of the greatest changes Frith has noticed during his term at Lawn Doctor include a heightened level of communication and understanding between levels of the green industry, increased care in the manner products are applied along with a greater level of professionalism.

Frith has seen this industry grow during its market boom in the late 1970s and early 1980s while maintaining its profitability as it ventures through the next century. The rationale behind this growth remains unchanged to Frith.

"The progression our society has made towards its focus on appearance coupled with the increase in dual-income households and the perception of affordability we offer has been a driving force behind our success," he said.

To maximize these opportunities, Frith believes the industry must continue to focus on becoming more efficient, on educating staff and clients on the services offered, utilize technology and more than anything, find means to provide the services customers are looking for.



MARTY ERBAUGH, Chairman

LESCO, Strongsville, Ohio

The green industry is in Marty Erbaugh's blood.

John Davey, the English gardener whose namesake is prevalent in the industry because of the Davey Tree Company, is the great grandfather of Erbaugh's wife.

While the relation may be a little distant, Erbaugh's connection to this industry is certainly not. Initially beginning his career in the green industry with Davey Tree in 1974, Erbaugh went on to develop the lawn division at Davey before moving on to create Lawnmark in 1978. It was a chance he couldn't pass up.

"The marketing opportunities that have presented themselves in this industry are amazing," Erbaugh said. "I knew this was a great time to get into the lawn care and landscaping business. I just couldn't pass this up."

The migration of citizens to the suburbs coupled with the emergence of the dual income family and the profitability of the lawn care and landscaping industry were the primary opportunities Erbaugh targeted. Recognizing these opportunities while with the Davey Tree Company, he was able to capitalize on these market conditions upon taking over the reins at Lawnmark.

His strategy at Lawnmark was fairly basic – be where ChemLawn wasn't.

"This business is driven by the cost of customer acquisition," Erbaugh said. "Get the attention of a homeowner and prove to them that you can service their lawn cheaper than they can do it themselves."

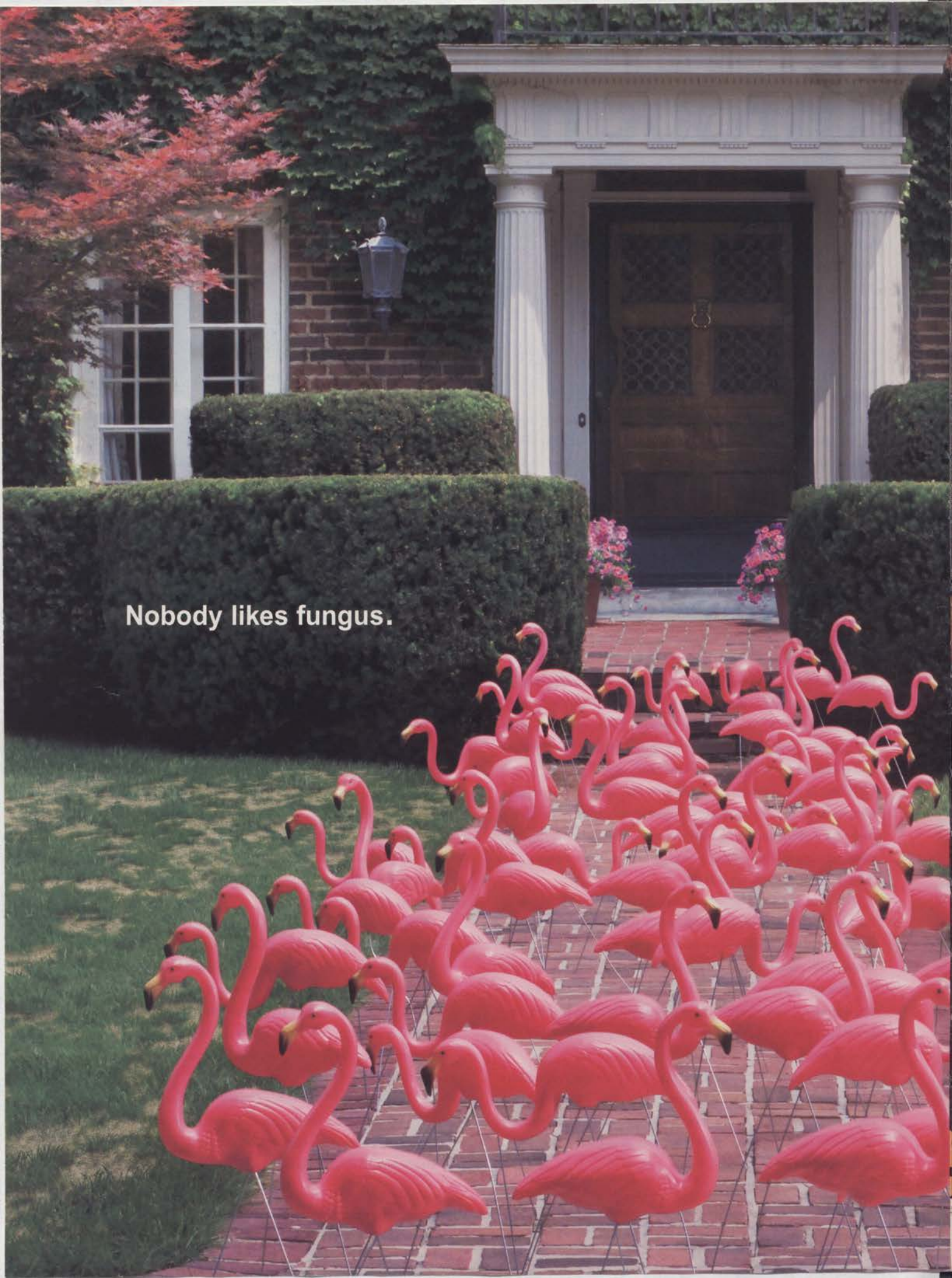
Erbaugh remained with Lawnmark until 1995 when he sold the company to Barefoot Grass. His long-time client status and relationship with LESCO presented a new opportunity as he joined the LESCO Board of Directors in 1995.

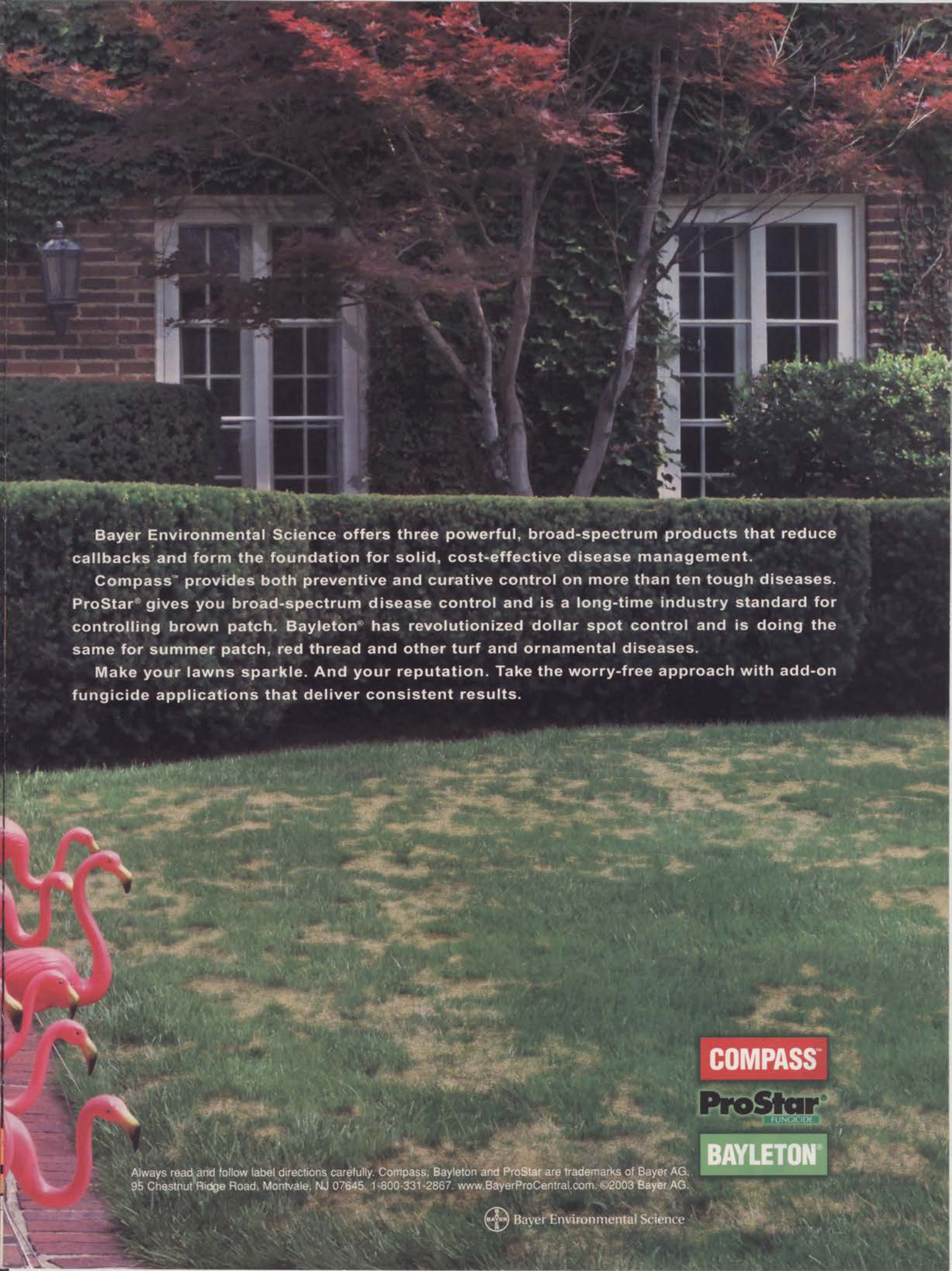
"The future is definitely bright for this industry," Erbaugh said. "We need to continue to differentiate our services from our competition by focusing on our service and the manner we provide it."

Erbaugh added "It is very comforting to know there is an anticipated demand for the products and services offered by this industry. The focus remains on customer service as your primary means of differentiating one company from the next."



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Years from now, a historical perspective of the legislative activities in the lawn care industry will be incomplete without a substantial amount of time devoted to the findings of the Canadian Supreme Court in June 2001. It was at that time in the historical context of the industry that it took perhaps its greatest blow. Municipalities throughout Canada have the right to ban the residential use of pesticides, all based on the argument that pesticides are a danger to the public's health and should not be used for aesthetic use on people's lawns.

But what effect would this have on the industry? This issue would not be limited to Canada. Legislation in New York state is being considered that would give the state the same rights as Canadian municipalities.

The lawn and landscape industry has long been fraught with the acts and ordinances of federal, state and local governments. Through it all, the industry has remained relatively unscathed and profitable.

"There is a positive outlook about the future even with the legislative issues," stated Richard Lehr, general council, Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA), Marietta, Ga. "There continues to be an increase in the number of people getting into this industry proving the regulations have not been a deterrent."

FIFRA. A direct link to the industry's current legislative battles dates back more than 50 years to 1947 and the implementation of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA).

FIFRA, and its subsequent amendment, the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), began a chain reaction of pesticide regulation in the United States. With FIFRA's implementation, states had the means to regulate the use of pesticides, while local governments were initially powerless.

"Each state regulating the use of pesticides ultimately resulted in stiffer laws and regulations for the green industry," said John Buechner, director of technical services, Lawn Doctor, Marlboro, N.J., and director of

PLCAA's government affairs committee. "Once this began to cross boundaries into the

arena of local governments, it further differentiated the laws we needed to abide by," Buechner added. Local governments gained regulatory power in June 1991 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Wisconsin Public Intervenor v. Mortier*. That decision gave local governments the same leeway as state governments in regulating pesticide usage.

Each of these rulings impacted both the lawn care industry and the turf it aimed to protect. Industry experts cited an inability to effectively control pests resulting in a general decline in property and land value.

"The industry does what it needs for compliance and does what it needs to do to continue to be a growing and profitable industry," Lehr said.

INDUSTRY OPPONENTS. In the meantime, the anti-pesticide advocates became more vocal in their stance against the lawn care industry.

In 1989, "Keep off our grass" was the rally cry voiced against the lawn care industry by Ralph Nader and his public citizen coalition. While it may have been the loudest initial cry from the public to that point, it was only the beginning.

"Any time you have situations like this, it raises the public's awareness of a perceived issue in the industry," Buechner said. "Many times, the effect of this is more groups get on board and start to come after you."

This cry, along with many others, were primarily focused on one issue – the perceived toxicity of the products used by the lawn care industry. This was brought to the forefront by Senators Joe Lieberman of Connecticut and Harry Reid of Nevada in a report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1990 titled, "Lawn Care Pesticides: Risks Remain Uncertain While Prohibited Safety Claims Continue."

This GAO Report questioned how the industry was regulated and claimed products were not adequately registered. A debate naturally arose.

"The claimed toxicity of these products has little relationship with the diluted material used by the industry," stated Tom Delaney, director of government affairs, PLCAA, Marietta, Ga. "These claims by the opposition are simply listed common symptoms of acute poisoning not from labeled use."

By Jason Parry

An Era of L



*Today's
lawn care
market is
telling its
side of the
legislative
story.*

egislation



ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS. While adverse effects on personal health and safety have been the central foundation of the anti-pesticide community cause, more recently the focus has included claims about the environment.

"Many of the benefits people enjoy from their lawn and landscaped areas are the byproduct of a healthy lawn and the use of pesticides," said Richard Lehr, general counsel to PLCAA.

The golf industry was also challenged by claims that the environment was being impacted as a result of the placement and maintenance practices of golf courses.

Water use was another issue brought to the forefront by environmentalists. Athletic fields have come under attack for their purported excessive use of water. This came to a head in Aurora, Colo., where events were being cancelled due to the terrible shape of playing fields – an effect of the increased pressure on water usage. Even the use of lawnmowers and blowers were being scrutinized as a source of excessive air and noise pollution.

"We need to continue and illustrate the value of good turf and a well maintained landscape," said Norm Goldenberg, vice president of governmental and public affairs, TruGreen-Chemlawn. "Good science illustrates its importance and how it plays a role in preventing erosion and storm water run-off."

Phosphorous run-off in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area was the next issue on the agenda. Phosphorous fertilizer was banned in this area because it was deemed unsafe for water resources. This thought process trickled down to Dane County in Wisconsin where similar regulations were proposed.

EVERGREEN FOUNDATION. It was with change in mind that the PLCAA's Research and Education Foundation evolved to the Evergreen Foundation and the Evergreen Foundation Advocacy Council (EFAC).

EFAC is a coalition of green industry end-user associations, suppliers/distributors, media companies and others. The group's

basic purpose is to unite green industry organizations to develop a national marketing campaign to promote the economic and environmental value of healthy, well-maintained green spaces.

"EFAC will focus on the benefits of well maintained green space," Delaney said. "It will stress the value of well maintained green space to the environment and to the economy."

The EFAC will consider advertising, public relations, public affairs and other tactics to tell the positive story of the environmental and economic value of well-



"We just need to keep telling our story and portraying the benefits of good turf management and the importance of maintaining our nation's landscape." — Norm Goldenberg

maintained green space. The group is in the process of fund raising to create a national publicity push to generate positive attention for the industry.

"I think [EFAC] can have a positive impact on the industry and the public," Lehr said. "The plans appear to be very positive. This endeavor has gained a great deal of support."

The council aims to ensure the environmental and economic responsibility and right of Americans to preserve and beautify America's green spaces at home, at work and at play. Additionally, the group has focused on guaranteeing the economic viability and vitality of the green industry suppliers and end user companies that exist in America.

Indeed recently the foundation announced it had reached its initial fundraising goal of \$200,000.

"We know people value what we are doing in the green industry," Delaney said. "The lawn care industry sector has historically been depression proof. But the entire green industry has shown growth as the National Gardening survey has shown again this year."

The work of the pest management in-

dustry will serve as a model for EFAC. For starters, both industries work under similar restrictions. The pest management industry has recently been portrayed in a positive light as they rally behind the insurgence of such diseases as the West Nile Virus. EFAC hopes to model its early publicity efforts after this group.

MARKETING RESTRAINTS. In addition to environmental challenges, the emergence of no-call lists may make telemarketing a challenge as well.

"There is a general concern that the changes this industry is being forced to undergo could change certain marketing practices," Buechner said. "Ultimately, we may be forced to look at new ways to advertise and market our business." This goes beyond just contacting a potential client on the phone. Permission must now be obtained prior to faxing your own customers. Direct mail appears to be next on the list making one wonder how the industry will market its services.

"We're back to the day of vacuum salesmen going door-to-door to solicit business," Delaney said. "It has gotten to the point that the Internet is the last bastion of salesmanship."

While this vehicle has been left alone, there is not a lot of optimism that the Internet will continue to be unregulated. "As with any service industry, there is general concern," Lehr said. "It depends on the outcome. There's a concern of limiting the means by which we market our services."

Legislative activity is nothing new to lawn care. In spite of this, there continues to be an optimistic outlook for the industry's future. "The industry is going to be under a constant microscope due to the activities of the anti-pesticide activists and to those that don't understand the benefits of its use," Goldenberg said. "We just need to keep telling our story and portraying the benefits of good turf management and the importance of maintaining our nation's landscape."

The author is a freelance writer based in Milwaukee, Wis.



An Eye On The Issues

A migration to the suburbs along with a marked increase in dual-income households directly correlate with the market boom experienced by the green industry during the late 1970s and early 1980s. These high levels of productivity began to cool as the industry made its way through the late 1990s and into the next century.

From 1998 to 2000, the industry saw its last double-digit growth rates. The housing boom, a vigorous economy and aging baby boomers were all contributing factors. A record number of homeowners provided more properties in need of the green industry's services. The standard of living afforded to people by a lively economy rendered this a readily affordable service. Finally, an aging population with a sizable portion of disposable income and interest in spending their time participating in endeavors other than yardwork, made hiring someone to handle these services an attractive option.

While growth has continued into the new millennium, the rates have not reached the exorbitant levels of the last boom. Analysts at

By Jason Parry

*Issues that
will shape the
lawn care
industry in the
years to come.*

As the baby boomer generation age and their wealth grows, they will continue to look into the green industry for maintaining their landscapes.





MarketResearch.com foresee a slow-growth economy and rising costs for lawn care and landscape services combining to soften growth rates for services over the next five years.

There are several issues over the next five to 10 years that must be managed for the industry to maintain its growth.

LABOR. The availability of qualified labor is one of the greatest issues that the green industry will continue to face. The possibility of restrictions being placed on the H2B program threatens the availability of manpower.

The H2B program allows companies to bring in workers from outside the United States. These workers are provided the opportunity to work with their employer in the U.S. for three years usually in nine-month increments. While there are approximately 66,000 visas issued as part of this program, those within the industry fear that this program may see devastating changes.

"There is a concern that [the government] may place a cap on the number of

workers brought in under the H2B program with the ultimate result being that some companies might get cut out entirely," said John Gibson, Swingle Tree and Lawn Care, Denver, Colo. "The difficulties arise where we can't find the quality

of people we want to bring in." Gibson fears that his company will be one that is cut out entirely from this program. Because he estimates approximately 15 percent of his workforce is employed under H2B program, it would have devastating effects on his ability to serve his clientele.

Craig Regelbrugge, senior director of government relations, American Nursery and Landscape Association (ANLA), Washington, D.C., estimates that more than half of the agricultural and landscape workforce likely lacks the proper authorization to work in the United States. The green industry must enhance legislators' awareness of the potential risks in limiting the use of the H2B program.

AGING POPULATION. Aging baby boomers will have a positive impact on the green industry. As boomers age and their wealth grows, they will continue to look to the green industry for additional services. They view quality lawns and top-notch landscaping as an expected privilege. With increasing demand on their leisure time, boomers will opt to have others service their lawns and maintain their landscapes.

"Expectations of the green industry are high among the baby boomer," said Rick Beard, executive vice president, Massey Services, Inc., Maitland, Fla. "This group wants golf course quality turf and landscaping, but does not typically want to take care of their own lawns."

As the boomer population continues to



2003: Here and Now

It hasn't been a steady year, but 2003 is looking like the year when solid industry growth resumes. According to *Lawn & Landscape* magazine's 2003 *State of the Industry Report*, rising health insurance costs and poor weather seem to be the most common obstacles contractors faced. The positive news is that contractors see the slow growth and uncertainty of 2001 and 2002 dissipating.

"This is a better year for us than the last two years," said Paul Wagner, owner, Masters Green, Walled Lake, Mich. "I see the economy turning around most definitely." Though growth seems to be gaining momentum, 2003 has been a year of ups and downs, particularly due to weather in the first few months.

Mark Schlossberg, president, Pro-Lawns-Plus, Baltimore, Md., said his season got off to an uneven start. A snow melt in January allowed earlier than normal fertilization, then rains pushed sales back to April. In May, company sales were the highest ever for that month. In early March, 59 percent of contractors surveyed as part of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine's 2003 *State of the Industry Report* said spring 2003 weather was worse than last spring, putting them behind schedule. By the end of May, however, excessive rain had cleared in some regions and 75 percent of contractors were reporting a better first half of 2003 compared to the first half of 2002.

"New sales were sluggish and cancellations were higher than anticipated. But we are seeing an improvement this summer. We have been in a recession but I really think we are seeing the end of it," said Tim Doppel, president, Atwood LawnCare, Sterling Heights, Mich.

grow and their incomes remain readily accessible, the lawn care and landscape industry will look to this group to grow their clientele.

"Opportunities are arising where larger numbers of people are getting into the age and economic group that we service," Gibson said. "They want people to service their lawns while they enjoy their time doing other things."

PRICE VS. SERVICE. Many consumers are driven by cost, not quality. Focusing on quality service will be essential to the success of the lawn care industry in the years to come. "Lawn care service becomes a commodity that people buy strictly for price," Beard said. "We have to work to avoid that."

According to Beard, the industry will have to continue to build relationships with its customers, helping understand the distinction between a low-cost provider and a service-oriented provider.

CONSOLIDATION. The late 1990s saw the lawn care industry's collective head spinning with the rapid rate of consolidation enveloping the industry. Spearheaded by the aggressive nature of TruGreen-ChemLawn, the consolidation activity shook up the industry as a whole.

"Consolidation is an evolving issue in our industry," Gibson said. "It is the evolution of business when new players are brought into this field to help fill the middle ground vacated by those companies that get purchased."

Although the industry has seen its share of consolidation, Gibson believes that more consolidation will be seen in the future.

Although the consolidation rate has slowed, it will continue to be a subtle factor in the future of the industry on the state and local level.

TECHNOLOGY. Technology continues to have an unprecedented impact on the ways in which we communicate and the efficiency of our work. The green industry has also benefited from its effects.

"We have to find ways to become more productive without raising the costs to the consumer," Beard said. "There will be a point where they just won't pay anymore. An increased use of technology will allow

us to keep these costs down, in turn benefiting our clientele."

While the products used by the industry have become slightly more advanced, the services offered by the lawn care industry remains relatively unchanged.

"The actual product is basically the same," Gibson said. "The improvements in the manner in which we deliver our customary services have seen incredible improvements."

More specifically, Gibson said the increased use of GIS systems and handhelds, the ability to text message your workers while they are out completing their routes and the cutback in administrative work alleviated by a greater acceptance of the role of technology in the green industry have changed the way the industry works.

"People are really starting to see more of the value by increased use of technology," Gibson stated.

"Our industry is really starting to take notice of how these pieces of equipment really help to speed up the process by which we offer our services," Gibson added.

His colleagues echo Gibson's sentiments.

"The use of handhelds and additional computer reports to our consumers continues to grow," Beard said. "Through the use of these handhelds, we know have software programs that do the mapping and handle a lot of the administrative work for our staff."

The elimination of administrative duties is one of the greatest benefits of this new technology cited by Beard. A reduction in administrative duties translates to reduced overhead expenses which can be passed along in increased savings for the consumer.

LEGISLATION. The legislative arena in the green industry is as dynamic as it has ever been. For example, in the landscape market, the industry continues to battle with the ramifications of water usage and restrictions on marketing activities.



"The actual product is basically the same. The improvement in the manner in which we deliver our customary services have seen incredible improvements."

— John Gibson, Swingle Tree and Lawn Care, Denver Colo.

"We have to do a better job in showing the benefits of this industry," Gibson said. "People don't understand the value of the environment that is created by regulated use of pesticides. We as an industry need to spend more time promoting the positive things that are being done rather than defending our actions." He added, "If people live in a world without pesticides, they will ultimately realize how much they valued the benefits of regulated pesticide usage."

The industry has begun to take a proactive stance in reshaping the public's attitude with the creation of the Evergreen Foundation Advocacy Council (EFAC).

EFAC is a coalition of green industry end-user associations, suppliers/distributors, media companies and others. The group's basic purpose is to unite green

industry organizations to develop a national marketing campaign to promote the economic and environmental value of healthy, well-maintained green spaces. (See *An Era of Legislation*, p. 14.)

ISSUES TO COME. Like any market segment, the lawn care industry has a number of key issues it must address to continue to improve and expand the market for its services. What's more, like any business, issues not yet foreseen are surely waiting around the corner.

Those companies that best anticipate these issues and challenges and use them as opportunities are sure to be the winning companies long term.

The author is a freelance contributor based in Milwaukee, Wis.



Leadersh

Former winners of a Lawn & Landscape/Bayer Environmental Science Leadership Award share their thoughts on leadership.



SAM FARISON
Farison Lawn
Care Inc.
Louisville, Ky.
Leadership Class
of 2002

Most all of us have the qualities and ability within us to become a successful leader at some level. Leadership is the ability to provide others the direction, the tools, and the knowledge to be successful at reaching a common goal.

Good leadership has an open line of communication and listens to the ideas of others while allowing their input into the decision making process.

Simply put — good leadership is the cultivation of the positive qualities in others and instilling the confidence for their success.



TOM DELANEY
PLCAA
Marietta, Ga.
Leadership Class
of 2002

Leaders can be born or they can be taught. From an early age we observe children at play with the ability to be leaders or followers. Many remain in those roles throughout life. Others can acquire the quality of leadership through training or by life experiences.

Leadership can come from groups like the U.S. Armed Services, the FFA, college, good companies and associations like PLCAA. However, people who are just leaders can be void of leadership qualities.

Leadership goes further than just telling someone what to do. Leadership also must be practiced. People that exhibit good leadership qualities are unselfish, they have teacher-like qualities and integrity. They care about something enough to want to share it and have others become as good or better than they are. Also, leaders continue to be good role models. I feel individuals who have been chosen for this award exhibit those important characteristics.



GARY LASCALEA
GroGreen Lawn, Tree
& Shrub Care
Plano, Texas
Leadership Class of
2001

Leadership is not a short simple term to define. It is a very broad term that encompasses many skills and characteristics. I believe the characteristics of any leader must include the ability to be decisive, provide and generate enthusiasm, encourage and empower creativity and demonstrate care and concern for others. Likewise, a leader must have courage and energy, be able to correct and adjust priorities, and most importantly to ensure that all of a leader's behavior is carried out with the highest level of ethics and integrity.

A leader in our industry must especially be a role model with respects to ethics. It is too easy for a leader to ignore doing the right things right.

Are we always demonstrating a concern for the environment, performing our services with the highest degree or professionalism? Are we allowing or directing our people to perform services under questionable weather, or providing a service to a customer that is unwarranted and only a revenue generator?

True leaders consider what's best for the customer, the community and the company, and then do it.

hip Defined



KURT KLUZNIK
Yardmaster Inc.
Painesville, Ohio
Leadership Class of 2001

Leaders are champions of a cause. That cause could be accomplishing a clear objective like building a project, or providing a nurturing environment for their family, or organizing a group of volunteers. Whatever the cause, the leader is the one with the deepest passion, understanding and sense of purpose and the person responsible for setting the tone. Leaders shape the destiny of the group they lead, be it a business, an organization or a family.

Trust is paramount to being a successful leader. In order to enlist and inspire others and foster collaboration there must be trust. In leadership your actions are magnified and there is a certain responsibility that your actions are consistent with your words.

Good leaders let others take credit for the successes and readily step up to take responsibility for failures.

Leadership requires being in the forefront at times but some of the most important work of a leader is done in the background by enabling others, challenging the process, picking good people and getting out of their way.

Leaders currency is influence. They influence and are influenced by the ones they lead. Communication and clarity, consistency and commitment and encouragement are important characteristics of good leadership.



ADAM JONES
Massey Services
Maitland, Fla.
Leadership Class of 2001

If you were to ask 10 different people what leadership is you would likely get 10 different responses. But if you were to listen closely you would see common characteristics that mark effective leaders.

- They tend to be thoughtful.
- They are outwardly confident even when they are unsure.
- They instill confidence in those around them by being level headed and responsible during a crisis.
- They show genuine concern over the welfare of the team.
- They tell you the truth about your performance no matter how tough it might be to listen to it.
- They show you how to behave not just tell you how to behave.
- They have a strong sense of urgency and can get others to react quickly.
- They are organized and self-disciplined.
- They treat people as individuals and leverage the skills of each team member for the benefit of the team.

The ultimate test of effective leadership is the result of leaders influence over the people around them. As leaders we will all be ultimately measured by results. The performance of the people we hire, train, develop and promote to leadership positions of the future will determine if we are effective leaders.

When you get a chance, think about those people in your life that you consider great leaders and you will likely see the results of that leadership reflected in the people around them. My guess is that you will be one of those people.



BARRY TROUTMAN
ValleyCrest Cos.
Calabasas, Calif.
Leadership Class of 2002

Great leaders don't need to be the best, the fastest or the strongest but they do need to communicate a clear vision of a great plan for success. This vision defines the work to be done, the way customers and other workers should be treated and the benefits to those who perform to high standards. This vision is so clear and logical that the leader's ideas accompany each employee as they perform their daily tasks. When this happens the leader's vision drives the team to react properly to challenges they encounter.

2003
LEADERSHIP
WINNERS

Leadership

Since 1999, the *Lawn & Landscape* Leadership Awards, sponsored by Bayer Environmental Science, have been presented annually to green industry professionals who uphold the highest standards of industry ethics and personal integrity.

This prestigious award celebrates the dedication and contribution these individuals make to the betterment of our industry. Their leadership provides us with a beacon by which to pattern our work.

The 2003 Leadership Award recipients join an illustrious group of professionals and will forever be remembered in the green industry's history.



Honor Roll



JOHN BUECHNER
Lawn Doctor
Holmdel, N.J.



TERRY KURTH
Weed Man
Middleton, Wis.



TOM DELANEY
PLCAA
Marietta, Ga.



JOE REYNOLDS
Black Diamond
Lawn Care
Toledo, Ohio



SAM FARISON
Farison Lawn
Care Inc.
Louisville, Ky.



BARRY TROUTMAN
ValleyCrest Cos.
Calabasas, Calif

The Class of 2002

The Class of 2001



DALE AMSTUTZ
Northern Lawns Corp.
Omaha, Neb.



TOM BLAND
Bland Landscaping
Co., Inc.
Cary, N.C.



BILL HOOPES
Scotts LawnService
Marysville, Ohio



BRUCE HUNT
The Brickman Group
Long Grove, Ill.



ADAM JONES
Massey Services
Maitland, Fla.



KURT KLUZNIK
Yardmaster Inc.
Painesville, Ohio



SAM LANG
Fairway Green
Lawn Care
Raleigh, N.C.



GARY LASCALEA
GroGreen Lawn, Tree &
Shrub Care
Plano, Texas



BETH SEME
Elizabeth A. Seme Inc.
Latham, N.Y.



JOSEPH VARGAS, Ph.D.
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Mich.

The Class of 2000



BOB ANDREWS
The Greenskeeper
Carmel, Ind.



GARY CLAYTON
All Green
Marietta, Ga.



RUSSELL FRITH
Lawn Doctor
Holmdel, N.J.



RON KUJAWA
Kujawa Enterprises
Cudahy, Wis.



TOM LIED
Lied's Landscape Design
& Development
Sussex, Wis.



GEORGE MORRELL
The Morrell Group
Atlanta, Ga.



LINDA NOVY
Gardeners' Guild
San Rafael, Calif.



J. LANDON REEVE
Chapel Valley
Landscape
Woodbine, Md.



WAYNE RICHARDS
Cagwin & Dorward
Novato, Calif.

The Class of 1999



LAURIE BROCCOLO
Broccolo Tree &
Lawn Care
Rochester, N.Y.



**DAVEY
TREE INSTITUTE**
Kent, Ohio



TIM DOPPEL
Atwood Lawn Care
Sterling Heights, Mich.



PHIL FOGARTY
Crowley's Vegetation
Management
Cleveland, Ohio



**NORMAN
GOLDENBERG**
TruGreen-ChemLawn
Memphis, Tenn.



DAVE HANSON
ValleyCrest Cos.
Calabasas, Calif.



**MICHAEL
KERNAGHAN**
The Weed Man
Mississauga, Ontario



MARK SCHLOSSBERG
Pro-Lawns-Plus
Baltimore, Md.



CHRIS SENSKE
Senske Tree &
Lawn Care
Kennewick, Wash.



TOM TOLKACZ
Swingle Tree &
Lawn Care
Denver, Colo.

Class of 2003

Bayer Environmental Science and *Lawn & Landscape* magazine are proud to announce the winners of the fifth annual Leadership Awards. These individuals embody the essence of leadership, whether it's in their tireless industry involvement, pioneering spirit, dedication to education, commitment to personal improvement or environmental stewardship. Congratulations and thanks for your outstanding contributions to the lawn and landscape industry.



MARTY **ERBAUGH**
LESCO Inc.
Strongsville, Ohio



GERALD **GROSSI**
Arborlawn Inc.
Lansing, Mich.



TOM **HOFER**
Spring-Green
Lawn Care
Plainfield, Ill.



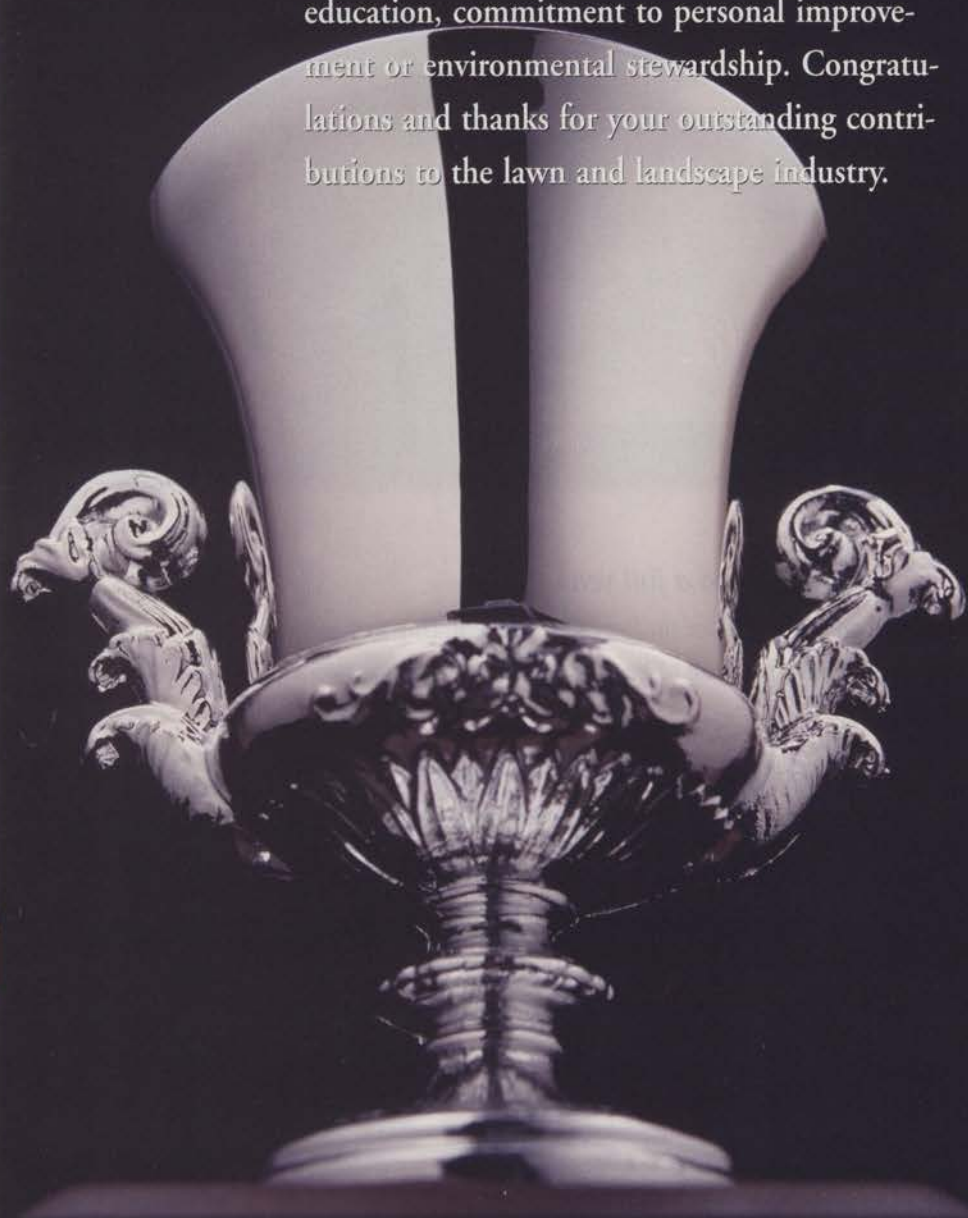
CHRIS **LEMCKE**
Weed Man USA
Scarborough,
Ontario



BILL
LEUENBERGER
The Chalet
Wilmette, Ill.



CHUCK **MCINTIRE**
Scotts LawnService
Norcross, Ga.





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WINNER
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2002

9
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Forget about mole crickets, too. And, the active ingredient in Chipco TopChoice (fipronil) is more than just a top-notch fire ant product. It's also the world's best mole cricket control. So while your fire ant problem is fading away, your mole crickets will be too.

Don't be burned again by fire ant treatments that are more trouble than they're worth. Choose something different. Really different.

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chipco®
topchoice™



Profile

NAME: Marty Erbaugh

COMPANY: LESCO

LOCATION: Strongsville, Ohio

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Founded Lawnmark in 1978 and grew it to 80,000 customers in six states before selling it to Barefoot Grass in 1995
- True entrepreneur, starting 14 different businesses to date including banking, bottled water, real estate and recreation
- Chairman of the Board, LESCO
- Active participant in the formation of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America; served as second president of PLCAA
- Earned law degree from Case Western Reserve University

*Marty Erbaugh's
leadership lessons
have proved
immeasurable.*

A

An entrepreneur in every sense of the word, Marty Erbaugh has been a leader in the professional lawn and landscape industry since the early days of lawn care.

Operating both within and outside of the lime-light, Marty Erbaugh has passionately yet quietly built a career, helped to launch an association and developed a penchant for starting new businesses.

It's easy to believe that Erbaugh has the magic touch when it comes to leadership and business. But he's modest when it comes to talking about his success.

"I think fundamentally it's not necessarily being the smartest or the most innovative," Erbaugh said. "But if you blend certain people skills with the ability to identify an opportunity...things happen."

Erbaugh began his career in the professional lawn and landscape industry with The Davey Tree Expert Co. in 1973 after graduating with a law degree from Case Western Reserve University. He researched Davey's entry into lawn care, and ultimately became general manager of the lawn division.

After five years at Davey, the entrepreneurial bug bit and he founded Erbaugh Corp. dba Lawnmark in 1978. Lawnmark was easily considered one of the first large and successful lawn care companies outside of the "old" ChemLawn. At its peak, Lawnmark served 80,000 customers in six states before selling to Barefoot Grass in 1995.

Since selling his business, Erbaugh has kept his hand in the lawn and landscape marketplace by consulting and serving on various industry boards of directors including Barefoot Grass.

LESCO, where Erbaugh currently serves as chairman of the board, is a solid example of an organization that in its infancy cleared the way in an untapped service business.

"Jim (Fitzgibbon) had the original idea that there has to be a better way to distribute product to the golf industry," he said. "They were also perceptive enough to see that maybe they could participate in the growing lawn care business."

LESCO's strength is clearly distribution. Basic systems are in place and Erbaugh is working with the management team there to grow distribution throughout key service markets.

Erbaugh enjoys stepping into existing businesses, analyzing opportunities and recommending plans of



By Cindy Code

Marty Erbaugh



Chairman of the board, industry veteran, Marty Erbaugh, lends his business acumen and deep market knowledge of the professional lawn and landscape industry to the new management team at LESCO. Photo: Roger Mastroianni.

action. But his real passion has been in developing new business.

His entrepreneurial pursuits include banking, bottled water, real estate and recreation.

LEADERSHIP LESSONS. In business, maintaining a clear focus on strengths and weaknesses is critical. Vision, persistence and implementation of a specific strategy over time are key.

Lesson number one: Erbaugh's "simple" idea to create a new bank stemmed from the need for a good community bank in Hudson, Ohio. The plan was to service the "devil" out of its customers and take banking back to the days of "Mayberry."

"We started it because we thought it was a great idea. It took us five years of losses to recognize that we didn't know

anything about the banking business, but we still believed in the idea," he recalled. "We finally hired the right team of people who knew banking and could execute the plan. Today it's growing like a rocket."

Erbaugh attributes the bank's growth to persistence that drives all of his pursuits.

"I've seen too many people kill off a good idea because they didn't have the money, because their wife couldn't stand the idea any longer or for health reasons," he said. "If they had just held out for another 18 months they would have seen it come to fruition."

Lesson number two: Two years before the famous meeting in Cincinnati that officially launched PLCAA (the Professional Lawn Care Association of America), the same nucleus of people got together when they recognized that they had more

to gain by organizing a lawn care group rather than trying to hold side meetings at golf events.

"As an industry, we didn't recognize that we were growing yet. It was really a buying issue, and trying to get the attention of suppliers that was motivating our focus," Erbaugh said. "It was five years from the time we had the original idea to the point we had the first trade show. So, in regards to leadership, I think it is more like risk taking. Looking at entrepreneurial leadership, there is a risk profile there."

Lesson number three: When Erbaugh started Lawnmark, he saw the movement toward dry fertilizer – vs. liquids – being accepted in the marketplace.

His primary strategy was to establish an operation in every city where ChemLawn wasn't a possibility.



**"If you blend certain people
skills with the ability to identify an
opportunity...things happen."
— Marty Erbaugh**

"We had no real geographic sense of where we opened a new operation. So, mistake or not, I didn't want to go to Chicago. To be competitive, I decided on Rochester, N.Y.; Portland, Maine; and Burlington, VT," he recalled. "It worked out. We got in there, got a huge share of a relatively small market and we were market leaders. We had a philosophy that the trucks would look the same in each of those cities, but the businesses stood on their own management, marketing and pricing strategies. It worked really well."

LEADERSHIP SKILLS. Believing firmly that the people you manage are directly reflective of your leadership ability, Erbaugh has always sought to develop his people.

"As long as you absolutely believe in your vision – and it's a sensible vision – and you're persistent in developing good people; all of a sudden an idea becomes an organization. It becomes a company," he said enthusiastically.

Erbaugh claims he inherited his leadership attributes from both his grandfather and father who both established successful independent business practices – one in fertilizer manufacturing, the other in the medical field. Additionally, his mother's father and his wife's father had flourishing independent businesses as well.

"I was around the influences in my life that supported those (entrepreneurial) instincts. I didn't grow up with people working for larger organizations. So after college I never thought about going to work for a corporation," Erbaugh said.

When Erbaugh launched his career at Davey, he said his goal was to learn the business and then go do something for himself. He held true to that dream.

"When you start businesses – I've started 14, some of them have been great winners and some of them have been great losers –

it takes a certain stomach to risk doing that work," he added.

He credits his wife, Lynne, for supporting and contributing to his career.

Lynne, like Marty, grew up in the same kind of entrepreneurial environment. In fact, her family founded Davey Tree. The two were married at the age of 22 and today have three, adult daughters. Together, the couple made the decision to start Lawnmark.

"What became a successful business in the early days was tough, and her role was supportive," he said. "I've seen that equation many times; often causing the relationship not to work right. I feel very lucky."

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES. Although leadership styles vary, most successful leaders are decisive from a "stick to my vision standpoint" and nobody "messes with my vision," Erbaugh asserted. As a result, Erbaugh didn't try to make the various Lawnmark operations like corporate.

The business grew nicely, and Erbaugh soon found himself facing activist initiatives in New York targeting lawn service businesses.

The business went from being fun, lucrative, challenging and growing to lucrative, challenging, growing and worrisome.

"We finally opened to the possibility of merging with a larger firm so that worrisome part would go away," he recalled. "Everybody wanted to acquire us. It was that time of 'go-go' acquisitions."

Erbaugh sold to Barefoot Grass because he thought the economics were fair and it was a good deal for his employees. He also joined the company's board of directors.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ENDEAVORS. Erbaugh's bottled water business is an example of staying power. The challenge was

to create a portable, recyclable water bottle and cooler unlike cumbersome coolers that exist in many offices.

"It was a great idea conceptually, but getting the cooler made to our specifications was an engineering problem," he recounted. "We sold it first then figured out how we could make it. So it took us over a year and a half and money to find a manufacturer who was willing to take us on. We're now selling franchises and its starting to rock and roll. We made a lot of mistakes but we hung tight."

Erbaugh also manages two property management businesses, one in Hudson, Ohio and one in the Bahamas. The business in the Bahamas started as a hobby, and now equates to the construction of two single-family homes per year.

"When I retire or slow down I'll do more of that because I like it and I know the costs" he enthused.

The property business in Hudson is more profitable.

Erbaugh is currently engaged in a huge political undertaking to bring new commercial and residential development to Hudson battling against development naysayers. "To date, that investment has been nonproductive," he lamented. "That's the risk," he added.

MENTORS IN LEADERSHIP. Outside of family, Erbaugh became close to a Hudson businessman named Burt Morgan. Morgan and Erbaugh shared mutual investments and Morgan served on the boards of Erbaugh's businesses.

"Burt taught me a lot; nothing about people. He taught me about absolute power. He was one of those guys who often was wrong about things, but he was never in doubt," Erbaugh recalled fondly. "He was intellectual; very smart. You would say 'Burt, I've got this problem and I can see two sides of it.' Burt would choose one side and say 'that's the way to go.' He was the ultimate Maverick."

What comes next for Erbaugh? He smiles and said he prefers to keep his options open.

The author is Business Director, Corporate Accounts for Lawn & Landscape magazine. She can be contacted at ccode@gie.net

Leadership Defined

Marty Erbaugh answers five questions on leadership.

What is your favorite book on leadership and why is it your favorite?

Les Schwab, "Pride In Performance, Keep It Going." This book was given to me by Paul Bison about 20 years ago. The author was an uneducated guy born in Central Oregon. After serving in WWII, he bought a small auto repair business and grew it into a tremendous independent tire dealership with stores all over the Northwest. He grew the business to about \$250 million and sold it in the late 70s. As he opened each dealership, he offered 50/50 equity partnership to the guy running the store. He was empowering his employees when nobody knew what empowerment was.

It's an autobiography, written in his own phrases. It's a powerful expression of home-spun business leadership. When the book was given to me, my business was expanding at the same rate. The author's wisdom was very helpful. The business application is still pertinent today. It's humorous.

Who has been the greatest influence on your leadership style, and what did he or she teach you?

Jack Singerman, executive director of a YMCA camp that I attended as a child and then worked at during college and law school. I was a program director at a camp outside of Dayton, Ohio. Jack taught me everything about leadership I needed to know. He showed me what could be accomplished if you have support around you. He taught me what can be accomplished if you pay attention to your employees and help them understand what their job is...help them be successful. He gave me opportunities to run first a cabin full of kids, then eight villages of cabins and then a successful tennis program. My ultimate challenge was to run the program and manage 40 other counselors, all at a young age. He shared his insight with others as well. His personality was that strong. He understood that was his job as a leader and mentor. Whether you're cooking hamburgers, loading a truck or selling lawn care, people aspire to be successful. The role of a leader is to facilitate that.

How do you develop leadership skills in your employees?

By helping them become successful. Success helps to develop self-confidence and make people feel good about themselves.

By helping them and supporting them in their efforts, suddenly they'll emerge as leaders with their own sense of leadership development. I'm a believer in imitation. You have to demonstrate leadership to develop leaders. It's not learned from a book or by listening to a motivational speaker. In a small business context, you develop leaders through an investment of time in getting to know your employees and by understanding what makes them tick. Work beside them on a lawn. In turn, they get to know you better and further enhances your leadership skills. Some of the best sales guys we ever had started out by dragging a spray hose. They never fancied themselves in a sales capacity, but they showed ability and became successful at it.

What is the biggest challenge of being a leader, and how do you overcome the challenge?

Success can breed complacency. To avoid falling into a rut, you have to wake up every morning and remember what it was like the first day you started your career, rather than basking in whatever success comes your way. If you don't, you'll lose your edge. It has to be a continuous communications strategy from the top of the organization on down that reinforces these themes. You must rely on your management structure which hopefully has the same value set, enabling you to replicate it in the field as you grow.

As a leader in the lawn care market, where do you see the industry in 10 years?

I see steady growth, more effective and environmentally sensitive products, more pest resistant turfgrass types and a steady demand for residential business services for both the end-user and the supplier. Commercial demand is harder to assess because it's so cyclical. Our research shows 6 percent compounded growth in lawn care sales for the next 10 years. Golf is a lot more problematic and the grounds business is anybody's guess. The lawn care business is as good now as it was in the mid- to late 70s from a business establishment perspective. We see tremendous consolidation at the top and start-ups all over the place. It makes me want to get back into the business. The relative percentage of new households with affluence is what fuels the market. Outmarketing your competition is where the growth comes from on the residential side.



Profile

NAME: Jerry Grossi

COMPANY: Arborlawn

LOCATION: Lansing, Mich.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Vice President, COO, Arborlawn
- President, Michigan Turfgrass Foundation
- Treasurer, Green Industry Expo
- President, Professional Lawn Care Association of America
- President, Lawn Sprayers of Michigan
- Advocate for green industry grassroots political efforts in Lansing

*An individual
leader, Jerry
Grossi doesn't
shy away
from group
projects.*

Two heads are better than one – but don't too many cooks spoil the broth? One is the loneliest number – but then again, three's a crowd, right?

Group work has heard its share of good and bad adages over the years, but in order to create a successful company and develop an effective business model, Jerry Grossi has stuck with focusing on the good.

"Unless you're a one-man operation, which most companies aren't, you have to rely on and develop the people you work with," says the vice president and chief operating officer of Arborlawn, Lansing, Mich. "That's the secret to success – defining what you're doing and then executing it by developing those systems and people to get it all done."

Throughout his nearly 30 years in the green industry, Grossi has adhered to his group effort philosophy by participating in numerous industry associations and encouraging teamwork throughout his company.

GROSSI FOR PRESIDENT. Despite his significant contributions to the green industry, lawn spraying wasn't what Grossi initially pictured himself doing.

"I got my degree in physical sciences, and actually thought when I was in school that I was going to be a teacher," he says. "The closer I got to doing it, the more I realized that wasn't for me. But I've come to realize that as a leader in a company or any of association, you are a teacher in more cases than not."

At both Arborlawn and its sister company Spartan Irrigation, Grossi takes every opportunity to guide his employees through the business world. However, Grossi built up much of his leadership and teaching experience by participation in local, state and national industry associations.

"I was a member of the Lawn Sprayers of Michigan and attended their meetings," Grossi remembers. "Usually I would sit in the back but I distinctly remember one meeting where they were voting on their bylaws, which were so poorly written. My business at that time was in property management and I had read a lot of bylaws and knew them very well. I kept thinking to myself that the group really needed some help, but then I realized that these people were volunteers and they worked hard for us – why should I criticize them?"

Instead of standing by while the group struggled to create its guiding principles, Grossi asked if he could help. "They said they needed a director and before I knew it I was involved with the state association," he notes – and that was only the beginning.

In addition to serving on the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) board of directors from 1995 to 2000 – when he became PLCAA president – Grossi is currently in his second year as president of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation and is treasurer of the Green Industry Expo. Moreover, the perpetual president has some of his own projects going on at the state and local levels as well. "I'm trying to some grassroots politicking here in Lansing," he comments. "They're not as well organized here, but there's one green industry coalition that we're working on developing and I have some little side projects going on as well."

By Lauren Spiers

Gerald Grossi



Jerry Grossi may be a modest man, but he has a lot to be proud of. Nearly 30 years of industry experience has taught him the value of teamwork, the importance of standing up for causes you believe in, and that the words "leader" and "teacher" are almost interchangeable. Photo: Greg Kindel.

TEACHER BY TRADE. So how is Grossi able to handle all these projects? It all goes back to teamwork.

"Jerry is very much of a doer," says Terry Kurth, director of development, Weed Man Lawn Care USA, Madison Wis., and long-time friend of Grossi. "He's the type of guy who you know is going to carry his fair share or more. He's intelligent, creative, organized and believes in systems – a really well thought man with a great sense of humor."

And as an association and company leader, Grossi has a strong support network of people who follow his lead and help visions and projects become realities. Even his definition of leadership illustrates that not all responsibilities can fall on one person's shoulders.

"A leader is someone who can accomplish a task with people working alongside them," Grossi defines. "We have big leaders and little leaders. Right down to crew chiefs and supervisors, everyone has a leadership goal. Because so many of those tasks include group goals for the company, each person involved has an investment in that project and everyone's leadership makes those projects happen."

In the office, Grossi inspires in his employees the same work ethic he learned from his family. "Obviously, my wife and family support what I do – they're enablers who let me do what I love," he says. "But it all really goes back to my parents. What they really did to help me was instill in me a strong work ethic. My dad was always a stickler that if I wasn't in school I was working and if I wasn't working I would start working for him. He kept me busy all the time and a lot of what I do came from those experiences."

"When I work with my employees I try to see where I can help them develop some of their own leadership skills," Grossi continues. "I always try to give them opportunities and a lot of education and training. I like to manage more by example than by edict and when I help employees with their leadership skills, I try to let them be their own person and see where their strengths



"I like to manage more by example than by edict and when I help employees with their leadership skills, I try to let them be their own person and see where their strengths are." — Gerald Grossi

are. Everyone has their own tools to work with and it's so important not to try and put someone into a position they're not suited for. We look for what works for them and for the company."

As evidenced by Grossi's friends, that encouragement has rubbed off.

"Jerry always involves the totality of the people he's working with," comments Grodon Lafontaine, retired executive director of the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation. "The sign of any good leader is to delegate and make sure that everybody participates. The strength of any organization is based on the involvement of its members and Jerry makes sure to get everybody involved."

Kurth agrees. "The best sign of a good leader and a good individual is the people

around him," he says. "The positive reflection of the type of person Jerry is, is seen in his staff. He has distinct strengths, but he's a modest guy and doesn't flaunt them." In fact, Kurth knows this firsthand. "Several years back I was buying out a struggling irrigation company and Jerry is big into irrigation," he continues. "I asked to pick his brain a little bit on the topic — trials and tribulations of obtaining and running a profitable irrigation company. The next thing I know, Jerry's sending me a stack of various forms that he's used and he saved me thousands of dollars in mistakes that we could have made without his help. He knew we wouldn't be competing and that's just the type of guy he is — a big proponent of raising the professionalism in the industry and he was just kind enough to do all that."

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE. But before offering leadership help and advice, Grossi had his own business challenges to tackle.

"We kind of back-doored into the green industry," he comments. "We worked with some condominium management companies doing janitorial and outdoor property maintenance and in the early 1970s one management company asked us if we could start plowing snow for them as well." Grossi picked up that snowplowing account and the company broke into the green industry by adding lawn mowing soon afterward.

"From there, we spun the business into a maintenance firm, an irrigation company and lawn care company," Grossi says. However, this arrangement created more expenses and some confusion in keeping the profit centers separate and distinct. To solve the problem, Grossi moved away from mowing and snowplowing and focused on lawn care and irrigation as the two most profitable segments.

"Each period of business is different, though, and we still faced some challenges after that," Grossi notes. In the 1980s, he explains that handling the company's rapid growth was the biggest challenge, followed by a labor shortage in the 90s.

"In terms of labor, I think the industry has really handled that by going to other sources," he comments. "We have a dozen Hispanic employees right now and we found other avenues, as well. As a leader, you go into problem-solving mode — here's the problem, how do we overcome it? We tried to think differently. For instance, we had a workforce that was primarily men — how could we get more women involved? Why aren't certain people succeeding? Maybe we need a different training program or a mentoring program. That's how we attacked it."

Grossi challenges new industry leaders to overcome 21st century hurdles head-on.

Words to Live By

When the going gets tough, Jerry Grossi ramps up his company's confidence and morale by checking in with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. That is, by referring to Powell's book *My American Dream*. Grossi takes Powell's 13 rules of successful leadership to heart and keeps the list on his desk for easy reference.

COLIN POWELL'S 13 RULES:

1. It ain't as bad as you think. It will look better in the morning.
2. Get mad, then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, you ego goes with it.
4. It can be done!
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don't let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can't make someone else's choices. You shouldn't let someone else make yours.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision. Be demanding.
12. Don't take counsel of your fears or naysayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

Leadership Defined

Jerry Grossi answers five questions on leadership.

What is your favorite leadership book and why?

I really enjoy reading biographies and autobiographies of leaders. Some of my favorite titles include *My American Dream* by Colin Powell, *Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy and *An American Life* by Ronald Reagan. These books share insight and experiences of successful leaders. In my work I have adopted Colin Powell's army philosophy on problems: deal with it and move on. Powell also created 13 rules for himself as a leader, which I find helpful.

For a pure business leadership book, I like *The Leader's Handbook* by Peter Scholes. Scholes reiterates the simple concept that leaders decide what needs to be done, managers decide how to do it, and administrators develop the methods. Having experience in all of those areas is important, especially when encouraging employees to take on more challenging leadership roles.

Who has been the greatest influence on your leadership style and what did he or she teach you?

My leadership style has been influenced by a number of different people. I guess you can say my leadership style was developed by consensus. I try to lead in the same manner by seeking collaborative relationships with staff and developing a team concept within our organization. I find it is beneficial to our staff and myself because it provides thought, ideas and action. Leaders take everyone into consideration before leading and can effectively get everyone on board with an idea.

How do you develop leadership skills in employees?

I've tried to develop leadership skills in my employees by teaching a good and effective leadership process. One approach,

which I find to be effective, is to ask the right questions, then listen to the answers, so you may learn and then lead. The single most important question to ask is "Why?" Getting an answer to the question "why" enables leaders to decide what needs to be done and then allows them to develop the process or system to accomplish that task.

What is the biggest challenge of being a leader and how do you overcome that challenge?

Understanding people and their behavior is the biggest leadership challenge. I've learned how to be a motivator and move my employees toward their potential abilities. With a motivated staff, it's easy to move your company forward with focus, direction and vision. I meet with our management team on a formal basis at weekly meetings. Besides coordinating our workload, we discuss company goals and motivating our fellow staff members to achieve them. Seeing the leadership potential in our employees is exciting and encourages them to excel in their jobs and become leaders themselves.

As a leader in the lawn care market, where do you see the industry in 10 years?

We are service providers and that portion of the economy has been growing faster than the general economy. I believe the market demand for our services will continue to outpace the economy for the foreseeable future. Our products will change either by legislations or new science, but we will continue to deliver a customer-driven service. The savvy lawn care provider will need to continue to expand their offerings and update the delivery of their goods and services with innovation and technology. Our best days are still ahead of us.

"The biggest challenge we have is meeting customer demand and being good at customer service and communication," he says. "The only way we can meet that challenge is to keep improving what we're doing and continue to offer a better program. There are a lot of new tools out there that are letting us do that, such as the Internet and I think savvy businesspeople will take advantage of those things and use them to build better businesses."

Additionally, Grossi has seen and been very much involved with legislative issues in the industry, participating in PLCAA's

Legislative Day on the Hill and doing as much as he can to educate the public on the benefits of the green industry.

"We in the green industry have a really good message to tell and there aren't enough people telling it," Grossi comments. "I think that in order for that to occur, our future leaders have to get involved. I see them excelling as leaders and telling our message as one voice."

"The message is that we are providing a service that we as a society want very badly," he adds. "We want green grass and beautiful yards—we see it as part of our standard

of living and the fact that we can provide it in an environmentally safe way can solve some of the problems of the future in respect to environmental issues."

Jerry Grossi has taken the lead and set the example for future industry leaders to meet these challenges. He assures that sending out the industry's message will be a group effort and, undoubtedly, he'll have some notes to pass onto anyone and everyone ready to participate.

The author is Assistant Editor of Lawn & Landscape magazine.



Profile

NAME: Tom Hofer

COMPANY: Spring-Green
Lawn Care

LOCATION: Plainfield, Ill.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Served in the U.S. Navy as a P-3 pilot during the Vietnam War
- Owned and operated a Spring-Green Lawn Care franchise from 1977 to 1980
- Joined Spring-Green corporate staff in 1980 as vice president and treasurer
- Named Spring-Green's president and CEO in 1987

*This former Navy
pilot has built a
high-flying career in
lawn care.*

S

Success in the green industry takes a unique combination of qualities. You can't be afraid of hands-on, hard work under the hot sun. You have to be good with customers and a natural salesperson. And you have to lead a team with a calm and supportive, yet firm, style.

With that perspective, it's not a surprise Tom Hofer, president and CEO, Spring-Green Lawn Care, Plainfield, Ill., has successfully grown a green industry company for the last 25 years. In fact, with a unique background as a part-farmer, part-Naval officer and part-retail business executive, Hofer's success in lawn care was almost guaranteed. More than 30 years ago however, making a life in lawn care was as foreign to Hofer as the enemy he looked out for in the skies over Southeast Asia.

FARMBOY TURNED FLIER. Growing up on an Illinois farm in the baby-boom 1950s, Hofer learned quickly the value of hard work. "It was a pretty big operation, and a rather typical Midwestern farm with corn, beans, wheat and lots of cattle and hogs," Hofer recalls.

When not busy sweating in the fields of a sun-drenched Midwestern farm, Hofer sweat on the courts and fields of athletic competition. "I went to a small school, so I played most everything, but football and basketball were my main sports," Hofer says.

After high school, Hofer enrolled in the University of Illinois' agricultural economics and animal science program. As Hofer matured and met friends from outside the farm belt, he changed his mind about being a career farmer. "I think during college I realized that running a farm would not provide what I wanted," Hofer says.

But before Hofer could settle on another career path, military conflict drew him overseas. As a junior in college, Hofer turned his interest in aviation into a pilot's

license. Upon graduation in 1968, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy. "It was the Vietnam era and you were either going to get drafted or enlist. I had always been really interested in aviation, so I enlisted and signed up to fly," Hofer says. After officer's training school and flight training, Hofer was given command of a four-engine, jet-prop P3 airplane, and the 13-person crew that operated the aircraft. "We did primarily anti-submarine warfare and shipping surveillance," Hofer recalls.

"It was a pivotal time in my life and I got a lot out of it. I was a 25-year-old guy flying a multi-million dollar airplane all over the world. I was in charge of people and had to get things done, so there were a lot of life-shaping lessons at a pretty young age."

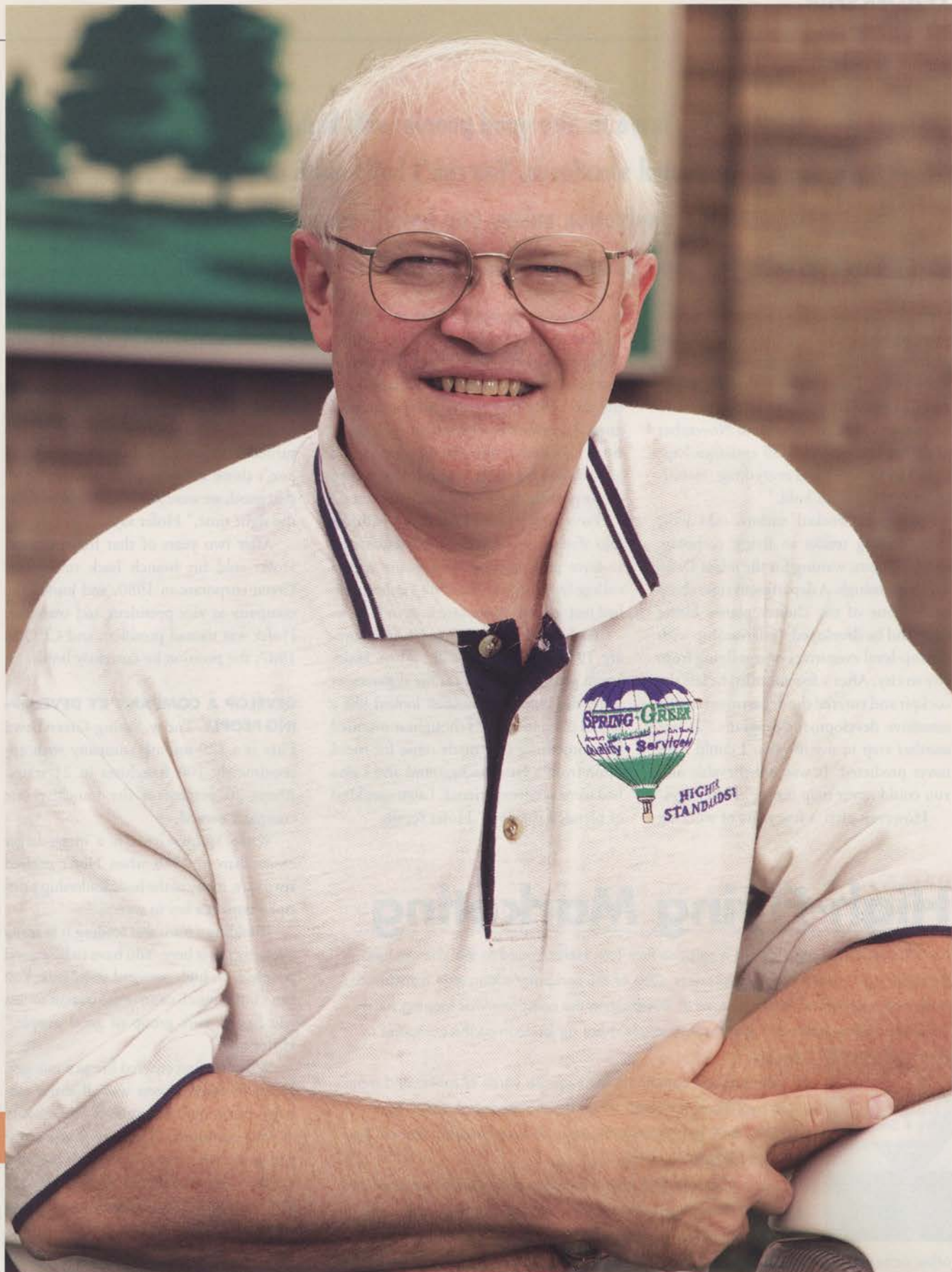
For example, the need for leaders to be down-to-earth and calm, a principle Hofer employs today as Spring-Green's CEO, was born from the Navy. "In the military you see the good and bad and every leader in between. The best leaders are comfortable with themselves and who they are. They are not overly impressed with their positions and, as a result, relate well to those they are leading," Hofer says, who eventually earned the rank of lieutenant.

Flying in the often-turbulent skies over the Pacific Ocean, Hofer also learned the value of an even-tempered management style. "The leader who is calm, cool collected and in charge keeps people's respect. In that part of the world there are some pretty nasty storms, and the pilots that maintained their composure had the confidence of their crews."

FLYING INTO MANAGEMENT. Like one of his bumpy flights, Hofer's life after the Navy took a few unexpected twists and

By Steve Smith

Tom Hofer



With a unique background as a part-farmer, part-Naval officer, part-retail business executive, Tom Hofer's success in lawn care was almost guaranteed. As president and CEO of Spring-Green Lawn Care, Plainfield, Ill., Hofer has successfully grown the company over the last 25 years. Photo: Lyal Lauth.



"You have to hire good people with high personal standards. You can't build much of an organization unless you have a core group of good people." — Tom Hofer

turns. Hofer wanted to be a career airline pilot, but the tough economy made the job search difficult. Hofer interviewed and was hired by Delta Airlines, the only major commercial airline hiring at the time. "I was supposed to go to work in November of 1973, but the Arab oil embargo happened in October and everything, including me, got put on hold."

So Hofer worked various odd jobs, from driving trucks to flying corporate charter flights, waiting for the job at Delta to come through. A department store chain owned one of the charter planes Hofer flew, and he developed a relationship with the top-level executives he was flying from city to city. After a few months, he left the cockpit and entered the department store's executive development program. "It was another step in my life that I could have never predicted. It was unbelievable and you could never map it out," Hofer says.

However, after a few years of working

in retail management, Hofer realized he wanted something better for his family. "There was no question that I had a great future with them, but I looked around at the top executives in the company and I guess I couldn't see myself in their position. I looked at the life they led, and I guess I wanted more control of my own destiny, both day-to-day and long term."

For nearly a year Hofer toyed with the idea of starting his own business, and started to have more serious discussions with a college fraternity brother, Bill Fischer, who had just started a lawn care firm in Illinois.

Fischer had started Spring-Green in January 1977 in Naperville, Ill. When Hofer began getting restless feet at the department store, the lawn care business looked like a logical place to land. "I thought it sounded like something that made sense for me. I came from a farm background and I also had some retail experience. Lawn care kind of blended the two," Hofer recalls.

So Hofer purchased a franchise from his friend's company and began operations in the spring of 1978. The lawn care business was booming in Chicago in the late 70s, so Hofer's franchise surged forward quickly. "I started with 300 customers. In the first year we ended up with 800, and by the

next year we were at 1,900."

Hofer admits that much of his early success in lawn care can be credited to an incredibly strong market. The southwest suburbs of Chicago were growing exponentially, as cornfield after cornfield was turned into residential developments. "I don't think we were all that smart or all that good, we were just in the right place at the right time," Hofer says.

After two years of that frenetic pace, Hofer sold his branch back to Spring-Green corporate in 1980, and joined the company as vice president and treasurer. Hofer was named president and CEO in 1987, the position he currently holds.

DEVELOP A COMPANY BY DEVELOPING PEOPLE. Today, Spring-Green Lawn Care is a \$20-million company with approximately 100 franchises in 21 states. About 20 percent of the franchises are company owned.

While Spring-Green is a much larger entity than in 1978 when Hofer entered lawn care, many of the basic leadership principles remain a key to success.

"Building a team and leading it is really what my job is here. You have to hire good people with high personal standards. You can't build much of an organization unless you have a core group of good people," Hofer says.

When he first entered life as a manager, Hofer thought success was all about systems. But today, he knows it's the quality of your personnel. "I used to think that if you gave me a person I could put together a system to make them into something. I think that was a faulty assumption because you can't make people into something they are not, but you can sure waste a lot of time trying," Hofer says.

People are by far the number one key to leadership success in lawn care, Hofer says.

High-Flying Marketing

As a former Navy pilot it's not a surprise that Tom Hofer turned to the skies to help build Spring-Green's brand awareness. One of the company's long-term franchisees is also an avid hot-air balloonist, so in 2000 when the company was looking for a novel marketing method, it made sense to use a hot air balloon as the company's symbol.

The balloon contains 1,000 square yards of fabric and more than two miles of thread. It can fly at altitudes of 5,000 to 10,000 feet, but typically floats just a few thousand feet off the ground for better viewing.

Spring-Green's flight team includes a network of experienced balloon pilots around the country. A special trailer carries the balloon envelope, basket, blower fan, propane tanks, lines and

other accessories to various events. The balloon makes scheduled appearances at balloon rallies and other events throughout the nation.



Family Focus



FACING CHALLENGES HEAD ON.

Throughout his 25 years in lawn care, Hofer has seen many challenges, including a trend of low-priced competitors in the late 80s and big-box, do-it-yourself stores in the 90s.

"We approached low-price competitors by being very aggressive also. We didn't just sit back and let them eat us up one inch at a time," Hofer said.

Likewise, to adapt to DIY outlets, and the resulting shrinking market they have caused, Spring-Green Lawn Care has focused on market segmentation, tirelessly researching its markets to identify the best prospects.

"We did a lot of research to try and sort out the best and worst prospects, and then we obviously focus on the best candidates."

Tom Hofer admits his life has never been well balanced. His hobbies have been work and family, and that's about it. Hofer married his wife Sue right before leaving for the Navy, and they've been married for 35 years. "Because we were stationed in several different places during my tour of duty, I tell my wife I took her on a five-year honeymoon, but she doesn't believe me. We were stationed in Hawaii for a while, however, so that was nice. Additionally, we were deployed in Okinawa, Japan for six months and she was able to go with me."

The couple has two grown children — Laurie and Ted — and two grandchildren. Like his father, Ted Hofer is an entrepreneur, owning and operating a UPS Store franchise.

With a strong network of franchises working to face industry challenges, develop people and serve its customer with high standards, Hofer feels confident about the future. "I see continued, consistent growth. We've never been one of these

record-setting growth companies, just consistent success," Hofer says.

The author is a Contributing Writer to Lawn & Landscape magazine. He can be contacted at ssmith@gie.net

Leadership Defined

Tom Hofer answers five questions on leadership.

What is your favorite book on leadership and why is it your favorite?

"My American Journey" by Colin Powell. It describes how someone of humble beginnings can achieve so much.

It gives you a list of simple real-world rules for leaders to follow.

Who has been the greatest influence on your leadership style and what did he or she teach you?

My father. My father was totally honest, principled, fair and a really nice guy. His example gave me a solid foundation to build my leadership style on.

How do you develop leadership skills in your employees?

We try to provide the right environment for people who want to be leaders. We expect people in leadership positions to take charge and make their own decisions. But, we don't abandon them. We're available to help if they need it. We want people to know that failure is an option.

In fact, a certain amount of failure is expected. It is okay to fail if we learn from it. We provide people with information

that teaches basic leadership skills. Leadership is built in to the evaluations of our managers.

What is the biggest challenge of being a leader and how do you overcome the challenge?

There is no one single biggest challenge of being a leader. We are all different, so leadership challenges are different for different leaders. For me the biggest challenge has been overcoming some of my natural tendencies that are not particularly good leadership qualities.

As a leader in the lawn care market, where do you see the industry in 10 years?

I see relatively steady, but not explosive growth. The growth of our industry will be influenced considerably by the strength of the U.S. economy. There will be continued pressure to provide attractive lawns and landscapes in an environmentally friendly manner. Overall, there will be greater emphasis on better management of water and a reduction in the use of pesticides and certain fertilizers. Demographic trends are very much in our favor, but they can be offset somewhat by inexpensive do-it-yourself alternatives and a weak economy.



Profile

NAME: Chris Lemcke

COMPANY: Weed Man USA

LOCATION: Scarborough,
Ontario

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Grew Ottawa Weed Man branch from \$400,000 to \$2 million, 1993-1999
- Served as technical coordinator, Weed Man USA
- In 2002, started position as industry advocate, Weed Man USA
- Member, Lawn Care Commodity Group, Pest Control Safety Council of Canada and the Professional Lawn Care Association of America's environmental committee
- Two-time recipient of the Environmental Award from Weed Man's Canada office

*Drawing lessons
from history and
sports, Lemcke leads
by example.*

When Chris Lemcke walks into a room, people notice. It's not just his stature – a commanding 6-foot-8 frame, solid as a soldier and fit for the NBA – but his golden-boy charisma hooks people, draws them in. He's a magnet.

"He definitely has a presence," describes John Ladds, trying to put a finger on why his co-worker attracts people – just makes them smile. "It's the way he carries himself and the way he speaks. He puts people at ease."

In a grisly hockey match, players want Lemcke on the team. In the field, technicians want him on their route. In a heated legislative debate, lawn care advocates want him on their side. And if you're on Lemcke's team, you're not likely to lose. His passion for the industry is as fierce as his will to win.

"I hate to lose and I'm very competitive – I've always been that way," admits Lemcke, who has fought his fair share of legislative battles since transitioning from technical director to vice president of regulatory affairs for Weed Man USA, based in Scarborough, Canada. "If I lose, I learn from my mistakes and I correct them. I try to make myself better every day."

And every day, the 34-year-old Canadian reads another headline, receives another phone call or hears another news report spreading misleading information about pesticides – "alarmist" accusations, he calls them.

Every day, he fights back. Each battle is a personal investment. And his teammates – co-workers like Ladds, who has worked closely with Lemcke on legislative issues – are well aware of his spirited streak.

"Heated and grueling," Ladds describes some of the legislative battles the two have faced recently, as Canada's volatile political climate puts pesticides at risk. "There are times when you feel like just giving up because it's all politics, and there are times when you feel like it's not worth it. Chris

just tries harder, and I think people get energy from that – from being around him at times like that."

He sends a message to people that sticks, Ladds adds. And he just doesn't give up.

LEGISLATIVE LAUNCH PAD. Lemcke revisits the root of his legislative involvement, which quite literally, started close to home. "I lived in a small town in Ottawa and there was an activist who lived down the street from me who wrote an article in the paper every week," he describes. "I was writing back answers, and my involvement grew from there."

At the time, Lemcke managed Weed Man's technical division, growing his Ottawa franchise from \$400,000 to \$2,000,000 – from four trucks to 14 – in the six-year period after 1993, when he bought the franchise with his wife, Jennifer.

Before long, Lemcke moved up in Weed Man's ranks to its corporate management team, serving as technical coordinator for Weed Man USA, a position that allowed him to exercise his hands-on skills. "I like doing the physical stuff and being very busy," he says.

Since assuming a full-time position as an industry advocate for Weed Man in 2002, meetings, communication and organization efforts tie him to his desk. But he's still busy. "I like to keep myself busy, and this is certainly doing it," he says of his legislative role.

Considering his initial career goal – a police officer – it's fair to say Lemcke got more than he ever expected.

"I always wanted to be a police officer, but I knew the benefits of working for yourself," he says. "Jennifer's father, Roger Mongeon, was involved with Weed Man

By Kristen Hampshire

Chris Lemcke



People and passion drive Chris Lemcke to defend the industry. He presents the hard facts – and true benefits – of lawn care applications to skeptical activists.



"I hate to lose and I'm very competitive. If I lose, I learn from my mistakes and I correct them. I try to make myself better every day." — Chris Lemcke

franchises in Quebec and Montreal, and he came to us and asked us if we wanted an opportunity to run our own franchise, and it appealed to me," Lemcke recalls. "I pretty much immersed myself in it."

People also appealed to Lemcke — good people. "In policing, sometimes you see a lot of the bad of society, and I really enjoy dealing with people. You meet a lot of good people in this industry."

And Lemcke also knows there are plenty of persistent people out there — stubborn people. People who want prenotification and bans on pesticides. People who tell lies without thinking twice. "I've been asked to talk about environmental issues on different occasions, and I've had activists across the table from me and been in situations where they've lied right on TV," he says. "It's frustrating sometimes because it's very easy to be an alarmist and say things that are outlandish. It's difficult to defend an issue when you have to be technical about it."

But Lemcke keeps it cool in these situations. When a woman claimed that Weed Man killed her dog with herbicides, he confronted her with the facts. "It's impossible for a dog to die because the product is less toxic than caffeine or aspirin," he reports. "But it's hard to go into technical terms when you have a statement like, 'You killed a dog.' When we told her it wasn't possible she said, 'I know. But I'm still going to say it.'"

Many times, these irrational conclusions override rational research.

"The hardest thing I deal with — and I've taken it to heart sometimes, even though I try not to let it get to me — is how activists can just tear us down without any real proof or any real justification," Lemcke says, revealing a tender layer that sometimes hides behind his commanding disposition. "I've had people tell me that their goal is to put us out of business. I know we

will never go out of business and we will provide green spaces and healthy lawns for customers, and I defend that."

So Lemcke writes, leads discussions and attends meetings. He constantly watches reports and reads editorials, though he adds that his letters to the editor often hide behind front-page stories that scream No Pesticides! "It jumps up on you," he relates, noting that since the July 2001 Hudson Quebec v. Spraytech case, in which the municipalities in Quebec gained the right to regulate pesticides, environmental concerns have snowballed in Canada.

Today, other municipalities are following suit, proposing and passing pesticide bans. "I'll find an article in the paper and I feel like I have to respond to it. I sit down and write something out. Or, I'll get a call or there will be a municipal meeting."

These "alarms" sound all the time and Lemcke spends days protecting the lawn care industry from passing legislation that could severely affect the business and, ultimately, turf health as a whole. He answers the radical with rationale.

"I tend to look at everything with reason," he says. "I tend to look at everything in the gray — I'm not up in the high or down in the low."

Perhaps this attitude is what allows him to truly enjoy working with people and believe that most are inherently good-natured. "Is this always fun to deal with? No," he admits. "But I still like dealing with people. A while ago, I learned that people can have their own opinions and they are voicing theirs and I am voicing mine. I feel that at the end of the day, I can go home and sleep because I've used common sense and I'm not an alarmist. And I don't lie. And that's how I sleep at night."

SET SYSTEMS, LEAD BY EXAMPLE. Lemcke pushes the off button on activist

issues so he can rest easy. And he passes on day-to-day business to trusted employees so he can make time for industry advocacy. Managers run his operations in Ottawa, Surrey, British Columbia, Hamilton, Scarborough and two U.S. franchises in Denver, Colo., and Minneapolis, Minn. "You have to get people to follow the systems and recognize if

they do that, they will succeed," he says.

The heart of Lemcke's training, though, isn't systems at all. It's picking the right people and instilling passion and trust in their abilities. It's leading — and letting them lead the business to success, he says. His tactic is to surround and conquer.

"Leadership comes from surrounding yourself with good people who can follow directions and rise to the top," he says. "There are different leadership styles, but if they have passion, they find ways to get things done. It might not be the same way you would do it."

His own leadership style?

"I try to lead by example," he describes. "I never try to fashion myself after anyone — I just like to glean things from people. No one is perfect. I think individuality is the key in leading."

He throws out names of some sports figures — Phil Jackson, Michael Jordan — and he explains how coaching without compassion kills teamwork. "I think a lot of leadership is just passion and caring and putting the hours and effort in," he says.

Sports are, in fact, a passion for Lemcke — he plays hockey once a week and is part of a basketball league. But as leaders go, Lemcke looks toward history.

"I'm a bit of a history buff," he admits. "People like Roosevelt during WWII really intrigue me, how in times of pressure when they come through as true leaders."

CAN DO APPROACH. Compromise isn't an option for Lemcke. Neither is quitting.

"In the movie Pearl Harbor when Roosevelt stands up and says, 'Don't tell me it can't be done,' that made an impression on me," he says. "Don't tell me it can't be done," he repeats, pausing to let the phrase sink in.

"You can't have that word in your vocabulary," he concludes. "You just have to

buckle down. There will always be hardships involved, but in the end, what you hope is that you persevere and you get the job done. And if you put your mind to it, you can."

Today, Lemcke is talking about legislature, and he's talking about the United States. While regulatory battles spread faster than tabloid rumors in Canada, there still is a chance to prevent a negative image and stop damaging legislature from passing in the States, he says. "The U.S. is at a pivotal time when I can see the challenges we faced in Canada showing up in pockets of the U.S.," he notes.

"If we had highlighted what we do as an industry and the value we bring in Canada years ago, then maybe we wouldn't be facing what we are now," he adds. "If we had organized and put our industry in the right light, maybe we wouldn't be defending ourselves."

The effort starts with groups like Professional Lawn Care Association of America and the Evergreen Foundation, Lemcke points out, and he pours his energy into these groups, exchanging ideas with members and spring-boarding promotional efforts. He sees other industries advertise on TV and paint positive images. He thinks the green industry should do the same, especially in the U.S. where there is still time to stymie sour industry impressions and slow down pesticide posting efforts.

"We can't sit in a bubble and expect everything to be hunky-dory – we have to be out there defending our businesses," he insists, a familiar competitive fire lighting his statement. Lemcke has decided the industry can win, and he's recruiting his team. Surround and conquer.

"It all has to do with the people I'm surrounded with – the people involved in fighting this," he says. "No one can do this on

their own. There are so many people involved who deserve credit."

November elections will pave the political climate and strongly impact pesticide legislation in Canada, and Lemcke watches other bedroom communities adopt posting requirements, mimicking some of the cases unfolding in metropolises like Quebec. What is a happy ending for Lemcke? Winning, of course. But reality and perseverance and persistency and passion are far more important to him.

"If in the end, there is a lawsuit and we win and this goes away, great," he remarks. "If it doesn't, we'll survive. We'll just have to adjust. Until then, I will be out there defending the industry."

And don't tell him it can't be done.

The author is a Contributing Editor to Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at khampshire@lawnandlandscape.com.

Leadership Defined

Chris Lemcke answers five questions on leadership.

What is your favorite book on leadership?

Books that have the most affect on me are those about people who have become leaders in adverse situations, like Franklin Delano Roosevelt during WWII. You can learn a great deal from great leaders in history and how they lead during times of difficulty.

Who has been the greatest influence on your leadership style and what did he or she teach you?

Having been involved in a lot of competitive sports, I've had coaches that inspired teamwork and taught me leadership skills that I still use today. I have also had coaches who were technically sound, but they were not good leaders. I probably learned more from the bad ones. Though some were committed, smart coaches, they could not inspire people to do more. I see this happen in everyday life. People can be good at what they do but fail to inspire others to reach their potential. I also have the opportunity to work with great industry leaders at Weed Man.

How do you develop leadership skills in employees?

First, you must recognize those capable of being leaders. Not everyone wants to take on extra responsibilities. You can teach

people to become leaders by giving them opportunities and direction. Systems can help people lead, and they are also important so the rest of the team understands the company mission and the owner's goals.

What is the biggest challenge of being a leader?

Striking a balance between work and your personal life, and making sure work doesn't take over is a challenge. Spending time with kids and family is important for your sanity, and gives you a break from all the other things on your mind. Keeping the two separate is sometimes difficult when your wife is in the industry, as well. The other challenge is to keep growing as an individual. I am still fairly young and I want keep learning.

Where do you see the industry in 10 years?

Our industry is at a pivotal time, and what we do in the next year or two will determine the future. The activist movement is growing again in the U.S., bolstered from what has been happening in Canada. We need to position ourselves as professionals who do not believe that protecting industrial, commercial, residential and public green space is simply a cosmetic pursuit.



Profile

NAME: Bill Leuenberger

COMPANY: The Chalet

LOCATION: Wilmette, Ill.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Founded his own lawn care business in 1984 called Lawngevity
- President, Illinois chapter of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America
- Lawn care manager, landscape division, The Chalet, Wilmette, Ill.

*The industry's
self-proclaimed
"predictable" guy
talks about the
industry's future
challenges and his
passion for turf.*

Bill Leuenberger can remember the first moment he became truly interested in turf.

California's Santa Rosa Junior College had a Fourth of July fireworks display and after claiming their spot on the property's lush lawn, Leuenberger and his wife, Rita, laid back to watch the show.

While gazing up at the brilliant color bursts of whites and blues and reds showering down to the ground, he regarded that lawn as one would consider a velvet carpet. "I can remember lying there feeling the cool grass and thinking about how much I realized I loved the turf," Leuenberger says. "It seems so simple, yet it's so intricate. It's just grass, but that did it for me. I also love the smell and feel of soil. When you're walking on the turf, you're actually walking on the soil and the earth – it's an amazing feeling for me."

And 18 years later, his love of turf hasn't diminished. The lawn care manager in the landscape division of The Chalet, Wilmette, Ill., has continually worked to improve his knowledge on turf maintenance issues, helped grow PLCAA's Illinois chapter and continues to embrace his position with Chalet's clients, as well as doing his part to boost industry education and professionalism.

THE EARLY YEARS. As a youth growing up in Chicago, Leuenberger didn't mind doing the chores – from mowing to painting the house. After his older brother experienced a temporarily debilitating stroke as a result of a childhood accident, Leuenberger did most of the chores himself. "I learned a lot from doing that," he says. "I learned to become handy."

Leuenberger describes his father as a "strict disciplinarian. If I did something pretty bad, I'd be grounded for a month. I'd have to come right home after school – no TV, no telephone and no going outside. If he caught me doing any of those

things, I'd lose a day of my punishment and have to make it up at the end. He did let me listen to the radio though."

These days stuck inside listening to the radio could be when Leuenberger's great love of music began. "I can remember always having a radio pinned to my ear," he says. "I like it because it makes so many people happy – music just does that. One of the best parts about my job today as lawn care manager at Chalet is that I get to drive around to various clients' properties and listen to music on the way instead of being stuck to a quiet desk."

His favorite music: 1960s Motown "because it touches all generations," he says. The past 22 years, Leuenberger has spent many weekends being a disc jockey for weddings with his son, Marty. "I love mixing and playing music," he shares. "It makes so many people happy – music just does that."

SELF-TAUGHT TURF MANAGER. Before joining the green industry, Leuenberger worked for the Chicago Transit Authority as a bus repairman right after high school, until one day in 1974 when his supervisor said something that he'll never forget. "He came into the office and said, 'This job is for people who can't go to college,'" Leuenberger explains. "Something about that comment stopped me. I knew instantly that I was going to quit. Virtually, he was saying that we were just a bunch of dumb guys. I signed up for a horticulture class at Wright Junior College the next day.

"I absolutely loved that class," Leuenberger continues. "It was much harder than I thought it would be – but it sold me on this industry."

After finishing school in 1975, Bill and Rita Leuenberger decided to take a three-month trip exploring the West – through

By Nicole Wisniewski

Bill Leuenberger

*Bill Leuenberger is a self-taught turf manager by day and a 1960s music-loving disc jockey by night.
Photo: Todd Fedler*

ger



"I love the smell and feel of soil. When you're walking on the turf, you're actually walking on the soil and the earth – it's an amazing feeling for me." – Bill Leuenberger

the Grand Canyon and California. During the journey, Rita's California-based uncle passed away and Leuenberger was offered the opportunity to move there and take over his greenhouse. He immediately signed up for courses at Santa Rosa Junior College's brand new green houses to learn about the nursery industry.

However, the two years Leuenberger spent tending the nursery were rough. The year 1975 marked the beginning of a two-year drought that would ultimately be the end of the business.

"The drought was so bad that the Russian River went from a body of water you could dive into to one where you could walk across and barely get your ankles wet," Leuenberger describes. "After two years, we realized that people weren't going to buy plants that they had to water if they couldn't brush their teeth or flush the toilet."

Consequently, in September 1977,

Leuenberger and his wife moved back to Illinois and Leuenberger got a job with Wheeling Nursery.

Following three to four years with Wheeling Nursery, Leuenberger decided to approach Chalet for a position in turf since that's where his interest lied. The company only had a garden shop opportunity available, so he took it.

Though he enjoyed working there, he decided to go out on his own in 1984 and start a lawn care business – he bought a spreader and some fertilizer and called it Lawngevity. "I felt the only way I was going to really learn about turf was by getting out there and doing it. I wanted to be on the turf and not just answering questions from people coming into the garden shop."

Entrepreneurship brought rewards and challenges. "There were good and bad years," he says. "It was hard to find good employees. I didn't have good cash flow and was always

strapped for cash, and I couldn't pay enough to keep people because of local competition."

Then, one day eight years later, when going to take a pesticide test, Leuenberger ran into Kevin Marko, his old boss at Chalet.

"I told him that the company had really grown a lot but could have grown much more

quickly with him running our lawn care division," Marko says.

At the same time, Leuenberger expressed his frustration with owning his own business. Consequently, Chalet offered to buy Leuenberger's customer list and bring him on as lawn care manager.

"It was the best thing I ever did," Leuenberger says. "I gradually worked into the position and learned the way Chalet did things. If people push you into something too quickly, they set you up to fail. But if a company is patient – then they let you reach your full potential. That's what Chalet did for me."

PRETTY PREDICTABLE. Predictable – if Leuenberger could use one word to describe himself, that would be it.

Leuenberger's day starts out at 5 a.m. when he opens up the Chalet garden center and picks up the mail. Then, on his way to the lawn care office, he stops at Starbucks to get himself and his assistant lawn care manager coffee and muffins. "I get the same thing everyday – they already have it waiting in a bag for me when I get there," Leuenberger says, adding that after going through the mail, he'll check his messages and answer client questions.

But Leuenberger's favorite part of each day is fixing lawns. "It's that good feeling of turning a lawn around," he says. "Just like you can get a headache or infection, so can your lawn. Sometimes it's too late, but most of the time, it's still repairable. Unfortunately, while doctors have patients to tell them what's wrong, the grass doesn't tell us anything. We have to figure out what's ailing it on our own. But just like the flu spreads, a lot of things that happen to one lawn happens to another so you can find patterns."

Learning and observing in the industry is what Leuenberger feels is the key to getting ahead. "You can't rush into being

Client Connection

What are Bill Leuenberger's tricks to dealing with clients who call with complaints? He tries to have a calming effect on them and talk to them like he's talking with good friends.

"No matter how mad a customer is, it doesn't do me any good to let my temper get the best of me – that won't solve anything," says Leuenberger, lawn care manager, landscape division, The Chalet, Wilmette, Ill., adding that quickly solving their problems also is key to customer retention. "So, instead, I apologize and express my understanding. It instantly reduces their stress levels and brings their tempers down."

One mistake Leuenberger sees managers make is not having 100 percent faith and optimism in their employees. "The tendency is for a manager to say, 'My guy did this and that' to explain to the customer what went wrong, but that only shows that a company is unprofessional and that the manager failed the employee in training. So, I try to take the blame in front of my customer. I focus the guilt on me and what I'm going to do to fix the problem."

"There are always problems – it comes with the territory," Leuenberger adds. "I ultimately talk to the customer and try to settle the problem. To me, it's not a big deal – it's my job."

Leadership Defined

Bill Leuenberger answers five questions on leadership.

What is your favorite book on leadership and why?

My favorite book is *When Character was King* by Peggy Noonan. Ronald Reagan and his leadership abilities fascinate me. He's a guy who was an actor and he found good people to surround himself with, and then was able to change the whole direction of our country. It reminds me that as a leader you need to look for people around you and make use of their talents as well as your own.

Who has been the greatest influence on your leadership style and what did he or she teach you?

My boss, Kevin Marko, has been a tremendous influence. He taught me how to deal with people. He has always been honest and straight with me. When I or anyone else here does something wrong, he talks to us, tells us what it is, how it's done and that's it. I learned a lot from his management style.

How do you develop leadership skills in employees?

I try to develop leadership skills in my employees by allowing them some latitude – allowing them to make decisions no matter what position they are in. I try to instill confidence in them by giving them chances, and letting them know that being right or wrong is not re-

ally of concern as long as they are making decisions that they *feel* are right. You can't be afraid to let your employees make mistakes. If something happens, we'll deal with it and then learn from it.

What is the biggest challenge of being a leader and how do you overcome the challenge?

The biggest challenge of being a leader is trying to determine what the employees can handle and what decisions they can make because the last thing you want to do is set someone up for failure. You have to give them the proper tools so when they make decisions you know they'll be the right ones.

As a leader in the lawn care market, where do you see the industry in 10 years?

The industry will continue to grow. A challenge will be getting new interest in the business from high school and college students. More of them are interested in golf and sports turf – they don't realize that consumer and commercial turf care has many more challenges because of the various turf problems and different clients we deal with everyday. We have to get our industry message out there to gain additional interest from young students.

a leader – it takes time," he says. "And you can't always think you know everything – there's always something to learn."

Leuenberger's other favorite part of the job is spreading news and education to others in the industry. For that reason, he became president of the Illinois chapter of the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA) two years ago. For the association, he's helped increase Illinois membership by more than 50 members in one year.

"He's got that workhorse attitude and he sticks to it and makes things work," points out Tom Delaney, PLCAA's vice president of government affairs. "Illinois is a tough area to get people interested. It is one of the biggest states, but it's a very independent group, so Bill's doing a good job."

"Some people are takers and some people are givers, and Bill is a giver, especially when it concerns educating this industry," adds Tom Voigt, assistant professor, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Ill. "He has been working hard to increase association

membership in Illinois, to increase professionalism in the lawn care industry and to help other lawn care applicators be prepared for continued regulations."

The job doesn't come without challenges, so Leuenberger considers the post as one of his accomplishments. "It can become disappointing – like in a situation where only three members show up to a meeting," he says. "But I've learned that despite that, I have to make the most out of that meeting and not give up. I have to show people that issues affecting New York, Canada and Wisconsin could affect us. I'm working hard to try and get other landscape companies interested in PLCAA. It's a really worthwhile venture for me – it keeps me busy. If I didn't love it, I wouldn't do it."

He also is known to incorporate his other love – music – into his job. For PLCAA's Legislative Day on the Hill this year in Washington, D.C., Leuenberger made a CD full of patriotic music and handed them out to PLCAA members and congress people.

Every Christmas, Leuenberger also makes a holiday-themed CD for his co-

workers. "He's won over the hearts of the employees here in all departments," Marko says. "He has a good sense of humor. He's hardworking and committed to his career. And he has a significant interest in taking a role in improving the industry as a whole and not just his job or the company. He gives a lot of his time to this cause."

And, when he's not attending meetings or tending to clients' needs, he's been known as a practical joker in the Chalet office. "A few people in the company still fall for it every time," Marko shares.

Besides a predictable jokester, Leuenberger considers himself a self-educated man of turf. "But he's not one who feels like he has all the answers," Marko points out. "He wants to gain the most knowledge he can about turf."

Why does he dedicate so many hours each week to building his turf knowledge? "I just love it," Leuenberger says. "And I don't know why – it's just who I am."

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Profile

NAME: Chuck McIntire

COMPANY: Scotts LawnService

LOCATION: Norcross, Ga.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Master's degree, botany, University of Oklahoma
- Technical director for national corporate accounts, AllGreen Corp., Marietta, Ga.
- In 1996 started his own firm, TurfPride, Kennesaw, Ga.
- 2002, sold TurfPride to Scotts LawnService, and became the company's regional director for the south
- Former member, PLCAA Board of Directors

*Chuck McIntire
knows that some-
times you don't seek
leadership – it finds
you.*

Chuck McIntire's recipe for leadership includes the basics you'd expect, such as working hard, planning, finding a mentor and taking risks. But emulating the kind of success he's achieved requires more than the basics. For McIntire it took unconventional measures that include turning down a role as the 25th president of Professional Lawn Care Association of America, making friends with the competition and letting the green industry get into your blood.

And he's not kidding about that last part.

"There *is* something about lawn care that gets in to your blood," McIntire says. "I've known a lot of people that have got out of the industry – gone out and tried to do other things and then come back after awhile." There's no question that McIntire is a full-blooded green industry leader, but sometimes even leaders take awhile to find their niche. McIntire's development in the world of lawn care is a case-in-point. "I don't know if I chose it or it chose me," he says.

A serendipitous chain of events led McIntire to the green industry. He was originally pointed in the direction of architecture when he enrolled at the University of Oklahoma, but quickly discovered that he hated the engineering side of his chosen discipline. That meant spending half of his college experience saddled with an undeclared major. Under the gun by the time he reached his junior year, McIntire decided he'd better get serious.

GOING GREEN. His two favorite classes at the time were botany and geology. "I don't know if it was the flip of a coin or what, but I chose botany thinking that working in the forests of southeast Oklahoma would be a pretty interesting career," he recalls. McIntire, who was always interested in science and growing plants, says that it was something that he felt comfortable with. Little did he know, however, there was quite a waiting list for botany-related jobs – something he found out after graduation.

Grad school followed but so did a wedding engagement. "I needed to get a job before I got married, so in 1978 I answered an ad for a job with ChemLawn. I had no intention of making lawn care a long-term career but I'm still here," he says. "I worked hard and was given the chance for advancement and new challenges along the way. I guess that's what I'm looking for all the time."

It was that quest for new challenges that eventually led McIntire to make a move from TruGreen-ChemLawn to work for AllGreen Corp., Marietta, Ga., where he was technical director of national corporate accounts.

After being moved to the company's corporate offices in Atlanta, McIntire felt confident enough to leave AllGreen, and in 1996 he started his own company, called TurfPride, in Kennesaw, Ga. "It was a challenge starting a lawn care company in 1996 with zero customers and zero reputation in the Atlanta area," McIntire remembers. "We were blessed that we were in a great lawn care market, but success came quickly because of the quality of the product we actually provided."

For six years he invested his life in growing TurfPride until an exceptional

By Will Nepper

Chuck McIntire



Meeting the expectations of Scotts LawnService customers is the chief incentive and most rewarding career challenge of Chuck McIntire.
Photo: Steven Swieter.

opportunity materialized that would garner him recognition and respect that he hadn't counted on.

A NEW DIRECTION. "I decided back in December of last year to sell [TurfPride] to Scotts LawnService, and accept their offer to be regional director for the south," McIntire explains. This change led McIntire to face his greatest career hurdles since opening his own business.

"I think the challenge had always been meeting the customer's expectation while still running the company as profitable, efficient and business-worthy," he says of his six years running TurfPride. But those experiences only partially prepared him for what "customer expectations" would mean to him once his work began to carry the Scotts logo.

"The challenge is developing a lawn care service that stands up to the quality issues that have been inherited from the Scotts products," he says. "It's a challenge that I take more seriously than anything I've ever dealt with up to now; developing a growth-oriented company, but still keeping a quality service out there that meets customer's expectations."

As one of three regional directors for Scotts, McIntire finds himself on the front line of what happens within the \$115 million lawn care service company. Most would agree that it sounds like an overwhelming responsibility, but he keeps it in perspective. "That's where I'm at in my life right now. I'm taking on a new challenge." All of this from someone who openly admits that he got started in the industry "somewhat by accident."

Of course there's a lot more to Chuck McIntire than a schematic of his career arc. Everyone knows that you don't evolve from treating lawns to serving as regional director of Scotts LawnService in a few easy steps. And though he's not prepared to hand over



**"There is something
about lawn care that
gets in to your blood."
— Chuck McIntire**

a blueprint for assured success in the industry, he knows how to handle those who express that they want what he has.

"You've got to decide what you want and how every decision you make can get you closer to what you want." He points out that too often, people know what they want but don't know how to plan for it. "I think there are a lot of people who think you can just fall into great situations." But McIntire doesn't invest too much faith in luck. "The majority of people out there who are successes worked hard."

And if success like McIntire's can be measured in money, happiness, respect or influence — leadership is often less tangible. "A leader is someone who, when he faces a challenge is not apt to follow the favorite trends but is willing to step out

Though no one knows for sure if leaders are born or created, McIntire's success seems to make an argument for both. "It seems like everywhere I go I end up in a leadership role." He cites his relationship with his church as an example of this. After five years of living in Atlanta, he was elected president of his church in time to lead the organization through the construction of a \$4 million school-building project.

McIntire recognizes that leadership is a quality he's been saddled with, for better or worse. Despite this, he had never really thought of himself as a leader in the green industry. "I don't think people think of me as a groundbreaking pioneer in the lawn care market," he explains. "I got into the market after the stage when the pioneers were really developing things. I got to get

and lead by example with integrity, confidence, knowledge and strength," he explains. "You've got to have the guts to step out when you're a leader."

LED TO LEAD.

in on that success and use my talents to make a career out of it."

Faced with the fact that people consider him an industry leader no matter what he thinks, McIntire still grapples with others' perceptions of his role. He credits his willingness to offer advice and mentor others in the green industry as going a long way toward building his reputation as a leader. "There are people I've known since I first went into business in 1978 that still call me for advice and I think there are people out there that respect the fact that I'm strong in agronomics and the chemical program part of the business." But even that might seem like a pat dismissal of his peers' true perceptions.

Furthermore, it's difficult to imagine that his election to the PLCAA board of directors, and then executive board of directors, stems solely from his ability to give helpful advice — which might be why he was taken aback by both offers.

"I was honored and pleased to be asked to be on the board of directors for PLCAA," McIntire admits. "I thought that was a major accomplishment in my career and I really appreciated it." But before long, more opportunities with PLCAA came

Focus on the Future

As Chuck McIntire, Scotts LawnService, Norcross, Ga., looks ahead to the future of the green industry he sees regulatory issues as being a significant focal point for anyone hoping to be around 10 years from now. "Regulatory issues are a challenge that a lot of people don't want to recognize as a big deal," he says. He was one of the many turning a blind eye to the importance of legislation until he spent some time talking to Canadian Professional Lawn Care Association board members who's businesses have been hit hard by government regulation.

"I don't think we realize how difficult it has become to do our work in Canada," McIntire says of his fellow state-siders. "It's got to the point where they've started to legislate city-wide bans on lawn care spraying in quite a bit of Canada."

McIntire is inspired by how the tough legislation has caused a "rallying of the troops" in the Canadian green industry, and stresses that it's a model the U.S. should watch closely. He admits that many really believe it can't happen

here. "But it can, and in some ways it has happened on a smaller scale," he says.

This is why McIntire believes that getting involved as an internal advocate for the industry is important — especially now. He cites getting involved with an association or contacting local government officials as strategies for being politically active. "Politics have never been a passion for me," McIntire admits. "But since I've seen how legislation and regulatory issues can affect livelihood, I've become much more vocal and much more passionate about it."

"There are issues out there that people need to be aware of and [leaders in the industry] need to be talking to people and getting support," McIntire says. "There are still too many people out there who are not involved with the industry from a professional standpoint, giving people the wrong impression about what we do and what our industry is all about."

"If this is the industry you want to make a career in, get involved and protect it."

Leadership Defined

Chuck McIntire answers five questions on leadership.

What is your favorite book on leadership and why is it your favorite?

Besides the Bible, a current favorite that I have just finished is *Good to Great* by Jim Collins.

He reviewed the leadership of 11 Fortune 500 companies that have developed into great companies after years of average performance and his findings made a lot of sense to me. I am trying to incorporate some of these success traits into my leadership style.

As a leader in the lawn care market, where do you see the industry in 10 years?

The regulatory issues that our industry faces are real. But the benefits of the green industry are too great to be ignored. I believe, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that we will overcome the challenges and continue to prosper and grow. In 10 years, we will still be going strong!

How do you develop leadership skills in your employees?

First, you need to set a good example and second, you need to encourage them to lead and then let them learn from their mistakes.

Who has been the greatest influence on your leadership style and what did he or she teach you?

No one person but every boss that I ever had both good and bad. I think that I have picked up something from each of them.

What is the biggest challenge of being a leader and how do you overcome the challenge?

I believe that being passionate about what you do is an important characteristic in a leader. The challenge I face at times is taking that passion and turning it into a positive ingredient in the workplace without being misunderstood. The key to this is communication, communication and more communication.

knocking and McIntire was faced with examining his priorities.

KNOWING WHEN TO SAY NO. After being appointed to PLCAA's executive board of directors he suddenly found himself the 25th president elect of the organization – an enviable honor tied to an unenviable dilemma. "What it really came down to is that being a leader of an industry and part of an association are volunteer situations. So it's career vs. volunteerism."

McIntire knew it was in his best interest to default on the side of his career. "It has to take priority, for your family and for you and your future," he explains. In light of his growing responsibilities with Scotts, McIntire decided to resign from the PLCAA executive board believing that his time and energy would best serve his more personal endeavors, for now anyway. "I really felt like it was too much exposure for what I wanted," he says. "I was kind of talked into it."

The irony is not lost on McIntire. He recognizes that the dedication and professionalism that he hoped to retain by turning down his roles at PLCAA are the same qualities that probably delivered him to

that position in the first place. "The best people to do those jobs are the ones that haven't been limelight seekers or sought to promote themselves," he says. "That has never been my motivation and I think it's one of the reasons I've been successful. I think people see that I really do have a passion for the industry and the people in it."

Even though Chuck McIntire has decided not to lead through a board position with PLCAA, that doesn't mean that his skills are going stagnant. He still finds time to offer advice, assert his opinion and mentor others, making good use of his experience and cumulative knowledge.

He also holds himself to the same standard that he expects of others. "I try to lead by example. If I tell people to do one thing and they see me doing something else – that's no way to develop leaders. You have to be consistent in your message and the example you set for them."

So what kind of example does McIntire set each day?

He acknowledges that it might sound trite coming from someone who has served on the board of an industry association, but – "Get involved," he emphasizes. It's a concept he so firmly believes in that he

expects it will call him back to association participation further down the road.

McIntire also encourages anyone hoping to excel in the green industry to develop positive relationships with the competition. That's right – the competition.

McIntire never hesitates to call on a particular competitor when he needs advice. "That's the kind of competitors we are," he says. "My attitude is that there is enough business for all of us." It's a concept McIntire believes the industry could use some more of.

It's likely that this kind of heart-felt advice keeps returning McIntire to leadership, whether it's his intention or not. It's a role he takes seriously even if he didn't seek it – even if he thinks it's exhausting. But as exhausting as it might be, when Chuck McIntire jokes that he's "thinking of taking a sabbatical from leadership," it's difficult to imagine anyone believing him.

Perhaps because it's difficult to imagine leadership taking a sabbatical from Chuck McIntire.

The author is a Staff Writer for Lawn & Landscape magazine and can be reached at wnepper@lawnandlandscape.com.



The Leading Edge: Bayer Products

Bayer Environmental Science consistently strives to find better formulations, new products and solutions to turf and ornamental problems. The following products were registered or received label amendments in 2003.

REVOLVER™ REGISTERED FOR LAWN CARE, SPORTS TURF

Revolver™ Herbicide, a new postemergence sulfonylurea herbicide recently received registration for use on commercial and home lawns, sports fields, roadsides, school grounds, cemeteries and recreational areas. Initial registration was received for use on golf courses and sod farms in February.

Applied as a broadcast, foliar spray, Revolver selectively controls unwanted cool-season grasses without harming the desirable grasses. It is labeled for use on the following bermudagrasses: common, Tifway 419, Tifgreen 328, Tifsport, Tifdwarf and Vamont. Revolver also may be used on Meyer zoysiagrass.

"In the lawn care and recreational turf markets, Revolver will be used primarily to remove unwanted cool season grasses, such as *Poa annua*, *Poa trivialis*, perennial ryegrass, bentgrass, bluegrass, and tall fescue, as well as henbit and goosegrass, from actively growing bermudagrass and zoysiagrass," says George Raymond, Bayer Environmental Science business manager for herbicides/PGR's. "It also can be used as a transition aid on sites that are overseeded during winter months."

Labeled rates for Revolver range from 0.1 to 0.6 ounces per 1,000 square feet. Higher rates and air temperatures result in quicker removal of unwanted grasses. Revolver provides control of emerged weeds only and has limited soil residual.

PROSTAR® FUNGICIDE OFFERED FOR ORNAMENTAL DISEASE CONTROL

ProStar® 70WP Fungicide is now available for control of foliar rhizoctonia and rust in ornamental plants. The product has been widely used for control of fairy ring, brown patch and other diseases in turf for many years.

Go the Distance

ProStar® FUNGICIDE

A systemic fungicide containing the active ingredient flutolanil, ProStar may be used in greenhouses, saran and shade houses, and on outdoor container and field-grown ornamental nursery stock. Available in water-soluble bags, ProStar provides preventive and curative activity in the management of foliar, soilborne, and propagative diseases caused by rusts, species of *Rhizoctonia* and *Sclerotium rolfsii*.

"We are excited to offer ProStar for ornamental plants as well as for disease protection on turf," says Eric Kalasz, business manager – Fungicides, Bayer Environmental Science. "ProStar is a versatile product for nursery and greenhouse producers."

Although ProStar has curative activity, application is suggested on a preventive basis when conditions are optimum for disease development. ProStar may be used as a foliar spray or soil drench or through irrigation equipment for chemigation purposes. In addition, the product may be used as a cutting and bulb dip.

BAYER ANNOUNCES CEASEFIRE™ FIRE ANT BAIT

Bayer Environmental Science recently renamed Chipco® FireStar™, the company's granular bait insecticide for controlling fire ants, as Ceasefire™. The product is available in two-pound bottles or 15-pound bags.

Ceasefire's active ingredient is fipronil, which is formulated at the extremely low concentration rate of .00015 percent a.i. It provides effective control of red imported fire ants at a low label rate of 1.5 lb. product per acre and with a high rate of 15 lb. product per acre. The bait product is a great complement to Chipco® TopChoice™, the company's higher-dose fipronil-based insecticide.

"Ceasefire is an easy-to-use, low-dose insecticide that provides excellent fire ant control," says Marc McNulty, business manager, Insecticides, Bayer Environmental Science. Ceasefire can be applied in several ways:

- By hand on areas difficult to treat with a broadcast spreader
- As a fast-acting complement to a broadcast application of Chipco TopChoice
- As needed on individual mounds

Ceasefire is labeled for individual mound treatments and broadcast applications on home lawns, schools, golf course turf, cemeteries, commercial and recreational turf, adjacent landscape beds and sod farms. It is excellent for spot treatments or in areas difficult to treat with

a broadcast application, including sidewalks, parking lots, landscape beds and areas near water. Control is achieved within 14 days, and lasts four to six weeks or longer, depending on the rate applied.

RELIABLE, EFFECTIVE PRODUCTS

Lawn and landscape professionals know they can count on Bayer products. Advanced formulations, superior chemistry and excellent product support from research, development and sales representatives set these products apart from the rest. Users can be confident with products that are "Backed by Bayer."

MERIT® INSECTICIDE — INDUSTRY STANDARD

Merit® Insecticide is a broad spectrum, systemic insecticide that is extremely effective at low use rates. Merit delivers outstanding control of a variety of important turf and ornamental insects. It has an active ingredient that provides strong residual activity and superior biological performance. Soil application to shrubs and trees provides long-lasting control of labeled insect pests.

In 2004, Bayer celebrates the 10-year anniversary of Merit — a product that changed the way lawn care operators con-

MERIT®



trol grubs. Since its introduction, Merit has led the industry with real-world results, recording more than 90 percent efficacy on virtually every species of grub.

Merit provides:

- Excellent control of all major turfgrass-infesting white grub species – the competition can't make this claim
- Outstanding control of key ornamental pests
- Low use-rate and favorable toxicological and environmental profiles mean low risk to you and non-target organisms
- A new formulation, Merit® 2.5 G Ornamental Insecticide, is a ready-to-use product in a convenient 4-pound bottle
- It controls: Adelgids, Aphids, Lace bugs, Leafhoppers, Japanese beetle (adults), Leaf beetles (including Elm leaf and Viburnum leaf beetles), Whiteflies

CHIPCO® TOPCHOICE™

Single-application fire ant control for up to 52 weeks.

Chipco TopChoice is a granular insecticide for control of red imported fire ants.

chipco® topchoice™

With its active ingredient fipronil, TopChoice provides up to 52 weeks of 95-percent fire ant control with only a single broadcast application.

- Contact insecticide
- Takes four to six weeks to diminish populations
- When applied for fire ants, provides excellent control of mole crickets (four months), nuisance ants (three months), fleas (one month) and ticks (one month).

mesostemic mode of action delivering the highest efficacy at very low rates against turfgrass diseases, especially brown patch, anthracnose, leaf spot, and gray leaf spot.

Compass delivers the value of a contact with the power of a systemic. With remarkably low rates, it provides a high level

COMPASS™

COMPASS™ FUNGICIDE — REVOLUTIONARY ACTION THAT DELIVERS

COMPASS™ fungicide is a broad-spectrum strobilurin fungicide with a

of activity against disease at the lowest use rates available on the market. In fact, one pound of Compass at 0.15 oz/1,000 sq. ft. rate will cover 2.45 acres of turf per application.

Compass poses less risk to humans and the environment. It's classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as a reduced-risk compound.

- Controls brown patch, anthracnose, leaf spot, red thread, and gray leaf spot
- Very cost effective
- Suppresses dollar spot, while others strobilurins flare dollar spot
- No risk of growth regulation effects
- Provides outstanding ornamental disease control

BAYLETON® FUNGICIDE

The clear winner. Bayleton® Fungicide makes an easy fight out of turf and ornamental disease problems. And where some products require application once every 10 days, the efficiency of Bayleton is shown by only having to apply it once every 21-28 days.

Bayleton provides:

BAYLETON®

Value-Added Programs

Bayer Environmental Science sees great value in supporting industry trade associations, including PLCAA and ALCA, to help with educational seminars and programs. The company also partners with *Lawn & Landscape* each year to sponsor the School of Management and other seminars and workshops throughout the year. One of these programs, the Contractor's Roundtable, held in Atlanta in June, provided an opportunity for discourse among top lawn care and landscape professionals. The three-day event included a business seminar with tips for improving profits and an open forum for discussing challenges and solutions.

In addition, Bayer is a long-time sponsor of a Turfgrass Scholarship Program. Each year, the company provides college students interested in the industry with funds to continue their education. Since its inception, the program has provided scholarships to nearly 500 students.

Also, Bayer recently provided financial support for a new industry endeavor, the Evergreen Foundation. This dedicated group will work to educate the public about the benefits of the green industry and support industry-related issues. We are proud to be a part of this new initiative.

Finally, Bayer sponsors the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) Annual Field of the Year program. The STMA program gives Field of the Year awards for baseball, football, soccer and softball.

- Longest-lasting dollar spot control
- Broad-spectrum, long-lasting control of 12 other turf diseases, including take-all patch

- Application flexibility (granular or sprayable)

- Convenient pack sizes available

- Ornamental disease control

PROSTAR® FUNGICIDE

ProStar® Fungicide's systemic mode of action provides both preventive and curative disease control.

- An industry standard for brown patch control

- Also controls Red Thread/Pink Patch, Yellow Patch/Southern Blight, Gray Snow Mold, Large Brown Patch

- Provides unmatched control of Fairy Ring

- Excellent safety on Kentucky bluegrass, creeping bentgrass, perennial ryegrass, red fescue, tall fescue,

ProStar®

FUNGICIDE

bermudagrass, St. Augustinegrass and zoysiagrass

ALIETTE® FUNGICIDE

Aliette® Fungicide provides effective, preventive control of *Pythium*, *Phytophthora*, downy mildew and fire blight.

- Suppresses bacterial diseases caused by *Xanthomonas campestris* pathovars.

- Enhances the plant's natural defense mechanisms to fight off disease

- Can be applied as a drench or a foliar treatment

- Foliar application saves time and money by minimizing costly labor

- Shown no disease resistance in more than 20 years

SENCOR® HERBICIDE

Sencor® Herbicide offers highly effective control of tough weeds on dormant and actively growing bermudagrass turf.

Getting Up to Speed

Training is only a click away for lawn and landscape professionals with a desire for improvement. Launched last year and beefed up with more offerings this year, Bayer Academy provides free, online training on pest control and product usage. Bayer Academy training modules include valuable information on target insect, weed and disease problems, product chemistries, and application procedures. First-year offerings included modules on organophosphate (OP) replacement, *Poa annua* management, and prevention of summer decline and winter decline.

New training modules in 2003 include:

- Grub control with Merit® insecticide

- Fire ant biology and control with TopChoice™ and Choice™ insecticides

- How to bait for fire ants with Ceasefire™ insecticide

"Participants are quizzed after reviewing information online," says Jim Fetter, director of marketing for Bayer Environmental Science. "When they successfully complete the quiz, they receive a certificate recognizing their training and a gift. You don't get that for passing a test in high school!"

For more information, go to Bayerprocentral.com, click on Bayer Academy, and sign up!

- Controls an extensive list of weeds in dormant and active turf

Sencor can be tank-mixed with MSMA to control crabgrass, nutsedge, barnyardgrass, common yellow woodsorrel, sandbur and dallisgrass

ACCLAIM® HERBICIDE

Acclaim® Herbicide is a selective postemergence herbicide that controls annual and perennial grasses in turf.

- Works in a single treatment

Acclaim® Extra

HERBICIDE

- Controls silver crabgrass/goosegrass, smooth crabgrass, hairy crabgrass, barnyardgrass, foxtail species, panicum species, Johnsongrass (seedling), sandbur, sprangletop

- Suppresses Johnsongrass (rhizome), Common Bermudagrass

- One of the only available postemergence herbicides that can control crabgrass and goosegrass effectively with good tolerance

on desirable turf

- Wide range of growth stages – from spikes to 5-tillers

- Water-based formulation makes precautionary handling procedures easy compared to solvent-based formulations

FINALE® HERBICIDE

Finale® herbicide is a nonselective herbicide that provides fast and effective control of a broad spectrum of emerged annual and perennial grasses and broadleaf weeds.

Absorbed rapidly through green tissue, Finale produces visible results in one to four days. Its unique mode of action controls even the

tough weeds like poison ivy, dandelion, and thistle.

- Provides control for: broadleaf weeds, grasses, sedges, woody species, greenbriar, blackberry, conifers

Finale®

HERBICIDE



- No soil-residual activity, so transplanting or seeding in treated areas is possible hours after application
- Excellent tank-mix component, compatible with many popular herbicides
- Can be applied through a wide range of spray equipment

DELTA GARD® INSECTICIDE

DeltaGard® T&O is a low-dose insecticide available for use on lawns, landscapes, ornamentals and turf. DeltaGard rates are among the lowest of any line of insecticides, anywhere!

- Provides extremely effective control

DeltaGard® T&O

5SC INSECTICIDE

of a broad spectrum of insects

- Rates as low as 0.03 lbs. active ingredient per acre
- Available as a suspended concentrate

(5SC) formulation

- Does not contain Volatile Organic Compounds
- Provides long residual control
- Virtually no odor, and very low toxicity to mammals

DeltaGard®

SEVIN® INSECTICIDE

Sevin® insecticide is a carbaryl insecticide that provides broad-spectrum control of more than 130 turf and ornamental pests. Sevin has been trusted for more than 35 years by lawn care operators, golf course superintendents, arborists, nursery professionals, and parks and recreation directors to provide effective, curative and preventive insect control.

Available in two easy-to-use formulations — Sevin SL and Sevin 80 WSP.

- Also available on fertilizer
- Sevin SL is a liquid formulation con-

Sevin

taining 4 lb. carbaryl per gallon packaged in 2 x 2.5 gallon cases

- Sevin 80 WSP consists of pre-measured water soluble packets (1.25 lb. each) containing 80% active carbaryl that dissolve when dropped into water

DYLOX® INSECTICIDE

Dylox® insecticide provides fast-acting control of surface-feeding and soil insects, penetrating to and eliminating problem pests with lightning quickness.

- Effective on white grubs, mole crickets, sod webworms and cutworms on turf and additional ornamental pests

DYLOX

On A Roll: Bayer Speakers Bureau

Staying at the top of your game is always a challenge. That's why the Bayer Speakers Bureau was created several years ago.

"We want to provide current, relevant information and training to turf professionals who strive to keep abreast of industry issues," says Marc McNulty, business manager, Insecticides, Bayer Environmental Science. "By the way, it's free of charge," McNulty added.

New offerings for 2004 include:

- White Grub Biology and Management
- How to Effectively Control Fire Ants
- Replacing Ops
- Technically Sound Landscape Ornamental Programs
- Lawn Care Turf Diseases – A Regional Perspective

Highly qualified speakers — Bayer research specialists from all parts of the country — bring the information to life at industry meetings and seminars. Previous speaking engagements have included the Kansas Turfgrass Foundation, Lawn Care Association of Pennsylvania, National Institute on Park and Grounds Management, Nevada Landscape Association, and the Indiana Professional Lawn and Landscape Association.

"Bayer understands the need for continuing education in the workplace and wants to help turf professionals gain knowledge and training from industry experts," adds McNulty. "We consider the Speakers Bureau a valuable tool our company offers to support green industry professionals."

Organizations or businesses wishing to book a speaker for an industry group of 20 or more attendees can contact Diane Johnson at: 215-790-4362. For more information, go to the Bayer Web site, click on Programs, then Bayer Speakers.

Outstanding Year for Accolades Program

It's been a stellar year for Accolades®! In 2003, the innovative rewards program established new membership levels, announced a more business-oriented selection of rewards, and lengthened the point expiration period.

Introduced in late 1999, the Accolades program allows users to earn points toward rewards by purchasing products. Rewards include turf equipment, electronic items, fishing and hunting gear, sports equipment, trips, and donations to turfgrass associations.

Now members of Accolades can attain different levels within the program as they earn points. The three Membership Levels of Accolades include:

1. *Standard Accolades Membership* (less than 10,000 points earned per year):
 - Enjoy all standard program benefits
2. *Accolades Preferred Membership* (between 10,000 and 24,999 points earned per year)
 - Enjoy all standard program benefits
 - Earn 10% bonus points on all Bayer product purchases
3. *Accolades Elite Membership* (25,000 points or more per year)
 - Enjoy all standard program benefits
 - Earn 25% bonus points on all Bayer product purchases

In addition, the points expiration was lengthened from two to four years, so as to make it easier for turf managers to save for bigger items, such as larger equipment and computers.

Accolades improvements continued this year when the company announced a more business-oriented selection of rewards. Equipment, training tools, and travel packages to national seminars are a few of the many additional



items featured in the new Accolades lineup.

"Our customers requested more industry-related rewards that they could share with others on their staff," said Bryan Gooch, Accolades program manager. "We expanded our offerings to accommodate their needs. In addition to association dues and payment for educational seminars, we offer a way customers can donate the value of their points to national charities, such as The United Way or the American Cancer Society."

Members can access their Accolades records by going to www.AccoladesRewards.com and entering their user names and passwords.

"In 2004, customers will no longer have to submit invoices to receive Accolades points," says Gooch. "This step takes Accolades to the next level. We know customers don't have time to collect and send in invoices and we have a plan in place to make Paperless Points™ a reality."

Through Accolades, turf professionals can continue taking advantage of marketing tools such as doorhangers and postcards promoting add-on services. A new feature called newleads USA will be available soon. This offering provides a subscription service of new homeowners in a given area.

For more information on the Accolades Program, call 1-888-456-6464 or visit us online at www.Accoladesrewards.com.

OX®

- Provides white grub control within 24 hours
- Unrestricted regarding turf species or sites for landscape and recreational area uses

TEMPO® INSECTICIDE

Tempo® insecticide is an advanced-generation pyrethroid insecticide proven to be highly effective against a broad range of

TEMPO®

surface-feeding and foliar insects on turf and landscape ornamentals.

- Effective against: Annual Bluegrass Weevil (adult), Ants, Armyworms, Black turfgrass ataenius (adult), Bluegrass billbug (adult),

Chinch bugs, Cutworms, Fleas, Grasshoppers, Sod webworms, and Ticks (including deer ticks)

- Tempo provides

fast knockdown, and residual control of up to 30 days or more.

For more information on these products visit www.bayerprocentral.com.



Leadership and business advice from noted leaders.

Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it. — *Dwight Eisenhower*

The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet.
— *Theodore M. Hesburgh*

The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it. — *Theodore Roosevelt*

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. — *John F. Kennedy*

If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, we did it. If anything goes real good, then you did it. That's all it takes to get people to win football games for you. — *Paul "Bear" Bryant*

What characteristics do I look for when hiring somebody? That's one of the questions I ask when interviewing. I want to know what kind of people they would hire. — *Jeff Bezos*

You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do.
— *Henry Ford*

A smooth sea never made a skilled mariner. — *English Proverb*

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.
— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

A no uttered from the deepest conviction is better than a yes merely uttered to please, or what is worse, to avoid trouble.
— *Mahatma Gandhi*

Quotable

To lead people, walk beside them. As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honor and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate. When the best leader's work is done the people say, we did it ourselves. — *Lao-tsu*

Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances.
— *Thomas Jefferson*

Success is where preparation and opportunity meet. — *Bobby Unser*

No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings. — *Peter Drucker*

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.
— *Abraham Lincoln*

No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself, or to get all the credit for doing it.
— *Andrew Carnegie*

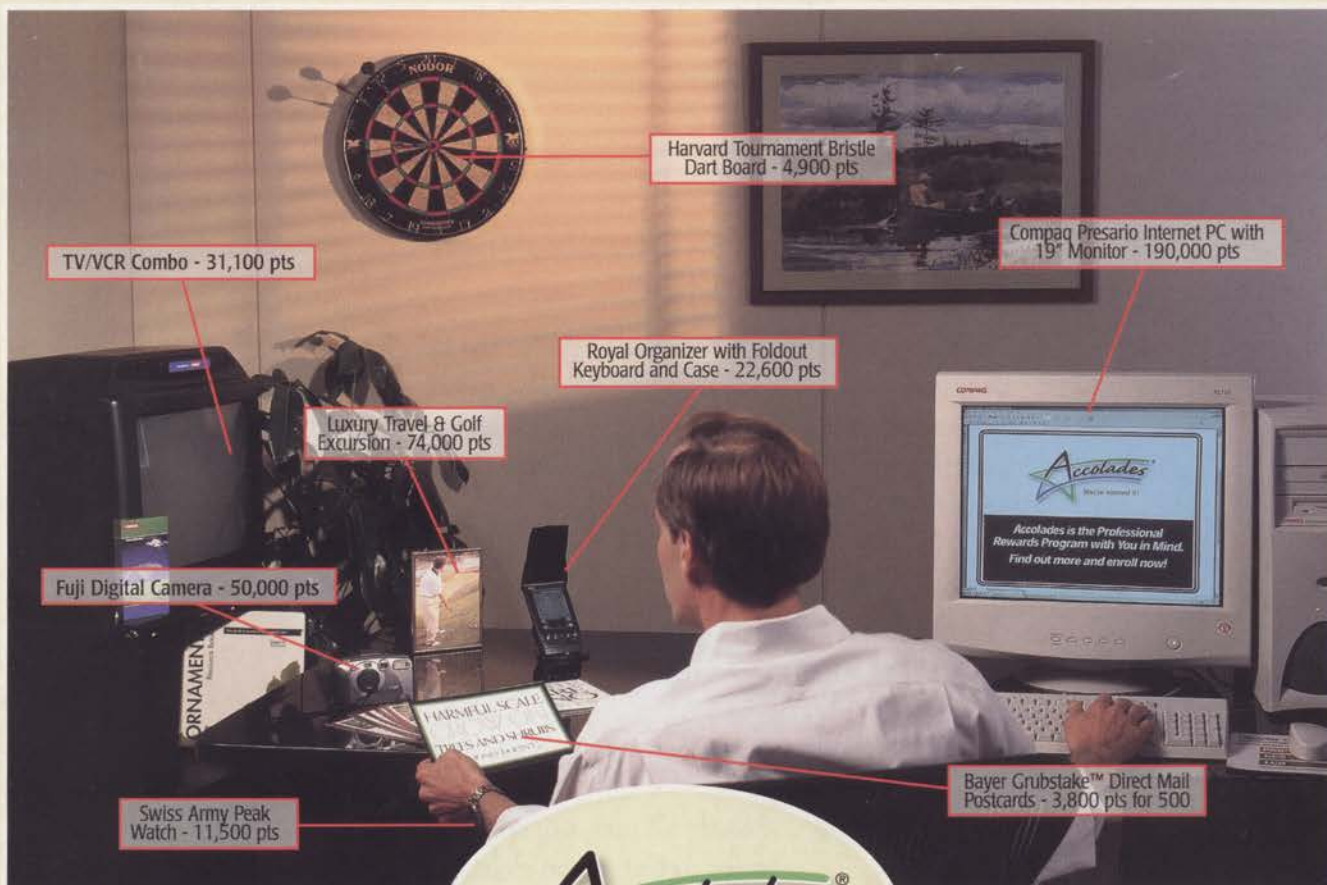
If you think you can do a thing or that you cannot do a thing, in either case you are right.
— *Henry Ford*

Entrepreneurs are the forgotten heroes of America. — *Ronald Reagan*

The first step to leadership is servanthood. — *John Maxwell*

Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things. — *Peter F. Drucker*

e Leaders



BOTH AT THE OFFICE AND IN THE FIELD

YOU GET THE REWARDS YOU DESERVE

