How “green” is your software?

Industry-specific software helps you capture profits and win clients

BY LYNNE BRAKEMAN / ON-LINE CONTENT EDITOR

Of all your important tools, among the most important (and the most bewildering) is computer software. Whether it's business management or design/estimating/presentation software, the choices are many and the investment is considerable.

When it comes to software, it's especially hard to determine when it's finally time to make the leap from off-the-shelf solutions (like Intuit Corp.'s QuickBooks or Microsoft's Excel) to industry-specific products.

If you think you've arrived at that jumping off spot, Landscape Management has compiled a list of 25 Green Industry-specific products which begins on page 37. Go to www.landscapemanagement.net for an expanded listing including product descriptions and live Web links.

Several Green Industry software vendors share their insights on recent trends in business computing and explain why their customers believe the investment has paid off in measurable growth of productivity and profitability.

David Tucker, president
Sensible Software Inc. (CLIP Software)
www.clip.com

"When we were still a lawn maintenance company, we already knew we had to control our job costing data so we could capitalize on our best properties," says Dave Tucker, explaining how Sensible Software got its start at the dawn of personal computing back in 1988.

Tucker says he's frequently asked why a company should switch from off-the-shelf software to an industry-specific solution like CLIP.

"The answer to that is the same as for somebody who says 'I'm happy mowing lawns with my little MTD I bought at Home Depot,'" Tucker says. "Yes, maybe you are, and maybe you can continue to be in business for the short term with that tool. But, if you're going to be professional and maximize your profit — if you're going to be in control of your company — you need to get the right tool for the job."

Tucker says some companies he's seen are using thrown-together systems as nothing more than electronic Post-It pads. He says the real key to profitability is tracking and maximizing some new landscape CAD programs can generate estimates and create proposal presentation documents from a single project plan.
mizing labor efficiency.

According to Tucker, hand-held computers (also called personal digital assistants or PDAs) for on-the-job data collection is an irreversible trend. Data saved in the PDA is downloaded to the main office computer. Some vendors already offer routing and mapping applications that can be uploaded to a crew's PDA at the start of the day, eliminating printed route schedules. CLIP communicates with English or Spanish-language PDAs.

"Another trend is moving data on the Internet," Tucker says. "We now have an option that allows customers to go to a Web site and check their bills and schedules. We're working on extending this to on-line communication with suppliers."

Paul Jackson, president
Alocet Software (Lawn Monkey)
www.lawnmonkey.com

"I think, by 2005, you will see a lot more Web-based applications," says Paul Jackson. This model is a lot like leasing equipment. The user pays by the month or by usage for an application that is hosted on a vendor's Web site.

Jackson has also noticed his clients struggling with the problem of having multiple

shops and off-site locations.

"What's coming is the ability to e-mail the schedule to a crew's PDA so they don't have to connect at the main office," Jackson says.

John Decell, president
Software Republic LLP
www.softwarerepublic.com

Software Republic started out making software for irrigation designers. Decell says contractors who handle both irrigation and landscape design kept asking for a landscape program, so the company created two programs: EcoCAD for design and job costing and Photoscapes for customer presentations.

"The most important thing for our clients is ease of use," says Decell. Although three-dimensional (3D) landscape design packages are beginning to become affordable, Decell says his company made a decision to stick with a two-dimensional solution to keep the learning curve short.

"That's also why we went with a separate imaging program for visual presentations," Decell says. "We focus on what is going to be easiest to learn — that's what our customers say is important to them."

Green Industry software products

Following is a list of 25 vendors that sell green industry-specific software applications.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Adkad | 800/586-4683
www.adkad.com
- GroundsKeeper Pro 2000

Alocet Software | 877/529-6659
www.lawnmonkey.com
- LawnMonkey 2001 PRO

Compuscapes | 800/350-3534
www.compuscapes.com
- Compuscapes

DK Enterprises | 317/722-1990
dkenetcom/winlawn.html
- WinLawn Pro

continued on page 38
$4.17 a month * buys you

- Multi-Category Search by Plant, Pest, Product and more
- 24/7 Turf & Ornamental Information at www.bluebooktor.com
- Search the C&P Press complete database for:
  - Labels
  - MSDSs
  - Supplemental Labels
  - Product Summaries
  - DOT

--- FREE TRIAL ---

Call C&P Press today at 800-544-7377 to get access to this Premium Service for 2 weeks...free of charge.

* Annual subscription fee for Premium Service is only $50.00 per year.

C&P Press

Circle 116

Looking for New Resources to Increase Online Sales and Profits? Find it all in...

Achieving Web Profits

NEW FROM JOE TRACY, INTERNET EXPERT AND AUTHOR OF WEB MARKETING APPLIED.

Research shows that nearly all websites fail on a number of levels, which can lead to a large loss in potential business and revenue. That does not have to be the case anymore thanks to Joe Tracy's new book Achieving Web Profits!

Features:
- Over 100 profit ideas for your website backed by research
- How to establish an advertising base
- What a CPL is and how it can increase your revenue
- How to maximize returns on affiliate programs
- Guidance on building an eBusiness plan
- Techniques to support avoiding investors, network with competitors, and control spending to produce strong financials
- How to sell your website when the time is right
- Real life experiences bringing concepts to life and showing them in action
- Step-by-step, easy-to-follow presentations to achieve maximum results in a short period of time

Whether one person or 2,000 control your website, the business models presented in Achieving Web Profits can help you build a winning combination of profit ideas!

Order Today! 1-800-598-6008
Outside the U.S. 218-723-9180 • Fax: 218-723-9456
Visit www.advanstarbooks.com/webprofits/
Please mention code H-AWP when ordering

continued from page 37

Include Software Corp. | 800/475-0311
www.include.com
- Asset Integrated Business Management System

Intac International Inc. | 800/724-7899
www.intac.net
- Wintac Pro

Performance Software Technologies | 800/624-6244
www.gopst.com
- Route Rite Legend

Practical Solutions | 614/436-9066
www.theservicessolution.com
- The Service Solution

Rapp Industries Inc. | 800/999-1159
www.rappind.com
- Landscape Business Management System

Real Green Systems
800/422-7478
www.realgreen.com
- Lawn Assistant III

Sensible Software, Inc.
800/635-8485
www.clip.com
- CLIP and QuickCLIP

Slice Technologies
800/542-7249
www.sliceplusplus.com
- SlicePlus

Tree Management Systems 812/876-7864
www.turftree.com
- TurfGold

UDS, Green Industry Software | 800/626-7247
www.activeapplications.com
- Active Applications

Vanguard Computer Systems | 888/350-1696
www.camelotsoftware.com
- Camelot Software

Sensible Software's CLIP PDAs come in both English and Spanish versions.
GET REAL GRASSHOPPER Performance

First to Finish ... Built to Last.

Real control with ComfortRide™ is standard — with no gimmicks that sacrifice quality of cut — providing a ride so smooth that putting in a day's work is not much work at all. Real liquid-cooled engines — the kind that include three cylinders and solid cast-iron construction — provide maximum power to mowing decks and implements. DuraMax™ decks let you mulch, bag or side discharge using the same deck. Grasshopper gives you a quality cut every time.

Get the real facts on why Grasshopper is "First to Finish ... Built to Last."

Send for literature, ask your Grasshopper dealer or visit our Web site for details.

www.grasshoppermower.com

The Grasshopper Company • P.O. Box 637 • Moundridge, KS 67107 U.S.A.
Phone: (620) 345-8621 • FAX: (620) 345-2301 • E-mail: info@grasshoppermower.com
Circle 118