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WHAT'S COMING UP IN NOVEMBER

**Cover story: Look out '03, here we come**
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**People of the Year**
We pick the movers and shakers in landscaping, lawn care and grounds management.

**Erosion control opportunities**
Warning! Stricter guidelines for erosion and sediment control approach. Turn them into cash.

**Trailers galore**
A complete product roundup of trailers that can get your equipment from the shop to the job efficiently and safely.

**To lime or not to lime**
... is often the question. Read this and you'll finally get the answer.

**Athletic turf in trays**
Find out how it's working out on Michigan State University's new football field.

**Plus:** Consultant Judy Guido's new "Market Watch" column, Dr. Bal Rao's "Ask the Expert" and Bruce Wilson's "Best Practices"

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So you think that Superman is the guy that has it all. Think again.

Superman has no family to speak of. No close relationships or friends to confide in. Work? Forget it. Superman has to spend all of his time flying around trying to solve problems.

And, those tights — do you think that maybe he needs somebody to help him pick out a nice sport shirt and khakis?

Green Industry consultant and entrepreneur Tom Oyler gave about 400 landscapers the real lowdown on Superman at the ALCA Maintenance Symposium that this magazine sponsored this past summer. To Oyler’s mind (and I agree), if you’re committed to going it alone and doing it all yourself in building your business or managing your operation, you’re headed down a long, lonely, and, ultimately, frustrating road.

Few of us are quick enough, clever enough or tough enough to do it all without a helping hand. Why should we?

They’ve been there, done that

A lot of sharp people in this business have already experienced what you may be experiencing now, particularly if you’re still trying to build your business or you’re working like crazy and not getting anywhere. Don’t fight these battles alone.

Not only have other people figured out ways to deal with what you’re going through, they’ll gladly share what they’ve learned with you. Sometimes all you have to do is show up and ask.

For example, several weeks ago, more than 40 landscapers from across the country gathered in Painesville, OH, and spent two days sharing experiences at consultant Jim Paluch’s “Face to Face” event. Some of the friendships and alliances formed there will likely continue long after the owners and managers returned to their homes and businesses.

Here’s your contact info

A much larger learning and networking opportunity, the Green Industry Expo, rapidly approaches. Beginning Nov. 13, 5,000 to 6,000 people from three industry organizations will gather at the Opryland Resorts in Nashville, TN. In addition to checking out all the latest equipment and products for landscape and grounds, you’ll get some great business building ideas there.

Consider going. The time and money you spend participating in the conferences and learning from colleagues will seem small compared to what you will learn and the new friends that you will make there.


Contact Ron at 440/891-2636 or e-mail at rhall@advanstar.com

If you’re committed to doing everything yourself, you’re headed down a long, frustrating road.
BY ED LAFLAMME / GUEST COLUMNIST

I’ll be sharing business ideas that will help you build your own learning organization.

You can never learn enough

I was in my 40s and had owned a landscape company for years before I began to appreciate the importance of creating a “learning organization,” or a company that purposefully seeks useful knowledge, then incorporates that knowledge into its day-to-day operations.

Now, after selling my business, I’m again teaching some of the lessons we learned in our company, and I love it. Those lessons will be the cornerstone of this column and future ones I’ll be writing for Landscape Management: I’ll be offering business ideas to help you build your own unique learning organization.

Creating a learning environment
There are many reasons to create a learning environment, but the most immediate and obvious one is that it provides a much sturdier base upon which to build a healthier company with a healthier bottom line.

I’ve also discovered there are less tangible benefits. For example, learning is fun and exciting. I discovered that once you and the rest of your organization have embarked on the journey to acquire useful knowledge, you also begin to share it. The more you learn, the more you share.

But how do you recognize if you own or work for this type of organization?

Mike Morrison, dean of the University of Toyta, suggests you ask yourself the following five questions:

1. Are you on a learning path? Do you have an agenda, a plan?
2. Are you open to information that contradicts your assumptions?
3. Do you learn from your mistakes?
4. Do you have systems to ensure that new information is retained?
5. Do you put new ideas to use?

The more times you answered “yes,” the stronger the learning culture in your operation. If these questions reveal weaknesses in your organization, then it’s time to do something about it. And we’re not just talking training, although that’s certainly a big part of a learning organization that:

• keeps up on industry trends by reading trade magazines,
• encourages and embraces ongoing education,
• increases the responsibility of key employees as they increase their knowledge, accept challenges and find creative ways to meet them, and
• attracts better accounts, offers higher wages and is able to hire and keep the best employees.

Be the champion for change in your company and help create a learning organization. There’s plenty of information and people to help in this effort.

— The author built and operated the largest landscape company in Connecticut before selling it in 1999.

He now operates Grass Roots Consulting, Inc.

He can be contacted at ed@grassrootsconsulting.com or 203/858-4696.

Attention! Forward! Learn!

Follow the U.S. Army’s example — yes, the U.S. Army — and institute an “After Action Review” or AAR after each job.

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Wrap the season up right!

Different times of the year bring their own unique challenges. The end of the season is now upon us, and there's a whole new slate of concerns for busy landscape professionals: how to keep as many employees as possible busy and productive, contemplating purchasing and budget decisions, forecasting next year's growth and sales, etc.

How do members of The Owners' Network deal with these challenges? Let's find out.

**Should they stay or go?**

Michael Hatcher of Michael Hatcher and Associates, Memphis, TN, has an interesting take on his employee situation come the end of the year. While he admits that Memphis may not be as seasonal an area as others, there is a slowdown between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day, and some employees must go. He likens it to a professional golf event.

"We're always working to retain our best employees, and, just as it is with the PGA golf tournaments, only the best get to play on the weekend," Hatcher says. He takes the golf analogy even further. "When you have the best playing all the time, there is no reason that you have to lay off. So you better start working on your employees' golf swing (work ethics) and make sure it's your people in the final pairings on Sunday afternoon."

Steven M. Vandervest of Turf Management Lawn Care, Lawrenceville, GA, says his business isn't seasonal either as maintenance continues year-round. But that doesn't mean he keeps his entire crew on.

"Our Hispanic workforce returns to Mexico at the beginning of November, and that leaves us with our base personnel," he says. "The base personnel are busy because they service the other routes during the off-season. This works out perfectly because we service our customers less frequently."

Dave Rooney's labor picture is predetermined in spring. "Everyone who works here knows they have to participate in snow operations," the owner of Rooney Landscape, Rolling Meadows, IL, says. "We offer a great incentive program for snow that keeps our people around but still allows them vacation time."

**Buying and budgeting**

Vandervest makes a good point of not waiting until the end of the year to do all budget and equipment purchase review.

"Our budgeting and equipment purchases are reviewed throughout the year," he says. "That way, if we notice we're way off on an item, we can further evaluate what's happening. It's my belief that you create a yearly budget, monitor it closely and make revisions as the year goes by only when an item budgeted is unrealistic."

Hatcher offers one bit of advice on purchasing: "There are some tax advantages to year-end purchases. Consult with your accountant." On budgeting, he says it's all about being careful and accurate. "Make sure everything is getting posted to the right account for expensing," he says.

Dixie Speck, who's three years into owning Viridis Garden Design, Atlanta, GA, takes the simple approach to purchasing. "We buy trucks and equipment when we are unable to continue job opportunities without them," she says. "This may not be the best way, but we're trying to get a handle on what to project for our growth so we can budget."

Like most, Rooney also espouses the "sooner rather than later" attitude towards determining a budget. Also, he looks at the fall/winter downtime as something that should be taken advantage of. "We've already started talking about our 2003 budget," he says. "We have had our 'Broad Strokes' meetings, putting together wish lists. Our next meeting will be fine tuning our growth potential and confidence in our market and economy. By December 1, we'll have our sales goals, rates per hour and material markups established."

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Information provided by The Owners' Network, a program created by JP Horizons, Inc. and sponsored by Weed Man. Visit the Web site www.owners1.com or call 877/574-5267.
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Sanitors acquires Terrain Systems
SAN ANTONIO, TX — Sanitors, Inc., a $100 million-plus company, acquired Terrain Systems, Phoenix, AZ, and Landscape Care, an affiliate of Terrain Systems. Terrain Systems reported 2001 revenue of $14.5 million. The acquisition was made through Grounds Control, the Sanitors’ subsidiary for the landscape industry. Sanitors entered the landscape industry with the 1998 acquisition of Ground Control, San Antonio, TX.

Jacobsen, Bunton equip Universal
ORLANDO, FL — Bunton and Jacobsen announced a multi-year agreement with Universal Orlando for use of their commercial lawn care equipment to maintain the grounds at the resort’s theme parks.

Kawasaki alters dealer distribution
IRVINE, CA — Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A., recently announced a shift in the distribution methodology for its power products lineup. The company will now distribute its small engines and lawn care products on a direct basis to its dealer network.

Thomas, United Rentals join forces
MARS HILL, ME — Thomas Equipment Ltd. and United Rentals have formed an agreement where Thomas will be a strategic supplier to United Rentals for their skid-steer loader needs.

‘New’ ValleyCrest eyes expansion
CALABASAS, CA — Environmental Industries, Inc., the largest landscape company in the U.S., changed its identity to ValleyCrest Companies on Oct. 1. This should create more brand awareness for the company’s growing presence in landscape maintenance, says the company.

“The driving force for the re-branding is to simplify the way customers view us and better communicate the scope of the company’s services,” explains Richard A. Sperber, president and COO.

While it was a challenge to get all the details worked out, employees in every division did begin wearing the company’s new red uniforms this month and the company’s 4,000 trucks began displaying the new design.

Eliminating confusion
“Most of our maintenance is an outgrowth of our landscape company,” says company founder and CEO Burton Sperber. “So, they (customers) were doing business with Valley Crest, then we switched them over to doing business Environmental Care to maintain their properties and there was confusion.

“This is going to give us a real leg up in expanding the landscape maintenance business,” adds Burt Sperber. “It’s our main focus for expansion.”

Picking a name that customers and the industry would immediately recognize wasn’t difficult, he adds. It was there all along since Valley Crest Landscape Nurseries was the name that he and his father chose in 1949 when they parlayed an initial $700 investment in a nursery/landscape business that now employs more than 7,000 people with annual pro forma revenue in excess of $600 million.

(The name Environmental Industries, Inc., was chosen when the company went public in 1969, and it remained the official name even after the family reacquired it a decade later.)

While it was a challenge to get all the details worked out, employees in every division did begin wearing the company’s new red uniforms this month and the company’s 4,000 trucks began displaying the new design.

“This is going to give us a real leg up in expanding the maintenance business”
— Burton Sperber
Home Depot takes on LESCO brands

CLEVELAND - LESCO, Inc., has been chosen as a supplier to the Home Depot Landscape Supply pilot stores opening in August and September.

"LESCO branded products are the preferred choice of the lawn care contractor," said Michael P. DiMino, president and chief executive officer of LESCO. "We have been successfully supplying professional grade products to Home Depot's traditional home improvement stores, and our product line will extend naturally into its pilot stores."

Home Depot intends to open three standalone pilot stores dedicated to the landscape business in its headquarters' city of Atlanta. The new stores will target the professional landscaper and the avid do-it-yourself enthusiast. LESCO will supply professional-grade fertilizer and combination products for the professional lawn care customer under its own brand. The company has been a supplier to Home Depot for the past 10 years and is supplying fertilizer, combination products and seed to more than 800 of their locations.

"It's important that we show our professional landscape customers that we're serious about serving their needs," said Todd Williams, director, Home Depot Landscape Supply. "LESCO is a name recognized by landscapers as a company with professional grade products. This is why we thought LESCO products would be a good fit for our pilot stores."

Correction

The contact information for Daniels Pull Plow was listed incorrectly in the September issue. For more information on the product, call 847/426-1150 or visit www.danielsplows.com.
Minnesota landscape industry tops $2.1 billion

New survey shows companies expect to grow another 30% to 50% by 2005

ST. PAUL, MN — The approximately 3,000 family-owned landscape and nursery companies in Minnesota topped $2.1 billion in sales this past year, reported the Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association (MNLA), citing the results of a recently completed industry survey.

Gross sales within four major industry segments were identified:
- Landscape services — $1.1 billion
- Retail sales — $453 million
- Agricultural/horticultural production — $347 million
- Wholesale hard goods — $207 million

The MNLA also reported that between 1995 and 2000, the survey indicated that average gross sales of the companies in the nursery and landscape industry increased 97%.

"The success of our industry is a testament to the fact that small family-owned and operated businesses can be created and can succeed," said Jim Wilson, president of the MNLA. "Most of our industry's companies have fewer than 10 full-time employees, yet collectively we provide 28,000 jobs." The breakdown is 10,000 full-time, 7,700 part-time and 16,500 seasonal employees.

Additionally, the survey revealed that the industry is a major employer within Minnesota with an annual payroll of $697.9 million.

Companies responding to the survey said that they expect to grow another 30% to 50% in the years 2000-2005.

The economic impact study was the first comprehensive compilation of data on the state’s professional green industry. Companies were surveyed in the winter of 2001-2002 and asked for sales figures for the year 2000. Partners in the project with MNLA were the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, AgStar Financial Services and the University of Minnesota, Department of Horticulture.

People & companies

ENCORE MANUFACTURING selected Doug Tegtmeier, national sales manager for the company, as secretary/treasurer of the company's Board of Directors.

Shindaiwa named Tom Murphy product manager.

The Scotts appointed Chris Nagel chief financial officer.

LESCO added the following people to its executive management team: Bruce K. Thorn, vice president, Logistics and Operations; Steven Cochran, sr. vice president, Marketing and Strategic Sourcing; and Maureen Thompson, vice president, Human Resources.

HUNTER INDUSTRIES named Charles Huston executive vice president of sales, Michael Cucchiara vice president of sales for the Americas, Brandon Meadows international vice president of sales for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Australia and Asia, and Dean Armstrong sales manager for eastern Canada.

HIGHGROVE PARTNERS, formerly POST LANDSCAPE GROUP, appointed Brad Jackson maintenance sales representative, Brett J. Wendel estimator and irrigation manager, and Erik D. Jarkins landscape designer. The company also promoted Pat Whalen to maintenance sales representative.

BOZZUTO Landscaping, Greenbelt, MD, promoted Dean Ratliff and Jeff Liija to area manager.

CEBECO INTERNATIONAL SEEDS added Mike Billman and Denise De Hart to its turf and forage sales and marketing program.
New study: healthy lawns prevent runoff

Fertilizer necessary for healthy turfgrass

MADISON, WI — As water quality continues to be an issue in many parts of the country, a longtime lawn care operator and a University of Wisconsin professor agree that a healthy lawn reduces runoff, which consists of phosphorus-rich soil that causes plant growth in lakes and streams.

Thick, healthy lawns filter out pollutants that would otherwise run into area lakes and streams. "Microorganisms that live in the thatch actually break down some of the bad inorganic materials that are found in urban runoff," says Terry Kurth, co-owner of Weed Man Lawn Care of Madison.

Additionally, says Kurth, most professionally maintained lawns are treated only with the amount of slow-release product required, so there's little or no product runoff. Driveways and other non-grassy surfaces are blown off after treatment to ensure that fertilizers don't wash into city sewers.

Six-year study

Wayne Kussow, Ph.D., turf specialist at the University of Wisconsin, recently completed a six-year study of nutrient losses from urban Kentucky bluegrass lawns.

"When the lawn was not fertilized for two years, the grass thinned out so much that the amount of runoff water increased 176 percent," said Kussow of his findings. While a common assumption is that the phosphorus in water runoff comes from fertilizer and soil, Kussow found that 72 percent of the phosphorus runoff water was collected from December through the period of snow melt, concluding that plant tissue is a significant source of phosphorus in runoff water from urban and agricultural landscapes.

"The end result was that the amount of phosphorus lost via runoff from the unfertilized lawn was more than double the loss from fertilized turf. Thus, lesson number two from this research is that fertilizing to maintain healthy, dense lawns is far more environmentally friendly than not applying fertilizer," he added.

The thing practically crawls up walls.

This may very well be the most versatile tractor line on the globe. To be versatile, you've got to do two things first: be agile and be user-friendly. Lots of old guard tractors are so big and clunky that they're hard to maneuver. Yes, they're durable, but difficult. Options can cost you.

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Other neat features include a completely reversible seat and control system that changes direction in seconds, loads of attachments that mount front, back and even on top, as well as powerful, yet fuel minimizing, engines that help keep operations costs down.

Recently, Carraro was honored in the "Best of Specialized" category in the International Tractor of the Year competition. So you know quality and engineering are high priorities at Carraro as well as value pricing.

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Champion Tree Project plants 9-11 memorial trees at Pentagon

Sen. Carl Levin, D-MI, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-MI, Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, and David Milarch, co-founder of the Champion Tree Project, are combining their efforts to ensure that a publicly-accessible memorial to the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack is established at the Pentagon.

Stupak and Milarch met with Levin and Stabenow staff members at the Pentagon in July along with retired Marine Corps Gen. George Cates, former executive director of the National Tree Trust, to confirm sites for a Sept. 11th memorial planting of Champion red and green ash trees. Also attending the planning meeting were Darryl Kosisky, the Pentagon's chief landscape architect, and Terry Mock, executive director of the Champion Tree Project.

"Trees have long symbolized life and hope," said Levin. "These Champion trees will be a fitting tribute to those who lost their lives at the Pentagon, and will remind us of our hope for the future. As season after season passes, these Champion red and green ash trees will serve as a constant, living remembrance, accessible to all, of the lives lost on September 11."

The Champion Tree Project is dedicated to collecting the genetic material of the nation's biggest and oldest specimens of each variety of tree. Project officials were recently involved in other Washington DC area events, including planting at his Mount Vernon home the clones of trees originally planted by George Washington, and cloning Maryland's famed Wye Oak, a 460-year-old tree toppled in an early June storm.

Virginia suffers water ban
Severe drought prompts governor to halt lawn watering

RICHMOND, VA — Virginia Governor Mark R. Warner issued an executive order Aug. 30 banning lawn watering and other water use in much of the state because of a severe drought. In response to an outcry from business owners who warned of big economic losses, exemptions will come for some irrigation and swimming pool contractors and newly sodded golf courses, but not lawn care businesses, according to an article in the Richmond Times-Dispatch. The only areas not included in the ban are the northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC, and the southwestern tip of Virginia. Virginia has suffered through a drought since 1999, and it has only been more severe this year. Recent rains only offered temporary relief.

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INDUSTRY TRENDS BY THE NUMBERS

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<th>Region</th>
<th>1&amp;2Q 2001</th>
<th>1&amp;2Q 2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>38,000</td>
<td>38,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: ROSE GUTIERREZ, RESEARCH ECONOMIST, NAHB'S ECONOMICS GROUP

2002 REVENUE AND PRICING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In 2002, prices will:</th>
<th>In 2002, revenue will:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51% increase</td>
<td>59% increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49% stay the same</td>
<td>33% stay the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7% decrease</td>
<td>7% decrease</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: LM READER SURVEY

Survey says...

More than one-third of the U.S. is suffering under drought conditions. If you own a lawn care or landscaping company, we'd like to know if drought has made this summer any tougher than usual.

44% Things are about the same as last year.
43% Yes. Business is all dried up.
13% My business is really taking off this year.

Percentages based on 181 responses

Log onto www.lanscapemanagement.net and answer our online survey. We publish the results here monthly.

LAWN & GARDEN CONSUMABLE SALES (MILLION DOLLARS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>% Annual Growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total lawn and garden sales</td>
<td>3570</td>
<td>4750</td>
<td>6220</td>
<td>01/96: 5.9 06/01: 5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertilizers</td>
<td>1380</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>2450</td>
<td>6.0 5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1525</td>
<td>4.8 4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing media</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>7.9 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>4.7 4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulch</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>7.0 5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>5.4 4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: THE FREEDONIA GROUP (WWW.FREEDONIAGROUP.COM)
Count up the dollars-and-cents worth of your long-term clients. You’ll be surprised at their value to your operation.

BY RON HALL/EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Thirteen years after founding his landscape company, Bill Gordon sat down and started tallying numbers. However, the lean, friendly man with thinning hair and engaging smile wasn’t tracking the same score that most landscape business owners follow from month to month or season to season.

Gordon, CLP, owner of Signature Landscape, Inc., was wading through his company’s history and re-examining how a handful of positive business relationships had expanded outward. He was counting up, in dollars and cents, how they had helped his company get to where it is today — one of the leading landscape service providers in the Kansas City market with annual sales of almost $5 million.

Seeing the light

As he went through the exercise, part of his research for a presentation that he eventually delivered to fellow landscapers at this past summer’s ALCA Maintenance Symposium, he was struck by a couple of points.

The first was the amazing ability of business relationships to grow and financially benefit an operation. He
realized, as never before, that on occasion — and given the right set of circumstances — a single positive encounter could spread out into a network of business opportunities, like ripples on a pond.

The other point that came into focus (it was right there on paper in front of him) was that most of his company's new revenues came from familiar sources — the customers it already served.

"I was really surprised to see the kind of impact that relationships have had in our organization," admits Gordon, a 1982 Kansas State University graduate. "I had almost forgotten how important they are. We tend to try to sell new work all the time, but that's not where most of our growth has come from. Seventy five percent of our new business is generated from our relationships with existing clients."

It's mutually beneficial
Signature Landscape, Inc., offers a variety of landscape services, but mowing and related horticultural services account for 56% of its annual revenues. Its primary customers are commercial properties, homeowners' associations and apartment communities. Because of this, the company has a lot of day-to-day interaction with on-site managers, property managers and homeowner boards. These boards are most typically represented by landscape committee chairpeople.

Several positive interactions with these people — and the realization that they network among themselves — awoke Gordon to the absolute necessity of establishing mutually beneficial relationships.

For example, shortly after starting his company, Gordon got a call from a property manager who he had met and worked with during his employment as the director of landscape maintenance for another company. "I didn't call her, she called us," says Gordon. Late that season, she gave Gordon's company the snow removal contract, and by spring she had signed up his company for two landscape renovations.

"These were our first big design/build contracts," says Gordon, who rented equipment to complete the work. "We did a nice job on those properties."

Weeks later, a friend confided in him that word of his company's quality service came up at a monthly breakfast meeting of property managers.

"It stuck in my mind what a small community the property management commu-

---

**RELATIONSHIPS' REWARDS IN DOLLARS AND CENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Year Began</th>
<th>Initial Properties</th>
<th>2002 Properties</th>
<th>Total Gross Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Property Manager A</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$1.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Manager B</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$2.55 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Manager C</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$1.925 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Manager D</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$1.96 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
nity is, but they control a large volume of business," says Gordon.

But property managers, particularly successful ones, don’t stay put, which can be either good or bad for a landscape company. In Signature’s case, it’s been more often good. For example, the work that he had done with his company’s first property manager client expanded significantly when her portfolio of properties expanded in 1994. Not only that, but the company, gaining a reputation for quality work, began picking up adjacent properties.

And even when this manager eventually switched positions, Signature Landscape didn’t suffer despite losing several of the properties because Gordon didn’t give up on them. “The most effective time to build a customer relationship is after the account is gone,” he says. “Your motives for friendship are more pure.”

Adds Gordon, “Fortunately, we were able to hang on to a good portion of the work that we had built throughout our relationship with her. And she brought us on board for other work. Things continued to build based on that one relationship.”

This isn’t an isolated case, stresses Gordon. He can point to other long-term relationships with property managers or owners that have resulted in long-term benefits for them and for his company. Gordon can conservatively count up almost $10 million worth of revenues in the past 13 years arising from these relationships. (See chart on page 23.)

As Signature Landscape has grown, Gordon has had to let others within his company build and maintain these relationships. He says he’s lucky to have four excellent account managers — Eric Robinson, Chris Carter, Mark Nelson and Brian Cox.

“All of us in the company count on them to build good relationships with our customers. We worked hard to get these four guys in place,” says Gordon. They, like he, subscribe to the same philosophy — “You reap what you sow in relationships. Always look out for the customers’ best interests.”

— Bob Andrews, former president of PLCAA, is the owner of The Greenskeeper, Carmel, IN.

Business relationships must...

► Be mutually beneficial. While they don’t have to be 50/50, they’re not working relationships if one side always “takes” and the other side always “gives.”

► Be built upon trust. Each party must fundamentally believe the other and act on “word” rather than written agreement.

► Withstand hard times. When one or both parties go through stressful times, the unaffected partner should stand by the stressed partner — at least for a reasonable time.

► Be above board. Unethical or illegal activity by either party cannot be tolerated.

► Benefit everybody. That is, everybody affected by the relationship, including customers of the parties.

► Change over time. Personal relationships often last a lifetime, but, as business conditions change, so do business relationships.

You can’t win if you don’t play

Get involved in organizations beyond your own company, but participate, too, insists Rick Doesburg, CCLP, owner of Thornton Landscape, Maineville, OH. That’s the fastest and most fun way to build long-lasting business relationships, he believes.

Doesburg practices what he preaches. In addition to serving as president of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America, a trade association that he’s passionate about, he and his company have been members of the Cincinnati Homebuilders Association since 1969.

“I know almost every developer in the Cincinnati market, and I know most all of the builders even though we don’t work for them all,” says Doesburg, adding that the benefits of belonging to that association have stretched way beyond strictly drumming up business from members.

Indeed, of the association’s 1,800 members, almost 1,300 are associates. These include bankers, lawyers, a wide spectrum of building material suppliers and support services and too many related industry members to list here.

“Not only did I get to know a lot of these people, too, because of our involvement in the homebuilders association, but many of them have become friends that I’ve dealt with regularly,” he says.

“A lot of our business over the years has not necessarily come from the builders and developers but from the many associates in that association. We’ve done a ton of work for these people, too.”

But, if you merely join an organization and don’t participate, you’re missing the point, says Doesburg.

“Be active, get involved, build relationships, get to know people and have some fun,” he stresses. “People like to deal with people they know and trust. Friends have friends and it just keeps mushrooming.”
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Going for the gold

American Landscape, Inc. earned the gold with its snow removal efforts at the 2002 Winter Olympics

BY JASON STAHL / MANAGING EDITOR

December 1, 2002, marked the official start of the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah. However, it was on this day that the largest snowstorm on record hit the city, threatening to disrupt the opening ceremonies. But American Landscape, Inc., was prepared. With a $3.35 million contract from the Olympic Committee, the company was able to mobilize its workforce and equipment to clear the snow from the 13 different venues.

"We were able to perform satisfactorily for the committee, and from that point on it was all downhill," Holland says.

Sealing the deal

When the project was nationally bid out last summer, American Landscape took an immediate interest in it. A $4.5 million structural landscape project for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had brought the company some local recognition in Salt Lake City. But the company had been founded in southern California, and the question from the Committee was, what do you know about snow removal?

"Our local workforce is just that — local. From Salt Lake City," Holland says. "So they understand snow removal. Four months out of the year here, they’re pushing snow.”
Holland emphasized to the Committee that American Landscape had a local presence and the capacity, strength and resources to handle this massive project successfully. Ultimately, it came down to American Landscape offering to do the project for a lump sum amount regardless of snowfall, something other interested companies, according to Holland, weren’t willing to offer.

A logistical nightmare
The first thing Holland and his crew had to do was prepare more than 100 pieces of equipment — skid-steers, salt trucks, loaders, backhoes and tracked ASVs — for the 13 venues.

“We mobilized enough equipment on site to where if it was a 12- or 18-inch snow storm, we could move that snow in a specific amount of time and accommodate all those people,” Holland says.

Some of the equipment was owned by American Landscape; some was rented from Hertz. The company bought an additional $250,000 worth to accommodate the project. Also, the equipment had to be all different sizes due to the design of the Olympic venues, what Holland termed a “very restrictive buildout.” Security fencing, temporary trailers and other immovable objects made the layout tight.

“And it was constantly evolving,” Holland says of the Olympics site. “What the venues looked like in October was in no way representative of what they looked like in December or for the Opening Ceremonies.”

---

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SNOW MANAGEMENT

By the numbers...
The numbers were staggering when it came to the size and scope of American Landscape's snow removal project at the 2002 Winter Olympics. Here are some interesting figures:

- 150,000-175,000 tons of snow removed from venues
- 40,000 gallons of diesel fuel used
- 26,000 man-hours worked

Operators went on "dry runs" on all 13 venues before the snow hit to make sure they were aware of the obstacles in place. Holland says the salt truck drivers had the most challenging job, as they had to familiarize themselves with multiple venues.

Not only was there a lack of space for the snow removal equipment to operate, there was hardly anywhere to put the snow. "There were some snow storage areas, but as the Games got closer, those areas became minimal because of security risks," Holland says. "We couldn't, for instance, mobilize a pile of snow against a fenceline because of line-of-sight issues."

American Landscape ended up hiring a large sand and gravel company to bring in 150 trucks at a time to carry the snow away.

Security matters
As if plowing and carting away hundreds of thousands of tons of snow away wasn't hard enough, American Landscape had to deal with the constant scrutiny of the Secret Service. After all, employees had unlimited access to every venue.

"The security did impede our job, but it was okay," Holland says. "We knew it was coming, we provided for it, and the guys were good-natured about it."

All employees were screened by American Landscape prior to the Secret Service's screening process. About 98% of the employees American Landscape turned in were passed by the Secret Service.

---

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“We did have a few rejections,” Holland says. “The Committee couldn’t tell us why, and we didn’t ask.”

The Secret Service also inspected all equipment, and salt loads too with a plastic probe.

Safety first
Despite the fact that 150 employees were working in cold, cramped, slippery conditions for six months, sometimes up to 30 hours straight, relatively few injuries were reported during the project. The elevation level, however, caused trouble for one employee.

“Salt Lake City is 4,500 ft. above sea level, and there’s a 3,000-ft. difference between Salt Lake and Park City,” Holland says. “One guy who was going back and forth had inner ear problems.”

Equipment operators had to avoid portable propane and natural gas tanks and miles of television cables, but only a few machines slid into fences due to the ice.

Plans for expansion
Looking back, Holland says the 2002 Winter Olympics snow removal project was the most complicated one he’s ever been in charge of. He personally averaged four hours of sleep per night for six months. Still, it’s as if he wished for a greater challenge.

“It was kind of an anticlimactic end because Salt Lake City didn’t get any snow during the 17 days of the Olympics,” he says.

Due to the success of the project, Holland says American Landscape wants to expand its snow removal operations by targeting high-profile, retail-oriented centers like hospitals. He anticipates a quadrupling of revenue in snow removal for the company in the winter of 2002-03. Perhaps memories of their Olympian effort will keep the crews warm on their ensuing projects.

“Our guys went into it and came out of excited and pumped,” Holland says. “The Olympic spirit was truly alive in Salt Lake City.”

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New accounting system lets The Groundskeeper consolidate five payrolls into one, reduce staff and get timely feedback

BY JERRY FIREMAN

he Groundskeeper had a problem, but not in how business was going. The thriving company located in Tucson had been recognized by Arizona Business Magazine as the number one landscape company in the state for the last two years, and it had won kudos for its excellence in landscape construction, improvement and maintenance.

The problem was that the company was managing its records on a host-based accounting system designed for construction accounting. The lack of a multi-level reporting tree meant that the company, with six branches in two states and more than 500 employees, had to set up each of its five regions as separate companies.

This caused serious inefficiencies. For example, one expense transaction that was distributed across the branches required separate journal entries in each of the regions.

Overall, it took five accounting runs for all the regions to be consolidated into a single statement. It also meant the company records could only be consolidated at the end of each month, so management didn’t have up-to-the-minute access to reports.

Consolidating payroll
The Groundskeeper’s staff, headed by then-information systems manager Kim Schnell, decided on a system from the Solomon Financial Series, a product of Microsoft Great Plains Business Solutions.

The attraction: its project management capabilities were the most powerful of all of those in the range of mid-market systems they viewed. Another plus was Solomon’s report writer, which allowed accounting staff to create custom reports.

Selecting the right software streamlines operations, financial reporting.
Today's systems software gives managers immediate information.

This system allowed the Groundskeeper to become one integrated company, while keeping each of its regions' payrolls separate. Three-digit sub-accounts allowed regional, branch and department information to be segregated without the need to treat them all as multiple companies.

"The use of balancing entries is no longer needed because all regions are now located within the same 'company,'" says Schnell. "Transactions that used to require many journal entries now require just one."

The Groundskeeper needs to do only one check run now, speeding the time to process timesheets. Plus, says Schnell, "bank reconciliation proceeds much more quickly." The new system also lets the company display available vacation time and make direct deposits to employee bank accounts.

According to Tom Rex, Groundskeeper's CFO, the company can now handle all its accounting operations with three people, representing a 40% reduction in accounting staff. "We also benefited from improved reporting," says Schnell, now Groundskeeper's corporate administrator. "After customized programming, our payroll edit report can be run for all employees or for any particular region, branch, or department," she explains, and current reports can be generated at any time, dramatically improving management's ability to track the business.

The Windows user interface is so easy to use that managers in all branches now have user accounts that can be accessed over the company's wide area network, letting them generate weekly or even daily profit-and-loss statements and other reports. This lets them identify problems, and opportunities, on a timely basis.

— The author lives in Birmingham, MI. He can be contacted at jerry_fireman@strucinfo.com. To learn more about The Solomon Financial Series, visit www.2020software.com/products/Solomon.htm.

continued on page 34
• Groundskeeper Pro, Blizzard Buster business management software for landscaping, lawn service and snow management pros. Scheduling, routing, billing, customer maintenance, job estimating, payroll and business expense tracking.

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continued from page 34

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Today’s design software produces colorful, hi-impact images that appeal to many potential clients

BY GEORGE WITTERSCHEIN

Dean D’Amico owns and operates D & D Landscaping, a 14-year-old design/build company focusing on higher end residential customers on Long Island, NY.

About five years ago, he purchased a copy of Design Imaging Group’s Designware program.

“I literally doubled my revenues and the size of my company,” says D’Amico who expects revenues of about $5 million this season. “Buying the software was one of the best moves I ever made. It helped my business because it’s a great selling tool.

“You walk in with your laptop, turn it on and you say to the prospective customer, ‘This is what your landscape looks like now’ and then ‘This is what it’s going to look like when we’re done,’ and more often than not the customer says, ‘Wow! Nobody ever did that for us before!’

D’Amico says that he made about 120 sales out of the first 150 computer-generated renderings he showed to prospective clients. Perhaps not entirely in jest, he observes, “I don’t want too many guys to get computer savvy, because it would make my job a lot harder!”

How taxing was it to learn to use the software? “For the first year I got assistance and instruction. Within a few months I had reached the point where I was doing everything on my own,” he says.

Ron Faberman, owner/president of Southernscapes in Broward County, FL, offers both mainte-
nance and installation for high-end residential estate homes and apartment communities. Faberman uses Visual Impact Picture Publisher 10 program in his operation that records about $1 million in annual sales.

"I wanted more efficiencies in running my company, so I looked into a number of design and presentation packages," says Faberman. "The software is so good that professional photographers can use it on their pictures. Plus, it contains a plant library that would take a long time to build up yourself."

Faberman describes his ability to demonstrate what projects look like before work starts as "a valuable shortcut" to go to a customer. "It's amazing how much time we have cut out of what we used to spend creating presentations that look much better.

"We go out and interview the customer and get a feel for what they want and what their budget is. Then we come back to our office and do a before and after. Usually we e-mail out the result. Most of our customers have e-mail today and that makes it really easy."

Peter Hogenbirk, owner/operator of Birk's Landscape, an 11-year-old, nearly $1 million firm in Durham, Ontario, Canada, began using Landscape Illustrator software in 1998.

At that point, Hogenbirk had already been using the high-powered generic design program AutoCAD for several years, and was a reasonably proficient self-taught computer user. He switched from AutoCAD to Landscape Illustrator because AutoCAD produces line-drawing plans as its output, and he was finding that some customers...
could not adequately visualize his plans from the line drawing AutoCAD output. "I would produce an entire plan, they would look it over extensively, and then they would ask me something like, 'Where is the lawn going to go?'" the Ontario area landscaper recalls. "The beautiful full color output of Landscape Illustrator is much more effective. Customers tell me they find it easier and more memorable to look at," he adds.

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The author is a frequent contributor to LM. Reach him at GRBWitt@aol.com
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All the more reason to have a top-notch grounds staff. The Department of Natural Resources and ServiceMaster, Grounds Management Services, team to keep things nice for the 900,000 Chicago residents who use the parks each week.

Every spring, staffers plant thousands of floral beds. For 2001, $3.5 million was spent on the annual floral displays including plant purchase, installation, maintenance and removal at the end of the season.

The Park District Grounds Maintenance Operation is separated into five geographic-based regions. Each region contains a forestry and landscape group responsible for tree care, turf maintenance, trash/debris removal and snow-clearing operations.

Every day, year-round, all 553 parks are cleaned and inspected by crews dispatched from the regional shops. The Lakefront Region provides garbage removal for parks and seasonal events such as Taste of Chicago and the Jazz Festival that draws millions of people to the parks.

Editors' note: Landscape Management is the exclusive sponsor of the Green Star Professional Grounds Management Awards for outstanding management of residential, commercial and institutional landscapes. The 2002 winners will be named at the annual meeting of the Professional Grounds Management Society in November. For more information on the 2001 Awards, contact PGMS at:

720 Light St. • Baltimore, MD 21230 • Phone: 410/223-2861. Web site: www.pgms.org
The Chicago Park District offers plenty of scenic, manicured sites for visitor rest and relaxation.

Few park districts in the world can match the $3.5 million that Chicago spends on its annual floral displays.
Joe Loyet’s been around the block once or twice in the landscaping business. As president of the $6 million Loyet Landscape Maintenance company in St. Louis, MO, he’s had time to figure out what works for his company. In irrigation, he’s decided that lots of service and just a little installation is the most profitable way to go.

“Installing irrigation is so competitive that they put these systems in for about nothing,” Loyet says. “We don’t want to be in that business.”

That’s not to say Loyet and his crew of four irrigation techs won’t expand a zone of a customer’s existing system. But, from his first foray into the irrigation business, Loyet has preferred being a master of service.

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“When we had to sub it out, a system might be down for a week or two and there was nothing we could do about it,” Loyet says. “I wanted service to be done quickly, and that’s why we moved everything in-house.”

Being able to service irrigation systems in-house hasn’t only been a plus on the customer service side, it’s been lucrative, Loyet says. “Give your customers prompt service, and there’s no question about the dollars. They just want it done.”

Loyet builds the irrigation servicing cost into his customers’ maintenance contracts. “We build in the start-up and blowout of the system, plus an inspection every four weeks,” he says. Anything beyond that merits a work order form. Sales reps are responsible for the controllers on the properties they manage, plus minor repairs such as a mowed head.

Today, irrigation comprises 20% of Loyet’s business. “Irrigation has been a plus for us,” Loyet says. “For installation, I recommend getting someone else to do it.”

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Circle 124
Applying herbicides now can ensure vigorous, healthy turf next season

BY DONALD F. MYERS

A year-round climate that's favorable for weed development makes weed control a 12-month problem for turfgrass professionals throughout the southern U.S. In these areas, LCOs must deal with a range of cool-season weeds that many northern professionals only encounter on a limited basis.

Most cool-season weeds germinate and begin to flourish in late summer, continuing through fall and winter when warm-season turf goes dormant. Even in winter months, these weeds will survive due to the favorable conditions in warmer climates.

Winter weeds will delay the green-up of warm-season turf in the spring, while competing with desirable turf in thin or newly seeded areas. Weeds that establish themselves in turf during fall and winter will often die when hot weather hits, leaving bare spots in turf — allowing for the establishment of other undesirable weeds. What's worse, an LCO's overseeding efforts in the fall may promote the establishment of these weeds.

Cool-season weeds

The range of cool-season weeds offers unique problems to southern LCOs. Identifying and understanding these problems is the first step to providing effective winter weed control.

Henbit. Henbit is a member of the mint family, thriving in cool, moist weather. The weed has a square-shaped main stem, and can grow from four to 12 in. Leaves are rounded, coarsely toothed, hairy and deeply veined. Its purple, trumpet-shaped flowers bloom in the spring. Found
throughout the U.S., henbit spreads by seed. It competes with desirable turf in newly seeded areas, and thrives in shaded areas. Postemergence herbicide applications made during active growth control the weed.

Common chickweed. The spreading, rooting branches of common chickweed cover desirable turf, impeding its growth. Chickweed leaves are bright, shiny green and taper to a point, attached on opposite sides of hairy stems. Highly adaptable to changes in mowing height, it will grow in moist, shaded areas. Chemical control of common chickweed may be needed in thin or newly seeded turf. Postemergence applications will achieve optimum control during active growth and in the seedling to flower stage.

Wild garlic/wild onion. Wild garlic and wild onion are grass-like weeds with dark, smooth, slender green leaves growing eight to 12 in. long. Each has bulbs that give off a strong odor. Wild garlic flowers are white to light green, appearing on short stems. Wild onion flowers are white to pink. Both weeds flower from April through June.

Wild garlic spreads by seeds, bulblets at the stem tips, underground bulblets and bulbs. Optimum control of wild garlic and wild onion is achieved via postemergence herbicide applications made during active growth.

White clover. White clover, with its three leaflets, is similar in appearance to black medic and oxalis. However, its white blossoms, from May through September, differentiate it from the other two. This shallow rooted winter perennial was once widely used in turf as a nitrogen source. Even today it appears in some less expensive seed mixtures. However, it can suffocate desirable turfgrasses and fades in hot weather, leaving large patches of unsightly

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turf. Postemergence herbicide applications in fall, when white clover is actively growing, are ideal for control.

**Annual bluegrass.** Annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is identified by its light green leaves with pale, thin tips. Like crabgrass, its stems often lie near the ground, forming dense patches that can withstand low mowing heights. Annual bluegrass produces hundreds of whitish-green seedheads at any mowing height. It's a short-lived plant, beginning growth in late summer or early fall from seed produced by mature plants earlier in the same year. Annual bluegrass has a shallow root system. In unwatered lawns, it will die during the hottest part of summer, leaving conspicuous bare spots. Preemergence herbicide applications in fall and spring should prevent germination.

**Lawn burweed (spurweed).** Lawn burweed (spurweed) is a low-growing winter annual, with branches spreading along the ground in a mat-like fashion. The leaves are divided into narrow segments. Lawn burweed reproduces by seed; sharply pointed spines on the seed can pierce skin easily. Make postemergence herbicide applications during active growth to control lawn burweed.

**Cool-season weed prevention**

Cool-season weeds all have one thing in common: their ability to flourish in weakened warm-season turf. That's why adopting cultural practices that encourage a healthy turf is an important step in the prevention of winter weeds. These practices include proper fertilization, watering and mowing.

Wild garlic and wild onion become problematic when allowed to grow in thin or dormant turf. Maintaining healthy, dense turf is an ideal way to avoid their appearance. White clover grows best in soils that are moist and low in nitrogen, so proper practices that encourage dense turf growth will hinder its establishment. Annual bluegrass excels with high fertility and irrigation, while cultural prevention of lawn burweed is based on good turf management measures that encourage dense turf growth.

**Chemical control of winter weeds**

Preemergence herbicides — effective tools for winter weed control — will have little or no effect on cool-season weeds that have germinated and begun growth. That's why preemergence applications need to be made in the late summer to early fall prior to germination to achieve maximum weed control through the fall and winter. Preemergence applications should be watered, ensuring herbicide makes contact with the top soil layer where most seed germination takes place.

In contrast, nonselective postemergence herbicides will provide control of actively
Wild garlic can be controlled with a postemergence herbicide.

growing winter weeds — ideal for LCOs who were unable to make preemergence applications earlier. However, in order to limit damage to desirable turf, postemergence herbicides shouldn’t be used until warm-season turf has gone completely dormant. In areas where warm-season turf doesn’t go completely dormant, postemergent applications may temporarily damage desirable turf. The application of these products must be made carefully. Preemergence herbicide applications may be more appropriate in situations where complete dormancy doesn’t occur.

Several postemergence herbicides will provide varying levels of control of cool-season weeds: Roundup Pro® (glyphosate), Reward® (diquat), Finale® (glufosinate) and Scythe® (pelargonic acid). Absorbed rapidly through green tissue, Finale has worked effectively in cooler temperatures.

Make these applications in fall and early winter when weeds are small. By the spring, cool-season weeds become mature and more difficult to control postemergence.

— The author is Technical Development Manager – Herbicides for Bayer Environmental Science / Chipco Professional Products. For more info on Chipco products, call 800/438-5837 or visit www.aventischipco.com.
Hitting the wall

This contractor faced a complex project, but the right retaining wall system made it easy

BY ARIK C. HANSON

The 35-year-old Skyline Medical Center in Nashville, TN, was long overdue for a facelift. Like many other buildings constructed in the '60s and '70s, it needed some remodeling, a few upgrades and a variety of improvements. So owner-operator TriStar Health System initiated a plan to renovate the hospital and its surrounding grounds.

Part of the massive overhaul included adding a sunken, open-air courtyard that would act as a combination dining-waiting area for visitors and patients.

Local landscape architect Gresham Smith and Partners designed an area full of plantings, trees, fountains and plenty of segmental retaining walls (SRWs), including steps and vertical columns. Soon after, regional masonry contractor Wasco, Inc. won the bid to install the SRWs.

The problem: size and complexity of project

Joe Marsh, field superintendent/estimator at Wasco, had been a bricklayer and stone-mason by trade for 34 years. However, most of his time had been spent building brick- and mortar-type walls, not segmental retaining walls. With 34 years of experience under his belt, Marsh figured it would be no problem handling the project.

"It was such a big project, and I think they (Gresham Smith and Partners) felt like my crew couldn't pull it off," Marsh says.

But Marsh's brimming confidence and extensive experience won over the architects, and he and his crew were awarded the job.

The solution: use simple retaining wall system

Before construction began, Marsh had to select a retaining wall system for the project. After researching his options, he chose VERSA-LOK Retaining Wall Systems because its solid units would enable him to build walls, steps and columns with just one single unit. Using this system, Marsh wouldn't have to spend valuable time ordering custom or special-sized units, but
instead could quickly split or saw-cut the solid units right on the job site.

Once the paperwork and estimating were done, Marsh and his crew visited the job site, surveyed the area and mapped a course of action.

"The walls were not a big deal for us because we've built (masonry) walls before," Marsh says. "The columns and steps were more challenging."

So Marsh put his 34 years of bricklaying experience to good use and devised a plan to build the columns. Using four half-units and concrete adhesive, Marsh stacked the columns while pouring a concrete center with rebar for additional reinforcement.

"It just came natural for me," Marsh says. "Of course, I'm used to laying walls with brick and mortar. The only difference was these walls didn't have any mortar."

Marsh and his crew quickly learned the installation techniques. But Marsh credits the segmental retaining wall system with the fast, easy installation the crew was enjoying.

"We would rather use solid, pinned systems than any other," Marsh says. "You can use other products (hollowed-out or 'cored' retaining wall systems) to build walls, but they can't incorporate steps or columns as easily."

Skyline Medical Center, Nashville, TN, celebrated its 35th birthday with a new landscape.

When the smoke cleared, the Skyline Medical Center had an updated facility and a brand-new courtyard, and Marsh and his crew had completed a project they could be proud of for years to come. LM
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continued on page 56
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Double sharp
Little Wonder’s double edge gas trimmer is now 20% faster and 10% lighter, with a one-in. lower profile for reduced weight and easier handling. Available blade lengths are 24 and 30 in. Machine produces 4,100 cuts per minute.
For more information contact Little Wonder at 877/596-6337 or www.littlewonder.com / circle no. 260

Tag team stimulants
Becker Underwood’s BioGain and Canteen work in tandem to treat newly seeded or established turf, sod and landscaping plants. BioGain reduces stress and stimulates root growth through enhanced water and nutrient uptake, and corrects iron deficiencies in grasses and landscaping plants. Canteen, a spreader and soil penetrant, loosens compacted soils, improves seed germination, delivers pesticides and fertilizers to the root zone and assists wetting of spray tank mixes.
For more information contact Becker Underwood at 800/232-5907 / circle no. 261

Grip it good
Caterpillar utility grapple buckets and forks for skid-steers come in three widths — 60, 66 and 72 in., with a maximum jaw opening on the grapple of 40 in. Grapple forks have jaw opening of 38 in. The nine-tine grapple fork measures 66-in. wide, while the eleven tine design is 72 in. wide. Both feature a coupler interface intended to match most skid-steers’ mechanical quick coupler systems.
For more information contact Caterpillar at www.cat.com / circle no. 262

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For more information contact Wright Mfg. at 301/360-9810 or [www.wrightmfg.com](http://www.wrightmfg.com) / circle no. 263

**Get in shape**

Pro Industries' new Shape-Trak feature for the BedShaper commercial landscape edgers is engineered so the cutting blade and the machine's drive wheels are in line with each other, allowing the drive wheels and cutting blade to follow the same radius for more control.

For more information contact Pro Industries at 717/738-9990 or [www.bedshaper.com](http://www.bedshaper.com) / circle no. 264

**Berkeley pumps perform**

The Berkeley GTS submersible pumps feature 304 stainless steel construction that outperforms ordinary fabricated stainless-steel pumps in abrasive conditions. The GTS Series is designed for six-inch well casings with flow choices from 40 to 360 GPM. Horsepowers range from 1-1/2 to 60 with a choice of 50 or 60 Hz configurations. The threaded discharge has BSP and NPT options. All GTS Series pumps are designed for continuous duty.

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17-18 Pennsylvania Community Forestry Conference / State College, PA; 814/863-7941
18-22 ASLA Meeting and Expo / San Jose, CA; 202/898-2444

November

22 ALCA Essentials for Success / Los Angeles, CA; 800/395-2522; www.alca.org
23-24 Western Nursery & Garden Expo / Las Vegas, NV; 800/748-6214
24-26 Int'l. Irrigation Show / New Orleans, LA; 703/536-7080
4-6 OLA Short Course / Intermediate Residential Design / Hudson, OH; Sponsored by the Ohio Landscapers Association; 440/717-0004

December

3-5 OLA Short Course – Advanced Landscape Drawing / Hudson, OH; 440/717-0004
6-7 The Great Southern Tree Conference / Gainesville, FL; 800/375-3642

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(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: Landscape Management
2. Publication Number: 0894-1254
3. Filing Date: 09/12/02
4. Issue Frequency: Monthly
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 12
6. Annual Subscription Price: $46.00
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Circulation Office: 213 First Street, 9th Floor Boston, MA 02110
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 60632 Captiva III Finance Ltd Captiva IV Finance Ltd 840 Newport Center Dr, Suite 300 West Palm Beach, FL 33401

9. Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher: John D. Payne 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44130-3369
10. Editor: Ronda Hughes 131 West First Street, 9th Floor Boston, MA 02110
11. Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Advertising/Business Manager: Robert A. Dahl, Group Circulation Director
12. Name, Address, and Telephone Number of Advertiser/Discount Agent: Ronda Hughes
13. Statement as to Whether Paid in Full or Partially Paid: Paid in Full
14. Circulation Data:
<table>
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15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

16. Publication Date: August 2002

17. Name and Title of Publisher, Editor, Business Manager, or Owner: Robert A. Dahl, Group Circulation Director

18. Certification

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
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Commit to it, keep it simple, don’t stop

BY BRUCE WILSON

Training is one of the biggest challenges in our industry. Companies face many hurdles in trying to implement even the most basic training platforms. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges is overcoming the language barrier. Another big challenge is consistently making time to do training. Most companies start training programs, but they end up falling by the wayside when the busy season hits. Here are some tried and true solutions to get you started.

Think about the end

Begin with the end in mind. Don’t start something without being totally committed to it. Also, be sure you can keep it going, and don’t make it complex. Train on things that get results. Training should do one of three things:

- Improve efficiency
- Improve quality
- Prepare a person for promotion

Begin to establish a training culture in your company. A training culture requires a commitment by ownership to support and encourage ongoing training of all employees at all levels.

Place the responsibility of getting training on the employee by tying pay increases to the learning of new skills and/or attaining certifications.

Don’t allow yourself to be put in the position of employees saying they’re not receiving training. Make it available, and make them take action on getting trained.

Take advantage of the many industry resources for training tapes, including the equipment manufacturers, fertilizer and chemical suppliers, and trade associations.

Find natural trainers

Every company has one or two crew leaders that are good at what they do and also are natural trainers. Put all of your new employees on the crew with the best trainers.

Pictures help overcome the language problem, so take some of how you want the finished product to look, whether it be good mowing patterns, weed-free beds or sharp edges. Also, take pictures of the same work done poorly and use these to show the right way in contrast to the wrong way.

The final piece is recognition. Make sure you call attention in a positive way to employees who take advantage of training opportunities.

Sound off

Bruce Wilson spent 30 years building Environmental Care, Inc., into one of the largest and most respected Green Industry companies in the U.S. He and partner Thomas L. Oyler of Wilson-Oyler Group now offer consulting services to landscape and grounds care providers. (Visit www.wilson-oyler.com or contact Wilson at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com.)

Do you have any training tips you can add to Wilson’s list? Let managing editor Jason Stahl know at jstahl@advanstar.com. If we publish your e-mail in a future issue, we’ll mail you a copy of the book, “Spanish Phrases for Landscaping Professionals,” by Jason Halben and Dominic Arbin. For information about the book, call 303/863-1685.

5 easy training tips

- Establish a training culture in your organization
- Train on things that get results
- Look within your organization for good trainers
- Take advantage of industry resources
- Recognize employees committed to improving
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