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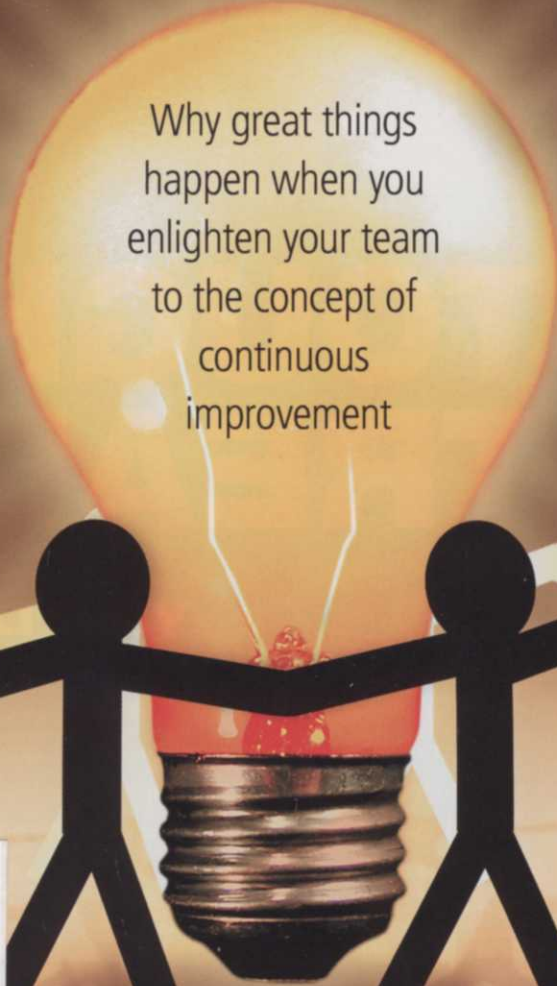
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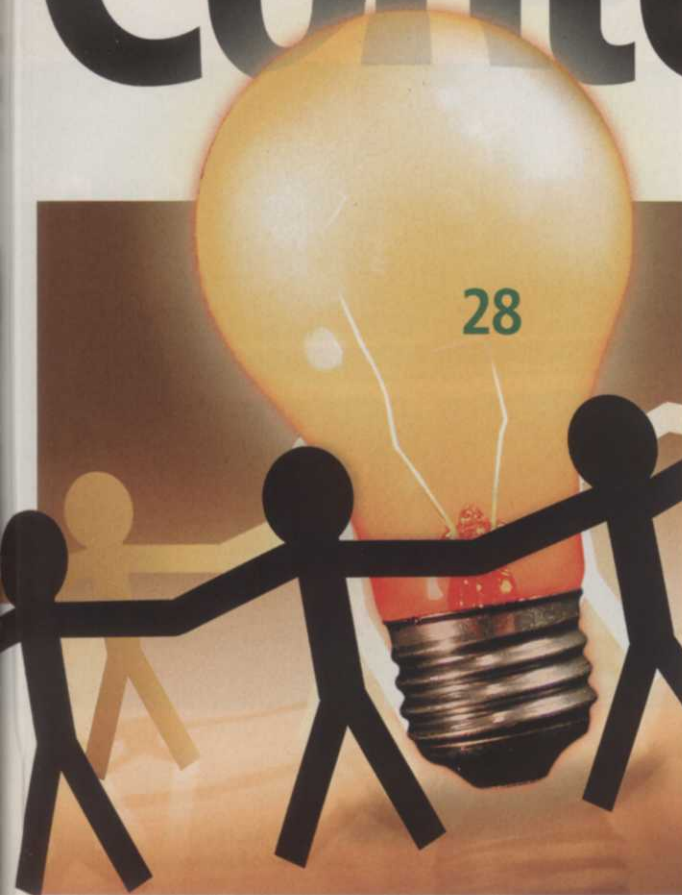


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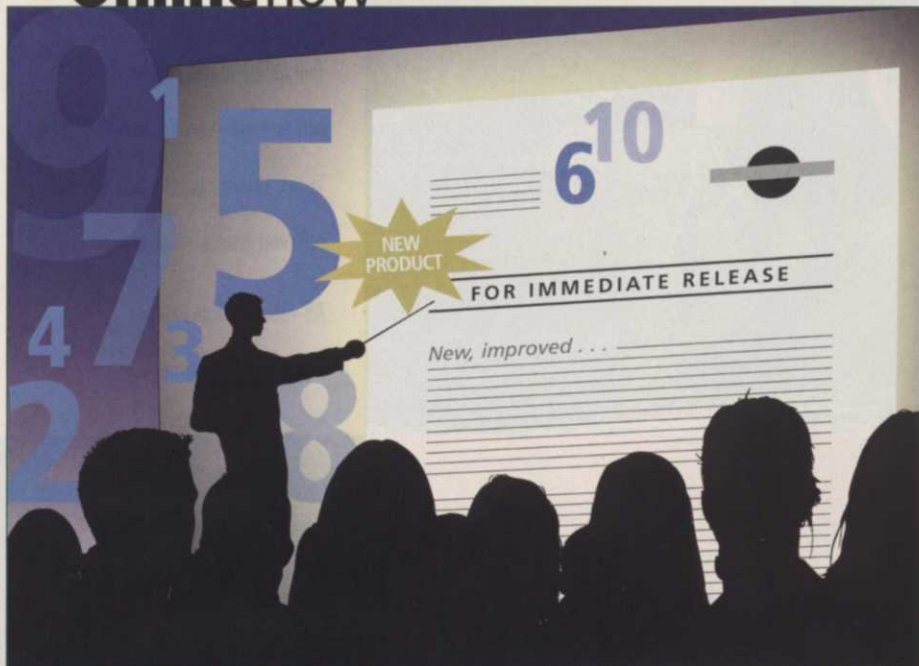
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As you reflect on how you want to grow and build your business next year, **what's your top business goal in 2007?** Here's what our online visitors said:

- 35% Setting — and making — revenue goals.
- 24% Finally hiring some good people.
- 23% Getting systems into place.
- 8% Developing managers.
- 6% Updating equipment.
- 4% Updating technology.

Want to weigh in? Our survey question changes every month and we publish the results here. Visit www.landscapemanagement.net to voice your opinion.

» Special issue

Landscape Management's December 2006 issue, "Outlook 2007," will reside online after publication so readers can use it as a forward-looking reference tool for business and technical topics throughout the year.



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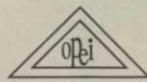
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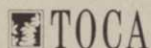
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EXPO knows its audience

BY MIKE SEUFFERT / Associate Editor

The Ferris Industries' 2006 Run With the Winners 5K race held in Louisville, KY, at this year's OPEI EXPO was cold. Brrrr.

Really, whose idea was it to wake up at 6:30 a.m. and go out and run 3.1 miles before the sun was even up?

But now that some time has passed, and I can tie my shoes again without wincing, I'm glad I did it. For one reason, the race raised money for charity, the Louisville-based WHAS Crusade for Children. For another it was part of the whole EXPO experience.

Though I've been with *Landscape Management* since August 2005, I had to miss EXPO last year because of a scheduling conflict, and always felt like I missed out. So finally being able to experience EXPO for myself, I was certainly not disappointed.

The reason is that at EXPO, no one holds back. No one puts on airs, or pretends that this industry is something it's not. The best example of this comes from Bad Boy. The mower manufacturer scored big points among attendees by bringing in Brett "The Big Schwag" Wagner from Discovery Channel's *Monster Garage*. Wagner and Bad Boy "transformed a stock Bad Boy mower into a flame-throwing hot-rod, complete with stereo system and DVD player."

As other vendors showed off their new equipment, including mowers, which thankfully did not shoot out flames, what I kept hearing was faster, stronger and bigger.

As for bigger, Jeff Laskowski, CEO of Lastec, talked about bringing articulating deck 80- to 100-in. mowers to the commercial landscaper. The Articula-

tor's multiple decks allow the mower to follow the contour of the ground, giving a more even cut without scalping and turf damage. "There's no reason the mowers in this industry can't do what the mowers in the golf industry already do," Laskowski said.

There were other innovations as well, and you'll learn about them in our December issue.

When we weren't walking the floor or trying out new products, we did manage to sneak in a few educational sessions.

Wayne Volz of Profits Unlimited told his audience to sell their company's services based on the value they provide, not just price. "If you based everything on price, your customers will leave you as soon as someone cheaper comes along," Volz said.

And aside from the education I got, I was also entertained. OK, I'm not a big country music fan, but big crowds enjoyed the Marshall Tucker Band and Aaron Tippin. Thanks Briggs & Stratton and Ariens. Stihl's IronJack Timber Team thrilled the crowd with the "Olympics of the Forest" competition. And Kohler kept everyone happy with free Wisconsin brats at its outdoor booth. You just can't beat free.

One thing you hear about in business all the time is "Know Your Audience." That's exactly why EXPO works so well, and why I'm so glad I made it this year.

Contact Mike at 216/
706-3764 or e-mail at
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At OPEI Expo the equipment emphasis was on speed, power and efficiencies



Understanding why change is hard to make stick is the key to managing it.



Managing — for a change

BY BRUCE WILSON

Most companies go through periods of change, or at least try to implement changes into their organizations. This month's feature story is on "lean" management (See the cover article beginning on page 28). If you choose to embrace lean and implement it into your company culture, it will most likely require change.

I am sure that you have attempted to implement new things into your company only to find that, after a few months, it is back to the old way. Other times, the change might only have occurred in some parts of your company. Understanding why change is hard to make stick is the key to managing it.

People are uncomfortable with change. They are used to doing things the way they do them. It's comfortable for them. Things that have been done a certain way for a long time become habits and old habits are hard to break. Sometimes newer employees embrace change, while more tenured employees resist.

Consistency counts

If a company doesn't have a culture of high accountability, change is unlikely to succeed because the employees know they do not have to implement it. It is almost as though change is an option — and as soon as one or two people get away with not changing, the whole group follows suit.

In my opinion, there are two essential pieces to implementing change:

- 1. The change, whatever it is, must be well thought out.** Management must buy in, and have a plan for getting employees to buy in. This is best accomplished with a good, systematic communication and training program set up around the change.
- 2. There must be a strong follow-up plan.**

Management should reinforce the change, holding people accountable for staying on track with its implementation. This is really difficult in our business, of course, because crews load up in the morning and leave the yard to go work on worksites throughout a city. They are not on a factory floor, which has limited variability and is under the scrutiny of managers all day. Therefore, your management team has to be out on jobs watching what the crews are doing and holding them accountable for their actions.

For most companies, on-site management falls by the wayside, and managers mostly end up in firefighting mode. On-site supervision by management, even in well-managed companies, is often spotty at best.

In light of that, it is wise not to try to implement too many changes at one time. Then again, there is an argument to be made where significant change is required: Do it all at once and get the pain over with all at once. If you do your homework pre- and post-implementation, the process will go more smoothly.

— The author is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.



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Now is the time to let your staff know how you feel about their work.



Time to pump up 'keepers'

BY BILL HOOPES

After a long, tiring season full of challenges and hard work, we all need to think of the players on our teams. Sure, you appreciate your good performers that show up each day, use your training and meet expectations. You're grateful for every helpful, meaningful customer communication at the door, on the landscape or via a handwritten note. And we all love those who consistently hit goals. But gratitude and appreciation will not amount to much unless you communicate those positive feelings in a meaningful way to your people.

Motivate the good ones

Whether your job is training or managing, you can make a difference.

Now is the time to let your staff know how you feel about their work. After the Thanksgiving holiday, workers in our business (depending on geography) begin to assess the year. They wonder: "Was it worth it?" "Should I stick around after I get my year-end bonus?" "Will we even get bonuses this year?"

If people feel appreciated and feel that you consider them to be contributors to overall company results, they will be more motivated to stay on and become smarter, more productive veterans next season.

Try the following to maximize positive motivation now:

► **Have a private, one-on-one discussion with each individual on your team.** Review their contribution,

and explain how and why they're important to your team. Give examples of positive performance that made a difference. When you make people feel important, their self-image and self-confidence grows. Do this in private, maybe over lunch or a beer.

► **Look for ways to help people grow.** All of us are motivated when we feel more knowledgeable and useful. Now is the time to determine which people you can grow with next year. Who has the skill to grow? Which people have demonstrated that they want to learn more, take on greater responsibility? The next step is to provide more training. Cross-train them with other team members. Allow them to attend educational seminars and events. Pick topics you know will help. Follow up to ensure the learning was taken seriously.

Not making the cut

As you embrace your winners, this is also the time to get rid of those who are either unwilling to meet your expectations or are negative players. Don't carry them into the new year.

If you have provided appropriate job skill training, followed up with coaching on the job, and allowed a fair amount of time for the person improve, your obligation is now to your team.

Hoping and praying for an attitude turnaround is a lot like buying a lottery ticket and actually expecting to win. Get the "losers" off your team now.

—The author is founder of Grass Roots Training in Delaware, OH. Contact him at hoopes@columbus.rr.com or visit www.grassroots-training.com.

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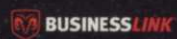
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In the Know

BUSINESS NEWS YOU CAN USE

All go for 2007's merged **GIE/OPEI Expo**

LOUISVILLE, KY — Perfect weather — sunshine, mid-70s — greeted exhibitors and attendees in Louisville, KY, the first week of October at this year's International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo (EXPO). The weather figures heavily into the Expo success because of the popularity of the 20-acre outside demonstration area, the event's most popular feature.

In promoting next year's merged EXPO, Fred J. Whyte, president of Stihl Inc., and chairman of the OPEI, pointed to the mild and historically dry October weather in Louisville. The OPEI is the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, the longtime sponsor (23 years) of the large Louisville-based Expo. He also noted the combined shows will add about 40% more space, compared with this year's EXPO.

Next year the Green Industry Expo merges with the larger equipment event. It will be known as the Green Industry & Equipment Expo. The dates will be Thursday through Saturday, Oct. 25-27, 2007. The show will remain in Louisville at least through 2010. A policy advisory board made up of representatives of the Professional Land-



James McNew, OPEI vp of technical and marketing, provides details of next year's Green Industry & Equipment Expo set for Oct. 25-27.

care Network (PLANET), the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) and OPEI will steer the plans for the event. The key elements of both trade shows will be maintained.

The 20-acre outside demonstration area, a unique feature of EXPO, will continue, providing attendees with try-before-you-buy opportunities each day of the show. PLANET and PGMS will continue their lawn care, interior plantscaping, landscape management and design/build/installation educational sessions, as well as a wide range of green industry tracks presented by seasoned industry leaders. OPEI will continue to offer dealer education.

This year's Expo saw increased booth sales about 3% over the 2005 show. Attendee registrations at 17,950 dealers, retailers, distributors, lawn & landscape pros, general contractors and municipal buyers was comparable with 2005 attendance.

EXPO news bits

BY STEPHANIE RICCA

Here are some of the trends that we at *Landscape Management* noticed while walking the floor at the International Lawn, Garden and Power Equipment Expo (EXPO):

► **Manufacturers are diversifying:** All the major iron manufacturers showed a big variety of models, especially in the mower category. It's not hard to find walk-behinds, stand-ons and ride-ons in every size class. Keep an eye out for our November issue, where we'll take a look at some of these new products.

► **Fuel efficiency and quiet operation are trends sweeping the nation:** Sure, California's on all manufacturers' minds when it comes to emissions and noise standards, but most players are meeting market demands with more efficient models of large equipment and handhelds.

► **Homeowners wanna be like the pros:** More manufacturers had expanded "prosumer" offerings, especially in the zero-turn category. Get ready for your clients to start asking you what you drive so they can get one for their vacation homes.

► **Manufacturers want to be there for you:** Full service is the order of the day. Many companies are partnering with training programs (like Ariens/Gravely/Stens with JP Horizons) or streamlining their operations to make buying and servicing equipment easier, Husqvarna, to name one.



HOW MUCH IS THIS CONVERSATION COSTING YOU?



THE OLD WAY:

Employee Time Card

Name: **DAVID B.** Date: **11-15**

Day	Start	Lunch	End	Jobsite	Activity	Hours
Monday	7	1/2	3:30	Brentview	Gen	8
Tuesday	7	1/2	3:30	"	"	8
Wednesday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2
Thursday	7	1/2	4	Crestview	"	8 1/2
Friday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2

Employee Signature: *David B.* Total Hours: **41 1/2**

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THE JOBCLOCK WAY:

Employee Report

Burns, David Date Range: 12/11/2006 through 12/15/2006

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	12/11	Brentwood	7:06 AM	12:05 PM	Irrigation	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Irrigation	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	12/12	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Irrigation	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Irrigation	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	12/13	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Irrigation	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Irrigation	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	12/14	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Planting	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Planting	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	12/15	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Planting	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Planting	2:55	7:49 hours
Total						38:53 hours	

Signature: *David B.* Burns, David

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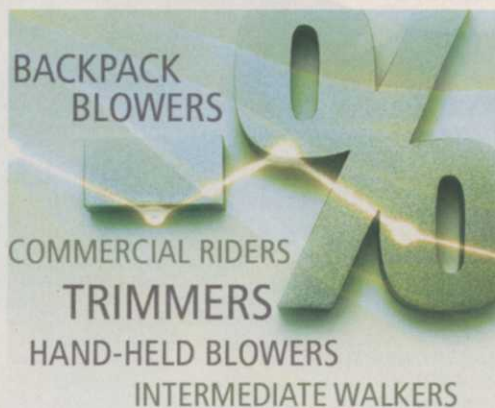
Power equipment sales could decline in 2007

ALEXANDRIA, VA — Sales of new power equipment may slow in 2007, though forecasts point to a stronger 2008, according to the latest forecast from the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute's (OPEI) industry outlook.

Rising energy costs, slower home sales and a generally sluggish economy are the reasons given for the projected slowdown.

According to the study: "The U.S. economy is slowing and real growth is expected to remain positive, although slow, through 2007. Even though gasoline prices crested a few months ago, the implicit tax placed on consumption, and especially discretionary spending, will linger throughout the year and into 2007. Housing indicators have peaked and are expected to slide over the next three years. Annual growth in real disposable income is projected to be around 3% over the coming two years."

Some equipment categories have already shown signs of a slowdown. Since the 2004 model year (September-August), commercial intermediate walker shipments have contracted by 29%. After tremendous



growth spurts occurring off and on over the past seven years for commercial riders, model year 2005 and 2006 shipments have shown some leveling off with 2005 slightly positive. And 2006 only grew 1.0%. After a projected 3.5% decrease in 2007, 2008 commercial rider shipments will recover to 207,628 units, predicted the forecast.

Hand-held blower shipments are expected to remain above two million units through 2008 in spite of some corrections in 2006 and 2007. The drop off for shipments of backpack blowers will hold off until 2007. Trimmer shipment volume was above six million units for the past three years, but is expected to fall below that over the next three years.



Ring a ding Dingo for Evansville, IN, owner

Michael Martin of M&M Lawn-care won a Toro Dingo TX 413 compact utility loader as part of a recent Toro promotion. "I've never won anything of any value before," said Martin, who began his company in 1998.

[CLIPPINGS]

IA names '06 Partner of Year

FALLS CHURCH, VA — The Center for Irrigation Technology has been named Irrigation Association 2006 Partner of the Year for its support of irrigation education, certification and standards. The Center for Irrigation Technology, an independent research and testing facility at California State University, Fresno, developed testing protocols and conducts product tests for the Smart Water Application Technologies program.

WGIF sponsors expert Web site

GREENFIELD, WI — The Wisconsin Green Industry Federation (WGIF) joined with horticulturist and gardening expert Melinda Myers in promoting the Green industry and its professionals to the general public. WGIF will serve as the primary sponsor of Myers' website, www.melindamyers.com. Myers hosts "Great Lakes Gardener," seen on PBS stations throughout the country.

JJR receives research award

ANN ARBOR, MI — The Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) presented JJR with a Communication and Research Honor Award for its Sustainable Urban Design Strategies Booklet. The booklet represents months of research on the part of the design team to implement opportunities of sustainable urban stormwater strategies.

It's a good time to be a landscape architect - survey

MINNEAPOLIS — A new survey from The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) shows that landscape architects' average salaries rose by 20% since 2004.

Average total compensation for landscape architects in 2006 is \$89,700, up from \$74,600 in the 2004 survey, according to the 2006 ASLA National Salary Survey and Business Indicators Survey.

The survey also reveals that there are not enough landscape architects to meet the demand for services, which is expected to continue to grow in the next decade. While 62% of respondents indicated there was a good supply of landscape architecture graduates, 38% thought there were too few landscape architecture graduates. No respondent thought that there was a surplus of new graduates in the field. Almost half of the respondents (47%) expect to hire landscape architects in the coming 12 months.

Respondents also reported a 10% increase in billable hours between 2005 and 2006.

"Both surveys confirm what we've been hearing from our members: that it's a very good time to be a landscape architect," said Nancy C. Somerville, executive vice president/CEO of ASLA. "With only 30,000 landscape architects in the U.S. and the sustained growth in demand for landscape architecture services, there is significant opportunity for young people considering entering the profession. The traditional market sectors—residential, parks and recreation, planning, commercial—have all remained extremely strong while less conventional fields such as stormwater management, green roofs, and security design have grown significantly."



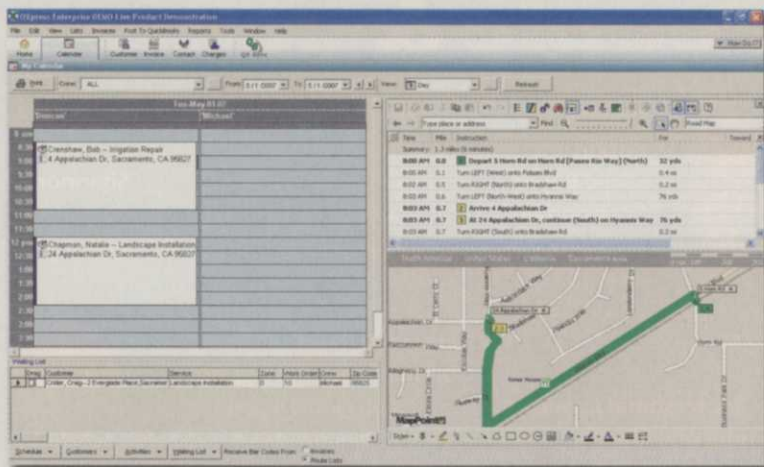
Giving back big time

YardApes, Inc., a full service landscape maintenance and construction company, raised \$10,000 for the local MVP-SOS (Motivational Volunteers Promoting the Spirit of Sports and Activities) at its first annual Quad-Am Golf Classic in Sherman, CT.

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Investment firm acquires majority interest in ValleyCrest

CALABASAS, CA — ValleyCrest Companies, headquartered in Calabasas, CA, announced that MSD Capital, L.P., the private investment firm of Michael S. Dell, has obtained a majority ownership interest in the company. Financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

In conjunction with the transaction, members of the ValleyCrest management team, including Burton S. Sperber, ValleyCrest Founder and CEO, Richard A. Sperber, president, and Stuart Sperber, CEO of Valley Crest Tree Company, have retained significant equity ownership in the company and will continue to lead the business.

Burton Sperber said: "Over our 57-year

history, ValleyCrest has always made decisions that we feel best benefit the people most important to us — our employees and our customers — and this new partnership is no different. MSD Capital shares our values and long-term perspective of the \$50 billion landscape industry, and we welcome them to the ValleyCrest family."

Eric J. Rosen, head of Private Equity at MSD Capital, said: "ValleyCrest, with annual revenues in excess of \$800 million, is an extraordinary business, which has a unique service offering, a premier brand within the landscape services industry and a compelling growth strategy. MSD is excited to join the ValleyCrest family, consis-

tent with our strategy of partnering with outstanding owners and managers and providing them with the support to grow and realize their companies' full potential."

Richard Sperber said: "This partnership with MSD Capital reinforces our most important priorities — providing the highest quality services, ensuring our customers are completely satisfied, and building the best workforce in the industry. We will continue to invest in the capabilities required to meet all of our customers' landscape needs, including landscape architecture, design-build, installation, maintenance, tree care, and tree growing and moving."

People & companies



Donald Botkin has joined **Bayer Environmental Science** as a senior field

sales representative in Ohio and Michigan.

The **Professional Landcare Network (PLANET)** Board of Directors selected **Tanya Tolpegin** to serve as chief executive officer of the organization. Since she joined PLANET in 2004 as chief operating officer, membership has grown from approximately 3,580 to 4,400 member companies.

The **F.A. Bartlett Tree Expert Co.** announced that Fred Fisher has accepted the

role of Safety and Training Coordinator for the company's Midwest Division. Fisher will be located in the company's Lake Barrington, IL, office.

Ingersoll Rand appointed **Daniel Sandonato** to vice president, global marketing road development.



Aquascape Designs added **Lisa Sweet** to its sales team, as territory sales manager for the Mountain Region.

Ewing Irrigation appointed **Brian Dixon** as the manager of its new facility opening in Redding, CA. It is the com-

pany's 54th California office. Ewing also appointed **Tom Shannon** Water Conservation Advisor for the Eastern United States.



Ruppert Nurseries hired **Patrick Hill** (above, left) as Information Technology manager and **Tim Berres** (above, right) as Safety and Loss Prevention manager.

The **Florida Turfgrass Association (FTGA)** awarded **Erica Santella** with the prestigious Wreath of Grass Award during the asso-



ciation's 54th Annual Meeting. Santella is the regional technical manager for **Tru-Green Chemlawn's** 16 Florida branches. The Wreath of Grass is the FTGA's highest honor and pays tribute to individuals who have provided outstanding service not only to the turf industry but also to the betterment of the FTGA.

Tony Brugger has been named regional manager and operating officer of **The Care of Trees** Illinois region.

Project Evergreen reaches Iraq



NEW PRAGUE, MN — As a show of appreciation for the GreenCare for Troops public service initiative, a soldier recently hung the Project EverGreen banner from one of Saddam Hussein's abandoned palaces. The soldier, who prefers to remain anonymous, wanted to bring attention to GreenCare for Troops and its mission to connect local lawn and landscape firms with military families who need help while their family members are serving our country overseas in the armed forces.

"Our hats off to everyone in the Green Industry who is volunteering to help these families," said Den Gardner, executive director of Project EverGreen. "Every family receiving service through GreenCare for Troops is so thankful for your efforts. We have more than 1,900 families enrolled so far, and if you haven't already volunteered, we could sure use your help as there are still areas where we have not been able to find a match for families."

According to Gardner, the GreenCare for Troops program is available at no charge. Participating contractors will receive a kit with information on how to get the most out of this service provided to

our armed forces families. Its centerpiece is a special "Mission Kit," complete with marketing and promotional materials as well as a business blueprint for efficiently

launching the program in local markets.

For more details about the GreenCare for Troops program, call 877/758-9135 or visit www.projectevergreen.com.

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BUSINESS

EXTEND YOUR BUSINESS

Athletic fields

► Score points for your business by branching out into field maintenance and services. BY JANET AIRD

Bob Andrews' opportunity to expand his Carmel, IN, lawn care application company, The Greenskeeper, came out of left field. One of his residential customers became the superintendent of a local school district and asked him to revive its athletic fields.

He bought larger application equipment and self-propelled tractors, and trained his employees how to operate them, but kept using the same products and distributors. Since then, his company has expanded to golf courses, sod farms and large commercial sites.

"I've been in residential lawn care for 26 years. Getting involved in other aspects of turf care has put a lot of fun back into it," Andrews says.

It also has helped his company grow. Athletic fields generate more income, Andrews says, partly because larger equipment can cover more ground more quickly. And it's increased the number of his customers. The company has picked up business around the

fields it works in, and many of Andrews' customers in trade organizations have spread the word to other members about the quality of his work.

One of the challenges Andrews has found is dealing with the amount of wear and tear on athletic field turf.

"These fields are very high maintenance," he says. "They're used by youth groups and marching bands — all sorts of people besides the teams. And in season, they have to look their very best all the time."

Andrews applies fertilizers intensively and frequently. He also does core aeration at least once a year and overseeds once a year.

It's the same at major league stadiums, says Murray Cook, a consultant for the Baseball Commissioner's Office and president of Sports Turf Services, a division of the Brickman Group.

"You are pushing grass to its limits," Cook says.

A big difference with



Doing a renovation on a sports field may be a stretch for most contractors.

schools and parks, though, is the use of pesticides. Companies have to use as few as possible, Andrews says, so they have to get the most out of each application. And since most schools have restrictions on when chemicals can be applied, the company usually applies them on weekends.

Another difference is their budgets. The pros can afford

to install fields that Cook compares to putting greens — and replace them a couple of times a year. Residential and commercial customers pay whatever it takes to keep their lawns

beautiful. But schools and parks have severe budget constraints.

"Lawn care companies have to do more work [on school and park fields] for less money," Andrews says. He helps customers figure out how to get the most they can



Brickman tackles jobs worldwide, like this infield work in Havana.

with the budget they have. And because many people have opinions on what has to be done, he's very careful to talk only to the person who signs the purchase order.

"The challenges make you better at what you're doing," Andrews says. "If you don't know what you're doing, you probably ought to stay away from this."

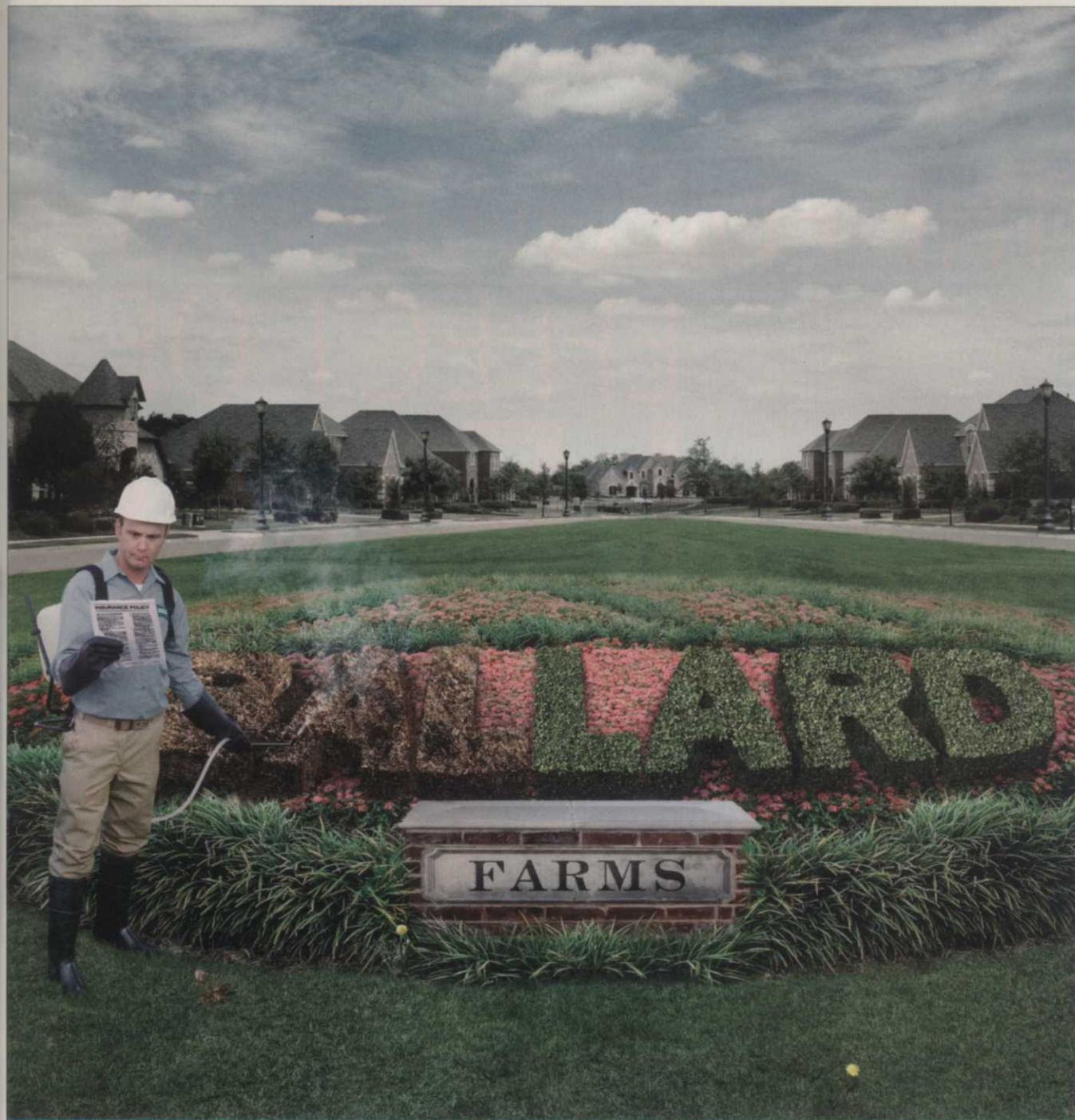
Cook agrees. "It's a different market. Do your homework."

— The author is a freelance writer in Altadena, CA.

Contact her at

janet.aird@earthlink.net

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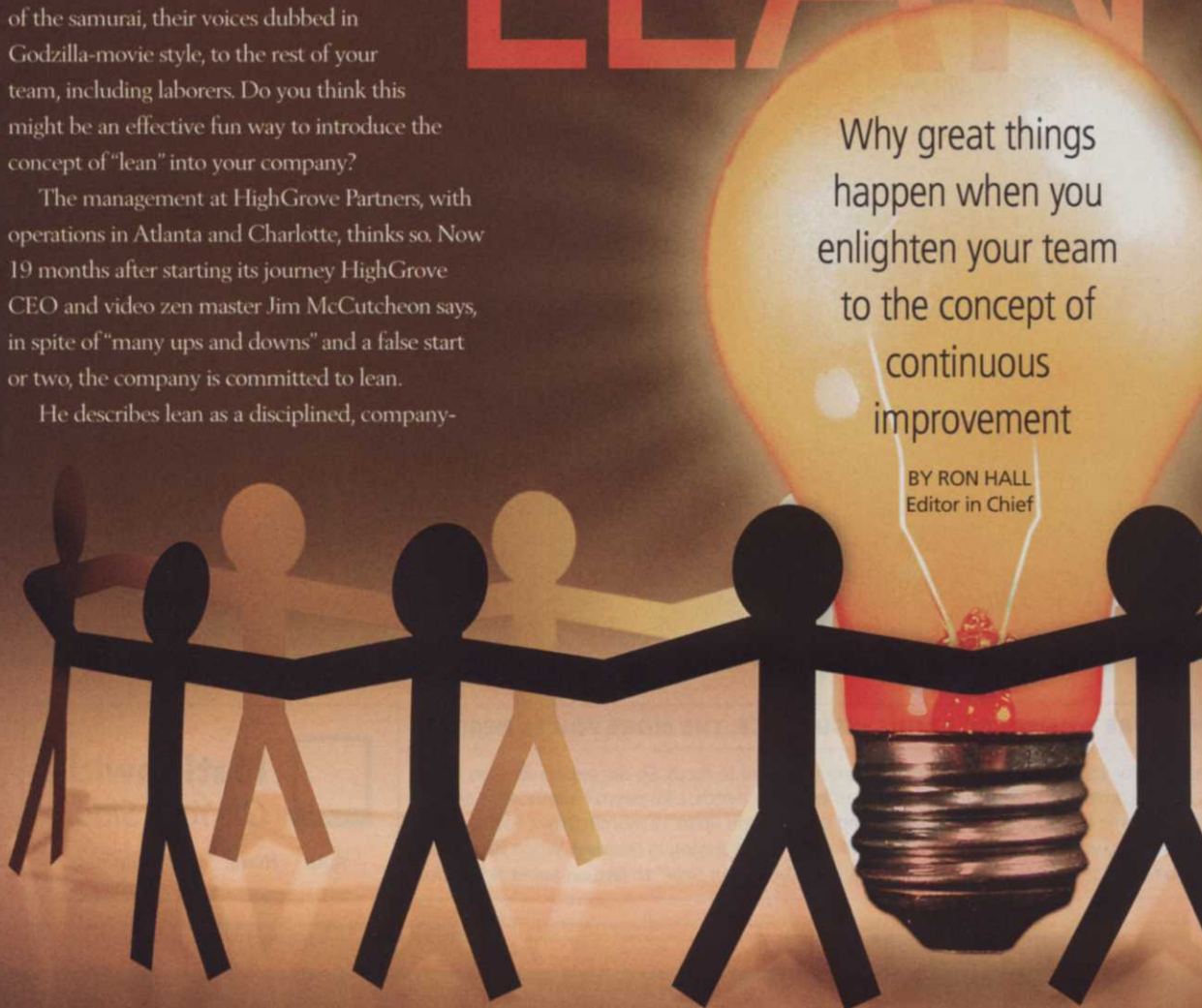
THE EMPOWERING EFFECT OF LEAN

PICTURE, IF YOUR IMAGINATION ALLOWS IT, three of your top managers dressed as samurai brandishing swords and running through a forest. They are battling the 3-headed hydra of waste — unproductive effort, unsatisfactory customer service and unrealized human potential.

Now imagine yourself showing a video of the samurai, their voices dubbed in Godzilla-movie style, to the rest of your team, including laborers. Do you think this might be an effective fun way to introduce the concept of “lean” into your company?

The management at HighGrove Partners, with operations in Atlanta and Charlotte, thinks so. Now 19 months after starting its journey HighGrove CEO and video zen master Jim McCutcheon says, in spite of “many ups and downs” and a false start or two, the company is committed to lean.

He describes lean as a disciplined, company-

A large, glowing yellow lightbulb is the central focus, held up by a line of stylized human figures. The figures are black silhouettes with their arms raised, holding the base of the lightbulb. The background is a warm, orange-brown gradient. The lightbulb is lit, with a bright yellow glow and a red filament visible inside. The text is overlaid on the lightbulb.

Why great things
happen when you
enlighten your team
to the concept of
continuous
improvement

BY RON HALL
Editor in Chief

wide effort to remove the non-value-added waste (time & effort) from processes and systems. It involves buy-in and participation by everyone in the organization. It's not a strategy to shed workers, a common misconception of the lean philosophy. But, successfully implemented, it will dramatically reduce overtime.

Processes for people

"Lean is hard on processes and soft on people," says McCutcheon. "We made a commitment not to layoff employees. You have to have buy in from your employees."

Other well-known landscape companies reportedly on the lean path include RAR in Baltimore; Chapel Valley, Woodbine, MD; Bland Landscaping, Apex, NC; and Lied's, Sussex, WI.

While it's premature to predict a lean groundswell within the landscape service industry, perceptive owners are realizing that to prosper (perhaps even survive) they must boost efficiencies as they deliver more value to clients.

Outdoor power equipment manufacturer Ariens Company is the most vocal proponent of lean in landscaping. It has completed 160 kaizens (See Kaizen sidebar) to eliminate waste and improve efficiencies, boost customer satisfaction and improve its bottom line perform-



ance. Dan Ariens, president of the company based in Brillion, WI, says the lean effort floundered when he first implemented it in 1999, and the company started over in 2000. Since then the results have been dramatic. The successes have only increased his company's commitment to the strategy.

"After seven years it's really rocking and rolling and a lot of fun," Ariens told a group of about 90 landscape owners and managers in Appleton, WI, recently. The group was attending the JP Horizons "Working Smarter Training Challenge", which Ariens hosted and The Weedman co-sponsored. (See Working Smarter sidebar.)

Ariens management, after convincing itself of the value of lean in manufacturing, began sharing its expertise to a small group of progressive landscape service companies, including HighGrove Partners.

Measurable wins

Robert Bradford, an Ariens vice president, recounted several landscape lean successes in meeting with the Training Challenge participants. In one, a Maryland company decreased the size of maintenance crews from six to four employees and increased productivity by 40%, he said. At a separate event, landscape workers figured out how to install spreaders on trucks in less than two hours instead of the 15 hours it previously took for the job. Time saved on breakdowns was equally startling.

"The more you know about lean, the more waste you see," said Bradford. And once you identify waste, you can eliminate it.

"You're never lean enough," says Paul Leao, Ariens director of lean operations. "You're al-

WORKING SMARTER CHALLENGE

More than 100 landscape/lawn companies and Ariens Co. power equipment dealers are participating and competing in the Working Smarter Training Challenge, offered by JP Horizons and sponsored by Ariens.

The Challenge, a 52-week program to teach lean and continuous improvement, began in October and received a sizable boost in interest with a special training session held in conjunction with the Green Industry Conference in Columbus, OH.

For details about the Working Smarter Training Challenge visit the website www.jp Horizons.com.





ways going after the waste that's in the process. You need to constantly go in and drive it out."

Catherine Renzi, owner of Yellow Springs Farm Native Plant Nursery, Chester Springs, PA, says the road to lean is difficult at times.

"We learned quickly that you need to take both failures and successes in stride," she says.

For Renzi, embracing the core concept of lean — waste reduction — has propelled her company to new levels of unique customer service and expert advice.

"Our lean landscaping approach has been formative in creating the identity we enjoy as a center for learning and shared values emphasizing organic methods, improving biodiversity and

environmental stewardship," says Renzi. "While it is sometimes slow and costly, our most valuable lessons come from mistakes we make."

While the trend of embracing lean has come relatively slow to most service industries, success stories will soon be the norm rather than the exception, says Rebecca Morgan, a lean consultant and president of Cleveland, OH-based Fulcrum Consulting Works Inc.

"People need to remember that the entire concept of having a lean enterprise is all about eliminating waste. But this is something that takes time and understanding to accomplish," says Morgan. "There is waste regardless of

continued on page 32

8 KEYS TO WINNING IN LEAN

The results of a successful lean strategy based on continuous small improvements are positive and, in almost all cases, measurable. They include making the job easier and more productive, removing drudgery and nuisance from the job, working safer, improving product quality and saving time and cost.

Here are some things to keep in mind in working toward a lean organization:

1 First things first. At least initially, don't get too wrapped up in tools when you should be working to understand the basic philosophies. Unless you understand the core philosophy, failure is unavoidable.

2 Embrace change. When you adopt lean for your organization you embark on a journey of continuous

change. But uncontrolled change can or change that's not embraced by employees will destroy morale. Most people resist change when they believe it's something that's happening to them. They're more likely to accept it when they're included in determining its course.

3 Build interpersonal interaction. Solid cross-functional teams encourage information and ideas to flow. Having these teams also makes it easier for decision makers to get the big picture understanding of operations.

4 Change the people or change the people. Some people, including managers, won't make it. Continuous improvement and constant change isn't for everyone. Remove employees that won't or can't buy-in to what a

company is trying to accomplish or their presence will damage your organization's ability to meet its objective.

5 Instill standardization and discipline. Discipline in how things are done is essential for successful lean. For instance, there cannot be two people doing the same job with different approaches. One of the goals of lean is to avoid uncertainty, unpredictability and variability. Standardized work is how things are accomplished.

6 Smarter not harder. The focus of lean is to make systems and operations more efficient, more productive, less stressful. Lean reduces waste, drudgery and unnecessary effort. The aim is not get rid of employees although you will find that fewer employees will provide

more value to them organization and get more job satisfaction in a lean environment. The workload will balance itself as employees and managers unwilling or unable to adapt to lean leave your system.

7 Best is the evil enemy of better. As conditions change, there's always another improvement to be made, more waste to remove. What's the best option today will likely not be best in the face of change. Your goal is to get better and better.

8 Get expert help. While there's no lack of resources or advice on implementing lean, you have a much better chance of making it work if you bring in somebody (a consultant or a manager with significant lean experience) to get your program started and established.

— PF & RH

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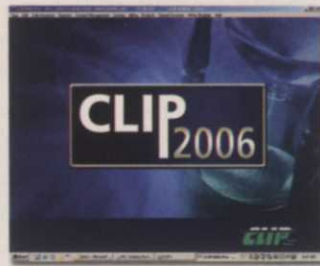
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KAIZEN THE FLAME THAT IGNITES, SUSTAINS LEAN

Kaizen is a Japanese word that means "continuous improvement." Don't let the name throw you. American efficiency experts developed the strategy of kaizen that Japanese industrialists embraced to rebuild their country's shattered manufacturing base in the years following World War II. The success they've achieved, in a country with virtually no raw materials, has been remarkable.

The word kaizen is often used (misused say sticklers for language) along with the words "event" or "blitz". A kaizen blitz and a kaizen event signify the same thing — a short-term project of managers and employees (including hourly front-line workers) to improve a process.

The theory is that if you conduct enough of these blitzes, each one focused on improving or standardizing a specific system or operation, you continually eliminate waste; your company becomes leaner, more focused on customers and more profitable.

While kaizen is most frequently referred to in regards to manufacturing, it's being adopted across other industries. Kaizen events can dramatically improve every facet of their companies. Name it and you can kaizen it, claim proponents of the philosophy of continuous small improvements.

Adoption of kaizen is not a one-time event. It's a philosophy to encourage and seek continuous measurable improvement. It involves bringing together small groups of employees (those tasked with a particular responsibility or process) under the guidance of a trained "lean director" to improve one system or process at a time.

The group starts its weeklong event by identifying what constitutes value in a process or system. For a landscape company that would be any activity that improves clients' properties according to their desires and wishes. Then the group looks for waste.

You can't fix a problem or eliminate waste (time, effort or material) until you know what it is. Then the group examines, dissects and re-engineers the process to reduce the waste. Typically the

group is seeking a 30% improvement or waste reduction. The last day of the week the team celebrates reaching its goals.

Two excellent books on the subject are:

▶ "The Kaizen Revolution," by Michael D. Regan with Mark Slattery, Holden Press, Raleigh, NC, Copyright 2000.

▶ "One Small Step Can Change Your Life, The Kaizen Way," by Robert Maurer, Ph.D., Workman Publishing Company, Inc., New York, NY, Copyright 2004.

— RH



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whether a business operates in the manufacturing or service sector."

According to Morgan, a prime example occurs when a landscaping firm undertakes a comprehensive multifaceted home or business landscaping project.

"Wasted time is quite common here. You want to make sure that all of the prep work is complete before the next crew steps in. This means having all the surface treatments taken place so that the irrigation crew can come in to complete its work without having to stop and wait for another process," she says.

Embrace the concept of mistake proofing, especially those employing seasonal workers, she advises. "As long as you hire people they will make mistakes. However you want to make sure that the mistakes do not become defects. A lot of mistakes happen because of poor communication. This means designing processes so that it is almost impossible to make a major mistake."

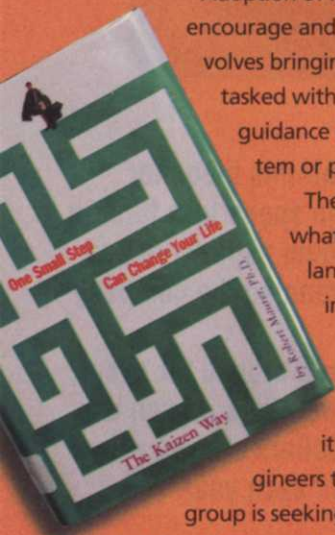
Whole-hearted support

The biggest challenge in starting a lean strategy is getting complete buy-in from upper management. And that means change, which is frightening to some managers, especially when it means empowering all employees in decision making, one of the cornerstones of lean.

"When any level of a business neglects to embrace of the changes contemplated, lean implementation fails," says Morgan. "Embracing change management is such a vital component of lean success. While lean demands top down support, the initiative itself is from employees up."

Also crucial, the businesses owner must instill a shared vision, understand that lean is truly a journey rather than a one time exercise, dedicate resources to training events and always communicate before, during and after changes. "Taking this type of stance from the onset also reinforces the importance management places on team member input," says Morgan. **LM**

— Peter Fretty, a freelance writer who lives and works in White Hall, MI, contributed to this article. Contact him at peterfretty@msn.com



Be the BANKING BOSS

**Don't let your
bank get greedy
at your expense**

BY WILLIAM J. LYNOTT

than your savings account and still allow you to withdraw your money on demand.

The improvement in interest may not be as dramatic as you might get from some other investment vehicles. However, as interest rates move up again — and they have already begun to climb — so will the interest income appearing on your bottom line.

2 Consider certificates of deposit (CDs) as a place to stash your extra business or personal cash. In today's uncertain economy, the best investment accounts available through most commercial banks are CDs. Typically, CDs are available for periods of 90 days up to five years. As a rule, the longer you are willing to leave your money in a CD, the higher rate of interest it will return.

One popular way to gain maximum advantage investing in CDs is to break up your total kitty into several equal parts and invest them in CDs with staggered maturity dates. This technique will allow you to take advantage of the highest available interest rates, while ensuring that a maturing CD and its penalty-free cash are never very far away as interest rates head back up again.

3 Don't allow yourself to think that your bank will give you the best available rate when you allow a CD to roll over automatically. It almost surely won't. That's why you should always call or visit the bank to review all current interest rates

While your bank may not be downright "sneaky," don't confuse it with your kindly old uncle, either. Like you, your bank is in business to make money, and it will take as big a slice of your pie as the law (and you) will allow.

New fees and service charges, confusing account options and wildly varying interest rates on savings accounts and CDs are just a few of the techniques banks are using to improve their bottom lines these days — at your expense.

How bad is it? One former bank executive estimates that you will likely overpay your bank through service charges, mortgages, credit cards, business

loans and checking and savings fees by thousands of dollars in your lifetime. That is, unless you learn how to beat the banks at their own game. Here's how to even out the playing field:

1 Never put a dime in a passbook savings account. With the interest rates commercial banks pay these days, savings accounts are guaranteed to lose money when inflation is factored in.

If you keep any of your operating funds in a bank savings account, close it out at once and put the money in an account that will pay you a higher rate of interest.

You won't have to look far. The account you need, a money market account, is available right at your own bank. It will pay you significantly more interest

Whether you are paying interest or receiving interest, never be satisfied with the first offer. Shop around before you sign. Bank deregulation has produced a competitive environment with wildly differing interest rates and bank charges. If you can find a better deal than your present bank is offering, take it. There is no reason for you to stick with a bank that isn't competitive.

4



for CDs, including any promotional rates that might be available. Banks often run promotions offering interest rates higher than their regular rates. You can be dead certain that an automatic renewal won't get that rate unless you ask.

Your bank will probably do a dependable job of sending you a reminder when each CD approaches its maturity date. The notice will dutifully explain that you don't have to do anything at maturity if you don't want to. If the bank doesn't hear from you, they'll just roll it over. That is, they'll renew it for the same period as the original and pay you their current interest rate.

This sounds fair enough, so millions of busy business owners like you are taking that easy road. The banks love people like that — those who are making a mistake that you can easily avoid.

5 Keep a lid on bank charges. According to the FDIC, banks collected an astonishing \$38 billion in 2004 in service fees from such things as assessing bad check charges. Estimates for 2005 call for more than \$40 billion.

Some banks make you pay big penalties for small errors. Let's say you accidentally overdraw your business checking account. You have \$500 in the account, and you write three checks in one day. The first is for \$10, the second for \$20 and the third for \$520. Some banks process such

checks in order of size. In such a case, the \$520 check would be processed first. That would mean all three checks, not just one, would bounce. Then you'd be hit with three separate bad check charges. Besides an overdrawn account, you'd be out as much as \$105 in painful overdraft charges (some banks are now charging \$35 for each overdrawn check).

6 Keep the least amount of money possible in your checking account. Most banks pay little or no interest on business checking accounts, so your job is to keep that balance to a minimum while making certain that you never overdraw it or incur minimum balance fees.

Here's a little technique that will allow you to safely and conveniently come out the winner: Ask your bank to link your new money market to your checking account so that you may transfer money between them by telephone or online. From that point on, never make a direct deposit into your checking account. Make all deposits into the money market account, where they will immediately begin drawing interest. Transfer money to the checking account only as needed to cover the checks you write. This is one of the easiest ways to maximize your operating funds. But don't expect to hear about it from your bank.

7 Get a divorce from those ATMs. Remember when automatic teller

machines (ATMs) came on the scene? You didn't take to those gadgets at first, and your bank was not happy about that. After all, if they could persuade you to use them instead of doing business with a live teller, they stood to save a lot of payroll.

So, the banks embarked on extensive marketing campaigns designed to persuade you to help them lighten their payroll load. Of course, they didn't put it quite that way. Instead, the ads trumpeted how convenient and time-saving it would be for you to use an ATM instead of both- ering to visit a live cashier. What's more, this new service would be entirely free.

You (and millions of others) took the bait. In time, ATMs became almost as familiar as stop signs. Once the public became hooked on ATMs, the predictable happened: Some anonymous bank executive had a brainstorm.

"Let's levy a charge on customers' accounts whenever they use an ATM owned by a bank other than our own," he said. Once that word got around, nearly every bank in town jumped on the bandwagon. At last count, nearly 90 percent of banks are assessing ATM surcharges. Fees now average from \$1 to \$2 per transaction.

This outrageous situation presents another opportunity to keep the bank's hands out of your pockets. If you're paying anything at all for the use of ATMs, stop using them. Cut up your ATM card and resume that old-fashioned practice of stepping inside the bank to transact your business.

Is this an unthinkable step backward? With your busy schedule, would it be a frightful inconvenience for you to do without ATMs? If you think so, you should disabuse yourself of that silly notion at once.

Dumping your ATM card can be a marvelously liberating experience, requiring nothing more than a slight change in

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your timing. Once you arrange your schedule to visit your bank only during banking hours, you've won the battle. With the extended banking hours offered by most banks these days, the whole process is a non-event. In fact, you're likely to find that the line waiting to use the ATM machine is often longer than the line inside the bank.

However, if you're so hopelessly addicted to ATMs that you turn numb at the thought of going cold turkey, there is still hope for you. Check out www.atmsurcharges.com, which provides locations of no-charge ATMs all over the country.

The bottom line: Don't allow yourself to be charged for withdrawing your own money from your bank.

8 Consider firing your bank. Chances are that you and your business have been a victim of merger mania at least once. That's when you wake up one day to find out that the bank you've been doing business with is no longer around. It's been merged with a strange new bank that promptly laid claim to your accounts.

Will this new bank, which is larger than the gross national product of some countries, treat you better? Will it exercise economies of scale in order to bring you better services? Forget it. Experience has clearly shown that some of the huge megabanks resulting from merger mania are raising inefficiency and customer alienation to undreamed-of heights. And with new laws blurring the line between banks and other types of financial institutions, such as insurance companies and

stock brokerages, the financial behemoths can only grow even larger.

Fortunately, solving this frustrating problem is relatively easy. Just search out the smallest FDIC member bank in your neighborhood and give it your business. You'll receive more personal attention from a small neighborhood bank than you'll ever get from a financial goliath, all with exactly the same insurance protection you receive from the largest banks.

Even at a small bank, you should follow the principles outlined here. But you'll be doing it in a friendlier atmosphere. Fewer banking frustrations will leave you better prepared to enjoy your stroll down the path to financial security. **LM**

— *The author specializes in writing about financial issues. Contact him at 215-886-3646 or lynott@verizon.net.*

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Circle 124

Your Daily

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (March 21 - April 19): A new friendship is blossoming. Take your time and really get to know this person. You will be pleasantly surprised what you find out.



TAURUS (April 20 - May 20): Money seems lighter than usual lately. But just remember, you have great fortune in other aspects of your life. Embrace your family and you will get through this.



GEMINI (May 21 - June 21): Your career is on the fast track. Now is not the time to slow down. Make the most of every available opportunity that your work presents to you.



CANCER (June 22 - July 22): Happiness is on its way. You've been through a lot and now it's your turn to shine. Be sure to take some time just for you. You truly deserve it!



LEO (July 23 - August 22): You are the center of attention. People rely on you not only for advice, but also for a good laugh. So keep it up, your fun spirit is contagious.



VIRGO (August 23 - September 22): It's time to take a stand. You should no longer remain on both sides of an issue. Instead, put your foot down and let others know exactly what you think.



LIBRA (September 23 - October 22): Love is in the air. Your relationship with the one you love will soon get even stronger. You are about to receive an even greater commitment.



SCORPIO (October 23 - November 21): It's time to let things go. The past is the past, and you should only be looking forward. "Forgive and forget" is the new motto you should live by.



SAGITTARIUS (November 22 - December 21): Knowledge truly is power. It's time to use your brain to its full advantage. Seek out opportunities in the workplace to show off your capabilities. Expect rewards!



CAPRICORN (December 22 - January 19): Be sure to listen carefully. Your ears are your most effective form of communication. Others will appreciate your willingness to hear them out.



AQUARIUS (January 20 - February 18): It's time for a break. Use that vacation time you've been saving up for a spontaneous trip. It will re-energize your mind and body for the rest of the year.



PISCES (February 19 - March 20): Do you like surprises? There is a big one in your future. Be alert, because this is one surprise that is going to change your life for the better.

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1 Quick change

Gravely's Rapid XZ outrider mower is designed for rapid installation and removal of mower decks and attachments. The Gravely Rapid XZ is available with a 25-, 27- or 30-hp air-cooled engine, 7.5-gallon fuel capacity, 13 mph forward/6 mph reverse ground speed, 24-in. big-terrain tires and the X-Factor Deck for superior quality of cut. This "next-generation" outrider mower provides increased visibility and maneuverability. A unique weight transfer system automatically adjusts the amount of weight transferred to the drive tires for superior stability and climbing ability.

For more information contact Ariens at 920/756-2141 or www.gravely.com / circle no. 250

2 Everybody's gone surfin'

The new Surfer from Great Dane is quicker and more efficient than a walk-behind — and smaller and less expensive than a rider. Available with a 19-hp engine and 52-in. fixed deck, this compact stand-on allows you to climb curbs, make quick turns and trim around trees, poles or any obstacle in your path. Features include easy-to-operate 2-lever controls, stand-on platform for true zero-turn maneuverability and increased visibility, aluminum hydrostat reservoir for improved heat dissipation, and compact design for increased productivity.

For more information contact Auburn Consolidated Industries at 402/274-8600 or www.greatdanemowers.com / circle no. 251

3 Tight fit

Toro's new Z300 Series sub-compact riders are small enough to fit through standard 36- and 42-in. gates, yet large and fast enough to deliver significant productivity gains over a walk-behind. The Z Master models Z334 and Z340 mowers (with 34-in. and 40-in. cutting decks, respectively) are powered by a 19-hp Kawasaki V-twin engine, allowing the mowers to reach 8 mph forward ground speed and 5 mph in reverse. Other features include a 1-in. to 4 1/2-in. adjustable cutting height, side discharge or mulching capability, efficient 7.7-gallon fuel capacity, and semi-pneumatic, flat-free caster tires.

For more information contact The Toro Co. at 800/348-2424 or www.toro.com / circle no. 252

4 New drive system

Grasshopper's new Model 620T features the exclusive Tandem T2 drive transmission — co-developed by Grasshopper and the Parker-Hannifin Corp. — with a unique pumps-in-reservoir design for direct power delivery to drive wheels in a space-saving package with reduced vibration. The mower features a Kohler Command Pro 20-hp fuel-efficient, horizontal-crankshaft, pressure lube, OHV engine equipped with large-capacity oil and fuel filters, engine oil cooler, high-performance spark plugs and large-capacity cyclonic dual air cleaner. The Model 620T is compatible with 44-, 48- and 52-in. DuraMax FoldUp decks.

For more information contact Grasshopper at 620/345-8621 or www.grasshoppermower.com / circle no. 253

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COMMERCIAL POWER

The real scoop on fuels

With high fuel prices, there has been a lot of news time devoted to alternative fuels, especially those including ethanol. Ethanol is an alcohol made from fermented plant material such as corn, which burns very clean.

Unfortunately, alcohols like ethanol can absorb water from other materials, or simply from humid air. This can cause significant engine performance and/or starting issues, in addition to perpetuating the corrosion of engine components. The alcohol can also have a solvent effect, causing damage to some metal alloys, diaphragms, o-rings and seals.

Briggs & Stratton recommends not using gasoline containing more than 10% ethanol in gas-powered engines. Fuel with higher concentrations of ethanol can cause engine damage and can void the engine warranty.

In addition, problems can arise when seasonal fuel blends are used in the wrong season. For example, running a summer-blended fuel in a snowblower in sub-freezing conditions may not allow the engine to start, even though fuel may be dripping from the carburetor. Since the summer-blended fuel was produced to vaporize at a very warm temperature, the cold air temperature is not sufficient to vaporize the fuel and allow the engine to start.

Conversely, if winter-blended fuel is used during a warm summer application, a different problem takes place – the fuel will boil at low temperatures. This creates bubbles in the fuel lines and carburetor that can stop the flow of fuel, causing the engine to die. This is called vapor lock.

The best solution is to consume stored fuel within 30-60 days. That way, you ensure fuel is fresh and seasonally correct, giving you easier starts and improved performance. The best way to consume a container of older stored fuel is to mix it with a filled tank of gasoline in a frequently driven vehicle. It will easily mix and be burned.



By Mark Nelson,
Master Instructor,
Briggs & Stratton Customer Education

From the Shop

TECHNOLOGY BELT UP

Belts are cheap, efficient
and frequently still the
best design solution.



They drive the world

BY HARRY SMITH

The lowly power transmission belt: It seems crude and low-tech, but if you look closely, it's just about everywhere.

There are v-belts, flat belts, hexagonal belts, toothed belts, cogged belts and even belts that do the impossible and run in oil. For all their hard work, though, belts are frequently touted as a liability. You may even hear a salesperson say proudly, "There are no belts in the drive system." Or, "We have eliminated the belts from the blade drive."

Are they that problematic — no.

John Deere offers *The Fundamentals of Service*, an excellent series of instructional books. One of the books in this series is *Belts and Chains*. Quoting from this book, "Power efficiency is 94% to 98% after break-in." You obviously cannot fault belts for efficiency. This is at least 10% to 15% better than hydraulic drive system efficiencies.

Belts like a clean machine

So what about other accusations leveled at these frictional drives? Most "problems" boil down to a lack of preventive maintenance.

For example, most belts hate grease and oil. Belts can slip and overheat if they become greasy. Some belts will even deteriorate if oil- or grease-soaked.

Belts require periodic maintenance and inspection. We have all been guilty of hanging out at the Zero Maintenance Club. Ignoring maintenance requirements and waiting for something to break is false economy.

Belts must be inspected and maintained. A total failure of a belt drive system will never equal the cost of a failed hydraulic system. This difference in cost over other power transmission systems is the primary attraction of belt drives.

Folks, belts do drive everything everywhere. They're cheap, they're efficient and frequently, for certain applications, they're still the best design solution. Just remember the rules: Keep belt systems adjusted and clean. If a belt slips, find out why.

Also, don't just coat a slipping belt with belt dressing. Belt dressing is not a solution, and no reputable belt manufacturer will recommend it. Belts are transmitting more power around the world than any other system. They do the job.

— The author is turf equipment professor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL. Contact him at smith@lakecitycc.edu.

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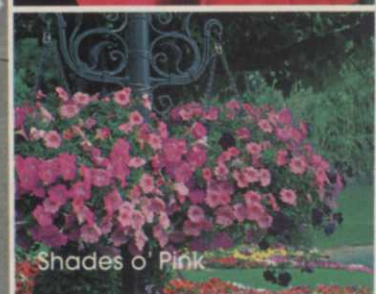
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Investing in technology wisely will lead to simplified operations, reduced staff and a better bottom line.



5 great tech budget savers

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Business owners are locked into a never-ending quest to get that next little boost in profitability. It's a noble quest that takes both cost-cutting and smart investment. One thing to look at is optimizing the overall value gained from your technology budget. After all, investing in technology wisely will lead to simplified operations, reduced staff and a better bottom line.

1. Laser, yes — inkjet, no. In recent years, inkjet printer prices have dropped through the floor. They even come free when you buy a new PC.

Don't be fooled by their low up-front cost. It's a marketing ploy to get you hooked on pricey replacement ink cartridges. A better strategy is to sell those "free" printers and buy a midrange laser printer instead. One good laser printer in your office will have lower maintenance costs and IT staff requirements than if everyone has their own free inkjet model.

Steer clear of any printer where the cost of the ink or toner exceeds the price of the printer.

2. Monitor size does matter. Is office productivity directly related to monitor size? It's strange, but true. Anymore, everything from Web pages to popular software packages is being designed for higher screen resolutions. The result is a lot of time spent scrolling and switching between applications.

The solution to all this extra scrolling is to upgrade to 19-inch or larger monitors. They can comfortably display more information on the screen at

once because of their ability to run at resolutions of 1600x1200 or higher.

3. Ongoing PC maintenance. Dust causes PCs to fail. It gets sucked into PCs by the cooling fans and then collects on everything. It's a major cause of both fan failure and overheating CPUs. A can of compressed air will do wonders to clean things out. A damp cloth can make a keyboard and mouse look like new. Just remember to unplug the unit before you begin.

4. Anti-Virus and PC firewalls. There is still no end in sight to the growing problem of spyware, viruses and worms.

Every PC in your office must have a PC firewall installed with up-to-date anti-virus protection that does real-time web *and* e-mail protection. Most packages can be set up to automatically download the latest virus database on daily.

Think of these steps as insurance against unproductive downtime.

5. PC security. Password-protect your PCs to safeguard your proprietary company data. Just as you protect who has access to your computers, you should also control who has access to make software changes.

Consider locking down your PCs so that unapproved software cannot be installed without the help of your technology staff. Even employees with good intentions can waste valuable productive time on superfluous software.

— *The author is a freelance technologist focusing in business automation. Contact him at 801/592-2810 or visit his blog at www.tylerwhitaker.com.*

Beautiful Places

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REAL ANSWERS TO REAL CHALLENGES

Be our guest

This Florida company tripled business in three years by focusing on high-end hotels and resorts

BY LEIGH GANGEMI

Thinking like a guest and not a service provider is the key to high-end resort work," says James Boynton, president and owner of Tampa-based SCAPES Environmental Group, Inc., a full-service landscape management, pest control, irrigation and renovation company.

Boynton should know; his ability to think like a hospitality manager has landed him many large resort and vacation community accounts in three Florida cities in just three years.

When he was working on his business plan in 2003, Boynton decided to focus on what he did best — landscape management of high-end resorts, homeowners associations and vacation communities. Focusing on this niche has paid off. He launched SCAPES with just six employees and a couple of accounts, and now runs a 7-figure, multi-branch operation with 53 employees. But the challenges are great, even for someone with Boynton's almost-20 years of experience.

"Resort work is extremely demanding and it's certainly not for everyone," says Boynton. "But I enjoy the uniqueness and challenges of each job. Plus, I enjoy educating and motivating staff to exceed our customer expectations."

Hospitality pays

SCAPES' high-profile accounts include Tampa's Grand Hyatt Resort, the Plantation Palms resort community, the Bayport Plaza office park and the Coconut Point Ownership Resort & Spa in Bonita Springs. Boynton has worked to understand the psychology of hospitality management. A

particularly helpful mentor was the former general manager of the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Resort and Spa in Orlando. Boynton often accompanied him as he "walked the property," learning to look at the grounds as a general manager and guest, not a lawn care operator.

"He was a photographer, and he taught me to look at properties from that perspective," explains Boynton. "He had me ask myself, 'Where would guests want to pose for pictures?,' 'How can I make this vista more appealing?' and 'How can we hide that service area?'" In addition, he learned how vacationers and conven-

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◀ SCAPES employees try to disappear before hotel staffers begin to set up for the day's events.



▲ At the Coconut Plantation Resort in Bonita Springs, FL, SCAPES employees find a way to beautifully maintain complex water features and hard-to-reach foliage.

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Circle 127



continued from page 46

tioneers behave — what they like to see, hear and smell, where they congregate and, most importantly, what bothers them.

Boynton and his team make sugges-

tions to managers to improve the overall guest experience as well as hotel operations. "For example, if the hotel wanted to build an outdoor coffee stand, we would work on how to landscape the area to

lure guests to that spot," explains Boynton. "By becoming more than just a maintenance company, we became indispensable to the client."

Customizing each program to each site is also important. "You must be ready to mold and adjust your service philosophies for individual properties," adds Boynton. "You simply cannot boilerplate a 'mow-and-go' program on a high-end property."

But customization also means being flexible enough to adjust to each site's daily schedule. At some jobs that require SCAPES employees on-site every day, employees will "pull a daily" for each property. Dailies are hotel/resort reports that detail guest occupancy, the type and timing of events, what groups are on-site and more. For crews like Boynton's, this information is vital to providing efficient service.

"You have to know, for example, that at 7:30 a.m. you must finish mowing an area because by 8:30 a.m., guests start arriving at the pool," he explains. "Or if a special event is planned for Friday, it



Resort work: Tips for success

Want to add a resort client to your roster? James Boynton, president and owner of Tampa-based SCAPES Environmental Group, Inc. offers the following tips:

- ▶ Tour as many resort properties as possible.

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► James Boynton built a business on what he does best — creating and managing high-end grounds management programs for accounts like the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, seen in the background.



"We were seeing resistance to the products we were using, and therefore a build-up of chinch populations," says Boynton. "We needed to break the resistance cycle, but in a cost-effective way."

must look perfect on Thursday."

In addition, Boynton spends a lot of time training employees on their attitude and appearance. "You are always being watched; it's almost like being on stage," says Boynton. "My employees know it can come down to the littlest things: how they look, how they walk, eye contact, a smile, those things."

The problem: Chinch bugs


Though Boynton claims 80% of all account problems are because of customer service issues, technical expertise is also important. That's why he is always searching for solutions to old problems.

Recently, Boynton and his team won two new accounts because they solved long-term chinch bug problems. In Florida, chinch bugs are one of the most damaging and pervasive pests, creating large brown or yellow patches on turf during peak feeding times. And with four to six generations per year, most lawn care experts agree they can be difficult and expensive to control.


- Think like a guest, not a lawn care operator.
- Customize each program to fit a property's long-term goals.
- When pitching a new account, know the property and its challenges better than the manager.
- Search out new solutions to old problems; the answers you find will lead to new clients.
- When starting a new account, seek out a relationship with the site's general manager.
- Make contacts by joining local hotel/motel, industry and tourist associations.

— L.G.

FANCY



FOOTWORK



The Boxer 500 series, track-driven mini-skids offer superb maneuverability and are available in gas or diesel units. Its unique, adjustable track widening system makes it the only machine on the market that retracts to get through gates, then opens back up for working stability.

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Circle 129

Solutions Center

The solution: Contact and systemic insecticide

At an industry event, Boynton learned of a new insecticide, Allectus, a formulation of pyrethroid and chloronicotinyl chemistries designed to work both on contact and systemically.

Boynton set up trials for Allectus insecticide impregnated on fertilizer on four properties, using the labeled rate on two to two-and-a-half acres. He quickly saw results. "Previously, I was only seeing about 20% to 25% control," says Boynton. "Now, we probably see about 90% to 95% control."

Boynton plans to incorporate a yearly rotation of Allectus among his usual applications of other chemicals. "If I apply the product in April or May, I'll control

the grubs and see about 7 to 12 weeks of control on the chinch bugs."

Taking a chance on the new product ultimately meant more clients for SCAPES, as well as greater operational efficiency: "Repeatedly sending a spray technician to treat these problems isn't cost-effective. Labor is much more expensive than the material itself."

For Boynton, business success — whether managing a 500-acre resort or a



▲ An early start: SCAPES employees at the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay maintain beds prior to when guests begin to arrive and depart.

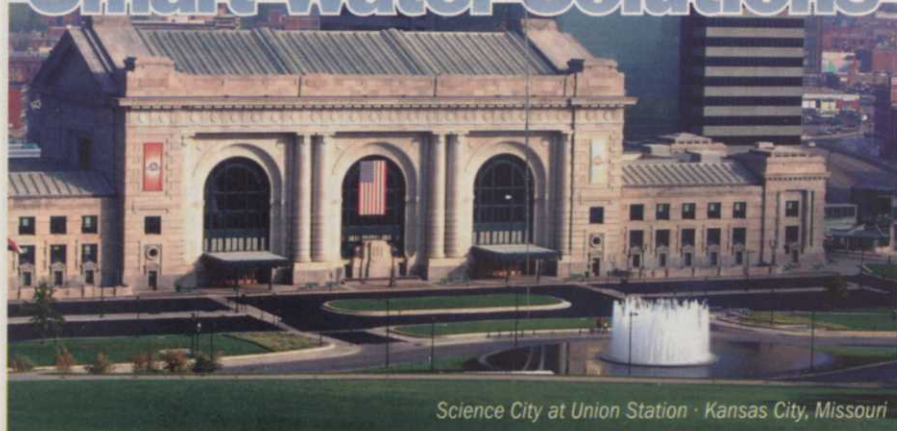
◀ Boynton, right, discusses placement with Operations Manager Bill Conrad during a property inspection.

two-acre home lawn — comes down to operational efficiencies.

On vacation, he tries to forget about lawn care for a few days by sinking his toes in some island sand. But it's not easy for a guest expert to just be a guest. "When I'm on vacation, I'm always watching the guests and checking out the grounds," he says. "You never know where an idea will come from." **LJM**

— The author is a Philadelphia-based writer who knows the Green Industry.

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Tracked vehicles



Volvo

Volvo has a range of seven tracked excavator models with digging depths ranging from 6.75 to 12.5 ft. and weights from 3,164 to 11,130 lbs. The mid-range EC-25 has a 27.2-hp engine and 6152-pound operating weight. Standard features include a control pattern change lever to convert from excavator-style to backhoe-style controls. Drop-down counterweight and fully opening engine cover provide ease of daily checks and maintenance.

For more information contact Volvo at 828/650-2000 or www2.volvo.com / circle no. 256



Kanga

With compact power to handle the toughest of jobs, whether moving soil or mulch across the work site, trenching for an irrigation system or installing a fence. The 16-hp Honda, electric start Kanga Kid has more than 10 attachments, all with a quick attach mount plate. Unit weighs less than 1,000 lbs. and is 32 in. wide. Complete system trailer can be pulled behind a standard vehicle. Ride-on operator platform and fingertip controls minimize training.

For more information call Kanga at 800/476-9673 or www.kangaequipment.com / circle no. 257

Mustang ▲

Mustang Manufacturing's new Model 5003ZT excavator has a zero-tail-swing design, where the backside of the operator's cab does not extend over the width of the undercarriage when turning the cab to either side. The Yanmar Tier II diesel engine with 47 hp is side-mounted separating the engine from the cab, offering lower temperature and noise in the cab. Adjustable headrests and armrests, along with a redesigned dashboard that puts all the controls in easier reach, are also featured.

For more information call 507/451-7112 or www.mustangmfg.com / circle no. 254

Bobcat

Bobcat's T140 compact track loader measures 55-in.-wide (without bucket) and weighs just 6,660 lbs. It combines the traction and flotation of a dedicated rubber-tracked undercarriage with the

ability to slip in and out of tight areas and has the power to work quickly and productively. Impressive traction and breakout forces make the T140 ideal for digging and grading jobs, especially in muddy or soft soil conditions and terrain. It has a 1,400-lb. rated operating capacity.

For more information contact Bobcat at 866/823-7898 or www.bobcat.com / circle no. 255



LM Reports



John Deere

With many best-in-class features, the John Deere CT 322 and CT 332 set a new benchmark for compact track loaders in stability, visibility, serviceability, smoothness of ride, flotation and tractive efforts. These models offer massive breakout forces with reinforced booms, thicker upper links, larger cooling capacity, and larger fuel tanks. Both models feature a two-speed transmission, hydraulic Quik-Tatch, a self-leveling bucket, high-flow hydraulics and a comfortable HVAC system: The stability, traction and flotation of these machines enhance their versatility, especially in adverse working conditions.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/503-3373 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 258

Vermeer

The Vermeer S600TX comes with a spring-cushioned platform positioned within the framework of the machine, reducing the need to walk through work site debris, mud, and uneven terrain. Two engine options are



available to power the new compact skid-steer, including a 25-hp Kohler Command Pro gas engine or a 25-hp Kubota D905 diesel. Positioned 14.5 in. high, the platform allows greater visibility of the attachment and bucket edge. Strategically placed operator station console cushions provide added comfort and help reduce operator fatigue.

For more information contact Vermeer at 888/VERMEER or www.vermeer.com / circle no. 259



ASV

ASV's SR-80 rubber track loader is built on a new ISR-4 undercarriage with 20-in. rubber tracks, a multi-level suspension and four wheel carriages on each side that flex independently. The SR-80 has an overall width of 72 in., an all-new chassis and a 125-in. lift height for the bucket. The cab has an adjustable suspension seat, split lap bar with gauge package and an optional slide up door. The company also launched a smaller model, the SR-70 (not shown), with 15-in. tracks on a 66-in. machine. This model is built on the same chassis and cab as the SR-80. They can travel at max 7 and 12.5 mph.

For more information contact ASV at 218/327-3434 or www.asvi.com / circle no. 260

New Holland

The LS185.B and LS190.B skid steer loaders are rated at 2,500 and 2,800 lbs. operating capacity respectively. The LS185.B is rated at 78 hp and the LS190.B, which replaces the LS190 as New Holland Construction's largest skid steer model, is rated at 81 hp. Spring-applied hydraulic released brakes give reliable parking, even on slopes. A digital overhead



instrument panel provides quick reference to important indicators and service points.

For more information contact New Holland at 717/355-1371 or www.newholland.com / circle no. 261

Thomas Equipment

The model T320 from Thomas offers more than 7,000 lbs. of breakout force with its 87.4 hp Kubota turbo charged diesel. The T320 features a track design that utilizes large diameter front and rear open sprockets. This self-cleaning design provides increased track wrap, 180 degree around the drive sprockets, which eliminate track slippage or ratcheting and its associated wear.

For more information contact Thomas Equipment at 866/238-6844 or thomasloaders.com / circle no. 262

Takeuchi

The Takeuchi TL140 rubber track loader is a third-generation loader that combines the power of the TL150 with the versatility of the TL130. Powered by a fuel-efficient, 81-hp Isuzu diesel, it features a 2-speed travel sys-



tem, operating at high (6.4 mph) and low (4.5 mph) speeds. A hydrostatic drive system is directly coupled with planetary final drives for durable, efficient power. Unit has an operating weight of 9,590 lbs., tipping load of 5,952 lbs. and bucket breakout force of 7,403 lbs. With 18-in. wide rubber tracks and an undercarriage that provides flotation capabilities, it operates easily on soft ground.

For more information contact Takeuchi at 770/831-0661 or www.takeuchi-usa.com / circle no. 263

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Compact Power

Compact Power, Inc.'s track-driven Boxer 526DX diesel unit is the only mini-skid that offers an integrated track system that retracts from a fully extended 43.5 in. to a width of 35 in. and is controlled by a joystick lever on the control

panel, the company says. The variable track design makes it simple for the operator to maneuver the 526DX through tight areas, such as gates and sidewalks with ease, then extend back to full width for increased stability. The 526DX handles more than 50 universal compact utility attachments.

For more information contact Compact Power at 800/476-9673 or visit www.boxerequipment.com / circle no. 264

Gehl

Gehl provides three models of its compact track loaders: the CTL60, CTL70, and CTL80. Each model bursts with power, yet is engineered for total comfort and control. The CTL60 features high-powered, 4-cylinder, liquid-cooled and emission-certified diesel engines, which deliver up to 97 hp for exceptional performance. Models CTL70 and CTL80 are turbo-charged. Other features include: two-speed drive system utilizes high-torque, radial-piston motors with planetary final drives, to match the application and speed of operations; SAHR (spring-applied, hydraulic release) multi-disc wet brakes respond quickly, to hold the loader on any grade; exceptional hydraulic power, for dependable digging, and hydraulic self-leveling lift action, to keep loads balanced whenever lift arm is raised.

For more information contact Gehl at 262/334-9461 or www.gehl.com / circle no. 265



Ramrod

The 905, 915, 950 and 1150 Ramrod Taskmasters handle the most demanding jobs. The 905 Taskmaster can be as narrow as 32 in. to work in constrained areas and the 915 can wide track to 44 in. There are more than 40 versatile, "quick on, quick off" attachments. From the low-step stand-on platforms, operators get a clear, 360 degree unobstructed view of their work area.

For more information contact Ramrod at 800/667-1581 or www.ramrodequip.com / circle no. 266

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Toro

The Toro Dingo TX 420 compact utility loader is ideal for applications such as tree planting, material hauling and handling, preparing seedbeds, pond building, constructing decks and fences, demolishing structures, and installing irrigation systems. Powered by a 20-hp Kohler air-cooled engine, it offers 35 quick-change attachments: auger, trencher, vibratory plow, hydraulic breaker, backhoe, leveler, tiller, cultivator, hydraulic blade, power box rake, adjustable forks, tree forks, two-stage snow thrower, rotary broom and buckets.

For more information contact Toro at 800/344-8676 or www.toro.com / circle no. 267



Caterpillar

Caterpillar's compact radius models of the mini hydraulic excavators make it possible to work in close areas. They are designed to fit through gates, between retaining or privacy walls, or through established landscaping. In addition to maneuvering in tight spaces, it is engineered to increase work productively in tight quarters. They feature a 360-degree house swing, and the upper structure remains near the width of the tracks.

For more information contact your Caterpillar dealer or go to www.cat.com / circle no. 268

Ditch Witch

The Ditch Witch HT25 is a compact, light-utility trencher designed to meet a wide range of



jobsite needs including the replacement of existing service lines, installation of new service lines, small utilities, footings, and for water sprinkler systems. It is 80 in. tall from the ground to the height of the cab and the transport width is 35.5 in. The unit is powered with a Kubota diesel engine. Attachments are available.

For more information contact Ditch Witch at 800/654-6481 or www.ditchwitch.com / circle no. 269

IHI

The 12 mini excavators from IHI offer digging depths of 5 ft.2 in. to 14 ft.1 in. and bucket forces of 2,160 lbs. to 14,730 lbs. Even with such compact designs, the IHI mini

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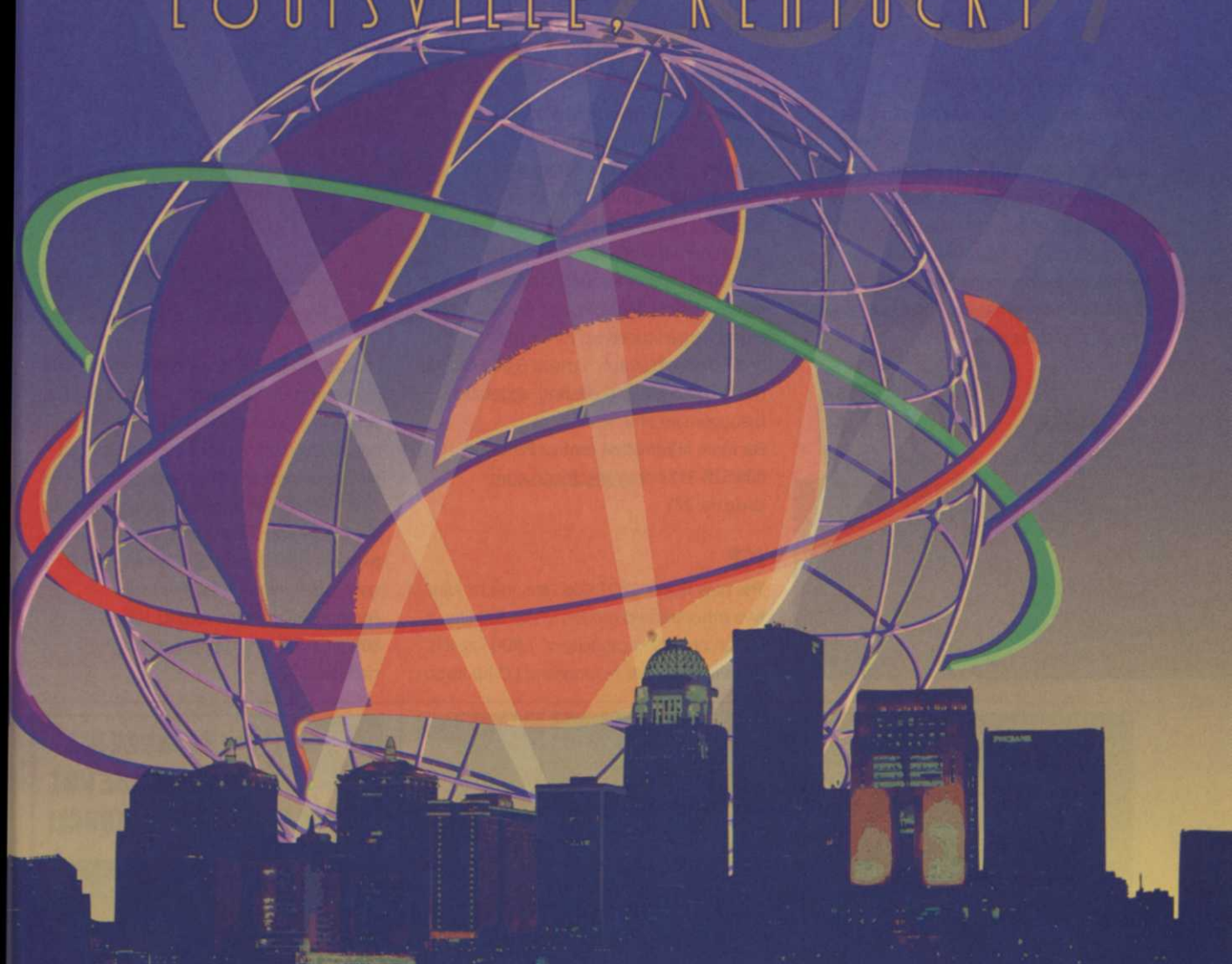
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excavator line offers versatility with three styles of excavators and component dependability, reports the firm. The entire compact equipment line includes tail excavators, zero turn and zero tail swing excavators, crawler carriers, and all-terrain carrier dumpers.

For more information contact IHI excavators at 800/538-1447 or www.ihcompactexcavator.com / circle no. 270



FECON

FECON, Inc.'s FTX130-FM Track Carrier forestry mulcher, with 130 hp, offers almost 50% more horsepower than any other compact mulcher. Equipped with the BH85FM mulching attachment the FTX130-FM weighs 15,100 lbs. Other features include a severe-duty hydraulic cooler, reversing fan, travel speed up to 4.5 mph and 69 gpm hydraulic flow at 6,000 psi. It can be used for land clearing, vegetation management and more.

For more information contact FECON at 800/528-3113 or www.fecon.com / circle no. 271

JCB

The new Robot 180T skid steer loader joins two other tracked models in the JCB line. It has an operating capacity of 1,800 lbs. It is powered by a tier II-compliant, 60-hp turbo-



charged engine. Its track system uses a simple, reliable 3-roller undercarriage design with a low number of moving parts. The new design allows easier cleaning and improved protection of hydraulic components. Unit features servo controls governing both the loader and the machine's transmission, plus an optional high flow pump with 30.4 gallons per minute at 2,973 psi.

For more information contact JCB at 800/PICK-JCB or www.jcb.com / circle no. 272

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Before you put your equipment
away for the season,
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to extend its work life.



A final check on summer tools

BY ALLEN SPENCE

Are your trimmers ready
for the winter?
Yes, I said *winter*.
The winter off-season
is the time to get your
summer equipment
ready for next spring.

So before you put your trimmers, edgers,
blowers and other equipment away for
the season, there are some things you can
do to extend their work life — and pre-
vent future headaches.

Engine

- ▶ Install a new plug.
- ▶ Change or clean the air filter.
- ▶ Fill the fuel tank with a fuel mix that has had a stabilizer added. (Actually, you should be doing the fuel stabilizer thing year-round).
- ▶ Check and replace loose or missing mounting bolts, nuts and shields.
- ▶ Clean around the air intake area and the cooling fins.

Drive train

- ▶ Lube and clean the gearbox.
- ▶ Check the condition of the clutch and

drum, the driveshaft splines for excessive wear or twist.

- ▶ Check the drive cable for fraying along its length.
- ▶ Check the input and output bearings for excessive movement. You need to replace the part if it is the least bit suspect.
- ▶ On a hedge trimmer, you also need to check the condition of the cutting blade, making sure there are no nicks or missing pieces. Check the bolts and nuts that hold the blade assembly together. Once again, if any defects are noted, replace the affected part(s).

Cutting head

- ▶ Install new string in the head, making sure you use the correct size.
- ▶ Look at the overall condition of the attachment itself. Check for excessive movement, making sure the attachment threads are in good condition.
- ▶ Ensure that the guard isn't broken, cracked or even missing, and that the line cutter is acceptable.

— The author is turf equipment management instructor at Hinds Community College in Raymond, MS. Contact him at

haspence@hindsc.edu



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CAMPUS *craftsman*

What's it like to manage what *Garden Design* magazine calls "the most beautiful campus in America"? For

Jeff Jabco, director of grounds at Swarthmore College in southeastern Pennsylvania, it's like maintaining a museum of ornamentals, trees and turf while 2,000 students and faculty live, work, dine, study and lounge in the middle of your exhibits. It takes dedication, innovative design and help from more than 100 volunteers, but the results are breathtaking.

Swarthmore's campus is home to one of the U.S.'s best liberal arts colleges as well as the Scott Arboretum, a collection of 4,000 varieties of ornamentals, shrubs, vines, trees and turf. Begun in 1929 thanks to the generosity and vision of Arthur

The director of grounds of **Swarthmore College**, home to a world-renowned arboretum, discusses the challenges of campus life, and what he looks for when hiring help BY STACEY HIMES

Hoyt Scott (Class of 1895), the arboretum features fragrance, teaching and texture gardens; historic conifer, magnolia and cherry tree collections; and the campus' famous swamp white oak-lined entrance allée. In addition, Jabco and his 15-person team maintain the 62-year-old Scott Outdoor Amphitheatre, an 8-tier event space featuring a tulip poplar "ceiling," evergreen and rhododendron "walls," and fescue and stone seating for 2,000.

continued on page 66

Jeff Jabco, director of grounds, inspects the College's new green roof, which holds and redistributes storm water.





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Pennsylvania native Jabco is responsible for all outdoor space, which includes the 300-acre main campus and arboretum, 20 acres of athletic fields, and the adjacent 50-acre Crum Woods and Crum Creek. After earning undergraduate and graduate degrees in horticulture, plant pathology and landscape design from Pennsylvania State University and North Carolina State University, he started his career at the local extension office, where he began consulting with Swarthmore staff. In 1990, he became the college's new director of grounds and coordinator of horticulture for the Scott Arboretum.

The post requires a lot of energy and dedication, in part because the grounds never close. The arboretum is open to the public from dawn to dusk, every day of the year. Plus, at colleges like Swarthmore — highly competitive for the nation's smartest high-school students — the landscape can make the difference in student recruitment and retention. A recent Chronicle of Higher Education report even found groundskeepers more important than vice presidents in college recruiting efforts. Jabco understands the pressure. "First impressions are everything," he says.

Turf 101

Campus life and the arboretum must exist in harmony, even though Jabco's team and students don't always see eye to eye. "Of everything we have here, our biggest challenge is keeping the turf alive," says Jabco. "Students usually take the shortest route from A to B, not necessarily the paths. We end up with a lot of muddy trails."

To keep the turf healthy, Jabco "re-trains" students to avoid sensitive turf with cleverly placed ropes, bushes and benches. The college has also tried widening footpaths. But the turf still takes a beating, which can lead to disease (usually summer patch) and weeds (mostly annual blue-



Commencement and other events are held in the 8-tier Scott Amphitheatre, built in 1941. (Above, right) Student traffic poses the biggest challenge to keeping the turf healthy.

grass, goosegrass and crabgrass). To help, Jabco's teams aerate the entire main campus twice each spring and fall.

The campus turf was originally Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass but is slowly being transitioned to heartier turf-type tall fescues. Ultimately, fescue will do a better job withstanding traffic though it takes time to toughen up — typically a year.

The team also spends nearly that long preparing soil for new gardens or turf. "If we build up the soil, the fescue is stronger and ornamentals will withstand pests better," Jabco explains. If time permits before planting, the site is amended with the college's own compost plus any nutrients or amendments dictated from a soil test. Because the main campus's turf isn't irrigated (only the athletic fields), grub damage is not a problem.

As one would guess, most of Jabco's pest problems involve ornamentals. Over his 15-year career, he's seen Dutch elm, apple scab, hemlock woolly adelgid, scales, mites, sawflies, anthracnose, fire blight, root rots, deer buck rub and dogwood blight. His team opts for ornamental soaps and oils, and, only when warranted, chemical control.

Despite having some many rare and historic specimens, Jabco and his team are



AT A GLANCE:

Swarthmore College & Scott Arboretum

- ▶ Full-time grounds staff of 15
- ▶ 100 part-time volunteers
- ▶ 300-acre main campus, 20 acres of athletic fields, 50-acre Crum Woods
- ▶ Home to 4,000 varieties of ornamentals, shrubs, vines, trees and turf
- ▶ Features fragrance, teaching and texture gardens; conifer, magnolia and cherry tree collections; a swamp white oak-lined entrance allée; 8-tier Scott Outdoor Amphitheatre
- ▶ Recently installed a green roof and biostream areas as part of a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) focus
- ▶ Outsources turf renovation, mowing and tree work; most snow removal and aeration done by staff

surprisingly low-key about pest control. "The mission of the arboretum is to replicate nature and educate the public so we don't worry too much if a plant has holes in its leaves," says Jabco. "We need to see how certain varieties behave naturally."

Helping hands

Also in line with their mission to educate, Swarthmore's grounds teams work with more than 100 volunteers, who help with everything from weeding and mulching to invasive exotic plant removal — as well as staffing for events and in the Scott Arboretum office. Volunteers are chosen for

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Project EverGreen -2007 Report to Stakeholders

Join Us in Telling Millions of Americans about the Benefits of Green Spaces



By Den Gardner

It's critical for our industry to educate Americans about the value of your company and the benefits you provide.

As the green industry equivalent of the "Got Milk?" campaign, Project EverGreen's very existence is based on a mission to raise awareness among consumers. The message is simple: the promotion of the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of green spaces.

Project EverGreen was founded two years ago by an alliance of large and small companies, associations, contractors and others who provide services and products for green spaces and the people who work in them. Our purpose is to promote the significance of those who preserve and enhance green spaces at home, work and



play and to bring an alternative voice from those criticizing these areas. By doing so, we support the thousands of American landscapers, lawn care operators, sod producers, arborists, nursery and greenhouse growers, golf course superintendents, sports turf managers, irrigation contractors, professional grounds managers and others.

But we don't lobby or represent any one segment or product category. Project EverGreen encompasses all the people, products and services used for green spaces and the benefits of maintaining them.

Project EverGreen Tells the Green Industry Story

Midway through 2006, we had already touched more than 115 million Americans through exposure in the news media.

We have told your story in hundreds of newspapers and radio stations, from the weekly paper in the *Parkersville, W. Va. Sentinel* to *New York Newsday*. Here is a small sampling of the national media that have covered Project EverGreen nationwide:

- *New York Newsday*
- *The Tennessean*
- *The Cincinnati Enquirer*
- *The Daily Oklahoman*
- *The Denver Post*
- *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*
- *Detroit News*

Partnering with Like-Minded People

We've created partnerships with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and America in Bloom that give us a solid story to tell consumers, while simultaneously working directly with the public.



ALL RIGHT AMERICA: Show Us Your Green Spaces

In 2006, Project EverGreen went in search of the best photos of well-maintained green spaces with a contest awarding publication in our *Because Green Matters* Calendar.

The photography contest was inspired by our *Because Green Matters* Award, which recognized the University of Akron (Ohio) and Southern Land Company (Tennessee) for their efforts to develop green spaces.

Your Support is Crucial

As a non-profit organization, Project EverGreen relies on contributions to relay our message to consumers and your help is needed! Volunteer, contribute and get involved! Sign up online at www.projectevergreen.com. Or call toll-free at 1-877-758-4835.

(Editor's Note: Den Gardner serves as executive director of Project EverGreen and helped found its current mission and strategies just two years ago.)

Do the Right Thing

Our highest profile campaign to date is GreenCare for Troops. This public service initiative provides free lawn care for families of armed forces personnel serving in the Middle East.

How does that help the green industry? GreenCare for Troops' slogan is "Serving You While You Serve Us." It puts a face on the green industry, and identifies us as people who care, by matching affected families with local lawn and landscape contractors who have volunteered their services. Are you a volunteer yet?



Project EverGreen enlisted former Marine Gunnery Sergeant, R. Lee "Gunny" Erme, as its spokesperson. Well-known for his roles on screen and TV, Gunny supports the program because, "The lawn and landscape industry recognizes the financial and emotional sacrifices being made by our men and women serving overseas."

Word about GreenCare for Troops spread like wildfire through the international military community by our media relations. We give daily interviews about the program, and connect the media with local contractors and families for a truly personal perspective. A soldier in Iraq even asked that we send a Project EverGreen banner to him. It is now displayed in Saddam Hussein's former palace.



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annual assignments that require six hours a month (though most give more time). Each volunteer must first attend five day-long training sessions.

"We started the program in 1987 and now have volunteers working beside us up to three days a week," says Sue Stark, gardener and volunteer coordinator. "We simply couldn't do it without them."

The arboretum recruits its volunteers via announcements in local papers and word of mouth. Most of the volunteers are local retirees or ex-college employees but the staff is also trying to recruit working folks with weekend and evening hours. Stark's recommendation to others who wish to start a volunteer program: consider hosting an "open house" to explain the program and build up a critical

mass of prospective volunteers.

In addition to volunteers, Jabco employs two or three contracted lawn care crews for mowing, pest control on ornamentals or renovating turf. He requires that crews be flexible enough to handle the needs of a campus open 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

"On campus, things are always changing and we have much shorter windows of time to get work done," he explains. Mowing around dorms is prohibited before 9 a.m. and classroom areas must be avoided during the day — leaving very little time for routine maintenance.

"I need my crews to be in constant communication and ready to change directions quickly," he says. "I'm also looking for the best quality I can afford because I have



A hired crew works on ornamental beds on a beautiful spring day.

MORE INFO
For more information, visit www.swarthmore.edu or www.scottarboretum.org

so much at stake." (See sidebar for more information on winning institutional accounts).

Looking ahead

The constant challenge of keeping it all looking spectacular while meeting the needs of his "customers" — students, faculty, alumni and the administration — is what keeps Jabco and his team motivated.

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How to win the college account

To win an account like Swarthmore College, home to a world-class 300-acre arboretum, can be a great resume booster for a lawn care company. Jeff Jabco, director of grounds since 1990, tells us what he looks for when hiring crews:

- ▶ **Communication and flexibility.** "Things change so fast on campus due to all the events, I need someone who is easily accessible and can change directions quickly."
- ▶ **Quality at a fair price.** "I look for the best balance between quality and affordability."
- ▶ **Be a conduit to the outside world.** "I appreciate it when a contracted crew offers ways to reduce costs or techniques I might not be aware of."
- ▶ **Get experience.** "I look for businesses with experience in a college setting. If you don't have any, try gaining some retirement community accounts or anywhere there are people living on the grounds 24 hours a day."

One day they are providing clippings to a biology class studying plant extracts and the next preparing the vice president's lawn for a 500-person event. "Every day is different," says Jabco, describing what he likes best about his post. "And I still get outside most of the day."

He also enjoys Swarthmore's emphasis on landscape design, especially Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design

(LEED) projects. On a new dormitory, he recently installed a "green roof," which uses rooftop grasses and sedums to collect and redistribute storm water. He also oversaw the construction of several biostream areas, where rock- and grass-filled drainage beds collect and "recharge" storm water. "Though Swarthmore is on a hill, we can have problems with flooding," he explains. Unique to Swarthmore is a giant un-

derground cistern that holds excess water. Located underneath a main courtyard, the 23,000-gallon cistern collects runoff that is later used to irrigate gardens. "The cistern is really helpful in times of drought," says Jabco.

In the future, Jabco and his team will continue to expand the arboretum and add more eco-friendly innovations. One project is the implementation of a computer mapping systems that allows staff and visitors to pinpoint every last one of the arboretum's 4,000 specimens. This precision, coupled with the beauty and scope of the historic arboretum, means Swarthmore will continue to set new landscape standards into the future. **LM**

—The author is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia. Contact her at staceyhimes@comcast.net.

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For more information contact A.T. Sales Associates at 888/442-2322 or www.genescalcium.com / circle no. 273

Professional hogs

Bush Hog's new Commercial and Professional Series mowers give commercial operators a competitive edge. The Commercial's frames are built of strong structural steel, decks are fabricated and reinforced for extra strength, and the durable cast iron spindles are easy to grease from the top. Rugged HI LIFT Bush Hog blades deliver 18,500 fpm blade tip speed. The Professional Series features a pivoting front axle that reduces scalping and deck wear and keeps all four wheels on the ground in undulating terrain or when climbing curbs. Change from pivoting to fixed axle is quick and requires no tools. All Professional Series decks are built of the same 7-gauge material as Bush Hog heavy duty mowers, and 2,900 psi relief valves protect the hydraulic system against shock loads and extend system life.

For more information contact Bush Hog at 334/874-2700 or www.bushhog.com / circle no. 274



Versatile combination cabinets

Lista International Corp.'s modular Combination Cabinets serve as an ideal solution for storing, securing and moving items of varied size and shape. These cabinets feature full-

width top drawers, which can store unusually long items safely and securely. The cabinets can be configured with a variety of drawer sizes, either full or shadow depth, and feature an optional shelf or roll-out tray for storage of bulky items. The cabinets are available with a choice of bases including mobile, fork truck, pallet truck, frame and Lista's new wet clean base. Optional tops allow the housing top to serve as a functional worksurface. The cabinet drawers feature a 440 lb. load capacity each and are available in seven different full sidewall heights for maximum cubic storage capacity.

For more information contact Lista International at 800/722-3020 or www.listaintl.com / circle no. 275

Do the 'Twist'

Rain Bird's Jar-Top Anti-Siphon line of products is designed with a threaded bonnet that provides homeowners with immediate access to the valve's basket filter for fast and easy cleaning and maintenance. In addition to the easy access "twist-off" top, each of the Jar-Top Anti-Siphon valves comes equipped with a "reverse flow" feature, which means that if the valve becomes accidentally damaged it will shut itself off, keeping both the flooding and water bill to a minimum. Available in both 3/4- and 1-in. sizes.

For more information contact Rain Bird at 800/RAINBIRD or www.rainbird.com / circle no. 276

Green Roof in a day

GreenGrid's new DIY Green roofing system for homes and smaller facilities comes with five plant pallets selected for their hardiness



and low maintenance requirements. The DIY Kit includes plant and growth media, a root barrier material, and 2-ft.- by- 2-ft.- by- 4-in. deep lightweight plastic modules, which make the roof easy to install. The entire green roof can be installed in less than a day — then the benefits begin like reduced energy costs, extended roof life, sound insulation and more.

For more information contact GreenGrid at Greengridroofs@westonsolutions.com or www.greengridroofs.com / circle no. 277

Avocet Aquatic Herbicide

Avocet Aquatic Herbicide is the newest addition to the growing line of aquatic products from Phoenix Environmental Care LLC. Avocet is formulated with 53.8% glyphosate as the active ingredient to ensure post-emergent control of a variety of aquatic and non-crop site weeds. A systemic, broad-spectrum herbicide, Avocet will control cattail, grassy weeds like torpedo grass, woody plants like trees and brush, many floating plants and other aquatic weeds. Avocet has no watering, swimming or fishing restrictions following applications. The product may be applied aerially, by boat, backpack or most conventional application methods.

For more information contact Phoenix Environmental Care at 229/245-8845 or www.phoenixenvcare.com / circle no. 278



A real cut-up

Tanaka America's ECV-5601 mid-size chain saw is ideal for farm and firewood use and is the largest in the Tanaka line. The ECV-5601 features a 50-cc, 3.6-hp, 2-stroke engine; 6-point anti-vibration system; decompression system for easy starting; and a 1-year professional / rental warranty. Tanaka's other chain saws include one other mid-size saw, the ECV-4501, and three smaller limbing models. The TCS-3401 and ECS-3301 are both top handle saws in the 32-34-cc range and the ECS-3351 is the rear handle version of the ECS-3301. All Tanaka saws are EPA and C.A.R.B. compliant.

For more information contact Tanaka America at 253/333-1200 or www.tanaka-usa.com / circle no. 279

apricot, yellow, white, scarlet and rose. Blazin' Rose iredine and its multi-color leaves grows to a height of 18 to 30 in. and performs well in both the sun and the shade.

For more information contact Ball at 800/879-BALL or www.BallLandscape.com / circle no. 280

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The optional Hydraulic X-Change mounting system for Bobcat compact excavators features hydraulically activated attachment retention pins that retract to remove the attachment and extend to secure the attachment, thus saving the operator time and labor. Bobcat represen-

tatives say the ease of the new feature will improve operator efficiency and machine utilization by encouraging operators to use the proper-sized excavator bucket and the best attachment for the job. Several attachments can be used with Bobcat compact excavators, including the trenching bucket, grading bucket, breaker, auger and compactor.

For more information contact Bobcat Co. at 866/823-7898 or www.bobcat.com / circle no. 281



continued on page 75



Ball keeps growing

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- 20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
- 30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
- 40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
- 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

3. Which of the following services does your company provide? (Fill in ALL that apply)

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- 01 Mowing
- 02 Turf Fertilization
- 03 Turf Insect Control
- 04 Turf Disease Control
- 05 Turf Aeration
- 06 Turf Weed Control
- 07 Irrigation Services
- 08 Bedding/Perennial Installation
- 09 Free Care
- 10 Pond/Lake Care
- 11 Snow Removal

DESIGN/BUILD

- 12 Landscape Design
- 13 Landscape Installation
- 14 Irrigation Installation
- 15 Paving/Deck/Patio Installation
- 48 Landscape Lighting Installation
- 98 Other (please specify) _____

4. Which of the following landscape products do you purchase or specify? (Fill in ALL that apply)

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- 21 Fungicides
- 40 Biological/Organics
- 36 Turf Seed/Seed
- 32 Spreaders
- 29 Bedding/Perennials
- 31 Skid Steers
- 42 Compact Track Loaders
- 28 Ornamental/Nursery Products
- 24 Irrigation Systems
- 38 Ponds/Water Features
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- 37 Utility Vehicles
- 41 Business Management Software
- 97 Other (please specify) _____

5. My firm's annual revenue is: (Fill in ONE only)

- 001 More than \$4,000,000
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- 003 \$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999
- 004 \$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999
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- 006 Less than \$500,000

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1. My primary business at this location is: (Fill in ONE only)

CONTRACTORS/SERVICE COMPANIES

- 01 Landscape Contractors (Installation & Maintenance)
- 02 Lawn Care Service Companies & Custom Chemical Applicators (ground & air)
- 03 Irrigation Contractors & Consultants
- 04 Other Contractors/Service Companies (please specify) _____

LANDSCAPING/GROUNDS CARE FACILITIES

- 05 Sports Complexes
- 06 Parks
- 07 Schools, Colleges & Universities
- 08 Other Grounds Care Facilities (please specify) _____

SUPPLIERS AND CONSULTANTS

- 09 Extension Agents/Consultants for Horticulture
- 10 Sod Growers, Turf Seed Growers & Nurseries
- 11 Dealers, Distributors, Formulators & Brokers
- 12 Manufacturers
- 13 Other (please specify) _____

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2. Which of the following best describes your title? (Fill in ONE only)

- 10 **Executive/Administrator** - President, Owner, Partner, Director, General Manager, Chairman of the Board, Purchasing Agent, Director of Physical Plant
- 20 **Manager/Superintendent** - Arborist, Architect, Landscape/Grounds Manager, Superintendent, Foreman, Supervisor
- 30 **Government Official** - Government Commissioner, Agent, Other Government Official
- 40 **Specialist** - Forester, Consultant, Agronomist, Pilot, Instructor, Researcher, Horticulturist, Certified Specialist
- 50 **Other Titled and Non-Titled Personnel** (please specify) _____

3. Which of the following services does your company provide? (Fill in ALL that apply)

MAINTENANCE SERVICES

- 01 Mowing
- 02 Turf Fertilization
- 03 Turf Insect Control
- 04 Turf Disease Control
- 05 Turf Aeration
- 06 Turf Weed Control
- 07 Irrigation Services
- 08 Bedding/Perennial Installation
- 09 Free Care
- 10 Pond/Lake Care
- 11 Snow Removal

DESIGN/BUILD

- 12 Landscape Design
- 13 Landscape Installation
- 14 Irrigation Installation
- 15 Paving/Deck/Patio Installation
- 48 Landscape Lighting Installation
- 98 Other (please specify) _____

4. Which of the following landscape products do you purchase or specify? (Fill in ALL that apply)

- 27 Mowers
- 18 Engines
- 16 Blowers
- 17 Chain Saws
- 26 Line Trimmers
- 20 Fertilizers
- 23 Insecticides
- 22 Herbicides
- 21 Fungicides
- 40 Biological/Organics
- 36 Turf Seed/Seed
- 32 Spreaders
- 29 Bedding/Perennials
- 31 Skid Steers
- 42 Compact Track Loaders
- 28 Ornamental/Nursery Products
- 24 Irrigation Systems
- 38 Ponds/Water Features
- 29 Pavers/Masonry/Bricks/Rocks (Hardscape Materials)
- 31 Skid Steers
- 42 Compact Track Loaders
- 33 Tractors
- 44 Pick up Trucks
- 43 Cab Forward Trucks
- 37 Utility Vehicles
- 41 Business Management Software
- 97 Other (please specify) _____

5. My firm's annual revenue is: (Fill in ONE only)

- 001 More than \$4,000,000
- 002 \$2,000,000 - \$4,000,000
- 003 \$1,500,000 - \$1,999,999
- 004 \$1,000,000 - \$1,499,999
- 005 \$500,000 - \$999,999
- 006 Less than \$500,000

106004

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Products

continued from page 71 Extended-release fertilizer

For use on all areas of turf, 32-3-10 Scotts Landscaper PRO Turf Fertilizer is specially formulated with Scotts Poly-S extended-release fertilizer for uniform growth and provides extended feeding that lasts up to three months. A 50-lb. bag covers up to 31,000 sq. ft.

For more information contact The Scotts Co. at 800/492-8255 or visit www.scottspohort.com / circle no. 282



creased hydraulic flow for enhanced performance of ground-engaging attachments. The model is compatible with Toro's 35-plus compact utility loader attachments — making it well suited for applications such as installing irrigation systems, preparing seedbeds, material hauling and handling, constructing decks and fences, tree

planting, demolishing structures and pond building. Weighing 2,127 lbs. with a standard bucket, the TX 525 Wide Track has a rated operating capacity of 553 lbs.

For more information contact Toro at 800/Dig-Toro or visit www.toro.com / circle no. 284

Easy weeding

The new Turf-Tec WeedAway not only removes the weed, but also twists off the entire root system to prevent re-growth. The Turf-Tec WeedAway Tool is designed for the rugged maintenance of everyday use has replaceable heavy duty spikes to insure many years of service. The Turf-Tec WeedAway tool is made of heavy duty gauge steel and also contains a spring loaded ejection rod to remove the weed from the spikes after popping the weed out of the ground. The tool is tall enough to be used while standing up so the entire weeding process can be done without bending over.

For more information contact Turf-Tec International at 800/258-7477 or www.turf-tec.com / circle no. 285

Stay sharp

Foley United's new 460 Automated Rotary Blade Grinder features an enclosure system for dust and noise control. Two grinding heads, automated infeed cycles, and a built in blade balancing system makes the process safer and more productive. The 460 will minimize multiple issues that are associated with dull rotary blades. More stress on hydraulics, added strain on your engine, and increased fuel consumption is typical when blades aren't sharpened regularly.

For more information contact Foley United at 800/225-9810 or visit www.foleyunited.com / circle no. 286



Walk along

Husqvarna recently introduced the W21 Walk Series, a line of walk behind mowers equipped with commercial grade engines. With three height adjustment settings, as well as heavy duty commercial grade cables and controls, the mowers' handle offers durability with comfortable ergonomic control. The open design of the handle also allows for the high capacity fabric bag to be easily removed and installed. The strength and rigidity of the mowers' 21-in. cast aluminum deck design and 9-in.

wheels provide premium



cutting performance. The added crankshaft support and deck mounted engine bar protect against possible impacts.

For more information contact Husqvarna at 513/381-8855 or www.usa.husqvarna.com / circle no. 283

Diesel Dingo

Compared to other Dingo models, Toro's TX 525 Wide Track diesel compact utility loader offers extra torque, longer engine life, and in-

Clear the way

FECON's Bull Hog BH85-PTO Heavy Duty Mulcher has 36 double carbide tipped cutting teeth, a cutting width of 70 in. and weighs 2,900 lbs. It is designed for clearing lots, brush and yard waste piles, park trails, wildlife habitat and firebreaks. Like other proven Bull Hog Mulchers, the BH85-PTO features an average tool life of 300-500 hours, a patented rotor design for unmatched cutting efficiency and a dependable belt drive system for more uptime. Options include custom or universal mounts and rake teeth for the push bar.

For more information contact FECON at 800/528-3113 or www.fecon.com / circle no. 287

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December

3-6 American Society of Consulting Arborists Annual Conference / Silverado Resort, Napa, CA. Sponsored by ASCA, 301/947-0483 www.asca-consultants.org

4-7 Turfgrass Short Course / Blacksburg, VA, Sponsored by Virginia Turfgrass Council, 757/464-1004 www.vaturf.org

4-7 Golf Short Course / Blacksburg, VA, Sponsored by Virginia Turfgrass Council, 757/464-1004 www.vaturf.org

5-8 Ohio Turfgrass Conference and Show / Columbus, OH, Sponsored by Ohio Turfgrass Foundation, The Ohio State University, OSU Extension, Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center, Ohio Lawn Care Association, Ohio Sports Turf Managers Association, Ohio Sod Producers Association, 888/683-3445 www.ohioturfgrass.org

5-7 Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association Annual Conference and Trade Show / Denver, CO, Sponsored by Rocky Mountain Regional Turfgrass Association, 303/770-2220 www.rmarta.org

5-7 New Jersey Turfgrass Conference & Show / Atlantic City, NJ, Sponsored by New Jersey Turfgrass Association, 215/757-NJTA www.njturfgrass.org

5-6 Georgia Turfgrass Institute and Trade Show / Duluth, GA, Sponsored by: Georgia Turfgrass Association, 706/335-6817 www.turfgrass.org

7 OLCA Annual Meeting and Breakfast / Columbus, OH, Sponsored by Ohio Lawn Care Association, 740/452-4541 www.ohiolawnca.org

11-13 Texas Turfgrass Conference & Expo / Austin, TX, Sponsored by Texas Turfgrass Association, 800/830-8873 www.texasturf.com

11-15 MSU School of Turfgrass Management / Lansing, MI, Sponsored by Michigan State University Extension, 517/355-0271, x 147 www.michiganturfgrass.org

January

4-5 Mid-States Horticultural Expo / Louisville, KY, Sponsored by: Kentucky Nursery & Landscape Association (KNLA), the Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association (TNLA) and the Southern Nursery Association (SNA), 770/953-3311 www.sna.org/midstates

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The Weidner Group

When experience and passion meet, great things happen

BY RON HALL / Editor in Chief

It took a few years in business before Jim Weidner and his team got down to doing what they really loved to do — design, build and create. But once they did, great things started happening.

“Design/build is what we love,” says Weidner, president of The Weidner Group, North Ridgeville, OH. “This is our passion, and when you’re passionate about something it will rise to the top and become your strength.”

This past spring, The Weidner Group, which is headquartered about a 30-minute drive southwest of Cleveland, led the state, earning seven Landscape Ohio! Awards for its innovative residential landscape projects. The Ohio Landscape Association sponsors the annual competition.

Working with clients

While awards are nice, Weidner stresses that the biggest goal of his team is to provide clients — mostly residential — with “outdoor living spaces”



Winning and grinning.

The Weidner Group (l. to r.): Sarah Schatz, Matt Williams, Jim Weidner, Chris Meltzer

that perfectly fit their lifestyles. The key to this, he explains, is taking the time to get to know the client. Everyone has a different idea about their perfect outdoor room. What Weidner’s team has to understand is how the space will be used. The team discusses everything, from how clients entertain to what furniture will need to fit the space. Then they discuss the best way to fit everything into budget. Weidner says he continually studies the latest products and trends to bring clients the most creative, beautiful and functional space.

Next, Weidner takes this information to his architect. Weidner says that he and landscape architect Chris Meltzer, whom he credits with designing many of the award-winning plans, work well together. “We both have an eye for design and space. We work as a team well, and blend our ideas together to create one great design. Our clients enjoy working with both of us and are grateful for the two different perspectives.”

Finding the focus

Weidner says the decision several years ago to focus his company’s efforts re-energized him and his team.

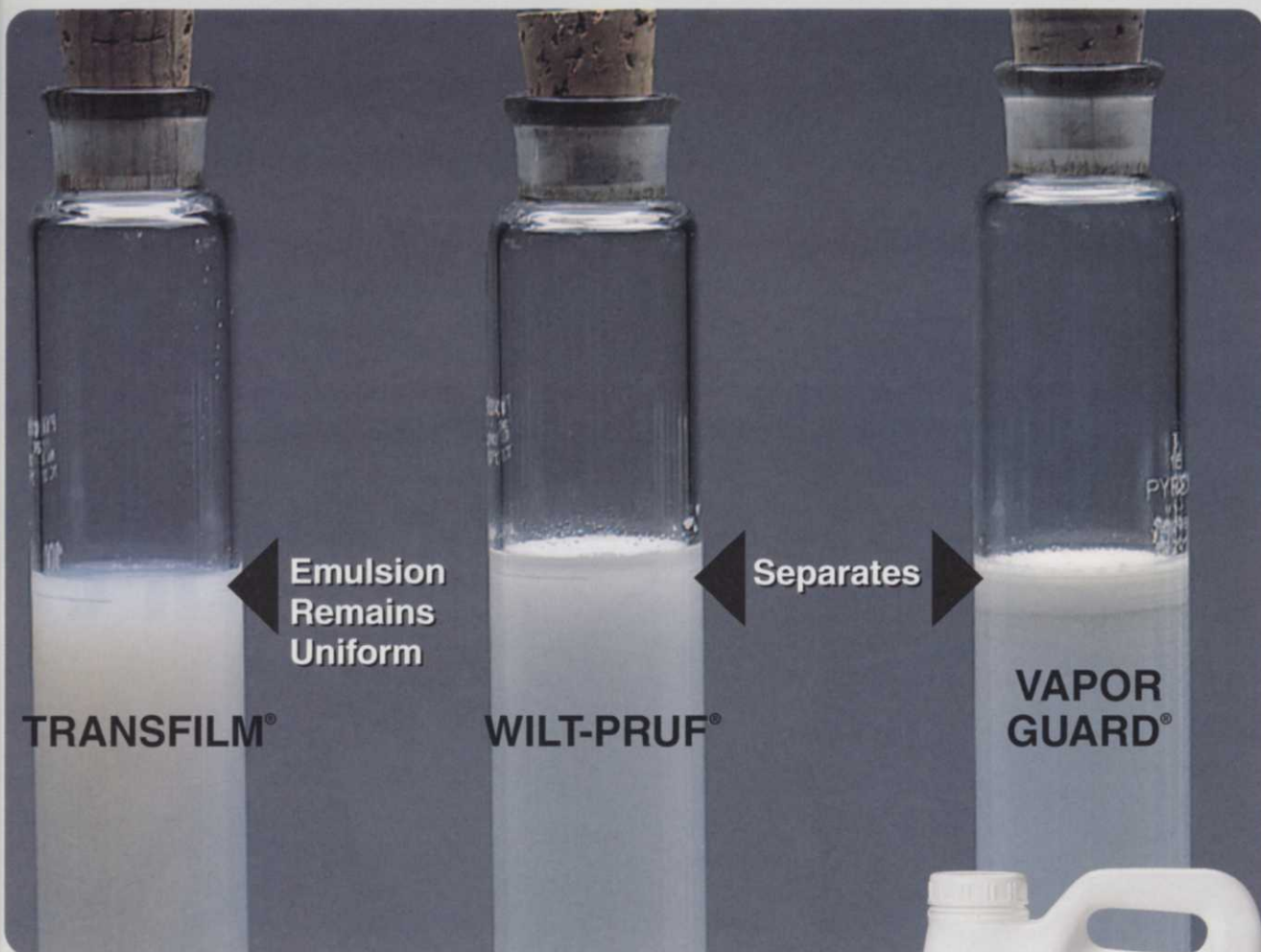
“The decisions to move to a design/build-only company was a 3-year discussion. We talked to our entire team and worked through it together. I have many people that have been with me from the beginning, and this would undoubtedly affect everyone,” he says. “The decision to ‘walk away’ from 40% of our business was a bit of a risk, and I wanted everyone involved in the discussions.”

Snow must go

Collectively, the group’s decisions were for the best. “The discussion led to the removal of mowing and snowplowing,” Weidner says. “Everyone’s quality of life was affected by the 2 a.m. snow plow call or spending Christmas Eve in a plow truck. The first year of our reinvented company, despite losing a large portion of revenue, the company still grew 8%. In reality we increased design/build 48% to maintain the previous year’s revenue.”

“We’ve discovered that when you’re passionate about something, really passionate, everything you do, every business decision you make, is going to slide you toward your goal.” **LM**

►► **Online:** www.theweidnergroupp.com **Location:** North Ridgeville, OH **Owner & President:** Jim Weidner **Founded:** 1987 **Employees:** 15 **Projected '06 revenues:** \$1.6 million



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