



Lou Wierichs followed a twisting career path before starting his lawn care business in 1987. But once he became a part of the industry, he plunged in heart and soul. After earning a degree from the University of Wisconsin at Stout, he worked first as a loan officer and a truck driver delivering furniture in the Midwest before returning to school for his master's degree. It was then that he discovered the lawn care industry through a ServiceMaster franchise. Once he had established his company, he spent the next 10 years immersed in the business and as an officer in industry associations.

Lou, you have been in the lawn care business for 22 years. What keeps you going?

The challenge of each and every day. There's always something different that needs to be done. I have loyal, competent employees, and it's still enjoyable to go to work. The keys to success in my case are common sense and the ability to problem-solve. Meet and succeed in the challenges of everyday business: "Success is a journey, not a destination."

Describe the biggest challenges your company is experiencing this year.

The biggest challenge is still customer education on how to do their part to care for their lawn. In our area this year, the drought has been exceedingly frustrating. We have not seen rain for two months. Much of the grass is dormant. We need Mother Nature to pull us out of this one.

The economy is another big factor this year. People are holding on tight to their money. If you can say "you're holding your own this year," that would be a success.

What changes have you implemented in your company in light of the depressed state of the economy?

This economy has made us tighten up on efficiency and routing. Work smarter, you cut costs — including fuel, labor and equipment. It's been a tight hold on the purse strings.

What changes have you seen in customers' attitudes this season?

Customers are frustrated with the drought conditions, and fewer people

are watering because of the tight economy. Everyone — me included — has a hard time parting with cash for the add-on services at this time. People are holding on tight to their money, and decisions are tough to make.

How do you see the lawn care business changing in the next 10 years?

I see the lawn industry promoting itself as environmentalist and hoping on this Green Movement if we're smart as an industry. We are the stewards of the environment. Healthy turf means healthy Earth. Turf provides much-needed oxygen for our planet and our survival. We need to promote the benefits of turf.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Pro-X Lawn Care, Appleton, WI

FOUNDED: 1987

PRESIDENT/OWNER: Lou Wierichs

SERVICE AREA: Appleton, Green Bay, Brillion, WI

EMPLOYEES: 7

SERVICES OFFERED: granular fertilization, slit seeding, weed control, shrub replacement and pruning, mulch beds, landscape consulting, lawn aeration, spring/fall cleanups, mowing, Christmas Decor

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: past president of PLCAAA (now merged with PLANET), Wisconsin Green Industry Federation, GMAW (now Lawns of Wisconsin Network), Green Industry Expo, Evergreen Foundation, also involved in Wisconsin Master Gardener

HOBBIES: golf, deer hunting, pool, comedy

FAMILY: three brothers and two sisters

WEBSITE: ProXLawnCare.com

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