



AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Lawn Doctor

CURRENT LEADERS: Russell Frith, president/CEO; Robert Magda, sr. vice president of manufacturing; Ewald Alstadt, vice president of operations & support services; Janice Capiro, vice president finance & administration; Scott Frith, vice president of marketing & franchise development

HEADQUARTERS: Holmdel, NJ, with 460+ locations

EMPLOYEES: 1,500 to 2,000 peak season

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Past president, Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA); past board member, Professional Landcare Network (PLANET); certified franchise executive of the International Franchise Association

ALSTADT'S HOBBIES: Freshwater and ice fishing

WEBSITE: Lawndocor.com

“Even after 30 years with Lawn Doctor, we still get calls here from people saying, ‘I want to speak with the guy with the funny name that I can’t remember,’ and the calls are automatically passed on to me,” says **Ewald Alstadt**, vice president of operations & support services for Lawn Doctor. “I’m an immigrant, one of the legal ones. I was born in East Germany, and all of my family escaped into West Germany before the Berlin Wall was put up.”

Briefly describe your role with Lawn Doctor. My role is to coordinate and provide support for the Lawn Doctor operating system in the key processes and procedures it provides all franchise owners in our system — the new ones and those that have been in our family for 20-plus years or more. This includes training, business planning/management, marketing, sales, service, equipment, agronomic, horticultural, pest, technology and customer relations.

What’s the most important thing you have learned since joining Lawn Doctor in 1981? First is that Mother Nature is unpredictable, and sooner or later reminds you she is the boss. Second is you must have a plan, whether it’s a business plan or a personal plan for your life. You should have an end in mind and a list of action items that must be executed in order to accomplish your goals. You must plan, and you must execute the plan.

What’s the biggest change you’ve seen in the industry in recent years? Customers are buying differently, they’re communicating differently and their expectations have shifted. We need to focus on customers’ needs, and use new ideas and technology to meet those needs. We have to get better at using our business and operating data to make better business decisions regarding customers’ specific desires.

What about the lawn care business do you find most rewarding? It’s been absolutely awesome to be able to work with new franchise owners and help them get started, grow their business and become successful using our operating system. I’ve formed some great relationships with franchise owners that are priceless to me. This is a great business that affords

owners tremendous operating flexibility, low inventory levels and the freedom to determine their own comfort zones and lifestyle ceilings.

Obviously, you believe franchises still offer great opportunities for individuals. A franchise provides a strong branding message that the public recognizes. From a franchise owner’s perspective, it offers a jump-start to starting the new business or opening up in a new market.

While a franchisor can’t guarantee that an owner won’t make mistakes — everybody makes mistakes — it will do everything it can to reduce the number of mistakes. A franchise also offers the opportunity to join a network of other franchise owners to share ideas and best practices in a non-competitive framework. And, finally, and this is certainly critical

to the success of any franchise and to the individual company owners, it provides a regularly updated and improved operating system that covers every aspect of the business — from the financials to the field service itself.

“THIS IS A GREAT BUSINESS THAT AFFORDS OWNERS ... THE FREEDOM TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN COMFORT ZONES AND LIFESTYLE CEILINGS.” — EWALD ALSTADT, LAWN DOCTOR