

## Cleaning up in business

One landscaper finds that being resourceful and never turning down an opportunity has been the key to continued success.

**G**REG SMITH, PRESIDENT of B.L.B. Contractors, is a jack of all trades. The Philadelphia area-based contractor has always been resourceful about finding new ways to generate income. As a result, he says, he has never been short of work. Smith refers to himself as a “one-stop-shop” for his clients. He says they appreciate that he can meet almost any of their maintenance needs.

Smith actually started out in the janitorial business, working as the operations manager for one of the largest companies in the Philadelphia area. But when that company was bought out and Smith lost his job, he had to be creative. Eventually he began building his own janitorial business. It wasn't long before he overheard one of his commercial clients talking about hiring a landscape company to handle outside maintenance, including snow removal.

“I stepped up and told them I could do it,” he says. “Of course I hadn't done that kind of work before but I got the equipment I needed and started building up jobs. My niche was telling people that I could handle maintenance indoors or out. I was already on the property so it made sense to do it all. Clients appreciated only having to make one call for all of their maintenance needs. From there, the business grew.”

While Smith's business started out as 85% janitorial and 15% landscaping, today it's completely the opposite. Smith mostly does landscape work, incorporating the janitorial work as an add-on service to supplement his income in bad weather or when landscaping work is slow.

“Doing that extra janitorial work allows for a steady paycheck every month and makes up for down time because of bad weather or lack of snow,” says Smith. “The idea is to always keep the income flowing. Sometimes that does mean being creative.”

Greg Smith



But that's how Smith's brain works. For example, if he takes on a tree removal project, he's already thinking about how he can sell the acquired wood as firewood.

“The fact is that there are always ways to make money or to be busy with work — even in tough times,” says Smith. “My father used to say that you shouldn't complain about not having enough money — you should spend that time finding ways to make it, even if you have to flip burgers. There's always something you can do.”

This past summer, when the weather was brutally hot in the Northeast and Smith's landscape business was sluggish, he picked up some extra work by doing blacktop for a client.

That patchwork job was a success. As a result, Smith was encouraged enough to later bid on a parking lot project. He says he enjoys being in the field and learning new skills. And if he gets asked about work he can't do, he still finds a solution for the client.

“If it's not something I know how to do, I sub it out if I can,” he admits. “The idea is to never say ‘No.’ If a client comes to me with a need and I can't do it myself, I'll find the right person for the job and serve as the project manager. It keeps the client happy and keeps some extra money in your pocket.”

Smith admits that in his 30 years of doing business independently he's always had to work hard. He's not a sit-behind-a-desk kind of boss. But he loves what he does. And in today's world, he's grateful for staying busy and having steady work.

“A lot of businesses are diversifying now with the state of the economy,” he says, “but I've always tried to sell myself as a one-stop-shop. I work hard, but it pays off.”

The author is a freelance writer with six years of experience covering landscaping.

### » SERVICE SNAPSHOT

**COMPANY:** B.L.B. Contractors

**HEADQUARTERS:**  
North Wales, PA

**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1981

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 4 full-time and 3 part-time janitorial

**SERVICE:** 70% landscape; 15% snow; 15% janitorial

**CLIENTELE:** 60% commercial; 40% residential