



AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: Turf Doctor Inc. dba Weed Man

FOUNDED: Turf Doctor (1994), Weed Man (2000)

HEADQUARTERS: Fresno, CA

TITLE: Dr. Jeffrey Kollenkark, President

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 19 lawn care / 30 total in Green Industry

SERVICE AREA: Fresno, Kings, Tulare Counties in San Joaquin Valley

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Member of PLCAA and PLANET since 1981

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: One

EMPLOYEES: In season, 14 full-time, 20 part-time

SERVICES: Fertilization, weed, insect, disease, aeration, lawns and flowerbeds

REVENUES: This year's goal is \$2.4 million

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS/HOBBIES: Travel, golf and exercise (the last not always so fun)

FAMILY: wife, Melissa; five children (ages 12-30), nine grandchildren

Needing an attention getter for his 1994 lawn care company start-up, **Dr. Jeff Kollenkark** bought a couple of box-style ambulances, complete with emergency lights, and plastered his Turf Doctor company logo on their sides. (He's allowed to do it. He's a doctor, right?) But since joining the Weed Man team in 2000, Kollenkark has been using more traditional service vehicles in his San Joaquin Valley, CA, operation.

Jeff, you started on the manufacturer/supplier side soon after earning a Ph.D. at Purdue University, then switched to the service side.

Tell us about that. I really enjoyed working for roughly 14 years as an R&D rep for both Elanco and Ciba-Geigy, and I loved the turf and ornamental industry people. It was a tough decision. I had a great boss, Dr. Doug Houseworth, and a great T&O team, but my family came first. I thought there would be a few job opportunities back there (California), but they quickly disappeared and so I started my own lawn care company, Turf Doctor, in order to stay in a field that I loved and to pay the bills.

We understand that you used unusual service vehicles when you founded Turf Doctor.

I wanted to work around the concept that Turf Doctor could fix sick lawns and keep healthy ones healthy. I picked up two box-style ambulances and logoed them up with the company information. It attracted a lot of attention from people, as they would pull off to the side of the road or make their heart skip a beat as we pulled up in front

of their neighbor's house to treat the lawn. Of course, it really caught people's attention when one of the guys accidentally turned on the strobe lights as he was driving down Shaw Avenue — not such a good idea. It would be killing us now, as they only got 4 miles to the gallon.

In 2000, you joined the Weed Man franchise system. Tell us about that. I was not initially interested as Weed Man was granular and I was liquid. Plus, they were really pushing telemarketing, which I could not see myself doing.

I agreed to meet Roger Mongeon in Scarborough the summer of 2000, but I was really thinking that I might want to franchise my Turf Doctor, and that I could get some ideas.

I was overwhelmed with the effort and support required to support a franchisee, and that convinced me that I had no interest in reinventing the wheel for myself.

The San Joaquin Valley is not your typical lawn care market. Tell us about it. It is a unique market. Even though we don't see snow and we

have 30 to 40 days over 100° Fahrenheit in the summer, we still have roughly 55% of our lawns as tall fescue and the balance common and hybrid Bermudagrass. There is an occasional Kentucky blue/rye or St. Augustine. Crabgrass pressure is severe, and so we go with split applications of pre-emergent starting in January. Crabgrass is usually germinating by mid-February.

We have eight rounds per year, every six weeks, for the basic service programs.

How did the Recession affect your company? How is your 2011 season looking so far?

The latest figures I heard was that Fresno was at 18.2% unemployment, and it might be higher because I suspect a lot of people have given up looking. I have seen our retention rates drop from 84% before the Recession to an average of 74% the last two years. We are striving for 80% this year.

Last year was our first year in 16 years that we did not grow. The Recession did have an impact on this, and our sales execution was lackluster as well last year. This year, we have been seeing great

results in new sales. We just need to stop the bleeding on the retention side and be willing to adjust programs, to keep even partial programs in place if necessary.

I think we have a good shot at reaching our goals of \$300K in net new business this year, but we will have to be hitting on all cylinders.