



## AT A GLANCE

**TITLE:** President

**COMPANY:** Dr. Green

**REVENUE:** \$10 million

**YEAR FOUNDED:** 1985

**YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY:** 17

**EDUCATION:** Masters in philosophy from Queen's University, MBA from Wilfred Laurier University

**HOBBIES:** Sports, running, traveling and most importantly, growing our business

**WEBSITE:** [www.doctorgreen.com](http://www.doctorgreen.com)

**Ryan Van Haastrecht** started working in the family business as a 12-year-old boy delivering fliers after school alongside his father, Lou. The elder Van Haastrecht launched Dr. Green in 1985 after discovering lawn care at a franchise show. But instead of buying into an existing concept, he went out on his own. "Dad ran the company and grew it to more than 10,000 customers by 2002," says Ryan, now president. "During high school and college my brother Lee and I worked on the trucks. In 2002 Lee, our current VP of operations, and I joined the company full time."

**Where did the name "Dr. Green" come from?** Dr. Green came from the concept of providing preventive care to people's lawns. (My father) thought it would be clever to have a mascot of a green blade of grass in a doctor's outfit, and this was an immediate hit with women and children.

**What makes your company unique?** We are able to offer compelling programs with very friendly service at a relatively low price. What allows us to do this is our productivity in sales and operations. Having an efficient delivery system and a lower cost per new sale than our competitors allows us to be competitive with our prices and aggressive with our promotions. Many competitors have indicated that our prices are too low, yet we make 20% profits almost every year and have an average annual growth rate of 17.6%.

**Can you describe your market and your customers?** We are 100% focused on the residential lawn care market, and we only provide lawn care

services (no landscaping). We used to do landscaping and we dabbled in commercial, but we discovered we are better off doing one thing very well. We currently serve three markets (Ontario; Calgary, Alberta; and the Chicagoland area).

In the past few years we have seen an increase in the number of female buyers. We are also experiencing a large increase in the number of online purchasers.

**What challenges do you see in the lawn care segment of the industry?** By far the greatest challenge to our industry is the increased attention and pressure to prohibit the use of many pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.

**How are you addressing those challenges?** We have not let these threats impact our company culture. Fear is

the worst thing because it consumes your energy and it paralyzes the development of new ideas.

**What changes have you seen in the industry?** Social media and the emergence of online marketing. It used to be that if you had one unhappy customer they would tell seven or eight of their friends. Now you can have one unhappy customer connect with hundreds of friends and/or strangers via Facebook, Twitter and other online social media sites. In the coming years growing your company and your profits will be more about service than ever before.

**What is your strategy for growth?** In the past our strategy for growth has always centered around telemarketing, door-to-door and flier delivery. Today we

are moving back to more of a guerrilla marketing approach whereby no one method of selling dominates the others. We need to create a lot of synergy through many smaller campaigns (telemarketing, door to door, flyer delivery, direct mail, email, social media, Google ad words, lawn signs, referrals etc.) Another aspect to our growth model is to improve service. We need to improve retention to improve our marketing ROI.

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