



COMPANY: Lawn Pride

TITLE: General Manager

YEAR FOUNDED: 1983

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 17

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT:
PLANET

HOBBIES: Shopping and spending time with my family

FAMILY: Husband – Bryan; children – Jacob, 9; Lexi, 11; Katie, 17; and Justin, 20

WEBSITE:
www.lawnpride.com

As the economy remains in flux, **Susan McIntosh** is looking for ways “to continue to prove our value to our customers.” As General Manager of Lawn Pride, Indianapolis, IN, McIntosh understands that while the company has yet to face any significant challenges from the economic downturn, “I don’t want to assume it will remain so in the future. So we will continue to find ways to make our business more valuable to our customers.”

What makes your company unique? We are a mix of landscaping (commercial) and lawn care applications (residential). They are two very different businesses that complement each other very well. Additionally, we believe in maintaining a very professional image. We have a strong brand, which is represented on our vehicles, our uniforms and our marketing.

How do you convey that message to your employees/customers? Extensive and continuous training is something we really believe in. As a part of that training our crewmembers are encouraged to be efficient on both sides of the business. This is good for us as well as our customers. For us, it results in higher margins. For our customers, it results in faster, seamless service. Ultimately our customers don’t want to be burdened with our processes. They just want results.

Can you describe your market and your customers? We serve a nine-county area with a population of about 1.7 million people. We have a fairly traditional growing season, with the

bulk of our business occurring from March to November. Our foundation is and will be residential lawn care. It’s 85% of our business. Commercial services makes up the remaining 15% and that is comprised of lawn services, landscaping and snow removal.

What challenges do you see in the lawn care segment of the industry? Maintaining a competitive advantage will always remain a challenge. As players come and go and prices fluctuate, we work hard to communicate our value to new and existing customers. Secondly, we are working to hone in our core target market. Understanding who our customers are and what makes them tick will allow us to market our brand more effectively and efficiently.

How are you addressing those challenges? First, we’re rare in that we work with an ad agency to determine the best way to reach our type of consumer. We don’t just

trust our instincts; we solicit outside expertise in all of our marketing efforts. Secondly, we have invested in profiling our customer base to know exactly who buys our service and where they are located.

What changes have you seen in the industry? Marketing has changed substantially over the years. It used to be driven by Yellow Pages and now Internet and social media have taken over. Technology is now a big driver of our business as well. We have invested in IT to help make our internal processes more effective and appear more seamless to the customer.

What is your strategy for growth? Our target audience isn’t growing, so we have to seek growth within a defined market. So our strategy is pretty simple. We want to reach new customers in the most efficient and effective means possible. By reducing waste in our marketing and making use of new tech-

nologies, we hope to maintain existing customers and attract new ones.

How has the economy affected your business, and how are you dealing with it? While the housing decline has eliminated market growth, the downturn overall has been good for us. Homeowners are investing in their homes and lawns, which ultimately is good for business.

What’s the best part of your job? I never do the same thing two days in a row. So I love the variety. Also, I have learned the business from the ground up, which comes in handy when issues arise.

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