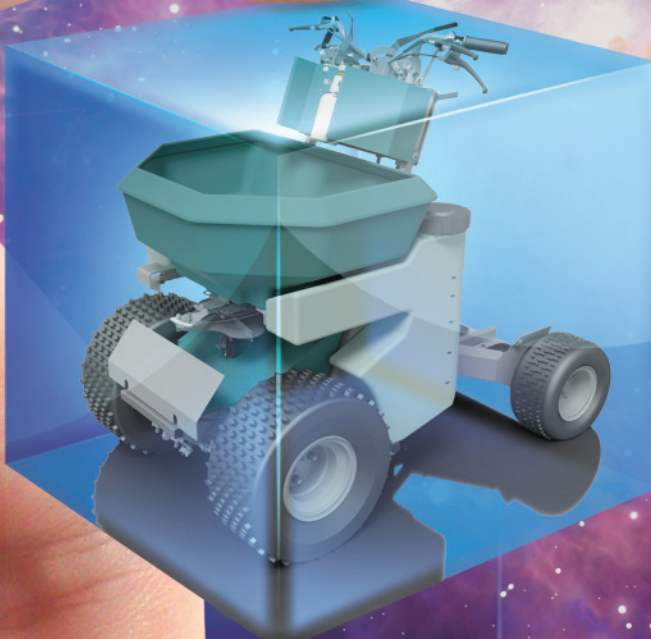


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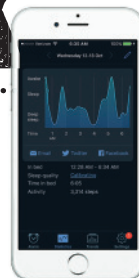


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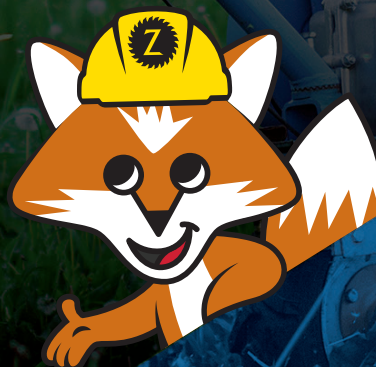
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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**MARISA PALMIERI**  
EDITOR

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mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net



## Family matters

I must have looked like I was preparing a thesis on Patrick Lencioni last week, as I walked out of the library with a stack of the author's books in my arms.

You see, during Phil Harwood's workshop at the fifth annual *LM* Lawn Care Forum in Orlando, Fla., last month, I pulled up my local library's app and placed holds on all the Lencioni books available.

I initially sought out "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team." It had been recommended to me before, and Harwood's session, "Mastering the Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team," was based on the concepts from this 2002 book. Learning about the book's model—which is essentially a pyramid with "trust" on the bottom, "results" on the top and other vital business components in between—opens your eyes to why some teams just aren't effective. It's all pieces of a puzzle you've seen and heard before, but Lencioni puts them together in an enlightening way.

“If you ran your company the way you run your family, would you go out of business?”

But a week later, when my library holds were ready for pickup, a different book caught my eye: "The 3 Big Questions for a Frantic Family." I read it in one evening. (Lencioni's books are told primarily in fable form, so they're pretty quick reads.)

Now, would I describe my family as "frantic?" No, not before. But I do

often feel like we're on a carnival ride that we never intended to get on, and it's never going to stop.

I know many of you feel the same way because "work/life balance" frequently comes up as a top concern among our readers in our research.

We're all running in a million directions between work, school, extracurricular activities, community and family commitments and so on. We feel like we can't say no. All of it's supposed to be fun, but no one's really enjoying it.

This book raises the question, "If you ran your company the way you run your family, would you go out of business?"

That's the way one of the characters in "The 3 Big Questions for a Frantic Family" feels. His wife takes issue with him saying so—she thinks he's implying she's disorganized—but that's not it. He's responsible for the chaos, too. As a management consultant, he knows companies need to identify their core values, outline their strategies and have systems in place for accountability. Why shouldn't families do the same? So, throughout the story the husband and wife work together to create a management plan for their family and others.

During this time of year more than ever, I seek a less hurried existence for myself and my family, so this book found me at the right time. If you ever feel like you'd like to get off that wild ride—and ensure your family doesn't "go out of business"—you might want to add this one to your wish list.

Happy Holidays.



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# Q+A

### How do you describe the current state of the landscape/lawn care market?



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# BIG PICTURE

## MAKING THE GRADE

**LOCATION** Fort Worth, Texas

**COMPANY** Bonick Landscaping

**THE DETAILS** The new owner of this four-acre estate engaged landscape architecture firm Hocker Design Group to renovate the site and Bonick Landscaping to install the landscape. Major features include a motor court with a water feature and koi pond, large-scale sculptures with gardens, a cobblestone dancing deck fountain, a fire pit and a black granite pool with dual negative edges.

The site is located on a terraced hillside with a grade change of 60 feet. Because of the grade change, only key access points were allowed. The company had to crane in large items like sculptures and stone slabs. An extensive system of french drains addressed the underground water on the site. The access points required commercial duty roadway mats to protect the site.

The project took more than two years to execute, involving Bonick's entire team of craftsmen and subcontractors. But the hard work paid off—earning Bonick both a Grand Award and a Judges Award in 2016 from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

**PHOTO** A series of concrete blade walls terrace the lawn and act as steps to the custom concrete fire pit.

*See more photos from this project at [LandscapeManagement.net/BigPicture](http://LandscapeManagement.net/BigPicture).*

PHOTO: DAVID HOCKER, HOCKER DESIGN GROUP



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# NEWS HOW-TO'S

LANDSCAPE  
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VIEWS  
AND TIPS

RECOMMENDER

BRUCE'S VIEW

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH

## PAPERLESS PRODUCTIVITY



**T**he reason Clean Scapes in Austin, Texas, wanted to move away from paper-based purchase order processing was twofold.

"For one, we knew paper printing was very costly," says Travis Dyer, director of technology. "But also, if our managers are back in the office for the sole reason of doing paperwork, they aren't doing real work. They need to be in the field to be productive."

So, the company employed Laser Fieche, a web-based submission form software, in 2013. Office personnel and managers now use the service for all the company's purchase orders, invoices and property visit forms with photos and notes. And there are a number of features Clean Scapes still hasn't tapped.

"It could be done with a simple email, but it looks much more professional and has an audit trail," Dyer says. "It also has customer surveys, which gave us some real good insights on how our customers viewed our service."

The service costs \$3,000 per month for 60 user licenses and users need a computer or phone. The company experienced the typical hitches in implementing a new system, but three years later, it estimates it's saved around \$100,000 by cutting paper cost and saving up to 200 man-hours per week.

“(Our managers) need to be in the field to be productive.”

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



**JOHN DEERE**



## RECOMMENDER

# What **vehicle setup** do you recommend for design/build+ installation?

A look at the truck/trailer combo preferred by Lowes Landscaping in Cuba, Mo.



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OWNER/CREATIVE INNOVATOR  
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**ERIK LOWES**  
PRESIDENT, LOWES LANDSCAPING  
CUBA, MO

"Dodge 5500 with four-wheel drive, a custom box behind cab, side door on dump bed, gravel chute in rear, pulling a skid-steer trailer. We chose this setup because the truck can legally haul everything we're transporting to the job site, while carrying all tools typically needed for most jobs. This eliminates a lot of lost productivity by loading tools every day. The gravel chute in the rear helps labor hours in installing rock, and the side door is a necessity in loading pallets. It's a year-round tool with four-wheel drive and a plow. It's one of the best decisions we've made."

## BRUCE'S **VIEW**



BY BRUCE WILSON

The author, of Bruce Wilson & Co., is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at [bruce.wilson@brucewilsoncompany.com](mailto:bruce.wilson@brucewilsoncompany.com).

## THE POWER OF A WELL-ALIGNED CULTURE

**P**eter Drucker, the "father of modern management," allegedly said "culture eats strategy for breakfast." This means that no matter how brilliant your strategy is on paper, it won't overcome a workplace where nothing works the way it's supposed to. Many companies are frustrated with a lack of accountability and urgency. These are important cultural factors, but they're two of many moving parts.

For CEOs wanting to drive cultural coherence, start here:

1. Define the kind of workplace you want to be: Will you be a place of continuous learning, innovation, collaboration and social responsibility? How will you discourage complacency and reward achievements?
2. Instill behavioral norms as characteristics of your value proposition and link them to business objectives. Codify how you behave with each other and with customers.
3. Be clear on the business you're in, the profile of the customers you serve and your message.
4. Define excellence and connect the dots, so employees are motivated by a sense of purpose.
5. Empower employees to have a sense of ownership, so they have the freedom to make good choices and take responsibility for their actions.
6. Establish new norms for transparency; invite open communication and an inclusive and supportive work environment.
7. Commit to never letting cultural performance fall through the cracks. Maintain high standards, and monitor and measure just like everything else. 📊



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## STEP BY STEP

# How to adjust rotary sprinkler heads

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Irrigation rotors should be tested, tuned-up and adjusted at the beginning of each season to ensure they're working as efficiently as possible.

Failing to do so can lead to more serious, long-term problems. For example, broken heads can cause dry spots in a lawn. Sprinklers that are not aligned properly can lead to water waste by spraying homes, driveways and sidewalks. Debris can get caught in pop-up units, causing uneven distribution. Overwatering can lead to a shallow root system, causing a lawn to become dormant and die.

It's also a good idea for contractors to encourage their customers to become acquainted with their sprinkler systems so they can quickly let their contractor know if they suspect a problem.

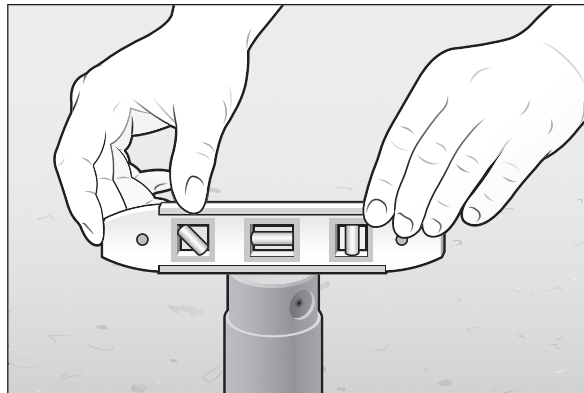
To determine whether or not rotors need to be adjusted between annual tune-ups, turn on the system and observe each sprinkler's distance and pattern. Take note of any broken heads or abnormal spraying and make any necessary repairs and adjustments. After adjusting the heads, check the lawn and landscape again in one week to ensure there are no dry spots or overwatered areas. Continue to adjust as necessary.

Follow these steps to effectively adjust rotary type sprinkler heads. 

SOURCE: Massey Services, [masseyservices.com](http://masseyservices.com)

## STEP 1

Be sure the head is flat to the horizon by using a level. This step ensures the head is operating to its maximum effectiveness.



## STEP 2

Adjust the fixed side of the arc. Determine whether the head is fixed to the right or left and make sure the fixed side of the arc is in line with the starting point by physically turning the head. Turn sprinklers on and let them cycle three times. Use the arc adjustment to set the final rotation point.

## STEP 3

Adjust the distance of the spray by turning the adjustment screw clockwise until it touches the water stream. Then turn the screw counterclockwise until it's not touching the stream. If water sprays too far, turn the screw clockwise until desired distance is reached.





A man wearing a green t-shirt, a brown baseball cap, and sunglasses is using a black and yellow battery-powered hedge trimmer to trim a green bush. The background shows a residential setting with a house and a church steeple.

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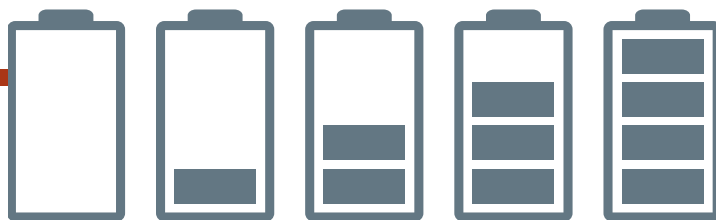
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# CHARGED DEBATE



Zack Kline has been running battery-powered equipment since 2011.

## Is battery-powered handheld equipment on trend to overtake gas products?

BY LAUREN DOWDLE

**T**he vote is still out for some pros on whether battery-powered equipment will become the norm in the green industry over gas. What's clear, though, is this option is gaining ground with contractors and their clients.

According to Husqvarna's 2016 Green Spaces Survey, of the 1,579 U.S. consumers surveyed, 65 percent said they would choose a landscaper who uses "eco-friendly" outdoor power equipment over one who doesn't. And 75 percent said they would support companies that use "eco-friendly" outdoor power equipment over those that don't.

Most contractors know about the equipment's lack of noise, fumes and fuel use compared to gas counterparts. The opposition points to lesser performance and run time, saying it's only for homeowners. But

manufacturers are addressing those concerns.

Here's a look at why some landscapers have made the switch to battery-powered equipment.

### GAINING GROUND

Prices have gone down and performance has gone up for battery-powered handheld equipment—making it a more attractive option. Those are just two of the reasons some landscapers started using it.

As a string-trimmer operator during high school and college, Zack Kline says he got tired of the trimmer's noise, fumes and gas consumption. So, he sought an alternative. He's been operating battery-powered equipment since 2011—using Stihl for about the past four years—and says it's come a long way since then.

"In the beginning, the equipment was more residential and not really commercial grade," Kline says. Now, he says, the equipment's performance levels and battery life have gone up, while its prices have gone down.

Kline, now the owner of A.I.R. Lawn Care in Rockville, Md., offers organic lawn care, landscaping and snow and ice removal services to primarily residential clients. The company's annual revenue is nearly \$500,000 with three to five crews during the spring.

For others, the maintenance issues associated with gas equipment pushed them toward batteries. Tired of dealing with carburetor issues, Greg Taylor began looking at battery options.

Taylor, owner of GTM Services in Largo, Fla., provides landscape maintenance and installation services to mainly residential clients, along with a few commercial accounts. His company has about \$300,000 in annual revenue. It switched to battery-powered equipment two years ago after using gas for about 20 years.

He says he initially worried it would take 20 or more batteries for his two-man crew to make it through the day, but he was surprised to find the crew used only five to six batteries a day, which covered about 20 properties.



# BATTERY-POWERED EQUIPMENT GUIDE

"I wouldn't go back to gas-powered equipment," Taylor says. "(Battery-powered equipment) is every bit as good as gas."

Aaron Holbrook, administrator of Diversified Landscape Services in Oak Ridge, Tenn., uses an Oregon battery-powered chainsaw (in addition to gas equipment) and says it's ideal for cutting limbs and small-diameter trees. Diversified Landscape Services has an annual revenue of \$850,000 and provides landscape maintenance, irrigation, landscape installation and renovation services. Its clients are 65 percent commercial, 25 percent HOA and 10 percent residential.

"We manage several properties that have trees planted along the road or in the center median. We can get out of the truck and be ready to cut with just the press of a button, zero emissions and with minimal noise, as to not disturb our customers," Holbrook says. "If the battery is charged, there is never a question as to if the equipment will start."

Ernie Brandenburg, owner of B&B Lawn Care in Timonium, Md., has been running battery-powered equipment for about a year. His company's annual revenue is close to \$200,000, and he provides maintenance, lawn care, pruning, leaf cleanup and lawn renovation services for about 65 small residential properties.

"There's nothing I need to do with battery-powered equipment," says Brandenburg, who uses DeWalt products. "I just put in a battery, pull a trigger and I'm working." He says he's pleased with the performance level. That's one reason he stopped taking his gas-powered handheld equipment with him to the job site (except

for a gas backpack blower during the fall because of the volume of leaves).

Although these products have improved, sources say there is room for upgrades before they can meet every contractor and property's needs.

"Gas-powered equipment is still more reliable and durable when it comes to equipment that is used all day, every day," Holbrook says. "For battery-powered equipment to get on par, it would need batteries with longer life and capacity without much added weight."

But, he encourages all contractors to give battery-powered products a chance to see if they work for them.

## BEFORE PURCHASING

Contractors should expect to pay a few hundred dollars more upfront for battery-powered equipment compared to gas equipment—with the price depending on the size of batteries, charging stations and other accessories.


It's important to factor in what you won't pay for with this equipment: gas, oil and maintenance. If you know these costs, you'll be able to see how long it will take for the battery option to save you money.

Before purchasing the equipment, contractors should do their homework just like they would with any other product.

"Start with a single piece of equipment until you become familiar with its pros and cons," Holbrook says. "Choose a manufacturer that has a history of producing battery-powered equipment. Speak with your dealer so that you'll know what to expect from your battery-powered equipment purchase."

As anyone who attended this year's GIE+EXPO can attest, battery power has come a long way—and it isn't slowing down.

"Within the next five to 10 years, you'll see nothing but battery power," Kline says. "That will come from consumer demand and from trends both within and outside of the industry."

Kline says he'd like to see equipment manufacturers offer battery-powered alternatives for all commercial equipment—not just trimmers, blowers and chainsaws but also edgers, aerators, applicators and snow throwers. "We'd like to see the whole industry go battery," he says. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.



Aaron Holbrook's crew removed a dead pine tree for an HOA using battery-powered equipment.



# Greenworks Commercial

**G**reenworks Commercial 82-volt tools provide all the power of gas without the hassle, making it the clear choice to replace your gas-operated tools. 82-volt technology partnered with superior brushless motors and commercial grade construction make Greenworks Commercial equipment perfect for landscape professionals.

## QUIET

Greenworks Commercial tools are powered by brushless motors, making them up to 50% quieter than gas-powered tools. This quiet operation allows you to work in sites where there are noise restrictions in place. Quieter operation means you can start your day earlier, get to more jobs, and work later – all without disturbing your clients.

## EASY TO OPERATE

Greenworks Commercial power equipment starts with either the push of a button or the squeeze of a trigger – no more pulling a cord. Start and restart easily. The brushless motor technology of Greenworks Commercial tools drastically reduces vibrations as compared to gas-powered equipment. Lighter-weight tools with reduced vibrations means less user fatigue, resulting in extended use and an easier week of work.



## GREENWORKS COMMERCIAL

### NO GAS. NO OIL. NO FUMES.

No fluctuating fuel costs. No mixing. No spills. No smelling like fuel and exhaust all day long. Greenworks Commercial tools deliver commercial grade power without the mess and smell of gas and oil, so you can breathe easy. Charging a battery is a fraction of the cost of a tank of gas, significantly lowering operating costs.

### LOW MAINTENANCE

Greenworks Commercial equipment requires less maintenance than traditional gasoline powered equipment. No carburetors to service, no lines to be replaced, no oil to change, no replacing spark plugs, no cleaning air filters...means no down time. With Greenworks Commercial, the tools are ready to work when you are.



The Husqvarna Battery Series provides a quiet, exhaust-free solution for professional outdoor power equipment needs.

# Husqvarna

## HUSQVARNA BATTERY SERIES PROVIDES PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE WITH NO GAS REQUIRED

The Husqvarna Battery Series provides landscape and tree care professionals with efficient, high-quality outdoor power equipment that is also quiet and environmentally friendly. One 40-volt, Li-ion, high-performance battery can be used interchangeably among all of Husqvarna's battery-powered products, making the line a natural fit for on-the-go professionals.

The professional-grade 500 Series Battery lineup includes the **536LiXP chainsaw**, which features a 14-inch bar, excellent ergonomics and high chain-speed. The chainsaw's MSRP is \$469.95.\*

An additional highlight is the **536LiHD60X hedge trimmer**, which features a 24-inch-long, double-sided cutter bar. A pivoting rear handle makes it easier when cutting both vertically and horizontally. The hedge trimmer's MSRP is \$469.95.\*

For clearing leaves and other debris, the **436LiB leaf blower** provides long-lasting performance and



quite operation. It generates air speeds of up to 105 mph and 388 cfm, while cruise control and boost power mode options provide optimum handling for tough jobs.

The leaf blower's MSRP is \$249.95.\*

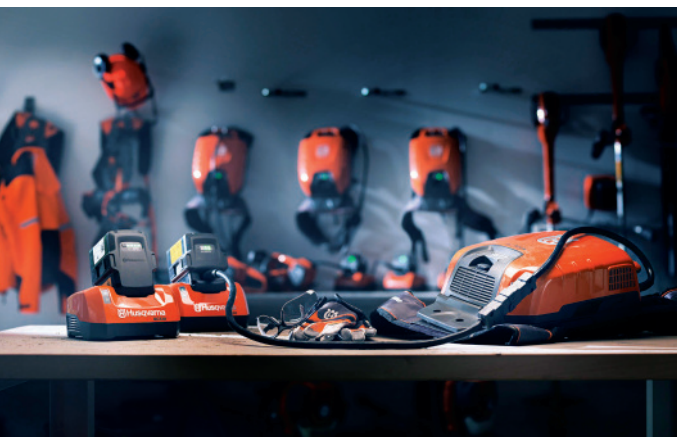
New additions to the Husqvarna Battery Series in 2016 include the **536LiPT5** (MSRP: \$499.95\*) and **536LiP4 pole saws** (MSRP: \$399.95\*), which are designed to be balanced and ergonomic without compromising power.

Also new is the **536LiLx trimmer**, which has a long-lasting brushless motor and a two-way rotation head that allows users to operate the product in a forwards or backwards direction depending on their preference. The trimmer's ergonomic handle makes it balanced and easy to use. The trimmer's MSRP is \$299.95.\*

For landscape and tree care professionals looking to minimize downtime, Husqvarna offers comfortable backpack batteries that provide extended runtime between charges. The **BLi520X backpack battery** (MSRP: \$599.95) has a capacity of 14.4 Ah, and the **BLi940X backpack battery** (MSRP: \$949.95) has a capacity of 26.1 Ah.

The Husqvarna Battery Series is available at Husqvarna dealers. Visit [www.husqvarna.com/us/dealer-locator](http://www.husqvarna.com/us/dealer-locator) to find a dealer near you.

*\*Battery and charger sold separately*



The Husqvarna Battery Series is powered by a lithium-ion, high-performance battery that is extremely durable and interchangeable between all Husqvarna battery-powered handheld equipment.



# LERA

**L**ERA (Ningbo LERA Electric Appliance Co. Ltd) debuted 3 new lithium-ion cordless outdoor power equipment product platforms at the 2016 GIE+EXPO.

With three different battery pack voltages (40V-62V-84V) LERA has a solution for every customer from the light DIYer to Commercial Landscapers. Each of these three new platforms has enough power for consumers to give up Gas or trade up from that annoying power cord. Trading fumes, noise and maintenance for environmentally friendly lithium power, less noise, virtually no maintenance becomes an easy choice.

The entry level R2S 40V platform is targeted at the DIY homeowner who knows value but still demands great quality and performance in their lawn care products. With ten products and more in development there is a solution for all your landscaping needs.

The LERA S1 62V platform steps up the power another notch with more than 50% more power than 40V! This platform also has a full range of products and is more suitable for the heavy DIYer with a larger yard.

The LERA 84V is the most powerful platform with more than twice the power of 40V and 50%



# LERA

more power than 56V. This platform is perfect for the heavy DIYer and Commercial customer that demands the best products with the most power to tackle any landscaping job.

All of LERA's new lithium-ion cordless outdoor power equipment platforms are offered with a range of useful, ergonomic and innovative features and battery pack options to extend run times and deliver the power to get any job done. LERA offers standard and rapid charging battery chargers, with charge times as fast as 30 minutes.

Complete products as well as brushless motors, controllers and battery packs are all designed, engineered and manufactured in house at LERA's facility in Ningbo, China.



LERA (Ningbo LERA Electric Appliance Co. Ltd) | NO. 398, Longtan Road, Longtan Village, Fenghua City, Ningbo, China 315500



Ivy Ying: +8613605781986



David Luczynski: 224-374-2679



Lera.com.cn



# Mean Green Mowers

**M**ean Green Mowers manufactures powerful, quiet, lithium-electric mowers and hand held equipment to the commercial landscape professional and prosumer residential customer!

Designed, developed and manufactured in the heart of the USA, these powerful products provide zero emissions, extremely low noise, no routine maintenance and zero fuel to purchase. Mean Green Mowers provides a complete line of commercial electric equipment including the patent pending CXR 52"/60" ZTR, S.A.M. Solar Assisted Mower, 48: Stalker Stand On, 33" WBX-33HD Walk Behind, MGP-20 Push Mower and NEW for 2017 our Prosumer Nemesis NXR-48"/52" ZTR.

Our hand held equipment includes: the BLAST! Commercial Electric Backpack Blower with over 150 MPH of air velocity and 503 cfm with single exchangeable battery run times equal to "full tank" gas backpack blowers while producing 1/4 of the noise and our Commercial, Cordless, Electric Backpack line trimmer with pruning saw, hedge trimmer, edger, chain-saw and hedge trimmer options. The patent pending "operator cooled" exchangeable battery backpack weighs only 13 pounds and provides run times similar

to 3 full tanks of gas with a typical gas trimmer.

Mean Green's ride-on mowers are constructed of thick 7 gauge steel chassis and a welded steel deck. Multiple angular bends and lightening holes borrowed from the aerospace industry make for the lightest, strongest, commercial mowers on the market today.



Proprietary blade motors and spindles maintain the highest blade tip speeds in all types of grass for the best



possible cut. All day run times are obtainable thanks to super efficiency and Mean Green's patent pending "Green Lithium" battery systems. Cut all day on one charge and charge overnight!

New to Mean Green's 2017 Prosumer product line is the Nemesis NXR-48"/52" ZTR. The Nemesis is crafted out of lightweight aluminum and high strength steel making it extremely strong and agile. Perfect for any commercial or residential job, the NXR is designed with a low center of gravity and custom ride-ride suspension that provides the smoothest ride possible!

Our S.A.M. Solar Assisted mower, is an optional solar electric canopy that can be added to both the CXR-52"/60" & NXR ZTR ride-on mower with up to \$10,910 in first year savings and qualifying you the customer for tax credit savings along with factory mower rebates!

With fast Return On Investment from fuel savings alone, Mean Green Mowers offer a huge competitive advantage for contractors. Stand out in the crowd with our powerful, quiet equipment!

**[www.meangreenmowers.com](http://www.meangreenmowers.com)**



# Oregon

**W**ith Oregon's 40V family of cordless tools, contractors get the performance and power needed for professional turf and yard care without the hassles of gas. The six tools in the lineup are all compatible with Oregon's premium lithium ion battery packs, engineered for constant, no-fade power, long run time and to hold on to charges even through winter storage. The quiet power of 40-volt is versatile in residential settings, and eliminates gasoline spills on lawns, driveways or streets.

- **CS300 Chain Saw:** With the built-in PowerSharp self-sharpening system, you'll never cut with a dull chain again. Go from dull chain to sharp chain with the pull of a lever.
- **HT250 Hedge Trimmer:** The HT250's 24" dual reciprocating blades can cut through up to a 3/4" branch with a maximum of 2750 strokes per minute.
- **ST275 String Trimmer/Edger:** The only cordless trimmer compatible with Oregon's new Gator® SpeedLoad™ trimmer system, which can reduce reloading time to 20 seconds or less. The ST275 is four times quieter than a gas trimmer and silent between trimming.
- **PS250 Pole Saw:** The PS250 has the precision of Oregon 3/4" chain with a reach up to 14 feet. Its ergonomic design features a mid-mount motor and reduced elevated weight.
- **BL300 Blower:** With silence between trigger pulls and a variable speed trigger, the BL300 offers a gas-like performance ideal for morning work or in communities with low noise requirements.
- **WL275 Portable Light:** The WL275 ensures that work doesn't stop when the sun goes down. It can run up to 12 hours on high or 24 hours on low on a single charge.

Want to give it a try? Contractors can take advantage of a promo code available only to *Landscape Management* readers. Use the code "landscape2016" to receive 15% off from your order on 40volt.com through Mar. 15, 2017.





# STIHL

## LITHIUM-ION BATTERY PRODUCTS

Portable, quiet and powerful, the full line of STIHL battery products are powered by advanced 36-volt lithium-ion battery technology for environmentally responsible landscaping with professional results! Packed with power, precision and convenience, these tools cut job times as fast as they cut fuel costs.

### STIHL BGA 100 BLOWER

**The lightest, quietest and most powerful handheld blower in the STIHL line.**

- Jet engine-inspired axial turbine fan delivers more blowing force (up to 17 Newtons\*) than any other battery products on the market – and many gas-line-powered models.
- Elimination of on-board battery reduces weight to only 5.5 lbs. reducing operator fatigue on the job.\*
- Variable speed throttle trigger delivers four performance levels; boost mode activates the highest power with air speeds of up to 140 mph for tough blowing tasks.
- Ultimate performance with blowing force rivaling top-rated STIHL backpack blowers.

\*One Newton is the force needed to accelerate 1 kilogram of mass at the rate of 1 meter per second squared. The BGA 100 is designed for use with battery belt or AR backpack battery with connector cable.

### WHAT THE PROS ARE SAYING

**Ralph Meyer • Sebert Landscaping • Chicago, Ill.**

"With as many crews as we have working in the field, any time the equipment is down for repair, it affects our efficiency. Dependable products like STIHL help keep us as productive as possible, which we believe saves us both time and money and makes us more profitable as well."



### STIHL FSA 90 R STRING TRIMMER

**Battery-powered straight shaft trimmer delivers the cutting performance needed for professional landscaping tasks.**

- Quiet, yet powerful, this cordless trimmer is great for professionals landscaping in noise sensitive or exhaust emission sensitive areas like school grounds, business districts or hospitals.
- Powerful brushless motor delivers a high cutting speed and 15" cutting width, allowing users to complete jobs in a short amount of time.
- Balanced and lightweight, delivering excellent cutting performance and low vibration for easy, smooth operation.

# STIHL®





# REAL PEOPLE. STIHL PEOPLE.

Michael Byrne | The Patio Company

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## “My clients expect the best. STIHL helps me deliver.”

Michael Byrne's meticulous dedication to quality and exceeding customer expectations extends to every aspect of his business, from the high-end stones used in his hardscape designs to outfitting his crew with the most innovative equipment the industry has to offer — like the TSA 230 STIHL Cutquik®. Delivering powerful cutting performance in a lightweight, compact package, the world's first battery-powered cut-off machine does more

than exceed expectations. “My crews like that it's lightweight and easy to use. With low noise and zero exhaust emissions, customers — and their neighbors — can enjoy their time at home while we work.”

**Legendary STIHL performance. Backed by 9,000 Servicing Dealers Nationwide.**

To find a dealer: [STIHLdealers.com](https://www.stihldealers.com)

Owner Michael Byrne is not an equipment operator. STIHL recommends operators always wear appropriate personal protective equipment and refer to their product instruction manual for proper operation.



# STIHL®



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# NEW STUFF



1



2



3

## CHECK OUT MORE NEW STUFF ONLINE

To stay up to date on all the latest landscape industry products and services, visit [LandscapeManagement.net/tag/product-news](http://LandscapeManagement.net/tag/product-news).

### 1. VANGUARD OIL GUARD SYSTEM

**COMPANY:** Briggs & Stratton

**URL:** [VanguardEngines.com](http://VanguardEngines.com)

The Vanguard Oil Guard System continuously exchanges oil between the engine and a large oil reservoir, external from the engine. It's designed to extend oil change intervals from 100 to 500 hours and lower labor and replacement filter costs. Initially available on Ferris mowers, the system is a factory-integrated feature of the Vanguard 810 and Big Block engines and is protected by a three-year warranty.

### 2. HRC216K3HDA WALK-BEHIND MOWER

**COMPANY:** Honda

**URL:** [PowerEquipment.Honda.com](http://PowerEquipment.Honda.com)

Honda's third HRC model geared toward the commercial lawn market is designed to be light-weight, with a 121-lb. operating weight, yet durable, with a hydro-static cruise control shaft drive transmission. The dome-shaped deck is designed for both bagging and mulching, and the Honda MicroCut Twin Blade System offers four cutting surfaces to produce finer clippings.

### 3. Z400 SERIES ZERO-TURN MOWER

**COMPANY:** Kubota

**URL:** [Kubota.com](http://Kubota.com)

Kubota's new Z400-Series zero-turn mowers feature deck sizes of 48, 54 and 60 in. They're powered by HydroGear's Commercial ZT3400 transmission and come with a 6.8-gallon fuel tank and a 24-hp Kawasaki FS gasoline engine, besides the 48-in., which has a 24-hp engine. A foot pedal mower lift system and brake system are easier to use than traditional controls, the company says.



## SAFETYWATCH

### TEXTING + CELLPHONE USE

**Most workers have phones or text messaging devices. These are a serious hazard while driving vehicles, operating equipment and even walking. Many people are killed in equipment and vehicles due to inattention caused by personal cellphone use or texting. Even talking on the phone is a distraction that takes your attention away from driving the truck or equipment. The following are some sensible rules for using devices:**

- Don't talk, dial or text on a cellphone or other personal communication device while driving a car, truck or machine. You should use a hands-free device if permitted by your supervisor. In many states, it's the law. Limit unnecessary conversation.



- If you are the driver, it's safest to use a cell phone only when the vehicle or machine is stopped, even if you have your hands free.
- Don't read or create text messages if you're walking or driving, even when the vehicle is stopped at a traffic light. It's impossible to pay full attention to your surroundings and text at the same time.
- Be respectful of any policies your company has that restrict personal cellphone use or texting while on the job.

#### WATCH AND LEARN

Visit [LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch](http://LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch) to view a video about texting and driving, and use it as a training tool for your team.

SOURCE: Greenius

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INSTALLATION

IRRIGATION+  
WATER MANAGEMENT

## TANK TALK

The move toward propane mowers has slowed due to cheap gas prices, but proponents say the benefits remain.

➤ PAGE 34





# A regional look at rounds

Most lawn care companies we spoke to apply six to eight rounds, but what they do with them varies and often depends on weather. **BY DILLON STEWART**

### JEFF COOPER

**President,  
Lawn Connection  
West Berlin, N.J.**

**Most common grass types:** Bluegrass-ryegrass blend, tall fescue

**Rounds:** Base offering—six; Premium—eight

**1: March-April**—Slow-release granular fertilizer with pre-emergent crabgrass control.

**Premium:** Aeration with additional application of preemergent herbicide.

**2: April-May**—Liquid fertilizer, broadleaf weed control.

**Premium:** May-June grub control application.

**3: Late May-early June**—Organic liquid biostimulant application.

**4: July 4**—Light feeding of granular organic-based fer-

tilizer, spot spray weeds.

**5: Early-mid-August**—Slow-release 28-0-0 fertilizer.

**6: October-November**—Slow-release 32-0-2 fertilizer.

### LUKE HAWTHORNE

**President,  
Emerald Lawns  
Round Rock, Texas**

**Most common grass types:** Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, St. Augustinegrass

**Rounds:** Eight

**1: January-mid-February**—Full rate of liquid organic probiotic on all lawns.

**2: February-March**—Bermudagrass lawns: preemergent, liquid high-nitrogen fertilizer; St. Augustinegrass and zoysiagrass lawns: no preemergent, high-nitrogen liquid fertilizer; spot treat

weeds, insects and diseases on all lawns.

**3: End of March-April**—High-nitrogen fertilizer on all lawns; spot treat weed, insects and diseases.

**4: May-June**—Bermudagrass: preemergent to control summer annuals; St. Augustinegrass or zoysiagrass: Good condition lawns get organic fertilizer. Struggling lawns get nitrogen fertilizer at technician's discretion.

**5: July-August**—Bermudagrass: organic fertilizer; St. Augustinegrass or zoysiagrass: Good condition lawns get organic fertilizer. Struggling lawns get nitrogen fertilizer at technician's discretion.



**“Potash helps the lawns get through the wintertime. It makes them more hardy and able to stand up against extreme temperatures.”**

—LUKE HAWTHORNE

**6: August-September**—Bermudagrass: organic fertilizer; St. Augustinegrass or zoysiagrass: Good condition lawns get organic fertilizer. Struggling lawns get nitrogen at technician's discretion.

**Mid-September:** Preemergent weed control for spring annuals.

**November-December**—Sulfur/potash application.

### BOBBY GAY

**Operations Manager,  
Kathleen's Lawn &  
Shrub Care  
Evans, Ga.**

**Most common grass types:** Bermudagrass, zoysiagrass, St. Augustinegrass, Centipedegrass

**Rounds:** Six; lime application or liquid aeration offered as add-ons.

**1: January-March**—Potassium and liquid organic probiotic to strengthen roots.

**2: April-May**—One round of full-rate liquid preemergent for crabgrass control; Bermudagrass/zoysiagrass: Some liquid nitrogen if warm weather is prevalent and grass is already growing.

**3: June-August**—Liquid organic probiotic, iron, potassium, phosphorous, insecticide; Bermudagrass/zoysiagrass: nitrogen fertilizer.

**4: September-October**—Fall preemergent to control *Poa annua*; Bermudagrass/zoysiagrass: Nitrogen if weather remains warm; Centipedegrass/St. Augustinegrass: iron, liquid organic probiotic.

**5: November-December**—Liquid potassium, phosphorous and some manganese.

**“State law says we can't apply fertilizer after Dec. 1. We would prefer to wait until it's a little colder because then you're getting a little bit of that nitrogen being utilized, and it stays there for spring. That way, the lawns are already starting to green up without us even needing to be there. Because of that law, we've had to adjust by using a slow release.”** —JEFF COOPER







## DEREK BLUMBERG

**Owner, Quality Seasons**

**Location: Savage, Minn.**

**Most common grass types:** Bluegrass-ryegrass mix

**Rounds:** Seven

**1:** *Usually April but varies*—"Spoon-fed" granular fertilizer.

**2:** *May*—"Spoon-fed" granular fertilizer, spot treat weeds with postemergent broadleaf herbicides.



"We use a "spoon-fed" method of fertilizing. For our bodies we're told we should eat less food, more often—we should eat six smaller meals a day instead of three large meals. We believe we're doing the same thing with fertilizer. So we're just putting enough fertilizer down to get you through the next four weeks, and then we spray whatever weeds are present at that time."

—DEREK BLUMBERG

**3:** *June*—"Spoon-fed" granular fertilizer, spot treat with postemergent broadleaf herbicides.

**4:** *July*—"Spoon-fed" granular fertilizer, spot treat with postemergent broadleaf herbicides.

**5:** *August*—"Spoon-fed" granular fertilizer, spot treat with postemergent broadleaf herbicides.

**6:** *September*—"Spoon-fed" granular fertilizer, spot treat with postemergent broadleaf herbicides.

**7:** *Early October*—Pelletized gypsum soil stabilizer.

"It all depends on weather. A lot of those people in March are going to get the same thing they got in January because it's not warm enough for preemergents, but once you get to April, they're going to get their preemergents. It kind of overlaps. That's how we get our six applications. Most of our yards get two rounds of our summer application."

—BOBBY GAY

## CHRIS SENSKE

**President, Senske Services**

**Kennewick, Wash.**

**Most common grass types:** Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass, bentgrass, chewings fescue

**Rounds:** Seven rounds; optional insect/grub prevention application in round three.

**1:** *Feb. 15-March 1*—Custom-blend fertilizer.

**2:** *April-May*—Custom-blend fertilizer, broadleaf weed control, preemergent herbicide for crabgrass in later applications.

**3:** *Mid-May-mid-June*—Custom-blend fertilizer, broadleaf

weed control, preemergent herbicide in earlier applications.

**4:** *Late July-August*—Custom-blend fertilizer.

**5:** *August-September*—Custom-blend fertilizer, broadleaf weed control.

**6:** *October*—Preemergent broadleaf control.

**7:** *Late October-November*—Custom-blend fertilizer. 🇺🇸



"The preemergent goes down late in our second application or early in our third application. We don't want to put it down too early."

—CHRIS SENSKE

## STEP UP TO BIGGER PROFITS

By Stepping Onto the New **TT5000**

The TurfEx TT5000 Ride-On Spreader/Sprayer caters to nearly any sized property... sprays and spreads materials faster, yet more precisely... and empowers you to do more jobs in less time, with less manpower and equipment. It's one small step for your operator, but one giant leap for your operation.

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## MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

# Fuel of the future?

**Despite the environmental and cost benefits of propane-powered equipment, cheap gas is preventing contractors from making the switch.**

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**M**ike Trump always knew propane-powered mowers were better for the environment. So with some advice from his equipment dealer and a monetary incentive from the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC), he decided to give them a shot. Since purchasing his first propane mowers in 2012, Trump has lowered his fuel costs, saved man-hours and sleeps better at night, knowing his carbon footprint is reduced and his crews are handling safe fuel.

"We decided to switch to propane because, at not much more of an expense, it is safe and environmentally friendly," says the president of Trump Lawn & Land Co. in York, Pa., which provides 40 percent design/build and 60 percent maintenance services to a 70 percent residential clientele. "With the incentives

from PERC, it made sense to go all in."

While Trump, who declined to share his annual revenue, was an early adopter, more than one-third of contractors are considering propane for their fleet in the next three years, according to PERC research. These contractors are interested in low emissions and reduced fuel costs—propane typically costs 30 percent less than gasoline. Many also believe the environmental benefits differentiate them from the competition.

Despite propane's pros, many contractors have cold feet about the switch. With low gas prices, fuel savings simply aren't as important to the average contractor as they were in the past. Like many energy-saving efforts—like replacing incandescent light bulbs or installing solar panels—the up front costs often overshadow the long-term savings.

"In our industry the primary driver for considering a move to propane is high fuel costs," says John Cloutier, senior marketing manager for Exmark Manufacturing Co. in Beatrice, Neb. "While operating a more environmentally-friendly fleet has appeal, it cannot come at the expense of significantly higher equipment costs, product performance and operational

inconvenience. It all boils down to, 'What is a contractor's payback for heading down this alternative path?'"

### PROPANE PROCEDURES

A primary benefit of propane is that it burns cleaner than gas, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Plus, propane engines can last about 25 percent longer than gas models because they are free from carbon build-up, experts say. Jeremy Wishart, deputy director of business development for PERC in Madison, Wis., says this makes propane popular with municipalities, government agencies, colleges and homeowner associations that require contractors to use propane mowers as part of their sustainability efforts.

"We are seeing more widespread use in metropolitan cities and their surrounding areas, particularly places where environmental factors are in play and forcing the hand of contractors," says Wishart.

There are also operational benefits. Because propane is stored in tanks, refueling simply requires replacing one tank with another, lowering downtime and the chance of spillage. However, propane

**↑  
STICKER SHOCK**  
Propane's benefits are often overshadowed by high up-front costs.



## NEWSPEED

### CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Verizon Communications completed its \$2.4 billion acquisition

of Fleetmatics Group. The combined company will continue to provide products and services connecting

the vehicles of fleet-based businesses.

### FLAT-FREE TIRES

Michelin Tweel Technologies is releasing the X Tweel Turf airless caster tire

for zero-turn mowers that doesn't go flat or require refills. The product, which was previewed at GIE+EXPO in October, will be available in early 2017.



PHOTO: TRUPLAWN & LAND CO.






**STAGNANT**  
An era of low-cost  
gas has stalled  
propane's growth.



"Before propane, the crews had gas cards and would stop at a gas station to fill up every day," he says. "This stopped because the propane cylinders are in a cage at our shop located close to the mowing trucks. Every morning the crew changes the cylinders in five minutes or less."

Propane experts like Wishart are still optimistic the fuel will gain popularity in the landscape industry. PERC has introduced a monetary incentive program offering contractors \$1,000 per qualifying new mower purchase or \$500 per qualifying mower conversion purchase while funds last. Through continuing communication efforts, Wishart believes more contractors will recognize the benefits of propane—benefits they will continue to reap for years to come.

"The key thing is that, while gas prices are low right now, propane prices are also low," Wishart says. "Contractors have to think about long-term investments and not just the day-to-day cost of operations. That is where propane is a win-win for your average contractor." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

is only available through specialized propane providers, known as retailers or marketers, making it more difficult to source than gasoline. Propane fuel tanks also are specific and can vary between equipment brands. Before investing in propane equipment, contractors need a trusted retailer that can provide regular access to propane.

"Our provider is great," says Trump. They know exactly when the cylinders need to be filled."

## ENGINEERING EQUIPMENT

In the past, contractors who switched to propane equipment had to outfit gas-powered machines with conversion kits. Subpar performance and inadequate fuel savings were the result, Cloutier says.

So, mower manufacturers pressured engine suppliers for a line of propane-focused engines. One key design aspect is electronic fuel injection (EFI) technology. Like EFI technology in automobiles, an engine's on-board intelligence compensates for operational conditions and environments and increases efficiency.

"EFI engines provide landscape contractors with an added level of efficiency to the propane fuel system," says Nick Minas, product manager for John Deere Commercial Mowing in Cary, N.C.

According to PERC research, about a quarter of outdoor power equipment dealers offer propane mowers or conversion kits, and 60 percent of these dealers began doing so based on customer demand. While nearly 40 percent of dealers say they are likely to begin selling propane equipment in the next three years, more than half say they're not at all likely to begin selling propane equipment within that time frame. Minas says low gas prices and a decline in customer demand may result in fewer dealers choosing to venture down the propane path.

"The cost advantage of propane isn't as strong when fuel prices are low," says Minas. "Couple that with the cost of a conversion, the equipment and the infrastructure needs for refilling tanks,

and you are seeing fewer contractors making the switch."

## CONTRACTOR CONSIDERATIONS

For those contractors who do switch, several factors should be considered when purchasing propane-powered equipment. The first is run time. Mowers use propane at roughly the same rate they use fuel, Minas says, noting a 33-pound propane tank is roughly the equivalent of 8 gallons of fuel. Most commercial mowers hold a minimum of 10 gallons of fuel, so the actual run time of a propane mower may be less than what a gas engine would provide unless more propane tanks are added to the system.

Contractors also need to consider their tank refueling strategy. The "Find a Propane Retailer" tool on propane.com connects contractors with local propane retailers. Contractors also can seek guidance from propane equipment dealers, since more than 60 percent have relationships with a propane marketer, according to PERC.

Trump's equipment dealer connected him with a local propane retailer, who installed propane cages and cylinders at his facility. His propane provider refills and replaces his tanks when necessary. It's done at night or when crews are off-site, so daily operations aren't interrupted. Each morning, Trump's crews change the cylinders, which saves close to 30 minutes a day compared to refueling with gas, he estimates.



## THINKING AHEAD

While propane's savings might not be huge now, experts say it's a smart long-term investment.



### SPOTLIGHT

Henkel Denmark opened its doors to National Association of Landscape Professionals members for a day of learning during the week of GIE+EXPO.



# Keeping promises

Two partners prove cooperation and alignment go a long way toward a successful landscape business. **BY KELLY LIMPERT**

**“W**e weren’t businessmen,” Gordon Denmark says. “We’re still not!” Bill Henkel adds.

They are family men who saw an opportunity: the chance to create a company on the values they believed in and strategies they knew could work. Seventeen years later, their company, Henkel Denmark is thriving in the Bluegrass State with an annual revenue between \$6 million and \$8 million per year, doing about 60 percent maintenance and 40 percent design/build. During peak season, it employs 80 people.

The partners, who met working together at another landscape company, knew they needed a strong foundation of values before entering this venture. So, Henkel and Denmark made three clear promises: take great care of clients, take care of the men and women who work for them and, finally, take care of each other.

“And to try not to kill each other in the process,” Henkel says, joking.

Along the way, they’ve held true to their promises while tweaking their business practices for the better.

### LISTENING TO THE CLIENT

It’s one thing to accept positive reviews from happy clients; it’s another to seek unknown opinions. But in the hopes of learning more about itself, the company set out to uncover these sentiments.

About five years ago, the team hired a consultant to survey eight clients, current, former and potential customers, about what they genuinely thought about Henkel Denmark.

The consultant asked what the company did well, what it could do to improve and how valuable the service was overall.

The company learned these clients wanted to be heard. From these conversations and internal meetings, the

team developed the company’s core values: tell the truth, do what you say you’ll do, deliver real solutions, work as a team, be professional and work safely and sustainably.

“I think that’s one of the biggest things that separates us from our competitors is that we listen to our clients and we value what they’re telling us,” Henkel says. “We understand it’s not what we think about how things should happen or what should happen. It’s what they think.”

To facilitate better service to the right type of clients, Henkel Denmark recently made a change to how its team handles design clients.

Instead of going out to a client’s location for the initial consultation, the company now has the clients come to them. The initial hour-long consultation is free if the potential client agrees to come to the office. During this time, the client provides photos of the area and a budget.

## NEWSPEED

### NATURAL LOOK

Belgard is rolling out Provence Slabs featuring Satura color technology in select

Northeast and Upper Midwest markets. The new color technology reproduces the look of natural materials,

such as Pennsylvania bluestone and Midwestern ledge rock.

### ASV’S NEW LOADER

ASV introduced the new large-frame, radial-lift Posi-Track RT-75

compact track loader. The RT-75 features a rated operating capacity of 2,650 pounds and a tipping load of 7,571 pounds. It’s 70 inches wide, has a 126-inch lift height and comes stan-

dard with 18-inch-wide tracks. Optional 20-inch tracks are available.





#### TEAMWORK

Gordon Denmark (below) and Bill Henkel (right, far left) hold each other accountable to the promises they founded the company on.

This move has helped the design team weed out the “tire-kickers,” ultimately saving time and resources. The company has discovered that the serious clients are typically willing to sit with a team of professionals for an hour to talk about the designs.

Henkel Denmark’s updated website allows new customers to sign up for consultations, thus opening up a new world of potential clients. With the streamlined process, the design team can focus more on the serious clients and spend less time on customers who are unwilling to make the commitment.

#### LOOKING AFTER THEIR OWN

Looking around Henkel Denmark’s headquarters, it’s not uncommon to see someone who joined the team at a young age, is now married and is starting families of his or her own. The partners say they strive to go above and beyond to promote an atmosphere that encourages a healthy work/life balance.

“We really wanted this company to be a place where folks could come and work hard, grow their skill sets, grow their ability to provide for their families and then go home,” says Denmark. “We weren’t going to work people to death. We weren’t going to work seven days a week.”

The pair also tries to consistently thank and praise their employees. For example, employees’ families attend the company Christmas party. Henkel and Denmark like to use this as an opportunity to talk with employees’ children and tell them how hard their parents work.

“We can buy the mowers and the trucks and the plows and make decisions to get the best piece of equipment money can buy, but people, from a crew member on a truck to a senior landscape architect, they’re the ones that really, really matter,” says Denmark.

#### LOOKING AFTER ONE ANOTHER

Anyone who works with a partner knows that it isn’t always a walk in the park. However, this pair sets aside some time every week to do exactly that.

In rain or shine, Henkel and Denmark take a weekly four-mile walk to discuss various topics. Sometimes they discuss business issues, sometimes it’s


personal. Sometimes the talk is urgent, sometimes they brainstorm. No matter what the topic is, what started as a way to communicate in a different environment became a non-negotiable activity.

The pair finds it’s better to talk about challenges and solve problems when they’re not sitting around a table. Meeting in this format takes some of the pressure off discussing topics where facial expressions and body language



can change the mood of the conversation quickly, Henkel says.

The ritual is a well-known practice at the company. Team members know that if they want one of their issues addressed, they should text the pair before the partner walk.

An extension to the partner walk, the pair’s physical activity even evolved into biweekly workouts with a trainer. Denmark says staying fit, healthy and clear of mind leads to better problem solving, quality family time and more effective leadership. 

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# On the horizon

We chat with the Irrigation Association about the state of irrigation regulations and what contractors can expect in 2017. BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**W**ater issues remain on the forefront in many regions of the country in 2016, keeping the irrigation industry under the microscope on local, state and federal levels. With Republicans taking control of Congress and the White House at the beginning of the year, the futures of several important legislative bills and agencies that focus on water use now hang in the balance. John Farner, government and public affairs director for the Irrigation Association (IA) in Fairfax, Va., discusses irrigation regulations and what irrigation contractors can expect in 2017.

**Q: WHAT'S THE STATE OF GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AS THEY RELATE TO LANDSCAPE IRRIGATION ON THE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS?**

**A:** This year brought many challenges and opportunities for the irrigation industry. In the West, the drought enters its sixth year and continues to drive legislation and regulations affecting water use for irrigation. In the Southeast and Northeast, we're seeing a newer, yet lingering, drought that's beginning to

affect water use and availability. However, throughout the U.S., potable water use for irrigation, licensing of irrigation contractors and the overall installation and management of turfgrass and landscape plants continue to be under a microscope.

In Washington, D.C., all eyes were on the election. Important bills, such as the Water Resources Development Act, stalled in conference committee—a committee made up of representatives and senators to negotiate differences between the House and Senate bills—and now may not pass, as Congress looks to punt the majority of legislative action to 2017, when Republicans will control Congress and the White House.

**Q: HOW MIGHT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION IMPACT THE IRRIGATION INDUSTRY?**

**A:** President-elect Donald Trump ran his campaign on being a Washington “outsider” and doing things differently than they have been done in the past. This can mean different things to different people, but one thing is for certain: We are in for a large ideological shift compared to the past eight years. While the campaign and transition have not

provided specific details on much of his legislative agenda, we know a few things thus far.

Immigration enforcement will be a primary focus during the first 100 days. While Mr. Trump has gone on record stating that he understands the specific needs of agricultural labor relating to immigration, he has not called out any other industry. While he has not mentioned any stance on H-2B visas, we can expect that we will learn more in the early days of his administration.

Mr. Trump campaigned on the position that the new Waters of the United States regulation, which increases the scope of the Clean Water Act, is government overreach and will be eliminated. With that said, we expect many of the regulatory programs (and possibly voluntary programs such as WaterSense) to be significantly reduced or eliminated under the Trump Administration.

We at the Irrigation Association are watching the presidential transition closely and remain ready to work with the new officials at the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Agriculture, the White House and others who will have an effect on landscape irrigation water use and regulations.

## NEWSFEED

### A PARCHED SUNSHINE STATE?

A study shows Florida's water supply might be insufficient by 2070 due to statewide

development, which will double its water consumption. Experts are calling for regulation across industries.

### SCHOLARSHIP GOAL REACHED

The American Society of Irrigation Consultants (ASIC) raised \$25,000 for an annual \$1,000 memorial scholarship to honor past-president, Ivy Munion, who died of

cancer May 23. Munion was ASIC's first female president and a 27-year industry veteran



as owner of ISC Group. The first Ivy Munion Lagen-dorff Irrigation Scholarship will be presented in 2017.



**Q: ARE ANY STATES PARTICULARLY CONCERNING OR RECEIVING A LOT OF ATTENTION RIGHT NOW?**

**A:** California seems to always be the most active when it comes to legislation and regulations affecting the landscape irrigation industry. Because the current drought is becoming the “new normal” in California, we expect this trend to continue for years to come.

However, states like Illinois, North Carolina, Georgia, Connecticut, Colorado, Massachusetts and Florida, among others, continue to be on our radar. The issues facing these states range from the practice of irrigation by an irrigation contractor (licensing), to drought plans and preparedness, to backflow prevention device testing, to the use alternative water sources, such as rain barrels.

We expect the trend of states’ involvement in landscape irrigation policy to continue to increase over time as more strain is placed on municipalities to provide enough potable water throughout their service areas.

**Q: WHAT IRRIGATION REGULATIONS SHOULD LANDSCAPE AND IRRIGATION CONTRACTORS BE PAYING ATTENTION TO NOW AND IN 2017?**

**A:** The issues we’re seeing now will continue through 2017. Priorities of the IA moving into 2017 include the following:

• **Potable water use for irrigation.**

As drought pops up in different areas (West, Northeast, Southeast), major strain is placed on water sources for different uses of water (municipal, agriculture, environment, etc.) Because the majority of water used for landscape irrigation throughout the U.S. is potable water, regulators will be looking to irrigation first for potential water savings.

• **Scope of practice.** This is an issue we have been working on for quite some time. Unfortunately, especially in states without a landscape irrigation license, we are seeing other trades (plumbing, landscape architecture, etc.) attempt to define irrigation under their license. For example, in Illinois

“California seems to always be the most active when it comes to legislation and regulations. However, Illinois, North Carolina, Georgia, Connecticut, Colorado, Massachusetts and Florida, among others, continue to be on our radar.”


—JOHN FARNER, IRRIGATION ASSOCIATION



and Connecticut, the irrigation contractor license is administered by the plumbing board. The IA believes that if irrigation contractors are licensed in a state, they should be governed by a board of their peers due to the technical aspects of irrigation.

• **Drought.** States are beginning to realize that drought can hit at any moment and sustain for a long period of time. Therefore, drought plans are being drafted throughout various states. Though landscape irrigation

water use is a “first line” of water savings, turning off access to water for landscape irrigation should be done only as a last resort. Technology efficiency improvements, audits and proper management should be part of a sustainable drought plan.

We anticipate other issues to pop up as legislatures convene in January. We will keep issues updated at Irrigation.org on a regular basis. 

Shappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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[INDUSTRY OVERVIEW]

# Standing on solid ground

## Landscape professionals report stability and growth in 2016.

BY MARISA PALMIERI

**T**he landscape industry is standing on solid ground. By all accounts—the results of our exclusive Industry Pulse research, the interviews we conducted to complete this report and the conversations we’ve had with many landscape professionals and industry suppliers—it’s been a strong year and 2017 is expected to be the same.

In fact, 85 percent of landscape professionals surveyed said the landscape industry is “very or relatively healthy” and more than 90 percent said they were “very or somewhat” optimistic about next year. These results mirror last year’s sentiments.

“I think we’re still seeing good growth,” says Jay Tripathi, president of 40-year-old Gardenworks, a full-service company in Healdsburg, Calif. “We certainly have recovered from—and probably exceeded—where we were before the Great Recession. We started to come out of it in 2012, and we have been building ever since.”

Seven in 10 companies report they’ll meet or beat their annual revenue goals this year—anticipating an average growth of 16 percent in 2016 over last year.

Majority of companies report they’ll see double-digit profits this year; 11 percent say they’ll be in the red. Two-thirds will meet or beat their profit goals, 20 percent won’t hit their targets, and still, perhaps unsurprisingly for an industry with a low barrier to entry, 15 percent of respondents said they don’t have a budget for net profit.

Greenup in Houston, Texas, is growing at a steady clip, says Harold Zick, owner. With about \$2.5 million in annual revenue, the company has grown 15-20 percent per year, even through the recession. But it’s not without challenges, the top one being finding employees.

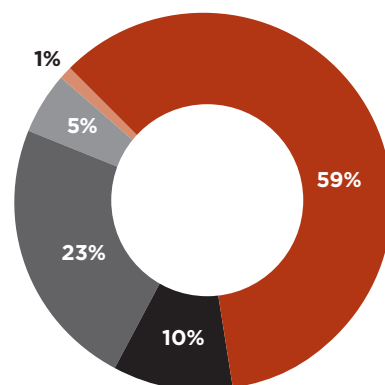
“The hardest part is finding competent labor,” he says. “You don’t want to market for growth and then not have anybody to

*Continued on page 42*

### Methodology

For the 2016 Industry Pulse report, LM surveyed subscribers online in October and November garnering 422 responses. Respondents were offered the chance to win one of three \$100 gift cards as an incentive. Based on the number of responses, we assume a +/- 5 percent margin of error. Unless otherwise noted, all charts and figures in this report come from this survey.

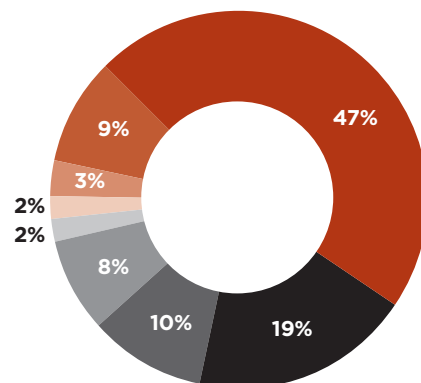
## BY THE NUMBERS



### Customer mix

- Single-family residential
- Multifamily residential
- Commercial/industrial
- Government/institutional
- Other

*Percentages don't equal 100% due to rounding.*



### Service mix

- Full-service landscape contractor (maintenance, lawn care, design/build and irrigation)
- Landscape maintenance contractor (mowing, trimming, etc.)
- Landscape design/build contractor (design, installation)
- Chemical lawn care company (excluding mowing)
- Irrigation contractor
- Tree and shrub care company
- Landscape architect
- Other



## Annual revenue change

2014-2015 – Reported

**+18%** Total

Mowing+Landscape Maintenance  
**+13%**

Design/Build+Installation  
**+13%**

Turf+Ornamental Care  
**+6%**

Irrigation+Water Management  
**+5%**

2015-2016 – Anticipated

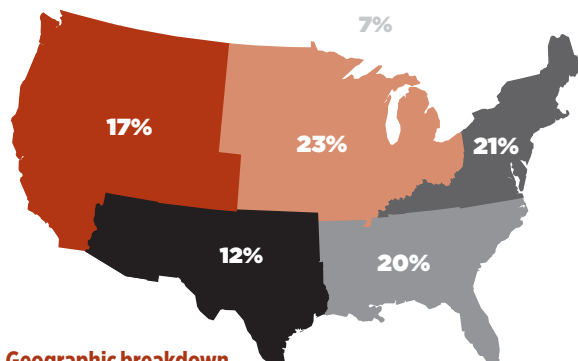
**+16%** Total

Mowing+Landscape Maintenance  
**+11%**

Design/Build+Installation  
**+11%**

Turf+Ornamental Care  
**+5%**

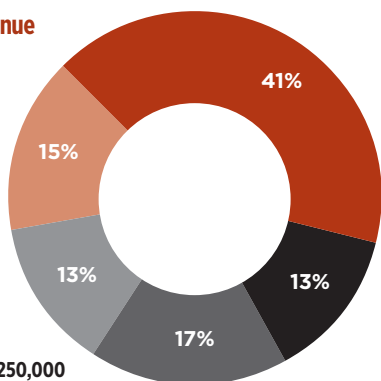
Irrigation+Water Management  
**+6%**



## Geographic breakdown

- Midwest (OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, MN, MO, IA, ND, SD, NE, KS)
- West (AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)
- Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)
- Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)
- Northeast (CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NJ, NH, NY, PA, RI, VT, D.C.)
- Canada/other

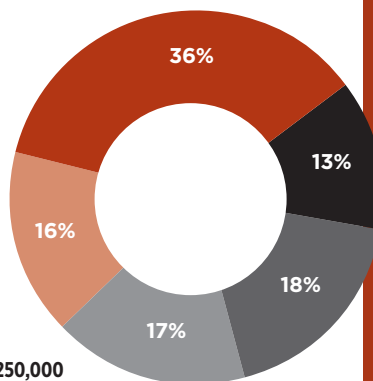
## Annual revenue



2015 – reported

- Less than \$250,000
- \$250,000 to \$499,999
- \$500,000 to \$999,999
- \$1 million to \$2.49 million
- \$2.5 million or more

Percentages don't equal 100% due to rounding.



2016 – anticipated

- Less than \$250,000
- \$250,000 to \$499,999
- \$500,000 to \$999,999
- \$1 million to \$2.49 million
- \$2.5 million or more

How does your expected 2016 revenue compare to what you budgeted for the year?

We won't make our revenue goal.

**16%**

We'll just meet our revenue goal.

**39%**

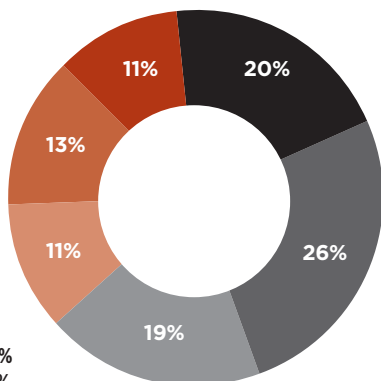
We'll beat our revenue goal.

**32%**

What budget? We don't have one.

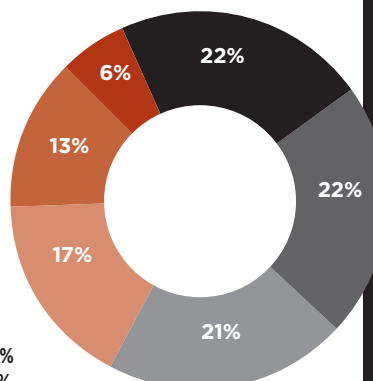
**13%**

## Profits



2015 – reported

- No profit
- 1% to 4.9%
- 5% to 9.9%
- 10% to 14.9%
- 15% to 19.9%
- 20% or more



2016 – anticipated

- No profit
- 1% to 4.9%
- 5% to 9.9%
- 10% to 14.9%
- 15% to 19.9%
- 20% or more

Percentages don't equal 100% due to rounding.

How does your expected 2016 net profit compare to what you budgeted for the year?

We won't make our net profit goal.

**20%**

We'll just meet our net profit goal.

**39%**

We'll beat our net profit goal.

**27%**

What budget? We don't have one.

**15%**

Percentages don't equal 100% due to rounding.



*Continued from page 40*

service that clientele. That affects your customer service and your reputation, and that's one thing you have to be careful about."

## Labor burden

In fact, labor woes top landscape professionals' lists of things that are an obstacle to growth.

"Qualified labor is probably our limiting factor—finding good people and making sure they show up every day, on time, ready to work," says Brandon Fusaro, who co-owns Worcester, Mass.-based Twins Lawn Service with his brother, Mike. Otherwise, the full-service company is having its best year yet, tracking \$300,000 with its sights set on hitting a half million next year.

Even for companies that aren't shooting for major growth year over year, labor is still a concern.

Take Nicole Lachance, owner of Bird's Eye View Design in Asheville, N.C. She's happy with her company's scope and size, doing less than \$200,000 providing specialized horticultural services for residential clients with her two-man crew, but if she wanted to grow more, she says would be limited in her ability to find good workers.

For Allan Wittur, owner of Nevaeh Group of

Cos., comprised of a landscape maintenance company and an irrigation company in Victoria, B.C., finding and keeping good employees is an obstacle, but it's not a major concern.

What he calls his top "Maalox moment" is when there's "a little month at the end of the money."

In other words, capital is a challenge.

"As a generalization, in Canada, we don't have much entrepreneurial spirit in our lending institutions," he says. "We're a pretty healthy company, but that's always our biggest challenge."

## Many costs stabilize

Although the Industry Pulse survey shows landscape professionals are expecting a 12 percent increase in operating costs this year, most contractors report minor news on the expenses front. Fuel—always a big talking point—is a nonissue for most companies this year.



Brandon Fusaro



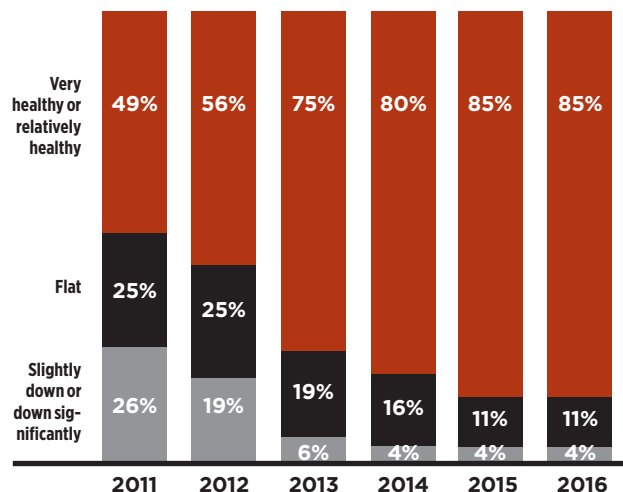
Nicole Lachance



Allan Wittur

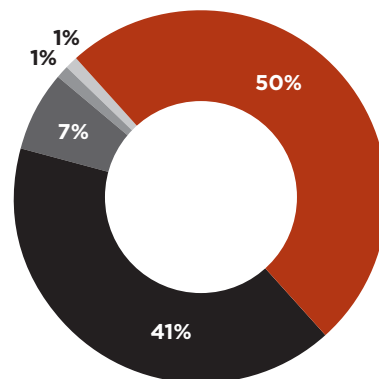
## STILL GOING STRONG

How landscape professionals describe the state of the market.



What's your 2017 business outlook?

■ Very optimistic  
■ Somewhat optimistic  
■ Uncertain  
■ Somewhat pessimistic  
■ Very pessimistic



## HOUSING: MODEST RECOVERY CONTINUES

The nationwide housing market, as measured by the National Association of Home Builders/First American Leading Markets Index, reached a score of 0.98 in the third quarter of 2016. This score, based on current single-family housing permits, house pricing and employment data, means the nationwide average is running at 98 percent of normal economic and housing activity.

"Ongoing job growth, low mortgage rates and rising incomes are contributing to a firming housing market and economy," said NAHB Chairman Ed Brady. "Though some areas are recovering faster than others, the overall trend is positive."

The level was 0.93 last year and 0.89 in 2014.

*Continued on page 44*



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Chad MacAvery

*Continued from page 42*

"Fuel stayed low for us this year, so we were really blessed," says Chad MacAvery, general manager of Yardworks in Emerald Isle, N.C. The full-service, primarily residential company runs diesel trucks and gas equipment.

Throughout the country, most landscape contractors sang the same tune.

The same goes for other cost categories. There were a few regional anomalies—for example, MacAvery is seeing a sod shortage in his area—but overall, professionals reported steady pricing in most categories of equipment and supplies, with the exception of plants,

which most companies have come to expect to get more expensive and become more difficult to acquire every year.

Daniel McCurry has found some savings buying direct from the grower instead of working with rewholesalers.

"We still use our broker for specialty plant materials, but buying some of this stuff direct, we're finding way better prices," says the owner of Father Nature Landscapes in Birmingham, Ala., which focuses on high-end residential landscape renovation and garden maintenance.

When it comes to insurance, most companies are reporting stable workers' comp and liability prices. To keep things this way, MacAvery advocates putting insurance out to bid every year.

"There's no considerable loyalty on insurance, no matter how long you've been with them," he says. "You need to make sure they're looking out for your best interest and not gouging you."

Health insurance is a different story. Due to costs and administrative headaches, many landscape companies forgo offering health insurance. For those companies who do offer it: "It's gone up dramatically," Tripathi says, noting a 10 percent increase last year and another 8 percent this year. "And what happens is the price goes up, but the quality of coverage goes down."

Not surprisingly, companies also report labor costs rising, in part as a function of worker supply and demand. Zick estimates his labor costs rose about 3 percent this year.

LM Industry Pulse research shows little or modest changes over last year's wages for hourly workers, but the figures for salaried employees reveal many double-digit increases. These large jumps indicate the competitiveness of the labor market or perhaps employers reacting to the Department of Labor's overtime rule, which was slated to go into effect with a new salary threshold for overtime at \$47,476, up from \$23,600, but was stopped by a federal judge days before the Dec. 1 deadline.

Even with some uncertainty related to regulations and a new presidential administration, most landscape professionals aren't worried.

Zick says, "We don't see anything on the horizon that will create a problem right now." 



Daniel McCurry



Harold Zick

## OPERATING COSTS

Average % change in costs

	Reported 2011-2012	Reported 2012-2013	Reported 2013-2014	Reported 2014-2015	Projected 2015-2016
<b>TOTAL</b>	+10%	+10%	+11%	+11%	+12%
Fuel	+14%	+11%	+7%	+6%	+5%
Labor	+10%	+9%	+10%	+11%	+10%
Equipment	+7%	+9%	+11%	+8%	+10%
Insurance	+14%	+10%	+11%	+11%	+9%

## WAGE REPORT: HOURLY

	<5 years experience	% change over last year	>5 years experience	% change over last year
Mower operator	\$11.78	2%	\$14.03	-0.2%
Construction worker	\$12.92	-2%	\$16.47	-2%
Lawn care tech	\$14.22	3%	\$18.04	7%
Irrigation tech	\$13.82	-0.2%	\$17.39	-8%

## WAGE REPORT: SALARY

	current salary	% change over last year
Crew foreman/team leader	\$34,770	4%
Salesperson	\$51,886	10%
Equipment mechanic	\$42,640	22%
Landscape designer	\$46,030	-4%
Landscape architect	\$64,762	10%
Account manager	\$48,594	16%
Supervisor	\$46,000	18%
Operations manager	\$64,446	21%
Office manager	\$41,720	3%
Owner/president	\$86,753	11%
Branch manager	\$72,083	11%



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## [NATIONAL POLITICS]

# President-elect Trump

**A look at how the new administration could affect the landscape industry.**

BY GREGG ROBERTSON

**D**espite the predictions of pollsters and pundits to the contrary, Donald Trump upset Hillary Clinton in the presidential election.

Not only did Trump win the presidency, but the Republicans held majorities in both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. This gives Trump the possibility of having his legislative agenda passed through Congress by friendly majorities. The only hang-up is the majority in the Senate is less than the 60 Republicans (it was 51 as of this writing) needed to make the Senate filibuster-proof, so some negotiation and compromise with Senate Democrats may be necessary.

What impact will the Trump presidency have on landscape contractors? Let's look at several areas where Trump's policy pronouncements during the campaign, if implemented, might affect your business. A word of caution: Trump's comments during the campaign should be taken with a grain of salt. He has shown himself to be a showman and negotiator. Look at the campaign as more of a carefully scripted reality show, where conflicts are set up among participants for entertainment and impact value.

Trump appears to be a flexible pragmatist rather than a stubborn ideologue. That's what drove many of his primary opponents crazy. He'd float an idea, then modify it over the course of a few days as he got feedback from the press and the public. So, all this may change once he gets into office and the pragmatist in Trump takes over.

## Economy

Trump has promised to produce economic growth of 3.5 percent per year. Over the past year, the U.S. economy has

grown an average of 1.5 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Although many economists are skeptical that Trump can produce this level of growth, he has stated that he can do even better than the 3.5 percent in his economic plan.

How does he plan to stimulate this level of growth? His economic plan consists of three major components: tax cuts, a rollback of government regulations and renegotiating trade deals that he believes now harm the U.S. economy.

Trump has proposed restructuring the tax code, reducing the corporate rate and implementing new, lower across-the-board personal income tax rates. An analysis by the Tax Foundation found middle-class earners (those making roughly \$50,000 a year) would keep, on average, an extra \$1,000 a year. Those who make \$450,000 and up would get more than \$100,000 on average.

These cuts would add about 0.17 percentage points to the current rate of economic growth. The Tax Foundation estimates the cuts would add \$10.14 trillion to the federal deficit over the next decade, after accounting for economic growth. He has a good chance of getting his tax ideas through Congress. His original tax proposal has been modified greatly to align more with House Speaker Paul Ryan's.

Trump promises to eliminate "every wasteful and unnecessary regulation." He specifically cites the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) regulation, although that regulation has been held up by a federal court injunction. It's likely he will have EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers withdraw the regulation.

It's difficult to say which other regulations may fall. He's promised to ask his new agency heads to conduct a thorough review of all federal regulations for possible elimination. Likely targets are regulations that were implemented during the last two years of the Obama administration, such as a new pesticide rule, which is scheduled to be finalized soon.

Renegotiating U.S. trade agreements was a cornerstone of Trump's campaign. Over the past several decades, foreign

*Continued on page 48*





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*Continued from page 46*

trade has become a large part of the U.S. economy. Trump made many statements during the campaign that have led some to believe that he could start trade wars with some of our major trading partners, which could lead to an overall decrease in economic growth.

We'll have to trust that Trump will talk tough and not take actions that would precipitate a trade war.

### **Immigration and guest-worker programs**

Immigration was the issue upon which Trump launched his campaign. His policy proposal is to build a wall along the U.S./Mexico border, make Mexico pay for it and round up the undocumented living in the U.S. and deport them.

Trump has already softened his stance on immigration. In his 100-day plan, Trump said he would submit legislation to Congress that would fully fund the construction of the wall, seeking an appropriation from Congress to build a wall. Trump estimates the wall will cost about \$8 billion-\$12 billion. He plans to force Mexico to pay for the wall by blocking remittances from undocumented Mexicans living in the U.S. to their families in Mexico. However, if he deports all undocumented Mexicans living in the U.S., no one will be left to pay for the wall.

My sense is that Congress will balk at the wall price tag. What may happen is that part of a wall will be built that integrates with the existing border fence that was started during Bill Clinton's administration and extended by George W. Bush. Photos will be taken and victory declared.

Deporting undocumented workers could cause the most problems for landscape contractors. In his Aug. 31 immigration policy speech, Trump reiterated that he would create a task force to deport illegal immigrants. He promised to triple the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement deportation officers, strictly enforce all U.S. immigration laws and deport anyone who is here illegally.

In 2015, Pew Research Center studied undocumented workers employed in the U.S. and found 24 percent of all workers in the landscape industry were undocumented in 2012. The industry has one of the highest concentrations of undocumented workers of all the industries Pew studied.

Surveys of landscape company owners consistently identify finding workers among the top three problems they face in running their companies. Imagine the impact if 24 percent of our industry's workforce vanished. Competition for the remaining workers would intensify enormously, making any current labor shortages even worse.

As well, our industry will be competing with other heavy users of undocumented workers, such as construction, apparel manufacturing and agricultural crop production.

So even if you don't or don't think you employ undocumented workers, any disruption in the undocumented immigrant labor force will have a significant impact on your landscape contracting business.

I believe Trump will find some "bad actors"—criminals who are living in the U.S. illegally—and make a show of deporting them and then, quietly, not go any further.

At first blush, Trump would seem opposed to guest-worker programs. After a March primary debate, Trump issued a statement that if elected, "I will end forever the use of the H-1B as a cheap labor program." The H-1B program, used extensively by the technology industry, allows foreign workers with specialized skills to enter the country legally and work in specific areas where workers are scarce.

But Trump himself makes extensive use of the H-2B seasonal worker program in his hotels and golf courses—the same program used by landscape contractors.

Will a President Trump be more favorable and understanding toward companies using H-2B than the tech companies using the H-1B program? It's difficult to say at this point, but we could hope that he would understand the business need for seasonal workers.

### **Obamacare**

Trump has pledged to "repeal and replace" Obamacare—the Affordable Care Act (ACA)—in his first 100 days. The ACA now provides health insurance for about 20 million Americans. Trump, however, has never specified what he will replace it with. The repeal will be easy, but the replacement will be very difficult.

I find it hard to believe that Trump will take health insurance away from 20 million Americans without having some way of providing them an alternative. The political fallout would be tremendous.

Although the House of Representatives passed a bill to repeal Obamacare over 60 times, it did so with the assurance that the bill would either die from filibuster in the Senate or be vetoed by President Obama. Now it has the real possibility of passing.

Practically, I think legislation will be crafted that "repeals" Obamacare, while replacing it with another program with many of the same provisions as Obamacare but under a different name. The program will be streamlined with some of the most objectionable provisions removed, such as the coverage mandates.

Let's hope that President Trump is a pragmatist. 

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Robertson, a government relations consultant for the Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association (PLNA) and president of Conewago Ventures, is LM's government relations blogger. A version of this article first appeared at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).



# Trends from 2016 GIE+EXPO

**We look at what was hot in equipment at the industry's largest trade show.** BY DILLON STEWART

**T**he 2016 GIE+EXPO and Hardscape North America, held Oct. 19-21 in Louisville, Ky., was the biggest showcase of green industry best practices and products ever assembled. More than 900 exhibitors showed off their offerings to a diverse crowd of more than 22,600 corporate big wigs, equipment dealers, veteran landscapers and lawn mowing newbies. Here are the hottest equipment trends we saw.

## Batteries on the rise

A crowd of journalists and attendees gathered around the Greenworks Commercial booth intently listening to a press conference. The company, which had just added three new zero-turns to its line of 82-volt-battery-powered equipment, announced a partnership with SiteOne Landscape Supply, formerly John Deere Landscapes, the largest and ever-growing landscape industry distributor.

"For years, we've relied on noisy, smelly two- and four-stroke equipment, but now, we're seeing a trend that's forcing contractors to look at alternatives," says Jeff Domenick, category manager for SiteOne. "Recently, we've had a surprising number of customers say they have contracts that require them to use electric or battery-powered equipment."

But even manufacturers that aren't battery-specific are upping their games. Husqvarna expanded its battery line with two pole saws and a trimmer, and American Landmaster touted its new 48-volt LandStar LS48V UTV, which can tow 1,100 pounds. Stihl, DeWalt and Oregon had their battery-powered options on hand and newcomers like LERA expanded their booth space.



The benefits, including lower fuel costs over time, are discussed at-length in our Battery-Powered Equipment Guide on page BP3. Experts say an industry challenged with regulations, ordinances and the occasional negative perception may benefit from quieter, emission-free equipment—especially if there are no performance costs.


"When I first started using it, the line was a lower battery power and not as powerful; it was more residential," says Chris Lambton, HGTV star, Greenworks spokesman and co-owner of E. Lambton Landscaping in Dennis, Mass. "Now, they're longer lasting and you get more power. I'm using it five days a week for my commercial accounts."

## Lower maintenance, less downtime

Another trend at the show was a push towards lower-maintenance equipment, designed to avoid downtime.

The technology came in all shapes and sizes. Michelin Tweel Technologies expanded its X Tweel line with a new airless radial tire-wheel for zero-turn mowers. The flat-free tire eliminates downtime from punctures and is maintenance-free because it eliminates the need to maintain air pressure. John Deere focused on its slew of NeverStop program offerings, including leasing, loaners, parts and rewards, and Fischer Barton released its new LaserEdge lawn mower blades, which sharpen as they mow and will never need sharpened, the company says.

Briggs & Stratton engine brand Vanguard rolled out its latest addition. The Oil Guard System, a factory-installed add-on that continuously exchanges oil between the engine and a large, external oil reservoir, is designed to protect the engine from thermal breakdown and take oil change intervals from 100 miles to 500 miles. The company says it saves users up to 60 percent by decreasing costs from labor, filter replacements and downtime. Plus, when the time comes to change the oil, it's toolless and drains in about five minutes.

"We think the delivery of productivity and finding ways to reduce downtime and cost of ownership are going to be a continuing trend and something we're really focused on in the coming season," says Marketing Manager Jim Cross. 





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# SNOW+ICE

## GUIDE



# Salt smart

**With the release of sustainable salt use guidelines, SIMA aims to push the snow industry forward.** BY LINDSEY GETZ

**F**reshwater resources throughout North America are contaminated with chlorides as a result of salt use in winter management operations, experts say.

With this information in mind, the Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA) set out to establish recommendations to help industry members make wiser decisions regarding salt operations.

Phill Sexton, director of outreach and chief knowledge officer for SIMA, says the purpose of developing this document, “Best Practices Guidelines for Sustainable Salt Use,” was to inspire broad adoption of these standards with a set of guidelines that are accessible to anyone, affordable and easy to understand.

The document is available for free download on SIMA’s website.

Sexton suggests companies implement these guidelines along with additional training, research and real-world experience to build a thoughtful approach to using salt. In his own travels and communication across the industry, Sexton says the issue of salt use continues to come up again and again. Over the years, SIMA has invested in research on application rates, launched a Sustainable Salt Initiative and renewed its focus on the use of liquids and other practices that can reduce salt output.

The development of this document, the most recent initiative, involved a diverse range of stakeholders sharing input, he says.

“A broad stakeholder review process was implemented for assisting SIMA staff to confirm and communicate the basic best standards of practice for reducing salt use,” Sexton says. “Stakeholders included winter management company owners, operations managers, property owners, facility managers, insurance industry representatives, manufacturers and suppliers, environmental service professionals and other subject matter experts.”

### GETTING ON BOARD

SIMA is hopeful that snow contractors will be on board with these guidelines and that they have an industrywide impact. In fact, many of the snow removal businesses *Landscape Management* spoke with expressed that they already adhere to similar practices in their own businesses.

“Our practices are very similar to these new guidelines,” says Michel Lyman, purchasing manager at Lynch Landscape & Tree Service, a company that does 90 percent residential work in Wayland, Mass. “We do manage our salt usage and like to be salt smart, as we know the damage that overusing or improperly using or storing this product can cause.”

For instance, the SIMA guidelines include avoiding dumping or relocating snow into bodies of water. Lyman says that’s something Lynch—which does about 10 percent of its total business in snow removal—already follows. Similarly, the company covers salt



loads in transit from site-to-site to prevent freezing and/or spillage.

William Blum Jr., CSP, vice president of Cenova Snow & Ice Solutions, a 100-percent snow removal company servicing the East Coast and headquartered in Philadelphia, says being responsible always has been important to his company. Blum says a majority of snow removal contractors are “people who value the outdoors” and want to be “good stewards of the land.” But he says the challenge arises when it comes to educating clients. Cenova serves an all-commercial clientele, and litigation is the main concerns.

“We have always trained and educated our crews, but it’s the client that also needs education,” Blum says. “In this litigious world, some of our clients have big concerns about slip-and-fall lawsuits and want salt, salt and more salt. It’s a vicious cycle that’s not always easy to navigate.”

Jim Hornung Jr., president of Elbers Landscape Service in Buffalo, N.Y., a 97-year-old landscaping company with \$5 million in annual revenue (40 percent of which is snow removal), says he’s faced similar push-back from clients who demand the

company “pile on the salt.” He says education must be “constant,” as there’s often resistance to change.

“Education is certainly not

always an easy solution,” says Hornung. “Clients who have asked you to pile on the salt will then be the same ones that complain that their rugs need professional cleaning or their door frames are rotting out from the salt. For us, we’ve found that education is a process. It doesn’t happen overnight.”

Hornung’s company has invested in better plow technology that does a better job scraping ice, which reduces salt consumption, he says. He keeps his customers informed of these investments and informs them about ways they can improve the process.

“We talk to the customer about ways we can mutually benefit from using less salt,” Hornung says. “If they can give me less pavement to be responsible for, I can use less salt and give them a reduced rate. Oftentimes, it’s a matter of having a conversation about solutions.”

## PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

The winter management industry is unregulated and has little, if any, required licensing or education. That makes it a low-barrier-to-entry industry, Sexton says, adding that it’s important the industry continues to move toward self-regulation.

“Best practices guidelines broadly adopted by the industry and the clients they serve are becoming the basis for establishing industry standards and self-regulation,” Sexton says, adding communities and states that have recently established certifications and/or licensing for applying salt and performing other winter management operations include Minnesota; New Hampshire; McHenry County, Ill.; Massachusetts; and Waterloo, Ontario. New York, Maine and Vermont are also looking at certification for salt applicators. The practices outlined in SIMA’s document were created to raise the bar of professionalism and to prepare the industry for potential regulations coming down the pike.

“These best practices are being developed in anticipation of supporting future state and provincial licensing certifications, particularly for salt use,” Sexton says. “These are already being proposed in more than four states that we know of so far. As a result, we must be prepared.”

Getz is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

**PLOWING THROUGH**  
Client education and better plow technology are two steps contractors can take towards smarter salt use.



**ON BOARD**  
Many snow companies say they already adhere to the standards outlined in SIMA’s best practices document.





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BY PHIL HARWOOD

The author is president and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach him at phil@mypmcteam.com.

# The snow scoreboard

**A**s the snow industry matures, one area that deserves more attention is what I'll call "the snow scoreboard." Just as the scoreboard at a sporting venue displays the game's score, the snow scoreboard displays a snow event's score. If the scoreboard at the ballpark were missing, it would be difficult to keep track of who's winning and losing. Players and fans would become quickly frustrated. Nobody would stand for it. We need to take the same approach with the snow scoreboard.

In my experience, snow events and snow seasons have been difficult to score. Too often, victory is claimed by surviving an event without any major equipment issues, accidents or complaints. Measurable data are nowhere to be found. The scoreboard is empty, as if someone forgot to plug it in before the game started. We need to do better than this.

With the advancement of technology and software, it's easier than ever to build a snow scoreboard full of timely, accurate and meaningful information. Notice that I wrote "easier than ever," not "easy." Building any type of scorecard isn't easy. However, the snow pros I know are up for a good challenge.

Which stats should we include? Think of a simple scoreboard at a neighborhood baseball park that only displays runs scored. For each game, this is the ultimate scoreboard metric. However, there are other statistics that matter. What about hits, walks, errors,

balls, strikes and outs? What about the team's win-loss record and the league standings? What about individual statistics? All of these statistics matter and are available. There is no reason snow professionals shouldn't take the same approach.

## WHAT TO TRACK?

For our snow scoreboard, we want to begin with a set of high-level, composite statistics. Our scoreboard should be interactive to allow us the ability to drill down into our data and look at it by property, customer, company, segment, manager, branch, territory, crew, route, etc. We want to be able to pull whatever information we're looking for, whenever we need it. That's the home run.

What are the high-level, composite statistics? Companies should decide and customize their own scoreboards, but below are the stats I would recommend in several categories. Some are event-based while others are seasonal:

**Customer:** Proposals, orders, customer meetings, renewals and issues.

**Financial:** Revenue, gross profit, operating profit, net marketing contribution, accounts receivable, cash availability, cash position and credits.

**Human Resources:** Absences, open positions, turnover and development.

**Operations:** Incidents, efficiency, productivity, internal audits, average weekly field hours and event completion.

Let's dissect one of these statistics so you can see a good example of the level of detail to

be looking for. Gross profit is one of the financial stats, but gross profit of what? A robust scoreboard tied to a bank of information will produce a variety of gross profit calculations. Wouldn't it be nice to see gross profit by event, per season, by property, salesperson, operations manager, crew, territory manager, division, branch office, customer group, marketing segment, etc.? Are you able to see this information today on your scoreboard? If not, we have some work to do.

As important as profitability is, customer metrics are even more important. Customers are satisfied when their expectations are met on a consistent basis by a proactive snow professional, which may require sacrificing gross profit on occasion. Financial stats like gross profit should never be the only scoreboard metric. Customer issues and customer meetings are the two leading indicators in this area. Lots of issues and not enough face time with customers are a recipe for disaster.

Human resources stats are important, and operational stats are critical to sustain reliable and profitable service delivery. They need to be on our scoreboard as well.

Look at your snow scoreboard. What do you see? Is it unplugged and unused? Is it simplistic like the one at the neighborhood ballpark? Or is it a fully developed, interactive scoreboard used by your snow management team to drive customer satisfaction, profitability, employee satisfaction and operational excellence? 📊



# SNOW+ICE GUIDE PRODUCTS



## ↑ SECTIONAL SNOW PUSHERS

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**Construction Equipment**

**URL:** [CaseCE.com/Snow](http://CaseCE.com/Snow)

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## SCRAPE MAXX ↓

**COMPANY:** SnowEx

**URL:** [SnowExProducts.com](http://SnowExProducts.com)

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## ↑ SNO BLADE

**COMPANY:** Pro-Tech

**Manufacturing and Distribution**

**URL:** [ProTechSnoBlade.com](http://ProTechSnoBlade.com)

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Debby Cole, Greater Texas Landscape, Texas  
Mark Bradley, TBG Environmental and LMN Software, Whitevale, Ontario  
Nathan Helder, Gelderman Landscape, Waterdown, Ontario

### FREE WEBINAR #3

January 24th, 1p.m. Eastern, 75 min

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Chris Imlach, Swazy & Alexander, Newburyport, Mass.  
Andrew Blanchford, Blanchford Landscape, Bozeman, Mont.  
Dennis Evans, Quiet Village Landscaping, St. Louis, Mo.

**About the host:** Jeffrey Scott, MBA, author, coach and Hall-of-Fame Consultant—is the expert in growth and profit maximization in the contracting industry. He grew his landscape company into a successful \$10 million multi-discipline enterprise (15 million in today's dollars), and he's now devoted to helping others achieve profound success. He facilitates the largest network of peer groups, called *The Leader's Edge*. His members achieved a 27% profit increase in their first year. To learn more visit [www.JeffreyScott.biz](http://www.JeffreyScott.biz)

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COMPANY

BUSINESS BASICS: PLANNING

LET'S GROW

CASE STUDY: OUR WAY

# RESULTS- DRIVEN

Phil Harwood offers forward-thinking strategies to make 2017 a year of results.

➤ PAGE 58



**BUSINESS BASICS: PLANNING**

# Year of results 2017

**A**s the calendar year winds down, we find ourselves asking: “How did we do this past year? Was it a successful year or not? Or more specifically, what was successful and what was not so successful? What were our results?”

These are excellent questions to ponder, and this is a good time of year to do so. Too often we’re running at such a rapid pace that we can’t seem to find time to slow down long enough to catch our breath, let alone have time for deep reflection and analysis. Weeks turn into months, seasons run together and before we know it another year is coming to an end. And yet, we know that it’s important to set aside time to disconnect from the daily grind.

Before the New Year begins—or before it gets too far along—let’s make a commitment to get our teams together and develop a plan for 2017. Let’s make 2017 the year of results. To do so, let’s start by reflecting on the past. Avoid the temptation to start looking forward without first looking backward. Let me explain.

Discussions about the future need to have context. Results from this past year—good or bad—didn’t happen in a vacuum. They occurred in the midst of many factors. They were influenced by previous years’ results, competition and the overall direction of your organization. They were affected by your core purpose, core values and culture. Starting with the big picture informs and reminds everyone of the headwinds that brought your organization to where it is today.

The Pro-Motion Consulting team met recently to develop our plan for 2017. We spent about an hour reflecting on what has transpired over the last decade—what led to our formation, what’s been successful, what we’ve tried that wasn’t so successful and how we’re currently positioned. Some of those seated at the table were hearing about these things for the first time and gained a new understanding of the company. As we moved into a discussion about the future, this foundation provided useful context for all.

Take a hard look at 2016’s results. What worked and what didn’t work? What were your goals for 2016? Whom were they assigned to? Were they achieved? Take each initiative or goal and make a determination—hit or miss, success or not-so-much? Why or why not? This is a meaningful exercise and should not be rushed.

Next, take some time to consider the current status of your firm. A review of each functional area will provide a nice outline for this discussion. What do your financials look like? How engaged are your employees? How satisfied are your customers? How consistent is the quality of your product/service delivery? How are you positioned compared to your competitors? Is your value proposition clear? How effective are your sales and marketing activities? And so on. The purpose of this discussion is to identify areas of success to be acknowledged or celebrated and also to identify areas of opportunity to be addressed and acted upon in 2017.



**BY PHIL HARWOOD**

The author is president and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach him at [phil@mypmcteam.com](mailto:phil@mypmcteam.com).

The next step is to consider your long-term vision to ensure that 2017 goals are in alignment and will move the company closer to this long-term vision. Sometimes our focus is at too much of a micro level and we fail to see the big picture. Something that seems like an important goal for 2017 may not be all that important when looking at the long-term vision. Separating strategic goals from lesser goals is an important step because it will help keep you and your team focused on the most important things throughout the year.

The final step is to obtain commitments and implement accountability systems. Team results are achieved when individuals on the team are fully committed to the team, when these individuals are willing to contribute toward team goals, and when there is peer-to-peer accountability. Who is committing to do what? By when? How often will we review the status of each commitment? When is our next status review meeting?

Each member of the Pro-Motion Consulting team made commitments for each quarter, starting with the fourth quarter of 2016 and for each quarter of 2017. Commitments are clear and deadlines are established. Our next review meeting will be in January. Our plan for 2017 is in place. Now we just need to execute the plan.

We all want 2017 to be year of results, but are we all prepared to create a plan with specific strategic goals? Are we all ready to make commitments to our teams? Are we all willing to schedule accountability meetings to review strategic goals? I hope we will all make 2017 the year of results. 📌



# Dramatically accelerate sales



**BY JEFFREY SCOTT**

The author is owner of Jeffrey Scott Consulting, which helps landscape companies grow and maximize profits. Reach him at [jeff@jeffreyscott.biz](mailto:jeff@jeffreyscott.biz).

**H**ow satisfied were you with your company's sales this year? Did you convert all the highly qualified leads that crossed your desk? To ensure your company hits its sales goals next year, and to maximize your chances of having a breakthrough year, follow the five-step sales accelerator below.

into it. You want salespeople who have dedicated themselves to the craft of selling and have shown on-going improvement. The best salespeople show ambition, self-confidence, organizational skills, creativity and the ability to think and act on their feet.

## **2. Next, set proper sales goals.**

Salespeople need monthly and annual sales goals that are tracked weekly. It's best if you have them set their own goals as opposed to you dictating their goals. This creates buy-in, plus it gives you a view into their mind and how they think. When they set goals that are too high or too low, you coach them on the bigger picture and how they fit into it. Help them set goals and believe in targets that fit into the larger company plan. As sales manager, you also need to set monthly and annual sales goals by division and decide who is going to sell what. This dual approach to goal setting gives you the leverage and control you need to maximize your company's chances of reaching your year-end sales targets.

**3. Implement a green-light selling process to filter out your red-light (wrong fit) leads and better qualify your yellow-light leads.** Spending the majority of your time building relationships with green lights (your target clients) and qualified yellow lights will grow your business faster and help you develop a stronger base of referrals. Moreover, spending less time with red lights will indirectly protect your self-confidence and help build positive momentum. Many contractors have told me this has been the key to profitably growing their entire business. Success is measured by an optimized closing ratio, improved sales margin and accelerated sales volume.

## **4. Tie commissions to profits.**

Most salespeople can impact profitability either because they estimate their own work or they steer the client's expectations and thus satisfaction of the work. For these salespeople, step four is developing a commission plan that ties them to the profitability of the work they sell. The most obvious way is to modulate the sales commission based on the margin of the work—as sold or as built. The more control they have on the final outcome of the job costs, the more helpful it is to base their commission on profit as built.

**5. Finally, ensure salespeople remain motivated throughout the entire sales season and keep selling in the final months.** You need them to hit—and even beat—their annual sales target for your company to reach its year-end production and profit goals. A year-end achievement bonus is a useful tool to maintain sales acceleration, and it ensures your salespeople sprint through the finish line.

*Breakthrough idea:* Once you have a good sales team, you need to take care of them. Are your existing salespeople sharpening their edges? What are you doing to train and enhance the skills of your sales team?

*Take action:* Grade your company, A through D, on each of these five steps in the sales accelerator. How well are you doing, and where can you make the most impactful improvements?

Who is acting as sales manager in your company? Are they prepared to lead your sales team to victory next year? Have a discussion with them and develop their action plan.



Source: © 2016 Jeffrey Scott Consulting

## **1. First, you need salespeople who are hungry and competent.**

Ideally, a salesperson is the main earner in his or her family. This is not a must, but it does ensure he or she is motivated to succeed, especially for the difficult job of business developer.

Finding a competent salesperson is a much harder step to address. Salespeople come in all shapes and sizes. That is part of the problem—because a large percentage of salespeople don't belong in sales. They are not naturally hard wired to open leads, build relationships and close the sale. They lack the confidence and self-esteem to sell work for a high profit. They may have gotten into sales because they wanted to try it, or they were forced



**CASE STUDY: OUR WAY**

# On the same page

How hand-off meetings help estimating and production staffs succeed. **BY CASEY PAYTON**

**B**ob Franey, president of RF Landscape Services in St. Louis, Mo., has learned that having a system of communication is important when selling design/build work. Although plants and materials bring in a small profit through markups, successful landscape business owners know true profit is derived when man-hours bid match the man-hours produced.

Franey says that landscape business owners must be able to communicate these expectations to crews in order to achieve the goals. He learned the importance of having a system of communication the hard way. He didn't have one—and it cost him.

In 1995, he did \$1 million in business but made no money. In what he calls his “quest to never make that mistake again,” Franey sought out mentors who could show him what he could have done differently. What he learned, thanks to mentor Jim Martin, president of Chicago-area landscape

company James Martin Associates, is that “everything is a system.” There isn't one part of running a business that can't be turned into a process.

Today, Franey's company uses the same system he implemented when he was the only one doing the estimates. It includes regular communication with the whole team.

“Once we have the estimate together, we have what we call a hand-off meeting with our production team,” Franey

says. “We then walk through the process of how we came to those man-hours and what we expect to happen.”

Similarly, after the job, the team holds a second meeting between production and estimating staffs to talk about whether they hit, exceeded or fell short of the estimate.

“If we fall short, then we immediately talk about why we missed it and troubleshoot solutions,” Franey says. “Was it a production issue and, if so, do we need better production supervision? Maybe the crew got to the job and the materials weren't ready to go. We want to be looking at our production schedule a week out—or even further—to coordinate those deliveries and materials so that the crew doesn't waste time waiting.”

Franey says that when man-hour goals are missed, he expects the production team to be “actively involved in why they fell short,” which he acknowledges can lead to some frank conversations. But he says that type of open communication is critical. The message has to make it all the way to the crew level to be effective.

“At the end of the day, I can estimate a job at whatever I want it to be, but if the crew can't produce it in the amount of time I've estimated, we won't be profitable,” Franey says. “When we hand the estimate off to the production team, we all need to be in agreement on our goal.”

As part of the hand-off meeting, Franey says a “production packet” breaks out every fine detail. For instance, for a retaining wall, the packet would break out details such as “how many hours are allotted for digging the trench” and “how many

hours are allotted for stacking block.” With each detail broken out, it leaves “no room for any mystery,” he says, but he has heard other business owners express concern over being so open.

“I know people talk about not sharing information with crews, but my philosophy is, ‘Why wouldn't you encourage them to be part of what you're doing?’” Franey says.

In fact, Franey is now looking at ways that he can incentivize the process. He says he'd like to see crews think like business owners and understand that if the company succeeds, everyone shares the benefits.

“We'd like to encourage our crews to shave off man-hours and then reward them for making decisions that helped us do that,” Franey says. “For instance, the first thing a lot of crews do when they leave headquarters is find the nearest drive-through for coffee. But what if we could motivate them to just get right to work? We know that pit stop costs us production time. So, we're looking at ways to incentivize the crews to make better decisions and to understand that, in the end, we all benefit when they do.”

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.



**Bob Franey**

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** RF Landscape Services

**HEADQUARTERS:** St. Louis, Mo.

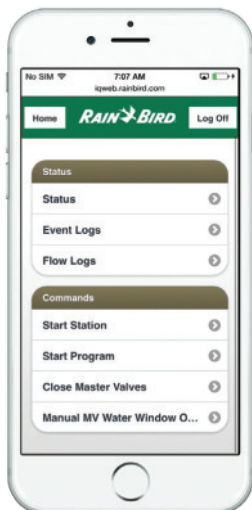
**EMPLOYEES:** 8 full-time

**REVENUE:** \$800,000

**SERVICE MIX:** 75% mowing + landscape maintenance, 25% design/build + installation



## IRRIGATION SHOW PRODUCTS



### IQ CENTRAL CONTROL PLATFORM

**COMPANY:** Rain Bird Corp.

**URL:** [IQweb.RainBird.com](http://IQweb.RainBird.com)

Rain Bird's IQ Central Control Platform offers three solutions it says give users greater control over the irrigation systems they manage. Each offering provides remote system access, weather-based irrigation management, automated reports, alerts and troubleshooting features that can improve efficiency while keeping systems up and running, Rain Bird says. IQ-Cloud allows multiple users to access IQ from any web-enabled device. It's designed for managing HOAs, schools, parks and municipal properties. IQ-Enterprise allows organizations to deploy IQ-Cloud on their servers to comply with IT security practices. Finally, single users managing multiple properties can use IQ-Desktop to control irrigation systems from their personal computers.



### GULP ULTRAMAX PLUS

**COMPANY:** Underhill International

**URL:** [Underhill.us](http://Underhill.us)

Gulp Ultramax Plus suction pump completely disassembles for easy maintenance. It can be used for quick cleanups of water-soaked areas on turf and landscape, including valve boxes and sprinklers. Three models are available: 36-in. length with 72-in. hose; 21-in. length with 18-in. hose; and a 12-oz. syringe version.



### LEIT SYSTEM

**COMPANY:** DIG Corp.

**URL:** [DIGCorp.com](http://DIGCorp.com)

DIG Corp.'s LEIT (pronounced "light") irrigation control systems are powered by an energy management system that collects ambient light and then stores this energy in internal super-capacitors, not batteries. The controllers can be installed in almost any location; no direct sunlight, AC power or external solar panels are required.

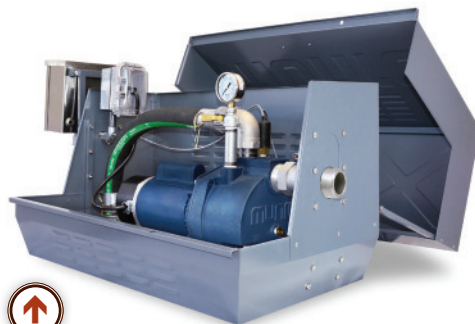


### MONITORING SYSTEMS

**COMPANY:** Spectrum Technologies

**URL:** [SpecMeters.com](http://SpecMeters.com)

Spectrum Technologies develops environmental monitoring and peak plant performance tools for better resource allocation and field results. Its meter, data logger and sensor offerings such as FieldScout, WaterScout, LightScout and WatchDog provide information to better manage irrigation, nutrients, integrated pest management (IPM) and site conditions.



### MUNRO COMPLETE PRO II

**COMPANY:** Munro Cos.

**URL:** [MunroCompanies.com/CompleteVideo](http://MunroCompanies.com/CompleteVideo)

The Munro Complete PRO II includes everything a professional needs for a simple pump installation, all in a pump enclosure, the manufacturer says. The kit is available in a range from 0.75 to 3 hp and now in a newly designed 5-hp model.



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# BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY DILLON STEWART



Strauss has a wife, Cindy, of 48 years, four grandchildren and two sons, Jeff and Jason, who are both in the industry.

## Mickey Strauss

Strauss enjoys boating on Lake Nacimiento in Central California and riding horses with his wife, who is the president of local equestrian group Equestrian Trails.



"I worked for three months as a designer and I never saw the pencil, so I quit."

### OWNER MSM LANDSCAPE SERVICES SYLMAR, CALIF.

#### EDUCATION

Taft Charter High School  
Woodland Hills, Calif.  
Class of 1963

Pierce College  
Los Angeles  
Ornamental horticulture  
1963-1966

#### WORK EXPERIENCE

**1963**  
Boething Treeland Farms  
Designer  
Woodland Hills, Calif.

**1963-1965**  
Toto's Nursery  
Landscape Designer/Installer  
Woodland Hills, Calif.

**1967-1971**  
ValleyCrest  
Chief Estimator/Purchasing Agent/  
Assistant Division Manager  
Van Nuys, Calif.

**1971-1973**  
Sid Galper Associates  
Project Manager  
Van Nuys, Calif.

**1973-2007**  
American Landscape  
Founder/Owner/President  
Canoga Park, Calif.

**2007-Present**  
MSM Landscape Services  
Co-founder/Owner/President  
Sylmar, Calif.

"I got my start in the industry in high school when I took an ornamental horticulture class in lieu of a science class."

"Prior to ValleyCrest, I thought a large job was around \$3,000. The first job I was involved in there was the California Exposition and State Fair in Sacramento, which in those days was \$1.2 million. It opened my eyes to how big the industry was."

At American Landscape, Strauss won unique contracts like the Jurassic Park theme park at Universal Studios, revamping LAX before the 1984 Olympics and snow management at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.



"A client called screaming at us for shortchanging her. Her roses didn't have as many petals as her neighbor's. I hung up the phone and realized this residential stuff wasn't for me. I wanted to get back into commercial and public works."

Strauss, who's been called "a trade association junkie" for his activity in numerous associations, is a local board member and past president of the California Landscape Contractors Association.

**WORDS OF WISDOM** "We never had employee problems until we hired our first employee." • "The contractors that won't recognize the drought and won't switch over (to drought-resistant services) are the ones who are suffering." • "Get involved in your industry. Our elected officials will stick it to whoever is the quietest."





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