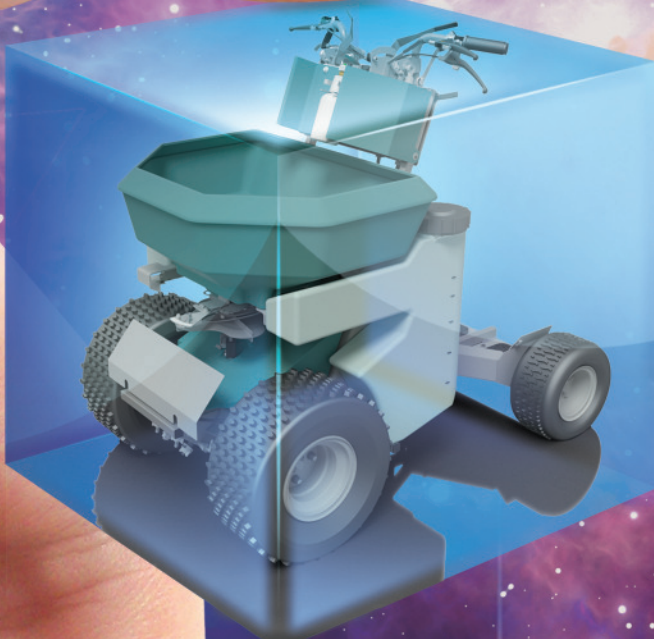


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BY MARISA PALMIERI

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A person is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark-colored mosquito net that covers their head and face, leaving only their eyes visible through a mesh opening. They are wearing a camouflage-patterned shirt. The background is a soft-focus natural setting with green foliage and a hint of a body of water under a bright sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of outdoor protection and comfort.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI
EDITOR

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mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net



Back to basics

Readers often tell us the most valuable part of belonging to a trade association or attending professional conferences is networking. I agree, and that's always the case when my colleagues and I attend the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association annual meeting. Last month, we convened with our peers—other writers and marketing professionals in the green industry—in Omaha, Neb. As always, relationship building was the best part of the meeting. But there was some excellent professional development to be had this year.

A highlight for me was a session led by Steve Wilbers, Ph.D., a writing consultant, instructor and long-time columnist for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

It was a “back to basics” discussion from which I walked away thinking, “I know so much of that information. Why don't I apply it consistently?”

He talked about word nerd stuff that may bore you (such as expression, grammar and punctuation), but there were a few practical points for people who write in their work lives—emails and proposals, anyone?

I realize these tips may sound elementary, but they're not widely practiced, based on the poorly written emails that come across my inbox every day and on a few messages I've traded recently with contractors as I pursue a bathroom remodeling project.

Perhaps these concepts can help you get your point across more clearly to your team, your clients and anyone on the receiving end of your emails.

THREE STEPS AND THREE RULES


First, Wilbers advocates the three-step message for emails and other business memos. The steps are:

1. Purpose (“I'm writing to you because...”)
2. Background (“The important parts are...”)
3. Proposed action (“I propose that you...”)

He says you don't have to write “I'm writing to you because” and the other items in parentheses if it sounds awkward or robotic, but it often doesn't hurt. The point is to use these phrases as prompts.

The next step is to check your message against Wilbers' three rules for email:

1. Always proofread! (Mistakes happen to the best of us, but you really don't want one to pop up in a high-profile proposal.)
2. Include a goodwill statement (“I hope you're doing well.”)
3. Never write anything you don't want the entire world to see. (Dispute with a client? It's best to pick up the phone rather than go back and forth via email.)

Finally, when you review your message before hitting “send,” consider omitting needless words. Modifiers like adjectives and adverbs are some of the biggest culprits. We use them to add emphasis, but many times they muddle the message instead of improving it. Next time you write, consider removing all cases of “very,” “somewhat” and other needless modifiers. 



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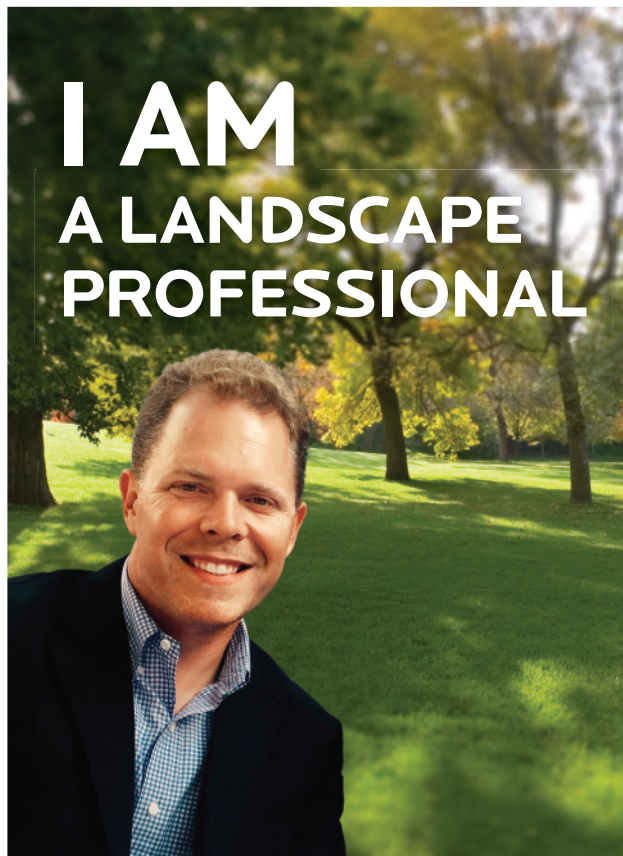
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Kingstowne Lawn & Landscape


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BIG PICTURE

WOODLAND RETREAT

LOCATION Harrisburg, Pa.

COMPANY GoldGlo
Landscapes, Millersburg, Pa.

THE DETAILS The client's goal was to create a 1,600-sq.-ft. patio space—where his grandchildren could play and he could relax and entertain—that complimented his wooded, European-style home.

There were several hurdles. For example, the client preferred natural flagstone—without the typical blue or gray colors found in Pennsylvania flagstone. He also requested minimal disturbance to the large existing trees.

The steep slope from the home to the wooded area had an elevation change of more than 7 ft., which created a need for a raised patio with multiple levels and steps to the woods. Access to the rear of the home was limited, and the staging area was small, making material deliveries a challenge. Finally, the site needed an extensive drainage system for stormwater management.

GoldGlo Landscapes met these challenges and more. The patio even features an outdoor kitchen, complete with a wood-fired pizza oven. This and other aspects of the project earned GoldGlo a Grand Award last year from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/BigPicture.

PHOTO: GOLDGLO LANDSCAPES

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RECOMMENDER

BRUCE'S VIEW

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH



FREE SPACE

Doug McIntosh, owner of McIntosh Grounds Maintenance in Milan, Mich., was running out of space in his shop and considered upgrading to a larger one.

One day he looked around and realized his trailers, which were parked inside, were taking up all the space. He had his solution: enclosed trailers that could be parked outside.

"The shop was going to cost \$150,000 to build," McIntosh says. "For under \$20,000, I doubled the space."

He started with three trailers at about \$6,500 each. The company now has nine.

Each trailer dedicated to maintenance stores a 22-, 36-, 48- and 60-inch mower, among other equipment. Before the enclosed trailers, all this equipment, or at least each trailer loaded with it, would've taken up space in the shop.

Free space isn't the only benefit the enclosed trailers provided. The logo-plastered trucks are a free source of advertising.

"All the sudden, we have these huge billboards driving around town," McIntosh says. "How many jobs we get from it, I don't know. But we get a lot of comments from people saying they see our trucks everywhere, and we don't have any more trucks than we did before."

“The shop was going to cost \$150,000 to build. For under \$20,000 I doubled the space.”

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



JOHN DEERE

RECOMMENDER

What organic lawn care products do you prefer and why?

Emerald Lawns uses an organic plant probiotic as part of its lawn care regimen.



KEN GRAWE

OWNER, LAWN TREATMENT BY KEN GRAWE
QUINCY, ILL.

"BeeSafe products offer an affordable, complete lawn program. These products focus on soil health, which, in turn, creates healthy grass.

Grass will have steady growth, good color, deeper roots due to higher microbial activity and will thicken well to keep out future weeds."



LUKE HAWTHORNE

OWNER, EMERALD LAWNS
ROUND ROCK, TEXAS

"Emerald Lawns uses Holganix because it feeds the soil directly, so the grass can flourish naturally from the roots up. This means I can use less fertilizers and pesticides and still get better results. My main goal is to give my customers the absolute greenest lawn possible. If I can do that while being environmentally responsible, I have the best possible business model. Not to mention, if we're using less chemicals, this means more profit and my customers like me better for doing the right thing."

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.

5 WAYS TO ALIGN WITH VALUES

I often see a disconnect between the corporate values posted on a company's wall and the way these ideals are executed in real time.

Doing the right thing, delivering high quality work, providing excellent customer service, being a great place to work—these are empty promises if your employees don't walk the talk.

The way employees approach their responsibilities—their sense of urgency and follow-through, their accountability or can-do attitude—has a great impact on the way customers perceive who you are. Aligning employee behavior with core values starts by identifying the behaviors you want to see.

The following will help reset your cultural norms:

1. Recognize your employees when they demonstrate value-driven behavior, and intervene when they don't;
2. Model the behaviors you want your employees to emulate;
3. Help employees understand and buy in to value-driven behavior;
4. Ensure your principles and ideals translate to action; and
5. Define and monitor behaviors associated with your core values.

Listening to your employees, respecting them and having an organized, ethical and positive work environment is crucial to your credibility. A good culture, where employees' attitudes and actions embody your corporate values, will deliver competitive differentiation, is a great recruiting tool and will have a significant impact on your bottom line. 🍷

STEP BY STEP

Properly split perennials

DOWNLOAD IT

Visit LandscapeManagement.net/StepbyStep to download a PDF of this page to use as a training tool for your team.

There are signs that indicate it may be time to split your clients' perennials. For example, if an established perennial produces fewer flowers or the center of the plant looks sickly while the margins thrive, it could be time to divide the plant and replant it in another bed or in a container.

The best time to split plants depends on region. In cold regions, early spring is the best time. The divided plants will have more time to become established before winter. In warmer climates, exposure to hot temperatures can damage divided plants, so fall is a better time to divide because it allows them to become established during the mild winter. If possible, divide perennials before cool, rainy weather is forecasted. These conditions will help the plants recover from the stress of being split and replanted.

If the ground is dry when you plan to divide the plant, prepare the area by thoroughly soaking the soil around the plant. Let it drain while you gather the necessary tools: a shovel, a garden fork, pruners and a sharp knife. Trim the plant's leaves or stems so they measure 6-8 inches high to make handling the plant easier.

Note that some plants are best left undivided. These include monkshood, false indigo, bleeding heart, lupine, peony and poppy.

Follow these three steps to properly split a perennial. 1

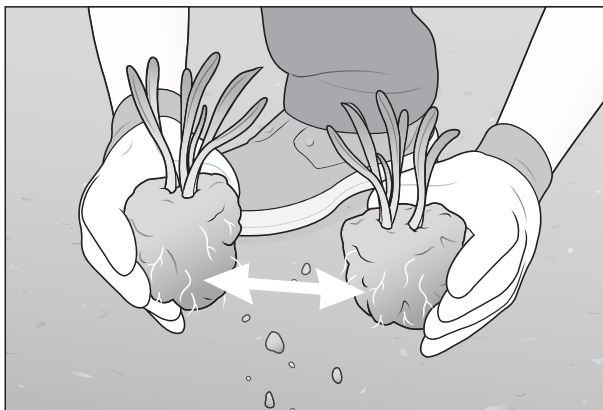
➔ STEP 1

Dig up the entire plant.



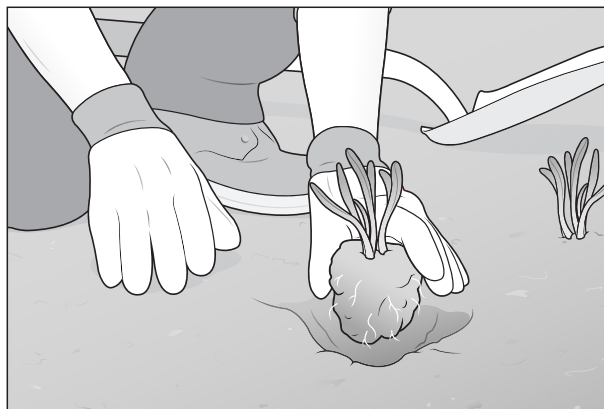
↶ STEP 2

Place the plant on a tarp in a shady spot and observe the roots. Some perennials have roots that separate easily, while others are tangled and more difficult. Some have fleshy roots that will need to be sliced into sections. Carefully split the plant based on the root type.



➔ STEP 3

Prune away any dead and damaged tissue, and ensure each divided section has a portion of its roots and leaves. Replant the divisions as soon as possible, water them and keep them well hydrated throughout their first year.



SOURCE: National Gardening Association, garden.org

NEW STUFF



1. VELKE HYDRO-POWERED WALK-BEHIND MOWERS

COMPANY: Wright Manufacturing

URL: WrightMfg.com

Wright Manufacturing released two new Velke hydro-powered, walk-behind mowers: the HC series and the LC series. The HC series is available with 32-, 36- and 48-in. cutting decks, and the larger LC series is available with 52- and 61-in. decks. All sizes come with the option of a fixed or floating deck.

2. 8-IN. RETAINING WALL LIGHT

COMPANY: Super Bright LEDs

URL: SuperBrightLEDs.us

Super Bright LEDs' weatherproof 8-in. retaining wall light has an attached powder-coated steel mounting plate that allows it to be used on patios, outdoor steps, decks, retaining walls, stone walls and under-rail lighting. Available with natural or cool white illumination, the energy-efficient LED light consumes 2 W, has a 12-V AC/DC operation and can be installed in existing low voltage landscape wiring systems.

3. DEMAND CS + ARCHER MULTIPAK

COMPANY: Syngenta

URL: SyngentaPMP.com

A part of the Secure Choice Mosquito Assurance Program, the Multipak contains two quarts of Demand CS and five pints of Archer. Demand CS insecticide is designed to provide immediate and residual control of mosquitoes, while Archer interrupts the reproduction cycle of mosquitoes. If applications of the Multipak fail to provide adequate reduction of mosquito populations during the 60-day treatment period, the manufacturer will provide the quantity of Demand CS and Archer to cover retreatments.



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.

4. BOXER INSECTICIDE-MITICIDE

COMPANY: ArborSystems

URL: ArborSystems.com

ArborSystems added an Emaxectin Benzoate insecticide-miticide for two-year control of Emerald Ash Borer. It causes no drilling damage to the direct-inject chemical line used in the Wedgle Direct-Inject Tree Injection System. The Boxer Insecticide-Miticide is available in 120 ml and 1000 ml Quick-Connect Chemical Packs.

5. 20-V MAX 5 AH HEDGE TRIMMER

COMPANY: DeWalt

URL: DeWalt.com

At 7.8 lbs., this battery-powered hedge trimmer is lightweight and durable. By doing away with carburetors, spark plugs and air filters, the equipment also eliminates the engine maintenance that gas-powered equipment requires, DeWalt says. The 22-in. laser-cut, hardened steel blades with 0.75-in. cut capacity provide long blade life, lasting sharpness and precise cuts. A wrap-around auxiliary handle gives the user a comfortable grip, according to the manufacturer.

6. HYDRAULIC HAMMER ATTACHMENTS

COMPANY: John Deere

URL: JohnDeere.com

Part of the Worksite Pro line, these hydraulic hammer attachments—HH20C, HH40C, HH60C and HH80C—are made for G- and E-series skid-steers, G- and E-series compact track loaders and G-series compact excavators. The tool retention system enables quick installation and removal using only one small screwdriver, according to John Deere.

SAFETYWATCH

HEDGE TRIMMER SAFETY

Powered hedge trimmers, also known as gas trimmers, gas shears or hedge clippers, present many safety hazards.

Before starting a hedge trimmer, check the following items.

- The condition of the hedge trimmer: Do you see any damage that may affect its performance and safe operation? For example, make sure the spark plug boot is secure to avoid sparks and possible ignition of spilled fuel.
- Test the throttle trigger to make sure it's in good working order, that it doesn't stick or isn't too loose.
- Inspect for missing or worn guards.
- Inspect for loose parts, such as nuts and screws on cutting bars.
- Ensure the blade is not cracked, bent or warped.
- Ensure the blades are sharp and safe to use. Always check with the engine off.

- Check fuel; make sure there's enough for the job. It's safer to refuel a cool engine than a hot one.
- Check that your fuel type is correct. The trimmer in this module uses a gas-oil mixture.

WATCH AND LEARN

Visit LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch to view a video about safe fuel handling and use it as a training tool for your team.



SOURCE: LS TRAINING SYSTEM,
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CHECK, RECHECK

Industry members
share advice and
cautionary tales about
pesticide label changes.

▶ PAGE 20

Law of the land

Pesticide labels are ever-changing, legally-binding documents. If you don't check them frequently, you could be in hot water. **BY DILLON STEWART**

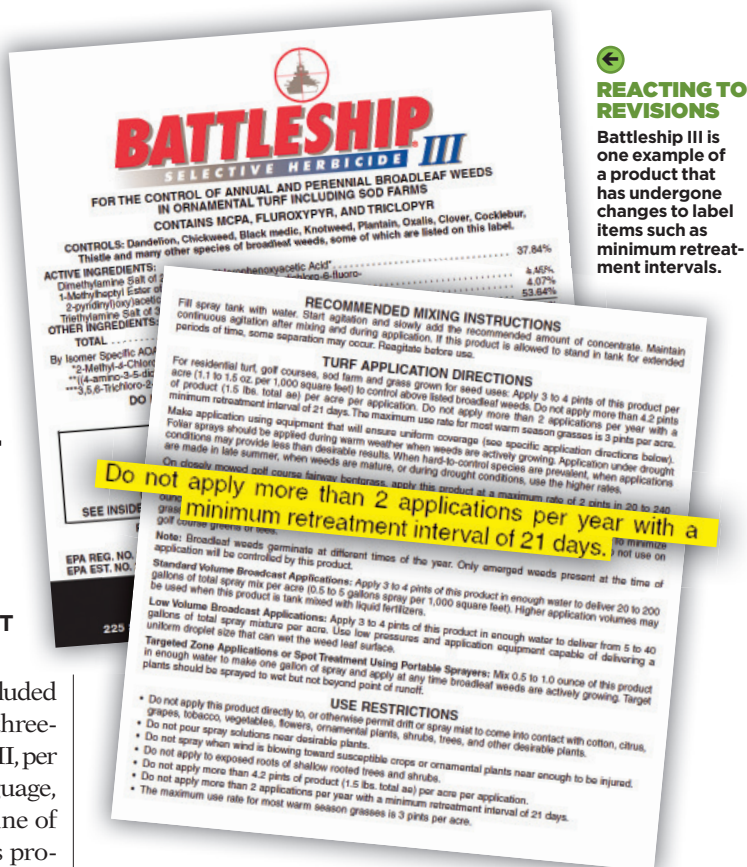
Last year, Addison Rogers noticed a change on the label of Battleship III, a three-way liquid formulation of triclopyr, fluroxypyr and MCPA designed to control broadleaf weeds. The new line read: "Do not apply more than 2 applications per year with a minimum retreatment interval of 21 days."

Rogers, operations and safety manager for ProLawn Service Corp. & Magic DeIcing in Winchester, Va., was startled by the realization. The minimum retreatment period, or the amount of time that must pass between applications, increased from 14 days to 21 days, and the number of applications went down. ProLawn's base lawn care program, which most

of its clients choose, included three applications of a three-way, such as Battleship III, per year. The new label language, different by just one line of text, meant ProLawn's program was out of compliance with the new label.

It's scary how a change can sneak up on you, Rogers says. And he considers his company diligent in checking and double-checking pesticide labels.

The Battleship III label change was made during its reregistration review in 2008, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Rogers' program may have been outdated for a few years, or he could have been purchasing stock from his supplier containing the earlier label language.



REACTING TO REVISIONS
Battleship III is one example of a product that has undergone changes to label items such as minimum retreatment intervals.

"People have used certain products for years, and sometimes they don't think about it," says Gary Custis, whose work includes writing and preparing labels for Quali-Pro, a division of Control Solutions. "You need to go back to the labels every year and make sure the language still fits your use. Maybe uses have been removed or there are new restrictions. So, it may or may not be the product you want to use, even if you have used it for a long time."

Label changes are occurring frequently and

often unexpectedly, experts say. If you're haphazard about checking your labels, it's time to review them before every application, as the EPA recommends.

On a micro level, in extreme cases, noncompliant lawn care company owners can be faced with unwanted fines and investigations—even if a misapplication was accidental. On a macro level, one company missing one line of label instruction can spur industry-wide changes to the way pesticides are regulated.

NEWSFEED

ORGANIC INSECT CONTROL

Central Turf & Irrigation Supply, a North American wholesale distributor of landscape

supplies, unveiled its Organic Insect Control for summertime pests. The all-organic formula eliminates ticks,

mosquitoes and other insects without harming beneficial insects, like bees, butterflies and earthworms. It's sold in a 32-oz. bottle that treats up to 5,000 sq. ft.

9/11 PARK'S TREES SAVED

Arborjet and Almstead Tree & Shrub Care Co., which operates in three states, saved more than 40 ash trees in Liberty State Park,

which is the site of the New Jersey Sept. 11 memorial. Almstead applied tree trunk injections of Arborjet's Treeage insecticide. Materials and labor were donated.

CHANGES ABOUND

Pesticide labels can be changed at any time, but changes are typically mandated during the reregistration stage. An EPA spokesperson says the agency is mindful of seasonal work, but midseason changes are sometimes unavoidable. A midseason change would come if the agency finds new, urgent information that it decides needs immediate action.

Barring extreme and urgent circumstances of human or environmental health risks, however, the manufacturer has a designated time period, often a year, to make any required label changes. The label on an LCO's existing stock is valid until the product is gone. Each new stock the manufacturer distributes will include any label updates, to which the end-user must adhere. In extreme cases, the EPA will issue a stop sale, stop use or removal order.

The EPA does not have a great system of disseminating label change information. It can be found in the Federal Register, in press releases disseminated by the agency or in its electronic Office of Pesticide Program Updates, but these outlets often don't reach many LCOs. One of the most reliable sources of pertinent information is through state- or industry association-run educational programs, where major changes are often the topic of discussion. States that require a yearly renewal of pesticide applicator licenses may relay this information to applicators during the renewal sessions. Still, both Rogers and the EPA say the only way to be sure you're aware of changes is by

religiously checking labels before application.

It's so important because, unlike suggested uses or instructions on many product labels, the use requirements on pesticide labels are legally enforceable. Each one carries the statement: "It is a violation of federal law to use this product in a manner inconsistent with its labeling." Pesticides are regulated under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, a version of which was first enacted in 1910. It received major revisions in 1972 and was most recently amended in 2012.

Enforcement of this law falls on state agencies. Many states require lawn care companies to document each application, and some states, such as New York, even require applicators to submit this data each year. However, the purpose of this record keeping is not to seek information about misapplication, and companies typically don't receive penalties from its findings.

"(States that require companies to submit records) simply want to know what is the quantity of pesticides that is being put down in their state," says Karen Reardon, vice president of public affairs for Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE). "There isn't a (process of) seeking information about misapplication."

Often, misapplication is reported by a company itself, in cases of accidents, or by another citizen, Reardon says. Many states, such as Virginia, where Rogers is located, do conduct inspections to ensure applicators apply chemicals

properly, applicators wear proper personal protective equipment and management collects the proper data. Errors typically result in warnings, but repeated mistakes or negligence can result in fines or even stripping applicators of their pesticide licenses.

SNOWBALL EFFECT

The Oregon Department of Agriculture dealt with two extreme situations in the summer of 2013 in Wilsonville, *Oregon Live* reports. First, roughly 50,000 bumblebees were found dead in a Target parking lot that June. Collier Arbor Care of Clackamas, Ore., had applied Safari, a dinotefuran pesticide, to a tree in the lot that was in bloom at the time. The product label warned that the pesticide is hazardous to bees when applied to flowering trees in bloom. The company and two of its applicators were each fined \$555 for the mishap, which occurred during National Pollinator Awareness week.

Those fines might seem small to some lawn care professionals, given the extremity and rarity of the event. In fact, a few weeks later another bee die-off at a golf course only resulted in a warning that carried no fine. Still, high-profile misapplication can have a snowball effect. For Collier Arbor Care, the event prompted an investigation, and the company was again fined after it was found to have misapplied chemicals in downtown Portland. The agency fined the company and two more applicators an additional \$407.

Later that summer, the state's agriculture officials placed restrictions on pesticides linked to the bee deaths, stating: "Pesticides containing dinotefuran and imidacloprid can no longer be applied to linden trees, basswood and other trees of the *Tilia* genus."

Furthermore, though not in a direct response to these instances, the EPA says it has taken a number of actions to protect pollinators, including "new labeling requirements for neonicotinoid pesticides to be clearer and better protect bees." Dinotefuran and imidacloprid are neonicotinoids. It also urges those in the landscaping industry to consider pollinator protection in their work.

"Some people get upset over (new regulations), but it's one of those things you're going to have to live with," Custis says. "By no means do I feel it's causing anybody to not be able to do their business. Our goal is to figure out how to help people use (a product) the right way so that we don't lose it. We don't want to go the way of Canada, where they put a ban on all cosmetic pesticides."

After Rogers' realization, ensuring compliance on future applications wasn't difficult. The company changed its base program to two applications of Battleship III and one application of a three-way called Cool Power. This new choice of herbicide targets

Continued on page 65



Addison Rogers

MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Joining forces

Tony Szczechowski has systemized and streamlined his Holland, Ohio-based company and is positioned for long-term growth.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

Learn how to become comfortable saying no. That's the No. 1 piece of advice Tony Szczechowski has for other owners of landscape companies. After mastering this skill, the owner of Pro Edge Lawn Care near Toledo, Ohio, now serves fewer than half of the 200 clients it once did, but his company is more profitable than before.

"It's OK to say no," says Szczechowski. "You have to know what you're good at and stick with it."

Lessons like this have helped Szczechowski grow his \$1.3-million dollar business, which started as the one-man operation Tony's Lawn Care in 1999. The company rebranded as Pro Edge Lawn Care in 2007 and is now housed in a facility on 14 acres near Holland, Ohio.

He's had to step out of his comfort zone and make some big changes to get there, but the moves have paid off in terms of profitability—and even some accolades.

TURNING POINT

Szczechowski knew that implementing consistent systems and processes

would be necessary for Pro Edge Lawn Care—which offers 80 percent landscape maintenance and snow management and 20 percent design/build services to a 70 percent commercial, 30 percent residential clientele—to become the professional, saleable company he envisioned.

After eight months of calls from a company called LandOpt, he finally answered and heard the sales pitch. It was the opportunity he'd been waiting for. Szczechowski completed the application process, and Pro Edge Lawn Care became "powered by LandOpt" in July 2013.

"The main reason we joined at that time was so I could actually have a life outside of work and be there as a father, and to allow us to get to the point where things can run and I don't have to be there," says Szczechowski, who sought a better work-life balance after his second son was born in May 2013.

LandOpt offers contractors a proprietary business operating system



Tony Szczechowski

aimed at improving profitability and growth. Working with businesses under a licensing agreement, LandOpt

provides tools and processes to systemize many landscape company operations, including sales and marketing, human resources, operations and business management. LandOpt also sponsors annual meetings and events attended by green industry business executives.

So far, his plan has proved successful. Since joining LandOpt, Szczechowski has been able to work an average of five fewer hours each week. Because of LandOpt's processes, he no longer performs the duties of account manager or office manager. He promoted two employees to serve as account managers and deal directly with clients, and he also hired an office manager.



NEWSFEED

NEW BOB-CAT DECK OPTIONS

Bob-Cat added 48-in. and 61-in. deck options for the XRZ Pro mower. These

sizes join the original 52-in. deck. All models include the TufDeck Pro mowing system.

SOLAR POWERED MOWER

Mean Green Mowers released S.A.M., aka the "solar-assisted mower." The optional solar electric canopy can be added to the commercial electric



Mean Green CXR-52-in./60-in. ZTR ride-on mower. It collects the sun's energy, converting it to extra power for the Mean Green lithium battery pack, which propels the mower.

PHOTO: PRO EDGE LAWN CARE



← HAND OFF
Pro Edge grew once its owner hurdled his reluctance to delegate responsibilities.

"I've always understood that projects can be more profitable, but the recurring profitability of maintenance was always more attractive to me—you don't have to go resell it every year," Szczechowski says. "But if you have a good sales rep on board, projects help.

You almost have to have both."

When it came to clientele, Szczechowski was urged to take a hard look at who was most profitable. Pro Edge Lawn Care went from serving 200 clients to serving 71 "ideal clients," as he calls them. The latter are primarily commercial maintenance accounts and

"I no longer deal with the day-to-day operations—and I'm OK with that," he says with a laugh.

Since joining LandOpt, Pro Edge Lawn Care's employee roles are now defined, and everyone has a clear career path. LandOpt also encourages financial transparency. This year, Szczechowski opened the company's financial plan to the staff, a move he never would have thought to make without LandOpt's guidance, he says. This level of transparency gives his staff a behind-the-scenes view and aligns them with company goals, changes and advancements.

"The biggest benefit of this is team buy-in," Szczechowski says. "We are actually showing our employees how they can impact the bottom line of this company."

Adding design/build work for the first time was another big move.

LandOpt encourages its licensees to strive for a 50/50 mix of recurring revenue and project work. So in 2015, Szczechowski hired a project manager to run the new design/build department. He chose a 17-year hardscape industry veteran with the experience and know-how to manage the department and its crews. Szczechowski says that, so far, the design/build segment has been a great addition.



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MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

residential design/build projects. On the commercial side, Szczechowski seeks out clients who understand that Pro Edge Lawn Care's crews are the "professionals of the outdoor space." They simply step back and let the pros handle the work. On the residential side, Szczechowski prefers high-end clients who enjoy spending time in—and money on—their outdoor spaces. The focus paid off. The company, which typically brought in \$1 million in revenue, grew by \$200,000 in its first year with Land Opt.

LETTING GO

The decision to join LandOpt improved nearly every part of Pro Edge Lawn Care, but not all aspects of the transition were easy. One of Szczechowski's biggest challenges was relinquishing his responsibilities. With the help of a


LandOpt success coach, he transitioned duties to his new managers and teams. He followed a timeline, but the process took longer than expected.

"A company my size should have been able to hand it all over in 18 months, but it took me about 30 months to give full rein to my team to do their jobs," Szczechowski says.

Because of Pro Edge Lawn Care's overall adherence to the LandOpt processes, the company was recognized with the President's Award during LandOpt's annual Principals Meeting and Success Celebration in Savannah, Ga., in February. Compared to the organization's numbers-driven awards, LandOpt's President's Award criteria are qualitative. Pro Edge Lawn Care was recognized for its leadership, consistency and initiative.

"We are one of the smaller companies powered by LandOpt, and I think it was powerful for some of the larger companies to see a smaller company win the award," Szczechowski says. "You have to put in the time and effort. LandOpt supplies the systems, (but) they are not going to implement themselves."

Going forward, Szczechowski plans to focus on growing the design/build segment of his company. With his management and sales teams in place, he's preparing for "explosive growth" with a goal to double revenue over the next five years.

"We feel we have the infrastructure in place and a great production team to make that vision a reality," he says. "The future of Pro Edge is bright." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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SHOW OFF

A photo book is a great way to show clients the work that went into their project and boost referrals.



A picture's worth a thousand dollars (or more!)

Need a fresh way to thank clients and drive referrals? Here's one idea. BY JODY SHILAN

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS TO HELP ME INCREASE MY REFERRAL BUSINESS?

A: Most landscape contractors give their clients holiday gifts in December to thank them for their business. It's a nice gesture, and I'm sure it's somewhat appreciated. But let's be honest, how many calendars, company mugs, bottles of wine or gift baskets does anybody really want or need?

I'm sure you're a little confused about why I am talking about customer gifts in June, but soon, you won't be. As I'm sure you know, you can give customers gifts any time of year, not just during the winter holidays when everybody else is doing the exact same thing. What's so great about my gift idea is that not only will your customers love it, but it will help you generate more referral business than you'll

know what to do with. Plus, this gift is inexpensive, perfect any time of year and for any size project.

As landscape professionals, we're used to ripping out overgrown trees and shrubs; demolishing patios, decks and driveways; and driving around people's properties in skid-steers, excavators, pick-up trucks and pretty much whatever else we want. We're also used to transforming people's properties from

NEWSPEED

KUBOTA ACQUISITION

Kubota purchased Salina, Kan.-based Great Plains Manufacturing, parent

company of Land Pride. The two companies have worked closely together since 2007.

BELGARD DONATES TO USO

In honor of National Military Appreciation Month in May, Belgard committed to donating \$1 to the USO for every Idea Book order, email share, social

media share and social media like, up to \$50,000.

PAY IT FORWARD

Students from Central Pennsylvania Institute of Technology will

build a patio for "Patio for a Patriot" program recipient Vince Reynolds, who received a Purple Heart from his two tours in Afghanistan. Materials were donated by EP Henry.

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“How many calendars, company mugs, bottles of wine or gift baskets does anyone really want or need?”

—JODY SHILAN



overgrown, dysfunctional wastelands into lush, colorful and desirable outdoor spaces. That's why people hire us.

On the other hand, upon hiring us our clients often have no idea about the reign of terror we're about to inflict on their properties. Fortunately for them, they're at work during the day can't watch as we turn their little slice of heaven into something reminiscent of a tractor pull (something they've probably never seen, either). All they usually see is our equipment parked in their backyard when they leave in the morning and again when they get home. They miss all the cool in-between stuff, like having a giant crane swinging trees over the roof of their house, a 300 Series Cat excavating a crater-sized hole for their new swimming pool or a fully loaded tandem driving around their property each day like a life-sized Tonka Truck in a sandbox.

My point is they never really get to see everything that goes into their project or appreciate the various stages of its transformation. And, truthfully, once the project is completed, they usually have no recollection of how horrible their property looked before the work began. Given the opportunity, most people would really enjoy seeing all the work that goes into the transformation of their property if they had the time. (Thankfully, they don't.)

Enter photo books—the modern version of a photo album, which you can create easily with an online service.

Websites like Shutterfly and Snapfish have preformatted or template books that let you drag and drop photos into place. It's easy even for you technophobes. Photo books can be just a few pages or many pages long, and they costs as little

as \$10 or \$20 per book. You can have one picture per page, several pictures per page or any mixture you'd like. In addition to photos, you can add captions or text on the photos or on separate pages. The opportunities are unlimited.

Most photo books come with a hard cover, making them feel much more expensive than they really are, unlike your drugstore calendars that look cheap and feel cheap.

So, what do you think would happen if you took before, during and after pictures of your client's project including photos of the demolition, the equipment, the people involved (employees, subcontractors and, of course, the homeowners) along with the materials necessary to complete the installation?

Then, what do you think would happen if you turned these pictures into a photo book, added some subtitles, called it “The Thompson's Landscape Renovation 2016” (if their name is Thompson) and gave it to them once the job was completed? Do you think they would like it? Do you also think they will be amazed at how much work went into their renovation project and appreciate it even more?


Finally, do you think they would take any and every opportunity to show this photo book to everyone they know? Do you think that might generate some serious referral business?

For those of you playing along, the answers are, “yes, yes, yes and, uhm, yes.” I think I've made my case. Now get out there and starting taking pictures. 📷

Shilan is the editor of FromDesignToBuild.com, a members-only website for design/build professionals. He's also a member of the LM Editorial Advisory Board.

Kawasaki

Engines

A worker wearing a red hard hat and a grey long-sleeved shirt is working on a large, complex industrial machine. The machine has various metal components, pipes, and a large flywheel. The worker is focused on the task, with their hands near the machine's components.

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IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

An efficient way to feed

Fertigation is one way to give clients what they want—a greener, healthier lawn for less.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

Michael Chaplinsky cuts to the chase. “No customer actually wants an irrigation system,” he said. “All they really want are green plants.”

Through fertigation, clients can have both. Fertigation is the process in which fertilizer is dissolved and distributed along with water in a drip or spray irrigation system each time the system runs. Fertigation-style injection systems also can be used to apply control products to keep a client’s lawn free of wildlife, mosquitoes and other pests. Although fertigation has been used for decades in commercial agriculture and horticulture, the process is also now being used in residential and commercial landscapes as the systems become more reliable and easier to use.

In fact, Chaplinsky, president of Turf Feeding Systems, a Houston-based supplier of fertigation systems for landscapes, sports fields, golf courses and agricultural sites, said fertigation is the most efficient way to manage water, nutrients and landscape quality.

“Water alone doesn’t make a plant green; it’s the nutrient program that makes it green,” he said. “Fertigation enables any landscape or sports field owner to use the irrigation system for more than to just put out water. It becomes a tool to lightly feed the plant, with each irrigation cycle, exactly what it needs.”

Fertigation “spoon feeds” plants frequent, small applications, making it easier for them to absorb the nutrients. This method can result in strong, drought-tolerant plants that are less susceptible to insects and diseases. Because of its precision, fertigation requires less water and fertilizer than traditional application methods and can reduce the leeching of chemicals into the water supply. In addition to reducing water and fertilizer use, the need for herbicides and pesticides is also reduced due to the increased health of the overall landscape.

“We have seen growing interest and growth for the past decade,” said Dan Gilmore, founder and CEO of Ez-Flo Injection Systems, a supplier of injection



equipment in Rocklin, Calif. “Technologies developed providing simpler ease of use and increased reliability are a growing popularity with consumers.”

COMMERCIAL VS. RESIDENTIAL USE

As the costs of water and fertilizer continue to increase, experts agree that fertigation can be a solution. Because plants more efficiently absorb nutrients when the product is mixed with water, fertigation allows 90-95 percent of applied nutrients to reach the plants, Chaplinsky said, compared with 50 percent of nutrients applied through traditional methods that rely on rainfall or irrigation water to dissolve the product into the soil. Fertigation also can reduce water use by 50 percent and the use of chemicals and fertilizers by up to 60 percent while improving the quality of the plant material, he adds.

NEWSPEED

HUNTER ACQUISITION

Hunter Industries acquired Hydrowise, a manufacturer of Wi-Fi based irrigation

controllers and web-based software. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. The acquisition al-

lows Hunter to enter the Wi-Fi-enabled controller market with the HC irrigation controller.

ASIC PAST PRESIDENT DIES

Ivy Munion, the first fe-

male president of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants (ASIC), died May 23. She had suffered from cancer. She was the owner of consulting firm ISC Group.



PHOTO: PINNACLE IRRIGATION

ECO-FRIENDLY
Fertigation typically
requires fewer nutrients,
control products and
water than traditional
methods.

"Years ago fertilizer and water were cheap—now they're expensive," Chaplinsky said. "Sustainability is a big issue in the future, but it's really an economic savings and reduction factor. We can save any commercial property up to \$500 per acre annually year after year."

Gilmore agrees that the financial savings fertigation can provide appeal to commercial properties. "Commercial properties are more open to adopting the technology due to quick ROI, results-driven programs and increased focus on sustainability," he said.

Marty DeNinno, president of Pinnacle Irrigation & Nightlighting in Haddon Heights, N.J., said homeowners are beginning to recognize the benefits of fertigation as an eco-friendly way to feed their lawns and landscapes. The company offers 70 percent irrigation services

to a 90-percent residential clientele, and DeNinno said about 6-8 percent of his customer base receives fertigation services. DeNinno installs Ez-Flo systems, which he markets to his existing clients. He said homeowners are particularly attracted to organic pest control methods available through injection systems. These include the application of cedar oil, lemongrass oil, peppermint oil and garlic oil that prevent deer, moles, voles, rabbits and geese from destroying plants.

"We see the popularity growing on the residential side because that's where people are spending most of their time," DeNinno said. "The commercial properties we maintain are only using the products to control deer and geese, but this could be regional."

Pinnacle Irrigation can retrofit the Ez-Flo system to any existing irrigation

system. The company's fertigation offerings include installation, maintenance, refills and an annual system inspection. Installations of systems filled with product start at \$650.

"I believe the opportunity is as much as you want as a contractor," DeNinno said. "Once you get certified by Ez-Flo, you can start installing these systems. As with anything new, do your homework and check it out."

Also, check with your state to see if you need a license to apply fertigation-related products, he adds.

Lawns by Dr. Vaughan in Chesterfield, Va., offers fertigation, lawn care and irrigation system repair services to a primarily residential clientele. The company's fertigation program includes bimonthly maintenance visits, during which it services and



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calibrates the pump and refills the system's 10-gallon container. The pump is housed inside a decorative garden box and placed in an out-of-sight area of the client's landscape.

↑ ACCURACY
One operator
likens fertigation
to a patient getting
an IV rather than
taking a pill.

"We tell our clients that fertigation is essentially like getting an IV at a hospital instead of taking an oral pill," said Diana Vaughan, owner of Lawns by Dr. Vaughan.

Many of her clients have an interest in protecting the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding waterways and appreciate the eco-friendly aspects of fertigation, she said. The company also works with its clients to highlight the importance of healthy lawn maintenance in addition to fertigation, including proper mowing, watering and disease control. Fertigated lawns stay healthier throughout the year and more quickly repair themselves should a problem occur, she adds.

"Fertigation just gives you very consistent results year-round," Vaughan said. "In the summer months when fertigation can really get outstanding results, we never have to worry about burning or streaking. We have some clients whose lawns are not fertigated, and they are trickier and just don't quite look as good year-round."

"The big three selling points for clients are reduced water and fertilizer needs, a reduction in required labor and better results at a lower cost," Gilmore adds. "Contractors have an opportunity to upsell the system at the time of installation or integrate it as part of their maintenance business providing a refill service. Margins are very strong at both levels and allow for differentiation in the market."

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

PHOTO: TURF FEEDING SYSTEMS

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BUSINESS BASICS: PLANNING

LET'S GROW

CASE STUDY: ADD-ON BIZ

GET THE FORECAST

How to get a read on your external environment during the strategic planning process.

➤ PAGE 32



BUSINESS BASICS: PLANNING

Which way is the wind blowing?



BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

There's an often repeated saying that "strategy should not be created in a vacuum." That means before you decide on a course of action, it's best to consider what's happening around you.

This concept may seem obvious, but I can assure you that very few companies in our industry employ a formal process for conducting external analyses. Some do a decent job of informally assessing what's going on around them; the rest have blinders on, although they would never admit it. Let's take a closer look.

External analysis is the process of assessing the world around us to determine trends, threats and opportunities that exist mostly due to circumstances beyond our control. The thought of "assessing the world" may seem like a daunting task, especially for a small business with limited resources. However, it's possible to do so by learning how to use existing analytical tools. In fact, it's possible to do so in a comprehensive and logical manner—which is much better than just winging it or following your gut instincts.

A road near my home was under construction last year. The signs went up, the road was closed on one side at a time and, of course, everyone avoided the road the entire time it was being worked on.

When it reopened, I noticed many of the small businesses located on this road had closed down. However, there was a gas station that took advantage of the downtime created by the road construction. It replaced its underground tanks and refurbished the building. When the road was finished, the gas station was enjoying its



own grand reopening with an all-new, larger facility.

The gas station owner likely conducted an external analysis well before the road closed. Upon learning about the closing, he or she formulated a plan to not only survive but take advantage of the closing. Apparently, the other business owners were caught off guard by the road closing or couldn't devise a plan to remain viable.

I recently facilitated a strategic planning retreat for a large, active local service club. Prior to the retreat, the club board arranged a series of town hall-style meetings with special guests who agreed to be panelists so the club could learn more about local and regional issues. This is a great example of the club conducting its own version of external analysis—learning about trends, threats and opportunities. Armed with knowledge, the club made informed decisions at its strategic planning retreat.

PESTEL ANALYSIS

One tool we use for external analysis in our strategic planning process is called the PESTEL Analysis. PESTEL is an acronym for the following external influences: political, economic, social, technological, environmental

and legal. For each influence, ask your team to identify the trends, threats and opportunities that exist, accompanied by at least one possible action step for each item identified. This is exactly what the service club members accomplished in their town hall meetings to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. In addition to the PESTEL analysis and several other tools, we use the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) format to summarize the best of the best from all other tools.

In addition to using analytical tools, another great way to conduct informal external analysis is by subscribing to great publications like *Landscape Management*, its social media feeds and newsletters to stay current on news, trends and ideas. Attending industry conferences, actively networking with others in the industry and joining peer groups are other ways to conduct external analyses.

Within the context of a peer group, formal external analysis is possible if the group members agree to embark on this journey. As a facilitator of several peer groups, I'd say this environment is one of the best places to engage in these discussions. Those who join peer groups are often some of the sharpest and most knowledgeable people in the industry. They are well-read, up to speed on trends and developments and have much insight to share.

So, which way is the wind blowing? Do you know? How might the direction of the wind affect you? Do you care? The gas station owner seemed to care. Not sure about the others, but I can tell you the gas station is thriving, but the other businesses are gone. 🍀

A SUPPLEMENT TO



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MANAGEMENT**

150

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Committed to growth



IN THIS YEAR'S LM150 issue, we have an opportunity to learn how the top companies in the landscape industry are growing and sustaining their businesses. We will gain insights into how they effectively navigate and overcome business challenges, such as finding new business opportunities, empowering employees to take responsibility for profit & loss and setting company standards.

The challenges they confront are likely similar to those you have and will continue to face as you grow your business. Whether it is recruiting employees, increasing your market share against tough competition or navigating the world of government regulations, it is vital as business owners to incorporate metrics and optimization standards into your short- and long-term plans.

To successfully craft a business plan, the first step is to determine measurable and actionable goals that you can work toward. Those goals may be high-level and strategic, such as increasing sales, or more granular, such as reducing input cost per hour.

When Deere & Co. started 179 years ago as a one-man blacksmith, we too faced challenges similar to those you encounter today. From developing a qualified staff to increasing our offerings to meet customer needs, through strategic planning, Deere & Co. overcame a variety of challenges to grow into one of the most trusted brands in the landscape industry, while maintaining our core values of integrity, innovation, commitment and quality.

As we move forward, we are evolving our business to provide you, our customers, with the solutions you need to effectively manage and expand yours. We are committed to supporting your business as a trusted partner both before and after the sale. From equipment to support to financing, John Deere is committed to helping you grow and prosper.

As you develop plans to grow your business, you will face new challenges. Just remember that every challenge presents an opportunity to learn and grow.

Let's take this opportunity to learn from our peers who are willing to share their experiences and develop a strategy that will guide our businesses to succeed.

Have a prosperous 2016!

Ken Taylor,
Landscape Industry Certified
General Manager,
Corporate Business Division



150

RANKINGS

		Headquarters	2015 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2014	% Projected Change for 2016	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
1	BrightView (formerly Brickman/ValleyCrest)	Rockville, Md.	\$2,230,000,000	3%	NR	22000/NR	NR/NR/NR
2	TruGreen ^	Memphis, Tenn.	\$976,080,000	6%	6%	11500/NR	17/83/0
3	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$821,904,000	4%	6%	8103/364	NR/NR/NR
4	Scotts LawnService ^	Marysville, Ohio	\$322,897,006	12%	5%	700/1985	5/95/0
5	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$226,000,000	8%	8%	1600/50	25/65/10
6	LandCare (formerly TruGreen LandCare)	Frederick, Md.	\$180,000,000	-5%	0%	2000/2000	100/0/0
7	U.S. Lawns	Orlando , Fla.	\$165,000,000	3%	5%	1400/650	100/0/0
8	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario	\$153,657,083	7%	8%	800/2700	5/95/0
9	Ferrandino & Son	Farmingdale, N.Y.	\$141,000,000	12%	22%	350/0	100/0/0
10	Gothic Landscape (including Gothic Grounds Management)	Valencia, Calif.	\$124,500,000	9%	10%	1200/65	100/0/0
11	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, Md.	\$123,000,000	12%	5%	1200/0	85/0/15
12	Yellowstone Landscape	Bunnell, Fla.	\$118,000,000	23%	10%	1100/700	80/0/20
13	McGuire & Hester	Oakland, Calif.	\$115,000,000	10%	15%	300/0	80/0/20
14	Lawn Doctor ^	Holmdel, N.J.	\$100,441,343	4%	5%	46/0	5/95/0
15	Merit Service Solutions	Malvern, Pa.	\$90,000,000	0%	5%	240/200	95/0/5
16	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	\$85,850,000	1%	9%	600/110	20/78/2
17	LandOpt	Pittsburgh, Pa.	\$80,000,000	10%	10%	500/400	65/35/0
18	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$71,500,000	-5%	0%	750/250	100/0/0
19	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	Tucson, Ariz.	\$66,130,000	20%	6%	1000/200	70/1/29
20	Marina Landscape*	Anaheim, Calif.	\$64,050,000	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
21	The Grounds Guys ^	Waco, Texas	\$63,706,500	101%	31%	500/100	60/30/10
22	Massey Services ^	Orlando, Fla.	\$62,061,864	12%	15%	1760/NR	12/88/0
23	Clintar Landscape Management	Markham, Ontario	\$59,000,000	-4%	2%	450/200	90/0/10
24	Denison Landscaping	Fort Washington, Md.	\$52,952,000	12%	10%	245/250	80/10/10
25	Garden Design	Farmers Branch, Texas	\$52,500,000	29%	10%	63/0	40/60/0
26	NaturalLawn Of America	Frederick , Md.	\$51,876,697	3%	4%	429/47	4/95/1
27	Acres Group	Sugar Grove, Ill.	\$50,000,000	6%	3%	110/700	95/5/0
28	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, Va.	\$49,600,000	0%	3%	150/400	5/92/3
29	Spring-Green Lawn Care	Plainfield, Ill.	\$49,444,000	8%	10%	116/418	2/98/0
30	Terracare Associates	Littleton, Colo.	\$47,810,000	41%	8%	340/183	55/0/45
31	TBG Environmental	Whitby, Ontario	\$47,450,000	200%	10%	212/50	30/15/55
32	Mariani Landscape	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$47,005,000	22%	-2%	140/350	12/88/0
33	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	Portland, Maine	\$46,500,000	-5%	5%	515/0	88/9/3
34	Jensen Landscape Services	San Jose, Calif.	\$45,700,000	14%	11%	355/0	60/32/8
35	Landscape Development	Valencia, Calif.	\$45,100,000	0%	0%	440/0	98/2/0
36	The Greenery	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$45,000,000	5%	5%	625/150	82/15/3
37	Christy Webber Landscapes	Chicago, Ill.	\$44,500,000	-4%	0%	500/0	65/20/15
38	ABM Landscape & Turf Services	Tampa, Fla.	\$42,000,000	0%	5%	550/50	90/0/10
39	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, Calif.	\$38,946,569	15%	7%	450/50	85/5/10
40	Clean Scapes	Austin, Texas	\$37,105,301	30%	25%	180/425	96/0/4
41	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	Slidell, La.	\$37,000,000	-3%	10%	130/220	70/0/30
42	Juniper Landscaping	Fort Myers, Fla.	\$35,725,300	61%	42%	200/0	98/0/2
43	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$35,650,000	29%	20%	350/150	80/20/0
44	Mission Landscape Cos.	Irvine, Calif.	\$35,072,565	7%	12%	560/0	100/0/0
45	Dixie Landscape	Medley, Fla.	\$33,964,000	1%	5%	315/0	NR/NR/NR
46	Girard Environmental Services ^	Sanford, Fla.	\$33,781,930	15%	8%	370/100	100/0/0
47	Northwest Landscape Services	Woodinville, Wash.	\$31,000,000	14%	15%	400/100	80/0/20
	Reliable Property Services	Eagan, Minn.	\$31,000,000	2%	5%	75/400	95/0/5
49	Bemus Landscape	San Clemente, Calif.	\$30,000,000	10%	10%	405/0	98/1/1
	Parker Interior Plantscape	Scotch Plains, N.J.	\$30,000,000	200%	0%	120/30	99/1/0

LEGEND NR = Not reported; ^ Indicates estimate, based on projected revenue reported in 2015; * Indicates a portion of reported revenue was removed (such as structural pest control, termite control or other non-green industry service)

		Headquarters	2015 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2014	% Projected Change for 2016	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
51	D. Schumacher Landscaping*	West Bridgewater, Mass.	\$29,806,700	10%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
52	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$29,514,750	18%	6%	346/0	84/3/13
53	Greenscape Land Design	Middleborough, Mass.	\$29,000,000	10%	3%	60/225	96/2/2
54	McFall & Berry Landscape Management ^	Annandale, Va.	\$28,518,000	4%	5%	125/165	100/0/0
55	Ryan Lawn & Tree	Overland Park, Kan.	\$28,000,000	4%	7%	230/20	1/99/0
56	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, Ill.	\$27,400,000	-3%	9%	72/249	90/2/8
57	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$27,300,000	0%	3%	100/250	0/100/0
58	Pierre Landscape	Irwindale, Calif.	\$27,000,000	10%	20%	192/0	NR/NR/NR
	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$27,000,000	14%	10%	99/87	5/95/0
60	Nutri-Lawn Corp.	Toronto, Ontario	\$25,875,000	8%	6%	NR/NR	8/90/2
61	Landscape Workshop	Vestavia, Ala.	\$25,800,000	26%	12%	244/65	88/8/4
62	Yard-Nique	Morrisville, N.C.	\$25,750,000	30%	3%	228/175	97/3/0
63	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$25,700,000	-8%	10%	375/25	90/1/9
64	James River Grounds Management	Glen Allen, Va.	\$25,200,117	2%	5%	285/130	100/0/0
65	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$25,064,044	3%	8%	89/220	80/20/0
66	Environmental Management (EMI)	Dublin, Ohio	\$25,000,000	0%	8%	85/210	85/5/10
67	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping ^	San Antonio, Texas	\$24,868,540	-9%	16%	270/180	45/10/45
68	Senske Services ^	Kennewick, Wash.	\$24,300,000	25%	8%	300/100	20/75/5
69	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	Gilbert, Ariz.	\$24,161,170	3%	10%	232/0	100/0/0
70	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$24,155,000	54%	18%	175/67	100/0/0
71	Southern Botanical	Dallas, Texas	\$23,836,500	-16%	28%	186/140	60/40/0
72	Gibbs Landscape Co.*	Smyrna, Ga.	\$23,583,000	0%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
73	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	\$22,716,201	8%	8%	230/12	5/95/0
74	Russell Landscape Group	Dacula, Ga.	\$22,500,000	0%	10%	230/150	NR/NR/NR
75	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care ^	Denver, Colo.	\$22,267,050	1%	6%	175/65	33/67/0
76	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	\$21,991,000	20%	0%	285/0	95/0/5
77	Merchants Landscape Services ^	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$21,560,000	5%	15%	420/0	0/0/100
78	DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$21,100,000	5%	3%	310/0	100/0/0
79	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$21,000,000	3%	2%	195/0	0/100/0
80	The Loving Group*	Charlotte, N.C.	\$20,930,000	30%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
81	Heads Up Landscape Contractors ^	Albuquerque, N.M.	\$20,605,621	9%	8%	230/75	88/8/4
82	Dennis' 7 Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers*	Portland, Ore.	\$20,228,640	2%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
83	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, Wis.	\$20,200,000	0%	0%	260/50	75/20/5
84	High Tech Landscapes	Branchburg, N.J.	\$20,050,682	-3%	5%	38/315	60/30/10
85	Artistic Maintenance (formerly Landscape Specialists)	Lake Forest, Calif.	\$20,000,000	8%	8%	300/0	95/0/5
	Berghoff Design Group	Scottsdale, Ariz.	\$20,000,000	4%	5%	275/0	20/80/0
87	Lambert's*	Dallas, Texas	\$19,818,750	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
88	Complete Landscaping Service ^	Bowie, Md.	\$19,800,000	12%	13%	100/160	85/15/0
89	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, Calif.	\$19,622,423	10%	15%	276/2	90/1/9
90	Westco Grounds Maintenance	Houston, Texas	\$19,500,000	23%	20%	145/85	80/0/20
91	Integrated Landscape Management	Tempe, Ariz.	\$19,078,408	16%	7%	300/0	99/1/0
92	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	Orange, Calif.	\$19,000,000	20%	15%	400/50	90/0/10
93	Greenscapes	Naples, Fla.	\$18,500,000	8%	6%	245/30	100/0/0
94	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$18,400,000	2%	9%	220/220	100/0/0
95	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, Del.	\$18,100,000	9%	8%	253/63	80/20/0
96	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$18,000,000	-3%	3%	75/175	90/5/5
97	Cleary Bros. Landscape	Danville, Calif.	\$17,300,000	17%	10%	215/0	83/2/15
98	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, Fla.	\$17,200,000	0%	10%	200/0	80/20/0
	Designs By Sundown	Englewood, Colo.	\$17,200,000	15%	20%	110/60	10/90/0
100	Complete Property Maintenance ^	Coconut Creek, Fla.	\$16,975,000	2%	2%	300/30	95/5/0

		Headquarters	2015 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2014	% Projected Change for 2016	FTE/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
101	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, Calif.	\$16,600,000	-6%	18%	210/12	75/3/22
102	Munie Greencare Professionals	Caseyville, Ill.	\$16,549,706	8%	8%	183/164	93/3/4
103	Southview Design	St Paul, Minn.	\$16,254,000	10%	12%	52/100	5/95/0
104	Earthtones Landscaping	Midlothian, Texas	\$16,200,000	15%	10%	90/35	85/15/0
105	Hittle Landscaping	Westfield, Ind.	\$16,151,501	5%	5%	120/133	85/10/5
106	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, Calif.	\$16,064,645	25%	21%	298/0	92/8/0
107	Ecoscape Solutions Group*	Huntersville, N.C.	\$15,964,220	18%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
108	Complete Landsculpture	Dallas, Texas	\$15,580,000	11%	10%	125/65	55/44/1
109	Santa Rita Landscaping	Tucson, Ariz.	\$15,500,000	23%	0%	155/0	65/30/5
110	Mountain View Landscapes	Chicopee, Mass.	\$15,150,000	7%	3%	25/60	90/10/
111	Bland Landscaping Co.	Apex, N.C.	\$15,000,000	10%	20%	200/25	82/16/2
	Engledow Group	Carmel, Ind.	\$15,000,000	5%	5%	90/80	83/15/2
113	Perficut Cos.	Ankeny , Iowa	\$14,600,000	-7%	3%	70/75	85/10/5
114	Encore Group	Houston, Texas	\$14,500,000	496%	300%	95/40	50/40/10
115	Greenscape*	Holly Springs, N.C.	\$14,435,553	15%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
116	Heron Home & Outdoor^	Apopka, Fla.	\$14,347,321	18%	18%	201/0	2/98/0
117	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, N.Y.	\$14,308,000	16%	10%	110/40	87/13/0
118	Becker Landscape Contractors	Indianapolis, Ind.	\$14,000,000	0%	5%	35/120	75/20/5
119	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	Dallas, Texas	\$13,943,069	23%	2%	141/95	66/14/20
120	American Landscape Systems	Lewisville , Texas	\$13,583,871	17%	12%	160/0	60/0/40
121	ISS Grounds Control	San Antonio, Texas	\$13,500,000	-10%	5%	225/0	85/2/13
122	Arteka Cos.*	Minneapolis, Minn.	\$13,335,000	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
123	Desert Classic Landscaping	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$13,300,000	6%	10%	285/0	85/5/10
124	Dora Landscaping Co.*	Apopka, Fla.	\$13,200,000	10%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
125	Earthworks	Lillian, Texas	\$12,600,000	-3%	15%	165/60	90/0/10
126	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, Conn.	\$12,570,000	9%	7%	110/0	0/100/0
127	Lawn Dawg^	Nashua, N.H.	\$12,525,886	7%	12%	48/80	5/95/0
128	Level Green Landscape	Washington, D.C.	\$12,433,000	32%	24%	87/118	92/0/8
129	Pacific Landscape Management	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$12,193,460	14%	12%	125/50	100/0/0
130	American Civil Constructors*	Littleton, Colo.	\$12,100,000	0%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
	Emerald Isle Landscaping	Denver, Colo.	\$12,100,000	32%	15%	125/85	90/5/5
132	Schultz Industries	Golden, Colo.	\$12,045,052	1%	1%	89/65	80/0/20
133	Signature Landscapes	Reno, Nev.	\$11,850,000	10%	16%	148/77	75/15/10
134	Cutting Edge Landscape	Boise, Idaho	\$11,707,986	8%	12%	122/53	98/2/0
135	CoCal Landscape Co.*	Denver, Colo.	\$11,557,280	12%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
136	Kujawa Enterprises (KEI)*	Oak Creek, Wis.	\$11,544,000	4%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
137	Joyce Landscaping	Marstons Mills, Mass.	\$11,515,000	8%	8%	80/60	15/85/0
138	Gardeners' Guild*	Richmond, Calif.	\$11,235,000	7%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
139	Crystal Greens Landscape ^	Clackamas, Ore.	\$11,049,500	17%	5%	146/0	92/8/0
140	Providence Landscape Group	Charlotte, N.C.	\$11,000,000	10%	15%	85/55	97/0/3
141	LandCare Innovations	Charlotte, N.C.	\$10,911,000	26%	12%	95/15	80/15/5
142	Nanak's Landscaping*	Deerfield Beach, Fla.	\$10,800,000	20%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
143	Coast Landscape Management	Napa, Calif.	\$10,712,000	30%	28%	135/35	50/10/40
144	Eastern Land Management	Stamford, Conn.	\$10,596,315	14%	-9%	39/40	100/0/0
145	The Spencer Co.	Houston, Texas	\$10,529,418	4%	16%	185/5	100/0/0
146	C. Caramanico & Sons	Upland, Pa.	\$10,512,592	0%	25%	30/65	100/0/0
147	Mountain High Tree, Lawn & Landscape*	Lakewood, Colo.	\$10,437,213	15%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
148	GreenScapes Landscape Co.	Columbus, Ohio	\$10,300,000	27%	10%	65/20	75/20/5
149	LegacyScapes	Groveland, Florida	\$10,248,000	-14%	12%	56/79	92/0/8
150	Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape^	Lancaster, Pa.	\$10,136,422	9%	8%	27/73	32/68/0
			Total: \$9,349,113,764	Avg: 16%	Avg: 12%		



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Top down

Our annual list of the largest landscape companies mirrors the overall industry's growth. BY MARISA PALMIERI

New companies emerged and others dropped off the *LM150* list of the largest landscape companies in 2016. Notably, there was no change in rank from last year among the top 11 companies on the list.

But that won't be the case next year. There will be at least one big move reflecting the merger of TruGreen and Scotts LawnService, which closed in April. That change should introduce a second landscape industry company with more than a billion dollars in annual revenue. BrightView—created when ValleyCrest and Brickman merged—currently tops the list for the second year in a row at more than \$2 billion.

Collectively, the companies on the 2016 *LM150* list grossed \$9,349,113,764 in 2015 revenue. About a third of that cash comes from the top two players. It's also worth pointing out, as readers have mentioned in the past, some revenue on the list is likely duplicated due to subcontracting agreements among companies on the list. *LM150* firms grew an average of 16 percent in 2015—on par with the industry average we reported in December's *LM* Industry Pulse report. *LM150* companies are projecting to grow an average of 12 percent in 2016.

To see how all the companies rank, flip back a page and open the gatefold. To quickly find the rank of any company, see the alphabetical index on page S20.

WHO'S MISSING?

Should your company be on the *LM150* list of the largest landscape companies? Do you know of one we missed? Contact Editor Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net to be notified when the submission period opens in early 2017. We encourage companies with \$5 million-plus in annual revenue to enter.

COMBINED 2015 *LM150* REVENUE

\$9,349,113,764



over combined 2014 *LM150* revenue

AVERAGE
REVENUE GROWTH
FROM 2014

16%

AVERAGE
PROJECTED
GROWTH FOR 2016

12%

To learn more about growth strategies being implemented at *LM150* firms, check out the interviews starting on page S4. We talked with six company leaders to get a read on their priorities now and in the future. Plus, scan the “Sound Bites” shared throughout this supplement for sage advice from *LM150* executives.

Methodology

LM sought submissions from landscape companies in the magazine, on LandscapeManagement.net, via email and over the phone from January through May. Companies submitted data through an online form. *LM* editors compiled the results and, where applicable, removed non-typical revenue sources (such as pest control) from reported totals.

We estimated revenue for firms that didn't provide data this year if they participated in last year's list and reported a projected 2015 revenue figure. *LM* staff calculated the numbers for client mix, profit centers and regional charts (pages S14-S17) based on submitted data.

In their words

Six *LM150* leaders share their companies' growth initiatives.

INTERVIEWS BY MARISA PALMIERI

Interviews have been edited for length and clarity.

Setting a standard

Nathan Patnaude

Maintenance division manager
Greenscape Land Design
Middleborough, Mass.

No. 53

After Greenscape, historically a landscape construction company, balanced its business with recurring maintenance and snow revenue post-Great Recession, company leaders set their sights on standardization. The company, owned by brothers Joe and Jon Ciffolillo, is prospering thanks in part to its Green Way training program, which launched last summer.

Tell us about the Green Way training program.

We were growing quickly on the maintenance side—from about a \$3 million operation eight or nine years

ago into a \$13 million maintenance operation. At the beginning, it was easy to keep things tight and close, and you could see what everybody was doing and what the service lines were. As we expanded into more managers and more branch locations and spread out geographically, it quickly became apparent it was hard to control and create consistency from manager to manager, crew to crew, branch to branch.

It was time to step back and say, "How does Greenscape do a service? How do we document it? How do we communicate scope of work to our crews? How do we show them what's an example of a good job and what's an example of a bad job?" We took the time to create the Green Way program. It's service standards and requirements for all the landscape maintenance services Greenscape sells to our clients—everything from spring cleanup, to how to plant a shrub, to how to plant annuals, to how to do a weekly maintenance visit.



Nathan Patnaude

The Green Way program details maintenance tasks, such as planting annuals.

How is it communicated?

It is a one-page sheet per service. It starts off with the scope of work for that service. A spring cleanup would have exactly what the client is expecting on the sheet. Then it lists what's included, what's not included and the steps we recommend the crews follow to complete that service. There might be photos, a map of how to sequence through a property and safety concerns when performing that service.

What are the primary benefits?

From crew to crew, from branch to branch, from manager to manager, we have those services defined, so we can build consistency. It also gives us a guideline to evaluate a crew on how they're performing, so one manager doesn't have a different level of expectations for one crew versus another crew. When we go out and perform site audits, we have a site audit scorecard, and it ties right back in with the Green Way sheet.

How's it working?

So far, it's been great. We've definitely taught some old dogs new tricks and defined things. People come from different backgrounds or different companies. So, some people are just used to doing things a certain way, and we've had to do some retraining.

We do weekly training on one of the Green Way sheets. The guys have them all in a binder that the foremen carry with them.



Overall, it was extremely well-received. I think guys want the training. They want to know if they're doing a good job, and they want clear instruction on how to do the job. Did some guys grumble about it? Of course. But overall, they want to perform well. If we're giving them clear instruction on how to perform and then we're holding them to it and helping them to perform it, they're always receptive to those things.

It's also been a nice marketing tool. It comes up quite a bit in sales opportunities, especially when (clients) cross multiple locations and multiple branches. A big concern from clients is, "How do you instill consistency and how do you instill quality from crew to crew and branch to branch, so I know that I'm getting the same service here that



The Green Way sheets depict how to perform each service through photos and directions.



I'm getting over there?" Customers have been very interested in the program and very supportive of it. So far, so good.

The Greenscapes training program has been well received by clients who value consistency.

Are you concerned this program will go into a binder and forgotten about?

Absolutely. We come up with great ideas all the time and then we move onto the next great idea. Then, you realize the idea you had three ideas ago isn't being used anymore. That's where our audit system comes in. We have a quality audit tracking that account managers and branch managers perform when they're on sites. They're all charged with performing five audits a week. We handle it on our iPhones (via BossLM's app). We make sure the audits are being performed, and the audits are based on the service criteria that's in the Green Way. Without that check, it would end up not being used regularly. Between the audits and the training repetition, it's in front of them constantly.

SOUND BITES

"Hire management staff proactively not reactively."

Janna Bradley, vice president,
TBG Environmental

"Implement systems before you need them, so you can get used to them and work out the bugs. Without systems and process, you will not be able to grow past owner/operator."

Martin Cleary, president,
Cleary Bros. Landscape



Delegating with directors

Mike McCaskill

CEO

Encore Group

Houston, Texas

No. 114

Two years ago McCaskill—a lawn maintenance and home building veteran—and a business partner bought Encore Group, a small, primarily pool company. Since then, the company has skyrocketed sales on the landscape side. Last year, it created a director system to delegate profit-and-loss responsibility down the chain.

Tell us about implementing a director system.

Each one of my directors (in the maintenance, pool and installation divisions) has a weekly meeting with their team and a weekly meeting with me. I meet with all of them at the same time, so they all know how everybody else is doing.

The things I talk about at a director level are the things you would hear at any business meeting. I

"Focus on employee and client retention. Both are difficult to attract and expensive to replace if lost. Treat them as the valuable assets they are. Build a sustainable client base, and you'll not often suffer for lack of business."

Gary Horton, CEO,
Landscape Development

"Don't overlook mapping out processes and creating systems that will keep you accountable to them. That's the only way you have sustainable growth."

Timothee Sallin, president,
LegacyScapes



talk about projections, budgets, variances and, of course, we talk about AR and AP and business concerns.

A lot of it has to do with projections, so the directors know, “Next month, I’m going to need a truck or I need another piece of equipment or I need another guy.”

If you’re not able to forecast, then you’re not able to plan, and if you can’t plan you’re going to get caught.

As much as we try to de-seasonalize the business, it’s a seasonal business, so you need to know how you’re going to operate on a consistent basis when your revenue goes up and down. The way to do that is we make the directors run it like a business. They’ve really taken to it, and every month they get better and better.

What kind of training was required?

What I’ve done is given them a business perspective on what they do. It goes back to accountability and transparency. Here’s how your business segment is doing. Here’s how much revenue you have. Here’s how much you spent. Here’s your labor. Here’s your fuel. I back out all the things they have no control over, like insurance.

“Don’t get in a hurry to grow big. Focus on your core objectives, and provide good customer service. Take care of the employees who help get you there.”

*Chip Eleazer, president,
LandCare Innovations*



Mike McCaskill

They look at the things that are pertinent to their business that they can control. That way they can project better. They can run it like a business, and they’re responsible for everything. A lot of times companies don’t want anybody to know anything, like “I don’t want them to know how much their foremen are making” or “I don’t want them to see what flows in and out of the company.” It’s their business. They have a stake in it. They’re the ones that make all the money. I just drink coffee and talk.

Encore Group is unconventional, McCaskill says, noting its office isn’t like a typical landscape firm’s.

Who participates in the team meetings?

Generally speaking, it’s supervisors and salesmen and admins. On the lawn maintenance side, it’s account managers, ops guys and field supervisors. Then, they meet separately with the foremen. Then, we do a general meeting and a safety meeting once a month on the lawn maintenance side.

What else is unique about your company?

Well, I don’t punish honesty. That sounds so odd when I say it out loud, but when you think about the typical policies in a company, they want you to take responsibility if you break something, but the consequence of responsibility is punishment. That fosters a culture of deceit.

So, somebody breaks a window, somebody puts a weed eater down and walks off and they come back and it’s gone—that’s part of life. Our theft and damages ratios are probably well below the industry standard because I say, “You know what? I’ve broken windows. I’ve lost weed eaters.” The net result of this attitude is employees are more careful. I really don’t know why, other than they just feel like they’re being treated like grown-ups.

“As you grow, never forget your existing clients. After keeping our employees safe, retention is our company’s most important priority.”

*Joseph Barnes, marketing manager,
Yellowstone Landscape*

Coaching team leaders

Brian DuMont

President/CEO
Yard-Nique
Morrisville, N.C.

No. 62

Yard-Nique's exec believes everyone needs to be on the same page for a growing company to thrive. That's why he brought a yearlong executive coaching program to his managers—and he's pleased with the results.

Tell us about your company's executive coaching program.

At the end of 2014, I got introduced to (management consulting firm) Dorrier Underwood. I work with an executive coach. She introduced me to a three-day program called the Mastery Program on Leadership. When I was done, I had the idea of taking it and translating it into the entire Yard-Nique organization. So, I engaged Dorrier Underwood to coach a team of about 17 employees for a year.

We worked on our core values, our vision statement, our mission statement and engaging employees. We have 450ish employees peak season, so how do we get the message from the top level, all the way down to the on-the-ground guy?

What was your goal initially?

Well, I think when you continue to grow, you have to make sure you have everybody on board because growth is really not for everybody. We've continued to grow at a very rapid pace for 19 years. And for

me, as we continue to grow, I wanted to make sure that everybody was in line with what we were doing. Sometimes we have to back up and hit the reset button.

For me, it was more of a realignment with all of the growth that we've had, making sure that everybody had a clear expectation of where we were going.

What was your team's reaction?

It's an interesting concept when you really get down to it. We had some area managers, who are boots-on-the-ground managers. It was interesting to see some of their faces when we talked about leadership and executive-style coaching, etc.

But they bought in. And we had some long, drawn out, tough conversations. And when we were in that meeting it wasn't like I was the president and CEO, and John was the director of installation. We didn't have titles in that room, and everybody was speaking openly and freely.

The key was we started holding each other accountable.

Give us an example of "a tough conversation."

Going on the word "accountability," prior to getting engaged in this, things would happen that would go under the rug or wouldn't be talked about or deadlines would be set but never met. What we started doing was really being clear and precise in what we are looking for across the organization.

So, if I asked someone for something, I would say, "Hey, do you think you could have that by



Brian DuMont

5:00 on Friday?" If he was not able to meet that, we would talk about when we could have it. It's really just kind of being in alignment, and I think at times, prior to

the coaching, we weren't really in alignment. A lot of us were working in different directions.

Was it a one-year program or will you continue it?

It was a one-year thing for 2015. In 2016, I'm still being coached, and our human resource director is working with me along with the executive coach. And this year we're using our own internal human resource team to develop the programs.

Do you recommend executive coaching to your peers?

Definitely. It's an interesting concept because it takes away the whole landscape perspective of it. In our industry, you have these founders of landscape companies that are true entrepreneurs. The biggest thing is being able to take a step back and know that, yes, you might have started the company, but it's not all about you, and executive coaching kind of helps you at the different levels that you achieve. Sometimes, they are conversations you don't want to hear, but I recommend it.

SOUND BITES

"Charge enough for your services not just to pay yourself but to be able to invest in your company's future."

Chris Senske, president, Senske Services



Evaluating directly

Phil Key

President
Ruppert Landscape
Laytonsville, Md.

No. 11

You grew about 12 percent last year. Is that typical?

That's pretty standard for us, in the 10 percent to 15 percent range. Over the history of the company, that's what we target, and we've usually been successful at it. We mainly target that range to provide opportunity for employees.

Talk about your renewed focus on evaluations.

Everybody has some kind of review or evaluation process. I don't know that structurally ours

is much different, but I'll tell you what makes ours special, at least what we push for, is very direct conversations. Getting people comfortable with being able to self assess, being able to take criticism, making sure that criticism is delivered with one goal in mind, and that's to make each person better.

When you're hired, you're given an evaluation at 30 days, seven months, one-year, a year and a half and two years. After two years, it's annually.

A write-up is done prior to sitting down with your manager. There will be feedback from other employees, like a 360-degree review, including peers, people who work for you and people above you. That's to try to have each employee accountable for supporting up and down the ladder. We review compensation at that time, too, and it's done very individually.

Obviously, we have a system around setting goals and measurements around those goals. But an environment that follows through with open communication both ways—from the employee to their boss and vice versa—I'd say makes us a little different than most.

How do you foster that sense of direct communication?

No. 1, you have to have a culture and an environment that allows feedback to go in every direction almost all the time. Ours comes from our founder, Craig Ruppert, and his approach toward people and the business. He's always asking questions and he always wants to hear what people have to say—good or bad.



Phil Key

"Have high expectations of yourself and don't underprice your work. It will not work in the long haul. Live by the price, die by the price."

Bob Grover, president, Pacific Landscape Management

"Stay small and improve profitability."

Eric Schultz, president, Schultz Industries

"Set goals and budgets. Delegate."

Douglass Delano, managing member, Level Green Landscape

"Listen to your customers to understand their needs and find the best solutions to meet them."

Shawn Stomp, vice president/CFO, Heads Up Landscape Contractors

"Have passion, know your strengths and hire for your weaknesses."

Arthur Batson, president, Lucas Tree Expert Co.

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JOHN DEERE

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**\$800 off offer includes the \$400 Z930R national offer plus \$400 off with Platinum 1 GreenFleet Member discount. GreenFleet discount offer expires October 30, 2016. GreenFleet level savings are based on total units purchased. A member's per unit discount for an eligible sale will be based on the highest accumulated qualifying equipment purchased at the time of an eligible sale. See terms and conditions at JohnDeere.com/GreenFleet for details.



Treat your employees like a long-term commitment, Key says.

I think people feel comfortable sharing both the good and bad if the company has a track record of not overreacting, being supportive and trying to correct and fix, instead of a culture where people feeling like they're going to get in trouble for saying the wrong thing.

Every year we have a thing called management development day where we train all of our managers for two days. We have 1,200 employees, and about 500 come to that event.

A favorite topic that somebody speaks on every year is "how to have a tough conversation." There are techniques for talking to people, but it also just has to come from a sincere place. I think if that person knows you want to help them, the message is received better. We make sure there are not superficial reviews. We get into the meat and hopefully move forward.

What's your process if someone is not meeting the standard?

I would say our culture manages that more than anything, meaning we don't have a bunch of specific rules around that.

We hire somebody, and in our handbook we say, "Our intention is for this to be your last job. We hope to hire you for the rest of your career." That's our commitment to them. It's a mindset we start with, and I think it helps us to think about employees as a long-term commitment, not as someone who's late too many days in a row. What's really going on in that guy's life? Why is he late? This isn't easy work. You've got to be a pretty committed person to do it. Maybe something else was going wrong that we can help him with.

PHOTO: RUPPERT LANDSCAPE

Encouraging education

Scott Murray

President
Desert Classic Landscaping
Phoenix, Ariz.

No. 123

Labor is a top challenge for Desert Classic. As the company strives to attract and retain employees through a variety of methods, perhaps the most successful effort has been covering certification costs for its team members—an expense Murray says is well worth the investment.

Tell us about how you encourage employees to increase their knowledge and education.

We belong to the Arizona Landscape Contractors' Association (ALCA). They have a couple different certifications my employees participate in: the Arizona Certified Landscape Professional and the Sustainable Landscape Manager Certified program.

The way I approach it is, I'll pay for you to go as long as you continue to attend the classes and pass.



Scott Murray

What are the benefits of this approach?

I feel it gives us a leg up against some of our competitors. When my account managers are off in the field with clients or an HOA board, they know what they're talking about. Things are changing all the time, so I want them to have that education background.

We're a more educated company, so we have more to offer our clients and then it also allows us to be more profitable as a company. At the end of the day, you're only as good as your reputation and your bottom line. If your reputation is there with the education and you can also be financially responsible, you stay in business.

How long have you been doing it this way?

We started three years ago, and it's gotten us more internal candidates to be able to move up within the



Among the educational offers Desert Classic covers is certified arborist training.

managers. They've worked their butts off. They deserve the opportunity.

They went and got classes, and they did the things they needed to do to better themselves. Now they've got a better career. When you bring somebody in from the outside in the green industry, unfortunately, you're never quite sure what you're getting until they are performing the job for you. I would much rather promote from within.

What would you say to an owner who says, "What if I pay for all this training, and then the guy leaves?"

They sign a document that says that if they leave within the year, they have to reimburse us. I feel that's pretty fair. As long as they stay for a year, then I'm cool. I feel that's a good investment.

I really do believe that if you take care of your employees, they'll take care of clients. This is one way I can do that. Everyone wants to make more money, but sometimes it's not about that. It's about showing some respect for their ability and also doing something a little bit different than some of my competition. My employees want to stay here, they want to work here, they want to move up in the company. We

want to try to foster that mentality and that culture.

How many people have you put through certifications?

There's probably about 20-25. I'll spend around \$20,000 this year on certifications and education.

I really believe in it. For years, our industry didn't really have a lot of education. The last three to five years, ALCA has worked really hard to put those programs together, so we can become a more educated industry and a more respected industry.

State associations offer learning opportunities for workers.



PHOTOS: DESERT CLASSIC LANDSCAPING

company. Guys were finding out that, "Hey, I'm not going to be stuck as a crew member my whole life. I can go and get a certification and have the opportunity to do better for myself." That's been a huge thing for us.

We just recently promoted two foremen to assistant account

SOUND BITES

"Have company values in place, defined and lived. Not just hanging on the wall."

David DuBois, president/CEO, Mission Landscape Cos.

"You cannot do everything for everybody."

Steven Pruchansky, CEO, Greenscapes

"Know what your overhead is really costing you."

Justin Crocker, president, Earthtones Landscaping

"Know your numbers."

Gene Freeman, co-owner, Complete Landsculpture

"Stay in front of your customers."

Phil Berry, controller, Designs by Sundown

"Find a niche."

Bruce Bachand, vice president, Carol King Landscape Maintenance

"Answer the phone."

Gary Clark, vice president, Environmental Management (EMI)

Focusing on growth

Larry Ryan

President

Ryan Lawn & Tree
Overland Park, Kan.

No. 55

After a few years of what he calls “sluggish” growth, partially due to \$30 million worth of damage done to the company’s properties from Imprelis herbicide, Ryan and his team are refocusing on sales.

Your company is focusing on growth by enlisting all employees in the company to help find business. Tell me where the idea came from to get everybody involved.

We have 200 people that are a team. If we focus on the right thing, we do it, and I don’t think we’ve been focusing on growth.

We’re an ESOP—an Employee Stock Ownership Plan—so we tell our people, “You don’t want to own stock in something that’s not growing.” Really, our story is that we have to have everybody engaged on growth.

We hit a wall the last couple of years. We’re refocusing the program. Some people got the attitude that we’re probably too big now or

if we’re going to win a customer, we’re going to lose a customer. The initiative is to say, “Guys, that’s an attitude. There are a lot of people out there who still want what we offer, so be bold and tell them.”

One of the issues when you hire nice people is that they think they can’t go up and ask somebody for business, that it’s too much in somebody’s face. We’re getting our staff back to being bold and telling them, “Hey, we’ve got a good thing, we’re unique in the industry and we would love for you to take a look at what we have.” We’ve gotten away from that the last few years. We’re seeing growth come back this year, so we’re pleased.

Did you have training or an event to launch this idea?

We talk about it. There’s a saying that you get what you focus on, and it is our focus.

Do you offer any incentive for finding new business?

We have little incentive programs built in throughout the company, but the big incentive is the employees own the company.

We focus on allowing everybody to win, and then they know that for them to keep winning—and we talk about this when we have our monthly meeting—they have to keep reaching out and selling. In most areas of our company,

we don’t have a dedicated sales force that grows the company. Our people do their own sales. Turf managers manage their routes, and they grow them.



Larry Ryan


Can this idea work at a non-ESOP company?

Oh, I think so. People have to very clearly know what they’re getting paid to do, don’t they? In a non-ESOP company, it could be as simple as, “Folks, I’m going to pay you to get the work done, and I’m going to pay you to grow.”

I think you can do it through a simple bonus system. The big issue there is that growth really needs to be in dollars versus customers, because there are too many games you can play. We’ve seen it happen a little bit in our company where people wouldn’t cancel off a customer who was doing no services because they were getting rewarded on growing customers.

Dollars accomplished at the end of the year is the only real tell-tale thing. It has to be in dollars accomplished.

You were up 4 percent over 2014. What’s your goal for 2016?

We would like to be up 10 percent at the end of the year. Our goal is to grow 10 percent every year through 2030, and it will be very difficult to do that, but that’s our corporate goal. When you’re at \$200,000, growing \$20,000 isn’t too hard, but at \$27 million, 10 percent is \$2.7 million. That’s taxing. We have to rethink everything we do. 

“Work early on with green industry consultants and industry peers to help develop and get your business going in the right direction.”

Steve Corrigan, president,
Mountain View Landscape

“Hire people that are smarter than you. Hire people that have a skill set opposite to yours.”

Matthew Prasky, vice president/
partner, Midwest Landscapes

“Hire the best, pay well and charge for your value. Our industry is worth every penny, and we need to constantly raise the bar.”

Lebo Newman, chairman,
Coast Landscape Management

150

TOP 25

A look at the *LM*150 list—sorted for top performers by client mix, profit centers and regions.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Not all companies report client mix, profit center and regional data. Dollar amounts were calculated by *LM* from data reported.

COMMERCIAL

1	LandCare (formerly TruGreen LandCare)	\$180,000,000
2	TruGreen	\$165,933,600
3	U.S. Lawns	\$165,000,000
4	Ferrandino & Son	\$141,000,000
5	Gothic Landscape (including Gothic Grounds Management)	\$124,500,000
6	Ruppert Landscape	\$104,550,000
7	Yellowstone Landscape	\$94,400,000
8	McGuire & Hester	\$92,000,000
9	Merit Service Solutions	\$85,500,000
10	Mainscape	\$71,500,000
11	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$56,500,000
12	Clintar Landscape Management	\$53,100,000
13	LandOpt	\$52,000,000
14	Acres Group	\$47,500,000
15	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$46,291,000
16	Landscape Development	\$44,198,000
17	Denison Landscaping	\$42,361,600
18	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	\$40,920,000
19	The Grounds Guys	\$38,223,900
20	ABM Landscape & Turf Services	\$37,800,000
21	The Greenery	\$36,900,000
22	Clean Scapes	\$35,621,089
23	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$35,072,565
24	Juniper Landscaping	\$35,010,794
25	Girard Environmental Services	\$33,781,930

RESIDENTIAL

1	TruGreen	\$810,146,400
2	Scotts LawnService	\$306,752,156
3	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$146,900,000
4	Weed Man	\$145,974,229
5	Lawn Doctor	\$95,419,276
6	SavATree	\$66,963,000
7	Massey Services	\$54,614,440
8	NaturaLawn Of America	\$49,282,862
9	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$48,455,120
10	Meadows Farms	\$45,632,000
11	Mariani Landscape	\$41,364,400
12	Garden Design	\$31,500,000
13	LandOpt	\$28,000,000
14	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$27,720,000
15	Chalet	\$27,300,000
16	Scott Byron & Co.	\$25,650,000
17	Nutri-Lawn Corp.	\$23,287,500
18	Naturescape	\$21,580,391
19	McHale Landscape Design	\$21,000,000
20	The Grounds Guys	\$19,111,950
21	Senske Services	\$18,225,000
22	Berghoff Design Group	\$16,000,000
23	Designs By Sundown	\$15,480,000
24	Southview Design	\$15,441,300
25	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$14,918,924

GOVERNMENT

1	TBG Environmental	\$26,097,500
2	Yellowstone Landscape	\$23,600,000
3	McGuire & Hester	\$23,000,000
4	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$22,600,000
5	Merchants Landscape Services	\$21,560,000
6	Terracare Associates	\$21,514,500
7	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$19,177,700
8	Ruppert Landscape	\$18,450,000
9	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$11,190,843
10	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	\$11,100,000
11	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$6,675,000
12	The Grounds Guys	\$6,370,650
13	Northwest Landscape Services	\$6,200,000
14	Clintar Landscape Management	\$5,900,000
15	American Landscape Systems	\$5,433,548
16	Denison Landscaping	\$5,295,200
17	Merit Service Solutions	\$4,500,000
18	Coast Landscape Management	\$4,284,800
19	ABM Landscape & Turf Services	\$4,200,000
20	Westco Grounds Maintenance	\$3,900,000
21	Cagwin & Dorward	\$3,894,657
22	Gachina Landscape Management	\$3,836,918
23	Jensen Landscape Services	\$3,656,000
24	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	\$3,652,000
25	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	\$2,788,614

BY CLIENT MIX

MOWING + LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

1	LandCare (formerly TruGreen LandCare)	\$171,000,000
2	Ferrandino & Son	\$63,450,000
3	Ruppert Landscape	\$51,660,000
4	Mainscape	\$47,905,000
5	The Grounds Guys	\$45,045,000
6	Merit Service Solutions	\$40,500,000
7	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$34,387,600
8	ABM Landscape & Turf Services	\$31,080,000
9	Terracare Associates	\$30,885,260
10	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$28,058,052
11	Clintar Landscape Management	\$24,190,000
12	Bemus Landscape	\$24,000,000
13	The Greenery	\$22,500,000
14	Cagwin & Dorward	\$21,420,613
15	Mariani Landscape	\$21,152,250
16	LandOpt	\$20,000,000
17	Landscape Workshop	\$19,866,000
18	Merchants Landscape Services	\$19,800,000
19	Acres Group	\$19,500,000
20	Girard Environmental Services	\$19,303,960
21	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$17,825,000
22	James River Grounds Management	\$17,640,082
23	DLC Resources	\$17,302,000
24	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$16,878,000
25	Jensen Landscape Services	\$15,995,000

DESIGN/BUILD + INSTALLATION

1	McGuire & Hester	\$103,500,000
2	Ruppert Landscape	\$59,040,000
3	LandOpt	\$52,000,000
4	Garden Design	\$51,450,000
5	Landscape Development	\$37,433,000
6	Denison Landscaping	\$33,359,760
7	Juniper Landscaping	\$31,438,264
8	TBG Environmental	\$30,368,000
9	Jensen Landscape Services	\$29,705,000
10	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$26,452,000
11	Parker Interior Plantscape	\$24,000,000
12	Mariani Landscape	\$21,622,300
13	Clean Scapes	\$20,407,916
14	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$20,025,000
15	Meadows Farms	\$17,856,000
16	Scott Byron & Co.	\$17,010,000
17	McHale Landscape Design	\$15,750,000
18	Southview Design	\$15,116,220
19	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	\$14,800,000
20	Yard-Nique	\$14,162,500
21	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	\$13,771,867
22	Santa Rita Landscaping	\$13,640,000
23	Southern Botanical	\$13,110,075
24	LMI Landscapes	\$13,043,700
25	Acres Group	\$12,500,000

TURF + ORNAMENTAL CARE

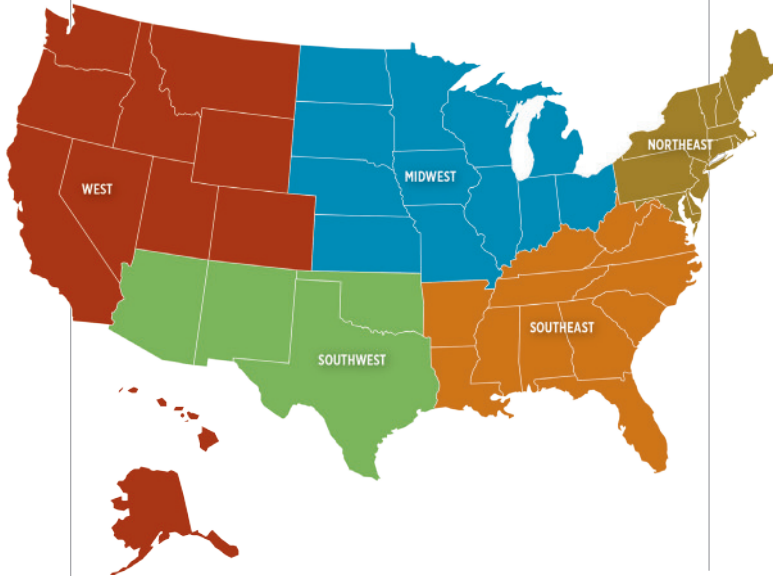
1	TruGreen	\$826,680,000
2	Scotts LawnService	\$322,897,006
3	Weed Man	\$153,657,083
4	Lawn Doctor	\$100,441,344
5	Massey Services	\$52,051,886
6	NaturaLawn Of America	\$51,357,930
7	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$47,960,680
8	Nutri-Lawn Corp.	\$23,287,500
9	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$19,600,000
10	Naturescape	\$18,172,961
11	Senske Services	\$15,600,000
12	SavATree	\$14,594,500
13	Heron Home & Outdoor	\$12,297,704
14	Lawn Dawg	\$12,226,065
15	The Greenery	\$11,250,000
16	Merit Service Solutions	\$9,000,000
17	The Grounds Guys	\$6,435,000
18	Mainscape	\$5,005,000
19	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$4,273,474
20	ABM Landscape & Turf Services	\$4,200,000
21	Lucas Tree Expert Co.	\$4,185,000
22	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	\$3,700,000
23	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$3,565,000
24	Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape	\$3,525,712
25	Coast Landscape Management	\$3,213,600

IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

1	McGuire & Hester	\$11,500,000
2	Massey Services	\$8,007,983
3	Denison Landscaping	\$6,354,240
4	LMI Landscapes	\$5,797,200
5	Mainscape	\$5,720,000
6	Earthtones Landscaping	\$5,670,000
7	Clean Scapes	\$5,194,742
8	Cleary Bros. Landscape	\$4,498,000
9	Cagwin & Dorward	\$3,894,657
10	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	\$3,700,000
11	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$3,626,662
12	LegacyScapes	\$3,586,800
13	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$3,565,000
14	American Landscape Systems	\$3,395,968
15	Southern Botanical	\$3,337,110
16	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$3,306,500
17	Terracare Associates	\$3,203,270
18	Northwest Landscape Services	\$3,100,000
19	Bemus Landscape	\$3,000,000
20	Girard Environmental Services	\$2,969,840
21	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$2,800,000
22	Merit Service Solutions	\$2,700,000
23	Nutri-Lawn Corp.	\$2,587,500
24	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$2,353,000
25	Westco Grounds Maintenance	\$2,340,000

BY PROFIT CENTERS

BY REGION



NORTHEAST

1	TruGreen	\$214,737,600
2	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$108,480,000
3	Scotts LawnService	\$96,546,205
4	SavATree	\$61,812,000
5	Ruppert Landscape	\$60,270,000
6	Lawn Doctor	\$57,251,566
7	Denison Landscaping	\$46,597,760
8	Merit Service Solutions	\$40,500,000
9	NaturaLawn Of America	\$34,238,620
10	LandOpt	\$28,000,000
11	Greenscape Land Design	\$26,100,000
12	Weed Man	\$23,048,562
13	High Tech Landscapes	\$20,050,682
14	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	\$18,536,700
15	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$18,100,000
16	Mountain View Landscapes	\$15,150,000
17	Meadows Farms	\$14,880,000
18	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	\$14,308,000
19	McHale Landscape Design	\$12,600,000
20	Hoffman Landscapes	\$12,570,000
21	Lawn Dawg	\$12,525,886
22	Level Green Landscape	\$12,433,000
23	Joyce Landscaping	\$11,515,000
24	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$10,695,000
25	Eastern Land Management	\$10,596,315

MIDWEST

1	TruGreen	\$312,345,600
2	Scotts LawnService	\$106,233,115
3	Acres Group	\$50,000,000
4	Mariani Landscape	\$47,005,000
5	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$44,500,000
6	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$32,633,040
7	Reliable Property Services	\$31,000,000
8	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$28,000,000
9	Chalet	\$27,300,000
10	Scott Byron & Co.	\$27,000,000
11	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	\$25,064,044
12	Environmental Management (EMI)	\$25,000,000
13	Weed Man	\$23,048,562
14	Naturescape	\$22,034,715
15	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$20,340,000
16	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	\$20,200,000
17	LandOpt	\$20,000,000
18	SavATree	\$18,028,500
19	Clarence Davids & Co.	\$18,000,000
20	Mainscape	\$16,445,000
21	Southview Design	\$16,254,000
22	Hittle Landscaping	\$16,151,501
23	Engledow Group	\$15,000,000
24	Perficut Cos.	\$14,600,000
25	Becker Landscape Contractors	\$14,000,000

SOUTHWEST

1	TruGreen	\$87,847,200
2	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	\$62,162,200
3	Garden Design	\$52,500,000
4	Gothic Landscape (including Gothic Grounds Management)	\$43,575,000
5	Clean Scapes	\$37,105,301
6	AAA Landscape	\$25,700,000
7	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$24,868,540
8	LMI Landscapes	\$23,913,450
9	Southern Botanical	\$23,836,500
10	Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management	\$23,677,947
11	DLC Resources	\$21,100,000
12	Scotts LawnService	\$20,988,305
13	Heads Up Landscape Contractors	\$20,605,621
14	Westco Grounds Maintenance	\$19,500,000
15	Berghoff Design Group	\$19,000,000
16	Merit Service Solutions	\$18,000,000
17	Earthtones Landscaping	\$16,200,000
18	Integrated Landscape Management	\$16,025,863
19	Complete Landsculpture	\$15,580,000
20	Santa Rita Landscaping	\$15,500,000
21	Encore Group	\$14,500,000
22	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	\$13,943,069
23	American Landscape Systems	\$13,583,871
24	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$13,560,000
25	ISS Grounds Control	\$13,500,000

SOUTHEAST

1	TruGreen	\$283,063,200
2	Scotts LawnService	\$83,953,222
3	Massey Services	\$58,338,152
4	Ruppert Landscape	\$54,120,000
5	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$47,460,000
6	The Greenery	\$45,000,000
7	Mainscape	\$42,900,000
8	Rotolo Consultants (RCI)	\$37,000,000
9	Juniper Landscaping	\$35,725,300
10	Meadows Farms	\$34,720,000
11	Girard Environmental Services	\$33,781,930
12	ABM Landscape & Turf Services	\$26,040,000
13	Landscape Workshop	\$25,800,000
14	Yard-Nique	\$25,750,000
15	James River Grounds Management	\$25,200,117
16	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$24,955,000
17	Weed Man	\$23,048,562
18	Lawn Doctor	\$22,097,095
19	LandOpt	\$20,000,000
20	Greenscapes	\$18,500,000
21	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	\$17,200,000
22	Complete Property Maintenance	\$16,975,000
23	Bland Landscaping Co.	\$15,000,000
24	Heron Home & Outdoor	\$14,347,321
25	Merit Service Solutions	\$13,500,000

WEST

1	McGuire & Hester	\$115,000,000
2	Gothic Landscape (including Gothic Grounds Management)	\$80,925,000
3	TruGreen	\$58,564,800
4	Jensen Landscape Services	\$45,700,000
5	Landscape Development	\$45,100,000
6	Cagwin & Dorward	\$38,946,569
7	Mission Landscape Cos.	\$35,072,565
8	Northwest Landscape Services	\$31,000,000
9	Bemus Landscape	\$30,000,000
10	Gachina Landscape Management	\$29,514,750
11	Senske Services	\$24,300,000
12	Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care	\$22,267,050
13	Benchmark Landscape	\$21,991,000
14	Merchants Landscape Services	\$21,560,000
15	Artistic Maintenance (formerly Landscape Specialists)	\$20,000,000
16	Stay Green	\$19,622,423
17	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	\$19,000,000
18	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$18,080,000
19	Cleary Bros. Landscape	\$17,300,000
20	Designs By Sundown	\$17,200,000
21	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	\$16,600,000
22	Andre Landscape Service	\$16,064,645
23	Scotts LawnService	\$15,176,159
24	Pacific Landscape Management	\$12,193,460
25	Emerald Isle Landscaping	\$12,100,000

“SOUND BITES”

“Control overheads. It’s very easy to increase these faster than you grow your company.”

*Richard Pantano, vice president of finances,
John Mini Distinctive Landscapes*

“Invest in your facility. A quality facility will help recruitment and establish your desired work environment.”

*Ben Helton, managing partner,
Cutting Edge Landscape*

“Make sure you have the resources to make capital investments and hire good people before you need them.”

Chris Clifton, president, Southview Design

“Evaluate your asset decisions constantly. New fancy fleets make no more revenue than well-maintained, clean, logoed assets.”

Tom Hougnon, president, Reliable Property Services

“Don’t write a check you can’t cash by growing too fast and outpacing your capital. There are vast opportunities nowadays in this industry, but the risks are also higher due to market forces that have made margins thinner and exposures greater.”

Kurt Bland, president/CEO, Bland Landscaping Co.

“Develop simple, sound processes early on and focus intensely on the execution around those processes.”

*Maria Candler, president,
James River Grounds Management*

10% club

68 companies grew by 10 percent or more in 2015. Here's how a few of them did it.

Yard-Nique

Learn more on [page S8](#).

Coast Landscape Management

The Napa, Calif.-based company bought Marizco Landscape Management in Sonoma County, Calif., late last year to expand northward. Company leaders believe Coast and its sister company Signature Landscapes in Reno, Nev., are uniquely positioned to service clients along the I-80 corridor, and that it's paying off. Coast plans to grow another 28 percent next year.

Cleary Bros. Landscape

This San Francisco Bay Area company attributes growth to a hot local economy and the consolidation of Brickman/ValleyCrest. Plus, personnel changes, such as the addition of a vice president and a project manager, have freed up other executives' time to focus on strategy and growth.

Encore Group

Learn more on [page S6](#).

Growth Rank	Overall Rank	Company	% Revenue Change from 2014
→ 1	114	Encore Group	496%
2	31	TBG Environmental	200%
	49	Parker Interior Plantscape	200%
4	21	The Grounds Guys	101%
5	42	Juniper Landscaping	61%
6	70	LMI Landscapes	54%
7	30	Terracare Associates	41%
8	128	Level Green Landscape	33%
9	130	Emerald Isle Landscaping	32%
10	40	Clean Scapes	30%
	62	Yard-Nique	30%
	80	The Loving Group	30%
	143	Coast Landscape Management	30%
14	25	Garden Design	29%
	43	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	29%
16	148	GreenScapes Landscape Co.	27%
17	61	Landscape Workshop	26%
	141	LandCare Innovations	26%
19	68	Senske Services	25%
	106	Andre Landscape Service	25%
21	12	Yellowstone Landscape	23%
	90	Westco Grounds Maintenance	23%
	109	Santa Rita Landscaping	23%
	119	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	23%
25	32	Mariani Landscape	22%
26	19	Environmental Earthscapes (The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes)	20%
	76	Benchmark Landscape	20%
	92	Harvest Landscape Enterprises	20%
	142	Nanak's Landscaping	20%
30	52	Gachina Landscape Management	18%
	107	Ecoscape Solutions Group	18%
	116	Heron Home & Outdoor	18%
→ 33	97	Cleary Bros. Landscape	17%
	120	American Landscape Systems	17%

Growth Rank	Overall Rank	Company	% Revenue Change from 2014
	139	Crystal Greens Landscape	17%
36	91	Integrated Landscape Management	16% ←
	117	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	16%
38	39	Cagwin & Dorward	15%
	46	Girard Environmental Services	15%
	98	Designs By Sundown	15%
	104	Earthtones Landscaping	15%
	115	Greenscape	15%
	147	Mountain High Tree, Lawn & Landscape	15%
44	47	Northwest Landscape Services	14%
	34	Jensen Landscape Services	14%
	58	Scott Byron & Co.	14%
	129	Pacific Landscape Management	14%
	144	Eastern Land Management	14%
49	22	Massey Services	12%
	9	Ferrandino & Son	12%
	11	Ruppert Landscape	12% ←
	24	Denison Landscaping	12%
	88	Complete Landscaping Service	12%
	135	CoCal Landscape Co.	12%
	4	Scotts LawnService	12%
56	108	Complete Landsculpture	11%
57	133	Signature Landscapes	10%
	103	Southview Design	10%
	13	McGuire & Hester	10%
	17	LandOpt	10%
	49	Bemus Landscape	10%
	51	D. Schumacher Landscaping	10%
	53	Greenscape Land Design	10% ←
	58	Pierre Landscape	10%
	111	Bland Landscaping Co.	10% ←
	124	Dora Landscaping Co.	10%
	140	Providence Landscape Group	10%
	89	Stay Green	10%

Level Green Landscape

Based in the Washington D.C.-area, this company grew, in part, by splitting one large branch into two—for a total of four branches—and hiring two new branch managers. Its top challenge is reducing employee turnover. Still, it plans to grow another 24 percent in 2016.

Integrated Landscape Management

Despite challenges opening new branches and finding qualified labor, Integrated Landscape Management had a great growth year thanks to the implementation of mobile time sheets, which added efficiency in the field and in the office. A new enhancement sales process also fueled sales.

Ruppert Landscape

Learn more on [page S9](#).

Greenscape Land Design

Learn more on [page S4](#).

Bland Landscaping Co.

A bevy of upgrades over the last five years—including business automation software, a sales tracking program, electronic timesheets, a career portal, scheduling software and estimating software—have contributed to the growth Bland saw last year. The company also points to a geographically diverse sales pipeline as another growth factor.

LM150 Company Index

Company name LM150 rank

AAA Landscape.....	63
ABM Landscape & Turf Services.....	38
Acres Group.....	27
American Civil Constructors.....	130
American Landscape Systems.....	120
Andre Landscape Service.....	106
Arteka Cos.....	122
Artistic Maintenance (formerly Landscape Specialists).....	85
ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design.....	98
Bartlett Tree Experts.....	5
Becker Landscape Contractors.....	118
Bernus Landscape.....	49
Benchmark Landscape.....	76
Berghoff Design Group.....	85
Bland Landscaping Co.....	111
BrightView (formerly Brickman/ValleyCrest).....	1
Bruce Co. of Wisconsin, The.....	65
C. Caramanico & Sons.....	146
Cagwin & Dorward.....	39
Caretaker Landscape & Tree Management.....	69
Chalet.....	57
Chapel Valley Landscape Co.....	43
Christy Webber Landscapes.....	37
Clarence Davids & Co.....	96
Clean Scapes.....	40
Cleary Bros. Landscape.....	97
Clintar Landscape Management.....	23
Coast Landscape Management.....	143
CoCal Landscape Co.....	135
Complete Landscaping Service.....	88
Complete Landsculpture.....	108
Complete Property Maintenance.....	100
Crystal Greens Landscape.....	139
Cutting Edge Landscape.....	134
D. Schumacher Landscaping.....	51
Davey Tree Expert Co., The.....	3
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Dora Landscaping Co.....	124
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Greenscape Land Design.....	53
Greenscape.....	115
Greenscapes.....	93
GreenScapes Landscape Co.....	148
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Harvest Landscape Enterprises.....	92
Heads Up Landscape Contractors.....	81
Heron Home & Outdoor.....	116
High Tech Landscapes.....	84
HighGrove Partners.....	94
Hittle Landscaping.....	105
Hoffman Landscapes.....	126
Integrated Landscape Management.....	91
ISS Grounds Control.....	121
James River Grounds Management.....	64
Jensen Corp.....	34
John Mini Distinctive Landscapes.....	117
Joyce Landscaping.....	137
Juniper Landscaping.....	42
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LandCare (formerly TruGreen LandCare).....	6
LandCare Innovations.....	141
LandOpt.....	17
Landscape Concepts Management.....	56
Landscape Development.....	35
Landscape Workshop.....	61
Lawn Dawg.....	127
Lawn Doctor.....	14
LegacyScapes.....	149
Level Green Landscape.....	128
LMI Landscapes.....	70
Loving Group, The.....	80
Lucas Tree Expert Co.....	33
Mainscape.....	18
Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping.....	67
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Marina Landscape.....	20
Massey Services.....	22
McFall & Berry Landscape Management.....	54
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Merchants Landscape Services.....	77
Merit Service Solutions.....	15
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Nutri-lawn Corp.....	60
Pacific Landscape Management.....	129
Parker Interior Plantscape.....	49
Perficut Cos.....	113
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TBG Environmental.....	31
Terracare Associates.....	30
Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape.....	150
TruGreen.....	2
U.S. Lawns.....	7
Weed Man.....	8
Westco Grounds Maintenance.....	90
Yard-Nique.....	62
Yellowstone Landscape.....	12



THE PART YOU NEED THE NEXT DAY OR IT'S FREE

With the **Next Day Parts Guarantee Program*** from John Deere, you'll get select OEM parts delivered immediately so you stay up and running. It's simple – visit your dealer to get the parts you need . If a part isn't in stock, you'll have it the **NEXT DAY** or it's **FREE!**



JOHN DEERE

JohnDeere.com/CommercialParts

Ask us for details on how we'll get you the part you need, when you need it with the Next Day Parts Guarantee.

* Program applies to John Deere OEM parts listed in the Keep Green and Suncare Commercial Parts Guide. Qualifying orders must be placed by 3:00 p.m. local distribution center time, with a participating dealer. Some restrictions apply. Contact your John Deere dealer for program availability and full program details. Available only at participating dealers.



The best combination since these two got together.

Now GreenFleet discounts can be combined with national savings.



JOHN DEERE

If you're a John Deere GreenFleet Platinum member, you can now combine the standard discount you get on select John Deere self-propelled equipment with any national savings offer.¹ Reaching Platinum status is easy: all you have to do is purchase two John Deere self-propelled vehicles in a 12-month period. With GreenFleet, loyalty now gets you even more rewards. For more, visit us at JohnDeere.com/GreenFleet.

ZTrak™ Z930R Savings Example:



Platinum 3
GreenFleet Discount
\$700

+

National
Savings²
\$400

=

Total
Savings
\$1,100



JohnDeere.com/GreenFleet

¹ \$400 off Z930R offer available March 01, 2016 through August 02, 2016. Savings based on the purchase of eligible equipment. Offers available on new equipment and in the U.S. only. Prices and savings in U.S. dollars. See your dealer for details.

² \$1100 off offer includes the \$400 Z930R national offer plus \$700 off with Platinum 3 GreenFleet Member discount. GreenFleet discount offer expires October 30, 2016. GreenFleet level savings are based on total units purchased. A member's per unit discount for an eligible sale will be based on the highest accumulated qualifying equipment purchased at the time of an eligible sale. See terms and conditions at JohnDeere.com/GreenFleet for details.



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.

To sell more, build fewer relationships

This may surprise you: You don't need to build more relationships to have more success.

Many people will tell you "this is a relationship business," and they're right. But some people go too far, building relationships with every person in their community and every prospect they meet. You need to pull back and find your sweet spot.

You can either develop strong relationships, or you can develop a large quantity of relationships—but it's hard to do both well. For example (see chart):

1. If you focus on intimate relationships with too few people, you can "over pick the fruit" and run out of revenue opportunities.

2. If you focus on many relationships that you shallowly develop, you may come across as disengaged.

3. If you try to do both by building intimate relationships with many people, you'll end up dropping balls and over stressing yourself, your organization and your clients.

4. And, of course, if you build shallow relationships with too few people, you will miss many opportunities.

To sell more and grow your reputation and goodwill, you need to become choosy and find your relationship sweet spot. Here's how you do it.

Avoid "red light" leads. You'll lose margin and create havoc if you sell to and service prospects who aren't a good fit. I call these "red lights." Follow Shakespeare's advice: "To thine own self be true." This means know your company's values and mission and build relationships with clients who match and support these. When "red light" prospects contact you, be polite and friendly and point them

in the right direction—to a company who can better serve their needs.

Reassess upon visiting leads.

Meeting a prospect in person is the second most important time (after the phone screen) to decide if this client is worth building a relationship with. You're not committed to preparing a proposal for everyone you meet. When you realize a prospect is not a good fit, be polite and honest in explaining the job isn't right for you. (I've gotten good referrals from "red lights" once they understood what we do.)

Cull ill-fitting clients. You have a few options if now is the time to get rid of clients that aren't profitable, don't respect you and don't want what you're focused on selling:

- Raise their prices to your current rates;
- Increase the scope of their contract (and thus, the cost) to match what's required to do a good job; and
- Show them the history of the hours their property has taken you, so you can explain the total cost needed to do the work required.

You also may have clients who are no longer in your geographic territory. Like a gangly tree, you need to prune these offshoots to make your tree healthier.


Start with integrity.

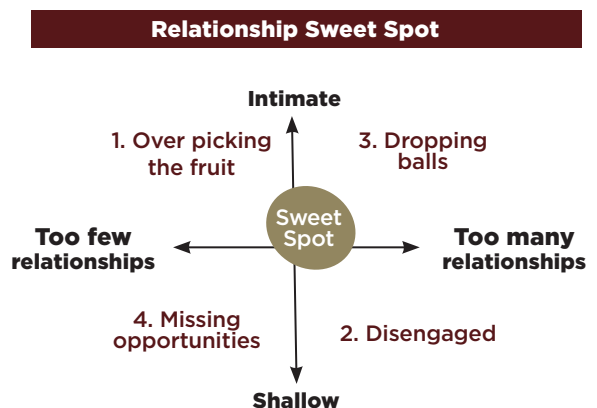
Early in my career, I asked my father what made him so successful. I was expecting stories of extraordinary feats of relationship building. His simple answer shocked me with its simplicity: "Follow through on what you promise, and when

you make a mistake, fix it." There was nothing sexy about that answer, but it led me to my rule of thumb: "Lead with integrity, and follow through with consistency." This mentality will drive your reputation and growth.

Build relationships on loyalty.

It's no secret credit card and airline companies try to figure out how to make their clients more loyal. But they have the question backward. The real question is: "How can they show more loyalty to their clients?" To nurture relationships with your ideal "green light" clients, dedicate part of your time and effort toward building and showing your loyalty to them. It can be as simple as you or a company leader walking your clients' properties as if they were your own, taking care of items proactively and communicating to your clients what you've found, done and/or what you propose.

Where do you sit on the relationship sweet spot axis? Do you need to reduce the number of relationships you have or simply strengthen them? Focusing on your "green light" prospects and clients will speed the growth of your success. 



CASE STUDY: ADD-ON BIZ

Party time

Party prep has been a fun and easy add-on for CLC Landscape Design. BY CASEY PAYTON

After being asked several times to help clean up properties before clients' parties or events, Richard Cording Sr., LIC, owner of CLC Landscape Design in Ringwood, N.J., realized he had a new service on his hands. Though it remains small—less than 1 percent of the company's revenue—Cording says it leads to bigger jobs.

Party prep is all about getting a client's backyard looking nice for an event. CLC preps yards for graduation parties, summer barbecues and even weddings, which is when the service gets slightly more involved, Cording says.

"A backyard wedding prep would apply the same principles—first and foremost getting the yard cleaned up and looking presentable," he says. "But it usually gets more elaborate. We might try to create more spectacular views or use more flowers. Plus, we may also need to recover the lawn where the dance floor was laid."

Overall, the jobs are simple. The service typically includes edging, mulching and planting flowers. Cording also has had some customers rent planters. There was zero investment in adding party prep, he says, as the company already had the manpower and equipment.

"We use our existing floating crew when these types of jobs come up," Cording says. "Unless it's a wedding,

the work can easily be completed by a two-man crew."

The jobs are priced based on time and materials. They typically take a half-day to a full day, depending on the size of the project.

"But the nice thing about this service is that we really can customize a budget," Cording adds. "If a client has a set figure in mind, we can tell them what we're able to do for that price and either add or subtract from there."

CLC began advertising party prep as a service under its fine gardening division three years ago, though it had performed the service before that. Party prep is listed on the company's website under its maintenance services. Finally, CLC sends postcards promoting its fine gardening division, Cording says, and party prep is listed among the other services. The company has mailed approximately 12,000 of those postcards this year, with the goal of securing more monthly fine gardening work.

"This grew from requests from our fine gardening division customers," Cording says. "It started by word of mouth, but now we include it in our direct mailing."


While many jobs are one-time gigs, Cording says some clients have annual summer barbecues and often call back yearly. Plus, he says the best part about the service is that it has led to other work. After a successful party prep job, his company even gets the occasional call back for design/build work.

The service is a good fit for Cording's clients and his business.



Rich Cording Sr. (left) and Rich Cording Jr. run CLC Landscape Design in Ringwood, N.J.



"Honestly, I can't think of a challenge we've faced doing party prep," he says. "This has been very easy and effortless to add on." 

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: CLC Landscape Design

HEADQUARTERS: Ringwood, N.J.

SERVICE: Party prep

EMPLOYEES: 35

ANNUAL REVENUE: Not disclosed

SERVICE MIX: 90% design/build+installation; 10% mowing+landscape maintenance

CUSTOMER MIX: 100% residential

WHY? "Clients literally asked for it," says owner Richard Cording Sr. "Once we realized this was a service our clients had a need for, we began promoting it."

BEST TIP: "If you want to get into this service, start with your existing clientele. You likely already have a base of customers that trust you and would be interested in your services for an outdoor party."

PRODUCT FOCUS

SPREADER-SPRAYERS



VENTURE SERIES

COMPANY:

Ground Logic

URL: Ground

LogicInc.com

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steel, the zero-turn

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120- or 220-lb. spreading capacity.



Z-MAX

COMPANY: LT Rich

URL: Z-Spray.com

Made of noncorrosive stainless steel, the Z-Max commercial sprayer/spreader features a 320-lb. granular fertilizer capacity and a 60-gal. liquid capacity. It's manufactured with a patented locking caster system, and includes a 75-ft. hose reel and a 10-ft., three-section breakaway boom.

SPREADER-SPRAYER



COMPANY: Exmark Mfg.

URL: Exmark.com

Exmark's Spreader-Sprayer features Lean-to-Steer controls; selectable narrow (up to 5.5 ft.) and wide (up to 11 ft.) nozzles; and a 20-gal., wide-mouth tank that includes graduation marks for easy mixing. The Spyker spreader system features a 175-lb.-capacity hopper, with the ability to carry an extra 50 lbs. of bagged material on top of the tank.



TRIUMPH

COMPANY:

PermaGreen Supreme

URL: PermaGreen.com

The Triumph features a 5.5-hp Honda horizontal-shaft engine, a wet clutch, a 150-lb. hopper and 1-acre spray capacity. Features include SmartSteer power steering, a low-volume spray system, drop-down handlebars and an articulated frame. It's backed by a 60-day guarantee and a 15-month warranty, plus 24 months on the frame.



T3100 SPREADER SPRAYER

COMPANY: Turfco

URL: Turfco.com

The T3100 is capable of fitting through a 36-in. gate and covering up to 132,000 sq. ft. per fill. A low center of gravity and pivoting front axle take the strain out of operating on uneven ground, while hands-free speed control and an ergonomic operator platform reduce shocks.





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RANGER EV LI-ION



COMPANY: Polaris

URL: Polaris.com

The Ranger EV Li-Ion offers more than three times the total lifespan of traditional acid batteries and more than twice the range on one charge, Polaris says. It features 1,500 lbs. of towing capacity, a 500-lb. gas-assist dump box and 1,000 lbs. of total payload. The one-wheel drive VersaTrac Turf Mode and high-pressure tires help ensure a light footprint on lawns.



TRUCKSTER SERIES

COMPANY: Jacobsen

URL: Jacobsen.com



The Truckster XD (pictured) is available in gas and diesel. It features a payload capacity of 3,550 lbs., a 32.5-hp Kubota



engine and a 12-gauge steel box. The Truckster HX offers a

maximum 1,600-lb. payload capacity and 1,300-lb. towing capacity. The gas-powered Truckster MS/MX features a maximum capacity of 1,200 lbs., while the electric Truckster MS-E/MX-E has a capacity of up to 1,000 lbs. The gas-powered Truckster LS/LX offers an 800-lb. capacity.

ATLAS JSV ACCESSORY KITS



COMPANY: Gravely

URL: GravelyAtlas.com

The MX-18 box rack configuration kit (pictured) transports landscaping equipment like string trimmers, backpack blowers, chain saws and shovels. The snow configuration kit features an auto-retracting frame kickstand, which keeps the plow at the right height for drive-up attachment and detachment. In addition, a large-capacity Gravely salt spreader is available for the MX-18 box.





RTV-X1140

COMPANY: Kubota Tractor Corp.

URL: Kubota.com

The Kubota K-Vertible cargo conversion system transforms the RTV-X1140 from two seats and a hydraulic dump bed with a 19.1 cu. ft. capacity to four seats and a 9.9 cu. ft. capacity. It features a 24.8-hp Kubota liquid-cooled diesel engine, tilt steering and inline shifting. Lockable storage includes a glove box on the passenger side and under-seat compartments.



3600 AND 3650

COMPANY: Bobcat Co.

URL: Bobcat.com

The 3600 and 3650 (pictured) hydrostatic-drive UTVs feature a 24-hp Kohler diesel engine, independent front dual A-arm suspension with rear de Dion suspension and a top speed of 30 mph. The automatic engine shutdown feature, for instances of high engine coolant or hydraulic oil temperature, is standard for both models.



500S AND 700S

COMPANY: Exmark

URL: Exmark.com

The 500S and 700S side-by-side UTVs offer switch-on-the-fly two- or four-wheel drive and a two-in-one tilting cargo box that goes from flatbed to box in minutes. The 700S features a total payload capacity (riders and equipment) of 1,500 lbs., while the 500S has a total payload capacity of 1,000 lbs. Both include 2-in. receiver hitches at both ends.

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September	8/8
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Law of the land

Continued from page 21

cool-season weeds, which emerge first in Northern Virginia, where ProLawn is located, so the company applies it at the beginning of the year.

There wasn't a huge financial impact from the change, Rogers says. In fact, his company saved only about \$100 per 700 acres of applications. However, with a high minimum retreatment interval, some companies that use cheaper ingredients may need to move to a more expensive product to get the same amount of efficacy, Rogers speculates.

For many experienced lawn care professionals, a reminder to "check your label" is a tired phrase like "wear a seat belt" or "don't text and drive." But just like those safety warnings, there are real consequences to forgetting this essential message. That's why ProLawn has renewed its commitment to studying labels.

"The label is the law," Rogers says. "As a company, we're big on doing things the right way. Any time we're going to go out with a product for a round of application, we're checking our labels and making sure we're following the law." 

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Richard Bare

**PRESIDENT
ARBOR-NOMICS TURF
NORCROSS, GA.**

EDUCATION

Chaney High School
Youngstown, Ohio
Class of 1966

The Ohio State University
Bachelor's of Science,
Ornamental Horticulture
Class of 1970

WORK EXPERIENCE

1960-1966

Worker bee
Terrace Gardens Nursery
Youngstown, Ohio

1970-1973

Owner
Fern Hill Landscaping
Columbus, Ohio

1974-1977

Sales
Karl Kuemmerling Associates
Columbus, Ohio

1977-1978

Branch manager
ChemLawn
Chicago

1978-1980

Sales manager, tree care tech
ChemLawn
Atlanta

1980-Present

President
Arbor-Nomics Turf
Norcross, Ga.

"When I graduated I started landscaping and doing mowing/maintenance with our Volkswagen Bug. I sold Encyclopedias in college, so I learned about selling door-to-door."

"They bought me out, and I cleared \$8,000 after the sale. I went out and bought a house."

"We doubled the size of it in three years. I'm so proud because they're all the original employees, plus a few more have come back."



**2013-Present
CEO**

Graham Spray Equipment
Douglasville, Ga.

**2014 to Present
CEO**

Simply Organic Turf Care
Norcross, Ga.



Bare and his wife, Sharon, have five kids and 11 grandchildren with one on the way. His son Josh (pictured with two of his kids) is CIO for Arbor-Nomics.

"I had a very rich upbringing at my father's nursery. Not monetarily—but with experience."

"My wife and I love to travel. This October, we're planning to spend a whole month in Europe and go live someplace like Bath, England."



"(ChemLawn's) Dick Duke got a flier of mine out of a store in Worthington, Ohio. We got along famously. They offered me a job and I went to Chicago."

"I didn't know what I was doing running a branch. So, they demoted me to Atlanta, and I became a worker bee. I really got knocked off my high horse, but it's the best thing that ever happened to me."

WORDS OF WISDOM "It's very important for company owners to be inventive all the time." • "Grow size and profits as quickly as possible without going under. Size matters in lawn care—the bigger, the better." • "Hire consultants, and consult with leaders in the industry to pull yourself up." • "The money doesn't matter. Your family, friends and fellowship, that's what really makes you happy in life. And your health."

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