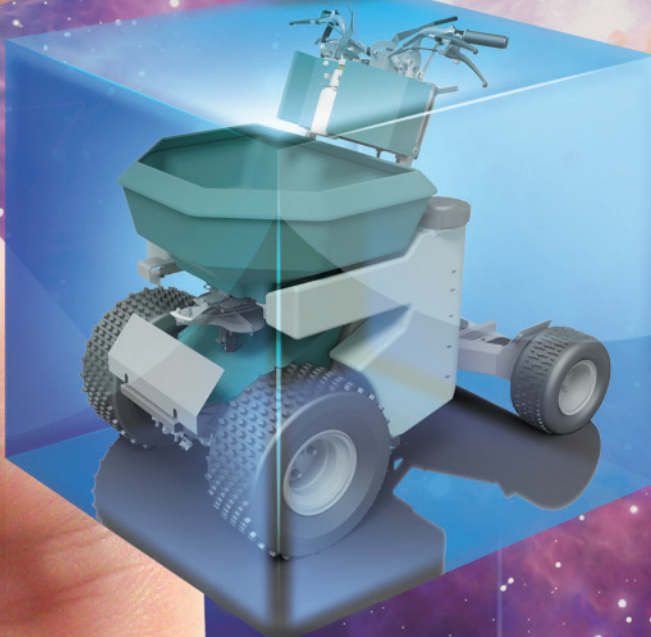


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BUSINESS PLANNER

= 2017 =

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OF PROFIT-
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TO
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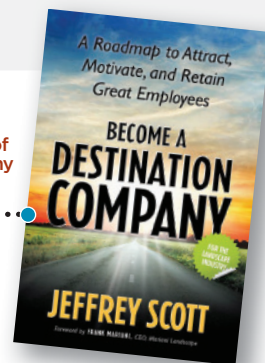
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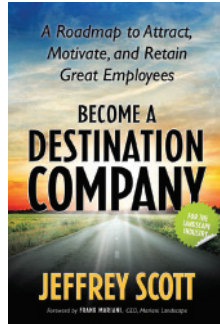


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SEVEN PILLARS OF 'DESTINATION COMPANIES'

➔ People are a problem for many companies in the landscape industry, which is why we've dedicated our annual Business Planner to helping you tackle this topic. Jeffrey Scott shares seven pillars for success in his book, "Become a Destination Company: A Roadmap to Attract, Motivate, and Retain Great Employees." These include:

1. Make vision an action verb.
2. Live a culture of excellence.
3. Treat recruiting like marketing and selling.
4. Hire and manage based on values.
5. Put people systems first, production systems second.
6. Embrace shared leadership.
7. Create an ownership culture.

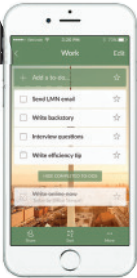


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The 'people rule'

Welcome to the Business Planner 2017: The People Edition. We hear repeatedly from our readers that labor and personnel are the most significant challenges they face as landscape industry business owners and managers. As the market continues to improve, we expect it to remain a difficult reality of the industry, so we knew it was time to dedicate our annual business planner to this tough topic.

As I read through these articles, it occurred to me that so many people problems are really just communication problems, either external or internal.

For example, I'm not the first to make the case that not enough people know about the good job opportunities that exist within the green industry. But are we speaking the language of the candidates who are out there and using the right avenues to reach them? Ben Gandy thinks we could do a better job, and he shares some ideas (page 58).

Within companies, somewhere in the grind of responding to clients, churning through paperwork and getting the work done, signals get crossed. What you think is implied or should be understood is never explicitly expressed, and people often fail to meet expectations. Kevin Kehoe addresses overcoming this "slog" on page 48, and you know what? A lot of it is about communication and perception.

In the midst of putting together this package, I traveled to Austin, Texas, to attend a Sales Summit held by Bruce Wilson's Better Than Both Peer Group. One of the speakers, Mark Adamson, senior vice president of sales and marketing for snow plow manufacturer Douglas Dynamics, said one of the biggest problems salespeople face is not adapting to their clients' preferred communication styles. He encouraged them to think not of the "golden rule" ("do unto others as you would have them do unto you") but of the "sales rule," "sell unto others as they want to be sold unto."

I've heard another adapted version of the "golden rule" as marriage advice: "Treat your spouse how he or she would like to be treated, not how you would like to be treated." I'd argue that it extends to all relationships—your employees included. Think of the people problems this approach could prevent.

In fact, let's call it the "people rule." Add it to the arsenal of advice provided in the pages of this Business Planner, and get 2017 off to a great start.

GOING PINK

Our parent company North Coast Media continues its commitment to supporting cancer research efforts and awareness by "going pink" in October. We use pink because October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, although we support cancer research in general. So many of our loved ones have been affected by various forms of the disease. A portion of this month's companywide revenue will be donated to a local cancer research initiative, bringing our three-year total to nearly \$30,000.



WEB EXTRA

Like our cover? Thanks! So do we. Cleveland-based artist Lisa Lorek illustrated it for us. Check out a video of her in action at bit.ly/ZahZngL.

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Q+A

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BIG PICTURE

A WALK IN THE PARK

LOCATION Huntington Park, Spokane, Wash.

COMPANY Land Expressions

THE DETAILS Avista Utilities owns Huntington Park, which exists within a power-generating facility on the Spokane River. It wanted to refresh the park and add a plaza to be used as an event space for community activities. The park, which was overgrown prior to renovation, was designed to provide riverside access and to educate the public about the geology and the history of the river.

Working with the utility company and city officials, Land Expressions changed a major downtown thoroughfare to a one-way street, reduced road width and installed a mid-block crosswalk to connect Riverfront Park, the new plaza and the river. Large multifunctional terraces were designed in the plaza to accommodate the elevation change and access, while addressing the removal of 2,000 cubic yards of contaminants.

This project earned Land Expressions a Grand Award last year from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

PHOTO "Water Works" is a steel arbor that measures 25 feet long by 18 feet tall.

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

PHOTO: DEAN DAVIS, JAMES RICHMAN, JOHN D. MOORE, ISAACSON AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY AND KATHY SWEHLA



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NEWS HOW-TO'S

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INDUSTRY
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VIEWS
AND TIPS

RECOMMENDER > BRUCE'S VIEW > STEP BY STEP > NEW STUFF > SAFETYWATCH

FACE TIME



Kevin Shackleford, owner of Shackleford Landscape Group in Bear, Del., has replaced most face-to-face meetings with tools like iPhone's FaceTime or Skype. Surprisingly, there's been very little—if any—pushback from clients, he says.

Shackleford says everyone is busy these days, and in-person meetings are burdensome. He adds that his commercial clients prefer the "privacy" of having him Skype in for a short meeting, but not having to excuse him from the room to discuss their options. He has also switched to electronic signatures with Adobe Sign, so proposals no longer need to be signed in person.

"By doing more of these tasks remotely with the help of technology, we save at least 20 percent on our monthly fuel costs," Shackleford says. "But perhaps more importantly, it saves on labor and keeps us efficient. With technology, I can now have one person take on the role of three."

“With technology, I can have one person take on the role of three.”



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JOHN DEERE

RECOMMENDER

What preemergent herbicides do you prefer and why?

Lawn care operators have many options for preventing weeds from popping up in the spring.



SETH DOWNING
OWNER, DOWNING LAWN CARE
HILLIARD, OHIO

"We use Dimension herbicide because it gives us more flexible crabgrass control. Crabgrass grows later in the season here. If you put certain products down too late, you can miss your window.

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AARON POPE
OWNER, ALC GROUNDS MANAGEMENT
MIDLOTHIAN, VA.

"Stonewall is good for fescue because it has a 6-month effective rate and will help deter Bermudagrass. Dimension is good for warm weather grasses such as St. Augustinegrass and

Bermudagrass. Make sure you follow all regulations on the containers and follow local rules and regs. We are stewards of the environment and we need to be responsible. Always do soil testing and use organic fertilizer when at all possible."

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 INNOVATE

Everywhere we go, we meet with landscape leaders who are looking to offer a greater service experience, higher quality work and become a great place to work. But simply talking about launching innovative initiatives isn't enough. Many contractors who want to grow run into the same problem: silos. Ideas get lost in the execution, exposing thornier problems.

To overcome this obstacle, here are a few best practices to integrate into your culture.

1. Set goals and measure results.


Companies tend to perform better if they have measurable performance goals and track results.

2. Rely on fact-based decision making. Combine insight and foresight, validating your instincts with data from inside and outside your company.

3. Invest in surveys. Get valid input from your clients and employees with third-party surveys. Make improvements based on feedback. Let clients know you closed the loop.

4. Recruit continuously. Hire talent when it's available, not when you're stuck. Use a combination of in-house and professional training resources to recruit and onboard new hires and develop managers.

5. Make marketing strategic. An integrated marketing-communications program, linked to growth goals, will help your company realize its objectives.

Be prepared to tweak your approach. Constantly updating your business model will create a flexible organization that can make you more prepared than ever to adapt to shifting customer expectations. 



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STEP BY STEP

How to effectively plow a parking lot

Winter is just around the corner, which means snow plows will soon be back in action. A few best practices will help you plow as efficiently as possible, even as snow continues to fall.

Before it snows, survey the property you'll be plowing to check for obstacles—such as speed bumps, curbs, sidewalks, shrubs, fire hydrants and fences—that may become hidden by fallen snow. When plowing in dirt or gravel, lower the plow shoes. This will raise the blade to prevent scraping away the surface. When plowing on asphalt or concrete, raise or remove the plow shoes to scrape as close to the surface as possible.

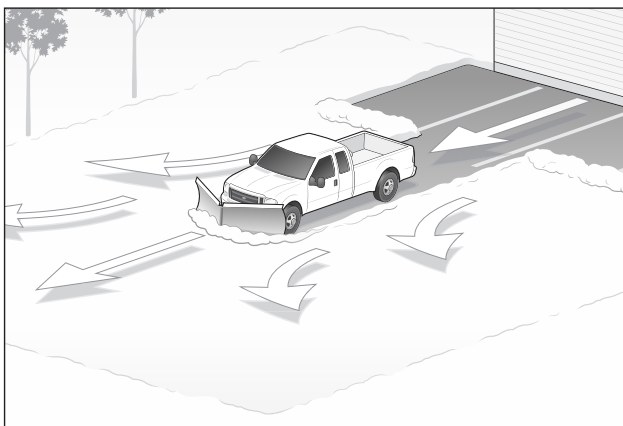
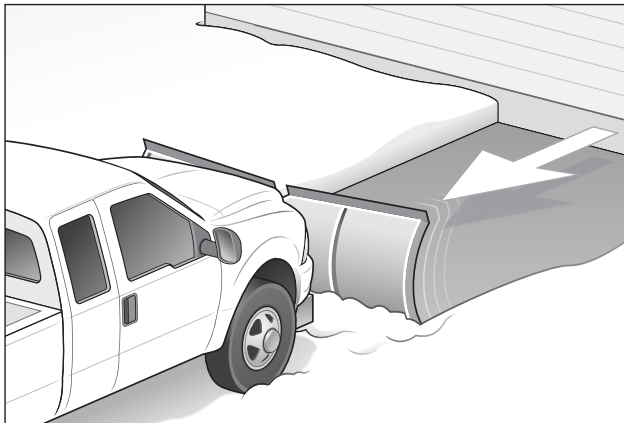
If a significant amount of snow is expected, plow with the storm rather than let snow accumulate. Never pile snow on someone else's property, on streets or sidewalks, in handicap parking spaces, or on top of any structures. Be sure not to impede mailboxes, dumpsters, water drains, electrical boxes or fire hydrants. Never push snow across a road without first checking the local regulations. Be aware of federal requirements for front and rear weight distribution and make sure your vehicle has the proper amount of ballast. Ballast should be placed rearward of the back axle toward the tailgate of the vehicle, and should be properly secured.

Follow the steps at right to effectively plow a parking lot. 🚚

SOURCE: BOSS SNOWPLOW

➔ STEP 1

Plow areas in front of buildings and doors first. With the plow blade raised and in the straight position, drive up to the building, drop the blade and pull the snow away from the building. Turn your vehicle around, back into the cleared area, and push the snow to the far outer edges of the lot.

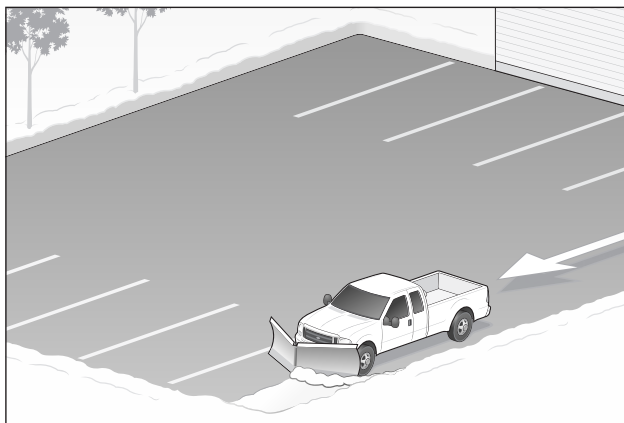


⬅️ STEP 2

After back dragging snow away from the building, start plowing the lot. Make a pass down the center of the lot, and then push snow to the outer edges. In large lots it may be best to break down the lot into smaller areas. Pile snow downwind to minimize drifting.

➔ STEP 3

Once the majority of the snow is removed from the lot, do cleanup work. Start by plowing next to curbs. Be sure to square off corners where possible, and don't leave trails of snow behind.



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NEW STUFF

**1. MS 261 CHAINSAW****COMPANY:** Stihl**URL:** Stihl.com

This mid-range professional saw is designed for low exhaust emissions, fuel efficiency and durability, Stihl says. A redesign features an updated cylinder and slimmer, ergonomic engine housing, which reduces the unit's weight. Its pre-separation air filtration system requires less frequent cleaning.

2. THE SNO BASKET**COMPANY:** Pro-Tech**URL:** ProTechCorp.com

The Sno Basket is a lightweight bucket for easy hauling and loading of snow, according to Pro-Tech. The slots on the bucket are designed to compress and collect the maximum amount of snow by allowing water from slushy snow to escape. The Sno Basket is intended for backhoes and compact wheel loaders. It features a replaceable steel cutting edge.

3. LED FLEX-FIT**COMPANY:** Unique Lighting Systems**URL:** UniqueLighting.com

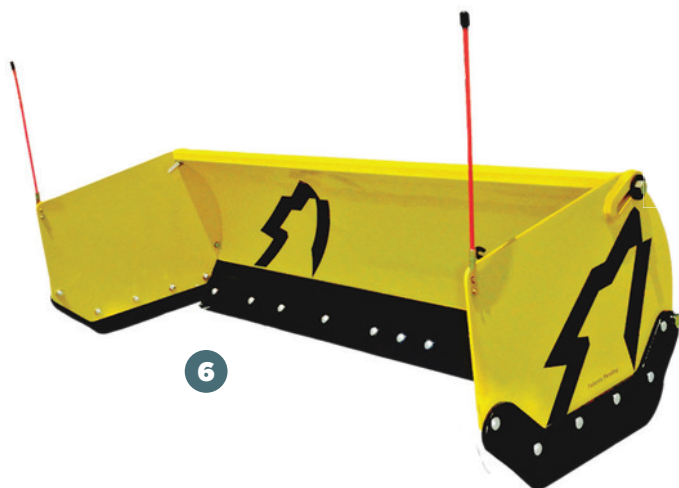
The LED Flex-Fit ensures the lamp stays in place within the fixture and provides reliable, consistent beam direction—eliminating the need for stainless lens retainers, springs and socket retainers, the company says. It can be ordered with the Intrepid and Guardian up light fixtures.



4



5



6

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. 3025E COMPACT UTILITY TRACTOR

COMPANY: John Deere

URL: JohnDeere.com

John Deere expanded its 3E Series Compact Utility Tractor line to include this 25-hp option. The 3025E model features a two-range hydrostatic transmission, which eliminates clutching, and Twin Touch foot controls, which provide an automobile-like experience, John Deere says.

5. RADIUS ZERO-TURN MOWER

COMPANY: Exmark Mfg. Co.

URL: Exmark.com

The Radius is available in three models: E-, S- and X-Series. Each features a heavy-duty unibody frame; large front caster tires and rear drive tires; an isolated floor pan; and patented Lazer Z-style deck strut isolation technology, which eliminates deck sway, offers smooth deck height adjustment and delivers increased durability with reduced maintenance. The isolation technology also increases operator comfort by reducing the vibration felt through the Radius chassis.

6. ULTRAPUSHER TE SNOW PUSHER

COMPANY: SnowWolf

URL: SnowWolfPlows.com

This skid-steer snow pusher has cushioned sideplates to protect the operator, machine and attachment in the event of an inadvertent obstacle strike at an angle. Due to urethane die springs, the sideplates flex as much as 10 in. in or out, depending on the direction of the strike. It also includes a 6-in. high-carbon steel cutting edge, a 9-in. trip edge and automatic oscillation that keeps the cutting edge on the surface.

SAFETYWATCH

AVOID SPRAINS AND STRAINS

Sore and strained backs, necks and joints are common ailments related to overexertion in the landscape industry. It's not surprising when you consider the heavy lifting and digging that takes place.

The best way to avoid these injuries is by warming up, stretching and working smartly. Several minutes of warming up and stretching before beginning a task is the minimum our body needs to avoid straining injuries. The worst thing you can do, for example, is to go from a long truck ride to a job site and immediately start tackling difficult physical tasks.

You may not be interested in—nor will your employer be prepared for—an elaborate routine every morning. So, we have a few simple suggestions for avoiding strains and sprains:

- Don't lift anything heavy or bend excessively for your first 10 minutes on the job; instead, survey the

site, get your hand tools out, refuel equipment or tackle a light task. Do anything that does not require a lot of heavy exertion for the first 10 minutes of the day.

- Once your body is warmed up, take three to seven minutes to stretch. Suggestions include: bend slowly at the waist, touch your toes, and hold the stretch for 20 seconds; stretch your arms out at your sides and move forward and back slowly to stretch your shoulders; rotate your arms for a minute; bend your knees and squat slowly for 10 to 20 repetitions; and stretch gently and hold for 20 to 30 seconds any body part that has given you trouble or concerns you.
- Stretch again after lunch and long breaks.

WATCH AND LEARN

Visit LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch to view a video about stretching to avoid strains and sprains, and use it as a training tool for your team.

SOURCE: Greenius



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START HERE

Expert advice for those looking to get into the lawn care side of the landscape industry.

▶ PAGE 18



Photo: iStockphoto.com

TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

Steps to success

Companies interested in lawn care must consider several factors before adding it to their offerings. **BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER**

So you're mowing lawns and doing other landscape maintenance, and the idea of providing fertilization, weed and insect control piques your interest.

If you're a maintenance contractor, there are several reasons you may want to add turf and ornamental care—aka lawn care—to your menu of services. Maybe you would like to earn more revenue from existing clients. Maybe you see it as a resilient market that requires expertise the average homeowner simply doesn't have. Or maybe you've heard lawn care is more lucrative than mowing and landscape maintenance.

Research shows the latter is true. The profit margin for lawn care services is 11 percent, compared with 3 percent for residential landscape maintenance and

4 percent for commercial landscape maintenance, according to preliminary results of the National Association of Landscape Professionals' (NALP) "Operating Cost Study for the Landscape Industry" by Dan Gordon.

Regardless of the reason, there are a number of things contractors should consider before venturing into lawn care to ensure the move is successful and profitable.

"You have to start out asking what do you want to accomplish and what is your goal?" says Scott Kinkead, executive vice president at Turfco Manufacturing, a commercial lawn care equipment manufacturer in Blaine, Minn. "The more you can lay out what you want to do, talk to other people who have done it and utilize industry resources, the more you will know what to expect."



FOCUSED
Rob Reindl (right), owner of Oasis Turf & Tree, successfully narrowed his scope to lawn care.

GETTING STARTED

Rob Reindl left his career in financial services to start a full-service landscape company, Oasis Lawn & Landscape, in 1996. Nine years later, in an attempt to streamline his efforts, Reindl shifted gears to focus solely on lawn and tree application services. He changed the company's name to Oasis Turf & Tree and invested about \$30,000 in equipment, software and other office supplies. Today, the \$4.1 million company offers lawn and tree care services for a primarily residential clientele.

"I learned a lot about the power of focus and read some articles about the success of companies that just do lawn care," he says. "It was my

belief that focusing on the lawn care side of things would give me the best opportunity to provide a good working environment for our team."

LEARNING THE ROPES

Choosing the right equipment is one of the first steps to adding a lawn care division. Kinkead says it's important for contractors to consider the different properties to be serviced—whether it's fenced-in residential backyards or commercial lots—and select tools that can handle all of them.

He says ride-on applicators are great for covering large areas quickly. For example, the Turfco T3100 riding sprayer/spreader can fit through a 36-inch gate and

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NEWSFEED

RISE SAYS 'THANKS'

Two longtime industry advocates were recognized at the Responsible Industry for a Sound

Environment (RISE) Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, Va., Aug. 29-Sept. 1. Tom Delaney, former government

affairs director for the National Association of Landscape Professionals, was honored with RISE's Grassroots Excellence Award, and Karen Reardon, vice president of public affairs for RISE; was recognized

for her 20 years of service to the industry.

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“When you’re getting started you’re going to want to keep as many properties as close together as possible for logistic purposes, and make sure you have good signage.”

—SCOTT KINKEAD

Continued from page 18

has the capacity to cover up to 132,000 square feet with one fill.

“There are different ways of doing it,” Kinkead says. “You can start with just a push spreader and a backpack sprayer, but most contractors have a mixture of customers and you really don’t want different machines for different properties, especially when you’re just starting out. It’s good to have a machine that can handle anything.”

Because lawn care was one part of his original menu of services, Reindl already had the necessary licenses and certifications in place when he transitioned to Oasis Tree & Turf. He has a pesticide license through the Ohio Department of Agriculture and is certified through the NALP. Reindl also took horticulture courses through a night school program at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College and found a mentor in one of his professors, who helped him set up his lawn care program. For Reindl, the learning never stops. He and his crews attend annual industry seminars and conferences and use new research and information from The Ohio State University Extension in Columbus.

“If you want to continue to be the best, you have to take advantage of the resources because every year there is a better product or a better way to do things,” he says. “This is an evolving business that needs continuous, ongoing training.”

Dana Davis, senior consultant at Pro-Motion Consulting in Farmington Hills, Mich., says most states require owners of lawn care companies to obtain a pesticide license through the Department of Agriculture, plus a commercial business license. Requirements vary from state to state. For example, in Michigan, anyone who wants to own a business involving pesticides has to be employed by a company that works with pesticides for three years before he or she can obtain his or her commercial business license in that field.

“It would be wise to work for a reputable firm that does lawn care and fertilization for a few years and learn the business,” says Davis. “You will also learn things like customer service and the technical aspects of mixing and applying pesticides.”

Aeration is a great add-on service for any company looking to transition into lawn care, Kinkead says, as it’s an important part of any integrated lawn care program and is an effective upsell. While aeration can be profitable, it also can be physically taxing for technicians. Steerable aerators with a reverse can increase productivity and decrease strain because the operators don’t have to lift the machine to turn it. Riding aerators also can be a good option for larger properties and sports turf. Because aeration services are only offered during short windows of time in the spring and fall, Kinkead stresses the importance of having a durable, reliable machine.

“Aeration is the logical step and fits well with lawn care,” he says. “Because it’s offered during a compressed season, not having downtime is critical and being productive in that period of time is critical.”

BUSINESS SAVVY

In addition to being educated about lawn care products and procedures, contractors need to be savvy when it comes to the day-to-day business operations. Reindl says he became much more

focused on marketing when he got serious about lawn care.

“A maintenance company is a production machine, and the lawn care side of things is a marketing machine,” he says. “Realize that not just the agronomic side of the business is important, but also the customer service, sales and marketing side is necessary to be successful in the lawn care business.”

Kinkead says marketing a new lawn care service to an existing customer base is the best way to get started. He also recommends trying to obtain as many customers as possible in close proximity to one another to cut down on driving time to and from jobs and to increase the impact of marketing signage and word-of-mouth referrals.

“When you’re getting started you’re going to want to keep as many properties as close together as possible for logistic purposes, and make sure you have good signage,” Kinkead says. “This allows people to see the quality of work you’re doing and makes them want to know how they can get their lawn to look like that.”

Industry peers are another important source of information. Reindl says his time spent networking at industry conferences is perhaps even more important than his time spent in the classroom. He says he’s found most people are willing to share information and experiences and help newcomers get their businesses off the ground.

“Meeting similar people and sharing frustrations and challenges and finding out what they’re doing about them is invaluable,” he says. “We were all small companies at one point in time and we are not afraid to reach out a hand and help people along the way.”

Along these lines, Davis suggests establishing a referral program with a trusted industry alliance. Finding a mowing company who will refer your lawn care services and vice versa is a great way to quickly gain new customers.

Reindl did exactly that with the owner of a local landscape maintenance

company he knew through a Cincinnati-based networking group. Over about two years, the companies traded maintenance accounts for lawn care accounts and continue to refer customers today.

PICKING A PROGRAM

Another step toward adding lawn care and fertilization services is to decide on a program to offer. Davis typically recommends a five-visit program, and he says companies should require clients to receive the full program.

Chemical manufacturer and distributor sales representatives are good sources of information when establishing a program and choosing the right products to use. During his time working for a lawn care company, Davis would interview three distributor sales reps and choose one who could

“It would be wise to work for a reputable firm that does lawn care and fertilization for a few years and learn the business.” —DANA DAVIS



write seasonal programs, keep up with changes in the product labels and local regulations, and offer agronomic advice.

“When choosing a sales rep, you’re not just looking at products, but you’re looking for someone to work with and who will keep you updated on everything,” Davis says.

Reindl began with a five-visit program, but he has since increased it to six visits. Over the past several years, Oasis Turf & Tree has placed more emphasis on soil health, and Reindl says that six visits give the company more opportu-

nities to reintroduce nutrients into the soil and to stay on top of problems as they arise, all while using fewer inputs. “Our program is six steps, but that’s not because that’s the number of applications it takes to get results,” he says. “It’s about staying on top of weed issues and making sure you can diagnose the difference between insect damage, disease or drought stress before they become huge issues.”

Davis says offering free service calls to come back and spot treat weeds is

Continued on page 115

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MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

A dispatch from Enviroscapes

Attendees of the JP Horizons Face to Face event came to learn about the Louisville, Ohio-based company's focus on culture and employee relations. **BY DILLON STEWART**

Banners hang from the ceiling of Enviroscapes' garage-like retired jerseys in a sports arena. Each features an employee's photo, name, current and past job titles, and the year he or she assumed each position. The banners remind employees, new and old, of where they can go within the company. For visitors of the Louisville, Ohio-based landscape company, the banners represent the company's dedication to culture and people.

You could argue this dedication is much of the reason the company—which performs 20 percent construction, 65 percent maintenance and 15 percent snow removal for a commercial clientele—is pulling in \$15 million in yearly revenue and growing about 15 percent per year. Owner Todd Pugh does. It was this culture—not the multimillion-dollar facility with a rolling farm landscape—attendees of the JP Horizons Face to



Todd Pugh

Face event came to see on Sept. 20. The all-day event, which drew more than 80 people, gave insight on Enviroscapes' inner workings and on how the company's leadership revamped its culture.

For those who couldn't make the trip to Ohio farm country, here are some tips you can take from Enviroscapes to revitalize your company's culture.

LISTEN TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

It took a slap in the face before Pugh, who started the company formerly known as Todd's Landscaping at age 17, and his team focused on developing an employee-centric culture.

Five years ago, Enviroscapes employees filled out an anonymous questionnaire. Pugh wanted employees to be brutally honest, and they were: 80 percent said they were actively looking for new employment or wouldn't recommend working at Enviroscapes to a friend.

"That was a low point for me, going home that night knowing 80 percent of the company didn't want to work for me,"



Pugh says. "But the takeaway is don't ever assume you know the heartbeat of your company."

Enviroscapes' focus became achieving "destination workplace" status for its employees. That meant not just creating a good place to work or a great stepping-stone to a better gig but being the better gig—a place for talented professionals to build a career.

"Taking good care of your guys is the most important thing," Pugh advised attendees. "It helps with recruitment, because they'll invite their friends to work at your company, and you won't need marketing, because it's just your employees talking to your customers."

GIVE THE PROPER BENEFITS

Every employee is motivated differently, Pugh says. For some, gestures like cookouts, Gatorade on hot days and on-site dinners when jobs run overtime were enough motivation. Paid time off and robust benefit packages raised morale, too.

Continued on page 24

A BETTER GIG
 Todd Pugh revamped his company's culture after a less-than-stellar employee survey.

NEWSFEED

NEW ENGINE OPTION

Yamaha Motor Corp. entered the landscape market in a new part-

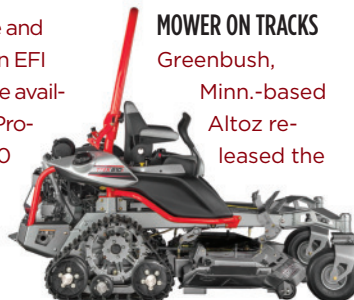
nership with Gravely, an Ariens Co. brand. Yamaha's two new V-Twin EFI engines—the MX775 V-Twin

EFI 29-hp engine and the MX825 V-Twin EFI 33-hp engine—are available in Gravely's Pro-Turn 200 and 400 lines of zero-turn mowers.

MOWER ON TRACKS

Greenbush, Minn.-based Altoz released the

TRX tracked zero-turn mower, equipped with rear-mounted tracks and torsional suspension system.





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MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Continued from page 22

Taking it a step further, the company hired a financial adviser to keep on retainer. Any Enviroscares employee can meet with the adviser for free. The company made this offering a prerequisite when it sought out 401(k) plan administrators. The adviser even attends the company's annual Growing Day employee event to discuss the value of the plan and delayed gratification.

"We try to explain to the guys if they just don't stop and buy a pack of chew or an energy drink on their way to work in the morning, they can retire with a million dollars some day," Pugh says. "All it takes is \$3 a day over a 40-year term with our 401(k) match, and it only costs about \$50,000 out of their pocket."

OFFER DEVELOPMENT OPPS

Benefits help, but Enviroscares really became a "destination workplace" by offering opportunities for personal and intra-company growth.

Growing Day—a \$50,000 event with guest speakers, internal growth stories, a financial review and other personal development initiatives (which you can read about at LandscapeManagement.net/case-study-growing-day)—is the cornerstone of the company's culture transformation. Some of the company's best employees rose through the Enviroscares ranks, Pugh says. Much of the day is dedicated to these home-grown employees' stories, which help newer employees

understand the ladder they can climb and serves as a reminder for stagnant ones.

A one-day event can be easily forgotten, though, so the company strives to continue personal and professional growth opportunities throughout the year.

This year, it implemented the Supervisor Boot Camp, a customized corporate university produced by faculty from nearby Kent State University. About 20 managers and 20 lower-level employees deemed "rising stars" by their peers participate in DiSC assessments, lessons on time management and conflict resolution and more. The professional development course costs the company \$1,000 a session, and the company has hosted about one session a month for the past six months.

"I think a lot of businesses try to focus on growing their crew-level guys and their laborers, but since we grow our guys internally, we found our managers, who had started as laborers or crew leaders, asking for professional development because once they got into management we didn't continue that training process for them," Pugh says. "Our managers needed and wanted more professional development to learn how to coach our guys because if they do a bad job coaching their replacement, their replacement is going to do a bad job coaching their replacement."

INCENTIVIZE QUALITY WORK

Enviroscares also has benefitted from an incentive program called Green Bucks



Incentive (GBI). It gives employees the chance to earn an extra \$300 a month—\$200 if your branch hits its mark and an extra \$100 if all branches hit their goals.

The program centers on safety, quality, image, productivity and attendance. Branches earn strikes if a truck isn't clean, if a member doesn't give two-weeks notice before calling off, if a member isn't in full uniform and other offenses. They can offset strikes by receiving compliments on Facebook or via email. The team aspect of the GBI program has had a unifying effect on the branches.

"It really became a self-policing type of incentive because it's almost a dollar an hour more that they make if they hit it," Pugh says. "We've had guys who were habitually late for work, so that group would assign someone to call that guy, make sure he's up and encourage him to get here on time."


KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER

In 2007, Pugh did the unthinkable: He let go 82 percent of his customers, totaling 450 residential mowing accounts. Before you write him off as a madman, understand the move only shed 18 percent of the company's revenue. Since the move, the

company has experienced continual growth. It's done so by focusing on the "Enviroscares client" and knowing what that looks like.

Its clientele is only about 5 percent residential, and every one is connected to a commercial property the company maintains. For maintenance, that client has three to five acres of mowable grass or parking lot the company can maintain. Design/build/installation projects must be more than \$100,000 or the client must be a friend/acquaintance of Pugh, an existing client or referral. Ideally, the company will be hired to maintain the property after the project.

If the job isn't a good fit, Pugh suggests a better-suited company. In fact, Enviroscares is making an effort to dial back installation projects even more.

"We wanted to know our customers, not be a mow-and-go company," Pugh says. "It was tough to tell customers that got us where we were at that we couldn't service them anymore, but what got you where you are today isn't necessarily going to get you to where you want to go tomorrow." 

Growing Day, an annual event with speakers and company updates, is one part of the new culture.

Job costing blueprint

Good tracking is essential for assessing a project's success. It also gives employees a blueprint to work from.

BY DILLON STEWART

Job costing helps contractors identify, quantify and measure all the costs that are unique or specific to a project. There are three main reasons job costing is so important, says Mike Lysecki, former director of operations for Ontario-based landscape company TBG Environmental, now chief technology officer for software company LMN.

“One, it gives crews clear and measurable goals—if you don’t keep score, there will never be any urgency to get work completed; two, so you can evaluate how close your estimated cost is to your actual; and three, so you have a living history you can use to train new estimators and fix consistent mistakes.”

WHAT TO TRACK:

HOURS

How to track it: Foremen should be aware of the estimated hours and track their daily hours on every job. Lysecki recommends using an app to reduce errors and overhead required to process paperwork, but you can use paper reports. Track every hour it takes to complete a project, from mobilization and site prep to the post-job cleanup. Keep it simple. Tracking minor tasks, like installing base or edging, is unrealistic for a foreman who’s trying to get a job done right, Lysecki says. Instead, start by tracking major tasks, such as “120 hours to install a driveway.” You’ll have less data, but it will be more accurate and you’ll end up with data you can trust to improve future estimates.

WHAT TO TRACK:

MATERIALS

How to track it: For the best accuracy, track material costs in QuickBooks or your accounting system. As you enter vendor invoices, allocate them to the jobs where they were used. For example, a patio might need \$3,000 worth of stone, \$600 worth of gravel, \$40 worth of anchoring spikes, etc. If your total material expense consistently exceeds your estimated material expense, pay attention to small materials that aren’t getting recovered when estimating. Most estimators are good with the major materials, but the small things that are missed often add up to major shortfalls in profit, Lysecki says.

WHAT TO TRACK:

EQUIPMENT

How to track it: You can cost equipment like a fixed expense, similar to overhead, or you can track it every day, like a job expense. Daily tracking might be more accurate, but it’s also very time consuming. If you do choose to job cost equipment each day, track the equipment used each day and apply those costs to the job. To calculate the hourly cost of equipment, use a spreadsheet or LMN’s equipment cost calculator, GoLMN.com/equipcalc. This tool takes into account a piece of equipment’s acquisition costs and annual operating costs to generate a cost per billable hour.

WHAT TO TRACK:

SUBS AND OVERHEAD

How to track it: Subs, rentals and extras should be tracked in accounting using vendor invoices, like materials. Once you’ve tallied the direct costs of doing the job, tack an overhead cost onto your estimate. Base the overhead recovered on the overhead recovery system you’re using—for many it’s an overhead per man-hour figure or the multiple overhead recovery system, Lysecki says.

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DESIGN/BUILD+INSTALLATION

PRO TIP: START SIMPLY

Don't overcomplicate things—especially in the beginning. In a perfect world, you would job cost every specific aspect of every project, but tracking too much information makes results inaccurate and analysis daunting, says LMN Chief Technology Officer Mike Lysecki. Start simple—if it's too complicated for the foremen, you can't trust the numbers. Save the details until their experience develops. Otherwise, you'll end up having a myriad of information that nobody trusts, and that's when most companies give up, he says.

Lysecki's job costing mistakes to avoid:

- Job costing in your head.
- Working without accurate estimates.
- Getting too complicated (see above).
- Not giving crews feedback and progress reports.
- Having payroll and job costing as separate systems. Make payroll and job costing the same system so that every payroll hour is accounted for.

NEWSFEED




NEW HYDRAULIC COUPLER


John Deere released a new hydraulic coupler (16GE23) for compact excavators. The hydraulic coupler is designed for 35G, 50G and 60G excavators. Operators are no longer required to exit the cab to switch buckets. It's compatible with the full lineup of John Deere Work-site Pro attachments and most competitive models.

CAT, WACKER NEUSON TO END ALLIANCE

Caterpillar will design and produce its smallest hydraulic excavators in-house beginning in 2018, phasing out a six-year strategic alliance with Wacker Neuson. Five current models (301.4C, 301.7D, 301.7D CR, 302.2D and 302.4D) made by Wacker Neuson will be phased out by mid-2018, and the 302.7D CR will be phased out by the end of 2019. The 300.9D also will be phased out by the end of 2019 or later if agreed upon by both parties.



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TIDES CHANGE
Public awareness about water scarcity drives irrigation pump trends.

Pump it up

Pump station trends reflect a need to manage water efficiently and monitor results.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER



Pump stations—often referred to as the hardest-working components of an irrigation system—are designed to pressurize water from supply sources such as ponds, wells, lakes, ravines and storage tanks and direct it to irrigation systems on residential, commercial and agricultural properties. Often working hand-in-hand with irrigation controllers, pump stations help ensure the right amount of water is applied at the right time to maintain healthy turf. With the public recognizing that water is a valuable, limited resource in many parts of the country, some say pump stations are more important than ever and are being designed to manage water as efficiently as possible.

“As water scarcity and drought have become everyday issues for much of the country, public water management agencies have imposed strict guidelines for the use of water—including water used for irrigation,” says Bill Beard, sales



Bill Beard

and marketing manager for Rain Bird, pumps and pumping systems, in Tucson, Ariz. “Public awareness as well as advances in irrigation and communications technology combine to change the way we design, install and monitor pump stations.”

Industry experts agree this move toward sustainable water management has driven recent pump station trends. The popularity of rain water harvesting in residential and commercial markets and stringent regulations surrounding stormwater management has increased the use of pump stations for irrigation, says Bill Tullos, district sales manager for SiteOne Landscape Supply in Orlando, Fla.

“The tide has turned in many markets,” Tullos says.

“The focus has moved away from reclaimed water as the primary source for irrigation to stormwater. This trend is driven by the realization that expanded use of reclaimed water is dependent on increased use of potable water that is typically withdrawn from the aquifer.”

Kevin Johnson, director of national sales for Munro, a manufacturer of pumps, pump stations, pump controls and pump accessories based Grand Junction, Colo., says the increased use of re-



Kevin Johnson

claimed water has resulted in pump stations with better filtration capabilities.

“Pump stations are being used for water capture and reuse projects more than ever,” he says. “The use of rainwater, condensate and



Bill Tullos

Continued on page 34

NEWSFEED

DROUGHT—A NEW NORMAL?

A study from UCLA suggests California’s drought could be “a new normal” for the

region. Looking at 10,000 years of climate, by studying soil sediments, researchers found

previous dry periods lasting hundreds or even thousands of years. Warming caused by man-made greenhouse gases are likely causing a similar effect, the study said.

SCHEDULE RELEASED

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IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

Continued from page 32

graywater is requiring higher levels of filtration to be incorporated with the pump station.”

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

Water use restrictions often require landscape watering to be completed in a very short period of time and only on specific days. Beard says pump stations are needed to meet the irrigation demand while complying with regulations.

Whether using city water or reclaimed water, by introducing dedicated pumping stations to residential neighborhoods, it's easier to maximize the potential of these “watering windows” that have been established by local public water management agencies. In many cases, he adds, water regulations and communities' desires to use reclaimed water sources

for irrigation have led to more centralized systems in residential neighborhoods. For example, instead of relying solely on the same city water lines that bring drinking water to homes, more homeowners' associations are using retention ponds and dedicated pumping stations to provide irrigation water to individual homes.

“As residential and commercial developments extend farther away from municipal water sources, the pressure needed for a properly functioning irrigation system may no longer be available straight from the tap,” Beard says.

Also changing are variable frequency drives (VFD), which are used when flow demand varies at constant pressure. VFD manufacturers offer simpler, lower cost drives with fewer bells and whistles, causing VFD prices to decrease. On sta-

tions with multiple pumps, it's becoming common to have a VFD per pump. Pump stations with VFDs used to be 5 hp and larger, but now smaller stations use VFDs with 2- or 3-hp motors, Johnson says.

“Lower cost VFDs can have few features,” he says. “The contractor needs to be sure that the VFD provided would support the needs of the project and provide the desired feedback, such as alarms and warnings.”

Alan Garcia, president and owner of Fort Worth Lawn Sprinkler Co. in Fort Worth, Texas, says VFD improvements have had the biggest impact on his use of pump stations. Fort Worth Lawn Sprinkler Co. uses pump stations about 2-3 percent of the time to irrigate land-



PHOTO: MUNRO COS.



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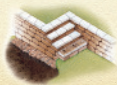
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TRENDING

Pump stations are being used for water capture and reuse more than ever before, says Kevin Johnson, director of national sales for Munro.

scaping with water that's not pressurized. The company commonly installs and maintains single-pump stations on residential properties with lakes, ponds or water storage tanks to help clients save money on their water bills.

"We used to have to match the flow of each zone to the output of the pump to avoid over-pressurizing the system or cycling the pump," he says. "Now, the pump control systems can speed up and slow down the pump motors to match the needs of each station."

Johnson says many contractors look for pump station components to be listed by UL, a global independent company that publishes nationally recognized safety standards. He says they also should look for the manufacturer to be an UL-listed panel shop and for the pump station to have a QCZJUL listing, indicating the pump station is UL listed as a packaged pumping system.

Contractors also should promote their use of high-efficiency motors on pump systems, Tullos adds, which are now required by the Environmental Protection Agency.

UNDER WATCH

Convenient and user-friendly monitoring of pump stations is another trend. Contractors and end users are looking to monitor the pump station via web apps, and Johnson says his company is seeing more requests to get water use data reports from the pump stations.

Irrigation consultants and contractors also want to be able to look at the entire irrigation system, including the pump station, as a package, so there are more efforts to integrate the pump station with the irrigation control system.

Bryan Gribskov, owner and manager of Cascade Pump & Irrigation Service in Bend, Ore., says manufacturers are also introducing stations with more efficient pump assemblies and motor manufacturers are following suit. Gribskov's company uses pump stations about 95

percent of the time working with a 75 percent agricultural, 25 percent commercial clientele. He says he would like to see more development of packaged pump stations that come on a skid, wired to a control panel and are ready to go.


"The development of having a packaged pump station for certain jobs would be easier for the end user," he says. "That's going to be a big thing in the next few years."

Contractors should recognize that, as irrigation systems become more complex, it's important to work with a supplier who understands and supports the entire system. Contractors should consider a vendor who can provide everything needed to complete a project.

"This ensures all the necessary components are designed to work together right out of the box," Beard says.

"An integrated system from a single manufacturer will result in faster, easier start-ups, fewer warranty service calls for the contractor and much higher satisfaction for the owner. This also translates into lower overall costs for successful commissioning and a lifetime of operation."

Gribskov says contractors should work with a reputable supplier to learn the pump station basics. He says about 45 percent of Cascade's jobs are rebuilding pump stations improperly installed the first time around.

"I see a lot of contractors picking something that doesn't have the correct engineering," he says. "The pump station is the heart of the system. If you don't do it correctly, the system doesn't work." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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PARTING WAYS

Here are several best practices for handling employee separations.

BY PHIL HARWOOD

Parting ways with an employee is always difficult for managers. I've handled hundreds of employee separations as a manager throughout my career and know there are solid best practices for handling these situations. Some of my greatest regrets as a manager involve situations in which best practices weren't followed, resulting in unnecessarily painful separations, ruined relationships and sleepless nights.

For those without such intense personal experiences to draw on, the news is filled with tragic situations in which employee circumstances are mishandled. Sometimes lives are lost. In fact, the phrase "going postal" was coined to express the outrage of employees who felt disenfranchised by their employers and wished to seek revenge on them. Handling separations is serious.

First and foremost, a separation should be a last resort. Unless an employee does something so egregious, all other options should be exhausted before separating. All efforts should be directed at restoring the employee through a progressive disciplinary process, which provides a step-by-step system to allow an employee to be restored or leave. A good, progressive disciplinary process that's well executed by management is the first best practice.

With a solid progressive disciplinary process in place, a separation will never be a surprise to an employee because all the steps leading up to the separation are built into the process. Not only will an employee not be surprised, but he'll have been expecting it. When an employee is given a formal final notice in writing, which states he'll be terminated if the behavior continues, he won't be shocked when the day comes.

Sometimes managers want to give an employee advance warning that he's going to be terminated. But this isn't a good idea because it leaves managers in an uncontrollable situation. The best practice is for the separation to be handled in a highly controlled environment

Continued on page 40

QUICK TIP:

The person handling the separation should never be alone with the employee. There always should be a second person to act as a witness and provide support.

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to minimize the risk of something going wrong. Unfortunately, this means it might not be announced to the employee ahead of time.

Another best practice is to take time to seriously plan ahead for the separation so all elements have been considered and are in place before executing it. This involves:

- determining who will be involved;
- when and where it will happen;
- how it will be communicated;
- what everyone's talking points will be;
- preparing all paperwork;
- addressing security concerns; and
- how best to retrieve keys, change passwords, retrieve assets and handle communications.

The more prepared management is, the better.

The person handling the separation should never be alone with the employee. There always should be a second person to act as a witness and provide support as needed. The manager in charge may or may not be present, depending on the situation. The second person should be selected carefully and shouldn't be someone who will create unnecessary discussion or emotion.

Sometimes separations need to be handled relatively quickly and there's not much time to prepare. Therefore, another best practice is to have a documented process in place that might be followed step by step, even on short notice. No step should be missed, especially required paperwork.

Managers should assume they'll need to defend their decisions in front



A difficult best practice is to protect the dignity of the person. If there was ever a good application of the golden rule, it's during a separation. If you were the employee being let go, how would you want to be treated?

of a jury several years from now. Capturing all pertinent information at the time of the separation is important. Human resource consultants and attorneys are good resources to draft employee separation agreements that will protect the company.

A difficult—but probably the most important—best practice is to protect the dignity of the person through the entire process. You can do this in various ways, like providing privacy or simply being kind. If there was ever a good application of the Golden Rule, it's during a separation. If you were the employee being let go, how would you want to be treated?

By following these best practices, managers will find they have better outcomes, less drama, fewer hurt feelings and more sleep-filled nights. Now go forth. ☺

Harwood is managing partner and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting, which has offices in Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin. Reach him at phil@mypmcteam.com.

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PREP FOR THE NEW OT RULE



It shouldn't be much trouble, unless you're currently out of compliance. **BY DAN GORDON**

The Department of Labor's (DOL) new overtime rule, scheduled to go into effect Dec. 1, will hurt, but I don't think it profoundly changes the way landscape companies do business—unless you're out of compliance with the current DOL regulations.

In working with hundreds of small business owners in the landscape and pest control industries, there is a problem here.

Many service companies apply the current rules incorrectly. Moving into compliance with the existing regulations may be scarier than complying with the new rule.

The new rule doesn't change how to categorize employees in terms of using the exemptions; rather, it changes the threshold amounts that allow an employee to be paid a salary using one of the exemptions.

Many firms I encounter believe that they can just pay employees a salary and not be subject to overtime—and that's exactly what they do, right or wrong. Employees have to meet certain requirements to be paid a salary. If they don't meet those requirements, the employer is out of compliance.

Again, this scenario is not because of the changes in the law. It falls under the current rule, which many companies don't apply correctly.

The changes will affect only those employees who are paid a salary and who fall under one of the "white collar exemptions" (discussed below) as justification for being on salary.

Employers who are currently paying folks properly, who are using the "white collar exemption" properly and who have a salaried employee who falls below the new minimum (\$47,476 per year) will have to make some decisions. Those are the only employees affected by the new rule.

BACKGROUND ON EXEMPTIONS

Landscape and lawn care companies typically employ service technicians, equipment operators, inside and outside salespeople, office/customer service people and managers/supervisors.

Two concepts are relevant here:

1. Nonexempt employees: Employees who must be paid hourly plus overtime after 40 hours per week.

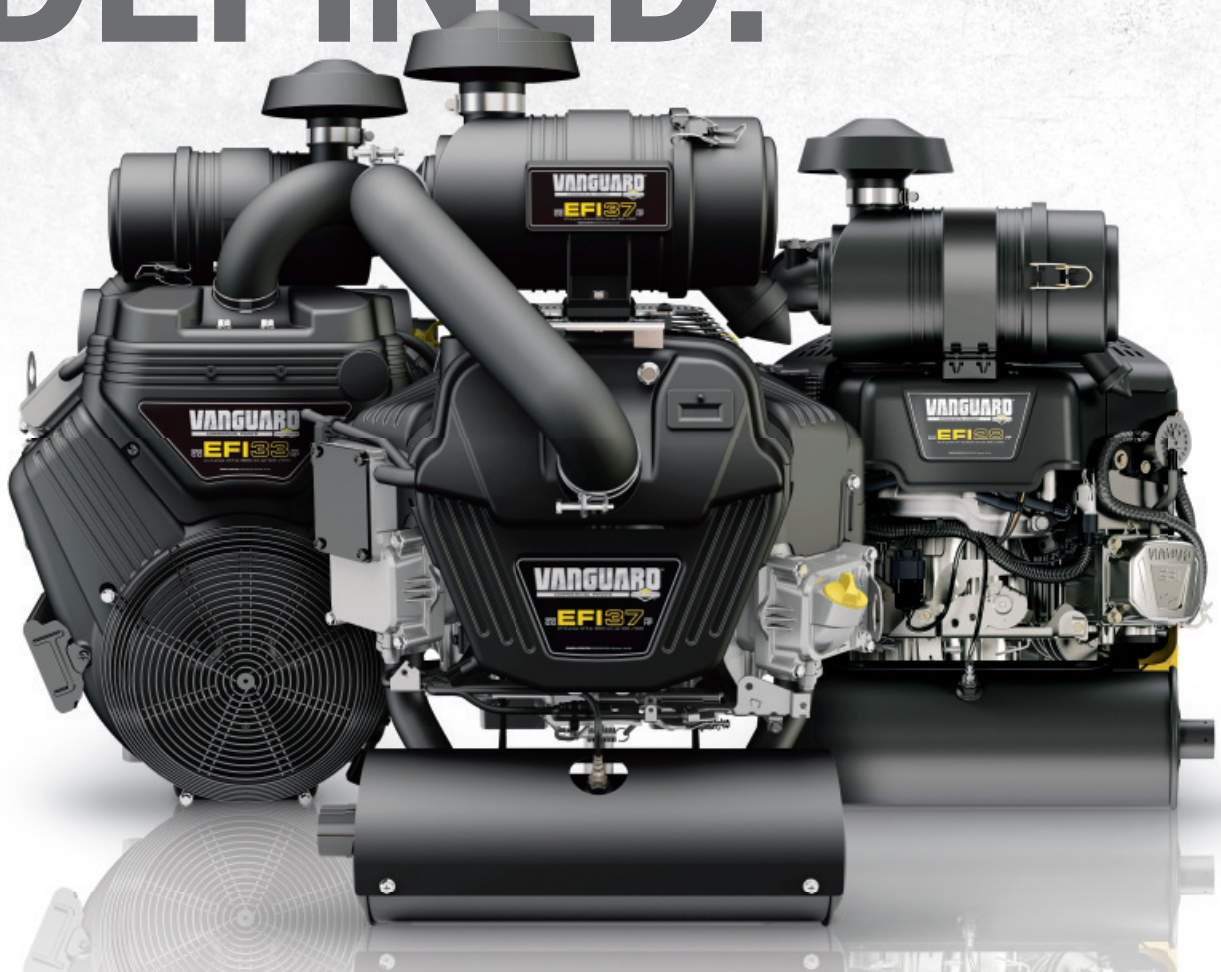
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QUICK TIP:

Look at all your nontechnician or commissioned employees to whom you pay a salary. Revisit the exemption definitions. If your employees don't meet the requirements, put them on hourly plus overtime.



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Technicians and equipment operators are nonexempt; however, they may fall under a provision called 7(i) (See below for discussion on that item). Check with your state, as some states are more stringent than the federal provisions regarding overtime and accepting 7(i) as an exemption. In any event, technicians are not the employee class affected by the rule change. Also, most customer service representatives and office workers must be paid hourly plus overtime, as they do not meet the “white collar exemptions” below. Again, these workers are not affected by the proposed rule change, as they do not qualify for exemption and must be paid hourly.

2. Exempt employees: Employees who can be paid a salary and are exempt from overtime by virtue of meeting one of the exemptions in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

What are the exemptions available to allow an employee to be paid a salary and not an hourly wage? I’ve listed the “white collar exemptions” below that qualify for employees to be paid a salary. These are the job classes that will be affected by the rule changes.

Currently, these classes are defined by their duties tests. In all cases except “highly compensated employees,” as explained below, there is a minimum salary requirement of at least \$23,660 per year. The new rule raises this amount to \$47,476 per year.

It’s this raise in the minimum salary for these “white collar exemption” classes that has caused the debate. Remember, just because you pay a staff member a salary doesn’t mean you’re correct in classifying that employee as exempt. We’ve worked with many clients who’ve learned this fact the hard way, coming up on the short end of a DOL audit.

• Administrative employees:

While many office workers, such

as customer service reps, may fall under this exemption, many do not. We see many landscape and pest companies getting trapped here during an audit when it comes to light that the employee doesn’t meet the “duties test” to use this exemption and, therefore, must be paid hourly.

• Executive employees: Most managers will fall under this category, as long as they direct the work of two or more other employees and have the ability to hire and fire or have significant influence in the decision. However, under the new rule, this manager will need to be paid a minimum annual salary of \$47,476. If he doesn’t, you may move him to hourly or give him a raise.

• Professional employees: This exemption is not usually used in our line of work. It’s used for work that is “predominately intellectual in character” such as computer engineers, teachers or other similarly skilled workers.

• Highly compensated employees: Employees earning more than \$100,000 fall into this exemption.

These are the “white collar exemptions” and the area that is affected by the changes. Remember, it’s not production staff who are affected, it’s employees to whom you pay a salary using the “white collar exemption.”

7(i) EXEMPTION AND WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

That said, in many states (check with your state DOL) technicians may qualify for an exemption called 7(i). This exemption is complex, but if it’s used properly it can be effective.

If a retail or service employer elects to use the section 7(i) overtime exemption for commissioned employees, it must meet the following three conditions:

1. The employee must be employed by a retail or service establishment;


Many firms believe that they can just pay employees a salary and not be subject to overtime—and that’s exactly what they do, right or wrong.

2. The employee’s regular rate of pay must exceed one and one-half times the applicable minimum wage for every hour worked in a workweek in which overtime hours are worked; and

3. More than half the employee’s total earnings in a period must consist of commissions.

Unless all three conditions are met, the Section 7(i) exemption is not applicable, and overtime premium pay must be paid for all hours worked over 40 in a workweek at time and a half the regular rate of pay.

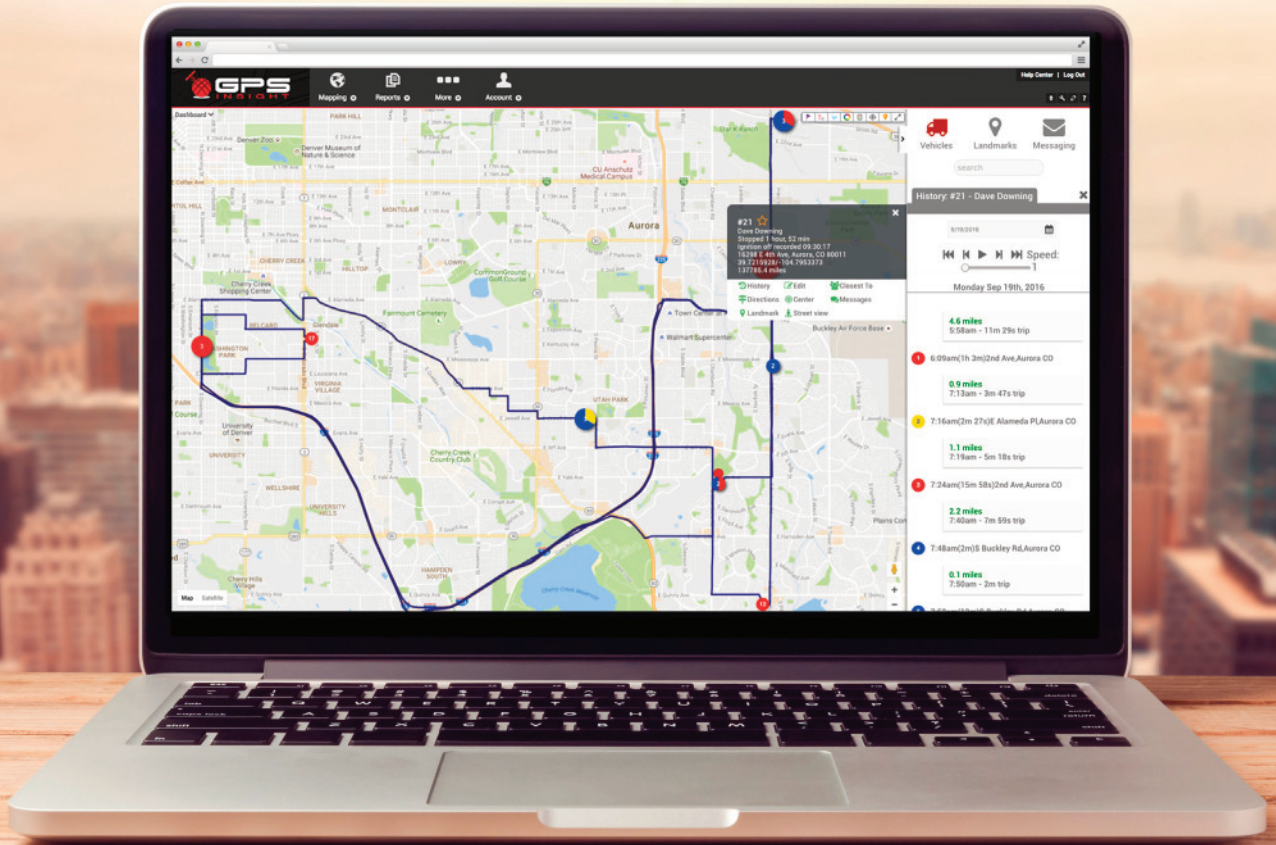
If you decide 7(i) is not for you or you’re in a state where it’s not acceptable, you must pay hourly plus overtime. You may pay production bonuses and/or commissions, but these payments must be increased by a “special” overtime rate if the employee has worked more than 40 hours.

The bottom line? Look at all your nontechnician or commissioned employees to whom you pay a salary. Revisit the exemption definitions. If your employees don’t meet the requirements, put them on hourly plus overtime. If they do meet the definitions but their salary is less than \$47,476, decide on how you’re going to comply: give them a raise or put them on hourly plus overtime. 

Gordon is a New Jersey-based CPA and owner of Turfbooks, an accounting firm that caters to land care professionals throughout the U.S. Reach him at dan@turfbooks.com.

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HIRE FOR POTENTIAL

Groom employees to step into critical positions well in advance of needing them in those roles. **BY BRUCE WILSON**

Few landscape companies would say they have enough employees who are ready to step into management positions. Most would acknowledge they need many more A-players to supply a much talked about, but rarely well-implemented, talent pipeline.

The high cost of not having trained, agile employees who are ready to be promoted affects a company where it hurts the most—with its customers' perceptions of its ability to deliver a seamless service experience. In fact, the negative impact on client retention when customer-facing employees and account managers leave have been well documented.

Without a plan to transfer processes and institutional knowledge to someone in the wings, customers may be faced with a loss in continuity, and contractors may be faced with a loss of credibility. Three ways to address the potential loss of productivity and service operations are to:

- build a pipeline-type organization for employees at all levels;
- develop a process of proactive hiring and onboarding; and
- implement a retention and training program to keep employees engaged and ready to step up.

Hiring for potential—hiring people not for what they know but for how fast they can learn—requires a plan based around talent acquisition at all times. Reactive hiring—or hiring a candidate to plug an opening—can lead to a stream of new hires with needs that disrupt a business's culture and slows its progress.


Throughout my career, I've always chosen to promote someone I believed had the potential to make a difference. I knew having well-trained employees ready to move up in the organization would be a competitive advantage. Promoting from within my company allowed me to spend time observing employee strengths and weaknesses. I knew where they would need extra guidance. I preferred coaching someone with the potential to grow to being surprised by an experienced external hire that wasn't equipped to succeed.

When I hire for potential I look for resilience and certain character traits, such as having empathy for customers and coworkers. Industry skills are less important to me as long as candidates exhibit the willingness to grow into more complex roles and demonstrate service-first sensibilities.

For a CEO concerned about the investment and overhead costs of this approach, ask yourself:

- What's the financial cost involved in hiring a replacement?
- What's the loss-of-productivity cost?
- What effects will these costs have on employees and customers?
- How will you find a suitable replacement?
- How much time and how many resources will you invest in recruiting, interviewing and onboarding?

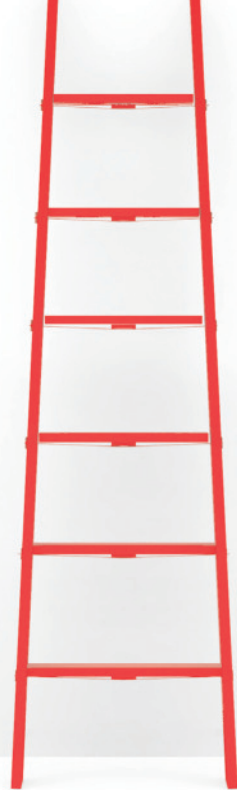
Having a number of employees who are ready to step into managerial roles ultimately will pay for itself via your ability to scale and compete more strategically on a moment's notice. When you have a potential high-performer ready to take on a larger role, you can finally terminate an underperforming employee who's eating up resources.

When a key person moves on, the impacts on employee morale and the company's financial results are significant. Avoid lost opportunities and operational hiccups by hiring for potential and grooming employees to move into critical positions well in advance of needing them. Can you afford it? I don't think you can afford not to. 

Wilson is the owner and principal of Bruce Wilson & Co., a landscape business consultancy based in Scottsdale, Ariz. Reach him at bruce.wilson@brucewilsoncompany.com.

QUICK TIP:

Hiring for potential requires a plan based around talent acquisition at all times.



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BREAK ON THROUGH



Get ordinary people to do the extraordinary more often than not through company culture.

BY KEVIN KEHOE

Running a company is exciting until it becomes a slog, isn't it? A slog is when profits sag, revenue growth slows and you feel like choking more than 50 percent of your staff to death on a daily basis. What happened? Is it typical?

It is typical. Fewer than 10 percent of all companies grow out of slog mode to become breakthrough companies. Read the book “The Breakthrough Company: How Everyday Companies Achieve Extraordinary Results” to learn how you can get out of slog mode. The basic feature of a breakthrough company is the ability to get ordinary people to do the extraordinary more often than not.

Is this a simple matter of better employee morale? Well, yes and no. Yes, in the sense that motivated people can accomplish more, but no in the sense that motivation isn't the result of a simple bonus or a human resources “employee of the month” program. Rather, it's a conscious strategy by leaders to engage employees in a way that generates genuine excitement about the company's and employees' futures.

The primary roadblock to achieving breakthrough status is the leadership bottleneck at

the top. Most leaders have strong personalities and egos that create a personality cult that revolves around pleasing the boss. This is a death trap. Companies should remove this cult of personality and replace it with the cult of the customer. The focus, then, isn't on pleasing the boss but pleasing the customer, from whom all growth and money flow. The customer is always more important than the leader.

CREATE PLATOON-LIKE COMMITMENT

When combat veterans speak about their experiences and the extraordinary things they did and why they did them, they don't speak about country or commanders first, they talk about their buddies—their platoonmates—and how they'd bleed for each other. While landscaping isn't spilling blood, we do want that sense of platoon-like commitment. Here's how to create it:

Customer first. Companies need to measure customer happiness. If customers aren't happy, companies need to do whatever it takes to please them, including offering money-back guarantees.

Treat people with dignity. Pride comes from dignity, and dignity comes from three things all leaders can do: set goals high and express belief they can be achieved; provide immediate positive and corrective coaching about performance; and keep open communication, and listen to and implement ideas from the front lines.

Watch the perks. Keeping the perks of the leadership team small creates more of an “us”

Continued on page 50

QUICK TIP:

Don't let loyalty become a liability. Don't cover for nonperformers because you feel loyal to them. Incompetence is the enemy.

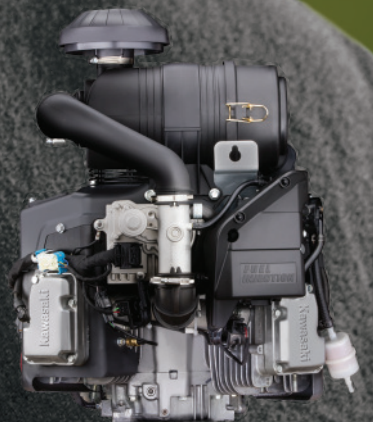
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Continued from page 48

feeling and less of a “them and us” divisive class dynamic.

Don't let loyalty become a liability. Don't cover for non-performers because you feel loyal to them. Incompetence is the enemy. In combat, it gets people killed.

Cut people in on the action. Every company needs enough profit to reinvest in replacement and growth. After that, profits can be shared. For example, measure a happiness score (on a scale of 100 percent), and track money-back guarantees. If the company makes \$500,000 in after-tax profit, the company keeps half of that for replacement and growth, leaving \$250,000 on the table. Assume there's \$50,000 in guarantee give-backs, leaving \$200,000. If the cumulative happiness score is 85 percent, this leaves \$200,000 times 85 percent, or \$170,000, available for bonuses. That's cutting people in on the action.

BUILD COMPANY CHARACTER

Company character is an ethos and set of behaviors that reflect customer service and platoon thinking. Closing-time character is an example. A customer walks into a shop at 10 minutes to close needing help repairing an

item. What happens? An employee says A).

“Come back tomorrow, we're closed.”

B). “Let's see what we can do in 10 minutes.

C). “Come in, and let's see if we can get it fixed,” regardless of how much past closing time it takes.

What's your culture:

A, B or C? That's

character, and character, as they say, is destiny.

So here's how breakthrough companies create character:

Give folks a fair deal. This one ethos creates trust and loyalty among customers and employees. Yes, you need contracts, and contracts should always be honored. But when they're not, do you focus on the spirit or the letter of the contract? Fair play focuses on the spirit. There are customers and employees you don't need, and those are the ones who focus on the letter of the contract. A fair deal is rare and valuable. Customers and employees know they can trust each other when things don't go right.

Build product excitement. You can build product excitement by introducing new services or product features, but an even better method is sharing customer service success stories with employees. Selling and delivering the product isn't nearly as exciting as knowing and understanding how that product has made people happier.

Clear goals and feedback. See the dignity bullet point above. People who know where they stand with the boss and coworkers, and get the sense they're doing better, strive even more mightily. Ordinary people start to believe they can do extraordinary things. People start to believe in each other. Everyone realizes there are no trophies for participation, only trophies for improvement.

Sacrifice performer for character. You know the dilemma—great worker but poor team attitude. This type of employee needs to change or be gone.

Follow through. Emphasize keeping promises among employees and getting things done, not participating in politics, which is the corruptive killer of character.

If you're tired of the slog and want to break through, follow the aforementioned elements of breakthrough companies. Perhaps they're not exceptionally unique, but that's the point. The best companies do the unexceptional things exceptionally, and ordinary people believe that together they can do extraordinary things. 🇺🇸

Kehoe is the owner and manager of 3PG Consulting. Reach him at kevinkehoe@me.com.

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QUICK TIP:

Quick feedback at the end of every job is extremely effective. When every foreman quickly shares in the successes of well-executed jobs, he's far more likely and motivated to bring in jobs on time and for profit.

INCENTIVIZE RIGHT

Here's the good, the bad and the ugly of profit sharing.

BY MARK BRADLEY

Incentive programs are always among the most engaging topics in business management workshops. Every owner or manager sits up straighter and leans in closer to hear how other contractors implement incentives for better productivity and efficiency. And while there's no perfect system, there are many systems better than no system at all. Following is an analysis of the benefits and pitfalls of a few.

BONUSES BASED ON JOB NET PROFIT

Simplicity	Motivation	Effectiveness
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

Why they work: Quick feedback at the end of every job is extremely effective. When every foreman quickly shares in the successes of well-executed jobs, he's far more likely and motivated to bring in jobs on time and for profit.

Why they fail: It's extremely difficult and time consuming to track net profit by job. Tracking hours accurately is a lofty challenge for many companies. Adding daily equipment, material and yard inventory tracking, as well as unused materials returned to the yard, is an immense amount of information every day. If you add variables such as warranty hours, multiple crews on one job and the fact foremen can't control overhead, the complexity thickens.

Job net-profit incentives are time and resource intensive—and they often lack accuracy. Prepare to spend half an office salary each year tracking daily information. You're also likely to miss tracking costs; therefore, job net profits are often overestimated.



BONUSES BASED ON JOB GROSS PROFIT

Simplicity	Motivation	Effectiveness
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

Why they work: Gross profit is a measurement of revenue versus job costs, which are largely (but not exclusively) controlled by the crews doing the work. Crews are incentivized to beat the hours and reduce overtime, material costs and waste. Because bonuses are calculated on a per-job basis, crews can be given prompt feedback on their successes and failures.

Why they fail: Like the aforementioned net profit example, gross profit is difficult to track. Crews even learn to “forget” to track expenses such as inventory materials as often as possible. There's also a temptation to lump as many hours as possible into nonbillable tasks, such as loading, unloading and driving. If those forgotten or unassigned costs aren't caught, jobs look more profitable.

Equipment costs also are a Catch-22. As a job cost, crews often forget to record all their daily equipment, making jobs look more profitable. If equipment is treated as overhead (to avoid daily tracking), jobs that use more-than-average equipment look far more profitable than they really are.

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There are literally hundreds of different ways owners have tried to help their staffs become engaged and share in the successes of the business. But by far and away, most owners never try at all.

Continued from page 52

BONUSES BASED ON JOB ESTIMATED VERSUS ACTUAL HOURS

Simplicity	Motivation	Effectiveness
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

Why they work: Crews exercise the most control over a single factor—man-hours. It's a simple goal that's easy to understand and relatively easy to track. The feedback also can be fairly quick because crews know at the end of each job if they stand to receive a bonus or not.

Why they fail: It's easy to give bonuses too often. Take a crew that completes three jobs. The first two are under budget by 10 hours each, and the third is over budget by 20 hours. If you'd given bonuses after the first two jobs, you're left absorbing the losses on the third job. You can mitigate this by issuing only estimated versus actual bonuses on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis, not at the end of each job.

BONUSES BASED ON COMPANY NET PROFIT

Simplicity	Motivation	Effectiveness
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

Why they work: It's based on a simple, profit-sharing formula thousands of companies throughout the world follow to help share their successes with their employees. The risk is low because a company only gives bonuses if there's net profit leftover.

Why they fail: There's far less individual accountability. High-performing crews or foremen are more likely to work just at the same level as their peers. The long gaps between bonuses make day-to-day motivation challenging.

Net profit also is a number that can be manipulated easily through depreciation, equipment purchases and overhead spending. Unless a company practices open-book management, most employees are distrustful that they're being cut their fair share. Big corporations have the need to show strong financials to shareholders; small businesses generally are inspired to keep numbers

secret and show as little profit as possible to avoid taxes. There are formulas, such as EBITA (earnings before interest, taxes and amortization), which make these calculations more "fair," but it's easy to understand why employees are skeptical.

BONUSES BASED ON REVENUE EARNED VERSUS WAGES


Simplicity	Motivation	Effectiveness
★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★

Why they work: Crews are given a simple formula: the labor ratio. Add the wages of the crew together (e.g., \$90,000) and divide by the company's or division's labor ratio (e.g., 25 percent) to determine a revenue goal for the crew (e.g., \$360,000). Simply track invoices to the crews that completed the jobs and, at the end of the year, compare revenue earned to wages paid. If the crew generates more revenue without increasing payroll, it earns a share of revenue more than its goal.

This system is based on the two factors over which crews have the most control: payroll costs (labor hours) and revenue earned (jobs completed). Warranty work, unbillable time at the yard, drive time and vendor pickups are avoided because they use valuable production hours, which cost opportunities to boost sales and bonuses.

Why they fail: Bonuses are awarded annually, usually at the end of the year. Employees have to see the big picture, or they'll lose faith. This pitfall can be mitigated by updating foremen with the revenue they generate monthly. If crews frequently share jobs, it also can be difficult to accurately credit the revenue each crew generates. The system also doesn't guarantee profitability because owners and managers must carefully manage overhead, equipment and material spending according to their budget.

There are literally hundreds of different ways owners have tried to help their staffs become engaged and share in the successes of the business. But by far and away, most owners never try at all. Incentives have been a significant factor in our success, and they remain a strategic advantage for us over many of our competitors.

Whatever system you like, you should start with the simplest one that works for you. Too many companies end up spending too much overhead salary tracking too much data nobody trusts at the end of the year. Keep it simple, keep it easy to measure and keep your crews engaged throughout the year with the results. 

Bradley is the CEO of TBG Environmental and CEO of LMN, a provider of estimating and mobile time sheet software packages. Reach him at info@golmn.com.

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CREATE A WORLD-CLASS CULTURE

Treat your internal customers as well as your external customers —if not better. **BY DAVE MURRAY**

Creating a world-class internal culture is an important piece of a business's customer service puzzle—it may even be the most important piece. All organizations need to make sure they treat their internal customers as well as, if not better than, they treat their external customers. Yet, so many times companies that want to improve their service never think about the experience of their internal customers—their employees.

When an organization doesn't focus on its internal experience, employees typically win or lose the manager lottery, meaning they work with a great manager who makes coming to work rewarding or they dread heading in each day. You've either been there or know someone who has. To jump off the manager lottery merry-go-round, you must ask difficult questions internally.

First, determine what the biggest morale issues are. What do employees complain about the most? What are the main reasons employees quit?

Companies also need to look at turnover by department first. What are the percentages of people leaving each department? When are they leaving? Are you losing associates within the first 90 days? After two years? Timing can suggest many things. Employees leaving early in their tenure can mean you're throwing too much at them too soon or overpromising during orientation and under delivering on the job. Turnover later in employees' tenures, say after one year, could mean they start to feel like a number.

Now, think about all the great things a new hire or current associate can get only from a landscape contracting or lawn care business. What are the soft benefits—those offered beyond what's required by law? It could be educational or service opportunities, things employers can start to take for granted because they're always there. Businesses have to remember the unique things they offer that aren't available elsewhere.

Here's a question that can get a little more difficult to answer and spark debate and discussion within your leadership group: How well do managers create a strong culture? Remember, a dynamic leader at the top is great, but a leader needs to be reinforced by managers and supervisors throughout an organization. Businesses can't rely on one person to establish company culture.

Here's the final set of questions: How are employees recognized and celebrated? What current systems, if any, are in place to collect and share success stories? Are managers and supervisors trained to coach and recognize in the moment?

The following are tools companies can use to improve culture, some as quickly as tomorrow:

Engagement indicator. First, make sure all hiring managers use the engagement indicator, which is an interview checklist that's a handy way to remember that, while you're asking the important questions, you're also making sure the candidate is smiling, making eye contact, engaging naturally and showing enthusiasm. Here's the reality: If a candidate can't do these things when he's there to sell himself, there's no way he'll be able to do it on behalf of your brand. The results might tell you

Continued on page 58

QUICK TIP:

Make sure all hiring managers use an interview checklist to remember that, while you're asking the important questions, you're also making sure the candidate is smiling, making eye contact, engaging naturally and showing enthusiasm.

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the person is better served in a non-customer-facing role, or maybe it's the deciding factor when the hiring manager is on the fence about a candidate.

Hiring non-negotiables. What are the things you wished new hires knew about your company? What employee behaviors (like being late) just aren't acceptable? Well, tell them. That's what hiring non-negotiables are all about. Identify what you wish everyone knew right off the bat, not what they will find out over time. What will slowly kill your company culture if new employees exude this behavior? Tell them before they start. Make sure they have a clear understanding of these things *before* they take the job.


You hear it all the time: People don't quit companies, they quit people. Do you have too many employees quitting your people?

Training tools. Now, take all this great data you've been collecting and create a training tool for your organization. Document all the best practices so you can create a guide for promoting consistency.

Identify—in an internal workshop, for example—the stages you believe are most important to your business model. Examples include recruiting; screening and hiring; and evaluations at the first week, first 90 days and first six months. Based on your findings about turn-

over, decide where you need the most attention. Do you need to add a step early on or focus farther out, say a year two and beyond?

Next, identify the standards that should be delivered to employees at each stage. What are the things managers should do consistently for employees? These can include things such as conducting a 90-day interview, or something as simple as completing an annual evaluation on time. Often, these are ideas senior leaders think are happening consistently, but many times they're not.

Remember, the most important determinant of an employee's performance and commitment to stay with an organization is the relationship he has with his immediate manager. You hear it all the time: People don't quit companies, they quit people. Do you have too many employees quitting your people? 

Murray is a senior experience consultant for The DiJulius Group, based in Cleveland. Reach him at dmurray@thedijuliusgroup.com.

CAST YOUR NET WIDER



Understand the root cases of the landscape industry talent crisis. Then, find ways to promote the industry and your company.

BY BEN GANDY

As I travel throughout the country, it's become increasingly clear the single overwhelming constraint facing landscape contractors is talent. From entry level to middle management to executive leadership, finding people to fill positions has become a bigger issue than raising capital, finding new business or even technical skills. Some landscape company executives are afraid of growth simply because they can't find people to do the work.

The best opportunity to alleviate the problem might be to devise strategies to attract people from outside the green industry. To do so, the industry will have to implement ways to promote itself and invest resources to do so. But first, let's look at how we got here.

There are a number of possible root causes for the current crisis, including worker availability, wage rates, lack of perceived opportunities and industry image. So let's examine these because the closer we come to identifying the root cause, the better our solutions will be.

Availability. Are there no young, ambitious, smart people looking to contribute? Certainly, there are. Our population is growing and, compared to many Western



Some landscape company executives are afraid of growth simply because they can't find people to do the work.

countries, we have fairly young demographics. In fact, the second largest segment of our population is people 15 to 30 years old (the first is people 40 to 55 years old, but not by much). The U.S. population is among the highest of industrialized countries. Unemployment is low, and the market for workers is competitive, but availability isn't the sole cause of our labor crisis. Available people exist, they're just not showing up at our doors.

Opportunities. Are there no opportunities in our industry? We all know that's not the case. Most everyone reading this article has advanced from an entry or lower level position to their current position. We work with a number of landscape businesses and can't think of any that aren't seeking more leaders. Not only are there plenty of opportunities in the landscape business, but compensation rates at all levels have been increasing considerably for several years. Recently, a company owner in the Northeast was willing to let a candidate write his own salary and guaranteed bonus plan just to get him on board.

Wages. The green industry hasn't been famous for high wages; however, entry-level wages have risen 20 percent to 35 percent throughout the country during the past five years. This has been the steepest wage escalation we've ever witnessed—increasing more quickly than the pace at which we've been able to raise prices for our services. While we still can't say the industry pays above market wages, we can say its wage rates are comparable and competitive with other industries—such as hospitality, food service, manufacturing, retail and warehousing—for

the same levels of responsibility. Wage pressure will continue in this competitive environment, but we don't know of any company unwilling to pay what it has to get people in the door.

Image. While availability and wage rates are partially responsible for the labor crisis, we don't believe these are the biggest drivers. The fact is, in many markets, it seems landscape businesses

all compete for the same set of employees. At the field level, these are mostly first- or second-generation Americans with industry experience and a solid work ethic. At the managerial level, the group seems to be comprised of a mix of people who've advanced from the field, are the product of a horticultural program or are recruited from other industries. Regardless, trading the same employees back and forth won't solve the labor crisis.

LOOKING OUTSIDE

It seems the pool of people working outside our industry holds much more promise than the limited world of those who are currently working in it. The industry needs to answer two questions: How can we attract people who are entering the hospitality, construction, food service, manufacturing, retail, warehousing and transportation industries? Why do these industry segments seem like better options? The industry is suffering from an image problem. It is unknown and underappreciated, and it's our own fault.

Devising strategies to become better known and appreciated will attract talent from other industries and save us from cannibalizing ourselves. Self-promotion is nothing new, but it's become an investment the industry can't afford to skip or wait on. Participation in school programs, volunteer events, placement offices and traditional marketing avenues is becoming a necessity. Many landscape companies offer benefits and compensation levels comparable to businesses right around the corner, but no one will know it if we don't tell the story.

Speaking of good stories, we need to be cognizant of our own self-image and how we talk about ourselves. It's frustrating to hear people say we struggle to attract talent because the work is difficult and outdoors. Have you ever watched a football practice? Our industry is full of former athletes who took a landscape job because they didn't want to work indoors all day.

There are no silver bullets, but self-promotion will help. The story of how you became a leader in a great industry is an exciting story. Share it passionately, and people will want to work with you. 📣

Gandy is a partner at with Envisor Consulting, which offers services to landscape business owners and professional property managers. Reach him at bengandy@envisorco.com.

QUICK TIP:

Devising strategies to become better known and appreciated will attract talent from other industries and save us from cannibalizing ourselves.

QUICK TIP:

Resolve a retention problem *before* you launch a recruiting campaign.

Tune up your retention, then follow up with recruiting. **BY BILL ARMAN**

KEEP YOUR KEEPERS

Which comes first, retention or recruiting? The answer is both. As if there aren't enough challenges for landscape contractors, it's apparent landscape businesses better be *really* good at recruiting and retaining the *right* people. The job market has shifted from an employer's market to an employee's market.

Here's what that means to landscape contractors and their businesses:

- An improved construction market means your landscape employees are prime targets.
- Employees are leaving their employers for higher paying positions.
- Studies show that at least 20 percent of employees are seeking new jobs.
- Employers using the H-2B guest-worker visa program are learning it's becoming more unreliable. Additionally, if a company has been relying on the H-2B program, its recruiting skills likely have become rusty or nonexistent.

It's game on, folks. Retention and recruiting must be at the top of every landscape contractor's list of areas to tune up. All organizations must be good at the people part of business to achieve sustainable

success and take advantage of a robust economy.

5 WAYS TO RETAIN

Let's look at five ways you can retain employees.

1. Determine if you have retention or recruiting problems.

If good employees are leaving and you can't find good ones to replace them, you have a retention problem. Fixing your employee program might require a work culture makeover and professional help. If so, resolve it *before* you launch a recruiting campaign. If you can't keep the good ones and can't fix the problem, it doesn't make sense to recruit more people—only to lose them because some areas in your organization need to be fixed.

Ask yourself why people are leaving, and determine any patterns. Also, find out why people stay. The goal is to reduce or eliminate the biggest reasons employees leave and emphasize and improve the reasons they stay. Conduct exit interviews, and hold onboarding meetings. Learn why people leave and why they stay, and build from there.

2. Build and shape the right culture. Every company has its own culture. How would you describe yours? Does it need work? Remember,

this can be one of your most attractive recruiting and retention tools or, if it's not in good shape, your worst. Conduct employee surveys annually with a third party.

Make hiring and onboarding a positive experience for new employees. Focus on ensuring their safety and providing them with the proper tools to become positive, productive employees. Upgrade this process. Include a piece about your culture and values. Ensure they feel welcome and appreciated. Include and involve leaders and owners.

3. Pay rates. When was the last time you looked at how competitive your pay rates are? Take a good look at them, and make sure you're in line and up to date in this area.

4. Be a good leader. Consider yourself and your leaders. A poor leader or boss is one of the main reasons why employees leave.

5. Take stock and good care of what you have. Know what performance and potential levels employees possess. Rate and rank your employees. Prioritize whom you need to focus on, and know what's needed to keep your keepers. Identify development needs and retention strategies.

BRING 'EM ON BOARD

Once you've stabilized your retention strategies, sharpen your tools and skills to build your recruiting strategy. Following are tips I've used during the past 35 years.

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READY WHEN YOU ARE

Remember, it's all about people. Always remember your success includes the people at the core of your business.

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Identify your needs.


Have a clear understanding of whom you need and when you need him. Develop a sense of priority. Start with the highest level, and work your way down. Think of this before you're desperately in need of new employees. Know the average time it takes to find the right person.

Identify your target candidate. Build candi-

date selection criteria that include the must-haves and the would-like-to-haves. Remember, not everyone has the exact knowledge, skills and experience you expect. I always look for humble, hungry and smart people. I can train them on the technical parts of the business.

Prepare and sharpen your tools. Don't recruit randomly. Examples of the basic tools you need are listed in the sidebar below.

Most companies are too busy to fine-tune their recruiting and hiring processes. However, a step-by-step process is critical. Remember, it's a hot market for good people. Don't let a hot candidate turn cold on you because you don't have a good recruiting and hiring process in place. Such a process includes sourcing, screening, interviewing, ride-alongs or shadowing existing employees, reference checks, background checks, job offers, drug testing, physicals and onboarding.

So there you have it, or at least a good start to answering the question: Which comes first, recruiting or retention? Remember, it's all about people. Always remember your success includes the people at the core of your business. Your ability to find and keep them is essential. 

Arman is co-founder of The Harvest Group, a landscape business consulting group. Reach him at bill@harvestlandscapeconsulting.com.

Must-have recruiting tools

Develop or update the following materials to improve your recruiting process.

- Revised competitive pay rates per position;
- A prepared vision and mission statement;
- A roadmap of how employees can grow with your company;
- Updated job descriptions;
- Screening and interview questions;
- Job offer letters;
- Advertising pieces;
- A referral fee and a sign-on bonus program;
- A positive environment (culture);
- A neat, clean yard, office, trucks, etc.; and
- Your elevator speech with compelling reasons to join your company versus the competition.

FIND TALENT + HIRE SMOOTHLY

Prepared managers don't rely on luck to find great prospects; they use existing employees and a cohesive hiring process.

BY JAMES CALI AND JASON NEW

Like ideal clients, new qualified employees don't just walk in your front door. So how do you find them? You have to market yourself as a valued employer and your company as a great place for employees to spend their careers by using existing employees and creating brand awareness.

The best place to find new talent is through a referral program manned by your existing employees. You can open it to entry-level positions all the way up to management. Reward employees for bringing in new valuable employees. Typically, they'll only refer the best because they don't want you to hire bad employees or those who reflect poorly on them.

Consider a "1, 2, 3" rewards program. We know once an employee makes it six months, chances are he'll stay. And if he lasts one year, he's really there to stay. So, consider rewarding employees \$100 at month one, \$200 at month six and \$300 at month 12. Present all checks in front of employees. Nothing beats rewarding your own staff members for building their team. This type of program beats temp services, which can cost thousands of dollars.

Your website and social media channels are invaluable tools to create brand awareness. Generally, they create the first impression future employees have of your company. Social media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, provide insights into your organization. Consider employee stories (not just advertisements about your



The best place to find new employees is through a referral program manned by your existing employees.

For a management candidate, a few hours with key employees and crew members at a client site will highlight his or her capabilities and natural tendencies. Regardless of the role, determine if he or she understands what you need and how he or she handles specific situations.

Once interviewing is complete—and considering the candidate is right—make an offer. Consider what the market is paying. Pay at or above that rate without playing “let’s make a deal.” Get him excited about his new role from the start. And don’t dismiss talented candidates who want more than you want to offer initially. For example, if they want \$6,000 more a year, do it. That’s only \$500 more a month, and the right person will drive more profit than that. Plus, if you have an appropriate review process in place, you’ll know if they’re not providing the right results soon enough.

Make offers before a weekend so a candidate has time to tell his family and close friends about his new opportunity. Treat this time with a sense of urgency, and plan to speak with the chosen candidate soon. If an offer is presented on Friday, reach out Monday morning if you haven’t received a reply.

Once an offer is accepted, keep the lines of communication open. This crucial time is when candidates could change their minds, so be there to continue to support them. Also, don’t stop interviewing new candidates, even if you don’t need anyone at the time. Plant the seed for the future, and build a bench for your crew because great employees are difficult to find.

Finally, when a new hire walks through the door on his first day, make sure he has the right first impression. Be prepared, and put him to work the first day. An employee orientation that includes the history of the business is a must. Then, depending on the role, have the following ready, if they apply: uniform; cell phone; vehicle; computer; password; field equipment; business card; credit card; and gate codes.

Remember the five Ps—proper planning prevents poor performance. Prepared managers don’t need to rely on luck to find great prospects; they bring them through the door. ☞

Cali and New, former landscape company executives, are the principals of McFarlin Stanford, a business-coaching firm based in Dallas. Reach them at james.calli@mcfarlinstanford.com and jason.new@mcfarlinstanford.com.

services), pictures showing your crews in training or hard at work, and companywide or employee accolades.

You also may choose to advertise for employee roles through Craigslist or traditional methods, such as magnetic signs on vehicles or church bulletins. Craigslist is effective for many companies when they tell their story and why they’re looking for candidates to join them. Magnetic signs should say more than “we’re hiring.” Elaborate on what roles you’re seeking, and use different magnets for different roles. Lastly, don’t underestimate the value of

church bulletins, where you can directly convey your hiring needs.

QUICK TIP:

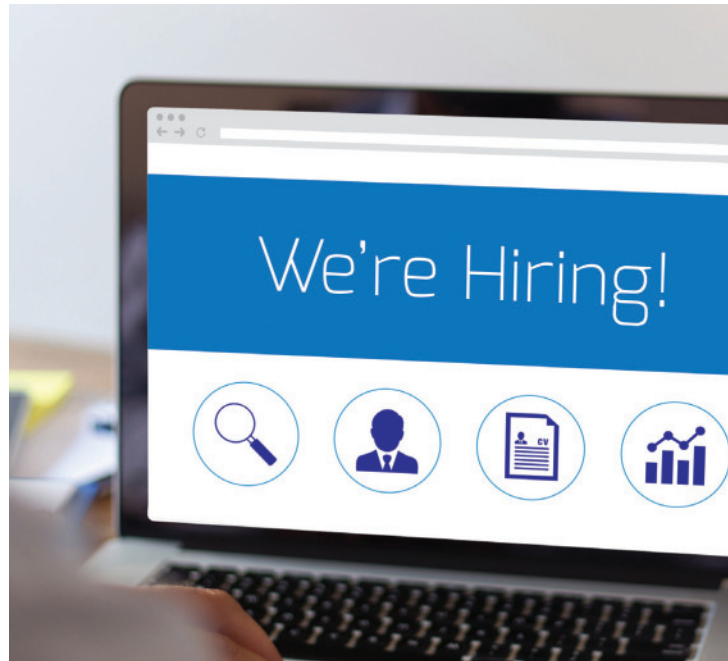
Remember the five Ps – proper planning prevents poor performance.

An initial phone interview is important even for a crew member. Why waste time continuing the conversation past the initial interview if you can’t have a meaningful conversation on the phone? The second interview differs for management needs. It can be held over a meal with key company leaders. Find out if the candidate can carry a conversation with you, future clients and your employees. Can he carry a conversation with more than one person at a time? Is he respectful to the wait staff? The answers to these questions will reveal a person’s character, values and ability to relate to others.

The second (with crew members) and third (with management) interviews should be conducted at the office. Be the example of what you expect. For example, be on time for the interview, and don’t make candidates wait. If they have to wait, provide refreshments and treat them as professionals. Also, expect the same from your employees when they interview candidates. Remember, vetting candidates needs to be companywide. As part of an office visit, include a field trial that could be in the garden at the office.

BE A DIGITAL RECRUITING SUCCESS

Effective digital recruiting requires captivating storytelling. **BY JEFF KORHAN**



If you could have five minutes of your dream candidate's attention, what would you say to dazzle him? Imagine what your ideal candidate would like to hear. Desperate companies tend to throw everything they can offer into the conversation, hoping to get lucky. This is like trying to marry someone right after a first date. It doesn't work that way.

You can see the marketing version of this scenario on the home page of many company websites in the green industry. In addition to oodles of pictures, you can see testimonials and awards, buttons for a dozen business specialties and links to the two dozen communities the company serves. This approach is confusing, lacks pizzazz and fails to inspire action. If you want to be a digital recruiting sensation, start thinking like savvy digital marketers. They know one simple truth: Your digital media need only to convince potential candidates to take a single action that sets them on a path to success with your business. If they do that, you've earned permission to have them act again and engage more until they've reached the desired destination—theirs and yours. That candidate's journey with your company ideally promises even more than he imagined.

QUICK TIP:

Make sure your "career opportunities" page tells a story that distinguishes your company from others, so superstar candidates know you're speaking to them.

How that's accomplished is older than the dirt beneath your feet. It's through storytelling—one compelling story after another, with a specific purpose in mind. You have that, right? Here's the secret. If you can learn how to tell your story in a digital environment,

you can tell it on any stage at a moment's notice.

The Landscape Digital Institute and LM recently surveyed the industry to create the "2016 Landscape Industry Digital Marketing Report." One of our findings was that only 11 percent of landscape companies have written marketing channel objectives, which suggests the "spray and pray" approach is driving their marketing and recruiting efforts. And let's be clear about one thing—recruiting is marketing.

So let's return to that five-minute interview with your dream candidate. What specific outcome are you hoping to achieve? When you commit to that objective in writing, you're that much closer to knowing the story that will influence his decision. This is how skilled website developers make sure every page works together to deliver a silky smooth digital experience.

I would guess somewhere on your website is a call to action for career opportunities. Does that page simply collect information, or does it tell a story that captures the X factor that distinguishes your company from others, so superstar candidates know you're speaking to them?

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS NEED OBJECTIVES

Kelly Dowell, business developer at Dowco Enterprises in St. Louis, conducts live leadership and lifestyle development events for the company's employees under the umbrella of Dowco Academy. Guests are invited. This training is another communication channel. As such, it has specific channel objectives that keep the curriculum focused

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on achieving them. Dowco Academy adds value for employees because it helps build trust and confidence about working for a company that cares about their well-being. That's great marketing for recruiting and hiring. Better still would be to invite outsiders who might be potential candidates and give them access to that value for free.

The story of what it's like to work for Dowco is embedded in every one of its live events, so working at Dowco means more than just earning a paycheck. That experience develops new relationships and creates a buzz in the local communities the company serves. Dowco plans to make this training available online, which is another channel that needs its own objectives. One purpose of online training is to migrate people into the live training where they can get the full experience.

HOW DIGITAL MARKETING WORKS

When I was writing my book, "Built-In Social: Essential Social Marketing Practices for Every Small Business," I came across an article on LinkedIn about a recruiter who noted that every job interview question can be distilled down to three:

- Do you want the job?
- Can you handle the work?
- Will we enjoy working with you?


My reaction at the time was that's exactly how digital marketing works. So I dedicated a few pages of the book to explain why. Just as a job candidate has to prove his fit, a company needs to show buyers it really wants their

Let's be clear about one thing—recruiting is marketing.

business, has the expertise to handle it and that everything about the experience will be remarkable.

Recruitment, marketing is a process of taking an individual on a journey with an uncertain destination. For that journey to be everything it can be, candidates have to tell themselves a story

that validates their decision to join your company. Later, they'll use the story to justify it again for their spouse, friends or boss, so it has to be a good one.

Your job is to help your employees tell a story that sizzles. You can only do that by mapping out the journey so all employees know the right stories to tell at the right time. That's what will dazzle, inspire and spark change for every candidate your business discovers. 

Korhan is a green industry veteran, speaker and consultant. He's the author of "Built-In Social" and founder of Landscape Digital Institute. Reach him at JeffKoran.com.

TROUBLE TRACKING LABOR COSTS?

Consider these ideas that use accounting software.

BY MONICA MUIR

Keeping up with job costs is crucial for your business, but job labor is definitely one aspect of overall job costs to watch more closely. Following are considerations for tracking labor costs in six areas with your accounting software.

Payroll. Do you outsource your payroll, do it in-house or some combination? For some, it might depend on staffing, such as how many employees you have or who on staff handles payroll. Depending on the software you use, you might find that by entering paychecks in your accounting software you'll be able to generate more accurate job-costing data. If you outsource your payroll, there might be workarounds that enable you to see job-costed labor in your accounting software. Because your invoices and bills are usually there, it's easier to have reporting in one place.

Hiring checklist. If you create paychecks from your accounting software, then you'll have to set up all wage information for each employee. For those who experience those mad rushes in the spring, it can be quite a task to have to set them all up quickly and accurately. See if your software supplier has a hiring wizard feature that can walk you through the necessary steps. If not, create a hiring checklist. Many times bookkeepers (especially new ones) don't know all the information they need to gather, such as I-9s or reporting new hires to the

Continued on page 68

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Continued from page 66

state. And in the hectic pace of early spring, it can be easy to miss a step. A checklist helps ensure all steps are completed, even if they're not all done at once.

Templates. When you do payroll in-house, try to create a basic template so you can set up employees quicker. Here are options:

- Perhaps most are paid hourly, so you can have an hourly wage ready to go. Then, just the rate needs changing.
- The same might be for overtime. Maybe there are other common wage considerations.
- If most employees live in the same state, set a default state for withholding. Then, you'd need to change only those living in different states.
- Maybe most employees are single or married. If so, then perhaps state or federal filing status can be set up in the template, too.

If you outsource payroll, ask about importing options. Even importing a basic journal entry can save time; but sometimes you have more importing options that could yield better job-cost reporting.

Workers' compensation. Can your software or payroll product track workers' comp? If so, that can save time during workers' comp audits and give you an idea if you'll owe additional money or receive a refund. Also, workers' comp products work on a pay-as-you-go option, making it easier on cash flow. (You owe more when you have more working, and you pay less when your workforce is smaller.) This can reduce the number of surprises come audit time.


Time tracking. Time on the job is a crucial factor in job costing and one that can be more difficult to control, but it definitely needs monitoring. Entering the time can be time consuming, especially for the maintenance crews because they work in so many different places in one week. So, look for ways to quicken data entry. For example, is there a way to enter the time for the crew versus individual employees? That can be a huge time-saver.

Also, there are many industry- and task-specific products that let crews track time in the field on their mobile devices and integrate that time into the company's accounting software. This feature not only saves a

lot of time, it tends to be more accurate. In many cases, the software includes GPS tracking so you know employees are actually on the job. Many of these products also allow foreman to track the time for the crew versus individual employees. Some also have a Spanish-language option.

Time on the job is a crucial factor in job costing and one that can be more difficult to control, but it definitely needs monitoring.

Reporting. Look to see what reporting you can generate that will show hours and dollars for time on the job. Predesigned reports might be available, or you might need to customize reports to generate the information you want. These reports might be found in your payroll reports, or there may be a group of job-cost reports that can give you the data you want.

You might not be sure how much of the aforementioned can be done in your accounting software or how. You also might find your bookkeeper doesn't always have the correct answers. Sometimes it's worth reaching out to a professional who works with accounting software so he or she can tell you what's possible and what's not. Then you can map out the ways to generate the data you need so you can account for your labor costs. 

Muir is a green industry accountant with Muir & Associates. She can be reached at monica.muir@muirassoc.com.

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There are many industry- and task-specific products that let crews track time in the field on their mobile devices and integrate that time into the company's accounting software.



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ATTRACT GEN Y

Yield higher quality applicants by understanding young workers. **BY TERRY DELANY**

I know, I know...millennials are lazy, tree-hugging, coffee-swilling liberal hipsters, right? Also known as Gen Y and “Generation Me,” this group of potential employees is believed to be difficult to attract and almost impossible to retain for any length of time. But that’s not necessarily so. Research indicates that if you put in the work to understand this breed of employee, you can find some diamonds in the rough.

If I had to choose just one thing to attract millennials, I’d build the most unbelievable, fun company culture I could. I’d sink a ton of money into making sure every employee had a great day, every day. I’d have my competition’s employees lining up to apply for jobs at my company because they heard about how awe-

some it was to work here. I’d let potential superstar applicants talk to my crew members so they could hear about my great company straight from the horse’s mouth.

To build an exciting company culture, try new things, try not to be like every other landscape company and try to have a fantastic time. If you do these things well, you’ll rarely have to search for great applicants. Word will spread quickly that if potential employees want to work for the best, they should apply for jobs at your company.

Building a company culture like the one I’m describing takes time, effort and money, but the results will be outstanding. Plus, you’ll achieve two great returns for the price of one.

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WEB EXTRA:

To download a survey you can use to help employees find their common passion, visit the Web Extras section at LandscapeManagement.net.



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Continued from page 70

First, current employees will be happy, and happy employees generally do outstanding work. Second, your recruiting will start to yield a higher quality applicant.

The simple fact is millennials do their research. They want to work for the best company, not the first one to offer them a job. So, are you going to keep recruiting the way you always have, or are you ready to shake it up, have some fun and open the floodgates to the best applicants?

We recently surveyed a 25-employee service company that was staffed entirely with millennials. The results fell in line with results we've seen from other companies staffed heavily with millennials.

Following are five benefits to ponder if you'd like to attract and retain millennials.

1. Flexible schedules. The staff overwhelmingly desired more flexible schedules. Requests included shorter workdays, time off when their children were sick and a three-day workweek. The best way to solve this problem is to implement a job-sharing program. In essence, if you have full-time slots for 15 workers, hire 20 to 25 workers and divide the available hours among them. Using part-time employees this way lessens

your chances of being understaffed on any given day and might mean you can reduce government-mandated benefits paid to full-time employees.

2. Community involvement.

More than 50 percent of the staff said they'd like to see their company be more involved with volunteerism in their community. Make sure you involve your employees when choosing where the company will volunteer. Dictating which causes receive the benefits of your company's goodwill can cause your employees to reject being involved. Find a common interest.

3. Insurance. The majority of respondents requested dental, vision and life insurance. The majority of your employees are looking for these traditional benefits. Find a qualified insurance broker, and let it do the work to shop for the best rates for your company.

4. Paid vacation. This was the No. 1 most requested (75 percent of employees) benefit in the survey. Many millennials live paycheck to paycheck, but they also place a high priority on time with their families. This means that even though they value time away from work, most can't afford to lose that week of pay while they're gone.

If I had to choose just one thing to attract millennials, I'd build the most unbelievable, fun company culture I could.

5. Social activities. There was significant interest in creating more opportunities for social events with coworkers outside of work. Most respondents indicated they wanted to include their families in these events, too. Consider ideas like an evening at the bowling alley, a day on the lake or a get-together at the local pizza place. These don't have to be expensive events. Again, involve your team when selecting the type of event to ensure a good turnout.

Put in the work, and start making changes now to attract these tech-savvy, curious and creative millennials. They can even be fiercely loyal if they love the work they do, are constantly challenged and believe their company is making a difference—not just a profit. ☒

Delany is a partner at Davis+Delany, which helps service companies attract, select and retain hourly employees. Reach him at terry@davisdelany.com.



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As an Owner, Manager, CFO and Industry Consultant, Dan has been involved with the development of several service companies from inception to \$15 million in annual sales levels and beyond.

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Get in the

GAME

Used strategically, early order programs can be a winning proposition.

BY MARISA PALMIERI

For as long as Mark Leahy can remember, he's been looking for a deal. He recalls stocking up on bags of fertilizer in the early days when he ran his company out of a barn.

"I would literally stack them by hand up to the ceiling in the one stall I knew wouldn't get wet," he says.

So it's no surprise he's a proponent of chemical and fertilizer suppliers' early order programs (EOPs).

"We're usually saving 10 percent on our overall cost, so that just makes us more competitive," says Leahy, president of Blades of Green, a \$5.3 million lawn care and pest control company based in Edgewater, Md. "Instead of buying product as needed, you're buying it upfront and getting a better price."



Mark Leahy

Although Leahy and others deride EOPs for being a bit of "a game" due to their complexity and fine-print requirements, it's a game worth playing to get a significant discount, they say.

The discounts come in terms of percentages off, cash rebates, extended payment terms and even spiff money.

"You're talking about bottom line dollars," says Doug Cash, vice president of Arbor-Nomics Turf, a Norcross, Ga.-based lawn care company with around \$10 million in annual revenue. "I think a lot of people hesitate because it's a lot of money and they're not good at reading the tea leaves, but if you bury your head in the sand, you're never going to grow at all."



Doug Cash

“If the square footages are correct on your properties, you can dial in purchasing pretty darn close.”

—DOUG CASH, ARBOR-NOMICS TURF

GAME PLAN

Cash, who focuses on preemergent herbicides and fungicides from manufacturers like Syngenta and Bayer for his EOP purchases, says he’s participated in these programs as long as they’ve been around. But the company has gotten more aggressive with early ordering in recent years.

“Instead of inching into the purchases, I do better due diligence in calculating what I’m going to need for that season based on manageable growth,” he says. “It’s a lot more thorough of a process, so I can buy more and save more.”

To get Arbor-Nomics’ EOP purchasing just right, the company has committed to having an accurate square footage on record for every property it services.

These measurements are documented in the company’s software system, so Cash can run a report that tells him how many thousands of square feet the company treats by grass type, which drives product selections and quantities.

Every Arbor-Nomics vehicle is outfitted with a measuring wheel and the company’s technicians are trained to remeasure a property if they believe it’s incorrect.

“If the square footages are correct on your properties, you can dial in purchasing pretty darn close,” he says.

Before focusing on square footages, Arbor-Nomics made EOP purchasing decisions based on dollar revenue assumptions, like many companies do.

Many companies also price their lawns based on rough estimates, which Cash doesn’t recommend.

“If people are ball-parking prices, that gets dangerous,” he says. “It’s easier to ball-park if you’re a one-truck operation, but eventually you have to

go to a more scientific method and that has to be knowing your square footages.”

CASH STRATEGY

Leahy agrees you have to “know your numbers,” and he says you must watch your cash. Blades of Green’s approach is to participate in EOPs to get a lower price on the products it would buy anyway and spend money so it’s off the books by the end of the calendar year.

“That reduces our taxable income for the year,” he says. “There’s no reason to pay taxes on it if you know you’re going to buy the product anyway.”

Plus, Leahy says the company typically makes its EOP purchases with an American Express card, earning credit card points and 45 extra days to pay.

He prefers to take the larger percentage discount upfront rather than take extended payment terms.

“A lot of guys buy stuff and don’t pay until May, June or July, but they’re going to lose the 4-5 percent discount that I take advantage of,” Leahy says.

It works for Blades of Green, but he acknowledges it’s a risk to tie up cash in inventory.

“It’s a fine line, and you have to know you’re going to be able make it,” he says.

When it comes time for EOP purchasing, Leahy recommends leaning on your suppliers for

guidance. He meets with three distributor representatives starting in October to plan purchases for the following year.

“Always try to use a supplier who will do the paperwork for you,” he says, and be careful if you’re buying the same product from two different vendors. For example, he buys liquid Dimension from one vendor but fertilizer with Dimension from another. “Make sure they’re both submitting paperwork for you or, if not, you’re getting receipts,” he says.

Adam Linnemann, owner of Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping in Columbia, Ill., makes his EOP purchases in September at the annual BWI Expo in Nashville.



Adam Linnemann

“We’re usually saving 10 percent on our overall cost, so that just makes us more competitive.”

—MARK LEAHY, BLADES OF GREEN



BWI Cos. is a regional distributor based in Texarkana, Texas.

This year Linnemann committed to about \$65,000 worth of purchases there, primarily fertilizer, for his full-service company. The benefits, for him, are extended terms and also the overall product discounts, which he says can be around 20 percent. At the end of the event, the distributor doles out cash back in the form of account credits or Visa gift cards.

He’s been participating in EOPs for about five or six years, since he reached the purchasing level to get a complimentary trip to the Expo.

“Before that, I hadn’t reached that level and didn’t realize it was an opportunity,” Linnemann says. “I recommend checking with your suppliers to see what they have—talk to the reps.”

Finally, remember to ask if it’s possible to stack EOPs with regular distributor offers, Leahy says, such receive 3 percent off if you pay by the fifteenth of the month. “That just adds to the savings,” he says.

RISK AND REWARD

Of course, there are challenges and risks to buying early, one of which is storage. Many companies don’t have the space to store pallets of materials.

“What happens if a building catches fire or there’s a leak or accident? You could lose product that way, but you should have insurance for that,” Leahy says.

One solution is to see if your distributors can hold the product for you, lawn care operators say. Typically, they like you to take the product as soon as possible, but it doesn’t hurt to ask.

Price fluctuations are another risk. Both the seed and fertilizer markets are susceptible to major swings.

“The market fluctuates so much,” Linnemann says. “Grass seed, for instance, the price is cheap right now. It’s the time to buy.”

Fertilizer prices are usually cheaper in the fall and pricier in the spring and summer, but “every once in awhile it will flip-flop on you,” Leahy says. “Fertilizer is a commodity.”

Cash acknowledges that for some people, it’s too big of a gamble to buy early and use up your cash or even to commit now and pay later, but he encourages LCOs to put in the time to plan ahead and take advantage of the savings.

“Once you start doing it, it becomes part of your business plan,” Cash says. “Even if you bought dead even with last year’s usage, it would be a victory.”

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Strobe 2L	1 Gallon	2 x 1 gal	Buy 2 cases, receive	\$100.00	\$25.00 per gallon
			Buy 5 cases, receive	\$300.00	\$30.00 per gallon
Nimitz Pro G	40 lb	40 lb pail	Buy 2 pails, receive	\$75.00	\$37.50 per pail
			Buy 6 pails, receive	\$300.00	\$50.00 per pail
Taurus Trio G	30 lb	30 lb bag	Buy 6 bags, receive	\$50.00	\$8.33 per bag
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Foursome	30 Gallon	30 Gallon Drum	Buy 2 drums, receive	\$150.00	\$2.50 per gallon
			Buy 5 drums, receive	\$550.00	\$3.67 per gallon
2DQ	1 Gallon	4 x 1 gal	Buy 3 cases, receive	\$25.00	\$2.08 per gallon
			Buy 5 cases, receive	\$50.00	\$2.50 per gallon
2DQ	2.5 Gallon	2 x 2.5 gal	Buy 2 cases, receive	\$25.00	\$2.50 per gallon
			Buy 5 cases, receive	\$75.00	\$3.00 per gallon

NEED TO KNOW

Deadline: **Dec. 9, 2016**

Website: Quali-Pro.com/promotions

Syngenta

GreenTrust 365 Lawn & Landscape Program

Planning a budget is one thing. Solving a year's worth of problems – that takes a conversation or two. GreenTrust® 365 gives you the biggest savings on proven lawn and landscape products throughout the season. Strengthen your purchasing power with all these program benefits.
Early Order Period Oct. 1, 2016–Feb. 28, 2017



YEARLONG REBATES

Spend at least \$5,000 on Qualifying Products during the Early Order Period - Oct. 1, 2016–Feb. 28, 2017 - to lock in your yearlong rebate. Earn **an additional 3% rebate on top of your yearlong rebate, which is valid on all purchases of Barricade® brand herbicides** during the Program Year.

SAVINGS SNAPSHOT

Your yearlong rebate ranges from 5% all the way up to 9%. This percentage is determined by the dollar value of Qualifying Products purchased during the Early Order Period.

Dollar Value of Qualifying Products purchased during the Early Order Period	Yearlong rebate percentage
\$5,000 to < \$10,000	5%
\$10,000 to < \$20,000	6%
\$20,000 to < \$30,000	7%
\$30,000 to < \$40,000	8%
\$40,000 +	9%

Acelepryn, is not for Sale, Sale Into, Distribution and/or Use in Nassau, Suffolk, Kings, Queens Counties of New York State.

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NEED TO KNOW

Rebate Deadline: **February 28, 2017**

Pallet & GreenTrust Rewards Deadline: **December 7, 2017**

Website: **GreenTrust365.com**





NEW: GREENTRUST REWARDS + ACELEPRYN BRAND BONUS

Earn more with GreenTrust Rewards. Every dollar spent in October and November earns 2X the points. Plus, you can earn up to an additional 10,000 GreenTrust Rewards points with the Acelepryn® insecticide Points Bonus, available Oct. 1–Dec. 7, 2017.



SUMMERPAY™

Keep your cash flow in check by deferring payment until July 6, 2017.



PALLET SOLUTION

Apply intelligently with the right mix of herbicides in the Warm Season Herbicide Solution. Available Oct. 1–Dec. 7, 2016.



PRODUCT ASSURANCE PROGRAMS

Syngenta has Assurance Programs that guarantee results when used according to Syngenta agronomic recommendations.



MULTIPAKS

Save even more on complementary products delivered in convenient multipaks through the entire Program year.



CALCULATE YOUR SAVINGS

To maximize your program benefits, the *Basic Savings* and *SavingsPlus* rebate calculators will help you determine the best product order. To access these tools, visit GreenCastOnline.com/Calculator.

Syngenta | 410 S. Swing Rd., Greensboro, NC 27409

1-866-SYNGENT(A) (1-866-796-4368) | GreenCastOnline.com | [@SyngentaTurf](https://twitter.com/SyngentaTurf) | YouTube.com/SyngentaTurf

EOP LISTING

Kick off your SEARCH

Considering early order program purchases? Start with this list of suppliers who offer them.

THE ANDERSONS

DG/SG Bundle Promotion
URL: AndersonsPlantNutrient.com/DGSGpromo
Deadline: **Nov. 30, 2016**

BASF

2017 Early Order Program
URL: BetterTurf.BASF.us/eop/
Deadline: **Varies**

BAYER

2016 Fall Solutions
URL: MyRewards.CropScience.Bayer.com
Deadline: **Dec. 9, 2016**

DOW

The Power of More 2016-2017
URL: PowerofMore.com
Deadline: **Aug. 31, 2017**

FMC PROFESSIONAL SOLUTIONS

FMC Early Order Program
URL: FMCeop.com
Deadline: **Dec. 16, 2016**

HARRELL'S

Nufarm End User Rewards 2017
URL: Harrells.com/products/early-order-programs
Deadline: **Varies**

NUFARM AMERICAS

Nufarm End User Rewards 2017
URL: NufarmRewards.com/
Deadline: **Feb. 1, 2017**

PBI/GORDON

End-User Early Order Program
URL: EOP.GordonsProfessional.com
Deadline: **Jan. 15, 2017**

QUALI-PRO

End-User Rebate Program
URL: Quali-Pro.com/promotions
Deadline: **Dec. 9, 2016**

SITEONE (formerly John Deere Landscapes)

2016-2017 Turf Early Order Program
URL: SiteOne.com
Deadline: **Varies**

SYNGENTA

GreenTrust 365 Lawn & Landscape Program
URL: GreenTrust365.com
Deadline: **Feb. 28, 2017; Dec. 7, 2017**

WINFIELD

WinField Early Order Program
URL: WinfieldPro.com/programs/early-order-program
Deadline: **Varies**

WAYS TO SAVE

Ask other manufacturers or distributors if they have early order programs. Many of them have offers that are regional or vary by branch.

EXCELLENCE, REFINED.

At Nufarm, we're improving facilities, increasing efficiency and expanding our solutions offering. The reasoning is simple: we know that excellence in our products and people results in excellence in your crop.

Visit your Nufarm distributor to learn how our products can deliver excellence for you.

Aloft® LC INSECTICIDE

NOW EXCLUSIVELY FROM NUFARM

TWO MODES OF ACTION. ONE POWERFUL WEAPON.

Prevent troublesome soil-feeding pests with a single treatment or knock down existing surface-feeding pests with flexible application options. Plus, Aloft LC SC is EPA approved for fire ant control.

OFFERING COMPLETE PLANT PROTECTION

including

**ALOFT® / ARENA® / CHANGE UP™
COOL POWER® / ESCALADE®2
HORSEPOWER® / LAST CALL™
SAFARI®**

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Grow a better tomorrow.



**PLANNING A BUDGET IS ONE THING.
SOLVING A YEAR'S WORTH OF PROBLEMS—
THAT TAKES A CONVERSATION OR TWO.**

With NEW GreenTrust Rewards points, you get even more purchasing power.

Yearlong rebates go far. Yearlong support helps you go farther. That's because no other purchase program offers industry-leading products and one-on-one service like GreenTrust® 365. To see how an ongoing partnership can stretch your budget and help you grow your business, visit GreenTrust365.com/Lawn



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®

BUSINESS PLANNER = 2017 =



MUST-SEE PRODUCTS

Learn about the latest offerings from landscape industry suppliers.

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The Andersons Humic Solutions



Humic DG

Humic DG combines pure dry humate and humic acid precursor in a homogeneous product featuring Dispersing Granule (DG) Technology. Humic DG contains 70% humic acid and 10% humic acid precursor. DG Technology creates a dust-free, spherical, ultra-dry particle that rapidly disperses into thousands of particles upon contact with moisture.

Humic DG contains a complete spectrum of humic substances – fulvic acid, humic acid and humin. While increasing phosphorus uptake, Humic DG also enhances nitrogen efficiency and micronutrient availability. Humic DG improves water penetration, increases CEC and improves soil structure.

While competitive products are non-uniform, dusty and contain up to 20 percent moisture, Humic DG granules are uniform, dust-free and contain less than 10 percent moisture.

Humic DG handles well and is easy to spread – with the ability to be blended with all fertilizers, including urea.

For more information visit our website at www.andersonshumates.com.



1947 Briarfield Blvd., Maumee, OH 43537

800-253-5296

AndersonsPlantNutrient.com

[Twitter.com/AndersonsTurf](https://twitter.com/AndersonsTurf)

GIE+EXPO booth #6012

Arctic Snow & Ice Products



LD Series Pusher

The mid-range LD line of Arctic Sectional Sno-Pushers™ offer enhanced performance and size for contractors tackling demanding snow removal jobs. The LD line is ideal for the diversifying landscape contractor looking for a profitable way to utilize inactive equipment during the winter months. These pushers are compatible with lighter-duty equipment including backhoes, skidsteers, compact loaders and tractors.

Incorporating several unique, patented features, the LD pushers increase snow removal efficiency, reduce fuel costs and virtually eliminate follow-up plowing. The patented steel moldboard design is made up of 32-inch-wide individual sections, each featuring spring-loaded trip edges. The separate sections move independently of one another, allowing the unit to contour to the surface and scrape snow and ice out of dips and recessions, all while moving up and over raised objects.

“We operate a total of 25 Sectional Sno-Pushers, ranging from LD models on our smaller machines like skidsteers, to the larger HD models on our loaders. They’ve played a big part in improving our productivity, lowering costs and allowing us to offer high-quality service to our clients. The Sectional cleared one of our toughest lots better and finished the job 15 percent faster than our other box plow. It got into the potholes and scraped away the snow and ice effectively. Plus, our crew puts down 1/3 less salt with the Sectional compared to its competitor.”

— STEVE FUZINSKI, OWNER OF GREEN SWEEP, SWANTON, OHIO

101 Euclid Ave., Bradley, IL 60915

888-242-3766

SectionalSnoPusher.com

[Facebook.com/ArcticSSP](https://facebook.com/ArcticSSP)

GIE+EXPO booth #7188



Bear Track Trailers



Tough. Durable. Quality. BearTrack aluminum trailers and ramps are designed and engineered to be the most dependable trailer on the market, ready to handle use from your toughest jobs.

From small skid loaders to compact excavators, we're your trailer solution for up to 6,500 lb. hauling capacity.

Bear Track, a brand of Voyager Industries Inc., manufactures a complete line-up of aluminum trailers and aluminum ramps, all covered by a five-year structural warranty. Bear Track's trailer line includes Utility, ATV/UTV, Motorcycle, Snowmobile and Car Hauler Trailers.

All trailers and loading ramps are sold through a network of knowledgeable and friendly dealers throughout the United States and Canada. Each of our dealers has the highest customer satisfaction in mind.

Contact one today to learn why a Bear Track Trailer should be your next trailer investment:
www.beartrackproducts.com/dealer-locator.



803 Central Ave. N., P.O. Box 566, Brandon, MN 56315

☎ 800-417-0504

🌐 BearTrackProducts.com

📘 Facebook.com/BearTrackTrailers

📺 YouTube.com/channel/UCZMONMpdEYITIVeBfZFP0tg

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power



Vanguard Engines Defining Productivity

Vanguard Engines are defining what it means to be productive day in and day out for landscape contractors who have no time for engine downtime. Vanguard Engines place a premium on combining technology, durability and unmatched support to handle whatever lawn conditions a contractor's crew is faced with — from thick, wet grass to the dusty, debris-filled dry lawns of mid-summer.

The complete line of Vanguard Engines, are designed with productivity in mind. Easier maintenance, 24-hour parts delivery and innovations like Vanguard EFI work together to provide unmatched performance and efficiency. Plus, all its engines are backed by a service and support network focused on commercial equipment. Experience the power to get more done — every day. Visit www.VanguardEngines.com to learn more.

12301 W. Wirth St., Milwaukee, WI 53201

☎ 414-259-5333

🌐 VanguardEngines.com

📘 Facebook.com/VanguardEngines

📺 GIE+EXPO booths #7104 (Indoor), #6260D (Outdoor)



Briggs & Stratton Turf & Consumer Power



NEW FERRIS SRS-Z1 STAND-ON

The compact performance of the new Ferris Soft Ride Stand-on (SRS™) Z1 features an adjustable coil-over-shock Operator Suspension Platform for increased comfort and productivity. Available with Briggs & Stratton or Kawasaki engines in 36-inch and 48-inch deck width options, the SRS-Z1 is ideal for mowing properties with tight spaces. Its superior balance provides stability and maneuverability for excellent traction and handling on slopes and flat terrain alike. Designed to allow quick operator exit and re-entry, the compact design also allows for full turn around on enclosed trailers and requires minimal storage space. Visit www.ferrismowers.com for more information.



5375 N. Main St., Munnsville, NY 13409
800-933-6175
FerrisMowers.com
Facebook.com/FerrisCommercialMowers
GIE+EXPO booths #5052 (Indoor), #6470D (Outdoor)

Campey Imants



Campey Imants combine to offer professional sports turf managers, golf superintendents and park managers the best-quality innovative maintenance equipment, honest advice and technical support.

Campey Imants supply to all levels of sport from the grassroots to some of the largest and best-known sporting venues in the world. Together we deliver innovative, efficient equipment to the marketplace, with Campey Imants recognizing the value of integrating skills, experience and knowledge to meet a common goal and purpose.

Most notable for the radical impact they have had on turf maintenance practices are: the KORO® FIELDTOPMAKER® (FTM) – a heavy-duty fraise mower that removes unwanted surface matter such as Poa annua, thatch, weeds or the entire surface to a depth of 50 mm, as well as the forward-thinking development of the Universe® rotor for the FTM, and the Imants ShockWave – a linear decompactor designed to revitalize heavy-wear areas by relieving soil compaction, improving aeration and removing surface water. The Imants ShockWave, reputed to be the world's fastest PTO-driven rotary, linear decompactor, is designed for use on fine turf and sports fields.

Marton, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK119HG, UK
Email: Info@Campeylimants.com
011-44-12-6022-4568
Campeylimants.com
GIE+EXPO booth #598



North American Importer

ClearSpan Fabric Structures



Commodity HD Building

ClearSpan's new Commodity HD Building features an open side that simplifies bulk and aggregate storage.

The new design is ideal for municipalities, bulk supply, construction and more, due to the open side that provides easy access for multiple vehicles. This design also allows for the structure to be broken down into separate storage bays, making it easy to keep aggregate materials separate. The Commodity HD Building offers maximum clearance, enabling large equipment to be easily operated within the structure.

ClearSpan Commodity HD Buildings come with industry-leading warranties, which include 50 years on the frame and 20 years on the cover.



1395 John Fitch Blvd., South Windsor, CT 06074

☎ 866-643-1010

🌐 ClearSpan.com

📘 Facebook.com/ClearSpan

Dixie Chopper



The Classic Series

Dixie Chopper's Classic zero-turn is the ultimate mowing machine with the perfect combination of commercial quality with industrial features. Equipped with Kawasaki, Kohler EFI and Vanguard engine options, the Classic is the pure power machine you need to get through the toughest jobs with ease. Offered in 50-, 60- and 72-inch deck widths, the Classic's Elite X Deck is the staple piece to Dixie Chopper's reputation of cleanly cutting all types of grass. An operator-controlled discharge chute allows you to switch from normal discharge to blocking the chute on the fly.

6302 E. County Road, 100 N. Coatesville, IN 46121

☎ 765-246-7737

🌐 DixieChopper.com

📘 Facebook.com/DixieChopperMowers

GIE+EXPO booths #1134 (Indoor), and #7500D (Outdoor)



Dow AgroSciences



Defendor®

Defendor® specialty herbicide is a postemergence product that controls dandelion, clover and other high-anxiety weeds early, giving lawn care operators more time to focus on other aspects of the business. It performs best in cold weather, so applicators can spray Defendor in fall or in early spring and see the same superior results. It also is effective at extremely low use rates compared with competitive postemergence herbicides, so less product is needed to get the job done. For maximum application flexibility, Defendor can be purchased in 1-quart jugs or in a Value Pak with Dimension® 2EW specialty herbicide.

“If a customer calls to complain about weeds, they’re already discouraged. We started using Defendor herbicide so we could be proactive. We treated all of our properties with Defendor this spring, and we didn’t see any dandelion breakthrough. A lot of our competitors had callbacks. We were fortunate that we didn’t have to deal with that and could instead focus on other areas of the business.”

—NICK BRUMMEL, OWNER OF BRUMMEL LAWN & LANDSCAPE, KANSAS CITY, MO



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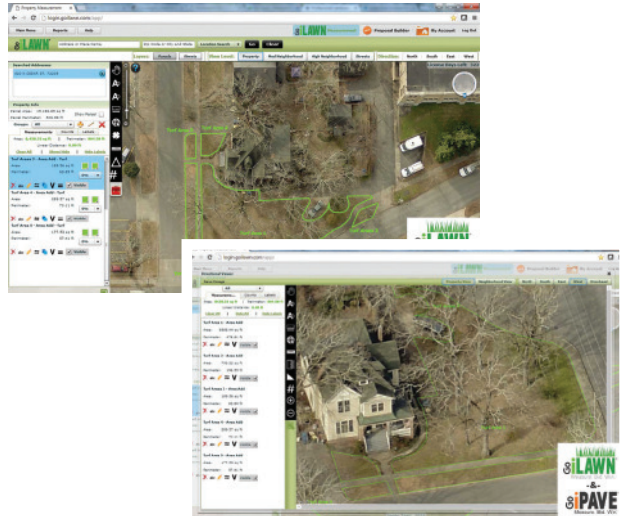
800-255-3726

DowProvesIt.com

PanoramaProvesIt.com

GIE+EXPO booth #3005

Go iLawn



Go iLawn is an online property evaluation tool, used by green industry businesses to assess job sites from anywhere.

Our customers use Go iLawn for:

- **Pre-Sales Assessment** – Using our measurement tools to produce the data they need to create a complete and accurate quote.
- **Sales Enablement** – Using our advanced imagery, drawing, grouping and sorting tools to sell, so customers can SEE what they are buying.
- **Operations** – Creating detailed jobsite maps to direct crews on the scope and procedures for doing work on the site.

11315 Williamson Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241

800-270-6782

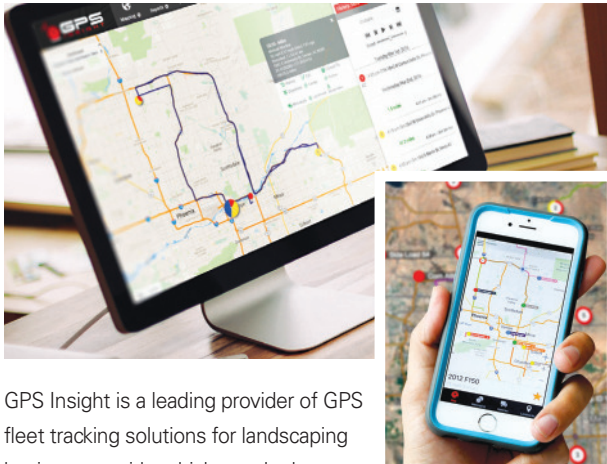
GoiLawn.com

Twitter.com/GoiLawn

GIE+EXPO booth #9055



GPS Insight



GPS Insight is a leading provider of GPS fleet tracking solutions for landscaping businesses with vehicles and other mobile assets. Using the GPS Insight Vehicle & Asset Tracking Solutions, you get real-time and historical location information, realize a significant increase in efficiency, and gain insight into all aspects of their fleet operations. GPS Insight tailors solutions for each customer and provides the industry's best customer service so that you get the greatest possible results resulting in increased revenue, reduced costs, and reduced risk.

“We're still learning daily of all the things GPS tracking can do for us. We initially got into it just for the maintenance aspect of it and then learned daily of the tracking, the scheduling, almost everything that you can think of in a service business for how you can save money, so you would almost have to ask me where on each line item because GPS Insight is saving us across the board; time and money.”

—NOLAN B., OWNER, TEXAS TURF MANAGEMENT

“GPS Insight is by far the best GPS fleet tracking software we came across when testing solutions against one another.”

—BLAKE L., ASSET MANAGER, SINGING HILLS LANDSCAPE

7201 E. Henkel Way, Suite 400, Scottsdale, AZ 85255

866-477-4321

GPSInsight.com

Facebook.com/GPSINSIGHT

Twitter.com/GPSInsight

GIE+EXPO booth #10057



The Grasshopper Company



Grasshopper EFI FrontMount™ and MidMount™ Mowers

The Grasshopper Company's two Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) zero-turn mowers provide unparalleled performance and fuel economy for commercial operators and large-acreage owners.

The MidMount 327 EFI and FrontMount 727T EFI are powered by fuel-efficient 747cc Kohler Command Pro EFI engines.

EFI engines offer a range of benefits to operators and dealers, including decreased fuel use, reliable hot and cold starts, reduced engine exhaust emissions and fewer fuel-induced service issues.

To learn more about the full line of Grasshopper True ZeroTurn™ mowers and grounds maintenance equipment, visit grasshoppermower.com.

“For a while, I had a Grasshopper 227 standard gasoline model and the new Grasshopper 327EFI. In comparing them side-by-side, the 327EFI was a lot better, more efficient with fuel use. We can run all day on a tank of gas and never have to stop to fill up with gas. And to me, it has more power. When you get into some heavier grass, you notice the fuel injection kick in, and you get that extra power boost.”

—AARON VAN RANST, OWNER, PRESTIGE LAWN & LANDSCAPE, BALDWIN, WI

P.O. Box 637, Moundridge, KS 67107

620-345-8621

GrasshopperMower.com

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GIE+EXPO booth #9136



IT'S SO MUCH MOWER®

Greenworks



Greenworks Commercial™ tools use 82V batteries and are the most powerful cordless commercial outdoor tools on the market. They offer many advantages versus gas.

No gas. No oil. No fumes. No fluctuating fuel costs. No smelling like gas and exhaust all day long.

Low maintenance. No carburetors to service, no lines or sparkplugs to replace. With Greenworks Commercial™ cordless outdoor equipment, the tools are ready to work when you are.

Quiet. Greenworks Commercial™ Tools are up to 50 percent quieter than gas-powered tools. Work at sites where noise restrictions are in place. Start your day earlier and work later.

GREENWORKS
COMMERCIAL

319 Oates Road, Mooresville, NC 28117

704-658-0539

GreenWorksTools.com

Facebook.com/GreenWorksTools

GIE+EXPO booth #11192

Husqvarna



T536LiXP Chainsaw

The T536LiXP battery-powered chainsaw is a lightweight, high-performance saw with a top handle that makes it ideal for arborists and tree-care workers. The chainsaw's brushless electric motor is 25% more efficient than standard brush motors, providing a high, consistent torque even at low revs. The motor also produces lower vibrations, which reduces operator fatigue, and contains fewer parts, which means less down-time for maintenance is required over time. Powered by Husqvarna's 36V lithium-ion battery packs, the T536LiXP provides the power and durability that professionals expect from Husqvarna products without the noise and emissions produced by gas-powered equipment.

“We work in a ‘green’ industry. Being environmentally friendly speaks volumes with our clients. Minimizing our emissions and limiting noise while on site is a feature that they can appreciate. Many of them are used to hearing the sputter of a traditional petrol chainsaw. When they see a device like Husqvarna’s T536LiXP chainsaw they automatically are intrigued and ask many questions. Seeing that our organization is innovative in our tool selection and care about their property and the environment is a huge feather in our cap, especially when dealing with our well-educated clients.”

—DONNA COFFEY, LOCAL OFFICE SAFETY COORDINATOR,
BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS, CENTRE HALL, PA

9335 Harris Corners Parkway, Suite 500, Charlotte, NC 28269

704-597-5000

Husqvarna.com/us

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GIE+EXPO booths #9094 (Indoor), #7800D (Outdoor)


Husqvarna

Intelligro



CIVITAS WEEDfree BRAND™ Concentrate

Intelligro brings you CIVITAS WEEDfree BRAND™ Concentrate, an affordable hybrid selective herbicide with no offensive odor that uses Microtechnology+ to kill broadleaf weeds* with less active ingredients* and a fast response rate. This innovative patent-pending product minimizes the proven three-way mix active ingredients while enhancing the penetration into the plant. As a result, visible injury can be seen on weeds within 12 hours. Additionally, the white emulsion produced when sprayed identifies treated areas, reducing product waste. These combined benefits help lawn care operators and landscapers protect their bottom line while exceeding customer expectations.

CIVITAS WEEDfree BRAND Concentrate is currently shipping within the continental United States with recent approval for California. To learn more, please visit www.civitaslawn.com.

*When compared to other pesticides containing these active ingredients.

+Microtechnology signifies emulsion particles less than 1 micron.

*Important: Do not apply to Bentgrass and Floratam, a variety of St. Augustine grass. See full list of controlled weeds and use directions on peel away label.

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intelligro
Smarter growth for a better world

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Intelligro.com

Twitter.com/IntelligroTurf

GIÉ+EXPO booth #3008

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America Inc.



Isuzu Low Cab Forward (LCF) Trucks: Ideal for landscaping businesses large and small.

Running a landscaping business is no easy task — moving from home to home, project to project or business to business. That's where an Isuzu LCF can help. Being a Low Cab Forward design, the driver has exceptional visibility, and it's easy to maneuver and park. Another asset, Isuzu offers regular cab models with three-across seating, and crew cab models that seat seven. Buyers also can choose gas with CNG/LPG capable or choose from two diesel engines. Add that to a variety of wheelbase and GVWR ratings, and you've got the perfect work truck to tame the toughest landscaping challenges.

Vehicles shown with optional equipment, some equipment is dealer installed. These vehicles are assembled from component parts manufactured by Isuzu Motors Limited and by independent suppliers who manufacture such components to Isuzu's exacting standards for quality, performance and safety. © 2016 ISUZU COMMERCIAL TRUCK OF AMERICA, INC.

1400 S. Douglas Road, Suite 100, Anaheim, CA 92806

886-441-9638

IsuzuCV.com



Jacobsen



Jacobsen's new HR700™ is the world's first and only wide area rotary mower with a 14-foot width-of-cut to increase productivity by up to 25% (up to 2.5 acres/hour more) over traditional 11-foot mowers. With ultra-durable new SureStrength™ decks and superior maneuverability, the HR700 is the ideal mower for sports fields, parks, and commercial grounds. The new AdaptiCut™ system automatically adjusts mow speed to ensure consistent performance even through the thickest grass.

The HR700 is part of Jacobsen's new HR Series of wide area rotary mowers. Learn more about the HR700 at www.jacobsen.com/hr700.



11108 Quality Drive, Charlotte, NC 28273

☎ 704-504-6600

🌐 Jacobsen.com

📘 [Facebook.com/JacobsenTurf](https://www.facebook.com/JacobsenTurf)

🐦 [Twitter.com/JacobsenTurf](https://twitter.com/JacobsenTurf)

GIE+EXPO booths #2156 (Indoor), #7428D (Outdoor)

John Deere



MICHELIN® X® TWEEL® TURF™

The MICHELIN® X® TWEEL® TURF™ is an airless radial tire sold exclusively for John Deere ZTrak 900 Series models with 54-, 60- and 72-inch deck sizes. Unlike traditional pneumatic tires, the MICHELIN XTWEEL TURF virtually eliminates tire downtime and is nearly maintenance-free. Landscape professionals can experience greater performance, increased uptime and a lower cost of ownership with the MICHELIN XTWEEL TURF. It offers uniform cut quality, enhanced operator comfort and increased productivity. Because the MICHELIN XTWEEL TURF is an airless radial tire, it minimizes the cost and time spent on repairs and maintenance.

The MICHELIN XTWEEL TURF has the same dimensions and bolt pattern as a standard 24x12x12 tire, and features automotive rubber technology, allowing the tread to last up to three times longer than standard turf tires. Those attending GIE+EXPO 2016 can view the MICHELIN XTWEEL TURF on the John Deere Z930M along with the rest of John Deere's line of commercial mowing equipment at booth #1110.



2000 John Deere Run, Cary, NC 27513

☎ 800-537-8233

🌐 JohnDeere.com

📘 [Facebook.com/JohnDeereUSCA](https://www.facebook.com/JohnDeereUSCA)

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GIE+EXPO booths #1110 (Indoor), #7834D (Outdoor)

Kawasaki EFI



With an integrated electronic governor, Kawasaki EFI engines maintain consistent blade tip speed, even in heavy turf, for razor-sharp results without slowing down. An advanced ECU and sequential multi-port injectors deliver fast starts and instant throttle response, and fine-tune power as you mow. Open-loop technology cuts complexity, and simple plug-in diagnostics minimize downtime.

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Learn more about Kawasaki EFI at kawasakienginesusa.com/efi

“*The first time we used the new Kawasaki EFI on a mower we were absolutely amazed. It didn't clump up the grass even though it was wet and deep, where our other mowers would not look near as good. Compared to other engines, the Kawasaki EFI runs a lot smoother, never loses any power, and gets us better gas mileage. We have definitely boosted our productivity and using these gives us an advantage because our lawns are going to look better. The Kawasaki EFI e-gov is definitely the future*”

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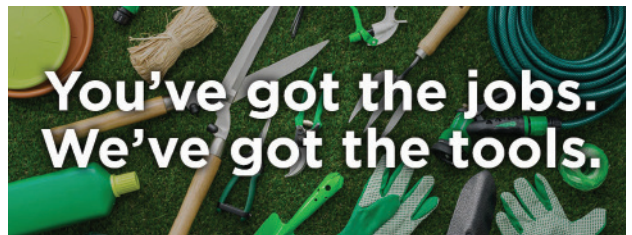
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Hosting an annual neighborhood gathering proves successful for one landscape firm.

 **PAGE 108**

Don't hire the best applicants, hire the best employees



BY MEL KLEIMAN

The author is the founder of Humetrics. He helps companies build high-quality, frontline, hourly workforces. Reach him at mkleiman@humetrics.com.

Before I make a presentation, I survey the attendees to find out their challenges when it comes to recruiting, interviewing, selecting and retaining employees. This year, the three biggest challenges reported across all industries are:

1. Not enough qualified applicants;
2. The ability to identify the applicants with the highest potential of becoming stars; and
3. Keeping stars motivated and engaged.

When asked about the best sources of job applicants respondents gave the following answers. They could select more than one option.

BEST SOURCES OF JOB APPLICANTS		%
1.	Referrals from employees, vendors, customers, and/or social networks	83
2.	Internet job boards	59
3.	Our company website	26
4.	Our competition	21
5.	Schools	21
6.	We re-recruit former star employees who left	8
7.	Newspapers	6
8.	Walk-ins	2
9.	Signage	1
10.	Job fairs	1

It's interesting to note referrals are by far the best source of job applicants across all industries and have been for the past 20 years.

If your challenge is a lack of qualified applicants, it can be remedied by creating an employee referral reward program. If you already have a program and it's not yielding the results you need, it's probably because you defer the employee's reward until the new hire has been on the job 90 days.

You'll get far more bang for your

buck if, on the new hire's first day, you gather everyone for introductions and say: "This is our new co-worker Jake, and I know he's going to be a real asset to our team because he was referred by Michelle. Michelle, thank you. Here's your new employee referral reward."

If you balk at this approach, consider the fact that you don't pay a job board, recruiter or newspaper only after your new hire has a certain tenure; you pay them up front in spite of the fact that new hires from these sources are not as likely to work out well as those referred by your staff.

It's also of interest that, in most industries, re-recruiting former employees is a highly effective strategy, but only 8 percent of the respondents reported using it. If you don't make this a practice, at least try it.

When it comes to job board postings, here are a few tips to ensure the best results:

1. Make sure the headline grabs the reader's attention.
2. Sell the sizzle first (why yours is a great place to work).
3. Specify your requirement in terms of CAPS (capacities—physical and intellectual; attitudes; personality traits; and skills), but make it a rule to hire for attitude and train for skills whenever possible.
4. If "high attention to detail" is required, put something in the post that tells you if the applicant possesses this trait, i.e., "Respond with 'A9987' and your full given name in the subject line."

When we asked the open-ended question, "What's the No. 1 reason a star employee would want to work

for you and/or your organization?" the reason cited most frequently was some version of "our culture." What's important here is to ensure you clearly define and communicate your culture.

For instance, it might be any of the following:

- nurturing (often expressed as "we care");
- fun;
- work/life balance;
- growth opportunities;
- community involvement; or
- laid back.

Once you've defined your culture, use the description in your recruitment ads to attract the kinds of people who would thrive in it: "Looking for growth opportunities AND work/life balance?"

When it comes to what's being done to keep good and great employees from leaving, the most frequently cited preventive measures were: open communications (72 percent), flexible hours/time off (59 percent) and performance bonuses (56 percent). Despite the fact employees most often cite a lack of recognition as a major job frustration, only 28 percent of the respondents use recognition as a component of their employee retention effort.

When it comes to employee recruitment and selection, the best way to find star employees is to be a great place for people to work and then to let it be known. And the best way to keep your stars on board is a culture that supports their needs; healthy doses of recognition and appreciation; and the regular use of employee retention "stay interviews" to foster a strong positive relationship between employees and their managers. ☺

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5 AdWords mistakes to avoid



BY SHAUN KANARY

The author is director of marketing for Weed Pro in Sheffield Village, Ohio, and adjunct professor of marketing at Baldwin Wallace University.

“Failure isn’t fatal, but failure to change might be.” This quote by legendary basketball coach John Wooden is one to apply to your marketing and advertising efforts. Mistakes are common with the constant changes in digital advertising and, frankly, they’re expected. However, if you don’t learn from those mistakes and optimize your efforts, you may be throwing money away. After viewing hundreds of Google AdWords accounts as a marketing consultant, here are the top five things you, or your agency, is probably doing wrong.

1. USING GREEN INDUSTRY JARGON. We must understand that our industry is highly technical, but our consumer base is not. So when we decide on “keywords” for our pay-per-click (PPC) strategy, we must use our consumer’s language. For example, lawn diseases and weeds are often searched for online by descriptions, not proper names. So rather than looking for “lawn rust,” most people search “orange powder in grass/lawn.”

2. HAVING ALL YOUR KEYWORDS IN “BROAD MATCH” SETTING. AdWords is built on the premise of bidding on “keywords” where you want your company’s ads to appear. That way when someone is searching for “lawn care in Cleveland,” your advertisement pops up. However, many times advertisers don’t know exactly what combination of words consumers use when searching for their services. For this reason, Google has created several match types to help your ads appear for multiple searches.

When creating an AdWords account, the keywords you begin



to bid on are in a match type called “broad match,” so your ad will show when anyone searches for terms that are loosely related to the term you’re bidding on. The problem with broad match is you may be showing ads for searches you don’t want to appear for. For example, if you’re bidding on the keyword “lawn care” with the broad match setting, your ads will appear for searches such as, “lawn mowing service,” “grass mower repair,” “where to buy grass” and so on.

The solution is to use “phrase match” and “exact match,” which only allows your ad to appear for searches using a combination of the words you’re bidding on.

3. NOT USING NEGATIVE KEYWORDS. Negative keywords are all the terms for which you don’t want to appear. This feature limits the number of times your ad shows for irrelevant searches, limiting wasted spend. For example, adding negative keywords such as “free, cheap and discount,” limits the number of people searching for services using those adjectives.

4. NOT TRACKING CONVERSIONS. Tracking ROI is important and is something you can easily do in AdWords through the use of “conversions.” Conversions are counted in AdWords when a consumer clicks on your ad and reaches a “goal

page” on your website that you set. For example, to track for sales, you would set the “conversion” to be when a consumer reaches a “thank you” page after filling out a request or sales form. By installing this code, you can accurately track your AdWords ROI.

5. NOT USING OBJECTIVE-SPECIFIC LANDING PAGES. A landing page is the specific page your prospect sees after clicking one of your online ads. Like the saying “you can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink” goes, you can lead consumers to your website, but you can’t make them take the actions you want. However, creating an objective-specific landing page that limits the number of options people have when reaching the page increases the chance they will take a desired action.

For example, if your objective is to have someone sign up for an estimate when reaching your web page, make the sign-up form the most prominent item on the page and remove all other things that may distract him or her from signing up. Other ways to increase landing page conversions are to limit text, remove navigation to other parts of your website and use language that matches what your ad promises.

ARE YOU WASTING MONEY? A good way to know is by having a professional perform a PPC audit on your accounts. A trained Google professional will examine your account and identify ways you can improve. On average, a good PPC audit can save you up to a quarter of your advertising spend and help to improve your return on your Google AdWords advertising investment.

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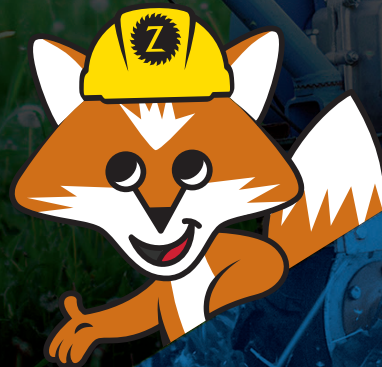
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CASE STUDY: OUR WAY

Appreciation party

How a Wyoming company builds a community among second-home clients.

BY CASEY PAYTON



Kellie Wheeler, managing partner of Boreal Property Management, never expected a cocktail party would drive sales leads—she just wanted to say thanks.

Experts say attracting a new customer costs a company five times more than retaining an existing one. With this in mind, the owners of Boreal Property Management, a full-service property care company in Jackson, Wyo., have put an emphasis on client retention. By hosting an annual neighborhood cocktail party, the company has found a unique way to thank their existing clients—and also unexpectedly gain new business.

Kellie Wheeler, managing partner, first had the idea for the party almost eight years ago when she realized many of her clients didn't know one another. Because of the nature of the Jackson Hole area, ranches are often spaced out and may even have bodies of water or rough terrain between them. It's also a second-home market, so many homeowners are only there part of the year. As a result, most clients did not have an opportunity to easily connect with others in their community. Wheeler says she wanted to do something to change that.

Seven years ago Boreal Property Management hosted its first neighborhood cocktail party, and it was a big success.

"For many of our clients this is a second home, so a challenge was finding a time when everyone would be here," Wheeler says. "The answer was Fourth of July weekend. Because we knew that people would have other plans that weekend, we made it a cocktail party with a drop-in feel. It's very casual and clients are welcome to

come and go—and also to bring their guests if they have friends in town."

Every year the event has been hosted under a tent with cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and light music from a hired musician. Wheeler says the party has not only been an opportunity for customers to meet one another but also to meet the full Boreal staff—allowing them to "put a name to a face" of someone they may have only talked to on the phone. In addition, Wheeler says they invite prospective clients to the party, allowing them to get "candid responses from neighbors" about the company's services.

While the goal was to connect customers and create a sense of community, the party also has boosted sales, Wheeler says. As customers come together and talk about work they've had done, new project ideas are generated.

"One customer might be talking about their new outdoor kitchen, and it spurs someone else to think about that project," Wheeler says. "That was an unexpected benefit for us."

The company declined to share how much it invests to host the party, but Wheeler emphasized it's also a time and planning investment. She starts planning the venue and caterer about a year in advance, but she says the benefits far outweigh any expense.


"Even if we didn't generate those new leads on possible projects, it would still be worth it just for the feel-good, warm experience that it is," Wheeler says. "It leaves our customers feeling appreciated—and that was our objective. Our

clients are very thoughtful people, and we enjoy doing this for them."

Wheeler says there's no doubt their customers enjoy it. This summer she began to wonder if the party had "run its course" and if customers were tired of attending. She inquired whether this year should be the last event. The feedback from customers was a resounding "no."

"It was created for the clients, and I wanted to make sure it was something they still enjoyed," Wheeler says. "From surveying them, it's obvious they still do. I was told by many customers that it's become something they look forward to each year. We have a high response rate. About 85 percent of those we invite do come."

With a big event like this, Wheeler emphasizes the importance of planning ahead to secure a vendor and prevent financial burden.

"It's not an unexpected expense," Wheeler says. "It's something we've planned for—and that helps make it successful." 

Payton is a freelance writer from Philadelphia.

BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

COMPANY: Boreal Property Management

HEADQUARTERS: Jackson, Wyo.

EMPLOYEES: 45

REVENUE: \$3 million

SERVICE MIX: 60% maintenance; 40% projects

CLIENT MIX: 90% residential; 10% commercial

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TITAN HD ZERO TURN MOWERS →

COMPANY: The Toro Co.

URL: Toro.com/TitanHD

INDOOR BOOTH: 7148

OUTDOOR BOOTH: 7600D

The Titan HD 1500, 2000 and 2500 series mowers feature the ability to attach string trimmers, 5-gallon buckets and other yard tools and accessories to the mower with mounting brackets. The platform boasts an adjustable deluxe suspension seat, isolated floor pan design, deck step guide, easy side and front mower access, and a 12-v outlet accompanied by deep storage pockets.



T3100 SPREADER SPRAYER

COMPANY: Turfco

URL: Turfco.com

INDOOR BOOTH: 7040

OUTDOOR BOOTH: 6152D

The T3100 is capable of fitting through a 36-in. gate and covering up to 132,000 sq. ft. per fill. It features hands-free speed control, a low center of gravity, a pivoting front axle and an ergonomic operator platform, as well as minimal electronics, added guards and rugged axles.



← 200 SERIES & 755I

COMPANY: Avant Tecno USA

URL: AvantTecnoUSA.com

INDOOR BOOTH: 3142

OUTDOOR BOOTH: 7720D

Avant Tecno introduces its 200 Series line and the 755i—each with Kohler engines—at this year's GIE+EXPO. Avant's five series models offer multiple cab options. Plus, there are more than 150 attachments available for these machines.



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V-PLOW FOR UTVS

COMPANY: SnowEx

URL: SnowExProducts.com

INDOOR BOOTH: 5042

Measuring 6 ft. wide, the plow blade angles to 5 ft. wide to fit most sidewalks and through gates. Two width settings cover the optimal tire track width on a range of UTVs. Configuring the plow to straight blade position, V position and bucket blade scoop position allows for customizing when facing various snow management situations.



LHD 2000, 2000D, 2000X LOADERS

COMPANY: LHD Machinery

URL: LHDMachinery.com

INDOOR BOOTH: 548

The LHD series of mini skid-steers, which have a lower MSRP than similar machines, LHD says, include rubber tracks, double hydraulic arm rams and a 42.7-in. width for stability and maneuverability. The machines are constructed of steel but are light enough for a single-axle trailer. Each mini skid-steer also features joystick controls for arm and attachment movements.



36-IN SPORT INTENSITY MOWER

COMPANY: Wright Manufacturing

URL: WrightMfg.com

INDOOR BOOTH: 3094

OUTDOOR BOOTH: 7624D

Based on the popular Stander I, the compact Sport Intensity mower offers the choice of stand-on or sit-down operation with a fold-away seat. When the operator steps off the machine, an operator presence switch on the foot platform stops the blade and engine; the control levers return to the neutral position when the operator lets go. All three engine options—18.5, 19 and 22 hp—deliver a top speed of 8.2 mph. The Sport I is covered by Wright's two-year limited warranty.



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Issue Date	Ad Closing
December	11/3
January	12/8
February	1/6

Steps to success

Continued from page 21

a common practice, and lawn care companies should be sure these visits are built into the overall program cost. But there needs to be limitations to these call backs, he adds. Most pesticide labels indicate the maximum number of times a product can be used during a specific period of time, and operators should follow these recommendations regardless of customer complaints. Client education also plays a role here. If customers have an excessive number of weeds, Davis says to make sure they know how to properly mow, water and care for their lawn in between visits.

"You're dealing with Mother Nature and weeds will pop up during hot, dry times," says Davis.

"It's important to set proper expectations for your customers," Reindl adds. "There is nothing we could spray that would eliminate every weed in a yard. You have to continuously work to maintain thick, healthy turf." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY DILLON STEWART



Bruce Moore Jr.

**VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS,
EASTERN LAND MANAGEMENT
STAMFORD, CONN.**

Moore and his wife, Lauren, have a 3-year-old daughter, Giavanna, and an 18-month-old son, William. Moore spends his weekends taking his family on walks at the local nature center and playing golf—a passion that might take a backseat to his newborn son, Joseph Edward, for a while.



Moore's father, Bruce Moore Sr. (far left), is owner and founder of Eastern Land Management.

“From a very early age, I spent a lot of time in the field looking at job sites with my father. I developed a passion for the business even before high school.”



BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

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EDUCATION

Trinity Catholic High School
Stamford, Conn.
Class of 2001

Curry College
Bachelor's in business management
Milton, Mass.
Class of 2005

WORK EXPERIENCE

1997-2001
Eastern Land Management
Stamford, Conn.
Gardener

2001-2005
Crew Leader

2005-2010
Account Manager

2010-2013
Director of Landscape
Management

2013-Present
Vice President of Operations

2014-Present
Boys & Girls Club
Board of Directors

2013-Present
Trinity Catholic High School
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“I enjoyed working on the labor force with the Hispanic guys. I was learning Spanish in high school, and I was able to use it a lot on the job. I'm not fluent, but I can hold a decent conversation.”



“It was my first time managing other managers. It was really hard to not just jump in and do it myself. I needed to let those account managers make their own decisions, make their own mistakes and learn from them and coach and mentor them to help them develop further in their roles.”

WORDS OF WISDOM “Create an environment for your people to grow, empower them to make decisions, recognize their achievements and the rest will fall into place.” • “If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.” • “Listen first; speak last.” • “Slow down to move fast.” • “Treat your customers with honesty and respect, and they will reward you with a relationship.”



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