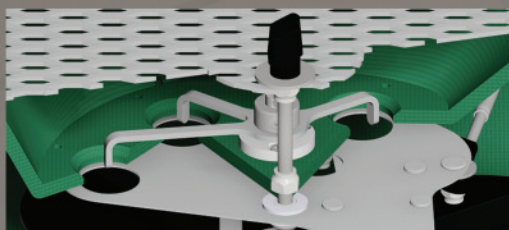


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AUGUST 2017 • VOL 56, ISSUE 8

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ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY RED VALLEY LANDSCAPE & CONSTRUCTION



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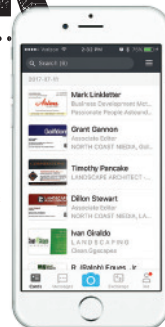
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Do rewards work?

Keeep it simple seems like good advice when it comes to employee incentive programs. It's the first of a few rules of thumb offered by a compensation expert in our cover story this month. It seems like a no-brainer to me, as someone who can barely keep up with her school-age daughters' sticker charts.

Landscape company owners and managers have enough on their plates. Why would you want to create a complicated program that someone has to track and employees may not even understand? But upon further investigation, I can see why some incentive programs get complicated.

On the surface, setting goals—and rewarding people for meeting them—seems like a reasonable thing to do for a company that's looking to grow. Unfortunately, it's not that simple.

“Incentive programs alone don't create lasting behavioral changes. But that doesn't mean they're unfeasible.”

Consider the Wells Fargo scandal that broke last year. Under pressure to meet quotas for selling multiple financial products to individual customers, the bank's employees created millions of fraudulent accounts for clients—unbeknownst to them.

The resulting firestorm led to a \$185 million fine, a Congressional investigation, the resignation of CEO John Stumpf and an untold amount of bad press.

You get what you pay for is an often-cited phrase in employee incentive circles. If you're not careful, you may be rewarding things you don't mean to.

The Wells Fargo example may be an extreme one, but there are many other instances of unintended consequences across multiple professions. When money is on the line, people find ways to game the system.

That's why setting up a basic rewards program isn't so simple. The landscape industry isn't immune to this phenomenon (see Borst Landscape's story about travel time on page 52). You end up with multiple caveats, and before long a simple program is a few pages long and may be more trouble than it's worth.

The truth is, incentive programs alone don't create lasting behavioral changes. They only ensure short-term compliance. But that doesn't mean they're unfeasible.

Experts say the companies that find success with incentive programs tie their rewards to the firm's overall profitability and combine their incentive programs with educational efforts that emphasize the company's culture and values.

Above all, the goal should be to recruit and develop employees who think and behave like owners and are rewarded for doing so. 📌

Editor's note: This month we say farewell to Associate Editor Dillon Stewart. Thanks, Dillon, for all your hard work over the past two years, and good luck at Cleveland Magazine!

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Q+A

An effective incentive program must _____.

"... be fair and equitable, causing neither envy or pride."

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BIG PICTURE

TIERS OF JOY

LOCATION Caldwell, N.J.

COMPANY Landscape Techniques, Nutley, N.J.

THE DETAILS The design intent was to transform a barren hillside at the rear of a home into a multilevel, family-centric oasis. To make this a reality, Landscape Techniques developed a four-tier landscape construction plan:

- Tier I: Expansive brick paver patio, anchoring the dining and cooking areas.
- Tier II: Free-form pool, bluestone patio, lawn and plantings.
- Tier III: Spa, cabana, bluestone patio, flowering roses and perennials.
- Tier IV: Play area consisting of lawn, jungle gym and child- and-pet friendly plantings.

The grade change was controlled by using a blend of stack dry-laid wall stone and 400 tons worth of boulders, creating pockets filled with plantings.

The project earned Landscape Techniques a 2016 Grand Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

PHOTO A natural stone raised beam features four copper scuppers and a raised spa, spilling into an 800-sq.-ft. pool surrounded by roses, hydrangeas, crepe myrtles and other perennials.

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

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A TOOL FOR BOOTSTRAPPERS



1-R Landscaping in Belvidere, N.J., is only in its first season using Yardbook, a landscaping business software, but it already has changed the way the two-man company operates.

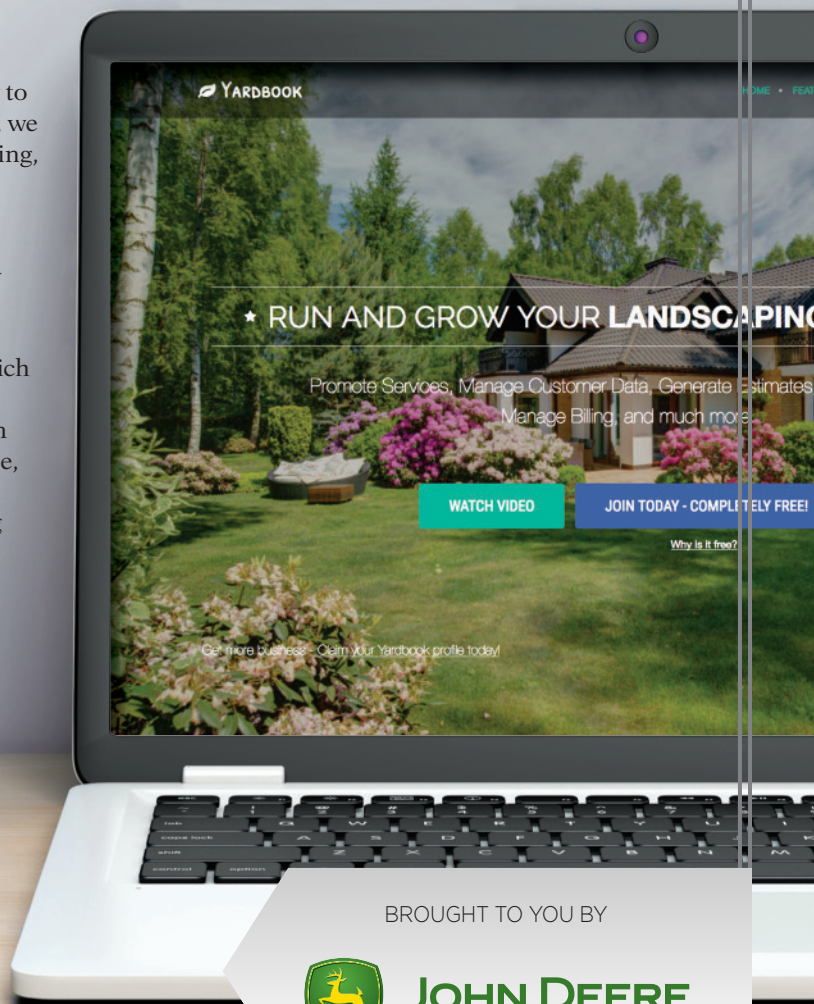
"We started using it during the snow season mostly to accept credit cards," owner Andrew Rudd says. "Now, we use it for all invoicing, we do routing off of it for mowing, we do all our schedules for jobs and we can even put routine maintenance reminders into the system."

Previously, the company used Excel to create every invoice from scratch. Now, invoices are automatically formulated from customers' profiles and emailed or printed in minutes. The service also gives the bootstrapped company a free web portal through which customers can sign up for service.

Yardbook is free other than the small cut it takes on credit card transactions, which are managed by Stripe, a third-party e-commerce service.

It's been an indispensable tool for professionalizing the small company, Rudd says. While Yardbook saves the company time, the real benefit is in organization.

"It's at least saved an hour to an hour and a half a week, if not more," he says. "But more importantly, it allows me to keep track of what invoices are due and what's past due."



“It's at least saved an hour to an hour and a half a week.”

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



JOHN DEERE

LEADERSHIP ADVANTAGE



BY BEN GANDY

The author is principal of Envisor Consulting. Reach him at bengandy@envisorco.com.



PROBLEM SOLVING 101

If you have a business problem that's going to take \$1,000 to solve, shame on you if you cheap out and try to fix it for \$900. You risk not solving it at all and having to start over. Only now, it may be a \$1,100 problem that's going to cost you a total of \$2,000 to remedy.

This brings us to proper investments in problem solving. We're never going to run out of problems in business, so problem solving is a critical skill for leaders to develop.

One of the first steps to successful problem solving is to define whether the problem is a project or a

program. There is a difference. See the chart below to help you decide.

Projects are narrow, focused and short-lived. Programs are forever. When projects are misunderstood as programs, and vice versa, confusion ensues, as does frustration and lack of commitment.

Despite the comparatively ambiguous nature of programs (versus projects), programs require a much greater level of investment. The primary investments needed are time, energy, focus and leadership, not necessarily money. These elements are never plentiful, so choose programs judiciously. Programs need to be high value and important to the organization in the long term.

Problems may be masquerading as projects that need to be integrated into a program. Invest wisely.

IS YOUR PROBLEM A PROJECT OR A PROGRAM?

	PROJECT	PROGRAM
Focus	Single objective	Business strategy
Scope	Narrow	Wide-ranging, cross functional
Benefits	Determined in advance, measured at completion	Used to make decisions, measurement is ongoing
Deliverables	Few, clearly defined	Many, may initially be undefined
Timeline	Clearly defined	Loosely defined
Change	To be avoided	Regarded as inevitable
Success factor	Time, budget, specifications	Mission, cash flow, ROI
Plan	Specific, detailed, bound	High-level and evolving
Risk	Confined within the scope	Spread across the organization

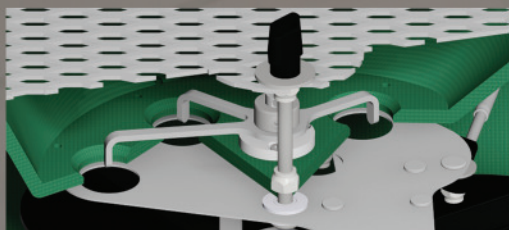
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STEP BY STEP

How to install a French drain


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

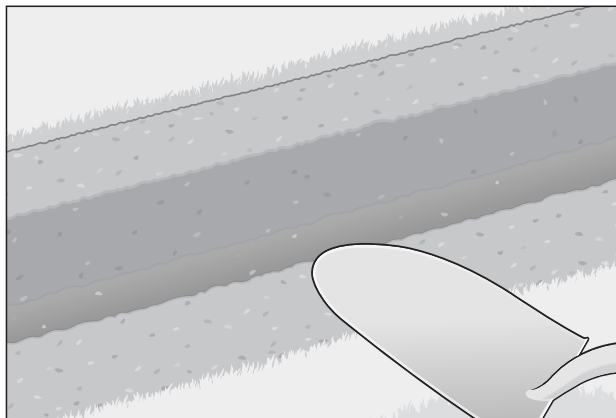
Drainage issues in a lawn can cause an array of problems, like disease and damage to a home's foundation. One way to get rid of excess water is to install a French drain. A French drain consists of a perforated drainage tube placed into a trench filled with loose gravel or rock that's designed to take water away from wet areas and disperse it into dry areas.

Before installing a French drain, it's important for contractors to figure out what kind of drainage problems they're dealing with. There are three main types of drainage issues that occur in turf: swampy ground, water that accumulates into a small lake and water that makes a small flowing river. French drains are often the best solution in swampy areas, where turf stays wet and squishy even days after rainfall. Dry wells, the vertical version of a French drain, also can help resolve other drainage issues.

For safety reasons, contractors should work with their clients' municipal or public agencies to locate all underground cables, pipes and other installations prior to digging a trench. It's also important to consider whether the water to be drained is coming from a hazardous source.

Follow these steps to properly install a French drain. 

SOURCE: KG Landscape Management; kglandscape.com

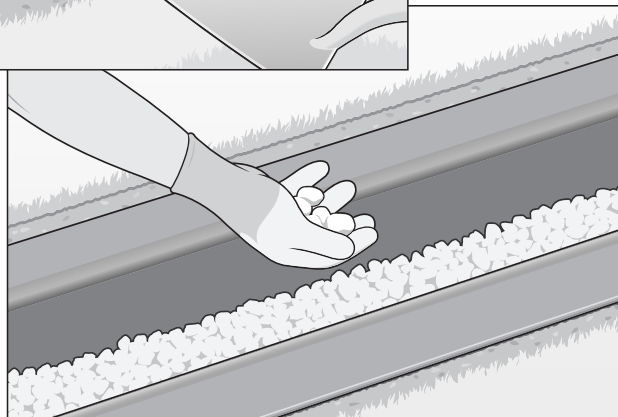


STEP 1

Using a power trencher or trenching shovel, dig a trench at least 8 inches wide and 8 inches deep at a 1 percent grade. Begin your trench near the middle of the lawn's wet area, ending it in a dry area.

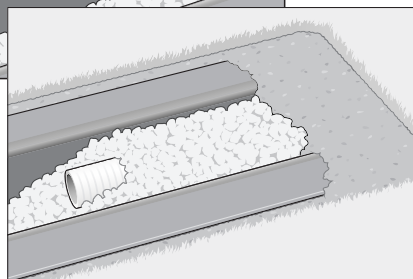
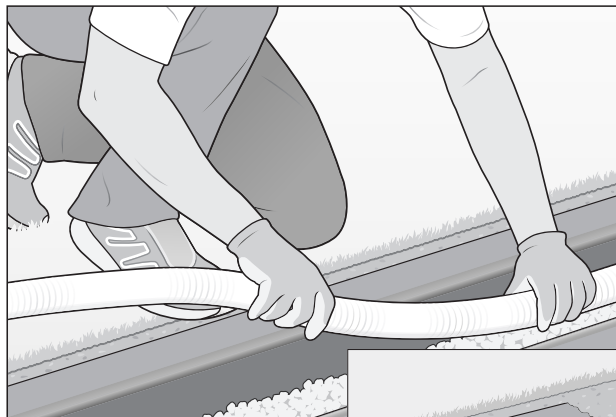
STEP 2

Line the trench with landscape fabric to keep out roots and soil, leaving at least 10 inches of excess fabric on either side of the trench. Fill the trench with 1-2 inches of loose gravel.



STEP 3

Place the perforated drainage tubing on top of the gravel, making sure the holes are facing downward to maximize drainage. Fill the remaining trench with more gravel and cover it with soil and grass.



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NEW STUFF

**1. QUICKCUBE****COMPANY:** Boss Snowplow**URL:** BossSnowplow.com

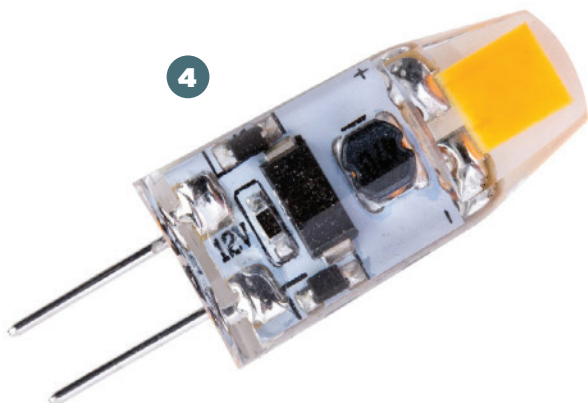
The QuickCube is a skid-steer-based salting system that uses weather-proof poly cubes with built-in, gravity-fed hopper spreaders. The cubes, which hold about 1,000 lbs. of salt, are designed to be filled with solid deicing materials and staged at job sites ahead of snow events. They can be stacked and are neutrally colored to blend in with existing landscaping.

2. AR 2000 BACKPACK BATTERY**COMPANY:** Stihl**URL:** StihlUSA.com

The hip belt and chest strap on this backpack battery are designed to evenly distribute weight. The battery comes equipped with built-in sensors and microprocessors that monitor temperature and shut down the battery if it overheats. Other features include audible and visual recharge alerts, a rain cover, sturdy housing and a durable base plate. A full charge takes 130 minutes with the Stihl AL 500 high-speed charger and lasts 11 hours.

3. LITHIUM GREASE**COMPANY:** Exmark**URL:** Exmark.com

This Lithium Grease is designed to protect machines from wear, rust and temperature extremes. It offers high structural stability for bearing protection at heavy loads and high speeds and resistance to water washout. With a National Lubricating Grease Institute performance classification of GC-LB, Exmark Lithium Grease is recommended for a wide variety of equipment and automotive applications at both high and low temperatures.



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. G4 REPLACEMENT LAMP

COMPANY: FX Luminaire

URL: FXL.com

The G4 replacement lamp offers retrofit capabilities for lighting fixtures with a G4 lamp base. Available in two intensities, the lamp has a warm, 2,700-kelvin color temperature and features a clear silicon capsule design. The G4 also is compatible with the company's Luxor ZD and ZDC Technology with the use of the low voltage Luxor Cube, which provides a pre-installed option for FX Luminaire path lights.

5. COMCONNECT WIRELESS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

COMPANY: Elvex

URL: Elvex.com

The ComConnect wireless headset comes with a built-in noise-canceling microphone, which allows users to place and receive phone calls in noisy environments. Users can also sync MP3 players or mobile devices to listen to music. It has a pairing range of 10 ft. and provides hearing protection at a 22 noise reduction rating. Additionally, the ComConnect features an automatic shut-off, which turns off the unit after four hours of idle time.

6. VERA GATEWAY/APP

COMPANY: Kichler

URL: Kichler.com

Kichler Design Pro LED Controllers can now be paired with the Vera Gateway and App to manage and customize lighting schedules, programs and zones from any mobile device anywhere. The system can operate motion sensors, cameras, 120-v exterior lighting, thermostats, locks and more, according to the company. Kichler is offering two options: the Vera Edge, which controls 50-75 devices, and the Vera Plus, which controls 75-125 devices.

SAFETYWATCH



CHAINSAW SAFETY TIPS

Making a poor choice or a simple mistake when using a chainsaw can result in serious injury to you or bystanders and can cause significant property damage.

Never use a chainsaw if you're unsure of your abilities or feel unsafe. Don't work above your skill level, and never operate a chainsaw without proper training. Consult with your manager or supervisor prior to using a chainsaw. Chainsaw injuries can be life-threatening.

Chainsaws come for right-handed use only. Left-handed users will have to adapt. Always hold the top handle in your left hand and the rear handle in your right hand, regardless of your handedness.

Other safety considerations include:

- Never work alone.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, sized and adjusted properly.
- Ensure all equipment is up to standards, in good repair and in working order.

- Establish a work plan and implement it.
- Remember, communication and supervision are key.
- Use ropes, pulleys and equipment to gain mechanical advantage when needed.
- Use spotters to monitor site conditions.
- Ensure all crew members are aware of the danger zone when felling is taking place.
- Rest as needed. Fatigue can cause fatal mistakes.
- Dead, hollow or decayed trees are hazardous.
- If your hands bother you long after using the saw, consult a doctor. Constant use of a saw and the vibrations has been known to cause vibration white finger or Raynaud's syndrome.
- Never wrap ropes around your waist, hands or other body parts. You must be able to readily release a rope used to aid the falling direction of a tree.

WATCH AND LEARN

Visit LandscapeManagement.net/SafetyWatch to view a video about chainsaw safety, and use it as a training tool for your team.

SOURCE: Greenius

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ITIES



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WEDNESDAY, OCT. 18, 8 PM



RUNAWAY JUNE **UNCLE KRACKER**

THURSDAY, OCT. 19, 8 PM



ALASKA & MADI **THE CRASHERS**

FRIDAY, OCT. 20, 8 PM



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DAILY SCHEDULE

EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME

INDOOR EXHIBITS

Thursday & Friday 9 AM - 5 PM

OUTDOOR EXHIBITS

Thursday 9 AM - 5 PM, Friday 9 AM - 4 PM

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18

8 PM – FREE CONCERT: Uncle Kracker
with opener Runaway June

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

8 - 9:30 AM HARDSCAPE WORKSHOP 1:

Production Management and Crew
Motivation on the Hardscape Jobsite
Frank Gandora, Creative Hardscape

9:45 - 11:15 AM LATINO LINK™: Spanish Seminar

10 - 11:30 AM HARDSCAPE WORKSHOP 2:

Hardscape as a Profit Center
Frank Bourque

11 AM - NOON HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATION 1:

SRW Construction with a Focus on Double
Tiered Walls and Proper Geo Grid Specification,
Placement and Use

11:30 AM - 1 PM LATINO LINK™:

NHLA Lunch & Learn Roundtable Discussions
(In Spanish & English)

1 - 2:30 PM NALP WORKSHOP 1: 50 Sure-Fire
Ways to Reduce Cost & Increase Profits

*Bill Arman and Ed Laflamme, The Harvest
Group, National Association of Landscape
Professional Consultants*

1 - 2 PM HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATION 2:

Installation of Base Material and Pavers for
Interlocking Pavements and Go Pro Time-Lapse
for Construction Jobs

1:30 - 2:45 PM LATINO LINK™: Spanish Seminar

3 - 4:30 PM NALP WORKSHOP 2:

A Critical Analysis of the Six Estimating
Systems used in the Green Industry Today
*Jim Huston, J.R. Huston Consulting, National
Association of Landscape Professional Consultant*

3 - 4 PM HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATION 3:

Permeable Base and Paver Installation

3 - 4:15 PM LATINO LINK™: Spanish Seminar

8 PM FREE CONCERT:

Alaska & Madi and The Crashers

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

8 - 9:30 AM NALP WORKSHOP 3:

The Success Marketing Strategy for
Growing Your Landscaping Business
*Christopher Yates, Success Landscape Marketing,
National Association of Landscape Professional
Consultant*

8 - 9:30 AM NALP WORKSHOP 4:

Teamwork - In Every Aspect of Your Life!
*Rich and Crystal Arlington, Rich Arlington &
Associates, National Association of Landscape
Professional Consultant*

9:45 - 11:15 AM LATINO LINK™: Connecting-the-
Dots for More Profits and Growth

10 - 11:30 AM NALP WORKSHOP 5:

Tips
and Trends for Hiring and Retaining Employees
*Kent Kohn, Pro-Motion Consulting Inc., National
Association of Landscape Professional Consultant*

10 - 11:30 AM NALP WORKSHOP 6:

Sustainable Winter Management™
*Phill Sexton, Chief Knowledge Officer, Snow
& Ice Management Association (SIMA)*

11 AM - NOON HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATION 4:
Tools of the Trade

11:30 AM - 1 PM LATINO LINK™: NHLA Lunch &
Learn Roundtable Discussions (In Spanish & English)

1 - 2:30 PM NALP WORKSHOP 7:

How to Develop a Well-Trained, Safe, and
Effective Workforce! ...Do we really know
how to "Train Our Trainers?"
*Fred Haskett, The Harvest Group, National
Association of Landscape Professional Consultant*

1 - 2 PM HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATION 5:

Hardscape Lighting

1:15 - 5 PM LATINO LINK™: Guided Tours of
GIE+EXPO Indoor and Outdoor Exhibits in Spanish

3 - 4 PM HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATION 6:

Outdoor Kitchens

3 - 4:30 PM NALP WORKSHOP 8:

The 4 Keys to Crush Your Goals
*Jeffrey Knight, Director of Education, Ewing
Irrigation and Landscape Supply*

4 PM FABULOUS FRIDAY \$10,000 GIVEAWAY

sponsored by Mercedes-Benz Vans

8 PM FREE CONCERT: V-Groove

GIE+EXPO WORKSHOPS

Pre-registration is required for all educational sessions. See page 15 or register online at www.gie-expo.com; click on Education.

● **NALP WORKSHOP – \$85** ● **HARDSCAPE WORKSHOP – \$50**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

8 - 9:30 AM | **HARDSCAPE WORKSHOP 1: Production Management and Crew Motivation on the Hardscape Jobsite**

Frank Gandora, Creative Hardscape

Creating and winning a bid is only half of the story. With over 30 years of hardscape experience, Frank Gandora knows profits are made or lost on the job site. In this info-packed session, he will share valuable techniques that will motivate your crew, increase production and ensure a profitable project.

10 - 11:30 AM | **HARDSCAPE WORKSHOP 2: Hardscape as a Profit Center**

Frank Bourque

Hardscape services prove to be one of the most profitable areas in the landscape industry. Adding hardscape services to a landscape business can mean big dividends if done the right way. Not only is the consumer demand high and increasing, but the variety of equipment, attachments and tools available make it easy for landscapers to add to the services they provide without sacrificing productivity and efficiency. In this high-impact session, you will learn how to differentiate yourself from the competition, implement proven systems to grow your landscape business and gain the maximum return on investment by adding hardscape services.

1 - 2:30 PM | **NALP WORKSHOP 1: 50 Sure-Fire Ways to Reduce Cost & Increase Profits**

Bill Arman and Ed Laflamme, The Harvest Group, National Association of Landscape Professional Consultants

Are you frustrated working 24/7 with low profits? Are your sales growing bigger and your bottom line smaller? It's time to figure out the things that really make you money. This hard-hitting session will include real-world case studies and practical advice to help you attract, motivate and keep great people and maximize your market share with powerful estimating and pricing strategies. Those who have attended this presentation and implemented their ideas have added thousands of dollars to their bottom line.

3 - 4:30 PM | **NALP WORKSHOP 2: A Critical Analysis of the Six Estimating Systems used in the Green Industry Today**

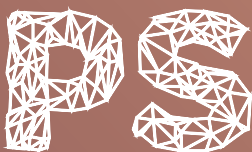
Jim Huston, J.R. Huston Consulting, National Association of Landscape Professional Consultant

Learn the six most commonly used estimating methods in the green industry. Attendees will gain an understanding of six estimating methods and the tools to identify the weaknesses and strengths in each; how to analyze a bid; and how to define and calculate direct costs, general and administrative overhead costs, a break-even point, gross profit margins and net profit margins.

"Being able to
network with landscapers
from around the U.S. exposes
you to better, more efficient ways
to do things."

*JOSH BOYKIN, Landscapes Unlimited,
Wilmington, NC*





FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

8 – 9:30 AM | NALP WORKSHOP 3: The Success Marketing Strategy for Growing Your Landscaping Business

**Christopher Yates, Success Landscape Marketing,
National Association of Landscape Professional
Consultant**

Websites and social media are changing at lightning speed and it's a challenge for a business owner to stay on top of it all. In this workshop, the author of *The Complete Guide to Marketing Success for Landscapers* will break everything down in a practical way to help your business generate more clients, referrals and revenue.

8 – 9:30 AM | NALP WORKSHOP 4: Teamwork – In Every Aspect of Your Life!

**Rich and Crystal Arlington, Rich Arlington &
Associates, National Association of Landscape
Professional Consultant**

The Dynamic Duo of Landscape and Snow, Rich & Crystal Arlington will explain how to work together as a team at work and at home. To be successful in our personal lives and business, a person must understand and develop a plan to overcome the obstacles presented when husband and wife work together. Attendees will learn how to create a professional environment, use technology as an effective tool and utilize each other's strengths to build unity in a business and personal relationship.

10 – 11:30 AM | NALP WORKSHOP 5: Tips and Trends for Hiring and Retaining Employees

**Kent Kohn, Pro-Motion Consulting Inc., National
Association of Landscape Professional Consultant**

What are businesses doing to attract and keep employees? What is the most important policy to maintain when hiring and firing? What are the most common hiring mistakes? How do you hire the best talent? How can an employer appeal to different generations? Learn answers to these key employment questions and much more.

10 – 11:30 AM | NALP WORKSHOP 6: Sustainable Winter Management™

**Phill Sexton, Chief Knowledge Officer, Snow & Ice
Management Association (SIMA)**

Phill will present the results of his two-year study about sustainability issues of the winter management industry. He will discuss solutions to consider for the industry to further its credibility as a profession. A lack of formal standards offers an opportunity for the industry to self-regulate its policy and practice and to elevate its image as environmental stewards.

1 – 2:30 PM | NALP WORKSHOP 7: How to Develop a Well-Trained, Safe, and Effective Workforce! ... Do we really know how to "Train Our Trainers?"

**Fred Haskett, The Harvest Group, National
Association of Landscape Professional Consultant**

This presentation examines the current state of training programs and systems in our information-rich environment. It offers a simple and implementable system that will arm any organization's trainers with the self-confidence to train their team members to execute tasks consistently and thoroughly in order to achieve a safe, competent and effective workforce.

3 – 4:30 PM | NALP WORKSHOP 8: The 4 Keys to Crush Your Goals

**Jeffrey Knight, Director of Education, Ewing
Irrigation and Landscape Supply**

The problem with goals is that many of them lack imagination or they are simply tasks that should never be categorized as a "goal" in the first place. Imagine what you could achieve if you conditioned yourself to stay in a mental state that constantly takes advantage of things that contribute to your success.

HARDSCAPE DEMONSTRATIONS

\$50 ADMISSION UPGRADE

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND! There will be a continuous build happening during the show hours in the HNA Outdoor Arena with 1-hour featured demonstrations starting at 11 AM, 1 PM and 3 PM.

Benefit from best-practice secrets and techniques, shared by experts in the field. Choose from six demonstrations on Thursday & Friday; all are eligible for ICPI Certified Installer Continuing Education Credit.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

11 AM – NOON: SRW Construction with a Focus on Double Tiered Walls and Proper Geo Grid Specification, Placement and Use

1 - 2 PM: Installation of Base Material and Pavers for Interlocking Pavements and Go Pro Time-Lapse for Construction Jobs

3 - 4 PM: Permeable Base and Paver Installation

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

11 AM – NOON: Tools of the Trade

1 - 2 PM: Hardscape Lighting

3 - 4 PM: Outdoor Kitchens



PRESENTERS:
BILL GARDOCKI
Owner, Interstate
Landscape Co., Inc.,
& University of New
Hampshire

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The National Hispanic Landscape Alliance (NHLA) is offering a variety of educational opportunities during GIE+EXPO, including sessions in both English and Spanish.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 19

LATINO LINK™ SPANISH SEMINARS

SESSIONS: 9:45 – 11:15 AM, 1:30 – 2:45 PM, AND 3 – 4:15 PM

Spanish-speaking landscape owners and professionals at every level will want to be there for the Latino Link™ series of educational seminars in Spanish. Learn what it takes to become a better professional and leader.

11:30 AM – 1 PM: NHLA LUNCH & LEARN

Join NHLA leaders for roundtable conversations on a variety of topics. Conversation will be facilitated in Spanish at some tables and in English at others. *Pre-registration is required. \$30, includes lunch.*

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20

9:45 – 11:15 AM: CONNECTING-THE-DOTS FOR MORE PROFITS AND GROWTH

Domenic Chiarella will reveal how the magic of function integration can increase your profits and reduce the time you need to spend at work.

11:30 AM – 1 PM: NHLA LUNCH & LEARN

Join NHLA leaders for roundtable conversations on a variety of topics. Conversation will be facilitated in Spanish at some tables and in English at others. *Pre-registration is required. \$30, includes lunch.*

1:15 – 5 PM: TRADESHOW TOURS IN SPANISH

Spanish-speaking landscape owners and professionals at every level will want to join NHLA leaders for a guided tour of show floor exhibits and the outdoor demo area. Gain an understanding of the latest innovations, try out the newest equipment and get all your questions answered!

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- Session schedule
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Available in August in the iTunes, Google Play or Amazon stores. Search for GIE+EXPO 2017.



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*JEFF MALONEY, Jeff Maloney's
Lawn Service, Princeton, KY*

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AND STEP OUTSIDE FOR A DEMO.**



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A demo area the size of **19 football fields** where you can test and compare before you buy. Where else can you find so much equipment just waiting for you to get behind the controls?

**OUTDOOR DEMONSTRATION
AREA OPEN THURSDAY & FRIDAY**

"The three elements that make GIE+EXPO worth while for me are the **NETWORKING, EDUCATION** and **EQUIPMENT**. The biggest thing for me is the equipment – At GIE+EXPO I'm like a kid on a playground!"

CAMERON MITCHELL,
Maintenance operations Mgr.,
Benchmark Landscape
Construction Inc., Plain City, OH



WWW.GIE-EXPO.COM



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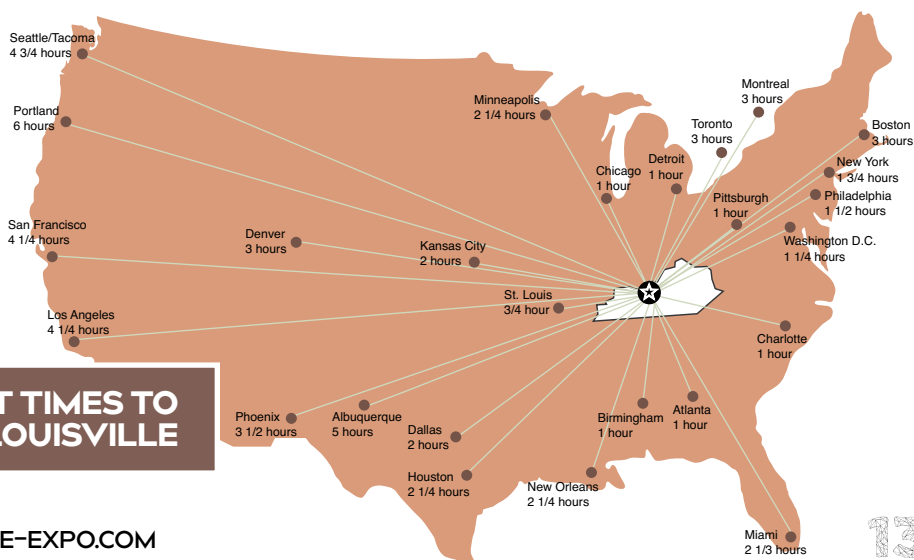


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Louisville International Airport (SDF) is just across the interstate from the Kentucky Exposition Center and only a 10-minute drive from downtown. Serviced by nearly every major and regional airline, the airport offers non-stop or connecting service to cities worldwide.



FLIGHT TIMES TO LOUISVILLE

TRAVEL & REGISTRATION INFORMATION

HOTEL AND TRAVEL DISCOUNTS

HOTELS

The **Louisville Convention & Visitors Bureau** is the official one-stop shop for booking your hotel rooms for GIE+EXPO, providing you with the lowest available room rates at event hotels. A list of pre-arranged hotel rates is available at www.gie-expo.com. Click on "Hotels & Travel."

Book Online & Win: Book your hotel room at www.gie-expo.com and you will automatically be entered to win a travel prize package*, including one complimentary hotel suite, two personalized bourbon bottles for you and a guest, two restaurant gift cards and more!

*Canceled reservations will be ineligible.

Winner will be announced and contacted one week prior to GIE+EXPO 2017.

Telephone: To make reservations by phone, call the Louisville Housing Bureau: Mon. - Fri., 9 AM - 5 PM EDT
(800) 743-3100 or (502) 561-3100

SHUTTLE SERVICE

GIE+EXPO will be running shuttle buses between select hotels, the airport and the Kentucky Exposition Center.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Pick up a free badge for them onsite. Children 16 and over must register at the adult price. **Must have a valid drivers' license to operate equipment.**

Photocopy the form on pg. 15 for additional registrations. Print clearly in black ink. After Oct. 13 fees are nonrefundable. See FAQs at www.gie-expo.com for refund policy.

Exhibitors: Please use the form for your customers only.



AIRLINE DISCOUNTS

United Airlines is offering up to 10% discount on flights. Search flights at www.united.com and use code: ZYC7218034. Or call United Reservations Meetings at (800) 426-1122.

Delta Airlines is offering up to 10% discount on flights. Search flights at www.delta.com/meetings, select 'Book Your Flight' and use Meeting Code: NMQ4P. For groups of 10 or more, call (800) 328-2216.

Southwest Airlines is offering 8% off Anytime & Business Select® fares and 2% off select Wanna Get Away® fares. Book by 9/29/17 and travel 10/13 - 10/23/17. Go to www.swabiz.com/flight and use Company ID: 99636972.

American Airlines discounted fares are available by contacting their Meeting Services Desk, (800) 433-1790. Use authorization number: A64H7BQ.

Editors/Publishers: Please visit www.gie-expo.com/media to register for media credentials.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Early-bird: Register by Sept. 7, 2017 and pay only \$15** per person.

Sept. 8 - Oct. 15, 5 PM Eastern time, and pay \$30** per person.

Register onsite and pay \$60** per person.

Online registration - www.gie-expo.com

GIE+EXPO REGISTRATION FORM

ATTENDEE INFORMATION (one form required per attendee)

Name:

Title:

Company:

Address:

City:State:Zip:

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Country if outside the U.S.:

Email Address:

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Check one that best describes your business.

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☐ 11 Servicing Dealer

☐ 12 Equipment Rental Dealer

☐ 13 Retailer/Merchandiser/Buyer

☐ 14 Lawn & Garden Center

☐ 15 Distributor of Lawn & Garden Products

☐ 16 Power Sports Retailer

☒ 17 Non-Exhibiting Manufacturer/Supplier/Media Sales/Agencies**

☐ 22 Lawn & Landscape Pro

☐ 23 General Contractor

☐ 24 Golf Course Super/Equip Mgr

☐ 25 Educational Facility

☐ 26 Parks & Rec./Municipality/Cemetery

☐ 27 Forest & Land Management

☐ 28 Nursery

****Through Sept. 7: \$350,
Sept. 8-Oct. 15: \$400, onsite: \$450.**

EDUCATIONAL & OPTIONAL EVENTS				
SESSIONS	CODE	DAY/TIME	COST	\$
HNA Demonstration Upgrade - 6 sessions	231	Covers Both Days	\$50	
Hardscape Workshop 1: Production Management and Crew Motivation on the Hardscape Jobsite	230-1	THU 8 - 9:30 AM	\$50	
Hardscape Workshop 2: Hardscape as a Profit	230-2	THU 10 - 11:30 AM	\$50	
NHLA Lunch & Learn	148-2	THU 11:30 AM-1 PM	\$30	
NALP Workshop 1: 50 Sure-Fire Ways to Reduce Cost & Increase Profits	240-1	THU 1 - 2:30 PM	\$85	
NALP Workshop 2: A Critical Analysis of the Six Estimating Systems used in the Green Industry Today	240-2	THU 3 - 4:30 PM	\$85	
NALP Workshop 3: The Success Marketing Strategy for Growing Your Landscaping Business	240-3	FRI 8 - 9:30 AM	\$85	
NALP Workshop 4: Teamwork - In Every Aspect of Your Life!	240-4	FRI 8 - 9:30 AM	\$85	
NALP Workshop 5: Tips and Trends for Hiring and Retaining Employees	240-5	FRI 10 - 11:30 AM	\$85	
NALP Workshop 6: Sustainable Winter Management™	240-6	FRI 10 - 11:30 AM	\$85	
NHLA Lunch & Learn	148-1	FRI 11:30AM-1PM	\$30	
NALP Workshop 7: How to Develop a Well-Trained, Safe, and Effective Workforce!	240-7	FRI 1 - 2:30 PM	\$85	
NALP Workshop 8: The 4 Keys to Crush Your Goals	240-8	FRI 3 - 4:30 PM	\$85	

PAYMENT INFORMATION

TRADESHOW PASS: Through 9/7/17 \$15 ea. | Through 10/15/17 \$30 ea. | After 10/15/17 \$60 ea.
or - Non-exhibiting Manufacturers/Suppliers/Ad Agencies/Media Sales:
Through 9/7/17 \$350 ea. | Through 10/15/17 \$400 ea. | After 10/15/17 \$450 ea.

\$

Educational & Optional Events

Total from above

\$

TOTAL FEES (Checks should be made payable to GIE+EXPO.)

\$

CREDIT CARD INFORMATION

Type of card: ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa

☐ American Express

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Name:

Exp. Date:

Signature:

**PLEASE RETURN
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411 ON UTVS

With more power and more attachments, UTVs continue to gain grounds in all markets.

PHOTO: BOBCAT

➤ PAGE 42





HOW TO ID TURF DISEASES

When the 'disease triangle' is present in a lawn, problems can crop up.

BY LAUREN DOWDLE

Turf disease isn't only an unsightly nuisance for homeowners. It can also be extremely damaging for lawns if not treated properly.

For a disease to cause a problem, three components—referred to as the disease triangle—must first exist: a host, a pathogen and a conducive environment. The host (turfgrass) has to be susceptible to the disease, the disease pathogen needs to be present and the environmental conditions (temperature, moisture and soil fertility/pH) have to be favorable for the disease.

If any of the components are missing, the disease isn't going to cause problems. But when a lawn has the trifecta, issues will appear. To properly treat the disease, lawn

care professionals will need to first identify it—and that starts with identifying the affected turfgrass.

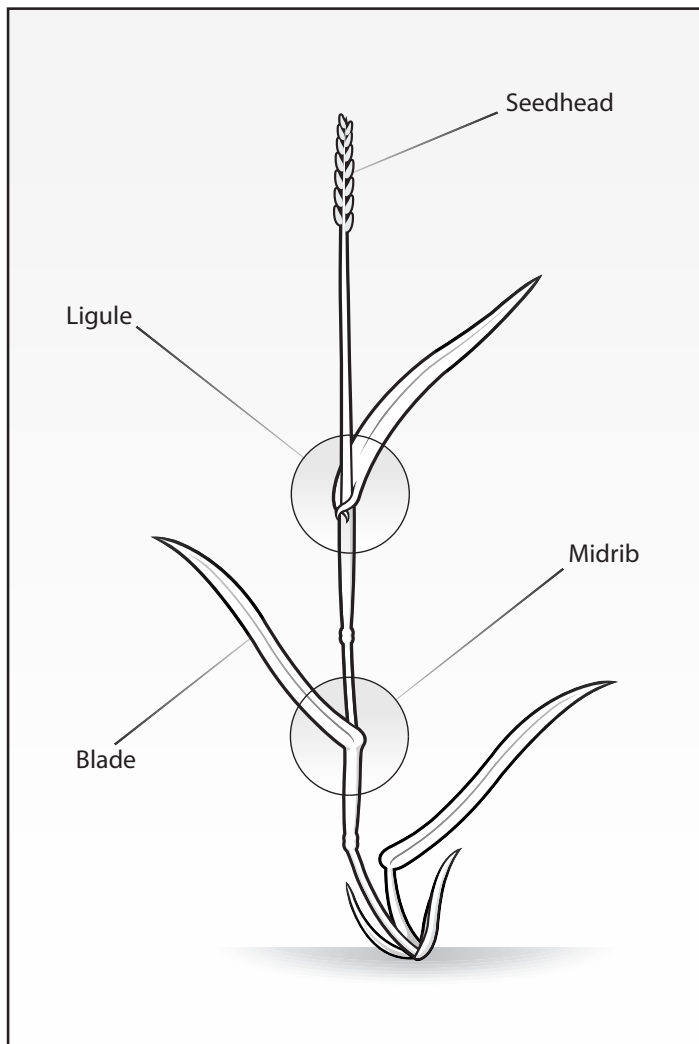
Once the type of turf is known, landscape professionals need to determine the month the damage is occurring. This helps narrow down possible diseases. For example, in some areas, gray snow mold is found from November to February, dollar spot is found April to October

Continued on page 36



STEP 1

Identify the type of turfgrass affected and consider the time of year. Each type of turf has its own set of possible diseases, and the month will help narrow down that list further.



WEB EXTRA

Learn how to ID turf at LandscapeManagement.net/step-by-step-how-to-identify-turf/



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*Jefferson Davis, 2012

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Solutions for the Growing World


TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

Continued from page 34

and brown patch is found from the end of June to August.

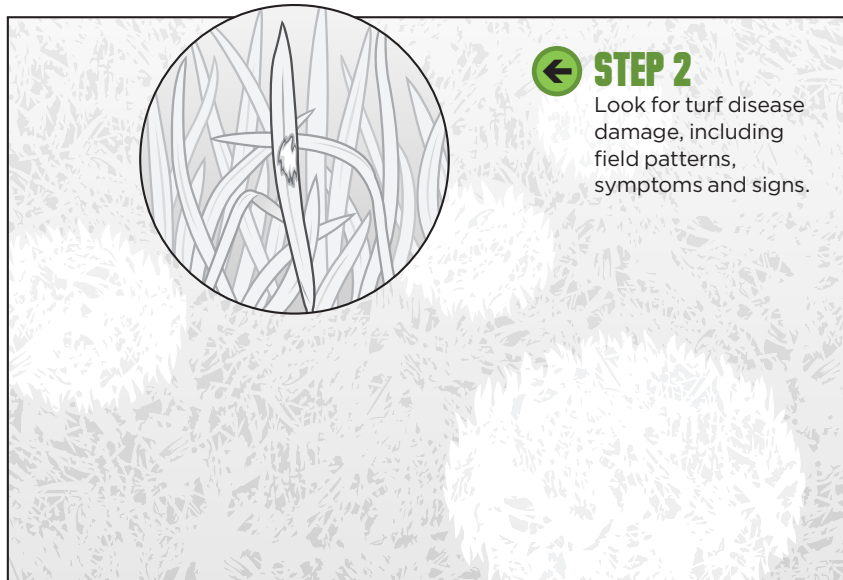
Turf pros also should look for physical signs of turf disease damage, including field patterns, symptoms and signs. Field patterns can be circular, linear, frog-eye or diffused areas (meaning it doesn't have a well-defined pattern). These patterns are visible from a distance, whereas spotting disease symptoms requires a closer look. Symptoms include root rot, die-back, blight and leaf spots, which is normally the most recognized symptom.

The signs are part of the pathogen that is causing the disease, including mycelium, sclerotia, setae and spore masses. A full description of each can be found at extension.purdue.edu, but the most familiar one is mycelium, which has a mass of white or gray fungal threads.

The goal is to narrow down the possible list of turf diseases until one is found that meets the description. When in doubt, lawn care professionals can send a turfgrass sample to their local extension offices for identification. Check with your extension office to see how they require the sample to be prepared and shipped. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.

SOURCES: Purdue Extension; Eric Brown, Ph.D., director of agronomy, Massey Services



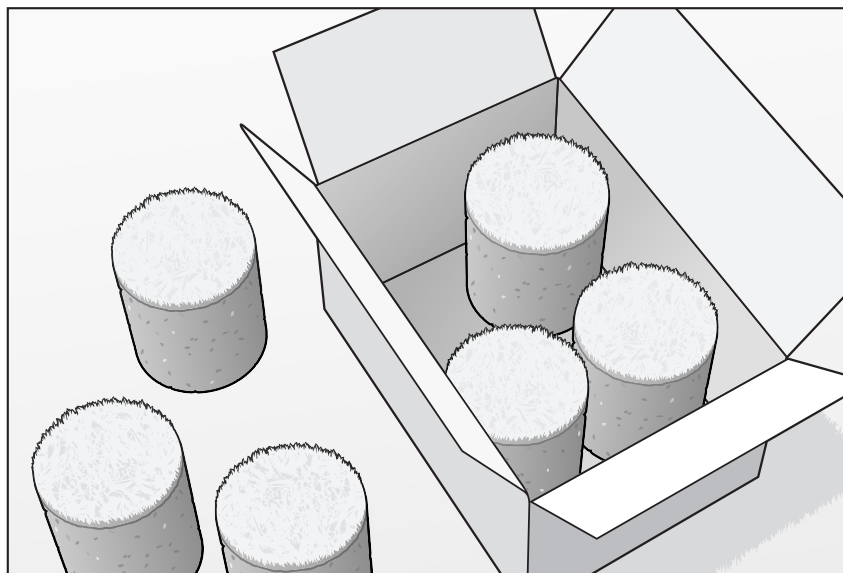
STEP 2

Look for turf disease damage, including field patterns, symptoms and signs.



STEP 3

Send a sample of the affected turf to the local extension office if you're unable to identify it using other methods.



ILLUSTRATIONS: DAVID PREISS

NEWSFEED

ATS ACQUISITION

Advanced Turf Solutions, an employee-owned distributor, acquired Tri-Turf,

a distributor with two locations in Michigan. Tri-Turf's staff will remain in place. The move expands

Advanced Turf Solution's reach to 11 states. Terms were undisclosed.

NEW HOLGANIX PROBIOTIC

Due to market demand, Holganix

is rolling out the PB1 product line across the U.S. Holganix PB1 products, which were previously only available in select markets, are targeted plant probiotics that opti-

mize nutrient efficiency, enhance color response and promote plant resilience. The Holganix PB1 product line consists of Holganix PB1 2-0-0 and Holganix PB1 LTO 4-0-2.

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KICKBACK
Rotational kickback is one of the biggest safety issues surrounding chainsaw use.

Brush up on chainsaw safety

Many landscape and tree care professionals use a chainsaw daily—but that doesn't mean safe handling best practices should be taken lightly. **BY KEVIN MYERS**

We all fall into routines, whether it's how you get ready for work each day, the route you take to get there or how you perform your job.

But for those of us working with powerful equipment each day, it's critical that we put safety first and that we don't fall into complacency. There's an element of risk in taking on big pruning and removal jobs, no matter the application. Allowing ourselves to shrug off simple safety measures in favor of

quickness or efficiency can't happen.

Nowhere is that more important than when handling a chainsaw. For those of us who work with chainsaws regularly, we know rotational kickback is something we need to work to avoid at all times. This is when the chainsaw suddenly and forcefully kicks back at the operator, and it can cause potentially devastating injury to both novices and the most seasoned chainsaw users.

Understanding is key to prevention. That's why it's worth brushing up on kickback.

WHAT CAUSES KICKBACK?

Stop and think about how a chainsaw works. Dozens of sharp, heavy-duty cutter teeth race around the bar quickly enough to cleanly cut through large branches and logs. It's a powerful instrument, and its operation depends on much force, torque and speed.

And that's where rotational kickback starts, occurring when the chain's rotation is suddenly halted, even for just a split second, by some interfering element. When this happens, the force that keeps

Continued on page 40

NEWSFEED

NEW FRANCHISE PROGRAM

Driven Landscapes Franchising unveiled a regional franchise program. The franchise

system, which will provide startup assistance, marketing guidance and other support, will start in Connecticut

and Massachusetts with more locations to be added later.

MINNESOTA ACQUISITION

St. Paul, Minn.-based Prescription Landscape, a specialty

commercial landscape service and snow removal provider, acquired Arteka Outdoor Services from Arteka Cos. Terms of the deal, which closed June 1, were not disclosed.

NEW PERC LEADER

The Propane Education & Research Council chose Tucker Perkins as president and CEO. Perkins succeeds Roy Willis, who retired July 31 after 20 years.

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MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

Continued from page 38

the chain moving along the bar must be transferred somewhere. In a kickback event, it's transferred to the body of the saw, forcing the entire device to pivot or "kick" backward toward the operator.

So, what causes kickback? Under ordinary operation, each tooth of the saw chain shaves off a little individual piece of wood. Of course, this happens very rapidly in chainsaw operation, allowing for the clean, rapid cut. The shallow depth of each individual cut is determined by the raker (or depth gauge), allowing just a small bit of wood to be cut by the tooth.

Kickback happens when a larger bit of wood or some other foreign object hits the cutting tooth. Since the device isn't designed for such a large piece of wood, it causes the chain to stop completely for a split second, causing the transfer

of rotational force that results in kickback. This is most likely to occur in the upper quadrant of the chain's guide bar, called "the kickback zone."

Most chainsaws are designed so the depth gauge allows approximately 0.018 inches to 0.030 inches of wood to be cut in each individual cut. In the kickback zone, the orientation of the chain is such that it allows much more wood than designed for to drop below the cutting tooth.

KICKBACK PREVENTION

The basic premise of kickback prevention is simple enough: Don't hit a piece of wood in the kickback zone during chainsaw operation.

But, as we know, field work isn't always so uniform, and most kickback events happen due to incidental contact. While bucking a large log, a chainsaw user might unintentionally strike a

branch or other log behind his or her target with the tip of the bar. Elsewhere, there are a number of advanced cutting methods, including bore cutting, that involve intentionally sticking the tip of the bar into a piece of wood or tree.

In the end, it comes down to situational awareness when you're working with a chainsaw. Pay attention at all times to how, where and what you're cutting. Know where the tip of the bar is, no matter what you're doing, and always pay attention for interfering objects. Ensuring a proper grip on the saw at all times is also helpful, keeping your left hand and thumb firmly gripped around the forward handle, while the right hand and thumb are gripped around the rear handle.

Locking your left arm during operation, so your elbow does not form an easy pivot point, also can help in

AWARENESS
Being diligent and engaged when using a chainsaw helps avoid dangerous encounters.





UP TO DATE
A well-maintained machine is less likely to kickback.

case kickback does accidentally occur. Keeping your head positioned to the side of the bar ensures your head is clear if kickback occurs. Additionally, while operating the chainsaw, it's imperative that you maintain proper body position and avoid cuts above your shoulders.

EQUIPMENT CARE AND PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE

Ensuring your equipment is in proper working order is another critical component of overall safety. Most modern chainsaws have incorporated new safety devices that have made the devices less risky than ever; whether they're homeowner saws, reduced kickback chains or chain brakes.

These things work only if the entire chainsaw is in proper working order, especially the chain brake, which can be the difference between a minor or major injury during a kickback event. The chain brake stops the movement of the saw's cutting chain, primarily used to prevent accidental acceleration while the operator is adjusting cutting positions. In a kickback event, though, it can be used to mitigate the potential damage. Being hit by a static chain can still be harmful but will cause significantly less damage than being hit by a moving one.

Always follow manufacturer instructions when caring for this equipment, as different saws from different manufacturers vary. Most saws are equipped with two braking systems, a mechanical brake and an inertia braking system. Elsewhere, some manufacturers build in a third braking option. Consider Husqvarna's TrioBrake, which employs a second mechanical brake at the rear of the saw and Stihl's Quickstop Plus option

where the brake engages when your right hand is removed from the rear handle of the saw.

No matter the saw you're using, vigilance is the most important thing you can do from a safety perspective.

Don't let yourself fall into complacency during chainsaw operation. 

Myers is an ISA-certified arborist, ISA-certified Utility Specialist, Arborist Training Instructor with ACRT and recipient of the 2016 UAA Silver Shield Award.



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DESIGN/BUILD+INSTALLATION



Gaining traction

How UTVs and attachments are changing the job site.

BY LAUREN DOWDLE

Ready for work or play, utility vehicles (UTVs) are gaining traction as landscapers find more applications for them on the job site. These machines are now starting to fill voids in some landscapers' fleets—and not just on the commercial side.

Helping to make them an attractive, versatile option is a long list of attachments. Some of the most popular ones are sprayers, hitches, tool racks, cabs, plows and mowers. There are options for a variety of tasks, whether a professional is looking for a better way to transport crews and tools across a site or manage snow and ice on a customer's property.

With more manufacturers entering the UTV arena, landscapers have even more options to consider if they

decide to add this type of machine to their fleets. It's not just about what the vehicle can offer but how a professional can get the most from it.

To get a better idea of how some contractors are putting them to work, take a look at why the following landscapers chose UTVs and what the current sales market looks like for these machines.

TACKLING A LARGE SITE

Maximizing a crew's efficiency is a top goal for any landscaping company, especially when it comes to finding the best way to maintain a large property that requires a variety of services.

UTVs can help with transportation, hauling tools and speeding up tasks, which are some of the reasons Level Green Landscaping added the machine to its fleet, says Michael Mayberry, chief technical officer.

Located in Upper Marlboro, Md., Level Green provides commercial landscape maintenance services, including enhancements, design/build, snow and



GET AROUND

Many companies use UTVs to haul equipment, laborers and materials.

ice management and irrigation management throughout Washington D.C., Maryland and Northern Virginia. With an annual revenue of \$15.7 million, the company serves properties like HOAs, condos, mixed-use facilities, retail, institutions and office buildings.

Level Green uses a John Deere UTV for maintenance on one of its properties, the Franciscan Monastery, which spans nearly 50 acres. The site includes a church, public gardens, courtyard, greenhouse, parking lots, a private park and other features. With such a vast space and list of tasks, the UTV helps transport the maintenance crew and its materials, saving time and some of the strains of labor.

"It gives us the ability to move around the site efficiently and take tools, like watering hoses, from place to place," Mayberry says. "We can also use it to hold our receptacle, which we put weeds and debris in."

The company also uses a UTV to hold a spray tank when applying chemicals on plants or to treat weeds along curbs.

"It's very good for spraying over a large area, like on a campus or along roadways or sidewalks. We can have one person spray and another one drive," Mayberry says. "We can put a 30- to 50-gallon tank in the bank, instead of carrying a 4-gallon backpack."

During the winter, the Level Green team uses the UTV with a snow plow and brine sprayer to tackle sidewalks at shopping centers and other properties. "It's got an enclosed cab, so it keeps people warm," Mayberry says.

Continued on page 44

NEWSFEED

HNA LINEUP RELEASED

Hardscape North America released its schedule of free,

20-minute contractor briefing sessions for the 2017 show. Topics will include navigating

OSHA silica regulations, profit-boosting tips and online marketing help.

PUMP UP THE JAMS

Kichler released its

Portable LED Lantern with Bluetooth speaker. The Bluetooth speaker delivers 3



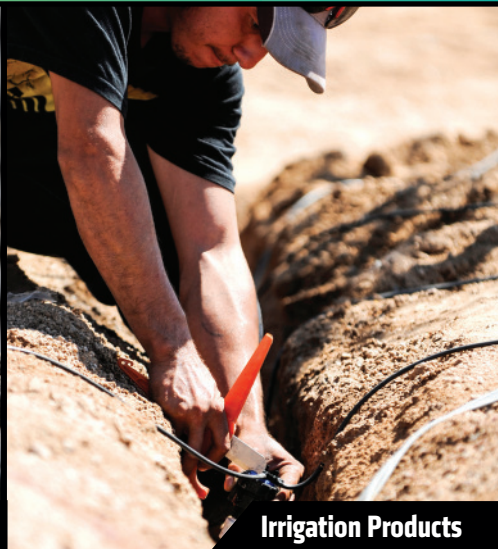
watts of audio output. The Portable LED Lantern can be paired with any Bluetooth-enabled device within a 30-foot range.



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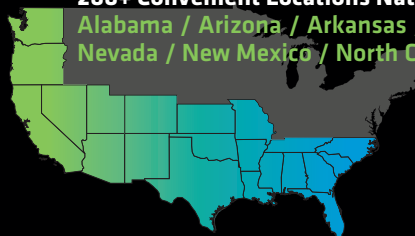
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Irrigation & Landscape Supply

DESIGN/BUILD+INSTALLATION

Continued from page 42

One of the main advantages to using a UTV is its versatility because of a long list of compatible attachments—from mowers to snow plows.

“There are so many attachments out there,” Mayberry says. “It can pretty much do anything you want it to do.”

Before making a purchase, Mayberry encourages landscapers to demo the UTV first and talk to the distributor and sales reps to learn more about their options. It’s important for pros to make sure specs like towing weight, hauling capacity, lift options and other features meet their needs before deciding on a model, as well.

Beyond reviewing the machine’s capabilities, landscapers should also consider if and how this vehicle could fit into their businesses: What will be its main use? How can they get more from the machine?

“See if it works into your business. Don’t be afraid to try something new,” he says. “You may be able to increase your efficiency in one segment of your business by just adding this type of equipment. You can justify the cost better if you’re making money with it year-round.”

Mayberry says Level Green is open to buying more work vehicles in the future, but the company is considering how much it wants to scale up and if a new machine fits in that plan.

While UTVs aren’t as prevalent in the landscaping industry as in some others they may be gaining some ground as professionals figure out the best ways to utilize them.

“I think people are coming around to (UTVs),” Mayberry says. “My background is in the golf industry, so we used them all of the time. They’ve been slow to be adopted in landscaping, since not a lot of people have gigantic sites that warrant them. But as they start to use the machines as snow equipment, it may

“You may be able to increase your efficiency in one segment of your business by just adding this type of equipment. You can justify the cost better if you’re making money with it year-round.”

—MICHAEL MAYBERRY, LEVEL GREEN LANDSCAPING



make sense to have more purchased across the industry.”

He predicts the demand for UTVs will grow with landscapers as manufacturers continue to improve technology and add more attachments.

EXPANDING APPLICATIONS

Not all operators cater exclusively to commercial clients with UTVs, however. There are also some professionals who have found applications for this vehicle on the residential side.

Victor Scalici, owner of Scalici Farm & Greenhouse in Freehold N.J., uses his UTV on the job site and with his family. His company offers lawn maintenance, landscaping, paver installation, drainage work and snow removal services, and it also has a garden center. The company mainly serves high-end residential clients, in addition to properties like churches.

Scalici originally decided to purchase the machine for his farm because it was easier for his wife to get in and out of, compared to other types of equipment. But now, it’s a workhorse for all his landscape and snow removal work.

Scalici has been using a Bobcat Toolcat for more than 15 years, trading them in every three to four years for a newer model. He uses the machine year-round with attachments like a mower, fork, tree spade, small milling machine, sweeper and snow plow.

“We use it for various jobs. It gets used every day,” Scalici says. “There

are just so many things we do with it.”

It’s especially useful during the winter months when he’s going house to house for snow removal, he adds.

“You can’t stop that machine in the snow. It’s unbelievable what it can go through,” Scalici says. “The way the steering is, you can turn around or change the steering if you have a tight spot you need to squeeze into.”

Scalici chose the larger vehicle option from Bobcat, and he recommends other professionals consider it, as well. “There’s no comparison. It’s worth it to spend extra,” Scalici says. “You get more for the buck when you go for the bigger one. It’s much more versatile.”

Through the years, the dashboard and controls haven’t changed much, Scalici says. He says every time he trades in, the machines are stronger with more updates than their predecessors, as is to be expected.

But something he wishes would be altered on these machines are the control placements, which can pose problems when operators treat them like they would a car—for example, accidentally throwing the vehicle in reverse when they think they are grabbing the blinker.

Scalici says that’s something he’s seen and experienced and would prefer the machines had a forward/reverse button instead like some of the newer models of equipment.

UTV SALES OVERVIEW

For the most part, the overall UTV market was down in 2016, says Greg Boeder, senior partner at Power Prod-



Victor Scalici



SMALL DIP

Though the first half of 2017 has shown promise, UTV sales were down in 2016.

ucts Marketing, a powersports and outdoor power market research company.

“Sales of what we call pure UTVs—the speed-limited vehicles most often found in landscaping applications—were down 7 percent, while utility crossover UTVs used in both utility and recreation were up 13 percent,” Boeder says.

The electric UTV market was also up 10 percent, he says, and the sport UTV market was down, pulling the overall market down to essentially a flat year.

However, the research firm estimates the U.S. UTV market through May 2017 was up. That upward trend could continue for several years, the firm says.


“There continue to be new entrants into the market on both the recreational and the utility/work sides of the market,” Boeder says. “New products from Cub



Cadet, New Holland, Hustler and Mahindra are challenging the traditional utility/work vehicle leaders: Kubota, Deere, Polaris and Kawasaki.”

While last year wasn't a strong one, side-by-side UTVs have seen their sales go up through the decades in the U.S., primarily for commercial use, going from about 100,000 units in 2000 to

more than 400,000 in 2015, according to Power Products Marketing.

With more players in the UTV mix, landscapers can expect to see additional features, sizes and capabilities, giving them more options for their businesses. 

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.

PHOTO: JOHN DEERE

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A group effort



Partnerships among agencies that focus on efficient water management are more important than ever. BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

Water shortages continue to impact states throughout the country, a fact that Mary Ann Dickinson, president and CEO of the Alliance for Water Efficiency, says should concern everyone. Even states that are typically considered to be water rich are experiencing scarcity issues due to the stress of rapid population growth on a limited supply. “We are experiencing shortages and rapid growth in areas where water is limited,” she says. “It is

possible to stretch resources further and accommodate greater demand with the same supply, but that can only happen if water is managed well. Managing water efficiently is a real opportunity.”

Because of these issues, programs like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) WaterSense and Smart Water Application Technologies (SWAT), which focus on efficient water management, are as important as ever. A June Irrigation Association (IA) webinar invited Dickinson

NEWSFEED

DON'T THROW IT OUT

After a six-month pilot, 10 Ewing locations collected more than 400

pounds of irrigation controllers for recycling. After this success, Ewing and Rachio have expanded

the program to include all Ewing locations.

RECLAIMED VALVE

Hunter released the ICV-R reclaimed water valve. As an



update to Hunter’s ICV valve, the ICV-R has all the features and benefits of its predecessor but has been optimized for reclaimed water use.

and representatives from WaterSense and SWAT to compare the programs and discuss the roles they play in the irrigation industry.

Founded in 2002, SWAT is an international initiative to achieve efficient landscape water use through the application of irrigation technology. SWAT identifies, researches and promotes technological innovations and related management practices that advance the principles of efficient water use. Led by the IA in partnership with leading water purveyors, SWAT also includes industry associations and irrigation equipment suppliers.

"SWAT was really the first time groups like utilities, manufacturers and distributors joined together on a water initiative," says Robert Reaves, member of the SWAT Executive Task Team and water conservation coordinator for Oklahoma City, Okla. "We develop testing protocols to see if products actually work."

EYE ON SWAT

SWAT formulates performance testing plans for different categories of irrigation products. These protocols define scientific methods to evaluate whether products meet established standards for water-use efficiency. Protocols are drafted by irrigation experts, then opened for public comment before being revised and adopted. Once finalized, SWAT protocols are used by third-party testing agencies to evaluate whether irrigation products submitted by manufacturers actually save water. Many water providers use these test results as the basis for offering rebates and incentives to consumers who are upgrading their sprinkler systems.

In addition to developing test protocols and reports, SWAT defines best practices for irrigation and water management and encourages partnerships between water providers, irrigation industry members, government agencies



Mary Ann Dickinson

and landscape professionals. SWAT also educates stakeholders about the water-saving potential of advanced irrigation technologies and produces professional, customizable marketing materials for water providers to use in contractor and customer

outreach programs.

"In the future we will continue to look for more ways technology is changing things," Reaves says. "It's very important for us to combine regional resources to enhance the reach of SWAT and provide unbiased information about smart irrigation technology."



Robert Reaves

WATERSENSE'S FOCUS

While SWAT provides product testing results to the public, WaterSense, a

program sponsored by the EPA, uses testing data to certify products that meet certain requirements. The organization, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2016, partners with manufacturers, retailers, distributors, home builders, irrigation professionals and utilities to bring WaterSense concepts to communities throughout the country. WaterSense-labeled products and services are certified to use

at least 20 percent less water, save energy and perform as well as or better than regular models.

In many cases, WaterSense uses SWAT protocols to develop standards for product labeling.

"We are always emphasizing performance. We don't want a more efficient toilet if it doesn't work," says Veronica

Blette, WaterSense program chief. "The work SWAT does is very helpful

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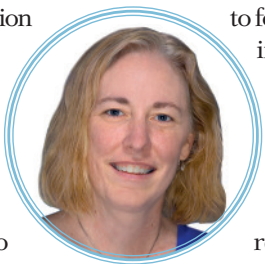
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in providing us the information we need to move forward.”

To certify a product, WaterSense issues a notice of intent (NOI) to inform the public that it intends to carry out work to develop a specification. The NOI also describes additional data needs or questions that need to be answered before a draft specification is developed. The program may make the decision to hold off on developing a specification to allow for additional research. Draft specifications are released for public review and comment before being issued as final specifications.

While many WaterSense-certified products relate to the indoor plumbing industry, the organization is beginning



Veronica Blette

to focus more efforts on outdoor irrigation products. The number of WaterSense-certified weather-based irrigation controllers has doubled since last year, Blette says, and the organization is currently working on certifying several other irrigation products.

For example, WaterSense released draft specifications for sprinkler bodies last fall, and it issued a notice of intent for soil-moisture-based technologies in May 2013.

“We hope we’ll have a good protocol by the end of this summer,” Blette says of soil-moisture-based technologies, adding that this has been a particularly challenging product category to work with. “We believe there are really good (water) savings that can be seen here.”

WaterSense promotes water sustainability efforts beyond just products and parts. The organization also supports the practice of planting the right plants in the right places and encourages all irrigation contractors to be professionally certified.

“It’s not just about irrigation—there are ways to plant, maintain and develop a landscape that will impact water use,” Blette says. “What we see is that people don’t understand how much water they really use, and they need the right information to tell them what to do. Landscape professionals can help to respond to homeowner questions and needs by providing information and to bridge the gap to also get that information to municipalities.”

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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SNOW+ICE

GUIDE

Melt or haul?

Fewer snow farms and more regulations are expanding the market for snowmelters.

BY DILLON STEWART



Figuring out where to dump snow is getting tougher for snow and ice management professionals. Dumping snow into bodies of water has fallen out of favor and is often illegal. The number of snow farms, or snow dumps, is also in decline—particularly in urban areas—due to factors like increased development, rising real estate costs and environmental regulations, says John Allin, president of John Allin Consulting, a snow and ice consulting firm. In Anchorage, Alaska, for example, Allin estimates that the number of snow farms drops by 10 percent each year.

“There are less than half the commercial snow dump areas in Anchorage than there were five years ago,” he says. “As develop-

ment occurs, that land becomes more valuable if you build on it than if you put snow on it. So, hauling is becoming less financially viable.”

An increasing number of snow and ice management professionals whose companies haul large amounts of snow are looking for alternative methods to skirt high hauling costs. In a session titled “Using Snow Melters Successfully in your Operations” at the Snow & Ice Management Association’s Snow & Ice Symposium in Montreal, Quebec, June 20-23, ULS Maintenance & Landscaping CEO Steve Wheatcroft, whose company is based in Calgary, discussed the trend that is helping some firms save money.

These large machines, made by companies like Trecan, Michigan

Snow Melters and Snow Dragon (which Allin helped found), resemble dumpsters and are hauled to the plow site using a semi or a pickup truck.

Mounds of snow are loaded into them, and a heating element melts it into liquid, which flows from an output on the machine. The process can completely rid a site of snow without a single trip in a dump truck.

“The biggest use for them has traditionally been municipalities, airports and military bases, but we’ve seen an uptick in their use among private contractors, especially in high density urban areas,” Wheatcroft says. “After so many of the

ROUND TRIP
Contractors begin to see savings when they’re unable to dump fewer than three times per hour, experts say.

dumps were shut down, it became a way to combat long distance travel to dumps.”

But avoiding snow farms isn't the only benefit. Firms that use the machines have seen drastic cuts in equipment and labor costs. A bare bones snowmelting crew needs only one employee plowing and piling and another loading and melting. A hauling crew is similar until you add dump truck drivers.

Wheatcroft also says owning a snowmelter can help firms qualify for municipal and commercial RFPs. The machines are often required for strip malls, schools, stadiums and government buildings. Plus, they can add a competitive edge in a bidding war by cutting costs and offering a greener service.

“It really helps when it comes to government jobs with strict security protocols, like a military base, because there will be less guys on and off the site,” Wheatcroft says.

A NUMBERS GAME

Jennifer Binney, marketing manager for Snow Dragon Snow Melters, acknowledges that the machines are not for every operation.

“Contractors have to be hauling off-site to justify the cost,” Binney says. “If you push and pile and only haul when necessary, it's not an economically viable purchase.”

Sticker shock warning, the machines can range in price from \$150,000 to about \$3 million for the largest and most powerful models. For example, the SND900 model, which is popular among contractors because of its combination of power and portability, Binney says, costs \$225,000.

On top of that, the machines run on diesel fuel—a lot of diesel fuel. The company's 900 model has a 30-ton



POWER
The SND900 (above) produces 9 million BTUs of power—enough to heat 75-90 homes.

capacity, melting anywhere from 100 to 250 cubic yards per hour, depending on snow density. To run that powerfully, the 900, which can store up to 550 gallons of reserve fuel at a time, eats about 40 to 60 gallons of diesel fuel an hour.

But hauling snow isn't cheap either. On top of having to drive longer distances to dump snow, which means higher gas and labor budgets, many snow dumps have tipping fees. As competition wanes, tipping fees will rise, many experts say. The tipping fee is about \$25 to \$35 per load in a remote city like Anchorage, Allin says. But in a populous area, like Newark, N.J., where farms are even more scarce, the cost to dump just one load reaches \$50 or \$60.

“The biggest thing to think about is will the machine save my customers money and will I make a bigger profit margin,” Binney says.

Companies that are considering purchasing a snowmelter should first track the average number of cycles—from the time they start loading a truck on-site to the time the truck returns for another load—they can make per hour when dumping

snow, Binney says. If a company using a 10-cubic-yard dump truck can make three round trips or more in an hour, a snowmelter is not going to offer a big savings. But if that company can only complete one or two round trips, which is not unusual in many urban areas due to traffic and distance, a snowmelter might be an economically viable option.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Snowmelter machines are often lauded as environmentally friendly options. There are a few reasons for this reputation.

Snow often hides trash, chemicals and other contaminants, which can decimate land and taint water supplies when dumped. It's a major reason snow farms have fallen out of favor. Some snowmelters have features that prevent these contaminants, like debris catchers, which are large baskets that catch anything larger than a grain of sand. Some machines also have a chemical-free output and steam emission. While some manufacturers add chemicals or use a direct

WEB EXTRA

Visit landscapemanagement.net/downloads to download Snow Dragon's "Snowmelting Expectations" guide and find out if a snowmelter can save your operation money.

flame to help facilitate the melting process, Snow Dragon's melters use only agitation and water, which is heated by a tube that runs throughout the machine. Allin contends this approach is better than others that have direct flame to water contact, which produce hydrocarbons.

There are some claims that the liquid output from snowmelters contains chemicals that can seep into storm drains. Stagnant snow is known to soak up hydrocarbons from the air—the major concern regarding snow farms near water supplies. But Binney says companies that use snowmelters melt the snow before it can capture hydrocarbons. Along with the debris catcher, this leaves the liquid output cleaner than the snow that's loaded into the machine, she says. Allin takes it a step further.


"When I was part of the company, I used to drink the water to demonstrate how safe it is," he says.

And the state of Colorado agrees, according to a June 2008 report, "Low Risk Discharge Guidance: Discharges from Snow Melting Machines," published by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. It said a snowmelter's output is "not expected to contain pollutants in concentrations that are toxic or in concentrations that would cause or contribute to a violation of a water quality standard."

Still, calling them "green" might go a bit far. As mentioned, the machines burn a lot of diesel fuel, which produces a lot of emissions. But the manufacturers, Wheatcroft and other contractors argue that the idea of green or environmentally friendly is more shades of gray than black and white. Hauling snow is a big undertaking that usually requires dump trucks. A large company might run 50 dump trucks during a snow event. Getting

more than 10 miles per gallon in a dump truck is considered a luxury, and with snow farms disappearing, that dump truck might be covering many miles to drop just one load.

"When you're working with large corporate companies that

go through LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, the government's green certification program), snowmelters are actually looked at as very green because they're more efficient than dump trucks," Binney says. 



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BY PHIL HARWOOD

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

Command premium prices

The snow and ice management industry is a diverse and competitive marketplace with many different types of customers and contractors serving it. Still, there is ample opportunity to command premium prices. After all, focusing on the premium market segments is a strategic decision and a choice not all companies will make.

In a snow industry benchmarking study published by Hindsite Software in 2015, more than half of the companies surveyed reported profit margins of 25 percent or less. However, 16 percent of the companies surveyed reported profit margins of 40 percent or more. The high margin companies are most likely pursuing premium customer segments with less competition, while the lower margin companies are battling it out for the lower priced work. Each company decides which sandbox to play in.

In every industry and every market, there are many different types of customers (buyers). The snow and ice management industry is no different. Let's begin by looking at income levels. There are the super-rich, the wealthy, the upper income wage earners, the middle income, the lower income and the impoverished. On the commercial side, there are the world-class owners/managers, "Class A" owners/managers, "Class B" owners/managers, slumlords, etc. Each segment has unique needs, and there is a snow contractor ready and willing to help them all.



There are also different buying habits, which don't always correlate with income level. There are the innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Google "innovation diffusion curve" to learn more. An early adopter has probably been buying liquids for more than 10 years now, whereas a laggard will not come around for another decade.

There are other variables that further segment customers, but if we simply look at the two variables mentioned above, we can see there are vast differences in customer needs and preferences within the snow and ice management industry. These differences create opportunities to command premium prices.

SPECIALIZED NEEDS, LESS COMPETITION

Premium pricing exists in the niche market segments where there are specialized needs and less competition. These niches are sometimes hard to identify and even harder to access, which is why there is less competition. Commercial examples include: airports, nuclear energy plants, electric transmission facilities, oil companies, etc. On the

residential side, there are specialized niche markets, as well: exclusive resort properties, estates, etc.

In niche markets, price is almost irrelevant. The primary purchase criteria are focused on qualifications and capacity. Premium buyers want to know you can get the work done, not how much it's going to cost them. The value created by performing to meet their expectations far outweighs whatever your invoice amount is.

Stop for a moment and think about your purchasing habits. Perhaps you are a premium buyer for some things. If so, you will understand the psychology behind the premium buyer. When you pay extra for convenience, status or higher quality, you are a premium buyer. There is always a cheaper alternative, but you're deciding to spend more because there is more value included. This is how premium buyers think and act.

This brief example illustrates my point. I drive a premium vehicle for a variety of reasons, and I have my oil changed at the dealership, even though I pay a premium for it. Why would I pay more for an oil change at a dealership instead of running through a quick oil change place or doing it myself? Great question.

My time is too valuable to change my own oil, mow my own lawn, etc. I learned this a long time ago, and it was one of the most valuable lessons I ever learned. Premium buyers understand this concept. They value their time and will pay more for convenience, comfort and peace of mind. I don't

Continued on page S18

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HSS1332 BLOWER

COMPANY: Honda

URL: PowerEquipment.Honda.com

The track-driven HSS1332 two-stage, walk-behind snow blower is capable of clearing a 32-in. swath with its commercial grade GX390 Honda four-stroke engine. It can move up to 2,750 lbs. of snow per minute at a discharge distance of up to 56 ft. It offers the exclusive shear bolt guard and is available in manual or electric start.



CLEANSWEEP ROTARY BROOMS

COMPANY: Grasshopper

URL: GrasshopperMower.com

Clear dirt, debris, slush and up to 8 in. of snow from side-walks and parking lots and remove gravel from grassy areas adjacent to driveways. The 48- and 60-in. brooms operate at a 25-degree fixed right angle. The 60-in. bidirectional model's variable sweeping angle is up to 25-degrees right or left, controlled hydraulically.



SKID-STEER BLOWER LINE

COMPANY: Loftness

URL: Loftness.com

Skid-steer snow blowers are offered for a wide variety of flow rates, starting as low as 15 gpm. Seven models are available in 72- to 84-in. widths. Eleven rear-mount, PTO-driven tractor models are also offered with one-, two- or three-auger configurations. Available in 60- to 108-in. widths, they accommodate tractors with 540- or 1,000-rpm PTO drives and 16- to 200-PTO hp.



XRS SKID-STEER PLOW

COMPANY: Fisher Engineering

URL: FisherPlows.com

Designed specifically for skid-steers, the XRS automatically retracts the inside wing when the plow is fully angled left or right. An oscillating skid-steer mounting plate gives 6 degrees of side-to-side movement to improve scraping and cutting edge wear.

SS1000 SPREADER



COMPANY: Hiniker

URL: Hiniker.com

This stainless steel tailgate spreader features a "no-dribble" bubble auger design, so the flow stops when the auger stops. It features an in-cab variable-speed controller with blast control and control for optional vibrator. The brushed-finish 304 stainless steel hoppers are available in 6- and 10-cubic-ft. capacities. An optional swing-away hitch provides easy access to the truck bed and tailgate.



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UTV PLOWS

COMPANY: SnowEx

URL: SnowExProducts.com

Built exclusively for utility task vehicles (UTVs), the 6-ft.-wide V-plow adapts to handle 5-ft. sidewalks. The 6-ft. straight blade (pictured) is lightweight, allowing it to pair with a wider range of UTVs.



Command premium prices

Continued from page S14

change my own oil because it's not a good use of my time. But, it's more than that.

The dealership offers me value that the quick oil change place doesn't, and I'm more than willing to pay for it. When I pull into the dealership, I'm greeted by name from a service adviser who knows me and my vehicle. I have peace of mind that my oil will be changed properly and 100 other checks will be made by a highly trained professional. I drive quite a bit and reliability is a huge concern for me. I also value the comfort of the dealership's private workspaces, good coffee, healthy snacks and beautiful cars surrounding me.

Premium buyers of snow and ice services value reliability, convenience, comfort and peace of mind more than price. Of course, not every buyer is a premium buyer. Most buyers care very much about price. This is why Walmart, the largest retailer in the world, is all about low prices. Premium buyers are not as prevalent as the price-driven buyer, but they do exist...if you decide to look for them.



TURF PUSHER COUPLER DESIGN

COMPANY: Pro-Tech Manufacturing and Distribution

URL: SnoPusher.com

The Turf Pusher product line now comes standard with a pin-on coupler design. It allows users to swap out different coupler plates to adapt to the required prime mover:



Remove several locking pins on the rear of the Turf Pusher and switch out the coupler plate. This feature replaces the previous fixed-coupler design that was welded to the Turf Pusher's chassis.

QUICKCUBE SYSTEM

COMPANY: Boss Snowplow

URL: BossPlow.com

This skid-steer-based salting system uses weather-proof poly cubes (hoppers) that can be filled with solid deicing materials and staged at job sites in advance of wintry weather. The filled, stackable cubes replace the need for remote salt piles, tarps and temporary salt shelters.



RB-400 BROOM

COMPANY: Western Products

URL: WesternPlows.com

The RB-400 walk-behind rotary broom is a combination sweeper/snow plow blade that cleans pavement along buildings, curbs and sidewalks. The rotary broom removes heavy snow, while the centrally driven broom allows bristles to clean where snow blowers can't.



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INCENTIVE INSIGHT

Profits and employee engagement can soar when you reward your employees.

BY DILLON STEWART

The landscape industry's employee woes typically center around recruiting and retention, but many experts say business owners should really be concerned about engagement. According to a study from Gallup, companies with highly engaged employees outperform those without by up to 147 percent in earnings per share.

Meanwhile, this same study found that just 13 percent of the workforce is truly engaged at work.

Incentive programs are one way to cultivate engagement. Carolyn Kurowski is the senior vice president for FMP Consulting, a management consulting firm that, among other things, helps orga-

nizations implement effective incentive programs.

"As an organization, you want your employees to work harder

for you, to take more ownership and to be more proactive," she says. "Employee incentive programs are a great way to build that engagement and work towards those goals."

That said, a poorly structured employee incentive program is going to fail, waste time, cost money and diminish trust in the systems and processes that leadership puts in place going forward.

Successful programs typically share four primary characteristics: They are simple, meaningful, timely and public.

First, simplicity is essential. Programs fail when companies take on too much, too fast, says Kurowski.

Complicated programs are difficult for employees to comprehend and difficult for managers to control. The program should be easy to sustain because the goal is longevity. It's only over time that executives will see the fruits of their labor.

"It's important to think about what you can afford, what you're going to be willing to do on an ongoing basis and what you're willing to commit to," says Kurowski.

4 keys to a successful incentive program

- ✓ Make it simple.
- ✓ Make it meaningful.
- ✓ Make it timely.
- ✓ Make it public.

SOURCE: CAROLYN KUROWSKI, FMP CONSULTING



It's also important for the program to matter to your workforce. Monetary compensation is common in employee incentive programs, but Kurowski says a gift card or an employee-of-the-month parking spot can go a long way for a program in its early stages.

"People get caught up thinking it has to be a big dollar value," she says. "The key is making sure it communicates what they do is important."

The reward also should be closely tied to the desired behavior, so Kurowski emphasizes timeliness. She too often sees well-intentioned



Gabriel Castilo, maintenance foreman, and Mike Freeman (right), owner of Red Valley Landscape & Construction in Edmond, Okla.

executives lose track of their incentive program for months at a time and then try to play catch up by handing out a bunch of checks or gift cards all at once. This huge gap of time between the behavior that's being rewarded and the reward diminishes the program's effect.

If your reward system uses gift cards, for example, be sure to have the gift cards on hand so employees can receive their rewards the week or even the day they earned them. This approach helps reinforce the desired behavior and keeps you up-to-date with your program.

Finally, great employee incentive programs are public, Kurowski says. Some programs even can become self-policing when teamwork is involved or when the score is kept publicly.

"Public acknowledgement of what a person has done and why it's valued creates a community sense," Kurowski says. "Employees will be able to see what the company really values and everyone can feel excited and positive about it. It's much more effective than a pat on the back behind closed doors."

Some companies honor employees who earn incentives or receive

positive feedback from customers on their websites or through social media posts. This concept not only makes employees feel revered, but it also works as a content marketing strategy.

"It serves as a dual purpose because potential customers are hearing positive feedback about employees, sometimes even from other customers," she says.

Armed with this knowledge, let's look at a few case studies from landscape companies that have implemented simple but effective employee incentive programs.

INCENTIVES FOR: recycling;
hitting gross margin goals

Red Valley Landscape & Construction

Edmond, Okla.

2016 revenue: \$5.8 million

Service Mix: 60% design/build+installation; 30% irrigation+water management; 5% mowing+landscape maintenance; 5% tree care

Client Mix: 45% residential; 55% commercial

Owner Mike Freeman wanted field employees from the lowest level to the highest level of the organizational chart to see how their decisions affected the company. So, two years ago, he created an incentive program that displayed the butterfly effect of employees' actions—and one that rewarded them for creating positive waves.

"(The incentive program) opens them up to see that everything they do—whether they make a wrong decision or a positive decision—affects the bottom line," says Freeman.

Employees have two ways to earn extra money under Red Valley's incentive system. The first, and more simple way, is through the company's recycling program.

Previously, the company had a problem with employees improperly disposing of items like pallets or plastic containers. Not only is it a concern to leave litter on a property, Freeman says, many of these items carry deposits, allowing the company to get money back if it returns them. The ones that can't be returned for deposits can be sold or recycled.

Now, any money the company earns by recycling or returning refuse is entered into a pool. At the end of the year, the money is dispersed to all members of the production crews. From there, a hierarchy exists where the higher members on the organizational chart earn more than the lower level guys. Top tier production crew-

members can earn an extra \$1,000 to \$1,500 from the recycling program alone. Less tenured employees earn about an extra \$300 or \$400 per year through this program.

"They understand the financial reward of making sure pallets go back, and we get those back to the vendors or we sell them so that we can recoup some costs," Freeman says. "If they save all the pallets (from a given job), that might be another \$30 or \$50 in their pockets."

Red Valley employees also can earn extra money based on productivity. The company tracks the total hours spent on the job. It also tracks each task on the job and ties it to a specific worker or set of workers to see if each employee is completing his or her tasks within a given time frame without sacrificing quality. If the employees are hitting their productivity goals and the job's gross profit margin is on target, the workers get a cut. Red Valley's goal per job is 50 percent gross profit margin. If it hits this goal, 1 percent of the earnings from that job go into a pool. If the company hits only 40 percent gross profit margin, only a half percent goes into the pool. If it goes above 50 percent, the percentage goes up. The pool contributions typically fall between a half percent and 1 percent, Freeman says. Productivity is determined per job for a design/build or irrigation project and per account for maintenance or tree care. Often, a few hundred dollars is given back per job or account. The earnings are paid at the end of each quarter.

Like the recycling program, incentives are doled out on a sliding scale based on seniority. Freeman says the program is self-policing with the high-level employees—the ones that stand to earn the most money—leading the lower-level employees to more profitable behaviors.

"What happens is the guys that really buy in to the program make sure that the other guys that aren't necessarily on board as much as they are, they're getting them on board," Freeman says.

Not surprisingly, getting employees on board is the biggest hurdle.

At first, Freeman says, the weight of simply knowing they stand to earn a percentage didn't really click with many employees. Now, the company talks about its program during weekly "tool box talks," where they discuss successes, failures and areas that need improvement. At the company's quarterly meetings, Freeman gives employees printed reports stating how much they've earned so far that year as well as an update on where the company stands as a whole. Once they watch that account grow, it doesn't take long for the program to click, Freeman says.

"When they start seeing thousands of dollars in this account that goes back to them at the end of the year it really opens their eyes," he says.

INCENTIVES FOR: hitting
budgeted hours

Borst Landscape

Allendale, N.J.

2016 revenue: \$8.4 million

Service Mix: 45% mowing+landscape maintenance; 10% turf+ornamental care; 33% design/build+installation; 12% snow removal

Customer Mix: 85% residential; 15% commercial

Mark Borst, president of Borst Landscape, was struggling to keep his jobs within their budgeted hours. His crews had no incentive to come in on time, and there was no consequence if they went over budget.

"You would maybe get a reprimand from your manager, but other than that, nobody was penalized for it in any way," he says. "So instead of trying to penalize them, we did the opposite and gave them a reward if they came in on time."



Mark Borst

Beginning three years ago with the company's maintenance crews, each crew is given a set number of hours to complete their duties at each site. If the crew hits its benchmark, each member receives an additional \$50 that week.

Having crews aim for speed might worry some contractors. It scared Borst, too. So, he added a catch. If a client calls back because the job wasn't done correctly, the crew must return to fix it. The additional time spent cuts into the following week's allotted time—which almost ensures the crew won't get its bonus that week.

Even the simplest plans aren't fool-proof. At first, the company based the program on production time alone, excluding drive time. If the employees knew they were going to exceed time on a certain job, they'd simply add an extra five minutes to their travel time to give themselves some wiggle room. Now, they're given a fixed number of hours for the week—travel time included—which removed that workaround.

"That's the downfall of any incentive system," Borst says. "You don't realize the workarounds from the employee standpoint. They're as smart as ever when it comes to that stuff."

The company expanded the program to the construction crews with a slight tweak. Each month, Borst Landscape looks at its job costing to see if its construction crews were on budget in hours and materials used. If they were and the job was profitable, the crew gets an extra 2 percent of their monthly salary tacked onto their paychecks.

"So, for simple math, if their paycheck was \$1,000, they'd get \$20 back," he says. "It ends up being a pretty good chunk of change, an extra \$200 (per year) or so."

When Mark Borst tells peers in the landscape industry about his incentive program, he gets a familiar response.

"Friends in the industry criticize me, 'Why are you rewarding them for doing their job?'" he says.

Incentive programs boost recruiting, retention efforts

While incentive programs are designed to change employee behaviors and put a few extra bucks in their pockets, many business owners say they also benefit companies by helping recruiting and retention efforts.

"(Having an incentive program) makes it easier to recruit and retain employees because guys are talking with their buddies and saying, 'You know, we're getting bonuses,'" says Mike Freeman, owner of Red Valley Landscape & Construction. "We find that employees are searching out Red Valley because they want to come work for us."

Furthermore, McHale Landscape owner Kevin McHale says incentive programs help attract career-minded people during the recruiting process. If an employee gets excited and understands the value of being a part of an incentive program, he or she is likely a desirable candidate for the company.

"The type of people that understand it are the type of people we want to attract," he says.



But Borst says he actually saves money on the program. The extra \$50 a maintenance crew member might make is cheaper than the overtime that went along with jobs coming in over budget all the time. He estimates he was paying an average of \$75 per employee for overtime. Plus, he says rewards work much better than consequences.

"I feel like it gives the employees a different mindset," Borst says. "Once you become negative on the employees, they think you're coming down on them. If you can twist it and make it a motivator, it gets them excited instead of making them depressed."

INCENTIVES FOR: improving gross margins; safety

McHale Landscape

Upper Marlboro, Md.

2016 revenue: \$21 million

Service Mix: 25%

mowing+landscape maintenance, 65% design/build+installation, 10% turf+ornamental care,

Client Mix: 100% residential

McHale Landscape's Kevin McHale believes employee's financial returns should match the value the employee is providing the

company. Simply, if you do more, you get paid more.

"You get more money because of your performance and because you're making money for the company," he says. "We even try to stay away from (paying for) tenure."

Naturally, the company's incentive program follows this line of thought. Employees are rewarded when the company is successful, and at McHale, success is measured by gross margin. At the end of every year, the company compares its gross margin for the year to the previous year. For every percentage of gross margin the company improves over the previous year, it splits a quarter of that difference evenly among the foremen.

For example, McHale is a \$21 million company, so if it increases gross margins from the year before by 1 percent, that's around \$50,000 for about 55 foremen. This year, each foreman received about \$1,000.

"Our goal was to get everyone to understand that you can't just get a raise because you've been with a company for a long time," McHale says. "The company has to be profitable."



Kevin McHale

[COVER STORY]

The program's biggest hurdle was education. If the program was going to succeed, there had to be an understanding at the field level. At first, not every foreman knew how gross margin worked. McHale explained the program as essentially a profit-sharing program.

The McHale playbook also includes a safety incentive program.

The company was plagued with worker's comp issues for years, he says. McHale pays \$200,000 in worker's comp insurance yearly, and every time he has to pay out for injuries, that bill gets bigger. Now, the company gives each foreman a \$1,000 "sinking fund" at the beginning of the year. If someone gets hurt or the

company's inspector spots a safety violation, the fund gets a deduction. A minor incident like


an employee not wearing steel-toed boots would cost the crew about \$100. A major incident, like an employee not wearing protective eyewear getting something in his or her eye, would cost \$200 or more. Whatever's left at the end of the year is split among the crew. "The whole goal is if we can get employees to buy in to being safe, it will reduce our costs," he says. "What we reduce gives us the ability to share more money with them."

The company has seen a drastic cut in incidents since implementing the program. In fact, if the year's total worker's comp claim exceeds that of the previous year's, the reward from the sinking fund is cut in half. McHale says taking it all would discourage safety once employees knew they wouldn't reach their goal that year, but he says it's important to strive for safety as a company. Because safety issues are often obvi-



ous and out in the open, crew members give each other friendly reminders, rather than management having to do it, because the crew members don't want to lose their bonuses.

Both programs have a team aspect that brings unity to the crews. Engagement has never been higher, McHale says.

"Between the gross margin and the safety bonus, it really gets everyone involved." 

WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extras section at LandscapeManagement.net to read Kevin McHale's take on hourly raises vs. incentives given the labor market.

PHOTO: MCHALE LANDSCAPE



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CASE STUDY: OUR WAY

THIS WAY

One landscape
firm shows
how codifying
company values
can make a big
impact on culture.

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BUSINESS BASICS: NUMBERS

Accounting for millennials



BY DANIEL GORDON

The author is a CPA who caters to landscape and lawn care firms. Reach him at dan@turfbooks.com.

Millennial business owners and managers demand an ever-increasing amount of real time information. They embrace technology and can make decisions quickly based on financial and operational dashboards.

Our accounting firm and many of our peers have noticed a need to accommodate millennials' thirst for services and information presented in a much different manner than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.

Here's how accounting firms are adapting to cater to millennials.

INDUSTRY SPECIALIZATION

On top of general accounting and tax information, clients expect their accountants to be thoughtful and insightful on common operational issues and industry-related regulations. "Niche" accountants must understand how decisions will affect the entire company. The key performance indicator of any business is gross margin. This number is so important because gross margin is the fraction used to determine the rate at which overhead gets paid and where breakeven is reached. Theoretically, a business owner uses gross margin to calculate how many units of a product or service needs to be sold to profit. The accountant who specializes in the landscape industry understands

that those units are synonymous with hours worked by various workers and, in turn, can formulate a pricing and compensation policy that follows Department of Labor guidelines.

PAPER IS OUT, DIGITAL IS IN

In our experience, millennials overwhelmingly prefer digital document storage over paper. Rather than having to call an accountant, companies want immediate access to data. Digital data vaults are encrypted and offer tiered access depending on position. For example, the owner can view personal financial statements and other sensitive information while the general manager may only have access to operational or sales reports. These vaults give clients full access without having to wait on a document request from the accountant.

CLOUD-BASED SYSTEMS

Cloud-based software provides 24/7 access. Cloud solutions are usually subscription-based, making the monthly fee predictable. Plus, with no updates to install, the user is always plugged in to the latest version. Since the application is hosted remotely, all users are instantly connected in real time. Most of our clients use QuickBooks Online, which is easy to use, reasonably priced and offers powerful reporting.

FLAT RATES/FIXED FEES

We hear clients say consultants, accountants and lawyers who have open hourly billing policies make them feel uneasy. They sell time, and time charges may not always be in line with expectations. There is nothing worse than a big, fat unexpected bill. Fee-based services negate that

problem. These services are priced based on value provided at a predetermined fixed price. Many progressive accounting firms are moving to this model, and clients seem to embrace it.


BOOKKEEPING, BILL PAYING AND INVOICING

Traditional accounting firms provide audit, tax and after-the-fact write-up services. With cloud-based accounting software, it's now easy for accounting firms to provide bookkeeping, accounts payable and invoicing services remotely. Many millennial clients don't want to deal with non-core competencies and would rather outsource. From a pricing and quality perspective, we've seen the outsourced CFO/bookkeeping model is efficient.

BUSINESS COACHING/STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

Millennials also seem to want timely and relevant recommendations on how to use real-time information to prepare budgets, marketing plans and other services to grow profits and value in their firms. They look at their accountants as valuable management team members to provide these services.

Business cycles now move quicker than ever. Landscape companies need to be agile and adapt to the latest technologies. Accountants should be ready when companies call looking for answers to tax questions or for help negotiating with bankers, insurance agents and/or auditors.

Business has never been more interesting. Speak to your accountant. Ask for his or her insights on business, taxes, financial, operational planning and cloud accounting. These are conversations your up-and-coming competitors are having. You should be having them, too. 



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BY KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kevinkehoe@me.com.

How to manage your sales process for better results

Picture your Monday morning sales meeting:
 “How are we doing in new sales?”
 “Good.”

“Are we close to getting any new work?”

“Oh yeah!”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Everyone I talked to loves us.”

“How many is everyone?”

“A bunch.”

“What’s the plan for this week to get these guys?”

“I have lots of meetings set up.”

Perhaps I’m being overly glib, but you get my point. This is not sales management. No data plus no math equals no plan—and probably no sales. What’s the solution? Base your sales meetings on data to make a plan that might actually work.

The way to accomplish this goal is to marry a few simple reports with the idea that falling short of the goal is not an option.

“The key to the sales plan is prioritizing actions that have the highest probability of producing the result.”

We start with the big picture: budget to actual sales performance. Using reports, we can assess volume and pacing at a glance and answer the question, “Are we proposing and closing enough and doing it on time?” In Figure 1, the KPI chart

tells us we are at 110 percent of the proposal budget and 90 percent of the closing budget.

This is good information but insufficient because we can’t 1). predict the likelihood of achieving the goal or 2). define a plan.

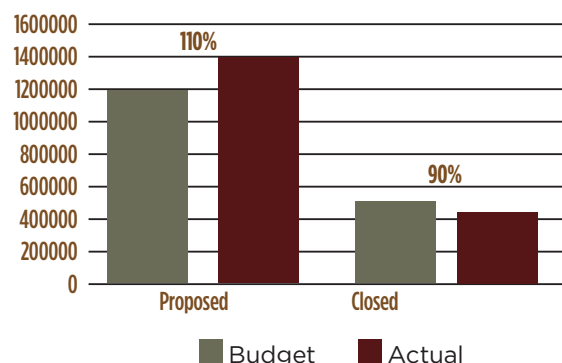
We need an open pipeline report (summarizing each job’s status, price and the probability it will come in) to assess what is “in play.” This information is where sales meetings should be focused—defining what’s real and where the salesmen should employ their energies. The chief reason salespeople underachieve is wasted time due to misplaced priorities.

For this reason, we need to know 1). whether we have enough in play to make the goal for the next few months and 2). which strategies must be pursued to close current opportunities and create new ones.

The key to the sales plan is prioritizing actions that have the highest probability of producing the result. Specifically we want to determine how best to touch existing opportunities, prospect for new ones and resurrect losses.

• **Touches.** Determine which opportunities require salesmen focus and the type of touch that will advance the sale or get a decision.

Figure 1: KPI



- **Prospects.** Determine how many new opportunities are required, given probabilities of current opportunities—and from where these must come.
- **Losses.** Yes, plan your losses. Determine low probability opportunities and move on to reduce wasted time. Use the lost list to resurrect and revisit those with whom we have already engaged to bring sales serendipity into play. (Sales serendipity is making your own luck by calling at precisely the right time when clients have a need.)

This methodical approach is the way to manage your sales process and meetings using data to do the math to make a plan. This is a way better way to coach and motivate your sales staff than any rah-rah speech or strategy based on hope. Yes, hope is a wonderful thing. But it’s not a good way to build a better sales person. Remember, manage what you can see. (U)

CASE STUDY: OUR WAY

A fundamental idea

One landscape company builds its culture by communicating company values consistently. BY CASEY PAYTON

Flip-over desk calendars are one way the company emphasizes the concept.

While Heads Up Landscape Contractors (HULC)—a full-service landscaping company providing design, construction, irrigation and grounds maintenance in Albuquerque, N.M.—always has had a strong culture, its leaders say formalizing some of its fundamentals in a program called “The Heads Up Way” has been a practical approach for training new employees and reinforcing values to existing employees.

It all began when David Friedman, a consultant and founder of High Performing Culture, came to give a presentation. The HULC leaders began to recognize the potential value of a formalized way to present the company’s fundamentals. These fundamentals, created by the company’s owner and founder, Gary Mallory, are values the management team believes in deeply and wanted employees to embrace.

After Friedman’s presentation, the HULC leaders set out to create 10 solid points that demonstrated the fundamentals, but they ended up with more than three times that many.

“As management, we spent a lot of time brainstorming about what it was that was important to our company and our culture,” says Shawn Stomp, vice president and CFO. “Our initial list actually exceeded 31, but we combined a few.” Some examples include “Think and act like an owner” and “Keep things fun.”

Every Monday morning an email goes out with a “fundamental of the week.” The newsletter shares a value

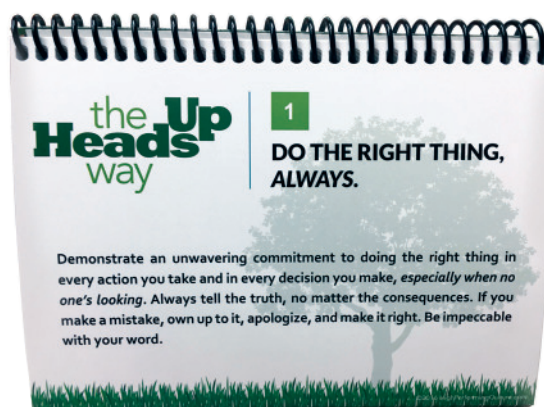
with an anecdote about how an employee applied it in business or made a better decision by following the specific fundamental.

“We’re now having the ‘fundamental of the week’ stories written by individual employees—for example, an account manager sharing an experience with a client and how they applied the fundamental,” Stomp says. “Getting our people more involved with applying these fundamentals regularly has been the whole goal of this, and it’s been exciting to watch it happen.”

In addition to receiving a reminder about the weekly fundamental, all new employees receive a list of the fundamentals on a card they can carry with them. The company also created flip-over desk calendars featuring the fundamentals as reminders for office staff. The fundamentals are presented in both English and Spanish.

Stomp says that “ritualizing the concept” has helped it become an everyday part of business instead of some far-off idea. Whenever they can, managers use the fundamentals to talk about how good decisions were made—or how something could have been done differently.

“When we talk to co-workers about their performance, we can turn to the fundamentals and say, ‘Here’s what you did great—that’s in line with our fundamentals—and here is something you could have done differently,’” Stomp says. “It’s basically taken a strong company culture and made it



stronger by having concrete fundamentals to which we consistently refer.”

After more than a year of discussing and refining the fundamentals, talking about them hasn’t gotten old because there are always new ways employees are applying them in business, Stomp says. Plus, the company is always looking for creative ways to reemphasize its core values.

“One idea we are considering is to create a video with an employee reading the fundamental of the week and sharing a personal story,” Stomp says. “We’re always thinking about ways we can keep it fresh and interesting as a teaching opportunity.”

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

COMPANY: Heads Up Landscape Contractors

HEADQUARTERS: Albuquerque, N.M.

REVENUE: \$20.2 million

EMPLOYEES: 325

SERVICE MIX: 40% design/build+install, 60% maintenance, including enhancements, irrigation, lawn care and snow

CLIENT MIX: 80% commercial, 10% government, 10% residential

PRODUCT FOCUS

BACKPACK BLOWERS



BR700

COMPANY: Stihl

URL: StihlUSA.com

Built in the U.S., the professional-grade BR 700 offers 64.8 cc/165 mph of blowing force with a low-emission, fuel-efficient engine and low cost of operation, Stihl says. Features include a telescopic tube adjustment, semi-automatic choke, large shoulder straps, a backpack pad, soft rubber throttle grip and overall streamlined, rounded design.

EB802RT

COMPANY: Shindaiwa

URL: Shindaiwa-USA.com

The EB802RT features a 79.2 cc professional-grade, two-stroke engine that delivers 695 cfm and 210 mph with the round pipe and 618 cfm with 243 mph using the turbo pipe. The shoulder harness system features four-point adjustment. Throttle cruise control offers sustained "hands-off" operation. The unit is also available with traditional hip-mounted throttle control.



PB-770

COMPANY: Echo

URL: Echo-USA.com

Equipped with a 63.3 cc engine, 756 cfm and 234 mph air speed, the unit is available in either hip-mounted or tube-mounted throttle. Common features include an exclusive vented back pad; dual-stage, side-mounted, heavy-duty air filtration; wide-angle tube rotation; padded backrests and shoulder straps; and a leaf guard.



SA 9500

COMPANY: Efco

URL: EfcoPower.com

Available this fall, the SA 9500's two-stroke engine provides 77 cc/5 hp performance. It features Efco's Aero fan rotation technology for smooth acceleration, along with a throttle trigger and an adjustable control handle. Other features include an aluminum backpack frame, a cushioned back support and a padded harness.



MM4

COMPANY: Makita

URL: MakitaUSA.com

The 75.6 cc MM4 Backpack Blower combines a four-stroke engine with quiet operation. It requires no fuel mixing, and delivers a maximum air speed of 200 mph and a maximum air volume of 670 cfm. It also has mechanical automatic engine decompression for quick and easy starts.





For safety's sake

The landscape industry has made a lot of gains in the realm of workplace safety. Sure, everybody can point to a company that doesn't take safety seriously, but most landscape companies have really upped their games. I'm encouraged by these gains, but there are still three egregious safety violations right under our noses—three violations so ubiquitous that most don't even realize they're a significant safety hazard.

1. Landscapers remove the debris shields from their string trimmers and sidewalk edgers.

2. Landscapers remove or disengage their discharge chutes on their mowing decks.

3. Landscapers operate their riding mowers without engaging their roll over protection system (ROPS).

While I take all of these seriously, this last one is the real killer. Literally. In 2015, my state alone logged three deaths from riding mower rollovers; two of these tragedies involved professional landscape companies.

So, here's my challenge to the landscape industry and especially to you owners. Let's agree to not overlook the obvious opportunities to create a safer work environment for our employees. Reinstall the safety guards on your string trimmers and stick edgers.

Enforce policies that require operators to engage the discharge chute on our mower decks. And for heaven's sake, don't allow riding mowers to be operated without the ROPS engaged. Are you with me?

ROSCOE KLAUSING, LIC
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No idling

Great to read about these (diesel) workhorse engines for mowers ("Down with diesel," April, page 32).

I would suggest that the modern diesel starts quite readily and the practice of leaving them running on the trailer between jobs is quite unhealthy as these and other engines are designed to run with some sort of load applied. Idling is best avoided as much as possible to prevent the need for such things as rebuilding to deal with rings that are carboned up from low combustion pressures and temperatures.

JOHN FISCHER
ENGINE CONSULTANT
Palatine, Ill.



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“From the time I was in elementary school I did neighborhood lawns. By high school I was a little more serious, and while I was in college in the summers I always fell back into landscaping.”

“My sister went there a year ahead of me. I had an incredible time visiting her, and I knew I didn’t want to go anywhere else.”

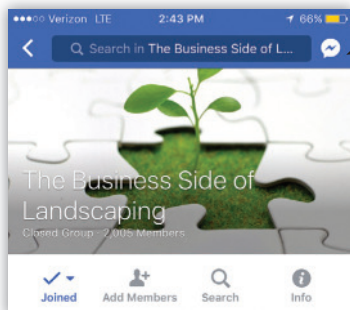


“In year two I realized we had something special. I knew I wanted to take our brand national, and I wanted to grow the hell out of it. So, I read a lot about franchising, and we developed our franchise program.”



Orcutt and his wife, Jill, have an 8-month-old daughter, Riley, and a 6-year-old chocolate lab, Charlie. “Parenting has been an incredible journey so far. It’s taught me a lot about patience and slowing down.”

“One really important thing that stuck with me was they didn’t want to hire people who knew how to build houses. They wanted to hire people who wanted to learn and had the ability to learn how to build houses.”



“My true passion is teaching, and that’s one of the reasons I started the ‘The Business Side of Landscaping’ Facebook group.”



WORDS OF WISDOM “I always tell people to dream big and ignore the noise around you.” • “Always seek advice from people who are in the position that you *want* to be in. You want to surround yourself with people that will support and encourage you, so choose your social group wisely.” • “You never want to be the smartest person in the room. If you are, then find another room.”



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	131	5544	123	\$36
	132	58962	0	\$
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