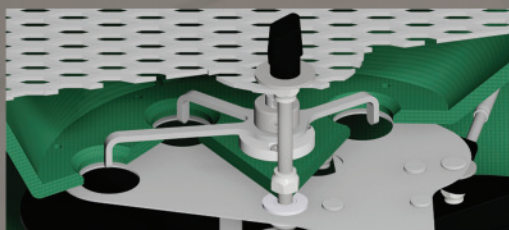


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# LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO GROWTH™

# 150

We rank the  
largest  
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LM150  
companies  
are planning  
for profits.

Landscape  
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Inc. CEO  
Gary Horton



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JUNE 2018 • VOL 57, ISSUE 6

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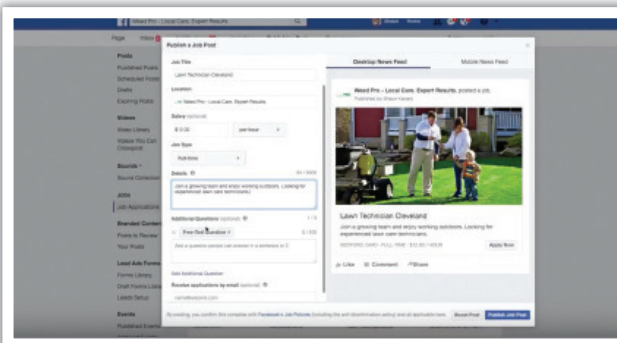
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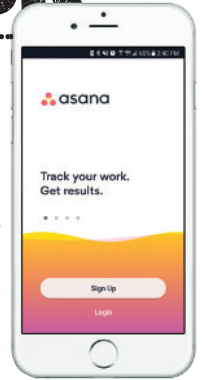
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➔ Are you considering trying out a job listing on Facebook? Head over to **LandscapeManagement.net/WebExtras/** for a step-by-step tutorial from marketing guru Shaun Kanary on how to create a successful Facebook ad to recruit the right people.



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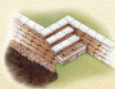
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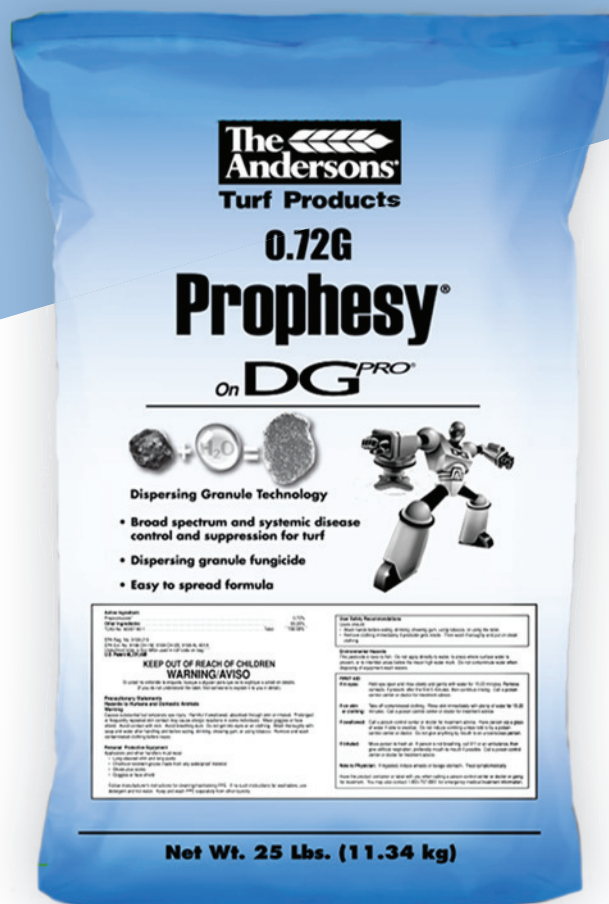


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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**MARISA PALMIERI**  
EDITOR

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## Rock the moat

**I**magine your business is a castle. Does it have a moat?

According to Warren Buffett—renowned investor and chairman of Berkshire Hathaway—businesses worth investing in have significant buffers to keep their opponents at bay. In other words, a company with a moat has a competitive advantage so great, it allows for above-average profits and long-term returns to investors.

Economic moats were in the headlines (and tweets) last month, when SpaceX founder Elon Musk criticized Buffett's emphasis on economic moats. He called it "quaint" and "lame," saying the pace of innovation is more important. Their spat was about See's Candies, which Berkshire Hathaway acquired in 1972. It's reported to have a moat thanks to its quality, price, distribution process and retail experience.

Regardless of the billionaires' stances on moats vs. innovation—which, by the way, do not need to be mutually exclusive—the conversation made me think about the landscape industry and our LM150 list of largest landscape companies, featured in this issue. Do any of these companies have wide moats?

Experts say there are several paths to building a moat, such as:

- Maintaining low operating costs or achieving economies of scale. This approach, favored by Walmart, allows the company to undercut competitors;
- Creating a network effect, where a company's products or services become more valuable the more people use them (think eBay);
- Having high switching costs, which makes it difficult for customers to move to a competitor (some software programs fall into this category); or

- Possessing "intangible assets," which may include intellectual property like patents and trademarks, brand equity or culture.

In our industry, which has a notoriously low barrier to entry, a moat couldn't be more important. Companies with moats have pricing power, which Buffett has said is one of the most vital factors in evaluating a business. "If you've got the power to raise prices without losing business to a competitor, you've got a very good business," he told the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission in 2010. "And if you have to have a prayer session before raising the price by 10 percent, then you've got a terrible business."

Among the ways to achieve a moat, the pursuit of lower operating costs appears to be the greatest opportunity for landscape and lawn care companies.

Many companies in the industry say they prioritize efficiency and lowering costs, but I'm surprised at how much low-hanging fruit is out there. For example, many companies—even some on the LM150 list—are still slow to adopt technology like GPS and software to automate office functions.

Though we'll likely never know whether Buffett would give any companies in the landscape industry moat status, I'd say the companies we feature in this issue's LM150 supplement are moving in that direction. They are fortifying their businesses through various tactics, including employee education and training; incentive programs; and more. See the list and read the stories of four of these firms in the supplement starting after page 16. 



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# Q+A

### How can companies ensure they remain profitable while growing fast?

#### MORE ONLINE

See more great advice and complete answers from our Editorial Advisory Board in the online version of this feature at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

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every job."

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# BIG PICTURE

## ENTERTAINING IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

**LOCATION** Amherst, N.H.

**COMPANY** Pellettieri Associates

**THE DETAILS** The design intent was to create a series of outdoor multipurpose rooms on the property, located on a northern slope in a densely wooded area. As such, the house lot was quite dark and received a substantial amount of groundwater/runoff. Due to poor soil conditions, the potential locations for a leach field were limited, which affected final driveway alignment and structure locations.

The Pellettieri Associates team selectively cleared trees around the site, installed appropriate vegetation to stabilize exposed slopes and used a natural stone retaining wall to capture subsurface drainage and reduce standing water.

The outdoor rooms, including kitchen, dining, fire pit, spa, pool, open lawn and sledding hill areas, were designed with consideration for how they lead or connect to the primary residence and pool house.

The project earned Pellettieri Associates a 2017 Grand Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

**PHOTO** The lush lawn area and landscaping surrounds a comfortable fire pit terrace adjacent to the pool and outdoor living spaces.

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

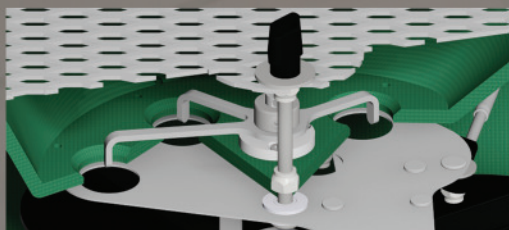
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# NEWS HOW-TO'S

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INDUSTRY  
TRENDS,  
VIEWS  
AND TIPS

RECOMMENDER

LEADERSHIP ADVANTAGE

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH

## REMOTE START



**W**ith more than 15 percent of Country Club Lawn & Tree Specialists' 30-plus employees starting work remotely on any given day, Co-owner Mark Black knew he had to find a time clock that fit his company's needs.

Black consulted with his peers, and about a year ago, the South Roxana, Ill.-based company implemented TimeStation, a cloud-based time clock that allows employees to clock in and out remotely with a four-digit pin on a smartphone or tablet.

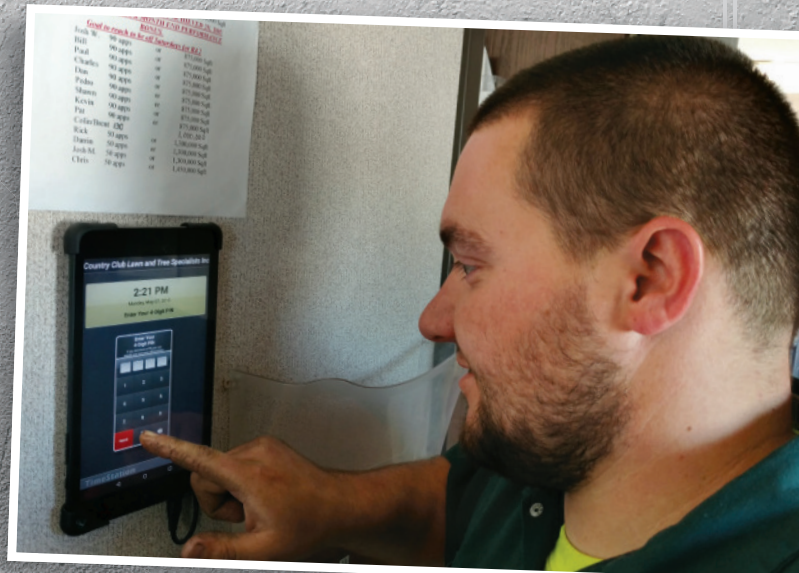
Allowing management to streamline its payroll process into one system, the time clock also includes a GPS feature, so management can cross-check remote employees' locations and clock-in times.

"It'll tell you if people aren't being honest, and it's set off a few red flags of people driving down the road and clocking in and out," Black says. "But (employees) don't have to worry about that as long as they do their job right."

Nonremote workers are able to clock in using the app through a tablet that's set up in the company's job trailer.

The application costs \$350 per year for up to 50 employees. Black says it has saved the company up to 15 man-hours per week when accounting for hours spent doing payroll, potential clock-in errors and system failures.

"For an average of a dollar a day, the remote time clock gives so much ease and peace of mind," Black says.



“For an average of a dollar a day, the remote time clock gives so much ease and peace of mind.”

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



**JOHN DEERE**



## RECOMMENDER

# What postemergent herbicide do you use for turf and why?

Postemergent herbicides help kill actively growing weeds that've already emerged from the soil.



**TOM WINKLER**  
PRESIDENT, GO  
ORGANIC LAWN CARE  
OAKLAND, N.J.

"We use a product called Lesco Three-Way to knock out weeds such as dandelions and many others. It has 2,4-D and Dicamba in it and really works well for us. It can safely be spot sprayed or blanketed across the turf up to 85 degrees without the potential of burning the turf."



**ALEX ADAMO**  
VICE PRESIDENT, PRO  
CUT LANDSCAPING &  
CONSTRUCTION  
WEST NYACK, N.Y.

"We have used Speed-Zone by PBI-Gordon Corp. for several years now. It's an excellent selective herbicide for cool- and warm-season turfgrasses that has noticeable effects within a few hours. The product is rainproof in three hours, and we have had nothing but great results with it."



**ADAM LINNEMANN**  
OWNER,  
LINNEMANN LAWN &  
LANDSCAPING  
COLUMBIA, ILL.

"We use Escalade from Nufarm. It works well and is cost effective. We purchase all our lawn care products in September for the following year in the early order program."

## LEADERSHIP ADVANTAGE



**BY KEN THOMAS**

The author is principal of Envisor Consulting. Reach him at [kenthomas@envisorco.com](mailto:kenthomas@envisorco.com).

## DELIVERING INTENTIONAL RESULTS


During the early years in my career, I learned and mastered all the field level skills that helped me become a landscape technician. When I started my own business, I realized my field skills weren't enough to make me a successful business owner. At first, things flowed smoothly, but as the business grew, things began to get out of control. No matter how many people or how much money I threw at the problems, I couldn't control them.

The turning point came after reading Michael Gerber's book "The E-Myth." His simple but profound insights on building a process-based business hit home.

My team and I began to change our task-led enterprise into a well-oiled machine. We learned all landscape jobs flow through a predictable path from start to finish. We figured out how to break each sale into phases and then group tasks and accountabilities into the right phases.

We coined our formula the Start Clean Finish Clean (SCFC) System. SCFC is a way to organize all of the chaos into a process that guarantees satisfied clients, happy and safe employees and profitable work. SCFC breaks every sale into six main phases: lead; design; estimating; sold/closing; work in process; and job close out.

In each phase, there are processes and accountabilities ensuring success. All phases are connected and work together. No one person is responsible for the entire process. Each team member just has to execute on his portion of the job.

When you are ready to turn chaos into an organized system, consider implementing a standard product delivery system like SCFC. 



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## STEP BY STEP

# How to perform stump grinding

**DOWNLOAD IT**

Visit [LandscapeManagement.net/StepbyStep](http://LandscapeManagement.net/StepbyStep) to download a PDF of this page to use as a training tool for your team.

**C**utting down a tree is only the first part of a professional tree removal service. The leftover stump can cause problems long after the tree is gone, so stump grinding services are necessary to grind the stump, remove the debris and return the area to its natural state. By stump grinding, contractors remove the core and kill the base of the tree because once a stump has been ground down, the roots will die. This step is important because new trees have a tendency to sprout at the base of a stump.

In addition to being unsightly, there are several reasons it's a good idea to remove stumps. Stumps are perfect habitats for pests, such as bees, termites, wasps and carpenter ants. Removing the stump eliminates possible infectious tree diseases from spreading. Stump grinding also removes a potential trip hazard, particularly if the stump is located in a high-traffic area, and it removes nuisance above-ground roots that can cause damage to sidewalks, driveways and building foundations.

Stump grinder operators should always wear personal protective equipment, including gloves, goggles and ear protectors. Be sure to mark any underground obstructions in the landscape, such as electrical wires, irrigation sprinkler lines and invisible dog fences. Contact phone and utility companies in advance of stump grinding, so the location of underground wires or pipes can be identified.

Follow these steps to properly grind a stump. 📄

SOURCE: Arbor Care Inc. Tree Care Specialists

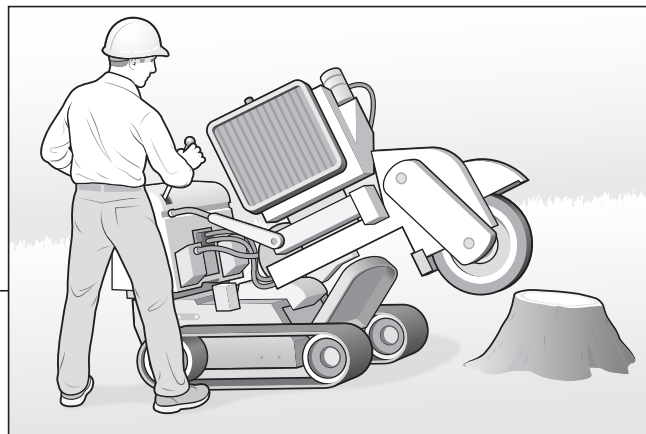


## ← STEP 1

Mark any underground obstructions, as well as any phone and utility lines, found in the landscape.

## → STEP 2

Using a mechanical stump grinder, grind the stump at least 6 to 10 in. below ground to remove the root system.



## ← STEP 3

Remove all stump debris and add topsoil to fill the hole left behind or install new grass, plants or trees.



## SELLING TIPS

## A TARGETED APPROACH TO CHINCH BUG CONTROL

Learn how one LCO grows his customer base with annual applications and a unique sales team.

**T**aking care of clients and the environment are two of the top priorities for Michael Juchnowicz, president of Gardenmasters of S.W. Florida in Venice, Fla.

That's why he focuses on having personable interactions and making calculated applications on every property.

"We're not trying to sell them," Juchnowicz says. "We're trying to be problem solvers."



Juchnowicz

His 56-member team offers lawn care services, as well as interior, lawn and ornamental pest control. The company's clients are 50 percent residential, 45 percent commercial and 5 percent municipal properties. Gardenmasters also services a few athletic fields and has an annual revenue of more than \$5 million.

## ONE AND DONE

Each region faces its own set of pests, and for Juchnowicz and his team, chinch bugs are their main concern. "In our geographic area, chinch bugs are the most prevalent problem in St. Augustine turf," he says. "The chinch bug is our biggest nemesis."

To combat the insect and its damage to clients' properties, Juchnowicz turned to Syngenta's Meridian insecticide. He's been using the product since its inception and has yet to have callbacks for chinch bugs or problems with the product.

"We don't have to retreat, and I've never had to call Syngenta to tell them it failed," he says.

He applies the highest rate legally permitted each May to treat for chinch bugs.

"With the millions of square feet I service, it's more cost effective for me to apply something once and then not have to worry about it for the rest of the summer, instead of having to go back and respray," he says.

## EXTENDED BENEFITS

An added benefit he's found is that Meridian also provides grub control.



While only a few of his 20,000 accounts have reported grub issues, the ability to offer grub control is still an asset.

"If you only have a handful of customers who have grubs, you still have a two-fold benefit. That's huge," he explains. "You can treat them all at once."

## BREAK THE SALES MOLD

Gardenmasters relies on its portfolio of green and healthy lawns to show potential clients what its team can achieve, says Juchnowicz, who has owned the company for 21 years.

"We grow the business every year by 10 to 18 percent," Juchnowicz says. "Our customers look for results and not the sales pitch. They see that there are no chinch bugs or insect damage on their turf and that their turf is greener, healthier and more pristine."

Another important component to growing Gardenmasters' customer base has been its sales team, although it might not fit the traditional description of one. Juchnowicz's sales people are retirees who work part time, giving the team an average age of 61. The team includes an Air Force retiree and the former mayor of Venice, to name a few. They all wear polo shirts and drive Kia Souls, completing the approachable

**Top:** Chinch bug damage to a home lawn that was originally mistaken for disease damage.

**Right:** Full winged adult southern chinch bug on grass St. Augustine grass blade.



persona, he adds.

"When the customers-to-be see a gentleman like that, they're not threatened by him and are more open and apt to hire us," Juchnowicz says.

## ONBOARD WITH EDUCATION

The sales team has a 90- to 95-percent close rate when they come out to a property, he says. Customers can sign up for a service agreement on the spot, or they can request a quarterly service and sign up for a long-term agreement or cancel after that time period.

The team looks to educate clients after the initial application, letting them know that while the treated chinch bugs might still be alive for a few days after treatment, they have ingested the chemical and are no longer doing any damage.

"Once they're on this program year after year, we don't have issues," he says.

**#LawnSellingTips**



## NEW STUFF



### 1. RT-40 POSI-TRACK LOADER

**COMPANY:** ASV Holdings

**URL:** ASVI.com

An alternative to walk-behind and stand-on mini skid-steer loaders, the RT-40 includes a turbocharged 37.5-hp, 1.8-liter displacement Kubota diesel engine, which produces 84.5 ft-lb of torque. The 4,175-lb. RT-40 features a rated operating capacity of 931 lbs. and a tipping load of 2,660 lbs. It is 48.3 in. wide, has an 8.4-ft. lift height, contains 12 contact points, provides a low ground pressure of 3.5 psi and offers a top speed of 7.1 mph.



### 2. 1600 TURBO SERIES III WIDE-AREA MOWERS

**COMPANY:** John Deere

**URL:** Deere.com

Updates to these mowers include an EPA Tier 4 Final compliant, liquid-cooled, four-cylinder engine, boosting the machine's power to 60 hp at 3000 rpm. The rear bumper easily swings out of the way, allowing the hood to be opened without tools, and the standard air-ride seat maximizes comfort, according to John Deere. Features from previous models include one 62-in. center deck and two 42-in. wing decks, all of which are rear discharged; on-demand or full-time 4WD; and more.



### 3. 1.5-IN. COMMERCIAL DRIP CONTROL ZONE KIT

**COMPANY:** Rain Bird

**URL:** RainBird.com

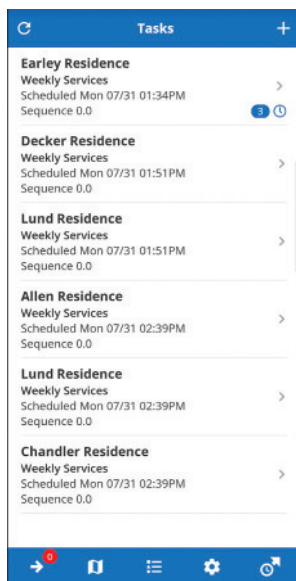
Rain Bird's fully assembled kit includes a 15-62 gpm flow rate to cover larger drip zones with fewer components. Engineered to minimize friction loss and preserve water pressure, it features a 1.5-in. large-capacity screen filter, 1.5-in. PEB globe valve and 1.5-in. 40 psi pressure regulator, according to Rain Bird. Additionally, the kit's inline configuration allows contractors to install two kits in a single jumbo valve box. A reclaimed water version of the inline control zone kit is also available.





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## CHECK OUT MORE NEW STUFF ONLINE

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

### 4. WHITE GREY FOUNTAIN ABART1600

**COMPANY:** Blue Thumb

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

An addition to Blue Thumb's Artisan Triple Fountain Series, the White Grey Fountain ABART1600 features three polished marble towers with heights of 18, 24 and 30 in. The easy-to-install kit comes with an Achelous basin reservoir, a mag-drive pump providing a flow rate of 1,495 gal. per hr., a flow control valve, plumbing, tubing and 200 lbs. of polished pebbles. Customers may choose pebble color from available stock.

### 5. ICREWTEK APP

**COMPANY:** Include Software

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

Now available for Android—in addition to Apple iOS—users, iCREWtek provides real-time connection from the field to the office by allowing users to track crew locations, review crew hours, dispatch job data, receive instant status updates and send invoices. Implemented by approximately 2,000 landscape crews every day, the app includes a new crew locations map, which provides a visual of where crews are located at any given time, according to Include Software.

### 6. NV EARTH ISO HYDRAULIC FLUID

**COMPANY:** Dynamic

**COMPANY:** Green Products

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

The NV Earth hydraulic fluid can completely replace conventional petroleum in more than 200 million pieces of equipment in North America—including mowers and construction equipment, said the company. It's made from renewable content that's readily biodegradable, compatible with mineral oil and able to outperform conventional lubricants, according to the company.



## SAFETYWATCH

### SPREAD SAFELY

A fertilizer spreader is used to apply fertilizer and other granular products to surfaces. Other products might include granular pesticides, grass seed, pelletized top-dressings or even de-icing products for winter walkway use. A fertilizer spreader, when properly maintained, will spread these products evenly and consistently over the surface of the ground.

Parts of a fertilizer spreader include:

- The hopper;
- The rain cover;
- The screen;
- The agitator;
- The shut-off lever;

- The control rate plate and knob;
- The impeller;
- The gearbox; and
- The wheels.

Follow these instructions to properly use a fertilizer spreader:

- Make sure the spreader is on level ground with the shut-off lever in the closed position.
- Fill on a hard surface, not the lawn, as a spill is always possible.
- Ensure the screen is in place, although this will vary; ask your supervisor.
- Fill the hopper with one bag of fertilizer, double checking the product label before filling. Keep in mind, a very full hopper is more prone to tipping and spillage on slopes, so you may not want to completely fill it.

- Set the control rate lever to the level your supervisor tells you and tighten the knob firmly.
- If you're concerned about controlling fertilizer that spreads onto a walkway, shut off one hole and use the deflector.

### WATCH AND LEARN

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

SOURCE: Greenius



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# Supporting profitable growth

## **IN THIS YEAR'S *Landscape Management* LM150 issue,**

we have an opportunity to learn from leaders in the landscape industry about the importance of profitability over growth, for growth's sake.

Growth and profitability are important aspects of any business. However, it is important to understand that they are not the same thing. Also, they're not mutually exclusive.

From my perspective, profitability can be considered the measure of efficiency. Profitability enables a company to measure if the resources that are being put into the business are being optimized effectively. Since labor is such a critical component within the landscape

industry, one of the key performance metrics of profitability should be calculating the productivity of your workforce and keeping labor productive.

While growth is fairly straightforward and can be measured in simple numbers, things can get a little tricky for a company that focuses only on growth. Focusing on growth alone may potentially help an organization grow in the short term, but could lead to incorrect longer term decisions. In the long term, it is not a focus on growth alone that will help increase your company's potential to grow. You will have to focus on ways to increase your profitability to make your return on investment worthwhile.

We've heard from many of you that business is good and there are opportunities for continued growth. However, profitable growth calls for new and innovative approaches, and often requires new business decisions.

John Deere is dedicated to providing you with the products, support and integrated solutions to help you grow and prosper, because profitable growth is important for all of us.

Our commitment to your business doesn't stop with providing innovative and quality products. John Deere Financial provides customized finance solutions to help you manage your business' cash flow. Our experienced John Deere dealer network is there to support your business needs after the sale with the most extensive factory-trained service technicians and knowledgeable parts staff in the industry. Our dealers ensure uptime in the most responsive manner, because we understand that downtime is not an option when you are running a business!

As you review this section and the insights and experiences of the leaders within the industry, I would encourage you to ask yourself two questions:

- What is your strategic advantage?
- How could you develop business plans to deliver that advantage and achieve profitable growth?

Have a prosperous 2018,



**Ken Taylor, CLP**  
**Landscape Industry Certified**

*John Deere Corporate Business Division*





# RANKINGS

		Headquarters	2017 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2016	% Projected Change for 2018	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
1	BrightView	Plymouth Meeting, Pa.	\$2,260,000,000	NR	NR	22,000/NR	100/0/0
2	TruGreen ^	Memphis, Tenn.	\$1,334,942,110	NR	4%	NR/NR	14/85/1
3	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Kent, Ohio	\$916,000,000	8%	5%	8074/387	59/40/1
4	Bartlett Tree Experts	Stamford, Conn.	\$271,000,000	11%	8%	1650/80	28/64/8
5	Gothic Landscape	Valencia, Calif.	\$182,500,000	40%	12%	1610/90	90/5/5
6	Aspen Grove Landscape Group	Willow Grove, Pa.	\$180,000,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
7	Park West Cos.	Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.	\$175,000,000	16%	5%	1600/0	NR/NR/NR
8	Yellowstone Landscape	Bunnell, Fla.	\$174,000,000	27%	10%	1800/800	100/0/0
9	U.S. Lawns	Orlando, Fla.	\$170,604,800	3%	5%	1450/700	98/0/2
10	LandCare	Frederick, Md.	\$160,000,000	0%	10%	1800/1200	100/0/0
11	Weed Man	Mississauga, Ontario	\$158,673,380	7%	5%	900/4000	5/95/0
12	Ruppert Landscape	Laytonsville, Md.	\$155,500,000	4%	8%	1350/0	85/0/15
13	Ferrandino & Son	Farmingdale, N.Y.	\$145,000,000	NR	NR	325/NR	100/0/0
14	Merit Service Solutions*	Malvern, Pa.	\$117,600,000	20%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
15	Lawn Doctor ^	Holmdel, N.J.	\$112,427,582	6%	5%	1000/350	5/95/0
16	Ambius	Reading, Pa.	\$109,000,000	3%	3%	857/140	100/0/0
	SavATree	Bedford Hills, N.Y.	\$109,000,000	22%	29%	855/146	23/75/2
18	Landscape Development Inc.	Valencia, Calif.	\$79,500,000	29%	31%	790/0	89/10/1
19	The Grounds Guys ^	Waco, Texas	\$79,200,000	8%	12%	500/100	50/40/10
20	Mainscape	Fishers, Ind.	\$75,145,000	2%	0%	800/200	100/0/0
21	LandOpt	Pittsburgh, Pa.	\$73,000,000	-10%	10%	264/450	27/62/11
22	Elite Team Offices	Clovis, Calif.	\$70,000,000	-10%	5%	250/100	99/1/0
23	The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes	Tucson, Ariz.	\$68,500,000	5%	5%	1000/1100	70/0/30
24	Massey Services ^	Orlando, Fla.	\$67,686,270	6%	15%	1989/0	13/87/0
25	NaturalLawn of America	Frederick, Md.	\$63,587,179	14%	8%	418/116	3/97/0
26	The Greenery	Hilton Head Island, S.C.	\$62,600,000	5%	5%	750/200	90/5/5
27	Garden Design*	Farmers Branch, Texas	\$61,950,000	12%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
28	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	Markham, Ontario	\$61,500,000	9%	10%	240/240	92/1/7
29	Denison Landscaping	Fort Washington, Md.	\$58,500,000	6%	0%	230/280	95/3/2
30	Spring-Green Lawn Care	Plainfield, Ill.	\$58,400,000	8%	9%	477/63	8/92/0
31	Acres Group	Wauconda , Ill.	\$53,650,000	12%	16%	115/750	95/0/5
32	Meadows Farms	Chantilly, Va.	\$53,000,000	2%	5%	250/300	4/94/2
	Rotolo Consultants	Slidell, La.	\$53,000,000	40%	30%	225/375	80/0/20
34	Juniper Landscaping	Fort Myers, Fla.	\$50,000,000	15%	15%	500/0	98/0/2
35	Clean Scapes	Austin, Texas	\$49,971,880	12%	12%	365/185	95/0/5
36	Lucas Tree Experts	Falmouth, Maine	\$49,500,000	3%	3%	410/25	NR/NR/NR
37	Mariani Enterprises	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$48,690,000	10%	1%	140/382	12/88/0
38	Sebert Landscape	Bartlett, Ill.	\$48,000,000	10%	12%	100/450	94/5/1
39	HeartLand	Mission Woods, Kan.	\$47,500,000	5%	7%	285/270	97/0/3
40	Dixie Landscape Co.	Medley, Fla.	\$45,345,000	5%	5%	305/0	NR/NR/NR
41	Cagwin & Dorward	Novato, Calif.	\$43,912,837	5%	6%	475/50	85/0/15
42	Girard Environmental Services ^	Sanford, Fla.	\$39,934,200	10%	4%	420/50	100/0/0
43	Christy Webber Landscapes	Chicago, Ill.	\$39,500,000	-1%	14%	435/0	70/20/10
44	Somerset Landscape*	Chandler, Ariz.	\$39,341,500	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
45	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	Woodbine, Md.	\$38,200,000	0%	10%	300/200	90/10/0
46	Teufel Landscape	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$35,238,000	29%	7%	270/30	97/1/2
47	Bemus Landscape	San Clemente, Calif.	\$35,200,000	14%	8%	414/0	100/0/0
	Environmental Management Services	Plain City, Ohio	\$35,200,000	19%	5%	70/230	85/5/10
49	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping ^	San Antonio, Texas	\$34,778,784	-1%	0%	282/150	48/4/48
50	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	Gilbert, Ariz.	\$34,000,000	38%	13%	318/66	100/0/0

**LEGEND** NR = Not reported; \* Indicates estimate, based on projected revenue for 2017 reported last year; ^ Indicates a portion of reported revenue was removed (such as pest control, janitorial services or other nongreen industry offerings)



		Headquarters	2017 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2016	% Projected Change for 2018	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
51	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	Portland, Ore.	\$33,952,431	18%	6%	280/20	NR/NR/NR
52	Pierre Landscape	Irwindale, Calif.	\$33,800,000	-3%	20%	250/30	NR/NR/NR
53	Landscape Workshop ^	Vestavia Hills, Ala.	\$33,773,961	19%	4%	305/200	90/5/5
54	Baytree Landscape Contractors	Stone Mountain, Ga.	\$33,413,086	34%	15%	220/60	100/0/0
55	Gachina Landscape Management	Menlo Park, Calif.	\$32,536,545	10%	12%	418/0	84/3/13
56	Ryan Lawn & Tree ^	Overland Park, Kan.	\$30,810,804	20%	10%	285/26	4/95/1
57	McFall & Berry Landscape Management	Annandale, Va.	\$30,460,381	3%	2%	260/160	95/0/5
58	AAA Landscape	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$30,456,616	5%	10%	450/3	95/2/3
59	Greenscape	Raynham, Mass.	\$30,400,000	0%	25%	35/300	99/1/0
60	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	Medway, Mass.	\$30,390,000	17%	10%	105/70	9/91/0
61	Complete Landscaping Service	Bowie, Md.	\$30,157,569	12%	15%	108/160	99/1/0
62	Beary Landscaping	Lockport, Ill.	\$30,100,000	7%	10%	60/225	80/14/6
63	Creative Environments	Tempe, Ariz.	\$30,000,000	NR	8%	140/0	NR/NR/NR
64	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	Middleton, Wis.	\$29,672,349	13%	0%	93/193	80/20/0
65	Chalet	Wilmette, Ill.	\$29,200,000	6%	3%	100/250	0/100/0
66	Schumacher Landscaping	West Bridgewater, Mass.	\$29,000,000	9%	9%	60/240	28/72/0
67	Signature Coast Holdings	Napa, Calif.	\$28,911,000	3%	19%	350/80	77/9/14
68	Landscape Services (LSI)	Nashville, Tenn.	\$28,674,505	NR	10%	250/50	95/5/0
69	Gibbs Landscape Co.	Smyrna, Ga.	\$28,000,000	9%	5%	277/30	67/33/0
70	Landscape Concepts Management	Grayslake, Ill.	\$27,930,000	0%	7%	74/190	99/1/0
71	Senske Services ^	Kennewick, Wash.	\$27,880,000	6%	8%	325/150	22/75/3
72	Merchants Landscape Services	Santa Ana, Calif.	\$27,500,000	3%	5%	430/0	0/0/100
73	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	Germantown, Wis.	\$27,400,000	9%	6%	250/50	67/30/3
74	Southern Botanical	Dallas, Texas	\$27,197,566	4%	39%	195/50	71/29/0
75	The Loving Cos.	Charlotte, N.C.	\$27,018,010	119%	75%	135/0	98/2/0
76	Earth Tones Design	Midlothian, Texas	\$27,000,000	1%	5%	110/65	85/15/0
77	Harvest Landscape	Orange, Calif.	\$26,780,000	25%	25%	500/500	100/0/0
78	Naturescape	Muskego, Wis.	\$26,739,484	7%	5%	270/15	5/95/0
79	Russell Landscape Group	Sugar Hill, Ga.	\$26,500,000	11%	13%	380/110	89/1/10
80	Scott Byron & Co.	Lake Bluff, Ill.	\$25,500,000	4%	7%	85/120	5/95/0
81	Stay Green	Santa Clarita, Calif.	\$24,263,155	13%	15%	335/0	99/1/0
82	Benchmark Landscape	Poway, Calif.	\$24,109,746	8%	0%	240/0	90/5/5
83	Benchmark Landscapes	Austin, Texas	\$23,800,000	-4%	1%	269/79	98/0/2
84	SiteWorks	Chandler, Ariz.	\$23,138,000	9%	23%	145/40	100/0/0
85	Designs By Sundown	Littleton, Colo.	\$23,000,000	10%	10%	200/100	10/90/0
86	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	Hayward, Calif.	\$22,850,000	10%	6%	236/0	10/75/15
87	Andre Landscape Service	Azusa, Calif.	\$22,705,295	20%	15%	362/0	95/5/0
88	Pacific Landscape Management	Hillsboro, Ore.	\$22,064,256	26%	10%	208/55	100/0/0
89	Nutrilawn Corp.	Toronto, Ontario	\$22,000,000	5%	5%	15/250	10/90/0
	DLC Resources	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$22,000,000	9%	13%	340/0	100/0/0
91	Superscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$21,985,892	32%	10%	60/38	93/6/1
92	Heads Up Landscape*	Albuquerque, N.M.	\$21,895,500	10%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
93	High Tech Landscapes	Branchburg, N.J.	\$21,820,219	1%	2%	45/328	60/30/10
94	Bland Landscaping Co.	Apex, N.C.	\$21,564,000	13%	15%	275/25	80/10/10
95	Southview Design	St. Paul, Minn.	\$21,183,000	10%	8%	60/125	28/72/0
96	The Munie Co.*	Caseyville, Ill.	\$21,119,000	NR	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
97	Berghoff Design Group	Scottsdale, Ariz.	\$21,000,000	5%	16%	375/0	0/100/0
	Cleary Bros. Landscape	Danville, Calif.	\$21,000,000	4%	5%	225/10	85/2/13
	McHale Landscape Design	Upper Marlboro, Md.	\$21,000,000	1%	1%	200/200	0/100/0
100	Heron Home & Outdoor	Apopka, Fla.	\$20,898,885	4%	4%	194/0	2/98/0



		Headquarters	2017 Revenue (U.S. Dollars)	% Rev Change from 2016	% Projected Change for 2018	FTEs/ Seasonal Employees	% Comm/ Res/Gov
101	Yard Nique	Morrisville, N.C.	\$20,500,000	-20%	10%	250/150	100/0/0
102	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	Jupiter, Fla.	\$20,113,000	3%	8%	275/0	97/3/0
103	M. Neves	Dartmouth, Mass.	\$20,000,000	50%	25%	57/112	50/5/45
104	Complete Property Maintenance ^	Coconut Creek, Fla.	\$19,950,000	20%	10%	415/415	90/10/0
105	Cutting Edge Landscape	Boise, Idaho	\$19,744,520	24%	10%	60/100	100/0/0
106	Westco Grounds Maintenance*	Houston, Texas	\$19,240,000	4%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
107	Clarence Davids & Co.	Matteson, Ill.	\$19,100,000	4%	3%	75/175	90/5/5
108	ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design	Venice, Fla.	\$18,863,350	9%	10%	215/57	80/20/0
109	Hittle Landscaping	Westfield, Ind.	\$18,700,000	7%	8%	110/140	90/5/5
110	HighGrove Partners	Austell, Ga.	\$18,300,000	6%	4%	200/30	95/0/5
111	Earthworks	Lillian, Texas	\$18,100,000	20%	15%	175/130	95/0/5
	Sposato Landscape Co.	Milton, Del.	\$18,100,000	-2%	10%	267/100	80/20/0
113	Moore Landscapes	Northbrook, Ill.	\$18,000,000	3%	12%	35/64	60/1/39
114	LMI Landscapes	Carrollton, Texas	\$17,829,000	0%	25%	129/67	100/0/0
115	Complete Landsculpture	Dallas, Texas	\$17,608,750	-4%	13%	135/40	50/50/0
116	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	Congers, N.Y.	\$17,500,000	8%	5%	160/16	90/5/5
	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	San Diego, Calif.	\$17,500,000	5%	5%	250/0	90/0/10
118	Landscape Maintenance Professionals	Seffner, Fla.	\$17,000,000	4%	5%	240/60	100/0/0
	Mountain View Landscape	Chicopee, Mass.	\$17,000,000	15%	3%	24/70-75	45/5/50
120	Desert Classic Landscaping	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$16,500,000	7%	7%	315/0	80/5/15
	North American Lawn & Landscape	Charlotte, N.C.	\$16,500,000	0%	5%	180/20	100/0/0
	Santa Rita Landscaping	Tucson, Ariz.	\$16,500,000	20%	15%	175/0	75/20/5
123	Conserve LandCare	Thousand Palms, Calif.	\$16,217,000	3%	12%	260/0	70/10/20
124	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	Dallas, Texas	\$15,631,074	20%	10%	130/140	70/15/15
125	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management ^	Buford, Ga.	\$15,554,677	42%	15%	129/24	47/52/1
126	American Landscape Systems	Lewisville, Texas	\$15,500,000	13%	5%	150/0	80/0/20
	Perficut Cos.	Des Moines, Iowa	\$15,500,000	8%	10%	90/60	85/10/5
128	Crystal Greens Landscape ^	Clackamas, Ore.	\$15,468,435	20%	3%	189/0	97/3/0
129	The Joyce Cos.	Marstons Mills, Mass.	\$15,450,000	10%	8%	95/90	15/85/0
130	Level Green Landscape	Washington, D.C.	\$15,335,244	-3%	20%	93/125	95/0/5
131	Greenscape	Holly Springs, N.C.	\$15,200,000	4%	5%	140/40	65/30/5
132	Timberline Landscaping	Colorado Springs, Colo.	\$15,134,000	18%	20%	86/60	60/15/25
133	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	Carrollton, Texas	\$15,000,000	15%	20%	75/75	19/80/1
134	The Spencer Co.	Houston, Texas	\$14,650,819	14%	2%	268/8	100/0/0
135	C. Caramanico & Sons	Upland, Pa.	\$14,520,962	28%	-15%	35/90	100/0/0
136	Schultz Industries	Golden, Colo.	\$14,448,588	14%	6%	145/30	86/0/14
137	LandCare Innovations*	Charlotte, N.C.	\$14,308,000	12%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
138	Hoffman Landscapes	Wilton, Conn.	\$13,760,000	1%	5%	120/0	0/100/0
139	Nanak's Landscaping	Deerfield Beach, Fla.	\$13,625,500	25%	12%	160/45	95/3/2
140	NJ Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	Delray Beach, Fla.	\$13,358,114	13%	10%	22/125	1/99/0
141	Lambert's*	Dallas, Texas	\$13,125,000	5%	NR	NR/NR	NR/NR/NR
142	Grounds Control	Phoenix, Ariz.	\$13,000,000	9%	5%	235/0	80/5/15
	ProGrass	Wilsonville, Ore.	\$13,000,000	5%	8%	195/0	40/60/0
144	Native Land Design	Cedar Park, Texas	\$12,592,734	2%	3%	125/95	100/0/0
145	Cherrylake	Groveland, Fla.	\$12,061,000	0%	16%	79/21	100/0/0
146	ASI Landscape Management	Thonotosassa, Fla.	\$12,000,000	25%	20%	100/30	100/0/0
147	Eastern Land Management	Stamford, Conn.	\$11,974,000	18%	10%	25/80	100/0/0
148	Emerald Isle Landscaping	Denver, Colo.	\$11,928,000	12%	20%	125/100	95/0/5
149	Brilar	Oak Park, Mich.	\$11,925,000	20%	14%	65/125	70/0/30
150	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	Caseyville, Ill.	\$11,650,000	49%	7%	50/70	86/10/4
			Total: \$10,603,896,544	Avg: 11%	Avg: 11%		



# It's our job to keep your wheels turning.



## NEVERSTOP™ Services and Support

NEVERSTOP represents the three areas that hold the key to eliminating downtime; **Customized Financing**, with leasing and payment programs made especially for the landscape industry. **Parts NOW**, which features our Next Day Parts Guarantee\* and our Parts OnSite™ cabinet program. And **Priority Loaners**, our exclusive commercial loaner program\*. And all three are combined with the unparalleled service and support you get from a John Deere commercial dealer. Come visit us today to find out how NEVERSTOP can keep you going. And keep you mowing.

### Keep Mowing

\*See your participating dealer for details.

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**NEVERSTOP**  
SERVICES & SUPPORT

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# \$10 billion+

**Total LM150 revenue hits eleven digits for the first time in the list's 10-year history.** BY MARISA PALMIERI

**T**his issue marks the tenth LM150 list—it debuted in 2009—and the first year the combined revenue of all 150 companies has topped the \$10 billion mark. The combined 2017 revenue was up 9 percent (\$8.6 million) year over year.

BrightView and TruGreen didn't report year-over-year growth figures, but the math tells us they grew only 3 percent and 2 percent over last year's reported revenue, much less than the average company on the list's reported 11 percent growth rate. LM150 firms are projecting to grow 11 percent on average again in 2018.

While the industry remains fragmented overall with tens—or even hundreds—of thousands of businesses, depending on who you're counting, it's worth noting that the top two firms again combine to account for more than a third of the entire list's revenue. The top five firms on the list—BrightView, TruGreen, Davey Tree, Bartlett Tree and Gothic Landscape—account for nearly half. The No. 6 company on the list, Aspen Grove Landscape Group, is a new one. Learn more about this firm and why it caused four LM150 mainstays to drop off this year's list on page S6.

## WHO DID WE MISS?

Should your company be on the LM150 list of the largest landscape companies? Or do you know of one we missed? Contact Editor Marisa Palmieri at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net to be notified in early 2019 when the submission period opens. We encourage companies with more than \$8 million in revenue to enter.

The information on the LM150 list is self-reported unless otherwise noted. Some companies don't break out their service lines, so we can't be sure what revenue is specific to typical green industry services. Not to mention, there are several firms that opt not to participate in the list, there are others we don't know about and it's possible some firms' revenue overlaps due to subcontracting agreements among companies on the list.

COMBINED 2017 LM150 REVENUE  
**\$10,603,896,544**



= 9%

over combined 2016 LM150 revenue

AVERAGE  
REVENUE GROWTH  
FROM 2016

**11%**

AVERAGE  
PROJECTED  
GROWTH FOR 2018

**11%**

COMBINED 2017 REVENUE OF  
THE TOP 5 FIRMS


**\$4,964,442,110**

**47%**

To see this year's rankings, turn back a page and open the gatefold for our three-page LM150 listing. To quickly find the rank of any company, visit the alphabetical index on page S21.

## Methodology

LM sought submissions from landscape companies in the magazine, on LandscapeManagement.net, via email and over the phone from January through May. Companies submitted their details through an online form. LM editors compiled the results and, where applicable, removed nontypical green industry revenue sources from totals reported by companies. For example, we omit revenue from pest and janitorial services.

We estimated revenue for firms that didn't provide data if they participated in last year's list and reported a projected 2017 revenue figure. We calculated the numbers for client mix, profit centers and regional charts based on the data submitted. 



# Bouncing back

No.  
18

## LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENT INC.

BY ABBY HART

In 2006, Gary Horton's company, Landscape Development Inc. (LDI), was at the top of its game. With an annual revenue of \$93 million, the Valencia, Calif.-based company was thriving and growing by more than 25 percent per year.

Then the 2007 recession hit, and like so many other successful firms, LDI found itself mired in a downturn. Revenue fell from \$93 million to \$22 million by 2012, and payroll numbers dwindled from 1,360 employees down to 220.

"It was remarkable," says Horton. "Nobody knew if this economic devastation was going to last, or when it would finally pick up—and it was really hard to plan both on the upside and the downside."

Home builders backed by Lehman Brothers and other funding sources folded and projects were halted. Horton recalls that every fourth house in many neighborhoods was put up for sale. "It was truly devastating for the human factor and the business factor," he says.

In 2009, Horton was reading *The Economist* when he happened

to see an advertisement for an executive education module at University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, which consistently ranks at the top of best business school lists.

An avid learner, and the holder of a bachelor's degree in finance from California State University, Northridge, and an MBA from Loyola Marymount University, it's no surprise that Horton turned to education to work through his business challenges.

"That was what I needed—it would be a big refresher, to really pull my head out of it and get some executive management training at the highest level," he says.

The intensive five-week Advanced Management Program focused on topics such as visionary leadership, creating innovative change and driving positive impact in one's organization.

Horton's time at Wharton allowed him to take a step back, recharge and rebuild his company to what it is today—a firm that has battled back from \$22 million in revenue in 2012 to a projected \$100 million dollars in revenue by the end of 2018, with a workforce of around 900.

Landscape  
Development Inc.  
CEO Gary Horton



But LDI doesn't plan to rest. The company has crafted a driving business goal for 2020: to become, in its words, "a \$150-million, multidiscipline, green-industry firm improving people's quality of life throughout the western United States."

Why the \$150 million target? "Early on in 2013, we determined that with 25 to 30 percent annual growth, we could meet that seemingly substantial target," says Horton. "We also understand that there's greater financial value in larger, heavily recurring revenue firms and, hoping to pass this business along to family and employees going forward, we need to create a durable, valuable entity."

Here are some of the lessons that Horton and his team are putting into practice as they strive to reach their goal.

### Lesson #1: Diversify the business

Before 2008, LDI was overconcentrated in the booming housing market. When the housing market crashed, Horton estimates that it impacted the business by 75 percent. "We were good at housing, and we created absolute raving fans in the housing sector, but it was too much work in too confined a market space," Horton says.

The company has now diversified its services, including vertical construction, earth services and a greater focus on maintenance services overall. In 2008, maintenance was \$8 million. Maintenance now accounts for \$20 million of LDI's revenue, on its way to an estimated \$35-40 million by the end of 2018.

LDI has also recognized that acquisitions are a key part of its growth strategy. The company acquired a small landscape firm, as well as a \$7-million maintenance company. Several more acquisitions are currently in progress.

"We've realized that these deals are necessary if we're to hit our goal of \$150 million by 2020, while positioning ourselves for better resiliency against the next downturn," Horton says.

### Lesson #2: Invest in your people

Ram Charan, business adviser, author and mentor to the late Apple founder Steve Jobs and former General Electric Chairman and CEO Jack Welch, presented during the Wharton program that the best managers and CEOs spend 40 to 45 percent of their time on their people. Today, LDI works hard to follow suit.

LDI Controller Jenny Lunde and Division Presidents Scott Heilman and Tristan Nicholls attended Wharton's

weeklong course in Finance and Accounting for the Non-Financial Manager. LDI's COO, Mark Crutcher, also completed the five-week Advanced Management Program course in 2017.

Part of LDI's people development has been coaching team members to go above and beyond to serve clients in unexpected ways. "We've spent a lot of time, money and effort on very high levels of customer service—tons of human touch elements," says Horton. Examples of these include providing clients with printed project books as gifts, as well as sending construction project photos and notes to clients every two weeks.

Prior to the recession, LDI took its management staff on luxury retreats, sometimes overseas—the idea being that if they could see firsthand what top-of-the-line hospitality looks like, they could then translate those experiences to providing outstanding interactions with clients.

These days, LDI takes its employees on equally luxurious retreats, but much closer to home in southern California, where they can model their customer service experience after the top hospitality brands' standards, without incurring exorbitant travel costs.

**"Over and again we acknowledge that we only have so much time, we often only get one shot, and we can use our time to the best, just kind of get by or simply waste it."**

—GARY HORTON



From left to right:  
LDI COO Mark  
Crutcher, CEO  
Gary Horton,  
Division President  
Scott Heilman and  
Controller Jenny  
Lunde.



Some members of the LDI design team on Ventura Beach, near their beachside offices.



### Lesson #3: Create a workplace of profound respect

Since LDI has made it through two recessions in its 35-year history, Horton looks back and recognizes that time is a precious resource.

“Over and again we acknowledge that we only have so much time, we often only get one shot, and we can use our time to the best, just kind of get by, or simply waste it,” he says.

To help guide the company, LDI has developed a set of what they call core beliefs and forever values, which are:

- We are a dynamic creative outlet for our employees.
- We are born to grow.
- We work to maximize profit for all stakeholders, inside and outside of the company.
- We do the right thing, day in, day out. Unquestioned honesty in all settings.
- We are tenacious in our personal principles, with managing our relationships and in business practices.

### ➔ PROFIT POINTER

Gary Horton says having a good business bank is a key to growth. Seek out a bank that believes in your company and will provide you with financing and terms that reflect your goals, he says.

“At any size company, develop a really good relationship with your banker and understand what competitive terms are—too often landscapers don’t know,” Horton says. “You need to know what’s appropriate for your type and size of business at any point in time.”

- We grow and enrich our associates for the benefit of their full careers.
- We are forever committed to creating “raving fans”—to provide the highest levels of green industry service.
- We make our clients’ lives easier and bring them peace of mind.

Horton acknowledges that this talk of values can sound a bit lofty—but it serves a purpose. LDI uses these values to hire a certain type of employee who believes and embodies these values and helps build a good place to work.

“We know that our overall purpose is to improve people’s lives through designing, building, protecting and maintaining beautiful living spaces,” says Horton. “Simply put, ‘We build cool things that help people.’”

Admittedly, not every CEO can or should go to an Ivy League school to learn how to develop people and help their organizations grow and reach their goals. Horton recommends that landscape business owners read business books and take webinars and online courses on topics such as insurance and finance.

But for Horton, it was a no brainer, and it’s paid off.

“We have a big-picture goal of where we want to go,” he says of the \$150-million mark. “(The LDI team) knows it and I believe, believes we will get there.”

## Making moves

Due to several mergers and acquisitions in 2017, some LM150 firms dropped off the list this year. They include:

- The debut of Aspen Grove Landscape Group, previously known as Five Seasons Property Management, based in Willow Grove, Pa. In April, it announced the 10 companies that make up their portfolio, including the following former members of the LM150 list:
  - Integrated Landscape Management in Arizona (No. 93 on last year’s list);
  - James River Grounds Management in Virginia (No. 72 on last year’s list);
  - Providence Landscape Group in North Carolina (No. 130 on last year’s list);
  - Reliable Property Services in Minnesota (No. 49 on last year’s list);
- The acquisition of Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care (No. 80 on last year’s list) by SavATree in September.
- TruGreen’s acquisition of Lawn Dawg (No. 125 on last year’s list) in September.
- Monarch Landscape Holding’s acquisition of Terracare Associates (No. 22 on last year’s list) in October. Monarch, which also owns five additional large landscape firms on the West Coast, declined to participate in this year’s list.
- Yellowstone Landscape’s acquisition of Ecoscape Solutions Group, based in Huntersville, N.C. Ecoscape was No. 91 on last year’s list. Yellowstone also acquired Heads Up Landscape in late 2017, so the Albuquerque, N.M.-based firm will drop off next year’s list.

## In other LM150 M&A news...

- An affiliate of New York-based private equity firm CI Capital Partners acquired a majority interest in SavATree (No. 16) last summer.
- Signature Landscapes and its sister company Coast Landscape Management, based in Napa, Calif., merged following an equity investment from Central Valley Fund. Together they are No. 67 this year.
- BrightView (No. 1) acquired Girard Environmental Services (No. 42), based in Sanford, Fla.
- TruGreen (No. 2) acquired TurfMasters in Connecticut.
- Bland Landscaping (No. 94) recapitalized in December and is now a private equity-backed, management-led platform company in the Carolinas.
- Davey Tree (No. 3) acquired Elizabeth River Lawn & Landscape in Virginia this year.
- Ruppert Landscape (No. 12) acquired Classic Landscaping in Maryland and Pennsylvania this year.
- Bartlett Tree Experts (No. 4) acquired Seattle Tree Preservation this year.



# Driving the bottom line

No.  
136

## SCHULTZ INDUSTRIES

BY MARISA PALMIERI

*Eric Schultz, who mowed lawns in high school, naturally joined up with his brother's residential lawn maintenance company after getting out of the Marine Corps in 1982. After five years, realizing he did not want to mow lawns for the rest of his life, Schultz broke off from his brother to found a commercial-focused company with his wife, Pam, in 1988. Thirty years later the Golden, Colo.-based landscape maintenance and installation firm still focuses on commercial properties and takes a no-nonsense approach to profits and growth.*

### **Tell us about your company's "top line is vanity" mentality.**

About 10 years ago when things started to tank a little bit during the recession, we stepped back. The first 20 years of business, everybody's mantra is grow, grow, grow, grow, grow. We looked at that and said, "Is that really what it's all about?"

At that point in time, we'd been steadily averaging around the \$10 million a year mark. At the end of the year, you look at what you have left over after your salary, and you think, "Wow, was that even really worth the time?"

So, we started to refocus our business model. One of my senior managers came up with the mantra, "Top line is vanity, bottom line is sanity and cash is king." We've been chasing that model for about the last 10 years, and we've seen margins skyrocket.

### **How do you apply this concept in your company?**

A lot of times the landscape industry has a tendency to want to eat itself. Because if you need that job so badly that you're not going to make any money on it, all you're doing is dragging the industry down because you're keeping prices low and nobody can make any money.

We have a standard goal for staff to hit 10 percent margins. We don't want 4 percent or 2 percent margins—then you're struggling to replace equipment, and it's just a downward cycle.

There are companies doing \$50 million a year that are making 2 percent. They're managing 500 employees and however many assets for a 2 percent return. You can get that in a CD.

During the recession we said, "We may not be able to hit the targeted revenue goals, so let's focus on the internal operations, how we get leaner and how we drive more money to the bottom line." It has worked really, really well for us over the last eight to 10 years.

### **What changes did you make to get to this point?**

We went to a profit-sharing program similar to an ESOP. We were averaging in the 4 to 6 percent range on margins. We told employees, "We're going to cut you a deal. Hit 10 percent of \$11 million, and we'll

**"Top line is vanity, bottom line is sanity and cash is king.' We've been chasing that model for about the last 10 years, and we've seen margins skyrocket."**

—ERIC SCHULTZ





## ➔ PROFIT POINTER

Lack of cash can be a vicious cycle, Schultz says, noting he's aware of many landscapers who rely heavily on lines of credit. "It just compounds itself and then they're out chasing work to have work, but they're not making any money on it," he says, adding that companies in this scenario may be two payrolls away from being out of business if they face an unforeseen challenge. "That's not a healthy business model."

it. We gave three quarters of a million dollars back (to the team) last year.

## What has the impact been internally?

The people in the field are engaged much more. They're engaged in production. We've completely flipped the culture that, "Hey, if you want to stop at 7-Eleven and spend 45 minutes in the morning buying cigarettes and Cokes for the day, that's your money."

We now have foremen saying "You've got to help find me somebody else because this guy's not cutting it." Whereas before, if they had a guy on a crew that wasn't producing, it was just a guy on the crew who wasn't producing.

The mentality is to focus on the bottom line and not be so focused on getting from \$14 million a year to \$20 million. When you're driving that top line, I think you lose sight of the bottom line.

## Is there anything else you attribute the successful shift to bottom-line thinking to?

We have a very, very good inclusive culture all the way down to the laborers. We have very little turnover as a result of it. So, that's a good thing. Because we're not looking towards growth, having that good core group of employees makes it easier for us to sell higher dollar work.

We did H-2B for a couple of years and then (the government) started messing with it, and I just walked away from it. When we did that, we again changed the culture to say we need to really make sure we're taking care of our people, this is the place where they want to come to work every day, and

give you 15 points back off that money."

We went one step further and said, "Anything you make over that, we'll split in half with you." So, the first year they hit about 14 percent. Then last year, which was our second year, it just blew up. They hit close to 25 percent margins.

We take the kickback all the way down to the field, so it's not just management that shares in

where they enjoy working. We have a standing policy that if you leave for more money, don't come back. You don't get to work here, go make \$5 an hour more for 90 days and then come back here and expect us to take care of you.

We offer health insurance. We do paid time off all the way down to the lowest paid laborer. We do longevity and milestone bonuses, so you get a check when you hit five, 10, 15, 20 years. We pay a hundred dollars per year.

## What other advice do you have for landscape business owners trying to be more profitable?

I see the flyers that say, "We'll beat any price by 10 percent." How do you know you'll beat any price by 10 percent? You're not focused on what it costs you to do business.

I know there's a point where you have to get enough work to feed three guys plus yourself, so you're chasing work, but once you get to the point where you have consistent work, then step back and say, "Can I look at replacing some of what I have with something that's better?"

The first 20 years we did work for just about anybody in the marketplace. We've gone to the model of picking and choosing our clients and working with clients that understand the value of a job well done as opposed to just buying the cheapest thing in the marketplace. That's worked really well for us.

I think a lot of people lose sight of the fact that they're chasing the work but they never step back and say is it the right work? Is there better work out there for me?

Schultz's work is about half design/build + installation and half maintenance, including snow and irrigation.



PHOTO: SCHULTZ INDUSTRIES





# Showing the love

No.  
115

## COMPLETE LANDSCULPTURE

BY SARAH WEBB

Complete Landsculpture ensures employees are on the same page during weekly safety meetings and trainings.

**L**ike so many in the business, Chris Strempek, founder, co-owner and president of Complete Landsculpture, entered the landscaping industry as a boy, equipped with an old mower, summers full of free time and an asking price of \$5 per lawn.

Strempek later founded Complete Landsculpture in 1985 when he was a second-year college student at the University of North Texas.

Although it began as a temporary endeavor with only eight employees, the Dallas-based company has since grown into a \$17.6-million organization, with approximately 135 full-time equivalent employees in 2017.

So, what's Complete Landsculpture's secret?

"(Employee) retention is critical for brand consistency," Strempek says. "You can't have brand consistency with a revolving door because it's impossible to always be training new team members and grow at the same time."

Strempek adds, "We spend a lot of time and effort recruiting, developing our people, training them and giving them a culture that makes them feel like part of a family versus just having a job. We have to send them out with the right message, so they treat our clients the same way."

In fact, Strempek makes a point to call employees at all levels "team members."

All in all, Strempek says the way a company treats its employees with boots on the ground is important—and may determine whether those boots walk over to the competitor for a mere 50 cents more per hour.

"Relationships matter at all levels," he says. "We're only as strong as our weakest relationships."

While the company still struggles at times with employees leaving for more pay, it's managed to increase its retention rate, in part, by applying the five following practices.

### Coach your team

To ensure its employees understand their roles from the get-go, Complete Landsculpture goes all in on its training efforts.

"We have mowers, we have tractors, we have all that," Strempek says. "But really, our soft assets are the most important resource we have. And we have to make sure that they're properly trained."

Complete Landsculpture's training program goes beyond a standard onboarding process.

Once crew members are in the field, a management staff member checks in with crews, ensuring each employee understands his or her duties and spot-training anyone who needs it.

Additionally, foremen and leadmen are paid (overtime if they've exceeded 40 weekly hours) to undergo formal training twice a year. Led by seasoned foremen, these two-day trainings focus on technical aspects and company culture. The company also provides a weekly 15-minute training session after each safety meeting.

Further encouraging employee development, Complete Landsculpture takes more than 50 members of


*Continued on page* **S12**



# Leasing: it could be for you and your mowing equipment

Perhaps you've reached the point in your commercial landscaping business where, due to growth of your company, your equipment expenses are growing as well. And you're spending more time and money on repairs and parts. Is there a better way than spending more and more on capital expenses like this?

You might be the perfect candidate for leasing your John Deere Commercial Mowing equipment.

	Z915E 25HP 48" Zero Turn Mower	
	Lease Option Example 1.9% for 36 Months <sup>†</sup>	Finance Option Example 0% for 36 Months <sup>†</sup>
List Price	\$8,459	\$8,459
GreenFleet™ Bonus <sup>**</sup>	\$700	\$700
Hours Per Year	400	400
Monthly Payment	\$162	\$216
Equipment Cost Per Hour	\$4.85	\$6.47
Cash Flow Savings	\$1,939	



## Run smarter and harder

The idea that leasing costs more isn't necessarily true. At John Deere, our leasing options are a low-cost, low-risk alternative to purchasing equipment outright or taking on an installment loan. Leasing is not as complicated as it seems. And since it can help cash flow and reduce equipment downtime, it could help your business run smarter and harder than ever before.

## With leasing, you'll see:



### Lower Payments

Depending on the term, leasing offers lower payments than installment loans of the same term. So you improve your cash flow. It's also a less expensive and more efficient option to renting equipment multiple times a year.



### Fixed Operating Costs

By and large, your leased equipment will be under warranty during the entire length of your lease. You'll be operating your equipment at the lowest cost per hour as well.



### Reduced Downtime

It's fairly simple: with leasing, you're running newer equipment, so your machines are spending more time in the field and less time in the shop, especially with our loaner program<sup>†</sup>. So your equipment will always be up and running.

<sup>†</sup> Example only. See your dealer for current programs, rates and other options. See your tax advisor for advice on tax impacts. Lease option is for Commercial Use Only. GreenFleet Level 3 Bonus. No down payment, \$7,759 total lease or finance amount 1200 hrs total/400 hrs/yr for lease.

<sup>\*\*</sup> To be eligible for the offer, purchaser must be or become a GreenFleet member and meet qualifying purchase levels. Amounts shown above are based on Platinum Level 3 savings. Qualifying levels and savings will vary depending on the quantity and combination of equipment purchased. See complete membership information and discount details at [JohnDeere.com/GreenFleet](http://JohnDeere.com/GreenFleet) or a participating John Deere dealer. Offer ends 10/26/18.

<sup>†</sup> Programs available only at participating dealers and dealer participation will vary. Loaners used for commercial purposes provided within 24 hours. Some conditions and restrictions apply. See participating dealer for complete details and program offerings.





JOHN DEERE

## The Ultimate Forgiveness Program™

When you lease with John Deere, returning equipment is a breeze. We're experienced with helping you plan for a "no-surprises" lease return. Once you lease with us, we'll go over in detail what is considered normal wear and tear. This includes minor scratches or chips in the paint finish, engine and powertrain in good working condition; operating hours within the limits agreed to in the lease contract.

And when you continue to lease with John Deere, your leasing experience just gets better with our Ultimate Forgiveness Program. Here are the ways that your loyalty pays off by keeping your lease with us:



### Hour Forgiveness\*

If you should exceed your hour limit, you can have half of the excess hours forgiven if you lease another Commercial Mowing unit from us.



### Rollover Hours\*

If you end up using fewer hours than what your lease stipulates, we will give you a credit for the unused hours toward your next Commercial Mowing Lease.



### Damage Waiver\*

We know your equipment works hard, all day long. That's why we'll forgive up to \$250 of any damage/excessive wear and tear if you lease another Commercial mower from us.

## Whether you decide if leasing or financing is right for you, there are special incentives available, including:

### Flexible Payment Options

We understand your business fluctuates throughout the year, and as a dedicated partner we want to help alleviate stress. Through John Deere Financial, you can work with your dealer to set up a flexible payment plan. From setting up payment dates to coincide with other bills to setting up skip payments or seasonal payments to align with the periods in the year where your cash flow is lower, John Deere is dedicated to supporting your business.

### Add-On Items

Consider other needs, like parts, handheld equipment and attachments, that John Deere allows you to wrap into your desired financing or leasing package and provides the most bang for your buck. Many customers do not realize routine maintenance can also be included. Your dealer will be able to help identify other additions, making it a one-stop solution.

### Special Payment Offers

When speaking with your dealer, make sure to ask for any special payment offers. John Deere regularly offers special incentives, such as zero percent interest for a set duration of time, helping to save additional money. Your dealer will also work with John Deere Financial to ensure you are maximizing potential savings.

### Commercial Loaner Program

John Deere eliminates the stress of downtime with its Commercial Loaner Program, which allows commercial customers to receive a loaner unit in the case equipment needs warrantable repairs. This program allows flexibility in keeping your business up and running, even when facing machine downtime.

\* Limitations apply to Hour Forgiveness, Rollover Hours and Damage Waiver. See your dealer for details.

John Deere's green and yellow color scheme, the leaping deer symbol, and JOHN DEERE are trademarks of Deere & Company.



**“You can’t have brand consistency with a revolving door because it’s impossible to always be training new team members and grow at the same time.”**

—CHRIS STREMPEK



*Continued from page S9*

its leadership team on an annual two-day trip full of team building, company culture discussions and additional training.

Scheduled before the start of the season, the leadership team trips began in January 2017.

“It’s really good to refocus at the beginning of each year and make sure that everybody’s fully prepared to take the challenges of the new season on,” Strempek says.

### Check in

To monitor how employees are adapting to the field, the company conducts follow-up surveys for its new hires at seven, 30, 60 and 90 days. The surveys, sent via email and collected by the company’s controller, are centered around the following questions:

- How are you being treated?
- How do you feel about the company and the culture?
- How is it working with other team members?
- Do you have the safety equipment you need?
- Do you have the tools to do your job effectively?
- Do you understand what’s required of you every day?

Implemented about a year ago, the surveys have helped with

employee retention, safety and efficiency, Strempek says.

For example, Strempek says the results might alert the management team if an employee lacks safety goggles.

“It also tells us that employees understand what their job is,” Strempek adds. “If someone says, ‘I don’t understand what I’m supposed to be doing,’ we’re going to dial in on that right away and see what it is he doesn’t understand.”

### Own up

Complete Landsculpture also expects its employees to think like owners by owning up and being held accountable for their responsibilities, Strempek says.

“Accountability is about ownership versus deflection,” Strempek says. “A lot of times, accountability is thought of in a negative sense of who’s responsible for the mistake or consequence. But really, it’s a positive term about ownership.”

The message was reiterated during the leadership team’s trip to Washington, D.C. So far, Strempek says the accountability message has resonated with team members. The efforts include foremen creating daily progress reports per job and the company performing A/R calls twice

weekly to accounts past due, along with a “5-10 rule:” Respond to emails or calls the same day if received by 5 p.m. Calls or emails received after 5 p.m. are responded to by 10 a.m. the next day.

**Co-owners Chris Strempek (second from left) and Gene Freeman (back row) are big on employee recognition.**

### Give kudos

While it’s no secret landscaping can be backbreaking work, Complete Landsculpture rewards exemplary team members with awards for employee and crew of the month and year.

“It’s celebrating these guys and helping create a competitive but family environment where they understand what success looks like,” Strempek says.

The company recognizes crews and employees of the month after the company’s safety meeting. Winners receive letters to take home, explaining why they won the award. The monthly award winners are then eligible for yearly awards and their pictures are posted on the company’s kitchen bulletin board.

The crew awards, which have been in place for about five years, include crew of the month by division, crew of the month overall and a crew of the year.

Complete Landsculpture managers take the crew of the year out to lunch, and that crew also receives a “crew of the year” emblem for its truck.

“I like to think the ‘crew of the year’ emblem gives that crew a little extra swagger,” Strempek says.

### Play hard

Since employees spend a large portion of their days on the job, Complete Landsculpture also places an emphasis on having fun at work.

The company’s efforts include quarterly cookouts, a Christmas party, an Easter egg hunt for employees’ families, a company-wide March Madness bracket and more.

“All of our employees are what we call our internal clients,” Strempek says. “And they’re the ones that really represent the company. We have to treat them in a way that we want our clients treated, which is with respect.”

“If we train and show our employee the love, he’s going to show our client the love,” he says.

### ➔ PROFIT POINTER

At Complete Landsculpture, drafting a 12-point business plan isn’t enough, according to Chris Strempek.

“You have to stop occasionally and pull that plan out and see how you’re doing against the plan,” he says. “You have to put some of that time on your calendar. It doesn’t happen organically. Otherwise, the transactions of the day will suck your time away.”

Strempek suggests setting aside a few hours each week for growth planning.

He also recommends management staff members conduct a biannual or even quarterly review of their own efforts, reviewing goals and the plans in place to achieve those goals—instead of conducting self-reviews at the end of the season, when it’s too late to change anything.

Strempek says, “You’ll find that you repeat the same sins over and over unless you can stop and correct them along the way during the year.”

# Overcoming setbacks

No.  
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## SITeworks

BY MARISA PALMIERI

Talk to Chris Malham and Rob Spoor, and you hear a lot of laughs and a lot of “dudes.” Despite insisting they haven’t rehearsed the interview, they finish each other’s sentences. They appear to genuinely appreciate and get a kick out of each other.

Their compatibility as business partners is evident, which hints at why they have been able to grow SiteWorks, their Chandler, Ariz.-based landscape development and maintenance company, from nothing to \$23.1 million in 14 years despite several significant setbacks.

As the company gears up to renovate the field for the Arizona Cardinals—their first NFL endeavor—Malham and Spoor are quick to say they haven’t done it alone. Certainly, they would be nowhere without a loan just shy of a quarter million dollars from Don McIntyre, Malham’s first boss in the industry in 1975 and their silent business partner today. Their leadership team, including Scott Gibson, their general





The spring training complex for the Los Angeles Dodgers and Chicago White Sox is one of many sportsfield construction projects SiteWorks has done.

superintendent and Steve Hoover, a partner in their maintenance business, have been key components of the company's success.

### Getting off the ground

The SiteWorks story starts in 1998 when Malham, a career landscape industry business developer, was teamed up with Spoor, an operations-minded project manager, at ValleyCrest Cos. in Phoenix. After a few years, Spoor left to join Landscapes Unlimited, but the pair kept in touch. The idea to "start their own thing" had come up before.

"Rob and I always thought one day, if we ever wanted to go do our own deal, let's start a company that we always wished we could work for," Malham says. "We're really opposite in a lot of ways, but when it comes to running a business and how to treat employees, it's his saying, 'We're closer than two coats of paint.'"

One day in 2003 Malham was finally ready to make his move. With a company name in mind and financial backing from McIntyre, Malham called Spoor with an offer to join him in a new venture.

On Dec. 1, 2004, they officially launched SiteWorks—a name inspired by animation studio DreamWorks—out of Malham's post-divorce apartment. They mapped out their vision on a yellow-lined piece of paper that they still have today, which details their roles and the culture they intended to foster.

As they anticipated, several of their former clients sought them out, and they began acting on their plan to take advantage of the Phoenix building boom.

"We knew the kind of work we wanted to chase," Spoor says. "It's no slam on other companies, but we did not want to go out and do front yards or do a new gas station on the corner. We wanted to chase big work."

Before long, they landed their first contract—a \$1.4 million deal with a general contractor. Sportsfield construction—which the pair had been involved with in their previous roles—came shortly after with a deal to renovate the San Francisco Giants spring training facility, owned by the city of Scottsdale.

Less than a week later came SiteWorks' first major setback—a cease-and-desist and lawsuit threat from a former employer and a rescinded offer from the

city. According to Malham, his former employer alleged that he pursued the relationship with the Giants while still employed there. Malham says that was not the case.

Malham and Spoor thought about folding, unsure if they could shoulder the legal fees. They regrouped, lawyered up and decided to swing back. Ultimately, SiteWorks had to rebid the contract against the competition. They won the bid the second time around and finished the job successfully, despite

running into further challenges, like getting a bond without any real financials to show. After the unlikely feat of having the bond requirement waived by the general contractor, Malham and Spoor say they completed the job successfully, and this project legitimized their business.

Overcoming obstacles like legal and bonding issues early on was tough, the partners say. They point to their team of outside consultants who have gotten them through difficult times. They use the acronym BABHI—banking, accounting, bonding, health and insurance (general liability) to represent key areas of their business where experts have helped them out.

"We surrounded ourselves with a strong team of consultants that could give these hooligan landscapers guidance on the decisions we needed to make," Malham says.

The Great Recession, which hit many other industries in 2008, was another challenge for the young business, but it didn't affect SiteWorks until a few years later.

"By virtue of how the work happens, all the dirt guys and survey guys felt the pinch right away because no new projects were starting, but we had work in the mix," Malham says.

When it did hit, though, Malham and Spoor were fortunate to have operated conservatively with strong retained earnings—in the millions—up until that point.

"We weren't drawing large salaries, we didn't go out and get fancy cars and stuff," Malham says. "If we didn't have those reserves, we never would have survived."

Though the company had to do layoffs, scale back and the owners went without salaries for two years, it was able to retain key staff during the downturn, which Malham and Spoor attribute their success to.

**"We have a couple of formulas we ascribe to, and one is to assemble a compatible team, pay them extremely well and then get the hell out of their way."**

—CHRIS MALHAM



## 'A place we'd want to work'

In fact, employee retention is a big contributor to the company's overall story, the partners say.

"We have a couple of formulas we ascribe to and one is to assemble a compatible team, pay them extremely well and then get the hell out of their way," Malham says.

Spoor points to several foremen who worked on the company's first job in 2005 who are still with them today.

"We do not lose people," he says. "We do everything we can to make them feel appreciated."

For example, when a new foreman comes onboard, he gets a brand new truck. "You don't get a hand-me-down that's got 127,000 miles on it because the guy that's been here for five years needs a new truck," Spoor says.

Taking it a step further, SiteWorks always has allowed foremen to take home their vehicles for personal use, which required the company to buy a rider insurance policy.


"Today, we still allow that usage, and it has never been abused," Malham says.

SiteWorks also shows its appreciation for its team with a performance-driven bonus program, which is based on the underrun of a completed job's budget. Twenty-five percent of the

underrun amount is split between the project manager, site superintendent, general superintendent and purchasing agent with a reserve for the field staff. The completed jobs are tallied twice a year, and the team often receives sizable bonuses. On the other hand, if an overrun occurs, the same 25 percent carries over against future bonuses. The company has had this program since its inception and honors it today, no matter how high underruns get.

"It's very transparent," Spoor says. "(Employees) have access to all the numbers on their jobs and they have the right to question any cost that hits their job. It's more performance-oriented than just a feel-good bonus on Christmas Eve."

Looking back on the business they've built, which now includes SiteWorks Landscape Development, SiteWorks Landscape Maintenance, LandWorks—a dirt moving and light grading company—and their newest business, DroneWorks, the pair joke about what they set out to do.

"His sales pitch to me was, 'C'mon bud—it'll be just a small \$3 million or \$4 million a year company,'" Spoor recalls. "We'll have two or three crews and we'll take off Fridays and Mondays." Still to this day, I repeat that to myself as I'm sticking up truck No. 67." 

## PROFIT POINTER

The No. 1 problem Rob Spoor sees in the landscape industry is a lack of understanding about job costs.

"There are a lot of guys who think, 'Let me take this job at a loss because I know this builder will have more projects and I'll make it up on the next one,'" he says. "We have never ascribed to that philosophy. It has to make sense financially."

Spoor says he often reminds his team that a company doing \$20 million a year at 10 percent and a company doing \$10 million a year at 20 percent both earn the same amount of profit at the end of the year.

"But I'll guarantee you, the guy who did \$10 million at 20 percent has a much happier workforce, his equipment isn't beaten up and he spent time with his family," he says. "It's not about the revenue dollar; it's about the profit dollar, and in order to concentrate on the profit, you really have to understand all of your costs."



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## TOP 25

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

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Not all companies report client mix, profit center and regional data. Dollar amounts were calculated by *LM* from data reported. Landscape construction is included in Design/Build+Installation figures.

## COMMERCIAL

1	BrightView	\$2,260,000,000
2	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	\$540,440,000
3	TruGreen	\$186,891,895
4	Yellowstone Landscape	\$174,000,000
5	U.S. Lawns	\$167,192,704
6	Gothic Landscape	\$164,250,000
7	LandCare	\$160,000,000
8	Ferrandino & Son	\$145,000,000
9	Ruppert Landscape	\$132,175,000
10	Ambius	\$109,000,000
11	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$75,880,000
12	Mainscape	\$75,145,000
13	Landscape Development	\$70,755,000
14	Elite Team Offices	\$69,300,000
15	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	\$56,580,000
16	The Greenery	\$56,340,000
17	Denison Landscaping	\$55,575,000
18	Acres Group	\$50,967,500
19	Juniper Landscaping	\$49,000,000
20	The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes	\$47,950,000
21	Clean Scapes	\$47,473,286
22	HeartLand	\$46,075,000
23	Sebert Landscape	\$45,120,000
24	Rotolo Consultants	\$42,400,000
25	Girard Environmental Services	\$39,934,200

## RESIDENTIAL

1	TruGreen	\$1,134,700,794
2	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	\$366,400,000
3	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$173,440,000
4	Weed Man	\$150,739,711
5	Lawn Doctor	\$106,806,203
6	SavATree	\$81,750,000
7	NaturalLawn of America	\$61,679,564
8	Massey Services	\$58,887,055
9	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$53,728,000
10	Meadows Farms	\$49,820,000
11	LandOpt	\$45,260,000
12	Mariani Enterprises	\$42,847,200
13	The Grounds Guys	\$31,680,000
14	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$29,270,264
15	Chalet	\$29,200,000
16	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	\$27,654,900
17	Naturescape	\$25,402,510
18	Scott Byron & Co.	\$24,225,000
19	Berghoff Design Group	\$21,000,000
	McHale Landscape Design	\$21,000,000
21	Senske Services	\$20,910,000
22	Schumacher Landscaping	\$20,880,000
23	Designs By Sundown	\$20,700,000
24	Heron Home & Outdoor	\$20,480,907
25	Nutrilawn Corp.	\$19,800,000

## GOVERNMENT

1	Merchants Landscape Services	\$27,500,000
2	Ruppert Landscape	\$23,325,000
3	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$21,680,000
4	The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes	\$20,550,000
5	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$16,693,816
6	TruGreen	\$13,349,421
7	Rotolo Consultants	\$10,600,000
8	The Davey Tree Expert Co.	\$9,160,000
9	Gothic Landscape	\$9,125,000
10	M. Neves	\$9,000,000
11	Mountain View Landscape	\$8,500,000
12	LandOpt	\$8,030,000
13	The Grounds Guys	\$7,920,000
14	Moore Landscapes	\$7,020,000
15	Cagwin & Dorward	\$6,586,926
16	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	\$4,305,000
17	Gachina Landscape Management	\$4,229,751
18	Signature Coast Holdings	\$4,047,540
19	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$3,950,000
20	Timberline Landscaping	\$3,783,500
21	Brilar	\$3,577,500
22	Environmental Management Services	\$3,520,000
23	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	\$3,427,500
24	U.S. Lawns	\$3,412,096
25	Conserve LandCare	\$3,243,400

## BY CLIENT MIX

## MOWING + LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

1	LandCare	\$160,000,000
2	Yellowstone Landscape	\$130,500,000
3	U.S. Lawns	\$116,011,264
4	Ruppert Landscape	\$76,195,000
5	Mainscape	\$53,352,950
6	The Greenery	\$48,828,000
7	Gothic Landscape	\$45,625,000
8	The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes	\$41,100,000
9	The Grounds Guys	\$40,000,000
10	Sebert Landscape	\$39,840,000
11	HeartLand	\$35,625,000
12	LandOpt	\$28,470,000
13	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$24,830,000
14	Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services	\$24,600,000
15	Bemus Landscape	\$24,288,000
16	Cagwin & Dorward	\$24,152,060
17	Mariani Enterprises	\$23,858,100
18	Girard Environmental Services	\$23,187,600
19	Landscape Workshop	\$22,867,786
20	Merchants Landscape Services	\$22,000,000
21	Acres Group	\$21,460,000
22	Rotolo Consultants	\$21,200,000
23	Signature Coast Holdings	\$20,237,700
24	TruGreen	\$20,226,396
25	Landscape Development Inc.	\$19,875,000

## TURF + ORNAMENTAL CARE

1	TruGreen	\$1,173,130,945
2	Weed Man	\$158,673,380
3	Lawn Doctor	\$112,427,582
4	NaturaLawn of America	\$62,951,307
5	Massey Services	\$56,016,223
6	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$55,480,000
7	Naturescape	\$21,391,587
8	Nutrilawn Corp.	\$19,800,000
9	SavATree	\$18,530,000
10	Senske Services	\$17,340,000
11	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$15,405,402
12	Heron Home & Outdoor	\$12,957,309
13	The Grounds Guys	\$8,000,000
14	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	\$6,913,190
15	U.S. Lawns	\$6,824,192
16	HeartLand	\$6,175,000
17	Moore Landscapes	\$6,120,000
18	Rotolo Consultants	\$5,300,000
19	Mainscape	\$5,260,150
20	ProGrass	\$3,900,000
21	Greenscape	\$3,800,000
22	Landscape Workshop	\$3,518,121
23	Conserve LandCare	\$3,243,400
24	Harvest Landscape	\$2,678,000
25	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$2,172,000

## DESIGN/BUILD + INSTALLATION

1	Gothic Landscape	\$136,875,000
2	Ruppert Landscape	\$79,305,000
3	Elite Team Offices	\$63,000,000
4	Landscape Development Inc.	\$59,625,000
5	Denison Landscaping	\$45,630,000
6	Yellowstone Landscape	\$34,800,000
7	Juniper Landscaping	\$32,500,000
8	LandOpt	\$29,930,000
9	Teufel Landscape	\$27,838,020
10	Clean Scapes	\$26,485,096
11	U.S. Lawns	\$25,590,720
12	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	\$23,460,000
13	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	\$22,792,500
14	Environmental Management Services	\$22,176,000
15	Baytree Landscape Contractors	\$21,718,506
16	Mariani Enterprises	\$20,936,700
17	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$19,476,119
18	Rotolo Consultants	\$18,550,000
19	Meadows Farms	\$18,020,000
20	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$17,380,000
21	Earth Tones Design	\$16,740,000
22	Southview Design	\$16,734,570
23	Chalet	\$16,060,000
24	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	\$15,957,643
25	Schumacher Landscaping	\$15,950,000

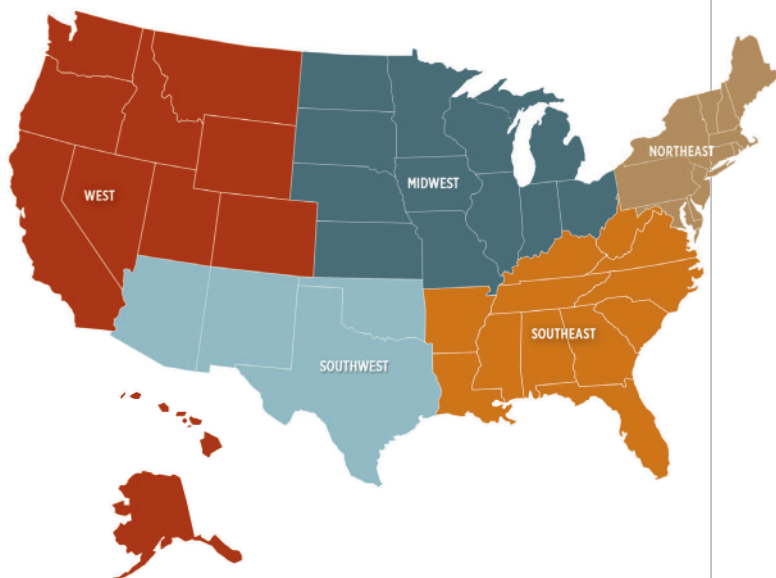
## IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

1	Massey Services	\$9,336,037
2	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	\$9,000,000
3	Earth Tones Design	\$8,100,000
4	NJ Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	\$7,480,544
5	Clean Scapes	\$6,996,063
6	Superscapes	\$6,595,768
7	Denison Landscaping	\$6,435,000
8	LandOpt	\$5,840,000
9	Rotolo Consultants	\$5,300,000
10	Mainscape	\$5,260,150
11	U.S. Lawns	\$5,118,144
12	American Landscape Systems	\$4,650,000
13	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$4,566,911
14	LMI Landscapes	\$4,457,250
15	Cagwin & Dorward	\$4,391,284
16	Cherrylake	\$4,221,350
17	Southern Botanical	\$4,079,635
18	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	\$4,074,292
19	C. Caramanico & Sons	\$3,920,660
20	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$3,820,000
21	Girard Environmental Services	\$3,435,200
22	The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes	\$3,425,000
23	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$3,423,423
24	North American Lawn & Landscape	\$3,300,000
25	Gachina Landscape Management	\$3,253,654

BY PROFIT CENTERS



## BY REGION



## NORTHEAST

1	TruGreen	\$307,036,685
2	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$130,080,000
3	SavATree	\$70,850,000
4	Ruppert Landscape	\$66,865,000
5	Lawn Doctor	\$64,083,722
6	NaturaLawn of America	\$39,424,051
7	Greenscape	\$30,400,000
8	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	\$30,390,000
9	Complete Landscaping Service	\$30,157,569
10	Schumacher Landscaping	\$29,000,000
11	The Grounds Guys	\$23,760,000
12	High Tech Landscapes	\$21,820,219
13	LandOpt	\$21,170,000
14	Meadows Farms	\$18,550,000
15	Sposato Landscape Co.	\$18,100,000
16	John Mini Distinctive Landscapes	\$17,500,000
17	Mountain View Landscape	\$17,000,000
18	M. Neves	\$16,000,000
19	The Joyce Cos.	\$15,450,000
20	Level Green Landscape	\$15,335,244
21	C. Caramanico & Sons	\$14,520,962
22	Hoffman Landscapes	\$13,760,000
23	NJ Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	\$13,358,114
24	McHale Landscape Design	\$12,600,000
25	Eastern Land Management	\$11,974,000

## SOUTHWEST

1	TruGreen	\$120,144,790
2	Yellowstone Landscape	\$60,900,000
3	The Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes	\$58,225,000
4	Gothic Landscape	\$54,750,000
5	Clean Scapes	\$49,971,880
6	Maldonado Nursery & Landscaping	\$34,778,784
7	Southern Botanical	\$27,197,566
8	Earth Tones Design	\$27,000,000
9	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	\$26,180,000
10	LandCare	\$25,600,000
11	Benchmark Landscapes	\$23,800,000
12	DLC Resources	\$22,000,000
13	Superscapes	\$21,985,892
14	Berghoff Design Group	\$19,950,000
15	Earthworks	\$18,100,000
16	Complete Landsculpture	\$17,608,750
17	Santa Rita Landscaping	\$16,500,000
	Desert Classic Landscaping	\$16,500,000
19	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$16,260,000
20	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	\$15,631,074
21	Ruppert Landscape	\$15,550,000
22	American Landscape Systems	\$15,500,000
23	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	\$15,000,000
24	The Spencer Co.	\$14,650,819
25	LMI Landscapes	\$13,728,330

## WEST

1	Gothic Landscape	\$127,750,000
2	TruGreen	\$80,096,527
3	Landscape Development	\$79,500,000
4	Elite Team Offices	\$70,000,000
5	LandCare	\$67,200,000
6	Cagwin & Dorward	\$43,912,837
7	Teufel Landscape	\$35,238,000
8	Bemus Landscape	\$35,200,000
9	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	\$33,952,431
10	Gachina Landscape Management	\$32,536,545
11	Signature Coast Holdings	\$28,911,000
12	Senske Services	\$27,880,000
13	Merchants Landscape Services	\$27,500,000
14	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$27,100,000
15	Stay Green	\$24,263,155
16	Benchmark Landscape	\$24,109,746
17	HeartLand	\$23,750,000
18	Designs By Sundown	\$23,000,000
19	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	\$22,850,000
20	Andre Landscape Service	\$22,705,295
21	Pacific Landscape Management	\$22,064,256
22	Cleary Bros. Landscape	\$21,000,000
23	Cutting Edge Landscape	\$19,744,520
24	New Way Landscape & Tree Services	\$17,500,000
25	Conserve LandCare	\$16,217,000

## SOUTHEAST

1	TruGreen	\$373,783,791
2	Yellowstone Landscape	\$113,100,000
3	Ruppert Landscape	\$73,085,000
4	The Greenery	\$62,600,000
5	Massey Services	\$62,271,368
6	Rotolo Consultants	\$53,000,000
7	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$51,490,000
8	Juniper Landscaping	\$50,000,000
9	LandCare	\$48,000,000
10	Mainscape	\$45,838,450
11	Girard Environmental Services	\$39,934,200
12	Meadows Farms	\$34,450,000
13	Landscape Workshop	\$33,773,961
14	Baytree Landscape Contractors	\$33,413,086
15	LandOpt	\$32,850,000
16	Landscape Services (LSI)	\$28,674,505
17	Chapel Valley Landscape Co.	\$28,650,000
18	Gibbs Landscape Co.	\$28,000,000
19	Russell Landscape Group	\$26,500,000
20	Lawn Doctor	\$24,734,068
21	The Grounds Guys	\$23,760,000
22	Bland Landscaping Co.	\$21,564,000
23	Heron Home & Outdoor	\$20,898,885
24	Yard Nique	\$20,500,000
25	Impact Landscaping & Irrigation	\$20,113,000

## MIDWEST

1	TruGreen	\$427,181,475
2	Acres Group	\$53,650,000
3	Mariani Enterprises	\$48,690,000
4	Sebert Landscape	\$48,000,000
5	Christy Webber Landscapes	\$39,500,000
6	Environmental Management Services	\$35,200,000
7	Beary Landscaping	\$30,100,000
8	Ryan Lawn & Tree	\$29,270,264
9	Chalet	\$29,200,000
10	Landscape Concepts Management	\$27,930,000
11	David J. Frank Landscape Contracting	\$27,400,000
12	Naturescape	\$25,937,299
13	Scott Byron & Co.	\$25,500,000
14	Bartlett Tree Experts	\$24,390,000
15	HeartLand	\$23,750,000
16	SavATree	\$21,800,000
17	Southview Design	\$21,183,000
18	Spring-Green Lawn Care	\$20,440,000
19	Clarence Davids & Co.	\$19,100,000
20	Hittle Landscaping	\$18,700,000
21	Moore Landscapes	\$18,000,000
22	Perficut Cos.	\$15,500,000
23	Mainscape	\$13,526,100
24	LandOpt	\$13,140,000
25	Lawn Doctor	\$12,367,034

## State-by-state breakdown

### Top 5 LM150 states:



### How the rest shake out:

Alabama	1	Idaho	1	Michigan	1	Pennsylvania	6
Colorado	4	Indiana	2	Minnesota	1	South Carolina	1
Connecticut	3	Iowa	1	North Carolina	6	Tennessee	2
Delaware	1	Kansas	2	New Jersey	2	Virginia	2
Georgia	5	Louisiana	1	New Mexico	1	Washington	1
		Maine	1	New York	3	Wisconsin	3
		Massachusetts	6	Ohio	2	+D.C.	1
		Maryland	7	Oregon	5	+Ontario	3



150

# Double digits

Sixty-four firms on the LM150 list grew by 10 percent or more in 2017. Here's a look at what boosted some of their efforts.

## Landscape Development Inc.

See [page S4](#) for the full story.

## Timberline Landscaping

This Colorado-based firm grew by tapping a consultant to help focus on its financial education, team building, sales and strategy. The company has created an internal process for employees to bring forth ideas to improve revenue and efficiency.

## Schultz Industries

Learn more at [page S7](#).

## Gachina Landscape Management

Gachina has employed consultants in various areas of expertise to continue its growth. For example, throughout 2017 the senior management team enrolled in a Franklin Covey leadership program, incorporating online resources, retreats, weekly huddles and the use of a daily app.

Growth Rank	Overall Rank	Company	% Change Over 2016
1	75	The Loving Cos.	119%
2	103	M. Neves	50%
3	150	Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions	49%
4	125	Unlimited Landscaping & Turf Management	42%
5	5	Gothic Landscape	40%
6	32	Rotolo Consultants	40%
7	50	Caretaker Landscape and Tree Management	38%
8	54	Baytree Landscape Contractors	34%
9	91	Superscapes	32%
10	18	Landscape Development Inc.	29%
11	46	Teufel Landscape	29%
12	135	C. Caramanico & Sons	28%
13	8	Yellowstone Landscape	27%
14	88	Pacific Landscape Management	26%
15	77	Harvest Landscape	25%
	139	Nanak's Landscaping	25%
	146	ASI Landscape Management	25%
18	105	Cutting Edge Landscape	24%
19	16	SavATree	22%
20	14	Merit Service Solutions	20%
	56	Ryan Lawn & Tree	20%
	87	Andre Landscape Service	20%
	104	Complete Property Maintenance	20%
	111	Earthworks	20%
	120	Santa Rita Landscaping	20%
	124	Richmond & Associates Landscaping	20%
	128	Crystal Greens Landscape	20%
	149	Brilar	20%
29	47	Environmental Management Services	19%
	53	Landscape Workshop	19%
31	51	Dennis' Seven Dees Landscaping & Garden Centers	18%
	132	Timberline Landscaping	18%
	147	Eastern Land Management	18%
34	60	R.P. Marzilli & Co.	17%
35	7	Park West Cos.	16%
36	34	Juniper Landscaping	15%
	118	Mountain View Landscape	15%
	133	Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting	15%
39	25	NaturaLawn of America	14%
	47	Bemus Landscape	14%
	134	The Spencer Co.	14%
	136	Schultz Industries	14%
43	64	The Bruce Co. of Wisconsin	13%
	81	Stay Green	13%
	94	Bland Landscaping Co.	13%
	126	American Landscape Systems	13%
	140	NJ Best Lawns, Sprinklers & Fencing	13%
	61	Complete Landscaping Service	12%
49	27	Garden Design	12%
	31	Acres Group	12%
	35	Clean Scapes	12%
	137	LandCare Innovations	12%
	148	Emerald Isle Landscaping	12%
54	4	Bartlett Tree Experts	11%
	79	Russell Landscape Group	11%
56	37	Mariani Enterprises	10%
	38	Sebert Landscape	10%
	42	Girard Environmental Services	10%
	55	Gachina Landscape Management	10%
	85	Designs By Sundown	10%
	86	Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors	10%
	92	Heads Up Landscape	10%
	95	Southview Design	10%
	129	The Joyce Cos.	10%

## Focal Pointe Outdoor Solutions

New to the LM150 list, this St. Louis-area company has seen 20 percent annual growth over the last decade—growing by nearly half in 2017. The company attributes its growth to delighting its clients by understanding what drives their satisfaction and investing in people and systems to support that cause.

## Rotolo Consultants

Rotolo Consultants has continued to grow through acquisitions in its core markets and an ongoing strategy of building its business around a maintenance base. It uses landscape construction as a tool to broaden the customer base, be visible in the market and serve as a pipeline for maintenance contracts.

## Andy's Sprinkler, Drainage & Lighting

To achieve double-digit growth, Andy's has devoted time and resources to establish in-house human resources and marketing functions. The company also has created new tiers within its call center to improve customer and technician relations.

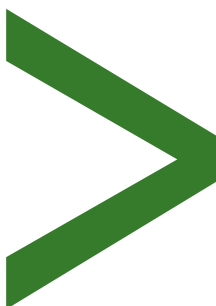
## Frank & Grossman Landscape Contractors

This California firm is growing and combatting labor challenges by continuing to promote CLCA Certified Technician Training. The company pays for fees, and employees study and test on their own time to earn a \$1 per hour raise for each certification earned.

# LM150 Company Index

Company name	LM150 rank		
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Beary Landscaping	62	Greenscape (N.C.)	131
Bemus Landscape	47	Grounds Control	142
Benchmark Landscape	82	Grounds Guys, The	19
Benchmark Landscapes	83	Groundskeeper/Greater Texas Landscapes, The	23
Berghoff Design Group	97	Harvest Landscape	77
Bland Landscaping Co.	94	Heads Up Landscape	92
BrightView	1	HeartLand	39
Brilar	149	Heron Home & Outdoor	100
Bruce Co. of Wisconsin, The	64	High Tech Landscapes	93
C. Caramanico & Sons	135	HighGrove Partners	110
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## LOW KEY

“We are just humble gardeners and want to make things better quietly,” says SGS Hawaii’s president.

 PAGE 48



# Show me the money

**Commission, bonus and incentive programs increase production rates and motivate lawn care technicians to go the extra mile.**

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER



**T**hey say money talks. And it seems lawn care technicians are listening. Companies are offering commission, bonus and incentive programs to increase production rates and motivate their lawn care crews to go the extra mile.

"In today's competitive workplace, it takes a whole lot more than just a flat hourly rate to attract someone to be part of your company," says Benjamin Allen, COO of Lawn-America in Tulsa, Okla. "Giving them some say in their ability to earn a living for their family is a good way to attract a good group of guys and girls to your workplace. It's a competitive advantage for us."



Benjamin Allen

### AN EYE ON QUALITY

LawnAmerica has had a technician commission system in place since the company started in 1999, and Allen says it's been a large part of the company's

success over the years. The \$8.6-million company provides 90 percent lawn care and 10 percent add-on services to a 90 percent residential, 10 percent commercial clientele.

"From our perspective, it is a form of shared ownership in the company," Allen says. "The challenge of paying on an hourly basis is guys tend to work a set number of hours and then they're done—their productivity isn't necessarily tied to anything, and they get paid the same whether they produce well or poorly. When you move into a commission-based system, there is an incentive to perform well."

LawnAmerica has both commission and incentive systems in place. Technicians earn 5 percent commission on everything they produce each day. They also have the opportunity to earn 2.5 percent commission on any sales they make, whether it's bringing on a new customer

or selling an add-on service to an existing client.

"The program incentivizes them to produce and sell," Allen says. "If they are good and sell the services they also perform, they can turn the 5 percent commission into 7.5 percent commission."

The company also implements team-based incentives for each crew. Once a crew exceeds its yearly goal—this year it is \$200,000 per regular walking route—the standard 5 percent production commission doubles to 10 percent for the remainder of the year. Allen says this is the incentive that drives the best performance because it helps employees finish the year strong and provides extra money for them going into the holiday season.

"If they are in what we call '10-percent money,' they have excelled and exceeded their original projections," Allen says. "Being able to pay out a bit more at the end of the year is good motivation."

*Continued on page 46*

## NEWSFEED

### WEED ROT HERBICIDE

Sierra Natural Science and MTC Horticulture Co., an organic pest control manufacturer and distributor,

respectively, teamed up to develop Weed Rot, a natural herbicide product. A systemic nonselective herbicide, Weed Rot falls under

the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) 25(b) Exemption and isn't required to carry an EPA registration number. It claims to strip the weed's waxy cuticle, allowing the

natural chemistry to penetrate the leaves, stem and roots, killing the weed for good.

### ARBORJET'S SCHOLARSHIP

Arborjet is seeking applicants for its 2018

"Taking Root" college scholarship program. For the fifth consecutive year, the scholarship program will award 10 U.S. graduating high school seniors each with a \$1,000 scholarship.



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## TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

*Continued from page 44*

LawnAmerica's commission programs are tied to quality goals, which Allen says is a critical component of the systems' success. The company keeps track of things like call backs, cancellations and customer retention rates. It also tracks each technician's net promoter score, which is a management tool that can be used to gauge the loyalty of a firm's customer relationships. Allen says this strategy helps keep everything balanced and prevents employees from abusing the commission systems.

"If their production rate is in line and their net promoter score is good, we know we have a good performer," he says. "All the incentives tie together to build a safety net to make sure one isn't being touted over the other. You have to watch the checks and balances and make sure you have someone who is doing well in all the metrics, not just excelling in one and failing in others."

### A BULLETPROOF PLAN

Arbor-Nomics Turf in Atlanta has had technician commission and incentive systems in place for the past 15 years. Richard

Bare, the company's CEO, says the systems are beneficial for everyone involved, as production rates increase and technicians are rewarded for their hard work. Arbor-Nomics is a \$10-million company that provides 90 percent lawn care and 10 percent tree/shrub care to a 99 percent residential clientele.

"We think a lot of technicians are money motivated and want to work hard and make good dough," Bare says. "The commission system makes our guys feel that they are in control of their own fate every day based on what they do and don't do."

The Arbor-Nomics system is structured so if technicians exceed their weekly goal, they receive 10 percent of the extra production. Arbor-Nomics' techs are eligible for time and a half and also receive 5 percent off the top of any sales they make. Bare says technicians can earn between \$50,000 and \$80,000 per year if they "really hustle and work their route."

"The idea is to maximize the dollars from every stop," Bare says. "If they have 10 stops at \$100 each, they might hit their daily goal by noon and may bring in another \$1,000 by the end of the day."

Bare says the commission system has to be thorough and precise in order to be successful, as any holes in the program or unclear guidelines leave room for technicians to take advantage of the system. Companies interested in developing a commission or incentive system should implement it slowly, Bare says, and be very specific about the rules.

"You have to have this stuff well-thought-out and strictly put in place so there are no questions about it," Bare says. "Sometimes guys can figure out how to work the system to benefit them in the short term. You have to keep in mind that a commission system can be a win-win, but it can also be a source of trouble."

### KEEPING IT SIMPLE

Spring Touch Lawn & Pest Control in St. Peter, Minn., implemented a technician commission program about two years ago to provide tangible goals for newer employees to work toward. Nathan Newlands, vice president of franchising, says since implementing the system, each technician's production rate has gone up an average of 30 percent. Spring Touch provides 70 percent lawn care, 20 percent pest control and 10 percent irrigation services to a 95 percent residential, 5 percent commercial clientele.

"Rather than just getting their hours in, they are getting serious amounts of work done," Newlands says. "The numbers are realistic ones that they can hit, and everyone across the board is benefiting."

Spring Touch identifies six different technician levels, each based on the employee's duration with the company, daily square footage requirements and certifications and licenses they earn. If a technician produces more square



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footage in a month than his level requires, he can receive 50 percent of the difference between the level reached and his current level. For example, if a level-one technician, who earns \$12 per hour, produces work equivalent to a level-four technician who earns \$14 per hour, the level-one tech would get a \$1 bonus (50 percent of the \$2-per-hour difference) for every hour he worked during the previous month. Spring Touch technicians also receive flat-fee bonuses for selling add-on services, securing new clients and earning new licenses and certifications.

"We were giving them time to study for certification exams, but they still weren't passing," Newlands says. "Already this year since we told them they would get paid extra, many have passed on the first try."

"It used to be that you just paid them to do their jobs," Newlands adds. "But that doesn't really work anymore."

Newlands says it's a good idea to keep the incentive system as simple and straightforward as possible to keep technicians engaged. For example, the company recently switched from a seven-level commission system to a six-level system to help simplify things. Spring Touch used to offer technicians a percentage of add-on sales or new client acquisitions, but switched to flat fees after they found that percentages were too vague to be meaningful. Newlands says they used to go over each technician's goals only at the beginning of each month, but he noticed they tended to lose track of their progress as the weeks went by. Now, an office manager meets with all technicians weekly to review their status.

"If you stay on top of it and keep reminding them where they stand, they respond well," Newlands says. "If they are really close to earning that bonus, they try to work a bit harder to get there." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

**"If you stay on top of it and keep reminding (technicians) where they stand, they'll respond well."**

—NATHAN NEWLANDS



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## MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

# The humble gardener

If not for the stunning landscapes and pristine turf at some of Hawaii's luxury resorts, you might not even know the SGS Hawaii landscape management crews were there—a fact company president Sidney Sparkman never intends to change.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**B**ehind the bright flowers and exotic plants that adorn some of Hawaii's most elegant resorts, you'll find Sidney Sparkman and his crews. Their simple green shirts don't bear the company name, only the logo, a *honu*, which is Hawaiian for sea turtle. Their battery-powered equipment barely makes a sound, allowing guests to enjoy the grounds undisturbed. They don't have business cards, flyers or even a website to promote themselves. In fact, if not for the stunning landscapes and pristine turf, you might not even know they were there—a fact Sparkman never intends to change.

"We are intentionally a low-key company," says the president of SGS Hawaii. "We don't want to be seen or heard."

Sparkman says SGS Hawaii is one of the largest landscaping companies in the state of Hawaii, but few people know of

the company. SGS Hawaii has a staff of more than 100 employees and serves 20 clients, including 14 resorts, two resort subdivisions, two shopping centers and a few high-end residences on the islands of Maui and Kauai. In addition to knowing

how to deliver beautiful, sustainable landscapes, Sparkman knows who he is and what he stands for and runs his business with a simple, straightforward approach.

"I don't like the things that most big companies stand for—the noise and the big flashy trucks," Sparkman says.

"It's counterintuitive, but it works for us. We are just humble gardeners and want to make things better quietly."

Sparkman has always had a passion for landscape work. He recalls a memory of running away from home when he was 5 years old and his mother finding him cleaning up a neighbor's lawn for money. Sparkman studied geology in college but



Sidney Sparkman



was quickly drawn back to outdoor work. He and his wife, Alysha, moved from Texas to Hawaii in 1993, and Sparkman found work as the assistant director of landscaping at the Hyatt Regency Maui Resort & Spa in Kaanapali. The following year, he became director of landscaping and water features at the Grand Wailea Resort & Spa in Wailea. As a way to make extra money, the couple started their own landscape operation in 1995 with a single account that paid \$75 per month. Today, SGS Hawaii provides 90 percent maintenance and 10 percent installations to mostly commercial clients.

"It was easy to get lured back into this industry," Sparkman says. "It's absolutely a fun thing to do. You're outdoors, you're dealing with people. We have 12 months a year of good weather and are on the beach every day. I was destined to be in landscaping."

Sparkman says his company is unique because many resorts throughout Hawaii have in-house landscaping crews, similar to the one he managed at the Grand Wailea. But Sparkman was in the right place at the right time when many new

## NEWSFEED

### ROBOTIC MOWER FRANCHISE

Robin Autopilot closed a \$1 million round of financing—led by a mower manufacturer—

to grow a nationwide network of robotic mowing franchises. MTD Products led the financing and was

joined by several new and existing Robin investors, including Ken Murphy, former CEO of Mattress Firm. MTD, based in Valley City, Ohio, manufactures and distributes

residential robotic mowers under its Cub Cadet, Robomow and Wolf-Garten brands.

### BAHCO'S PRUNING TOOLS

Bahco introduced the new extended reach

pruning tools, designed for users to safely and efficiently prune trees and tall shrubs. The line includes aluminum section poles, short telescopic poles, pole saws, pole hooks and more.



**BLEND IN**  
SGS's crews try not to draw attention to themselves, seeking instead to take a quiet approach.

hotel and resort properties were being built that didn't have their own landscaping teams. He says the hotel industry is a "tightknit group of people" and word-of-mouth referrals led him to opportunities to meet the landscaping needs of these new developments.

"The reputation I developed at the Grand Wailea opened up a lot of doors for us," Sparkman says. "It helped that I had experience with the nuances of doing landscape management in hotels around high-paying guests, and we were able to jump on board."

## BLENDING IN

Sparkman's focus on environmental sustainability began during his time at the Grand Wailea, where he first experimented with practices like integrated pest management (IPM), composting and other forms of natural pest and weed control. That focus carried over to SGS Hawaii. In 2012, Sparkman decided to work toward no- to low-noise and zero-emissions concepts with the company's lawn equipment. Working with a local dealer, his crews tried battery-powered trimmers and blowers, and Sparkman says "they were hooked." As technology has improved, the company now performs 90 percent of its lawn maintenance with battery-powered equipment, as well as various rotary and reel mowers on smaller lawns. While the equipment is expensive—he has four battery-powered Jacobsen Eclipse mowers that cost \$43,000 each to manage the seashore

paspalum turf—Sparkman says he attracts more exclusive clientele because he can provide a better experience for the resort industry. He adds there are other opportunities for battery-powered equipment he has yet to explore, such as hospitals, schools and other places where noise and gas emissions are problematic.

"This was a huge break for us and a huge hit for the resorts we managed," Sparkman says. "You can't hear us cut grass—it's so cool. Guests have actually videotaped us cutting."

Hawaii's tropical climate is a breeding ground for insects and diseases, which Sparkman continues to manage with IPM. He has educated his clients that the presence of some weeds and insects is a good thing and that a sterile environment is not necessarily a healthy one. The company is judicious about the lawn chemicals it uses, only spot treating problems as necessary. Sparkman incorporates compost and humic acid as part of his management practices as well. While he still uses synthetic fertilizers, his goal is to be 100 percent natural by 2020.

"We treat the landscape like it is part of the natural environment and make sure we blend in with it," Sparkman says. "I believe that as a company, we owe it to our clients, the residents of our islands and the environment to push the levels of how we do things. We simply want to do the right thing. We want to be *pono*, which is Hawaiian for 'do what is right.'"

Sparkman says he wouldn't be able to "do what is right" without the help of his staff and leadership team. Many of the company's staff are immigrants from the Philippines and Micronesia who came to Hawaii on visas to work on sugar cane and pineapple farms—industries that have since disappeared from the state. Sparkman empowers his leadership team to research and experiment to ensure the company is pushing the envelope in terms of sustainability, IPM, water management, safety and efficiency standards.

"I stress to our leadership team that our staff is just as important as our

clients—you cannot have one without the other," Sparkman says. "We have been truly blessed with incredible people."


So far, Sparkman's unconventional approach to running his landscape business has proven successful. SGS Hawaii has experienced more than 20 percent annual growth for the past decade, but Sparkman says it's time to slow things down a bit and hold steady for the next year or so. One reason, he says, is it's hard to find employees, as unemployment has "flatlined" in Hawaii. He also says it's time to revamp



**LAY LOW**  
SGS Hawaii's use of battery-powered equipment ensures peaceful experiences for resort guests.

the company's internal systems, including human resources, hiring practices, safety programs and more to prepare SGS Hawaii for future growth. Sparkman is currently talking with a national organization that helps landscape companies improve business performance and other green industry experts for ideas on how to move forward.

"We have had hotel general managers contact us to come look at their properties, but I've told them I'm not ready yet," Sparkman says. "We first need to look at our internal systems that need to be improved upon or completely overhauled in order to better position us for the next growth spurt."

"So far, we've been able to grow the business very quietly," he adds. "Just like we operate." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



# Installing joy

A new study reveals the emotional ROI landscape projects deliver. **BY MARISA PALMIERI**



Irrigation system installation  
Joy Score: 10



Fire feature  
Joy Score: 10



New wood deck  
Joy Score: 9.8



Water feature  
Joy Score: 9.8



Statement landscape  
Joy Score: 9.7



Landscape installation projects rank among the highest in terms of outdoor projects that bring homeowners joy, according to a study by the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) and the National Association of Realtors.

The two associations partnered to analyze outdoor residential and commercial projects, why property owners should invest in them and the value these projects bring people—both financially and emotionally.

The “2018 Remodeling Impact Report: Outdoor Features” took a multipronged approach to the research, surveying more than 4,000 consumers on homeownership site HouseLogic.com about the last outdoor project they undertook; more

than 400 NALP members about average project costs; and nearly 7,000 members of the National Association of Realtors about the cost recovery for each project.

When it comes to the enjoyment homeowners gain from these projects, a fire feature and irrigation system tied for first, both receiving a perfect Joy Score of 10. Joy Scores range between 1 and 10; higher figures indicate greater joy from the project. The next most appealing projects were a new wood deck (Joy Score of 9.8), a water feature (9.8), statement landscaping (9.7), a new patio (9.7), landscape lighting (9.6) and an overall landscape upgrade (9.6). 🏡

**PRIDE AND JOY**  
The study by NALP and NAR shows landscape installation projects bring homeowners the most joy, compared to other outdoor projects.

## NEWSFEED

### HNA OPENS REGISTRATION

Registration for Hardscape North America (HNA) 2018 is now open. The event, set for Oct. 17-19, at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville, Ky., will include new show hours, big name speakers, a VIP education pass and more, according to HNA.

### BOBCAT ADDS REAR CAMERA

Bobcat Co. added a rear camera kit to the list of available options for Bobcat skid-steer and compact track loaders. The kit offers the operator a continuous rear view of the machine, preventing contact with obstacles that may damage the loader and its components, according to Bobcat.

## PROVING VALUE

“This report validates that landscaping is an investment worth making, offering the immediate benefits of increased enjoyment of your property, as well as desirable long-term value that holds if or when it comes time to sell,” says Missy Henriksen, vice president, public affairs, NALP. “From lawn and tree care to installing a new fire or water feature or landscape lighting, there’s no shortage of opportunities to enhance your landscape and to reap the benefits these upgrades provide.”



New patio  
Joy Score: 9.7

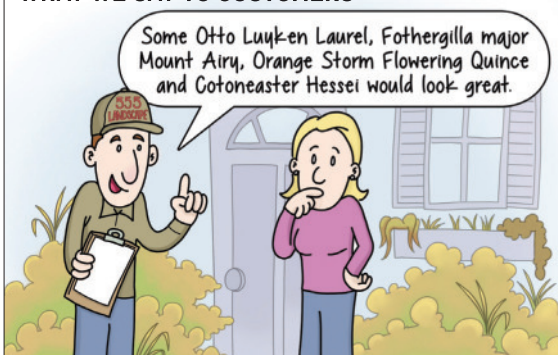


Landscape  
lighting  
Joy Score: 9.6



Overall  
landscape  
upgrade  
Joy Score: 9.6

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## IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

# Spray smarts

Four irrigation experts offer their take on the latest sprayhead trends—and what's driving them.

BY SARAH WEBB

**T**hirty-one billion gallons of water could be saved each year by replacing water-inefficient sprayheads with efficient ones, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates.

It's no wonder the irrigation industry has started to see more water-saving sprayheads entering the market.

After all, experts say water savings and cost savings go hand in hand.

"Ultimately, the customer is going to have a lot lower water bill, which is a big incentive to implement water-saving products," says Kelsey Jacquard, product manager, MP Rotators and sprays at Hunter Industries.

To answer the growing demand, manufacturers enhanced their sprayheads to include high-efficiency features, such as pressure regulators, check valves, flow restriction devices and more.



Kelsey Jacquard

### WHY THE PUSH?

While drought-prone areas have experienced the biggest push for saving water, experts say water conservation efforts have touched many parts of the U.S.

"I think we're in the early stages of water conservation," says Russ Jundt, founder and vice president of Conserva Irrigation. "We have to reduce the barriers to comply and make it easier for people."

The company, headquartered in Richmond, Va., is a \$7-million organization offering 100 percent irrigation services to a 65 percent residential, 35 percent commercial clientele.

A countrywide trend toward smaller lot sizes also contributes to the push for high-efficiency sprayheads.

For example, the median lot size of a new single-family detached home sold in 2016 stood at 8,562 square feet, compared to 9,148 square feet in 2010 and 9,388 square feet in 2000, according to the 2016 Census Bureau's Survey of Construction.

"With smaller lot sizes, we can now

leave behind the high-water-throwing products like rotors and go to nozzles or sprayheads that throw water at a lower rate," says Steve Counter, vice president of category management at SiteOne Landscape Supply.

Catering to varying site requirements, manufacturers often offer a menu of sprayhead options, instead of an all-inclusive sprayhead, according to Chris Davey, product marketing manager for Toro.

"For example, at Toro, you can buy the plain 'vanilla' sprayhead with nothing in the stem, the 'Rocky Road' version with everything in it or anything in between," Davey says.



Chris Davey

### HIGH PRESSURE

While pressure regulators are not brand-new to the industry, they continue to make a difference in terms of



## NEWSPEED

### EWING EXPANSION

Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply expanded into the Midwest by opening

its first three locations in Illinois and Indiana. Dale Nieuwebeerta will lead Ewing's efforts in this new market.

### TORO WINS WATERSENSE

The Toro Co. was awarded WaterSense certification for spray sprinkler bodies by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for its range of 570Z Series

sprayheads with built-in pressure regulation.

### HUNTER'S BLUETOOTH TIMER

Hunter Industries introduced the BTT, its new Bluetooth-enabled tap timer. Designed for

use with a hose faucet, BTT provides app-controlled light irrigation for plants, flowers, nurseries, greenhouses and small lawn areas. It's available for iOS and Android.



**SPRAY GROUND**  
More efficient sprayheads  
entering the market help  
save water and costs.

## SLOW THE FLOW

Manufacturers also have started to implement flow-restricting devices inside their sprayhead products to prevent water loss in the case of a broken or missing nozzle.

For example, Hunter's FloGuard feature reduces the flow of water from the riser down to 0.5 gallons per minute (gpm) and immediately generates a 10-foot tall indicator stream if a nozzle is compromised, according to Jacquard.

"Instead of having a ton of water coming out anywhere from 6 to 30 gallons a minute, you only have half a gallon a minute," she says. "You're not losing a lot of water at that point. It's not going to save as much water with pressure regulation, but it's that extra little grab of water savings."

Counter agrees, adding contractors may not even realize there's a broken element unless they happen to walk by and see water puddling in the area.

Toro also offers a flow-restricting feature, called X-Flow. It comes as an option on its 570Z sprayhead models.

"The X-Flow shuts off the flow and allows a person to do maintenance on the sprayhead without getting a geyser coming up in their face," Davey says.

## ODDS AND ENDS

The pressure-activated, zero-flush wiper seal (ZFWS), also available on Toro's 570Z sprayhead, is another byproduct of conservation efforts.

A replaceable wiper seal in the cover of the pop-up sprayhead, the rubber ZFWS wipes or seals the stem as it pops up and goes down, reducing startup water waste, according to Davey.

"It's just a way to keep the stem clean so you don't get grit and sandy bits and pieces of mulch in there," he says.

Jundt says Toro's Precision Series Spray Nozzle can also help reduce water usage—by up to 35 percent, compared to many variable arc nozzles.

"Variable arc nozzles throw massive amounts of water out that can

never infiltrate into the soil, so you get runoff, and all the minerals leach off," Jundt says.


## A LOOK AHEAD

For the future, Jacquard says a lot of energy will be focused toward more water-efficient products, such as nozzles.

"With high-efficiency nozzles especially, the precipitation rates are a lot lower, and they're a lot less susceptible to misting and wind," she says.

Counter and Jundt share similar views about the future of sprayheads.

"The biggest piece for the future is the continuation of how to make products more robust and efficient," Counter says.

Jundt says, "I think across the industry, we're going to see the water abusers and the products that are major water abusers go away." 



Steve Counter

water savings, experts say.

"The benefits are pretty extreme," Jacquard says, noting that water savings can be as high as 30 percent when water pressure is brought down to 30 psi.

Pressure regulators can be beneficial in municipalities where the water pressure is high and in downhill situations.

"If you're building pressure in the pipes and you've got 60-70 psi coming in, the pressure regulation function works so the outlet pressure is a steady 30 psi," Davey says, adding that Toro recently received EPA WaterSense certification on its 570Z sprayheads with pressure regulation.

## CHECK IT

Implementing check valves is another route to water savings.

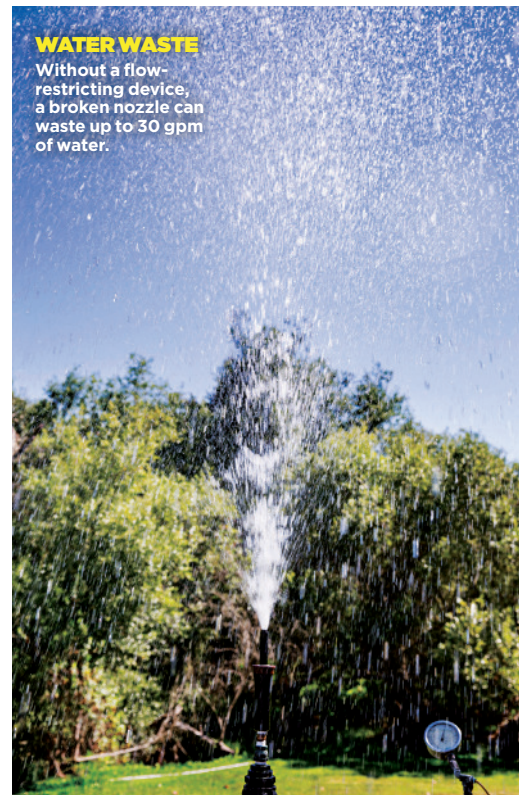
Check valves prevent water from draining out of the sprinkler or sprayhead, especially in areas with slopes or elevation changes.

"If you don't have a check valve, when you turn off the system, the water wants to drain to the lowest point, which means you've wasted all that water," Counter says. "That means the next time you turn on your system, you have to refill all those pipes."

Jacquard says Hunter approximates the water savings to be about 20 gallons if contractors install check valves in a zone that's going to drain out.

## WATER WASTE

Without a flow-restricting device, a broken nozzle can waste up to 30 gpm of water.





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LET'S GROW



## ALIGN THE STARS

Learn to connect the dots between marketing, sales and operations to achieve a five-star brand reputation, Jeffrey Scott says.



PAGE 58



**BUSINESS BASICS: PLANNING**

# Discover your blue ocean



**BY PHIL HARWOOD**

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

**I**magine a world without competitors, where you are able to charge whatever you want and get it. Imagine having highly qualified personnel, customers who are patient and strong positive cash flow. Welcome to the premium market.

The premium market is a different world than what most of us operate in. In the bestselling book “Blue Ocean Strategy,” author W. Chan Kim paints a picture of the premium market world as a blue ocean. The blue ocean is an undisturbed body of water where the water is clear and where you have the entire ocean to yourself. Kim compares this scenario with the typical world most of us live in: a red ocean, corrupted, shark-infested and bloodied by years of vicious competition. I wonder why more companies don’t seek out blue oceans.

Recently, my wife and I were looking for a service provider for a window in our home that needed to be repaired. After spending some time on the internet and making some calls, I learned there was only one company in my area authorized by the manufacturer to make repairs on my windows. I called the company and learned there was only one person who handled repairs. Clearly, he has found a blue ocean, if not a monopoly.

I was prepared for what came next because I understood the normal rules of the red ocean no longer applied. We were in a blue ocean. I knew I would have to wait, and I did. Demand for this company’s services was strong, and there was a delay at every step along the way. I knew I was going to pay a premium, and I did. The repair cost was more than twice what I had

anticipated it would be. However, I was completely satisfied after the repair was made. Let me explain why and you will have a glimpse into the mind of the premium buyer.

I could have made the repair myself if I had wanted to do even more research, order parts and spend my time on this type of thing. There are plenty of home repairs I handle myself, but this was out of my comfort zone, and my time is limited. Another option was to find someone else who was *not* authorized by the manufacturer, maybe a handyman who was available right away and much less expensive. None of these options appealed to me because I wanted the repair done correctly the first time by a professional. I knew that would come at a cost.

The communication was outstanding at every turn. Between phone calls, emails, text messages and smartphone photos, I was able to provide all the information requested for the repair without unnecessary visits to my home. This was valuable to me due to my heavy travel schedule. In addition, the repair was flawless. The work was meticulous. Even the cleanup was amazing. Overall, this was one of the most pleasant service experiences I’ve ever had. Needless to say, I would hire this company again in a heartbeat.

My experience illustrates some important lessons about the premium market. First, this repair service provider has positioned itself in a narrow market where there is little competition, aside from DIY (no time), unqualified handymen (no thank you) or imposing on my friends (not this time). Where can you find a market

segment with almost no competition? They do exist.

Second, there’s less—or nonexistent—price pressure in the premium market, and it’s important to charge a premium price for a premium service. If this company hadn’t charged what it did, it may not have had the ability to be staffed with such a knowledgeable professional, and he may not have had the extra time to spend in my home to ensure that his repair was perfect and that he cleaned up after himself before he left. He may not have thought it was worthwhile to communicate with me the way he did. I paid a premium, and I’m glad I did.

Third, value is not the same as price. Benefit minus price equals value. In my case, I paid a high price, but I received an even higher benefit and so there was value. We often think of “value pricing” as pricing on the low end of the scale. Value can be created at any price level. Because we often are only working in highly competitive environments, we lose sight of the fact that price is not all that important in the premium market.

As you consider your strategic plan, perhaps going after a premium market makes sense for you. Where is a premium market? Where is your blue ocean? Look around. They’re not in the most obvious places. You’re not going to find one on every corner. Premium markets are by nature exclusive. They often require specialized training, certifications or authorizations. This is exactly what minimizes competition. Open your mind, do some brainstorming with your team and keep your eyes open. You just might find what you’re looking for. 



# TORO® PRECISION™ SERIES SPRAY NOZZLES

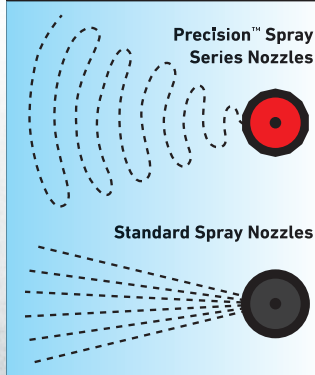
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**BY JEFFREY SCOTT**

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

# Build a 5-star brand

**S**ome companies rely too much on a strong business developer, pay-per-click or social media for their growth. These tactics help you grow, but long-term growth is driven by a powerful brand reputation.

Branding starts by aligning marketing and sales, but it's much more than that. The expectations set by your sales team must be successfully fulfilled by operations. Operations must be able to meet and exceed clients' expectations.

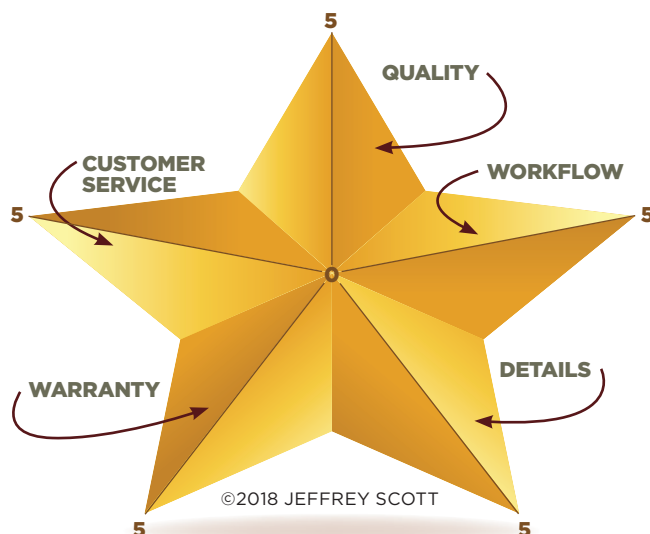
At its core, branding is what people say about you behind your back. In other words, how good your entire company does its job. Someone in your firm (CEO, COO) must connect the dots between marketing, sales and operations to ensure you achieve a five-star brand reputation.

## WHAT YOU DO AND HOW YOU DO IT

There are five critical elements of brand building based on operational excellence. You must excel in all five.

## DO YOU HAVE A FIVE-STAR BRAND?

**SCORE YOURSELF (1-5) ON ALL 5 CRITERIA:  
HOW DO YOU MEASURE UP?**



**1 Quality** makes up just one-fifth of your brand impression. Of course it's important, but it's just the price of admission to make it on the short list. You won't win in the long run if quality is your only focus.

**2 The workflow process** is critical; clients care about how the work gets done. I once had a client tell me, "Your quality is fantastic, but your process stinks." Ouch, that was hard to hear, and I never forgot it. Your process needs to be easy on your clients.

**3 Customer service** attitudes of all employees are critical. It requires both good systems and training on those systems. Some employees mistakenly think, "The customer is getting in the way of doing my job." Therefore, customer service attitudes must be built into your values and systems at all levels and be continually reinforced.

**4 Warranty** and work mistakes inevitably happen. It's how you make your client feel during the warranty process that makes all the difference. One of my clients once told me during a focus group, "You don't make me feel dumb when I have a complaint; I really appreciate that about your company." Your warranty and mistake-fixing process must convey respect and be speedy to build up a five-star reputation.

**5 The details** are perhaps the most important element within operations—getting the little things done right. Removing the little thorn in your client's side quickly and painlessly is what creates repeat clients. This approach includes things like picking up a small piece of garbage stuck in a bed, handling small nuisance plantings for existing clients, cleaning up the job site every evening and documenting and handling a client's recurring instruction.

**How do you measure up?** See the figure, "Do you have a five-star brand?" to measure your company's brand performance.

## BUT CAN YOU EXECUTE?

As my father (and most important mentor) taught me many years ago, "All companies make great promises, but few will follow through on those promises. And fewer still will do so year after year. So don't obsess about other companies—just worry about your own performance. Over time, others will give up and fall away."

With grit and determination, be prepared to take it the distance, and you will achieve a five-star brand.

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## HARDSCAPE PRODUCTS



### PAVER PRETREAT

**COMPANY:** Black Diamond Coatings

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

Black Diamond Coatings' Paver PreTreat is a product designed to seal porous pavers by implementing a color-enhancing nanotechnology, according to the company. The product can be used on new concrete pavers, as well as older pavers that need maintenance. It's available in 1- and 5-gal. containers at many retail locations.



### AQUASTORM PAVER



**COMPANY:** Techo-Bloc

**URL:** [Techo-Bloc.com](http://Techo-Bloc.com)

Techo-Bloc's Aquastorm paver is strong enough to survive vehicular traffic and designed to allow turfgrass and other ground covers to grow in the voids. A stormwater management solution, the paver can be used in both front and backyards. Additionally, Aquastorm's integrated spacers maintain consistent joint spacing while permitting a variety of laying patterns. Each unit measures 20 in. long, 10 in. wide and 4 in. thick.



### TANDEM WALL SYSTEM

**COMPANY:** Belgard

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

Belgard's Tandem Wall System is a versatile system that can be used to create curved or straight retaining walls and freestanding landscape walls. Ideal for use in a wide range of residential and light commercial hardscape projects, it provides the natural appearance of chiseled stone and is available in four face styles, according to Belgard.

### U-CARA MULTI-FACE WALL SYSTEM



**COMPANY:** Unilock

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

The U-Cara Multi-Face Wall System represents a revolution in wall design with just two basic components, Unilock said. Dimensionally accurate U-Cara Sure Track Backer Blocks are the system's backbone and provide structural integrity for retaining walls and landscape features. U-Cara Fascia Panels can be easily placed anywhere along the Sure Track Backer Block and come in a variety of colors and textures, including Unilock EnduraColor finishes.





## >> AERATORS



### 24-IN. STAND-ON AERATOR

**COMPANY:** Toro

**URL:** Toro.com

Toro's 24-in. stand-on aerator reaches ground speeds of up to 6.5 mph, can fit through a standard 36-in. gate and features a hydraulic valve to adjust operator weight and electronic depth control. Providing consistent plug depths of up to 5 in. long, the aerator also includes an intuitive smart controller. The machine is compatible with a new seed spreader attachment.

### ABI FORCE

**COMPANY:** ABI Attachments

**URL:** ABIAttachments.com

ABI Attachments' ABI Force is a zero-turn multitask vehicle with available attachments that can loosen, grade and rake with precision. The machine features a zero-turn platform, controllable downward force and the optional laser-grading package. The machine's hydrostatic drive system is powered by two commercial-grade hydro-gear brand pumps and two Parker wheel motors. The ABI force also provides an easy-on-and-off step-through design and a compression spring floor, knee pad and comfort grip controls. Optional attachments include an aerator, fertilizer spreader and cultipacker.



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## 530 LAWN AERATOR

**COMPANY:** BlueBird Turf Products

**URL:** BlueBirdTurf.com

BlueBird Turf Products' 530 lawn aerator offers a 19-in. aerating width. The aerator's free-wheeling tine system allows even inexperienced users to easily aerate corners and tight areas, BlueBird said. A folding



handle, lift handles and semipneumatic front tire provide easy transport, while removable side weights offer optimal soil penetration and balance for easier slope aeration. It's available with a Honda, Briggs & Stratton or Kohler engine.



## 24-IN. STAND-ON AERATOR

**COMPANY:** Exmark

**URL:** Exmark.com

Exmark's 24-in. stand-on aerator features a compact design that easily fits through 36-in. gates. The efficient hydro-drive system offers infinite speed control up to 6.8 mph, the compact design heightens maneuverability and the ergonomic controls and foot-activated hydraulic tine control are easy to use, according to Exmark. Mass is centralized over the tines for consistent coring depth (electronically adjustable from 0.5 to 5 in.). Additionally, the machine's smart controller tracks hours and maintenance reminders.

## ORGANIC + BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTS



## GREENTRX

**COMPANY:** Anuvia Plant Nutrients

**URL:** AnuviaPlantNutrients.com

GreenTRX is a homogenous, enhanced-efficiency plant nutrient that slowly releases nutrients to lawns when needed most. The Organic MaTRX delivery system, using reclaimed organic materials, mimics organic matter in soil to provide nutrients in an effective way that reduces leaching and volatility. The product is environmentally friendly, easy to use and safe on all types of turf, Anuvia said.



## COOL TERRA ORGANIC

**COMPANY:** Cool Planet

**URL:** CoolPlanet.com

Cool Terra Organic works to improve key soil performance characteristics for quality and resilient turf and plants, according to Cool Planet. The product's properties are engineered to optimize water and nutrient retention in the root zone, build lasting soil structure, provide an environment for microbial growth and sequester carbon. It's a consistent, granular material that's high in fixed carbon, which works complementary to other soil carbons but will not break down biologically over time.





## M-PEDE



**COMPANY:** Gowan Group

**URL:** GowanCo.com

M-Pede is a natural insecticide, miticide and fungicide that provides excellent control of insects, mites and powdery mildew, Gowan said. National Organic Program compliant and Organic Materials Review Institute listed for organic production, landscapers can treat trees, shrubs, ornamental plantings and vegetable gardens without worrying about pesticide residues. The product has no preharvest interval.



## TURF FORMULA

**COMPANY:** Neptune's Harvest

**URL:** NeptunesHarvest.com

Neptune's Harvest's Turf Formula was specifically designed for areas where there are zero-phosphorus laws. The NPK is 2-0-2. It's made with organic ingredients including hydrolyzed fish, seaweed, humate, yucca, molasses and biological microbes. A high-energy mix that shows greening within days, the product increases the biological life of the soil and helps retain moisture in the soil, according to the company.

## M-ROOTS



**COMPANY:** Lebanon Turf

**URL:** LebanonTurf.com

M-Roots helps increase transplant survival—both for sod and other transplanted plants—and improves water and nutrient absorption, according to Lebanon Turf. The fertilizer works specifically with disturbed or poor soil to help plants thrive in extreme circumstances. It's a blend of the natural organic ingredients in dryRoots, along with 18 species of endo- and ectomycorrhizae.

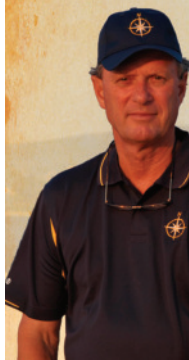


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## RESOURCES

[ LM Growth Summit ]

### Attention lawn care companies!

The LM Growth Summit is the industry's exclusive event pairing leading supplier partners with pre-qualified lawn care professionals for two days of 1:1 meetings, educational sessions and relaxed professional networking. This year's LM Growth Summit will take place Nov. 12-14 in Orlando. To learn more or apply to attend, visit **LMGrowthSummit.com**.



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# BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY ABBY HART

"My wife, Faith, and I are very interested in human rights causes."



## Jeff Buhler

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE  
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**ORLANDO, FLA.**

### EDUCATION

Lincoln High School  
Tallahassee, Fla.  
Class of 1989

University of Florida  
Gainesville, Fla.  
B.A., Religion and Psychology  
Class of 1993

Rollins College  
Winter Park, Fla.  
Master of Business Administration  
Class of 2005

### WORK EXPERIENCE

**1994-2000**  
Pi Lambda Phi Foundation  
Director of Chapter Services,  
Assistant Executive  
Director for the Fraternity, Director  
of Development for the  
Educational Foundation  
Danbury, Conn.

**1995-2000**  
Western Connecticut State University  
Assistant Men's Basketball Coach  
Danbury, Conn.

**2000-2005/2008-2010**  
Middleton Lawn & Pest Control  
General Manager/VP of Operations  
Orlando, Fla.

**2005-2008**  
Gaylord Entertainment  
Director of Engineering, House-  
keeping and Capital Projects  
Orlando, Fla.

**2010-present**  
Massey Services  
Senior VP of Customer Service  
Orlando, Fla.

On vacation with wife, Faith, daughter, Maya, 13, and son, Jackson, 9. "Our daughter loves competing in anything sports related. My son Jackson is all about technology—anything on a tablet, computer or video game related. Fortunately, they both got their looks and brains from Faith."

"This experience was a big influence on my life—here I was able to connect with people from all backgrounds on a common focus to eliminate prejudice."

"We are in the service industry—but we are a people business. Our ability to satisfy customers, develop our leaders and grow our company is directly correlated to how we recruit, hire, train, develop and hold our people accountable. My favorite part of my responsibilities is the opportunity to develop our team members to achieve more than they thought was possible."



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Current president of the NALP

"In leading basketball coaching clinics for Adidas and Nike, I discovered it's not how much you know about basketball that matters, it's how much your players can learn and retain about basketball that impacts the results. If your players aren't executing what you're teaching, it's more valuable to learn how to teach and develop people more effectively than to learn more about basketball."

### ORLANDO SCIENCE CENTER

"As president of the Orlando Science Center and leading their \$30 million capital campaign, I find tremendous value in their mission to 'inspire science learning for life' by exposing people of all ages and backgrounds to STEAM programming, exhibits and experiences."

**WORDS OF WISDOM** "Make decisions in your business based on how you develop long-term trusting relationships—with your team members, with your customers and with your partner vendors." • "You see it in sports, companies and community organizations all the time, a new coach or leader comes in and there's another change in strategy. The persistence to be able to continually focus and execute on your *current* strategy makes the difference—it leads to improved confidence and momentum, which every organization seeks."



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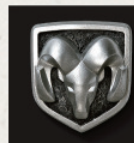
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