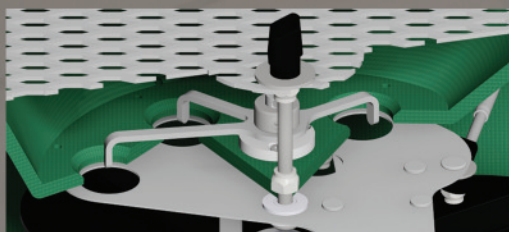


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p.24

## GET A GRIP

For Grapids Irrigation CEO Aaron Katerberg, success means getting a handle on his strengths, solid systems and the right people.

November 2018 VOL 57, ISSUE 11

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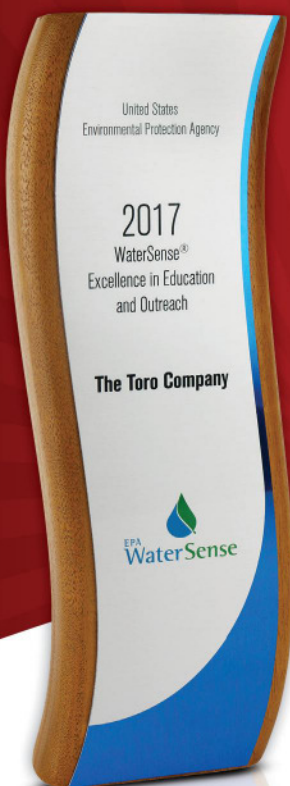
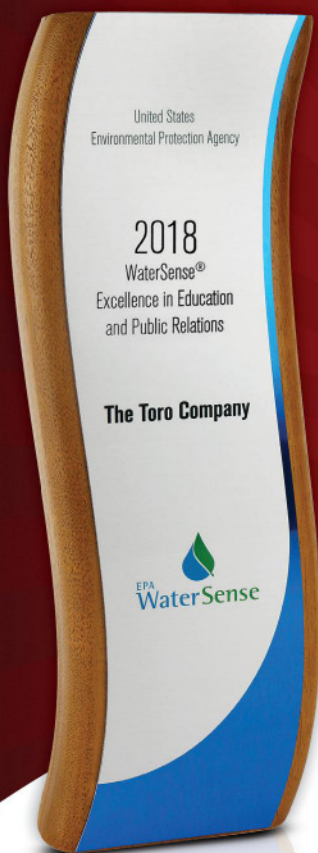
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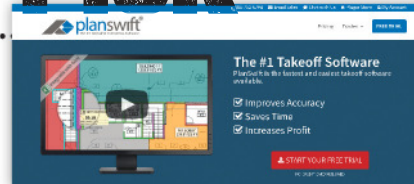


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## Next gen mindset

A spot on the local news gathered a few pieces of technology from decades past—a Sony Walkman, a pager, film, a floppy disc, an old TV “clicker”—and showed them to school-aged kids of today to see if they knew what purpose each item served. Hilarity ensued.

The kids ranged in age from maybe five to 12—members of Generation Z or the newest group, Generation Alpha.

Although your youngest employees aren't quite as young as the kids I saw on the news, there's a good chance they've never used these items, either. It's likely they've never encountered other innovations that once made your business tick, like a Nextel device or a fax machine.

As Kevin Kehoe points out in his column this month (p. 46), each generation changes the workplace in its own way. Millennials—the largest generation currently in the labor force—want better tools and better pay, Kehoe says. In today's strapped labor market, they just may be able to demand those things.

I don't always agree with how generations are stereotyped (disclosure: I'm a millennial who identifies more with the subgroup of xennials), but I am fascinated by the differences among age groups. If you're an employer or manager, you should be too. The ability to attract and retain people is *the* difference between successful companies and unsuccessful ones in our industry. Understanding generational differences and how you can use them to your advantage is pure opportunity.

One resource for getting to know your younger employees is The Mindset List, published annually since 1998 by Ron Nief and Tom McBride at Beloit

College in Wisconsin. It started as a clever way of informing college faculty members about how to identify with new students, but it has been used for much more than that. In fact, McBride and Nief authored a book based on the lists called “The Millennial Promise,” offering details about this generation's attitudes on topics like politics and economics and tips on how to better educate them. I bet it offers some nuggets about how to better employ them, too.

This list is released in August before the school year begins and details the worldview of the entering class of collegiate freshmen. Consider these facts about this year's group—members of the college class of 2022, who were mostly born in 2000:

- They've grown up with stories about where their grandparents were on 11/22/63 and where their parents were on 9/11.
- A visit to a bank has been a rare event.
- They have grown up afraid that a shooting could happen at their school.
- “You've got mail” would sound as ancient to them as “number, please” would have sounded to their parents.

They've have rarely heard the term “bipartisan agreement” and always have been able to secure immediate approval and endorsement for their ideas through “likes” on social media.

A few years back, the authors asked, “How will the absence of instant online approval impact their performance in the classroom and workplace?”

You're the one who's going to find out on the job. Are you doing your best to understand what you're up against? 🐼



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# Q+A

## What popular business authors, speakers or influencers do you recommend landscape professionals follow and why?

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"Good to Great" by Jim Collins is a must-read for any CEO."

"To gain an advantage and learn to think differently, read more than business books! For example, try 'Einstein' by Walter Isaacson, 'Kitchen Confidential' by Anthony Bourdain and 'Skin in the Game' by Nassim Taleb."

"Joe Calloway—Every landscape pro should read his book 'Becoming a Category of One.'"

### 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).

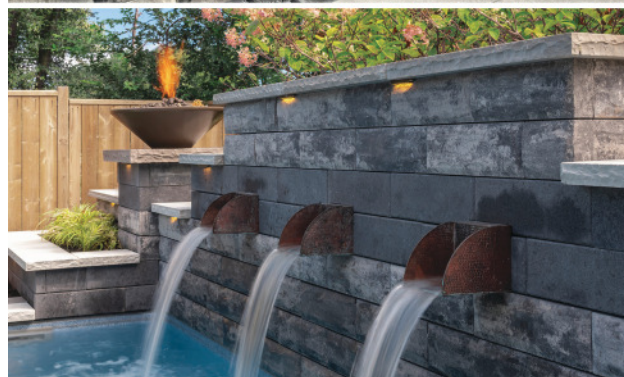
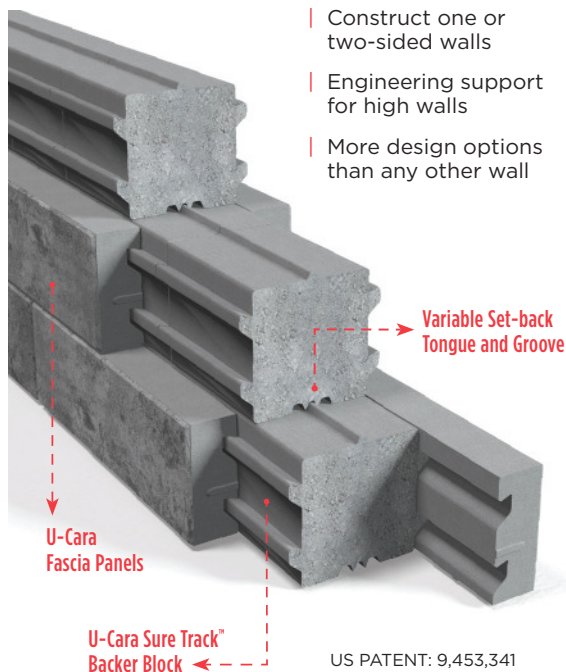


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# BIG PICTURE

## AN ELEVATED OASIS

**LOCATION** New York City

**COMPANY** John Mini  
Distinctive Landscapes

**THE DETAILS** Located in Manhattan, this residential building's outdoor space included overgrown and failing plantings. The client looked to transform it into a well-manicured park for residents.

The terrace lacks direct sunlight as it's located on the northeast corner of the block and surrounded by 30-plus-story buildings. The John Mini team installed shade-loving blue fescue around the perimeter. The plantings started as spaced-out rows, and over time, more plantings were added.

The design team incorporated Siberian spruce and river birch trees, as well as pops of color from rudbeckias and floral plantings. During the initial season, the crew pruned back the canopies and created archways through the trees. An herb wall was also installed, featuring 16 different herbs.

The project earned John Mini Distinctive Landscapes a 2017 Grand Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program.

**PHOTO** The "fire" bowl in the foreground defies Manhattan code's opposition to fire pits, with the interpretation of fire made by firestyx pencil cactus and landscape plants in red and amber tones.

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



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AND TIPS

LM GALLERY

ISSUE BRIEF

STEP BY STEP

NEW STUFF

SAFETYWATCH

## LANGUAGE LIAISON

**C**andice Bún of MetroGreenscape is more than the everyday human resources coordinator—she's also bilingual in English and Spanish, serving as a touch point for Spanish-speaking workers.

Of MetroGreenscape's 25 employees, several have limited English skills, Bún says. "To have someone who understands their question, can communicate it to the right people and help with the language barrier is great," says Bún, who has been with the Charlotte, N.C.-based company since May.

The presence of a bilingual staff member in the office helps instill confidence in people who may want to apply for a job, she adds.

Bún begins the day standing by as crews load up their trucks, in case anyone needs to communicate a question or concern about payroll, time cards, new policies, etc. She also makes recruitment calls to job applicants, acts as MetroGreenscape's initial contact to Spanish-speaking subcontractors and generates recruitment materials

**"It's realizing you can't lump all Spanish speakers into one culture."**

in English and Spanish. Additionally, she translates the weekly field staff trainings and monthly all-staff

meetings into Spanish.

For companies interested in hiring a bilingual human resources representative, Bún says it's important to find someone who is willing to be out in the community, recognizes where to target specific recruitment efforts and has knowledge—or a willingness to learn—about different Hispanic cultures.

"It's things like having an understanding of colloquialisms and slang and realizing you can't lump all Spanish speakers into one culture," she says.



ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK/CONY  
ALBERTO MASHNOVO

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## LM GALLERY

Check out a few of the places where the **LM** team made its rounds last month.

**1** *LM* Publisher Bill Roddy (right) and incoming Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones (second from left) took a peek behind the curtain at Grunder Landscaping Co. for its Fall Field Trip in Miamisburg, Ohio. Here they are with new *LM* columnist Marty Grunder (second from right) and Vince Torchia, vice president of The Grow Group, Grunder's consulting firm.



**2** Clara Richter, incoming managing editor of *LM*, popped in to Environmental Management in Plain City, Ohio, for its annual employee appreciation day, which included team-building events, food trucks, prize drawings and more. She captured this shot of the company's Organizational Development Manager Joe Lewis (center) having fun with Ohio Landscape Association Executive Director Sandy Munley (left) and Roni Petersen, membership and certification manager of the Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association.



**3** Richter is going from gas to grass when she officially joins the *LM* staff next month. Here she and *LM* Western Regional Sales Manager Jake Goodman are catching up with propane buddies Jeremy Wishart of the Propane Education & Research Council and its PR rep Jeff Salem of Swanson Russell at GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky.

## ISSUE BRIEF



BY ANDREW BRAY

The author is vp of government relations, National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP)

## NALP, DOL TO COLLABORATE ON H-2B COMPLIANCE

In September, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced a nationwide initiative to strengthen compliance in the landscape industry with the labor provisions of the H-2B temporary visa program. It was almost identical to a release issued the previous week targeting the hospitality industry.


The compliance will focus on:

- Confirming an insufficient number of U.S. employees are qualified and available to work.
- Confirming the employment of H-2B workers will not adversely affect the wages of U.S. workers.

DOL indicated that specific requirements must be met to protect American workers and investigations will be forthcoming. The release also highlighted DOL's desire to provide compliance assistance tools and information to employers and stakeholders.

In response to the administration's actions, NALP met with DOL officials to determine how NALP can collaborate with DOL to ensure landscape professionals have the correct information and resources to comply. NALP and DOL have agreed to work together to create tools for the landscape industry and educational opportunities with national and local DOL staff.

NALP also has heard U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services is increasing compliance and enforcement efforts by conducting random audits and visits to companies that participate in the H-2B visa program. NALP encourages all H-2B participants to review H-2B policies and maintain comprehensive records on file.

Questions? Please contact me at [andrew@landscapeprofessionals.org](mailto:andrew@landscapeprofessionals.org). 





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## STEP BY STEP

# Install a simple fire pit

**F**ire pits continue to be popular as more homeowners strive to create an outdoor oasis in their own backyards. But before installing a fire pit, there are several factors for contractors, as well as their clients, to consider.

The most common types of fire pits are wood burning, natural gas and propane. Wood-burning fire pits are less expensive to design and install than gas or propane versions, and they provide the sounds and smells many homeowners associate with a backyard fire. For customers willing to invest the money, gas or propane fire pits are easier to clean and maintain because they produce no ash and almost no smoke. Also, a fire can be started instantaneously, without the need to gather wood and other materials.

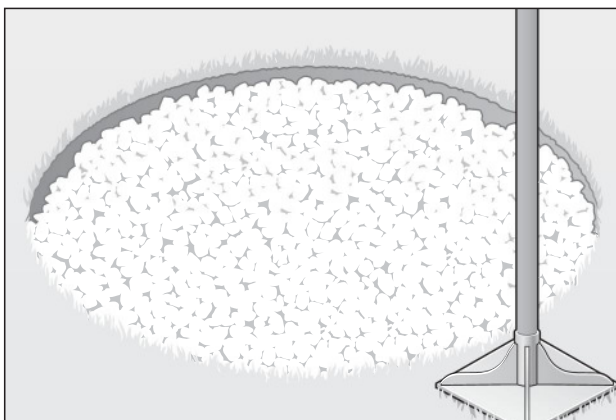
The shape and size of the fire pit and the materials used to create it are also important. There are several options, including a masonry fire pit faced with stone veneer, ceramic tile or stucco; interlocking block made from engineered stone; and natural stone. Most often, the fire pit design will dictate what materials are used. It's interesting to note that many professionally installed fire pits aren't actually pits at all. Instead, they are built 16 to 21 inches above ground to prevent drainage issues and to help the fire draw more air.

Follow these steps to install a basic wood-burning fire pit. 

SOURCE: RealStone Granite Products; Engledow Group

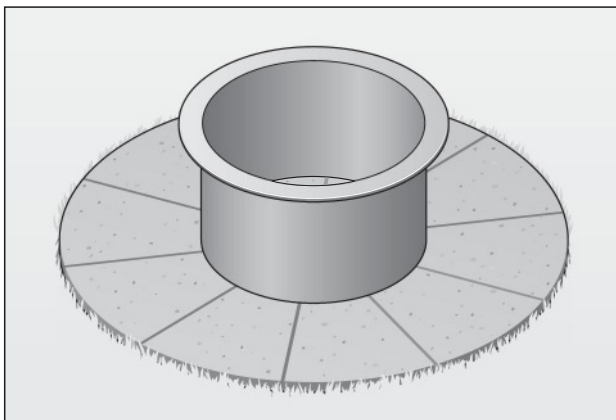
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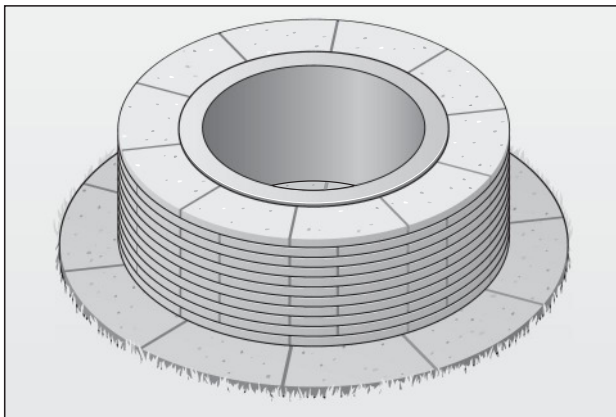
### STEP 1

Mark the outer diameter circle with spray paint. Remove any sod, stones and roots found inside the circle. Dig a circle 5 inches deep, making sure the circle is level. Fill the fire pit with gravel, then level and tamp down.



### STEP 2

Lay fire pit pavers on top of the gravel and place the steel ring in the center of the pavers.



### STEP 3

Lay fire pit stones around the ring, staggering joints on each layer. Use a rubber mallet to secure stones against the fire ring. Add adhesive to the top stones to keep them in place as an additional safety precaution.



## SELLING TIPS

WEED CONTROL WITH  
TURF SAFETY

Dallisgrass weeds in Common Bermudagrass the same day as the first application of Manuscript herbicide.



Common Bermudagrass unharmed by Manuscript surrounded by dead patches of dallisgrass, ten days following application.

**F**inding an herbicide to use for postemergent grassy weed control can be a challenge for lawn care operators (LCOs).

Lane Tredway, technical services manager for Syngenta, says the new Manuscript herbicide, featuring the active ingredient pinoxaden, is going to be a good resource for LCOs, as part of a season-long program, to ensure their clients' lawns are weed-free and they're renewing their programs year after year.

"Manuscript is going to be a welcomed addition to the toolbox," he says.

### TURF SAFETY

A big challenge for turf managers trying to control grassy weeds is to do so without severely injuring the desirable turf. "We want to be able to control those weeds without damaging turf, and Manuscript can do that," Tredway says. "LCOs are impressed with the level of turf safety, which is crucial to lawn care in particular where aesthetics are so important."

Manuscript offers postemergence control of weeds, including crabgrasses and dallisgrass, in Bermudagrass and zoysiagrass.

In 90- to 100-degree heat, many herbicides can exhibit side effects on the desirable turf, says Shawn Emmack, Mid-South U.S. territory manager at

Syngenta. Manuscript doesn't do that.

"You want to be able to apply a product that's going to work on the weeds but not damage the lawn," he says.

### TIMING FLEXIBILITY

Weeds that germinate in early spring, such as crabgrass, get bigger and more difficult to control throughout the summer. Typically, LCOs are limited to only controlling young crabgrass plants. With Manuscript, LCOs can control small plants all the way to mid- to late-summer, Tredway says, adding that Manuscript is a supplement to preemergence herbicide programs or a rescue option for where a preemergent failed or wasn't applied.

"With Manuscript, LCOs aren't limited to controlling weeds in April and May – when the weeds are so small that you can't even see them yet," Tredway says. "When you really need to be able to control them is mid-season when those weeds are big and noticeable, and they start to become more objectionable to the customers."

Sometimes LCOs inherit a yard or acquire a new customer mid-season, and that yard may not have had any herbicide treatment before, so it's full of weeds.

"Now we offer an herbicide that provides good activity on dallisgrass during the summer months," Emmack says. "Prior to Manuscript, for effective control, LCOs had to wait until fall to control dallisgrass."

Using Manuscript as a spot treatment can give those LCOs an opportunity to control some of these hard-to-control

weeds that may have been neglected in the yard before," Emmack adds. "I think the lawn care market is going to see this as a great new tool for their businesses."

Syngenta has done many trials across all segments of the turf industry, including the southern U.S. and the transition zone.

Numerous test trials were conducted in southern U.S. this past summer that showed Manuscript's good foliar absorption, according to Emmack, who oversaw about 10 trials in his region. He noted the product may be applied any time of year, but the best control comes in the spring and fall.

### MAXIMIZE EFFICACY

The herbicide is packaged with Adigor, a surfactant that was specifically developed to enhance the performance of Manuscript. According to Tredway, the surfactant increases and speeds up the absorption of Manuscript's active ingredient into the target weeds. The herbicide is mostly foliar absorbed.

"If LCOs get a rain storm during the day, they can be more certain that enough of the active ingredient has been absorbed before the rainfall washes it off," Tredway says.

Another benefit of the absorption rate is that LCOs don't have to rely on the homeowner to water in Manuscript or wait for natural rainfall to come along.

"LCOs don't need a lot of extra steps to make the product work," Emmack adds.

**#LawnSellingTips**



Lane Tredway



Shawn Emmack



## NEW STUFF

1

**1. TBOS-BT CONTROLLER****COMPANY:** Rain Bird**URL:** RainBird.com

Rain Bird's TBOS-BT, a Bluetooth-enabled, 9-v battery-operated controller, allows users to wirelessly manage irrigation at sites without electrical power via a mobile app for both Android and iOS devices. Designed to resist heat, humidity and harsh environments, the tamper-proof TBOS-BT is rated IP68, meaning it's 100 percent waterproof and fully submersible. Available in one-, two-, four- or six-station models, the TBOS-BT works with Rain Bird's TBOS latching solenoid. A direct rain sensor connection accommodates the Rain Bird RSD rain sensor.

2

**2. PB-8010 BACKPACK BLOWER****COMPANY:** Echo**URL:** Echo-USA.com

The PB-8010 includes a 79.9cc engine, which delivers a performance of 1,071 cubic feet per minute and 211 miles per hour. The blower comes with 3.6-in. diameter tubes with wear rings on the ends, a carbon fiber plastic frame and a fan case. It can cut 1.9 lbs. and weighs 24.5 lbs. Other features include an oversized pleated paper main filter and foam prefilter, tool-less latches, an 83.8-oz fuel tank and a padded backrest and backpack straps.

3

**3. TURF FUEL CLEANSE****COMPANY:** Target Specialty Products**URL:** TargetSpecialty.com

An organic soil remediation system, Turf Fuel Cleanse treats soil displaying signs of localized dry spot (LDS), poor infiltration or poor health, according to the company. Cleanse's two-part system works to attack hydrophobic organic acids responsible for LDS while delivering key enzymes to promote healthy soil biology and root system development. This combination gives treated soil an improved rewetting capability and a more robust biological portfolio, Target Specialty Products said.



4



5



6



## CHECK OUT MORE NEW STUFF ONLINE

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

### 4. SPEEDZONE SOUTHERN EW

**COMPANY:** PBI-Gordon

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

An emulsion-in-water (EW) formulation, SpeedZone Southern EW offers a lower odor profile and lower volatile organic content compared to the original SpeedZone Southern, the manufacturer said. It controls more than 70 tough broadleaf weeds, including dollarweed, ground ivy and spurge. This product is most effective when applied February through April, is rainfast in as little as three hours, allows for reseeding in one week and creates a visual response within 24 hours, killing weeds within seven to 14 days.

### 5. AUTOMOWER 550

**COMPANY:** Husqvarna

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

Husqvarna's Automower 550 (pictured) and 550H models are designed for landscapers, municipalities, commercial business estates and sports clubs. The Automower 550 comes equipped with Fleet Services, Husqvarna's cloud-based fleet management software. It can handle lawns up to 1.25 acres and slopes up to 45 percent. It also features GPS-assisted navigation. Automower 550H includes the same features as the 550 model but is designed to handle lawns that require a higher cutting height of up to 3.6 in.

### 6. MANUSCRIPT HERBICIDE

**COMPANY:** Syngenta

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

Syngenta's Manuscript herbicide is designed to provide postemergence control of weeds, such as crabgrass and dallisgrass, in certain warm-season turf species on residential and commercial lawns, according to the company. Powered by pinoxaden, Manuscript can be used any time weeds are actively growing. The herbicide includes a built-in safener that speeds the metabolism of pinoxaden and allows for effective spot treatments, Syngenta said. It's packaged with Adigor surfactant from Syngenta.



## SAFETYWATCH

### SAFELY TRANSPORT TREES

#### Large shrubs and trees present a challenge.

A large tree with a root ball is heavy. Moving it is not a one-person job or even a two-person job.

Often, you can roll a large tree by the root ball to get it into a planting position, depending on the weight of the root ball. Be careful to protect the branches and leaves. Don't let the tree scrape against the ground. Pay attention to how tall the tree is and make sure you don't roll it into a fence, doorway or other obstruction.

When you're lowering the root ball into the ground, make sure you have enough help and that everyone is aware. Don't put your foot or arms into the hole; the root ball can drop in very quickly and crush whatever is beneath it.

Sometimes, when dropping the root ball into the ground, the tree will spring up and could hit you or others, causing serious injuries. Pay attention.

Trees that are too heavy or awkward to roll are often moved with a tree cart. The cart works through

leverage, but the

same general precautions apply:

- Work with a partner if the root ball is too heavy for you.
- Don't lift with your back.
- Make sure people around you are aware and stay at a safe distance.
- Make sure the tree is securely tied to the lifter.
- Set the tree on level ground and make sure it doesn't tip over.
- Don't use the lifter on soft ground or where the wheels might cause damage.

Your company may plant or move trees that are too big for the lifter. In those cases, you may be working around small tractors, trucks with mechanical lifting arms or other machinery.

#### WATCH AND LEARN

Visit [Landscapemanagement.net/SafetyWatch](https://www.landscapemanagement.net/SafetyWatch) to view a video about safely transporting trees and use it as a training tool for your team.

SOURCE: Greenius



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## FLEET FEAT

Landscape pros discuss  
the benefits of buying  
an entire mower fleet  
from one manufacturer.

▶ PAGE 24





## TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

### SPREAD IT OUT

Turf experts say using slow-release fertilizers over fewer visits can increase profitability.

# New way to fertilize

With advancements in fertilizer technology, LCOs can keep clients' lawns green using less product in fewer visits. So why aren't more of them doing this? BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**D**avid Helt says there is a clear difference between the “old” and “new” ways lawn care operators (LCOs) can manage their fertilizer applications.

“The old way of fertilizer application is based on a premise that the customer correlates value with the number of visits—if they don't see you out there, they think your service is poor, regardless of the quality,” says Helt, president of Target Specialty Products, a provider of pest management and turf and ornamental products, based in

Santa Fe Springs, Calif. “The new way is to utilize longer-release fertilizers that not only feed the turf for a full season but also provide

other benefits in one application. This method enables the LCO to increase overall turf quality while lessening the frequency of visits, lowering overall cost.”

When considering this theory, it seems clear that LCOs should prefer the method that can improve turf quality in fewer visits and at a lower cost. But industry experts agree that this approach is not the most common. Many LCOs continue to use the old way, regardless of advancements in fertilizer technology that can save them time, money and labor.

“The residential lawn care industry, which kicked off in the U.S. in the 1970s, and the way LCOs fertilize hasn't really changed much,” says Eric Miltner, Ph.D., an agronomist for Koch Industries, a fertilizer manufacturer based in Wichita, Kan. “If you think about how many other things have

changed over the last 40 years, there is definitely room for innovation.”

Fertilizer technology has come a long way in the past several years. Manufacturers have developed polymer-coated controlled-release products that break down slowly and feed the turf as needed. With some controlled-release products, as much as 95 percent of the fertilizer can be used by the turf, compared to traditional fertilizers that release the majority of their nutrients so quickly that they wash away or vaporize into the atmosphere before they can be fully absorbed, says Bob Hartman, director of sales and marketing for Knox Fertilizer Co., a specialty plant food manufacturer in Knox, Ind. These new products are effective for three to four months or longer, eliminating the need for the regular four- to six-week visit. New combination products that

*Continued on page 22*



David Helt

## NEWSPEED

### LAWN DOC INVESTS IN PEST

Lawn Doctor acquired an 80 percent equity interest in Mosquito Hunters, a franchisor of mosquito and pest

control services. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. Lawn Doctor franchises also provide mosquito control service under the

brand name Yard Armour. The acquisition furthers Lawn Doctor's strategy of growing organically and via acquisitions of additional home service brands, according to the company.

### REAL GREEN GETS PE BACKER

Real Green Systems, a pest management and lawn care business software company, partnered with Serent Capital, a San Francisco, Calif.-based private equity firm focused on in-

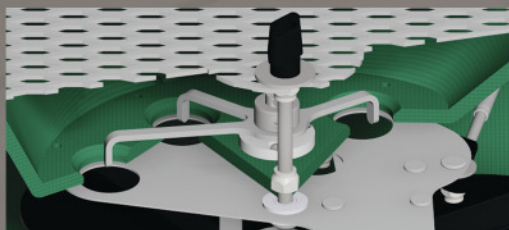
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## TURF+ORNAMENTAL CARE

*Continued from page 20*

include insect control, weed control and fertilizer in one application also reduce the need for frequent visits to the same property.

“Predicable release products will feed the turf over a number of weeks based on the thickness of the polymer coating, so LCOs won’t have to come back every six or eight weeks,” Hartman says. “You get a longer feed without the crazy flush of growth you get when you put down straight minerals. From a sustainability and environmental standpoint, this is really the most effective and efficient use of nitrogen out there.”



Bob Hartman

### CHANGE IS CHALLENGING

So why are LCOs hesitant to use these new fertilizers and change their application methods? Industry experts say there are several reasons.

One is simply that change is difficult. Hartman says many LCOs view their current practices as an efficient way of doing things and don’t realize the benefits they could gain from switching things up. Additionally, customers, particularly residential homeowners, want to know their lawn care provider was on their property before they will pay the bill. Some LCOs can’t wrap their heads around the idea of billing their customers for a season’s worth of work while making fewer visits to the property—even if the turf ends up looking as good as or even better than before.

“The challenge to the industry as a whole is changing the mindset of the LCO and the property owner regarding the frequency of applications and the frequency and cost of billing without sacrificing efficacy,” Hartman says. “It’s a fine line to get people to switch from the way they have always done things, but with labor costs rising and

the availability of good labor decreasing, coupled with fuel price increases, it’s more important than ever to find efficiencies wherever you can.”

Another challenge is the higher price of controlled-release fertilizers.

While LCOs may be able to specify the amount of controlled-release nitrogen in their fertilizer to help control the cost, Hartman says these products cost approximately 30 percent more than their traditional counterparts.

The price difference can be a tough pill for LCOs to swallow.

But paying for a higher-quality product upfront can save money in the long run, Miltner says. Making fewer visits to each property saves money on labor and fuel, and making fewer fertilizer applications decreases wear and tear on equipment, so spreaders last longer. Miltner says new truck regulations and rising freight costs are growing problems facing the industry, and using less product can decrease a company’s freight and shipping expenses. While some of these savings aren’t initially obvious, Miltner says they add up over time to make a big difference.

“If LCOs buy a controlled-release fertilizer that will last three months, it will be more expensive upfront, so there is some sticker shock,” he says. “We are trying to educate the industry not to buy fertilizer based on price per bag, but instead to understand what is in the bag and what they’re paying for. The more expensive bag can ultimately cost less to use.”

Helt says LCOs can utilize the time they used to spend fertilizing to provide profitable add-on services. Tree care, pruning, pest control, bed maintenance, mulching and targeted weed

control are all services that LCOs can upsell to their existing customer base and provide during the four- to six-week visits that were previously reserved for fertilizer applications.

“By following the new way, fertilizer can be applied as little as once per year, and the remaining visits can be used solely to provide add-on services instead of reapplying fertilizer,” Helt says. “This reduces the average length of the visit and increases revenue generation, maximizing profitability. At the end of the season, the labor savings from this model alone typically offset the added cost of the new fertilizer, even if a customer doesn’t want additional services.”

For LCOs interested in approaching their fertilizer applications the new way, Miltner suggests starting with a handful of commercial clients who typically are more concerned with having green, weed-free turf than they are with how many times an LCO visits the property. Full-service landscape companies also can try this fertiliza-

tion approach, since they are on clients’ properties to provide many services at different times throughout the year. Education—for both the LCO and the customer—is another important piece of the puzzle to ensure everyone is on the same page.

“For anyone interested in doing something innovative, be sure to dig into the details and take a hard look under the hood,” Miltner says. “At the outset, it seems that this fertilizer might be more expensive and that this type of program might be difficult to implement operationally. But if you put the pencil to the paper, it is really something that can save resources, save money and produce high-quality turf.”



Eric Miltner

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.





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## MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

# Package deal

Why to consider buying your whole fleet from one manufacturer.

BY LAUREN DOWDLE

**T**here are loyalty programs for everything from hotels to restaurants that reward customers for making purchases. It only makes sense for customers to take advantage of these perks for things they are already going to buy. But what about mower fleet loyalty programs? Should landscapers consider a rewards program or purchasing their entire fleet from one mower manufacturer?

Beyond the equipment purchase, there are no costs to join the programs, and benefits can include equipment discounts, low-rate financing, gift cards and other special deals.

To better understand some of the key benefits of participating in a loyalty program or purchasing an entire fleet from one manufacturer, these landscape professionals and suppliers share their experiences and insights.

### PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

From a manufacturer's standpoint, there are obvious incentives to having a landscaper turn to them for their full mower fleet. To make their company stand out, they look for ways to sweeten the deals and also cover a wider range of equipment.

Tom Vachal, Kubota senior turf product manager, helps break down how Kubota's loyalty program works. Customers can qualify

for the Kubota Fleet Program in two ways—either on the number of units they purchase or the size of their current fleet.

For medium to large landscapers, Kubota allows a customer to qualify based on their existing fleet regardless of brand; the larger their fleet, the greater the discount, he says.

“For the new and/or small landscapers that are just getting into the business, Kubota offers fleet pricing even

for single-unit purchases,” he adds.

Other customer groups also qualify for higher tier levels independent of the units they purchase or their fleet size.

Those include members of the National Hispanic Landscape Alliance (NHCLA), the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) and first responders and veterans who cut grass commercially.

Loyalty program members will not only experience savings on their initial purchase of whole goods but also on accessories, such as mulch kits and grass catchers.

“Another significant benefit for fleet participants is Kubota's EverGo loaner program,” Vachal says. “If for some reason a repair cannot be completed quickly, participating dealers will loan the fleet participant a machine so they can keep cutting until their equipment gets repaired.”

The Kubota Fleet Program also includes leasing, seasonal payments, extended warranties and insurance options. The seasonal payments incentive gives landscapers the option to skip payments in low cash flow months, and the insurance program ensures they don't have unplanned expenses due to an accident or natural disaster.

“Landscapers should consider mower fleet programs any time they need to make a new machine purchase,” he says.

That extends beyond mowers, Vachal says, with some manufacturers offering a loyalty program that covers both mowers and construction equipment. Using a single manufacturer for all equipment allows the landscaper to

*Continued on page 26*

**ACCESSORIZE**  
Kubota's loyalty members also receive deals on mower accessories.



Tom Vachal

## NEWSFEED

### CONSTRUCTVY LAUNCHES

A new business management platform for home service professionals, Constructvy,

launched. Free to access, the app offers quick quoting and invoicing, repeatable templates, scheduling,

payment processing, accounting and consumer loans.

### NEW KUBOTA PRODUCTS

Kubota Tractor Corp. entered the stand-on mower segment and

introduced three new models with electronic fuel injection (EFI) to the Z700 family of gasoline zero-turn mowers at this year's GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky. The SZ Series

stand-ons, including the SZ19-36, SZ22-48 and SZ26-52, will be available at Kubota dealerships in January, and the new EFI models ship to dealerships this month.





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## MOWING+LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

*Continued from page 24*

only interact with one dealer, helping to make the process a little easier.

“The one thing I hear from many landscapers is there is never enough time to travel from place to place trying to get a better deal,” Vachal says. “That travel time takes away from servicing the paying customers.”

### HAVING INSIGHT HEARD

Beyond the cost savings of making multiple mower purchases from one manufacturer, Brandon Gurley, partner at North American Lawn & Landscape, has also experienced the benefits of working with a manufacturer on equipment. Gurley says his company has built a partnership with Husqvarna’s research and development team to test the equipment and give feedback.

His company has offices in Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C., and offers commercial maintenance, irrigation, design/build, retention and pond restoration, stormwater management and tree farm services. With \$16 million in annual revenue, his company has about 75 mowers, more than half of which are from Husqvarna.



Brandon Gurley

Beyond giving input, his firm also benefits from competitive pricing, Gurley adds. Using several mowers from the same manufacturer comes with advantages like being able to interchange parts across different machines and becoming more accustomed to maintaining them.

“We buy mowers every single year in the winter for spring startup,” Gurley says. “We’re certainly looking for the best capital expenditure—how best we can use our funds for our fleet.”

When it comes to adding mowers to their fleet, Gurley encourages landscapers to look at the history of the equipment, ask their crews what they like to use, read reviews and, lastly, look at the cost.

### DEALER DIFFERENCE

For Adam Linnemann, founder and president of Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping, buying all his mowers from the same manufacturer came down to the benefits and relationships he’d built with his dealer.

The firm has 11 mowers in its fleet—all John Deere. Linnemann takes part in the John Deere Rewards loyalty program, which gives his company equipment discounts, special financing, discounted parts, giveaways and other perks.

Located in Columbia, Ill., Linnemann Lawn Care & Landscaping has more than \$1 million in annual revenue



and offers design/build, maintenance, fertilization and weed control, hardscaping, landscape lighting, Christmas lighting and snow/ice removal services. Its customers are 70 percent residential and 30 percent commercial. Linnemann also offers consulting as The Green Executive.


To be eligible for John Deere Rewards, landscapers have to make two or more qualifying purchases and be a member of affiliates like the NHLA or NALP; be a SiteOne Landscape Supply customer or employee; be a Farm Bureau member; or be in the military. This type of eligibility structure is common for manufacturers across the landscape industry.

One of the perks that goes along with using John Deere and Linnemann’s dealer, Nobbe and Co., is the NeverStop program that includes benefits like offering parts on-site, mobile service, professional landscape contractor priority service and after-hours parts and service (open until 8 p.m.).

Linnemann says having a program and dealer he can rely on has been a main benefit of sticking with one manufacturer. It also helps reduce downtime.

He says it’s important for landscapers to find a dealership they know and trust and also one that understands the industry. “This is imperative to your company’s success,” Linnemann says. “Next, demo all the brands and make sure the equipment is the best choice for your company, your team—because they are the ones using it daily—and your clients’ properties.”

Linnemann adds that it’s beneficial to work with an equipment manufacturer that extends fleet discounts to other equipment divisions.

“We own John Deere compact track loaders and mini excavators, and the fleet discount extends to these pieces of equipment, as well,” he says. 



Adam Linnemann

Dowdle is a freelance writer based in Nashville.





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### FARM FRESH

Loving's 1,000-acre sod farm operation allows the company to control the material's cost and quality.

# The ultimate mission

With a focus on home builder business, Mike Haynes' main goal is for his fast-growing company to make a positive impact.

BY EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**W**hen Mike Haynes began mowing his neighbors' lawns in middle school for extra spending money, he didn't exactly have a passion for cutting grass. But fast-forward 20 years and Haynes will tell you that, today, passion is the main driver behind nearly every aspect of his landscape company. Even its name, Loving, was inspired by the care, commitment and joy Haynes feels is necessary to run a successful business that puts its people first.

"Our name comes from a place of passion and love," says Haynes, president of the nearly \$35-million company headquartered in Charlotte, N.C. "We believe that our ultimate mission is to create a positive impact and to be a place that is filled with love."

Loving (recently rebranded from The Loving Cos.) was established in 2004 and provides 84 percent new home build landscape installations and outdoor living construction

services. The other 16 percent comes from a sod farming operation that provides the sod Loving uses on its new landscape installations. The company serves a large portion of the Southeast, including parts of Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Texas.

"We will continue to expand our footprint," Haynes says. "Although there is a lot of volume in what we do, there are only a few select services we provide. We don't want to perfect everything—we want to take what we do, have a laser focus on growing the people and process that allow us to do it well, then integrate it into expansion market opportunities."

While other companies struggled during the Great Recession, Loving flourished. As a small, up-and-coming business at the time, Haynes says the company was able to recruit talented employees who had been laid off elsewhere. Despite the downturn, Charlotte remained a growing city that attracted people looking for new jobs and opportunities, so new homes were still being built. In 2009, Haynes was contacted by home building company Pulte Homes to install hardscapes at new home sites, since Loving was doing so much work directly for Pulte's home buyers post-close. Haynes says this opportunity was a turning point for the company.

"We had never worked with a home builder before, but we decided to give it a try, and that's when the builder business took off," Haynes says.

Loving now works with more than a dozen new home builders to provide landscape and outdoor living services. With all these new landscape installations comes the need for sod—a staggering 30 million square feet of it this year alone. About three and a half years ago, Haynes realized that supplying the sod themselves would eliminate problems with quality and



Mike Haynes

## NEWSPEED

### NEW CAT EXCAVATORS

Caterpillar expanded its Next Generation mini hydraulic excavator portfolio with the

addition of six new models in the 7- to 10-ton category. The machines range in maximum operating

weight from 18,152 to 22,447 pounds and in standard dig depths from 13 feet, 5 inches to 17 feet.

**HNA AWARDS TOP PROJECTS**  
Hardscape North

America (HNA) honored top hardscape projects in the U.S. and Canada during an awards ceremony at the 2018 HNA trade show at the Kentucky Exposition Center in

Louisville, Ky. Winners were recognized in 18 categories, and 18 honorable mentions were named in 17 categories. A record number of 155 entries were received this year.



Although its goal isn't growth for growth's sake, Loving was ranked the fastest-growing firm on the 2018 LM150 list.



supply shortages, and Loving's sod farming operation was born. The farm boasts just more than 1,000 acres of production and allows Loving to control the quality, supply and cost.

"To be in control of the sod, which is the main driver in every landscape installation, has been huge," Haynes says. "We own the farming aspect as well as the installation aspect, so we can align the two to ensure a super fresh product. We know that on, say, Thursday morning we will be installing lot 175, so the day before we are at the farm cutting it. It's allowed quality and efficiency that we believe are second to none."

In October, Loving introduced its newest endeavor: a centralized distribution center for all of its hardscape and outdoor living installation products. Based in Orangeburg, S.C., the facility will also manufacture some of the company's hardscape materials, including all concrete precast products used in outdoor living installations. Like the sod farm, Haynes says this operation will allow the company to control the quality and availability of much of its hardscape materials. In conjunction with the distribution center's roll out, Loving recently announced a partnership with Lennar Homes, one of the nation's largest home builders, to begin installing its proprietary outdoor grilling islands and fireplaces in every home it builds in select U.S. markets.

"Just like granite has become pretty standard for new home buyers, we think we can do the same with outdoor living spaces," Haynes says. "This will help set the stage for other builders to follow and to make outdoor living more attainable for home buyers. Our end goal is to make outdoor living affordable and available to nearly every new home buyer in America."

## OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

While the sky seems to be the limit for Haynes and his company, there have been some challenges along the way. Finding quality labor has been difficult at times, but Haynes says Loving has done its best to overcome this obstacle by creating an environment that people want to work in. These people include not only green industry laborers, but also technology and marketing experts, graphic designers, dispatchers and customer service representatives. Haynes says the company offers above industry standard pay, a companywide bonus

system and an employee assistance program for team members who find themselves in difficult situations. Haynes is transparent with his team members and wants them to know how the company is faring financially and otherwise. In addition, 10 percent of all company profits are donated to local community outreach programs that help people in need.


"Our team is the most important piece of the puzzle," Haynes says. "We have a desire to make each and every employee the best version of themselves."

Loving's workforce grew by nearly 25 percent over the past year to a total of 135 full-time employees, which Haynes says was a critical but difficult task. The company places a heavy focus on minimizing turnover and recruiting and has recently become active on social media, particularly LinkedIn. Haynes says it is a great platform on which to be "goofy and unfiltered" and provide a view into the company culture. Loving's approach includes conducting parody interviews, highlighting the work of specific employees and sharing community outreach efforts.

"Social media isn't something we have always participated in, but we understand it's a good tool to recruit new people and to attract and engage with different demographics," Haynes says. "We are very intentional about who we bring on board and work hard to create a real company culture. It's not perfect, but it's real."

Loving was ranked the fastest-growing company on the 2018 LM150 list, reporting 119 percent annual growth from 2016 to 2017, but Haynes says being the fastest-growing firm is not something the company set out to be. Still, growth is a key component of success when done intentionally, strategically and for the right reasons.

"We want to grow but we don't want to just grow for the sake of growing," Haynes says. "We want to make sure we're growing a profitable and sustainable model that is known for quality service, great products and great value."

"Our ultimate goal is not simply revenue growth," he adds. "That is a byproduct that allows us to do our ultimate mission, which is to make a positive impact." 

Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



# Products in the pipeline

Get a sneak peek at a few products to be featured at the Irrigation Show, Dec. 3-7, in Long Beach, Calif.



### ← PRO-LC CONTROLLER

COMPANY: K-Rain Manufacturing

URL: [KRain.com](http://KRain.com)

K-Rain's Pro-LC controller includes a full-program display that highlights watering days, number of start days, number of stations and any special programming; permanent memory, which saves program settings during power outages; a valve locate feature that aids in locating buried valves; short circuit protection, which identifies and isolates stations while the remaining program continues; and rain/freeze sensor compatibility.

### HCC CONTROLLER →

COMPANY: Hunter Industries

URL: [HunterIndustries.com](http://HunterIndustries.com)

The next-generation Hydrowise Commercial Controller (HCC) brings the Wi-Fi-based irrigation management capabilities of the Hydrowise platform to high-end residential, commercial and public sector projects. The HCC can control up to 54 zones and operate any two stations simultaneously. The controller's modular design allows for rapid expandability with the same 4-, 8- and 22-station output modules as the ICC2. Engineered with a prewired SmartPort, the HCC is also compatible with Hunter's Roam and Roam XL remotes, allowing for fast and reliable manual operation in the field from long-range distances without the need for a smartphone.



*Continued on page 32*

## NEWSFEED

### NEW EWING LOCATION

Ewing Irrigation & Landscape Supply has opened its second location in New Jersey in

the city of Tinton Falls. Ewing Tinton Falls is the fourth location the national, family-owned supplier has opened in

the northeast/mid-Atlantic region this year.

### IA NOMINATION OPEN

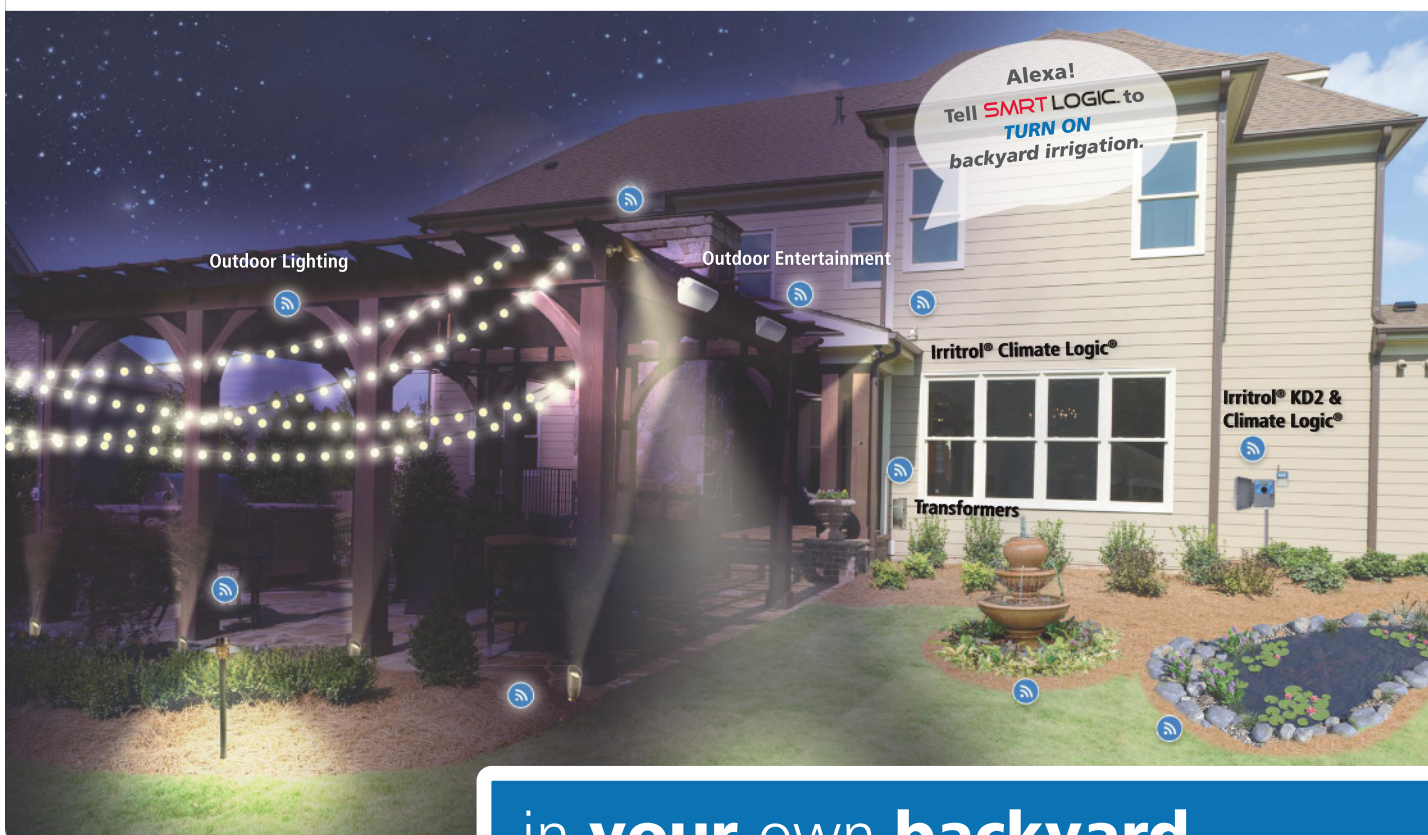
The Irrigation Association and Irrigation Foundation opened the nomination process

for the 2019 awards program. These awards recognize individuals and projects that set the standard for making significant contributions to the advancement of the irrigation

industry. Nominations for each award will be open through Jan. 31, 2019. Winners will be announced on Smart Irrigation Month's Technology Tuesday on July 9.



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## IRRIGATION+WATER MANAGEMENT

Continued from page 30

### ESP-9V CONTROLLER →

**COMPANY:** Rain Bird

**URL:** RainBird.com

Available in one-, two-, four- and six-zone models with up to six start times and four watering-day cycles per zone, the ESP-9V battery-operated controller provides reliable irrigation control at sites without AC power, Rain Bird said. It's IP68 rated against dust and water intrusion in the harshest conditions. The controller is rated for two years of life on two 9-v batteries.



### ← EVOLUTION SERIES CONTROLLER

**COMPANY:** The Toro Co.

**URL:** Toro.com

Compatible with Google and Amazon Alexa, Toro's Evolution Controller with Smart Logic can be programmed in minutes using an easy-to-understand interface. End users can upload system updates and programming data through the USB port and pair wireless add-on accessories, such as the ET Weather Sensor or Precision Soil Sensor. SMRT Logic allows remote control of irrigation, lighting and other features from anywhere through a smartphone, tablet or computer.



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# GET A



Grapids Irrigation  
CEO Aaron Katerberg



# GRIP

FOR GRAPIDS IRRIGATION CEO AARON KATERBERG, SUCCESS MEANS GETTING A HANDLE ON HIS STRENGTHS, SOLID SYSTEMS AND THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

Aaron Katerberg didn't set out to be an irrigator. He's been a tennis pro, pursued a master's degree in divinity and climbed Mount Kilimanjaro.

After college, he tried working for his father's irrigation business, Grand Rapids, Mich.-based Grapids Irrigation, and that first stint didn't pan out. A few years later, he finally made peace with the fact that irrigation runs in his blood, and he decided to dive back into the family business.

In 2002, when the company's revenue was under \$1 million, he began buying into the company. He has now been running Grapids for six years.

As a third-generation irrigator and second-generation owner of the company, Katerberg has set his sights on increasing Grapids' revenue from \$2 million to \$6 million over the next 10 years. He is adopting a new way of running his business and assembling the right team.

"I have no interest in owning a yacht—those things just aren't important to me," Katerberg says, explaining his motivation to grow Grapids. "And I have all the backpacking equipment I need. I'd rather see my people have more opportunity and connection with what we're doing."

## GAINING TRACTION

Four years ago, Katerberg was looking for a way to grow his company when David Crary, owner of Hindsite Software in Minneapolis, recommended he read "Traction" by Gino Wickman, which outlined the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS).

The EOS identifies six key organizational attributes: vision, people, data, issues, process and traction. The system requires that a company:

- Create a clear vision of its targets and goals;
- Hire the right people and ensure they are in the right seats within the company;
- Understand its data and metrics;
- Solve issues that arise; and
- Develop and execute core processes that allow the business to run smoothly.

Traction, the final attribute, occurs when the company turns its  
*Continued on page 36*

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** Grapids Irrigation

**HEADQUARTERS:** Grand Rapids, Mich., one satellite office in Kalamazoo, Mich.

**FOUNDED:** 1986

**REVENUE:** \$2.6 million (projected for 2018)

**SERVICE MIX:** 100% irrigation

**CLIENT MIX:** Construction: 50% commercial, 50% residential; Service: 90% residential, 10% commercial.



## COVER STORY

*Continued from page 35*

vision into actual results—through setting and achieving measurable priorities and monitoring that the company is on track.

After reading “Traction,” Katerberg was hooked. “It was my shiny object at the moment. I made all my people read it,” he says. The company integrated the lessons of the book for six months on its own before hiring an EOS consultant, called an implementer, who helps bring EOS principles into companies.

It was a big financial decision to take the plunge and work with Jim Coyle of Nexus Business Solutions. The engagement was a two-year process, but only for 10 days of hands-on time over those two years—at a cost of \$50,000. “For a small company, that’s like hiring a new employee for 10 days,” Katerberg says.

Despite the cost, Katerberg says implementing EOS was a game-changer because Grapids needed some direction. “I know some people who have (implemented EOS on their own) and they have some good systems for that online too, but I just felt like I wasn’t the person to do it,” he says.

According to Katerberg, EOS has gotten everyone on the same page.



### TAKING A PULSE

From left: Sales Manager Randy Small, Katerberg, Tiscareno, Business Manager Christina Edsall and Sullivan discuss goals in a weekly meeting.

“That’s why they call it ‘traction’—the wheels are all pulling in the same direction,” he says. “We all know what our purpose is, who we’re looking for employee-wise, we know who’s not stepping up because we’re measuring it, we all know where our struggles are—you can ask any member of my leadership team.”

The new system has created an improved environment at Grapids, allowing team members to have more opportunity to succeed on their own with less micromanagement, Katerberg says.

The changes also have freed up more time for the Grapids owner to be the visionary for the company and focus on projects and initiatives that are important to him—such as

planning to climb Mount Aconcagua in South America in 2019 to raise money for the Lifewater charity. The money will provide clean water and sanitation training in countries such as Cambodia and Uganda.

“For me, personally, I feel like I’m in the right seat for the first time in my career,” Katerberg says. “It’s a really good feeling.”

### THE INTEGRATOR

For Katerberg to get into the right seat—the visionary role of president/CEO—he had to fill the integrator role, also known as the general manager or COO.

Ideally, the visionary and the integrator should have a yin-and-yang type of relationship, Katerberg says. “I’m the scatterbrained person who brings ideas like climbing mountains to raise money,” he admits. “The integrator is the one who keeps me from driving people crazy with new ideas, filters them and brings things down to earth that are actually functional—the one who makes things happen.”

Finding someone to fill the integrator role wouldn’t come cheap, according to his research, which showed that integrators command a salary in the range of \$150,000 to \$300,000, depending on the industry. That’s a high-ticket number, which is why \$500,000 companies typically don’t hire one, says Katerberg.

Katerberg and his team agreed that the company would be stuck at the \$2 million mark without someone



### DREAM TEAM

From left: Grapids Operations Manager Tony Tiscareno, CEO Aaron Katerberg and General Manager Matthew Sullivan.



to create structure and help move the company to the next level.

He went outside his organization to find his integrator, and after about three years of searching for the right person, he met Matthew Sullivan, whom he hired in April, through a mutual business acquaintance.

Sullivan's background includes a management role at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, where he became a group rental manager, overseeing more than 20 locations and 100 employees on the western side of Michigan. He ran his own company in leadership and management development training for a few years and developed a sales and marketing strategy for an automotive parts wholesale company, before going into workforce management for Fortune 500 companies.

Sullivan credits the EOS one-page plan with driving organizations to identify 10-year, three-year and one-year goals; the company's purpose; its differentiator; and its marketing plan.



#### FAMILY BUSINESS

Aaron Katerberg (left), with his father, Will Katerberg, the original owner of Grapids Irrigation in 1987.

The goals are broken down into "rocks" or 90-day priorities meant to keep the company on track. The team reviews goals, rocks and any issues in a

scheduled set of meetings. Key performance indicators are listed on a scorecard, which is a weekly report of the main numbers in the business.

Katerberg says the scorecard in particular has been a valuable tool. "I could get stuck on Mount Aconcagua next year, and they could email me that scorecard, and I can know exactly how the company is doing," he says.

In addition to EOS, Grapids also uses some facets of the Great Game of Business concept, from the book of the same name by Jack Stack and Bo Burlingham. Sullivan says the value of the Great Game of Business is it's a bottom-up

*Continued on page 40*

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### MAKING THE CLIMB

In 2017, Katerberg climbed Mount Kilimanjaro and raised more than \$9,000 for Lifewater, which helps communities in need of clean water.

**“THE WHEELS ARE ALL PULLING IN THE SAME DIRECTION...WE KNOW WHAT OUR PURPOSE IS, WE KNOW WHAT OUR STRUGGLES ARE.”**

—AARON KATERBERG, GRAPIDS IRRIGATION OWNER AND CEO

*Continued from page 37*

system, geared toward educating employees about the numbers part of the company's business. It opens the company's finances to the staff, so they know where money is going.

“It allows people into the discussion of ‘If this is what we want to accomplish, what can we do to make a difference?’” Sullivan says, “which creates a line of sight to how they can affect the bottom line.”

EOS and the Great Game of Business are systems that create accountability, but discipline is really the key to making these systems work and growing the business, Sullivan says. “It's great that you can have this format and the framework, but how disciplined you are is really the difference maker,” he says.

### THE HEART

While Sullivan keeps the EOS system running and ensures Katerberg and the teams are disciplined and accountable to the process, there's a third person who holds the company together: Operations Manager Tony Tiscareno.

“He's my rock, my right hand,” Katerberg says.

“There's no doubt about it, Tony is the guy who is running this company,” Sullivan says. “He deserves a hell of a lot of credit for any success that we're having, have had and will have in the future.”

Tiscareno started working for Grapids in 1998 when Will Katerberg, Aaron's father, hired him as a laborer. Over the years, he worked his way up through the ranks to foreman, remodel manager, service tech and

field supervisor. As Grapids' operations manager, he runs the install and service department of the business.

Tiscareno says it's the Katerberg family's values that attracted him to the company and the quality that has kept him there for the last 20 years.

“They really focus on their customers,” he says. “More than money, it's their name. That appealed to me and the way I think—be honest with people.”

Tiscareno carries that honest approach to the team members he manages, and it helps him assemble crews that work well together.

“I want to make sure I'm thinking the way they're thinking,” he says. “I know their personalities, and then I can see what type of job a technician is better for and put together good crews.”



"That's the challenge, making sure everyone's happy. I always focus a lot on my guys and try to help them with whatever they need," he says.

The Grapids team consists of 13 technicians, two install crews of two to three men and a remodeling crew. The remodeling crew is responsible for midsize jobs such as working around new patios or pools, rather than full installations or small service calls. The company also runs another small branch in Kalamazoo, Mich., an hour away from Grand Rapids.

Staying updated with the latest technology has been one major change Tiscareno has seen since Aaron Katerberg took over from his father.

The company uses Hindsite Software, which he says has been easy to use, even for less tech-savvy crew members. The crews clock in and out via smartphone, and all work orders are done by smartphone and synced to technicians' devices in the field.

As far as irrigation equipment, he says Grapids used to be loyal to one brand, but now it tries to source what it considers the best tools in the market, including K-Rain sprinkler heads, Hunter controllers, Irritrol valves and Toro irrigation equipment. The company offers three levels of irrigation systems: premier, standard and economy.

Tiscareno says honesty is a major part of his success as an irrigator. "You're putting things in the ground and no one sees them," he says. "You've got to be honest with yourself and with your customers."

Education also is a major focus for Tiscareno, who holds training sessions once a week for the irrigation technicians on design and new products, such as water and moisture sensors.

The trainings sometimes cover non-irrigation-related subjects, such as the ins and outs of finances

#### TALKING IT OUT

The EOS system has allowed for better communication all across Grapids Irrigation, says Aaron Katerberg.



and educating employees on why it might not be a good idea to have a personal credit card. "I want them to be successful, too," Tiscareno says. "Most of the time it's about irrigation, but this is one example, I want them to be all right."

#### ENVISIONING SUCCESS

Between Katerberg, Sullivan, Tiscareno and the other members of the leadership team, the company is poised for success. The company's

projected revenue for 2018 is \$2.6 million, but the team is thinking bigger.

"We talk now as if we were a \$6-million company," says Katerberg. "That's our 10-year goal—and financially, we're on track with that. From now until then, we're continuing to find the base and find good technicians and field staff to tweak our processes." 📱

#### WEB EXTRA

Learn more about Aaron Katerberg's plan to climb Mount Aconcagua in 2019 to raise money for those in need of clean water in the Web Extras section at [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

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➤ PAGE 46



# Want to borrow money? What a banker looks for



**BY DANIEL GORDON**

The author is a CPA who caters to landscape and lawn care firms. Reach him at [dan@turfbooks.com](mailto:dan@turfbooks.com).

**A**s your company grows, you may look for money to buy vehicles, equipment and inventory. Applying for credit can be frustrating. The first place you'll probably look is a bank. Bankers' first priority is to protect their loan portfolios and earn a competitive return on their loans, so you need to give them many reasons to feel comfortable with you as a borrower.

All business loan applications have some basic information in common. Here are some universal questions: Why are you applying for the loan? Who will be managing the business? What will you use the funds for? What assets do you need to purchase? What is your personal background?

Once you submit the application, the bank will ask for a loan package. The following items are usually required in the loan package:

- **Owner's personal net worth statement.** The bank will usually give you a template to present the information. It may be a good idea to have your CPA complete this form.
- **Three years prior personal and business tax returns.** Most businesses are taxed as either partnerships (including LLCs) or corporations (S Corp. or C Corp.) and have tax returns that are separate and distinct from the personal tax returns of their owners. The bank will require a signed copy from each year. In a few cases, a business may be taxed as a sole proprietorship or a single member LLC. In this case, the personal tax return contains the profit and loss statement of the business on the Schedule C form. Again,



the bank will require signed copies of these returns.

- **Most recent profit/loss and balance sheet.** If you're using QuickBooks, these reports are easy to produce. Again, it's a good idea to have a CPA look at the interim reports prior to submission.
- **Three-year budget.** The main purpose for a budget is for the banker to determine if you are serious about your business. While the budget may or may not come to fruition, all well-run businesses budget for the future.
- **Most current A/R, A/P aging reports.** The accounts receivable reports will come from your dispatch program or general ledger program and should be aged 30, 60, 90 days. The accounts payable reports also will come from your general ledger program and should also be aged.


The banker will use these documents to assess risk. He will perform a ratio analysis. Important ratios include interest coverage, profitability and return on investment. In this analysis, he is determining if you are creditworthy, how much debt you can afford and what collateral is available to secure the credit. The most important concepts here are earnings before interest,

taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) and equity.

Most banks will require EBITDA to be at least 1.25 times debt service (all payments for all debt) and will provide financing up to a monthly payment that will coincide with this payment amount.

Equity on your balance sheet would include all assets minus all liabilities. Equity should be positive. In most instances, since assets are recorded at purchased value rather than fair market value, an appraisal can be done on existing assets. If the market value of assets minus liabilities is positive, your company may be healthier than what your balance sheet depicts.

The bank will require you to submit periodic financial information verifying that your ratios are within the terms of the loan or credit line agreement. If your scores fall below the covenants described in the loan document, you can be put on a "watch list" whereby the bank will not lend you any more money or allow you to draw on your credit line. In an extreme situation, the bank has the right to call the loan. Banks try not to let a problem get to this point, but these options are open to them. So, prior to establishing a banking relationship, it's a good idea to employ the services of a competent CPA.

A strong banking relationship is vital to growing a business. Proper planning and financial management are the keys to a healthy relationship. Make sure you can meet the terms of the agreement and treat the relationship as one of the most important factors in your success as a growing business. 



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# 5 things that will change the way we do business

**I**n my business lifetime, I've experienced many innovations that changed the way I worked: the copier (yes, I'm that old), the computer, the laptop, the Internet, the cell phone and the smartphone. These technologies were all once considered groundbreaking and are now the norm.

In the five short years since I started a technology company, I can see firsthand just how quickly things change. As a result, I have to think about what will change so my company doesn't get left behind. Therefore, I want to share some thoughts on the forces that will change the way we do business in our industry. Each is important and will make us more efficient and professional.

## 1 Millennials

They are changing the workplace just as the boomers did two generations ago. They want better tools and better pay, and they will work for companies that provide those things. To attract and retain millennials, you need to embrace mobile software applications so they can manage more and you can pay them more. I am willing to bet that within the next

few years, the best account managers will be paid \$100,000 per year.

## 2 Business and artificial intelligence

There are software applications that exist right now that do more than produce management reports. These applications interpret reports and make recommendations. In the future, there will be applications that alert you to problems and suggest solutions. For example, instead of just a P/L statement from your software, you may get an alert that your hourly labor bid rate is lower than your actual pay rate, and it will recommend (and perhaps make) updates to your estimating system.

## 3 The cloud

The cloud facilitates the integration of systems that do not currently "talk" to each other. Consider this example: Your crew uses their phones to inform the shop about an equipment problem. The shop "sees" the information and references an online repair manual that notifies a dealer that you need a part. After the repair has been made and recorded, all that information is visible to the manufacturer, who can then use it to address design and training issues.



**BY KEVIN KEHOE**


The author is managing partner of The Aspire Software Co. Reach him at [kevin.kehoe@youraspire.com](mailto:kevin.kehoe@youraspire.com).

## 4 Uber

This company made an entire industry obsolete. No longer do you worry about when your ride will arrive, who the driver might be and how much it will cost. You know right now. Apply that same concept to something as simple as irrigation repair services. Your customer or crew leader identifies an issue, it gets assigned to the closest technician, the information goes to the customer, the tech completes the service, the invoice and notes are generated and sent to the customer and it gets paid online.

## 5 Amazon

With Amazon, you get many choices, competitive prices and easy ordering and delivery. This same marketplace concept will work for our industry. Imagine your estimating and purchasing software will sync with a virtual marketplace. You complete your project estimate, which integrates with a purchasing application that releases it to the marketplace where material and equipment vendors bid on it. Next, prices are confirmed, the order is processed and money exchanges hands—a streamlined process that reduces mistakes and paper, all while making your people more productive.

These forces and technologies are shaping where our industry needs to—and will—go. They will change the way we do business. The result is good for everyone: the customer, your company and your suppliers and vendors. In five years, these groundbreaking forces and technologies will be the norm. Don't get left behind. 



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# BACKSTORY

INTERVIEW BY ABBY HART



## Troy Clogg

**OWNER AND SALES CONSULTANT  
TROY CLOGG LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATES  
WIXOM, MICH.**

### EDUCATION

North Farmington High School  
Farmington Hills, Mich.  
Class of 1981

Lawrence Technological University  
Architecture  
Southfield, Mich.  
1981-1983

Ferris State University  
Business  
Big Rapids, Mich.  
1983-1984

### WORK EXPERIENCE

**1978-1980**

Mr. Fables, The Nugget, Pizza Hut  
Busboy  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

**1980-1988**

Troy Clogg Lawn & Snow Service  
Owner and President  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

**1988-1998**

Troy Clogg, Inc.  
Owner and Sales  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

**1998-present**

Troy Clogg Landscape Associates  
Owner and Sales Consultant  
Wixom, Mich.



Clogg is involved with Real Men Wear Pink, an organization that raises money for the American Cancer Society. "I've got pink on every day. We've also got our hot pink deicer—it's a pink salt that we use, and the money raised goes to local families who have been affected by a breast cancer diagnosis."

"From these jobs, I learned about getting along with people and having a service-minded mentality—the better you take care of people, the more successful you feel."

"I spend most of my time creating additional leaders. I'm at the stage of the business where I'm trying to replace myself. My full-time job is building and educating the bench and also trying to educate the marketplace about the value of landscaping labor, so people understand how much the service should cost."

On a family vacation in May 2015 in Galway, Ireland. From left: Ryan, Jack, Troy, Linda, Kelsey and Dan.

"The harder I worked, the more money I could make, which led me to my first stages of freedom—buying my first houses, buying the shop, actually taking control of my own life."

"Meeting with Sen. Gary Peters of Michigan (center, in the black suit) and other Michigan snow contractors talking about the need to pass the Lawsuit Abuse Reduction Act. This was just one of 60 meetings that day."



**CLOGG'S WORDS OF WISDOM** "We can either have control or trust, but we can't have both. There is no secret sauce to any of these businesses. People who hide behind their control because they don't trust—they limit themselves, and they limit their ability." • "Be anticipatory, not reactive. You have to see into the future, make the best plan you can and be totally cool with failure or hearing 'no.'" • "If you line things up that you really want to chase that you think belong in your life, then just peck away at it. And what you swing and miss at, you swing and miss at, but at least you tried it because it was important to you."



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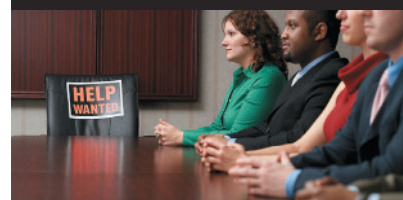
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## RESOURCES

[ Coming in December ]

### LM Industry Pulse

Next month we'll dig into the landscape industry's current market conditions in our annual **LM Industry Pulse** report, based on our research and extensive interviews with landscape professionals. Keep an eye out for results in print in our December issue and online throughout the entire month.



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# GROW WITH GRUNDER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

The author is president and CEO of Grunder Landscaping Co. and The Grow Group, based in Dayton, Ohio. Reach him at [marty@growgroupinc.com](mailto:marty@growgroupinc.com).



## 4 steps for planning to succeed

**I**n a class I took years ago at Aileron, a learning center for entrepreneurs, the facilitator told us again and again, “All planning is good.” He said it so frequently I wrote it down in my notebook and underlined it, not realizing at the time how important this simple bit of advice would prove. It’s now 20 years later, and while the older I get, the less I relate to absolutes, this is one I keep going back to. Why? Because, simply put, planning improves your chances for success.

And yet many companies in our industry don’t do it enough. Like entrepreneurs the world over, we tend to prize action over deliberation. We often feel like there’s not enough time in the day to do all that we need to. We sacrifice the future for the immediate and then never get ahead.

So do your future a favor by taking some time this month to think about what you want to accomplish next year and formulate a plan. Here are four steps to help you get started.

**1 Review the past year.** What went well? What didn’t? Which jobs were the most profitable and which ones were losers? Last month I shared with you the efforts we were taking at Grunder Landscaping Co. to retain valued clients, but just as important is figuring out which clients you don’t want to work with again. Conventional wisdom tells us the customer is always right, but that doesn’t mean you’re always right for the customer. Did you have clients in 2018 who didn’t pay their

“We sacrifice the future for the immediate and then never get ahead. So do your future a favor by taking some time this month to think about what you want to accomplish next year and formulate a plan.”

invoices on time, who didn’t treat your crews with respect or who were never satisfied? Is it worth it for you to continue working with them? In my experience, it’s not.

Make note of all these factors—what went well and what didn’t, your profits and losses, good clients and bad—and plan for what your company will do more of, less of or differently next year to grow.

**2 Set goals for yourself.** What do you need to accomplish in 2019 for you to feel successful? It’s obviously crucial for your company to have a revenue goal you’re shooting for, but it’s also important to think beyond that number. How can you get better as a leader? How can you improve your company culture? How can you develop your people?

Write down your goals and keep them someplace where they’ll always be nearby, whether it’s in a journal, on an app on your phone or on a piece of paper you tack to the wall above your desk. And then tell someone about them—your significant other, a mentor, a friend or even your team if it’s appropriate. Sharing your goals with others helps make you

accountable for them and can keep you motivated to keep going when the going gets tough.

**3 Break your goals down into steps.** Now that you’re officially committed, look at your goals and break down each one into steps. For example, if your goal is to improve as a leader, identify three actions you’ll take in 2019 that will help get you there, whether it’s reading a book on the subject, scheduling one-on-one meetings with your team members or attending an industry educational event like the annual GROW! Conference I help organize every year.

**4 Get to work!** The best cure for analysis paralysis is action. Don’t wait for the change of the calendar year to get better. Start today, start this hour, start now. This time next year, you’ll be glad you did.

See you next month! 

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