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Give your customers the instant satisfaction they desire.

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continued from page 40

give the client warning that a future phase of the landscape they want would not meet requirements.”

Perhaps the biggest benefit of a master plan is that it shows prospective clients what is possible. On the design, they can see how everything is going to tie in with the various parts of a landscape. This not only addresses clients’ true hopes for their landscape, it can also cement your company’s long-term relationship with them.

“A master plan is an opportunity for the designer to be much more creative,” Doesburg says. “It’s an opportunity to stretch the client’s thought pattern not necessarily their budget, but it can. It allows you to show clients how ideas relate. Instead of a pool, you might find out they really want an overhead structure and an outdoor kitchen. The master plan shows them how all their outdoor spaces and uses can function together.”

continued on page 44

MASTERING MAINTENANCE

A master plan can be used to show the client what it is they really want in a landscape, but it can also help you show them what they don’t want to maintain. A project, built in phases over a number of years, is a great repeating advertisement for your company. However, a big project that the client can’t maintain becomes an eyesore and reflects poorly on your company.

“It helps to create a master plan for plantings,” says Rick Doesburg, president of Thornton Landscape, Maineville, OH. “Even if the client has the money to do a big project at once, it’s a good idea to break them in slowly.”

The client may soon discover that what they initially wanted would be too much for them to maintain. Thornton offers horticultural services to its design-build clients, but makes sure the client knows what kind of maintenance commitment they’re getting into from the outset.

“There’s nothing worse than designing a beautiful plan that the client can’t maintain themselves or afford to have maintained,” Doesburg says. “We didn’t do our job if we presented a master design they can’t take care of.”

Maintenance is also on the mind of Miles Kuperus, president of Farmside Landscape & Design in Wantage, NJ, when creating a master plan. His company provides turf care, maintenance and plant health care services, in addition to design-build services.

“We do a high level of design detail on construction projects,” he says. “If the customer doesn’t understand what the maintenance cost is, then they may not maintain it. The project will lose their design intent in two or three years if it’s not taken care of.”

When not fully explained, high-maintenance designs can destroy the relationships and multi-phase projects that master plans can help create.

“You’ve got to ensure you’re doing something for them that’s going to reach its potential at a later date,” says Doesburg.
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A master plan is an opportunity for the designer to be much more creative.

— Rick Doesburg, THORNTON LANDSCAPE
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Cub Cadet's new 4x4 Utility Vehicles are rugged and hard working on the job and smooth and fun-loving off-road. They come with a choice of 20-hp Kohler V-Twin or Cat diesel engines. A 4-wheel, fully independent double A-arm suspension and a wide stance offers increased stability on rough terrain. The tight curb-to-curb turning diameter and rear anti-sway bar provide superb cornering at faster speeds. High back bucket seats provide operator comfort and reduce stress. It also features 14.4 cu. ft. cargo box volume.

For more information contact Cub Cadet Commercial at 330/225-2600 or www.cubcadetcommercial.com / circle no. 250

Updated for '07
Kubota's RTV900 utility vehicle is designed for heavy-duty use with its liquid-cooled, three-cycle Kubota diesel engine, hydrostatic transmission and 1,600-lbs. payload. New for 2007, the RTV900 features a deluxe hard cab with factory pre-hung doors, thermoformed roof and door panels, sound-proofing lowers noise level to 84 dBA, standard, AM/FM/CD player and speakers in hard cab. Kubota also offers its hydraulic tool system on the utility vehicle, which allows the operator to operate one of nine different available hydraulic power tools off of the back of the RTV.

For more information contact Kubota Tractor Corp. at 888/4-KUBOTA or www.kubota.com / circle no. 251

Bobcat's 2300
Bobcat Co.'s new 2300 4x4 utility vehicle can mow, sweep, and move materials with its RapidLink attachment system. The removable attachment arm can lift loads up to 500 pounds as high as two feet with five specially designed attachments, including a bucket, mower, pallet fork, snow blade and whisker push broom. Users operate and change attachments from their seat with joystick control. The 20-hp vehicle includes Bobcat's InteliTrak drive system for maximum traction while traversing hills or traveling soft terrain. The 4x4 reaches up to 25 mph.

For more information contact Bobcat at 866/823-7898 or www.bobcat.com / circle no. 252

John Deere XUV
John Deere's new Gator XUV 4x4 utility vehicle will be available at dealerships in March in electronic fuel injection gas and diesel versions. The Gator XUV features a True 4WD system with an on-demand locking front differential for superior terrain capability. The Gator XUV features 11-in. ground clearance and a new Advanced Suspension System that provides customers with a comfortable ride, even when tackling the most rugged terrain. Maximum cargo capacity is 900 lbs for the cargo box, 1,300 pounds total payload. It reaches a top speed of 30 mph.

For more information contact John Deere at 800/537-8233 or www.johndeere.com / circle no. 253
At Walker Manufacturing this is how we think about what we do— we don’t make lawn mowers, we make beautiful places. That thought has inspired us for nearly 30 years on our quest to design and build the best possible machine to make a beautiful place. And the Walker is made for landscape contractors who have the same thought— we don’t “mow grass”, we make beautiful places. Ask to see a Walker demonstration if you are not using Walker and would like a little help in making your own beautiful places.
COMMERCIAL POWER

Ongoing training

The old saying “Knowledge is Power” could not be more true in today’s world. A skilled technician not only fixes problems, but also implements a maintenance program that prevents problems from occurring in the first place. But finding skilled technicians is not an easy task, so it pays to develop an ongoing training regimen that gives your service crew the additional knowledge they’ll need to keep the newest pieces of equipment up and running.

Briggs & Stratton manufactures a wide range of engines, from a model used in a handheld string trimmer application all the way up to commercial three-cylinder water-cooled models. This product diversity creates a substantial ongoing training need to keep technicians up to speed, which is why we offer a number of education options for service technicians. For technicians focused on commercial engines, Briggs and Stratton provides regional educational classes that feature a practical hands-on approach. Typically one or two days in length, the classes are fast paced, allowing the technician to be out of the shop for just a short time.

Technicians that have a relationship with a Briggs and Stratton distributor can view a listing of upcoming courses at www.thepowerportal.com (login information required). Technicians without an existing distributor relationship can go to our Website - www.commercialpower.com - to find the contact information of the distributor nearest them.

The benefits of well-trained service technicians are many. Not only will technicians be more confident and trustworthy in their work. Productivity in the shop will increase and equipment downtime will decrease, and since running equipment is necessary to generate income, it’s no wonder education is such a powerful tool.

By Mark Nelson,
Master Instructor,
Briggs & Stratton Customer Education

A left glove in your left back pocket and a right glove in your right back pocket is a simple, elegant storage solution. You will soon get accustomed to the matching lumps, and this slight discomfort is a constant reminder that your protectors are nearby.

Protect your most important tools

BY HARRY SMITH

They are the best tools you have. They are frequently abused, left unprotected against the elements and exposed to an assortment of chemicals. They get dented, dinged, cut, scraped and their poor condition ignored. Why would we do that to a fine set of irreplaceable tools? Is it just because they are attached to your arms?

How many times have you stuck an unprotected hand or finger somewhere knowing the probability is high that you will get pinched, mashed or cut? Where are those mechanics gloves you bought because you thought they were so neat when you saw members of a NASCAR pit crew wearing them? Lying on the dash of the truck? Are they still in their packaging carefully stored in your toolbox? Anywhere but on your hands is their usual location. You need to get them out and put them on, and keep them stuffed in your back pockets when not in use.

Pocket protectors

It sounds oversimplified but a left glove in your left back pocket and a right glove in

— The author is turf equipment professor at Lake City Community College, Lake City, FL. Contact him at harry_smith@juno.com.
VoIP is a technology that allows you to convert your voice into data packets and send it over your Internet connection.

**Voice over IP 101**

BY TYLER WHITAKER

Does your head ache when you look at your phone bill? Are long distance charges getting you down? Do you wonder why taxes account for nearly 30% of your phone bill? If so, Voice over Internet Protocol, also called VoIP, may be the answer to your prayers.

VoIP is fast becoming a realistic choice for business communications. VoIP is a technology that allows you to convert your voice into data packets and send it over your Internet connection instead of the traditional phone system. Why would you want to do that? The answer is cost. Companies that provide VoIP services claim up to 50% reduction in your phone bill through low per-minute rates or fixed-price unlimited local and long distance calling plans.

Several factors make this cost savings possible. First, the wide adoption of broadband Internet connections creates extra, unused bandwidth available in homes and offices. Secondly, Internet traffic is unregulated and free from the fees and taxes of current phone service providers. Also, the unique nature of the technology used to compress and transmit voice over the Internet allows more concurrent voice conversations to occupy the same fixed-cost bandwidth.

I’ve played with VoIP for years in both home and commercial situations. But I was recently reminded of the cost savings while I was in Zermatt, Switzerland. Several people I was traveling with had purchased long distance calling cards at a rate of 1 Euro ($1.30 USD) per minute for calls to the United States. Fortunately I had my PocketPC with me. Using VoIP software from Skype (www.skype.com) and a free wireless Internet hotspot at a local pub, I was able to call to the States for 2 cents a minute saving roughly 99%.

How do you get started? You have several different options. Both Skype and Windows Live Messenger (www.msn.com) offer PC to PC, and PC to phone calling. This is a great way to get started with VoIP and test the functionality. You can then upgrade to VoIP services like Vonage (www.vonage.com) to use your existing phone number.

Be aware that VoIP services offer varying degrees of Enhanced 911 functionality. The flexibility to move your phone service anywhere you have an Internet connection also plays havoc on the 911 service. Read your VoIP provider’s 911 disclosures so you understand what happens when you call for emergency services. Another downside is Internet connectivity and power. If either goes down, your phone doesn’t work. If you live and work in areas where the power or your Internet connection has frequent outages, VoIP may not be your best solution.

As a business tool, Voice over IP has its place. For example, deploying VoIP between branch offices can significantly reduce your long distance bills. But like any technology, understanding the pros and cons can help you make the most informed and correct decision for your business.

— The author is a freelance technologist focusing in business automation. Contact him at 801/592-2810 or visit his blog at www.tylerwhitaker.com.