for '09. The largest number of responses (100 of 439, or 23%) is in the 1% to 4% forecasted growth category. However, when we asked how many were budgeting for decreased revenues, in the very next survey question, 44% of respondents said they expect revenues to decrease 5% or more this season, with 5% expecting at least 20% less revenue.

Not surprisingly, this uncertainty is reflected in the readers' employment plans, our survey shows. Forty percent of respondents said their employment picture remains the same as it was last year; 31% say they will have fewer employees, and 29% report they will need more employees.

If there's a silver lining in this economic cloud, it's that companies will be able to be selective in bringing new employees and managers into their companies. A lot of experienced people will be looking for positions this year. — RH

Landscape worker wages (average) for '09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>$11.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew Leader</td>
<td>$15.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Supervisor</td>
<td>$18.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>$21.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hours of employee training annually

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours of Training</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 8</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 to 10</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 40</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in the number of employees for '09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased by 1-5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased by 5%-10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased by 11% or more</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased by 1-5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased by 5%-10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased by 11% or more</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What % are you budgeting to grow revenues in '09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth Percentage</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero growth</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 1-4%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 5-9%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 10-14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase 15-19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase by 20% or more</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued from page 38

two or three years," says Senske.

"We're also working on being better managers and making sure we're running lean and mean," he adds. "We've made a commitment throughout our company to train all of our people, and everybody is involved in evaluating, and improving, our processes."

Beyond that, Senske says the economy offers a great opportunity to add new talent to his company.

"We're getting more high-quality applicants now," he says. "We're only interested in the A players. We're excited about adding anybody like that to our team."

Services make the difference
Landscape or lawn service companies' prospects for the coming season (and continued on page 43

Change the landscape.

With almost 40 job-matched attachments for landscaping, you can get more done in less time. Check out Bobcat attachments for turf installation, land clearing, hardscaping, site maintenance, irrigation or for plants, trees and shrubs at www.bobcat.com/changelandscape.
Getting unbeatable quality at an unbeatable price.

That's intelligent.

Save more than 10% with the Rain Bird® 1806 Spray.
The industry's most durable and water-efficient spray now carries a lower list price—so you won't have to sacrifice quality for cost. Your customers will enjoy greater reliability and higher water efficiency, while you enjoy more than 10% savings. You could call it an easy choice in tough economic times. We call it The Intelligent Use of Water™.

Rain Bird® 1806 Sprays
Save more than 10% over Hunter® PROS-06 Sprays.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rain Bird List Price</th>
<th>Hunter List Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$9.39</td>
<td>$10.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

owners’ expectations) seem to be predicated, in large part, on the types of services that generate most of their sales. Lawn and tree care services generally are doing better than lawn maintenance, which is holding up better than installation. Landscape construction — for almost all layers of the market, and especially for new construction — is way off.

David Kafka’s company, Supergreen, maintains the properties of seasonal homes on the resort islands in and around Charleston, SC. Even though the owners have primary residences elsewhere, the properties must be tended 12 months of the year.

“A lot of our customers are saying they’ve lost 40% or more of their retirement savings, and they’re telling me they must cut back on their expenses,” says Kafka. “We tell them, ‘You’ve told us that you like what we do, so let’s stay in business together. Let’s reduce the services, maybe eliminate the shrub treatments or cut back the visits from 52 to 41 this year. We can help you.’”

While that approach has yielded some positive results, and Kafka has reaped others by personally contacting customers, the depressed real estate climate and dormant local construction have dramatically slowed his business this past winter.

Kafka says he tries to keep his employees working year-round because they’re trained and experienced, and he would hate to lose them. This winter, however, he was forced to cut back their hours. Most weeks, at least through February, they were done by Wednesday afternoons or, on some occasions, Thursdays. As a last resort, he laid off two people in his office and five production employees.

“We’re going from three-man crews to two-man crews. We’ll just have to work longer hours,” says Kafka, a former fireman who started the company in 1997.

The contractor factor
Mountain View Landscape and Lawn Care, Chicopee, MA, is going into this season with about $3.5 million in business on the books, says President Steve Corrigan. It’s enough to get it started, but well below what it’s been carrying into the past spring seasons. Even so, Corrigan remains “cautiously optimistic.”

“Our maintenance renewals have been good, but that’s only 20% to 30% of our business,” he adds, admitting that he’s probably more concerned about next season because of the lack of construction starts this past year, especially in the commercial sector: “Because we’re always the last contractor on a site, we’re a little concerned about what’s going to happen in 2010.”

Corrigan says the lack of new construction has added another wild card to this season’s prospects: the entry of more contractors into the competitive mix.

“There’s more competition than ever for the work. Last week, we bid on a $350,000 park job. We came in second,” says Corrigan. “The low bidder was a subdivision contractor. He said he didn’t have any subdivisions to do, so he had to start looking at other stuff.”

Mountain View employs 25 to 30 people on its construction crews, but Corrigan says he might need to reduce that number by two to six employees this season, depending upon sales. It’s something he hopes he can avoid.

“These are skilled employees because we do a lot of diverse and difficult projects,” Corrigan says. “The more difficult the job is, the more competitive we are. We have a great work force.”

continued on page 45
KAWASAKI. HIGH PERFORMANCE RUNS IN THE FAMILY.

KAWASAKI ENGINES. Known for innovative design and leading technology, Kawasaki engines have a heritage of high performance. From world-class motorcycles to commercial-grade engines for true landscape professionals, the Kawasaki name says it all. So now when you think about power, think Kawasaki. Find your authorized Kawasaki dealer at www.kawpower.com or call 800-433-5640. COMMERCIAL GRADE. KAWASAKI MADE.
PROTECT YOUR BEST PLAYERS  BY BILL HOOPES

Be very careful about the employees you cut from your roster or let get away.

Reflecting back to the 1987 recession, I recall the need to trim our staff. I also remember a senior manager saying, “Let’s just do it through attrition. We just won’t replace quitters.” There’s a problem with this tactic: In tough, demanding times, the best people get the best opportunities. Also, as typically happens, the people you need least are usually the ones who don’t quit.

If you have one of those “really good people,” another company, maybe a competitor, is trying to recruit him or her. One thing is certain; in tough times you need your veteran problem solvers more than ever. You need their experience, their knowledge and their ability to work efficiently.

Before you cut staff, consider these three factors:

1. Evaluate the relative benefits of keeping people versus the cost of hiring and training new workers once the recession comes to an end. When it will end is anybody’s guess, but it will end, and you will need to add or replace staff. It can take years to truly, fully replace talent.

2. If you decide you must cut employees, force-rank your entire team — not just production workers. Look closely at supervisors who might not be pulling their weight, but who are more highly paid. I recently helped a client lay off a non-functioning manager and replace him with a high paid, more talented person. Once on the job, the new manager reorganized and reduced the staff, made the operation more efficient — and did it all for a net added cost of zero.

3. As you evaluate the team, think about your best utility players — those people who understand and can play several different positions well. You want people who can capably handle responsibilities formerly handled by others.

— The author is the owner of Grass Roots Training, and provides consulting services, specializing in training and employee building for Green Industry companies. Contact him at hoopes@columbus.rr.com.

continued from page 43

Seasonal labor

Steve Booth started Booth’s Landscaping in 1984. It’s the most-established landscape company in Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula, a scenic region on the southern edge of the state that touts itself as Alaska’s Playground.

“The last couple of years we’ve been very busy. Typically, Alaska is a little bit slower to catch up with the outside economy,” says Booth. “I’m sure this year the economy will hit us.”

Booth’s Landscaping derives most of its revenue from commercial projects, and employs about a half-dozen employees each season. The work is highly seasonal, generally starting May 1 and lasting until October or November.

“We have several projects that we couldn’t finish last fall because the customers weren’t ready for us, so we have work right out of the chute,” says Booth.

Getting employees is sometimes a challenge, admits Booth, who has been in the industry 32 years.

“We don’t have a big labor pool here, but the phone will start ringing in April. I try to hire somebody who has good references,” he says. “Driver’s licenses are often a problem, and it’s hard to find guys with commercial licenses. Sometimes we have to weed through a lot of people to get a good employee.”
Take 5 steps toward lasting change

One common Lean tool to making changes and taking action is a simple, but effective process called 5S. It is effective because it provides a plan to accomplishing something that is visual to everyone. In most cases, it also creates immediate efficiencies and improvements.

5S can take place in the maintenance bay, the design office, or through the computer files — and will help in shaping the culture of your company to move from just talking about changes to making them. The following is a brief description of 5S methodology:

1. **Sort:** Select an area, then begin to systematically evaluate what should be in that area and what should not be. It might mean you need to go through the “painful” experience of throwing away that old transmission you bought at an auction 12 years ago that your maintenance crew has to step over every time they need to get the backpack blower hanging behind it on the wall. After all, when in doubt, throw it out!

2. **Shine:** Get out the mops, buckets, cleaning utensils and go to work. Clean everything in the area in which you are focusing. Don’t just dust; how about some new paint on the walls and the floor? Spray off the tools and equipment that will be stored in this area. Be careful not to try and clean the entire world, just stay focused on the area you have selected.

3. **Set in order:** When you are ready to put back only the things that belong in that area, first add some shelves, hooks or designated space on the floor to park equipment. Give thought to what should be placed where, based on making it efficient to locate and easy to access.

4. **Standardize:** The easiest way to accomplish this is through labeling and creating some structure to the area of your focus. When a designated label clearly reads “rake,” it becomes more difficult to place the shovel there. Show faith in your team or yourself as a leader. Try it, and your team will amaze you.

5. **Sustain:** This step is what separates your efforts from “just cleaning something” to an evolving culture of efficiency and Working Smarter. Keep in mind that the project is not completed until you have put up some visual reminders and tracking that will maintain and continue to improve what you have accomplished in this area. Post a simple map that shows where everything is to be stored, and use an auditing system that consistently measures and evaluates how well everyone is adhering to the new standard that has been established.

Making changes, even simple ones, often can be uncomfortable, seemingly time-consuming and can challenge the current state of your company. Yet on the other side of the change, success is waiting patiently. What if a mind shift and a great 5S project could help your company add 10% more billable hours in 2009, or add 3% improvement to client retention? When the correlation between making changes and noticeable and measurable improvements is realized, a culture shift to continuous improvement takes place.

More than 250 Green Industry companies have participated in JP Horizons’ Working Smarter Training Challenge (WSTC), typically saving tens of thousands of dollars annually. To see if your organization qualifies to participate in the WSTC, visit www.jphorizons.com today.
Sure you can cut it.  The question is, can you grow it?

You know Gravely has an impressive lineup of powerful, high-performance mowers. What you might not know is that Gravely also has a program to help you grow your business. It's a lean approach that streamlines your operation by eliminating waste and inefficiencies. It's a process that creates avenues for sustained profitability. It's a boost to employee morale. You're doing everything you can. We're saying CUT IT OUT. Take the first step toward working smarter. Not harder.

Visit WWW.GRAVELY.COM.
When applying any chemical product, here are some factors to keep in mind, courtesy of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service:

- They can only help manage some plant diseases, not all.
- Identify the disease/weed first, so you choose the correct product.
- The correct timing of applications is critical to success.
- Measuring, diluting and applying products effectively and safely requires attention to detail.

Petro-Canada
Civitas primes the turf's genes, stimulates its natural defenses and kills or inhibits fungal diseases. It offers short reentry intervals, spray and application flexibility, and improved turf health. Available in a tote, 55-gal. and 30-gal. drums and 5-gal. pail, Civitas helps to control dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose, spring leaf spot and several others. www.civitasturf.com or 866/335-3369

Dow AgroSciences
Dimension specialty herbicide provides pre- and early post-emergence control of crabgrass, and season-long control of crabgrass, goosegrass, foxtail, spurge and Poa annua. With multiple formulations, including the water-based Dimension 2EW, Dimension can be used over the top of field- and container-grown nursery and landscape ornamentals, and in established lawns, golf course fairways and commercial sod farms. www.dowagro.com/turf/prod/dimension.htm or 800/295-3726

Scotts Professional
To help professionals develop flexible weed management plans, Scotts Professional has created a free Pre-Emergent Weed Guide. This informative guide describes how to most effectively use its new granular herbicide, Jewel (pictured), in rotation with its other pre-emergent herbicide products, Rout and OH2. The guide also offers sample rotation schedules for five U.S. growing regions, and identifies common weeds with photos and detailed descriptions. www.scottspro.com or 800/492-8255

Syngenta Professional Products
Barricade pre-emergence herbicide is supported by a money-back guarantee that the product will control crabgrass well into 2009. Customers who purchase $5,000 or more of any combination of Barricade flowable, Barricade 65WG water-dispersible granule formulation or Barricade on-fertilizer from authorized Syngenta Channel Partners between Sept. 1, 2008 and May 15, 2009 qualify for the program. www.BarricadeGuarantee.com or 800/395-TURF

Valent U.S.A. Corp.
SureGuard Herbicide received registration from the Environmental Protection Agency and has been approved by all 50 states for use in landscape settings as a preemergent and quick postemergent control of broadleaf and grass weeds such as crabgrass, spurge, bittercress and groundsel. SureGuard’s active ingredient, flumioxazin, brings a unique mode of action to the LCO market that works to control glyphosate-resistant weeds and provide an overall strong resistance management alternative. www.valentpro.com or 800/69-VALENT

Arysta LifeScience North America
Disarm G granular formulation strobilurin fungicide is labeled for control of brown patch, dollar spot, gray leaf spot, pythium, red thread, zoysia patch and all major patch, spot and snow mold diseases on lawn, sports turf and sod production. Disarm G is the only strobilurin labeled for control of light-to-moderate dollar spot infestations. Coupled with exceptionally rapid systemic activity, quick rainfastness and long residual, the new formulation provides lawn turf care professionals a cost-effective strobilurin fungicide cornerstone for their disease management programs. www.arystalifescience.us/disarmg or 866/761-9397

continued on page 50
Furious. Fast.

• Total fire ant control within 72 hours

For fire ant colonies, it's a perfect storm.

Only one solution has the benefits of both baits and contact insecticides. DuPont® Advion® fire ant bait is the fastest, most effective product available today—eliminating the entire colony in just 24 to 72 hours. Thanks to a new class of chemistry, powered by the MetaActive™ compound, Advion® provides outstanding year-round protection in just one or two applications. And it does it all with an excellent environmental and toxicological profile, and a reduced-risk classification from the EPA. Experience all-in-one fire ant control today. Call 1-888-6DuPont (1-888-638-7668) or visit us at proproducts.dupont.com. Advion® Unbeatable results.
Bayer Environmental Science
The selective post-emergent herbicide controls annual and perennial grasses in turf in a single treatment. With its water-based formulation, Acclaim makes precautionary handling procedures easy compared to solvent-based formulations. Its timing and use is flexible. www.bayerprocentral.com or 800/843-1702

SePRO
Octane 2% SC contains the active ingredient Pyraflufen ethyl, which when added as a tank-mix with post-emergent broadleaf weed herbicides, increases the speed of kill and broadens the weed spectrum. Because Octane is rainfast in only one hour, the risk of losing activity because of inclement weather is minimized. Octane can be applied in rates less than 4 oz. per acre stand-alone, or 1.5 oz. per acre in tank mixes. www.sepro.com or 800/419-7779

DuPont Professional Products
DuPont TranXit herbicide aids in spring transition and fall overseeding. Spring use controls ryegrass to give your bermudagrass the opportunity for more rapid and complete re-establishment after winter dormancy. A fall application helps control annual bluegrass prior to overseeding for the winter. product.dupont.com or 866/6DUPONT

FMC Professional Solutions
Echelon herbicide provides pre-emergence and early post-emergence control of crabgrass, goosegrass and sedges in sports turf, residential and institutional lawns. Echelon saves applicators time and money on weed control later in the season. The Echelon Assurance Program offers 100 days of sedge control when applied according to label directions. fmcprosolutions.com or 800/321-1FMC

Pruning is essential. Whether it’s azaleas or your insurance budget.
Right now, cutting costs is just as critical to your business as trimming hedges. That’s why you need Progressive Commercial Insurance. For over 30 years we’ve helped thousands of small businesses save hundreds, while delivering comprehensive coverage and great claims service. Now that’s Progressive.