This new Little Wonder truckloader puts a 14hp helper at the back of your truck. With the 8” intake this unit will pick up leaves and debris and load them all day long, especially in tough conditions. We put all of the features you want into a smaller easy to use unit. Built for commercial use, this model has high airflow for performance, a tough impeller, an easy to use intake, plus we made it serviceable so it will last.

Visit your local dealer for more information.
E-newsletter marketing

Most companies have exciting news to share with their customers. Great deals, special pricing and informative articles can turn readers from casual customers to product evangelists. Finding the right method to deliver your message can make all of the difference. E-newsletters, if done correctly, can deliver the right message, to the right people, at the right time. If done incorrectly, they can ruin your business.

So hopefully, your traditional and online search marketing efforts have met some level of success — and you now find potential customers hitting your website to learn more about your services. What’s the next step? Web traffic can be a fickle friend. You typically have a few fleeting moments to capture potential customers’ interests and motivate them to action. First and foremost, that action should be to buy.

But what about customers who need more information or a higher comfort level before doing business with you? You can’t count on them returning to your website, so motivating them to opt in to your e-mail marketing campaigns ensures you have several more chances to convert them into customers.

Just about every large online retailer offers e-newsletters of one sort or another. The online shoes and clothing retailer Zappos.com, known for its customer service, offers a weekly e-newsletter listing special deals and new products. But e-newsletters don’t need to be strictly sales related to be useful. You may want to consider an e-newsletter with helpful “how-to” articles that are informative and help position your company as an expert in your industry. Building credibility can lead to great word-of-mouth advertising and sales.

The key to a good e-newsletter is consistency. Carefully describe what type of publication you are offering on the web signup page, and then stick to it.

Dos and Don’ts

When it comes to e-newsletters, there are a couple of rules to follow. I’m referring to the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. The Federal Trade Commission has a great compliance guide (online at FTC.gov), which can result in penalties of up to $16,000 if not followed. In essence, these guidelines can be characterized by the ideas of not being deceptive, being forthcoming on who you are and your location, and allowing people to easily opt out of future e-mail — all things a normal company, looking to grow, would do by default. But it’s surprising how often companies stumble by not paying attention.

The best way to handle the details involved with successful e-newsletter campaigns is to use the right technology. There are several online services that can turn your ideas and content into professional marketing pieces that conform to the law and deliver the results you want. Look for a solution that offers e-mail templates, signup forms, list management tools and, most importantly, reporting analytics for tracking who reads and clicks through to your website. Vendors such as VerticalResponse.com, ConstantContact.com and iContact.com have spent years perfecting the art of e-mail marketing. Pricing is typically based on the number of subscribers you have, which makes it easy to get started and test things out. Most have plans that start around $10 to $15 per month.

One tried-and-true method for reaching your customers on a regular basis is through e-newsletters. If your business doesn’t have something to share, you’ve got other problems. But if you’ve been doing direct mail, consider making a small shift to e-newsletters — and start building your business.

GROWTH GOALS

1. Use e-newsletters to reach your customers on a regular basis. 2. Use sharp and relevant content to keep customers interested and continually checking your website. 3. Once you start, be consistent.
Like our proven brands, Syngenta’s 2011 GreenTrust™ 365 Program for professional turf managers provides outstanding value throughout the year. You can lock in your yearlong rebate percentage with only $5,000 in purchases of Qualifying Products during the Early Order Period (October 1, 2010 through February 28, 2011). The more you purchase during this time, the better your rebate percentage—as high as 14% on Barricade® herbicide.

Through the GreenTrust 365 Program, Syngenta also offers benefits like product assurance opportunities and deferred payment until June 6, 2011 for most purchases made during the Early Order Period. Visit greentrust365.com today to plan your purchase and lock in your yearlong savings.

Full Program terms and conditions are available at greentrust365.com.
“Account”ability = success

Account managers can make or break your business.  

There are five things that are somewhat consistent in successful account managers (AMs):

1. The ability to communicate with customers in a way that builds trust. The key factor here is honesty in communication and behavior. A team that can deliver the expected service in support of the AM helps the AM to earn trust.

2. The ability to avoid things that are traditionally known as “trust busters.” (See “Common Trust Busters” below.)

3. The ability to bring value to the customer proactively. Successful AMs know what value the customer places on the service. The proactive AM brings things to the attention of the client that are important before the client brings the issue to him or her. The AM makes the client look good. The AM does not waste the client’s time.

4. The ability to manage time wisely. AMs that fall into “firefighting mode” instead of working proactively are prevented from doing things on a timely basis. They get themselves into situations where they lose trust. Clients see them as reactive, and commitments are often not met. Successful AMs are usually very organized and keep lists, which allow them to prioritize the importance of their tasks. All too often, AMs end up doing menial tasks that are within their comfort zone, while really important things that are not in that zone are put off. These issues then mushroom into larger problems.

5. The ability to build a relationship that goes beyond the job. Effective AMs understand that clients have a hard time firing someone they like or respect. These AMs earn respect and business friendships by building relationships that go beyond the day-to-day business transactions. Good AMs know about their customers’ hobbies, interests and family life. They connect in a personal way.

If an AM works at honing the above five traits, they are certain to be more successful.

Wilson is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Contact him at bwilson@questex.com or www.wilson-oyler.com.

GROWTH GOALS

1. Look for account managers who are good communicators and enjoy building relationships with people.
2. Make sure account managers are proactive, follow-through and accept responsibility for their customers.
Fusion-welded for durability
E-coated maintenance free finish
Backed by 20-Year Warranty

Ameristar®
1555 N. Mingo Road
Tulsa, OK 74116
Phone 1-888-333-3422
Fax 1-877-926-3747
www.montagefence.com
Email: mktg@ameristarfence.com
Using the suggestion box

Encourage ideas from your team to build morale and the bottom line. BY GREGORY P. SMITH

GETTING EMPLOYEES’ IDEAS AND INVOLVEMENT IS CRITICAL IN OUR RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD. IF YOUR COMPANY IS GOING TO BE COMPETITIVE, IT’S MANDATORY TO INVOLVE NOT JUST HANDS, BUT IDEAS FROM EVERYONE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION.

Why is it important to capture ideas and suggestions? For starters, the process improves individual motivation and morale. Involvement programs help capture the creativity, energy and ideas many people have. They also allow departments and individuals to work cross-functionally and create an environment of learning and constant renewal.

They improve work methods and processes continually, reduce the costs of doing business, improve safety and reduce accidents. Exchanging ideas always improves communication, and the knowledge that top management is open and willing to act on the ideas improves trust.

Good idea boards
Georgia’s Buckhead Ritz-Carlton Hotel promotes employee involvement by letting employees write their ideas on an “easy wipe” board in their department. Instead of passing untested ideas up the chain of command, the employee who originates an idea has responsibility for its achievement. They follow a three-step work process: “Study it, pilot it and adopt it.”

A quality coach helps each department and its employees with the process. Once an idea is piloted and found worthwhile, it is adopted. Each month the department forwards the best idea to the division and then on to the Quality Office for special recognition. The department awards cash for the best idea of the month. The best idea of the division gets a higher amount of money or brunch in the hotel’s restaurant. At the hotel level, the best idea receives an even higher amount or dinner for two. In addition, the winners receive letters of appreciation and an invitation to a quarterly reception courtesy of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Bright idea campaigns
Most suggestion programs fail. Suggestion boxes sit and collect dust and approved suggestions are few and far between. An effective variation to the suggestion program is the Idea Campaign. Over and done with in three weeks, this steroid-enriched campaign generates hundreds of ideas.

The goal is to get at least one idea from everyone in the organization. For the first idea, each person receives a small token of appreciation, such as a coffee cup. A second idea is acknowledged with another form of appreciation. At the end of each week, a special award ceremony recognizes everyone who turned in ideas or suggestions. Names drawn from a basket receive other prizes and gifts.

Because the program only lasts three weeks, it generates a tremendous amount of focused energy and motivation from employees.

No one wants to be left out of the program – everyone participates. All ideas have to be considered and all employees suggesting ideas receive instantaneous recognition. For participants, the most powerful force is not the awards, but the feeling that management is listening to their ideas.

Idea expositions
The Sony Corp. is well known for its ability to create and manufacture new and innovative products. Each year Sony generates approximately 1,000 new products and product innovations. Founder Masaru Ibuka’s philosophy for success is “never follow others.”

In order to foster the exchange of ideas within departments, Sony’s Corporate Research sponsors an annual Idea Exposition. Scientists and engineers display projects and ideas they are working on. Open only to Sony’s employees, the exposition lets individuals share ideas otherwise protected by departmental walls.

SMITH is a nationally recognized speaker, author and business performance consultant. He is the president of management-consulting firm Chart Your Course International, located in Atlanta, GA. Contact him at 770-860-9464.

WEB EXTRA
For another method of finding ideas visit www.landscapemanagement.net/mini-kaizen

GROWTH GOALS
1. Create an environment of learning and constant renewal. 2. Develop a program where all employee ideas are encouraged. 3. Inspire future ideas with instantaneous recognition.
ROI in One Year

Situation at Top Care
Top Care provides a wide range of lawn care services for commercial, institutional and office locations in a three-state area in the Midwest. Top Care’s story reveals an enduring pursuit of managing costs to control their business. Rusty White, Top Care’s Executive VP and COO, sees this as a straightforward, yet crucial, principle if you want your landscape services business to thrive.

Driven by a discipline of excellent customer service and consistent profitability, Top Care experienced steady growth. As the business grew, Top Care found that they were unable to manage their business with the same degree of control and certainty. Rusty became very aggravated due to the frustration of “…not having the information I needed to make day-to-day decisions.” Stretching their current systems and methods exposed a reliance on duplicate data entry and extensive manual processes.

A New Perspective on Software
If they were going to meet their goals of control and profitability, Rusty knew they needed to abandon individual tools and find a better way. BOSS’ LM was the solution to his vision of a fully-integrated system, and for the past five years, BOSS’ LM has helped Top Care reach new levels of success.

With BOSS’ LM’s single database that seamlessly integrated with Top Care’s accounting system, they were able to eliminate costs and redundant data entry. More importantly, since BOSS’ LM was specifically designed for the typical characteristics of a landscape services business, Top Care no longer needed to tediously maintain complex spreadsheets to understand what was really happening to their business.

Expense or Investment?
Adding the BOSS’ LM software system at Top Care was really like adding another profit-producing asset to the business. Rusty considered the software purchase exactly the same as buying a piece of capital equipment, “…treating the BOSS’ LM software purchase like buying a mower or mulch blower makes you change your view from an expense to an investment and opens up a whole new way of thinking as you implement and evaluate results.”

At Top Care, ROI Also Means… Return on Information
Was the investment worth it? Rusty says, “…we got our return in the first year.” Top Care now has a clearer view for their business decisions. Rusty confidently emphasizes, with BOSS’ LM “I now have the visibility to see the profitability of any job or service at the click of a button.”

Rusty contends when purchasing any asset, whether it’s a piece of equipment or software, you need to use all of its features if you are really going to get your biggest return. For Top Care this meant looking at every business decision and process to see how BOSS’ LM’s integrated information solution could help them. As the Top Care Team methodically selected the next process to implement, the entire business was quickly transformed into an efficient, timely operation. All aspects of the business were touched and brought under control: sales, bidding, scheduling, purchasing, payroll and invoicing.

Rusty says his biggest ROI comes from the information he receives using BOSS’ LM. “If the only value you are considering is reducing overhead, you’re missing it. Sure, we were able to reduce overhead, but the real value is having information to make better decisions…today, I can’t see how I could run the business without BOSS’ LM.”

BOSS® LM
The powerful, easy-to-use business management software solution designed for landscaping software companies like Top Care and yours, too

Single, Integrated System
• spans entire business
• for use by every employee
• no duplicate data

Increases Sales
• faster, more accurate bidding
• easily track sales goals

Reduces Costs
• improved scheduling
• performance monitoring
• purchasing controls

To schedule an executive briefing or to learn more about taking your landscaping business to the next level go to www.bossl.com

866-596-5971

providing landscape companies the tools they need to achieve their goals
Case studies on growth

Maintaining current revenue and growing business — these are contractors top two priorities for the next six months, according to Landscape Management research. In addition to providing expert advice on how to grow now, Landscape Management talked to 12 contractors with 2010 growth success stories to unlock the details on how they did it so you could steal an idea or two from their playbooks. Here are their stories. » » »
WIDE-OUT™ ADJUSTABLE WING SNOWPLOW:
AN UPGRADE THAT PAYS FOR ITSELF

“In our condo complexes we have to carry snow over hills and around corners. With the WIDE-OUT you can angle the blade and contain the snow even around corners. You can’t do that with a V-plow. So what used to be a one-hour job, is now a 30-minute job. We can do 10-11 properties in the same time it used to take to do 6-7 properties. I guarantee you I can plow twice as fast.”

Kale Christman // The Ground Specialists // Valparaiso, IN

“The best thing about the WIDE-OUT is that beginners are more efficient right from the start. Especially when it comes to containing snow between cars in busy parking lots. According to our numbers, we’re 35% more efficient, so for every three trucks we outfit with a WIDE-OUT, it’s like getting a fourth truck and driver free. And that makes us more profitable. Period.”

Shannon Shaw // Pinnacle Property Maintenance // Columbus, OH

“Since I upgraded my old V-Plow to a WIDE-OUT, I’m able to finish my jobs at least 20% faster. When you can use 80% of the blade versus half, and angle the blade to carry snow around corners without spilling off, it makes a big difference. Next year I plan to upgrade another truck with a WIDE-OUT.”

Paul Kiedrowski // Oconomowoc Lawn // Oconomowoc, WI

www.westernplows.com
Competitive pricing

Working with customers on their biggest pain point — price — brings renewed growth for Cagwin & Dorward.

BY LINDSEY GETZ

GROWTH PROFILE
Cagwin & Dorward
Novato, CA
2010 Growth: 4%