for it to import to the profile. It’s on that spreadsheet where professionals provide project addresses, pricing and customer email addresses if they’d like the company to request endorsements for them.

Although Porch employees are hands on with helping professionals set up their profiles, they do not upload the information from spreadsheets by hand, so to speak. That data importation process is completed using “a combination of employee curation and proprietary software” the company wrote to process spreadsheets, Ehrlichman says.

Champagne, who joined Porch in November, chose to manually upload his projects, and he did so right from his phone. Still, he says, Porch employees were very involved in his profile building process.

“They are determined to try to make sure you have your information out there so they can better promote you,” he says. “They’ll hound me to death on pictures or endorsements from my customers.”

Champagne’s greatest struggle with the site is setting aside time to upload recent projects, plus he prefers to post before-and-after photos once his installation jobs have filled in, which can take up to a year.

He has nine projects uploaded to his profile. Webb, who has been on Porch almost a year longer, has 54 projects listed.

“The more projects, the better,” Webb says. “The more projects you have photos of, the better.”

Because Porch profiles are highly photo-driven, Webb says he’s extra attentive to the quality of project photos he uploads to the site.

“Having pictures of projects, is more valuable than descriptions,” he says. “Images are always better than words and good images are always better than poor images.”

“That’s the one thing that I’m still not crazy about. I want to be able to rearrange the way in which the photos are presented,” he says. “I’m not 100 percent satisfied yet.”

Once Webb has his projects organized to standard, he says then he’ll press customers to view and endorse his profile.

continued from page 28

“CUT YOUR MOWING COSTS WITH PROPANE.
AND GET UP TO $1,000 PER MOWER TO PROVE IT.”

Take part in our Propane Mower Incentive Program and get $1,000 back for each new qualifying propane-fueled mower purchase, or $500 back for each qualifying mower conversion. In return, you’ll tell us about your experience for one mowing season.

For more information, see your mowing equipment dealer or visit poweredbypropane.org.

Some restrictions apply. See rules at poweredbypropane.org.

WEB EXTRA

For advice from photographer Tiffany Morisue on capturing and posting web-friendly images to sites such as Porch, visit the Web Extras section at LandscapeManagement.net.
Every vehicle in the Ram Commercial lineup was built to do serious business for your business 24/7/365. The proof is in Ram’s full Commercial lineup: the Ram 3500 Heavy Duty with 30,000 lbs towing¹, Ram 1500 Tradesman with best-in-class 28 MPG highway fuel economy², and the new 2014 Ram ProMaster® with best-in-class payload³, all under a 5-year/100,000-mile powertrain warranty⁴. Ram’s Commercial dealer network, BusinessLink⁵ has your business’ back too, by providing the specialized service to keep you on the road to profitability.

The network of BusinessLink⁵ dealers especially knows that for business owners, there’s no clocking out. They’ve matched your nonstop schedule with extended service and repair hours. For bumps along the way, 24/7 towing is there — and in most cases, no-charge loaner vehicles. And behind these and our hefty roster of other benefits stands a team trained expressly to serve small business.

The On the Job program provides business consumers like yourself with upfit and equipment allowances, no-charge service and maintenance, and the right tools to keep you and your business heading in the right direction for whatever lies ahead. For more information, visit www.ramtrucks.com/commercial.
The Voice of the Green Industry Professional™

Every Wednesday, 7–8 pm EST!

Tune in at FD2B.COM!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SPECIAL GUEST</th>
<th>PROGRAM TOPIC</th>
<th>SPONSOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>Vinnie Mercurio, Vendor, NDS</td>
<td>Make Easy Money with Drainage Work</td>
<td>KUBOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/12</td>
<td>Steven Moore, Consultant/ Vendor, Weather Reach</td>
<td>Water Management for Design/Build Contractors</td>
<td>KUBOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/19</td>
<td>Bill Dysert, Contractor, Exscape Designs</td>
<td>Design/Build by the Numbers</td>
<td>KUBOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/26</td>
<td>Colin Milde, Contractor, Ramapo Tree and Shrub Care</td>
<td>Stop Killing Your Clients’ Trees</td>
<td>KUBOTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/2</td>
<td>David Katz, Contractor, Elite Landscaping Inc.</td>
<td>Diving Into the Pool Business</td>
<td>QUALI-PRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/9</td>
<td>Jonathan Goldhill, Consultant, The Goldhill Group</td>
<td>Stop Acting Like an Employee</td>
<td>QUALI-PRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16</td>
<td>Denice Shuty, Consultant, ARCHIBUSINESS Marketing</td>
<td>Facebook and Twitter are a Waste of Time</td>
<td>QUALI-PRO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember: all shows are archived for later listening at FD2B.COM!

ABOUT THE HOST

Jody Shilan, MLA is an award-winning landscape designer and former landscape design/build contractor, who has sold tens of millions of dollars of design and installation work throughout his career. He now uses his 35+ years of experience to coach other landscape contractors how to easily and dramatically increase their sales by following his unique landscape design/build sales process. He does this through public speaking, private consulting, group workshops and his “exclusive” members-only website www.FromDesign2Build.com.

Interested in sponsoring Landscape Live! Talk Radio?
Contact Your Account Manager Today!

Bill Roddy
Publisher
216-706-3758
broddy@northcoastmedia.net

Craig MacGregor
North American Sales Manager
216-706-3787
cmacgregor@northcoastmedia.net

Chris Lavelle
National Account Manager
216-363-7923
cлавelle@northcoastmedia.net
Green infrastructure projects like rain gardens are on the rise. Here’s why Green Industry professionals should clue in on this trend.
when Dennis Topo discovered a former employee of Allison Lawn & Landscape Service was trying to recruit clients from the company to start his own business, he issued a cease and desist letter on the grounds that the individual was in violation of a signed noncompete agreement. The contract bars former employees from contacting Allison customers for one year after termination. The letter was enough to resolve the situation, but Topo, director of operations, says without the noncompete agreement, there was little else he could have done to protect the Tampa, Fla.-based company and its assets.

“We are a family-owned business and our employees are considered assets to the company,” Topo says of Allison, which has a 75 percent residential and 25 percent commercial client base and generates less than $1 million annually. “But those assets come with intellectual property and when those assets leave, we want to make sure we retain the intellectual property that is our customers. It’s pretty much basic business administration for a small company.”

Kevin Kehoe, owner of 3PG Consulting, says “noncompete agreement” tends to be a loosely-used term. He clarifies there are three types of legal contracts that can help landscape company owners protect what is rightfully theirs: traditional noncompetes, nonsolicitations and confidentiality agreements.

A traditional noncompete agreement is a contract under which an employee agrees not to enter into or start an enterprise that competes with an employer for a designated number of years after the employee leaves the company. These can be difficult and expensive to enforce, particularly in states with right-to-work laws, Kehoe says. Noncompetes, he adds, typically apply to higher-level employees, such as partners, those with equity in the firm or those with significant customer interaction. They are not the type of agreement necessary for maintenance workers or hourly employees, Kehoe says.

Nonsolicitation agreements prevent employees from trying to recruit clients or staff from their former employers. Confidentiality agreements prevent former employees from disclosing propriety information, such as trade secrets and client data, to a third party. As long as the terms of these documents, which pertain to a length of time and geographic area, are detailed and specific, Kehoe says they are highly enforceable in most states.

“You can’t keep a person from making a living in the same industry, but you can certainly put some teeth into the non-solicitation and confidentiality agreements,” Kehoe says. “It should just be standard practice to have them. Otherwise, you can rely on the good faith, honestly and loyalty of people, but good luck with that in life.”

Richard Lehr, general counsel for the Professional Landscape Network (PLANET), says these types of agreements are particularly useful in the Green Industry, which is perceived to have easy, low-cost entry. While there are generic versions of noncompetes available on the Internet, Lehr recommends business owners have a lawyer create a document specifically for their company that incorporates the nuances of their state
VERSATILE! Works with all of The Andersons Pre-Emergent Herbicides, Insecticides, Soil Enhancers, and Nutrient products. Many of our products are ideally formulated for field and container growing, landscape, and turf applications.

New! Calibration Made Easy
The Andersons Calibration Tray for Professional Landscape Managers

VERSATILE! Works with all of The Andersons Pre-Emergent Herbicides, Insecticides, Soil Enhancers, and Nutrient products. Many of our products are ideally formulated for field and container growing, landscape, and turf applications.

APPLY. TILT. MEASURE.

®The Andersons is a registered trademark of The Andersons, Inc.

www.AndersonsPro.com/Horticulture
800-253-5296
The agreements should be reevaluated annually or whenever there’s a change in the business structure, such as with the addition of new locations or services. The terms and conditions should vary based on the type of employee, Lehr adds. For example, managers and sales team members may be restricted from working for specific competitors for two years, while an hourly maintenance worker may only be restricted for one.

“Noncompetes are advisable and necessary to protect a business,” Lehr says. “Employees invest time, dollars and training into their employees. For that person to become a competitor is something the employer should limit as much as possible.”

Kenneth LaVoie, owner of LaVoie’s Landscape Management in Winslow, Maine, requires employees and subcontractors to sign noncompete agreements. The contract ensures his $110,000 company has the rights to any potential work a subcontractor encounters while on a LaVoie’s Landscape Management job and prohibits subcontractors and employees from doing business with LaVoie’s clients, which are all residential, for a period of five years. While LaVoie says it’s unlikely his company would have the resources to enforce the agreement, he uses it as a precautionary measure to encourage current and former employees to do the right thing.

“Noncompete agreements are like locks on doors,” he says. “They are there to keep the dishonest people in line.”

Saying “No” to Noncompetes

Steven Jomides, president of Lawns by Yorkshire in Westwood, N.J., is one contractor who doesn’t think noncompete agreements make the best business sense. The $10-million company, which offers commercial maintenance services, used to require employees to sign noncompetes, but Jomides recently stopped putting as much emphasis on them. He says his philosophy is simple: “If you offer good service and you make your customers happy, regardless of who comes and goes, you should keep your customers.”

Jomides says the costs to draft, maintain and enforce noncompete agreements outweighed any benefits his company saw in return. He also found the contracts difficult and time-consuming to enforce. Plus, there was the potential to upset clients if they were to get caught in the middle of a legal scuffle.

“Noncompetes aggravate everyone and, from a business perspective, I don’t think it’s a good decision,” Jomides says. “We hire people who bring work in, and people who leave take work with them. We have come to accept that as part of doing business.”

Some experts believe Jomides may have the right idea. A recent Harvard Business Review article—authored by On Amir, associate professor of marketing at University of California, San Diego, and Orly Lobel, a professor of labor and employment law at the University of San Diego—reports noncompete clauses are a standard feature of many employment contracts, but they often can be a double-edged sword.

Research shows innovation, productivity and economic growth all are greater in parts of the country where noncompete agreements are not permitted or enforced. The authors also conclude limits on future employment decrease workers’ perceived ownership of their jobs and diminish their desires to exert themselves and develop their skills—factors that can be more detrimental to a company’s success than the actual loss of the employee.

“Given today’s increasingly mobile labor market and the heightened competition in many industries, it’s understandable that companies want to guard their talent closely,” the authors write. “But if the walls meant to protect human capital diminish the quality of the capital, they may not be worth building.”

Saying “No” to Noncompetes

Steven Jomides, president of Lawns by Yorkshire in Westwood, N.J., is one contractor who doesn’t think noncompete agreements make the best business sense. The $10-million company, which offers commercial maintenance services, used to require employees to sign noncompetes, but Jomides recently stopped putting as much emphasis on them. He says his philosophy is simple: “If you offer good service and you make your customers happy, regardless of who comes and goes, you should keep your customers.”

Jomides says the costs to draft, maintain and enforce noncompete agreements outweighed any benefits his company saw in return. He also found the contracts difficult and time-consuming to enforce. Plus, there was the potential to upset clients if they were to get caught in the middle of a legal scuffle.

“Noncompetes aggravate everyone and, from a business perspective, I don’t think it’s a good decision,” Jomides says. “We hire people who bring work in, and people who leave take work with them. We have come to accept that as part of doing business.”

Some experts believe Jomides may have the right idea. A recent Harvard Business Review article—authored by On Amir, associate professor of marketing at University of California, San Diego, and Orly Lobel, a professor of labor and employment law at the University of San Diego—reports noncompete clauses are a standard feature of many employment contracts, but they often can be a double-edged sword.

Research shows innovation, productivity and economic growth all are greater in parts of the country where noncompete agreements are not permitted or enforced. The authors also conclude limits on future employment decrease workers’ perceived ownership of their jobs and diminish their desires to exert themselves and develop their skills—factors that can be more detrimental to a company’s success than the actual loss of the employee.

“Given today’s increasingly mobile labor market and the heightened competition in many industries, it’s understandable that companies want to guard their talent closely,” the authors write. “But if the walls meant to protect human capital diminish the quality of the capital, they may not be worth building.”

Saying “No” to Noncompetes

Steven Jomides, president of Lawns by Yorkshire in Westwood, N.J., is one contractor who doesn’t think noncompete agreements make the best business sense. The $10-million company, which offers commercial maintenance services, used to require employees to sign noncompetes, but Jomides recently stopped putting as much emphasis on them. He says his philosophy is simple: “If you offer good service and you make your customers happy, regardless of who comes and goes, you should keep your customers.”

Jomides says the costs to draft, maintain and enforce noncompete agreements outweighed any benefits his company saw in return. He also found the contracts difficult and time-consuming to enforce. Plus, there was the potential to upset clients if they were to get caught in the middle of a legal scuffle.

“Noncompetes aggravate everyone and, from a business perspective, I don’t think it’s a good decision,” Jomides says. “We hire people who bring work in, and people who leave take work with them. We have come to accept that as part of doing business.”

Some experts believe Jomides may have the right idea. A recent Harvard Business Review article—authored by On Amir, associate professor of marketing at University of California, San Diego, and Orly Lobel, a professor of labor and employment law at the University of San Diego—reports noncompete clauses are a standard feature of many employment contracts, but they often can be a double-edged sword.

Research shows innovation, productivity and economic growth all are greater in parts of the country where noncompete agreements are not permitted or enforced. The authors also conclude limits on future employment decrease workers’ perceived ownership of their jobs and diminish their desires to exert themselves and develop their skills—factors that can be more detrimental to a company’s success than the actual loss of the employee.

“Given today’s increasingly mobile labor market and the heightened competition in many industries, it’s understandable that companies want to guard their talent closely,” the authors write. “But if the walls meant to protect human capital diminish the quality of the capital, they may not be worth building.”
Living your dream is always in season. At American Family Insurance we want to do more than just insure your business. We want to give you the tools to grow your dream. We’re the only insurance company with an award-winning Business Accelerator Program that arms you with results-driven business coaching at no extra cost, even if you don’t have a policy with us. We also offer Safety Consulting, which helps prevent risks so you can focus on your bottom line.

Learn more or find an agent at AMFAM.COM/BUSINESSINSURANCE or call 1-800-MY AMFAM. Your dream is out there. Go get it. We’ll protect it.
Service relief

Jerry McKay sheds light on how hiring a lighting service tech freed his team from the burden of service calls. By SARAH PFLEDDERER

When eight landscape lighting professionals gathered for The Lighting Summit 2014, hosted by McKay Landscape Lighting Jan. 22-23 in Omaha, Neb., their conversations went beyond manufacturer preferences and installation methods.

In fact, the conference touched on none of that. Somewhere between the peer-to-peer networking, chatter about marketing techniques and a tour of McKay's facility and projects, Jerry McKay brought up a topic that prompted every head to nod in agreement.

“Service sometimes gets in the way of your business,” the owner of McKay Landscape Lighting said, and recalled when it was worst for his company.

It was 17 years ago, when McKay Landscape Lighting was a $250,000 company and had two two-man crews.

“We got so many service calls in the early days,” McKay said. His employees struggled to keep up on installations and existing customers were disgruntled with slow response times.

McKay’s solution: Delegate the service jobs to a single person, a service tech.

Now a $1 million to $2 million company with two service techs, McKay said the company’s service department reaps 25 percent of its annual revenue.

PREPARING FOR THE HIRE

As with any move that will grow a company, there are costs associated with forming a tech position. McKay said he looked at it as “creating another profit center.”

Thorough planning, he adds, is key to onboarding a service tech.

Before hiring, map out a job description that addresses what that person will be doing in their downtime, such as taking inventory, cleaning the shop or doing small installs and upgrades, because they won’t be busy with service calls 40 hours per week at first—that will come later, McKay said.

In terms of investing in the position, McKay purchased a new truck, toolboxes, a ladder rack and a surplus of lighting supplies—bulbs, wires, transformers, etc.—to fill the vehicle.

“It’s gotta be like Noah’s ark,” McKay said. “He’s gotta have a couple of everything.”

It’s equally important to equip techs with information, he said. Give them access to job histories, such as notes on the original install, any add-ons and past service calls. McKay’s techs have netbooks that allow them to log in remotely to access customers’ job histories.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

Hiring a service tech is “an art,” McKay

The American Society of Landscape Architects unveiled findings from its 2014 Residential Landscape Architecture Trends Survey, which showed lighting, low-maintenance landscapes and native plants to be in demand. The category of gardens and landscaped spaces received a 94 percent rating as somewhat or very popular.

Outdoor living spaces were second most popular at 92 percent. Visit ow.ly/ubWwX for the full results.

John Deere debuted its 4 Family of compact utility tractors. The units, with Final Tier 4 engines, will hit dealerships in April.

MARKETWATCH

DESIGN/BUILD

The Ticker: