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Butch Dellis grew his lawn care company from a one-man second job into a more than **\$1-million revenue machine** while working full time as a firefighter.



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DEPARTMENTS

4 **Editor's Insight:** Tick, tick, tick

6 **LL Insider:** Latest industry news

18 **Huston:** Covering auto costs

20 **Wilson:** Organize your org chart

22 **Harvesters:** Build your qualified customer program

24 **Bray:** Pesticide policy debates

50 **An Average Day:** Mike Bogan

FEATURES



The drive toward automation

36 While awareness around robotic mowers is increasing, landscapers who've embraced the technology have few regrets.

Take on any terrain

42 The latest UTVs can be an essential addition to your fleet.

Trucks trends

44 The market is seeing an uptick in electronic and hybrid models.



SNOW & ICE
REPORT 32

DID YOU KNOW?



Investing in autonomous mowers can help offset a labor shortage. PG. 40



MORE THAN A SIDE GIG

Butch Dellis grew his lawn care company from a one-man second job into a more than **\$1-million revenue machine** while working full time as a firefighter.

26



Brian Horn
Editor, Lawn & Landscape

"As we talk to these leaders about their average day, I'm hoping you can pull out a lesson or two about better managing your time."

Tick, tick, tick

Father Time. It's undefeated.

Second by second, our weeks, months and 2020 as a whole (thank goodness, right?) is coming closer to an end.

But that's why time management is so important. Whether you run your own company or are an entry-level employee, how you use your time can give you a big advantage in being successful against the competition.

We hope you take a few of those minutes to check out a new back page feature we're introducing called "On an Average Day." Each month, we'll feature a company owner or executive taking us through, you guessed it, what their average day looks like.

Kicking off the new feature is Mike Bogan, CEO of Landcare – a \$186-million company with more than 3,000 employees. I wanted Mike to launch the feature because the idea stemmed from a conversation I had with him during a bus ride at our Top 100 event last year.

Somehow, we got to talking about his morning routine and he said he wakes up at 5 a.m. but doesn't check his phone until 7 a.m. I was amazed by that. Not to mention he's on the West Coast, so most of the country is working by then. But the two hours to get his mind right daily makes him more effective.

I use my phone as my alarm clock, and check my mail within 10 minutes of waking up. It's a habit I'm trying to break, and it could be as simple as buying an alarm clock and leaving my phone on the other side of the room.

As we talk to these leaders about their average day, I'm hoping you can pull out a lesson or two about better managing your time or learning a process to make your company more efficient.

Everyone has different life circumstances – even Mike admits his day looked a lot different while he and his wife raised their family. But what we all have in common are those 24 hours in each day. I know you will be able to learn a better way to organize your day with every new profile we write. – *Brian Horn*

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EDITORIAL

BRIAN HORN EDITOR bhorn@gie.net
JIMMY MILLER ASSISTANT EDITOR jmillers@gie.net
KIM LUX ASSISTANT EDITOR klux@gie.net
JIM HUSTON J.R. HUSTON ENTERPRISES jhuston@giemedia.com
BRUCE WILSON & COMPANY bwilson@giemedia.com
THE HARVEST GROUP harvest@giemedia.com
KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

CREATIVE

JUSTIN ARMBURGER ART DIRECTOR jarmburger@gie.net

ADVERTISING/PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

CATILIN MCCOY cmccoy@gie.net

SALES

DAVID SZY PUBLISHER dszy@gie.net
TRACI MUELLER ACCOUNT MANAGER tmueller@gie.net
BRIAN MAY ACCOUNT MANAGER bmay@gie.net
DANNY WALSH ACCOUNT MANAGER dwalsh@gie.net
RUSSELL WARNER NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGER rwarner@gie.net
STEVEN WEBB CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING SALES swebb@gie.net

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RICHARD FOSTER CHAIRMAN
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Embracing leadership through change

This year's Women in the Green Industry event focused on making the most of these uncertain times while also bolstering women's presence in landscaping.

By Kim Lux

The coronavirus pandemic has caused plenty to change. From the way business is done, to people working remotely, 2020 has brought along all sorts of obstacles. Attendees of SiteOne Landscape Supply's annual Women in the Green Industry (WIGI) event learned how to cope with these challenges and lead through them.

WIGI was held virtually in October and featured four presentations on a variety of topics along with supplier-partner exhibits and live chats.

CHANGING THE WAY YOU MAKE CHANGES. The keynote was delivered by Dr. Michelle Rozen and titled "Leading Forward through Change with Confidence."

Rozen shared personal stories from her own life about making changes and empowering yourself to stick with those changes.



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Rozen, who has a PhD in psychology, gave an analogy of a person waiting for the elevator and hitting the button multiple times while waiting for the elevator to arrive.

"Why does our mind cause us to do things that don't make any sense, just to get the same result?" she asked.

In order to adopt new behaviors and make an effective change, Rozen pointed out that a person is working against their own brain, which wants to remain in its "default setting." Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the state of the world, Rozen said being able to lead through change is more important now than ever.

Rozen then shared five steps with attendees so they could lead more effectively through these difficult times.

She said the first step is to empower yourself and those around you.



FROM TOP LEFT: Jennifer Myers, Jaclyn Ishimaru-Gachina, Brigitte Orrick and Jennifer Lemcke all joined SiteOne's Women in the Green Industry event, which was hosted virtually due to the pandemic.

"Be present and give people your undivided attention," Rozen said.

According to Rozen the second step is a critical one – focus.

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WIGI INCLUDED FOUR IN-DEPTH PRESENTATIONS AND LIVE CHATS WITH SUPPLIER-PARTNER EXHIBITORS.

"We spend major time on minor things," she said.

Rozen suggested that attendees learn to utilize her "0-10 Rule" to rate all tasks and goals. She said to focus on the 10s first and ignore anything that was under a 6.

Step three from Rozen was overcoming mind biases. She advised the group to block out criticism that is inevitable when making changes.

Rozen said step four is to adhere to the "20 Minute Rule" and take a short break from a task that is causing stress and come back to it later when you're refreshed.

"Wait it out like a pot on a hot stove," Rozen said. "When you come back it will be cooler and you won't burn your hands."

And Rozen's fifth step was simple – believe in yourself.

Following her keynote, Rozen also facilitat-

ated a workshop where attendees were able to share goals they had, and how they would achieve them and she gave them encouragement and guidance.

H-2B KNOW-HOW. WIGI also included a presentation on the H-2B process by Scott Patterson, a shareholder with Detroit-based law firm Butzel Long.

Patterson discussed the legal requirements and considerations for seeking H-2B visa labor, along with the timing, costs, certifications and other aspects of the process.

Patterson said that while some attendees may have been hiring H-2B labor for years, it's important to review your process regularly.

"You don't want to just copy and paste what you did last year," he said.

Patterson shared that annually, there are 133,000 workers entering the country on

H-2B visas and about 70% are from Mexico.

"The landscaping and lawn service industries are huge users of H-2B labor," Patterson said.

Because of the high demand, Patterson suggested starting the process early as it usually takes around 120 days.

Patterson also said there are a few changes this year to keep in mind, including new filing fees and no longer having to post a newspaper ad for the job beforehand.

One of the new fees is the \$1,440 premium processing fee. While premium processing is optional, Patterson said anyone who wants to be in contention should pay it.

"Premium processing has essentially become regular processing, so assume you'll have to pay the fee," he said.

Patterson also touched on what COVID-19 has done to the H-2B process and what the



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year ahead could hold. Earlier this summer, President Donald Trump halted H-2B visas until Dec. 31, 2020.

"What is going to happen in 2021 is still unknown," Patterson said. "They're still processing applications. We will all have to wait and see."

CELEBRATING WOMEN IN GREEN. Next on the agenda was a panel titled "A Forward Focus: Recruiting, Retaining and Empowering Women in the Landscape Industry" with members of the National Association of Landscape Professional's (NALP) Women in Landscape Network.

The discussion was moderated by NALP's Jennifer Myers and also included Brigitte Orrick with The Davey Tree Expert Company; H. Jaclyn Ishimaru-Gachina from Gachina Landscape Management; and Jennifer Lemcke with Weed Man.

The women touched on a variety of topics including maternity leave and pregnancy, promotion and advancement in the workplace, mentorship, inclusion and creating a work/life balance.



SPEAKERS AT WIGI COVERED TOPICS LIKE H-2B VISAS AND WAYS THE INDUSTRY CAN BETTER RECRUIT AND RETAIN WOMEN.

Recently, Ishimaru-Gachina noted Gachina Landscape has been promoting women in the industry on social media as a way to attract more women to her company.

Orrick and Lemcke said their companies have been working to get better fitting uniforms, safety gear and tools for female employees, along with having appropriate restroom facilities available for them near jobsites.

"We identified important things that women have to have to be successful," Orrick said.

Lemcke added that women becoming more involved in the industry has been a natural progression at Weed Man with many women owning franchises.

Ishimaru-Gachina said that while hiring women is essential - it's not enough.

"It's not important to just hire them but we need to promote them to be decision makers," she said. "We need to give them the opportunity to affect change."

Lemcke and Orrick said their companies are mapping long-term job plans that documents a clear pathway on how to move into an executive role.

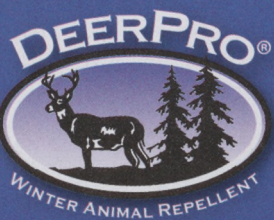
The group also discussed how working from home in the midst of the pandemic can affect attendees' work/life balances.

Lemcke shared that finding a balance has always been a struggle for her, and she accepts that most times the scale will be uneven.

"It's very hard to have balance," she said. "It just doesn't always balance out."

Orrick agreed and said that the most important thing to do is recognize that everyone is in the same boat and take it easy on yourself and others.

"Just give yourself grace," Orrick said.



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CUTTING EDGE SERVICES ACQUIRES PARKSIDE LANDSCAPING

The Colorado-based Parkside Landscaping was founded in 1992.

BOISE, Idaho – Cutting Edge Services, a commercial landscape company in Idaho and Utah, recently acquired Parkside Landscaping in Denver, Colorado.

This acquisition will enable Cutting Edge to expand and strengthen its position in the Colorado market. More acquisitions are planned to further enhance geographic reach.

Parkside Landscaping was founded in 1992 and provides landscape maintenance



GENE BAKER WILL CONTINUE TO LEAD PARKSIDE LANDSCAPING AFTER THE ACQUISITION.

and snow removal services to the greater Denver area.

Gene Baker, president of Parkside Landscaping, will continue to lead the company

alongside the new ownership group. "We are very excited to partner with Cutting Edge," he said. "This will allow Parkside to strengthen our presence in the Front Range while creating more advancement opportunities for our team members."

"We are looking forward to growing the Denver market while continuing to expand our operational footprint in the western United States," said Cutting Edge Co-Founder Ben Helton.

Bob Wheeler, Cutting Edge co-founder, said, "Expansion into Denver has been a long-term goal of ours, and we could not have picked a better company to partner with. Gene and his highly skilled team are a great addition to our operation."

You can learn more about Cutting Edge by reading *Lawn & Landscape's* December 2019 feature at bit.ly/lcuttingedge.



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BRIGHTVIEW ACQUIRES COMMERCIAL TREE CARE IN CALIFORNIA

The purchase of CTC followed the sale of BrightView Tree Company to Devil Mountain Nursery.

BLUE BELL, Pa. – BrightView Holdings recently acquired Commercial Tree Care, a full-service tree care company based in San Jose, Calif. The purchase of CTC followed the sale of BrightView Tree Company to Devil Mountain Nursery of San Ramon, Calif. Terms of the transactions were not disclosed.

Founded in 1992, CTC is a full-service tree care provider specializing in pruning, tree

removal, stump grinding, cabling, bracing, fertility treatment, pest and disease control, install and transplant, forestry fire fighting and timber harvesting.

The company also consults for development, appraisal, maintenance plans and overall site evaluation.

“The acquisition of Commercial Tree strengthens BrightView’s maintenance opera-

tions in Northern California and positions us to be the foremost tree care service provider in the San Francisco Bay Area,” said President and CEO Andrew Masterman. “The acquisition of CTC followed the sale of BrightView Tree Company, a tree nursery division that typically generated between \$25 million and \$30 million in revenue. Redeploying assets from our Development segment to our Maintenance segment is consistent with our overall strategic growth plan.”

“I believe that Commercial Tree Care shares much in common with BrightView and this transaction provides a solid foundation in which to continue our growth in the greater Bay Area,” said CTC President Todd Huffman.

Huffman, along with his senior leadership team, will remain with BrightView and continue to run the day-to-day operation of the business.



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LANDCARE ASSUMES ROSBOROUGH PARTNERS' COMMERCIAL BUSINESS

RPI announced recently that it would narrow its focus to residential services.

Rosborough Partners, a landscape design, build, and maintenance firm in the Chicagoland area, has narrowed its focus to residential services and selected LandCare to assume its commercial business.

For the past 30 years, RPI has provided full-service landscaping solutions to commercial and residential clients. RPI partner Blaine Owens will now lead the integration with LandCare as vice president of client relations, while founder Philip Rosborough will continue to lead RPI.

"This is an exciting time for our commercial team. They are joining an industry leader with core values and a culture that closely resembles ours – putting their people and customers first," Rosborough said. "And Rosborough Partners will continue to grow our residential design, build and maintenance business in the same manner that we have in the past."

This merger marks LandCare's entry into Chicagoland and Milwaukee, just months after branching out to Columbus, Ohio, and Indianapolis.

LandCare partner and executive vice president Neil Carter, who has been instrumental in expanding the company's presence in the Midwest, said he believes that LandCare will benefit from assuming RPI's strong, existing infrastructure.

"Rosborough Partners built a strong commercial maintenance business focused on premier properties across the market," he said. "In addition to a talented, well-led team, they have a balanced portfolio of loyal customers. We are excited to build on such a solid foundation to enter and serve the greater Chicago area."

"I am excited to grow our business with the support of a larger partner exclusively focused on commercial maintenance," Owens said. "I've known and respected Neil and many of the leaders at LandCare for over three decades, so reorganizing our team under people I know and trust is incredibly reassuring and makes the transition much easier."



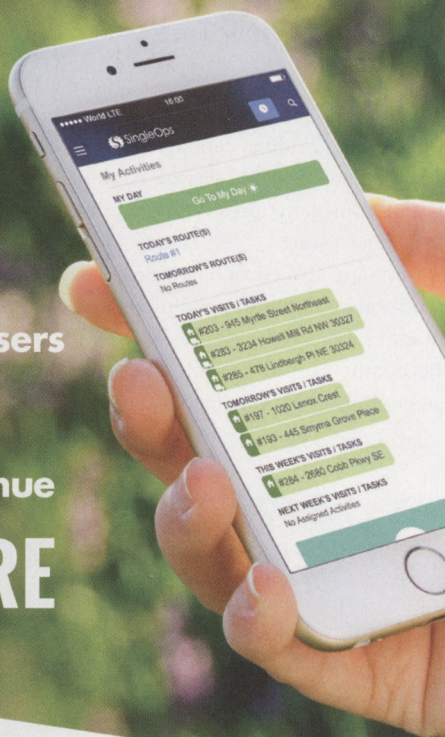
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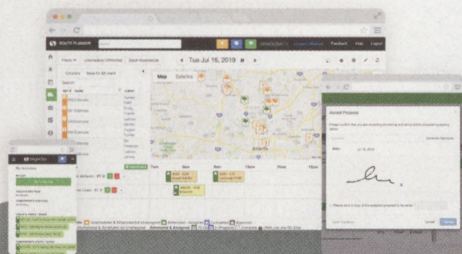
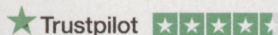
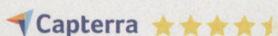
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RUPPERT HIRES PAM BERRIOS AS DIRECTOR OF MULTICULTURAL TRAINING

In this newly created role, she will develop and deliver training programs to empower the company's diverse workforce.

LAYTONSVILLE, Md. – Ruppert Landscape has added Pam Berrios to the team as director of multicultural training and development.

In this newly created role, she will develop and deliver training programs specifically designed to grow and empower the company's diverse workforce; particularly Spanish-speaking team members.

Berrios, a resident of Springfield, Virginia,



**BERRIOS ONCE SERVED ON THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
NATIONAL HISPANIC LANDSCAPE ALLIANCE.**

holds a bachelor's degree in business from George Mason University and owned a full-service landscaping company in the northern

Virginia area for 24 years. She served on the board of directors of the National Hispanic Landscape Alliance for eight years, where she held many titles including main trainer, speaker, secretary, treasurer, vice president and then president of the association. She is a certified bilingual trainer, coach and motivational speaker and has traveled all over the country as the lead instructor of the acclaimed ELEVATE Program en Español.

"Pam's unique ability to fully connect with team members sets her apart, and her experience as a previous company owner gives her extraordinary insight into proven methods of growth and success," said Mike Monde, Ruppert's director of training and culture. "She has dedicated her entire career to helping people realize their full potential, and we hope she continues on that journey for many years to come here at Ruppert."

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REAL GREEN SYSTEMS NAMES ROBINSON AS COO

With more than 20 years of experience, Tim Robinson will be responsible for key business functions in this new position.

WALLED LAKE, Mich. – Tim Robinson has joined the Real Green Systems team as chief operating officer. He will be responsible for company operations, customer engagement and continued expansion.

In this new position, Robinson will be responsible for key business functions as he oversees the business development, corporate marketing, customer success, marketing services and sales organizations.

With more than two decades of experience leading marketing, sales, business development, product management and support teams, Robinson was most recently chief operating officer of FMG Suite. Prior to that, he served as chief operating officer at FRONTSTEPS and subsequently as an Advisor to FRONTSTEPS.

YELLOWSTONE LANDSCAPE PARTNERS WITH ACRES GROUP

Yellowstone ranked No. 5 on Lawn & Landscape's Top 100 list in 2020, while Acres Group finished 27th.

PALM COAST, Fla. – Yellowstone Landscape has partnered with Acres Group, based in Wauconda, Illinois. Yellowstone does not disclose terms of partnerships or other confidential information.

Yellowstone ranked No. 5 on Lawn & Landscape's Top 100 list in 2020, while Acres Group finished 27th with an annual revenue of \$69,355,727 and 865 employees.

Yellowstone Landscape, based in Bunnell, Florida, operates over 40 branch locations across the South and Southwest. In partnering with Acres, Yellowstone has now expanded into the Midwest.

Founded in 1983 by Jim Schwantz, Acres Group provides landscape maintenance, snow and ice removal, tree care, irrigation, and plant health care services. Schwantz, Jeff Kelly, Paul Washburn, Riley Skaggs and the Acres management team they lead will continue to run the company's operations and growth.

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COVERING AUTO COSTS

→ IN MY LAST COLUMN, I said that the total of all costs (fuel, repairs, mechanics, depreciation, insurance, etc.) for trucks, autos and field equipment for a green industry company usually runs 12% plus/minus 2% of revenue. A \$1-million company would have about \$120,000 of such costs. All of these costs should be passed on to your customers (with an appropriate margin added to them) in your pricing for your services and projects. This article will explain how to do so.

CALCULATING THE COST PER HOUR (CPH) FOR A SKID-STEER.

The total cost per hour (TCPH) for a truck, automobile or piece of equipment is comprised of three components. They are the acquisition CPH, the maintenance CPH and the fuel CPH. Costs for our example skid-steer are calculated over a six-year useful lifetime at 500 billable hours per year for a total of 3,000 lifetime billable hours. I always aim to overstate the costs and understate the lifetime hours. This ensures that I do not understate the TCPH. Essentially, what you are doing is dividing the lifetime costs for an item by its lifetime billable hours.

1. Acquisition CPH: Includes the purchase price, interest paid, sales tax, toolboxes, paint/wraps and upgrades (for trucks and autos) minus any salvage value upon trade in or sale. It is \$60,000 lifetime for our skid-steer, or \$20 per hour ($\$60,000 \div 3,000$).

2. Maintenance CPH: Includes inland marine insurance (or vehicle insurance), maintenance services, oil changes, tires and tire repairs (or tracks and track repairs), washing of same, registrations and so forth. We estimate our skid-steer to cost \$5,000 per year or \$30,000 lifetime. This is \$10 per hour ($\$30,000 \div 3,000$).

3. Fuel CPH: We estimate our fuel consumption to be 2 gallons per hour at \$3 per gallon or \$6 per hour.

4. Total CPH: Our total CPH is: \$20 ACPH + \$10 MCPH + \$6 FCPH = \$36

HOW IT WORKS. If you plan to run this skid-steer five hours per day on a job, you'd multiply the $\$36 \times 5 = \180 per day cost. You would then add a 25-35% margin to this figure to arrive at a price to charge your customer.

$$\$180 \div (1 - .35) = \$180 \div .65 = \$277$$

Note: The margin is \$97 ($\$277 - 180$) or 35%

When estimating the costs for a project, you would total the estimated number of hours the skid-steer would run on the job and multiply that figure by the TCPH. You would then add an appropriate margin to the total cost.

MARKETING EQUIPMENT COSTS. I'd argue from a cost-analysis perspective that the \$36 TCPH is a reasonable cost figure for the skid-steer in question. However, the question becomes how much margin should you add to that figure to charge your customer? This is a marketing question.

I like to use common benchmarks from the marketplace that the customer is familiar with when it comes to calculating an amount to charge the customer. In a normal economy, I'd add a minimum margin of 25-35%. I may charge less than this in a recession. Because rental shops would reinforce my charge to the customer, I'd consider charging rental rates to residential customers. I'd discount this somewhat for commercial customers.

One client told me that he charged \$500 per day for an installation crew member. Since putting a skid-steer on a job was like putting at least one extra crew member on it, he charged \$500 per day for the machine (without an operator).

I told him that as long as he could charge that amount without getting any push-back, he should do so. In a robust economy, the customer's primary concern is schedule (when can you start?). However, in a recession, the customer's number one concern is price. Research local rental rates if you're unsure how much to charge for a particular piece of equipment. Such rates should help you determine how much to charge your customers. **L&L**

↓
THE ECONOMY, AS WELL AS YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY, can determine how you pass auto costs on to the customer.

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ORGANIZE THE ORG CHART

→ **ORG CHARTS ARE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS** of business strategy. Yet, as companies go through different growth cycles, their organizational needs change while organization chart models remain unchanged. As a result, there can be a degree of dysfunction and things seem harder to control.

This is a symptom, not the cause. With business continuously evolving, nothing stays the same for long. Roles and responsibilities and shifting work structures can be disrupted during rapid growth – is that what is happening? Or is it something deeper?

CEOs are under increasing pressure to keep pace and structure, and systems and processes need regular fine tuning. No matter how well the org chart is set up, the root cause often centers on span of control and owners and subordinates question the number of direct reports.

In our peer group meetings, when owners bring this issue to the table, the conversation inevitably jumps to the number of direct reports. Unfortunately, this can lead to adding more hierarchical layers.

Many organizational problems are caused by poor performance. Before you start restructuring the boxes or adding positions, think about each position's KPIs, and evaluate strengths and weaknesses objectively based on performance against them.

For example:

- **Crew Leaders:** High-performing crew leaders seldom have jobsite issues. Strong crew leaders take a lot of pressure off production managers, and account or project managers. If a crew leader underperforms or if the position is a weak link due to turnover or not being able to find or develop new ones, the slippage trickles up the reporting ladder, overwhelming supervisors, managers and so on. Adding a new position or level does not fix the root cause if it is at the crew leader level.
- **Account Manager:** The weak link can be at other levels, too. Ineffective account management can result in unhappy customers, renewal issues and have a detrimental impact on bigger, more rewarding opportunities for company growth. Is the account manager weak or is the problem weak crew leaders?
- **Turnover:** High turnover compromises consistency and impacts an organization's ability to run like a well-oiled machine. New people are learning on the job, there's poor morale and new hires struggle to fast track. Turnover can create weaknesses at all levels.

Ask good questions to fix what's broken:

1. How does your company's dysfunction, inefficiency, conflict or tension show up in your day-to-day?

2. What issues make you feel that you have an organizational problem?
3. Can greater functionality be addressed through training, upgrading, upskilling, DiSC assessment, culture improvements?
4. At what level are your issues the most severe, and where are the problems originating?
5. Are you happy with the performance of the people you have in key roles?
6. If you fixed the weak links, would it solve the problem?
7. How do your people feel about how things are actually working? They experience stress differently than people at the top.
8. An obstacle to fixing the org chart is trying to work around people in the chart. You should try building the chart without names then put people in the slots. You will get a more functional org chart.
9. How efficient is your current workflow? Do people have two bosses, or is reporting complicated?
10. How can job design and requirements be modified to deliver greater accountability?

If, after going through this exercise, you feel that disconnects still exist, then it might be time to look more closely at creating fundamental change. Many times, org charts can look good on paper but don't work in practice. And while these challenges may seem operational, they could be a byproduct of organizational decision-making.

You can improve the odds of company alignment by making sure your org chart matches your strategic intent. Every position on the chart should, ideally, support your goals and work together to achieve them. **L&L**

↓
**BEFORE ADDING
A NEW POSITION**
to fill a gap, taking
some time to
re-evaluate your
org chart can help.







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BUILD YOUR QUALIFIED CUSTOMER PROGRAM

→ DOES THIS SCENARIO SOUND FAMILIAR TO YOU? You receive a call for what sounds like a great new project. It is a complete backyard renovation with a stone patio, pergola, fire pit and screen plantings.

You jump in your car and drive 45 minutes to meet the new prospect. You then spend two hours walking through the project with the prospect exchanging design ideas and potential budgets. You are about to wrap things up and head back to the office to start designing the project when they mention their timeline. The project needs to be completed in six weeks for their daughter's wedding. Your lead time is 10 weeks out, and you have no flexibility in the schedule. You have no choice but to politely turn down the project.

As you drive back to the office, you are kicking yourself for wasting 3½ hours of your time at a busy time of year. You will never get these hours back. How could this have been averted?

PRE-SCREEN AND QUALIFY YOUR PROSPECTS. You must find ways to work smarter, not harder. This starts with implementing a solid, well-structured pre-screening and qualifying program. The program should be documented and trained so several people in your organization can do the screening and pre-qualifying of the prospects that call.

Building the program has a number of facets to it:

PRE-SCREENING. This is the first step where you make sure that the prospect's project aligns with the work you do. The prospect may need a large tree removed from their property. You do not do arborist work, so you can let the prospect know that you do not offer this service. At that point you can end the call or refer the prospect to a company that you know does good work. Be careful when referring work to another contractor. The work they do reflects directly back to you. Referring to the wrong company could jeopardize future work with that client.

Given the right parameters, a receptionist or someone in your office with a good phone presence can perform this function.

QUALIFYING THE PROSPECT. Now that you have determined that this is a solid prospect, you need to qualify the prospect. This is where you talk in-depth with the prospect to get a better understanding of the scope of work and services needed to be sure this prospect is a good fit for your company. This function is generally performed by the salesperson or designer.

CREATE A SCRIPT. To be sure that you are carefully qualifying the prospects that call, it's important to follow a script so you cover all the critical questions. In the heat of the season, it is easy to hurry through

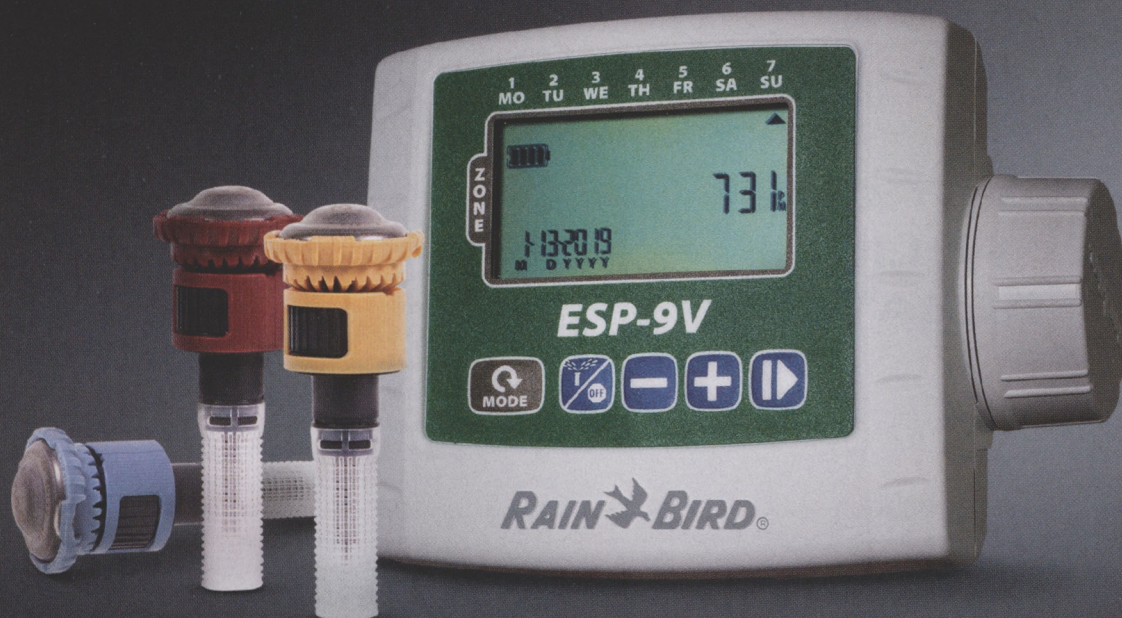
the qualifying process and move on to the next tasks. Having a script will allow a number of people in your organization to perform this function and will go a long way in assuring you that you will be meeting with a great prospect.

CREATE A LIST OF QUALIFIERS. The qualifiers will make sure that you are not chasing after prospects that you will never work with. Qualifiers should include:

- 1. Timing** – What is the client's timeline or deadline? Does it align with your schedule and backlog?
- 2. Minimum project size** – You should know what the minimum project size you do to ensure profitability. What is your cost to send out a three-man crew in one of your trucks fully equipped? Is it \$3,000? \$5,000? \$10,000? You cannot afford to run out to perform some small projects.
- 3. Location** – Is this project in your normal service area? If it is well beyond, you may want to turn it down unless it is a direct referral from one of your great existing clients.
- 4. Design Fees** – These fees are great qualifiers. If a prospect is unwilling to pay for design fees, it is highly likely that they are just out "shopping" for the lowest price.
- 5. Consultation fees** – Your initial meeting may be complimentary, but make sure the prospect knows that there is a one-hour limit. Beyond an hour, your hourly consultation fee should kick in. This will help prevent Mrs. Jones from walking you through her garden for three hours to pick your brain and get design ideas. By creating and documenting a solid pre-screening and qualifying process, your chances of finding a great new client go up exponentially along with your sales. The amount of wasted time in your day, will be drastically reduced as well. **L&L**

↓
YOUR INITIAL MEETING MAY BE COMPLIMENTARY, but make sure the prospect knows that there is a one-hour limit.

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LEGISLATIVE LANDSCAPE is an occasional column by Andrew Bray, vice president, government relations, for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

PESTICIDE POLICY DEBATES

As we prepare to turn the page on the 116th Congress and welcome in the 117th Congress in January, a shot across the bow of the green industry was made this summer. In August, Senator Tom Udall (D-NM) and Representative Joe Neguse (D-CO) in the House introduced the Protect America's Children from Toxic Pesticides Act of 2020 (H.R. 7940, S. 4406) which undermines 70 years of regulatory advancement based on best available science. H.R. 7940/ S. 4406 would drastically alter the way pesticides are regulated in the U.S. and would dismantle the Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) as we know it today. Some of the most onerous provisions proposed in this legislation include:

- Roll-back pesticide preemption and allow local communities to enact pesticide restrictions and bans even if the actions preempted by state law.
- Immediately ban large categories of pesticides including:
 - Organophosphates;
 - Neonicotinoids;
 - Paraquat; and
 - Any product banned or otherwise prohibited by the European Union, 1 or more countries in the European Union, or Canada until EPA completes a thorough scientific review of the product.
- Prohibit EPA from considering economic costs and product benefits in its registration decisions.
- Define a dangerous pesticide as an active ingredient or pesticide product that may:
 - Be carcinogenic;
 - Be acutely toxic;
 - Be an endocrine disruptor;
 - Cause harm to a pregnant woman or a fetus; or
 - Cause neurological or developmental harm.
- Blindly follow foreign regulatory process and require the suspension and review of pesticides deemed unsafe by Canada and the European Union which do not follow the FIFRA standards.

- Create a petition process to enable individual citizens to petition the EPA to identify dangerous pesticides. EPA must review citizen petitions and determine within 90 days if the pesticide meets the definition of a dangerous pesticide. If EPA fails to make a determination within 90 days, the pesticide will automatically be deemed a dangerous pesticide.

While it is unlikely this bill will move in this Congress, we must strongly oppose this bill now and use this time to educate lawmakers. Whether this bill comes back verbatim in the next Congress or several smaller bills are introduced representing certain aspects of this bill, or if we have a change in the Administration, will a Democratic controlled EPA set out to amend long standing FIFRA regulations? It is unclear how these attacks will come but it is certain that they will be coming. As an industry we need to be ready for an escalation of pesticide policy debates at the federal level in the next few years.

In September, NALP joined hundreds of national and state associations in supporting a letter that was sent to Congress in opposition of the anti-pesticide legislation. The green industry was very well represented on this letter with our partner groups representing the agriculture industry. Additionally, NALP began grassroots efforts to reinforce the message that this sort of drastic and misinformed anti-pesticide legislation is not acceptable.

The landscape industry, as part of the green industry, will need to work together in the coming months and years to educate new legislators and regulators at the federal level about what the landscape industry does to improve our environment and enrich the lives of our fellow citizens through healthy green spaces. We will also need to explain the professionalism of our industry and how we responsibly use EPA approved products while defending and preserving the FIFRA process. **L&L**

Editor's note: This article was written on Oct. 5, 2020. You can contact Bray at andrew@landscapeprofessionals.org for the most current information.

**BILLS PERTAINING
TO PESTICIDES
ARE CONTINUING**
to be introduced to Congress, and this year's election could also have an impact.



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MORE
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SIDE GIG

Butch Dellis grew his lawn care company from a one-man second job into a more than **\$1-million revenue machine** while working full time as a firefighter.

By Brooke Bilyj

AS A CAPTAIN IN THE TULSA FIRE DEPARTMENT,

Butch Dellis has to make quick, high-pressure decisions to lead firefighters safely through emergencies. But when he got serious about growing the supplemental lawn care business he tended to on his days off, Dellis faced a whole new challenge of knocking out figurative fires in the business world.

"You can't equate growing a business to time-compressed decision making on a fire ground incident," says Dellis, 47, who has been a firefighter for 21 years and owned his company for 19. "But there are definitely crossed paths when it comes to managing people and solving problems."

Through decades of balancing a full-time firefighting career with his company, Nutri-Green Professional Lawn Services, Dellis developed systems to keep his crews operating smoothly while he was off fighting literal fires. By borrowing leadership lessons from the fire service, Dellis took a tactical approach to building Nutri-Green from a one-man side job into a million-dollar revenue machine – and growing.

BALANCING ACT. With a baby on the way in 1996, Dellis needed some additional income to supplement his engineering job. When his friend requested help mowing lawns around Tulsa, Dellis agreed to join him in the field after work.

After a couple years, Dellis sold his half of the small lawn business to his partner to pursue his dream of becoming a firefighter. After joining the Tulsa Fire Department in 1999, Dellis – who was still working as an engineering consultant on the side – realized how much he missed lawn care. He approached his old partner, who agreed to refer his mowing clients to Dellis for weed control and fertilization. In 2001, Dellis launched Nutri-Green with a steady flow of business.

For several years, Dellis juggled three jobs. His fire service schedule – revolving 24 hours on, then 48 hours off – allowed him to work other jobs on his days off. "I would go spray some accounts, and then I'd work as an independent engineering contractor, then I'd be at the fire station," he says. "On my days off from the firehouse, I'd get up super early and start working on my commercial accounts (while it was) still dark outside."

To supplement lawn care treatments for weed control and fertilization, Dellis took on any odd yard jobs clients requested, from cleaning gutters to trimming trees. After all, as a firefighter, he was comfortable climbing ladders. "Being honest with my customers (about my schedule) was key," he says. "They knew I was a firefighter working on my days off."

Dellis worked alone for several years, eventually bringing his sister-in-law to help in the office and his brother-in-law in the field around 2007. He finally eased out of engineering work, but kept Nutri-Green small while he focused on raising his daughters and pursuing fire service promotions.



Butch Dellis missed lawn care when he first joined Tulsa's fire department.



Dellis formalized the Nutri-Green University training program, which includes sending study packets to new hires as soon as they accept a job offer.

FROM SIDE HUSTLE TO GRIND. While Nutri-Green provided “a nice side income” for his family, Dellis realized he was sitting on an untapped gold mine by keeping the company small. “There were a lot of jobs I wasn’t taking, so I knew I could generate some good revenue,” he says.

With limited promotional opportunities in the fire department and two growing daughters to support, Dellis decided to focus on growth – sparking the “rebirth” of Nutri-Green around 2012. “That transition period was tough,” he remembers. “I was juggling my time between knocking on doors, making calls, training and being in the field. It was very chaotic and stressful.”

To boost his growth strategy, Dellis began attending industry trade shows and networking with successful lawn care operators, who opened his mind to “more aggressive sales approaches, which created bigger spouts of growth,” he says. For example, Dellis

learned about software and digital marketing strategies that could propel his company forward faster than just knocking doors and mailing postcards. Leveraging advice and classes from industry conferences, Dellis transitioned from manual estimates to an automated marketing database and started using social media to drive more referrals.

Dellis’ relentless “grind” of sales efforts generated more business as he added digital and mass marketing to his mix. “As I grew my customer base, it allowed me to hire people to do the fieldwork,” says Dellis, who relied heavily on Craigslist to find employees. “My aunt began managing the customer accounts, which (allowed me) to focus on selling. As something got bigger, I would bring in a new person to handle it.”

By gradually growing his team and delegating responsibilities, Dellis began tapping into new revenue potential as he expanded Nutri-Green’s market share.

UNIVERSITY TRAINING. Tactical training is a critical component of fire service and safety, with intensive assessments and problem-solving exercises to sharpen firefighting skills. It comes as no surprise, then, that training became vital as Dellis built his Nutri-Green team.

“Training is one of the keys to our success. I have to instill processes that put everyone on the same page, because I have to be more hands-off (as an owner with another full-time career),” says Dellis, who formalized a program called Nutri-Green University around 2015. “The extensive training that we do solves problems before they occur.”

Nutri-Green’s initial training is tailored around Oklahoma’s applicator technician certification, with hiring dates scheduled a few days before the Department of Agriculture offers the licensing exam twice a month. Nutri-Green sends study packets to new hires as soon as they accept a job offer, then they review the material during orientation.

After acing the state applicator exam in the morning – with a 100% pass rate – Nutri-Green employees begin field training that afternoon. “They’re assigned a trainer in the field for extensive training that covers everything from customer service to equipment,” says Dellis, including a half-day in the office where they’re exposed to administrative work.

For example, the equipment training module teaches employees how to safely and properly use, clean and calibrate spraying

Training is one of the keys to our success.

I have to instill processes that put everyone on the same page, because I have to be more hands-off (as an owner with another full-time career)."

BUTCH DELDIS, owner, Nutri-Green

5 PERCENT

of every dollar of work an employee produces is given back to the employee. Once they exceed \$240,000 of production in a year, they earn an additional 3% bonus.

equipment to get consistent results. To put this training in action, Dellis sets up equipment obstacle courses – similar to the fire truck driving courses used by the fire department – with orange cones creating serpentine paths and narrow clearance zones that crews might encounter on customer properties.

As new hires float around to different route managers, trainers check their progress using checklists that indicate when each topic has been “introduced,” “in progress” and ultimately reached “satisfactory” understanding. This typically takes two or three weeks. At that point, the trainer steps back to observe while the new hire takes charge of the route for at least a week before going off on their own.

As a check-and-balance, Nutri-Green’s production manager evaluates performance through random property checks and monthly ride-a-longs for new and experienced employees alike. To keep employees sharp, Dellis also gives random pop quizzes about turf issues or customer service policies. For example, he might share a picture of a weed in the company’s Microsoft Teams chat room, and employees will send him private messages to identify it for a chance to win a small prize like a candy bar. Other times, he might hand out a small five-question quiz about weed control during the Wednesday morning team meeting, or call out individual employees to explain how they’d respond to certain customer service scenarios.

Crews also go through mandatory half-day training sessions before each of Nutri-Green’s seven annual weed control treatments, where they review the chemicals they’ll be spraying and the weeds they’re targeting. Vendor reps sometimes provide detailed presentations about common insects or diseases. To keep employees engaged, Dellis provides food, performance awards and even equipment competitions with his obstacle courses “to make it fun, break up the monotony and develop skills at the same time,” he says. “We’re trying to create an environment of learning where people keep striving to be better.”

SMOOTH OPERATION. Between two 24-hour shifts at the firehouse and 40 hours at his business, Dellis regularly swings 90-hour

workweeks – but he can’t be everywhere at once. This balancing act demands that he puts processes in place to keep operations running smoothly at Nutri-Green while he’s

fighting other fires.

“If you have good people and they understand and execute your policies,” Dellis says, “then good people can make great choices,



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so you have fewer problems.”

With no operations manager on his team, Dellis instead holds employees accountable to themselves and each other with an incentiv-

ized bonus system. Instead of basing salaries on hourly rates alone, Nutri-Green offers up to \$20,000 a year in potential incentives that employees earn by hitting certain metrics

related to service, production and quality.

For example, Nutri-Green tracks employees' net promoter score (which measures their customers' willingness to recommend their service) using an app called Podium that crews use to text customers a link to review them after each visit. To earn the quarterly NPS bonus, employees need an average score of at least 75.

To reward production, Nutri-Green incentivizes employees by paying 5% for every dollar of work they produce. Once they exceed \$240,000 of production in a year, they earn an additional 3% bonus. While most incentives are individualized, the team can also earn an extra \$50 each month if everyone meets their biweekly team production goals. Dellis says this promotes teamwork, where crews help each other to reach goals together.

Service call volume offers another potential bonus. By dividing each employee's service calls by the number of production stops on their route, Dellis calculates a percentage of service calls per production to keep it fair regardless of route size. A service call rate of less than 2-3.5% in a month earns another \$50.

“We put a lot of responsibility on our route managers. That's why we call them route managers, not technicians, because they're not just there to do a technical job; they're there to take care of the customer's needs,” Dellis says. “Since we moved to this system, I've had route managers tell me that they're finding themselves slowing down in the lawn and making sure they're more thorough.”

GROWING SUCCESS. Extensive training, team goals and transparency keep Nutri-Green employees accountable, whether Dellis is in the office or at the firehouse. By implementing these systems, Dellis grew Nutri-Green from \$152,000 in 2012, past the million-dollar mark in 2018 and is on pace to hit \$1.4 million in 2020.

While Dellis admits that he's missed out on some growth opportunities because half of his time is devoted to another career, he believes that his dual nature adds value to both ventures by honing his leadership skills.

“I found two careers that I'm very passion-

Continues on pg. 46

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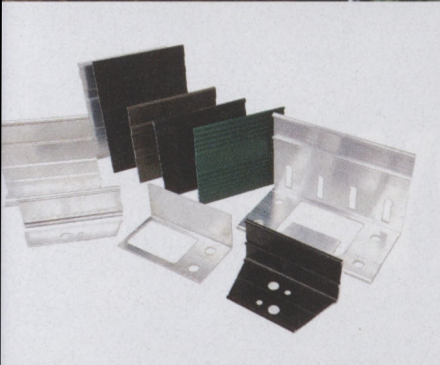
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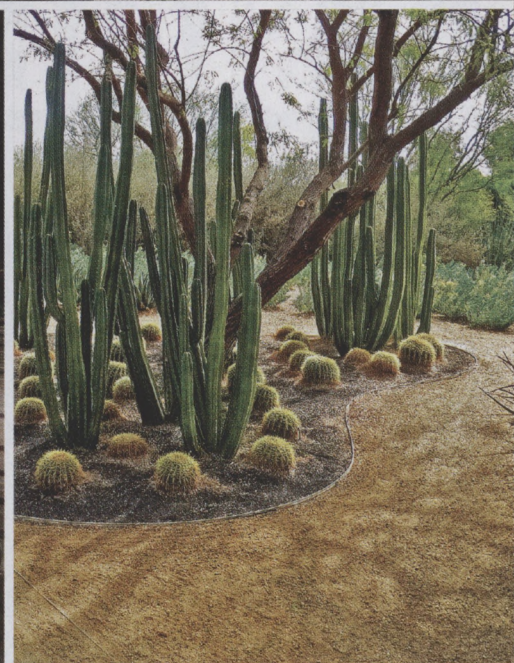




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2020 STATE OF THE SNOW INDUSTRY

OUR BENCHMARKING REPORT examines how the average snow and ice professional fared during Winter 2019-20.

It's been a crazy year to say the least. Not only was the industry hampered by another low-snow, low-event winter, but just past the mid-winter point, we experienced the onslaught of a global pandemic that impacted every business in our economy.

As commercial and retail businesses furloughed workers and closed offices and manufacturing plants, many of you were concerned that, even if it did begin snowing again, would your services be needed? Or worse, would your clients have the means to continue paying for services? The implications of an economic and financial domino effect were appalling.

While it's fair to say no one was left unscathed by COVID-19's impact, the 2020 State of the Industry data seems to indicate that the industry did persevere, and snow and ice management contractors – perhaps through a combination of thoughtful preplanning and good luck – man-

aged to keep their heads above water and make it through to more solid footing this past spring.

Here are some of the highlights from this year's report. According to the research data, more than a third of snow pros reported an increase in their gross revenues last winter over the previous season, and on average, contractors saw around \$1.5 million to \$1.7 million in gross revenues generated primarily from commercial contracts (62% of the overall average portfolio). Profit margins last winter hovered around the 50% mark for snow plowing (41% profit margin) and ice mitigation/management (47 percent). The following pages go into further detail on Winter 2019-20's impact on the average contractors' snow and ice management operations. And keep an eye out for additional in-depth reporting on the State of the Industry data findings in upcoming editions of the Snow Magazine Enewsletter.

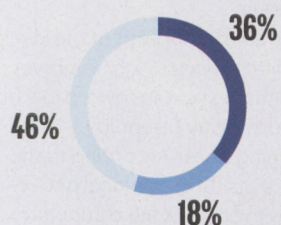


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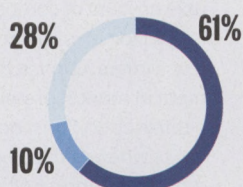
WINTER 2019-20 AVERAGE GROSS REVENUE

GROSS REVENUE:
2019-20 VS WINTER 2018-19

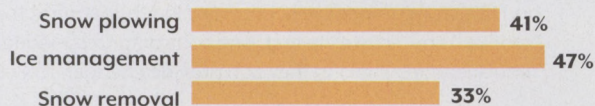


● Increased ● No change ● Decreased

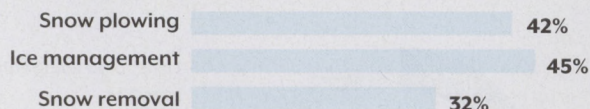
GROSS REVENUE:
2018-19 VS WINTER 2017-18



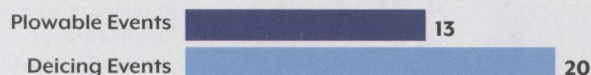
WINTER 2019-20 AVERAGE PROFIT MARGIN



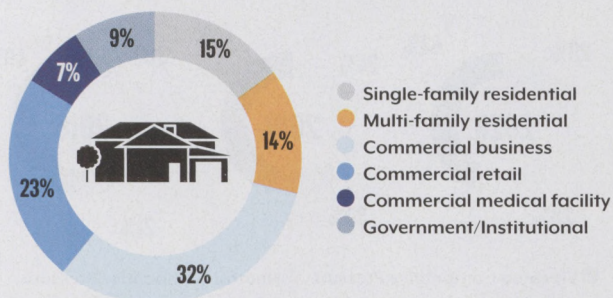
WINTER 2018-19 AVERAGE PROFIT MARGIN



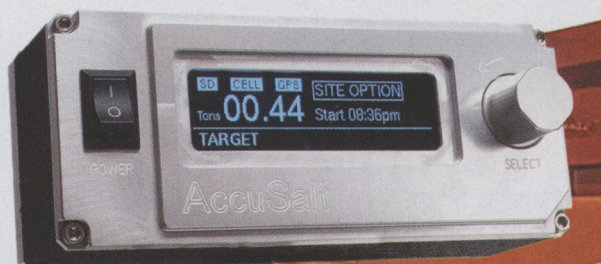
WINTER 2019-20 BILLABLE EVENTS



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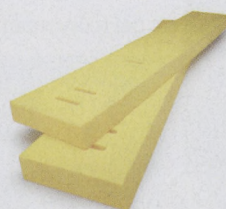


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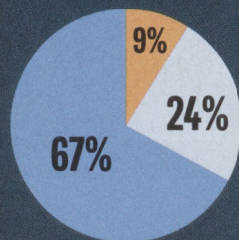
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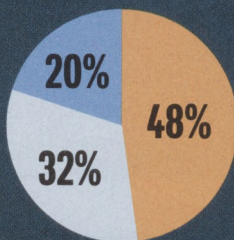
Snow contractors highlight some tech trends and challenges for the near term

Invest in alt-fuel/electric equipment and vehicles



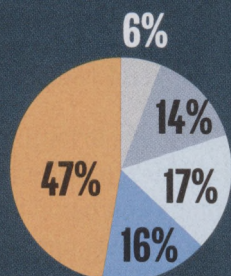
● Likely ● Uncertain/Neutral ● Unlikely

Invest in technology to streamline and increase efficiency



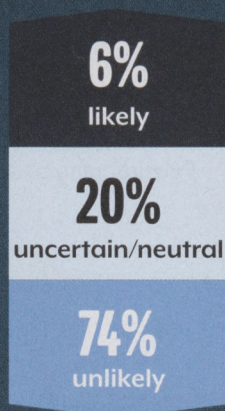
INSURANCE

Availability of liability



● Insurmountable challenge
● Significant challenge
● Manageable challenge
● Light challenge
● Not a business challenge

In the next 3 to 5 years, I will leave the industry due to lack of affordable insurance options



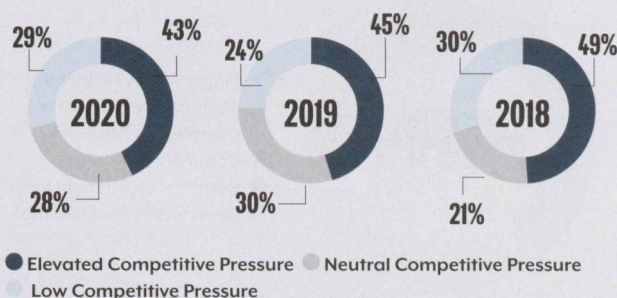
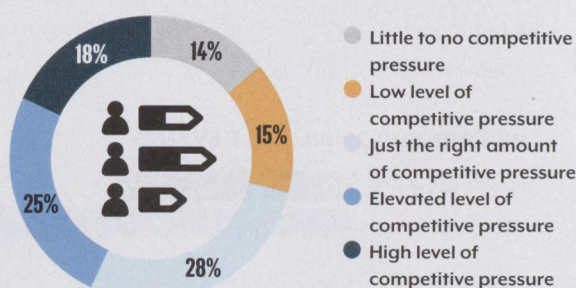
COMPETITIVE PRESSURES

NEARLY HALF (43%) of snow and ice professionals report operating in a high-pressure market, according to industry data. In contrast, 29% of respondents report low to very little competitive pressures in their market. And just short of a third of respondents (28%) report their market maintains a comfortable amount of competitive pressure.

And for a historical perspective, when looking at the last few winters, contractors appear to report a slight improvement in market pressure with a modest swing toward low or neutral conditions, according to industry research.

So, where is this pressure coming from? According to the data, more than half of respondents (61%) cite local and regional competitors as providing the bulk of the competitive pressure in their markets. Only 14% of respondents pointed their fingers at national and/or multi state firms, and 8% indicated it was both local and national. A slim 3% of respondents said there were no competitors in their markets, and 16% saw competitive sources like low-ball contractors; "crooks," and "idiots." In fact, one contractor responded: "Knuckleheads thinking they can provide cheaper services."

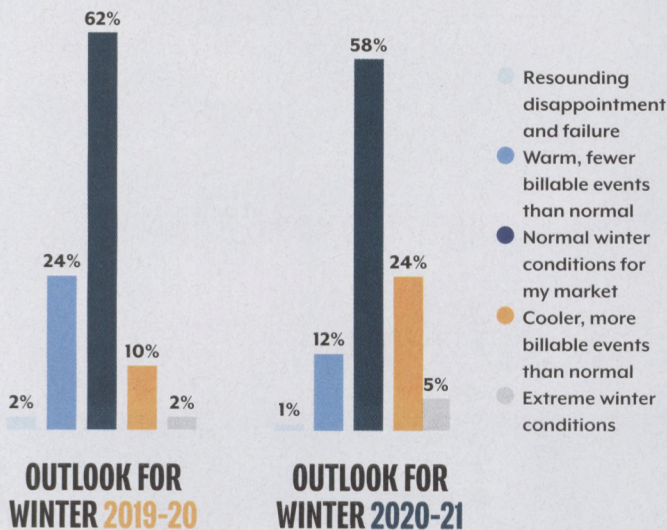
2020 COMPETITION & MARKET PRESSURE



WINTER EXPECTATIONS

HEADING INTO WINTER 2019-20, the majority of snowfighters were anticipating "normal" seasonal conditions. Only 12% were banking on an active season, with cooler temperatures and extreme winter conditions, according to the State of the Industry data. Likewise, 26% of respondents' predictions were on the mark, foreseeing warmer conditions, fewer billable events and an overall disappointing season.

Heading into this winter though, snow contractors have a favorable outlook, with nearly a third (29%) anticipating cooler temperatures, extreme conditions and more billable events. So, what are they basing this seasonal sentiment on? When asked, many contractors responded the outlooks were based on long-term forecasts and weather service assessments. However, a fair number of contractors submitted responses like: "We're bound to get a bad one"; "Gut feeling"; "The law of averages" and "Hoping for the best."



IMPACT OF COVID-19

Snow ops and the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic



Uncertainty surrounding retail clients' financial health



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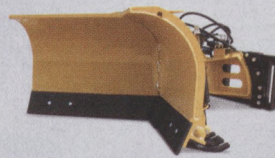
Snow Pusher (SP4500)

- Spring Trip Edge
- Available Widths 10'-14'



Broadcast Spreader (HS100)

- Self Loading
- 1/2 cu yd Capacity



Six-Way Blade (SB3600V)

- Hydraulic Control
- Available Widths 54"-84"



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When we brought the robotic mower over, **their eyes kind of lit up with excitement** for everything it could do.”

EMMA TRIZZINO,
general manager,
Greenspace Associates



THE DRIVE TOWARD AUTOMATION

Awareness around robotic mowers is increasing, and landscapers who've embraced the technology have few regrets. **By Kim Lux**

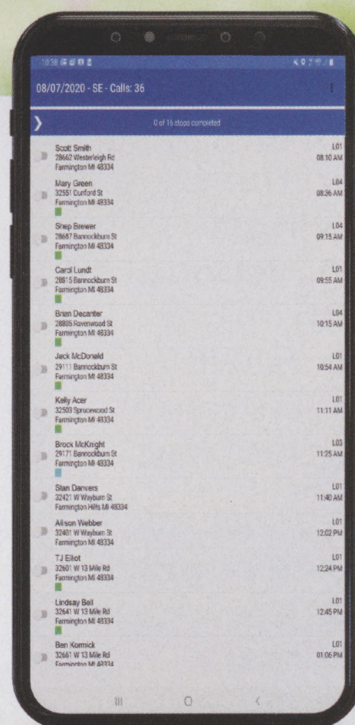
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As people learn about the technology and the cost structures for these mowers, and the time savings, I think people with larger yards will absolutely go this way.

I truly think it will change the lawn care industry totally."

ERIC BERG, owner,
EMBerg Ventures



Greenspace Associates General Manager Emma Trizzino, left, says employees not only appreciate the safety benefits of the robotic mowers, but like that they are less physically taxing to operate.

Eric Berg says that after using a robotic mower for his own yard, he quickly decided to invest in the technology.

"I have three little kids at home. And there was never a good time to cut my lawn... so, my lawn never looked good," says the owner of EMBerg Ventures in Milwaukee, Wis. "It saves me time, it saves me money, it's environmentally-friendly and cost effective. It really checks all the boxes from a consumer standpoint, which led me to the technology as a consumer and as an entrepreneur as well."

Berg signed with Robin Autopilot in December 2018 and launched in the spring of 2019. Prior to investing in robotic mowers, Berg had no experience in the green industry.

"The majority of my clients pay us a weekly fee, and we install and maintain a robotic mower," Berg says. "We will also sell them outright

and install them, but the real niche is using it as a service – using the technology to maintain the lawn without someone on a gas-powered mower showing up every seven to 10 days."

Nathan Laughlin, owner of Robo Lawn Salon in Edmond, Okla., has offered robotic mowing since 2018.

"I was looking for something where the business model would be residual," he says. "With the way I do the lawn mowers, people essentially lease them from me, so it's very residual."

Laughlin says offering robotic mowing services is very adaptable.

"My model is whatever makes the customer happy," he says. "If they want to buy it outright, I'll sell it outright; if they want to buy it over the course of time, I'll finance it to them; if they want to lease it, I'll lease it to them. People appreciate that I'm really flexible in that aspect."

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Laughlin and Berg say that their clients appreciate the hands-off and worry-free approach of robotic mowing.

"You can be 100 miles away and it is still doing its job," Berg says.

While the robots are mowing the customers' yards daily at times, Laughlin says he offers other services to his customers to take care of the finishing touches.

"It's really however the customer wants to do it," he says. "Most of my customers do their own, but I offer edging and trimming. I do it all myself."

Laughlin says the price of his service is comparable to other landscaping or even the cost of a ride-on mower in the long-run.

"I usually charge a one-time install fee and install it and then they're typically paying March through October on the robot if they're leasing it," he says. "The monthly fee depends on the size of the yard, the kind of robot and the services they want. I start out at about \$79 or \$89 a month. And that's just for the robot...it also includes the monitoring and maintenance of it."

Berg says that by owning the mowers and leasing them out, he's able to repurpose them if need be.

"If that client stops service or moves, I will recover the mower and re-deploy it at another client's property," he says.

For Greenspace Associates in Bettendorf, Iowa, crews use robotic mowers in a commercial setting rather than residential, says Emma Trizzino, general manager.

The company first used them three years ago, and Trizzino says the limited maintenance and prep work for the mowers has been nice.

"You just come in and plug the remote in overnight, so it's ready the next day," she says. "Other than that, you're good to go."

SAFETY FIRST. Trizzino says that the crews can safely and effectively use the robotic mowers on tough landscapes including dikes, cliffs and steep hills.

"It's made the work a lot safer and a lot more efficient," she says. "It's been a great asset to our company. One of our larger maintenance contracts has a lot of steep dikes and it was taking six guys all week to string trim it safely and cut down the weeds. So, we looked into getting a robotic mower. It's cut it down (from) six guys all week to now one guy operating the mower."

Trizzino says that before making the switch to robotic mowers, the terrain was known to cause problems for crews.

"Before you always had to worry about someone rolling an ankle or walking through the tall weeds string trimming and not knowing what they're stepping on," she says. "Now you've got a guy who is standing back a ways and can just control the mower with a remote control and not have to worry about those dikes and live animals."

For now, Greenspace crews are only using the mowers at one site, but Trizzino says the property owners are very impressed with the quality of cut and safety measures.

"They are big on safety," she says. "That's one of their top priorities. So, if it rained or anything like that, we were never allowed on the dikes to mow because they'd be too slippery. When we brought the robotic mower over, their eyes kind of lit up with excitement for everything it could do."

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Trizzino says having the robotic mowers has even helped the company through a shortage of labor.

"I'm sure every landscaping company has labor shortage issues with finding the right guys and getting a number of employees to show up every day, so reducing our need for more employees to control and maintain these dikes has been nice," she says.

HANDLING HICCUPS. While there are plenty of advantages to robotic mowers, Laughlin says he has had to deal with managing expectations.

"It's not a perfect fit for everybody," he says of customers who've cancelled services. "They wanted it to be 100% hands off. And often times the mower gets stuck, or you have to make sure it isn't stuck under your vehicle or something like that. Some people just don't want to hassle with it."

Laughlin says his limited knowledge of the mower's capabilities early on caused him to lose a few clients. He explains that when a mower is installed, a wire is run around the perimeter of the property. If there is anything in the middle of the yard that the mower should avoid, those are called islands and wire is ran around them as well.

"I had a customer who ended up with 23 islands...and his yard was over an acre and a quarter," he says. "I had two robots on his yard and after two or three months of trying to get the two robots to mow his yard, he had to call it quits. The robots really couldn't keep up."

Berg adds that some customers are hesitant to make the switch because they are so used to traditional landscaping.

"There's definitely a learning curve," he says. "We're the same, yet we're different. We do the same thing as a traditional lawn care provider, but we just use a totally different technology to do it. It's picking up but there has been a learning curve."

Laughlin says he feels suspicion around the mowers has also kept them from gaining more momentum.

"I think there's a large gap in the awareness. People don't really know much about these mowers and are skeptical when they find out about them," he says.

FITTED FOR THE FUTURE. As people learn more about them and see more in their neighborhoods, Berg thinks more people will come around.

"To me it's not a question of 'if' but 'when,'" he says. "As people learn about the technology and the cost structures for these mowers, and the time savings, I think people with larger yards will absolutely go this way. I truly think it will change the lawn care industry totally."

Currently, Berg and Laughlin say their clients are tech savvy individuals who enjoy testing out the latest trends and gadgets.

"I do think a lot of our customers are early adopters," Berg says. "They have a hybrid vehicle, or electric vehicle, already. They are tech-forward people who don't necessarily do things the way they've always been done. As we see people get more used to it and acquainted with the technology, I think we'll see more people sign on."

Laughlin says he too thinks robotic mowers will continue to make their way into the industry slowly, but surely.

"I think a lot of the yard maintenance companies will start transitioning to this," he says. "Because long-term, it's a huge money saver." **L&L**

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- The Cat UTVs are backed by service and support from participating UTV Cat dealers.

For more info: Cat.com/utv



CUB CADET CHALLENGER M 550/750 EPS

The pitch: A UTV designed for work and play and can be enhanced with versatile attachments.

- Standard dump bed with gas shock assist can easily move up to 500 pounds worth of material.
- 40-gallon capacity bed sprayer with 70 PSI pressure, three nozzles and adjustable relief with pressure gage (optional).
- 27-inch turf tires with reliable traction are ideal for whatever task or adventure is ahead (optional).

For more info: Cubcadet.com



KUBOTA RTV-X1120

The pitch: The Kubota RTV-X1120 Designed for the commercial customer and daily heavy-duty work.

- It's most well-equipped, all-terrain proven utility vehicle.
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For more info: KubotaUSA.com



JOHN DEERE GATOR UTILITY VEHICLES

The pitch: The Model Year 2021 John Deere Gator Utility Vehicles include new automotive-like features that make the vehicles easier to operate and provide improved control in a variety of terrain.

- The new instrument cluster provides more information – including gear position, fuel level, differential lock, and on some models, an RPM readout and service interval indicator.
- Updated Gator Utility Vehicles offer an integrated park position and improved shift pattern for easier operation and a more automotive-like feel, as well as instant four-wheel drive that's engaged with the flip of a switch to power through tough conditions.
- Upgraded automotive-style power steering on the Gator XUV M and R models will help provide smoother steering and better control on all terrains.

For more info: [Deere.com/en](https://www.deere.com/en)

TRUCK TRENDS

The big news in the world of trucks is the new Ford F-150, due out at the end of the year.

The 2021 model is less of a revolution and more of an evolution as Ford continues adding new options and features but keeping things similar enough to keep its fans loyal. Here some more on what to expect in 2021.

NEW FOR 2021

• **HYBRID OPTION:** The gas-electric hybrid model isn't a pure economy play. The most powerful version of the 2021 F-150, Powerboost engine mates the twin-turbo Ecoboost 3.5L V-6 with an electric motor. The company is targeting 700 miles of range and 12,000 pounds in towing capacity from the hybrid. The Powerboost model boasts 430 horsepower (hp) and 570 lb-ft of torque. The 35kW (47hp) electric motor will be powered by a 1.5kW/h lithium-ion battery, slightly larger than the 1.4kW/h battery it uses in current hybrids such as the Fusion sedan.

• **EXTERIOR COSMETICS:** The truck's front fenders are slightly higher, giving it a taller look, and the wheels are larger and slightly farther apart (0.75" farther out per wheel). Buyers will have 11 grille options, depending on model selected.

• **TECH UPGRADES:** The truck will be able to update software over-the-air, eliminating the need to visit dealers for minor patches. Updates to the Sync connectivity system support more apps and add-on services. On hybrid and non-hybrid models, users will be able to use the truck's engine as a generator to run tools and other devices.

• **SAFETY:** Some optional features are now standard, such as pedestrian-detection systems and an emergency system that pretensions seatbelts if it senses an accident is about to take place. Late next year, the truck will offer Active Drive Assist, Ford's answer to Tesla's autopilot or General Motors' Su-

perCruise, a system that will allow drivers to take their hands off wheel in some cruise situations. That feature will come as an over-the-air update.

• **THE RAM 1500** was new last year, and the General Motors products (Chevy Silverado, GMC Sierra) were new in 2019. So, there will be minor changes to both of those, new special editions, new colors, etc., but even those cosmetic upgrades will be delayed, likely into mid-2021 because of COVID-19.

Operating in this environment is difficult, and working through plant upgrades can be even tougher, so companies are delaying anything other than the completely necessary. Ford's new model involved tearing up existing assembly lines, and those balls were already in motion when COVID-19 hit. Swapping out colors in the paint shop is much easier, so those sorts of things will be delayed indefinitely.

ELECTRIC TRUCKS

In 2021, electric vehicle startups will be really active in the truck space:

• **LORDSTOWN MOTORS** plans to launch the Endurance pickup in early 2021. When it launches next year, Lordstown's Endurance EV (Electric Vehicle) pickup will use electric hub motors in each wheel instead of following the traditional EV layout of a large electric motor with a transmission that sends power to the wheels. You can learn more about that by visiting bit.ly/trucktrend2020.

• **NIKOLA** is taking pre-orders on its Badger EV pickup. They haven't given a release date, but it'll likely be late 2021 or early 2022. GM is partnering with Nikola to make the Badger and supply batteries for it for an 11% stake in the company.

• **RIVIAN**, an EV startup that bought a former Fiat Chrysler plant in Illinois, plans to launch three EVs next year, an SUV, a delivery van for Amazon and the R1T electric pickup.

• **GMC HUMMER EV**, GM is bringing back

the Hummer name as an electric pickup from GMC. It goes into production in late 2021, probably as a 2022 model. The company is promising extreme performance numbers (1,000 hp, 1,100 lb-ft of torque, 0-60 mph in 3 seconds).

• **FORD ELECTRIC F-150.** So far, Ford has only committed to the 2021 model year hybrid F-150, but an all-electric model is in the works, probably as a 2022 model. No details yet.

• **TESLA'S CYBERTRUCK** goes into production in late 2021, so it probably won't be available until 2022. The first vehicles will be more expensive (\$50,000 to \$70,000) dual-motor and tri-motor pickups. The \$40,000 single-motor option doesn't go into production until late 2022. The company is promising more than 500 miles of range, 14,000 lb. of towing capacity and less than 3 seconds for 0 to 60 mph.

• **BOLLINGER B2**, the most expensive of the new EV trucks at \$125,000, the all-aluminum model is built in Detroit and should launch early next year.

• **ATLIS XT PICKUP** may launch late this year, but I doubt it. The company made a lot of noise in 2019 but hasn't said a word this year, so either they're keeping their heads down and working on launching the truck or they've run out of cash and are hoping someone buys their intellectual property. **L&L**

The author is editor of Lawn & Landscape's sister publication Today's Motor Vehicles.



The market is seeing an uptick
in electric and hybrid models.

S RENDS

By Robert Schoenberger

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PS Form 3526-R, July 2014

COVER STORY

LIGHTING UP THE HOLIDAYS

ONE DAY WHILE HE WAS CANVASSING A NEIGHBORHOOD DOOR-TO-DOOR, Dellis encountered a landscaper doing the same thing. They started talking and quickly realized they could provide complementary services to each other's customers. After sharing clients for a while, the landscaper decided to exit the business and asked Dellis to pick up his holiday lighting service.

Dellis had been looking for ways to keep his staff busy during the offseason, and this winter work offered the perfect solution. After assisting the landscaper with several Christmas lighting installations, Dellis took over the decor business. With help from local advertising and a dedicated salesman, the division quickly grew.

"The next season, I think I sold 100 grand (of lighting installations) in a six-week time frame," says Dellis, who leapt into holiday lighting by helping homeowners upgrade from incandescent to LED.

"There wasn't a lot of competition for hanging Christmas lights, and we had a good sales pitch that worked. Getting people to switch over from incandescent bulbs to LEDs was a no-brainer because they lasted longer and used less power, so people were willing to pay more money for it."

Back then, Dellis didn't have many employees, but he knew plenty of firefighters looking for side jobs on their days off. "I can't think of anybody better to climb a ladder or be on top of a roof than a firefighter," he says. "So, I started hiring guys from the firehouse."

Dellis formed an LLC to keep the ladder-climbing liabilities separate from Nutri-Green. Hook & Ladder Holiday Decor launched in 2013, with a name and logo inspired by his staff of fellow firefighters.

"We don't have full-time (Hook &) Ladder employees," Dellis explains. "We utilize the staff from Nutri-Green, which is 14 people. As we transition from Nutri-Green into Hook & Ladder, I'll temporarily hire anywhere from seven to 10 off-duty firefighters part-time."

As a supplemental business, Hook & Ladder generates about 8-10% of Nutri-Green's annual revenue during the holidays.



Continued from pg. 30

ate about, and I love what I do," he says. "There's a commonality in the two professions that really resonates with me, and that's being able to see other people be successful. In the roles I play as a captain and a business owner, I'm able to train, teach and develop people, and that's the reward I get from this." **L&L**

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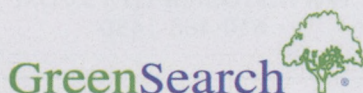
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AN AVERAGE DAY

Mike Bogan
CEO, LandCare



→ **Mike Bogan admits he's a creature of habit and enjoys his routine. Even when he's on the road, he tries to keep things static. "I try to wake up, exercise and eat the same at the same times," says the CEO of LandCare, which ranks 10th on Lawn & Landscape's 2020 Top 100 list.**

Interviewed by **Brian Horn**

But that may not have always been the case, especially as a father raising young kids with his wife Rebecca, a landscape architect. "Our kids are grown and on their own, so life has evolved in the last five years and is very different than it looked as we raised our family," the San Diego resident says. **Here's Bogan's average day.**

I wake up at 5 a.m. I'm happiest when I have 8 hours of sleep, so I try to in bed by 9 p.m.

For the first several months of COVID-19, I immediately checked my phone – which is a direct contradiction to the way I want to start my day. Living on the West Coast, areas of the company have already been at it for a few hours, so news about people's safety was available and important to me.

Now, I am back to my preferred habit, which is to hold off on external information until 7 a.m. So, I start my day with 10-15 minutes of stretching, during which I try to be grateful for the blessings I have in life to start my mind in a positive place. I exercise from 5:30 to 6:30, alternating running with weight training.

I live near the beach, so when the tides are right, I'll do 6 miles along the Torrey Pines shoreline. This gives me a connection with nature, a chance to watch the sunrise and often fellowship with a friend. Other days, it's CrossFit with a group I joined a few years ago.

Then, I return home, fix my breakfast and pack my lunch for the day and read the news while I eat and have coffee. Usually, it's toast with avocado and egg whites or tortillas, egg whites and Soyrizo.

I'm on my way to the office at 7:30. I only have an 8-10-minute drive to the office, so I usually ride in silence while I think about the day's priorities.

I'm in at 7:45 and I'll greet my team members while I make a cup of coffee,

then take 10-15 minutes to organize my objectives for the day – usually with a "to do" list – before opening my computer and checking email.

Including calls and video chats, I have between three and six meetings – sometimes more. Most of my day is interacting with others, not working independently.

When others are working at the office (pre-COVID-19) we eat together at noon. Most of us bring our lunch. For me, it's usually leftovers from the night before. My wife is an amazing cook and prepares most of our dinners, so it's always something healthy and tasty.

Post-lunch, I'm responding to email and other inbound requests. I know the east half of the company is wrapping up soon, so I try to get back on issues for those who are on eastern time.

I usually work until about 6:30. I really like the last hours of the day. The office gets quiet, there are no interruptions and I can be very focused on my objectives.

I try to stop looking at work-related items when I leave the office. Unless there is a current crisis, I attempt to keep work between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.

On weekends, I'll often put in a couple of hours from home on Saturday and Sunday, but there are plenty of days when I don't. I try not to email people as I know it interrupts their weekend, so I'll cue mail up to send on Monday morning.

I also listen to a lot of podcasts while I do chores or exercise on the weekend, which can be professionally enriching, and I'll be anxious to put those ideas into action the next week. My top three are FREAKONOMICS by Stephen Dubner, This American Life by Ira Glass and Revisionist History by Malcolm Gladwell. **L&L**

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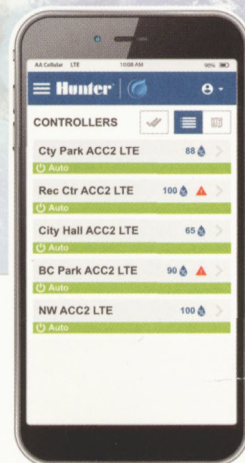
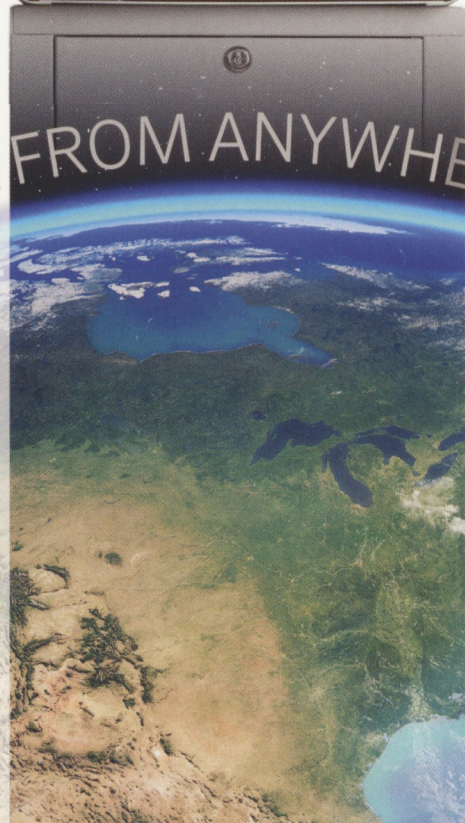
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