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APRIL 2022
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2022

LAWN CARE REPORT

Lawn care operators see a growing market, but the companies are not free of major hurdles.

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




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WE WANT
TO HEAR
*your
story*



Have you recently implemented something new in your company?

Have you experienced tremendous growth or overcome major obstacles recently? We want to know about it! At Lawn & Landscape, we're always looking to learn what those in the industry are doing to set themselves apart from the competition and improve their businesses. If you're interested in being interviewed by the magazine, head to bit.ly/LLcompanyquestionnaire and fill out a short questionnaire which will be reviewed by the Lawn & Landscape staff.

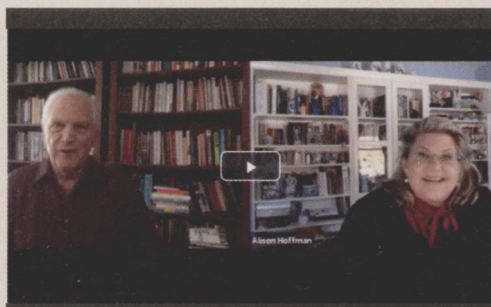
DON'T MISS OUT

Mark your calendars for the 2022 Lawn & Landscape Technology Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, Aug. 10-12. Education sessions will cover a wide range of topics including utilizing technology to increase profitability, improving company culture with it, autonomous machines and getting employees on board with technology as it advances. You'll also have the company to meet with various green industry companies on the tradeshow floor to learn all about the latest and greatest products on the market. Head to bit.ly/LLtechconference to register and learn more!



LISTEN UP!

Lawn & Landscape Radio Network has a whole bunch of podcasts on all things related to the green industry. We've got episodes on everything from xeriscaping and irrigation trends to how to avoid stress and overload. Head over to bit.ly/LLRNpodcasts and take a listen!



What's ahead this year

Harvesters Ed Laflamme and Alison Hoffman reflect on last year and give advice on how to make the most in 2022 in their latest video, "The past, present and future of the industry." Hear how demand is still going strong for design/build and commercial work, along with the ever-worsening labor market and the impact it'll continue to have. The duo also touches on inflation, supply chain issues and increasing taxes. Visit bit.ly/Harvesterpredictions to watch and learn.



Getting to understand the new things coming to the industry, the updates are on **robotics** and **software**, and other companies' best practices: **There's no place else where you can do that.**

Ben Collinsworth
Yellowstone Landscape
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Brian Horn
Editor, Lawn & Landscape

“But in recent years, I’ve heard from lawn care operators and landscapers that lawn care is almost its own industry, which surprises me.”

Get to know LCOs

I’ve been with Lawn & Landscape for almost 12 years in different editorial roles. I’ve always viewed maintenance, design/build, irrigation and lawn care as the four main services provided by landscapers. Tree care always seemed to be its own entity because arborists do a lot of their work in the air and not on the turf.

But in recent years, I’ve heard from both lawn care operators and landscapers that lawn care is almost its own industry, which surprises me.

I understand the products and equipment used to apply those products can be different but, overall, you are keeping a lawn healthy.

Those conversations ended up resulting in the 2022 Lawn Care report, which is our cover story this month that starts on page 32.

We wanted to find out how the lawn care market is performing, in particular. For the research, we printed the results from companies that generate 50% or more of their revenue from lawn care services.

But here, I want to show some numbers from all of the people who took the survey compared to those who have more than

50% of revenue generated from lawn care services.

- For the 50% or more portion, 9% said they sub out lawn care while 19% of everyone who took the survey sub out lawn care work.

- 47% of those in the 50% or more club offer organic lawn care services, while 38% of everyone who took the survey offer organic.

- As far as the challenges we asked people to rank, the order of concern was pretty consistent for both camps. Fuel was at the top, along with keeping up with demand and weather. Callbacks were at the bottom of the list.

- Early order programs are becoming more popular, with 64% of the heavy lawn care companies participating while only 47% of all respondents participate.

- One significant difference is perceived customer confidence. For the lawn care heavy group, 70% described customer confidence in the market as strong, while it was only at 56% for all respondents.

So do you see lawn care as its own industry, or are there more similarities than differences? Let me hear your thoughts at bhorn@gie.net. — *Brian Horn*



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Flourish through feedback

Securing reviews and referrals goes a long way in growing your client list.

By Kim Lux

For the majority of green industry companies, a large percentage of their new customers come from referrals. So, in the world of word-of-mouth marketing, what can you do to secure quality referrals and reviews of your business?

During a panel discussion at Jobber's virtual Professional Development Day, three business owners outlined ways companies can go about growing their client lists through reviews and referrals. The panel included Dan Guest, president of Guest Plumbing and Heating; Terence Chen, president of Impetus Plumbing and Heating; and Kurt Stenberg, owner of Cochrane Tree Care.

WHERE TO GET REVIEWS. All three business owners agreed that the best place to collect reviews is Google.

"There are so many platforms now, and some are gaining some traction, but Google by far gives you your best bang for your buck," Guest said.

Guest said it's also the best platform for customers, as it's the easiest for them to navigate.

Stenberg agreed, saying to collect the best reviews, you have to think like the customer. This will make sure you're presenting your best self in front of the people looking for you.

"The most common places for people to find you is online," he said. "So, think about where are they looking, and what's easiest for them. Keep up with what people are doing and get the reviews through there."

And getting those reviews seen on Google is leading to more calls for all three companies.

"Being found first is important, so I would really work on my SEO and stuff and get my name high up on that list," Stenberg said.

Guest added that the more people who see the reviews, the more calls you'll get.

"There's been a lot of people calling and mentioning how many reviews we



have, and they mention the quality of the reviews," Guest said.

He added that another hidden benefit of having good, quality reviews is it allows potential customers to learn early on what services you provide.

"When a client takes a minute to go through the reviews, they can really understand if we are the best business for their service," Guest said. "It's just like reading restaurant reviews. What kind of food do they serve? Is it quick? It shows what kind of business we are offering."

In terms of how many reviews to go out and collect, Chen said to start with obtaining one quality review. If that goes well, it should be easy to grow.

"Strive to get that first one, because when you get that, you're able to learn from that experience and how you're able to replicate that again," he said. "And then you're able to start building up your repertoire."

WHAT TO SAY TO CLIENTS. But in order to get those reviews, you have to ask customers for them.

Stenberg said it can start the minute you visit a customer and give a quote.

"I try to mentally prepare myself to do a little extra for the customer," he said. "I want them to feel like they got a little bit of extra value, or a little extra work done. Not only is the job done well, but they feel like they got something better. It leads them into wanting to leave a good review."

Stenberg said being personable and taking the time to talk with customers is another easy way to make them want to review you.

"We also will send an email to follow up on the service and

ask them to leave a review," he said. "But honestly, I don't feel like that works very well. I don't get a lot of traction with that because people don't really read emails."

Stenberg said asking in person is usually best.

"Be straight up and honest and tell them it makes a good impression for your company and helps you get business," he said. "People are pretty good about it then."

Guest said leave-behind cards are another way to ask for that five-star review.

"We've actually created a Google Review How-To card that we ask all of our technicians to leave if they think the customer would want to leave a review," he says. "It gives them the five steps to do it. Not everyone knows how — especially if they've never done it before."

Guest noted the technicians don't give the cards out to every client.

"If they seemed busy or whatever, you don't want to ask them for more of their time," he said. "But if you have a good opportunity — take it."

Guest said the technicians also feel more comfortable leaving the cards behind because then they don't have to explain to the client how to leave the review.

HOW TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES. The next step is getting employees motivated to secure those reviews.

Guest said incentive programs can be a great way to get everyone on board.

"We asked 'What's a review worth to us?'" he said. "So, we started incentivizing our staff members and making it a bit of a challenge each month. We give \$5 per guy, they work in teams of two, so \$10 per review that leaves their name."

Guest said the extra money has made his staff seek out more reviews and is just a friendly competition now among the technicians.

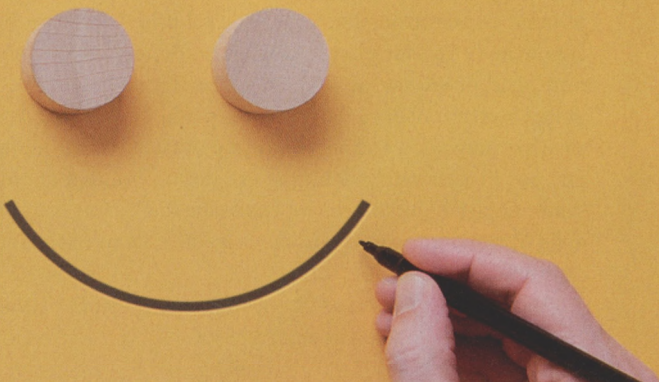
"It's been a lot of fun around the office," he said.

Chen said he also uses an incentive program to encourage crews to ask for reviews.

"It makes sure they're putting a lot of care into their work," he said. "And the customers can feel that, too."

He compensates employees with \$30 per review.

"I don't do a lot advertising, so what I do instead is have our techs do the advertising for us," Chen said.



Stenberg said these incentives programs are also great for ensuring quality work is being done.

"The whole reason to get reviews is you want to get some feedback on how the work was," he said. "So, it's a bit of accountability that they're actually doing a great job."

WHY TO RESPOND. But what happens in terms of receiving a bad review?

Stenberg said he sets expectations with customers ahead of time and tells them to come to him with any and all problems.

"I ask them that if they aren't completely satisfied, that they please let me know personally," he said. "That way it can be a more personal interaction, and you're less likely to get a four-star or less review. That personal connection helps."

Guest said another important thing to remember is always respond, no matter what the review is.

"It gives you some character and realism," he said. "We've actually turned a couple of reviews into positive reviews because we haven't shied away from a little conflict. Really, it's usually about just educating the client."

Guest added that it's unrealistic to think that every review will be glowing and five-stars.

"You're going to get some bad reviews, but it's all about how you deal with challenges and problems," Guest said.

Chen suggested using it as a learning experience when negative reviews arise.

"Be professional and take it on as a business matter instead of putting your emotions into it," he said. "Take it as a way to improve your services. You

can always reflect on what happened there and what mistakes were made."

Chen said to confront it and work with that customer to turn it into a good review.

"Bad reviews are good (because they) allow you to turn them around and put out better customer service," he said. "The biggest tip I could give is to always try and turn those stars around. If you have to refund a cost or something, I would do that any day."

Stenberg points out that a lot of bad reviews could even be prevented by being selective with your customers.

"Choose your customers," he said. "If you don't feel good about it, then maybe you don't take that job on."

WORKING IN REFERRALS. In addition to reviews, direct referrals from loyal customers are another way to grow your client list.

Chen said he doesn't have a formal referral rewards program.

Instead, he focuses on engaging with his community.

"A lot of my interactions come from social media and connecting with my community," he said.

Chen added that connecting with local competitors, whether that's in person or via social media, is another way to get referrals and collaborate.

"Not everyone can take on that much work," he said.

Guest said by keeping an ear to the ground and asking the right questions, you can figure out where your referrals are coming from.

"Our customer service coordinator takes all of our incoming calls and she'll ask where the client came from," he said.

Bayer sells Environmental Science Professional business to Cinven for \$2.6 billion

The transaction is expected to close in the second half of this year.

BAYER AND CINVEN have entered into a definitive agreement regarding the sale of Bayer's Environmental Science Professional business for a purchase price of \$2.6 billion.

"This divestment represents a very attractive purchase price and allows us to focus on our core agricultural business and the successful implementation of our Crop Science Division growth strategy," said Rodrigo Santos, member of the Board of Management of Bayer AG and president of the Crop Science Division.

Environmental Science Professional offers environmental solutions to control pests, diseases and weeds in non-agricultural areas such as vector control, professional pest management, vegetation management, forestry and turf and ornamentals. In 2021, the business had approximately 800 employees supporting operations and sales in more than 100 countries. It is headquartered in Cary, North Carolina. Bayer had announced its decision to divest the business in February 2021.

"Driven by a shared belief in people and purpose, Cinven will enable the Environmental Science Professional business to advance towards its vision of healthy environments for everyone, everywhere. We are convinced by Cinven's focus and its commitment to the long-term growth potential for the business and its people," Santos said.

The transaction is expected to close in the second half of this year, subject to the satisfaction of customary closing conditions. Its net proceeds are to be used to reduce Bayer's net financial debt.

"Bayer's Environmental Science Professional business is a global leader in a highly attractive and critical industry. We thank Bayer for the trust they have placed in Cinven and plan to build on the strong foundations established by Bayer by significantly investing in it," said Pontus Pettersson, partner and head of industrial at Cinven. "As a long-established global investment firm, Cinven is well positioned to continue to drive innovation and accelerate growth at Environmental Science Professional, including the delivery of digital and data-enabled solutions, as well as make the business more agile in responding to the unique needs of its markets and customers."

BofA Securities acted as financial advisor to Bayer, while Hengeler Mueller acted as legal advisor.

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Bartlett Tree Experts expands with California, Maine acquisitions

Bartlett acquired S.P. McClenahan Company and Savage Forest Enterprise.

BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS recently acquired two companies — S.P. McClenahan Company (Portola Valley, California) and Savage Forest Enterprise (Mount Desert Island, Maine).

The largest ever in Bartlett’s 114-year history, the acquisition of 111-year-old S.P. McClenahan meant one fourth-generation company acquired another.

“We are excited to join forces with S.P. McClenahan. I have known the McClenahan family for 40 years and, like Bartlett Tree Experts, they have worked hard to build a stellar reputation for their company as an industry leader,” said Jim Ingram, president and COO of Bartlett Tree Experts. “We look forward to combining our strengths and adding significant depth to our arboricultural services in gorgeous Northern California.”

S.P. McClenahan Co. and its 55 employees are now a division of Bartlett Tree

Experts, which provides more than 188 services to its customers from 151 operations in 39 U.S. states, Canada, Ireland and Great Britain.

John Henry McClenahan, who previously served as CEO of the company his great grandfather founded, will run Bartlett’s new Portola Valley office as local manager. His younger brother, Josh McClenahan, joins Bartlett as a loss control manager, administering and supporting compliance with all insurance and loss control programs, analyzing risks and developing strategies to reduce losses throughout the corporation.

“Becoming a division of Bartlett gives all of our employees and staff, including me, a chance to grow and develop and be better arborists because of the resources that Bartlett has, such as the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories,” said John McClenahan, who has been involved in his family’s business since 1993.

Savage Forest Enterprise has been operating in the Mount Desert Island area for 23 years. Meghan EG Savage, the owner of Savage Forest Enterprise, said Bartlett was the right fit to acquire their family-owned tree and shrub care business because of similarities between the two companies, including Bartlett’s focus on scientific tree care.

“Because Bartlett Tree Experts shares our same values, we are confident they will carry forward the character and reputation of Savage Forest Enterprise while providing diversified, enhanced service our clients have grown to expect,” Savage said. “Bartlett Tree Experts is known through-



out the industry as the leader in applying scientific methods to tree care. We were especially impressed with the capabilities of the Bartlett Tree Experts Research Laboratories in Charlotte, NC., which provides customers with direct access to the latest arboricultural research.”

With this acquisition, Bartlett’s new office on Mount Desert Island joins the company’s Portland office as the second in Maine.

“We are excited about this acquisition because Savage Forest Enterprise has built a stellar reputation for quality tree work in an area of unparalleled natural beauty,” said Paul Fletcher, vice president and division manager of the New England Division for Bartlett Tree Experts. “The two companies are a great match because we share the same values, and both companies have a heritage of being community focused. Our expansion in this beautiful area of coastal Maine allows us to provide a full-range of scientific tree and shrub care services to more customers while continuing to honor the values that Savage Forest was built on for honesty, integrity, safety and professionalism.”

Senske Services acquires portion of Rentokil’s lawn care division

Rentokil sold some of their lawn care businesses in Washington and Utah.

SENSKE SERVICES has acquired a portion of Rentokil’s lawn care operations in Washington and Utah.

Senske is a family-owned provider of lawn, tree and pest control services throughout the Western U.S. It ranked No.

53 on our Top 100 list in 2021. Rentokil also ranked No. 3 on Pest Control Technology’s Top 100 list in 2021.

“We’ve worked with Senske for many years, and it was an easy decision to align part of our lawn care operations with

their team,” said John Myers, president and CEO of Rentokil North America. “The Senske name is well-known for their lawn care services and expertise in the field, which was a great fit for our business.”

“Our expansion and growth

strategy focuses on acquiring companies with similar service lines and quality employees that can join our team,” said Senske’s COO, Tim Ehrhart. “We look forward to providing fantastic service to our new customers.”

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BrightView acquires TDE Group

TDE is a snow removal and commercial landscaping company based in Detroit.

BRIGHTVIEW HAS ACQUIRED TDE Group, a snow removal and commercial landscaping company headquartered in suburban Detroit with operations in Windsor, Ontario. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

TDE Group is the 34th firm to be purchased by BrightView under its long-term acquisition growth strategy.

"BrightView continues to execute on our 'strong-on-strong' acquisition program in which we actively seek out exceptional businesses to expand our existing opera-

tions in attractive markets. Bringing TDE under the BrightView umbrella allows us to grow in a profitable market and bring highly trained and motivated team members into the company," said Andrew Masterman, BrightView president and CEO.

In addition to snow removal, TDE Group provides landscaping maintenance services in the Detroit/Windsor metropolitan areas and beyond. Among TDE's most prominent clients are auto manufacturers and the Detroit Metro Airport. TDE employs more than 125 people.

"The addition of TDE Group and their skilled crews is a great enhancement to our operations in the Upper Midwest," said Jamie Gollotto, president of BrightView Maintenance Services Seasonal Division. "Their expertise in both winter services and landscaping makes them a perfect year-round complement for our existing branches in this important region."

"TDE Group is happy to have become part of the BrightView family," said Eddie Conte, TDE's president and CEO. "This partnership will provide our employees with significant growth opportunities both in the USA and Canada. Our clients will continue to enjoy our meticulous self-performed approach to snow removal with a larger depth and breadth of landscape service offerings that far exceed what TDE could have done on its own."



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Landscape Workshop acquires Southern Scape

The company, based in Madison, Alabama, opened its doors in 1997.

LANDSCAPE WORKSHOP RECENTLY acquired the commercial landscape operations of Southern Scape, based in Madison, Alabama. Southern Scape will continue to operate as a design/build and pool installation company with a focus on the residential market.

"The LW team is excited to continue building on the success Greg Shaw and

his team have created since opening their doors in 1997. Our shared values of hard work, commitment and quality service make this an exciting venture for both parties involved," said J. T. Price, Landscape Workshop CEO.

"This transaction will strengthen our Huntsville team and reinforce our position as the elite commercial landscape company serving the Huntsville region," said Braxton Ferguson, Landscape Workshop's Huntsville general manager.

Shaw will continue operating under the Southern Scape name.

"We are excited to join the LW team, a company that has a great reputation and will continue to deliver the exceptional service that our clients have come to expect over the years," Shaw said. "This acquisition provides growth opportunities and additional resources for our employees that will support the continued success of our business."

Southern Scape's commercial maintenance managers and staff will join the Landscape Workshop team. All design/build, chemicals and pool installation team members will remain with Southern Scape.

Landscape Workshop gained 11 employees in the acquisition. The company ranked No. 47 on our Top 100 list last year.

Landscape Workshop is a full-service grounds management company that has been providing professional service and expert maintenance for outdoor commercial spaces since 1984. Landscape Workshop serves 12 Southeastern markets. Landscape Workshop is backed by Carousel Capital and McKinney Capital.

Butler Sparks and Stuart Maxey of Bradley served as Landscape Workshop's legal counsel in this transaction. Southern Scape was represented by Jacquelyn Jordan Core and Michael Voytek of Jordon Voytek. Southern Scape's financial advisor was Steven Bach of Bach Business Partners.



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LOVING expands in Florida

The company added a 700-acre sod farm in Punta Gorda.

LOVING EXPANDED ITS footprint in Florida by adding a 700-acre sod farm in Punta Gorda, Florida. With the framework already in place to begin production, this expansion enables LOVING to further support landscaping companies in southwest Florida.

“We are beyond excited to begin production with this new farm as it will optimize our Southwest Florida operations significantly,” said Mike Haynes, founder and president. “This farm combined with our Babcock Ranch farming location will set us up to execute on the continued growth expected in Southwest Florida. We also are looking forward to supporting the local community through employment and outreach opportunities.”

LOVING is headquartered in Gastonia, North Carolina, and offers landscaping, outdoor living and sod supply to both local and national homebuilding clients across the Southeast.

ExperiGreen acquires TurfMan in Cincinnati, Ohio

John Rust started TurfMan in 2003 and is now retiring.

EXPERIGREEN LAWN CARE recently acquired the TurfMan lawn care business in the Cincinnati metro area.

John Rust started TurfMan in 2003 and is now retiring, opting for ExperiGreen to take over the business in the sale. TurfMan has a strong presence on the eastern side of the Cincinnati metro area which nicely complements ExperiGreen’s existing footprint in Cincinnati.

ExperiGreen began operations in 2017 and is headquartered in Mishawaka, Indiana, and Dublin, Ohio. The company provides lawn care, perimeter pest control and mosquito control services in Columbus, Cincinnati, Detroit, Indianapolis, Chicago, and Charlotte, North Carolina. Ornamental tree and shrub service is also available in Cincinnati, Charlotte, Detroit and Chicago.

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~~~~~  
Please email submissions or any questions to Editor Brian Horn at [bhorn@gie.net](mailto:bhorn@gie.net).



## FNGLA finds new CEO in Talmadge Coley

Outgoing CEO Ben Bolusky is retiring after 24 years.

**AFTER A SIX-MONTH** national search, Talmadge Coley has been tapped as the next chief executive officer to lead the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association.

"Over FNGLA's 70-year history, we have employed only four CEOs," said Sarah Spatola, FNGLA's 2021-22 president. "The quality and tenure of our staff is a strength that has served us well in upholding our core values and completing our strategic goals. We are confident Tal's industry knowledge, advocacy acumen and esteemed service to our nation's nursery and landscape industry will further bolster the strength and innovation of FNGLA."

Coley, a Florida native, has been serving in Washington, D.C. as the senior director of advocacy & government affairs for AmericanHort, based in Columbus, Ohio. He has also been serving as executive director of the Nursery & Landscape Association Executives of North America.

Prior to his role at AmericanHort, Coley undertook leadership roles in several legislative outreach capacities over a five-year-period advocating for veterans at Concerned Veterans for America. Coley also served for four years in the United States Air Force as a



Talmadge Coley

Russian cryptologic linguist where he was stationed at Fort Meade, Maryland. He holds a bachelor's and a masters degree from the University of North Florida and the University of Miami respectively.

"I am humbled and honored to be the next chief executive officer at FNGLA," Coley said. "The opportunity to return home to Florida and advocate for an industry I feel so passionate about is truly a dream come true. Leading FNGLA into this next chapter and building off the incredible foundation Ben Bolusky has provided is a mission I am eager to take on."

Coley will take the reins from FNGLA CEO Ben Bolusky, who announced plans to retire after what will be 24 years of service to FNGLA. Bolusky and Coley will initially work side-by-side during an onboarding period, and Bolusky will cap his work at the Association during FNGLA's Annual Convention in June 2022.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FNGLA

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## Ryan Lawn & Tree merges with CM's Outdoor Solutions

Both companies will operate under the name of Ryan Lawn & Tree, and CM's 61 employees will all be retained.

**RYAN LAWN & TREE**, a Lawn & Landscape Top 100 company, completed its largest merger to date with CM's Outdoor Solutions of Omaha, NE.

Founded by Chuck Monico in 1987, CM's Outdoor Solutions, formerly known as CM's A Cut Above, has grown from providing only mowing services to offering complete turf, tree, irrigation and landscape services, as well as snow removal for both residential and commercial clients.

"When we met with Chuck and the CM's team, we liked them right away," said Larry Ryan, founder and president of Ryan Lawn & Tree. "We saw Chuck as someone who cares about his associates... he hires good people and he's committed to the industry."

"One of the biggest things that's different about Ryan Lawn & Tree is that it's a faith-based company," Monico said. "If you have a faith-based company, if you're looking to take care of your people, if you're looking to take care of your community and grow the industry, those are companies that would be a great fit for RYAN. I think it's unique that RYAN has such a commitment to its team members."

With their values aligned, both Larry and Chuck saw merging the two companies as an opportunity to innovate and lift the green industry.

Both companies will operate under the name of Ryan Lawn & Tree.

CM's Outdoor Solutions employs 61 people, all of whom will be retained.

Like Ryan Lawn & Tree, CM's Outdoor

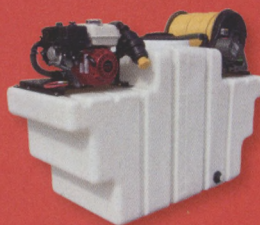
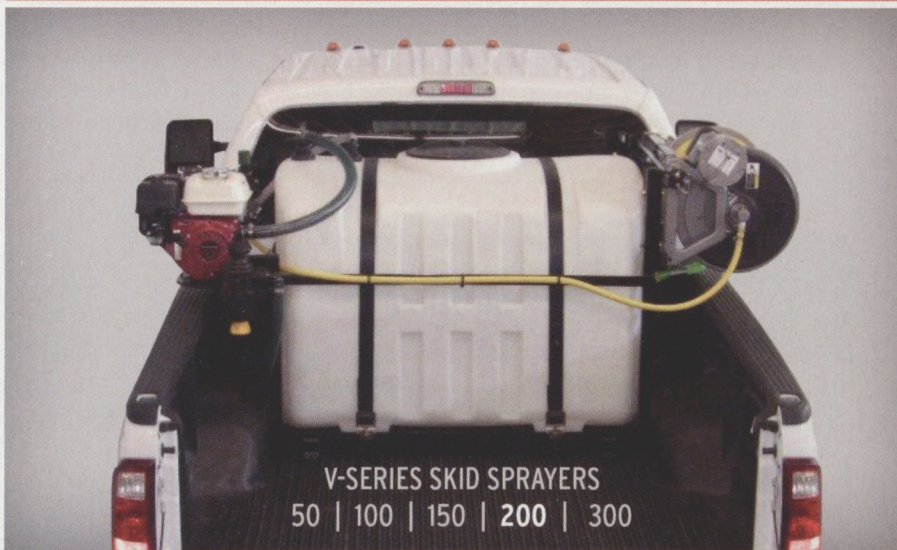
Solutions is a participant in the Great Game of Business (GGOB) open-book management system. Both CM's Outdoor Solutions and Ryan Lawn & Tree were named as 2021 GGOB All-Stars earlier this year.

Ryan Lawn & Tree is 100% employee-owned and with the recent merger has more than 400 full-time associates and

graduates from more than 80 different universities.

Ryan Lawn & Tree now serves six different markets, both Kansas City, KS and Kansas City, MO Metro, St. Louis, MO, Springfield, MO, Wichita, KS, Tulsa, OK, and Omaha, NE, and offers a variety of lawn care services.

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## Doosan Bobcat announces new facilities

The company is adding two additional locations in Reno and Atlanta to join its primary distribution center in Chicago.

**DOOSAN BOBCAT NORTH AMERICA** has plans to further expand its aftermarket parts distribution network with the addition of two new regional parts distribution centers. Joining the company's existing Bobcat Parts Distribution Center near Chicago in Woodridge, Illinois, are new facilities in Atlanta, Georgia, and Reno, Nevada.

"This investment demonstrates our commitment to our dealers and customers, as well as Bobcat's leadership in the industry," said Mike Ballweber, president of Doosan Bobcat North America. "This expansion will help ensure faster response and delivery times to all North American customers

by bringing parts closer to end-users and where they do business."

These new facilities will roughly double the company's existing warehouse footprint by adding approximately 445,000 square feet of additional distribution and storage space to the existing 358,000-square-foot primary parts distribution center in Chicago.

The distribution facilities, along with expanded customer service teams and decentralized U.S. locations, will also enable quicker order-to-delivery times and the highest level of service for aftermarket parts. The regional distribution centers of-

fer additional benefits, including:

- Same-day order processing and extended order hours
- Expanded dealer support programs and customer service hours
- Improved speed of delivery times and additional shipping carrier options

The new distribution centers are part of Bobcat's overall plans to meet growing capacity needs and the demand for Bobcat equipment in the marketplace.

"With the outstanding support of dealers and the improved parts availability this expansion offers, this is an exciting step for us to enable faster service for our valued Bobcat customers and accommodate our continued growth and business demands," added Ballweber.

The new facilities are anticipated to become operational by the fourth quarter of 2022, and all facilities will be managed by APL Logistics. Additional facility details are forthcoming. **L&L**



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# A shift in today's landscape

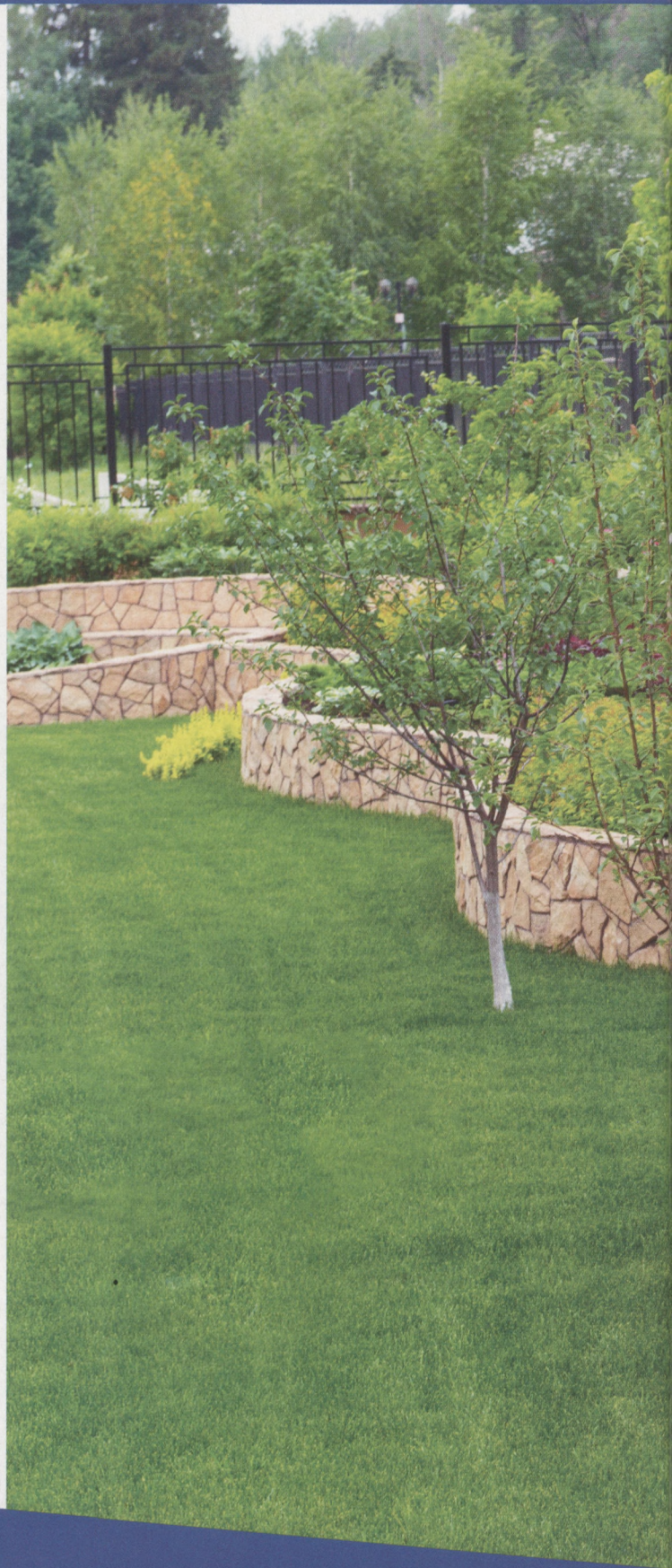
Let me start out by saying that this title is a play on words. Day in and day out, you and other industry professionals are making a great impact on residential and commercial landscapes. Your job is to make them more beautiful, essentially give the properties more value and curb appeal and give homeowners a visual result that brings them satisfaction.

This is definitely not an article about customers perspectives on changing their landscaping. It's about the ever-evolving economic landscape that we are all a part of. While it would seem that we are stuck in a cycle of "bad news comes in threes" perhaps that's not the case. I would encourage you to view and to process the "bad news" of today and the past two years through the lens of shifting priorities / problem solving.

After navigating the never-ending rule changes of the Covid pandemic, we have been thrust into a new realm of challenges; supply chain issues are threatening our industry on a daily basis, control products are increasingly harder to find, employees are in major short supply and if you can find them, wages are at an all-time high. Additionally, inflation challenges and fast-rising gas prices have taken so many by surprise. This rapid change has also made many realize how at risk their businesses actually are.

As with any business, the gold standard for preservation is either: (A) raise your prices to cover your cost or (B) cut operating costs to improve profit. While I believe everyone has gotten to the point of realizing that pricing increases are an absolute necessity, I'd like to talk on the second one for just a moment.

In a recent conference I hosted, I asked the room of about 60 business owners if they were concerned about raising prices on their customers. This led to a very enlightening discussion about the value of the services they







**John Perry**  
President/CEO/ Founder  
Greene County  
Fertilizer Company



provided and what their true value as a service provider was. Many business owners expressed concern with raising prices on their customers. The cost of doing business has increased so much in the last six months that without at least passing on these increases, there is likely little chance that a company would remain in business.

Most service companies seek to cut/control costs with improving operational efficiencies and cutting marketing costs. Manpower and hard costs are currently on the rise, so that is at present not an area where additional funds can be found. Since starting my own lawn care company in the early 2000s, I have given an equal level of priority to controlling my product and operational efficiency.

It was this mindset that had me looking at ways to lower my fertilizer cost without sacrificing results. It was back then I stumbled upon the benefits of using humic substances alongside fertilizer. Move forward a few more years and the understanding deepened to see that not only could there be a reduction in total nutrient load, but also a big chance to save money. My first experiences with the high cost of fertilizer came in 2008. At that time, urea was as much as it is now and adjusted for inflation, quite a bit more. It was then that I realized how much nitrogenous material I could cut and how much money I can save and maintain beautiful and healthy lawns.

Since then, a core focus of mine has been teaching other lawn care operators how they can have beautiful lawns on less cost per thousand and less nitrogen. It has been well documented how much humic acid can help in the efficiency of fertilizer and now with prices skyrocketing, this is an excellent way to save money.

I feel very confident in saying that nitrogen prices will come back down. On the flipside, I don't expect any operators or service providers to lower their prices based solely on that discount. Since every other cost of good has been on the rise, this is the one area where you can actually save money and perform a greater service to your customers.

While times may be presenting challenges on several fronts, and the economic landscape is shifting, you are not in this boat alone and the need for greater conservation has come into play for everyone. Simply implementing techniques into your lawn care program that will not only lower your cost per thousand square feet, it will also be doing a greater benefit to the soil and therefore the plant that occupies it. Perhaps it's time to shift our perspective to opportunities rather than frustration in this new economic landscape to transform our physical landscapes for the better.

*John Perry is President/CEO Founder of Greene County Fertilizer Company and author of Lawnology®*



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# HONEST DAY'S PAY

→ **THERE ARE THREE PRINCIPLES** about money that most of us entrepreneurs should be able to agree upon. First, it's better to have it than not have it. Second, it's better to have more of it than less of it. Third, it's better to have it sooner than later. Many people in our country agree with my three principles regarding money and operate financially out of self-interest. They see the obtaining and accumulation of money as a good thing — an empowering endeavor.

**HOW IT WORKS IN THE FIELD (REAL LIFE).** A client in Virginia decided to pay his two-man residential lawn maintenance crew one week of pay to perform one week of maintenance work with the stipulation that the quality of the work had to be acceptable. Any re-work had to be done on the crew's time. How'd it go? The crew consistently completed five days of work in four days while meeting the quality standard. This was a 20% productivity improvement. Seen another way, it was a 20% pay raise for the crew. Any re-work done on their own time would lower the increase in pay (hourly rate).

An irrigation technician for a New Jersey irrigation company was billing only four to five hours per day. The owner decided to pay the technician \$40 per hour for billed hours and \$15 per hour for non-billed hours. Overnight, the technician's billable hours doubled and his pay increased.

John Garretson worked mostly in the pet care retail industry for 20 years. During this time, he saw how pay-for-performance could be implemented. In 2009, he started ABC LawnWorks as a side hustle. Four years ago, he devoted full time to his residential lawn company.

John knew that he personally could service two houses per man-hour. He thought his two-man crew could satisfactorily service 2.5 to 3 houses per crew-hour (2 man-hours). John's field labor cost ran roughly 33% of revenue so he paid his crew one-third of what he billed for the crew's work. However, the crew leader thought he was getting the short end of the bargain. He also thought that he was rushing through jobs.

John agreed to put the crew back on hourly pay. The crew leader agreed to this but told John that he was going to slow down a bit to ensure that the quality standard was met. John had no problem with this. After a few weeks of paying the crews hourly, John sat down with the crew leader and showed him that he would have earned a significantly larger paycheck had he worked on a pay-for performance basis. Today, John pays all of his field staff on a pay-for-performance basis.

**THE BENEFITS OF PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE.** John implemented pay-for-performance three years ago. Here are some of the benefits that he's seen:

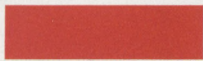
- **Productivity:** Amazingly, John has seen a 20% improvement in productivity. (Other contractors that I know who have imple-

mented pay-for-performance have seen a similar improvement).

- **Turnover:** PFP attracts individuals who embrace being paid based on their efficiency. If they improve productivity by 20%, they see a 20% increase in their pay. These individuals generally tend to be long-term employees.
- **Motivation:** PFP rewards employees who think about the quantity of work performed. The more they do, the more they make. They're motivated to get out of the yard and produce. They realize that unnecessary time at the gas station or donut shop cuts into their earnings.
- **Quality:** PFP not only rewards employees who are concerned about quantity, but they also think about quality. Call-backs decrease and customer satisfaction increases.
- **Truck and equipment (T&E) expenses decrease:** If field labor efficiency improves 20%, T&E efficiency also improves 20%, and T&E costs go down. T&E expenses usually run 12% of revenue. This translates into a 1-2% savings.



**ADJUSTING TO A PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE** model might just improve productivity and help you get the most out of employees.



**CONCLUSION.** Performance-based pay isn't for everybody. Some people either can't or don't want to connect their pay to their performance. When employees do connect these two dots, they're thinking the same way that a business owner thinks. "How do I make the most amount of money (pay) utilizing the least amount of resources (time)?"

But is pay-for-performance legal and does it work for anything other than residential lawn maintenance companies? What about work performed on a time and materials (T&M) basis? How do you implement PFP? We'll cover these and other questions next time. **L&L**





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# INFLATION STRATEGIES

→ **INFLATION IS THE HIGHEST** it has been since 1982. Most of you were not in business then, but I was. What left an impression on me was how difficult it was to maintain profit. As a business owner, the most difficult decision to make with inflation is whether to raise prices to keep up. Small businesses in particular say they have no other way than to pass increases downstream to end users. Wrong! Looking back, this isn't the only strategy that will help you offset higher costs.

Take this year for example. Inflation started taking off in spring 2021. We reacted by increasing our prices for 2022 contracts. We had already been increasing prices because labor costs rose in the preceding 3-4 years. In addition, owners are also spending more to attract qualified candidates for open positions. But inflation was something else entirely.

We now know that the consumer price index has risen 7.5 as of January 2022. For 2021, the Producer Price index rose 9.7. Many economists say the Producer Price index is a better metric for contracts because it reflects the selling prices received for services and products produced by the seller.

Here is the problem with raising prices, especially with respect to maintenance contracts. Say for 2022, you raise prices somewhere between 7.5-9.7%. You raised your price to what it was costing you last year, if those percentages truly reflect your actual cost increases. I know labor probably went up more than that. You should be tracking your average hourly wage weekly to see what is really happening. Fuel is a significant cost to your company directly for vehicles and equipment. It also hits you indirectly in materials because they all are shipped to you from somewhere.

With enhancements and construction, you can raise prices as you bid the work because it will be performed soon thereafter. If you are bidding larger construction jobs that are prone to getting pushed out due to delays which you have no control of, it is important to have price protection language in any contract you sign.

In less inflationary times, adjusting bidding prices for materials and plants once or twice a year has been within reason. However, with supply chain disruptions causing problems across the board, materials pricing needs to be adjusted more frequently to offset reduced inventories.

Now we all know that we do not receive all of the price increases we ask for. So, your actual price increases across your book of business is most likely a little lower. This is why you cannot keep up on price increases only. You must simultaneously decrease cost or wring greater efficiencies from your organization and tighten up overhead.

The worst part of the current inflation numbers is that the Fed-

eral Reserve will raise interest rates. Forecasts now predict likely recession in 2023. If that happens, and inflation does not come down quickly, you might end up having inflationary pressures and a stagnant economy. This all suggests belt tightening and maintaining good cash position.

Good companies ride out these times by being disciplined, intensely managing their finances, keeping losses at a minimum and focusing on keeping customers and revenue, despite price increases and short staffing.

As much as owners can apply strategies to keep business operations running smoothly, customers are also coping with financial pressures of inflation. To adjust, owners need to find ways to deliver greater value or double down on performance. It's important to stay vigilant and keep a close eye on buying behavior in order to be prepared and respond to customers cutting back, deferring projects or other negative shifts in spending.

Now more than ever, a focus on value-driven relationships, coupled with prudent financial management, is a winning combination. When things stabilize, owners that lead with this approach will be in a stronger position to restart, while the companies weakened by inflation-related events will be less able to capitalize when the situation improves. **L&L**

↓

**BEFORE RAISING PRICES AGAIN**  
 Consider other ways to offset the impact of inflation.





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## CREAM OF THE CROP

BY ALISON HOFFMAN  
HARVEST GROUP CO-FOUNDER

CREAM OF THE CROP features a rotating panel from the Harvest Group, a landscape business consulting company.

# PLANNING YOUR BUSINESS EXIT?

→ WHETHER YOU ARE preparing your company for sale to a third party or building long-term value for yourself, as an owner, you probably perform a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. You likely do this annually to capture the internal and external factors that affect your company's ability to do business. Business plans that cascade from the SWOT analysis usually focus on highest priority, immediately needed "better, faster, stronger" goals.

If you are considering the sale of your business in the future, consider adding a due diligence preview to identify issues that might affect your company's value. Unless you've had a problem and had to react to one of these issues, you and your management team may not even be aware of them. In an ideal world, an owner would identify any major potential areas of risk and mitigate them prior to the buyer's scrutiny.

Some problems are obvious and will make going to market a non-starter. These are things like not having current and correct I-9s for your employees, or having your largest customer upset and suing you about a serious shortfall. There are many less-obvious areas that can be evaluated well before the decision to sell is made. It can be hard to "see" these issues since we are used to them, so it's often helpful to have a fresh pair of eyes on the company for "blind spots." Some actual examples we've seen over the years include:

**Leases** — If the seller does not own the property or is in a tight real estate market and does not have a relationship with the landlord, the future feasibility of his company running profitably could be at risk. If the buyer's rent expense will increase dramatically and/or your employees must change their existing travel to work (causing potential losses), this could be a big problem.

**Environmental exposure** — When was your company's last independent review of environmental policies, procedures and potential problems? Many buyers will require an independent environmental expert report. This might include interviews with your team members as well as property and material inspections. If you don't have a regular review, it might be worthwhile to identify any issues in time to make corrections if there are any oversights. Cleaning up the soil where the workers have been dumping used oil for years will be expensive!

**Client contracts with problem wording** — Have you ever seen an "indentured servant" type contract? In this case, a contractor committed to a three-year contract with a city park district to

provide services for a fixed price with an annual CPI escalator. The problem was that the park district could cancel the contract with 30 days' notice, but the contractor couldn't. The owner had committed his company to provide services during that term with no way to cancel or modify the contract (except for lack of payment). The bigger issue was that he had underbid the work to get the contract, so he was "stuck" for three years. Imagine what a surprise that was when someone finally explained what that contract said. Not very appealing to a prospective buyer.

When you read these examples, I'm sure you are shaking your head wondering, "Who lets this happen to their business?" The truth is that it seems everyone has some issue once their details are scrutinized. Deals that were on track fail to close for reasons owners didn't even know about in some cases.

It's a good idea to "preview" the due diligence that would be applied by a buyer before you think you are ready. If you know you have an issue, you can manage it prior to going to market. If you didn't find an issue, I'd be surprised, but you would have peace of mind. In this case, no one likes surprises. Be prepared with a preview of your company's due diligence. **L&L**

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# Olivia Schaub

Project Manager,  
TruNorth Landscaping

**I LIKE TO CONSIDER MY CAREER GOALS** when I think about family planning. How will my career change when I become a new mother? What sacrifices will I have to make in my professional life to manage my family life? How will my job change as I progress in a pregnancy?

It wasn't until I had a conversation with my superiors, Doug and Patti, about family planning that I realized I had it all backwards. I should be considering my family goals first, and how my career will mold to fit my new role as a mother second. The sacrifices I perceived having to make in my professional life will actually just be adjustments to the demands of motherhood, being the primary caregiver in my household and learning to balance my new family life with the responsibilities of my career. With children and grandchildren of their own, my bosses understand what it means to put your family first. Their reassurance that my family planning decisions would be respected and encouraged, enabled me to feel confident that I had made the right choice when I choose to work for TruNorth. One of our company's core values is "TEAM,"

*Olivia Schaub is an active member of the National Association of Landscape Professionals Women in Landscape Network (powered by Bayer) which provides a forum for industry professionals to support each other's professional growth. The Network is free to all industry professionals.*

**WOMEN IN LANDSCAPING** is a column brought to you in partnership with the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

and part of that core value is respecting home life. I felt Doug and Patti were upholding this value in our conversation, and I feel confident they will continue to respect this value as I experience life changes outside of the workplace.

I'm glad I had this conversation — and I'm sure some of you are thinking I probably didn't need to have it at all. Some women in the green industry, and other industries for that matter, may choose to keep these feelings of uncertainty around family planning locked away until they can no longer hide a baby bump — and that's totally fine, too! I urge you, however, if you have a good relationship with your superiors and feel comfortable discussing your livelihood with them on a regular basis, don't be afraid to have an open discussion regarding family planning. Thinking about adding a little one to your family can be stressful — the sleepless nights, the hospital bills, the missed work (especially for those who do not receive a paid maternity/paternity leave) — so why not talk through some of these changes and worries with your superiors? Figure out how they will affect your day-to-day work life.

By the time this article is published, I will have reached the 20-week mark of my first pregnancy (God willing). My husband and I found out about my pregnancy about two months after the family planning discussion with my superiors. We both felt that my excitement was doubled because of the ease provided during that discussion. My due date is Aug. 28 during the peak of our installation season — and my role as a project manager will have to adjust as my pregnancy progresses. Still, I feel confident that my workplace will support me and will be just as excited for my baby's arrival as I am.

My hope is that my experience is one you can take to your workplace to influence the open discussion of family planning, pregnancy and motherhood. I know I don't stand alone in this industry as a soon-to-be mother, and I feel it's important now, more than ever, to support other women and families with similar goals, and encourage workplace cultures that embrace family planning. Happier employees have the tendency to be harder workers, so taking care of soon-to-be and current employees who are parents will add value to your workplace culture and strengthen the team you want to build. **L&L**







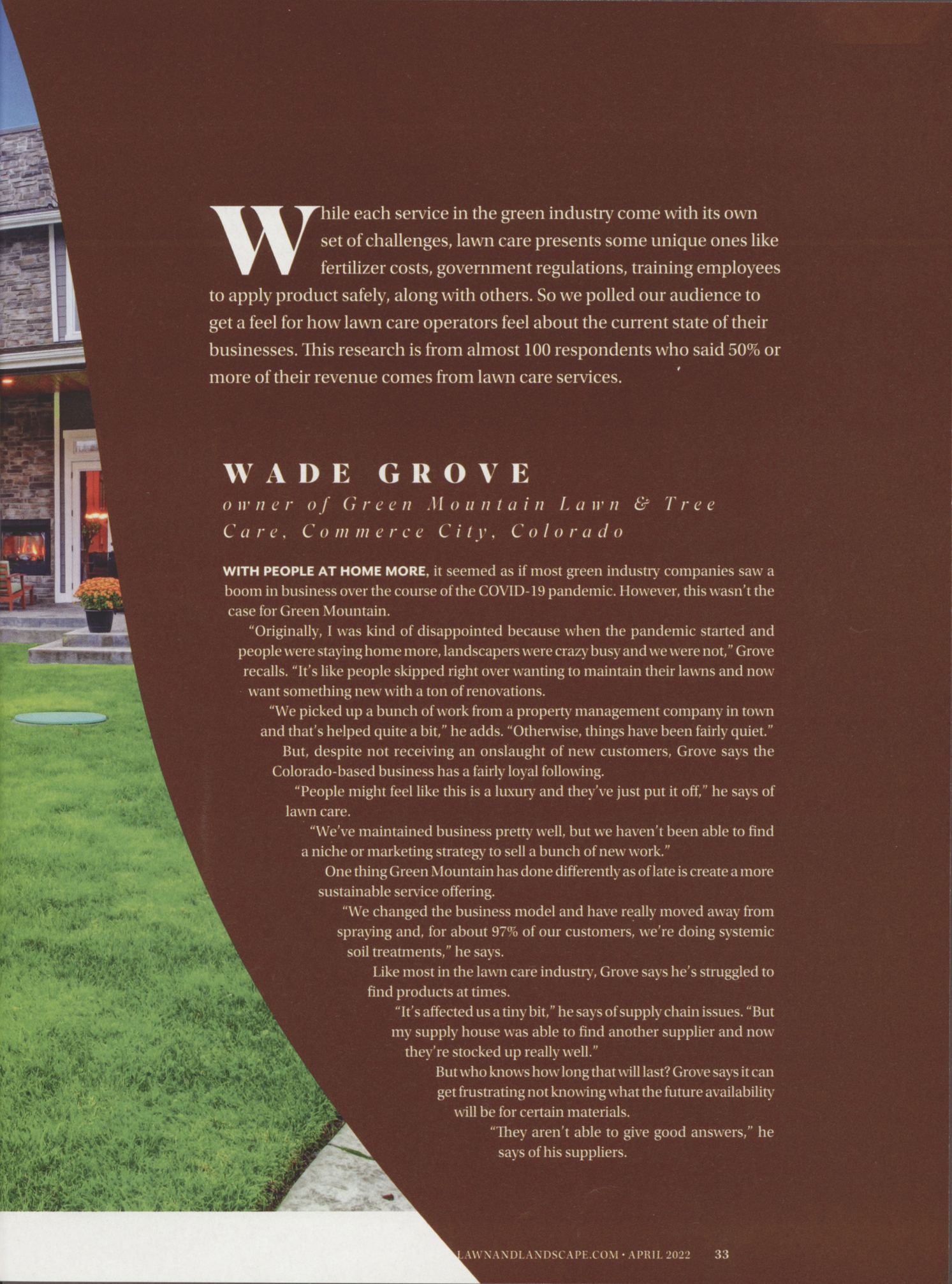
A photograph of a well-maintained lawn in front of a house. The lawn is green and has several circular patches of lighter green grass. A wooden fence runs across the middle ground. In the background, there are trees, including a large evergreen and some deciduous trees with autumn-colored leaves. The house on the right has a porch with a white door and a window. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

2022

# LAWN CARE REPORT

Lawn care operators see a growing market,  
but the companies are not free of major hurdles.





**W**hile each service in the green industry come with its own set of challenges, lawn care presents some unique ones like fertilizer costs, government regulations, training employees to apply product safely, along with others. So we polled our audience to get a feel for how lawn care operators feel about the current state of their businesses. This research is from almost 100 respondents who said 50% or more of their revenue comes from lawn care services.

## WADE GROVE

*owner of Green Mountain Lawn & Tree Care, Commerce City, Colorado*

**WITH PEOPLE AT HOME MORE**, it seemed as if most green industry companies saw a boom in business over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this wasn't the case for Green Mountain.

"Originally, I was kind of disappointed because when the pandemic started and people were staying home more, landscapers were crazy busy and we were not," Grove recalls. "It's like people skipped right over wanting to maintain their lawns and now want something new with a ton of renovations.

"We picked up a bunch of work from a property management company in town and that's helped quite a bit," he adds. "Otherwise, things have been fairly quiet."

But, despite not receiving an onslaught of new customers, Grove says the Colorado-based business has a fairly loyal following.

"People might feel like this is a luxury and they've just put it off," he says of lawn care.

"We've maintained business pretty well, but we haven't been able to find a niche or marketing strategy to sell a bunch of new work."

One thing Green Mountain has done differently as of late is create a more sustainable service offering.

"We changed the business model and have really moved away from spraying and, for about 97% of our customers, we're doing systemic soil treatments," he says.

Like most in the lawn care industry, Grove says he's struggled to find products at times.

"It's affected us a tiny bit," he says of supply chain issues. "But my supply house was able to find another supplier and now they're stocked up really well."

But who knows how long that will last? Grove says it can get frustrating not knowing what the future availability will be for certain materials.

"They aren't able to give good answers," he says of his suppliers.



**HOW MANY LAWN CARE SPECIFIC EMPLOYEES DO YOU HAVE?**

**48%**  
LESS THAN 5

**26%**  
6-15

**6%**  
16-25

**1%**  
26-35

**2%**  
36-45

**17%**  
MORE THAN 45



Due to this, Grove says he's ready to increase prices for the season ahead.

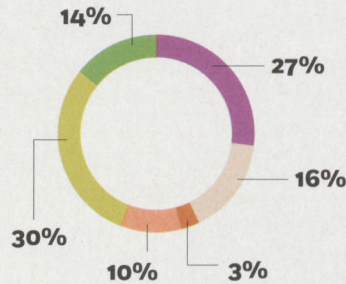
"We did raise prices in 2021," he says. "We've been doing a 1-2% increase all along and I think we'll go with a 3% increase for 2022 to cover the anticipated increases and uncertainty."

But according to Grove one of the primary challenges his company faces isn't related to COVID or supply chain shortages — it's Mother Nature.

"The weather has been a challenge," he says. "The weather has changed to where we're more cold, rainy and snowy in the springtime. For so many years, it was so warm in the spring that we were panicking and trying to get people to turn sprinklers on at the end of March. Now, it's completely flipped and we had four snow events in April last year that shut us down. And it didn't warm up until late May and then it just got crazy hot right away."

**\*WHAT IS YOUR ANTICIPATED OVERALL REVENUE FOR 2021?**

- Less than \$200,000
- \$200,000-\$499,000
- \$500,000-\$749,000
- \$750,000-\$999,000
- \$1 million - \$6.9 million
- \$7 million or more



**\*WHAT IS YOUR ANTICIPATED OVERALL LAWN CARE REVENUE FOR 2021?**

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Less than \$50,000    | 9%  |
| \$50,000-\$199,000    | 23% |
| \$200,000-\$499,000   | 15% |
| \$500,000-\$799,000   | 9%  |
| \$800,000-\$1 million | 8%  |
| More than \$1 million | 36% |

*\*The data was collected in Nov. of 2021, which is why we asked for anticipated 2021 revenue.*



LAWN PHOTO ©SINGJA / ADOBE STOCK / HEADSHOT COURTESY OF WADE GROVE



## JOSH WISE

CEO of Grassroots Tree & Turf Care, Acworth, Georgia

### IT'S BEEN A BANNER LAST FEW YEARS

for the company, which is now franchising and is up to 17 locations across the Southeast.

"The last couple of years have been really good for growth," Wise says. "Our corporate office saw 27% growth in 2021."

Additionally, the company is making an impact on customers and they're sticking around.

"Last year we had the lowest cancellation rate we ever had in the history of the company," Wise says. "We're at 13% and usually we hover around 16%. We've seen great retention"

And this high retention rate held up as the company continued to raise its prices for the season ahead.

"We did an across-the-board 15% price increase," Wise says.

"And then we went back and where people who were still underpriced, we bumped them up to where they should be.

"Some of our accounts are up to a 35-40% increase," he adds. "But at this point with estimating what prices will be on products and all the uncertainty that's out there, we're really aggressive with price increases."

Wise says Grassroots took the time to review each individual client and ensure that the pricing was up to where it should be.

"I had one customer whose bill was \$120 a month and now it's \$247 a month," he says. "That customer was a little upset, but there are always a few like that. His property was way underpriced. He's been a customer since 2004 and he's always just flown under the radar. Now you get to a year like this, where you really have to fix stuff and those accounts show up on the radar. But, they are few and far between."

Wise says he anticipates customers will remain sympathetic to price increases, as it's not just happening in the lawn care industry.

"Most customers are receptive to it and understand," he says. "I think if there's ever been a year to raise prices — now is the year to do so. People don't even really question it; they just expect it."

While Wise is taking price increases seriously, he says he wants other companies in his market to follow suit.

"I'm hoping everybody is jumping on board with price increases," he says. "Sometimes the South has too competitive of pricing."

Still, Wise doesn't lower his price, even while facing lowballers.

"We don't get into the price matching, and we're on the higher side of prices," he says. "I'm not looking for that value shopper customer that's cutting the coupons and is going to switch to the next company in three months when there's a new special. We provide a higher level of service."



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# PALMER HIGGINS

CEO of Mainely Grass, New England



**TOWARD THE END OF LAST SEASON,** Mainely Grass was beginning to be impacted by supply chain shortages and a limited supply of materials. Higgins predicts this problem will continue to get worse before it gets better.

"We've definitely seen supply chain and logistics issues hit our industry, especially in the back half of 2021, in a fairly pointed way," he says. "It's gearing up to hit the industry pretty hard next season."

One big concern is the rising cost for materials like fertilizer.

"Costs are double or triple what they've been historically," Higgins says. "That's pretty major."

To combat this, Mainely Grass relied heavily on early order programs for the upcoming season.

"I think we're in a really good spot," Higgins says. "We got really aggressive very early because we were seeing this coming."

"We were realizing it could seriously impact 2022, so we worked with our vendor and distributor partners and got really aggressive with buying early or securing (product) through distributors so they are already warehoused and set aside for us."

"Over 90% of our product needs for next year have already been secured," he adds.

Higgins recognizes what a hefty financial commitment that was to make.

"It was a monumental investment to do that," he says. "Hundreds of thousands of dollars are going into making that a

reality. But the flip side would be going into next season and you're not sure what the price of the product is going to be, and you don't even know if you're going to be able to get product."

Even with so much of their materials already accounted for, Higgins says he'd like to see Mainely Grass need even more as the upcoming season progresses.

"I hope it's not enough," he jokes. "That'll mean demand is strong and I certainly hope that's the case. I was aggressive in securing conservative product needs, but we weren't aggressive in securing anticipated huge growth."

Higgins says he hopes demand for lawn care continues to increase as it has over

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the past few years but making any kind of prediction is extremely difficult in these times.

"If you asked me what's more likely to happen — that we'll see continued strong demand for our services or a weakening of demand, I'd say continued strong demand," he says.

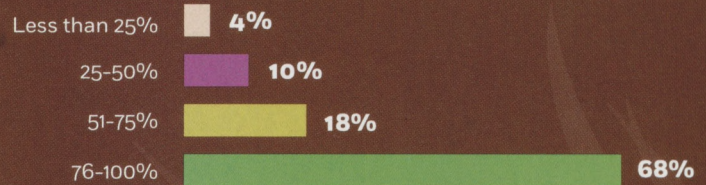
"But, if you're asking me to bet thousands of dollars on that, I'd say let's wait and see and deal with it then. I guess time will tell."

In addition to the supply chain uncertainty, Higgins adds that another obstacle facing most lawn care companies are new, stricter rules and regulations.

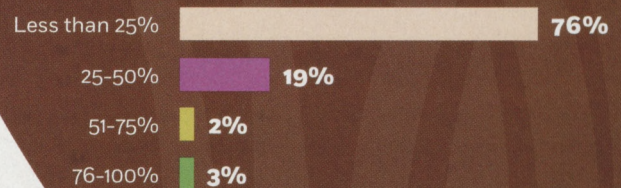
"There's definitely been a groundswell of desire to continue to regulate and control products more and more," he says.

"Sometimes this is at the state level, but more at the municipal level, you can drive seven minutes in one direction and it's a whole new environment. That's challenging from a training, educational and customer communication perspective."

## WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR LAWN CARE BUSINESS IS RESIDENTIAL (SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES)?



## WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR LAWN CARE BUSINESS IS COMMERCIAL (BUSINESSES, MULTI-FAMILY HOMES, HOAS)?



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With material prices continuing to fluctuate, many LCOs are planning to raise prices to offset unexpected price hikes.

## JOHN DORSEY

owner, Dorsey Lawn & Landscape, Raleigh, North Carolina

**JOHN DORSEY BELIEVES** carving out a name for yourself in the lawn care industry is tough. When you first start out, he says most clients pay roughly \$600 on the low end per year, so obtaining enough clients to justify staying in business can be difficult.

Conversely, companies that start out in design/build don't need as many clients to keep the lights on at the office. That's one of the reasons why Dorsey started with landscape installation and slowly began transitioning those projects as an add-on for lawn care clients.

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He doesn't envy businesses just starting out in lawn care though, especially as clients remain skeptical of that lawn care products hurt the environment.

"(The education) gives them more certainty," Dorsey says. "That's been our biggest hurdle...having to overcome their predisposition. It comes with the territory."

To educate the clients, Dorsey's team takes careful note of the questions clients ask and try to turn them into blogs or newsletters. Each time a client signs up with Dorsey Lawn & Landscape, they receive a PDF that details the type of grass on their property, plus an outline of good maintenance habits and how they can water and mow it throughout the year to get the most of Dorsey's program.

"If you're not doing other things that are necessary by taking care of the lawn on your own, too, then you're not going to maximize your results out of that," Dorsey tells clients.

Education also means total transparency. Dorsey has no issue sharing that the company is more focused on using granulars, which Dorsey says "feed better and slowly release, so you get better results that way." Their

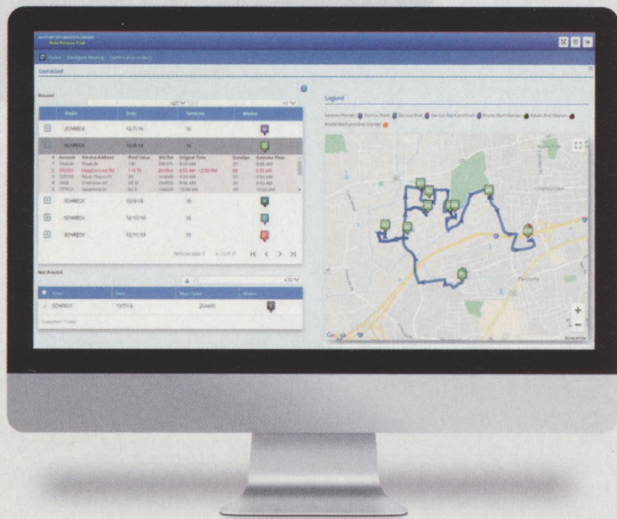
sprayables are largely post-emergents, and while they do offer some organic materials, the products they use are a blend so they're simply organic-based. They don't use sodium nitrate, but Dorsey doesn't believe in a fully organic approach.

"When it comes down to it, when you want to go completely organic, you just can't," he says. "You're not going to get the results you want."


Dorsey says companies can earn pretty high profit margins if they're doing things correctly on lawn care. He says they had to raise prices a bit more than usual this year (somewhere around 5%), but all in all, it's been lucrative, even despite an uncomfortable supply chain market.

That said, Dorsey has seen a fair amount of companies offer pricing models for their lawn care services that essentially come in at a "good, better, best" model. Dorsey doesn't believe offering the cheap alternatives (good, better) should even be options - it's all or nothing for him.

"Don't offer good, better, best in lawn care," he says. "It's either done the right way or it's not."



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## FRED WESTERFELDT

*FRW Landscape, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin*

**TO FRED WESTERFELDT**, the COVID-19 pandemic opened up a huge silver lining — one that was practically overwhelming.

“I didn’t realize it at the time until basically the whole year, but while the pandemic was raging, there were so many contractors who pulled out,” Westerfeldt says. “It seemed like the phone would never stop ringing. I had to turn people down more last year compared to any other year. Usually, it took later in the year before I started turning people away.”

The number of calls tested Westerfeldt’s golden rule of returning phone calls within 24 hours. Even still, so many people he spoke with said that they had called several other companies, too — and that his was the first who ever bothered to call back.

His hold on the market in Wisconsin Dells — a city that boasts a number of theme parks and Mirror Lake State Park — is strong, Westerfeldt says.

There are about 2,500 people in town but 30,000 people who come through the area weekly, so he does find himself often ser-

ving commercial accounts and some neighboring communities. Westerfeldt says he has this trouble with saying no, especially when people felt like they needed service so badly that price was no object.

“It’s like, ‘Can you come and do some work?’” Westerfeldt says. “They don’t even talk about price because they’re desperate to have someone to do work.”

For him, there’s no fancy formula for raising prices. Westerfeldt is a single entity operator at this stage, and many of the clients he has are long-term clients (roughly 70 of them). He offers a wide range of services like shrubbery pruning or tree health inspections, but he also maintains a focus on fertilizing and liming lawns. Last year, he raised \$2 per service he offered, and this year, he did it again.

“I (use) more of an intuitive method. I raise them a few bucks per service,” he says. “I had no issues at all. It seemed like one of those weird times in your life where it doesn’t matter what you charge — people don’t even think about the price.”

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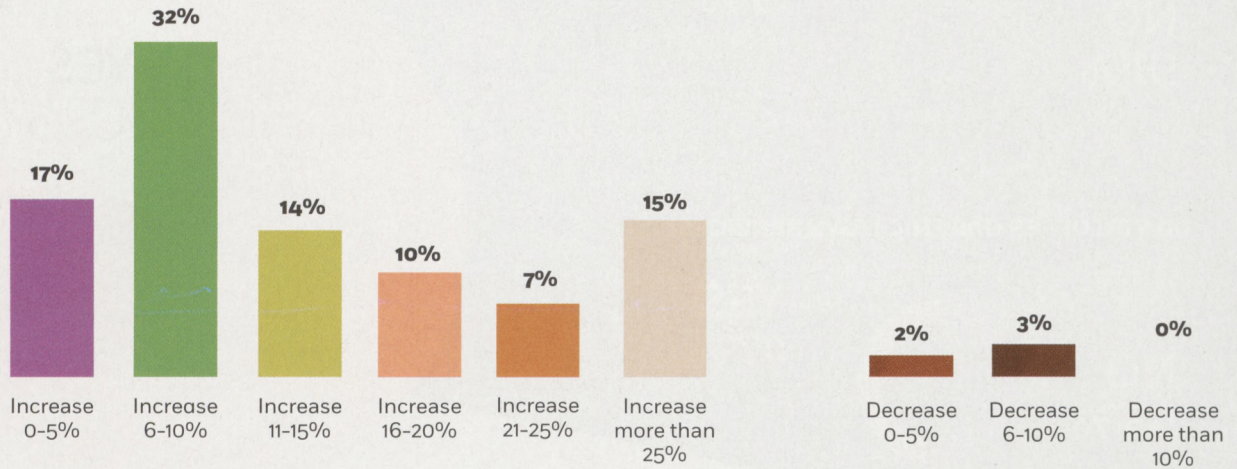
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**\*HOW DO YOU ANTICIPATE YOUR LAWN CARE REVENUE IN 2021 WILL COMPARE TO 2020?**



*\*The data was collected in Nov. of 2021, which is why we asked for anticipated 2021 revenue.*

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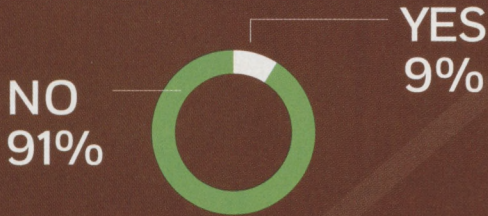
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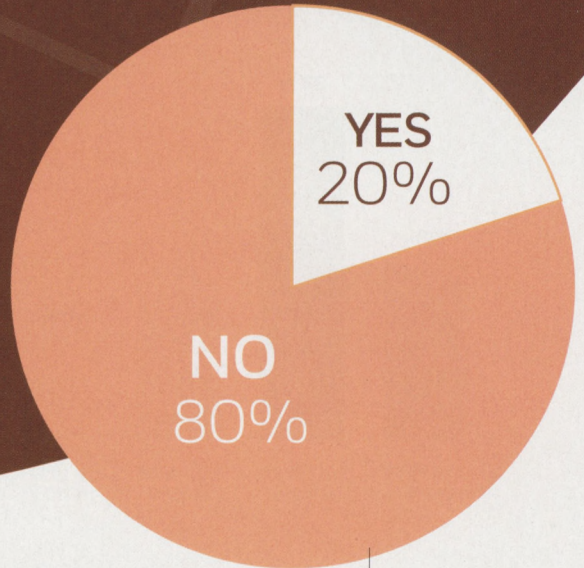
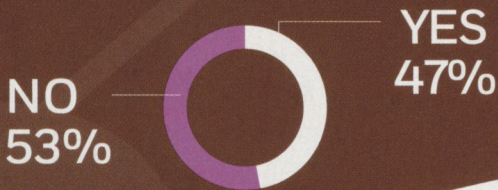




**DO YOU SUB OUT ANY PORTION OF YOUR LAWN CARE WORK?**



**DO YOU OFFER ORGANIC LAWN SERVICES?**



**DID YOU ADD LAWN CARE AS A SERVICE IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS?**

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## JOSH FLYNN

*CEO of Seabreeze Property Services, Portland, Maine*

**FOR FLYNN**, labor struggles have continued to hinder his business as much as any supply chain disruptions.

"At any point over the summer, we could've used five or six more people, but it wasn't dire straits," he says. "We didn't have to cancel any contracts or anything."

Flynn foresees these problems continuing, so the company is taking on new tactics in 2022 to try and find more workers.

"We've applied for and are working through the H-2B process for the first time in the history of the company. We're trying to make sure there are no barriers so we can continue to grow and be successful," he says.



Being low on labor has also caused the company to increase rates recently.

"Our labor rates have gone up about 11-12%," he says. "That alone will drive an increase in pricing I'd say anywhere from 5-10% across most services for next season."

"Early conversations with customers have gone pretty well," Flynn adds.

Adding to those reasons to increase rates are concerns over the rising price of materials.

"We didn't have too many supply chain issues on the fertilizer and grass seed side, but I fully anticipate seeing some of those this year," Flynn says. "From all indications



Survey respondents say a significant majority of their lawn care clientele is residential.

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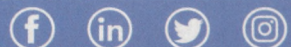
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from vendors, and other folks in the industry, it feels like that's going to be a challenge this next season."

And the full effect of those price hikes is still unknown.

"We hadn't been able to raise prices throughout the year and were honoring our

original contract regardless of the scenario, but for next season, we're anticipating \$5-\$10 more per bag of fertilizer and who knows how much more grass seed will cost," Flynn says.

Regardless of raising rates, Flynn says he hopes to attract even more customers

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*There are a lot of contractors in our area getting out of maintenance and lawn care. I'm sprinting as fast as I can in the opposite direction of all those folks to try and soak up all the good customers they are leaving behind **simply because they don't want to deal with it anymore.**”*

— JOSH FLYNN, SEABREEZE  
PROPERTY SERVICES

this season as he's noticing some changes in his market.

"We're trying to go against the grain as far as where everyone else is headed at the moment," he says. "There are a lot of contractors in our area getting out of maintenance and lawn care. I'm sprinting as fast as I can in the opposite direction of all those folks to try and soak up all the good customers they are leaving behind simply because they don't want to deal with it anymore."

Seabreeze is setting out to do this by focusing on its reputation within the communities it serves.

"We're trying to position ourselves as the most professional and the most reliable company in the area," Flynn says. "It's all about reliability and who can actually get to the work."

Flynn says he feels demand for lawn care will continue to be high this year, but beyond that, he's unsure.

"I think there's still going to be a tremendous amount of demand and still a limited amount of supply," he says. "Something I can't predict is how long it's going to last."



# BRUCE LOVE

president, Lawn  
RX, Latrobe, Pa.

## BRUCE LOVE REMAINS ENCOURAGED

that the issues that've caused his company's biggest price increase in years — 5% instead of an annual 1% price hike — will subside soon.

"I don't think we'll ever go back to 2018 or 2019 prices," he says, "but I think it'll be manageable from here on out."

Love's been in business since 2004 and has accumulated roughly 3,000 customers, all serviced by his 13 employees. They're a predominantly residential lawn care company, and one of the toughest things to manage this offseason to prep for the spring was a limited selection on grass seed and fertilizers.

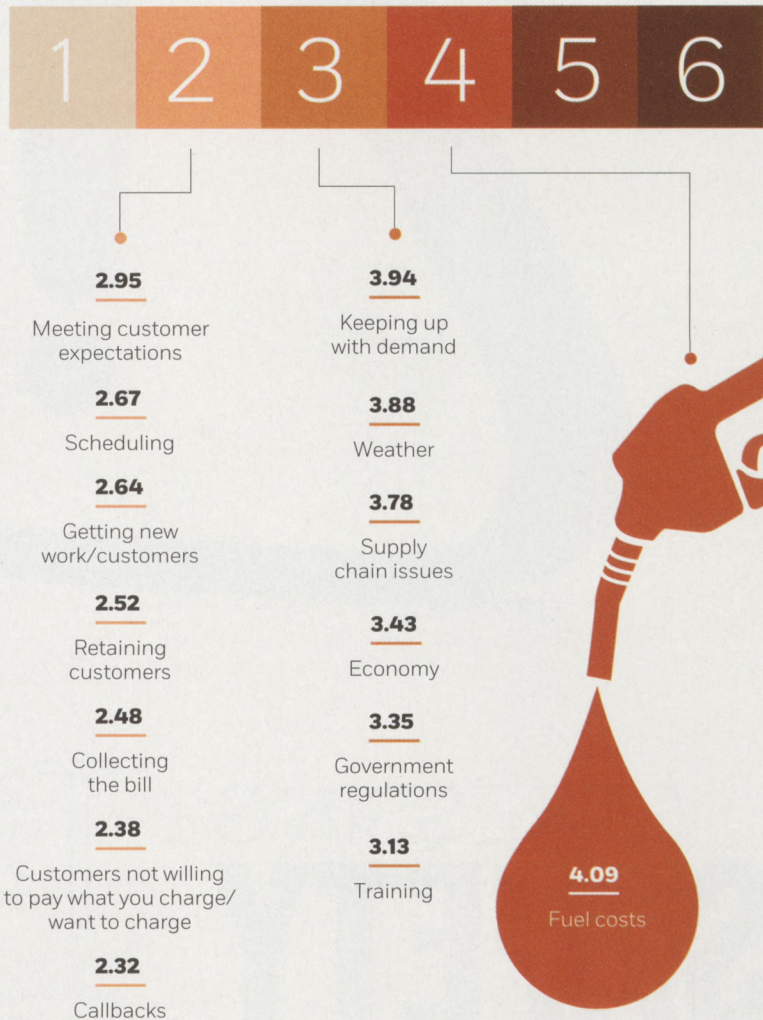


He didn't hold it against his suppliers that the materials he ordered arrived weeks after they were supposed to — he understood there was a lot to manage on their end, between manufacturing delays caused by labor shortages or having no truckers available to ship the materials.

And, just like he found himself pretty understanding of the current climate, Love found his customers were empathetic to price increases they received. He didn't have any unusually frustrated customers cancelling due to price increases, nor did they push back on price increases he applied to his clients. For the most part, they didn't even ask for an explanation — they just know the world's in a weird state, Love says.

"Most of our clients value lawn care. They know the value we provide for them," he says. "It's kind of like a thing they can't live without, so they'll make room in the budget for it."

ON A SCALE OF 1-6, HOW WOULD YOU RANK THE FOLLOWING AS A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO YOUR LAWN CARE BUSINESS/SERVICE? A 6 BEING MOST SIGNIFICANT.



The 5% increase doesn't recoup the full extent of Love's cost on materials, but he says his pricing structure allowed the company to absorb the suppliers' price increases. Ordering stuff in the preseason helped Love in the long run, especially on grass seed, and he didn't have an issue storing the materials he ordered early.

Ultimately, Love recommends figuring

out the materials you'll use in advance, especially in this current landscape. But as COVID-19 restrictions fizzle out nationwide, he also anticipates more drivers and more workers in manufacturing plants to provide more materials than there were available in 2021.

"I think things will improve," Love says. "I'm optimistic." **L&L**





# STRESSING SAFETY

during **STRESSFUL** times

Landscape companies are making sure safety sticks long after an employee's initial orientation.

By Gregg Wartgow

Today's increasingly hectic environment has placed unprecedented strains on landscape companies. At a time when it might be easy to allow haste to make waste, it's important for landscaping professionals to remember that safety always comes first.

"For our company, safety is an everyday discussion," says Tim Worrell, owner of Beechwood Landscape Architecture & Construction, which employs between 25-30 people, in Southampton, N.J. "One thing I've learned is that you have to be repetitive to the guys in the field. You have to talk about the job, but you also have to talk about safety in that same meeting every single morning. You can't just have a big group meeting every couple of months because nobody will listen. You need consistency and repetition."

It also helps to have respected leaders that other employees look up to. Employee turnover has plagued the landscaping industry for many years. The key for successful companies has been having the ability to maintain a core group of talent that is able to lead the entire organization in the right direction.



"We've been looking to hire more local labor over the past couple of years, but the labor pool just isn't that great right now," says Will Schoggen, co-owner and president of SchoggenScapes, a company that employs more than 20 people in Clinton, Miss. "Fortunately, I have foremen who've been here for five or six years now."

The Yard Barbours, which employs 11, in Elizabethtown, Ind., has been in the same boat. "Amazingly, we have a core group that has been with us for years, and they have turned out to be great teachers for us," says Tim Barbour, shop manager. "If an employee ever fails to wear certain PPE (personal protective equipment), we typically hear about it from the others on the crew. They know our customers are watching so we have to stay on top of it."

#### A PUSH FROM YOUR SAFETY PARTNERS.

When it comes to improving safety, landscape companies can sometimes take advantage of encouragement from a key client.

"One of our commercial clients came to us to have a conversation specifically about safety," Barbour says. "We learned to focus on more than just safety in general, that 30-foot safety zone. We also learned a lot about safety equipment. The client said it would require us to wear hardhats in addition to the gloves, hearing protection and eye protection we also require."

That client also required other safety-related habits from The Yard Barbours. For instance, parked trucks and trailers needed safety cones and wheel chocks. "These are the extra safety measures the client expects to see when they pull up and see us on a jobsite," Barbour says. "These requirements have also gotten our employees in the habit of wearing their safety gear and just thinking more about safety in general."

Partners can also assist with training. Beechwood Landscape works closely with its workers' comp insurance carrier. "Our carrier provides us with a lot of learning materials to help with our toolbox talks we have every two weeks," Worrell says. "I also have regular meetings with our insurance carrier to go over our safety efforts and look for ways to improve."

At Beechwood Landscape, safety has also become an integral part of jobsite planning. "When we handle our crews' paperwork, we talk about specifics of the job and what to look out for from a safety standpoint," Worrell says. "When we visit a jobsite, we check for safety wear. We also have our workers' comp carrier visit our sites to see how our crews are working. He points out things he sees that could be done better and safer."

North Point Outdoors, which has 75 employees, in Derry, N.H., has ramped up its safety efforts over the past five years or so. The company has become part of a self-insured workers' comp group with roughly 30 other companies, a couple of which are landscaping companies. Inclusion in a group like this is rare for a landscape company due to the "higher risk" nature of the landscaping profession.

"Being part of a group like this forces you to continue promoting and providing for a safety-minded culture," says Andrew Pelkey, co-owner and chief operating officer of North Point Outdoors. "When you have an incident, you have to answer to the other companies in the group. So, our company will go over any incidents in our monthly meetings, covering why something happened and what we can do to prevent it."

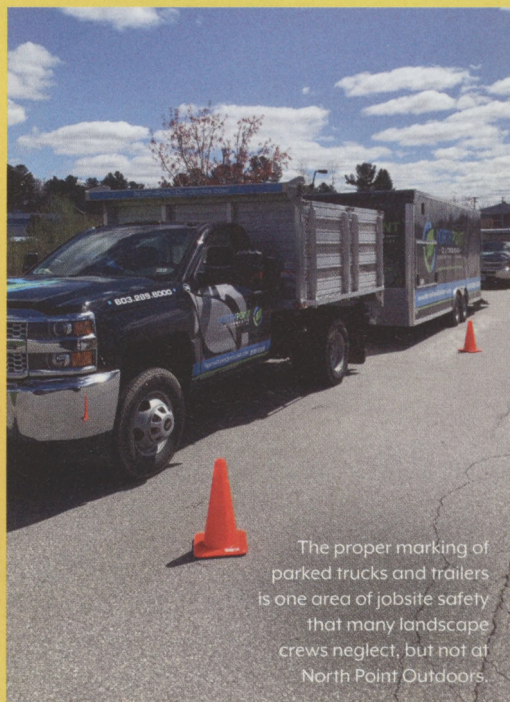
**SETTING THE TONE.** Prevention starts with the way new hires are onboarded.

"Our new hires go through a half day of orientation," Schoggen says. "They watch safety videos on the different types of equipment we use. Each training section includes a test at the end. Then we go into the back of our yard to show them how to actually use the equipment."

Schoggen got his training videos from the National Association of Landscape Professionals. As for the hands-on training, Schoggen's account manager takes the lead.

"After a new hire completes their training and is put on a crew, we make sure the crew foreman knows where the skill level is," Schoggen says. "Some employees might be good workers but still need a closer eye for a while. Some of our H-2B guys who have been with us a while actually help our foremen with training and coaching on the jobsites."

Prior to joining the self-insured workers' comp group, Pelkey says most of the safety incidents at North Point Outdoors were happening within the first few weeks of a person's employment. In response to that trend, the company created NPO University. At the core of this safety curriculum are



The proper marking of parked trucks and trailers is one area of jobsite safety that many landscape crews neglect, but not at North Point Outdoors.

training modules from a provider of online training for landscaping companies.

"A new hire always starts off on a Wednesday with a full orientation presentation from our trainer," Pelkey says. Next, the employee dives into the general training modules as well as modules that are specific to their job.

"Once they pass those, they head out into the yard for hands-on training and evaluation," he says. "Each new employee



At North Point Outdoors, new employees must complete a thorough safety orientation period that includes both written and hands-on tests. Since instituting this program, incidents during an employee's first several weeks on the job have been drastically reduced.



**“OUR PEOPLE HAVE TO KNOW THAT THEY ARE HERE TO DO THE WORK, BUT ALSO DO IT SAFELY. WE WILL NEVER COMPROMISE THEIR HEALTH OR WELLBEING JUST TO GET SOMETHING DONE.”**

**ANDREW PELKEY, CO-OWNER  
AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  
OF NORTH POINT OUTDOORS**

has to be checked-off on both the written and hands-on training.”

After a weekend break, the new hire returns on Monday morning to attend the weekly company meeting. This meeting includes a safety talk from North Point's safety coordinator. Then the new employee heads into the field with a crew. “We make sure every new hire works closely with a foreman-level employee for a week or so before joining the actual crew they are going to be working on,” Pelkey says.

**HELP ENSURE COMPLIANCE.** Maintaining the safety culture well beyond orientation requires another level of commitment. North Point Outdoors, for example, has created an official safety manual. The company's mission statement is also geared toward safety.

“I think that's really important,” Pelkey says. “Our people have to know that they are here to do the work, but also do it safely. We will never compromise their health or wellbeing just to get something done.”

“We have introduced something we call ‘common sense safety,’” says Everett Stewart, owner of Cornerstone Landscape, which employs 16 in Belmont, Ohio. “Even though we are very safe with how we oper-

ate equipment, we always talk about the little things that can happen — especially if you let yourself become lax.”

Stewart says equipment transport is one area he implores his crews to never become lax in. “This can really get a landscaping company into trouble,” Stewart says. “Especially at the end of the day, you have to be careful to make sure machines are tied down correctly. At our company, this responsibility doesn't just fall on one person. The entire crew is responsible and held accountable.”

Employees are also held accountable for how they operate equipment.

“The speed of equipment is something we really focus on,” Stewart says. “A lot of people think that the faster you run equipment, the faster you can get the job done. But in reality, the faster you run equipment, the faster you can get yourself into trouble. We train our employees to slow down. Yes, they are at a slower pace, but they are also at a safer pace. They end up doing a much more proficient job.”

Regularly occurring safety meetings present an opportunity to reinforce safety-related policies and enhance safety knowledge. At SchoggenScapes, company-wide safety meetings take place every Tuesday morning. General topics apply to both construction and maintenance crews, such as cut hazards, trips and falls and ladder safety.

“We'll also use our weekly meetings to talk about any recent near misses,” Schoggen says. “We never call anybody out though. We just take the opportunity to acknowledge an incident and try to learn from it. These meetings are led by our account manager and operations manager.”

Random jobsite inspections can further help ensure compliance. Since North Point Outdoors is part of that self-insured workers' comp group, the group randomly dispatches an OSHA-trained inspector to one of North Point's jobsites.

After assessing the jobsite, the inspector shares low, medium and high-level hazards. “We internalize those reports and work on any problems that might need to be fixed,” Pelkey says.

According to Pelkey, establishing a safety culture requires a top-down approach.



"Even in the busy season, our managers know that if we can't do it safely, we won't do it," Pelkey says. "Sometimes you have to pause a second to think about a better, safer way to do something. It is in those times of haste where decisions really matter. If leaders fail to prioritize safety over productivity, you can never expect your employees to consistently prioritize safety."

Holding people accountable is vital. North Point Outdoors has a zero-tolerance policy for drugs and alcohol. And when it comes to everyday safety infractions, clear policies help with policing.

"We'll issue a couple of verbal warnings," Pelkey says. But if a bigger trend emerges, formal disciplinary documents are recorded in an employee's personnel file. That can impact an individual's ability to attain promotions and pay raises. Repeat offenders could face further action including non-paid time off or, eventually,

termination. "However, because of the culture we've been able to breed, we don't tend to see it get to this point," Pelkey adds.

**SAFETY DURING A PANDEMIC.** Over the past couple of years, employee safety has taken on an entirely new facet. When the pandemic first hit, North Point Outdoors limited crews to one employee per truck; the others drove themselves directly to jobsites. The company also avoided group training, relying heavily on a closed Facebook group for disseminating safety information.

These days, North Point Outdoors continues to utilize its Facebook group as a supplement to in-person training. And with employees having had the opportunity to get vaccinated, daily operations have returned to some semblance of normal.

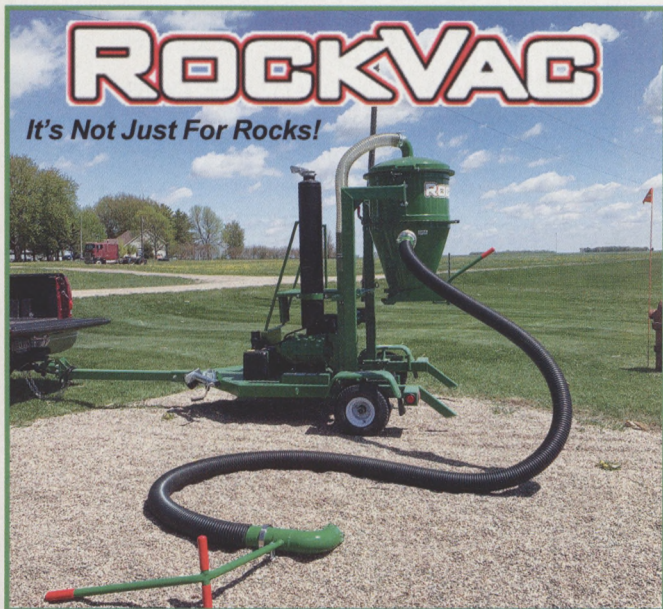
"If an employee exhibits any COVID symptoms, however, we do require them to get a test before returning to work," Pelkey

says. "We aren't mandating vaccinations though. But if an employee wants to go and get a vaccination or booster, we make it easy for them to take time off to do that."

Beechwood Landscape has taken it a step further. "We actually brought in some medical professionals to provide vaccinations right at our office," Worrell says. "I had found that a lot of my employees weren't really sure about how to get vaccinated on their own, so this seemed to make a lot of sense. It made it easy, and made both my employees and clients feel more comfortable. We didn't mandate it, but 98% of our employees took advantage of it."

When it comes to safety, employees will also take advantage of the training, tools and encouragement provided to them. Leaders just need to set the tone that safety always comes first, and a little repetition doesn't hurt. **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Wisconsin.



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# Exposed!

## Insurance **Must-Haves**

Heading into policy renewal, now is the time to rake through your coverage with an experienced agent who can pinpoint the right risk-mitigation program for your business.

**By Kristen Hampshire**

You're in a competitive bidding process to win a profitable account – one you really want to add to the roster.

It's a condo association, and the property manager asks to review your company's insurance policy. He's looking for a waiver of subrogation and a specific limit to protect the association, just in case. But the fine print indicates the policy falls short.

"You can always add on to your insurance, but by the time you do that, you might lose the bid," says Bill King, director of underwriting at Progressive Insurance.

This scenario is more common than business owners realize.

Another common misstep: figuring your operation is just too small for insurance, a misperception King sometimes finds with startups, part-time landscapers and small, home-based operations. "We hear it a lot from companies and owners when they reach out for insurance and we ask, 'Why weren't you covered?' Often, the thought process is, 'I thought I was too small to really need an insurance policy,'" he says.

"In today's environment, no business is too small when an accident happens,"







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King says. “You will be held just as responsible as any other business owner, whether or not you have insurance.”

And operating without insurance for any period of time could hike up the cost of your policy since insurers look at the lack of protection as a risk. “Was there an accident that happened that the insurance company would be on the hook for covering — something that happened prior to the company being insured?” King says.

Another insurance blunder: figuring your personal auto coverage is just fine for a truck you use to haul mowing equipment to jobs. After all, you drive the vehicle to the grocery store and soccer games — and to maintain neighbors’ lawns. But when a fender-bender occurs on the way to an account, the insurance coverage in place doesn’t cut it.

“Small companies that are just starting out might use a homeowners’ policy or auto policy that they buy online,” says Drew Garcia, vice president of the landscape group at Rancho Mesa Insurance Services based in Santee, Calif. “They enter in their vehicle and mileage and trust the insurer without doing their due diligence.”

An insurer that understands the landscape industry and its exposures is a valuable partner to any size company. “There’s so much more that goes into an insurance quote than cost,” Garcia says. “It comes down to industry knowledge and the resources an agency can provide to the landscape company to help it better manage risk.”

Here are some important factors to account for as you plan for renewal to be sure your business is covered for the way you operate today and how you’ll evolve in the coming policy year.

**COVERING YOUR BASES.** The size, scope, complexity and service mix of your business will dictate what type of insurance coverage you need. Location also matters.

“Is the business out of your home, or will you need a business owners policy that combines property and general liability into one package, making it more appropriate if you own a location or have business personal property you want to insure?” King says.



Landscapers should make sure the limit on their contractor equipment coverage is appropriate.

Landscape companies that focus on maintenance alone will require different coverage than a design/build firm with a fleet of heavy equipment. And lawn care companies applying products to properties need coverage for risks associated with chemicals. “They can be considered pollutants, so the landscapers should be sure it is included in a policy,” King says. Some insurers bundle this into a basic landscaper’s policy while others include it as a rider to a base policy.

Design/build companies should ask about installation endorsement coverage, King adds. “And you might want to consider professional liability because of the design aspect of major projects,” he says.

Contractor equipment is important coverage. “Make sure the limit you have on your contractor equipment coverage is appropriate,” King says. Also, think about non-owned tools if you rent equipment. If you rent more than once per year, including the coverage in your policy is more cost effective than buying a temporary policy from the rental company.

“It’s about the value you get, and you also get the safety of a policy without having to pay an additional expense at the time of rental,” he says.

Keep in mind, some general liability policies exclude new residential construction, Garcia says. “So, they do not want to insure you if you are doing new installs for housing developments with single-family homes, apartments, townhomes or anything in

the track building realm,” he says, citing the reason: construction deed back claims.

Two coverages that might not come to mind immediately because they’re not field-related are cyber protection and employee practices liability. “If you collect customers’ information electronically or accept electronic payments, this coverage will protect you from data compromises, computer attacks and cover expenses related to identity recovery, and some states require owners to help in recovery efforts if a cyber incident occurs,” King says.

Employee practices liability protects businesses against employment-related claims brought forth by staff, independent contractors or job applicants.

**SAFETY FIRST.** Workers’ compensation coverage is a must for landscape businesses of any size. Beyond buying the coverage, owners should evaluate the resources insurers offer to help mitigate risk. “Some agencies and agents have safety training or risk management platforms so the company can continue to build its safety programs and be more appealing in the insurance marketplace,” Garcia says.

Companies with well-defined safety protocols and training programs could access better pricing and coverage terms. You have to communicate how you mitigate risk with the insurer, Garcia says.

“If you’re doing something to keep accidents from occurring, make sure the insurer has that information so they can



fully evaluate your business and come up with the right numbers," he says. "An underwriter can connect the dots and say, 'They have a great safety program and no larger workers' compensation issues, so what they are doing is working,'" Garcia says. "This helps during an evaluation of your business so the insurer can come up with the right premiums."

One number insurers analyze is your company's Experience Modification Factor, which represents your claims history and is the ratio of your company's actual workers' compensation claims compared to expected costs for companies of a similar size in the industry. Basically, experience mod benchmarks where your claims stand versus similar businesses to determine if you are more or less of a risk to the insurer. Less risk can mean lower workers' compensation premiums.

Not all states factor experience mod into the underwriting process, Garcia says. "Other states do provide a discretionary credit based on their judgment and analysis of the business that can impact pricing," he says.

Workers' compensation coverage also depends on the type of exposures employees experience on the job. "There are variants to landscape maintenance and design/build," Garcia says. In other words, an increased likelihood of severe injury on landscape construction jobs is factored into the underwriting process and premium costs.

Overall, workers' compensation protects your business if employees are injured on the job. "In the environment we are in today and with the physical demands on landscape contractors, we highly encourage a policy, and some states require it," King says.

**ASK THE EXPERT.** Your clients partner with you to maintain their properties and build outdoor living spaces. And, as a landscape professional, you need business resources to protect your people, customers' properties, equipment investment and beyond.

"Surrounding yourself with a strong team who will help your business succeed includes partnering with an insurer," Garcia says. "An agent with experience in the industry is looking at the fine print every day."

Be wary of insurers offering stripped-down policies. "In today's environment, make sure that you are working with an insurance company that offers a comprehensive product that protects them with the right price — because price is important for small business," King says.

A solution: bundled policies. For instance, some companies offer a Select Package for landscape contractors that packages coverages like general liability, business operations, protection for tools and equipment, non-owned tools and so on.

Give yourself plenty of time to review your existing policy before renewal. While 30 days is generally sufficient, Garcia tells clients that allowing for 120 days is ideal.

And be sure you can easily access the insurer. "Business changes all the time," King says. "So, if you are growing and adding different services to your offering, you want to be sure your insurance company can add on coverages." **L&L**

The author is a contributing editor with Lawn & Landscape magazine.

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# MISSION CONTROL

Multitasking machines can mitigate erosion.

By Kristen Hampshire

**T**he last thing Tom Horn wants when installing a new landscape or renovating a property is for excess water to roll on to neighboring properties, bringing a swath of silty soil along with it. In fact, where he operates in Jefferson City, Mo., there's a requirement to protect nearby properties if the ground is being disturbed.

"We have to make sure there is no erosion — and nowadays with concerns of leaching fertilizers and herbicides, you want to also minimize that type of runoff on to other properties," says Horn, sales and business development, All-n-One Outdoor Solutions.

Erosion control accompanies other design/build projects All-n-One takes on — it's not a stand-alone offering, and about 80% of it is residential. Much of it is new construction with jobs sold as package deals to grade and manage erosion while installing a new lawn and landscape.

Horn can deploy the same equipment he uses for other outdoor projects on erosion control jobs: mini excavators and trenchers. The company's fleet includes three of each.

"For silt fence installation, we will rent an attachment that goes on a three-point hitch of a tractor," he says, explaining how the implement helps unroll and stake in the barrier he frequently uses to comply with the state's requirements.

Southwest of Horn and close to the



Erosion control projects typically coincide with design/build work so some machines can pull double duty.



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Arkansas border, Jeffrey Patterson says topography calls for erosion control on many projects. “We have to deal with hills, valleys and major water drainage issues because when it does rain here, it rains hard,” says the owner of 2 J’s & Sons, which he started in 2015. A mini excavator and skid-steer are must-haves for Patterson, and currently he’s renting.

For Jeffrey Linton, 60% of his business is erosion-related work, including laying straw blankets with hydroseed. From residential drain fields to installing berms, he also relies on a trusty skid-steer and excavator to do the work. Because erosion control jobs generally call for operating these machines, Linton loves the work. “I’ve always liked running equipment,” he says.

**CUT OUT FOR CROSS-OVERS.** Multitasking machines like skid-steer loaders, mini excavators and trenchers can share time on erosion control jobs and other construction projects. So, when erosion control is paired with design/build services, a contractor can justify the investment in purchasing equipment because it will stay busy regardless of whether erosion control is included in the scope.

“We use our mini excavators for multiple purposes, and we’ll hang on to the equipment for seven to 10 years, depending on how many hours we put on it,” Horn says.

Because All-n-One uses these machines on its installation jobs, some customers such as general contractors will ask about handling the drainage/erosion control aspects of a job, too.

“It seems like we are getting more general contractors and they like to get a package price, and now that we do everything from hardscape to landscape and irrigation, (erosion control)

is a nice fit for us,” Horn says. “It’s natural because the equipment can be utilized for different projects, so it makes it cost effective for us to do it for them versus them renting the equipment or bringing in another company.”

Sometimes, drainage work involves installing permeable pavers, and Patterson puts equipment to work leveling ground and digging out a drainage basin. So even within an erosion project, there are multiple tasks that keep skid-steers and mini excavators busy.

As for trenchers, landscapers that offer irrigation services can work both angles with this machine: digging to install irrigation lines or drainage pipe. In fact, irrigation and erosion projects go hand in hand, and Horn expects to see more water-reclamation work down the pike.

“Especially as we move forward, that is a very critical component of erosion control — trying to keep the water on the property to maybe reuse it for irrigation,” he says. “It seems like that could be the next big thing where you can control run-off and capture it for reclaimed irrigation use.”

**THE RENT OR BUY DECISION.** Horn owns his skid-steers and mini excavators — though he considered leasing one of them. “It seemed like we were better off to go ahead and make the purchase,” he says.

Based on the frequency of use and depreciation schedule, he determined that purchasing the machines made good business sense. On the other hand, he does see how leasing mowing equipment can be financially viable. “Because you can lease that equipment and turn it back in and not have repair costs,” he says.

He adds leasing might be an option for this reason based on equipment use and budgeting preferences. As for renting, Horn’s crews use the skid-steers and mini excavators far too often to consider it. He acquired two skid-steers from contractors with the purchase of their businesses. He bought the other two pieces brand new.

Linton figures if he will use a piece of equipment more than a few times per year, purchasing is a serious consideration. “I haven’t rented erosion control equipment,” he says, adding that his business has always maintained machines on the fleet.

Patterson agrees that usage dictates the



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decision to rent or own. But there are other factors that can tip the scale. For example, when he retired a tractor because of its poor service record, he was not yet prepared to purchase while investing in building a facility for his business. For now, he's renting skid-steers or mini excavators as needed.

"Generally, if you are renting a piece of equipment at least once a month, you're probably paying your equipment 'payment' to the rental company, so at that point you're better off buying," he says.

**EROSION CONTROL TOOLCHEST.** Beyond multitasking skid-steers and heavy machinery, erosion control jobs require tools like a laser level to identify the grade. "And, of course, there are drainage components like pipe and inlet boxes," Horn says.

He orders pipe as needed rather than keeping it in stock because it requires too much storage space. "But because the materials fluctuate in pricing, you'd probably be wise to purchase and keep it in stock," he relates.

Linton uses erosion control blankets along with tackifier to improve seed contact. Berming and rocks are also essential materials. Patterson also goes through plenty of these supplies when building open drainage systems that include 2- to 4-inch, fist-sized limestone. "We use pics, shovels and with retaining walls we use geo-grid, a layer that goes between courses to hold dirt," he says.

Part of an equipment investment is training to assure crewmembers' safety — and project quality. Horn has tapped into supplier training opportunities, including a drainage/erosion control course. "It was very beneficial and gave us a great deal of knowledge on how to properly size drainage components, and what types of drainage components are best to utilize," he says.

Troubleshooting is also a big part of successfully executing erosion control projects and the equipment required to complete them. Patterson reflects on a cul-de-sac property where water draining off the street flooded a client's garage regularly.

Patterson's task: Create a plan and assign the right equipment for the job to get it done. "The drain wasn't deep or steep enough to handle the water, so we cut out the bottom drain, made it deeper and steeper, and connected it to an open channel drain," he says.

The versatility of equipment like skid-steers and mini excavators allows contractors to problem-solve with the flexibility of using attachments to multitask. And in erosion control, digging to the root of the problem is literally what's required. **L&L**

The author is a contributing editor based in Ohio.



Most contractors suggest purchasing skid-steers or mini excavators if you plan to use them a handful of times per year.

“IT SEEMS LIKE THAT COULD BE THE NEXT BIG THING

WHERE YOU CAN CONTROL RUN-OFF AND CAPTURE IT FOR RECLAIMED IRRIGATION USE.”

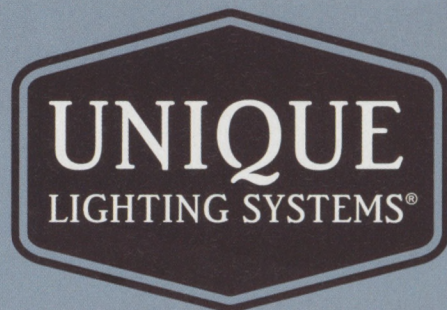
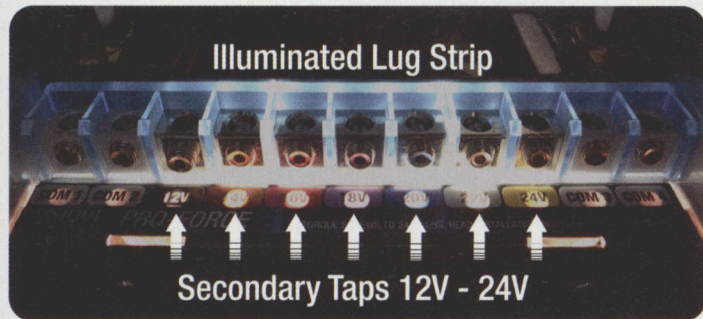


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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT BUSINESS MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE



# Q&A WITH BRYAN MOURS

VP of Customer Experience, Aspire Software

### 1 What is your response to landscape business owners who ask how software can really move the needle?

**Bryan Mours:** I can speak from my own experience here—I was running a landscape company back in 2001, and we bought the only ERP software that was available on the market for landscapers at the time. It took us a couple years to start utilizing it well, but we were able to analyze the data and create the right business processes. We brought our company from 3 to 4% net profit up above 15% net profit every year and so it was a game-changer.

But there's another side to that. I spoke to a company owner recently who said, "I never thought I would be giving away a quarter of a million dollars to my employees at the end of the year because of how much profit we've made. Thank you so much to Aspire for helping us do this." It not only changed the company owner's life, but he's able to change the lives of all his employees because of the bonuses they received. They're able to go buy cars and put away money for college funds and things of that nature, so it can be a game-changer that way as well.

### 2 What reactions have you received from companies that have switched to Aspire about the impact on their business? What's different for them now?

**BM:** Initially, people get on Aspire and say, "Wow, this is hard. I'm not seeing any results."

But once you start seeing the data, you're able to tell your crews they can be more efficient, or you can see which clients you're losing money on or should fire, or where you can consider increasing prices. That's when you can start to see the positives.

We've helped companies to not only grow organically but grow so they can now acquire other companies, build bigger businesses, and employ more people.

### 3 Can you talk about what exciting things are next for Aspire users?

**BM:** We're always looking to boldly innovate, which is one of our core values. For example, at our IGNITE! client conference last year, we had an expert panel of robotic mower manufacturers. Now, we're talking to robotics and drone companies about how we're going to integrate that technology into Aspire.

We're also getting quality partners engaged in creating an Aspire ecosystem. With different integration partners like SiteOne and Robin Autopilot that all link into Aspire, it minimizes work and wasted time for our clients. We're also partnering with the best consultants in the industry, like Marty Grunder and The Grow Group, to train our users on better business practices not only in



Aspire, but in general.

A great thing about our partnership with ServiceTitan is the addition of resources, knowledge, and people in the trades to support Aspire users and build the community. For example, if you want to talk to somebody in heating and air conditioning about how they're running their business, we'll give you access to ask these questions.

Our original vision for Aspire was to change the industry and become the leader of the industry. How do we do that? By providing not only quality software, but information and resources for people to run their businesses better. ●





# aspire

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- Reporting
- Job Costing
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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT COMPACT LOADERS



# Q&A WITH BEAU SLAVENS

President of Avant Tecno USA

## 1 Tell us about Avant Tecno USA.

**Beau Slavens:** Avant Tecno is a world leading manufacturer of high-quality compact loaders and attachments. For 30 years, Avant Tecno has been pioneering the R&D and production of versatile and multi-functional machines that are designed to offer minimal ground damage, increase efficiency and reduce labor on job sites including tree care, landscaping, property maintenance, construction, demolition and more.

Avant Tecno USA is a subsidiary of Avant Tecno Oy, which is headquartered in Finland. Established in 2012, our team at Avant Tecno USA runs the company's day-to-day operations, logistics, service, sales, marketing and financial functions.

## 2 What are the biggest key factors to Avant's success?

**BS:** The quality of Avant products and after-sales support the equipment gets, coupled with our network of dealers and the fact that Avant can play in so many different markets with over 200 attachments, are the biggest factors to our success. We also pride ourselves on being a customer focused company – we speak to our end users daily and value their ongoing feedback on improvement opportunities.

## 3 What was the biggest hurdle for Avant when it opened its

## United States office in 2012?

**BS:** The biggest hurdle in the beginning was that the United States was a very skid-steer driven market. We spent a lot of time educating the customer on the various features and benefits of the Avant: high lift-to-weight ratio, minimal surface impact, low fuel consumption and maintenance costs, telescopic boom, easy to transport from one jobsite to the next. In the ten years since Avant has been introduced to the U.S., many of those skid steer owners have become Avant owners themselves. Now, we've become a well-respected brand in the industry and other major manufacturers are beginning to produce compact loaders because they see the advantages Avant brings to these various segments.

## 4 How do you keep up with brand recognition and competition in the US market?

**BS:** It's critically important for us to stay ahead of the curve by innovating and introducing new technology, new loader models and new attachments for specific market segments. It's also important to point out that while Avant



has built a reputation as pioneers of the concept, our brand recognition comes directly from the customers. They are out there seeing what the Avant can do and creating the buzz about these compact-but-mighty green machines. Our customers are hands down our biggest and best brand ambassadors.

## 5 What part does Avant's dealer network specifically play in the company's overall success?

**BS:** Our dealers believe in Avant and they are excited to represent a product that is so unique. At the end of the day, dealers are always looking to solve their customer's problems – to find the perfect tool for any job. Avant offers that versatile, multi-purpose, year-round solution for multiple segments: one machine for all jobs. ●



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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT FUNGICIDES



**BASF**  
We create chemistry

# Q&A WITH JEFF VANNOY

Senior Product Manager at BASF, gives insight into the future of the lawn care industry and upcoming BASF innovations

### **1** What are the biggest challenges that today's lawn care operators (LCOs) face? How can BASF help address these challenges?

**Jeff Vannoy:** For the last seven to eight years, a primary challenge has been labor. Hiring and retaining good people has been difficult because jobs in the LCO business can be strenuous. You're out in the elements, and you have to know how to apply products the right way. Another challenge is setting and meeting the property owners' expectations in a reasonable way. If we get a stretch of hot and dry weather and folks aren't watering their lawn or don't have an irrigation system, then cancellation rates may go up. It's an age-old problem for any service company, but in lawn care specifically, it is very difficult if property owners aren't doing the things they need to do to help make their lawn healthy. As manufacturers, we try to make sure LCOs know what solutions are available and how to implement them. I think there is always room for improvement and for us to continue to strive to make our customers happy.

Disease control is also particularly tricky because most LCOs don't offer that service. A property owner may think there is something wrong with the fertilizer or herbicide when, in fact, they are dealing with a disease issue. The most common diseases LCOs face include cool-season brown patch and warm-season large patch; they're about half of the reported issues for lawns in the U.S.

### **2** BASF works hard to forge close relationships with LCOs. How are those relationships helpful as they build their spray programs?

**JV:** We try to partner with LCOs that are looking for value-added ways to grow their business and provide top-level products and services, resulting in a really healthy lawn. The ideal situation is working with LCOs that want to integrate our innovative solutions into their programs.

### **3** How do the innovations that BASF offers help LCOs create and maintain beautiful lawns year round?

**JV:** We offer an array of products that fit into season-long programs and meet the specific needs of lawn care operation, including post-emergents like Drive® XLR8 herbicide and pre-emergents like FreeHand® 1.75G herbicide and Pendulum® 2G herbicide, which is a granular herbicide that can be used either on lawns or in landscape beds. We are also focused on enhancing our fungicide offering this year for the lawn care market.

### **4** Which products have LCOs found to be the most successful in the past couple of years?

**JV:** Drive XLR8 herbicide — the post-emergent herbicide for grassy and broadleaf weeds — is a product we've had in the portfolio for a long time that has seen a lot of growth in the last four to five years. Folks are really enjoying it, and that has to do with its outstanding formulation; it's water-based and seems to be a big hit with LCOs. FreeHand 1.75G herbicide is also a growing brand for us and includes two active ingredients; it's great for any landscape bed or warm-season turf area, and it keeps things out — any sort of doveweed, goosegrass or crabgrass. It's really a nice, easy-to-use product.

### **5** Are there any new chemistries in the pipeline?

**JV:** This season, we are introducing Pillar® SC Intrinsic® brand fungicide, which will be a premier fungicide for disease control in both cool- and warm-season lawns. It's a very flexible, broad-spectrum product, so it will enable LCOs to have a new disease-control solution that can be integrated into their spray programs. We've always provided many herbicide solutions to the LCO market, but this will allow us to enter that fungicide space for lawn care and provide a more diverse offering for LCOs. ●



# FreeHand® 1.75G

Herbicide

## Unsurpassed preemergent control for tough weeds

FreeHand 1.75G herbicide is an easy-to-use granular preemergent herbicide for excellent, long-lasting control of grassy, broadleaf and sedge weeds in warm-season lawns and landscape beds.

For more information visit [betterturf.basf.us/lawncare](https://betterturf.basf.us/lawncare)

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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

### PROPERTY MEASUREMENT



# Q&A WITH MIKE RORIE

Former CEO Go iLawn, Chairman GroundSystems

## 1 How does property measurement impact the profitability of landscape businesses?

**Mike Rorie:** Property measurements are the first link in your sales chain. If your property measurements are inaccurate or nonexistent, everything else from estimates and pricing, to labor and material ordering will be messed up.

Accurate property measurements are vital to bidding on the right jobs at the right price and allowing your company to operate profitably. Trusted measurements are also the foundation of your company's Property Intelligence capabilities.

## 2 What is Property Intelligence?

**MR:** Property Intelligence refers to your ability to find, organize, and connect all the different types of information you need to win and service a job on a visual sitemap. It lets your company and even your customers, clearly see the relationship between visual and numerical job data in one place.

In other words, measurements without context are just numbers, but measurements connected to equipment, materials, labor, and proximity to other job data create Property Intelligence.

Your Property Intelligence system becomes a compounding, proprietary asset for your company. It drives productivity, collaboration, and transparency across every part of your organization: sales, planning, operations, estimating, budgeting, and more.

## 3 How can Go iLawn Property Intelligence help landscape contractors win more bids?

**MR:** Landscape companies lose bids because their prospects don't feel they offered the best price to value against the other bidders.

This can be caused by inaccurate measurements that produce over or under-bidding mistakes. It also results from submitting number-heavy proposals that don't show meaningful value.

The Go iLawn Property Intelligence system helps contractors gain a competitive bidding advantage by helping them get the right numbers and communicate them visually to provide

clear value. Go iLawn's high-resolution aerial imagery, and precision measuring tools let you easily get the accurate job numbers you need and organize them into color-coded groups within a dynamic visual sitemap. You can then quickly export all numbers and the sitemap image into your proposal.

The Go iLawn ShareView feature creates a link for your bid recipients to see an online, interactive, non-editable version of their job's sitemap. It turns your Property Intelligence into a visual sales tool that lets property managers virtually experience the better value of your bid and sets your company apart from the competition.

## 4 Go iLawn was recently acquired by Aspire. How will that impact how the software works?

**MR:** Go iLawn will still operate as a standalone solution and continue serving landscape companies of all sizes. The acquisition provides Go iLawn with exceptional industry and technical resources from Aspire and ServiceTitan to innovate and further enhance the product.

Larger companies will benefit from a solution that systematically connects Property Intelligence with comprehensive business management. An upcoming integration will send Go iLawn property data directly to Aspire. With property measurements and sitemaps linked directly to Aspire, companies can unlock a new level of data-driven productivity, opportunity, and profitability.

## 5 How many landscape contractors use Go iLawn?

**MR:** Thousands of companies rely on Go iLawn as a core system to grow their businesses. The software is built specifically for the needs of landscape contractors and it's backed by outstanding support. Go iLawn customers include the largest companies in the landscape industry down to the smallest.

The reason for the product's success is simple. It helps our customers win! Now with a new parent company behind it, the best property measurement system for landscape contractors is getting even better.

You can try it free for 14 days at [GoiLawn.com](http://GoiLawn.com). ●



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Join the thousands of landscape contractors using Go iLawn to win more profitable jobs in less time.

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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT ZERO-TURN MOWERS



# Q&A WITH MICHAEL SIMMON

Why Grasshopper Model 337G5 is the right choice for any commercial mowing fleet

### 1 How does Grasshopper Model 337G5 save contractors time?

**MS:** Model 337G5 EFI saves time by combining design, zero-turn-radius maneuverability and engine torque to power through any conditions at faster mowing speeds. The HydroGear ZT-5400 trans-axle transmission is design-matched to the 37hp Vanguard Big Block EFI engine to provide mowing speeds up to 10.5 mph. This design-matched characteristic transfers more power to the cutting deck to ensure optimal blade tip speed, even in lush or overgrown conditions. The DuraMax® cutting deck is 5.5-inch-deep with specially designed cutting chambers to maximize airflow. These combined features allow operators to move complete jobs in less time without sacrificing cut quality.

### 2 How does Model 337G5 save contractors labor?

**MS:** The dual-swing out lever design standard on Model 337G5 allows operators to precisely maneuver while staying comfortably in control at faster speeds. The levers are dampened and feature automatic return-to-neutral settings, which require less effort to steer and maintain forward speed.

The ergonomic design also reduces operator fatigue. The seat and footrest are iso-mounted to reduce vibrations, and steering levers adjust to fit nearly any arm length. The standard Premier Suspension (Grammer) seat provides additional comfort with

adjustable lumbar support, tilting backrest, operator weight adjustments and adjustable armrests.

Maintenance is often overlooked, but lifetime maintenance should also be a key consideration during the purchase process. Model 337G5 requires only five grease points and features easy access to belts, filters, tension springs and other items that need routine maintenance and care. Commercial-grade components are built into every mower to keep mowers running longer with less wear and down-time in the shop.

### 3 How does Model 337G5 save contractors materials or fuel?

**MS:** The fuel-efficient EFI (electronic fuel injection) engine uses less fuel than comparably-sized carbureted gasoline engines, and most operators can achieve up to 10 percent fuel savings with EFI engines.

In addition, our proprietary CoolTemp Hydro-Max™ hydrostatic transmission fluid extends oil change intervals – every 600 hours after the 100-hour break-in change. This specially blended fluid also reduces operating temperatures inside the transmission by up to 15 degrees Fahrenheit, which reduces wear and extends internal component life. This results in fewer oil changes, fewer replacement parts and less down time.



### 4 How does Model 337G5 help generate revenue for lawn care and landscape companies?

**MS:** Model 337G5 has the ability to finish most mowing jobs in less time without sacrificing the quality of the cut. This allows contractors to stay on schedule, and possibly add more clients to the schedule.

### 5 How can Model 337G5 make landscape and lawn care companies profitable?

**MS:** With ample power and speed, the commercial cutting deck, as well as the reduced maintenance required, as described in the previous questions, Model 337G5 is a perfect choice for contractors who want to save time, labor, fuel and costs, all of which contribute to a healthy and profitable bottom line. ●



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## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT

### EDGING



# Q&A WITH MARC COHEN

Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Permaloc

## 1 What makes Permaloc different?

**MC:** Permaloc is the pioneer of aluminum edging and restraints. Founded 36 years ago by a landscape architect, Dan Zwier, Dan quickly learned in real-world applications that the products out there did not suit their intended purpose. They were heavy and hard to cut or they were light and did not stand the test of time, thus the evolution of Permaloc aluminum edging. Permaloc excels with its excellent customer service, same day quotes and shipping, product selection, in-stock finished goods inventory, knowledge of industry specifications, lean manufacturing and well-developed relationships with its customers. Permaloc is the world's leading sustainable landscape edging.

## 2 Why is aluminum the best choice in landscape edging and restraints?

**MC:** There are many choices when it comes to landscape edging including wood, steel, concrete and plastic however aluminum out performs them all. Aluminum has a high strength to weight ratio. It is lightweight, very strong and 100% recyclable. Permaloc manufactures edging and restraints utilizing non-corrosive 6063 aluminum which is a grade higher than that which is used marine applications. The lightweight characteristics of aluminum make it a contractor's choice as it can be cut and formed in the field, transported and installed by one person, thereby saving labor cost which would otherwise be passed on to the end user. Finally, aluminum just looks better as an architectural accent and will last the test of time.

## 3 Should I be using a different edging for straight runs as opposed to curved lines?

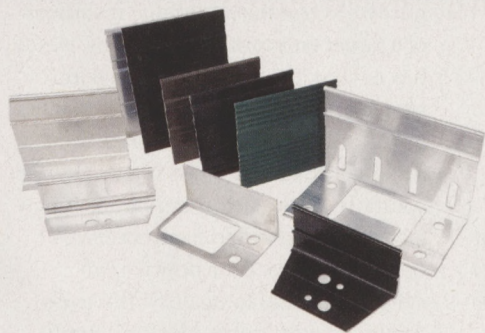
**MC:** We've all been there. Trying our best to make edging

that is running parallel to a structure look straight. No matter how hard we try, the waves between each staking point remain painfully obvious. The human eye is designed to pick up those anomalies. That's why when doing straight lines with edging, it is important to use an edging that was created for that. Not only will the result look much better to those that will see it over time, but you will save yourself a great deal of time during the install. And in this business, time is money! Edgings designed for straight lines typically have a feature built in that allows them to remain perfectly rigid, like a small "foot" on the bottom. They should still have built-in staking to assure that it remains in place and does not shift during the lifetime of the project. PermaStrip manufactured by Permaloc is the clear choice.

## 4 When should I use edging?

**MC:** A well-planned landscape design is created by a series of lines. Whether these lines are curved or straight, it is imperative to the design that they remain crisp throughout the project's lifetime. In order to maintain the lines that create the landscape design, it is necessary to use a proper landscape edging. The correct usage of landscape edging can save the user time, labor, and money over the lifetime of the project, as well as ensure the design remains visually appealing. Without the presence of an edging, a landscape design can begin to migrate over time, causing the design to lose its original intent. With this in mind, edging is important in every project where two different textures or media meet. It is important in these situations to maintain the line of separation and keep each adjacent media in place. This is beneficial to both the structural integrity and the visual aesthetics of the project. ●





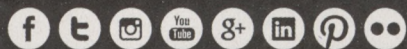
## EVERY PROJECT OF EVERY SIZE NEEDS PERMALOC.

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SUSTAINABLE EDGING SOLUTIONS



## Q&A WITH THE EXPERT MARKETING



# Q&A WITH JOE MCPHAIL

Founding Partner and Real Green Number 2

### 1 How can business software help companies succeed?

**Joe McPhail:** There's no single, straight-forward path to success. You need to make sales, manage your growth and stay profitable – but effective customer communication, an excellent local reputation and a solid marketing plan are also crucial. A good software system should help with all those things, streamlining processes and making running the business more efficient. I always tell my customers that their software should bring more value to their business than it costs them.

### 2 What makes Real Green stand out above the competition?

**JM:** Our focus has always been on our customers and how we can help them grow. It's just good business – we knew from the very start that if our customers were successful, we would be too. Each product or service we added over the



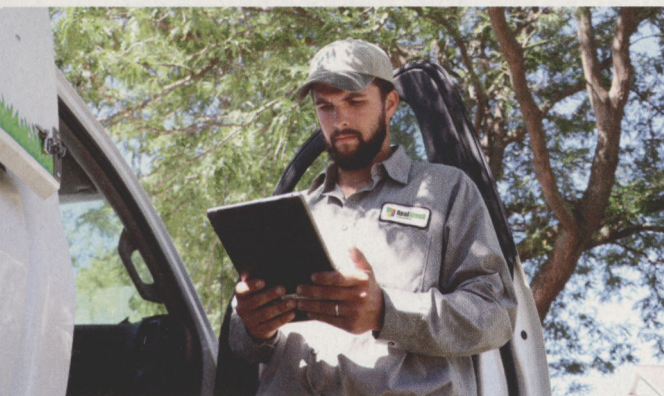
years was created to make our customers more successful and add value for them. From Service Assistant to Mobile Live to our Customer Assistant Websites, we would create the product then continue to refine it; we always listen to our customers to hear how they think we can make things even better. We're always developing – our goal is continual improvement. If there's one thing I've learned after 30-plus years in the software business, it's that we're never done.

For example, we first started developing a mobile product more than 20 years ago. Initially, it was primarily for data collection. The product that eventually became Mobile Live came about not because we were looking for an additional revenue stream but because we saw a very clear way to help make our customers' jobs easier. Real Green founder Joe Kucik also ran a lawn care

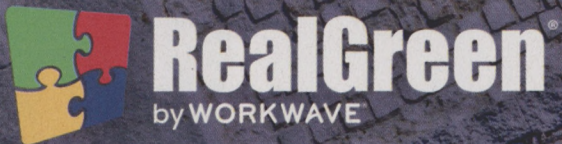
business at the time. He had gone out on a route because his crew was behind on production, and he wanted to boost morale. After that day, he demanded that we build a mobile product that would do more than just collect information – it needed to provide driving directions to make their jobs easier. Of course, that was just the start for Mobile Live, which we're continuing to improve upon today.

### 3 What does the WorkWave acquisition mean for Real Green – for its customers and its products?

**JM:** This is definitely a positive move for Real Green and our customers. Partnering with WorkWave gives them the best of both worlds: They still benefit from Real Green's industry-specific expertise, our long-term relationships and our customer-focused philosophy. But now we've got the additional resources of a larger corporation behind us, which has enabled us to speed the development of products like Service Assistant 5. We've been able to accelerate those timelines, which will put an even better solution in our customers' hands much faster than we would have otherwise been able to do. Plus, now we can start integrating some of WorkWave's established products, like their Route Manager, into SA5 to provide improved functionality and increased flexibility across the board. It's an exciting time. ●







# Real Green. Real Growth. Real Success.



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-Alec McClennan, Founder, Good Nature Organic Lawn Care



**"Real Green has revolutionized my business.** I started with nothing – a 1987 truck and 60 customers. Today I have more than 1,600 customers. Seven trucks. And Real Green was a huge part of that. Once you start to get a little bit bigger, you have to be able to organize all of that chaos. **Real Green does that perfectly.**"

-Cody Saunders, Owner, Pro-Lawn



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-Jonathan Riggsbee Owner, GrowinGreen

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## Q&amp;A WITH THE EXPERT

PGRs



## Q&amp;A WITH

## DR. KYLE BRISCOE

Manager, SePRO Technical Development

**1 Why should PGRs be considered for use in lawns & landscapes?**

**Dr. Kyle Briscoe:** PGRs provide a multitude of benefits, ranging from reducing the total cost of a management program to improving plant quality. We consistently see a 50% or more reduction in trimming over a growing season. Given the current labor situation, you can't afford not to use PGRs in lawn and landscape.

**2 What can PGRs do for me?**

**KB:** Let's start with lawns. Using Edgeless to suppress turf growth in areas that are edged or string trimmed is essential. Less time spent edging and string trimming equals more day-to-day productivity. For landscapes, Cutless 0.33G (granular) and Cutless QuickStop (liquid) are game-changing when it comes to shrub management. Using 0.33G and/or QuickStop will produce more uniform shrubs with darker green foliage that require significantly less trimming. In many cases, flower count will increase on flowering shrubs following Cutless 0.33G and/or Cutless QuickStop applications.

**3 How do I put PGRs into my maintenance program?**

**KB:** I mentioned Edgeless for edged or string trimmed areas of lawns. Make Edgeless applications to actively growing turf within 2-3 days after edging or string trimming. With Cutless QuickStop, make applications to actively growing

shrubs within 2-3 days following a trimming. Cutless 0.33G differs from Cutless QuickStop in that you will want to make the application 3-4 weeks prior to trimming, to allow the PGR to move up the plant to the growing points.

**4 How do I select the right products for me?**

**KB:** Edgeless is a no-brainer, as it suppresses turfgrass growth longer than any other product labeled for banded applications. In the landscape, one product might fit your program better than the other. First, consider what type of application you are best setup for (granular or foliar), then determine the shrub species and plant height. Review the Cutless Landscape PGR Application Guide to find the correct Cutless 0.33G and Cutless QuickStop rates. Access the guide by scanning the QR Code.

**5 How often do I need to apply PGRs in lawn and landscapes?**

**KB:** The key to PGR reapplication is timing. Target reapplications when turfgrass or shrubs begin to grow out of the previous application. For Edgeless, that's



Ligustrum growth suppression following Cutless QuickStop



Arboricola growth suppression following Cutless QuickStop



Hybrid bermudagrass growth suppression following Edgeless

usually about 6-8 weeks after application. The reapplication timing of PGRs used in the landscape varies by product, with Cutless QuickStop suppressing growth for 3-4 months and Cutless 0.33G suppressing growth for 6-8 months. ●



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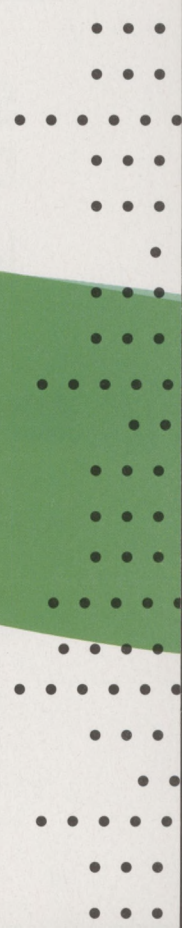
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# AN AVERAGE DAY

**H. Jaclyn Ishimaru-Gachina**, president /  
CEO, Gachina Landscape Management



On weekends, when she isn't catching up on emails or reading, you will find Jackie Ishimaru-Gachina riding horses. The president and CEO of Gachina Landscape Management started riding about 10 years ago as a stress outlet while her late husband and company founder, John, battled cancer.

"You need to fully be present with a 1,000-pound animal," she says. "So many think – don't you just sit there? No, no, no. I find the multi-tasking and mind/body connection challenging. It's mentally and physically challenging, a fun way to exercise, and a social outlet."

**Here's Ishimaru-Gachina's average day.**

Interviewed by **Brian Horn**

In the morning, I check the calendar, news, email, text messages. I read emails and texts in bed. I go over the to-do list, make the life calls — anniversary and birthday calls, check in on people who are sick. I get on the Peloton, cool down and stretch. I don't answer calls/email during the Peloton time.

For breakfast, I have coffee and — if I feel hungry — avocado toast, corned beef hash, oranges, apples. My commute is normally 15 minutes. I usually work 3 days from home, two in the office.

At home, I start work at 6 a.m. If I go in to the office, I'm in at 8:30 to walk around and greet everyone. I catch up with everyone, ask how's the family and hear if anyone needs to meet with me.

I set the alarm for meetings throughout the day. I need to hear an actual alarm go off, continuously, that I have to physically turn off or I will work through a calendar reminder and be either late or miss. I hate to be late.

I have 4-5 meetings day — kept to an hour to an hour and a half. If I am leading it, I'm keeping everyone on task. I stop everyone from going down wormholes. Interestingly, I don't have a set agenda. My meetings with senior management are organic. Everyone is given time to present ideas/issues to the group. The discussion takes what it takes, but if I feel it has run its course, I ask if we could revisit either at the next meeting (two weeks) or a special meeting with just stakeholders. If someone starts veering off, I will intercede and politely ask to stay on point. Usually, the meeting is 1.5 hours and may only cover two topics. I keep Fridays

open for closing the loops. No calls during meetings. Everyone knows to text if it's important.

I like to schedule ride-alongs with account and project managers to see how the sites look, see current enhancement projects and connect with each individual. I ask what and how I can do to make their jobs easier or more efficient.

I used to go once a week. Now, maybe once a month, usually half a day with lunch or breakfast included. It's a way also to shake hands and thank the field techs, sometimes meet clients and really see what we are doing. Managers let me know when they are proud of a project and invite me to walk the site. I will periodically call to check on how a project is progressing and if they need support. What do they need to make the job go more smoothly? Or I will invite myself when we sign an interesting new client.

I also periodically request an invitation to attend a weekly branch meeting. I will listen to understand more about a branch manager and the rest of the team. And it's a comfort zone time for me to answer their questions.

My day usually ends at 5:30 p.m. I used to listen to books (riding home). Not so much now — more so music. Dinner time is the start of the wind down and cleaning up the house and preparing for the next day. At 8:30-9, I jump in bed.

I answer e-mails and read articles of interest — business and personal, over the weekend. I ride my horse and work with my trainer on improving my skills in dressage. I catch up with family and friends. **L&L**



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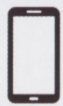
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