

Somebody has to offer the lowest-priced lawn/landscape services in every market. Although lowest-priced doesn't necessarily translate into bad service or, in fact, an unprofitable business, it's a very, very tough niche to fill.

The operation with the lowest price for any service—and let's include any type of commercial lawn care or landscaping—has to: a) operate more efficiently (at a lower cost) than its competitors, b) sell and complete more work to generate as much revenues as the competitors do.

Either one is a tall order particularly in the lawn/landscape business where a guy can buy a mower and a small trailer, and start rounding up properties convinced that he can mow just a little bit cheaper than the other guy. The truth is he can—until he wises up or runs out of money.

Laying claim to being the lowest-priced commercial mower, applicator or builder (or even near the bottom of the price ladder) will probably get even riskier as the lawn/landscape contractor market continues to consolidate.

LandCare USA, The Brickman Group and TruGreen-ChemLawn are expanding rapidly in commercial maintenance. (See stories on pages 12 & 15 of this issue.) They're establishing themselves in as many major markets as they can as fast as they can.

So, what's this have to do with prices?

Plenty. Look to the lawn application business which is dominated nationwide by TruGreen-ChemLawn. Most competing independent application companies wouldn't want to go head to head with TG-CL on price alone. Generally, the smaller operation can't buy product less expensively than TG-CL. Nor does it have the same

[LANDSCAPE/GROUNDS]

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Scapes excited about growth

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Thrill rides and landscaping

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Why you shouldn't fear complaints

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Build great ponds in a day

Offering lowest price is no advantage today



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name recognition or marketing clout of a national company.

To survive and prosper the local or regional lawn/landscape business owner has to offer a level of service and customer satisfaction that exceeds the larger company. This requires continuing investments in equipment, employee training, customer education/communication, and marketing.

This is impossible if the local operator doesn't charge fairly for his services. **LM**

[PEOPLE & PROJECTS]

Blalock gets Argentina work

Blalock Design Associates, based in Birmingham, AL, will consult for the Argentine Soccer Association on the development of a new training facility for the country's World Cup and Olympic soccer teams. The project will consist of three new soccer fields and the renovation of four other fields. All seven fields will be ready for play in 1999.

NY students work rails

Landscape architectural technology students at Delhi College, Delhi, NY, are helping the Delaware and Ulster Rail Ride in Arkville, NY, to get a facelift. Students created designs that included stone pathways, gardens, picnic areas, and handicap access for the popular tourist attraction.