



◀ YardMaster's Bill Pike increases his crew's efficiency by keeping in touch.

tried to solve your communications needs by using a two-way radio system, even though you know all too well the many limitations of this method.

Two-way complications

Consider the experience of Yardmaster, a TruGreen-Land-Care landscape contracting firm headquartered in Painesville, OH, which found its analog two-way radio system was unable to provide communications over the extended regional area the company serves. Yardmaster communicates through between its branches in Cleveland and Columbus, OH.

"We have an average of 55 field crews spread across the entire northeastern Ohio area on any given work day," explains Anthony Vitari, area manager for Yardmaster's maintenance division. "We were forced to abandon the two-way radio system due to its seriously inadequate coverage."

Crowded airwaves

Another landscaping company in the same market faced similar problems with two-way radios. Nair Landscaping, which has 15 to 18 crews out of offices in both Medina and Hudson, OH, continuously experienced extensive interference from outside sources over its radio system, which hampered communication between crew workers, field supervisors and managers back in the office. And since two-way radio technology required all the company's units to use the same channel for communication, backups and delays in disseminating information were commonplace.

"Only one person could be on the system at a time," says Sue Russo, director of marketing for Nair Landscaping. "Analog two-way radio was not a very feasible solution" for them. For the 70-employee company, the system's lack of portability was another major obstacle that stood in the way of complete productivity.

Communication is a tangled web of problems for most landscape and lawn care contractors, at least the busy ones. You're serving customers over a wide geographic area, so costs for cellular phones with roaming and long distance charges can be pro-

hibitive. On any given day, you might have to reach several work crews who are out in the field or you might have to reach from several different locations to coordinate their activities.

Work schedules during the day are a fluid, moving target, so your supervisors need to be able to find you with

progress reports in order to stay close to schedule. With the wide variety of communications technology available today, where do you turn for solutions to these problems?

If you are like many contractors, you have

Wireless and loving it

Imagine how much more efficient your company can be if you could communicate with your crews instantaneously.

You can with digital two-way radios.

As Russo explained, "The radio units had to be mounted inside our work trucks, so someone had to be inside or very close by the truck in order to receive incoming calls; otherwise, we couldn't make contact."

As an alternative to the analog two-way radio system, Yardmaster and Nair began using a wireless system provided by Nextel Communications. There, they found a system that had the benefits of digital two-way radio communication, a cellular phone service without the high cost of other carriers and a variety of other features that have given them the ability to run more efficiently and productively. The system is based on Motorola handsets that combine four communications technologies into one device:

- ▶ digital cellular,
- ▶ digital two-way radio,
- ▶ text/numeric paging,
- ▶ voice mail.

The digital two-way radio feature, Nextel Direct ConnectSM, allows a user to instantly contact one or up to 100 coworkers at the same time, much like using a traditional two-way radio. Digital's coverage minimizes problems with coverage range, interference or channel backup.

"We get reception everywhere we need it," says Russo.

The portability of the phone gives instant communication with everyone in the field, instead of keeping workers next to their truck-mounted two-way radios or playing the game of pager tag. "It cuts out so much time and effort," she says. "You can get in touch with anyone, anywhere, when you need to."

Vitari agrees. "We're as close to seamless communication as we can get."

Extend your range

For both companies, the extended range of the digital two-way radio, along with its clarity, is an improvement over the older analog radio systems they previously used. Russo and Vitari both report that they're able to keep in touch with crews over hundreds of square miles using the inexpensive radio air time, a capability that just wasn't available with their previous systems.

"From my office in Cleveland," says Russo, "I'm able to use it to reach someone in Columbus and even Cincinnati, which is four hours away from here, as easy as if they were in the next block."

The new system was especially cost-efficient for Yardmaster. When Nextel evaluated Yardmaster's cell phone use, it found that approximately 65% of the calls were made to the office or to a few other frequently dialed numbers. These calls could be handled through direct connection. Even though Yardmaster has increased its communications with workers by nearly 40% in the two years since switching to the service, it has not had a corresponding increase in communications costs.

24/7 communications

The digital cellular service also allows Yardmaster's and Nair Landscaping's sales representatives and managers to remain in constant contact with customers and the office, improving each company's level of customer service and opening up opportunities for more business.

"Our sales reps are directly accessible," says Vitari of the system. "There's no need to leave messages and wait around for a return call. We have direct contact."

The integrated wireless communication service eliminates roaming charges and per-second rounding on all digital cellular calls flat rate pricing for long distance. This saved both companies additional costs. The messaging service allows field employees to receive voice, text or numeric messages 24 hours a day, even when their phones are off, which eliminates the need for an after-hours answering service. **LM**

Nextel, which provides integrated all-digital wireless service, has offices throughout the country. Or visit www.nextel.com on the Web.

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