

## How to get rewards and respect

**D**espite the many glowing opportunities on this industry's horizon, it has a long way to go before each of you get the rewards and respect you deserve. With few exceptions, you should be able to charge more for your services, and your profession should be better appreciated for the value, beauty and improvements that you make to your clients' properties.

But it ain't necessarily so. Most of you charge what the market will bear and, in many cases, the market says your service is a commodity. Many of you low-ball because you need the business, yet even then, you're not making a good profit. Your business may be growing, but you're probably working too hard for it. And you're stuck until you become profitable – you can't buy top-quality equipment, pay enough to get (and keep) good people or make your life easier.

Those of you who charge mid-range prices usually get some profits, and your clients understand that you bring some value. While the true nature of your expertise might be a little fuzzy to them, your clients do understand that you bring value, and they'll support the higher levels of service, quality or experience you bring.

However, you might not be charging as high an hourly rate as a plumber and you probably don't get respect for your line of work like a landscape architect, accountant or even a carpenter. If you're savvy, you can reinvest in your organization, but keeping good employees long-term or reaching that level of "greatness" that you desire continues to be a dream.

Finally, a few of you charge premium prices – because your clients recognize a truly unique and worthwhile service. You generate profits to reinvest, hire the best people and are able to expand your businesses.

But the sad truth is that only 5% or less of you get to this level in our industry. Few clients or institutions truly understand the skills, knowledge, experience or attention involved that make it a real profession.

### Speaking with one strong voice

This is a tough problem, and one not solved easily. This industry won't change public opinion overnight. You won't help your clients, suppliers, potential employees, regulators, investors or researchers understand this industry's value without several things happening:

- ▶ This industry must speak with one strong voice.
- ▶ The public must understand the meaning and value of professional landscape work.
- ▶ Suppliers must comprehend this industry's diversity, expertise and challenges.
- ▶ Potential employees must realize this work is a profession with rewards and opportunities.
- ▶ Regulators must respect this industry's breadth, education and priorities.
- ▶ Investors must be convinced of this industry's tremendous potential for growth.
- ▶ Researchers must focus on landscape's challenges.

How do we get there?

Next month, I'll share some specifics. In the meantime, please share your ideas and opinions with me so we can bring more value to professional landscaping.

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