

Get saved by software

Winter's a great time to upgrade your computer systems and train your staff to make those upgrades pay off

BY LYNNE BRAKEMAN /
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If your company hasn't upgraded its computer systems in the last five years, it may be time to consider investing in Green Industry-specific software and staff training that will allow your company to grow, even in tough economic times.

As these two landscape/lawn care company owners admit, the up-front cost in time and money will seem like a lot at first — but the results will speak for themselves.

Steve Hill, President

TurfTenders, Inc. ■ Raleigh, NC

We've been in business 21 years. We still use QuickBooks for some of our accounting, but we implemented the CLIP system years ago because it has some great functionality on industry-specific issues.

For example, we have an installation division and a maintenance division. On the maintenance side, CLIP allows us to capture the square footages so we can project the amounts of fertilizer and labor needed. And it allows us to schedule jobs once a year, once a month or once a week.

This is especially valuable for an annual job like irrigation winterization. For each job,

we can input notes about where the device is, what type of clock it has, etc. So, from year to year, you don't lose that knowledge when different personnel perform that task. Those notes also help us when a property changes hands.

In order to get the value out of a product like this, you have to invest in training your people. I think you need to invest an amount at least equal to the cost of the product itself. We have four front office people using it: myself, our estimator, the maintenance manager and our accounting assistant. We've sent our folks to several CLIP training sessions, and we buy the updates.

Tim Doppel, President, Owner

Atwood Lawncare ■ Sterling Heights, MI

I've been in this business for 32 years. There's never been any question about doing things the best we possibly could, so we've been computerized for almost 25 years.

I just crack up when I think back to what we used to use. We used to have Radio Shack Tandy machines with 5.25 in. floppy disks!

About 13 or 14 years ago, we went with the RealGreen system so we could have information at our fingertips that helps us make much better decisions on ordering products and scheduling labor.

We've just started using remote data capture. The technicians use a hand-held device

Solutions providers

Adkad

www.adkad.com

Alocet Software (Lawn Monkey)

www.lawnmonkey.com

DK Enterprises

www.dkenet.com/winlawn.html

Include Software Corp.

www.include.com

Intac International Inc. (Wintac Pro)

www.wintac.net

Performance Software Tech., Inc.

www.GoPST.com

Practical Solutions

www.theservicesolution.com

Real Green Systems

www.realgreen.com

Sensible Software, Inc. (CLIP)

www.clip.com

Slice Technologies

www.sliceplus.com

Tree Management Systems Inc.

www.turftree.com

UDS, Green Industry Software, Inc.

www.activeapplications.com

Vanguard Computer Systems, Inc.

www.camelotsoftware.com

to enter start and finish times on each job and record products used and any problems. The real time savings is when they bring the hand-held back to the office and drop it in the cradle to download the data in 30 seconds or less.

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