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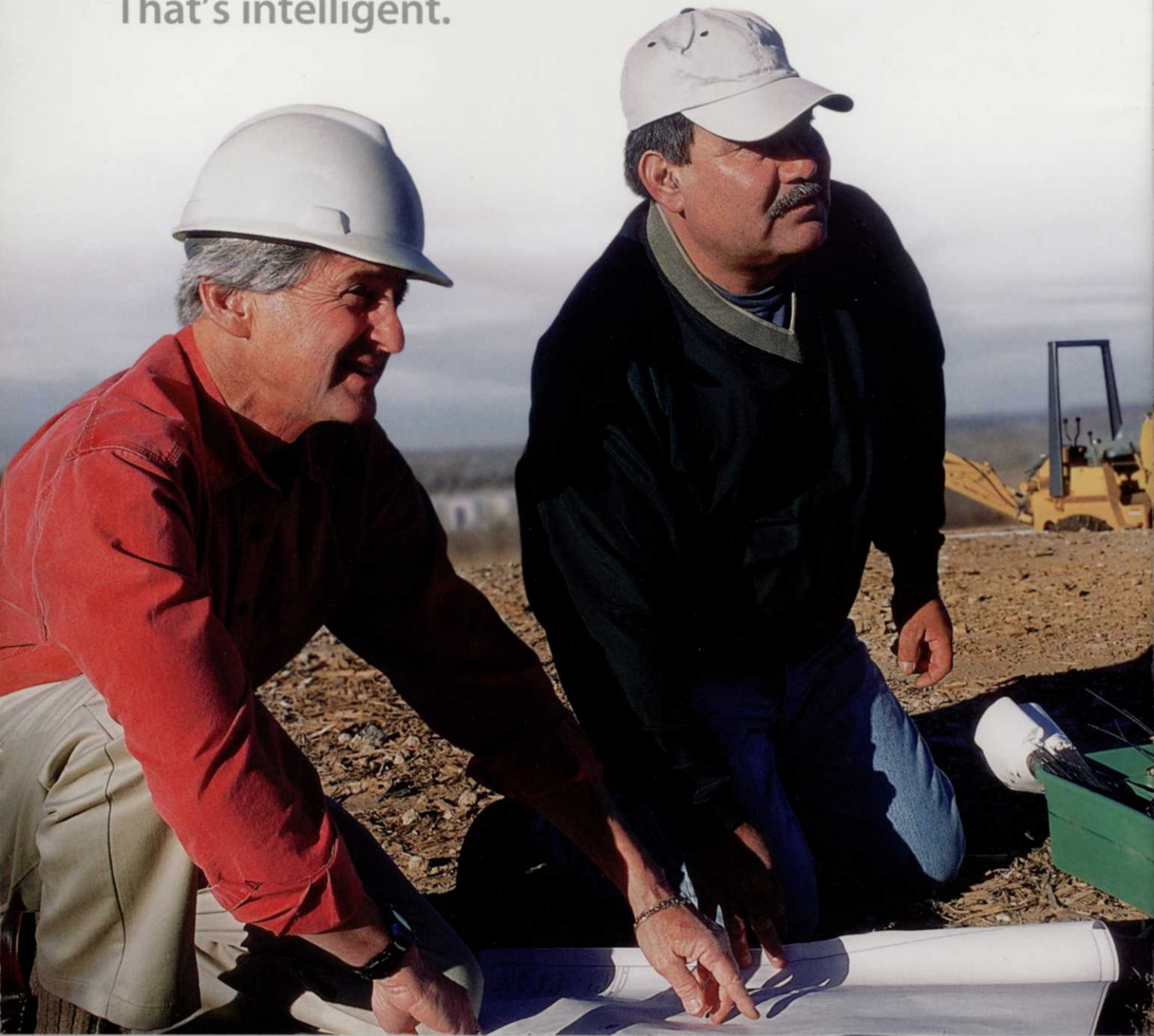


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** Based on U.S. Rain Bird® list pricing effective March 23, 2009, and Hunter® list pricing effective January 1, 2009.

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When implemented correctly, this service can expand your client base and let you work sooner in the spring and later in the fall. BY CURT HARLER

LM MARKET MATCH We've made your life a little easier by supplying icons that direct you to stories targeting your core business.

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10 cost-effective, sustainable, low-impact and attractive tips from a landscaping professional.

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Get Growing

The right pond plants help maintain a well-balanced eco-system, which will keep the water clean and clear.

Clarification: The revenue listed for OneSource Landscape & Golf Service in the LM State of Industry Top 150 was a year old. The current figure is \$60 million.

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Differing visions of sustainability

If you've ever witnessed a hog being slaughtered on a family farm, as I did many years ago as a youth, you get some idea what bloody business sustainability can be. Or at least how it was on the rocky Appalachian homestead where my mother grew up with five brothers and sisters and where my grandparents lived until their deaths in the 1970s.

Witnessing my grandpa Silas and my uncle Ray dispatch and dissect that squealing hog more than 50 years ago colors my perception of the word sustainability. That, and the times — wide-eyed, fascinated and repulsed — that I watched my grandma ring the neck of a chicken, pluck it over a cauldron of boiling water and sacrifice it to the frying pan.

My grandparents lived, for the most part, "off the grid" and in a manner that practically none of us would wish for ourselves. But looking back on it, I suppose you could describe their lifestyle as green, organic or natural; take your pick.

Today, I marvel at the chasm separating my grandparent's existence with the consumerist, resource-churning life-style we now take for granted and, to the point of this column, how we too often run our businesses.

Sustainability to them meant using everything

they had as efficiently as they could. Everything. They wasted virtually nothing.

So, what does this have to do with the landscape/lawn service industry?

Whenever I grapple with the term sustainable, especially as it's applied to the landscapes we design, install and maintain, I keep coming back to the question of waste — wasted effort, wasted time and materials and especially wasted resources such as water and energy.

To survive as a company or an industry, that can't continue. We're facing a future of rising resource costs and escalating concern over environmental issues. While we can't see the degree to which these trends will play out, let's begin now to ensure the future of our companies and our industry by adopting strategies to more efficiently deliver services, protect and enhance beneficial ecosystems, and, most especially, to conserve resources such as water and energy.

Let's consider yet another meaning for the word sustainability as in generating sufficient revenue from year to year to enable us to continue to providing the attractive and resource-conserving landscapes that provide so many benefits to our customers and our society, in general.

Customers recognize that their landscapes are sustainable only because of us. They remain healthy, attractive and provide the property-enhancing and life-enriching benefits they appreciate only through our expertise, and the intelligent use of our time, materials, water and energy.

I'm convinced that we can and will adapt to whatever new economic and environmental challenges arise, and that we will create a more prosperous and environmentally focused future for our industry.

Certainly, our goal is to build a models of sustainability very unlike the depression-era existence that my grandparents experienced well into the 1950s. Even the most committed proponents of sustainability wouldn't want that.

Urban landscapes are sustainable only because of us. They remain **healthy, attractive** and **life-enriching** only through our expertise and the intelligent use of our time, materials, water and energy.

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GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS, TRENDS AND TIPS

CLIPPINGS

Digging myself a deeper hole

FROM THE FIELD



BY DANIEL G. JACOBS MANAGING EDITOR

If you didn't know any better (or didn't look that closely), you might think the photo above shows a contractor working hard on a job, diligently preparing a site for a project.

Take another look.

Yup, that's me doing a passable imitation of an excavator operator. I'm sitting on Bobcat's 418 excavator. The Bobcat folks invited

journalists up to a site near their manufacturing plant in Bismarck, ND, to learn about the company's new M-Series loaders and excavators. The M-Series skid-steer and compact track loaders feature the most significant design changes ever undertaken, according to the company. Changes include:

- ▶ A hydraulic system that provides more power to attachments and makes changes easier;
- ▶ Larger fuel capacity;
- ▶ Holes for frame-mounted counterweights that increase lifting performance and tractive effort by 15% to 20% to provide better pushing and digging power; and
- ▶ Increased lighting, improved visibility and additional cab comfort.

With the M-Series, Bobcat reengineered its compact excavators and introduced a couple new products, the E32 (conventional tail swing) and E35 (zero tail swing), which fit into the 3- to 4-ton weight class. The E80 is categorized in the 6- to 8-ton weight class.

The machines, which offer an auto-idle feature to save fuel and reduce sound, feature a new engine, air intake, pump and valve system, and cooling and exhaust systems.

For more about the company's new offerings, visit Bobcat.com.

PBI/Gordon develops marketing relationship

KANSAS CITY, MO — PBI/Gordon Corp. finalized agreement with Mitsui Chemicals Agro, Tokyo, Japan, giving PBI/Gordon marketing rights to dinotefuran in the U.S. professional turf and ornamental markets. PBI/Gordon also received EPA approval for T-Zone broadleaf herbicide, which contains triclopyr, sulfentrazone and phenoxies.

JCB earns stripes with the U.S. Military

SAVANNAH, GA — JCB continues supplying the U.S. Air Force with essential Wheel Loaders. The ongoing relationship resulted in 92 JCB Wheel Loaders in the 100hp and 165hp range shipped to date in 2009, and more than 250 units contracted during the past five years. Used for base maintenance and to clear runways for B-52s in the U.S., the 416HT (100hp) and the 426HT (165hp) will serve various applications overseas.

Contractors have new tool to combat pests

WILMINGTON, DE — DuPont Advion insect granule has been registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and state approvals are in progress. Pest control and lawn care professionals now have a granular formulation that controls household and commercial pests across a wide range of applications. Advion insect granule is a nonrepellent bait that's highly attractive to a broad spectrum of insects including ants, cockroaches, silverfish, house and field crickets, and earwigs.

WORD ON THE STREET

Are customers delaying payment? What are you doing about it? Is it causing payment delays for materials, equipment and services received?



"As the economy in Southwest Florida worsened, we experienced an increase in bad debts in our construction division. Our maintenance division has a dedicated client base — established communities have managed to make payments on time; however, upstart communities have struggled to make payments. Working with these communities to reduce costs by streamlining services has kept our receivables stable. The established relationship we have with our bank has allowed us to pay our vendors on time and make any necessary purchases." — **Joe Gonzalez**, president/owner of Venice, FL-based ArtisTree Landscape Maintenance & Design



"Good question. In 2008, we saw our accounts receivable increase 2 to 2.5%. To combat this, we're being more vigilant monitoring accounts 30 days or more past due. Our employees are using predictive dialers to touch base with late pays, and we're sending letters to some customers who are more than 60 days late notifying them that their accounts will be turned over to collections within 10 days. These measures and others have helped us keep accounts receivables in check and keep paying our accounts payables in a timely manner." — **Jennifer Lemcke**, chief operating officer, Weed Man USA based Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

ValleyCrest throws a party for its 60th anniversary

Calabasas, CA — More than 700 guests attended a garden party to celebrate the 60th anniversary of ValleyCrest Landscape Companies on June 25.

ValleyCrest Landscape Companies' Burton S. Sperber, founder, CEO and chairman, and Richard A. Sperber, president and CEO, hosted the afternoon event at the company's corporate campus.

Included among the attendees were customers, company employees, business partners, community members, friends and dignitaries such as the mayor of Malibu, city of Calabasas council members, and representatives from California Senators Alex Padilla, and Fran Pavley, Assemblywoman Julia Brownley, and Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Zev Yaroslavsky and Michael D. Antonovich.

The company, which has annual revenues of \$1 billion, has more than 11,000 employees and more than 100 locations nationwide. ValleyCrest operates six business units and one subsidiary that deliver a full array of landscape services.



Angel F. Barnuevo, Jr. (center), field deputy for California State Senator Alex Padilla, delivers a procolomation honoring ValleyCrest's Richard (left) and Burton Sperber.

BELIEVE IT

OR NOT ...

Customer bites back

In April, a man filed a lawsuit against Chicagoland's Lurvey Supply & Garden Center, claiming he was attacked by a snake that emerged from fieldstones sold by the landscaping company. The customer claims he was bitten by the snake, and as a result, suffered injuries to his head, body and limbs and was temporarily unable to work. He's seeking more than \$50,000 in damages. (Note: LM's Managing Editor, Dan Jacobs, took the accompanying photo while walking on a golf course. Jacobs wasn't attacked by a snake, but he was bitten by a poisonous swing.)



PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



The Fockele Garden Co. named **Wade Harmening** project manager in Huntsville, AL. Harmening, who has 22 years of experience in landscape, maintenance and nursery operations in the Huntsville area, will oversee all company projects in Huntsville. He's certified in landscaping and the setting of landscape plants by the state of Alabama.



Dow AgroSciences announces changes to its Turf & Ornamental business division. **Ryan Messner** is black belt in the Strategy Acceleration



& Productivity group, and **Maureen Clark**, sales representative, replaced Messner.

Girard Environmental Services, a full-service landscaping company based in Seminole County, FL, has promoted **Tim Dyer** to branch manager of its Tampa location, **Mike Furber** to branch manager of its Melbourne location and **Bobby Shaw** to branch manager of its Sanford operations.



DuPont Professional Products added **Adam Neate**, Turf & Ornamental sales representative, to its sales force. Neate will focus on West Virginia, Iowa, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and North and South Dakota

Lebanon Seaboard named **Ken Bevilard** director of business development for its consumer products division. Bevilard, who has more than 25 years experience in the consumer lawn and garden industry, previously was vice president-North America for Hydro Industries. The company also named **Tom Lokitus** product manager in the consumer products division.



Netafim Ltd., a worldwide manufacturer of drip irrigation systems, promoted **John Vikupitz** to president and CEO of **Netafim USA**. Vikupitz succeeds **Igal Aisenberg**, who accepted the position of president and co-CEO of Netafim Ltd.

BY DANIEL G. JACOBS MANAGING EDITOR

DEEP ROOTS

In business 130 years and counting, employee-owned **Davey Tree** serves as a case study on surviving and thriving in any economy.

EMPLOYEES OF The Davey Tree Expert Co. always have direct access to at least one of the company's owners. One can simply walk over to the nearest mirror and look the reflection squarely in the eye.

Since 1979, any full-time Davey Tree employee with at least 90 days of service is eligible to purchase stock in the 130-year-old, \$600-million-a-year business. Davey Tree is one of the largest and oldest ESOPs (employee stock ownership plans) in the country.

Granted, a heart-to-heart with the person in the mirror won't resolve all issues, but employee ownership is one reason the company has survived a dozen recessions and the Great Depression — and expects to handle the current recession without too many troubles.

"We essentially have 6,000 employee-owners," says Karl Warnke, chairman, president and CEO of the Kent, OH-based company. "Our company has really blossomed in great part because of employee ownership. We pride ourselves on strong internal leadership and have grown without direction from outside investors or partners who have equity or management interests in the company. The ESOP business model has served us well."

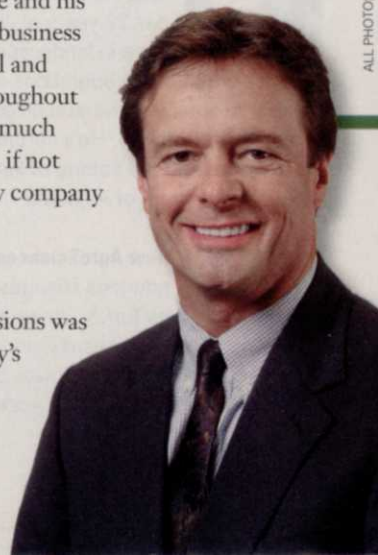
It's that combination of strong management and employee ownership that has allowed the company to develop deep roots that serve as a strong foundation on which to grow and support healthy branches throughout the country.

"Just having employee ownership is not the answer," Warnke says. "It's what those employees commit to and accomplish."


Employee ownership helps motivate staff, but it's also essential Warnke and his co-workers make savvy business decisions at the top level and communicate them throughout the company. "That, as much as employee ownership, if not more, is what makes any company successful," he says.

Balanced offerings

One of those good decisions was to diversify the company's offerings. As the company's name implies,



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY: THE DAVEY TREE EXPERT CO.

A large, mature tree is being moved by a crane. The tree is supported by a large, cylindrical structure wrapped in burlap. The crane is yellow and has a sign that says "DAVEY LARGE TREE MOVING". The background shows a clear blue sky and some other trees.

Davey Tree ranked
No. 4 in our June
2009 LM 150.

« Just having **employee ownership** is not the answer. It's what those employees **commit to and accomplish.**

— **KARL WARNKE**, CHAIRMAN, PRESIDENT AND CEO

COVER STORY

it started as a tree care operation, and throughout the years added and subtracted services to find the right mix. Currently, the company comprises four major divisions: tree and lawn care services, commercial landscape services, utility services and the Davey Resource Group, which offers technical consulting to utility, commercial and municipal markets.

The mixing continues.

"We started working in '07 to change our business direction and reduce the emphasis on businesses that don't fit us," says George Gaumer, vice president and general manager of the commercial landscape services division.

The willingness to adjust services allows Davey Tree to focus on its strengths, offer just what's needed in a given part of the country and keep the company strong amid the ebb and flow of the economy.

For a while, the commercial landscape services division delved into the bid/build arena. But in past few years, Davey Tree has begun to downscale that part of its business.

"Right now, the landscape construction part of our business is struggling," Gaumer says. "It would have been good if we'd been able to downscale services to that segment two years earlier because it was going to do it to itself anyhow."

In any operation where struggles exist there are also opportunities.

"In the utility side of the business, while it could be perceived as a frustrating time, it's also an exciting time for us," says Steve Marshall, executive vice president. "Our acquisition of Wolf Tree has given us deeper penetration into the southeastern market. It also has provided a link between our eastern and western utility operations and given us a better ability to service our customers. It provides increased mobility and diversity."

It also gives the company strength.

"Our four divisions are like auto-

» If one of our divisions slips a little, another one makes up for it.

— **GEORGE GAUMER**, VP & GM,
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mous companies within this corporate container," Gaumer says. "We're four independent organizations, each with our own set of plans, goals and strategies. It's because of that, there's strength. I don't think any of the four divisions has ever had a banner year at the same time. If one of our divisions slips a little, another one makes up for it."

Seeking opportunity

An economic recession isn't preventing Davey Tree from looking at all avenues for growth. The company keeps a close eye on, and has improved, its balance sheet — even since last year. But that doesn't mean the company won't act if the right opportunity presents itself.

"We're \$15 million better off than we were last year at this time," Warnke says. "We're paying off debt despite the economic situation. We're focusing on our cash management. We've curtailed our capital spending for equipment; however, we're continuing to seek out acquisition candidates."

Such attention to detail means the company can survive the current economic crisis and be in prime position when the turnaround comes.

"The greatest opportunity we have is positioning the company in such a way that we'll be able to gain and exploit opportunities more so than anybody else in our industry,"



While most landscape contractors experienced significant revenue declines in 2008, Davey Tree topped its 2007 sales by 18.5% — growing its business nearly \$94 million last year.

Warnke says. "Financially, we'll be as strong or stronger than anybody, including the biggest companies in the industry.

"We're in a more prolonged situation, but our management team is optimistic. We know we can get through this," he adds. "I'm optimistic, too — although sometimes it hurts to know so much of what's happening to you isn't your fault."

But Warnke and his team don't dwell on what they can't control.

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COVER STORY

"Without question, the biggest challenge is trying to control that which is difficult to control — the marketplaces in the residential and commercial segments," Warnke says. "How do we affect our customers and prospects? How do we affect their buying decisions? How do we encourage them to spend? That's the toughest challenge."

The company must be doing something right. In 2008, when some larger companies were headed toward bankruptcy and several smaller ones disappeared, the value of Davey Tree's stock increased 3.8%. Most executives would be happy with that. Not Warnke.

"How many companies do you know that *increased* their stock values 3.8% in

2008?" he says. "However, because our stock value *had* been averaging 17% annual growth since we became an ESOP, the valuation was painful."

The stock valuation also hurt because the company had one of its best years ever, Warnke says.

In 2008, Davey Tree merged with The Care of Trees and acquired Wolf Tree. And hurricanes Ike and Gustav led to one of the largest storm responses in company history generating significant unanticipated revenue. The company ended the year with its second-highest operating profit percentage since becoming an ESOP.

Managing the company

Even with growth in 2008, Warnke and his team are taking a cautious approach to the rest of 2009 and beyond.

EMPLOYEE OWNERSHIP

It was the late 1970s. The family members who owned the then-\$52 million The Davey Tree Expert Co. were in their 60s and 70s and had no heirs prepared to take the reins. So a few members of the executive team put together a plan for the employees to buy the company.

"They had to get the employees to come up with a down payment to be able to finance the rest," says George Gaumer, vice president and general manager of the commercial landscape services division. "It was touch and go. There were 113 employees who were part of that initial acquisition."

Of those 113 employees, of which Gaumer was one, nine still work for the company. Those original employee-owners, and those who have come along since, have averaged a 17.1% annual rate of return on their

Davey Tree has about 6,000 employee-owners.



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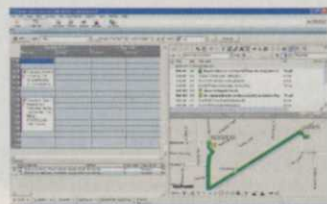
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Davey is renown for its tree care but provides a host of other services.



investments throughout the years.

"I love to beat the markets," says Karl Warnke, chairman, president and CEO. "I love to see privately held companies lay one on the public markets. As they continue to decline, we've outperformed them by a long shot. I love to see our stock go up. I like to see hard-working people — a lot of whom are overachievers — find success financially and in their careers. That's the biggest driver I have."

Warnke has had a lot to be happy about. Take two investors in 1979, the year Davey Tree became employee owned. One, a Davey Tree employee invests \$100 in the company's stock. The second investor puts the same amount into an S&P Index fund. Both reinvest their dividends. In 2008, the S&P investor's stock would be worth \$2,284, while the Davey Tree employee's investment would be worth five times as much — \$12,518.



"We're going to come out of this recession the same way we went into it," Warnke says. "You're not going to see it. You're not going to feel it. It's going to be painfully slow. We're going to be in this recession all this year. And it is going to have a lingering effect into 2010."

Like most companies, Davey

Tree has had to cut costs, including not hiring back many seasonal workers and laying off other employees.

"People say you can't cost-cut your way into profitability," Warnke says. "That doesn't make any business sense. We're attacking the cost and revenue sides — building business is equally important — in a number of ways."



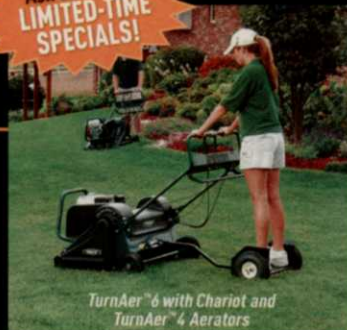
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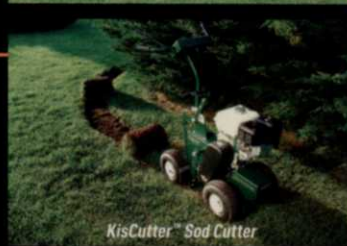
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PLANTING THE SEEDS

John Davey came from England in the latter part of the 19th century and worked as a cemetery grounds manager where he developed a passion for large-tree preservation. It's that passion that developed into the \$600-million-a-year enterprise known as The Davey Tree Expert Co.

It'd be easy to understand why Karl Warnke, Davey Tree's chairman, president and CEO, might feel a little intimidated walking into the office every day. An economy that grows like an unwatered sapling and no rain in sight might give any executive pause. Add to that the remains of the com-



Founder John Davey passionately preserved trees.

pany founder resting in a cemetery plot across the street from the Kent, OH, headquarters of the 130-year-old company. Still not enough? In the

lobby of the company's headquarters hangs a portrait of Martin Luther Davey, Sr., the founder's son, who not only ran the company for 36 years, but also ran the state for two terms as Ohio's governor (as well as served as Kent's mayor and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.)

"Once in a while, I think about it," Warnke admits. "It almost becomes overwhelming. I intentionally try not to think about that. I think about what we see, what's in front of us, what our opportunities are going forward, and treat it as though it's just a crusade to make Davey Tree — whatever size it is today — bigger, better and more profitable tomorrow."

That takes constant focus by everyone from Warnke down to the employees in the field.

"The biggest change is in the way we manage," Marshall says.

"We monitor our activities weekly and daily," he adds. "Each business unit has to understand where they are in achieving their goals. It's important we're on time to meet the expectations of our pricing."

When the management team does its job and employees in the back office and field are doing their work, Davey Tree isn't just a top Green Industry operation, it's as good as any enterprise, anywhere, Warnke boasts.

"Our company can compete with any company, in any industry, in terms of financial performance and financial and personal rewards for employees," Warnke says.

"That's a feel-good thing," he concludes. "We don't have to be dictated to by a majority shareholder or institutional shareholders or anybody else. That's exciting. That's why we get up and go to work every day." LM



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WORKINGSMARTER

JIM PALUCH

The author is president of JP Horizons Inc. Visit www.jphorizons.com.

In some ways, there is a 'me' in team

In developing, implementing and facilitating the Working Smarter Training Challenge over the past four years, the team at JP Horizons has learned many things. Among the most interesting has been the feedback that comes to us from companies after completing weeks 32, 35 and 38. These are the weeks when participating organizations focus on the lesson plans titled "Working Smarter in My Position."

By this time in the program, participants have gained an understanding of effective ways to identify and drive out waste in processes, use the time they save to improve service and have dramatically improved communication and teamwork within their companies. So, what makes these particular Weeks 32, 35 and 38 significant?

These are the weeks when the focus moves from what the organization or its departments can do, and turns to what the *individual* can do to Work Smarter and make a difference. At this point, we turn from looking at what the team needs to improve upon and now prod

everyone to ask, "What could I improve upon?" It becomes an important transition point in the program, and looking at real feedback from participants during these weeks might give you, as a leader, some insights into human nature. After all, it's the very same human nature that you and I have, as well.

Consider the progress in thought in the span of these weeks, as individuals first had to learn to evaluate their own roles and how they affect others, then the change in attitudes as they actually began to find ways to improve — and ultimately how they become inspired to find more opportunities to Work Smarter in the things they do every day.

Week 32

- › "We struggled with this one."
- › "The group did not participate very well in the session this week."
- › "It was hard to find things in our individual areas to fix."
- › "Most people said they are already doing things pretty effectively in their areas."

Week 35

- › "Individuals came back with some great little improvements that they were able to make."
- › "The energy of the group was great as individuals began sharing their successes."
- › "There is a sense of friendly competition as people try to outdo each other."

Week 38

- › "This has become an everyday focus for individuals in the program."
- › "Our Working Smarter program has gone to another level."
- › "People are focusing on how they can control costs and drive revenue from every position in the organization."

Please understand that the examples above are certainly a generalization and sampling, yet there is a pattern that can be detected. One of the most difficult things to do is to stop and honestly evaluate the functions of our work. A company can make great strides in efficiency and Working Smarter as groups of people come together and improve processes. Those same companies can make tremendous changes and improvements, however, when individuals are able to personally apply the same principles and discipline to their work and find ways to drive out waste and add value to the tasks they tackle in their positions.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Help your team learn to individually contribute on a higher level to the success of your organization.

More than 250 Green Industry companies have participated in JP Horizons' Working Smarter Training Challenge (WSTC), typically saving tens of thousands of dollars annually. To learn whether your organization qualifies to participate in the WSTC, visit www.jphorizons.com/LM.htm today.

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› Manufacturers are debuting designs that offer power and fuel efficiency. Electric and battery-powered models are in the mix, too. Keep in mind the emissions level of the product you're eyeing because the market in which you work may be considering (if it hasn't already) ways to keep clean air.

› Because many tasks undertaken with handheld equipment last for a long time, be kind to your techs and look for features such as adjustable handles and cushioned grips. The upside to what might be a higher initial investment will be more appreciative employees who'll likely take better care of the equipment and do a more thorough job.

› Is the equipment easy to maintain and store? Does it offer shields over parts that are potentially hazardous when in use? Is it easy to power off in an emergency?

› Because handhelds are dragged out at almost every account, they'll become in need of repair. What kind of warranty is offered from the manufacturer? How easy is it to make minor fixes back in the shop? Are parts replaceable? Are they easy to order?

HANDHELD EQUIPMENT

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Powered by a 2.4-hp heavy-duty Emak engine, Cub Cadet Commercial's CS 3916 chain saw is built tough to guarantee the right cut each time. Complete with a 16-in. commercial-grade bar, the CS 3916 is constructed for extended use, while an antivibration handle reduces user fatigue, and an inertia chain brake allows for increased operator safety and minimal kickback. Its no-tool access to air filter and spark plug allows for easy maintenance, while its variable automatic oiler eliminates oil consumption while in idle. The CS 3916 comes with a 90-day, limited commercial warranty and a 2-year, limited residential warranty. www.CubCadetCommercial.com or 877/835-7841



Echo ↓

Based on a handheld design, Echo's BRD-280 allows routine flowerbed and garden edge maintenance without the bulk of wheeled machines or the time-consuming, hard work associated with the use of shovels. It's also significantly less expensive and easier to use than a wheeled unit. Powered by a 28.1 cc Power Boost Vortex engine, the carbide-tipped, six-fingered blade cuts a crisp, beveled groove, leaving a professional manicured look. A high-impact, oversized nylon shield keeps debris contained within the landscaper bed, eliminating cleanup. www.echo-usa.com or 847/540-8400



Efcopower ↓

The low-emissions Efcopower MultiMate is a multi-attachment piece of equipment that quickly converts to five different tools with a patented Rev&Go attachment system: Simply insert an attachment and twist to lock in place, then press the button to release when you're finished. The attachments are available to complete a variety of jobs: straight shaft trimmer, curved shaft trimmer, blower, pruner and hedge trimmer. All attachments feature Efcopower's professional performance and feature adjustable handles, as well as a "Five Year No Fear" warranty. www.efcopower.com or 800/800-4420





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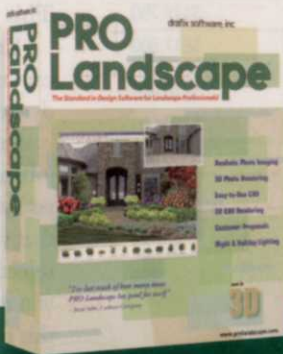
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THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author is the owner-manager of Kehoe & Co. Contact him at kkehoe@earthlink.net.

Price smart to win, keep business

Price competitiveness is a function of cost control and revenue generation. Cost control is a function of personal productivity (revenue per employee must increase). Revenue generation is a function of price and pressure (labor rate/price per hour must decrease, and we must be more aggressive in our sales closing efforts). Both strategies must be employed simultaneously.

Price reductions can be achieved to win and retain work; this is an essential element of the revenue-generation strategy.

Using Table 1, we start at the bottom with several givens: our current average wage rate (\$11.67, including taxes) and the net profit dollars (\$100,000) we need to earn.

Next, we budget just to maintain general and administrative (G&A) cost at current levels (\$300,000, which includes overhead for staff, who will be required to do more) while we make some

room for slight increases in indirect cost necessary for expanded sales at reduced pricing (\$170,000, which includes some increases for additional equipment to do the work).

We next incorporate market/customer feedback that is telling us that at 55% gross margin, we are “too expensive” (relative to competitor prices), and further we know that we are losing work and winning business at rates insufficient to cover the losses.

This is where industry benchmarks and trial-and-error budgeting are useful. If we are consistently 20% too high in our bids on an “apple-to-apple” basis, the gross margin must be reset to achieve this differential in labor rate/price.

Using a 48% gross margin projection achieves the 20% differential and reflects the trend in current benchmark gross margins in maintenance.

The real price to pay

As a result of using Table 1’s pricing strategy, we would sell labor at \$25 per hour instead of \$30 per hour — 20% less. In exchange for this “pricing concession” to the market, the company would have to generate an additional \$187,500 in revenues without increasing overhead staffing.

Labor staffing will, of course, increase by the difference between Last year’s 30,000 hours and This year’s 42,750 hours.

Keep in mind this analysis provides a static example only. Real-world pricing is much more dynamic.

In the real world, you should end up pricing some jobs at the current \$30 per hour because you know you can get that price. But it’s also essential to know that you can price at lower/more competitive rates in select situations when you need to retain business or win new work — and still make your bottom line. All this requires is:

- › knowledge of the math;
- › cost control; and
- › the steely nerves of a true sales professional.

TABLE 1: PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT

	Last year	This year
Revenues	\$1,000,000	\$1,187,500
Labor	\$350,000	\$498,750
Material	\$100,000	\$118,750
Direct cost	\$450,000	\$617,500
Gross profit	\$550,000	\$570,000
Indirect cost	\$150,000	\$170,000
G&A cost	\$300,000	\$300,000
Net profit	\$100,000	\$100,000
Labor hours	30,000	42,750
Average wage rate	\$11.67	\$11.67
Labor rate/price	\$30	\$25



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Cultivate

YOUR WEED COSTS

Remember the label is the law.

Minimize pricey labor with an economical herbicide plan

BY DR. KATHIE KALMOWITZ

LAWN CARE OPERATORS challenged with managing weeds in ornamental beds can save money and satisfy customers by using an integrated weed management program that includes herbicides and mulch. While hand-weeding always will be important to weed management, an integrated herbicide program can minimize labor greatly.

Proper herbicide applications can provide weed control for two months or longer, creating consistently clean landscapes. Mulch gives beds an additional layer of weed prevention.

However, developing a herbicide program can be challenging because of ornamental selection, placement within a landscape bed, the presence and growth of weeds, and germination expectations. Advance consideration of which chemical and mulch techniques are compatible with a landscape can cut traditional hand-weeding labor costs in half.

Before selecting an herbicide program, determine whether an herbicide can be used safely with the area's mixture of woody ornamentals and herbaceous bedding plants. Determine whether weeds can be managed more easily before germination using a preemergent herbicide or whether weed control can be handled effectively using a postemergent herbicide. Some landscapes may need both.

Generally, woody ornamentals are more tolerant of broad-spectrum herbicides, so there's a greater number of preemergent and postemergent herbicide options available for use on these plants. Only a few herbicides are labeled for use on sensitive herbaceous species, particularly annual flowers, so applicators should know about the safety of the product they intend to use.

Because bedding plant species vary as much in herbicide tolerance as they do in color, form and plant vigor, confirm plant safety by checking herbicide labels and conferring with local extension specialists and herbicide company representatives when developing a plan.

Identifying weed types or those likely to germinate in the landscape to determine which type of herbicide to apply. Any combination of broadleaf, grassy

and sedge weeds can be problematic.

Weeds compete for nutrients and water, but they can be related closely to many of the annual and perennial bedding plants, so choosing an herbicide that kills weeds — while being safe on desired plants — is more difficult.

Herbicide labels list weed types controlled by the active ingredients' modes of action or behaviors in the plant. Some herbicides are effective on broadleaf weeds but not on sedges, while others control two weed types but not all three. Therefore, proper weed identification is an important first step to ensure desired weed-control results.

Look for opportunities to use herbicide combinations, commonly in granular formulations, to increase the spectrum of control. When using a sprayable formulation, for example, check the label to see whether mixing multiple products to control a greater number of weeds with one application is recommended.

The most effective and economical weed control method is prevention. Preemergent herbicides



WEB EXTRA!

For information about preemergent strategies, postemergent herbicides and weed characteristics, visit www.landscapemanagement.net/weedcosts.

help prevent seeds from germinating but are not active on established weeds. They're commonly used to prevent annual grasses and broadleaf weeds.

Before you can prevent growth, you must eliminate weeds that have germinated. Hand-weeding or postemergent herbicide spot-spray treatments are recommended before making new or repeat preemergent applications.

Preemergent herbicides are available in granular and liquid formulations. Granular formulations tend to be less damaging when used on bedding plants. Uniform applications should be made when plant foliage is dry to prevent the herbicide from binding to foliage. The application should be timed before seeds germinate and where irrigation is available, or when rainfall is expected within a few days of the application. This is important because water must carry the herbicide into the soil where it creates a barrier to weed germination.

Once an application is made, control typically lasts two months. An herbicide's activity length in a specific region can be monitored efficiently when lawn care managers return to customers within a five- to eight-week cycle.

Once an herbicide program is put into action, it's important to manage weeds in nearby turf to prevent depositing weed seed and vegetative parts of weeds from moving into landscape

areas. Weed management in lawns and landscapes should work in concert to eliminate a customer's overall weed problem.

With awareness and experience, you'll become more familiar with the herbicide products available for weed

control and how to develop a plan. Use caution when applying herbicides and always read and follow chemical labels and manufacturer recommendations. LHM

KALMOWITZ is a market and technical specialist for BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals.

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The naked truth about marketing

A recent television advertisement for New Zealand Air features employees dressed only in body paint and smiles. The message is there's nothing hidden about the airline's fees. Fees are full frontal.

The ad campaign and accompanying safety message for passengers are done in good taste – at least in the fact there isn't anything you can see in the videos you don't already see on the beach or around a swimming pool. A pair of luggage handlers haul their, ahem, baggage into the belly of a plane. A flight attendant with strategically placed coffee cups pushes the drink cart down the aisle much to the surprise of unsuspecting passengers. A pair of pilots walking through the terminal catches the eyes of two women in the waiting area. The elder of the two leans over to her friend and says, "I do love a man in uniform." (www.youtube.com/watch?v=eID38pJX7iE)

The commercials are playful, and they've accomplished what they were designed to do – capture people's attention, hit a major pressure point and get them focused on, and interested in, a product. What do you do to keep your company's name on the minds of customers in your market?

In our jaded, seen-it-all society, it's often dif-

ficult to distract prospects away from their busy lives to focus on your message. A few famous examples come to mind of companies that have done it well. Apple's seminal Orwellian, Big Brother IBM-busting commercial only aired once, but remains one of the most memorable TV spots of all time. Wendy's "Where's the Beef?" series spawned laughs and numerous jokes, but the message stuck with consumers.

Of course not all memorable ads are on the boob tube. Clothing designer Calvin Klein and retailer Abercrombie & Fitch have made headlines with scantily clad models adorning billboards, print advertisements and catalogs.

We've written a lot about marketing throughout the years. There are many schools of thought and nearly as many methods to draw a tech-savvy audience into your world. And the Internet continues to expand our reach. (It also provides many more distractions.) Facebook, YouTube, flickr, digg, del.icio.us, Twitter, fark, stumbleupon — the list goes on. Reading a recent story about a national news Web site listed half a dozen ways to share the story and a link that offered 55 additional methods to disseminate the content to other users. Digital is the new word of mouth.

It's an age-old adage that sex sells. Some of the aforementioned citations prove that point. I'm not suggesting you strip down to your boxers for your next brochure (though if you do, you might earn a mention somewhere in our magazine). And you're not likely to see the editors of *Landscape Management* do so. We're trying to attract readers, not scare them away.

I'm wondering how far you're willing to go to turn the heads in your neighborhoods. What's the most outrageous or unusual way you've tried to reach new or existing clients? If you're willing to share your secrets, e-mail me your most effective and unusual marketing campaigns (along with images), and we'll give you due props here.

I'm wondering how far you're willing to go to **turn the heads in your neighborhoods**. What's the most outrageous or unusual way you've tried to reach new or existing clients?



Z300 Series

THE KUBOTA FACTOR

Kubota Turf Equipment

These days, often the difference between making do and making a profit is the quality of your equipment. Kubota turf equipment is built with your business in mind—to deliver a higher level of performance; to be more fuel-efficient; and to provide more comfort and conveniences that make each job more productive. That's what turf pros all across the country call the "Kubota Factor."

B26 TLB — Tractor, loader and backhoe—this is the perfect all-in-one tractor for landscaping work. Now with more horsepower, greater versatility and enhanced operating performance.

Z200 and Z300 Series — Compact or full-size? Gasoline or diesel? Either way, you get a high-performance zero-turn mower with a powerful Kubota-built engine. All models deliver high levels of torque to handle your toughest turf challenges.

RTV500 — Starts quicker. Runs quieter. Stops smoother. This all-purpose utility vehicle packs a powerful 15.8 HP Kubota-built gasoline engine, yet is small enough to fit into the back of a long bed pickup.



B26 TLB



Z200 Series



RTV500

Kubota
EVERYTHING YOU VALUE

Financing available to qualified customers through Kubota Credit Corporation, U.S.A. For product and dealer information, call 1-888-4-KUBOTA, ext. 403 or go to www.kubota.com.

Optional equipment may be shown.

©Kubota Tractor Corporation, 2009





Charlie King founded King GREEN in 1987 in the basement of his home with the help of his wife, Barbara, and his late father, Alfred King. Although the company's administrative headquarters are in Gainesville, GA, it depends on wherever King is at that day. His company offers a range of lawn care and structural pest control services.

How did you enter the lawn care business? I wandered into the lawn care business by accident. In 1978, I graduated from the University of Georgia and was working in a grocery chain as a management trainee. A friend of mine recently started in the lawn care industry and asked me to try it out. I wasn't even looking for a career, but I found one.

Give us an idea of your typical day. I don't have one, and that's what I like best about my business and lifestyle. I sprayed from dawn to dusk in the early years. Now, I may be meeting with customers or checking lawns. We recently started a pest control division, and I'm learning that science. It's like starting all over again. I also spend time training and working with employees.

North Georgia suffered through one of its worst droughts in 2007 and 2008. How did it and the resulting watering ban affect your company? The drought exposed every weakness and strength in our company. We coped by

communicating, educating and by listening to our customers. We manipulated programs and were able to get through the drought with a minimum of impact to our customer base. But between the drought and the weak economy, we got hit harder than we'd have liked.

Our response to the depressed economy has been to service the accounts harder than ever, be patient and listen to our customers. If a customer needs to skip a service, we don't make a big deal about it.

How's your season going so far? Business is flat. We have few new homeowners moving in, and people are watching what they spend. Homeowners, apartments, commercial properties — it doesn't matter because it's across the board. It started last fall because of economic conditions, and the drought didn't help.

As you look into the future, what do you see? The next five to 10 years will be an interesting time for our company. I'm 54, my vice president and partner, Greg Wagner, is close to 50, and we're preparing a new generation of people ready to assume the helm. My daughter Jennifer joined us this January, and she's excited about the future, as are the other younger employees who've been with us. We have a succession plan.

Tell us about kudzu control. Kudzu is a vine from Japan. It grows 6 in. a day, but a good broadleaf herbicide will kill it. If you have a 4-hour job, by the time you finish, you can see it dying.

Kudzu is an annual that dies off with a frost, but it comes back the next year and will swallow an acre of pine trees if you let it. We get calls to kill it on the back of properties, near apartments and places like that.

AT A GLANCE

COMPANY: King GREEN, Gainesville, GA

FOUNDED: 1987

PRINCIPAL: Charlie King, president

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS: 4

SERVICE AREA: Gainesville, Athens, Watkinsville and Atlanta, GA, and Charlotte, NC

EMPLOYEES: 70

SERVICES OFFERED: commercial, residential and sports turf care; tree and shrub service, specialty services (kudzu control, seeding, renovation, aeration); King GREEN IPM termite and pest control

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Metropolitan Atlanta Landscape and Turf Association founding member (president, 1997-1998), PLCAA board member, Georgia Turf-grass Association board member (2000-2005)

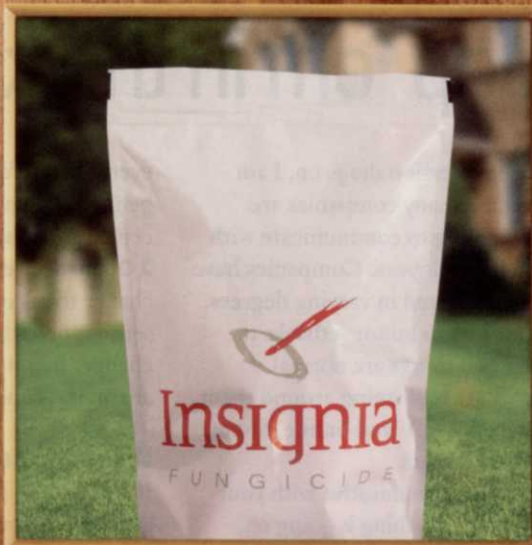
HOBBIES: fishing, camping and flying a small plane

FAMILY: wife Barbara and two daughters, Jennifer and Amber

WEBSITE: KingGREEN.com

BUSINESS IS FLAT. HOMEOWNERS, APARTMENTS, COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES – IT DOESN'T MATTER ..."

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



INSIGNIA FUNGICIDE

INSIGNIA FUNGICIDE

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INSIGNIA FUNGICIDE



You've got enough to worry about. But with **Insignia® fungicide** on your team, you can be sure of one thing: effective control of patch diseases (brown, summer and take-all), fairy ring, pythium root rot, pythium blight (volutum), bipolaris, gray leaf spot, snow mold and more. You'll even suppress dollar spot. So put a better strobie to work for you: **Insignia**. You'll be glad you did, month after month.

betterturf.com | 800-545-9525

BASF

The Chemical Company

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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author is a partner with the Wilson-Oyler Group consultancy. Visit www.wilson-oyler.com.

To grow, keep 'em in the know

As our recession drags on, I am finding many companies are struggling to communicate with their employees. Companies have been affected in varying degrees, from severe business loss to minor setbacks to some moving along as if things are normal.

Employees see what's happening around them, as well as the bad news on TV and online. Some even still read the newspapers.

In light of this, stay communicative with your employees. They know something is going on, and they want to know how it could (or will) affect them. Fear of the unknown can be very unsettling and disruptive to your work force, and can lead to deteriorating morale and productivity.

Communications should be:

- ▶ **Honest.** During times like these, you need the full trust and commitment of your work force. If layoffs are possible, warn them — but at the same time tell them what you're doing to avoid job cuts and how they can help stave off layoffs.
- ▶ **Consistent.** Do not go out and paint a rosy picture to keep everyone happy, then be put in the position of having to dribble out bad news. You will lose your credibility, and that leads to trouble. Avoid mixed messages: For instance, do not tell

everyone, "We need to cut back and watch our pennies," then do something that could be perceived as extravagant, such as buy a new car.

▶ **Open.** Seek employee input, and give them a chance to ask questions — whether it be in group settings or with their managers — as to how changes might affect them. Make sure all managers are on the same page with their messaging.

When the belt tightens ...

If you reach a point where you must cut back, here are some suggestions:

- ▶ **Be objective.** Look at your organizational chart — without names — and see which positions can be eliminated. If you look at it with names, emotions involving particular people will influence your willingness to keep or eliminate each position.
- ▶ **Promote from within.** Once you've trimmed your organizational chart, fill it with qualified people from your existing staff. Job qualifications are important because they will help prevent filling positions with favorites.
- ▶ **Cut deeply enough the first time.** There is nothing more painful or unsettling to your company than progressive cutbacks.
- ▶ **Keep your finger on the pulse of employee morale.** Employees will be watching and evaluating your decisions. Beware of favoritism and of protecting sacred cows, especially divisions that have been longtime "loss centers." This can lead to serious morale issues, as well as create a disgruntled faction within your company that could undermine what you're trying to do. It also chips away at the bottom line.
- ▶ **Keep a positive attitude.** Approach this process as an opportunity to get the right people in the right places to strengthen your company for the rebound. Build on the successful implementation of your plan and create a positive team dynamic. Constant, consistent communication is key. Keep people focused on a more positive future — not a depressing present, if that is the case.

Approach this process as an opportunity to **get the right people in the right places** to strengthen your company for the rebound.

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For sure.


Totally.

ALOFT Insecticide provides total insect control, guaranteed.

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On-the-go gadgets for work, pleasure

This summer, I'm finding myself on the go more than ever. Being able to get the work done is a never-ending challenge. This month, I review four products that can help you balance work with some fun in the sun:

LaCie iamaKey USB Flash Drive |

www.lacie.com



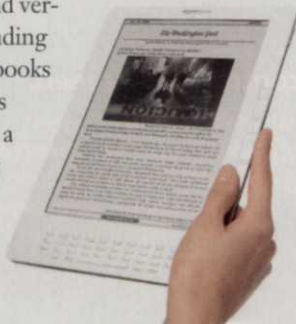
Are you sick of running back into the office for those revenue numbers or the latest sales presentation? Never be without your critical data with the new iamaKey USB Flash Drive from LaCie. Finally, someone has created an 8 GB flash drive in the form of a standard car or house key. Its sturdy metal design is both water- and scratch-resistant. Lacking the right data is a thing of the past — as long as you have overcome that bad habit of losing your keys and locking yourself out.

Plantronics Voyager Pro | www.plantronics.com

There is a lot to be excited about with the new Bluetooth headset from Plantronics. The Voyager Pro employs two noise-canceling microphones, adaptive equalizers, and three layers of WindSmart technology to bring you crystal-clear voice, even in the stiffest wind. With six hours of talk time and five days of standby, this headset lets your office go anywhere you go. (Even conference calls while golfing can be a "give me.")

Amazon Kindle 2 | www.amazon.com/kindle2

I can never find enough time to catch up on my reading. Amazon's Kindle 2 is a perfect solution for people on the go. This second version of Amazon's wireless reading device can hold up to 1,500 books and can download new books in less than 60 seconds using a built-in 3G wireless Internet connection.



What really makes the Kindle 2 special is the Read-to-Me feature, allowing you to listen to your books in the car or while working.

Basic Web browsing and the ability to listen to music and podcasts means you have a knowledge tool designed to keep you informed while on the road. Doesn't the ability to research and e-mail from behind home plate at a baseball game sound like heaven?

Acer X233Hbid 23-in. Widescreen LCD Monitor | www.acer.com

I've long been a fan of large monitors. Their productivity benefits have been documented for years. But the stumbling block for most people has been the high price tags. With this new LCD monitor, Acer has removed all of the excuses. The X233Hbid 23-in. LCD boasts full HDTV (1920x1080) resolution, and can be found online for close to \$200.

While it's not a mobile solution, this monitor just might be able to help you get your work done early, so that leaving the office while the sun is still shining is a definite possibility.

Getting the job done, on time and under budget, is a matter of using the right tools. Hopefully, these tools can energize your work life while giving you more time and toys to explore and enjoy summer.



livescapes

SPECIAL SECTION OF *LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT*

Producing profits through bedding plants, ornamentals & trees

In a **bout** with **DROUGHT**



Drought-resilient landscapes don't have to look like they were designed to save water.

THE HEAT of summer is here, threatening to wilt and wither your carefully designed landscapes ... unless you installed drought-tolerant landscape plants. Choosing the right cultivars and following simple installation advice can keep your clients' landscapes looking vibrant through the hottest weather.

"We want people to become drought resilient ahead of time," says Kelly Smith, drought

THE RIGHT PLANTS CAN BEAT THE HEAT. BY JAMIE J. GOOCH

resources specialist at the National Drought Mitigation Center in Lincoln, NE. "Drought is a slow-moving natural disaster that people don't think about until it happens. Over time, it can cause a lot of environmental stress and human hardship. It's going to happen. We want people to be prepared."

Diversity equals strength

Perhaps the best way to prepare a landscape for drought conditions is with biodiversity. Different types of plants, trees and shrubs — as opposed to a monoculture — are better able to resist stressful conditions. Part of that biodiversity should come in the form of native plants. Natives are more likely to tolerate drought conditions because they've become conditioned to the weather patterns of a particular area over many generations. Depending on the region, native species can offer a number of height, texture and color options.

However, there are many non-native species that can be used to add color and additional interest. The key is to choose drought tolerant

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ANTHONY TESSELAAR PLANTS VARIETY FOCUS: FLOWER CARPET® PINK SUPREME

The second of the 'Next Generation' Flower Carpet® roses, Pink Supreme is a non-stop bloomer from early summer through late autumn frost. The results of this Next Generation breeding includes improved natural disease resistance plus heat and humidity tolerance. Other Next Generation releases include Flower Carpet® 'Scarlet' and Flower Carpet® 'Amber.' For more information about this and other Anthony Tesselaaar Plants, visit www.tesselaar.com.

cultivars for your area. Many local extension offices often maintain a list of drought-tolerant plants specific to their regions.

Consider a plant's water requirements when designing the landscape. Grouping plants with similar water needs will allow for easier and more efficient irrigation of that grouping, rather than watering an entire bed of plants that may not need additional water

"The landscape industry has a big opportunity to make communities more drought resilient," Smith says. "By making domestic ecosystems that have greater diversity and drought resistance, landscapers can really have an impact."

Watching water use

As more parts of the country with limited water resources become increasingly urbanized, water shortages are becoming commonplace. Droughts bring emergency water restrictions and new legislation geared toward making the most out of

DID YOU KNOW?

- > Landscaping accounts for about half the water Californians use at home.
- > Every day in the United States, we drink about 110 million gallons of water.
- > A leaky faucet can waste 20 gallons of water a day.
- > Watering your grass and trees more heavily, but less often, saves water and builds stronger roots.

— Sources: American Water Works Association, Mojave Water Agency, and Sunnyslope County Water District.

each drop of water — and with good reason. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more than 50 percent of water used to irrigate lawns and gardens is wasted. And that's a lot of waste because between 30 and 50 percent of the average American household's water use goes to outdoor uses.



This drought-resilient landscape includes a man-made stream that will create an attractive dry streambed in times of drought.

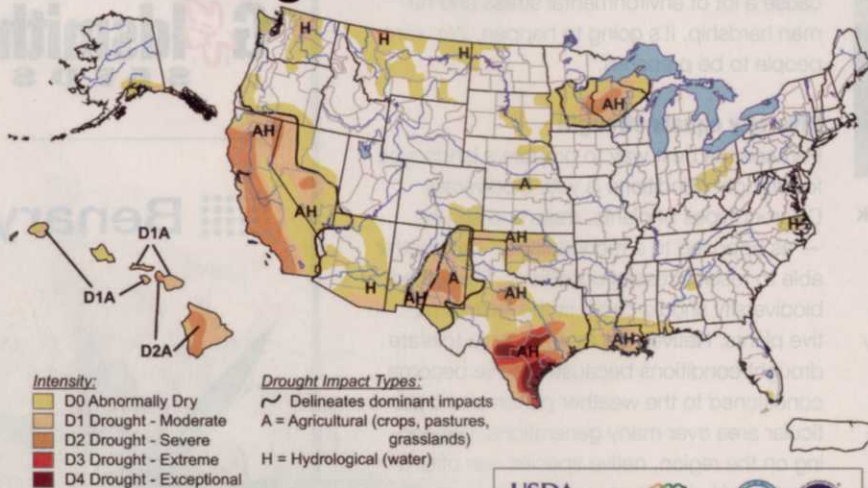
Some communities offer incentives for homeowners to make their landscapes more drought resilient and conserve water. By doing a little research, these incentives can be used to help bring in new clients and offer new services.

New irrigation technology is one way to save water and keep your clients' landscapes looking lush. Smart controllers monitor soil moisture, rain, wind, slope and plant type to help apply the right amount of water to the right areas. Installing, maintaining and inspecting irrigation systems can bring extra business to your company. For more information about smart irrigation, visit www.epa.gov/watersense/sim.

"Landscapers have a vested interest in being drought resilient, especially if they're installing lawns and other water-intensive plants," Smith says. "When coming out of a dry time, when homeowners' water-hungry installations have died off, landscapers can help people select drought-resilient plantings. It's a good business angle and good for future drought preparation."

U.S. Drought Monitor

June 23, 2009
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://drought.unl.edu/dm>



Released Thursday, June 25, 2009

Author: M. Brewer/L. Love-Brotak, NOAA/NESDIS/NCDC



GOLDSMITH SEEDS VARIETY FOCUS: CORA® CASCADE™ TRAILING VINCA

Brand new series from Goldsmith Seeds, Cora® Cascade™ Trailing Vinca! Just like 'Cora,' this new series has a patented disease resistance to aerial *Phytophthora*. This vigorous trailing plant fills large beds and landscapes with lush, long-lasting flowers. Super large blooms cover the plant — no bald spots! 'Cora Cascade' is available in five colors and a mixture.



My Project

My customers rely on my expertise to select the best plants for their landscape. Flower Carpet® Roses are environmentally friendly and offer high color, low maintenance, and guaranteed success.



My Reputation

"Proven landscape performance is just so important"



My Choice

Masses of Blooms; an Easy-Care Plant
Available in 9 Great Colors
The latest: Flower Carpet® AMBER



www.flowercarpet.com



Easy-going elegance

As the newest member of **Proven Winners'** Supertunia series, Supertunia Vista Silverberry is a vigorous, mounding petunia hybrid that's low maintenance, heat tolerant, and butterfly and pet friendly. With a height between 16 and 24 in., it's ideal as a landscape filler or containers by itself or in a combination. Its generous white blooms last all season, and it's hardy to 30 degrees Fahrenheit in full sun. www.provenwinners.com

Royal treatment

Terra Nova's Regal Ruffles strain of Hellebore is replete with double picotees, splashed forms and rich hues. But this clumping beauty also has brawn — in the form of resistance to shade and deer. It flowers during the winter, and is hardy in USDA zones 5 through 8. It favors dappled shade (full sun in the Northwest) and prefers soils with good moisture and drainage. www.terranovanurseries.com



Merry mix

New Taishan Marigold, available in gold, orange, yellow and mixture (pictured), delivers season-long landscape performance with high-impact, drive-by color. Featuring a height of 10 to 12 in. and a spread of 8 to 10 in., its branching provides full, lush plants. Large flowers hold their doubleness and won't develop soft centers — so there's extended season performance and less chance of disease. www.panamseed.com

Lush and lively

Just like "Cora," **Goldsmith Seeds'** new "Cora Cascade" Trailing Vinca series has disease resistance to aerial *Phytophthora*. This vigorous trailing plant fills large beds and landscapes with lush, long-lasting flowers. Large blooms cover the plant with no bald spots. The series is available in five colors and a mixture. www.goldsmithseeds.com



Strong yet stylish

Amber is the ninth and newest color in the **Flower Carpet** family of groundcover roses, and the third of the Next Generation Flower Carpets, following Scarlet and Pink Supreme. The striking amber-peachy-apricot blooms are in abundance from late spring through frost, with bushes maturing as tall as 3 ft. Once established, Amber is drought tolerant, disease resistant and requires little maintenance. Hardy in USDA zones 5 to 11, it also handles zone 4 readily with winter protection. www.flowercarpet.com



Flower power

At between 18 and 20 in. tall, **Benary's** *Rudbeckia hirta* "Denver Daisy" is suited to 1-gal. production, or for large landscape plantings. It produces large masses of golden flowers adorned with rusty red rings that cover the daisy from late spring until first frost. www.benary.com



BALL VARIETY FOCUS: MATRIX® PANSY

Matrix pansies produce abundant large blooms in traditional bright colors, including several unique patterns such as Morpheus, Sunrise and Blue Frost. Plants display superior branching and won't stretch in the heat but will grow quickly to fill in client's beds and pots. Matrix will continue to bloom even through shorter days of winter in mild climates and will brighten every spot of the garden the following spring. Matrix is an outstanding choice for spring and autumn containers and landscape beds.



Begonia x benariensis F₁ hybrid



Extraordinary Flower Power!

Set yourself apart from the competition. Grow 'BIG'TM begonias. Early branching, flowering and pot fill guarantee that you will have a premium container for spring sales. 'BIG'TM continues to thrive in the landscape, ensuring that your customers will ask for more next year. Grow your sales in a 'BIG'TM way.



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Matrix[®] pansy makes more blooms for more impact — count on season-long color in your plantings. Turn to Ball for fast, easy and profitable landscape color solutions!

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livescapes  PRODUCTS



Divine style

Kichler Lighting's new Cathedral Collection features seven coordinating lighting products with cathedral-inspired detailing to create a high-styled, cohesive look throughout the

landscape. Each durable die-cast aluminum piece is finished in a textured bronze powdercoat. Products in the collection include a wall-mounted planter, low-voltage pendant, two deck light styles, path light, bollard light and the pictured standing lit planter, which spreads a shadow onto path and patio surfaces while illuminating potted flowers or plants. www.landscape-lighting.com

Get smart

Developed for commercial tree growers, the Smart Pot series are soft-sided, fabric containers have the rigidity to hold their shape while supporting a plant. The aeration container features the ability to air-prune and enhance a plant's root structure. After all, a highly branched, fibrous root structure is the key to growing a better plant — with more flowers and fruits, and more resistance to insects and disease.



www.smartpots.com

Sustainable solution

Strata Systems' new Neoweb is a honey-combed, cellular confinement system (geocell) that, when filled with soil, stabilizes soft soils, reinforces pavement structures, and provides a durable reinforcement solution. It can be customized to the specific project and application. Cell heights range from 3 to 8 in., and sections are tri-folded, shrink-wrapped and palletized for shipment. www.geogrid.com



BENARY VARIETY FOCUS:

RUDBECKIA HIRTA 'DENVER DAISY'

Growers will love this new Rudbeckia because of its high germination and large stands of usable seedlings. At 18 to 20 in. tall, the 'Denver Daisy' is perfect for 1-gallon production or for large landscape plantings. Flower power is no understatement for this beauty as large masses of golden

flowers adorned with rusty red rings cover the 'Denver Daisy' from late spring until first frost. Strong, dense flowers stems ensure it won't flop or fall over in adverse weather conditions. This heat-loving beauty is able to thrive in diverse and rugged areas.



True to form

Primescape Products' new Flexi-Liners conform to the shape of each container to prevent leaks. Made from soft, flexible plastic that can be cut or bent as needed, they're easily trimmed to fit with a standard pair of scissors. The liners also help prevent calcium deposit buildup on the surface of the planters, as well as prevent excessive evaporation. They're available in a range of sizes, from 8.3 to 31.5 in. top diameter. Primescapeproducts.com

Drainage for a cause

Place a reusable PotHoles Drainage Disc at the bottom of a pot, add soil and plant — the hydroponic filter holds moisture for plants while improving oxygen flow. Available in four sizes (5, 6.5, 8.5 and 11.5 in.), the product has the added benefit of aiding lung cancer research: 5% of all Internet sales and 5% of PotHoles' profits go to the Christine J. Burge Endowment for Lung Cancer Research at the University of Colorado Cancer Center. www.gotpotholes.com



Handy rake

Looking for the best way to clear debris from flower beds, around plants and from other hard-to-reach areas? The Oxo adjustable hand rake, part of its Good Grips series, features easily adjustable tines that lock into place at a spread anywhere from 3 to 12 in. Simply unlock the adjuster and slide forward or back to increase or decrease the spread, then securely lock into place.



Fully retract the tines for getting into tight areas or for compact storage. Fully expand the tines for clearing larger areas. The 12-oz. rake also features a dual position handle for added reach with optimal comfort and a soft, nonslip grip. www.oxo.com

NEW!

TigerEye™

by Goldsmith

RUDBECKIA

Loaded with large and long-lasting blooms!


- Vigorous root development for fast establishment in the garden
- Easy Care! Reduced sensitivity to Powdery Mildew
- Perfect for mixed containers and large garden beds
- 2008 is the Year of the Rudbeckia!

Goldsmith
SEEDS

800-549-0158 ■ www.goldsmithseeds.com

To order Goldsmith varieties, call your favorite grower or supplier.





Generally, a lawn needs to be aerated once a year. But a lawn on clay soil might need to be aerated more frequently.

AERATION: GET THE 'HOLE' STORY

When implemented correctly, this service can expand your client base and let you work sooner in the spring and later in the fall.

BY **CURT HARLER**

MANY COMPANIES OFFER aeration, but it's not always an overnight success. To ensure repeat business, a savvy contractor has to educate the customer and perform the service properly.

"There are different reasons for aeration, so a landscaper can't just tell a customer he wants to poke holes in his lawn," says Bob Brophy, director of lawn products for Minneapolis-based Turfco.

While aeration is beneficial, few homeowners have it done regularly. Managed properties usually are more aggressive.

Aeration helps water infiltration, which reduces chemical runoff into

streams and keeps the product where you need it, says John Bentley of Earth & Turf Products in New Holland, PA.

Aeration holes need to be spaced properly and uniform in depth, says Michael Hileman, sales rep for Clemmons, NC-based tine-maker JRM. "If you emphasize uniformity with chemical applications, you should do the same with coring," he says.

A typical landscaper uses a 7.5-in. coring tine, and depth is key with coring tines, Hileman says. "You have to be consistent for the whole job," he says.

One aeration a year is enough generally, Bentley says. A lawn with tight roots should be aerated three or four times the first season, then aeration can be done annually. A lawn on clay soil might need more frequent aeration. By contrast, a lawn on sandy loam can be aerated once a year.

Bermudagrass lawns should be aerated in the fall because the grass emerges from dormancy in the spring, and it's important to allow the roots to grow with minimal disturbance, Hileman says. Cool-season grasses can be aerated at a

season's start. A second aeration might be appropriate for heavier soils.

Anywhere a pristine look isn't required, it's good to aim for about 15% removal, Hileman says. A 7.5-in. tine will plug to a depth of 4.5 to 5 in. in loose soil. Once the tines begin to wear and that depth decreases, it's time for new tines.

"You can't go across the lawn once and think you're done," Bentley says. "The lawn should look like you've just about killed it." He recommends 18% to 20% soil disturbance.

Many lawns allow an inch or two of penetration, Bentley says. These need to be worked frequently. Newly constructed lawns require aeration because topsoil usually is scraped off, and the subsoil is used to cover the ground, Bentley says.

"It's difficult to core aerate subsoil," he says, recommending shatter tines. "Even if you don't get much of a core, it's better than none at all."

Different tines serve different purposes. Don't slice home or business complex lawns.

"In a running grass such as Bermuda
continued on page 42

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RAIN BIRD

POKING HOLES

continued from page 40

or zoysia, you're cutting the runners and getting new shoots," Brophy says. On home lawns, the intention of most aerations is different.

Spiking – a solid piece of steel pushed into the ground, which fractures the soil and breaks up thatch and the soil beneath – is more appropriate.

"It's a short-term solution for soil ventilation where you don't want to pull up a core and leave it on the ground," Brophy says. An example is a sod area around a swimming pool.

Spiking opens up holes that typically last until the first heavy rainstorm or soaking. Then the holes close. So, spiking has to be repeated often.

Core aeration tends to be the best solution for home lawns and office parks. The machine pulls up a soil plug and leaves it on top of the ground. This allows soil to break up slowly and helps control thatch, Brophy says. It should

Warm-season grass should be aerated in the fall. Cool-season grass can be aerated in the spring.

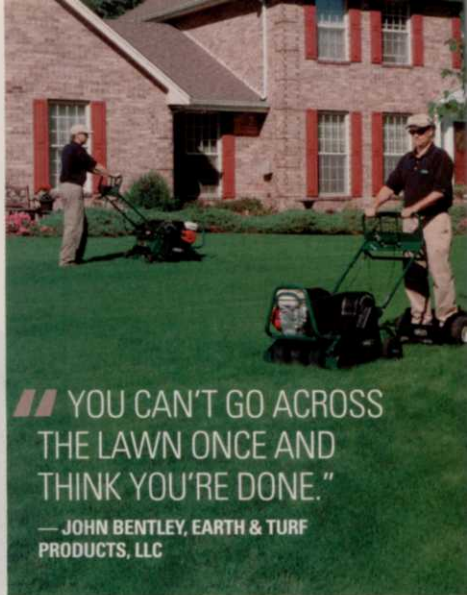
take several weeks for the plugs to disintegrate and the holes to close.

Coring is a good standard for landscapers, Hileman says. A coring tine will fit most drum rollers. Some landscapers use the solid tine because it doesn't leave cores on the surface. If you're taking the time to aerate, you might as well pull a core, he says.

Core aeration allows oxygen into the root zone, eliminates methane gas that builds up around dead or decaying roots and allows the soil to break up slowly on the ground's surface. "Don't pick up the plugs – that defeats the purpose," Brophy says.

Core aeration helps stimulate root growth by getting oxygen down past the upper, yellowish part of the root and closer to the growing white part that takes in nutrients.

There are two basic kinds of core aeration. Piston aeration shoots a tine straight down into the soil and comes up



“ YOU CAN'T GO ACROSS THE LAWN ONCE AND THINK YOU'RE DONE.”

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and out. This is the favored method in damp conditions, but it can actually compact the soil, Brophy says. Second, a rolling drum sends the tine into the ground at a 30-degree angle and moves under the soil. This action rips and loosens the soil.

"This is the solution for a turf where it doesn't have to be perfectly level," Brophy says. LM

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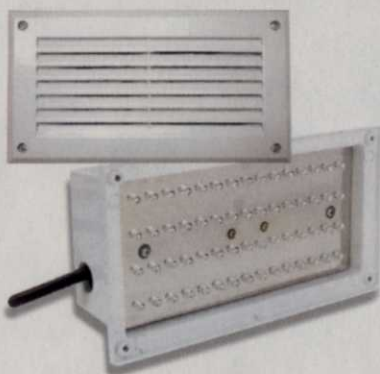
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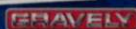


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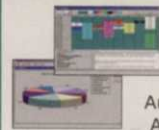
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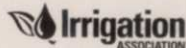
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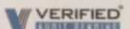


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Joe Lamacchia

Meet Joe: A real pro with blue-collar street smarts

*"But Oz never did give nothing to the Tin Man
that he didn't, didn't already have."*

— LYRICS FROM AMERICA'S "TIN MAN"

America's 1973 hit song "Tin Man" just as easily could have been named "Scarecrow" — because Oz never did give nothing to the scarecrow — either — that he didn't, didn't already have.

Playing the scarecrow in the 1939 classic flick "The Wizard of Oz," Ray Bolger sang the straw man's mantra: "If I Only Had a Brain." Truth be told, the scarecrow had street smarts like no other, despite being diploma challenged. In fact, it was the scarecrow who pointed Dorothy in the correct direction when she came to a fork in the yellow brick road. Without the straw man's street smarts, Dorothy never would have met the tin man, cowardly lion or Oz, nor found her way home.

Education is essential, but the scarecrow reminds us that colleges haven't cornered that market. Experience also can be quite the educator, especially when it's tethered to hard work and common sense. Just ask Joe Lamacchia, a high school grad who over the past 28 years has built a successful \$2 million-a-year landscape company.

The president of Newton, MA-based Lamacchia Landscape Construction Corp. has been making headlines across the nation, including being featured on the front of *USA Today's* Life section on June 23, for his recently published book, "Blue Collar & Proud of It — The All-in-One Resource for Finding Freedom, Financial Success and Security Outside the Cubicle" (available at www.amazon.com and www.bluecollarandproudofit.com).

Lamacchia's message is simple: Spending tens of thousands of dollars on college can pay enormous dividends, but it's a luxury not all can —

or need to — afford. Fortunately, many of life's lessons, including basic business tenets, can be learned in the field from mentors and trial-and-error. Equally important, blue-collar jobs serve as the backbone of America and most can be mastered better with on-the-job training and hands-on experience rather than with textbooks.

That's why *Landscape Management* is partnering with Lamacchia, the Green Industry's Average Joe. We're launching a new standalone newsletter, *LM podcast: From Joe to Pro*, in which Lamacchia shares his success tips and the keys to turning common contractor obstacles into opportunities.

Visit www.landscapemanagement.com/joetopro1 for a sneak listen to our inaugural *From Joe to Pro* podcast.

Lamacchia, like the scarecrow, knows life's many paths. He maintains there are numerous avenues to education, success and true happiness — and the lives of my father and godfather confirm that belief.

Dad was gifted in gray matter. He was valedictorian of his high school, graduated with high honors from Georgetown University's School of Medicine, and was a member of Mensa International — a high-IQ society. My godfather, Uncle Tim, on the other hand, left school in the sixth grade so he could pitch in on the family farm in Galway, Ireland. Years later, he crossed "the big pond," met and fell in love with Dad's sister, and took a job for life as a truck driver — a position that enabled him to raise a family and live comfortably and happily until God called him home in 1987.

I was exposed to the best of both collars: My white-collar dad taught me the value of a traditional education, while my blue-collar uncle showed me the utility of street smarts. Whether you're hiring blue or white collars, our new Uncle Joe can teach you and them what it takes to be a pro. He has a take that America — both the group and the country — can sing about.

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