

The Industry Pulse



How we turned down 5 out of 6 prospective clients and still grew 21.6%. **pg 102**

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How I achieved 108.5% growth. **pg 119**

HOW TO

GROW

How we suffered our worst year in business and came back strong. **pg 110**



{ The status quo is no longer an option. Today, growth is imperative. Your time is up — **turn to page 75** to make an immediate difference in your business. }



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
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Illustration by: Istock International Inc.

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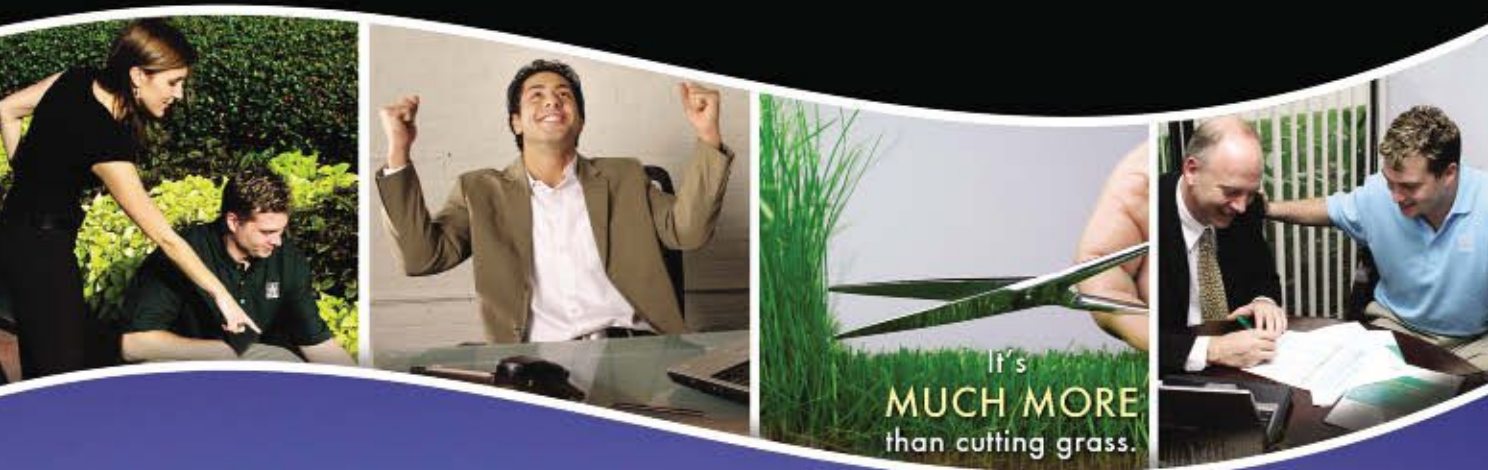
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SPECIAL REPORT

S1 THE INDUSTRY PULSE
LM measures the industry beat, offering strategies to maintain and improve business health in 2011.



DIGITAL VAULT

Select stories from our e-newsletters. Visit www.landscapemanagement.net/enewsletters to sign

LMdirect! Some familiar names are listed among the 175 pilot projects selected to test the Sustainable Sites Initiative national rating system.

Athletic Turf News Looking back on the early days of girls' interscholastic sports, few of us realized how significant they would become in our schools and universities.

LD/B Solutions A Long Grove, IL, residence becomes a study in white that blends formal garden spaces within a setting of natural conservancy.

Get Growing The 2010 American Garden Award, now in its second year, featured four new flower varieties chosen by their breeders for their excellent garden performance.

I-News When we want to put a monetary value on water, we generally start with the question: "How much do you pay for water?" We should also ask: "How much do you think fresh, clean potable water should cost?"

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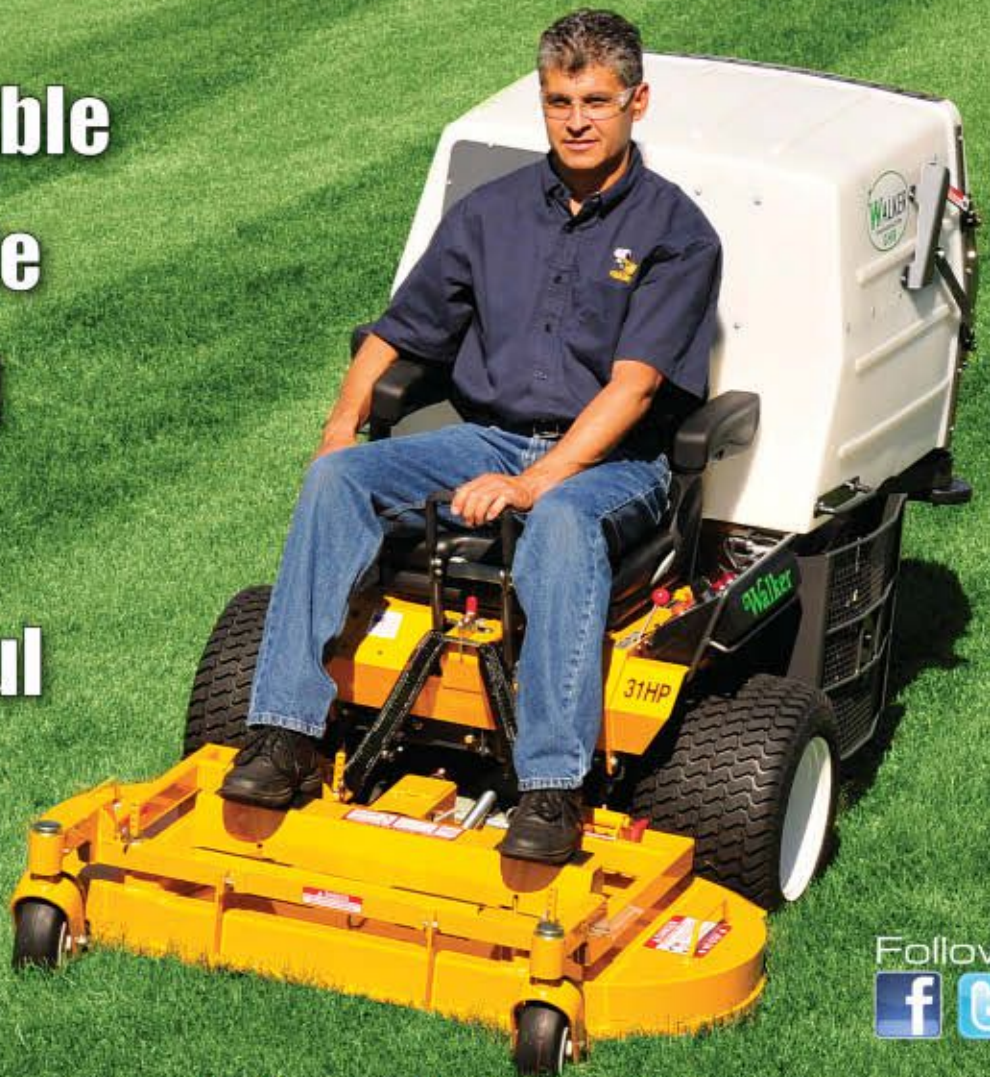
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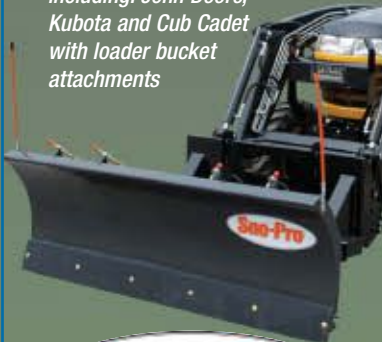
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FIRSTCUT

NICOLE WISNIEWSKI EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Contact Nicole at 216/706-3735 or via email at nwisniewski@questex.com.

Now is How

In August, our TV died. Initially, we looked for a replacement. We went to Sears and picked out a new Sony that was on sale. But the store manager gave us a hard time about their sale applying to that particular television, so we walked away.

Instead, we took our itty bitty 19-inch, 20-year-old RCA from the basement and put it in the broken TV's spot. Certainly not high-tech, but sufficient.

"I'm doing it, too," Chris Senske, owner of Senske Lawn & Tree Care in Kennewick, WA, told me. "I have a TV that's ready to be replaced and I'm just plain holding off because I don't want to spend the money right now. I've also put more money in the bank in the last 18 months than ever before in my life."

Call it uncertainty. Call it doubt. Call it a lack of faith. People today — your customers, your employees and even your fellow business owners

— are more hesitant to spend money.

But that doesn't mean they don't have money. In some cases, like with Senske, they do have cash, but they don't want to spend it on a particular item or service.

This puts the emphasis in today's economy on the HOWs. How you tell your story. How you sell. How you emphasize what customers need vs. want. Perceptive need combined with the right value has people spending. But like my experience at Sears, you disappoint a customer over a few dollars, and you've lost the bigger sale.

In our 2011 Business Planner, we bring you 50 ways to grow in honor of *Landscape Management's* 50th year of publishing, which kicks off in 2011. And in the spirit of this new economic environment, we don't just share expert advice on new growth strategies; we show you how 12 contractors achieved growth this year.

Now is the time to grow. How quickly you make a positive impact on your business all depends on HOW you do it. Turn to page 75 to get started.

Landscape Management

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Rising to the challenge

Aaron Hobbs, newly appointed president of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), shares specialty chemicals' top opportunities, obstacles.

BY **MARTY WHITFORD** EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

MW: How does it feel to be selected to serve as president of RISE — Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment — an organization that protects professionals' access to pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers?

AH: I'm humbled and honored to take the helm at RISE. I look forward to continuing to serve such an exciting and thought-leading industry, working closely with RISE's board and volunteer leaders to build upon the many successes of this association.

MW: How does it feel to try and fill the shoes of Allen James, who retired earlier this month after serving as RISE's first and only helmsman for the past 19 years?

AH: I certainly have big shoes to fill. But I'm excited to take the reigns from Allen. I worked closely with Allen the past 18 months, and we have a very strong board and group of volunteer leaders at RISE.

MW: James is confident you're up to the task of succeeding him. He said you bring a plethora of experience on regulatory and legislative fronts that he didn't possess when he took RISE's presidency in 1991. When and from where did you receive your undergraduate and graduate degrees, and what were your core studies?

AH: Originally from Texas, I earned a master's and a bachelor's of science in agricultural economics from the great Texas A&M University. I complemented these studies with myriad political science and public speaking classes.

MW: What positions have you held since earning your master's?

AH: I've had the opportunity to work in two of the three branches of the government. I've worked on two presidential campaigns, which gave me a firsthand, on-the-ground understanding of grassroots efforts. During the 2008 presidential campaign, I served as national grassroots coordinator for one of the candidates, as well as spokesperson for constituents. Before that, I ran the state government affairs program for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. That gave me a real appreciation for the similarities and differences in politics in different states and cities.

MW: Did working as an economist for the federal government during the George W. Bush administration give you an insider's perspective?

AH: Yes. So much of what we do at RISE to support our members and their customers is dealing with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Just having experience working within another federal agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will be extremely helpful.

MW: As RISE's director of legislative affairs and grassroots outreach for the past 18 months, you've seen our industry's strengths and weaknesses. What do you view as RISE's top three opportunities and obstacles?

AH: Our top three opportunities are connecting with customers, connect-



ing with policymakers and continuing to work for industry unity. I see our ability to address these three opportunities heightened through RISE's new public relations/public-facing outreach campaign, "Debug the Myths," which educates consumers, policymakers and others within the industry on the many benefits of our products.

I don't think we can talk about obstacles without talking about the economy. The economy continues to be an issue for everyone. We built our industry and its products on science, but science continues to erode and be misused. Another hurdle is ensuring industry unity while municipalities and other policymaking bodies come after our individual segments and chip away at the corners of our industry.

MW: What are three musts regarding grassroots outreach?

AH: We must "show up" — be there locally, in person, and make return visits. We also must help the public understand how issues affect them and give them resources to effectively speak to their policymakers. Thirdly, we must remember policymakers are human; in fact, often they don't have the depth of knowledge on specialty chemicals that we do. **LM**

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THE HALLMARK

RON HALL EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Ron has been in the Green Industry for 26 years. Contact him via e-mail at rhall@questex.com.

Becoming ever water-wiser

Like a wizard, I command water to flow — clean, fresh water. When I turn on the faucet handle in my shower, I expect the water to come out; it does. Technology grants me this shaman-like ability, which I've never been without and that I now regard (perhaps like you) as my birthright. It never occurs to me that the faucet will fail me, so accustomed am I to effortlessly accessing clean water that, of course, is irreplaceable for sustaining my envied American lifestyle.

To what do I owe this good fortune, which is not shared by almost three billion of my earthly companions? (An estimated 900 million humans do not have access to safe drinking water, and 2.6 billion do not have access to basic sanitation.) Certainly, little that I have ever done entitles me to this incredible convenience. For reasons beyond my comprehension, I was born into this blessed U.S.A. at a time when clean, fresh and, yes, inexpensive water has always been at my fingertips.

Indeed, our nation's ability to harness water to do its bidding and raise our standard of living has been little short of astounding. Take the engineering and harnessing of the Colorado River, as one example — perhaps its most stark. Disregarding the misappropriations, political wrangling and deleterious environmental consequences of its taming for the moment, who can argue that its water hasn't

made deserts flower into some of most agriculturally productive land on Earth, that it hasn't been the single largest ingredient in allowing the growth of some of the nation's largest and most dynamic cities and — not coincidentally but certainly less recognized — birthed the modern irrigation industry as we know it, a key factor in the growth and continued evolution of our Green Industry?

Author Steven Solomon, in his book *Water, The Epic Struggle for Weather, Power, and Civilization*, claims that the United States rose to its prominence in the world during the 20th Century due, in large part, to its success in using water in four categories efficiently: meeting our domestic needs (drinking, cooking, sanitation), economic production (manufacturing, mining, agriculture), power generation and transport (shipping, defense).

Within the past generation, a fifth category, environmental sustainability, has emerged. It will figure largely in our special Water Wise coverage, which begins on page 17 in this issue. We've arrived at the point in the evolution of our Green Industry, and the understanding of what our efforts can accomplish, that we can make vastly larger positive environmental impacts on the properties entrusted to our care.

As you read our Water Wise coverage, you will gain in this first of three monthly installments a greater understanding of water management and its role in sustaining the urban and suburban properties that are now so much a part of our lifestyles.

Our continuing coverage of irrigation and water issues will continue to focus on water use efficiency and best management practices. We won't focus on restrictions and bans. We'll be sharing examples of what we're doing well, and what we're going to be doing better.

The Green Industry, including our contractor segment, is an industry of positive change. It's in the forefront of a worldwide movement to use resources more wisely to preserve and improve our urban and suburban ecologies.

As you read our **Water Wise coverage**, you will gain in this first of three installments a greater understanding of how landscape irrigation fits into the **total water picture** of the urban and suburban properties within our communities.

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IN THIS SPECIAL Water Wise supplement you will learn about Lovett School, an incredible private school in Atlanta that embraces water conservation within its core vision. Also Brian Vinchesi, an irrigation consultant and EPA WaterSense Partner of the Year, shares how to make every irrigation project a winner.

WATER WISE

PART



PHOTO BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC

17 Understanding water's worth

Conservation is the key to water's future.

19 Water lessons

An Atlanta school teaches and embodies intelligent environmental design.

23 11 steps to a great irrigation project

A 'recipe' to make every irrigation project a winner.

Rain Bird: Innovative products and initiatives for a better world

ACCORDING TO A recent article in the *New York Times*, the Southwestern United States is on the verge of a critical situation. Not only are water levels in Lake Mead too low to supply the area's burgeoning population, these same low water levels also diminish the Hoover Dam's ability to generate electricity. Unless the drought ends or water is diverted from other sources, the economic implications could be severe.

The Southwest provides just one example of the impact water has on each of us — in ways as personal as our monthly water bill and as public as our global economy. Around the world, the realities are staggering. Only 1 percent of the world's water is fresh — the only portion suitable for human consumption. Meanwhile, the demand for this relatively small amount of water is growing exponentially. As a result, 47 percent of the world's population will be living in areas of "high water stress" by 2030.


These facts are taken directly from Rain Bird's latest white paper, "Water Conservation and the Green Industry," a publication that examines the social and economic factors behind water conservation and their cumulative effect on the green industry. Our white paper series is just one example of our continued focus on The Intelligent Use of Water™. We understand the vital role water plays in a healthy, sustainable environment — and a healthy economy. As a result,

we continue to innovate and develop spray heads, nozzles, controllers and drip irrigation systems that apply water in the most effective and efficient manner possible.

Our commitment extends beyond our products to initiatives aimed at educating the industry and the community about the need to conserve water. Now in its fourth year, Rain Bird's Intelligent Use of Water Awards will provide a total of \$50,000 worth of grants in \$1,500, \$5,000 or \$10,000 categories to deserving water conservation and environmental sustainability projects worldwide. Through the annual Intelligent Use of Water Summit, Rain Bird brings together some of the world's leading experts on water, irrigation and conservation to openly discuss and debate water-related issues.

We are dedicated to environmental stewardship, and this commitment is woven into the very fabric of the Rain Bird organization. In the future, we will continue to develop both products and initiatives that have the potential to inspire responsible, informed choices about the way we all use water each and every day.





Understanding water's worth

Civilization, traces mankind's dependence and use of water — from the first ancient, irrigated agrarian civilizations in the Middle East's Fertile Crescent to the rise of the United States as a global superpower. He makes the point that the economic dominance achieved by our society in the 20th century can be attributed, in no small part, to the abundance and productive use of our freshwater resources.

Accounting for approximately 6% of the world's population, the United States and Canada are blessed with a disproportionately large supply of its available fresh water. We use this precious resource to drive turbines in our massive dams, and for cooling and producing electricity in our power plants producing enormous amounts of energy that we parlay into industrial production. We use water from our rivers and our aquifers to make deserts bloom into gardens and to transform prairies into massive grainlands.

Who can dispute that much of California's incredibly productive agriculture industry is a gift of the Colorado River, while huge farms in our Plains states, one of the world's top grain-producing regions, owe their productivity to water drawn from the massive Ogallala Aquifer.

The best new source of water to meet our future needs will be the water we save now.

BY **RON HALL**
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

W AS A SOCIETY, and especially those of us in the Green Industry, are starting to comprehend water's true worth. While we have a long way to go, we now realize that we must do a better job of preserving water quality and conserving our freshwater resources. We're becoming aware of the irreplaceable role of fresh water to our society's economic vitality and to the health of our Green Industry.

Author Stephen Solomon, in his recently published book, *Water, The Epic Struggle for Wealth, Power and*

But there's a price to pay for drawing upon this bounty.

We're now faced with an overdrawn Colorado River, shrinking aquifers and, in the case of some of our fastest-growing regions, grossly inadequate water storage capabilities and crumbling infrastructure. Apart from providing our drinking, cooking and sanitation needs, the lack of an ample and reliable supply of fresh water threatens the economic base of our nation and, of course, our industry.

Few cities in the United States know this better than Atlanta, the Southeast's economic powerhouse that suffered a four-year drought that ended in the winter of 2008-09, ironically (and perhaps predictably) with flooding.

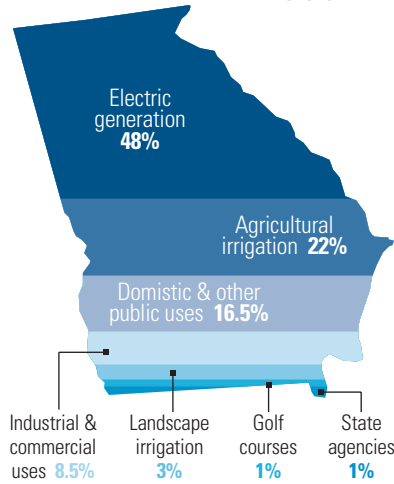
Atlanta's huge challenge

You can't be blamed for wondering how a region that averages 50 in. of precipitation annually (compare this to the 4 in. annually in Las Vegas) can end up with just a few months supply of drinking water during the height of its recurring droughts, a huge problem considering the region's 5 million people. The short answer: lack of storage.

You also can't be blamed for being curious as to why Atlantans pay more for water than people in any other large American city — 108% more than New York and \$144 more than

GEORGIA WATER USE

BY SECTOR



Source: The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

San Antonio, TX. The answer again is simple: the \$4.1 billion price tag for upgrading the city's antiquated water and sewer system.

North Georgia's water issues, which the state is now belatedly attacking, offer a stark example of lack of foresight, planning and, perhaps, political will in securing water to meet future economic growth and development. And yes, Georgia, like much of the rest of the United States, will continue to add people, homes, industries and businesses.

Meanwhile, the amount of available fresh water (at least at an affordable cost) will remain constant or, in some regions, become even more stressed.

"We know we have to start construction now and plan for future droughts," says Dr. Mark Risse, professor and coordinator of Extension Engineering, University of Georgia. And, says Risse, future droughts are inevitable, ticking off the list of those plaguing Georgia during the last 30 years (1981, '86-'88, '98-'02 and '06-'09), the period of the region's explosive growth and development.

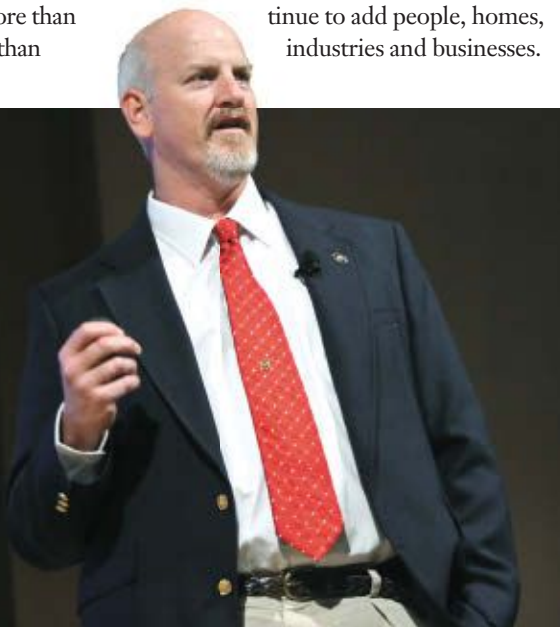
It's unlikely Atlanta will soon be getting a significant new source of water storage in the form of a reservoir. The cost and the time it takes to perform environmental studies and obtain necessary permits will see to that. The region's best — and likely, only — source of new water will be the water it saves through conservation.

Risse says that adoption of the State Water Plan in February 2008 ignited a flurry of activity to alert Georgians to the very real need to use water more wisely. These include programs directed specifically at the landscape industry such as:

- ▶ Implementing educational programs for customers;
- ▶ Offering customers checklists of practices and processes for certifying water-efficient landscapes; and
- ▶ By 2012, recommending standards for design, installation and maintenance of irrigation systems and certifying landscape professionals.


Is Atlanta doing enough to secure its water future — the key to its continued economic growth? Are the rest of us?

Maybe or maybe not. But the example set by new development in the region, projects such as the remaking of Atlanta's Lovett School campus (featured on page 19 in "Water Lessons") shows that we're aware of our water issues and taking steps to meet them. **LM**



"WE KNOW WE HAVE TO START CONSTRUCTION NOW AND PLAN FOR FUTURE DROUGHTS."

— Dr. Mark Risse

A photograph showing two men, likely students or staff, kneeling in a garden bed. They are focused on planting small green seedlings into the soil. The man on the left is wearing a purple polo shirt and khaki pants, while the man on the right is wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants. The garden bed is bordered by concrete blocks and filled with brown mulch. In the background, there is a building with a covered walkway and some trees.

Students take a hands-on approach to environmental issues in addition to their more traditional studies at Atlanta's independent coeducational Lovett School.

Water lessons

DIRTY HANDS aren't frowned upon at the Lovett School, an independent, co-educational day school of approximately 1,500 students in the Buckhead neighborhood of Atlanta. Students investigating and studying the school's natural areas and gardens are a common sight on its 103-acre campus. Even primary school students at Lovett School get grime beneath their fingernails as part of the broader environmental education.

Urban water management — efficient irrigation and innovative drainage in particular — figures large on the school's environmentally sensitive campus, which hugs the bank of the Chattahoochee River. The wooded campus features three school buildings constructed within the past decade, several older structures, a 0.33-acre pond, a small meandering creek, gardens and sports fields for

Atlanta's Lovett School shines as an example of intelligent environmental design, construction and wise use of its energy and water resources.

BY **RON HALL** EDITOR-AT-LARGE

60 school teams, including two new grass sports fields.

In almost every respect, Lovett can be described as green.

The most major recent addition to the campus, apart from its new baseball and softball fields, is the Portman Family Middle School, which opened in August 2009. Its 5,000-sq.-ft. green

roof, apart from helping to cool the building during Atlanta's hot summers and keeping it cozier in winter, serves as a living classroom for students who regularly gather in small groups to study around tables under the shaded plaza adjacent to its roof garden.

The garden is one of many cutting-edge innovations the school has embraced to use resources as efficiently as possible, including water, says irrigation consultant Bob Scott, who helped design and oversee the installation of the site's water-saving landscape features.

"Early in the planning process, I recommended that we develop an overall and bigger picture to deal with water at the campus," says Scott, president of Irrigation Consultants Inc., Conyers, GA. "We ended up doing a master plan for water usage and conservation. We started by prioritizing the water at the site, and our first priority was to harvest whatever storm water we could."

For example, the middle school's

WATER WISE

roof surface provides much of the irrigation water required by the garden. Precipitation falling onto the roof is collected, along with the building's air conditioning condensate, and directed into a 10,000-gal. aluminum tank at the base of the building, explains Scott. During periods of dry weather, that water is pumped back onto the roof and used in the green roof's low-volume system. Or, it can be used to irrigate plants surrounding the school.

The installation of the green roof was handled by national landscaping company ValleyCrest Landscape Cos., which was involved with many other landscape construction projects at the site during the decade-long process of upgrading Lovett School's campus.

"From our point of view, the logistics of how to access a roof is always a challenge, including how to get the material to the roof in a safe manner," says Brian Prantil, branch manager of the Southeast Region for ValleyCrest. "There were many other considerations for this project, as well, such as installing the correct, lightweight soil and installing the irrigation, in terms of the long-term maintenance of the green roof — and taking into account the water needs of the plants, which are different from other landscape areas at the school.

"There are increasing concerns about how to irrigate plant material without wasting water," he adds, noting that solutions include "the use of elements, such as cisterns; using plant material that doesn't require extensive maintenance, including native or adaptive plants; and making sure plants are located in the proper locations and in the correct soils."

The green roof and other energy and water-conserving design elements contributed to the middle school earning a Leadership in Energy and



Environmental Design (LEED) Gold Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council. The school learned of the designation in August.

"In the last 10 years, we have replaced our major educational spaces with up-to-date and more energy-efficient facilities," says Jeff Rountree, director of plant operations. "When we replaced our high school and our elementary schools, we were interested in building to LEED standards. Those two buildings just missed it by a couple of points each, so we dug our heels in a little bit deeper and

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Top: Students gather on the shaded middle school roof garden plaza to study or socialize.

Center: This above-ground cistern collects air conditioning condensate and rainwater from the green roof and stores it until it's needed to irrigate the roof garden.

Bottom: This naturalized creek captures runoff and empties it into a 0.33-acre pond.

BEATING THE **HIGH COST** OF SPORTS FIELD IRRIGATION

Sports fields *must* have water. But the cost of watering them is becoming an issue for grounds maintenance budgets. Turfgrass sports fields require irrigation to maintain plant health and healing, so playing surfaces stand up to the pounding they get from game play. Synthetic turf fields require less water than their natural counterparts for cleaning and cooling, but they do require water nevertheless. Apart from irrigation, sports fields must also drain.

Building sports fields that can be irrigated efficiently and drain promptly is a science. Building them so they disperse, capture, store and reuse the water that nature provides them approaches art. The new softball and baseball fields at Lovett School can be described as state of the art, and feature a system to capture rainwater and reuse it for irrigation.

Eric Holland, co-owner of Precision Turf LLC, Buford, GA, explains that rainwater falling on the fields drains into 4-in. drain lines on 30-ft. centers. The fields' sand cap construction has a 6-in. rootzone over a permeable gravel base. They are turfed with Tifway 419 Bermuda-grass. Water falling on them filters through the grass and the gravel sub-base before draining into a 250,000-gal. underground cistern. Rainwater from elsewhere on the campus, including runoff

from parking areas, is also naturally filtered before it also drains into the underground cistern.

"Ever since we had the drought of 2007 and 2008, everybody is looking at alternative sources of irrigation water," says Holland, whose company installed the fields.

Irrigation consultant Bob Scott, owner of Irrigation Consultants Inc. in Conyers, GA, oversaw the project just as he has nearly everything related to irrigation at the site over the course of the decade-long campus renovation.

"Early in the process we got with engineers and other people to take a serious look at water harvesting," says Scott, past president of the American Society of Irrigation Consultants. "Everyone liked the idea of an underground cistern, but they realized athletic fields take a lot of water. The civil engineers then began developing the storm water system that empties into the underground holding cistern."

The underground cistern is connected to a 50,000-gal. storage tank located beyond the outfield fences between the baseball and softball fields. When a level control within the cylindrical metal tank indicates the tank is running low on water, a pump within the underground cistern replenishes it. During an extended dry spell, water for irrigation can also be drawn from a

0.33-acre pond located on the campus and pumped to the above-ground tank.

Previously, a pump drew water from the nearby Chattahoochee River to replenish the campus pond. Today, the captured rainwater also decreases the need for potable water from Atlanta.

Jeff Rountree, director of plant operations for Lovett, knows the importance of irrigation for providing green, healthy turfgrass and a safe playing surface for young athletes. Lovett provides sports facilities for more than 60 school teams.

Rountree, who has 42 people on his staff, says Lovett School has four main natural grass sports fields: one each for football, baseball, softball and lacrosse. A natural turf, multi-sport field is available when the turfgrass on one of the others is rested or renovated. The school is also installing a synthetic turf sports field. It will be irrigated with eight water cannons.

"Last year, we came out of a long drought. It was difficult to maintain our sports fields. If turf can't be watered and the grass dies, the ground can turn into concrete," says Rountree, who was born and raised 20 miles from the school where he has worked for 34 years. "Fortunately, we could draw water from a well, and we could maintain all of our fields with the well water. We have a 600-ft. deep well on campus. It gives us enough water so that at night when demand for irrigation is low, we can pump water and replenish our pond."

The Lovett School has an extensive irrigation system on campus, with pumping stations custom-built by WaterTronics.

Rountree says the next big improvement will be automating the campus irrigation, which means integrating the site's nine irrigation clocks.

"We hope to be able to tie them into a central control system next year to help us use water even more efficiently," he says.

— RH



Much of the irrigation water required to irrigate Lovett School's two new sports fields comes from captured rainwater.

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worked very hard in choosing and using materials, means and methods to achieve a higher level of LEED certification for our middle school.”

A collaborative project

While the school’s faculty, staff, students, parents and other supporters celebrated the Gold recognition, it wasn’t the planners’ main goal when the school’s major renovation process began more than a decade ago. Their larger vision has always focused on providing students with modern, state-of-the-art facilities to prepare them for the ever-changing career needs and opportunities of the 21st century. The other part of their vision included elevating the school’s facilities — buildings and campus — to a new level of environmental sustainability.

Like all projects of this size, its many different components required the talents of many professionals and contractors, and everybody following the spirit (if not the exact dictates) of the original master plan. Conditions, as in all sizable projects, called for some modifications as work progressed, says Scott.

Several experienced architecture firms took up the challenge of fulfilling the school’s vision, including the Atlanta-based landscape architecture firm of Hughes, Good, O’Leary & Ryan Inc. (HGOR). Its involvement began more than a decade ago as it partnered with committees comprised of school officials and a diverse group of other firms and professionals in crafting the project’s master plan.

Landscape architect Lauren Standish of HGOR says creating the visionary plan and obtaining the necessary permits and authorizations for the project took more than two years. Only then could moving dirt at the

site begin. The ambitious scope of the project required it be approached step by step, a process that has lasted more than a decade and is just now winding down, says Standish, who served as project director for HGOR on the site.

The school’s makeover began ambitiously with the construction of a 300-space parking garage, which opened up more green space on campus. It continued in phases, month after month and year after year, with the construction of the new upper school, then the building of the new lower school and, finally, the new middle school, now in its second year of use. HGOR partnered with and relied upon the services of experienced contractors, such as ValleyCrest and irrigation consultant Scott, throughout the project.

THE IRRIGATION CONSULTANT’S ROLE AT LOVETT

- › Working with the owner during development of the master plan;
- › Analyzing the existing irrigation systems on the campus, determining irrigation demands of the various systems around the campus, and identifying water resources available for irrigation;
- › Developing methods to deliver available water resources, and planning water harvesting and rainwater catchment systems for new and anticipated campus projects; and
- › Implementing irrigation best management practices (BMPs) for the landscaped and turfed areas of the campus.

“Our overall role was to make the vision of the landscape architect and the school a reality,” says ValleyCrest’s Prantil. “Lovett spent a great amount of time thinking through what its vision was going to be, and it was our job to put in exactly the installation it wanted and expected.”

This was also Scott’s role on the Lovett School project — making sure the school’s vision, at least in terms of irrigation and outside water use, was being realized.

“Perhaps the biggest challenge in a project like this is getting and keeping an overview of the project’s goals, and also keeping everyone aware of those goals, keeping everyone informed,” he says. “This includes the client, the design teams, the construction teams, and making sure it all remains tied together.

“In the end, of course,” he adds, “you want everything in the project to work as it was designed, and you want it to perform and be efficient for a long time. And, obviously, you’re also working to make sure it ends up providing the client, in this case, the school, with a tangible payback. When you conserve water, and in this case we’re harvesting and saving rainwater and runoff, you’re providing a tangible payback.” **LM**



Irrigation consultant Bob Scott guided the Lovett School water use plan.

PHOTO COURTESY: IRRIGATION CONSULTANT SERVICES, INC.; ILLUSTRATION (RIGHT) BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL, INC.



11 steps to a great irrigation project

Follow this 'recipe' for working with general contractors, landscape architects and landscape designers, and you're on your way to making every large landscape irrigation installation a winner.

BY **BRIAN E. VINCHESI**, LEED AP, CID,
CIC, CLIA, CGIA, GWM-L

IF YOU have been in the irrigation contracting business for very long, you've had successful and unsuccessful projects. There's a good chance your first unsuccessful project may have been your first irrigation system installation. Looking back, I know mine could have been done better, especially the first one. It was also the landscaper's first irrigation system installation; need I say more?

There are several keys to having a successful irrigation installation project. At the residential level, you have control, and you make all the decisions. If it's wrong, it's your fault; there is no finger pointing. However, in larger systems that you may have provided design/build services or especially professionally designed systems (irrigation consultant, landscape architect or civil engineer), there are a large number of places where things can go awry — and quickly.

In many cases, these problems may not be your fault, but you're the one left holding the bag. There's a learning curve, and you must educate yourself about these more detailed systems for them to be successful. In other words, educate yourself before bidding, not after.

Communication is vital, regardless of the size of the project. The more you communicate with whomever is overseeing your work and/or paying you, the better off the results of the project will be. You cannot over-communicate, as long as you are being professional and have legitimate questions, concerns or gripes.

Step by step

What follows is my recommended procedure to follow to make sure each project is both successful and profitable:

1 Do your due diligence. Take the time to look at the irrigation plans, read the specifications and study the details to understand exactly how to install the irrigation system. First, look for things that you and/or your crew are not used to doing. Your staff will either need to be trained on the new procedures, or be reminded to do it differently. Spend the necessary time to understand what's expected before putting shovels into the ground. You'll be surprised how much more smoothly jobs will go if you thoroughly understand the plan. It also makes it easier to get your money and get out at the end of the project.

2 Get the necessary clarifications. As you study the plans, specifications and details, look for inconsistencies between the specifications and the plans, and especially between the specifications and the details. Is there missing information? Pieces missing? Equipment not specified? Is there something on the plan that makes no sense, or makes the plan unworkable? Will you be able to install it the way it is designed or specified?

Remember, at the end of the job, it's still your responsibility to have a working system. Finger-pointing works much better at the beginning of the project, before anything is installed, than at the end — when it just plain doesn't work or no one wants to pay for it.

3 Specify your submittals and substitutions. If you're not used to professionally designed commercial work, the submittal process will be new to you. The specifications will require that you submit a product sheet for each and every product that was specified or is to be included in the irrigation system. Submittals are also where you would request substitutions from the equipment that is specified. However, submittals must be understood and prepared. Poorly prepared submittals are a red flag to both the general contractor and the professional designer that you don't understand the specifications or the design, and/or you're not qualified to install it.

Create submittals to identify the products (and the features of the products) that you are planning on install-

ing. Be as exact as possible. Substitutions aren't a good idea if the specifications detail exactly what products are to be used. If the specification says "or approved equal," substitutions might be possible.

Your supplier can help you with properly preparing submittals. Install what was approved on the submittals. It's generally a bad idea to install products other than what you submitted.

Last but not least, submittals obviously have a cost to them. Include that cost in your bid.

4 File your request for information (RFI). Once you've bid the project, the best way to ask questions is through a formal process using an RFI. File the RFI with the general contractor, and the responsible party will respond to it in writing. An RFI is still an excellent way to clarify inconsistencies or ambiguities after you have been awarded the project, but before installation. You cannot file an RFI after you have performed the work.



PROVIDING A LANDSCAPED SITE WITH IRRIGATION THAT KEEPS PLANTS HEALTHY AND ATTRACTIVE BUT ALSO MAKES EFFICIENT USE OF WATER REQUIRES A CAREFULLY CRAFTED PLAN.

5 Adjust to changes and change orders. Many times, the landscape designer or architect will change the landscape design during construction. He or she may change it slightly, or make major changes. It's not uncommon for an irrigation contractor to install a system as per the irrigation design and pay no attention to those changes. The result is an inefficient irrigation system that doesn't match the landscape. Communicate and understand potential changes before they occur, so you can adjust the irrigation system accordingly.

Make sure the landscape architect/designer understands the implications of changing the landscape before installing any irrigation. File a change order. Ideally, you'd file the change order before you do the work, but many times that isn't possible. Again, regularly communicate with the general contractor. This will help the change order process — especially when they are filed after the fact — go more smoothly. Never anticipate you will be paid for work you have done if there was not a change order approved ahead of time.

6 Flush. There's nothing worse than having a new landscape that needs to be watered if sprinklers repeatedly clog and don't properly operate. Ideally, the system will be complete and there will never be

a clogged nozzle or an inoperable sprinkler. Spend the proper time flushing the system to make sure everything is operational. This may keep you from getting called back to the site.

Also, unplug nozzles on a regular basis through the first month of operation. Specifications often require the irrigator to be responsible for clogged nozzles for 30 to 90 days after the system is complete.



Adjust arcs. Just as you properly flush the system so you do not get clogged nozzles, take the necessary time to adjust the sprinkler arcs so they're properly watering what they're intended to water. Make sure none of the arcs are watering the hardscapes. Every time you have to come back to adjust something, it costs you money, but it also shows the general contractor and/or the owner that you didn't install the job properly.

8 Create an irrigation schedule. Even though you may not be required to provide (or program into the controller) an irrigation schedule for the project, it would be prudent to do so. After all, you want the irrigation system to be properly scheduled as much as the property owner does.

9 Provide a record, normally known as built drawings, at the completion of the installation. A good record drawing gives everyone a good understanding of what was installed and where. Record drawings should indicate sprinkler model and nozzles installed, zone valve locations and wire and pipe routing and sizing.

10 Provide an operating and maintenance (O&M) manual. Most commercial projects and professionally designed irrigation systems require an O&M manual. Topics might include startup procedures, winterization procedures, approved submittals, a suggested irrigation schedule, a list of supply houses, a written warranty statement and a list of numbers to call for service. The manual may also include the controller unit's operating and maintenance instructions and any other significant items in the system.

11 Know the warranty requirements of the specifications. A one-year warranty is standard, but an extended warranty might be required. Account for the costs of any extended warranties in your bid. Be aware the warranty of many projects require you perform a first-year winterization and spring start-up.

Every item and procedure listed in this article will cost you — either financially or with your time/effort. But taking shortcuts or not following the plan may result in an even larger cost: the bad impression it leaves with a landscape architect/designer and the property owner.

Follow the plan I've laid out in this article, use quality materials, install the project as it's been designed and chances are you'll end up with a successful project — and you'll get paid. **LM**

VINCHESI is president of *Irrigation Consulting, Inc., Pepperell, MA*, a member of the *American Society of Irrigation Consultants*, a *WaterSense Partner of the Year* and a board member of the *Irrigation Association*. Contact him at bvinchesi@irrigationconsulting.com.

Next month, learn how initiatives such as Sustainable Sites (SITES) and WaterSense will shape landscape irrigation.

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INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Founding member of the Metro Atlanta Landscape Trade Association, past president of the Georgia Turfgrass Association, frequent speaker at industry conferences

HOBBIES: Walking; hiking in the mountains; watch, clock and knife shows; reading; opera; and going to German car races at Road Atlanta

FAMILY: Wife, Sharon, five children and seven grandchildren

WEBSITE: www.arbor-nomics.com

Richard Bare, president of Arbor-nomics, is a voracious reader. At the top of his list these days (and in the hands of his management team) is Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. "This book is like the Bible," he says. "If everyone followed its precepts, there would be no wars, divorce, discord, nothing. It is the final say on how to treat people — and it was written in 1936 and still applies today."

What lessons did you take from Carnegie's book? Don't criticize, condemn or complain. Make people feel important. Give people what they want. Become genuinely interested in other people. Give honest and sincere appreciation. Smile. Remember people's names. Be a good listener. In other words, be like your dog.

You're regarded as a marketer and salesman par excellence. Please tell us how you keep your message in front of clients. The trick to coming up with successful ideas is to test a few new ones every year. One of the ideas that has been the most successful for us has been SEO — search engine optimization. We urge customers to pay online, which gets people to our website. We highlight and ask them whether they would like other services, such as seasonal services. All they have to do is click on a box and get an estimate. We've increased our add-ons with virtually no investment.

What marketing programs have been duds? I'd have to say subdivision directory ads, just about any kind of print ad, and TV didn't work for us.

What's your secret to increased growth during a downtime? Our service. We interviewed 100 customers recently about why they liked us, and it came down to our great customer service. Not only does this encompass our customer service department, but it's also about our technicians. They each have their own route and treat it like their own business. They are knowledgeable and accountable. Some have been with us 15 years. We answer the phones in person and we do more than the customer expects. It's simple: we under-promise and over-deliver; it's gotten us on the *Inc.* 5000 list four years in a row!

What's the biggest change you have seen in the lawn care business since you founded your company 30 years ago? In Atlanta in 1980, 95% of the lawns were fescue, now fescue is 40%; Bermuda and zoysia are more prominent. We still have the basic components — fertilizer and weed control — but we're more sophisticated. We're able to respond to customers within 24 hours because of our computer systems. We don't get lost with our GPS systems. We can print invoices from air-conditioned trucks, and we can even type out notes when we are there so they can read our handwriting. We automatically have a record of every speck of it.

Another big change from 30 years ago is that almost all of our clients now have

mowing maintenance services and sprinkler systems, so that makes it easier on us.

WEB EXTRA

For more from Arbor-Nomics, visit www.landscape-management.net/arbor-nomics.

“(OUR TECHNICIANS) EACH HAVE THEIR OWN ROUTE AND TREAT IT LIKE THEIR OWN BUSINESS. THEY ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND ACCOUNTABLE.” — RICHARD BARE, ARBOR-NOMICS

A SUPPLEMENT TO

Landscape Management

The **INDUSTRY PULSE**

↓
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Landscape Management
measures the industry beat,
offering strategies to maintain
and improve business health
in 2011. **BY NICOLE WISNIEWSKI**

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Over the years, we've all had challenges and we've refined our businesses, moving and molding with the times, taking advantage of new opportunities and building and growing our people and our brand along the way.

The recent recession has, undoubtedly, been challenging on businesses. Many who've been in the industry more than 20 or 30 years claim it's been the toughest time they've encountered since their inception. If these challenging economic times have taught us anything, it's to remember our simple beginnings — the drive and focus that inspired us to follow our entrepreneurial spirits and soar. As I talk with lawn care and landscape professionals across the country, I hear optimism and focus. And it's inspiring and contagious. Instead of succumbing to flat growth, many of you are taking your lumps and renovating your businesses, implementing lean principles and, yes, even growing in the more complicated business environment we work in today.

To help fuel the fire of this positive business spirit, the stories in this report reflect on the 2010 challenges the industry has faced in various business categories. And, more importantly, each story provides you with some 2011 goals — a few bullet points you can add to your business plans to inspire you and help you continue to drive your businesses through the difficult challenges ahead.

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While the future may be uncertain, the industry's ability to adapt and embrace change will continue to drive bright spots through those economic storm clouds and create a smarter, tougher and more focused industry.

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Adapt or die

Diversification reigns as contractors adjust to the beat of what they are describing as a “fundamentally changed” industry.

Many landscapers are using the word “flat” to describe business this year as owner and consumer confidence and service pricing remain low, office buildings and homes suffer high vacancies and margins dwindle under the continued, tighter restraints of running a landscape business.

But despite the lingering recession, the industry has not flat-lined. It still has a pulse — nearly half of contractors (47%) say so, describing the industry as healthy. *Relatively* healthy dominates at 39% over the mere 8% who call their market *very* healthy.

While total company revenue growth was slight in 2009 at 1.41%, 2010 growth expectations are better at 4.6%. And average net revenue is 8.91%. But one can't ignore those other nagging figures — blips on the screen that show an erratic or unusually slow heartbeat. These are the 27% of people who say the industry is down ((the majority of which (14%) call it down significantly)) and the 26% who describe it as just flat.

“It’s the uncertainty that’s scary,” explains Joanne Kostecky, president of Allentown, PA’s Joanne



GROWING PAINS

| | Avg. 2009 Growth | Avg. 2010 Growth |
|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Lawn maintenance | 4.75% | 6.60% |
| Design/build/installation | -1.94% | 2.16% |
| Chemical lawn care | 1.66% | 4.56% |
| Irrigation | 0.93% | 5.20% |
| Total company revenue | 1.41% | 4.63% |

TOP PRIORITIES

1. Maintaining current business/sources of revenue
2. Growing my business
3. Cutting expenses
4. Innovation (finding new ways to do business)
5. Managing cash flow issues
6. Adding new services to offer more to core clients
7. Adding or improving green/sustainability services for customers



SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Industry Setbacks

1. Service pricing decreases, reducing margins.
2. Uncertainty lingers with clients and owners.
3. Business becomes more complex and volatile.

2011 Industry Goals

1. Improve efficiency to make up for price reductions.
2. Diversify and adapt to today's “new reality.”
3. Understand customer needs before making business changes and then integrate their feedback into future reinvention/planning.

Kostecky Garden Design. “Nobody knows how long this recession will really last.”

The recession in the mirror may be larger than it appears, according to small business intelligence database Sageworks. Looking at revenue data from more than 25 million small businesses, Sageworks CEO Brian Hamilton says small business sales were down 5% over the past two years, and then down another 5% the following year. “When you go down 5% and then 5% again — as anyone who knows the magic of compound interest will tell you — that’s more than a 10% decline,” Hamilton says. “That level of revenue shrink can have a fearsome effect on the bottom line. Deleveraging assets is the technical term, which translated means, ‘I’m stuck with the same fixed costs but have less income with which to pay them.’”

The bright spots seem to be coming from those contractors who check their pulse regularly, see an unusual or unexpected throbbing and make changes to get a strong, systematic, pounding rhythm going again.

At least that’s the case for those owners who’ve recognized “that in repairing our damaged economy, many of the ways in which we used to conceive of doing business will be fundamentally changed,” says Kirk Brown, Joanne Kostecky Garden Design’s business manager.

What does this mean for the industry? “We will never go back to pre-recession highs,” Brown believes. “The successful companies will be those who can adapt and grow in new models of their former selves.”

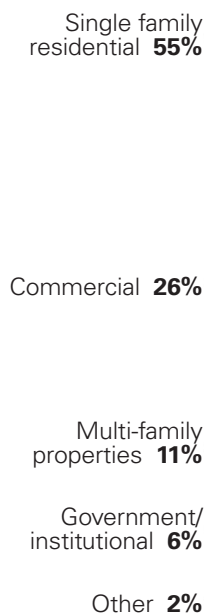
Action, reaction

To outperform the economy, contractors are taking action, what business expert and *Harvard Business Review* blogger Jeff Stibel describes as “an entrepreneur’s best weapon.” “Small businesses can adapt to any circumstance quickly,” he says. “As every thriving entrepreneur knows, speed breeds success.”

Certainly, nothing tops money as the largest client concern. For that reason, when offering new services today landscape and lawn care professionals are



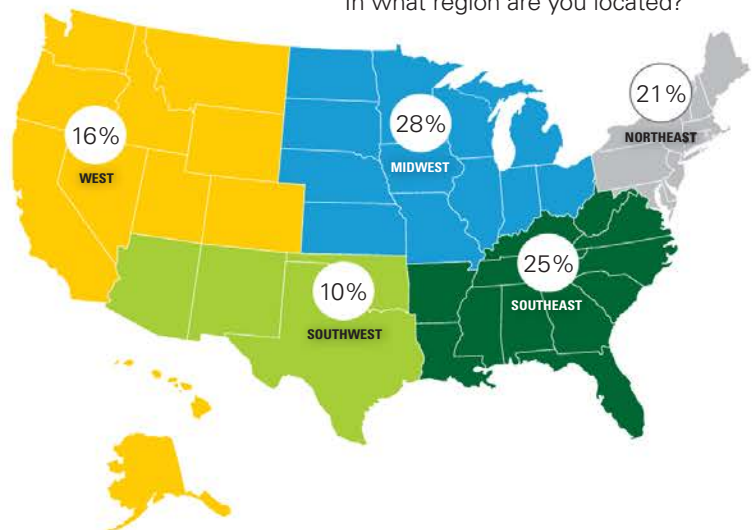
CUSTOMER MIX



SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

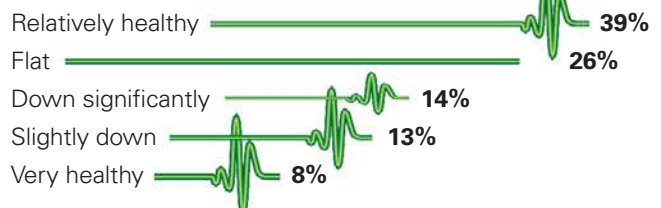
LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

In what region are you located?



TODAY'S PULSE

Describe the state of the industry in your region.





PULSE PROFILE

PRIME LAWN/PRIME DESIGN

THE OPERATING ROOM

AT A TIME WHEN industry operating costs increased 5.69% on average in 2009 and another 6.49% in 2010, according to *Landscape Management* research, Matt Griffin was able to reduce his operating costs by 6%.

"That's not a big number but it is when you look at it over the large scale of a year's time," says the president of \$1.5 million Kingwood, TX's Prime Lawn/Prime Design.

To do this successfully, Griffin made some smart cuts. "We eliminated water delivery," he says. "And the cleaning lady comes only once a week now vs. twice a week. We send out someone to pick up paper instead of having it delivered. And we talked to our phone company about reducing those costs. Basically, we are just cutting back on anything that isn't a necessity."

Though the recession wasn't a total shock to Griffin, "it did surprise me how fast everything happened," he says, adding that his numbers are still down by 10% but that's better than last year's 18% to 19% decrease. "When it falls it brings down a lot – I guess that's the nature of the beast. I know some guys who are down 40%."

But Griffin is feeling a sense of recovery. "I think it's getting better," he says. "Whether we're out of it or it's just on its way out, I don't know. But I think it could've been worse."

Next year has Griffin hopeful. His 95% residential customer base did put off some jobs this year, whether they were maintenance or just cleanup or even a patio. "They initially put it off to save money and now they're starting to want to do things," he says. "They're looking at things that have gone into such disrepair that they want to fix it up."



Matt Griffin

looking at things that alleviate the big pain point for customers — saving cash — to provide the ultimate direct benefit for themselves — growing profit. The specific markets that are proving successful add-ons for contractors vary from enhancements to water-saving and sustainability services to specific client needs identified through company surveys.

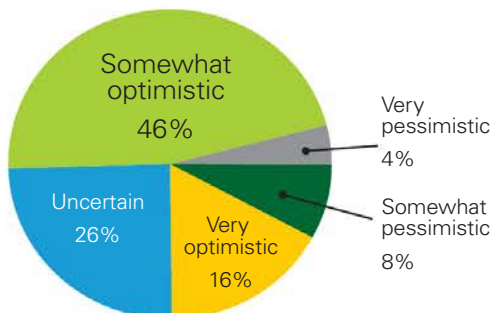
Another challenge has been knowing expansion or diversification is necessary, but not knowing what services would prove profitable or what changes would make the right difference in the bottom line. "We're looking to expand into markets we're not strong in," says Todd Dilley, general manager of The Lawn Ranger, Minneapolis, MN. "I don't know what those are yet, but that's what we're looking into."

In the past three CEO Studies conducted by IBM, coping with change was the most pressing owner issue. However, in 2010, a new primary challenge emerged: complexity. "CEOs told us they operate in a world that is increasingly volatile, uncertain and complex," the study explains, adding that 81% of CEOs anticipate business complexity to remain high or very high over the next five years. "Many shared the view that incremental changes are no longer sufficient. The most successful organizations are using entirely new approaches to tap new opportunities and overcome challenges to growth."

A warning: Don't diversify just for diversification's sake, stresses Chris Senske, president of Senske Lawn & Tree Care in Kennewick, WA. "We're diversified enough that it's almost hard to keep track of what we already do so we're not adding any new services or departments," he says.

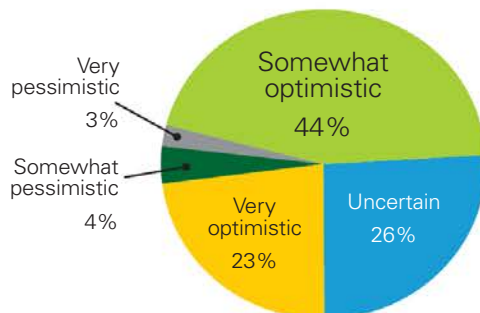
Adapt to economic challenges, strategically diversify, and then "test, measure, refine and repeat," Stibel suggests, urging contractors to be flexible today.

2010 BUSINESS SENTIMENT



Uncertainty remains the same ...
 but pessimism drops by almost half.

2011 BUSINESS OUTLOOK



SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

“Spend your time with your ear to the ground and respond accordingly.”

New reality

Though contractors are worried, they are maintaining optimism. This year, 62% of contractors feel optimistic, and 67% are feeling positive about 2011, according to *Landscape Management's* survey.

However, uncertainty still lurks around corners. A quarter of the industry feels uncertain about business this year and that grows by a percentage point in 2011. And, nationally, 75% of small business owners believe it is likely or highly likely that the economy will slip into another recession before it fully recovers, according to the September Discover Small Business Watch.

“I’m not an economist, but this recession is lasting longer than I thought it would,” says Bob Grover, president of Hillsboro, OR’s Pacific Landscape Management. “I’ve been working full-time since 1983 and this is the deepest one I’ve seen. I’ve heard discussion that it won’t get back to the glory days so we’re trying to prepare for the idea that it won’t be the level it was before, but it will get better. The term ‘new reality’ is something we’re preparing for. We’re preparing to be able to operate in an economy that is slower than it used to be but hopefully better than it is now.”

“Nothing would surprise me,” agrees Matt Griffin, president of Prime Lawn/Prime Design, Kingwood, TX. “But the idea that it could be worse than last year would scare me. I think it’s going to be better – I’m optimistic.”

David Norred, founder of Laguna Niguel, CA-based Nor-Land Landscaping Co., doesn’t feel as positive. “Overall, I think we still have some time yet before happy days,” he says.

“I worry that if we don’t have some level of improvement, we’ll continue to have further erosion of pricing and further cutbacks of our customer spending,” Grover points out, saying his biggest fear is his customers would want nothing else except to have their lawns mowed. “I hope our enhancement sales will start to go back up again instead of people thinking they don’t need flowers or any extras. I don’t expect it to miraculously recover for 2011, but I do hope to see *some* recovery.”

Ultimately, “perception is reality,” Dillely says. “It’s a tough time, no doubt, but I try to look ahead and stay positive. I look at it this way: If you’re not positive and excited, your customers and employees will take that cue. You have to portray a positive image.” **LM**



TOP 10 REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES

1. Residential design/build/installation and renovation
2. Commercial maintenance/mowing
3. Residential maintenance/mowing
4. Commercial design/build/installation and renovation
5. Irrigation/water management
6. Green/sustainability services
7. Chemical lawn care services
8. Landscape lighting
9. Snow and ice management
10. Water features/pond installation and maintenance

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

RECESSION WATCH

75

% of owners who think another recession is likely before full recovery.

SOURCE: DISCOVER SMALL BUSINESS WATCH

TOP CONCERNS

3. Consumer confidence
4. Properly and competitively pricing my services
5. Lack of time to chase new business opportunities
6. Accounts receivable
7. Accounts payable
8. Lack of staff to respond to business opportunities
9. Making payroll

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT



A GOOD INVESTMENT

28

% of small business owners who plan to increase spending on business development over the next six months.

SOURCE: DISCOVER SMALL BUSINESS WATCH



The consumer recovery

Consumers will spend again ... but not excessively.

Some people described it as gluttony. Others called it obnoxious. It was consumers' "I have to have it" mentality. Anything was attainable to people who wanted it. If they didn't have the money, they borrowed it. Today, that has clearly changed.

Contractors now use words like "cautious," "careful" and "conservative" to describe customer spending. Clients seek information before they make any decisions and are more frequently asking about deals and discounts. Instead of making instant purchasing decisions, they hesitate. They consider. They ponder. In the *Landscape Management* survey, 36% of lawn care and landscape professionals say customers are taking more time to make decisions.

And, in today's depressed economy, "bad news travels too fast," says Joe DiRoma, owner, DiRoma Landscaping, Lisbon, CT. "People are sitting on the fence not spending money until they see what other people are doing," he says. "I think they hear so much about the economy and that makes them more cau-



tious. They hear other people are struggling and they're worried about spending their own money."

Instead of neighbors one-upping each other, gushing about new furniture or their bigger and better televisions, the water cooler battle is who has the saddest story to tell. According to Gallup.com's latest consumer confidence survey, 47% of Americans rate current economic conditions as poor and 63% say economic conditions are worsening.

Though unemployment is tough and home values are not at their best, "my impression from surveys we get back from customers is their reasons for discontinuing service is not that they lost their job or home value has gone down," shares Chris Senske, president of Kennewick, WA's Senske Lawn & Tree Care. "It's just that they're uneasy and hanging on to money. People are unsure."

"We do have customers telling us they want to scale back and we did lose customers who told us it was because of the economy," admits Giuseppe Baldi, landscape maintenance manager for Baldi Gardens in Arlington, TX. Though he feels this was worse in 2009 compared to this year.

What has changed? There's been "a profound shift in client needs and expectations," says Kirk Brown, business

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Consumer Confidence Setbacks

1. Customers demand more deals and discounts.
2. Constant barrage of economic negativity increasing fear, even when money isn't an issue.
3. Pickier customers.

2011 Consumer Confidence Goals

1. Build consumer faith in the value of landscape services.
2. Strengthen customer relationships.
3. Phase work into easier to swallow, bite-size chunks.

manager, Joanne Kostecky Garden Design, Allentown, PA. "As with the terrible demise of the easy flow of money in the residential housing market, landscape budgets have contracted and clients — if they are looking to do any work at all — are scaling back their wishes and ramping up their demands/requirements."

"Customers are definitely getting more picky," Baldi confirms. "There's still that hesitation. They are still spending but hesitant to do too much."

In an August survey, The National Gardening Association found one in five households spent more time caring for their lawns and gardens last year — a good sign. However, they are spending 16% less money total than in previous years.

Todd Dilley's biggest fear is the recession will continue to worsen and play on customer psychology to the point where "even if they have money, they will be scared to spend it," says the general manager of The Lawn Ranger, Minneapolis, MN.

Yet, optimism prevails, but it grows in "baby steps," Baldi says. When asked which one customer segment holds the most opportunity for business growth, a clear majority of contractors (51%) chose residential.

"I do believe that people will continue to see the value of our industry in 2011," Dilley says. "So I'm

PHASED OUT

Are your customers taking too long to make decisions because they're afraid to spend too much at once in today's uncertain economy?

Offer the work on phases. It's worked for Todd Dilley, general manager of Minneapolis, MN's The Lawn Ranger. "People are still spending money — just not as much, so we have to learn to work with them," he says. "And doing jobs in phases — even over several years — has worked.

"Also, it ensures work," he adds. "You do phase one the first year, phase two the next year, and as long as you keep the customer happy, you know they aren't going somewhere else when it comes time for phase three."

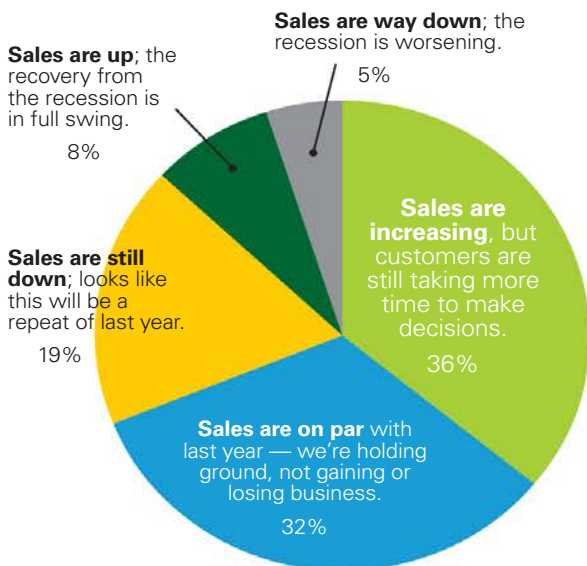
Matt Griffin has also found success in phasing out work. "People are managing their money tighter — they're still spending, just not in mass amounts," says the president of Kingwood, TX's Prime Lawn/Prime Design.

The additional perk: "A lot of times the profit margin can be higher when you break a job into phases," Griffin says. "You have to set up on the job site each time, so the profitability is better than doing it all at once as one big job."

CUSTOMER CHECK

How are customers responding this year?

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT



NOT A SPENDING SPREE

16

% reduction in all lawn and garden activity spending by consumers.

\$30.12 billion

Amount spent by consumers on lawn and garden activities in 2009.

SOURCE: NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION

RETAIN TO GAIN

76.15%

Landscaper's average customer retention rate.

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT



PULSE PROFILE

PARAMOUNT LANDSCAPE

WHEN OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Brian Golembiewski's monthly maintenance work is down — no doubt about it.

But he's up \$120,000 for the year because of one thing: service diversification.

Last year he added weed control/lawn care and tree trimming to his service mix to become a more complete maintenance business and capture more of the money customers were spending with other companies. "Those two services alone right now account for probably 15% to 20% of my revenue

for this year," says Golembiewski, president of Tempe, AZ's \$2.95 million Paramount Landscape. "And since that work has higher profit margins, my margins are up right now, too. I'll continue to work on developing and growing those areas of my business next year."

The bad news is his monthly maintenance account work — what he calls his base — is what he needs to sustain to increase the ancillary, profitable services for his 100% commercial client base, a large portion of which is made up of homeowners' association work.

Today, Golembiewski is bidding work at 2005 pricing levels, adding that service value has decreased by 20% or more just over the past year. "It got to a point where I wasn't winning the work so I had to keep tweaking my labor rates until I got to a point where I started to win some work," he says. "So part of my strategy is to keep that maintenance base once I've got it so I can build the other services. There's a lot of downward pricing pressure right now, so it's critical to maintain high levels of quality and strong relationships to prevent them from leaving."

Though Golembiewski is cautiously optimistic about 2011, "I'm really nervous about the future," he says. "Our goal is to work on operational improvements to remain competitive."



Brian Golembiewski

LINGERING DOUBT

47

% of Americans who rate current economic conditions as poor.

SOURCE: GALLUP.COM

63

% of consumers who say economic conditions are getting worse.



hopeful about that. In a funny way, the recession has made people look less at material things and get back to taking good care of their homes and buildings. That starts with the outside. People want to make their house look good again. I'm looking forward to that continuing to be a trend — people valuing what we do."

"It will happen," Senske agrees. "But I think it will be awhile before we see anything like the early 21st century. We're not going to have that obnoxious consumerism again for awhile." **LM**



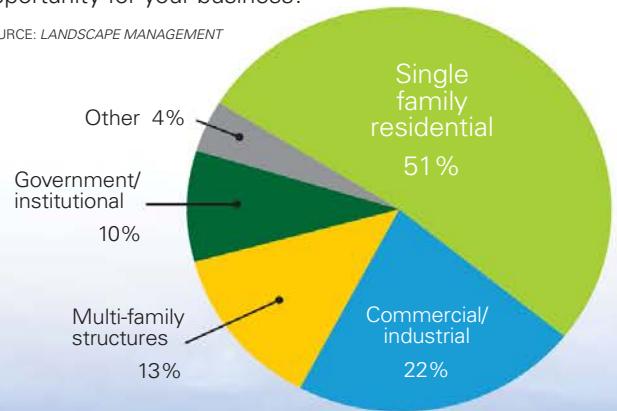
INCOMES INCHING UPWARD

10.6

RESIDENTIAL REIGNS

Which one customer segment holds the best opportunity for your business?

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The top reasons consumers still spend money on lawn and garden activities:

- | ONE | TWO | THREE |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| To maintain property appearance (64%) | To improve property appearance (63%) | To make my outdoor space more livable (44%) |

SOURCE: NATIONAL GARDENING ASSOCIATION





Word of mouth is no longer enough

To increase sales, landscapers move beyond referrals as their only means of marketing.

Landscapers lose clients. It's inevitable. "They die. They lose jobs. They sell their houses and move. They divorce. They get sick. They can't afford us." Jerry Tindel lists the many ways he's lost Cutting Edge Lawn Care clients in Austin, TX.

The goal, obviously, is to replace these clients because "clients are the lifeblood of all future growth," Tindel explains. "If you don't continue to grow, you will slowly shrink to nothing."

To avoid wasting away, contractors market. And in today's wary economy, they are marketing a lot more than they used to. To improve business growth next year, 48% of small businesses say they will increase marketing, according to a September Citibank survey.

MORE VISIBILITY

48

% of small businesses who plan to increase marketing in 2011.

SOURCE: CITIBANK

Paramount Landscape president Brian Golembiewski has already spent three or four times what he typically spends in a normal year on marketing. This includes putting together a short movie about his company, buying e-mail lists and sending out e-blasts, and dropping off fliers and business cards to potential clients' properties.

"We didn't have to do much marketing in the past — we got a lot of work just by word-of-mouth," Golembiewski admits. "But with what is going on now, we're doing a lot more marketing to recover lost maintenance. I am laying the groundwork now because I know it can take awhile to materialize."

Jeff Bowen is embarrassed to admit that up until this point he hasn't spent even 1% of the company's revenue on sales and marketing. "We were a word-of-

mouth company," he says. "But we will no longer be a word-of-mouth company. We will be more like the big boys and sell the way they do. We think we need to start a more official marketing and sales plan."

To accomplish this, Bowen is now looking for a salesperson who can develop sales strategies, grow and track the numbers and tie it all to marketing.

Maintaining current business and sources of revenue is No. 1 on contractors' priority lists for the next six months, followed closely by growing business, according to *Land-scape Management's* survey. And over the past two years, one-third of all small business owners continue to report weak sales as their top business problem, according to the National Federation of Independent Business. With sales being top priority, it's no wonder increased marketing is a key part of the contractor business game plan.

As Christy Webber, president of Chicago's Christy Webber Landscapes, insists: "Now is the time to make sure your name is still out there." **LMI**

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Marketing Setbacks

1. Lack of marketing presence.
2. Increased competition and market oversaturation decreases effectiveness of traditional means.
3. Doing nothing beyond word-of-mouth.

2011 Marketing Goals

1. Increase marketing budgets to keep your name in front of current and potential customers.
2. Try different, and maybe less traditional, marketing methods; don't rely solely on customer referrals.
3. Take advantage of low-cost marketing opportunities (public relations, social media marketing, etc.) to engage customers.

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Surviving the 'Undercutters'

Contractors fight lowballers in a battle for core business.



TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Price Setbacks

1. Bidding low just to get the job.
2. Sacrificing profit.

2011 Price Goals

1. Making internal cuts and driving efficiency to reduce price and maintain profit.
2. Offering ancillary services where price slashing isn't as great to make up for losses in core business.

What's the biggest obstacle to growth today for the average landscape contractor?

Certainly, the prolonged recession comes to mind for most contractors, as that tops *Landscape Management* readers' list of top success blockers. But a mere fraction of a percentage point behind sits lowball/underpricing competitors. Giuseppe Baldi calls them "the undercutters."

"We've had customers tell me they can find someone to do it for \$20 so why should they pay us \$30?" says the landscape maintenance manager of Arlington, TX's Baldi Gardens.

"Competitors get scared and want to give stuff away," explains Todd Dilley, general manager of Minneapolis, MN's The Lawn Ranger. "They think they need business at any cost, so we've lost business to people driving the price down too much, and it's just not worth us doing the job for so little."

Dilley's had to lower prices 5% though they've been trying to resist price wars. He's hoping to hold steady and increase prices 2% to 3% next year.

Nationally, August was the 21st consecutive month in which more owners reported cutting average selling prices rather than raising them, according to National Federation of Independent Business's September Economic Trends report. Widespread price cutting contributes to the high percentage reporting declining sales revenue. Plans to raise prices were unchanged at a net seasonally adjusted 10% of owners.

On the cost side, 3% of owners cited inflation as their No. 1 problem and only 4% cited the cost of labor, so neither labor nor materials costs are pressuring owners to raise prices, NFIB's report reveals. Without pricing power and sales volume, profits are not able to recover. Only 18% of businesses reported higher profits, while 42% say profits are declining.

Competitors in Matt Griffin's region are driving pricing — and profits — down. "In our area, there are

about 80 companies and really only about four of them are actual, reputable companies — the rest are fly-by-night guys,” says the president of Prime Lawn/Prime Design in Kingwood, TX. “For instance, we bid \$21,000 on a job and someone comes in and bids \$13,000. How is that even possible? So our biggest challenge this year was how to keep our quality up, but still compete with those guys. You don’t want anyone thinking your quality is poor.”

How does Griffin prove quality? Past history. “We can tell them all we want that they’re wasting money on going with the cheap product or the cheap company, but you have to back that up,” he explains. “When you pull out 12 to 15 pages of references, you know nobody will call them all — maybe not even one. But we do pride ourselves on having that list and that knowledge.” **LM**

TOP SUCCESS BLOCKERS

1. Prolonged recession
2. Lowball/underpricing competition
3. Rising taxes
4. **Rising fuel prices**
5. Rising health care costs
6. Continued housing market challenges
7. Poor consumer confidence



PRICE TAGS

| | 2009 | 2010 |
|---|----------|----------|
| Residential mowing price/visit | \$37.98 | \$37.53 |
| -1.20 — % drop in residential mowing price | | |
| Commercial mowing price/visit | \$213.49 | \$203.40 |
| -4.73 — % drop in commercial mowing price | | |
| Irrigation maintenance price/hour | \$67.85 | \$67.62 |
| -0.34 — % drop in irrigation maintenance price | | |

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

‘I DON’T WANT TO BE WALMART FIGHTING THE DOLLAR STORE.’

In Bob Grover’s eyes, the industry “is teetering on the edge of becoming a commodity.

“We fight hard not to act like we’re becoming a commodity,” says the president of Hillsboro, OR’s \$6 million Pacific Landscape Management. “I see our customer base acting that way though — just thinking they’ll bid out the work every year and see who is most aggressive.”



Bob Grover

For Grover, this is discouraging as pricing for his 100% commercial client base has decreased 5% to 10%. “The day this industry becomes a total commodity, I don’t want to be involved,” he says. “I don’t want to be Walmart fighting the Dollar Store.”

Instead of whining, though, Grover is looking for ways to improve efficiencies so he can cut prices in a smart way.

A question he asks himself everyday: “Can we resist becoming a commodity?”

His first step: “In our effort to cut our cost structure so we can stay competitive, we need to learn how to do so intelligently so we aren’t cutting it so close that we are just becoming a low cost operator that can’t perform,” he says. “That’s our biggest challenge. It’s easy to say let’s cut, cut, cut, but we need to learn to do it the right way. For instance, not assuming what the customer wants but having a conversation with them and asking them specifics so we can understand their investment perspective.”

Instead of following what the low cost operator model in his area tends to do — which is bring in maintenance at a low cost and make their margins on enhancements — Grover is looking at services in which he can create market supremacy, offering something other companies don’t.

Sustainability is a good example. “People want to be green but there aren’t enough people who want to be green just for green’s sake — that touchy-feely feeling doesn’t last very long,” Grover says. “It has to relate to solving a problem or saving money. And we’ve been a leader in sustainable practices in our area.”

Weather-based irrigation has also been a successful add-on service for Pacific Landscape as a means of helping customers save money on water.

In the whole price reduction equation, Grover says “the interesting part is nobody is saying they’re willing to put up with less work — so we’re doing the same work for less pay.”

Luckily, Pacific Landscape is finding some commercial clients who “are tired of the bid thing,” he says. “We have had some success in picking up work that went to a commodity and is coming back out of it because they do have an expectation of quality. That has given us some encouragement.”

House of cards

The sensitive residential housing market will stabilize at a 'frustratingly slow pace' as home prices return to pre-boom levels.

If most of your landscape work was in residential design/build in Tempe, AZ, then "you're probably out of business because it dried up."

This from Brian Golembiewski, president of Tempe's \$2.95 million Paramount Landscape. And it's just one example of an area where the housing market "tanked," as Golembiewski puts it. Building is stagnant, home prices are devalued and there is a large inventory of homes available. "We're near the bottom — it's as bad as it can get," he says.

The same is happening in Allentown, PA, where Joanne Kostecky Garden Design's business manager Kirk Brown says: "The housing market is glutted with a residential inventory far in excess of anything remotely normal. Prices have taken a dive to 25% to 40% of pre-recession highs. Most real estate agents are bracing for what they see as a second round of foreclosures that will only add more depressed inventory available at fire sale prices."

In Kingwood, TX, the outlook is a little brighter, but only in select price ranges. "The market is increasing in homes ranging from \$150,000 to \$200,000 and homes in the \$1- to \$2-million range," explains Matt Griffin, president of Prime Lawn/Prime Design. U.S. Census figures concur with this — showing homes



A CLOSER LOOK AT HOUSING STARTS

On a year-to-date basis, single-family construction is up 14.8% from one year ago, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

On a month-to-month basis, however, single-family starts have been down for three months straight. That, coupled with builders slowing completions of homes under construction, points to signs of a continued slide in the near future.

As advances in the economy emerge over the next few months and help improve consumer confidence and demand for housing, economists predict residential construction activity will pick up, and so too will construction spending. Access to credit to provide home buyers with mortgages and home builders with loans will be key to determining how fast single-family construction rebounds.



TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Housing Setbacks

1. The new home market "tanked."
2. Increased foreclosures.

2011 Housing Goals

1. Recognize opportunities in maintaining foreclosed homes.
2. Pursue clients who are purchasing existing homes and want to renovate.
3. Stay on top of housing market trends.

sold in the \$150,000 to \$300,000 range (where most first-time home buyers make their purchases) picked up share. "But in homes priced between \$400,000 and \$500,000, there's not a lot of development at all."

When it comes to buyers, 76% of consumers believe current home buying conditions are good — 65% citing low prices and 46% citing low interest rates as reasons why, according to the University of Michigan Consumer Sentiment Index. Though most consumers recognize the market offers some of the best housing affordability opportunities in a generation, that view is not reflected in actual home buying activity.

In most parts of the country, house prices have returned to what the National Association of Realtors loosely describes as "pre-boom levels." For a new home, U.S. Census data says the median sales price is \$204,000, down from \$214,200 one year ago.

The National Association of Home Builders expects any additional price declines to be mild and temporary — the underlying trend is upward. "All of the bubbles have been removed" from price, Yun says, but the recovery will proceed at a "frustratingly slow pace."

As contractors wait for housing market stabilization, there is a bright spot in the area of home improvements, where spending was up 10.6% this year, according to the National Association of Home Builders. **LMI**

TAX CREDIT AFTERMATH

A look at how residential home sales are faring after government assistance expired.

Following the sharp drop in the months immediately after the home buyer tax credit expired April 30, pending home sales rose modestly (5.2% increase in July), according to the National Association of Realtors.

While the figure is still 19.1% below July 2009's Pending Home Sales Index figures, this is still a positive sign, according to Lawrence Yun, NAR's chief economist. "Home sales will remain soft in the months ahead, but improved affordability conditions should help with the recovery," he says.

When it comes to new homes, however, the three months following the April 30 deadline of the home buyer tax credit were the three worst for this category in history, per U.S. Census Bureau figures. All four census regions recorded declines, with the largest in the West (-25.4%) and Northeast (-13.9%) and smaller declines in the Midwest (-8.3%) and South (-8.7%).

"Now that the stimulus is over, we have to let the market forces do their own work," Yun insists. "We can't rely on federal stimulus forever."

UP, UP, UPGRADES

10.6

% increase in spending on home improvements this year.

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS

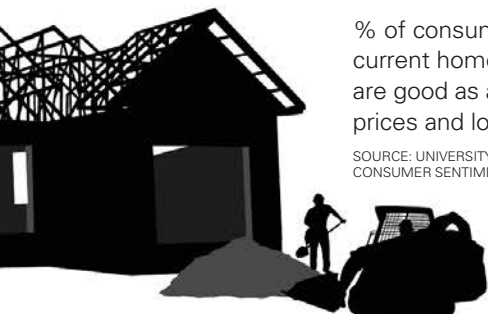


CRITICAL CONDITIONS

76

% of consumers who believe current home buying conditions are good as a result of low prices and low interest rates.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN CONSUMER SENTIMENT INDEX



A CLOSER LOOK AT MULTIFAMILY PROPERTIES

Weak demand for condos, high rental vacancy rates and miniscule rent increases have combined with a harsh financing environment to slow multifamily construction to a snail's pace. Spending, year-to-date, has plummeted 57% from \$19.2 billion a year ago to \$8.2 billion in July, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

But there is evidence that prospects for multifamily projects are slowly improving. The three-month moving average for multifamily housing starts has been generally rising throughout the course of this year, which should begin to turn multifamily construction spending upward.



Commercial value

Contractors try to uncover true value in commercial maintenance work as clients force price reductions.

As Brian Golembiewski describes the state of the commercial market, one can only picture a vast, vacant Western movie street with just the hint of wind and the slightest bits of tumbleweed rolling across the dusty, quiet space.

“There is such a huge amount of availability of commercial property right now, but nobody is buying,” says the president of Tempe, AZ-based Paramount Landscape. “There are a ton of empty buildings out there that are just waiting for things to turn around.”

But contractors didn’t feel these effects right away. The recession hit the commercial market one to two years after it hit the residential market. Bob Grover’s commercial customers started cutting back in mid-2009. “Some customers came to us and said their tenants needed rate relief and to find a way to reduce expenses,” says the president of Hillsboro, OR-based Pacific Landscape Management. “We also saw our work put out to bid more and had more customers just flat out ask if we can cut our rates.”

Even for contractors like Golembiewski, who had developer clients decide to finish projects they had



already started despite the economy’s effects, the work has been drying up.

These contractors are not alone. Spending on non-residential construction is likely to fall more than 20% this year before recovering slightly in 2011, according to an American Institute of Architects survey.

Looking at specific facility types, construction spending on hotels will drop more than 43% this year, construction of office buildings will decline almost 30% and retail and industrial categories will be down more than 20%, the AIA says. It forecasts smaller declines for institutional categories like amusement space, educational and religious facilities and health care buildings.

The AIA cites an oversupply of facilities, weak demand for space, continuing declines in commercial property values and real estate lenders’ reluctance to provide credit as the reasons for decreases.

A Society of Industrial and Office Realtors study concurs, showing vacancy rates are beginning to level but rents remain depressed and subleasing space is high. The data also shows commercial real estate development remains stagnant in all regions with low investment activity — 88% of survey respondents say it’s virtually nonexistent in their markets.

This is one reason — in addition to price slashing — Christy Webber is cutting back on her commercial

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Commercial Client Setbacks

1. Price/bid wars.
2. Oversupply of facilities/high vacancy.
3. Weak demand for space.
4. Decline in commercial property values.

2011 Commercial Client Goals

1. Continue to build customer relationships.
2. Pursue commercial property types less affected by the recession.
3. Focus on smart negotiation of prices and services; ensure profit by improving internal efficiencies or reducing service offerings on the job to meet client needs and requested price adjustments.

construction offerings. "That's an area where people are practically giving away work," says the president of Chicago's Christy Webber Landscapes. "I don't want to deal with that."

Recovery of nonresidential construction activity typically lags a wider economic revival, especially an improvement in employment, which drives demand for office and retail space. Development acquisitions are beginning to grow in many areas in what AIA describes as a buyer's market. The organization forecasts single digit gains in most commercial categories in 2011 with an overall 3.1% increase in nonresidential construction spending.

Some segments of the commercial market are faring better than others. Contractors report college campuses eager to attract and retain students as a growth area. "They recognize the importance of image, even in tough times," says Andy Felix, president of Foxboro, MA-based Tree Tech.

These customers are starting to realize "they have vacant buildings that are going to stay vacant if I don't make them look nice," adds Todd Dille, general manager of Minneapolis, MN's The Lawn Ranger.

And sometimes a negative is a positive in disguise. Developers cut services on their commercial properties back to the point where the banks took over in Tempe, AZ. "But the banks have the money, so they've actually been hiring us back," Golembiewski says. "If you stick around until the bank takes over, it can be a good account. We are back to the full level of service on some of those properties. Obviously, this isn't good for building owners who

have lost their properties to the bank, but it's actually worked out for us."

While many contractors are fighting low bids on commercial projects, Joanne Kostecky reports finding a few project managers seeking more imaginative landscape solutions. "They didn't want the typical 'just put it out to bid and have the lowest bidder do the installation of a poor design,'" says the president of Joanne Kostecky Garden Design, Allentown, PA. "They wanted something more creative."

Shying away from commercial maintenance, Webber sees opportunity in municipal work — where 65% to 85% of her business is now based. "Even some of our good municipal contracts are cutting back," she admits. "But a good thing about a lot of municipalities is they won't just take the low bid. They are fed up with contractors who don't know how to do their paperwork and don't send a good crew out — they know it costs them more in the long run. They have dealt with that before and don't want to put up with it. So they go for the middle bid, which is where we try to sit."

While the national office vacancy rate rose to 17.4% — a level unseen since 1993 — the underlying numbers that make up national figures are shifting toward a more positive outlook. With favorable supply conditions entering the downturn, office properties are poised to rebound much faster once aggregate demand ramps up, according to a report by Reis, Inc.

As the country emerges from the downturn, economists say there will undoubtedly be some surprises in commercial real estate. Though patterns of fluctuating rents and vacancies may seem counterintuitive, Reis says it's quite common to see such results at the inflection point of an economic recovery. **LM**



26%

U.S. commercial real estate sales in the first half of 2010 totaled only a quarter of the average of the previous six years as owners kept properties off of the market.

SOURCE: REAL CAPITAL ANALYTICS

FOUR SQUARE

New York, Boston, Washington & San Francisco

Demand for commercial properties is the strongest in these four markets.

SOURCE: REAL CAPITAL ANALYTICS

OFFICE SPACE

1.4 million sq. ft.

The national occupied commercial office space decline.

SOURCE: NATIONAL REAL ESTATE INVESTOR

FACE VALUE

41

% commercial property values are down from their 2007 peak levels.

SOURCE: MOODY'S/REAL COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PRICE INDEX



Spend smart

Landscapers avoid frivolous spending and focus on efficiency and vendor relations.

When it came to keeping crews outfitted with the right equipment to get the job done in 2010, landscapers on average maintained last year's spending.

The National Federation of Independent Business calls it being in "maintenance mode," replacing vehicles or equipment only as needed.

To carry this out, some have instituted policies to reduce excessive purchasing on unnecessary items. "We're big on equipment because if you want to do the job right, you need the right equipment. But our policy is no new equipment unless it's a must," says Matt Griffin, president of Prime Lawn/Prime Design, Kingwood, TX, who spent \$20,000 to \$30,000 on equipment this year. "There's really no need to go buy more if we already have what we need. And we have backup equipment available so if a machine breaks, we have something to replace it while it's being repaired."

Leasing or renting first helps Andy Felix solidify purchasing decisions. "We did replace a number of vehicles this year but haven't really added anything major," says the president of Foxboro, MA's Tree Tech. "We're kind of doing some wait-and-see to see what the economy will look like."

Just as the economy impacts consumer spending, small business spending is also affected. "We're

VISUAL AIDS

Sometimes old equipment reaches a point where it doesn't best represent a business brand. That's when contractors realize spending the money may prove more beneficial than saving the cash.

"We don't like to show off junky equipment," explains Jeff Bowen, president of Stuart, FL's Images of Green, adding he has been able to stick to his equipment spending budget this year. "If something needs to be replaced, we do it. We have to. Our equipment represents our business."

really trying to conserve cash — there's too much uncertainty right now," admits Brian Golembiewski, president of Paramount Landscape in Tempe, AZ.

Others are avoiding incurring unnecessary debt loads. For Kirk Brown, business manager of Joanne Kostecky Garden Design in Allentown, PA, large equipment purchases are on hold. "We are being extremely cautious about purchasing anything that would increase our inventory holdings," he says.

While some landscapers were able to keep current equipment running longer, others realized "stuff wears out. You can't always wait to buy," points out Chris Senske, president of Kennewick, WA's Senske Lawn & Tree Care, who made approximately 70% to 80% of the equipment purchases he normally does this year.

Joe DiRoma agrees. "The bottom line with equipment is if we know we're doing a job and we don't have something, we'll get it," says the owner of DiRoma Landscaping, Lisbon, CT. "That's just what you have to do."

The NFIB September Economic Trends report concurs, stating that "spending (financed with credit



TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Equipment Purchasing Setbacks

1. Incurring debt loads and excess inventory.
2. Concerns over spending cash.

2011 Equipment Purchasing Goals

1. Invest in necessary pieces; avoid frivolous spending.
2. Invest in equipment that improves efficiency.
3. Build stronger vendor relationships; negotiate with vendors.
4. Lease or rent before purchasing to ensure need.

WHAT YOUR INDUSTRY IS BUYING

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

| EQUIPMENT TYPE | % PURCHASED IN 2010 | % WILL PURCHASE IN 2011 |
|---|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Mowers | 51 | 45 |
| Construction equipment & attachments | 13 | 16 |
| Sprayers & spreaders | 51 | 30 |
| Aerators | 12 | 13 |
| Handheld equipment | 71 | 53 |
| Trucks & trailers | 46 | 43 |
| Alternative fuel vehicles | 3 | 5 |
| Trees & shrubs | 70 | 66 |
| Annuals & perennials | 71 | 66 |
| Turf seed/sod | 69 | 67 |
| Hardscapes (retaining walls, pavers, etc.) | 53 | 49 |
| Water features | 31 | 31 |
| Landscape lighting | 38 | 40 |
| Irrigation systems & products | 46 | 44 |
| Herbicides | 64 | 62 |
| Insecticides | 54 | 54 |
| Fungicides | 43 | 43 |
| Fertilizers & fertilizer/pesticide combination products | 69 | 63 |
| Plant growth regulators | 19 | 20 |
| Tree care chemicals | 21 | 22 |
| Snow & ice control equipment and products | 34 | 33 |
| Computers & business/design software | 47 | 38 |
| Mobile phones/handheld devices/Nextel | 53 | 35 |
| GPS systems/software | 23 | 18 |
| Consultants | 16 | 15 |
| Subcontracted services | 48 | 39 |

6
The number of equipment categories showing a predicted increase in spending next year.

or out of cash) for new equipment, expansion or for new employees must generate enough additional value to pay off the investment.”

“And if you want to be efficient,” Senske adds, “you have to replace stuff.”

Efficiency actually topped the reasons for buying equipment this year. Pacific Landscape Management replaced his walk-behind mower fleet with stand-on zero-turning radius riding mowers. “It’s a smart capital investment because they’re more efficient,” says Bob Grover, the Hillsboro, OR-based company’s president. “If you don’t keep your fleet upgraded, you end up paying the same amount over time in repairs. So it’s better to continue that investment now. It’s either pay me now or pay me later.”

In some cases, lawn care and landscape professionals feel equipment can be a better investment than people. “Adding crews and hiring more people can be a problem — finding good people, having employee problems, plus paying their salaries,” says Giuseppe Baldi, landscape maintenance manager, Baldi Gardens, Arlington, TX. “Instead, I think we’re focusing

more on increasing our efficiency and using the same manpower but getting more machines.”

When companies have made purchases this year, improving vendor relationships to get the best deals has been a key strategy. Joe DiRoma tries to buy from the same two places because he thinks the more volume he can give them, the better offers he’ll get. “We have been trying to barter with suppliers a little more, asking them for the best prices,” says the owner of Lisbon, CT’s DiRoma Landscaping.

Christy Webber never questioned her vendors or their pricing before. But, this year, she took some time to shop around. Her usual vendors — places where she’d spent a lot of money in the past — weren’t “straight up with me,” says the president of Chicago’s Christy Webber Landscapes. “That was sad to find out. Because I didn’t shop around and question them, I wasn’t getting the best price. And it’s not just me — it’s happening to anyone who isn’t shopping around. This year, I shopped around and saved \$35,000 overall — that’s someone’s salary. That’s a lot.” **LM**



The bad and not so bad of hiring today

While applicants abound, contractors learn to hire smarter, control labor costs and build their management teams.



It can be a gamble weeding through so many applications — you don't always know what you're going to end up with."

Labor costs remain under control, according to the National Federation of Independent Business' September Economic Trends Study — good news for those worried about inflation but bad news for workers.

And for those contractors looking to build or improve their management teams, "now is a good time if you're fortunate enough to do so," says Bruce Bachand, vice president of Orlando's Carol King Landscape Maintenance. "There may be more time spent weeding through applications for labor positions, but the managerial pool and available supervisor level individuals are more plentiful." **LMM**

In Landscape Management's survey

results and contractor interviews, there is one thing that was fairly unanimous: No one is having a problem with hiring today.

But that also depends how you define "problem."

While contractors are receiving an unprecedented amount of applications for open positions from what they describe as desperate people without jobs looking for work, this also means they are spending triple the time weeding through a lot of unqualified applicants to find the few who might fill the bill.

"There are a lot of people looking for work," explains Giuseppe Baldi, landscape maintenance manager, Baldi Gardens, Arlington, TX. He put an ad for an open position on Craig's List and within two hours got overwhelmed with calls. "But it's hard to find good people even though there are so many to choose from. A lot of people want to work but don't have experience in landscaping or don't want to work hard.

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Labor Setbacks

1. Overabundance of less qualified applicants.
2. Lengthened hiring process.

2011 Labor Goals

1. Build management team from newly available pool of applicants.
2. Hire slow, fire fast.
3. Retain good people as the economy improves.

TODAY'S HOURLY RATES

| | 0 to 5 years experience | > 5 years experience |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Mower operator | \$10.38 | \$11.89 |
| Spray technician | \$12.36 | \$15.32 |
| Construction worker | \$11.63 | \$14.70 |
| Irrigation technician | \$12.73 | \$15.94 |

TODAY'S SALARIES

| | |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Crew foreman/ team leader | \$30,444 |
| Salesperson | \$45,556 |
| Equipment mechanic | \$32,792 |
| Landscape designer | \$41,108 |
| Landscape architect | \$52,889 |



| | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Account manager | \$40,752 |
| Supervisor | \$44,782 |
| Operations manager | \$54,845 |
| Owner/president | \$69,738 |

Budget crunch

Loving the industry used to be enough. Now more than ever, 'you have to have business sense, too.'

Where does the landscape marketplace fall short most today? "Bidding, billing and paperwork," explains the president of Chicago's Christy Webber Landscapes. "We're not savvy businesspeople."

The numbers don't lie. Only 56% of landscape business owners prepared a 2010 budget (which is actually down 4% from last year), and only 47% have a three- to five-year business plan (up 1% from 2009). The majority of those who have a business plan (29%) review it only annually. Last year, 56% of landscapers reviewed their plans twice a year.

A basic rule of thumb is updating financials, marketing and general company information quarterly; looking over specific plan chapters to make edits every six months; and conducting a major review of the whole plan and making alterations annually.

"Typically, we are in the landscape business for the love of it," Webber says, "But that's just not enough anymore. You have to have business sense, too."

In today's economy where price wars have escalated and customers are hesitant to spend "there's no room for you not to pay attention to your numbers," Webber stresses. "If you don't you will be out of money."

Chris Senske, president of Kennewick, WA's Senske Lawn & Tree Care, agrees. "In lawn care, job costing is not as big of an issue because you aren't using a lot of materials, but in landscape maintenance, the margins are so thin you really have to know exactly how much labor you're spending on every job every day."

What kind of effect can poor money and business management have on a company? In Orange County alone, David Norred, founder of Laguna Niguel, CA-based Nor-Land Landscaping Co., says up to one-third of landscape firms have closed or are closing.

But for every small business failure, others are finding ways to maintain or thrive despite economic panic.

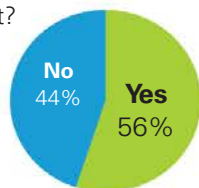
"Our industry needs to wake up," Webber insists, pointing out having outside advisory boards and networking with other business owners can help contractors benchmark and brainstorm survival tactics. "We're constantly reinventing the wheel" instead of learning from each other's mistakes and growing.

When planning, always overestimate expenses and underestimate revenue, stresses business coach Brad Sugars. "Being conservative in your numbers doesn't mean you are willing to accept those numbers," he says. "It just means you are arming yourself with information you can work with, so you can gauge the kinds of efforts you will need to put into sales and marketing."

Accept the fact that today "learning more equals earning more," he adds. "If you've never run a million-dollar business, you don't know how to run one — simple as that. But you can learn to run one." **LM**

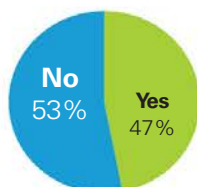
BUDGET CRUNCH

Did you prepare a 2010 budget?



PLAN OF ATTACK

Do you have a 3- to 5-year business plan?



RAVE REVIEWS

How often do you review your business plan?

29% Annually **24%** Quarterly **13%** Once every six months

SOURCE: LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

TAKE-AWAYS

2010 Budget Setbacks

1. Pricing work without understanding job costs.
2. Foregoing budgeting and planning.

2011 Budget Goals

1. Know your numbers and review them regularly.
2. Learn more so you can earn more.



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It's hard enough to run a company in one country. **Robert Wilton**, president of Clintar Landscape Management, runs operations in two.

"Our growth plans are more U.S.-directed than Canada; we think we've got more to offer a larger population," Wilton says. "We're (currently) most concentrated in southern Ontario. To go west in Canada is not unlike the U.S. The population concentration is not in the Midwest. There's a lot of empty space."

LM recently spoke with Wilton to discuss the trends, obstacles and opportunities facing his North American maintenance business.



INSIDE INFO

Company: Clintar Landscape Management

Founded: 1973

Headquarters: Toronto

Branches: 23 (including HQ, branches are franchise-owned)

Employees: 300 part-time, nearly 200 full-time

2009 revenue: \$45 million

LM Top 150 Ranking: No. 18

Key to being a maintenance leader: Do what you said you were going to do. The industry is fraught with broken promises. If you promise to meet a client at 10 o'clock in the morning, be there at five minutes to 10. If you promise to get a job done tomorrow, get it done tomorrow. No excuses. Do what you promise. The industry has a very bad reputation for not doing that. We pound on it every day.

our training quite substantially. This isn't just technical training; it's management training, supervisory training. We're finding people like to be trained. We're getting good response from the training, which does include certification. We think it's paying off. We've always trained, but we've intensified it to combat some of the other competitive factors that we're facing.

The people thing is what stands out the most. If you have good people, you have efficiencies. The cash flow works. If I stand back and look at the question of what impedes our growth, it all comes back to our people. How smart are they? How hardworking are they? Do they have the right incentives?

» **Pricing push.** We read about price pressure. We think knowledge and efficiency are the ways to combat it. Our customers are suffering. Budgets are tighter. We chase a market that's not available to the disorganized, low-ball group. We tend to go after and keep larger, more professionally managed property management organizations.

TOP TRENDS

» **Reducing salt.** The environmental concerns are increasing. We see a lot more interest in doing the right thing — not only in our lawn operation, but also in our winter operation. Our customers like that we're attempting to reduce the amount of salt that we're using in the wintertime. All of our salt application equipment has onboard wetting systems to spray the salt as it leaves the truck. We can get just as good coverage of ice melting with less salt.

» **Reducing water.** The wallet always dictates. It does cost more to be green. Our green push is coming to the forefront. It's stronger in Canada than in the U.S., but it's there. We've partnered with a company to help us sell water conservation to our existing clients. We can keep landscapes alive with less water.

» **Increasing technologies.** We're probably pretty good at taking advantage of technology. We do have things like GPS. We have web-based accounting and job costing. The technology is there; it's learning how to use it. It's pretty nice for me to look at a computer screen and see where 300 or 400 vehicles are.

TOP OBSTACLES

» **Labor.** Finding and keeping good people. Keeping, training and motivating people. We've taken the approach of increasing

TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **New service offerings.** We plan on doing things we don't currently do or doing things that we now sub-contract. For example, we don't do a lot of tree work. We get requests all the time to do tree work. We either turn it down or sub it out. We're now looking seriously at bringing that service in-house.

Because we're working on peoples' outdoor properties, there are a variety of things they spend money on, such as asphalt parking lot, hard surface maintenance. We see that we can push further into that. It requires investment, of course, but there are opportunities everywhere if we're running a good business, an efficient business. We don't have all the customers we want. We want more.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY





CURLY DOCK

Rumex crispus

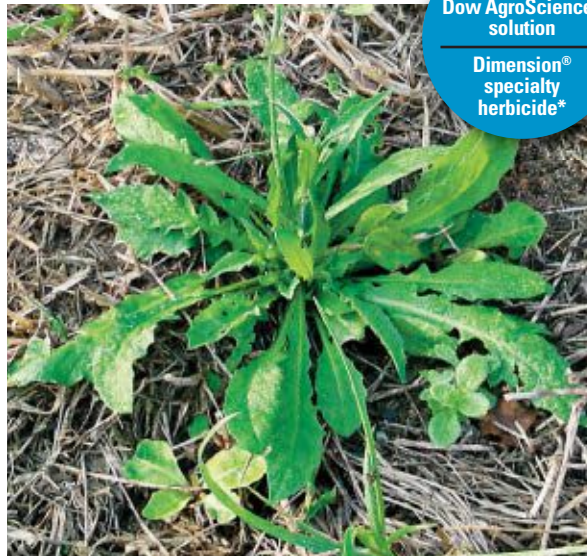
IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This taproot perennial develops a rosette of wavy-margined leaves.
- ▶ It features a membranous sheath at the leaf base and usually swollen nodes.
- ▶ Flowers occur in greenish clusters at the top of the main stem, and become reddish-brown as they mature.
- ▶ Stems are unbranched, thick, without hairs, ridged and often reddish in color.
- ▶ It usually grows in wet areas, such as those

caused by overwatering or standing water in low areas.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ It's best controlled post-emergence in the fall or spring, with two-, three- and four-way broadleaf herbicides.
- ▶ Perennial weeds are capable of living more than two years, and thrive in weak, thin turf. Proper turf maintenance is the key to maintain control. Properly fertilize, mow and water to encourage dense growth.



SHEPHERD'S PURSE

Capsella bursa-pastoris

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This winter annual forms a basal rosette and tall stems.
- ▶ It prefers disturbed soil on many growing sites.
- ▶ Leaves range from smooth to deeply lobed (more lobed as they mature).
- ▶ The flowering stalk produces flat, heart-shaped seed capsules and tiny white flowers.

quickly after producing its seedhead. Proper mowing will reduce seed production, as the seedhead is erect.

▶ It does not compete well with actively growing turf. Maintaining a healthy turf stand is the best control option. It will develop in areas that have been damaged over the summer and have not filled in during the fall.

▶ Apply a pre-emergent herbicide labeled for control of shepherd's purse prior to germination in fall or spring.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Because it spreads by seed, the plant dies

* State restrictions on the sale and use of Confront and Dimension apply.

For more information regarding these and other turf weeds — and related control technologies and tips — please visit www.DowProvesIt.com or call 800/255-3726.

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P R O V E N S O L U T I O N S

A *SHIFT* IN THE FLEET

Trucks represent growth, expansion of business and the pride owners have in their companies. But the economy, like many other aspects of business, has started to change the way the industry purchases new vehicles.

BY **DAN JACOBS**
MANAGING EDITOR

YOU CAN ALMOST hear the pride in landscape business owners' voices when they start talking about their trucks. There is no equipment (with the possible exception of a mower) that embodies everything about the Green Industry the way a truck does — rugged, earthy, powerful.

These days, there's one other adjective to add to that list: older.

With a down economy affecting business, some owners are focused more on maintaining and extending the life of their existing truck and trailer fleets. "We're not buying as many trucks," says Maurice Dowell, president of Dowco Enterprises, Chesterfield, MO. "We're doing more maintenance on our existing vehicles. We've stretched them out."

According to *Landscape Management* research, 46% of contractors purchased new or used trucks this year and 43% plan to purchase them next year.

Industry trucks have certainly advanced. Years ago, contractors had fewer models from which to choose, explains Bob Johnson, director of fleet relations for the National Truck Education Association (NTEA).

"You ended up with more truck than you needed or a truck that was overloaded," he says. "Landscape trucks, historically, were the most overloaded trucks because they would get a 1-ton truck and use it for everything."

The good news is there are more classes of truck, and that gives contractors more options.

"With the emphasis on fuel econ-
continued on page 62



Tom Heaviland prefers a clean and uniform looking fleet.

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TRUCKS & TRAILERS

Dowco is phasing out some trailers in favor of box trucks.



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omy, people are taking a much closer look at what their real requirements are and trying to downsize wherever they can,” Johnson says. “The big danger, however, is if you don’t do your homework properly, and end up with less of

a truck than what you need, what you save in fuel economy you’re going to more than spend in maintenance.”

New vs. used

Whether it’s having crews spend time on nearby jobs or driver training, contractors

have always worked to limit the wear and tear put on their vehicles.

“Because our routing is fairly dense, we don’t put a lot of miles on them,” says Tom Heaviland, president of Heaviland Enterprises, Vista, CA. “I like to see our typical truck life at about seven years.”

Limiting yearly miles will lengthen a truck’s usability, but no matter how much life is added, there comes a day when the cost of repair and maintenance outweighs the return on the investment. When that day will arrive is often difficult to gauge — and it’s one reason why Heaviland has outsourced his fleet management.

Many business owners think they’re saving money by continually repairing used vehicles, but that may not always be the case, says Ned Maniscaloco, a spokesman for Enterprise Fleet Management in St. Louis. Controlling costs for any business is essential, he adds, and a fleet can be one of the company’s larger expenses.

PHOTO COURTESY: DOWCO ENTERPRISES



SPRINTER

"We're pretty confident that we can get the best return," Maniscaloco says.

Of course, when the maintenance is minimal, the return is clear.

"Three years ago, we took some of our older vehicles and we painted them," Dowell says. "We spent \$1,500, and we got another three years out of them. When you look at your return on investment, that's really huge."

Dowell isn't the only contractor holding off on picking up new equipment. Dowell and Heaviland say they prefer to purchase new trucks as opposed to acquiring less-expensive used vehicles. That's also Barry Morton Sr.'s preferred way to get new equipment, but he's not above buying used when the right deal comes along.

"We have not bought any new trucks this year," says Morton, president and CEO of Morton's Landscape Development, Columbia Station, OH. But while leafing through an equipment trader

FOR CONTRACTORS, WATCHING TRUCK COMMERCIALS IS LIKE BEING HUNGRY AT THE DINNER BUFFET:

EVERYTHING LOOKS GOOD, AND THEY KEEP BRINGING OUT SOMETHING BETTER.

magazine, Morton ran across an ad for a 12-ton trailer. The company was in need — and when he ran the numbers, Morton's decision became easy.

"A new trailer with air brakes is about \$20,000," Morton says. "For the used one I bought, a 2008, I paid \$4,500. My two mechanics spent a week on it."

There's nothing wrong with buying used, Morton says, but it requires time and research. Morton estimates that with the two mechanics' labor, a week's down time, a paint job, new tires and a new rim, he put another \$3,000 into the trailer. In other words, he saved \$12,500

by purchasing a used vehicle.

"Do your homework," he advises. "Just make sure you're not buying someone else's junk."

Heaviland agrees. "You must weigh the cost of buying something new with buying something used that you may have problems with and spend money repairing," he says. "You can eat up a new monthly payment and have a good-looking vehicle with low repairs and warranties on it. As long as you can track and justify it, then buying used is fine."

New types of vehicles

While the buying of new equipment has slowed, when they do decide to sign on the dotted line, contractors are carefully considering the types of vehicles their employees need.

"The days of everybody driving a big Ford F-150 are long gone for us," Heaviland says.

Fleets are changing in other ways,



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TRUCKS & TRAILERS



Temperate weather means Heaviland's trucks, like this F-250 used by irrigation technicians, don't need air conditioning.

too. Pickup trucks, still the stalwart of maintenance crews, have seen a competitor making headway: box trucks.

Dowell is growing increasingly enamored with the box type of vehicle. He recalls seeing his first industry box truck when he attended the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET) Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery a few years ago.

"We came back and replicated that with some modifications," Dowell says. "Every year, we've gotten more creative with these box trucks. Now, we've got it down to a science."

There are a number of advantages to box trucks, he notes. "Box trucks are the wave of the future — trucks in which you can get all of your equipment inside," Dowell says. "They're more

secure and give you a rolling billboard. It's a vehicle that you don't need a separate license for to drag a trailer that's going to require wires and lights. Half of my guys can't back up a trailer. It provides security from the elements. There are so many reasons to have a box truck."

The NTEA's Johnson agrees.

"It would not surprise me to see that trend grow, especially as equipment becomes more expensive and people are looking to extend the longevity of their equipment," he says.

Dowell admits, however, that box trucks tend to be one-use tools.

"You're definitely not going to plow snow with it," he says, chuckling. But, he points out, "It makes a good storage area when you're cleaning your warehouse in the middle of winter."

Must-haves vs. nice-to-haves

For contractors, watching truck commercials is like being hungry at the

PHOTOS COURTESY: HEAVILAND ENTERPRISES (LEFT); DOWCO ENTERPRISES

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Box trucks provide a rolling billboard and help protect equipment from the elements.

dinner buffet: Everything looks good, and they keep bringing out something better. Today, vehicles come with iPod docking stations, satellite radios and a host of other features. Most dealers have their specifications, but it's not always easy to limit the options.

"Do I spec out CD players and plugins for iPods? Definitely not," Dowell says. "Almost every truck comes with power windows. We don't spec that. They've all got tilt and cruise. They practically all come that way."

In his temperate climate, Heaviland's employees don't need air conditioning.

"We're in southern California, and it rarely gets extremely hot here," he explains. "It's just an AM/FM radio and bench seats. We get exactly what we want on it, and we buy it at a good price."

The look of a truck is just as important to contractors as its versatility is.

"Image is half of your business," Johnson says. "You don't want to go out and do a lousy job landscaping the yard. At the same time, you don't want your trucks looking like they're going to collapse in the driveway or go down the road with the fender flapping."

As vehicles become more sophisticated, maintenance challenges increase.

"They are becoming more fuel-efficient, more productive," Johnson says. "At the same time, they are drastically reducing the ability of owners to work on their own vehicles."

Purchasing solutions

Whether buying new or used, contractors are definitely keeping a closer eye on their cash flow.

When it's time to purchase a new vehicle, Dowell and Heaviland hand off that task. Heaviland uses Enterprise Fleet Management.

"We got out of the vehicle business," Heaviland says. "They're the professionals. When we go to sell a truck, we turn it back to Enterprise. They sell it, and those proceeds are applied to the purchase of another truck or to pay the loan of an existing vehicle. There's a tax advantage there. I'm not paying on the gain on the sale of an asset."



Dowell uses an agent as well. "His prices have been consistently good, better than what I had been able to negotiate," he says. "Plus, it takes me out of the negotiating process. I don't need to be going in beating up on people. He does all the work. His prices are good. I would recommend that everyone have an individual like that." LM


A pair of red-handled Corona wire cutters is shown against a red background. The tool has a built-in sprinkler adjuster on the top handle. The brand name 'CORONA' is visible on the handle. The tool is positioned diagonally, with the blades pointing upwards and to the right.

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BEHIND THE

bulbs

The strategies, trends and challenges of today's holiday lighting business.

BY CHRIS CROWELL

HERE'S THE SCENARIO: Your landscape business is in the Northeast. Winter is approaching. How do you maintain your business until spring? Snow plowing and removal is one solution, but what if it doesn't snow?

Then the light bulb turns on — or light bulb strands, actually. Hundreds of them. Holiday lighting could be the answer.

Snow might not fall every year, but roof-line lights will go up, and it could be an opportunity for landscape contractors, in any region of the country, to make an extra buck or keep a business running during a slow period.

Even in a down economy, people want to celebrate the holiday season.

"We don't anticipate losing customers this year, but they may have restricted their budgets," says Bob Craig, president of Lighting & Landscape Co., Niceville, FL. "I think customers realize the necessity for holiday lighting, especially commercial entities, but they may scale it back, they may do something different."

The customer

Every location is different, and the success of a holiday lights service depends on the built-in client base. The mix between commercial, municipal and residential clients sets the stage, often more than the economy.

The economy plays a role in holiday lighting, but John Trimble, national sales director for Brite Ideas, says the type of customer most ideally targeted by this service should always be in the market in some way.

"It's not recession-proof, but the majority of people who want their places decorated and have the income are looking for high quality products," Trimble says.

"We have seen some commercial accounts go away, and we see some others arise," says Brandon Stephens, director of marketing for Christmas Decor. "A lot of those guys look at it as marketing when they decorate. It's no secret businesses cut back on marketing in a recession, but others come on board as a competitive advantage."

The can be said for residential

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ADD-ON BIZ

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customers. Homeowners with smaller budgets might skip this year, while the larger accounts stay committed.

“We tend to deal with high, upper-middle class individuals with high levels of disposable income,” Trimble says.

Eric Lint, operations manager for Outdoor Environments in Minnesota,

recommends locking in accounts when they are spending on other services. “If you’re smart about selling it, you can take the lighting project and wrap it into the turf and have that for the whole year and it’s budgeted,” he says.

The best example is a large-scale landscape job, one that might include a pond and the installation of accent



lights in the yard. That client should be asked about adding a holiday lighting service for the winter to complement the big investment they’re already making. “The initial cost doesn’t seem as much when you’re doing a \$800,000 backyard install,” Lint says.

The sell

Holiday lights can be a tricky sell, especially because they should be sold in June or July, a time of year when people are thinking baseball and barbecue, not presents and pine trees. A key to the sell, according to Scott Heese, president of Holiday Bright Lights, Omaha, NE, is using photos to show the client the possibilities.

One strategy implemented by Holiday Bright Lights is to use software to show clients how their house will look with a great lighting design package.

“It’s really cool to think of your own home being decorated with Christmas lights,” he says. So either the landscape company or the customer photographs the house, and using the software, the contractor can spice up the photo with a variety of decorative elements.

Heese recommends supplementing this service with a direct mail campaign that offers 10% off to customers who send in a photo. They get a slight discount; the contractor gets a better sales opportunity. It’s also good to show the customer good, better and best scenarios, Heese says.

During the face-to-face part of the sale, unlike a traditional residential landscape job, it is important to have both husband and wife in on the conversation. And, if possible, throw in storage, Lint says. Customers like to save the extra room, and it’s a bonus to the contractor.

“Don’t charge for storage. We want to store it because we want them to come back and have us put their lights up the following year,” Lint says.

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ADD-ON BIZ

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He says 70% to 80% of his customers request the storage, especially for garland and wreaths.

Another good way to sell the service is to let the lights speak for themselves. Put signs in the yards of certain jobs. Show customers photos to illustrate unique qualities your service may have as an extra incentive. Outdoor Environments has a signature light-wrapping style that makes it stand out among other designs. "It's a selling point," he says. "They can't get that look from everyone else."

Craig says a big key in the contract is maintenance. Set up an agreeable system for making sure the display looks as it should from setup in October or November to take down in January or February. Lighting & Landscape has a dedicated 24-hour maintenance routine that covers all customers every day. "We drive and look at the lights

A company that can offer a unique lighting technique can really make a customer's property stand out.

every night," Craig says. "We make sure all the lights at commercial properties especially are working properly. We have a continuous coverage of customer lights and greenery and everything, if they wish us to do that — they pay us to do that. Some want a 48-hour or 72-hour response."

The challenges

Shifting from the business of yard maintenance into one of electrical work and design clearly has its challenges.



The big dilemma of putting "mowers and plowers up on a roof when its cold and icy out" was too much for Joel Grant, president of Maple Leaf Landscape. He has scaled back his lighting service. "It's too dangerous," he says.

But the challenges have to be stacked against the possibility of employees filing for unemployment for a few months or possibly moving and not returning in

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Software that can help take a potential customer's home and allow contractors to show them the lighting possibilities can help make the sale easier.

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the spring — requiring new hires and more training. It's a quick way to lose good workers.

The key to lessening the challenges and running a successful holiday lights

service is training, contractors say.

Lint says getting the labor right is the only way to make a holiday lighting service work. "I picked up jobs from companies that have gone under trying to do lighting," he says.

One way to improve the math in holiday lighting labor is to track efficiencies on a computer and review when the season is over and make adjustments, Lint says.

There's also the possibility that after a few years, established customers quit upgrading. "You do well if you sell lights and install them," Zellmer says. "Roughly half the profit is lights and half is labor. If they don't upgrade, then you're only making half of that."

The trends

The biggest evolution in holiday lighting is in the adoption of light-emitting diodes over the old-school incandescent bulb. LED lights are loaded with positives:

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1. Over the last five years, LED technology has improved and become a more reliable form of lighting. LEDs are available in more colors and provide more versatility in displays.

These advancements improved the little things, like providing several variations of white, the most popular lighting color. The advancements also improved bigger issues, like the amount of outlets and power needed for displays. "If it was a large project, an electrician would come in for more plugs," Stephens says. "LED offers the contractor more flexibility. Jobs that used to take five or six power sources can run on one or two, now."

This then leads to better and more impactful displays.

2. LEDs are much more energy efficient. They typically consume 90% less energy than incandescent lights.

In turn, LEDs last longer. Buy an LED display, and there will be little to

replace for years. "They last 10 times longer than incandescent products," Trimble says.

The only problem? LEDs can be pricey. Sticker shock sometimes has a bigger effect on customers than the promise of overall cost savings and efficiency.

Darryl Zellmer, president of Turf and Tree Worx in Wisconsin, says he's "not seeing the LED trend" take shape with his company because customers are avoiding the high cost.

Craig says it's on the contractor to relay the benefits of LED and change their thinking without being pushy. "More and more customers are becoming aware of the positives," he says. "They look at the initial investment and say, 'Oh!' But then they look at a power bill and see how much it's reduced, so it's a trade off."

Trimble says multi-color lights had a huge jump in sales last year. "We had a

massive spike in color orders last year," he explains. "Combinations of red, green, blue and amber. A huge spike like that we haven't seen in five years."

The trend isn't leaving white or clear lights behind, but Stephens says it's subtly having every fourth bulb be a different color, or doing bushes a different color, but leaving the house white.

"We're also seeing a lot more greenery and day time décor," Stephens adds. Greenery in bows, a lot of requests for adding the berries and pine cones into the greenery for a more realistic, traditional look."

"Our clients," Heese says, "don't want just a string of lights across their gutters. They want gift boxes, toy soldiers, icicles, candy canes, glacier lights — all pure white LED that fades to blue LED on a cycle." LM

CROWELL is a freelance writer based in Cleveland, OH.

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[ALL ABOUT GROWTH]

The growth imperative

A RECENT STUDY of more than 3,000 business owners and managers found growth was their No.

1 priority. This study was conducted by Pro-Motion Consulting in the fourth quarter of 2009. Not surprisingly, their other top priorities were closely related to growth: becoming more strategic, improving sales processes, fine-tuning marketing messages, etc. This focus on growth is not a new phenomenon, but it is more of an imperative for businesses that endured recent periods of slow or negative growth.

Businesses that are not growing often become obsolete and find it difficult to recover. They lose their best people. They stop investing in new technology and systems. They become inwardly-focused. They lose their way. This is a recipe for disaster.

So, you want to grow. This is easy to say, but what specifically does that mean? In what market segments will you grow your business? What initiatives are you taking to drive sales? What marketing support will your sales efforts have? What will these initiatives cost? Are these costs in your budget? Do you have a budget?

In my experience, many businesses want to grow, but they struggle with developing and executing a concrete growth plan. If statistics hold true, only a few of those who participated in the Pro-Motion Consulting study will achieve their growth objectives for 2010. Here, we discuss why growth remains elusive for many businesses and what they can do about it.

Creating healthy, profitable and sustainable businesses.

BY PHIL HARWOOD

3 Key ingredients of growth

Growth involves moving your business in a certain direction — toward something and away from something else. It implies the existence of a goal or outcome related to this “something” in

the future. This “something” is often called your “vision.” Growth that moves you closer to your vision is good, and growth that moves you away from your vision is bad. Yes, there is good growth and bad growth.

You may or may not have a vision for your company, but I would venture to guess that most business owners desire to create a business that is healthy, profitable and sustainable. Let’s take a closer look at each of these areas.

Successful businesses are healthy. Just as individuals are relatively healthy or unhealthy, so are business organizations.

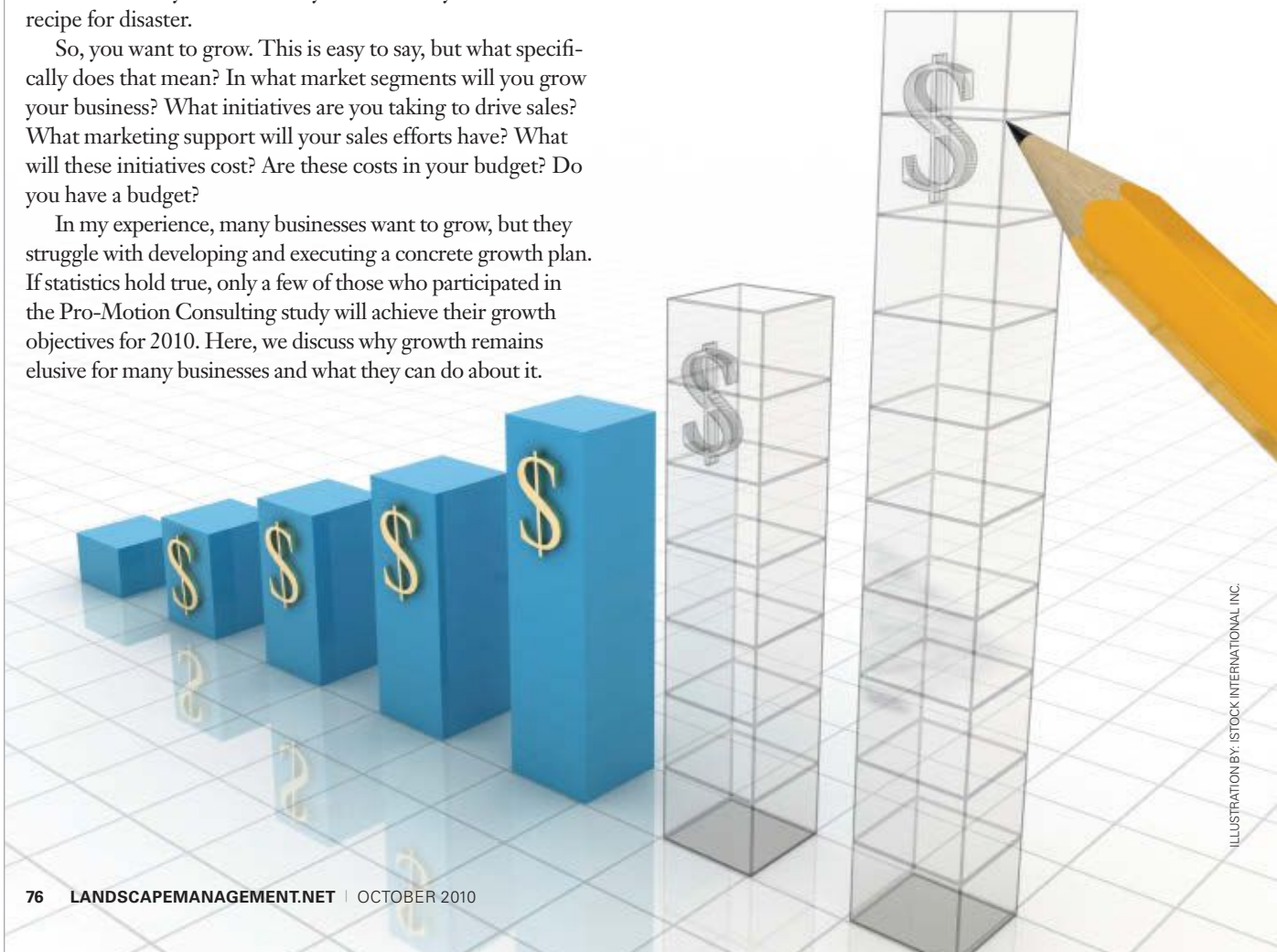


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Poor organizational health is indicated by a lack of vision, poor leadership, weak culture, high employee dissatisfaction, high employee turnover, poor market positioning, lack of accountability and lack of teamwork.

Successful businesses are profitable. More precisely, they're consistently profitable, year after year. Strong financial planning systems must be in place to accomplish this. Consistent, long-term profitability is not a result of luck or hard work. It's a result of executing a strategic business plan and maintaining a strict financial management program.

Successful businesses are sustainable over the long-term. They have visionary leadership that takes into account the future of the organization, the world we live in and how the two are related. They not only have a five-year plan but a 20- to 30-year plan with a clear strategy for executing these plans. These businesses understand their roles in society, are willing to provide leadership in their areas of influence, and respect their stakeholders along the way.

Systems make it happen

Most businesses don't have a system for growth. More specifically, they lack a strategic planning system. And most businesses that do have a strategic planning system struggle with the execution of it. It should be no surprise to us that most businesses fail to achieve their goals. An effective strategic planning system will not only include the development of a strategy but also the execution of it. I've found execution is the most difficult aspect of a strategic planning system and the area in which most firms fail.

One of the challenges for smaller (under \$50 million in annual revenues) firms is the owners and managers are not interested in complicated and expensive strategic planning systems. Unlike larger firms, they have limited time and resources to devote to strategic planning. This is one of the primary reasons why many of these firms don't even attempt to implement formal strategic planning systems. Instead, they rely on their instincts and hope for the best.

However, I've found strategic planning systems don't need to be complicated or expensive. Instead, these systems need to be simple to understand, easy to implement, and they should include a way to monitor results. Business owners have a duty to seek out such solutions for the sake of themselves, their families and other stakeholders. No ship sets sail without a map. No plane takes off without a flight plan. No business should attempt to operate without a strategic plan.

Key ingredients of a strategic plan include: analysis of resources, capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, competitors, market dynamics, threats, and the identification of growth opportunities. Often times, there are more opportunities than resources, forcing the selection of only the best opportunities.

Time to strategize

With the meltdown of the real estate sector and profit margin erosion in commercial maintenance services in many markets, many firms are looking to expand services. This is one viable alternative, since selling more things to existing customers is usually a solid growth strategy. At the same time, there is risk when considering expanding services, and this decision should not be made without thoughtful analysis and consideration.

Other firms are looking to reduce services, so they can focus more intently on their most profitable services or those they are most passionate about. When times are good, it's easy to begin dabbling in peripheral activities that only serve to distract a company from its core mission. Becoming an expert in a niche area is another valid growth strategy.

In other cases, firms are achieving growth by simply focusing on sales and marketing activities. They're staffing these areas with better people, committing more resources, talking with more prospects, proposing more



GROWTH GOALS

1. Decide what you want to be and how you want to grow.
2. **Build a growth strategy.**
3. Implement a strategic growth plan ... NOW.

work, and closing at a higher rate. To do this, they're investing in their people through sales training, improved systems, more marketing support and incentive compensation to drive results.

Regardless of the strategy, once the best opportunity has been identified, an implementation plan must be put into place, along with goals, accountabilities, metrics and scorecards to ensure effective execution. This is where the rubber meets the road.

The good news is now is the time. Most firms in the landscape or snow management industries find fall is the best time for strategic planning. The day-to-day demands of the business are at their lowest point of the year. Taking a day or two away from the business is possible. So there are no excuses for not having your strategic plan in place for 2011. Good luck. **LM**

HARWOOD is president of Pro-Motion Consulting, and is a landscape industry certified manager, certified snow professional, PLANET Trailblazer and holds a masters degree in business administration from Michigan State University. Visit www.pro-motionconsultingllc.com for more information.

[STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS]

Go direct

SOON AFTER THE recession hit, I received a flood of questions about how to survive the recession. My advice was: Since you can't control the revenue, work on becoming more competitive by implementing better systems and business processes. Some owners took my advice and some didn't.

Now, as things are stabilizing a bit, guess who's winning the battle for new business and returning to profitability soonest? There are certainly areas where bidding wars are raging and profitability is suffering, but the efficient businesses can price lower, burn less cash, and will eventually wear down the competition and emerge victorious.

So what's this got to do with building revenue? Revenue alone doesn't feed the bulldog; business is about profitability, not revenue alone, and since you have more control over your internal costs than you do over the market's gyrations, it makes sense to pay serious attention to your internal costs.

For every point of cost you can take out (and a "point" means going from 35% to 36% of revenue) it's a point you can use to either increase profit in your pocket or reduce your prices and still maintain income.

The place to push hard is in direct costs, meaning the materials and labor used directly in producing your products or services. Reducing these costs means you'll make more money from both your existing revenue stream and all the new revenue that'll come in as things improve. A two point increase in gross margin percentage for a \$500,000 business will create \$50,000 in your pocket over five years — not too shabby. A \$1 million business will see an extra \$100,000 — even less shabby. And there are plenty of businesses that are leaving five points of gross margin or more on the table, but they won't for very long if they're still around at all.

How can you make this happen? Look at projects that will improve operating efficiencies, like:

- ▶ Better labor scheduling to reduce overtime or travel times.
- ▶ Detailed procedures that let people produce better results and less waste/fewer callbacks, etc.
- ▶ Tougher purchasing arrangements (your suppliers are in the same boat as you are; they need business.)

I like to attack direct costs first because of the leverage involved, but that doesn't mean indirect costs shouldn't be examined as well. A mistake that gets made here, though, is mistaking investments for expenses and throwing the baby

Better understanding direct costs can mean more money from existing and new business.

BY **JAYME BROUDY**



\$ GROWTH GOALS 1. Improve labor scheduling to reduce overtime and travel time. 2. **Set up systems to eliminate waste and produce better results.** 3. Review purchasing agreements and vendor relationships to ensure the best deals.

out with the bath water. Systems development costs that produce ongoing returns, marketing efforts to maintain and increase revenue, and other things with payoffs are not expenses; they're investments (and in the case of systems/standalone work are actually going to end up improving margins, so they're doubly important). Don't lump these things together with office supplies and truck washes.

Does this mean you should stop chasing revenue? Absolutely not. Aggressive marketing is more important than ever (and marketing firms are becoming far more results-oriented than ever before, meaning they're more willing to be compensated based on whether their activities actually bring more business in the door). And when business is flat, it's especially important to maintain and increase your visibility, so think hard before reducing marketing spending.

It seems the worst is over (or at least it's not getting much worse), and now's the time to grab the business that's starting to re-emerge. We're seeing a buyer who's very conscious that you need his business more than he needs you, so being able to produce the highest possible quality at lowest price is more important than ever. **LM**

BROUDY is a small business consultant with Contractor's Business School. Before that she was a part of Michael Gerber's Gerber Business Development Corp. Reach her at www.contractorsbusinessschool.com.

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[STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS]

The hidden value of customer satisfaction

HOW IMPORTANT IS customer satisfaction? Not an easy question to answer. We all have opinions. Few of us have real, experience-based answers.

How important is building profits and ensuring a greater return over time? To accomplish it, would you consider creating what can be a cultural paradigm shift in your company? Is an investment in re-tooling — or at the very least enhancing — your approach to building customer satisfaction worth the effort?

Sustaining ongoing profits

First, generating and sustaining ongoing profits in this economy is far from a slam-dunk proposition.

I see two general approaches to making money in the Green Industry today. First, the big company approach, involving lots of high-risk marketing and lead generation, followed by an intense,

Use this long-term business strategy to drive profit.

BY **BILL HOOPES**

high-pressure sales process. The idea is to focus on selling more customers and selling current customers more of everything.

The second general approach, used mostly by small to mid-sized operators, is to generate leads via the referral process, sell the benefits of a relatively higher ticket

service and maximize referral business, while minimizing customer turnover in the service delivery side of the business.

But, since the bottom fell out of the economy in 2008, marketing effectiveness, by any estimation, has been “iffy” at best. And, even if your marketing strategy has been satisfactory, it’s still not cheap. If recent trends hold up, it’s clear that the days of low cost customer acquisition are gone.

With this background, consider what I’ve found effective.

The most successful Green Industry businesses focus on satisfaction — measurable, tangible satisfaction.

Satisfaction guaranteed?

Understanding what really satisfies customers — what pushes them to refer your company to others — is not simple, but it happens.

Satisfied customers do two things consistently and very well: First, they deliver higher lifetime value. They are with you longer and spend more money. Second, they sell your company for you. Both are, in tough economic times, invaluable.

So, regardless of their status today and track record of marketing and selling successfully in the past, more operators are taking a very serious look at building or rebuilding a satisfaction culture. Notice, I did not say service culture.

Building a satisfaction culture requires a process for eliminating mistakes and making each customer feel special.

First, understand sales and service are two sides of the same coin. If properly joined in a well-planned communication strategy, they result in higher customer satisfaction and longer, more profitable relationships.

Understand also that in the vast majority of cases, a company’s marketing plan (generating interest), followed by selling process (closing leads), typically sets unrealistic expectations in the prospect’s mind. Once sold, over time, the customer is disappointed and dissatisfied.

Finally, accept the fact that your leadership style — your





words, deeds and general interface with your team of employees — has created a positive or negative culture in terms of employee attitudes and opinions about the importance of maintaining satisfied customers. If negative, you simply need to acknowledge it. Making changes for the better will also take time.

To a psychologist, you'll be creating a paradigm shift. Defined, a paradigm shift is a "radical change in a person's basic assumptions about something," like the importance of creating and maintaining customer satisfaction. Most companies will acknowledge the need to change but find the process overwhelming. Still, it has been done and, as a long-term business strategy aimed at ultimately greater profits, is being done today.

Building satisfaction

To build customer satisfaction, look at the following areas:

1. What is your customer satisfaction level today? Focus groups and surveys can help you find out. Talking to individual customers when there are no problems is also useful.



GROWTH GOALS

1. Spend time initiating the customer satisfaction change process.
2. Monitor small changes to ensure progress vs. goals.
3. Keep talking to front-line people. Input is important.
4. Step up communications with customers. Look for positives.
5. Meet frequently to relay and build on positives.
6. Measure results continually, and react.

2. Get staff input. Blind input taken from your staff can be unbelievably revealing.

3. Look at cancellations and referral trends. Then, sit down and consider what changing your customer satisfaction strategy will be like.

Know that your team members will resist. Change often requires people do more. If the value of change to the individual is not pre-sold and backed up by action, it won't work.

Prepare to spend extra time and money initiating the

continued on page 83

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A LOYALTY BOOST

Here are a few innovative ways to improve customer loyalty:

- 1. Establish a customer focus group.** Invite some customers to a periodic meeting and provide incentives.
- 2. Host an off-site meeting for key customers.** Find out how you are meeting their needs; build relationships.
- 3. Talk to your front-line people.** Most of the time they know the problems and the solutions.
- 4. Collect e-mail addresses.** People are more likely to read and respond to e-mail. Periodically send updates, tips, facts and stories to your client list.
- 5. Make your direct mail stand out.** No mailing labels; use colorful stamps.
- 6. Discover your competition.** Talk to your competitors and your competitor's customers. Pizza Hut didn't begin delivering pizzas until Domino's arrived on the scene.
- 7. Steal ideas.** Look for new business or marketing ideas from other companies. Don't only look at similar businesses.
- 8. Be different.** Stand out from the

crowd. Some ideas: Send complimentary movie tickets to best customers on opening weekends with a thank-you note, send gifts to customers on the anniversary date they started doing business with you, send disposable cameras with your logos to customers including a photo of you so they have a thank you message when they develop the film, and send customers poinsettias during the holidays.

- 9. Survey customers.** Ritz-Carlton hotels and Pizza Hut survey up to 40% of their customers each month to find out what they did and didn't like.
- 10. Write a column.** Hire a ghost writer or write a weekly or monthly column for a newspaper or trade journal.
- 11. Hire a key customer representative.** Appoint a special employee to keep in touch with your special customers.
- 12. Treat your employees the way you want your customers treated.** The front-line people are the most important people in your organization. If they feel management cares about them, they will reflect the same respect to your customers.

— Gregory Smith, a business motivation, training, development and leadership expert

continued from page 81

change process. Provide ongoing, visible support for change.

Then lay it all out on paper and communicate. Start with managers. Be sure you have 100% buy-in. Next, enlist support from veteran employees.

Once you initiate your strategy, take it one step at a time, using this guide:

- 1. Monitor small changes to ensure progress vs. goals.**
- 2. Keep talking to front-line people.** Input is important.
- 3. Step up communications with customers.** Look for positives.
- 4. Meet frequently to relay and build on positives.**
- 5. When one change has become part of the process, move on.**

Continuing satisfaction

Another important part of improving customer satisfaction is measuring results continually and then reacting to the information you gather. An example is responding to customers who answered negatively on satisfaction surveys with a goal of converting all negatives to positives over time.

Review all marketing materials. Evaluate your message and don't make claims you cannot live up to.

Next is sales. What are your people actually saying to prospective customers? Are they overpromising?

Continue to train your crews on communicating the real benefits of your services as well as handling customers contacts in the field and on the

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I CAN'T GET NO ... SATISFACTION

phone. Benefits equal value, and value is what people pay for, not features.

Follow up to confirm each new sale is treated like a new baby in the family. Build the relationship based on early, positive "touch points."

Review the process for handling customer questions and complaints. Who is on the phones? How are incoming

contacts handled? Monitor all customer service contacts. Who did what and when? Was each question handled as it should have been?

Then, assign increased individual responsibility as staff members show positive results.

Establishing a customer satisfaction culture may seem like an insurmountable project. It can be. But it can — and is — being done.

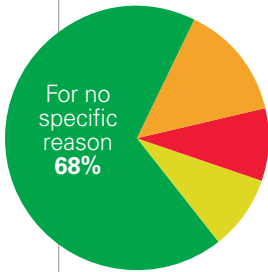
The payoff? Everyone wins: a happier staff and more satisfied customers. For ownership and senior management: greater profits in good times and bad. Isn't it worth another look? **LM**

HOOPES is owner of Grass Roots Training/ Consulting. He can be reached at hoopes@columbus.rr.com, 614-531-4000 or via www.trainandkeeppeople.com.

Here are some eye-opening facts about customer behavior and satisfaction:

- Forum Corporation showed that up to **40%** of the customers in its study who claimed they were satisfied switched suppliers without hesitation.
 - A *Harvard Business Review* study reported that **65% to 85%** of customers who switched suppliers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their former supplier.
 - An average American company loses **15% to 20%** of its customers each year.
 - "Businesses can boost profits **25% to 85%** by increasing customer retention by as little as **5%**."
- Jill Griffin, author of *Customer Loyalty: How to Earn It, How to Keep It*

DEFECT Why do customers defect?



Because the company did not respond to their complaints **14%**

Because of the competition **9%**

Because they moved **9%**

Source: Rockefeller Study

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[SALES & MARKETING]

Marketing through a recession

Every business looking to thrive today needs solid strategies for finding new customers. BY JOE SHOONER

THE CURRENT ECONOMIC downturn has had marketers and business owners scratching their heads looking for new ways to motivate buyers. Every company looking to thrive in a recession needs a strategy for finding new customers and creating interest and revenue in spite of economic uncertainty. Though no single approach is a guaranteed winner for every business, some basic steps will guide you to greater success.

Call in the experts

A common thread running through the history of most successful green industry companies is the use of outside consultants. Since we tend to seek the path of least resistance to getting our production complete on a day-to-day basis, we're apt to develop operational blinders as a result.

Consultants have a wealth of experience with budgeting, operational systems and defining roles within an organization, but they're free of the baggage that can keep you tied to your status quo. Florida's Nanak's Landscaping, for example, has made extensive use of outside consultants over the last 20 years. President Sampuran Khalsa finds the assistance instrumental in building his company's financial structure. "For a smaller landscape company that cannot afford an in-house CFO, the right outside consultant can bring a high level

of analysis that can be instrumental in establishing healthy financial practices," Khalsa says.

There are plenty of consultants available to help guide your business through periods of growth and organizational challenges, but be sure to do your homework to determine what type of company they have the greatest success with. The needs of a commercial landscaper and that of a design/build contractor will vary greatly, and you should find a consultant who focuses on your type of business. Khalsa also warns about taking the short view with consultant relationships. "It is important for landscape company owners to realize an outside consultant is not a quick fix," he says. "It is best to establish a relationship and work together over the years."

Invest in your current customers

Any politician will tell you, "You don't win an election without securing the base." Likewise in business, it is more profitable to keep a current customer happy than it is to find a new one. Satisfied customers are the most valuable marketing assets you have. They provide a stable foundation of business on which to grow, they provide opportunities for recurring and expanding revenue streams, and they represent a tremendous potential for referrals.

According to a recent Accenture Study of Customer Service, 73% of



GROWTH GOALS

1. Put someone in charge of your marketing and have a plan.
2. Improve visibility and public image.
3. Invest in your current customers.

consumers who changed service providers did so due to poor service vs. 47% who left due to price. Keeping customers happy keeps their business.

According to Marty Grunder, owner of Grunder Landscaping Co.

in Dayton, OH, “you can’t give a client any reason to go looking elsewhere these days. When our clients say ‘jump,’ our teams jump. A lot of companies in all sectors are providing bad customer service because they’re

too worried about the future to pay attention to current clients. If you do good things for your customers, you can really stand out.”

Ask for feedback

Consumers are bombarded with marketing messages every day and can be distracted by your competition. Good communication from your organization



reinforces their buying decisions by reminding them you provide the easiest and best solution to their needs. In a larger company, you need to create a communication plan that utilizes print or electronic newsletters, follow-up phone calls and personal contact in a way that reinforces your client relationships. Ask about problems. If you solicit complaints, you diffuse potential anger and work toward a productive solution.

Ask for the referral

Satisfied customers are a tremendous source of potential business, but you have to ask for it. There is no shame in looking for work, and if you aren’t willing to ask a happy customer for help growing your business, who will you ask? Simple systems can aid in the process. For example, consider printing a self-addressed, postage-paid postcard with areas for your customer and their referral to fill in and mail back. Satisfied customers want to send you work, but you have to tell them you want it, and you have to make it easy for them to send it.

Put your product into words

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mercial maintenance services or do you say you're providing an attractive environment for commercial tenants? Do you say you build patios or do you say you create living spaces to serve as a backdrop for countless good times with friends and families?

Successful communication requires identifying with the listener, and good marketing relies on the ability of the marketer to clearly promote the benefits of their services. Write down the services you offer. Then write down the benefits of each of those services. People buy benefits.

Put someone in charge of your marketing

The best person for your marketing position may already be working for you. Look for an employee who seems to "get it" and understands why people are buying from your company to begin with. An ideal marketing coordinator will be able to think like your clients in order to plan creatively for future marketing efforts. The owner generally has the clearest vision of the company's unique selling proposition and should be involved in the marketing plan. However, green industry business owners often have significant operational responsibilities and need to delegate marketing responsibilities to other individuals.

Develop marketing channels

Look at each segment of your client base as an individual channel to target. If you offer a diverse group of services, this segmentation can be done in terms of which services certain clients buy, leading you to develop mini marketing plans for individual types of consumers.

If you offer a narrower set of services, you'll need to develop a clear picture of who your buyers are. For example, Gary Donovan's TurfMasters has grown to one of the largest independent lawn care companies in Connecticut in just six years by avoiding diversification in favor of specialization. "We've developed a strong sense of who we are and, more importantly, who we aren't, which has allowed us to focus all our energy on our best prospects," Donovan says.

Go on the offensive

At the outset of the current economic downturn, many companies made a hasty decision to cut marketing expenses. If you look at marketing competition as a battle, this is equivalent to retreating. Every company needs to watch costs, but if other companies are reducing their marketing efforts, you have an immediate advantage by maintaining or increase yours.

Polish your public image

Ideally, your employees and vehicles will add to your company's professional image. Practically speaking, landscaping is a



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dirty job. Ask a friend or family member to drive by a couple of job sites and give you an outside perspective on the image your employees are portraying. Based on what you learn, develop a written policy for appearance on the job site.

It's a small part of successful marketing that's consistently overlooked.

Become more visible

Opportunities abound for landscape companies to provide community ser-

vice. Schools, churches and community groups of all sorts can use your help. If your locale has a community vegetable garden program, volunteer to prep beds in return for posting a sign with your company name and logo. Or, visit ProjectEvergreen.com/gcft and become a GreenCare for Troops volunteer. Through GreenCare for Troops, you can donate services to a family with a loved one on active duty in the military.

Use job site signs

Job site signs are a simple and effective means of communication. Posting signs enables neighbors to see a new landscape installation and immediately get a visual referral to your company. You can also post a sign to mark a job in progress, which is a good idea if you're on the property for more than a week.

Say thanks

Thanking your customers is one of the easiest things you can do to improve your image. It's also the right thing to do. Our businesses only operate because of our clients, so show your appreciation. I prefer to pick up the phone, though handwritten notes and e-mails do the job as well. The key is to be sincere.

Act like success matters

"More than anything else — more than tactics, more than money — marketing is a matter of will," Donovan says. "It's creating a will and a desire in your organization to succeed, and then using that attitude to outthink and outwork your competition." The culture of a company is created by its leadership. As an owner, you need to lead your army into the competitive marketplace by example. Create a marketing plan and champion it to your staff. Then work harder and smarter than your competition. *LM*

SHOONER is vice president of sales for Focal Point Communications, Cincinnati, OH. Contact him at joeshooner@growpro.com or 800-525-6999.

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[SALES & MARKETING]

When good referrals turn bad

WITH ALL OF the effort you are putting forth to excel in your career, there's nothing worse than wasting a perfectly good referral that was hand delivered to you by a happy customer (associate, friend, family member, and so on).

There are a few things you can do to destroy a referral and any possibility for a sale: poor follow up, poor service, a comment you made to the referral that you were better off keeping to yourself, or a sales tactic that turned the warm referral into a cold fish.

Think about what destroying that referrals costs you. The most obvious cost would be the loss of a perfectly good selling opportunity. However, there's much more at stake that you stand to lose.

Think about the person on your referral team (a select group of individuals who provide you with a steady stream of referrals). This person is putting their neck on the line for you. Once your referral source gets wind of what happened, you can bet this will be the last time that person ever sends you another referral. It not only costs you one possible sale but all of the potential future sales that you have lost because you compromised the relationship you have with your referral source.

To take it one step further, what if it was a customer who sent you this referral? How does this customer now perceive you? Demonstrating this less than admirable trait to a customer may change their once positive perception of you and tarnish the trust and confidence they had in you. Not only have you lost the chance of getting any future referrals from them but you now run the risk of losing this customer's future business that you would have normally earned.

How to protect and encourage continued referrals and sales.

BY KEITH ROSEN

Just like your customers, referrals are a privilege, not a right. You don't automatically deserve referrals, you have to earn them regardless of how long you've been in your position, known someone or how much work you've already done for a customer.

Keep in mind the players on your referral team are doing you the favor, so make sure you appreciate their efforts in a measurably visible way. They are the ones who are taking time out of their busy schedule to help you.

The biggest blunder people make is, once they start getting referrals, they forget to thank the person who provided them. Thank each person on your referral team when you:

1 Get the referral. Call with words of thanks or send a thank you card letting them know how much you appreciate

ate them thinking of you and taking the time out of their busy day to send you a referral. Reinforce the fact that each referral will be taken care of and given the exemplary service and attention that every one of your customers deserve.

2 Meet with the referral. After you connect with the referred prospect, call or send a thank you card as well as an update on where each referral stands as it relates to your selling cycle.

3 Turn the referral into a customer. Once the sale is made and the referral becomes a customer, rather than waiting until you have completed this project, immediately call your referral source and send a thank you card. This way, you are the first person to let them know their referral is now a customer of yours, rather than having your referral source hear it from the person who they referred to you.

Before you know it, you may not have to market or prospect as much as you think due to the influx of referrals you are generating. **LM**

ROSEN is a business author, trainer and coach, and president of Profit Builders. He can be reached at 888-262-2450 or info@profitbuilders.com.



GROWTH GOALS 1. Ask for referrals. 2. **Protect your referral team, thanking them regularly.** 3. Follow-through with referred potential customers. 4. **Turn referrals into customers.**

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[SALES & MARKETING]

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So hopefully, your traditional and online search marketing efforts have met some level of success — and you now find potential customers hitting your website to learn more about your services. What's the next step? Web traffic can be a fickle friend. You typically have a few fleeting moments to capture potential customers' interests and motivate them to action. First and foremost, that action should be to buy.

But what about customers who need more information or a higher comfort level before doing business with you? You can't count on them returning to your website, so motivating them to opt in to your e-mail marketing campaigns ensures you have several more chances to convert them into customers.

Just about every large online retailer offers e-newsletters of one sort or another. The online shoes and clothing retailer Zappos.com, known for its customer service, offers a weekly e-newsletter listing special deals and new products. But e-newsletters don't need to be strictly sales related to be useful. You may want to consider an e-newsletter with helpful "how-to" articles that are informative and help position your company as an expert in your industry. Building credibility can lead to great word-of-mouth advertising and sales.

The key to a good e-newsletter is consistency. Carefully describe what type of publication you are offering on the web signup page, and then stick to it.

Dos and Don'ts

When it comes to e-newsletters, there are a couple of rules to follow. I'm referring to the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003. The Federal Trade Commission has a great compliance guide (online at FTC.gov), which can result in penalties of up to \$16,000 if not followed. In essence, these guide-

Using the right technology, following the law and providing customers with relevant and engaging content can significantly improve your business and build great word-of-mouth advertising and sales.

BY TYLER WHITAKER

lines can be characterized by the ideas of not being deceptive, being forthcoming on who you are and your location, and allowing people to easily opt out of future e-mail — all things a normal company, looking to grow, would do by default. But it's surprising how often companies stumble by not paying attention.

The best way to handle the details involved with successful e-newsletter campaigns is to use the right technology. There are several online services that can turn your ideas and content into professional marketing pieces that conform to the law and deliver the results you want. Look for a solution that offers e-mail templates, signup forms, list management tools and, most importantly, reporting analytics for tracking who reads and clicks through to your website. Vendors such as VerticalResponse.com, ConstantContact.com and iContact.com have spent years perfecting the art of e-mail marketing. Pricing is typically based on the number of subscribers you have, which makes it easy to get started and test things out. Most have plans that start around \$10 to \$15 per month.

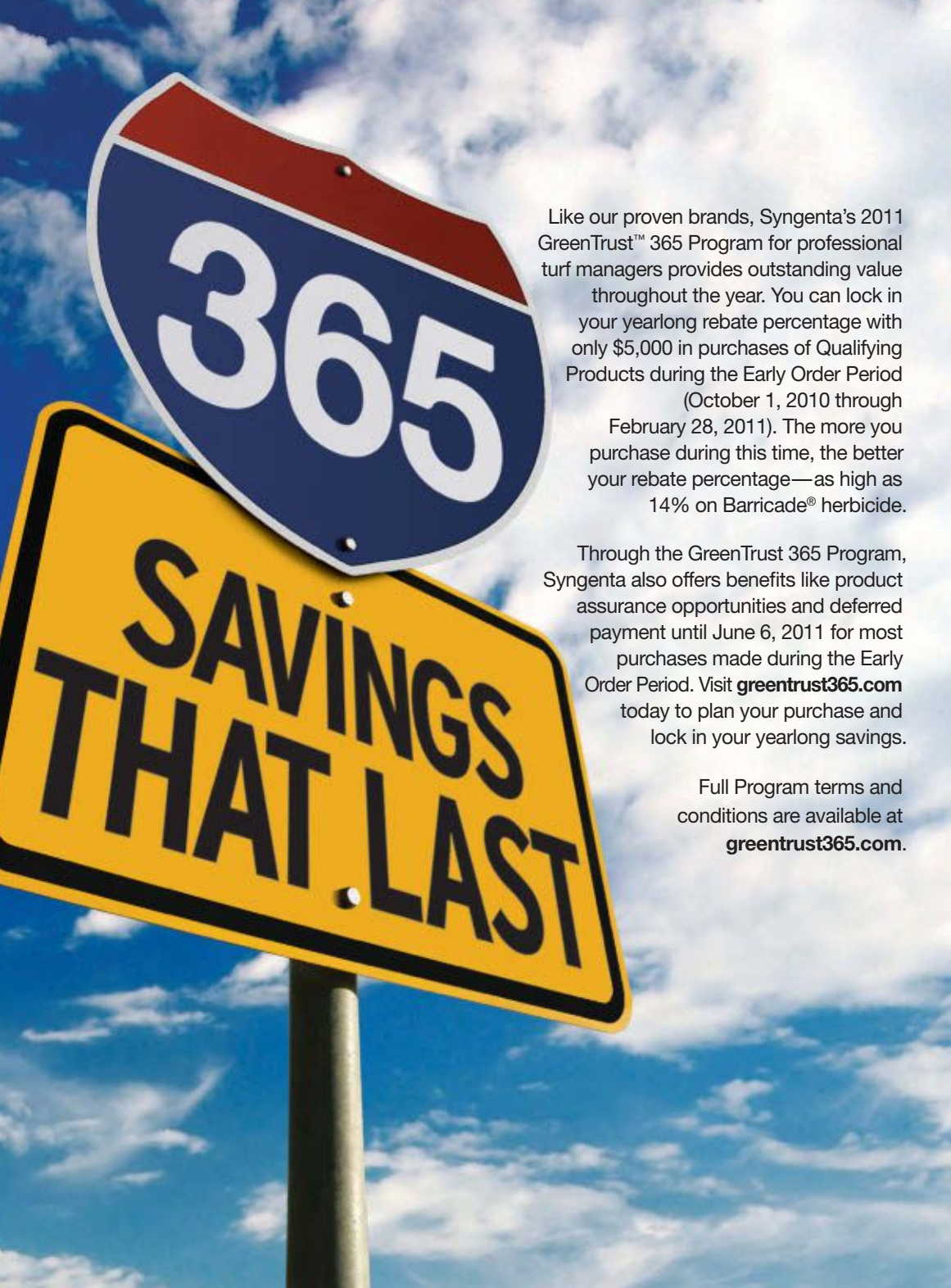
One tried-and-true method for reaching your customers on a regular basis is through e-newsletters. If your business doesn't have something to share, you've got other problems. But if you've been doing direct mail, consider making a small shift to e-newsletters — and start building your business. **LM**

WHITAKER is a freelance technologist. Contact him at 800-592-2810 or visit his blog at www.tylerwhitaker.com.



GROWTH GOALS 1. Use e-newsletters to reach your customers on a regular basis. 2. Use sharp and relevant content to keep customers interested and continually checking your website. 3. Once you start, be consistent.





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[PEOPLE POWER]

“Account” ability = success

Account managers can make or break your business. BY **BRUCE WILSON**

THERE ARE FIVE things that are somewhat consistent in successful account managers (AMs):

1 The ability to communicate with customers in a way that builds trust. The key factor here is honesty in communication and behavior. A team that can deliver the expected service in support of the AM helps the AM to earn trust.

2 The ability to avoid things that are traditionally known as “trust busters.” (See “Common Trust Busters” below.)

3 The ability to bring value to the customer proactively. Successful AMs know what value the customer places on the service. The proactive AM brings things to the attention of the client that are important before the client brings the issue to him or her. The AM makes the client look good. The AM does not waste the client’s time.

5 The ability to build a relationship that goes beyond the job. Effective AMs understand that clients have a hard time firing someone they like or respect. These AMs earn respect and business friendships by building relationships that go beyond the day-to-day business transactions. Good AMs know about their customers’ hobbies, interests and family life. They connect in a personal way.

If an AM works at honing the above five traits, they are certain to be more successful. **LM**

COMMON TRUST BUSTERS

- ▶ **Over-promising:** Sometimes, in an attempt to keep the customer happy, an account manager (AM) overpromises and then cannot deliver.
- ▶ **Being reactive:** Usually when a customer has to bring something problematic in nature to the AM’s attention, the tendency is for the AM to either get defensive or make a lame excuse.
- ▶ **Failing to check their work:** This often inadvertently leads to the AM telling a customer that something has been taken care of when, in fact, it has not.
- ▶ **Not accepting responsibility:** A team member made the mistake, but the customer sees it as a company error, not an individual error. The AM must approach it in this way and realize the entire company’s reputation is on the line.

4 The ability to manage time wisely. AMs that fall into “firefighting mode” instead of working proactively are prevented from doing things on a timely basis. They get themselves into situations where they lose trust. Clients see them as reactive, and commitments are often not met. Successful AMs are usually very organized and keep lists, which allow them to prioritize the importance of their tasks.

All too often, AMs end up doing menial tasks that are within their comfort zone, while really important things that are not in that zone are put off. These issues then mushroom into larger problems.

WILSON is a partner with entrepreneur Tom Oyler in the Wilson-Oyler Group, which offers consulting services. Contact him at bwilson@questex.com or www.wilson-oyler.com.



ILLUSTRATION BY: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL, INC.

\$ GROWTH GOALS 1. Look for account managers who are good communicators and enjoy building relationships with people.
 2. **Make sure account managers are proactive, follow-through and accept responsibility for their customers.**

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[PEOPLE POWER]

Using the suggestion box

Encourage ideas from your team to build morale and the bottom line. BY GREGORY P. SMITH

GETTING EMPLOYEES' IDEAS and involvement is critical in our rapidly changing world. If your company is going to be competitive, it's mandatory to involve not just hands, but ideas from everyone in your organization.

Why is it important to capture ideas and suggestions? For starters, the process improves individual motivation and morale. Involvement programs help capture the creativity, energy and ideas many people have. They also allow departments and individuals to work cross-functionally and create an environment of learning and constant renewal.

They improve work methods and processes continually, reduce the costs of doing business, improve safety and reduce accidents. Exchanging ideas always improves communication, and the knowledge that top management is open and willing to act on the ideas improves trust.

Good idea boards

Georgia's Buckhead Ritz-Carlton Hotel promotes employee involvement by letting

employees write their ideas on an "easy wipe" board in their department. Instead of passing untested ideas up the chain of command, the employee who originates an idea has responsibility for its achievement. They follow a three-step work process: "Study it, pilot it and adopt it."

A quality coach helps each department and its employees with the process. Once an idea is piloted and found worth-

while, it is adopted. Each month the department forwards the best idea to the division and then on to

the Quality Office for special recognition. The department awards cash for the best idea of the month. The best idea of the division gets a higher amount of money or brunch in the hotel's restaurant. At the hotel level, the best idea receives an even higher amount or dinner for two.

In addition, the winners receive letters of appreciation and an invitation to a quarterly reception courtesy of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Bright idea campaigns

Most suggestion programs fail. Suggestion boxes sit and collect dust and approved suggestions are few and far between. An effective variation to the suggestion program is the Idea Campaign. Over and done with in three weeks, this steroid-enriched campaign generates hundreds of ideas.

The goal is to get at least one idea from everyone in the organization. For the first idea, each person receives a small token of appreciation, such as a coffee cup. A second idea is acknowledged with another form of appreciation. At the end of each week, a special award ceremony recognizes everyone who turned in ideas or suggestions. Names drawn from a basket receive other prizes and gifts.

Because the program only lasts three weeks, it generates a tremendous amount of focused energy and motivation from employees.

No one wants to be left out of the program – everyone participates. All ideas have to be considered and all employees suggesting ideas receive instantaneous recognition. For participants, the most powerful force is not the awards, but the feeling that management is listening to their ideas.

Idea expositions

The Sony Corp. is well known for its ability to create and manufacture new and innovative products.

Each year Sony generates approximately 1,000 new products and product innovations. Founder Masaru Ibuka's philosophy for success is "never follow others."

In order to foster the exchange of ideas within departments, Sony's Corporate Research sponsors an annual Idea Exposition. Scientists and engineers display projects and ideas they are working on. Open only to Sony's employees, the exposition lets individuals share ideas otherwise protected by departmental walls. **LM**

SMITH is a nationally recognized speaker, author and business performance consultant. He is the president of management-consulting firm Chart Your Course International, located in Atlanta, GA. Contact him at 770-860-9464.



WEB EXTRA

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GROWTH GOALS

1. Create an environment of learning and constant renewal. 2. Develop a program where all employee ideas are encouraged. 3. Inspire future ideas with instantaneous recognition.

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Situation at Top Care

Top Care provides a wide range of lawn care services for commercial, institutional and office locations in a three-state area in the Midwest. Top Care's story reveals an enduring pursuit of managing costs to control their business. Rusty White, Top Care's Executive VP and COO, sees this as a straightforward, yet crucial, principle if you want your landscape services business to thrive.

Driven by a discipline of excellent customer service and consistent profitability, Top Care experienced steady growth. As the business grew, Top Care found that they were unable to manage their business with the same degree of control and certainty. Rusty became very aggravated due to the frustration of "...not having the information I needed to make day-to-day decisions." Stretching their current systems and methods exposed a reliance on duplicate data entry and extensive manual processes.

A New Perspective on Software

If they were going to meet their goals of control and profitability, Rusty knew they needed to abandon individual tools and find a better way. BOSS[®] LM was the solution to his vision of a fully-integrated system, and for the past five years, BOSS[®] LM has helped Top Care reach new levels of success.

With BOSS[®] LM's single database that seamlessly integrated with Top Care's accounting system, they were able to eliminate costs and redundant data entry. More importantly, since BOSS[®] LM was specifically designed for the typical characteristics of a landscape services business, Top Care no longer needed to tediously maintain complex spreadsheets to understand what was really happening to their business.

“ I now have the visibility to see the profitability of any job or service at the click of a button. ”

Expense or Investment?

Adding the BOSS[®] LM software system at Top Care was really like adding another profit-producing asset to the business. Rusty considered the software purchase exactly the same as buying a piece of capital equipment, "...treating the BOSS[®] LM software purchase like buying a mower or mulch blower makes you change your view from an expense to an investment and opens up a whole new way of thinking as you implement and evaluate results."

At Top Care, ROI Also Means... Return on Information

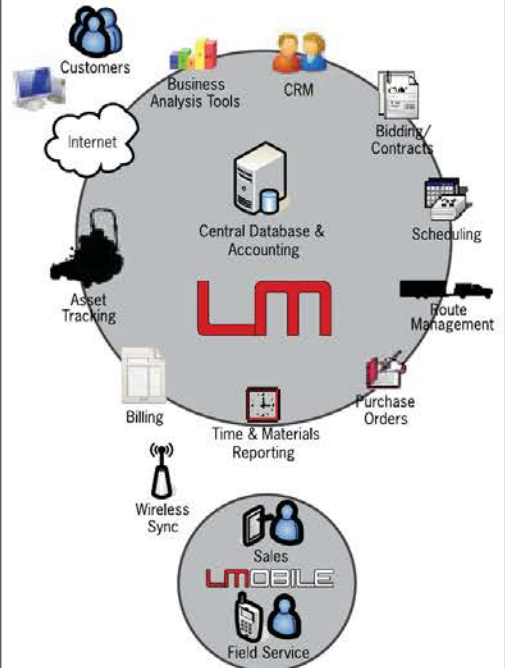
Was the investment worth it? Rusty says, "...we got our return in the first year." Top Care now has a clearer view for their business decisions. Rusty confidently emphasizes, with BOSS[®] LM "I now have the visibility to see the profitability of any job or service at the click of a button."

Rusty contends when purchasing any asset, whether it's a piece of equipment or software, you need to use all of its features if you are really going to get your biggest return. For Top Care this meant looking at every business decision and process to see how BOSS[®] LM's integrated information solution could help them. As the Top Care Team methodically selected the next process to implement, the entire business was quickly transformed into an efficient, timely operation. All aspects of the business were touched and brought under control: sales, bidding, scheduling, purchasing, payroll and invoicing.

Rusty says his biggest ROI comes from the information he receives using BOSS[®] LM. "If the only value you are considering is reducing overhead, you're missing it. Sure, we were able to reduce overhead, but the real value is having information to make better decisions...today, I can't see how I could run the business without BOSS[®] LM."

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Case studies on growth



Maintaining current revenue and growing business — these are contractors top two priorities for the next six months, according to *Landscape Management* research. In addition to providing expert advice on how to grow now, *Landscape Management* talked to 12 contractors with 2010 growth success stories to unlock the details on how they did it so you could steal an idea or two from their playbooks. Here are their stories. >> >> >>

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Kale Christman // The Ground Specialists // Valparaiso, IN

"The best thing about the WIDE-OUT is that beginners are more efficient right from the start. Especially when it comes to containing snow between cars in busy parking lots. According to our numbers, we're 35% more efficient, so for every three trucks we outfit with a WIDE-OUT, it's like getting a fourth truck and driver free. And that makes us more profitable. Period."

Shannon Shaw // Pinnacle Property Maintenance // Columbus, OH

"Since I upgraded my old V-Plow to a WIDE-OUT, I'm able to finish my jobs at least 20% faster. When you can use 80% of the blade versus half, and angle the blade to carry snow around corners without spilling off, it makes a big difference. Next year I plan to upgrade another truck with a WIDE-OUT."

Paul Kiedrowski // Oconomowoc Lawn // Oconomowoc, WI



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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Competitive pricing

IN 2009, NOVATO, Calif.-based Cagwin & Dorward was down around 14% in lost revenue.

Like so many other companies, they were hit hard by the economy, and experienced lost accounts and lots of scaling back. Since then, the company has rebounded greatly and is currently looking at a little more than 4% growth for 2010.

What that difficult year has allowed the company to do, says Steve Glennon, vice president and COO, is to become more competitive on pricing. “We were a little slow to react to the economic situation,” he says. “We’ve never typically been a company with a reputation of being a low-price leader. In fact, we have a reputation of being on the higher side. However, we do provide a lot of value with that price. But in this economy we’re finding people are no longer looking for the ‘Mercedes Benz’ level of service anymore. They want good work, but price has become critical. So we’ve gotten a lot more competitive.”

This solution was born out of one of the company’s biggest challenges — losing customers solely on price. “We were getting termination letters in which they told us we’d done an outstanding job for a decade or more, but they were hiring someone who charged much less,”

Glennon says. “It’s difficult to lose a contract when we were doing a good job — they just couldn’t afford us anymore. So we’re work-

Working with customers on their biggest pain point — price — brings renewed growth for Cagwin & Dorward. BY LINDSEY GETZ

ing closer with our customers on pricing now.”

In addition to scaling back pricing, the company, whose two biggest areas are maintenance (61.5%) and installation (23.2%), has also put more emphasis on what they call “customer centricity.” “It’s about staying connected to the customer,” Glennon says. “Customer retention is probably one of the most important elements of our business and we put a lot of emphasis on it. One of the things we implemented last year was going out to our top 25 customers and just talking with them. Asking how the economy is affecting their business and letting them know that we understand.”

Of the company’s growing areas, tree care (which accounts for about 8.8% of overall services) has been strong with about 25% growth over last year’s numbers. Glennon says that’s one area where customers are willing to spend their dollars — particularly when it comes to safety and liability issues — so he’s put some more focus there. “We are making more of an effort to address safety issues and hazards with our clients,” he says. “When you bring those types of things to the client’s attention, they’re willing to spend the money.”

The company has also put an emphasis on water conservation education, which is a growing need for Northern California, an area that’s dealt with many drought issues. “We pulled a lot of new contracts simply based on the premise that we felt confident we could reduce their water consumption and their overall cost,” Glennon says.

The combination of several key strategies — namely competitive pricing, customer centricity, and a focus on growth areas like water conservation — has helped grow Cagwin & Dorward in 2010. “We knew when we were budgeting that this would be another tough year,” says Glennon, who originally put growth around 6%. “We felt if we could have a conservative goal and grow despite the economy that we’d be happy with that success.” LM

GROWTH PROFILE

Cagwin & Dorward
Novato, CA
2010 Growth: 4%



The Cagwin & Dorward management team.

GETZ is a freelance writer with experience covering the lawn care and landscape industry.

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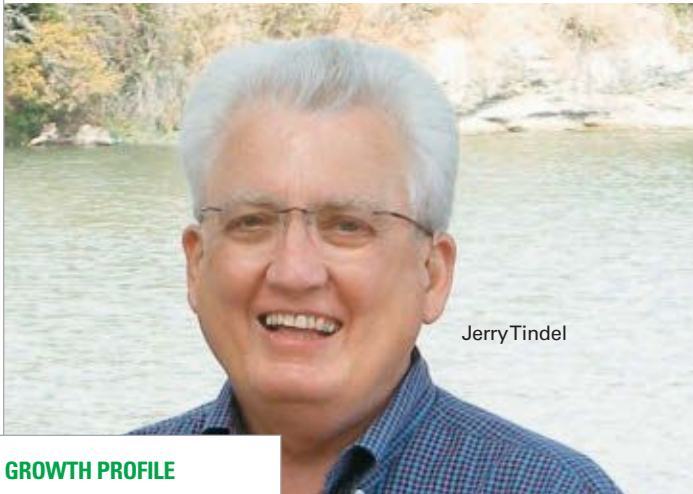
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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Wisdom from water

Drought plus more service solutions equals growth for Cutting Edge. BY LINDSEY GETZ



Jerry Tindel

GROWTH PROFILE

Cutting Edge Lawn Care
Austin, TX

2010 Growth: 10%

THIS YEAR Cutting Edge Lawn Care based in Austin, TX is on track for 10% growth in revenue. In fact, over the last three years they've managed to

increase by 10% each year, despite the weak economy. Jerry Tindel, business manager, says the fact that Austin did not experience as difficult economic problems as other U.S. cities is certainly one factor in their success.

However, there's more to it than that, as Austin wasn't without its own problems — including a drought. “A drought is probably the next worst thing that could happen to a lawn mowing company,” Tindel says. “It lasted 68 days with temperatures more than 100 degrees. We had four summer months with a total of only 2 inches of rainfall. That's really bad.”

So how did a company that does all lawn maintenance for 90% residential clients grow its business during a drought? “By making the biggest change in our business policy since we have been in business,” says Tindel, adding they actually implemented the new policy in 2007, during the first really bad drought they experienced and that it has continued to help the company grow through the most recent drought. “We decided to only accept new clients who have a

sprinkler system, want weekly lawn services and would accept one of our annual service plans. That was a huge change, which resulted in us turning down five out of six prospect calls we received. Even though we turned down 86% of our calls for quotes, we grew 21.6% that year. The reason: Those new clients brought in almost three times the sales as the ones we formerly added.”

Previously, Tindel says, four out of five customers were biweeklies who were not on contract. “In a drought year, we would mow them between 11 and 15 times,” he says. “But for our new weekly contract clients, we mowed 43 times a year, which results in about three times the sales volume when you add in the mulch and other services they buy because they want a prettier lawn.”

How did Cutting Edge Lawn Care secure such top-notch clients? With top-notch service and aggressive marketing, Tindel says. The company puts money into advertising in good times and in bad. “We always advertise,” he stresses, “because good advertising works.”

The company also doesn't miss an opportunity to market itself. It uses its trailers as billboards that advertise and promote the company in new areas. And Tindel knows how much appearance counts in this industry. Employees are professionally dressed and equipment is in good shape. “Too many lawn guys are in their old pickups and ragged clothes,” says Tindel.

While Austin wasn't as hard hit as the rest of the nation, not everyone went unaffected, and Cutting Edge decided to help prospective clients who were experiencing harder times by modifying their annual service plan proposal to offer two different levels of service. “Our standard service has always been to quote the total cost of 43 service visits per year and include eight free ones so we visit our clients' properties 52 weeks a year,” Tindel explains. “We changed the name of that to our ‘Premium Service’ plan and then offered a ‘Minimum Service’ plan, which includes only 37 service visits.”

About half of new customers signed on for the Minimum Service plan — evidence it was a smart and much-needed addition to their offerings that likely helped them secure new clientele. Tindel hopes he can move these clients into a Premium Service plan when times get better for everyone. LM

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering landscaping.

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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Master planners

Considerable growth leads to expansion into new markets for DLC Resources. **BY JOHN WALSH**

DLC RESOURCES IS spreading its wings like an eagle soaring over deserts in the Southwest as it continues to grow. Jumping from \$16.86 million in annual revenue in 2007 to \$21.98 million in 2008 and \$22 million in 2009, the company recently expanded out of its headquarters into Tucson and Las Vegas.

With a niche of managing large master-planned communities, DLC is using its proprietary GPS software, water management system, environmental policies and talented employees to differentiate from competitors and boost business.

It seems to be working.

Keep track of it

The proprietary software using GPS technology, which was implemented five years ago, measures and tracks properties' assets — such as trees, playgrounds, mail kiosks, water meters and irrigation components — that require maintenance. DLC employees can do this via handheld PDA devices.

Using the software, DLC plots all assets on aerial photographs and, in the case of

trees and other assets, can put a value (dollar amount) on each. The company keeps track of everything it prunes and stores the information electronically, allowing the company to look back five years to help it plan for future maintenance needs.

The software also helps DLC and the communities it serves regarding liability. "If a particular tree fails, causing damage resulting in a claim, we can demonstrate there's a plan in place to minimize a negligence argument," says Jeff Penney, CEO and co-founder of DLC Resources.

The most obvious edge DLC has over its competitors is the use of this GPS technology, says Don Schlander, head of business development.

"No one else does it like this," he says.

Every drop counts

Aside from the GPS software, DLC is using water management to set itself apart from its competition.

"The goal is to provide only enough water to the turf and plants to remain healthy but no more," Penney says.

The comprehensive water management program, which was implemented eight years ago, tracks all water meters (50 to 200) monthly per community, including previous years' water use. A water budget is implemented based on acreage and vegetation type. That budget and actual usage is compared to an association's budget.

"Our people who program the clocks know how much it costs to run a cycle (\$500 to \$4,000 per cycle), which is all the watering needed on a property for one night," Penney says. "We can save significant dollars per cycle because we're looking at water reports and weather conditions. We analyze the local conditions and work continually to balance the systems. We arm our people in the field with resources and knowledge, and then they're held accountable for the budget."

DLC's water management program saved Desert Mountain 30% on its water bill the first year it maintained the property. Penney says 15% to 30% is the norm for water savings for its clients. Another example: Johnson Ranch saved \$50,000 on water the first year DLC maintained the property.

GROWTH PROFILE

DLC Resources
Phoenix, AZ

2010 Growth: 0% with 10% to 15% expected as a result of expansion into new markets



DLC Resources management team.

continued on page 106

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PROVEN SOLUTIONS

continued from page 104

It's easy being green

Another way DLC tries to make a difference is via the environment. It recycles all the green waste that's generated on a property — 90% of all material

removed from a site is green waste and processed in the company's yard with a horizontal grinder. Then it's hauled to a third-party recycler that makes low-grade paper and mulch. An average of 25 tons of processed green waste a day is



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hauled away from the DLC yard. Even though DLC pays for that waste to be hauled away, it saves about \$10 a ton by not taking the waste in multiple loads to a transfer site or landfill facility. The other 10% of the waste is trash, which is nongreen. The company recycles half of that (cans, bottles, etc.).

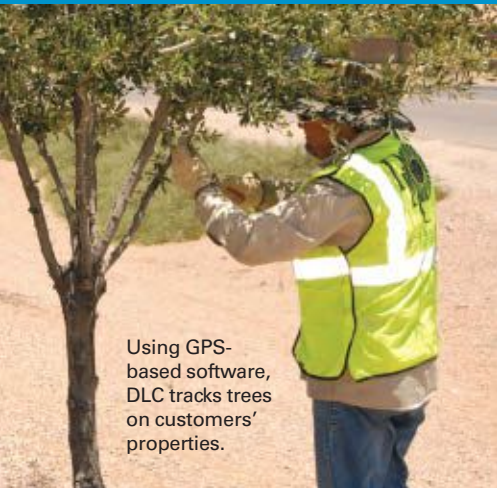
Additionally, all managerial and supervisory employees drive Honda Accords, CRVs and Toyota Priuses instead of pickup trucks SUVs. Another environmental initiative: all two-cycle equipment (trimmers, chain saws, edgers, etc.) is sold annually, and the company buys new equipment, which has improved emissions.

Growth spurt

All aspects of DLC's operation adds up to growth — the company has been averaging 10% to 15% annually from its conception until '04 when it had two years of back-to-back 25% growth. It grew 30% from '07 to '08. And employee growth has been proportional to revenue growth. This growth is due mainly to the expansion of Phoenix, Penney says. Rapid growth has slowed in the tough economy — 2009 was a flat year, and Penney predicts 2010 to be flat.

DLC, which is 100% maintenance focused on master-planned communities (about 30 of them), has only one municipal project, which represents 5% of its business. That project is for the city of Phoenix and entails maintenance of the landscape buffer along the residential side of sound walls next to freeways throughout the city.

"We don't want to grow the municipal or commercial business," Penney says. "Large HOA (homeowners' association) is our market, and if



Using GPS-based software, DLC tracks trees on customers' properties.

He'll oversee both offices but not the day-to-day operations.

To date, DLC has garnered four contracts in Tucson but none in Vegas yet. The revenue goal is to generate \$2 million through targeting master-

planned communities. As Schlander says: "We need better name recognition in those markets." **LM**

WALSH is a freelancer with experience covering the lawn care and landscape industry.

we continue to focus on that, we'll have continued success because we provide services other companies don't."

Most companies in Phoenix combine maintenance and construction, Schlander says. As the economy slowed, companies with a sizable construction business were hurt worse than those with a smaller construction business.

When comparing the Phoenix market to Las Vegas, Schlander says the quantity of target properties in Vegas are similar to those in Phoenix, and the competition in Vegas is similar to Phoenix, he says, citing three national companies (ValleyCrest, TruGreen, Groundskeeper) and one local company (Par 3 Landscape & Maintenance) competing for business in Sin City. The Vegas market, however, is smaller than Phoenix. It's metro population is 2 million compared to Phoenix's 4.5 million.

While trying to earn new business in Vegas and Tucson, Schlander says 90% of the sale is the presentation, the company's credibility and the work.

The economy is DLC's main growth obstacle, not new development. Second to the economy is cost pressure because there is more competition.

"We have one-third of the Phoenix market, and we can capture another third," Penney says. "We've opened offices in Tucson and Las Vegas, but it will take a year or two to get a foothold in these cities. Once that happens, we expect 10% to 15% annual growth."

Penney is looking to find managers in those two cities and says he'll take key players in Phoenix that desire the challenge and relocate them there.



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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Maintenance is where it's at

GROWTH PROFILE

Earthworks

Lillian, TX

2010 Growth: 20%

Shifting focus toward maintenance over construction brought growth to Earthworks.

BY LINDSEY GETZ

WHEN THINGS STARTED going downhill with the economy, Earthworks, a Lillian, TX-based company, decided to be proactive. "You can't fight the environment," says Chris Lee, president. "You have to look at how you can turn what most people see as a negative into something positive."

Lee says the more he looked at the situation his company was in, the more opportunity he began to see. He realized it was a chance to grow the maintenance end of his business. "Normally we wouldn't have the resources to grow our maintenance base," he says. "But suddenly we had that opportunity."

At the time, the business was doing about 60% maintenance work and 30% installation/rehab. But when the economy turned, a lot of the extras, outside of maintenance, were starting to dry up. There was no new construction in the area. So Lee made the transition to growing the maintenance division in place of installations. Today, he's closer to 70% maintenance and 20% installation/rehab. As people have started spending more this year, that maintenance base began increasing dramatically. Lee believes he's in a great place. "We're set up to not only maintain our business

through the recession, but to explode once it's over," he says. At press time, the company was tracking for a little more than 20% growth. "We're on target for bringing in \$12.7 million if everything continues as planned," Lee adds. "That's actually a little ahead of where we thought we'd be."

Chris Lee

Besides the ability to adapt by growing the maintenance side, the company was also successful this year because it embraced its clients and their situation. "They were in financial difficulty and their budgets were tighter," he says of his all-commercial clientele. "While some landscape companies got resentful and mad that their clients were bidding work, we tried to empathize with our clients' situation. We got out there and talked to them about how we could help them through these tough times so they weren't taking our jobs to bid. We started looking at ways we could re-negotiate contracts with clients who were really struggling. We embraced their situation and said 'Let's work together.'"

Along with that, many of Lee's clients were doing things like sprinkler repairs or flower beds in-house to try and cut some costs. "We decided that instead of being mad, we'd look at it as the 'new game,'" he explains. "It's the way things are now. So we decided if they were going to do it in-house, we could help them do it right. We viewed it as another opportunity to solidify our base by creating good will. So we offered no-charge irrigation classes where we actually taught them what to do and bought them lunch. Ironically, the more education we gave, the more our clients realized it wasn't so simple — there's a lot of complexity to irrigation systems, and they wanted beautiful and colorful beds. So we actually found we got a lot of jobs back that way."

Lee says he really believes the recession has ultimately made his business better. "We're truly a better company today than we were at the end of 2008 because it was easy to make money then," he says. "Now you really have to have a focus and a plan. The situation has forced us to adapt and it's pushed us to get better. We will be a better company for the future because of what we've been through today." **LMI**

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering landscaping.

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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Whiplash recovery

Having an owner who works *on* the business vs. *in* it and increasing marketing took Grant & Power Landscaping from its worst year in business to stable growth. BY LINDSEY GETZ

GRANT & POWER Landscaping has been through some major whiplash, but has come out better on the other side of things.

In 2008, the company had its best year by far. In 2009, it had its worst. “That catches you off guard,” says Jan-Gerrit Bouwman, RLA, MLA, ASLA, senior landscape architect and partner of the West Chicago, IL-based company. Now, for 2010, things have stabilized and the company is even tracking 5% to 10% growth over last year. With the economy still somewhat shaky, they’re thrilled with that success.

GROWTH PROFILE

Grant & Power Landscaping
West Chicago, IL
2010 Growth: 5% to 10%



Jan-Gerrit Bouwman

This year, all departments grew over 2009 and estate maintenance is currently ahead of where it was in 2008 — the company’s best year. Grant & Power has also seen huge growth in snow removal, due not only to a large snow fall, but to an increase in new customers as well as a 90%-plus retention rate.

One reason for this year’s growth, says Bouwman, is clients are loosening their grip on their purse strings. The company has a customer breakdown of

60% residential/ 40% commercial. “In 2009, customers were angry, anxious and not spending at all,” he says. “In 2010, people are more relaxed, more secure and more value-conscious again. We are known for high quality and excellent service. Customers know we will be around, even with a bad economy, and that is now paying off.”

But Bouwman says a lot of factors went into their

success this year, including the fact that with three partners, the company operates as a “triangle.” “That’s one of the strongest structures,” he says. “Each partner works on their own areas of strength. Also, the owner works *on* the business — not so much *in* it. That makes a big difference.”

Owner Gene Grant Jr. manages the company from his home office more than 2,000 mi. away.

The company also increased marketing efforts in 2009 and 2010 to try and keep their name out there, even when times were rough. “We do a lot of branding and want to convey ourselves as being the experts,” says Bouwman, adding that in 2009 the company spent 2.4 times what it spent on marketing in 2008, shifting away from Yellow Pages advertising toward Internet pay-per-click advertising via the company’s own website. “We try to be No. 1 in quality and service — not necessarily the biggest company out there.”

Grant & Power Landscaping is also heavily promoting sustainability, forming a “Green Team” of several employees who meet and discuss ways to continue improving. The company offers native plants, rain barrels and rain gardens, permeable pavers and organic lawn care fertilization as greener options for customers. The company also reduces, reuses and recycles 95% of its green waste and started e-invoicing this January.

One of the hardest areas the company has had to overcome was the need for layoffs when things got really rough in 2009. They needed to lay off 20% last summer and Bouwman says it was important that the company do it as fairly as possible, while showing employees they really did care about them. The employees were obviously upset but understood the company had no other options. When things improved this year, all but one employee was hired back.

In the end, Bouwman says, it’s those employees who have made the biggest difference in growth. He says it’s the people behind the company that keep it strong. And to show their appreciation, employees were given an increase this year. “Our employees all push in the same direction and are truly caring when it comes to the company,” he says. “And they are unbelievably hard working. Without them, we are nothing.” LM

GETZ is a freelance writer with experience covering the lawn care and landscape industry.

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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Sharpening the saw

An in-depth self-examination led to better business at Lawn Doctor. BY **LINDSEY GETZ**

SCOTT FRITH, VICE president — marketing and franchise development for Lawn Doctor, headquartered in Holmdel, NJ, believes the economic situation actually strengthened the company. “It caused us to take a really close look at our business, our team and our processes to look at what opportunities are out there,” he says. “Stephen Covey calls it ‘sharpening the saw,’ so you can cut better, and that’s just what we’ve done. We conducted an in-depth self-examination that’s led to ways we can build a better business.” At press time, sales were approaching 15% growth over last year.

How they grew involved a variety of contributing factors, including the formation of committees focused on specific functional areas in the business, bringing franchisees to the table so their voices could be heard. “They help us drive our strategies,” Frith says. “We want to keep them involved in decisions.”

Implementing more technology was also a key growth factor that allowed the company to drive more marketing and some service and sales efficiencies. “Having more efficient sys-

tems is important,” Frith says. “For instance, having GPS routing and mobile technologies enables us to check in on jobs easier and sync up with software in the office.”

And like many other companies, Frith also says the economic situation has made customer retention more important than ever. As a result, the company has really focused on providing better customer service. “We’ve always put the customer at the center, but I do think when you’re growing at a certain rate you’re always looking for the next customer. You don’t forget the existing customer, but maybe you don’t do everything you really should to retain them and create that referral base. So we’ve really started focusing our efforts on what we need to do to deliver on the service expectations of all of our customers.”

For Lawn Doctor, the economic situation has also created a unique opportunity Frith believes will bring future franchise growth — the fact that so many green industry vets are out of work but still love the industry. “There are a lot of quality green industry people out there who just don’t see a light at the end of the tunnel in their state of unemployment,” he says. “We believe a future trend for us will be hearing from people who’ve lost jobs in the Green Industry who come to a point where they need to make a move and want to do it on their own but still go with a brand they know and trust.

We’ve had so much interest already.”

As a result, the company now offers a green discount for industry vets. If applicants qualify as having Green Industry experience, they’ll get \$12,500 off of the initial startup fee. The company is also now financing half of the total investment for all new franchisees. “There are so many people out there who are responsible and hardworking, and did everything right; they just fell victim to the times,” Frith says. “We believe in our brand and the people in this industry, so if they’re joining our brand, we want to help them out.” **LM**

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering the landscape industry.

GROWTH PROFILE

Lawn Doctor
Holmdel, N.J.

2010 Growth: 15%



Scott Frith



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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Making dad and

Steven Jomides is on track to turn a \$15,000 starter loan from his dad into a \$10 million-plus business by 2013 — the 25th anniversary of Lawns By Yorkshire.

BY **MARTY WHITFORD**
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

STEVEN JOMIDES NEVER had the opportunity to fully repay the \$15,000 his father loaned him in 1988 to found Lawns By Yorkshire.

“I made one or two small payments to Dad in '88, but later that year he died of lung cancer at age 56,” shares Jomides, a black belt in Tae Kwon Do, as he fights back tears. “Mom died two years later, at 53, of brain cancer. I was orphaned at 27. I grew up in a hurry.”

Today, the 48-year-old Jomides says he honors his parents daily by placing family first, while working hard to grow his dad's \$15,000 loan into a \$10 million-plus business by



Steven Jomides

GROWTH PROFILE

Lawns By Yorkshire
Westwood, NJ

2010 Growth:
10%-15%

mom proud

2013 — the 25th anniversary of the founding of Lawns By Yorkshire.

Seed of hope

Little did Jomides or his parents know then, but that \$15,000 starter loan would represent the seed of hope for a 25-year-old only child about to lose both parents.

“Looking back, it’s very fitting I named the business Lawns By Yorkshire,” Jomides notes. “My parents absolutely loved, and for years bred, Yorkshire terriers. I’m not a small-dog guy, but it’s never been just about me. This business is as much Dad’s and Mom’s as it is mine and my associates.”

Jomides is a self-purported graduate of “The Green School of Hard Knocks.”

“When I was 17, I made \$3 per hour mowing lawns and picking weeds for a friend,” Jomides reminisces. “I spent most of my daily earnings on breakfast and lunch. That was Lesson No. 1: Control expenditures now; rewards come later.”

Three years later, Jomides received a reward: a 33% bump in pay when he went to work for another landscape contractor.

“I earned \$4 per hour — but, again, it was very hard and humbling work,” Jomides notes. “Tasked with transporting crushed blue landscape stone up a steep hill, I lasted only one week on that grueling job.

“But I learned another critical business lesson that week: The sizable gap between labor and material costs and project pricing — the ‘net’ — really caught my eye, and eventually my heart and my parents’ faith,” Jomides adds. “The seed to start my own landscape business was planted

that week, with that job loss. Five years later, with help from Dad and Mom, I struck out on my own.”

No small dog

After attending his father’s funeral, Jomides returned to work that afternoon. And, for the most part, he hasn’t looked back since.

“I only have two regrets: 1) That my parents never met my beautiful bride of 16 years, Andrea, and our children, Zac and Noa; and 2) That Dad and Mom never saw what became of their \$15,000 — how their little Yorkshire has grown into a pretty big dog.”

Lawns By Yorkshire has grown its annual revenue two hundredfold — from about \$40,000 in sales in 1988 to a projected \$8 million this year. The company’s operations, meanwhile, have expanded from one small home office to its Westwood, NJ, headquarters plus three satellite locations.

The company’s “Green Team” provides landscape and tree installation and maintenance; lawn, plant and shrub care; integrated pest management; design/build services; erosion control; and irrigation and storm water management solutions. The Green team accounts for half of the company’s employee roster, yet typically generates about two-thirds of the business’ annual sales.

Lawns By Yorkshire’s “White Team” comprises about 250 associates providing snow and ice management services. With an arsenal of 40 trucks, 30 plows, 75 snowblowers, 15 salt spreaders and more than 40 skid steers with plow attachments, the White Team is tethered to headquarters and one

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another via smart phones, a system of controlled circuit TV cameras and GPS devices. "Technology helps us ensure safety and efficiency in even the most brutal of Northeast storms," Jomides adds.

Lawns By Yorkshire serves an array of clients — from homeowner associations, multi-family dwellings and senior-living facilities to hotels, restaurants and retail/shopping centers, to school and corporate cam-

panies to municipalities and industrial complexes — throughout New Jersey and New York.

"How do we grow every year? We work our butts off to bring in and keep business," Jomides says. "Sometimes,

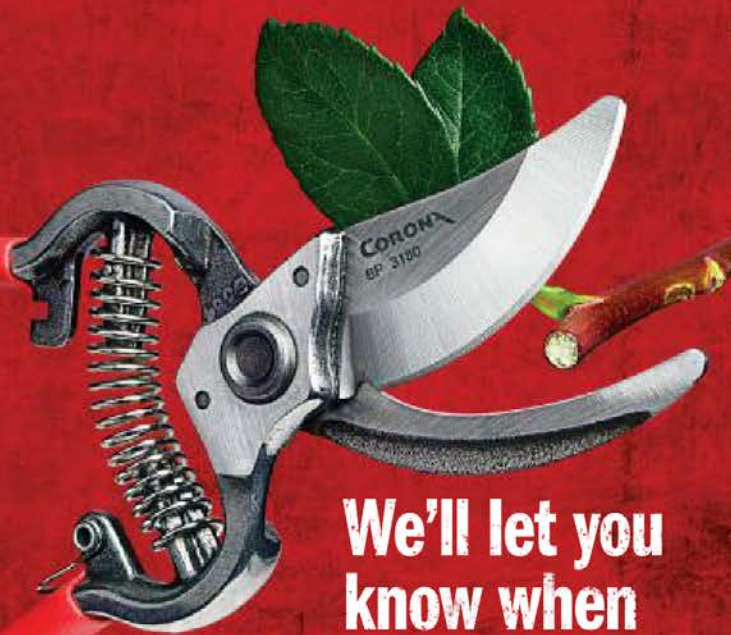
NOTHING BUT NETS

Jomides tipped off 2010 by forging a co-branding business development deal with the NBA's New Jersey Nets. The integrated marketing alliance includes:

- ▶ A "Greenest Fan" contest, in which Nets enthusiasts craft essays offering environmentally sound solutions to common problems, with winners awarded environmental prizes on Nets' "Green Nights." Jomides and the Nets have taken their green game on the road, educating grade-schoolers — tomorrow's leaders — on the importance of environmental stewardship and the ecological and health benefits of plants.
- ▶ The installation of a Lawns By Yorkshire Putting Green just outside The Courtside Club at The Prudential Center where the Nets currently play — offering fans another opportunity to win prizes.
- ▶ Lawns By Yorkshire serving as the presenting sponsor of the Nets' "Metropolitan Madness Basketball Challenge," an annual five-on-five tournament in which associates from 64 major companies compete in March at PNY Center, the Nets' practice facility in East Rutherford, NJ.
- ▶ The landscape business also is the presenting sponsor of "Football Night,"



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our industry forgets we need to keep our customers happy to keep them. Other times, we forget we need to keep selling to keep growing. We need to do both very well to survive and thrive in this business.”

Giving back

Jomides says he feels a strong tug to give back to the Green Industry, which has given him, his family and his family of associates so much. That’s why he shares his time and leadership

talents with the New Jersey Landscape Contractors Association (NJLCA) and the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET).

“Steven’s dedication to the Green Industry, network of industry profes-

a gridiron-themed evening including a chance for fans to don football uniforms and have their photos taken with Nets Dancers, as well as to participate at halftime in an on-court football skills competition. The winner receives a sustainable landscape consultation and maintenance facelift compliments of Lawns By Yorkshire.

➤ A private suite located in The Platinum Lounge of The Prudential Center serves as a networking opportunity for Jomides, other Nets sponsors and premium floor-seat season ticketholders.

➤ Lawns By Yorkshire also receives in-arena signage, advertising space on www.njnets.com, and a radio ad and feature during each Nets’ radio broadcast.

“Co-branding with a major sports brand like the Nets is the opportunity of a lifetime for us,” Jomides says. “Because of these new, high-level marketing and networking opportunities, we’ve landed key projects such as maintaining the landscape surrounding the Nets’ practice facility, as well as Vonage’s existing and PNY’s future headquarters — and we’re just getting started.” — *MW*

Steven Jomides (left) with Brett Yormark CEO of Nets Basketball and President and CEO Brooklyn Sports & Entertainment



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sionals and addictive enthusiasm has been a welcomed addition to NJLCA's Board of Directors," says NJLCA President Jody Shilan.

Jomides also is an active member of PLANET, helping to drive mem-



Jomides' management team (From left): Chris Hricik, Burke Hammonds, Jomides, Fidel Castro and Mark Boggio. Left, employee Noe Garcia.



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bership in the national association as well as serving on its Executive Forum Committee.

"We have an excellent group of core managers at Lawns By Yorkshire, which affords me the peace of mind needed to leave base camp and give back more to our industry," Jomides notes. "We're about halfway up Mount Everest. As we close in on the summit, I'll turn over more to our talented management team and give back more to the industry."

After one of his rare looks in the rearview mirror, Jomides earlier this year decided to further honor his parents while giving back to the industry.

Jomides and Judy Guido, his chief marketing officer, are working closely with PLANET staff to establish an annual scholarship in the names of Jomides' parents, Morton and Sandra. The goal is to each year award one landscape/horticulture student \$1,000 for his or her education as part of the planned \$25,000 scholarship endowment.

"This annual PLANET scholarship honoring Dad and Mom will be around long after I'm gone," Jomides says, smiling. "I wasn't afforded the time to pay back my father during his short stay here, but I can repay Dad and Mom by paying it forward." **LM**

[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Retain to gain

BEN COLLINSWORTH, CEO of Native Land Design in Cedar Park, TX, says his key to success this year was simple — he didn't try to reinvent the wheel.

"While many others in our market and industry are trying to add revenue in a bad economy, we have tried to get better operationally in our business and give our current customers more attention and better customer service," Collinsworth says. "We want to spend our time trying to retain our current clients instead of hitting the streets trying to add a lot of new people to the mix."

Focusing primarily inward on existing clients has led to organic growth for the company. In fact, despite the down economy, Native Land Design is looking at bringing in a little more than \$9.2 million this year in revenue. Last year, they brought in \$7.6 million. And for the past three years, Native Land Design has made the *Inc.* magazine list of the Fastest Growing Private Companies in America with 108.5% growth from 2005 to 2008.

In Cedar Park, TX, people are starting to spend money again, Collinsworth says, and that's allowed his company, which is driven by 90% commercial work, to grow without having to pick up a ton of new clientele. But Collinsworth did pick up a few big jobs this year, which also helped growth. The economy has actually created a unique situation in which Native Land

Focusing on existing customers brought organic growth to Native Land Design. BY LINDSEY GETZ

Design has had the opportunity to get some work that was previously unavailable. "Jobs went up for bid that had been tied up with one landscape business for years," he explains. "There were companies out there that had their budgets cut and they had to shop around for a lower price. That has allowed a business like ours to secure projects that previously weren't even available for bid. So, in some ways, the economic situation has actually helped us."

While the economy allowed Collinsworth to get some new work, it also led to his biggest challenge to overcome. As a relatively young company, Native Land Design found it difficult to find the funds they needed from local bankers. Collinsworth overcame this by looking for the right lending opportunities out of state.

"We actually had to look nationally," he says, "to make sure the funding was available to finance the equipment we needed for growth."

Operationally, growth has also required more equipment and labor, Collinsworth points out. The latter is another area where the economic situation has actually helped. "Because the construction industry was so hard hit by the economy, there's some good talent that's readily available right now," he says.

While the company has made some pretty big strides in growth, Collinsworth says he's looking to be conservative in his plans for continued growth. In the past, the company grew too quickly — going from a \$4 million business to a \$10 million one in just two years — and that almost put them out of business. "We're anticipating 7% to 10% growth for next year and think that's a comfortable, conservative number," he says. "There are a lot of clients who cut back services, and we're hoping they'll start spending even more next year and add some of those services back. So we're looking at growing again without having to pick up a lot of new clients." **LM**

GROWTH PROFILE

Native Land Design
Cedar Park, TX
2010 Growth: 21%



Ben Collinsworth

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering landscaping.

[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Hire slow, grow fast

People are the front-line of growth at Ryan Lawn & Tree. BY **LINDSEY GETZ**



Larry Ryan

GROWTH PROFILE

Ryan Lawn & Tree
Overland, KS

2010 Growth: Between 10% and 14%

LARRY RYAN, PRESIDENT of Ryan Lawn & Tree in Overland, KS, believes the quality of his company's growth has come from the quality of the people he hires — and that's an area where

the economy has actually helped his business. "A lot of the people who would normally go into the golf course industry are coming to us," he says. "That industry is overbuilt and currently depressed. We also get a lot of top quality people straight out of the local universities who are anxious for a job."

Ryan looks at 20 resumes for every one person he hires, and his focus on seeking out the best people is what has grown the company, despite these tough times. He's expecting between 10% and 14% growth.

Irrigation (which accounts for about 10% of services offered) has been one of the company's strongest

growth areas considering the region is coming off of two very wet years where there was little demand. "A dry season will market our service," he says. "In 2011, we again expect irrigation to be one of our strongest growth areas." The company also does 55% turf work and 35% forestry, and services mostly (80%) residential customers.

In terms of marketing, Ryan says it's the top-notch employees that best market his company. Word-of-mouth is still the company's No. 1 way of corraling new business, and Ryan says having hard-working, uniformed employees out in the field everyday has also helped rope in new jobs. In addition, he also recently redesigned his website and is looking to generate more of a web presence for the business. "We've almost completely done away with the Yellow Pages," says Ryan. "We find them very limiting."

In addition to quality employees and a growing web presence, Ryan says his company's focus on the customer is probably what aided growth the most. The company is in regular communication with all of its customers. "It's important to have a staff that will take the initiative to call people — and not just the top people but all of the customers," he emphasizes. "We just had a scenario where someone cancelled our pruning services to go

with someone that was \$200 cheaper. The employee called them up and left a message thanking them for their business and just putting it out there how important pruning is and how critical it is that they are using a reputable company that will do it right. Within an hour the customer called back and said they'd rather have us do the job right than save a little money."

Ryan makes a special effort to really focus on the tough customers too, and that's ultimately helped with customer retention. In this economy every customer counts. "It's too easy to walk away from that really tough or nasty client, but hanging in longer teaches us to take better care of all our customers," he adds. "Our customer service is the number one reason we grew this year. We don't easily give up on any customer." **LMI**

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering landscaping.

FASTEST TURF

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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Signature solutions

Government work helped Signature Contracting Services grow 18%. BY LINDSEY GETZ

MARSHA NEWBERRY, OWNER of Signature Contracting Services, LLC in Grand Prairie, TX, says she can't pinpoint just one reason why the company has been so successful this year. "It's the whole picture," she says. "There are a multitude of reasons."

The top two are diversification and customer loyalty. While she's heard other companies tell prospective clients they "don't do that type of work," Newberry says Signature doesn't like to say 'No' to future clients and have been diversified from the beginning in the type of services they offer their all-commercial base. That includes everything from mowing to erosion control and construction and street work. In terms of creating customer loyalty, she says it's simple — they build great customer relationships from day one. "We have really deep customer relationships," she

says. "It's mostly because we make them feel comfortable from the start. We have a conference room here with couches and big televisions where we hold meetings. Our clients always feel welcome. And, of course, we follow through with great work performance."

This year, despite a down economy, Signature is projecting 18% growth. In some ways, Newberry says, the economic situation has actually helped her business, due to the type of work they do. In fact, while most landscape companies have no construction work going right now, that division has actually grown for Signature. "That's mostly because of the large contracts we work on, which the Federal government has put money out for," she explains, adding that Signature is a certified business. "We have certainly reaped the benefits on those types of jobs, and it's also the type of work where you know you're going to get paid since the government has laid the money out."

While they've had a great year, Newberry says it wasn't without challenges, and the economic situation did have some negative effect on the business in terms of cash flow. "Probably one of the largest challenges we face today is that the banking industry does not want to let go of money and that makes it difficult to get cash flow for big projects," she says. "We're a small company with many big projects, so that's a real issue for us."

As a result, Newberry says that she's really started watching the company's money a lot closer. "I will call clients before it gets to the 90-day period and discuss the payment with them," she says. "Staying on top of your accounts receivable in a down economy is highly important. People who used to pay right away will wait the whole 90 days now. Being on top of that has helped us continue to succeed. Nobody is going to watch your own money as closely as you do."

Despite some cash flow challenges, Newberry feels fortunate to be one of the few companies that did grow this year. "We definitely feel lucky," she says. "And we'll continue to work hard for another good year." LM

GETZ is a freelance writer with experience covering the lawn care and landscape industry.

GROWTH PROFILE

Signature Contracting Services

Grand Prairie, TX

2010 Growth: 18%



{ Add Firestone, Add Innovation }



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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Back to basics

Improving client connections helped Stay Green stay out of the red. BY LINDSEY GETZ

OPERATING FROM THE garage of their home in the San Fernando Valley, Richard and Charlene Angelo launched Stay Green, Inc. in 1970 with a truck, a handful of residential customers and a vision.

Richard's sense of professionalism drove customer satisfaction, and the business grew quickly through referrals. Today, the company has more than 200 employees working in three divisions — landscape maintenance, plant health care and tree care.

In tough times, sticking to the basics of where one started really counts, says Chris Angelo, president of the Santa Clarita, CA-based business and son of Richard and Charlene. That's what's helped Stay Green grow the business despite a challenging economy. "It's why we got into the business in the first place — or, for me, why my father founded it — and that's to provide exceptional customer service," he says.

In trying times, Chris Angelo believes it's more important than ever to be connected to the client. "We do not lose sight of the clients and what they need," he says. "We achieve that with things like monthly walk-throughs and working with them to find solutions that will help them stick to their budgets. These include water retrofits, water efficiency savings or changing annual color beds to perennials."

These types of efforts, have kept client retention above 95% this year, despite the economy, Chris Angelo says. He's also been empathetic toward his clients who are struggling, and that effort has been appreciated. "We recognize most landlords who own commercial properties, whether office or retail, have conceded rent rates as much as 30%," he says of his all-commercial base. "That means we've had to be flexible enough to provide them with a price that fits their budget this year. That flexibility and willingness to work with them has allowed us to keep high retention rates."

Stay Green focuses largely on landscape maintenance and grew that division by 9% this year, which Angelo sees as a great success during the recession.



Chris Angelo

Overall revenue is tracking to grow slightly, but any growth in this market is also a success.

In addition to a focus on customer relations, Angelo says growth was also achieved with smart planning. "The secret to success is aligning our estimating with our current productivity," he says. "That means working on productivity efficiencies in operations and building specifications that work for the different client market segments."

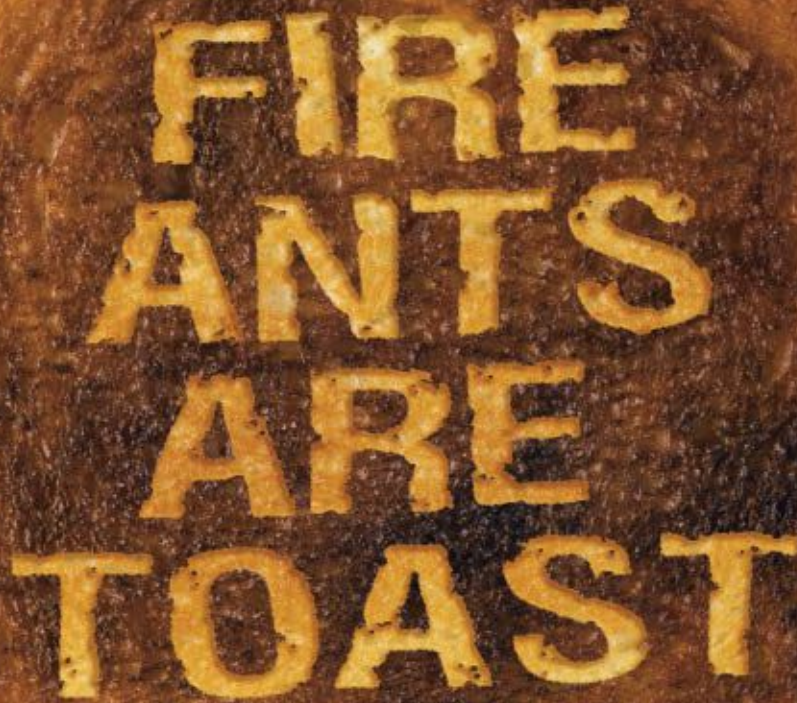
Of course, Angelo also recognizes he can't do any of this without good employees, and he's turned some of the focus on them as well. In fact, he says helping them through these difficult times has been one of his biggest challenges. "The most difficult thing is morale in today's economy," he says. "People we work side-by-side with are having financial challenges of their own, and it's tough to keep their spirits up in these darker days. We have employees who have spouses who lost jobs and no longer have a dual income. That's a reality for many."

Angelo says he has made a real effort to boost morale this year. "We are offering more company appreciation programs, including a picnic that will have around 400 or 500 people in attendance," he says. "We're doing what we can to keep our employees motivated." LM

GROWTH PROFILE

Stay Green
Santa Clarita, CA
2010 Growth: 5%

GETZ is a freelancer with experience covering landscaping.



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[CASE STUDIES ON GROWTH]

Persistence pays off

Urban Farmer found the work it wanted and chased it until it was theirs. BY LINDSEY GETZ

The Urban Farmer management team.



GROWTH PROFILE

Urban Farmer
Thornton, CO
2010 Growth: 4.5%

GETTING TO THIS point was a lot of hard work, but Urban Farmer, a Thornton, CO-based full-service landscape, irrigation, reclamation and maintenance firm, is tracking 4.5% growth for the year. How did they do it? One word, says Sean Lynam, business development manager: “Persistence.” “It came down to finding the work we wanted to chase and staying after it until we got it,” he says. “When bidding, we were also persistent in finding the target number and making it happen.”

Like so many other successful landscape firms, when times were good, Urban Farmer had a lot of jobs coming in. Sales didn’t have to be too aggressive and could almost pick and choose the jobs they wanted. But in this economy, every job counts and Lynam says their persistence has paid off — though he admits, it was a lot of work to achieve that success. “We really chase down leads now,” he continues. “In the past, there was so much more to bid that you didn’t have to be as tenacious. That’s certainly not the case today.”

Once Urban Farmer gets a job, it makes every effort to keep it. “We’ve always been about customer

service, but now more than ever, if our customers ask us to do something, we do it,” Lynam says of the mostly commercial clientele they work with. “And we handle it when they need it — even if our bid table is busy we find the time to fit it in. Basically, whatever they need, they get.”

This year, Urban Farmer’s maintenance division is seeing the strongest growth. Though construction/installation is their larger division (60%), Lynam says maintenance (which accounts for 30%) is holding up better in the tough economic times. “Probably because all our property managers and other customers have to spend money that’s allotted for maintenance or it doesn’t come back next year in their budgets,” he hypothesizes. “Though in this area, con-

struction is at least holding steady.”

One adaptation the company has undergone to deal with the economy is to bring more work in house that they typically would have subbed out. “We do a lot of our concrete in house now,” Lynam says. “We do as much work in house as we can, though it doesn’t always work that easily. There are times when you have nine projects going on and they all want to start the same day, so you’re forced to sub out some work. But we make an effort to do it ourselves whenever we can.”

Besides doing some more work in house, Lynam says the company didn’t make any major changes this year. It didn’t add any new marketing plans or map out a detailed growth strategy. Instead, the Urban Farmer team just focused on working as hard as ever. “In terms of a strategy or goal, it was really just to push as hard as we could and to really latch on and stay with our core group of customers,” he says.

In the end, that persistence has certainly paid off. **LM**

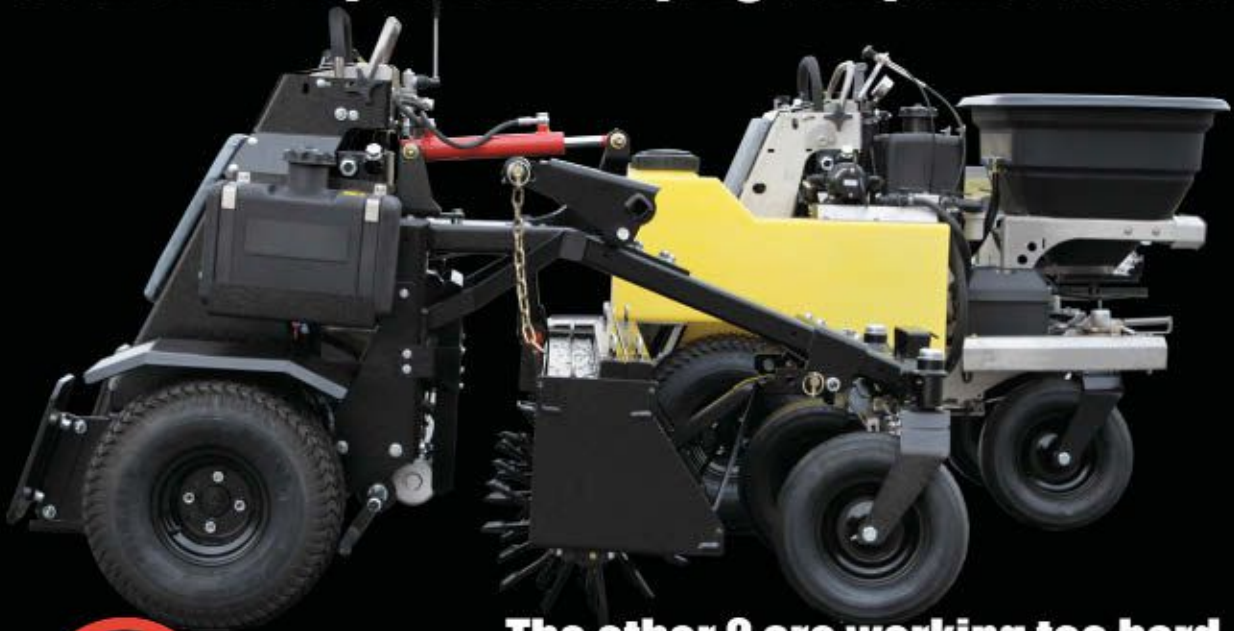
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BUSINESS PLANNER 2011

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Our turf brands include **Spread it & Forget it™**, **XCU®**, **DURATION CR®**, **POLYON®**, **NITROFORM®** and **NUTRALENE®** slow- and controlled-release fertilizers; **AMP™** micronutrients; and **PRECISE®** controlled-release plant protection. These products go into dozens of fertilizer brands and hundreds of blends sold by blenders and distributors throughout North America.

Our products are also available from our new direct-to-market sales division called Agrium Advanced Technologies Direct Solutions, which boasts more than 100 industry professional field representatives across North America.

Agrium Advanced Technologies continues to focus on further advancing enhanced efficiency fertilizers with an emphasis on quality and customer service. We are committed to developing new technologies, products and best practices that will help turf and lawn care professionals do their jobs more efficiently, save money and discover *smarter ways to grow*.

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➤ **Spread it & Forget™** is a new, season-long fertilizer **DRIVEN BY DURATION™** that is formulated to effectively feed lawns or professional turf for six months or more. In many parts of the country, that means you get a full growing season's worth of green, healthy turf with just one fertilizer application. By using Spread it & Forget, you can drive down your fertilizer costs plus save on labor, fuel and other overhead associated with multiple fertilizer applications.

➤ **XCU® Slow-Release Fertilizer** is the only sulfur-coated urea (SCU) with a polymer layer inside the protective sulfur layer. This adds durability and consistency so there is less breakage during blending and application, which means less quick release,

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➤ **DURATION CR® Controlled-Release Fertilizer** uses an advanced generation polymer coating technology to gradually meter nutrients from two months to all season long to meet the turf's needs. Thanks to DURATION CR's enhanced efficiency, lawn care professionals can use up to 40% less nitrogen per year, which is good for the environment and your bottom line.

➤ **POLYON® Controlled-Release Fertilizer**, with its trademarked green color, has been used by turf professionals for nearly 20 years. In fact, POLYON is the No. 1 polymer-coated fertilizer in turf today. Because POLYON is engineered to provide 100% controlled release of nutrients, there is virtually no environmental loss or nutrient lock-off.

➤ **NITROFORM®** and **NUTRALENE® Slow-Release Fertilizers** have been trusted brands delivering dependable, long-lasting performance to countless turf professionals.

Jack Roser
President

AlturnaMATS, Inc.



in Titusville, PA, birthplace of the oil industry.

Major product lines:

AlturnaMATS manufactures ground protection mats, including:

- ▶ The original **AlturnaMAT** with diamond cleats on both sides. This mat was designed for heavy equipment and to keep equipment from getting stuck in the mud, sand or snow, and to keep the equipment from tearing up manicured landscapes. This style is available with cleats on both sides, one side or smooth both sides, depending on your application. AlturnaMATS are available in sizes ranging from 2-ft. x 4-ft. up to 4-ft. x 8-ft. and are ½-in. thick. The AlturnaMATS will bend, but will not break. Made of 100% recycled HDPE, AlturnaMATS is environmentally friendly.

- ▶ The **VersaMAT** features a flat, oval, slip-resistant tread on the top surface and the diamond cleat on the under surface. This mat was designed for pedestrian traffic or lightweight equipment such as wheel barrows, mini Bobcats, etc. The VersaMATS are available in 3-ft. x 8-ft. and 4-ft. x 8-ft. and are ½-in. thick. Made of 100% recycled HDPE, VersaMATS is environmentally friendly.

- ▶ The **Mobile Matt** is designed for light and heavy weight equipment. The Mobile Matt has an "M" shaped tread and studs on the under surface for maximum traction. The Mobile Mats are available in sizes ranging from 2-ft. x 4-ft. up to 4-ft. x 8-ft. and are made of "virgin" HMWP.

All three styles of mat are guaranteed for six years.

Product focus:

AlturnaMATS has been providing landscape professionals with ground protection they can count on for more than 15 years.

Manufacturing facilities:

AlturnaMATS began and continue to be manufactured



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Eddy Gibbs
President

Ameristar Fence Products

Product focus:

Ameristar® was chartered more than 25 years ago to provide specialty fence products that were more affordable but did not compromise the quality level demanded by specifiers and consumers. This could



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Product design was approached from many new perspectives: maximizing high-volume productivity; increasing strength and durability; designing the ultimate level of system security; promoting ease of installation; enhancing aesthetic appearance; and maintaining an environmentally friendly workplace.

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Major product lines:

▶ **Montage®** is the new generation of ornamental fencing that is changing America's landscape. Unparalleled quality, made affordable through new technology and manufacturing processes, has made Montage the No. 1 choice of landscapers across America for both new fence construction and replacement of existing wood, chain-link or PVC fences. The popular Montage Plus® Fence System has been taken to the next level, with 7- and 8-ft.-tall fencing in several styles. All systems include matching gates available for a wide range of opening sizes and, for projects requiring added distinctiveness, special arched gates called Estate Gates are available.

▶ The **Aegis®** ornamental fence system is the strongest steel ornamental fence in the industry. It has a proprietary internal fastening system that eliminates unsightly exterior fasteners and allows the fence to follow changing landscape grades.

▶ The **Echelon™**

ornamental fence system offers an aluminum alternative for projects where corrosion considerations are amplified by harsh environmental conditions.

▶ **Ameristar's Impasse™**

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Andersons Turf Products



Product focus:

Andersons Turf Products is the industry's leading supplier of premium granular turf-care products for sports turf, golf courses and lawn care markets, and is also a manufacturer of turf and ornamental fertilizer and control products sold by retailers in the U.S.

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Andersons Turf Products is a division of The Andersons Processing Group, a business unit that also produces corncob-based chemical and feed ingredient carriers, animal bedding, cat litter and ice-melt products. The Processing Group operates facilities in Maumee and Bowling Green, OH; Montgomery, AL; and Delphi, IN.

Andersons is an active member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, National Golf Foundation, ITODA, RISE and many other industry organizations.

Major product lines:

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- ▶ **Foltec™** foliar nutrients (the perfect complement to Contec DG)
- ▶ **Prophesy™** fungicide (the only granular propiconazole)
- ▶ **Governor™** (granular products based on Syngenta's Primo)
- ▶ **ProSect™** (bifenthrin)
- ▶ **Extend™** (long-lasting polymer-coated urea)
- ▶ **Allectus** (Merit + Talstar combination)

Sales and service:

Andersons products are available through a comprehensive network of distributors in the U.S. and international markets.



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Randy Strait
Owner

Arctic Snow and Ice Control

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▶ Steel shoes lay flat and resist premature wearing for several seasons of use.

Sectional Sno-Plow is the solution to turn idle equipment into a powerful, productive snow removal fleet. It's available for a variety of light- and medium-duty equipment, including loaders, skid steers and even telehandlers, and offered in models ranging in length from 8 to 22 ft. Check out the Sectional Sno-Plow in action by watching the video at www.sectionalplow.com and see why Sectional Sno-Plow is the only plow you'll ever want.





Jeff Gibson
Landscape Business
Manager

Ball Horticultural Co.

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▶ Exceptional support from planning to purchase to planting. We have more people committed to your business than any other horticultural supplier, including a dedicated business manager, 56 sales reps, technical product reps, and many others with the knowledge to help you succeed.

Visit BallLandscape.com to find a local supplier and to get more information about the Ball Landscape program. Sign up to receive timely newsletters, or to receive business resource tools. The website is filled with details on new varieties and proven landscape performance. Find fast, easy landscape color solutions from Ball.



Major product lines:

- ▶ Wave® Petunias
- ▶ Dragonwing® Begonia
- ▶ Matrix® Pansy
- ▶ Taishan® Marigold
- ▶ Zahara® Zinnia
- ▶ Landmark™ Lantana
- ▶ Super Elfin® Impatiens
- ▶ Purple Flash Ornamental Pepper
- ▶ Voltage™ Yellow Osteospermum
- ▶ Serena® Angelonia
- ▶ Henna Coleus
- ▶ Fantasia® Geranium
- ▶ Dakota Gold Helenium

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Support:

Belgard University and www.belgarddesignpro.com

Major product lines:

- ▶ Belgard Hardscapes, an Oldcastle Architectural Brand
- ▶ Pavers, walls and curbs
- ▶ Custom and modular applications for backyard kitchen designs



Belgard Hardscapes

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Suite 250
Atlanta, GA 30350

Phone: 877-235-4273

Web site: www.belgard.biz

Blizzard Snowplows

Product focus:

BLIZZARD® is dedicated to providing the most innovative, highly productive snow removal equipment available. It pioneered the expanding moldboard technology and today manufactures and markets a full line of innovative snowplows.

Major product lines:

➤ **POWER PLOW®:** This plow sets the standard in snow removal productivity and versatility.

The moldboards hydraulically extend from a compact straight position to an extended WIDE PASS™ straight position, or into a high-capacity BUCKET BLADE™ scoop position—all

from the comfort of your cab. Models are available for use on trucks and skid-steer loaders.

➤ **SPEEDWING™:** This BLIZZARD exclusive plow like a POWER PLOW but is as easy to operate as a straight blade. SPEEDWING automatically defaults to the scoop position for straightforward plowing, creating maximum snow containment for pushing and stacking snow. When the blade is angled, the trailing wing automatically drops back in line with the main moldboard, while the leading wing retains its forward position



to prevent spillover and utilize the entire blade width.

➤ **HD Straight Blades:** Built to withstand winter's fury and deliver superior performance in the most demanding conditions, the flared moldboard—an industry first—rolls snow further ahead and to the side, saving time and wear and tear on your truck. Available in 7½-, 8-, 8½- and 9-ft. widths, these plows feature an aggressive cutting edge angle, optimized blade curl and the time-saving Power Hitch™ 2 attachment system.

➤ **LT Straight Blades:** Built for lighter-duty plowing applications, these plows share the same basic features as the HD straight blades. 7½- and 8-ft. models are available for pickup trucks, SUVs and even select utility vehicles.

➤ **Ice control equipment:** BLIZZARD offers both a low-

profile tailgate spreader and a line of ICE CHASER™ poly/ electric hopper spreaders to match your ice control needs.

Manufacturing facilities:

A division of Douglas Dynamics, LLC, the country's leading manufacturer of snow and ice removal equipment, BLIZZARD products and components are manufactured in Milwaukee, WI, and Rockland, ME.

Technical support:

BLIZZARD's expanding distributor organization provides the product knowledge and technical expertise to match the appropriate BLIZZARD plow to your vehicle and snow removal needs to maximize your plowing efficiency and profitability. To locate your nearest BLIZZARD dealer, please visit blizzardplows.com



Blizzard Snowplows
PO Box 245038
Milwaukee, WI 53224-9538

Web site:
www.blizzardplows.com
E-mail:
info@blizzardplows.com

Rich Goldsbury
President,
Bobcat Americas

Bobcat



Product focus:

With the invention of the M400, Melroe Manufacturing Co. (which would later become Bobcat Co.), created the world's first true skid-steer loader. "Skid steer" describes the unique steering system, which enables the machine to turn within its own length. Today, nearly one out of every two skid-steer loaders is a Bobcat machine.

Today, Bobcat Co. is the leading provider of compact equipment for global construction, rental, landscaping, agriculture, grounds maintenance, government, utility, industrial and mining markets. We strive to empower our customers to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. We're North

Dakota's largest manufacturer, with the most extensive compact equipment distribution network in the world.

Manufacturing facilities:

- ▶ Gwinner, ND
- ▶ Litchfield, MN
- ▶ Pont-Château, France
- ▶ Wujiang, China
- ▶ Dobříš, Czech Republic

Technical support, sales, training:

About 1,000 independent dealers in more than 100 countries serve our customers through more than 3,000 sales specialists. Known for their dedication to the customer, Bobcat dealers provide customer service for long, reliable equipment performance.



Major product lines:

- ▶ The Bobcat-exclusive all-wheel skid loader
- ▶ Compact excavators
- ▶ Compact track loaders
- ▶ Compact tractors
- ▶ Mini track loaders
- ▶ Skid steer loaders
- ▶ Utility work machines and vehicles
- ▶ Telescopic tool carriers
- ▶ More than 500 models of attachments



Bobcat
250 E. Beaton Drive
West Fargo, ND 58078

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Web site: www.bobcat.com



Mark Tipton
Managing Partner

Mission Statement

To enable profitable growth in landscape companies by leveraging leading edge software technology to control costs, increase efficiency and deliver premier customer service. Our goal is to provide tools to build a better future for you and your company.



BOSS® LM—
The Integra Group, Inc.
714 Spirit 40 Park Drive
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Chesterfield, MO 63005

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Web site:
www.bosslm.com
E-mail: info@bosslm.com

BOSS® LM — The Integra Group, Inc.

Product focus:

The Integra Group was founded in 1999 as a custom software development firm. More than 100 software systems have been designed, developed and successfully deployed. One of these systems was developed for a large landscape company with offices in multiple cities. We captured their vision and delivered BOSS® LM, a powerful, easy-to-use business management software system—a single integrated solution that spans all core business operations from sales through invoicing and accounting.

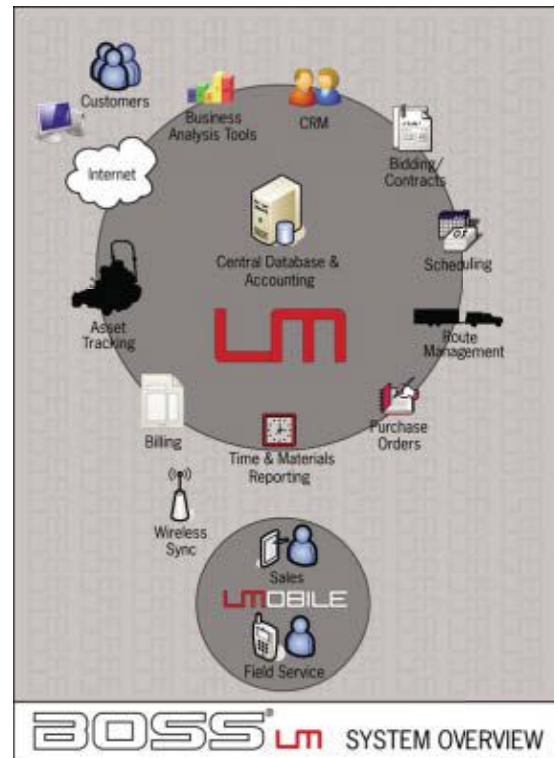
BOSS® LM is enabling companies of all sizes to better understand and manage their businesses by providing greater visibility and control over what is happening on a day-to-day basis. BOSS® LM presents the information you need for strategic planning to improve and expand your business.

One of BOSS® LM's unique features is that it is designed for use by employees throughout the organization from sales to production, not just accountants and administrators. BOSS® LM provides simple graphical screens with intuitive drill downs that give users the information they need quickly and easily. They will throw out their spreadsheets and charts—and actually use it.

That's why clients are telling us that sales is able to sell more and production is able to produce more since they implemented BOSS® LM.

Our first customer told us: "My return on investment for BOSS® LM is higher than any piece of equipment I've purchased."

Calculating the ROI doesn't just apply to equipment, but to any asset that requires an



investment, including software. One of the steps in our process with each client before he or she purchases BOSS® LM is to create a value analysis to identify the ROI.

Technical support:

Unlike many software purchases that typically don't have a plan until after you purchase the software, ours begins long before you have made any commitments. After some initial discussions, we put together a mutually agreed upon evaluation plan, which outlines the steps that we will go through together to determine whether BOSS® LM is a good fit for your business. After implementation, we provide complete support including product upgrades.



Mission Statement

Brite Ideas Decorating, Inc. strives to be recognized as the premier festive holiday light product company. Our employees are committed to creating a unique and durable product, which will provide long-term satisfaction to our distributors and customers.



Brite Ideas Decorating
3852 Farnam St.
Omaha, NE 68131

Phone: 888-200-5131
Web site:
www.sayitwithlights.com

Brite Ideas Decorating

Product innovation

- › Design
- › LED Products
- › UV-Protected Poly Clips
- › Steel Construction
- › Aluminum Construction

Software

Brite Ideas Decorating has developed easy-to-use software. The software is an Access-based proposal form that allows you, our distributor, to bid out jobs and control your profits. With the ease of the proposal software, your next sale is a few clicks of the mouse away.

Profits

Brite Ideas Decorating has a successful plan for profitability that provides you with the tools and support to make holiday lighting a revenue source. Not only will you make impressive profits the first year, you will establish residual business for years to come.



Training and support

Brite Ideas prides itself on making sure that you know all there is to know about holiday lighting so that you can have a successful and lucrative business. We take our time training you in every aspect of the adventure with a two-day training session about the business as a whole.

With 24/7 support 365 days a year, Brite Ideas' knowledgeable staff is available any time for any questions. We also offer web support from other distributors through online forums.



Blake Smith
President

The Decor Group
Christmas Decor, Inc.
NiteTime Decor, Inc.

Mission Statement

The 'light' way to new revenue and additional profits from two proven business systems!



Christmas Decor
NiteTime Decor
7602 University Ave.
Lubbock, TX 79423

Phone: 1-800-687-9551
Fax: 806-722-9627

Web sites:
www.ChristmasDecor.net
www.NiteTimeDecor.com

E-mail:
jbush@thedecorgroup.com

Christmas Decor, Inc. / Nite Time Decor, Inc.

The Decor Group has helped more than 375 service companies achieve greater success with its unique franchise concepts. Times like these call for action and positive steps to better position yourself for success. Our systems work and can give you the edge you need to zoom past competitors.

The Decor Group diligently works to ensure the success of all of our franchises. No other franchisor will do more to train, support and encourage its franchisees. By providing an extensive range of educational programs, technical support, in-the-field site visits, specification assistance and marketing support, we set the standard in total franchisee support. We were named a 2008 Top Ten Home Improvement Franchise by *Entrepreneur* magazine and AOL.

The holiday season can provide many opportunities for your business:

➤ **Christmas Decor** is a proven system that will help you provide professional holiday decorating services to homes and businesses using many of your existing assets. Trucks, equipment and employees produce more. Our franchisees earn an average of 28% net profit, and can produce \$2,698



per day with a three-person crew! We train and support you, and give you access to our exclusive product lines year-round. Contact us today for a complimentary Christmas Decor Market Assessment of your area! Call 1-800-687-9551 or visit www.christmasdecor.net.

➤ **NiteTime Décor** is our architectural and landscape lighting system, and the demand for this service continues to grow! Tap into this exciting industry to diversify

your services and earn higher margins. Our training and support system teaches you to operate more efficiently while commanding a higher price for your service. Call to find out how our franchisees earn an average sale of \$3,765—earning about \$100 gross profit per man hour. Contact us today for a complimentary NiteTime Decor Market Assessment to see your territory's potential. Call 1-800-687-9551 or visit www.nitetimedecor.com.

Corona Clipper



Product focus:

Corona is the leading manufacturer of superior quality forged pruning and long-handled tools for both the professional and consumer markets. Corona's legendary reputation is built on classic design, handcrafted forged workmanship and superior customer service. This reputation has made Corona America's first choice in hand tools, season after season.

Born in the orange groves of southern California in the early 1920s, Corona has a long history of designing tools that provide lasting performance for professionals and gardeners who take pride in a job well done.

Corona's customer base includes landscape, irrigation, horticultural, agricultural, forestry, construction, maintenance and public works markets, served by

professionals and home gardeners.

Manufacturing facilities:

Headquartered in Corona, CA, approximately 60 miles south of Los Angeles, Corona has three manufacturing and warehouse facilities in the United States and Mexico, employing approximately 250 people.

Technical support:

Top distributors and dealers rely on Corona's unparalleled expertise to manage the entire hand tool category. Corona offers comprehensive dealer/distributor support from its factory and home office. Corona field

representatives provide a first line of assistance, there to answer questions or offer valuable advice.

Major product lines:

The company's product line includes hand pruners, shears, loppers, saws, garden tools, shovels, rakes and wheelbarrows.

In 2010, Corona introduced its new brand image and innovative line of cutting tools, the Dual Cut Series of pruners, loppers and hedge shears.

Based on its heritage, Corona's new mark and tool design innovations continue to assert leadership and expertise in manufacturing the best garden and landscape tools. Check out the full line of Corona tools and accessories at www.coronaclipper.com.



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Fax: 951-737-8657

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coronaclipper.com
facebook.com/coronatools
twitter.com/coronatools
linkedin.com/company/corona-clipper-inc

E-mail:
sales@corona.bellota.com

“More than 80 years ago, Corona began forging a reputation for quality. Our constant search for innovative techniques to build increasingly superior tools has earned the respect of landscape and agricultural professionals, as well as home gardeners.

“Both our professional and passionate consumers demand the best; and at Corona, we believe we make the best gardening and landscaping tools in the world. To be the best, Corona’s tools must always be unique in the marketplace, relevant to professional and consumer lifestyles, and authentic to our company’s values and heritage. For decades we’ve applied our advanced principles of tool design while researching those who use our tools and understanding how they use them. We apply our research into making tools that help professionals work faster, smarter and more efficiently, season after season.”

—Steve Erickson, President



Antonio Galindez
President and CEO

Mission Statement

As part of The Dow Chemical Company, we share a common mission of constantly improving what is essential to human progress by mastering science and technology. This mission is embodied in what we call the “Human Element”—our commitment to drive and apply science to solve the world’s most challenging human problems. This focus empowers our thinking, encourages teamwork and gives our employees the freedom to develop creative approaches. Together with The Dow Chemical Company, we strive to make the biggest impact while leaving the smallest footprint.

Dow AgroSciences
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Web site:
www.dowprovesit.com
E-mail: info@dow.com

Dow AgroSciences

Product focus:

Dow AgroSciences delivers innovative technology that exceeds market needs and improves the quality of life of the world’s growing population. Every day, our employees—our Human Element—combine their different perspectives to constantly improve our organization and the products and services we deliver. This is evident in the Turf & Ornamental products we have recently introduced, and the several new products and technologies in our pipeline. That’s our commitment to the industries we serve and, most important, that’s our commitment to you.

Major product lines:

➤ **Dimension®** specialty herbicide provides premium season-long pre-emergence control of crabgrass, spurge, oxalis and other grassy weeds, along with early postemergence control of crabgrass. With multiple formulations, including water-based Dimension 2EW specialty herbicide, Dimension can be used over the top of field- and container-grown nursery and landscape ornamentals, and on established lawns, golf courses and commercial sod farms without staining surroundings.



➤ **Gallery®** specialty herbicide is the most effective pre-emergence herbicide for broadleaf weeds labeled for cool- and warm-season turf. It can be applied in spring or fall; helps minimize costly callbacks due to weed breakthrough; and provides control for up to eight months.

➤ **LockUp®** specialty herbicide is available through distributors as a formulated product for superior control of dollarweed in the South and dandelion in the North. It offers postemergence weed control to lawn care professionals, golf course superintendents and sports turf managers. It provides activity at extremely low use rates (0.02 to 0.06 lb. a.i./A) and

can be applied to wet or dry cool- or warm-season turf.

➤ **Eagle® 20EW** specialty fungicide is a liquid systemic fungicide for preventive and curative control of roughly 20 turf-destroying diseases, including dollar spot and brown patch. Available in convenient, easy-to-use containers ideal for use on home lawns and backyard fruit trees. It won’t harm popular turfgrass and ornamental species.

Support: We have more than 30 dedicated individuals serving as sales representatives, technical account managers, nursery specialists, sales managers and field scientists providing training, stewardship and solutions to formulators, distributors, university researchers and end users nationwide. Labels and MSDS are available at www.dowprovesit.com.

Our Power of MORE™ earning program allows companies to earn cash rebates on Dow AgroSciences product purchases. Visit www.powerofmore.com.

®/™ Trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC. State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products, LockUp specialty herbicide and Eagle 20EW specialty fungicide apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions.

Pete Lord
President

Mission Statement

Our mission is to always provide the landscape professional with the most innovative, feature-rich and easy-to-use landscape design software in the marketplace.

Drafix Software
114A W. 3rd St., Suite #301
Kansas City, MO 64105

Phone: 800-231-8574
Fax: 816-842-5554
Web site:
www.prolandscape.com
E-mail:
sales@prolandscape.com

PRO Landscape by Drafix Software

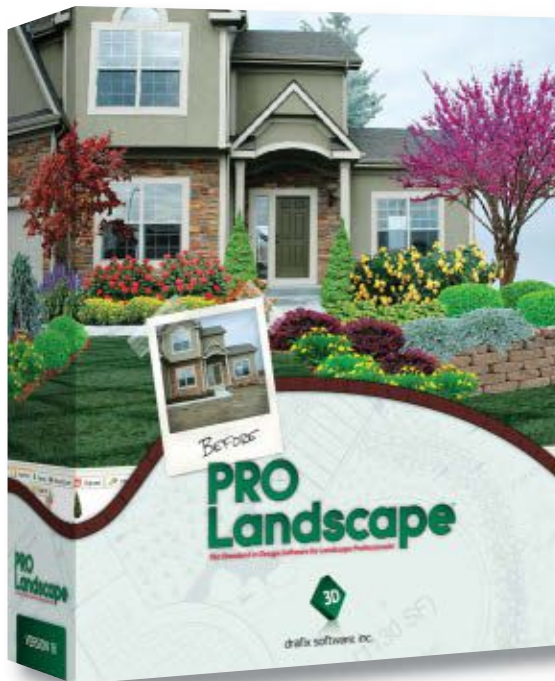
Product focus:

Take your business to the next level using PRO Landscape design software.

PRO Landscape is the most complete, easiest-to-learn and easiest-to-use professional landscape design software package you can buy. The software creates breathtaking visual landscape designs, 2D site plans, 3D walk-throughs and accurate estimates. PRO Landscape makes it fast and easy to sell, plan and bid your landscape designs.

➤ **Photo Imaging:** Do your customers have difficulty understanding exactly what you are proposing for their property? Use PRO Landscape’s photo imaging to create a realistic visual representation of what your proposed landscape design will look like. Simply start with a digital photograph of your customer’s house and then you can easily drag and drop your landscape items right onto the photograph. PRO Landscape’s library contains 8,500 of the industry’s highest quality images of plants, trees, shrubs, grass, mulch, hardscapes, water features, night and holiday lighting and much, much more. Easily create visual designs that your customers can understand.

➤ **Easy-to-Use CAD:** Tired of drawing by hand and spending hours labeling and doing take-offs? PRO Landscape allows



you to quickly create scaled 2D-site plans that accurately represent your proposed design elements including plantings, hardscapes and irrigation systems. PRO Landscape Planner keeps track of all materials, calculates hardscape areas and material volume of items such as mulch. With a single click you can create a title block, callouts or a plant legend.

➤ **True 3D:** Our 3D is exactly what the name says it is—three dimensional. It’s as easy as pushing a single button from either your photo imaging or CAD file and automatically converting it to a stunning 3D representation of your design. You can then view the design from any angle as well

as perform fly-overs or walk-throughs.

➤ **Customer proposals:** Would you like to improve the professionalism of your estimates? PRO Landscape generates an accurate bid directly from your photo imaging or CAD files using your prices and tax rate. Once you create your estimate, put together a professional-looking customer presentation including the cover sheet, estimate, material list and plant information in just seconds.

Technical support:

PRO Landscape comes with a 60-day money-back guarantee, tutorial/training CD and free technical support.



Mike McDermott
Global Business Leader
for DuPont Professional
Products

DuPont Professional Products

Product focus:

DuPont Professional Products brings the company's tradition of science, innovation and safety to the pest and green industries. DuPont Professional Products' global portfolio includes DuPont™ Imprelis™, DuPont™ Acelepryn® insecticide, DuPont™ Advion® fire ant bait, DuPont™ Advion® insect granule and

broadleaf weeds. Plus, it can be used with granular fertilizer or on post-emergent weeds with unprecedented results. Although Imprelis™ is tough on weeds, it has one of the lowest application rates in lawn care. In addition, it has low toxicity to mammals.

➤ **DuPont™ Acelepryn® insecticide** provides season-long control of every turf-damaging white grub species plus key surface-feeding insects with just one application when applied according to label use directions. Acelepryn® is also gentle on the environment, a key feature as more homeowners are requesting environmentally-smart choices. Classified as reduced-risk by the EPA for applications to turfgrass, Acelepryn® has a mode of action different from other turf insecticides. It is available in a liquid formulation, a granular ready-to-use formulation and a ready-to-use fertilizer formulation.

Acelepryn® is designed and approved for use on residential and commercial turf as well as landscape ornamentals.

➤ **DuPont™ Provaunt® insecticide** offers a mode of action that controls a wide range of caterpillars and other key insect pests as listed on the approved label. Applications of Provaunt causes target insect pests to stop their feeding in hours or less—and that activity helps to stop damage to your customers' turf and landscape

ornamental plants. Provaunt® is effective at the low label application rates. And this effectiveness can be attributed to the class of chemistry and mode of action of the active ingredient in Provaunt®.

➤ **DuPont™ Advion® fire ant bait** has been tested in the field and through professional use to show that fire ant colony control can be achieved in 24 to 72 hours. Just one or two applications of the bait formulation has been shown capable of achieving year-long control in a fire ant-infested area that has been treated—at an annual cost per acre that's more affordable than many other fire ant control products currently on the market. This product features the DuPont active ingredient indoxacarb, which was recognized by the U.S. EPA in its Reduced Risk Program for fire ant control.

➤ **DuPont™ Advion® insect granule** is a non-repellent bait that is attractive to ants, cockroaches, silverfish, house and field crickets, and earwigs. It provides lawn and pest management professionals with desirable insect control in a ready-to-use, dry bait formulation. This formulation is easy to apply in a wide range of approved application use sites including broadcast lawn treatments, attics, crawl spaces, basements and perimeter applications.

DuPont™ Provaunt® insecticide. Our R&D efforts focus on creating high-performing turf and landscape ornamental products with the best environmental attributes possible.

Major product lines:

➤ **DuPont™ Imprelis™ herbicide** is the most scientifically advanced turf herbicide in more than 40 years. Its innovative new technology is effective on even the toughest broadleaf weeds—like ground ivy and wild violets—with more application freedom than ever before. That's because there are no restrictions to when it can be applied. Even during reseeding or rainy days, it provides long-lasting residual control on a wide range of



The miracles of science™

DuPont Professional Products

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Web site: www2.dupont.com

E-mail:
proproducts@dupont.com

PGMS

professional grounds
management society

Advancing Grounds Management!
Advancing YOUR Career!

Do YOU want your requests for funds and equipment to be met?

Do YOU want your recommendations and presentations to carry more weight?

Do YOU want to be viewed as a leader at your facility?

Then what are you waiting for? Join PGMS and take advantage of the education, networking, and certification opportunities we've been providing to Grounds Management Professionals since 1911. **START ADVANCING YOUR CAREER TODAY!**

www.PGMS.org

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____ Email _____
FIRST LAST

Title _____ Company _____

Street Address _____ City/State/Zip _____
(PLEASE, NO POST OFFICE BOXES)

Work Phone _____ Fax _____ Branch _____

Active - \$175 Affiliate - \$125 Supplier \$400 Educator \$55 Student \$35

Check is enclosed Charge my: VISA MasterCard AmEx

Acct. Number: _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Please complete and return to: PGMS, 720 Light Street, Baltimore, MD 21230



John Goers
General Manager

Mission Statement

Firestone Specialty Products aims to be the global leader in the protection, conservation and reutilization of water.

Firestone Specialty Products Co., LLC

Product focus:

Firestone Specialty Products manufactures high-quality, durable liner and geomembrane systems for a variety of decorative, stormwater management and critical containment applications. Our products are manufactured at five facilities located throughout the United States.

➤ **Residential:** Each year, Firestone lining products help enhance the beauty and value of thousands of private homes around the country. Perfect for ponds, waterfalls and other landscaped water features, Firestone offers an affordable solution for all residential applications.

➤ **Commercial:** From decorative ponds and lakes for apartment complexes and golf courses, to more utilitarian



applications in agriculture and aquaculture, Firestone has a range of geomembrane systems to meet any business need.

➤ **Industrial:** Industrial applications such as canals, dams, reservoirs and retention ponds often account for some of the most demanding lining projects. Firestone

geomembranes provide proven performance in conditions where quality and durability are critical.

Support, sales, training and customer service:

Visit www.firestonesp.com to locate a sales rep or distributor near you, to view installation detail videos, to find technical information, to order literature and samples, or to learn about our contractor training program.



Major product lines:

- Firestone PondGard Pond Liners
- Firestone EPDM Geomembranes
- Firestone fPP Geomembranes
- Firestone TPO Geomembranes
- A full line of accessories

Firestone Specialty Products Co., LLC
250 W. 96th St.
Indianapolis, IN 46260

Phone: 800-428-4442
Fax: 317-575-7002
Web site:
www.firestonesp.com/lm
E-mail:
info@firestonesp.com

Fisher Engineering

Product focus:

Dedication to quality and service has been a FISHER® tradition from the start. Fisher Engineering has been manufacturing snowplows for over 60 years in the coastal city of Rockland, ME. Through the years, its plows have earned a solid reputation for reliability and strength—especially among commercial snowplowers. Major product lines include:



to a scoop width of more than 9 ft., and a more effective windrowing configuration, the XLS delivers a new level of profitable performance in every plowing situation.

➤ **HD Series:** The rugged FISHER HD Series plows will withstand the rigors of all commercial applications.

➤ **MC Series:** For vehicles in the 17,000 to 27,500 gross vehicle weight range, these plows are designed for serious snowplowing.

➤ **HT Series™:** Targeted specifically for today's half-ton 4WD pickup trucks, the FISHER HT Series snowplow is a full-size, full-featured snowplow with the strength to handle institutional and extended-use homeowner applications.

➤ **SD Series:** Designed for homeowners and non-commercial plowing applications.

➤ **Spreaders:** FISHER builds a variety of PRO-CASTER™ and POLY-CASTER™ hopper spreaders and SPEED-CASTER™ tailgate spreaders to match your ice control needs.

Manufacturing facilities: FISHER's recently expanded 200,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility is in Rockland, ME. As a division of Douglas Dynamics, LLC, the country's leading manufacturer of snow and ice removal equipment, FISHER products and components are also manufactured in Douglas Dynamics' Milwaukee, WI facility.

Technical support: FISHER distributors and dealers are factory trained to provide exceptional product and service support before, during and after the sale.

➤ **XtremeV™:** FISHER has taken the best features of the rugged XBLADE™ and the popular EZ-V® snowplows and combined them to build an industry-best V-plow.

➤ **XBLADE™:** You won't find a commercial- or municipal-use snowplow built any tougher than this. It combines FISHER's exclusive X-Bracing with premium, corrosion-resistant stainless steel or poly moldboard.

➤ **XLS™ (Expandable Length Snowplow):** From an 8-ft. retracted straight-blade width to the 10-ft. expanded width,



Fisher Engineering
50 Gordon Drive
Rockland, ME 04841

Web site:
www.fisherplows.com
Contact:
fe2000@fisherplows.com



Amy O'Shea
 Director, FMC Professional Solutions

Mission Statement

Feeding the world, protecting health and providing the conveniences of life. With our superior technology and strong partnerships with customers, FMC Corporation is finding solutions that help to change people's lives for the better.

FMC Corporation
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 Philadelphia, PA 19103

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Fax: 215-299-6100
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www.fmcprosolutions.com
E-mail:
fmc.prosolutions@fmc.com

FMC Corporation

Product focus:

FMC is a global, diversified chemical company that has been providing innovative solutions, applications and quality products for more than a century to agricultural, industrial and consumer markets.

FMC products are formulated in the United States. Our corporate headquarters and customer support center is located in Philadelphia, and our extensive team of research, sales representatives and technical support are scattered throughout the United States.

Major product lines:

FMC provides a full line of proven liquid, granular and aerosol insecticides for indoor and outdoor pest and termite control, pre- and post-emergence herbicides, fungicides, and more.

Talstar: Our Talstar® products are the #1 trusted brand in general pest control, giving lawn care operators cost effective, proven solutions for long-lasting, broad-spectrum control of more than 75 of the toughest lawn and ornamental pests, including ants (including fire ants), billbugs, chinch bugs, fleas, ticks, and more.

This includes the popular **Talstar® EZ** granular insecticide for unmatched control of surface feeding pests and an



odorless, low-dust formulation; **Talstar® Professional**, a water-based, liquid formulation; **Talstar® PL** granular insecticide, which uses a sand carrier for more invisible control of perimeter pests; and the new **Talstar® XTRA**, which eliminates fire ants and other outdoor pests in as little as minutes, while not sacrificing the long-lasting residual that professionals expect from Talstar.

Herbicides: Our new and ever-expanding list of herbicides gives lawn care operators control of weeds without the

wait. The list includes:

- **Solitare®** herbicide, the only all-in-one postemergence weed control solution against crabgrass, sedges and tough broadleaf weeds;
- **Dismiss®** herbicide, the industry's fastest control of sedges with visible results in 24-48 hours;
- **Echelon®**, a pre-emergent crabgrass and sedge control that is both root and shoot absorbed for over 100 days of control that is available in a sprayable formulation and on fertilizer;
- **New SquareOne™** herbicide for increased application flexibility on newly seeded turf;
- **QuickSilver®** herbicide, a common tank mix partner with typical 3-way broadleaf products for fast and broader spectrum control of common broadleaf weeds.

Additional products for lawn care are listed on our web site at www.fmcprosolutions.com.

(FMC, Talstar, Solitare, Dismiss, Echelon, SquareOne, and QuickSilver are trademarks of FMC Corporation. © FMC Corporation. All rights reserved.)





Joe Shoener
Solutions Manager and
Vice President

Mission Statement

Our mission is to make it easy for landscape and lawn care professionals to grow their businesses. Our marketing solutions improve our clients' image and results.

Focal Point Communications

Product focus:

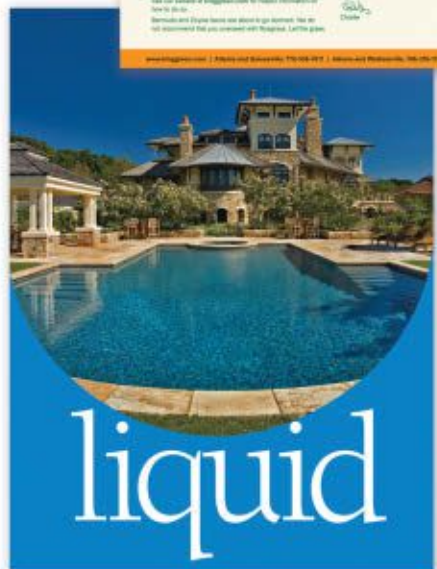
Focal Point is a marketing company serving landscape and lawn care professionals exclusively. We focus on getting results for our clients by generating more leads, helping to close more sales, retaining more clients and utilizing new media to improve credibility and success. We've been serving the green industry since 1987, providing effective marketing solutions with our dedicated and talented team of professionals.

Support, sales and service:

We pride ourselves on exceptional customer service, and when you work with us, you can expect a smooth, trouble-free and friendly experience. Our new website at www.growpro.com enables our customers to learn about our products, send inquiries and shop for marketing materials at any time.

Product lines:

Focal Point creates and manages newsletter, e-newsletter and direct mail programs. We provide website design and custom graphic design, in addition to our catalog of postcards, presentation folders, educational materials and client communication tools. We develop marketing plans for our clients and offer full rebranding services.



Focal Point Communications
61 Circle Freeway Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45246
800-525-6999

Web site:
www.growpro.com
E-mail:
joeshoener@growpro.com

Grant Gibson
 Founder & President

Mike Rorie
 CEO

Go iLawn



Product focus:

Go iLawn, www.goilawn.com, delivers an online measuring service for green industry professionals. Go iLawn combines high-resolution aerial photographs, a suite of measuring tools and property information all into one easy-to-use application. Go iLawn can be used to accurately measure area, linear distance, height and more of both residential and commercial properties from the convenience of the office.

The process is simple and efficient: enter an address, view a high-resolution image of the property, measure anything on the screen. All measurements can be color-coded, labeled, copied, edited, printed and saved. Measurements are automatically calculated

and formatted to an Excel spreadsheet, making it easy to include both measurement data and property photos in customer job files.

Go iLawn offers more than just measuring tools. Neighborhood and property reports allow users to gather information about their markets and the surrounding area. Neighborhood reports include local demographics, and property reports provide specifics that include owner name, property value and mail carrier route.

Go iLawn is available 24 hours a day and does not require software installation.

With Go iLawn you can:

- ▶ View high-resolution photographs of residential and commercial properties from the office

- ▶ Measure prospective and verify existing properties
- ▶ Measure area, linear distance, height, slope and more (turf, mulch beds, trees, parking lots, etc.)
- ▶ Color code, label, copy, edit, print and save data and photos
- ▶ Create site maps
- ▶ Extract property information for marketing

Sales and support:

The Go iLawn team is dedicated to educating its customers with training and live support along with a help center that features tutorial videos and a knowledge base of support related articles.

Major product lines:

Go iLawn: www.goilawn.com
Go iSnow: www.go-isnow.com



Go iLawn
 7157 East Kemper Road
 Cincinnati, OH 45249

Phone: 800-270-6782
Web site: www.goilawn.com
E-mail:
goisales@gisdynamics.com



Stan Guyer
President

Mission Statement

Design, manufacture and distribute high-quality, versatile, zero-turn outdoor power equipment that provides long-lasting value to its owner.



Grasshopper
P.O. Box 637
Moundridge, KS 67107

Phone: 620-345-8621
Fax: 620-345-2301
Web site:
grasshoppermower.com
E-mail:
info@grasshoppermower.com

Grasshopper

Product focus:

The Grasshopper Company is a pioneer of zero-turn mowers and grounds maintenance equipment, continually innovating for maximum performance, durability and comfort since 1969.

Major product lines:

For more than 40 years, Grasshopper has focused on manufacturing a complete line of zero-turn mowers, PowerVac™ Collection Systems, and other turf-renovation and snow-removal implements that are highly productive, supremely comfortable and easy to maintain. These fuel-efficient, environmentally friendly products provide easy operation, versatility and timesaving performance—a turf care professional’s production solution based

on zero-turn maneuverability.

Grasshopper offers durable horizontal- and vertical-shaft engine options—fuel-efficient diesel or gasoline, 16- to 35-horsepower—with mid-mounted (MidMount™) or front-mounted (FrontMount™) DuraMax® decks.

Grasshopper power units optimize the zero-turn performance of a wide range of year-round implements, including the AERA-vator™, dethatcher, Little Bully™ dozer blades,



Edge-EZE™ edger, PowerVac™ Collection System, CleanSweep™ rotary broom, Remote Vac™, shielded sprayer, DriftBuster™ snow thrower, turbine blower and V-plow. The exclusive QuikConverter™ implement system allows operators to remove FrontMount™ DuraMax® decks and connect implements in minutes without tools. Only Grasshopper lets you mow, aerate, edge, blow leaves, dethatch, pick up debris, and push, sweep or throw snow with only one engine to maintain.

Among the company’s major firsts for the industry, Grasshopper is the originator of dual swing-away control levers for mowers as well as the ergonomic PowerFold® deck lift that raises the deck to vertical at the touch of a switch, and provides electric cutting height adjustment capability. Now PowerFold® is a standard feature on the massive 72-in. DuraMax® decks as well as the new 35 Series dedicated rear-discharge decks for FrontMount™ power units.

As the first zero-turn manufacturer to offer diesel engine options, Grasshopper

continues to lead and perfect diesel-powered mowing and turf maintenance equipment with engines that are CARB Tier 4-I compliant, save 700 gallons of fuel for every 1,000 hours of operation, and pack power and efficiency to add more than \$9,000 every year to the bottom line.

Manufacturing facility:

Grasshopper engineers continuously research and innovate new product features and improvements at its 300,000-sq.-ft. facility in Moundridge, KS. Our skilled manufacturing specialists use computer-aided manufacturing integrated with 3-D solid modeling computer design system, CNC fabrication and machining and robotic welding.

Sales, training and customer service:

Dealers benefit from factory service training, support from knowledgeable territory sales representatives and helpful factory customer service representatives.

Jim Ross
President

Mission Statement

As a professional distributor to the Green Industry, we are committed to exceeding our customer's expectations by providing quality products, innovative services and professional knowledge; measured by the mutual profitability and success of our customers, employees and shareholders.

Horizon Distributors, Inc.



Product focus:

Horizon is more than just a landscape and irrigation distributor; we are your partner, ready to deliver the products and services you need to be successful. Horizon offers the most complete selection of products in the industry, including irrigation, fertilizer, pesticides, seed and sod, mowers, 2-cycle equipment, lighting, pond supplies, barbeques, tools, safety products, pavers and more. Every Horizon region has an in-store service center that offers repairs and maintenance to your power equipment.

More than 60 locations in 11 states means that there is a Horizon store conveniently located near your job or property. All stores are open merchandised, helping you to get in and out more quickly. And Horizon's professional, knowledgeable staff—which includes many bilingual team members—can offer ideas and

solutions to any member of your crew. Horizon teams include experts in agronomy, water conservation, equipment and ponding that can answer your questions and ensure you find the right solution.

Horizon offers the Business Builder Program, an innovative new program that helps landscape professionals grow their business and be more profitable. The BBP features services like the Marketing

Toolkit—templates and printing services to help you create marketing materials to advertise your business. Most recently Horizon launched BizPro, an online training program that discusses ideas for new services you can offer to increase income along with the tools you need to help sell those services to your clients.

With on-time delivery, will-call, online account access, parts hotline, accounting hotline, paperless invoicing and more, Horizon is the only distributor you need to get the job done.

Stop by your local store today to see the Horizon difference first hand. Or you can reach Horizon by calling 800-PVC-TURF or online at horizononline.com.

Horizon Distributors—the edge you need.



Horizon Distributors, Inc.
261 N. Roosevelt Ave.
Chandler, AZ 85226

Phone: 800-782-8873
Fax: 480-337-6701
Web site:
www.horizononline.com
E-mail:
info@horizononline.com





Mona Haberer
President and CEO

Mission Statement

To guide and provide the green industry with superior, cost-effective insurance solutions.



Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits

1 Horticultural Lane
P.O. Box 428
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Phone: 800-851-7740

Fax: 800-233-3642

Web site:

www.hortica-insurance.com

E-mail:

sales@hortica-insurance.com

Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits

Product focus:

Founded in 1887, Hortica is the only U.S. insurance company solely dedicated to landscape professionals, nurseries, greenhouse growers, garden centers, interior plantscapers, retail florists and wholesale floral distributors—the entire green industry. We realize the industry is unpredictable and ever-changing. Rest assured our focus is, and will remain, dedicated to protecting you.

Hortica will guide you in designing an insurance plan to provide protection for equipment at job sites, on-the-job employee injuries, chemical application, landscape design/architecture errors and omissions, your employees and other risks unique to your business. With the right coverages at competitive prices, Hortica can help your business improve its bottom line.

Hortica actively participates and supports many national and state industry associations including Professional Landcare Network, Association of Professional Landscape Designers, American Nursery & Landscape Association, OFA—an Association of Horticultural Professionals, Master Nursery Garden Centers and Society of American Florists.



Facilities:

Hortica is a national company with its corporate office located in the St. Louis metropolitan area in Edwardsville, IL. The company has branch offices in California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Hortica has approximately 80 account executives throughout the country.

Support:

When you call Hortica's toll-free number, a real person will answer your call. Our knowledgeable insurance experts will help you stay abreast of your insurance program. Hortica provides cost-saving services to our clients such as loss control training programs, safety resource materials and proactive claims handling. We will even help you

avoid unreasonable liability by reviewing legal contracts. In the event of a loss, a professional on-staff adjuster will guide you through every detail and provide a prompt, fair and hassle-free claim settlement.

Major product lines:

Hortica is the green industry advocate that is a trusted partner for all business insurance, employee benefits and personal insurance. We provide a full range of products and services including business package policies, business automobile, workers compensation, bonds, errors and omissions, umbrella, nursery crop, employment practices liability, flood and earthquake, health insurance, long-term care, disability and a variety of personal lines coverage.



Paul Mullet
President

Mission Statement

To provide innovative and durable outdoor power equipment, maximizing customer profitability and employee satisfaction, while creating value for shareholders.



HUSTLER

Hustler Turf Equipment
200 South Ridge Road
Hesston, KS 67062

Phone: 800-395-4757

Fax: 620-327-1321

Web site:

www.hustlerturf.com

E-mail: info@excelii.com

Hustler Turf Equipment



Product focus:

In 1964, Hustler Turf Equipment built the first true zero-turning-radius mower. Since then, Hustler has continued to concentrate on providing the highest quality, most productive, and innovative mowers to its customers.

Manufacturing facility:

More than 185,000-sq.-ft. facility in Hesston, KS, which features the latest in powdercoat paint technology with a 9-stage wash system for the best finish in the industry.

Technical support:

Hustler has earned the industry reputation of having an uncommon commitment to customer service.

Major product lines:

- ▶ The **Sport™** offers homeowners exceptional Hustler quality and dependability at a more affordable price.
- ▶ The **X-ONE™** is a commercial mower at an attractive price, without

compromising quality and features.

- ▶ Hustler Turf has raised the bar for its competition with The Next Generation Super Z. Built to industrial standards, the **Super Z™** features Hustler's new VX4 technology. Look for the new Super Z in January 2011.

▶ The **TrimStar™** is the most innovative and technologically advanced walk-behind mower on the market. The feature-rich TrimStar is priced lower than competitive hydrostatic, floating-deck mowers, making it a tremendous value.

- ▶ Want to lower your carbon footprint? **The Hustler Zeon™**, the world's first all-electric zero-turning-radius mower, can help you reach that goal.

Samuel R. Allen
Chairman & CEO

John Deere



Product focus:

The John Deere organization is noted for more than 170 years of innovation, the highest quality products and product operator safety initiatives.

John Deere manufactures and distributes a full range of products and services designed for the commercial customer.

From commercial riding mowers and compact tractors

to skid steers and utility vehicles, John Deere offers an extensive equipment line to address landscaping needs, from design to daily maintenance.

Creating a total solution for the commercial customer, John Deere also offers a wide range of soft goods and landscaping materials from John Deere Landscapes, competitive

finance options and seasonal payment plans to optimize cash flow through John Deere Credit, superior parts and service, and the support of a strong national dealer network.

Manufacturing facilities:

John Deere manufactures commercial products in Fuquay-Varina, NC; Horicon, WI; Augusta, GA; Alpharetta, GA; and Dubuque, IA.

Technical support and training:

At www.JohnDeere.com, customers can find information on a variety of support functions, including online product operator manuals and training modules, warranty information and product selector tools.



John Deere
1 John Deere Place
Moline IL, 61265

Phone: 800-537-8233
Web site:
www.JohnDeere.com

Tom Rich
President

L.T. Rich Products

Product focus:

L.T. Rich Products is a manufacturer of stand-on fertilizer/spray systems, aerators and turf renovators for the commercial lawn care industry. All units are zero-turn and feature a pump/wheel motor transmission. We use only state-of-the-art laser-cutting equipment and CNC fabrication machinery.

Sprayers feature all stainless

steel construction with large fertilizer and liquid spraying capacity. Sizes range from 100 to 300 pounds for fertilizer and eight to 50 gallons of liquid.

Aerators feature 36-in. or 46-in. tine width and 95,000-sq.-ft.-per-hour productivity.

Several attachments are available for the aerators, including a spray system, fertilizer spreader, de-thatch rake, slit seeder and even

a snow plow. Custom and purpose-built units are also available. All products are sold direct or through a dealer base depending on location.

Manufacturing facility:

22,000-sq.-ft. facility in Lebanon, IN.

Major product lines:

- Z-SPRAY
- Z-PLUG

L.T. Rich Products
920 Hendricks Drive
Lebanon, IN 46052

Phone: 877-482-2040

Fax: 765-482-2050

Web site:

www.z-spray.com

E-mail: sales@z-spray.com





Project EverGreen: Continuing to Make a Measurable Difference

By Norman Goldenberg, President
Project EverGreen Board of Directors

Just six years ago, with the support of our contributors, staff and industry partners, Project EverGreen launched an effort to preserve and enhance green spaces in our communities for today and future generations.

We remain committed to winning the hearts and minds of consumers by using local grassroots efforts to carry the resonating message about green spaces throughout America—ultimately sustaining the vibrant green industry that makes it all possible.

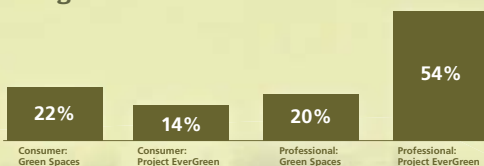
Highlights:

- The Milwaukee EverGreen Zone launched with landscape personality, Melinda Myers, as spokesperson.
- Our third EverGreen Zone launched in North Carolina in Spring 2010.
- We officially launched Project EverGreen in Canada.
- Green industry companies are now including the Project EverGreen logo into their business and marketing materials.
- A new hosta named for GreenCaare for Troops goes on sale this summer.
- We continue working closely with other green industry associations to help educate consumers about how we are positively impacting green spaces.
- Holiday CD by Little Chicago is a big hit nationwide.

EverGreen Zone Grassroots Education Program Returned in Akron, Ohio and launched in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2009

Independent research verifies that we continue to increase consumer awareness about the benefits of green spaces. By educating consumers through EverGreen Zones, we are changing consumer attitudes.

Change in Awareness:



GreenCare for Troops Continues to Grow

- The total number of families grew by 21% in 2009.
- The total number of volunteers grew by 20% in 2009.
- Approximately 9,200 military families and more than 2,400 volunteers are involved.



Help Us Spread the Good News About "Managed Green Spaces"

Continue your financial support of Project EverGreen because "a rising tide lifts all boats."

For more information about Project EverGreen go to www.ProjectEverGreen.com or call us toll-free at 1-877-758-4835.



Rand A. Baldwin
Managin Director

Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show

The Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show (Mid-Am), scheduled for Jan. 19-21, 2011, will appeal to everyone throughout the horticulture industry at every level. Business owners, CEOs, landscape architects, arborists, garden center retailers, landscape construction/maintenance professionals and more will find something of value at Mid-Am. Mid-Am provides buying opportunities with hundreds of exhibits displaying the latest equipment, products and services, career-advancing education and relationship-building networking events.

Mingle with your peers at the Pier

Mid-Am is returning to Chicago's Navy Pier—a favorite location of attendees and exhibitors alike. Close to the action in downtown Chicago, Navy Pier provides a fantastic backdrop for Mid-Am with a wide variety of dining and entertainment options.

Mid-Am is the original industry social network, helping horticulture professionals in the Midwest to connect and facilitate business for 38 years! At Mid-Am you'll find the resources to get answers, build contacts and obtain ideas to grow and enhance your business.

Mid-Am 2011 Highlights include:

▶ **Free Mid-Am Mixer & Reception.** Scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 20 from 5-6:30 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom at Navy Pier, the Mid-Am Mixer is a great place for professionals to connect and network.

▶ **Sustainability Zone.** This specialized section of exhibits on the show floor is organized to help attendees keep up with the latest plants, products and information on today's hottest trend: sustainability. Find out what you should know, discover products for your business, and learn sustainable techniques in the Sustainability Zone.



Educational opportunities

Mid-Am's education and career growth options feature sessions presented by some of the brightest minds in the industry. Visit midam.org for program and registration details.

Pre-conference workshops. The Mid-Am Pre-Conference Workshops on Tuesday, Jan. 18, presented by the Illinois Green Industry Association (IGIA) and the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association (ILCA), offer three concurrent full-day educational workshops designed to provide ideas and solutions for green industry businesses.

Mentoring roundtables. Ask questions, get feedback and find solutions at the Mentoring Roundtable on Jan. 19. Two 50-minute sessions with concurrent table topics keep owners and managers abreast of the latest and hottest issues. Industry veterans who have been in the trenches offer advice and share their experiences to provide a valuable learning experience.

Midwinter Conference. Presented by IGIA and ILCA, the Midwinter Conference on Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 19 and 20, offers two full days of business-centric sessions focusing on timely topics for green industry professionals. Tracks include Sales & Marketing, Plants & Horticulture, Management & Operations, Sustainable Solutions and Business Retail.

For all the latest information and to register, visit www.midam.org.



Mid-America Horticultural Trade Show
1000 N. Rand Road
Suite 214
Wauconda, IL 60084

Phone: 800-223-8761
Fax: 847-526-3993
Web site: www.midam.org
E-mail: mail@midam.org

For exhibiting information, visit www.exhibitmidam.org or contact Show Manager Suzanne Spohr.

Jim Jackson
President

Mission Statement

MistAway® Systems is the leading manufacturer of outdoor misting systems that control mosquitoes, spiders, no see-ums and other annoying insects. We are committed to providing our dealers with the best business opportunity in misting.

MistAway Systems



Product focus:

MistAway manufactures a system that sprays a very fine mist of a dilute botanical insecticide through a nozzle circuit that is installed around the perimeter of a backyard or other area where people want to spend time outdoors. The mist settles on the grass and landscaping and as mosquitoes and other pests come into contact with the insecticide, they are killed. The systems are both very effective and safe.

While the margins from installation of the systems are attractive, our units make an ideal platform for our dealers to operate a highly profitable recurring service business.

Technology, support and training:

MistAway is committed to innovation, and our products are the most advanced and reliable in the industry. Our design and engineering is primarily driven by the ideas, experiences and feedback of our dealers, who have installed more than 15,000 of our systems in the U.S. and abroad.

We offer unmatched technical and sales support and reliable, quick, friendly service.



We also offer comprehensive, practical training at MistAway University, conducted monthly in our offices in Houston.

Dealer opportunities:

We are very excited about the opportunity to introduce this new application of misting technology to every market where property owners seek relief from mosquitoes, no-see-ums and other outdoor pests; and we are actively seeking entrepreneurs to act as dealers for our products.

We offer a chance to “get in on the ground floor” of a great business opportunity and build a lasting relationship with a leader in the industry. If you would like to learn more, please don’t hesitate to call us at 866-485-7255 or e-mail info@mistaway.com and we’ll contact you.



MistAway Systems
2121 Brittonmoore, #5200
Houston, TX 77043

Phone: 866-485-7255
Fax: 713-255-5055
Web site:
www.mistaway.com
E-mail: info@mistaway.com

Join the Community



facebook.com/LandscapeManagement



twitter.com/LandscapeMgmt

Landscape Management is the No. 1 resource for business management content from the most experienced editorial team in the industry! And now it's also the best place to connect online. Visit us on **facebook** and **twitter** or at the *LM* Blog and ask us your burning questions, become a fan or see what other contractors are talking about.



landscapemanagement.blogspot.com

Want instant feedback from the GIE+EXPO delivered direct to you?

Be sure to check *Landscape Management's* Facebook and Twitter feeds and the *LM* Blog for live updates from the show floor October 27-30.



Richard Martin
President & CEO

Mission Statement

PBI/Gordon Corporation, a 100% employee-owned company, is a national leader in specialty pest management products and those related products and services that keep our environment beautiful and bountiful.

Our mission is to continually improve our products and services to meet the needs of the many specialty markets that make up the professional turf and ornamental, home, lawn and garden, agricultural and industrial vegetation management industries.



PBI/Gordon Corporation
1217 W. 12th St.
Kansas City, MO
64101-04090

Phone: 800-821-7925
Fax: 816-474-0462
Web site:
www.pbigordon.com
E-mail:
webmaster@pbigordon.com

PBI/Gordon Corporation

Nobody knows your turf like we do

New for 2011!:

Zylam 20SG Systemic Turf Insecticide is a 20% soluble granule formulation of dinotefuran, the latest generation of neonicotinoid insecticides. It is the product of choice when you need “muscle in your tank” for outstanding control of turfgrass’ toughest pests, including chinch bug, cutworms, mole crickets, European crane flies, billbugs and annual bluegrass weevils.

Trimec® 1000 Low Odor Broadleaf Herbicide is a proprietary mixed-amine formulation. It contains MCPP and dicamba with two forms of 2,4-D – DEA (diethanolamine) and DMA (dimethylamine) for a total of four ingredients. The formulation resists crystallization, allowing more thorough absorption into the plant, resulting in more active material translocating down to the root of even the most deep-rooted perennials. This mixed-amine 2,4-D provides an incredibly broad spectrum of weed control.

Product focus:

At PBI/Gordon, innovative product development for the turf and ornamental industry is our primary focus. We were the first to formulate products specifically for this industry. We continually search for and evaluate products or product combinations that fill the needs of the professional end-use market we service. Our professional field sales team keeps us constantly alerted to these needs.

Technical support:

Technical support is available from dedicated support personnel at 800-821-7925 (answered by real people!) or at www.pbigordon.com or www.weedalert.com.

Gordon’s Professional Turf and Ornamental Products:

- ProForm® Herbicides
- Trimec® Herbicides
- Embark® and Atrimmec® Plant Growth Regulators
- Azatrol® EC Insecticide
- Ferrmec® Liquid Iron
- Launch® and Focus® Plant Nutrient Supplements





Tom Jessen
Founder

PermaGreen Supreme



Company focus:

PermaGreen Supreme, Inc. was founded in 1980 as a lawn care company, making its way by pulling hoses on lawns. It was not long before founder Tom Jessen developed innovative turf application technologies such as Low Volume (1 gallon/ thousand) spraying; the first commercially available Injection Gun System; and the first Ride-On Spreader Sprayer, which vastly increased production numbers and reduced operator fatigue. Ten-thousand spreader sprayers later, the concept has remained the same: a powerful mechanized rider, fast enough to treat 1 million square feet per day, yet small enough to fit through 36-in. gates and treat tiny lawns.

The PermaGreen™ philosophy is: "One machine that you'll use every day on almost

every lawn." It virtually eliminates walking and pushing, generates huge profits through increased production and gives employees very favorable working conditions. In today's market you can't compete using your feet.

PermaGreen™ is more than a great machine.

› **Knowledgeable and**

professional customer service:

Our Tech Support team includes former lawn care owners and technicians, in addition to former assembly line people, who know every nut and bolt of every machine we have ever built. Getting parts is fast and simple, thanks to our extremely knowledgeable technical staff and \$2 million parts inventory.

› **We stand behind you**

all the way:

We are certain you'll *love* your

PermaGreen™. To prove it, we offer a 30-day buyback guarantee and a 1-year warranty. PermaGreen™ also offers the largest dealer and repair center network in the industry.

› **Ideas to help you thrive not just survive:**

PermaGreen™ offers a free, comprehensive consultation to help you accomplish your business goals. Our Tactical Handbook (written by lawn care pros with more than 100 years of experience) offers a wealth of business tips for maximizing the output and effectiveness of your operation.

Call 800-346-2001 or visit permagreen.com for a free handbook and dealer locations.

PermaGreen Supreme
5609 Murvihill Road
Valparaiso, IN 46383

Phone: 800-346-2001

Fax: 219-476-7113

Web site:

www.permagreen.com

Mission Statement

We are a team dedicated to helping our customers fulfill their dreams by providing quality brick products and unmatched service to make it easy for them to build beautiful homes and buildings.

Pine Hall Brick Company



Product focus:

Pine Hall Brick enjoys a long history of commitment to our employees, the communities where we operate, our customers and the environment.

Since 1922, our policies, products and actions have been coordinated to harmonize with our natural surroundings including earth, water and air.

Our products can also help qualify for LEED certification in these categories:

- ▶ Sustainable Sites: Credit 6 Stormwater Design
- ▶ Sustainable Sites: Credit 7 Heat Island Effect-Non Roof
- ▶ Energy & Atmosphere: Credit 1 Optimize Energy Performance
- ▶ Materials & Resources: Credit 2 Construction Waste Management
- ▶ Materials & Resources: Credit 3 Materials Reuse
- ▶ Materials & Resources: Credit 4 Recycled Content

- ▶ Materials & Resources: Credit 5 Regional Materials
- ▶ Innovation & Design: Credit 1.2 Life Cycle Cost & Durability

Major product lines:

StormPave and RainPave

permeable clay pavers allow rainwater to filter down through a specially constructed paving system and dissipate into the soil, rather than carry excess pollutants into storm drains. **StormPave** permeable clay pavers are perfect for institutional and commercial projects where impervious surface restrictions apply and joint openings need to meet ADA restrictions (>1/2-in.).

RainPave Rumbled permeable clay pavers are also available.

Our rose color pavers contain 53% pre-consumer recycled content and also qualify for the Solar Reflectance Index (SRI<29).

City Cobble pavers offer a cobblestone look, which is the most popular look in segmental paving today. This 2 1/4-in. product includes two sizes, a 5 1/2-in. square and a 5 1/2-in. x 8-in. rectangle, and when they are installed in an "i" or modified herringbone pattern, they give a random cobble look reminiscent of ancient walkways laid in stone. **City Cobble** is easier to install because it's 10% smaller size allows the rectangles to be easily handled without special clamps or grippers. The Siesta color contains 54% pre-consumer recycled content and also qualifies for the Solar Reflectance Index (SRI<29).



Pine Hall Brick Co.
2701 Shorefair Drive
Winston-Salem, NC 27105

Phone: 800-334-8689
Fax: 336-721-7517
Web sites:
www.americaspriemierpaver.com
www.pinehallbrick.com
E-mail:
info@pinehallbrick.com

Progressive Commercial Insurance



If you use a car or truck in your small business, feel confident that you're protected from the unexpected with commercial auto insurance.

Join the hundreds of thousands of business owners who trust us with their insurance needs and have made us the #1 truck insurance company.

Quotes that save you time and money

Getting a Progressive Commercial auto insurance quote with a local agent takes just a few minutes.

To get started, call us at 1-888-806-9598. We'll give you a list of local agents to contact for personal service, or

connect you with an inside sales representative who can give you a quote over the phone.

Claims service that gets you back to work fast

You work hard to keep your truck on the road so you can grow your business. Choose a company that helps you get your truck repaired fast so you can get back to work.

Progressive has more than 1,000 claims representatives that specialize in commercial claims, including heavy trucks. Nearly half of the heavy truck claims we handle are fully processed within the first week—that's almost three times faster than a claim

handled by an independent adjuster.

You can also get coverages that will cover a rental vehicle or provide downtime payments. That way, your business will stay profitable if your truck's out of commission.

Customer service, your way

If you need to add a driver, switch a vehicle or just pay a bill, you can contact your agent, log in to your policy online, or call us directly any time.

Progressive Casualty Ins. Co. and its affiliates, Mayfield Village, OH. No. 1 truck from Highline Data's 2009 national written premium data.

Progressive
6300 Wilson Mills Road
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

Phone: 888-806-9598
Web site:
www.progressivecommercial.com

Paul Jackson
 Founder

Mission Statement

Alocet Incorporated is built on the belief that solid business processes create solid companies. It is our mission to be the leader in accounting software add-ons by challenging our customers to adopt software and online systems that free up time from administrative tasks in order to focus on what makes them profitable.



QXpress Scheduling Software

57 Spadina Ave., Suite 210
 Toronto, Ontario
 M5V 2J2 Canada

Phone: 888-QXpress

Fax: 416-640-6027

Web site:

www.qxpress.com

E-mail: info@alocet.com

QXpress Scheduling Software

Product focus:

QXpress is the scheduling software of choice for green industry companies who use QuickBooks.

QXpress is a true QuickBooks add-on that turns your favorite accounting package into top-rated, industry-specific management software by adding scheduling, job costing and invoicing capabilities.

You don't have to learn a whole new system—you can just add industry-specific functionality to your existing QuickBooks.

Highlighted QXpress features:

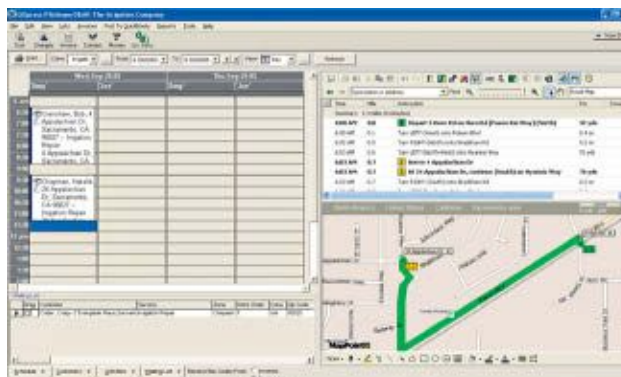
- ▶ Instantly integrate with your entire QuickBooks database with one click.
- ▶ Real-time synchronization: i.e. when a customer is added in QuickBooks, it instantly appears in QXpress and vice versa.
- ▶ Scheduled services turn into QuickBooks invoices, minimizing data entry and mistakes.



▶ QXpress comes with a built-in "Template Designer" to fully customize work orders, invoices, etc.

▶ QX Mapping™ uses highly advanced logic to re-route services to the optimal technician, day and time.

▶ QX Mobile™ is the most advanced handheld software available for the industry, allowing wireless synchronizing, remote printing, signature capture and a customizable data-entry screen.



QXpress Online:

A customizable, web-based version of QXpress Scheduling Software is now available. QXpress Online is completely customizable, so you can create your ideal scheduling add-on for QuickBooks. Simply edit existing screens, or create your own screens, tables, fields, forms, buttons and entire business processes using drag and drop wizards (no coding!).

With QXpress Online, you can access your QXpress and QuickBooks data from anywhere with an Internet connection. Using patent-pending real-time sync technology, it is the first and only web-based field service app to sync with QuickBooks in real-time.

In addition to scheduling capabilities, QXpress Online also includes a full featured CRM, customer portal and automatic backups of your database. To see a full list of features, visit www.qxpressonline.com.

Sales & technical support:

Sales and support can be reached Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. EST at 888-QXpress. Call sales for a free online demo or view movie tutorials at www.qxpress.com/MovieTutorials.

Walter K. Byrd
President

R&K Pump & Equipment

Product focus:

R&K Pump & Equipment manufactures sprayers for the lawn care, pest control, aquatics, nursery and agricultural industries. With 30 years of experience in the spray equipment industry, we produce

more than 50 models with various pump, engine and hose reel options to meet every spraying need. Our exclusive all-welded aircraft-grade aluminum frames

allow us to produce a high-strength, lightweight piece of equipment that will never rust and never needs painting.

Manufacturing facility:

Located in Pompano Beach, FL, since 1980, R&K is proud to be an American manufacturer. All welding, fabrication and assembly is completed in-house to ensure quality control and on-time deliveries. Our shops are organized into work cells that can easily be adjusted to build a custom unit or 100 production units just as efficiently. We manufacture for some of the largest fleets in the lawn care and pest control industries and provide maintenance for more than 1,500 commercial spray units.

Major product lines:

➤ **Lawn/Turf Care Trucks.**



Truck-mounted spray systems are available from 200 to 1,600 gallons.

We offer complete turnkey body and chassis combinations, or we can custom build on your existing vehicle.

➤ **Pro-Series Skid Mounted Units.** Skid units range in size from 50 to 600 gallons with poly or fiberglass tanks and more

than a dozen pump and engine combinations. These units offer exceptional service at an economic price.

➤ **Portable Commercial Sprayers.** Our 50-, 100- and 200-gallon 4-wheel carts and 2-wheel trailers are available with boom spray options and hose reel accessories to match any spraying application.



R&K Pump & Equipment, Inc.
500 NE 28th St.
Pompano Beach, FL 33064

Phone: 954-295-3144
Fax: 888-229-4341
Web site:
www.randkpump.com
E-mail:
ken@randkpump.com

Anthony “Tony” LaFetra
President

Corporate Philosophy

Water is a precious resource—and the need for each of us to use it wisely has never been greater.

As the world’s largest provider of irrigation products and services, Rain Bird leverages state-of-the-art technologies that help our customers use water effectively and responsibly. From smart controllers to pressure regulating rotors and low-volume drip irrigation, Rain Bird creates products that use water efficiently.

Through partnerships and educational initiatives, Rain Bird also strives to create opportunities for our industry partners to become better stewards of this essential resource.

To learn how The Intelligent Use of Water™ philosophy is woven into every aspect of the Rain Bird organization, visit www.rainbird.com/iuow.

Rain Bird
970 W. Sierra Madre Ave.
Azusa, CA 91702

Phone: 1-800-RAINBIRD
(1-800-724-6247)

Web site:
www.rainbird.com

Twitter: @RainBirdCorp

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RainBirdCorp

YouTube: www.youtube.com/RainBirdCorp

Rain Bird

A History of Innovation

For more than 75 years, Rain Bird has offered the world’s most trusted line of irrigation products for homes, commercial developments, farms, golf courses and sports arenas. A true industry pioneer, Rain Bird has been awarded more than 130 patents, including its first in 1935 for the original horizontal action impact drive sprinkler.

Today, Rain Bird continues that same spirit of innovation at one of the most comprehensive irrigation testing facilities in the world. At this facility, Rain Bird engineers evaluate products under the most demanding conditions, helping ensure unsurpassed product performance and durability while finding more efficient ways to provide the moisture that turf and plants need to thrive.

Quality products for top performance

▶ **Controllers.** Rain Bird is known for introducing groundbreaking controller technology, and the new ESP-LXD is no exception. This controller combines the programming ease of traditional controllers with the flexibility and cost savings of two-wire decoder systems. Another recent innovation, the new Landscape Irrigation and Maintenance Remote (LIMR), enables a single crew member to communicate with a system’s



controller from a distance to perform tasks that formerly required a two-person team.

▶ **Drip Irrigation.**

Rain Bird’s drip irrigation products continue to provide outstanding water efficiency. Unaffected by wind or evaporation, XF-SDI Series Subsurface Dripline effectively irrigates turf, shrubs and groundcover with 30% to 70% less water than overhead sprays. Patent-pending Copper Shield™ Technology protects the dripline’s emitters from root intrusion without the use of chemically-treated filters.

▶ **Sprays and Rotors.** For

decades, Rain Bird’s sprays and rotors have developed a proven track record of unmatched performance. With integrated pressure regulation, Rain Bird’s 1800-PRS spray heads eliminate inefficient misting and fogging. And Rain Bird’s 5000 PRS Rotors save 15% to 45% more water than other brands of rotors on the market today.

▶ **Accessories.** Rain Bird

offers a host of irrigation system accessories that

save time and water. The revolutionary SMRT-Y Soil Moisture Sensor measures plant and turf moisture levels where they matter most—at the roots—and transmits that information back to the controller. A water-saving accessory that’s both efficient and affordable, the WR2 Wireless Rain and Rain/Freeze Sensor makes it possible for customers on a budget to enjoy the benefits of smart technology.

The Intelligent Use of Water™

Rain Bird’s commitment to excellence extends beyond products to education, training and services. From the new EPA WaterSense-labeled certification program offered by Rain Bird Services Corporation to thought-provoking white papers like *Water Conservation and the Green Industry*, Rain Bird continues to promote The Intelligent Use of Water™.

Visit www.rainbird.com and discover the many reasons why Rain Bird is the world’s leader in irrigation.

Fred Diaz
President & CEO,
Ram Truck Brand

Ram Trucks



Ram 1500 Laramie Crew Cab –
the most awarded Ram truck ever



RAM

Ram Trucks
1000 Chrysler Drive
Auburn Hills, MI 48326

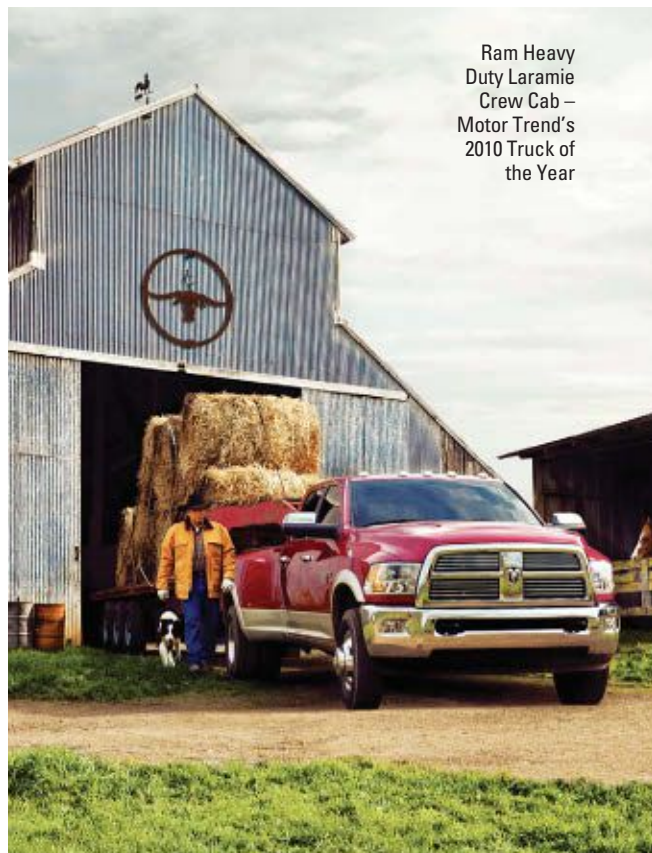
Phone: 866-726-4636
Web site: ramtrucks.com

Product focus:

Ram trucks are built, designed and constructed by a new breed of machinists, engineers and truck fanatics who share the same unending passion for trucks as the people who drive them. They are the gear-heads, the master craftsmen, the guys who bleed gasoline and aren't afraid to get a little dirt under their fingernails. Ram is composed of people whose mission is to revive the long-standing tradition of building trucks the way they were meant to be built, with legendary HEMI and Cummins engines, refined interiors and ground-breaking features. That's what makes Ram run.

Major product lines:

- Ram 1500 Pickup
- Ram 2500 / 3500 Pickups
- Ram 3500 Chassis Cab
- Ram 4500 / 550 Chassis Cabs
- Dakota



Ram Heavy
Duty Laramie
Crew Cab –
Motor Trend's
2010 Truck of
the Year

Swanson Graves
President

Reddick Equipment Co.

Product focus:

Reddick Equipment Co. has been manufacturing sprayers since 1965. We produce sprayers for multiple markets, including lawn care, turf, pest control, deicing, tree care, nursery, agricultural and highway. Our equipment is available with frames built from mild steel, stainless steel or aluminum to carry poly or fiberglass tanks from 8 gallons to 1,650 gallons. With more

than \$1.2 million in sprayer parts inventory, we can build most equipment right off the shelf and provide replacement parts for most major brands throughout the industry.

Manufacturing facility:

Located in eastern North Carolina just east of I-95, we operate in 28,000 square feet of manufacturing space. The strong values of our rural community are reflected in the conscientious attitude of our employees and management staff.

Technical support:

Our customer service department is staffed by five senior technicians with a wide variety of expertise within the spraying industry, and they enjoy sharing their knowledge. The value to you is receiving the right parts and equipment for your job—the first time.

Major product lines:

➤ **Pest Control / Lawn Care**

Skids. Aluminum skid frames with poly tanks or our seamless fiberglass tanks with safety cross baffles from 30- to 500-gallon capacity to fit ATV, UTV and truck applications.

Diaphragm, centrifugal and 12V pumps options, manual

and electric hose reel options.

➤ **Deicing Skids.** Aluminum or stainless steel frames and rear-mounted shielded spray booms with poly or our seamless fiberglass tanks with safety cross baffles from 100- to 500-gallon capacity.

➤ **Agricultural.** Three-point hitch, utility tool bar and trailer sprayers up to 1,000-gallon capacity with spray booms available up to 72 feet.



Reddick Equipment Co.
1909 W. Main St.
Williamston, NC 27892

Phone: 800-334-3388

Fax: 252-792-4913

Web site:

www.reddickequipment.com

E-mail: sales@reddick.cc



Pat Cappucci
President

Mission Statement

To make it easier for grounds care professionals and serious do-it-yourself homeowners to care for their property and gardens and achieve the superior results they demand.

Vision

To have our brands be recognized by our end-user customers as the performance leaders in each segment of the grounds care market that we serve.

Schiller Grounds Care
1028 Street Road
Southampton, PA 18966

Phone: 877-596-6337
Fax: 215-357-1071
Web site:
www.schillergc.com
E-mail:
lbeatie@schillergc.com

Schiller Grounds Care



Product focus:

Schiller Grounds Care manufactures some of the most trusted brands in the outdoor power equipment industry—BOB-CAT, Classen, Little Wonder, Mantis, Ryan and Steiner. To learn more about our brands or to locate a dealer in your area, visit our web sites:

- www.bobcaturf.com
Commercial walk-behind and riding mowers
- www.classenturfcare.com
Turf care equipment
- www.littlewonder.com
Landscaping and debris management equipment
- www.mantisdealer.com
Gardening and yard care
- www.ryanturf.com
Turf renovation equipment
- www.steinerturf.com
Mid-sized compact tractors and attachments

Manufacturing facilities:

Southampton, PA; Johnson Creek, WI; Norfolk, NE

Major product lines:

- Mowers: Walk-behind & Zero-turn riding mowers
- Tillers
- Walk-behind Blowers
- Hedge trimmers
- Edgers
- Loaders
- Debris vacuums
- Composters
- Log splitters
- Aerators
- Dethatchers (Power Rakes)
- Seeders
- Sod cutters
- Tractors
- Snow management tools and accessories

Our core values / beliefs:

- Customers Come First. Walk a mile in their shoes.
- Innovation and Product Quality
- Customer Service and Continuous Improvement
- Teamwork
- Passion
- Entrepreneurial Spirit



Martin Tirado, CAE
Executive Director, SIMA

Daniel Gilliland, CSP
President, SIMA Board
of Directors

Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA)

The Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA) is a non-profit trade association that ensures professionalism and safer communities by helping those who manage snow and ice master essential skills and practices. The association represents more than 1,600 industry professionals, connecting suppliers to buyers, and peers in snow and ice.



Snow & Ice Symposium

Each year, SIMA coordinates the go-to event in the industry, the **Snow & Ice Symposium**. This event features more than 20 educational sessions, a pre-conference event, and multiple networking receptions and opportunities. Furthermore, it provides a two-day trade show where industry pros can find the newest and best equipment and services to help them grow their businesses. It's also a ton of fun, with contests, a closing event and annual Snow Warrior awards banquet, which honors the best of the best in snow and ice management. The 14th annual Snow & Ice Symposium will take place June 22-25, 2011, in Schaumburg, IL.



Certified Snow Professional

SIMA is proud of the **Certified Snow Professional** program (CSP). In the past five years, SIMA has certified nearly 200 snow and ice management professionals, and the program is growing at a strong pace. The CSP designation is more than letters after a name—it illustrates a long process of experience, preparation and testing that helps grow the skill set of a snow and ice professional. Owners and managers looking to better themselves and their snow businesses should strongly consider this program.



Bidding programs

For anyone in the industry looking to learn more about how to build a consistent and accurate pricing/bidding structure specific to snow, SIMA's **Build a Bid** and **Beyond the Bid** programs offer the industry's only snow-specific bidding programs.

Education and training

▶ In print, online and in person, SIMA delivers incomparable value to snow and ice professionals: SIMA owns **Snow Business** magazine and **www.GoPLOW.com**, the two best sources of information, training and tips in the industry.



▶ The annual **Snow Strategies Forum** delivers high-quality programming for snow and ice management business owners.



▶ Quarterly webinars are presented through **SIMA Online**.

▶ Snow-specific training materials cover a wide selection of operational scenarios.



Supplier savings

SIMA members enjoy discounts and savings with many of the leading manufacturers and suppliers in the industry through our **SIMA Savings** program.

To learn more about SIMA and how it can be a valuable resource for snow and ice management professionals, visit www.sima.org or call 414-375-1940.



SIMA
7670 North Port
Washington Road
Suite 105
Milwaukee, WI 53217

Phone: 414-375-1940

Online with SIMA:
www.sima.org
www.goplow.com
[facebook.com/The Snow & Ice Management Association, Inc.](https://www.facebook.com/TheSnow&IceManagementAssociation)
[twitter.com/@SIMASnow](https://twitter.com/SIMASnow)
[Linkedin.com/Snow & Ice Management Association](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Snow-amp-Ice-Management-Association)

Mission Statement

The vision of Syngenta is to provide the best products in the industry, to build superior packages of chemistries and technology, and to provide strong technical field support, all to help professional turf managers exceed the expectations of their customers while growing their profits with add-on services.



Syngenta

Major product lines:

Syngenta offers some of the industry's most effective herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and plant growth regulators, including:

➤ **Barricade®**, a selective pre-emergence herbicide that offers low-rate, season-long control of more than 30 grassy and broadleaf weeds, including crabgrass, goosegrass and *Poa annua*. Barricade offers

a wide application window in both liquid and wettable granule formulations, both of which give operators a high degree of flexibility. Barricade is also available in an "on-fertilizer" formulation.

➤ **Meridian®**, a low use rate insecticide that provides lawn care operators with control and application flexibility in managing a broad spectrum of grubs and insects. It also metabolizes slowly in turfgrass, allowing for extended control with good knockdown activity.

➤ **Headway®**, a fungicide that includes two complementary active ingredients to deliver broad-spectrum disease control against brown patch, dollar spot and other major turf diseases. Headway's dual

modes of action provide lawn care operators with a cost-effective and practical way to control major turf diseases plus ward off disease resistance.

➤ **Heritage® G** granular fungicide, which provides the same effectiveness of a liquid formulation, but with the flexibility to spread when weather or other conditions prevent spraying. Heritage G uses a highly water-soluble carrier that offers long-lasting, broad-spectrum control of turf diseases including brown patch, anthracnose and take-all patch.

Customer support:

Syngenta offers lawn-care operators:

➤ More than 30 territory managers, who consult with customers to solve problems and work in partnership with a nationwide network of full-service distribution partners;

➤ Field technical managers located across the country, who are available to assist with issues that customers might face;

➤ A Customer Center, available at 1-866-Syngenta(a), which gives lawn care operators access to technical and product support as well as assistance with marketing programs;

➤ Innovative online tools such as GreenCast® (www.greencastonline.com), a web-based technology platform that delivers weather,



pest and reference information directly to customers' desktops; and

➤ The GreenTrust™ 365 Professional Turf Management Program, which allows customers to earn rebates for purchases of qualifying products throughout the year. Program participants can lock in a yearlong rebate percentage with only \$5,000 worth of purchases of qualifying products during the early order period. Details are available at: www.greentrust365.com.

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Syngenta
P.O. Box 18300
Greensboro, NC 27419

Phone: 866-SYNGENTA
886-796-4368

Fax: 336-632-6135

Web site:
www.greencastonline.com

E-mail:
dan.steltz@syngenta.com



George Kinkead
President

Turfco Direct

Company focus:

A family-owned company, Turfco Manufacturing has roots in the turf maintenance industry dating back to 1919. From day one, we have been driven by a passion for helping turf maintenance professionals be more effective and productive. We created Turfco Direct to form a direct connection with lawn care professionals. From buying and servicing equipment, to getting direct answers to renovation questions, we strive to be the easiest, most helpful company to work with in the industry. By building equipment that is intuitive, productive and easy to operate, we've engineered "easy" into every piece of equipment we make.

Turfco Direct advantages

› Innovative, Quality Products:

Our innovative products are built to withstand the most rigorous duty in the field, to increase productivity and to satisfy the toughest critics. When you buy from Turfco Direct, you are maximizing uptime and profits.

› Order Direct—"10+ Years of Selling Directly To You":

Call Turfco Direct and we will personally help you choose the right equipment for your needs, walk you through your purchasing options and arrange for equipment delivery.

› **Profit Tools:** Turfco Direct provides professionally designed



"The T3000 Spreader/Sprayer has been one of our most rewarding product launches to date. We designed it based on customer input and now we are watching those customers use the T3000 to generate significant growth in business and profitability."
— George Kinkead, President

brochures and door hangers to help sell your aeration, overseeding, landscaping or bed-shaping services. These tools are available to all Turfco Direct customers at a low cost to help you grow your customer base and increase revenue.

› **14-Day Trial:** We're so confident you'll like our equipment, we offer a 14-day trial period. During that time, you can return the equipment to Turfco Direct for a refund if it does not perform to your expectations.

› **2-Year Warranty:** Turfco stands behind its products with an industry-leading, two-year warranty against defects on its lawn-care products used for commercial applications or one full year for products used for rental purposes.

› **Service/Support:** Downtime costs you money. That's why our team of turf renovation experts is available

to help with parts or technical assistance. Call or get 24-hour access to our service center via www.turfcodirect.com. You'll find exploded parts drawings, convenient online ordering and technical assistance. If needed, we can work with your local repair center.

› **Parts/Shipping:** The Turfco Direct shipping department prides itself on super-fast delivery. Parts ordered by 2 p.m. CST are shipped the same day via ground or next-day service, and equipment orders are shipped within 48 hours. There is no minimum order. Check the status of your shipment online at turfcodirect.com by clicking on "Track Your Shipment."

› **Quick Financing:** Turfco Direct offers a variety of financing options. Apply by phone, fax or through our web site, and receive your notice in just half an hour.

Turfco Direct
101st Ave. NE
Minneapolis, MN 55449-4420

Phone: 800-679-8201
Web site:
www.turfcodirect.com



Ken Hutcheson
President

Mission Statement

To provide our customers with the highest quality landscape management program at competitive prices through a national organization of dedicated local owner operators and their employees, supported by the expertise of today's most accomplished industry leaders. In pursuit of excellence we are committed to honest and forthright dealings with our customers, our employees and our vendors.



U.S. Lawns Inc.
4407 Vineland Road
Suite D-15
Orlando, FL 32811

Phone: 866-781-4875
Fax: 407-246-1623
Web site:
www.uslawns.com
E-mail:
franchise@uslawns.net

U.S. Lawns Inc.

Commercial landscape management since 1986

Commercial landscape management is one of the most sustainable new businesses you can start. Mother Nature is on your side. Grass and plants grow every day. Commercial property landscape must be maintained. And that's where you come in. More than 200 franchisees have started right where you are now, some with a landscaping background, some without, but all with one thing in common: the desire to succeed as a business owner.

Business to business results in economic stability

Annual commercial contracts produce recurring income. As a U.S. Lawns franchisee, you support only commercial accounts—no residential. You will provide landscape management services to commercial office buildings and centers, apartment complexes, homeowners associations, banks, municipalities and more. Commercial properties need professional business partners to maintain their landscapes year-round and supply them with an accurate accounting of costs and quality control. Our proven model allows your business to consistently grow, regardless of the economy.

Low investment/overhead

We set ourselves apart from many franchise systems by maintaining a low overhead structure. Avoid the expensive build-outs that many concepts require. You acquire office space, and add labor and equipment as you grow your commercial clientele.

U.S. Lawns is extensive and provides you with a competitive edge in your market. You won't have to hire an in-house team or consultants to advise you. You will have access to a full staff of experts in all areas of commercial landscape maintenance, business and accounting.

You will receive ongoing



No prior experience necessary

If you do not have landscape industry experience and/or you have no experience starting or expanding your own business, no worries. Our comprehensive training program and ongoing support provides you with the tools to get your business off the ground. Our experienced industry professionals will support and train you to use your sales and management abilities to build the business, while your crews service the properties.

one-on-one mentoring in bidding and estimating, financial management, routing and scheduling, marketing and customer acquisition. You'll benefit from our corporate purchasing power for your equipment and supplies. We have support and training for your office procedures and human resource needs.

Like your family and friends, we are here to support your success every day.

➤ **For more information** about joining the U.S. Lawns team, please contact: Brandon Moxam, Director of Franchise Recruiting, at 866-781-4875 or franchise@uslawns.net.

Systems and support

The operational systems and support you will receive from

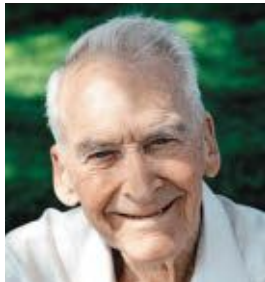
What does your future hold?

Take a peek inside The Professional Landcare Network's Crystal Ball Reports to uncover your potential business future. *Landscape Management* editors Ron Hall and Nicole Wisniewski, with a combined 40 years of industry experience, have authored the past three reports, and they are available for sale in the *LM* bookstore—<http://shop.landscapemanagement.net>.

From our bookshelf to yours.



Landscape
Management



John A.A. Thomson
President-Founder

Vitamin Institute

SUPERthrive® is a proprietary formulated invention by John A. A. Thomson, Ph.D., D.A. This is the 50-vitamins-hormones solution that helped Dr. Thomson and his Vitamin Institute win the Science and Industry gold medal at the Golden Gate International Exposition official Worlds Fair at San Francisco in 1940, for "Use for the greatest public benefit of scientific advances of the past decade."

Thomson started with the purpose of arriving at the formula that would be universal for all plants and all plant processes. SUPERthrive is the popular material for activating, reviving, transplanting, growing (beyond the effects of fertilizers) and perfecting trees and other plants.

In fact, the record shows that the Vitamin Institute has, without a challenge for 70 years, offered \$5,000 to the first person to create a product to beat SUPERthrive's efficacy for these purposes.

SUPERthrive has long been billed as "America's most unanimously respected horticultural product" for half a century and also is said to be the "World's No. 1 plant supply."



This formula is a highly concentrated liquid that is understood to have normalizing effects that bring out the maximum potential of any plant. Some 50 types of horticulture are listed by SUPERthrive's maker as improved by the product. The most popular concentration for many purposes is 3 fluid ounces of the product per 100 gallons of water.

SUPERthrive provides carbon, hydrogen and oxygen molecules that would otherwise have to be constructed by each plant in order to complete cells. It is not a fertilizer or so-called

"plant food." It, therefore, would not be required by plant materials under ideal growing conditions and with plenty of time available. It is when growing conditions are not perfect and time is a factor that SUPERthrive brings about otherwise unattainable effects, including saving 100% of trees under difficult conditions.

Some of the most noticeable results observed from adding SUPERthrive to a growing program include earlier and stronger plants, with earlier crop with heightened quality and quantity.

Vitamin Institute
12610 Saiticoy St. South
North Hollywood, CA 91605

Phone: 800-441-VITA (8482)
Fax: 818-766-VITA (8482)
Web site:
www.superthrive.com



Bob Walker
President

Mission Statement

The only way for a small company to enter an established product market and stay there is to design products with irresistible superiority and uncompromising quality. A conventional product with conventional performance may be acceptable and even attractive when offered by a large established company; the same company cannot hope to survive in the marketplace where profit margins are small, competition is strong, and consumer loyalty to existing product lines is great.



walkermowers.com

Walker Manufacturing Co.
5925 E. Harmony Road
Fort Collins, CO 80528

Phone: 1-800-279-8537

Fax: 1-970-221-5619

Web site:

www.walkermowers.com

E-mail:

info@walkermowers.com

Walker Manufacturing Co.

Product focus:

➤ **WALKER RIDING MOWERS MEAN "PRODUCTIVITY"**

Contractors, municipalities and homeowners alike are finding the Walker Riding Mower to be one of the most compact zero-turn-radius mowers available. The tractor's size and maneuverability are designed to fit and do the work of mid-size walk-behind mowers with the increased productivity of a rider. Ten tractor models are offered from 13- to 31-hp with gas or diesel engines, and 13 mower deck sizes range from 36-74-in. with grass collection, side discharge or mulching capability. All decks tilt up to 90 degrees for easy maintenance and compact storage.

In conjunction with Kohler Engines, Walker has become an industry leader for Electronic Fuel Injection (EFI) designs in power equipment—an efficiency that offers easy starting over a wide temperature range, less maintenance, and improved throttle response; along with considerable fuel savings.

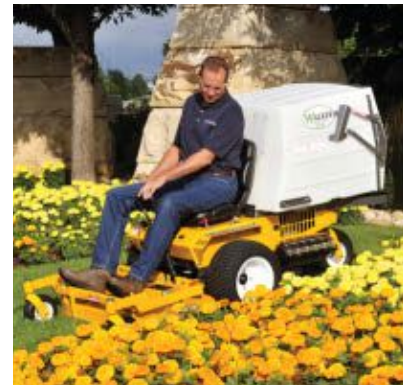


Manufacturing facility:

Walker Mowers are hand crafted in our 216,000-sq.-ft. facility in Fort Collins, CO. Walker takes pride in being more than an assembly shop. We have a full metal fabrication area and a full staff of highly skilled welders. Our average term of employment is over nine years.

Technical and sales support:

Walker sells through two-



step distribution throughout North America and around the world. Our distributors are factory supported for service but have their own in-house technical staff to support their dealer network.

Major product lines:

Commercial riding mowers and a full range of attachments make the Walker Mower a work horse all year long.



Western Products



Product focus:

For 60 years, WESTERN® snowplows have been the choice of the professional plower.

Major product lines include:

➤ **PRO PLUS®:** Since its introduction, the PRO PLUS has been a best seller that's big, tough and built to last. Designed for heavy-duty commercial and municipal applications, the PRO PLUS line fits a wide range of vehicles, from ¾-ton to F550-size trucks.

➤ **WIDE-OUT™ Adjustable Wing Snowplow:** The WIDE-OUT features a 9-ft. scoop and 9- to 10-ft. straight blade. With the leading wing angled forward, it delivers the ultimate in high-capacity windrowing. At the touch of a button, WIDE-OUT hydraulically transforms to perfectly match every plowing condition, delivering time-saving performance at each jobsite. It's the one plow that does it all.

➤ **MVP Plus™:** As the ultimate in speed and efficiency, the MVP Plus line takes V-plow performance to the next level with industry-leading speed and productivity. It's available in steel or poly in three sizes: 7½, 8½ and 9½ feet.

➤ **PRO-PLOW® & POLY PRO-PLOW®:** Leave it to the Pros. Designed to meet the requirements of the professional plower, the 7½- and 8-ft. PRO-PLOW models are available in both powder-coated steel and maintenance-free poly. An 8½-ft. model is offered in steel only.

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➤ **Ice control equipment:** WESTERN offers a full line of spreaders. Choose from ICE BREAKER™ hopper spreaders in 8- and 10-ft. lengths or the redesigned TORNADO™ poly/electric hopper spreader in 7- and 8-ft. lengths. A variety of top-performing tailgate spreaders are also available.

Manufacturing facilities:

Western Products' 150,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility is in Milwaukee. As a division of Douglas Dynamics, LLC, the country's leading manufacturer of snow and ice removal equipment, WESTERN® products and components are also manufactured in Douglas Dynamics' facilities in Rockland, ME.



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Web site:
www.westernplows.com
E-mail:
info@westernplows.com

Meet the LM Team



Nicole Wisniewski

Editor-in-Chief

Nicole Wisniewski brings 12 years of industry experience to *Landscape Management*. In addition to winning more than 35 writing awards, Nicole has won TOCA's prestigious Best of Show

honor three times in the past decade and was specially chosen to author two recent PLANET Crystal Ball books. Outside of the landscape industry, Nicole has been published in numerous trade and consumer publications, including *Smithsonian* magazine, and is a member of many industry and journalism associations, including PLANET, TOCA, the Ohio Landscape Association, the Irrigation Association and the Press Club of Cleveland.



Ron Hall — Editor-at-Large

Ron Hall joined the *Landscape Management* editorial staff in 1984 and has held every editorial position within *LM*, including editor-in-chief. In addition, Hall, who serves on several industry boards and committees and is a frequent speaker at industry events, is former editor-in-chief of *Lawn Care*

Industry and continues in that capacity for *Athletic Turf News*. The winner of more writing and editing awards than any other journalist covering the professional Green Industry, Hall has, since assuming the role of editor-at-large in 2008, focused his attentions on industry issues relating to water and pesticide use, sustainability and, of course, the ever-changing business of creating and maintaining beautiful and resource-conserving outdoor environments.



Marty Whitford

Editorial Director

Whitford is an award-winning journalist and editorial leader at Questex Media. He has served Questex's Green Group for four years, including spending the past two years at the helm of

Landscape Management magazine. He steered *LM*'s 2009 reader-driven print and Web site redesigns that helped the brand win a record number of awards from the Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA). Whitford brings with him 18 years of experience in business-to-business integrated media. He served in the U.S. Navy during the first Persian Gulf War.



Pete Grasso — Technical Editor

Promoted to Technical Editor of *Landscape Management* and *Pest Management Professional* magazines in March 2010, Grasso has nearly 10 years of editorial experience covering technology trends, university research & supplier innovations.



Dan Jacobs —

Managing Editor

Dan Jacobs was named managing editor of *Landscape Management* in November 2006. Jacobs is also managing editor for sister publication *Pest Management Professional*.

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LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

MAINTENANCE: UTILITY VEHICLES



John Deere

Boasting 50-hp, the 2011 Gator Crossover Utility Vehicle (XUV) 825i offers the highest-powered engine in its class, with low-end torque for taking on even the toughest tasks, trails and terrain. Horsepower is delivered by an 812-cc, liquid-cooled, inline 3-cylinder engine featuring four valves per cylinder, dual overhead cams and electronic fuel injection. The XUV can travel up to

44 mph, and like the rest of the 2011 Gator lineup, features a completely redesigned front and rear independent suspension system. The new models are designed for less body roll and more side-hill stability with either no-load or maximum cargo. Also, all models sport an entirely new braking system that improves stopping performance. JohnDeere.com/Gator

Bobcat

The 2011 line of utility vehicles launches with four models: the 3200, 3400, 3400XL and 3450. Features range from two-wheel drive to the four-wheel drive, attachment-ready 3450. Additional options and accessories are available to customize the new utility vehicles to fit each customer's unique needs. Operators can easily flip a



switch to select from one-wheel (Turf Mode), two-wheel or four-wheel drive on the Bobcat 4x4 models to best match

the driving conditions. When the front wheels are engaged in the 4x4 mode, all four wheels receive torque for maximum traction. Comfort features include lower sound levels, two-passenger bucket seating (dealer-installed bench seat also available) and a dealer-installed cab and heat for working in cold or windy climates. Bobcat.com



Gravelly

Now equipped with a Subaru 22-hp engine, the Turf Treker delivers 10% more power, improved bottom end torque and more efficient cooling. With a redesigned fuse box with new starting logic and a new wiring harness, cold starts are not a problem. The new limited slip differential provides the same capability as the previous generation's locking differential, with the added advantage of better durability. A new intake involves fewer parts and produces less restriction. Additionally, the Treker's exhaust was overhauled to provide lower intake temperatures and less restriction, providing improved performance. The Treker is designed to transport up to three passengers and 900 lbs. in its 15.9-cu.-ft. dumping cargo bed for a total payload capacity of 1,300 lbs. Gravelly.com

Kubota Tractor Corp.

Kubota's utility vehicle lineup includes the workhorse RTV900; an all-weather, air-conditioned RTV1100; a transformable one-to-two-row RTV1140CPX; and the compact, gas-powered RTV500. All models feature Kubota's Variable Hydro Transmission. Unlike belt-driven Continuously Variable Transmissions, these tractor-proven hydrostatic transmissions are built to handle heavy loads and high-torque applications. The durable bench seats are roomy and comfortable; the dash layout is simple and intuitive; and the flat floor provides unobstructed legroom. The RTVs are available in both Kubota Orange and Realtree Hardwoods Camouflage, and feature an extensive list of optional accessories and implements. Kubota.com



Kioti Tractor

The Mechron UTV is driven by a 22-hp, 3-cylinder Daedong diesel engine. With one of the widest tracks on the market and 4-wheel drive, the Mechron delivers stable operation and superior traction over challenging terrain and up steep slopes. Front limited slip differential and rear differential lock are standard. It also offers a 56-in. wide dump bed for a 1,600-pound payload capacity. Standard equipment includes a two-speed continuously variable transmission, four-wheel disk brakes, a rear hitch receiver for a trailer or three-point hitch, an operator station with lots of storage compartments, halogen headlights and an easy-to-service design. Kioti.com

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MY BIGGEST MISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY LINDSEY GETZ



John Rennels' biggest business blunder was thinking he was alone in this business. Since reaching out to his peers, he's turned his story of error into one of great success.



COMPANY: A Plus Lawn and Landscape

PRESIDENT: John Rennels

EMPLOYEES: 8

FOUNDED: 2002

HEADQUARTERS:
Lawrenceburg, KY

WEB: www.apluslawnlandscape.com

REVENUE 2 YEARS AGO: \$220,000

REVENUE TODAY: \$500,000

JON RENNELS was a lone wolf. As a result, his company, A Plus Lawn and Landscape, Lawrenceburg, KY, struggled.

Rennels had no strategic sense of direction. He wasn't paying himself. And he had some serious cash flow issues.

"We had no banking relationships to speak of," he says. "We had no idea what banks wanted, part of which was because we couldn't understand our own financials. The extent of our business planning was: find more work."

To make matters worse, Rennels says two years ago it wasn't uncommon for him to top 100 hours a week during peak season.

The problem was simple: "I was not working *on* the business; I was working *in* it," he says.

And it all "got old after a while," he says. He knew something had to change.

It takes two or more ...
Rennels needed advice

beyond those closest to him. "Your friends and family will often tell you what you want to hear instead of giving you good business advice," he says.

Steep competition in his region meant he didn't spend a lot of time talking with other landscape business owners either.

So he joined a peer group — a collection of business owners across the country who get together to discuss ideas and hold each other accountable to their goals.

"The feedback from my peer group is honest — sometimes even brutal and painful — but it's the best business advice you can expect," he says. "And it comes from leaders who know what they're talking about and have been through it themselves."

Today, the company has more focus and revenue has increased. Rennels has also had a significant increase in personal income, and the company has lines of credit that are being properly maintained. He attributes it all to the help of his peer group. "We still have a lot of issues, but finally we have a process on how to identify the major problems and deal with them," he says.

Fears abound

In seeking help from other landscape business owners, Rennels was wor-

ried he would struggle to stand out. He wanted his business to be unique and to do things his own way. He's since learned he can still be his own company, even while taking advice from peers. "We take a good idea and make it work for us," he says.

Joining a peer group was also a significant financial investment for Rennels' small company. A Plus currently has only eight employees and is the smallest company in the peer group, which includes seven businesses.

While he admits he invests thousands each year, Rennels says it's proven worthwhile. This year, the fees were recouped with some help from the peer group on his brochures. "The peer group edited the copy," he says. "It went through six revisions. The final result had great response. The fertilizer and weed control brochure alone brought in about \$60,000 worth of work. That made the peer group expenses well worth it."

Looking ahead

While Rennels' attempt to do it all on his own was his biggest mistake, he says joining a peer group was his biggest success.

"I consider the peer group my board of advisors," he points out. "Today I would not make a decision without running it by them first."

The author is a freelancer with experience writing for the landscape industry. To share your biggest mistake, contact Nicole Wisniewski at nwisniewski@questex.com.

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