



## AT A GLANCE

**COMPANY NAME:** U.S. Lawns of Western Kentucky

**HEADQUARTERS:** Mayfield, KY

**OWNER:** Mark Carrico, president

**EDUCATION:** Murray State University, degree in agricultural business

**FOUNDED:** 2004

**LOCATIONS:** One

**MARKET AREA:** Far western Kentucky

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 7 (peak)

**SERVICES OFFERED:** Lawn maintenance, enhancements, lawn care, snow

**HOBBIES:** Vacationing with family and friends

**FAMILY:** Wife, Beth, and daughter, Anna

While you may not be able to fix past mistakes, learning from those errors is the next best thing. **Mark Carrico**, owner of U.S. Lawns of Western Kentucky, reflects on the seven years since he purchased a U.S. Lawns franchise. "I would have liked to be bigger than we are right now," he says. "Those first years I was too conservative. I felt if I got too much work I couldn't get it done. I was really conscious of doing whatever I got as good as I could and to build a good reputation. I should have been more aggressive because I found out I could do it."

**Mark, we're hearing a lot about bargain basement pricing for lawn maintenance services. What are you seeing in the western Kentucky market?**

We're in a mostly rural area. We work out of Mayfield (pop. 10,100), but we do work in an area 20 miles north to Paducah, southeast to Murray, east to the Lakes Region and to the Tennessee state line south of us. Paducah and Murray, where there's a university, are the biggest markets. Sometimes I admit I've been confused by the competition's pricing here. We've established production rates for every job we bid and sometimes our numbers are much higher than the competition and, on some properties, our bids are lower by a considerable amount. I guess some people are looking at jobs and just throwing out a price of what they think it is worth to them.

**We understand you're in the process of building the lawn application portion of your company. Yes, this past year we bought a ride-on applicator, which I operated for the most part. The ride-on machine has been a good investment. Previously, we had done applications, mostly as part of our general maintenance contracts, but I still expect our employees to take care of any weeds they see in the beds or in the cracks of the pavement of our customers' properties. Our maintenance contracts are 90% commercial properties. Now, we're expanding our fertilization and weed control services to the residential market.**

**How are you going to market your lawn care services?** My wife, Beth, started working for our company last year. She had her own career and was given the opportunity to

WEB EXTRA

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buy five years into her pension plan, so she took advantage of that and left that job. Besides doing our books, she now does our marketing and began sending out monthly e-newsletters using Constant Contact with information we feel they would find useful. It's our way of giving them something other than an invoice. We're marketing harder now and started getting some calls because of it.

**Tell us how you've fared since the beginning of the recession.**

We lost one of our biggest clients last year (2009) and several others. We were underbid. This year we'll be back to where we were before the recession depending on some work coming in at the end of the season. So far this fall the work has been steady but we're not rushed.

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