

HOW-TO

# Become certified

BY MICHAEL BECKER

I've been involved in certification for several years as a candidate, certified individual and volunteer. My motto is "I'm certifiable, and so are you."

If I grabbed your attention, my mission is partially accomplished. Getting your attention is important, but encouraging you to act is essential. My sole purpose is to convince you to become Landscape Industry Certified.

## My story

I care about certification and encouraging others to pursue it because it made a difference in my life and career. I became involved in the landscape industry during the 1980s but didn't earn my certification until 2001. I was a technician who started a company and believed obtaining the Certified Landscape Professional credential (CLP, as it was called then) was my ticket to personal benchmarking. I wanted to know if I had the knowledge to operate a business. Now I'm a proud Landscape Industry Certified Manager and member of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) operating a successful company. Being able to study and test my business and leadership savvy through certification was, and continues to be, inspiring, motivating and empowering.

PLANET's certification program has been a driving force in my personal growth and development as a leader and business owner. It's opened so many doors. The benefits have been tremendous, mostly because I promote my landscape industry certification to customers, colleagues and the community whenever I can. Certification gives me a competitive edge.

While more than 5,000 people worldwide hold this distinction of excellence, it's a relatively small number compared to how many Green Industry service providers are capable of becoming certified. And certification as a marketing vehicle won't work effectively until customers who want to specify Landscape Industry Certified service providers have access to them.

These realizations led to my pivotal next step of progressing from newly certified bystander to participant. I

became involved in the International Certification Council (ICC)—PLANET's certification administrative body. Now I chair the council and couldn't be prouder of ICC members, past and present, along with our certification partner, the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association. Our passion for certification bonds us to improving the programs under the manager and technician labels. For several years, we've made many strides, beginning with:

- › planning certification strategically;
- › conducting occupational analyses (OAs);
- › revamping our brand to Landscape Industry Certified to replace the alphabet soup of acronyms;
- › introducing a two-year recertification process that requires continuing education units (CEUs); and
- › aligning the program with best practices in general.

We even launched a new exam last year—the Landscape Industry Certified Lawn Care Technician—National—and released two OAs for educator documents for use in curriculum development.

## Certification wants you

For me, certification progressed from being a personal and professional achievement to a cause I've committed my time and energy to with other like-minded volunteers. We have momentum and drive, we just need more people to invest in the program to create demand and reach critical mass. I can visualize a variation of the famous Uncle Sam poster: "The ICC wants YOU ... to get certified!"

We need to build legions of certified professionals, and it starts with you and me. We must work together to create demand and simultaneously build an inventory of certified individuals. This will help shorten the time frame needed to reach critical mass and a widespread demand for certified individuals.

That's where you come in. While you might have different motivating factors than I did for becoming certified, it's important to certify your skills and knowledge. It's time to get certified now. If you're an owner or manager, it's the right time to encourage your crew to become cer-



### QUICK TIP

**The first step is to visit the certification section at [landcarenetwork.org](http://landcarenetwork.org), review the manager and technician certifications available and determine the best program to meet your needs.**

Certification has upped my A-game and made me more marketable to customers. Earning bids, impressing customers, distinguishing yourself from the competition—these are just a few of the potential benefits you can look forward to once you study, test and become certified.

Seize the opportunity, map your certification game plan and go for it. The first step is to visit the certification section at [landcarenetwork.org](http://landcarenetwork.org), review the manager and technician certifications available and determine the best program to meet your needs. Once you've reviewed this information, don't hesitate to contact PLANET's certification team at [certification@landcarenetwork.org](mailto:certification@landcarenetwork.org) or 800-395-2522.

Good luck, and I look forward to counting you among my fellow Landscape Industry Certified colleagues soon. Remember, I'm certifiable, and so are you. **LM**

*Becker, a Landscape Industry Certified Manager, is the owner of Estate Gardeners in Elkhorn, Neb., and chair of PLANET's International Certification Council.*

tified. I invite you to join me and thousands of certified professionals who've earned the Landscape Industry Certified status and continue to maintain our credential through recertification. As Green Industry service providers, we need to show we care enough about our craft to continually sharpen our skill set by pursuing certification.

Take Landscape Industry Certified Manager and Technician Shayne Newman, owner of YardApes in New Milford, Conn., for example. In a recent issue of Inside Certification, PLANET's e-newsletter to certified professionals, he said: "Certification is something that allows me to define and set the standard for what I want from employees. To be certified means, unequivocally, that we're safer, more knowledgeable, more efficient and more productive. I can say, with confidence, once they become certified, our employees are professionals who absolutely understand the proper management and care of property, execute quality work and are dedicated to safe practices."

It's your turn to join the certification ranks and enjoy the benefits that being Landscape Industry Certified affords.

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