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WEB EXTRAS

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» To supplement the cover story, check out a list of helpful Affordable Care Act resources, how insurance carriers are involved in the changes and how to figure the small business tax credit.

» Interested in altering your leadership style? Check out "How to achieve change" (from page 24).

» Snow Strategy columnist Phil Harwood offers tips on contract reviews (from page 42).

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

Contact Marisa at 216/706-3764 or via email at mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.

Reducing costs, improving lives

Research shows about 40 percent of all health care expenses in the U.S. stem from preventable chronic illnesses that are most often caused by three lifestyle choices: physical inactivity, poor diet and tobacco use, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

At the same time, the Affordable Care Act is forcing employers' hands to offer health care to all workers or pay a penalty, and with that pressure comes the heightened desire to control costs. What if there were a way to reduce costs while improving employees' productivity and overall well-being? That's where workplace wellness comes into play.

I hear about wellness all the time from my sister Gina. In addition to being one of my best friends, a half-marathon runner and a supermom to my 18-month-old nephew, Andy, she's a client wellness coordinator for Gallagher Benefits Services and a former wellness program manager for a major manufacturer. She knows a thing or two about getting employees healthy and the importance of doing so.

Consider that medical costs fall by about \$3.27 for every dollar spent on wellness programs and absenteeism costs fall by about \$2.73 for every dollar spent, according to a 2010 report published by the journal *Health Affairs*.

These ROI measures are reason enough take a look at wellness programming, but that doesn't mean implementing such efforts is easy, as my sister sees firsthand in her work.

That's why I turned to her for a few simple ideas any company can use.

Here are some of her thoughts.

Begin with free. Gina says most insurance carriers offer some wellness offerings, such as a tobacco quit line, discounts to weight-loss programs and the like, but many employees don't take advantage of them. Start by finding out what's available to your firm and promoting those internally. Don't forget about other potentially free resources from groups or associations you belong to. There also may be government funding available. For example, Ohio's Bureau of Workers' Compensation offers a wellness grant program.

Start a wellness committee. You may be thinking, "This is all great, but I still don't have time to coordinate it." Why not delegate some duties to an employee wellness committee? They can brainstorm ideas, create a newsletter or bulletin board and conduct a survey to see what offerings employees would take advantage of if they were available (such as healthy snacks, blood pressure screenings, smoking cessation classes, etc.). Also consider grouping wellness in with safety. Communicating wellness information during safety tailgate talks is a better venue than sharing it at a benefits enrollment meeting when everyone's just concerned with their rates.

Have a strategy. A "Biggest Loser" program may be fun and effective on a short-term basis, but is it sustainable and is it achieving long-term goals? Maybe not. Gina recommends a company wellness strategy focusing on the Big 4 areas of tobacco use, nutrition, exercise and stress management. Why? These are the areas linked to preventable chronic illnesses that cost us all so much.

Landscape Management

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National Mall upgrades to propane mowers

One-third of the park division's mower fleet has changed over from diesel, thanks to a PERC donation. BY MARISA PALMIERI

More than 24 million people visit the National Mall each year, and the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is betting that more than a few of those visitors will notice the shiny, new propane-fueled mowers maintaining the high-profile grounds.

On June 24 PERC donated six Exmark Lazer Z S-Series lawn mowers with Kohler Command Pro Propane EFI engines to the National Mall and Memorial Parks (NAMA), a division of the National Park Service. NAMA encompasses the Mall and many of the national memorials around Washington.

The donation amounts to approximately \$70,000 in equipment.

"This is an opportunity to showcase this technology in a place where millions of people come every year," said Roy Willis, PERC president and CEO, after a ribbon-cutting ceremony outside the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. "We hope some decision makers see these propane mowers and ask the question, 'Why can't we do this back home?'"

The four 72-in. and two 60-in. Lazer Z S-Series propane-fueled zero-turn riders will comprise one-third of the Mall's mower fleet and replace diesel-fueled mowers. PERC selected these models for the donation because they are the first to employ Kohler's Command Pro Propane EFI engine—a technology that was developed and com-



A National Park Service employee takes a newly donated propane mower for a spin near the Thomas Jefferson Memorial on June 24.

mercialized through PERC funding.

The combined deployment of the mowers and two electric vehicles, also donated at the ceremony, added NAMA to the list of national parks advancing the Green Parks Plan, a National Park Service initiative to reduce dependence on foreign oil, mitigate the effects of climate change and conserve energy.

"We are always looking for ways to integrate sustainable practices into every part of our operation," said Bob Vogel, National Mall and Memorial Park superintendent. "The electric cars and generous donation of propane mowers from PERC will help the

National Mall meet its sustainability goals with a clean-burning, American-made fuel."

Switching to propane mowers is expected to lower carbon monoxide emissions by 80 percent compared with gasoline, reduce fuel spills and save NAMA money on fuel and maintenance costs, PERC says. Kohler estimates its engine increases fuel efficiency by 25 percent compared to a carbureted gasoline engine and also reduces overall mower operating costs.

The mowers will be refueled using a propane cylinder exchange system from Thompson Gas.

OPEI confirms officers, board

The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) named its 2013-2014 officers and board of directors at the OPEI Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, Va., in June.

“OPEI is entering this new fiscal year stronger than ever, both organizationally and financially,” said Kris Kiser, president and CEO of OPEI. “The OPEI board reflects the impressive scope and breadth of our membership. Our membership is at a record high, representing small engine manufacturers with a range of power sources, utility vehicle manufacturers, and a myriad of small engine equipment manufacturers and suppliers serving a broad range of industries and uses.”

Officers for the 2013-2014 year include:

- ▶ OPEI Chairman Todd Teske, chairman, president and CEO, Briggs & Stratton Corp.;
- ▶ OPEI Vice Chair Paul Mullet, president, Excel Industries; and
- ▶ OPEI Secretary/Treasurer Lee Sowell, president – outdoor products, Technonic Industries.

Continuing service on the OPEI board are:

- ▶ Immediate Past Chairman Daniel Ariens, president and CEO, Ariens Co.;
- ▶ Marc Dufour, president, Club Car;
- ▶ Peter Hampton, president, Active Exhaust Corp.;
- ▶ Jean Hlay, president and COO, MTD Products;
- ▶ Steven Bly, executive vice president, Echo;
- ▶ Ed Cohen, vice president, government & industry relations, Honda North America;
- ▶ Michael Hoffman, chairman and CEO, The Toro Co.;
- ▶ Tim Merrett, vice president, AT&T Global Platform Turf & Utility, Deere & Co.; and
- ▶ Fred Whyte, president, Stihl.

New to the board this year are Tom Cromwell, president, Kohler Engines, Kohler Co., and John Cunningham, president, consumer products group, Stanley Black & Decker.

Minutaglio passes at 64

John Minutaglio, aka John Mini, founder and president of John Mini Distinctive Landscapes in Congers, N.Y., passed away June 21. He was 64 years old.

“This is not only a great loss for our family and our company, but also for the entire industry,” said Minutaglio’s son, Mark. “My father was a pioneer and an innovator, setting new standards and



raising the bar in the landscaping industry. Growing up, I can recall how proud he always was of our company’s achievements and the team that will carry us forward for years to come.”

Since the company’s inception in 1973, Minutaglio built it into a leading and well recognized interior landscaping, exterior landscaping and holiday decorating businesses with \$11.3 million in revenue in 2012. Minutaglio’s family says he took great pride in growing the business, along with the help of his family, employees and his business partner and Senior Vice President Jack Harris, who continues to operate the business. The company won more than 100 national awards for quality and environmental improvement.

Minutaglio served as a coordinator of the landscaping program at the New York Botanical Garden and created its curriculum for interior landscaping.



MAILBOX

Heads up

I loved “Looking up” (Hear Me Out, June). It was refreshing with excellent application at the end.

I’ve been to Italy but not to Cinque Terre; it sounds like an awesome trip. My “looking up” moment was when I was in Florence and I looked up at the “David,” that was breathtaking for me.

Ed Laflamme, LIC

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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com.

To branch or not to branch

At some point, it seems that every successful owner is eager to branch out. Perhaps the company needs to expand in response to growth, gain a competitive edge or capture and create opportunity.

Opening a branch can reduce travel time and put the crews closer to their customers. It can also be a solution if your company outgrows its main facility.

However, sometimes the reasons aren't so clear.

When contemplating opening an office in a new location, ask yourself:

- › What position does my company hold in my present market?
- › What does the new market look like? Is it wide open?
- › How will I allocate my resources in a new market?
- › How many contracts are lined up to support a new location?
- › Can I financially and opportunistically sustain another office?

Guidelines for getting started:

› Determine start-up costs, review existing financials and lay out a new budgeted income statement for the new branch. Forecast revenue to avoid underestimating cash-flow requirements. Keep fixed costs to a minimum. See how long it will take for the branch to operate cash positive or how long you'll have to underwrite the branch until it's self-sustaining. Do this first.

› Ask yourself "Is it necessary?" Unless your company is operating at a high level, sales growth, profitability, high customer and employee retention, you are probably not ready.

› Before opening in a new market area, do a thorough evaluation of the area you're planning to enter. Cultural nuances differ from community to community. Study your new area prior to committing to it to make sure it's a good fit.

› Ensure you have the technologies needed to share work between locations, good company controls and systems and processes that can be

duplicated in a remote office.

› If your main problem is space or travel time, you probably do not need a full branch, but rather a satellite yard.

› Whether a satellite yard or a branch, you should put a trusted leader from your team in charge of the facility to help maintain your company culture and values and implement your systems. Guaranteeing standardization of your service and culture is one of the most important elements needed to help the new office be successful.

› Determine how the satellite or branch will be supported both administratively and operationally. A satellite may not need administrative support on site but does need support. It also needs a mechanic.

› If you're considering a satellite yard, beware of the duplication of overhead, which can more than offset the cost savings of reduced travel time and other proposed operational efficiencies. Most likely you'll need a specific growth plan to grow the book of business for the new operation.

› The HR component is critical. You most likely will benefit from having employees of the new facility live in close proximity to the new operation. Moving current employees to the new facility is fraught with challenges. Many car pools are upset; some employees can't or won't move. Attracting new hires to the facility will take time and effort, as will interviewing and hiring. Often employees will agree to move and give it a try only to start looking for a new job, so expect some negative surprises.

› If you're the owner, plan to be visible at the new facility, possibly even work there one day per week. This way, you can see how it's working and improve on what's not.

› Have a Plan B. Prepare for the worst. Have an exit strategy in place in case it doesn't work out. Make sure your lease agreements are flexible, and scale back if it's not working or if you lose a key piece of business.

Opening a new office can be promising. The key is to first challenge the plan, then put people in place to make sure it's executed to perfection.

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THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kevinkehoe@me.com.

Coach for revenue growth

In my last column I talked about the first function of a good sales manager—planning and prioritizing the salesman’s time.

In this column, I address the second function of a sales manager—coaching for salesman effectiveness.

I recently rode with a salesman on a call for a Class A Commercial opportunity. I always use the car ride to prepare for the call. Specifically, I wanted to be ready to respond to the prospect’s objections to doing business with me. So I asked the salesman, “What objections might this prospect have to doing business with you?”

He hadn’t really thought about that, he said.

“How do you expect to advance this sale if you don’t know what objections there might be?” I asked. I think he wanted to choke me. “Would you go into a boxing ring knowing little to nothing about the other guy?” I asked him.

“No, of course not,” he said.

“Well, that’s what you’re doing on this call.”

Now he wanted to punch me.

We all want our salespeople to sell more. If they’re not practicing call preparation—specifically, the skill of surfacing and responding to objections—they’ll always sell less than they could. The successful salesman knows the likely objections—in advance.

When selling in the homeowners association/condo/commercial/industrial segments, the objections are fairly predictable: price and change. If we know the objections, why not be prepared to manage them to our benefit?

Best practices for managing objections are validate, explore, recommend and negotiate. Here’s how those play out with the likely objections.

Price objection: “We like you, but you’re priced too high.”

Validate: “Hmm, yes price is always important when making a decision like this.”

Explore: “May I ask you a question? If my price

were within your budget expectations, would we be your first choice for the work? OK, what exactly is the budget range?”

Recommend: “Let me make a suggestion. We can meet your budget and address your quality and responsiveness concerns if we update your spec. In fact, I think we might be able to shift some money from weekly maintenance to upgrades. Would you be interested?”

Negotiate: Show them using examples of how you can do this.

Change objection: “It’s hard to train a new contractor.”

Validate: “Hmm, yes making a change is always a challenge and important in making a decision like this.”

Explore: “May I ask you a question? What are your primary concerns with changing contractors? Have you had bad experiences in the past?”

Recommend: “If I’m hearing you accurately, the first three months of the transition process have never gone well for you? Let’s talk about what we do and if this addresses your concerns.”

Negotiate: Show them by using examples of how you do this.

When negotiating, please remember to be brief (role playing preparation helps this greatly). The more you talk, the less they talk. And the more they talk, the greater the probability they’ll get comfortable that you can manage their objections.

So that’s what the salesman and I did the rest of the car ride—we prepped. When he got in front of the prospect, he uncovered their real objections and it made all the difference.

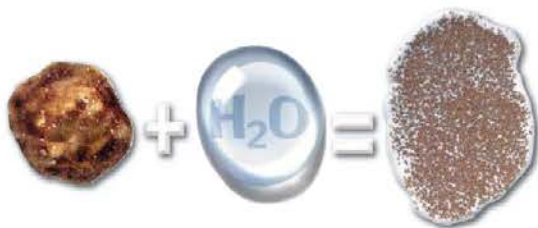
It’s nothing more than the Boy Scout motto: “Be prepared.” Yes, it’s a little old fashioned, but it seems that there’s no school like the old school when it comes to sales.

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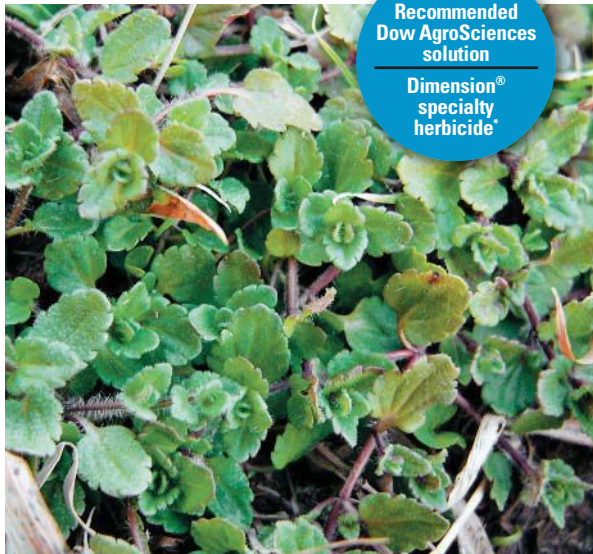
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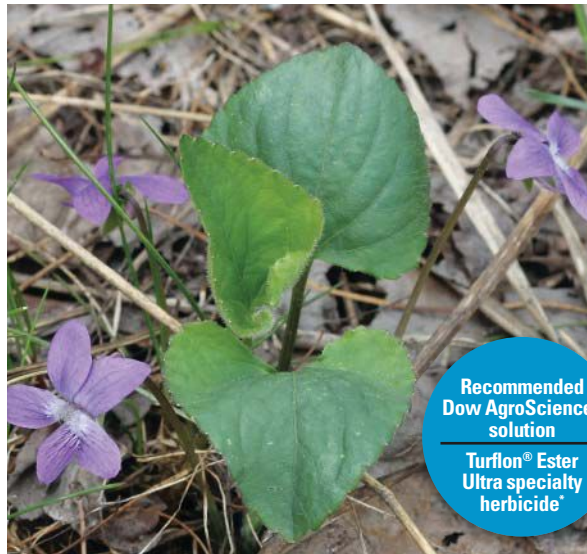
IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This low-growing winter annual thrives in open turf and often appears in solid stands.
- ▶ It has small lower leaves that are rounded and toothed; the upper leaves are pointed.
- ▶ The plant, which is entirely covered in fine hairs, grows small bright blue flowers with white throats.
- ▶ A distinctive heart-shaped seedpod grows below the flowers.
- ▶ Corn speedwell does not typically last long after

flowering, and cannot live in high temperatures.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Increase turfgrass density and minimize open turf areas with proper fertilization, mowing and irrigation.
- ▶ Because winter annuals germinate in the fall, treat this weed prior to germination in late summer or early fall with a preemergent herbicide containing dithiopyr.
- ▶ If speedwell is established, treat early stages of growth with a product containing clopyralid or triclopyr.



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WILD VIOLET

Viola spp.

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This low-growing, clumping perennial can reach heights of up to 5 in. It grows from a dense, fibrous root system.
- ▶ Small, pansy-like flowers feature five blue-violet, lilac or white petals.
- ▶ Heart-shaped leaves with scalloped edges are often cupped toward the petiole to form a funnel shape.
- ▶ It's most often found in cool, shady, moist, fertile soil.

to control because of its aggressive growth, waxy leaves and resistance to many herbicides.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Wild violet is difficult

- ▶ Apply a postemergent broadleaf herbicide as soon as violets reach the two-leaf growth stage. Repeat applications may be necessary if the violets are well established.
- ▶ In turfgrass and sites labeled for use, apply a postemergent herbicide containing triclopyr, either alone or in two- and three-way combinations with other broadleaf herbicides.

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'AFFORDABLE'

Will "Obamacare" batter or bolster your bottom line?

The question is an important one, given the impact of health insurance costs on the earnings of small business owners. While calculating the precise effect of the complicated Affordable Care Act (ACA) is difficult, you have a good chance of turning it to your advantage if you have fewer than 50 employees or "full-time equivalents" (FTEs).

"Smaller businesses stand to gain a number of benefits from the law," says Karl Ahlrichs, benefits consultant for Indianapolis-based insurance broker Gregory & Appel. Among the favorable provisions are competitive statewide insurance exchanges, premium reform and tax credits.

Employers are eager for some relief, given the rising costs of health insurance. Average annual premiums for employer-provided family coverage grew

to just under \$16,000 in 2012, a rate some 4 percent higher than 2011, according to a report from the Kaiser Family Foundation.

KEY POSITIVES

Here's a rundown of how small firms may benefit from some of the law's provisions.

Competitive exchanges. Competition is good. That's the theory behind the new statewide health insurance exchanges, designed to allow small businesses to shop for plans from competing carriers. These exchanges will be available for employers with fewer than 50 people in 2014. Most exchanges are expected to offer plans from only a single carrier for the first year. After that, plans from multiple carriers will be offered.

"To understand how the exchanges will work, imagine navigating to a travel website that aggregates airfares," says Ahlrichs. "You type in your parameters and the site sorts your options and

Though the new health care law is a tough pill to swallow, small companies may benefit from some provisions.

BY **PHILLIP M. PERRY**



ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.

CARE?



you pick what you want. That's what employees will be doing with the exchange sites."

Under the best of conditions the new exchanges also will help trim the human resources overhead by providing a host of robust administrative services. "Businesses that send employees to the health insurance exchanges will be getting out of the health insurance management business," notes Ahlrichs.

Premium reform. Small businesses have long been the targets of prohibitive premium hikes when one employee is hit with a costly illness. The new law levels the playing field. "Starting in 2014 insurance carriers will not be able to set premiums based on health status, sex or claim history," says Julie Stich, director of research at the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans (IFEBP), a research organization based in Brookfield, Wis. "That will help small group plans where one catastrophic claim can cause health costs to go up."

Penalty exemption. If you have fewer than 50 full-time employees, you'll be exempted from penalties for not providing health insurance. If you have 50 or more such employees and your employees purchase insurance from the new state exchanges, you will pay a fine of \$2,000 per employee who does so, excluding the first 30 employees from the assessment (see sidebar at right).

Tax credit. The law provides for a tax credit for businesses with 25 or fewer employees if the company pays at least half of the employee premiums.

Downward pricing pressure. The law also may encourage more transparency in the area of fees for medical services, says Ahlrichs. In consumer-driven health plans people will be given a set amount of money with which they can shop for services. They will be able to

go to a website, enter a service such as an "appendectomy" and get a list of physicians that perform that procedure, a quality rating and a cost. "Comparison shopping should put downward pressure on prices," notes Ahlrichs.

Transparency. Do you know how much your broker is being paid for arranging your insurance? Today such commissions are buried in your premiums. This may change under the new law as pressure mounts to reduce administrative costs. Brokers may start charging fees for their services, which may well dampen overall costs while promoting accountability and performance.

EMPLOYEE MOBILITY

There's another hidden benefit the new law may provide smaller businesses: access to higher quality personnel.

"Today at larger employers there are many high-quality mid-career professionals who are frustrated because they cannot be very entrepreneurial," says Ahlrichs. "They would love to join a smaller organization where they can try things out or they might want to band together and start something."

In the current system, says Ahlrichs, if such people quit their current positions they may be uninsurable. "They may have a daughter or wife who's a

Kyle Narsavage

President
Green Sweep
Silver Spring, Md.

Number of employees: 46

Challenge: Maintaining fewer than 50 employees

Solution: "We're being very selective about which contracts we accept. For one, we want to make sure that it's a profitable job and also because at first a job may seem profitable but it could cause us to spend money to hire more employees, which is money we may not make back down the road."

Your take
Green Industry
professionals'
views on the
ACA.



diabetic or cancer survivor," he says, "Or they themselves may have some chronic condition. As a result, they are handcuffed to their desks because of health care."

When the exchanges come online the handcuffs come off. "There will be
continued on page 20

EMPLOYER MANDATE DELAYED

In July the Obama administration delayed a key provision of the Affordable Care Act, the so-called "employer mandate," by a year. This provision, which requires employers with 50 or more full-time equivalent employees to provide health insurance for their workers or pay a \$2,000 penalty, has been put off from Jan. 1, 2014, until 2015.

The delay is reportedly in response to complaints from the business community about reporting requirements for employers with 50 or more full-time workers.

WHAT LARGE EMPLOYERS MUST DO NOW

What steps should large firms take to get up to speed with the requirements of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)? “Employers need to take a look at their current health insurance plans and make the changes required to be in compliance,” says Julie Stich, director of research at the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans, a research organization based in Brookfield, Wis. “Then communicate these changes to employees and revise the plan descriptions and handbooks.” Here are some specific steps:

1 Determine full-time equivalencies.

“The big issue for many employers will be calculating the average hourly workweek in determining who is an equivalent full-time worker,” says Karl Ahlrichs, benefits consultant for Indianapolis-based insurance broker Gregory & Appel. “It goes beyond the simple drawing of a line in the sand at 30 hours. The new system uses new terms and new ways of calculating things that, if ignored, can cost an employer significantly.” Failing to accurately determine full-time equivalencies can result in costly fines. “The employers most at risk hire many part-time or seasonal workers.”

In analyzing their workers, employers are required to apply a measurement or “look-back” period that can be anywhere from three to 12 months. If an employee averages 30 hours a week or 130 hours a month during that period, the employer must offer coverage equal to either six months or the length of the look-back period, whichever is longer.

This calculation will be especially difficult for those employers who have not been keeping careful track of their employees. “Employers who have a lot of variable-hour employees, and have not been keeping close watch, need to do the exercise now to see who falls into the full-time bucket and what measurement period will be best for them,” says Joan Smyth, partner at the New York-based Mercer consulting firm.

2 Analyze labor costs.

Companies should analyze the income of their workforces, particularly if they include a large number of relatively low-wage employees. That’s important because employers may be penalized not only for failing to provide any health insurance coverage, but also for providing coverage that fails to meet the standards of affordability as defined by the law and as determined by employees’ family incomes (W2 wages can be used as a proxy for family income).

With these figures in hand, companies can perform the calculations to see the financial impact of three options: not offering any coverage, offering coverage which is not “affordable” under the definitions of the government or offering coverage that’s affordable (that is, charges employees premiums that are 9.5 percent, or less, of family income.) In some cases it may be cheaper to not offer insurance than to offer insurance and pay a penalty.

3 Update benefits plan language.

“Employers must update their benefits plan language to be in compliance with the ACA,” says Ahlrichs. “Many plans must undergo a significant rewrite to reflect the new world.”

He cautions that Department of Labor audits are rising in frequency and that they will be looking hard at this area. “One of the ways they will help fund the ACA is by penalizing organizations which are in violation,” says Ahlrichs. “Expect 80 percent of DOL questions to revolve around how the ACA language is not in company documents and expect fines to be assessed.”

4 Get the communications right.

“Employee communications will be huge,” says Ahlrichs. “Employees will turn to their employers for answers. You can benefit significantly by having early and aggressive communication about what the changes mean and about your new wellness plan.”

5 Draw up a five-year benefits plan.

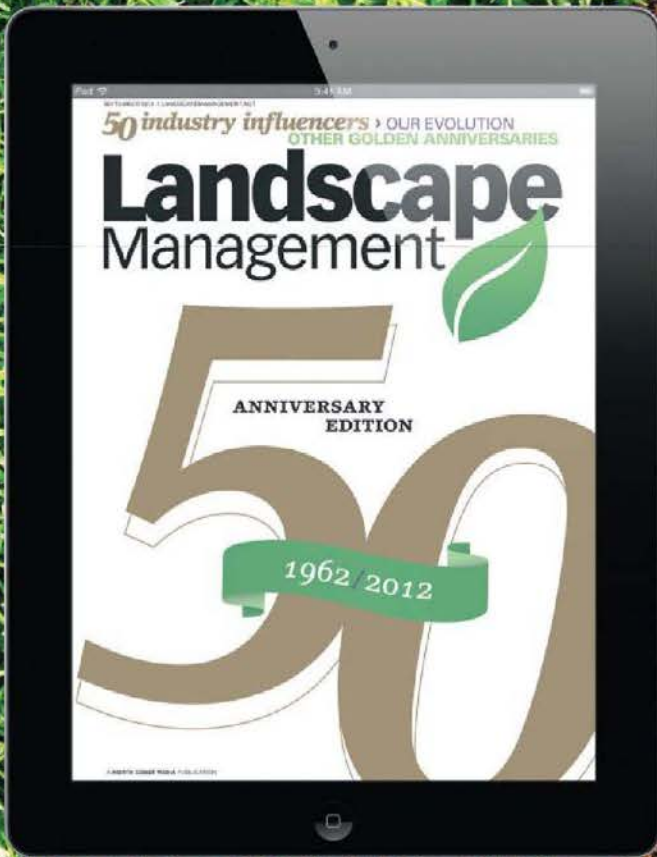
“Draw up a five-year strategic benefits plan that’s aligned with the one for your whole organization,” says Ahlrichs. “This is not the time to patch last year’s model. This is the time for a clean sheet of paper and a plan written with someone who understands the implications of the law.

“If your company has a strategic benefits plan and your competition does not it will help you and hurt them,” says Ahlrichs. “Maybe not in the first three months, but certainly in the first couple of years. Over time if you get ahead of these issues and make the right decisions you will have a significant competitive advantage.”



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COVER STORY

Evan Moffitt

Director of business development
KD Janni Landscaping
San Luis Obispo, Calif.



Number of employees: 42

Challenge: The costs that come with hiring more than 50 employees

Solution: "We're preparing for a strong push and growth. We want to grow to where we have 75 employees so that our numbers will be able to cover costs. We're trying to grow our business."

Your take
Green Industry
professionals'
views on the
ACA.

continued from page 17

a significant shift in high-performing talent out of the larger organizations and into smaller ones," says Ahlrichs. "This could be a huge benefit to small entrepreneurial organizations, which position themselves as places where talented people can exercise some freedom."

DECISION TIME

Many business owners are upset about the minimum level of benefits required by the new law. In some cases those levels are higher than what's currently being offered in the workplace. That means greater expense in the form of higher premiums.

Will employers, as a result, drop health insurance coverage completely and opt to pay the fine? Ahlrichs says some will be tempted. "A lot of CEOs may want to tell their employees, 'Go to the exchange and I'll pay the \$2,000 fine.'"

Employers who decide not to offer the insurance should realize there are additional ramifications, points out Ahlrichs. The first problem is the \$2,000 fine is not tax deductible. The second problem is the employees who go to the exchanges find out insurance is not free.

"Maybe the premium for a family is \$8,000 annually," poses Ahlrichs. "Who pays it? If the employer wants to keep the employees, the employer may want to make them whole and give them the \$8,000 needed to pay for their insurance."

The story doesn't end there, adds Ahlrichs. The premium payments are now taxable, so paychecks have to be grossed up to around \$10,000, in the above example, so the employees can pay premiums out of after-tax dollars.

Put it all together and cessation of a health insurance program can backfire, concludes Ahlrichs.

Realistically, though, the decision to retain or drop health insurance might depend less on the costs of noncompliance

than on what other businesses in the same employment market are doing. Many employers see health insurance plans as important tools for employee satisfaction, retention and recruitment. No one wants to lose top talent to businesses offering superior benefits.

As a result many businesses seem to be playing a waiting game, with many reluctant to drop coverage unless other employers take the lead. "Our surveys indicate the vast majority of businesses, probably 80 to 90 percent, will continue to offer coverage, primarily to recruit and retain talent and to keep people productive," says Larry Boress, president and CEO of the Midwest Business Group on Health, a Chicago-based consortium of over 115 employers.

ACT NOW

What steps should you take now? Start by determining whether you employ 50

or more FTE employees. If so, you're subject to the law's mandate to either offer health insurance or pay a penalty.

"The employer mandate is the 900-pound gorilla," says Adam Solander, an associate at the law firm of Epstein Becker Green in Washington. "It's issue No. 1 through 10 for our clients." In determining your own status, seek assistance from your accountant. Also see the sidebar, "Calculating your full-time equivalent employees," below.

What if you employ fewer than 50 FTEs and you still want to offer health insurance? Be aware of a caveat: "Coverage has to comply with the minimum standards mandated by the ACA," cautions Solander. "A lot of people have gotten tripped up on this." Employers, for example, can no longer offer the so-called "mini med" plans with their limited benefits and high deductibles. Failure to comply with the

Ben Collinsworth

CEO

Native Land Design
Cedar Park, Texas



Number of employees:

180 at peak season

Challenge: Providing employees with health insurance without drastically increasing costs

Solution: "We're keeping our options

open for any large policies that will help keep our prices in check. There are some outside labor resource companies that allow us to take employees and put them on a temporary outsourced payroll and the outsourced company pays insurance, but prices on that will probably go up."

Your take
Green Industry
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CALCULATING YOUR FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT EMPLOYEES

The requirements of the federal Affordable Care Act (ACA) do not apply to businesses with fewer than 50 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs). Does your own business qualify for this exemption?

Generally speaking, the ACA defines as full time any employee who works at least 30 hours per week averaged over a month's time. Included in the calculation are hours paid for but not worked, including vacation time and jury duty.

Additionally, a portion of the hours worked by part-time employees will be included in calculating a business' number of full-time equivalent workers.

Consult your accountant to determine your own liability.



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ACA's market reform provisions can be expensive. "The penalty is pretty severe," says Solander. "It comes to \$100 per day per incident."

As you tackle the vagaries of the ACA, keep in mind the legislation is very much a work in progress. "There's a lot of uncertainty about the law," says

Solander. "Everyone is doing their best to comply, but understanding the complicated provisions takes a lot of effort and hard work." The federal government will continue to issue regulations that interpret the law for real world operations.

In untangling the confusions, your insurance broker may be one of your

Your take
Green Industry professionals' views on the ACA.

Jon Parry

President
Bemus Landscape
San Clemente, Calif.

Number of employees: Almost 500

Challenge: Regulating costs

Solution: "It's a pay or play regulation, there's no gray area or gaming the system. We are going to play. We're going to offer some type of benefit package to our employees. There is still some confusion about what packages are available but we should know in the next 60 days."



best sources of assistance. "There's no need for you to give up your current broker, but make sure that the person knows what's going on with the new law," says Boress. "Given the more competitive marketplace, you might want to use a broker who's independent of any one insurance carrier."

Your broker can help you understand the opportunities to purchase insurance from your own state's exchange. By getting a handle on how the marketplace is changing, and on what other employers in your region are doing in terms of benefits, you can design a health insurance program that maximizes employee satisfaction while minimizing


cost. "The devil is in the details," says Solander. "As an employer you have to figure out what really works for your business." **LM**

» WEB EXTRA

Visit **Landscape Management.net** for information about the tax credit, a list of websites related to the ACA that are worth exploring, plus a look at the insurance carriers' perspective.

Perry is a freelance writer based in New York. Additional reporting by Molly Bealin.

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Are you a *resonant leader?*

**Emotional intelligence isn't just feel-good stuff.
It's about the bottom line.** BY **LESLIE BOOMER**

Think back over your years in business, from the early days when you came into the workplace. Is there someone who inspired you along the way? Someone who helped you dig deep and find the best you had to offer, a boss or manager who helped you see that you could succeed?

I'll bet you can think of at least one person who did more than just make sure you punched your time card. Was it someone who motivated, even challenged you in a way that helped you find out what you're really made of?

The way you lead will make a lasting impact on how your people perform and how they remember you years down the road. Your leadership style can make the difference between both personal and professional long-term success or failure. The gap between the resonant "good"

boss and the dissonant "bad" boss can be small and easily sutured. Or it can be as divide as gaping as the Grand Canyon, one that's nearly impossible to bridge.

Resonant leadership makes the difference. But what does "resonant leadership" mean?

A resonant leader inspires others by creating a work environment that supports innovation and change, according to the book *Resonant Leadership* by Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee. This type of environment not only allows for but also encourages creativity, experimentation and risk taking. It doesn't matter if these risks end with a victory or a constructive mistake; either will uncover better ways to serve customers or achieve goals. Further, these leaders are able to be honest with themselves and others while holding staff accountable to goals and company standards of excellence. They work with

individuals to find the sweet spot in their personal set of strengths to benefit both the workers and the company.

And they manage their teams in ways that build loyalty and trust, which ultimately leads to better business. This is resonant leadership.

Does resonant leadership really matter? Absolutely. This is more than feel-good stuff. It's about the bottom line, when you acknowledge how leadership impacts productivity and employee retention. Experienced employees are your No. 1 competitive resource. Great leadership creates the kind of environment that produces a stable, innovative staff that will want to stay the course for the long term and invest in the company's future to ensure sustainable success.

continued on page 26

» WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extras section of [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) to learn how to change your leadership style.

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LEADERSHIP

continued from page 24

Evaluate your competition, then look closely at your crews and management staff. Could it be that you'd have a greater opportunity for market dominance if you changed your and your management team's leadership style?

The leaders who stand apart from the rest drive success through positive emotion. To do so you'll have to be willing to put some time into learning more about your leadership style. It starts with a decision to take an honest look in the mirror and listen openly to what others (genuinely) share about how your leadership style affects them. Often the one at the top has no clue what those who report to him or her actually think. (Let's face it: It's not often that someone will risk his or her job security to be honest with an overbearing boss.)

The good news is much of what you learn will be affirming and show you the strengths you have on which

to build. Great leaders are open to reality. After your reality check you'll become more mindful of who you truly are and more accurately gauge your internal emotions and reactions.

With this new clarity and awareness you'll be more able to learn to manage your emotions and reactions so others feel safe with you. And, once you're more aware and able to manage your emotions you'll begin to look at the people around you differently and understand how their emotions impact the way they work and relate to others.

That awareness allows you to manage your relationships in a way that fosters trust and growth. It's all about building your



What's your leadership style?

Recognize your own leadership style, which one you aspire to and which to avoid. >>

VISIONARY

This leader lets the team know where they're going without providing a road map.

The visionary helps people feel safe and free to be creative and explore options—even to take risks. The visionary inspires those around him/her and tends to be transparent/authentic. This transparency is important, because when a leader is seen as insincere the team loses trust, which kills creativity. Empathy is critical for a visionary leader—reading and knowing what others think and feel helps this type of leader communicate an inspiring vision.

COACHING

The coaching leader is great one on one, helping to develop strengths in others.

With the competencies of emotional awareness and empathy, this leader helps the team identify and accomplish career goals.

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AFFILIATIVE

The affiliative leader is a collaborator who helps promote the goals of the group.

These leaders foster harmony and use empathy to care for the emotional needs of the individual workers. They often combine the affiliative style with a visionary approach—a powerful mixture of style and competency.

DEMOCRATIC

The democratic leader builds on three emotional intelligence abilities: collaboration, conflict management and influence.

This leader knows how to listen, still conflict and create harmony within a team. When unsure of the direction to take, the democratic leader will get consensus from other team members, benefiting from the group's past experiences.

PACESETTING

USE WITH CAUTION!

This style has the most potential for negative consequences. There are only a few situations in which it's effective.

The pacesetter leader holds others to extremely high standards of performance and

is driven to do things better and faster, while pointing out any flaw or poor performance, which may lead to low morale rather than encouraging achievement. In controlled circumstances, pacesetter can help a team reach a short-term goal or get over a challenging hump as long as it doesn't continue for long periods of time.

COMMANDING

USE WITH MOST CAUTION!

Of the six leadership styles, the commanding leader is the least successful. This style demands compliance without providing any reason for the demand. Commanding leaders are seen as cold and uncaring and quickly cause an organization to lose trust in leadership. They erode the spirit and confidence of the workforce. A commanding style can be effective in an emergency for the short term to help a team get through a crisis. This style draws on three competencies: influence, achievement and initiative. Self-awareness, emotional self-control and empathy are crucial to keep the commanding style from going too far.

SOURCE: *PRIMAL LEADERSHIP* BY DANIEL GOLEMAN, RICHARD BOYATZIS AND ANNIE MCKEE

emotional intelligence to set you free to become a truly resonant leader.

Years of research prove that change can and does happen through intentional development. That's your challenge. Are you willing to do the personal work that will move your company to the next level through resonant leadership? (Visit the Web Extra, "How to achieve change.")

There's a wealth of information out there to help you determine how best to evaluate and improve your leadership style. The benefits to you, your employees, your coworkers and in the end, your company, will prove well worth the introspection, time and effort you'll have devoted to such a positive, and at times humbling, process. Are you up for the challenge? **LMI**

Boomer is an organizational health consultant with Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach her at leslie@myprmtteam.com.



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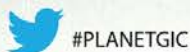
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MARKET WATCH

MAINTENANCE

Welcome wagon

The Greenery targets new movers for its residential maintenance and retail garden center business. *By* MARISA PALMIERI

PG 29

MAINTENANCE How one firm focuses on new movers

PG 30

LAWN/TREE CARE Scale insects

PG 32

DESIGN/BUILD Construction is making a comeback

PG 34

IRRIGATION A sprinkler standard is finally in the pipeline

Homeowners who've recently moved are a target for The Greenery, a \$34.4 million landscape company based on Hilton Head Island, S.C. The company provides landscape maintenance services, but it also has a retail component. The Greenery may be on to something, considering new movers spend more in their first six months post-move than a typical consumer does in three years, according to MoverTrends.com. Plus, research says they're five times more likely to become long-term customers compared to a settled household.



Lee Edwards

and gift shop, and by enticing newcomers with a gift certificate, this program gets them to visit our facilities before they might happen to see one of our competitors. I'd say we've added about 120 newcomers to our mailing list from this program after their first visit, and now we can market to them regularly with other promotions.

Q What "offers" have you tried and which ones work best?

A We've had one basic offer since the start of \$10 toward a purchase in the garden center/gift shop or 50 percent off the first month of a residential yard maintenance program.

Q Do you use any other methods to get in touch with homeowners who've recently moved?

A We have an active advertising and direct mail program, but this is the only one geared specifically to newcomers. We believe that many newcomers want to spruce up and add their

own personal touches to the landscaping of their new home.

Q Why is this an attractive audience for your landscape business?

A We have a very good operation and excellent service, so we feel that anytime we can get someone to start a relationship with us, it will be a long-term relationship at all levels.

Q Do you have any tips for other landscape businesses interested in reaching new movers?

A Being visible is the key thing for any business that hopes to grow, but what I don't like about most advertising is that it's not trackable. This service takes our gift certificates and then follows up by providing us with good information about the customers themselves. I believe that the more you know about your customer, the better your marketing efficiency will be.



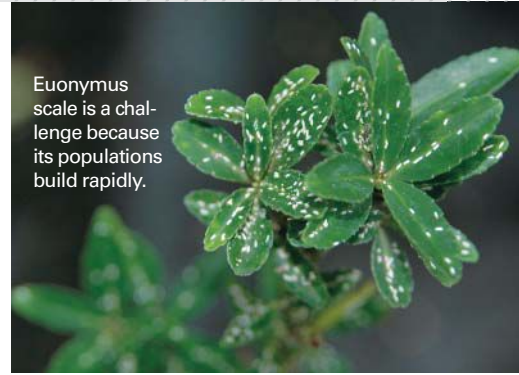
Q How effective has this method been?

A We feel it's an excellent way to introduce new movers to our retail garden center, nursery and antiques gift shop, as well as to our residential maintenance program. We have a very nice garden center

LAWN/TREE CARE

Up to scale

How to determine the most effective methods for treating scale insects. *By* MARISA PALMIERI



Euonymus scale is a challenge because its populations build rapidly.

Green Industry professionals facing down scale insects have a variety of treatment options on their hands, but knowing which one to choose for which species can be tricky. In May Joe Boggs, assistant professor at The Ohio State University Extension, and Rex Bastian, regional technical advisor for The Care of Trees in Wheeling, Ill., presented a webinar in conjunction with *Landscape Management* and sponsored by Valent Professional Products, on scale insect identification and treatment.

ON THE LOOKOUT

The first line of defense against scale is knowing the common species and hosts for the geographic area, Bastian says. Plant health care professionals should be on the lookout, particularly, for species that can cause significant injury, like euonymus scale or magnolia scale.

Whether the plant is plagued by soft or armored (hard) scale will have an impact on the plant's symptoms (see "Soft scales vs. armored scales," below).

For example, soft scales insert their mouthparts into the plant's phloem bun-

dle, damaging cells and causing localized symptoms. The main problem is soft scales withdraw large quantities of liquids, which they eventually void as sticky honeydew. The honeydew is problematic because it can allow fungi like black sooty mold to develop. Left unchecked, soft scales may result in dieback or death.

Armored scales also insert their mouthparts into plant cells. In this case the cells become damaged and die, producing leaf symptoms. Without treatment, heavy infestations may stunt plants and kill all or part of the plants.

The next step is to formulate a management plan. Biorational options include soaps/oils or insect growth regulators. Chemical approaches may include foliar sprays, soil applications, lower trunk sprays or trunk injections with systemic or contact insecticides. Consider the following:

- › Length of residual effect;
- › If systemic, translocation speed;
- › Possible side effects;
- › Off-site movement;
- › Mite outbreaks;
- › Non-target effects; and
- › Costs (product and labor).

PARTICULAR PESTS

One armored scale Boggs honed in on was euonymus scale.

When it comes to euonymus scale, the top three challenges are rapidly building populations, difficult detection due to some scale that may remain hidden on stems and the fact that two generations are produced per season.

Dormant oils don't offer any control for euonymus scale, he says. With contact insecticides, it's best to target crawlers, and timing is critical. Pyrethroids offer good control but require multiple applications. Effective systemic insecticides include dinotefuran and aceamidprid. The lady beetle is a beneficial insect to help combat euonymus scale.

On the soft scale side, Boggs addressed calico scale. He says professionals can target overwintering crawlers with a pyrethroid contact insecticide, though results haven't been consistent. Likewise, you can target newly hatched crawlers with a contact pyrethroid product, but timing is important, he says. Effective systemic soil drench applications include imidacloprid or dinotefuran in late spring. From September to early November, imidacloprid, clothianidin or dinotefuran may work. Beneficial insects like the lady beetle are another option for lighter infestations.

SOFT SCALES VS. ARMORED SCALES

	Soft scales	Armored scales
Body	Covered by leathery exoskeleton	Covered by hard, waxy shell called a "test"
Size/shape	Usually large and oval (1/8-in. or larger)	Usually small and round, oval or drop-shaped (less than 1/8-in. long)
Eggs	Females produce hundreds to thousands of eggs	Females usually produce less than a hundred eggs each
Mobility	Nymphs and early females remain mobile	Second instar and adults are not mobile
Honeydew	Produce	Don't produce

TREND WATCH

Bastian noted a few trends in scale treatment, including the increased use of biorational materials for foliar applications. Insect growth regulators—especially for armored scale management—are another option on the rise. Finally, Bastian is seeing the use of soil-/bark-applied systemic chemicals more, especially for soft scales on large trees.

PHOTO: BRIAN KUNKEL, UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE, BUGWOOD.ORG; CHART: JOE BOGGS



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Construction comeback?

The design/build sector finally shows signs of growth. *By BETH GERACI*

After years of decline, the construction business finally is showing signs of a turnaround, reports *Engineering News-Record* magazine in its latest Construction Industry Confidence Index.

The second-quarter report released in June showed that a record 69 percent of more than 300 respondents felt optimistic about the state of the market, indicating it has stabilized.

Landscape design/build professionals are seeing the positive results firsthand.

"It's definitely turning around, no question about it," says John Mariani, design director at Mariani Landscape, Lake Bluff, Ill. "People are doing some pretty major projects. In fact, in the last few weeks I sold one of the biggest projects I've ever sold."

Lambert's Director of Garden Development Jud Griggs also is encouraged.

Because Texas emerged from the recession last year, Dallas-based Lambert's had a "remarkable" 2012, Griggs says. "Our revenues were about a million and a half dollars more in design/build last year than the previous year."

Lenny DiTomaso, owner of Landscape Perceptions in Oakland, N.J., is noticing growth there, too. "People realize the market is so up and down that when it's up and they have the money, they're going to spend it," he says.



A recent Lambert's project.

TRENDS

The caveat, Griggs says, is "people are taking much longer to make decisions now. It's more of 'Let's look at this option and let's explore these materials and we're going to think about it.'"

DiTomaso sees the same scrutiny. "Usually people cut me loose and allow me to do my thing, but this year customers are watching every single thing that's being done," he says.

Things also are trending toward more water features, patios and swimming pools, sources say. Lambert's completed 15 pools in the last year; Mariani already has installed three of them in 2013. All of that growth is creating a pretty positive picture.

"It's a ways a way," Mariani says, "but I do believe it will be better than before the crash. I'm pretty positive about that."

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IRRIGATION

Sprinkler standard in the pipeline

Irrigation professional Tim Malooly shares the latest efforts to implement the first U.S. landscape irrigation sprinkler standard.

By JONATHAN KATZ

Water districts and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), most notably through its WaterSense program, have pressured the irrigation industry to use water more efficiently. Some contractors are taking notice and action; the Irrigation Association has ramped up education, promotions and advocacy; and landscape irrigation manufacturers have responded by advancing controller technology and introducing more water-efficient sprinklers.

Still, the industry doesn't have consistent testing methods to identify and document component performance. In 2011, the International Code Council (ICC) and the Association of Agricultural & Biological Engineers formed a subcommittee to develop the first consensus standard for landscape irrigation sprinklers.

The subcommittee includes representatives from irrigation component manufacturers, water utilities, designers, installers and consumers.

Landscape Management recently spoke with the irrigation committee Chair Tim Malooly, CIC, CID, CLIA, president of Minneapolis-based Water in Motion, about the status of the standard and how it will affect contractors.



Tim Malooly

Q What type of standard is the ICC subcommittee developing?

A This applies to landscape irrigation sprinklers, including pop-up broadcast sprinklers, pop-up misting or spray sprinklers and drip and micro components. One of the first things we've focused on is testing sprinkler performance. Right now, manufacturers test their products in their own facilities with their own methods and without independent verification.

The standards also give agencies—such as local units of government or the EPA—reliable, credible information from which to build a labeling program for products.

Q So you're looking at labeling in this standard?

A Labeling is an important component of this work. We're considering how to label what's

being standardized. For instance, when you buy cereal at the grocery store, there are standard nutrition facts, such as calories, sugar and serving size. A similar label is now available for light bulbs. How that relates to landscape irrigation sprinklers is still undecided, but packaging and labeling is one component of the standards.

Q What is the status of the standard right now?

A The first public comment period took place in late winter of 2013. We're currently in the process of considering every comment and making adjustments to the draft document.

My hope was to have the standard in place by the end of this year. It's a little unknown whether we're going to hit that target because a second comment period is expected to take place in August or September. Depending on how many comments we have, we may have to go to a third public comment period. However, if we don't have to go through that, I think it's realistic to expect the standard to be completed by March 2014.

Q What type of feedback have you received so far?

A There have been comments on testing methods, parameters and how we're defining things. For example, the industry commonly refers to the application rate of an irrigation sprinkler as the "precipitation rate." But after much deliberation, the committee chose to adopt the term "application rate" instead because the term "precipitation rate" connotes something other than mechanical irrigation taking place.

Q What will this standard ultimately mean for landscape and irrigation contractors?

A It's important to the industry because the use of water in the landscape is currently receiving and will continue to receive a high level of scrutiny. People are questioning whether the water being



The landscape irrigation industry lacks universal component performance testing methods.



The International Code Council's landscape irrigation sprinkler standard may be complete early next year.

individual doesn't have to know a lot of the details of why a sprinkler system works. As a result, many irrigation systems are being installed indiscriminately and outside of best practices without consideration for water efficiency. In other words, many poor-quality lawn sprinkler systems are being installed with accompanying poor-quality maintenance and scheduling practices.

We're using a resource that's been identified as being more precious than it was in the past, and the Green Industry has been identified as one of the biggest users. There's a science behind the design, installation and scheduling of irrigation systems. If the industry doesn't take more seriously selection, design, installation, maintenance and scheduling practices, we run the risk of being put out of business. **LM**

Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

used in the landscape is being used wisely and responsibly. And the definition of "responsibly" is changing. Currently the definition of responsibly by some includes emotional decision making or social engineering positions. With the creation of industry standards—and codes that likely follow—responsible water use moves away from emotion and toward process and verifiable science.

Now more than ever practitioners must adapt to changes occurring around

them and become as technically adept as possible. The industry is changing, and the world around the industry is demanding more discipline, efficiency and rigor. If practitioners choose to do things the way they've always done them, they will ultimately be left out.

Q What are you referring to when you talk about adapting to change?

A Right now landscape sprinkler components are so reliable that an

PHOTOS: RAIN BIRD

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PVB LOCK BOX

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SNOW+ICE

GUIDE



doesn't matter if it's with your spouse, a friend or a client."

The pillars of trust, he explains, are the eight distinct qualities that build a competitive advantage when others confidently believe in you—it's what Horsager calls "the trust edge."

These pillars include: consistency, clarity, compassion, character, contribution, competence, connection and commitment. Mastering the pillars and gaining trust isn't easy, because trust is always a risk, he said. Remember: "It's the little things done consistently that make the biggest difference."

Being a great employer

One well attended Symposium session was "Why Become a Great Employer?"—a talk given by Mike Rorie, CEO of GIS Dynamics and former CEO of Cincinnati-based GroundMasters, which he sold to Brickman in 2006.

At its peak, GroundMasters had 550 employees at eight locations. Becoming the landscape employer of choice in his market was a key to the company's success, Rorie said.

The goal for any Green Industry company that wants to grow should be to become the place where people want to work—where competitors' employees approach you and ask if there's a place for them.

"If your name comes up as one of the best places to

Snow and ice management professionals studied up in June and July at several industry educational events. **BY MARISA PALMIERI**

WHEN IT HEATS up outside, savvy snow management professionals don't neglect their winter work—they hit the books for next season.

This summer provided several educational opportunities, including the Snow & Ice Management Association's (SIMA's) Annual Snow & Ice Symposium, held June 20-22 in Minneapolis, and Sno-Motion, a seminar and roundtable event hosted by Pro-Motion Consulting in Cleveland, July 11-12.

It's about trust

Snow & Ice Symposium keynote speaker David Horsager presented "The Trust Edge: 4 Keys to Create, Build and Enjoy Lasting Momentum."

Why should snow and ice profes-

sionals care about a "soft" topic like trust? Consider the following statistics from the 2009 Edelman Trust Barometer. When people trust a company:

- > 91 percent chose to buy from it;
- > 76 percent recommend it to a friend;
- > 55 percent will pay a premium; and
- > 42 percent share positive experiences online.

"For the trusted brand, people pay more, come back and tell others," Horsager said. "From the trusted salesperson, people buy. The trusted leader is followed. A lack of trust is your biggest expense, and it



David Horsager was the keynote speaker for the Snow & Ice Symposium.

work, you've got a competitive edge," he said.

So, how do you get there? Here are a few tips from Rorie.

➤ Share the company vision. It's important to employees to have a road map of the

organization's goals and values to create buy-in. Remember, employee satisfaction equals customer loyalty. "People want to do business with employees who look like they love what they're doing," he said.



SIMA's Snow & Ice Trade Show was held in Minneapolis in June.

➤ Give your employees great systems.

These may include software (financial, sales, management, measurement, etc.), checklists, manuals and processes with documentation. "Lack of systems causes confusion, frustration and chaos," Rorie said. "Employees feel like they're not in control. It's your job to produce a solution so that doesn't happen."

➤ Work hard to retain the proper talent. When companies achieve a certain level of talent within the organization, senior managers and key team members become "gatekeepers"—wanting to have a say about who gets into the company, he said.

➤ Recognize, reward and replace. "It's vital to recognize those who are exceeding expectations by improving the fastest or taking on more responsibility," Rorie said, adding it's important to follow up that recognition with rewards those employees value. Here are a few ideas:

- Offer personal recognition in front of peers;
- Send home a thank-you card; or
- Give them a perk or financial incentive such as a car wash, lunch, paid day off or 50-cent raise.

Finally, if managers or other employees say there's someone on the team who doesn't belong, listen to them. "There should be no sacred cows," Rorie said. "Great employees appreciate when you hold everyone accountable. The best form of praise you can offer other team members is to replace the under performers."

Objects in motion

Attendees at Sno-Motion were taken back to physics class by host Phil Harwood when he shared: "An object

continued on page 40

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continued from page 38

at rest will stay at rest and an object in motion will not change its velocity unless an external force acts upon it. You are the force, if you take action!"

With that, Harwood, CEO of Pro-

Motion Consulting, emphasized the interactive slant of the event, which featured product- and technology-focused sessions, including speakers and roundtable talks and group presentations. The format spurred much discussion.

Attendees shared many good ideas during the event. Here are just a few:

▶ **Test run.** When Harwood ran a snow and ice management firm, the company would do a "fire drill" before the season's first true snowfall. When there was a dusting of snow, the company would bring all staff in, guarantee them four hours on the clock to make it worth their while and run them through all the procedures.



Sno-Motion attendees participated in roundtable talks.

▶ **Bonus round.** To encourage employee retention and timeliness, Brian Vanhengstum of DICAM Landscaping in Binbrook, Ontario, shared that his company has had success offering a \$2 per hour bonus for all hours worked at the end of the season to employees with 100 percent prompt attendance.

▶ **Box it in.** Neal Glatt, account executive at Case Snow Management in Attleboro Falls, Mass., said his company uses box trucks for sidewalk crews. They can hold and keep dry all of the necessary materials and tools, including brooms, blowers, shovels, etc. "That truck can take on sidewalks for any account," he said.

▶ **Call me, maybe.** Bruce Vander Vennen from Jack's Lawn Service & Snowplowing in Bryon Center, Mich., shared his tactic for keeping crew members informed during snow events: a text and voice broadcasting service called Call-Em-All. The service also accepts replies, which he receives via email. **LM**

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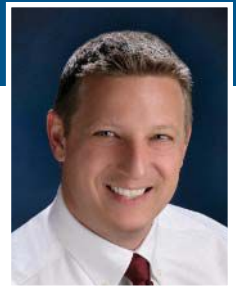


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BY PHIL HARWOOD

Smart portfolio management

SNOW AND ICE management professionals face one of the most difficult variables of all—unpredictability. How many other businesses have no idea when they'll be required to perform services, how long they'll be performing services or what demands will exist for labor, equipment and materials? The unknown makes it very difficult to plan, manage and be profitable.

Trying to predict snowfall totals and ice formation is like to trying to predict who will win the Stanley Cup before the season starts. Since 1880, there's no pattern to seasonal snowfall totals in Southeast Michigan, where I'm located. They are completely random. However, with smart portfolio management (and smart management of individual contracts themselves), much of the risk inherent in the randomness may be mitigated.

Because we have decades of weather history, we're able to easily determine monthly and seasonal averages, along with probabilities for event frequencies. We may create scatter plots, run statistical regressions and more. Armed with this information, we may develop very accurate estimating models. These models and related estimating programs are especially useful when estimating seasonal limited or unlimited contracts.

When we consider the impact of snowfall on the bottom line, we need to realize that seasonal snowfall totals may not line up with the fiscal year. In fact, most snow businesses have fiscal years beginning Jan. 1, which splits the winter season

into two fiscal years. If a business' revenue is more than 50 percent snow, it may be wise to change the fiscal year. One of our clients has a fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, which keeps the winter season in one fiscal year. It's important to compare apples to apples when looking at financial information.

A balancing act

We've developed models for sensitivity analysis of snow contract portfolios. These models prove that most of the risk, due to weather, may be mitigated in the portfolio. For example, our models show that a portfolio of 100 percent per-push (or per event/visit/application) contracts will result in a 101 percent drop in net profit in a light winter (30 percent below normal) and a 110 percent boost in net profit in a heavy winter (30 percent above normal), compared to an average winter.

The risk inherent in such a wide swing in net profit is unacceptable to most business owners and has put many snow and ice contractors out of business. The result of a 100 percent seasonal portfolio is similar, only in reverse—90 percent boost in net profit in a light winter and a 90 percent drop in profit in a heavy winter, compared to an average winter.

However, with a balanced portfolio, the risk is mitigated in a dramatic fashion. In our sensitivity analysis example, with a balanced portfolio, net profit only drops by 52 percent in a light year and increases by 56 percent in a heavy winter. In both scenarios, our example company is very profitable, creating a no-lose situation.

So what's a balanced portfolio? A balanced portfolio is simply a collective bundle of different types of contracts. In the snow business, the most critical variable is the percentage of "per" and seasonal revenue in the portfolio. A 50-50 split is desirable but anything over a 33-67 split in either direction would be considered a balanced portfolio in my book. Strategic selling is the way to ensure that a balanced portfolio exists.

Strategic selling begins with an analysis of the existing portfolio to determine what types of contracts are needed to keep the overall portfolio in balance. This analysis will establish sales goals. Once the selling cycle begins, sales tracking and reporting are necessary to monitor sales activity from a portfolio perspective. At all times, it should be crystal clear as to what the portfolio looks like, so salespeople are able to use their influence to sell the right types of contracts. In some cases, it may be a good move to only offer a specific type of contract so that the portfolio doesn't become imbalanced. It may be better to walk away than to take on too much portfolio risk. Professional gamblers exist but not in the snow business.

Another aspect of portfolio balance is the percentage of contracts expiring in any given year. The higher percentage of contracts up for renewal in a given year, the more portfolio risk increases. Selling multiyear contracts is the only way to reduce this risk. Again, strategic selling is the key. Selling without strategy, tracking and control is a recipe for disaster—or low profitability.

Smart portfolio management equals high profits. There's no reason to settle for mediocre or low profits in the snow business. **LM**

Harwood, LIC, CSP, is president and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach him at phil@mypmcteam.com.

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ABOUT THE HOST

Jody Shilan, MLA is an award-winning landscape designer and former landscape design/build contractor, who has sold tens of millions of dollars of design and installation work throughout his career. He now uses his 35+ years of experience to coach other landscape contractors how to easily and dramatically increase their sales by following his unique landscape design/build/sales process. He does this through public speaking, private consulting, group workshops and his "exclusive" members-only website www.FromDesign2Build.com.



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Ariens Co. // AriensCo.com



Little Bully dozer blades

Multipurpose Little Bully dozer blades attach in place of the out-front mowing deck of any FrontMount Grasshopper zero-turn mower, providing the same time-savings for plowing snow or leveling dirt as mowing grass. They operate straight ahead or 25 degrees left or right, and can be raised or lowered with hand or foot controls. Options include hydraulic lift and angling for precision feathering.

Grasshopper Mower // GrasshopperMower.com



Snow blower line

Seven models of Loftness' skid-steer snow blowers are available in 72- to 84-in. widths. They feature a universal coupler, a single motor design and an electric spout rotator. In addition, 11 rear-mount-driven tractor models are available in 60- to 108-in. widths—accommodating tractors with 540- or 1,000-rpm power takeoff (PTO) drives and 16- to 200-PTO hp.

Loftness Specialized Equipment // Loftness.com

2013 Landscape Management

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Skid-steer snow blowers

Ranging in size from the S510 to the S590, the five new medium-sized Bobcat skid-steer loader models feature an exclusive cab-forward design, providing an increased level of visibility as well as a larger cab door opening. With widths from 36 to 84 in., the snow blower attachment is ideal for deep snow banks, hard, compacted snow or heavy snowfall.

Bobcat // Bobcat.com



DXT plows

Featuring a dual-trip design, the new 98- and 110-in. poly, steel and stainless steel DXT multi-position plows join the 10-ft. steel DXT model. THE BOSS full moldboard trip protects against taller obstructions (6 in. or more), such as frozen snow banks when in vee, scoop and angled positions. They use the SmartHitch 2 Attachment System.

THE BOSS Snowplow // BOSSPlow.com



Power Broom

Equipped with a Kohler 208CC Command Pro Multi Season engine, Toro's new 36-in. Power Broom features a variable speed, shift on-the-fly transmission with six forward and two reverse positions. Patented power steering reduces operator fatigue. Available accessories include a tire chain kit, snow cab, turf caster kit, dirt deflectors, concrete/snow bristle discs, turf bristle discs, light kit and a debris box.

Toro // Toro.com



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— Marisa Palmieri, editor

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SNOW + ICE GUIDE PRODUCTS



Power Pusher box plows

Power Pusher skid-steer models are available in 8- and 10-ft. widths, while backhoe loader models are available in 10- and 12-ft. widths. Both feature 36-in.-tall moldboards and side plates. Three wheel loader models are also available in 12-, 14- and 16-ft. widths, with 48-in.-tall moldboards and side plates. All models feature adjustable and reversible rubber cutting edges and heavy-duty abrasion-resistant bolt-on wear shoes.

Blizzard Snowplows // BlizzardPlows.com



MVP 3 V-plow

The new MVP 3 blends the best features from the MVP PLUS V-plow, with added performance and durability capabilities. Its new flared blade design takes the center height on the 9.5-ft. models from 31 in. up to 39 in. at the outer edge. Blades are available in 7.5-, 8.5- and 9.5-ft. widths in either powder-coated steel or poly material.

Western // WesternPlows.com

XBlade

The new XBlade (pictured) and HD Series for skid-steer loaders feature a universal skid-steer mounting plate; the machine's standard auxiliary hydraulics provide the power to angle the blade left or right. Available in 8- and 9-ft. widths, XBlade combines Fisher's exclusive X-bracing with corrosion-resistant, stainless-steel moldboards and proven trip-edge design.

Fisher // FisherPlows.com



DEICING EQUIPMENT

Crossfire Spreader

The new Crossfire is designed for 3/4- to 1-ton pickups. Available with 6- (1.5 cu. yds.) or 8-ft. (2 cu. yds.) beds, the spreader is available in a standard model or DLX model (pictured), which features an integrated pre-wet system that reduces the amount of material used by up to 30 percent. The double-walled, high-density polyethylene hopper has a five-year warranty. Meyer Products LLC // MeyerProducts.com



Drop Pro spreader

SnowEx's two new tractor-mounted Drop Pro electric spreaders offer controlled application of bagged ice melters and bulk rock salt. Model SD-600 has a 6-cu.-ft. capacity with a 36-in. spread width, while Model SD-1400 has a 14-cu.-ft. capacity with a 48-in. spread width.

SnowEx // SnowExProducts.com



Tension fabric buildings

Legacy buildings use a durable rigid frame in place of the hollow-tube, open web truss framing traditionally used for fabric buildings. The solid structural steel beams are not vulnerable to unseen corrosion originating inside a tube. Additionally, the company says the hot dip galvanized framework provides years of low-maintenance use.

Legacy Building Solutions // LegacyBuildingSolutions.com

Legacy Building Solutions // LegacyBuildingSolutions.com

T370 trucks

As Clintar Landscape Management's mainstay truck in its snow removal business, the Kenworth T370 in single- and tandem-axle configurations spread salt and a salt-liquid mixture in government and private sector parking lots throughout the southern Ontario and the Maritime provinces. During the spring and summer, the salt boxes are removed so the trucks can haul gravel and mulch. Some are outfitted with 1,000-gal. tanks so Clintar can use them for watering sod installations or for power washing operations.

Kenworth Truck Co. // Kenworth.com



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PROJECT PORTFOLIO

A SCRAPBOOK OF DESIGN/BUILD OVERHAULS

Addressing
Gettysburg

THE MISSION

Maintain the integrity of this historically significant site as its visitors center relocates elsewhere on the premises.

The Gettysburg battlefield is a reminder of three fateful days in July 1863, when the tide of the American Civil War shifted from Confederate to Union advantage.

Commemorating this historic battle and its significance was originally undertaken in the 1960s, with a visitors center and cyclorama building designed by renowned architect Richard Neutra. But to return the battlefield to its original state and relocate the center to ground that saw no major battle action, the National Park Service, in conjunction with the Gettysburg Foundation, undertook the construction of a new 139,000-sq.-ft. center in 2008.

Ruppert Landscape, based in Laytonsville, Md., was responsible for planting, removing existing turf, re-grading, sodding, drainage and irrigation at the new facility. The team also installed pavers, the concrete subslab, a bench, a statuary, boulders, river rock, lighting and trees; restored the rubble wall; and installed pedestrian-control safety fencing.

Perhaps the biggest challenge on this project was that the visitors center and paths leading to and from it were open during the landscape installation. There also were boulders (some in excess of 20 tons) and large caliper trees (one with a rootball weighing nearly 15 tons) that had to be craned into position.

Ruppert's Landscape Construction Foreman Leroy Barton worked closely with the landscape architect, Andy Balderson of Donovan Feola Balderson, and grower Halka Nurseries to dig a flat side of the rootball to more easily "face" the project's large 40-ft. specimen tree toward the courtyard area.

"When all was said and done, our team had assisted the client with their original intent of drawing and allowing visitor access during construction," says Bob Jones, vice president and director of Ruppert's Landscape Construction division.



PHOTOS 1 AND 5: GETTYSBURG VISITORS CENTER;
PHOTOS 2, 3, 4 AND 6: ANDY BALDERSON /
DONOVAN FEOLA BALDERSON



3

THE WORK

1 | Living history. The Gettysburg Museum & Visitor Center and its landscape have been melded to create a site that's sensitive to the historic nature of the surrounding landscape and evokes the emotions of 1863 while meeting visitors' expectations of a 21st-century museum experience.

2 | Rock solid. This 20-ton boulder is one of several included in the design as an homage to rock formations at Devil's Den, which were used during the battle to shield soldiers from gunfire.

3 | Sky's the limit. To lift this tree and its 30,000-lb. rootball into its final position required two moves: First from a lower parking lot to midpoint, which was as far as the crane boom would extend. The crane was then repositioned and the tree was deposited to its final destination.

4 | LEED-certified. To satisfy LEED requirements, materials had to be sourced from within 500 miles of the project and come from a palette of native plant material, increasing sourcing time by 25 percent. Some of the native species: fragrant sumac, Itea, arrowwood Viburnum and winterberry.

5 | Multipurpose. Stone walls commonly seen throughout Pennsylvania fields and the battlefield were echoed along walkways for visual effect, to stabilize the slope and to control erosion.

6 | The big reveal. Prior to the statue's unveiling in fall 2008, it had to be shielded from view. Ruppert procured and erected a Civil War-era tent so it would blend in with the surroundings until its unveiling.



4



5



6

Laytonville, Md.-based Ruppert Landscape offers estimating and pre-construction services, general installation, project management and design. For more information, visit RuppertLandscape.com.



If you build it

Carpentry projects have led one New Jersey company to launch a new division.

DOING THE OCCASIONAL pergola or deck project for some of his landscape clients led Simon Darlington, owner of Darlington Designs in Glassboro, N.J., to launch an entire carpentry division for his landscape company. Though he knows it's a bit of an unusual service for a landscape company to offer, the strong reputation for quality and craftsmanship he's built on projects completed so far has allowed that division to grow and thrive. In fact, Darlington has now hired three full-time crew members to handle the carpentry work.

During college, Darlington says he worked for a custom home builder, spawning his interest in carpentry. When he started his landscape business in 2003, he offered small carpentry projects—like pergolas—if homeowners requested them. His business blossomed from there as clients began asking for more. In 2007, Darlington launched a separate carpentry division. He calls the service “wood construction” on his website,

and it encompasses just about anything a general contractor does. Darlington says the division grew organically.

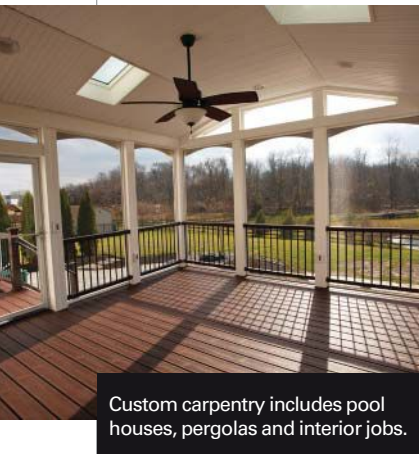
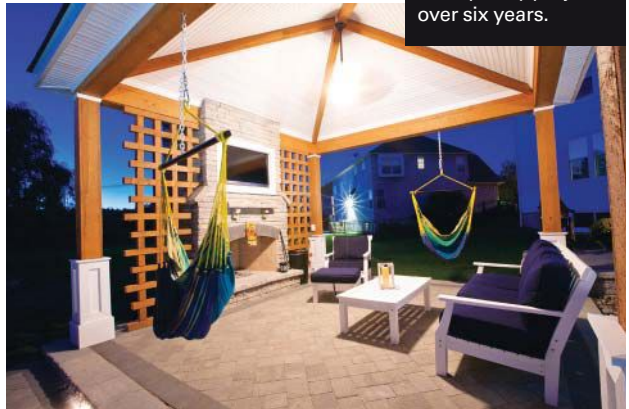
“As the work grew, I hired an employee to work on that division—then another—and now we're up to a crew of three full-time workers,” Darlington says. “All they do is custom carpentry, which has included everything from pool houses and cabanas to interior work like hardwood flooring or trim work. We don't always go out and look for those jobs—they often just happen naturally.”

The carpentry division of Darlington's business has even handled roofing, siding and small additions. Darlington says it's getting to the point where customers are hiring him because of the carpentry offering.

Darlington says the company had to prove itself in the field.



Darlington Designs has built a portfolio of carpentry projects over six years.



Custom carpentry includes pool houses, pergolas and interior jobs.

“We've been doing the carpentry work for about six years and the first three were a little slow,” Darlington says. “As a landscape company we don't look like carpenters, so we had to slowly build a portfolio as jobs came along, which proved we were really good at doing this, too.”

As the division has grown, Darlington says it's been a substantial investment. Carpentry tools are not cheap and Darlington also had to purchase an additional box truck. Still, he says the investment in those tools are cheaper than the construction equipment needed for outdoor landscape projects. He adds that he's been able to recuperate the cost relatively quickly as carpentry projects often can produce a nice profit.

Recently Darlington has begun marketing the carpentry division as its own entity.

“We're doing specific brochures and using our website to showcase that division,” he says.

One of the biggest benefits of adding the division has been the year-round work it produces. In fact, he started this division in part to generate winter work for his staff.

“We've been increasingly able to accomplish that as the division has grown. It's something I'm very proud of,” he says. “We try to get some interior work lined up for the winter, and that gives us an extra 12 weeks a year where we can generate revenue. We're even able to use some of our landscape crew members when we're doing a carpentry project that requires extra hands.”

Payton is a freelance writer with eight years of experience writing about the landscape industry.

» SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: Darlington Designs

LOCATION: Glassboro, N.J.

EMPLOYEES: 17

SERVICE: Custom carpentry division

COST TO INVEST IN A CARPENTRY DIVISION: Approximately \$30,000

YEARS TO RECOUP INVESTMENT: Three to five

LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH



ENCLAVE

Multiple trials from Michigan State University, North Carolina State University, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and the University of Connecticut have found that ENCLAVE quad-control technology fungicide provides broad-spectrum control to help prevent many diseases—including dollar spot, brown patch, anthracnose and pink and gray snow mold.

Quali-Pro // Quali-Pro.com/enclave

Fungicide line

Syngenta fungicides are a valuable add-on for an agronomic program. With two separate modes of action, Headway fungicide controls all major turf diseases. Heritage fungicide provides systemic activity to move the active ingredient throughout the plant for 28 days of residual control. Caravan G fungicide/insecticide (pictured) delivers healthier and better-looking turf.

Syngenta // GreencastOnline.com



FUNGICIDES



Armada 50 WDG

Armada 50 WDG protects against 16 diseases that affect both turf and ornamentals. Its dual mode of action helps reduce the need for inventory and provides up to 28 days of residual control. Quick-dissolving granules are easy to store and measure for efficient loading of both backpack and large tank applicators.

Bayer // BackedByBayer.com

Fungisol

A proprietary fungicide formulation containing debacarb, Fungisol is effective against more than 30 foliar and stem diseases. The company notes the product is also active against soil-borne wilt pathogens that cannot be controlled with drenches or foliar applications.

Mauget // Mauget.com



Pillar G Intrinsic

A granular product that combines triticonazole (the same active ingredient in Trinity fungicide) and pyraclostrobin, Pillar G Intrinsic is a key active ingredient in Honor Intrinsic brand fungicide. Turfgrass diseases controlled by the product include dollar spot, anthracnose, patch diseases, gray and pink snow mold and leaf spot.

BASF Professional Turf &

Ornamentals // IntrinsicPlantHealth.com

COMPACT EQUIPMENT

640 loader

The Avant 640 is equipped with the same Kubota diesel engine as the Avant 635, but because of the two-speed drive motors, its top speed is 14 mph—five miles more than the 635. More than 100 Avant attachments attach to and detach from the machine.

Avant // AvantTechnoUSA.com



PT-30 CTL

The Terex PT-30 compact track loader is designed with a 26 percent increase in lift height, a 16 percent increase in operating capacity and a 45 percent increase in bucket rollback over its predecessor. The 33.7-hp unit offers an operating weight of 3,600 lbs., a tipping load of 1,900 lbs., a 950-lb. operating capacity at 50 percent tipping load capacity, and a lift height of 101 in.

Terex // Terex.com



Case SiteWatch

Case SiteWatch is a telematics, remote monitoring and data reporting program that provides customers with information to help manage their fleets and optimize machine performance. Using a control module that integrates with the machine, SiteWatch sends real-time data to a web portal. An interface allows review and analysis up to 18 months of information.

Case Construction // CaseCE.com/SiteWatch



200 Series loaders

New Holland introduced the long wheelbase concept to skid-steer loaders, and goes even longer with the 200 Series. The New Holland Super Boom vertical lift linkage allows operators to load material into the center of high-sided truck boxes or hoppers. Ergonomically designed joysticks are standard, while optional controls are switchable between ISO & H-Pattern. Pictured are the C232, left, and L220 models.

New Holland // NewHolland200Series.com

8026 CTS

The new 8026 CTS compact excavator is a 2.7-ton conventional tail swing excavator, which now sits alongside the JCB 8025 zero tail swing excavator. It features short pitch tracks and auto kick-down, with 11 percent increase in travel speed; a new valve block with 17 percent longer spool stroke offering; increased precision control and an easy-clean undercarriage.

JCB // JCB.com





259B Series 3

Equipped with a redesigned vertical lift, the Cat 259B Series 3 compact track loader delivers extended reach and lift height. The standard, fully independent torsion axle suspension improves performance on rough terrain. The suspended undercarriage system provides traction, flotation, stability and speed options to work in a wide range of applications.

Cat // CatResourceCenter.com

50G and 60G

The John Deere 50G (36-hp) and 60G (53-hp) compact excavators are the newest models to join the G-Series line. They feature widened and lengthened cabs for improved operator comfort, and incorporate an auto-idle feature that slows engine speed when the pilot-control levers are momentarily released, for reduced fuel consumption and noise.

John Deere // JohnDeere.com



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[Coming in September]

15 and counting

Scotts LawnService—a \$300 million division of a \$3 billion company—turns 15 this year. We look at how it has grown, will continue to grow and what other Green Industry firms can learn from its model.



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Director of education, Spring-Green, Plainfield, Ill.



Who's your mentor? There are three. One is Bob Parmley, who was co-owner of the first lawn care company I worked at, Tempo 21. He was very even-tempered, very thorough and thought-provoking. I was in my 20s and full of vim and vigor. He taught me you have to step back and think about how your decision is going to affect everybody. The second is Bill Hoopes. He was the trainer at Barefoot Grass [where Enger worked as a regional manager for 10 years after it acquired Tempo 21 in 1987]. I'd started doing some training at Tempo 21 and I liked helping people

learn. He really helped me decide on a training style, making sure the information I provided people was of use and getting people involved. The third is the chairman of Spring-Green, Tom Hofer. He's always interested in you and always turns around with a smile on his face.

Did you ever have the entrepreneurial itch? Not really. I'd think about it, but in all honesty, I like having someone else have the ultimate responsibility. Owning a business wouldn't have afforded me the same possibilities, like being able to travel and learning a lot of new things. I like being part of the supporting cast because it gives me a chance to work with more people and train more individuals.

You've taken to blog posts and video to help promote Spring-Green. What's that like? If you need to know how to do anything you can do it on YouTube. We didn't really want to do a video on how to fertilize the lawn, because that's what we do, but what about sod webworm damage or how to check for grubs? You have to do lots of different takes. You try to make sure you say everything correctly, but it all has to be off the cuff. There's no teleprompter.



What's changed the most about lawn care since you started in the business in 1978? The number of applications and services we offer. It used to be four apps and we did a soil conditioner called gypsum. Now there are seven applications. Why? No. 1, customers want to know what's going on with their lawn. If we're out there more often, we can identify their problems. The other reason, of course, is to make more money.

Another thing is the control products. Our selection is so much more extensive than it was at one time with different modes of action and products that are more pest specific.

What's stayed the same? The customer has changed the least overall. They've become more attuned to lawn care and the environment, but they still want to get a good deal and they're paying for the results.



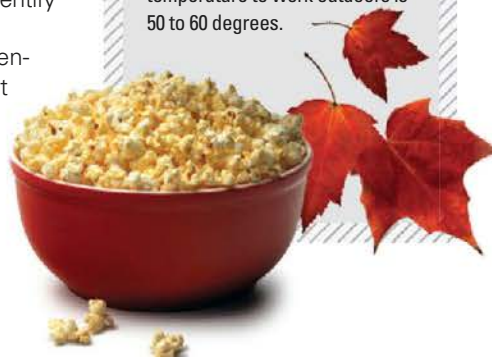
OFF THE CLOCK

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT WORKING? Gardening, woodworking. But my passion in life is singing. I sing in our church choir and in the bell choir. I'm a tenor. There aren't many of us.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY. Roxanne is my wife. Through the years she's worked in lawn care. She was the office manager for Tempo 21 and worked as a customer service rep at Barefoot Grass when we needed help. And I have one daughter, Sarah, who's a special education teacher. She got married last year. Her husband, Steve, is also a teacher.

FAVORITE SNACK FOOD? Popcorn, buttered. We do it the old-fashioned way—a popcorn popper with oil. None of this microwave stuff.

THE BEST TIME OF YEAR IS... Fall. It makes me think of going back to school. I really loved high school and college, and it makes me think of that time of my life. Plus, the cooler weather. My favorite temperature to work outdoors is 50 to 60 degrees.



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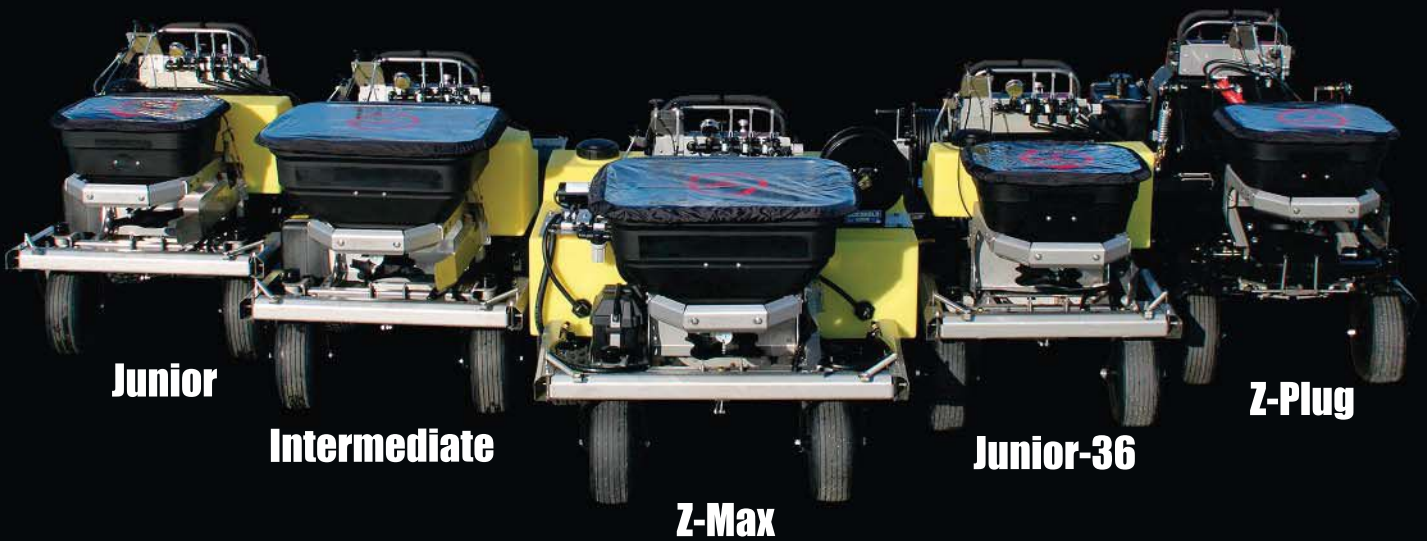
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