

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

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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**

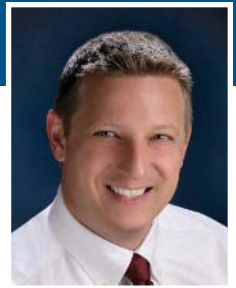
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SNOWEX
LEADERS IN ICE CONTROL



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.

» WEB EXTRA

For tips on smart management of individual contracts, visit the Web Extras section of [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).

SNOW + ICE GUIDE PRODUCTS

SNOW REMOVAL



Hydro Brush 36

As the newest addition to the Power Brush line, the Hydro Brush is an all-season machine capable of moving snow, sand, dirt and gravel. It easily removes up to 6 in. of snow and other debris from sidewalks, driveways and decorative surfaces like patio brick or cobblestone. It also can be used to dethatch or remove gravel from lawns.

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

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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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