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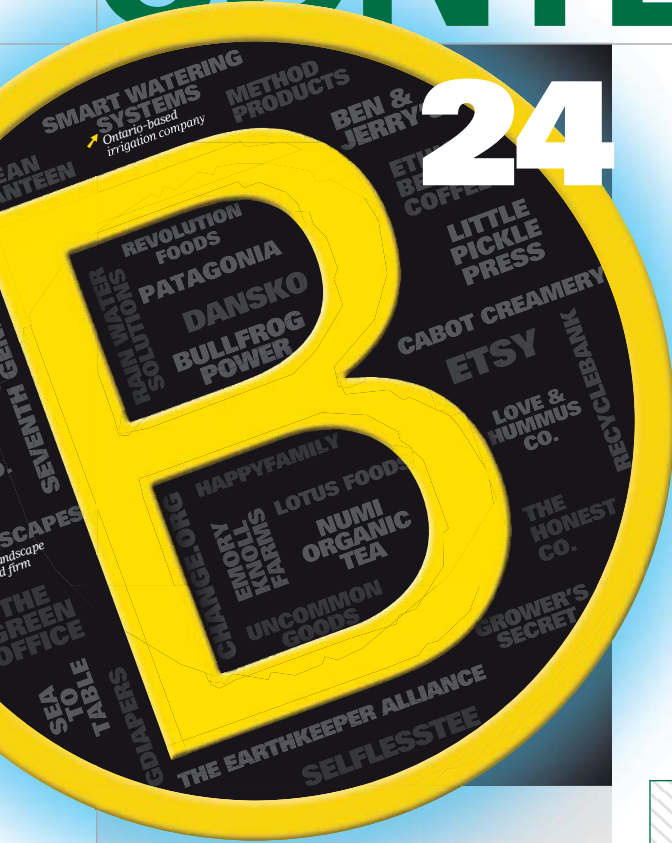
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Design by Tracie Martinez



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FROM THE **LM BLOG** > LandscapeManagement.blogspot.com

Senske Lawn & Tree Care makes 'Tonight Show' headlines'



Senske Lawn & Tree Care was featured on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" on April 22 as part of the "headlines" sketch where viewers submit newspaper headlines, signs and printed materials with spelling errors or other mistakes or sentence structures that make them funny.

The punch line in the Senske bit came from a pruning flier that says, "Did you know... trees are tall plants made of wood?"

Despite Leno calling the company "Senske Lawn & Garden" (which is not its name), Patrica "Patt" Mosley, director of marketing and communications for the \$21.6 million firm based in Kennewick, Wash., was pleased with the exposure.

"When one of my colleagues sent us the link to the clip, I was actually worried at first, since I didn't know what to expect," she says. "But when I saw it, even though Mr. Jay Leno referred to us incorrectly, it made my day. I actually had to watch a few more times and each time, it cracked me up. While I realize their intent was to poke fun at our expense, it was still worth the exposure and I can probably assume that more

people today will remember that trees are tall plants made out of wood!"

View the "headlines" clip featuring Senske at <http://goo.gl/8hQ1Y>.

SEEN ON TWITTER

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@Inbound_Agency: Lawn Care Market Survey Shows Optimism Among Lawn Care Providers - ow.ly/kwyqa via @GoiLawn @LandscapeMgmt

@HoekstraTruck: RT @LandscapeMgmt: 6 techniques for increasing sales this spring on the LM blog ow.ly/k9QHd

@KingsSprayers: RT @LandscapeMgmt: Just getting your landscape business off the ground? Expert advice from LM columnist Bruce Wilson ow.ly/kvG0r

WEB EXTRAS

Visit LandscapeManagement.net > Click on Web Extras

» Get tips for making small improvements to your business from B Corporation certifier B Lab (from the cover story).

» Download a case study and the sample irrigation audit letter Turftenders sends to its clients (from page 38).

» View Lawn Management Company's customer philosophy (from page 64).

PHOTOS: SENSKELAWN & TREE CARE; NBC.COM; ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL INC.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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

Designation style

The way a publication writes and applies grammar and punctuation is called its "style."

Landscape Management uses the Associated Press Stylebook and we have our own house style, too, which is nothing more than a Word document that lists the idiosyncrasies of the way we write about the industry. For example, we capitalize Green Industry. We say "handheld equipment"—not "hand-held equipment." We use the term "preemergent herbicide" rather than "preemergence herbicide." The point of sticking to a style is consistency—to present clarity for readers.

Until now we've specifically left professional certifications out of our copy. Why? We've treated them like academic degrees, which the AP Stylebook says to include only to establish someone's credentials. To us, your experiences owning or operating a landscape business are enough to quote you in a news article or to share your best practices in a feature story. A few letters after a name doesn't guarantee someone's credibility.

But that's not the only reason we'd left certifications out of the magazine. There were other, logistical reasons, including the difficulty we'd have verifying certification claims, the many types of certified professionals there are in the Green Industry and the sheer amount of space it would take to explain them each time. After all, until 2010 when the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) rebranded the certification programs to Landscape Industry Certi-

fied, there were more than a handful of different designations (CLP, CLT, CTP and the list goes on).

That said, many other business-to-business publications print their industry's professional designations. When a certified golf course superintendent's name appears in our sister publication, *Golfdom*, the initials CGCS follow without question.

Why shouldn't we do the same? For one, PLANET now lists all certified professionals on its website, eliminating the difficulty of fact checking certification claims. And, when you consider lack of professionalism is a perennial problem in the landscape industry and there's a seemingly rampant increase in occupational licensure laws in the business community, we feel a duty to acknowledge the *voluntary, proactive* efforts some professionals make to improve their skills and businesses through certification and biennial recertification.

So, beginning with this issue, you'll see the designation LIC, which stands for Landscape Industry Certified, following certified managers' and technicians' names in the pages of *LM*. This issue, you'll see it in the article about Michael Bellantoni Inc.'s 50th anniversary on page 12 and also on page 34, where outgoing PLANET President Norman Goldenberg, LIC, is quoted. We'll also begin denoting the Irrigation Association's certified professionals, like Chris Le Conte, CIC, CLIA, whose company is profiled in this month's cover story, starting on page 24.

Now, if you'll please excuse me, I have to update *LM's* style guide.

Landscape Management

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Where consumers spend

PLANET/Harris Interactive's research reveals consumers' spending habits on professional lawn and landscape services.

vs. 30 percent of men). About a third say they hire professionals because they don't have enough time and 31 percent say it's because they want a professional look. Fifteen percent say they don't have the patience. (See chart below).

What they'll spend on

A third of U.S. adults who have a lawn or landscape say they'll hire a professional in the next year for at least one service. Fifty-eight percent state they will not hire a professional in the next year for lawn/landscaping services. Nine percent are not sure.

The top five spending areas are expected to be landscape maintenance/care, such as mowing, edging, leaf cleanup;

lawn care (e.g., application of fertilizer and weed control products); tree care; landscape services, which could include design and/or installation such as planting shrubs, trees, flowers, mulching, etc.; and building patios, decks, walkways or outdoor kitchens. (See chart on page 10).

How much they'll spend

U.S. adults with a lawn or landscape who expect to spend on landscape maintenance/care in the next year plan to spend an average of \$700 on this service in the next year, a \$100 increase compared to what they reported spending last year.

Those who hired or expect to hire a professional for lawn care services

continued on page 10

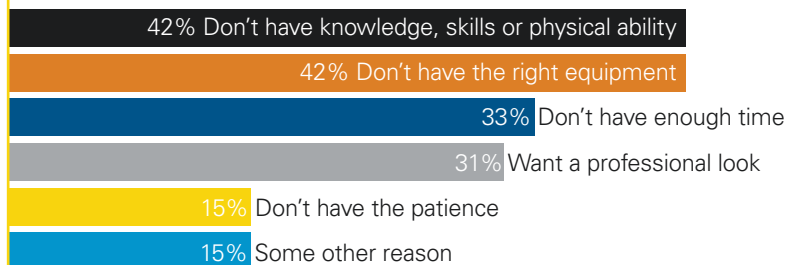
The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) commissioned Harris Interactive to field research, asking consumers about spending on professional lawn and landscape services. The online, five-question survey was conducted in February among 2,219 U.S. adults aged 18 years and older, of whom 1,830 (83 percent) have a lawn or landscape. The study is the second in a two-part series PLANET conducts with Harris. For complete reports on both parts, visit loveyourlandscape.com/research/.

Why they spend

Survey results show that those who purchased lawn/landscaping services in the past year or will purchase services in the next year do so primarily because they don't have the knowledge, skills or physical ability or they don't have the right equipment (both at 42 percent). Women are more likely to indicate the former response (56 percent of women

Main reasons for hiring a professional for lawn/landscape services

(Respondents could select more than one)



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continued from page 8

will spend an average of \$400 in the next year, which is flat from what they reported spending last year. Tree care customers also expect to spend \$400 in the next year on those services, which is on par with last year.

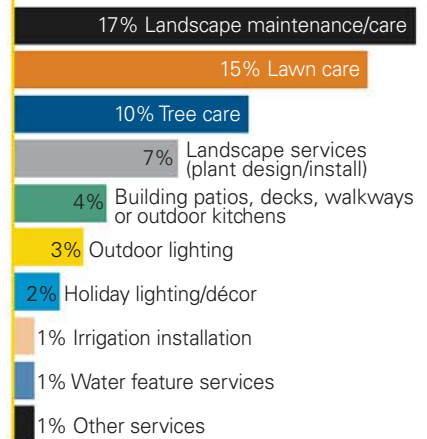
Those who spend on landscape services plan to spend \$1,200 in the next

year, which is a \$200 increase from what they reported spending last year.

Finally, those who hire professionals for building patios, decks, walkways or outdoor kitchens expect to spend \$2,900 in the next year, which is about double the \$1,500 they reported spending last year. —MARISA PALMIERI

Services consumers expect to hire a professional for in the next year

(Respondents could select more than one)



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LM ADDS STAFF

Landscape Management (LM), added two media professionals to its staff last month. Bill Roddy, a Green Industry marketing professional, has joined North Coast Media as publisher of *LM* and associate publisher of sister magazine *Golfdom*. Carla Kastanis has joined NCM as national account manager for *LM* and *Golfdom*.



Bill Roddy

Roddy has spent the past 13 years managing some of Melamed Riley Advertising's largest accounts, including Syngenta and FMC. He was responsible for developing and executing marketing strategies and tactics, launching and developing brands and products across myriad platforms, including events, print, digital and social media. Kastanis fills a newly created position at *LM* and *Golfdom*. She brings with her 17 years of B2B media sales and account management experience from roles at Advanstar Communications and Penton Media.



Carla Kastanis

Immigration bill on the table

The Senate bill could have a major Green Industry impact.

BY MARISA PALMIERI

The “Gang of Eight” bipartisan group of senators and representatives introduced an immigration bill to the Senate on April 17. The legislation includes many provisions that could affect the Green Industry.

It’s “the most encouragement we’ve had in a long time” on immigration, Tom Delaney, director of government affairs for the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), told *Landscape Management*.

Delaney highlighted a few key provisions pertinent to the landscape industry.

H-2B guest-worker program. The new bill would reinstate the returning-worker exemption through 2018. It also includes language that’s similar to the controversial 2008 wage methodology. However, the

bill would require employers to pay workers’ incoming and outgoing transportation costs and reasonable subsistence costs during the travel period. Plus, employers must certify and attest the H-2B workers didn’t and will not displace U.S. workers employed within 90 days before the start and end dates of an H-2B worker.

W visa program. This new program for low-skill workers allows spouses and minor children of the workers under the program to accompany workers to the U.S. and be given work authorization for the same period as the W visa holder. Some members of the landscape industry may qualify for this program, which isn’t seasonal and temporary in nature like the H-2B program.

E-Verify. The legislation requires all employers to use the federal government’s online system for verifying workers are legally permitted to work in the U.S. This mandate would be phased in over a five-year period. As part of the system, every

noncitizen would be required to show a “biometric work authorization card” or a “biometric green card.”

Unlawful status. The proposed legislation allows for people currently in the country illegally to apply to adjust their status to the legal status of Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI). Those eligible to do so include people who have resided in the U.S. prior to Dec. 31, 2011, and have maintenance of continuous physical presence since then and have paid fees. After 10 years, aliens in RPI status may adjust to Lawful Permanent Resident status through the same merit-based system everyone else must use to earn a green card. Many people are ineligible, including convicted felons and other criminals.

“It’s a good start and it has a lot of good provisions in there,” Delaney said. “But I can guarantee you this isn’t the bill that’s going to be voted on. There will be changes made to get it more acceptable to more people.”



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Half a century of success

Michael Bellantoni may be stepping away from his business, but he's not slowing down.

BY DAN JACOBS

After 50 years of running his landscaping business, Michael Bellantoni, LIC, might be on the back nine. Or he might be in Hawaii or Florida or Aruba. But even as he winds down his role in the business, rest assured, he will not sit back and simply watch the grass grow.

"The worst thing for me to do is just stop because I'm so active with my lifestyle," says Bellantoni, who still retains the title of president and CEO of Michael Bellantoni Inc., the full-service, White Plains, N.Y.-based landscaping company he launched in 1963.

BELLANTONI'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

"These are the [principles] that we preach in our company to everybody—from the guy pushing the mower to the guy selling jobs, interacting with clients," says Michael Bellantoni, president and CEO of Michael Bellantoni Inc.:

1. Put safety first.
2. Make no excuses.
3. Be prepared.
4. Be honest.
5. Have a positive attitude.
6. Don't make promises you can't keep.
7. Look professional and be professional.
8. Be a leader.
9. Provide best value of service.

"That's the advice I'd give to other people in business," he adds.



While he has found time for golf and the occasional vacation, Bellantoni admits he usually put the business first.

"I always found a reason to stay at work and not go do something I wanted to do," Bellantoni says. "But, I made a commitment to myself. I'm not going to let work keep me from doing the things I want to do anymore. They need to learn to pick up the slack.... Otherwise, I'll be here forever."

The "they" Bellantoni refers to are his two sons and the management team he leaves behind. Statistics suggest about two-thirds of businesses handed to the second generation don't survive, but Bellantoni isn't worried about the future of his company. Two of his four children have been helping him run the organization for the past several years. His son Matthew Bellantoni is in charge of business development, and his son Michael Bellantoni, LIC, is operations manager.

In many businesses, "the second generation just doesn't have what the first generation had," Bellantoni says. "I preach this to my sons all the time. I have the strongest confidence in watching them operate and make decisions that they're not going to be part of that (failing) percentage."

Bellantoni retains majority ownership in the business. Over the next

Michael Bellantoni (center) is flanked by his two sons who work with him in the business: Matthew (left), who handles business development, and Michael Jr., who manages operations.

couple of years he will transition ownership to his sons.

"I enjoy going out to see clients, old and new," he says. "I enjoy designing. I enjoy engineering projects. As for everyday operations, I am going to get to a point this season where I really don't have to come in in the morning if I don't want to."

One thing he does want to continue is his work with the larger Green Industry. He's been a member of the New York State Turf & Landscape Association for 30 years, helped bring certification to the landscaping industry and has traveled around the country helping other states get their testing in line.

Bellantoni also has worked with national industry organizations such as the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), where he mentors others in the industry as a Trailblazer.

"The secret to success is good relationships," Bellantoni says. "That's with your people in the company as well."

Bellantoni's done it for 50 years. He should know.

Jacobs is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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Jumping at the opportunity

Volunteer efforts are ingrained in ALCC's culture. BY CASEY PAYTON

In its 50 years, the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado (ALCC) has established a long history of supporting communities, sponsoring and leading projects throughout the state.

"Giving back to the community is one of the things we were founded on," says Kristen Fefes, executive director of the ALCC. "Part of that is because making communities beautiful, productive and sustainable is something

that our membership does every day."

Those community projects have included numerous undertakings over the years. In 2012, ALCC efforts included the installation of an edible garden at Excelsior Youth Center, a school for at-risk teenage girls. Fefes says many of the projects stand out in her mind, but this one had a powerful impact.

"To hear these young women talk about rape, drug abuse and the lack of support from their families was heart wrenching," she recalls. "One of the things that's important to community service is ensuring you have the right volunteers for the right project. On this particular project they were mostly female volunteers that wanted to be role models for these young girls. That was inspiring."

There were other efforts, as well. At Poudre Valley Hospital, the Northern Chapter of the ALCC took on a project in which 14 volunteers transformed a parking lot into a healing garden to benefit both patients and staff. It involved



In 2012, The Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado installed healing and edible gardens for those in need.

food bank a few years back. "It was such awful weather that day and people could have felt discouraged or even wanted to give up, but instead everyone said, 'It's all right, we're doing this,' and then went ahead," Fefes recalls. "Everyone ended up having a blast and it was very memorable."

As the ALCC chapters continue to embrace community involvement, Fefes says she feels it's now "in their blood" and something they will continue to do.

"Helping people in need is just the right thing to do," Fefes adds. "I've found our chapters are jumping at the opportunity to do that and to make a difference in our communities. We all benefit from our surrounding communities becoming more beautiful.

Fefes says that by this point, community involvement is ingrained in the ALCC and that its members consider volunteering to be part of their membership.

"I see the interest in volunteering as something that's an ongoing part of our future," she says. **LMM**

AT A GLANCE

State association: Association Landscape Contractors of Colorado

Location: Denver

Executive director: Kristen Fefes

SELECT PROJECT LISTING:

▶ **Excelsior Youth Center**—

In 2012, 24 volunteers from the Denver Chapter designed and installed an edibles garden within a larger master-planned garden at this school for at-risk teen girls.

▶ **Poudre Valley Hospital**—

Last year, members from the Northern Chapter transformed a parking lot into a healing garden that included irrigation and hundreds of plants.

▶ **Aspen Pointe Enterprises**—

Thirty-four Southern Chapter members turned a weed field into a community gathering place, with support from 18 suppliers.

Landscape Management is the media sponsor of the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET) Community Stewardship Award. We'll feature each of the program's winners January through June. For more information or to read about the other winners, visit landcarenetwork.org/awards/communityaward or landscapemanagement.net/givingback.

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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.

Knowledge: your secret weapon

If you're like me, you get your fair share of industry news blasts, social media updates and business-in-general updates. But how many of you actually read them?

The truth is, as much as we find the 24/7 news cycle overwhelming, deleting or dismissing updates just might be holding you back.

Early in my career, Joe Marsh, one of my mentors and the founder of Green Valley Landscaping (later acquired by ValleyCrest), met with me every morning to review the news.

Keeping up to date on the industry and staying informed was a priority for the company, and we clearly used it to our advantage. We discussed how announcements from our competitors, customers and suppliers would affect Green Valley's hiring, buying, operations and sales—and help us be more competitive. This practice taught me how to think critically, assess the big picture and learn how events happening somewhere else could influence something happening on my desk.

Landscape owners need to think about trends all the time. This year in particular there are legislative changes, spending cuts and government budget reforms that will significantly impact the workplace: health care mandates, immigration/tax laws and nationwide dialogues on green and environmental initiatives. Regardless of your position politically, you need to stay informed and know how these changes will affect your bottom line.

There are scores of websites, newspapers, magazines and other popular news sources to choose from. Information is abundant and everyone is swamped, with not enough time to absorb it all.

Here are 12 best practices to streamline the overload, prioritize what's relevant and make knowledge your secret weapon for success. They'll also help you keep up with trends in 30 minutes a day or less.

1. Keep up with industry news and insights through our own Green Industry media, who've triaged the important issues so we don't have to.

2. Follow state and national association newsletters and weekly feeds; scan headlines and talking points for facts and figures.

3. Identify and keep an eye on favorite news websites and seek a cross section of opinions.

4. Use an online news aggregator (i.e. Google News), to search current and past stories from a multitude of sources.

5. Create customized news pages or use an RSS feed, which provides an updated summary of web content and makes it easier to access specific topics.

6. Set up Google Alerts to stay on top of things without getting sidetracked by too much unrelated content.

7. Read all you can about our industry and your market. Keep up with trade publications and websites, influential bloggers and thought leaders.

8. Go beyond our own industry and learn what customers and professionals in related upstream fields (architecture, urban planning, development, real estate and construction) are talking and thinking about.

9. Read up on your customers' industries and their positions on issues through association journals, newsletters and blogs. Regularly talk with them about trends in their businesses. Read what your customers are saying on their social media sites and follow their news. What markets are they targeting? Are they expanding, downsizing? Are there new services? Is there an acquisition?

10. It pays to have a business-savvy mind. Read top business journals and magazines to find inspiration and information on marketing, management, technology, leadership and changing consumer preferences or buying habits.

11. Access or download mobile versions or apps of your favorite business and Green Industry news to your smartphones and tablets.

12. Encourage critical thinking and continuous learning. Set aside 30 minutes in your team meetings to focus on, share and discuss key topics and news that will affect your business.

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THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kkehoe@earthlink.net.

Revenue growth: Closing more sales

In my March column I shared financial benchmark data for sales growth as well as a list of best-in-class tactics that drove that sales growth. Here I address one of those tactics—sales management and the use of a customer resource management (CRM) system. Most high-performance sales companies employ a CRM planning and tracking system such as BOSS LM or SalesForce.com to make plans, monitor plans and coach for success.

Make a plan

Table 1, below, shows how to set up a plan for a commercial landscape salesman in the columns “Plan number of leads,” “Plan dollars bid” and “Plan dollars closed.” In this real-life example the goal is to close \$1 million in new annualized contracts. The bid plan is based on a 20 percent close rate. Therefore, \$5 million needs to be bid. The required leads (a lead is an actual property) are based on an average monthly job size of \$2,500

(\$30,000 per year) and an 80 percent opportunity rate. To be successful, this salesman will need to find and develop 208 property leads. The monthly plan numbers are based on a pacing rate in line with your market’s seasonal buying history.

Monitor the plan

A planning and tracking system that captures actual lead, bid and close performance is an essential best practice. The “Actual” columns in Table 1 show this salesman is ahead on bids but lagging on sales closes. The sources for this report are three lists in the CRM system: 1). Leads that are in queue with scheduled activities for advancement to a bid; 2). Bids in the pipeline ready for decision and closing; and 3). Bids lost and closed. Many lost bids can be re-tasked for future year sales work.

Coach for success (i.e., closes)

The sales meeting is a best practice to help salesmen improve. A CRM has to be married to a process to refocus and coach salesmen toward success. Here’s a standard process.

Sales meeting agenda

1. Do the math. Is there enough in the pipeline 60 to 90 days out? Using the “Actual” columns in Table 1, we can project the closes from the bid pipeline. Presently \$1,056,000 is bid and \$270,000 is closed. This leaves \$786,000 available. Projecting the next 60 days of closes required (April and May) plus the current lag of \$30,000, \$230,000 is necessary to get back on track. Using the 20 percent close rate on the existing \$786,000 open bids would provide \$157,000. This is short of the goal.

2. Assign probabilities to open bids and strategize tactics to get a decision. Make phone calls during the meeting to open bids. It’s amazing how much progress you can make “doing it live.”

3. Assign priorities to leads/opportunities and strategize tactics to qualify and advance. Again, make phone calls and write emails during the meeting to get advancement.

TABLE 1: COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE SALES PLAN

Month	Plan number leads	Plan dollars bid	Actual dollars bid	Plan dollars closed	Actual dollars closed
January	21	\$500,000	\$455,000	\$50,000	\$47,000
February	21	\$250,000	\$277,000	\$100,000	\$94,000
March	21	\$250,000	\$324,000	\$150,000	\$129,000
April	21	\$500,000	-	\$100,000	-
May	21	\$750,000	-	\$100,000	-
June	21	\$500,000	-	\$100,000	-
July	21	\$500,000	-	\$50,000	-
August	21	\$500,000	-	\$50,000	-
September	10	\$250,000	-	\$50,000	-
October	10	\$250,000	-	\$100,000	-
November	10	\$250,000	-	\$100,000	-
December	10	\$500,000	-	\$50,000	-
Total	208	\$5 million	\$1,056,000	\$1 million	\$270,000
Progress to date			\$56,000		(\$30,000)

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Get Smart

Closed-loop EFI brings high-tech brainpower and unmatched fuel efficiency to the mower engine.

Are your lawn mowers running *stoichiometrically*?

It's not a trick question. However, the answer might depend on whether or not your mowers are powered by closed-loop electronic-fuel-injection (EFI) engines. Stoichiometric combustion—a fancy way of saying “optimal fuel usage”—is one of the prime advantages of closed-loop EFI engines over open-loop EFI and carbureted engines. And while “stoichiometric” might sound like some kind of abstract Zen concept, achieving it produces tangible fuel savings and emissions reductions for landscape professionals.

AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY

With its origins in the automotive industry, closed-loop EFI engines incorporate an oxygen sensor in the muffler, which analyzes exhaust gases and sends data to an electronic control unit (ECU). If the data indicate the air-fuel mixture isn't ideal, the ECU adjusts the ratio of ingredients to maximize power while optimizing fuel usage. These systems close the loop, so to speak, between the air-fuel intake and the exhaust output, supplying a constant stream of critical operating information to the ECU.

“The ECU in a closed-loop EFI engine is collecting all of this information from the engine, plugging it into a series of mathematical equations and saying, ‘Perfect, this is what I need to input to provide optimal performance, power and efficiency,’” explains Brandon Fredricks, marketing channel manager for Kohler Engines.

What does this mean for the landscape professional? “Kohler's closed-loop Command PRO EFI engines use 25 percent less gasoline compared with similar-size carbureted engines. In real dollars, this translates to \$600 of fuel savings per engine in a year*.”

ADAPTING TO ALL OPERATING CONDITIONS

Kohler's closed-loop EFI system includes a manifold atmospheric-pressure (MAP) sensor that helps the engine adjust to fluctuations in weather conditions and altitude. The MAP sensor, along with other sensors in the system, are continuously providing feedback in pursuit of stoichiometric combustion—there's that word again—regardless of the operating conditions.



**Kohler's
Command
PRO EFI Engine**

“Our closed-loop EFI is unique because—unlike a carbureted or open-loop system—it's constantly adapting to the operating environment as well as changes within the engine,” Fredricks says. “So, in addition to making adjustments for humidity, temperature, altitude, and air quality—it's also adjusting based on the engine's oil temperature, cylinder temperature, air flow and more.”

A closed-loop EFI system is automatically recalibrating itself multiple times per second. This continuous loop of analysis, feedback, and adjustment also enables closed-loop engines to start up immediately—which is music to the ears of any operator who has gone through the rigmarole of choking and priming a carbureted engine on a cold morning.

“On our Command PRO EFI engines, the minute you turn the key the closed-loop system is already taking readings from all of the sensors to figure out the ideal air-fuel mixture,” says Fredricks.

LESS DOWNTIME

Kohler's closed-loop EFI system not only puts automotive-grade technology in the hands of operators, but also at the fingertips of the people who maintain the lawn mowers.

With Kohler's proprietary diagnostic software, maintenance personnel can simply connect to their laptop to perform a detailed troubleshooting analysis. The software not only identifies problems, but it also provides step-by-step instructions for quickly resolving the identified problem.

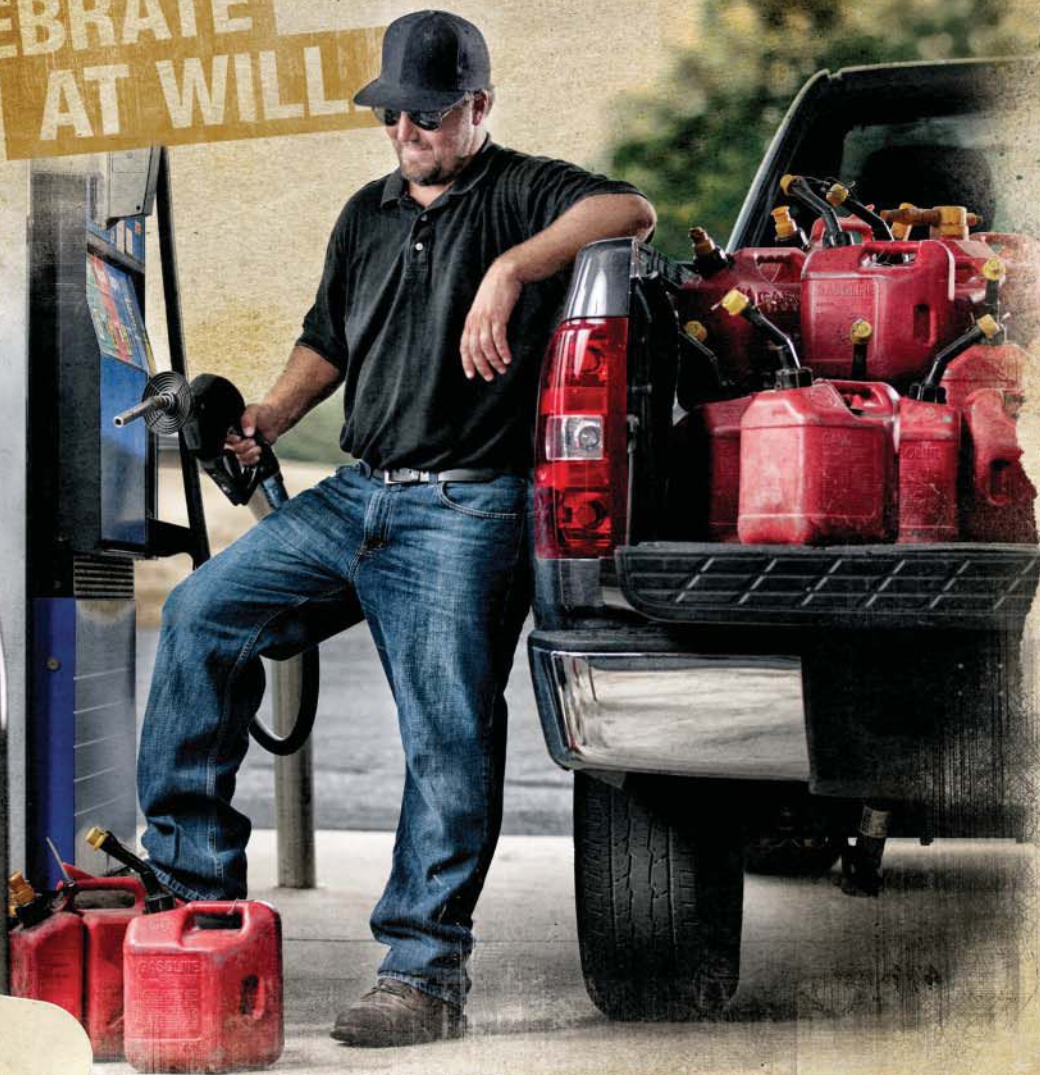
“We've really taken the guesswork out of engine service and repair,” Fredricks says. “Just like the automotive industry, our diagnostic software allows for quicker and better repairs, maximizing productivity and minimizing downtime.”

Many commercial OEMs have already integrated Kohler Command PRO EFI engines into their products. And the technology has been adopted by landscape pros nationwide who have responded favorably to the enhanced performance and fuel savings delivered by the line. For additional details, visit KohlerEngines.com.

**Compared to a comparable Kohler carbureted engine under comparable loads and duty cycles. Based on 600 hours of annual operation.*

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*Compared to a comparable KOHLER carbureted engine under comparable loads and duty cycles. Based on 600 hours of annual operation at \$3.50/gallon.

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SOUTHERN CRABGRASS

Digitaria ciliaris

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This annual, warm-season grassy weed reproduces by seed and forms dense stands in open, disturbed or thin-canopy sites.
- ▶ It grows along the ground with branched stems that root at the nodes.
- ▶ Leaf blades are rough with no hairs or only a few short hairs near the base of the blade. Long hairs are often on leaf margins near the sheath and on the sheath itself, similar to large crabgrass (*D. sanguinalis*).

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Southern crabgrass typically germinates when soil temperatures reach a consistent 55 degrees F.
- ▶ In the absence of frost, Southern crabgrass can overwinter—producing new growth and a second crop of seed in spring or early summer.
- ▶ Apply an herbicide containing dithiopyr prior to germination or prior to the tillering of crabgrass, which generally corresponds to the time when crabgrass seedlings are easily observed in turf.

* State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products apply.



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DOWNY BROME

Bromus tectorum

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ Downy brome, also known as cheatgrass, has densely hairy leaves and sheaths and drooping seedheads.
- ▶ Its leaves are rolled in the shoot and hairy on both surfaces. Leaves lack auricles and have a membranous ligule that may be fringed with hairs near the top.
- ▶ In late spring/early summer, the seedhead, a soft drooping panicle, changes from green to purple to tan. It often remains purple during the winter months.

- ▶ Flowers consist of individual spikelets with needlelike awns.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Cutting is not a recommended control method for downy brome. If cut prior to seed ripening, it will produce new stems and seeds at the cut height.
- ▶ For smaller infestations in commercial settings, apply an herbicide containing pronamide.
- ▶ Make fall application(s) after downy brome seeds have germinated and are beginning to grow.

** Kerb is a federally Restricted Use Pesticide.

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

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THE CHANGE

Companies seek B Corporation status to emphasize stewardship of the community, environment and their employees.

BY **MARISA PALMIERI**

“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” –GANDHI

Call it what you will: “Corporate social responsibility.” “The triple bottom line.” “Conscious capitalism.” Whatever your terminology, the movement of for-profit enterprises toward considering their impact on employees, the community and the environment is undeniable. Some early leaders have blazed a trail and others—including companies in the Green Industry—are following in their paths.

Firms are accomplishing and validating their corporate social efforts in a few ways, including third-party certification programs and benefit corporation status (see sidebar on page 29 for more information on the differences between the two).

Certified B Corporation status, administered by the nonprofit B Lab, is one third-party program. You may have heard of some of its certified companies—the list reads like a who’s who of esteemed brands: Ben & Jerry’s, Danskø, King Arthur Flour Co., Patagonia, Method Products, Numi Organic Tea, Seventh Generation and Etsy, among others. There are more than 700 Certified B Corporations in 26 countries and 60 industries.

At least two Green Industry firms are out in front of the Certified B Corporation movement: Ontario-based irrigation contractor Smart Watering Systems, and Naturescapes, a Paoli, Pa.-based design/build firm.

What do these companies do that others don’t? Certified B Corporation status means they have rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency, says Katie Kerr, communications associate with B Lab.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

To become a Certified B Corporation, a company first completes the online B Impact Assessment. Companies that earn a minimum score of 80 out of 200 points undergo an assessment review process, essentially a conference call verifying the claims made in their assessment. Companies may be required to provide supporting documentation before they are given Certified B Corporation status.

Certified B Corporations also pay fees based on annual sales, ranging from \$500 for firms with annual sales less than \$2 million up to \$25,000 for companies that are \$100 million-plus. Companies are required to become recertified every two years.

After certification, firms are subject to random on-site reviews. Ten percent of Certified B Corporations are randomly selected for review each year.

Becoming a Certified B Corporation also has a legal component to protect officers and directors under the law. Some companies have to change their governing documents to meet this legal requirement. Doing so allows them to consider interests of all stakeholders when making decisions (not just shareholders).

Read on to understand why two Green Industry firms became certified and how it’s working out for them.

SMART WATERING SYSTEMS

Location: Milton, Ontario

Service mix: All irrigation: 20% consulting; 70% service/upgrades; 10% installation

Client mix: 95% commercial/industrial; 5% residential

2012 revenue: \$1 million-plus

Employees: 14

Management: Chris Le Conte, president

B Impact Report

Certified since: December 2011

Focus area:	Points Earned:
Governance	7
Workers	32
Community	12
Environment	41

Overall B Score 92

LM: How’d you first hear about Certified B Corporations?

Chris Le Conte (CL): They came to my attention because a few years ago instead of giving Christmas gifts we funded construction of sand-based water filters on our clients’ behalf. A local company goes to Sudan and builds these filters. That company happens to be a B Corporation. The people there said, you guys are in the same sort of

Phil Burkart (left), then president of the Irrigation Association, presents Chris Le Conte, CIC, CLIA, with the IA’s 2012 Crawford Reid Memorial Award.





“We thought this would be a good challenge for us.” —CHRIS LECONTE, SMART WATERING SYSTEMS

business, so you should look into it. We did and we thought it was a good fit, in terms of “walking the talk,” so to speak. We feel pretty good about it.

LM: What’s been your response from clients?

CL: Many of our clients work with us because they’re trying to reduce their water use as part of a corporate sustainability process. When people prequalify us as a vendor, they ask us to see our

sustainability policy to see if we’re the right fit. They value those sorts of things, so we thought this would be a good challenge for us, and it’s also good for staff and how we run the business.

LM: How long did it take you to become certified after you’d learned about it?

CL: After finding out about it, we pursued it right away. It was something we wanted to implement immediately. We went through the process of vetting our procedures and we implemented some new ones. It only took a month or so to pull it all together.

» WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extras section of [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) for tips from B Lab on how to make small improvements to your business to be a good steward of the environment, your community and your employees.

LM: What was the certification process itself like?

CL: There’s a large, online assessment form you complete—it’s more in depth than just a survey. You have to talk about your policies and processes. It addresses all aspects of your business—there are segments about employees, daily operations, sustainability, etc. Then there are two to three interviews and support calls with B Lab staff. Our office manager really helped pull it all together because you have to complete the assessment and submit your documentation.

LM: Do you promote your Certified B Corporation status?

CL: We market it somewhat and we have it on our website. I don’t know how much attention all of our clients pay to it or if it’s a relatively new concept to them. It is a growing movement. I don’t know how well known it is in private industry outside of sustainable businesses.

I look at it more of demonstrating our commitment to our clients and our staff. It’s heavily weighted on how you treat employees, if you’re creating a positive work environment, a work and personal life balance and offering benefits and profit sharing. The theory is corporations are traditionally structured

continued on page 28

PHOTO: SMART WATERING SYSTEMS

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continued from page 26

to benefit the owners only. B Corporations work differently. A sustainable business has happy employees that are well looked after and are part of the growing company. If the company does well, they do well. The company makes decisions not strictly on profit.

LM: What things do you do as a B Corporation that many others don't do?

CL: The process ensures you modify your corporate documents saying you'll allocate a certain percentage of profits to employees. We were already doing that with our profit-sharing plan. Another thing we do is give people two paid days off a year to work for a charity of their choice.

LM: What companies do you, personally, look to as models of ethical business practices?

CL: Patagonia, which is a Certified B Corporation, always has been what I think of as a forward-thinking company. It recognizes success is heavily weighted by how you treat your

INTERESTED?

If the case studies from Naturescapes and Smart Watering Systems have piqued your interest, but you're still not sure if the time and financial investment will work for you, take the B Impact Assessment at b-lab.force.com/bcorp/AssessmentReg. It's a free, confidential tool to see where your company stacks up against more than 7,000 other companies.

employees. That approach creates a positive, productive work environment.

We try to model ourselves in a way that we attract good, talented people and we'd retain them. It's the same with our clients.

LM: Would you recommend becoming a Certified B Corporation to others?

CL: I would. It's a good way to look in the mirror and make sure you're walking the talk and to make sure you improve your processes to facilitate a better work environment and a sustainable enterprise. Before, we were doing a lot of things that were positive, but we weren't formalizing it and documenting it as policy—simple things like our recycling program. We'd always had recycling bins, but now we've retained a recycling contractor and set up stations throughout the office to make it easier, and there's actual training about it when you come on board.

Before becoming a B Corp we had a one-page sustainability policy. It was very rudimentary. Now it's much more in depth.

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NATURESCAPES

Location: Paoli, Pa.

Service mix: Primarily design/build

Client mix: Primarily residential

2012 revenue: not disclosed

Employees: 7

Management: John Fridy, owner; Sally Fridy, administrator

LM: When did you first hear about Certified B Corporations?

Sally Fridy (SF): I wish I could remember exactly how we came to be B Corp enthusiasts. I probably read something about them, found out they were nearby and had to investigate.

[B Labs, the nonprofit organization that administers B Corporation certifications, is located about 5 miles from Naturescapes in the Philadelphia area.] I'm sure I just thought it was a good thing, so we signed up. Now, one of our clients is [B Lab cofounder] Bart Houlihan, who's one of the originators of B Corps. In fact, the Houlihans called us because we were a B Corp.

LM: Why did you decide to become one?

SF: It made sense: It's a different corporate style. It's for public benefit. It's not just for profits. It just sounded like something we wanted to do. We're a naturalistic organization. We believe in the plants and the environment and putting the right plant in the right place. In other words, we're not just out to make the almighty dollar.

Naturescapes owner/operators John and Sally Fridy say they have a naturalistic approach to landscape design and installation.

B Impact Report

Certified since: July 2009

Focus area:	Points Earned:
Accountability	15
Employees	36
Consumers	28
Community	33
Environment	15
Overall B Score	127

CERTIFIED B CORPORATION VS. BENEFIT CORPORATION

Benefit corporations and Certified B Corporations are often confused, according to the nonprofit B Lab. Both are sometimes called B corps. They share much in common but have a few important differences.

Certified B Corporation is a certification conferred by B Lab. Benefit corporation is a legal status administered by the state. Benefit corporation legislation has been enacted in 14 states and Washington D.C. and is under consideration in 13 states. Benefit corporations do not need to be certified. Certified B Corporations also may be benefit corporations.

Benefit corporations differ from traditional companies in three primary ways: higher standards of purpose, accountability and transparency.

15 Laws Passed

13 Working on it



LM: What's been your response from clients? Do people know you're a Certified B Corporation?

SF: Some do, particularly those who have a penchant for being in tune with the equalizing parameters of life. Some don't. It's probably a good idea to promote ourselves as a B Corp, especially because we're so different than many landscape businesses, but we haven't really marketed it to customers. I guess there's already enough to share in the sales process. Perhaps we need to change this aspect of John's interviews with clients.

LM: What companies do you look to as models of ethical business practices?

SF: The White Dog Café in Philadelphia and the woman who started it, Judy Wicks, are big on being local. We're not that far from Philadelphia and we've paid attention to that and some of those things have made a difference in our business. We buy locally. Also, remember when Ben & Jerry's used to have a policy that the highest paid employee made only seven times as much as the lowest paid employee? I don't believe they do that anymore, but it's about being that kind of ethical. We pay our people well and



PHOTOS: NATURESCAPES

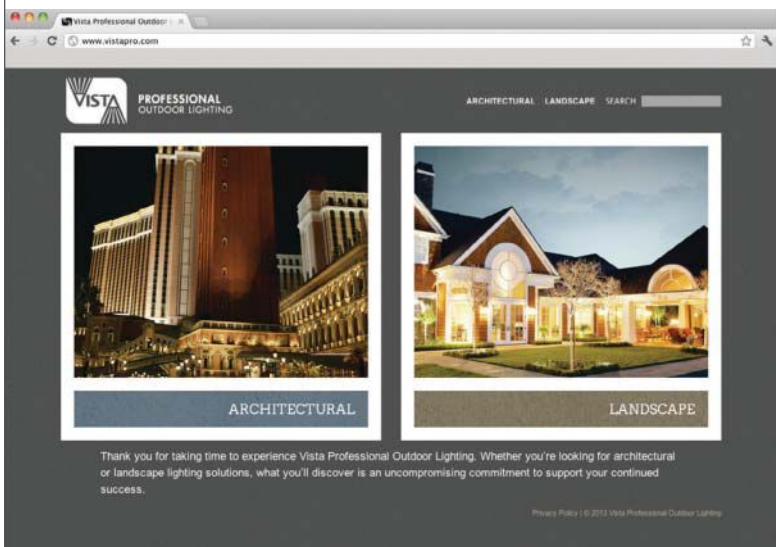
try to do everything to help them. That's the whole point. It's really important to recognize the fact that your labor force is of great benefit to you.

LM: Would you recommend becoming a Certified B Corporation to others?

SF: I would recommend it because I

think it's the coming thing to do. Probably, a lot of companies would think it might be too costly or don't think it will benefit them in some way. We didn't choose to do it for the benefit it would garner us; we chose to do it because it was the right thing to do. We're probably not like a lot of others. We're small so we can do things differently. **LM**

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IN GOOD COMPANY

Green Industry Certified B Corporations are listed among many well-thought-of brands. Here's a look at a few notable examples that happen to founding B Corps.



West Grove, Pa.
Certified since:
December 2007

Not only does Dansko pay employees to take time off to volunteer, it matches the amount of their salary and donates it to the organization they volunteer with. More than 50 percent of employees share ownership, more than 5 percent of profits are shared with employees, and all employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement. Plus, the company's LEED-certified headquarters features a living wall.



Overall B Score: 84



White River Junction, Vt.
Certified since: May 2007

A 100-percent employee-owned company, this baking ingredients and tools company boasts company-wide service outings and 40 hours of paid time off for all employees to help their choice of non-profit groups. The company also conducts biannual environmental audits and shares the information with employees.



Overall B Score: 101



Burlington, Vt.
Certified since:
May 2007

This brand of "green" household and personal care products calls itself a "pioneer in corporate responsibility." Its offices are LEED certified and more than a quarter of the firm's fleet is made up of low-emission vehicles. More than 75 percent of employees share ownership, and benefits include health coverage for half-time employees and off-site subsidized childcare. Additionally, the firm offers paid time off for employees to volunteer.



Overall B Score: 116

[ADVERTORIAL]

Talkin' Tech

JERRY CORBETT » TECHNICAL SERVICES MANAGER, QUALI-PRO



Q What trends are you seeing in the lawn care market?

As I've heard many times in my life, "The only thing you can count on is change." In my opinion, how successful you become depends on how well you adapt to the change. There's a growing change in information technology that lawn care operators (LCOs) can and should be taking advantage of to be more successful. The new modern information technology can at least make life a bit easier. We now have social media, iPhones or Androids, iPads, Skype and the Internet at our disposal at all times.

For example, I see LCOs out in the field and if they're having trouble identifying a weed, disease or insect, they can snap a picture on their cell phones and send into the office, extension agent or university professor for proper identification. Within minutes you can get several opinions on the pest you're dealing with. If you really think about it, we have amazing tools that can help us with our jobs today.

Another thing I find very cool is that leading turfgrass universities have lots of information on their web pages. For example, at turffiles.ncsu.edu, North Carolina State University researchers publish weed, disease and insect alerts when the pests are first seen in their area. It's a lot easier to find information about our pests these days.

Q What pests are lawn care operators most concerned with these days?

In the past LCOs could plan to deal with the same pests year after year. You could almost count on it. Today we're all dealing with pests that may not have been a problem before. In my area we have red imported fire ants that were certainly

less of a problem 10 to 12 years ago. I have heard entomologists claim we have more pests because we're now using insecticides that are safer to the environment, so these insecticides do not offer the broad-spectrum insect control like the old chemistry (organic phosphates or carbamates, etc.).

Today we're treating for more specific insect situations. In the past, when spraying an insecticide with the old chemistry we actually controlled several other insect pests. Now when we're treating fire ants using fipronil we may control a couple of other insects like mole crickets, but we don't control everything.

Today we're now having issues with pests like billbugs, armyworms, sugarcane beetles, nematodes and more ants than I have ever seen before. Also, in my area I can say that we have seen more ticks, fleas, spiders and mosquitoes than ever before.

Because of the increase with insect pest pressures and the limited insect spectrum of our insecticides, I predict that combination products will be more handy in the future.

Q What's new with Quali-Pro in the lawn care market?

We recently launched ENCLAVE™ flowable fungicide for horticultural disease control (for greenhouse, nursery and landscape applications). ENCLAVE provides broad-spectrum control of many foliar, stem and below-ground diseases on a wide range of horticultural plants grown or maintained under a variety of conditions. It's university tested, providing superior results.

Another product we offer for LCOs is Fipronil 0.0143 G broadcast insecticide. It's one of the best fire ant products available, providing residual control. It can be

used to control existing mounds and prevent new fire ant infestations in residential, commercial, golf courses, recreational turfgrass and landscape beds. It can be applied any time of the year as a broadcast application.

For the LCOs dealing with broadleaf weeds in southern turfgrass situations, we have Quali-Pro MSM herbicide. MSM contains Metsulfuron, which is a powerful sulfonylurea herbicide that can be used on southern turfgrass cultivars and will control several broadleaf weeds.

Quali-Pro also offers 3-D herbicide, which is a phenoxy-based combination product that can be used on warm season and cool season turfgrass cultivars. It will control several broadleaf weeds including chickweed and dandelions.

With regard to insect control, I really like our Cyonara 9.7 insecticide. It contains Lambda-cyhalothrin, which is a synthetic pyrethroid. This product can be used by LCOs around buildings, lawns and landscapes. It is my favorite insecticide for controlling fleas, ticks, spiders and mosquitoes.

Q What's different about Quali-Pro?

One thing that I can say about Quali-Pro is that we are dedicated to supporting the industry. All of our products are tested internally as well as by the leading university cooperators. Our promise is to deliver an economically competitive product with superior formulation technology.

Another thing that I tell folks all over the country is that if you have a question about a Quali-Pro product with regards to rates, issues or performance, you can contact me at JerryC@quali-pro.com.

BUILD A BETTER BUSINESS WITH *generosity*



Why companies are pitching in to support charities and their communities.

BY STAN CRAIG

A full-page ad in a Sunday edition of *The New York Times* stated boldly that \$60 million was received in 2012—more than \$1 million a week—by a variety of recognized charities and community causes. The ad was not from a charity or fund-raising organization. It was from one of America's largest retailers with multiple stores all across America. Why run full-page ads announcing charitable giving? Why not a sales ad or holiday offers? Because statistics prove over and over that customers, if given a choice, prefer to buy from those who provide support to charities and causes they see as valuable to their community.

More companies understand the balance sheet is more than numbers and have developed values that are stated, respected and carried out. Generosity is one of those values. The buying public has made clear that they prefer to buy from good corporate citizens. Generosity demonstrates a genuine corporate value that benefits the company, employees and the community. It comes in all sizes. It will fit nearly every business. How is true generosity recognized? Generosity is noticed if its goals are visible and more than a sales or a morale booster. If your company is looking for ways to give back, consider the following options.

Volunteers matter

Businesses that encourage employee volunteer days at a local nonprofit of their choice get a double bonus. Employees enjoy serving and local non-profits see your company in a very different light. With employee verification, write a check to an organization representing the value of an employee's work if a paid day-off can't be granted. Schedule an employee generosity day for all employees to sign up for a community or team project.

Helping build a house for Habitat for Humanity, spending a day at a soup kitchen or shelter or helping in a local community center are all team-building events as well as acts of generosity.

Here are just a few of the dividends that corporate generosity creates, according to a VolunteerMatch.org survey. It:

- > **Raises employee morale.** 94 percent of companies surveyed believed employee volunteering provides a way to raise employee morale.
- > **Boosts employee health.** 92 percent of people who volunteer through their workplace report higher rates of physical and emotional health.
- > **Provides skill development.** 88 percent of employee volunteers report that volunteering provides networking/career development opportunities.
- > **Increases employee loyalty.** 66 percent of employees reported a greater commitment to the company as a result of their experience as volunteers.

There are many more examples of creative ways to be generous. Look around your community. How can what you do every day become more evident and beneficial to others?

Little things count

"Giving" actually multiplies what you are "receiving." Walk into most Sam's Clubs or Costcos at 1 p.m. on almost any weekday and you can basically have a free lunch—and not by ordering at the lunch counter. Just walk down the aisles and you will find hot foods

92 percent of people who volunteer through their workplace report higher rates of physical and emotional health.

from pizza to burgers, cold beverages, hot beverages, sweets and treats of all sorts—freely and gladly handed out. Whole Foods and Trader Joe's are doing the same for their customers.

Why this generosity? The truth is, even if the goal is not necessarily to be generous (as we think of it), generosity can build sales. Coupons for free items, free bonus gifts and prizes have always worked to gain attention and build sales for products from cereal and soap to jewelry and big ticket items such as automobiles and even homes.

But how can you be generous when your cash is low, your business consists of products or services that you can't give as samples—or you have few employees to volunteer? What then?

- > Offer discounts to charitable organizations;
- > Give time or funds to community projects;
- > Participate in a community event that's not business-related;
- > Offer your place of business for community use, seminars, calling-marathons or a meeting room;
- > Lead a class on your specialty for the chamber of commerce or any local organization or non-profit; or
- > Speak to senior citizens clubs, retirement communities, schools and PTAs and let the group charge participants for your valuable information and keep the revenue.

Customers and potential customers will take note. You will generate positive publicity. Commit to generosity in the true sense of the word and it will make a difference that can pay dividends for years to come and build your balance sheet in ways that simply can't be quantified.

Remember, your bottom line may not only be measured by revenue received but by resources shared. Generosity is a business vitamin that will build a healthier bottom line. **LM**

Craig is a financial planner, executive coach, keynote speaker and author of "ForeTalk: Taking Care of Tomorrow Today." Reach him via ForeTalkSeminar.com.

GREEN INDUSTRY gives back

Volunteers tackled 140 projects nationwide during PLANET's fifth annual Day of Service.

The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) held its annual Day of Service on April 22, Earth Day. The event is a grassroots effort by individual landscape industry companies to create volunteer projects in their own communities. This year's theme was "Come Alive Outside" to showcase the positive effects green spaces have on peoples' lives.

This year, more than 1,900 volunteers from across 36 states, Canada, and Trinidad and Tobago, participated in approximately 140 projects that had an estimated value of donated time and services of \$660,000.

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VOLUNTEERISM

GREEN INDUSTRY gives back

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"Our industry has the ability to make people's lives better by improving the community green spaces, gardens, parks and ball-fields that people use every day," says PLANET President Norman Goldenberg, LIC. "It's so inspiring to see the incredible projects that these companies do in their own communities, at their own cost, without question, out of a desire to help people."

Event sponsors included Belgard Hardscapes, Blizzard Snowplows, Fisher Snowplows, Include Software, John Deere, Nature Safe, Western, TruGreen, Shindaiwa, CNA, Stihl, Snapper Pro, Turf Appeal, and HighGrove Partners and The Greenwood Group. Many sponsors including Stihl, Shindaiwa, Turf Appeal, The Greenwood Group, and HighGrove Partners organized projects in addition to providing financial support for the event.

Here's a look at a few projects:



Kane Landscapes
STERLING, VA.

Project: Construct a memorial patio at Langley Residential Services, a home for disabled adults in Dunn Loring, Va.



Gachina Landscape Management
MENLO PARK, CALIF.

Project: Build an educational garden at Marin Day Schools in Redwood City, Calif., including irrigation upgrades, amending the soil with organic compost, planting a variety of vegetables and planting annual and perennial flowers.



Belknap Landscape Co. & New Hampshire Landscape Association members
GILFORD, N.H.

Project: Lead a three-day cleanup effort to restore the yards and landscapes of nearly 200 homes ravaged by Hurricane Sandy in Lindenhurst, N.Y.



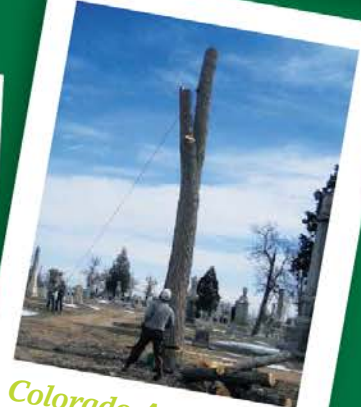
Hemlock Landscapes
CHAGRIN FALLS, OHIO

Project: Clean up the grounds at the Ohio Army National Guard's 135th Military Police Co. armory.



Ammons Landscapes
PAMPA, TEXAS

Project: Clean up, replant, paint, aerate and more at the Pampa Optimist Youth Club.



Colorado Association of Lawn Care Professionals
DENVER

Project: Remove approximately 60 large, medium and smaller dead trees from the Riverside Cemetery in Colorado.



HighGrove Partners
AUSTELL, GA.

Project: Install landscape elements at Calvary Children's Home in Powder Springs, Ga.

MARKET WATCH

MAINTENANCE

Blade runners

Handling mower blades with care preserves quality and productivity at Mainscape.

By MARISA PALMIERI

At Mainscape's Naples, Fla., branch, the staff handles mower blades with care to give its military, homeowner association and commercial clients the best quality of cut without any dreaded "streaking."

If quality is subpar and callbacks occur, Branch Manager Jim Spano cringes at the thought of lost time.

"If there are streaks, we have to go back out and re-mow if it's a priority customer," he says. "Then we're just wasting gross margin dollars by going back out to an area that should have been treated correctly the first time."

To prevent such an instance the company is picky about its mower blade selection and maintenance to ensure success when handling blades for the 60 to 80 John Deere and Exmark mowers it runs daily.

RIGHT BLADES FOR THE RIGHT GRASS

Most of the turf Mainscape handles is St. Augustine grass, as well as Bahia and other varieties of *paspalum*. "Currently we like the high-lift Gator Mulcher blades," he says, noting the blade thickness is superior to many other aftermarket blades, resulting in a good quality of cut for the Mainscape clients' turf. "If we

PG 35

MAINTENANCE How to handle mower blades with care

PG 36

IRRIGATION Adding value with irrigation audits

PG 38

DESIGN/BUILD Co-op showroom concept presents opportunity

PG 42

LAWN/TREE CARE Some LCOs turn to organic soil amendments



Mainscape mechanics store extra sets of mower blades on racks (left) and disinfect them daily in a wash station.

don't order new mowers with the high-lift mulching blade, I'm willing to pay to have get them instead of trying out whatever they're putting on."

Spano notes it's a premium product—sets of three cost about \$50—but it's worth it not to have to have blades that cause "streaking."

MAINTAIN WITH CARE

Sharp blades are key. "Every day our mechanics get underneath, take off and put on new blades," Spano says, noting there are two sets of blades for every mower, which buys the mechanics some time with the sharpening process. "When we buy a new mower we just go ahead and order the second set of blades so it goes into our inventory."

Each mower has slot on a rack where its spare blades are stored before they're rotated back onto the mower. In addition to being sharpened daily, the mechanics disinfect them with a bleach-water mixture.

"That way we don't run the risk of spreading diseases from one property to another," he says.



Mainscape's Naples, Fla., branch upgrades its mower blades to improve its quality of cut.

Finding 'liquid assets'

Contractors can add value to their irrigation services by identifying cost-saving opportunities for clients.

By JONATHAN KATZ

Over the past century, advancements in irrigation technology have created more efficient and accurate systems. Still, many irrigation system users are unaware their systems are outdated or inefficient.

For irrigation contractors, this presents an opportunity for upgrades, replacements and other maintenance needs.

The challenge is identifying these needs and then communicating them to customers. Irrigation audits can be an effective way to upsell customers on solutions for irrigation systems.

Turftenders Landscape Services, based in Raleigh, N.C., began offering commercial customers irrigation audits more than two years ago as a money-saving service.

While the audits haven't become a major revenue generator for Turftenders, the company views the offering as a potential market differentiator, says Chase Erwin, Turftenders' business development manager.

"Our company tries to be a solutions provider," Erwin says. "It's very competitive in Raleigh, and there are a lot of companies that are great at landscape maintenance. They try to maintain what's existing. For us, we try to take more of an outside-the-box approach."

Being a solutions provider means helping customers find long-term savings in an environmentally friendly way through water conservation, Erwin says. Turftenders

President Steve Hill created the irrigation auditing program after attending an annual water symposium in North Carolina about two years ago. One of the main conference topics was the subject of irrigation-related water conservation. The discussion touched on water scarcity in the region and the rising cost of water. Seeing an opportunity to help customers reduce costs and save water resources, Turftenders decided to offer irrigation auditing services, Erwin says.

Turftenders markets the irrigation audits primarily to homeowner associations, condominiums and other commercial clients rather than smaller residential properties. That's because a property with few irrigation zones will likely find less value in an audit that can cost between \$500 and \$2,000, based on the number of zones, Erwin says. Turftenders charges separately for the audit and any additional work related to the audit findings.

HOW IT WORKS

Turftenders markets the program by mailing a cover letter explaining the audit portion of its irrigation efficiency program, which it calls Liquid Assets, to select customers. This year, the company plans to send the letter to

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At left: Josh DeMoll, irrigation technician, sets an irrigation head. Below: A Turftenders' account undergoes an irrigation audit.



PHOTOS: TURFTENDERS LANDSCAPE SERVICES



JERRY GAETA
Landscape Solutions



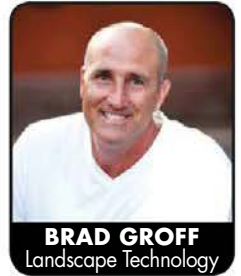
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To download a Liquid Assets case study and a sample of the irrigation audit letter Turftenders sends to commercial clients, visit the Web Extras section of [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net)

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approximately 200 commercial clients. Turftenders conducts the audit to map the irrigation system to pinpoint design flaws and identify leaks or broken heads.

The company begins the audit process by turning on every zone and then observing the system in operation to identify performance problems. The technicians look for obvious signs of malfunction, including sunken sprinkler heads, misaligned spray patterns (identified by brown spots in certain areas) and misting or fogging, which can be a sign of overpressure.

From there, Turftenders conducts performance testing to calculate the precipitation rate, so the company can determine uniformity of the application. The process helps Turftenders technicians know how long the system should operate. Measuring the precipitation rate is less sophisticated than it may sound. Turftenders conducts the process by placing red plastic cups along a mapped-out grid system in the landscape. After allowing the system to run for several minutes, a technician measures how much water was collected in the cups. Using this data, the company

can determine how much water per hour each area is receiving, Erwin says.

Turftenders enters the data, including usage information from the client's water bills, into a spreadsheet provided by Rain Bird. The spreadsheet calculates savings and the payback time frame. With the audit complete, Turftenders follows up with a report detailing a plan to potentially save water at the property. The letter includes estimates of potential gallons and money saved if the customer follows through with the suggested actions. Some of the recommendations may include retrofits, capping off certain heads or eliminating zones, as well as ensuring the controller is properly scheduled.

THE RESULTS

One housing development already has realized significant savings from the program. The housing community encompasses 71 homes on 11.5 acres, including nearly 74,000 square feet of fescue turf. After the first full year in 2011, the Turftenders' client realized a decline in landscape water consumption of 638,792 gallons from the previous

year and a water cost savings of \$5,950.

Turftenders installed new pressure-regulating heads to improve water distribution and eliminate misting.

The company also cut the total number of heads from more than 1,000 to 880. Turftenders expects the client to recover its initial capital investment in three-and-a-half years and save more than \$71,000 over the system's lifespan.

So far, Turftenders has achieved some success with the audit program, including a client who agreed to a \$20,000 retrofit. Typical projects in the current economic climate have been a few thousand dollars, Erwin says. He's optimistic that as water prices continue to rise, more customers will recognize the value of irrigation audits.

"It's something that differentiates us from our competition, and everybody wants to save some money, Erwin says. "It's also good for the environment. Here in North Carolina water rates are going up, and these irrigation systems are too valuable to these properties to just abandon them."

Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

DESIGN/BUILD

One-stop shop

A Florida outdoor living co-op presents opportunities and challenges.

By JONATHAN KATZ

Some homeowners envision their backyard as a secluded paradise with a pool, patio and fire pit. Others seek a Zen experience with koi ponds and water gardens. Yet sometimes these dream

backyards are beyond the capabilities of a single landscape designer or company.

In November, a group of businesses opened a showroom in Ellenton, Fla., less than 20 miles north of Sarasota, as a type of one-stop shop for outdoor living. The four companies that make up the co-op called Backyards N More joined together to create synergies that would lead to better landscape designs and more referral-based business.

Backyards N More includes a landscape design/build company, a pest control and lawn care firm, a pool and spa installer and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) firm. The building is owned by Backyards N More founder Philip Yetzer, who's the president and CEO of the pool and spa

installation firm Drips 'n' Puddles. The partnership has increased revenue by approximately 20 percent to 40 percent for Prime Environmental Landscaping (PEL), says owner and founder Chris Lockhart. PEL is a design/build contractor that partnered with Drips 'n' Puddles last spring to form the co-op.

PEL already has benefited from job leads generated by Drips 'n' Puddles. In some cases, the partnership has reduced installation times for PEL, resulting in more satisfied customers, Lockhart says. Before joining Backyards N More, PEL often faced design, timing and budget challenges because the company didn't have the opportunity to coordinate with the pool contractor.

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5/15	Dave Macilius , Contractor, <i>Natural Landscapes</i>	Trends in Landscape Design/Build	Sponsorship Available
5/22	Pat Donovan , Consultant, <i>Classic Landscaping</i>	Truck and Trailer Safety	Sponsorship Available
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ABOUT THE HOST

Jody Shilan is an award-winning landscape designer with more than 35 years of experience in the green industry. In addition to hosting FD2B Talk Radio and managing FromDesign2Build.com, Shilan is a regular presenter at industry events and writes the "Profiting from Design" column for *Landscape Management* magazine.

Shilan earned his Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture (BSLA) from Rutgers Cook College and his Master's Degree in Landscape Architecture (MLA) from the University of Massachusetts.



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continued from page 38

“When we can sit down with the client from the get-go and have an overall idea of the design and not just pieces of it as it comes,” Lockhart says, “the whole project is much easier to tie together, construction is smoother and the design goals are easier to achieve by pre-planning.”

The collaboration with Drips ‘n’ Puddles has cut the amount of time it takes to complete some projects, Lockhart says. In addition, when the Backyards N More affiliates refer business to each other, they receive a commission for the referral, Lockhart says. He eventually expects to generate 60 percent to 70 percent of his sales through Backyards N More.

PEL’s involvement with Backyards N More began about eight years ago after a client introduced Lockhart to Yetzer. Yetzer was seeking a landscape designer to help him establish a full outdoor design operation, Lockhart recalls. After Yetzer reviewed Lockhart’s work with PEL, the two discussed creating a one-stop shop that could handle multiple backyard needs.

PEL and Drips ‘n’ Puddles together invested approximately \$100,000 into the Backyards N More showroom, which Lockhart characterizes as a type of village setting with sidewalks and meandering paver walkways. Some of

the features include a pondless waterfall near the showroom entrance and outdoor fireplaces and kitchens. Eventually, Yetzer added a pest control and lawn care company and HVAC firm to round out Backyards N More’s offerings.

The showroom provides the co-op companies with marketing opportunities they may have missed, Lockhart says.

“There are a lot more elements to the outdoor landscape than just plants,” Lockhart explains. “It’s stone, wood, water, topography, sound—all kinds of things other than just plant material, and it’s helping us get all those other services out there and get our name out there as clients are coming in to see one of the other businesses.”

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Being associated with multiple businesses has its advantages, but companies considering similar ventures should exercise caution, Lockhart says. Make sure potential partners have solid reputations, Lockhart says.

“It can be a good thing to have your name behind another company, and it can be a bad thing if they’re not doing their job,” Lockhart says. “As long as you’re partnering with a company that’s equal or better than you are, then you can’t go wrong.”

Backyards N More, a co-op of several different outdoor-related service businesses, operates a showroom featuring aspects of all its members’ offerings.

PEL only associates itself with Backyards N More partner Drips ‘n’ Puddles, Lockhart says. The other companies are primarily building renters Yetzer brought on board as a source of rental income, according to Lockhart. That presents another potential drawback that companies interested in a co-op should consider, Lockhart says.

“Another challenge is making sure you’re not too associated with those companies that you don’t really know about,” Lockhart says.

For instance, organic landscaping is a major part of PEL’s offerings. The lawn care company in Backyards N More provides chemical pest treatments, Lockhart explains. That could send a confusing message to clients if they begin associating PEL with a chemical-treatment provider, Lockhart says.

“You don’t always agree with every idea that the other contractors have,” he explains. “When that happens, you have to make sure you can separate yourself and keep your company identity unique. That’s really the challenge.”

Katz is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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LAWN/TREE CARE

Going organic

Several lawn care pros using organic soil amendments say they'll never go back to their old ways.

By BETH GERACI

At a time when organic lawn care products are gaining buzz in the Green Industry, one product in particular is making a strong push in the market. And the lawn care professionals using it say they're seeing results.

The product is called Holganix. It's a 100-percent organic soil amendment that functions as a biostimulant, enabling plants to efficiently take up nutrients and pesticides.

Some companies are hesitant to use Holganix, a type of compost tea, because it must be refrigerated in special refrigeration units at 33 to 44 degrees. But the vendor provides and sets up the units for clients at no cost. The units come in three sizes based on the amount of the product a company will need.

"I don't see us going back to what we were doing before—not at all," says Ed Fleming, owner of Milton, Del.-based Lawns Unlimited. Fleming made the switch from liquid fertilizers and micronutrient packages to Holganix two years ago, wanting to reduce the amount of nitrogen and herbicides applied to his customers' lawns.

"The concern was the amount of nitrogen we applied," he says. "We wanted the plant to not be dependent on

it as much. The more fertilizers that we apply onto these lawns, the more we're reducing the biology in the soil."

PLANT HEALTH ELEMENTS

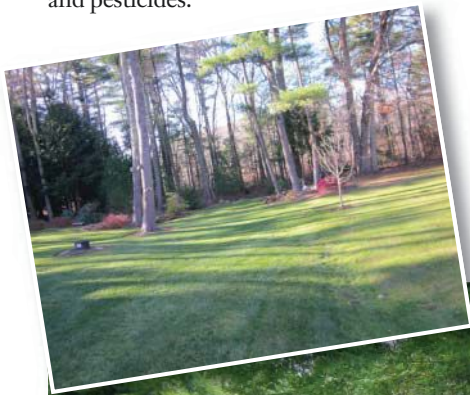
Fleming, who is an agronomist, learned about Holganix from one of his distributors. Since he's been using it, he says he's noted better color, fewer disease problems, healthier and stronger root systems and better control of broadleaf weeds on his customers' lawns.

"Based on the depth of the roots and the thickness of the turf, our lawns just stand out compared to our competition. They're greener, thicker and healthier," he says. "And the program is cumulative, so the longer you use it, the better the results are."

Gerry White, managing partner at Grassmaster Plus in Georgetown, Mass., north of Boston, has been using Holganix since last June. White had a 20-year career as a golf course superintendent before making his foray into lawn care six years ago. As a superintendent, he used organic products on fairways and greens to maintain the health of the soil.

When White saw Holganix, he thought it could help reduce his inputs, including the amount of nitrogen and pesticides his workers applied.

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Grassmaster Plus Managing Partner Gerry White, a former golf course superintendent, uses Holganix soil amendments to reduce nitrogen and other inputs.

PHOTOS: GRASSMASTER PLUS

BUILD YOUR BUSINESS WEBINAR SERIES

WEBINAR #2:

Treating scale

Thursday, May 23, 2013
10 a.m. PT/1 p.m. ET

FREE
Scale Treatment
Webinar



PHOTO: VALENT

WEBINAR DESCRIPTION:

Join *Landscape Management* for an hour-long webinar on treating scale insects. Our experts will cover both the technical side of treating these potentially damaging insects and the business side of educating customers and selling it as a service.

PRESENTERS:

Scale identification and control



Joe Boggs

*Assistant Professor
The Ohio State University
Extension*

Boggs is a commercial horticulture educator, providing support to the Green Industry.

His specialties include classroom and hand-on teaching of tree/shrub plant problem diagnostics and management, invasive species and applied entomology.

Scale: educating customers, evaluating products and treating trees



Rex Bastian, Ph.D.

*Regional Technical Advisor
The Care of Trees/Davey Tree Expert Co.*

Bastian joined The Care of Trees in January of 1989 after receiving his Ph.D. from Iowa State University, majoring in entomology. His emphasis is on education and training, public relations and diagnostics. He is an ISA Board Certified Master Arborist and currently serves on the ISA Board Certified Master Arborist Test Committee.

MODERATOR:

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continued from page 42

“The goal is to have a thicker lawn and fewer inputs of pesticides and herbicides,” White says. “I would say I’ve been able to cut my herbicides down, from a rate standpoint. I want to see it through another season, but I’m definitely intrigued by it and happy with the results I’ve seen so far”—results such as thicker blades of grass that grow laterally instead of vertically, he says.

Scott Whitehead, CEO of Unlimited Landscaping and Turf Management Inc. in Buford, Ga., is new to the Holganix program, launching it Jan. 1. It’s too early to see results, since the grass is just now coming out of dormancy, Whitehead says, but he’s optimistic.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The environmental health benefits and fewer inputs of Holganix are most appealing to Whitehead. “We want to give customers exactly what their lawn needs

and not more than that—to avoid having products just run off into our lakes, rivers, creeks and streams,” he says.

In years past, Unlimited was “fertilizing non-stop,” Whitehead says. But he got fed up with that. “We wanted to set ourselves apart and have a more organic approach than our competitors.”

Using less fertilizer also is vital for Fleming, who’s focused on environmental stewardship. “Using organics is important for being a good steward of the soil and the earth,” he says.

Whereas slow-release fertilizers used to be on Fleming’s agenda, now he’s focused on “preserving the biology in the soil, so the soil can feed the health of the plant,” he says. “It’s kind of like either putting people on welfare or giving them a job so they can be dependent on themselves.”

Holganix can be more expensive than

typical fertilizing products—White says it increased his material costs by about 5 percent. But “the benefits far outweigh the costs,” he says. “If you look at the whole picture, in the long run it will save money because you can reduce your rates,

“We want to give customers exactly what their lawn needs and not more than that.”

—Scott Whitehead, Unlimited Landscaping

spend less time spraying on the property, all of those things are going to build up as time goes on.”

One year into it, White has Holganix on all his trucks. “I wanted to see it last year,” he says. “I wanted to believe it, and I saw good enough results where I made the switch completely. I’m all in, baby.” LM

PVB LOCK BOX

PVB LOCK BOX

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CLOCK BOX

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SNOW+ICE

GUIDE



Snow and ice contractors are adding specialty services and equipment like agricultural tractors to improve residential snow profits.

On the home front

Three snow contractors put a new twist on winter's residential market. **BY DAN JACOBS**

WHEN WINTER'S ICY tendrils snake their way through the northern part of the country, many contractors put the mowers away and attach plows to the fronts of their trucks. But today they're doing so on the heels of a couple seasons where snowfall was erratic and unpredictable.

In the face of such uncertainty, contractors can't confidently rely on the residential market to earn their winter keep, and many of them have come to

prefer the steadier, long-term income generated by commercial accounts.

Nonetheless, snow contractors have found several ways to differentiate themselves and make money from their residential services. Here's a look at how three contractors are doing just that.

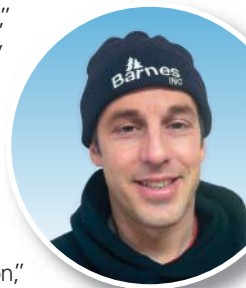
Short-term accounts

Madison, Wis.-based Barnes Inc. provides both commercial and residential service during the long Wisconsin winters. And while the bulk of the winter income is derived from the commercial accounts,

Barnes is growing its residential base, often with the clients dropped by competitors leaving this part of the market.

"It's a balancing game," says Chris Schultz, quality control coordinator and sidewalk snow removal division manager for Barnes.

"When you transition to residential, you have to do that in a timely fashion," he says. "Getting to your residential accounts as soon as you can after your commercial accounts is the challenge."



BARNES INC.'S CHRIS SCHULTZ

continued on page 46

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Barnes is large enough and flexible enough to offer traditional snow services along with vacation and emergency services. Many customers are content to take care of their own

driveways—until a big snow comes along. Nobody wants to shovel a 15-in. snowfall, Schultz says.

“Because we are so big, we’re able to take on customers for a short period of time,” he says.



Providing short-term snow removal services is a gateway to full-time customers for Barnes Inc.

Even when the snows don’t pile up quite that high, many customers call on Barnes to provide services while they’re away for the holidays or on a business trip. They hire Barnes to take care of their properties during those times.

“We’re very flexible like that,” Schultz says. “Whenever our customers are gone and need snow removal services, we’re there for them. It’s a nice service to be able to offer for people because it’s one less thing they have to worry about. One less thing customers want to do is come home to three fines because their snow removal wasn’t done. It’s one phone call. It’s peace of mind for them.”

It’s all about delivering on a need. “We’ve been doing that forever,” Schultz says. “It’s one of our selling points. We’ll pick up full-time customers from that because they’re so happy with our service that we’re able to fit them in for a week or two. They don’t want to continue to do their own snow removal, so they’ll hire us out for the rest of the season. It’s a nice service for our customers because we’re able to take the work on and not lack any quality or service.”

Concierge service

The unpredictable nature of winter weather often brings late night and sometimes very long hours.

When he first entered the Green Industry, Aaron Smith worked in snow removal for a large landscaping company in Minnesota.

“I could be gone for 80 hours straight and not see anybody, not sleep and barely eat,” says Smith, general manager/
continued on page 48

PHOTO: BARNES INC.

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sales manager for Essex, Vt.-based S&D Landscapes. "It was fun for the first two events. After that it got kind of old."

It was old for his new bride, too, and Smith promised when he started work-

ing in the family business he wouldn't work those hours again. Yet the allure of winter income proved too strong.

Not wanting to break his promise to his wife, Smith had to find a way to bring in the income without working

those long hours. Smith's solution was to offer a highly personal, higher-margin concierge snow removal service.

"We use walk-behind snow blowers," Smith says. "We service some of our summer clients and a few who are not. The minimum charge is \$45 for a single width or a very short double-width driveway from 3 in. to 6 in. of snow. More than 6 in. is \$65. In the case of continuous snow, we're trying to be there every 4 in."

The route is small and Smith uses only two workers. And the service includes more than just clearing snow from a driveway.

"If your car is in the driveway, the car will get brushed off," Smith says. "It does not get scraped for ice for liability reasons. We hand shovel around all the cars so there is no snow underneath the car. We snow blow the front walks and city walks."

Because S&D only provides the concierge snow removal to a few customers, the service can be customized, such as clearing a client's back deck by request.

"The beauty of it is, it was an afterthought," Smith says. "Because our budget is set up to recover in the summer, this boils down to extra operating capital and keeping guys busy."

Smith acknowledges it's been difficult to manage expectations. Two years ago there wasn't that much snow, and customers were thrilled with the service. Last year, when the snow was much heavier, some customers found themselves with a \$500 monthly bill.

That said, Smith has some very devoted followers.

"We looked at doing something else, expanding in a different direction, and we got some push back when we suggested we would drop the service," Smith says.

Tractor-based approach

Chris Marino, owner of Xtreme Snow Pros of Mahwah, N.J., visited a Montreal, Canada-based colleague to learn about the approach contractors there

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ANGLED LEFT

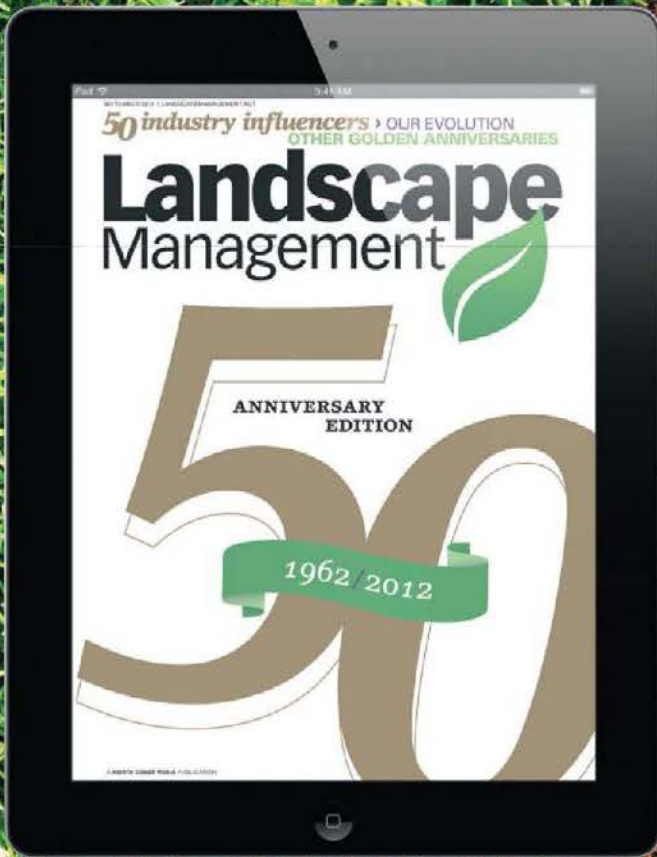


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SNOW + ICE GUIDE



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take to snow management.

"They do residential snow a whole different way than we do in the U.S.," Marino says. "By studying their business model I realized how efficiently they were doing things."

That method involves putting a 92-in. inverse snow blower on the back of an agricultural tractor. Instead of taking 15 minutes or more to plow a driveway, the new setup can clear a driveway in just a couple minutes. The method is so efficient, Canadian contractors can charge less than Americans and still make more money.

In addition to the ability to clear a driveway quickly, the snow blower offers another advantage over plowing.

State law forbids leaving any snow in the street. The snow blower allows Xtreme's employees to direct where the snow goes.

There are some challenges to the business model. In Canada, customers are more willing to sign season-long contracts.

"The U.S. market doesn't think about snow the way Canadian market does," Marino says. "In the Canadian market, snow is a part of their life. Where I'm stumbling is with

the idea of getting people to think about snow in September. I don't want them signing up in December, I want them signing up earlier on so it's all routed correctly."

Marino is still tweaking the model to make it work for his company. He plans to add another tractor next season to expand the service. When it comes to making money in winter, it's simply a matter of considering all the options.

"Open your eyes to new ideas," Marino says. "There are other ways of doing things out there that break the mold of the traditional way. In today's market, which is so competitive, you have to invest in efficiency in order to remain competitive." **LMI**

Xtreme Snow Pros crews clear residential driveways with a 92-in. inverse snow blower mounted on an agricultural tractor.



**XTREME SNOW PRO'S
CHRIS MARINO**

Jacobs is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.

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BY PHIL HARWOOD

Off-season analysis

SUCCESSFUL SNOW AND ice management professionals have learned the spring and summer months are the best time to address many important aspects of their snow businesses. While others refuse to think about the snow season in the off-season, these pros are proactively improving their snow processes, researching innovative technologies and making major decisions affecting profitability.

The best place to start with off-season planning is with an analysis of what happened last winter. Most likely, you had successes and failures. Some things went very well and others didn't. Many companies repeat their mistakes simply because they never take the time to analyze their operations and take corrective action. I suggest you take some time to understand what

MANY COMPANIES REPEAT THEIR MISTAKES SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY NEVER TAKE THE TIME TO ANALYZE THEIR OPERATIONS AND TAKE CORRECTIVE ACTION.



you need to do to improve your snow business before you dive into planning for the upcoming winter.

Define & document

Since this analytical process is an annual event, I recommend establishing a defined and documented process for it. Who needs to be involved? What information do you want at your disposal? Where is this information and who will retrieve it? When will the analysis take place? Will this be done in one meeting or spread out over multiple meetings? Who will take notes and where will these notes be stored?

There are a number of factors to consider when analyzing last winter's snow business. As you consider each factor, make note of anything that needs to be addressed before next winter. I recommend rating each factor using a defined rating system, along with capturing any specific positive or negative comments regarding that factor.

Here's a partial list of factors to consider:

- > Weather data and trends
- > Contract portfolio
- > Sales process and results
- > Customer satisfaction
- > Contract management
- > Invoicing
- > Subcontractor performance
- > Operational controls and procedures
- > Mobilization speed
- > Routing
- > Snow watch procedures
- > Mobilization decisions
- > Equipment performance, usage, maintenance and repair
- > Material purchasing and storage
- > Accidents
- > Risk management processes
- > Staffing and training

- > Employee turnover and performance
- > Administrative functions
- > Unused capacity

This analysis is best done at the tail end of winter to ensure important issues aren't forgotten. However, it's not too late. If you didn't complete this analysis yet, now is the time to get it done.

Next, you should begin planning for the upcoming snow season. Start with an understanding of the long-term vision of the company. Clarifying this vision will provide you with a road map and greatly assist you with establishing sales goals for everyone with sales accountability. What type of growth is desired in terms of your service mix, geographical mix, customer mix and contract type mix?

Aside from establishing sales goals, planning may encompass any of the items listed above or anything else that will better position you for success. One area of particular interest to me is the use of innovative technology. Incorporating new technology into your snow business requires steps to ensure the technology is effectively leveraged. That's why off-season planning is so critical. Waiting until fall to think about the upcoming snow season will effectively preclude you from making significant improvements in your snow business.

With an established and documented process for your off-season analysis and planning, your snow business is more likely to be healthy, profitable and sustainable. You may even discover that snow and ice management is the most profitable service you provide.

I hope you're having a great off-season. **LMI**

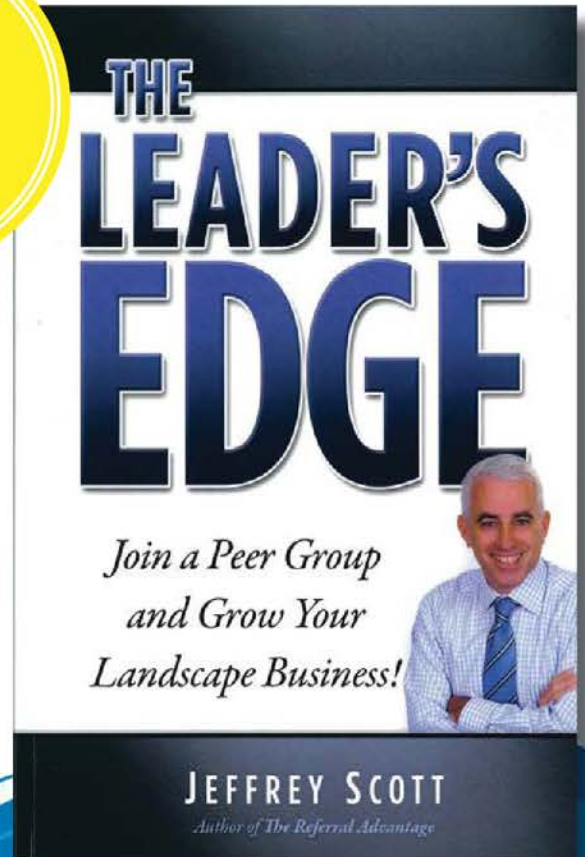
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Author: Jeffrey Scott

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Multi-position winged snow plow

Western's Prodigy Multi-Position Winged Snow Plow automatically positions its patented mechanical wings for plowing efficiency, whether in straight-ahead scoop mode or when angled for windrowing. The plow is available for truck and skid-steer loader applications. The UltraMount 2 mounting system features a one-piece frame design for strength and durability.

Western Products // WesternPlows.com



Steel beam/fabric buildings

Legacy offers fabric buildings with structural steel beams instead of open web trusses. This new engineering concept is designed to provide a cost-effective, long-lasting solution for salt and sand storage facilities. Tall peaks provide space for tipping trucks to maneuver inside, while heavy-duty beams support conveyors for efficient transition of materials.

Legacy Building Solutions // LegacyBuildingSolutions.com

Roof deicing system

The RoofHeat STEP roof deicing system uses an exclusive polymer blend that heats when electricity passes through it. This thin, flexible heating element has the ability to self-regulate its electrical consumption, making it energy-efficient. Because of its ability to accept AC or DC current, solar and wind power can also be directly integrated to the system.

Warmzone // WarmZone.com



Skid-steer line

Skid-steer snow blowers are offered for a wide variety of flow rates, starting as low as 15 gpm. Seven models are available in 72- to 84-in. widths. Features include a universal coupler, a single motor design and an electric spout rotator. Adjustable skid shoes, reinforced body braces and shear bolt protection are standard.

Loftness // Loftness.com

Skid-steer plows

Blizzard now offers both the Speedwing multi-position winged-blade and HD Series straight blades for skid-steer loader applications. Speedwing clears an 8 ft., 7 in. swath in straight-ahead scoop position and a 7 ft., 10 in. swath when angled for windrowing. The HD Series is available in 7.5-, 8-, 8.5- and 9-ft. blade widths.

Blizzard Snowplows // BlizzardPlows.com



Dual-stage snow thrower

The 1830EXLT is a dual-stage snow thrower with a heavy-duty auger to feed snow into the housing; a high-speed impeller to discharge the snow; heated handles; power steering and a standard LED headlight for greater visibility in unfavorable conditions. A heavy-duty hydrostatic transmission provides power to the track drive system to tackle snowdrifts.

Husqvarna // Husqvarna.com

Utility vehicle plow

The Nordic Auto Plow attaches to any vehicle and allows users to plow up to 8 in. of snow from driveways. Weighing less than 50 lbs., it is readily moved into position and attached to the vehicle in minutes. Its rugged, ABS plastic rounded blade is designed to glide over uneven surfaces and prevent damage to driveways.

Nordic Auto Plow LLC // NordicAutoPlow.com





V plow

The Fisher XV2 V-plow features a new flared blade design. The blades now rise from a 31-in. center height up to 39 in. at the outer edge on the 9.5-ft. models. Stainless steel blades are available in 7.5-, 8.5- and 9.5-in. widths; the two widest blades are also available in 14-gauge steel with Fisher's Storm Guard powdercoat finish.

Fisher Snowplows // FisherPlows.com

Bulk spreader

The SnowEx SP-1875 Bulk Pro Spreader offers a two-stage auger system, independent spinner/auger controller, low-maintenance direct drive system and other exclusive features. Spread width is infinitely variable from 5 to 30 ft. The pivot mount requires no drill holes in the truck bed and allows the spreader to swing away, providing full tailgate or rear door access.

SnowEx // SnowExProducts.com



Hydro snow thrower

The new Hydro Pro Sno-Thro features Ariens' first hydrostatic transmission in a snow thrower, allowing for infinitely variable speed selection. The series features four hydrostatic drive models, including the Hydro Pro 28, 32 and 36 (pictured), and the Hydro Pro Track 28. They are cold-start capable, requiring little to no warm-up time.

Ariens Co. // Ariens.com

Training videos

To address the standards of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), LS Training has released five new training videos for landscape contractors on snow and landscape equipment operation, safety procedures and ways to reduce liability. Developed in cooperation with the Snow & Ice Management Association, the 30-minute videos are available online with an annual subscription.

LS Training // LSTraining.com



Truck-mounted spreader

Built to carry 6 cu. yds. of material, the SHPE6000 spreader features the largest poly hopper in the SaltDogg line. An in-cab console features independent controls for the auger, spinner and vibrator. The series is completely self-contained and mounts on utility vehicles, pickups, dump trucks and platform trucks.

Buyers Products // BuyersProducts.com



Snow blower for compact tractors

The new 600CT features the industry's first concentric-axis design: The 18-in., four-blade impeller rotates the same direction as the auger to effectively direct snow into the discharge chute. Its 74-in. cutting width and 28-in. cutting height is designed for tall drifts and snow piles.

Sheyenne Tooling and Manufacturing // SheyenneMfg.com



Mower-mounted snow thrower

The DriftBuster features a 180-degree rotating discharge spout. With the exclusive QuikConverter implement system, any Grasshopper FrontMount zero-turn mower can go from mowing to snow throwing quickly without tools. An optional electric lift and electric spout rotation with steering lever-mounted joystick control are available.

Grasshopper // ThrowMoreSnow.com

Salt or sand storage

The Dura-Box provides snow removal professionals with a cost-effective, secure salt or sand storage bin. Features include industrial strength, a molded-in lid stop, a reinforced lid, an inner stackable design and a sloped lid for added water resistance.

OutdoorBoxes.com // OutdoorBoxes.com



PROFITING FROM DESIGN

JODY SHILAN

Shilan is editor of FromDesign2Build.com. Contact him at 201/783-2844 or jshilan@gmail.com.

Bigger project, smaller deposit

Q How much money should companies require as an initial deposit? I've heard various theories on this and wonder what your experience is with deposits.

—Benjamin Parsons, Living Landscapes, Andover, Mass.

A That's a terrific question, Benjamin. First, let me begin by making a distinction between a deposit toward a design fee and a deposit toward a design/build installation.

Design fees, for most of us, are pretty straightforward. I recommend a 50 percent deposit and then a 50 percent final payment once the plan is completed. It's simple and straightforward and, to be quite honest, we usually aren't talking about large sums of money for our design work. If you've read some of my previous columns you know my design process also is simple and straightforward. I charge a flat fee that's based solely on the size of the property. There's a copy of my design fee contract on my website that's free to anybody, access it at tinyurl.com/c9r96yf.

That takes care of the design side of the equation, so now let's talk about the build.

Benjamin, as you pointed out, there are several theories and philosophies on this topic, and quite frankly, the real answer is: whatever works best for you. With that said, I do have some very specific opinions based on both my successes and failures. As the title of this month's column suggests, one of my theories is that the larger the price of the job, the smaller the deposit should be. I'm not saying you need to structure your deposits on a sliding scale, but keep reading to see why this concept makes a lot of sense for both you and your client.

Let's look at a few examples. Projects that are in the \$3,000 to \$5,000 range are usually one- or two-day jobs. Like the design fee example above, the most logical thing is to get a 50 percent deposit and get the second half when the job is completed. You'll need to buy materials and will have some labor costs, so 50 percent upfront is reasonable.

If you're a smaller company, you may not have

established credit, so you really do need the money to start the work. Because the project is small there really is no need to complicate the process and break the payments up into thirds, which is a common fee structure for many of us. If you work this way, all that's going to happen is you're going to get a one-third deposit and two-thirds on the completion instead of 50 percent and 50 percent.

Now let's take a big jump and look at six-figure projects. Just as it doesn't make sense to require three payments on a two-day job, it also is not a good practice to ask for a 50 percent deposit on an installation that may take you three months to build and isn't going to start for eight weeks. Clients don't like writing big checks for work that's not going to begin soon, and there are too many horror stories about contractors running off with homeowners' deposits. In all honesty, you don't need a \$75,000 deposit to schedule a \$150,000 project. In fact, given the current business environment, even asking for a deposit of one-third, or \$50,000, is excessive.

I recommend taking a 10 percent deposit at the signing of the contract. It's an easy check for most clients of this caliber to write and an even easier number to calculate when you're figuring out the actual dollar amount. It's enough money to show a commitment to the project, yet it doesn't scare your client into wanting to think it over, which we all know is never good.

Here's how I manage the rest of the payment process. Although I only ask for a 10 percent deposit at the signing of the contract, I do require another 30 percent approximately one week before the work begins. This gives me 40 percent before we start. The clients are happy to cut the check because they know that the work is going to begin soon and they realize you need the remainder of the deposit to make material purchases. Once the project starts, I require a 30 percent payment due when the project is halfway completed; the remaining 30 percent is due upon completion.

To submit a question for Profiting From Design, please contact Shilan at jshilan@gmail.com.



Our mission is to preserve and enhance green spaces in our communities where we live, work and play.

BECAUSE GREEN MATTERS.

A national non-profit service organization, Project EverGreen works to help spread the good word to consumers about well-maintained lawns and landscapes, sports fields, parks—anywhere that green exists. The more people believe in the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of green spaces, the better off we'll all be.



WORKING TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

Together with key industry partners, Project EverGreen has established the following programs to help make a greater impact, sooner:

GreenCare for Troops SnowCare for Troops



- Project EverGreen connects military families with lawn and landscape companies, as well as snow removal companies to receive free services while their loved one is serving overseas.
- More than 3,500 contractor volunteers and 12,000 military families have signed up for GCFT, while 1,100 contractor volunteers and 1,500 military families signed up for SCFT.
- These popular programs have garnered attention on TV and in newspapers across the nation including Mike Rowe's *Dirty Jobs* and NBC's *Nightly News*.

Community Based Revitalization Projects

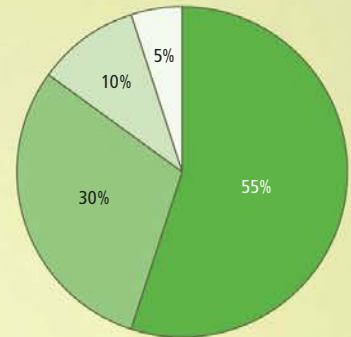
- Focused community revitalization and renovation projects across the United States encourage industry professionals, consumers and anyone who's passionate about healthy green spaces to work together to improve their city and surrounding areas.
- Over the last seven years, our message has made a positive impact in: Akron, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Greensboro, Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina; Ft. Myers, Florida; Toronto, Canada; and San Antonio, Texas.
- Maintained green spaces generated community engagement, involvement and communication among residents, city leaders and visitors.

GreenCare for Youth

- By reaching out to children of all ages, we can create a greener tomorrow.
- The Art of Green Spaces Competition, sponsored by Birds and Blooms, encourages students to use all forms of art to share how they feel about the green spaces in their lives.
- Golf bag tags, featuring messages on the benefits of green spaces, are given to participants of the GCBAAs Sticks for Kids program.
- Youth sports field renovations make playing surfaces better and safer.

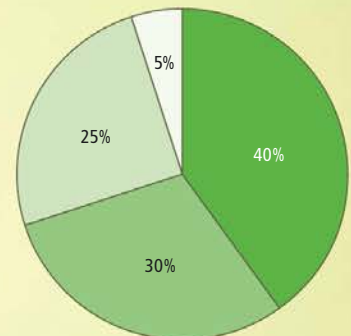
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HOW YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE UTILIZED.

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www.ProjectEverGreen.com

Selling safety

A Virginia-based company profits from safety and damage control services.



Jon Zalewski,
Professional
Grounds' business
development
manager

SAFETY SELLS. THAT'S why the crews at Professional Grounds in Lorton, Va., pay extra attention on their property walkthroughs. Though they may be there simply to access the turf and shrubs, pointing out hazards such as a hanging limb or a failing retaining wall can drive additional profit while impressing the client with the company's attention to detail.

"We're all about being as proactive as possible," says Professional Grounds Business Development Manager Jon Zalewski. "No matter why we're there, any time we're walking a property we're looking for hazardous trees, broken limbs or anything else that could be a potential liability to our client." Professional Grounds typically performs work for homeowners associations and commercial properties concerned about staying up to code. Contractors who work primarily on residential properties could take the same preventive approach, Zalewski says. "Paying attention to potential hazards is a win-win for everyone," he says.

Professional Grounds workers are known to point out potential problems even on nonclient properties when they notice them. "While we're not licensed to inspect playground structures, if we see a playground that hasn't put fresh chips down in years we'll bring it to the proper person's attention," Zalewski says. "If the kids are playing on the dirt and fall, that's a liability because the playground isn't up to code. It's not about scare tactics—it's just bringing an important issue to their attention and letting them know it needs to be taken care of, whether they use us or not."

When Professional Grounds workers bring these concerns to light, it often *does* result in new business from the effort. In fact, fixing safety hazards has become a profitable add-on service for Professional Grounds, which also offers storm damage control and emergency response services.

"All of our clients have our personal emails and cell phone numbers so that if there is an emergency situation, they can reach someone right away," Zalewski

explains. "After a bad thunderstorm we may be out on a Saturday or Sunday removing fallen trees. How quickly you respond to a situation like that is what sets you apart, and it all starts with answering your phone."

A quick response in an emergency situation not only generates extra revenue, he says, "It also sets you up as a sort of hero in the clients' eyes."

FAIRNESS RULES

Zalewski points out that pricing jobs fairly is an important part of emergency response and damage control. While it would be easy to take advantage of the customer and inflate prices in his or her time of need, he says that's no way to build client relationships. "Charging the customer a fair price for an emergency gets you more work in the long run," Zalewski says.

An emergency response service for Professional Grounds may even include last-minute landscape repair after an accident. "We've had situations such as a vehicle crashing into an entryway monument or running over a bunch of bushes," he says, explaining his team may be called in to clean up the area quickly to make it look presentable again.

"Some of our commercial clients can't afford to have that down time, so we handle those jobs immediately," Zalewski says. "They might have a potential leasing tenant coming in—or another reason why they need the area fixed up fast."

With its fast response time and focus on safety, Professional Grounds has come to be known for its emergency services and damage prevention alike. "It's really as simple as proposing work based on need," Zalewski says. "A lot of times the clients don't even realize they had the need. They appreciate that you brought something important to their attention, and it's often work that sells itself."

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

» SERVICE SNAPSHOT

COMPANY: Professional Grounds

HEADQUARTERS: Lorton, Va.

SERVICES: Hazard prevention, damage control and emergency response have become an everyday part of business for the company.

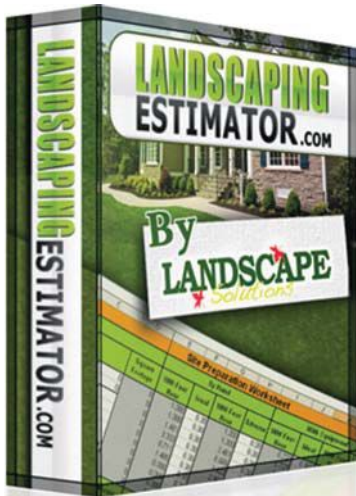
BEST TIP FOR SELLING SAFETY: "Answer your phone," says Jon Zalewski, the company's business development manager. "Frankly, response time is what sells that kind of job."

HOW IT WORKS: "It's company policy that employees are available during bad weather events or other natural disaster types of situations," says Zalewski. "We then prioritize the jobs based on their severity. If it's a tree on a house or a car—or in danger of falling—that takes priority over a tree in a field."

LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

BUSINESS SOFTWARE



Landscaping Estimator

Landscaping Estimator is Excel-based software for all facets of estimating landscaping, including hardscaping, water features, erosion control and special projects. Features include invoicing, change orders, cost analysis, materials lists and numerous reports.

Landscaping Solutions LLC //

LandscapingEstimator.com

Virtual Property Architect

This design software enables users to simultaneously create 3-D designs and detailed 2-D plans from a catalog of actual industry products. Features include real-time sun and shadows, plus the new SketchUp Importer.

Each design can be saved and shared online as a complete 3-D virtual property with screen shots, high-definition videos, project photos and the 2-D plan.

VisionScape // VisionScape.com



Square Foot Advantage Calculator

This mobile-ready application is designed to compare real-world data and the total cost-in-use of controlled-

release Driven By Duration fertilizers vs. ordinary or conventional fertilizers. Variables include square footage, the number of times an area is fertilized annually and the overhead cost (product and labor), both by square foot and by total area fertilized.

Agrium Advanced Technologies //

DrivenByDuration.com



DynaSCAPE Design

DynaSCAPE Design's CAD tools, which integrate with the rest of the DynaSCAPE Suite, offer the ability to present landscape designs in black and white, full color or 3-D. Users can insert pre-drawn shapes from an extensive symbol library and add plants from the Horticopia-powered online database.

DynaSCAPE Software // DynaSCAPE.com



LandSpec Pro

This new, free mobile app lets users create profiles for multiple projects, upload site plans into a smartphone and quickly build plant and materials lists for each. LandSpec Pro assembles shopping lists for multiple projects at each vendor, and geo-positioning allows the mobile device to map out the best route.

LandSpec Pro LLC // LandSpecPro.com



Px3 Maintenance Package

Need the total square footage of a maintenance job but don't have time to walk it? The John Deere Landscapes Px3 Maintenance Package gives a customized portfolio on scope of work and square footage, as well as a pricing quote for turf, planting beds, trees and other items.

John Deere Landscapes // JohnDeereLandscapes.com

HARDSCAPE



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BOMAG Americas // BOMAG.com/us

Smart-Bit Pro Plug System

The new Smart-Bit Pro Plug System for decking, wide-plank flooring and woodworking projects includes the Pro Plug tool for wood, the Pro Plug glue nozzle (not pictured) and the Pro Plug plug & fastener kit in different wood species and fastener sizes. These combine to quickly and consistently create plugs in less than half the time of other plugging methods.

Starborn Industries // StarbornIndustries.com



Edgetite paver edging spikes

Created by a landscape contractor, new Edgetite spikes help solve the separation problem that can occur when installing paver edging: When hammered in, the patent-pending angled tip design deflects away from the installation, while the head pushes the edge restraint tightly against the brick. Watch the demo at Edgetite.com/videos.

Edgetite Products // Edgetite.com



Bufftech Danbury picket fence

Replicating the look and feel of true wood, Danbury with Select Cedar is now available in white, almond, natural clay, arbor blend, arctic blend, sierra blend (pictured) and weathered blend. The easy-to-install, 4-ft.-tall fence offers weather-resistant vinyl construction that the company says will not corrode, peel or discolor. Reinforced bottom rails eliminate sagging and bowing.

CertainTeed Corp. // CertainTeed.com

Deck boxes

Help customers store outdoor cushions, flower pots and more. Available in large (42 by 22 by 22 in.) and king (60 by 28 by 24 in., pictured), these deck boxes feature watertight storage and base panel openings that allow for air circulation. They're manufactured from a high-grade synthetic for the look of real wood without the maintenance.

Highwood USA // Highwood-USA.com



Decorative metal and plastic grates

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[Coming next month]

LM150 list to be released

Next month we release the LM150, our annual list of the largest companies in the Green Industry, ranked by revenue. Check the pages of *Landscape Management's* June issue or visit LandscapeManagement.net to see which companies made the list—and what new ideas these large companies are implementing that companies of all sizes can learn from.



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Bill Cox

President of Lawn Management Co. (LMC), Houston



Who's your mentor? Dr. Steven Hotze, CEO of Hotze Health & Wellness Center in Houston. I've known him for 35 years. Our kids went to school together. In my opinion, he's a pioneer in innovating unique business practices that differentiate your business from the competition.

He inspired me to take service to a higher level and encouraged me to take best practices from all types of industries—not just landscaping—and use them in my own business.

How do you build your business? By hiring exceptional people, who in turn provide outstanding customer service. The ideal way to grow your business is to grow organically through referrals and existing customers. Ninety percent of our business comes from those two things.

LMC has an official customer philosophy. Why? It keeps us on track. We live by these principles every day, whether it's focusing on customer service, helping clients problem solve or listening to them. If you listen to your customers, then you can deliver what they want. If we can align ourselves as their partner, then we've become more valuable to them and our relationship is strengthened.

Customer appreciation also is part of LMC's philosophy. Yes, you can't say "thank you" enough. We'll take clients to lunch or a ballgame, for example. It's just common courtesy. When someone buys something from you, you should say "Thank you." It creates a tighter bond with the customer and has helped us grow the business a lot.

How do you ensure the philosophy is being practiced? If we have happy employees and happy clients we know it's being practiced.



Tell us a little bit about LMC H2O. It's our smart water management program designed to conserve water, save our clients money and maximize efficient water use on our clients' properties. It's an amazing system. From it, our clients have realized a 20 percent to 40 percent reduction in their monthly water usage.

You just celebrated your 33rd anniversary in the landscaping industry. What have you learned in that time? The more I give back to others the more successful I become.

Visit the Web Extras section of LandscapeManagement.net to view LMC's official customer philosophy.

OFF THE CLOCK



WHAT JOB OR PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION HAS INFLUENCED YOU MOST?

The Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) and the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). They've provided excellent resources that have helped improve our business over the years and allowed us to share best practices with other companies. Being part of the National Hispanic Landscape Association (NHLA) also has contributed to our success.

WHAT'S ONE THING IN YOUR LIFE YOU CAN'T DO WITHOUT? My faith.

ANY GIVEN SUNDAY, YOU'LL FIND ME... At my river house watching the sun come up.

TEXAS BARBECUE OR TEX-MEX? Tex-Mex.

WHO'S IN YOUR FAMILY? My wife, Connie, and my sons, Brad and Kyle, who are now running the company. I'm here for support and to make sure the culture here stays the way it's been for 33 years.



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