

Landscaping Management

BUSINESS PLANNER 2014

Answers to the questions
you should be asking to **lead**,
run and **grow** your business
next year and beyond.

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OK?

How do I
plan for 2014?

What if I
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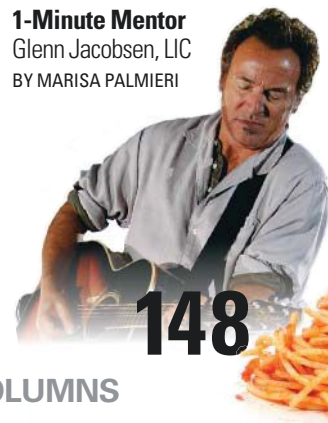


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Photo by Tracie Martinez

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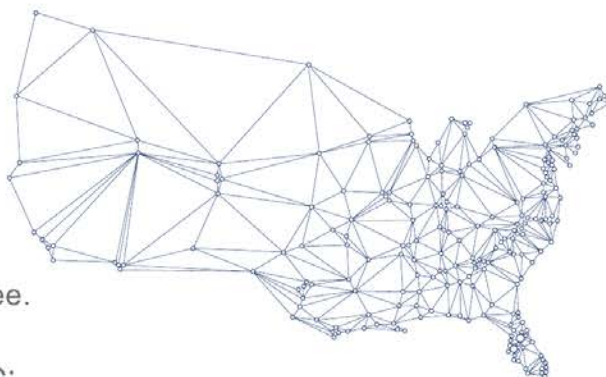
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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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Help vs. hype

Welcome to the Business Planner 2014 edition of *Landscape Management*. I sat down to write an editor's note about the importance of the three areas we focus on in this issue: leading, running and growing your business. But I can't get the last one, *grow*—which focuses on sales and marketing—off my mind because I'm fresh out of attending the Content Marketing World conference in Cleveland.

Content marketing: What does it mean, precisely? For marketing expert Jay Baer, who keynoted the event, it's as simple as helping people. As he says, "If you sell something, you make a customer for today. If you help someone, you can create a customer for life."

Baer says marketing should be about *help* and not *hype*. It all boils down to a concept he calls "youtility" (he's authored a book by the same name). One of his favorite examples is *Taxi Mike's Dining Guide*, which started out as a simple yellow printout distributed by a taxi driver in the ski town of Banff, Alberta, and has grown into a website. Taxi Mike distributes this guide—"like a one-man Trip Advisor"—for free in bars and restaurants. He makes genuine recommendations about the best places in town and distributes the content to a touristy, bar-going contingent that may need his services down the road.

This is not a new concept. Have you ever wondered why one of the most prestigious rating scales in fine dining is associated with a tire manufacturer? In 1900 in France, Michelin began publish-

ing a guide for drivers with restaurant reviews to create demand for cars and ultimately for car tires. *The Michelin Guide* is published—and respected as an authority—to this day in France, most European countries and select cities internationally.

Likewise, John Deere has published *The Furrow*, a print magazine to help farmers succeed, since 1895.

Although this approach isn't novel, it has a new life due to consumers' access to information via mobile and social media tools. Consider that 64 percent of U.S. mobile phone owners have a smartphone, according to Nielsen. That means any prospective customer is just one swipe away from researching any type of product or service he or she wants to purchase or learn more about, including lawn care or landscaping.

In 2010, the average consumer needed 5.3 pieces of information before making a purchasing decision. By 2011, that figure rose to 10.4, according to Baer, and likely has skyrocketed since then. Why? People know they have nearly all the world's information in the palms of their hands, so they dig around a bit before calling for a quote or making a decision.

"If you make a bad decision now, you're just lazy," Baer says. But if you help customers and prospects make good decisions—whether they choose to work with your company today or sometime down the road—you just may be a hero to them.

Remember: The difference between selling and helping is only two letters, Baer says. But those two letters make all the difference in the world.

Landscape Management

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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

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Finish strong for a good year

Whatever your economic outlook, ending your business year positively is important.

Avoid slipping from a good year into a so-so year by never letting your guard down. It's imperative, when things are looking up, not to ease up on the sales efforts and watch your profits slip away.

To that end, if your year has been disappointing, don't give up. You can certainly make it better with a strong focus.

There are two sides to finishing strong: revenue management and cost management. And focusing on both sides at the same time will give you the most leverage.

Improving revenue

One of the most immediate opportunities is in upsells or enhancements. Make this a focus. Some companies run contests or give incentives to those who sell the most or exceed their targets. Give guidance to less experienced employees who might start to nickel and dime your customers by trying to oversell or sell things that clients don't need. Give them ideas or consider promotions that move inventory—these can be especially effective.

Fall is a great time to sell renovation and overseeding so lawns look great next season. Some other proactive, customer-centric ideas include: helping clients prepare for winter; offering enhancements related to drainage as a

result of heavy rains, replacing wear spots in turf and beds from wear and tear; removing plant material nearing the end of its life cycle; freshening entry areas or vacant spaces to increase property value; or reducing maintenance costs through water savings, modified irrigation or using drought tolerant plant material.

Another efficient technique is to offer discounts to get pending proposals closed if done before Dec. 31.

Managing costs

Your best opportunity to recover savings is to productively manage your labor. For example, don't replace positions if someone leaves. You'll most likely be reducing labor as winter approaches, so it's more beneficial for crews to work some overtime than to add an inexperienced replacement who has to be laid off in a month or two. Also, a common mistake is not reducing labor quickly enough. Field managers always hang on to people too long because they think they might need them and they don't like to lay people off.

Senior management has to drive this labor reduction process or labor dollars will be wasted, either ruining a good year or adding to a bad year. You get only one chance to do it right.

Another savings area is a well-managed inventory control system. Create a detailed database of equipment assets and supplies to prevent adding unnecessary purchases or spending money you don't have.

Hold off on requests for equipment or tools that you probably can get by without. The workload is declining and with a little effort, you likely can move equipment around and postpone purchasing until next season's buildup.

For a successful yearend, you must drive the last quarter strategically. Delegating could work, but if you delegate to an employee who loses focus or gets busy, even the best intentions slip. If you own the focus, you own the results.

It's imperative, when things are looking up, not to ease up on the sales effort and watch your profits slip away.

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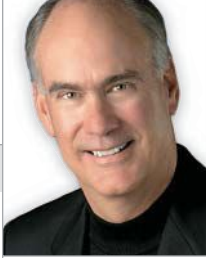


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THE BENCHMARK

FRANK ROSS

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Confessions of a budget freak

I am all about eliminating the guesswork we face in our businesses. Yes, I am a budget freak.

Some of this stems from what my mentor, Emol Fails, Ph.D., instilled in me a long time ago. One such morsel was the construction industry is the second most risky business behind restaurants in the U.S. That doesn't say much for us on that side of the landscape business—but think about it: We're in the business of selling labor, the greatest variable of all. We perform our work outdoors, so we have weather to deal with every day. Most times we're at the mercy of others for payment for our services, and, to make matters worse, we're uneducated in the art of financial management. Only one of every 10 contractors who opens his doors will see his 10th anniversary. Now, that's a horrible statistic.

I'm also all about maximizing profits. It's what my partners and I do everyday, and we do it by eliminating bad decisions. Fails taught me to make a plan to reduce bad decisions. That's what a budget is—a plan. Think about this: Would you ever commit to doing a job without an estimate of costs, overhead and profit? Of course not. So why, I ask, would you ever start a whole year of jobs without a budget? You wouldn't.

Fails also told me without a well-conceived plan, we have the chance of making the right decision about 55 to 60 percent of the time. *With* a well conceived plan, Fails follows up, the odds of making the right decision increase to 65 to 70 percent. Now, some of you might think increasing your chances of making the "right" decision by 10 to 15 percent isn't worth the effort, but believe me it is. A well-defined business plan will more than double the profits generated without a plan.

Say when

So, when do you prepare a budget? Budgeting is a perpetual process. If you're a calendar-year operator, you'll begin the process for the coming year around August and it's a monthly scrub for the next 16 months (August of this year through December of next year).

In the fall, we'll initiate the plan for the coming year with a "pricing budget." Every fall we'll set our pricing

strategies for the coming year. If we're in maintenance, our commercial customers are setting their budgets for next year in the fall; if we're in installation, many of the projects we're proposing in the fall will not be installed until the spring. The point is to make sure we can effectively estimate and price the work.

To that end, we'll want to know how we'll be spending money in our company next year. That requires a preliminary budget to set what growth we anticipate, what capital expenditures for vehicles and equipment we'll need, what are the labor wages and benefits we anticipate, will there be changes in material unit costs, what changes in overhead spending might we experience, etc. This preliminary forecast will tell us if and how much of a price adjustment we'll require for the coming year to achieve our net profit goals.

Preparing the "detailed budget" for next year will likely span a time frame of mid-October to mid-January. Count on it being a fairly involved process. I encourage involving our key people in this project. The more they know of our plans, the more ownership and accountability we will create among them. This tactic creates buy-in and does nothing but heighten our chances of surpassing our goals. An effective budget is a team effort.

Once the budget for the year is set, spread the results by month to create a "rolling budget." With each month that passes, replace the budgeted figures for the month with the actuals for that month and re-total the year—actuals plus the remaining budgeted months. Do we like what we see?

Now comes the real strength of the process: Every month, we'll look forward 90 days at all of the budgeted assumptions and challenge our abilities to achieve them—sales, labor control, overhead spending—the entire gamut. If there's an area where we feel we'll either exceed or fall short of goal, *change the budget!* Yep, change it. Then repeat this process monthly.

Sure, I'm a budget freak and proud of it. But, more importantly, I am a profit freak—budgeting is just one way I do it.

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COMMON VETCH

Vicia sativa

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

▶ This winter annual vine has leaves that divide into many leaflets (eight to 16 per stalk) and form large mats of vegetation.

▶ Each leaflet is arranged alternately along the stem and grows on a petiole. Leaflets are oblong to elliptic in shape and may grow hairs. Toothed stipules occur at the base of the leaf petiole.

▶ Older leaves develop tendrils that help in climbing. Stems climb on other vegetation or trail along the ground.

CONTROL TIPS

▶ Dense, vigorous turf is the best way to reduce the encroachment of winter annual weeds. Properly mow, fertilize and water to encourage dense growth.

▶ For postemergent control, apply a two-, three- or four-way herbicide containing triclopyr, clopyralid or fluroxypyr in the fall or spring. Use the higher labeled rate when applications are made in late summer on mature plants and during periods of drought stress.



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CANADA THISTLE

Cirsium arvense

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

▶ Cotyledons are club-shaped, dull green and relatively thick. Young leaves are covered in short hairs and leaf margins are wavy with spines.

▶ Mature plants feature smooth, oblong, irregularly lobed leaves.

▶ Pink or purple flowers bloom in late June through September, growing in 0.75-in.-diameter clusters.

▶ Unlike bull thistle (*C. vulgare*) or musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*), the stems and flowers do not have spines or prickles.

CONTROL TIPS

▶ Fall typically is the best time to control Canada thistle. After the first flower buds form and before the first flowers open, apply a postemergent herbicide that contains clopyralid. Apply prior to seed set. Repeat applications on regrowth may be needed.

▶ Removing shoots can stimulate growth on underground buds, which can generate more shoots after top growth has been destroyed. Hand-pulling or mowing also spreads growth.

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When it comes to good drivers, the place to start is with a well-written standard employment application.

"Don't just put anyone behind the wheel," warns Ken Von Forell, CPCU, director of independent agents at Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits. "A good employment application includes questions about the applicant's driving record and whether their license has ever been suspended. Employees should also be required to bring in a copy of their motor vehicle record."

Von Forell says landscape contractors should use the employment application as a way to uphold certain standards such as "no reckless driving in a three-year period" and "no DUIs." He adds, "Establish limits and don't bend on them."

Make safety a priority

Texting, talking on cell phones and eating are all ways drivers can be distracted; as a company owner you can't afford to have a distracted driver on the road. Von Forell says it's important to establish a written policy on distracted driving. Having that policy in place encourages employees to follow the rules and allows you to take action if an accident occurs due to a distracted driver. While distracted driving can be hard to enforce, Von Forell suggests the stickers encouraging other drivers to call an 800 number to report poor driving



is a good place to start. "If somebody is dangerously changing lanes or cutting people off in your company vehicle you want to know about that," Von Forell says.

Other riders also can be a distraction and a liability. Von Forell advises business owners to institute a "no riders" policy. "We've had instances of claims where an employee picks up a friend on the way to or from the job site," Von Forell says. "If the person riding in the vehicle is not an employee, their injuries in an accident are not covered by worker's comp. Make sure employees know that the company vehicle should not be used as a taxi service."

Another common trouble spot for landscape contractors is properly tying down loads. "Make sure that everything has a proper place to be stored on the truck and that bungee cords and other appropriate equipment is available to secure items safely," Von Forell says.

Keep costs down

There are many variables that impact the premium for a commercial vehicle; knowing them may help save you money. For example, commercial autos are rated on size, cost new, radius of use, type of use and garaging location. The rate also increases by the size of vehicle: light, medium or heavy.

While there is certainly much to consider with commercial vehicle insurance; in the end, so much of it comes down to drivers.

The bottom line, Von Forell says, is avoiding "problem drivers" can save you many headaches. "Have a standard for hiring and stick to it—regardless of friends, family or even need," he says.

KIDS CAN COST YOU

A common mistake landscape business owners make is insuring personal vehicles under the business policy, says Hortica's Ken Von Forell. This approach sometimes occurs in a family with teenagers—who have higher premiums not only based on age but also gender. "We've seen circumstances where a business owner might insure his children's vehicles under the policy to save a little money," Von Forell says. "But that can cost them much more in the long run. If a teenager gets into an accident and you have a fleet of 25 vehicles under your company, that entire fleet takes a hit because of the severe loss from one driver. It's simply not worth the risk. One teenage driver out with friends can ruin the insurability and cost of insurance for a family business for years."

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Lead
18

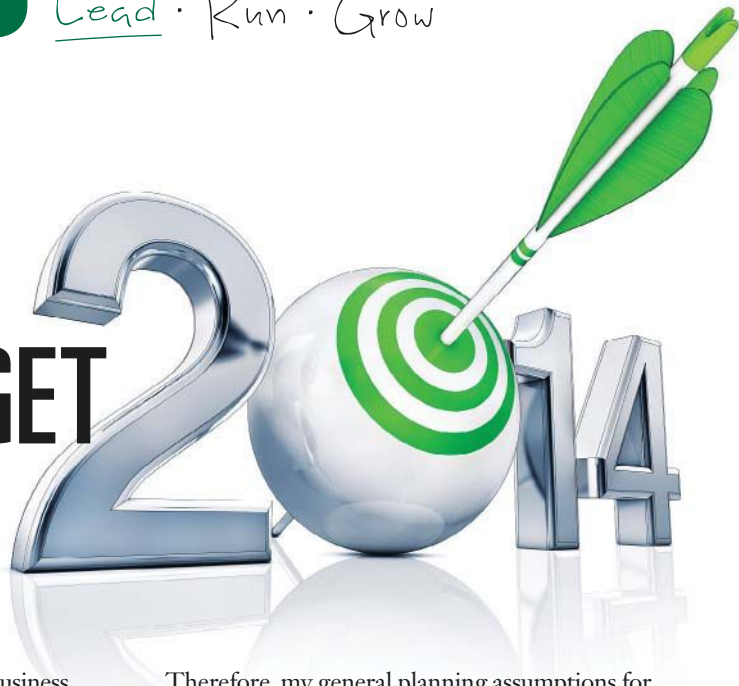
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and your team for
advancement.

Run
34

Improve your finances
and operations.

Grow
82

Achieve sales and
marketing success.



Q HOW DO I GET READY FOR

BY KEVIN KEHOE

A I began last year's article about business planning with the following statement: "Painfully aware that any prognostication or prediction might be off base, any plan you make has to be based on critical assumptions." The key planning assumptions I made for 2013 last year were:

› **Labor costs will rise.** I was correct. The H-2B program is in shambles, and there's a growing labor shortage that will continue to put upward pressure on labor costs. This is still a valid assumption for 2014.

› **Pricing will remain flat.** I was right. Customers are resisting increases of pricing despite the increases of labor and fuel costs. Yet there's room for price increases in enhancement and construction work. Grounds maintenance pricing will likely remain relatively flat. This is still a valid assumption for 2014.

› **Interest rates will remain low, and gas prices will be flat.** I was accurate about interest rates until recently. The rate increase will be a problem in 2014 only if the increases stall the nascent recovery of real-estate prices and investment, which they won't. We somewhat missed the fuel-price increase. The national per-gallon-price of \$3.61 is 22 cents higher than last year this time (6.5 percent). The forecast is for gas prices to continue their upward trend. We can depend on this because fuel prices are driven more by politics than supply and demand.

› **Better computer systems will allow for revenue growth without increased overhead costs.** I don't know how to measure this exactly, but with a few exceptions, it hasn't happened to the extent it should. While it's a valid assumption, making it happen has been a challenge. Overheads continue to rise.

Therefore, my general planning assumptions for 2014 include:

- › Labor supply will fall and costs will rise.
- › Pricing will remain flat. Overall economic activity will be sluggish.
- › Interest rates will rise.
- › Fuel prices will rise.
- › Overhead will rise in employee-related expenses, such as workers' comp and health care.

There are two key strategies to address these assumptions and work into your budgeting process: revenue and labor strategies.

REVENUE STRATEGY

- › Be aggressive with early renewals to maximize retention. Customers, especially in the homeowners association segment, are feeling the budget pinch. I'd plan for overall 88 percent to 92 percent retention. This means if you have \$1 million in maintenance contracts, plan for the potential of \$100,000 in losses. Plan for this and sell to make it up.
- › Be aggressive selling new contract work for spring 2014 and enhancement work for this fall now. Budgets need to be spent this year but may be installed next, allowing a backlog buildup for 2014. Big landscape companies in every market are investing in salespeople, who have goals to achieve. This means they'll be calling on your customers.
- › Flat pricing (not much in the way of contract increases) will be important, but market presence and salesman persistence will be more important. Invest in your sales effort.
- › Be more aggressive raising prices and margins on your enhancement bids.

» WEB EXTRA

To read Kehoe's article from last year, visit LandscapeManagement.net/2012/11/14/how-to-prepare-for-next-year/

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\$25.00			
40,000			
2,000			2,000
\$15.00			
#1	→		\$15.79
Desired Savings		Actual Savings Planned	
10%		5%	
Labor Savings - Assumed		Labor Savings - Assumed	Labor Savings - Planned
4,000		2,000	38,000
20		19	19
\$60,000		\$30,000	
			\$30,000
Overtime Premium			Annual Work Weeks Assumed
\$7.50			48
OT Hours Allowable / Year		OT Hours Allowable / Man / Year	OT hours Allowable on Average per Week
4,000		211	
#2	→		4.39

Annual Contract Revenue
Price per Hour Estimated

Labor Hours Budget at that Price
Average Annual Hours / Man / Year

Actual Wage Rate Paid - Burdened
Potential Wage Rate Paid - Raises
(See "Labor plan comparisons," below)

Labor Hour Reduction - Lean
Assume only 5% actually Achieved

Hours
Number of Men - Labor
Labor Dollar Cost
(See "Labor plan comparisons," below)

Potential OT - Additional Hours Worked
(See "Labor plan comparisons," below)

Planning pointer

Plan for increases in payroll per person. This strategy can be accomplished by raises in hourly rates (not necessarily across the board) and/or increasing overtime hours.

continued from page 18

LABOR STRATEGY

- Invest in lean management techniques in the field. Several of our clients have made this investment and reduced labor hours on contract work. Lean is a comprehensive approach to site management that matches crew sizes, equipment and materials to a sequenced plan for minimizing wasted time. Investing in lean can save 5 percent to 10 percent of labor hours. Using our example of \$1 million in contract work at a \$25 an hour revenue price, we get 40,000 hours required to do that work. A 10 percent reduction of hours—assuming a \$15-an-hour burdened labor cost per man—is a savings of \$60,000 a year, not to mention the reduced need for recruitment.
- Increase your recruiting budget. The recruitment costs for a new crewman is about \$500, considering ads, signing bonuses, interviews and testing. Plan to spend more money on this next year.
- Plan for increases in payroll per person. This strategy can be accomplished by raises in hourly rates (I'm not suggesting across the board) and/or increasing overtime hours. The questions are how much can I afford, and how best to do this? The chart above provides a static analysis of the options. It assumes you execute a lean management strategy.

LABOR PLAN COMPARISONS

There are two points to make regarding the chart above:

- 1). Planning to reduce 10 percent of current hours as a result of lean management and giving 5 percent of the cost (see green box with \$30,000) of these same hours back in the form of raises

is equivalent to \$15.79-per-hour raise, which is far more than required or will be necessary, and 2). Using the same assumptions in lieu of raises, the same goal can be achieved with overtime. In this case, when you save 10 percent of the hours and give back 5 percent (\$30,000 or 4,000 hours of premium time pay—\$7.50 an hour), the average overtime per week for a 48-week year is 4.39 hours a week.

The same planning approach used last year can be used for 2014 with these revised assumptions, but there's no such thing as a perfect plan. To paraphrase U.S. Gen. George Patton, a good plan well executed is far better than a perfect plan never executed. Hone your plan, and see if you don't have a prosperous 2014. LM

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Keboe, the owner-manager of 3PG Consulting and a regular columnist for Landscape Management, can be reached at kevinkeboe@me.com.



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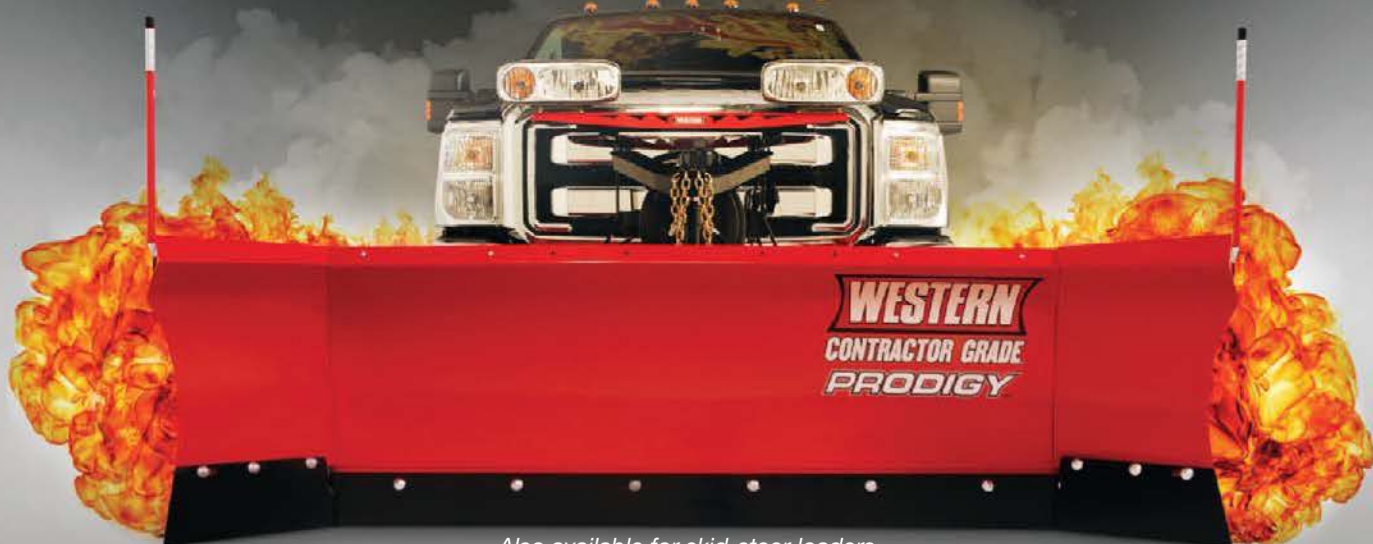
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HOW DO I LINK MY COMPANY'S **VALUES** TO **OUTCOMES**?

BY **CRAIG RUPPERT**

A There's been much written about the importance of developing a distinct company culture. Like many of you, for the first 15 years we were in business, we didn't have the time or the energy to think about our culture, let alone develop a formalized mission or values statement. We were just operating an everyday business, keeping our customers and employees on board and trying to succeed and be profitable.

It was only after we achieved a certain level of success, with about 70 employees and geographic expansion, that we started to figure out we needed to develop consistency. We learned we had to further

define what made us Ruppert and develop scalability around those ideas to ensure others within our expanding organization

understood the principles we believe are important to our success. It was then the term "culture" popped up in our vocabulary for the first time. We started to look closely at what made us unique and what beliefs set us apart from our competition to help us continue to grow and succeed.

As with most organizations, no matter the market or industry segment, our key values centered around quality, customer service,

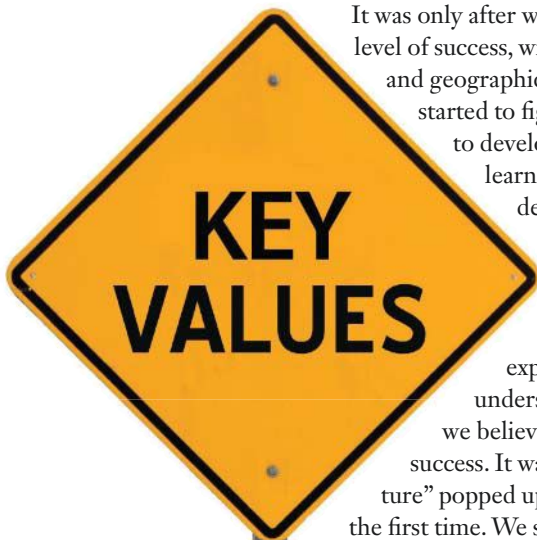


employees and profitability. We carved out 12 core values that are important to our success and supported our culture. Once you determine your beliefs and document them (about 5 percent of the exercise), the real work can begin (the other 95 percent of the equation), which is getting your employees to understand those values, believe in them, adopt them and make them their own. Here are the steps you can take to link company values to outcomes:

Start from the top down. As a manager or company owner, it's important to lead by example and live by the company values daily. That means adhering to the same standards you expect from

Safety, measurement and documentation are a big part of the Ruppert Landscape culture. Here, a crew undergoes a weekly vehicle safety inspection.

continued on page 24





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your employees, such as maintaining a certain work schedule, wearing the company uniform or driving a company vehicle. One of the best ways to reinforce your expectations is to set the standard by your actions so others can model the behavior.

Structure your values with policy. When you get busy, even your best-laid plans fall by the wayside. You meant to call your mom or planned to schedule a lunch meeting with a vendor to discuss a project. Often, the items on our to-do list that aren't urgent become less of a priority when schedules become busy.

One way to ensure important tasks are receiving the attention they deserve is to build structure around them. If you say your people are your most important strength, be sure your policies reflect that. How will you ensure your employees are successful, knowledgeable and happy? Some examples include structuring training programs and guidelines for when you expect them to happen or regularly scheduling employee-appreciation events, which can be as simple as a lunch or happy hour after work to something more elaborate like an awards banquet or whitewater rafting trip. If you set goals and policies to ensure you'll take the time to follow through, you're more likely to succeed.

Measure what you expect. As you try to tie your values to your organization more closely, measure and document important areas to provide a point of comparison because it will be more clear where your successes and challenges lie. Putting numbers around

Clockwise from top left: 1). Ruppert schedules companywide employee appreciation events, such as awards banquets or picnics, to show team members their contributions are valued. **2).** Because Ruppert values people development and training, it tracks whether new employees—such as the group participating in this new field managers orientation—receive their training in a timely manner. **3).** The safety incentive program rewards company field managers and branches that demonstrate their commitment to safety. Ken Thompson (left), Ruppert's Virginia Landscape Construction branch manager, accepts a check and award on his team's behalf from Dave Sanders, Ruppert's safety and loss prevention manager, for being the company's safest branch of the year.

anything that's essential to success might help underscore its importance. If providing excellent customer service is high on a company's value list, then performing yearly customer surveys might enable a company to better understand what's going well and what isn't. If a company's principles center around people development and training, it's valuable to track if new employees are receiving their orientation on their first day on the job and existing employees are receiving their evaluations in a timely manner. Putting employees first also might be measured through turnover rates or employee job satisfaction surveys.

Reward what's working. You might have heard the adage, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." That saying has implications in almost all areas of life, including the workplace. While it's important to be looking for areas where someone can be coached for improvement, it's just as important, if not more so, to recognize someone

WHILE IT'S IMPORTANT TO LOOK FOR AREAS WHERE SOMEONE CAN BE COACHED FOR IMPROVEMENT, IT'S JUST AS IMPORTANT, IF NOT MORE SO, TO **RECOGNIZE PEOPLE FOR WHAT THEY'RE DOING WELL.**

AS A MANAGER OR
COMPANY OWNER, IT'S
IMPORTANT TO **LEAD**
BY EXAMPLE AND
LIVE BY THE COMPANY
VALUES DAILY.

for what they're doing well. Recognition can be as informal as saying thank you with a quick pat on the back, taking employees out to lunch to

congratulate them for a good job, presenting a formal award to them at an awards banquet or giving them a bonus.

If an organization values creating a safe work environment, incentivize that behavior by rewarding employees who are promoting hazard awareness or the team or branch that has consistently demonstrated their commitment to the company's safety culture through compliance or achieving the lowest incident rates. If an organization values employee longevity, do something special to acknowledge significant company anniversaries. Consider giving a monetary reward or hosting a celebration that recognizes significant achievements in

an area of importance.

As you look for ways to differentiate your company from the competition and stand out as the best choice

for customers and employees, develop a set of values and ethics that will serve as a guide. By practicing the values from the top-down and adding structure, measurement and evaluation into the mix, along with a willingness to look at the process and ask difficult questions, you might be more likely to succeed. With the essential ingredients covered, there's a better chance your employees will be infused with principles you believe are crucial to your company's long-term success. **LM**

Ruppert is CEO of Laytonsville, Md.-based Ruppert Landscape. Reach him at info@ruppertcompanies.com.

Planning
pointer

Once you determine your beliefs and document them, the real work can begin, which is getting your employees to understand those values, believe in them, adopt them and make them their own.



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HOW DO I DEVELOP GOOD PEOPLE?



BY **BRUCE WILSON**

A: If your company is transitioning in size or you're at a crossroads that's holding up growth, there are steps and actions you can take to gain traction. Here are some things you can do to nurture your leadership energy and your need for the right team.

Q: I've reached \$6 million and need to grow, but I'm stuck and can't build a team because of turnover. How do I improve my hiring practices to keep people longer?

Turnover can set back growth plans, cause contract losses and impact morale, so it's important to have a pipeline of people ready and able to step up.

If you've reached \$6 million you have done a lot right. It's not common, however, to reach this level in a stressful environment. The sooner you have a people development plan the better. You must identify how you will staff and train for growth.

Q: I need to find good people, but I'm spending a fortune on ads and getting poor results. What can I do?

Filling empty positions can cost a lot. While head-hunters can be a solution for key positions, in general recruiters are expensive and the time it takes to evaluate and select a suitable candidate can be a disadvantage.

Advertising now includes using online tools and social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Craigslist

and Monster or CareerBuilder. These popular online databases can be effective but come with uneven results.

The best solution is to have a system in place for proactively identifying high-potential people at all levels and promote from within whenever possible.

Q: I hire promising college grads, invest in training them and they stay for a year or so and then leave. What can I do?

The career potential in our industry is really good, but college graduates are only part of a long-term solution. There are very good manager-potential people who have little or no college education, so the key is to hire for potential and make a long-term commitment for people development.

In small, entrepreneurial companies, some employees emerge as leaders or show intuitive or inspirational qualities in spite of the fact nothing has been done to develop their leadership skills. It takes time. The larger your company gets, the less time you have. You can't wait for your future leaders to develop independently; you must encourage leadership through a culture that supports your commitment to it.

Q: What's the best way to train people internally so I can promote them?

For a career training and development program to work effectively, you need a company culture that

continued on page 28

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nurtures talent and promotes people based on merit. Your employees must know opportunities are there for them. If they gain new skills and take on more responsibility they can get promoted. Your employees need to know “training their replacement” is what will make them eligible to move up.

If your employees know you’re committed, they’ll be your most effective cheerleaders and help you promote it. Teach them how to coach and mentor their subordinates, especially high-potential and high-performing employees. Put your senior managers in charge of this initiative and make sure promoting from within is reinforced regularly.

Q: How do I build a mentoring culture?

A coaching and mentoring culture will better meet the demands for improved employee performance. But it takes time to grow and evolve.

Tie coaching outcomes to your strategy for success and make it a priority. Include measurements for accountability, and a broad range of intangible benefits such as increased employee engagement, job satisfaction, morale, teamwork and professional growth.

Assign a coach to promotable employees to see they get the right exposure of training and experience to ensure they are prepared when promotional opportunities arise.

For example, field supervisors in collaboration with crew leaders could identify crew personnel who show potential as crew leaders. Set up a plan for these potential crew leaders to ensure they get the experience they need to move up. Ultimately, this approach could work for all positions.

Also, remember to “coach during the game.” Don’t fall into the trap of waiting to coach employees until review time.

Q: I’m considering recruiting at our local schools. What’s the best way to get started?

Companies that have the most success in college recruiting brand their organization on campus through existing connections. They establish a relationship with key faculty members who are influential in guiding students on their careers after college and utilize employees who are alumni of the targeted schools to help recruit other students. They also seek opportunities to speak or lecture to classes in support of the curriculum.

While cultivating your relationship with the schools, don’t forget to reach out within your company. Develop internal plans to fast-track graduates to positions of incremental responsibility.

For interns, you cannot put them out in the field pulling weeds and mowing grass without a plan that gets them some varied experience. Most companies that do this well set up an eight- to 12-week plan to rotate interns through different jobs in the company, including sales and some exposure to account management so they can see what they can aspire to do as a graduate.

Q: How do I integrate newly hired external talent with my company’s existing leadership?

Going outside to find and hire talent is an opportunity to balance the strength of your current managerial team and upgrade your company’s leadership pool.

Companies with a talent mindset focus their attention on the individual’s leadership capability and potential for professional growth. They hire from the outside using the same criteria for competencies they use internally.

Managers in a talent mindset company are expected to participate in identifying, attracting, developing and retaining future talent. It’s also an important factor in the manager’s own advancement.

Encourage your managers to meet competitors’ employees at bid walks, homeowners association board meetings, supplier events and seminars. They should look for people who are results oriented and who are capable of stretch assignments or fast-tracking.

This may sound contrary to having a culture that promotes from within and there is a fine balance here. First, it’s unlikely you will end up with a flood of talent through your employees, but over time you will have them develop relationships and networks so when there’s a need they can reach out to someone who they think might be a strategic hire.

If you develop a culture where your employees see opportunities and are treated well, they will want to bring on other talented people they know to benefit the pipeline. In a perfect world, they might even find their own replacement when they get promoted. **LM**

Wilson, a consultant with the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran and a Landscape Management columnist. Reach him at bwilson@wilson-oyler.com.



Planning pointer

Assign a coach to promotable employees to see they get the right exposure of training and experience and to ensure they are prepared when promotional opportunities arise.

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HOW DO I MOTIVATE MY STAFF?

BY MARK BRADLEY

A □ Every year, finding and keeping good staff is one of the biggest problems for landscape contractors. With industry prices stagnant and even deflating in some areas, it's never been more important to get maximum results out of your most important resource—your people.

THE PROBLEM

Our industry faces significant labor challenges. Our average wages are less than other trades, and we don't attract enough exceptional, young talent out of schools. Most companies are small businesses working without a plan, with limited opportunities for advancement and no formalized training. Many can only guarantee steady work for eight months a year. The work is hot, cold, wet and dirty. It's no

wonder it's difficult to find people who want to commit their futures to our industry.

But you have a choice: Join the tens of thousands of other companies that play victim to labor problems or seize the opportunity to differentiate yourself. The labor problem, in fact, can be an extremely powerful competitive advantage.

BUILDING A DOOR OF OPPORTUNITY

During performance reviews for my company, it became obvious we lacked a system for employees

to envision how they fit in. I find reviews are more positive when criticism is framed as "this is what you need to be doing to get to the next level" rather than "this is what your weaknesses are." But right after our review process came the questions: "When will I be re-evaluated?" "What else do I need to do?" "How can I move to a hardscape crew?" "Where can I go to get that training?"

Employees were motivated to move up, but there was no system in place to guide them, and they weren't about to make it up themselves. So we set the following system in place to define the opportunities available to staff and the criteria required to move up the ladder. There are five steps to implementing the system.

1 Define the roles.

Identify different positions in your company as an opportunity tree. Even if you haven't had formal positions before, draw out what they'd look like. If they're not clear to you, imagine how your staff feels about future opportunities with your company. Make it look like a flowchart or an organizational chart. Use this for new and existing hires to illustrate the opportunities.

2 Establish pay scales.

We define fixed wage floors and ceilings at each position. Ceilings motivate development. An A-level laborer will bump up against a wage ceiling eventually. To earn another raise, he needs to develop himself into a bigger role. Incentive systems based on time served breed overpaid, underperforming employees.

» WEB EXTRA

To download sample advancement opportunity criteria or view a video about effective employee bonus systems, visit the Web Extras section at [Landscape Management.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net).



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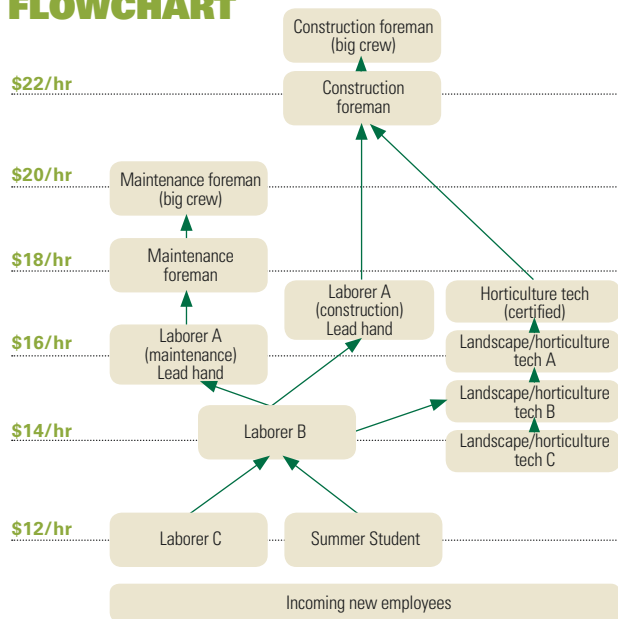


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SAMPLE FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FLOWCHART



*Opportunity paths are suggested/typical but don't necessarily need to follow the order above. Wages and positions have been changed for confidentiality.

continued from page 30

3 List your requirements.

Define your standards for each position. To move up to a B-level laborer, you need to take a first aid course. To be a stonemason apprentice, you must register in an apprenticeship program. To be a foreman, you must become a Landscape Industry Certified Technician. Whatever your firm's criteria are, put them in writing to give your staff a clear road map. Ensure you've got a plan for which training expenses (if any) your company will cover (e.g., employees do the course on their own time, but you'll reimburse the cost of the course after completion).

4 Make your goals their goals.

I believe strongly in employee incentives, especially at the foreman level. Hourly wages put the company and its staff at odds. The longer jobs take, the worse for the company, but the better for the staff. If we want to inspire performance, we must create incentive systems that reward staff for achieving company goals. Keep your goals objective. Bonuses given without transparency for how they're calculated are forgotten faster than they're spent. Objective goals are based on criteria such as beating sales or production targets, estimated hours and a target sales-to-wages ratio (total sales divided by total wages).

5 Stick to it.

You need regular feedback and reinforcement. Have a performance review at least once a year with written objectives and give your staff a copy. Come back to that document during the next review. Share information, such as how the company is doing relative to our bonus or incentive goals. Discuss it in meetings. Put a chart on the wall at the shop. Without regular reinforcement, this will be just another change that didn't work.

THE RESULTS

➤ **Better hiring.** Your opportunity tree diagram is an ideal tool for hiring. Show prospects the opportunities for growth in your company. You'll excite the right kinds of employees and drive the wrong kinds to find work with your competitors.

➤ **Better motivation.** Without an opportunity system, staff will lack drive and motivation. Visible opportunities, clear criteria, incentive systems and wage ceilings work together to provide strong incentives for improvement.

➤ **Better culture.** Everyone knows who's moving up and why. They know the expectations you set. Raises and promotions are earned on merit, not just time served.

➤ **Better accountability.** You're putting the responsibility on your employees to develop themselves. You've provided the framework. It's up to your staff to take advantage of it.

➤ **Better responsibility.** Delegate work easier by making certain roles and responsibilities part of your opportunity criteria. Inspire others to sweat the small stuff, so you can focus on the big picture.

➤ **Better sales.** Our employee-training program has played a role in our sales presentations to customers with high standards for health and safety.

➤ **Better profit.** Worried about rising costs because of raises? Consider this: A raise of \$1 an hour will cost you about \$1.25 an hour after taxes, benefits, etc. That's \$12.50 a day. If that employee is just 10 percent more productive as a result of his training, engagement, experience and attitude, then you've added \$40 a day in productivity, assuming a charge-out rate at \$40 an hour, 10 hours a day). The difference is even bigger if he's installing materials. He'll install 10 percent more material a day, as well.

Defining opportunities for your staff is just as important for your company as it is for them. Hiring key people off the street is like handing the keys to your business to a stranger. A few mistakes can cost you a lot of money in a short amount of time. Given the industry's turnover, successful companies must be focused on developing their talent. Current employees know your systems and procedures. You know their strengths and weaknesses. It's a win-win for the company and employees. **LM**

Bradley, president of TBG Landscape in Brooklin, Ontario, and co-founder of the Landscape Management Network, can be reached at mark@golmn.com.

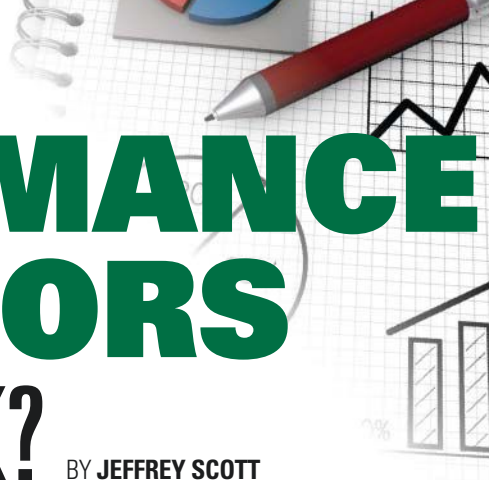


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Q WHAT KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS SHOULD I TRACK?

BY JEFFREY SCOTT

A Landscape firms often want to know what metrics will keep them on track. Use this list of key performance indicators (KPIs) to stay focused on what's most important in running your business. The beauty is once you understand and can measure KPIs, you can use them to motivate employees.

1 Sales

The most important sales KPI is *closing ratio*. It should be monitored quarterly or semiannually. As your closing ratio goes up, so will your margins—up to a point. Once your closing ratio gets too high your margins will start to decrease again. This KPI is a silver bullet if you monitor it closely along with your markups to find the margin-inflection point.

Other sales KPIs to keep an eye on are *margins as sold* (monthly) and *sales per salesperson* (also monthly).

Once you hire salespeople you'll want to track their margins as sold, or tie their incentives into margins as built. Don't commission salespeople on top-line numbers, unless they have zero impact on the bottom line.

2 Clients

Customer surveys will help you uncover some of your unhappy clients but not all—some unhappy clients won't bother to fill in a survey. To create a KPI from your survey results, you have to measure your *Net*

Promoter Score (NPS), a customer loyalty metric that's gained popularity over the last decade. While your NPS can be useful for companies with large service bases, it doesn't give you as much directly helpful data as *retention* (quarterly), *quality score* (weekly) and *upsales* (monthly).

Are you retaining your clients at a high level? If not, you're either not retaining your key employees or you're not giving your clients a consistent high-level experience. A weekly quality score (by crew) shared with your staff will help modulate this issue.

Upsales is how you help clients solve problems, improve the use of their property and beautify their landscapes. Plus, it can restore and increase low margins. Low upsales is a red flag, meaning clients are being ignored (or you have low-end clients who are hampering your margin growth). Expect to sell 25 percent to 100 percent in upsales, depending on your niche.

3 Production

Labor percent is the single biggest cost you must control. This simple percent is not only critical for budgeting, but it also allows you to compare with like companies. *Net-net-sales per hour* (sales minus cost of subs and materials, divided by labor hours) and its cousin *net-net-sales per day* are extremely versatile indicators because you can track them hourly and daily and roll up the numbers monthly and yearly. These tell you how much your crews produce in any given time period

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and allow you to compare it year over year, while removing variations like high material or high sub costs.

Non-billable hours is a critical indicator because it's where profits often leak out. It's difficult to measure without time sheet or tracking software, although you can focus on yard time as a starting point. If you're not getting your maintenance crews out in single-digit numbers, then you're leaking profits. *Division gross profit*, one of the most overlooked KPIs, is useful for identifying where you're making money and where you're not. This indicator can help owners zero in on poor performing markups, crew sizes and inefficiencies.

Operational margin (gross margin minus equipment and indirect cost margins) is useful for incentivizing department managers. It also allows you to do scenario planning with labor versus equipment. For example, if you add equipment expenses, are you able to reduce labor expenses as a total percent of revenue? Some contractors get in trouble by buying equipment without reducing labor percent enough to reduce the total cost structure of the business.

The importance of *overtime* goes without saying, except to say that some companies aim to keep this number too low. Incremental sales can make you a lot of money if your overhead is already recovered. Don't follow conventional wisdom—analyze your own numbers and make your own decisions.

4 Safety

Safety is often overlooked until a firm has a bad accident. Even if you run a safe company, you may be losing money due to property damage—yours and your clients. Key safety KPIs include *days lost of accidents* (quarterly); *workers' comp mod factor* (annually); and *property damage* (annually). Consider a group incentive to control these costs. For example, the entire division earns a quarterly bonus if no days are lost and no significant property is damaged over a 90-day period. The 90-day clock gets reset if there's an accident.

5 Equipment

To own or lease? To replace frequently or run into the ground? These are reoccurring questions you can't answer if you aren't tracking your historical *equipment, repairs, maintenance and fuel costs* monthly and quarterly. Another metric to track is *equipment lease, rent and depreciation* annually or quarterly, if needed.

These indicators help you benchmark against other companies to identify cost savings opportunities. Your results will differ depending on what services you provide, so make sure to measure and benchmark with like companies or by like divisions.

6 Manpower

As you get larger and delegate management responsibilities, you'll want to maintain a pipeline of foremen and ensure

you keep the ones you hire and train. The foreman is the key position that makes you money, which is why it's important to track foreman retention level and the *pipeline of assistant foremen* (both biannually). Fast-growing companies need a good pipeline and slow-growing companies tend to lack A players at this key position. While finding good employees is difficult, you'll find if you treat recruiting like marketing and branding you'll be able to create a steady stream of good candidates into your company. It's easier than you think when you change your mindset and take this strategic approach.

7 Balance sheet

How do you use your balance sheet? Here are two common ways some contractors I work with use them. The first is measuring accounts receivables (AR), specifically, the number of *average AR days* outstanding. I love this indicator because reducing it means you're simultaneously staying on top of client dissatisfaction. The second indicator, *return on assets*, indicates the amount of profits you're able to derive from the average total amount of assets (cash, AR, equipment, etc.) at your company's disposal. A higher ratio means you're more efficient and growth costs you less cash. You must compare these with other like companies and against your own year-over-year benchmark.

8 Operating cash flow

This is probably the most important KPI—are you able to turn your theoretical profits (the ones that show up on your P&L statement) into cash? Profits are princely but cash is still king. You should track your *operating cash flow* monthly or weekly, if needed. Once you make your outgoing payments, investments in equipment/inventory and collect on your accounts, etc., is your business bank account richer or poorer? This is the real testament of a business: Your ability to grow depends on your ability to turn profits into cash flow.

9 Owner's ROI

Lastly, how much money are you making? Many business owners commingle their personal and business expenses, but it's too easy to lose track of your actual earnings this way. When I ask owners how much they earn sometimes they can't give me a straight answer. That's too bad. To grow it year over year, it's important to track it every month. Compare yourself to other business owners for best results by watching *net profit* (monthly), *net to owner* (monthly) and *return on equity* (annually).

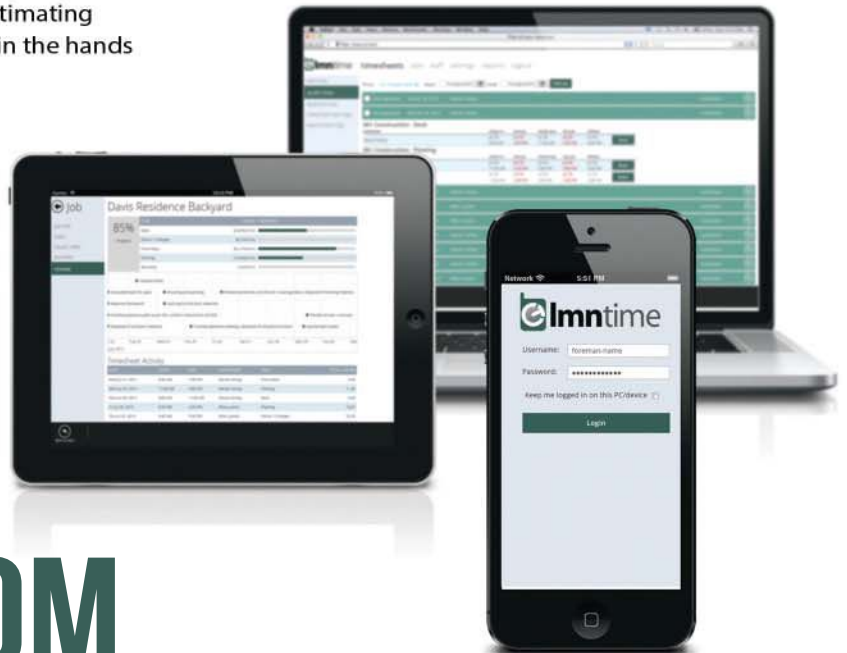
Return on equity tells owners how much return they make for the amount of money they leave in their businesses. Should you pull more money out and invest in other ventures? This ratio will help you decide. **LMM**

Scott, who has a master's degree in business administration, is a consultant who facilitates The Leader's Edge peer groups for landscape business owners. Reach him via GetTheLeadersEdge.com.

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WHEN IS OVERTIME OK?

BY **BEN GANDY**

A You've told your guys a thousand times, "No overtime!" It's an unnecessary premium cost that cuts deep into your margins. Or is it?

The unplanned, capricious use of overtime hurts financial performance. We rarely bid work at overtime rates, so it hurts margins. There are, however, times when the strategic use of overtime makes sense, as long as it's limited and part of a strategy. These occasions include dealing with labor spikes, handling overbudget sales and service-recovery situations.

tegic overtime doesn't mean working an indefinite number of hours. It's limited to the job budgets.

› Planning a dual strategy—temporary labor plus overtime, depending on the hours. Determine the hour limit you're willing to work people. Calculate the hours exceeding this limit, and hire temporary help to cover the difference.

› Budgeting for the overtime. Strategic overtime in this scenario can be put in your financial budget in advance so the labor premium is planned, not a financial hit.

Before deciding on strategic overtime, look closely at the schedule of operations. There may be more leverage in flexing the schedule. For example, in the Southeast, mulch operations can be done during the winter when landscapes are dormant. That's not the case in the Northeast where snow cover and frozen ground pushes a mulch schedule on top of spring cleanup and mowing operations.

COPING WITH LABOR SPIKES

In some markets, landscape maintenance operations spike at certain times of the year for a brief time. The only way out of working overtime is hiring extra bodies for a few weeks, then letting them go or moving them to another area of the business. The challenges include:

- › Finding a number of workers in a hurry is always difficult.
- › Finding good workers who are willing to accept a job that only promises employment for a few weeks might not be realistic.
- › Training temporary labor puts a strain on your most valuable people.

Additionally, the risks are great:

- › Untrained workers on your sites puts quality and safety at risk.
- › The layoffs must be timed right. If the work isn't well understood, there's a risk the extra workers will be kept on too long, which is a costly mistake.

When dealing with labor spikes, keys to using a successful overtime strategy are:

- › Understanding the man-hour needs exactly. Stra-

SELLING OVERBUDGET

You should have staff, vehicles and equipment to handle your planned sales volume. Hopefully, you beat your sales targets from time to time. But what do you do if it's half a crew? Maybe your crews typically produce \$20,000 a month each and you sell an additional \$10,000? It might not make sense to buy an additional vehicle plus equipment and hire more people for half a route, especially if it's late in the season (you'll make payments all winter, with the rig sitting idle). It might make sense to work overtime strategically to cover the extra volume until additional sales are generated and a new full route can be created. This tactic is unbudgeted, but as long as you're running ahead on revenue, it won't ruin your financials.

Overtime hours aren't unlimited here; hour budgets must still be met.

Planning
pointer

Before deciding on strategic overtime, look closely at the operations schedule. There may be more leverage in flexing the schedule.

What about overselling the budget on installation? If your clients will tolerate stretching the schedule, you might be able to finish the work without overtime, but it's usually not the case. When installation is oversold, it makes sense to work strategic overtime.

In the first place, installation profits come from markups on labor and materials. The materials' profits are unaffected by overtime (you're making the material markup whether your workers are on overtime or not). Labor often is a smaller portion of the direct cost in installation work, often less than 25 percent. A premium on this portion has a smaller effect on the overall gross profit than in labor-only services like maintenance. (See chart below.)

Besides that, overselling your installation budgets generally doesn't mean an increase in overhead, so even though there's margin erosion in the overtime, you usually can expect to keep your profits. More gross profit dollars contributing to cover the same overhead will help your business, even if the gross margins are smaller.

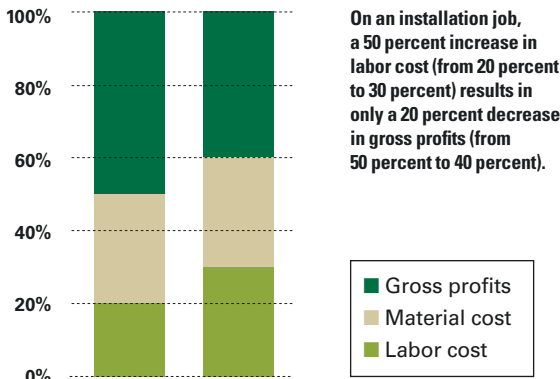
There's a point where you simply need to add more staff if installation sales can be sustained at higher-than-budget targets. However, as the last market downturn showed, limit your investment in installation overheads so you can pull back as painlessly as possible.

SERVICE FAILURE

From time to time, we let clients down. Whether we fall behind, make mistakes or miss something, it's impossible to never disappoint anyone. Working overtime is an expensive way to fix problems, but this is a relationship business. People overwhelmingly buy landscape based on relationships. Better to lose money in the short term than lose the relationship in the long term. Overtime isn't the path to financial success, but if limited and used strategically, it can be part of the arsenal in coping with labor spikes, windfall sales or service challenges. **LM**

Gandy is principal of Atlanta-based Envisor Consulting. Reach him at bengandy@envisorco.com or 404-556-8923.

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WHAT IF I CAN'T SELL MY BUSINESS?

BY RON EDMONDS

A Often, Green Industry business owners have a tremendous percentage of their wealth tied up in their businesses. Many assume they'll be able to sell their business when they're ready to retire or move on to another opportunity. Unfortunately, few have actually planned how to monetize this asset when that time comes, though. Many businesses are placed on the market without considering the best plan for achieving a transaction that meets the owner's requirements. As a result, business owners sometimes are unable to sell their businesses, at least at a price they're willing to accept.

So what should you, as a business owner, do if your company doesn't sell?

The first step is to identify why your business failed to sell. Possibilities are:

The business isn't attractive to potential buyers.

This is difficult. Buyers tend to favor businesses with a significant stream of recurring revenue, such as landscape maintenance or lawn care. A construction-oriented business may be solid and highly profitable, but buyers usually are wary about their ability to continue the existing level of operations after a transition.

The business is too dependent on the owner.

Many Green Industry

businesses are identified highly with their owners. No matter how much the business has grown, the owner may be the principal salesperson, quality control officer and chief recruiter, as well as being involved in client relationships. The owner's name is often on the business, too. In these situations, a buyer would be concerned about his ability to maintain the existing business after the original owner is no longer present.

The business is too dependent on a few customers. The business may be profitable but have just a few customers that produce a large portion of the business. If a business is dependent on one customer or group of customers to make up 50 percent of sales, a buyer will be concerned about the risk of that customer going away, for whatever reason, after the sale is completed.

The business isn't priced correctly. Unrealistic prices are often reasons businesses don't sell. Owners may ask for an offer from a potential buyer, but the asking price sets an expectation of what it takes to buy a business. If a buyer believes the asking price is significantly too high, he often won't make an offer, avoiding wasting his time and money pursuing the transaction, believing the owner may not take a reasonable offer.

The business hasn't been marketed effectively. A business opportunity must be presented to a large enough market to identify one or more interested buyers. If too few potential buyers have been exposed to a business for sale, the process may not produce a buyer. This can happen when a business

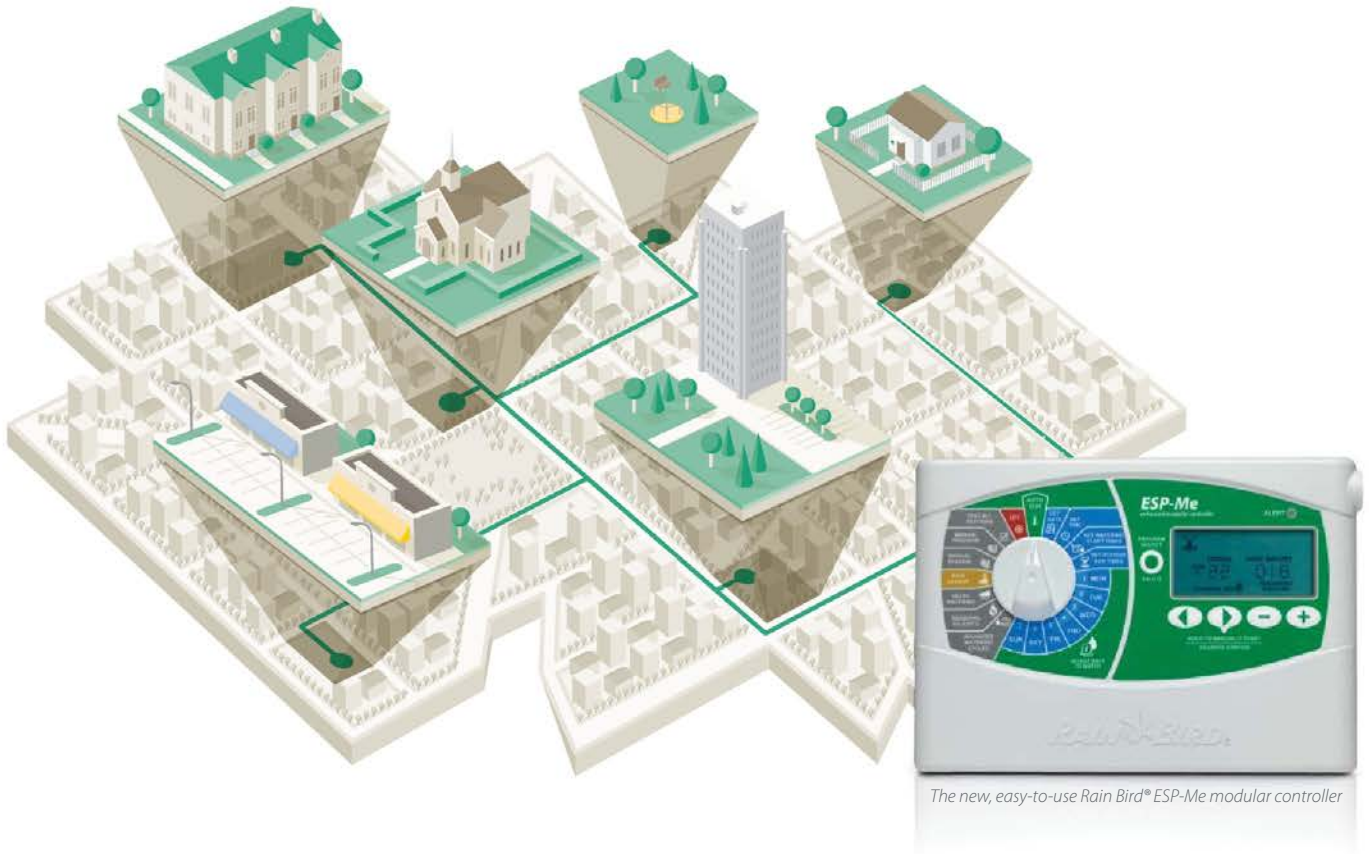
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intermediary has too many restrictions placed on marketing the business or doesn't have the right connections or resources to market the business effectively.

Market conditions are negative. The market is cyclical. There are times when few transactions take place because credit markets tighten. When interest rates are higher, the available financing usually decreases because lenders require a certain level of debt service coverage.

LOWERING THE BUYER'S PERCEPTION OF RISK

The first three reasons a business may not sell are primarily because of the perceived riskiness of the transaction to a potential buyer. A few strategies are available to address the risk to a buyer. The best thing to do, if possible, is to address the reasons for the perception of risk by steps such as:

- › Build the recurring revenue components of the business or create new ones. This is somewhat counterintuitive, but one way to do it is make an acquisition or two.
- › Develop the management team and make the business less dependent on the owner.
- › Diversify the customer base.

Unfortunately, those ideas take time. If you don't have the time to make significant changes in the business, alternatives are:

- › Make a portion of the purchase price an earn-out payable only if the business achieves a certain level of performance after a deal is done. These are tricky. The objective is to decrease the buyer's perception of risk while not significantly increasing the seller's risk of going unpaid.
- › Provide some of the financing for the transaction in the form of a seller note. This, too, is tricky because a seller note will be subordinate to the traditional financing a buyer obtains and may have limited payments for two to three years. However, lenders often prefer 20 percent in seller financing. Fortunately, sellers who are willing to take a seller note will, on average, realize a significantly higher price for their businesses than those who are unwilling to take seller paper.
- › Focus on buyers who will have a lower perception of risk, such as key employees or, perhaps, competitors.

PRICING AND MARKETING

To stimulate buyer interest, it's a sound idea to have a discussion with a merger-and-acquisition adviser about an asking price that will be attractive to potential

buyers without leaving money on the table. In some cases, an earn-out or similar provision can help bridge a valuation-perception gap.

One factor that diminishes the likelihood of receiving an offer is a limited marketing plan that's the result of concerns about confidentiality. Many owners are concerned their business may implode if employees or customers find out it's for sale. Thus, they limit the advertising or types of contacts their intermediary can make to avoid the risk of inadvertent disclosure. However, there's a direct relationship between the number of potential buyers who know about an opportunity and the likelihood of receiving an acceptable offer. It's often wise to have as broad a marketing program as possible.

Negative market conditions are one thing you can't control. The best advice is to prepare ahead of time and be ready to sell when market conditions are right, not knowing exactly when that may be. Your only other realistic alternatives are to delay your transaction until market conditions improve or use transaction terms (seller financing, earn-outs and asking price) to make a proposed transaction attractive, even with negative market conditions.

BEING OBJECTIVE

Examine your business as a buyer would, and address the things that would make your business unattractive to you if you were considering purchasing it. Being objective is difficult when it's your business, so consider asking trusted advisers to do the same thing and be straightforward with you about what they think.

The best alternative is to avoid this situation altogether by developing an exit plan. An effective exit plan should assess the value and marketability of your business and include action steps to improve them throughout your planning timeline. A primary goal of your exit plan should be to enable you to sell your business on your terms and timetable. **LM**

Edmonds is principal of The Principium Group, a Green Industry merger and acquisition firm. Reach him at redmonds@principiumgroup.com.

BUYERS TEND TO FAVOR BUSINESSES WITH A SIGNIFICANT STREAM OF RECURRING REVENUE, SUCH AS LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE OR LAWN CARE.

Planning pointer

The first three reasons a business may not sell are primarily because of the perceived riskiness of the transaction to a potential buyer. The best thing to do, if possible, is to address the reasons for the perception of risk.

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Q WHAT IF I GET AUDITED?

BY DANIEL S. GORDON

All land care professionals need to maintain accurate financial records. The most obvious reasons for doing so is to assess the results of operations against past periods, analyze current budgets or to formulate future projections. Moreover, for ownership and management, this is an internal need to monitor and improve the business.

Yet there's an external partner in your business needing to be fed accurate information, too. And if that partner requests, you, as an owner/manager, must prove the accuracy of the information. If you're wrong or can't prove the information is accurate, you may be subject to fines. Who's this partner? Well, there are several. They include the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and state and local taxing authorities.

You're responsible for providing these taxing authorities financial statements summarizing the results of your operations to report tax liabilities and provide tax payments. Depending on the type of legal entity you operate, you may be required to provide a balance sheet and a profit and loss statement. It's your responsibility to support every number on your tax return with corroborating documentation.

This sounds like a lot of work. It is. The problem is we get so involved with running our businesses, we put record keeping on the back burner and do a mad dash at tax time to organize our records. A landscape business has many moving parts, including prepaid customer accounts, renewals, payroll, loan/lease payments for vehicles and premiums payable or refunded, based on general liability or workers' comp insurance audits. These items, as well as other issues, make bookkeeping a tedious, important task. But, luckily, you have some leeway in how you bookkeep.

JUST SHOWING YOU PAID AN ITEM ISN'T SUFFICIENT. IT MUST BE NECESSARY AND REASONABLE, SUPPORTING A BUSINESS PURPOSE TO BE DEDUCTIBLE.



REQUIRED RECORDS

The IRS doesn't have a prescribed record-keeping system. You may choose any system suitable to your needs as long as it clearly shows your income and expenses. It should include a summary of your business transactions, primarily the ledgers a part of your accounting system. Many land care professionals use QuickBooks or Peachtree for their ledger requirements. Both provide adequate detail when drilling into subledgers. As long as the transactional information is accessible, accurate and detailed enough to trace and agree to a source document, you'll fare well in the data presentation phase of an audit.

Assuming your ledgers are correct, each transaction needs to be supported by a source document, which can be electronic. Purchases, sales, payroll and other transactions will generate supporting documents such as invoices, receipts and others, which contain the information that must be recorded in your ledgers. It's important to keep these documents because they support the entries in your books and on your tax return. Keep them in an orderly fashion and in a safe place. For example, organize them by year and type of income or expense.

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It's important to note a record needs to be verifiable and must support a transaction includible in income or deductible as an expense as allowed by the tax code and regulations promulgated there under. Just showing you paid an item isn't sufficient. It must be necessary and reasonable, supporting a business purpose, to be deductible. Here are basic records that substantiate the following items:

Gross receipts are the income you receive from your business. You should maintain supporting documents showing the amounts and sources of your gross receipts. Documents for gross receipts include:

- › Signed service tickets or invoices;
- › Bank deposit slips;
- › Credit card charge slips; and
- › Forms 1099-MISC received from customers.

Purchases are the items you buy and resell to customers or materials you apply during your service visits. Your supporting documents should show the amount paid and the amount was for purchases. Documents for purchases include:

- › Vendor invoices for material, supplies and equipment;
- › Cancelled checks; and
- › Credit card sales slips.

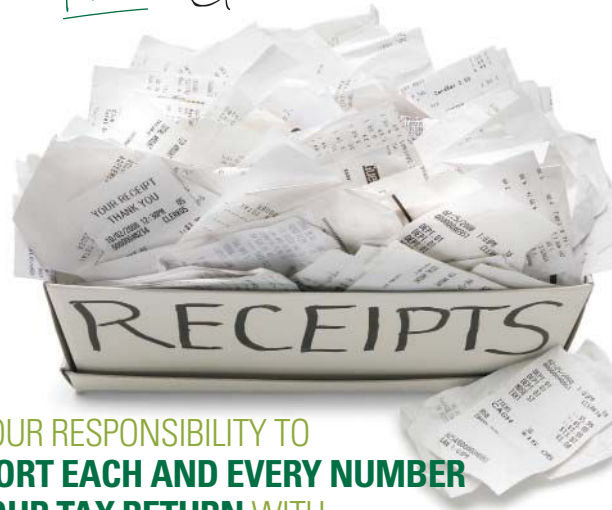
Expenses are the costs you incur (other than purchases) to carry on your business. Your supporting

documents should show the amount paid and the amount was for a business expense. Documents for expenses include:

- › Cancelled checks;
- › Legal agreements, such as leases, note payable, mortgages, etc.;
- › Account statements;
- › Credit card sales slips;
- › Vendor invoices; and
- › Petty cash slips for small cash payments.

RETAINING RECORDS

The minimum amount of time to retain records for tax purposes depends on the item, when it's recorded and if it will be part of a future transaction. For example, you purchase a vehicle and sell it in five years. The transaction five years hence would be a future transaction requiring information from the original purchase. Generally, you



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ON YOUR TAX RETURN WITH
CORROBORATING DOCUMENTATION.

must keep your records supporting an item of income or deductions on a tax return until the statute of limitations for that tax return runs out.

The statute of limitations is the period of time in which you can amend your tax return to claim a credit or refund, or the IRS can assess additional tax, usually three years after filing. Returns filed before the due date are treated as filed on the due date for this purpose. In the following situations you'll need to produce records past the normal statute of limitations:

- › Records for as many as six years after filing if you fail to include income you should've reported, and it's more than 25 percent of the gross income reported on the original return.
- › Records for as many as seven years after filing if you file a claim for a loss from worthless securities or bad debt deduction.
- › All employment tax records for at least four years after the date the tax becomes due or is paid, whichever is later.
- › If you file a fraudulent return or you don't file a return, your records might be examined indefinitely.

These are the rules for the supporting documentation. However, I like to keep copies of the tax returns long after they're filed. They can help when preparing future tax returns and when making computations if you file an amended return. Keep records relating to property purchases and improvements until the statute of limitations expires for the year in which you dispose of the property. These records must be kept to determine any depreciation or amortization and figure the gain or loss when you sell or dispose of the property.

Keep accurate and complete records supported by a well-maintained bookkeeping system. This allows you to perform proper planning for growth and profit and, foremost, comply with any requests for records during an IRS audit should you be called on to prove your tax return is accurate. **LMM**

Gordon is a CPA in New Jersey who owns an accounting firm that caters to landscape professionals throughout the U.S. He can be reached at dam@turfbbooks.com.

Planning pointer

You may choose any record-keeping system that suits your needs as long as it clearly shows your income and expenses. Your system should include a summary of your business transactions, primarily the ledgers that are part of your accounting system.

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HOW DO I IMPROVE CASH FLOW?

BY **MONICA MITCHELL MUIR**

A Almost every business monitors cash closely, and they all seem to have their own systems. The following are 10 ways to help you improve cash flow in your business.

let you quickly see who pays slowly and who pays quickly. Wouldn't it be nice to have more fast-paying clients?

5 Make it easy for customers to pay you. Many business owners don't like to accept credit cards, but sometimes accepting a credit card will pay you much faster. Perhaps you can have your customer's card on file so you can take monthly payments or whatever you prearranged with the customer. You may even

Planning
pointer

Look for patterns so you can drop the least profitable clients or jobs and do more for the most profitable.

1 Monitor your cash on hand. This includes money that has come in and might not have been entered in the accounting system yet, as well as payments that haven't cleared the bank yet.

2 Reconcile your bank and credit cards monthly. That will help make monitoring your cash on hand more accurate.

3 Review your statement of cash flows, income and expenses. The P&L or income statement provides only partial insight into

the health of your business. Payments on loans would be an example of transactions that decrease cash on hand but wouldn't show up on your P&L. The purpose of the statement of cash flows is to explain your change in cash on hand throughout a given period of time; in other words, why it increased or decreased.

4 Monitor accounts receivable closely. Besides accounts receivable aging reports, you may have an average days to pay report, which will



MANY BUSINESS OWNERS DON'T LIKE TO ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS, BUT SOMETIMES ACCEPTING A CREDIT CARD WILL **PAY YOU MUCH FASTER.**

find the customer will go with a larger project because you accept credit cards.

You also can have clients pay you online, and not only by credit card. Automated Clearing House, for instance, has lower transaction fees because it charges a flat, per-transaction fee instead of a percent-of-transaction fee. There may be a monthly fee.

6 Accept payments up front or at the time of service, then you don't have collection concerns.

Set prepayments aside, and use it for the client's work instead of other bills. If you're using it for other payments, that should be a warning. You need to look closer at your financials.

7 Run a cash flow forecast, if your software has the capability.

It can be quite helpful—this assumes customers pay you on time and you pay your vendors on time.

8 Monitor your payables closely. To do this, you must enter your bills in your accounting system and not just simply write checks when it's time to pay bills.

SET PREPAYMENTS ASIDE, AND USE IT FOR THE CLIENT'S WORK INSTEAD OF OTHER BILLS. IF YOU'RE USING IT FOR OTHER PAYMENTS, THAT SHOULD BE A WARNING.

9 Look for most and least profitable patterns so you can drop the least profitable clients or jobs and do more for the most profitable.

Consider monitoring profitability by:

- › Product/service line;
- › Type of customer;
- › Project/job; and
- › Type of project/job.

10 Monitor your debt.

Loan and credit card payments may not show up

in your accounts payable aging reports, so consider these. The following can help:

- › The statement of cash flows (discussed in No. 3);
- › Current ratio, which looks at how easily you can pay your debt (total current assets/total current liabilities); and
- › Debt ratio, which calculates the percentage of your business financed by debt (total liabilities/total assets). **LM**

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WHAT'S THE **ROI** FOR EFFICIENCY TRAINING?

BY **DAVE HESSONG**

A The return on investment for efficiency training obviously depends on the efficiency of your operation. As a rule, there's always room for improvement. So many times we tend to do things a certain way, but if we were asked why we do something this way, the answer would be something like, "Because we've always done it that way."

The definition of efficiency is acting or producing effectively with a minimum of waste, expense or unnecessary effort, or exhibiting a high ratio of output to input. It means doing the same work faster. The key is doing the

same work and having the same results. If you sacrifice quality to gain speed, it's not being more efficient, it's only being faster.

There's certainly room for improvement in how we do a job, but what about how we prepare for and travel to and from a job?

There could be the most room for improvement here. How much time do your workers spend loading up at the shop in the morning? Do you pay workers to sit in a truck for 10 minutes while the driver stops for fuel—or longer if the crew stops for materials on the way to a job? Consider these operational aspects.

Here's a hypothetical situation: A supervisor fails to consider the best place to position the trailer when arriving at a job so his guys can unload materials most efficiently. Anytime you do a repetitive task, even for a few seconds, it adds up to a significant amount of time. Don't believe me? Let's do the math.

Take three workers moving 300 pavers to the back of a house inaccessible by mechanical means for a patio job. If each carries five at a time, it's 20 trips each. Multiply that times the three workers, and you have 60 trips. If the trailer is parked on the street instead of backed in the

continued on page 75

» WEB EXTRA

Visit the Web Extras section of **Landscape Management.net** to download an efficiency health assessment workbook, which allows you to enter a billing rate, number of workers, estimated amount of time wasted and how often you think it occurs.

Planning pointer

You'll want to show your crew leaders best practices for some specific tasks, but you'll never cover every situation in your operations.



A SUPPLEMENT TO

Landscape Management

THE
INDUSTRY
PULSE

2013

Ahead *of the* Curve

Landscape industry professionals are feeling positive. Despite challenges, the industry is out front of other small businesses when it comes to optimism.

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SPONSOR'S WORD

A clear focus

Every recession teaches us familiar lessons, and the past few years were no exception. As business owners, we are again smarter for having gone through the last economic dip. One advantage of the uncertain economy is that it forced us to focus—whether we liked it or not. If you are like me, you learned to monitor your business more closely, manage your cash and even reassess your profit structure. These are worthwhile lessons that all business owners need to learn, even if we don't fully appreciate them at the time.

As the economy starts to show signs of picking up, let's stay steadfast in the lessons we've learned. There are still plenty of challenges to keep us motivated. Fuel prices, rising taxes and unpredictable health care costs make all of us wary. But I've always believed you can find opportunity in any kind of economy. My great-grandfather started our family business in 1933 in the midst of the Great Depression. He had to set his priorities, stay focused and ignore the doom-and-gloom mindset that surrounded him at that time. But with a small loan borrowed against his life insurance policy, he slowly and steadily grew a business that would go on to sustain three more generations of employees.

Certainly, all of our success hinges on the weather to a certain extent, but there are many positive indicators that show we are moving in the right direction as an industry. The housing market is in recovery, consumer confidence is slowly improving and leading indicators point to a growing economy. As you go into the next year, remember to keep a clear focus on profitable growth. Selling short of your value is not a viable business model. It will only catch up with you in the near future and create a cycle of low price, low value that is hard to break. And, more importantly, it will hurt the entire Green Industry in the long run.

We, as an industry, need to find new opportunities to create value for our customers—even if it means continually finding more creative ways to do so. The year ahead has all the positive signs of providing an environment for profitable growth. The world of communications technology should provide a ripe opportunity for you to stay even closer to your customers seeking your professional advice and service.

Use these opportunities and the lessons of the last few years to come out of the gate strong, healthy and reenergized for your most successful year yet.

As you go into the next year, remember to keep a clear focus on profitable growth. Selling short of your value is not a viable business model.



Dan Ariens

President
Ariens Co.
Manufacturer of
Gravely Commercial Equipment



INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Ahead of the Curve

Landscape industry professionals are feeling positive. Despite challenges, the industry is out front of other small businesses when it comes to optimism.

By **MARISA PALMIERI** / Editor

Optimism among landscape professionals about the state of the Green Industry is better than expected this year, despite some uncertainty.

When asked for last year's *Landscape Management* Industry Pulse report, "What's your 2013 business outlook?" 69 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat optimistic about the coming year. When asked the same question about current business conditions for this year's report, 85 percent of respondents indicated they are very or somewhat optimistic—a 16-point jump (see "Optimism Index" on opposite page).

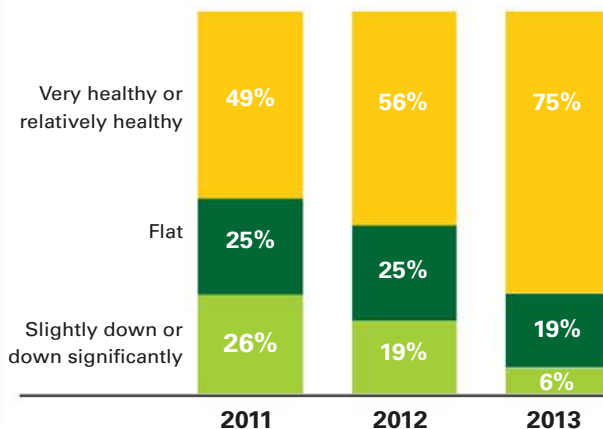
As for their feelings about next year? Four-fifths of them are very or somewhat optimistic about 2014. Landscape companies grew revenue an average of 14 percent from 2011 to 2012 and are expecting another year with 14 percent growth for 2013.

Landscape industry optimism is ahead of the curve when compared to overall small business optimism. The National Federation of Independent Business releases a monthly index of small business optimism, and the 2013 average is 91.9, well below the average reading of 100.

Consultant Bruce Wilson of the Wilson-Oyler Group characterizes Green Industry sentiment as "guardedly optimistic."

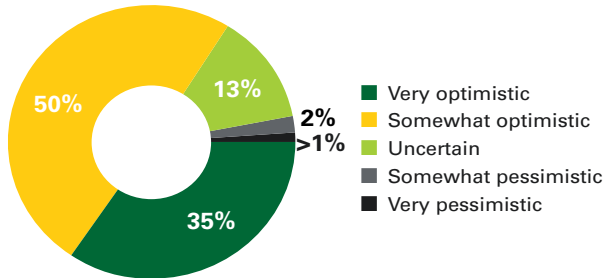
"Most contractors are having what they would consider a good year," he says. It's not all good news, though. "They still have Obamacare looming in their future, which is going to cost everybody a lot of money. They're hopeful something positive will come out of the immigration reform movement right now, but they're not sure."

The Industry Pulse is...
How landscape professionals describe the state of the market

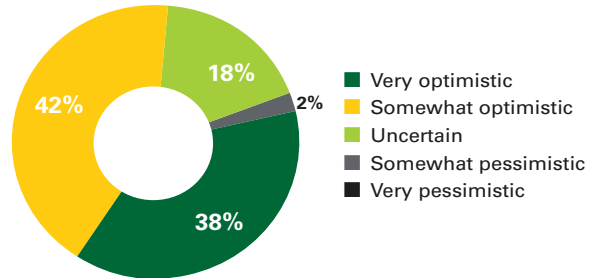


OPTIMISM INDEX

What's your 2013 business outlook?



What's your 2014 business outlook?



Methodology

For the 2013 Industry Pulse report, *Landscape Management* surveyed subscribers online in July and August, garnering 356 complete responses. Respondents were offered the chance to win one of three \$100 gift cards as an incentive. We assume a +/- 5 percent margin of error. Unless otherwise noted, all charts and figures in this report come from this survey.

More than a feeling

"I'm seeing it come back," says Tom Canete, owner of Canete Landscape and Canete Snow Management in Wayne, N.J. "This year has been better than last year and last year was better than the year before. I see it progressively getting better." For 2014, Canete is anticipating even more improvement.

"You gotta think positive," he says. His firm is planning for about a 20 percent increase on the landscape side and to double its snow business, having landed a major contract—snow removal of MetLife Stadium, home of the New York Giants, the New York Jets and host of the Super Bowl XLVIII in February. He didn't disclose his revenue, but says he employs about 75 on the landscape side and, in the past, as many as 300 on the snow side. He's in the throes of hiring 400 additional snow personnel to staff MetLife Stadium alone.

Dan Dahlkemper is another landscape contractor on the upswing; 2013 is on track to be his company's best year out of the last five—with a record high 42 employees.

"We've just had a great project mix," says the owner of Dahlkemper Landscape Architects & Contractors in Erie, Pa., a \$3.5 million design/build and maintenance firm. "We plan on continuing to grow at a measured pace."

The company looks to grow about 10 percent per year. Some of next year's growth will come from servicing athletic fields, which is part of the company's strategic plan. Stream and lake bank stabilization are other services Dahlkemper is eyeing.

A fair price

Value is one area where many landscape professionals report clients are coming around, finally, after the price-driven mentality of the recession.

Andrew Ziehler is one of those. He says customers are tired of receiving low-quality service for a lower cost, and those dissatisfied customers are turning to his firm for quality service.

"Spending is picking up with customers," says the owner of the \$1.2 million lawn care and maintenance firm. "It's not back to where it was, but there's definitely positive movement."

Grant & Power Landscaping, a \$7 million design/build, maintenance and snow removal firm in West Chicago, Ill., is seeing a similar trend.

AT A GLANCE

+ POSITIVE

Eighty-five percent of respondents indicated they are very or somewhat optimistic about current business conditions.

Uncertainty remains, primarily due to health care and immigration reform.

- NEGATIVE

“People are looking for quality products again,” says Jan-Gerrit Bouwman, a partner. He says clients appear “very confident about the economy.” Plus, the recession benefited Grant & Power by weeding out weaker companies that drove down prices in the market. He says the economy is better but not back to where it was and conditions have been improving since 2009.

In Ohio, Todd Pugh agrees customers are coming around to understanding value versus price.

“The market is still very cost driven, but customers have been burned by the low-end provider,” says the CEO of Todd’s Envirosapes in Louisville, Ohio. “So there’s room for the higher-end provider. Right now it’s a matter of the company that can deliver the best service and quality for a fair price will succeed.”

Envirosapes will do about \$11.5 million in revenue in 2013 and Pugh expects to grow 15 percent to 17 percent next year. The company grew nearly 35 percent over 2012—15 percent of which came from the acquisition of a smaller competitor. Next year, the growth will be organic, and Pugh says it will come naturally.

“If you focus on your work and being the best at what you do, there’s 15 percent growth in any market,” he says. “If you’re not the best at what you do, you’re just going to be on a treadmill because you’ll be losing customers instead of maintaining them.

“For us, if we don’t grow but we retain 100 percent of our customers, that’s OK,” he says. “But that’s not going to happen if you have momentum behind you and you focus on the client. They’re going to refer you for 10 percent to 15 percent growth.”

WEATHER WATCHERS

Whether it’s the heat, the rain, the snow—or the lack thereof—weather is always an obstacle for landscape professionals. And this year was no different, especially when it came to rain.



The cool, wet year is costing Andrew Ziehler, owner of Ziehler Lawn & Tree Care in Centerville, Ohio, more on labor.

“We’re slightly over budget on some of our hours because the grass

has grown so well,” he says, adding the good growing conditions have made weeds more difficult to control.

California, Idaho, Nevada and Oregon had top 10 dry year-to-date periods. California’s precipitation total of 4.58 inches was record low for the seven-month period at nearly 10 inches below average.

Texas, too, has been dry, and that presents both challenges and opportunities for TechScape, a full-service firm in Richardson, Texas.

“Almost every city in the North Dallas area is under drought restrictions,” says Bram Franklin, residential design/build and garden manager supervisor, adding some cities allow residents to water only once a week. However, these conditions present advantages, such as an increase in mulch sales, more drip irrigation installations and a push for smart controller installations. The company also has been doing more irrigation system audits.

As for temperature, the year-to-date contiguous U.S. average of 51.8 F was 0.5 F above the 20th century average. Above-average temperatures were observed in the West and Northeast, where California, New Hampshire and Vermont had one of their top 10 warmest year-to-date periods. Below-average temperatures stretched from the Northern Plains to the Southeast.

Despite a year-to-date contiguous U.S. precipitation total of 19.14 inches, which is just 1.54 inches above average, rainfall wasn’t evenly distributed across the country, according to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Climatic Data Center.

The East experienced wet extremes and the West had dry extremes. East of the Rockies, 10 states had one of their 10 wettest year-to-date periods. Michigan was record wet with 24.35 inches of precipitation, nearly 7 inches above average. Several cities,

from Fargo, N.D., to Greenville, S.C., had a record wet January through July.

Due to the weather, the phone didn’t start ringing for Dan Dahlkemper, owner of Dahlkemper Landscape Architects & Contractors in Erie, Pa., until after July 4.

“We’ve had shitty weather this year,” he says. “It’s been cold and wet through the whole spring season.”

East of the Rockies, 10 states had one of their 10 wettest year-to-date periods.

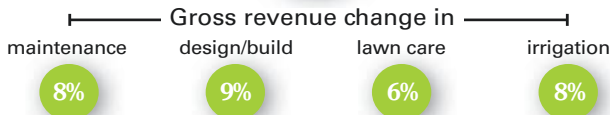
BY THE NUMBERS

Average Number of Years in Business

20.8

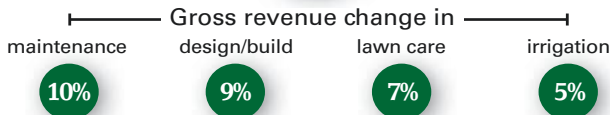
Average Gross Revenue Change 2011-2012

+14%

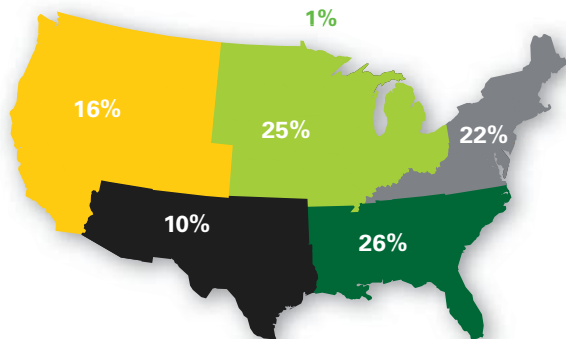


Average Gross Revenue Change 2012-2013 (anticipated)

+14%



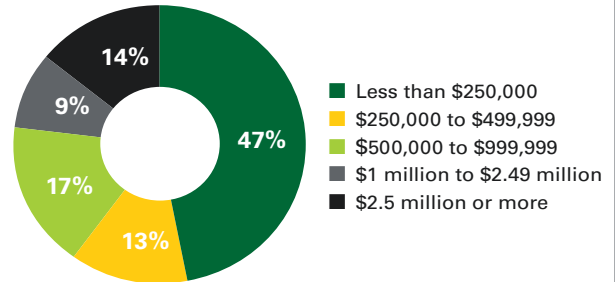
Company Location



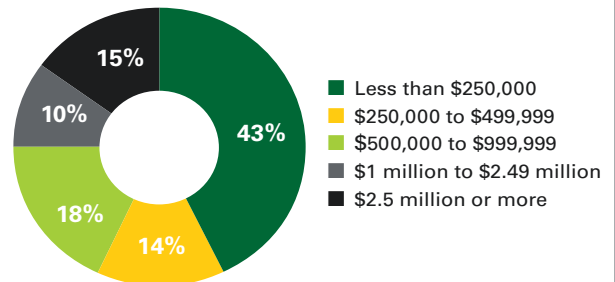
- Midwest: OH, IN, IL, MI, WI, MN, MO, IA, ND, SD, NE, KS
- West: AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY
- Southeast: AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV
- Southwest: AZ, NM, OK, TX
- Northeast: CT, DE, ME, MD, MA, NJ, NH, NY, PA, RI, VT, D.C.
- Canada

ANNUAL REVENUE

2012

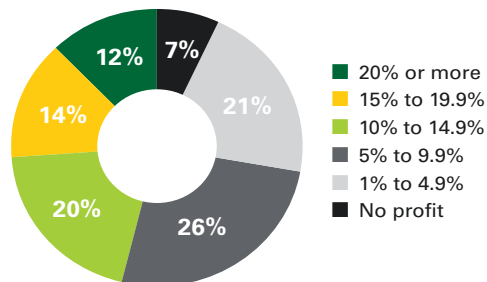


2013 (anticipated)

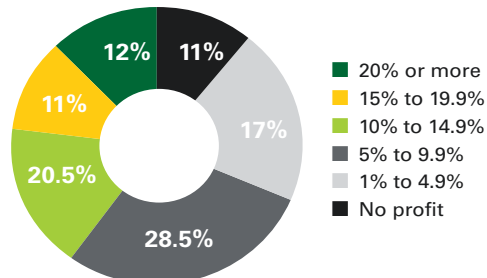


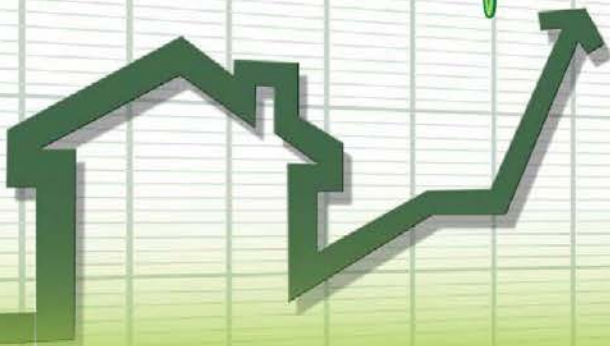
PROFIT LEVELS

2012



2013 (anticipated)





HOUSING MARKET BUILDS

The housing market—a leading indicator of growth for the landscape industry—has continued its climb out of a valley since it dipped during the recession.

That bodes well for Green Industry companies. For design/build and construction firms, it means more new landscapes to install and for maintenance companies, it means new landscapes to care for rather than just trading clients with competitors like the last few years, says consultant Bruce Wilson.

“Hopefully by 2014, the market will start to get bigger once again,” he says.

One good sign is the number of improving housing markets nationwide. A total of 247 metropolitan areas across 49 states and the District of Columbia qualified for inclusion on the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB)/First American Improving Markets Index (IMI) for August, the most recent month available as of press time (see chart at right). The IMI is designed to track housing markets nationwide that are showing signs of improving economic health. This figure dropped slightly from July, but it’s about three times the number of metros that qualified for the list in August 2012. NAHB expects further modest advancements, though improvement may be hampered somewhat by the availability of credit, materials, lots for development and labor.

On the multifamily housing side, the production of apartments and condominiums gained momentum in second quarter 2013, according to the latest NAHB Multifamily Production Index (MPI). The index increased nine points to 61, which is the highest reading since its inception in 2003. The MPI measures builder and developer sentiment about conditions in the apartment and condominium market on a scale of 0 to 100. Any number over 50 indicates more respondents report conditions are improving than conditions are getting worse.

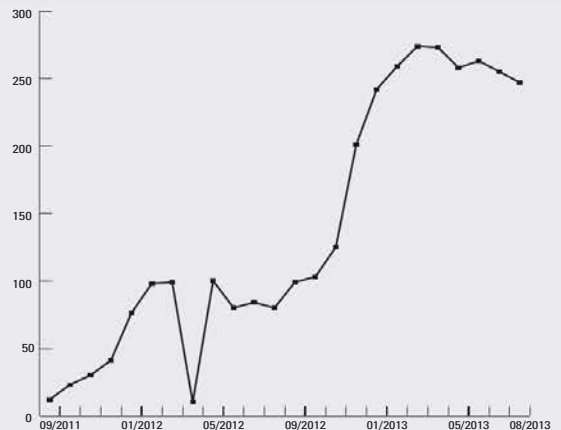
Getting the word out

Many companies, though, aren’t comfortable relying on referrals alone. In fact, Wilson expects companies to boost marketing budgets now that they’re in growth mode, after reeling in costs during the recession years.

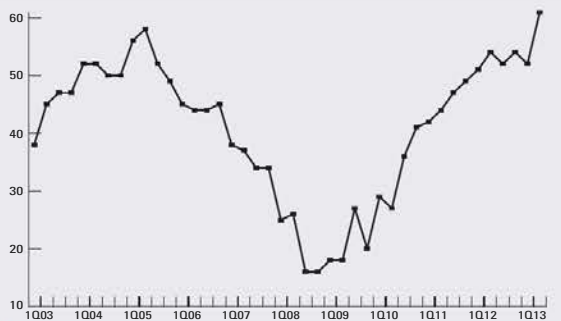
“I’m seeing a little more interest in marketing, since companies really cut back on it the last few years,” he says. “They’re starting to invest in marketing and other social media initiatives.”

Jeff Bowen, owner of Images of Green, a full-service firm in Stuart, Fla., plans to increase marketing efforts next year, despite relying only on word of mouth for his 18 years in business. His company does about \$1.8 million in annual revenue, and he would like to grow

HOUSING: NAHB/FIRST AMERICAN IMPROVING MARKETS INDEX (IMI)



HOUSING: NAHB/MULTIFAMILY PRODUCTION INDEX (MPI)

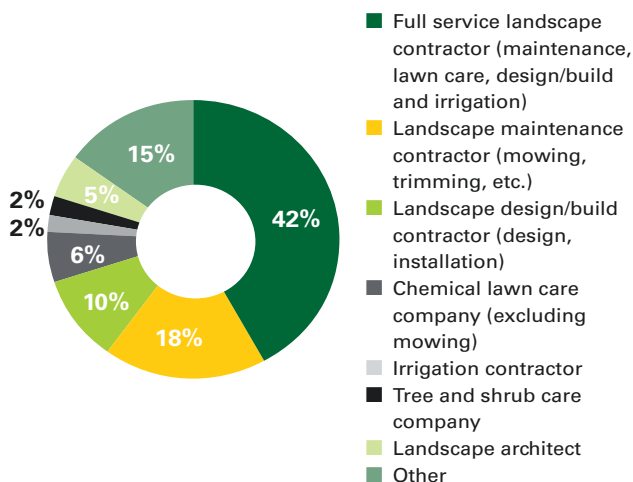


it to around \$4 million to \$5 million in size. He's also engaged a consulting firm to help with those efforts.

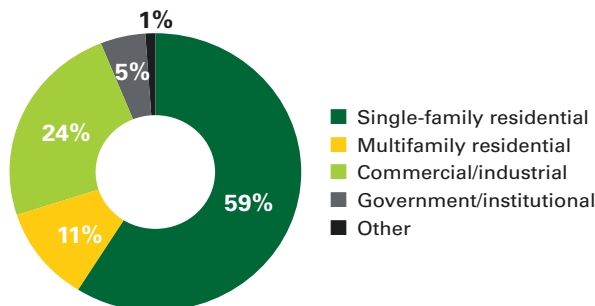
On the other hand, Grant & Power Landscaping is reducing its marketing budget in favor of a more direct sales approach. The company used to do radio advertising but has switched to TV this year, says Bouwman, noting TV is cheaper than radio. The company is also reducing print magazine advertising and home show expenditures.

Bill Banford, president of The Sharper Cut in Upper Marlboro, Md., spent more than intended on marketing this year—about \$45,000 versus the \$37,000 he budgeted. That may be part of the reason the company is on track for about \$2 million in annual revenue in 2013—an 80 percent increase over 2012. The primarily residential design/build company revamped its social media presence and began using Angie's List, which it plans to continue next year. **LM**

SERVICE MIX



CUSTOMER MIX



Additional reporting by Sarah Pfledderer.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Mowing	73.6%	Design/build	60.6%
Aeration	60.6%	Design only	15.5%
Seeding	67.4%	Installation only	16.9%
Sodding	65.5%	Landscape lighting	52.1%
Hydroseeding	19.9%	Water features	44.0%
Lawn renovation	62.3%	Retaining walls	53.9%
Edging/trimming	74.1%	Other hardscapes (patios, walkways, etc.)	54.2%
Spring/fall cleanup	74.5%	Tree and ornamental pesticide/fertilizer applications	39.4%
Fertilization	69.7%	Tree trimming/pruning	60.0%
Weed control	66.9%	Tree removal/transplanting	44.9%
Disease control	50.0%	Macro/micro injection	11.8%
Insect control	51.6%	Snow and ice removal	41.2%
Grub control	50.0%	Holiday lighting/décor	20.4%
Fire ant control	24.8%	Nursery/grower	9.5%
Organic lawn care	29.6%	Interior landscaping	10.4%
Seasonal color	46.8%	Sports turf	14.1%
Perimeter pest control	16.7%	Green/sustainability services	12.7%
General pest control	16.4%	Retail garden center	6.5%
Structural pest control	5.6%	Other	6.0%
Irrigation installation	42.6%		
Irrigation maintenance	51.4%		

M&A OUTLOOK

Eyeing their moves

Green Industry buyers and sellers aren't making many moves just yet.

By **SARAH PFLEDDERER** / Associate Editor

The mergers and acquisitions (M&A) market has been the equivalent of an ever-long chess game for the Green Industry in 2013. Buyers and sellers are simply strategizing and waiting to make a move before yearend—or in some circumstances make no move at all.

For this reason, M&A activity has been relatively low, consultants say, but they caution to “stay tuned” for an upswing in activity the remainder of the year and trickling into the next.

Jeff Harkness, partner with the 3PG Group, credited looming costs of Obamacare, a rise in workers' comp rates and immigration concerns that could affect the H-2B guest-worker visa program as reasons for companies moving at a sluggish pace on transactions.

“We're not seeing companies or acquisition targets that have fantastic earning numbers,” he says. “We're still not in an environment where we can go charge more to the customer.”

Harkness says it's small- to medium-sized companies that have been the most active this year.

Landscapes USA, for instance, acquired Peach Tree Landscapes, based in Nashville, Tenn., in June for an undisclosed sum. The company has completed an acquisition every year in the last four years, accruing seven locations.

“They're certainly becoming more visible, and it wouldn't surprise me if they did more deals,” says Ron Edmonds, president of the Principium Group. He adds it seems the company's growth has been “intentionally kept below the radar screen.”

The strategists

Other companies' growth schemes, however, are making headlines.

Leonard Green & Partners is preparing for a \$1.5 billion sale of The Brickman Group, Reuters reported in mid-August. The Los Angeles-based private equity firm acquired a majority stake in Gaithersburg, Md.-based Brickman in 2007.

“It's conceivable that a transaction could get done by the end of the year, but that would be very quick,” Edmonds says. “A lot of it depends on who is interested.”

Edmonds points to private equity firms and large facility service companies with smaller landscape divisions as prospective buyers.

Those types of companies, he says, have been most active in strategizing this year.

Other major Green Industry players ValleyCrest Landscape Cos., based in Calabasas, Calif., and Memphis, Tenn.-based TruGreen have been directing their attention toward internal restructuring instead of expansion, consultants say. Meanwhile, Scotts Lawn-Service, based in Marysville, Ohio, has indicated it's looking for acquisition targets and has been buying back well performing franchise locations, *Landscape Management* reported in September.

Brian Corbett, managing partner at CCG Advisors, says there are a number of private equity groups with

investments in the Green Industry possibly interested in making M&A transactions.

Those most notable include:

- L2 Capital Partners, with investments in MERIT Service Solutions (formerly Lipinski Outdoor Services), Marlton, N.J.;
- Gridiron Capital, with investments in Yellowstone Landscape Group with several locations in the South;
- Progress Equity Partners, with investments in Terracare Associates, Littleton, Colo.; and
- McKinney Capital, with investments in Landscape Workshop, based in Bessemer, Ala.

He also listed facility services companies with smaller landscape divisions he anticipates will make moves, including Norwalk, Conn.-based EMCOR Group, which owns U.S. Maintenance, and ABM Industries, which owns OneSource Services, based in Tampa, Fla.

“One would assume they would either begin looking to grow, including via acquisition, or it would seem to make sense they might look to spin off what are obviously not core operations,” Corbett says.

In August, facility services firm ISS Group chose to spin off when it sold the California portion of its landscaping division, Grounds Control, to Four Seasons Landscape and Properties Services, based in Santa Clarita, Calif.

Trends: The downslope and the upslope

On the sellers-end of the market, Edmonds says, for small- to medium-sized companies looking to sell, the market is more in their favor than past years.

“As some \$5 million to \$10 million companies are stronger coming out of the recession and a little bit more confident in the economy, they’re interested in making acquisitions,” he says. “The odds for those kinds of businesses have increased significantly.”

Another foreseeable trend is an increase in employee stock ownership plans (ESOP) as opposed to M&A transactions, Corbett says. He attributes the projection to a raise in the capital gains tax.

ESOPs create a retirement plan for employees that acquire stock from the owners, allowing owners to sell interest to employees. Some plans also allow employers to take money out on a tax-advantaged basis through investment banking-led financial transactions.

“This is called a leveraged ESOP and has been utilized by many companies in the market, especially

those who are not an ideal fit for the strategic buyers,” Corbett says.

Companies such as Sunflower Landscaping & Maintenance, Delray Beach, Fla.; The Groundskeeper, Tucson, Ariz.; AAA Landscape, Phoenix; and The Greenery, Hilton Head Island, S.C.; are engaged in ESOPs, he says.

On the downslope as a substitute for M&As are partnerships, Harkness says.

While alliances, such as the one formed between The Bruce Co. of Wis., and Reliable Property Services, based in St. Paul, Minn., may have shown promise at the beginning of the year, Harkness says the 3PG Group discourages them.

“We’ve undone more partnerships than encouraged partnerships,” he says.

The Bruce Co. and Reliable’s partnership allows the companies to remain separate entities but share operations. For example, Reliable took over golf course maintenance operations, yet The Bruce Co. continues to oversee its own golf course construction operations.

“You really have to have some good personal and financial synergy to make it work,” Edmonds says, echoing Harkness’ insights on partnerships.

Something the industry won’t see changing, Edmonds concludes, is the unbalanced amount of buyers versus sellers.

“There are always more buyers than sellers,” he says. “It’s rare that a business owner in this industry started their business with the idea of wanting to sell it. They’re in it because it’s what they want to do; they have a passion for it.” LM

AT A GLANCE

+ POSITIVE

Immigration and H-2B reform, health care requirements and a rise in workers’ comp rates are causing uncertainty, resulting in less M&A activity.

Despite sluggish M&A activity in 2013, market watchers say to “stay tuned” for an uptick.

– NEGATIVE



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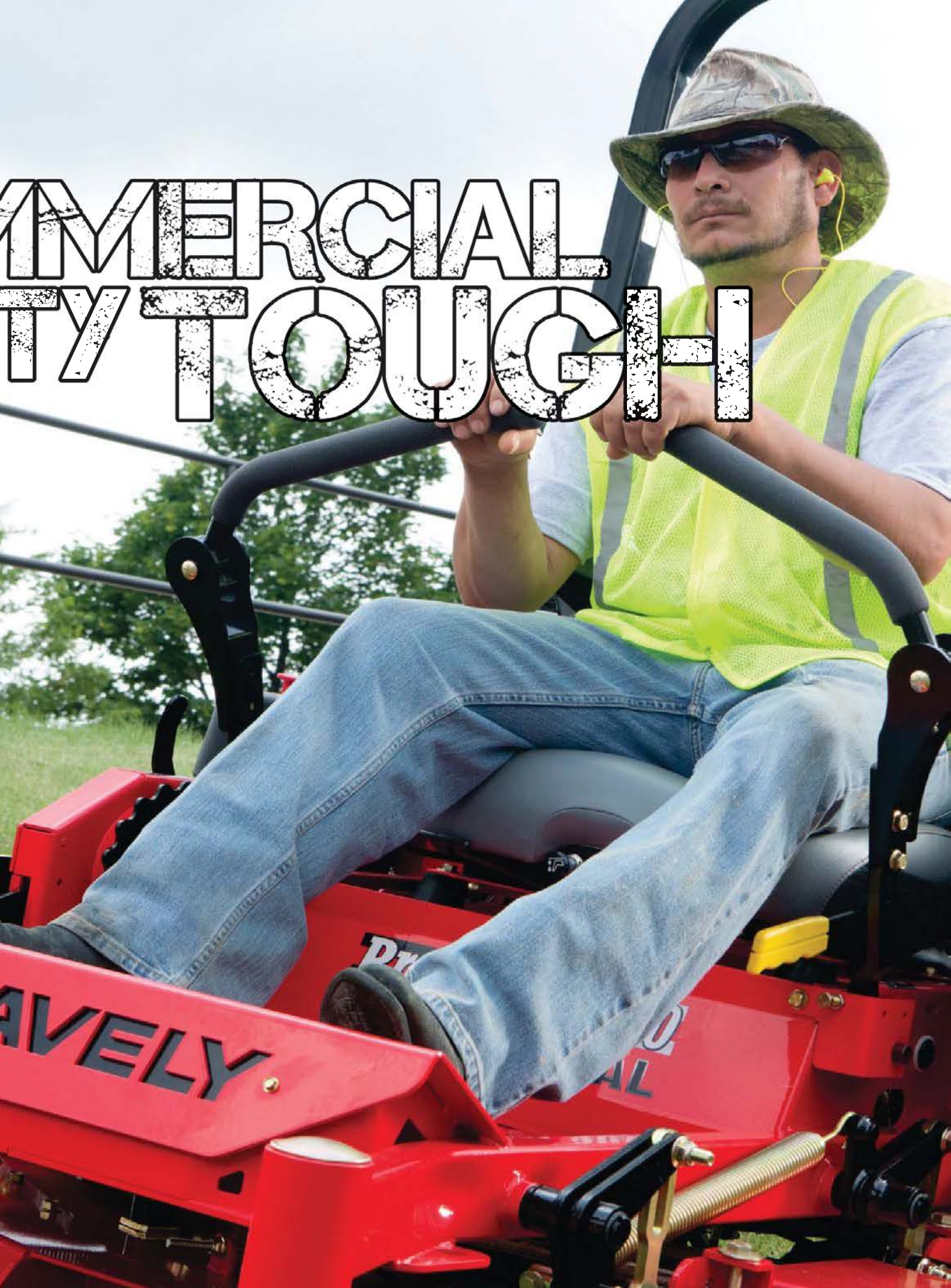


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COMMERCIAL MARKET

Quality comeback



Pricing is still a concern on the commercial side of the business, but the tide may be starting to turn.

By **MARISA PALMIERI** / Editor

Landscape professionals on the commercial side of the business say they're seeing some clients return to a quality- and value-driven mindset. That's good news for these companies, as many of them may be doing some work for less than they were before the recession, even though many costs have risen year after year.

Green Industry consultant Bruce Wilson of the Wilson-Oyler Group differentiates clients' willingness

to pay more by whether the work is new or existing.

"If you're trying to get a new job, bidding is low, but contractors who have work are able to get price increases from their customers, which they weren't a few years ago," he says.

Existing customers are open to price increases because they're aware costs rise and

contractors likely haven't had an increase in three to four years, Wilson says.

"If you have work, you're probably doing it for less than you were five years ago because unless you lowered your price, the customer was going to take the low bid, so you had to match that," he says.

Todd Pugh, CEO of \$11.5 million Todd's Environments in Louisville, Ohio, puts a face to this statement.

"The reality of it is we're forced to charge 15 percent less than we did 10 years ago, and our inputs are double," he says. "Because many of us have survived that, the sad part about it is how much money did we lose all those years before when we weren't lean? We're so efficient now. You have to be a good businessperson to be profitable today. The days of just doing a good job cutting grass are long gone."

Getting an increase

Wilson pegs commercial price increases this year in the 3 percent to 5 percent range. *Landscape Management* Industry Pulse research shows commercial maintenance contractors' average price per visit increased 7 percent from 2012 to 2013. Commercial prices for design/build projects, lawn care applications and irrigation maintenance all rose, too (see chart on opposite page).

In Florida, Jeff Bowen says he raised prices on large contracts by 2 percent, though he hasn't raised prices on the residential side but expects that may have to change next year if minimum wage requirements increase. Bowen is the owner of Images of Green, a \$1.8 million full-service company in Stuart, Fla., that has a client base of about 30 percent commercial customers (HOAs) and 70 percent residential customers. He doesn't want to be the lowest-priced business in his market, he says, but it's a balance to prove the company's value to clients before expecting an increase.

Matt Owens, vice president of landscape operations for Potomac Garden Center in Urbana, Md.,

"If you can keep the customer happy, they're not going to go out to bid; in fact, they're going to give you a price increase."

— **BRUCE WILSON,**
WILSON-OYLER GROUP

PRICE TAGS: COMMERCIAL SERVICES

AVERAGE PRICES REPORTED	2012	2013	% CHANGE
Maintenance price/visit	\$144.58	\$154.22	+7%
Design/build price/job	\$34,817	\$34,879	+0.2%
Lawn care treatment price/job	\$115.31	\$123.85	+7%
Irrigation maintenance price/hour	\$60.76	\$63.83	+5%

also has witnessed clients who are open to paying for quality. “I’m seeing the shift from the price-conscious decision-making mentality back to the quality side of the pendulum,” he says. “That bodes well in our favor. We’re not trying to be the low-cost provider, yet we’re forced to compete with national firms in our market.”

His company’s landscape division does just north of \$2 million in annual revenue; most of its business comes from the homeowners association (HOA) market. He calls the landscape market overall “strengthening to very strong,” compared to 2008. “It’s nothing like it was in 2004 through 2006,” he says. “But if things keep increasing like they have been over the last year and a half, we could get back in that neighborhood.”

Bidding wars subside

Competing on price with national landscape firms may be less of a concern, Wilson says, noting he’s heard The Brickman Group and ValleyCrest Cos. “are not bidding as low as they once were.”

More good news: Some say commercial clients are going out to bid less frequently.

“If you can keep the customer happy, they’re not going to go out to bid; in fact, they’re going to give you a price increase,” Wilson says. “Some customers think if they go out to bid their prices will go up. Others say they’ve been burned by low bids, so if they’re happy they’ll stay.”

Owens agrees. “For the most part, going out to bid isn’t a concern,” he says. “We have one large community that puts it out to bid every three years. That’s their M.O., even when there’s no level of dissatisfaction, but in general, it’s not a concern.”

Even so, Owens has focused on lengthening commercial contracts since he joined the company in 2010. “Every contract was one year,” he says. “Thirty to 40 percent now are three years. One contract is

now five years. There is some risk to that from a labor and fuel standpoint, but it’s a very nice community in our staple area. We want to work with them and build our nucleus there.”

Potomac’s landscape division, which grew 23 percent alone in its base commercial maintenance revenue in 2013 over 2012, plans to grow about 10 percent to 15 percent in base maintenance next year, too. “Everything else—tree care, enhancements—is extra and extremely profitable,” Owens says, adding his company’s position, with two garden centers, gives it a unique selling point. No. 1, the landscape division’s goal is to saturate the area within a 5-mile radius of one of the garden center locations to improve profitability. And secondly, it provides a community discount program for the residents who are part of the HOAs it maintains, giving these customers 20 percent off all materials purchases.

“The intent is to have the homeowners receive the highest quality products and plants—the same thing the boards are hiring us for to keep the common grounds looking great,” he says of the seven-year-old program that services up to 7,000 individual homeowners. **LM**

Additional reporting by Sarah Pfledderer.

AT A GLANCE: COSTS

+ POSITIVE

Companies with existing commercial contracts are able to get slight price increases.

Pricing remains low for new work.

– NEGATIVE

CONSUMER MARKET

Picking up steam



The Green Industry benefits as residential customers become more comfortable with their finances.

By **MARISA PALMIERI** / Editor

Green industry companies that serve the residential market are upbeat about the direction they see this portion of the industry headed.

On the recurring services side, Andrew Ziehler, owner of Ziehler Lawn & Tree Care in Centerville, Ohio, says, "Spending is picking up with customers."

In his area, he says, the improvement has been gradual. He attributes it to consumer confidence and

people "feeling more comfortable" with the economy.

Ziehler's assessment is correct: In August, the Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment ranked at 82.1, up from 74.3 for the same period in 2012. The index averaged 69.85 from 2008 until 2013, reaching an all time high of 82.7 in

November 2012. The record low of 55.3 occurred in November of 2008.

Ziehler's primarily residential company is 65 percent lawn care and 35 percent maintenance. He expects to end the year with annual revenue of \$1.2 million, a 40 percent increase over 2012.

On the design/build side, Diana Grundeen says clients are willing to invest in their spaces again and invest

"bigger dollars" than they have been in recent years.

Landscape Management Industry Pulse research reveals average prices and project levels for residential services are all up in 2013 over 2012 (see chart on opposite page).

"(Clients) understand it's an investment in their property and they're willing to put money into it," says Grundeen, landscape designer/owner of Trio Landscaping, a Minneapolis-based design and project management firm that subcontracts with about five installation contractors.

The unemployment rate may have something to do with better market conditions, she suspects. Nationally, it's at 7.3 percent, its lowest rate since December 2008. In Minnesota where Grundeen operates it's about two points lower. When people are working more, they have less time to tend to their landscapes, she says. Also, as customers and potential customers aren't "fearful of pink skips right now," it makes them more willing to spend.

"When customers are not afraid of losing their jobs, it makes it a whole lot easier to dump a few thousand into their landscapes," she says. Trio Landscaping had a bit of a slow start to the year due to a late spring. The company will do about \$438,000 in revenue this year and Grundeen is budgeting \$450,000 next year.

Still some hesitation

Bill Banford of The Sharper Cut in Upper Marlboro, Md., says his business never took much of a hit during the recession because of its proximity to Washington D.C. and his many clients who have stable employ-

"When customers are not afraid of losing their jobs, it makes it a whole lot easier to dump a few thousand into their landscapes."

—DIANA GRUNDEEN,
TRIO LANDSCAPING

PRICE TAGS: RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

AVERAGE PRICES REPORTED	2012	2013	% CHANGE
Maintenance price/visit	\$44.19	\$47.21	+7%
Design/build price/job	\$14,842	\$15,454	+4%
Lawn care treatment price/visit	\$64.26	\$68.63	+7%
Irrigation maintenance price/hour	\$55.68	\$58.17	+5%

ment with the government. Still, the deflated housing market has caused remodels to take precedence over new builds.

“Because of the economy, people are deciding not to move and just stay at home and improve their houses, whether it’s inside or outside,” says the president of the primarily residential design/build company that has grown about 80 percent this year to \$2 million in revenue. “It has affected us more so by clients deciding to save more,” and that may mean doing projects in phases vs. all at once, he adds.

Tom Canete, owner of Canete Landscape and Canete Snow Management in Wayne, N.J., agrees residential design/build has been somewhat of a tougher sell recently than in the past.

“In the early 2000s, we were able to tell people we were booked for two to three months and they’ve give us a deposit and get on the schedule,” he says. “Now, because of the competition, you can’t tell them that. You have to find ways to get that work done.”

One strategy, he says, is splitting up crews to spread out experienced, skilled workers among laborers, so they can be on more jobs. This tactic and others are working: Canete, who employs about 75 workers on the landscape side of his business, plans to be up 25 percent to 35 percent this year over last year in his mostly residential design/build division.

Consultant Bruce Wilson of the Wilson-Oyler Group reports the very high end of the residential market is seeing some price sensitivity.

“I think it’s an outcome of the recession that people in general have become more price conscious,” he says. “It used to be the higher-end residential market was somewhat immune to pricing issues, but now they’re much more price conscious.” **LJM**

Additional reporting by Sarah Pfledderer.

DESIGN/BUILD BACKLOG LENGTHS

One to two months	78%
Three to six month	18%
Seven to nine months	Less than 1%
Nine to 12 months	3%
12 months+	1%

Asked only of companies who perform design/build. Numbers don't equal 100% due to rounding.

CUSTOMER RETENTION RATES

Less than 50%	5%
50-59%	1%
60-69%	4%
70-79%	6%
80-89%	31%
90-100%	55%

Asked only of companies who perform recurring services. Numbers don't equal 100% due to rounding.

AT A GLANCE: COSTS

Some price consciousness remains; no part of the market is “immune” from budget concerns anymore.

+ POSITIVE

Consumer sentiment has improved in 2013, and landscape professionals are taking notice.

– NEGATIVE

LABOR REPORT

Force to reckon with



As the labor market tightens, landscape contractors continue to struggle to fill key positions.

By **MARISA PALMIERI** / Editor

GreenSeasons, a full-service landscape company in Baton Rouge, La., “just cannot get steady workers,” owner Chris Casselberry says.

The company’s annual revenue for 2012 was \$7 million, and it expects to be up about \$100,000 in 2013. “We could have done better, but we aren’t really pushing too hard because we don’t have the labor force,” he says. Casselberry is not alone.

“Finding good people is the biggest obstacle,” says Dan Dahlkemper of Dahlkemper Landscape Architects & Contractors in Erie, Pa.

Labor is “hands down” the No. 1 thing that hinders growth for the landscape division of Potomac Garden Center in Urbana, Md., says Matt Owens, vice president of landscape operations.

“Staffing is absolutely our biggest hurdle to growth,” says Andrew Ziehler, owner of Ziehler Lawn & Tree Care in Centerville, Ohio.

With the unemployment decreasing and construction market picking up nationwide, the landscape labor pool likely will get even tighter, says consultant Bruce Wilson of the Wilson-Oyler Group.

“Contractors are worried about labor costs going up,” he says.

Why do these companies have such trouble finding workers? Most Green Industry professionals have a similar story to tell. To start, people don’t have a positive view about working in the Green Industry, Casselberry says. Plus, it’s hard work.

“If you feel the heat we work in, most people come in and say, ‘Oh, I can’t do that kind of work,’”

he says. “Most Americans don’t raise their kids to go work outside all day. Now kids play electronic games and they go to college.”

To battle these obstacles, Casselberry’s company offers benefits and gives bonuses to people who bring in workers. The company also works with a state labor program and calls charities and churches looking for people who are unemployed. Additionally, GreenSeasons uses the H-2B guest-worker visa program for about half of its workforce, which is a challenge of its own.

In fact, if the government forces the company to raise its wages for H-2B workers next year from the \$11 per hour it currently pays them, he may be forced to make cuts. Under the new wage meth-

WAGE REPORT: SALARY

	Current Wage	% Change Year to Year
Crew foreman/team leader	\$31,189	-9%
Salesperson	\$49,116	+6%
Equipment mechanic	\$38,265	+10%
Landscape designer	\$42,136	+2%
Landscape architect	\$59,869	+5%
Account manager	\$43,776	+4%
Supervisor	\$39,411	-4%
Operations manager	\$55,951	+5%
Office manager	\$35,350	n/r last year
Owner/president	\$79,496	+6%
Branch manager	\$71,000	+6%

WAGE REPORT: HOURLY

	0-5 Years Experience	% Change Year to Year	>5 Years Experience	% Change Year to Year
Mower operator	\$10.80	+2%	\$12.80	+0.5%
Construction worker	\$11.80	+1%	\$15.46	+4%
Spray technician	\$12.70	-1%	\$15.40	-1%
Irrigation technician	\$12.79	-2%	\$16.01	-1%

odology for the H-2B program, some landscape companies report they will be required to institute mandatory wages increases by as much as 30 percent. GreenSeasons employs 60 H-2B workers—about half of its total workforce. “We haven’t decided yet, but we may downsize,” he says. “You can’t cut grass with nobody running the trucks.”

Matt Owens, vice president of landscape operations for Potomac Garden Center in Urbana, Md., says the Department of Labor has notified his company that it’s required to increase H-2B wages 31 percent next year. The company has about 30 H-2B workers.

“We’re appealing it, but we’re also escrowing the money,” he says. “We’re hoping we’ll win the appeal, but it may force us out the H-2B game.”

Attracting and retaining

Ziehler, whose company is primarily lawn care and some maintenance, says finding people who can provide the company’s level of quality is very difficult.

“We’re having a heck of a time trying to find the right people to bring on board,” he says. “(It’s tough) trying to get those good candidates in the door.”

One way he’s addressed this challenge is by focusing on company culture and developing existing staff members through training programs to ensure retention is good. Still, getting new workers is a struggle—especially for a company that’s budgeted for 50 percent growth next year.

Beyond just finding enough workers to get the job done, Wilson says there’s a focus on building “bench strength” for growth.

“That hadn’t been the case for the past few years because nobody was really growing,” he says. “Now they see there could be a growth cycle ahead, so they’re thinking about bench strength so they have the ability to grow.”

Todd Pugh is an example of that. He is focusing on culture and attracting quality staff. Pugh

previously used the H-2B program but today has an all-local labor force.

“Growing our people is the No. 1 focus of our company right now,” says Pugh, CEO of Todd’s Environments in Louisville, Ohio—an \$11.5 million firm with about 175 employees. He hopes to grow 15 to 17 percent next year, and at such a large size, staffing up is the most difficult obstacle to hitting those figures.

“Adding 20 percent isn’t such a big deal when you have 10 people,” he says. “But at 200 people, you need 40 people to grow 20 percent.”

Attracting new employees is part of the challenge, as is making sure everyone already on board understands their opportunities, Pugh says. To convey that message, Pugh organized a day-long staff meeting with three speakers who addressed what it takes to achieve career success inside the landscape business or out.

“It was very well received,” he says, estimating it cost about \$25,000 in payroll alone to host the meeting. “The big messages were nobody’s promotable unless you train your own replacement and nobody’s going to drag you through a career-training program. It’s up to you in your position to be looking for the next opportunity and go the extra mile.” **LJM**

Additional reporting by Sarah Pfledderer.

AT A GLANCE: COSTS

+ POSITIVE

The labor market is tightening, with unemployment declining and the construction market picking up.

Landscape companies are focusing on bench strength to grow.

– NEGATIVE

COSTS REPORT

Expecting increases

Landscape companies seek savings as they plan for cost increases in many areas of their businesses.

By **MARISA PALMIERI** / Editor



Controlling costs is a major focus of most successful businesses, and the Green Industry has been no exception to that in 2013.

Todd Pugh, CEO of Todd's Enviroscapes, a \$11.5 million company in Louisville, Ohio, estimates his costs are twice as much as they were 10 years ago, despite having to charge 10 percent to 15 percent less than he once did.

The *Landscape Management* 2013 Industry Pulse report research reveals how that shift could happen over a decade. The average landscape company's operating costs rose 10 percent from 2011 to 2012 and are expected to be up 12 percent from 2012 to 2013.

While fuel, a perennial concern, has stabilized over the last two years, sights are set on other potentially costly uncertainties, namely health insurance and labor (for more on labor, see page 18).

Although many contractors say fuel costs were less of a concern this year than in the past, the *LM* Industry Pulse report shows average landscape companies' fuel costs were up 14 percent in 2012 and are expected to be up 11 percent this year. As for next year, the annual average price of retail gasoline is expected to decline from an average of \$3.63 per gallon in 2012 to \$3.52 per gallon in 2013 and \$3.37 per gallon in 2014, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's Short-Term Energy Outlook in August (see chart on opposite page).

That's welcome news to contractors like Pugh. Even though he has seen fuel recently as low as

OPERATING COST OUTLOOK

+10%

Increase in operating costs from 2011 to 2012.

+12%

Anticipated increase in operating costs from 2012 to 2013.

AVERAGE % CHANGE IN COSTS

	2011-2012	Projected 2012-2013
Fuel	+14%	+11%
Labor	+10%	+8%
Equipment	+7%	+15%
Insurance	+14%	+8%

\$3.30 per gallon—"the cheapest in a long time"—his company makes it a point to cut fuel costs. Its crews are working four-day workweeks as much as possible, it has implemented GPS technology to help with routing and it's enforcing a no-idling policy.

"We're making sure the tire pressure is up, going the speed limit—all that stuff," he says. "We'll spend over \$700,000 this year in gas and diesel. That's a huge expense. Even if we save 10 percent, that's \$70,000."

At Images of Green in Stuart, Fla., President and CEO Jeff Bowen has seen stable gas prices between \$3.60 and \$3.80 per gallon. He keeps costs down with on-site fuel tanks so the crews on his 16 vehicles don't have to waste time and money stopping at gas stations. He is also part of a fuel co-op. The \$1.8 million full-service firm spent about \$75,000 on fuel last year and will spend a little more than that this year, Bowen says.

Steve Chepurny, president of Beechwood Landscape Architecture & Construction in Southhampton, N.J., is also pleased with the relatively steady fuel prices, compared to other years. The \$6 million full-service firm has gone as far as to "protect itself" on fixed contracts by implementing fuel surcharges.

Most equipment, supplies going up

Unfortunately, contractors can't protect that way in every area. For example, Chepurny says the price of equipment is "just getting crazy."

The *LM Industry Pulse* survey shows contractors' equipment costs rose 7 percent in 2012 over 2011 and they expect them to go up another 15 percent for 2013.

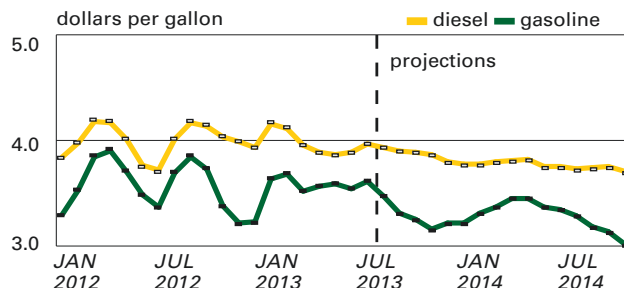
"I think it goes up 5 percent every year," says Chepurny of equipment prices. He purchased one truck this year and may have to get another one by yearend due to the company's growth.

Dan Dahlkemper, owner of Dahlkemper Landscape Architects & Contractors in Erie, Pa., says "everything seems to be up a little." His company has an annual revenue of around \$3.5 million; it's about three-quarters design/build and a quarter maintenance. The cost that's most troubling to him is when vendors—typically hardscape and plant material suppliers—tack on fuel surcharges. "That just bugs me," he says.

Bill Banford, president of The Sharper Cut in Upper Marlboro, Md., also has seen increased fuel surcharges on bulk product deliveries. The biggest upswing in pricing he's witnessed has been for mate-

FUEL PRICES REMAIN STEADY

U.S. average diesel and regular grade gasoline prices—retail price, including taxes



SOURCE: ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION'S SHORT-TERM ENERGY OUTLOOK

rials like lumber and vinyl products. Because these prices have increased by about 30 to 40 percent, The Sharper Cut has increased its deck-building prices.

Insurance rising

Insurance costs are another obstacle for landscape companies. *LM Industry Pulse* research shows landscape firms' insurance costs increased 14 percent from 2011 to 2012, but companies are anticipating only an 8 percent increase for 2013.

Workers' compensation and liability coverage are always on their radars.

Ask Chris Casselberry, owner of GreenSeasons, a \$7 million, full-service landscape firm based in Baton Rouge, La. Despite just a slight increase in workers' comp and stable liability rates, his insurance agent cautioned him both will go up next year.

As for health insurance, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has small and medium-sized business owners scratching their heads. In July, the Obama

AT A GLANCE: COSTS

+ POSITIVE

Fuel prices have been stable and projections show they'll remain so.

Uncertainty over labor and health insurance costs are a concern.

- NEGATIVE

administration delayed the “employer mandate” provision, which requires employers with 50 or more full-time equivalent employees to provide health insurance for their workers or pay a \$2,000 penalty per employee. Implementation of this provision has been put off from 2014 until 2015, which buys employers time in the short term, but doesn’t take away any uncertainty.

Andrew Ziehler, owner of Ziehler Lawn & Tree Care in Centerville, Ohio, has 16 employees and is struggling with anticipated health insurance costs.

“What we’re facing here in 2014 is going to be an outrageous amount of increase in costs,” he says. His company may see 60 percent to 80 percent increases for its group health care plan premiums. For that reason, he’s toying with the idea of dropping the plan so his employees can go to the state health insurance exchanges, mandated by the ACA, and buy insurance

there more affordably. Enrollment for these exchanges begins Oct. 1. “It will raise big questions as to what we provide as health care benefits through our business in the next few years,” Ziehler says of the ACA.

On the other hand, Dahlkemper has seen his health insurance premiums go down some, which he credits to the ACA. Even so, he’s looking forward to his state exchange. He expects it will allow some of his employees to get better rates, which could lessen the burden on the business.

The bottom line, Chepurny says, is you have to shop the insurance every year. “We’re constantly staying on top of that,” he says. “At the end of the day, somebody has to pay for the costs and we try to recoup those through our work and production by raising our prices.” *LM*

Additional reporting by Sarah Pfledderer.

GREEN INDUSTRY PURCHASING HABITS

Equipment type	% purchased in last 12 months	% will purchase in next 12 months
Mowers	57%	45%
Construction equipment & attachments	20%	22%
Sprayers/spreaders	46%	28%
Aerators	17%	17%
Handheld equipment	74%	52%
Truck & trailers	54%	54%
Alternative fuel equipment or vehicles	7%	6%
Trees/shrubs	69%	61%
Annuals/perennials	63%	60%
Turf seed/sod	67%	62%
Hardscape products	57%	53%
Water feature supplies	32%	35%
Landscape lighting	44%	48%
Irrigation systems and products	46%	42%
Herbicides	62%	57%
Insecticides	50%	47%
Fungicides	43%	40%
Fertilizers & fertilizer/pesticide combos	66%	58%
Plant growth regulators	18%	17%
Tree care chemicals	23%	24%
Snow/ice control equipment and products	34%	33%
Computers & business/design software	48%	37%
Mobile phones/handheld device	57%	35%
GPS systems/software	23%	16%
Consulting services	19%	18%
Subcontracted services	45%	39%

Q&A

Last Question



We asked Green Industry pros what's on their minds right now.

Chris Casselberry

Owner

GreenSeasons

Baton Rouge, La.

2013 projected revenue: \$7.1 million

Service mix: 55% maintenance; 35% irrigation/landscape installation; 10 percent pest/termite control

Top of mind: *The H-2B seasonal guest-worker visa program. GreenSeasons has used the program for nine years but may have to drop it next year do to government-imposed increases in hourly wages. "We haven't decided, but we might downsize. You can't cut grass with nobody running the trucks."*



Dan Dahlkemper

Owner

Dahlkemper Landscape Architects & Contractors

Erie, Pa.

2013 projected revenue: \$3.5 million

Service mix: 75% design/build; 25% maintenance

Top of mind: *HGTV, because it educates people about the landscape industry and calls their attention to creative options for their outdoor spaces. "HGTV has been a good friend to the industry."*

Bill Banford

President

The Sharper Cut

Upper Marlboro, Md.

2013 projected revenue: \$2 million

Service mix: 95% design/build; 5% irrigation

Top of mind: *He realizes his company is the "last to be paid," and that can be stressful.*



Katie Parkhurst

Operations manager

Grant & Power Landscaping

West Chicago, Ill.

2013 projected revenue: \$7.8 million

Service mix: 53% design/build; 21% snow; 26% maintenance

Top of mind: *Whether workers will show up to work and getting crews moving by 6 a.m. "My personal goal is to have every crew out of my yard in a half hour. That's a lot of coordination. Trying to not get burned out is key."*



Andrew Ziehler

Owner

Ziehler Lawn & Tree Care

Centerville, Ohio

2013 projected revenue: \$1.2 million

Service mix: 65% lawn care; 35% maintenance

Top of mind: *"I think about how I can inspire our people to provide amazing customer service and great results for our customers every day and, at the same time, attract and retain a high-quality staff."*

Todd Pugh

CEO

Todd's Enviroscapes

Louisville, Ohio

2013 projected revenue: \$11.5 million

Service mix: 60% maintenance; 25% design/build; 15% snow

Top of mind: *"I've been blessed that I don't let things bother me or get stressed too much. But in the last couple years, I've put more pressure on myself to grow as a leader: How do I make myself better for tomorrow so I can lead the company?"*

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driveway and it takes an extra 10 seconds to walk the additional distance, that's 600 seconds. Once each worker makes a round trip, covering the additional 10 seconds walking back, double that to 1,200 seconds or 20 minutes. If you're paying them \$15 an hour, you pay them \$5 each or one man-hour unnecessarily. But that's not really what it costs. If your billing rate for each man is \$50 an hour, that 20 minutes cost \$16.60 per man or \$50. If this is repeated at each job once a week for 26 weeks, that's \$1,300 dollars down the drain. Now let's say you have five crews operating the same way. That's \$6,500 dollars. That seemingly insignificant 10 seconds looks pretty significant now, doesn't it?

How far into this story were you before you asked, "Why are they carrying five at a time instead of putting 20 in a wheelbarrow?" That would be an alternative to carrying them, but how many times have you seen it done the hard

WHEN YOU SEE HOW THE NUMBERS ADD UP AND CONSIDER HOW MANY OTHER ASPECTS OF YOUR DAILY OPERATION MAY BE DONE INEFFICIENTLY DAY AFTER DAY, TRAINING BECOMES IMPERATIVE, NOT OPTIONAL.



way because that's the way it's always been done? Or maybe it was because of a lack of preparation—they didn't have a wheelbarrow or they had one but the tire was flat. This is an example of just one small task among many that make up your daily operations. When you see how the numbers add up and consider how many other aspects of your daily operation may be done inefficiently day after day, training becomes imperative, not optional.

Fortunately, the investment doesn't need to be as much as you may think. You'll want to show your crew leaders best practices for some specific tasks, but you'll never cover every situation in your operations. It has to be a mindset. Your crew leaders need to watch each situation and ask if there's a better way to do something. It's the work-smart-not-hard mentality. Best practices will set precedents, and your crew will see processes differently. Inefficiency isn't difficult to spot if you're looking for it.

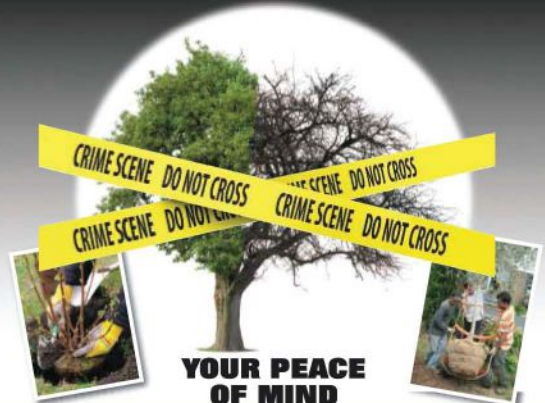
To that end, the ROI for efficiency training may be more significant than you think. LHM

Hessong, a coach and consultant with Pro-Motion Consulting, can be reached at dave@mypmcteam.com.

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Q HOW MANY SUPPORT STAFF DO I NEED?

BY KEN THOMAS

A I'm continually surprised and amazed by the lack of continuity in the amount of support staff per dollars of revenue among landscape business owners. It ranges from two people per \$5 million to one person per \$1 million. Notwithstanding the differences between design/build and maintenance, it seems there should be a standard correlation between support staff and revenue. So what's the right number, and why is it no matter how many people are in the office, they still can't seem to finish all the work?

First, let's define support staff. Anyone who's not on the sales and production staff is in a support role. The role can be broken down into a couple of key areas: accounting/HR/finance (office administration) and sales and production (production administration). While both are support roles, they have different focuses.

In many small businesses, the responsibilities of these support areas are hazy. After all, these two roles are generally performed by one person early on so it's easy to brand anyone and everyone who works in the office in a support role as administrative, even as the business grows and evolves. This melding of support roles eventually can lead to an enormous amount of blurred accountability and disconnected tasks that become almost impossible to manage efficiently.

Owners and managers spend a lot of time developing sales and production staff so these teams can be effective and efficient. But we don't spend as much time focusing on our office or support staff. Like any other hiring decisions, the hiring of office and support staff should be related to company size and number of tasks. On the finance support side, staff size is related closely to the number of transactions and employees. On the production/sales support side, it's tied to the volume of calls and jobs or number of customers.

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REVIEW AND ANALYZE

At some point in a company's growth, it's imperative for leadership to separate financial functions and production/sales support functions. One approach for unraveling this puzzle is to review the role of your support staff and to do a task/time analysis of all work being completed. This exercise will reveal exactly what each staffer is doing and how much time they're spending on each task. Task/time analysis comprises listing each task and estimating the time required to complete it. For example, payroll may take four hours each week. If there are 30 people involved, payroll processing takes about eight minutes per person per week. Knowing this will help us understand what it will take if there are 40 people and what other responsibilities the payroll person has time for. Doing this analysis may require timing certain activities; it will typically reveal a combination of inefficiencies and opportunities.

Once these have been identified, list exactly what all the key functions are: invoicing, payables, payroll, new job setup, etc. Next, map the way you're processing these key functions. Mapping means drawing a chart of how the process takes place, who does what and how. Mapping existing process flow is an effective way to identify points of waste and opportunities for improvement. Begin eliminating waste and creating efficiencies by remapping the functions. Eliminate as many connection points and tasks as possible. Often, the current owners of the processes struggle to see the redundant or inefficient steps in it. A nonbiased but knowledgeable third party may be needed to facilitate the process and encourage people to let go of certain tasks because it's always been done that way or because they feel a threat

THIS MELDING OF SUPPORT ROLES
EVENTUALLY CAN LEAD TO AN ENORMOUS
AMOUNT OF **BLURRED ACCOUNTABILITY**
AND DISCONNECTED TASKS THAT
BECOME ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO
MANAGE EFFICIENTLY.

or loss of power when responsibilities are reorganized. The key is to seek the most efficient flow for every process and identify a way to make processes measurable.

DOCUMENT, TRAIN AND MONITOR

Once processes have been remapped, they need to be documented, trained and monitored. The benefits of efficient well-documented processes are increased efficiency and capacity, increased accuracy and ease of onboarding and training of new employees. Once you've redesigned and documented your key processes, it's easier to manage, hold accountable and right-size the support team. You also can assess the abilities of your people more easily to determine if you have the right person in the right seat. Once you have a baseline for how long each task should take, you can set staffing levels more realistically.

At certain growth points, it becomes important to increase financial oversight

and recognize and separate the administrative responsibilities. This is accomplished by establishing the accounting controller position and the contract administrator position.

The controller is a higher-level accounting and finance executive who can manage all accounting and finance responsibilities and staff, as well as perform higher-level financial analysis, budgeting, forecasting and cash-flow management.

The contract administrator position is key to breaking off many of the administrative tasks associated with production away from the accounting and finance area. The contract administrator typically reports to the operations manager (not the controller) and acts a bridge between operations and finance. His role is to support operations and facilitate information flow to and from accounting. If there are multiple divisions (e.g., maintenance and construction) there may be a need for a contract administrator in each division, based on the size of each division.

Establishing these key positions along with the development of clear processes will help structure and simplify your office, making it more manageable, measurable and accountable, which will allow you to do more with less.

So how many support staff are required? While this varies by business type, size and market area, as a company reaches maturity, a reasonable average is one staffer for every \$1.7 million to \$2.3 million. **LMM**

Thomas is principal of Atlanta-based Enviro Consulting, which provides professional business and landscape consulting services. Reach him at 404-987-2499.

Planning
pointer

Like any other hiring decisions, the hiring of office and support staff should be related to company size and number of tasks. On the finance support side, staff size is related closely to the number of transactions and employees. On the production/sales support side, it's tied to the volume of calls and jobs or number of customers.



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SHOULD I CONSIDER OPEN-BOOK MANAGEMENT?

BY **JENNIFER LEMCKE**

A: An open-book management style that includes employees from every aspect of a business can improve its scope and take in the big picture. Most importantly, planning allows employees to develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the overall business.

Weed Man's business plan, a blueprint for continued success, covers the company description and mission, details about the marketplace, sales and marketing data, business operations information and extensive budgeting. Because of the amount of thought that goes into creating such a detailed document, it's important for brainstorming to include a diverse group of people to develop a sustainable, well-researched plan.

Ownership can't be everywhere at once, which is why businesses strive to hire effective managers in the first place. It's essential to rely on their expertise to help us make long-term and short-term decisions. Not to mention having the entire team on the same page from the get-go saves time, effort and money in the long run.

Creating a solid, credible business plan is easier when you have the right tools and people. Collaboration with the majority of staff promotes an all-hands-on-deck planning process. The more insight own-

ers and managers have into a given business aspect, the more accurate forecasting is likely to be. In this way, the business-planning session is more valuable when you have an open-book style because the input is driven from knowledge rather than gut feelings.

This is particularly critical for a zero-based budgeting model, which forces managers to budget from scratch each year, regardless of whether the budget is higher or lower than the previous one. All managers come together to thoroughly analyze all business facets and evaluate and justify every expenditure.

HOW IT WORKS

The business-planning process, which usually takes place in the fourth quarter for the following year, should involve the entire management team and owner building the plan collaboratively.

It should be at a prearranged time with thoughtful discussion and consideration given to your business results and goals for the following year. The meetings may include the administrative, technical, sales and general managers.

When field experience is required to make a decision, bring in someone special, such as a technical supervisor or field supervisor, to provide direct knowledge of the topic. All staff members with accountability become an active part of the decision-making process.



Gathering the team for business planning allows employees to develop a deep understanding of the company's processes, while recognizing profitability is good. The mentality is never us vs. them; it's everyone is in it together because it's everyone's plan, not the owner's plan.

COMPANY CULTURE

As with any aspect of workplace culture, this attitude toward budgeting and business planning directly impacts the way employees feel about their roles. Weed Man has seen tremendous benefits from implementing open-book management.

Other companies considering an open-book approach may have to do a gradual cultural shift. It's often a business owner's instinct to keep financials under wraps, but the benefits of inclusion far outweigh the negatives. Foremost, it allows management and ownership to align in their goals. Employees aren't just told what the company's goals are; they play an active role in setting and reaching those goals. Secondly, collective business planning with the entire management team creates a forum for challenging company discussions. Not everything is easy or enjoyable to deliberate, but sometimes a problem or part of the budget needs to come under the microscope before

it can be resolved. The company owner has the freedom to ask, "Why were there no telephone costs one month?"

After the business plan is created, the next step is to put the budget into an accounting software program and share financials with all managers. In addition to helping maintain an open-book management style, this step enables employees to understand where the business stands at all times.

Encouraging active participation in the business-planning process among all employees helps managers manage better, while fostering a culture of trust, autonomy and accountability in the workplace. **LM**

Lemcke, COO of Turf Holdings/Weed Man USA, is responsible for training and supporting Weed Man's U.S. subfranchisors. Reach her at jennifer.lemcke@weedmanusa.com.

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WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING TO GROW MY BUSINESS?

BY JEFF KORHAN

A Talk to your customers to develop more intimate relationships with them, teach them what you know about your business and work together to create what hasn't been done. There was a time when a business could grow on the merits of quality products and service alone, but that's not nearly enough these days. In this trust economy, every business has to innovate to be relevant to the communities it serves.

There are many qualified landscape companies in every community offering consumers what they want—often at an equal or lower price. To differentiate your business, give your customers more. While you can't read their minds about what they want, you can implement practices to better understand their desires.

Develop more intimate relationships with your customers. How well do you know your customers—not

just their needs but what really influences their buying behaviors? Most of us have to admit it's not as well as when our businesses were much younger. Remember the early days when you were an aspiring entrepreneur? Recapture that freewheeling energy and excitement because that's what will fuel your growth.

Your first customers likely were friends who trusted you. Take the time to build those kinds of relationships with your current customers, meaning as friends instead of buyers. This approach honors your customers at an emotional level from which they tend to make their buying decisions. Unfortunately, when business conditions are more challenging, there's a tendency to take relationships for granted and focus on transactions—making the next sale. This shortsighted approach erodes the relationships that advanced your business to where it is today. So focus more on relationships and less on selling and marketing products. In a socially connected business environment, it's no longer about selling to buyers. It's about working together to give them more.

Teach customers what you know about your business. The more your customers know, the better they'll be able to make the correct decisions to improve their condition. There's a lot of information online. More than half of all consumers are using the web to make buying decisions, so it makes sense for your business to contribute. People are searching the web for answers, which is why you want to think about your company and provide answers. You already know the common questions and problems that never seem to go away, so use your expertise to address them.



There always will be companies taking shortcuts. In the Green Industry, poorly designed structures built without proper foundations and irrigation systems that stretch beyond capacity always will be problematic. Be the one who teaches your community better practices. But why would you want to give away your best practices? This concept is difficult for some business owners to grasp. They believe if they give away too much information customers will no longer need them. The opposite is true. When you provide enough value, your business becomes invaluable by creating a desire for more. When a teacher does his job well, he fills the classroom the next day and every day thereafter. This should be the role of all your marketing.

Viable methods for accomplishing this are:

- › email newsletters that teach instead of sell;
- › blogs that inspire by sharing relatable stories;
- › managers in the field to reconnect with customers;
- › social media channels for community engagement; and
- › periodic surveys to learn what's being discussed.

Consumers are addicted to searching online because people, by nature, are curious. Learn to feed that curiosity to align them closely with your business. After that, you'll have their undivided attention to accomplish something special.

Collaborate with your customers to create what hasn't been done.

Small business owners often think they have to be experts, but your customers are the experts of what they want. That's why it's important to ask questions and share stories to help them understand how your business can be a solution. My favorite questions are the ones customers are afraid to ask, such as those about price. It's an opportunity to share how cost-cutting measures that reduce prices often undermine the integrity of projects. Answering these questions acknowledges you understand your business and your clients' mindset.

Traditional selling can be demoralizing work with many dead ends, but building relationships results in favorable returns. You may not know when that will happen, so persist. This lesson applies to social media marketing. You have to prime the pump continuously until it delivers the expected result. When you help customers achieve what they've only imagined, you've progressed from a transaction-based to relationship-based business. This is the secret for growing a business in the trust economy. **LMI**

Korban is a small business marketing trainer, coach and author of Built-In Social: Essential Social Marketing Practices for Every Small Business. Reach him via jeffkorban.com.



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HOW DO I AVOID COMPETING ON PRICE?

BY JULIE GUEST

A You send one of your employees to give a potential customer a quote. He thanks him for coming but says he'll think about it. In less than half an hour, you receive a call saying he has found someone who'll do the exact same job for less. Unless you're willing to sharpen your pencil, you just lost the job. How many times has this situation happened to you?

We all know price warfare doesn't just occur with prospective customers. Jobs you've had for years can be pulled away from you suddenly—all because the customer was contacted by a competitor who was hungrier and more desperate for his business than you were.

COMPETING ON PRICE IS ENTIRELY OPTIONAL, AS LONG AS YOU HAVE THE PROPER MARKETING AND MESSAGING IN PLACE. NOT ALL BUYERS ARE DRIVEN BY PRICE. IN FACT, THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE AREN'T DRIVEN BY PRICE.

When one of your customers asks you to lower your price, you're in a pickle. Do you price match that lower quote and leave them with the bad taste in their mouth that they've been overpaying all those years? Or do you try to justify your higher price and hope the strength of your relationship will win them over? The real truth is you don't ever want to get into these price negotiations in the first place because it puts you in a lose-lose situation. You're going to lose precious revenue or a job.

Here's the great news: Competing on price is entirely optional, as long as you have the proper marketing and messaging in place. Not all buyers are driven by price. In fact, the majority of people aren't driven by price. If they were, Wal-Mart would likely

be a hundred times bigger than it is and companies such as Apple, which charges \$3,000 for a new computer, wouldn't exist.

The simple and game-changing fact for your business is people only revert to buying on price when they have no other information available. There's a segment of the market that only buys on price. It doesn't matter how good you say your services are or how great the quality of your workmanship is, they're never going to choose your company because you're a smidge more expensive than the other guy. Frankly, you don't want these bottom feeders as your clients anyway. They're usually the most demanding customers, the least appreciative and the least likely to refer your services. Let the other guys in your market provide services to the extremely price-sensitive crowd. They can slash their prices and fight among each other to see who's most desperate for business.

In almost any industry, the bottom feeders account for 40 percent of the market. The rest of the market, which accounts for more than half, can afford and will pay more for your services, if you can provide them compelling reasons to. This is why having the right marketing becomes so important. But don't make the mistake of thinking you can just hike your prices and expect to achieve a similar result. You must have a solid marketing program to back it up. Here's how to do it in three easy steps:



1 Find something uniquely yours, something your business does better than your competitors that can create a distinct competitive advantage. An example of this is Domino's Pizza's original tagline: "Fresh, hot pizza in 30 minutes or less, or it's free."

2 Educate your customers and prospective customers about why your services are better than the competition. Help them make an informed decision about who to choose. Create a special report, booklet or mini magazine that explains this. Educated customers make the best customers, and they're the kind who will happily pay more for your services.

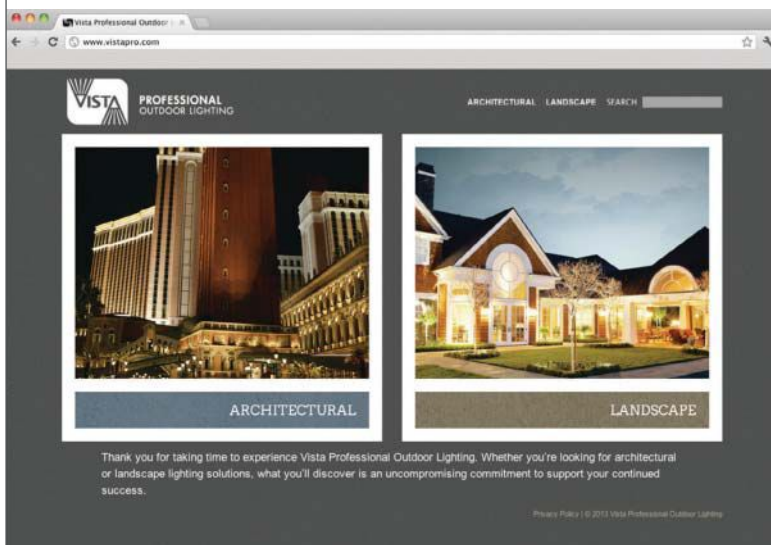
3 Take your key messaging in your special report or mini magazine and integrate it across all your marketing efforts. Eliminate any of your old marketing that refers to price and help your customers recognize your value. Don't forget to use direct mail, display ads, street signs, flyers and your website with this important messaging. Your website is the most important because it's where people will look and judge your value first.

If you still need convincing the majority of people don't buy on price, take a look around your home. What

have you bought recently that commanded a premium price—a brand-new TV, truck, piece of fishing or hunting equipment? Now think about what made you decide to buy that. It was the marketing. **LM**

Guest is a copywriter, author, speaker and founding partner of Blazing Copy, a full-service marketing agency based in Ann Arbor, Mich. Reach her or download a free copy of "Marketing 007—Stealth Marketing For Business Owners" via JulieGuest.tv/bizbook.

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Take your key messaging in your special report or mini magazine and integrate it across all your marketing efforts. Eliminate any of your old marketing that refers to price and help your customers recognize your value.

Q HOW DO I MARKET TO PRODUCE A RAINFALL OF LEADS?

BY JONATHAN GOLDHILL

A To produce a rainfall of leads in the landscaping business, reengineer your mindset about marketing first; otherwise, you'll never consistently produce enough high-quality leads to grow. Until marketing becomes a process in your business, adding new customers always will be a problem. When marketing becomes a process, it will cease to be a problem because marketing, prospecting and selling aren't any different from accounting, bookkeeping, designing, installing, mowing or providing maintenance services. Each requires a process or a systematic approach to executing it. To produce a virtual rainfall of prospective customers, think like a marketer.

Stop thinking you're a landscaper. If you think you're in the landscaping business, hit yourself over the head with a shovel. Think like a marketer and seller of landscape services. You're in the sales and marketing business. The service you market, sell and deliver is landscaping.

Marketing is like politicking, so start campaigning. Too many small-business owners market haphazardly. Their marketing is event driven or a short-run campaign. Strategize like you're running a political campaign, only this campaign has no end date, unless you want to go dark during the offseason. Effective marketing requires the mindset of a political strategist. Test, measure and evaluate.

Marketing is much more analytical than you think. Management theorists agree you can't manage what you don't measure. If you want to produce a rainfall of leads, experiment, measure and when successful, add water. Your successful marketing programs



should be treated like a sponge. Expand them by spending more, adding more geographical coverage and trying other marketing channels. Above all, measure what's working and what's not by asking your customers when they first call how they heard about you or by putting telephone-tracking software on your pay-per-click and organic search web pages. It's all about return on investment.

Plug the holes in your bucket. It's difficult to expand your business if you're losing customers. Calculate

continued on page 88

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your attrition rate (the number of customers you lost the past 12 months) and set a goal to reduce that rate by half. Landscape contractors lose customers usually because of poor service relative to price, lack of communication with customers or both. As the old AT&T commercial and slogan read, “Reach out and touch someone.” Don’t let your customers get away. Call, survey or visit them more.

Think outside the box. If you’re going to grow larger, faster or be more profitable, think outside the box. Like the Apple slogan says, “Think different.” Peter Drucker, the father of modern management said, “Marketing and innovation produce results. All the rest are costs.” If everyone is doing the same thing and communicating the same message, it’s difficult to determine how to stand out.

When landscape contractors are asked what sets them apart from everyone else, their answers are typically vague. Fewer than one in eight people say something different or infectiously exciting. It may not be true that the other seven don’t have something exciting to say, perhaps they just haven’t honed in on their marketing message with any real differentiation. That’s why contractors should identify and define what’s unique about their business and then embed that message into all their marketing.

Never the pest, always the “welcome guest.” Salespeople calling on commercial accounts are usually trying to determine how to get past gatekeepers. I’m often asked to answer that question when speaking to salespeople, but I avoid answering it because it’s the wrong question. Instead, salespeople should be asking: “How can I get sought after and invited in by decision makers?” The answer is to engineer a situation in which you’re invited and welcomed as

an expert. Marketing campaigns that let prospects know you can fix their problems will open up conversations with them more easily.

Here’s the “welcome guest” process briefly: 1). Provide information that grabs their attention, raises their interest level and presells the value of the appointment. 2). Only schedule an appointment after you’ve gained mind-share. This changes the entire sales process if successfully implemented and religiously adhered to. Your time isn’t wasted, administrative time is replaced with valuable face time, closing rates increase and you can

be more selective about who becomes your client.

A similar approach for landscape companies selling to residential accounts is a “pardon our dirt” or “pardon our trucks” letter. This type of mailing, sent to residents in neighborhoods where the company does work, invites neighbors to call the company if the dirt or trucks are in their way. It’s a low-cost method that creates awareness and can land new appointments and new customers.

Be discovered online. It’s unbelievable how bad some company’s websites are. When people look for lawn care or landscape services, there’s a solid chance they’re going to search for you online, in the local newspaper or the Yellow Pages. With more people jettisoning the Yellow Pages for the Internet, contractors have to be savvy about online marketing, making their website easily searchable and frequently found. By focusing on this strategy, contractors can rapidly multiply the number of leads streaming into their business every month. If you want to be discovered online, find a reputable or trustworthy marketing company to help you.

Use testimonials to get referrals and add octane to your marketing. Testimonials provide a powerful asset in your marketing tool kit. When your customers tell others about the benefits of choosing your company, it makes your sales and marketing efforts more effective. Gather testimonials from customers, and leverage the power of testimonials to get other customers.

The bottom line is that selling is the lifeblood of any business. Along with a properly sustained marketing program, your opportunities for success are much improved. **LM**

IF YOU THINK YOU’RE IN THE
LANDSCAPING BUSINESS, HIT YOURSELF
OVER THE HEAD WITH A SHOVEL. **THINK
LIKE A MARKETER AND SELLER OF
LANDSCAPE SERVICES. YOU’RE IN THE
SALES AND MARKETING BUSINESS.**



Planning
pointer

Strategize like you’re running a political campaign, only this campaign has no end date, unless you want to go dark during the offseason. Effective marketing requires the mindset of a political strategist. Test, measure and evaluate.

Goldhill, head coach of The Goldhill Group, provides strategic business, marketing and sales coaching to owners, managers and salespeople of growing companies in the Green Industry. Reach him or download his free e-book, “The Six Silver Bullets to Growing Any Business Fast,” at TheGoldhillGroup.com.

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WHAT SHOULD BE PART OF MY **BRANDING** REPOSITORY?

BY LARA MOFFAT

A One of the more frequent questions I hear is, “What *really* should be a part of a marketing plan?” Effective branding and marketing starts with a communications strategy suitable to a company’s business model. Only after distinguishing a business’s culture, clientele and services, can a company develop a fitting communications strategy—and one including messaging, content and platforms (traditional or digital).

Another question I frequently receive is, “What’s the difference between marketing and branding?” Marketing is tactical, a process identifying target consumers, effectively communicating with said audience and initially retaining them. Branding is strategic. It expresses characteristics, values and attributes that create engagement, loyalty and referrals. I advocate brand marketing focusing on communicating the brand message to drive awareness and encourage engagement.

So what should be a part of a branding repository? A repository is a collection of content, including copy (verbal and written) and imagery.

Depending on the medium, a communication may be timeless or have a shelf life. Once you’ve created effective content, file it where it’s easily retrievable. Don’t be afraid to

revisit past campaigns. Just because imagery is outdated doesn’t mean the message is irrelevant. The following are components of a rich branding repository.

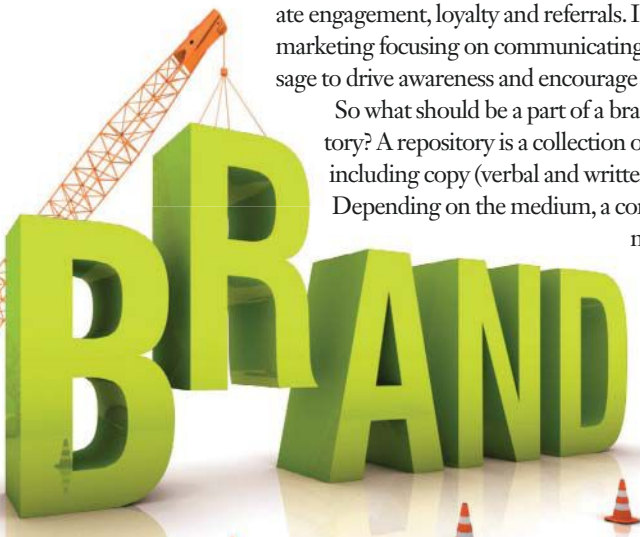
CONSISTENT MESSAGING

First, define your personality. Specify the services you offer, the demographic of your target audience, what differentiates your company and what matters to you as a professional. Being as specific as possible enables you to create messaging that resonates with and engages prospects, clients and industry colleagues. Remember, though, people buy a service based on the benefits of the service, not because of the service. Consistent and clear communications that place the consumers’ needs first will keep you top of mind and build brand loyalty.

Complementary collateral. Your letterhead, business cards, proposals and contracts need to be complementary. The look and feel of each must have a unified appearance because it reflects the professional nature of your business and, in some cases, is a deal breaker for whether you’re awarded the project. Beyond appearance, especially in legally binding forms, review them for consistent copy.

Professional promotional materials. Invest in quality graphic design and professional printing. Just because you know how to use a desktop publishing program doesn’t mean you should. Your office printer is fine for certain applications, but a professional printer is the best option. As with complementary collateral, professional promotional materials often sway a prospect.

Interactive website. A website is a company’s online communications specialist, though many sites remain



BEING VISIBLE, WHETHER THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OR NETWORKING, IS PARAMOUNT IN TODAY'S MARKETPLACE.

static. If you haven't added a blog, don't delay. A blog allows you to further engage visitors, showcase your companies' personality, highlight your interests and helps with search engine optimization. You have only two or three seconds to make a good first impression online. Be sure your website mirrors your promotional materials and is streamlined for easy content navigation and intuitive user engagement.

Suitable social media. Look to your target audience when deciding which social media platforms are right for your business. The big three are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, followed closely by Houzz and Pinterest in the residential market. Each platform has its own advantages and a different way to engage. LinkedIn can be an amazing tool for consultants and managers, if used properly.

Purposeful public relations. Support the community that supports you. Being involved in the community benefits your company image, but it's also important for your employees. Psychologically, helping others strengthens the bonds of a group and develops employee loyalty. Fulfilled employees are typically your best marketers, so share your stories online and in press releases (locally and nationally) before, during and after events.

Effective networking. Being visible, whether through community involvement or networking, is paramount in today's marketplace. With active lifestyles, it's imperative to be involved and reachable. Your target audience, however, determines how often and in what capacity. Even as time is limited, networking is effective only if you take a sincere interest in the person and enrich the relationship. Supplementing face-to-face interactions, LinkedIn allows you to engage your audience even when you're unable to meet in person.

Where you invest your branding efforts will differ depending on the market sector, consumer and community. Start small and focused so you allow time to direct your initiatives effectively. Consistency and professionalism should be your guiding principles. As time and staff

permit, add another strategy and continue to review what's resonating with your prospects, clients and industry colleagues. Through effective brand marketing, you'll build awareness, encourage engagement and create lasting relationships. **LM**

Moffat, ASLA, who owns LM Creative Consulting, is the former director of marketing for a nationally recognized design/build/maintenance firm. Reach her at LM@LMCreativeConsulting.com.




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HOW DO I BUILD A WORLD-CLASS SALES TEAM?

BY JUDY GUIDO

A The one point all Green Industry folks agree on is the importance of sales. Let's face it, sales is the engine that drives your business and your salespeople are the drivers. As the competitive landscape continues to grow more fierce and becomes increasingly more difficult to create a competitive advantage, it's imperative you have a strategic sales plan in place to attract, grow and retain a world-class sales team. That team is your competitive advantage.

IT'S IMPERATIVE TO CREATE A SALES CULTURE THAT'S UNDERSTOOD AND RESPECTED BY THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION. TOO OFTEN, SALES IS SEEN AS THE ENEMY, ESPECIALLY BY OPERATIONS.

How does a company develop a world-class sales force? Successful sales organizations focus on four key areas:

- › strategy and process;
- › talent and training;
- › customer relationship management; and
- › sales management.

The first steps to success begin with the owner (who's often the sales manager and is generally unqualified and unhappy doing so), sales team and key field personnel collaboratively designing a sales strategy based on an accurate analysis of their market dynamics and skill sets.

The next step is ensuring the sales strategy is communicated accurately to the entire team. It sounds

simple, but this important step is overlooked more than 80 percent of the time. Professional sales and operational talent are attracted to companies that can prove they've done their homework and have a road map for success. Everybody wants to feel they're a part of a winning team with an intelligent vision.

It's imperative to create a sales culture that's understood and respected by the entire organization. Too often, sales is seen as the enemy, especially by operations. Those companies that have a sales-centric culture and collaboration between sales and operations are market leaders. Aligning sales and operations is a key component in world-class sales organizations. Make sure your plan includes tactics fostering both groups working together while sharing accountability and rewards. The Green Industry is competitive enough, why make it any more difficult by creating internal challenges and obstacles that may sabotage the company's success?

Next, match your core competencies and unique value proposition with your customers' needs. This is called customer segmentation and qualification. It seems like common sense, but aligning customer needs with your offering and qualifying and assessing the potential value of customers happen much less than you think.

Account planning is another important step. It includes identifying your geographic footprint (the areas where you'll conduct business) and the specific industries and market segments poised for growth (or that are underserved) within your geographic locale. Then you must assign your sales

team accordingly. Will you assign them geographic territories or specific industries to grow? Will you assign them to markets where they have experience and a network of contacts? For example, stating your market segment is commercial maintenance isn't a good example of account planning. Stating that multifamily, specifically high-end residential apartments and condominiums within a 20-mile radius of your headquarters, is your market segment is much more predictive and focused. Assigning somebody with experience and contacts in the multifamily market is even smarter.

Once you've completed your companywide account planning, develop specific, clear and customized action plans for each account the salespeople are serving or new customers they've acquired. Sales isn't a one-size-fits-all game, so it's a must to have a strategic account selling methodology with specific tactics identified for each customer. Customers demand you understand them and only them.

Next, focus on sales-channel management. Make it easy for your customers to buy from you by providing them with the most accessible, efficient and convenient sales channels available. Sales channels may include external independent sales reps, web-based sales channels—such as social media networks—or strategic sales partnerships with people who share the same customer targets (think janitorial, pest management or security companies).

Develop a replicable, sales process (mirror your high-performer methodologies and processes) focusing on winning opportunities. Have your salespeople shadow your best performers and make sure those stars share best practices regularly. Ensure your salespeople know how to work their sales

funnel and focus on high-value activities, such as identifying and qualifying leads, conducting site audits and reviews, performing competitive analyses, setting up meetings with decision makers, presenting solutions and asking for the sale. Identify drivers of high sales performance.

Just as your field operators need their equipment to be successful, your salespeople need their tools. Provide them with the most effective mobile sales force automation and customer relationship management technologies possible. Many low-cost smartphones, sales force automation and customer relationship management software packages, templates and dashboards are available.

One of the primal keys for sales success is providing your staff with an experienced sales manager who's capable of aligning the company's sales goal with important metrics, such as:

- › revenue;
- › retention;
- › increased wallet share;
- › market share;
- › gross margin;
- › referrals;
- › win ratio; and
- › sales cycle time.

An effective sales manager also helps set strategy, coaches the staff, manages the numbers, provides leadership, conducts training and assists with presentations when necessary. Less than 9 percent of Green Industry professionals conduct sufficient sales training and 93 percent of sales forces are managed by owners who, as aforementioned, are unqualified and unhappy in their roles as sales manager. Sales training saves time and money and increases revenue, retention and value.

Additionally, provide salespeople with the necessary administrative resources they need. Salespeople should be selling, not spending the majority of their time performing administrative tasks. Hiring efficient administrative help, even part time, is paramount in building an excellent team. It also saves money while increasing the sales usefulness and revenue.

Don't forget to clearly align your marketing with your sales goals. Effective marketing makes it easier for your sales staff to sell. If you plainly spell out your sales goals, roles, responsibilities and metrics, and you hire, train and reward your staff based on those success metrics, you'll build and retain a world-class sales team. **LM**

Planning pointer

The four building blocks of sales success are: strategy and process, talent and training, customer relationship management and sales management.



Guido, chairwoman and founder of Guido & Associates, helps contractors grow their people and profits. Reach her at jmguido@sbcglobal.net.



HOW CAN I GET MORE SALES?

BY **ANDREW POTOTSCHNIK**

A In describing the process companies go through to generate new customers, I refer to a big old sales funnel. You pour leads in the top and sales come out the bottom. All sales funnels leak leads, though, letting them escape before you can turn them into sales. By patching your funnel, you can improve marketing effectiveness and boost sales. And in any funnel, it takes four steps to gently nudge prospects to a sale.

Each step is a potential lost sale waiting to happen, so the goal should be to improve your ability to move prospects through the steps.

Sadly, most companies put all their effort into getting attention and very little into the rest. You won't make a sale if you never guide them through the other steps.

With every hole you patch, you'll exponentially increase the percentage of leads that become sales because improvements throughout the funnel have a multiplying effect on the sales coming out the bottom. For example, increasing the attention your company receives allows more chance for prospects to become interested.

More interested prospects increases the number of them engaging with your company; and the more engaging, the more opportunities you have to sell.

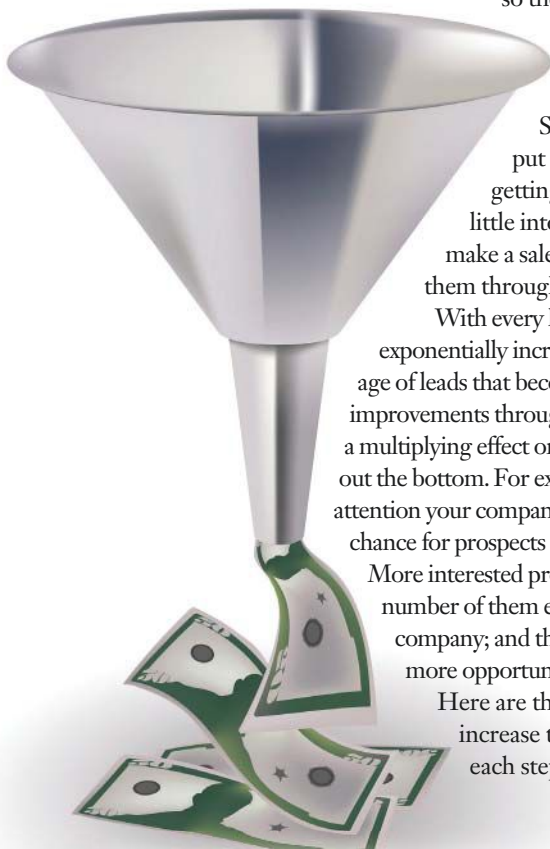
Here are the ways you can increase the effectiveness of each step.

STEP 1: Get their attention.

If you can't get a prospect's attention, you've already lost the sale. Do you have fanatical referrers? Are you everywhere prospects are looking for your services? Does your business appear in search results, pay-per-click ads, their door, their mailbox or on your truck in their area? Most leaks occurring in this stage are a result of nonexistent or poorly executed marketing. Your prospective customers simply don't know you exist or choose a company they think is larger because it's more visible in the marketplace.

It seems every landscape company uses the same tired fleet of generic white trucks with little green lettering on the door; however, companies could turn their fleets into attention-grabbing, mobile billboards with the use of neon colors, graphics and a bold, easy-to-remember phone number and website. Get noticed, then listen to prospects say, "I see your trucks everywhere," even when your fleet is only two trucks. Most online marketing programs lack similar market exposure.

Many companies have an old website that naturally shows up somewhere on the first page of Google for one key phrase. And that's it. They think they have the web thing covered. They don't, though. Prospects search thousands of key phrases to find you or your competitors. A high-ranking, properly optimized, content-rich site, supplemented by pay-per-click advertising and a presence on all of the most popular local search sites—such as Google+ Local and Yelp—will give you the largest online presence possible. This allows you to be everywhere online potential customers are looking for your services.



continued on page 96



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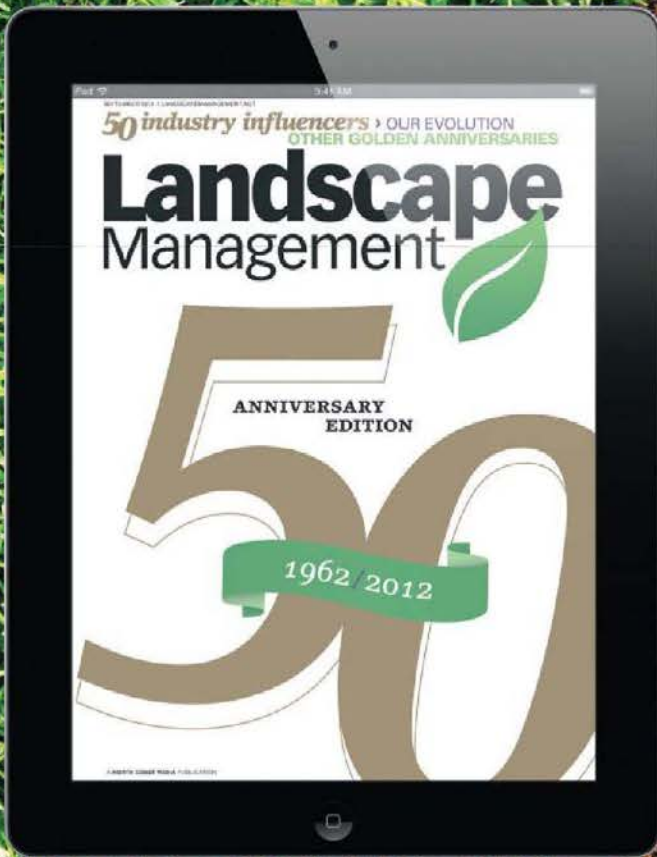
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continued from page 94

STEP 2: Get them interested.

If you don't look or sound different from other companies, you probably aren't. Try this quick exercise: Collect several competitors' direct mail pieces or door hangers. Cover the names, logos and any other identifying information, then compare your own marketing piece. Chances are your message is identical to everyone else's: "We cut lawns. We cut trees. We do beautiful landscapes. We're the best. We're professional. Call us for a free estimate."

This is a big problem. If you look and sound the same as everyone else, the only difference left is your price. Start by determining the unique selling points that set you apart from your competitors. Highlight the ones prospects care about. Saying you do great work is meaningless when everyone else says the same thing. Do you have 50 letters from ecstatic customers prospects can read online? Do you have before-and-after videos demonstrating without a doubt you do the most beautiful landscape lighting installs in Midland, Texas? Don't be the company saying, "Just take our word for it." Marketing is all about distinguishing yourself from your competitors. Look different, sound different and be better. After that, you can charge more.

STEP 3: Get them to engage with you.

Now that potential customers are interested, how easy have you made it for them to raise their hand and say, "Yes, I am interested! Tell me more! Sign me up!"? Merely answering your phone instead of letting calls go to voicemail will increase your sales. Sounds crazy, right? Sadly, this is normal for our industry and it's what you're competing against. If you're more responsive than your competitors, you'll sell more.

Most prospects visit your website before they call, so a lead-generating website should be at the center of any landscape marketing campaign to support and increase the effectiveness of all other marketing efforts. Some designers are great at making pretty websites. Pretty on its own doesn't sell, though. A website exists for two reasons: to get visitors to call or email you. Your website design determines this outcome. The images and text, where forms and contact info are positioned and even the color of buttons affects the percent of visitors who will contact you. If prospects don't know exactly what you do and in what service area, they're hitting the back button in 20 seconds or less. And they're not going to call if your website looks like you're about to go out of business. This is where companies shoot themselves in the foot.

Invest in a professional, lead-generating website engineered to convert visitors into paying customers. Spend more than \$5. Stop using crummy free sites, generic templates or Facebook to save money because you'll end up costing yourself money in lost sales. A website designed by a conversion

expert pays for itself multiple times over. Test it and engineer it to get new customers. You can spend nothing on a poorly designed, free site that converts one of 1,000 visitors into a customer, or you can spend \$5,000 on a website that converts 100 of 1,000 visitors.

STEP 4: Get them to act.

At some point, a prospect has to speak with you or your staff face to face or over the phone to make a sale. All that time and money you've spent leading up to this moment is thrown away in an instant if you can't close the sale. Your staff should be fully trained on how to sell. It's shocking how many business owners can't list 10 unique selling points about their own company. If you don't know why someone should buy from you, why would they?

The same is true with your staff members. They must be able to highlight your strengths and overcome every objection a prospect has to signing up for your service, especially your higher prices. You'll never have a 100-percent close rate, but you can capture a sale with one simple thing: following up. Ninety percent of companies never do this. They don't call, they don't email, they don't put prospects on a special mailing list. They quote a price and let them disappear to buy from competitors. Why not give them a second-chance offer? Why not send them a personal note the next day? Extra effort lets prospects know you care about having them as a customer. And if you care about doing business with them, you'll probably do a better job than the competitors who let their calls go to voicemail. A follow-up can capture an additional 20 percent of residential lawn care business that would've been lost otherwise.

It's easy for business owners to get caught up chasing a never-ending procession of buzzwords to generate more business. Stop chasing the buzzwords and become really good at what you're already doing. Instead of adding more halfhearted marketing, make your existing sales and marketing perform at the highest level possible. Then anything else you add to the mix will be much more effective and profitable. **L.M.**

Planning
pointer

Marketing is all about distinguishing yourself from your competitors. Look different, sound different and be better. After that, you can charge more.

Pototschnik is owner of Lawn Care Marketing Expert. Reach him at andrew@lawncaresmarketingexpert.com or download a free report at GetMoreLawnClientsNow.com.



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HOW CAN I GENERATE BUZZ?

BY JON GOLDMAN

A How can we get prospects to chase us instead of us chasing them? For most landscaping companies, marketing is difficult. You need to get noticed, but you can't afford to break the bank on big-name celebrity endorsements and Super Bowl ads. It is possible, however, to promote your company without a big-time budget and generate powerful marketing buzz.

YOU CAN USE YOUR **BACKGROUND, PROFESSIONALISM AND EXPERTISE TO TURN YOURSELF FROM "ANOTHER COMPANY" INTO A TRUSTED RESOURCE YOUR CUSTOMERS TURN TO.**

No matter the size of your company, you can use your background, professionalism and expertise to turn yourself from "another company" into a trusted resource your customers turn to. Do this by transforming from a design/build, landscape maintenance, snow removal or whatever kind of vendor into a design/build, landscape maintenance or snow removal expert. The key is vendor to expert.

Generating leads is one of the most difficult challenges any business faces, so any strategy that accomplishes lead generation is a competitive advantage you don't want to ignore. Positioning yourself as an expert accomplishes that.

MAKING THE SHIFT

Here's the secret to becoming an expert: You probably already are an expert. Think about it. Do you know much more than your customers about their lawns, irrigation systems, weeds or the pool, patio or fire pit of their dreams? Chances are, you know an

enormous amount your customers would love to know.

As an aside, this underscores the need to stay on top of the ever-changing trends and best practices in the industry. Whatever your niche is, stay current. That's why participating in your local landscape association, attending national events, and reading constantly is mission critical to the success of your business.

PUBLISH OR PERISH

The first step to becoming an expert is being published. The phrase "publish or perish" comes from academia, but it's not just stuffy professors who stand to benefit from being published. Whether it's a book, e-book or article, being published shows you know what you're talking about. Being published creates a level of credibility that attracts potential clients to you. That's especially true if you offer specific solutions to prospects with specific problems.

Most businesses chase prospects, but when you chase prospects, they often run in the opposite direction. Becoming an authority makes potential clients seek you. Suddenly, instead of chasing customers, you have customers chasing you.



LANDSCAPE LIVE! TALK RADIO

Every Wednesday, 7-8 pm EST!

Landscape Live! Talk Radio, formerly FD2B Talk Radio, is a weekly internet radio show for landscape and lawn care professionals who want to take their companies to the next level.

Tune in @ FD2B.COM!

Broadcasting live from the *Landscape Management* booth #3018 at GIE+EXPO, Oct. 23-25!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

DATE	SPECIAL GUEST	PROGRAM TOPIC
10/9	Shay Leon , Vendor, <i>Bollinger Insurance</i>	Minimize Your Snow Liability Today
10/16	Jordan Richie , Educator, <i>Green Roofs for Healthy Cities</i>	Profit from Green Roofs and Walls
10/23	Visit the LM Booth at GIE+EXPO	Live from GIE+EXPO
10/30	Shelly Hewson , Contractor, <i>Hewson Landscape</i>	Married to Your Business
11/6	AJ Davis , Contractor, <i>Davis Outdoor Jobs</i>	Young Guns of the Green Industry
11/13	Chris Heiler , Consultant, <i>Landscape Leadership</i>	It's Time for a Website Redesign

Remember: all shows are archived for later listening at FD2B.COM!

ABOUT THE HOST

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



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SUPPLIER RESOURCE PROFILES

A look at what Green Industry manufacturers and service providers have to offer.

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Agrium Advanced Technologies



What is Agrium Advanced Technologies?

Agrium Advanced Technologies is a leading manufacturer and marketer of controlled-release fertilizers for lawn maintenance professionals. The company is at the forefront in providing a single, convenient source for innovative fertilizer technologies that offer efficient, economical and environmentally responsible advantages.

Where is Agrium Advanced Technologies located?

The corporate headquarters for Agrium Advanced Technologies is located in Loveland, Colo. The company's core operations are located throughout North America and include eight production facilities, 14 storage facilities, and one technology innovation laboratory.

What are the principal products Agrium Advanced Technologies markets to turf professionals?

Duration CR® is a controlled-release source of nitrogen that features an advanced polymer coating. Fertilizers Driven by Duration CR are blended products incorporating this controlled-release technology with longevities ranging from 45 up to 180 days. Spread it & Forget it™, with a single application lasting up to 180 days, is a specific controlled-release product featuring Duration CR's next-generation coating technology.

Why is this polymer coating better than traditional sulfur-coated fertilizers?

Traditional coated fertilizers are known to crack and break down prematurely. This releases nitrogen more rapidly. The release is also based on moisture, which is not necessarily when plants need nutrition most. Since plants can only take up a portion of the nitrogen that's applied, it's more likely nitrogen will leach away into the groundwater or be lost to volatilization. As a result, turf yellows sooner from not getting the nitrogen it needs.

The nutrient release of fertilizers Driven by Duration CR is based on soil temperature, when plants are actively feeding. With more of the nitrogen taken up by the plant, far less is lost to leaching or volatilization. And because fertilizers Driven by Duration

CR don't need to be applied as frequently, nitrogen use can be reduced by up to 40 percent, compared with sulfur-coated products. This consistent, controlled feeding also eliminates the feast/famine cycle that contributes to stress, so turf is more resistant to weeds and diseases, which promotes lush, green growth.

How can a lawn care operator benefit from making fewer fertilizer applications?

Fewer applications per property saves time, freeing up crews to visit more properties per day, or allows lawn care operators to add new customers or services. There is also less hardscape cleanup, particularly helpful if working on HOA or large commercial properties. Controlled feeding also eliminates flush growth, reducing mowing and clippings cleanup, while decreasing fuel and equipment upkeep costs.

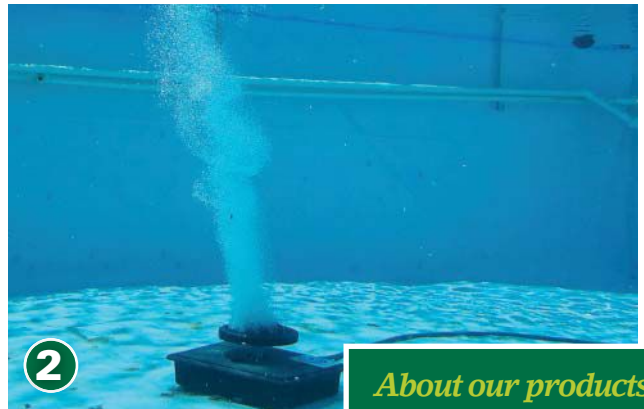
Where can you learn more about the products available from Agrium Advanced Technologies?

Visit www.DrivenByDuration.com for additional details about fertilizers Driven by Duration CR, including Spread it & Forget it, and to locate a distributor near you.



Air-O-Lator Corp.

Fine-bubble aeration best for deep ponds, lakes to achieve superior water quality



About our products:

1. The Deep Aire aerator creates a healthy pond by taking oxygen to the pond's lowest depth.
2. The Deep Aire bottom-mounted diffused aeration system.

When Mother Nature can't maintain a sufficient amount of oxygen in the water naturally by means of sunlight, wind or wave action, manmade aeration is needed to keep the water body clean and healthy.

A pond or lake that is suffering from unsightly algae growth or odor problems can be improved and maintained via environmentally friendly mechanical aeration and mixing equipment, reducing or eliminating the amount of chemical treatment. The Deep Aire bottom-mounted, diffused aeration system creates a healthy pond by taking oxygen to the pond's lowest depth.

The Deep Aire diffused aeration system by Air-O-Lator is a fine bubble diffuser. As the air bubbles are released, oxygen is added to the water. When the bubbles rise to the surface, the water from the bottom of the pond is dragged to the surface, breaking up the thermal cline and the stratified layer of water to the surface. The bottom layer of water is aerated and mixed into the entire lake or pond no matter the depth. Surface aerators do the same thing, but are less efficient at providing oxygen and mixing at depths greater than 10 feet.

The Deep Aire system utilizes an air compressor, located on the shore, which delivers oxygen through a

hose to a special diffuser lying on the pond bottom. Depending on the body of water depth and shape, various motors and models are available with a deluxe kit that includes a lockable cabinet with electrical box/outlet, shock mounts, pressure gauge and cooling fan.

Air-O-Lator added the Deep Aire aerator product line to the existing water aeration group as another tool to improve the water quality and the ecosystem of ponds and lakes. Land owners, golf course superintendents and water managers utilize aerators to keep bodies of water clean and healthy, but the popular surface aerator is not always the best fit. Air-O-Lator recommends a Deep Aire subsurface aeration system over a surface aerator when the application calls for, or requires, no above-surface water spray, surface obstructions or installations that prohibit the use of electricity in the water.

About Air-O-Lator Corp.

For more than 40 years, Air-O-Lator has been manufacturing de-icers, aerators, fountains, mixers and aspirators for water treatment. Our high-performance and environmentally friendly product line is engineered to improve water quality, bringing about a healthy water eco-system. Each unit is made in the USA and constructed from the highest-grade components.



Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power



At GIE+EXPO in Louisville, Ky., Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power (booth No. 7104) is announcing a new line of Vanguard 810cc engines for commercial zero-turn mowers that are specifically tailored to thrive in the extreme conditions landscape contractors face every day.

The new 810cc Vanguard™ engines, available in 24 or 26 gross horsepower¹ models, are designed to maximize productivity by delivering the optimum power, performance and efficiency commercial zero-turn mowers need.

“Briggs & Stratton is known for helping people cut grass — it’s in our DNA,” said Dan Roche, marketing manager with Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power. “We have collaborated with and gained support from the entire organization on this new platform and have logged tens of thousands of hours testing to ensure we perfected the design, materials and assembly process. Landscape contractors can have total confidence knowing these engines are ready to continue the Vanguard brand’s legacy of durability and performance.”

The new models have 810cc of displacement for higher torque to take on the heavy workloads common in commercial settings. This meets a growing landscape industry demand for higher displacement engines and hence, higher-productivity mowers, according to Roche.

In addition to power, other features were designed for the rigors of the commercial cutting work environment. The engine’s new debris chopper fan offers excellent debris management while providing up to 30-degree cooler engine temperatures to guarantee the mower performs even when conditions get tough. Debris access panels allow for quick and easy maintenance. The high-flow blower housing offers more than 30 percent larger intake surface area than the next closest competitor.

Highlighting Vanguard’s commitment to producing the most reliable and durable commercial turf engines on the market, the 810cc engines will be produced at the all-new Vanguard Certified Production Center located in Briggs & Stratton’s Auburn, Ala., plant.² There, the engines will be assembled exclusively by certified Briggs & Stratton Master Service Technicians (MSTs).



About our products:

1. The new Vanguard 810cc engines from Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power are available in 24 or 26 gross horsepower models.
2. Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power’s new line of Vanguard 810cc engines is specifically tailored to thrive in the extreme conditions zero-turn mowers encounter every day.

Unlike most other engines, the Vanguard 810cc engines will be almost exclusively assembled using Direct Current (DC) electric hand tools in lieu of more-common air tools. This technology allows technicians to program the fastening process, which results in superior quality control. This process also produces a detailed record of torque sequences and values and generate a “torque DNA” for each engine.

“To be qualified for the Vanguard brand and carry its global 3-year commercial warranty³, an engine has to pass a battery of specific tests for durability and reliability even the most extreme conditions,” Roche said. “From design, to testing, to production, we couldn’t be more confident that the new 810cc engines are ready to take commercial turf contractors to a new level of performance and productivity.”

¹ All power levels are stated gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by Briggs & Stratton.

² The Vanguard 810cc engines are made in the US of US and global parts.

³ Warranty details available at www.vanguardengines.com/service-support/warranty/

Caterpillar

Cat® 906H2 Compact Wheel Loader Improved for Increased Productivity



The Cat® 906H2 Compact Wheel Loader leads the industry in performance, versatility and operator comfort. Equipped with a Cat C3.3B DIT engine that meets U.S. EPA Tier 4 Interim emission standards, the Cat 906H2 delivers high performance with 74 gross hp and a breakout force of 9,442 pounds. Additionally, the engine service area features eco-friendly drains, separate coolers for cleaning and ground-level service points for easy access.

The oscillating chassis helps ensure four-wheel ground contact for optimum traction, and standard differential locks in both heavy-duty axles can be engaged on the move. The standard hydrostatic drive line offers two speeds—first gear at 4.3 mph (7 km/h) and second gear at 12.4 mph (20 km/h)—and an optional speeder transmission provides a third gear reaching up to 21.7 mph (35 km/h).

Optional transmission control upgrade offers creeper control and hand throttle for improved management of hydromechanical work tools. Rimpull control options reduce tire slippage in soft or loose underfoot conditions.

Increase Versatility with Work Tools

Cat Work Tool Attachments can be changed quickly making the 906H2 ready for multiple applications. The standard high-performance Z-bar loader is designed for strength and improved work tool



visibility. It gives the operator a clear view to the work tool as well as excellent dump clearance while maintaining good cycle times and parallel lifts.

Cat Work Tool Options Include:

- › Buckets
- › Power Box Rakes
- › Brooms
- › Trenchers
- › Landscape Tillers
- › Material Handling Arm
- › Snow Pushers
- › Stump Grinders
- › Landscape Rakes
- › Vibratory Compactors
- › Forks
- › Augers
- › Cold Planers
- › Snow Blowers

Additional work tool options, like the return to dig work tool positioner and work tool wiring harness, can further increase machine productivity. The positioner automatically returns the bucket to level after dumping, and the harness provides additional hydraulic functions for applications such as broom angling, cold planing and snow blowing.

Improved Operator Comfort

On top of power, durability and specialization, the 906H2 offers superior comfort in

the operator station with low-effort joystick steering, adjustable seating and personalization settings for higher productivity and reduced operator fatigue.

For more information, contact your local Cat dealer or visit us online at www.cat.com

About our products:

1. The 906H2's work tool wiring harness provides additional hydraulic functions for applications such as snow blowing.
2. Operators get a clearer view to the work tool plus excellent dump clearance.
3. The oscillating chassis helps ensure four-wheel ground contact for optimum traction.



ClearSpan™ Fabric Structures

Design-Build Solutions for Landscaping Needs



About our products:

1. ClearSpan design allows space to maneuver equipment.
2. Bright interior due to the natural light that filters through the cover.
3. Permanent or temporary and easy to relocate with minimal foundation requirements.

Tension fabric buildings from ClearSpan make ideal storage facilities for landscaping companies. These structures are a fast and economical storage solution for trucks and equipment, sand, salt, mulch, topsoil and other materials. From high clearances and wide open space to energy efficiency, ClearSpan Fabric Structures are the perfect solutions to your landscaping equipment and materials storage needs.

ClearSpan structures can be constructed in any length and up to 300 feet wide. With no internal supports, maneuvering equipment inside the building is a breeze. The natural light that shines through the covers not only aids in worker comfort and ease of operations, it reduces energy costs and, ultimately, business expenses. With no need for artificial daytime lighting, there are fewer electric costs associated with running day-to-day activities. Lower energy costs can greatly increase your bottom line.

At ClearSpan, we pride ourselves on providing the highest-quality products. We construct our buildings with the most durable and long-lasting materials. Structure frames are made of American-made, triple-galvanized structural

steel that stands up well in harsh and corrosive environments. Covers are made of 12.5-oz., 24-mil rip-stop polyethylene and are UV-resistant. Both the frame and cover have an industry-leading 15-year warranty.

All ClearSpan Fabric Structures are engineered specifically to meet the needs of your location, including wind and snow-load requirements. We can provide engineered stamped drawings for local code requirements, when necessary. Though these structures are engineered and can stay permanently in one place, we know that needs often change in a landscaping business, and this includes location. ClearSpan structures can easily be dismantled and reassembled in a new place due to minimal foundation requirements. They can also be added on to down the road if business grows and more space is needed. ClearSpan Fabric Structures are a cost-effective, energy-efficient, permanent or temporary solution for all of your landscaping materials and equipment storage needs.

For more information, call 866-643-1010 or visit www.ClearSpan.com/ADLM.



Dow AgroSciences



At Dow AgroSciences, we diligently test and research products to make sure you're not just getting a solution — you're getting a proven, innovative solution. Our portfolio uses advanced chemistry to help minimize effort by delivering maximum control on weeds, insects and disease.

Here are just a few of the proven solutions that are backed by our uncompromising service and support:

Our newest innovation, **Defendor™** specialty herbicide, eliminates dandelion blooms and controls clover, chickweed and other annual and perennial broadleaf weeds for healthier, more attractive turf. It is available in a value pack with Dimension® 2EW specialty herbicide and can be tank-mixed for proven crabgrass and broadleaf weed control, giving turf managers more time to complete the first applications of the season. In addition, Defendor provides activity at extremely low use rates when compared with other postemergence herbicides.

➤ **Dimension®** specialty herbicide provides season-long preemergence control of crabgrass, spurge, oxalis and other grassy weeds, along with early postemergence control of crabgrass. With multiple formulations, Dimension can be used on established lawns, golf courses and commercial sod farms without staining surroundings, and over the tops of landscape ornamentals.

➤ **Eagle® 20EW** specialty fungicide is a liquid systemic fungicide for preventive and curative control of roughly 20 turf-destroying diseases, including dollar spot and brown patch. Available in easy-to-use containers, Eagle 20EW is ideal for use on home lawns and backyard fruit trees. It won't harm popular turfgrass or ornamental species.

➤ **LockUp®** specialty

herbicide is available through distributors as a formulated product for superior control of dollarweed in the South and clover in the North. It offers postemergence weed control to lawn care professionals, golf course superintendents and sports turf managers. It provides activity at extremely low use rates and can be applied to moist cool- or warm-season turf.

➤ **Snapshot®** specialty herbicide offers proven control of more

than 125 species of broadleaf and grassy weeds and minimizes the need for hand-weeding. Snapshot also is labeled for use on more than 636 landscape ornamentals, more than any other granular preemergence herbicide. It has excellent tolerance on established plants and proven, long-lasting, broad-spectrum weed control.

Innovation

On average, it takes nine to 10 years and an investment of more than \$250 million to bring a new agricultural chemical compound to market, according to industry figures. With so much on the line, it's critical to be as efficient and effective as possible. Dow AgroSciences is a recognized leader in research and development because we focus on market needs, openness to strategic collaboration, investment in state-of-the-art scientific technologies and a disciplined development process.

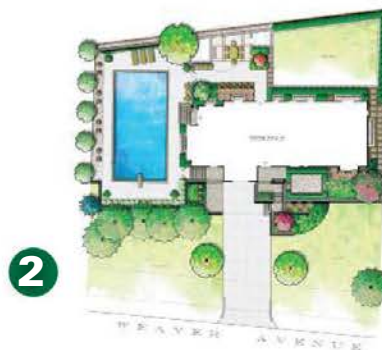
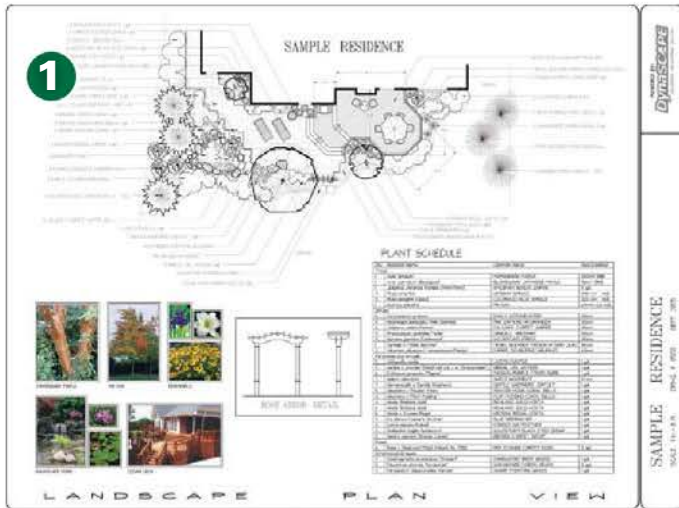
For more information, visit www.DowProvesIt.com.



Dow AgroSciences

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DynaSCAPE Software



Show your professionalism! DynaSCAPE's CAD-based design solutions allow you to produce impressive, job-winning presentations in a fraction of the time that it takes you now. Whether you prefer to present your designs in hand-drawn-quality black and white, stunning full color or jaw-dropping 3-D, we have the tools you need to express your ideas, clearly and impressively, in each and every proposal.

Selling. Estimating. Designing. Job Management. Recovering overheads. Invoicing. Profiting. Managing. Scheduling. Routing. Analysing. Reporting. The list of areas that you have to stay on top of to run a successful landscape business can almost seem endless at times. Would you like some help with all of it?

DynaSCAPE Manage360 is a custom-crafted, end-to-end software solution for any landscape business that's serious about growing. About thriving. About running efficiently, profitably – professionally. It's designed to help you follow industry best practices for every stage of your interactions with your customers, from the first phone call to the final invoice. More to the point, it will help you to use those best practices to increase both your sales and your profits.



Maximize the opportunities in each phase of your sales pipeline, and prepare estimates with confidence. DJS Sales & Estimating offers landscape professionals like you a better way to manage your entire sales process, and to prepare accurate and profitable estimates using the methodology of your choice. It lets you manage your sales cycle, create a reliable cost book, automatically prepare material takeoffs from your designs, and prepare professional, job-winning proposals for your clients.

Once you've won the job, DJS Job Management is the software you need to manage every detail of that project from Day 1 to final sign-off. It has the tools to help you specify, schedule and route your crews, create purchase orders, generate job logs and field reports,

track everyone's time, manage change orders, prepare invoices and compare your estimated vs. actual costs.

About our products:

1. Draw spectacular, information rich designs.
2. Show your design's true colors.
3. Make your 3-D models come to life.

Fisher Engineering



Dedication to quality and service has been a FISHER® tradition from the start. Fisher Engineering has been manufacturing snowplows for more than 60 years in the coastal city of Rockland, ME. Through the years, FISHER plows have earned a solid reputation for reliability and strength – especially among commercial snowplowers. New models for 2013 include:

► **XV2™ V-Plow:** The XV2 features extreme flared wings, Fisher Engineering’s proven trip-edge design, super fast hydraulics to quickly change blade positions and standard InstaLock double-acting cylinders to securely hold the wings in place for windrowing, back dragging and straight blade operation.

► **XBLADE™ and HD Series Skid-Steer Plows:** FISHER’s popular XBLADE and HD Series snow plows are now available with universal skid-steer loader mounting plates for fast attachment. Both blades feature Fisher Engineering’s trip-edge design.

► **STORM BOXX™ Pusher Plows:** Fisher Engineering’s line of heavy-duty pusher plows are designed for use with skid-steers, backhoes or wheel loaders, and come in 8’ to 16’ blade widths. The STORM BOXX is designed for quick attachment and features a reinforced design.

► **POLY-CASTER™ LT and WB-100B & WB-160D Salt Spreaders:** FISHER’s new ½ cu. Yd. POLY-CASTER LT hopper spreader provides professional hopper spreader performance for

ATVs and pickups with smaller spreader needs. The new WB-100B & WB 160D walk-behind salt spreaders offer excellent performance in broadcast-spreading and drop-spreading for sidewalk de-icing applications and feature durable polyethylene construction.

About our products:

1. XV2 V-Plow
2. STORM BOXX Pusher Plow

Manufacturing Facilities:

FISHER’s 200,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility is in Rockland, ME. As a division of Douglas Dynamics, LLC, the country’s leading manufacturer of snow and ice removal equipment, FISHER products and components are also manufactured in Douglas Dynamics’ Milwaukee, WI, facility.

Technical Support:

FISHER dealers are factory-trained to provide exceptional product and service support before, during and after the sale.



Growth Products

The Landscaper's BioNutrition™ 3-0-3 Granular.
3-0-3 Granular with Mycorrhizae Technology
for Trees and Plantings



Sustainable Landscape Management

"We have to assume that landowners and land users as a whole want to do the right thing and be good stewards – promoting fertility, diversity, health and social good while leaving their lands better off than when they got them."
–Clare Reinbergen, president,

Growth Products Ltd., and lifelong avid gardener.

► **Condition soil structure.** Newly planted areas often have been stripped of valuable top soil, leaving compacted subsoils with drainage problems. Landscaper's BioNutrition has a unique combination of soil conditioners – including yucca, humic acid, kelp and a high-quality polymer gel for water retention – that drastically improve soil conditions for better plant growth.

► **Root Biostimulant.** Containing natural auxin stimulating properties, the kelp, L-amino acids and rhizosphere bacteria in The Landscaper's BioNutrients promote new rooting on transplants.

► **Microbial Inoculants.** Among the most important elements for a balanced soil are the activities of soil bacteria. Without beneficial bacteria, large organic materials such as leaves and other debris would accumulate in an uncomposted state and litter the soil surface instead of being broken down into an available food source for plants. The Landscaper's BioNutrition contains yeast plus four strong and prolific bacillus strains, each of which decomposes leaf litter and solubilizes minerals for plant uptake.

► **Mycorrhizae Inoculants.** The Landscaper's BioNutrition includes seven strains of endo- and ecto-mycorrhizal fungi. Colonized in the soil, these fungi form a symbiotic relationship with a plant's root system, literally extending the plant's roots with white,

filament-type threads. The result is better nutrient uptake (particularly of phosphorus, potassium and magnesium), better mineral uptake and increased water absorption by the plant.

► **Improve Water Retention.** Moisture is critical to any newly planted tree or landscape material. The Landscaper's BioNutrition contains a unique organic polymer gel that has the ability to absorb 500 times its weight in water, allowing the gel to gradually release moisture to a plant's roots as the soil dries.

► **Add Important Carbon to Soil.** The ingredients in Landscaper's BioNutrition provide the soil with important carbon sources. The combination of kelp, L-amino acids, humic acid and our exclusive slow-release nitrogen provide food for beneficial bacterial and endo- and ecto- mycorrhizal fungi, thus ensuring the establishment and of beneficial microbes in the soil.

► **Provide Slow Release Nitrogen.** It is important to avoid high-salt fertilizers when transplanting. The Landscaper's BioNutrition contains a safe and reliable source of slow-release nitrogen with a low to negligible salt index. This slow-release nitrogen gradually breaks down with the increase in microbial activity to supply a steady source of available N.

About our products:

- 1.** The Landscaper's BioNutrition offers landscapers and arborists a one-step method to reduce stress and transplant loss on trees and large ornamentals.
- 2.** A granular product, Landscaper's BioNutrition combines 5 strains of beneficial soil bacteria, 11 strains of endo- and ecto-mycorrhizae, and key organic soil conditioners for the ultimate in tree and landscape preservation.



Honda Engines

All-New Rammer Engine

New GXR120 Specifically Designed for Power Rammers

Honda Power Equipment, a division of American Honda Motor Co. Inc., based in Alpharetta, Ga., and its operating unit, Honda Engines, will have a dynamic presence at GIE + EXPO 2013.

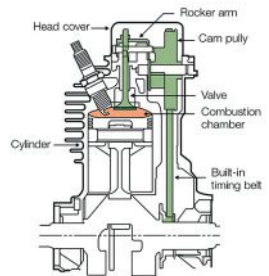
At this year's venue, Honda Engines representatives will be available at the company's indoor booth (#3118) and outdoor display area to discuss the company's continued technological advancements and environmental commitment. The Honda Engines team will showcase its complete range of engines models, including the latest advancements for its GX Commercial Series Engines and the recent introduction of the all-new GXR120 general purpose engine, a model uniquely developed as an ideal source of power for rammers – equipment used to compact soil or other granular material.

In addition, at its company trailer on display in the outdoor exhibit area, the Honda Power Equipment team looks forward to discussing design enhancements to selected product lines. Highlights include general purpose de-watering pumps as well as the introduction of an all-new Industrial Series generator for construction and rental applications.

The Honda GXR120: A Closer Look at the All-New Rammer Engine

The Honda GXR120 is capable of meeting the high demands that rammers require of the engine, frame and operator. With a displacement of 121 cc, the engine can appropriately power 110-lb. to 175-lb. rammers at multiple altitudes with ease. Additionally, a new, special cast-iron cylinder sleeve and a high carbon-steel, dual-ball bearing crankshaft provide improved engine strength for rammer applications. To further enhance engine durability, the recoil starter and fan cover of the new GXR120 now are even more robust through the incorporation of steel in the design.

When developing the GXR120 for the rammer marketplace, Honda engineers identified the need for a more compact and lightweight engine footprint to allow for more versatility in frame mounting.



OHC LAYOUT

Using an Overhead Camshaft (OHC) orientation similar to the Honda GX100, Honda designers incorporated a maintenance-free, low-noise timing belt to create a smaller, lighter and quieter engine.

Honda integrated several features into the design of the GXR120 that make it easy and comfortable to control. Since quiet operation and low noise are critical for rammer machine operators, the GXR120 includes a newly designed and very compact muffler, which is 22 mm (.87 inches) narrower than the muffler used as standard on the Honda GX100 engine. This smaller muffler, combined with the OHC engine layout, reduces operation noise by 1dB over the current GX100 engine. In addition, a heavy-duty recoil starter, together with an automatic decompression system, allow for easy engine starting, while an Oil Alert feature prevents the engine from starting if the oil level is too low. A simple but innovative lubrication system with a dual-breather chamber optimizes engine lubricating performance in most rammer operating conditions.

Editor's Note:

Honda Power Equipment, a division of American Honda Motor Co., Inc., markets a complete range of outdoor power equipment, including outboard marine engines, general purpose engines, generators,

lawnmowers, pumps, snowblowers, tillers and trimmers for commercial, rental and residential applications. Its comprehensive product line is powered exclusively by 4-stroke engines.

HONDA
ENGINES



Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits

For more than 125 years, Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits has provided insurance solutions for green industry businesses and is the only U.S. insurance company solely dedicated to landscape and lawn care professionals, nurseries, greenhouse growers, garden centers, interior plantscapers, retail florists and wholesale floral distributors. We realize the industry is unpredictable and ever-changing. Rest assured our focus is, and will remain, dedicated to protecting you.

Hortica is a mutual company owned by our policyholders and elects respected industry leaders to its Board of Directors.



We understand our success is directly tied to the success of both the green industry and the businesses we insure. We are proud that 25% of our policyholders have been with us for more than 25 years.

Hortica is a proven partner for business insurance, employee benefits and personal insurance. We will guide you in designing a comprehensive plan to provide

protection for equipment at job sites, on-the-job employee injuries, design errors and omissions, your employees and other risks unique to your business. With the right coverages at competitive prices, we can help your business improve its bottom line.

Hortica offers a full range of products and services including property and liability, automobile, workers' compensation, excess umbrella, health/life/disability, loss control and safety on-site consultations, thermographic inspections, customized safety presentations/webinars, annual claims analysis and access to loss control and safety training material.

Hortica always provides personalized customer service with a real person answering your call. Our knowledgeable insurance

professionals are available to assist our policyholders whether they are requesting a quote, requesting a certificate of insurance, reporting a claim or asking questions concerning their policy. In the event of a loss, an on-staff adjuster will guide you through every detail and provide a prompt, fair and hassle-free claim settlement.

Hortica actively participates and supports many national and state industry associations including Professional Landcare Network, Association of Professional Landscape Designers, American Nursery & Landscape Association, OFA-the Association of Horticulture Professionals, Master Nursery Garden Centers and Society of American Florists.

Hortica is a national company with its corporate office located in the St. Louis metropolitan area in Edwardsville, Ill. The company has branch offices in California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia, in addition to approximately 80 account executives throughout the country.

Mission Statement: To guide and provide the green industry with superior, cost-effective insurance solutions.



1 Horticultural Lane, P.O. Box 428, Edwardsville, IL 62025 | Phone: 800-851-7740 | Fax: 800-233-3642 | Email: sales@hortica.com
hortica.com | GIE +EXPO booth #3023 | Join us on Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn

John Deere



When you enter the John Deere booth at GIE - EXPO this year, you're going to discover many new and exciting products and programs. For instance, Uptime Solutions, a program that keeps your fleet up and running all season long. And GreenFleet, the best loyalty program in the industry.

You will see new products in our commercial mowing line up, and the best in construction, utility tractors, and utility vehicles, plus see how John Deere's unmatched parts delivery system can keep you going. Come and talk to the experts about our full package of equipment and services that will fit your landscaping business needs.

ZTrak 900 Series Mowers

Our new generation of B, M and R Series are three distinctly different zero-turn mowers with features designed for every type of commercial mowing customer. The B Series has essential features at a reasonable price. The M Series appeals to those with fleets who demand efficiency. And the R Series was created for those who want the ultimate in features.

QuikTrak 600 Series Mowers

When it came to making sure you had the best stand-on mower, we didn't sit down on the job. We focused on giving you machines that would fit your needs, whether you wanted something brawny and basic or mowers with a floating deck, cast-iron front forks and Flat Free front tires.

Commercial Walk-Behind Mowers

You're always on the go – pushing to get more done, working your way through tight spaces, taking care of the details that can make all the difference. Our walk-behind mowers offer features that help you take everything in stride, including the option of pistol grip or twin loop controls, a wide variety of deck sizes and powerful, air-cooled commercial engines.

GreenFleet Loyalty Rewards

Simply, the best equipment rewards program in the industry. You depend on your equipment day after day, which is why we want to thank customers who have trusted John Deere with their fleet. Such loyalty should be rewarded. Along with exclusive equipment discounts, you get substantial parts savings, preferred financing opportunities and other member-only benefits and promotions. GreenFleet is designed to help you manage your fleet, assist with your bottom line and congratulate you for your purchase.

Visit John Deere booth 1110 at GIE + EXPO to learn which mower is right for your business, find out more about the best way to buy or finance your equipment, and how

John Deere and your local dealer are dedicated to you and your business to help you keep mowing.





Kohler Engines

Power to Succeed
A partnership based on trust and performance

Professional landscape contractors have learned to depend upon Kohler Engines. They realize Kohler is dedicated to manufacturing well-crafted and durable products that will stand up in the field and deliver reliable, long-term performance. Of course, a relationship like this doesn't happen overnight. A company needs to prove itself by listening to the unique needs of landscape contractors and turf professionals, and then deliver on those needs by committing to product innovation and customer support.

History of Innovation

Kohler Engines was founded more than 90 years ago and has continually enhanced its product lineup in an effort to help make life easier and more profitable for end users around the globe. Its professional-grade engines have become synonymous with success in the landscape industry. When looking around a typical landscape operation, it's common to see Kohler Engines powering a wide variety of equipment. Command PRO, Aegis, Kohler Diesel – today's professionals regularly entrust their livelihood to many of the proven models within the Kohler Engines family of products.

And Kohler's products continue to evolve and improve. The most notable new product innovation for landscape professionals is the Kohler Command PRO EFI (electronic fuel injection) engine, which is the only closed-loop EFI engine in its class. These engines, which offer unmatched efficiency, have been proven to save end users up to 25 percent in fuel when compared to one of Kohler's carbureted engines under comparable load conditions. This translates into fuel savings of \$600 per engine every year for landscape professionals, which helps to explain the rapid growth and acceptance of EFI technology nationwide.

Closed-Loop EFI

Kohler closed-loop EFI engines are actually quite unique because they include an oxygen sensor that analyzes the air/fuel mixture in the muffler. If the oxygen level strays from the ideal air/fuel mixture, the sensor triggers adjustments to the amount of fuel



injected into the system. These engines then "close the loop" between the air/fuel intake and the exhaust output to provide a constant stream of feedback, which helps deliver optimal fuel efficiency and a variety of other benefits, including easier starting, fuel

compatibility, improved power, and better reliability.

Based on strong marketplace response to Kohler's Command PRO EFI engines, Kohler Engines has recently released a Command PRO EFI Propane Engine. This new option is ideal for those seeking the fuel savings, easy starting, and improved reliability of the company's closed-loop EFI technology in tandem with the clean-burning and eco-friendly benefits of propane.

About Kohler Engines

Kohler Engines and Lombardini – a KOHLER Company based in Italy – have been manufacturing engines since the 1920s. Kohler Engines produces a wide range of gaseous, gasoline and diesel engines, from 6.5 to 74.5 hp, which are supplied to equipment manufacturers worldwide in the lawn and garden, commercial and industrial, agricultural and construction markets. To learn more, please visit www.KohlerEngines.com or www.facebook.com/kohlerengines or www.twitter.com/kohlerengines.

KOHLER
Engines

444 Highland Drive, Kohler, WI 53044 | Phone: 920-457-4441 | kohlerengines.com
[Facebook.com/kohlerengines](https://www.facebook.com/kohlerengines) | [Twitter.com/kohlerengines](https://www.twitter.com/kohlerengines) | GIE+EXPO booth #7176

Kubota



About our products:

Kubota's new Z700-Series includes three models: the Z723, Z724 and the Z725. The new series is the ultimate solution to the turf care professional's demand for a high-quality and productive zero-turn mower, at the perfect price point.

Kubota unveils its new Z700-Series commercial zero-turn mower at GIE+Expo.

The new Z700-Series includes three models: the Z723, Z724 and the Z725. The new series is the ultimate solution to the turf care professional's demand for a high-quality and productive zero-turn mower, at the perfect price point.

Designed to run day in and day out, the Z700-Series is a true workhorse, boasting the powerful Kohler Command V-Twin Engine and integrated Parker 14cc pump and wheel motor.

Available with a rugged commercial deck in three popular cutting widths – 48-inch, 54-inch and 60-inch – the Z700-Series comes equipped with a wide operator platform, a thick, high-back, adjustable seat and a convenient deck height adjustment dial.

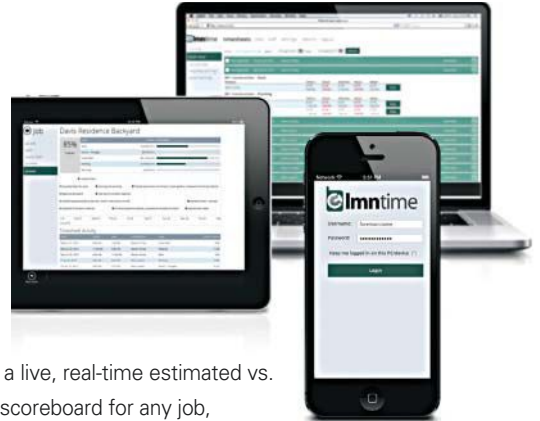
Maintenance is easy with an optional maintenance lift kit attachment that allows operators to lift the front of the deck, plus sealed greaseless spindle bearings create for less down-time in between jobs.

Kubota Tractor Corp., Torrance, Calif., is the U.S. marketer and distributor of Kubota-engineered and manufactured machinery and equipment, including a complete line of tractors of up to 135 NET hp / 118 PTO hp, performance-matched implements, compact and utility-class construction equipment, consumer lawn and garden equipment, commercial turf products and utility vehicles. For product literature or dealer locations, contact: Kubota Tractor Corp., 3401 Del Amo Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503, (888) 4-KUBOTA [(888) 458-2682], Ext. 900, or visit www.kubota.com.

For Earth, For Life
Kubota

3401 Del Amo Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503 | Phone: 888-4-KUBOTA [(888) 458-2682], Ext. 900 | www.kubota.com
www.facebook.com/kubotatractor | GIE+EXPO booth #5094 (Indoor) and #7401 (Outdoor)

Landscape Management Network



and staff get a live, real-time estimated vs. actual hours scoreboard for any job, all from their mobile device. Transform your company culture with a whole new level of accountability and productivity. LMN Time can also track hours, equipment and materials for extras billing. Invoice reports are ready the minute the crews end their shift.

- ✓ Mobile Timetracking
- ✓ Mobile Estimating
- ✓ Sync with Quickbooks
- ✓ Real-time Job Tracking
- ✓ Forms + Templates
- ✓ Online Training

LMN is mobile software that builds efficient landscape companies. With more than 3,000 users across the globe, LMN is one of the most popular estimating and job management systems in the green industry.

The Right Price for Every Job...

Any estimating software can price work, but LMN ensures you're making profit. In less than 6 hours, LMN shows you how to create a budget that ensures profitable pricing. Estimates show job costs, overhead, and profit – all calculated using your company's specific numbers. Estimators have more time to focus on what they do best: material takeoffs, estimated hours, and equipment planning. Because it's mobile, salespersons close more deals, faster. Revisions can be executed on the spot, saving needless delays going back and forth to the office.

Because Efficient Crews Need More Than A Shovel...

LMN Time brings real-time timetracking to the industry. Crews clock in/out to jobs on any smart device in 4 simple clicks. Owners

Syncs with Quickbooks...

Save hundreds of hours of data entry by exporting estimates and timesheets directly into Quickbooks. Every record can be linked to Quickbooks jobs and service items for precise jobcosting.

One 2-Day Workshop. A Lifetime of Profit...

More than 2,000 landscape contractors have attended LMN's business management workshop, and for good reason. In just a few hours, contractors are shown how simple it is to build a plan that improves profit, productivity and staff motivation. Best of all, workshops are taught by actual best-in-class landscapers, not accountants or consultants. Sponsored by Caterpillar Equipment, this workshop is guaranteed to be the most rewarding 2 days you'll ever spend on your landscape business.

With no startup costs and memberships costing less than the average cable bill, LMN is the simplest, most affordable way to build a more profitable landscape company. Visit golmn.com and find dates + locations for their workshops at www.golmn.com/workshop.



Phone: 888-347-9864 | golmn.com | [Twitter.com/lmnnetwork](https://twitter.com/lmnnetwork)
[Facebook.com/landscapemanagementnetwork](https://facebook.com/landscapemanagementnetwork) | GIE+EXPO booth #4018

L.T. Rich Products



Product focus:

L.T. Rich Products is a manufacturer of stand-on fertilizer/spray systems, aerators and turf renovators for the commercial lawn care industry. All units are zero-turn and feature a pump/wheel motor transmission. We use only state-of-the-art laser-cutting equipment and CNC fabrication machinery.

Sprayers feature all stainless steel construction with large fertilizer and liquid spraying capacity. Sizes range from 100 to 300 pounds for fertilizer and eight to 50 gallons for liquid.

Aerators feature 36-inch or 46-inch tine width and 95,000-square-feet-per-hour productivity.

Several attachments are available for the aerators, including a spray system, fertilizer spreader, de-thatch rake, slit seeder and even a snow plow. Custom- and purpose-built units are also

available. All products are sold direct or through a dealer base depending on location.

Manufacturing facility:

22,000-square-foot facility in Lebanon, IN.

Major product lines:

- Z-SPRAY
- Z-PLUG



MistAway Systems



MistAway manufactures a system that sprays a very fine mist of a dilute botanical insecticide through a nozzle circuit that is installed around the perimeter of a backyard or other area where people want to spend time outdoors. The mist settles on the grass and landscaping and, as mosquitoes and other pests come into contact with the insecticide, they are killed. The systems are both very effective and safe.

While the margins from installation of the systems are attractive, our units make an ideal platform for our dealers to operate a highly profitable recurring service business.

Innovative Technology, Support and Training

MistAway is committed to innovation and our products are the most advanced and reliable in the industry. Our design and engineering is primarily driven by the ideas, experiences and feedback of our

dealers, who have installed more than 25,000 of our systems in the U.S. and abroad.

We offer unmatched technical and sales support and reliable, quick, friendly service. We also offer comprehensive, practical training with MistAway University, which is delivered online.



2121 Brittmoore #5200, Houston, TX 77043 | Toll-Free Customer Service Number: 866-485-7255 | mistaway.com



NAFA Fleet Management Association



Since 1957, NAFA has been the world's premier not-for-profit association for the fleet industry. Today, NAFA is the unparalleled organization for professionals who manage fleets of sedans, public safety vehicles, trucks, and buses of all types and sizes, and a wide range of military and off-road equipment for organizations across the globe. NAFA is the association for the diverse vehicle fleet management profession regardless of organizational type, geographic location or fleet composition.

NAFA provides its members with a full range of products and services, including statistical research, publications, regional chapter meetings, seminars, online information, and an annual Institute & Expo that is the largest, dedicated fleet management event year in and year out. Unique to fleet management associations is NAFA legislative counsels, located in Washington, D.C., and Canada. They provide a legislative voice for not only the association, but the concerns of the fleet management industry to government bodies.

The Association has several thousand full and associate



members in more than 30 regional chapters in the United States and Canada. NAFA's members manage fleets for corporations covering a wide range of manufacturing and service organizations, governments (whether local, state and/or federal), and public service entities (public safety, law enforcement, educational institutions, utilities, etc.); still other members serve financial institutions, insurance companies, non-profit organizations and the like.

NAFA members play an integral part in today's business environment, whether that is a corporate enterprise, commercial industry or public service. NAFA's full and associate members – regarded as the association's most important resource – maintain responsibilities for the specification, acquisition, maintenance and repair, fueling, risk management and remarketing of more than 3.7 million vehicles including more than 1.2 million trucks. NAFA members across North America have more than 420,000 medium- and heavy-duty trucks in their fleets, totaling more than \$21 billion in assets for medium- and heavy-duty trucks alone. The trust, loyalty and confidence that NAFA members hold in their association provide the fuel for excellence, growth and change for the entire fleet industry.

NAFA members' fleets are as diverse as the North American organizations they work for, from small fertilizer applicators and landscaping companies to international corporations that span continents. Our fleet manager members are instrumental in keeping businesses and local governments moving; and since 1957, our members have found the information, education and advocacy they need from NAFA. We think you will agree and invite you to take a new look at fleet management

Pennington® Seed

Introducing Pennington® Smart Seed® Pro. Specifically designed for the needs of the Professional Turf Manager.

As The Grass Seed People®, we at Pennington Seed set out to create the best-possible grass seed for the needs of the professional landscaper and sports field manager. The result – Smart Seed® Pro, professional seed blends and mixes with exceptional aesthetics, advanced genetics and industry-leading, water-saving technology.

Outstanding Turf Quality

The first job of the turfgrass professional is to provide excellent turf quality for his or her customers. We've combined our finest varieties to produce the best-performing product possible. Smart Seed® Pro varieties consistently score high on NTEP & CTBT turfgrass ratings, certifying outstanding quality. Our select mixes and blends offer the benefits of choice for the quality turfgrass manager:

- ▶ Superior dark green color
- ▶ Outstanding drought tolerance
- ▶ Improved disease resistance
- ▶ Improved wear tolerance

Technologically Advanced

Smart Seed® Pro is more than just a great-looking grass. It is the most advanced grass seed on the market today. Smart Seed® Pro mixes and blends are comprised of the most up-to-date, technologically advanced cultivars developed at NexGen Turf Research LLC, the largest private grass seed research facility in the United States.

All Smart Seed® Pro mixes and blends are treated with our patented MYCO Advantage™ technology. Beneficial micro-organisms attach to emerging seed roots promoting dense, strong root systems. Healthier roots grow deeper in the soil to give you better drought protection and greater ability to absorb nutrients.

In addition, all seed is treated with Pennington's exclusive Penkoted® Seed technology. Penkoted® seed contains a proven growth stimulant,



ensuring better plant growth and increasing survival rates by enabling the seed to establish faster during early growth periods when grass is most susceptible to disease.

Unparalleled Water Conservation

As demand for water increases, the use of water applications on landscapes, athletic fields and lawns is coming under increased pressure. To help reduce excess water use, Pennington Seed has committed to the research and development of new grass seed varieties that can survive with limited water. Water Star® is the Pennington Seed designation for grass seed varieties proven to use significantly less water based on independent testing performed by the Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance (TWCA), an external organization formed to evaluate and certify drought-resistant turfgrass varieties.

All Smart Seed® Pro mixes and blends use Water Star®-certified varieties. Extensive research has shown that Water Star® varieties in Smart Seed® Pro use up to 40 percent less water year after year than ordinary seed – that's thousands of gallons of water saved every year.

Guaranteed Quality

You don't have to take our word for it. All Smart Seed® Pro mixes and blends are Blue Tag-certified to guarantee quality. Blue tag certification insures varietal integrity and genetic purity of each seed. Yet another reason you can trust that Smart Seed® Pro is nothing

but the best professional seed you can buy.

Smart Seed Pro is available in Tri-Fescue Blend, Fescue & Bluegrass Mix and Athletic Field Mix.



P.O. Box 290, Madison, GA 30650 | Phone: 800-588-0512
Email: proturfsolutions@penningtonseed.com | penningtonusa.com

PermaGreen

2014 PermaGreen™ Triumph Spreader Sprayer: the machine you'll trust your employees to drive!



- Triumph's full-articulation and long wheel base won't beat up employees.
- Fingertip location of main controls help the operator keep both hands on the handlebars.
- Triumph is intuitive to operate with a short learning curve.
- No need to take chances riding difficult terrain. Just drop the handlebars and walk.

PermaGreen™ features that help reduce employee confusion and costly mistakes:

- No guessing if the spray matches the ground speed. The Triumph has two factory-set working speeds (3.5 and 5.0 mph) and matching factory-set spray widths for each speed.
- Our center-mounted, low-drift nozzle actually sprays wider than some booms!

Triumph spreads and sprays up to an acre per fill and in as little as 15 minutes, and comes closest to the goal of one machine, all properties, every day. Why trust your future to anything else?

One fully-loaded test drive is worth a thousand words! Call or visit us online for a demo location near you and a chance to win your own 2014 Triumph*.

**Details, limitations and exclusions available online.*

New 2014 Triumph features that earn your trust:

Our improved ExtraEasy power steering system dramatically reduces the muscle power your employee needs to control the machine in tight, high-speed maneuvers and tough terrain. You'll be impressed.

New Extended Warranties* including corrosion coverage:

- 60-day buyback Guarantee. You won't be stuck with a machine you don't want.
- 15-month PermaGreen™ Warranty includes engine, transaxle, and gearbox corrosion protection.
- 30-month frame and sully Warranty covers cracks and weld failures.
- Guaranteed same-day parts shipping. Parts orders received by 2 p.m. CT ship the same day, or the shipping is FREE!

Tried and true Triumph hillside safety features:

- The low-riding Triumph hopper and tanks are no more than 36 inches high for a truly low center-of-gravity with good weight distribution and better stability on slopes.
- Front-wheel-drive steering and all-wheel brakes help the operator keep Triumph under control and all four wheels on the ground regardless of the direction of travel on a hill.

permagreen



Polaris®

BRUTUS™



BRUTUS, a purpose-built commercial vehicle line from Polaris, is the first side-by-side utility vehicle in the market to deliver front-end power take-off (PTO) capability. Comprised of four models, the line was built to provide new levels of versatility and productivity to commercial users.

The full BRUTUS line includes standard features that are ideal for commercial applications. A 24-horsepower diesel engine with hydrostatic transmission, On-Demand True All-Wheel Drive, and treadle pedal for seamless — and shiftless — forward and reverse travel, provide operators with the power and functionality necessary on the jobsite.

BRUTUS vehicles can be paired with a complete line of purpose-built attachments that when used in conjunction, allows users to execute six diverse application with just one machine.

The BRUTUS HD vehicle is equipped to operate three hydraulically controlled attachments including a 69-inch snow blade, 450 pound capacity adjustable width pallet forks and a 62-inch materials bucket with 500-pound capacity.

The BRUTUS HDPTO model is capable of operating both the hydraulically-powered attachments as well as three PTO-powered attachments including a 70-inch angle broom, a snow blower with a 62-inch cutting width and a finishing mower

with a 66-inch cutting width.

As the first side-by-side utility vehicle line to use a multi-link coil over De Dion rear suspension, BRUTUS delivers a superior ride quality, minimizes suspension sag when the 1,250-pound capacity rear cargo box is fully loaded and maintains class-leading ground clearance when trailering with its 2,000-pound towing capacity.

Select models feature fully enclosed, factory-installed cabs with in-dash heat, defrost and air conditioning, keeping operators productive and comfortable no matter what the climate.

All models feature Polaris' exclusive Lock & Ride® cargo system, with a full line of cab, storage and vehicle protection accessories also available to meet each user's unique needs. BRUTUS vehicles come with a 12-month standard warranty.

About our products:

1. Four-model BRUTUS commercial utility vehicle line.
2. BRUTUS HD with optional hydraulically controlled materials bucket attachment.
3. BRUTUS HDPTO with optional PTO-powered finishing mower attachment.



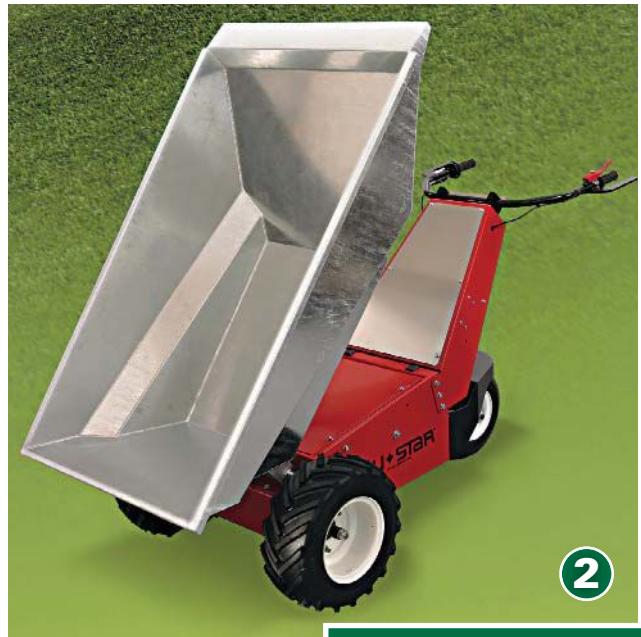


Power Pusher

E-750 Electric Wheelbarrow



1



2

The Power Pusher **E-750 Electric Wheelbarrow** is designed to safely, easily transport loads weighing up to 750 pounds. Available in stainless steel or heavy-duty, high-density plastic, the wheelbarrow is designed to improve safety and efficiency by eliminating ergonomic challenges and unnecessary production delays that are associated with manually operated wheelbarrows. Designed to minimize strain, the E-750 is ergonomic and provides push-button unloading capability.

Features and Benefits

- Available with a heavy-duty, high-density plastic tub or a stainless steel tub to handle diverse material-handling applications
- The motor, powered by a rechargeable 24v battery, can run five-miles on one charge
- Hauling up to 750 pounds at 3 miles per hour increases production speed and efficiency



About our products:

1. The E-750 Electric Wheelbarrow available in heavy-duty, high-density plastic
2. The E-750 Electric Wheelbarrow available in stainless steel

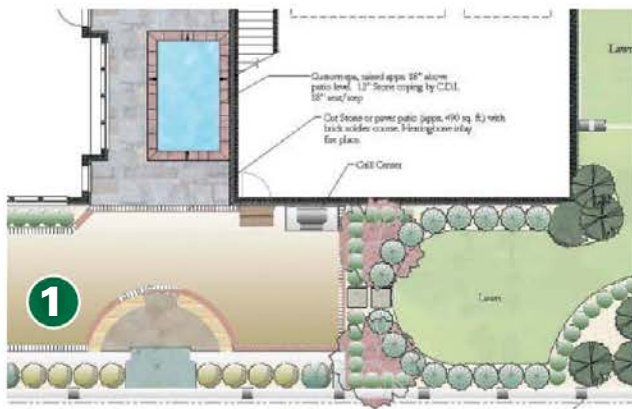
- A quiet motor is suitable for indoor use
- Bed capacity of 9 cubic feet allows the hauling of large loads in one pass
- Power dump feature allows users to eject materials with the push of a button on the wheelbarrow handle
- Durable, reliable construction is suitable for rocks, bricks, sand and concrete, fertilizer, sod, soil, mulch and many other materials

About NuStar Inc.:

NuStar Inc. is a global manufacturer of engineered solutions for material handling needs, with facilities in the US and UK. The company operates out of Shakopee, Minn., and, to date, its Power Pusher® division has sold more than 26,000 units worldwide. Years of experience as a leading designer, manufacturer and innovator in the industry have given us the competitive edge in providing reliable and cost-effective load-moving solutions that deliver tangible productivity and safety benefits in a wide variety of applications.

PRO Landscape by Drafix Software

Increase sales and improve design quality using PRO Landscape design software.



PRO Landscape is the most complete, easiest-to-learn and easiest-to-use professional landscape design software package you can buy. The software creates breathtaking visual landscape designs, 2D site plans, 3D representations and accurate estimates. PRO Landscape makes it fast and easy to plan, bid and sell your landscape designs.

➤ **Photo Imaging:** Use PRO Landscape's photo imaging to create a realistic visual representation of what your proposed landscape design will look like. Simply start with a digital photograph of your customer's house and then you can easily drag-and-drop your landscape items right onto the photograph. PRO Landscape's library contains more than 11,000 of the industry's highest quality images of plants, trees, shrubs, grass, mulch, hardscapes, water features, night and holiday lighting, or easily add your own. Easily create visual designs that your customers can understand.

➤ **PRO Landscape Companion for iPad/Android:** Go mobile with the first professional landscape design solution for your iPad or Android. PRO Landscape Companion allows you to easily create and edit designs right in the field using your



tablet. Impress your customers and outpace your competition by designing, presenting and closing the sale right on the spot.

➤ **Easy-to-Use CAD:** PRO Landscape allows you to quickly create scaled 2D-site plans that accurately represent your proposed design elements including plantings, hardscapes and irrigation systems. PRO Landscape keeps track of all materials, calculates hardscape areas and material volume of items such as rock or mulch. With a single click you can create a title block, callouts or a plant legend.

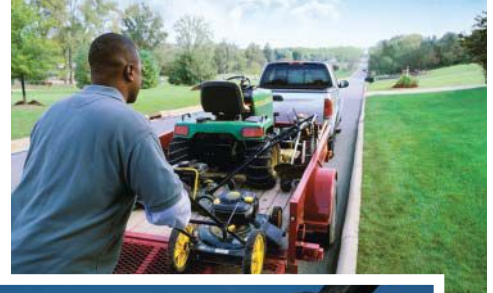
➤ **Customer Proposals:** PRO Landscape generates an accurate bid directly from your photo imaging or CAD files using your prices and tax rate. Once you create your estimate, put together a professional-looking customer presentation including the cover sheet, estimate, material list and plant information with pictures in just seconds!

➤ **Free Technical Support:** PRO Landscape comes with a 60-day money back guarantee, tutorial/training DVD and free, lifetime technical support.

About our products:

- 1.** Create accurate site plans with CAD software created specifically for landscape design.
- 2.** Create, present and sell your designs right on your tablet.
- 3.** Visually communicate design ideas to your customers.

Progressive



Should I keep a Comprehensive Only Policy in the offseason?

At Progressive, we'll work with you to find a policy that's right for your business. Just like you'd go to a doctor for medical advice, your agent or company should be able to help you find the right policy for your business. One question we hear often is, "Is a Comprehensive Only policy right for me?"

Sometimes we hear from landscapers like you about whether you need coverage during the off-season since you won't need your vehicles again until next spring. You might think: It's better to cancel the vehicle's insurance during the winter months to save some money, right?

Actually, a lot can happen to a vehicle in storage—even if it's covered in a garage. Your work truck could be stolen, vandalized or even slightly damaged, and those damages could end up costing more than you might expect. It's in your best interest to protect all work-related vehicles, regardless of whether they are in use or not.

Talk to your agent to identify which coverage options are right for you and your landscaping business throughout the year. Instead of eliminating coverage altogether, seasonal businesses can simply switch over to a Comprehensive Only policy. This provides basic protection

against incidents like theft, vandalism, falling tree branches and windstorms year round.

Another reason to maintain a Comprehensive Only policy is that most insurance companies want to see proof of continuous coverage when you purchase a policy. So, when you drop insurance completely during the off-season, it may seem like you're saving money in the short term, but when spring rolls around you'll end up paying more to get the coverage you need. Seasonal businesses can save money by maintaining continuous coverage throughout the off-season, and it also eliminates the hassle of reinstating your policy each year.

Whether you're talking to Progressive or your agent, we're here to help you with questions about your policy. It doesn't matter if you need to cover one truck, multiple vehicles or all of your mowers and equipment – there's a policy that will fit your needs. With more than four decades of experience in the commercial auto industry, we know that your time is money, so we work to get you back on the road fast.

PROGRESSIVE[®]
COMMERCIAL



Propane Education & Research Council



The Propane Mower Incentive Program offered by the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) is a research and demonstration program that provides incentives to landscape contractors for providing feedback and documenting performance data about their real-world experiences mowing with propane. PERC uses this data in the research, development, and demonstration of new



propane-fueled lawn care equipment.

New mower purchases and new mowers converted to run on propane are eligible for the incentive. By participating, landscape contractors can receive \$1,000 on eligible new mowers and \$500 on converted mowers. This incentive can be combined with other manufacturer and state-level propane gas association rebates.

To qualify for the mower incentive on conversions, the equipment must be a commercial mower operated for less than 10 hours. It also must be a dedicated propane-fueled mower and the conversion kit must meet Environmental Protection Agency or California Air Resources Board requirements. The conversion cannot void the original equipment manufacturer's warranty.

While participating in this program, landscape contractors can benefit not only from the monetary incentive, but also from the overall benefits of propane. Fuel costs have an enormous impact on landscape contractors' profitability, and the price of propane is competitive compared with other energy sources. And since propane



is an approved alternative fuel, there's less downtime as a result of ozone action days.

Landscape contractors who have switched to propane-fueled commercial mowers have seen substantial results with cost and time savings. Denison Landscaping and Nursery, a large landscape contractor based in Fort Washington, Md., knows firsthand about these benefits.

Vice President Elbert Monroe said the company saves an average of \$20 to \$30 daily for each propane-fueled 72-inch riding lawnmower. Monroe also said that his customers support Denison's use of propane-fueled lawn equipment.

"It's environmentally friendly," he said. "Customers like it that we're using a clean fuel."

For more information about the Propane Mower Incentive Program and how propane can benefit your business, visit www.poweredbypropane.org.



1140 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 1075, Washinton DC 20036 | Phone: 202-452-8975
 Fax: 202-452-9054 | propanecouncil.org

Quali-Pro

Trends in the lawn care market



What pests are lawn care operators (LCOs) 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 for the environment, so these insecticides do not offer the broad-spectrum insect control like the old chemistry (organic phosphates or carbamates, etc.).



JERRY CORBETT
TECHNICAL SERVICES MANAGER,
QUALI-PRO

Today we're treating for more specific insect situations. 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.

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.

What's new with Quali-Pro?

This has been an exciting year. Quali-Pro has launched many new and innovative products, such as **ABBA CS**, a new generation of Abamectin boasting a highly efficient technique for encapsulation with CapVantage Technology.

Three newly added herbicides include:

- **2DQ**, a three-way herbicide with 2,4-D, Dicamba and Quinclorac to provide superior control of annual and perennial broadleaf weeds.
- **NEGATE 37WG**, a unique, dual-powered, post-emergent Sulfonylurea herbicide with synergistic grass and broadleaf weed control in established warm season turfgrass, and
- **Quinclorac 1.5L**, a liquid herbicide that provides unsurpassed crabgrass control.

We also recently launched two new fungicides: **QUALI-PHITE F**, a systemic fungicide, and **ENCLAVE**, a flowable fungicide for horticultural disease control. ENCLAVE pioneers the first fungicide, with Quad-Control-Technology for control of many foliar, stem and below-ground diseases on a wide range of horticultural plants grown or maintained under a variety of conditions.

Quali-Pro delivers more value for your dollar and a product that guarantees satisfaction. Our innovative formulations are university-tested with proven results, designed to help you prevent and eliminate diseases, weeds and pests. By creating new and unique products, we help keep golf courses, lawns, landscapes, nurseries, greenhouses and other general maintenance areas looking and playing their best. We're making "basic" even "better," just what you'd expect from Quali-Pro, and you Know The Sign.

QUALI-PRO

Quality Turf & Ornamental Products



R&K Pump & Equipment



R&K Pump & Equipment manufactures sprayers for the lawn care, pest control, aquatics, nursery and agricultural industries. With 30 years of experience in the spray equipment industry, we produce more than 50 models with various pump, engine and hose reel options to meet every spraying need. Our exclusive all-welded aircraft-grade aluminum frames allow us to produce a high-strength, lightweight piece of equipment that will never rust and never needs painting.

Manufacturing facility:

Located in Pompano Beach, FL, since 1980, R&K is proud to be an American manufacturer. All welding, fabrication and assembly is completed in-house to ensure quality control and on-time deliveries. Our shops are organized into work cells that can easily be adjusted to build a custom unit or 100 production units just as efficiently. We manufacture for some of the largest fleets in the lawn care and pest control industries and provide maintenance for more than 1,500 commercial spray units.

Major product lines:

- **Lawn/Turf Care Trucks.** Truck-mounted spray systems are available from 200 to 1,600 gallons. We offer complete turnkey body and chassis combinations, or we can custom build on your existing vehicle.
- **Pro-Series Skid Mounted Units.** Skid units range in size from 50 to 600 gallons with poly or fiberglass tanks and more than a dozen pump and engine combinations. These units offer exceptional service at an economic price.
- **Portable Commercial Sprayers.** Our 50-, 100- and 200-gallon 4-wheel carts and 2-wheel trailers are available with boom spray options and hose reel accessories to match any spraying application.



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Rain Bird



Rain Bird® ESP-Me provides versatile control for residential and light commercial sites

Contractors often have to learn to install and program two or more different irrigation controllers to meet the needs of their diverse customer base. Others keep things simple by specializing in either residential or commercial systems—but end up limiting their growth and new job prospects. There’s a solution that offers contractors the best of both worlds—the Rain Bird® ESP-Me Modular Controller.

The ESP-Me controller builds upon all of the best features of its trusted predecessor, the ESP Modular. However, while the ESP Modular was limited to 13 stations, the ESP-Me offers the highest station count in its class. Simply install the optional three-station or six-station modules and expand the ESP-Me from its standard four stations all the way up to 22 stations.

With the ESP-Me, there’s no need to stock multiple controllers or teach crew members how to install and program them. This saves space on work trucks, ties up fewer dollars in inventory and decreases labor costs. These factors, combined with the ESP-Me’s highest-in-class station count, make this controller an outstanding value. By using the ESP-Me, contractors can save money, pass those savings on to their customers and potentially win more jobs.



About our product:

1. The ESP-Me controller expands from four to 22 stations, making it ideal for both residential and light commercial sites.
2. With the ESP-Me, contractors can stock a single controller, saving space on work trucks and tying up less money in inventory.

The ESP-Me also offers a number of new, useful features that save contractors time and money. The Delay Watering feature allows users to easily postpone irrigation for up to 14 days and then automatically return to their normal watering schedule. Some landscaped areas aren’t easily reached by rainfall—like those shadowed by a deck or an overhanging eave. ESP-Me users can simply choose to bypass the rain sensor for those stations. The Seasonal Adjust by Program feature allows users to reduce watering to as little as 5 percent of the scheduled program times in cooler, wetter conditions or increase it by up to 200 percent during warmer, drier weather. The Total Run Time Calculator automatically tallies up the total amount of time a system is scheduled to run for any given program. On the rare occasion that the ESP-Me experiences electrical or programming issues, a bright red LED will either stay illuminated or flash, depending on the condition. Scrolling messages across the display alert users to a problem.

By combining practical features with a versatile station count, the ESP-Me helps contractors keep things simple while serving a larger customer base.



Schiller Grounds Care

Schiller Grounds Care creates and brings to market a broad variety of landscaping, gardening and turf care equipment for residential and commercial use under the brand names of BOB-CAT, Classen, Little Wonder, Mantis, Ryan and Steiner. For nearly 100 years, professional landscapers and home gardeners have trusted these industry-leading brands to maintain and transform landscapes across the globe.

The Schiller Grounds Care brand/product lineup includes: BOB-CAT commercial and residential walk-behind and zero-turn mowers, Classen aerators, dethatchers, overseeders and sod cutters, Little Wonder landscaping & debris management equipment, Mantis tiller/cultivators, composters and handy yard care tools, Ryan turf renovation equipment, and Steiner tractors and attachments.

New products from Schiller Grounds Care include:

➤ **BOB-CAT CRZ** – All of the power and performance of a BOB-CAT professional zero-turn riding mower harnessed for the homeowner. BOB-CAT consistently delivers the most “beast for the buck” in the industry and the brand’s first zero-turn riding mower designed for the homeowner is no exception.

➤ **BOB-CAT XRZ** – Introducing the new BOB-CAT XRZ – a CRZ for the large property owner with enhanced comfort and performance features that are attractive to the commercial cutter as well. The new BOB-CAT XRZ (shown above) features a 3100 Hydro-Gear transaxle, deluxe seat for all-day riding comfort, and 22-inch rear drive wheels for surefooted agility and a smooth ride on hilly and undulating terrain. Get a sneak peak and test drive the new BOB-CAT XRZ at this year’s GIE+EXPO. GIE+EXPO Exclusive!

➤ **Classen Reciprocating Aerator** – As easy to operate and maneuver as a 21-inch mower with eight core tine rods that easily



penetrate even the most compacted soil. Productivity: 450 tine revolutions per minute, covers up to 26,000 square feet per hour, providing more aeration holes per square foot than traditional drum-style, walk-behind aerators.

➤ **Little Wonder Hydro Brush Cutter** – The newest brush cutter from Little Wonder (BRC-26) features a rugged design that stands up to your biggest brush-cutting challenge. Top-of-the-line features include: Hydro-Gear T2 Hydrostatic Transaxle, 28-inch cutter deck, 26-inch reversible cutter blade, solid linkage controls, speed control dialer, and puncture-resistant X-Trac tires.

➤ **Ryan Lawnaire Aerator with EST** – New Easy Steer Technology enables the industry-leading Lawnaire IV & V walk-behind aerator to easily steer while the tines are in the ground. Intuitively responsive, the EST’s outer tines rotate faster as the operator steers left or right, embracing turns while maintaining deep core penetration. See how easy turf aeration can be when you take control with the new Ryan Lawnaire with EST.



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Facebook.com/bobcatmowers Youtube.com/classenturfsolutions | Youtube.com/ryanturfrenovation | Facebook.com/ryanturfcare

SourceOne



Since the introduction of our first PLUGR® walk-behind aerator almost 20 years ago, the same attention to design details, efficient quality-oriented manufacturing and superior customer service that serves us well in other industries has defined our commitment to our green industry customer base.

Traditional aerators from the major-name manufacturers have been hard-to-control, tiring-to-operate, heavy, complex machines with rotating sheet metal spoons. SourceOne's PLUGR line offers an alternative that is safer to operate, maneuvers with relative ease, has fewer components and increases productivity on typical residential and commercial applications. PLUGR's unique cam-powered design punches cleaner, deeper holes in tough soil conditions and is easy to maintain, reducing costly downtime. No messy water ballast or heavy add-on extra weights either!

Specific product advantages include:

- SourceOne offers the widest range of aerators for every size and type of aeration job.
- Unload and go! No extra weights to haul or water bins to fill and empty.
- Closer core pattern eliminates the need to aerate twice to reach optimal aeration results.
- PLUGR offers the narrowest aerator in the industry.
- PLUGR's reciprocating tines create deeper cores in tougher soil conditions without extra ballast or effort.

- PLUGR offers great rental units for homeowners or small operators.
- Loading, unloading and operation are easier with lighter machines with no added weight needed.
- Fewer tines means lower maintenance cost and less downtime.
- Add a StepSavr sulky for ride-behind operation.
- PLUGR Pro VS allows you to determine a comfortable operating speed from approximately 2.5–3 MPH.

About our products:

- 1.** PLUGR PL845 Pro VS offers operator-controlled, variable-speed aeration.
- 2.** SourceOne's EZ Haul transport ramps can be installed on most vehicles.
- 3.** SourceOne's DT220 dethatches and can overseed or fertilize simultaneously.

Never content to rest on our laurels, we continue to make improvements to existing models and add new turf equipment to our line. For 2013, we have redesigned our complete 30-inch, eight-tine PLUGR lineup with a new unibody design and added the PL845 Pro VS, the first variable-speed reciprocating aerator on the market. The introduction of the VersaTow model with variable width wings and built-in weight, plus both tow-behind and three-point hitch options, added tow-behind capability for both aerating and slicing. Walk-behind turf renovation options include the SL220 Overseeder for combined slicing and seeding and the DT220 Dethatcher with fixed and flail blade power raking capability.





Syngenta

Syngenta understands turf. We can support your business with proven lawn care products and sound agronomic support.

What sales and technical support does Syngenta offer its customers?

Syngenta is a leading supplier of pest control products for turf. Leverage our knowledge and expertise when you work with the largest sales force in the turf pest control industry. Our experienced team also includes four field technical managers who can help you understand your most challenging turf issues, and who are determined to find the best solutions so you can deliver superior results for your customers.

What are the “must have” products for the lawn and landscape industry?

Year-round, Syngenta has the products that lawn care professionals need to manage the weeds, insects and diseases that pressure residential lawns and commercial properties.

Start your year with **Barricade® herbicide**. Barricade prevents more than 30 weeds, including crabgrass, from emerging. Supported by a guarantee for season-long control, Barricade is available in both a liquid and dry formulation, including on-fertilizer. Tank mix Barricade with other herbicides to broaden its spectrum of control or even manage

weeds post-emergently. Mix it with **Acelepryn®** insecticide to control both grubs and crabgrass all season long with just one application.

Acelepryn insecticide is based on a unique class of chemistry providing unmatched, season-long grub control with a single application in April or May. It also controls turf caterpillars with that same application and is available on fertilizer.

Customer upsells are a profitable part of a lawn care professional’s business. Above and beyond your typical yearly rounds, consider the following:

Tenacity® herbicide can be used in lawn renovation and over-seeding projects. It can be used prior to seeding, at seeding and after seeding to reduce weed competition, allowing new seedlings to establish strong root systems before the cooler weather arrives.

Advion® fire ant bait is effective and fast-acting, ensuring control of fire ants in 24-72 hours. It’s effective on all life stages.

Manage summer turf diseases with **Headway® G** fungicide. Headway provides long-lasting broad-spectrum control, up to 28 days, for brown patch, dollar spot and anthracnose. The DG Lite™ carrier dissolves quickly to deliver the effectiveness of a spray with the convenience of a granule.

Does Syngenta offer rebates?

Cash flow is an important part of your business. Syngenta offers the SummerPay™ program that extends



payment terms until July 11, 2014, on orders placed by Feb. 28, 2014. The Syngenta 2014 GreenTrust™ 365 Lawn & Landscape Program provides outstanding value throughout the year. Purchase a minimum of \$5,000 worth of qualifying products during the early order period (Oct. 1 through Feb. 28, 2014) and receive rebates throughout the year on other Syngenta products, including a rebate of up to 14 percent on purchases of Barricade herbicide.

To learn more about Syngenta products, services and the Early Order Program, visit GreenCastOnline.com or call 1-866-SYNGENTA (796-4368).

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U.S. Lawns

Since 1986, U.S. Lawns has dominated the commercial grounds industry by combining national brand strength with a network of locally owned franchises. Using this model, we set the standard for both performance and service in commercial landscaping.

From our home office in Orlando, Fla., we proudly select and train community leaders to do business wearing the U.S. Lawns star. Today, a dedicated team of men and women in more than 250 locations make up our franchise network. All are equipped with the processes and standards you'd expect from a national chain. All are united by a passion for service to our neighbors. Since every U.S. Lawns franchise is locally owned, their customers' grounds are truly an extension of the franchisee's backyard. That's where we got our tagline, "Your turf is our lawn." From retail to restaurants to office parks to apartment complexes, our mission is to beautify communities and help local businesses grow.

As the nation's largest provider of commercial grounds care, we focus solely on commercial properties, serving property managers and owners.

When independent landscapers convert their business to a U.S. Lawns franchise, they still own their business, but would then operate under our nationally recognized brand name with proven systems, tools and support. They would no longer be alone in their business. We have eliminated the guesswork and uncertainty that hinders small-business start-ups. U.S. Lawns Regional Franchise Advisors work one-on-one with them for any agronomic help, sales and business plans and business building. Franchisees receive ongoing mentoring in bidding and estimating, financial management, routing and scheduling, marketing and customer acquisition. They also benefit from our corporate purchasing power for equipment and supplies. We offer support and training for office procedures and human resource needs.

Like family and friends, we are here to support our franchisees' success every day. In addition to the support in their local market, U.S. Lawns has a full support team at the home office for marketing, accounting and business assistance. We will always be here to help with anything our franchisees need. But don't take our word for it, call our franchisees and ask them about it.



U.S. LAWNS®
Your Turf. Our Lawn.



Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting



Headquartered in Simi Valley, Calif., Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting has been a leading supplier and innovator in the architectural and landscape lighting industry since 1984. Vista designs, manufactures and supplies a wide range of distinctive lighting fixtures, transformers, HID ballasts and accessories for both the low-voltage and line-voltage lighting markets.

Why Landscape Lighting? Today's homeowners see their landscape as a source of pride, a refuge for relaxation and a place to enjoy good times with family and friends. Vista products bring these spaces to life after the sun goes down, providing an unmatched aesthetic effect while adding safety and usability.

Why Architectural Lighting? The addition of architectural-grade lighting to a project adds a new dimension of beauty, safety, security and usability. Whether the application is commercial, industrial, institutional, or a public area, Vista products can help today's professional designers deliver on the toughest requirements. Each Vista architectural-grade fixture is designed for maximum efficiency and easiest ongoing maintenance for the lowest total cost in both installation and everyday use.

Vista's range of designs and finishes are an ideal complement to residential, commercial, public area, resort and institutional applications.

The company's revolutionary MR-16 LED Lamps offer outstanding performance even in the harshest outdoor environments. Professionals can use MR-16 LED Lamps to upgrade existing landscape lighting installations to the energy-saving benefits of LED. Patent-pending advanced thermal management effectively dissipates heat away from the lamp's LED and driver, contributing to a longer life of up to 35,000 hours. Consistent, warm white light and high-performance optics with beam-spread options of 25, 36 and 60 degrees make the MR-16 LED Lamps not just practical but attractive and precise.



Designed for performance but priced for every job, Vista's 5000 Series Up & Accent Fixtures combines the best of both worlds: the energy savings of LED with the flexibility and performance of Vista's MR-16 LED lamps. Providing up to an 80 percent energy savings over standard halogen lamps, Vista's high-performance MR-16 LED lamps maximize energy savings and minimize maintenance. The Series' compact design enhances aesthetics and allows for maximum light output that can be conveniently concealed throughout the landscape, even within tree branches. Additionally, because each fixture is shipped with a factory-installed 4.5- or 5.5-watt LED lamp, no assembly is required, resulting in optimum jobsite convenience.

All products are custom built and American-made at Vista's headquarters and shipped within 24 hours of an order being placed. The innovative company has a well-established reputation among lighting designers, engineers, architects, distributors, contractors and property owners for delivering high-quality products and outstanding customer support. More than 2,500 distributor locations worldwide stock Vista products and provide local product support.



**LANDSCAPE
LIGHTING**

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Western Products



For more than 60 years, WESTERN® snowplows have been the choice of the professional plower. New models for 2013 include:

➤ **MVP 3™ V-plow:** The MVP 3 offers a whole new slant in V-plow performance and durability. Featuring a flared blade design, standard UltraLock double-acting cylinders, a patented trip-edge system and a reinforced structure, the MVP 3 provides all the performance features needed for unmatched plowing productivity.

➤ **PRODIGY™ Multi-Position Winged Plow:** The PRODIGY features a patented mechanical wing designed to automatically position the blade wings for maximum plowing efficiency. The multi-position blade is equally adept at straight-ahead scooping or angled windrowing and is as easy to operate as a straight blade plow. The PRODIGY is available for trucks and skid-steers.

➤ **PRO PLUS® and PRODIGY Skid-Steer Plows:** The PRO PLUS and PRODIGY skid-steer snowplow models feature a universal mounting plate for fast attachment and are powered by the skid-steer's auxiliary hydraulic system.

➤ **PILE DRIVER™ Containment Plow:** WESTERN's line of heavy-duty containment plow models are designed for use with skid-steers, backhoes or wheel loaders. The PILE



DRIVER is available in sizes ranging from 8 feet to 16 feet and feature a quick attachment system suited to each form of heavy-duty machinery.

➤ **Tornado™ LT and WB-100B & WB-160D Salt Spreaders:** WESTERN's Tornado LT ½ cu. yd. hopper provides excellent de-icer spreading performance for smaller applications. The WB-100B and WB-160D walk-behind spreaders ensure even salt spreading for sidewalks and feature corrosion-free polyethylene construction.

Manufacturing Facilities:

Western Products' 150,000-sq.-ft. manufacturing facility is in Milwaukee, Wisc. As a division of Douglas Dynamics, LLC, the country's leading manufacturer of snow and ice removal equipment, WESTERN® products and components are also manufactured in the Douglas Dynamics Rockland, Maine, facility.

About our products:

1. MVP 3 V-Plow
2. PRODIGY Multi-Position Winged Plow

WinField™

WinField™ Turf Tech Tool 3.0



Why is data important?

As the adage goes, those who don't learn from the past are doomed to repeat it. The same can be said for turfgrass managers.

With hundreds of turfgrass varieties on the market today, landscape professionals are often overwhelmed when it comes to selecting the optimal seed variety for their lawn based on their unique environmental and agronomic requirements.

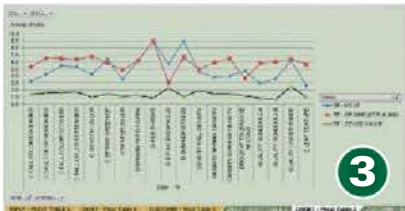
The WinField™ Turf Tech Tool 3.0 is a software platform designed to work in conjunction with the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, the nation's premier database which features comprehensive

turfgrass data from across the country dating back more than 30 years.

Using historical research data is the best barometer to gauge how a certain seed variety will perform in your

environment. The WinField™ Turf Tech Tool 3.0 brings previously stagnant and largely hidden data to life with visual representations generated by desired user inputs.

Prior to the WinField™ Turf Tech Tool 3.0, few people knew how to access and calibrate this data. What used to take hours now takes minutes. The WinField™ Turf Tech Tool



3.0 not only makes data more searchable and chartable, it allows landscape professionals to glean actionable insights from multiple data sets with only a few clicks.

How it works:

WinField's professional sales representatives work closely with professional turf managers to establish their individual requirements and expectations. Specific varieties can also be evaluated on national, regional and state levels to determine the best varieties for local-specific situations.

Say for example, a turf manager is struggling with brown patch. They can select, sort, filter, compare and chart more than 1,500 varieties of grass to see which ones fit their specified parameters for brown patch resistance, as well as other qualities such as drought tolerance, improved density, color or quality.

Improved management systems

The WinField™ Turf Tech Tool 3.0 application is more than just choosing the right turf variety. It gives landscape professionals improved control of not only performance, but information impacting several other critical considerations such as chemical treatments, water management needs, mowing requirements, staffing and more.

At the intersection of "Big Data" and real-time, high-quality management decisions, the WinField™ Turf Tech Tool 3.0 gives turf managers the level of foresight they need to be successful.

About our product:

1. Thirty years of historical turfgrass data provides the foresight needed to be successful.
2. Establish individual requirements and expectations for your lawn.
3. Compare and chart past performance of more than 1,500 grass varieties.

WINFIELD™

1080 County Road F West, Shoreview, MN 55126 | Phone 855-494-6343

winfield.com | Facebook.com/winfieldinsight | Twitter.com/winfieldinsight | GIE+EXPO booth #10062

Wright Manufacturing

When the first Wright Stander® rolled off the assembly line in 1997, it didn't simply introduce a new mower design. It created a better way to mow.

The first Wright Stander brought unprecedented agility, speed and safety to lawn maintenance professionals with its patented zero-radius turn, stand-on design. Its operating experience delivered greater comfort and ease of use, and its superior craftsmanship resulted in rock-solid reliability—yielding higher productivity and profitability. Today, every Stander and Wright mower continues to deliver these results.

This commitment to quality and innovation reflects the vision and values of Bill Wright, founder and CEO of Wright Manufacturing. Wright focuses solely on manufacturing the best commercial mowers available anywhere.

Since the introduction of the Stander, Wright has continually refined and enhanced their full line of Standing mower designs, keeping them, literally, on the cutting edge of mowing technology. Today, professionals everywhere still recognize the Stander line as the industry leader in performance and quality—truly the **Stander of Excellence.**

Wright offers a full line of professional mowers and accessories that include:

Stand-On Mowers

Stander mowers enable operators to easily shift their weight and positioning for optimal control over changing terrain and in tight spaces.

- Stander
- Stander I
- Stander X
- Stander ZK
- Stander RH



Sit/Stand Mowers

Sport models allow operators to sit or stand for maximum comfort and maneuverability in a variety of environments.

- Sport X
- Sport RH

Mid-Mount Z

Wright Mid-Mount Z mowers are among the lightest and most agile in their class.

- Mid-Mount Z
- Mid-Mount ZTO

Walk-Behinds

Velke mowers feature a compact design as well as the option for use with Velky sulkies for "ride-behind" convenience.

- Velke Gear Drive
- Velke Hydro

Accessories

Wright accessories enhance the performance of Wright mowers and provide years of reliable performance.

- Grass Gobbler
- Grass Collection system
- Velke Sulky
- Velke Sulky X2



LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

GIE+EXPO/HARDSCAPE NORTH AMERICA PRODUCT DEBUTS



Water-conserving cultivars

The TWCA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to research and education for the improvement of the environment through water conservation. Some TWCA cultivars can save more than 50 percent of the water needed to keep other cultivars of the same species acceptable. TWCA trials have determined a correlation between the green color measured by digital image analysis to gallon usage and evapotranspiration (ET).

Turfgrass Water Conservation Alliance // TGWCA.org
Booth #486

Defendor

Save time and reduce labor costs by applying Dimension 2EW plus Defendor specialty herbicides with your first application of the season.

When it's too cold for other herbicides to be effective, Defendor eliminates dandelion blooms and controls clover, chickweed and other annual and perennial broadleaf weeds, the company says.

Dow AgroSciences // DowProvesIt.com
Booth #1104



Design Pro LED hardscape accent lights

Now available in a 3-in. version, these 12V fixtures are designed for small application areas such as narrow columns, low-level step lights and corners. Three color temperature options are available (3000K, 2700K and 4200K), along with a range of finishes including textured architectural bronze, bronzed brass, copper, gray, sand and textured white.

Kichler Landscape Lighting // Kichler.com
Booth #1188



Compact wheel loaders

At 12 in. lower than other compact John Deere wheel loaders, the new 204K and 304K feature rigid front and rear axles to meet the 8-ft. height while lowering the center of gravity and increasing stability and the tipping load limit. The two new models can work in areas with restricted access, such as door and trailer openings.

John Deere // JohnDeere.com
Booth #1110

Stander I

The new Stander Intensity, or the Stander I, is equipped with the first 36-in. deck to incorporate Wright's AERO CORE technology. Its floating deck tilts side to side and front to back, to better follow the terrain contours. This new mower also will be available with a 48- or 52-in. deck; engines range from 18.5 hp to 22 hp.

Wright Manufacturing // WrightMfg.com
Booth #3094 (indoors) or #7624-D (outdoors)





GXR120

With a displacement of 121 cc, the new Honda GXR120 general-purpose engine can appropriately power 110- to 175-lb. rammers—equipment used to compact soil or other granular material—at multiple altitudes with ease. A cast-iron cylinder sleeve and a high carbon-steel, dual-ball bearing crankshaft provide improved engine strength for rammer applications.

Honda Engines // Engines.Honda.com

Booth #3118



BC1000XL

Complete with an 89-hp GM industrial 3.0L gas engine, the BC1000XL brush chipper is powered by an electronic fuel injection system. Patented SmartFeed technology helps monitor engine rpm and is able to automatically stop and reverse feed rollers when processing large, hardwood material. Operators have the option of choosing three different droop settings that adjust the rpm to fit specific applications.

Vermeer Corp. // Vermeer.com

Booth #3104



I-Core 3.0

The new version of the I-Core irrigation controller features a Solar Sync dial position and allows all sensor setup functions from the main control panel. The controller also permits a Solar Sync Delay feature, allowing the installer to specify a number of days before the controller switches to automatic adjustment mode.

Hunter Industries // HunterIndustries.com

Booth #3142

PC912

Billed as the “world’s first dust control power cutter,” the PC912 dry-cuts concrete and masonry products with virtually no dust. It meets dust standards of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in all 50 states, according to the company.

iQ Power Tools // iQPowerTools.com

Booth #4228



Enclave and Negate 37WG

Quali-Pro's Enclave is the first fungicide in North America featuring Quad-Control Technology to control major turf and ornamental diseases. In addition, Quali-Pro's new Negate 37WG herbicide features a formulation that allows turf managers to control more than 35 grasses. It inhibits the growth enzyme acetolactate synthase (ALS), providing fast and complete postemergent control, the company says.

Quali-Pro // Quali-Pro.com

Booth #4005

Exmark Advantage

Exmark will unveil its latest innovations in Louisville, including its expanded electronic fuel injection propane line, new rear-discharge cutting decks on the Lazer Z S-Series, a revamped Turf Tracer wide-area walkbehind, new options for the Lazer Z X-Series, new accessories and more. While onsite, register to win a new Exmark Lazer Z, plus an all-expenses paid trip to the company's headquarters to see it come off the production line.

Exmark Manufacturing // Exmark.com

Booths #7080 (indoor) / #7444-D (outdoor)



Extreme Pro

The Scag Giant-Vac Extreme Pro leaf blower features a 17-in., six-blade impeller and a 26.25-sq.-in. discharge opening, as well as a two-year warranty for commercial use. Air output measures in at 2,824 cu. ft. per minute (CFM).

Scag Giant-Vac // Giant-Vac.com

Booth #7060 (indoor) / #6008-D (outdoor)

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Propane Mower Incentive Program

PERC offers two ways to save on propane-fueled mowers through its Propane Mower Incentive Program. Receive \$1,000 toward the purchase of a qualifying new propane mower or \$500 toward the conversion of eligible gasoline- or diesel-powered mowers to propane, on up to 25 mowers. Participants assist PERC in documenting the cost savings and benefits of propane-fueled mowers. Data collected is then used for new product development.

Propane Education & Research Council // *PoweredByPropane.org*
Booth #7094



Vanguard 810cc engine line

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power's new line of Vanguard 810cc engines for commercial zero-turn mowers are available in 24 or 26 gross hp models. The engine features 810 cc of displacement for higher torque and a new debris chopper fan that provides up to 30-degree cooler engine temperatures. Debris access panels allow for quick and easy maintenance.

Briggs & Stratton Commercial Power // *VanguardEngines.com*
Booth #7104



Pro-Turn 400

Gravely introduces Kawasaki Big Block engine options to the Pro-Turn 400 zero-turn mower lineup. The mowers also feature the industry's first air-suspension seat and a new effortless deck lift, the company says. A rubber isolated foot platform minimizes vibration for a more comfortable ride. Each gas and diesel mower has a 13.4-gal. fuel capacity.

Gravely // *Gravely.com*
Booth #7120



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Avant 2-stage Snowblower

The new Avant 2-stage Snowblower is powerful and compact, the company says. It's available in 48- or 60-in. models, and is shown here with the Avant 640.

AvantTecnO USA // AvantTecnOUSA.com

Booth #10080



EFI Z Master

Toro's expanded line of electronic fuel-injected (EFI) mowers includes additions to its Z Master Professional 6000 Series and Z Master commercial 3000 Series. Each is equipped with Kohler Command Pro closed-loop EFI engines that automatically adapt to load, weather, fuel and altitude changes for faster response and up to 25 percent better fuel economy, the company says.

The Toro Co. // Toro.com/professional

Booth #7148

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LI 700 with LECI-TECH Non-ionic Penetrating Surfactant is a spray adjuvant that delivers multifunctional properties as a surfactant, water acidifier and penetrant. It makes your herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and plant growth regulators work harder, the company says, by allowing droplets to penetrate to the plant on the plant's surface and in the plant's root zone.

Direct Solutions // AATDirectSolutions.com

Booth #9148



SuperMaxx II

Available in 3.3-, 4.3- and 6.0-cu.-yd. capacities, new SuperMaxx II spreaders feature an enhanced material feed system with a new stainless steel trough, where brine and salt are mixed before being delivered to the spinner. The exclusive cab-forward hopper boasts up to 33 percent better payload distribution, the company says, resulting in improved safety and reduced stress on the carrying vehicle.

SnowEx // SnowExProducts.com

Booth #9180



Spread it & Forget it

AAT has teamed up with Syngenta and Dow AgroSciences to offer end-users a single-application fertilizer solution: Spread it & Forget it controlled-release fertilizer is now available with Barricade or Dimension premium preemergent crabgrass control. This solution helps grow green, healthy turf while reducing crabgrass outbreaks, the company says.

Agrium Advanced Technologies //

AgriumAT.com

Booth #9168



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Sno-Thro with AutoTurn

New Auto-Turn technology is available exclusively on Ariens' two-stage Sno-Thro equipment, enabling operators to turn effortlessly without adjusting speed.

No manual adjustments are necessary, nor is there the need to take large loops during a turn, the company says. Instead, users make even, tight turns from the center axis of the machine.

Ariens Co. // Ariens.com/autoturn

Booth #7120

Pendulum AquaCap Shuttle

The new 220-gallon returnable, refillable packaging from BASF provides ease of use and eliminates triple rinsing and container disposal problems. The stainless steel container with electric pump and flow meter improves delivery accuracy of Pendulum AquaCap herbicide, with the preemergent active ingredient pendimethalin, which controls more than 40 unwanted weeds including crabgrass, spurge, oxalis, annual bluegrass and foxtail.

BASF // BetterTurf.BASF.us

Booth #TBD



XC Series of zero-turn mowers

This new commercial mower line from Altoz promises an array of features, including a maximum speed of 19 miles per hour; its Aero Deck System with 54-in., 64-in. and 72-in. widths available; a push-button operated electro-hydraulic lift for height adjustments in 0.25-in. increments; anti-scalp wheels; dual 7-gallon fuel tanks; and various operator-comfort elements.

Altoz // Altoz.com

Booth #11086



TurfTeq Edger Attachment

The new Turf Teq Edger Attachment for Walker Mowers can edge landscaping beds up to 250 ft. per minute. The grooming blade cuts up to 4.5 in. deep. Designed for redefining a sharp edge around trees, along flowerbeds or creating a new bed, it allows operators to edge beds quickly and accurately.

Turf Teq // TurfTeq.com

Booth #11036



www.turfbooks.com

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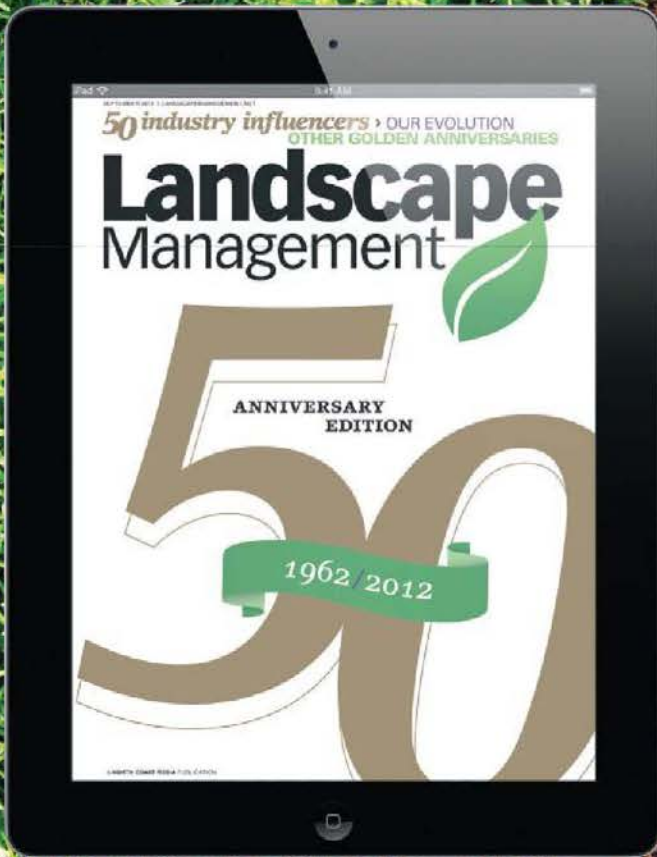
As an Owner, Manager, CFO and Industry Consultant, Dan has been involved with the development of several service companies from inception to \$15 million in annual sales levels and beyond.

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Glenn Jacobsen, LIC

president, Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction, Midland Park, N.J.



How'd you get your start? I get asked that all the time. I got in this business just like many others did, cutting lawns in the neighborhood. That evolved into going to college and into the design part of the business. I started my business in 1978 in high school. You can tell by the number of hairs on my head it's been 35 years.

What was your original company name? At first it was Jacobsen Landscaping & Tree Service because my dad had a part-time tree business. It evolved from that and after about 10 years we went to Design & Construction.

You're current president of the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET) board of directors. When did you first get involved with the association? What about your involvement has helped your business? It was ALCA back in the mid-1990s when I got involved. I went to a Green Industry Conference out in Fort Worth, Texas. I saw the industry as having a national presence and that opened my eyes. I got involved with committee work—membership and a few others. I did that until 2003-2004. Right before the [ALCA/PLCAA] merger I was on the ALCA board, then I was off for a couple years before joining the PLANET board. The No. 1 thing is just seeing other companies and the networking I've had the opportunity to do. You're not operating in a bubble, as you often do.

Any words of wisdom? You can't expand too quickly and overleverage yourself with debt. We've always been fiscally conservative as far as taking loans and we've grown organically versus through acquisitions. There are a lot of people who will lend you money and you can go into debt pretty quickly. We've never done that. I've always been wary of it, probably because of my wife, Melissa. She's CFO here and she's fiscally conservative. In the tough economic times, a lot of the companies that went out of business were overleveraged. We're virtually debt free.

Any advice for working with your spouse? Work with each other's strengths, know each other's weaknesses and separate duties as much as possible. It's the same as having any partner, as far as I'm concerned. With any partnership, you want to separate duties. We've been married 30 years. It's not easy to be in business with your spouse, but we've been blessed with different traits, personalities and skills. In the same respect, it's a blessing because we have the same end goal.

What's the best business decision you've made? Running it like a business, hiring the right people and building the right team. It's been said many times but there's so much truth to it: Hiring is not an exact science. You can do as much research as you want and try to fit people into the right positions. There are definitely some lessons learned, as far as thinking you have the right hire and 'Boy, what was I thinking?' As the company has evolved, hiring is what it's all about.

OFF THE CLOCK

TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

Our daughter Rachel, who's 24, is a special education math and science teacher at a charter school in Boston. Our son Christopher, 25, completed his master's at Harvard this past May and works in development at Hamilton College in upstate New York. He is getting married in October.

FAVORITE FOOD? Italian food.

WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELAX?

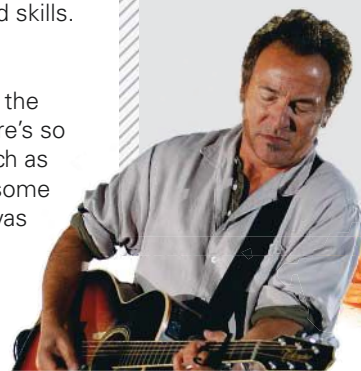
I enjoy outdoor activities. We have a lake house in New York state. I like sailing, not that I get a chance to do it too much. We're outdoor people.

FAVORITE MUSICIAN?

That's easy. I'm from New Jersey, so it's either Bon Jovi or Springsteen, but Springsteen is the guy. I've been to many of his concerts.

SO WHAT'S THE BEST SPRING-STEEN SONG?

My favorite is "Thunder Road." It has that great ending.



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