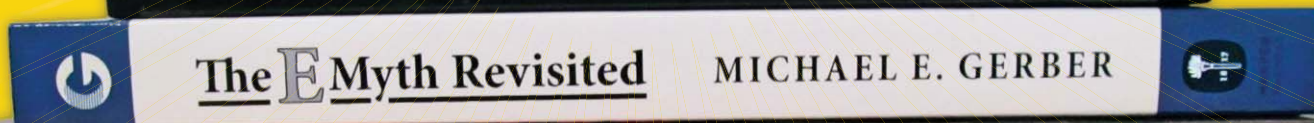


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# Landscape Management

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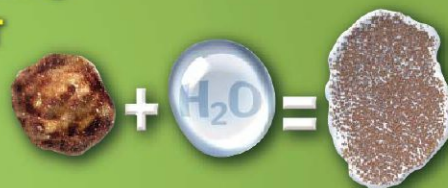


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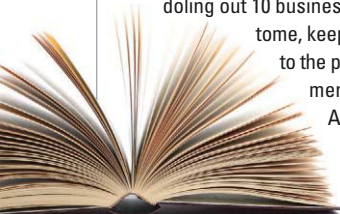
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## ICYMI: Business book giveaway

LM is hosting a business book giveaway in-hand with our February issue. We're doling out 10 business books, including those on this month's cover. To nab a tome, keep an eye on LM's Facebook and Twitter accounts and respond to the posts mentioning the book you'd like to win (favorites, retweets, mentions, likes and comments all qualify) by noon March 17.

All participants also will be entered into a drawing for the grand prize, a \$50 Amazon gift card, which will be awarded at the conclusion of the contest. For more details, visit [LandscapeManagement.net/BusinessBooks](http://LandscapeManagement.net/BusinessBooks).



### WEB EXTRAS Visit [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) > Click on Web Extras

- » Reference 1-Minute Mentor Terry Delany's "How We SERV" document for tips on how to manage relations with subcontractors and strategic partners (from page 52).
- » Get more on Michael Gerber's logic of "working on the business, not in the business" (from page 25).
- » Read an excerpt from *The E-Myth Landscape Contractor*, coauthored by Michael Gerber and landscape industry veteran Tony Bass (from page 25).
- » Another to add to the shelf: Jerry McKay details how reading Les McKeown's *Predictable Success* improved his business (from page 18).

## SEEN ON TWITTER

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@TheByrdsGroup:

RT Tom Canete and his "army" are ready to take on the snow should it fly on @nfl @SuperBowl Sunday. [ow.ly/talqt](http://ow.ly/talqt) @CaneteLandscape

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Transparency establishes credibility. CEOs should job shadow entry-level workers and get a new perspective! [ow.ly/tjmE5](http://ow.ly/tjmE5)

@batesbn: Wow: @houzz brings 4x the website traffic to @McKayLighting than all other #social-media sites combined! MT via @LandscapeMgmt

@PLANET2005: RT @LandscapeMgmt: "Do as I say, not as I do" doesn't work with children or adults." #LawnCareSummit



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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

# Recommended reading

**T**he Pew Research Center reported last month that nearly a quarter (23 percent) of American adults had not read a single book in the past year (that includes e-books and audiobooks). This number has nearly tripled since 1978, when Gallup reported only 8 percent of the population was non-book-readers. That figure hovered between 13 percent and 18 percent between 1990 and 2008. Suffice it to say, with the advent of mobile devices, social media and our "busy" culture, fewer people are turning to books.

For me, books are like movies in that a personal recommendation is required to get me to delve in. I can see what the masses are reading and watching by checking best-seller lists or box-office ticket sales, but I'm not forking over my money—or, more importantly, committing my time—without the good word of a trusted friend or adviser.

I know from our research and from talking with *Landscape Management* readers that you feel the same way about your time as I do about mine.

In my interview on page 24 with the author of *The E-Myth*, Michael Gerber, he confirms lack of time is one of the biggest problems plaguing small business owners. He adds that even if they did have more time to study how to improve their businesses, many wouldn't know exactly where to start.

So, that's what we're giving you here: A place to start. Starting on page 16 is our recommended reading list, courtesy of other landscape

and lawn care professionals who've learned a thing or two about improving their companies from the pages of a good book.

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body," some say. If you can find time to exercise to improve your body's health and fitness (or at least if you know you should be doing so), why not make the same commitment to reading to better your mind, and, in turn, your business?

The benefits of reading are countless. Studies show you may improve your vocabulary, boost your memory, become more emotionally intelligent and reduce stress levels by the simple act of reading regularly.

Think about it: Aren't the smartest people you know voracious readers? The best and brightest among us are those who constantly seek more information to either confirm or challenge their current belief systems.

While we'd love it if you could get every idea you need to run your company—whether it's a small tip or an entirely new business philosophy—from the pages in *LM* and our website, we'd be silly if we thought one source was sufficient. That's why we're referring you elsewhere.

I encourage you to add at least one of the books featured in this issue or in its associated online content to your reading list this year. Don't be a member of the 23 percent who go 365 days without picking up a book. Spend just a few minutes a day reading (or listening to) one of these recommended titles. You just might learn something.

# Landscape Management

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## ServiceMaster completes TruGreen spin-off

**S**erviceMaster completed the separation of its TruGreen business Jan. 14, according to a filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

Memphis, Tenn.-based ServiceMaster spun off assets and certain liabilities of TruGreen through a tax-free, pro rata dividend to private equity firm Clayton, Dubilier & Rice.

The deal first was announced in November during the company's third-quarter earnings call. The move was

expected to close by the end of 2013 but was delayed slightly due to logistical reasons.

"We believe the most effective way to realize TruGreen's long-term value is to have it operate as a standalone company," said TruGreen President David Alexander. "We have the right team and the right plan, and we're excited about the opportunity ahead of us. What we need to do now is stay focused, execute well and deliver more consistent, reliable performance over the long haul."

Alexander said the company is down about 300,000 customers compared to two years ago, the *(Memphis) Daily News* reported.

Green Industry observers aren't surprised ServiceMaster took action, considering TruGreen's poor results, but they're unsure what the outcome will be.

"It's kind of hard to believe (Clayton, Dubilier & Rice is) in it for a long-term fix, but who knows?" said Ron Edmonds, principal of mergers and acquisitions consulting firm The Principium Group. "I will be very surprised if they do any significant acquisitions in the next year. What I hear them say is they will be focusing on execution, including solving their systems issues and implementing new marketing programs, especially door-to-door neighborhood marketing."

## MAILBOX



### Systems = success

I love Marisa Palmieri's "Editor's Note" in the January issue of *Landscape Management* ("Frequency illusion"). You have corroborated the 'Shotzburgerian' approach to business: Process and systems equal successful growth.

I applaud your continuing efforts to improve our industry by challenging us to work smarter and get better. Using Weed Man USA as an example was the perfect choice. I'm a fan of Jennifer Lemke, one of the humble leaders in our industry.

**Tom Shotzburger**

General manager, Shreiner Tree Care  
King of Prussia, Pa.

### Eyes on Weed Man

"All systems go" is a great article and very cool journey this father and daughter have taken together along with their associates and franchisees. (It will) be great

to see if they can hit the 2023 Goals.

**Mike Rorie**

CEO, Go iLawn  
Loveland, Ohio  
*Via online comments*

We've been a Weed Man franchisee for 11 years. I can't tell you how proud we are to be a part of the Weed Man family. Roger (Mongeon) is a true professional that's led by example. We also have been able to apply Weed Man principles to the rest of our business, which has made us a better company. I feel confident that 2023 goals will not only be met but exceeded!

**Stephen Hillenmeyer**

Owner, Stephen Hillenmeyer Landscape  
Services/Weed Man  
Lexington, Ky.  
*Via online comments*



### Planting right

We appreciate Gregg Robertson's constructive article ("The invasion of the plant regulators" on the *LM* blog, Jan. 6.). It was educational and actionable. Well done!

I've shared it with a number of my PlantRight colleagues, our network of plant scientists and allies. PlantRight is partnering with California's nursery industry to tackle

the ornamental invasive plant problem in ways that make economic sense, including a plant risk evaluation tool. Thanks to the grant funding support of HRI, we're extending our research with this tool nationwide.

**Jan Merryweather**

Senior project manager, PlantRight  
San Francisco

Kudos? Complaints? Share your thoughts with the *Landscape Management* team by emailing [mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net](mailto:mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net).

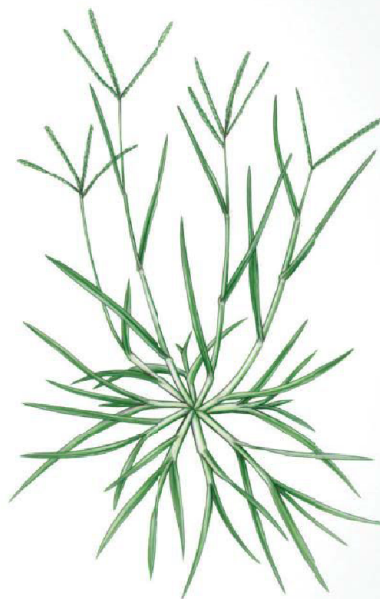




*Take a good look.  
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{fig. w-42}  
*Digitaria sanguinalis*



{fig. w-76}  
*Eleusine indica*



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## BESTPRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

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

# 5 ways to build bench strength

**E**arly December headline in the *Wall Street Journal*: “Employers Gain Confidence to Hire.” The national unemployment rate has dropped below 7 percent. For many, this is really good news and an indication the economy is finally coming back.

This news is on top of reports that the economy grew at 4.1 percent and 3.2 percent rates in the third and fourth quarters of 2013 (in terms of real GDP).

The Green Industry, like all industries, benefits from positive economic news. However, unlike many others, our business depends on adequate labor. These headlines, then, indicate trouble ahead for Green Industry companies to have sufficient labor for future opportunities.

And it's not just production labor we need. It's middle managers, administrators and salespeople.

You don't have to be a victim of employment trends. There are some best practices that have proven to help proactive companies. And the most important of those is building bench strength.

Five steps to a bench-driven hiring culture include:

➤ **Let your employees drive recruiting.** I've always believed in using employees to help recruit. If recruiting and hiring is done by the human resources person or department, employees become passive in helping to find good people. It becomes, “Not my problem. It's HR's problem.” Sound familiar?

The best recruiters are engaged, energized and happy employees at all levels. If you have good people with good values and good work ethics, they

probably have friends with the same attributes working elsewhere. Encourage them to bring their friends into the company.

➤ **Stay in hiring mode.** When good people become available, hire them. Find a place for them in your organization so you have them when needed. You can always eliminate a weak player to keep your costs in line. If you wait until you need someone before you hire, you risk settling for what's available versus what's optimal. If you settle over and over again, the result is a mediocre, turnover-prone culture.

➤ **Build with a culture of promoting from within.** Establishing a career path encourages employees to stay. If they see opportunities and know they'll be considered, they'll be motivated to perform and achieve. Promote this concept heavily throughout your organization. You cannot talk about it enough.

➤ **Create a profile of the ideal high-potential, success-driven entry-level employee.** What attributes will make him or her successful in your company culture? Create a document identifying these items and use it as a guideline for hiring. This process will help you be a little more selective and efficient. Invest quality time to get quality people.

➤ **Develop a “train your replacement” culture.** Every crew leader, for example, should be identifying whom among their crewmembers could replace them if they get promoted. Each manager should identify which people on his team are promotable and help them do what they need to do to be ready. If you don't have promotable people, you need to address that in your hiring processes. Profile and establish success and performance metrics at all levels.

Integrating these five steps will build a dynamic company culture populated with talented people who are committed to your business and want to get ahead, people who drive opportunity because they themselves want opportunity.

Watching your people grow is not only a beautiful thing, but the positive energy in your bottom line is contagious.

---

If you wait until you need someone before you hire, you risk settling for what's available versus what's optimal.



## The simple sales pitch

I received a lot of good feedback from my last column about the habits of successful salesmen. Thanks! There were many requests to provide more ideas on each of these habits, so here it goes.

The first habit is “keep the sales pitch simple.” In sales you’ll have greater success focusing on customer *benefits* over service *features*. For instance, telling the prospect that you’re better because you provide them with a dedicated account manager is good, but it’s only a feature. It’s not a benefit.

Demonstrating to the customer how this feature will get them answers when they want them or better—get them answers before they have to call you—is a benefit. When talking about valuable features, it’s imperative you marry them to a benefit statement.

For example, “When you work with us we dedicate an account manager to your property. He or she is your primary point of contact at all times. What this means is you’ll never be in the dark waiting for answers and, more importantly, you’ll get a plan showing you ways to manage your budget better and improve your property. Is this what you want?”

Let’s all agree that prospects are more interested in benefits that help them better manage their money, minimize their hassle and maximize their peace of mind than they are in the organizational structure of your company.

The successful salesman never forgets that customers are interested first and foremost in what’s in it for them. This is particularly true when it comes to talking about money. I said money, not price. The customer is spending money, but too many salesmen talk price instead of keeping the pitch simple and demonstrating how their services may help the customer spend money more effectively.

Here’s what I mean: Over the course of a few years, the landscape maintenance prospect will spend money in three ways with a contractor.

**1. Monthly maintenance:** This is not happy money and customers want to reduce it.

**2. Fixes (repair and replacement):** This is very unhappy money because it’s a “surprise.”

**3. Enhancement/improvement.** This is happy money and they like to spend more here.

The simplest pitch relates your service features to the prospect’s service experience. It may sound like this: “Our clients work with us because we help them manage their landscape dollars better. You’ll spend money in three ways with any contractor: **1.** monthly services; **2.** fixing, repairing and replacing things as they age like your irrigation system; and **3.** enhancement and property improvements. If you don’t spend enough on the first, you end up spending way more on the second, which leaves very little for the third. In your current situation where would you rather be spending your money?”

Now the effective salesman shuts up and gets the customer to talk.

That’s the purpose of your pitch: Get the customer talking about what he or she values other than the price of the monthly contract. If you can make this a habit, you’ll qualify better and separate the tire kickers from the buyers.

### Kevin Kehoe’s 6 habits of successful salespeople

1. They keep the sales pitch simple.
2. They’re grinders.
3. They’re direct.
4. They use a list.
5. They listen more than they talk.
6. They’re prepared for every call.

Read the original column from the November issue of *LM* at [ow.ly/r9MJl](http://ow.ly/r9MJl).



## Prompt & efficient

### WHY FILING CLAIMS QUICKLY IS GOOD BUSINESS

**A**N EMPLOYEE IS carrying a bag of mulch and throws out his back. It's nobody's fault—just an everyday accident—but now he's out of work for a few weeks. Back injuries are one of many common claims in the Green Industry. Others include trip-and-fall injuries, equipment-related accidents and, of course, vehicle accidents, among others. The truth is, given the nature of the industry, even the safest businesses often have accidents or unexpected situations that require filing an insurance claim. If a claim is necessary, filing both timely and efficiently is beneficial to your business and to your employees.

Although the filing process is easier than ever, businesses sometimes put it off. Whatever the reason, delaying the process can be a big mistake. The faster you file your claim, the better off you'll be. Filing your claim quickly and efficiently has benefits for you and the possibly injured party.

Fortunately, these days most businesses do recognize the importance of filing claims promptly. Thomas Richey, vice president property/loss control for Hortica In-

surance & Employee Benefits says most insured businesses are aware of the consequences of late reporting. These include losing credibility with employees, hurting employer/employee relationships and even possible litigation. Filing claims promptly helps maintain a strong business ethic and demonstrates that you care about your employees. In many horticulture businesses employees may be close-knit or even feel like family; maintaining that culture is important.

"The faster you get the injured employees care, the faster they are on the road to recovery," Richey says. "By doing this, there is a sense that the employer values their employee."

Of course, being prompt and fair with the treatment of your employees also can help avoid litigation costs. If injured parties go unacknowledged by your business, they may feel their only recourse is to contact an attorney. That can be avoided simply by getting the claims process rolling.

Today, the claims process is easier than ever. Online filing allows the insured to make the claim from the convenience of a computer. Those who prefer speaking to someone in person

simply have to pick up the phone. Given how easy the process is, there's no reason not to start it immediately. In fact, Richey says businesses should take advantage of same-day reporting. Avoid putting it off or even being "too late" to make a claim. "There is a statute of limitation which states the time frame in which an employee can make a claim," he says. "This time period varies from state to state."

#### What steps to take?

So how exactly should an accident or claims situation be handled? In the event of an accident, the very first step is to get prompt medical care for the injured. Emergency care always comes first. Once everyone has been cared for, the insured should make a call to his or her insurance carrier to begin the claims process. There's a lot of information required and the quicker you file, the more likely you'll be accurate.

The critical information

required at the time of filing, Richey says, includes the employee's name, address, date of birth, social security number, date of hire and wages; the date and time of accident; and nature of the injury. Be sure to have all of that information handy when contacting your insurance carrier.

Taking these actions quickly protects your business but also shows your employees that they matter to you and your company. Showing you value your employees protects the company culture and also may help prevent legal action.

"By showing this, the employee may think twice about getting representation," Richey says. "We have one insured who sends a gift basket out whenever one of her employees gets hurt. It's amazing how this one act has kept down the payout of each claim made. It's the little things that count the most and that includes prompt filing."



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## SMOOTH CRABGRASS

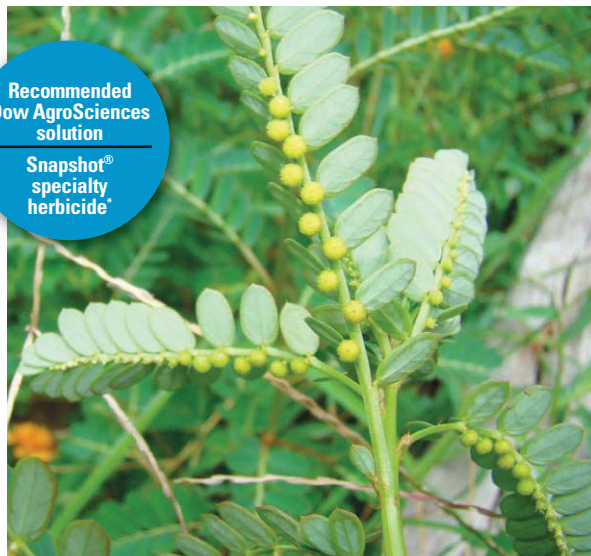
*Digitaria ischaemum*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This summer annual germinates when soil temperatures reach a consistent 55 F.
- ▶ It features rolled vernation and a prostrate growth habit.
- ▶ It can be distinguished from large crabgrass (*D. sanguinalis*) by the absence of hairs on the leaves and sheaths. Both species will grow under close mowing, but smooth crabgrass can survive and set seed at mowing heights as low as 0.25 in.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ When soil temperatures approach 55 F in late winter or spring, apply a preemergent crabgrass herbicide.
- ▶ Look for products containing the active ingredient dithiopyr. It provides season-long preemergent and early postemergent crabgrass control.
- ▶ Consult the appropriate product label for recommended rates for your area, as well as reseeding and overseeding recommendations.



## CHAMBERBITTER

*Phyllanthus urinaria*

### IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This summer annual is often found in ornamentals and landscape beds, but has recently become more problematic in turfgrass. It's also known as gripweed, leafflower or little mimosa, among other names.
- ▶ As a member of the spurge family, chamberbitter reproduces by seed found in the fruit attached underneath the branch.
- ▶ It's a small, erect plant with grooved stems, thin leaves and smooth margins. It grows from a well-developed taproot.

### CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ In turf, apply a preemergent herbicide containing isoxaben prior to germination. For landscape or container-grown ornamentals, use a product containing isoxaben and trifluralin.
- ▶ Apply preemergent products labeled for chamberbitter first in early spring and again two to three months later for season-long control.
- ▶ Hand weed any plants that may have emerged prior to application.

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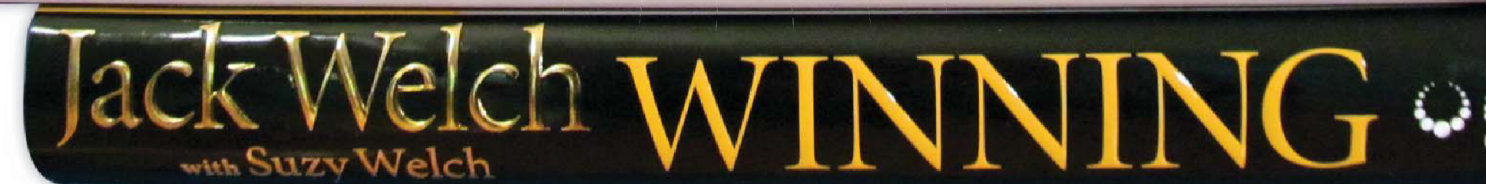
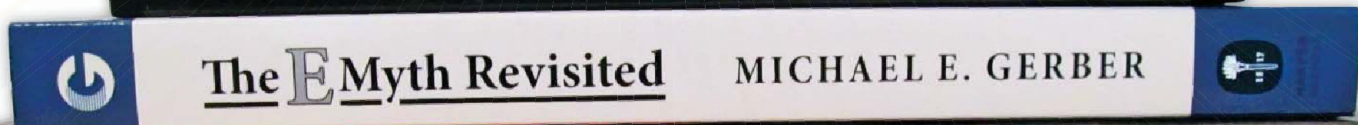




# 'THE BOOK THAT CHANGED MY BUSINESS'

Which titles have had the greatest impact  
on Green Industry companies? Four  
business owners share their must-reads.

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## By Bill Bemus

### PRESIDENT

Bemus Landscape, a \$21 million, full-service landscape company San Clemente, Calif.

***Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl is one of the most challenging books I've ever read. I**

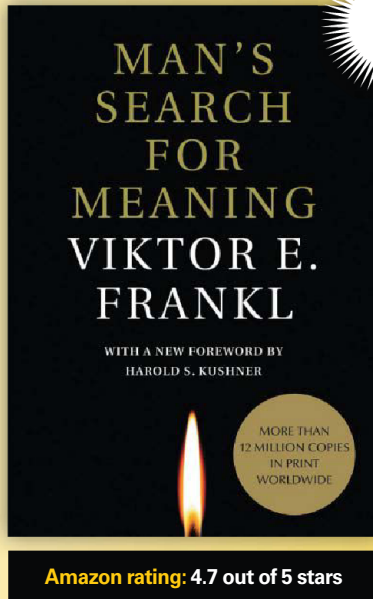
first became aware of Frankl about 20 years ago when as a company we studied another excellent book for business, Stephen Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Frankl was an Austrian psychiatrist who, along with his parents, brother and wife, was imprisoned by the Nazis in September 1942. He suffered unspeakable deprivation and degradation until being liberated by American forces in April 1945. Of those imprisoned, he was the only member of his family to survive.

Frankl wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* in 1945 and meant to publish it anonymously, not wanting to earn literary fame or profit from his experiences (he was persuaded otherwise by friends). The main part of the book, "Experiences in a Concentration Camp," describes (with a kind of eerie, clinical detachment) day-to-day life in the camp: the train ride to Auschwitz, being stripped of all clothes and valuables, the smoke from the crematorium chimneys, the cold and hunger, the guards and the deaths and suicides—the utter despair.

And yet, interspersed throughout this section are bolts of light: the ultimate freedom, no matter what the guards did, to choose his response (referenced by Covey extensively); the power of love; the necessity of having faith in the future; the power of hope; and, most importantly, the necessity of finding the why of existence.

Frankl says: "Woe to him who saw no more sense in his life, no aim, no purpose and therefore no point in carrying on. He was soon lost. The typical reply with which such a man rejected all encouraging arguments was, 'I have nothing to expect from life any more.' What sort of answer can one give to that? What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, fur-



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thermore, we had to teach the despairing men that *it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us.*"

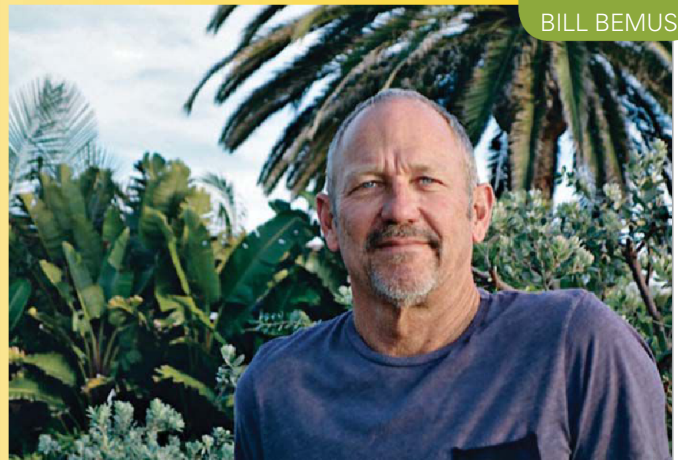
A second section to the book, "Logotherapy in a Nutshell," was added in 1962 in response to people wanting to understand more of his therapeutic doctrine. A third section, "The Case for a Tragic Optimism," was added as a postscript in 1984.

In this little book, the lessons and applica-

tions for any business or endeavor are myriad, but three in particular have been helpful to me as of late.

The first is to never give up or become hopeless in the face of adversity. Sometimes it feels like running a business—especially in California—is like playing solitaire. You start with a deck of 52 cards but the government removes a card from the deck every six months

BILL BEMUS



**“IN OUR INDUSTRY WE CREATE AND MAINTAIN BEAUTY, WE PROVIDE VALUABLE SERVICE TO OUR CLIENTS, WE PROVIDE JOBS AND OPPORTUNITIES; THESE ARE NOT INSIGNIFICANT THINGS.”**

## RECOMMENDED READING

or so and expects you to keep playing. That feeling of being victimized is unhealthy and needs to be resisted.

The second is to find or create meaning out of what seems to be mundane, day-to-day, trivial existence. In our industry we create and maintain beauty, we provide valuable service to our clients, we provide jobs and opportunities; these are not insignificant things.

Finally (and I will just quote Frankl here), "Don't aim at success—the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the byproduct of one's surrender to a person other than oneself. Happiness must happen, and the same holds for success: You have to let it happen by not caring about it."

When you reach a certain age (I'm 60) you begin to question what you've accomplished in life. Has it mattered that I've been here? Reading Frankl helped me understand that meaning and fulfillment are attainable without having to go far afield. Maybe it's moving past enlightened self-interest and into wholeheartedly trying to make a difference in people's lives; every businessman is connected to a lot of them.

## By Chris Joyce

### PRESIDENT

Joyce Landscaping,  
a \$9 million, full-  
service company  
Cape Cod, Mass.

**I tell anyone I know in business or any management structure, whenever we're talking about the frustrations of business, "You've got to read *Winning* by Jack Welch."**

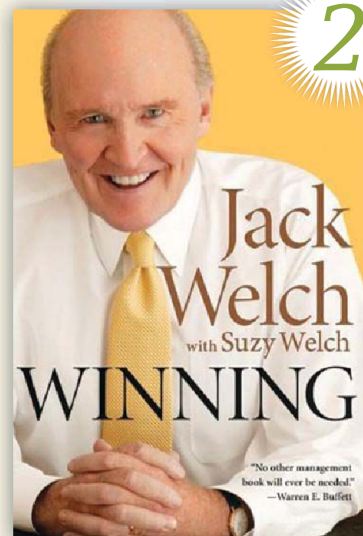
Welch is the former CEO of General Electric. He retired in 2001 and wrote a couple books. I think someone might have said to me, "You've got to read this book" or maybe I heard it on a news channel, but somehow I ended up with the book in 2007. That's when I read it for the first time. For me, who's not big into reading, it was riveting. I kept wanting more and more information he was discussing. I couldn't put it down. It doesn't get much activity anymore, though. I got lazy and bought it on CD. When I find myself in a rut I will throw it in my car and go through the discs. It energizes me.

I just love his approach and his stories. A lot of the stuff is human nature. It just represents itself differently. Basically, the title says it all. It's all about winning with people. In business you want to win and you win with people. It's simple.

The discussion on candor, which is in chapter 2, is probably the best chapter in the book. You have to have candid conversations with people. And that's probably our biggest challenge. Motivating people and understanding people is challenging. It gets frustrating at times.

He also talks about getting the right people on your team and how first you're the manager and then you have to be a leader yourself. You have to be a success individually before you can lead others. He breaks it up into your top 20, which is your top-end managers or your high performers. He delineates to your bottom 10, which you're going to push out of your organization, and then he says, "Your middle 70 is what you need to cultivate." Your middle 70 needs to be heard to be a part of the team. Instead of all decisions, policies and procedures being made from the top, he says to implement and develop a communication with


*continued on page 20*



**Amazon rating: 4.2 out of 5 stars**

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## RECOMMENDED READING

CHRIS JOYCE



**ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS OF *WINNING*:** IN BUSINESS  
YOU WANT TO WIN AND YOU WIN WITH PEOPLE.

*continued from page 18*

the middle 70 so they have a word and they have buy-in within the development of the business.

It made me realize I would constantly get frustrated with my middle group. After reading this book, it really made me open up my eyes and say: "That's human nature. That's what people are. Those people actually have a lot to offer." You have to cultivate those people through communication through your culture within your organization. The middle 70 is really what makes up your business. Successful, winning teams get the most out of their middle 70.

I find myself sometimes getting away from that (mentality) and that's when I have to revisit the book. I listen to it probably once a year when I find I have to kick myself in the ass a little bit. It actually is in my car right now.

—As told to Sarah Pfledderer

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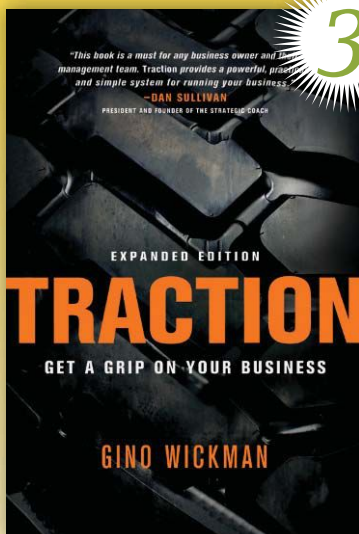
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Amazon rating: 4.7 out of 5 stars

## By Chris Clifton

### OWNER & PRESIDENT

Southview Design, an \$11 million, primarily design/build firm  
Minneapolis

### About three years ago I read Gino Wickman's book *Traction*.

Wickman is the founder of an organization called EOS Worldwide, a consulting and coaching group focused on helping companies in the \$2 million to \$50 million revenue range achieve and manage growth. *Traction* is the handbook that summarizes EOS's core teachings.

I bought Southview Design in 2009 when it was doing about \$5 million in sales. In spite of the recession, I felt the company had a solid foundation and the potential to grow. Though I've been involved with various businesses over the years, I was looking for tools to help me with this one. A friend gave me a copy of *Traction*, thinking it might provide some insight.

*Traction* builds on the idea that most businesses get to a point where management becomes frustrated because progress has slowed or stopped altogether. The book identifies six components essential for sustainable growth and profitability:

- › **Vision.** Leaders in successful companies not only have compelling visions, they know how to communicate them.
- › **People.** It's impossible to build a great company without help. Successful companies get the right people into the right seats.
- › **Data.** Wickman advocates use of a "scorecard," a weekly report containing five to 15 high-level, performance-indicating numbers or measurables.
- › **Issues.** Issues are the obstacles that must be faced to execute the vision. The good news is that in the history of business, there have only been a handful of different kinds of issues. The same ones come up over and over again. Companies that deal effectively with their issues achieve their visions.
- › **Process.** Successful organizations see their way of doing business clearly and work to constantly refine it. Key processes are well documented and followed by all. This is the most neglected of the six key components.



CHRIS CLIFTON

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## RECOMMENDED READING

► **Traction.** “Vision without traction is merely hallucination,” Wickman says. The “traction” component deals with action and accountability. The book says organizations should establish three to seven priorities, referred to as “rocks.” These are the organization’s most important priorities that must be accomplished in the next 90 days. This

component also deals with “meeting pulse,” a series of meetings at different levels of the organization, ultimately designed to ensure the company’s vision is achieved.

I found the advice in *Traction* to be simple and practical, based on the real world and not theoretical or faddish. Much of how I run Southview Design is

based on *Traction* ideas and I refer back to it on a regular basis.

Recently, we’ve refocused on the process component. Growth has stirred excitement in the organization, but it’s also added complexity and the need to hire more people. We need to make it easier for everyone to understand how we want them to do business. Right now we are in the midst of redefining and documenting any and every process we can think of.



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Amazon rating: 4.4 out of 5 stars

## By Richard Bare

CEO

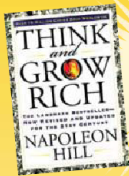
Arbor-Nomics Turf, a \$7 million, primarily lawn care company Norcross, Ga.

The premise of the book is that we all operate based on long-term assumptions that may not be true, even though they're logical. For instance, one would assume logically that if an employee wrecks a truck a few times, he or she would become a better driver. However, in real life, poor drivers have been proven to be just that, poor drivers. No matter how many times they wreck, they continue to do



Between the ideas gained from *Traction* and other improvements we've made to the business, our results have been good. We reached \$11.2 million in revenue in 2013 and I expect we'll continue to grow.

I recently read Wickman's follow up book *Get A Grip*, written in conjunction with his colleague Mike Paton. It's written in fable format and tells the story of an individual company working its way through the *Traction* process. I thoroughly enjoyed it as well and would recommend either book to anyone looking to grow a small business into a mid-sized one.



See "1-Minute Mentor" on page 52 for contractor Terry Delany's favorite book.

RICHARD BARE

**BARE ALSO RECOMMENDS:**  
*THE E-MYTH* BY MICHAEL GERBER AND *HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE* BY DALE CARNEGIE

it, because they drive differently. They're distracted, careless, unfocused and cavalier.

I read the book about five years ago when our company was 30 years old. I was 60. I knew from experience the basic tenets of the book were completely correct. I've only read it straight through once, but I refer back to it many times.

After reading the book, I tried to apply its main message to my business: "People don't change that much." Rather than trying to change people, you're better off trying to draw out what's there and what works. I've had many customer service reps who are great at answering the phones, taking notes for call backs and charming customers. But give them accounting/bookkeeping responsibilities and they're terrible. They cannot be trusted with a checkbook. Awhile back a customer service representative asked me, "How can I be overdrawn if I still have checks left?"

We've greatly improved our hiring processes since reading the book. We look for clues as to what makes up a person but also for problems that will surface. For instance, if we're hiring for a spray tech position, we look for excessive tattoos, body piercing, cigarette smoking, souped up personal car, off-beat dress, slouching body language and messy family life, which all are red flags that this person is not a team player and probably won't fit in.

This book is full of leadership ideas for the entrepreneur. I frequently recommend it to others. **LM**

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# BEYOND THE E-MYTH

The *Landscape Management* interview with the author of the legendary book.



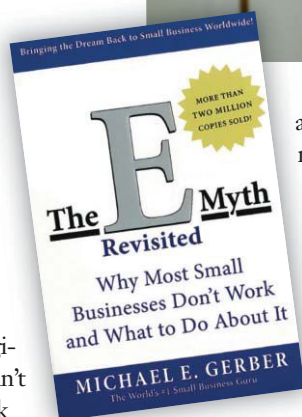
*The E-Myth* author  
Michael Gerber

When I started writing about and for small business owners nine years ago, one phrase I heard pop up time after time was the importance of “working on your business not in your business.” When I finally discovered where it originated—*The E-Myth*—I shouldn’t have been surprised. That book and its descendants often are cited as revelatory by many landscape professionals I’ve spoken with over the years.

So, rather than profiling one landscape professional who’s been influenced by the tenets of *The E-Myth*, we sought and landed an exclusive interview with the author, Michael Gerber, to get his take on why his iconic small business tome is a staple for Green Industry company owners. —*Marisa Palmieri*

**LM:** You’ve said, “Most small businesses fail because people start them for the wrong reasons...” Remind us: What are the right reasons to start a business?

**MG:** *The E-Myth*, which has been my mainstay for 40 years, says that people who go into business aren’t entrepreneurs but what I’ve come to call “technicians suffering from an entrepreneurial seizure.” They’re working for someone else



and say, “I want to become my own boss. I can do this for myself,” and they go off to start their own business being the technician, the producer, the guy who does the work. The problem is they don’t understand all of the other parts that

have to work in a business if it’s going to be successful.

So they’re out there doing it, doing it, as I say, but they’re ignoring some of the work they have to do: client acquisition, finance, management, development of people and so forth. Because they don’t know how to do it or they do it sloppily.

The right way to do it is to start it all over again as an entrepreneur and to understand there are three critical roles for any business owner: the entrepreneur, the manager and the technician. The technician is the doer who gets stuff done. If there is no system through which to get stuff done, we just get it done in whatever way we’ve done it. That fails to become a system; it’s my particular way. I rarely know how to teach someone my particular way.

The owner who’s doing it, doing it, doing it ends up having to be there all

the time to make sure it’s being done right. When you have to be there all the time, your business isn’t scalable. It only can grow to the level in which you can be there all the time.

**LM:** *The E-Myth* was first published in 1986, before the Internet, smartphones and social media. There’s so much information at one’s fingertips today. Do you think these tools make it easier for small business owners today vs. when you first wrote the book?

**MG:** The reality is it’s neither, simply because the greatest single problem every small business owner has is lack of time. They’re consumed with work. The guy out in the field hasn’t the time to go to the Internet to look something up and he hasn’t the ability to parse down all of the information available on the Internet.

Even before the Internet, I could read everything I wanted to read about management or recruitment or hiring or training, but most of the people in your industry or any industry don’t read anything. Even, in fact, if they were able to read all of the books on every subject, they wouldn’t understand how to apply it.

Social media? So what. The Internet? No way. Well, yes, it’s something where if you were absolutely determined to study and to learn, you have access to every-



thing to study. But how do you discriminate? Access is insufficient without a clear understanding of what I'm looking for. Most of the owners of most of these businesses don't have an understanding of what they're looking for.

**LM: What's surprised you most about entrepreneurs after all these years?**

**MG:** I can tell you what surprised me in the beginning. I had the assumption that because they owned a business, they knew how to run a business. They didn't. They didn't understand that business is ultimately a system of work—financial work, technical work. It's a system of management work, marketing work, sales work. But, in fact, many don't understand a system that works is independent of the people who are doing it.

**LM: But owners in this industry and many others often say what sets them apart is their people. How do you respond to that?**

**MG:** It's a dumb idea. If everybody says our company is different because of our people, then everybody is saying the same thing, then everybody is wrong. Well, somebody's wrong. You can prove it's wrong by quantifying the impact of what they do. Measure it. It's just an anecdotal statement. Every single technician thinks of themselves as the reason why people come buy their service. They all believe people dependent is the key because they don't know how to do it any other way.

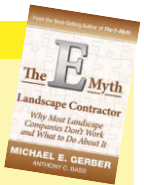
In the case of *The E-Myth*, there's no one who can read that book that can say it isn't true. Every reader who finishes the book knows they just read the book. That's not because Michael Gerber is so damn smart. It's because Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonalds, is so damn smart. It's because the founder of Starbucks is. The founder of IBM is. What made them successful and others fail? That's what I communicated in *The E-Myth*. Before that, nobody said

it to independent business owners. Ray Kroc said it to his franchisees. But until he approached the business as a turnkey prototype for scalable growth, the company itself would be incapable of growing. It would come to that ceiling imposed on it by the limitations of the owner. Ultimately, a company can only grow as large as the owner is competent to grow it.

Most guys in your industry work themselves to death. What started as a dream—"I'll become my own boss"—ends as a nightmare. I became my own boss and I'm working for a lunatic. **LM**

**» WEB EXTRA**

Visit the Web Extras section of **LandscapeManagement.net** for Gerber's take on "working on the business, not in the business," plus, an excerpt from *The E-Myth Landscape Contractor*, coauthored by landscape industry veteran Tony Bass.



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## ABOUT THE HOST

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



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DESIGN/BUILD

IRRIGATION

MAINTENANCE

LAWN CARE

PG 30

PG 34

PG 36

PG 38

# MARKETWATCH

SERVICE SEGMENT SNAPSHOTS

*One firm improved service by recruiting staff from luxury retailer Nordstrom.*

PAGE 34



# As seen on TV

Georgia-based company works against the clock to deliver a dream backyard on 'Yard Crashers.'

By EMILY SCHAPPACHER

**P**roviding clients the backyard of their dreams is what Oasis Landscapes & Irrigation does best—but doing it in less than 48 hours is a challenge crazy enough only for television. Featured on an episode of the DIY Network's "Yard Crashers," the Oasis crew completed a job that should have taken two to three weeks in less than two days, working against the clock to provide one lucky Atlanta-based couple a customized backyard sanctuary.

"We had no time left over and were all scrambling in the last hour," says Kevin Paulen, president of the Doraville, Ga.-based company. "I think it was a little harder than we expected it to be, but it was every bit as much fun as we thought it would be."

"Yard Crashers" is a landscape renovation show that offers unsuspecting shoppers at home improvement stores the opportunity for professional landscape contractors to renovate their backyards in less than two days. The show's producers contacted Paulen to see if his company was interested in appearing on an episode being filmed in Atlanta last April.

About a month after the initial contact, the producers traveled to Atlanta to interview Paulen and the owners of six other companies to determine which was most qualified for the job. Paulen was notified later the same day that his \$3-million company—which is 80 percent design/build, 20 percent maintenance and serves 90 percent residential clients—had been selected.

"They wanted to make sure we were qualified and capable of pulling off a project in a short period of time and



that we had the skills to do something unique," Paulen says.

Oasis had three months to plan and a \$25,000 budget provided by "Yard Crashers" to work with. Planning ahead, Paulen says, was key to completing the project on time. He and his project manager created a timeline to estimate how long each component of the project would take and worked ahead as much as possible, such as by shaping each piece of stone for the patio and the retaining wall and constructing the water and grill features.

Paulen's team also utilized the time to up the ante on creativity. The homeowner restores classic cars for a living, so Oasis made the water feature and grill out of parts from a 1948 Ford pickup and a 1934 Chevy sedan. The project also included

a decorative redwood sanctuary, privacy plantings, mature trees and blooming annuals.

"The network goes over your plan and lets you know if you bit off more than you can chew," Paulen says. "But if you're going to do something like this, make sure it's planned well and do as much in advance as you can. Also, don't get too overzealous—keep your goals realistic."

## CHALLENGES, COSTS ARISE

Despite being organized, unexpected challenges still arose. One of the most difficult parts was working around the film crew, Paulen says. His staff members repeatedly had to stop what

*continued on page 32*

## TUNE IN

"Backyard Hot Rods" is slated to air on DIY Network March 12 at 10:30 a.m. EST and March 29 at 5 p.m. EST.



Oasis worked with "Yard Crashers" host Matt Blashaw (center) and a DIY Network crew.





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Kevin Paulen estimates his team's participation in the show cost the company \$20,000 to \$30,000 in lost time and labor. Oasis had three months to prep for the two-day project.



*continued from page 30*

they were doing for the film crew to capture structured footage, such as the program's host showing the homeowners how to build a retaining wall. They also had to work until almost midnight on the first day, so part of the job was done under spotlights.

Another downfall for Paulen was the revenue lost as a result of the time and manpower dedicated to the show.

He estimates the time spent planning the project, preparing structures and materials in advance as well as having all 25 of his guys working on the show for two days during peak season cost him \$20,000 to \$30,000 in lost time and labor. While he's glad he had the opportunity

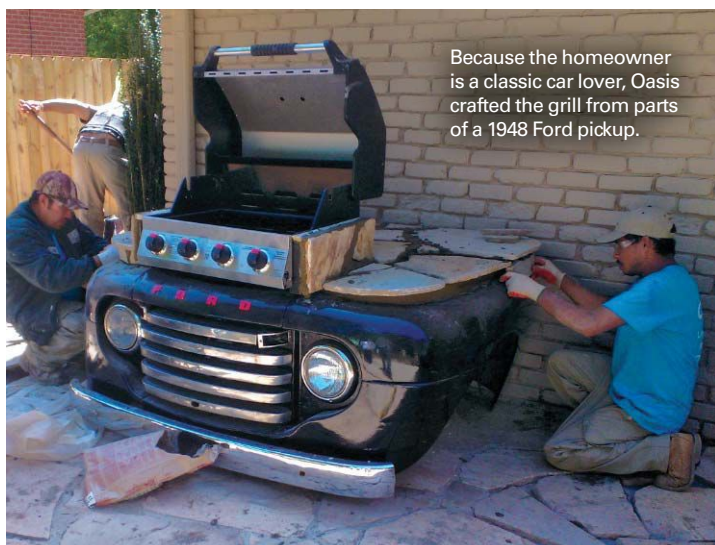
to be part of the project, Paulen says he doesn't imagine he would do it again.

"The highlight was seeing how excited the homeowners were when we were done—they were absolutely blown away," Paulen says. "It was fun to do, but I don't see a benefit to doing a second one."

The episode, "Backyard Hot Rods," aired twice on Sept. 2 on the DIY Network. It's slated to air again this spring, but Paulen says it will take at least a year for the episode to start syndicating. So far, he hasn't seen many tangible benefits from the experience, but the company utilizes an "As Seen on 'Yard Crashers'" logo on its website, marketing materials and client newsletters, and has the full-length episode posted on its website. Paulen hopes it soon will pay off as a marketing tool. For now, he says, it's an addition to Oasis's long list of accomplishments and accolades.

"I think it gives us more credibility," Paulen says. "People love to hear you were on TV. You're seen as the expert. And after 25 years in business, it was something we hadn't done."

*Schappacher is a freelance writer based in Charlotte, N.C.*



Because the homeowner is a classic car lover, Oasis crafted the grill from parts of a 1948 Ford pickup.

## The Ticker:

### DESIGN/BUILD

**DAP Products** rolled out a new construction adhesive: DAP Smart-Bond, which may be applied to dimensional and treated lumber, natural and synthetic stone, painted surfaces and more.

**JCB** expanded its North American dealer network with the addition of **JCB of Miami**, formerly **E.R. Truck Equipment Corp.** The dealership offers wheel loaders, backhoes and more, plus a parts department and full-service maintenance team.



For its work at a private residence in Newport Beach, Calif., **Richard Cohen Landscape & Construction** was deemed best of show at the **California Landscape Contractors Association** Trophy Awards.



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# Recruiting from retail

Cougar Irrigation staffs up with former Nordstrom employees to deliver excellent customer service.

By SARAH PFLEDDERER

**M**atthew Stamm is no farmer, but he sure knows how to cherry pick—employees, that is.

The president of Cougar Irrigation, Austin, Texas, has hired the bulk of his irrigation technicians from Nordstrom on the philosophy the customer service skills they derived from the luxury retailer are translatable to the Green Industry or any industry.

“Whatever it is, you’re providing a service to people,” Stamm says. “So you really want people to have good customer service skills, not necessarily technical skills.”



Matthew Stamm

Nordstrom is renowned for its customer service. The company’s processes have been assessed and reiterated by experts for years. (See, “The book on service,” at right.) That’s why Stamm boasts that three of his five irrigation techs deliver “Nordstrom-level customer service.”

“Anybody can go out and fix a sprinkler head,” Stamm says, and adds he taught his retail hires those technical skills. They, unexpectedly, taught him “everything” he knows about customer service.

Stamm says he also benefits from being able to teach former retail employees technical skills from scratch rather than having to break them of “bad habits” picked up from previous industry employers.

## SERVICE SMARTS

For Stamm, recruiting his first Nordstrom employee was happenstance. In fact, he doesn’t even shop at Nordstrom. Stamm met Nick Linzenmeyer at a dinner party hosted by one of his neighbors who also worked at Nordstrom.

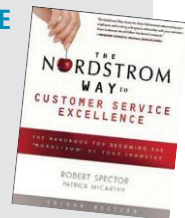
That was in 2008. Linzenmeyer now is a project manager at Cougar Irrigation. Recounting his first few years as a technician, Linzenmeyer’s telling confirms Stamm’s logic:

“My (performance) as an irrigation technician was terrible. But the thing that saved the customer from a terrible experience was my good communication and customer service,” Linzenmeyer says. He recalls the following customer service “protocol” from Nordstrom and how he’s applied it at Cougar Irrigation:

**1. Greet the customer.** In irrigation, the key is to make them feel comfortable because they’ll likely be spending a lot of

## THE BOOK ON SERVICE

In step with this month’s cover story, we give a nod to the book *The Nordstrom Way to Customer Service Excellence: The Handbook for Becoming the ‘Nordstrom’ of your Industry* by Robert Spector. He has written four books on the retailer’s customer service.



money, Linzenmeyer says. “Respect that, and make them feel relaxed.”

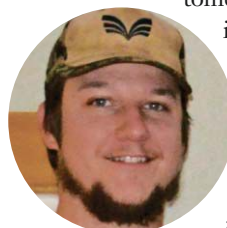
**2. Find out why they’re there.** “The more information you have as a salesperson, the better you can service that customer,” Linzenmeyer says. He cautions to not be forceful in getting the details.

**3. Make them realize you’re the expert.** “Don’t be rude or abrasive, but establish there’s a better way to do things,” Linzenmeyer says.

**4. Establish trust.** For example, if a customer is wary of drip irrigation but it’s the best fit for the property, Linzenmeyer ensures he’ll replace the system if it’s insufficient. When it works satisfactorily after installation, you’ve established trust and the client is open to future suggestions.

**5. The follow-up is key.** Keeping the follow-up personal is crucial, Linzenmeyer says. At Nordstrom this meant calling the customer to see if his or her purchase worked for an occasion. At Cougar Irrigation, he follows up in person to explain to clients how the irrigation system operates and urges them to reach out with any concerns.

Due to bringing Linzenmeyer and other Nordstrom employees on board, Stamm says he’s looking to improve the sales on the recurring service options his company provides. It serviced 700 of the 2,500 clients in the company database last year and, this year, is introducing service agreements to customers to better track retention.



Nick Linzenmeyer

## The Ticker: IRRIGATION



**Hunter** introduced a family of pressure-compensating drip emitters for its micro-irrigation line. Featuring flow options of up to 6 gph, they are available in three inlets: self-piercing barb, 10/32 thread and 1/2-in. female thread. The barb and 10/32 thread models are offered in .5, 1, 2, 4 and 6 gph models; the 1/2-in. female threaded model is available in 1 and 2 gph.



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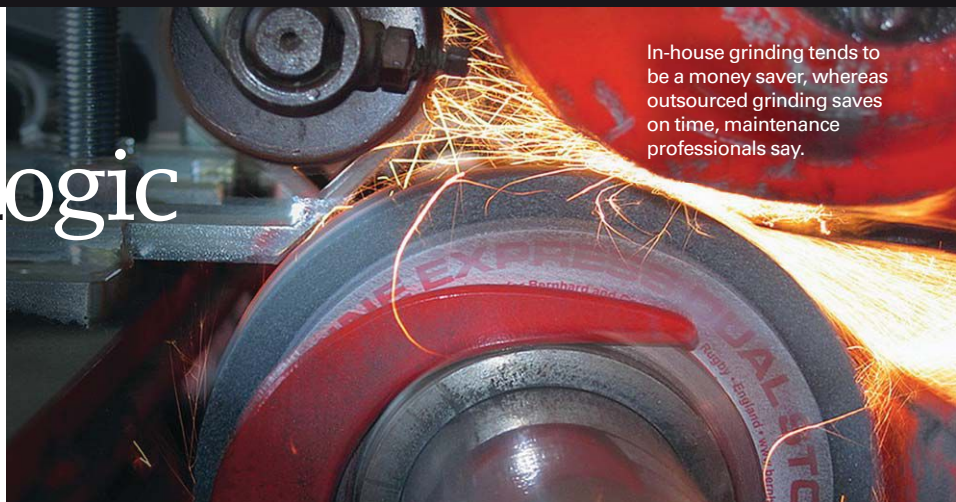
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# Grinding logic

Mowing professionals share why they sharpen mower blades in-house or outsource the task. *By SARAH PFLEDDERER*



In-house grinding tends to be a money saver, whereas outsourced grinding saves on time, maintenance professionals say.

**R**ood Landscape has sharpened its mower blades in-house for so long the brand marker on its grinder is no longer visible. Accordingly, Maintenance Department Manager Jaron Sickler can't conjure from memory what manufacturer's name once bedecked the machine.

None of that is important, though, he says. The grinder still operates to standard for the Hobe Sound, Fla.-based company. The shop mechanic

uses it to sharpen 20 sets of blades two to three times per week, providing quick replacements of dull blades with freshly and correctly sharpened ones.

That handiness is why Rood has done in-house grinding for so long instead of outsourced

grinding, Sickler says.

"I like it in-house for the fact I have

more control over it," he says.

"The biggest advantage is the turnaround time and we can make sure it's done right."

Contradictorily, Ben Bowen uses the same logic—ensuring blades are sharpened correctly—to reason why he outsources his grinding to Oregon Carbide Saw, a local sharpening service in Portland, Ore.

"To me, it's one less thing to worry about and I know it's being done properly," says the landscape manager of Ross NW Watergardens in Portland. "These people are professionals so I know they're getting the angle just right and they're balanced perfectly."

As part of outsourcing, Bowen has triple the amount of blades on-hand than necessary for his quantity of equipment so there's never a shortage of fresh blades for his team to rotate with. Employees



Ben Bowen

swap out blades as they see appropriate, putting dull blades in a box for Bowen to drop off at Oregon Carbide Saw every two to three weeks to be sharpened at \$7 a piece.

Although this process does eat into his financials, Bowen says the payoff is his team, which does not include a full-time mechanic, can work on more important tasks, rather than spend its time sharpening blades.

"Philosophy is part of it," he says. "We prefer to outsource stuff we don't enjoy or takes us away from the stuff we know we make money on."

While Bowen says he can't see a scenario where he'd purchase his own grinder, he understands why in-house grinding is suitable for some companies, due to volumes of mowing differing per location.

"If I was having to put new, sharp blades on a couple times per week that would probably change the math," he says. "(But) it's just about priorities for us."

Ben Talbert's philosophy aligns with Bowen's. The owner of Bay-Scapes Property Maintenance & Landscaping, based in Lusby, Md., has outsourced its grinding to a local dealer for the past three years.

And of the \$600 per month he spends on the grinding, Talbert says:



Ben Talbert



Jaron Sickler

## The Ticker: MAINTENANCE

In commemoration of its centennial, **The Toro Co.** documented its innovation and achievements over the past 100 years in the form of a timeline, viewable at [toro.com/100](http://toro.com/100). The company also recently introduced the American Hero Program which provides equipment discounts to former and current military members, firefighters and police officers.





"I eat it. It tears my wallet up to outsource, but it's a timesaver. I try to avoid spending time on business outside of work as much as I can."

He says he's humored the idea of purchasing his own grinder, but says it all boils down to personal preference.

"I base it on how much time it's going to take me versus how much time I want to spend on other stuff," Talbert says. "I can allocate a person or myself to work sales versus having to take an entire day to sharpen all of those correctly."

Mark Schifsky, owner of Association Maintenance in Shoreview, Minn., delegates the task of grinding to his company mechanic, who sharpens around 200 blades per week with a grinder Schifsky purchased nearly 20 years ago.

Schifsky has done in-house grinding since opening his company in 1988. It was in 1995, however, that he upgraded from a freestanding grinder to a more professional machine that better matched

his sharpening demand.

"That was a big step for me because that machine was \$5,000 to \$6,000," he says. "When I bought it, I didn't expect for it to last as long as it did with as little of care. Everything should last forever, it's just how much you put into to it."

The grinder, Schifsky says, has paid for itself due to the amount he's saved financially on in-house grinding versus paying someone else to do it.

Moreover, he says his blades have had longer life spans because he oversees whether they're sharpened at the correct angles, speeds and by qualified employees (per chance his mechanic is unavailable). For safety and performance reasons only about 10 of his 35 employees are allowed to use the grinder.

Another perk of in-house grinding, Schifsky adds, is the convenience of hav-

ing freshly sharpened blades at his facility versus having to travel to pick them up.

For those reasons, he says the notion of outsourced grinding is unfathomable to him—he jokes it's more likely he'd incorporate that as an add-on service for

his own company than resort to outsourcing himself.

"I've never heard of anybody outsourcing," he says. "Maybe that's something I need to be doing is sharpening everybody else's blades. ... I trim a nice blade."



Mark Schifsky

A man in a blue jumpsuit and a cap with a headlamp is operating a yellow propane-powered lawnmower. A large silver propane tank is mounted on the back of the mower. The background shows a multi-story residential building.

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# Help technicians sell

By AUSTIN FRISHMAN, PH.D.

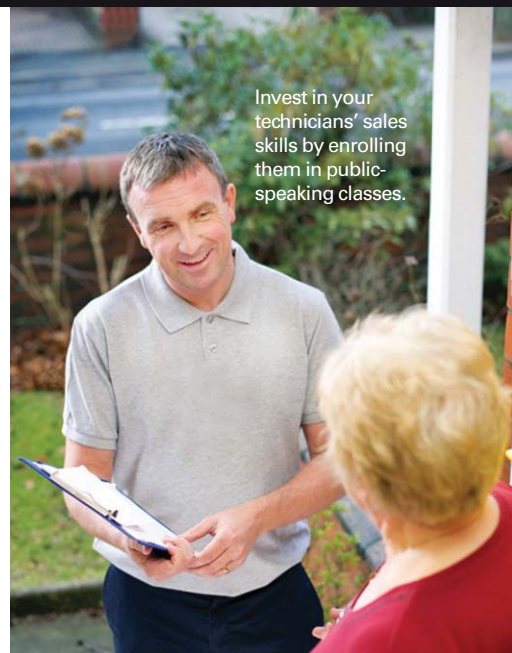
**M**ake sure your employees understand the importance of the service your company provides.

They must feel comfortable and good about the items you sell, or else the initial motivation is lost. Ideas to ensure you're keeping that comfort level high are:

- **Have a plan and goals.** Decide how and where you want to expand. Share this information with your technicians.
- **Issue business cards for each technician.** They should carry at least five cards with them at all times.
- **Role play in training sessions.** Select different types of services you're trying to sell and have them walk through their pitch with a manager or colleague.
- **Bring in manufacturers for training meetings.** Reps can provide insights about how to sell, install and maintain add-on services like fire ant control, surface insect control or mosquito control.
- **Sharpen technicians' communication skills.** Offer to enroll and pay for public-speaking classes.
- **Hone technicians' time management**

**skills.** Training in this area can open their schedules so they can fit sales time into their routes.

- **Recognize successful sales.** Dinner for two at a nice restaurant is a satisfactory reward, but this doesn't have to be only about cash. Post positive results on a visible bulletin board. Send letters to technicians' families explaining how important their dad or mom is at work.
- **Give them a head start.** Help the technicians compose a list of potential prospects, so they know where to prospect.
- **Give them support materials.** There are effective sales training videos, as well as leave-behind materials, online for technicians to use with their clients.
- **Make sure they know it's OK to ask for help.** When it comes to a large national account, for example, you don't want a technician to inadvertently destroy a lead because of his sales inexperience. If a technician is reluctant to sell, encourage him to turn in leads at least.
- **Hire the right person.** Screen for individuals who are likely to succeed at sales and service.



Invest in your technicians' sales skills by enrolling them in public-speaking classes.

- **Set goals that are realistic, and reevaluate them over time.** LM

*Frishman is technical consultant to LM's sister magazine Pest Management Professional, where this article was first published. He's president of AMF Pest Management Services.*

## The Ticker:

### LAWN CARE

**Valent U.S.A. Corp.** and **Nufarm Americas** entered a distribution agreement that appoints Nufarm the exclusive distributor of Valent-branded products for professional turf, ornamental and aquatic uses in the U.S. The two companies will combine product portfolios into one broad portfolio that will be sold by Nufarm in the U.S.

**FMC Corp.** produced a video about liquid pesticide applications and added it to its YouTube page, [youtube.com/user/FMCTurf](https://www.youtube.com/user/FMCTurf). The video demonstrates how to prepare for an outdoor application, proper personal protective equipment, proper storage of pesticides and how to prepare for an accidental spill.

## MY DOG ATE MY SALES LEAD

Most service technicians aren't comfortable selling. Some even believe selling is a step back and borders on being dishonest. They're locked into their own comfort zone. Here are 10 of the most common thoughts about why selling is so difficult for them:

1. I know my customers. I like them. I don't want to push something on them they may not need.
2. My day is too short as it is to get the work done. How can I possibly have time to sell?
3. Salespeople are sharpies who have no idea how to do the work. It's not what I want to be.
4. I once turned in a lead and never received the commission. Who needs that?
5. It takes 60 days or longer to get paid for what you sell.
6. Uncle Sam takes too much out of my commission.
7. What's the sales force for? Isn't it their job to sell?
8. If I wanted to sell, I would have interviewed to be a salesperson.
9. People don't like to be hounded to purchase things.
10. I'm afraid of rejection. (Few people admit this.)

Now, tackle each of the above challenges and turn your technicians into happy, successful, well-balanced service/sales professionals.



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# PROJECT **PORTFOLIO**

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*sculptural  
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## THE MISSION

To enhance the estate known as “Floating Peaks” with a landscape that highlights a collection of natural stone sculptures.

This Boston-area new-build home was christened “Floating Peaks” by the homeowner, who envisioned an accompanying garden to showcase several natural stone sculptures he had collected and shipped from China. These unique stones were shaped by water at the bottom of a river. In addition, the homeowner wanted several outdoor living areas—a pool, hot tub, pergola, terraces and a large lawn area for his children.

Fred Anderson, president of Anderson Landscape Construction, was up to the task. His Sterling, Mass.-based firm specializes in large-scale installations like the one on the homeowner’s wish list.

“Our first challenge was installing the landscape around the existence of a mature Cedar of Lebanon specimen tree,” Anderson recalls. “Utmost care was taken in the completion of the house and landscape during construction, as the tree was only 15 feet from the house.”

Placing the stone sculptures was another challenge, he notes: “A crane was brought in to set the largest stone, which weighed 40,000 pounds. We hired an engineer to help us figure out how to mount and stabilize this massive stone. Great care had to be observed during installation of these stone sculptures so as not to break or scratch them.”

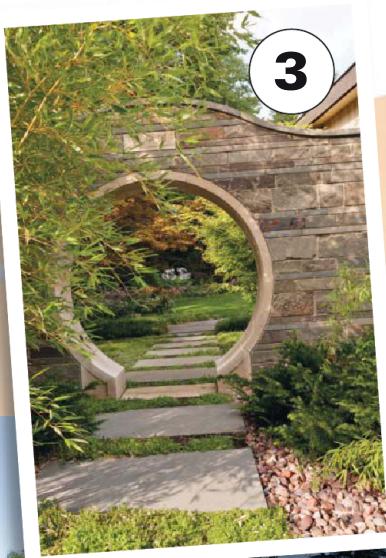
After the house was built, the owner decided he wanted to expand his backyard landscape area. He negotiated with a neighbor who was directly in view of his backyard, tore the house down, and had Anderson create a large lawn and wildflower meadow area complete with fire pit and moss garden.

“This allowed for the property to expand into space that the house really needed to balance its massive size,” Anderson says.



PHOTOS: ROSEMARY FLETCHER PHOTOGRAPHY





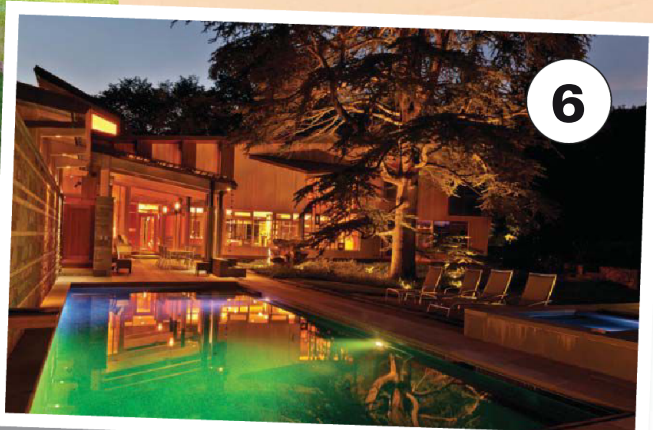
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4



5



6

## THE WORK

**1 | Activity center.** This early-morning view captures the entire entertainment area of the house, complete with a hot tub, fountain, pool, pergola, patio, outdoor grill and sculptures.

**2 | Circle of life.** Flower beds and sculptures surround this circular garden space.

**3 | Grand entrance.** The moon gate leads visitors to the entrance of the front garden, which opens to a large circle.

**4 | Rock on.** The driveway entrance displays a 40,000-pound stone from China. The bamboo has matured and helps reduce the scale of the house.

**5 | Back to nature.** Surrounding the back lawn is a wildflower and meadow garden. One of its challenges is to keep weeds from overtaking the planted flowers; intensive hand weeding is the solution.

**6 | Transformative experience.** Dusk settles in on "Floating Peaks."

*Founded in 1982, Sterling, Mass.-based Anderson Landscape Construction focuses on building gardens for private estates with features such as baseball fields, football fields, tennis courts, seasonal colorsapes, private intimate gardens, ice skating rinks and more. Learn more at [AndLC.com](http://AndLC.com).*





# Scoring with ice rinks

**B**EING BASED IN Blasdell, N.Y., Mike Pace could have relied on snow plowing to make up for lost revenue in the off-season. But the owner and president of Pace Landscaping & Ice Rinks chose to veer from the usual to build backyard ice rinks instead. As a former hockey player, it was the perfect fit for Pace's winter business.

Of course, being on the ice versus actually making the ice are two very different things, Pace says. Therefore he spent an entire year just researching the process and what would be involved before launching the service in 2010.

"We're the only ones in the area doing this so, there was no business model or price points to follow," Pace says.

He turned to his hockey friends and anyone he knew who had owned or built a backyard rink to figure what they liked about it and, more importantly, what they didn't like.

"Almost everyone told me it was fun to build," Pace says. "But what nobody liked was maintaining it or having to take it down in March. Plus, nobody liked storing the materials for next winter. It was an eyesore behind the shed."

Having pinpointed the need, Pace built his business around the "do-it-all" concept. His company takes care of everything—providing the professional materials, installing the rink, maintaining it, taking it down and even storing it until next season.

The company installed more than 70 rinks this winter and signed contracts to maintain about 40 rinks. Pace charges a package price based on rink size for installation, take down and storage. Rink maintenance is a separate contract, which is priced per visit. Ice rink install add-on options include lighting, nets behind the goals, curved corners and bumper caps.

## GETTING IT DONE

This winter kept employees on their toes. Pace averaged about six one- to three-man installation crews, plus two two- to three-man maintenance crews, eliminating any winter downtime.

As landscape work begins slowing in late summer and early fall, Pace starts pushing ice rink sales. Installation typically



Pace Landscaping & Ice Rinks built its service on the do-it-all model. It installs, maintains, takes down and stores rinks for clients.

begins in November and crews are maintaining the rinks all winter long. In March, rinks are disassembled before grass comes out of dormancy, and landscape work picks up again.

Because Pace Landscaping focuses largely on design/build, it was already set up for this service in terms of construction equipment and vehicles for ice rink installations. As for maintenance, Pace invested in a portable ice rink resurfacer, which he turned to his brother to design.

"(It) uses one of our own landscape trailers to carry 450 gallons of water, which we convert to hot water instantly and flood the rink to smooth it out," Pace says. "We typically do that twice a week."

"The only thing we had to do was build a storage facility for the material," Pace says, referring to the ice rinks the company stores for clients during the off-season. "Otherwise, we were pretty well set up. You couldn't pull this off with a pick-up and a trailer. It requires decent sized trucks to haul boards and brackets, plus steady crews."

Pace adds the service fit well into his region's niche. It's a huge hockey town and many families have children who play the sport. Plus, it's cold enough to have ice.

"This definitely isn't a service you could just start anywhere," Pace says. "But I think my story is a testament to the fact that any business that doesn't produce 12 months of revenue needs to think outside of the box because there are things out there you can do. For us, the hockey knowledge and background, the nature of our business and the equipment we already had made building rinks a perfect fit. In many ways it felt like the moon and stars all aligned perfectly but we also worked extremely hard to get where we are."

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

## >> SERVICE SNAPSHOT

**COMPANY:** Pace Landscaping & Ice Rinks

**LOCATION:** Blasdell, N.Y.

**SERVICE:** Ice rink construction, maintenance and storage

**WHY:** Mike Pace, owner and president, was looking for a unique winter revenue stream

**BIGGEST CHALLENGE:** The weather. "It's our refrigeration system," Pace says. "We've had years where we built rinks and the owners barely got to use them because they became big swimming pools."

**BEST TIP:** "Think outside of the box for ongoing revenue streams," Pace says. "Everyone here does snow plowing and it could have been easy to fall into that same pattern, but by thinking outside of the box we found something unique and really filled a need."



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## TREE SERVICES

### Arbor-OTC

Arbor-OTC is a water-soluble injectable systemic antibiotic for the annual suppression of bacterial diseases in non-food-bearing trees and palms. The new container comes in two sizes. The 1-ounce (28 gram) jar treats 10 trees or palms at 10-in. diameter at breast height (DBH) in the same day. This container can be filled with water, covered/shaken and then poured directly into the formulation tank on trunk injection equipment. For bigger projects, the 5-ounce (140 gram) container makes enough Arbor-OTC to treat 50 trees or palms at 10-in. DBH.

**Arborjet** // [Arborjet.com](http://Arborjet.com)



### BugBarrier Tree Band

Banding trees with the BugBarrier Tree Band is a control option for climbing and crawling insects, including winter moths and spring and fall cankerworm. The pesticide- and pheromone-free adhesive banding system is so effective, the company says, that it is required to be registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a "mechanical pesticide."

**Envirometrics Systems USA** // [TreeBands.com](http://TreeBands.com)

### Predator 360SW

The new Predator 360SW stump grinder features a turntable mechanism for frame swivel of up to 60 degrees for easy stump cutting and handling. Powered by a 14-hp Kohler CH440 engine, the 300-lb. unit has an above/underground cutting range of 8 in. and operating range of 32 in. As with all Predator machines, it employs Multi-Tip technology, which allows fast changing of the preset teeth.

**Predator Power** // [Predator-USA.com](http://Predator-USA.com)



### BC700XL

The new, 25-hp BC700XL is the smallest machine in the Vermeer brush chipper line. It's ideal for small-diameter material. Its centrifugal clutch system engages the cutter disc without the need for a traditional belt tensioner: The operator increases the throttle, and the cutter disc starts to engage at 1,500 rpm. It is fully engaged at 2,000 rpm.

**Vermeer Corp.** // [Vermeer.com](http://Vermeer.com)



### M-Tronic technology

The STIHL M-Tronic microprocessor-controlled engine management system optimizes chainsaw engine performance and compensates for changes in operating conditions, such as temperature, elevation, fuel quality or dirty air filter. The microprocessor electronically controls the ignition timing and fuel metering 33 times/second. Learn more at STIHL's online chainsaw video library: [bit.ly/SdCTyg](http://bit.ly/SdCTyg).

**STIHL** // [STIHLUSA.com](http://STIHLUSA.com)

### CS-370F and CS-400F

These tool-less chainsaws feature the new FasTension Tool-less Chain Tensioning System, which makes quick and easy chain tension adjustments or bar and chain replacements without a srench or tightening tool. A rotating lever takes the place of locking nuts, and a tensioning wheel replaces an adjustment screw. Adjustments can be made anywhere in four simple steps, the company says.

**ECHO** // [ECHO-USA.com](http://ECHO-USA.com)







### STX-38

The 38-hp Toro STX-38 stump grinder has a travel speed of 4.5 mph. It's equipped with operator-friendly TX-style controls and the new Toro Intelli-Sweep feature, which automatically adjusts the speed of the wheel when sweeping across a stump to help achieve optimum performance. The unit's full hydraulic operation eliminates belt breaks or slippage and the need for tension adjustment.

**The Toro Co.** // [Toro.com](http://Toro.com)

### JAWZ Grabbing Tools

Paladin has partnered with Star Hill Solutions to introduce Bradco JAWZ Grabbing Tools. The tools provide a quick, easy and eco-friendly way to remove invasive trees and shrubs, complete with roots, the company says. They feature a patented set of T1 steel fingers (pinchers), powered by dual cylinders to grab the tree/shrub trunk with a skid-steer, compact tractor—or in the case of Mini-JAWS, a compact tool carrier.

**Paladin Construction Group** // [PaladinAttachments.com](http://PaladinAttachments.com)



### M15RX

As a new, compact chipper in the Beaver line of tree care products, the M15RX offers a high capacity and lightweight. Its patented chambered air impeller system increases the chip-throwing velocity and reduces dust and material blow-back out of the infeed to pack more into the chip truck. Its TorqMax top feed wheel compression system generates more than 3,400 lb./ft. of material pulling force.

**Morbark** // [Morbark.com](http://Morbark.com)



### Timber Ax

As a new addition to the VMLogix line of products, the Timber Ax skid-steer attachment uses an exclusive knife system to efficiently cut grass, vines, brush or trees up to 6 in. in diameter, or intermittently cut material up to 12 in. in diameter. Its 17-in. rotor features a reverse-rotation design to lift material off the ground for proper cutting.

**Loftness Specialized Equipment** // [VM-Logix.com](http://VM-Logix.com)



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### SL220

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**SourceOne Outdoor Power Equipment** // [SourceOneOPE.com](http://SourceOneOPE.com)



### Spreader series

These four new broadcast push spreaders are made of heavy-duty polyethylene construction. Models TS65 and TS85 offer 75- and 120-lb. capacities, respectively, and powder coated frames. Models TS65SS and TS85SS have matching specifications, but are equipped with stainless steel frames for corrosion protection. All boast a 12-ft. spread width and a two-year warranty.

**TurfEx** // [TurfExProducts.com](http://TurfExProducts.com)



### S-Series aerator

Exmark's 21-in. S-Series walk-behind aerator features a transaxle drive system with variable drive speed and powered reverse. Designed to centralize weight over the self-cleaning tines, the S-Series delivers maximum core depth. The S-Series aerator is powered by a single-cylinder Kawasaki KAI engine, delivering speeds of up to 4 mph and productivity of nearly an acre per hour.

**Exmark** // [Exmark.com](http://Exmark.com)



### Lawnaire V and IV

Ryan's Lawnaire V and Lawnaire IV with Easy Steer Technology have a new tine assembly that enables the unit to turn easily while in the aeration process without removing the tines from the ground.

**Ryan** // [RyanTurf.com](http://RyanTurf.com)



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### Model 8HT PowerVac

Building upon nearly 50 years of airflow research, the Model 8HT PowerVac collector features a hinged metal top with a spring-loaded metal latch lock, allowing easier removal and emptying of the twin 4-cubic-ft. mesh bags—which are now reinforced to be more tear- and rip-resistant. Combined with the deck-driven Quik-D-Tatch vac drive, the unit makes a clean sweep through everything from thick spring grass, wet fall leaves and even pine needles and other yard debris.

**The Grasshopper Co.** // [GrasshopperMower.com](http://GrasshopperMower.com)



### LS-22 lawn overseeder

Turfco's LS-22 lawn overseeder delivers maximum germination thanks to optimized 1.5-in. blade spacing and micro-screw depth adjustment, which allow accurate setting of the cutter blades for optimum seed-to-soil contact. Depth is adjustable up to 1.5-inches. The LS-22 can seed more than 30,000 square feet per hour, and large pneumatic tires allow it to roll easily over any terrain. Operators can quickly check seed levels with the convenient seed window and fold handles for safe transport and storage.

**Turfco** // [Turfco.com](http://Turfco.com)

### Eco200

This self-propelled topdresser's reverse spin, dual-wheel broadcast system delivers a uniform spreading pattern with sand, the heaviest of materials and more. Additionally, the Eco200 has a new four-wheel design for increased weight distribution and stability. While sporting the same 1/3-cubic-yard hopper, the Eco200 has an improved larger hopper opening.

**EcoLawn Applicator** // [EcolawnApplicator.com](http://EcolawnApplicator.com)



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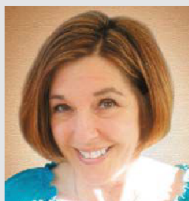
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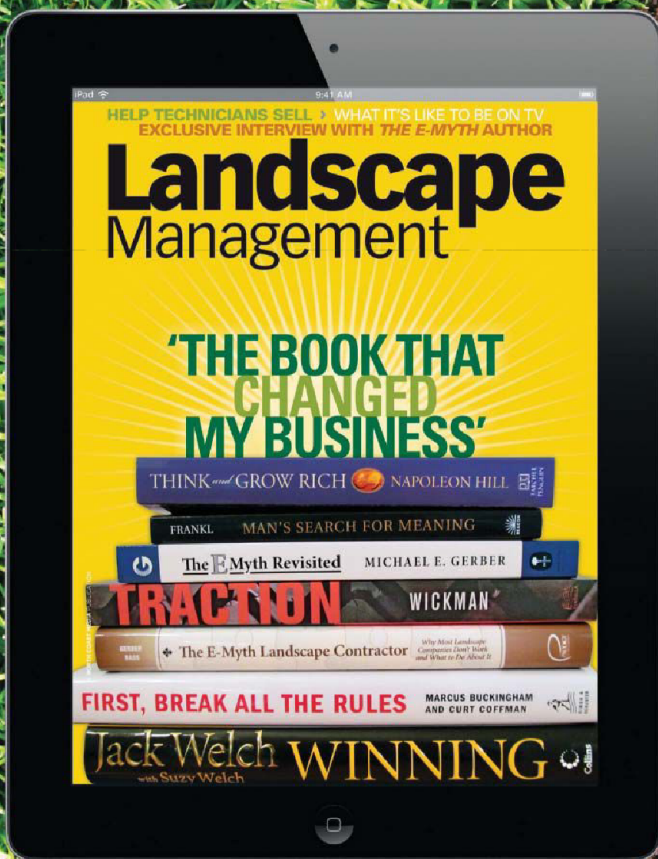
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# Terry Delany

*owner, GroundSERV, Fayetteville, Ark.*



**Who's your mentor?** (Green Industry consultant) Bill Arman. He taught me the importance of building a great culture. I used to rule things with an iron fist and be a mean dude. I felt I had to have a hand in everything and it just about killed me. That really changed when I started talking to Bill.

**Tell us about your unique business model.** We're really just a sales and marketing company that happens to be in property maintenance. We're professional middlemen. We had been strictly maintenance since 2005, and (during the recession) installation companies started going after the same maintenance contracts we were.

I changed our concept to be full-service exterior maintenance. We bought an expensive striping machine and realized we didn't know how to do (parking lot) striping. So I called another striping company, got a price from them, marked it up and made a profit. I said, "Hey, that's pretty cool." I still had 30 people on staff and was subbing out parking lot striping, sweeping, window washing—any exterior service that wasn't landscaping. We did this for several years and kept making money doing it.

Three years ago, I was struggling with the same thing everyone does: employees. I had to take a trip six hours each way in truck alone with no radio. I started thinking, "I'm making money subbing everything out, but I'm struggling to do landscape work with the employees I have." In a 12-hour drive I changed the entire business concept to go from 30 employees to 2 employees and a subcontracting model almost over night. I called Bill Arman. He said, "I've never seen it done, but heck, let's try it." We spent a month thinking through it. My other option was to walk away. I was so over the employee issues.

**What have the results been?** It took us three years to get really good at it. There's the whole legal aspect of working with subs. How do you qualify them and manage them? There's a lot to it. But I have no headaches any more. I sleep at night. Quality is up. Profits are up. I now have six employees: a business manager, a few account managers and a sales manager. We'll do about \$2 million (in 2013). We have between 30 and 40 subs at any given time.

**What's your best advice for working with subs?** The most important thing to remember is you want them to make money. A lot of people beat subs to death on price to get their mark-up up. Then they don't want to work with you anymore.

We created a document called "How We SERV," which is the 10 mandates we live by. It says we're committed to the success of our subs, which we call strategic partners. The minute you start investing in them, the profit will come naturally to you. That's the biggest key.

Visit the Web Extras section of [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) to see Delany's "How We SERV" document.



## OFF THE CLOCK

### ARE YOU A SPORTS FAN?

I like to spend as much time getting away from sea level as I can. I'm a private pilot and master scuba diver.

### SO DO YOU TRAVEL A LOT?

I travel to the Caribbean three to four times a year. There are maybe three or four islands I haven't visited yet. My favorite is Union Island—part of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The people are so friendly; it's insane. It has beautiful white-sand beaches.

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

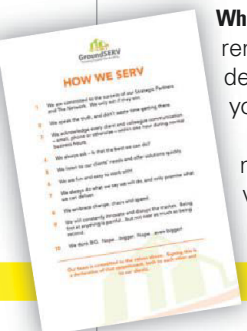
I married Janelle six years ago. She's the complete opposite of me. She is very detailed. She's now a full-time, stay-at-home mom. We have Alexa, who's

two and a half. She's the reason I wake up in the morning and the reason I rush home at night.



### WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE BUSINESS BOOK?

"Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill. He studied millionaires and billionaires from back in the day and identified the common traits they all have. I've probably read that book 10 times.





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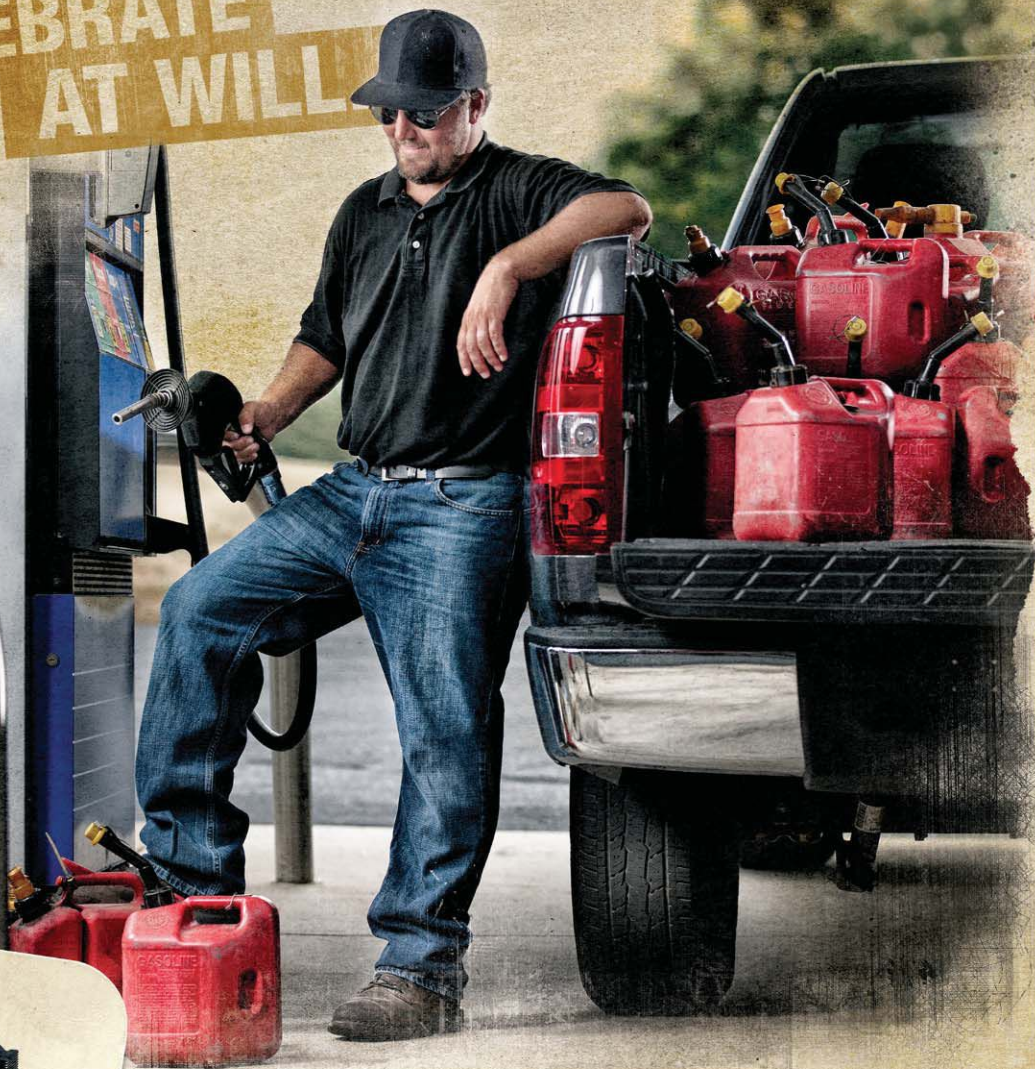
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