



PROFITING FROM DESIGN

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Beyond commercial bid/build

Q We do a lot of residential and commercial maintenance. We also do residential design/build work. Business has been good, but we're always looking for additional sources of revenue. Got any ideas?

A Many landscape contractors have a mix of residential maintenance and design/build work as well as commercial maintenance, but there's one category of business that has been overlooked for years that has profit potential. Let's see if you can figure it out what's missing from your business.

- › Residential maintenance
- › Residential design/build
- › Commercial maintenance
- › Commercial _____/_____

Hopefully you figured out that the missing opportunity for your business is commercial design/build work. Not commercial bid/build work but commercial design/build. Give it a minute and the concept will hit you like a ton of pavers.

I came up with this concept about 10 years ago when we did a design/build installation project for a client who happened to be the facilities manager at one of the corporate campuses we maintained. After his project was completed he told me the property owners where he worked wanted to redesign the building entrance and create an outdoor lunch area for the employees. He told me he was interviewing architects, landscape architects and landscape designers about the project and asked me if we wanted to bid on it when the drawings were ready.

I said: "I have a much better idea that I think can work for all of us. Since you already know us and the work we do, why not let us design and build the project instead of hiring a separate designer and installation contractor?" He agreed that made perfect sense and so began our foray into commercial design/build work. We never looked back.

Believe it or not, facility managers have difficult jobs. Regardless of the size of the properties and building(s) they manage, they're responsible for creating and maintaining a budget, managing a

support staff, sourcing service providers, interpreting business contracts and much more. It behooves you to help make their lives easier. Here are some ideas to help get you started

Where to start

First, contact the commercial property owners and facility managers you currently do maintenance or snow plowing for, and let them know you've created a new commercial design/build division specifically for your commercial clients. A colorful and informative marketing piece would be great, too. If not, an introductory letter or initial phone call is a good start. They already know you, depend on you and have a working business relationship with you, why wouldn't they be interested?

Next, set up a meeting with the facility manager and any other influencers to take a walk around the property to discuss existing problems and/or future opportunities. If you really want to impress them, start off by showing them how they can save money on their maintenance bill or snow contract. That should get their attention.

Toward the end of the meeting, ask them to prioritize all the things you discussed and maybe pick the top three. Finally, offer to provide them with some numbers for the proposed work so they can put it into their 2015 budget. This way when they're ready to pull the trigger on the project, the money is already there. Who knows, maybe you'll get lucky and they already have a project in the pipeline just waiting for someone to design it and make it happen.

Facility managers really do have a lot on their plates and would appreciate a helping hand from a friendly face who's already a qualified and trusted partner. When you look at it this way, you can understand how valuable a commercial design/build landscape contractor can be to a facilities manager when faced with outdoor issues or potential projects.

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