REAL-WORLD SOLUTIONS™

PART 1 OF 2

With no GIE+EXPO in 2020, the industry adapts and moves forward

September 2020 VOL 59, ISSUE 9

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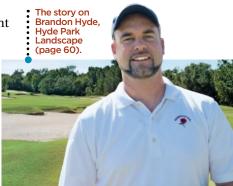
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ZOOMING AROUND THE INDUSTRY

You've likely seen *Landscape Management*: At Home Edition videos where *LM*'s editors have taken "Zooming around the

industry" to a whole new level by video interviewing landscape professionals, industry association representatives and more about how they're adapting to the industry's current challenges. But, have you ever considered participating in one of these Zoom interviews yourself? If you're interested in adding your take or being interviewed via Zoom, please email *LM* Senior Editor Abby Hart at **ahart@northcoastmedia.net**. You can find the full slate of Zoom interviews in the video section at **https://www.landscapemanagement.net/latest-lm-coverage-of-covid-19/.**

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Sentimental for a selfie

am not one to often take a selfie. For multiple reasons — and probably some of the same reasons I've never responded to a text message with an emoji. But last October, I was feeling a mix of emotions excitement, anticipation, energy—and I had two St. Ed's High alums with me: Bill Roddy and Craig MacGregor, publisher and associate publisher, respectively, of this fine publication. I extended a go-go Gadget arm, and we all looked up and smiled, capturing Fourth Street Live in the background. It was Day One of GIE+EXPO 2019, and we were just about to arrive at the party we were hosting at the Goose Island Beer Bridge.

A year later and with some hindsight, that photo means a lot more to me than I thought it would when I took it. Bill, Craig and I are all still fine and well and doing our thing. But, one of our annual meeting places — GIE+EXPO in Louisville, with Fourth Street Live and the Goose Island Beer Bridge - is off our travel schedule for a year.

ff It's like my friend Louis(ville) got thrown in the slammer for a two-vear sentence, and now I know I can't see him again until 2021.

SETH JONES EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Contact Jones at 785-542-2627, sjones@northcoastmedia.net or via Twitter@sethaiones

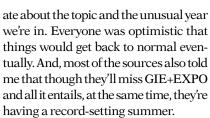
It's like my friend Louis(ville) got thrown in the slammer for a two-year sentence, and now I know I can't see him again until 2021. And, because he's locked up, that also means I don't get to see Bill, Craig and the rest of the LM team as often, as they live in Ohio, and I live in Kansas. I also don't get to see the other GIE+EXPO attendees — our readers and our advertising partners. It's ... strange.

It was an interesting journey putting together this month's cover story on GIE+EXPO being postponed to 2021 ("No show. What now?" starts on page 10). I called my sources, and in

> most cases, I left a voicemail that said, "I'm doing a cover story for LM on there not being a GIE+EXPO in 2020 ... and what that means to people in our industry. Call me back if you're interested in giving me your thoughts."

Every source returned my call immediately. Every source was passion-

Associate Publisher Craig MacGregor, Editorin-Chief Seth Jones, and Publisher Bill Roddy in Louisville, 2019.



Sadly, that wasn't the case for everyone. One of my sources is Karen Williams, CEO of the Louisville Convention and Visitors Bureau. As you would imagine, the tourism business in Louisville has taken a serious hit, and as a result, many people are out of work. GIE+EXPO annually brings \$17 million to the Louisville community. But this year, zero.

But, if there is a positive here, it's the recurring thought that everyone said to me ... when things get back to normal and we can meet again ... that will be the best GIE+EXPO ever. In the meantime, we strive on. Next month, in part two of this series, we'll ask "What if?" What if there wasn't a pandemic and the 2020 show went on as planned? What would we have seen, who would we have met? What product would have won the show? If you have the answers to any of those questions, please email me.

And, when we're all at GIE+EXPO again, I'm going to take another selfie of me and the St. Ed's guys. Louis will be free from his sentence — turns out he was wrongly accused. And, all of us will celebrate his freedom, as friends should do. 🕲



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MORE ONLINE

See more great advice and complete answers from our Editorial Advisory Board in the online version of this feature at LandscapeManagement.net.

How can landscape companies promote diversity when hiring?

"We would never let race. color or creed affect our hiring; we just hire the most qualified person for the job, so that has gotten us a diversified company."

"We have employees

from Europe, Asia,

South America, Africa

the Middle East,

and Central America. We hire men

and women in the office and in

the field ... I think sometimes we

like ourselves. For our team, we

have learned to gravitate toward

those who are different than us in

both their skills and backgrounds

stronger and more understanding

because it makes all of us

of each other."

naturally gravitate toward people

Landscape Professionals

·····Richard Bare Arbor-Nomics Turf Norcross, Ga.

Troy Clogg

Troy Clogg Landscape Associates Wixom, Mich.

Paul Fraynd ".....

Sun Valley Landscaping Omaha, Neb.

Luke Henry

ProScape Lawn & Landscaping Services Marion, Ohio

Chris Joyce

Joyce Landscaping Cape Cod, Mass.

Aaron Katerberg Grapids Irrigation

Grand Rapids, Mich. Jerry McKay

McKay Landscape Lighting

Omaha, Neb.

Bryan Stolz ···

Winterberry Landscape & Garden Center Southington, Conn.

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Phil Harwood Grow the Bench Grand Rapids, Mich.

Kevin Kehoe

3PG Consulting Laguna, Calif.

Jeffrey Scott

Jeffrey Scott Consulting New Orleans, La.

"Ask your staff for feedback on your culture, seek training from experts and listen. Now is the time to make a big change in

our industry!"

"Some of it happens naturally through a commitment to hiring the best person for the job regardless of race, religion or background, but it also requires taking an active hand in reaching out to diverse communities and building bonds, through vour existing workforce or leaders within those communities."

"Actively recruit in places where a more diverse population of candidates will be reached to increase the diversity of your applicant pool."



"Diversity actually raises the IQ of your company. To promote diversity, use a 'hiring scorecard' to ensure a less 'qut- and comfort-

based' hiring process. Most important is the leader actively setting an open-minded tone in the company, including intolerance for mistreatment and an old boys' network that make diverse people feel unwelcome."



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PROGRESSIVE COMMERCIAL

Giving back

BY SARAH WEBB LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ope Lawn Care in Winston-Salem, N.C., found itself in the spotlight of local media attention after one of its crews was out mowing lawns and a neighbor called the police, citing "suspicious behavior," at the beginning of June.

The neighbor reported that four Black men were driving around in the area, possibly performing yard work, and officers were dispatched to investigate. Hope Lawn Care owners, Sarah and Mike Avery, were disappointed that their crew experienced racial profiling. They posted on Instagram and Facebook, sharing the story and calling upon their local community for support.

People around the country were moved by their response in support of their employees. Coalmarch, a digital marketing agency based just two hours away in Raleigh, N.C., was so moved that it decided to build the blossoming company a website in a day.

"We were inspired by their willingness to stick up for their employees, and we were taken aback that something





like that could happen close to our community," said Laura Simis, communications manager at Coalmarch. "The owners have a great approach to how they run their team, and they're invested in giving back to their community and offering job training and

Hope Lawn Care in Winston-Salem, N.C., makes a point to stand up for its employees.

providing a chance for people to get some experience."

All in all, about 30 Coalmarch employees jumped at the opportunity to design, build, write and put together the website.

"For us, it was a no-brainer," Simis said. "We do this for a living. We're always building websites for growing lawn care and pest control companies, so this was the perfect thing we could donate and give them something that'll help them continue to grow."

Simis reported that the company's newly created site, **HopeLawnCare. org**, has already generated leads to help the small company continue to grow.

①

PROJECT EVERGREEN PROVIDES YARD MAKEOVERS TO CONN. MILITARY FAMILIES

Members of the Connecticut Grounds Keepers Association and Project EverGreen's GreenCare for Troops initiative joined forces on Aug. 2 to perform a makeover of three yards belonging to families who have a member deployed with a branch of the U.S. military.

In addition to the makeovers, each family was matched with a GreenCare for Troops volunteer who will continue to provide lawn and landscape services for the balance of each deployment at no cost.

The makeover included tree trimming/pruning, shrub trimming, bed edging and cleanup, weeding, mulching, mowing and trimming.

Participating companies included Brookside Garden Center, Iovanna Property Maintenance, TJB Landscape & Drainage Contractors, CB Property Maintenance and Costello Landscaping.

Events postponed, canceled due to COVID-19

ith the coronavirus pandemic still affecting much of the country, many green industry events and trade shows have been postponed, canceled or made virtual.

Below is an up-to-date list of those events, along with their rescheduled dates, if applicable.

- Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association's annual convention will be held June 11-12, 2021. The organization had pushed back the event to Aug. 14-15 from its original June 5-6 date.
- **GIE+EXPO** has been postponed to Oct. 20-22, 2021, in Louisville, Ky. The event was originally scheduled for Oct. 21-23, 2020.
- Landscapes 2020 will be virtual this year, following the postponement of the 2020 GIE+EXPO, according to the National Association of Landscape Professionals.



- Hardscapes North America, held in conjunction with GIE+EXPO, also will be postponed to Oct. 20-22, 2021.
- The Irrigation Show and Education Week, scheduled for Nov. 30-Dec. 4, 2020, in San Antonio, Texas, has been canceled. The in-person 2021 Irrigation Show and Education Week will be held in San Diego on Dec. 6-10, 2021.

WEBB SELECTED AS ASBPE YOUNG LEADER

LM Associate Editor Sarah Webb was named a 2020 Young Leader by the American Society of Business Publication Editors (ASBPE).



Sarah Webb

Webb is the associate editor of *Landscape Management*, along with its sister publications, *Golfdom* and *Athletic Turf*.

For more than a decade, ASBPE has recognized future leaders in the B2B press with the Young Leader Scholarship. Scholarship winners must be 30 years old or younger, have worked for at least two years as an editor at a business publication, be sponsored by their chief editor and plan to continue in the business press as a career.

SILVER CREEK SUPPLY JOINS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY GROUP

Heritage Landscape Supply Group has acquired Silver Creek Supply in Boise, Idaho. Silver Creek is an independent distributor of irrigation, outdoor lighting, plumbing, fencing, hardscapes and other landscape and outdoor living products. Terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

John Slaughter, general manager, and the Silver Creek's sales and operations team will lead the business going forward. Heritage will continue to operate these locations under the Silver Creek Supply name.

Silver Creek was founded in 1974. It operates a network of eight branches across Idaho and Wyoming, servicing professional contractors.

Heritage Landscape Supply Group also acquired Stone Center of Indiana, an independent distributor of hardscapes, architectural stone and landscape products. Terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

Founded in 1969 in Indianapolis with a second location in Sheridan, Ind., Stone Center serves builders, architects and professional contractors throughout central Indiana. Stone Center's sales and operations team will lead the business going forward. Heritage will continue to operate these two locations under the Stone Center name.

Heritage Landscape Supply

Group, a wholly owned subsidiary of SRS Distribution, operates eight local branches with more than 70 locations across 11 states.

RYAN LAWN & TREE EXPANDS SERVICES

Ryan Outdoor Living (ROL), the landscaping division of Ryan Lawn & Tree, has expanded in the Kansas City metro area. ROL said the company almost doubled its staff this summer, including the addition of a fifth landscape crew, as well as a new landscape consultant, landscape architect and division project coordinator. Ryan Lawn & Tree ranked at No. 51 on the 2020 *LM*150 list, with \$41 million in 2019 revenue.

"This was the plan we've been working on over the last year, and it is finally coming together," said Ryan Outdoor Living Manager Shawn Parker. "Our additional experts will allow us to expand comprehensive landscaping design services from Overland Park and Leawood to the entire metro area."

Parker started the landscape design division at Ryan's Kansas City location three years ago. With no GIE+EXPO in 2020, the industry learns to adapt and move forward

BY SETH JONES

LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

here's a deer somewhere that will regret the 2020 GIE+EXPO show not happening. That's because the cancellation of the show means there will be one more hunter in the Minnesota woods this October.

"For me, this will be the first time in 20 years — maybe longer — that I won't be going to Louisville in October," says Scott Kinkead, executive vice president of Minnesota-based Turfco Manufacturing. "Maybe I'll go hunting that weekend."

From that poor deer to the people at John Deere, the COVID-19 pandemic causing the cancellation of GIE+EXPO has many in the industry feeling blue.

"We were disappointed we wouldn't be heading to Louisville in October, but we fully support OPEI's decision to put the safety of show attendees and exhibitors as the top priority this year," says James Dutton, marketing manager for John Deere. "This is a resilient industry that knows how to roll with the punches."

A significant challenge

Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) President and CEO Kris Kiser

announced in late July that GIE+EXPO was being postponed to 2021. This was a change in position from May, when the plan was to host the show safely. As everyone has learned this year, plans can change quickly.



Kris Kiser

"We had hoped to have the show — we believed we could get it done safely, with protocols in place," Kiser told *LM* in a Zoom interview recorded on July 29 that can be watched at Landscape-Management.net. "It was all going in the right direction, and then two, three weeks ago, we saw the explosion and the virus has reasserted ..."

Kiser says a lot of deliberation went into the decision to postpone the show to 2021, including meetings with the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP), the Professional Grounds Management Society and OPEI's board of directors, and it went all the way up to the governor's office in Kentucky.

"It goes to show you how serious professionals are taking the pandemic," says Marty Grunder, CEO of Grunder

PART 1 OF 2

No Show. NO OW. NO OW.



Landscaping Co. and The Grow Group in Dayton, Ohio. "I'm sure it's creating a great heartache for OPEI and NALP ... but it speaks to their care for others over profit."

Kiser acknowledges that it is a serious blow for OPEI that the association will have to overcome.

"It's a real hit to us. We'll have to find ways to make up the deficit," Kiser says. "It's a significant fiscal loss. If we lost the building or an airplane came down, those are the kinds of things we are insured for, but we're not covered for the virus/pandemic — it's a significant challenge."

While OPEI will take a big hit by losing the show, other parties are also affected, including the city of Louisville, the 1,000-plus exhibitors and 16,000-plus attendees. So, what now?

Biggest show in the industry

Russell Skipper, owner of Solid Green Lawn & Landscape in Atlanta, says the lack of the show will hurt morale at his company and also limit his team's ability to see new equipment that could improve his operation.

"It's nice to be able to demo equipment,"

Skipper says. "My guys can get on these machines and see if it will make their lives easier and bring that to my attention. It's also a way to appreciate my guys, take them to the Brazilian steakhouse and recharge."

The good news is Skipper says his business, which provides primarily fertilization and weed control, is booming. The company has picked up almost 200 accounts this summer, growing to 1,000 accounts. He is encouraged by the good year and is looking to find a different way to reward his crew.

"Like everyone, we have had to readjust and keep going," Skipper says. "I'm going to take my guys on an offshore fishing trip to Florida to show them my appreciation and reconnect. I'll do that in lieu of GIE+EXPO this year."

Greg Burghall, president of Gro-Green Lawn Care in Ontario, Canada, says he is in the middle of his

busiest year yet, with many

residents investing in their home outdoor spaces.
While missing this year's GIE+EXPO show won't directly affect his day-to-day operation, he says it will hurt his opportunity to become more innovative.



"Last year, I bought a Steel Green ride-on sprayer, and it has changed the way we do business," Burghall says. "I get inspiration

from that show. We have a landscape show here every January, but (GIE+EXPO) is multiple times bigger. I've made friends there, I love it ... I'm going to miss it."



Greg Burghall

Brandon Hyde, vice president of Hyde Park Landscape, Norwich, Conn., attends GIE+EXPO every other year. This year would have been his year to go. He values the event so much he plans to make accommodations to attend in 2021.

"The seminars are phenomenal," Hyde says. "They honestly get me pumped up, bringing fresh ideas to the company. On the trade show end, to see all the new products, it's a decision you can make. Two years ago, I went looking for a skid-steer, and I went and sat in all of them, felt them all out. I was able to make a good decision when we got back home. Furthermore, it's seeing products that we don't go there for, it's seeing

Continued on page 13

MEET THE FX1000V EFI



"This engine comes in at an outstanding 38.5 SAE Certified Horsepower, giving landscape pros all the power they need while also boosting their fuel economy."



CONTRIBUTOR:
Troy Smith, New Product
Development Engineering Manager

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Continued from page 11 new things we didn't even know were in the industry, or maybe they're popular in another industry."

Hyde says the skid-steer he selected in 2018 was a Bobcat 650, and the crew loves it. He adds that he believes next year's GIE+EXPO will be a special one.

"I think what's going to happen is next year is going to be huge," Hyde says. "The people who were going to go this year are all going to go next year, and it's going to be a blowout. It's the biggest show for our industry. It's impressive to see what our industry can do and the connections you can make."

Stav tuned

While attendees are certainly disappointed, exhibitors also have found themselves without an outlet they've come to rely on for nearly four decades. Along with proving their equipment in the demo area and showing off their wares on the trade show floor, there's also the loss of the face-to-face meetings with end users.

"By far, the best part of GIE+EXPO is connecting with customers," says John Deere's Dutton.

"Having the opportunity for face-to-face conversations helps us better understand their needs

James Dutton

at GIE+EXPO. and how John Deere can provide them with even better products

> and services." Dutton says Deere has new products the company will launch in October and to "stav tuned." Turfco's Kinkead says his company also

Many would-be

attendees say

the in-person

interactions

they value

has new products it'll be launching, and he jokes he might now drive some of

that equipment to the front lawn of the nearest LM editor.

"We want people to see the quality we put in our products," Kinkead says. "We want to make landscapers more productive and profitable; we want to help them grow their business. And, there's value in connecting with people who already own our stuff. It's a big deal (not to have GIE+EXPO). You want to be busy from sunup to sundown."

Kinkead says his company is investing in ways to show its equipment

Continued on page 14

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Continued from page 13 virtually. He also adds his team members are still traveling to visit with customers — they're just driving and not flying.

Mulch Mate, says his team was look-

Nick Carlson, CEO and founder of

ing forward to building on its forward momentum from last year's show, when the company unveiled the Truck Mate and the Kart Mate. Though he says he's "bummed" that the show won't go on, he says he understands the decision because he's gotten sick after attending a trade show in the past.

Mulch Mate will launch another new product next month, Carlson says, and he is still weighing options on how to get the most eyes possible on the new creation. In the meantime, he says there's no way for him to replace the in-person relationship building he values.

"It's like Chick-fil-A: The food is good, but it's more about the service," Carlson says. "We try to portray that. We try to set a new bar, a new standard. (At GIE+EXPO), we literally have customers come to our booth and help us sell products for us. To not meet face to face hurts."

Effect on Louisville

Another group disappointed to see the 16,000-plus GIE+EXPO attendees not making the trip this year is the city of Louisville. GIE+EXPO brings more than \$17 million in tourism value to the city, according to

Karen Williams, president and CEO of the Louisville Convention and Visitors Bureau. Williams has been working in her office every day since the beginning of the pandemic Continued on page 16



EYES ON THE

Nick Carlson of

his company will still launch

next month.

a new product

Mulch Mate says

PRODUCT

Karen Williams



✓ AIR PRESSURE MONITORING

(if added for flat-spot prevention & extreme loading)





this year.



Continued from page 14

and says she can feel the absence of the many conventions that call Louisville home.

"It's not only the weight of not having the GIE+EXPO but the void of the hustle and bustle on Fourth Street Live and the restaurants," she says.

Williams says 60,000 people work in the hospitality industry in Louisville, and she estimates that 70 percent or more are currently laid off. The Kentucky Derby,



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rescheduled for Labor Day weekend, will happen without fans. She says the race normally brings \$400 million to the city, but estimates this year will be closer to \$10 million.

"Everyone here is so familiar with

GIE+EXPO; we know what to expect from attendees," Williams says. "They visit the attractions, and they stay afterward. The city truly appreciates the show, and we hated to say that we couldn't host it."

David S. Beck, president and CEO of Kentucky Venues, echoes Williams' sentiment and says they are learning each day at the Kentucky Exposition Center how to host a safe event. The Kentucky State Fair has been successful, though with less people. The annual Street Rod Nationals built morale for the community, he says, but he adds that it had half its normal attendance, dropping from 30,000 people to 15,000.

"All of these are building blocks to the next level," Beck says. "It's a puzzle. But, I feel good about our team. We're setting the example of how to be safe, so we can exceed those requirements. It's a partnership (with GIE+EXPO). They're the kind of people that if they want to do it, they'll do it right. Next year will be bigger and better."

Kiser strongly agrees.

"We have a great track record, 38 years of meeting the needs of our exhibitors," Kiser says. "We expect a dynamic, door-busting event next year. The city really wants to welcome us back. We're excited to shift the focus to 2021 to being the biggest show ever." (19)

Editor's note: Next month LM will present part two of this two-part series, where we present "What if?" and ask what this year's GIE+EXPO would have looked like had it happened. If you have a product launch that you would like included in this feature story, send an email to LM Editor-in-Chief Seth Jones at sjones@northcoastmedia.net.

Quali-pro

INNOVATIVE, EFFECTIVE AND SUPPORTED -SOLUTIONS FOR LCOS

ONE-STOP **TURF SHOP**

Quali-Pro pairs extensive product lines with costefficiency to help LCOs get the job done

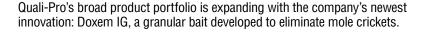
uali-Pro is constantly expanding and evolving. You might have heard the name or seen a label in passing, but a lot has changed. The company, which is supported by its multinational parent company Adama, now has one of the broadest portfolios of products in the industry, so now is a good time to take notice.

Supported by a strong backbone of products like broadleaf weed herbicide 3-D, Quali-Pro has spent the past several years developing new solutions that are convenient, effective and economical.



Convenience is key

Keeping the end-user in mind is one of the main motivators for the Quali-Pro team. They listen to customer feedback, connect with distributors and rely on their own industry knowledge and experience to develop products that not only



work, but are practical.

"I know from my experience on the landscape and commercial turf side of things, convenience is pretty valuable," says Ian Rodriguez, Ph.D., technical services manager for Quali-Pro. "You don't have the luxury of being at a facility mixing up stuff.

> You're often mixing on-site out of a vehicle, without some of the conveniences you might have at the shop."

This is how Quali-Pro's line of combination chemistry products was born. You might be familiar with two of the products in this line: Negate and Fahrenheit.

Both products eliminate the need to do calculations and tank mixing in the field, because the formulation is simple: one bottle for one acre.

The newest innovation is Doxem IG, a granular bait developed to eliminate mole crickets.

It is not a restricted-use

product and it doesn't have a strong chemical or pesticide-like smell, which means you can use it anywhere — residential homes, parks or schools.

"A lot of the stuff that's effective on mole crickets come with pretty strong odors and/or restrictions on where and how you can use it, so it's a big win for LCOs in that sense," says Rodriguez.

Available in 25-pound bags, or a 4-pound shaker, Doxem IG doesn't require any mixing. Simply add the granular bait to a spreader and apply to the infected area. It is also weather resistant for up to two weeks.

Solutions that don't break the bank

The landscape market is highly competitive and with labor shortages continuing to be a persistent issue, offering lower-cost solutions to LCOs can make a



world of difference.

"Labor is a very difficult thing to

deal with in the landscape industry so anywhere you can offer some savings with the same efficacy is a win-win for the lawn care folks," says Rodriguez.

Rob DeBonis, owner and president of Chesapeake Lawn Science in Highland, Md., has seen convenience and cost-savings firsthand with granular fungicide Strobe Pro G.

"It's worked really well for brown patch and it's easy to apply," says

> DeBonis. "It's not dusty, which is huge."

But the products

While comparable to other products on the market, DeBonis says he sees significant savings with Strobe Pro G. So much so that for the 2020 season, he purchased 20 80-bag pallets.

themselves aren't the main reason he chooses to use Quali-Pro products.

"Even though they are a bigger company, they seem to have more of a small-business-minded focus," says DeBonis. "Some companies don't want to come out and meet with me, so Quali-Pro seems more proactive in wanting to establish relationships with their customers."

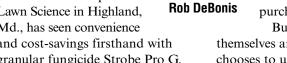
Looking ahead

Quali-Pro isn't showing any signs of slowing down in the product development department. Whether it's creating a brand-new product, or making an existing solution better, Quali-Pro always keeps the end-user in mind.

"Some of us at Quali-Pro, including myself, have spent years spraying lawns and pushing a spreader, and I see that as an advantage." says Rodriguez. "The first thing in my mind is, 'Would I use this?""

And that value is what truly sets Quali-Pro apart.

"There's value to be had with our line," says Rodriguez. "You'll find the sales and product support is there as well. Sometimes people may be surprised by that. We take our products seriously and stand behind them."



Save more with Ouali-Pro's revamped EOP

The new Early Order Program (EOP) will bring even more savings to LCOs because Quali-Pro will now pay out on products, regardless of product level.



As long as there is \$100 total rebate involved — from purchased base products or platinum products — the rebate is paid out.

"We listened to distribution and their feedback from their customers and then we reached out to those people as well to hear from them directly," says Nick Strain, business director for Quali-Pro. "This new program allows landscape company owners to purchase 80 percent of their needs and get the best price."

This feedback also led to extending the timeframe for this year's program. Landscape owners now have from August 15 until November 30 to participate.

Learn more at: SimplyGrowTogether.com

PROTECT YOUR TURF

Fall lawn care 101

What lawn care operators need to know about fall lawn care maintenance practices

BY SARAH WEBB

LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR

erforming fall lawn care is critical to help lawn care operators (LCOs) set up their clients' yards for success the following spring, according to Alan Hollen, territory manager at The Andersons.

"Fall is the most important time of year for lawn care," he says. "The first thing to do in late summer/early fall is to get the turf to recover from the summer."

Hollen and Nick Carlson, CEO and founder of Mulch Mate, provide insight on what LCOs should keep in mind when it comes to preparing turf for the winter and spring ahead. Before starting Mulch Mate, Carlson founded a landscape company in 2001 and sold it in 2017 in a multimillion-dollar deal.

WHAT TO DO

Cultural practices for fall lawn care can include items such as aerating, adding soil amendments, dethatching, fertilizing, removing leaves and doing weed control, Hollen says.

"Generally, especially with tougher weeds like wild violet and ground ivy, the best time to control is in the fall," Hollen says. "It's all about timing, so if lawn care operators do a fall application of an herbicide, they will be more efficient because that's when the plants are moving food and nutrients and energy to their roots."

When it comes to putting down fertilizers and herbicides, one challenge



is keeping the yards clean enough to perform the task.

"It's hard to do a fertilizer application when the lawn is covered in leaves," Hollen says. "The best way to combat that is with call-aheads. Let the customer know when crews are going to be there and have them get the lawn ready ahead of time so technicians are able to treat it (if the company isn't already performing a leaf cleanup)."

Carlson agrees but notes that the needs may vary based on location.

"One of the big things crews skip over is the prep work to the seeding and the fertilizing," Carlson says. "When you do the cleanup, you're supposed to cut the lawns shorter because when you seed, it's going to take two to three weeks to germinate, and you're not supposed to be on the turf at that point in time. In the fall, you're going to have leaves coming down, and it's very important to get that up, because if you spread seed on top of the leaves, that does the customer no good."

He suggests using a utility trailer that hooks to the front of the mower

to help collect leaves and debris: The operator can empty the clippings and debris from the mower bagger into the trailer, cutting down on the time spent driving the mower back to the truck. "You've basically eliminated all that travel time, the wear and tear on the unit and the time the tires are on the turf," he says.

With aeration, Carlson adds, because crew members are often in a hurry, they'll drag an aerator over a hard surface like a walkway or driveway and chip the concrete. He says buying and installing a linear actuator that lifts the tow-behind aerator in the air allows operators to pass over the hard obstacles without damaging people's property.

HOW TO DO IT

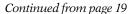
Both Hollen and Carlson say that one of the most important aspects of fall lawn care is educating customers.

"A lot of the customers, when spring rolls around and the grass greens up, they get excited, and they're all into it, Continued on page 20

PROTECT YOUR TURF

TRAILER TIME Adding a trailer to a mower can make collecting debris faster.





but by the time summer stresses hit and their lawns decline, they lose interest and let go of it," Hollen says. "But, it's key to keep customers engaged with their lawn and educate them that what you do in the fall pays off for the next year."

Timing of marketing is important, too.

"I would start planting the seeds for aeration and seeding services in July, letting customers know you have openings available," he says. "Once August is over, I start doing aerations at the middle or end of the month (at least here on the East Coast). If you don't have it buttoned up by now, you're behind for aeration and seeding. When it comes to leaf cleanups, you should be hot and heavy now getting people on the list and giving estimates."

Carlson also suggests simplifying the process so you don't confuse customers.

"Use fewer words and common words," he says. "We focused really hard on not confusing the customer with too much information. Give them simple payment options and

simple services and lay it out for them. You need to put a plan in place for the customer so all they do is say, 'I want this service,' and the sale is over."

In addition to lawn care practices, Carlson also recommends performing three leaf cleanups in regions such as the Northeast — at the end of October, before Thanksgiving and just before Christmas — and then giving the customer one estimate for the whole



season and letting them pay on it from September through January.

"People usually don't want to pay one big lump sum," he says. "This way helps relieve the pressure on the customer and gives the landscaper consistent cash flow throughout the rest of the season, so everyone wins," he says.

As far as marketing these services to customers, Carlson says the sooner in the season, the better.



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PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Apparel, footwear and hearing protection

RUCKUS DISCORD BLUETOOTH EARPLUG EARBUDS

COMPANY: Elgin URL: ElginUSA.com The Ruckus Discord earbuds provide EPAcertified (25-dB noise reduction rating) hearing protection while allowing users to listen to music. Designed to block out noise in tough working environments, a noise-canceling mic allows users to make



phone calls and use their phone's voice activation. The Discord features an IP65-rated enclosure that seals out dust and sweat. The noise-isolating tips are made of biocompatible, USP Class 5 medical grade silicone, and the cable is reinforced with a triple Kevlar braid. The earbuds have a range of up to 50 feet and a rechargeable battery life of up to 14 hours.



WORKTUNES WIRELESS HEARING PROTECTOR

COMPANY: 3M URL: 3M.com The 3M WorkTunes Connect hearing protector with Bluetooth wireless technology entertains and connects while helping to protect

hearing. Users can stream high-fidelity audio and make and take phone calls without missing a beat. The lowprofile and lightweight design also offers built-in comfort with a headband that's compatible with baseball hats.



COMPANY: Kujo Yardwear

URL: Kujo.com

The Kujo Yardwear X1 Landscape boots offer premium safety protection without sacrificing comfort. They are water resistant to keep feet dry with breathable air vents to keep them cool. The composite safety toes meet ASTM F2412-11 I/75 and C/75 impact compression standards. A tough rubber outsole protects the bottom of the boot and features 6-mm lugs for tough traction with flex grooves for mobility. The X1 boots have an EVA-cushioned midsole and arch support insoles for antifatigue comfort.



CARHARTT FORCE COLOR-ENHANCED T-SHIRTS

COMPANY: Gemplers **URL:** Gemplers.com

Carhartt Force color-enhanced T-shirts are available in lime or orange for visibility in tough conditions. They're built with Force technology to wick sweat, dry fast and release stains. Add a logo to identify your crew or promote your business using Gempler's in-house embroidery and heat-press service. Turnaround is in as little as two days, and Gempler's keeps the logo on file to make reorders quick and convenient.

Lawn care operators offer insights on how to disrupt the cycle of snow mold by ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

now mold is a persistent problem on cool-season turf each year, regardless of how much it snows, according to John Patterson, general manager of Grasshopper Lawns, in Larksville, Pa.

Pink snow mold appears in small tan or pinkish circular patches up to 6 inches in diameter, and gray snow mold patches can be several inches to several feet in diameter.

Two lawn care operators (LCOs) offer insights to help beat back snow mold before it appears or after telltale patches appear on a lawn.

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Patterson recommends a good yard cleanup at the end of fall and dropping mower blades down a level. Shorter turf minimizes moisture getting trapped and increases air circulation.

Mary Kottke, owner at Spring Touch Lawn & Pest Control in St. Paul, Minn., says aeration is key in the fall for breaking up thatch and helping air out turf. Kottke suggests adjusting irrigation systems, as overwatering can cause snow mold. If problems continue in a shady area, trim or remove trees to allow more sun.

CHEMICAL CONTROL

Patterson says the worst snow mold damage happens in March

PERSISTENT PROBLEM Snow mold can show up in coolseason turf without heavy snow cover.

when snow covers turf and goes through melt and freeze cycles. "Once you get to March, if you've got snow mold and it's far gone, we'll rake it out or have the customer rake it out and fluff the turf up," he says.

To prevent snow mold in March, Grasshopper Lawns relies on fungicides early. "We do a fungicide application as a preventive and, if able, put another treatment on if there's a January thaw," he says. The company typically uses pentachloronitrobenzene or triadimefon-trifloxystrobin. Kottke currently uses azoxystrobinpropiconazole for both preventive and curative snow mold control.



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BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Marketing musts

Marketing experts share seven tips for marketing lawn care and landscape services

BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR



arketing green industry services may seem like a hefty — and somewhat nebulous task, but it doesn't have to be.

Lindsay Malke, director of marketing for Landscape Workshop, a full-service commercial grounds maintenance provider in the Southeast, and Sue Silva, owner of Superus Marketing, a marketing agency in Atlanta that works with lawn care company Arbor-Nomics, provide insight into what green industry companies should do to market their business.

CONSIDER YOUR COMPANY'S STRENGTHS

"First, we try to figure out what is the company's positioning, what's their strong point," Silva says. "A lot of companies say, 'We give you green, weed-free lawns,' but you're supposed to provide that. Figure out what you want to say besides, 'We can make your lawn green,' and then have all your assets communicate that positioning."

An example of such a differentiator, she adds, is high-quality customer service.

→ BE SENSITIVE TO CURRENT ISSUES

Whether it's making social media posts that aren't tone-deaf or ensuring crews have appropriate personal protective equipment, it's important to always be aware of current issues especially with protocols surrounding COVID-19.

"It's making sure that in any pictures of our crews, we've all got the appropriate safety gear on and that we show that our guys are wearing masks," Malke says. "As far as our business development people going out to sites and marketing, they have been very careful about not walking into anybody's place of business unannounced. They call and ask if they can stop by. We used to just cold call."

3 CREATE AN EASY-TO-NAVIGATE COMPANY WEBSITE

Silva notes that many customers will search a company's website first.

"A lot of the millennials and the younger upcoming homeowners don't want to talk to people," she says. "They want to do everything by email, look at your site, get the information, make a request and just get it done whether it's 10 p.m. on a Thursday or 7 a.m. on Sunday."

The website should communicate a company's strategy, look professional and provide the information a customer may need, including the ability to request information online.

4 DISSEMINATE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

Malke says Landscape Workshop puts out quarterly e-blasts and monthly blogs with educational content.

She adds that the company posts educational content and time-relevant topics on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn about two times per week.

5 NOTE YOUR COMPANY'S MARKET Depending on the region, some homeowners may prefer to do their own fungicide applications and mow their own lawns, whereas in other areas, they prefer to pay a company to do it.

Silva says it can help to do some research on an area to figure out what type of homeowners the company is servicing.

For example, she notes that while radio ads may work well for regions that have a high commuter population, they may not work so well in areas where people aren't listening to the radio on a regular basis.

6 IDENTIFY HOW MUCH YOU'RE WILLING TO PAY FOR A NEW CUSTOMER

Veering away from traditional media, some companies may choose to enlist the help of a pay-per-click company to boost their leads.

"Establish a ceiling: What you are willing to pay for a lead and see if they can get you leads for that cost," Silva says. "If the company didn't even bother to ask you that question of what can you pay for a lead, then this company is not doing you justice."

Figuring out how much a company is willing to spend on a new customer and how many new customers it would like to acquire that year can help establish a base marketing plan for the year, she adds.

CONSIDER INVESTING IN PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

Malke says that Landscape Workshop's sales representatives get a lot of traffic out of promotional items.

"Our clients are really receptive to getting new swag," she says. "We have an aluminum water bottle, a coffee cup, a notebook, a hand sanitizer that's really popular these days, golf tees, chip clips and Chapstick, stuff like that."

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SOFTWARE UPDATE

Tech to grow your turf business

How lawn care operators are using software and services to stay on top of their game

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

oday's lawn care clients are a new breed, says Steve Martinko. The owner and CEO of Contenders Tree & Lawn Specialists in Waterford, Mich., says that lawn care clients have become more demanding and distracted.

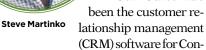
"We're in the age of connectivity and real-time customer support," he says. His company relies on software to fulfill customer demands and prevent a communication lapse with clients. Here's how three lawn care operators use software to manage customers and grow their businesses.

MANAGE CUSTOMER NEEDS

Martinko says that software serves a purpose beyond data collection — tailoring services to customers' needs. "If software can help enhance the relationship, you want that," he says. "We're able

to provide a proposal with

site-specific notes that when sold get transferred immediately into the client's account without redundancy or risk of human errors." ServSuite has



tenders Tree & Lawn Specialists for the past four years. Martinko says the software improved efficiencies, leading to more satisfied customers and a \$500,000-per-year net growth in the first two years — double the company's previous growth numbers. The company has a revenue of \$3 million and provides 45 percent lawn care, 45 percent tree/ shrub care and 10 percent pest control to mostly residential

Software can help companies tailor their services to meet a specific client's needs.

Serving 350 clients per day in the metro Detroit area, Contenders' technicians need to be trained to properly input accurate data. The software offers the ability to forensically analyze how mistakes are made in the system, so technicians can receive extra training as needed.



Chris Barlow, owner of All Green Pest Control & Lawn Care, a \$600,000 residential lawn care and pest control company in Provo, Utah, uses PestPac for his CRM. In the last year, the company also adopted Slingshot, a third-party answering system. Slingshot's staff answers sales calls and online chats, gives basic quotes for services and provides lead generation during overflow periods before and after business hours. It integrates with companies' CRMs and offers the ability to select specific requests to forward to them.

Barlow says the service has been helpful in capturing sales leads during their busy times, but recommends that users of third-party answering services be meticulous about which requests they want the service to respond to these services charge per minute on the phone and per response on chat or text.



CRM software also provides a clear picture of how to manage lawn care companies' people.

"It gives us the information needed to know if we have to add more representatives on the phones, when representatives can take breaks

and when the best time is to conduct weekly customer service meetings," says John Guth, vice president of lawn at Green Lawn Fertilizing, a \$16 million company in West Chester, Pa. The company provides 74 percent lawn care services to 90 percent residential clients and uses Real Green's Service Assistant

"Our software is also used to identify wins and recognize high performers," Guth says. The company has 70 technicians that access Real Green's Mobile Live on iPhones. Mobile Live tracks technicians and products, allows users to add additional work to a route and access call logs from customers in real time. Technicians also can sell services and provide them

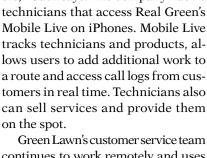
as its CRM software.

continues to work remotely and uses a variety of apps to supplement the CRM, such as Dropbox, Chronicle, ReviewTrackers, Whip Around, Mojo, Sales Rabbit, Microsoft Power BI, Microsoft Teams and Google Analytics.

"The biggest tip is to identify the data that's going to help grow your business, have reports that create transparency around that data and benchmark yourself weekly against



John Guth





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THE BIG ONE

Bragging rights

LOCATION Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

COMPANY Yellowstone Landscape

DETAILS This property is part of a homeowners association that Yellowstone Landscape services.

Dollar spot and heavy insect pressure from nematodes infected the bahiagrass yard. Sueanna Nelson, Yellowstone's manager for the Port St. Lucie, Fla., branch, says the team aerated, verticut and changed the mowing height to improve the turf. "It's been a really fun project and a long time in the making," Nelson says. "It took a good year to get it to that point, to go through the ups and downs to get it to that level of excellence."

Nelson and her team, which includes Account Manager Sandy Larson and Designer Jack Simmons, also pull soil samples to provide a custom turf treatment as needed. Crews hand prune many parts of the landscape.

"In South Florida, it's a challenge to get good color in because we never get a dormant season," she says. "We really push colors by annuals and flowers."

Nelson's team has worked with the client to understand her needs and expectations. The client, in turn, enjoys showing off their hard work.

"She loves it when people ask her, 'Who does your lawn?" Nelson says. "She also takes a lot of pride, which, in turn, becomes more pride for us."

This project earned Yellowstone Landscape a 2019 Gold Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Award of Excellence program.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/thebigone.







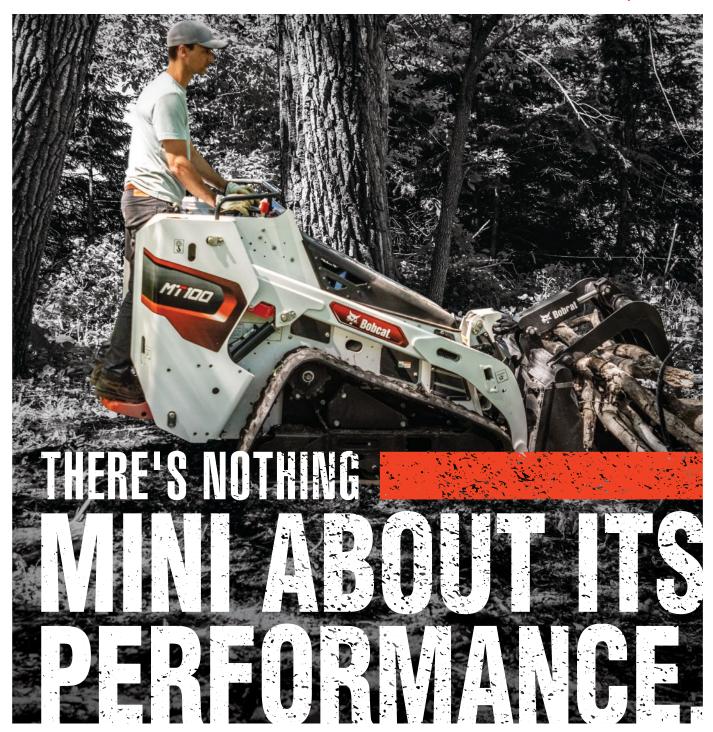




Captions | 1. This home is part of an upscale luxury golf community in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. The homeowner's expectations are high. She desires a property worth bragging about. 2. Royal palms provide privacy for the outdoor kitchen and entertaining space. 3. Soft pastels and vibrant shades of pink can always be found in the home's landscape. The homeowner does not want any plantings with hues of red or orange. 4. The side yard includes travertine stepping stones and a small water feature 5. A path of smooth river rocks accents the side garden of the home. 6. Crews often replenish the dark chocolate-colored mulch to maintain the landscape's

fresh appearance.







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PHOTOS: FROIO LAWN & LANDSCAPE (TOP); QUALITY YARD AND HOME MAINTENANCE (BOTTOM)

MAINTENANCE SHOP

How to service zero-turn mowers

Follow these expert tips to keep your fleet of zero-turns running smoothly

BY CHRISTINA HERRICK | LM EDITOR



hen it comes to servicing a zero-turn mower. Nick Froio, owner of Froio's Lawn & Landscape in West Chester, Pa., says

zero-turns are similar in many ways to other mowers, but to keep them running, there are a few things mechanics and operators should keep in mind.

Froio, Paul Shrigley, shop manager for Quality Yard and Home Maintenance in Pataskala, Ohio, and Nick Miller, a mechanic at Schlabach's Engine Repair in Millersburg, Ohio, offer some tips and tricks to keep zero-turns at their best.

KEEP A CLOSE EYE

Froio recommends changing the oil every 100 to 150 hours of operation, changing transmission fluid every 500 hours and checking tire pressure once a month.

"Bad (tire) pressure can give a funky cut from being off balance," Froio says, whose company, Froio's Lawn & Landscape, provides lawn maintenance and care, hardscape, tree care, irrigation and masonry for a primarily residential clientele. The company also does commercial snow and ice removal.

Shrigley says operators and mechan-

ics should also inspect mower belts for cracking or wear.

"It's pretty easy to inspect your belts, and it's a lot easier to pop one on in the

CARE Signs on equipment is one way to encourage crews to handle it with care. morning in the shop than in somebody's front yard on a 90-degree day," he says.

Operators can help tip

off mechanics on when a mower needs maintenance.

Shrigley and his team in Quality Yard and Home Maintenance's shop check the company's fleet of Exmark zero-turns for belt issues and replace blades weekly. Quality Yard and Home Maintenance provides lawn care, maintenance and landscaping, snow and ice removal, home maintenance and pest control for primarily residential clients.

Froio also recommends mechanics regularly check the forward- and backmotion hand controls of the zero-turn mower to ensure they are tight.

"They start to get loose as you use them," he says. "If they get too loose, you can start driving in circles."

Also, check gauge wheels or antiscalping wheels in the back of the mower every day as they can easily bend or break, and replace when necessary. Froio also suggests mechanics check for blown fuses and inspect seat switches to ensure they're plugged in and not bypassed. They also should check power takeoff switches and change wires to ensure they aren't cut or corroded.

WHAT OPERATORS NEED TO KNOW

Keeping mowers clean helps keep zeroturns out of the shop, Miller adds. Schlabach's Engine Repair services Hustler, Husqvarna, Walker Mowers and a few other brands.

"Wet grass creates conditions for rust to start forming, and debris caked on

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an engine traps heat and doesn't allow for proper cooling," Miller says.

Miller suggests using a leaf blower or air compressor to clean off the motor and deck after each use.

Froio suggests operators also keep a daily inspection checklist of crucial zero-turn checkpoints: oil, gas and fluid levels, belts and blades.

Operators should remember common sense items like not running the mower over rocks because the rocks can bend up blades, Shrigley says.

And, avoid wearing loose clothing while running a zero-turn mower, and take care when touching parts of the mower. Froio adds.

"Make sure the blades are disengaged before putting hands under it while running," he says. "Don't put your hand under the motor while running — it gets hot."

TAKE CARE

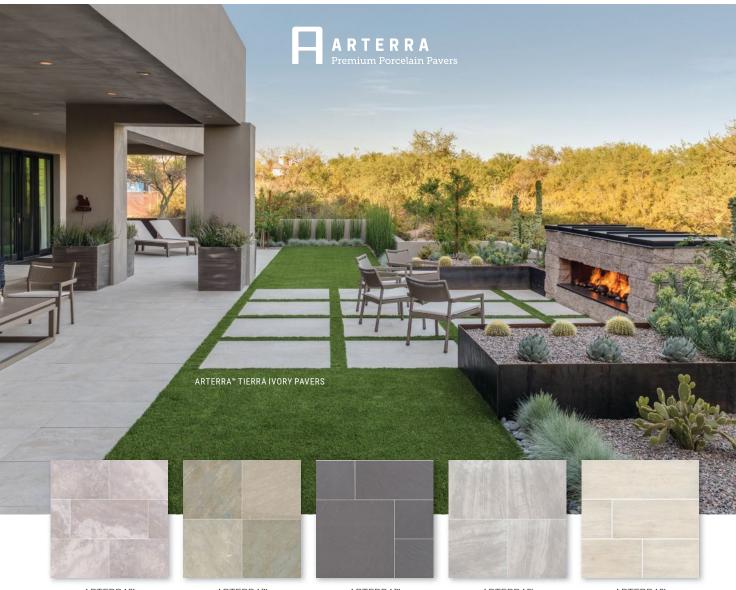
Shrigley says he's fortunate that some crew members have been running zeroturns for a long time and their experience helps him in the shop.

"We've got a couple that are so in tune with machines," he says, noting they'll tell him if a cut is off or if they hear a funny noise when the mower is running.

> Shrigley encourages operators to look after their mowers. His company puts stickers that say "This equipment pays your salary ... take care of it!" on its equipment

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PRODUCTS THAT WORK

Trucks, vans + accessories





COMPANY: Isuzu Commercial Truck of America URL: IsuzuCV.com

Isuzu Commercial Truck of America is among the top brands of low forward cab trucks in the U.S., according to the company. The Isuzu N Series and F Series LCF product line includes Class 3-6 trucks, like the NPR gas crew cab model, pictured here. The Class 4-6 trucks are equipped with an EPA-certified diesel engine. Offering four wheelbases from 109 to 176 inches, the N Series gas truck can accommodate bodies ranging from 10 to 20 feet and have a GVWR of up to 14,500 pounds.

SMARTGATE CONVEYOR UNIT



COMPANY: SmartGate

URL: SmartGateConveyors.com

The SmartGate Conveyor unit moves landscape materials efficiently with little effort from the user. It handles aggregates, river stone, sand, topsoil, compost and mulch from the dump truck and into a wheelbarrow or cart at the press of a button. There's no need to jump on and off the truck, and since it acts as a regular tailgate, crew members don't have to take it off for bulk dumping. With the press of a button, the tailgate opens or closes, just like a standard tailgate but without the heavy lifting. Crews can continue pulling the trailer with no extra hardware or brackets. The unit reduces fatigue and injury while increasing productivity and profits, according to the company.





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COMPANY: Buyers Products URL: BuyersProducts.com **Buvers Products' extensive** line of rear observation systems with night vision cameras includes everything needed to install a high-quality backup camera in a van. Cameras come in a range of shapes and styles with heated, wireless and waterproof variants. There's even a combination camera and floodlight available for maximum versatility. Monitor options include standard, wireless, rearview mirror (replaces the original equipment manufacturer mirror) and quad screen (shows up to four views simultaneously).









READING CLASSIC SERVICE VAN (1)



COMPANY: Reading

URL: ReadingBody.com

Reading's Classic Service Van (CSV) features an aluminum construction that's up to 50 percent lighter than steel - freeing up space for bigger payloads and saving money on fuel, according to the company. Available in 57-, 72- and 75-inch heights, Reading's Aluminum CSV comes loaded with features such as a zinc phosphate bath that enhances adhesion of the powder coat finish; Dual-Pro door seals; an Aluma-Fill fuel cup; patented hidden hinges; and stainless steel handles and locks, available with the Latch-Matic remote keyless entry system.





Good chemistry

How reliable products + great vendor relationships = success for one Texas lawn care firm

ark Safford and his business partners didn't have backgrounds in lawn care when they started Lawn Lab in Forney, Texas, in 2002. Their experience was in the telecom industry.

So, early on, they did what a lot of lawn care companies do: They tried to run their firm "lean and mean" by using generic control products to create good margins.

"We soon found out that by looking for the cheapest products, it was creating problems down the road, mainly in terms of customer retention," Safford says. "By using off-brand products it looked better on paper, but the problems it

was creating, like having to do multiple service calls, was causing customer service problems and retention problems for us."

Before long, with the help of a distributor representative and their Bayer rep, Gary Brooks, Safford and company converted their programs over to incorporate more Bayer products, such as Topchoice®, Dylox®, Armada®, Tribute®, Celsius® and Specticle®. The move has equated to better results, fewer cancellations and customers that stick around.

"Once we had a chance to sit down with Gary and our distributor rep to speak more in-depth about what solutions Bayer had to offer, we started incorporating them,"

Safford says. "And we found out pretty quickly we were getting better results by using best-ofbreed products, and it started making a big difference in our customer retention."

In addition to product quality, Safford says the customer service is above par.

"Working with a company like Bayer, and especially Gary Brooks, I don't ever have to worry about when I'm going to hear from him because he's always keeping in touch with us, seeing how our year is going, offering assistance at any time to come out and do site service," Safford says. "Sometimes you start doing business with a company and then

SPONSORED CONTENT

you never hear from them again. Gary is always keeping in touch with us, and I'm sure it's not only us. That's just him and that's why he's been successful is because of his commitment to his customer."

Brooks himself says having eyes on a lot of turf throughout the region helps him serve Safford and all of his clients better.

"I'm calling on all of Texas north of Waco, Oklahoma and New Mexico, so I see a lot of things they may not see because I'm out there running around," he says. "It naturally follows that I'm going to be more aware of pest problems happening in the region. I get a lot of people who send me pictures of pests to identify, and I love it — especially insects."

Safford says Brooks is just a phone call or visit away to answer any questions about pests, conditions, mixing rates, application rates or provide follow-up as needed. He also appreciates learning about new products coming to market.

"The biggest thing is knowing that when he comes to us and

proposes looking at a product, it's going to be beneficial for our customers and the success of our company," Safford says.

Take the postemergence herbicide Celsius, for example. The team at Lawn Lab had been searching for a better product to use in St. Augustinegrass lawns because many of the products they tried had adverse effects.

"Although they were labeled for St. Augustine lawns, with the heat, there would be a degree of discoloration," Safford says. "It was getting to the point of alienating customers because of the yellowing."

Eventually, Brooks introduced Lawn Lab to Celsius. The company tested it on several lawns and was pleased with the results.

"The beauty of this product is when you apply it, it solely targets the plant you're trying to eradicate — it doesn't yellow or cause undue stress to the turf," Safford says. "I can't tell you how big of a game-changer that was for our St. Augustine lawns."

Other products have made a big impact for Lawn Lab, as well. Topchoice insecticide for fire ants, with its 12-month performance guarantee, is one example.

"As long as it's put out at the recommended rate, we don't get callbacks on it," Safford says. "Our service calls literally went to next to nothing."

Beyond innovative products like Celsius and Topchoice, Safford lauds the partnership he has with Brooks and the rest of the Bayer team.

"It's good to know day in and day out if there is a question or I need answers on something out in the field, I know we have 100 percent of their support," he says. "I can't say that about every chemical manufacturer. They care about you as a person and the success of your company."

In terms of success, Lawn Lab has its sights set on some big goals, one of them being to double the size of the company in the next five years.

Both Safford and Brooks know that growth hinges on customer retention, which depends on having good products and good manufacturer partnerships.

"Whatever your target pest is, you have to pick the best chemistry to control that, and that's how you double your business," Brooks says. "We have good chemistry and we service that chemistry. If Mark has any problems, we come over and take care of them for him."



Working together. Partnership is the name of the game for Bayer sales representative Gary Brooks (left) and his clients Mark Safford (center) and Joel English (right) at Lawn Lab, based in Forney, Texas.



DESIGN BUILD + INSTALLATION

HARDSCAPE SOLUTIONS

Mansion makeover

LOCATION Alton, Ill.

COMPANY Frisella Nursery

DETAILS Overlooking the Mississippi River, The Olin Mansion is a well-known historical landmark in the St. Louis area. Frisella Nursery joined the project following a design consultation with the architectural firm working on the restoration.

"You're dealing with a home that was very old, built in the 1920s," says Tony Frisella Sr., co-owner of Frisella Nursery, noting past owners had entertained presidents at the mansion. "There were a lot of old trees that were in decline. They had to be as old as the home, maybe older."

Frisella wanted to restore the landscaping to its original style while selecting unique plant material that would grow well in the area. Because the house is tall, trees needed to be tall enough to stand out.

The reflecting pool in the front of the house features an original fountain with graceful cranes. Frisella says a goal of the design was to keep the original details fresh while adding new ones.

"I was trying to keep in check with the era of that part of the house, with some design flair," he says.

A major challenge was working around the sinkholes that surround the mansion. Crews used Bobcat equipment to prepare the uneven site. The Bobcat soil conditioner attachment helped work compost in.

Frisella Nursery won a 2019 Bronze Award from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' Awards of Excellence program for this project.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/hardscapesolutions.



















Captions | 1. Since 1927, this 40-acre estate has perched high on a bluff with stunning views of the Mississippi River. The estate is an hour away from Frisella Nursery, requiring extensive preplanning of the landscape installation. 2. The Olin Mansion gets its name after its most famous owner, Franklin Olin, founder of the Olin Corp. This historic photo shows that the home's facade was once ivy covered. The reflecting pond is still a focal point in the landscape. 3. This is a preconstruction photo. Frisella Nursery restored stone structures such as the reflecting pond. 4. Symmetry in the form of lilacs, boxwoods and hornbeams line the reflecting pool, which is offset by a playful water feature. 5. The uneven grade at the front of the house created a challenge when designing the front landscape, requiring careful consideration to maintain symmetry on either side of the reflecting pond. To accomplish this, Frisella selected six hornbeams to accommodate the lower elevation on one side. 6. Roses surround the pool to add color and intrigue to the lilac and boxwood landscaping theme, carried over from the front of the home. 7. Red Obelisk beech trees add height and color among a sea of boxwoods and ornamental grasses on the side of the mansion. 8. Local college classes visit the Olin Mansion to study aquatic plants in the reflecting pond.

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

So, you want to install a water feature?

Water feature providers lay out the best practices for installing water features BY SARAH WEBB | LM ASSOCIATE EDITOR



hen installing water features, it comes down to more than clients' budgets and the type of water feature they'd

like to install.

"There are a lot of things to consider because water offers more than a simple, static, testament in the landscape," says Demi Fortuna, director of product information and education for Atlantic Water Gardens. "For example, a landscape plant, it just sits there, whereas water is about sight, sound and motion."

Brian Helfrich, vice president of Aquascape Construction, agrees.

"Ponds, waterfalls and fountains bring an element of relaxation and refreshment to a landscape," he says. "People choose water destinations, like oceans, lakes and rivers, for vacation because it helps them to relax and unwind. Having a water feature in the yard is like having your own year-round personal 'staycation.""

Landscape Management spoke with Fortuna and Helfrich to determine what types of questions contractors should consider to ensure their clients get the best bang for their buck.

WHY DOES THE CLIENT WANT A WATER FEATURE?

Customers may want to install a water feature for a variety of reasons — for wading purposes, for children to enjoy a shallow pebble beach area or to attract wildlife, for example.

"If (the client) wants koi, the pond needs to be at least 24 inches deep," Helfrich says. "Do they want to attract birds? If so, then include shallow areas where the water is slower moving, and the birds can enjoy bathing. Do they want to drown out traffic or neighborhood noise?

If yes, then a louder waterfall should be installed, such as one that's faster moving and slightly taller than a babbling brook."

2 HOW MUCH MAINTENANCE IS THE CLIENT COMFORTABLE WITH?

While some clients don't mind getting into the nitty-gritty of water feature maintenance, for others, such upkeep is a chore. "It's important to match the maintenance with the customer," Fortuna says.

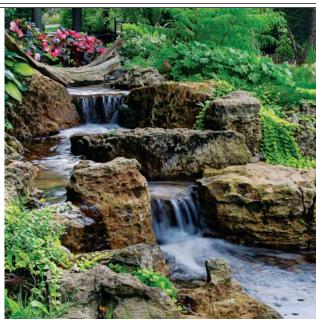
Helfrich adds, "Die-hard gardeners won't mind getting in a large pond to divide waterlilies or do other basic pond chores. Avoid an area of the yard with a lot of trees if the homeowner doesn't want to frequently empty the skimmer basket of leaves and debris, although this is a simple task, provided the skimmer has a basket inside."

For clients who don't wish to perform maintenance, Fortuna suggests installing a simple retaining wall waterfall where all homeowners have to do is flip a switch to turn it on and off and, depending on their region, pull out the pump in the wintertime with a quick disconnect that requires just a screwdriver.

He adds that if a client is willing to spend a little more money, many manufacturers offer automated systems that clean themselves.

WHERE SHOULD THE WATER FEATURE BE PLACED?

When deciding the best location for a water feature, Fortuna says it's important



to determine from which windows and angles the homeowner will be able to view — and listen to — the water feature when inside.

Kitchen windows, dining room sliding doors and bedroom windows are optimal spots to meet those purposes.

Also consider the elevation and topography of a yard.

"If the elevation slopes away from the house, a berm will need to be built up so the waterfall can face the house, but don't build the berm too high or the waterfall will look unnatural, especially in a flatter landscape," Helfrich says.

For ponds, there's the additional determination of whether to place it in a shady or sunny area.

"A shady pond will have less algae to deal with, but the type of aquatic plants that thrive in shade are limited," Helfrich says. "A sunny pond will naturally produce more algae — this can be controlled with water treatments — but more types of aquatic plants will thrive in a sunny location. Waterlilies, for example, ideally need six hours of direct sunlight to perform optimally."

Other steps to take include knowing which trees have more sensitive root systems, so crews can avoid disrupting them by digging a pond too close; checking easements on a property to avoid building on areas where the city might need access; and ensuring there is outdoor electricity available for the pump and water feature lights.

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configurations to match most soil conditions or trench requirements. The TC36 and TC48 trenchers come equipped with a spring-loaded trencher boom that reduces system shock. The carefully designed frame provides easy ingress and egress during use. The crumber boom pulls loose soil into the trenchers, leaving a clean bottom, and an auger removes spoils from trenches, increasing productivity on the job.

PRECISION-ENABLED LASER GRADING BOX

COMPANY: Case Construction Equipment

URL: CaseCE.com

Case's precision-enabled laser grading box for Case skid-steers and compact track loaders is ideal for concrete subgrade, athletic fields, parking lots, driveways, and other fine-grading applications. Creating precise finish grades to within 1/10th of an inch, the grading box is available in 72-, 84- and 96-inch options in two different mast configurations — single-mast for automated elevation only and dual-mast for automated elevation and cross-slope. It's compatible with the Case Site Control laser receivers, control panel and beacons. With a reversible cutting edge on all sides, the grading box's push-pull design grades while moving forward or in

reverse. The hydraulic valve system adjusts the grading box. A rotating laser is set for the desired grade.





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TILTROTATE SYSTEM

COMPANY: Caterpillar URL: Cat.com

The TiltRotate System (TRS) for Cat Next Gen mini excavators allows attached work tools (including buckets, forks, grapples, brooms and compactors) to rotate 360 degrees and tilt 40 degrees side to side, enabling the

machine to reach more work areas from a single position, while maneuvering tools over, under and around obstructions when excavating, grading ditches, sorting recycle materials or placing pipe. The new TRS models multiply the mini excavator's versatility and are available in various configurations to match the application. TRS models have two interfaces: a top interface that connects the TRS to the carrier machine and a bottom interface that connects various work tools to the TRS. The four configurations for the TRS6 allow the user to choose between an S-Type hydraulic-coupler or pin-on top interface and whether the TRS is equipped with an integral grapple (which can be used with a work tool attached). All TRS6 models use an S-Type hydraulic coupler for the bottom interface.



COMPANY: Vermeer URL: Vermeer.com The Vermeer SVP18 vibratory plow



attachment for mini skid-steers is designed for land-scaping and utility installation applications on compact job sites. With the ability to install product up to 12 inches deep utilizing either a chute-style or pull-style blade, the SVP18 vibratory plow delivers better productivity than digging irrigation lines or fiber optic cable by hand in residential areas. A 50-degree swing angle allows the attachment and mini skid-steer to make tight turns around obstacles, and the 6-inch height of the plow's tamping feet provides improved tractive efforts than previous models. While a dedicated plow machine offers many benefits to contractors, the SVP18 attachment offers versatility for mini skid-steer owners and operators to use a variety of attachments for multiple applications on one job site.



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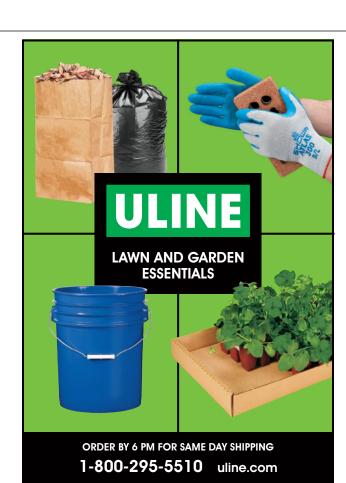
MICHAEL HALL

OWNER, PROGREEN TURF AND LANDSCAPE **NEWPORT, N.C.**

"The Yanmar ViO35-6 was an easy choice for us when we were in the market a few years ago. For us, it all comes down to service as the top deciding factor when we purchase any new equipment. We have purchased several mini skids from Ditch Witch of N.C., who has been phenomenal over the years. They are also a Yanmar dealer and were our first and only

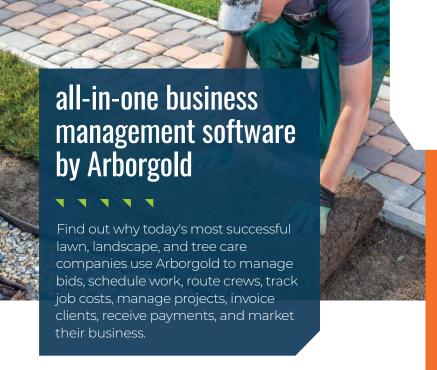
call to purchase a mini ex. The zero-tail-swing adds a huge benefit in addition to the 35-hp size and weight, making it easy for us to tow without a commercial driver's license. We went with an enclosed cab to provide safety from objects, insects, noise and dust, and, most of all, to provide employee satisfaction. To date, with almost 1,000 hours, we have not had a single problem with the machine."

Continued on page 55









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PHOTOS (ABOVE AND ON THE COVER); THE GREENERY, KINGWIN/ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS/GETTY IMAGES

INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE



he search for a new software provider can be a challenge.

Landscape Management talked to three landscape and lawn care companies about their experience in upgrading their software.

MORE THAN 10 PERCENT

When Lawn Plus in West Alexandria, Ohio, started using Real Green Systems in the late 2000s, the company was only utilizing about 10 percent of the software's features.

"We were using it as accounts payable and scheduled services," says Bob Brower, general manager of Lawn Plus.

Lawn Plus provides lawn care, lawn maintenance, tree and shrub care, tree removal and stump grinding, seeding, pest control, excavation, site development and athletic field maintenance for a 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial clientele. As the company grew, it turned to software to increase its efficiencies.

"You get to a point where there has to be a quicker way," he says.

For example, Brower says a technician averages around 15 to 20 stops a day, and prior to Real Green, the tech would input those invoices into a Microsoft Excel system by hand. Now, the technician scans the invoice into the system with a handheld device and logs payment information. Brower says it's also easier to schedule his team with Real Green.

"With this, you know your (client's) last day of service," he says. "There's a map that shows all the dots for what area you need to service. It's more efficient and more effective."

Brower also tips his hat to the marketing capabilities within Real Green's platform. Lawn Plus uses the customer assistant website where clients

Continued on page IT4

Implementing

software on

the go helps make techs

and crew

ATTEND THE EVENTS

Many software companies have a user conference. These, says Bob Brower, general manager of Lawn Plus, are excellent ways to learn from peers and the company itself. Real Green's event, called Solutions, has many tracks, including lawn care, marketing and pest control, designed for different users of the software.

Brower says when Lawn Plus first started going to Solutions, only two people from the company attended. Now, he goes and brings along the company's operations manager, assistant operations manager and office manager.

"You can pick up something every year," he says.
"We all go to different classes, and we all bring something different back to our employees to teach them. It's pretty beneficial."

INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE

PRO TIP:

STRESS YOUR NEEDS

One element to consider when looking to upgrade your company's operational software is how you plan to grow your business and where a potential software fits into that growth.

"Good business owners have a 10-, 15- or 20-year plan," says **Stephen Price,** owner and operator of All Brothers Lawn Squad in Union City, Ind. "What does that look like? That (software) company needs to be able to grow with you."

Price says he likes how responsive Arborgold is to suggestions. His company uses CardX to process credit cards because it can charge fees for clients who use high-reward credit cards instead of All Brothers absorbing that fee, which could be anywhere from 3.5 to 4 percent. Before CardX, Price says the first year his company accepted credit cards, it spent \$18,000 on fees and reward fees.

Price suggested that Arborgold integrate CardX into its offerings because he thought it might help other Arborgold users. The software company listened.

"The ability of Arborgold to take that suggestion from me and put it into play — that makes me a little proud," he says. "I'm able to keep using what I'm using. They take it upon themselves to push it up the line in their system to see if it makes sense as a company."

Continued from page IT3 can log in to their account and pay bills and order services, which cuts down on phone calls. He also uses Real Green's automated marketing assistant. He crafts emails and letters to go out to clients over the winter and then schedules them to send throughout the season for upsells. And, he says this year, he's up 15 percent over last year at this time.

"We know that what they're selling is helping us grow," he says of Real Green. "You pick and choose how your business lines up, and they'll have the software to provide that for you."

CUSTOMER SERVICE ON A CLOUD

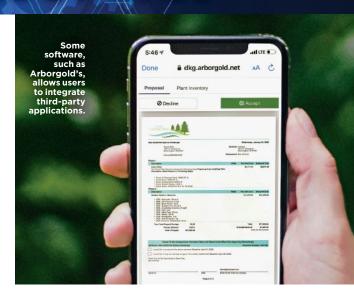
Stephen Price, owner and operator of All Brothers Lawn Squad in Union City, Ind., says his company chose Arborgold field service management software when it was looking to upgrade for two big reasons — customer service and cloud-based data.

All Brothers is a full-service lawn care and maintenance company with a 75 percent residential and 25 percent commercial clientele.

Price says his technicians can access the cloud-based platform from anywhere and on any device. And, he's been impressed with how responsive technical support is.

"I jump in a chat box that's built in, and I have almost an immediate response," he says. "When I needed something done, I didn't have an hour to wait for a call back."

Price says he's been happy with Arborgold's third-party app integra-



tions to customize his experience. Price explains this concept with the analogy of a pickup truck.

"It's kind of like if you brought all the good of a Chevy, a Ford and a Dodge work truck, and you built one truck out of it; you would have one super truck," he says. "The software is the same way. We take the good from Twilio, the good from SendGrid, the good from other third-party software, and in the long run, you've got a stellar product."

DOING ITS HOMEWORK

Before The Greenery upgraded its operations and accounting software last year, the Hilton Head Island, S.C.-based company did a lot of research.

"We not only called a few other companies to ask about their experience, we even traveled to visit two companies that were not competitors in our markets," says Janet Davoli, chief technology officer for The Greenery.

The Greenery provides mowing and landscape maintenance, design/build and landscape installation and turf and ornamental care for its 90 percent commercial, 10 percent residential clientele.

CEO Lee Edwards estimates his company spent a few years vetting different software providers before selecting Aspire for its operations software and Acumatica for accounting. The Greenery transitioned to both Aspire and its preferred accounting partner, Acumatica, within a couple of months last summer.

"We wanted to be on the new system for several months before we started the new year," he says.

Davoli says the integration of Acumatica with Aspire shares and consolidates the data and cuts down on duplicate information.

"Before Aspire, our business software was siloed, meaning that the only way you moved data from one system to the next was by rekeying it, or downloading it to Excel, reformatting it and uploading it to another system," Davoli says.

Edwards says he's impressed with Aspire's issue logging. For example, he says if he's driving around and sees a limb that's fallen or a drainage issue at a property The Greenery manages, he's easily able to communicate that to the proper account manager.

PRO TIP:

TRAINING, TRAINING, TRAINING

Janet Davoli, chief technology officer for The Greenery, says it's important when adding software to take the time to educate your staff properly so they can use the technology as you intend.



"Train, train and then train some more so that the guys and gals in the field will be able to operate the system," she says. "We knew that initially we would be focused on just the basics — getting employees paid, getting work tickets closed, getting clients invoiced and processing customer payments."

But, she attributes the success of The Greenery's adoption of the software to the teamwork mindset the company took when moving to Aspire.

"We had the buy-in throughout the organization to make it successful," she says. "We accepted the fact that we would need to continually tweak the design as we learned more about the system. This meant we sometimes had to take a step backward to go two steps forward."

BRIGHT IDEAS IN HOLIDAY LIGHTING

Software isn't the only technology that's helping landscape companies improve services for their customers. Innovations in holiday lighting are making it easier and safer for installers and customers alike.

Minleon, an LED holiday lighting company, has been in the holiday lighting business since 2005. Augie Roper, factory representative for Minleon, explains that company released the first C9 bulb in the U.S. that year. "From there, the Christmas lighting industry hasn't taken a step back in 15 years," Roper says.

Wayne Wheeler, holiday lighting project manager at Reinders, a green industry supplier, says that programmable, mappable LED products are up and coming, but retrofit LED lighting is the workhorse of the lighting market. With more than 100-million-plus bulbs up on rooflines across the country, Wheeler says that Minleon is the go-to brand for many contractors for its performance and longevity.

Two years ago, a UL Prop 65 lab test determined that the bulbs have low levels of cancercausing lead and mercury. To ensure safety for installers and customers, the company's bulbs are UL rated and UV coated.

Follow-up service calls are a concern for installers as well, according to Andrew McClure, owner of Fort Worth, Texas-based Landscape Legends. The company provides 30 percent lawn care and maintenance and 70 percent holiday lighting to a 70 percent residential, 30 percent commercial clientele.

McClure says that holiday lights should have more of a snug fit in the socket, since looser bulbs require service calls and providers to get on a ladder to fix issues with the lighting product. To ensure a product can stand up to the elements, he tests them for several months to check for issues with heat, fading or corrosion before switching.

With an eye on safety, quality and performance, Roper doesn't expect that the holiday lighting industry will take a hit anytime soon. "It's grown and moved forward, and even through the recession in 2008, we were still decorating," he says. "Commercial properties are applying (lighting) to their budgets and homeowners are becoming more aware." - Abby Hart

INNOVATION + ECHNOLOGY GUIDE



Arborgold Software

with Jon Garner President and CEO

What are Arborgold's featured innovations?

For more than 25 years, Arborgold's all-in-one business management software has helped tree care, lawn care and landscape companies manage leads and customers, bid jobs, schedule work, track inventory, run supply chains, manage projects and invoice customers from any computer or mobile device.

In 2020, Arborgold has already released a variety of new features and enhancements to its software. However, Arborgold still has some exciting news for Q4 as it releases its next generation of employee and job time tracking features and functionality.

What problem does your innovation solve for its users?

These latest enhancements come as a direct result of primary feedback from our users, as well as from months of in-depth secondarv market research.

We believe that time tracking, including GPS tracking, project tracking, receipt capture and alerts, in combination with intelligent scheduling, are some of the most important components



of a company's ability to operate efficiently and "stay lean" when it comes to job costing.

How does your innovation improve the speed, efficiency or agility of its users?

As a general rule, direct and indirect labor costs are often the primary foundation for a company's overall pricing and their ability to win market share, as well as maintain profitable margins and ongoing growth potential. It's also important to mention that time tracking is important throughout the entire year, instead of just during high season



when companies are potentially onboarding and deploying additional temporary crews.

With available features such as routing or rerouting teams based on GPS location, capturing billable versus nonbillable hours and tracking additional direct costs including receipts and real-time material inventory, Arborgold makes it easy for companies to manage its remote workforce at multiple job sites or locations and keep track of project actuals versus plans.

When you're ready to learn how Arborgold's customers are building a better business by automating tasks, optimizing schedules and connecting the office with the field in real time, connect with one of Arborgold's product experts for a personal walkthrough at Arborgold.com/LM.

Arborgold Software | 101 W Kirkwood, Suite 224, Bloomington, IN 47404 | 🖎 812-269-8402











INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE



Aspire Software

with Mark Tipton

What innovation does **Aspire provide?**

Aspire Software offers a highly scalable, cloud-based business management system built specifically for companies in the landscape and snow/ice removal industries. The Aspire platform provides end-toend functionality - including sales, estimating, invoicing and accounts receivable - in one centralized platform that enables contractors to capture and access the realtime data they need to keep their businesses running smoothly and profitably.

What problem does the Aspire platform solve for its users?

Without an integrated landscape management system, company owners and managers are challenged to access the information they need - when they need it to understand how their business is performing. In turn, this lack of insight impacts their ability to make timely, informed decisions, ultimately limiting profitability and growth.

The Aspire platform replaces manual processes and siloed solutions with a single, centralized platform that provides contractors with full visibility into every aspect of their operations — each division, service, customer, service, job, ticket, account manager and/or crew. With the ability to query data in any way, business owners and managers can get insight into what's impacting their bottom line so they can accurately factor overhead and direct costs into estimates and ensure proper margins.

Aspire makes a real difference in clients' lives by helping them gain a complete view of their business, make better decisions and increase profit margins.

With so many options available on the market today, what sets Aspire apart from other solutions?

At Aspire, our goal first and foremost is our clients' success. While we strive to deliver the most upto-date, innovative solution possible, we also realize that technology for the sake of technology isn't enough. That's why our dedication to new client partnerships doesn't

aspire



end when the contract is signed; rather, that's just the beginning.

To that end, Aspire takes a very strategic, success-driven approach to onboarding new users. Each new client works directly with a dedicated implementation manager for the duration of the onboarding process, from system design through deployment, to make sure the software is configured to meet their specific needs and ensure all users are trained to utilize the platform to its full potential.

Aspire takes our role of true business partner very seriously. In fact, our commitment to our clients' success extends indefinitely beyond the initial onboarding. After implementation, customers are assigned their own client success manager to help ensure their ongoing success, and our users have unlimited access to ongoing training and support as well as numerous resources within our online Aspire Knowledge Base at no additional cost.

Aspire Software 390 S. Woods Mill Rd., Ste. 200, Chesterfield, MO 63017 866-727-7473











INNOVATION + ECHNOLOGY GUIDE



Minleon

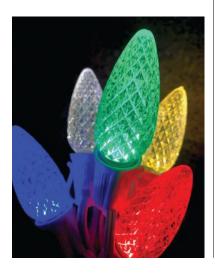
with Augie Roper Factory Representative — USA Market

featured innovations? First, we hope all is well and ev-

What are Minleon's

eryone is safe during these times. Minleon USA has been serving the U.S. during the Christmas season for the past 15 years. We offer our customers the best two C9 bulbs in the market: our traditional industry-standard bulb and being introduced into the market on a limited basis is our NFW C9 called the V-2. It has a thicker shell and a different light-diffusing look.

Both bulbs are UL rated under file E322335 and provide the same quality UV coating customers have received for 15 years.



What problem does vour innovation solve for its users?

The enhanced design of the C9 bulb ensures customers that their packaging will no longer require a warning label for hazardous cancerous materials. In fact, in a recent UL Proposition 65 lab test, of the five major brands sold in the U.S., the Minleon C9 bulb was the only bulb registering low levels of cancercausing lead and mercury; all other brands registered high levels.

How does your innovation improve the speed, efficiency or agility of its users?

The benefits to Minleon customers



with this innovation are multifold. All Minleon bulbs continue after 15 years, ensuring a great lifespan and reducing labor cost to our customers who are performing the installations.

The Prop 65 new connection also now fits the socket even better, resulting in cost savings and reducing service calls. With 24/7 exposure for nine months of testing, the new connection has no corrosion.

Additionally, Minleon developed its own bulb patents, assuring its customers secure patent protection on all its products. Customers can find the patent by visiting USPat. gov. Again, Minleon is proud as a factory to deliver 15 years of C9 quality with great construction and technology through its suppliers and distribution channels.

If you are not currently using Minleon and are interested in doing so, you may contact me, Augie Roper at 402-210-5077.

Minleon USA 4902 Carlisle Pike, Mechanicsburg, PA 17050 402-210-5077







MINLEON USA

- WELCOMES

THE 2020 HOLIDAY LIGHTING SEASON



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Wayne Wheeler

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INNOVATION + TECHNOLOGY GUIDE

Real Green Systems: Mobile Live



obile Live by Real Green Systems puts vour entire business at your fingertips from wherever you happen to be, on any web-enabled device. It's the ideal solution for today's remote work environments. enabling quick communication and sharing of vital information. You and your staff will have the power of remote data syncs, mobile routing and scheduling, customer communications, the ability to accept PCI compliant, data-encrypted in-field payments and so much more. Mobile Live makes it easy

to do everything you need to do efficiently and effectively, saving valuable time and money.

With Mobile Live, you can instantly see the location of all of your techs and connect quickly with the whole team. Live dispatching and vehicle tracking, combined with route analysis and optimization, work together to reduce drive and tech time, vehicle wear and tear and fuel costs. You can make



informed routing and tech assignment decisions, even responding to new call requests with the closest available tech for the fastest possible service. Techs can input propertv conditions, start/stop times and any other customer notes.

Mobile Live also makes it easy to connect with customers. The Call Log feature enables users to add and make calls, view customer history and send alerts and reminders in real time. You can also create a library of custom Quick Texts for preloaded company-approved communications, then use them to send customers personalized messages with specific feedback about their services and properties by adding them to invoices, receipts, tech notes and more. Plus, automatic syncs with Customer Assistant websites and Automated Marketing Assistant will help increase sales, upsells and prepays by triggering online promotions and after-service or upsell messages.

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Aspire. There's a reason it's the **#1** business management software for landscape contractors.



Continued from page 42



DONN VIDOSH JR.
OWNER/OPERATOR,
VIDOSH NORTH
PETOSKEY, MICH.

"We use a host of compact excavators. We own an 88-hp Volvo that is a great machine. Aside from that, we rent the right size piece of equipment for the specific job. I know we pay a premium to do so, but I think the efficiency savings in having the right tool for the job makes up for the cost differential. Two key components that our excavators must have for versatility are a thumb and a blade for light-duty grading."



"Our favorite brand is Kubota; our favorite model is the Kubota KX033. The performance-to-weight ratio is one of the best on the market. We want an excavator that can be easily towed with an F450 but also handle moving large boulders into place. Another reason is reliability; as long as you perform routine maintenance, you should have no problem with breakdowns or issues with your machinery. Unfortunately, other brands we have utilized in the past would overheat, have hydraulic issues or engine trouble. The Kubota series has been a very solid investment for us with no added costs for repair. The two-way pattern selection system allows you to switch between International Standards Organization (ISO) and Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), depending on the operator's preference. Another feature we like is the comfort of the cab and visibility from the operator seat. Finally, the angle blade makes backfilling trenches or grading effortless. We really like the ability to angle the blade on the KX033 model."



FRANK SHANG
OWNER, MRD LANDSCAPING
VANCOUVER,
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

"I love Kubota mini excavators, which have never broken down for me. My Kubota U25 works great in limited spaces. It's a small excavator with big power, like a giant onsite. The Kubota KX040 is powered by a 29-kW/1826-cc Kubota diesel engine and weighs just 4.2 metric tons. It's the ultimate landscaping machine for any purpose. Another reason I choose Kubota is because the nearest Kubota dealer, DLE, provides friendly and professional services."



IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

WATER WORLD

Saving water in San Diego

LOCATION San Diego

COMPANY LandscapesUSA

DETAILS Tanabe Research Center, a commercial science laboratory campus, worked with LandscapesUSA on overhauling its irrigation system and renovating its existing landscaping. The primary aim was to gain a more efficient irrigation system, so it could limit water use and lower its water bill.

"Everyone is very water conscious, but being in San Diego, they're still used to a tropical landscape and turf," says Stacey Sturnot, executive operations manager at LandscapesUSA. In installing drip irrigation and a variety of drought-tolerant plants on the property, the client saved on water and maintenance labor since the drip irrigation provided underground watering to plants, and LandscapesUSA, which also provided maintenance on the property after the renovation was complete, did not have to overhead water plants.

LandscapesUSA worked with Jain Irrigation to install the new Jain drip irrigation system quickly and efficiently. Technicians dug out old rotors from the clay soils, capped the lateral line and ensured that the new drip system was installed properly and watering correctly. The company used hand tools, Bobcat skidsteers and a John Deere front end loader for the renovation.

The company aimed for easy-to-maintain colorful plant varieties and drought-tolerant groundcover, and the client now uses half the water it once did. "The previous landscape was uninspiring. Now, it's beautiful, utilizing some natives, and we've had great feedback from the company's owners," Sturnot says.

See more photos from this project at LandscapeManagement.net/waterworld.















Captions | 1. Tanabe Research Laboratories is located on a serene campus in San Diego. 2. Landscapes USA technicians installed a brand-new drip irrigation system with the assistance of Jain Irrigation. 3. A variety of carefully selected plants, including Cercis Forest Pansy, shows that landscapes can be colorful and water saving. 4. Orange blooms of leonotis planted among furcraea foetida mediopicta alba. 5. Cordyline in full bloom at the entry island of the property. 6. New plants included variegated dianella, leonotis, agave and hesperaloe parviflora, which provide texture, color and height to the landscape.

IRRIGATION + WATER MANAGEMENT

BUSINESS BOOSTERS

Rising to the challenge

How Conserva Irrigation is approaching growth, training and water management

BY ABBY HART | LM SENIOR EDITOR

020 will be remembered as

a difficult year for many industries, but with increased demand from homeowners, green industry companies have been able to thrive under the new challenges the coronavirus has presented. Conserva Irrigation has grown more than most. The franchise irrigation company, headquartered in Richmond, Va., has added 14 new territories in the first half of this year and is closing in on 100 licensed territories in the U.S. Conserva founder Russ Jundt shares the company's outlook on growth and how it's helping waterconscious clients manage resources.

Q: CONSERVA HAS REPORTED SIGNIFICANT GROWTH THIS YEAR. HOW IS THE COMPANY APPROACHING GROWING AND ONBOARDING NEW FRANCHISEES DURING THE PANDEMIC?

A: We keep in mind that business and life, for that matter, go on even in the midst of a global pandemic. Conserva

had to reinvent our new franchisee training program and

move it to 100 percent virtual training.

We laid out each of the 10 days of our training on a virtual whiteboard with our entire operations, marketing, CRM and app team



and all elements of our business unit, and regrouped each of the topics. We invested in overhead desk cameras to highlight each angle during the instruction and practiced (with a variety of camera angles) so that we could still deliver an almost-hands-on training. And, we shipped boxes of irrigation components to each of the franchisees' homes so that they could have that same hands-on feel.

Today, all of our content is now refreshed and updated. We'll continue to have five of those 10 days as a virtual training program, shortening the time away from family for new franchisees. We had to do it 100 percent virtual a few months back, but now, with the permission of the franchisees, we have (training) in our Richmond office. We're practicing social distancing at all times and working in much smaller groups.

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK THE IRRIGATION BUSINESS HAS BEEN THRIVING IN THESE CONDITIONS?

A: People are investing in their homes. We know that irrigation is essential for plant health and well-being, so each of our locations remained essential during the heightened period of the pandemic. And, the ticket size of each work order is traditionally smaller than other home projects and is therefore more attractive to people to continue that service.

An irrigation system that has been professionally assessed and updated with high-efficient components uses 40 to 60 percent less water, which is highly attractive in these times. And, by delivering the right amount of water at the right times, it also reduces the need for weed and feed, as the soil is not leeched of its nutrients by overwatering.

Q: HOW IS CONSERVA HELPING CUSTOMERS MANAGE THEIR WATER CONSUMPTION?

A: (The philosophy of) 'the wetter the better' is egregious and doesn't make sense to us. With the advent of the new generation of smart controllers and flow control, we have beta tested and are now releasing for next season what we call Water Like a Pro, which is a subscription-based remote monitoring program for our residential customers.

It's a heightened monitoring program of all of our smart controllers online. We take advantage of bridging rain events, thus lowering the amount of water that is traditionally used, even by smart controllers.

Each franchise owner, with local and regional weather, can even be more attentive and react to weather conditions, even greater than a smart controller can. With the predictive capabilities of these smart controllers, we can react to changes in the weather patterns that affect that residential consumer's yard, thus reducing the amount of water used and taking advantage of that 'free water,' that rain.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR THE REST OF THE GREEN INDUSTRY AS IT ATTEMPTS TO ADJUST WITH THE TIMES?

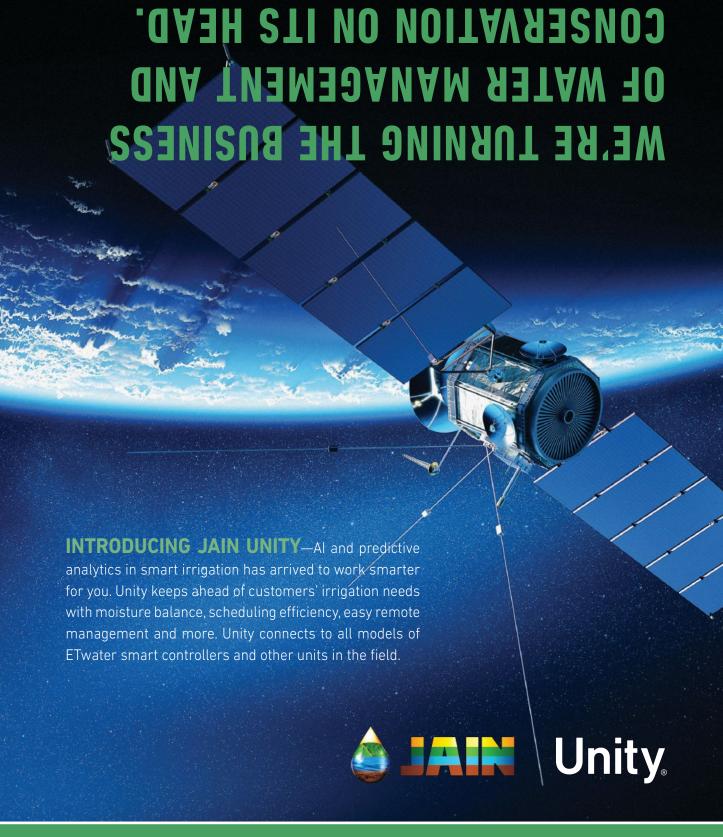
A: Challenge yourself, question your field protocols and your other methods of running your business. Try to look at them differently to see what areas of improvement you can bring to your own business model, what you can bring to your own consumers and how can you break the pattern of, 'This is how we've always done it.' Because more of the same produces more of the same, and that's not going to keep you fresh. This is a time to reinvent yourself. (



Russ Jundt



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FIVEQUESTIONS

INTERVIEW BY SETH JONES | LM EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Brandon Hyde

VICE PRESIDENT

HYDE PARK LANDSCAPE NORWICH, CONN.

What can you tell me about Hyde Park Landscape?

We started in 1980, founded by my father, Harlan Hyde, who is still very involved in the business. I grew up in the industry and went to work for a wholesale perennial farm to get some insight into the industry. When I came on in 2001, we were warming up to the building boom. Our company was primarily maintenance; we then got involved in some higher end construction and install and added on landscape design. From there, our business has morphed into more and more commercial work and some residential, and we've also added on a turf care division.

How has 2020 been for you guys?

It started off shaky and scary. We saw some cancellations. Since then, people have come back on

board ... What we're seeing is people not spending money

on vacations but on their properties ... The limiting factor is getting it done with the right amount of people. People want a space they can enjoy. They want to make it green. Plantings and fire pits are a big thing. People want to bring what they can do indoors, outdoors. Indoor/outdoor kitchens have been a huge thing.

What do you and your family like to do for fun?

We're a family-owned business. I'm one of four siblings. We like to travel, we like to hike and see things. We're really into history. Our family is a founding family here — our direct ancestors helped settle Norwich and Hartford. My kids are the 14th generation here. We're deeply embedded in Norwich. Our original ancestor came in from England; we've been able to track it back to the boat he came in on and even

further back. We're connected to the local history here ... We're working on the oldest silversmith shop in New England, rebuilding the natural stone foundation.

Are there any new products that catch your eye?

On the maintenance end, the stand-up mowers. The popularity of those machines is a good thing. Ergonomically, the human health standpoint — it's much healthier to be standing up versus sitting and to also get the speed of the rider versus a walk-behind. Secondarily, the strength of the blowers and some of the cleanup equipment out there is phenomenal.

If you could sit down for dinner with any three people, living or dead, who would you choose?

Those three are people who,

George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan. The first two are obvious. The third one I think is, too. I use all those people as guides.



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Get buy-in to gain commitment



BY PHIL HARWOOD

The author is president and CEO of Pro-Motion Consulting. Reach him at Phil@GrowTheBench.com.

uilding great teams requires trust as the foundation. When there is a willingness to trust, it's possible to let your guard down and engage in healthy conflict. We looked at both of these areas in previous articles. What's really great about conflict is that it allows everyone on the team a chance to provide input before a decision is made. When our voices are heard, we are more likely to support a decision, even if we don't necessarily agree with it.

Let's compare two scenarios. In the first scenario, your boss invites you to attend a brainstorming session regarding a big decision that has to be made soon. Your boss tells you your input is essential, valuable and that a decision will be better made with your perspective. How does that action make you feel? How likely are you to be supportive? How does this affect your level of commitment?

In the second scenario, you receive an email about a decision that was made a week ago without

HEAR 'EM OUT When employees feel like they are included and valued, their commitment grows. your input or knowledge. This decision greatly affects your work, and it was a terrible decision that would not have been made if someone had only taken the time to ask you about it first. How does that situation make you feel? How likely are you to be supportive? How does this affect your level of commitment?

If we are included, our commitment level increases. It's a natural consequence of feeling part of the team, valued and heard. When we're excluded, the opposite is true. Author Patrick Lencioni uses the phrase "weigh in to buy in" in his best-selling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. When we're able to weigh in on a decision, we are more likely to buy in to the decision. When we buy in, our commitment level rises.

We often hear phrases like "owner-ship mentality" and "taking ownership" to describe a desired level of commitment, as if this level of commitment may be obtained just by setting expectations. In my experience, this approach is misguided. Just because I expect my people to be "all in" for the company doesn't mean they will be. I need to act like they are an owner for them to begin to see themselves as an owner.

Consider the implications of having crew leaders who take ownership of

their crews, as if they owned the company themselves, versus having crew leaders who couldn't care less. What are the implications in terms of damaged equipment, lost or stolen tools, productivity, quality and customer satisfaction? I think we all can agree that the difference is night and day.

I often see leaders attempting to increase commitment levels through punitive approaches. They seek to control, manipulate or instill fear to gain commitment. Avoid this approach. It will ultimately backfire. There may be short-term gains, but employee turnover and dissatisfaction will eventually lead to failure.

I also see leaders providing generous incentive compensation opportunities to motivate behavior. This is a better approach; however, I would rather see incentive compensation used to reward achievement than to gain commitment. For example, a management team sharing in the success of the highly profitable year is a great thing. But handing out bonus checks to keep the team's "head in the game" feels more like a bribe than anything. Commitment is more about engagement than compensation.

Where to begin? As mentioned previously, lay the foundation by establishing trusting relationships and creating opportunities for healthy conflict to occur among team members, so everyone on the team has an opportunity to be heard. These disciplines are often missing in land-scape companies, but the return on investment is huge. Stop demanding commitment and start engaging your people in the decision-making process. Everyone will reap the benefits.

Now go forth. 🖲



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Landscape business owners are used to wearing too many hats. But that will eventually lead to burnout. In this webinar, learn how splitting responsibilities with your No. 2 can help your team operate more effectively and achieve more profitability.

We'll break down the various models and techniques to set this up to help you choose what works best for you and your company.

You'll walk away from this presentation with an understanding of:

- Best practices for splitting responsibilities with your managers and second-on-command(s);
- How a distinction of responsibilities at the top will help your business run more smoothly; and
- What to avoid during the process.

PRESENTER

Jeffrey Scott, MBA, author, specializes in growth and profit maximization in the green industry. His expertise is rooted in his personal success, growing his own

company into a \$10 million enterprise.

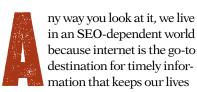
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Be a friend to win with SEO



running smoothly. In a perfect world, search engine optimization should be a win-win for consumers and businesses that share mutual interests and objectives. However, sometimes there is a communication gap, and the process falls short.

Google currently employs hundreds of ranking factors to give people the best possible information as quickly as possible. Most of the factors fall into three categories:

Authority - Proven expertise leads to higher search rankings.

Relevance - Search intent unlocks the matchmaking process.

Trust - Forming relationships is ultimately SEO's purpose.

Proving your credentials in these three areas is enough to earn Google's attention. This is how it has been since it was founded. The key distinction between then and now is Google is becoming increasingly smarter.

Therefore, to win at SEO, businesses need to get smarter, too. Imagine that Google wants to help its friend connect with your business because it believes you are the perfect solution to his or her problem. How would you use your digital marketing assets to do

that — to be so approachable, prepared and easy to work with that you leave no doubt? Be the path of least resistance by considering these points.

SEO. Google and human beings need site structure to help them find what they need. This includes how content is organized on your website, how quickly it loads and other items like that. If your site is confusing, Google and its users will move on.

Back in the day, people read blogs to discover useful content. There was even a service, Technorati, that ranked blogs according to their perceived authority.

It was easier back then because solid content was uncommon. Nowadays, there's limitless content and much of it is exceptional.

Therefore, the SEO play is to be exceptional, too, by organizing your content into potentially high-ranking pages that act as standalone websites. Organize, update and combine those old blog posts into useful guides that address your prospects' most pressing buying concerns.

SEO is content optimization.

There is no point in talking about SEO without a conversation about content because content signals your relevance, authority and trust.

Keywords, backlinks and other traditional SEO tactics are of little value without content's rock-solid foundation.

Winning the SEO game is fundamentally a communication strategy. It's using data, stories, visual media and everything else to clearly communicate capabilities and qualities that make it attractive to its ideal audience.

Referring sites are power boosters. More important than what



BY JEFF KORHAN

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your site says is what other people are saying. This is social media, Google My Business and other powerful sites that transfer authority to your website by linking to it.

You simply cannot win at SEO without the help of others. Content has to be shared to find a larger audience.

Of course, paid advertising such as Google and Facebook Ads are also ways to find that audience. The trick is making it your own so you can recoup your investment.

SIMPLIFY SEO WITH THESE STEPS

Do a strategic assessment. This step includes keyword research, competitive analysis, core competency messaging, testimonials, social profiles, accurate and accessible contact information and so on. Many companies offer free basic assessments. My company, Landscape Digital Institute, is one of them.

2 Make a plan and execute it. Now that you have identified the gaps to close, take them one at a time by starting with the most painful gap, which is usually lead generation. The solution is often smoothing out the customer experience to effectively communicate its value and distinction.

If you are attracting quality leads but not converting your share, you may have a selling problem. To convert leads, marketing should act as a salesperson would by making human connections.

That's SEO in a nutshell. It's not spamming or manipulating, but, sadly, you can still find websites playing that old SEO game. Be a friend to SEO, and you'll win more business. (4)

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IMPLEMENTING A SAFETY AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

BY SAM STEEL, Ed.D.

ast month, we provided you with a suggested Stage 1 - Planning outline for written safety and health programs. This edition will cover Stage 2 - The implementing phase of your safety and health policies and programs.

Step 1. Communicate the management team's overall policy on a safe workplace for all employees early and often. New workers should receive a copy of the firm's safety and health policy during their orientation. Ensure your workforce knows the importance of their safety. Along with management's overall safety policy statement, specific policies on hazards identified in Stage 1 should be communicated to all office. shop and field staff. Examples of policies tied directly to workplace hazards include those related to personal protective equipment; company driving privileges; drug use prohibitions; severe weather and emergency response strategies; first aid and CPR guidelines; protection from respirable airborne particulates; observance of Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration regulations on machine guarding and shielding; and others.

Step 2. Provide effective training on hazard mitigation. Remember that training and workplace safety and health resources must be in a language that all workers can understand. You may need the services of staff or contracted translators to deliver safety and health information. Insurance firms are an excellent source of training materials. Local EMS units and fire departments may have staff available for on-site training on fire prevention/suppression and first aid



responses. Always make sure that the training conducted for your workforce is fully documented, with each individual signing off on the training session topic, date of training and the trainer's name.

Step 3. Keep your hazard audits up to date. As you contract new business projects, the hazards that your workers are exposed to may change. Purchasing new or additional equipment may increase the risks associated with workplace noise levels and machine guarding. If your updated equipment hazard audits indicate new hazardous exposures, update your training resources. Take advantage of equipment manufacturers' training resources early in the delivery process. and add a policy on safe machine operation.

Step 4. During the implementing stage of your safety and health management plan, always remember to provide all information, briefings and training in a language that all employees can understand. You will learn quickly whether the training being provided is effective in changing unsafe attitudes and behaviors. Provide a brief post-training test and observe the trained employees as they work at job sites. If you observe them working in an unsafe manner, don't hesitate to retrain them.

Sam Steel, Ed.D., is the safety adviser for the National Association of Landscape Professionals.



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- Brad Leahy, Blades of Green



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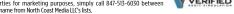
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EXIVE WITH EXILIBER

BY MARTY GRUNDER

The author is president and CEO of Grunder Landscaping Co. and The Grow Group, based in Dayton, Ohio.
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Don't lose good team members

or the last several years, if you asked landscaping business owners what their greatest challenge was, most would say finding good team members. I know I did. But, at Grunder Landscaping Co. (GLC), we've gradually gotten smarter — and more patient — about recruiting and hiring, enabling us to find and bring on more of the men and women who fit our ideal team member profile. The challenge we face now is continuing to retain the strong team we've built.

How are we going about that? We've learned it's an *ongoing* effort to create and evolve a company people really want to be a part of. You can't just "set it and forget it." These are the steps we've taken that are having the greatest impact.

We raised our pay rates and established clear career paths.

Paying well allows you to attract hard workers, but it's not enough. Talented employees want to know what opportunities there are in their futures and see a path forward if they stay with your company.

This summer, we've been fortunate to have several capable young people with degrees in horticulture working for us. Most started in a position we call "team leader entry," which sets them on a path to becoming a full team leader if they take the steps necessary to get there. We make those steps crystal clear to them, delineating the knowledge, skills and certifications they need to obtain, and we discuss their progress during regular one-on-one meetings and performance reviews. If team members want to move up at GLC and are willing to work for it, it's our leadership team's job to support them in their efforts. After all, their advancement is our company's advancement, too.

We're continually adapting with the times. We're in our 38th year of business at GLC, and like a lot of companies that have been around for a while, it's easy to become set in our ways. But, our COO Seth Pflum has done a great job challenging all of us to

We've learned that it's an ongoing effort to create and evolve a company people want to be a part of. You can't just 'set it and forget it.'

resist clinging to old habits and routines and to continually be open to and seek out new and better ways of doing things. Good team members do not want to stay at a stagnant company or have their recommendations ignored because everything is already set in stone. To that end, we've fully embraced technology and are reconfiguring our workspace to enable our sales team to work more collaboratively and sell remotely through Zoom. More important, our team knows we are always looking to get better as a company, and, regardless of where they sit on the org chart, their ideas matter.

We invest in training.

At GLC, we believe training is an investment, not an expense. When your team stops learning, they stop growing and so does your company. We have built an onboarding process that ensures new hires learn the knowledge and skills they need to succeed, and we devote an hour every week for the ongoing training of our team leaders, who, in turn, train *their* team members in what they've just learned. And while the coronavirus pandemic has put many in-person industry events on hold, we've found online training can be just as effective — and sometimes more efficient — if you approach it right.

Your company's success rides on your team. What are *you* doing to keep your star players? ©

I'm leading one virtual training event a month for owners and their teams through the end of the year. Check out what I have on tap on The Grow Group's website at https://growgroupinc.com/upcoming-events and join in!

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