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MYBIGGESTMISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY DANIEL G. JACOBS



Not doing the proper job costing meant leaving money on the table, or worse, doing work at a loss.

AFTER TWO YEARS in business, Ted Young, recognized the cost of earning a job at any cost.

"In the beginning you're so anxious or hungry to get business that you cut pricing to take it away from your competitors. It can come back to haunt you down the road if you don't do the proper job costing and make sure you're making money."

Reviewing every contract
"After year two we knew we were losing money."

Young spent the winter after his second year as an owner reviewing every contract. He had two choices: shed the non-profitable contracts or find ways to make the jobs profitable. Young used small increases and enhancements to start to bring the contracts in line. He also began using a software program to help the company more accurately track costs.

Detailed, profitable pricing
"Now that we're a bit more mature, every job has a price tag. We can tell

you how many hours it's going to take, how many men it will take, how much every item should cost and then give you detailed pricing."

The days of underpricing are long gone. If they weren't, Young's business might have been.

"If we had not made that change, this year would be very challenging. We probably would have been on the way out."

To share your biggest mistake, contact Dan Jacobs at djacobs@questex.com.

NAME/COMPANY:

Ted Young, director of operations, Pyramid Landscaping and Development

EMPLOYEES: 6 full-time; 15 peak season

FOUNDED: 2004

HEADQUARTERS:

Upper Marlboro, MD

2008 REVENUE: \$400,000

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PHOTOS BY: JERRY MAISE (PORTRAIT); ISTOCK INTERNATIONAL, INC. (BACKGROUND); MARTY WHITEFORD (INSET REPAIRS & REMEMBRANCE PHOTOS)

Solemn salute

PLANET honors Phil Fogarty for organizing Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington National Cemetery — the Green Industry's annual service salute to America's military heroes and their families

WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE captured the essence of Renewal & Remembrance more than 100 years ago when the four-time British prime minister said, "Show me the manner in which a nation or community cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals."

It is those same high ideals that rendered Phil Fogarty (typically a talkative, jolly lawn care company owner) speechless and tearful when he humbly accepted, on behalf of hundreds of volunteers and dozens of sponsors, the Lifetime Leadership Award for helping found and organize for 10 years the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET's) signature environmental enhancement project — Renewal & Remembrance at Arlington National and Historic Congressional cemeteries.

After 38 seconds at the podium during PLANET's Green Industry Conference Awards Banquet, moving his mouth to no avail, a surprised and shaken Fogarty finally uttered a precious few words (visit www.landscapemanagement.net to view the video of Fogarty's speech).

"When I think of Renewal & Remembrance, I think of all of the people who keep coming back, all of the volunteerism and gratitude this industry shares, and how it shows that the heart of this industry is in the right place all of the time," said Fogarty, president and owner of Cleveland-based Crowley's Vegetation Control and a Weed Man franchise owner and subfranchisor.

BY **MARTY WHITFORD** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

“Even though the event has changed and grown so much over the years, the really great thing is that everything important about Renewal & Remembrance has stayed the same — from the appreciation we feel to be there to the awe we feel when working in the cemetery plots — the weight of it all,” shared a leaky-eyed Fogarty. “And it’s that appreciation for what’s truly important in life that makes it so great to be in this business.”

Rooted in respect

Renewal & Remembrance’s roots reach back to 1993, when Fogarty was co-hosting “Root of the Matter,” a lawn-and-garden call-in show that aired on three Cleveland radio stations. Fogarty’s co-host, local tree care expert Lauren Lanphear, talked about how he and more than 400 other members of the then-called National

Arborist Association (now named the Tree Care Industry Association/TCIA) had just spent a national day of service sprucing up and protecting many of the more than 9,000 trees adorning the 630-acre Arlington National Cemetery.

“I said to Lauren, ‘PLCAA [The Professional Lawn Care Association of America] meets every year in D.C. for its Legislative Day. We should do something like this on the turf side,’” says Fogarty, noting the cemetery has 562 acres of turfgrass.

Fogarty asked Lanphear for the key contact at Arlington National Cemetery, and the rest is history. John C. Metzler Jr. (aka Jack), superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery since 1991, met with Fogarty and eventually agreed to allow PLANET’s predecessor association — PLCAA, which merged with the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) in 2005 to form PLANET — to spend a day beautifying the hallowed grounds in Virginia.

Getting the green light from Metzler — who grew up on the grounds as the son of John C. Metzler Sr., a World War II sergeant and superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery from 1952-1972 — and putting all the pieces (professionals, equipment and materials) in place to launch Renewal & Remembrance took more than three years.

“To say that Phil was instrumental in initiating Renewal & Remembrance would be a real understatement,” says Erik Dihle, chief of grounds, burial operations and ceremonial support at Arlington National Cemetery. “Phil — with his boundless energy, warm way and desire to serve — was absolutely critical to getting this enhancement project going and growing, and to ensuring this shining example of public-private partnership will continue for decades to come.”

Rallying the troops

Renewal & Remembrance has come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1997, when about 30 Green Industry professionals and about 30 of their spouses and children volunteered to lime about 38 acres at Arlington National Cemetery.

In its second year, the annual enhancement project moved from February to July (along with the association’s annual Legislative Day), which allowed more aeration, turf renovation and sodding work and helped draw more volunteers. Not long after, Renewal & Remembrance expanded to include tree care, design/build work and weed control at Historic Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C., where 19 Senators and



Arlington National Cemetery dedicated a five-sided memorial to the 184 victims killed when terrorists seized control of American Airlines Flight 77 and flew the plane into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

HIT CLOSE TO HOME

Erik Dihle, chief of grounds, burial operations and ceremonial support at Arlington National Cemetery, heard the roar of the plane rocketing by, 25 feet above his office. He figured it was a tributary “fly-by.” But seconds

later two earth-shaking booms — American Airlines Flight 77 striking the Pentagon and then its fuel tanks exploding — nearly knocked Dihle and his co-workers out of their chairs.

“We ran outside and after the massive cloud of smoke cleared a bit, we realized it was some kind of an attack,” somberly recalls Dihle, who that day lost a dear friend and carpool partner who worked at the Pentagon.

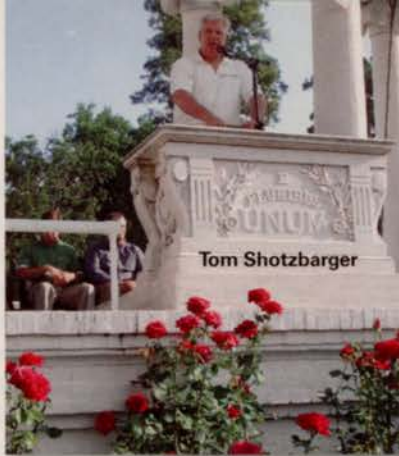
“Debris from the crash blew into several of our burial sections,” Dihle adds. “We closed the sections for two weeks so the FBI could conduct debris sweeps. I’ve worked here more than 25 years and have been deeply touched many days, but Sept. 11, 2001, really hit close to home.”

Tom Delaney, director of government affairs for the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), says the association’s annual Renewal & Remembrance enhancement work at the cemetery was more moving than usual in 2002.

“We put sod on some of the 60 or so graves stemming from that terrorist act,” Delaney says. “It was incredibly touching to see so many new tombstones, all with the same date of death, while cranes right across the street were still clearing away the wreckage at the Pentagon.” — MW

71 Representatives are buried. TCIA members helped PLANET expand tree care work in the mid-2000s, and design/build work at both cemeteries accelerated in 2005 when the lawn care and landscape associations united to form PLANET. Shortly thereafter, the Irrigation Association helped Renewal & Remembrance troubleshoot, redesign and rebuild irrigation systems on the hallowed grounds.

The volunteers really rallied over the years. In the past three years alone, nearly \$1 million in time and materials have been donated. Last year, more than 400 volunteers from 170 companies spanning 27 states (and about 80 of their spouses and children) joined forces to: spread 217,800 pounds of lime across 250 acres of turf at Arlington National Cemetery and 34,848 pounds of lime at Historic Congressional Cemetery; repair and install a number of irrigation systems; complete 819 landscape installations around Arlington National Cemetery's Visitor Center and



Tom Shotzbarger

TODAY WE WORK FOR THEM

"Today our efforts are for them — the military veterans and their families and friends. Brave men and women have sacrificed their lives. We sacrifice a day of effort to improve the beauty and health of this sacred resting place. Today is not about us. Today is for them.

Your state, the color of your shirt, the tractor you're riding, the spreader you're pushing, the shovel you're using — today these matter not.

Today is for them.

What really matters is that we offer our most-sincere efforts to honor the brave souls buried here.

Today is for them.

What matters is giving our time and talents.

Today is for them.

What matters is that we gratefully serve all who visit and all who abide on this hallowed site, Arlington National Cemetery.

Today we work for them."

—Tom Shotzbarger, Renewal & Remembrance Project Coordinator, and GM of Lancaster, PA-based Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape

PHOTO BY: MARTY WHITFORD



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elsewhere; and cable 14 trees and outfit four more with lightning protection across both cemeteries.

"Phil's vibrant personality and persistently positive attitude are contagious," says Tom Shotzbarger, GM of Lancaster, PA-based Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape, to whom Fogarty passed the Renewal & Remembrance Project Coordinator torch in 2007. "Renewal & Remembrance, thanks in large part to Phil's 10 years of leadership, not only has improved the health and appearance of Arlington National and Historic Congressional cemeteries, it has changed the lives of all who have volunteered."

In — not for — recognition

Last year, PLANET nabbed an Award of Excellence for Renewal & Remembrance from the American Society of Association Executives and the Center for Association Leadership.

"Renewal & Remembrance is the most significant project PLANET does each year," said PLANET President Jason Cupp. "The natural

beauty and quiet grace of Arlington National Cemetery make it a place we feel compelled to protect and take care of. This extremely worthwhile, meaningful gift to the American people demonstrates our honor and remembrance of America's veterans and leaders."

Home of the Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery is the final resting place of American military heroes from every war the United States has fought in, as well as of President John F. Kennedy and the crew of the 1986 space shuttle Challenger, to name just a few of the big draws for the more than 4 million tourists who visit the sacred site every year.

"Most people don't know what a true honor it is to work at Arlington National Cemetery — until they come for the first time," adds Jeff Bisker, president of Your Lawn of Ashville, OH, who has participated in Renewal & Remembrance the past several years. "Our industry is one of the fortunate few."

Dihle concurred.

PRAYERFUL WORK

Over the past 17 years, as an editor I've covered hundreds of events across a number of markets — from rubber and plastics, to hotels and resorts, to waste management and sustainability, to pest management and now lawn care/maintenance, irrigation and landscape design/build.

Before that, I served four years in the United States Navy. At age 23, as a second-class petty officer aboard the USS Schenectady LST-1185, I was part of the first wave of Operation Desert Shield — the beginning of the first Persian Gulf War.

In all my travels and professional experiences, including my first visit to Pearl Harbor aboard the USS Schenectady and my stint in the Gulf, I've never been so moved to prayerful work and tears as I was July 21, 2008, when I first had the distinct honor of participating in the Professional Landcare Network's

(PLANET's) 12th annual Renewal & Remembrance environmental enhancement project at Arlington National and Historic Congressional cemeteries.

Tom Shotzbarger (aka "Shotz"), PLANET's Renewal & Remembrance Project Coordinator and GM of Lancaster, PA-based Tomlinson Bomberger Lawn Care & Landscape, "had me at hello." I will never forget Shotz's "Today we work for them" speech (see sidebar on page 17) delivered that day to more than 400 professional volunteers and about 80 of their spouses and children, or the beautifully open and honest way this mountain of a man showed me and the rest of the Green Industry that it's OK to be brought to tears.

Walking Arlington National Cemetery is a life-changing spiritual journey every time I make it.

As I trudged the sacred ground's hillsides with PLANET members last year, I was awestruck by how many military heroes have served America the

Beautiful faithfully through three wars.

I also was graced with the gift of a new perspective on time — and on my longtime friend's battle with terminal brain cancer — when I came across the grave of one soldier's baby, "Born March 18, 1950; Died March 19, 1950." I prayed for that soldier and his precious child, and for my buddy, as I thought, "We must live today well, for none of us is promised tomorrow."

One wondrous tree captivated me by its warm, strong, bark-built arms embracing one of our fallen heroes.

And my spirits soared to Heaven after reading a neighboring tombstone: *Love Makes Memory Eternal.*



Green life embraces eternal life throughout Arlington National Cemetery.

PHOTO BY: MARTY ITCHIO

"Phil's offer of assistance was completely genuine and heartfelt from the start, and PLANET's purity of intention hasn't wavered one bit over the years," Dible says.

Fogarty says Green Industry professionals recognize the freedom their families and businesses enjoy is far from free and have a strong and growing desire to give back to those who "gave the last full measure of devotion," as President Abraham Lincoln referred to it in his Gettysburg Address.

"Our industry absolutely refuses to forget the ultimate sacrifice these American heroes — our nation's great veterans and leaders — and their families have made on our behalf," Fogarty concludes.

The industry's service salute doesn't stop with Renewal & Remembrance.

"We're equally grateful to those helping protect our freedom at this very moment," Fogarty adds. "That's

Throughout my walk, I kept hearing the voice of veteran Mac McIlvried, vice president of TruGreen LandCare, who earlier reminded Renewal & Remembrance volunteers that while very admirable, our actions that day pale in comparison to the sacrifices of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery. John C. Metzler Jr. (aka Jack), superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery, drove home the point when he noted that more than 324,000 brave souls had been put to rest at the 630-acre site and 6,000 more military heroes join the ranks there each year.

During last year's Renewal & Remembrance, Arlington National Cemetery welcomed home to their final resting places 31 freedom fighters. Throughout the day, I heard the beat of brave hearts that have stopped: The sound of taps, three ceremonial gunshots and horse-drawn caissons carrying caskets adorned with our beautiful nation's flag while color guards marched in perfect step as loved ones — some young widows and their children — said their final goodbyes.

It's OK to cry. — MFV

why Project EverGreen launched GreenCare for Troops, which has more than 2,000 companies signed up to help more than 7,000 military families maintain their properties' green spaces.

"The key to all of this is that we do this *in* recognition — not *for* recognition," says Fogarty.

And that is why Fogarty stood at the podium at PLANET's awards banquet for 38 seconds in solemn silence. LM

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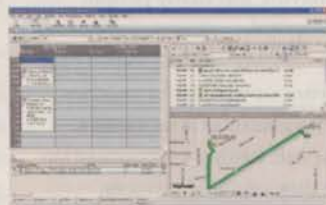


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WORKINGSMARTER

JIM PALUCH

The author is president of JP Horizons Inc. Visit www.jp horizons.com.

Identifying the seven deadly wastes

Waste is in your company. It's costing you a lot of money. If you look, you can find waste in almost every process — from the infamous getting out of the yard on time, to how many steps it takes to create a proposal to the time lost in following up on service orders.

Accepting the fact that waste even exists is the first step to driving out waste, allowing your team more time to add value to services and percentage points to your bottom line.

After you have accepted that waste is there and realize you do not need to be sick to get better, the next step is identifying the waste. What follows are the seven types of waste that can be found in almost any processes. When you name it, you can identify it and then you can eliminate it.

1. Overproduction — Something is done that doesn't need to be done, such as going to a site and cutting grass that doesn't need to be cut.

It also can be about delivering more quality on a project than needed or having too many people involved in creating a proposal.

2. Waiting — Employees standing around, looking for instruction from a supervisor or waiting for another employee to finish a job are common time wasters. Another is administrative staff waiting for information from salespersons before they can send invoices.

3. Transportation — The most obvious example is the truck traveling from one point to another; it's necessary, but it's still waste. Transportation

waste also can be moving equipment, paperwork or people from one point to another.

4. Extra processing — Why do we have two people doing a task that one person can do? This includes too much paperwork or reporting that isn't being used or information that isn't being shared.

5. Inventory — Whether it's too much or too little, battling inventory waste is a problem caused by a lack of discipline or standards to manage it. If you have an irrigation van, look in it and start adding up the potential dollars lost. That's waste, too.

6. Motion — Crawling over or around equipment to get to another piece of equipment is wasted effort. Watch someone loading or unloading a truck. Why do they load it this way?

7. Defects — Poor quality resulting in service calls, or machines breaking down, stopping production, or any other situation that causes rework or lost time. You don't have to put up with it.

Now that you have identified waste, motivate yourself to

eliminate it by estimating how much it is costing your company.

When I have clients do this exercise in a "Working Smarter Day" they realize that they can improve profits by driving out the waste they have identified. They also realize that sometimes the simplest and most common process can yield large gains when they take action to eliminate the waste.

As you and your team begin to identify waste, you might hear a common phrase that will always give it away. When you hear someone say, "I know we can't do *this* any faster. We have been doing it this way for years and we know that this is the fastest way to do it."

When you hear that, it's time to go work. You still have plenty of waste to identify.

MONTHLY CHALLENGE

Choose just one process and observe it, process map it, see how many of the seven types of waste you can identify, and then estimate the potential savings there would be annually if you were to drive the waste out of that one process.