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ACUTABOVE

GREEN INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE LEADERS >>>> BY DAN JACOBS

Success can be a little uncomfortable.

"It's kind of embarrassing in a way when people ask me, 'How's business, Randy?"" says **Randy Newhard**, CEO New Way Landscape & Tree Services "I know a lot of people are hurting, and I'm saying, 'It's the best year we've ever had.' We had our best year ever in 2009 as far as sales and profits, which beat our best year in 2008." Now in its 30th year, Newhard offers his insights on the maintenance industry and what he expects the coming years.

TOPTRENDS

Water. Finally people are paying attention to water usage. The rate (in San Diego) has gone up something like 40% in five years. They're looking at another 14% increase coming this January, if they don't do it before then. Smart controllers that can automatically adjust to the weather — we sold a lot of those last year.

Sustainability. There has been a move to low-water-usage plants. Reducing turf to where it's needed. A lot of turf needs to come out. It's more than just water — sustainability — in the whole landscape. It's water, plants maintenance, making things more sustainable for the future while still reducing costs. Sustainability is the big word. It used to be "going green."

Fuel. We have five hybrid vehicles. When gas was up around \$4 a gallon and these vehicles get 47 miles per gallon, it helps reduce the \$400,000 to \$500,000 a year we spend on gas between the mowers and vehicles. Someday, I see mowers and equipment run by solar power.

TOP OBSTACLES

» Competition. Price points are probably near the top of the list. We're probably at five-yearago pricing. With the vacancies in commercial buildings many businesses have cut back. The HOAs have been hurt by foreclosures; they don't have the revenue they were budgeting for, so they have to gear down. They're always looking

INSIDE INFO

Company: New Way Landscape & Tree Services

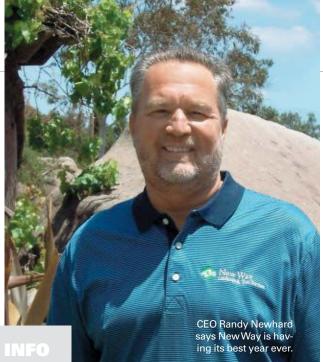
Headquarters: San Diego

Employees: 205 full-time (plus 30 seasonal)

2009 revenue: \$11.2 million

Key to being a maintenance leader: We have a knowledgeable (long-term) staff. Our people enjoy doing the work, being with clients and educating them. We have fun at work.

We have a couple of different safety programs where the foremen can get significant money, quarterly, based on safety. We put away \$30,000 every year. When there are accidents and people are out on modified duty or lose a day of work, a certain amount of money comes out of that pool. If there's an accident, \$500 comes out. If somebody negligently damages equipment or if equipment is stolen because they didn't lock it, money comes out. Any remaining money — up to \$7,500 each quarter — is divided up by the number of foremen in the field.



for the lower price. It's the same thing for commercial properties, with 20% to 40% vacancies. They need to reduce their expenses.

Drought. We're in southern California in a drought. One of the hardest things to do is to convince people to go to low-water usage plants. People don't have money to convert even though it would save them a lot of money going into the future. It's not just convincing them, it's finding ways to get their limited financial reserves to re-landscape.

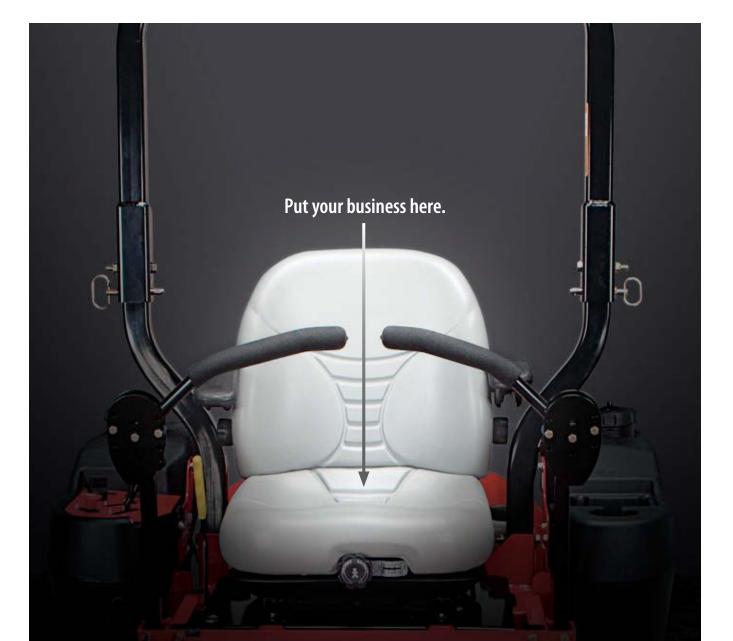
TOP OPPORTUNITIES

Sustainability. Conversions, redoing landscapes. I've re-landscaped my whole house. I might have had to water three times a week. Once the low-water use plants are established, I might have to water once a month. We're trying to get people to understand there are a lot of opportunities there. Many are doing it in stages, which is great because then we can show them the savings.

>> Expansion. We're moving into other geographical areas. We're now in Riverside County — we have two branches there. That's starting to take off after six, seven years. Coming this summer, we're moving into Orange County with one branch.

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INFOTECH

TYLER WHITAKER The author is a freelance technologist. Contact him at 801/592-2810 or via e-mail at twhitaker@questex.com.

Embracing the online sale

hen you're a small business owner, nothing is more important than sales. It goes without saying that revenue is the lifeblood of business. So why do most business websites focus only on marketing products and services, and not taking the next step of closing the sale? Maybe it's time to start collecting payments online instead of just generating leads. With a few simple changes, your website could be paying for itself.

The typical lifecycle of a company website begins as an online brochure, directing potential customers to contact the company for more information. Adding the ability to capture sales leads through the use of html forms is the next step in website evolution. For companies selling products, adding a shopping cart can turn prospective customers into paying customers. But when it comes to companies that sell services, where the price is not known ahead of time, lead capture is

With a few simple changes, your website could be paying for itself.



often the stalling point in their website progression. What most companies don't consider is the ability to use online payment systems to allow customers the ability to pay their invoices online.

Adding payment options to your website can range from simple modifications to in-depth software development. In the past, figuring it out was a lesson in patience and persistence. Today, adding simple payment options to your website has never been easier.

PayPal.com

Gaining a start as a way to pay for eBay purchases, PayPal has become the most widely used payment system on the Internet today. Because PayPal allows a business to take credit cards without setting up a merchant account, it is a service many businesses use when first implementing online payments.

A good starting point with PayPal is the Website Payments Standard service. With no set-up charges or monthly fees — and no programming skills required — it's an easy way to start accepting credit cards. All you need to do is set up a business PayPal account, then link it to one of your bank accounts as a funding source. My suggestion is to set up a separate bank account just for your PayPal transactions. That way, reconciling your transactions will be simple and straightforward.

Once your account is set up, you can use "Buy Now" and "Add to Cart" buttons. Just use the easy button wizard to generate the HTML code, then cut and paste the HTML onto your web pages next to the services you're selling. With PayPal, you can even create and email invoices to your customers for your goods and services, or create a specialized version of a "Donate" button to have your customers send you payments along with their account number.

To receive payments online, all it takes is a little bit of planning. If you can integrate web orders into your back office fulfillment process, additional revenue could be right around the corner. And who couldn't use a little more revenue these days?

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- CELERY ALL TRANSPLANTED PERFECTLY IN 17 LARGE HOUSES, before and after one without, IN WHICH ALL LOST. California
- 1200 TREES WITH 4" CALIPER TRUNKS BARE-ROOTED IN DESERT JUNE, NO LOSS. Tucson, Arizona, City Parks Department.
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AD INDEX

- COMING IN AUGUST -

LOOKING BEYOND GASOLINE

The very real possibility of higher gas prices, tougher emission regulations and reduced maintenance costs suggest diesel, propane, alternative fuel and electric mowers will become a bigger factor in commercial mowing. Here's the lowdown on the respective advantages and disadvantages of each power source, including a look at what's in the market now and what's around the corner.

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JACOBS'JOURNAL



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Milestones and forgiveness

ur family changes forever this month.

Our oldest child has begun attending a five-week program offered by Washington University in St. Louis. Josh returns home near the end of July, and a few weeks later, he returns to Wash U. to begin his full-time college experience. Save for a few holiday breaks, he'll probably never call our house "home" again.

My wife, Marci, and I still have a teenage daughter at home, so we'll not be at a loss for our share of angst and turmoil — not to mention the nearly daily reminders about how little we know about ... well, everything.

For more than 16 years, we've guided Josh as best we could, instilled our values and managed his path to adulthood. But once he hit high school (and probably long before), many of the choices he makes are his alone. We've guided and cajoled, supported and commiserated, cheered and cried. Josh has done a wonderful job and — as far as we know — in general, he's made excellent choices. It's been as much a pleasure watching him mature as it's been a struggle waiting for it to happen.

And while he's still a work in progress (aren't we all), I'm confident he will continue to make good

I imagine **having employees** is a lot like raising children. Somewhere along the way, **they'll** make mistakes.

choices. That's not to say he won't take missteps. I suspect there will be a number along the way — girlfriends, jobs, ill-conceived late nights. Our only hope is that they're temporary and short-lived mistakes, and most important, that he learns from them.

Josh, for the most part, seems not to repeat his mistakes. Samantha, our 15-year-old, is a repeat offender. To be fair it's not the mistakes I'm concerned about. I still make plenty of those myself. My issue is with my daughter's response to them. Josh has learned discretion is the better part of remorse. He says he's sorry and moves on with his life, trying not to repeat past missteps. Sammie rolls her eyes, sighs and immediately offers a dozen explanations of why it's not her fault. She contradicts every comment I make. My favorite line is her response to the comment, "Sammie, quit arguing with me." Her response: "I'm not arguing."

Please don't misunderstand; my daughter, my children, are extraordinary. I love them both — equally and unconditionally. And given what I hear some families are dealing with, we're lucky. It's just in our home (and nowhere else), Sammie whines, argues and complains.

I imagine having employees is a lot like raising children. You spend time and money teaching, training and supervising them, but in the end you must let them do their jobs. And most likely, somewhere along the way, they'll make mistakes.

How you deal with those mistakes — and equally important, how well they accept responsibility for their actions — says a lot about your character and theirs. How often have we heard celebrities "apologize" for their abysmal behavior with a line like, "I'm sorry if anyone was hurt"? It's not an apology if there's no acceptance of responsibility.

How refreshing it would be to hear, "It was my mistake, and I'll do my best to not let it happen again." I know that's something I'd love to hear more often from my daughter when she falls short.

And to my son, it's an extraordinary world. I envy the journey you're about to begin.

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