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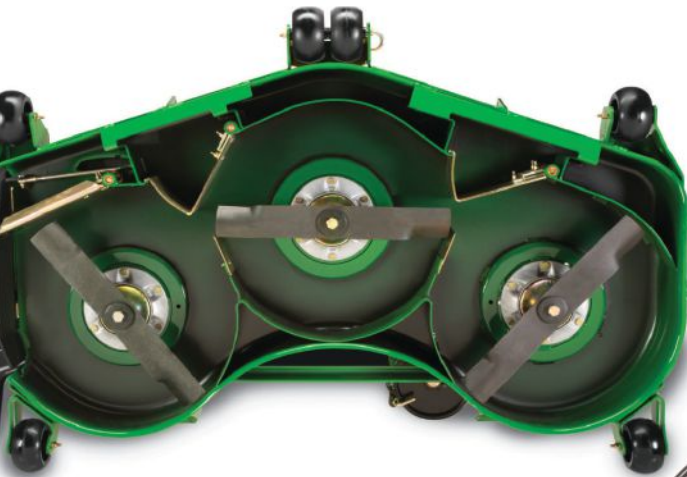
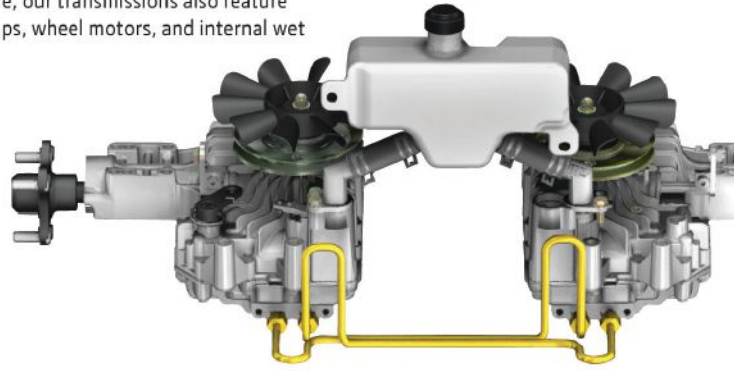
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Landscape Management

OUR MISSION: *Landscape Management*—the leading information resource for lawn care, landscape maintenance, design/build and irrigation contractors—empowers Green Industry professionals to learn from their peers and our exclusive business intelligence from the most experienced editorial team in the market. Serving as the industry conscience for 50 years, we not only report on, but also help shape, news, views, trends and solutions.



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WEB EXCLUSIVE

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LMdirect!

As *LM* approaches its 50th anniversary, new *LM* editor-in-chief Dan Jacobs discusses his new role and how the magazine continues to evolve.

Athletic Turf News

How environmentally and economically sound are synthetic turf football fields — truly?

LD/B Solutions

A temporary garden and orchard created for a designer show house last spring gets new life as an organic vegetable garden. And its produce benefits a local food pantry.

i-News

As Florida's fresh water supply diminishes in the face of rampant development and other changes to the region's ecosystem, the state is devising a new plan to capture and deliver more fresh water. But is the mammoth \$10 billion plan feasible?



THE LM DAILY

Phipps Conservatory's Center for Sustainable Landscapes, a \$7.8 million 24,350-sq.-ft. construction, will be among the world's greenest buildings once it's completed, says its executive director.

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A poor choice of words

Mother Nature bates you. Deal with it.

That was the headline atop a promotional email sent out by **Backcountry.com**, an online seller of clothing, equipment and accessories for folks who like to spend their leisure time traipsing through dense forests, climbing the sides of snow-covered mountains or kayaking down rapids that make the most daunting roller coaster look like a ride in a kiddie park.

So a headline like the one above is actually somewhat fitting, given the company's clientele. These people enjoy testing themselves in extreme conditions — bone-chilling cold and extreme heat — in areas well known for not being well traveled. These people know what Mother Nature has to offer, and they “deal with it” on their terms.

There was only one problem with the email. It was sent a day or so after one of the worst tornado outbreaks in nearly four decades. Nearly 350 people died because of Mother Nature's fury. The intensity and ferocity of this cluster of storm activity devastated entire communities. Thousands were injured. One estimate suggested more than 1 million homes and businesses went without power.

No matter what outdoor activity you engage in, no matter how rugged you are, no matter how good your survival skills, you don't go test yourself during a tornado.

Receiving an email suggesting Mother Nature had it in for them smacks of poor taste. Granted, the marketing copy was likely written long before the storms hit, but failing to put a stop to hitting the send button left the company looking uncaring.

Backcountry did the right thing. CEO Jill Layfield immediately sent an email apologizing

for the bad timing and seeming bad taste. The mea culpa email began, appropriately, with the words, “We messed up.”

Accepting responsibility for your screw-ups is one of the most important steps on the road to forgiveness. Backcountry did just that:

Please accept our sincerest apologies for this mistake. What was intended to be witty marketing copy may have been when we wrote these words two weeks ago, but in light of current events and the suffering of people affected by Mother Nature's wrath, it is not only not witty, it is completely unacceptable.

At another time, the original headline and email would likely be considered clever. Arriving in an inbox the day after storms ravaged six states, it seems, at best, insensitive. I don't fault the folks at Backcountry for their choice of words. Headlines, whether they top newspaper stories, magazine articles or marketing materials, are meant to capture a reader's attention. This headline certainly did that — perhaps too well.

In the publishing business, these things are a bit of an occupational hazard. Articles and headlines are often written weeks in advance of when they are published and arrive on readers' desks. And that interval can lead to some embarrassing moments.

My guess is there have been moments in your business as well that you'd take back if you could. Maybe it was a marketing piece or an off-the-cuff comment to a customer. Even as the words leave your mouth, you wish you could snatch them out of the air. The look on your customer's face turns to one of dismay or disgust, and an uncomfortable silence swells.

Do the right thing. Apologize. Offer a sincere and heartfelt mea culpa for your indiscretion. And then get back to business.

Editor's note: A tip of the hat to freelance writer and avid outdoorsman Curt Harler for bringing the issue to our attention.



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PROGRESS

Change with the times

David Frank's rapid-fire speech emerges so fast, it's hard to keep up. So it's no surprise the first words out of his mouth are: "I speak quickly."

But Frank's speech also reflects the impressive quickness of his mind.

The 62-year-old president and chief executive of Germantown, WI-based David J. Frank Landscape Contracting (DJFLC) has helmed his company since its inception 52 years ago.

Yes, the math is correct: Frank launched his company when he was just 10 years old, caring for his neighbors' yards. Five decades later, his innate drive is intact as he still serves some of his first clients — and many more.

Frank's total recall says more about the type of businessman he is than perhaps anything else. He can recite every address he ever worked on — going back decades — and recount the exact work he did on each property.

"I could freak you out," he says. We first wrote about Frank 25 years ago, in

David Frank relaxes in the gardens outside DJFLC headquarters.



For more than five decades David J. Frank has evolved with a shifting industry.



February 1986, when he had just become president of the Milwaukee Chapter of the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association.

His company was growing at 60% annually, and he had 19 crews working for him.

"It doesn't feel like 25 years ago to me," says Frank, who today has 96 crews and a staff of 325. "It's amazing when you look in the rearview mirror how fast time passes."

There's a lot to see in that rearview mirror. DJFLC's regular clientele has blossomed from about 600 in 1986 to 1,500 today. Along the way, the company accumulated more than 650 awards, dating back to 1978.

Industry evolves, too

The Green Industry Frank supports has also soared.

It's "wonderful to be part of," says Frank, whose company installs green roofs that mitigate energy use and reduce storm water runoff. "When I was starting out, there was far less legislation and environmental awareness. Now people are concerned about the possibility that planet Earth is becoming a toxic landfill that won't support human life unless changes are made."

In our 1986 feature, Frank noted the burgeoning professionalism in the industry. Today, he says, that professionalism is deeply rooted.

"The landscape practice has become much more sophisticated," he says.

He cites today's broader use of layering, color and traditional materials.

"People want color.

They want music in the landscape area. They want outdoor kitchens, fireplaces and play areas," Franks says. "Clients' attitudes have changed. The public is much more educated."

Just as the landscape industry has changed, so has Frank. Early on, he just wanted to make a living. Today, the man who has logged more than 1,000 global scuba dives and is inspired largely by Antoni Gaudí's Barcelona Sagrada Família cathedral is most concerned with cultivating his staff and continuing to grow his business.

That growth has slowed to less than 5% annually in the face of an economic downturn and rising fuel and insurance costs that have "squeezed operating margins," he says. But the company has avoided layoffs.

Frank maintains the company's staff has been key to its longtime success. When things go awry, Frank doesn't blame his staff. Instead, he says, "I pick up a mirror and I look at it and say, 'Now you know who is causing you all this grief.' In the end, it doesn't matter who did it. It's what do we do about it. My mirror reminds me to look forward, not backward."

Frank doesn't look back much. "It's one of my shortcomings," he says, "because there are a lot of things to be proud of."