



that cuts through farmland, draped in the day's mist. His is the only car on the two-lane road.

When we finally pull into the 12-acre holding yard, we're greeted by the striking sight of 240 swamp white oak trees, each held in its own 7-and-a-half-foot by 9-foot yellow pine box, encased in white insulation.

Merit knows the sight well. After all, he and his team built it. The trees are grown in boxes to ensure their root systems stay intact as the trees are transported to and installed at the memorial.

Environmental Design began building the nursery in March 2007, loading onto flatbed trucks trees from New York, Maryland and Pennsylvania in tribute to the places where the attacks took place.

"We moved all told close to 600 trees into that nursery and there was not a single problem," Merit says proudly.



The sight of the more than 200 trees at the holding yard is "eye-popping," Wayne Dubin says.

place," he explains. "You get this 'aha' moment and you

Completing the picture

At the far end of the plaza stands a chainlink fence. Beyond it, cranes rise into the air and construction workers are engrossed in building out the plaza. A jackhammer pounds nearby, but the soothing gush of the memorial's waterfalls mutes the noise.

The makeshift entrance where visitors enter the memorial today was never intended to be an entrance at all, Vega says. "The true intention of the design is that you go through the museum first and then finally get to know the people who have it as their last resting

open up to the authentic original."

Despite the ongoing work, the plaza has come a long way from its beginning, when every square inch of it was filled with gravel, concrete, rebar, dirt and tool storage.

"We still have another two acres to build," Vega says. "But it's so beautiful, you don't realize you're coming in through the bathroom window. That's the success of it. You get to experience all the victims' names and hear the rustling of the trees and the rushing of the water. It's a tremendous accomplishment." **LM**

PHOTO BY: BETH GERACI



MORE profit.

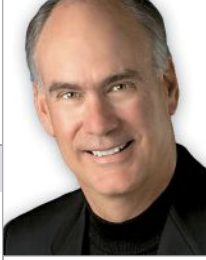
Make Mallet® insecticide the cornerstone of a preventive grub control program and gain add-on sales. The active ingredient in Mallet – imidacloprid – is the proven leader in grub control, and is an exceptional value so you can price your service attractively. Preventing grubs and producing profits – another way Nufarm gives you more where it matters most.



More where it matters most.
www.nufarm.com/usto

©2012 Nufarm. Important: Always read and follow label instructions. Mallet® is a trademark of Nufarm.





THE BENCHMARK

FRANK ROSS

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 45-year industry veteran. Reach him at fross@questex.com.

Beat the market with new resolve

For most of us, 2011 was challenging. The economy continued to be sluggish. Businesses struggled with rising fuel and labor costs against declining prices. New construction in many arenas was non-existent. Cash flow tightened. For many, it was a matter of hanging on tight and riding out the storm.

The economy remains sluggish. Unemployment in the construction field is more than 16%. Fuel costs are expected to hit record highs. Credit is more difficult than ever to obtain. And how many more years can we keep telling our people “no” to bigger paychecks?

Let’s quit crying in our beers and realize we’re in control. We can overcome the market and this economy, but we must realize we need to make changes in how we do what we do. That means *improve*. We need to look at every aspect of our business and ask, “How can I improve this process?” Lead generation, the sales process, pricing, job productivity, job tracking, accuracy and timeliness of financial information, cash flow, updating our business model and our business plan, training ... the list goes on.

My challenge to each of us is take control, make improvements and beat this market at its own game, which brings me to some resolutions.

I pledge:

- 1 I will become a better manager of my financial goings-on**, understand my financial position and manage my cash flow more effectively.
- 2 I will install an estimating system**, so no matter who estimates the job, the price will be the same.
- 3 I will develop a pricing strategy** that will balance what the market will bear against what I need to make a fair profit.
- 4 I will track job performance daily** so the people who can really make a difference (my crew leaders) will take ownership of their work.

5 I will cost every job so I know where I’m making money and can make improvements in the areas where I’m not.

6 I will generate timely financial reports focused on providing information I desperately need to manage my company: sales reports updated weekly, with the status of every open proposal; P&L statements by profit center by the fifth of the following month showing where I’m making money and where I’m not; job productivity reports weekly, if not daily; schedules of aged accounts receivable and payable; cash position reports weekly; budgetary projections, updated for current market conditions, etc.

7 I will prepare an intelligent and insightful budget that will serve as my road map for the challenges I’m facing this year.

8 I will control my cash flow to enhance the liquidity of my company, obtain deposits on jobs, collect money in less than 30 days, create a just-in-time mentality for inventory control, sell equipment we’re not using, renegotiate my bank loan portfolio for better terms (consolidation/lower interest/longer term) and strive to become debt-free by a specific deadline.

9 I will maximize the capacity of the people in my organization, to inspire them to perform beyond expectations, compensate them fairly, keep the pipeline packed with fresh young talent, train and retrain and create an energized environment where all of my people can grow professionally and financially.

10 I will develop my marketplace so I’m king in my geographic area; provide the best service at the best value; and never have my crews drive past a property we should be maintaining.

Once I master these, my challenge will be to create 10 more, and 10 more after that, because I know the only way I will beat this economy and stay ahead of the game is to continuously improve.



AT A GLANCE

NAME: Danny, Gordon, Jessica Milligan

COMPANY: Strathmore Landscape

YEAR FOUNDED: 1960s

YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY: 40-plus

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT: Members of ASHOQ (Quebec Ornamental Horticulture Association) and CNLA Certification Committee

EDUCATION: Very little formal education. Lots of learning at industry conferences and seminars

HOBBIES: DM: Reading, walking; JM and GM: Crossfit; All 3: Family vacations

FAMILY: Danny is married to Cathy, and together they have 6 children. They also have one granddaughter, Jessica's daughter, Mia.

WEBSITE: pslc.ca/

Danny Milligan, president of Strathmore Landscape, is proud of the company's latest environmental initiative.

"We cannot change from gas-powered trucks completely, but we are moving in the direction of sustainability one step at a time."

Milligan, along with daughter **Jessica** and son **Gordon**, talked a little bit about how the industry has changed over the years and how business is different in America's northern neighbor.

How did you get into the industry? Danny's father Elmer did landscaping when Danny was a child. Danny helped him. Elmer opened a garden center and Danny started taking planting jobs for garden center customers when he was 17. Gordon joined the company while he was still in high school and Jessica started in 2004.

What makes your company unique? Our clients don't simply need a contractor; they need us to be their eyes and ears for their building's exterior appearance. We offer them proactive, professional management.

Tell us about your electric vehicle. Strathmore launched Quebec's only zero-emissions landscape maintenance team in April 2011. This team of skilled horticultural technicians drive Québec's first privately owned Goupil electric vehicle. This compact truck

can operate for a full week on a single electrical charge.

The zero-emissions team does not use gas-powered tools. Their work is done by hand or with professional-grade battery-powered tools. All green waste is composted and used to enrich acres of local topsoil.

Do you have challenges in Canada that your American counterparts don't face? Herbicide restrictions in the past five years. We've adapted our systems and processes to focus more on total lawn health, preventative rather than reactive treatments.

Can you describe your market and your customers? Urban commercial properties and suburban shopping/life-style centers. We work with property managers who are focused on balancing their budgets while maintaining an excellent exterior image.

To what do you attribute your 100% retention rate in 2010?

We don't wait for customers to tell us there's a problem. We partner with the customer and propose upgrades and improvements, establish long-term plans and budgets and participate actively in the success of their building.

What is your strategy for growth? We focus on what we can be the best at. Any new growth has to be in line with our budget and has to be done systematically. Instituting standardized work practices has allowed us to grow quickly and profitably with very little stress.

What's the best part of your job? DM: Touring jobs after the flowers are planted. GM: Being outside. JM: Seeing our employees succeed at work and in life.

What is the most significant moment in your business career? Writing our value statement together with the employees and then turning it into a living document that guides our daily decisions and practices.

“ WE RECOGNIZE THAT OUR CLIENTS DON'T SIMPLY NEED A CONTRACTOR; THEY NEED US TO BE THEIR EYES AND EARS FOR THEIR BUILDING'S EXTERIOR APPEARANCE. — JESSICA MILLIGAN

PROJECT PORTFOLIO

A SCRAPBOOK OF DESIGN/BUILD OVERHAULS

Building Community

THE MISSION

Provide beautiful, meditative and functional outdoor spaces to help a community center better serve its members.

As one of nearly 100 subcontractors on this \$33 million project, the DeSantis Landscape team was continually faced with coordination, scheduling and logistics challenges. But as President Dean DeSantis notes, “We are proud to say that we have become the general contractor’s landscape contractor of choice, based on our performance on this unique project.”

The 10-acre landscape, which surrounds a 92,000-sq.-ft., LEED Silver-certified, multi-functional community center, was completed in two phases over a period of approximately a year. The project involved the procurement and installation of nearly 35,000 plants and trees.

“The first phase included the irrigation, bioswale construction and planting and large lawn areas around the perimeter,” DeSantis says. “The second phase included the entry water feature; prayer garden and water feature; amphitheater; entry pavers; ‘turtle back’ stone feature and swale; and the planting and irrigation around the exterior of the building.”

The entry water feature consists of four boulders, each weighing between 25 and 40 tons. They were hand-selected by DeSantis and landscape architect Christopher Freshley from a mountainside in the Columbia River Gorge. A stone artist was then brought in to bore and cut the stones before they were loaded and trucked to the project site.

DeSantis credits three suppliers in particular who helped his team significantly with this project: Hunter Industries, John Deere Landscapes and the Andrusko Group.



PHOTOS COURTESY: SALVATION ARMY RAY AND JOAN KROC CORPS COMMUNITY CENTER

THE WORK

1 | Show and shell. What became known as the “turtle back” stone feature courses through a swale and planting bed near the front entry. “It is a unique feature of dry-set, three- to five-inch-thick stones laid in a rolling pathway that creates a fun element for children and adults to walk through the landscape,” says DeSantis.

2 | Making an entrance. Behind the boulder water feature at the center’s entry are 30-ft.-tall specimen *Acer circinatum*, dug from a local, native forest.

3 | Bould over. The two water feature boulders have 2-in. bores intercepted by 36-in. cross cuts to create a weir. All the paver work was also completed by DeSantis Landscapes.

4 | Sewer soother. The parking lot swales were constructed using these round rock “dams” to slow stormwater as it passes through, using phytotechnology to cleanse the water before entering the sewer system. Also, curb cuts throughout the parking lot direct stormwater to the swales for filtering.

5-6 | Tranquil space. The prayer garden’s water feature is a mortared stack wall. The team was charged with keeping the water from running horizontally across the stones and directed into the basin. The solution? “All of the stones had to be laid at a slight canter,” DeSantis says, “while maintaining a nice horizontal stack line.”

DeSantis Landscapes is a family-owned, nationally recognized landscape company with offices in Salem and Portland, OR. Projects range from commercial properties and large private estates to intimate residential gardens. This project garnered a 41st Annual Environmental Improvement Grand Award from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). For more information, visit DeSantisLandscapes.com.



WEEDWATCH

STANDING SENTINEL TO PROTECT PLANT HEALTH



Recommended
Dow AgroSciences
solution
Dimension® specialty
herbicide*

CROWFOOTGRASS

Dactyloctenium aegyptium

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This bunch-type summer annual is commonly found in sandy soils.
- ▶ Stems bend and root at the lower nodes, and have a spreading, creeping structure.
- ▶ Leaf blades and sheaths are without hair. Leaf margins have long, stiff hairs at the base.
- ▶ The flower head has two to seven spikelets at the tip of the stem.
- ▶ Its seed head resembles a crow's foot, and each plant may produce up to 60,000 seeds.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ Properly mow, water and fertilize lawn to encourage healthy growth and minimize thin turf.
- ▶ This species can be invasive and is a prolific seed producer. Appropriately labeled pre-emergent herbicides are the most effective method of control.

* State restrictions on the sale and use of Dimension specialty herbicide products apply.



Recommended
Dow AgroSciences
solution
Dimension® specialty
herbicide*

JAPANESE STILTGRASS

Microstegium vimineum

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- ▶ This summer annual, also known as Mary's grass, resembles bamboo.
- ▶ Its leaves are pale green, lance-shaped and asymmetrical with a shiny mid-rib.
- ▶ Slender stalks of tiny flowers are produced in late summer, and dry fruits (achenes) are produced shortly afterward.
- ▶ It spreads by seeds and rooting at joints along the stem. Seeds produced by this plant can remain viable in the soil for at least three years.

CONTROL TIPS

- ▶ For non-selective control of established Mary's grass, glyphosate can be used. There are limited choices for complete post-emergent control of this species in established turfgrass.
- ▶ Mary's grass is identified as a class C noxious weed in some areas, so preventing the germination and establishment of it is critical. Apply a pre-emergent herbicide in early spring prior to germination.

For more information regarding these and other turf weeds — and related control technologies and tips — please visit www.DowProvesIt.com or call 800/255-3726.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY  **Dow AgroSciences**

GENERIC HERBICIDES ARE FINE IF YOU RUN A GENERIC BUSINESS.

Dimension® specialty herbicide isn't the No. 1 brand just because it offers outstanding preemergence and early postemergence for crabgrass control.¹ Or because it's a wall-to-wall solution for weed control in turf and landscape. It's No. 1 because it's a proven product from a proven company. Unlike generic manufacturers, Dow AgroSciences provides innovative products, expertise and field support that helps retain and grow business. It's what sets Dimension apart from the competition. And when you use it, it can do the same for you. To learn more, visit www.DowProvesIt.com.

¹2010 Specialty Product Consultants.

Dimension®
Specialty Herbicide



GOLF



LAWN



NURSERY



ORNAMENTAL



P R O V E N S O L U T I O N S



BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at bwilson@questex.com.

Let's fix the cracks in your foundation

Last month I laid out the six pillars necessary to create a strong foundation. Now, here's how to fix what's broken.

1 Solid financial base: Improve cash position by understanding ratios. The first step in solving restricted cash flow problems is to regularly track two key balance sheet ratios: *Quick Ratio*, an indicator of a company's short-term liquidity to meet operating needs (current assets minus inventories divided by current liabilities) and *Current Ratio* (current assets divided by current liabilities).

- › Cost cutting can help build cash, but cash management is equally important.
- › Stay on top of your receivables: strive for an average age of receivables of under 30 days.
- › Bill in advance for maintenance contracts versus billing at the beginning of the month for the current month's service.
- › Do not make cash distributions until your current ratio is in the safe zone.

Healthy *Debt-to-Equity Ratio*: This is a ratio of debt to owner's equity. A debt to equity ratio of over 2 for a maintenance company is considered too high and will limit your ability to gain access to credit.

- › Have a clear plan for paying down debt.
- › Consider leasing rather than taking loans out to finance equipment.

2 Maintain a good business mix. A diversified business mix will strategically position your organization for lasting results and ensure regular revenue streams throughout the year.

- › Track your business mix annually.
- › Measure the profitability of each type of business (construction, maintenance, etc.) and each customer segment (commercial, residential, etc.)
- › Develop a targeted sales approach that keeps you in balance.
- › Apply sales incentives in segments of business that you want to grow to achieve balance.

3 Make a commitment to learning. Having the ability to adapt, change and transform your company in response to shifting market preferences will enable you to remain competitive.

- › Hire a good cross-section of talent.
- › Encourage debate and dialogue.
- › Provide continual learning opportunities for your employees.
- › Conduct regular reviews when things do not go as expected, either favorably or unfavorably.
- › Keep the 'blame game' out of your company.

4 Be decisive. Empower managers to lead, be objective and think on their feet.

- › Make meetings count, have an agenda and keep minutes. Hold people accountable.
- › Move procrastinators out or to positions where they do not kill the decision making process.
- › Reflect on the future and quickly take advantage of opportunities.

5 Inspire talent: Commit to learning. If you don't have enough management candidates to meet growth demands:

- › Recruit interns and new graduates to develop a pipeline of new talent.
- › Develop a mentoring culture that inspires engagement.
- › Reward people with promotions if they have trained a replacement.

6 Customer focus. Keep an eye on customers' preferences. You'll grow your business and improve customers' experiences.

- › Evaluate process changes for their effect on your present and future customers.
- › Ask your customers for advice.
- › Learn more about your customers and what's trending. If you know their problems, you can offer solutions.

LM REPORTS

YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

DESIGN BUILD: LIGHTING

Schröder Lighting US

Featuring a perforated mask design, new Boreal luminaires' decorative style is inspired by translucent paper lanterns. Laser cut, brushed stainless steel exterior shades can be complemented with optional dichroic filters to create colorful effects. Available in single- or twin-light configurations, IP66-rated fixtures measure 33.1 in. tall x 24 in. dia. They have an internal metal halide CDM lamp module, and use 70-, 100- and 150-W ED17 lamps. *Schreder.us*



Acuity Brands

New Tersen Ratio 1.5 is a contemporary styled luminaire supporting 48 LED diodes that produce illumination equivalent to a traditional 175-watt metal halide lamp. Its stylistic, "finned" shape serves as a heat sink as well as an architectural statement, making it ideal for outdoor parking lots, walkways and mixed-use applications. The luminaire achieves a 50,000-hour life at 1,000 MA with 70% lumen maintenance. *AcuityBrands.com/outdoor*



Bulbrite

New Eco Halogen A19 bulbs are compliant with EISA 2012 incandescent general service standards, and are ideal for use in outdoor and security lights. The energy-saving bulbs are available in clear and soft white, and in the equivalents of 40-, 60-, 75- and 100W incandescent. *Bulbrite.com*



Cooper Lighting

Lumière offers a variety of surface, wall and tree mounting accessories. All are equipped with a standard 0.5-in. NPS threaded mounting hole to accept fixtures with 0.5-in. NPS threaded stems. Made from die cast aluminum or stainless steel, they are available in several finishes, including black, bronze, white and more. *CooperLighting.com*



With Gallery® and Snapshot®, you'll stand out even more.

Nobody offers the portfolio of turf, nursery and lawn care solutions we do. Gallery® specialty herbicide provides up to eight months of control on more than 100 broadleaf weeds without harm on 490 field-grown ornamentals, while Snapshot® specialty herbicide provides excellent plant tolerance and can be applied over the top of 636 field-grown and 487 container-grown ornamentals.

To learn more, visit www.DowProvesIt.com.

 Dow AgroSciences

PROVEN SOLUTIONS

®Trademark of Dow AgroSciences LLC. State restrictions on the sale and use of Snapshot apply. Consult the label before purchase or use for full details. Always read and follow label directions.

©2012 Dow AgroSciences LLC

T38-081-001 (03/12) BR 010-60782 DATOTURF1075



Holophane

GranVille II LED luminaires feature a new optical design that provides HID light levels while creating a comfortable, wholly luminous appearance with low glare, less uplight and less light trespass. Multiple lumen packages are available, and fixtures may be ordered

with asymmetric or symmetric distributions. The luminaires are optimized to meet existing light standards. A dedicated thermal management system maximizes performance and reliability. The period-style fixtures are also designed for easy access to the electronic driver to simplify maintenance. They include cast aluminum housing available in multiple styles, including two utility series and four standard housings. The fixtures are offered with traditional GranVille trim options and mount to industry standard pole tenons and existing locations. Holophane.com/LED/GV2



Orbit Industries

The new LET/LVT Series of compact electronic transformers for low voltage landscape lighting can be installed indoors or outdoors. It includes various options, such as a dimming loop, potentiometer and grounding wire. Models are available in an operational range from 10W to 300W. The transformers are "cool running," offering efficiency and reliability. A patented auto heat regulator automatically provides overload protection, dimming the output voltage if the system accidentally overheats (194°F). This ensures more dependability when compared to systems that terminate the light completely. The LET/LVT Series is also dimmable without producing any acoustic noise, which may occur with older systems. OrbitElectric.com

**The Smart Choice:
Reliability & Productivity**

**PS 200™
Power Spreader**

See our PS200 Video
www.prizelawnspreaders.com

Prizelawn
614-559-2655

Cuts Downtime/Maintenance
Stainless steel frame & bodywork
Honda 6XV160 commercial engine

Cuts Application Time/Labor Costs
6 mph transport & application speed
200 pound capacity hopper
Cover 1 acre ≈ 8 minutes
Consistent impeller speed
Controllable spread pattern
35" width for garden gate clearance

©2012 PSB Company



WAC Lighting

Designed with architectural aesthetics and performance in mind, the new energy-efficient LEDme Step Lights offer a sleek profile and enhanced functionality for safety and style on indoor and outdoor stairs, walls and other pathways. The lights are offered in versatile, horizontal and circular scoop designs for a clean, seamless installation without any visible hardware. Easy to retrofit on to a single-gang, rectangular-style junction box, these luminaires offer a wide beam angle for broad lighting distribution, and deliver balanced, consistent lighting free of shadows and glare. Constructed with a cast aluminum body, the lights can be dimmed with an ELV dimmer and feature a replaceable LED module. They minimize energy consumption and maintenance while extending their life to 50,000 hours. Mounting hardware is available in white, bronze and brushed nickel finishes. WAClighting.com