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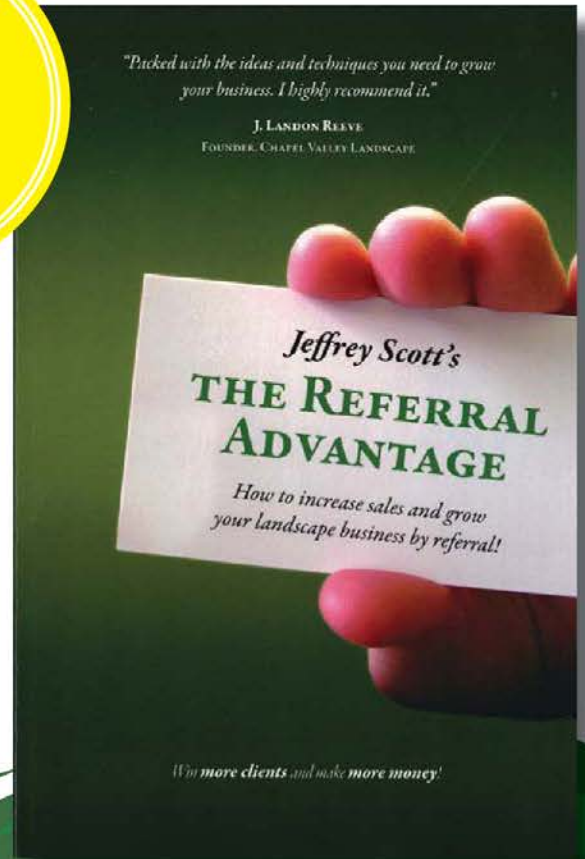
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How to increase and grow your landscape business by referral!

Veteran Green Industry business owner Jeffrey Scott doubled the size of his design/build/maintain business to over \$10 million, by raising client retention in one division to 98%, and by increasing professional referrals from \$50,000 to \$2 million. Referrals are one of the cheapest and most effective ways to grow your business. In *The Referral Advantage* Scott teaches you how to ask for a referral, get your employees to create them, and even benchmark and track your referrals.

Author: Jeffrey Scott

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INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

THE GREEN INDUSTRY AT A GLANCE

MOWING RATE ROUND-UP

Late last month the *Wall Street Journal* published a round-up of mowing rates across the country. Here's how different regions stacked up.

DALLAS

Lawns of Dallas

\$40 for a 10,000-square-foot lawn

Per-1,000-square-foot price: **\$4**

PARKER, COLO.

BestYard

\$36.25 for any lawn up to 3,000 square feet

Per-1,000-square-foot price: about **\$12** or more

LANSING, MICH.

ArborLawn

\$36 for a 12,000-square-foot lawn

Per-1,000-square-foot price: **\$3**

NEW MILFORD, CONN.

YardApes

\$67.50 for a 27,000-square-foot lawn

Per-1,000-square-foot price: **\$2.50**

PORTLAND, ORE.

Other Side of the Fence

\$35 for a roughly 2,500-square-foot lawn

Per-1,000-square-foot price: **\$14**



DROUGHT TAKES ITS TOLL

This year's historic drought has caused more than half of all U.S. counties to be deemed disaster zones by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), CNN reports. USDA economist Timothy Park called it "the most severe and expensive drought in 25 years."

Tom Vilsack, secretary of agriculture, declared disaster zone designations for an additional 218 counties in 12 states on Aug. 1 due to damage and losses caused by drought and excessive heat. The states are Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wyoming.

To view CNN's interactive map of how drought conditions have spread in 2012, visit goo.gl/71Ynn.



SMALL BUSINESS OPTIMISM DECLINES

In a disappointing reversal of several months of slow but positive growth, the National Federation of Independent Business' June Index of Small Business Optimism dropped three points, falling to 91.4. The decline is significant and relinquished the gains achieved earlier this year. Labor market indicators and spending plans for capital equipment and inventories accounted for about 40 percent of the decline. Political uncertainty remains historically high and continues to be a primary cause for a reticence among small-business owners to expand.

"All in all, this month's survey was a real economic downer," says NFIB Chief Economist William Dunkelberg. "The economy has definitely slowed; job growth will be far short of that needed to reduce the unemployment rate unless lots of unemployed leave the labor force—no consolation. Taxes remain a top concern for the small business community."



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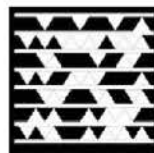
USE PROPER APPLICATION EQUIPMENT

By Julie Pospesch | FMC

Even when the appropriate pesticide is applied using the right equipment, applicators will not achieve optimal results if their tools are not prepared properly. To ensure even, effective treatment, only use sprayers and spreaders that have been calibrated to the approved equipment settings for the pesticide being applied. Be sure to take into account field speed, application rate, spray pressure and the size of the treatment area. Accurate calibration helps ensure that a pesticide is applied at a rate that delivers effective control without endangering humans, plants and animals living nearby. After application, it is just as important to wash equipment and perform any necessary maintenance.



Julie Pospesch is the Market Specialist for FMC Professional Solutions in Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.



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Contractors take to the Hill

PLANET's Renewal & Remembrance and Legislative Day on the Hill programs offer the opportunity to give back and speak up.

The Professional Landcare Network (PLANET) held its annual Renewal & Remembrance service event at Arlington National Cemetery and its Legislative Day on the Hill program last month.

"This year's Renewal & Remembrance event once again showed the commitment and dedication to service that our PLANET members have," said Norman Goldenberg, president of PLANET. "It is such an honor to see our members, their children and our sponsor companies come together to help Arlington National Cemetery provide the best possible green spaces for our military heroes and their families."

Renewal & Remembrance included more than 400 PLANET members and their families, who spent their time helping to mulch, prune, aerate, irrigate, plant, spread lime and provide cabling and lighting protection for some of Arlington's historic trees. (For more on Renewal & Remembrance, see page 8.)

After Renewal & Remembrance, the focus switched to legislative issues. More than 100 PLANET members



and their families met with legislators or staff from their local districts to talk about important issues, including overregulation, NPDES permits, H-2B and Lyme disease. PLANET members visited with representatives from approximately 20 states.

"This event allows PLANET members to meet with their elected officials and discuss issues that are important

U.S. Rep. Bobby Schilling (R-Ill.) (center) with Alan and Mary Ann Skoog of Skoog Landscape and Design of Sterling, Ill.

to their businesses and the lawn and landscape industry as a whole," said Goldenberg.

The Irrigation Association partnered with PLANET to host this year's Renewal & Remembrance and Legislative Day on the Hill.

DOWN-Y BUT NOT OUT

Cornell experts offer tips for managing impatiens downy mildew in landscape settings.

This year, downy mildew has been widespread on landscape impatiens in Florida, the Mid-Atlantic and the Northeast. Cornell's Margery Daughtrey and Nora Catlin

offer the following tips for management:

» Scout plantings for symptoms (look for the diagnostic white sporulation on the undersurface of



leaves, pictured here) and remove—including roots—any infected plants immedi-

ately. Bag them and remove them from the site.

» Don't replant previously infected beds with susceptible varieties of impatiens. Replant with alternatives, such as New Guinea impatiens, begonias or coleus.

» Focus on prevention and consider integrated pest management.



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OFA, ANLA to create new association

The new group will be established by January 2014.

OFA – The Association of Horticulture Professionals and the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) will begin the process of organizing a new association. Following several

months of working together in a joint venture, the working group, comprising leaders from both organizations, determined it was time to formally create a new trade association, which will



replace OFA and ANLA.

OFA and ANLA announced in January a joint venture to support business education and government relations activities. The vision statement adopted by OFA's board of directors expressed the desire to form a new organization if it brings more value to its members and the industry. Since June 2011, OFA's executive committee has been meeting with ANLA's leaders about the opportunity for and viability of a formal relationship between the two organizations. As early as the first meeting, the idea of forming a new organization has been discussed by the joint venture working group.


"We are listening to our members," said Mike McCabe, owner of McCabe's Greenhouse & Floral in Lawrenceburg, Ind. "Results of a membership and organizational study performed at the end of last year indicated that members of both associations want the organizations to work closer to unify the industry. They want their industry association to be all encompassing—one that touches and links all pieces of the horticulture industry, which can be offered by a new organization. After significant exploration and evaluation the elected leadership of OFA determined this is the best way to meet the needs of our members and the industry."

The timeline is to have a new organization established between July 2013 and January 2014.

"This is not a merger. This is taking the best of what both associations do to create a new organization that will advance the industry and better serve our members," said OFA CEO Michael Geary.

Following ANLA Executive Vice President Bob Dolibois' scheduled retirement at the end of the year, Geary will become the chief staff executive of both ANLA and OFA beginning on Jan. 1. The organizations will continue to be governed separately, but Geary will lead the daily operations of both associations.

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Weed Man named a military-friendly franchise

The company was recognized for volunteerism and financial incentives offered to veterans.

As a result of the financial incentives offered to veterans who open a Weed Man franchise and the community initiatives the company implements to support military families, Weed Man was recently recognized as a 2012 Military Friendly Franchise by *G.I. Jobs* magazine.

"It is our goal to support our nation's heroes by providing them with a business opportunity that has a low overall investment, but enables them to be financially successful," said Jennifer Lemcke, COO of Turf Holdings and Weed Man USA. "Franchising is a great avenue for veterans to turn to, as it offers an established business model and

Weed Man®

a support system that will help them achieve long-term growth goals."

The honor ranks Weed Man in the top 10 percent of all franchises nationwide, and recognizes the company for demonstrating best practices in recruiting military members as franchisees. As part of the company's incentives for veterans, Weed Man offers a 25 percent discount off the franchise fee. The initiative is in support of the Veterans Transition Franchise Initiative (Vet-Fran), a voluntary effort of International

Franchise Association (IFA) member companies to provide franchise business opportunities to honorably discharged veterans transitioning to civilian life or seeking a career change.

Weed Man also has partnered with Project EverGreen's GreenCare for Troops program for the past six years. Weed Man franchise owners across the country provide free lawn care for military families. Currently, more than 15,000 families are registered with the GreenCare for Troops program.



Ideal Landscape Group adopts propane mowers

St. Louis-based Ideal Landscape Group added 30 propane-powered mowers. It anticipates the switch to propane-powered mowers will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 50 percent compared to gasoline mowers.

The environmental benefits are a plus, but according to Tim Kircher, Ideal's maintenance division manager, there's a strong business case to be made.

"Making the switch to propane isn't just about emissions," Kircher says. "We're certainly proud of the part we're playing there, but there are additional benefits that are significant as well, including longer engine life for the mowers and reduced maintenance costs because the cleaner fuel deposits less carbon in the engine."

The most compelling reason to make the switch, Kircher says, is the savings. The price of oil continues to hover around \$90 a barrel, pushing the average cost of gasoline in St. Louis to approximately \$3.35 per gallon. The price for propane is significantly less.

"In addition to the savings we'll enjoy on the service side, we're also paying less than half for the fuel. In a business like ours, where the cost of fuel is one of your largest expenses, that's significant."

SWINGLE ACQUIRES LAWN CARE FIRM

The move expands the company's reach in northern Colorado

Swingle Lawn, Tree & Landscape Care, Denver, acquired Saratoga Ventures, a lawn services company in Boulder-Longmont, Colo. Terms were not disclosed.

The acquisition will help Swingle provide increasingly improved and expansive service for residential and commercial lawn service clients in northern Colorado.

"Our team's focus will be on servicing our existing client base while fostering loyalty among new customers as we integrate them into the Swingle family," said Thomas Tolkacz, ceo of Swingle.



TORO CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN UNDERGROUND IRRIGATION



Fifty years ago, The Toro Co. got its start in the underground irrigation business with the purchase of Moist O'Matic, Riverside, Calif.

Moist O'Matic had made advancements in the use of plastics and new designs to make water-efficient sprinklers, valves and control systems. In

1962, Toro's fourth president, David Lilly, initiated the purchase of Moist O'Matic and hired irrigation contractor John Singleton to pioneer Toro's entry into golf irrigation. Today, Toro owns more than 225 irrigation patents. It has added to its irrigation capabilities over the years with multiple acquisitions.

CHANGING YOUR COMPANY NAME MIGHT BE A HASSLE, BUT IT COULD PAY OFF.

When **D.J. Vander Slik** was mowing lawns in Grand Rapids, Mich., at age 12, a customer asked him for a receipt. He didn't have any, so the homeowner helped him write something up, jotting down D.J.'s Lawn Service on the slip.

"I thought, 'Sure, that sounds good,'" Vander Slik says of his 12-year-old self.

The name stuck, and when he graduated from high school in 1999 Vander Slik turned his business into a full-time venture. He grew it steadily over the next decade, adding branches in Kalamazoo and Holland, and services like snow plowing, fertilization and weed control, tree and shrub care, design/build and irrigation.

By 2010, the company was ready for a change, and he asked clients their thoughts about rebranding at a quarterly focus group.

Vander Slik originally considered dropping his first name from the brand, but the client response was: "We always just call you D.J.'s."

"If I had to do it all over, I'd do something nicer and softer," he says. But with more than 75 trucks on the road in three cities, his clients and team convinced him that dropping D.J. could be "like committing suicide."

So, D.J.'s remains, but "lawn service" was ousted. The company is now D.J.'s Landscape Management, which reflects its full service offerings.

Vander Slik is not the first landscape contractor to go down this road. Like his, many landscape businesses were hastily named or took on their founders' monikers by default. As companies mature, want to change their focus or freshen their brands, they discover there are challenges—and costs—along the way.

continued on page 20



ILLUSTRATION: JEFF BENNETT



For a checklist of key things to consider when launching a new name, visit the Web Extras section of landscapemanagement.net.

BY MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

D.J.'s LAWN SERVICE



BEFORE

D.J. Vander Slik's company worked with a local marketing firm to redo its logo when it rebranded. The goal was a fresh look that incorporated the new name and the old colors.



AFTER

continued from page 18

Choosing a name

Perhaps one of the most important things in the Green Industry, where new companies pop up every day, is to make sure no one else is operating under your name or one that's similar.

That's what drove Tara Gray to change her company's name in 2009 from The Other Side Lawn Co. to Green Paws Lawn Care. When she and her husband founded the company in 2004, they didn't research other company names. "We didn't know a whole lot about choosing a business name," she acknowledges.

In the company's third year there were several times when potential customers requested quotes from Gray, mentioning her

company also took care of their neighbors' lawns. When she looked up these addresses, she was confused because she didn't have any accounts on their blocks.

"This happened several times before we discovered there was another company named The Other Side Landscape and Maintenance that was located about 30 miles from us," she says. "While we weren't really in each others' service areas and our names weren't exactly the same, they were still close enough for us to decide to make the change. Since we were already getting calls about this other company we could see the possibility of problems."

The Grays spent that winter looking for a unique name, doing research online and at the state comptroller's office.

"I spent a lot of time just searching to make sure we didn't repeat our first mistakes," she says. They decided on Green Paws Lawn Care, a name Gray says ties their professional brand to their personal love of animals.

Vander Slik's company also conducted online research to see if there were other businesses with similar names in the state. Additionally, he worked with a local marketing firm to create a new logo and with Green Industry consultant Judy Guido. She has worked on naming strategy

continued on page 22

THE OWNER AS THE BRAND

One factor to consider when changing a company's name is whether selling the business is in the future, says Ron Edmonds, principal consultant of The Principium Group, a Green Industry M&A and exit planning firm.

Buyers may raise eyebrows at companies named for their owners, he says. It's a bigger problem when the company is being sold to a similar entity or owner. It's less of a concern when the company is being sold to a much larger business.

"A buyer will be very interested in understanding how dependent on the owner the selling business really is, whatever it's named," he says. "It's certainly possible that a business whose name is based on its owner's name is not dependent on its owner, but it raises a question."

All other things being equal, Edmonds would recommend against naming the business after the owner, but he acknowledges that it's logical for companies built on their owners' reputations to have their owners' names.

"The challenge is to bridge from the reputation of the owner to the

"IT'S CERTAINLY POSSIBLE THAT A BUSINESS WHOSE NAME IS BASED ON ITS OWNER'S NAME IS NOT DEPENDENT ON ITS OWNER, BUT IT RAISES A QUESTION."

—RON EDMONDS,
THE PRINCIPIUM GROUP

reputation of the business and its team," he says. "Using the owner's name for its 'rock star' quality often makes a lot of sense, until it becomes time to sell or transition the business." —M.P.