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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

The author, of the Wilson-Oyler Group, is a 30-year industry veteran. Reach him at editor@northcoastmedia.net.

Take the lead on pricing

The landscape maintenance industry has been fighting a low price-to-nowhere war for the last few years. Some think it might have hit bottom, but others see more of the same. In any event, selling value has become more difficult — if not impossible.

We all know that companies are now reducing scope and frequency to gain an edge in the price war. If they are not reducing the scope in the specifications they provide, they are reducing frequencies of service, cutting corners where they can in an effort to turn their low price into a marginally profitable job.

They are also trying to sell more enhancements and mark them up to make up for their low prices. After all, if the customer is going to just look at low price, contractors have to figure out how to make money and still provide enough service.

I think we can all agree that this is not a sustainable model.

Cost vs. value: the real bottom line

Your customers view landscape maintenance as a commodity. This is because, all things being equal,

most landscape companies are perceived to be the same: They're all saying the same things, marketing themselves using similar techniques, and customers think everyone is bidding to the same specifications.

You have an opportunity to shape the conversation on price by showing them the real cost of landscape maintenance.

Customers fail to realize (or are simply ignoring the fact) that a lower level of service and attention over time will cost them money in having a deteriorating asset: their landscape. Important maintenance practices are being deferred in many cases. Contractors are also, for the most part, the ones controlling the amount of water being used on the landscape.

Water has a cost. It is part of the cost of maintaining the property. The customer pays the utility, but the contractor decides how much water to use. Some customers pay attention to this by calling the contractor out on excessive water bills, but few connect the contractor selection process with the other costs of maintenance.

This provides you with a great opportunity to help customers reduce their energy bills. Show them that you can actually *save* them money when they look at the total cost of maintenance. The customer might pay \$500 more per month for maintenance, but save more than that on water cost. Also, if you can do a better job maintaining the property through better agronomic practices, it has the added benefit of reducing the costs for enhancements over time.

If you invest some time in figuring out the total cost for customers — the service contract plus water cost as related to irrigation — and what you can do to save them money by managing their water bills, you can offer true value for the service itself, and the service partnership you hope to have over the long term.

PARADIGM SHIFT: HOW NOT TO BE A COMMODITY

- » Use new software technologies, tools, skills and advancements that make your efforts and your business better and different.
- » Build your knowledge in related fields (sustainability, the environment — and their technology, tools and advancements), so you can add value to multiple points on the value chain.
- » Invest to build your awareness and brand to where you are not considered a commodity. This will create demand.
- » Reshape the conversation on price.

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YOUR GUIDE TO PRODUCT RESEARCH

OPERATIONS: SOFTWARE



Drafix Software

PRO Landscape, Version 18, contains new and enhanced features that make it easier and faster to create both photo imaging and CAD designs, as well as professional quotes. Other features

include enhanced integration with QuickBooks, as well as new paver tools, and improvements to color CAD drawings. Version 18 also introduces the new PRO Landscape Companion for iPad, allowing designers to impress customers with the ability to create, edit and present designs on-site. PROlandscape.com

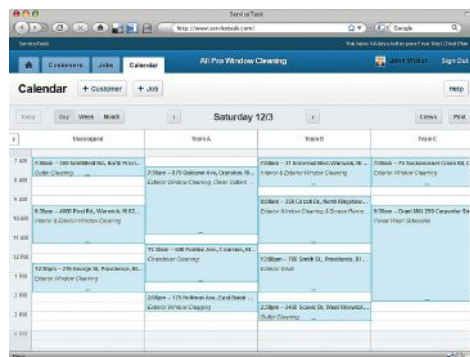


BOSS LM

Boss LM business management software enables landscape companies to manage everything in their business from a single interface. It eliminates the employee frustration, data inaccuracy and support costs of using multiple, fragmented systems. More than just software, BOSS LM delivers what landscape companies need to take total control of their business. BossLM.com

Modeco Systems

TimeScope is a mobile production tracking system that streamlines the collection and flow of field information. With the use of bar codes and pocket-sized scanners, each crew tracks properties served, tasks performed and materials consumed as it occurs in real time. TimeScope tracks job names, time of arrival and departure, tasks and material throughout the day, then instantly presents dozens of comprehensive reports. TimeScope data easily can be imported to your accounting and payroll programs. ModecoSystems.com



ServiceTask.com

ServiceTask was founded on the belief that landscaping software should be simple to use, allowing you to focus on what really matters: your business. Many landscape companies want to make sure they never forget to follow up with customers, fall behind on scheduling or allow jobs to fall through the cracks. ServiceTask makes it easier to collaborate with company members through a live recent activity feed. It's 100% web-based software, which means you can manage your business from a browser, desktop or mobile device and you can access your ServiceTask account from the Internet. There is nothing to install or download, and support and upgrades are free. ServiceTask.com

GIS Dynamics

Go iLawn is the industry go-to for fast, precise online property measurement. Go iLawn combines high-resolution property photos and measuring tools in one easy-to-use application. Use Go iLawn to measure commercial and residential properties for maintenance, chemical application, irrigation, snow removal and more. Try it today for free to see how thousands of companies are using Go iLawn to get ahead. Visit www.goilawn.com/promo and use code LM612. Goilawn.com



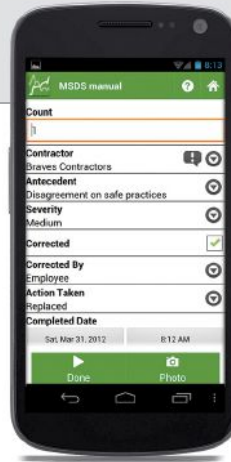


Sustainability Dashboard Tools LLC

The Sustainability Dashboard Tool is designed to identify ways to make your business operations more efficient, improve performance and save money. The web-based software program tracks and measures fuel, water and energy use and suggests ways to reduce consumption. Secure, safe and accessible, the system is cost effective, intuitive and easy to use, the company says, and reports are easy to understand. Green2Sustainable.com

Include Software

Bringing CNG-SAFE document management software to Include Software's client base reduces overhead by eliminating redundant processes in a company's operations. Asset business management software focuses on the contracting industries, helping manage every aspect of a contractor's business and eliminating the need for other software. Integration with CNG-SAFE allows Asset users to instantly pull up documents in the context of how they relate to the actions they're performing. Because Asset modules integrate to the appropriate electronic filing cabinets, users can add, edit, view or route documents directly from Asset. The integrated platform enables users to manage all documents across all business processes. Include.com and CabinetNG.com



Predictive Solutions Corp.

SafetyNet app for Android is now available for download on Google Play. Existing Predictive Solutions customers can install the app on their Android phones or tablets and use it to collect their workplace safety observations. This safety software solution automates the collection of workplace safety data, and performs advanced and predictive analytics to identify trends that can affect workers' safety. With their highest risk areas identified by SafetyNet, customers can predict where injuries are likely to occur, then proactively prevent them. The easy-to-use app drives an increased number of inspections while improving the quality of observations. By removing the manual data-entry steps associated with paper-based observations, companies get inspection results faster, allowing teams to be more productive. SafetyNet is also available on most BlackBerry devices and is available for download on the App Store for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. PredictiveSolutions.com



Tensor International

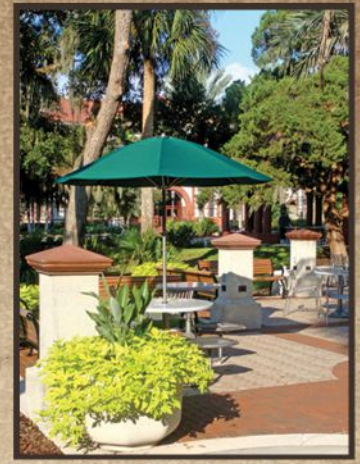
ECMS 5.0 is the improved, web-based version of Tensor's popular Erosion Control Materials Design Software. ECMS 5.0 ensures the proper evaluation and design for soil-loss prediction, product specification and project planning. It helps users quickly and easily design erosion protection for projects to comply with today's strict erosion and sediment control regulations. The application offers robust calculations to develop cost-effective, sustainable erosion control and vegetation establishment with both rolled erosion control products (RECPs) and hydraulic erosion control products (HECPs). It also features dynamic graphics throughout its various analysis pages. NAgreen.com



ExakTime

New JobClock Hornet, from the makers of PocketClock/GPS, is the first completely wireless, rugged time clock that automatically sends hourly time records from your worksites to your office. Hornet tracks workers, job activities and job locations in real time, so you get the accurate records that handwritten, paper time cards can't deliver you. Securely enclosed in a rugged, military-grade, ABS plastic composite case and built to survive any environment — rain, snow, heat or dust — Hornet has a 30-day, rechargeable battery. ExakTime.com

continued on page 77



Permeable Clay Pavers...Beautiful and Sustainable

Blending history with Creative Solutions...

Challenge...

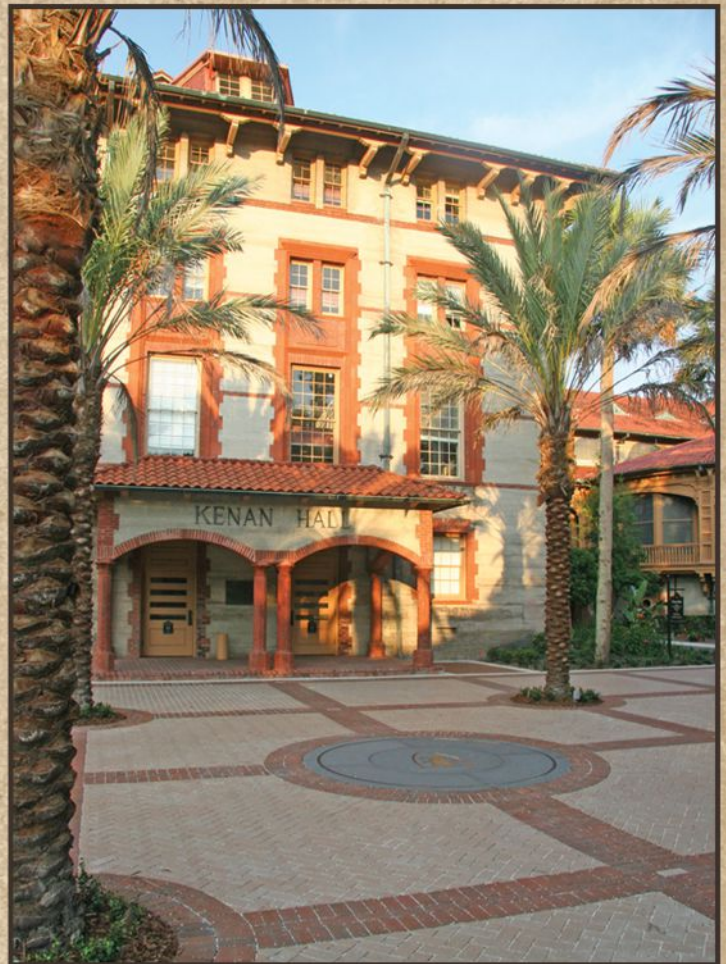
Water pooled up into ankle-deep mud directly in front of Kenan Hall At Flagler College each time it would rain. The City of St. Augustine didn't allow any new tie-ins to its storm sewer system and required all new construction to keep its storm drainage on site. Secondly, the design had to tie in with the historic nature of its surroundings.

Solution...

Pine Hall Brick StormPave® permeable clay pavers provide an effective way to drain away stormwater while at the same time, picking up colors of the nearby building - in line with local historic-district guidelines.

The 5,300-square-foot space has become a popular gathering spot for students.

The plaza is paved in gray as the primary color with autumn as the accent.



The Plaza at Kenan Hall/Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida
 Landscape Architect: Sharon Fowler of Hauber Fowler & Associates
 Builder: A.D. Davis Construction
 Mason Contractor: Paverscape Inc.
 Distributor: Oldcastle Coastal



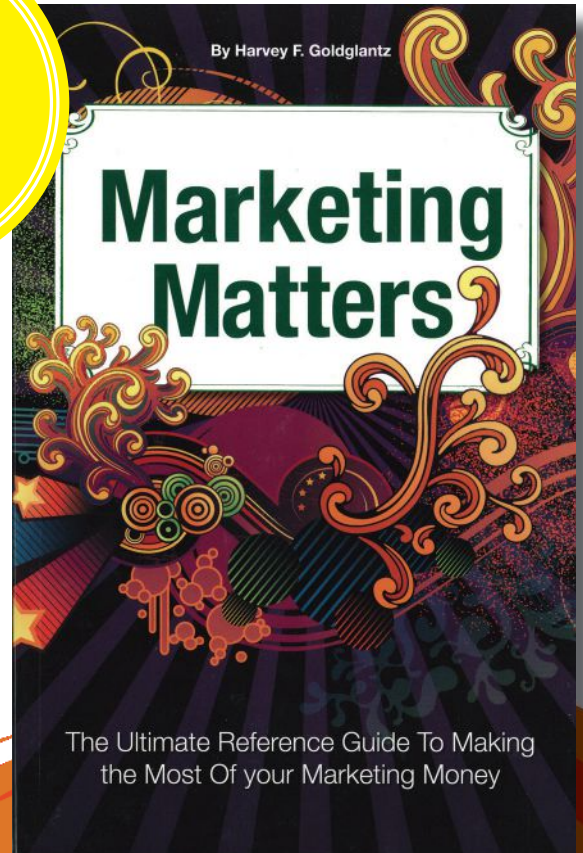
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Marketing Matters isn't just good – it's phenomenal. It's going to revolutionize the way you think about marketing, and will help you realize you can create a great marketing plan and not break the bank doing it. Harvey Goldglantz walks you through the marketing process step by step – from creating a marketing budget to crafting an effective message to deciding where to place your advertising to maximizing your success from your marketing investment. This easy-to-understand, useful reference book should be on every service industry professional's desk.

Author: Harvey Goldglantz

shop.landscapemanagement.net/shop.php

Landscape
Management



continued from page 74

MAINTENANCE: MOWERS

Gravelly

A new diesel zero-turn mower has been added to the Pro-Turn 400 series commercial lineup. The mower features a 25hp Kubota engine and is available in a 60- and

72-in. deck. Also featured is Gravelly's air-suspension seat for all-day operator comfort. The air pressure can be adjusted with the touch of a button, and comfort foam feels more like an office chair than a standard mower seat, the company says. The seat rides smoothly over rough terrain, allowing faster mowing speeds and increased productivity. A rubber isolated foot platform also minimizes vibration for a more comfortable ride. The Pro-Turn units also feature a 13.4-gal. fuel capacity and large flat-free front tires. The seven-gauge fabricated and welded X-Factor Deck features an easy-to-operate deck-lift system aimed at reducing operator fatigue; dial adjust height-of-cut system; and maintenance-free XL spindles. *Gravelly.com*



Cub Cadet

The Tank LZ series provides performance, with low maintenance and consistent professional-quality cut. Designed with the operator in mind, the Tank LZ series offers an intelligent lap bar system with easy, tool-free adjustability for exceptional ergonomics and personalized comfort. Plus, you get a patented EVC (elasticity vibration control) seating system and intuitive controls for remarkable all-day comfort. These mowers are made with the thickest steel, and advanced design puts them among the strongest, most durable frames in the industry.

Cubcadet.com



John Deere

The Z900 series offers a wide range of horsepower choices and deck sizes that run smooth day after day, thanks to all metal, deep and extra-wide pulleys and optimum belt alignment no matter the cutting height. The unique cross-porting system routes the coolest hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic pump doing the most work. A gear reduction drive in the wheel motor adds mechanical muscle, increasing the torque available over a purely hydraulic system. The Z900 mowers are equipped with an ANSI-certified, rollover protective structure (ROPS) and seat belt. This 3-position ROPS enhances operator safety and provides ample clearance when trailering or mowing under trees. No tools required makes repositioning easy. Extra-thick foam cushioning keeps the bumps and jolts to a minimum. *Deere.com*

BOB-CAT

The FastCat Pro zero-turn mower line now includes a choice of 52-in. side discharge deck with a Kawasaki FX691V engine or 61-in. side discharge deck with a Kawasaki FX730V engine (pictured). Both new models use canister air filtration and feature BOB-CAT's DuraDeck with extreme discharge system, a new patent-pending double-wave baffle system, extra-wide discharge opening and molded rubber chute. Dual Hydro-Gear ZT-3400 hydrostatic transaxle independent drives with 12cc pumps deliver smooth maneuverability. Coupled with 9-gal.-capacity duel fuel tanks, 23-in. drive wheels and 13-in. caster wheels, you can cruise at speeds up to 10 mph. A new custom seat with elastomeric radial bearing and seat suspension eliminates vibration to the operator and prevents "topping out" and "bottoming out," providing all-day ride comfort.

BOBCATturf.com



Walker Manufacturing

The MTL 31-HP EFI offers operators easy starting, consistent running temperatures and user-friendly maintenance. A combination of liquid cooling and electronic fuel injection from Kohler's 31-hp fuel-injected Aegis engine provides longer engine life, more power and better fuel economy than air-cooled engines. The mower features an electric radiator fan with reversible self-cleaning action; a clam-shell style body and chassis to accommodate higher horsepower engines; and a shock-mounted instrument panel with warning lights and a horn. It also includes an ignition switch, a water temperature gauge, a voltmeter, an hour meter and a service light. *Walkermowers.com*

DESIGN/BUILD: LIGHTING ELEMENTS



Hunter Industries

Hunter's Pro-C irrigation controller offers a new option: the ability to control landscape lighting. With a simple facepack upgrade, the Pro-C can be used to control up to three PX lighting transformers using the PXSUN relay box. Three new lighting programs (L1, L2, L3) allow lighting schedules to be created as easily as irrigation schedules, using the same familiar Pro-C interface. Lighting programs can run simultaneously to irrigation, and are not interrupted by irrigation functions such as rain sensor condition or seasonal adjustments. HunterIndustries.com

WAC Lighting

Combining form and function for a variety of architectural-grade outdoor lighting applications, the IP65-rated, surface-mounted Panther luminaire uses energy-efficient LED or metal halide lamping, and offers tool-free precision handling and lockable aiming. Also new is a commercial-grade outdoor wall sconce that casts light up and down. The IP65-rated and die-cast aluminum constructed sconce is designed with a deeply regressed LED light source and a 35° cut-off angle that provide consistent glare-free, shadowless illumination. Both are backed by WAC Lighting's five-year warranty. WAClighting.com



Hayward Pool Products

New Universal Color-Logic is the first color-changing LED pool light to be UL-listed for safe installation in virtually any niche. These energy-efficient, long-lasting lights can be an easy retrofit for pools limited by old white incandescent lights. With no bulbs, filaments, color wheels or moving parts, the lights offer a choice of seven shows — ranging from a soothing, intimate retreat to a pulsating, nightclub-like experience. Users can capture any holiday with a choice of 10 fixed colors, such as Saint Patrick's Day green, Valentine's red or Independence Day red, white and blue. And with a Pro Logic controller, users can choose from 101 colors for nearly endless options. Hayward.com

Vista Professional Outdoor Lighting

Vista's 1500 Series Precision Illumination Control (PIC) features sharp cut-off LED optics and adjustable hot aiming for a customized illumination without glare. The adjustable optics allow the series to illuminate narrow forward throw requirements for stairways, or very wide forward throws for large pedestrian ingress and egress entries. Hot aiming provides a 30° adjustment range, with the maximum candela able to be placed from 25° to 55° below horizontal. With hot aiming, optics can be adjusted while installed and operational. VistaPro.com

continued on page 80



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continued from page 78

DESIGN/BUILD: CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT

Truck Bodies & Equipment Inc.

TBEI's next-generation Ox SuperDump features four-, six- or seven-axle configurations, increasing payloads up to 25 tons and 80,000 GVWR (in most states). With the multiple axle configurations, the Ox SuperDump distributes the weight over a much longer area, meeting payload restrictions throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. The Silent Drive Maxle air-suspension trailing axle is designed to carry the extra weight of the payload and ensure a smooth ride with stability and handling. The unit also is available with a wide range of time-saving, productivity-enhancing options, including air-retractable mud flaps, on-board weight scales, non-stick liners and more.

OxBodies.com/SuperDump



Caterpillar

The Cat 907H, the latest addition to the Cat Compact Wheel Loader range, fits between the 906H and 908H models. The 70-net hp model features a skid steer loader style coupler, auxiliary hydraulic system, Cat C3.4 diesel engine, two-speed hydrostatic drive, standard differential locks in both axles, parallel-lift Z-bar loader linkage and a high-visibility operator's station. Optional features — including high-flow hydraulics, ride control and speeder transmission — enhance the 907H's performance and versatility. The hydraulically actuated skid-steer-loader-type coupler expands the 907H's versatility and allows the machine to be integrated into existing small-equipment fleets. Standard auxiliary hydraulics, proportional third-function valve and continuous-flow capability provide a complete control package for work tools such as trenchers and stump grinders. Cat.com

John Deere

The new K-Series Backhoe Loaders are eight productive and efficient models (310K EP, 310K, 310SK, 310SKTC, 315SK, 410K, 410KTC, 710K) that build on the success of the popular J-Series. Two economical tractor loader models (210K EP, 210K) round out the K-Series and provide additional jobsite versatility. Powered by a certified IT4/ Stage III B John Deere PowerTech engine, the K-Series comes equipped with a five-speed transmission that allows top speeds of 25 mph when roading. In addition, a complete redesign of the cab ventilation now circulates cab air from front-to-back, directing airflow where operators need it the most. JohnDeere.com



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