

*continued from page 29*

When evaluating suppliers, identify offerings that will help you improve management of product use and inventory levels. Ask for special services such as “just in time” delivery—where the vendor holds your product until it’s needed at the job site. In the past, I personally worked to understand inventory levels on a monthly basis and changed systems so vendors held plant material until the product was needed. The results of the change in our procedure and recording and measuring data showed we were losing more than \$20,000 a year in dead plants and excess material usage.

Many companies balk at paying delivery fees, but the savings in lower inventory levels and production efficiency will more than make up for them. In one case, a supplier charged \$27 per direct job site delivery regardless of load size, including single items. Consider the savings from a commonplace practice: sending a \$19-per-hour crew foreman in a company truck about 20 miles round trip to pick up the part. Using delivery, savings is evident almost immediately, especially when you can combine loads.

Use of vendor-managed inventory (VMI) outsources the responsibility of your inventory levels to your suppliers. VMI entails suppliers visiting your site to take counts and place orders for you or by using a software program. With a

site-visit supplier, avoid giving them free rein of ordering inventory. Oversight is important and includes checking orders ready to be placed and comparing them to sold work, considering the season. Software-based systems remove this double check because they allow the supplier access to your sold orders and material need dates. VMI services are not widely offered, but it doesn’t hurt to ask, and it’s important to develop processes and procedures that best fit your company. Ask your vendors to provide the special services you need as partners who are concerned with your growth and bottom line. If suppliers are not open to partnering with you to help with your requirements, it’s time to move on.

### Improving processes

Improve internal processes to identify material needs specified by your estimating and sales staff. Work with the production staff to understand how and when materials will get to the job site so production workers aren’t idle. Weekly meetings between the production scheduling staff and purchasing department are critical for accurate timing and sequencing of a large project. Timing is important so suppliers can understand well in advance when best to schedule timed deliveries. Courtesy goes a long way with suppliers. Ensure the production staff understands each piece of the project so work isn’t duplicated. Con-



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## SUPPLY CHAIN

ducting a job walkthrough with designers/estimators can remove guesswork from making plans a reality. Sometimes plans don't tell the whole story. In one example, a blue stone sidewalk was changed twice because it wasn't laid out per the designer's mindset. The rework added an extra \$3,000 for labor and additional material.

Start measuring the performance of your supply chain, including responsiveness and reliability of orders placed with your vendors; inventory levels and inventory turnover; costs of material waste or theft; and customer satisfaction with the project's timeliness and quality. Having the proper software in place for your size company is important to simplify data collection and reporting. There are many great products available specifically for our industry.

In today's economy, better managing your supply chain is essential. Be aware of where you're spending your money and work to get costs under control. You will be surprised at what you can find in the process. **LM**

---

*Mours, principal of Mour Growth Consulting, is a former vice president of finance and operations for a landscape firm. Reach him at [bmours@mourgrowthconsulting.com](mailto:bmours@mourgrowthconsulting.com).*

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# LM REPORTS

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## TRUCKS, TRAILERS & ACCESSORIES



### VIA Motors

VIA won the Work Truck Show 2012 Green Award for its full-size, extended-range electric vehicle (eREV) work

trucks. Work trucks equipped with VIA's proprietary eREV powertrain are able to drive a majority of their daily work routes emission-free and entirely on electric power. They have up to 40 miles of all-electric range using lithium ion batteries and can drive unlimited additional miles using VIA's onboard electric generator or "range extender." The vehicles can be charged from a typical 110V household outlet overnight. In independent testing, VIA reports that its eREV pickup trucks have demonstrated up to 100 mpg in typical fleet driving. [VIAMotors.com](http://VIAMotors.com)

### Buyers Products

Buyers Products' landscape trailer accessory line is designed to use trailer bed space efficiently and keep your trailer organized and clutter-free. Lockable trimmer racks are available in two sizes for open trailers and one size for enclosed trailers. Designed to hold three trimmers, the trimmer racks feature an easy, snap-in design that only requires one-hand operation. The multi-rack can be used on either open or enclosed trailers and protects a variety of tools, including hedge trimmers, chainsaws or handheld blowers. Designed for open trailers, the EZ Gate tailgate lift assist reduces lifting effort of trailer gates by 90 percent, dramatically reducing the opportunity for injuries and fatigue. The gate assist can be easily installed on gates that weigh up to 180 lbs. [BuyersProducts.com](http://BuyersProducts.com)



### Firestone Industrial Products Co.

Ride-Rite air helper spring kits are available for 2012 Dodge Ram 2500/3500 trucks, both 2WD and 4WD models. The kit is designed to use air pressure to help maximize the truck's safe load carrying capacity, vehicle stability, ride quality and brake effectiveness. The system features individual inflation valves that allow for separate side-to-side or front-to-rear adjustment, which helps keep the vehicle level when carrying off-center loads and maintains ride quality under differing load conditions. The no-drill kit is designed to use the truck's factory holes and mount between its frame and axle. All the necessary components are included for an easy installation, which typically takes less than one hour. [Ride-Rite.com](http://Ride-Rite.com)

### Mean Green

Fleet managers report that because it eliminates the scrubbing required of other cleaners, Mean Green Industrial Strength Cleaner & Degreaser cuts cleaning time in half. It removes dirt, tar and road grime from vehicles and trailers and cleans and degreases equipment like chippers, stump grinders, augers, wood splitters and skid steer loaders and their attachments. It is also effective on concrete floors and driveways and asphalt, making it ideal for spot removal in the shop or on worksites. Mean Green can be used with pressure washers, and it cleans with no environmentally harmful solvents, the company says. [MeanGreenDegreaser.com](http://MeanGreenDegreaser.com)



### Cequent Consumer Products

The Reese Carry Power TransRACK Cargo Truck Rack is a "one-size-fits-all" solution for transporting long items that may not fit in a truck bed. Made of aircraft grade aluminum, TransRACK quickly installs without tools. Eight double lock clamps with stainless steel hardware hold the rack to the bed of the truck. Easy On crossbar clamps make installing accessories fast and convenient. An 800-lb. capacity and four movable load stops make carrying ladders, lumber or other long items a simple task. Accessories using the same double-lock clamp system include the TransRACK Conduit Carrier, TransRACK Trimmer Rack and TransRACK Tool Rack. [CequentConsumerProducts.com](http://CequentConsumerProducts.com)





## Titan Fuel Tanks

Titan's new cross-linked polyethylene fuel tank is gaining favor among Ford dealers and end-users, who have been battling fuel line contamination in 1999-2010 diesel-powered Ford F-350,

F-450 and F-550 cab and chassis vehicles and diesel-powered E-Series Vans. Titan's replacement tank is constructed of military-grade cross-linked polyethylene (XLHDPE) and is compatible with most bio-diesel fuel blends. Ford's original equipment steel tanks are lined with a protective coating that can break down when exposed to certain agents and additives associated with diesel and bio-diesel fuels. Once the tanks are in use, some fuel compositions can cause the steel tank linings to delaminate and shed flakes into the contents of the tank. The introduction of particulate matter into the fuel source ultimately contaminates the entire fuel path, causing pumps, filters and injectors to fail. Because the tank delamination problem is considered to be fuel-related, it is not covered under Ford's warranty policy, and once lining contamination is detected in the fuel system, all affected components must be replaced to bring qualified vehicles back into warranty compliance. Each Titan fuel tank comes with a limited five-year warranty.

[TitanFuelTanks.com](http://TitanFuelTanks.com)



## Briggs & Stratton

Briggs & Stratton Advanced Formula Fuel Treatment & Stabilizer, which keeps ethanol-formulated gas fresh in the tank for as long as three years, provides an easy and inexpensive solution to protect small gas engines from ethanol's potentially damaging effects. The fuel preservative protects any gasoline against chemical breakdown but is targeted at ethanol-blended fuels. The stabilizer combines a triple antioxidant formula with additional ingredients to protect the entire fuel system, fighting the harmful effects of water separation. Corrosion inhibitors form a protective barrier on metal parts to prevent rust and corrosion, while detergent ingredients help prevent gum and varnish build-up on engine parts. A metal deactivator works to stop the aggressive chemical reactions caused by dissolved metal ions in the fuel. It's available in 4-, 8-, 16- and 32-oz. plastic bottles. [BriggsAndStratton.com](http://BriggsAndStratton.com)

## CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT



## Caterpillar

A Cat skid-steer loader delivers lower owning and operating costs, thanks to a standard foot throttle pedal and on-demand cooling fan. The new Cat D Series models are powerful machines for heavy-duty hardscape jobs. They feature the industry-leading Intelligent Leveling system, providing dual direction self-leveling, return-to-dig and work tool positioner.

[Catresourcecenter.com/landscaping](http://Catresourcecenter.com/landscaping)

## Takeuchi-US

The all-new TL10 (pictured) and TL12 track loaders feature EPA Tier 4i-compliant engines, along with an exclusive Eco Mode function designed to reduce fuel consumption. New selectable auxiliary work modes allow the operator to fine-tune the auxiliary hydraulic output to three specific attachment settings for reduced downtime on job sites. The TL10 has an operating weight of 10,318 lbs., a tip load of 6,867 lbs. (7,793 lbs., with optional counterweight), and an improved rated operating capacity of 2,403 lbs. (2,723 lbs. with optional counterweight). The TL12 has an operating weight of 11,618 lbs., tip load of 8,102 lbs. (9,315 lbs. with optional counterweight).

[Takeuchi-US.com](http://Takeuchi-US.com)



## Massey Ferguson

The new GC1700 Series sub-compact tractor includes four models that replace the previous GC range. The GC1705 and GC1710 TLB are rated 22.5 gross hp, and the GC1715 and GC1720 TLB are rated at 24.5 gross hp. All four models feature a low-rated engine rpm that reduces vibration and noise to improve engine life and decrease fuel consumption. A wide-open, clutter-free platform allows the operator to move on and off the tractor with ease, and offers plenty of space for natural leg movement. [MasseyFerguson.com](http://MasseyFerguson.com)

## Bobcat

Seven new 500 frame-sized skid-steer and compact track loaders feature extensive feature upgrades, including increased visibility, a more comfortable cab and easier serviceability to maximize job site efficiency. All seven models began limited production in September, with full availability at dealerships in January. The new machines



include the S510, S530, S550, S570 and S590 skid-steer loaders, and the T550 and T590 compact track loaders. The S510, S550 and T550 feature a radius lift path, giving operators the reach and visibility they require for dump-

ing over a wall, backfilling or loading flatbed trucks. The S530, S570, S590 and T590 models feature a vertical lift path, providing operators the ability to lift heavier loads higher, making it easier to clear high-sided truck boxes and hoppers, as well as placing pallets loaded with heavy material. The M-Series vertical lift path machines feature an increased lift height over the equivalent K-Series models. *Bobcat.com*

## Case Construction Equipment

The new 570N XT loader/tool carrier offers enhanced fuel economy and productivity, along with superior breakout force and reach. It achieves Tier 4 Interim certification through the use of cooled exhaust gas recirculation (CEGR) technology and a diesel particulate filter. The machine features a Case turbocharged engine rated at 78 net hp that delivers a minimum 5 percent increase in fuel efficiency and faster response times than previous models while meeting current emission standards. It

boosts productivity and efficiency by retaining more material during the dump cycle. To help reduce material spillage during roading, Case offers the 570N XT with optional Ride



Control. The three-point hitch with variable-flow hydraulics delivers greater precision and lift capacities. An optional hydraulic power takeoff and dual tilt on the box blade provide more versatility and ditching capabilities. Its operating weight is 12,898 lbs., bucket breakout force is 9,271 lbs. and hinge pin height is 11 ft., 3 in. The machine's front loader features an optional hydraulic quick coupler to easily connect and disengage buckets and other attachments. *CaseCE.com*

## JCB

JCB has upgraded its 1CX product—the



smallest member of its backhoe loader family—with a new appearance, longer loader arms, an extending dipper option, servo controls and a power management system. Features include a revised cab roof trim, improved working lights and sturdy electrical switchgear. The new optional loader arms are 4 in. longer to provide easier loading of site dump trucks. At the rear, an extending dipper option adds up to 20 in. to the digging envelope, taking maximum dig depth to 10 ft. A new Power Management System (PMS) improves performance, reducing engine lug down as the machine starts to dig and increasing power when driving into a pile with the front bucket. Optional Servo controls for the backhoe provide the operator with greater control and no need to lean forward when working the rear excavator. Not only is the system more productive, it removes the control lever post, creating more space for the operator, particularly around the feet. Customers can choose between SAE or ISO control pattern by using the optional changeover switch, to suit the individual operator and ensure rapid driver acceptance. *JCB.com*

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## PLANT VARIETIES & SUPPLIES



### Hortech

Hortech introduces LiveScreen, a two-sided, mobile version of LiveWall, the living wall system that transforms ordinary walls into vertical green landscapes. Four models in the series are constructed in a waterproof aluminum frame: LiveScreen XL is 6 ft. by 4 ft., with five tiers of planter boxes; LiveScreen 4S is the same size, with four tiers, and adds shelves on the bottom of each side for growing plants in containers. LiveScreen Patio is 65 in. by 32 in., with three tiers and bottom shelves for container plants. LiveScreen Access is 5.5 ft. by 4 ft., with three tiers, and facilitates wheelchair accessibility. Every model is available with optional automated irrigation components and a hose timer.

[LiveWall.com/products/livescreen](http://LiveWall.com/products/livescreen)



### Kieft Seed

Bred by Kieft Seed, 'Cheyenne Spirit' produces a mix of colors, from rich purple, pink, red and orange tones to lighter yellows, creams and white. This compact, flowering *Echinacea* hybrid features well-branched, durable plants. It does not require a lot of water and offers a wide range of uses from the perennial border, in a mass landscape planting, in a butterfly garden or as a cut flower. This 2013 All-America Selections Flower Award-winner won't topple in wind and

rain like many *Echinacea*, the judges found. No deadheading is needed, and the flowers bloom from mid-summer through fall. [KieftSeeds.com](http://KieftSeeds.com)

### Ball Horticultural

Extreme heat, humidity and drought are no match for Ball Horticultural's AngelMist Dark Rose Improved *Angelonia*, a new variety for 2013. Dark Rose Improved has outstanding true rose color and better habit to match this series of summer snapdragon. Hardy to 32 degrees F, it blooms in late spring and summer, with a height ranging from 4 in. to 10 in. and a spread of 10 in. to 20 in. Its upright habit is equally at home in groundcover, baskets or containers. [BallHort.com](http://BallHort.com)



### Syngenta Flowers

'Aideen Red Fire' from Syngenta Flowers is a decorative, easy-to-grow bushy perennial that prefers full sun but thrives with even a half-day of direct sunshine. Hardy in USDA Zones 4-8, this mum will grow between 18 in. and 24 in. tall and should be planted that distance apart. It offers vibrant red color from late summer through fall. [SyngentaFlowers.com](http://SyngentaFlowers.com)

### Dümmen

'Great Balls of Fire' exhibits all the favorable characteristics of ivy geraniums but is highly heat tolerant, according to the breeder. Dümmen has actively selected for this trait over a three-year period with trials in Florida, Texas and North Carolina. Because of this, oedema and foliar bleaching—common problems for ivy geraniums in warm climates—are not an issue. Ball-shaped, double flowers in a velvety texture are nestled in strong foliage, with good branching. Colors include deep rose, burgundy, dark red, merlot, pink, white, blue and lavender. [DummenUSA.com](http://DummenUSA.com)



### Takii & Co. Ltd.

'South Pacific,' a 2013 All-America Selections Flower Award winner, presents

showy, 4-in., scarlet flowers that bloom all summer long. This F1 hybrid canna grows up to 5 ft. tall, boasting about six stems per plant and delivering larger flowers than other seed cannas, according to Takii & Co. Ltd. Flowers appear early, bloom consistently all summer and withstand a light frost. As with other cannas, it tolerates wet conditions so it can be used as a pond border or in other similar growing conditions. This perennial can be treated as an annual by northern gardeners. [Takii.co.jp/english](http://Takii.co.jp/english)

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## Paint it green

Turf painting could be a solution for customers who want a quick fix.

**M**ANY HOMEOWNERS ACROSS the country this year saw their turf die or turn yellow thanks to scorching temperatures and unceasing drought. Some people looking for a solution turned to lawn painting as a quicker, cheaper fix than complete lawn overhauls.

Brian Howland, founder and president of Arizona Lawn Painting in Phoenix, runs this business as a part-time gig to supplement his full-time sales job for a digital printing firm.

"There's not a lot of repeat business with this type of work," he says, noting it makes a nice part-time service. "A lot of my clients are people who have rental properties and just don't want to deal with the hassle of renovating their yard or homeowners who are about to be fined by their HOA because of yellow grass. But I do have a few regular clients with larger properties who find this to be a convenient solution to their problems."

On average, Howland charges \$200 for up to 3,000 square feet of property and also may charge a travel fee, depending on the customer's location and travel time. A typical yard takes him about an hour to paint, but obstacles in the yard can involve more time and therefore drive up the fee. If there are a lot of items that have to be sprayed around, the job gets more complicated.

"The more things in their yard, the more the price goes up," he says. "The green paint is permanent, so you have to be very cognizant about where you're spraying it."

Howland says customers seem to appreciate that it's a relatively inexpensive service that offers a quick solution. "The truth is, it's not really something you need, and it only takes me an hour, so I think it's worth my while to make somewhere around \$200," Howland says. "It's a nice little side business."

There isn't a lot of equipment involved, so Howland says the investment in a lawn painting business is relatively low. Any company that has a lawn or pest control division may already have the appropriate spray equipment; lawn colorant is the only other material required.

Howland uses a product called Natural Green Grass Patch. He buys direct, but he



Brian Howland charges about \$200 for a 3,000-square-foot yard, which takes him about an hour to paint.

says paint can be sourced from landscape supply distributors or websites.

Howland went through some trial and error to find the best spray tank to lay the paint down evenly. He tried an orchard sprayer and some other equipment, but he was fortunate to have friends in the pest control business who gave him an old spray tank, which he says has been the best solution he's found.

"I've probably invested about \$500 of my own money for materials like hosing, fittings and wiring, so it's certainly not a big investment," Howland says. "The lawn paint is the biggest ongoing investment, and it's not that expensive."

Howland used to have his vehicle partially wrapped, which solicited a lot of calls, but he says most of his business now comes from Internet leads. He says many people don't know what lawn painting is, but they find him online when trying to find a quick solution for a dead lawn. Howland says he is the only professional lawn painter in his region.

There's nothing like making a customer happy, Howland says. "You can take a lawn that was completely yellow and turn it into this lush green turf in an hour," he says. "I just recently did a job where the customer walked out after I was done and all he could say was, 'Wow.' That definitely made me feel good about what I do."

Casey Payton is a freelance writer with seven years' experience covering landscaping.

### » SERVICE SNAPSHOT

**COMPANY:** Arizona Lawn Painting

**HEADQUARTERS:** Phoenix

**WHY LAWN PAINTING:** An article about a guy doing lawn painting in California caught Howland's attention. Having recently quit a job, he was looking for a way to make money, and the business idea made sense.

**INVESTMENT:** A spray tank system plus lawn paint



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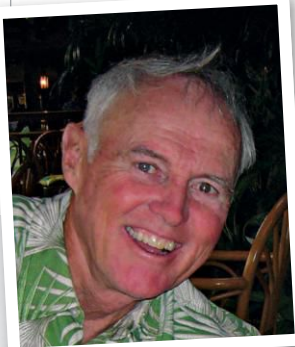


# MY BIGGEST MISTAKE

LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY » BY CASEY PAYTON



## Balancing old and new is challenging for a longstanding Montana firm.



Jerry Cashman

**COMPANY:**

Cashman Nursery & Landscaping

**HEADQUARTERS:**

Bozeman, Mont.

**SERVICES:** 50% nursery/garden center; 50% landscape design/build

**CLIENTELE:** 65% residential; 35% residential

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 50

**2011 REVENUE:** \$3.4 million

**PROJECTED REVENUE:** \$3.6 million

**W**ITH A LONG-STANDING history in Bozeman, Mont., the family-owned Cashman Nursery & Landscaping is well known for its industry experience. Jerry and Jan Cashman built the present nursery building and landscaping business in 1976, but the original Cashman Nursery dates back to 1898 in Owatonna, Minn. Being a long-established business has many benefits, but owner Jerry Cashman points out it also can pose some challenges. Keeping the business looking and feeling up to date has been the biggest challenge of all, he says.

Cashman has on staff some longtime workers. Though veteran employees can be great assets, challenges arise with an aging workforce. Some employees have been with Cashman for two decades or more, and as they've aged, their productivity levels have declined.

"Obviously, an older employee might not be able to lift heavy items or work 50 hours a week in the spring, when we really need everyone to work overtime," says Cashman. "That can be a business problem. You come to accept less productivity from employees at the highest pay levels simply because of their seniority."

Cashman says it's a problem that a lot of businesses probably face—not

just in the Green Industry but in many other industries as well. It's just a fact of life that age can naturally decrease productivity, and Cashman admits he's gotten complacent with longtime employees who may not be producing what they used to. It can lead to some tough conversations.

"One of the biggest challenges is at our year-end review when I have to talk about salary with an employee that's been with me a long time," he says. "I may have to tell them they're not getting a raise or may even have to be paid less. It's just one of those tough parts about business."

One solution, says Cashman, is to bring in more young help to supplement the older, long-term employees. While he wants to remain loyal to longtime employees and won't replace them, he also is willing to bring in some new help.

"New people are always coming on board and bringing new ideas and more energy," he says. "Those are the types of new employees you want to seek out because it's important to have a good balance between senior, well-experienced employees and fresh, eager employees. A balance between the two will hopefully bring you a combination of both good productivity and quality."

### Image upgrade

In keeping "fresh," Cashman says the longtime

business also has had to focus on keeping the image of the company "crisp and clean."

"In other words, 20 years ago our truck paint and logos might have looked brand new, but as time goes on everything stays the same and things start to look tired," Cashman says. "Then you see new businesses start up in the area and all of their stuff looks crisp, clean and fresh and it gives them an advantage."

Cashman hopes community members appreciate the fact that the business is well established. He also hopes they'll equate that to experience and knowledge.

"We hope that some people might understand we've been in the industry a long time and they won't expect us to look brand new," Cashman says. "We hope that they'll appreciate the fact we've been around for a while. But even if you don't look brand new, you still have to look crisp and clean. You have to keep your image up to date."

The business recently changed its logo and also produced new signage to help achieve that goal. Cashman adds: "We haven't changed the logos on all our vehicles yet—that's our next step—but we have changed a lot of our signage with a fresh new logo. We hope that making these kinds of changes will help us continue to compete with newer companies."

Casey Payton is a freelance writer with seven years' experience writing about landscaping.