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VOL. 52, ISSUE 7

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Photo courtesy of McKay Lighting

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ONLINE NOW

» LANDSCAPEMANAGEMENT.NET

On the Web

LM website has a new look

Last month we mentioned here that our blog has moved to its new home, LandscapeManagement.net. Now, that home has enhanced its look with a new eye-catching makeover. Our website's new design showcases exclusive content geared toward your business needs—and it's more user friendly and interactive than ever before. Log on now to explore the changes!



SEEN ON TWITTER

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@SuziMcCoyGMG: Always. Grt #PR Lessons from Paula Deen: How What You Say Can Damage Your Brand <http://entm.ag/1cfiy2z> by @JimJosephExp via @entmagazine

@ShaunKanary: It's cool to work for a company like @WeedProOhio that organizes #CommunityService projects to give back

@Bayer4CropsUS: Female farm operators are more likely to own the land that they operate. Interesting stat from @usda_nass <http://bit.ly/15ytkiL>

@ambidextrousinc: RT @LandscapeMgmt Impatiens disease could encourage diversity in landscape plantings <http://sbne.ws/r/dqYa>

BLOG

FROM THE LM BLOG

» LandscapeManagement.net

The blog is abuzz this month with lots of valuable tips from *Landscape Management* contributors. Rich Goldstein talks to Jody Shilan about what it takes to build a million-dollar company, consultant Jeffrey Scott explains how recruiting is like marketing, and we share important HR best practices from consultants Ed Laflamme and Bill Arman.

WEB EXTRA

Visit LandscapeManagement.net »
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» Learn about how researchers say tree loss due to Emerald Ash Borer infestations has negative health effects, including cardiovascular and lower respiratory diseases.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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In the long run

In late spring I traveled to Naperville, Ill., to see how that city has put in place an aggressive program to save its 16,000 municipal ash trees from Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). (See page 25 for more details on that trip.)

In addition to hearing about (and seeing with my own two eyes) healthy, thriving treated ash trees literally across the street from trees that are dead and tagged for removal, I heard a story that stood out to me about how Green Industry professionals should be getting involved in the fight against EAB.

M.D. Skeet, a certified arborist and district manager for The Care of Trees, told the story of a few ash trees lining the property of his favorite sub shop. Being an unabashed tree lover who's also on the front lines of the effort to save trees from EAB, Skeet pointed out the failing ash trees to the facility manager, who explained her landscaper handles all of her exterior needs. Skeet kindly explained the trees were dying and may be able to be saved through insecticide treatments—or else they eventually will need to be removed due to safety reasons. Again, the manager said the landscaper's the expert and hadn't mentioned a thing.

Now, Skeet knows there is one of two things happening here: The contractor is either oblivious to the fact that he has an EAB problem on his hands or he knows about the ailing trees and doesn't want to alert his customer to the fact that the trees are dying on his watch.

It's a shame, Skeet explains, for a few reasons. These trees are likely going to be removed because they'll be too far gone by the time the landscaper recognizes or addresses the problem. These trees are some of the only greenery providing shade to the property. Also, it's a totally missed opportunity for the landscape company, not to mention a disservice to the customer.

Had the contractor recognized the EAB-infested ash trees, it could have recommended management options (removal or treatment). Depending on the company's capabilities, it may have made an additional sale. At the very least it could have referred the business to a tree care or tree removal firm. The bottom line is the landscaper isn't doing his client justice by either missing or ignoring the problem. The problem is, instead of doing what's ultimately right, too many contractors are short sighted and fear they'll lose an account.

Do you have a network of professionals in related fields you can rely on when you face a situation that's not in your wheelhouse? All three Green Industry executives interviewed for the cover story (page 14) talk about how their hyper-focused businesses thrive thanks to strategic partnerships with like-minded professionals.

Don't be ignorant or negligent like the landscape company in Skeet's story. Find others you can align with and agree to trade leads on a handshake or contractual basis. Whatever works for you, as long as it's best for the customer in the long run.

Landscape Management

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Smart Irrigation Month ramps up

Manufacturers lend support for the annual initiative with month-long promotions. BY BETH GERACI

Irrigation companies are ramping up their water conservation messages again this July in honor of Smart Irrigation Month, an annual Irrigation Association (IA) initiative launched in 2005 to tout the benefits of efficient water use during the heart of summer.

The association encourages companies in every sector of the industry, including manufacturers, dealers, distributors and contractors, to educate customers about efficient water use and offer solutions to today's water challenges.

Smart Irrigation Month "provides a platform for the entire industry to promote the importance of smart irrigation products, practices and services and grow demand for them," said Kathleen Markey, marketing director for the IA. "It's important for us to increase public awareness of water use efficiency, especially during the summer but also year-round."

Irrigation equipment suppliers are on board for the initiative again this year, including Ewing Irrigation, which has created sales tools to enable contractors to engage clients in conversations about smart irrigation. The tools include a flyer

showing property owners how to reduce their outdoor water use; an irrigation inspection form; and a proposal form. The customizable forms are free to download on Ewing's website, www.Ewing1.com.

The company also is commemorating the month with an irrigation photo contest and Monday deals on water-saving products.

Hunter Industries is hosting a Smart Irrigation Month promo because "we are strong supporters of the Smart Irrigation Month initiative, and our goal at Hunter is to help raise awareness of smart watering practices," said Troy Leezy, marketing manager for Hunter Industries and a Smart Irrigation Month committee member.

Log on to www.HunterIndustries.com for a collection of educational resources about intelligent water use, or upload a photo showing how you're marketing Smart Irrigation Month for a chance to win a weekly prize of \$250—or a trip to the Irrigation Association show in Austin, Texas (Nov. 4-8).



Ewing Irrigation offers a slew of smart irrigation downloads for contractors.

NHLA swears in 2013-2014 board

The National Hispanic Leadership Alliance (NHLA) has officially named its new board of directors, which the organization said was chosen to represent the Hispanic community's diversity.

Replacing Jesus "Chuy" Medrano as president is Raul Berrios, president of Rulyscapes in Centreville, Va.

A founding member of the NHLA, Berrios has concrete plans for his two-year tenure. "Our members are the backbone of the organization," he said. "So the main goal will be to increase the number of members as much as I can."



Berrios also will focus on improving the access members have to job training, whether it be through on-site support, webinars or group classes. "I've been part of the association for a long time, and I'm especially excited about focusing on workforce development for our members and their organizations," he said.

Rounding out the new board are past president Medrano; president-elect Juan Torres; secretary Pam Berrios; and treasurer Veronica de Hoyos. Joining the board of directors later this year are Arnulfo Lopez of Nature Safe Landcare, Gresham, Ore., and Jose Cantu of Saw House Inc. in Houston.

Rain Bird is getting in on the action, as well, with an initiative called "Project PRS" to build awareness about the water-saving benefits of pressure-regulating sprays and rotors. High or fluctuating water pressure is a common problem, the company states, and one that can waste water (and money) by increasing an irrigation system's flow rate. Log on to www.facebook.com/RainBirdCorp to learn more and keep up with the company's July promotions.

Also showing support for the month-long initiative are state governments. Markey is encouraged by the growing number of them promoting July as Smart Irrigation Month through official proclamations—the number stands at seven today, with cities such as Denver and Oklahoma City participating, as well.

"The fact that we have these state governments supporting smart irrigation highlights its importance," Markey said.

MAILBOX



Taking it slow

I noticed Beth Geraci's article about Cinque Terre. ["Hear Me Out," June]. I spent a few days there on our trip to Italy two weeks ago, so the timing of your article was an interesting coincidence ... Unfortunately, stopping to "smell the roses" is not the American way but I won't soon forget the trip and how nice it was to be in a place where things move just a little bit slower.

John Butts

*Siesta Key Landscape, Inc.
Sarasota, Fla.*



Aspire to inspire

I just read "B the change" [May cover story] on [landscape management.net](http://landscapemanagement.net) ... It's very inspiring!

Lisa Bailey

*Owner, BayLeaf Studio
Maynard, Mass.
via LinkedIn*

Thumbs up

I think you're doing a great job with the magazine.

Rick Girard

*CEO, Girard Environmental Services
Sanford, Fla.*

Share your thoughts by emailing mpalmieri@northcoastmedia.net.

Immigration reform passes Senate

But will the House take up the legislation? BY BETH GERACI

The U.S. Senate on June 27 passed bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform by a vote of 68-32. And if the legislation ever sees the light of day, it will impact the landscaping industry.

The long-debated Senate provisions would create a path to citizenship for the estimated 11 million individuals living illegally in the U.S., add 20,000 border security agents at the U.S.-Mexico border, create a mandatory E-verify system and make minor changes to the H-2B guest-worker visa program, among other things. H-2B changes would make returning H-2B workers exempt from the program's 66,000 annual cap through 2018, require employers to pay incoming and outgoing transportation costs for workers, change the way wages are calculated and require employers to pay a new \$500 processing fee.

But immigration reform is slow to be entertained by House leaders, who've said they will not take up the Senate bill at all. "Getting a bill through the Republican-controlled House will be a challenge," said Gregg Robertson, government relations consultant for the Pennsylvania Nursery & Landscape Association. "No House Republican has taken up [immigration reform] as Sen. Rubio and Sen. John McCain have done."

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BEST PRACTICES

BRUCE WILSON

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

Disaster plan dos and don'ts

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is predicting an active hurricane season this year, with more than a dozen big storms and a couple major hurricanes statistically overdue to hit vulnerable regions of the country.

After Superstorm Sandy, the violent tornadoes that recently devastated parts of Oklahoma and the wind-whipped wildfires testing those living in the arid Southwest, reports indicate we're still not out of the woods.

As more and more towns and cities continue to be impacted by severe weather, many of us are feeling that seasonal weather patterns—and their higher than normal, lower than normal temperatures—are upside down. And with an early hurricane season already upon us, we need to batten down the hatches in more ways than one.

While we can't prevent natural disasters from striking, it helps if we have an emergency plan in place so we can help others and ourselves get back to business as quickly as possible.

Here are some Dos and Don'ts for protecting your business and your customers' interests in the event of a natural catastrophe:

DO:

- ▶ Be prepared. Make emergency preparedness an integral part of your strategic operating plan.
- ▶ Create a vulnerability map. Determine the most likely threats to your business and your customer's business, and identify the consequences and what ifs.
- ▶ Create an up-to-date list of priorities and identify ways to address risks to your business and your customer's business. If you're a national company or have multiple branches, mobilize nearby branches to move into the affected areas to support the local branch.
- ▶ Reach out to neighboring contractors for help. You could take this to a new level by reaching out to your customers in advance (where you have advanced warning) and let them know you are setting up this emergency response on their behalf.
- ▶ Reach out to your customers a season early

and team with them to orchestrate partner response teams that combine resources.

- ▶ Consider a fee-based service that would allow you to stage equipment and other resources at their sites to facilitate a more immediate response.

- ▶ Document with pictures, videos, etc., and note the efforts you are making. This will come in handy for insurance, risk management or other property-related clean-up issues.

- ▶ Get your billing done promptly before customers forget how bad things were.

- ▶ Communicate before, during and after the event. Let your customers and employees know what your plans are and what to expect.

- ▶ Identify alternative suppliers in case a major disaster affects your vendors. Get your contract terms worked out up front so you are not left scrambling.

- ▶ Make sure your contact list and address book is up to date in case you or your customers are working from temporary offices.

- ▶ Protect your data. Back up your systems and make sure you can get access to critical information. This will help both your business and your customer's business in case servers, systems and technology infrastructure go down.

- ▶ Create a personnel policy plan. Invest in cross training so your staff can take over critical functions if employees can't get to work or are otherwise affected.

- ▶ Review your insurance and risk management policies and ensure they are up to date.

- ▶ Create a crisis management "chain of command" team responsible for protocols and procedures in the event of an emergency.

DON'T:

- ▶ Ever price gouge, exploit tragedy or take advantage of the situation.
- ▶ Reach out to new customers without first taking care of existing customers.
- ▶ Put your employees in harm's way.
- ▶ Bite off more than you can chew.

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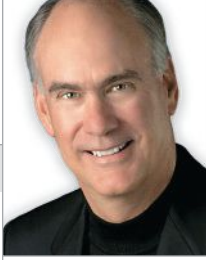
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THE BENCHMARK

FRANK ROSS

The author is owner-manager of 3PG Consulting. Reach him at frank@3PGConsulting.com.

Focus on the right stuff

In the last several months in this space, Jeff Harkness, Kevin Kehoe and I have written about sales performance, margin generation (a sign of pricing and productivity) and, of course, my favorite, net profit.

Why net profit, you ask? Well, in my mind there are two reasons we are in business: profit and fun.

Profit is our scorecard and the fuel for our lifeblood—cash flow. And, fun...that's the fire in the belly, the passion that keeps us doing what we do 24/7. If we don't enjoy it, we shouldn't be doing it!

And my point is? We're at the mid-year mark for most of us outdoor contractors. When was the last time you checked how you were progressing toward your annual profit goal?

You do have an annual profit goal, don't you?

Have you generated your mid-year financial statements? Are they generated by profit center (each type of work you perform)? Have you compared the mid-year performance to your budget? You do have an annual budget, spread by month, don't you?

So, how do you measure up?

If you don't know, that means you do not have a scorecard for the most important financial standard in any of our businesses—net profit.

If you don't trust what you see, that means that you don't have an effective information system. Either way you're flying blind and what net profits you have will only materialize because you're lucky.

I play golf, so I know all about lucky. I'd much rather be lucky than good—wins every time. But, in business, luck is what we make for ourselves. In business, we have to be good to succeed.

When we discussed profit performance for 80 odd of the industry's best and brightest companies, we saw that in our sampling, average levels of profitability on revenues of between \$5 million and \$45 million ranged between 8 percent and 12 percent. Not bad, though I'm certain each one of those companies would like to improve upon that performance.

So, how did you stack up to that "standard?" Do you see any room for improvement? Thought so.

Committing to net profit

Here's a test for you. Take a look at the average amount of profit percentage you put on each job you bid last year. At the end of the year, how much profit did you make? Is your year-end net profit percentage the same as what you put on jobs, or is there a disconnect?

For many of us there is a disconnect. Why? Because profit simply isn't something we track. It's not a focus.

Statistician and consultant W. Edwards Deming said it best: "If we do not track it, we cannot control it."

Truer words have never been spoken.

So, here's where we start. I want:

1. A commitment from you that net profit is the most important financial standard you have in your company. It's not sales, it isn't margin—it's the bottom line: net profit.
2. You to realign your internal information systems to focus on how you're performing on the bottom line by profit center.
3. You to commit to generating an annual budget by profit center that's spread by month so you can track how you're performing each month.
4. Your budget to be flexible enough so you can reforecast the coming months at will.
5. You to have a comprehensive estimating system that defines the three primary financial elements of any proposal: direct costs, overhead and profit.
6. You to have a job-tracking system that tells you where you're making profits and where you aren't and indicate how you can fix the problem areas.
7. You to give your principle managers specific and measurable financial goals.
8. You to build an internal system of information and reporting that enables you to report back to your managers how they're doing, hold them accountable and coach them on how to reach their goals.

So, you see, maximizing profits isn't hard, but it's not easy. If you commit, if you focus on profit, if you build your systems, if you involve your people, profits will come.