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JANUARY 2014  
VOL 53, ISSUE 1



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## facebook FEATURE

### QUESTION OF THE WEEK

**What's your New Year's resolution for your business? How will you achieve it?**

- » **Matt Dingeldein:** We will be streamlining the systems we put in place in 2013: Budget-driven estimating, better job tracking, automated e-billing, and the like!
- » **John Shea:** Receipt organization. Made envelopes tonight for each month.
- » **Jake Zappy Achterberg:** Stay firm with my prices! Can't drop prices just to get the job. Need to make PROFIT.
- » **Terry Delany:** As a leader, I refuse to listen to the "negative committee" that sometimes holds meetings in my head. My team deserves a confident leader.

### SEEN ON TWITTER

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- @ADLandscaping1: RT @LandscapeMgmt NY landscaper finds \$1M winning lotto ticket in the leaves. ow.ly/s9ALQ
- @BobcatCompany: What devices do you use? MT @LandscapeMgmt: Survey says landscape professionals favor #iPads over any other tablets. ow.ly/i/48v1z
- @CompostCrusader: RT @GreggRobertson opines on the upswing in government regulation of invasive plants and its effect on landscape pros. ow.ly/sltFm

### WEB EXTRAS Visit [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) » Click on Web Extras

- To get a taste of Weed Man's business plan and procedures (from page 16):**
  - » Get direction on setting reachable goals with Weed Man's goal-setting worksheet.
  - » View hiring evaluation sheets for managers and technicians.
  - » Take business-planning pointers from a breakdown of the company's budgeting processes.
  - » Download an office checklist of daily, weekly and monthly tasks.
- For more on, "How to manage your online reputation" (page 22):**
  - » Reference Lewis Landscape Services' settlement agreement to cover your back from clients who retaliate via online reviews.
  - » Learn how to ask clients to post positive reviews online.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

MARISA PALMIERI EDITOR

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# Frequency illusion

**H**ave you ever had one of those days or weeks where multiple bits of information—all with the same message—seem to materialize out of thin air, like they're screaming, "Hey, you! Pay attention to this!"

It feels like fate, but it's really just a matter of the brain's ability to recognize and call attention to patterns. It's called frequency illusion or the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon.

This recently happened to me. I'm taking the message as a cue to improve the way we do some things around here at *Landscape Management* (I won't bore you with the details of the magazine production process) and the way I do some things at home (paying bills, cleaning the house—also boring, I know).

What's not boring for a business owner, I'm sure, is operating an unsystemized business. In fact, if you're in this camp, it's probably downright chaotic and draining for you and for your employees. As for your clients? We probably don't even want to know what they think about your erratic procedures.

This topic—the disorder caused by a lack of standard operating procedures—is the one that's been following me around all week.

First, I came across this quote from legendary process improvement expert W. Edwards Deming: "If you can't describe what you're doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing."

Interesting, I thought, and true. *But wait, that sounds a lot like the message from the cover story I'm finishing up on*

*the Weed Man USA way: Start with a solid plan and create systems to support it.*

Then the other day, when I was refamiliarizing myself with the tenants of *The E-Myth* in preparation for the February issue of *LM*, I got that not-quite-déjà-vu-but-still-kind-of-strange feeling that comes when you can't avoid a piece of information.

The concept that seemed to be hitting me over the head became clear: Business systems and processes breed competency, structure and scalability—and, in turn, less stress and more profits.

Although this idea seems fundamental, apparently it's not.

*Landscape Management* research shows as many as 40 percent of Green Industry firms don't make an annual budget. The Benchmark columnist Frank Ross cites a study showing less than 10 percent of construction contractors plan out their years compared to 80 percent of manufacturers. Pair those facts with various research revealing anywhere from half to 80 percent of small businesses fail within the first few years, and you get the picture: Many companies, in the landscape industry and otherwise, are flying by the seats of their pants.

If you're not currently operating this way, congratulations. You're probably a recovering pants-seat flyer, aren't you?

If you are currently improvising your business as you go, let my case of frequency illusion—and lessons shared throughout this issue—serve as the catalyst to get your company's process-development program in place. Otherwise, you risk leaving your growth to fate.

# Landscape Management

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## Certified Wildlife Landscaping Professional program launches

The National Wildlife Federation aims to certify 300 Green Industry pros by the end of the year. BY MARISA PALMIERI

**N**ational Wildlife Federation (NWF) launched its Certified Wildlife Landscaping Professional (CWLP) designation late last year as an offshoot of its Certified Wildlife Habitat, Schoolyard Habitat and Community Wildlife Habitat programs. The new program certifies landscape professionals who commit to supporting ecologically sound and wildlife-friendly methods of landscaping.

"We wanted to bring together our expertise and couple that with the landscaping professionals' skills and expertise to combine for a true certification program for them where they participate in a training program," said Eliza Russell, NWF's director of education.

The impetus for the program was two-fold, she said: 1) Demand from its existing habitat program participants looking for expert help, and 2) Demand from landscape professionals asking for guidance on and recognition for setting their businesses apart from an environmental standpoint.

About 25 landscape professionals were certified as CWLPs in 2013. Some of them worked with NWF to test the program during its eight-month-long development phase. NWF hopes to grow the number of certifications to 300 by the end of 2014.

Ben Bowen, landscape manager for Ross NW Watergardens in Portland, Ore., is one of those pilot participants.

"One of the things I like about the program is it's very focused," he said. "It's not something that takes a huge investment of time or money to get involved in, but has some real benefits."

The advantage

Bowen names is the credibility gained by being associated with NWF and the ability to promote the certification on its website and via social media.

"I'm here in Portland, Ore., where this sort of thing is very important," he said. "I realize in some parts of the country, the (environmental) emphasis isn't there yet, but everywhere people are becoming so much more aware of the impact we have on the world around us. There's a little investment with time and money with this program, but I think it's one that would pay off for a lot of companies."

### Getting certified

To become certified, landscape professionals complete 18 to 20 hours of online, self-paced training about wildlife habitat elements, native plants and more. The process also includes submitting documentation (plant lists, design, etc.) that emphasize how the company's approach "improves the larger ecosystem, benefits wildlife and enhances their client's experience with nature," according to the NWF's website. The training



culminates in a test with an essay. The first year certification fee is \$150 and it's \$200 to renew in subsequent years.

NWF worked with the Ecological Landscaping Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Association of Professional Landscape Designers to develop its certification requirements.

Once professionals are certified, they're entitled to use marketing materials provided by NWF, such as web and print badges, a listing and profile page on NWF's website and access to more training.

Bowen noted his website received some traffic from the NWF site listing, but he hasn't yet landed a job directly from there. "We've had the badge on our website for a few months and had people who've commented on it," he said. "It's caught their eye."

Though any landscape professionals may apply to participate, the "sweet spot" for the program right now is landscape designers and installers, Russell said, noting the training reflects that focus. "We do know there are probably going to be more tweaks," she said. "And we need to learn more about the lawn care side of the industry."



# AmericanHort debuts

**A**mericanHort, the Green Industry's new trade association, formally began Jan. 1, following the closing of the consolidation of the American Nursery & Landscape Association (ANLA) and OFA—The Association of Horticulture Professionals Dec. 31. The more than two-year effort to bring the groups together was initiated by the volunteer leadership of the legacy organizations. OFA and ANLA members have been automatically enrolled in AmericanHort.

"We will not forget the past as we rapidly move toward the future," said Michael Geary, president and CEO of AmericanHort. "We will continue the legacy of providing innovative educa-

tion, industry promotion, developing consumer and professional markets, an expanding convention and trade show and leading a powerful national government relations program."



The mission of AmericanHort is to unite, promote and advance the industry through advocacy, collaboration, connectivity, education, market development and research. The vision, developed by the new board of directors, is to be a leading and unifying organization for the horticulture industry to cultivate successful businesses and to enhance lives through the benefits of plants.

The new organization will represent breeders, greenhouse and nursery growers, garden center retailers, distributors, interior and exterior landscapers, florists, students, educators, researchers, manufacturers and all of those who are part of the industry supply chain. AmericanHort will have its primary office in Columbus, Ohio, and an office in Washington, D.C., to facilitate government relations and research activities, including the management of the Horticultural Research Institute. AmericanHort also will continue to manage America in Bloom.

## » CORRECTION

The 1-Minute Mentor department of *LM's* December 2013 issue (page 44) incorrectly identified Jim Cali as CEO of Southern Botanical. His title, in fact, is COO.

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