



## New Kubota Z700 Series: We Mean Business

Kubota's new Z700 Series commercial zero-turn mower raises the bar for quality, durability, precision and all-around productivity. No other commercial mower in its class comes close. Available with 48, 54 or 60-inch decks and a wide variety of attachments and accessories. Ready to cut with the best? Give your business the Kubota Z700 edge. ***Demo one today at your local Kubota dealer.***



**Kubota**

[www.kubota.com](http://www.kubota.com)



## DIFFERENT BRANCHES

*continued from page 19*

industry for a few years. It was during an internship at an architecture firm he put the pieces together.

“That’s when I learned carpentry and realized construction and architecture were the missing link between me enjoying where I came from,” he says. “I learned how to design and produce projects—I hadn’t done that before. I was strictly dirt, plants and maintenance for so many years.”

In 2006, Brook Klausung founded landscape design/build and management firm Brook Landscape and has grown it to about \$1.5 million in 2013 with 15 employees. The company designs, constructs and manages urban gardens with “classic materials in a contemporary way” with a variety of methods, including carpentry, masonry and steel fabrication. Brook Klausung also is a licensed general contractor.

The company is booked through the end of 2014 and is recruiting so it can add capacity and accept work in other locations, such as Los Angeles. It also plans to advance its growth prospects by subcontracting out construction services, focusing on serving as a general contractor for those and by expanding its horticulture management division.

“(Horticulture) is the reason clients call us,” he says. “It’s the finished product, the icing on the cake, so I want it to

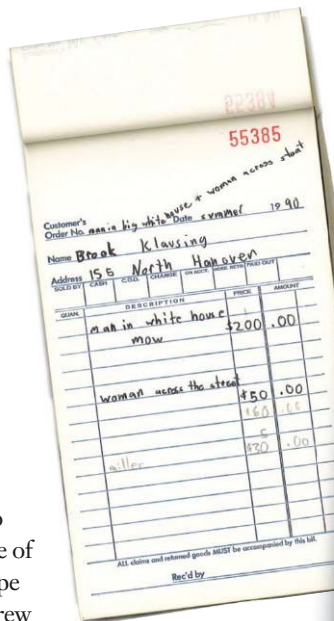
be as strong as possible.”

Growing a design/build firm seems like work enough, but Brook Klausung also manages a second career—that of a fashion model. He was “discovered” about five years ago when he landed one of his first big landscape design jobs for J. Crew Creative Director Jenna Lyons. After the project, she asked him to be in a J. Crew photo shoot featuring “real guys,” and he’s picked up other modeling jobs from there.

Though reluctant to talk about his modeling career, which he described to Details.com as “a great way to meet amazing people and earn extra cash,” the benefits of his artistic side job are not lost on the younger Klausung, who’s largely self taught as a designer.

“Working with other designers and creative directors has been and still is amazing,” he says. “It’s more like a collaboration and I’m the interpreter.”

Not to mention the who’s-who aspect of the modeling industry. “From a net-



Roscoe Klausung saved some receipts and fliers from the brothers’ first foray into business.



working standpoint, it’s good to know taste makers, trendsetters and the folks that report on what’s happening,” he acknowledges.

Knowing the reporters has done Brook Klausung some good. The PR he’s gained as a model/landscape designer is the only form of marketing he’s ever pursued, he says. He’s been featured in the *New York Times*, *Garden Design* and *Delta’s Sky*, among other media outlets.

“I don’t do any advertising; I only do press,” he says. “I could do (advertising), but my growth rate is stunted by the ability to produce, not the amount to sell.”

*continued on page 24; sidebar on page 23*



Roscoe (left) and Brook Klausung pose with the sign from their first business, which evolved into Klausung Group.

# Inspiration INTO ACTION

Some things have changed at Klausing Group over the years. One that hasn't: the company's commitment to community stewardship.

Going back to when the Klausing brothers wrote their first business plan, Roscoe Klausing says the company always has tried to be "a good corporate citizen."

"I wanted to give back on a regular basis without having to think about it," he says, noting he got the idea to set aside a portion of the company's earnings from Patagonia. The outdoor clothing and gear brand pledges 1 percent of sales to preserving and restoring the environment through its 1% For The Planet program.

Initially, Klausing Group followed suit, committing 1 percent of top-line revenue toward providing services to local nonprofits with grounds maintenance needs. Eventually the company changed its program to 5% For The Community, setting aside 5 percent of net profit to the same cause.

"We sign a contract with the organizations to take over their grounds," Klausing says. "We do the contract so they know we're serious. Technically, they're one-year contracts, but we've never stopped doing work for anybody."

Today, the program maintains about six sites, including a food bank.

It's successful in its simplicity, Klausing says. "Our staff, in many cases, doesn't even know when it's working on a site that's a donation," he says.

There has been one hiccup: One recipient acquired another facility, increasing the size of its grounds from one acre to 15 acres. Klausing Group committed to letting this organization be a repeat recipient of the award for the next few years so it can continue service.

Each annual contract has a value of about \$20,000, Klausing says, tallying the program's lifetime giving near \$200,000.

"I'd so much rather do community service this way than every six months to rally troops on a Saturday," he says. "I'd rather be able to plan for it and know what our expenses are going to be instead of donating whenever we're asked."



## Wherever your business takes you, we're there to help.

At Progressive Commercial Auto, we know your business depends on your vehicle. For over 40 years, we've been offering Commercial Auto insurance designed specifically for small business owners. And with 24/7 live support and expert claims representatives, we get you back on the road fast. On the road with you. Now that's Progressive.

- Call for a Free Quote  
**1-888-375-7905**
- Find an Agent  
**ProgressiveCommercial.com**



**PROGRESSIVE**  
COMMERCIAL

Progressive Casualty Ins. Co. & affiliates.  
12B00197.L06 (02/14)

## DIFFERENT BRANCHES

*continued from page 22*

As it turns out, there are many barriers to growing a landscape business in New York City, not the least of which are labor and material costs. Though, those aren't the things that plague Brook Klausings the most.

"It's the red tape involved in architecture and construction in New York versus an area like Lexington," he says. "In New York, you can't do anything without someone saying 'stop' or 'you owe us money.'"

The highly regulated atmosphere also creates a lot of stop and go for Brook Landscape. "You can get a stop-work order from a building inspector from an anonymous phone call," he says. "You have to be involved in enough opportunities to constantly have the ability to switch over to another project."

That's not always easy for someone who describes himself as "impatient." Brook Klausings estimates his jobs take twice as long as a comparable job would

take in a suburban market. An average design/build project takes a few months but could drag on for a year.

"You have to have a trick up your sleeve all the time," he says. "It's having consistent flexibility and problem-solving skills."

### →LEFT BRAIN

For Roscoe Klausings, the differences between his and his brother's businesses are most outwardly evident in their facilities.

"He has a warehouse in Brooklyn; it's largely a design studio in one section and a fabrication facility in the other," Roscoe Klausings says. Then, he describes his digs, chuckling: "I've got 2 acres that would be worth millions of dollars in Brooklyn."

How each brother sells his services also shows the distinction between them.

"I find that much of what my brother sells in New York City is a

### » WEB EXTRA

Ever read *Growing Dreams* by Jim Paluch? Visit [LandscapeManagement.net](http://LandscapeManagement.net) to learn about how the Klausings inspired the book's characters.



personal relationship with him," he says. "He's a hip, fashionable guy. He's providing something that's quite unique and that very

few people can do. A lot of people can do what Klausings Group does, and we have to figure out a way to set ourselves apart. It's a different approach."

Roscoe Klausings has found a way to make Klausings Group stand out with its systems-oriented approach to caring for customers and the community (see "Inspiration into action," page 23).

The company grossed about \$2.8 million in 2013 and is budgeted for the same in 2014, though after this winter's windfall

## Oh, BROTHERS



### ROSCOE KLAUSINGS

*President and CEO  
Klausings Group  
Lexington, Ky.*

65% commercial grounds management; 35% design/build and bid/build work for those accounts  
**2013 revenue:** \$2.8 million

#### →Roscoe on...

**Brook:** "I had no idea he

had it in him to do what he's doing right now, doing the projects he's doing and working with clientele he works with."

**Their early days:** "I still have some of the first invoices we gave to customers where we differentiated \$3 to cut the back lawn or \$2 to cut the front."

**Company that inspires him:** Patagonia

**What's next?** Klausings Group opened a new branch an hour away in Louisville, Ky. "At this point it's more of a satellite production facility than a branch," he says. "We have one seven-man crew based in Louisville. The hope would be that it will be operating as a proper branch within two years."

**Moonlights as:** Husband to Elizabeth McLaren and father to 5-year-old Sara.

### BROOK KLAUSINGS

*Owner and creative director  
Brook Landscape  
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

Design/build and management firm, primarily for residential accounts  
**2013 revenue:** About \$1.5 million

#### →Brook on...

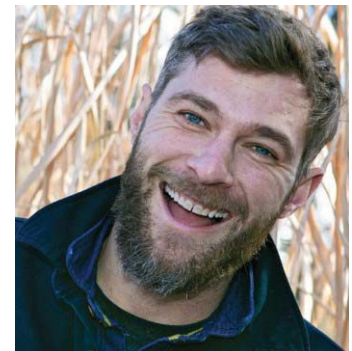
**Roscoe:** "He's a smart, talented fair individual ruled by ethics and idealism. He's the type of person I'd want to do business with."

**Their early days:** "I've cut enough lawns to make me want to puke."

**Companies that inspire him:** "BDDW and Italian designer Paola Lenti both make amazing furniture and have great brand identity. I'm inspired by designers that push the envelope but don't look like they're trying too hard."

**What's next?** By the end of 2014, he'll launch Natural Workshop, a line of outdoor living products. "It's a slow start but I'm very excited to create products that I want to use."

**Moonlights as:** A model for brands such as J. Crew, among others. Was featured in holiday TV commercial for MasterCard.





Klausing Group changed all of its business over to commercial grounds maintenance in the early 2000s.

intimate space with custom planter boxes and potted trees and shrubs.

“We have different strengths, which is really evident in the companies we have today,” Roscoe Klausing says, acknowledging the brothers had trouble finding ways to complement their strengths when they were partners. “I’ve seen the work Brook does. It’s the exact opposite side of

the industry of what I do. Our personalities really reflect that, too.”

Brook Klausing thinks back to the days of the original business in Kentucky.

“Here’s the difference between Roscoe and I,” he says. “I could get clients and he could produce.

“If we were ever partners again, we’d kill it.” **LM**

Roscoe Klausing expects to exceed that. (The company met its snow budget for 2014 on Jan. 15.)

To get a taste of the older Klausing’s methodical approach to business, listen to him describe an internal analysis of addressing client callbacks, which became a problem in September 2012.

“We realized at a strategic planning meeting that one of the main characteristics of our company—response time—had become a weakness,” he says. “We doubled down and made an internal commitment to resolve every single customer issue within 48 hours, no matter what. We started tracking it from when we noticed the issue or when the customer called in with one. It could be anything from an incorrect invoice to a tree planted in the wrong place.”

The leadership team devised a procedure to route all customer calls into the same location. There’s now a protocol for taking the customer call, which is logged into a system and pushed out to an account manager, who promptly calls the client for instructions. Once the conflict is resolved on the production end, the person who accepted the phone call follows up with the client to ensure it’s been taken care of to satisfaction.

“Closing that loop was really important,” Roscoe Klausing says, sharing the average issue is now resolved in 24 hours. “We’ve seen better contract renewal. Although I don’t have a way to connect that to issue resolution, we’ve had customers say, ‘You guys were on chopping block because we were so fed up with response time.’ We tell them we call 2012 a blip.”

#### → DISTINCT STRENGTHS

The same satisfaction in Roscoe Klausing’s voice as he describes overcoming the “blip” surfaces when his brother describes transforming a rooftop garden into an

## SO SMOOTH, YOU’LL FORGET IT’S AN AERATOR.








**THE NEW  
STEERABLE  
AND  
REVERSIBLE  
TURFCO™  
XT5**

**AERATION HAS  
NEVER BEEN  
THIS EASY,  
COMFORTABLE  
OR PROFITABLE.**

- > More lawns per day
- > Easier on the operator
- > Smoother, quieter operation
- > Easier to service
- > Better hill-holding ability
- > All for a great price

Call today to see what  
the XT5 can do for you.  
**800-679-8201**

**TURFCO**

◀ DIRECT ▶

[WWW.TURFCODIRECT.COM](http://WWW.TURFCODIRECT.COM)

# Word-of-web referrals



How landscape professionals are using Porch, a new online home improvement platform.

BY SARAH PFLEDDERER

Like many small business owners, most of Mike Champagne's leads come from word-of-mouth referrals—75 percent, he says.

It's not that the owner of American Blade Runners Lawn care in Charlotte, N.C., hasn't tried other means of marketing. There was the time he distributed 5,000 fliers, but that only got him one call. It's disappointments like these that led to his reliance on referrals.

And it's for that reason he's putting some of his trust in the website Porch as an extension of his word-of-mouth marketing.

The online home improvement network connects homeowners and professionals for free and does so by vetting companies on the same values neighbors do when referring others to a business, such as a company's service

perimeters, pricing and quality of service.

Porch CEO Matt Ehrlichman created the company about two years ago from a homeowner's perspective, using it as a solution to some of the struggles he faced when building his home.

"It's so hard to have any idea what it's going to cost and it's so challenging to know who really is going to be the best professional to work with for my specific home," he says. "Porch was started to make that process easier for homeowners and to help professionals and small businesses around the country be able to get not just more business but the right kind of business."

It achieves this through populating Porch profiles with photos of professionals' projects, including details on those such as the project cost and location. Porch uses that information, in addition to the number of "positive endorsements," to determine where a professional will fall in a homeowner's search rankings.

"We use data and information home-

In addition to photos, Porch urges users to upload project pricing and location details.

owners are going to have a tremendous amount of confidence in," Ehrlichman says.

The company had a relatively quiet launch in 2013, officially going live in September, but it had reached out to professionals to join the site more than a year in advance. Of the 1.5 million home improvement professionals on the site, 4 percent identify as "landscapers," according to Porch.

Darwin Webb, president of Darwin Webb Landscape Architects in Issaquah, Wash., was one of the initial professionals contacted to join the site.

"After a couple conversations, I instantly saw the value in what they were doing," he says. "They really took the lead on helping me set up my profile."

## Promotional perks

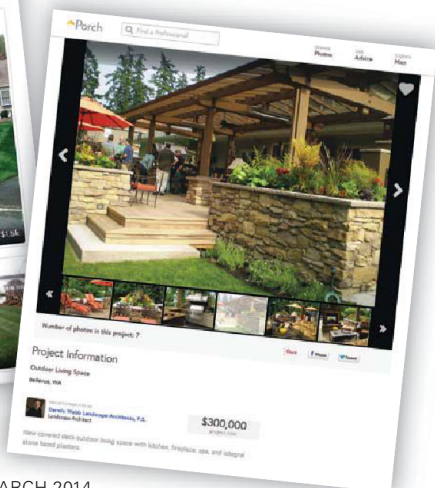
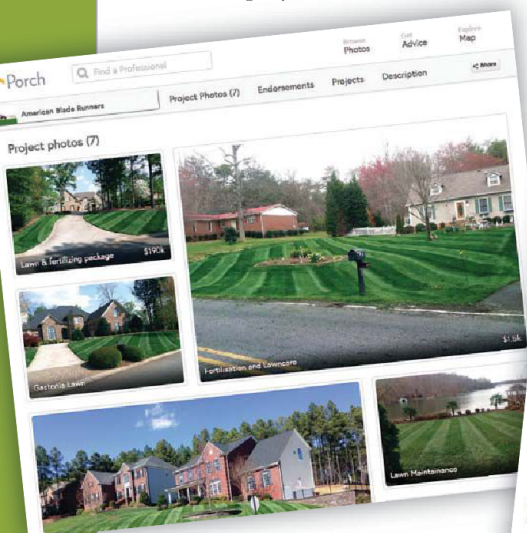
While Webb hasn't gotten any leads directly through Porch yet, he sees it as a more reliable customer referral source than other home improvement sites.

"There's certainly no downside to trying (Porch) out and if you're not getting what you think you need out of them, you can always bow out," he says.

And this is somewhat Webb's plan. He's waiting to see results from his profile before dishing out an optional \$35 monthly subscription fee to heighten his marketability through Porch.

It is free for professionals to enroll and run a Porch profile, but by paying a subscription fee, which is how Porch profits, professionals' projects can be highlighted in Porch's marketing materials, such as emails sent to homeowners.

*continued on page 28*





## Your Vision, Their Dream – Anywhere

Communicating your vision to prospective customers has never been easier with PRO Landscape design software. Whether your design platform is a desktop, laptop or tablet you can design and sell anytime, and now – anywhere.

PRO Landscape is not only easy to use, but feature rich including stunning photo imaging, night and holiday lighting, 2D CAD, 3D renderings, and complete customer proposals.

Bring your customer's dreams to life – starting today!



**PRO Landscape**  
DESIGN SOFTWARE

[prolandscape.com](http://prolandscape.com)  
[sales@prolandscape.com](mailto:sales@prolandscape.com)

800-231-8574



*continued from page 26*

The fee does not increase professionals' visibility on the Porch website itself to ensure homeowners are seeing the most highly endorsed companies in their area, not the ones who pay the most for a higher ranking.

"In different places, we can proactively give them more exposure and highlight them, but we do that without breaking the trust of homeowners," Ehrlichman says.

An added layer to Porch's marketing comes from the company's strategic partnership with Lowe's, which was announced in January.

Through the partnership, signage in Lowe's stores informs customers to refer to Porch to find a local professional to help them with their project. Moreover, Lowe's employees are trained to connect customers to Porch professionals in store for services the retailer doesn't offer.

That partnership initially was instituted in 139 stores in North Carolina, South Carolina and the Seattle area, where Porch is headquartered. It will gradually roll out to more than 1,700 Lowe's stores.

Champagne says he's already seen signs in his local Lowe's and expects that exposure to generate more leads for him via Porch, especially in the spring when outdoor projects are top of mind for customers. Although, like Webb, he has yet to receive any leads through Porch.

### Reliability distinguishers

The Lowe's partnership is a prime way Porch now sets itself aside from competitors, such as Angie's List, Yelp and Houzz, Ehrlichman says. Another distinction is Porch doesn't allow users to post negative reviews at this time to avoid professionals being "gamed" by competitors.

"Professionals right now use Porch as their definitive resume, so we want that to positively represent their work," Ehrlichman says. "At some point it's important to create an experience for homeowners where they get all of the information they need.

Before we do any of that stuff, we want to do a very good job of verifying it's a homeowner who's actually used that professional."

Thus, negative reviews eventually will be a part of the site for the homeowner's benefit, Ehrlichman says, but the company is figuring ways to ensure posts are authentic before launching the feature.

For the time being, Porch merely allows homeowners to provide "positive endorsements" of companies. The



### CEO Matt Ehrlichman's tip sheet for Porch users to increase their visibility on the site:

- 1 Upload as many projects as possible, making sure to include their addresses and pricing, so Porch knows which customers to target for you.
- 2 Provide customer email addresses to Porch for it to garner endorsements for your page.
- 3 Post a headshot of yourself on the site to personalize your page.

more endorsements a company has, the more viewable they are to neighbors of the person who endorsed them.

"That's where homeowners have the most confidence," Ehrlichman says, referring back to the notion that neighborly referrals are viewed as the most trustworthy.

But how does Porch know whose neighbor is whose? In uploading projects to their Porch profiles, professionals are encouraged to provide the project's addresses.

"That gives us the insight to know when to feature that professional correctly," Ehrlichman says, clarifying that Porch never shows a customer's address on the website. "We anonymize it. It's completely private." (See map example at left.)

Another detail professionals are encouraged to include is the price of the projects. Porch says this information helps homeowners quickly identify the company as being in their price range or not.

Including such details—location and pricing—are entirely optional, though.

Champagne, for instance, only posts the price of his residential projects, not the commercial ones.

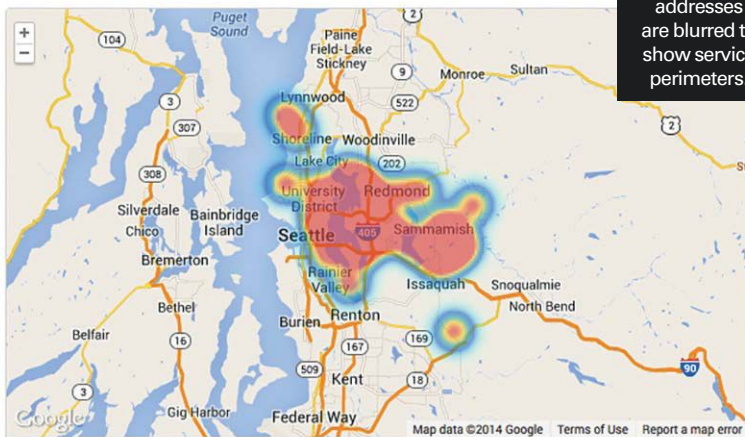
"That's kind of like putting your bids out for everybody to see," he says.

### Profile creation, upkeep

There are two ways to build a profile: 1) manually uploading projects and photos or 2) sending a spreadsheet of project data, such as through Excel, to the Porch team

*continued on page 31*

### Project locations



Top Service Area(s): Central Houghton, Market, Wilburton - NE 8th St



Learn more at  
[ww2.rainbird.com/Rewards](http://ww2.rainbird.com/Rewards).



# Earning a larger rebate faster. That's intelligent.



## Introducing the new Rain Bird® Rewards program.

- **Earn More Faster:**  
New Rewards levels help you earn larger rebates faster than competitive programs.
- **Get Even More as Your Business Grows:**  
Easier than ever to qualify for higher rebate levels.
- **Benefits That Help You Grow Your Business:**  
Marketing materials and training classes from the industry leader help you win more jobs.

Rewards Rebate %	
LEVEL I	3.5%
LEVEL II	4.0%
LEVEL III	4.5%
LEVEL IV	5.0%



# **BUILD YOUR BUSINESS**

## **WEBINAR SERIES**

**FREE Webinar!**

# Controlling Weeds in Landscape Beds

Thursday, April 3  
10 a.m. PT/1 p.m. ET



### **WEBINAR DESCRIPTION:**

In this hour-long webinar, experts will tackle landscape bed weed control strategies from two perspectives: the technical and applicator perspectives. Virginia Tech's Jeff Derr will address weed ID and control methods and Brickman's Joe Ketterer will share lawn care applicator best practices.

### **PRESENTERS:**

#### **APPLICATOR SPEAKER:**



**Joe Ketterer**

*Regional Production Specialist  
Brickman*

Ketterer's 30-plus years of experience at Brickman plus a bachelor's of science degree in ornamental horticulture from Penn State allow him to coach production teams, conduct seasonal in-house training in the classroom and in the field and perform R&D on the latest labor methods, materials and/or equipment. He's a certified pesticide applicator in ornamentals, turf, industrial weeds and aquatics in Maryland and Virginia.

#### **TECHNICAL SPEAKER:**



**Jeff Derr, Ph.D.**

*Professor of Weed Science  
Virginia Tech*

Derr provides weed management information to commercial landscape maintenance firms and lawn care professionals and oversees the turfgrass evaluation program at the Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center, among other research and extension duties at Virginia Tech. He has a doctorate degree in horticulture/weed science from North Carolina State University.

### **MODERATOR:**

**Marisa Palmieri**, Editor of *Landscape Management*

Sponsored by: **SureGuard**<sup>®</sup>  
HERBICIDE

Brought to you by: **Landscape Management**

**DON'T MISS THIS BUILD YOUR BUSINESS SERIES WEBINAR!**  
**REGISTER NOW! [LANDSCAPEMANAGEMENT.NET/WEBINARS](http://LANDSCAPEMANAGEMENT.NET/WEBINARS)**