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A Winning Season

Communication, preparation and product education are the keys to a successful 2019.

MANY OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS MANAGERS ARE TEAM PLAYERS AT HEART.

“When you’re leading a lawn care business, you’re working to make sure everyone is on the same page – and ultimately, you’re only as good as the members of that team,” says Rob Golembiewski, Ph.D. Bayer Green Solutions Team specialist. “You want to do whatever you can to retain and reward your best employees, because keeping good employees only makes your team stronger.”

In previous roles, Golembiewski served as assistant professor with Oregon State University and even ran a lawn and landscape company along with his brother in Phoenix, Arizona. As part of the Green Solutions Team, Golembiewski offers technical support for lawn care operators – ranging from agronomic expertise to high-performing products and region-specific training sessions with technicians.

84% of survey respondents played football, soccer, basketball or baseball in high school or college.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE OFFSEASON

“When business slows down, that’s the perfect time to maximize employee training and development and review how your previous year went – where there were successes and where there were shortcomings,” Golembiewski says.



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A solid agronomic program includes the proper use of tools and techniques, along with utilizing the support that comes along with the product line being used. By using the right products properly, contractors can help reduce callbacks and labor costs, Golembiewski says.

“Ultimately customer satisfaction and retention are really what you’re after,” he says.

Another key to success is having a defined program in place before the season kicks off, says Brian Haga, president and owner of Scientific Plant Service, a full-service lawn care company based in Baltimore, Maryland.

“We like to get pre-emergence (herbicides) on the ground in late fall. Then, we’re not rushed to get a timely application done in the spring, so it takes some pressure off,” Haga says.

This application is typically made in late November when soil temperatures drop below 52 degrees Fahrenheit.



Brian Haga, president and owner of Scientific Plant Service (left), and Eric Snelsire, Bayer Area Sales Manager.

“At that point, you put the product down, it binds, and it stays put, and there’s no loss of active ingredient,” Haga says. “And once the soil temperatures drop below 52 degrees, that microbial activity stops.”

This tactic works particularly well in areas like Baltimore, where there are nutrient management laws in place that ban nitrogen applications from December through February, Haga says.

RALLY AND EMPOWER THE TEAM

In addition to preparing for the season by doing work on client properties, additional preparation should be made among the internal team, Haga says.

“Before the season begins, communication is key. We try to communicate everything we can staff-wise so that everybody’s on the same page,” he says.

And communication with clients is just as important as internal communication, Golembiewski says.

“Clear lines of communication help ensure everyone is on the same page and executing that game plan or strategy for the given year,” he says.

“It’s about that client relationship, and it’s about doing right by your customers.”

Haga knows firsthand the importance of education in this industry.

“We keep our staff educated. We get out

58% of survey respondents feel they have “die-hard” customers who would likely offer a referral.

to industry meetings for our re-certifications, and then go beyond that and get whatever education we can to keep our staff engaged,” he says.

Part of that education is taking advantage of industry resources such as the Green Solutions Team. In addition to consulting the team on available products and how best to use them, Haga has also taken advantage of Bayer Fall Solutions, the company’s early order program – something he considers a key factor in his company’s success.

“We have participated, since the beginning, with the Bayer early order program. We lay out a program six months or more in advance and buy 80 to 85 percent of what we need for the season. It’s on the shelf. We know what we’re going to use,” he says.

In addition to utilizing the Green Solutions Team as a resource during the off season, Haga says he focuses on education between November and March.

“We go to industry meetings put on by the local universities and distributors,” he says. “Bayer had invited us down to Raleigh for education. We went to their (research facilities) and learned about pollinators and how to protect them.”

Solid relationships with industry partners can help ensure a winning season.

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SURVEY METHODOLOGY: A survey was distributed to 4,437 green industry representatives who have opted in to receive email communications from Bayer. Of 537 total survey respondents, 220 were qualified and analyzed in these findings.