

STATE OF THE FLEET MANAGEMENT MARKET



Sponsored by

lytx®



How technology will power the next decade of the commercial landscape industry

For too long, commercial landscaping companies have operated with one arm behind their backs. Lack of visibility into operations has yielded a largely reactive approach to fleet management, safety and efficiency challenges. Although many organizations have graduated from manual to digital management of technicians, customers and fleets, there's still ample room for modernization as we move into a new decade with significant growth opportunities.

Forward-thinking commercial landscaping businesses are using technology to help transform their operations for a competitive future. Many are leveraging video telematics, for example, to reduce collisions, insurance premiums and workers' compensation claims, while also bolstering safety, customer service and operational efficiencies. Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) is one of those companies.

In 2017, following its acquisition by Asplundh Tree Expert, ILM deployed video telematics to address costly risky and distracted driving issues within its fleet. As one of Arizona's largest family-owned businesses, with 350 employees and \$20 million in annual revenue, ILM was self-insured for claims totaling less than \$10,000. Collision-related out-of-pocket costs were hurting the company's bottom line. Just two years after adopting a Lytx video telematics program, ILM cut collisions in half and reduced risky driving behaviors by 31%. Work-related injuries, another key issue, dropped by 39% in less than a year because video telematics enabled monitoring and enforcement of safety compliance in the field.

These improvements improved the company's bottom line by helping reduce both insurance premiums and workers compensation claims.

The application and benefits of video telematics aren't limited to safety. Field service fleet operators are using the technology to:

- **Safeguard brand reputation**
- **Confirm service and deliveries**
- **Investigate workers' compensation claims**
- **Gain clarity into idling to improve fuel efficiency**
- **Verify customer claims or complaints**
- **Protect against theft**
- **Onboard and train employees**

Moving forward, we'll see widespread adoption of video telematics and other technologies that grant new levels of visibility into operations to modernize reactive processes, creating an industry-wide ripple effect.

This is a pivotal moment for the landscaping industry. Companies deploying video telematics in their fleets are industry innovators, setting the standard for their peers while setting themselves apart with operational efficiencies and safer fleets – allowing them to focus on enhanced customer service.

The time to evolve and modernize is now.

DAVID THAWLEY

Executive Vice President and General Manager,
Small- and Mid-Market Business
Lytx

More than a map

GPS has benefits beyond simply getting you where you need to go.

When Brandon Gurley rolled out fleet management software five years ago, he was honest with employees behind the reasoning. He wanted a better grasp on estimating jobs by finding out when trucks arrived at and left jobsites.

“We had six-man hours on this and no matter what crew you put on it, can’t get done in eight,” says Gurley, the managing partner of North American Lawn & Landscape in Charlotte. “That’s an estimating problem, which runs into scheduling which runs into their bonuses.”

Gurley’s company, which has approximately 100 vehicles and more than 200 employees, has a bonus pool where if certain benchmarks are hit within a team, that team can split a percentage of the company’s gross profit.

“If everyone does what they’re supposed to do, and we get all these metrics, then there is a bonus pool that we put together ... which has really revolutionized our business in terms of what we have to do as owners,” he says.

The investment in the software has led to better estimates, giving the workers much more realistic deadlines on jobs.

“I think employees like to know that this is the time. This is proven time. And there’s some accountability to that,” Gurley says. “You show up at a site and say, ‘Get done as fast as you can,’ there’s no accountability there.”

It’s also helped Gurley keep track of his second office in Raleigh, North Carolina,

which is about two hours away. Because of COVID-19, he hasn’t been able to visit that office as often as he’d like.

“If you have more than one location, it helps you a bunch because you can help manage from afar. As an owner, you can just feel like you can touch it,” he says. “Certainly, it gives me a little peace of mind.”

While the software has helped Gurley hold employees accountable, it’s also helped Les Lightfoot, CEO of Lightfoot Enterprises in Houston, with customer disputes.

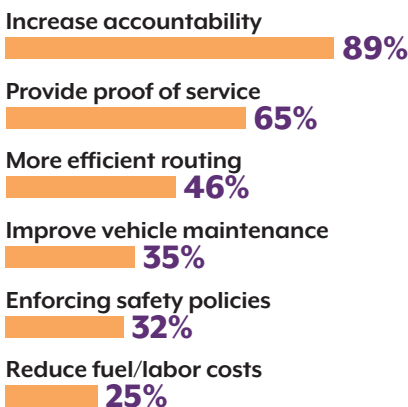
“We’ve had customers who have said we were not at their jobsite ... occasionally you have a customer who wants to get out of paying you, so it helps to be able to send them data to show we were at the property between this time and this time on this

date,” Lightfoot says. “If it gets into any kind of legal action, we’ve got the data for proof.”

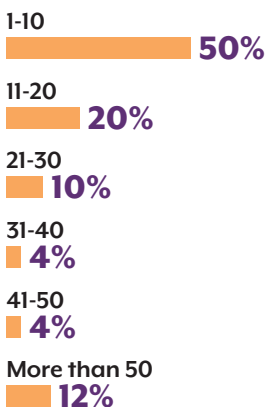
For Jeff Sebert, president and founder of Sebert Landscapes, it’s all about being efficient and providing the best service for the client, and the investment has helped achieve those goals.

“For the cost of these systems today, it’s highly worth the investment,” he says. “For minimum dollars you can put yourself in the driver’s seat and monitor where your crews are at and get a handle on what problems you might have.”

What are the top 3 ways GPS tracking helps you manage your fleet?



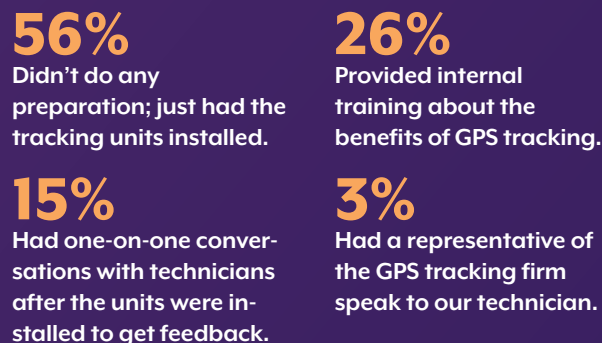
How many vehicles does your company have?



How did most employees feel about GPS tracking being installed?



How did you prepare employees for the installation of GPS systems?



Spreading the word

Les Lightfoot, CEO of Lightfoot Enterprises in Houston, installed GPS software 10 years ago, but didn’t tell crews right away that the trucks were being monitored.

“After the second week, we sat down with them and said, ‘Here’s the data and we wanted to see how fair you guys were being with the company.’ Some guys were not being very fair with the company,” Lightfoot says, adding that some employees were spending over an hour at the store.

However, employees didn’t express any resentment over his method of rolling out the software.

“With most people we’ve dealt with in over 30 years of business, as long as you’re fair, they are OK,” Lightfoot says.

When Chris Haase bought Haase Landscape in Spokane Washington from his father, he wanted to invest more in technology and software. So about seven years ago, he purchased fleet management software to install on approximately 20 trucks. When he announced the systems would be on every truck, he didn’t receive much pushback.

“I just said, ‘Hey guys, this is what they’re here for. This is why we’re doing it. We’re doing it for fuel, we’re doing it for routing. We’re doing it to make sure you guys are all where you’re supposed to be,’ and nobody really complained,” he says.

Haase says he had some pushback from managers because they didn’t think they needed to have the equipment on their trucks.

“I said, ‘No, it’s a company policy. Every company truck will be having them on there,’” he says.

Brandon Gurley, the managing partner of North American Lawn & Landscape in Charlotte, also only had pushback from managers who had more flexible schedules than other employees.

“If they had a softball game with their kid, we’re all for that,” Gurley says. “They work like crazy, so go to the softball game, go to the play in the daytime, just manage your guys and do what you got to do. We’re not out to get you.”

For Purple Care’s Justin Berg out in Fort Worth, Texas, the team’s GPS rotation is what keeps the crews sharp.

Purple Care has 31 vehicles but only five GPS systems, so Berg switches the tracking devices out on a rotation he privately monitors. He says this is an easy way to keep costs down but still feel like you’re monitoring the crews, as the employees don’t know when their trucks have the systems plugged in and when they don’t.

“If we get complaints about one particular vehicle, I can pretty much guarantee the GPS will be on there a month,” Berg says.

None of his employees have argued with him when they’re approached about what the GPS found because, as Berg says, “they know they can’t argue with it.”



Turn it off

One of the most important pieces of information Chris Haase, owner of Haase Landscape in Spokane Washington, receives from his fleet management software is the amount of times his trucks idle.

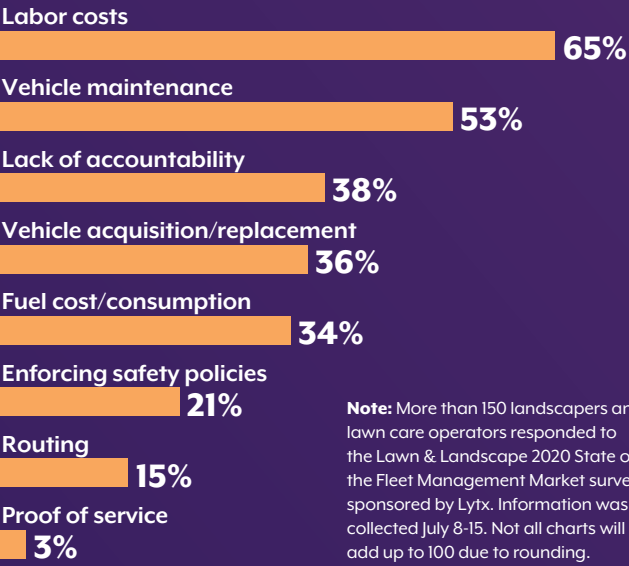
“Some guys let their trucks idle too long – two or three hours a day,” Haase says. “I said, ‘Hey guys, you guys don’t pay the fuel. I pay for the fuel. There’s no reason to leave your truck running that long and you need to knock it off.’ Think about it, when you’re parked, you don’t need to have the truck going.”

Jeff Sebert, president and founder of Sebert Landscapes, found out the hard way what idling can do to a truck when he took it in because of engine problems.

“It was under warranty, so we took the vehicle in and it was under mileage,” Sebert says. “But they said the idling time of this truck took the mileage that was, say, 40,000 (miles) and changed the use of the engine to as if it had been running 75,000 (miles). They then voided the warranty. We’ve never had that happen before.”

Dan Bitler, fleet manager at Sebert Landscaping, says the company receives alerts if a truck is idling for 15 minutes. However, they turn off the idle alerts in the wintertime as trucks usually idle longer than 15 minutes during snow events.

What are the top 3 challenges your business faces today, relative to your vehicles? (Choose any 3.)



Note: More than 150 landscapers and lawn care operators responded to the Lawn & Landscape 2020 State on the Fleet Management Market survey, sponsored by Lytx. Information was collected July 8-15. Not all charts will add up to 100 due to rounding.



You’ve got proof

You’ve all been there. You get a call from an angry customer or driver that one of your employees caused a broken window or cut someone off. With fleet management software, you can check if your employees were on a specific road at a certain time or if they were at a jobsite on a certain day.

Les Lightfoot, CEO of Lightfoot Enterprises in Houston, says he’s had incidents where someone says there was damage done to their property – like a broken window – on a specific day.

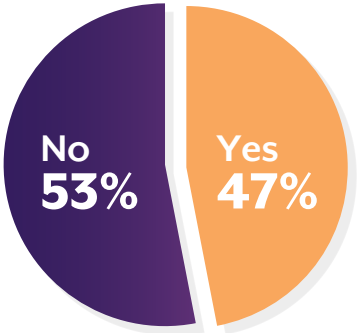
“We’ll look at the GPS and we weren’t there on that day,” Lightfoot says. “It’s pretty easy to prove we didn’t cause the damage.”

Justin Berg, owner of Purple Care in Fort

Worth, Texas, says his employees have also somewhat appreciated the GPS technology because they can use it to their own benefit as well. If a client calls and complains about nobody coming to service their house, crew members can prove they actually showed up to do the work by pulling up the GPS data.

Chris Haase, owner of Haase Landscape in Spokane Washington, has used it during the snow season to show a commercial property manager their property was serviced after saying it wasn’t.

“I said, ‘Here’s the report right here showing my truck’ and it’s a bunch of little dots all over their parking lot where the GPS pings out,” Haase says.



Do you currently use GPS tracking technology to help manage your vehicles and techs?

A fit for every size

Fleet management software gets the reputation that it’s only for companies with a lot of trucks. That’s not the case for David Warrick, Jr., who only has three employees at his company Warrick Properties Group in New Jersey

Warrick Jr. runs his landscaping company as a side job, though the work is still a full-time gig. In managing his other full-time job and then adding in the operations of a landscaping company his dad ran for 30 years, he says he needed the GPS software and implemented it as soon as he took over.

“Knowing where my guys are is key,” Warrick Jr. says.

Warrick Jr. has sifted through three programs in two years as they’ve experimented with this new frontier of technology. When Warrick Jr. told his foreman that they were implementing the GPS software, he made sure to clarify that it wasn’t about babysitting him.

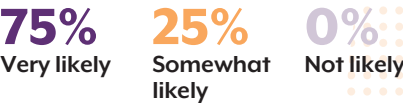
What is the primary reason you are not using GPS tracking?



“I just told him flat out that it’s not necessarily to babysit him. It’s just to make things easier on everybody,” Warrick Jr. says. “It’s just a checks and balances system. If you’re doing the right thing, you have nothing to worry about.”

Warrick Jr. says his company has improved its efficiency and customer service since

How likely are you to recommend using GPS tracking technology for fleet management?



they started with the GPS technology. For instance, he’s had customers call and say that the crew left their gate open and they noticed it on their home cameras while they’re at work. Instead of telling the clients “tough luck,” Warrick Jr. can contact his crew and have them head back over there if they’re in the area.

Safety first



North American Lawn & Landscape has a “How am I driving” sign and a number to call on their trucks. If they get a call about a bad driver, they can check the GPS to see if it’s accurate.

“What we do is we look at the GPS and the call and then we look for patterns – is this the same driver getting these types of calls?” Brandon Gurley, managing partner, says. “Then we just explain to the drivers and say, ‘We’ve had two calls about the same instance. Let’s work on that.’”

In Watsonville, California, Shane White, vice president of operations at K&D Landscaping, says his company has just started using safety features in his software and wants to incorporate them into a weekly, monthly and quarterly conversations with approved drivers.

“Our goal is to use the driving behavior data to review with the drivers who are doing a good job and reward them, as well as a tool to help correct some not-so-good driving behaviors shown by certain drivers, White says, adding that the GPS system he uses allows the company to monitor seat belt violations, speed violations and hard cornering.

Justin Berg, owner of Purple Care in

Forth Worth, Texas, had the GPS software for roughly two years, and since then, he’s been able to translate it into several teaching moments for his employees, including misuse of trucks and safety reminders. The program alerts Berg and management when a truck would be used during late hours as an employee drove it out to pick up cigarettes, or if a truck ends up three hours away in Austin.

“The other thing it does is every time you speed, it sends us a text,” Berg says. “Guys who were notorious speeders got written up and stopped.”

He adds that when he notices there’s a recurring problem, he’ll bring it up in one of the company’s weekly safety meetings or monthly overall meetings.

“Until they’re being watched, they won’t stop doing it. We’ve seen an increase in accountability, an increase in safety,” Berg says. “If you’re an honest person and you’re following the rules, you’ve got nothing to worry about. We’re giving you an opportunity to right the wrong and correct this on your own without us telling you to.”

How good is your company driving record?

