

# Lawn & Landscape

Leading business media for landscape contractors

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*STAND FOR?*

This is the question the people at **Vande Hey Company** asked two years ago, and it triggered a long-term cultural revitalization that is igniting a team spirit, profitability and a fulfilling lifestyle for its people.

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# Business Growth Transformation



Hosted by Mark Bradley  
Founder & CEO,  
Landscape Management Network (LMN)



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wearing  
a cape  
might feel  
appropriate.**

## What's your next growth goal? \$5M, \$10M, \$25M?

Join Mark, an industry insider who built a Top 100 landscaping business from scratch and has helped thousands of contractors accelerate their growth.

### During this program you will:

Define your customer and build a sales and marketing strategy to grow revenue and profit, develop a strategy to grow your people who support your business, and create systems that improve safety, quality, and efficiency using transparent metrics to drive success.

## Day 1

### AM Build Your Strategic Growth Plan

- Set 2024 desired outcomes
- Align company mission & values
- Develop a SWOT analysis
- Implement a financial plan that makes it happen

### PM Solve the People Problem

- Learn simple tools to attract the best people
- Retain staff with training & career laddering
- Design a performance-based incentive system
- Develop a culture of high-performers

## Day 2

### AM Win More Business and Grow Profits

- Complete a go-to-market strategy
- Uncover how to win at marketing
- Learn a sales process that delivers
- Improve customer retention

### PM Run Efficient Operations

- Guides to eliminating waste in materials, equipment, subs & more
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## Spotlight: Local Roots Landscaping

We had a chance to catch up with Patrick Murray, founding partner of Local Roots Landscaping. Patrick has been an LMN customer for about 5 years and we checked in to see how business was and to ask how LMN helped Local Roots grow.

**Hey Patrick, thanks for sitting down with us today. Can you tell us a little bit about who you are and your role at Local Roots?**

Sure! My name is Patrick Murray and I'm one of the two founders of Local Roots Landscaping here in Pittsburgh. I handle the financials and team building for the company while the other founding partner, Ken, handles sales. We brought in a third partner to lead our day-to-day operations.

**What services does Local Roots offer? And what would you say your company is great at?**

We focus on the high-end residential market, but we also do a fair bit of commercial work too. So our service offerings range from patios and pools to outdoor kitchens and decks. Plus our commercial offerings and maintenance work. We also just got into snow, so we're building that part of the business as well.

**Sounds like a little bit of everything. What would you say your team is most passionate about doing?**

We love turning neglected spaces, like city landscapes, into small areas where people want to spend time. They present a unique challenge for us, so figuring out what's going to work in the space is really interesting.

Our crews might get a little bit frustrated with these projects because they're usually hard to access and small - so we can't use our full-sized equipment. But after getting that all taken care of, I think they also enjoy the unique challenge.

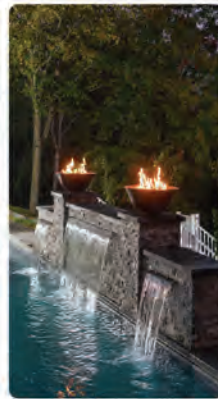
**So how long have you been using LMN and what made you decide to become a customer?**

It's been about 5 years now. We had been trying out the free version but weren't quite sure if it was going to be right for us. My business partner convinced me to drive down to Ohio where LMN was holding a training session. After learning how to use the software a little better, I knew we couldn't go back to the pen and paper estimates and the notes written down on napkins. (laughs)

When you're using pen and paper, it seems normal to lose track of time sheets, forget to invoice people, or just working through a job where the estimate was way off. And changing your process is intimidating and easy to put off. But once we started using LMN, it was impossible to go back.

**What's your favorite LMN feature?**

We really like the scorecards for our crews, but I have to say that the budget and estimating tool are so helpful in our day-to-day business. The budget links directly into our estimating, so we know if a project is going to be profitable, or if we can take the project on without increasing our overhead. So if we're considering buying a new piece of equipment, we can see exactly how much more margin we need to make to justify that expense.



**What would you say to business owners who are considering LMN?**

Hands-down I recommend LMN to other contractors. I'm also a business coach for landscapers, and if they aren't using a software, LMN is the one I steer them toward.

Not only is the software good, but I've had such a great experience with the service team. They hold in-person and online classes to help customers learn how to use LMN, and I can call or chat with a real person whenever I need. The team really cares about your success.

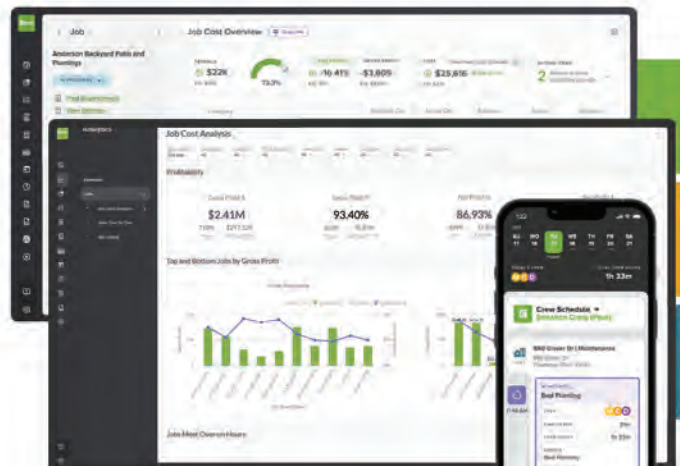
**Thanks so much Patrick! We're so glad that you've had such a good experience and we can't wait to see your snow business grow!**

## Business potential unlocked here.

If you're still using pen and paper, or your current software just doesn't cut it, check out LMN. You'll get the tools you need and the support you deserve to grow your business.



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FEBRUARY 2024

**Lawn & Landscape**

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Rich Curran (left) and  
Andy Vande Hey of  
Vande Hey Company

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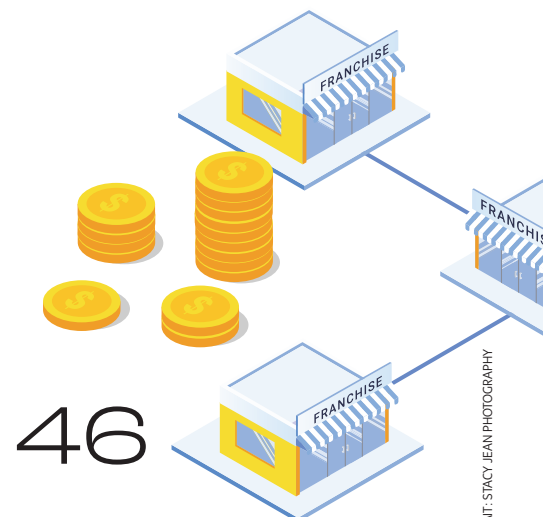
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**Brian Horn**

Editor, Lawn & Landscape

“The idea behind the event is to put those who want to grow their company, whether it’s organically or through mergers and acquisitions, in the same room to learn from each other.”

# Money in the Music City

**I**t may be a strange concept to some business owners, but there are landscapers who do not want to grow their business. When I say “grow,” I mean put a significant focus on achieving double-digit growth while remaining profitable.

I’ve spoken with a number of landscape company owners over the years who are happy with just enough growth to keep up with the cost-of-living increases and be able to take home a decent paycheck.

There is another group with that growth mindset, however, who are motivated but who don’t know what they don’t know.

They need to learn from other companies that have gone through those growing pains. That’s why we are launching a new event: **The Lawn & Landscape Business Builders Summit**. It will take place **May 22-23** at the **Loews Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee**.

The idea behind the event is to put those who want to grow their company, whether it’s organically or through mergers and acquisitions, in the same room to learn from each other — as well as others who have been down that path.

There continues to be very strong interest from private equity investors in the green industry, but knowing which one is right for you can be overwhelming. In addition, making your company appealing to those buyers can be equally difficult.

On the other hand, I meet more and more of you who want to actively grow without selling and that has its own share of headaches.

Our upcoming Business Builders Summit is geared toward helping everyone.

Not only will potential buyers and sellers have the ability to connect, but owners who are just interested in business growth will be able to meet owners from across the country with the same mindset.

We want to help you figure out how to take the next step, whatever that step may be.

So make plans to head out to Nashville in May. If you are interested in speaking or appearing on a panel, email me at [bhorn@gie.net](mailto:bhorn@gie.net).

Visit [LLBusinessBuildersSummit.com](http://LLBusinessBuildersSummit.com) to learn more. See you in the Music City!

—Brian Horn



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## Senske Services expands internationally

The company recently acquired Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz.

**SENSKE SERVICES** has acquired Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz.

Nutri-Lawn, established in 1985, boasts a prominent Canadian presence with six corporate locations and 12 franchises spanning major cities in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. Meanwhile, Mosquito.buzz, founded in 2016, operates with three corporate locations and five franchise locations across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Senske was number 45 on Lawn & Landscape's Top 100 list with more than \$62 million in revenue.

Ryan Vincent, president and owner/partner of Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz, will continue to lead as the president.

"After years of rapid growth in both brands, selling Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz was a thoughtful decision for the businesses and our employees," says Ted Dzialowski, executive chairman and owner/partner of Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz. "We found a partner in Senske Services who values our legacy and understands our vision. Senske's reputation for excellence and its dedication to customer service aligns with the principles we've upheld since the company's inception."

Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz will continue to grow the Canadian market through organic growth and future acquisitions.

**"We found a partner in Senske Services who values our legacy and understands our vision. Senske's reputation for excellence and its dedication to customer service aligns with the principles we've upheld since the company's inception."**

— Ted Dzialowski, executive chairman and owner/partner of Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz.



"This strategic alliance marks a significant milestone for Senske Services. As we welcome Nutri-Lawn and Mosquito.buzz into our family of companies, we see great things in our future," says Casey Taylor, CEO of Senske Services.

## Superscapes acquires Newman Lawn Care

The commercial landscaping company is based in Northern Texas.

**SUPERSCAPES**, a commercial landscaping provider in Texas and Arkansas, has acquired Newman Lawn Care, marking a move to enhance its presence in North Texas. This acquisition reflects Superscapes' commitment to delivering top-notch landscaping services and strengthening its position as an industry leader.

Superscapes landed at number 79 on Lawn & Landscape's Top 100 list with \$39 million.

"I am thrilled to welcome my friend, Brandon Newman, to the Superscapes family. For a quarter of a century, we have taken great pride in the award-winning service and satisfaction our customers have grown to expect and appreciate. During that time, Brandon has successfully built his company into a like-minded business focused on excellence and client satisfaction. He is now working alongside our management team as he services his existing clients and helps manage and grow our exciting business in North Texas," says Shawn Clayton, CEO of Superscapes.



# Electric Sheep acquires two more landscaping businesses

This makes four landscaping businesses that Electric Sheep has acquired in recent months.

**ELECTRIC SHEEP** has made two new acquisitions of landscaping businesses — Westar Landscaping and Caliscapes.

This makes four landscaping businesses that Electric Sheep has acquired in recent months.

Electric Sheep is an outdoor maintenance company powered by artificial intelligence and robotics. It acquires traditional outdoor service providers and progressively transforms operations by deploying its proprietary AI software and robots.

“The ESR business model of acquiring landscaping businesses and improving their margins by augmenting workers with automation is radically innovative, and a sustainable, rapidly scalable way to build moonshot robotics,” says Pieter Abbeel, professor in AI and robotics at UC Berkeley, co-founder and chief scientist at Covariant, and long-time scientific advisor to Electric Sheep. “As this model

scales, ESR is poised to build an RL factory to train AI agents for sustainable outdoor work. I’m excited to support their mission.”

Electric Sheep’s ML models are designed to automate various physical tasks like mowing and sweeping and knowledge work like inventory management, customer success, and marketing.

The robots explore, map, navigate and manipulate the physical world around them including HOAs, parks, university campuses and more. Electric Sheep’s robots don’t require an engineer on site – they can just be shipped to the site and begin tasks alongside the crew.

“Electric Sheep is at a critical point in its growth; acquiring Westar and Caliscapes builds on our successful business model of injecting advanced AI and robotics into traditional landscaping companies and significantly increasing their value,” says Nag Murty, CEO and co-founder of Electric Sheep. “We’re bringing a new business

model to an industry that is ripe for innovation; by acquiring these businesses first and incorporating this full data and AI deployment engine, we are creating a fully scalable and sustainable business that is really a first in the outdoor services market.”

“We continue to acquire companies in major metro areas that have a strong customer base, well-maintained equipment and exceptional facilities,” says Jarrett Herold, COO and co-founder of Electric Sheep. “In California in particular, electrification is a major priority, and starting in 2024, the sale of new gas-powered blowers, mowers, weed trimmers and chainsaws will be banned in the state. With both Westar and Caliscapes based in California, we are building out our footprint to bring electrification to landscaping for regions that are demanding it. We will also be focusing on implementing robotics for tasks like fire abatement which is becoming a more urgent issue for counties in California.”

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## Bland Landscaping Company acquires Foster Lake & Pond Management in North Carolina

Foster Lake & Pond Management provides lake, pond, stormwater and fishery management services to commercial customers in several North Carolina markets.

**BLAND LANDSCAPING COMPANY**, a North Carolina provider of commercial landscaping management services, has acquired Foster Lake & Pond Management of Garner, N.C.

Foster Lake & Pond Management, founded in 1983 by Johnny Foster, provides lake, pond, stormwater and fishery management services to commercial customers in the Raleigh/Durham “Triangle” and Charlotte markets.

“We have known and worked with the Foster Lake & Pond Management team for many years and have the utmost respect

for the business Johnny has built,” says Kurt Bland, Bland Landscaping’s president and CEO.

Bland Landscaping, based in Apex, is a full-service provider of landscape design, installation, enhancement and maintenance services. Its customers include offices, hospitals, universities, municipalities and homeowner associations statewide, including the Triangle, Triad, Charlotte and Coastal regions. In 2023, Bland Landscaping ranked 52nd on the Lawn & Landscape Top 100 list.

## Bartlett Tree lands pair of acquisitions

The company expands by acquiring Emery's Tree Service and Butler Brothers.

**BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS** has opened a new office in Greer, South Carolina, with the acquisition of Emery's Tree Service.

For the past 32 years, Emery's Tree Service has provided tree care to commercial and residential clients in the Upstate region.

"Bartlett Tree Experts is a family business that has been a leader in our industry for 117 years," says owner Scott Emery. "Customers can rely on local attention from a team of highly skilled arborists with a commitment to exceptional customer service, quality, and safety."

As part of the acquisition, the entire team from Emery's Tree Service has joined Bartlett in its new Greer office, including an Arborist Representative and six production team members.

"Emery's allows us to expand our full range of scientific tree care services while continuing to honor our commitment to exceptional safety, science, technology, and business," says Jim Ingram, president and chief operating officer of Bartlett Tree Experts.

Meanwhile, Bartlett also acquired Butler Brothers in Metairie, Louisiana.

For the past 23 years, Butler Brothers has provided tree care in New Orleans and surrounding areas and was owned by Paul and Tim Butler.

"Bartlett's arboricultural research facility supports its offices in delivering the most advanced scientific tree care solutions available," Paul Butler says. "Customers can rely on local attention from highly skilled arborists with a commitment to customer service and safety."

"The Butler brothers built their business through hard work and integrity and their success made them an attractive company for Bartlett Tree Experts to bring onboard," says Patrick Brewer, vice president of Bartlett's southwest division. "Our team in the New Orleans office is excited to grow with our new colleagues, as we expand Bartlett's scientific plant health care services to benefit our clients' trees and landscapes."

## Barefoot acquires Bob Jenkins Pest & Lawn Services in Texas

Bob Jenkins Pest & Lawn Services has operated in San Antonio, Texas, since 1987.

**BAREFOOT MOSQUITO & PEST CONTROL**, a portfolio company of Incline Equity Partners, has acquired Bob Jenkins Pest & Lawn Services.

Bob Jenkins Pest & Lawn Services has operated in San Antonio, Texas, since 1987. Founded by Robert E. Jenkins and his wife, Catherine, Bob Jenkins Pest & Lawn Services began as a family owned and operated company. Robert and Catherine's daughter, Paula, joined the company and still works there today. Mike Davison joined the company as a manager in 2008 and quickly expanded its services to include lawn care.

Incline Equity Partners is a private equity firm dedicated to investing across the middle market in distribution, business services and manufacturing companies. Incline's typical investment types are ownership transitions for privately held businesses, buyouts and corporate divestitures within the U.S. and Canada.

"This partnership with Barefoot Mosquito & Pest Control marks an exciting chapter for our company," Davidson says. "We believe that their experience and resources will play a pivotal role in further enhancing our capabilities and expanding our reach. We are eager to embark on this journey of growth and innovation."

## Ruppert acquires The Greenery of Charleston

The Greenery of Charleston, a sister company of The Greenery, Inc., serves customers in Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, James Island, Johns Island, Kiawah Island and Summerville.

**RUPPERT LANDSCAPE**, a provider of commercial landscaping services, is pleased to announce it has expanded its services in South Carolina with the acquisition of The Greenery of Charleston.

The Greenery of Charleston is also a sister company of The Greenery, Inc., which landed on Lawn & Landscape's 2023 Top 100 list at no. 28.

Owned and operated for 15 years by Andrew Dupps, The Greenery of Charleston is a commercial landscape maintenance and installation provider in the Charleston market. Together with partners Dennis Hensley and Tom Murray, along with the support of approximately 320 team members, the company serves customers in Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, James Island, Johns Island,

Kiawah Island and Summerville.

The acquisition of The Greenery of Charleston aligns with Ruppert's vision to continue to expand the company's footprint within current and adjacent markets.

"We are eager to enter the South Carolina market through this partnership with The Greenery of Charleston," says Phil Key, CEO of Ruppert Landscape.



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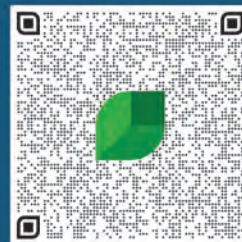
"Aspire offered so much more. It gave us the ability to go in depth on everything we were missing."

**Joseph M.**  
Operations Manager

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## Stanley Black & Decker names new president

Denny Docherty will oversee the company's Independent Dealer Channel.

**DENNY DOCHERTY** has joined the Stanley Black & Decker as its new president, commercial outdoor. In this role, Docherty will oversee the company's Independent Dealer Channel, which includes the Independent Retail & Post-Sales Support teams. Docherty will take over the role from Gary Lobaza upon his retirement at the end of March 2024.

Docherty brings more than 30 years of experience in the outdoor power equipment industry to Stanley Black & Decker, most recently spending the last 23 years at John Deere in sales leadership, marketing and strategy roles.

Docherty began his career with MTD Products, which was acquired by Stanley Black & Decker in 2022.

## Diller promoted to president of Landscape Leadership

A 25-year green industry veteran, Chad Diller formerly held the title of vice president with the marketing company.

**LANDSCAPE LEADERSHIP**, a marketing and sales agency for the lawn and landscape industry, has announced the promotion of Chad Diller to the role of president. Formerly the vice president, Diller's elevation to this pivotal position marks a new era for the agency.

"Chad's forward-thinking vision and extensive practical experience make him the ideal leader to guide our agency into this new era of innovation and excellence," says Chris Heiler, CEO of Landscape Leadership.

Diller began as a lawn and tree technician in 1998, then worked as an account manager before finding his passion for marketing.

"The lawn and landscape industry is defined by its leaders. We must be on the cutting edge of marketing initiatives that blaze a trail," Diller says. "That's what I aim to give back to our clients, team and industry peers."

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# Glenn Jacobsen passes away at 65

Jacobsen founded the New Jersey-based Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction in 1979.

**GLENN JACOBSEN** passed away Jan. 8 after a battle with glioblastoma brain cancer. He was 65.

Jacobsen was founder of Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction in 1979.

He was a 2009 Lawn & Landscape Leadership Award winner.

According to his 2009 profile, Jacobsen started in the landscaping business at a young age, when he was in his mid-teens. His father was a part-time tree trimmer who also operated a small greenhouse.

Jacobsen earned his associate degree in ornamental horticulture when he started his own company. "When I was in high school, I started my own landscaping business working in neighbor's yards," he said in 2009. "I went to college only a couple of years. For the past 32 years, I have run my own business."



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— Robert Clinkenbeard, CEO, Wilson360



## Vroman joins Wilson360

Brandt Vroman will serve as a strategy consultant, leadership coach and CEO peer group facilitator.

**BRANDT VROMAN** has joined the Wilson360 team as a strategy consultant, leadership coach and CEO peer group facilitator.

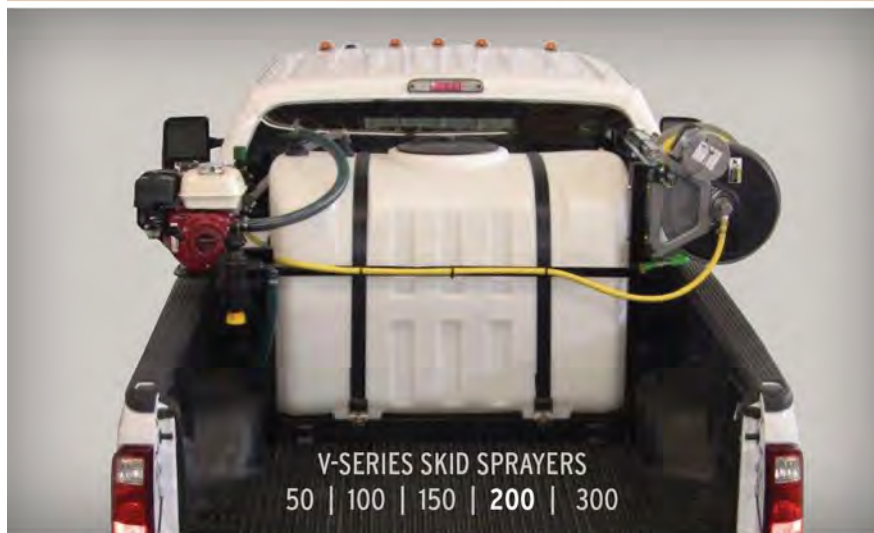
Vroman’s four-decade experience in the landscape industry included being a startup founder of Northwest Landscape Services of Oregon, which was sold to The Brickman Group in 2007. Post-acquisition, he remained with Brickman as Western Regional Manager, overseeing Oregon, Washington, Colorado, California, Arizona, Nevada and Texas. He subsequently served as a strategic implementation partner with Boston Consulting Group during its engagement with Brickman.

“Brandt’s deep experience and expertise as a landscape entrepreneur and business leader will ensure that our firm remains pre-eminent in landscape management consulting across all aspects of our capabilities,” says Wilson360 CEO, Robert Clinkenbeard.

Vroman received his Masters in Business Administration from Marylhurst University in Lake Oswego, Oregon, and a Bachelor of Science in Ornamental Horticulture from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Originally from Laguna Beach, California, Vroman and his family reside in Oregon.

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## FMC launches Durentis

This formulation provides lawn care operators protection from above and below ground chewing pests, including all species of grubs and Fall Armyworms.

**FMC CORPORATION** has received federal registration enabling the commercial launch of Durentis insecticide. This proprietary formulation provides lawn care operators and golf course superintendents season-long protection from above and below ground chewing pests, including all species of grubs and Fall Armyworms. FMC announced the upcoming availability of the new insecticide at various lawn care events in 2023. However, the official launch will occur at the GCSAA Conference and Trade Show in Phoenix earlier this month.

Durentis is a highly concentrated formulation of the active ingredient chlorantraniliprole with the lowest use rates in the diamide class of chemistry and requires a single application for season-long control. It is fast acting and provides a zone of protection around the roots, and its systemic properties allow upward translocation. These unique physical properties allow Durentis to quickly move into the turf — protecting it without the need for excessive irrigation.

“Customer input led to the development of Durentis,” says Mike Sisti, FMC North America marketing manager. “Ongoing customer conversations and collaboration with FMC’s R&D team guided the development of this new tool for well-maintained lawns and golf courses.”

FMC’s comprehensive portfolio of fungicides, herbicides and insecticides provides turf and ornamental growers, golf and lawn care professionals, as well as pest management professionals, with differentiated solutions designed to help promote healthy turf and plant growth, while efficiently controlling pests. ■

**“Customer input led to the development of Durentis. Ongoing customer conversations and collaboration with FMC’s R&D team guided the development of this new tool for well-maintained lawns and golf courses.”**

— Mike Sisti, FMC North America marketing manager



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TRAVELS WITH JIM follows Jim Huston around the country as he visits with landscapers and helps them understand their numbers to make smarter decisions.

# “WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND IT IS US.”

→ MY COMMANDING OFFICER ASKED ME, “Captain Huston, what’s the biggest challenge that we face in today’s Marine Corps?” He then pointed to a Pogo cartoon on his wall where a befuddled Pogo was gazing at his reflection in a mirror. The caption under it read, “We have met the enemy and it is us.” Conclusion: We are our biggest challenge.

During a recent Lawn & Landscape magazine State of the Industry webinar, the question was asked, “What’s going to be a CEO’s biggest challenge in 2024?” I thought about the economy, high interest and inflation rates, labor, the 2024 elections and so forth. I then remembered Pogo and my CO’s cartoon on his wall.

**GROWING AN ORGANIZATION BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.** In order for a business to grow externally (sales), it first has to grow internally (people and systems). To do so, the primary driver behind this growth is the CEO. If the CEO doesn’t grow, neither will the business. The CEO has to be constantly aware of two things: first are opportunities that the organization can pursue; second are threats that jeopardize the organization’s existence and/or profitability.

Effective CEOs have to be able to master four traits: First, he or she has to be able to build a results-oriented team that flourishes within the organization; next, they have to be able to implement systems that effectively control the flow of business; third, they must be effective networkers both within and without their industry; and finally, and most importantly, they must understand the role of a CEO, which is the ability to distinguish the difference between effectiveness and efficiency. Those who master these traits usually build great teams and achieve significant success. In other words, they build an organization that is perpetually successful and where people flourish.

**HOW IT WORKS IN THE REAL WORLD.** Building an effective organization is like building sand castles on the beach. The tide is constantly working to tear down what you’ve built. You have to build faster than the ocean’s ability to wash it all away. Entropy in the form of chaos is your constant enemy. You and your team build while entropy attempts to destroy it all. Most entrepreneurs aren’t prepared for this kind of challenge; however, the skills to do so can be learned.

Because the barrier to entry into the green industry is so low, many — probably most — green industry entrepreneurs enter it with minimal entrepreneurial or managerial skills. Even a degree in business does little to prepare you for owning a business. I’ve coached hundreds and interacted with thousands of entrepreneurs over my 37-year career in this industry. It’s a learn by hard-knocks and trial-by-error training program. Unfortunately, many don’t make it and the casualty rate is very high. This is primarily because these entrepreneurs do not understand the role of a CEO and incorporate the appropriate skills into their business skillset.

**EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER.** In the introduction to the audio book version of Peter Drucker’s book, “The Effective Executive,” Jim Collins, author of the classic, “Good To Great,” tells us that Drucker is the management guru of all management gurus. He’s the best and most insightful organizational consultant of all time. Drucker tells us that managers make sure that things get done right. Leaders, on the other hand, make sure that the right things get done. The first is about efficiency, but the latter is about effectiveness. Effective CEOs learn how to focus on the right things at the right time. They delegate things that require efficiency to trusted managers while they focus on strategic items — that which no one else can do. They intentionally and consciously avoid the trap of straightening deck chairs on the deck of a sinking ship. They master the art of being an effective CEO because they work at it and learn from the experience(s) of others.

**CONCLUSION.** What’s going to be your biggest challenge in 2024? You could list dozens of possible items to head this list. However, Peter Drucker and Pogo would disagree. Your biggest challenge this year (and any year) is not an item on a list. It’s managing yourself. For many of us, it’s learning how to manage ourselves that is so difficult. Green industry entrepreneurs who grow externally first grow internally. Remember, think in terms of opportunities and threats to your company, and then build your team, your systems and network like crazy. Study to understand your role as a CEO. I’d encourage you to start by reading (I prefer listening to the audio version) Drucker’s book, “The Effective Executive.” You’ll be glad (and more effective) when you do. **L&L**

### THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR CEOs THIS YEAR

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**WORDS OF WILSON** features a rotating panel of consultants from Wilson360, a landscape consulting firm.

# PRICING FOR PROFIT

→ **THE BEST WAY TO ATTAIN** profitability is to get pricing right. Yet, for all its importance, an effective pricing strategy that maximizes profitability can be an ongoing challenge. In fact, how to price strategically is one of the how-to questions I get asked most often.

There are four critical factors to build a good pricing strategy: It has to take into account the market you work in; it has to support the long-term sustainability of your company; it has to connect with what your customers' value; and it needs constant monitoring and adjustment for you to cover your costs and remain competitive.

**COST AND SCOPE OF WORK.** Profitable pricing starts by understanding the true cost of delivering your services in order to determine the minimum price you need to charge to break even. Consider your fixed and variable costs; your labor, materials and sub-contractor costs. Some contractors develop unit pricing — cost plus mark-up — which can be good for small jobs and a way to give your customer a quick number.

Pricing larger jobs can be done a number of ways. Some contractors develop an hourly rate for routine maintenance jobs. The hourly rate will include labor, materials, equipment, overhead and profit. This doesn't allow for variables, which can result in over- or under-charging.

In my career, I priced work by developing the direct cost and then pricing to hit a certain gross margin. That might be a 50% gross margin, which is easy math because you just double the direct cost. The gross margin is the overhead and profit.

**ECONOMIES OF SCALE.** When you reach a point where your production becomes efficient and your overhead declines as a cost percentage of sales, this savings translates to profit. The larger your business, the more you can lower and save cost and be more flexible in pricing. Any plans you have on the drawing board for the new branch, service or strategic new hires need to include a way to pivot if it doesn't work out. Add overhead carefully and have a plan for accountability to ensure that each growth step is a good return on investment.

**PRICING LARGE MAINTENANCE ACCOUNTS.** When pursuing desirable maintenance contracts, you often have to be low, price aggressively or very competitively to get the client to change contractors. Do this on jobs that have the potential to add value.

When you take over the job, double down on performance and ask for a price increase at renewal time. If the client goes out to bid, the client is loyal to low price. So, while it might have been a desirable job, it's not a desirable client.

You are not going to make the same gross margin on large accounts — jobs with one or more full time people on site, such as a multi-acre campus, mixed-use retail, resort or HOA — as you do on smaller jobs. The best pricing strategy in this case is to price the direct cost as normal, and then break down the equipment cost by piece, associated cost, maintenance, repairs, fuel, plus the amount of indirect supervision and any overhead that is not required to do the job.

For example, you might be able to use an on-site yard for equipment or staging. So maybe you don't charge for all the yard cost in your overhead in your pricing, or you do not charge the normal part of your administrative labor for accounting since you only send one invoice. In this case, your overhead for bigger jobs may end up being less.

**ESTIMATING JOB COSTS.** Comparing jobs being estimated to existing jobs that you already have that are similar in scope and category — such as HOAs — is a good way to validate your estimates. To get the best result, I estimate three ways: 1) I review production rates; 2) ask my field supervisor or ops manager, who probably knows the job better than me, to give me their production rates; and 3) compare the estimates to benchmarks properties having more or less the same footprint and requirements. **L&L**

↓  
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## CREAM OF THE CROP

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CREAM OF THE CROP features a rotating panel from the Harvest Group, a landscape business consulting company.

# DECISIONS, DECISIONS

→ IN THE LANDSCAPING INDUSTRY, decision making involves a delicate balance between art and science, combining emotional intuition, experience-based gut feelings and factual data. With more than 30 years of experience as a landscape business owner, and more than 20 as a consultant and coach, I can attest to the complexity of this process and its critical importance in moving a company forward successfully.

Poor decisions not only result in financial losses — sometimes substantial — but also cause significant delays in achieving company goals, potentially stretching for months or even years.

In our business, there are essentially three main areas that require decisions: strategic, operational and financial. The key is to employ a unified decision-making framework that applies consistent criteria across these areas, ensuring that decisions align with the company's objectives regardless of the specific area.

**PLANNING.** One effective way to aid the decision-making process for owners is to conduct annual planning sessions with your staff. During these sessions, the company's vision, mission and values are reviewed and clarified for everyone. When each of these aspects is crystal clear to all team members, future decisions in these areas become straightforward. For instance, if during the season an account manager has the opportunity of offering a proposal to "Mr. Big Shot in Paradise Cove," it's evident that this conflicts with the prior decision made during the planning session to focus exclusively on commercial projects. Therefore, the decision on how to proceed has already been made.

**OVERTHINKING.** Overthinking and indecisiveness often act as significant roadblocks to a company's progress. Many owners find themselves paralyzed when faced with various choices, leading to inaction. This frustration extends to their employees, causing the company to stagnate. In such cases it becomes clear that the owner needs help with this problem.

**DECISION FATIGUE.** Another substantial challenge is decision fatigue experienced by many owners. This issue significantly impacts a business owner's ability to make sound decisions. It typically arises due to a lack of delegation and the absence of time away from work to clear the owner's mind. This is precisely why taking breaks from the business, attending industry conferences and going on vacations are crucial.

**TECHNOLOGY.** In today's world, technology plays a pivotal role in decision-making. Embracing technological advancements and understanding how to assess new tools are critical for staying ahead in the landscaping industry. For example, modern software can automate the scheduling of multiple jobs, eliminating the need for constant decision-making in this area.

**PRACTICAL DECISION EXAMPLE.** Now, let me provide an example of the criteria necessary for making a well-informed decision. Suppose everyone in the company agrees that to fulfill the company's vision and mission, an improved software system is needed because the current one is inadequate. For the sake of this example, let's say the team has narrowed down their options to two software programs.

Together, they should review and put to writing their findings in each of the following eight areas when making the decision:

**Purpose:** Define the software's purpose and how it will benefit the business.

**Comparison:** List the features of both software products including functionalities, unique features, additional tools and how each software aligns with your specific needs.

**Usability:** Assess the user-friendliness of both options. Arrange demos to gain hands-on experience or consult with other business owners for their opinions.

**Integration:** Evaluate how well each software will work with your existing systems and whether integration will disrupt current workflows.

**Cost:** Compare the upfront and long-term costs of both options.

**Customer Support:** Speak with current users of each software to gauge the quality of customer support.

**Testimonials:** Look for customer reviews, testimonials and case studies. Spending time with current users of each software is essential.

**Flexibility:** Consider the adaptability of each software to accommodate future changes in your business needs.

Can you imagine making such a crucial decision without conducting the due diligence as described above? Unfortunately, this happens every day. As mentioned earlier, the key is to remove emotions from the decision-making process and select the best choice based on these criteria and other factors that the company deems important. And, like when purchasing a car, don't let salespeople cloud the facts.

These insights and strategies provide only a glimpse into the intricate world of decision-making. If you are interested in delving deeper and equipping yourself with more comprehensive tools and knowledge, watch for details on my March webinar titled "Making Better Decisions." The webinar goes beyond conventional formats, offering practical, real-life scenarios that can transform your decision-making process.

I hope this information on making better decisions will help you "Harvest Your Potential." L&L

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**WOMEN IN LANDSCAPING** is a column brought to you in partnership with the National Association of Landscape Professionals.

# Chelsea Hartshorn

Co-Founder of Threadleaf Landscape Design

**EMBARKING ON THE JOURNEY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP** and parenthood simultaneously has been a voyage into uncharted waters. In 2023, life presented me with two of my most significant roles: having our second child and launching a landscape design company. Each role is demanding, fulfilling and intricate, and balancing them has been both my greatest challenge and my most profound achievement.

In my daily life, I navigate the complexities of running a new business while nurturing my baby and four-year-old. The early mornings are a delicate dance of checking emails with an infant in my arms and a rambunctious toddler. Nap times are aligned with client consultations or drafting design proposals. Time management, once a simple concept in my pre-parental life, has now become a critical lifeline. It's about making the most of the quiet moments before dawn, nap times and the hours after bedtime. Each day is a carefully choreographed routine of prioritizing tasks.

The unpredictable nature of both a new business and a baby means that flexibility and adaptability are not just valuable — they are essential. Some days, the to-do list is a series

of checked boxes; other days, it's about embracing the unexpected and finding joy in the spontaneity of life.

Parenthood has profoundly transformed my perspective on my business. The relentless pursuit of perfection in every landscape design has given way to an appreciation for the unknown. I've grown more empathetic toward my clients and my team, understanding that each project we undertake is not just about creating beautiful spaces but about crafting stories and experiences for our clients and ourselves. The emotional depth of balancing these two worlds is often overwhelming. The love for my young children, the passion for my young business and moments of self-doubt are intertwined in this journey. Yet, each challenge faced and each milestone achieved brings a deeper sense of fulfillment and purpose.

I remember an instance where a critical project deadline coincided with a significant milestone in my child's life. This conflict brought into sharp focus the delicate balancing act between my professional responsibilities and my parental duties. Choosing to be present for my child's milestone while entrusting my team with crucial aspects of the project was not just a decision; it was a profound lesson in setting priorities and building trust.

Patience, once a virtue, has now become a necessity — understanding that growth, be it in a child or a business, is a process that cannot be hastened. Efficiency has taken on a new meaning — maximizing productivity in the limited time available. Empathy has become a cornerstone — the ability to connect on a deeper level with clients and colleagues, recognizing our shared experiences of life's challenges and joys. The journey of balancing business and parenthood is an ever-evolving process. There are days when the scales tip more toward one aspect than the other, and I've learned to embrace this imbalance as part of a larger, enriching journey. It's not just about managing two separate parts of my life; it's about integrating them into a harmonious whole.

Looking forward, I am filled with optimism and excitement. Each new landscape project and each developmental milestone of my children are reminders of the beauty and resilience of growth. With each passing day, as my children grow and my business flourishes, I am reminded of the limitless potential that lies in the harmonious blend of nurturing a family and cultivating a business. **L&L**

*Chelsea Hartshorn is an active member of the National Association of Landscape Professionals Women in Landscape Network (powered by Envu) which provides a forum for industry professionals to support each other's professional growth. The Network is free to all industry professionals.*

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TALK ABOUT  
*CULTURE.*”

RICH CURRAN, PICTURED HERE, VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND OPERATIONS AT VANDE HEY COMPANY





# WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

This is the question the people at **Vande Hey Company** asked two years ago, and it triggered a long-term cultural revitalization that is igniting a team spirit, profitability and a fulfilling lifestyle for its people.

STORY BY  
KRISTEN HAMPSHIRE

PHOTOS BY  
STACY JEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

“I never met a company in any industry that doesn’t talk about culture,” says Rich Curran, vice president of sales and operations at Vande Hey Company (VHC) in Appleton, Wisconsin. “Mostly, if you ask what the culture is, they will give you a trite answer. They can’t really define it.”

Curran likens it to telling a child to clean up his room and growing frustrated with the results. “It’s not cleaned to the way you want it because you never taught the child how to do the job,” he says.

It’s back to the adage, “Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Similarly, the VHC leadership team recognized that how the company conducts business, and the experiences it creates internally and externally, must be clearly defined and put in writing. VHC is a third-generation family business with Andy Vande Hey at the helm, and the company is working on its 75th anniversary, founded in 1950. The company generated more than \$13 million in 2023 revenue and employs more than 100 employees.

VHC started as lawn installation expanded into landscaping, patios — then landscape lighting, sunrooms, athletics and pools. In spring 2023, VHC opened a pop-up showroom and garden center at the Fox River Mall campus so guests could experience and learn about its range of outdoor living solutions as what they call the largest provider in northeast Wisconsin.

Like any growing, evolving business, VHC recognized its expansion and inherent labor challenges had resulted in some inconsistencies.

A culture revival was in order.



Andy Vande Hey has overseen significant growth since COVID-19.

The initiative started on the heels of COVID-19 in a brainstorming session that was kind of awkward at first. “It was, ‘Wait, what are we doing?’” Curran says, adding that the initial session prompted those involved — 10 senior managers — to identify some fundamentals for the company. Basically, what does it take to be successful as a team member and what should clients expect from a VHC experience?

“The first couple of meetings, everyone was trying to be poetic,” Curran says with a laugh. “It was very obvious that people had been looking at templates on how to do this and we were trying to be so perfect in the way we said things.”

Real talk emerged when the team discussed what VHC could do to be itself and not like other companies. “What’s really important to us?” Curran says.




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**“AS WE CONTINUED TO GROW AND BRING ON NEW EMPLOYEES, THAT CONSISTENCY OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE ABOUT WAS STARTING TO GET... *CONFUSED.*”**

— RICH CURRAN, VANDE HEY COMPANY

There was no target number of fundamentals like a top 10 or core five, which might fit a marketing mold but wasn't what VHC was after. The team landed on 34 fundamentals. “And they speak clearly to who we are, what we are about, our expectations to be a part of this organization — and we do not waver from that,” Curran says.

Of course, it all sounds easy when you read it on paper. But the process, the adoption and truly living these fundamentals is the real story.

**WHO DO WE WANT TO BE?** It's not that the system was broken. “It was inconsistent,” Curran says.

“Like a lot of companies, we have employees who have been here a long time, and they understand the way we do things,” he explains. “Some are better at teaching. Some are more demanding. As we continued to grow and bring on new employees, that consistency of who we are and what we are about was starting to get...confused.”

With the pandemic exacerbating an always-tough labor situation, VHC, like others in the industry, was



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When company leaders sat down to reshape Vande Hey Company, they devised charity and incentive programs to live out their fundamentals.

running into situations where employees would come on board from other landscape operations and bring “a mix of values” that further stirred the pot. Also, there’s the generational piece as a third-generation business employing the old and new schools — tech-adverse folks and digital natives.

“We said, ‘We can keep getting frustrated, or we can clearly define what behaviors we want, from how we treat each other to what we do on jobsites and how we interact with customers,’” Curran says. “If you don’t clearly define that, employees will define it for you.”

Management held some training and coaching meetings to learn more about the process of creating values before rolling into that first fundamentals brain dump. As for the ideas bouncing around the room, “They were all over the board,” Curran says.

The team considered what qualities exist that it wants to sustain — and what must-haves were waning or missing completely that needed to be integrated into the VHC so it could advance for the next 75 years of its life as a family business.

For one, the company has a very low workers’ compensation rat-



ing with few accidents on record. “We are very deliberate and intentional about that,” Curran says. So, the No. 1 fundamental is “think safe, work safe.”

Curran says, “Sometimes, we noticed our employees will filter comments when they really do need to speak their minds. We want to create an environment where everyone’s ideas are legitimately welcome at the table.”

That led to the fundamental, “speak straight.” It requires open doors and open minds. “The best ideas can come from anyone, anywhere in the business,” he says.

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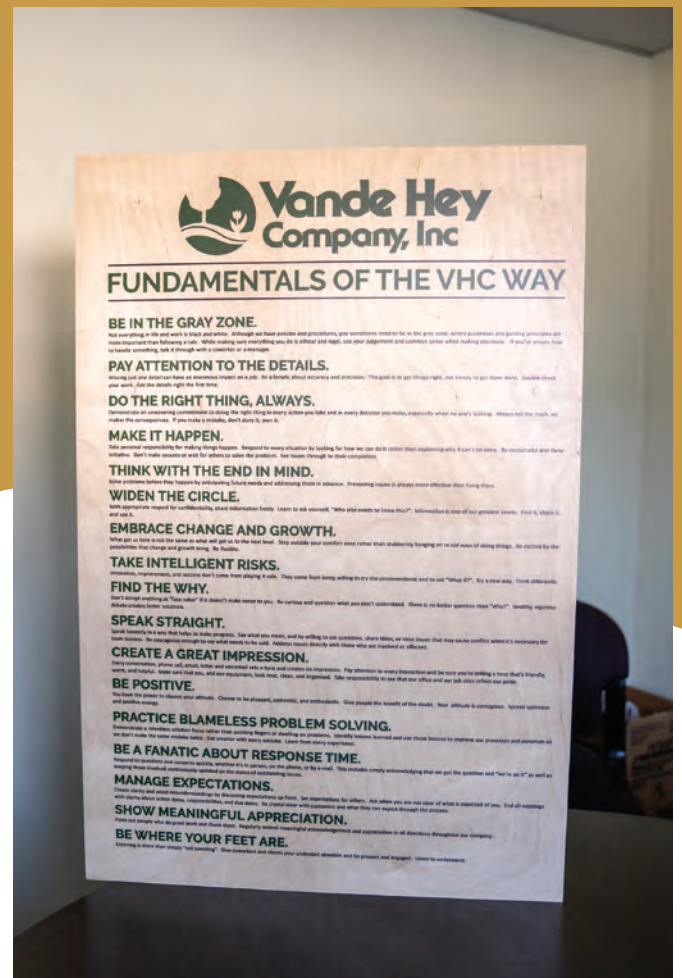
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Vande Hey Company developed 34 fundamentals, including “speak straight,” which means good ideas can come from anyone.



This prompted the “diversity of thought, background and experiences” fundamental. Following it is the importance of being a lifelong learner and leading with education. “We have an educated team and are leaders in the industry, and we encourage our people to continuously learn,” Curran says, adding that this means attending conferences and participating in company training — including personal and professional development segments the team records on a weekly basis.

“Walk in customers’ shoes,” is another biggie. “Honor your commitments and make sure you give back,” Curran adds, rattling off more VHC tenets.

So, the fundamentals flowed.

And to be sure they didn’t land on a wall placard or web page to sit static, “We put our money where our mouth is,” Curran says. For instance, related to giving back, VHC established a foundation. The first 10% of all profits go to the foundation and are distributed to charitable organizations in the community.

The next 20% of profits go to employees through a profit-sharing program that is disbursed quarterly and at years-end. “We are in this together, we lose and win together, and we are going to live in this family we call a human enterprise business in the landscape industry,” Curran says.

**THE FUNDAMENTALS IN ACTION.** What started as a “clunky” process, Curran says, evolved into an inspired, energized mission and vision — basically a guide of how to do VHC and life. The management cohort that assembled the 34 fundamentals rolled them out at a company-wide meeting.

“It was a great team-building event, too,” Curran says, adding that employees were

broken up into small, deliberately cross-departmental groups of six or seven. “We asked them to discuss the fundamental that is most difficult for them, which is easiest, then hash out why,” he says.

Breakout sessions involved presenting common challenges, then addressing how applying the fundamentals can solve problems. “When people look at our fundamentals list, the first thing they said was, ‘I get it from a work perspective, but most of them are about life,’” Curran says.

Exactly. That’s the idea.

VHC launched a program called Diane Dollars, named after Andy’s late mother, which encourages employees to recognize each other for living out a fundamental (or many). They can use Diane Dollars at the annual company party for prizes like power tools and flat-screen TVs.





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“Now, on a regular basis, we’ll hear employees calling out a fundamental like, ‘Hey, that’s not speaking straight,’” Curran says. “So, we are self-policing, and every business owner wants a culture where employees are holding each other accountable to upholding standards.”

With Culture Cash Dollars, employees can also earn prizes for living out the values. “We are constantly calling out examples,” says Kelly Smith, marketing director. “We might say, ‘Because of this situation, we saved X dollars on equipment this year.’ The more examples we have been able to share during the last two years, there’s a greater understanding of putting the fundamentals to work and their impact.”

The language is more than words: It’s actionable and in play.

VHC’s implementation has made its fundamentals part of what it stands for. “If employees can regurgitate a fundamental on a daily basis and put it back out there, that tells me they are embracing it and living it,” Curran says.

“Also, there are measurables, such as the foundation and profit-sharing plan. By eliminating waste, preventing damage and walking in customers’ shoes, we are now seeing the fruit of that and 2022 was overwhelmingly the best



Kelly Smith  
Marketing Director

## ▶ CAPTURING CULTURE | ON-THE-SPOT VIDEOS

**CULTURE CAN AND SHOULD** be a tangible concept.

To engage team members in its fundamentals, Vande Hey Company launched a weekly video series that focuses on one of the 34 values every week with a two-minute lesson-learned presentation delivered by management or staff.

“It’s a great way to get to know your coworkers and the videos are insightful and some of them are super-creative,”

says Kelly Smith, the company’s marketing director.

For example, one delivered by President Andy Vande Hey is titled, “Be where your feet are.” He reminds, “Listening is more than not speaking. Give coworkers and clients your undivided attention and be present and engaged. Listen to understand.”

A dispatch from employee Angela in the field was titled, “Keep things fun.” She relayed, “Stuff happens. Keep

perspective, don’t take things personally or take yourself too seriously. Laugh every day.”

Team member Luke encourages, “Take intelligent risks. Innovation, improvement and success don’t come from playing it safe. They come from being willing to try the unconventional and ask, ‘What if?’ Try a new way. Think differently.”

Smith says of the videos, “It’s a present part of our day-to-day.”



Vande Hey's Phil Prokas is one of the team's 100+ employees.

year in company history by a long shot," Curran reports.

VHC grew 8% from 2021 to 2022, growing by \$2 million and more than \$1 million from 2022 to 2023 to approximately \$13 million. Curran emphasizes, "It's organic growth and because we are seeing a significant improvement in quality and consistency across the board, and we are attracting a high level of employee," he says.

There are more and better applicants, which is ultimately what triggered this whole process. "When the number of employees leaving plummets and the number of team members who come to VHC for a career skyrockets, it tells me we are on to something," Curran says, acknowledging that four years ago, the revolving door was beginning to become a problem. "That has almost gone away."

**THIS IS A LIFESTYLE.** Now at VHC, there is more clarity and focus. People feel empowered. They're making decisions with confidence, working more efficiently and engaging more intentionally with customers on the job site.

Not to mention, gradually after implementing the fundamentals, employees who decidedly would not rise to the standards self-selected out of the ranks. This attrition was healthy for the company and its revitalized culture.

Curran says, "This is not just a program. This is a lifestyle, and we hold people accountable to it."

He adds, "We do not waver — this is who we are, and it did take employees some time to realize, "This is not a rah-rah-rah speech."

To be expected, there were a handful of toxic people on the team spreading negative chatter about fundamentals and the culture shift. "Every time one of them left,

the culture took another step forward," Curran says. Within six to 12 months, everyone on board was really on board.

The results of implementing VHC fundamentals are personally fulfilling for team members, he adds. For instance, with the formation of a foundation, they realize their hard work generates dollars to do good for



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# “WE ARE CREATING A LIFETIME OF CHANGE HERE.”

— RICH CURRAN, VANDE HEY COMPANY

organizations that matter to them. “When your employees see you stand by your values and see we are giving money we all worked for to establish a foundation, they want to be part of that,” Curran says. “It changes the person, and when people love where they work, they go home differently.”

More and more, the conversation Curran overhears is focused on a career vs. “this is my job.”

“And this is a great industry to make a career out of and support your family,” he says. “I see the rolling impact for our employees — offshoots of this process, including the support we now offer like financial counseling if employees want or need it.”

Perhaps the most exciting aspect is, the initiative is young. “We are still in the baby stage,” Curran says. “We’ve been doing this for two years — that’s nothing. Where will we be 10 years from now?”

And above all, a point of pride and winning outcome for VHC leadership is fostering a workplace community of nearly 100 team members who can support their families, grow and develop their talent, and go home happy.

Curran says, “We are creating a lifetime of change here.” **L&L**

The author is a freelance writer based in Cleveland.



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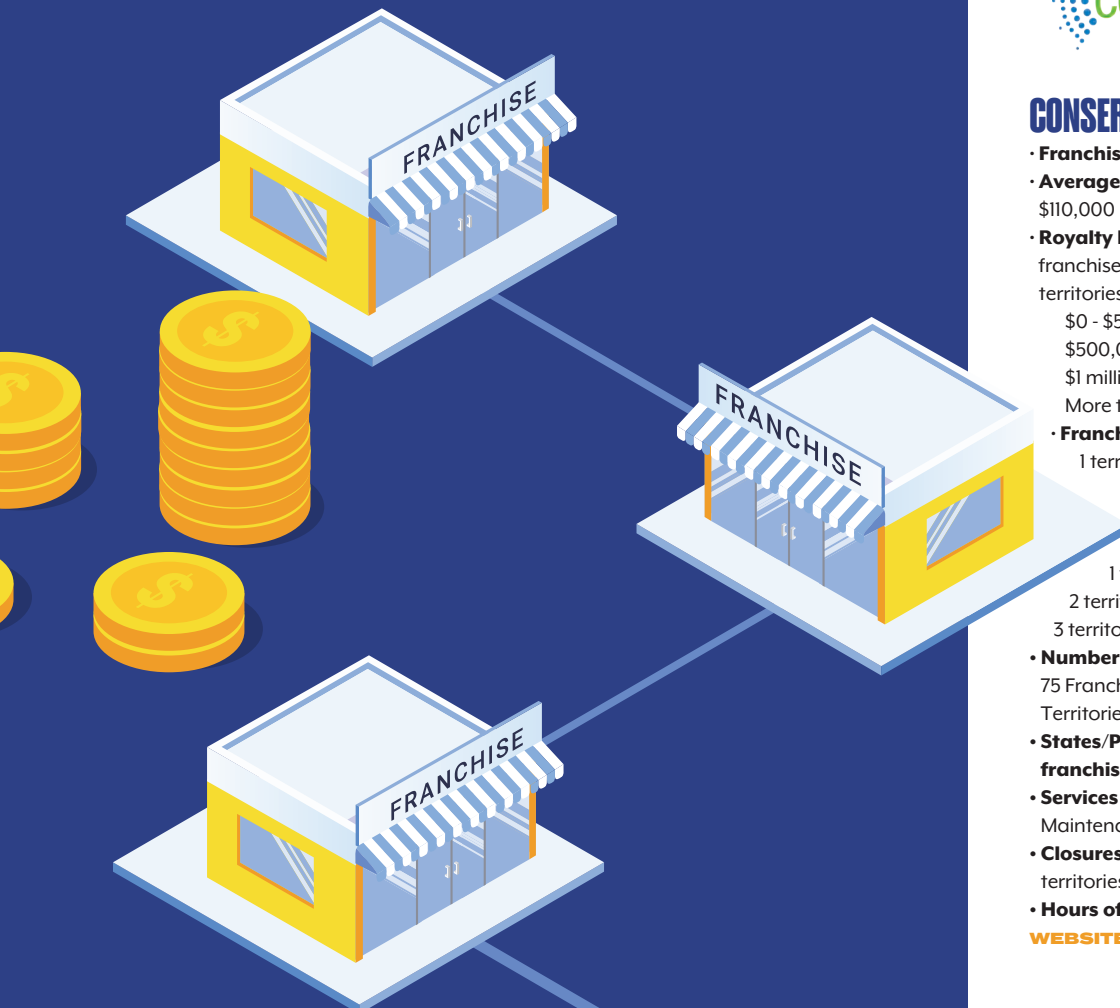
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## CANOPY LAWN CARE

- **Franchising since what year:** 2023
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$25,800 - \$48,200
- **Royalty Fee:** 8%
- **Franchise Fee:** \$49,500
- **Total Investment:** \$80,300 - \$147,700
- **Number of North American Locations:** 5
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma
- **Services offered:** Lawn Care
- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
- **Hours of Training:** 10 days, mixture of virtual and in-person

**WEBSITE:** canopylawncare.com



## CONSERVA IRRIGATION

- **Franchising since what year:** June 2017
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$84,800 - \$110,000
- **Royalty Fee:** Tiered Royalty Table, per franchisee not per territory (assumes territories are contiguous)
  - \$0 - \$500,000: 8%
  - \$500,000 - \$1 million: 7%
  - \$1 million - \$1.5 million: 6%
  - More than \$1.5 million: 5%

• **Franchise Fee:**

- 1 territory: \$49,500
- 2 territories: \$89,500
- 3 territories: \$119,500

• **Total Investment:**

- 1 territory: \$150,000 - \$200,000
- 2 territories: \$200,000 - \$275,000
- 3 territories: \$275,000 - \$350,000

- **Number of North American Locations:** 75 Franchise Owners; 175 Licensed Territories
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** 32
- **Services offered:** Irrigation Repair, Maintenance and Installation
- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 12 territories
- **Hours of Training:** 100

**WEBSITE:** www.irrigationfranchise.com



## GRASSROOTS TURF

- **Franchising since what year:** 2019
  - **Average Initial Investment:** \$150,000
  - **Royalty Fee:** 6%
  - **Franchise Fee:** \$49,500
  - **Total Investment:** \$150,000
  - **Number of North American Locations:** 20
  - **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina
  - **Services offered:** Turf Care, Weed Control, Insect and Disease Control, Aeration, Seeding, Ornamental Care, Mosquito Control
  - **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
  - **Hours of Training:** 160
- WEBSITE:** grassrootsturf.franchise.com



## THE GROUNDS GUYS

- **Franchising since what year:** 2010
  - **Average Initial Investment:** \$79,320 - \$192,470
  - **Royalty Fee:** 5-6% License Fee
  - **Franchise Fee:** \$35,000
  - **Total Investment:** \$79,320 - \$192,470 plus any additional franchise fee
  - **Number of North American Locations:** 265+
  - **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario and all U.S. states, except for Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming, nor District of Columbia or U.S. Territory Puerto Rico
  - **Services offered:** Residential and Commercial services in Lawn & Grounds Maintenance, Outdoor Lighting, Tree & Shrub Maintenance, Landscape Design & Installation, Snow & Ice Service, Artificial Turf Installation & Service, Fertilization – Weed – Pest Service, Flower & Garden Bed Maintenance, Power & Pressure Washing
  - **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 54 territories 2020-22. The 2024 FDD with 2023 info is not published yet.
  - **Hours of Training:** 8 -13 weeks onboard training, plus ongoing self-paced module training.
- WEBSITE:** franchise.neighborly.com/grounds-guys



## JOSHUA TREE

- **Franchising since what year:** 2021
  - **Average Initial Investment:** \$196,760 - \$303,091
  - **Royalty Fee:** 6% of Gross Sales for Gross Sales of up to \$19,231 per week, 5% of Gross Sales of \$19,232 - \$38,462 per week, 4% of Gross Sales of \$38,463 - \$57,692 per week, 3.5% of Gross Sales of \$57,693 or more per week. Subject to a minimum weekly royalty fee requirement depending on the size of your operating territory.
  - **Franchise Fee:** \$49,500
  - **Total Investment:** \$196,760 - \$303,091
  - **Number of North American Locations:** 4
  - **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** Pennsylvania and New York
  - **Services offered:** Joshua Tree Experts started as a general tree services and plant health care company. After nearly a decade, Joshua Tree Experts launched new services, including lawn care and pest control.
  - **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
  - **Hours of Training:** The training consists of one full week at our corporate location and one full week during launch, full week is 50 hours.
- WEBSITE:** joshuatreeexperts.com



## LAWN PRIDE

- **Franchising since what year:** Founded in 1983, but franchising since 2023
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$148,870 - \$167,520
- **Royalty Fee:** 8% License Fee
- **Franchise Fee:** \$40,000
- **Total Investment:** \$148,870 - \$167,520
- **Number of North American Locations:** 23 in the U.S., two of which are corporate owned locations.
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, Tennessee and Virginia.
- **Services offered:** Fertilization, Weed Control, Aeration and Overseeding, Pest Control, Fungicide

- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
  - **Hours of Training:** 8-13 weeks onboard training plus ongoing self-paced module training.
- WEBSITE:** franchise.neighborly.com/lawn-pride



## LAWN SQUAD

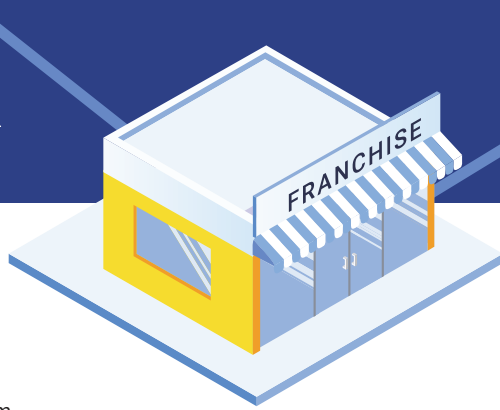
- **Franchising since what year:** 2023
  - **Average Initial Investment:** Total investment for single territory ranges from \$127,054 - \$157,045
  - **Royalty Fee:** 7%
  - **Franchise Fee:** \$45,000
  - **Total Investment:** \$127,054 - \$157,045
  - **Number of North American Locations:** N/A (Corporate locations are still WeedPro)
  - **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** N/A (Territory not open yet)
  - **Services offered:** Lawn Squad offers an array of services, including lawn fertilization and weed control, lawn aeration and seeding, as well as lawn grub and insect control for both residential and commercial properties.
  - **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
  - **Hours of Training:** Approximately 7 weeks (38 hours in classroom, 24 hours on-the-job training)
- WEBSITE:** lawnsquadfranchise.com



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## MANAGE MOWED

- **Franchising since what year:** 2019
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$114,800 - \$245,800
- **Royalty Fee:** 8%
- **Franchise Fee:** \$49,500
- **Total Investment:** \$114,800 - \$245,800
- **Number of North American Locations:** 23
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** 9
- **Services offered:** Full Service Landscape Maintenance, Enhancements, Seasonal Services



- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 4
- **Hours of Training:** 80
- **WEBSITE:** [managemowed.com](http://managemowed.com)



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## MOSQUITO JOE

- **Franchising since what year:** Founded in 2010, but franchising since 2013
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$112,825 - \$153,375
- **Royalty Fee:** 10% License Fee, 2% MAP

- **Franchise Fee:** \$42,500
- **Total Investment:** \$112,825 - \$153,375 plus any additional franchise fee or real estate costs
- **Number of North American Locations:** 440+
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** All U.S. states, except Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, West Virginia and Wyoming, nor U.S. Territory Puerto Rico
- **Services offered:** Barrier Spray, Natural Treatments, Flea Control, Tick Control, Gnat Control, Mistng Systems, Special Event Treatments, Commercial Services, Mosquito Traps, Perimeter Pest, Smart Mosquito Repellent System

- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 17 territories 2020-22. The 2024 FDD with 2023 info not published yet.
- **Hours of Training:** 6-8 weeks, plus ongoing self-paced module training.
- **WEBSITE:** [franchise.neighborly.com/mosquito-joe](http://franchise.neighborly.com/mosquito-joe)



## NATURLAWN OF AMERICA

- **Franchising since what year:** 1989
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$50,000
- **Royalty Fee:** N/A
- **Franchise Fee:** \$9,500 - \$29,500, based on whether you are a conversion or a new start up.
- **Total Investment:** \$57,500 - \$122,650
- **Number of North American Locations:** 100
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** 27 States, plus District of Columbia

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- **Services offered:** Organic Lawn Care and Organic-Based Lawn Maintenance services, as well as Mosquito Ranger and Tick Ranger services
- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
- **Hours of Training:** 24-40 hours classroom and 51-90 hours on the job, three weeks in total

**WEBSITE:** [naturalawn.com](http://naturalawn.com)



## SPRING GREEN

- **Franchising since what year:** 1977
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$116,993 - \$125,999
- **Royalty Fee:** 10-9-8%
- **Franchise Fee:** \$0 - \$50,000
- **Total Investment:** \$116,993 - \$125,999
- **Number of North American Locations:** 156
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** 25
- **Services offered:** Lawn Care, Pest Control and Tree Care
- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 2
- **Hours of Training:** 133

**WEBSITE:** [springgreenfranchise.com](http://springgreenfranchise.com)



## WEED MAN

- **Franchising since what year:** Founded in 1970, franchising since 1976
- **Average Initial Investment:** \$80,535 - \$107,785
- **Royalty Fee:** 6.5% of net sales up to \$1 million and 5.5% anything above \$1 million
- **Franchise Fee:** \$30,000 for 1 Territory (up to 150,000 in population) / \$50,000 for 2 Territories (up to 300,000 in population)
- **Total Investment:** \$100,000 - \$125,000
- **Number of North American Locations:** 213 Physical Locations
- **States/Provinces with at least 1 franchise:** 38 States / 10 Provinces
- **Services offered:** Lawn Care and Mosquito Services
- **Closures in the last three fiscal years:** 0
- **Hours of Training:** 70 hours

**WEBSITE:** [weedmanfranchise.com](http://weedmanfranchise.com) L&L

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Gen Z craves more time for gardening and they're willing to spend more money on their beloved pastime.

**By Emily Mills and Kelli Rodda**



# the Z factor

**G**en Z (a.k.a. Zoomers) will “reshape the future of the horticulture industry,” says Katie Dubow, president of Garden Media Group (GMG) and lead creator of the 2024 Garden Trends Report. Are you dialed in to what products Zoomers prefer, how they shop and how they research buying options? If not, it’s time to meet the second-youngest generation in a meaningful way.

Born in 1997 through 2012, this demographic is ahead of Millennials and Gen X when it comes to homeownership. In 2022, 30% of 25-year-olds owned their home, compared to the 27% of Gen Xers

ADOBE STOCK



A vibrant night scene of a Nashville street, likely Broadway, featuring numerous neon signs for local businesses and landmarks. Signs include 'ERNEST TUBBS', 'Rep. John Lewis way', 'AJs', 'MELLOW', 'MOORHILL', 'GOOD TIME BAR', and 'ALAN JACKSON'. A large guitar-shaped sign is also visible.

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and 28% of Millennials when they were the same age, according to Redfin. The average age of a first-time home buyer used to be 36, according to the Garden Trends Report. And they're motivated, Dubow says: 71.5% of Zoomers plan to buy their first home in the next one to six years.

"While we love first-time home buyers, this is important today because many Gen Zers have only ever worked from home. They see their home, and quality things to fill it, as a long-term investment," GMG reports.

The green industry can capitalize on Zoomers' values. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of Gen Zers are willing to pay more and wait longer for sustainable products that are of better quality, according to the report. Another key characteristic of this generation is their interest in pieces that have stories (i.e., where it's from, who made it).

Since Gen Z is the first generation raised entirely in a digital world, landscapers need to understand and cater to their specific habits and preferences, such as seeking input from trusted online sources and keeping website and social platforms up to date, so influencer marketing and promotions through short-form videos are key for getting to Zoomers, she says. "Social media platforms make it easier for younger generations to learn how to make a difference in their own community," she says. "We need to foster those young minds and help them to find their place in the green industry."

The report also identified seven trends that will shape the future of horticulture. Below Dubow explains how those trends apply to the landscaping market.

## 1 Zoom Out - CATERING TO GENERATION Z

Landscapers should recommend sustainable and high-quality products to meet Generation Z's strong preference for eco-friendly options. This demographic is often open to paying a premium and waiting longer for sustainable materials. Focus on items like eco-friendly containers, pavers and outdoor furniture, as well as native plantings and meadow-style gardens that are low-maintenance and visually appealing. Digital tools for showcasing and managing landscaping projects can further engage this tech-savvy generation.



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## 2 Hortifuturism EMBRACING SCI-FI ELEMENTS

Landscapers can integrate bright and futuristic features into their garden designs. Include elements like neon lights and glowing orbs, and select plants that stand out due to their unique textures and colors. These kinds of designs can be especially appealing in public areas or for clients who desire unique and visually striking gardens.

## **3** **Delight in the Dark** GOTHIC AND ENCHANTING THEMES

Landscapers can cater to clients who prefer darker-themed aesthetics by selecting plants with dark foliage, deep red flowers and distinctive textures. These choices are perfect for creating themed gardens with a Gothic or Victorian influence, offering a unique and visually captivating landscape experience.

## **4** **Bugging Out** ECLECTIC AND NATURAL THEMES

This trend emphasizes the importance of designing gardens that attract and support pollinators. Landscapers have the opportunity to inform their clients about the advantages of pollinator-friendly gardens, such as enhancing biodiversity and promoting ecological well-being. To achieve this, they

can include a variety of plants known to attract beneficial insects, thereby creating a healthier and more diverse environment.

## **5** **Hanging in There** MAXIMIZING VERTICAL SPACE:

With increasing crowding in urban areas, landscapers can focus on vertical gardening techniques to make the most of limited spaces. They can use hanging plants, planters mounted on walls and trellises to craft lush and space-saving gardens, ideal for small or restricted areas. This approach maximizes planting space and adds a unique aesthetic dimension to urban gardens.

## **6** **Nature Calls** FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Focusing on native plants and sustainable landscaping methods meets

the increasing demand for eco-friendly and carbon-neutral solutions. Landscapers can respond to this trend by providing services that include planting native trees and designing landscapes that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also environmentally advantageous. This approach aligns with the current shift toward more ecologically positive practices in landscaping.

## **7** **Color of the Year** CYBER LIME

Using the dynamic "Cyber Lime" color in landscaping projects is an effective way to stay on trend and attract clients seeking contemporary and eye-catching designs. Choose plants and decorative elements in shades that complement or match "Cyber Lime." **L&L**

Mills is associate editor of Garden Center magazine and Rodda is editorial director for GIE Media's ornamental publications.



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# From niche to necessary

Drip irrigation has been common in the desert states for decades, but as water resources decrease, it may increase in popularity. **By Kim Lux**



Communities across the country are starting to mandate drip irrigation for new projects to combat water waste.

**Time is money.** But so is water. With water rates rising in the majority of the country, and water scarcity being a hot-button issue, more and more irrigation companies are turning to drip irrigation to service their clients' needs.

And the manufacturers of irrigation equipment are doing what they can to make technicians' lives easier and add some consistency to the installation process — while also raising awareness to the benefits of drip irrigation.

**EXACT IRRIGATING.** While drip irrigation is nothing new to the green industry, Senior Product Manager at Hunter Industries, Gaurav Mathur, explains it first made its mark in agriculture.

"Drip started years back in the agricultural industry in the 60s and it made its mark in the commercial landscape business in the 90s and early 2000s," he says. "The primary intent is water savings — because water is finite."

Peter Lackner, marketing manager for residential and commercial irrigation and lighting with Toro, says at times it can be difficult to har-

moniously market all the different types of irrigation equipment Toro offers. While some have different advantages than others, he adds there is room for everything within the industry.

“It’s a balancing act for manufacturers who also sell other forms of irrigation,” Lackner says. “Overhead irrigation certainly has its place, but compared to traditional overhead irrigation, drip irrigation puts water closest to the roots, which means there’s zero chance for overspray.

“Misting is also a non-issue with drip,” he adds. “In the case of subsurface drip, there’s no chance for evaporation either since it’s all underground right where the roots are.”

In addition to having the water zero in on the targeted area, Mathur says drip irrigation is also extremely beneficial in achieving irrigation uniformity — or having an even amount of water being distributed to an area.

“At the same time, it’s also trying to help create irrigation uniformity,” Mathur says. “Irrigation uniformity is all over the place — and even the best of the best manufacturers can deliver irrigation uniformity only up to a certain point... Drip irrigation is a product that gives you almost 100% irrigation uniformity, and also saves more water than anything else available in the market today.”

**WHAT’S NEW & WHAT’S NEXT.** Because drip has become a tried-and-true form of irrigation, the basic mechanics and products haven’t changed too much in recent years.

Mike Merlesena, national commercial sales manager with DIG Corporation, says there haven’t been too many advancements in the technology behind drip irrigation.

“We’ll have some new products here or there but it’s really just different emission devices. The wheel hasn’t really been reinvented in a while,” Merlesena says. “Like with anything, products do get better and better as time goes by.”

Lackner adds that while the installation process is mainly the same, manufacturers are working to improve things.

“Most advancements have been more so on the manufacturing side,” he says. “It’s always about trying to get components smaller and at a lower cost. Performance has been improving as well.”

One key area of performance Toro, and other manufacturers, are targeting, is pressure regulation and compensation.

“Back in the day, pressure compensation was relatively unheard of,” he says. “You would see a lot more water coming out of emitters closer to the point of connection compared to the very end of the line. Now, especially in landscaping, almost everything is pressure

compensating to ensure a more even distribution of water.”

Lackner adds that with more irrigation crews using drip, Toro is attempting to make things easier for them to improve efficiency.

“We’re making drip a little more user-friendly, so we’ve come out with a spray head retrofit kit since a lot of municipalities across the country are mandating drip in certain applications. We’ve made it easier to retrofit an existing spray head zone to drip by swapping out a spray head zone with our conversion kit,” he says.

And according to Lackner, it’s something that crews really appreciate.

“We have been asked for it for some time,” he says. “Most of the legislation has been for new installations, but there’s definitely a need for the ability to retrofit as well.”

Merlesena says that DIG Corporation is also looking to assist crews in the installation process, and the company has a new solution.

Traditionally, dripline comes in a variety of sizes ranging from 15- to 17-millimeters. Most sizes call for a specific fitting to be used for connection, but DIG has created its new Nutloc Fitting, which fits all standard sizes.

“You have these three sizes in the half-inch arena, so we have a very unique fitting that can be used for all three sizes of that tubing,” he says. “That’s something new and cool from our standpoint.”

For Mathur and Hunter Industries, effective drip comes down to more than just the tubing — so they are seeking to improve the more “active” components of a drip irrigation system.

“Basically, we should look at drip irrigation not as a subject, but as a complete system solution,” he says. “People get narrowed down to thinking about just the drip tube itself, but a drip tube doesn’t do much if you don’t have a valve, regulator or a filter.

“There are passive devices and there are active devices. The controllers and the valves are active devices. Then your passive devices are the drip tubes themselves,” Mathur adds. “The technology is moving more on the active side of things, and how we can get even more precise irrigation.”

That’s where smart controllers and wireless connections will come into play.

“We have quite a few things in the pipeline,” Mathur says.

The technology behind the products will also continue to be important as drip irrigation goes underground.

“Drip irrigation is moving subsurface,” Mathur says. “We have copper drippers now. So, our line of HDL copper allows you to do subsurface irrigation and keeps root intrusion in mind. It does not

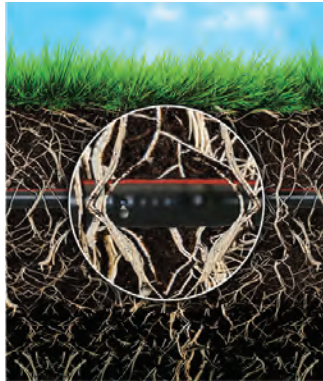


To make drip installations easier for crews, manufacturers are working to create more universal products and retrofit kits.

eliminate root intrusion, but studies have shown that copper and roots don't like each other."

But where that copper is used is critical. Mathur says in order to prevent contamination it shouldn't be placed in the emitter itself.

"There are people doing copper in different forms — some people put a copper plate inside the emitter, but the problem there is they are now leeching copper into the water, which is not good for the landscape," he explains. "Some manufacturers, like us, use copper on the outside and it is a part of the molding process. Therefore, we are taking the copper particles and basically mixing it with the resin and at a certain percentage. That does not leech into the soil."



Manufacturers are making more and more subsurface drip irrigation products. Some of which, also combat root intrusion.

drip was something that contractors used only when needed," Lackner says. "Like if they had a small zone up against the house to water some shrubs, it was more of a niche category if you will. Now, it's definitely a mainstay... There's some places like Arizona where drip has been around for forever, but in places like California, it's something that has exploded over the past 10 years.

"Contractors don't really have a choice at this point," he adds. "They have to make sure they have drip in the back of their truck."

Mathur says that changing weather patterns, like extremely hot summers in the Northeast and deep freezes in Texas, will call for stricter watering practices.

**LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION.** As the technology behind drip irrigation continues to advance, so does the need for water savings throughout the country.

What was once primarily practiced out west is now spreading as more states pass watering restriction and drip irrigation legislation.

"I've been involved with drip for about 15 years now, and at first

an abundance of water, drip irrigation was not that popular," he says. "But the seasons are changing, and global warming is making things different. I can see drip irrigation expanding into other parts of the U.S."

Merlesena says this will call for more education on drip irrigation throughout the industry.

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“The further east you go, the knowledge of drip definitely goes down since there is a more abundant supply of water,” he says. “Self-education, going to tradeshow, talking to your distributors and doing your research on manufacturers’ websites can help you discover what’s out there.”

And while it may be the way of the future, Merlesena doesn’t expect drip to take off as rapidly back east.

“It’s like anything, the more time that goes by and the more information that’s readily available, I think drip will continue to grow,” he says. “But at the end of the day, it’s still somewhat of a niche compared to the overall irrigation market even in the biggest markets like California.”

Mathur sees a different path forward for drip in the U.S. and other parts of the world.

“The market is very strong and is still growing in the double digits year-over-year, globally,” he says. “There is more and more need for drip and micro-irrigation. It’s growing fast in countries that are new to drip as well in the Middle East and South America. There are a lot of exciting times coming in drip irrigation.”

Lackner predicts that subsurface drip irrigation will be the next big thing as it saves even more water.

“Subsurface drip is the next step,” he says. “I think that’ll be the next trend. I wouldn’t be surprised to see more legislation specifi-



While drip irrigation continues to grow more popular in the U.S., it has also increased in use in the Middle East and South America.

cally calling out subsurface drip. That’ll take drip to the next level and even high efficiency.” **L&L**

The author is an associate editor with Lawn & Landscape magazine.



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# PRICE IT right

OUR STATE OF THE INDUSTRY PANELISTS  
DISCUSS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO  
APPROACH PRICE INCREASES IN 2024.

By Brian Horn

In December, we hosted our annual State of the Industry panel where panelists examined the challenges and successes during the past 12 months, and what to expect next year. The panelists were Jim Huston, founder of JR Huston Consulting; Ed Laflamme, partner with the Harvest Group; Robyn Schmitz, owner/founder/CEO of High Prairie Outdoors; Justin White, CEO of K&D Landscaping; and Bruce Wilson, founder of Wilson 360. Here is a portion of the webinar where the panel discussed price increases. You can watch the full webinar here: [bit.ly/2023soi](https://bit.ly/2023soi).

**Laflamme:** I have worked with some clients lately that did not raise their price properly in the last two, three years, and they're suffering greatly

from it. And as a result, now they're trying to make the correction and they are getting serious pushback. Not only pushback, they're getting dropped. So now it's about starting over again in their market and educating the clients they're working with.

My counsel to them was, before you increase the price, substantiate it. Prove it. Show them the labor increases over the last few years, show them the material increases so they can see it, then they'll be more likely to believe it. And just tell

them the truth: "I didn't raise the price like I should have. It was a big mistake, but I have to now and here's why." The companies that in the past that raised the prices, systematically, I think they're, they're winning.

**Schmitz:** It's all about communicating the value. When you are communicating parallel costs and increases on things like labor, materials, even fuel and those types of things, consumers can combine that

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with, inflation too — but is it really a surprise to anyone if you have to make minor adjustments and you set those expectations and justify them with concrete facts? As long as you're providing real value and you are, you're checking in, you need to be worth what you charge. If you do a good job providing value year-round and communicating, then when it comes time for price increases, you've got a comfortable platform for doing so.

**White:** We've actually moved away from the CPI (Consumer Price Index) programming into our contract language and say, "Hey, we're going to have a meeting every year in September or October, or whenever you like, and talk about the increases we've experienced in our industry and figure out where that's going to be for them next year." Because, this year, we're actually averaging closer to 5-6% increase with all of our maintenance clients due to the cost increase within our company. Most everyone has been good with that. I think we've gotten, as a percentage, 2-3% kickback on that, and most have been O.K. once we have that further conversation. But ... when we talk price increases, we all think maintenance, but we have to go back and think construction, and enhancements and water management and those kind of prices.

For us, we review it quarterly, and maybe that's a little bit too often, but at least twice a year you need to be looking at what is your overhead, what are your direct costs and also what are the other, unforeseen costs that you're going to encounter. We're talking a lot about new equipment going way up, interest rates being a lot higher for equipment purchasing and financing. I think we just need to really look at our pricing closer, not just maintenance, but also construction. Chances are you're probably underpricing your jobs as of today. Once you look at that, you'll realize that you probably need to bump them up a little bit.

**Huston:** You've got to know your numbers and you've got to study them. You've got to study your business. Most people are very, very reluctant to raise prices, and when they do, they get virtually no pushback. I



**If you do a good job providing value year-round and communicating, then when it comes time for price increases, you've got a comfortable platform for doing so."**

**— Robyn Schmitz**

did an article about a year ago in *Lawn & Landscape* about a (company) in Idaho. They had about 20,000 labor hours he was selling a year. He had these guys sitting on big dozers, big scrapers and so forth, and they were probably charging close to \$180 an hour for most of this equipment. We ended up raising prices about \$30 an hour. \$30 times 20,000... you do the math.

I asked him about a year later, I said, "Did you get any pushback?" He said that nobody even mentioned it. The thing is that you've got to really study your numbers, know your overhead, know how to cost out equipment, labor burden, all those things. If you're providing good service, you're going to get minimal pushback. If you do, you probably want to lose those clients anyway.

The big problem I see with the maintenance side is that a lot of people are charging the same labor rate for construction as they are for maintenance, and that's a big mistake. It should probably be another \$15, \$20 higher for construction labor than for maintenance labor.

**Wilson:** What I've seen that's worked the most successfully is some of the owners regularly communicate with their clients. They send them either newsletters or individual letters or emails telling them what's going on and what they can expect. The other thing is, in June, you start giving clients a heads up that the way the year is laying out, our labor costs are up significantly, etc. You can prepare them for what the conversation's going to be when you get around to renewing the contract.

The other thing is that a lot of clients are very effective with maintenance clients in particular, giving them budgets. All the property managers have a budget process they go through at a certain time of the year. If you find out when that is and give them information for budgeting for the price increase, you might need the amount of enhancements you're projecting you might do or could do, and you can even give them individual enhancement recommendations, then they become kind of pre-sold because they're built into the budget.

Enhancement sales are, I believe, budget-driven. If they have the money in their budget, they do it. They're not price-driven. It's just a matter of, do they have the money in the budget or not? So getting into that budget process is a little bit of extra work, but it pays off handsomely.

And I agree with the comments about not using consumer price index. Most of the time, it underestimates what our costs went up, especially in the states where they're raising the minimum wage a dollar an hour a year over a period of years. That translates immediately into more than 3%.

You've got to look at what your individual costs are, and, if you break down those individual costs to the client, they're, they're much less resistant to it. If you just go and say, "I need a 5% increase. (they say) well, why? "Well, because costs went up." That's not really a convincing argument because their costs go up too and they know more about it. Some companies have policies where if you go over 3%, they're going out to bid. You can challenge that stuff if you get ahead of it. **L&L**

The author is editor of *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.

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# THE LATEST FROM LOUISVILLE

From mowers to aerators, manufacturers had lots of new products at Equip Expo.

**T**he Lawn & Landscape staff traveled to Louisville again this fall for the annual Equip Expo. While there, we saw some of the industry's newest products to hit the market. Whether you're looking for something small and cordless or a larger mower, we rounded up the latest machines debuted at the show. For our full roundup from online coverage, visit our website.

## EXMARK

Exmark expanded its commercial walk-behind mower line with the electric Commercial 30 V-Series.

Powered by three 60V Flex-Force batteries, the Commercial 30 V-Series delivers Exmark's signature cut quality, with extended runtime, quick charging and reduced sound output.

With the ability to mow more than one acre in a single charge of the triple Flex-Force batteries, the Commercial 30 V-Series is capable of running for up to an hour and twenty minutes. Plus, the included rapid charger can charge one battery to 90% in just 90 minutes.



Exmark's Commercial 30 V-Series

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With easy push button starting, the Commercial 30 V-Series offers the choice of low- or high-settings for the powertrain, delivering 3.1- or 4.2-mph based on the selected setting. The heavy-duty wet clutch transmission and self-tensioning belt drive are the same as on gas-powered Commercial 30 models, delivering positive ground drive to both rear wheels.

Additionally, Exmark unveiled a new electric version of its Lazer Z zero-turn riding mower. The new Lazer Z V-Series has reduced noise output and zero engine exhaust emissions.

## KUBOTA

Elsewhere at the show, Kubota debuted a slew of new products, including the F3710 Front-Mount Mower and the Kubota ZD1611 zero-turn mower.

Kubota's new F3710 replaces the F3990 in Kubota's F Series of commercial front-mount mowers and is equipped with a 36.9-HP Kubota Common Rail System diesel engine for fast, powerful and efficient job performance. Available with both side-discharge and rear-discharge pro-commercial mower decks in 60 inches and 72 inches, the F3710's high lifting capacity provides the versatility to handle an array of implements like a grass catcher, snow blower, rotary sweeper and debris blower.

The new ZD1611 replaces the ZD1511 in Kubota's ZD Series of commercial zero-turn mowers and features a 30.8-HP Kubota Common Rail System (CRS) diesel engine



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## NEW PRODUCTS



Clockwise from left: Kubota ZD1611; Bobcat E40; and Z-Aerate 50.

that delivers increased levels of power, torque and reliable performance. Designed for commercial landscapers and residential users who want a professional-quality cut, the ZD1611 is available in three deck configurations: a 72-inch side-discharge mower, and 60- and 72-inch rear-discharge mowers.

The company also launched the SVL75-3 Compact Track Loader, Kubota's U10-5 Compact Excavator, SCL1000 Track Loader, SZ Series Commercial Stand-on Mowers and the gas-powered RTV-XG850 Sidekick.

### BOBCAT COMPANY

Bobcat Company expanded its lineup of compact excavators to include the newly released Bobcat E40.

The E40 is a minimal tail swing excavator, with less than two inches of overhang and a standard long arm. Its features include a powerful non-DPF, turbocharged Bobcat engine; a dual-flange track roller system for improved lift performance and a smoother ride; and standard, low-effort joysticks, LED lights and integrated lift eye.

The E40 also comes with extensive attachment versatility. Bobcat also revised the model numbers for its 3-to-5-ton excavator lineup to more closely align with the industry's size class.

### Z TURF

For the lawn care operators, Z Turf Equipment introduced a new aerator: its new Z-Aerate 50 stand-on aerator. The machine has the ability to aerate up to four acres per hour while simultaneously applying granular material.

The 50-inch, 12-row tine head uses positive down pressure and a full-floating design to pull plugs with a consistent core depth of up to 3.5-inches. A precision depth adjustment system enables core depth to be adjusted in .25-inch increments. Plus, the split-reel design enables the Z-Aerate 50 to easily maneuver around trees, flowerbeds and other landscape features with the tines in the ground.

The machine reaches ground speeds of up to 10 miles per hour moving forward and five miles per hour in reverse. It features an eight-gallon fuel cell and 150-pound capacity hopper.



In addition, a wide range of accessories are available to further increase productivity and versatility. Choose from a 30-gallon sprayer, 36-inch slicer seeder, 46-inch dethatch rake, or a 40-inch spike-style aeration head.

### ARIENSCO

AriensCo was also active in Louisville this fall. Gravely's new AXIS 100 series of gasoline-powered compact utility loaders launched at the show.

This gives a low-barrier-of-entry opportunity to landscape contractors and lawn maintenance professionals.

The AXIS 100GT and AXIS 100GW, which represent track and wheel-drive models, feature many of the same features as their diesel-powered counterparts.

Though the 23.5-horsepower Kohler Command PRO CH730 engine is a clear difference from the AXIS 200 series, favorites from the diesel-powered lineup are carried into the AXIS 100.



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## NEW PRODUCTS

That includes a self-leveling boom/bucket, universal attachment plate, adjustable hydraulics to supply power where needed, track and wheel options, two auxiliary hydraulic ports to drive motor- and cylinder-driven attachments, and a common controls layout.

The company also debuted its remote-control, high-slope brush mower, the OVIS. The new Gravely OVIS uses a 40-inch-wide flail mower to clear vegetation on steep or inaccessible terrain where traditional lawn mower operation is either impossible or unsafe.

## SENIX

From walk-behind mowers to a brand-new snow shovel, Senix announced 23 new products at Equip Expo as it expanded its X6 Cordless Outdoor product line.

For lawn care operators, the newest products of note are the 60V 21-inch Push Mower, 60V 21-inch SP Mower, 60V 42-inch ZTR Mower, 60V 54-inch ZTR Mower, 60V 810CFM Blower and 60V 900CFM Blower.

Tree care professionals might invest in the 60V 16-inch Line Trimmer; 60V 26-inch Rotating Handle Hedge Trimmer; 60V 26-inch Fixed Handle Hedge Trimmer; 60V 16-inch Chainsaw; 60V 18-inch Chainsaw and 60V 10-inch Pole Saw.

Anyone dealing with snow removal can buy the 660V 21-inch Snow Blower and the 60V 13-inch Snow Shovel. Senix also debuted a series of new batteries.

## MICHELIN

The new Michelin X TWEEL Turf 26-inch tire can now be used on Ferris Mowers' new ISX 3300 model.

The new wheel features a 1,031-pound load capacity, allowing the use of an optional bagging system. It incorporates a 5-bolt design, which mounts easily to the Ferris ISX3300 mowers without modification or complex mounting equipment.

Michelin's airless TWEEL tires eliminate downtime due to flats and unseated beads, and they help maintain a level deck without the need to adjust air pressure.

## OTR ENGINEERED SOLUTIONS

And speaking of wheels, OTR Engineered Solutions revealed its TR-34, Reaper and Big Bite tires at the show. The TR-34 is designed for farm tractors and ride-on mowers. It performs on grass, mud and loose soil while reducing the risk of turf damage and soil compaction.

Its Reaper tire is for multiple brands of zero-turn mowers and garden tractors. This tire combines a turf-specific design that yields traction, stability and control with aggressive styling.

There's also the Big Bite turf tire. Designed for zero-turn, ride-on and stand-on mowers, the new tire features a large footprint that maximizes traction and stability. **L&L**

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## RAISE THE BAR

WITH JUSTIN WHITE  
CEO OF K&D LANDSCAPING

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**RAISE THE BAR** is a monthly column by Justin White, CEO of K&D Landscaping, written to help improve professionalism in the green industry.

# A GOURMET MARKETING RECIPE

→ **LET'S GET RIGHT TO THE POINT:** Marketing is an area that does not get enough love from us business owners. In this article, I am going to break down the top marketing tactics I used to 10x our family landscape company. As you read through this, you may get overwhelmed and turn the page. I get it: We were there once, and for decades our family business stayed between \$1 to \$1.5 million. But in 2016, everything changed when we started putting more effort into the pillar of marketing, and last year we generated more than \$17 million in revenue. If you want to grow, follow these steps:

**1. Google Profile Page (historically "Google My Business"):** To start, make sure you are listed in Google, and additionally, "Google Verified." This can be done very easily and costs nothing. If you already have a profile, great. Now it's time to ensure everything is updated and current: phone number, website, address, hours and a description of what you do. Continue to add high-quality video and photos to this page at a minimum of once per week.

**1b. Customer Reviews:** Ideally on Google Profile: Do some research on your local competition. Take note of how many reviews they have on Google. Your goal is to go out and get enough so you have 2x more than anyone in your service area. This will dramatically increase your leads, and it's one of the easiest ways to boost visibility on a Google search. A few ideas for gathering reviews: call every client after you complete a job and request a review or have QR codes that take people to the review site on trucks and phones. Text messaging can also be a successful tactic. Either way, you now have a mission.

**2. Community Beautification Events:** Use your expertise, knowledge and resources to beautify your community. We focus on places that are in need of improvement: the local school where we built veggie-garden boxes for students to grow food, a homeless shelter that needed a playground for the kids and the local park that was run-down in need of a boost. Make sure to capture the projects with photos and videos; you can also invite local press like the newspaper or television out to help spread the word. We call it the "ripple effect," as the more people that see us doing this, the more people will give back themselves.

**3. Professional Photography and Video:** What we do in our industry makes for great content, so all we need is to document the cool stuff and get it online. The best way to do this is to partner with a professional photographer. Getting professionally created videos is a huge plus, too! I would recommend focusing on quantity in the beginning and to steer away from big ticket long-form videos. It's better to have 15 reels that are 10-15 seconds long, than one three-minute video you post once. It's okay to mix in a few iPhone photos, but it shouldn't all be low quality; your work is professional, as is your team, so bite the bullet and get the professional grade.

**4. Social Media, specifically Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook & TikTok:** Clients and employees are researching your company before they ever call you. This usually includes a quick sweep of their favorite social media platform. If the last picture on your business page was two years ago of you and your dog on a jobsite, that's the first impression they get. And that's even if you have a business page. I am still amazed at how many businesses don't have dedicated social media accounts. You may feel like you don't have time for it, but just like you hire employees and sub-contractors, there are people to help you with that, too. You must invest to grow, and this one is non-negotiable. Get your business profile going on at least four socials and set a goal to update it at least three times per week.

**5. Use the Data You Have, Go Get Those Leads:** This winter, it's time to go back through all those bids you have given out, all those happy clients you have served and all those people who helped you get here. We are often frustrated waiting for the phone to ring, and we forget we are sitting on a goldmine of data. Here is a simple way to approach it: take the last two years of projects/properties you have either performed or bid on, (even those you lost) and give those people a call — not an email, a phone call. I don't have enough room to give you a full script here, but I'm sure you can think of something to say. Your goal is to get a referral from those you worked with and hopefully another opportunity for those you didn't.

**6. Branding:** Trucks, uniforms, swag, signs — brand everything. Get all of your trucks, trailers and equipment looking consistent with the same logo. Set up your employees with uniforms and provide them with swag they can wear on the weekends; even give them extra for their family to sport! Ensure your trucks are clean, neat and tidy. We drive around moving billboards all day, and I can't believe how some landscapers represent their image publicly. It's time to show the community you are serious and get your branding into alignment. This will help you stand out in a crowded space and make your name more recognizable in the future. **L&L**

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