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MAY/JUNE 2018

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The Management Resource for Landscape Contractors and Equipment Dealers

SUPPLIER PROFILE

The Right Tool for the Right Job, at the Right Price

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DEALER PROFILE

Four Generations Use Family Foundation to Build Successful Dealership.

› Page 12

Compact track loaders are real WORKHORSES

› Page 34

PRODUCT COVERAGE

- Hardscaping and Landscape Installation
- Software and Technology
- Compact Track Loaders



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Pioneer Landscape Centers Acquires Grand Materials & Supply in First Transaction of 2018

Pioneer Landscape Centers, a landscape and hardscape materials supply destination in the United States, announced the acquisition of Grand Materials & Supply in the company's first transaction of the year. Founded in 1986, Grand Materials & Supply is an Arizona-based distribution company that operates six stores across the Phoenix area. The acquisition solidifies Pioneer Landscape Centers as the largest full-service materials supplier (retail, contractor, wholesale, and commercial) in Arizona, and is part of Pioneer's plan to expand its presence in Colorado, Arizona and other new markets.

Grand Materials & Supply acts as a complement to Pioneer Landscape Center's current hardscapes, landscapes and outdoor living market by focusing on residential distribution of landscaping products and construction materials. With expertise in stone and related offerings, the newly acquired company sells a full suite of products ranging from outdoor lighting, pavers, cement products, decorative rock and more. The combination of two companies enhances Pioneer's presence in the Arizona residential market and augments the customer experience by bringing a multitude of products and services together under one roof.



"Acquiring Grand Materials & Supply strengthens our position in the southwest, specifically within residential areas in the Arizona market," said Sagi Cohen, CEO of Pioneer Landscape Centers.

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HARDSCAPE NORTH AMERICA 2018 OPENS REGISTRATION

New Wednesday show hours, a keynote speaker and VIP pass add value to the largest hardscape industry event.

Registration for the hardscape industry's largest trade show, Hardscape North America (HNA), is now open. Organizers have announced new show hours, big name speakers, a VIP education pass and more. Set for October 17 -19, 2018 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville, Kentucky, HNA continues to grow in attendance, reaching record numbers in 2017 with 2018 expected to be even larger.

As a result of the show's continued growth, a new format will be implemented, allowing all industry members to attend the show on Wednesday. The indoor show floor will open exclusively for dealers, retailers and the media at 12 p.m. on Wednesday. Then, beginning at 3 p.m., the entire industry will be invited to visit the indoor exhibits and enjoy a welcome reception on the show floor from 5 to 7 p.m. The indoor exhibits and Outdoor Demonstration Area will be open Thursday and Friday for all industry members.

Dr. Robert Ballard, the oceanographer and former U.S. Navy officer who discovered the Titanic wreckage, will deliver two keynote sessions on Wednesday. Ballard has a passion for the last great uncharted territory, and will entertain and motivate attendees while sharing his practical approach to team building and execution. His presentation for dealers, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., is sponsored by STIHL Inc. and BOBCAT, and his keynote for contractors, 1:30 - 3 p.m., is sponsored by JOHN DEERE. These sessions are included with trade show registration.

Attendees interested in the education component of HNA can save money by purchasing the new HNA VIP Pass. This admission upgrade gives the attendee open access to seven conference sessions and six live hardscape demonstrations—a $400 value. The cost of the pass is $189 for ICPI/NCMA/BIA members or $229 for non-members, in addition to trade show admission.

The Hardscape Demonstrations will have a new format and presenter this year. Award-winning hardscape consultant Frank Bourque and his team will lead six sessions on how to install hardscapes around pools and water features. Each one-hour demonstration offers 1 CE hour for ICPI Certified Installers.

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OTHER TOP NEWS

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Robotic Lawn Mower Market Continues to Grow

If you think robotic lawn mower technology is a novelty that will eventually disappear, think again, because the market potential continues to gain momentum. According to the market research report, "Global Robotic Lawn Mower Market – Strategic Assessment and Forecast 2017-2022," published by Beige Market Intelligence, the market is projected to increase by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 19 percent in terms of volume.

According to the report, the rise in new residential construction will stimulate the demand for landscaping services and options on how to keep those new lawns manicured. Commercial property owners will also express interest in the new technology as a way to enhance the aesthetic appearance of their facilities.

For professional landscape contractors, the robotic lawn mower has significant potential to not only maintain the well-groomed appearance customers want, but also to do so without dedicating valuable human resources to perform the task. For landscaping contractors, maintaining lawns is time-consuming, and the return on investment is not as great as hardscaping or other landscaping services.

"For professional landscape contractors, the robotic lawn mower has significant potential..."

Secondly, landscape maintenance businesses, like many other businesses, are having a difficult time finding workers to handle the business they have and would like to pursue. With limited human resources, programming a robotic lawn mower to maintain a customer's property frees up at least one employee from the task of cutting grass. That employee is now available to work on projects – ornamental plantings and maintenance, or hardscaping features – that carry a higher value to the property owner.

Developing a skilled-labor crew allows a landscape contractor to pursue more work that carries a higher price tag, while the robotic crew keeps the lawn well-manicured.

While homeowners who maintain their own lawns are beginning to show more interest in robotic lawn mowers, thanks to the fact that the technology is becoming more affordable and many of those homeowners have used similar technology – the Roomba – to maintain the inside of their homes, it's the professional landscape contractor who can certainly benefit from the technology.

There are landscape businesses in the United States currently employing the technology for the reasons mentioned above; and there will be more who decide to do the same. And if you only focus on lawn maintenance, the technology allows you to pursue more accounts without adding more mower operators.

Obviously, you need to evaluate whether the technology is right for your business. You can always implement it on a limited basis to see how it performs for you and if it meets your customers' expectations. But you can be sure there will be more robotic mowers and discussions about the technology at the upcoming Green Industry & Equipment Expo (GIE+EXPO) at the Kentucky Exposition Center in October.

The robotic lawn mower could be a valuable addition to your trailer as you try to grow your business, focus on more profitable services; or do both with limited access to a qualified crew. ›



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By Angie Mellor

Conserva Irrigation Revolutionizes Irrigation Systems

Conserva has over 44 franchises across the United States, has cultivated partnerships with both the Toro Company and Target, and has established itself in the business of water conservation.



At first glance, it may seem strange that a company whose bread and butter comes from installing and fixing irrigation systems would be so active in the field of water conservation—after all, irrigation installers rely on commercial and residential clients to use their systems and water. But Russ Jundt and Tom Olson, co-founders of Conserva Irrigation, have made a point through the past ten years to put their neighbors and communities ahead of their profits.

Serving neighbors and their hometown team is a lesson Jundt recalls from spending his childhood summers painting houses with his father. "He taught me things about business and lessons which stick with me, and we've built our company on treating your neighbor right, pricing yourself accordingly, and being accountable for what you're doing for them," Jundt states. "[My dad said] You'll see them at the local grocery store, or on the golf course, or at church, and you don't want to be embarrassed by that relationship, you want to flourish in the relationship."

Humble Beginnings

Those first years in the business started local for Jundt and Olson. "My business partner and I met in the 5th grade; we've been friends forever and business partners the past twenty years," Jundt notes. The duo started working together in underground utility construction, but were so frequently asked about sprinkler system installation that they decided to start offering that service to clients.

Jundt recalls that their first foray into the irrigation space was short lived. "I didn't like how wasteful the entire industry was or seemingly was. There wasn't a lot of thought put into design or efficient irrigation." Soon after, the pair purchased the first Mosquito Squad franchise outside of the beta testing shop in Charlotte, N. C. "We brought it to Minnesota and I fell in love with the franchising model, where you share successes and you're building off of each other's learning curves and it was all about education and being in business," Jundt shares.

Jundt kept thinking about the need for a franchise model in the irrigation industry. This led him to The Irrigation Association National Show in 2010, where he began his journey toward co-founding Conserva Irrigation. "I walked in there [the national show] and it was like a kid in a candy store, and everything was all about the advent of these brand new smart controls," Jundt recalls.

From there Jundt and Olson began to research, study and build their business from the ground up.

But it wasn't an easy start. Jundt remembers starting the fall 2011 season with zero clients and zero revenue, and employing "guerilla marketing tactics," to drum up business. "We put yard signs out that advertised inexpensive winterization or sprinkler system blow outs. We knocked on doors, and we introduced ourselves as local guys, saying 'here's what we're doing, and here's what we're offering,'" Jundt notes.

Additionally, that first season also helped Jundt and Olson to discover an important diagnostic tool. When winterizing the systems, Jundt would walk around the yard, and say 'look at that, there's a broken head, there's a line leak over here.' "I could see these things easily, since water leaks down and those problems go unnoticed many times in the summer months. As we were winterizing, we'd see air bubble up with the water and realized we could use air as a diagnostic tool as a proven strategy," he remembers.



Reducing water consumption with the right irrigation equipment and planning is a win-win for the Conserva franchisee and customers.

The Origins of the Franchise

Since then, Conserva Irrigation has completed six full seasons and boasts over 2500 active clients in one territory alone. From 2012 to 2016, Jundt and Olson's business model was tested in local and regional markets with success before they joined a partnership with Outdoor Living in June of 2017.

"Once we gathered enough data points and had proof of concept that it would work in a short season here in Minnesota, where we say all four days of summer are awesome," Jundt jokes, "we expanded to year—round irrigation territories and started building traction. This last year we officially franchised the model through our partners Outdoor Living brands who have been in business with Mosquito Squad for 13 years," he states.

Jundt says successful franchisees can come from several backgrounds. "It may be someone who already works in the Green Industry, such as irrigators, landscapers, lighting specialists, or anyone who wants to expand their service offerings." Additionally, it also works well for someone who has experience in the green industry and wants to own his or her own business.

Conserva Irrigation not only gives franchisees the opportunity to own and operate a business, but also provides a wealth of education. At Conserva, within the first year of employment, technicians become certified, then become Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditors. Additionally, Conserva creates e-learning opportunities for franchise owners to keep updated not only in irrigation systems, but also in conservation. "We study all the trade magazines, the EPA reports, the Irrigation Association findings, the UN World Water Development Report of 2018," Jundt states.

Jundt believes Conserva's emphasis on sustainability and conservation is a large part of what draws in employees and franchisees. "They feel great in being part of something. We all yearn to be part of something bigger than ourselves, and this is a social movement with direct and relatable products and end results," he notes.

Jundt estimates with over 44 Conserva Irrigation franchises across the country, billions of gallons of water will be saved in one year.

Toro Partnership

"We settled on a strategic partnership with the Toro Company mostly because they were aligned with our same goals, which are really changing the industry and bringing sophistication to it and focusing on spending time, money, and energy into high efficient product



Conserva Irrigation has over 44 franchises across the United States.

lines and practices," Jundt says.

The Toro Company has demonstrated their commitment to conservation by being the only manufacturer to win the EPA Water Sense Partner of The Year Award in addition to producing quality equipment.

"We want to change the way we water the world and do what's right for the communities in which we live. For a large company to get to that grassroots level is impressive, and that's what separates Toro from all other manufacturers in my opinion, by far," he concludes.



"We want to change the way we water the world and do what's right for the communities in which we live."

Russ Jundt

Hometown Team Partnership with Target

Jundt and Olson didn't rest on their laurels after securing a partnership with the Toro Company. "We approached Target two-and-a-half years ago with what we call the "hometown team." I wanted to take the next step in our offerings for Conserva with our partners at Toro," Jundt says.

Target gave Conserva Irrigation nine stores in Florida to test a pilot system, which eventually turned into 332 stores nationwide. "They'll be in place in more than 300 of our stores by the end of 2018. We anticipate the water savings will be approaching 150 million gallons this year. Think how much water that is; it's phenomenal," Jundt exclaims.

Conservation Starts at Home

Furthermore, Conserva Irrigation supports the Wyland Foundation and participates in the its annual National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation. "We partnered with the Wyland Foundation and in the last two years we've donated as franchisees over $30,000, and in 2018, we'll donate another $30,000," Jundt says.

Jundt encourages homeowners to become more aware of their watering practices. He summarized that irrigation systems account for in excess of 59% of water usage per residential home. "Watering one yard one time uses 2500 gallons of water," Jundt says. "Yet what do we do as humans, as irrigators? We water during the day, during rainstorms, after rainstorms, in high sunlight when it's evaporating or transpiring quickly."

Jundt and Conserva Irrigation believe that awareness and removing barriers that make it difficult to comply with water conservation practices are key to changing the irrigation word. "We're making that easier through this franchise model and the great products at Toro, like smart irrigation systems that adjust themselves," he states. "We'll create the world's largest, first ever irrigation franchise and effect change ourselves. We'll recreate the industry, we'll turn it upside down, and we'll education the masses, and through that we can effect change."

To find out more about the Conserva Irrigation Franchise and their commitment to water conservation, visit www.conservairrigation.com. ›

Angie Mellor teaches communications and writing classes at Western Technical College in La Crosse, Wisconsin, while freelance writing and editing.

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By Angie Mellor



The Carlsons use their family foundation to maintain a local community approach to conducting business. From left to right: Roger Carlson, Zach Carlson, Elva Carlson and Lance Carlson.

Fourth Generation Dealership Offers Tips for Lasting Success

You'd be hard pressed to find an equipment dealership in the Midwest that hasn't been in the family for years—so what makes Quincy Tractor LLC stand out?

Zach Carlson, the fourth generation of Carlson men involved in the family business, offers a few time-tested and new tips for staying successful.

Zach, operations manager at Quincy Tractor LLC, recounted a brief history of the family involvement, starting in 1962. "My great-grandfather was a mechanic, my grandpa Roger was the salesman, my uncle JR was a parts person, and my great-grandma was the bookkeeper," he says. In 2008, Zach's father, Lance Carlson bought out his father and rebranded the dealership as Quincy Tractor. Soon after, Lance acquired additional dealerships in nearby locations and continued to expand.

According to a 2017 Bobcat press release, "Lance's vision of expansion and growth led him to purchase and rename additional dealerships in Missouri and Illinois, establishing Bowling Green Tractor in 2010, Hannibal Tractor in 2011 and Brookfield Tractor in 2016. Lance also opened a new dealership, Midwest Tractor Sales Jerseyville, in 2012 in partnership with Midwest Tractor Sales." This rapid growth has allowed Quincy Tractor to expand its services to include landscape and turf markets.

Keep It in the Communities

Zach also credits the importance of locality. "We take a different approach to things," he says. "A lot of these dealerships have taken on a corporate mindset, and we still try to maintain that local feel." And who better could the local community trust than owners who use the equipment they sell? "My father and I have a farm in Missouri that we grow crops on. We farm out 300 acres of row crops, so we sell what we use on our farm," Zach says.

Another way that Quincy Tractor has shown its commitment to local communities has been through its naming and branding of the dealerships they have purchased over the years. Instead of lumping each of their locations under the title of Quincy Tractor,

While Quincy Tractor maintains a strong agricultural presence, it continues to expand into the municipality and landscaping markets.



Lance made the decision to name each dealership for the city or town in which they were located. "We keep things locally branded after the towns and those communities to maintain that persona of we're that community store," Zach notes. "We've tried to keep every employee on staff that was already there, and we hire local people to run the store, work as our parts people and to be our mechanics."

Follow the Golden Rule of Customer Service

"We treat others the way we want to be treated, Zach says. "We pride ourselves in that. That's what we've built our business on." To fulfill this promise, Quincy Tractor provides in-field and shop service, as well as several inspections. "We will do a full inspection on that equipment and provide a list of recommendations to get ready for that season's work," Zach stated. Additionally, they've implemented parts drop-box locations for customers. For example, they may post a drop box up to 50 miles away, so customers can drop a part off instead of driving all the way to the dealership. "We do anything possible to keep our customers going and keep them happy."

Provide and Service Equipment Customers Need

In its early years, Quincy Tractor's market was in cash crop agriculture corn and soybean farmers, dairy livestock, but has now expanded to serving the municipality and landscaping markets by adding the Bobcat skid steer and lawn and garden line at their Brookfield location. "We brought on Bobcat as one of our brands to offer," Zach notes. "It's a great name; it's a nationally recognized brand and has been really good for us."

Quincy Tractor locations also offer rentals of zero turn lawnmowers, skid loaders, compact track loaders. "If a contractor has one big job to do, he can rent a machine for the weekend or week, so he can do the job and he doesn't have to own the machine he would only use once or three times a year," Zach offers. Expanding their offering of landscaping equipment has allowed Quincy Tractor to reach a group of customers they hadn't expected. "We've developed different markets we've never thought we'd be huge players in, so including brands like Bush Hog and Rhino have helped



Each dealership maintains its own identity with the community it serves.

As a full-service dealership, Quincy Tractor doesn't just sell equipment, they also provide warranties and service for the brands and parts they offer. "We have certified trained service technicians at every location," Zach states. "All of my mechanics and parts people go through certification online classes and onsite classes to ensure they're knowledgeable about products we sell."

Bring in the Next Generation of Employees

A final tip Zach Carlson offers is to make connections with local students who will soon be joining the work force. This not only establishes Quincy Tractor's commitment to their communities, but also to the next generation.

For example, Quincy Tractor gives area students the opportunity to learn and work in their dealerships throughout Illinois and Missouri. "The local schools have professional day when they bring in local business to talk to the kids," Zach says.

Additionally, Quincy Tractor has a sponsorship program with area trade schools. "We partner with Parkland University in Champagne, Ill. to utilize students who are actually working on our branded equipment while at our store," Zach says. "When they graduate from Parkland University they have their degree and a position at our dealership

Since finding experienced personnel is a challenge Quincy Tractor LLC faces a dealership, the partnership with area trade schools serves an important role for both the students and the dealerships. To date, there have been four successful hires through the sponsorship program.

Every dealership has a recipe for success, and the Carlson family is no exception. They started with one family devoted to their business, added local communities and employees, mixed in a commitment to customer service and quality equipment, and finished by valuing and teaching the next generation to carry on their legacy. ›

By Gregg Wartgow

The Right Tool for the Right Job, at the RIGHT PRICE

SDLG North America offers compact wheel loaders at skid steer prices, and sees landscaping as a key market that will benefit.

Whether it's plants, pavers, mulch, fertilizer, etc., your job as a buyer is to find a product that helps maximize both customer satisfaction and profitability. That goes for the equipment you operate too. The ultimate goal is to get the job done as quickly, safely and cost-effectively as possible.

That is why a Chinese-based construction equipment manufacturer decided to brings its lineup of wheel loaders to North America in 2013. There is a large market of contractors and other users—including landscape contractors and nurseries—that could benefit from using a wheel loader, but have a tough time justifying the typical wheel loader price.

The company is Shandong Lingong Construction Machinery. Its "value" brand of loaders is simply marketed as SDLG. Four models are currently offered in North America: the larger LG958L/LG959 and L948F, and the smaller L938F and L918F.

The company itself was established in 1972. "They started out with wheel loaders," says Nick Tullo, sales manager for SDLG North America. "The company has since expanded into seven different product lines and more than 200 models. Wheel loaders continue to represent the company's main product. In fact, Shandong Lingong is the No. 1 wheel loader manufacturer by volume in the world. They have the ability to produce up to 40,000 wheel loaders in a year—which is almost inconceivable for some of our industrial footprints we're used to seeing."

When a value-engineered wheel loader makes sense

Tullo says the SDLG loaders are no-frills and budget-friendly. For example, the L918F has a suggested retail price of $54,500. According to Tullo, that's about 30% less than a comparably sized premium wheel loader. It's also comparable to a value-branded skid-steer loader.

"The SDLG machine is de-spec'd to lower the cost," Tullo says. "The main reason we introduced it in 2013 was because there was a position in the market that wasn't being filled. Many of the premium construction equipment manufacturers were going in one direction with more features and more cost. On the other hand, the loaders offered by the value brands had matured so their costs increased. That left a void for users who just needed a good loader that met their budget and got the job done."

SDLG engineers focused on a handful of key areas to pull cost out of the machine without sacrificing performance.

One is the axles. It's a 4x4 machine with no differential locks. "That covers 95% of the applications someone would want a wheel loader for," Tullo says. "The axles are also dry disc brake. Yes, that's pre-1990 technology, but it brings the cost of the machine down by nearly $10,000. If you look at the type of customer who wants a budget-friendly machine, he is simply going to ask: Will the brakes stop the machine? Yes they will."

Does old technology mean more maintenance more often? Not necessarily. As Tullo points out, the brake pads are $500 and need to be replaced every 500 hours or so. That's $1 per hour. A wet disc brake system might last 10,000 hours, but having it serviced could cost upwards of $10,000. That's also $1 an hour.

Additionally, replacing dry disc brake pads is much easier. That can be important if you have on-staff technicians



Budget-friendly compact wheel loaders can be a great solution for a variety of landscaping and snow removal applications, especially if you have a nursery or materials yard where a lot of loading and hauling takes place on a regular basis.

or are inclined to do basic machine maintenance yourself. For landscape contractors who are using a wheel loader just two to four hours a day, one or two brake pad replacements per year are all that will typically be necessary.

Another area of cost reduction is the transmission. SDLG transmissions are manual two-speed power shift. "This means the customer can go between first and second gear by turning the shift lever on the steering column," Tullo explains. "Better yet, they can achieve both direction control and gear shifting in the joystick used for the boom and bucket. For a landscape contractor, this is a great solution because it's so simple. Simple operation results in increased efficiency. And at the lower price point, you're talking about the potential for a much lower per-hour operating cost."

This is why SDLG engineers focused so much attention on bottom-line performance and ease of operation. The L918F, SDLG's newest and most compact model, has the operating capacity and hydraulic system to handle most landscaping applications. A third-function hydraulic system is standard, allowing for easy operation of things like augers, brooms, grapple buckets and snowplows.

SDLG loaders also come with a skid steer coupler. "Any other attachments you have can be hooked up to this loader," Tullo points out. "This is a turnkey machine, which is what a lot of landscape contractors are looking for.

"We've seen appreciation for the simplicity of these machines," Tullo continues. "Much of today's equipment is fairly complicated and in need of a lot of operator training. Owners like that these loaders are easier to operate and easier to maintain. It's a niche market, but it's a very important part of the market."

Landscape and nursery is an important segment of that niche. Tullo sees some applications where a skid steer or track loader is probably the best option, such as backyard landscaping on existing properties where a smaller footprint and tighter turning radius are needed. But on new construction, a compact wheel loader powering numerous attachments could be a highly productive option. Snow removal is also an ideal application, especially if servicing properties where you want to use a 10-foot blade or 6- to 8-foot pusher.



SDLG loaders are supported by an established network of Volvo dealers across North America, including Nuss Truck & Equipment, a multi-location dealership in Minnesota.

The best-suited application for a compact wheel loader is hauling and loading. "If you have a mulch yard or nursery, for instance, this is where a wheel loader really comes into play," Tullo says. "At the SDLG price point, you can afford to go from a skid steer, which has a lower ground speed, into a compact wheel loader where you have faster speeds, a working cab, a bigger bucket and more productivity."

Speaking of productivity, one area of the SDLG loader that has not been de-spec'd is the engine. That said, some complexity and cost has been removed.

The L918F uses a 74-hp Deutz Tier 4 Final engine. "That means we don't have to put any complex emissions technology on the engine for that rated horsepower," Tullo says. "We don't have to worry about diesel exhaust fluid or a diesel particulate filter. With this engine, you have passive regen through a diesel oxidation catalyst. This is great because contractors do not have to regen the engine, which results in fewer parts and more reliability."

Local, established parts and service support

Service support is a key factor for equipment-shopping landscape contractors. SDLG has an established network of dealers that knows how to serve the construction and landscaping industries very well. SDLG has been in a joint venture with Volvo Construction Equipment since 2007. Volvo dealers throughout North America are exclusively representing the SDLG wheel loader line.

Parts support is a second consideration. Some Chinese companies have earned a reputation for poor parts fulfillment. Tullo points to an important distinction with respect to SDLG.

"SDLG parts are actually out of Columbus, OH," Tullo says. "This is always the first question you hear from contractors when talking about a Chinese or even Korean brand. There is a natural concern about getting parts. Right now, we're running at a roughly 98% availability. Plus, we direct ship to either the dealer or end customer overnight. I think those are two very important points."

For more on SDLG, visit greenindustrypros.com/12352784. ›

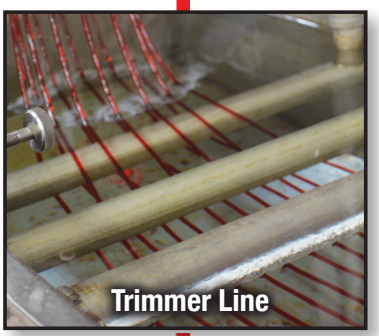


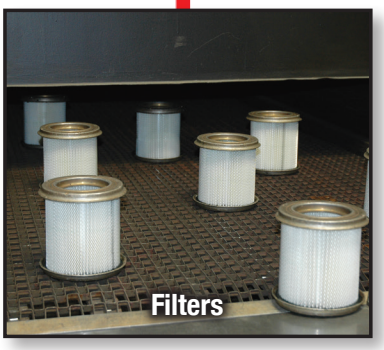
Nick Tullo, sales manager for SDLG North America.

Over 50 Years of American Manufacturing Expertise.









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By Gregg Wartgow



John Deere

The John Deere 35G compact excavator is easy to maneuver in tight spaces.

Why Excavators Are INDISPENSABLE in Hardscaping

When it comes to digging, reaching, grabbing and placing, a compact excavator remains a hardscape contractor's best friend.

People love their hardscapes. They look great, help to increase property value, reduce landscape maintenance needs, and add functional value to a home or business.

"Homeowners are following new trends in outdoor spaces like full outdoor kitchens and fireplaces, as well as more elaborate retaining walls and staircases," says Ed Brenton, brand marketing manager at Case Construction Equipment. "The same can be said for commercial properties. The latest trends have led us toward new ways of extending our living spaces—beautifying outdoor spaces while also making them more practical."

"Hardscaping applications continue to increase in popularity as businesses and homeowners look to alternative landscaping systems that can thrive without the water and maintenance requirements typically associated with traditional landscape systems," says Jason Boerger, marketing manager at Bobcat Company. "Hardscape systems can often pay for the investment in a short time through savings in water and maintenance costs."

"With commercial properties, employers want to attract the best talent," says Justin Steger, inside district manager for John Deere Commercial Worksite Products. "Employee wellness and work-life balance are growing trends. Companies want to give employees options to get outside. That's why you're seeing things like walls, walkways and patios more often.

"The big boom in hardscaping, though, is in the residential market," Steger continues. "Paver patios, outdoor kitchens and complete entertainment areas with fire pits and seating have become common. Contractors tell us homeowners look at these things like an investment. Hardscapes help homeowners get more enjoyment out of their property, and also help them stand out amongst the crowd if they every try to sell their home."

According to the American Society of Landscape Architects' 2018 Residential Landscape Architecture Trends Survey, the following landscape amenities are among the 10 most popular, all pointing to overwhelming demand for hardscaping:

- Low-maintenance landscapes (#3)
- Permeable paving (#6)
- Rain gardens (#7)
- Reduced lawn area (#8).

When you'll need an excavator

When installing hardscaping features, contractors have choices in the equipment they use. Tractors, skid steers, track loaders and compact utility loaders can all help get tasks done more efficiently.

Manny Carlino, owner of M&R Landscape & Design in Westfield, NJ, tends to instruct his crews to use a compact utility loader for the majority of the hardscaping work they do. That work includes paver patios, walkways and smaller fire pits. A compact



Bobcat

A Bobcat E42 compact excavator makes for easy work of a retaining wall.



Case

The Case CX30C compact excavator demonstrates its versatility.

utility loader, or mini skid steer, is a nimble machine that makes less mess and costs less per hour to operate.

That said, Carlino does have an excavator in his fleet. He uses it to build retaining walls and raised patios. "When you look at the amount of digging that has to be done and dirt that needs to be moved, an excavator is the most productive option here," Carlino points out.

John Deere's Steger agrees that it all comes down to application. "A skid steer or tractor is best for load-and-carry work like spreading rock in a bed, or when using pallet forks to pull retaining wall blocks off a truck. A skid steer or tractor is also great for doing finish-grade work with a bucket."

With an excavator, on the other hand, you have the ability to be more precise. "You can also dig deeper," Steger says. "Think about the general geometry of an excavator bucket. It's maybe 24 inches wide as opposed to 76. It's simply made for digging deeper."

Case's Brenton says an excavator is also a great choice when you need to dig close to existing structures or when access is a challenge. "Excavators are also perfect for digging applications along hillsides when building retaining walls or other hardscape features," Brenton points out.

When working in tight spaces, a reduced tail-swing excavator is a big plus. That is the term used when an excavator's housing extends only slightly beyond the tracks. With a *zero* tail-swing configuration, the housing doesn't extend at all beyond the tracks. "This is a helpful feature when working in between houses or in a tight backyard," Steger says.

Picking the right excavator

If you conclude that an excavator is a hardscaping machine you need, you still have some homework to do. The first thing to think about is size. According to Case's Brenton, the most important factor is to get the job done safely with the right lifting capacities and proper amount of reach.

Deere's Steger suggests spec'ing approximately 20-25% over what you think you'll need. "This will allow you to handle the majority of work you see without pushing the excavator to its limits. At the same time, when you have the opportunity to take on a bigger job than normal, you'll have the ability to do so. This allows you to organically grow your hardscaping business with the same excavator." Talk to your dealer about the work you're doing so he can help you pick the right size excavator.

Next, think about the types of properties you'll be working on. When working in tight spaces, close to existing structures or along paths or roadways, look for features that help address those challenges. "An adjustable boom with the ability to offset left or right will allow an operator to work closer to buildings and obstacles," Case's Brenton says. "A machine with a short-radius or zero tail-swing configuration allows operators to turn the machine while minimizing its footprint on a jobsite. A smaller machine with retractable tracks can fit right through a garden gate."

Along with overall size and jobsite footprint, machine weight is an

important consideration. That's because equipment transport is a major issue for contractors.

"Many manufacturers make very capable excavators," Deere's Steger says. "But that doesn't do any good if contractors can't get it to jobsites quickly and easily. Landscapers want to get to the job, get the work done and get onto the next job. An excavator that is easy to transport will help the contractor make more money."

Brenton says Case's CX37, at 7,990 pounds, represents one of the most popular size classes for residential construction and landscaping applications. "This is a powerful machine with bucket-digging forces up to 6,900 pounds and over 10 feet of dig depth," Brenton says. "Yet it is still small enough to be towed with a pickup truck. In many states it can be towed without a CDL."

John Deere has also focused on high performance in a lighter-weight package. The company's newest compact excavator, the 30G, was born from contractor feedback on the popular 35G. "Contractors told us they'd like something that was just a little bit lighter and easier to trailer," Steger says. "Contractors need to be aware of the weight and towing restrictions in their particular state. That's why 7,000 pounds is kind of that magic number. Depending on what else is being towed, our 30G gets contractors to that magic number."

To shed some bodyweight without sacrificing performance, John Deere engineers looked at the boom and arm configuration. "The 30G can't dig quite as deep as the 35G, but it gets close," Steger points out. "When you look at the reduced weight, it's a good trade off." The 30G has an operating weight of 6,850 pounds and a digging depth of 9'2".

One more thing to think about is attachment capability. Yes, it's likely that you'll predominantly be using your excavator to dig. But it's nice to know that you can pop on different attachments when needed to gain additional jobsite productivity.

"All of our compact excavators come standard with mechanical quick couplers and auxiliary hydraulic lines plumbed to the end of the boom to easily swap attachments," Deere's Steger says. "It's not uncommon for hardscaping contractors to fit their machines with a thumb for handling boulders, and to switch between a bucket and another attachment depending on the task they are performing."

Bobcat's Boerger points to several attachments that will make a hardscape contractor's life a lot easier. "Plate compactors help prep an area for pavers. Clamps help place rock more precisely. Bobcat offers something called the Pro Clamp system that allows operators to grab large, small or irregular objects with greater confidence."

Innovative tools like that are a big reason why excavators remain an indispensable tool for hardscaping. Contractors can make more money when they can use the same machine to quickly and safely complete a variety of tasks. With demand for hardscaping amenities continuing to grow, having a versatile excavator in the fleet will help contractors make more money too. ›

ROBOTIC MOWERS REDUCE LAWN MAINTENANCE EFFORT

It takes an average of 40 hours a year to maintain a normal sized lawn with a conventional mower. Husqvarna's revolutionary robotic lawn mower, Automower®, requires only a one-time installment to maintain a yard for years with minimal user effort. That "effort" is simply pressing "start" on the Automower® Connect app and sitting back as the robotic mower manicures ordinary grass into carpet-like lawns.



Husqvarna

Robotic mowers can help reduce maintenance effort.

As a battery-powered robot, the mower works fully automatically and nearly silently. It consists of three parts - the mower, the charging station and the boundary wire. The boundary wire is laid throughout the yard during installation. Correct installation of the boundary wire allows a signal originating from its charging station to be sent through the wire, guiding the mower on its own and ensuring all parts of the lawn are mowed equally.

While users can install the robotic lawn mowers themselves, it is best to hire a local dealer. Dealers have the cost-effective tools and experience to lay the boundary wires correctly and efficiently. Once the boundary wires are in place, the specific models with the patented GPS system creates a map of the yard, allowing the robotic mower to learn the lawn.

The mower works in a free moving pattern, which allows it to discover and navigate every corner of the yard in the most efficient way possible. It can go around bushes, under benches, between trees and everywhere in between providing a clean, crisp cut in even some of the harder-to-reach places. When its batteries run low, the mower always returns to its charging base.

Automower® mows frequently, cutting a little grass at a time with its thin, but razor-sharp blades. It leaves miniscule clippings, naturally fertilizing the grass regularly, eliminating the need to continuously purchase fertilizer.



On the Cuttinge Edge: Enjoy Creative Freedom in Your Designs

Landscape architects can enjoy creative freedom in their designs, knowing that Coyote Landscape Products creates custom steel edging products for specific project requirements. With its newly expanded production capabilities, Coyote provides:

- The flexibility to produce edging to support design projects of any size or configuration, such as sleek curves to intersecting pathways.
- Different lengths, sizes and thicknesses of edging.
- Steel edging that creates a finished look that is easier to maintain with well-defined borders to separate rocks, grass and landscape beds.
- The ability to produce distinctive bends and hidden pockets for a cleaner aesthetic.

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The Building Blocks of a Beautiful Landscape



Willow Creek Concrete Products has developed a new proprietary process to enhance its Willow Creek Paving Stones (WCPS) Select Series: Slatestone Slatestone Grande, Dekrastone and Eurostone. Additional features include:

- Willow Creek Infusion technology, a manufacturing process providing vibrant color, enhanced color longevity, heightened durability and additional stain-resistant properties to concrete pavers, while minimizing absorption rates.
- Engineering to meet performance standards and aesthetic demands of contractors and landscape architects.
- Many year maintenance-free design and limited lifetime guarantee in residential applications.
- Durability through harsh freeze-thaw cycles.
- Midwest Availability.

www.greenindustrypros.com/12409057

Vermeer Adds S925TX Mini Skid Steer

Vermeer's new S925TX mini skid steer with radial lift path features a tip capacity of 2,643 pounds, rated operating capacity of 925 pounds and maximum hinge pin height reach of 84.5 inches. Additional features include:

- A choice of three Kubota high-torque, four-cylinder engines includes a 24.8-hp V1505 diesel, a 40-hp WG1605 gas or a 35.1-hp V1505 diesel engine (international markets only).
- 7-inch-wide tracks with 5-psi ground pressure or 9-inch-wide tracks with 4 psi for even better flotation.
- A travel speed of 4.1 mph.
- A chariot-style platform that ensures optimum operator comfort and pilot-operated ground drive help maintain smooth control.
- The dual auxiliary system that switches between high flow for ground-engaging attachments and low flow for maximum control.
- A universal mounting plate that fits a broad range of Vermeer-approved attachments.
- A three-year/3000-hour extended limited warranty on the mainframe and loader arms.



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Landscapers' Choice Primary Seeder

The Landscapers' Choice from Kasco Manufacturing is a primary seeder ideal for prepared seedbeds. Utilizing the company's Walking Beam technology, the Landscapers' Choice follows the contour of the terrain for a maximum seed-to-soil contact. Additional features include:

- Two rows of heavy duty cast iron press wheels; the front rows level the dirt, preparing it to seed while the back rows provide a manicured final grade.
- Simple and quick seed rate changing, without the need to change tools or plates.
- One seedbox that can handle most seed varieties.
- The Seed Chute that delivers seed evenly across the width of the machine.
- A ground driven seed metering system that is consistent and will stop seed flow when the implement is stopped.
- 5' and 6' working widths and the ability to adapt to either Cat. 1 or 2 three-point hitch tractors.



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Landscape Installation & Construction Products



New ToughEdge is Ideal for High-Traffic

Keeping with its durable and flexible line of steel landscaping, Coyote Landscape Products introduces ToughEdge, a new landscape edger for high-traffic commercial/industrial applications. This heavy-duty product is ideal for hardscapes in front of parks, playgrounds, schools and any area where edging product is exposed to high volumes of foot traffic. Additional features include:

- 11 GA, 3/16" and 1/4" availability.
- An EcoCoat finish that provides a colorful upgrade with color choices of brown, black and green, while ensuring the edging has a long, maintenance free life.
- Recycled steel manufacturing.
- Virtually no VOCs or waste, with low energy use.
- Reduced on-site installation time and low maintenance.
- ArborEdge Tree Rings, Edge Stakes, Corner Pieces, Start and Stop Pieces and 14" Edge Stakes accessories.

www.greenindustrypros.com/12413210



ASV Offers RS-75 and VS-75 Skid Steers with Leading Ground Clearance

ASV Holdings Inc. offers the large-frame, radial-lift RS-75 and vertical-lift VS-75 skid-steer loaders. The machines feature highly efficient hydraulics and cooling systems, as well as high ground clearance, departure angle and serviceability. The skid steers are ideal for a wide range of applications, including rental, construction, landscape, snow removal and forestry. Additional features include:

- A 10.5-inch ground clearance that allows the machines to travel over obstructions such as logs, stumps and rocks with less risk of getting hung up.
- A 24-degree departure angle, decreasing the risk of the machines getting stuck when starting to climb a steep hill.
- Drain plugs on all service items, including chain cases, the hydraulic tank, the radiator and the engine oil pan, to speed the draining process.
- Standard metal-face seals that ensure the drive hubs don't require maintenance.
- A direct-drive pump that eliminates labor-intensive belt servicing.
- A maximum speed of 11 mph when equipped with optional two-speed drive allowing fast and easy travel uphill, downhill and over rough terrain.
- An industrial 74-horsepower diesel engine.
- The naturally aspirated 2.9-liter displacement engine that produces 192 foot-pounds of torque.
- The Tier 4 Final engine that requires no regeneration, exhaust sensors or diesel exhaust fluid.

www.greenindustrypros.com/12413513



Visit www.greenindustrypros.com/10857096

Machine Enhancements to N Series Backhoe Loader Line



CASE Construction Equipment has introduced several machine enhancements to its N Series backhoe loaders incorporated throughout the machine—from cab and drivetrain improvements to enhancements to the hydraulic and electrical systems. CASE has also made standard several options that were previously optional and offers an increased suite of factory options on all N Series backhoe loaders. Additional features include:

- A Pilot Control hydraulic system for optimal precision and smoothness that offers more control in critical applications. <strike></strike>
- A standard fuel economy package.
- ECO mode switches for the loader and backhoe functions, which allows for greater fuel savings and optimal power and performance.
- The Auto Engine Idle that brings engine RPMs down to idle when the backhoe controls are not used for a set period of time.
- Automatic shutdown if the machine idles for a set period of time.
- The Engine Protection Shutdown mode that turns the engine off if engine temperature, drivetrain fluid temperature or engine oil pressure go out of normal operating range.
- An updated drivetrain with improved roading and gradeability, as well as more pushing power under load and greater acceleration around the jobsite.

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Visit www.greenindustrypros.com/10915742

By Lisa Stryker, National Association of Landscape Professionals

Making Injury Prevention a HIGHER PRIORITY

Focus on the reasons why safety is important to your company.





National Association of Landscape Professionals

LEFT TO RIGHT: Wearing a safety vest will help alert others of your presence. Hearing protection is a must for landscape contractors. Landscapers working off the ground trimming trees should be secured with proper harnessing and head protection.

It seems like a no-brainer to say that safety is important, but have you really thought of all the short and long-term reasons why it is so important to your company? If you focus on those reasons it will help keep safety training and good safety practices at the forefront of everything you do.

So why is safety so important?

It is at the core of your company's professional image. Safety is important to your clients. Clients, especially commercial clients, need to see that your staff is well-trained and operating safely on their property. If your staff isn't wearing Personal Protective Equipment, using cones and making their work area safe, and adhering to equipment safety practices, your clients will notice and it can damage your relationship – even if you don't have an accident on their property.

It helps you retain employees. We all know how hard it is to find great crew and keep them year after year. People want to work in a professional, safe work environment, so your commitment to your employee's health and welfare is a great step to keeping great employees.

A good safety record makes you more profitable. A bad safety record leads to higher insurance rates, medical costs, lost time, equipment repair costs and more. An effective safety and health program can save $4 to $6 for every $1 invested according to OSHA.

How Do You Make Injury Prevention a Higher Priority?

How do you reduce injuries at your company? You must establish a strong safety culture and make sure everyone in your company knows it is the top priority and reinforce that message with regular training and education.

Education and enforcement are keys to a strong safety culture.

Education - Preparing and delivering safety policies and training should be on-going activities during the entire work season. Many companies do "tailgate training" in the morning before crews head out for the day. If that format doesn't work for you, then try weekly safety training.

Use your own experience to choose the most critical safety training topics. Close call incidents and accidents you have had at the company are great teaching tools. All safety policies and training resources should be in a language your workers can understand. OSHA and the National Association of Landscape Professionals provide almost all safety resources in English and Spanish. Remember to fully document policy and training delivery.

Enforcement - A fair and consistent

enforcement of company safety policies and work procedures is important for all employees. If Personal Protective Equipment is required on a jobsite, ensure that all workers, supervisors and sub-contractors utilize these injury prevention tools. When enforcing workplace safety rules, keep the consequences of unsafe behaviors consistent for all crew and supervisory personnel.



Drew Garcia, member of the National Association of Landscape Professional's Safety Committee and partner in its Worker's Compensation Insurance Program stresses that, "Employee buy-in is critical to a strong safety program. Having your employees participate in safety trainings or lead safety trainings creates ownership of ideas and empowers individuals, which ultimately helps your company."

And a strong safety culture will help employees make safe decisions even when they are not being directly supervised.

What Safety Topics Should You Focus On?

Depending on the type of landscape or lawn care work your company does, there are literally dozens of crucial areas of safety training for your employees, including but not limited to:

- Equipment safety
- Personal protective equipment
- Slip, fall and trip prevention
- Protection from Crystalline-Silica dust
- Roadway safety
- Chemical safety
- Preventing heat related illnesses
- Lifting injuries
- Driving safety
- Mower safety
- Carbon Monoxide poisoning prevention
- Protecting eyes, ears, nose and throats
- Tree care and pruning safety

You can quickly see just how many different safety topics apply to the work your employees are doing daily and how many opportunities there are for accidents and injuries.

Equipment Safety

Equipment safety is especially critical to your overall safety program and equipment maintenance deserves special attention. Sometimes there is a big focus at the beginning of the year to get equipment ready for the season, but then the momentum dies off. Don't let that happen to you – maintain a regular inspection and maintenance schedule. Also, make sure you do extensive training on safe equipment operation.

Make Sure You Are Continually Improving

If you have a great safety education program, but don't take the time to evaluate and assess accidents and near miss incidents, then you are missing an opportunity to fix problems. Make sure you have a process for your crews to report safety accidents and even near misses or bad practices that could have – but didn't – result in an accident.

Accidents can and will happen. But you can make a huge difference in your company by doing everything you can to limit the amount of preventable injuries from occurring.

Also, stay on top of the latest safety trends, rules and regulations with information from OSHA, from your state association and from the National Association of Landscape Professionals. Join a safety program like NALP's Safe Company Program to help plan your year-round safety tailgate training.

Internal safety campaigns, employee involvement, unique slogans, and praise and recognition for following safety requirements are all examples of how you can build your company's safety culture. ›

A FEW ITEMS TO START YOUR INJURY PREVENTION CHECKLIST

Use Personal Protective Equipment – Ensure that your employees are wearing the right PPE for each specific task.

Use Warning Signs and Cones- Keep the work area safe by using cones and warning signs to keep drivers and pedestrians away from the worksite.

Maintain Clean Machine Operating Platforms - Remove any tripping hazards from equipment and trailer decks.

Use Equipment & Chemicals According to Manufacturer Specifications

Prevent falls - Never use an aluminum ladder near electrical lines, don't place a ladder on another object, don't over-reach.

Keep Shop Area Floors Free of Slippery Liquids - Clean up spilled oil and lubricants immediately.

Drive Safety – No distracted driving, maintain safe speeds

Use Mower Shields and Discharge Chutes and

Ensure Roll-over Protection (ROPS) is in the up and locked position and accompanied by a seatbelt for the operator.

Prevent Heat Exhaustion – Proper hydration = 2 gallons per 8-hour shift. Time in the shade or air-conditioning is necessary on hot days. Know that everyone will tolerate the heat differently based on their health.

By Rod Dickens



Construction crews take advantage of extra room provided by cab overhang and deck-over trailers.

Morgan Tolentino Photography

Klausing Group matches TRAILERS TO TASKS

Kentucky landscape contractor handles maintenance and installation services with trailers equipped for those uniquely different tasks.

As a rule, landscape management companies, those that provide maintenance and installation services, have two completely different trailer setups for both offerings. Lexington-based Klausing Group is no exception. In business since 1992, the company provides grounds management and landscape construction services to a wide variety of commercial accounts in both Greater Lexington and Greater Louisville.

"Going back to the shop for something as small as string line is time consuming and can kill your budget."

Construction superintendent Tyler Taylor has been with Klausing Group for four years and currently oversees two construction crews. Each is called on to perform major installs and bid build work. "We have two new 20-ft deck-over trailers with dove tails," he explains. "How each is equipped depends on the day. They could be hauling plant material or a Toro Dingo, with several attachments, a Bobcat T590, also with an array of attachments, or a trencher for irrigation."

His favorite piece of equipment is the Dingo, because, as he notes, it's so versatile and can be used in big and small areas alike. Whereas the Dingo is his favorite, the skid steer is a requisite for lifting anything over 1,000 pounds, including pallets full of sod. It, too, is versatile, when outfitted with a pallet fork, smooth bucket, tooth bucket, auger, or a Harley rake for finished grading. The trailer also has a tool box filled with a variety of hand tools.

The outfit is hauled from site to site with a Ford F-450 crew cab, with a 10-ft dump bed, 4-ft side boards, and a cab overhang for strapping on a wheel barrow.

Nine-year company veteran Jorge Tolentino, is one of six maintenance crew leaders. "Our teams go out with either 20 or 25-ft enclosed trailers, each pulled by a four-door Ford F-350," he relates. "A typical crew would carry four mowers, including two Exmark zero-turns with 60-inch decks, one 60-inch midsize with a Velke, and a 30-inch push mower. Also, on board is an array of Stihl hand-held equipment, spray tanks, a big trash can, and a tool rack.

"Our trailers are equipped with everything we need for the day. There's a 40-gallon fuel tank for mowers and a 5-gallon can of mixed gas for hand-held equipment."

Tolentino's favorite piece of equipment is the 60-inch Exmark zero-turn, a machine, he says, that mows a lot of grass in a hurry. Surprisingly, the most critical item on his trailer is neither a mower nor a hand-held tool Instead, it's spare string line for trimmers or other small replacement parts that can save the day. Says Tolentino, "Going back to the shop for something as small as string line is time consuming and can kill your budget."

There's another item on board that's critical, especially on hot summer days, he emphasizes. That's a five-gallon water tank to keep crew members hydrated.

Last word

What criteria are among the most important when buying new equipment? Company founder and president

Company Name: Klausing Group

Owner: Roscoe Klausing

Location: Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky

Years in Business: 26

Geographical Coverage:
Greater Louisville and Greater Lexington, Kentucky

Type of Clients: Commercial accounts

Services Rendered:
Grounds management and landscape construction

Roscoe Klausing says he looks for manufacturers that offer a family of products that can help reduce the number of makes and models in their inventory. Good dealer support is a requisite, as well. Although his company hasn't put a high priority on purchasing energy-efficient equipment, he notes that continually updating the fleet with late model equipment and vehicles increases fuel-efficiency while keeping emissions as the lowest end of the spectrum. ›



Morgan Tolentino Photography

Maintenance crews have everything they need for the day, including gas and important replacement parts.

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By Mark Borrasso



IMPLEMENTING business systems

Business systems can help you grow your business and have more time to enjoy your life.

How often have you felt chained to your business, unable to fully nurture the heart that yearns to see it – and the people within it – thrive and prosper? What if there were a way to shake off the chains that bind you and your teams to endless obligations and responsibilities, leaving you all free to work on growing the business and enjoying the abundance of life outside it? There is a way – and it all begins with systems.

Business systems have gotten a bad rap, mainly owing to the stigma attached to their development and implementation. For many owners and managers, the exciting part of running the business is providing quality goods, services, and solutions to the customer, not configuring software and writing operating manuals. But systems are as necessary for the efficient, seamless operation of the landscape contracting business as sunlight is for plant growth. in fact, in much the same way natural systems support life, business systems support individuals and teams and provide the predictability, stability, and consistency so critical for ensuring the health and longevity of the organization. Business systems have other benefits, too.

Proper systems that are both scalable and replicable ensure the impact to the bottom line caused by normal growing pains is minimized and that operations can successfully continue during times of growth-related transition.

They Reduce Costs

The costs to keep your business operational are numerous and reach across all parts of the organization, but most can be directly traced to human resource management, accounting functions,

crew labor and mobilization, and vehicle and equipment maintenance. The more these necessary non-billable events can be streamlined and automated, the more cost effective they will be. Recruiting, payroll, invoice generation, crew tracking, and inventory acquisition are only a few instances of non-revenue-generating activities in your business that can greatly benefit from established systems.

They Support Growth

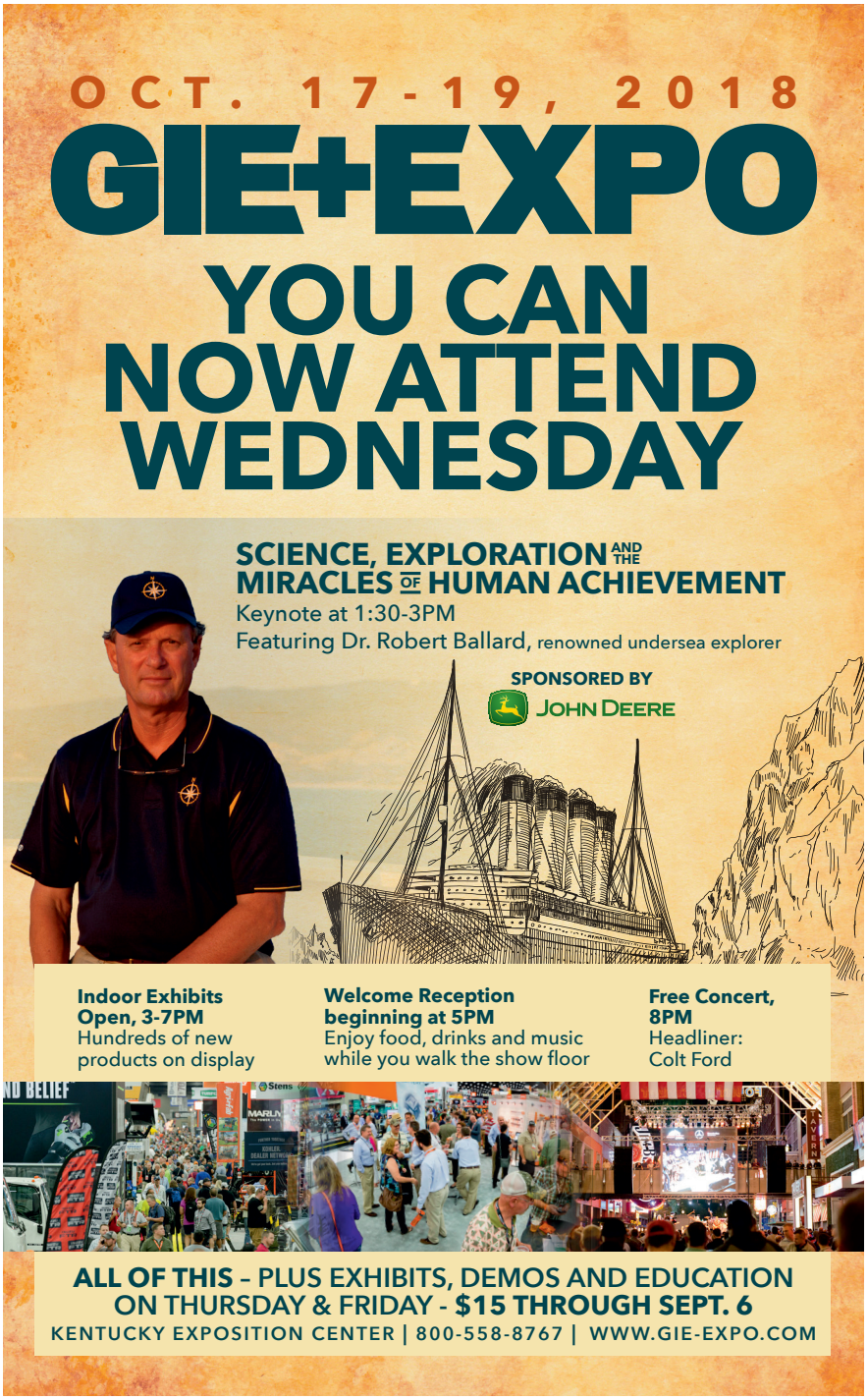
One of the goals for your business should be growth. Growth can occur organically as you build and refine an increasingly profitable book of business, or it can happen acquisitively as you partner with or buy out other firms. Your business should always be poised to support either type of growth, which requires systems that can scale to fit any size organization and that can be easily replicated as many times as necessary. Proper systems that are both scalable and replicable ensure the impact to the bottom line caused by normal growing pains is minimized and that operations can successfully continue during times of growth-related transition.

They Add Value

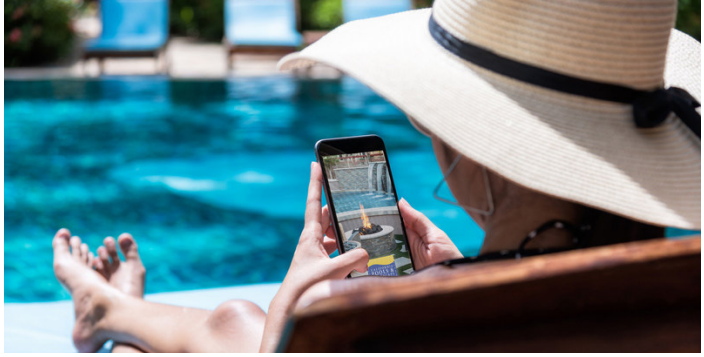
No matter the owner's investment, every business will have to change hands at some point. Adding thoughtful, well-designed systems increases a business's market value and makes it more attractive to prospective buyers, who are looking for – among other hallmarks of a robust organization – healthy margins, predictable revenue, and ease of integration (read more here: www.findtheedge.com/finance/top-10-things-that-add-value-to-your-business). Systems also indicate to lenders that the business is disciplined with its resources, which presents it as a lower lending risk.

Designing, selecting, and implementing business systems might not bring the thrill you were seeking when you started your landscape contracting business, but the results they provide most definitely will. Systems help to free you and your teams to plan, strategize, and dream of new and exciting avenues for the business to travel. Whether you are looking to reduce costs associated with overhead and non-revenue-generating activities, grow the business organically or acquisitively, or develop an ironclad succession plan, implementing scalable, replicable business systems to streamline operations and increase profitability is one of the most important and impactful ways you can ensure your business always works for you.

Mark Borrasso is a Success Coach for the LandOpt Network of Contractors.



Technology



California Pool & Landscape Creates First Backyard Design App

California Pools & Landscape developed and launched a free backyard design app to help homeowners create an ideal outdoor space. This app launch is available for iOS and Android mobile devices. The new mobile app will allow homeowners to select specific features of outdoor living areas and have them recreated into a homeowner's backyards. Additional features include:

- Galleries of outdoor spaces and features available.
- Several high-resolution images to choose from, select and add to Dreambooks.
- The ability for customers to upload photos of the outdoor space they currently have.
- The ability to request a quote directly from the app.
- Resources for financing the project and selecting a designer.
- The ability for personal designer to sort through customer saved images and create a digital 3-D virtual tour of the dream backyard.
- State-of-the-art software that delivers an interactive experience allowing the customer to virtually walk around their property, simulating the completed project.

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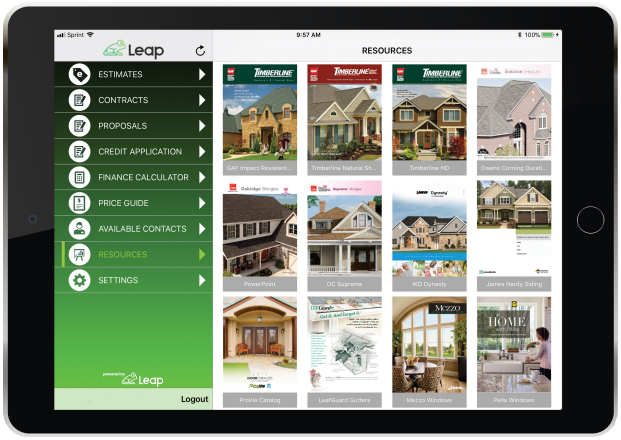

Leap App Sets Out to Revolutionize the In-Home Sales Process

Leap announced its market launch to the home services industry, eliminating the inefficiencies of handwritten paper contracts, inaccurate estimates and credit application errors. The Leap application helps businesses and homeowners by simplifying, securing and automating the day-to-day sales process for all stakeholders. Additional features include:

- Cost alleviation for home services companies by converting the all-paper sales process to digital documents, eliminating inaccurate measurements, providing a digital library of brochures and company literature, converting paper price guides to digital price guides and shortening sales employee training time.
- Easy use for all in-home service vendors, including exterior remodelers, landscaping companies, electrical supply, HVAC, general contractors, plumbers, kitchen remodelers and bath remodelers.
- Complete brand customization.
- Integration with tools such as Salesforce, MarketSharp and Provia to help homes services sales teams manage customer and prospect information.
- A partnership with GreenSky and other lending firms for in-app financing options on-site, allowing customers to obtain financing approvals within seconds.

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Fully-Rugged U11 Tablet

Durabook Americas, Inc., the North American branch of Twinhead International Corporation, introduced the newest member of the DURABOOK family, the fully rugged 11.6" DURABOOK U11 tablet. The U11 is ideal for flight line maintenance, field diagnostics, and data collection applications, found in a variety of demanding markets, including defense, law enforcement and field service, where users often operating in extreme conditions. Additional features include:

- An Intel 7th Generation CPU, Windows 10 Pro, MIL-STD-810G and 461F ratings, DOD-level security and a full HD sunlight readable LCD.
- Certification for drop (6'), shock, vibration, rain, dust, sand, humidity, freeze/thaw, high/low temperature (- 4°F ~ 140°F) and temperature shock.
- It's sealed, fanless design means dust, sand and other small particles are kept out.



- A quick-release SSD that makes it easy for DOD customers to remove and store vital information is a secure location, at a moment's notice.
- TMP 2.0, an insertable SmartCard/CAC reader and optional Intel vPro Technology, fingerprint scanner and contactless SmartCard/CAC reader.
- A 10-point capacitive multi-touch panel that allows users to keep their gloves on when engaging with the device and its touchscreen operates, even when wet.
- Anti-glare and anti-reflective film, making it readable in direct sunlight.
- A stealth/night vision mode that allows operation without exposing the user in light.
- The latest Intel Dual Band wireless AC 9260, which supports faster downloads with 160Mhz bandwidth and a maximum speed of 1.73Gbps.

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By Jenny Lescohier

It's Gotta Be the SHOES

Compact track loaders are real workhorses. But like real horses, they can go a lot further and do a lot more with the right shoes on. And in the case of compact track loaders, those shoes are, in fact, the tracks they run on.



The right tracks make the difference in your compact track loader performance.

If you have compact track loaders (CTLs) in your fleet, then you know these machines are real workhorses. But they can go a lot further and do a lot more with the right tracks to run on.

When selecting tracks for your compact track loaders, the first step is to consider the application the machine will be most often used for. Lysandre Michaud-Verreault with Camso, maker of OEM and aftermarket tracks, advises choosing a track based on the sort of catastrophic events that could arise under your normal working conditions — in other words, the worst-case scenario — and use that as a baseline. For example, if your machines are most often used in turf applications, you won't have the same potential for failure as you would if your machines are typically used in demolition settings.

Secondly, think about weather, terrain and other variables that may influence track choice. "Wide tracks with deep treads do better in marshy, snowy and icy conditions than standard tracks because of the increased traction and lower ground pressure," notes Bill Wake, director of product development, ASV. "Use tracks with little or no tread when turf damage is a concern, such as on golf courses or manicured lawns. Standard tracks are effective for most common applications."

Style Matters

ASV uses rubber tracks on all of its models, but most other manufacturers' CTLs use rubber track embedded with metal pieces and steel cable to increase durability. As such, Wake says

it's important to choose the correct style of track for the specific machine. Also check the equipment manual to pick the correct size of track.

While most rubber-embedded track might look similar, there are many differences between them. "A good rubber track is one that lowers your operating costs in the application you're running," says Michaud-Verreault. "What differentiates them is the rubber compound, the tread design, the carcass thickness, iron core and alignment of steel cables."

She notes that each track manufacturer offers unique features to extend the life and increase the durability of its tracks. Camso, for example, offers its CTL SD tracks featuring single-cure technology for even tread wear and long, predictable tread life. An optimized zigzag tread pattern maintains traction throughout tread life, while endless high-tensile steel cables help to eliminate unexpected downtime due to cable/track breakage. The Trackguard iron core improves rolling path life for enhanced durability.

The Camso CTL HXD heavy-duty tracks feature an optimized H-type tread pattern and endless high-tensile steel cables to handle severe applications.

ASV offers three styles of rubber tracks with different tread depths. The aggressive style has a deep tread for maximum traction, while the standard is effective for everyday applications. Turf tracks have no tread at all for minimal turf damage in highly manicured areas such as golf courses or lawns.

Check for Quality

According to Wake, the most reliable way to ensure tracks are of high quality is to buy directly from the original equipment manufacturer rather than choosing lower-priced aftermarket tracks.

"Customers are guaranteed quality and aftersale support when they buy from the OEM," he says. "There's no way for a buyer to know how a set of aftermarket tracks were made, if they're manufactured from quality materials and whether there will be aftersale support from the seller. Anyone can pour rubber into a mold and create a good-looking track, but it's what's inside the track as a result of years of engineering and testing that matters."

He advises, "Look for tracks that contain embedded co-polymer cords for extra strength, and that are manufactured with circular press technology and produced using a single-cure process, eliminating cure-point weaknesses in the track that can lead to premature breakage."

Michaud-Verreault adds that quality is mainly determined by the components of the tracks. "The difference is not visible to the eye — except for the tread pattern — and goes back to rubber compound, carcass thickness, iron core and the alignment of steel cables.," she states. "What's most important when selecting a CTL track is to match it with your application and its severity, which will determine the quality level you will need."

What's Under There?

In addition to the tracks themselves, there's the undercarriage to consider. There are two types of undercarriages: rigid and suspension.

Michael Shebetka, product manager, Takeuchi-US, explains that in a rigid-mount frame, the left and right track frames are bolted or welded to the main frame. A suspension undercarriage, on the other hand, uses movable track frames supported by torsion springs or in some cases rollers suspended by a leaf spring.

"Both undercarriages offer unique advantages," he says. "A rigid undercarriage is better suited for the harsh environments it will endure over its useful life due to a more simplistic and rugged design. While the ride quality of a suspension undercarriage is generally more forgiving by reducing shock and vibration throughout the machine, take into account the additional components required to provide suspension. These components translate to additional wear points and added cost as the undercarriage ages."

> ***Anyone can pour rubber into a mold and create a good-looking track, but it's what's inside the track as a result of years of engineering and testing that matters."***
>
> **- Bill Wake**

It's important to pick the undercarriage that best suits your daily needs. No matter how well you maintain your machines, any type of undercarriage with moving parts has expensive wear items that will require maintenance and replacement over time.

Operation is a Factor

In addition to the type of work the machine will be doing, the operator plays an important role. Improper or aggressive operation is a major contributor to excessive wear, says Wake.

"To minimize damage, train users on proper operation before they utilize the equipment," he emphasizes. "Counter-rotations, or sharp changes of direction, are a big cause of



Each track manufacturer offers unique features to extend the life and increase the durability of its tracks.

premature track wear. This is especially true when driving over highly abrasive material, such as shale, granite or ragged materials commonly found on demolition sites.

"Encourage operators to use three-point turns to avoid cuts in the track often caused by counter-rotations," he continues. "Operators should also avoid spinning the tracks, especially on abrasive surfaces. Like counter-rotations, spinning can result in cuts in the rubber and unnecessary wear."



Undercarriage inspection should be a routine part of your maintenance discipline to maximize the life of your machine's tracks.

Shebetka says premature failure of tracks can typically be attributed to a few operational factors:

Improper track tension. Refer to the recommendations in the OEM manual or check with your local dealer.

Operation on hard, rough terrain. This can cause cuts or chunking of tracks and lead to excessive, premature wear. For this type of application, a skid-steer loader might be the best choice.

Riding over curbs. This can also cause cuts and chunking that expose internal steel cables, which can let moisture penetrate and cause the cables to weaken and eventually fail.

Demolition debris underfoot. Skid-steer tires can run right over demolition debris (rebar, concrete, sharp objects, etc.), while the same debris is very hard on tracks.

"We also advise running up and down slopes instead of across, and staying on as flat a surface as possible so the machine does not lean heavily to one side," says Shebetka. "Leaning puts pressure on the idlers, rollers and sprockets, resulting in premature wear."

Take Care of Your Sprockets

It's no surprise the most important variable in getting the most performance and uptime out of your tracks is regular and meticulous maintenance. With this in mind, undercarriage inspection should be a routine part of your maintenance discipline.

"Regularly inspect the track," Wake recommends. "The average ASV rubber track life is about 2,000 hours but can be as high as 5,000 if maintained well. On the other hand, neglecting a rubber track can result in a wear life as low as 500 hours. To get the longest track life, check track tension and condition daily."

Many common problems associated with rubber tracks stem from improper track tensioning. "A track that's too tight can accelerate wear on the track as well as on bearings, wheels and sprockets," says Wake. "Alternatively, a loose track can result in ratcheting — lugs skipping over sprocket rollers — which accelerates wear or damage to the lugs. A loose track also increases the risk of derailment.

"Make sure the track tension matches what is listed in the equipment manual," he stresses.

To some degree, ground conditions can dictate the frequency of inspections. "Despite an undercarriage's all-weather versatility, snow, mud and sand can get into and pack the undercarriage, which increases track tension," Shebetka says. "In colder environments, material can also freeze inside the track."

"Florida is a prime example of how a maintenance schedule can vary," he continues. "Most of the state consists of sugar sand, which becomes airborne around a working machine. It fills up the bottom of the chassis, plugs filters and can prematurely wear out an undercarriage if the tracks are not tensioned properly for this type of ground condition. A majority of the time you want the tracks to fit tight; but in the case of sugar sand, the tracks should be loose."

This is where proper cleaning of the track comes in. "Cleaning the entire track system is essential to ensure a long and productive life," says Michaud-Verreault. "Material buildup can cause track misalignment, de-tracking, sprocket wear and over-tensioning."

A more thorough inspection of the complete undercarriage and sprockets should be done when it's time to change out a track, notes Michaud-Verreault.

Camso has been studying track life and the causes of track failures for many years. "When you find premature wear or damage to the track of your compact track loader, it's often a sign of a worn or failing sprocket," Michaud-Verreault indicates. "Worn sprockets, in fact, are the major cause of premature track failure. A sprocket, however, can be replaced for a mere fraction of the cost of a new track."

The sprocket teeth should be the focus of your inspection. "They engage the interior tread of the track, and are carefully crafted to ensure the best fit with the specific make and model of your loader," Michaud-Verreault explains. "Check the teeth for the appearance of a 'shark-fin' profile — the thinning and sharpening of the tooth — at the wear tips. This thinning of the metal, along with any broken teeth, will degrade the fit and will result in excessive wear and tear on the track itself. The shark-fin look tells you it's time to replace the sprocket.



When selecting a CTL track, it's important to match it with the application and its severity.

"Proper care, maintenance and sprocket inspection will more than pay you back in longer track life and reduced unplanned downtime, as well as maximizing efficiency," she adds. ›

Track Loaders



A Small Machine for Big Jobs

CASE Construction Equipment introduced the TV370 compact track loader (CTL), a 74-horsepower machine that combines a maintenance-free Tier 4 Final solution with the strength and reach of a large-frame CTL. Additional features include:

- A 3,700-pound rated operating capacity and a vertical-lift design.
- A 74-horsepower option that provides high capacity, low ground pressure and stable platform, while utilizing a maintenance-free after-treatment system.
- Auxiliary hydraulics for traditional attachment use in standard and optional high-flow hydraulic setups.

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The Largest and Most Powerful Compact Track Loader

ASV presents its Posi-Track RT-120 Forestry as the largest and most powerful compact track loader in the industry. According to the company, the large-frame RT-120 Forestry features:

- The ability to make mulching and brush cutting faster and easier.
- Optimal power, torque and cooling capacity, so the loader can use large attachments for long periods of time.
- Versatility on all surfaces—from mud and brush to ice and snow—using ASV's patented Posi-Track undercarriage.
- Metal guarding against brush and debris around key areas, such as lights, the air conditioner condenser and the rear screen.
- Efficient hydraulics and high-capacity cooling systems so more work can get done in less time.
- A heavy-gauge falling object protective structure (FOPS) Level 2 cab, improved rollover protective structure (ROPS) and reinforced windows for impact resistance.

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JCB Unveils New 210T and 215T Compact Track Loaders

JCB launched its 210T and 215T compact track loaders that offer the power and performance of large-platform compact track loaders in small-platform, easily towable machines weighing less than 10,000 pounds. Additional features include:

- A 74 hp JCB Diesel by Kohler engine that requires no DPF and no DEF.
- A rated operating capacity (ROC) of 1,900 pounds at 35 percent tipping load and 2,650 pounds at 50 percent tipping load for the radial lift 210T.
- An ROC of 2,100 pounds at 35 percent tipping load and 3,000 pounds at 50 percent tipping load for the vertical lift 215T.
- An optional bolt-on chassis counterweight package to adjust the ROC, and high flow attachment operating capabilities up to 30 gallons per minute.

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Takeuchi Launches TL6R Compact Track Loader



Takeuchi has introduced the TL6R compact track loader (CTL) to its lineup. The CTL is a compact machine that is easy to transport and features stability and performance. The TL6R is ideal for customers in the agricultural, general contracting, landscaping and rental industries. Additional features include:

- A Kubota 2.4 liter, 65.2 horsepower engine.
- A radial lift loader design with a maximum lift height of 9 feet 6.4 inches and a rated operating capacity of 1,841 pounds.
- A width of 5 feet and height of 6 feet 5.8 inches.
- A weight of 7,480 pounds with a canopy or 7,780 pounds when equipped with a cab.
- The Takeuchi Fleet Management (TFM) system, which comes standard on the TL6R, that provides a variety of data points including machine health and condition, run time and machine.
- A two year warranty period.

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Insecticide Control Crucial to PREVENT TURF DAMAGE

Cut the Callbacks with Sounder White Grub and Chinch Bug Control this Season

Don't lose ground to white grubs this season. Grubs such as European and Northern masked chafer and Japanese beetle feed on the roots of grasses, resulting in initial sponginess, browning and then dead patches of turf. The underlying grubs attract foraging animals, such as racoons and skunks, that further damage turf. It is best to control grubs in spring or early summer before they hatch and begin to cause challenges. However, it is possible to attain control of grubs and restore turf after breakouts begin.



Southern Chinch Bugs are small but highly damaging. They've become the number one pest affecting St. Augustine grass and lawn care operators in regions such as Florida and Southern Texas. As with grubs, control has become increasingly difficult in recent years because of resistance to commonly used pyrethroid insecticides. Left untreated, chinch bugs will cause unsightly damage and eventually kill the turf. Turf loss by these pests does not recover, leaving behind the high expense of re-sodding.

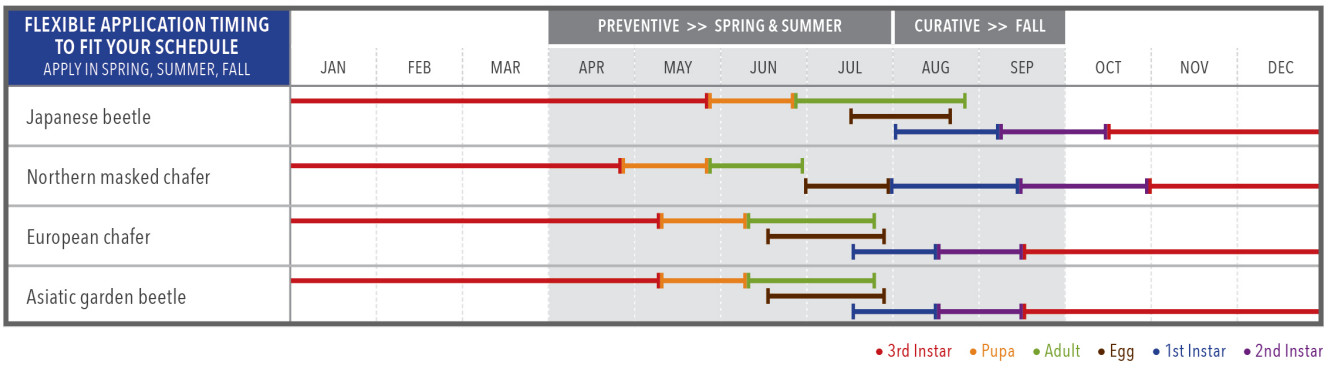
Failure to control both of these pests can cause more than turf damage. This can result in several callbacks and even damage a lawn care company's reputation through negative word-of-mouth. It is important to find fast-acting and long-lasting control solutions that provide both immediate and prolonged results. This can capture grubs that go below the treatment zone for weeks before coming up to damage roots. Increasingly, this may require alternatives that control pyrethroid-resistant white grubs and chinch bugs and do not increase levels of pyrethroid resistance, helping to conserve the utility of other products.

Choose insecticides that deliver proven results. Some factors that are important for achieving effective control of grubs and chinch bugs include having a good balance of water solubility and organic matter binding potential. This binding affinity to matter, such as thatch and plant uptake, is particularly important in periods of heavy rainfall.

Insecticides that offer preventive and curative properties can be beneficial. Curative properties can be applied after egg hatch or when turf damage is first observed. This supports a longer application window and efficacy from a single application, offering flexibility and time savings.

In the case of pyrethroid-resistance, there can be a significant difference in the appearance of an untreated lawn and a lawn treated where pyrethroid resistance is present with the right alternative mode of action. Once lawn professionals successfully match a control solution, they can experience the benefit of a lawn that is more competitive, allowing fewer weeds and undesirable grass growth, and supporting thicker and healthier stands.

One insecticide that can help LCOs stand behind their treatment plan is Nufarm Arena® insecticide. Arena offers an effective mode of action beyond pyrethroids and can be used to help conserve the longevity of pyrethroid insecticides in areas where chinch bug resistance to pyrethroids has not yet developed. Arena offers optimal chemical properties to stop chinch bug feeding within 24 hours and deliver fast knockdown of white grubs. Arena doesn't require watering-in and provides one of the longest lasting residuals, saving time, labor and minimizing the frequency of callbacks. ›





New Trap For Spotted Lanternfly

The spotted lanternfly is the latest stowaway to bug tree owners throughout the eastern United States. This native of pest is threatening fruit, ornamental and shade trees. Tree owners now have an effective, easy to use, attractive sticky band choice. The BugBarrier Tree Band contains no chemical pesticides or pheromones. University researchers, government entomologists, arborists and property owners have used it for more than 15 years to trap a variety of insects that climb on the trunks of trees. Additional features include:

- Adhesive technology used to trap pests.
- A dense, flexible fiber and a polyester film with a thin coating of adhesive work together to prevent passage into the canopy.
- The film comes with the adhesive already applied and, when installed, the adhesive faces the tree.
- This eliminates unsightly debris and bridging.
- It installs in minutes and, once removed, can be recycled with your household recycling.

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Insecticides

Flexible Insecticide Applications at Any Stage of Plant Development



Bayer Environmental Science launched Altus insecticide for use in landscape ornamentals. According to the company, Altus not only offers flexibility to landscape ornamentals by controlling sucking pests before, during and after bloom, but also:

- Flexible applications at any stage of plant development.
- Broad-spectrum control of important sucking pests, including whiteflies, aphids, leafhoppers, mealybugs, psyllids, scale and lace bugs.
- Compatibility with honey bees, bumble bees and many beneficials.
- Systemic and translaminar protection of existing and new plant growth.
- EPA classification as a reduced-risk product.
- Complementary use in conjunction with integrated pest management programs.

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Central Turf Launches Organic Insect Control



Central Turf & Irrigation Supply, a leading North American wholesale distributor of landscape supplies, has launched a new Organic Insect Control for summertime pests.

- "With the risks of mosquito-borne pathogens on the rise, it's time for landscape contractors to treat their clients' properties to create a protective zone against mosquitoes, ticks and other insects," said Anthony Luciano, director of sales and marketing at Central. "Contractors who act now can earn extra income by offering this in-demand service as part of their regular site visits."
- The product has an all-organic formula which will not harm beneficial insects like bees, butterflies and earthworms, but will eliminate ticks, mosquitoes and other insects, the company assures.
- The product can be applied with a traditional sprayer or can be used with a fogger device. Central offers a fogger that operates from a propane tank for use in patio and deck areas.
- The organic insect control is sold in a 32-ounce bottle that treats up to 250,000 square feet.

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SNOWPRO

By William Eastman

For more information, please listen to the associated podcast at www.greenindustrypros.com/12412544.



Part 4: Before we drill down on growing managers to build a self-managing business, let's start with turning technicians into supervisors

Growing Your Own Managers

The right person to place into a position of responsibility in your business is out there, but given the current challenges of the labor market, your ability to attract them is limited. The right person for a self-managed business needs to be grown internally.

The following is an overview of what you need (and develop within yourself):

- Technical Skills
- People Skills
- Conceptual Skills

Technical Skills - The specific knowledge and skills of the business (landscaping, design build, turf, etc.). If you are developing a technician for a management position, they need to understand all facets of the job to climb the first rung of the ladder. As they move up the organization the need for technical skills decrease.

People Skills - This can be a real trap for new managers. We usually promote people for their technical skills and should - can't have incompetents in charge, however that doesn't mean they can deal with people. Make sure you promote or hire for a blend of adequate technical skills and good people skills. It is smarter to promote a decent technician with people skills than the reverse.

Conceptual Skills - This is not an issue for recently promoted managers. However, if you are looking for someone to move higher in the company - make it a factor. These skills include seeing the big picture, ability to solve complex problems, work as a management team, and an understanding of how to impact the business.

The other organizational demands are on their personal attributes:

- Self Management
- Working Under Pressure

Self Management - If your new manager cannot manage their time, they cannot manage the flow of work and will be at the mercy of events. This is beyond time management. It is the ability to create a daily and weekly schedule that maximizes the use of resources to realistically service the most customers. 80% of your gross margin is the result of effective scheduling.

Working Under Pressure - Most management positions can be characterized by performing a great quantity of work at an unrelenting pace. Also it has high variety and very fragmented in short bursts. Part of this is a self management issue (control what you can control) and the other is understanding you must deal with the uncontrollable and keep your composure.

OK, we laid out what attributes and skills you need for success, the next step is how to develop future managers. BTW the following is also a great recruiting tool - what does a career in landscaping look like.

Start with creating several new job titles. Assuming you use the first 90 days as a probationary period, create a Technician 2 level position. This is a recent hire, and the focus is on learning a single skill or task. Once they have mastered the job, use them in other technical parts of the business until they have learned all the jobs. This is accompanied with a promotion to Technician 1 and a pay raise. You now have a candidate for Assistant Crew Leader.

Do the same with your first-line supervisor role - create 2 levels, Crew and Assistant Crew Leader. One role of the Crew Leader is to create a replacement by training the Assistant to manage the flow of work and leading people. Your development of Crew Leaders is the same cross-training as the Assistant except in a leadership position. Although you are developing management skills in the Assistant, the Crew Leader should be considered a manager in training.

These Crew leaders become the seed corn for growth. Whether the position is in operations or the back office, you have somebody that displayed their management chops and the right choice will be obvious.

Supervisors Into Managers

The next article will pick up here and focus on how to turn supervisors into managers that help you build a self-managing business. ›

William Eastman is a senior consultant at GreenMark Consulting Group.

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Volume 40

DEALER Success GUIDE



Pictured: Andy Kasten, general manager at Bobcat of the Coulee Region in Dresbach, Minnesota

CLOSING THE DEAL

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CUSTOMER SERVICE IS TOP PRIORITY

Coulee Region Bobcat Offers Minimum Product Line, Maximum Customer Service

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A SUPPLEMENT TO
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MESSAGE FROM THE [GUEST] EDITOR

DEALER SERVICE RULES

Reading Carrie Mantey's editorial, Are You 'That Guy?', in the March 2018 Dealer Success Guide reminded me of a time when I was writing about independent contractor supply houses who were under pressure from the big-box retailers during the 1990s. At the time, I really didn't understand why a contractor would walk into a big-box for power tools and accessories.

I visited a couple of the big box retailers to see what was attracting contractors, because a lower price seemed to be all they had to offer at the time. They obviously didn't have 'that guy' ready to answer your questions and offer advice/solutions to the work you needed to accomplish. And if you had a broken power tool, well, they could send it to a repair center and have it back in a week or two.

The bottom line is big boxes at that time and even today focus primarily on the do-it-yourselfer and not the professional tool user. In all fairness, some do have a professional contractor counter, but that was not the case in early years of the big-box frenzy.

Independent dealers are focused on the professional contractor, because that customer is their bread and butter. The independent dealer is not selling dog food, beef jerky and all the other stuff found in the cavernous environment that seem to consume a fair chunk of your time when you need to get back to the job.

I was always impressed by the attention and responsiveness independent dealers would give each customer who walked through the front door. Within a matter of steps, the customer arrived at a service counter where a knowledgeable customer service representative was ready to promptly address the need of that customer, who was anxious to get back to the job. If a tool was broken and the dealer's service technicians were unable to fix it immediately, the dealer would provide a loaner. Most professional contractors who relied on this partnership were not likely to visit a big box to save $20 on a new tool. They realized the price they were paying at the dealership provided benefits the big box could not provide.

So, whether it's an independent dealer serving construction contractors or an independent dealer serving landscape contractors, the relationship you build to be "that guy," who is committed to the professional contractor in whatever capacity necessary to keep his business running, the genetic makeup is the same. It's called a partnership.

As the late great radio broadcaster Paul Harvey would say, "And now you know the rest of the story." ■



Greg Udelhofen
gudelhofen@acbusinessmedia.com



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By Angie Mellor

Coulee Region Bobcat Serves Multiple Markets in a Unique Location

Keeping your equipment lines to a minimum allows you to maintain customer service as a high priority.

Bobcat of the Coulee Region, located in Dresbach Minnesota, provides Bobcat and Hustler equipment, parts and service to a unique market. Their location near the Mississippi River allows them to attract customers from the tri-state area of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa. According to the general manager, Andy Kasten, "the business was started by Dale Husman as Chain Drive Inc. in 1975 and located in a two-car garage in Nodine, Minnesota. In January of 1979 it was moved to Dakota, Minnesota and as the business has grown we had to relocate to our current location here in Dresbach, Minnesota in November 1994."

Kasten started working with the dealership in 1979 and over the next 25 years worked his way "up through the ranks," as he said, to the general manager position in 2004. Kasten described Bobcat of the Coulee Region as a full line Bobcat dealer. "We carry the Bobcat skid steer loaders, track loaders, mini excavators, Versa handlers, mini track loaders and the Bobcat utility vehicles, along with the full line of Bobcat attachments. We also carry the Hustler line of turf equipment and multiple loader attachment lines," he states.

Expanding beyond agriculture

Throughout the years, Kasten saw Bobcat of the Coulee Region grow to serve new customers beyond the agricultural market the Midwest is known for. "As of right now the agriculture industry is in a downtime so we are seeing more activity in the landscaping and construction side of the business, which means we are selling more of the Bobcat compact track loaders, mini excavators and attachments," he observes.

Regardless of a shift in market, Bobcat of the Coulee Region places customer service as a high priority. "We keep our equipment lines to a minimum, so we can concentrate on knowing our products better than our competition, and also making sure after listening to our customers' needs we can direct them in the best possible choice of equipment," Kasten says.

Kasten also notes "the complete line of Bobcat equipment are products that have stood the test of time because of the company's commitment to quality and customer service." Bobcat, a Doosan company, demonstrated its commitment to quality equipment by winning the Pillar of the Industry Award last year.

According to a November 2017 Bobcat press release, "The Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) honored Doosan Bobcat North America with its Pillar of the Industry award, reflecting Doosan Bobcat's work to improve the business environment for the equipment manufacturing industry during this election year."

Landscape customers weigh in

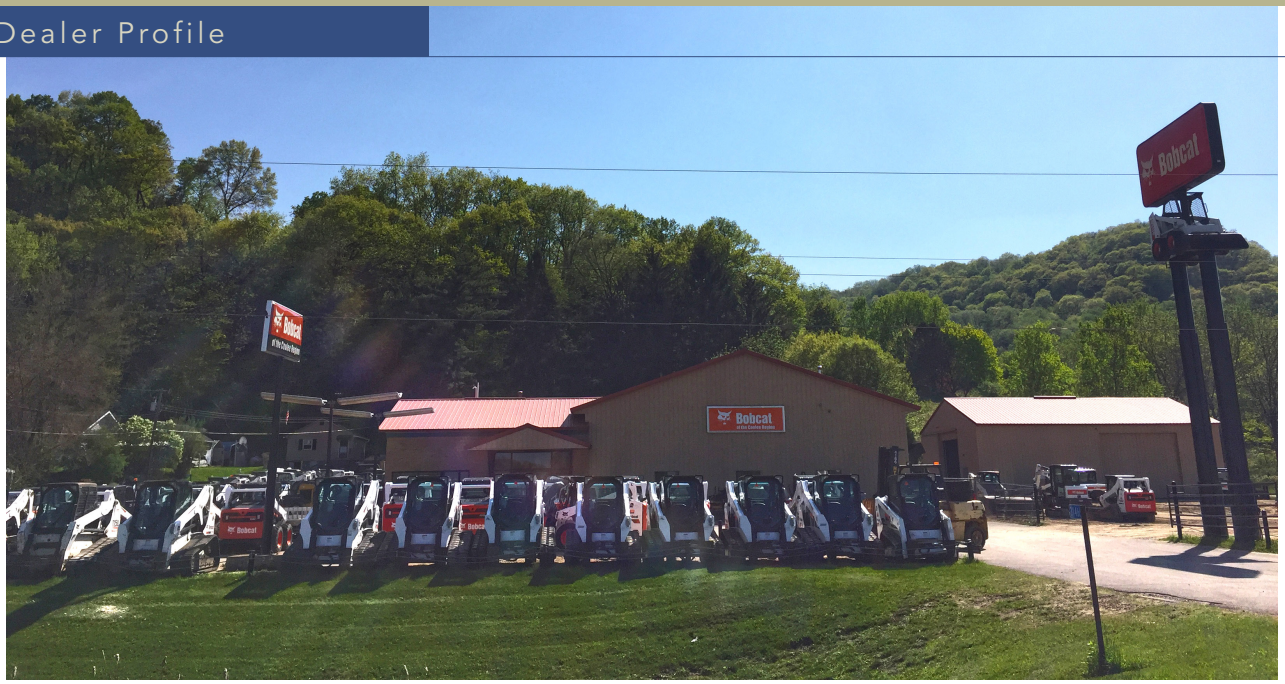
And for many of their customers, the quality and features of Bobcat equipment is second to none. Tri-state area contractor, Justin Aulik notes, "On the jobsite they [Bobcat] are known to be on the cutting edge of technology and dependable." Additionally, Aulik prefers Bobcat's control offerings. "They are a manufacturer of skid loaders that use foot

"As of right now the agriculture industry is in a downtime so we are seeing more activity in the landscaping and construction side of the business, which means we are selling more of the Bobcat compact track loaders, mini excavators and attachments,"

Andy Kasten, Bobcat of the Coulee Region



Keeping its equipment lines to a minimum allows Bobcat of the Coulee Region to maintain customer service as a high priority.



Bobcat of the Coulee Region serves the Tri-state area of Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

controls to control the bucket, which I prefer, and they make a ridiculous amount of attachments," he adds.

Wisconsin landscaping business owner Jordan Fennikogh of JD Lawn Care & Maintenance LLC concurs with Aulik's viewpoint. Fennikogh owns a Bobcat S590 and is partial to its speed options. "The feature I like best is the 2-speed option, which makes moving materials and "bucketing" materials over long distances much quicker." According to a bobcat.com description of the S590 skid steer, "the 2-Speed travel option boosts your top travel speed by as much as 57 percent, reduces your travel time across jobsites, limits the need to load and unload your machine on a trailer, and shortens your long-haul tasks."

Additionally, Bobcat compact track loaders, popular in the Green Industry, offer new and exclusive features such as automatic ride control, selectable joystick control, and deluxe instrumentation. According to the Bobcat company website, "Deluxe Instrumentation brings upgraded communication, monitoring, productivity and control to your Bobcat® skid-steer loader or compact track loader. It monitors key loader functions, communicates alerts and provides additional attachment information to track usage."

Bobcat of the Coulee Region doesn't just tout the Bobcat line, they're also familiar and experienced with the equipment. "We pride ourselves on product knowledge and service of the equipment after the sale," Kasten says. "We offer a wide range of services such as rental, sales and service."

Furthermore, Bobcat of the Coulee Region can help whether a landscape contractor is in the market for a new machine or is looking for parts to keep their current equipment going. "We have the largest inventory of parts in the tri-state area, as well as the largest inventory of new and used Bobcat equipment," Kasten concludes.

To check out inventory and learn about all their services, visit bobcatofthecouleeregion.com ■



Experience, along with product knowledge and service the dealer provides, has helped build a loyal customer base. Terry Meyer, parts specialist, works the service counter.

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By Sara Jensen



2D fencing technology on the new Cat 320 creates an imaginary border to prevent the machine from hitting obstacles near the work area.

Machines for the Next 25 Years

An equipment manufacturer sets out a program to make major updates to its excavator product line in order to take advantage of new technologies for continued machine utilization. Can a similar approach be used in the Green Industry?

For the first time in 25 years, Caterpillar Inc. has made a major overhaul to its hydraulic excavator line, starting with the introduction of the new 320, 323 and 320 GC excavators. These three machines are designed to meet a broad range of applications within the 20-ton size class.

While each machine is intended to meet different application needs, all three have the same core design featuring integrated technologies, electrohydraulics, a redesigned operator cab with touchscreen monitor and push-to-start button, as well as various connectivity features.

Caterpillar initiated the redesign because it recognized the evolving needs of its customers—for greater productivity and safety, among other needs. According to Zach Kauk, Vice President, Excavation at Caterpillar Inc., the hydraulic excavator is the most versatile tool in a contractor's fleet. "Because of that, about 50% of global construction equipment sales are hydraulic excavators," he said during the launch event for the new excavators. "If we want to make our customers more successful and help them build a better world, we've got to start with the hydraulic excavator. That's what we decided to do with the next generation excavator program."

Kauk said that while the company's excavator platform has evolved over time, it saw the opportunity to make customers more successful as Caterpillar looks ahead to the next 25 years.

He said Caterpillar looked at four key customer themes—matching performance to the job type, reduc-

ing operating costs (both fuel and non-fuel related), increasing operator productivity, and transitioning to the digital work site.

Digital technology use on work sites has increased over the last several years as the technologies have grown and evolved. Kauk said Caterpillar has seen the shift toward the digital work site accelerate as customers see the benefits it offers. "Today we're at a point where customers who are the most successful are adopting many of the geospacial and other technologies of the future, and we only see that accelerating rapidly over the next couple of years. In the next 5 years many customers will have a hard time being successful without having adopted those technologies.

"So we must prepare our products for the next 25 years for these four key themes, and that's what we've done," he said.

A digital heart

The new 320 GC, 320 and 323 were designed to three key numbers—15% lower owning and operating costs, 25% lower fuel consumption and 45% improved efficiency. Kauk said these numbers were achieved through the inclusion of a "digital heart" in each machine. "For the first time, [Caterpillar is] standardizing across its entire hydraulic excavator product line an electrohydraulic control valve, electronically controlled pump and electronically controlled engine," he explained. "They all work in harmony to lower operating costs, [and provide] higher efficiency across a broader range of applications."

The electronically controlled engine runs at lower rpm, helping to reduce fuel use, while the use of a highly efficient, electronically controlled pump and main valve in the electrohydraulic system enable fuel savings, as well.

A redesigned cooling package also helps to reduce fuel consumption. It consists of five electronically controlled fans (e-fans) which can provide on-demand and independent cooling to keep the various machine systems running at optimal temperatures. The fans can all run at different speeds, as required by the machine's cooling needs; multiple fans can run at one time, or just one or two, again depending on the requirements of the machine. The fans are run only when needed which burns less fuel. They also have a reversing capability to keep the system clean.

All three machines come with a rearview camera, and can have additional cameras added; the 320 GC comes with Caterpillar's Product Link Pro—providing basic machine data such as fuel burn, and service notifications—while the 320 and 323 have Product Link Elite which allows two-way communication. Information can be pulled from the machine as well as put onto it, such as updates.

This ability to send machine updates is designed to be similar to updating one's smartphone—customers will receive an alert and can make the choice to have the software update downloaded. Kauk said Caterpillar's intention is to continuously update the machine via an annual rollout program in which new software with new features and functionalities will be offered.

The new 320 and 323 also come standard from the factory with various integrated sensors. These sensors enable the machine to know where the work tool tip is in space versus the center of the machine, or any other part of the machine at any point in time. Having this capability allows the company to standardize 2D grade control, as well as payload and productivity features. In addition, Kauk said semi-autonomous productivity features are also standardized on the machine.

With Cat Grade 2D and Cat Grade with Assist—also standard on the 320 and 323—more machine functions can be automated, said Brian Stellbringk, Market Professional at Caterpillar Inc. Cat Grade 2D allows operators to see where the excavator's bucket is, as well as the depth and slope of the grade being dug. Cat Grade with Assist can then be used to prevent over-digging by having the boom and bucket take over the actual digging, so all the operator has to focus on is stick movement. The two systems work together to help improve operator productivity, as well as work site safety as there is no longer a need for a person to stand outside of the machine to check the grade.

Also part of the Cat Grade with Assist system is Swing Assist. This functionality uses the excavator's integrated swing sensor to allow a swing target to be set, preventing operators from swinging too far and missing the truck or other target at which they are to dump materials. "It lends well to very repetitive apps," said Stellbrink. "The operator sets it once, then throughout repeated cycles, the machine will automatically decelerate and stop at [the set] target even if the operator continues to use the controls."

Due to all of the integrated sensors and software, the 320 and 323 are "3D ready"—they can be upgraded with GPS receivers and a monitor for use of 2D advanced or full 3D geospacial technologies. All of the mounting points are already on the machine, as well as the necessary sensor technologies, so all a customer needs to do is mount the additional components—which can be done within about 2-3 hours—



The Caterpillar 320 digging a foundation.

and they will be ready to go. The machines can also come straight from the factory with all of the 3D technologies integrated.

For improved safety, 2D fencing technology is included on the 320 and 323 to enable boundaries to be set in which the excavator operates. An imaginary wall, ceiling, floor or swing limit can be set; when a limit is set, operators can continue working as they normally would, but the machine is prevented from going past the set limit. For instance, if an excavator is working alongside a roadway, a swing limit can be set to prevent the machine from turning into traffic while still allowing the operator to work. Even if too much swing command is given by the operator, as long as that e-fence is set, the machine will not go past the set limit.

Further updates and redesigns

In addition to the standardization of digital technologies, Caterpillar's new 320 GC, 320 and 323 include several other updates. The inclusion of an electrohydraulic system enabled the simplification of certain machine aspects, such as reducing the amount of filters now used on the machine. Caterpillar was able to eliminate some of the previously used hydraulic filters, such as a pilot filter as the pilot system is now an integrated part of the electrohydraulic system, helping reduce maintenance costs.

Further maintenance cost reductions were made through improving the design of the air filter which now includes an integrated pre-cleaner. The pre-cleaner removes much of the incoming dust and flushes it out before it has a chance to reach the high-capacity air filter. This doubles the lifespan of the air filter, said Stellbrink, as well as extends its maintenance interval.

The maintenance interval was extended on the excavator's return line filter, as well—from 2,000 hours to 3,000—by improving its design and capacity.

Improving operator comfort was also a key criterion for the company. A brand new cab design is included on all three machines that provides more space for operators. The machine controls have been ergonomically designed with all of them moved forward of the operator. A touchscreen display within the cab features a simple, easy-to-use interface. Navigation on the touchscreen is similar to that of a tablet or smartphone. A jog dial on the display gives operators the option to use either the screen or the dial to navigate through the various menus.

Visibility out the right-hand side of the cab has also been improved due to an improvement of the machine profile on the right side. In addition, the height of the rear of the machine has been reduced, further improving visibility. The engine hood was removed and a flat panel used to reduce the height.

Going forward Caterpillar will be implementing its next generation excavator program to additional size classes—incorporating the standard digital heart and electrohydraulic system, as well as productivity and semi-autonomous features. ■



Oregon Announces Upgrade to 70 LGX

Oregon introduces the PowerCut 70-Series EXL, an evolution of the popular LGX 3/8" professional saw chain for 50-100cc chainsaws. Built with a focus on maximizing every cut, this upgraded chain features a proprietary grind that provides increased performance with reduced operator fatigue. Additional features include:

- A proprietary multi-axis grind technology and precision-ground cutters that help the saw power through timber.
- LubriTec technology that keeps the saw chain and guide bar oiled for less friction and longer life.
- Improved grind shape profile that helps to match the shape of the file and make it easier to file a precise edge.
- The Gold Loop Start Indicator that makes sharpening easier with start-stop identification.
- A design that reduces the force applied by the operator.

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Earth Drill Provides Power, Simple Transport

Little Beaver's Towable Hydraulic Earth Drill combines safe and powerful drilling with hassle-free operation and transportation. The design reduces operating weight and requires less than 20 pounds of force to pivot into digging position. The frame eliminates torque for safe one-person drilling. The rig can be conveniently transported using a removable towing hitch, making it a convenient tool for fence and deck building, sign installation, rental and park and recreation departments. Additional features include:

- An 11-horsepower Honda engine.
- A 2,700-psi hydraulic system that provides up to 300 foot-pounds of torque and an auger speed of 150 rpm.
- A 34-inch width that allows access through tight spaces for drilling in locations inaccessible to skid steers and tractors.
- 16-inch semi-pneumatic tires and auger lock that makes it easy for one person to maneuver the drill around a jobsite.

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One Well-Equipped Utility Vehicle

Kubota Tractor Corporation introduces the RTV-X1120 utility vehicle with the power, torque and performance to get the job done. Designed for commercial customers who use the machines for heavy-duty daily work, the utility vehicles also offer:

- A 24.8-gross-HP, three-cylinder, liquid-cooled diesel engine, along with a VHT-X transmission, with a top speed of 29 MPH.
- Standard 2-inch receivers located at the front and back of the vehicle, allowing a tow capacity of up to 1,300 pounds.
- Shoulder restraints for the operator and passenger, a 60:40 split bucket seat, a digital dashboard display, hydraulic power steering, an easily accessible parking brake, under-seat storage compartments and a heavy-duty steel cargo box.

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Legendary Jr. Sod Cutter Enhancements

Adding to the 70-year legacy of the RYAN Jr. Sod Cutter, the company has announced several product features. The features improve the user experience in rental, golf and professional lawn care applications. Additional features include:

- A user-friendly control panel complete with a Text to Video instructional decal.
- Instructions that correspond to color-coded levers on the control panel, which help to simplify machine operation.
- Ultra-Low Vibration Technology that gives the operator more comfort, reducing hand/arm vibration.

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From Lawn Mower to Trailer-Puller

Riding lawn mowers have power and low center of gravity making them natural towing machines. With the Hi-Hitch, a regular riding mower can be transformed into a handy tool for pulling small trailers. The Hi-Hitch works for hauling trash on a utility trailer, bringing up firewood or positioning a trailer in a tight space. Additional features include:

- Ideal bracing and positioning at a height that keeps trailers level and well-balanced.
- Aircraft aluminum construction, providing power with minimal weight added to the machine.
- Easy installation and compatibility with conventional trailer-hitch balls.
- Minimal drilling and modifications when mounting on conventional riding lawnmowers.

www.greenindustrypros.com/12406307

By Jeff Winsper

5 Tips on How to Grow the Pros

Here are a few tips to help manufacturers, distributors and dealers make a difference to the customers that matter most, the professionals.





All leading market indicators suggest the economy is in full swing. Housing permits, housing starts, and housing closes are at near all-time highs. Supported with consumer confidence, a projected 3% GDP, and employment down across all U.S. regions. With extra cash in their pocket and an overall increase in the use of and demand for power tools, the industry can either rise in the tide like all other boats, or strategically grow market share and market penetration in key markets. Here are a few tips to help manufacturers, distributors, and dealers make a difference to the customers that matter most, the professionals.

1. Products don't buy products. People buy products.

It is easy to fall into the trap of evaluating your success by only measuring Pro units sold year over year. Yes, building, shipping and selling product is a fundamental but it doesn't tell the true story about your Pro customer base. This is the difference between a company that is product-centric versus audience-centric. After all, to grow your business you need to either get, keep, or grow the customer base. And if your base of customers is eroding, and yet your unit sales are growing, that would mean you are selling more to less. This is an omen for when the market starts to stall as they are less inclined to buy more, and you will need to over invest to get new ones in a time when your budget most likely will be reduced.

2. Develop a scoring model for defining your high value customer.

The definition of a high value customer can mean different things to different companies, but it's certain that somewhere along the way the total margin generated during a time period is what matters most to management. For best practices outside of the B2B space, it is not uncommon to track RFM (Recency, Frequency, Monetary) as part of the formula. That learning can also be adapted for measuring Pro value. Since the distance between considered purchases are greater than say a cup of coffee, advanced analytics to measure value is required. Here is a use case to dramatize the notion assuming each Pro buyer bought different product categories at MSRP over time. Pro buyer A purchased 10 products 10 years ago, two products nine years ago, and then five products last year. Pro buyer B purchased 15 products 10 years ago, went dormant for nine years, and then bought two products last year. Pro buyer C bought 12 products from you for the first time this year. Pro buyer D bought one product each year for past 10 years. Which "Pro buyer" is your highest valued customer?

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3. Build an accumulating base of repeat purchasers.

It is common knowledge that getting your first customer is typically 6x costlier than getting a current customer to make a repeat purchase. In order to grow a profitable Pro following, many companies forget that you need a constant flow and a greater amount of first time buyers

5.They require more. They deserve more.

OPE and hardware dealers balance selling high volume and low margin vs. lower volume and high margin products to both the homeowner and the Pro. It is a tricky situation as not all customers are created equal; not just from a product, parts, and service requirement, but also in terms of the buyer's expected experience pre-sale, during the sale, and post-sale. Like any good B2B company with a wide range of product categories serving a wide range of business occupations, the manner in which you make your content, in-store display, training, and post-sale follow-up needs to be as relevant as possible. Pros live, eat and breathe their profession and they feel that the product they buy must fit what they believe is only made for the nuances of their productivity. They don't want generic. They want to be treated in a personal and professional manner, not like a revolving door of less-than educated homeowners. Provide them with digital access to manage their own fleet assets, give them a heads up on product warranties, empower them to build their own fleet "wish lists," and personalize outbound communication efforts regarding seasonality service. Only load up web assets relative to their job function or based on past purchase history. Amazon does this and you can too. These are just some of the value add efforts they require and deserve. ■

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