

# Network News

Produced by:





**A monthly newsletter informing  
and educating the LandOpt Nationwide Network**



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## Benchmarking Against Peers and the Plan LandOpt Feature

By Niki Ratcliff

Benchmarking is the process of comparing one's business processes and performance metrics to industry bests and/or best practices from other industries. The items measured to gain a full understanding include: quality, time, and cost. The improvements one can expect from learning and acting on the results of proper benchmarking are doing things better, faster, and cheaper.

Your performance and that of your organization must be measured in quantitative numbers. That is where benchmarking comes in. There are two ways LandOpt benchmarks the success of companies in the Nationwide Network: peers and the plan.

Peer benchmarking involves not only the people in your company but the entire LandOpt network stacking you against other's in your position to get a fair comparison. An example of the Licensee Monthly Report includes the Account Management Report which measures the C.A.R.E calls conducted and total up sale in dollars for the month per Account Manager in the network.

Accurate peer benchmarking is great for the individual because it fosters a helpful and competitive environment, maintaining momentum to push beyond status quo.

Benchmarking a company's plan and comparing performance of other organizations in the Network is one of the true benefits of being part of being



part of the larger culture LandOpt has developed. The measurement of success in this kind of benchmarking compares a company's outputs with a similar sized organization. When one company grows, others are inspired to do the same. These checks and balances leave no organization alone in the forest of business. LandOpt and the Network are here to help each company reach their planned success.

According to an article in [Tech Republic](http://TechRepublic.com), we must use benchmarking to chart an organization's performance. If you want to know where you stand in your journey to success identify your targets and then implement a standard process to measure your productivity consistently.

As the LandOpt Network continues their transformation and evolution into a group of companies that run their businesses based on proves processes, growth is obvious to so many in the industry. Benchmarking is one important piece of the puzzle that must be rigorously performed.

## Continuing Education Training and Webcasts for our Network

The following schedules are for the best in class LandOpt training for upcoming times in 2011.

**Training:**

- April 25 through 28—Transformation Training
- May 9 through 11—Sales Rep. Boot Camp
- June 13 through 15—Con Ed
- July 25 through 28—Transformation Training

**Webcasts:** (Subject to change)

- March 17—Marketing Your Brand to Drive Sales
- March 31—Using MFE
- April 14—CRM Training/Reports
- April 28—Employee Expense Plans

### Network Success!

- Congratulations to Burkholder Brothers for achieving the goal of \$1 Million Annual Maintenance Base!
- Congratulations to Eric Schwab & Bryan Hockman of Silvis Group for growing the Maintenance Base with almost every renewal CARE Call!
- Congratulations to Justin Herron & Paul Hamilton of ProCare for closing their first deals!
- LandOpt welcomes Luke Dennison to the Nationwide Network! Luke recently joined the Twin Oaks team as a Sales Professional.
- The Success Coaches thank everyone who submitted their monthly reports on time.

### Reminders

The following reminders are for the LandOpt network of licensees:

- Sales Professionals are to conduct five Intro Meetings per-week.
- CARE Calls are to be made on a regular basis for recurring and project work.
- Monthly Reporting is due on the 20th of each month.
- LandOpt encourages the network to communicate with one another, building business relationships.
- Be sure to set up your social networking sites on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- Begin building relationships with your local media and position your organizations as green industry experts.

## Understand and then Redeem the Plan

A Message from Tim Smith, President/CEO



It's easy to say, "We're going to hit our goals and blow away the plan." Business owners around the world have the passion and drive to deliver success to their organizations. Achieving that success, however, is a whole other issue that requires critical thinking and careful planning.

Owners and General Managers of the organizations in our Network must first fully understand the nuances of their financial plans and sales plans, before they can ever redeem them. This requires a great deal of self-discipline to focus a consistent amount of attention to those details and to ensure that all matters of the business remain under control.

As most are aware, I often recommend books during trainings and get-togethers with the LandOpt Network that help us all gain a deeper education of business leadership and makes us aware of innovative trends we can capitalize on. When it comes to redeeming our plans I'm asking that Owners and General Managers read the book, [Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done—by Larry Bossidy and RAM Charan](#). The book teaches that discipline and getting things done can be just as exciting as other parts of the business, such as strategy, leadership development, and innovation.

The important lesson this book teaches, and it's something we all strive to learn in our business lives, is that the difference between us and our competitors is the ability to execute and fully redeem our plans.



## Monthly Reports Means Benchmarking

Professional Sales Leadership

By Steven Bach

Submit your LandOpt monthly reports! When you submit your monthly reports they are being measured and compared. What does that mean? It means submitting that report is one of the necessary steps in benchmarking yourself against your plan and your peers.

In order to submit your required LandOpt monthly reports you must have progressed your financial plan. By progressing your financial plan you are benchmarking yourself against your respective financial plan.

As a refresher of how to progress your financial plan, take the actual data out of your respective accounting systems and enter that information into the LandOpt financial plan. *Yes it is that simple.*

By submitting your LandOpt monthly reports in a timely manner you receive the benefit of benchmarking yourselves against your peers. Your coaches look at the progressed financial plan and look at the most important measurements of an organization's success. The measurements are

known as LandOpt Performance Indicators (LPI).

The LPI data is compiled by your coaches, broken down and sorted. After the organization process it is placed on the front page of the Licensee Center. It can be recognized by the Red, Yellow and Green stop lights next to each company in the network.

The LPI report gives you an opportunity to see how each company "stacks up" next to the others. It also provides the opportunity to look at critical data in a timely manner. This allows you to manage that data in a proactive manner, rather than reacting after it's too late to impact the numbers.

I look forward to reviewing your monthly reports on the twentieth of this month and every other month to follow.



## The Metrics of Benchmarking

Tips from the Director of Success

By David Gallagher



LandOpt Success Benchmarking is done with a number of metrics. The most visible and published metrics are Sales, Revenue and Gross Profit as reported by the LandOpt LPI on the Licensee Center home page.

Coaches evaluate and provide metrics throughout the year in webcasts and at planning times. Topics we cover include items, such as COGS categories, burden rates, effective average wage, and others. Each of your organizations track your *Rev/Hr* and *Hrs/day* which are the next metrics we will begin focusing on as our reporting advances.

In the short term your ability to discuss these metrics with other members of the LandOpt Network is not only easy, but should be done regularly.

Comparing your performance with others in the Network gives you the ability to raise your performance in the areas where your peers are excelling.

In the weeks ahead we will run the annual LandOpt Benchmarks webcast. We will also publish

a benchmarking report that focuses on the past number of years and the trends in certain key metrics. They include Sales, Revenue, GPM, Burden rates, etc.

As Steve discussed in his article, we cannot supply these necessary benchmarks without your monthly reporting and participation. Redeeming your plan and hitting your goals is the responsibility of each organization in the Network. Your coaches are here to assist in that journey, but each of you must lead your company to success.

I continue to encourage all the members of the Network to take the effort in creating and submitting your monthly reports. They create value for you beyond the evaluation of key metrics to manage your business.

Continue networking and reporting and we will all obtain unrivaled levels of success.



### Did you know?

- [Landscape Online](#) reports that privately-owned housing units authorized by building permits in January are down an overall of 10.4-percent, due to slow economic recovery.
- [Landscape and lawn](#) maintenance businesses are considering raising prices, due to the increased costs for fuel at the pump.
- [Lawn and Landscape](#) reports that Husqvarna has created an Automower robotic lawnmower for small gardens and lawns. It is now possible for all garden owners, no matter how small their lawn is, to give up their old walk-behind lawn mower.
- According to a report by [Mortgage News Daily](#), HUD initiatives in housing construction are boosting rental market construction, which may benefit landscape service providers nationally.

## The Right Candidates for the Busy Season

Best Human Resources Practices

By Mike Gaydos



As the Network approaches the busy season, the need to staff up and get ready to hit the ground running is a key to success this year.

When determining your staff needs and the holes to be filled, keep in mind the

need to follow the process when it comes to hiring any individual.

We're in the middle of March Madness, where the top 68 college basketball teams in the country all race to be the top of the mountain by the end of the month. They will practice their plays and run their systems over and over again to hopefully achieve perfection on the court. The winning team will be the one that sticks to their systems, because they know it will lead them to success.

Just like that successful basketball team, your business can be the number one landscape company in your region by having the right team members in the right roles. Finding the right candidates for those roles is the challenge, but a challenge that can and will be overcome with

knowledge and confidence in your decision making.

If the 11-Step Hiring Process is followed and run to perfection, the chance of failure will be minimized and your team building for the new season will be achieved with a fantastic workforce.

Here are some key highlights you should make sure not to miss:

**Cast a wide net** in finding the right candidates. Make to use all of your channels available to you.

**Ask the right behavioral questions** during the first and second interviews for all open positions from managers to crew team members.

**Conduct the proper background checks** and be sure to collect business references, criminal and DMV checks, degree verifications, and behavior assessments.

**Make sure the candidates** and you both fully understand the role expectations. Questions and answers should flow freely from both sides of the conversation.

Just like the successful teams in this year's March Madness tournament, by running proven processes and systems your organization will be in a unique position to lead the industry this year and the years to come.

### What LandOpt is to Me...

““I thought for a long time that I was doing well as an Account Manager for Twin Oaks Landscape. During this second visit for the LandOpt Account Manager Boot Camp, my eyes were opened to the job I can provide to my clients and my team. I discovered that I can do so much better and I am only breaching the surface of this very important position. LandOpt provides continuous training to the network for their success. I am refreshed and recharged every time I come to training.”

Steve Scheuring—  
Horticulturalist, Twin Oaks  
Landscape

## Recycling and Green Initiatives

### LandOpt Environmental Leadership

By Ron Gavalik

Across the country municipalities are assisting businesses to implement sound environmental practices and recycling initiatives. Many measures adopted save companies time and money, while promoting green business standards.

The LandOpt Network can learn these trends and then use that knowledge to conform to these standards and each company will be positioned to lead the region in local green practices.

In an article titled, [Green Landscaping Program Makes Business Sense](#), many examples of these successful business ventures in green practices are discussed.

Recycling is beneficial, not just for the environment, but for an organization's economic standing. The simple truth is recycling promotes efficiency in all forms.

While the environmental benefits of recycling are well known, what is less known is that the reuse of products helps foster sustained growth for a company, based on cost savings. By following the code: Reduce, Reuse, and then Recycle, you will



save revenue, while exercising practical common sense environmental practices.

Recycling of materials generated during landscaping projects is increasingly important. The environmental benefits of recycling those materials can be significant. According to Construction Business Owner Magazine, current estimates show that if all concrete and asphalt pavement generated annually in the United States were recycled, it would save the energy equivalent of 1 billion gallons of gasoline or the removal of more than one million cars from the road. That's the power Green Industry leaders have.

We must weigh the environmental impact against the economic. It may be easier to add to local landfills in order to continuously buy cheap goods, but as leaders in the Green Industry we must determine the best course of action for each situation.

As Green Industry professionals it's paramount that environmental matters are respected, so that success can be capitalized upon.

#### Environmental Tips Towards Sustainability!

- Establish a system of composting.
- Ensure all mowing is completed at the proper height with sharp blades.
- Recycle!
- Use hand tools when possible. Choose electric over gas.
- Minimize soil compaction with lighter equipment.
- Minimize soil and plant disturbance on construction sites.
- Develop long-term goals for vegetation on each site.
- Manage all equipment to minimize pollution.
- Commit to reducing the spread of invasive species through plant selection and site maintenance.
- Review site maintenance plans yearly.
- Use high gas-mileage vehicles or hybrids.

### A Note about Social Media

As the Principals of the LandOpt Network are aware, we requested that each company begin setting up their social media pages on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. To those who are less savvy of new technologies in communications, social media is the new "word-of-mouth" that so many service businesses rely on. By enabling customers and prospective customers to interact with your organization in the digital realm, relationships will be built and success to follow. This note is a gentle reminder to not just reach for brass ring, but to grab it.

#### Business Transformation

LandOpt helps to transform your business by focusing on our four pillars of success:



Human Resource Management



Business Management



Operations Management



Sales and Marketing

LandOpt empowers a select group of highly qualified, regionally-based landscape contractors with a powerful portfolio of business systems to dramatically improve their growth, profitability and productivity.

The LandOpt team facilitates the transformation of landscape contractors by providing the best in class technology, along with proven business processes and systems.

LandOpt enables network licensees to efficiently utilize these systems to increase growth, profitability, and productivity in their

business.

Intensive coaching, followed with a continuing education curriculum ensures the success of the licensees. Training sessions pass along proven business practices in business management, financial planning, marketing & sales, operations and more. Coaching establishes a partnership between LandOpt and the licensee, which builds a growing successful business relationship.

The LandOpt network of licensees is a powerful resource in developing new relationships with peers in the Green Industry. The expanding network cultivates a growth of business experience and knowledge.

LandOpt continually measures and monitors the results gathered from each licensee location to evaluate the effectiveness of the LandOpt systems and ensure success.

Be proud to be a member of the Powered by LandOpt Network.



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