

Network News

Produced by:



A monthly newsletter informing
and educating the LandOpt Nationwide Network



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Benchmarking Sales Professionals and Holiday Blues

LandOpt Feature

By Niki Ratcliff

The sluggishness of selling during the holidays may create weariness in the sales plan. Therefore, it's important to keep to the benchmarks laid out by your Success Coach.

Like all professions, there are more than one kind of benchmark to measure success. We often gravitate to whichever provides the most comfort and reflects current efforts. That is not acceptable when reaching for the brass ring of sustainable growth.

The benchmarks for sales professionals are set with your Success Coach, and are based on calculations of an organization's needs, and not based on peers throughout the network, or based on what other similar companies are doing. Our network is the gold standard for business in the industry and we must always work toward our goals.

Hitting those goals to ensure our benchmarks during the holidays can be unnerving to say the least. According to an article on SalesGuy.com, "One of the hardest things about selling during the Holiday Season is getting customers to make buying decisions." The article also adds, "In sales, like it or not, activity is everything."

So how does a sales professional redeem their plan during these times of consumer attention deficit disorder? Stick to the plan.

Ensuring dedicated times to exercise the necessary tasks (prospecting, calls, lead generation and presentations) always ends in success. Temporarily plan your daily routine to be out of the ordinary during this crazy time of year. Work different hours when your prospects are willing to speak is a key ingredient. Increase your activity to keep your pipeline full for the new year.

Creative prospecting. Letters, calls, and site visits are not enough. Your clients' attention is being ripped away from them faster than the Grinch can steal Christmas, because of the long awaited advertising and sales campaigns of other consumer businesses. The good news: nothing beats the personalized and proactive sales of our network. Building relationships always wins over the largest advertising campaigns, because of the human element.

Review your sales plan and goals every day. Know you will work harder during the Holidays and prep for it.

LandOpt brings together all Sales professionals in the network during the Weekly Sales Webinar which has focused heavily on avoiding the *status-quo* syndrome during these highly competitive times. Keeping your peers accountable to the LandOpt benchmarks is a positive way to ensure every organization's success.



Continuing Education Training and Webcasts for our Network

The following schedules are for the best in class LandOpt training for upcoming times in 2010.

Training:

- Jan. 16 through Jan. 17—Principals Meeting
- Jan. 24 through Jan. 27—Transformation Training
- Feb. 7 through Feb. 9—Account Manager Boot Camp
- March 14 through March 16—Con Ed

Webcasts: (Subject to change)

- Dec. 16—Finalizing Your 2011 Plans
- Jan. 6—The Three Whys
- Jan. 20—Preparing Your Monthly Reports
- Feb 3—Leveraging the LandOpt Lead Program

Fulfillment of Benchmarks Equals Success

Tips from the Success Coach

By David Gallagher



The past year has been yet another example of the success our network can and does achieve.

We have shown a 15% increase in Gross Margin and a 13.5% in NET margin since 2008. We continue to sell new work and increase the maintenance base to the tune of having multiple companies in the Network reach or exceed the \$1M maintenance base mark. We have also seen a number of Sales Professionals and companies meet or exceed their sales plans, revenue plans and their profitability plans.

In an unfavorable economic time and in an industry that claims customers and sales have receded, *Powered by LandOpt* companies are setting the bar for every landscape contractor. The planning process is part of the reason for success, and pro-active customer management and sales are the other reasons. Keep your focus on completing your 2011 plans and commit to

progressing those plans all year. The process allows you to measure your success and will indicate areas for you to focus your time and attention. Reporting your progressed plan allows LandOpt to help you manage and exceed it, and help you understand how well you are performing to the network benchmark.



Benchmarks are used in a lot of different areas of business to evaluate performance. In our case they are used to report the aggregate performance of the Network, giving you the ability to determine your *efficiency*. Use these numbers as a guide when you are planning and managing your business.

Remember, without a plan you will never have the opportunity to exceed a plan.

Benchmarks of Sales Professional Staffing

Best Human Resources Practices

By Mike Gaydos



When it comes to recruiting and staffing for a recurring sales professional, the task can be daunting and challenging when looked at from a wide angle. There are many items to be studied, poked and prodded to see how sales professionals tick. As we know, the sales person is a different breed of person, especially when they are hunters. Who in their right mind desires to hear rejection after rejection just to hear one yes?

As we also know, sales professionals come in all shapes and sizes. Some look at the challenge of new business as exciting, while some like to manage the relationships after a sale is completed, and some are a blend of the two.

From experience levels they possess different levels of sales knowledge. Some sell on features and benefits, others on solutions, and some just think they can *sell ice to an Eskimo*. Within these varying types there are varying levels of willingness and attitude towards new business development and how to go about prospecting.

There are the ones that aggressively cold call via the phone and in-person. Unfortunately, some

shoot emails and wait for the phone to ring. Looking at all of these different variables for the right candidate can make your head spin and raise the question, "how can I find the right person and measure their potential for success?" The answer lies within the Staffing Benchmark of the **LandOpt 11-Step Recruiting Process**.

Benchmarking is a technique used to measure performance against a plan to determine potential success of a process or idea to be implemented. With the whirl wind of sales recruiting and the variables that come into play, the 11-step process gives the hiring manager a "benchmarked process" to measure candidates. By following the steps, the benchmarks even the playing field.

The AVA, for example, provides the benchmark of the JAR to measure the pattern shape of the individual against determined skills sets for the role. The role play uncovers solution based sales techniques necessary to sell our service.

These benchmarks help us visualize how they *do it* and we measure each one to another.

Keep in mind that no matter how good the benchmarks are, and no matter how much they're used to determine an outcome in hiring, the human element that can throw you a curve ball.

Consider these points for future hiring. The LandOpt HR department wishes everyone in the

Did you know?

- [VP Racing Fuels](#) announced the introduction of SEFTM94 Small Engine Fuel, designed to combat ethanol-related problems in portable gasoline-powered equipment including chain saws, generators, blowers, trimmers, lawnmowers and more.
- The PLANET Executive Forum theme for this year will be innovation and technology, Feb. 16—20.
- [Forbes Magazine](#) has published a feature article on how to properly construct and launch an email marketing campaign.
- [Bloomberg News](#) is reporting lending to U.S. small businesses is on the decline. Lending fell in the third quarter, showing the companies that account for more than half of total job creation are still struggling to emerge from the recession.
- [A Las Vegas landscaping company](#) is creating an iPhone app, called MyScape, to help users design their own landscaping. It's being designed by a third party developer, but shows how technology in marketing is leading the charge.

What LandOpt is to Me...

"The Project Manager Boot Camp was educational for us, because we were intimately introduced to the sales cycle and strong role playing activity. It was good to be learning with a diverse collection of companies from the LandOpt network, and I'm glad that I had the chance to explore deeper into the Project Manager role."

Joe Hayes—Project Manager, Twin Oaks

Sustainability in a New Year

LandOpt Environmental Leadership

By Ron Gavalik

As we begin a new year, it's time to revisit the practice of sustainability in landscaping. This environmentally friendly maintenance of a local environment is highly important for preserving the natural habitat of an outdoor space, and also to beware of pollutant alternatives that do little to *better* anyone's quality of life.

"Intelligent landscape management can reduce water and air pollution, creation of health risks for people and wildlife," according to an article on EnvironmentalLandscaping.org

These common sense practices include using materials that are either already part of the natural environment or will integrate without disrupting the natural surroundings. The disruption of stunting necessary growth of natural plants can harm local wildlife and damage a region's eco-system. That damage can result in increased pollution and eventual human health risks.

According to the University of Delaware Botanic Garden Advisory Board's Green Initiatives subcommittee, a sustainable landscape is a stable and productive ecosystem that conserves the physical and biological processes occurring in that space. Designed and managed sustainable

landscapes maintain hydrological function, plant and animal diversity and biomass, soil integrity, and contribute to human wellness.

Landscape service providers who are conscience of an environmental impact should ideally minimize site disturbances and work with existing elements to the fullest extent possible.

Pollution issues in landscaping are very real and must be changed. For example, 5% of the nation's carbon pollution comes from gas powered lawn and garden tools. A 1,000 square-foot lawn requires 10,000 gallons of water (usually city water) each summer to maintain a green look. Over 100 million tons of fertilizers are applied to residential lawns and gardens annually.

Leadership in changing to more sustainable environmental protection, like most things, comes from market drivers, such as customer demand for healthier options. In 2010 there was a greater increase of customer demand for green initiatives and there's no reason to believe the number of customers looking for those options won't continue to rise. *Powered by LandOpt* organizations that lead on environmental issues will secure the trust with those customers and communities.

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.

Principals' Meeting Agenda Notes

The Principals of each *Powered by LandOpt* organization received a letter and agenda for the upcoming Principals Meeting on January 17. Participants are to arrive in Pittsburgh on Sunday evening, January 16 for an informal welcome reception. As you read in the letter and agenda, we have changed the format of the event into five modules, where LandOpt team members will deliver the necessary information in blocks, as it applies to each topic. This new format will foster open discussions and keep the LandOpt team accountable. We look forward to seeing you then.

Business Transformation

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

 Human Resource Management	LandOpt empowers a select group of highly qualified, regionally-based
 Business Management	landscape contractors with a powerful
 Operations Management	portfolio of business systems to dramatically improve their growth,
 Sales and Marketing	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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