

Network News

Produced by:





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



Inside this issue:

Efficiently Plan Your Crews LandOpt Feature	1
Continuing Education Announcements for Training	1
Planning Production Expectations Message from the President	2
Crew Know the Standards? Professional Sales Leadership	2
Network Success LandOpt and Licensee Successes	2
Reminders For the LandOpt Network	2
Preparing for Spring Tips from the Success Coach	3
Avoiding Job Related Burnout Best Human Resources Practices	3
Did You Know? Tidbits for Licensees	3
What LandOpt is to Me... Message from the Network	3
Reduce Lawn Waste LandOpt Eco Leadership	4
Environmental Tips For the LandOpt Network	4

Efficiently Plan Your Crews for Success

LandOpt Feature

By Niki Ratcliff

When the subject of organizing a landscape crew is brought up to a landscaper, the first thing that may come to mind is tool storage. Mention increasing productivity and crew tracking ranks on the top of the list for the green industry. These are helpful, but the manner in which a licensee projects the overall expectations of a crew starts with a company's business plan.

Each business has a projected goal forecasted for the overall company. The structure of each crew is defined based off of this projection. The business plan defines what services the company provides. The crew's are formed based upon individual skill to support that particular service.

For instance, if a company claims they are the fastest and most efficient lawn mowing service in town, then that crew should live up to the claim. They should know which clients to mow each day, based off of careful planning and scheduling. They should know the quickest routes to job sites and be physically able to perform. If the company provides exclusive residential design/build projects then the crew must have understanding of plant installation, attain a keen eye for detail, and be more personable since these crew members will be more exposed to client interaction.

Organization of a crew and proper planning is paramount to success. Crews must be aware of



their budgets and time allocations to perform their jobs. A trusted key leader is responsible for adhering to the goals set out by the company to ensure efficiency to the carefully planned schedule.

According to [Robin Westmiller's article, Power Produces Productivity](#), "contractors lose between \$1,000 and \$1,300 per crew, per year, due to equipment being left on jobsites or falling off trucks," due to misuse. The simple fix: keep the crew accountable for their equipment. The same goes for time measurements to complete work and move on to the next scheduled job.

The business's plan defines the organization of the crew. The team members on each crew define the productivity. Invest in your team, train them well and hold them accountable. These responsibilities lead to success.

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:

- March 14 through March 16—Con Ed
- April 25 through April 28—Transformation Training
- May 9 through 11—Sales Rep. Boot Camp
- June 13 through 15—Con Ed

Webcasts: (Subject to change)

- Feb. 17—The Perfect CARE Call
- March 3—Gearing Up for Spring
- March 17—Marketing Your Brand to Drive Sales
- March 31—Using MFE

Network Success!

Congratulations to Tom Chase, Account Manager for Carolina Creations Landscapes. Tom outpaced his up sale goal for the second year in a row!

LandOpt welcomes the following new team members to the Nationwide Network!

- Paul Hamilton and Justin Herron, Sales Professionals for PROCARE Landscape Management.
- Victor Abdy, Sales Professional for Good Earth Landscape Contractors.
- Mike Dimeo, Sales Professional for Burkholder Brothers.
- Bryan Begley and Heather Sanford, Sales Professional for Mountain View Landscapes & Lawncare.

Congratulations to Steven Bach for his one-year anniversary with LandOpt as Success Coach.

Congratulations to Ron Gavalik for earning his M.A. in Creative Writing.

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.

Planning for Production Expectations

A Message from Tim Smith, President/CEO



Planning your schedule is often looked at as a chore in itself on top of the work of running an organization. The reason for this is because most managers and team members do not set aside time specifically for planning their workloads.

The result of proper planning is a 3:1 ratio. What I mean by this is that it's been proven that for every one hour we spend planning our work, we save three hours in the implementation. That's a significant savings for our personal schedules, but imagine the savings when planning company wide for each department and crew. The lack of understanding of what to do next is removed, replaced with achievable goals that leads to high morale and amazing cost savings. All of this is just another example of remaining sustainable for long-term success.

I encourage newer licensees to look at the success of veteran companies in the network, who've capitalized on their planning initiatives and see how its helped them stay on top of the workload and also helped them determine their equipment needs, staffing, and other resources. The ripple effects of strong planning goes well beyond the daily or weekly work schedule.

Make sure you integrate time in your day to plan out your schedule and reflect to ensure it's being implemented properly. Network with peers to discuss what works and what doesn't. Together, we will use these kinds of innovative practices to increase our quality of life.



Does Your Crew Know the Standard?

Professional Sales Leadership

By Steven Bach

The Sales to Operations Handoff is one of the most critical steps in the Customer Relationship Process (CRP). It's a process that your crew must be aware of for a smooth transition.

If the Kickoff is not done properly then operations will never understand the overall solution(s) that must be performed to the property. Additionally, if the crew doesn't know the budgeted hours or materials and subcontractor costs, they cannot measure their success or failure.

The Kickoff is critical so that the customer and operations team members are on the same page. This ensures that the sales professional is not over committing or over promising. In these cases the company's reputation can be severely damaged, because of the appearance of disorganization and lack of willingness to accomplish the tasks that were promised.

Our goal as a Network *Powered by LandOpt* is to convey the exact opposite, which is a *quality of life* feeling. We provide solutions with a real impact on the lives of our customers. We're no longer selling landscaping services, but an advanced way of life that is hard to fit with a price tag.

Sales professionals prepare customers for the sales to operations hand off throughout the entire CRP. At the time of the Kickoff, the selected operations team members meet the customer in the presence of the sales professional, so that relationship can begin to build.

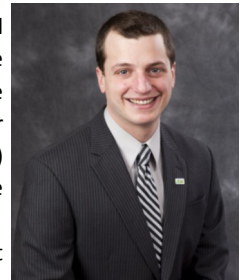
Together, the customer, sales professional, and

the operations team will review the specifics of the work and determine the best methods for introducing the solution(s) agreed upon during the sales process.

This is the time that special conditions are discussed and worked into the planning and scheduling of work. Some examples of conditions could include the presence of pets, parking conditions, property variables, etc.

Sales professionals are responsible for creating the proper kickoff sheets for the account manager to manage their respective crews. Management in this case includes services, budgeted man hours, materials allocated, possible subcontractors, crew tracking worksheets, etc.

In this industry we all know when a Kickoff goes smoothly. We feel it when it happens and we all try to emulate the same circumstances for each new customer or agreement. But it's not difficult to achieve this process if we are willing to devote ourselves to the careful planning of each Kickoff. The customer will then know that all of the team members of their landscape service provider understands their needs, and the team is willing to deliver the services as promised. This will only heighten the reputation and strengthen the relationship for all future agreements.



Preparing for Spring with Efficient Planning

Tips from the Success Coach

By David Gallagher



In preparing for spring you should be reviewing your tracking data and performance on maintenance accounts from last year, in order to route and schedule your maintenance services more efficiently.

Consider how you might reroute or reschedule your maintenance work to reduce your total number of crews or crew members. Look to eliminate or reduce overtime hours by spreading out certain services over a longer period of time. Ask yourself how much time you are *losing* by having crews fuel and stock their trucks, or going to the diner for lunch. Leverage your LandOpt tracking tools and schedule board to make decisions about operational effectiveness and efficiency.

Work on skill and general approach training with your crews. Have them look at properties and talk about the most efficient way to perform maintenance services, share ideas, and help them think above just getting the job done. As Account Managers and Project Managers you are provided

tools to monitor and manage your resources. Make sure you are taking full advantage of them. Are you using the Crew Tracking workbooks and sheets? Leveraging the schedule board, not only to schedule, but track your Rev/MHr and other metrics? Do you have all your Maintenance Agreements in CRM and up to date? Are you creating the budgeted revenue and man-hours records in CRM? Are you conducting a Maintenance and Project Department meeting where routing, scheduling and performance against budgets are being discussed?



If you can't answer yes to these questions talk to your success coach and find out what you are missing. It just might improve the quality of your work days and deliver a higher level of success to the company.

Avoiding Job Related Burnout

Best Human Resources Practices

By Mike Gaydos



Burnout can be described as “the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially when devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results.”

There are several factors that contribute to burnout, including job-related features.

Unclear Requirements. When it's not clear *how* to succeed it's hard to be confident and do a good job. If the job description isn't explained clearly or if expectations are otherwise unclear, workers are at higher risk of burnout.

Impossible Requirements. Sometimes it's not possible to do a job as explained. If responsibilities exceed the time given to complete properly it's really not possible to do the job well. Workers will put in a lot of effort and never quite feel successful, which leaves them at risk for burnout.

High-Stress Times with No Down Times. Many jobs and industries have “crunch times,” where teams work longer hours and handle a more intense workload. This can invigorate people in

short spurts if the extra effort is recognized. It becomes problematic when *crunch time* occurs year-round and there's no time for recovery.

Big Consequences for Failure. People make mistakes, but when there are dire consequences to the occasional mistake the work experience becomes much more stressful.

Lack of Recognition. It's difficult to work hard and never be recognized for accomplishments. Awards, public praise, bonuses and other tokens of appreciation and recognition keep morale high.

Poor Communication. Poor communication in a company can cause problems, like unclear job expectations or little recognition. When an employee has a problem and can't properly discuss it with someone in a position to help, this can lead to feelings of low personal control.

Insufficient Compensation. Some occupations are stressful, and it's accepted along with the paycheck—if the paycheck is sufficient. If demands are high and financial compensation is low, team members will undoubtedly question their employment.

Article continued on page 4.

Did you know?

- [Lawn and Landscape](#) is reporting that spending on maintenance services such as lawn care and pest control increased, while home remodeling decreased in the fourth quarter of 2010.
- [Landscape Online](#) reports a growing trend for cash strapped cities and school districts, Detroit Public Schools plan to outsource lawn care services.
- [MSNBC](#) reported that confidence among small U.S. business owners rose to a three year high in January, but concerns about sales saw owners remain cautious about hiring and spending plans, a survey showed on Tuesday.
- LandOpt will be attending the [PLANET Executive Forum](#) from Feb. 16—20 to meet with landscape service providers across the country.
- Tim Smith will be guest lecturing for a Landscape Contracting class at Penn State University on April 11.

What LandOpt is to Me...

“LandOpt has helped our company institute a business plan and financial plan that is replacing organized chaos with structure and accountability. The transformation we're going through is not an easy process, but it's well worth the effort. LandOpt is definitely helping us achieve our long-term success.”

Barry Burkholder—
Owner, Burkholder
Brothers, Inc.

Reduce Lawn Waste for a Healthy Environment

LandOpt Environmental Leadership

By Ron Gavalik

Developing and maintaining the cherished landscapes that frame our customer's homes and buildings requires significant inputs. Water, soil amendments, fertilizer, hardscaping, and other natural and manufactured resources come together to give us the greenery our customers desire.

From these landscapes come the trimmings—grass, leaves, branches, and weeds need to be managed. Conventionally, this has meant disposal: stuffing yard waste into garbage cans, piling it in the street, or hauling it to the dump. For many reasons this convention needs to change.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) estimates that 20% of the municipal solid waste stream in the United States is generated through landscaping wastes. This translates into 31 million tons of waste per-year. Landscaper service providers and consumers pay to dispose of yard waste, when in fact, they are excellent sources of nutrients.



Many of the facts that professionals already know can translate into environmentally friendly practices. Use a mulching mower to convert the grass clippings into mulch for the lawn. Incorporate grass clippings and other landscaping waste, along with non-animal based food wastes, into compost. Each of your county conservation agencies have information on creating and maintaining composts.

Most of the environmental practices we can put implement are common sense based, and always serve as a selling tool to homeowners and companies in search of service providers sympathetic to green initiatives.

One practice that's easy to overlook is sustainable mowing practices. By keeping blades sharp for clean cuts, and focusing on only cutting the top third section of grass blades promotes grass root health and shades out weeds. Because grass produces oxygen, it's important to remember this and educate customers, so they are aware and feel empowered to do their part and agree to a healthier lawn and atmosphere.

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.

Avoiding Job Related Burnout *(continued from page 3)*

Poor Leadership. Company leadership can go a long way toward preventing burnout. Poor leadership is one factor that can put a team member at risk for burnout. Non of these are relevant if managers don't listen to the team and stay aware for warning signs. By keeping an eye and an ear to the factors just discussed, you can help retain team members. As a team member you will also need to be aware of the signs of burnout and not be afraid to approach your manager. It's a two way street for both managers and employees.

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.



650 Smithfield Street ♦ Suite 750 ♦ Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: 412-567-4345 ♦ Fax: 866-508-2472 ♦ URL: www.landopt.com ♦ E-mail: info@landopt.com