

Network News

Produced by:



A monthly newsletter informing
and educating the LandOpt Nationwide Network



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Now That's A Great Plan!

The first week of November was dedicated to focusing exclusively on 2012 – specifically the financial plans that will drive each of the Powered by LandOpt Contractors within our Network. More than 30 people – Owners, GMs and Business Systems Managers—representing the majority of our 16 contractor locations, gathered in Pittsburgh to work in a collaborative environment on their financial plan for next year.

Though the days were long, the group did get the opportunity to relax and enjoy each other's company during a LandOpt-hosted social. Having the chance to look back at the year and share stories was a great way to break up a week that was, for all intents and purposes, very numbers-focused and forward thinking. Despite the intensity, the atmosphere throughout the week was one of camaraderie, high energy and enthusiasm.

The Pittsburgh financial planning week, of course, was but one step in the financial planning journey.

As a reminder to everyone, the key dates that remain on the horizon are:

- **Nov. 11:** Full draft of Financial Plan due
- **Nov. 18:** Second draft of Strategic plan due
- **Nov. 23:** Second reviews of Strategic and Financial plans returned
- **Dec. 09:** Final drafts of Strategic and Financial plans due
- **Dec. 14:** Final reviews of Strategic and Financial plans returned
- **Dec. 20:** Final Strategic and Financial plans due for sign-off

A special thanks to all who traveled to Pittsburgh and committed their time to the financial planning process. By all accounts, it was a great week! If you haven't already done so, kindly take a moment to submit your evaluation form so we can capture comments and suggestions while they are fresh in your mind. As well, a note of appreciation goes out to **Becky Broderick**, LandOpt's executive office manager, who organized an outstanding social event for the group!



The group listens intently as Barry Burkholder shares his plan.



Christa McKnight and Jake Silvis believe that they are "first" to be done with their plan!



LandOpt Professional Development Activity

Training & Events:

- Jan. 9-11—Sales Rep Boot Camp
- Jan. 24-26 —Principals Meeting
- The 2012 Critical Dates calendar will be published in December.

Webcasts:

- Nov. 17—Financial Planning Progress, Pt. 1
- Dec. 1—Financial Planning Progress, Pt. 2
- Dec. 15—Finalize Your 2012 Plans!

Network Success!

- The LandOpt Network is barreling full-force toward the end of the year, recently posting \$15.6M in new sales. That's 18% ahead of the same time period last year and we aren't done yet!
- The Silvis Group's **Dave Vaniel** is proving to be a sales superstar in his own right. He has achieved a remarkable \$975,261 in total sales on the year — \$846,296 of which is attributed to maintenance. This is the highest individual maintenance sales total recorded in the Network's history. Phenomenal work, Dave. Congratulations!
- Holding his own is **Charlie Bennett** from ProScape Lawn & Landscape Services, who recently closed a \$30,000 snow maintenance agreement. Nice work!
- With these record sales numbers, it's no surprise that we've got quite a few sales professionals who have reached their premium incentive plan! Congrats to all! Next month we'll print a full list of those who have hit that all-important mark.
- A warm welcome to **Jon Thomas**, who has recently joined Carolina Creations as an Account Manager.
- Not only is PROCARE Landscape Management having a great year, but their tree service division recently hit \$697,000 in new sales on the year. Congratulations to the entire team!
- The unseasonably early snowstorm on Halloween weekend wreaked havoc with several of our contractors in the Northeast. Burkholder Brothers, Nurney Landscape & Design, Mountain View and Good Earth were among those who had their first taste of snow.

The LandOpt Transformation—Look How Far You've Come!

A Message from Tim Smith, President/CEO



"Instead of always looking at how far you have to go, look back instead to see how far you've come."

Just last week, we hosted Financial Planning here in the Pittsburgh office and had a full house as we welcomed representatives from nearly every one of our contractor locations. I watched from the back of the room as flashes of confusion and exasperation sometimes crossed the faces of those diving into their financial plan for the first or second time, and noted with pride the confidence with which our more veteran representatives offered advice and encouragement. I was reminded of our early beginnings and just how far so many of you have come in the LandOpt transformation process. I remember vividly sitting with our first contractor, Miller Landscape, formulating their very first plan. Bill, Bob and Jeremy certainly wrestled with the new terminology and understanding the cost structure, among other elements. And now, 6 years later, they are solid veterans who are enjoying their most profitable year in company history. I have the same memories with Eichenlaub, Burkholder Brothers and Twin Oaks. Looking over the room that day in Financial Planning, it was so easy for me to see how much each and every one of your companies has evolved and changed since becoming a Powered by LandOpt Contractor.

Beyond the numbers and operational aspect of the business, however, I have also stood witness to your personal transformations. And to me, that has been the most rewarding part of my job. As business owners, you started out simply because you had a passion for the green industry and for doing what you do. You realized that you could make a living doing something you loved. But, as your businesses grew, so did the pressure and issues associated with management, sales, profitability, and employee retention, to name a few. When I met many of you for the first time, during a LandOpt intro meeting, that passion had faded. It was obscured by 15-20 hour work days and an off-kilter work/life balance among other things. The pleasure for me in watching your businesses undergo the LandOpt transformation process – a process admittedly filled with its own stresses – has been in seeing your joy and passion return. I see owners and GMs who are once again excited about going to work every day and who enjoy productive days at the office as well as vacations and valuable weekend time with their families. And your transformation as business leaders certainly has had a far-reaching impact on your team members and your customers. Your enthusiasm and commitment to your business is contagious and yours have become companies for which they want to work and with which they want to do business. My message to each of you – regardless of where you are in the transformation process – is simply to pause and take a moment to look back. Reflect not only on the strides you have made, but truly how far you've come. I think you'll find the road ahead to be far less daunting. I look forward to continuing to watch you grow!

LandOpt Spreads the Word at 2011 GIE



LandOpt joined more than 25,000 industry professionals gathered in Louisville, Kentucky recently for PLANET's annual Green Industry Expo (GIE). Representing LandOpt among the 750 exhibitors on the trade show floor were **Lori Bonham, Alison Blobner, Teri McGuinness, Tim Smith** and **Dan Eichenlaub**, each of whom shared the story of LandOpt with booth visitors after they disclosed their biggest business challenge in hopes of spinning the "Wheel of Challenges" to win a prize. Over the course of three days, the LandOpt booth team visited with contractors from Florida to Milwaukee to California to Texas, educating them about the Powered by LandOpt Network.



Top: *Teri McGuinness and Alison Blobner give "manning" the booth a whole new meaning!*
Bottom, L-R: *With more than 750 vendors, the GIE trade show floor offered something for everyone; Not one to resist a sale, Lori Bonham takes time to shop at a neighboring booth.*



There's No Time Like Snow Time!



It's that time of year. Those of you who offer snow and ice management services have been preparing for the past few months and are eagerly anticipating those first white flakes that will fall from the sky. Some have already leapt into action thanks to the uncharacteristically early Halloween weekend snowstorm in the Northeast. In fact, back in September, our own "Snow Wizard," **David Gallagher**, gathered the operations pros from our Network for Con Ed training that focused solely on snow and ice management services.

David is also well-known as an expert on the topic within the industry, so, when *Snow Business* magazine came calling, he was happy to contribute his opinion on the topic of "Per Event" pricing. This article was part of a "What if..." series on trends and challenges that have the potential to impact snow services. In the case of this article, writer Cheryl Higley looked at "What if...you are asked to bid per event?" The article not only defines "per event" for readers, but also includes some very helpful insight from David and other industry pros on key points that should be defined in the RFP and taken into consideration to ensure success and profitability. Here are some highlights:

On defining the scope of work:

The RFP should, obviously, include a complete scope of work. But when it comes to event pricing, a red flag for Glatt is the new trend toward all-inclusive pricing. Typically, the company's per-event pricing does not include deicing services. Case shies away from all-inclusive whenever possible because that's where cost controls are jeopardized.

"We're seeing more people ask for all-inclusive, and it's tough to price," Glatt explains. "The plowing component is easier. But depending on the type of precipitation, I can see a big variance in my cost. That is a dangerous proposition."

David Gallagher, director of success for LandOpt, who is familiar with the event pricing structure, agrees: "A big concern is when a contractor doesn't build enough service into the price."

On data collection and billing:

For Glatt, the biggest benefit to per-event pricing is ease in billing. With a verified snowfall total, administrative time is greatly reduced and invoicing can happen more quickly. "If we're billing per event, I don't have to see the plow sheets. Once the snow stops, I can check my report and that determines the bill," he says.

Gallagher says that while contractors may understandably be skittish about per-event pricing, with good data collection, and an understanding of your market and your costs to do business, it can be manageable. "It needs to be understood from a potential revenue generation perspective," he says. "It allows snow and ice management companies to build a forecast of revenue in a simpler manner and helps customers project their costs more easily."

The article is full of great information and can be read in its entirety at GoPlow.com. Special thanks to author Cheryl Higley for granting permission to reprint portions of her work.

Progress Continues on the Next Generation of the Licensee Center

As we reported in the September issue of *Network News*, we have engaged independent consultant Shannon Miller to streamline our internal document structure in our quest to unveil, in the first quarter of 2012, the next generation of the Licensee Center. Shannon has made great progress and was able to employ a Beta Team to test the new environment and provide feedback. The group was given a set of tasks that required use of the new navigation and filters to accomplish tasks within the Product Library. Special thanks go out to **Jeremy Miller**, Miller Landscape; **Maureen Kaufman**, Cut Above Landscaping; **Angela Barr**, Eichenlaub; and **Jonathon Thrift**, Carolina Creations Landscapes for willingly taking on the tester roles. Each provided valuable insight and feedback that we have since incorporated into the overall design. At the same time, LandOpt internally identified subject matter experts that have worked directly with Shannon on evaluating each of the existing documents in the Library, assessing value, renaming and classifying each that were deemed current, and, lastly, identifying related documents to which they should be cross-referenced.

The new Product Library is now nearly complete and we are working to improve the navigation even further. As well, we are finalizing our rollout plan and establishing guidelines for adding and organizing new and future items. We are on track for introducing this new product to the Network and look forward to bringing it to you early in 2012!

Network Announcements

- Note to Account Managers:** Make sure your book of business is up to date! This includes agreement pricing, multiple opportunities and budgeted man hours. Your variable compensation is dependent upon this information being 100% accurate in the system as the Account Manager compensation tool works from this data.
- Reminder:** The combined Principals Meeting and Sales Luau will be held Jan. 24-26, 2012 in Savannah, GA. Keep an eye out for registration materials, travel and event details, which will be sent out the week after Thanksgiving.
- Quick Tips:** In conducting testing on the new Licensee Center, we discovered some stumbling blocks in usage that are common to all users. Here are two quick tips to keep in mind:
 - 1. Be careful of the red X!** Many of you have mentioned that every time you close a document from the Product Library you get thrown out of the Library and you have to start all over. Remember, the red X is for closing your web browser, not the document that you are looking at. Use the **back arrows** on the left of the screen to navigate back to the Product Library.
 - 2. You shouldn't have to enter your password twice.** For Word docs and Excel spreadsheets, you will be asked to re-enter your password if you are opening the document **within the library**. We don't want you to do that. The Word docs and Excel spreadsheets are templates for you to modify, so first save them to your computer and then you can access as many times as you'd like without being asked to re-enter your password.

Network Sales Professionals Should Be Looking Back in Order to Plan Ahead



With only one month left, the sales professionals within the Network are working hard to finish the year strong. According to Success Coach **Steve Bach**, however, sales professionals should also realize that they are an important part of the 2012 planning process.

“The financial plan that the owner and GM is establishing is based largely upon sales goals that each sales rep will be asked to achieve. Certainly sales reps should expect a percentage increase over this year’s goals and now is the time that reps should be looking ahead and planning how they are going to achieve these new numbers,” Bach said.

So how, exactly, should they plan ahead? Start with looking back. Bach noted that this is the time to review CRM data from the past year. “Examine sales activity to remind yourself what worked and what didn’t in terms of generating interest among prospects and securing meetings. Look at what your busiest times were and review the messaging that you used. Look at some of your slower times and determine what you might have done differently,” he coached. By diligently utilizing CRM, each sales professional is afforded a comprehensive view that makes it quite easy to prepare a schedule for the upcoming year.

Bach shared, “It’s all about time management. Think about your efforts over the past year and put a plan in place for 2012 at a monthly, weekly and daily level in terms of the type of messaging you want to deliver for each season, your methods to reach prospects, the number of dials you’ll need to make to achieve your goals, the community events and professional networking functions at which you should have a presence, etc.”

The Success Coach noted that diligence and time spent now on planning allows sales professionals to start their new sales year off strong, with key benchmarks in place right out of the gate. Doing so significantly decreases the odds of falling behind in the first few months.

Who Says Financial Planning Can’t Be Fun?



Stuart Ward keeps Ann Warner, Angela Barr and Julie Hoover laughing during the evening social.



Art Miller, Jason Holloway, Jon Thrift and Tim Smith spend a little time catching up.



Steve Corrigan, Jim Finley, Darren Morford, Brian Trace and Jason Holloway are happy to pose for the camera.

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 landscape contractors with a powerful portfolio of business systems to dramatically improve their growth, profitability and productivity.



Business Management



Operations Management



Sales and Marketing

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 businesses.

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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