

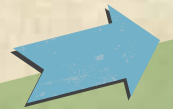
A SUPPLEMENT TO

Lawn & Landscape

MOVING ON UP



We asked commercial property managers why they hire
and fire landscapers. Their answers will surprise you.



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Commercial properties appreciate quality above all else

A landscape is more than just green grass. Whether it is a recreational park, a home lawn or a commercial renovation project, a well-maintained landscape delivers a sense of community. It greets visitors, provides a play area for children and gives homeowners pride in their outdoor living space. As the economy continues to recover, the lawn and landscape market also continues to grow as commercial properties seek unique landscapes and beautiful spaces with quality turf.

To help you maintain your customer's landscape, Syngenta is proud to partner with *Lawn & Landscape* on this special Grow the Market report. Keeping in mind the value of quality customer service, the findings in this report can help you implement business strategies for the year ahead. The report features feedback from your customers, giving you insight into current market trends such as:

- 89 percent of property managers reported their landscape budgets have remained the same or increased in the past three years. However, of those commercial properties whose budgets increased, 42 percent increased their spending between 10 and 19 percent.
- More than half of property managers consider the quality of completed projects to be the most important hiring factor. In 2013, only 5 percent of decision makers hired a landscaper because the company offered the lowest bid. In the lawn care industry, commercial properties are willing to pay more for high-quality services that meet their needs.

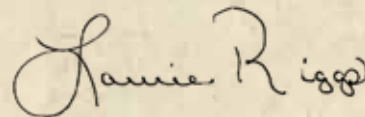
- When there are errors or a lack of efficiency in service delivery, 69 percent of property managers are more likely to end the partnership. The importance of providing efficient service and completing a job in a timely manner ranks high on the list of necessary qualities for a landscaper.



These are just a few of the trends identified in this 2014 Grow the Market report. In this issue, you will find many insights to help you grow your business.

As homeowners and businesses begin to invest more into lawn care, Syngenta is looking forward to providing the tools you need to give them a beautiful outdoor space. With brands like Acelepryn insecticide, Barricade herbicide, Heritage fungicide and new products in development, Syngenta remains dedicated to helping you grow your business with products that perform.

Laurie Riggs



Lawn Care Market Manager



To read our **2013 RESIDENTIAL REPORT** go to www.lawnandlandscape.com

BRAND NEW MARKET, SAME GREAT APPROACH



BY CHUCK BOWEN

When we launched Grow the Market last February, we sought to conduct the first major post-recession study of homeowners' attitudes about their landscaping and lawn care. We wanted to find out why Mr. and Mrs. Jones hired you, and why they fired you. How much do they spend on your services, and what they were planning to spend in the next few years?

It was a great report, and we ran a year's worth of stories based on the data. I was excited to share it with every reader I talked to. But I was in Atlanta last winter, doing just that – sharing my excitement and geeking out about this data – and the contractor I was talking to looked at the notes, then at me and said, without missing a beat: “This is good. But what about property managers? I don't do residential service.”

I left a bit deflated, but with a plan to replicate the same ideas in a different market. And so Grow the Market II was born, in which we sought to answer the same questions about commercial property managers. Here are some of the key points we learned:

- Far and away, having good communication and high levels of good customer service ranked far ahead of pricing or services performed. Those are much more difficult to do, sure, but not impossible.
- Most of our survey respondents – 60 percent – spend more than \$20,000 a year on their entire landscape, and almost half of them say that budget has increased since 2011.
- Just 11 percent of respondents say their budgets have decreased in the last three years, and most of them say that drop has been less than 10 percent. About a third of them say they've

slimmed their landscape budget by between 10 and 19 percent.

- Seventy-eight percent of respondents to our survey say that a well-maintained landscape at their building helps increase occupancy rates.
- Three-quarters of property managers agree that a well-maintained landscape is good for the environment.
- Two-thirds of survey respondents say that a well-maintained landscape helps save water.
- And, in a nod to how contractors stack up to other professions, only 7 percent of respondents say that they spend more time working through problems with their landscaper than with other service contractors.

Now, residential service still is the bread and butter of the average landscaper, producing two-thirds of sales, according to our 2013 State of the Industry Report. Commercial work makes up just 22 percent of the average top line. For smaller companies, those numbers are thrown into higher relief: Companies earning less than \$200,000 a year earn, on average, 17 percent of their revenue from commercial accounts. For companies earning more than \$200,000 a year, commercial business only accounts for 28 percent of their top line.

To me, that shows commercial landscaping as an untapped market for most of you reading this column right now. The following pages contain a treasure trove of data and analysis that will help you either enter the world of commercial landscaping, or intelligently expand your current commercial division. Our report does exactly what it says on the tin: It helps you grow your market. So read on and take notes. It's time to move on up.

How we did it

In mid-January, the editorial team at Lawn & Landscape teamed up with the fine folks at BOMA International – the nation's leading property manager association – to distribute a web-based survey to their members. We also asked some key commercial landscape contractors to pass along the same link to their customers. Ultimately, we received 248 responses from property managers, building owners and facilities managers in 43 states across the country. The data in our report this month come from these people – all of whom, regardless of their specific title, are responsible for the hiring and firing of the landscapers at their properties.





Doing **BUSINESS** with a **BUSINESS**

Before you decide to try your hand at commercial landscaping, there are a few things you should consider.

BY KATIE TUTTLE

Profitability is the name of the game, and when it comes to landscaping projects it can be the difference between staying in residential and making the giant leap to commercial. The fact of the matter is, any business can be profitable if it's run correctly. When it comes to residential versus commercial services, it's about the bottom line.

If you've been tossing around the idea of getting more into the commercial side of landscape work (in this article commercial is defined as business parks, HOAs and other commercial properties), now may be your time to make that big step.

LOOK IN THE MIRROR. First things first, know what you want. That's the first step in making any type of decision,



and according to Orlando, Fla.-based U.S. Lawns President Ken Hutcheson, it definitely should be considered here.

“Decide where you personally are more comfortable,” he says. “Are you most comfortable dealing with professionals, or are you uncomfortable and more comfortable dealing with a residential homeowner?”

Second, evaluate your mindset. What kind of mental situation do you feel most comfortable in?

“(Is) the way you think transactional?” Hutcheson says. “Do you like a beginning and an end to everything you do during the day? Because that’s what residential is. You go to a job site, you do your service and you leave.”



› Hutcheson

The third thing to consider is your management style. There is a large difference between managing a residential crew and managing a commercial crew.

“This is the most important,” Hutcheson says. “Are you a micro-manager that likes control, or are you willing to delegate? If you’re unwilling to give up control, have at it with residential, because it requires that. As the owner you have to be involved all the time. If you’re willing to give up and let your team grow and be successful, you may be willing to jump into commercial.

“Money and profits follow, but if you as a person can’t delegate and allow others around you to grow, if you think long term instead of thinking transaction to transaction, if you aren’t comfortable talking to professionals, then stay in residential.”

Another thing to consider is your equipment, according to Carly Rizor, enhance-



› Rizor

ments account manager for Christy Webber Landscapes in Chicago. She says you’ll need larger equipment to get the job done in the commercial world.

“All these larger commercial sites require a different set of equipment,” Rizor says. “So sometimes making that leap from purely residential to commercial spaces, which are just wide open, you’ll want to take a closer look at your fleet to make sure it’s something that you’re capable of and that you’re doing it as efficiently as possible.”

There’s also the topic of certification.

“The guy on the homeowner end, he doesn’t care necessarily that you’ve got a lot of certifications,” says Chris Kujawa, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Kujawa Enterprises in Oak Creek, Wis. “He wants to know that you’re going to do a good job and he can trust you. The guy on the other end has a boss above him, and they’ve got corporate policies and so forth, that they want to see people with different certifications and professional degrees and those kinds of things.

“That’s an important distinction between the two. That’s way more important to a corporate property than a residential property.”

BUILD A CUSTOMER PORTFOLIO. If you’ve thought all of these points through and made the decision to make the jump, your next step is to find customers. But how?

“I’ve had the most success getting in front of commercial people by joining various real estate organizations where property managers and facility managers are meeting on a regular basis,” says Gib Durden, vice president of business development for HighGrove Partners. “Getting to network with those people puts a face to the name.”

Christy Webber, president of Christy Webber Landscapes, suggests looking into your current residential clientele and the relationships you’ve already developed.

“A lot of times when you really get to

know your residential customers ... they own businesses, or work for businesses, so a lot of times you have to leverage what you have,” she says. “Find that homeowner that just loves (you). That guy wants to see his landscaper succeed, he wants to be a part of helping.”



› Webber

Unlike residential accounts, where you offer your services and customers either accept or decline, commercial landscaping can be more cutthroat. These businesses are required to get two or three proposals before making a decision, and that’s where the danger lies.

According to Tom Houghnon, chief operating officer for Reliable Property Services in St. Paul, Minn., commercial property managers price shop much more than residential clients.

“The relationship is still very important,” he says, “but customers are more cost-conscious on the commercial side.”

Hutcheson says most of the customers know as much about this industry, or more, than some contractors.

“Pricing must be accurate for you to get work,” he says. “I can tell you 100 stories of customers that throw out the high bid and low bid because they are inaccurate.”

Note that Hutcheson mentioned both the high and low bid. In this business, it’s not best to be the cheapest.

“I think one common mistake people make is they try to enter into a new type of business by being cheap,” says Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management. “People are working off of budgets ... usually it’s a fine line in their expense. If you do it really cheap in year one, it’s going to be hard to raise that price.”

A way to make sure your bid is as accurate as possible is to have a good estimating process.

CONTRACT LANGUAGE

ABOUT HALF OF PROPERTY

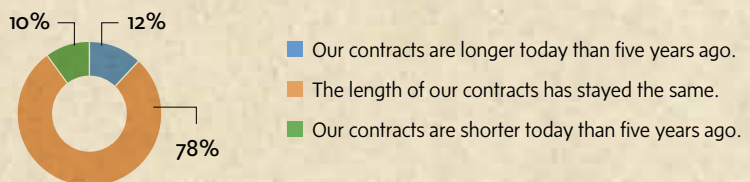
managers still go year-to-year on their contracts with landscapers, and more than three-quarters say their time frame has stayed the same since 2009. Just one in ten respondents say they have changed the lengths of their contracts – longer or shorter – in the same time.



How long is your average contract with a landscape contractor?



How has the length of that contract changed in the last five years?



“There is an art and science to estimating,” Hutcheson says. “It can’t just be winging it. That process has to be consistent from job to job to job. It’s not competitive, it just requires accuracy.”

Kujawa says you need to know exactly what everyone wants from the project.

“Write down that they are in fact calling for edging, for mulching, whatever services there are, because your idea of a full-service program and their idea of a full-service program might be different,” he says. “You can’t include flowers in a program that takes it from \$30,000 to \$40,000 if they didn’t want flowers. You won’t get that company.”



› Grover

Kujawa suggests creating a spreadsheet or matrix with one column being what the customer wants, and another column being marked off when you add that to your bid.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS. While it’s important to know what the client wants, Houghnon says it’s also important to know all your costs, so you can profit from the job.

“You really have to know what you need to be profitable on the site,” he says. “They’re typically bigger properties and have differ-

ent demands and different ideas. We as an industry do a pretty good job knowing what our direct costs are, but we sometimes forget the other costs associated with doing the property, whether it’s insurance to equipment repair ... that kind of gets put by the wayside. You have to make sure you’re covering all those costs or it’s just going to be a lost leader.”

Tom Canete, president and CEO of Canete Landscape & Garden Center in New Jersey, says that because of costs and everything involved, you most likely won’t even see a profit until later in the season.

“(The commercial properties) give you a lump sum for a year, and usually break it into eight or nine payments,” he says. “So you’re very heavy in the spring with what you’re laying out. You may not even cover your out-of-pocket expense, so you have to be able to float that money until you start seeing a little bit of a profit after the summer. In the summer you skate by and come fall you start getting out of the red and get into the black.”

Sometimes, you are going to have a bid that’s too high, and if the property manager isn’t willing to negotiate, you may need to accept that and move onto a different job.

“You can’t go below what you can’t go below,” Webber says. “You just have to let it go. It’s like buying a car. You love that car,

but if the guy isn’t willing to negotiate with you on the car, then screw it whether you love it or not. You’ve got to let it go. You’ve got to make money, and many of these companies that went out in the last five years are because they didn’t pay attention to that.”

“You’re going to have to be diligent with it,” Durden says. “A typical closing rate for commercial properties is 20 percent, so if you’re putting out 100 bids, 80 times you’re going to be told no, 20 times you’ll be told yes. Don’t be discouraged and keep plugging along. Be consistent and don’t get frustrated.”

So what happens if you’ve put in your bid and you realize it’s not working out?

“Be honest with yourself,” Durden says. “You’ve got to know what kind of product you want in your portfolio. Not every commercial job is perfect for every company. You’ve got to know what your niche is. Don’t be afraid to say no to somebody if you don’t feel it’s going to be a successful project. We always want to please people. We’re always the go-getters, we can do it, no job is too small ... But sometimes a strategic decision to say no can pay better dividends.” **L&L**



› Durden



PROPERTY BY THE NUMBERS

Our exclusive research will help you better understand and sell to commercial property managers.

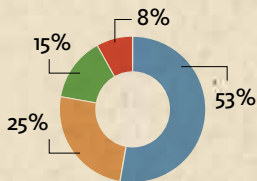
IN OUR LATEST Grow the Market research project, we asked property managers across the country what they thought of landscapers, why they hire you and why they fire you. Turns out communication, quality work and reliable account managers are some of the best defenses against low bids and shorter contracts. Use these data to help you better understand your customers and prepare for the coming season. – *Chuck Bowen*



WHO WE TALKED TO

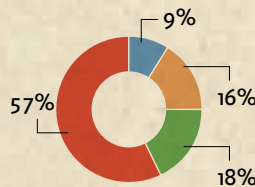
WE SURVEYED 248 commercial property managers, building owners and other folks to see what they think of landscapers. Everyone who answered our questions is in charge of hiring the landscaper at their buildings. All told, we received responses from 43 states.

What title best describes your position?



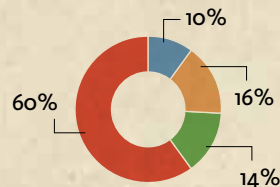
- Property manager
- Building owner
- Facilities manager
- Developer

How many buildings do you oversee?



- 1
- 2-3
- 4-6
- 6 or more

How many acres of outdoor landscape/turf do you oversee?



- Less than 1
- 1-3
- 4-6
- 6 or more

What type of facilities/grounds do you oversee? (Choose all that apply.)



Business park/
multi-building property

44%



Homeowners'
association

13%



Apartments

39%



Strip mall

16%



Standalone
office buildings

44%



WHY THEY HIRE YOU

FAR AND AWAY, quality of work and staying on budget are the most important things to the average property manager when it comes to hiring a landscaper.

For as much talk as we hear about low bids and the cutthroat nature of the commercial world, price comes in tied for fifth on the list of top reasons. This jives with what we've been hearing in the last few years – that many contracts went to low-bid companies during the recession, but property managers got what they paid for when it came to quality of work. After a year or two of shoddy craftsmanship, property managers came back to the more expensive – but more reliable – contractors.

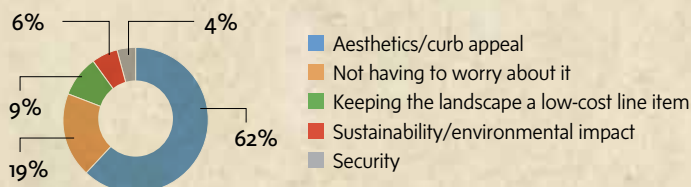
Coming in a distant second, with 19 percent, is a high level of customer service. This suggests that even if you can't come in at or under budget, or the quality of work isn't up to snuff, you can still win the business if you're up front and communicate well about the status of your jobs. Green services and certifications come in dead last, with just 2 percent of property managers choosing those as the top reasons to hire a company.

What's the most important factor when you decide on hiring a landscaper? (Choose only one.)

Quality of work – jobs are completed on time and within budget.....	52%
A high level of customer service.....	19%
My relationship with the company contact/account manager.....	8%
The company offers multiple services.....	7%
The company is highly recommended or has great reviews.....	5%
The company has the lowest bid.....	5%
The company offers green/sustainable services.....	2%
Insurance and/or professional certifications.....	2%

AGAIN, WE SEE THAT almost two-thirds of property managers say the most important thing about their landscaping is how it looks. Keeping the landscape a low-cost item on the budget is a distant third place, with just 9 percent of respondents choosing price. About one in five say the most important factor is simply not having to worry about it.

What is most important to you when it comes to the landscaping at your building(s)?



WHY THEY FIRE YOU

ALMOST THREE-QUARTERS of respondents cited problems with services or improperly completed jobs as the most common reason they fired a landscape contractor. In second place was poor customer service or bad treatment by an account manager, which highlights the importance not just of quality work, but of putting the right person in charge of handling each customer. High prices came in near the bottom of the list, with just 4 percent of property managers saying it was why they often changed landscapers.

What is the most common reason you fire a landscape contractor? (Choose only one.)

Problems with services/jobs aren't completed properly..... 69%

Poor customer service/bad treatment by account manager.....	19%
Poor communication.....	5%
Price is too high.....	4%
I don't trust them.....	3%

WHEN ASKED WHAT a landscaper could do to instill confidence in their company, more than half of respondents said excellent communication. Everything else – multiple service offerings, being local, a long tenure in the market – pales in comparison, with those responses just barely breaking into double-digits.

What one thing could a service provider do to instill confidence in their company?

Have excellent communication.... 53%

Offer multiple services.....	13%
Be local to my market (not a national company).....	11%
Have a good image.....	11%
Have been in business for many years.....	6%
Have certifications/professional trade association memberships.....	5%
Have the lowest bid.....	1%



LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY

MOST OF OUR SURVEY RESPONDENTS – 60 percent – spend more than \$20,000 a year on their entire landscape, and almost half of them say that budget has increased since 2011. Of those property managers who have increased their landscaping budgets, about half say they've bumped up less than 10 percent. About four in ten say they've increased spending by 10-19 percent.

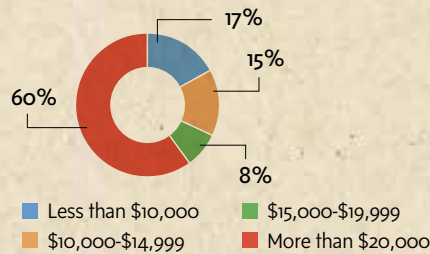
Just 11 percent of respondents say their budgets have decreased in the last three years, and most of them say that drop has been less than 10 percent. About a third of them say they've slimmed their landscape budget by between 10 and 19 percent.



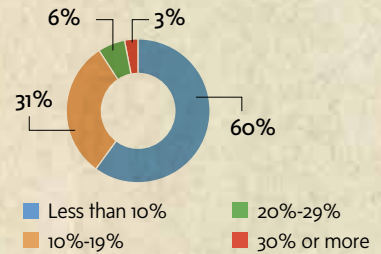
How has your total budget for landscaping (mowing, enhancements, irrigation, lawn care, etc.) changed in the past three years?

- ↑ My total budget has gone up **47%**
- ↔ My total budget has stayed the same. **42%**
- ↓ My total budget has gone down **11%**

How much do you spend on landscaping (mowing, enhancements, irrigation, lawn care, etc.) in a year?



As a percentage of your total budget, how much do you spend on landscape enhancements in a year?



➔ **WHEN WE ASKED** about the next two years, half of the respondents said they plan on increasing their landscape budgets. Another 45 percent said they would keep their spending about the same. Just 7 percent said they would be spending less by 2016.

How do you anticipate your total spending on landscaping changing in the next two years?

- ↑ My spending will go up **48%**
- ↔ My spending will stay the same **45%**
- ↓ My spending will go down **7%**

A SHARPER SALES PITCH

WE ASKED OUR RESPONDENTS to tell us how much they agreed with the following statements as a way to judge what was truly important to them when it comes to their decision of hiring landscapers. These numbers indicate the percentage of property managers who said they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement. Use these as a way to hone your sales messages.

Curb appeal is important to my tenants

87%



- A well-maintained landscape at my building helps increase occupancy rates **78%**
- A well-maintained landscape is good for the environment. **74%**
- A well-maintained landscape helps save water. **67%**
- It's important to me that my contractor provides all the exterior services. **60%**
- Sustainability is an important factor when considering a contractor. **52%**
- Certifications or memberships in professional trade associations are an important factor in my decision to hire a landscaper. **35%**
- A well-managed landscape is too expensive to maintain. **10%**
- I spend more time working through problems with my landscaper than with other service contractors. **7%**



Service with a *SMILE*

Commercial clients need a lot of attention. You need an account manager who can give it.

BY JIM HUSTON

An experienced commercial maintenance account manager is one of the most important roles at your company. Whether you can develop your existing sales team into this role, or you have to find someone new, it's a position you can't go without.

According to *Lawn & Landscape* research, after quality of work, commercial property managers cite high levels of customer service and their relationship with their account manager as the most important factor in hiring a landscaper.

Here are some qualifications and performance expectations I've found that can help you find the right person.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Minimum of five years of combined commercial landscape maintenance production and sales experience
- An associate degree (preferably in the green industry) and a certified landscape professional certification
- A valid driver's license that is insurable on the company's insurance policy
- Possess excellent written and oral communication skills
- Possesses excellent computer skills
- Able to make effective presentations to clients and sell \$750,000 to \$1 million of commercial maintenance projects annually
- Able to represent the company in a courteous and professional manner

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Oversees \$500,000 to \$1 million of commercial maintenance projects annually
- Ensures vendor pricing is competitive and accurate

- Sells approximately 10 percent to 25 percent of account contract amount in enhancements
- Develops new business and prepares bids for supervisor to review
- Prepares all bids/proposals for enhancement work
- Reviews all bids/proposals with sales manager for accuracy and marketability
- Presents all proposals/documents to client
- Closes sale and coordinates job specifics with accounting personnel
- Coordinates job specifics with production personnel
- Meets with client and ensures that all client concerns are addressed in a timely and professional manner
- Conducts monthly walkthrough with client and identifies and documents any discrepancies
- Provides written monthly report and files in customer file
- Ensures that jobs are kept on schedule, and at or under budget
- Processes all change orders/enhancements and ensures that they are priced and processed correctly
- Interfaces with subcontractors to ensure timely and accurate completion of their work
- Interfaces with suppliers to ensure timely and accurate delivery of job materials
- Interfaces with company production manager to ensure client's expectations are met and that jobs are kept on schedule and on budget
- Ensures that all safety procedures are

followed and reports any unsafe conditions to supervisors

- Continuing education requirement minimum of 20 hours per year

ONE MORE THING. I'd highly recommend having all of your key staff sign a confidentiality agreement and/or a non-compete agreement. In addition, account managers should use a customer relations management (CRM) software package. It should be mandatory that the account manager schedule all meetings, to-do items, phone calls, proposal due dates, etc., using the CRM software. Brief notes from meetings and client conversations should be entered daily and always be kept current.

If the account manager gets run over by a truck (or quits), the company has a record of what he or she has been doing. I've seen a number of account managers depart a company and take all of the information that they've been collecting with them.

WHERE TO LOOK. There's no silver bullet or hidden secret as to where to find good account manager prospects. Landscape contractors are scouring every possible nook and cranny where they might find good help. You have to be in constant hiring mode.

Many of my clients have found Craigslist or Angie's List a good resource. Others look for people in a service sector outside of the green industry, and who have great attitudes, communicate well, are trainable and are looking for an opportunity. **L&L**

The author runs J.R. Huston Consulting, a green industry consulting firm, and is a columnist for *Lawn & Landscape*.

Go to our site to download full-length job descriptions for both commercial and residential landscape account managers.





GO ALL IN

Give your clients the full monty and ask to be their one-and-only service provider.

BY KATIE TUTTLE

So you've done it: You've made the leap to commercial landscaping. Congratulations. But what do you do if all your crews are doing is maintenance? How do you take that next step to sell yourself as a full-service company? The commercial property you maintain may hire a different company for irrigation, a different company for snow removal and another one for construction.

How do you become their one-and-only contractor?

Tom Canete, president and CEO of Canete Landscape & Garden Center, Wayne, N.J., says a simple, but important first-step for his company is marketing.

"Let your customer know you do all that stuff," he says, suggesting that you hand out mouse pads and magnets with your provided services and contact information on them. "They pass their file cabinet 10 times a day and your magnet's there. What happens when their other guy doesn't come through? They call you because you're staying in their face. You may not be getting the work, but you're staying in their mind."

Most landscapers we contacted agree that the easiest place to sell yourself as full-service is with your current clients, and not just for added revenue. Another contractor coming onto your client's property for lawn care,

parking lot maintenance or snow removal could put your business at risk. "If they have to go out and hire a different company, I potentially put my relationship at risk because I'm not able to provide all their needs," says Bob Grover, president of Pacific Landscape Management, Hillsboro, Ore.

Tom Houghnon, chief operating officer for Reliable Property Services, St. Paul, Minn., echoes Grover's statements.

"Your margin is definitely a lot stronger if you're a full-service provider," he says. "Mowing and weekly services, while they can be profitable, that's really where you can get upside down quickly. If you can't provide the irrigation service or some of the enhancement services, it's going to be significantly tougher to make a profit and succeed in the commercial market. You're giving up significant revenue potential that can help compensate for the lower margin mowing work that got you the facility in the first place."

Grover also says you shouldn't be worried about a lack of resume or long list of previous work, and you definitely shouldn't let that keep you from offering your services.

"I'm a firm believer in 'act the way you want to be,'" he says. "If you have one reference, you've got a reference. You don't have to have a long history before you can say you do it. Say it confidently or show examples

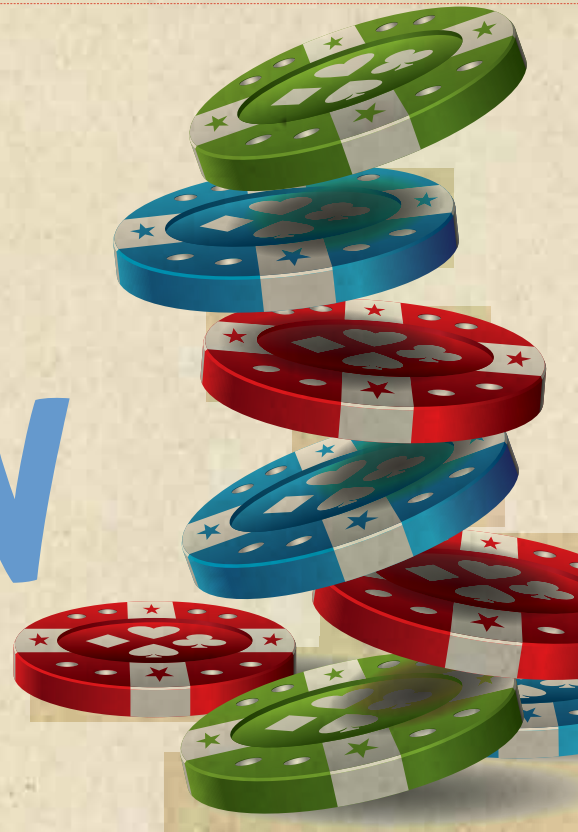
confidently. You don't say, 'Hey I just started this this year,' you just say, 'We provide this.' You may not have done it last year, but act confident that you know what you're doing."

So what happens if your client already has another company do that service, and you're thinking about offering to do it yourself instead?

"I just say 'I'm not trying to kick anyone out of the box, but I surely would love the opportunity to bid it,'" says Christy Webber, president of Christy Webber Landscapes in Chicago. "They can't really deny you that, but at least you get to throw your hat in the ring. Ask for the opportunity to price it at least."

ASK FOR THE WORK. If your client contracts multiple companies for the work on the property, you may stumble across another hurdle in your attempts to be full-service: What if they don't want to consolidate?

"In those markets, there's really only one way to go about attacking that," says Ken Hutcheson, president of Orlando-based U.S. Lawns. "Develop a working relationship with that customer or prospective customer by using one as the entry point. You will not sit in front of a customer that has always kept (services) apart and convince them conversationally that they can bundle all together.





You won't be a trusted counselor unless you have a working relationship with them. Once they trust your counsel, then you can start sharing your reasons why they should bundle and use you."

WHAT MAKES THE RIGHT CHOICE. When it comes down to it, the client will pick which is the right choice for them.

"We put a proposal in for snow plowing," Canete says. "The previous guy had it for 20-plus years and charged per hour. They had a check-in system, then had to check cameras to make sure everything was working or they weren't being mis-billed, and that was their pain."

When Canete Landscape & Garden Center put its bid in, the proposal included a pay-per-event plan.

"If 7 inches fall, we only charge for 7 inches," Canete says. "We had proven ourselves with the landscaping, so they checked our snow references. Now they're one of our top referrals."

When it comes to why the client should chose you over another company, there's more involved than just costs. Something to also consider is relationships.

"To sell yourself," Houghnson says, "say 'we're on the site and you deal with us in the summer, you can deal with us in the winter.' We know the site intimately in the summer. When it comes to winter, it's the same guys coming so they're going to know that property because they're on it so much in the summer."

It's also about your knowledge and coordination.

"So many things we do are dependent upon the weather or the application timing," Hutcheson says. "When you mow affects when you do a fertilizer application."

It can also benefit the client in a non-typical financial way.

"We can easily reallocate funds in your budget," Hutcheson says, "and do it very affectively from service line to service line. If

DON'T HATE. CONSOLIDATE.

Sometimes your clients hesitate to go all-in with just one service provider. Ken Hutcheson, CEO of U.S. Lawns, has some key points to keep in mind when convincing your customers to consolidate.

ACCOUNTABILITY. "There's a natural relationship among these service lines, they affect each other, and if one doesn't work well, another won't work well," he says. There will be one company to look to if something happens and they're using a single source.

CREW COORDINATION AND TIMING. "So many things we do are dependent upon the weather or the application timing," he says. Using one crew for everything on the site allows them to time for the best results.

UNDERSTANDING THEIR NEEDS "We know what you need and we know access points. There are benefits to us understanding the ins and outs of the property," he says. Because you're on the site in the summer, you know exactly where that pesky section of land that

doesn't drain is located. If you're also doing snow removal in the winter, you'll know to not pile snow there.

YOU OWN THE LANDSCAPE. "It's more intangible, but it resonates with the customer. We own (the landscape) and want to be proud of it. It's hard to be proud when we cut the grass but we don't own any other aspect of it," he says.

FLEXIBILITY WITH MONEY. "We can easily reallocate funds in your budget and do it very effectively from service line to service line," he says. If the weather has been unkind when it comes to the plants lining the walkway and there's no point using the budgeted funds to plant more, it's easy to reallocate that money to irrigation, in order to help the current flowers survive.

THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IS TRUST. "They always end up trusting the contractor who's on the site every week," he says. "If they don't, you're not on the site anymore."

the weather means you don't need as much maintenance early in the season as expected, we can reallocate cutting funds to something else, like mulch or flowers. We don't need to cut because it's been dry, so we install flowers instead, or do a mulch application."

Houghnson says it's not just about the relationships with on-site crews either.

"Something that gets forgotten is the administrative side," he says. "The invoices look the same ... the billing, the invoicing, the proposal sheets ... everything to the certificate of insurance. It's just more consistency and that's the key of the thing. Even the person who answers the phone is the same in the summer and winter. Some of it sounds pretty minor, but it's like anything else. You're comfortable with the people you deal with."

One thing most people don't think about is how can being full-service affect your company negatively? For the most part, it's all win-win, but there is one pretty big way it can have a negative impact on your company.

"If you're making money and you're very successful, but you mess up the snow that one time, you'll never do the landscaping again," Webber says.

At the end of the day, it all comes down to the relationships and trust you have with your clients and vice versa.

"They'll say 'I can get anyone to come out here, but this company also has my best interest in mind,'" says Gib Durden, vice president of business development for HighGrove Partners, Austell, Ga.. "I think it makes you more of a partner with that property manager than just a vendor." **L&L**