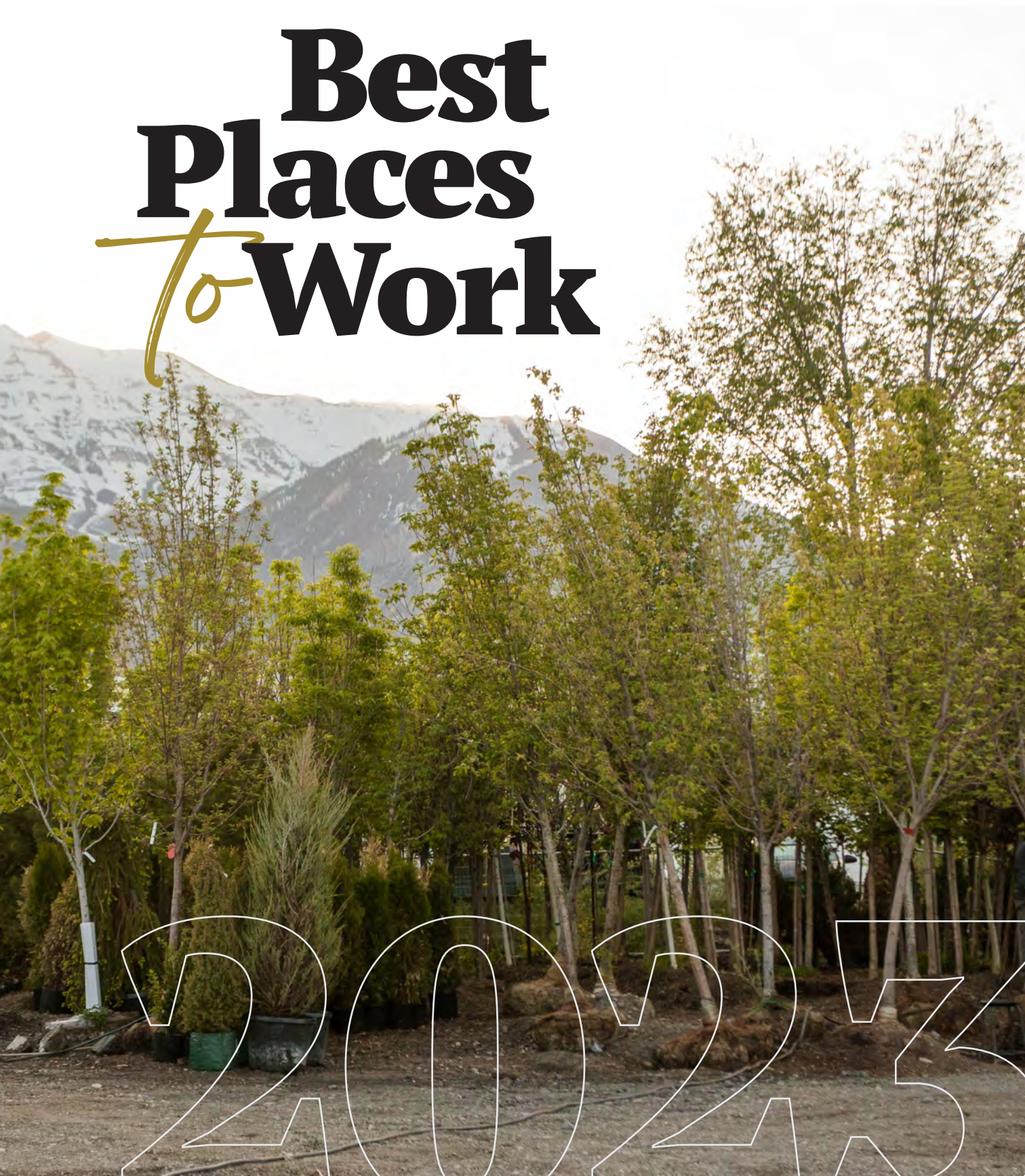


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Best Places *To* Work



2023

Executive Letter

David F. Giannetto

Shaping the Future of the Green Industry



The green industry is at a turning point. With increased consumer demands, advanced technology becoming more available, a surge in financial investment from private equity, and mergers and acquisitions occurring at a rapid pace, it is more important than ever for green industry companies to be hiring and retaining the best talent available. And that all starts with creating an organization that fosters growth, a positive culture, and trust — making it a best place to work.

We are proud to be a part of this year's Best Places to Work program, because we at WorkWave are committed to joining together with you to build the future of green. In a time where quality labor is hard to come by, you are building a company to be proud of, and one that we are proud to highlight as you build teams that will help you find success.

Over the past few years, we have brought together the service industry's best and brightest companies so that we can maximize the top talent and resources to bring you the green industry's leading technology and service solutions. RealGreen by WorkWave, our flagship green industry solution, helps companies like yours achieve greater efficiencies, provide an optimal customer experience, and help you build a profitable company — all things that help contribute to building a great place for your employees to work. It has been the top choice for lawn and landscape professionals for decades, and one of our top priorities when it comes to investing in innovation. We recently launched RealGreen Life, a green solution for small businesses, as well as launched new and updated features including digital forms and signatures, enhancing lawn maintenance capabilities from estimates to labor tracking, and automating upsells and campaigns with condition codes.

At WorkWave, we are continuing to invest in technology and solutions that help you grow your business, service your customers and maximize your money. We have been your partner for over 40 years, and we look forward to continuing our partnership well into the future.

Congratulations to all of this year's honorees. You should be proud of the business you are building and your contribution to this amazing industry!

All the best,
David F. Giannetto
CEO of WorkWave



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without working more.



Green industry's leading lawn software



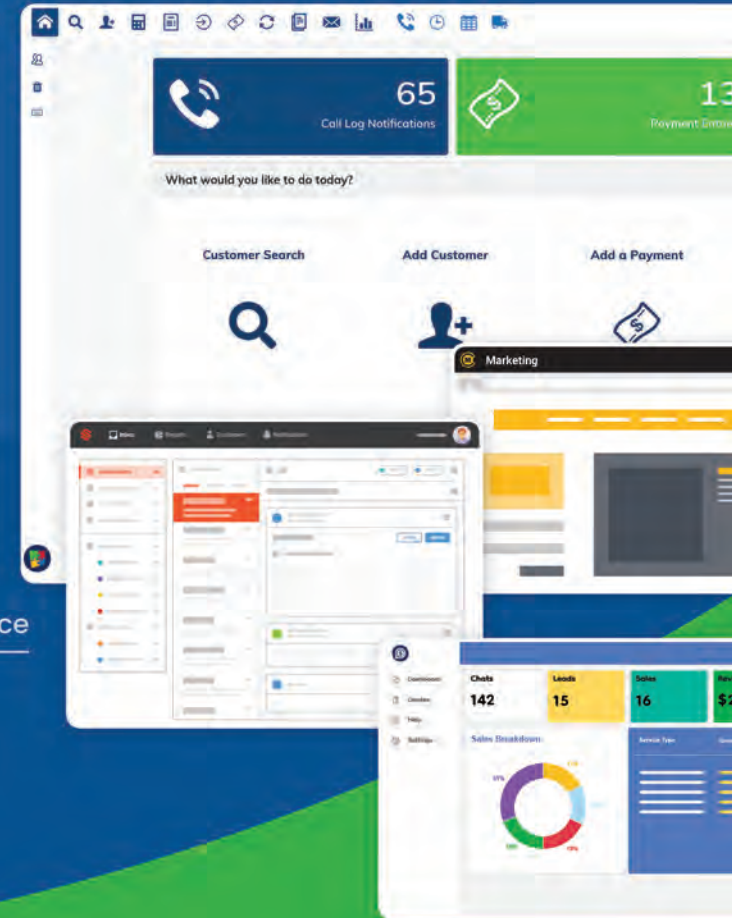
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Lawn industry sales & customer answering service



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Call 800.422.7478 or visit realgreen.com



BRAVE NEW WORLD

Behind a completely new vision, Frederico Outdoor Living is winning over clients and employees alike.

STORY | JIMMY MILLER
PHOTOGRAPHY | KATE JEPPSON

AFTER YEARS OF CONSULTING FOR COMPANIES, Adam Frederico decided to own one of his own. All it took was a phone call home to find his next opportunity.

Of course, that's a simplified overview — since buying the company two years ago, Frederico has completely rebuilt the team and reshaped the brand. It certainly has not always been easy, but the big changes have lifted Frederico Outdoor Living as one of Lawn & Landscape's Best Places to Work.

The idea to buy his father's company came on a call home for the holidays. While

Frederico lived in Chicago at the time, he called his family back in Utah, where his father, Russell Frederico, still owned the company he founded in 1980.

The company culture was always strong. One employee, Paul Ward, can certainly attest to that. Ward is now the landscaping division leader, and he noticed a difference with Frederico in charge.

"The energy was very positive. It was a breath of fresh air. It wasn't that (Russ Frederico, Adam's father) was old and stuck in his ways," Ward says. "The company still has its morals and values, but people are starting to move in a direction that is more high energy."

STARTING FRESH. Frederico acknowledges that there's always at least a little bit of tension between buyer and seller when the new guy comes in making changes. The father-son dynamic furthered that friction, especially when it came down to what was important for each party involved.

For instance, Frederico readily admits he didn't know much about horticulture before prepping to step into the company. He remembers his father saying things like "this is going to be really difficult if you don't know plants." But Frederico signed up for plant identification classes and visited his local nurseries before moving back to Utah. He anticipated some of this uneasiness — that's why he approached his prep work meticulously.

"For 40 years, running a business,

Company benefits include anything from a high-matching 401K to help for mental health services.

and suddenly someone else comes in and makes changes, I'd be a little squeamish, too," Frederico says.

As for Frederico, it was incredibly important that he had autonomy to make those changes. He felt he had a strong business background after earning a bachelor's degree in business management from Brigham Young University and a master's degree in the same field from the University of Chicago. That's not to mention the time he spent as a product analyst or business consultant to firms of all types of sizes and reputations.

So, he set off and made some big changes, all in the name of building a stronger company culture. Frederico says he wanted his employees to feel empowered in co-creating the vision.

"It's important to me, especially being an outsider in the industry, to be the first one to raise their hand and say, 'I don't know what I'm doing, but I have some ideas,'" Frederico says, adding that this level of honesty helps all his employees feel comfortable making suggestions, no matter how long they've been at the company. "The only way



to achieve that vision is to find people who are excited to add to that vision."

Ward says it's been great to see a new perspective on the green industry. Given Frederico's experience outside of the industry, it was actually a selling point that Frederico didn't come from horticulture. Ward says he felt Frederico offered some new viewpoints that helped reshape the way the company operates.

"I felt like, 'this will be exciting to learn some new skills, and taking a corporate world type of view and applying it to a construction world that maybe doesn't cross paths ever,'" Ward says. "He comes from the background of consulting and developing companies... (We have learned) how to build your business while working in the business."

That doesn't mean getting to that point was easy. After the first four months at the company, Frederico let go of every previous employee on the team except for the office manager. Whether it was their fit with the budding company culture or it was related to their performance, Frederico just felt the team needed a fresh start.

Frederico bought the company during the winter, so they had time to implement that fresh start in the offseason.

"By laying off everybody for either performance or culture reasons, I was able to bring in people who were excited about the changes and find people who were wanting to build a culture that actually had posted core values, that had metrics and goals, and that had a vision for the future," he says.

There were some challenges despite starting the staff change in the offseason: For one, Frederico bought the company in January 2021 — amidst COVID-19. Plus, he got some pushback on talk of cultural changes from his employees. That was a large part of why he felt he needed new faces in the field.

"It's really difficult when you see your former boss, his youngest son comes in and suddenly says he's making changes," Frederico says. "I just kind of found that if there wasn't a desire to adapt and morph and there wasn't excitement for the vision, it was going to be really, really hard to execute the vision."

ABOUT THE RANKINGS

Lawn & Landscape partnered with the Best Companies Group to find out who are the Best Landscape and Lawn Care Companies To Work For. Best Companies Group surveyed employees on the following areas: leadership; corporate culture and communications; role satisfaction; work environment; relationship with supervisor; training, development and resource; pay and benefits and overall engagement. The companies below met the score requirements to be on the list.

RANK	COMPANY LISTING	US/CA EMPLOYEES
1	Frederico Outdoor Living	18
2	Mullin	149
3	LawnSavers Plant Health Care Inc.	21
4	RedTree Landscape Systems, LLC.	79
5	Go Green Lawn and Pest LLC	32
6	Gras Lawn	58
7	TLC Landscaping Design + Pools	145
8	The Pattie Group, Inc.	55
9	Reinhart Landscaping & Snow	79
10	Hidden Lane Residential Landscapes	24
11	Western Landscape, Inc.	35
12	Blades of Green	119
13	Don's Lawn	33
14	Chalet Landscape	80
15	Green Summit Landscape Management	132
16	Garden Design Inc.	79
17	Amazing Blades Landscaping	27
18	GOLD Landscape	85
19	WillowGrove Landscape	30
20	Classic Nursery & Landscape Company	37
21	Green Garden Group	58
22	Monarch Landscape Management	153
23	Para Space Landscaping	137
24	Fisk Lawnsapes	36
25	Heath Outdoor LLC	50
26	Piscataqua Landscaping & Tree Service	114
27	Coloradoscapes	59



Adam Frederico

COVERPAGE PHOTO | KATE JEPPSON

Employees tended to stay once Frederico rolled out the new-and-improved compensation and benefits plans. Plus, Frederico merged with a notable homebuilders company in Utah last year; with that company came additional human resources work that contributed to the better overall offerings for potential employees.

That includes anything from a high-matching 401K to anonymous help for mental health services. The company also now has more purchasing power than ever before after building relationships with banks, so that has helped them get brand-new equipment and trucks when needed. Frederico says the companies still operate independently, but the mutually beneficial merger helped them offer more resources.

MORE THAN NEW FACES. Frederico says resetting his team was just one of three major changes they made as they reshaped the company. He also wanted to rebrand the company, removing “Landscape Management” from the end of the title and instead adding “Outdoor Living.” He also worked quickly to swap out a 40-year-old logo with his own.

“To me, the name was commentating something that was very run-of-the-mill,” he says. “No knock to anyone with landscape management in their name, but to me, it was more maintenance heavy.”

That rebrand coincided with the third and most recent change at the new-look Frederico Outdoor Living: the team opted to oust its maintenance division entirely.

That decision didn’t come from nowhere: open forum discussions with his teams and data suggesting their gross margin numbers were down led Frederico to making that final call.

“We looked at just the amount of time that was spent in order to generate the maintenance revenue, and ultimately, one of our key tenants is focus,” he says. “If you have a lot of priorities, you have no priority. We didn’t want to be a competitor to other landscape maintenance companies in the area. We wanted to do more of what we knew we could do super, super well.”

Dustin Rock, the operations manager, has been with Frederico Outdoor Living for nearly a full year. He joined in June of 2022, and after a summer of working out in the field with the maintenance team, he was one of the major voices in stopping that service.

Though he wasn’t originally in the horticulture field, Rock says he’s a self-proclaimed “lawn nut,” so going out and working with his crews came naturally. And of course, he



Whether it be cornhole or darts, the Frederico team tries to keep it light amidst busy work cycles.

grew close with his employees, but ultimately, he felt it was best from a business standpoint to focus on landscape design.

Even still, the transition went really smoothly. Rock approached the team about a month before the end of last season and let them know this was the plan. However, he helped several of those employees keep lots of clients Frederico previously had in the maintenance division, effectively helping them start their own maintenance company.

“They were actually really excited at the prospect of getting to run their own business,” Rock says. “Plus, we still wanted to make sure our clients were in good hands, too.”

With an already strong company culture, Rock says the client handoff was great.

“Some guys even stayed on through winter to help with our snow work,” Rock says. “Everyone understood why we were doing it.”

HAVING SOME FUN. It’s not always work-related talk at Frederico; Rock says the employees and the clients alike have enjoyed some fun with the company.

Take last year’s first-ever client appreciation event. Rock says Frederico invited any customers who did a bigger project to join the company at a high-end golf course for a more formal dinner. They also hosted

some primary vendors and suppliers and did awards like best customer.

“We didn’t know what to expect, but almost everybody we invited showed up,” Rock says. “It ended up being just awesome.”

They ended up giving out cornhole boards for clients who redid their backyards. Anyone who added a firepit received a s’mores packet. Rock says many clients won’t hear back from their landscapers once the work is done, but not at Frederico Outdoor Living.

“We’ve wanted to set ourselves apart in how we treat our customers,” he adds. “We care about them even after the job ends.”

The company hosts fun events for the team, too. Whether it be laser tag and arcade games or it’s breakfast burritos and free throw competitions, the Frederico team tries to keep it light amidst busy work cycles.

“I feel like there’s a million landscape companies out there,” Rock says. “To me, you can go work for a lot of them. A lot of them don’t have a culture that makes people want to stay.”

SEATS AT THE TABLE. Frederico says lots of new benefits have kept his employees engaged. But what he feels has really made a difference is the company’s flat organizational structure. This encourages employees to feel like their voice is heard, he says, as there are very few levels of middle management.

Sure, there is accountability, but there’s no direct reporting structure for most employees or org chart instructing each employee to talk with a direct superior.

“Even with small companies, you can sometimes feel distanced with a leadership team or the owner,” Frederico says. “What we’re trying to do — and we’re far from perfect — to me, seats at the table means we provide many opportunities for 360 feedback, for adding ideas to the team in operations.”

Ward and Rock both say part of the reason employees are so comfortable being honest with Frederico is his humility.



Everyone attends Monday morning meetings where they bring up what’s going well and what’s not.

SMALL EMPLOYER CATEGORY (15 - 49 US/CA EMPLOYEES)

Rank	Company Listing	US/CA Employees
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6	Don’s Lawn	33
7	Amazing Blades Landscaping	27
8	WillowGrove Landscape	30
9	Classic Nursery & Landscape Company	37
10	Fisk Lawnsapes	36



“To me, that had just earned my loyalty. I’ll work with him as long as I can,” Rock says.

Face-to-face time with one another is important. Frederico says the whole team attends their all-hands-on-deck Monday morning meetings — it’s where everyone brings up what’s going well and what’s not. Just recently, Frederico says a newer employee asked about how a project plan could use better communication. “It was a great discussion because it looks like the communication is kind of the telephone game,” he says. “Someone said something from sales to operations to the crew lead and it got distorted all the way down to him.”

“That’s a great way for things to not fester,” Frederico adds. “Some team members are more shy than others. The door is always open. We want people to contribute to the culture. All ideas are valid. It doesn’t matter who is right; it matters what is right.” **L&L**

Ward says the company has stressed to its employees that the reason they’re trying to expand is not to just put more money in the owner’s pockets.

Rock, who’s also not from the horticulture field, adds that he has worked for employers in the past who were all about trying to get rich and didn’t care about the employees. It was telling to Rock that Frederico was one of the last ones at the company to get a new truck for himself as the company grew.

Even when Rock dealt with some health issues, he privately wondered if Frederico would let him go. He didn’t — in fact, Frederico encouraged Rock to get healthy and spend some days at home to rest.

The author is associate editor with Lawn & Landscape.



After taking over the company, Frederico let go of most of the staff, replacing them with employees who believed in the new company vision.

BY JIMMY MILLER

PAY IT FORWARD

From clients to its own employees, Mullin is working hard to provide the “white glove” experience.



WHEN HURRICANE IDA devastated some areas of Louisiana a few years back, Mullin in St. Rose jumped into action.

It wasn't lost on Mycah Schexnayder that her company was helping the community despite their office being destroyed by the storm. Schexnayder, now in finance & administration for Mullin, says the winds ripped off portions of their own roof.

But there was the company, raising \$80,000 and helping feed families in the area anyway. They converted their front parking lot into several food and dry goods donation stations. People who had been without power for a week could get catered food, and some didn't even need to get out of their cars to do it.

“I think we showed it's not all about making money — it's about helping people, too, and giving back,” Schexnayder says. “We were under tough times. We had crews out cleaning up. But to put our stuff on hold for a couple days, that really stands out to me.”

This generosity goes beyond times of extreme turmoil. Schexnayder adds that the team adopts a few families for Christmas and buys every single gift on their lists. Company President Chase Mullin says he's been fortunate in his own personal life, so he's tried to pay it forward individually.

“As far as the company's concerned, I've really carried that same mentality over to the business,” Mullin says. “I think anything you pay, you're paid back at least tenfold, if nothing else than in a good night's sleep or a good feeling.”

Whether it's benefiting the community, the clients or their own employees, the company's people are behind their standing as one of Lawn & Landscape's Best Places to Work.

“Anybody can cut grass and anyone can do what we do,” says Nubia Gutierrez, Mullin's director of human resources. “That has been something that Chase has led the organization by. What is it that we can do to make ourselves unique? What is it that we can be the choice of employment? I truly do believe it has been the people that have made that happen.”

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD. Taking care of those people has helped Mullin retain

those employees. Gutierrez started with Mullin seven years ago when the team had roughly 35 employees. But the company wanted to kickstart its human resources group — Gutierrez says that once companies reach a 50-employee threshold, that's when an HR department is needed to monitor different labor laws.

Well, now the company hovers around 150 employees in the field, and Gutierrez says she guesses the team will soon grow to over 180. The company built its own facility in 2017, and now the company is doing everything it can to ensure employees are comfortable there.

Take the company's brand-new culture patio, which Schexnayder says the company christened with their first barbecue in May. Mullin brought in duck sausage and some adult beverages. He says this was the first time they got to use their new furniture, shade sails and outdoor fans.

“There's always something going on here,” Schexnayder says. “We're always trying to create ways for us to be co-workers but also friends.”

This goes beyond events on the company's site, too. The company offers cabbage ball and sand volleyball teams, plus Gutierrez says she helps assemble more unique programs like this spring's crawfish boil. It was there where she jokes that she “couldn't tell you how many pounds” of crawfish they cooked for over 300 people. All employees were invited to bring their families, where those with younger kids enjoyed bounce houses, clowns and balloons.

Gutierrez says they also rented out a whole theater to watch the Super Mario movie in April, following up last year's viewing party of the Buzz Lightyear movie. Gutierrez says everything was on the company's dime — after all, a family trip to the movie theater might usually cost upwards of \$80 or more. That's not the case for company events, where drinks, popcorn and tickets are all paid off. Plus, Gutierrez says some families walked away with extra prizes if they sat in the seat where something was placed beneath.

These family-oriented events aren't just planned by happenstance — it's the

company's intention to treat employees' families right. This Halloween will be another example of that, as Gutierrez says they'll turn a rented-out carnival area with rides into a trick-or-treat spot.

“The team members are great, but their families are the ones we're trying to affect,” Gutierrez says. “It's impacting them. It's telling them, ‘My mommy and daddy works for a good company.’”

Of course, it helps them retain employees, too. Mullin remembers attending a conference where the speaker shared that workers with a best friend in the office were much, much more likely to stay in the long run.

“We'll all just hang out. We'll just be together, not just talking about a specific project or an invoicing issue,” Mullin says. “It makes the workplace much less stressful and a more enjoyable place to be.”

THE WAY FORWARD. Mullin says that another part of that retention has come down to establishing clearer career ladders. They always had met with standout employees to communicate their unwritten career paths, but now they can show someone during the onboarding process how they can earn promotions.

Gutierrez says her HR department has

helped establish clearer career paths for employees. Of course, things have always been good — Gutierrez adds that there are employees who have been with the company since it first started. But Mullin says he wanted new hires to know what their way forward would be.

“Everybody understands the opportunity they have with Mullin,” he says. “Our goal and belief is that it will help them shift their minds from a job to a career.”

Mullin says they hope to have every single field-level person eventually try and earn a role as a crew leader at a minimum. And while they have a clear printout of a career ladder to distribute, Mullin adds that it's flexible.

“Our belief is that it's not always defined,” he says. “It can change from person to person, but we like to at least show them a general pathway.”

Finding new employees comes down to everybody being ready to recruit, Mullin included. Of course, they have a recruiter on staff, and they openly celebrate new hires, promotions and bonuses, but it's everybody's job to bring in the right people.

“I've spent a fair amount of my time recruiting,” he says. “I'll recruit down to the field level sometimes depending on where I am. It really is all hands-on-deck effort.”



Emphasizing culture has led to better recruiting for the company.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MULLIN

“

It's the things that everybody knows we should do, but we tend to forget. I think that as a company scales, it's ingraining those things in the culture from the top down so that same mentality and mindset remains.”

— Chase Mullin, founder and CEO, Mullin

LARGE EMPLOYER CATEGORY (100+ US/CA EMPLOYEES)

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CLIENT EXPERIENCE. Mullin recalls being on a fishing trip several years back with other landscapers in the area. One of the landscapers mentioned that he wanted to be the McDonald's of landscaping – quick and reliable service was the name of the game, with strong brand recognition.

Mullin wanted to craft his own vision – he respected the comparison but wanted to carve one out on his own. Instead, he believes Mullin is the Ruth's Chris Steak House of landscaping. This means he wants to serve clients the way makers of affordable but nice luxury cars or luxury hotels treat their clients.

Gutierrez has a different term for it: She says they're trying to offer the “white glove” experience. One specific person at Mullin stays with the same project the whole way through, meaning they're available to answer any questions they might have as they remodel their backyards.

Gutierrez admits that the company isn't for everyone, but they are for the clients who want to rest assured the project is getting done the right way.

“We're not the lowest in terms of pricing,” she says, “but we give them the experience of sitting back and relaxing.”

Mullin adds that it can be stressful for clients to have landscapers trotting onto a property for backyard renovations, or it can be annoying when clients don't hear back from their landscapers about when they'd be around for maintenance. So, he believes in strong communication with the customers.

“It's kind of overcommunicating,” he says. “It's overservicing the customers.”

Overservicing clients also means that the customers get great value in what they buy; the company trains its employees to bring up trash cans or carry newspapers to the front door. They greet people as they walk by or turn off blowers as clients pass. And if a client lives out of town, it can be a matter of sending them pictures and timeline updates so they rest assured the work is getting done.

“It's the things that everybody knows we should do, but we tend to forget,” Mullin says. “I think that as a company scales, it's ingraining those things in the culture from the top down so that same mentality and mindset remains.” **L&L**

From recreational sports leagues to family movie nights and crawfish boils, Mullin is prioritizing its employees.

The author is associate editor with *Lawn & Landscape* magazine.



BY KIM LUX

FOREST FOR THE TREES

At RedTree Landscape Systems, employees are motivated by more than just a paycheck as the company strives to put people first.

PETE AND DAVE LUCADANO, owners of RedTree Landscape Systems, are no strangers to the green industry. Having both been in the business for nearly 40 years, they've learned a thing or two from their multiple business ventures.

"We started as kids in high school and started our first business," says Pete Lucadano. "We built up the company and then in 2004 we partnered with a publicly traded equity firm. I worked for them for quite some time and then eventually as that company changed their leadership time after time, the world they had us living in became too corporate and not centered on the client or employees at all."



RedTree Landscape Systems started six years ago and the company has worked hard to retain dedicated employees and recruit new ones who share in its core values.

Over time, both brothers went on to leave the company they started, which has since gone under. Six years ago, they started RedTree knowing that this time, things would be different and their "people first" motto would stay at the heart of all they do.

"It was those experiences that helped us shape what we wanted RedTree to be," Pete says. "It gave us examples of things we needed to do right and things we did not want to repeat."

ASSISTING WITH THE UNEXPECTED. Serving the Tampa Bay area with 120 employees, RedTree is dedicated to every person on its staff, and it shows through the company's growth. Revenue reached almost \$8.2 million in 2022.

Pete says anyone can talk the talk when it comes to prioritizing employees, something he saw firsthand after selling his former business.

"The term 'people-centered' is so over-used," he says. "A lot of people say that but having worked in that publicly traded company where they said all those things, but they behaved the exact opposite of that behind the scenes. They had all the nice promotional materials, but what's really important is the grassroots, behind-the-scenes involvement and focusing on our people and our team first."

Whether it's coordinating after-school childcare or eldercare for an employee in need, transportation assistance to appointments or providing financial literacy resources and counseling support, RedTree knows it's about more than cashing in a paycheck.

"There's a whole level of needs that people have that go beyond the basic, sterile employee/employer relationship," Pete says. "These folks have family needs. We try to maintain a very open mindset toward assisting and aiding our employees. We try to have a platform where we can do that."

Client Care Specialist Benjamin Garland says his RedTree family was there for him during the hardest time in his life.

"In 2019, my fiancée died in her sleep. She had epilepsy and wasn't feeling well,"

he says. "They helped pay for her cremation and the cost of that. They didn't have to do that. They also helped counsel me through it. It was a part of my life that really could've went haywire, but they kept inspiring me."

Pete says RedTree is always willing to lend a hand if it's possible.

"If an employee has vehicle problems, we'll assist in getting the car towed to our shop and we'll allow them to work on and repair our vehicles in our equipment shop. It saves them money and lets them use all our tools and air compressors and those things," he says.

But RedTree isn't just there for its employees during the tough times. Pete says the company is big on celebrations as well and holds quite a few employee appreciation events throughout the year.

"We're big on celebrations and celebrating their commitment to the company," he says. "We try to do different things. One Friday they'll come in and we'll have a big ice cream truck set up making them all custom ice creams. We tell them to bring their families by, too. It's the little things."

Senior Landscape Designer, Kevin Smith, says the culture at RedTree is palpable and the energized mentality is something everyone feeds off.

"The culture is the best I've ever been involved in," he says. "Everybody comes to work and they're happy. A lot of it has to do with how we're treated by the owners. They are really receptive on people making suggestions anywhere from ground guys to upper management — that's just huge."

SEEKING OUT ASSESSMENTS. Having leadership throughout the company strive for an open-door policy and make such an effort to listen to everyone at every level is one of the most appreciated things at RedTree.

"There's things that us guys who aren't out in the field day-to-day anymore don't see," Smith says. "You can lose track of that. You have to be able to listen to the ground guys who are out there and if they have a suggestion on how to make something better, you definitely need to listen to them."

Pete says constant communication from top to bottom has always been a priority and a way to get the most out of RedTree's employees.

"Beyond that, we wanted to have a very personal approach with our people and empower our leaders," he says. "Empowerment of leadership is the things that's most often missed... ours

“ I’ve worked for companies where you pull over to the side to take a drink of water and the next thing you know you have an account manager watching you and you’re just not trusted. That’s not the situation at RedTree.”

— Benjamin Garland, Client Care Specialist

is down to the supervisor level. We involve our supervisors on everything from job planning to people planning. They help craft and pick their crews, they help decide pay rates and they help decide bonuses and merit increases.

"It allows them to take ownership and pride in how the company's run, and on our end, it allows us to have supervisors who are truly invested in the crew they roll out the gates with every day," Pete adds.

Garland, who has been in the industry for over 35 years, says he really appreciates the open dialogue at RedTree. He adds it helps foster a united front as well when employees know their voices are being heard.

"I've worked for companies where you pull over to the side to take a drink of water, and the next thing you know, you have an account manager watching you and you're just not trusted," he says. "That's not the situation at RedTree. That trust level makes for a better workplace and makes for a better work ethic in our employees."

Pete says this high level of communication starts from the very beginning — the interview process.

"No one is hired at this company, at any level, without a personal interview with the owners," he says. "I really want to develop an understanding of people as individuals."

Garland adds he's learned from the Lucadano brothers over the years, and this has helped him serve his crews better.

"I try to approach the guys with kindness and love because that's how Dave and Pete have taught me," he says. "They are literally my role models and mentors."

Pete says he believes it's that insistence to check in and have regular conversations with everyone at all levels of the company that contributes to a business' success or failure.

"Without that team, especially in the green industry, the equipment will just sit, and the trucks will stay parked," he says. "You can have all the resources in the world, but if you don't have people that are very good at what they do and have the right attitude, mindset and commitment to the company, it doesn't matter."

PROVIDING THE RIGHT TOOLS. Investing in good, quality equipment is another reason RedTree earns employees' loyalty.

In fact, Smith says it was a driving factor for him when he chose to join the team.

"They were really my style," he says. "I've always been big on quality and keeping equipment up and trucks up and keeping

PHOTO COURTESY OF REDTREE LANDSCAPE SYSTEMS

Brothers and co-owners of RedTree Landscape Systems, Dave, right, and Pete Lucadano, have spent years building up green industry companies together.



that image alive. There's a lot of landscape companies that fall short with that."

Garland agrees, saying before RedTree, he witnessed companies giving their crews subpar equipment and expecting miraculous work.

"I've worked for companies who had stuff held together with duct tape and glue," he says. "They'd never fix anything. RedTree is constantly putting money back into the business."

Pete admits the company spends a lot on upgrading to the newest equipment and even maintaining older equipment.

"Each day we are meeting with our supervisors morning and evening to hear how the equipment performed, what needs to be taken offline and fixed, and all that," he says.

Pete adds the reason behind the investment is to ensure employees have what they need to make their jobs easier and more enjoyable.

"Equipment support is a huge factor in the green industry in terms of employee satisfaction," he says. "When you're working out in 100-degree heat on long days and you have equipment that won't run and you need certain tools and don't have them, and then go in at the end of the day and tell your employer and nothing changes — that's demoralizing."

INSPIRING POSITIVE INTERACTIONS.

Just as Pete says he hoped when starting RedTree, the support of employees has translated into satisfied customers, who appreciate the company's workforce and positive interactions with them.

"The key to growth in the green industry is happy clients," he says. "Profits will come if you do all the right things first. If you do right by your people and invest in your equipment to give your people the tools to succeed, the profits will come. It's like 'Field of Dreams.' You have to build it and then they will come. It's not the other way around."

One of those happy clients is Tish Dobson, the district manager of Vesta Property Services.

Dobson says there's been countless times she's called RedTree for assistance outside of their routine property maintenance and they've always been eager to help.

"I could have a tree go down or you name it, and they were there to help me," she says. "The professionalism is amazing

from the crews all the way on up. They're very respectful, very resourceful and very responsive."

Dobson, who manages dozens of HOAs and communities, says RedTree is great because they treat each client as an individual and seek to provide a specialized service.

"They roll out the red carpet for all of their communities," she says. "They understand the needs of every community and they work with you and within your budget.

"They modify each contract so they're unique to each community — it's not a boilerplate contract," Dobson adds. "Every community is not the same, so all the agreements have to be built around the uniqueness of them all."

Still, Dobson says some of her favorite interactions with the RedTree team have been off the clock, like when they volunteer to parade Santa around the communities during the holiday season.

She explains it all started when the firetruck she rented one year canceled last minute.

"We were two weeks out from Santa driving down the boulevard waving to kids and now I don't have a firetruck," she recalls.

Dobson says she called Pete in a panic thinking RedTree could escort Santa in a truck or something. But lo and behold, the brothers actually had a firetruck of their own they could use for the festivities.

The best part? Dobson says the RedTree team volunteered for free.

"I know what fuel costs to run a firetruck," she adds. "Since then, all the other communities want that, too. All these years,

RedTree has been parading Santa around."

The annual event is a big deal for employees, too, who gladly volunteer their time to help out.

"Their community spirit is unmatched," Garland says of RedTree. "We have the privilege of doing those Christmas hayrides and parades with Santa...I enjoy doing that stuff and look forward to it all year. To see the kids have so much fun is amazing." **L&L**

The author is assistant editor with Lawn & Landscape magazine.

MEDIUM EMPLOYER CATEGORY (50 - 99 US/CA EMPLOYEES)

Rank	Company Listing	US/CA Employees
1	RedTree Landscape Systems	79
2	Gras Lawn	58
3	The Pattie Group	55
4	Reinhart Landscaping & Snow	79
5	Chalet Landscape	80
6	Garden Design	79
7	GOLD Landscape	85
8	Green Garden Group	58
9	Heath Outdoor LLC	50
10	Coloradoscapes	59