

Top 5 Highlights from the 2017 Northeast Hardscape Expo



Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

Clad in blue jeans and baseball caps, landscape design/build professionals descended on the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence last Thursday and Friday, eager to make connections, check out new hardscape materials and learn from one another at the [Northeast Hardscape Expo](#).

Along with the competitions and booths that lined the expo floor, the attendees took part in education sessions that dove into topics such as new materials being studied at nearby universities to how to best train and retain good employees. Here are highlights from those informative sessions:

1. Permeable Interlocking Concrete Pavement

presented by James Houle of the University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center

Houle presented findings on an installation project at the University of New Hampshire that replaced a worn out, buckling drive and parking lot with permeable interlocking concrete pavement. In conjunction with the Stormwater Center, the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute, and Tighe & Bond Consulting Engineers Environmental Specialists, the installation consisted of several layers of subbase below the permeable material, which provided a drainage system. This replaced the need of having to build another drainage area such as a retention basin. After monitoring 23 rain events, the group found there was 99.97 percent drainage volume reduction. "We can say pretty conclusively that all the water that went into the system got infiltrated into the ground," Houle said. He added that research into the best maintenance methods is still needed.



Photo: Jennifer King

2. Seal the Deal with 3-Dimensional Images

presented by Brian Scanlon, landscape designer, [Scanlon Design Group](#)

Demonstrating how the use of 3-D software can help bring a client's landscaping dreams to life better than a 2-D sketch can, Scanlon showed vivid examples of his work as a landscape designer, including the "before" pictures, the 3-D renderings and the "after" pictures. Scanlon said the best thing about using 3-D imaging is the ability to show different elevations in the way flat sketches cannot. "They really made a difference in the ability for the client to visualize" the project, Scanlon said.

3. Finding, Hiring & Motivating People at the Right Time

presented by Mike Lysecki, CTO, LMN and TBG Landscape

Explaining how the company he works for, TBG Landscape, turned around their hiring woes, Lysecki provided goals for all companies to follow to get the right employees in the door and keep them motivated. Lysecki said one key is to always be hiring. "If I can find a good employee, I'll take him. Anytime of year, anytime of day," he said. The goal is to build a company that becomes a career destination, and to do this you must provide what people are looking for, such as benefits and incentives to take on more responsibilities. His company now shows each new hire a map of the different roles and exactly how to move up – down to the small details of training, such as first aid, that must be completed. He said showing employees that you will be rewarded for hard work is empowering. "Any good player is going to want to play for a company that can recognize that they're a good player," Lysecki said.

4. Operational Excellence

presented by Mike Lysecki, CTO, LMN and TBG Landscape

Understanding how much time, materials, production and more are wasted is the key to being a more successful company, Lysecki said. It starts with breaking down your production rate per employee, per hour. Lysecki said that, as an average, a wasted hour in this business equals \$100 of wasted profit, per person. So eliminating different types of waste can increase profit. If, for example, a tool is forgotten and the foreman goes back to the shop for it, and three laborers are waiting for him, that could mean at least an hour per person wasted, or \$400, he said. There are many little things like this that companies can identify to help eliminate waste. "If I could tell you one thing to make it all better I would tell you and we could all go home, but there's not. There's a thousand little things to do better," Lysecki said. An overview of some other examples of waste: movement waste, overproduction, processing and defective work.

5. The Power of Digital Marketing

presented by Paradigm Media Consultants

Amanda Brayman, social media director, and Emily Hattub, operations manager, encouraged landscape design/build companies to get to know their audiences so they know who to target and which social media platforms to use. It's also important to establish why you want to use digital marketing – is it to build your brand, or make sales? Since many companies seek to appear on the first page of a Google search, Brayman and Hattub said using content marketing, such as creating a blog for your business, can be helpful. “The number one suggestion I have, if you're not already doing it, is to link your social media accounts to your website,” Hattub said.