

5 Trends for Our Bumpy Recovery



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✖ *"Turn out the lights the party's over. They say that all good things must end. Call it tonight, the party's over ... " – The Party's Over, written by Willie Nelson and sung by "Dandy" Don Meredith*

Don Meredith was a hoot as an original member and color analyst, teaming with Howard Cosell and Keith Jackson, on ABC's Monday Night Football. As Cosell's often-irreverent sidekick, Meredith helped popularize professional football as prime time television fare. Meredith played nine seasons with the Dallas Cowboys after starring at Southern Methodist University, so he knew football. He also knew how to really enjoy himself in the broadcast booth.

Meredith ("Dandy Don," as Cosell amusedly referred to him) is best remembered by many of us for breaking into the old Willie Nelson favorite "The Party's Over" when the outcome of a Monday Night game became apparent long before the final whistle blew. Sadly, Meredith died in 2010. His party was over.

Similarly, the landscape industry has long-since swept up the confetti and streamers from its latest party. The industry prospered during the credit-fueled home-buying spending spree that lasted more than a decade before being blindsided by the '07 meltdown. Within a year or two, the project pipelines of thousands of formerly flush landscape companies began to shrink.



5 New Truck Models for Landscape Pros

Need a new truck for your landscaping business? The following five trucks, listed in alphabetical order by manufacturer, provide enough horsepower, torque and towing capacity for a variety of landscaping tasks. Find out more: www.bit.ly/YxFY00.

The housing debacle and the resulting recession have forced untold numbers of

landscape pros to reinvent their companies, which we share in this month's cover article, "Pulse of the Industry", which starts on page A10.

In addition to the industry's post-recessionary migration to landscape maintenance and lawn care, consider these five other trends that will grow as the 2013 season unfolds.

1 – Reinvigorated interest in franchising, licensing groups: A new crop of franchisors are promising support and systems to help newly established or under-performing companies successfully compete, or, in some instances, to offer additional services. Judging by the rapid growth of The Grounds Guys and LandOpt, in particular, plenty of owners are looking for help and new ideas.

2 – Full service means full service: Many landscape companies are morphing into full-service property management companies. In addition to traditional landscape services, they also offer services such as gutter cleaning, power washing, asphalt coating, etc. Many landscapers are content to take their percentage off the top after they sell the services and turn the work over to trusted subs.

3 – Communicating on the move: Smartphones and tablets aren't optional in today's business environment; they're required. Companies are using mobile technology in all sorts of neat ways, and not just to stay in contact with field crews. They're replacing clipboards, streamlining record-keeping, invoicing and also making it easier to share information (including presentations and offers) with clients.

4 – Get there, get it done and move on: GPS isn't the novelty it was a decade ago. It's become a service company must-have. Contractors are looking to companies, such as UPS and Jimmy Jones, to route more efficiently, including servicing clients furthest away from the office and working back in case something goes wrong, and creating routes with no left turns, which saves time and reduces the risk of accidents.

5 – Leaner means greener: J.P. Horizons and equipment manufacturer Ariens began promoting and teaching "lean" movement in the industry several years before the recession. What did they see that many others didn't? Their efforts almost certainly saved hundreds of landscape operations worse pain. Smart contractors are now committed to reducing waste in all its many forms – labor, procedures, materials, etc. Lean is the handmaiden of "green," which challenges contractors to design, install and maintain landscapes without squandering resources, such as energy, water and materials.



Lawn Care Issues to Prepare for in 2013

Next year will see bills covering a range of categories affecting lawn care firms – pesticide preemption, school pesticide bans, fertilizer restrictions, fertilizer preemption and efforts to define integrated pest management. To find out what's going on, go to www.bit.ly/YHaYeK.

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