

Company Name on a Pickup Not Enough

The logo for "Turf" features the word in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter 'u'.The logo for "Tree Services" is in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is positioned above the 'e' in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, italicized font.The logo for "DesignBuild" features the word "Design" in black and "Build" in orange, both in a bold, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is positioned above the 'i' in "Design".The logo for "PLOW" is in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted to the right.

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By Ron Hall/Editor-in-Chief

What a spring!

Sunshine, warm temperatures and lots of rain, and all greenery bursting out of dormancy at least two weeks earlier than normal. I can't recall a milder winter or earlier spring. The landscapers were cutting properties in my northern Ohio neighborhood the third week of March.

I've never seen so many pickup trucks pulling trailers loaded with mowers. Most of these "landscapers" are new to me. I often wonder how they attract enough clients to pay for their trucks, their mowers and their gasoline. As I write this gasoline is \$3.99 a gallon in my town.

Apart from a couple of the region's largest landscape firms, none of these operators have a noticeable presence in my region apart from a company name on their truck doors.

Most of them will be gone by next spring, but some of them will be back year after year. They mow a few properties and make a few bucks, and they're satisfied with that. They don't view property maintenance as a career but mostly as a way to add to their incomes. I'm sure some of them actually enjoy mowing the properties of their few accounts every week. It's not like they're on their mowers eight hours a day, five days a week.

Whether they realize or not, and I suspect most of them realize this: hard work alone isn't enough of a foundation upon which to build a successful company. They lack basic business knowledge, which apparently is just fine with some of them.

Yes, a lot of successful and large landscape companies were started by ambitious young guys with just a truck and a mower. But sooner rather than later they realized that they had to become business smart, too. Those are

the folks that wanted to make the landscape business a career and a lot more than a job.

So, the take-home message for any struggling newcomers to the industry reading this is pretty simple. . .

To succeed in the landscape business, like any business, you have to learn basic business principles and then come to the market with a systems-based plan. Along with being willing to put in long hours executing that plan, you also must learn to market and sell.

The company name on your trucks and word-of-mouth will only get you as far as all the other guys relying on lettering on their truck doors and word-of-mouth. And usually that's not very far.