

Daniel Plawski, Peninsula Landscaping

The logo for Turf, featuring the word "Turf" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter 'T'.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is 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, featuring the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font and "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is above the 'i' in "Design".The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted to the right.

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com



Daniel Plawski represents the new breed of landscape designers. A true millennial at age 22, he started his landscape design and maintenance business in 2011 and is already attracting the top HOAs, government facilities and small businesses in the southeastern Virginia area. He is a master at creating 3-D designs for his clients using the most state-of-the-art design software available. Wise beyond his years, Plawski studies landscaping trends and sustainability practices, as well as lives and breathes his landscaping business by putting in an average of 100-hour weeks. For example, he encourages his clients to think of year-round appeal in the landscape. "I think a property should look good 12 months out of the year, and I try to use plants that are maintenance-free," he says, adding that he likes to use ground covers, such as liriope or ivy, in his clients' beds.

Plawski believes smart landscaping is an investment that can pay huge dividends. Peninsula Landscaping maintains all the landscapes it installs, but Plawski has a passion for installing patios and outdoor kitchens. "A patio is an asset," he says. "I put myself in my clients' shoes, striving to put their money to good use."

Proudest moment in business and why: Getting my first "six-figure" design and maintenance contract with a national property manager. I presented the management team with 3-D speculative designs using design software. I showed them how reducing their mulch beds would save them thousands of dollars each year. We are now expecting to do major enhancement work, reducing their contract cost by 25 percent using low-maintenance plants and reducing beds. We plan to eliminate mowing in small and difficult areas by installing liriope. These capital improvements decrease the long-term liabilities on the property while at the same time enhancing the aesthetics of the site.

Client mix: 90% commercial, 10% residential

Service mix: 65% grounds management, 30% design/build, 5% snow and ice control

Business motto: Hard work, education and integrity

Biggest business challenge today: Getting financing. To this day, I still own all my trucks and trailers outright because I can't get approved for a loan. I'm in my early 20s, don't own a home and have never borrowed money, so all the banks are saying I don't have enough credit history. Other challenges are finding quality management with leadership skills. Just because someone is a great worker doesn't make them a great leader. Productivity of the entire crew can suffer because teamwork and efficiencies are reduced.

Best sources of landscape design/build inspiration: Whenever I travel I like to grab my running shoes and camera, taking pictures of my favorite landscapes. For example, the condos along Collins Avenue in Miami, or the villas along Las Olas Boulevard in Ft. Lauderdale have some really nice landscapes. When I return from vacation, I always have new ideas and implement them into my designs. On a recent trip to the Hamptons, I noticed almost all of the homes had hedges completely outlining their properties. This is something I have never seen in southeast Virginia. I was inspired by how the hedges made the place so beautiful. I am now using hedges in my designs to add sophistication and privacy to a landscape.

Favorite plant or plant combination: My favorite plant right now is the 'Color Guard' yucca. It has an interesting color, no maintenance and looks good all year. Other plants I like are 'Cream de Mint' pittosporum, 'Golden Mop' cypress, 'Hetz Midget' arborvitae and 'Gulf Stream' nandina. These plants are low maintenance and colorful.



Photos: Peninsula Landscaping

Monday morning motivation: I work seven days a week, so Monday is no different from Friday or Saturday. Sometimes I have to ask people if today is Monday, just to be sure. Mondays are always exciting to me because when the teams come in, something always changes. We either have a new truck, a piece of equipment, an office addition or a new training procedure.

Business worry that keeps me up at night: Worrying is a complete waste of time and energy. I sleep like a baby. When you work 100-plus hours per week, sleeping is a big luxury. Instead, what keeps me up at night is thinking about ideas I want to implement, which I add to my to-do list near my bed.

Landscape design mentor: Honestly, I don't really have one. A lot of other companies have great designs, and I spend some time online getting ideas and inspiration from them.

Favorite business or landscape design books: I recently went on a book-buying spree on Amazon, spending about \$500 on approximately 50 used books. Tony

Bass stands out as my favorite business author because his book is relevant to the trade. He taught me to work on my business and not in my business. Other business authors I like include Felix Dennis and Paul Getty.



Describe one landscape design project you've worked on that makes you smile every time you drive past it: A homeowners' association (HOA) entrance re-design that I completed free of charge. By the time I finished it, I spent about \$7,000 of my own money and was on-site almost full time for an entire week. Even though my credit cards were maxed out, it paid off. As a result, the entire neighborhood got to know me and my team. Within three months, we landscaped about a dozen homes in the HOA. Later that year, four adjacent HOAs saw the work and hired us to design their entrances, too. Now, when I drive through the neighborhood, I smile because all of the entrances look great, and the homeowners are really thankful.

Describe your business in five years: Who knows? I definitely want to do something different. I want to add more sustainable principles. Our industry is one of the least "green" industries in America. There has to be a way to change that while creating a new type of business model. I also want to connect people more with the outdoors. People spend all of their time at the office or at their home and many have lost their connection with the outdoors. We can change that by creating more practical, affordable and aesthetic outdoor living spaces. TDB

Connect with Daniel Plawski & Peninsula Landscaping:

Web: <http://www.peninsulalawn.com>

Facebook:

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Peninsula-Landscaping-Inc/525043047533334?ref=br_tf

LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/danielplawski/41/208/41b>