

Do More with Less



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Mower attachments help contractors tack on new services

Lawn and turf professionals constantly look for ways to get the most bang for their equipment buck. Whether using their pickups for plowing snow in the off-season or finding various other niches to serve, contractors are always on the lookout for new ways to make money, especially when times are tough.

However, the bread and butter of many operations, the zero-turn mower, holds a huge profit potential that often goes untapped. This workhorse costs thousands of dollars, yet many contractors are content just to have it mow. Imagine if it could tackle other tasks, like dethatching, spraying, sweeping and more. The mower could achieve a much greater return on investment, and more services could be offered to customers. Thanks to recent developments in attachments, this is all possible. It's time to start doing "mower" with less.

Playing catch-up



Some dealers are starting to exhibit zero-turn mower attachments on their showroom floors.

The thought of using a zero-turn mower as a tool carrier is not at all absurd, as this practice has long been used with other types of equipment. Consider skid steers, for instance. These machines have evolved over the years, going from simple loaders to multitasking machines, and they've gotten more expensive throughout this progression. However, contractors have been able to justify the high price of a skid steer because of the multiple tasks they can accomplish with the available attachments.

Skid steers are only the tip of the iceberg. Utility vehicles and compact excavators are other examples of machines that are now used for more than their original purposes. Even cell phones are offered with data packages and

applications that allow them to not only place a call, but also make businesses more efficient. It's about time for the mower market to play a little catch-up.

As many contractors realize, zero-turn mower attachments have actually been available for some time, but both the infrastructure and quality of products were lacking. There wasn't strong dealer support to satisfy needs, and attachments were typically offered through catalog orders only, so contractors couldn't see the product in the showroom before buying it. Virtually the only places where these items could be seen in person were farm and fleet stores, which generally carried a poor selection of amateur-quality products.



The quality of zero-turn mower attachments has improved greatly over the years.

However, manufacturer support and distributor infrastructure have seen improvement. Although the mentality of only offering products through a catalog still prevails in most dealerships, some are starting to exhibit these products on their showroom floors thanks to their improved distributor networks. Not only does this mean people can see a product before buying it, but they can also return to that dealer for warranty and service needs if they run into trouble.

You say you want a revolution

While the availability has improved, so have the attachments themselves. Finally, manufacturers are developing products that meet the high quality that lawn and turf professionals demand. And, unlike attachments that were offered in the past, the newest ones cater better to mowers. They are specially engineered to accommodate zero-turn mower designs, providing the best fit possible and exceeding expectations for performance.

In a way, the mower attachment industry has not just seen an evolution, but a revolution, as the number of available attachments has grown, including seed and fertilizer spreaders, sprayers, brooms, leaf pushers and dethatchers. Some attachments are even multipurpose, and are essentially two or more tools in one.

Not only has the number of attachments on the market grown, but the technology behind the equipment has also increased, and more thought has been put into the design of attachments to better accommodate mowers. For example, some attachments feature innovative mounting systems, which allow them to fit on almost any zero-turn mower on the market; some powered attachments are fully electric, allowing equipment like spreaders and sprayers to run completely off the mower's battery.

Additionally, steps are being taken to eliminate turf damage. To do so, some manufacturers have developed specialized tines for their dethatching attachments, helping to prevent turf gouging, whether the mower is driving forward, backwards or conducting a zero-radius turn. Also, articulating

hitches are available to accommodate the ground contour better than traditional rigid designs. This hitch style allows an attachment to pivot as the ground height changes from one end of the unit to the other. Therefore, if a dethatcher is used with an articulating hitch, for example, the tines won't tear into higher ground at one end of the attachment while floating over lower ground at the other end. Instead, the result will be an even dethatching operation.

Jobs with good benefits

The benefits of such equipment are obvious. A zero-turn mower can finally be used for more jobs, letting it achieve higher productivity and, not to mention, a better return on investment.

While the types of attachments available for mowers are also offered for other vehicles, such as UTVs, there are definite advantages to equipping them on mowers. Obviously, an operator can stay more productive using one piece of equipment rather than having to switch machines to accomplish different tasks. Also, contractors may now only need to haul one piece of equipment to a job site, saving on transportation costs. And, since fewer pieces of equipment are used, the operator has less routine maintenance to perform.



Some zero-turn mower attachments are multipurpose, such as dethatchers that can transform into sweepers.

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Low-risk takers

Even more appealing may be the low risk of expanding a business. Contractors spend thousands of dollars on machines just to mow grass, but for a fraction of that original investment, they can buy attachments and offer new services.

Obviously, providing these new services can quickly pay off the investment of an attachment, but this situation can also help contractors retain customers and even gain new business. Existing customers will no longer need to go to a competitor for other turf care needs, so they will be less likely to consider taking all of their business to another company. And, prospective customers who are looking to hire a lawn care professional will be more drawn to one who can provide full service.

Furthermore, attachments actually help some contractors justify the cost of purchasing a new zero-turn mower. Mowing services alone may not be able to provide the return on investment needed to purchase a specific machine, but when the revenue from added services is considered, the investment may seem much more feasible.



Attachments can help some contractors justify the cost of purchasing a new mower.

No matter what the scenario may be, many have been achieving newfound success by using mower attachments. With this latest trend, the professional-grade

products contractors want are now starting to be made available at the dealers they trust. With the small investment attachments require, contractors can be more efficient while also getting the return on investment they desire.

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