

Tracking for Productivity



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With the seasonal rush kicking off, landscaping businesses must prepare for the busy road ahead. Efficient processes and productive teams are crucial to maximize revenue during peak seasons.

To reduce downtime and keep operations running smoothly, business owners and fleet managers can utilize technology solutions like GPS fleet tracking. This technology is a beneficial tool for landscaping companies as it provides features that allow for complete fleet management.

Job scheduling and routing benefits

Having an effective job scheduling plan is crucial in order to keep the workday on track. With a GPS fleet tracking solution, business owners and fleet managers can automate the job scheduling process, helping to reduce errors and save time. Using a drag-and-drop scheduling tool, management can quickly create, view and assign jobs to employees – all from one screen. Once jobs are assigned, they can be sent directly to a driver's in-vehicle Garmin device or mobile application for maximum fleet efficiency.

Efficient routing allows drivers to get to jobs quicker and get more done throughout the day. Traffic congestion or road delays can slow down progresses and ultimately cut into profits. Using a fleet tracking solution, dispatchers can re-route drivers on the fly to avoid delays and get them to jobs on time. If workers have multiple stops in a day, the optimized routing feature will take those stops and organize them to create the shortest, most efficient routes to all locations, helping to increase productivity.

Better communication for better results

Effective communication between the office and field is also key when running a route business. With a GPS fleet tracking solution, employees can use an in-vehicle [Garmin](#) device or mobile application to keep the office informed.

Managers can then view those job status updates from their computers or mobile devices. A mobile app allows employees to clock in and out, report vehicle problems and update odometer readings from their smartphone or tablet.

When employees are in the field, it can be difficult for business owners and managers to track and monitor progress. Using a GPS fleet tracking solution, managers can set up geo-fences, which are virtual perimeters around specific locations. If a driver enters or exits the defined location, managers can receive instant notification. For example, if a geo-fence is set up around a job site, managers can receive alerts when drivers arrive or leave the location. This helps to ensure employees are arriving to and leaving jobs on schedule.

GPS fleet tracking technology also provides detailed information about where drivers have been and where they are going. Being able to pull fleet activity from the past can help to resolve customer disputes. Additionally, fleet managers can use this information to pinpoint drivers who continuously take long lunch breaks or drive to unauthorized areas. Having a more accurate view of fleet activity can also help to prevent employees from “padding” their hours and improve payroll accuracy.

[Landscape Concepts Management](#), a Grayslake, Illinois-based landscape contracting company with more than 366 vehicles, has improved many aspects of its business using a fleet tracking solution, including driver behavior and accountability. “The GPS solution acts as a virtual time card to verify our drivers’ accountability and jobs completed for the day,” says Kevin Stone, fleet manager for Landscape Concepts Management. “When you have a fleet of more than 360 vehicles/heavy equipment, this gives you the ability to monitor unwanted behavior among 30 sub-fleets enterprise-wide.”

Proper maintenance can help prevent equipment downtime

Maintenance is also crucial to prevent breakdowns and reduce vehicle downtime. Using an automated maintenance module with schedules, logs and reports, landscape fleet managers and business owners can keep track of maintenance and ensure vehicles are being serviced on schedule. Instant upkeep or repair alerts allow for a “set it and forget it” method.

With maintenance logs, management can track and view details of services performed to ensure policies are followed correctly. Landscape contractors can customize automated reports to generate a complete fleet maintenance data picture. Properly managing vehicle maintenance can help prolong vehicle life and keep processes running smoothly.



PHOTO: NEXTRAQ

Along with maintenance, driver behavior can have an impact on vehicle health and shelf life. Habits such as excessive speeding and rapid acceleration can increase vehicle wear and tear, leading to costly repairs at a quicker rate. With a GPS fleet tracking solution, fleet managers can monitor aggressive

driving and view detailed reports that rank drivers based on performance. Fleet managers can also set up speed alerts for instant notification if drivers exceed a user-defined speed limit or posted speed limit on a roadway. Having this type of information helps managers determine if additional coaching is necessary to improve driver behavior and extend vehicle shelf life.

Acres Group, a Chicago-based landscape company with more than 300 vehicles, has seen a significant reduction in speeding using automated speed alerts. Upon implementation, the speed alert functionality lets Acres Group know that a small percentage of drivers were exceeding posted speed limits at some point during the day. Just a couple of weeks after implementation, the speed alerts were reduced by 92 percent.

In addition to speeding and aggressive driving, excessive vehicle idling can damage engine components and lead to higher maintenance costs. With idle alerts and reports, fleet managers can identify high idling drivers and see how much money it's costing them. By reducing excessive vehicle idling, landscaping businesses not only save more on fuel, but improve the health of their vehicles.

Doug Boehm, superintendent of parks and planning for the [Homewood-Flossmoor Park District](#), Flossmoor, Illinois, saw a 95 percent reduction in both speeding and vehicle idling since implementing a GPS fleet tracking solution. With 43 employees performing park and building maintenance throughout the Homewood and Flossmoor communities, being able to efficiently monitor driver behavior has been a major benefit.

With fuel being a major operating cost for any field service business, efficiently managing the expense is important. Utilizing fuel cards and fuel card integration can streamline processes and save time for both managers and drivers. Integrating fuel card purchase data into a fleet tracking solution provides a complete view of fuel purchases, usage, efficiency and slippage. It allows fleet managers to manage all aspects of fleet fuel usage from one screen, eliminating manual processes and the need to keep track of paper receipts. Fleet managers and business owners can also see all in-network merchants in the fleet tracking solution and direct drivers to the closest ones, reducing unnecessary time on the road.

Reduce theft to reduce downtime

For landscaping businesses, any loss in vehicles or equipment can put a dent in productivity and result in expensive replacement costs. With GPS fleet and asset tracking solutions, fleet managers can view the location and activity of their assets 24 hours a day, seven days a week from any location. This is extremely beneficial for any company that leaves equipment on job sites after hours. If any asset is moved from a designated location, built-in motion sensors within the hardware will trigger an immediate alert. This helps to quickly pinpoint and recover stolen assets.

Acres Group has recovered \$30,000 worth of equipment and vehicles on more than one occasion with GPS fleet tracking. Jeff Dumas, vice president of

[Acres Group](#), has automated alerts set up so that he receives a text message if any vehicle moves before 5 a.m. This functionality allows the organization to pinpoint a theft and notify police immediately. "One of our managers was watching the vehicle's movement on the fleet tracking solution and was able to guide the police to the vehicle in time to arrest the thieves," Dumas explains.

The ability to quickly locate stolen assets and vehicles has also been a tremendous benefit for Landscape Concepts Management. "We have been able to recover \$400,000 worth of stolen vehicles and equipment. We have actually told the police where our assets are for recovery," shares Evelyn Herzog, fleet administrator for Landscape Concepts Management.

A downtime solution

For landscaping businesses, having a solution to streamline processes and reduce downtime is crucial, especially during peak seasons. GPS fleet tracking technology provides a variety of features specifically designed to help landscaping businesses improve all aspects of their operations and maximize revenue. Businesses that implement a fleet management solution can achieve ROI in as little as one month.

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