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Withholding those Snap Judgments ...

From the time we are little kids, we get trained to make instantaneous judgments. We taste the ice cream. It’s cold and sugary and gives us our first sugar high, and we judge that it is a good idea to reach for the handle on the hot pot on the stove – and we learn that touching that pan is not such a good idea.

We toddle around our mom’s kitchen while she’s cooking, and she screams “NO!” as our little hands reach for the handle on the pot of hot soup – and we learn that touching that pan is not such a good idea.

A little later on, we start getting guidance from people in school and at home about what first impressions mean. The experts tell us that within seconds, you’re assessed, boxed and judged by most people, never to recover unless repetitive future interactions somehow change the data that got registered in those first moments. So step by step, we learn that there are judgments we need to make by taking in data and having consequences occur from those actions.

For most of us who have been around through the last 20 years, the requirements for us to take in massive volumes of data to make decisions has exponentially multiplied almost beyond what we sometimes feel is within human capacity. This has caused us to make judgments on an even quicker pace than “snap judgments” used to be defined. To further complicate that, there are some personality types that naturally do this more quickly than others.

I have learned over the years that there is a very useful technique to keep from making mistakes that are sometimes hard to repair; particularly in relationships. It is very easy to lack all the data that one needs to make a snap judgment about the status of a project, the intentions of a staff member, the motives of someone around you, and to be frustrated and subsequently interact in a detrimental way. This is particularly true when you think of the volume of decisions that we are called to make within 30 minute segments on any given day.

How easy it is to start an interaction with “Where is it? Why haven’t you? Weren’t you supposed to?” I have learned that it is CRITICAL to inquire; not accuse – no matter how frustrated your current state of mind is; and if at all possible, to give it a moment before you inquire. Tone of voice and the correct phrasing of a question can preserve an important relationship for years to come and build upon that foundation. Having the information you need in order to have a full perception of what the issue, challenge, opportunity, etc. is completely changes the picture and can create a positive exchange instead of a negative one.

I find that the majority of the time people who you are regularly engaging with have every good intention of meeting your expectations. If you withhold the judgments and gather the information you need, while inquiring instead of accusing, you have an everyday solution to arriving at your company’s destination with your entire team around you – with smiles on their faces …

Judgment calls about ice cream and safety are not the same training we all need as withholding judgments. We taste the ice cream. It’s cold and sugary and gives us our first sugar high, and we judge that we want to repeat this over and over again. As we get older, we learn that we should taste the ice cream a little less often, in perhaps a little smaller quantities, or there is another price to pay for our judgment on eating it.

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Before

[Image of damaged trees]

After

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The late Freeman Maltby was ahead of his time. Maltby started using cranes for tree removal in 1950, just a year after he founded his tree company. He bought his first crane five years later, according to his son, Bill, who notes that this was “long before it was fashionable.”

Bill Maltby, now a partner in the company his dad founded, Maltby & Co. of Stoughton, Mass., recalls that in those days big trees were cut by climbers and the branches dropped to the turf, a method that could be messy, inefficient and dangerous.

“He was trying to find a safer, more effective way to remove trees,” says Maltby. “He realized that you could hang it from a crane and lower everything down with some control. Part of his thinking was to get more control coming down.”

These days, removing large and difficult trees is one of many specialties for Maltby & Co., which owns two 120-foot cranes and keeps both of them working on a daily basis. The company mostly uses them for tree removals, but will also sometimes use its cranes for planting.

“If you need to lower a new tree into a difficult spot, it’s a great way to do it,” Maltby says. His company has taken trees down over expensive properties, including moving them over greenhouses on more than one occasion.

And instead of letting the limbs and sections of trunk fall to the ground, landing in a circle around the tree, the crane will place everything in one area, for easier chipping or transport away from the site.

In the past 10 years, and particularly over the last five, the use of cranes for tree work seems to have increased greatly. Arborists find that a crane and a well-trained crew can bring in additional work and help them do jobs with greater speed, safety and versatility —as well as with less wear and tear on its manpower and the sur-

By David Rattigan
rounding environment.

“Your insurance rates can go down, you can do a lot more with a smaller crew, and the impact on the customer’s property is much less,” Maltby insists. “We can take a tree down over sensitive areas and not get the breakage that you would years ago.”

That trend can bring mixed feelings from those with experience using the cranes, and not because they’re concerned about the competition. There’s also a great concern about safety.

Safety was in the spotlight this spring in Massachusetts with two crane accidents occurring during tree take-downs. Rain-saturated ground was thought to be a contributing factor in both cases, during which the cranes tipped over and crashed to the ground.

“When there’s an accident, it’s very bad for the company and very bad for the industry as well,” says Mark Cicoria of Cicoria Tree Service, based in Danvers, Mass. “If a crane goes into a house, a company can expect to see a premium increase, but there’s also an affect on everybody’s workers’ compensation insurance.”

Of course, it’s not just the monetary cost that worries those in the tree care industry, nor the additional regulations that might come because of concern over accidents, nor concern over bad publicity that might besmirch others in the industry. The larger concern is that an employee might be hurt, or worse.

“The worst thing for a company is to have somebody injured, and most accidents are avoidable,” Maltby stresses.

Right tool, right job

Like Maltby, Cicoria’s company was one of the first in his region to begin using cranes, and has made it one of the company’s specialties. Based north of Boston in Danvers, Mass., (Maltby is south of the state’s capital city) the company founded by his brother bought its first cranes in 1985, when Mark was a high school student and working as a climber for the company.

He is now climber and crane operator, as well as president of the company, which operates four crews including one that uses a crane.

“This is an equipment-oriented industry, and there’s a right tool for every job,” he says, noting that the crane is particularly effective in suburban areas where it’s important to limit the impact on a surrounding house or yard.

“The crane is the closest to zero impact you can get,” Cicoria says, “which is good for your customers.”

Many of the tree companies that are newer to crane use are following a path similar to the one taken by Andy Felix, who has run Tree Tech, Inc. of Foxboro, Mass., for 20 years. A TCIA-accredited company, Tree Tech bought its first crane in 1997 and now runs three crane crews.

Tree removal was not necessarily a direction he planned to go in, says Felix, son of Robert Felix, the former TCIA (then the National Arborist Association) executive vice president.

“So many old trees were dying or declining and the need was so great,” he recalls. At first, he would subcontract the services of a crane and operator, but eventually the demand for crane-related tree removal was so great he decided to buy a crane for the company.

“It was all math for us,” Felix explains. As demand grew, the company added a
second crane, then a third. Other companies came to use Tree Tech as a subcontractor when they needed a crane.

“Trees don’t live forever,” Felix says. “A lot of trees planted in New England in the early 1900s are reaching the end of their life span. That’s hazardous, and they need to be removed. Also, there is more vegetation now than 100 years ago, and a lot of competition in people’s yards.”

For a variety of environmental reasons, Felix says, the white ash species also has gone into decline in the metro-Boston region.

“We knew that the tree removal part of the business was inevitable, and there was enough demand to justify this. I felt that if we were going to do tree removal, we were going to do it as well as it can be done. To do that, I knew we would be using a crane in many situations.

“It’s a lot easier on the guys, because they’re not lifting heavier pieces,” he says. “The incidence of back injuries and other injuries are reduced tremendously. Using modern equipment makes their work life easier, and I think they take pride and have more enthusiasm for the job because they’re working with modern equipment.”

Before a company decides to make the jump to purchase its own crane, Cicoria says, it should consider more than just the obvious financial factors. For some smaller companies, renting a crane and operator on an as-needed basis may make better fiscal sense.

While a crane and crew can be more productive than a crew without a crane, there are additional costs that go into running a crane, including insurance, maintenance and fuel.

“For me and other businesses my size or thereabouts, you have to have a steady flow of crane work,” Cicoria says. “If the crane sits for a day or two, you can’t recoup that.”

Having a crane may also require a com-
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“If you pick up the top of a tree 80 feet in the air, you own it,” Cicoria says. “You don’t have a second chance. If you’re working on the Big Dig (a Boston tunnel project) and you get a load you can’t lift, you can put it down. You don’t have 80 feet to travel to get your load to the ground.”

Safety first

All three arborists agree on the need for safety, and on some basic building blocks for maintaining a safe standard when working with cranes.

Bill Maltby and his brother, Bob, testified in Washington, D.C., in 2004, as the American National Standards Institute drafted new rules for crane safety and standards. He says there are certain basic rules that are keys to operating a safe work site, starting with having a well-trained and licensed crane operator, as well as a climber versed in the latest climbing techniques.

“You need a crew that is safety conscious with safety awareness,” says Maltby, a member of the Massachusetts Arborist Association Safety Committee. “There should be regular safety meetings and job site meetings.”

“Outriggers need to be properly cribbed and weight dispersed evenly on the ground, and the operator needs a stable setup before he puts the boom in the air.”

Mark Cicoria

A crew should avoid the natural tendency to arrive at a job site and go straight to work, confident in each others’ abilities, without reviewing the job and its potential dangers at the site first. “You have to ward off complacency and stay aware,” he says. “If the crew falls into action and they don’t communicate first, and just go by the feel of the job, that’s not good.”

Pre-climb preparation should also include inspection of both the equipment and the site, Cicoria explains. Inspection of the crane shouldn’t be limited to the annual inspection done by a dealer, he says, noting that at his company a crew member will look over the equipment to be sure...
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“We make sure it’s in perfect working order,” says Cicoria, who works as both a crane operator and a climber. “We don’t assume that because we used it yesterday that it’s perfect today.”

He also noted that a job site should be assessed for any potential hazards when the crew arrives for work. Among the things to check for are high winds, telephone or power lines or other obstructions up high, and soggy sod or possibly a septic tank in the ground.

“There are old tanks people don’t know about,” says Cicoria, who noted that old tanks are sometimes not removed and left empty, which can present a possible cave-in risk when a crane is set up on the ground above. “I ask the homeowner, ‘Do you have a septic tank? Where? Can I see the plans?’ ”

Lack of stability on the ground may cause the crane to tip, Maltby says.

“Outriggers need to be properly cribbed and weight dispersed evenly on the ground,” he adds. “An operator needs a stable setup before he puts the boom in the air.”

Communication among crew members, particularly the climber and the crane operator, is extremely important, adds Cicoria. The equipment may be loud, and on some jobs – such as one in which the crane is on one side of a house, a tree on the other – the operator and climber may not be in visual contact.

“We try to use headsets to be sure there’s voice communication between the climber and crane operator,” he says.

The teamwork involved is another reason Cicoria cautions small companies with a limited amount of work to consider subcontracting their crane work instead of buying a crane for a small handful of jobs each month.

“If you’re working with a crane two or three times a month, it’s much more dangerous than when you’re working with a crane crew that goes out every single day,” he says. “There’s a whole different dynamic.”

The experience of both climber and crane operator is also an important part of a successful operation. Cicoria noted that a climber working with a crane positions himself quite differently than one not working with a crane – everything that is removed comes from over his head, basi-
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cally. “Everything is going up, instead of down below him.”

One of the most important safety elements is the person running the crane. Lifting tree parts is unlike many of the other jobs done by crane operators. Most are trained on the job, and some say that the best operators are those with experience climbing.

A crane operator needs to be well versed in the work load chart, which provides an indicator of the crane’s leverage and lifting ability based on weight of the load, angle of the boom, and extension. He or she will also benefit from experience working in the tree industry.

“There are a lot of variables,” Felix says. “The weight of every tree species is different, and there’s a lot of unbalanced weight to deal with. A steel beam or air conditioning unit is always going to be the same weight, but with trees there are a lot of variables.

“Leverage is the crucial factor,” he adds. “Most problems that occur with crane accidents come when guys take too big a piece. That’s when you see accidents happen.”

Conclusion

So, are you thinking a crane might be right for your business? Remember that in addition to the cost of the crane, there is the cost of having a crew trained and dedicated to it. Do you have enough work to keep it busy? Can you afford to operate it safely? Will your workload grow fast enough to afford owning it? Would subcontracting your crane work be a better idea for now, until you build your crane business and have the crew to staff it? All good questions that only you, or your business consultant, can answer.
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Environmentally friendly handling of wooden waste can be a key issue, along with essential soil stabilization in areas that require regular maintenance. No other system can match FAE’s unique technology for ease of use and the low hourly cost of operation. This enables regular work operations with no hidden cost penalties. FAE can guarantee this high level of actual performance combined with low operating costs due to patented developments in rugged, long-life shredding tools, featuring tungsten carbide inserts, which are built to handle the extreme situations likely to be encountered in day-to-day operations.

Skid steer loader application

When it comes to managing land where tree and brush clearance is needed there are few solutions that can match FAE’s new Skid Steer Loader application. It is a purpose-built, hydraulically operated, forestry shredder unit that can be fitted to tracked and wheeled excavators as well as Skid Steer Loaders. It is designed for complete environmental maintenance, including the clearance of trees and brushwood and

*Many competitors have tried to imitate FAE’s old style tooth design. As the acknowledged leader in the heavy duty mulching industry, we have always maintained a position of being one development step ahead of our competitors, and our new style tooth design (WORLD PATENT PENDING) now completely protects the tooth holder and provides the following significant operational advantages to the user:

- Less wear to the tooth holder*
- Increased production*
- Reduced operation costs*
- Increased overall productivity*

*this information is based on a comparison of FAE’s new style tooth vs. the old style tooth.
other vegetation alongside roads and railways, including slopes and embankments, which can be difficult to maintain. It can also be used on building sites and in forestry applications to grind wooden waste and tree stumps.

**Unique Design features**

The large, new forged steel tooth* design helps minimize potential damage to the tooth holder and rotor assembly, while rapid tooth change is also facilitated. The single fitting bolt size reduces spare parts holding to a minimum and speeds up tooth changing - a clear first in mulching and shredding technologies. With our full range of shredders and mulchers the buyers of this latest FAE technology will enjoy low operating costs combined with high reliability. Such advancements grouped with a unique simplicity of operation, are reasons that FAE guarantees a clear path ahead for all its customers.

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For more information

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Grayson, GA 30017
tel. 877-FAE USA (323-8721)
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FAE's FORESTRY equipment is a clear leader in its field. It offers a perfect combination of power, technology and safety in a range designed for land reclamation and maintenance, as well as the reclamation of dirt roads, forestry trails and firebreaks.
SHURflo Electric Backpack Sprayer from Forestry Suppliers

The new SHURflo electric backpack sprayer’s advanced microprocessor pump control allows users to select one of four pump speeds in conjunction with an adjustable cone nozzle to deliver a delicate mist, high-volume spray, or long-range stream to meet any spraying need. Long-life battery will spray up to 120 gallons on a single charge, and can be charged on the unit or removed for remote charging. The sprayer features an ergonomically designed four-gallon polyethylene tank with full padding on the back and shoulder straps for comfort and less fatigue. The chemical-resistant SHURflo pump delivers a maximum pressure of 40 psi at 1.0 gpm. It has a braided PVC delivery hose and polypropylene wand with aluminum lance and adjustable brass nozzle. Contact Forestry Suppliers at www.forestry-suppliers.com.

Barko Hydraulics 305 hp mulcher

Barko Hydraulics new Model 930 Mulcher is a wheeled machine designed for demanding right-of-way projects, land clearing and site prep applications. Barko engineered this machine with an efficient 305 hp Cummins QSC 8.3L diesel engine (or optional 300 hp Deere 9.0L). Barko blended load-sensing hydraulic performance with the engine’s high torque/low rpm characteristics to lower fuel costs, minimize component wear, and reduce engine noise levels by up to 50-percent.

The 930’s power resides in a purpose-built carrier featuring heavy-plate front and rear framing, a robust center-joint section, and massive pins with double-tapered roller bearings. The carrier is sure footed for any operating conditions with a low center of gravity and balanced weight distribution. The 108-inch wheelbase provides the operator with a smooth ride, and the responsive heavy-duty hydrostatic drive and full 90-degree articulation allow for excellent maneuverability. The workstation is designed for all-day operator comfort and efficiency. The ROPS, FOPS and OPS cabin is sound insulated and pressurized for heat and air. Large tinted Lexan windows and non-glare surfaces reduce eyestrain and deluxe seat with joystick controls minimize operator fatigue. Contact Barko at (715) 392-5641.

Send your Cutting Edge Product information to: Don Staruk at staruk@tcia.org
Plastic Composites bucket work table

Plastic Composites Company has recently achieved patent pending status on a new bucket-mounted work table designed primarily as a holder for a laptop computer or other similar lightweight equipment. The durable fiberglass structure will hold any amount of weight up to the rated load capacity of the aerial man-lift device. The 19-inch square table will hold any laptop computer and various other work-assistance products, and is adjustable to fit securely on the top lip of any bucket. The product folds into a compact shape and has a handle for ease of carrying. An optional plate to hang on the inside of the bucket allows mounting various tools and supplies. When the product is then folded for transport, the tool and supply holders remain upright to prevent tools and supplies from falling out. This option does not significantly compromise the product’s compactness. Contact Plastic Composites at 1-800.747.9339 or via www.buckettruckparts.com.

Root-Zone anti-transpirant

Root-Zone from GSI Horticultural is a new solution to protect trees from water stress and transplant shock during digging, shipping and re-planting. It is the first new type of anti-transpirant technology ever developed. For years chemist and researchers have tried to create a product that would cause trees to produce excessive amounts of their own ABA to create dormancy. Root-Zone will put trees and shrubs into a dormant state within five hours and keep them there for up to three weeks or until normal watering is resumed. Claims are made about water stress and transplant shock but realistically the only effective solution is an anti-desiccant that will close the trees stomatal system. Root-Zone convinces the tree to close its own stomata naturally. It is inexpensive, easier to use, and more economical to apply than foliar sprays. Just drench soil through a drip ring or normal irrigation the day before you dig. Contact GSI Horticultural via www.gsihorticultural.com.
Arboguard appoints Tom Dunlap tree care manager

Arboguard Tree Specialists is pleased to announce the appointment of Tom Dunlap as their new tree care manager. Dunlap will supervise risk management, employee training and development for Arboguard’s extensive staff.

For more than 25 years, Dunlap owned and operated Canopy Tree Care in Minneapolis, Minn. For many years, he has served as the chair for the Program, Education and Tree Climbing Championship for the Minnesota Society of Arboriculture. He is a frequent speaker at industry trade conferences on topics such as pruning, rigging and best business practices. Inspired by the teachings of Dr. Al Shigo, Dunlap embraces the techniques and philosophy of the “modern arborists,” and has been active in teaching both the science and field skills necessary for arborists to practice modern arboriculture. He has been an ISA Certified Arborist for more than 12 years, and has given training classes in both the U.S. and Europe.

Located in Atlanta, Ga., Arboguard has 50 employees and conducts business in both Georgia and the Charlotte, N.C., area.

ServiceMaster Opt for Husqvarna

Husqvarna has received preferred vendor status for wheeled goods and been placed on the select list for hand-held products by the TruGreen LandCare and ChemLawn divisions of the ServiceMaster Co. Husqvarna will provide the lawn and garden power equipment, including commercial zero turn mowers, wide area walk-behind mowers, specialty turf equipment, chain saws, trimmers, blowers and hedge trimmers for their lawn service branches across the country.

“The newly formed partnership with ServiceMaster brings together two premium brands that provide a superior product and service solution,” says Dave Zerfoss, president of Husqvarna North America. “We are excited about the opportunity this represents for our network of servicing retailers.”

ServiceMaster currently provides outsourcing services for residential and commercial customers through a network of over 5,500 company-owned and franchised service centers and business units operating under leading brands, including TruGreen ChemLawn, TruGreen LandCare and several others.

Vermeere to be dealer for Polecat aerial lifts

Step Two Company has selected Vermeer Southeast Sales and Service, Inc. as the exclusive dealer for its Polecat aerial lifts in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Caribbean nations and Central America. Polecat lifts are utilized extensively for tree care as well as rental and facility maintenance applications.

“Vermeer Southeast is a perfect fit for us because they target the same green industry markets as our lifts do and they will provide local parts and service at their 13 locations in the Southeast and Caribbean along with a fleet of mobile service trucks,” says Gabriel Villabon, Step Two president.

Kris DenBesten, Vermeer Southeast president, said: “We are always looking for opportunities to better serve our customers. By combining an outstanding product such as Polecat, and with excellence in sales and service support, we believe this partnership will prosper and that our customers will be the ultimate benefactors.”

Dave to train HMI field assessors

The Davey Tree Expert Company has agreed to create a comprehensive training program for green industry professionals to become authorized Horticultural Asset Management, Inc. (HMI) assessors. HMI assessors will provide critical information on the type, size and condition of woody trees and shrubs for the purpose of creating replacement valuations on those assets for insurance, tax and real estate applications.

Davey’s flagship training program, the Davey Institute of Tree Sciences, was founded in 1908 and has graduated thousands of students in a multitude of programs covering tree care, hazard evaluation, insect and disease management, tree identification, tree physiology and plant health care. Roger Funk, Ph.D., vice president and general manager of The Davey Institute, says that all of Davey’s training programs are designed to give the hands-on training and technical knowledge that will be useful in the field.

“The potential that HMI’s program offers the green industry is very exciting and Davey is proud to be supporting its development,” said Funk.

“We couldn’t ask for a better partner to provide the critical content necessary to prepare our field assessors to support our program,” says HMI COO Doug Cowles. “I’m very happy to have their resources and expertise creating this content for us, and as a member of HMI’s PLM network, we are also fortunate to have Davey’s experts providing services to our customers.”

Davey will participate in HMI’s Premier Level Member network. The PLM network is a critical component of HMI’s comprehensive plan to support insurance, casualty loss, and valuation services for all residential and commercial property owners.
Two Worlds of Arboriculture: The Maryland Story

By Peter Gerstenberger

On April 25, Governor Robert Ehrlich of Maryland signed Senate Bill 123 into law, which alters the qualifications and the testing requirements for licensure as a tree expert (LTE) in that state. The emergency measure -- called that because it automatically expires in a year -- provides a grandfathering clause for existing businesses that have been engaged as tree experts for the past three years. The measure became effective immediately, and almost as quickly began to shine a light on a growing chasm between the stereotypical professional arboriculture firm and a growing underground tree care trade.

The Maryland LTE law has a legacy. As far as the local arborists are concerned, the Maryland LTE law is one of the toughest consumer protection laws in the U.S. Going back decades, the law has revoked licenses, assessed fines, even threatened recalcitrant tree guys with jail time for failure to abide with one or more of its consumer protection requirements. The new LTE bill was enacted to provide relief to a specific segment of the arboricultural community. Tree removal companies cried foul when a law passed last year brought “tree removal” under the auspices of the LTE law for the first time. That bill provided no grandfathering clause and only limited opportunities for compliance for existing businesses. Truthfully, at issue was having to take a written exam.

The new law allows tree experts in existing businesses to obtain their LTE without having to take the Tree Expert Exam provided they can prove that for at least three years immediately preceding the date of application they have been engaged continuously in practice with or as a tree expert in Maryland or in another state.

The grandfathering provision sunsets on May 31, 2007.

Businesses seeking to avoid test-taking must provide evidence of their legitimacy by providing tree business income tax returns for the prior three years and any one of the following items for the tree expert business: a liability insurance certificate; a business registration filing; a binder or certificate of insurance for Workers’ Comp or a Workers’ Compensation Commission Certificate of Compliance; and carry and show proof of property damage and liability insurance.

Within a month and a half of the law’s passage, the Maryland DNR evaluated 48 applications for Tree Expert license submitted under the new provisions. Only 13 percent were complete as submitted.

The rest were not approved because of one or more deficiencies in their documentation. One must keep in mind that this statistic only reflects businesses that voluntarily came forward to try to claim legitimacy. It is difficult to estimate how many others may have remained in the shadows. Several well-connected practitioners in the state estimate that 60 percent of their competition is unlicensed.

The DNR is now getting second and third submissions from SB 123 applicants. As of mid-June, 12 persons have been approved under SB 123, with half meeting the requirements in the first submission and half in the second.

Maryland has approved more applicants and issued more LTEs than in any year in the law’s 17-year historic record except 1998, when they had a run of examinees trying to get in before a new and much tougher exam was implemented. DNR issued 141 licenses that year, and by comparison have 78 to date this year, with one more exam and more SB 123 applications pending.

Some LTEs have asserted that the LTE program focuses most of its enforcement efforts against licensed versus unlicensed practitioners. To the contrary, since they began tracking in 1995, DNR in fact had 66 guilty findings against unlicensed practitioners, compared to 48 against LTEs. They had 13 criminal convictions against unlicensed practitioners from 1995 through 2001. However from 2002 to the present they had 53.

On one hand, the Maryland story is one in which both regulators and the regulated have worked in concert to improve a profession, and it is therefore a story of success. On the other hand it illustrates how profound a problem there is with illegitimate and quasi-legitimate practitioners in a profession striving for legitimacy.

We are sure Maryland is not at all unique with this problem, but what is unique is what they are doing about it. There are Maryland tree care professionals who decry this “amnesty,” and with some justification. They worked hard to obtain and maintain their LTEs. TCIA empathizes with this view while it supports the measure because it begins to make an “invisible” segment of this industry visible and hold it to a higher standard.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.
The Massachusetts Arborists Association celebrated Arbor Day with their 27th annual volunteer project at Castle Hill in Ipswich, Mass., on Friday, April 28. A record-breaking 300 MAA members pruned, planted, transplanted and removed an amazing array of mature shade trees throughout one of the state’s most scenic & historic properties – all set against some of Massachusetts’ most spectacular ocean views.

This is the third year that the MAA has partnered with The Trustees of Reservations for their annual Arbor Day Celebration. The MAA was recently honored with the Trustees’ Volunteer of the Year Award. Since 1891, The Trustees’ conservation work has helped to protect more than 53,000 acres of open space across the state.

“We can’t thank all the arborists enough for the fabulous day of work,” said Augusta Stanislaw, Landscape Committee chair. “You all did a wonderful job and left Castle Hill looking so much better than when you arrived. The machinery was awe-inspiring, the pruning beautifully done, the replanting a huge help and the cleanup was superb. It was an enormous step forward in our ongoing plans for rejuvenation and restoration of this precious landscape, so thank you all so very much!”

Dan Mayer, MCA of Mayer Tree Service in Essex, Mass., a TCIA member, served as chairman of the MAA’s 2006 Arbor Day committee. He was assisted by committee co-chair Jim Abusamra, MCA of Hartney Greymont, Inc., Needham, Mass., another TCIA member, and other MAA leaders.
3 MYTHS
About TCIA Accreditation

1. TCIA Accreditation is only for large companies
   This is one of the biggest myths. TCIA Accreditation is designed to work for companies of all sizes. In fact, if you are a small to medium size business you may actually see a larger return on your investment. What is true... If you want to become a more profitable company, this is an excellent place to start.

2. TCIA Accreditation is too difficult to complete
   You may be pleasantly surprised. In fact, you may already meet most of the requirements. What is true... The Accreditation process is carefully structured so that you will have access to many tools, resources and association staff that will help guide you through the process.

3. I don’t have enough time to complete the program
   You have the ability to complete the program at your own pace. Some companies have completed the program in one month while others chose to fulfill the requirements over several months. What is true... When you apply for Accreditation, you are investing time to become more professional and strategic. More importantly, you are setting your company up for future success!

Are you ready to take your company to the next level?
Call 1-800-733-2622

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Earlier this year, on an insect-collecting trip to Florida, I noticed unusually high numbers of eastern tent caterpillars, Malacosoma americanum, between Maryland and Georgia. Almost every small stand of black cherry or choke cherry along Interstate 95 was festooned with ugly tents. In southern Maryland these tents were small, about the size of a cell phone. As I proceeded further south, where tent caterpillars had hatched weeks before, tents were as large as basketballs and large and small trees had been stripped of leaves. This was a harbinger of a season of evil.

In Maryland, tent caterpillars have reached the highest levels we have seen in the past several years. Entomologists believe that eastern tent caterpillar populations run in cycles. After a few years of caterpillar plague, natural enemies such as predators, parasites, and pathogens reduce the tent caterpillars to innocuous levels. Some have suggested that repeated defoliation may reduce the quality of a plant’s leaves as food for caterpillars, thereby contributing to the tent caterpillar’s demise. In some years and some locations, eastern tent caterpillar and its close relative, forest tent caterpillar, reach phenomenal levels and completely defoliate trees. This may contribute to the collapse of tent caterpillar populations as caterpillars run out of food and starve to death.

The forest tent caterpillar, Malacosoma disstria, is a close relative of our eastern tent caterpillar. Its name is a misnomer because it builds no tent at all but, instead, forages freely on the leaves of many hardwood trees such as oak, maple, birch, ash, tupelo and elm. These caterpillars are easily distinguished from one another. When newly hatched, eastern tent caterpillar is almost pure charcoal gray. As it feeds and grows, it has a distinct white line down the center of its back. The forest tent caterpillar has a row of keyhole-shaped spots on its back.

The life cycles of eastern and forest tent caterpillars are quite similar. The life cycle described herein is typical for a location such as Maryland (Hardiness Zone 7). States further south or warmer locations at lower elevations will witness life history events earlier in the season and states to the north or at higher elevations will experience these events later in the growing season.

The winter is spent as a quiescent larva inside an egg with as many as 350 brothers.
Eastern tent caterpillars hatch from dark brown egg masses at bud-break on their food plants. This is near the time of bloom for boarder forsythia.

and sisters nearby in the egg mass. Tent caterpillars are among the earliest of all caterpillars to hatch. They do so in late winter and early spring. The beginning of egg hatch correlates well with the blooming of border forsythia. For those who count growing degree days, this event usually coincides with about 100 degree days with a base threshold of 50 degrees and a March 1 start date. This early date of hatching ensures that larvae will have a tasty crop of tender, highly nutritious leaves to eat.

Larvae build small silken tents over the egg mass, the surrounding branch, and a cluster of young leaves. From this bivouac they move along the branch to find newly expanding leaves. When they discover branches with rich sources of leaves, they use chemical markers and trails of silk to alert brothers and sisters of their find and direct them to the larder.

As larvae grow during March and April, tents expand and are relocated. Eventually tents will be constructed in the crotches of large branches or where branches join the trunk. Their silken homes are remarkable structures. They are multilayered and provide protection from predatory and parasitic insects. Temperatures inside the silk tents can be several degrees higher than ambient air temperatures. This enables caterpillars to elevate their body temperature for more rapid growth and development during chilly spring days.

These hairy caterpillars have a voracious appetite and can strip even large trees of their leaves when many tents are present. After the caterpillars have completed development or when the natal tree is devoid of leaves, a mass exodus occurs and larvae wander the land. They will eat leaves of other trees and, when fully grown, seek protected spots beneath logs, leaves, stones, and under man-made structures to spin yellowish or white, silken cocoons.

In Maryland, adult eastern tent caterpillars emerge as moths from their cocoons in June or July, mate and lay eggs on pencil-sized branches of primarily rosaceous trees such as black cherry, choke cherry, apple and crab apple. Eastern tent caterpillars have been reported eating a wide variety of trees in addition to those already mentioned, such as ash, birch, black gum, willow, maple, oak, peach and plum. I often am surprised to see egg masses and tents in cherry laurel, until I recall that this is in the same genus as our native cherries.

Egg masses of both eastern and forest tent caterpillars are composed of 150-350 eggs embedded in a matrix of spumaline, a dark brown polymer made by the female moth. It has the appearance and texture of Styrofoam. These eggs house the future generation of caterpillars that will emerge with the bloom of forsythia next spring.

How serious is the threat posed by eastern tent caterpillar? This depends who you are or who you ask. In rural settings, eastern tent caterpillars are most common and cause most of their damage to cherry trees in hedgerows and along roadways. Although the tents are unsightly, after a spring stripping trees produce a second crop of leaves and their beating will be more or less undetectable by mid-summer. While trees may recover and produce a second flush of leaves, repeated defoliation probably reduces their vigor. This may predispose them to attack by other pests.

In residential landscapes, the presence of ugly tents, defoliation of specimen plants, and wanderings of large hairy caterpillars may be more than a client will tolerate. Circumstances such as this may demand some type of intervention. Fortunately, companies with IPM and PHC programs have several options available including non-insecticidal ones. Recall from the pre-
So which caterpillar is it, anyway?

This spring, populations of gypsy moths, cankerworms and tent caterpillars reached the highest levels in recent memory in several states up and down the east coast. Exactly why these leaf-eating machines are on the rise, no one knows for sure. What we do know is that several species of caterpillars gain more than one thousand times their birth weight before they are done eating. This is equivalent to a seven-pound baby weighing more than a minivan when fully grown. In the process, trees may be completely stripped of leaves. It is not unusual to find several species of vernal caterpillars on the same tree. A picture taken in early May in Maryland revealed three gluttons on a single tree. Starting at 12 o’clock and moving clockwise, rogues in this gallery include a mid-instar gypsy moth caterpillar, fully grown light and dark forms of the fall cankerworm, and a fully grown forest tent caterpillar.

vicious discussion that tent caterpillars spend the majority of their life in the egg stage on small branches of their host. My observation has been that eastern tent caterpillars will return to the same tree or nearby host trees year after year. Trees that had a tent in them last year are the first ones I inspect to find egg masses or tents in the following year. Observant technicians will have no trouble detecting the dark brown egg masses during routine inspections, especially on small specimen trees. The egg masses are easily removed with a pinch of the fingers or, if you are a bit squeamish about touching bugs, simply get out your snippers and prune them out. As the tents enlarge and move to the crotches of the tree, tents and their inhabitants can be removed with a gloved hand or pruner on a cool day. Be sure to place the tent and the caterpillars in a bag and destroy it. The old school remedy of “burning them out,” though dramatic, went out with the storming of Frankenstein’s castle. Flames are very damaging to the bark of a tree and should never be used. Some arborists recommend removing native cherry trees from hedgerows and unmanaged areas. This may reduce the source of tent caterpillars.
NEW!
Abacide 2™
TWICE the Abamectin!

100 %
Control of
Eastern
Tent
Caterpillar

2004 University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture study to prevent
Mare Reproductive Loss Syndrome
(M.R.L.S.)
(http://www.hamseslink.com/www/Article.asp?ID=36511)

Also controls
Spider Mites,
Leaf Miners, Elm Leaf Beetle,
Sycamore Lace Bug,
& other Lepidoptera Insects such as
Fall Web Worm!

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available to invade nearby trees in managed landscapes near the property of your client.

A new threat associated with eastern tent caterpillar surfaced in 2001 in the Ohio Valley region of the United States when tent caterpillars reached large numbers on cherry trees on horse farms. As caterpillars migrated from trees into the grass below, they were accidentally consumed by grazing horses. Many pregnant mares that ate caterpillars spontaneously aborted their foals. The resultant losses to the horse industry were in the hundreds of millions of dollars. This phenomenon has been termed “Mare reproductive loss syndrome” or MRLS and is now suspected or confirmed in several eastern states. The likely mechanism for the disease is as follows.

Recall that eastern tent caterpillars are remarkably hairy. After being thoroughly munched and swallowed, hairs on the insect’s body break off and hairs or their fragments puncture the cells of the mare’s digestive tract carrying bacteria with them. These bacteria establish infections in the horse’s reproductive system. The infection results in the abortion of the foal. MRLS has provided an added impetus to find new ways to reduce populations of eastern tent caterpillars and limit exposure of horses to nasty caterpillar hairs. Professor Daniel Potter at the University of Kentucky and his colleagues are leading this effort.

Professor Potter has found that a new formulation of abamectin with high concentrations of active ingredient provided very high levels of control of eastern tent caterpillars. The higher doses are necessary as previous research indicated variable levels of control with lower doses of abamectin. Abamectin is a nerve poison derived from a soil microbe that is systemic and can be injected into the vascular system of the tree through the bark.

Spinosad is a fermentation product of a naturally occurring microorganism. It affects the nervous system of the insect causing paralysis and death. Tebufenozide is an insect growth regulator that causes abnormal molting in caterpillars – bad molt, dead bug.

Btk, spinosad, and tebufenozide are applied as foliar sprays with conventional sprayers. They are considered to be relatively benign to beneficial insects and sound components of IPM and plant.
CLIMB WITH THE BEST

From the makers of the world’s first lightweight chain saw comes the new Jonsered top handle saw CS 2135T.

Designed exclusively for the professional arborist, this compact powerhouse delivers 2.0 DIN hp from a powerhead less than 8 pounds, making easy work of those hard to reach places.

Born from over 50 years of manufacturing excellence and sold and backed by local authorized Jonsered dealers... because professional equipment should have professional parts and service support.

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health care programs. In a recent study, Dan Potter found the synthetic pyrethroid, bifenthrin, to be highly effective in controlling eastern tent caterpillar in all stages.

For many reading this article, it is too late to apply insecticides to control tent caterpillars this year. At best these applications would be revenge, and at worst a waste of time, money and innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire. Now may be the time to educate your clients, mark your trees, schedule your inspections, and develop a battle plan for next season.

For more information on eastern tent caterpillars, visit the following Web sites.

- [www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/entfacts/trees/ef423.htm](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Entomology/entfacts/trees/ef423.htm)
- [www.ca.uky.edu/gluck/mrls/2006/info%20page/041906Insecticide.htm](http://www.ca.uky.edu/gluck/mrls/2006/info%20page/041906Insecticide.htm)

Michael J. Raupp is a professor of entomology and extension specialist at the University of Maryland at College Park, and is affectionately known by many there as “the bug guy.”

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**Spill Responder Kits**

When working with pesticides, fertilizers and commercial motor vehicles, minor spills and drips occur. When surprised by a leak, your preparations will determine the extent of the incident. Training is not enough. Preparedness involves having the right equipment at hand when needed. For service vehicles, equipment needs usually occur in the field. TCIA has configured spill responder kits that will fit behind truck seats for easy access and storage. Kit components provide both tools and PPE that will be needed to begin taking action as a first responder. An Inventory Maintenance and Restocking Guide is included to ease administration and maintenance.

**Pesticide Spill Responder Kit**

- **Price:** $129.95 (TCIA Member price: $118.95)
- For vehicles transporting or applying pesticides. Absorbs approximately 65 gals.
- (Please call for custom configurations or fleet prices.)
- Call 1-800-733-2622 or order online at www.tcia.org
The Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) program is receiving broad-based support and acceptance in the industry. In less than four months, it boasts 117 individuals enrolled from 75 companies in 28 states.

The new certification program is receiving high marks from safety professionals as well. Here are just two of the comments that TCIA recently received:

“Your development of a [safety] certification and recertification program is what we believe to be a major step in the right direction. We would be honored to serve on the CTSP Council of TCIA.” – Alan McMillan, CEO, National Safety Council

“I think the Study Guide does give an excellent perspective on looking at the ‘big picture’ and what is needed to develop a safety program. Whoever worked on it did a commendable job.” – Allan Fraser, safety supervisor, Lewis Tree Service and NSC Certified Utility Safety Administrator

The first two CTSP certification workshops are scheduled to be convenient and cost-effective for those attending either the ISA Annual Conference or TCI EXPO:


CTSP Workshops may be attended by all interested parties; however, to accommodate hands-on learning, registration will be limited, with preference given to enrolled students – and there will be no on-site registration. The fees, whether one takes the exam or not, are $295 early bird TCIA member/$329 regular member/$445 early bird non-member/$489 regular non-member.

Most of the enrolled CTSP candidates have probably read the Core Competencies Study Guide and completed one or more of the Critical Thinking Exercises. All the exercises must be satisfactorily completed and submitted to TCIA to be eligible to attend a CTSP Workshop and sit for the Certification Exam.

Make sure you or your employees take time in the busy summer months to enroll in CTSP and complete its prequalification requirements. Call or e-mail Peter Gerstenberger, at peter@tcia.org, for more information.

In other CTSP news, during a very fruitful full-day meeting May 22, the CTSP Council crafted much of the program’s policy and procedure. More detailed information will be forthcoming in future issues.

CTSP Enrollment by State

May 31, 2006

Total in
each region

GRAND TOTAL: 117

12 Pacific
1 Rocky Mountain
2 Southwest
34 Midwest
20 Southeast
48 Northeast

Tree Care Industry – July 2006 33
It seems there are about as many stump cutting solutions as there are stumps these days, which is probably a good thing. That means tailoring the tool to the job, from the smallest walk-behind for the quick jobs to the land clearing beasts that make surprisingly short work of big jobs. Anyone who’s been in the business for more than a few seasons has seen the stump cutter’s evolution in two ways: engineering and safety. Interestingly, while both drive up the cost of a cutter, each also has short- and long-term capability of making money and saving money, which is good news for the bottom line. For example, an operator who is capable of working more hours in an environment away from the cutter, one that has greater freedom from dust and flying debris and that allows him or her the ability to better view the work at hand, is likely to be more productive over longer periods of time.

From an engineering perspective, the first big challenge has always been to pack as much punch as possible – power plus versatility – into a compactly designed unit that will squeak through the proverbial 36-inch-wide garden gate.

After that, there’s the issue of safety, largely driven by government regulations and insurance costs, of course, but also practicality. Hence, the rise in things such as the first and ol’ reliable safety screen. And, today, there are three generations of remote controls, which can exist side by side. For the record, those controls are the remote joystick – or rocker switch in some cases, the wired or tethered remote, and the new radio controlled remote. All are dedicated to keeping the worker away from the work while also allowing for maximum visibility and therefore safe control. This is very important as the speed and automation of the stump cutter universe continues to expand.

Tree Care Industry caught up with John Bird, vice president of J.P. Carlton Co., in the midst of a brisk selling season. The company makes a full line of stump cutters from the 13-hp push-type (typically found in rental agencies) to the 250-hp land-clearing, track-mounted behemoths. “The trend in the industry in the past five years has been to higher-horsepower, self-propelled stump grinders,” Bird says.

“Traditionally,” he says, “larger jobs and stumps were left to the large horsepower towables. With the introduction of high-horsepower, self-propelled types, I find customers are trading in their tow-behinds and small self-propelled for a single high-horsepower self-propelled wheeled or track machine.”

Another trend is in the area of remote controls, tethered and wireless, which join
the lever-type. Sometimes they’re options, sometimes they’re standard equipment. When it comes to the radio controlled types, keep in mind there are two types – wireless and proportional wireless.

Remotes versus the traditional behind-the-screen lever-type controls allow the operator to operate at a further distance – away from dirt, flying debris and noise. The intended result is a safer environment, less wear and tear on the operator and more efficient (faster, more accurate) work due to an improved vantage point.

Bird says that Carlton pioneered the concept of the remote-controlled stump grinder and explained that the difference in the radio or wireless types lies in the ability of the basic wireless to control the machine once its speed is set, while the proportional type allows the operator a finer measure of control at the hand-held device.

The Carlton controls include a 25-foot wired remote and both wireless types with ranges of up to 150 yards. Carlton machines come with lever controls standard, with the wired or wireless versions as options. The most popular right now is the Carlton SP7015TRX, a self-propelled track unit with wireless remote as standard. It also includes the ability to narrow to 35 inches wide for the ride through the gate and to quickly expand to 48 inches for stable positioning.

Another featured machine is the Hurricane model, standard radio-controlled, with a full 360-degree radius capable of cutting a 19-foot (wide) path while advancing forward.

Erika Harwood handles marketing for Rayco Manufacturing, Inc., and her take is that, “Right now a self-propelled (unit) with lots of horsepower that can still fit through a 36-inch gate is the majority of what people are looking for and hot on the market.”

For example the company’s RG35 Super Junior replaced a predecessor with a bit less punch.
first stumpers about two years ago, starting with a small self-propelled type and has been adding models all along the way.

The line starts with the “handlebar,” gas-powered 13 to 20 hp devices, manual push and self-propelled. There’s also a 4-wheel drive unit, Model 2100, with a 21-inch cutting wheel. There are versions in gas and diesel (gas 25, 27, and 35 hp; diesel 26.3 and 34 hp).

Eluskie says radio remotes are available on smaller Bandit Model 2100 machines. They’re capable of motivating the units forward and backward and activating expandable frame versions. The cutting wheel is manually engaged on those machines as is the throttle, all else (sweep and reach) is remote.

With remotes, he says, “Standing behind a stump cutter throwing dirt and debris versus in front at a 45 angle is a huge difference. You can see a lot better and not get pelted by material or breathe in dust.”

The Bandit remote range is advertised at 100 feet, but they do go further, Eluskie notes.

Eluskie’s perspective is that the radio and tether remotes (corded plug-ins) are two of three remote systems, if you think

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about it. The electric panel on Bandit cutters has switches to run the machine in the event the radio or tethered remotes are lost, broken or forgotten back at the shop.

Next up from the Model 2100 are the Bandit tow-behind and self-propelled versions, a 28-inch, fully hydrostatic drive, available with swing-out panel or radio option. Eluskie says the redesigned self-propelled unit is a bit smaller and yet has a lot of torque. Radio remote is standard but deductible. He explained that the manual controls feature manually controlled valves and radio/electronic feature electronic valves. This means that one cannot be up or downgraded without significant expense. Therefore it’s best to specify which system you prefer up front.

One thing that Bandit has been working on is accessibility of the stumper’s components for repair and maintenance. One downside to high-power, feature-laden cutters that can get through that gate is that everything has to be built compactly. That means it can be tough to get at parts and pieces for repair and refurbishment. Bandit has designed a pivoting hydraulic tank so that you can get at hoses and do general maintenance more easily.

On the Model 2800, the remote is more sophisticated. This one controls everything but turning on the machine – wheel engagement, throttle, propulsion, etc. Look for safety features like two-switch engagements, a sort of kill switch that won’t engage the unit if the operator accidentally bumps a switch. “You have to push up on one, and down on another,” Eluskie says.

Models also include the diesel-powered 2900, a mid-size with expandable track. It goes through the gate at 35 inches and expands to 53 inches for stability. After that, Bandit jumps to the Model 3200 available as towable or track machine. It’s designed for light land/lot clearing. The tow-behind is available with or without radio; the track version is strictly radio remote. Figure about $50,000, according to Eluskie.

The new 3400 is now the top-of-the-line land-clearer, powered by a 140 hp Cat engine. It’s strictly radio remote. A 200 hp John Deere version was just added. Up and coming is a John Deere 275 hp model. Testing was in late June prior to a July launch. On through the gate models, Bandit expects to have a 100 hp version by this fall.

Jeff Craft, president of Miller Machine Works in Frankfort, Indiana, says his company offers an extensive line of high performance, attachment-style stump cutting machines. In business for more than 20 years, the company specializes in what he terms “super high-quality, full-race equipment.”

The Miller line is actually several product lines for tractors, skid steer loaders and large forestry tool carriers. The company’s niche is intended to address the “rapid movement to attachment-style stump machines with powerful, proven and patented work tools using a tractor or loader as a tool carrier,” Craft says.

“The successful tree care companies are mechanizing manual labor tasks with one common tool carrier,” Craft says. “Lower overall costs, the ability to reduce labor costs and overall job time are the results of attachment-style stump grinders.”

Miller offers tractor mounts at $6,000 to $10,000 for 50- to 150-hp tractors, and skid steer, hydraulic-driven units at $10,000 intended to replace dedicated engine-driven units costing many times more. In addition, the company makes the larger 200 hp Titan line timber units at $20,000 to $30,000.

New products include mid-size 130- to 175-hp Titan series grinders for both hydraulic and mechanical PTO-drives, to go with the 130 hp machine/tool carriers currently being released. Plus on the drawing boards there are several attachments for an anticipated market for excavator grinders. These will be in the 100- to 250-hp class for hydraulic drive, stick-mounted units.

Fecon Inc. is known for industrial-strength stump grinder attachments, “built for the serious contractor,” as well as other devices, such as stone crushers. The mission of these types is to save time and to
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Stump cutter wheels are changing, too

“Visibility is definitely a key issue as we pack more horsepower into the stump cutter frame, especially as you start to see in tight spots,” says Joe Leonardi, vice president of Leonardi Manufacturing, maker of the Phantom wheel for stump cutters. “With a traditional wheel, as you stand to one side, you cannot see what’s going on behind the wheel. The Phantom Wheel lets you see through the wheel,” he says, noting that the concept is part safety and part efficiency.

“As Leonardi explained it, as the cutter swings away, if the operator can’t see if the cutter is doing a one-inch or a three-inch cut, and the new higher horsepower stumpers are more than capable of doing a three-inch cut every time, it’s a matter of productivity to be able to see through the wheel as it cuts. It’s a matter of allowing the operator to see obstacles, and it is also part of the whole thing about efficiency.”

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create new profit opportunities in the field. The SH (Stump Hog) models are designed for most brands of high-performance, high-flow skid steers, loaders or forestry gear.

Units with the EX model nomenclature suffix are intended to reach difficult areas and cover larger work zones by mounting on excavators and other boom-type equip-

ment. The Stump Hog features popular cutting wheels from 24 to 40 inches.

At the very high end is the SH700, introduced last December. It’s a diesel-powered, self contained attachment that will turn any 30-metric-ton or larger excavator into a severe duty commercial stumper.

In March, Fecon introduced the SH340, an excavator-based stump grinder featuring a 33-inch wide by 4½ inches thick disk (Sandvik Dura Disk™ system) aimed at reaching up and down slopes and into other areas inaccessible to traditional stump grinding equipment.

Vermeer Manufacturing is known as one of the pioneers of the stump cutting technology and offers a broad range of stumpers. At the smaller end is the SC90, a 9-hp, mower-sized unit capable of decimating stumps up to 3 feet in diameter, followed by a 13 hp walk-behind.

Vermeer’s SC252 stump cutter is a 27 hp, self-propelled unit with the Vermeer optional AutoSweep system engineered to increase productivity and reduce drive train wear and tear. Dual-drive wheels are also available.

The SC352, with characteristics similar to the SC252 that preceded it, is aimed at contractors who need power for right-of-way clearing and versatility, and lightweight features that lend the unit to the backyard challenge. It features 35 hp and AutoSweep.

Vermeer also offers the SC602 a 60 hp diesel cutter for tough jobs. At 62½ inches it won’t clear the gate, but the SC60TX with the same CAT 3024CT diesel will. The line also includes the SC802 with a 78-horse Deutz turbo diesel, AutoSweep and optional wireless remote, and the SC1102A, a Cummins-powered (Tier II), 110 hp AutoSweep-controlled system for high-production applications.

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Strategies to Improve Your Bid-Hit Ratio

By George Hedley

“IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO COMPETE IN THIS TIGHT MARKET.”

“There's always too much competition.”

“I can't find any profitable jobs to bid.”

“The only way I get any jobs is when we leave too much money on the table.”

“I get tired of cutting our bids to beat the competition.”

“How can we ever make enough money to survive?”

Do these quotes sound familiar? I have been hearing the same complaints since 1977, when I first started my general contracting company. It seems as if nothing changes as contractors continue doing business the same way. But a select few successful contractors and subcontractors seem to get more than their fair share of the profitable projects over the years. What do they do differently?

Bid like you fish!

Before you go fishing, you need a license. Your bid is like a license to go fishing as well. Fishing for an opportunity to negotiate and land a great contract. When you fish, your goal is to catch the big one, so you set out to find an abundant fishing hole and cast out your bait – hook, line and sinker. When looking for great companies to bid to or profitable projects to bid on, you also seek out opportunities that will give you the best chance to make the most money. When you finally catch a fish, you reel it in, weigh it, and decide if you want to keep it. After you submit a bid and get the call to cut your bid or match a better price to get the job, it is your choice to accept their offer as well.

When you go fishing and they aren’t biting, what do you do? You try different fishing techniques, change your bait, or move on to another fishing hole. This is not what contractors typically do when they don’t land enough contracts. Most contractors just keep bidding to the same customers over and over, using the same bait and proposal strategies as they’ve always used. Contractors often think if they bid enough jobs to the same companies or entities, the same way, eventually they’ll get their share. This effort won’t get you the positive results you want. As in fishing, you must change your estimating and bidding strategies to get the big ones to bite more often. You have to use the right tackle, different techniques, and tastier bait to get the fish to think your bait is better than your competition, or look for better fishing holes.

Bid-hit ratio

When I present my “Profit-Driven Estimating & Bidding” program at conventions or company meetings, I ask everyone what their Bid-Hit ratio is. Most business owners, estimators, and project managers don’t have a clue what their ratio is. In a survey I conducted of more than 2,000 general contractors, subcontractors, and design-build companies, less than 6 percent know and track theirs. To me, this is like going fishing and not really caring if you catch any fish!

Bid-Hit ratio is the rate at which you successfully bid or propose on projects. For example, a 5 to 1 Bid-Hit ratio states for every five jobs you bid or propose on, you are awarded only one. Do you know what yours is? Do you keep track? What should it be?

I have asked more than 5,000 general contractors, builders, and subcontractors what they think a good Bid-Hit ratio should be. Their responses vary from a perfect 1 to 1 to a poor ratio of 35 to 1. Which is the best ratio for you? Obviously, the lower the ratio, the better. But, the right ratio is what works for your company.

Companies that negotiate lots of work tend to have lower Bid-Hit ratios. They also require additional overhead expenses for marketing, sales, pre-construction services, customer development, and public relations. Companies that procure most of their work from public works jobs, or regularly bid against a long list of competitors, have higher Bid-Hit ratios. But, they generally have more estimators on staff, which offsets the fewer marketing dollars they spend. These trade-offs usually balance out at the bottom line.

Bid-Hit ratios revealed

See how you compare to construction industry averages:
You can submit better bids, get more work through or customer and seek out better opportunities when competing against too many competitors, your success ratio won’t be as good as it should be. This simple tracking system will help you determine which jobs and customers to bid to. It will also help you determine when to eliminate a project type or customer and seek out better opportunities to invest your estimating dollars. You can submit better bids, get more work and improve your bid-hit ratio.

Keep track

In order to determine how many jobs to bid, what type of jobs to go after, and which customers give you a higher percentage of their work, you must know your Bid-Hit ratio for these different categories. Track it monthly, quarterly and yearly. Track it for all types of projects you bid on and each customer you bid to. Also track by job type: large versus small, local versus out of town, commercial versus industrial or residential, bid versus negotiated, plans & specifications versus remodel.

The right Bid-Hit ratio is what works for your operation. A 35 to 1 ratio is too high and 1 to 1 is nearly impossible. The highest reasonable ratio for public works bidding should not exceed 10 or 11 to 1. Higher than 11 to 1 will cost your company too much in estimating expenses and won’t provide a reasonable profit. For private work, I recommend you strive for a 4 to 1 ratio or less. Another Bid-Hit ratio to track is the number of competitors you bid against on each project.

### General Contractors

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<th>Projects</th>
<th>Bid-Hit Ratio</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public Works</td>
<td>6:1 to 10:1</td>
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<td>Private Bid Work</td>
<td>4:1 to 6:1</td>
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<td>Negotiated Work</td>
<td>2:1 to 4:1</td>
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<td>Design-Build</td>
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### Subcontractors

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<td>Public Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private Bid Work</td>
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<td>Negotiated Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design-Build</td>
<td>3:1 to 4:1</td>
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Things your customer may value more than price:

#### Ability and experience:
- Understanding of plans & specifications
- Understanding of contract terms
- Reputation for excessive change orders
- In-house design & value engineering
- Design-build capability
- Contractual issues & potential hassles
- Experience in similar type projects

#### Customer service:
- Trust with a delicate customer
- Service image
- Flexibility
- Response time

#### Solid workforce:
- Properly trained professional field crews
- English speaking foreman
- Foremen who can make decisions
- Large enough crews
- Workload and ability to make the schedule
- Quality workmanship

#### Sales ability:
- Ability to help sell the job
- Presentations skills

#### Image:
- Great safety record
- Maintain clean jobsite
- Jobsite image & uniforms

#### Financial security:
- Financial strength & bonding capacity
- Payment schedule & need for cash
- Workload and ability to make the schedule
- Quality workmanship

#### Strategies to improve your Bid-Hit ratio

1. Offer what your customers want

Think about what you include in your typical proposal or bid. You automatically include the price, terms, scope of work, specification section number, inclusions, exclusions, a list of the plans and specifications, and payment provisions. These facts and figures don’t take into consideration what your customer really wants. Sure they want a low price based on an “apples to apples” scope of work, but what else?

If you wanted to hire a remodel contractor to add on to your home while you continue to live there, would price be the number one factor in selecting your professional contractor? What about disruption to your life, keeping the house clean, noise, security, commitment to meeting the schedule, integrity, financial strength, manpower, supervision, etc.?

Every project has unique requirements that are often as or more important than price. Before you start working on an estimate, always ASK – ASK – ASK the decision maker:
- What are the top 3 most important deciding factors when selecting contractors and awarding contracts on this project?
- What would set us apart from the other bidders?
- How important is price?
- If our price is the same as other bidders, do we have a chance to be awarded the contract?

Then, custom design your bid proposal accordingly. Highlight the differentiating factors and make it clear that their priorities are the same as yours. As a general contractor, when we are selected to build a project, price is almost never an issue. We don’t like to compete on price. To set us apart, we try to offer more than our competition.

Take a look at these extra services we provide and check some to add to your list of services:
- Project feasibility study, budget & pro-forma
- Recommend & select architects & engineers
- Review & coordinate soils engineering
- Obtain city approvals & permits
- Power & telephone company coordination
- Water & sewer company coordination
- Fire department approvals
- Review & coordinate all plans
- Review project specifications
- Recommend & work with project lenders
- Obtain owner’s course of insurance policy
- And the obvious – offer the same as your competition!
- Build a quality project, with personal service, on-time, & under-budget.

You have to be competitive, but you often get chosen because of what else you
offer to your customers. “If you don’t offer anything more than your competition, you only sell price!” Always ask what your customer needs before you submit your bid. You’ll be surprised how often price is not the most important factor in selecting you as the general contractor or subcontractor.

2. You’re in the people business!

Busy contractors realize that getting profitable work requires using different tactics and strategies than competitors use. And even more important is to realize that bidding is only a small part of the sales process. Being awarded a profitable contract starts with getting your customers to want to give you good jobs at your price. When more than being low bid is the deciding factor, remember – you’re selling a relationship.

Think about the personal relationships and friendships you have. They were nurtured over time and stayed strong because of the investment in time spent together. Business relationships are no different. Business relationships are also built “face to face” and often the deciding factor when procuring construction work. Most contractors’ idea of a business relationship is to pick up a set of plans to bid, fax the bid to the customer, and then wait for the phone to ring, hoping to be awarded the job.

Sometimes brave contractors call their customers after submitting bids and ask, “How do I look?” The only response you’ll ever get to this question is, “Cut your bid and then you’ll look better!” You’ve got to give customers a reason to call you. You need to use and offer differentiating factors to entice your customer to want to talk to you.

Remember, phone calls don’t count. Only face to face meetings improve your bid odds dramatically. Whatever it takes, you’ve got to get in front of your customer OFTEN! And remember, estimators are not professional visitors. Their number one job is to get profitable work at their price. Anyone can do good take-offs and estimates. Real estimators sell!

3. Only bid what you do best

Over the years we wasted lots of time and money chasing work we wouldn’t get and didn’t really want. Once we decided to specialize and focus on certain types of projects, in specific locations, for certain types of customers, we improved our Bid-Hit ratio dramatically. We chose industrial and office projects within a 60-mile radius for customers who build at least two projects every year.

The next big decision we made was to define the ideal job size to target by creating the minimum profit margin we wanted on every job. We decided to “Just say ‘No!’” by setting our minimum contractor’s fee at $75,000. This eliminated most of the small projects we had previously done under $1 million. This increased our effectiveness, made us more competitive, and allowed us to focus on doing a great job on larger projects. The last decisions we made were to primarily seek negotiated jobs and never bid or propose on projects against more than three quality competitors. These bold and scary decisions transformed us from a “too busy, low profit” contractor selling price into an “above industry average profitable” company with loyal repeat customers who use only our construction services and give us lots of referrals.

4. Bid like a pro

The key to a good bid is arriving at accurate job costs. It is the estimator’s job to know the costs of constructing projects. The estimator does their job perfectly when the final job costs equal the project estimate and budget. We give our estimators incentive bonuses when this happens. The only variables between your bid and the completed project should be overhead and profit mark-up. In order to insure accurate job costs, include the following as your estimator’s area of responsibility and accountability:

- Accurate time cards
- Accurate labor burden rate
- Accurate crew bidding rate
- Accurate equipment rates
- Accurate cost history library
- Accurate general conditions
- Accurate overhead mark-up
- Accurate profit mark-up

5. Get on the right bid lists

One of the best ways to improve your Bid-Hit ratio and get more profitable work is to get on the right bid lists. This starts by keeping track of your Bid-Hit ratio by customer, project type, location and competition. Another important factor is to have a bidding strategy with goals to shoot for. Most estimators don’t have a clear strategy – just bid, and hope to land as many jobs as they can. What is your bidding strategy?

Our bidding strategy is simple:

- Goal #1 – Negotiate contract
- Goal #2 – Be only bidder
- Goal #3 – Get last look
- Goal #4 – Bid odds greater than 66 percent
- Goal #5 – Only 3 bidders

Our strategy may not work for your company, but it keeps us focused on jobs and customers we want. You can improve your bid results by focusing primarily on the project types in which you specialize and the customers for which you want to build. Sit down and develop a bidding strategy that fits within your business strengths, plans and goals. It’s too easy to get on a treadmill chasing the same kind of jobs and customers over and over. By being proactive and seeking the jobs and customers you want, you can really make some money.
Rules to get on the right bid lists

Don’t waste time & money. Never invest estimating effort bidding projects to customers without any hope for a return on your investment. Get a positive commitment and understanding from your customer on how the contractor will be selected before you start working on a preliminary budget, estimate, or bid.

Pick the jobs you want and work them hard. I noticed our estimating department was too busy to focus properly on every bid. Instead of concentrating on the jobs we really wanted, our estimators were working on lots of bids and commitments that would never happen. This diluted our efforts and caused us to lose the good projects. Be selective and eliminate the projects you don’t want and diligently pursue the jobs you want to improve your Bid-Hit ratio by as much as 100 percent.

Never bid jobs you won’t get, no matter how low you bid. You know which jobs I’m talking about – the ones with too many bidders on the bid list or the customer has used the same contractor on the last 15 jobs in a row.

Never bid jobs you can’t get. These jobs include those where your company is not the perceived expert in the project type, you are not a local contractor or subcontractor, or you don’t have enough trained help to man the project properly.

Never bid jobs without meeting the decision maker. This is my BIGGIE for private construction work. Unless you can meet with the decision maker before you start working on an estimate, don’t waste your time – pass on the opportunity. When you meet, ask the following:

> Who will negotiate?
> Who else is bidding?
> Who have they used on their last five projects?
> Are the construction funds available?
> What are the chances the project will be built?
> How will the bids be opened and reviewed?
> Who makes final selection and award?
> What is the selection criteria?
> What is the most important factor in selection?
> If all else is equal, what are the chances we have to be awarded the job?
> Get wet ink!

The goal of estimating and bidding any project is to get wet ink on a signed contract. This is accomplished by first getting on the right bid lists and then getting in front of your customer. Remember your bid is a license to go fishing for a contract. Our success is based on the understanding that the main purpose for our bid is to get a meeting with our customer. At this meeting you can discuss the project in depth, review how you can help your customer meet their goals, explain why you are the
best choice, review pricing options, get a second chance to be the selected contractor, and get last look. Getting last look is your second chance to match the price of the lowest bidder, only if you want to. It is very difficult to accomplish all of these actions over the phone.

The hard part of this process is to actually get a meeting. Try to exploit your relationships, referrals, or any other means possible to force a meeting. Other tactics to get a meeting include excluding bid items that need discussing, specify alternatives to entice your customer, offer lower price value engineering ideas, ask questions needing clarification, or suggest ways to improve the schedule. You must do whatever it takes to get a meeting, including just showing up at their office and waiting in their lobby until they see you. But, the best way to get a meeting with the decision maker is to be low bid!

How to be low bid

Be “Select” bidder. Select bidders almost always get the first chance to propose on a project and a chance to get last look. Being the select bidder is a result of your relationship and market perception of your expertise.

Get on the “Right” bid lists. Implement the points discussed above.

Offer MORE than price, service and quality. Service and quality construction is a given today, expected, and won’t give you an advantage over your competition. Give your customer a different reason to use you instead of your competition. Give customers what they want, help solve their problems, provide total solutions, reduce their risk, offer a guarantee, and set your company apart.

Bid plans & specs. I am a firm believer in the motto: “If in doubt, leave it out.” If the plans don’t call for it, don’t include it, exclude it, or qualify it. By bidding only per plans and specifications, and not listing out all of your bid qualifications, you’ll be called to discuss your bid with your customer. This will give you a chance to request a meeting. When you list out everything on your bid, your customer will take your base bid. Wait until they call you to discuss these items. This will also give you a reason to call and ask for a meeting. These tactics should make your base bid lower than your competitors and help you get a meeting by appearing to be low bid. Remember, at the meeting it is your ethical responsibility to share all of these items so your customer will get full value when they contract with you.

Don’t exclude anything. Another tactic we use is to list our exclusions, low priced alternates, and substitutions as “inclusions” instead of exclusions. For example: “Our bid includes an alternate material for the aluminum storefront.” When the plans conflict with the specifications use an inclusion such as: “Our bid includes two coats of paint per plans sheet A-7.” If you must exclude an item, such as sand below the slab, list it as an inclusion: “Our bid includes a 5-inch slab over native soil compacted by others.” Inclusions usually don’t draw attention to bid clarifications.

It’s not a good tactic to reveal the amount of your alternates or exclusions on your base bid. Wait until they call you to discuss these items. This will also give you a reason to call and ask for a meeting. These tactics should make your base bid lower than your competitors and help you get a meeting by appearing to be low bid. Remember, at the meeting it is your ethical responsibility to share all of these items so your customer will get full value when they contract with you.

Not all of these tactics will work for you. But, try them and you’ll like the outcome as they improve your Bid-Hit ratio and help you get more work. When you’re not getting the results you want, change your tactics, try some different bait, and find a new fishing hole as you look for profitable work. By trying new ideas, you can make estimating and bidding a fun and challenging experience with a great return. Have fun fishing!

George Hedley owns Hedley Construction & Management Inc. and Hardhat Presentations, and is a speaker at numerous industry events. He has written several business books and is available to present his business building programs on building profits, leaders, and loyal customers. For more information on his programs or products, or to receive his free management e-newsletter, visit www.hardhatpresentations.com, call 1-800-851-8553, or e-mail gh@hardhatpresentations.com.
As we all know, figuring out the financing of a business start-up can be the most challenging part of the whole undertaking. Typically the start-up money is from cash savings, debt, borrowing, loans or contributions from friends and relatives, and credit card financing. If a bank loan is part of the financing, the owner may be personally liable for at least part of the debt. Whatever the mix, this initial financing defines the capital structure of the beginning business.

The business may grow and change its operations, but the structure of debt and capital tends to stay relatively constant. Yet, just as a business has a particular growth cycle with respect to its operations, there is also a financial growth cycle for small businesses. As the business grows and becomes more experienced, its financial needs and financing options change. Similarly, the capital structure can also mature as the business grows and prospers.

Often it doesn’t. The business retains essentially the same capital structure as it had when the business opened. This occurs more through default than because the business is stuck – or trapped – in its capital structure. For many businesses there may be other options for how the business is financed as it goes through changes in its cycle. Businesses should periodically consider the question of whether some restructuring is in order, and what might be the options. Not all options are appropriate for every business, but it’s useful to consider a range of possibilities. The result may be a decision that the current financing structure fits the business’s needs.

The other variable

Significant questions revolve around debt. Debt reflects past borrowing and circumstances that led to that particular form of debt and its terms.

The size, age and history of a business are key variables in lending and finance decisions. Financing the initial equipment and start-up is particularly difficult because the business has little history, and having no financial track record puts the business in a weak borrowing position. Time lessens the impact of some of these negative aspects and the business gradually acquires a business and financial history. In theory, at least, the business has more options for financing.

There’s another critical variable that’s often overlooked: information. Small businesses are considered riskier because lenders don’t have sufficient information to distinguish between a high-risk and a low-risk, high-quality and low-quality, company. Consequently, if funds are available, they carry a higher rate of interest.

Obviously information is more readily available on publicly traded companies. (However, the last five years have highlighted the delusion of the usefulness and quality of that information in many instances.) But that begs the question of the availability of information on small, private companies.

What is this lack of information? Lenders cite the fact that smaller firms, not being publicly held, aren’t subject to the SEC public disclosure regulations, and that these businesses also don’t have audited financial statements. The first is true; the second shouldn’t be.

Lenders say that information is opaque with respect to small businesses. That’s probably true – but should it be?

Businesses differ in size and complexity, but they don’t differ radically in the aspect of accounting and record-keeping; big businesses just have more of it. Almost every type of information a publicly held business provides could be provided by a private corporation and a small business. They all have sales, balance sheets, cash flow, products and services, assets, and so on. What they don’t all have is stock trades. Furthermore, as suggested above, audited statements should be the norm for every small business.

The thoroughness and quality of information about your business strengthens your position when you’re considering some debt or capital restructuring. Is it a possible bargaining point when you’re looking for financing or capital? Possibly.

Restructuring: From startup to self-sustaining

A smaller and younger tree care business relies on insider financing and, as the business becomes more established, on trade credit (vendors). Funds for a newer business are limited; they’re usually more

Branch Office
costly and for only short term. Banks and lending institutions tend to be more willing to loan money when the owner of the business personally guarantees the loan, but that calls into question the aspect of personal liability and risk.

Angel financing is a source of funding for some startup firms; but the likelihood of finding an investor is limited. Angels are usually individuals with a high net worth. While we usually think of them in terms of investing money, some will also contribute their skills. Typically they’re interested in businesses with new, innovative ideas that have the potential for high and rapid growth rates, so that the investor can eventually sell his investment.

TIP: Maintain good communication with investors, particularly when the business goes through a period of change. While the change may not affect their investment, they will want the opportunity of knowing what’s happening with the business.

And, it’s also good sense to maintain an open level of communication. You don’t need to tell investors everything that’s happening – what a bother both for them and for you! – but you also never want to give the impression that you’re indifferent to them now that you have their money.

Significant changes take place as a business moves out of the start-up phase and becomes a “settled” business. Typically the business grows and develops – but it also “fills out,” establishing a history, acquiring a broader client list and a financial track record, and developing business relationships. The financing shifts (quickly, one hopes) from start-up financing to utilizing profits. This change to self-sufficiency is a critical turning point, and it signals a change in the debt and capital structure. This is the time to accumulate some savings and to think about reducing or restructuring the debt. With the business having a track record of sustainability, options for refinancing the debt may open up.

Two considerations are key.

First, an owner who has personal liability for any of the financing, (having co-signed a note, for instance) should consider taking steps to reduce or get rid of that liability, such as if the lender is willing to retire that note or debt and replace it with one that has only the business on it. Or, look for alternative borrowing that will allow the business to pay off that debt. Interest rate may be a factor in restructuring decisions; if the existing debt carries a favorable rate of interest, the question becomes whether the favorable interest rate outweighs the aspect of personal liability.

Maturity

As a business matures its financial pattern shifts. In theory, more mature firms have had opportunity to accumulate more assets and cash to meet short-term financial needs. The capital structure can be less debt intensive, and businesses have more options with how debt is structured. Businesses that are planning significant expansion and growth may consider outside investors, as partners, stockholders, or just as investors. A very few businesses get into venture capital and public stock offerings.

This is also the time to consider restructuring debt and capital.

Many of us have a tendency to accept the debt structure as long as we can make the payments. Debt is the status quo. That may be true – debt tends to have a certain Velcro quality, it tends to stick. Yet, if the business is paying on an obligation it incurred four years earlier, it may now be in a position to restructure that obligation – refinance it or renegotiate the terms.

Does your financial record and your business history open up better access to more favorable terms from banks and commercial lenders? Put yourself in the place of a potential lender. Can you make a strong case for your business as an investment?

Do you have the information that will “sell” a lender or financier on your business?

Alternative loan sources

Every five years or so a “new” loan source emerges. These days it is merchant cash advances. This financing, also known as credit-card-receivable funding, is a growing industry. Companies in this business pay cash advances to small merchants who have significant credit card sales. The advantages can be tempting to a business that’s strapped for cash, but this is expensive money, typically around 35 percent. Because this is an unregulated loan industry, businesses can “get away” with such rates.

Most new lending vehicles aren’t at all new, they’re just re-packaged. Unfortunately, what’s in that package isn’t always as good as the packaging implies.

If your business is debt-heavy, would better terms or restructuring that debt enable you to reduce the debt to a less risky level?

Should you be going after additional capital?

Are you considering significant expansion or changes? If so, it may be time to think about the future in more definite plans than “someday,” and figure out what capital structure you would need to achieve what you want.

Conclusion

Businesses aren’t stagnant. Changes may be almost imperceptible, but they are taking place. Patterns of financing, capital, and debt may not change drastically in the life of a business, but neither are they cast in stone. Going with the status quo should be a decision, not a default.

Mary McVicker is a freelance writer living in Oak Park, Illinois.
What to do about that aching back?

If I may, I’d like to comment on the article “Ergonomically Friendly Tools and Equipment for the Arborist/Landscaper” in the May 2006 TCI magazine. I’m sure that the authors are theoretically qualified to write such an article, though it would be hard to tell from the content, photos and examples. The article mentions instances where workers would be moving large and heavy objects, but fails to mention any of the tools commonly found and used in the industry. While it would have been nice to hear mention of our log arch line, none of our competitors were mentioned, either; nor even the simplest tools such as hand tongs that are available nearly everywhere.

Personally, I do about a dozen or so live, in-the-woods demonstrations of safe, effective and ergonomic methods for forest or arborist operations each year. I’m always on the lookout for something better and immediately test it and bring it into the conversation when possible. Ergonomically friendly tools are indeed beneficial, but when I read an article in TCI magazine that doesn’t mention any of them, I begin to question it’s validity.

Mark Havel, founder/president, Future Forestry Products Inc. Willamina, Oregon

Editor’s note: Mr. Havel raises some important issues. Back injury is by far the most significant ergonomic injury faced by arborists, and is one of the leading causes of lost time in the industry. The article to which he refers does a masterful job of presenting a broad overview of ergonomic hazard assessment and mitigation but focuses more on reducing at-risk behaviors and hand tools for mitigating risk factors other than back injury.

It is widely accepted among safety and risk management professionals that the surest way to reduce or eliminate a hazard is with an engineering control that blocks employee exposure to the hazard in the first place. Tools such as the log arch that Mr. Havel mentions, and even more mechanized material-handling equipment, are examples of engineering controls that can save one’s back.

Thank you, Mr. Havel, for this important clarification.

Peter Gerstenberger, senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association

Should arborists continue giving free estimates?

I am currently a member of TCIA and had a thought that I’d like to share with you. The other day, my husband and I called an electrician to come out to give us an estimate for some electrical work. They told us that they charge $45 to come and do estimates. With fuel and other high daily expenditures, I wondered why the tree care industry did not feel comfortable getting those costs covered. It would be difficult for us to implement a charge for free estimates unless other tree care companies would follow suit. If plumbers, electricians and other contractors charge to come out for estimates, it would only make sense that we should, too. I think this is a worthy discussion, and would like to see what other tree care specialists think about it.

Cassidy Martorana president, Home & Gardens Inc. Parkesburg, Pa.

Fungicides are a pesticide, and chips can erupt

I have enjoyed reading Tree Care Industry magazine for several years now. I like the diversity of stories and authors, as well as the quality content of each work. After reading the May 2006 issue, I was concerned about some items that took away from the quality of a couple of the articles. Permit me to be specific:

“Integrated Spray Equipment”: Page 12, photo caption: “… It allows for fertilizer, pesticides and fungicides to be carried ...” Fungicides are a type of pesticide. Perhaps a better caption would have been “It allows for fertilizer and two different pesticides to be carried and applied from one truck.”

It is my understanding that some spray rig equipment allows the applicator to apply a product while the equipment mixes it, and when finished, there is no ‘leftover’ mixture in a tank. Thus, the equipment pulls the concentrated material from its holding container, the fresh water from a nurse tank, and mixes them during the operation. If this was covered in the article, it was not clear.

On pages 14-15 of the same article, the author discussed environmental and worker safety, but did not specifically state how important it is to minimize a worker’s con-
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tact with concentrated pesticide or fertilizer product.

“Turning Chips into Cash”: Very little was mentioned about how to maintain mulch piles with respect to fire potential, height of each pile, movement of native subterranean termites from the yard to a customer property (yes, I have seen legitimate cases where eastern subterranean termites were moved!), or being ready to educate the customer when fungal masses show up in the mulch the following season. These are important considerations for someone wanting to start up a mulching ‘division’ in their business.

Thanks for permitting me to give you feedback on this issue of Tree Care Industry. I look forward to other topics in the coming months, years.

Dr. Mark Shour, forest health entomologist and ISA Certified Arborist, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

Do crabapples have pits!

I know I’m behind on my reading, but I was just looking through the April 2006 TCI and I was wondering if the photo on page 68 in the crabapple article isn’t a grafted Kwanzan cherry (Prunus serrulata ‘Kwanzan’)! Just curious. Thanks.

Steve Chisholm
Aspen Tree Expert Co. Inc.
Jackson, N.J.

Editor’s note: As far as we can tell, Mr. Chisholm is correct. He was the second to point that out to us, but we seem to have lost the first writer’s note. The image was misidentified by the photographer, and we didn’t catch it. It is, to the best of our knowledge, a Kwanzan cherry. The image was taken in Battery Park in New York City, and Eileen Calvanese, horticulture foreperson for the Battery Park City Parks Conservancy, concurred.
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C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University
Brookville, NY
Contact: www.treesny.com

July 14, 2006
Vermeer/Sherrill Tree Arborist Climbing Seminar
Fountain, CO
Contact: 719-382-1947

July 14-15, 2006
Heronswood Open rare/unusual shrub/tree showcase
Fordhook Farm, Doylestown, PA
Contact: www.heronswood.com

July 25-27, 2006
PANTS (Penn Atlantic Nursery Trade Show)
Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, NJ
Contact: PLNA 1-800-898-3411; www.PLNA.com

July 27-28, 2006
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Minneapolis, MN
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

August 10, 2006
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Contact: (860) 429-5028; info@ArborMaster.com;
www.ArborMaster.com

August 21-25, 2006
ArborMaster Training Programs
2-day & 3-day modules: Rigging levels 1 & 2
Haddam, CT
Contact: ArborMaster Training, Inc; (860) 429-5028;
info@arbormaster.com; www.arbormaster.com

August 22, 2006
Plant Identification
MGIA Summer Programs;
Plymouth, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

September 5, 2006
Ornamental & Turf Diagnostic
Novi, MI
Contact: MGIA, (248) 646-4992

September 14-16, 2006
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Hon-Dah Resort-Casino Conference Ctr,
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ArborMaster Training Programs, Two 2-day modules
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Longmont, CO
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September 22, 2006
MGIA’s 2nd Annual Snow Mgt. Conf. & Expo
Troy, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

September 28, 2006
MGIA Compliance 2006 and Test-n-Tune
Shelby Township, MI
Contact: (248) 646-4992

October 2, 2006
Urban Forestry/Nursery/Landscape/Turf Field Day
Virginia Tech/Mid-Atlantic Chapter, ISA
Virginia Beach, VA
Contact: bapple@vt.edu; www.vaes.vt.edu/hampton

October 4-6, 2006
ISA Texas Annual Tree Conference
Round Rock Marriott, Round Rock, TX
Contact: Mike Walterscheidt; (512) 587-7515;
mwalterscheidt@totalaccess.net;
www.trees-isaa.org/events/

October 9, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt. seminar
Sturbridge Host Hotel & Conf. Ctr, Sturbridge, MA
Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

October 10, 2006
It’s All About the Water
Farmington Hills, MI
Contact: MGIA, (248) 646-4992

October 11, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt. seminar
Washington, D.C., area (location tba)
Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

October 12, 2006
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Shelby Township, MI
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October 13, 2006
Tree Hazard & Habitat
Risk Assessment & Ancient Tree Mgt. seminar
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Contact: Safetrees, LLC, www.safetrees.com

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Perennial Plant Conference Scott Arboretum, Swarthmore Coll., Swarthmore, PA Contact: Longwood Gardens (610) 388-1000 x507; www.longwoodgardens.org

October 27-29, 2006
NJ Shade Tree Federation Conference Philadelphia Cherry Hill Hilton, Cherry Hill, NJ Contact: Bill Porter or Donna Massa (732) 246-3210

October 27-28, 2006
PHC’s Plant Biology Workshop Presented by Dr. Donald H. Marx, Frogmore, SC Contact: www.planthealthcare.com

November 7, 2006
Tree Care Workshop Oklahoma State University, Stillwater OK Contact: Mike Schnelle (405) 744-7361 mike.schnelle@okstate.edu

November 7-8, 2006
Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) workshop Prior to TCI EXPO 2006 Baltimore Convention Center Baltimore, MD Contact: Peter Gerstenberger 1-800-733-2622; peter@tcia.org

November 9-11, 2006
TCI EXPO 2006 Tree Care Industry Association Baltimore Convention Center Baltimore, MD Contact: Deb Cyr 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; cyr@treecareindustry.org or www.tcia.org

February 11-15, 2007
Winter Management Conference 2007 Tree Care Industry Association Hilton Cancun Golf & Spa Resort, Cancun, Mexico Contact: Deb Cyr 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 106; cyr@treecareindustry.org or www.tcia.org

March 6-7, 2007
MGIA’s 20th Annual Trade Show & Convention Rock Financial Show Place, Novi MI Contact: (248) 646-4992

April 16-18, 2007

June 5-7, 2007
National Oak Wilt Symposium: ISA – Texas Austin Hilton, Austin, Texas Contact: Mike Walterscheidt, mbwalters@totalaccess.net; www.trees-isa.org/events/
Choosing the Right Avenue Tree

By Dr. Lakshmi Sridharan
Decades ago, when there were no motor vehicles, trees were planted on roadsides to give shelter to weary travelers. The vast majority of these trees have survived severe weather conditions, such as drought, heavy snow falls, floods, storms, etc., in addition to human encroachment simply because most of these trees are native trees. Native trees are excellent choices as avenue trees, which are now planted to add visual interest to roadsides and enhance the quality of air, as well as to increase the property value of a neighborhood.

Public works departments, agricultural cooperative extension services and various other agencies are responsible for planting and maintaining avenue trees. Homeowners can also participate in tree planting with the approval of municipal tree commissions. Knowledgeable arborists in the tree commission help in the selection of trees.

In choosing the right tree for a location, arborists or tree commissioners need to take several factors into consideration, such as cold or drought tolerance, tolerance to salt sprays, resistance to pests and diseases, longevity, etc., in addition to the esthetic value of trees. Arborists or tree commissioners are also often responsible for adhering to tree preservation ordinances aimed at controlling the aesthetic qualities of the environment by regulating protection, maintenance, removal, and planting of trees in the public rights of way, parks and public properties within the city or town.

Across the county, one can see a wide variety of avenue trees – native or introduced, trees, tall and majestic trees with a huge canopy, trees that show seasonal changes with beautiful fall foliage, evergreen trees, spring, summer, or fall flowering trees or trees with colorful fruits or shapes (see Table 1). However, do not limit yourself to the list. Hundreds of trees are available for selection.

### Evergreens as avenue trees

As the name implies, the foliage of evergreen trees remain green all through the year. Narrow-leaf evergreen trees are mostly conifers (pines, cedars, junipers, etc.). Conifers can withstand temperatures far below the freezing, heavy snow falls, strong winds and even drought. Once established, conifers need very little attention. No other trees enjoy such a wide distribution (USDA zones 3 to 10) as conifers do. Conifers show a high degree of variability with reference to height (30 feet to a little more than 100 feet), spread (10 feet to 40 feet), shape, foliage, etc. Canopy may be pyramidal, rounded or spherical. One may find a conifer suitable for most any location.

Foliage may be needle-like, as with pines, or finely dissected, as with Junipers. Leaves may be light green, dark green, variegated, bronze, bluish or silvery. Some even show seasonal variations in foliage colors. *Pinus sylvestris* “Aurea” (golden Scotch pine), *Pinus virginiana* “Wates golden” (“Wates golden” Jersey pine), and *Pinus strobes* “winter gold” (“winter gold”...
white pine) have more yellow in their foliage during winter and green in summer. Conifers shed leaves but never remain barren, as such when most trees look desolate without leaves during bleak winter conditions, conifers give the colors that one longs to see. While they do not produce spectacular flowers, they bear cones that come in different sizes, shapes and colors.

Conifers are usually trouble free, with few pests or diseases. Try to select disease resistant conifer cultivars as avenue trees. Prune them to maintain desired shapes and remove deadwood and storm-damaged branches.

Broad-leaf evergreens

Broad-leaf evergreens are angiosperms—flowering trees that produce seeds enclosed within fruits. The leaves come in different shapes—lanceolate, elliptical, oblong, orbicular, lobed, cordate, or pinnately or palmately compound, with two to more leaflets. Leaves may be light to bright green, bluish or silvery.

Southern Magnolia (zones 6-9) has bright shiny leathery leaves. They grow to a height of 80 feet. Some of the popular shorter cultivars are “Barcken’s Brown Beauty,” “Baby Doll,” “Little Gem,” and “Satin Leaf.” “Barcken’s Brown Beauty” is hardy even in zone 5. Magnolia trees are grown as avenue trees in residential areas mostly in southern states and in California. They produce fragrant, creamy, showy white flowers in late spring and summer and bright red seeds in winter.

Eucalyptus spp (zones 8-11) are native to Australia. Being tropical in origin, they prefer warmer climates and, as such, are a favorite avenue tree in California. Eucalyptus trees are drought tolerant and can grow on any kind of dry soil. These tall (more than 100 feet), majestic trees have rounded or lanceolate, bluish-green, scented leaves and blackish bark. They bear white or reddish flowers from late fall to spring and produce attractive capsules.

Mimosa is a tropical tree (zones 6-9) with pinnately compound green leaves. It is a drought tolerant tree that requires almost no special attention. It grows to a height of 20 to 35 feet. Small pinkish flowers are produced in summer, and its flat pods are popularly known as Monkey pods.

Deciduous trees

Deciduous trees offer unlimited choices as avenue trees in urban and suburban areas. Select trees that flower in various seasons, have spectacular display of foliage colors during autumn, bear fruits for birds and other small animals, or provide nesting places for small creatures.

Flowering trees

Select trees depending on location, climate, precipitation and type of soil. Pay attention to the size of a mature tree; make sure that mature trees will not grow into utility lines. In neighborhoods where there is planned development, property management may hire landscape services and arborists to care for trees. Irrigation systems may also be installed for watering the avenue trees. Planting, fertilizing or pruning are no problem in such locations, and emphasis is on trees that have aesthetic value to enhance the property value. Still low maintenance is the decisive factor in tree selection. Saucer magnolia, crepe myrtle, Eastern redbud, “Poinciana regia” (Delonix regia, Royal Poinciana), Black locust, “Plumeria,” flowering peaches, plums, etc., would serve as avenue trees in such neighborhoods.

Saucer magnolia (20- to 30-feet tall, zones 5-9) bears saucer-like fragrant white or pink flowers early in spring. Choose frost resistant cultivars. It prefers moist, slightly acidic soil. Alba superb, Lombardy rose, verbanica and lenei are some popular cultivars.

Tulip poplar, Liriodendron tulipifera, (80- to 100-feet tall, zones 5-9) is a spring flowering tree that bears showy fragrant green or yellow blooms. Foliage turns yellow in fall. Once established the tree requires no special care.

Crepe myrtle, Lagerstroemia indica, (15-feet tall, zones 7-9) indigenous to India, is one of the popular flowering avenue trees in California and New Orleans. It produces exotic flowers with crepe-like crinkled petals of various colors (white, red, pink, mauve, etc.) from mid summer to late fall. Foliage turns red dur-
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Royal poinciana, *Delonix regia* (family Caesalpiniaceae), is truly a regal tree. This semi deciduous tropical tree, popularly known as “the flame of the forest,” grows to its full potential in southern states bordering the Gulf of Mexico. The city of Miami celebrates flowering of poinciana during summer when the tree is loaded with thousands of bright orange-red flowers.

Eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, (20- to 30-feet tall, zones 4-9) is one of the tree lover’s favorite members of family Fabaceae that produces butterfly-like attractive flowers. It is drought tolerant and free of pests and diseases. It is an early spring flowering tree, which bears pink flowers on racemes. The green foliage turns yellow-green in fall.

Black locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, (50-feet tall, zones 4-8) has pinnately compound leaves with blue-green leaflets. It produces butterfly-like attractive fragrant white flowers in racemes from mid to late spring. The tree is drought tolerant and free of pests and diseases.

Golden shower tree, *Cassia fistula*, (synonym: *Cassia exelsa, Cassia rhombifolia*.

**Trees with fall foliage colors**

A number of deciduous trees, such as oak, maple, golden rain, have a spectacular display of colors – golden yellow, bronze, red or blends of these – in autumn prior to shedding their leaves.

Oak, *Quercus* spp., is the national tree of United States. Oak enjoy a wide distribution across the nation. Most oak trees require very little care and are extremely tolerant to high and low temperatures. However, some cultivars are susceptible to infection by the fungus *Phytopthora ramorum* that causes sudden oak death (SOD). Select disease resistant cultivars to grow as avenue trees. Mature trees are about 80 feet tall with dissected green leaves in spring and summer and show striking foliage colors in autumn. Rodents (chipmunks and squirrels) and birds feed on the acorns. The fall foliage color is bright red/scarlet, as in scarlet oak, *Quercus coccinea*, (zones 4-9); yellow, as in willow oak, *Quercus phellos* (zones 5-9); or brownish-red to bright red, as in red oak, *Quercus rubra*, (zones 4-8).

Golden rain tree, *Koelreuteria paniculata*, (30-feet tall, zones 5-9) is one of the popular avenue trees in California. It grows in any kind of soil, is tolerant to high as well as low temperatures, and is truly a low-maintenance tree. The tree lives up to its name. Early in autumn, the tree produces truck loads of golden yellow flowers in panicles. The exotic red-purple transparent pod looks almost like a magic lantern. The green leaves turn yellow in fall.

Chinese pistachio, *Pistacia chinensis*,
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(25- to 40-feet tall, zones 7-9) has pinnately compound leaf with green leaflets that turn red, yellow or orange during fall. The tree bears bunches of blue/red fruits (nutlets). After leaf fall, the bright nutlets attract birds in winter.

Ginkgo or maidenhair tree, Ginkgo biloba, (75-feet tall, zones 4-8) is a gymnosperm. The green, oddly fan-shaped, bi-lobed leaves turn golden yellow in autumn.

European white birch, Betula pendula, (40- to 50-feet tall, zones 2-7) has a spectacular display of yellow to yellow-green foliage in fall.

American elm, Ulmus americana, (70-feet tall, zone 3) is a majestic tree with glossy, dark green leaves. It has creamy-brown to greenish-red flowers in spring. Decades ago, elm trees in a number of places were wiped out because of Dutch elm disease. Modern cultivars are disease resistant.

Shagbark hickory, Carya ovata, (70- to 90-feet tall, zones 4-8) grows in wet as well as dry areas. However, it grows better in well-drained soils. The shagbark hickory tree has long taproots that help the tree get extra water during drought. The shagbark hickory has an ashy gray bark that separates into long strips to give the trunk an interesting shaggy look. It has an interesting appearance with drooping lower branches, upright upper branches, and middle horizontal branches. The wood of this tree is strong and tough. The leaves are compound and alternate, with five or seven green leaflets that turn yellow in fall. The shagbark has showy male and female green blooms in spring. Male flowers grow in bundles called catkins, and female flowers are in clusters called petallet. It produces edible nuts with thick husks and thin shells inside. Humans and squirrels both compete for the sweet nuts.

Maple trees (Acer spp.) are known for their foliage that comes in different colors, light green, red, variegated, etc. Flowers are rather inconspicuous, however, for fall foliage colors no other tree species can come anywhere close to maple. Once established, maple trees require almost no care.

Red maple, Acer rubrum, (70-feet tall, zones 3-9) has small red flowers in spring. Fruits (paired green samaras) add additional interest to the tree. In fall, leaves turn bright red.

Sugar maple, Acer saccharum, (40- to 70-feet tall, zone 3) is the source for maple syrup and sugar. Green foliage of this tree turns yellow to golden-orange to orangish-red in fall.

Avenue trees prevent air, noise and visual pollution, aid in the stabilization of soil, enhance property values, provide glare and heat protection, and enhance the aesthetics and general quality of life in a community. On hot summer days, trees may provide shade. Colorful flowers and fruits can offer a feast to the eye. During autumn, trees may dazzle with their spectacular display of colors. Birds and squirrels might nest in tree canopies. When most trees remain barren during winter, can evergreen trees offer visual interest. So many options – choose carefully.

### Vermeer

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Longwood Gardens, Inc., the world’s premier horticultural display garden, located in Kennett Square, PA, has an opening for a full time arborist. We are looking for an experienced tree climber with the ability to handle pruning and removal operations. This individual must be capable of running aerial lift trucks, chippers, stump grinders and other small equipment used in arboriculture. Strong knowledge of plant health care preferable. We are looking for someone with a minimum of an Associate’s degree, or equivalent, in an agriculturally related field and 2 years’ climbing experience as an arborist. ISA Certification preferred. Must have, or be willing to obtain, a Pennsylvania Pesticide Applicator License and CDL Class B driver’s license.

We offer an excellent starting salary and an outstanding benefits package.

Please mail your resume with salary requirements to: Longwood Gardens, Inc., Human Resources, P.O. Box 501, Kennett Square, PA 19348. Fax (610) 388-2079 or e-mail: jobs@longwoodgardens.org.

To find out more about job opportunities at Longwood Gardens, please refer to our Web site, www.longwoodgardens.org. EOE

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Arboriculture Foreman

Longwood Gardens, Inc., the world’s premier horticultural display garden, located in Kennett Square, PA, has an opening for a full time Arboriculture Foreman. We are searching for an individual who possesses strong leadership skills and a thorough knowledge of arboriculture and/or forestry to lead, motivate and train full-time staff and students to perform arboriculture and land management practices throughout the property. This individual will also oversee the implementation of a major Christmas light display. We are looking for an experienced tree climber with the ability to handle pruning and removal operations. This position requires an individual who has knowledge and practical experience as a professional arborist. Strong knowledge of plant health care preferable. A Bachelor’s degree in arboriculture or forestry is required. Must have, or be willing to obtain, ISA Certification, a Pennsylvania Pesticide Applicator License and Pennsylvania CDL Class-B driver’s license. Must have at least three years’ experience in a similar leadership position. We offer an excellent starting salary and an outstanding benefits package.

Please mail your resume with salary requirements to:
Longwood Gardens, Inc., Human Resources, P.O. Box 501, Kennett Square, PA 19348. Fax (610) 388-2079 or e-mail: jobs@longwoodgardens.org.
To find out more about job opportunities at Longwood Gardens, please refer to our Web site, www.longwoodgardens.org, EOE.

Peterborough/Milford, NH

Broad Oak Tree Care needs 1 tree climber specialist and 1 plant health care specialist to assist our two-crew PHC operation. See complete job posting at www.broadoaktree.com or e-mail dan@broadoaktree.com.

KLF Arborists, Newtown, CT

Seeking experienced climber/arborist. Valid driver’s license (CDL preferred). Top pay based on experience. References required. Fax resume (203) 270-7749.

Advanced Tree Care, McKinney, Texas

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Telephone: (214) 544-TREE (8733); Fax: (972) 569-8370; Mail: Advanced Tree Care, 590 N. Meandering Way, Fairview, TX 75069.

Staff Arborist for TCIA

Trade association for commercial arborist companies seeks qualified candidate with arboricultural background for full-time position. Position requires demonstrable and extensive skills in project management, managing volunteers and communication – esp. writing skills. Candidate should possess a Bachelor’s degree in Arboriculture or closely related field as well as two or more years’ field experience in arboriculture. He/she must be willing to take direction and work in a team environment, and must submit current samples of writing and undergo personality profiling exercises during the interview process. Working knowledge of Microsoft Office software products in a PC environment needed; experience with desktop publishing software preferred. Previous experience with volunteer and/or non-profit groups preferred. Position requires travel at least six times a year. Ability to speak and comprehend Spanish a plus. Salary and other benefits commensurate with demonstrated experience and abilities. Please send resume and salary requirements to travis@treecareindustry.org.

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To explore this unique opportunity, contact: Dennis Tourangeau, Director of Operations, Arborguard, P.O. Box 477, Avondale Estates, GA 30002, or send fax to (404) 294-0090 or e-mail dtourangeau@arborguard.com.


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For career opportunity and confidential consideration, send or fax resume, including geographic preferences and willingness to relocate to: DeAngelo Brothers, Inc., Attention: Carl Faust, 100 North Conahan Drive, Hazleton, PA 18201. Phone: 1-800-360-9333. Fax: (570) 459-5363 or e-mail-cfaust@dbiservices.com.

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Top Notch Treecare is seeking a motivated leader to oversee the daily operations of our production department. Qualified candidates must have proven arboricultural experience as well as familiarity with equipment and sales procedures. This person will be responsible for scheduling crews and equipment for top efficiency while promptly responding to clients’ needs. Candidate must possess strong customer service skills and a firm commitment to safety. ISA Certification a plus. Full benefits and competitive salary. Please submit resume to Chris Romer: ChrisR@topnotchtree.com or fax to 763-253-2273. Come visit us at the ISA Conference!

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TREE CARE INDUSTRY – JULY 2006
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Please circle 49 on Reader Service Card
With the official start of hurricane season on June 1, TCI brings you one member’s experience during last year’s hurricane Katrina. We hope it may help you plan for storm response should the need arise this summer or fall.

By Adrian S. Juttner

On Saturday, Aug. 28, as hurricane Katrina bore down on the city of New Orleans, my wife, Adrienne, was packing. She begged me to evacuate.

“Naaah – I got gas, I got generators, chain saws and guns loaded and ready – I ain’t goin’ nowhere,” I told her.

The Mississippi River, with its cool plume of water flowing into the Gulf, always protected us from hurricanes by deflecting them or slowing them down. I went to bed satisfied and confident. But, I awoke with a start after a dream – there was a drought in the Midwest and the river was hardly flowing at all!

Adrienne pleaded again, “Let’s go!”

“Yes, dear.” I answered, as we jumped into the car with only a change of clothes and our dog, Cody.

Interstate 10 west out of town was gridlocked at the St. Charles Parish line, so we doubled back on West Esplanade and took the Causeway north. In the middle of Lake Pontchartrain, we hit another gridlock and prayed as the waves crashed over the roadway. We inched our way across and made it to Baton Rouge by navigating the back roads. We stayed with a brother-in-law. No problem, we’ll be returning soon I thought.

Time stretched on. We walked the dog three times a day, surfed the Internet and watched the horror of flood and riots unfold on TV. Every morning, before dawn, a nephew who worked for the FBI would strap on his pistol and helicopter into New Orleans with his SWAT team. Each day, he would tell us that we still couldn’t go home – New Orleans was still too unsafe. But, while the city was still flooded and the bridge over the Mississippi River to the west bank was closed, we loaded up with gas and groceries and set off for home.

We figured to get around the military checkpoints by taking the Sunshine Bridge to Donaldsonville. From there we took River Road, winding slowly through Hahnville, Boutte, Westwego, Marrero, Harvey and Gretna – and slipped into Algiers by way of back streets. The trip, which normally takes an hour and a half, took more than half a day. When we got home, a policeman armed with a shotgun escorted us to our house. There stood the house and shop – roof shingles blown off, two 80-foot pine trees crashed into the pool, the tops blown out of the 15 big live oaks, the saw shop looted, all the gas gone, the pickup vandalized and all the electric and phone wires down.

I looked up and said, “Thank you, Lord, for allowing us to start life again – someplace else.”

All the wires were down, save one – the tree service phone line – and the phone was ringing.

In terrible heat, I cobbled together some tools, rented a pickup and grabbed a lone remaining worker and started pulling trees off houses. Other saws and equipment were shipped by an arborist friend from Billings, Montana. A week later, an NBC camera crew showed up and filmed this bearded old guy on the roof of a house.

“There’s only gonna be one take,” I said, as the top crashed to the ground. Ten seconds of fame on national TV. Five minutes
later, a Japanese television crew came by – but they missed it.

Pretty soon, tree people from Florida, Ohio, Montana and Canada – even England and Nicaragua – came down, stayed in our house and worked a spell. Our regular clients were served by a rotating kaleidoscope of sojourners. My wife, Adrienne, a PhD and liberated professional woman, enjoyed being camp mom. She took delight in fixing meals and bed space for the tree people and others on their long way back home.

Eight months down the road, the New Orleans area is becoming divided into a small, living zone that includes all of Jefferson Parish, Algiers, Uptown, the French Quarter, Bywater and Faubourg/St. Jean. Then, there is the much larger dead zone. This is the area that took the greatest flooding. This includes the lower 9th, the 7th wards, Lakeview, Gentilly, East, Broadmoor and St. Bernard Parish. Flood waters from the 17th street canal breach took an end run around Airline Highway and flooded the mansions of Old Metairie. A quarter-million dollars of flood insurance was not nearly enough to cover the damages. Despite the boosterism, political pronouncements and the expenditure of billions – only one-fourth, or 100,000 people, have returned to their homes permanently.

Almost all of our work since Katrina is in the living zone. Now we are doing amenity pruning, spraying for caterpillars in the oaks, termite treatments and even some tree planting. Every now and then someone living in a FEMA trailer in the dead zone will hire me to spray the caterpillars in his oak trees. The house is gutted, the neighborhood is total desolation, yet – they still see the need to spray the oak trees. I can’t bring myself to charge them the regular rate.

The dead zone remains. In February 2006, a tornado blew through Lakeview and spilled more rubble into the streets. FEMA and the Corps of Engineers have cleared the streets, creating a huge pile of debris in the West End Boulevard neutral ground. Some of the houses have been gutted and a few hardy souls are homesteading in their FEMA trailers. But the dead zone remains. Huge pines and oaks are still lying on roofs. Miles of dead magnolias line Paris Avenue, Broadway and Elysian Fields Boulevard from the city center to the lake. No sounds of chain saws can be heard. By the end of this coming summer, ragweed will be standing tall in the heat and Hypoxylon will be growing in the oak branches, making them brittle as glass. The other day, a client from the dead zone, near City Park, called for a price on the removal of a 60-foot pine tree. I’d treated this tree once for termites and the flood killed it. It was already brittle and hazardous to piece out.

“No problem,” he said, “just drop it on the house. We’re having it all demo’d and hauled in one go.”

The dead zone remains because of a lack of insurance, lack of housing and jobs and uncertainty over building permits and the future of the levees. There is a clash between insurance companies and homeowners in Mississippi over whether the damage was caused by wind or water. All the beachfront property was blown away by a 30 foot storm surge that sent debris over I-10, 20 miles away. Was it a flood, or wind-blown water? When Katrina blew through, cheaply built apartment complexes were compromised and evicted their tenants to renovate. Housing is in critical supply and apartment rents run from $1,200 to over $2,000 a month. Tree crews from out-of-town are sleeping in tents and campers in City Park for 30 bucks a night and thousands of people are commuting from Baton Rouge and the North Shore. Activists and politicians were demanding the right to vote in satellite voting centers, the right of return of residents and a foot-
print for the city that cedes no territory to the storm. But, eight months later, the reality is – the dead zone remains.

Debris disposal

The standard paradigm for disposal of tree debris by arborists has been altered by the storm. FEMA and the Corps of Engineers, through several tiers of contractors, sub-contractors and sub-sub-contractors, are moving and sorting all the curbside debris. This includes white goods (refrigerators, stoves, etc.), construction debris and tree debris. Special crews, armed with 1-ton trucks (with Texas plates) towing big steel gooseneck trailers are accompanied by loaders, pickup crews and even flaggers. The contractors, who are paid by the cubic yard delivered to the dump, are motivated to find and pick up as much debris as possible. Utility contractors left all the trash from utility line clearance in place. Sometimes homeowners got stuck with the job of moving debris to the street; as the utility bucket trucks did not tow any chippers.

As a result, it makes little sense for private tree companies to do any hauling for a fee. In the rare case where tree debris needs to be moved away from a work site, it can simply be dumped curbside somewhere else. The bigger the mess, the sooner it will get picked up.

Still, the costs of moving tree debris can get exorbitant. One of our clients had 75 large water oaks topple on a 3-acre site. The trees were 75 to 90 feet tall and the exposed root pans were 10 feet tall. A standard work crew quoted $90,000 just to clean the mess off the fence lines. This would require big trucks, loaders and even low-boy trailers to carry the big root balls away one at a time. There was a loophole, however.

The property was located on the Lower Coast of Algiers. The area contains an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course, an upscale subdivision, the Tulane University Primate Center, a private lake, woods and many cow pastures. This is a discreet enclave within the city limits of New Orleans where open burning was still allowed. My crew arrived in early February. First, we drilled a number of 1-inch-diameter by 18-inch-deep holes into the stumps of the trees. We packed the holes with ammonium nitrate prills (pellets) and watered them repeatedly to get the oxidizer dissolved into the stump wood. Then we bucked the trees, packing each root wad with logs, branches, flammable materials and an accelerant. One by one, the piles were touched off and kept burning for up to a week. The flames shot up 80 feet into the air sometimes. When it was all done, every bit of every log and stump was gone. Only ashes remained. The fires burned so hot, they converted the clay soil under the stumps to fire brick. Two of my men, working for three weeks, cleared the entire 3 acres for one-third of the contractor’s bid and planted 50 new, small trees.
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**Tree losses and consulting**

Trees were uprooted, snapped off or splintered. Tops were blown out, leaving dangerous hangers all over the place. The damage extended from Baton Rouge, La., east to Mobile, Ala., and in Mississippi, north to Hattiesburg. A few forest stands were a total loss, most pine stands took losses of about 50 percent of the stems. The damage to forest as well as amenity trees could have topped $10 billion. IRS rules have always allowed casualty loss status for trees that were destroyed by lightning, wind or flooding. They will not cover the loss of a tree killed by heart rot or Dutch elm disease. Trees killed by bark beetles are in a gray area. To claim a casualty loss, a taxpayer needs to fill out IRS Form 4684 and list the dollar amount on line 19 of Schedule A. The IRS has allowed more liberal treatment of casualty losses and an extension of the filing deadline to August 15 for those of us in the Katrina and Rita areas.

Though it is specifically allowed in the IRS manual, there is some debate among CPAs and tax lawyers over the appropriateness of casualty loss for trees. One CPA suggested that the invoice from the arborist for the tree removals represents the limits of loss for the trees. But, this amount does not address the diminution of the value of the property when the trees were lost. Old U.S. Forest Service research work suggests that identical properties with trees sell for 20 percent more than properties without them. Therefore, the landscape and amenity trees can be worth 20 percent of the gross market value of the property. It is this value increment that drives our industry. But, what if the fact that 200,000 homes were lost in New Orleans actually drives up the value of a north shore property that lost its trees in the storm? It is still going to be a hot summer in 2006 and a shaded house lot is more valuable in June!

A Louisiana state forester is doing a good business for forest landowners, calculating tax loss as a cost-of-cure. That is, the cost of cleaning up the mess. This is fine for unmerchantable trees, but what about the lost income from a future pulpwood or saw-log cut? There clearly are two separate losses incurred when trees fall down. First, you have the cost of cleaning up the mess, and grinding or removing the stumps. The sheer volume of wind-thrown pine trees has collapsed the local pulpwood market. Big pine logs with ring shakes that occurred during the storm are worthless as saw logs. Then, you have a loss to the property – either as income or as amenity – due to the loss of the trees. Many homes in St. Tammany Parish are located in wooded subdivisions, surrounded by remnant pine trees and where the backyard grades into a natural forest stand. The location values of these trees would grade from an optimal of 100 percent for a single specimen centered in the front yard to under 10 percent for the same tree that was located on the back fence line. If a tree was poorly taken care of, or had a significant V-crotch, rot or termite cavity, then its value for tax loss purposes may actually be close to zero. Species values vary, from 100 percent for baldcypress, southern magnolia, live oak or some of the nice under-story species, to 20 percent for invasive weed trees like Chinese tallow. My conservative evaluations have angered some homeowners with lower values than they expected. But, most of the time I can find tax credits that will, at least, pay the arborists’ cleanup bill for clients in the upper tax brackets.

Adrian S. Juttner is owner of Adrian’s Tree Service, Inc. in New Orleans, La., and a 15-year TCIA member.
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Safety is a competitive advantage for my company

By Randy Owen

In the start-up years of my business, I attended all the seminars and conferences that I could in order to expand my tree care business knowledge. The seminar that had the longest and most cost-effective impact on my company’s profitability was “Safety Is a Profit Center.”

This tree-worker-turned-businessman was able to understand how a company’s safety culture would save money. And, over the years, I have changed the way my company operates to improve safety.

For example, any of the production staff can refuse to do any job if they feel uncomfortable with any issue, such as if they believe that the job is too hazardous for their abilities, too close to wires or obstacles, or any other safety issue. They will communicate to their direct supervisor why, but they will never be belittled or chastised by anyone or questioned again. Then management looks at the issues and makes the best choice to move forward and overcome the issue or obstacle.

A safety culture is a lot deeper than passing out personal protective equipment (PPE) in the morning. It has to be in the core values of the corporate culture. Safety has to be equal to profitability in management’s eyes. It starts with a properly trained work force.

In our company we have a meeting, called “Near-miss Monday,” every Monday morning at 6 a.m. with the entire tree production staff. One or more staff members talk about a near-miss situation or safety problem from the previous work week. As this safety meeting has matured and evolved, there is more honesty in the field about safety issues and issues are being brought forward each week. The employees discuss their experiences and share how to make their work sites safer. They also discuss what situations to watch out for and prevent from getting out of control. We document the topics talked about each week and all in attendance sign an attendance sheet showing that they were there.

Everyone says that their workers are the best, but the insurance mod (experience modification) rate tells the story.

Safety training is an investment that does pay back. One of our investments in safety last year was in TCIA’s Accreditation program. It included a safety audit. At our company the biggest problem was that we were not documenting what safety training was done, when it was done, and who was there. Now we document all training and safety programs and we reap many benefits, such as OSHA training compliance and Accreditation compliance. And, we reap large savings on our insurance premiums and renewals.

There is some excitement in our industry from the new TCIA Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) program. One of the program’s goals is coaching thinking patterns and creating an understanding of positive safety. As the owner, you can’t be everywhere. Having a certified professional who can take your commitment to safety into the field every day is invaluable. Having a trained safety manager helping you create a culture of safety with your crews will pay dividends. This is beneficial in more ways that just saving money on your insurance premiums. You will attract and retain higher quality individuals, have better customer and public perception, and have improved damage control and equipment abuse control.

Randy J. Owen is president of Owen Tree Service Inc. in Attica, Mich., and a member of the TCIA Board of Directors.

Safety is a Profit Center

Compiled by two insurance industry veterans

An effective safety (or loss control) program and good loss experience can significantly affect your ability to be competitive and your bottom line.

Four Safety Attributes

From an insurance company perspective, there are four significant attributes that we look for in an effective loss control program.

First is the attitude of management. We expect management to understand that loss control is an integral part of company operations and that controlling losses is a top priority, just as much as selling and delivering a quality service.

Second, we evaluate all of the exposures in your operations and develop recommendations that would improve operations or eliminate hazards.

Third, we look for the opportunity for improvement in your operations and develop recommendations that would improve operations or eliminate hazards. We also weigh management’s attitude toward complying with these recommendations.

Fourth, we evaluate all of the exposures in your operations and develop recommendations that would improve operations or eliminate hazards. We also weigh management’s attitude toward complying with these recommendations.
When John Eisenhower, president of Integrity Tree Service, Inc. in Scottsdale, Arizona, started the business in 1989, he chose the name Integrity because that word defined how he wanted the company to operate.

“We believed from the start that if we did everything above board, hired legal workers, paid all of our taxes, maintained the right insurance, and delivered quality work, customers would follow,” says Eisenhower. “And we knew that a mindset of integrity would set the bar high for ourselves. Our calling card is quality pruning with an attention to detail. We emphasize that we have certified arborists on staff who adhere to the ANSI A300 pruning standards.”

Of course, most consumers can’t recognize the subtle differences between proper pruning and unprofessional hacking – and few have heard of the A300 standards – so Eisenhower works to educate consumers while selling tree work. He explains what proper pruning is during the on-site consultation stage. Included with proposals is information about pruning standards and practices. They also have an A300 summary sheet with definitions that they e-mail to potential clients along with proposals.

Word has indeed spread in the greater Phoenix area about a company that operates with professional integrity – from satisfied clients to landscape companies who refer work.

“Most of our business is word of mouth at this point,” explains Eisenhower. “We dropped our ad in the Yellow Pages two years ago to put the money into strategic business planning. We don’t spend any money on newspaper advertising either. We keep very busy through client referrals, and a number of landscape companies in the area have come to trust us with all of their customers’ tree work. A couple of the larger ones have made us their ‘go to’ tree service.”

When Eisenhower first heard about the Accreditation program launched by TCIA he knew its goals were a perfect match for the direction he wanted to take his company.

“The Accreditation process was in step with everything we wanted to accomplish, every-

where we wanted to go,” he confirms. “We had been working pretty hard over the last year on a lot of the same items on the Accreditation checklist. We knew Accreditation would help hold our feet to the fire to bring our company to where we wanted to be. We had a strategic business plan and that plan dovetailed beautifully with Accreditation.”

Of course, long-range planning is difficult for a small company. Setting up business systems that will improve profitability next month and next year doesn’t necessarily help make payroll next week. For that reason, many smaller company owners don’t think they can afford the time to become Accredited. Eisenhower disputes that notion.

Integrity is a small company, with just nine employees. Eisenhower believes that Accreditation is not only possible for small companies but that one of the greatest benefits will be enjoyed precisely because they are smaller companies.

He notes that large firms have employees whose job is to make sure the company follows all of the regulations, laws and rules that apply to a commercial tree care company. For the smaller firm, that job often falls on the owner.

(Continued on page 84)
TCIA Student Career Days is an annual event held in conjunction with TCI EXPO. Students in two-year and four-year collegiate programs as well as students in vocational training programs are invited to attend with the intent being to open their eyes to the world of commercial arboriculture. It is also a chance for employers to eye prospective employees.

The 10th Annual TCIA Student Career Days will be held during TCI EXPO 2006, Thursday, November 9, through Saturday, November 11, 2006 at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, Md.

Students will have the opportunity to compete in the Tree Care Skills Competition, a friendly and fun competition with plenty of events for students at various skill levels – and lots of great prizes! Students can attend TCI EXPO educational seminars, Career Day workshops for students only, and live arborist demonstrations on the huge TCI EXPO trade show floor.

The live arborist demonstrations are facilitated by International Tree Climbing Competition champions and other widely known tree care experts who demonstrate the latest techniques in tree climbing, rigging for removal, cabling and bracing, and more, all on a full-size tree on the show floor.

And then there are the job opportunities. But, why should an arboriculture student attend Student Career Days when jobs in the industry are so easy to find?

“My advice to a student in arboriculture today is to pick an employer carefully,” says Peter Gerstenberger, senior advisor to the president for safety, compliance and standards for the Tree Care Industry Association. “Jobs are plentiful, so the challenge becomes finding a position that best matches your career goals. An event like Career Days exposes you to the big world of tree care; it can really broaden your horizons.”

Here’s what participants have told us:

Howard L. Eyre, assistant professor at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, Penn., brings his students to TCI EXPO every year. When asked to describe his students’ impressions of TCI EXPO, Howard stated, “One of them has attended three of the EXPOs, and when he walks in, he feels right at home. He’s starting to feel he can be part of this industry. They have always been warmly received, unlike other (industry) EXPOs. Everyone wants to talk and interact with them. First-time attendees walk around with their jaws hanging open at first, because they don’t realize the extent of the industry. It makes them think about other career opportunities.”

Student Career Days and TCI EXPO 2006 events are free for pre-registered students and their advisors. Contact Debbie Cyr at cyr@treecareindustry.org for more information. Download the pre-registration form at www.treecareindustry.org/Public/meetings_expo_careerdays.htm.

While Student Career Days focuses on education and skills, the Job Fair is all about jobs. Here, a representative from SavATree talks with two prospects.

Students looking to take part in the Job Fair can contact Peter Gerstenberger at 1-800-733-2622 or peter@tcia.org.

TCIA Student Career Days Schedule at a Glance

**Thursday, November 9**
7 a.m.-4 p.m. – Student/Instructor registration/check-in and T-shirt give-away

**Friday, November 10**
7 a.m.-4 p.m. – Student/Instructor registration
8 a.m.-4 p.m. – Tree Care Skills Competition - (Park TBA)

A complimentary continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Safety & Knowledge Exams (pre-registered students only):

- Tree Care Skills Competition - Written Exam
- Tree Care Skills Competition - Safety Exam
- Tree Care Skills Competition - Climbing & Throwline events

**Saturday, November 11**
7 a.m.-3 p.m. – Student/Instructor registration
8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. – Job and Internship Fair, Baltimore Convention Center - Rooms 318-321

Don’t miss this opportunity to meet with representatives from the largest tree care companies in the country. Attend the Job and Internship Fair to receive a complimentary breakfast buffet and be eligible to win prizes! Drawings will be held for prizes and you must be present to win.

Noon-12:45 p.m. – Tree Care Skills Competition Awards Ceremony, Tree Demonstration Area, trade show floor.

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Starting something special

Kevin Caldwell, owner of Caldwell Tree Care in Roswell, Ga., had a busy April on behalf of the Voice for Trees political action committee.

He spent the weekend at the Ritz Carlton and played a round of golf at a fundraiser for Congressman Charlie Norwood. Also at the event were Senator Johnny Isakson, Senator Mike Enzi, House Majority Leader John Boehner, Congressman Steve Buyer, Congressman Jim McCrery and Congressman Lynn Westmoreland. He also joined TCIA members Eileen M. Rattiner with Performance Capital Group and Bob Delbridge with 404-Cut-Tree in delivering a VFT-PAC check to Senator Johnny Isakson.

“I had a lot of personal time with Congressman Norwood and others,” says Caldwell. “We spent about 20 minutes with him when we arrived. I had seen him before in Washington as a representative of groups from my state. This was the first time we weren’t asking him for something. Instead, we had our checkbook out. I thanked him for looking out for small companies and helping make OSHA fairer in dealing with small companies.”

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Experts offer different ideas about who can influence elected officials, but the real advocates are the informed constituents who interact with members of Congress. According to a survey by the Congressional Management Foundation, 60 percent of congressional staff believe constituent visits have “a lot” of influence on undecided members of Congress, compared with only 15 percent who believe lobbyist visits have “a lot” of influence.

“ Armed with solid research, a thoughtful story to tell, and a good legislative strategy, a group of well-organized constituents with a national association behind them can have a profound impact on decisions in Congress.

“I have never delivered a check to a Congressman personally before,” admits Caldwell, “but these guys love seeing real people. They are tired of seeing lobbyists. My wife and I were the only non-professional lobbyists there. I got a very good sense that they want to talk to constituents who run real businesses and employ people in their states.”

More to do

A 20-minute meeting like Caldwell’s is just the start. TCIA is at the beginning of a long process of creating a local connection with members of Congress. We’re also introducing our industry to staff. With members of Congress forced to make thousands of decisions each year on legislative issues, they rely heavily on their staff for advice. With the help of our members, we are building relationships by continuing a dialogue before and after our meetings.

“Being able to walk into a Senator’s office and get his attention, without asking him for anything or complaining about something, will help us in the future,” says Caldwell. “If we have a crisis that affects our business someday, they will know who we are and what we do.”

Everything done with Integrity

(Continued from page 81)

who just doesn’t have the time. Accreditation can help.

“Accreditation has moved our business forward in a lot of areas,” he says. “It opened my eyes to legal requirements from OSHA and the Department of Transportation. TCIA also provided lots of forms, templates and checklists that really simplified the whole process. That was a big benefit. Accreditation will help us with employee reviews, too, in letting the guys see where they are, helping them set personal goals, and pushing us all toward where we want to go. I can’t say enough about the program and how excited we are with the credential.”

Eisenhower did most of the work toward Accreditation himself, with the help of his field supervisors, but he also credits Bob Rouse [TCIA director of Accreditation] with helping move them along. “Bob was awesome. He was available by phone or e-mail whenever I had any questions. We saw early on that TCIA was our partner in helping us achieve our company goals and we were simply borrowing from their years of experience in business management. When I brought the Accreditation checklist to our business consultant, he was very impressed with the depth and thoroughness of the program. He is a very sharp consultant and has developed a high level of respect for TCIA and the business help the association provides.”

In preparation for his audit, Eisenhower can’t guess at how many hours it took to become accredited, though he estimates it wasn’t too many.

“I was a little scared when I set the on-site audit date, wondering if we would be ready,” he says. “We didn’t pass everything during the audit. There were a few critical action items we needed to complete and send in afterward. Then, a couple weeks later, we received final word that we were the first accredited company in the state.

“It makes the guys proud to be part of an organization that takes safety and quality work seriously,” he stresses. “It also helps our small team pull together by gaining recognition that we are doing things right. A few years ago we included in our mission statement that we wanted to become the best tree service in Arizona. We still have a long way to go, but with Accreditation, I can sleep well at night knowing that we are doing everything we are supposed to do.”
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Safety is a Profit Center

(Continued from page 80)

Fourth, we look at accident frequency (the number of accidents) more critically than severity (the dollar costs). Even though the dollar amounts paid or reserved for losses may be low, high accident frequently tells us that controls are either not in place or are not effective. Besides, accident severity is all a matter of degree. A splinter in the eye for example, can be a first-aid visit to the doctor or it can be the loss of an eye. It’s all a matter of millimeters.

Pricing an account

In order to properly price an account, insurance underwriters need a completed application, three complete years of currently valued loss information on your various exposures, and an evaluation of your existing loss control program and its effectiveness.

With this information, underwriters can price your general liability, automobile, property, equipment and workers' compensation exposures and calculate a premium that is appropriate for each given situation.

Now, let’s walk through a couple examples to demonstrate how your loss control or safety program has a profound impact on your bottom line.

Factors for pricing insurance

A number of factors go into pricing insurance. Rates — The base rate for an industry is historically calculated annually as the rate needed for your class to pay losses, loss expenses, administration and allow for a modest profit. It is related to an element of exposure common to all risks in the class and represents exposure to loss, based upon a dollar level (or maximum) of $25,000. Why $25,000? This is the amount, under which, most of your losses occur.

Exposures — This is simply the exposure base used to calculate your premium. The calculated manual rates are applied to exposure bases. For example:

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<td>Per unit, usually actual cash value (ACV)</td>
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<td>Workers’ Compensation</td>
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Increase limit factor (ILF) — Since the base rate developed covers losses under $25,000 and most insureds need or want more insurance for the potential large losses that may occur, the ILF is the multiplicative factor used to provide you the limits of liability that you want or need. For example, $1 million worth of limits may be 2.0 times the base premium for $25,000 of coverage.

Experience, credits and debits — Three complete years of loss data is run through a formula to calculate your individual credits or debits, based upon your particular loss experience, compared to that of similar tree and landscape companies.

Schedule credits or debits — This factor is where underwriting judgment comes into play and is the area where management attitude and an effective loss control program can be most beneficial.

Example: Let’s walk through an example, using general liability insurance as a model. The general liability base rate for $25,000 of coverage is multiplied by the increase limit factor and the exposure base to give you the base premium.

In our example (For illustrative purposes ONLY):

- Base rate for $25,000 of coverage = $5
- Increase limit factor for $1 million of coverage = 2.00
- Exposure base = $3,000,000 in sales/$1,000 = 3,000

Base rate X Exposure X ILF = Base Premium

$5.00 X 3,000 X 2.00 = $30,000

By comparison

Remembering that our manual base premium as calculated above is $30,000, let’s compare two companies to demonstrate how your insurance rate is affected by experience rating and schedule credits, and how your safety program can impact your bottom line.

ABC Tree Care has had much better than expected loss experience with a lower-than-average accident frequently. When the loss information is run through the experience formula, a experience credit of 20 percent is developed, which modifies the base premium of $30,000 to $24,000, which is $30,000 X .80. When the underwriter evaluates ABC for schedule rating, it is noted that ABC has been in business for many years with a formal written safety program, including regular safety meetings, formal safety training, accident investigation, and jobs being pre-planned or inspected prior to work being done. Because of this, a full 25 percent schedule credit is given and the total premium for ABC now becomes $18,000, or $24,000 X .75.

XYZ Tree Service, on the other hand, has had worse than expected loss experience with a high frequency of losses and a large loss a few years back. When the loss information is run through the formula, a 10 percent debit is calculated, resulting in an experience rated premium of $33,000, or $30,000 X 1.10.

When reviewing the submission, the underwriter notes that XYZ has little experience in the tree care industry, does not have a formal written safety program, does not have regular safety meetings, does not have formal safety training for employees, and does not investigate accidents. The underwriter then applies a 25 percent schedule debit and the total premium for XYZ becomes $41,250, or $33,000 X 1.25.

$18,000 versus $41,250 Does safety pay? You bet it does!

Good attitude, good loss control programs and a good loss experience reward ABC with a premium less than half that of its competitor. The underwriter

Team safety pays off

Management commitment to the company’s safety program is an absolute necessity. You must care about safety and quality much as you do about productivity. Your program has to be one with action — not just words or a safety manual sitting on a shelf.

Here are some of the attributes of an effective program:

- Explain to employees that accidents cost the company money and without money there can’t be salaries, raises or promotions. Let them know that safety is a profit center of the company.
- Establish achievement and recognition programs to gain employee support and involvement. Peer pressure is also effective. If an employee is not following safe practices, nobody knows it better than his or her co-workers.
- Hold regular safety meetings and form a safety committee. Regular communication is vital to the continued life of an effective safety program.
- Conduct formal safety training for all employees. Make sure this is documented and signed off by all employees with written warnings given to all violators.
- Develop consistent human resource policies that include a standard job application, job descriptions, background checks, motor vehicle reports, and a comprehensive interview.
- Review Motor Vehicle Reports for ALL drivers and take appropriate when needed.
- Provide technical training to staff as needed to maintain competencies.
- Implement a scheduled maintenance program for all automobiles and equipment and keep a log for verification.
- Conduct road tests prior to operating company vehicles and train drivers in defensive driver techniques.

Summary

Safety pays big dividends in reduced insurance costs and improved operations with fewer losses that disrupt overall operations. This allows a company to be more competitive and produce an even higher quality product that distinguishes them in the industry!
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Founding Partners recommit to Career Days’ success

The F.A. Bartlett Tree Experts have signed on to continue their commitment to the success of the Student Career Days run at TCI EXPO. Based in Stamford, Conn., Bartlett has provided services and been a leader in the tree care industry since 1907. A partner since the inception of Student Career Days, Bartlett has given from their nearly 100 years of expertise on many levels of the program, having helped shape it into its current format.

The Davey Tree Expert Company of Kent, Ohio, provides arboricultural and horticultural services throughout North America. Davey has partnered with TCIA on many levels and has committed this commitment, Davey has provided funding as well as their time and talent to the preparation and implementation of an exemplary program.

Partners Advancing Commercial Treecare (PACT) is a strategic partnership with the Tree Care Industry Association that will allow your company to gain maximum exposure to our membership and other partners.

For more information about PACT and to see how your company can benefit, please contact Kim Anastasiou at 1-800-733-2622 or at kim@treecareindustry.org.
TREES AND BEEs GO TOGETHER!

By Elmer Pyke

Trees and bees go together. It was only a matter of time after I got into tree work that the crew got all upset because of bees. I watched them, running around, swatting at the bees, some of them getting stung. I didn’t pay any attention to the bees and I didn’t get stung. I told the guys you run around, swatting them, that’s why you get stung! They said your crazy!

I was up a tree trimming it one day, when Bob Lewis (owner of Lewis Tree Service at the time) drove up. He came over to my tree and told me to come down. He’s the boss, so I came down. The crew was standing around him listening when I got down. Bob told us that, there was a tree with a swarm of bees. People were getting stung, and they were looking for somebody to get the bee hive out of the tree. They had a bee keeper there that would take the bees – if somebody would climb the tree and bring them down. Bob was looking at me while he was talking. He asked “Any volunteers?” Still looking at me! Well what could I do? I volunteered!

I got my climbing gear and put it in Bob’s car. While he drove us over to the tree, he explained that the bee keeper would tell me how to get the bees, and he would get them into his hive. Bob said the man had a lot of bee hives. He introduced me to the bee man, Ed, who started giving us an education on bees, telling us bees won’t sting unless their excited or you get in their way. These bees are swarming, they want to get into the hive with the queen bee. If you stay out of their way, they won’t sting. Ed gave me a hat with a net covering my neck and a pair of gloves with long sleeves. With these on I wasn’t worried about being stung. Ed said, “cut the limb with the hive on it as small as you can, slowly and gently let it down to me, so I can put it on the pavement.” I followed his directions, slowly, carefully cutting and gently lowering the limb with the hive down to Ed; all this time the bees are swarming around the hive. Ed has a smoke machine set up to blow smoke on the bees quieting them. It worked, allowing Ed to brush them into his own hive.

Watching Ed handle them, I thought, “Ed is Mr. Bee Man for sure.” Then I got so interested in the whole thing I started helping Ed put the bees in the hive. In no time bees are covering my arms. I’m calmly brushing them off my arms into the hive and not getting stung. I got a glimpse of the crew watching me, with bees all over my arms, brushing them into the hive. I started getting nervous, so I moved slowly away from the hive, continuing to brush them off me. I was nervous but I didn’t loose it! After all that, I only got stung once, when a bee got under my shirt collar, stinging when it got squeezed.

Over the years I’ve had a lot of bee episodes. One I remember because I was stung a lot, and it would have been a lot worse except for an aerosol can of tree paint. I had a maple tree to trim, located in the village of Camillus, (home of Camillus Knives). I put a 30 foot ladder against the trunk, climbed up it, and then tied in directly in front of me. I could do all the work from there, but it turned out to be a big mistake. My first saw cut – Ouch! I’m being attacked and stung by bees, swarming all over me and the tree. “Dennis, help! Bees!”

Dennis, our groundman, can’t do anything to help me. I’ve got to get out of this tree, but I can’t get off the ladder because of the way I tied in. I don’t have enough slack and I can’t get any because I’m too busy swatting bees, bees that are stinging me! They are swarming all over me and the tree. I am in trouble. I’m killing bees with my bare hands when out of the blue “tree paint” pops into my head. “Dennis, give me a can of tree paint.” He ran to get a can of paint, tying it on my rope. I pulled it up and started spraying them with tree paint, and of course painting them and me. I don’t care, the paint hits them and they can’t move or sting me. It takes awhile for them to die, but they can’t move or sting, so who cares? The tree paint saved my butt, and maybe my life. Bee spray would have stopped them, not as soon, and it would have been bad for me breathing that poison in. I always told people, bees don’t bother me – well, I don’t panic – but I’ve got more respect for them. I told my son in law, Rick one time, bees don’t bother me. A few minutes later I was stung twice. Rick exclaimed, “I thought you said bees don’t bother you?” I told him, “I said ‘bees don’t bother me, I didn’t say bees don’t sting me!’” Rick is a great guy, he is also the father of my grandson, Alex.

Elmer Pyke is founder of Elmer Pyke Tree Specialist in Syracuse, N.Y. This excerpt is from what he hopes one day will be a book.
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