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As Seasons Change...

Like our lives, businesses go through seasons of change. Somewhere along our paths, we grow to believe that things don’t change – and really, constant change is all that happens in life. Sometimes change comes in small increments, and sometimes it’s significantly larger. How we plan for, manage, experience and react to change are the things that are within our control and really are a measure of our maturity as individuals and industry leaders.

In business, change can bring new insights that allow us to put resources together in ways that we never thought of before, which create new products or cut costs or reposition a product line. External change, as we have all been feeling sharply since last year, can also be the catalyst to change. Sometimes the changes are painful and are thrust upon us, but again, how we react to them and whether we dig in and figure it out or succumb to them, are within our control. Sometimes those are the biggest learning moments for us. They can also be highly valuable teaching opportunities when engaging with others around us.

Change is not an enemy. It is one of the facets of our life experiences. It creates moments of great creativity. It provides opportunities for people to exceed their expectations of themselves. It satisfies the human need in us not to just vegetate but to interact with our world and the people around us to make a difference. It provides opportunities to look at situations differently. Finding out what we’re made of throughout each season of life is part of the constant growth path that we are all on. This is mirrored in our business lives. It’s a fabulous feeling when you realize, as an individual or a team, that you were able to pull something off that you had no idea that you really had the capacity for. It starts when we’re little ones, and we watch the delight on a child’s face when they take their first steps or connect the bat to the ball the first time. There can be great joy in reaching the next step. That’s change in its simplest form, and the reaction of pure elation is one we can choose over fear throughout our lives.

That is not to say that real tragedy does not enter our lives in business or personally. It most certainly does. What remains true through those experiences is how we process them, react to them and choose to engage the rest of our lives. We can be defined by tragedy and trauma, or it can be a great teacher.

Change is also a very personal thing. The only people we can change are ourselves. Any counseling course will tell you that when you go into a setting with multiple people who want to change a dynamic, the only thing you can focus on is changing yourself. You can hope others change in relationship to your change, but you cannot make it happen. In our businesses, we can lay out a path for how we want change to evolve – and evolution is always better than revolution. We can paint a picture and communicate how things will be better as we travel a new path together. However, we cannot force the people around us to change. That must be a day by day choice of their own.

In the tree care industry, we have seen the latter especially illustrated in safety. The CTSP program has been working to change a tragedy of high loss of life by working to affect and change behavior personally by person in every company. Where companies are embracing a culture of safety, individuals are stepping up to the plate and changing one by one, which is in turn changing the culture. This is a great example of how tragedy can be a motivator, and yet to get an entire company to a change is still a very personal thing. It takes each person.

As the tree care industry continues along its path to transformation, it will take each and every one of you making the decision on a daily basis to change. Transformation doesn’t happen TO you – you choose it. Your election to walk that path as individuals will help you arrive at a point where the industry has transformed completely. You’ll know it when you get there – the seasons will have changed...

Cynthia Mills, CAE, CMC
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ON THE COVER: This tree in Federal Hill Park, overlooking Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, may be a good candidate for the Student Career Days’ TCI CSI, where arboriculture students attending TCI EXPO are challenged to diagnose problems with trees. TCI EXPO comes to Baltimore again this November. Photo courtesy of boyghost/Michael Wriston, www.flickr.com.
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By John Ball, CTSP

The odds of dying on any given day as a tree worker are about 1 in 300,000. This does not seem very risky, but you are not working just for a day but five days every week, year in and year out. So, these odds compound over time, becoming less in your favor. Consider for a moment the risk for a WWII bomber crew over Europe. The odds of surviving a single mission were fairly good, but the odds of surviving 25 missions were less than 1 in 3, and 50 missions less than 1 in 5. The more missions you flew, the less likely you would be coming back.

When tree workers hear that their odds of dying on the job increases as they age, they assume (particularly if they are young) the reason is that older workers are complacent or slower. Slowness is not a major factor; even a healthy 20-year old cannot outrun a falling tree. Complacency may play a role – the longer you do a task, the more routine it becomes in your mind and it is easy to gloss over details that may be the genesis of an accident. However, the real reason that risk increases with age is the length of exposure. Every day you work is another day you beat the odds and a day closer to when you will not.

And the odds you have to beat are high compared to most other professions. Pick almost any occupation you want that has a reputation being high risk – police, fire and mining – as examples, but unless you chose commercial fisheries or logging, you are far better off changing jobs.

Not only are your risks high as a tree worker, the manner in which you can be injured or killed are incredibly varied.

What are these varied exposure risks to tree workers? One of the most common accidents we face does not involve a tree but a truck. Vehicle accidents rank high among tree workers. It should not be too surprising, after all we drive to trees; our customers do not bring their trees to us. And the road is a dangerous place to be. Transportation accidents are some of our most common sources of non-fatal accidents for tree workers and, sadly, some fatalities as well.

These accidents, typically a vehicle crash, have one factor in common – the victim was not wearing a seat belt. If we could get every tree worker to wear a seat belt, transportation related accidents would drop off significantly. We could probably eliminate most of the other transportation accidents if defensive driving was part of every company’s safety program. If there is one failing of many company safety programs, it is the lack of attention to improving workers’ defensive driving skills. Many companies have safety sessions and workshops devoted to chain saw safety and proper climbing techniques, among others, but driver training is often neglected. When you consider how much time the average tree worker spends behind the wheel, driver safety programs should be one of the top priorities.

Of course our biggest exposure risks start when we get to the job site. Many of our serious injuries and fatalities involve the victim being struck by a branch or tree, struck-bys account for almost a third of all our fatalities. The victim in most of these
accidents is not the person running the saw but a worker who had the misfortune of standing in the wrong spot at the wrong time. There are two common factors in these accidents; no one established a work zone and no communication system was employed.

Establishing a work zone should be one of first items of business when the crew arrives at a job site. This zone is where the branches or whole tree is expected to fall and everyone should stay clear of this zone unless there is a very specific need to be there. A common reason a worker is injured or killed by falling branches or trees is they were merely walking through the area on their way to do another task, not that they had a specific need to be in the zone. If a work zone was established at every job site and a command and reply system used when cutting, we could reduce a significant number of these contact accidents.

Chain saws

Chain saws are the primary source for our minor non-fatal accidents. These saw injuries constitute about a quarter of our non-fatal accidents, but few fatalities. The reason that chain saws injure, rather than kill, is that most tree workers are now wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment when operating a saw. The few fatalities we see occur mostly to climbers or aerial lift operators as they are holding the saw in odd positions, often above their shoulders, and the saw kicks back striking the upper body or head. Everyone needs to be a little more cautious operating chain saws off the ground. Your body is not as well protected from saw cuts as when you are on the ground; and, with aerial accidents, you stand a greater risk of bleeding out before help can reach you.

Chippers

Another source of accidents in the contact category is the chipper. Chippers account for the high number of amputations in our industry, usually to the foot but sometimes the hand. The most common reason for chipper accidents is the worker neglecting to follow the safety instructions for the chipper, which clearly say and show, regardless of manufacturer, to keep your feet off the infeed and do not kick brush in or feed it with your hands (in the chute).

Falls

What about falls? These represent only a small percentage of our minor accidents but close to a third of our fatalities. When you fall, particularly at the height we can work, the results are not minor injuries but fatalities. Forty feet seems to be the threshold for accidents going from non-fatal to fatal. While we have fatalities from seven-foot falls and survivals from 80-foot falls, once above 40 feet the majority of falls are fatal. Most of our fall accidents occur with climbers, often while they are repositioning and unclip from the line for a second to isolate it.

The other major source is the climber falling with the tree, rather than from it. These accidents often occur when a worker is pushing the job by improperly loading lines while rigging. Usually the tree was not properly evaluated and there was extensive decay near the base that was missed. The climber, unaware of the instability of the tree, attempts to bring down large pieces, subjecting the tree to shock loading. This combination, shock loading a heavy load from a tree with an unstable base, results in the tree coming down and dragging the climber with it.

Aerial lifts generate a significant number of accidents both non-fatal and fatal. Some falls occur to workers that neglect to snap their lanyard to the boom. Once recent accident occurred when a worker had a boom fully extended but still could not quite reach the branch to be cut. Everyone reading this has experienced the frustration where you have the aerial lift up or out as far as it can go but you still cannot reach the branch and you do not want to do another set up. What did he do? He unclipped the lanyard and got out of the bucket to stand on the lip while he reached up to cut the branch. Unfortunately he slipped and fell to his death.

While these types of accidents are common with aerial lifts, your greatest risk is not falling from the aerial lift but falling with the aerial lift. Typically, the lift is more than 15 years old and it’s on its third owner. There can be a lot of deferred maintenance built up in a lift over that time as owners just sell a lift rather than do any maintenance; essentially selling their troubles to someone else. The other problem is the manufacturer no longer has any contact with the owner and safety recalls are
missed. Everyone owning a lift should contact the manufacturer so they can be notified of any recalls or other safety issues.

We had one recent accident where the current owner (he was the third) of a 19-year-old lift suffered severe injuries to the legs and back when the cylinder rod sheared off and the lift fell more than 20 feet. The owner recently had the lift in the shop and they had ordered a new cylinder rod, but he continued to work with the lift until the new part came in; unfortunately, it failed before the part was replaced.

**Electrical contact**

Electrical contact represents only a small percentage of our non-fatal accidents. This is not too surprising; when you tangle with 14.4 kV conductor, the outcome is usually fatal. Electrical contact accounts for more than one fifth of all our fatalities and still is the single most common way a tree worker is killed.

Contact with an object as a category usually has the most fatalities, but there are a lot of ways that you can die in a contact accident: chipper, chain saw, falling branches and trees. Surprisingly direct contact with the conductor, either through your hand or back shoulder, is almost as common as indirect contact through a conductive tool. The most common reason for an accident involving an electrical conductor is the worker did not notice the conductor was there. This is something a crew’s site inspection should have revealed, but too often workers arrive at the job and begin the work rather than spending time establishing work zones and inspecting for hazard.

While we do not have a lot of non-fatal accidents associated with electrical conductors, the ones we do have are not pretty. Many companies use an electrical shock as the scenario for their aerial rescue training. The dummy hanging in the tree has contacted an electrical conductor and is not breathing so the rescuer needs to get the victim down as soon as possible. While this is a common practice scenario, it is not the most common type of aerial rescue. The majority of aerial rescues are per-
formed on tree workers that are trapped and pinned in the tree, not hanging out in an open canopy with a clear approach to the ground.

Even our non-fatal electrical contact accidents differ from the type practiced. The victim may be having difficulty breathing, but most commonly they have suffered broken bones, severe burns and even spinal cord injury. These are not easy medical conditions to deal with for the rescuer, but the next time you practice a rescue, consider that in a real one you might come face to face with a fellow worker whose face or arm looks like goo and is screaming in pain rather than a passive dummy.

**Attitude and behavior**

The biggest safety factor we need to improve is worker behavior. Too often workers brush off close calls, but close calls are trying to tell you something. They are telling you that you have made a mistake, but did not end in an accident. I define an accident as a series of mistakes made in the proper sequence. When someone tells me that they have done a task thousands of times but never had an accident until today, I say no, today you did at least one thing different from the thousands of time before.

**Training, and safety culture**

What are some ways to reduce your risk? Start with the company for which you work. Companies that take safety to heart, creating and fostering a culture of safety that surrounds all aspects of the work, tend to have fewer accidents. Dwayne Neusteter, trainer with North American Training Solutions, summed this up once by saying, “You’re only as safe as your least trained worker.” Many tree workers are not injured or killed by a mistake they made, but by a mistake made by another worker. You want to work for a company that trains all the workers, not just a few of the top climbers.

Another factor is working for a company that is a member of the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA); they typically have fewer accidents than non-member compa-
TCIA member companies tend to train workers more often than the average company and provide better training.

Ultimately, when you really come down to it, you are responsible for your own safety. It is not the government, the company you work for or even your coworkers primary responsibility. Obviously the government is charged with the role of setting and enforcing safety standards and regulations; the company has to create and foster a culture of safety, and everyone should look out for their buddies on the job. But no thing or no one has more responsibility to your own safety than you.

Everyone reading this has probably done a job where at one point you got the feeling, that little voice, that something was about to go wrong. But instead of stopping to consider what was wrong with the situation, you instead decided to make the cut and get the job over as soon as possible. Instead, we ought to be listening to that little voice and stopping to reassess the situation. Sometimes when I am reading investigation reports of tree worker accidents, I’ll read where the crew says the victim, high up in the tree, said things just were not looking right, but choose to continue the work – and died as a consequence.

Listen to that little voice. I know we are all under a lot of pressure for production and we have to get the job done. But think how many lives we could save if we just slowed down, took a deep breath and thought things over.

Dr. John Ball is a professor of forestry at South Dakota State University where he teaches arboriculture and forestry as well as conducts research into tree worker safety. He is a certified treecare safety professional (CTSP) as well as a certified arborist and forester. This article was taken from his presentation on the same subject at TCI EXPO 2008 in Milwaukee. He will be making an updated presentation at TCI EXPO 2009 in Baltimore next month.
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When speaking to groups about assessing the risk associated with trees, I often ask how many people believe they are an unbiased source of information. Frequently, many hands appear. Most consulting arborists submit that, because they do not offer contracting services, they offer an unbiased opinion. I expect this is rarely, if ever, truly the case.

In 1991, I was involved in a catastrophic tree failure that killed a young climber. I have since made it a principle of my own arboricultural consulting firm that we will endeavor to prevent any tree we are asked to look at from killing anyone ever again. I personally couldn’t go through an event like that again and remain in this business. However, this has indeed biased my own perspective and recommendations regarding trees – a bias I acknowledge and a principle I am unwilling to compromise. It is a bias nonetheless, and it affects how I approach tree risk assessment.

Recognizing this bias has resulted in trying to identify where it comes from and how to mitigate its effect and the consequences regarding my opinions of tree risk. I am also interested in how I might teach others to recognize their own biases. My hope is that presenting this discussion will help other arborists improve their services, not just regarding tree risk assessment but throughout their arboriculture practices. After all, in the worst case, these biases can lead to bad decisions that result in the death or injury of others. In my case, bias might lead to the removal of trees that could have been safely preserved for the benefit of their owners.

My primary source for this discussion is Risk Management in Projects, by Martin Loosemore, John Raftery, David Higgon and Charles Reilly. It’s an easy read and well worth the time invested. It was written in relation to the management of large construction projects, but the concepts of the perceptions of risk and the influences of bias seem to very naturally apply to our assessment of the risk of trees.

What I learned from this source is that with regard to risk assessment there are two primary forms of bias: personal bias and reporting bias. “Personal biases are associated with people’s own psychological make-up, education, experience, culture, beliefs, values, etc. Reporting biases are introduced when people talk or report to each other.” My own admitted bias is, therefore, primarily a personal bias arising from a previous negative experience and my own beliefs and values. But there are other forms of personal bias of which we should be aware.

Rules of thumb can import a bias into decision-making regarding risk. It is important to remember when evaluating tree risk that rules of thumb are typically based on experience and may not apply directly to new situations. This doesn’t mean rules of thumb are not useful or helpful, only that they may create a biased outcome in any situation where any of the risk parameters are different from previous situations. In tree risk assessment, it is inevitable that every situation is different and rules of thumb alone should not be solely relied upon to inform decision-makers.

Another form of personal bias described in Risk Management in Projects is called “habituation.” This occurs when an individual’s frequent exposure to a particular risk reduces his fear of it. Arborists, who frequently climb trees, eat their lunch under them, and generally associate with them on a daily basis may perceive the risk very differently than a random member of a community. This could result in downplaying the risk or even in outright denial that a significant risk is present. A homeowner just moving into a home may associate a significantly greater risk to a particular tree than one who has lived under the same tree for many years, even though the actual risk is the same. Habituation can result in those more familiar with tree risk assessment making poorer decisions than an outsider who is
unfamiliar with tree risk. It can be a good reason to avoid answering the question for the client as to whether a tree should be removed or not. In thinking about this, I realize I have trees at my own house that another homeowner might remove due to decay and weak structural characteristics. My familiarity with trees and belief that the risk isn’t so great may be biased and compromising my family’s safety.

Responsibility for the risk associated with a particular tree may also bias the perception that an individual has of the risk. This bias probably affects all municipal arborists who must balance public safety with the benefits a particular tree provides. One might decide to remove a particular tree due to these perceptions rather than risk his or her career if the tree were to fail. Or, the arborist might transfer the risk to a political body better able to deal with the responsibility of any decisions regarding that tree. In either case, this sense of responsibility affects perceptions of risk and should be acknowledged.

According to the authors of *Risk Management in Projects*, “Perceptions of risk are also shaped by the way in which a particular risk evolves. In particular, those risks that evolve gradually tend to be underestimated compared to those that emerge suddenly.” A cavity that slowly expands over time might be perceived as much less of a risk than a crack that develops after a severe weather event or a tree that dies suddenly.

The tendency to bury unpleasant memories in the subconscious can cause people to underestimate certain risks. I do not see this as a significant bias in arboriculture. Our safety programs and industry organizations tend to prevent us from forgetting about particular risks and educate us in ways to avoid them. I certainly haven’t repressed the memory of that one fatality. If anything, I think our tendencies are more in the other direction, and that is generally a good thing.

Sometimes arborists just don’t want to be the bearer of bad news. They are simply unprepared to deal with the consequences associated with reporting that a particular tree represents a significant risk. The tendency is then to downplay the risk to avoid the unpleasantness foisted upon them by those who perceive it differently. I understand this, having been consulted only to report that a particular tree represents a significant risk resulting in being called a “hired gun” and far worse than I am comfortable revealing here. I submit, it is better to report honestly in such situations rather than what people want to hear and, if necessary, get an additional opinion.

Competing goals and priorities can influence the way tree risks are perceived and reported. An arborist should be aware that decision-makers may not place as high a priority on a particular tree risk as they do. If the roads are crumbling or the roof is leaking, they may be addressed prior to the tree assessed as high risk – even though the consequences of the tree failure might be greater.

*Risk Management in Projects* notes that “Perceptions of blame and the use of negative reinforcement are strongly linked to perceptions of risk.” It is not uncommon for the arborist to be blamed for the removal of a tree that represented a high level of risk. Such experiences can make one more reluctant to report such a risk in

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the future. If you frequently find yourself in situations where you become a scapegoat, be aware of how this might influence future risk assessments.

The constant development of new technology can also bias and influence the perception of risk. A new method of assessment may appear more comprehensive and increase the level of confidence in a report. However, it may be no more precise than the opinion of an experienced arborist using professional judgment alone. This does not suggest that new methods and techniques should not be employed, but be aware of any limitations and reconcile the outcome of the method with experience and knowledge without relying on technology alone.

Be aware that the potential impact, the consequence of failure, holds more weight than the probability of it happening. People don’t understand probabilities but they understand damage, injury or death. Therefore, they will likely take decisions based on the effect of a tree failure rather than on the likelihood that it will happen. This type of personal bias is difficult to overcome and likely results in the removal of trees that could be retained without unreasonably compromising safety. Long term, it can probably only be mitigated by increasing the public trust of the arboricultural profession as a whole and by improving our understanding of tree risk and how we communicate it.

Projects like the ANSI Standard for Tree Risk Assessment,* developing best management practices for tree risk assessment and mitigation, and efforts to standardize the way we evaluate and report tree risk will promote better decision-making regarding tree risk in the future. In the meantime, try to identify your own sources of bias and use that knowledge to improve the way you communicate regarding tree risk with your clients and the public.

Don Zimar is president of Zimar & Associates, an arboricultural consulting services firm based in Manassas, Virginia. This article was excerpted from his presentation, “Tree Risk Assessment: The Quest for Standardization,” at TCI EXPO 2008 in Milwaukee. He will present again at TCI EXPO 2009 in Baltimore, where he will speak on “A300: Evolution or Revolution?”

Sources

* The A300 Committee in April 2008 submitted a public notice with ANSI for a proposed new ANSI standard, “BSR A300 (Part 9)-20xx Risk Assessment for Tree Care Operations — Tree, Shrub, and Other Woody Plant Management — Standard Practices (Risk Assessment).” The A300 committee hopes to have the standard completed by the end of 2010.
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Magnatag’s magnetic whiteboard 31-Day Crew Scheduling Board is a fast, easy, efficient, flexible way to plan work schedules and show them 24/7 to employees. The Scheduling Board is designed to display jobs with color-coded magnets where each person or crew can see what they have to do, where they’re working and what equipment they need from day to day on each job. The magnet colors make it fast and easy to plan, post, change and update information, and you can also write quick notes right on the board. The heat-fused printed magnetic whiteboard system is available in four sizes to accommodate from four to 16 crews for up to four months. It includes magnetic cardholders to show job locations and specifications; magnet circles in 10 colors for your own special job detail codes, and magnetic month and date sets and write on tools make it easy to show what’s happening. Contact Magnatag Visible Systems, a division of W.A. Krapf, Inc., via www.magnatag.com/crewschedule or 1-800-624-4154.

Circle 192 on RS Card or visit www.tcia.org

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**Worksaver tine grapple**

Worksaver, Inc.’s new ETG Series Skid Steer Tine Grapple is for use on skid steers and tractor front loaders with universal attaching systems. The tine grapples are ideal for raking, piling and loading brush and other materials while leaving dirt on the ground. Two ETG models are available: the ETG-5, with seven tines, and the ETG-6, with eight tines. The upper grapple is design to provide clamping force to hold material securely, featuring greaseable pivot points for long service life and a shield plate to protect the hydraulic cylinder. A low-profile design offers great forward visibility for superior control in close quarters and easy access to the skid steer seat. Contact Worksaver, Inc., via (217) 324-5973 or www.worksaver.com.

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**Bobcat M-Series loaders**

The first models of Bobcat’s new M-Series skid-steer and compact track loaders, which feature numerous and significant design changes, include the S630 and S650 skid-steer loaders and the T630 and T650 compact track loaders. The S630 has a rated operating capacity (ROC) of 2,180 pounds and an operating weight of 7,707 pounds. The S650 has a ROC/oper. weight of 2,690/8,327; the T630 2,230/9,015; and the T650 2,570/9,440. Bobcat has increased the performance of the hydraulics on the M-Series, engineering them for higher standard flow and pressure that give attachments more power to work more quickly. Hydraulic horsepower is increased more than 15 percent and the standard auxiliary hydraulic flow is now 23 gpm at 3,500 psi and an optional high flow reaches 30.5 gpm for maximum attachment performance. A new, removable hydraulic hose guide makes changing attachments easier and correctly routes the hoses, preventing wear. The guide slides onto attachment hoses and is easily attached to the loader during attachment hook-up. Attachments approved for use on M-Series loaders have a post for the removable hose guide that keeps the hose secure, clean and protected when not in use. Some other performance enhancements include increased tractive effort by 15 to 20 percent to improve pushing and digging power; holes for frame-mounted counterweights that increase lifting performance with certain attachments; and a larger fuel capacity that allows working longer between fuelings. Light output has increased to illuminate work areas around the front of the loader. Contact Bobcat via www.Bobcatdealer.com or www.bobcat.com/loaders.

Circle 194 on RS Card or visit www.tcia.org
Swampy Hollow WC5500 chipper

Swampy Hollow Manufacturing’s new WC5500 chipper features as standard equipment the convenience of a hydraulically-operated feed system that can be run by tractor hydraulics or by an available, optional, self-contained hydraulic system. The WC5500 is designed to be operated by tractors of 35 horsepower or higher, and can be ordered to fit both Category I and Category II three-point hitches. The hydraulic requirement for the hydraulic feed is only 6 gpm. To insure smooth, easy feeding, the hopper opening measures 28 inches square and the chip opening measures 5-1/2 inches by 8 inches. The chip chute can be rotated 360 degrees for accurate placement of chipped material.

Swampy Hollow, a small, family-owned company in southeastern Pennsylvania, produces chippers that are compact, yet packed with commercial grade components such as double-sided knives, a standard chip anvil, a top discharge chip chute and a durable, industrial powder-coat finish. Contact Swampy Hollow Manufacturing via (877) 827-2447 or www.swampyhollow.com.

Fecon Compact Equipment Mulcher

Fecon now offers their durable Bull Hog mulcher for mid size and smaller excavators. The Compact Equipment Mulcher features Fecon’s proven, durable fixed rotor system that allows grinding of material up to 4 inches in diameter, and Fecon’s HDT Tooling System that offers four tooling options to tailor cutting tools to the job application. Tooling options include double carbide, stone tools, single carbide and chipper tools. The Compact Equipment Mulcher offers a 36-inch cutting width and a maximum weight between 1,000-1,200 pounds. Targeted for excavators in the 7-12 metric ton range with 17-30 gpm of auxiliary flow, the compact mulcher also works well on other applicable machinery such as larger back hoes. Contact Fecon via 1-800-528-3113 or www.fecon.com.
SavATree acquires H.R. Spooner Ornamental Care

SavATree in August merged with H.R. Spooner Ornamental Care, an East Falmouth, Massachusetts-based local provider of plant health care services for more than a decade.

“This strategic merger along with our excellent service reputation and skilled team, creates a strong competitive advantage for the company and facilitates the purchase of quality landscape services for customers, by dealing with one organization for all their tree, shrub and lawn care needs,” said Daniel van Starrenberg, SavATree president.

Arborwell named to top 5000, appoints LaVelle COO

Arborwell Professional Tree Management of Hayward, California, has named Andy LaVelle as chief operating officer. Formerly Arborwell’s vice president and general manager, LaVelle says his new position will entail a fresh, more strategic approach to his previous responsibilities.

“My short term goal is simple: to maintain our exemplary level of customer service through the development of our fantastic employees,” said LaVelle.

LaVelle is an industry veteran with more than 20 years in the tree and landscape business, and brings direct experience in developing business and relationships with commercial property managers and owners. A graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a degree in horticulture, LaVelle is now an ISA certified arborist as well as a Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP). As COO, he is directly involved in recruiting and managing the talent of Arborwell’s expanding management team and 75 field employees.

“Andy’s commitment and dedicated focus to the Arborwell way of doing business has been a huge benefit to our company’s growth and success,” said Peter Sortwell, president and CEO of Arborwell.

“In other news, Arborwell earned position 3,271 on the 2009 Inc. 5000, Inc.’s annual ranking of the fastest-growing private companies in America. As an Inc. 5000 honoree for the third year in a row, Arborwell shares a prestigious pedigree with some of the most successful businesses in the country. Since the company’s start in 2001, Arborwell has grown at a staggering rate. Between 2005 and 2008, Arborwell grew 78.9 percent and almost doubled in annual revenue. Arborwell continues to grow and develop new business in all three of its office locations in the Hayward, Sacramento and San Diego regions.

Nelson Tree appoints Cox VP

Nelson Tree Service, Inc., of Dayton, Ohio, has appointed Donald L. Cox to vice president. Cox has more than 27 years experience in the line-clearance industry and began working for Nelson in 1991.

Cox advanced to the position of general foreman and in 2002 was made regional manager in the Midwest, which includes operations on the properties of Ameren UE, CIPS, CILCO, IP as well as Duke Indiana and several other utilities and co-ops. Throughout his career, he was in charge of many storm response teams, coordinating hundreds of crews to various regions in the U.S. to assist restoration efforts after events such as hurricanes and ice storms.

Cox has furthered his education by taking courses at the University of Wisconsin, Michigan State University and The Harvard Law School. He resides with his family in St. Clair, Missouri.

Davye, Caldwell, Stowe, Tree Elements, Rainbow, Schneider join HMI

The Davey Tree Expert Company, Caldwell Tree Care of Roswell, Georgia, Stowe Tree Experts of Stowe, Vermont, Tree Elements Inc. of Yorba Linda, California, Schneider Tree Care of Taylors, South Carolina, and Rainbow Treecare of Minnetonka, Minnesota, have joined Horticultural Asset Management, Inc.’s Authorized Member Network. HMI, a TCIA associate member and PACT partner, provides property owners, insurers and others with tree and shrub condition assessment, replacement cost calculations and a range of insurance claim support services. Its AM network consists of arborists and professional tree care companies to support these products and services.

Davey will support HMI’s programs through their offices throughout the U.S. and Canada; Caldwell in the greater Atlanta, Georgia, market; Stowe Tree Experts in Vermont and in greater New England during major weather events; Tree Elements in Southern California; Schneider in both the Greenville, S.C., and Charlotte, N.C., markets; and Rainbow in the Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., market.

Davye promotes Ina to VP & GM of Davey Institute, Whitmire to VP operations

The Davey Tree Expert Company promoted Greg Ina to the position of vice president and general manager of The Davey Institute, Ina’s is responsible for all activities of The Institute including research and development, technical support services, environmental compliance, technical innovation and education and training.

Ina joined Davey in 1995 as a GIS intern and served as manager of GIS/IT for the Davey Resource Group. Named general manager of The Institute in 2006, he holds both a bachelor’s and master’s degrees in geography, specializing in geographic information systems, from Kent State University.

Bill Whitmire was named vice president of operations for Davey’s residential/commercial services division. Whitmire has been with the Davey Company for more than 31 years. He began his service with the Akron, Ohio, later serving as district manager of the Milwaukee, Wisc., office in 1985, being appointed operations manager of the north central operating group in 1997, and in 2002 he became operations manager of the western operating group.

An alumnus of Kent State University and Cardinal Stritch College, where he studied biology and business management respectively, Whitmire is a past member of Davey’s President’s Council.
Events & Seminars

October 13, 2009
Protecting Your Business: How to Reduce Your Employment Risks During Troubling Times
Shelby Township, MI
Contact: MGIA (248) 646-4992; landscape.org

October 13-14, 2009
Advanced Plant Health Care (10/13)
Wood Decay Fungi & Testing Trees for Decay (10/14)
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Jan McFarlan (215) 247-5777 x156; jlm@exchange.upenn.edu

October 13-29, 2009
Aerial Lift Specialist
Westchester Community College,
Valhalla, NY
www.sunywcc.edu/ce/registration; (914) 606-6830

October 14-30, 2009
Aerial Rescue Training
Westchester Community College, Valhalla, NY
www.sunywcc.edu/ce/registration; (914) 606-6830

October 15, 22, 29 & November 6, 2009
Refining Your Climbing Skills
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Jan McFarlan (215) 247-5777 x156; jlm@exchange.upenn.edu

October 19-21, 2009*
MAC-ISA Annual Meeting
TREEx fund golf tournament on Oct. 18
Ocean City, MD
Contact: www.mac-isa.org; (703) 753-0499

October 20, 2009
Pruning Deciduous Trees
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Jan McFarlan (215) 247-5777 x156; jlm@exchange.upenn.edu

October 20-21, 2009
Tree Biology and Care I & II: Selection & Planting/Culture & Preservation
Calgary Zoo, Calgary, Alberta, Canada
Contact: www.arborcanada.com

October 22-23, 2009
Pennsylvania Community Forestry Conference
Morris Arboretum,
Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Patricia Schriever pschriever@pennhort.org;
www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsoociety.org

October 23-25, 2009
NJ Shade Tree Federation 84th Annual Meeting
Crown Plaza, Cherry Hill, NJ
Contact: Donna Massa (732) 246-3210; www.njstf.org

October 24, 2009
11th Annual Tennessee Tree Climbing Championship
TN Urban Forestry Council, TN Dept Agr. Div. of Forestry
Centennial Park, Nashville, TN
Contact: www.tufc.com; (615) 352-8985

November 3-4, 2009*
Certified Treecare Safety Professional-CTSP Workshop
Coincides with TCI EXPO
Baltimore, MD
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; www.tcia.org*

November 5-7, 2009*
TCI EXPO 2009
Tree Care Industry Association Conference & Trade Show
Baltimore, MD
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; cyr@tcia.org; www.tcia.org

November 12, 2009
Comprehensive CORE Pesticide Training Seminar
Bellville, MI
Contact: MGIA (248) 646-4992; landscape.org

November 18, 2009
Evaluating Trees for Hazards
Morris Arboretum, Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Jan McFarlan (215) 247-5777 x156; jlm@exchange.upenn.edu

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For the most up to date calendar information, visit www.tcia.org ⇒ news ⇒ industry calendar

Upcoming TCIA webinars

Oct. 8
Jeff Korhan
Social Media Practices and Strategy (open to WMC registrants only)

Oct. 20
Michael Butcher, CTSP
The Hazards and Cautions of Storm Work Emergencies

Oct. 22
Tim Bushnell, CTSP
Equipment Inspections: What to look for and what to do about it when you find it

Nov. 18
Dane Buell, CTSP
Understanding and Complying With Federal DOT Regulations

Dec. 2
Jennifer Mohiman, CTSP
Proper Cleanup of Pesticide Spills

Dec. 8
John Iurka
Setting Up and Conducting Effective Performance

Dec. 16
Nick Bomber, CTSP
Setting-up and conducting safety committee meetings

Jan. 13
Tom Tolkacz
What You Should Know About Buying Another Tree Care Company

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Londonderry, NH 03053
or staruk@tcia.org

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Q. What can you do to help us maintain our position as the best magazine in the tree care industry?
A. Fill out a subscription card for your FREE subscription every year. (there’s one in every issue)

Q. Why?
A. It costs money to publish a high-quality magazine. Advertising support enables us to provide you the highest quality educational, scientific, business and safety articles.

Q. How does filling out a subscription card help?
A. Advertisers look at the number of subscribers who request the magazine by filling out a card. To them, it means people are reading it.

Q. What if you don’t fill it out?
A. We don’t look as attractive to advertisers and they may not support the magazine, and the quality of the magazine suffers. Also, after three years you’ll be dropped from the list.

Q. How often should you fill out the card?
A. Once a year would be best. Directly requesting the magazine is the best way you can show advertisers that you are actually reading the magazine. Doing so every year shows them that you are reading it regularly. We show them those numbers.

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A. Yes.

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By Rebecca Fater

Though winters are nothing new in Buffalo, New York, a city of close to 300,000 that abuts Lake Erie. Still, the sudden storm that swept through the region in mid-October of 2006 caught residents by surprise, burying the city in heavy snow. The blanket of white toppled trees, knocked out electrical power and slowed city life to a crawl, with people and vehicles unable to move about. Time was of the essence.

Tim Pope, co-owner of Terry Tree Service, based in Rochester, N.Y., climbed into his vehicle and drove to Buffalo to meet with city officials that night. He showed them his company’s credentials and promised the equipment, machinery and manpower to get the job done.

Within the next 48 hours, Terry Tree had reached out to its network of subcontractors, and 200 trucks hit the streets of Buffalo to clear tree debris.

“The City of Buffalo is very cautious, because they always know they (could) get another lake-effect storm,” says Pope. “They were very pleased. When you have trees down and the power is out and the weather is cold, it’s not fun for anybody.”

While Pope and his employees propose that there are many reasons that led Buffalo officials to identify Terry Tree Service as the best choice for the job, there is one factor they say consistently beats the competition — its safety record.

For the past 10 years, Terry Tree Service has carried a MOD rate of 0.8. The “experience modification rate” examines the number of incidents and workers’ compensation insurance claims a company recorded in the most recent three-year period. That data is used to modify the company’s workers’ comp manual rate, a figure set by a National Council for Compensation Insurance, or a state board, as is the case in New York. The manual rate is a numerical average designed to reflect the amount of risk an industry has. Together, the numbers have the power to make or break a company in terms of the workers’ compensation premiums it must pay.

For Terry Tree Service, its 0.8 MOD rate...
is something to be marveled at and celebrated, says Peter Gerstenberger, TCIA’s senior advisor for safety, standards and compliance.

“Considering workers’ compensation is one of the biggest expenses a business has, that sort of savings is very significant,” he says.

Terry Tree Service, a nine-year TCIA member, operates four separate divisions, all overseen by the same management. Terry Tree Service covers residential tree pruning and maintenance; Ironwood Heavy Highway handles land clearing jobs for major construction and utility projects throughout the eastern United States; Terry Tree Service South handles storm disaster response, such as the Buffalo storm and hurricanes in the Gulf over the past 15 years; and its Resource Recycling center churns out 50,000 yards of mulch per year from biowaste brought in through Terry Tree Service’s other ventures and from local residents. Together, the four divisions are a large presence east of the Mississippi and, of course, in New York state, with the skills, experience, subcontractor network and heavy machinery at hand to complete a wide array of jobs and recovery efforts.

Company-wide, Terry Tree Service boasts 45 full-time employees, not including the subcontractors with whom it often works. And Terry Tree Service’s 0.8 MOD rate takes into account each of those 45 full-time employees. When a company’s roster grows that large, it can become increasingly difficult to hold on to a low MOD rate, says Gerstenberger.

“I firmly believe you can control accidents, but oftentimes, the difference between a near miss and an ambulance ride is luck,” Gerstenberger says. “To some extent, accident frequency and severity are functions of exposure. When you get into a company of this size, probability kicks in.”

Pope credits his employees, many of whom have been with the company since it began in 1995 and have stayed as Terry Tree Service expanded.

“We’re only as good as our people,” he says. “Having them committed to safety and everybody working together, watching everybody’s back and identifying what the hazards are as the days get longer and things get busier, that truly is the whole key.”

The fact that Terry Tree Service seems to have trumped the odds when it comes to size and exposure is what caught the eye of John Schwelm, who joined the company in July as general manager and corporate safety director.

“As a safety professional, I went, ‘Amazing. I’m not going to have a lot to do,’” he jokes.

Workplace safety has been a passion for Schwelm throughout his lengthy career, which had him most recently serving as the senior training and safety supervisor for a major international company. He was in the second graduating class of individuals to achieve TCIA’s Certified Treecare Safety Professional (CTSP) credential, a program that not only trains individuals on the latest safe work practices, but also how to teach those practices and ideas to other employees.

And while Terry Tree Service carries an outstanding MOD rate and proven commitment to safety, Schwelm already has his own plans for raising the bar. He’s evaluating the company’s training program, increasing employee involvement and cross training employees on new machinery and responsibilities. He also plans to hold Terry Tree Service’s subcontractors to a higher standard for training and safety.

“(Subcontractors) always had to meet our safety criteria, because we’re responsible for them,” he says. “But I want to make
it a little tighter. I want to look into a process where all (the safety standards subcontractors must follow) are uniform.” He wants to be able to say, “If you want to work for us, these are the qualifications you need to meet.”

Still, Schwelm is pleased to be starting with a team that already has a proven record of safety.

“They don’t have any incidents here,” he says. “The owners go out and buy the machines and the big iron for these fellows, because they know they’re going to be productive with it and use it safely. Our MOD rate is 0.8. That means our excavator operators, our (tree) climbers and our guys who are putting in trenches are on the same par of having an incident as an (office) secretary.”

But there is plenty of reason to stay on alert and aware, no matter which area of the company a Terry Tree Service employee may work. At the Resource Recycling center, for example, operations manager Jason Van Allen keeps his eyes open at all times for his staff and the general public.

“Safety is a huge issue,” he says. “We have residents and (other) people coming in and dumping here all day long. We have big machines running, grinders running, and you have to worry about debris flying. We wear hard hats and safety glasses all the time.”

The issue of safety has also taken on a new importance at Ironwood Heavy Highway, where the company has been taking on more jobs and more business – which translates to more risk. It has cleared land for airports and widened runways, felled trees for wind farms, cut rights of way for utilities, expanded highways and more. Through it all, Ironwood has established a record of working successfully with a variety of vendors and public agencies, such as municipal, state and federal government entities.

“We understand the language, we understand the contracts and we understand what (the client is) looking for,” says Mike Richards, operations manager for Ironwood Heavy Highway and a division manager.

These days, what the client is looking for is not just the number of trees down or the number of acres cleared. Companies must operate with an awareness and respect for environmental issues. Conscious of this, Ironwood works closely with its in-house green expert, Matthew Steiner, environmental specialist for the company. He analyzes each project from an environmental point of view. Often, projects require the use of construction mats that trucks and equipment drive over to reduce soil compaction and ground pressure. He considers storm water and erosion control as well, and dictates action that must be taken during a job to prevent damage to the environment. The company is developing additional environmental procedures that will be used as guidelines for all projects, he says.

“Whether we’re working for a federal or local agency, if standards are not met, they can lead to serious consequences, like shutting the project down, fines or an extensive clean up,” Steiner adds. “So it is to our benefit to anticipate these problems and make
Ironwood Heavy Highway is also working toward the ISO 14001 certification, a set of requirements for environmental management systems, to improve its own efforts for environmental sustainability in every project it completes.

“We hold ourselves to the highest standards,” Richards says. “That can set us apart from our competition. Having a great safety standard and being environmentally friendly is really important. It’s important for our customers to know that they don’t have to worry about us.”

Steiner has also witnessed the company’s focus on safety. Since he came on board, he has seen every employee participate in safety training regarding electrical hazard awareness. He’s also watched everyone take part in first-aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training, among other things.

“And that’s just in the two and a half years that I’ve been here,” he says.

Still, the fact that Terry Tree Service is expanding so rapidly — especially Ironwood Heavy Highway — makes this no time to grow lax when it comes to safety.

“We are a very safe company,” Richards says. “The reason we need John is that we are expanding tremendously and wanted to make sure we can keep up with all those training needs. That’s where John’s expertise comes in.”

That instinct is another sign that Terry Tree Service is serious about safety — and that it continues to take the right steps to hang onto that 0.8 MOD rate, says Gerstenberger. In a TCIA survey that looked at data from 2006 and 2007, companies involved in TCIA’s CTSP program or Accreditation program — or both — were 10 times less likely to have a lost work day accident than companies not involved in either. While the CTSP and Accreditation programs have not existed long enough for data to prove that they had direct effects on the results, the survey does point to the payoff that a company can enjoy.

“Terry Tree Service is a living example of what a proactive company can do,” Gerstenberger says. “When a company is growing and expanding, it becomes absolutely important to have a means of assessing risk and implementing controls and communication throughout the ranks. It’s important to have a workforce that has adopted a culture of safety.”

Schwelm is optimistic about the job ahead of him. As the company grows, he says, the fact that its longest-running employees already make such an effort to focus on safety in every job will only help spread that positive attitude to the newcomers.

“The fellows working here now have been working together 15 years for the most part,” he says. “It’s a tight-knit family. Everybody’s really on board with the safety culture. We’re going to be introducing a lot of new things here in the next year, and it’s going to be interesting. I don’t think the employees will disapprove,” he laughs. “I think they’ll probably want more.”

Make sure to visit the Terry Tree Service and Ironwood Heavy Highway booth at the TCI EXPO this November in Baltimore – Booth #1435 on the trade show floor.

Often, projects require the use of construction mats that trucks and equipment drive over to reduce soil compaction and ground pressure. Shown here are wooden mats the company uses.

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A small business owner who had made 24 payments on a $52,000 loan called his lender to inquire about rewriting the loan to take advantage of recently advertised lower interest rates. After looking into the matter, the bank offered to rewrite the loan if the business owner would put $5,500 toward the principal. The business owner declined and thought nothing more of it.

The next day, he received an e-mail from the bank requesting that the balance of his $17,000 be paid off immediately. He learned shortly thereafter that the bank had withdrawn $20,000 from his personal and business checking accounts. (After 24 payments, the balance on the loan was $37,000). Adding insult to injury, he had to pay penalties and fees on all the checks that bounced because he did not know that the bank had depleted his accounts. Not only did he learn of the bank’s actions almost accidentally; the steps they took caused him great embarrassment and compromised his relationships with his vendors.

Can a lender do that to its clients? Unfortunately, they can—and they do, more often than one might think. With the proper planning, however, this businessman’s woes could have been avoided, or at the very least the damage could have been minimized.

Unfortunately, many small business owners look at their business’s financing situation, contracts and agreements only once, when they sign on the dotted line. By the time they understand that their business’s financing is a live entity and the effects of that transaction start to reveal themselves, it is too late to make cost-effective changes. The outcome can be devastating to the business.

Small business financing is continually changing. It has many moving parts that are interdependent and susceptible to the ever-changing business environment, such as its growth mode, fluctuating market conditions, prosperity, recession, lender’s “mood” and more. In addition, a small business’s financing circumstances alter as its owner’s personal life evolves: home ownership, marriage/divorce, and even factors involving their children.

We must understand a basic fact. At the time when we make business decisions that are large enough to warrant financing, such as business start-up, equipment purchase/lease, a large scale marketing campaign, (yes those can be financed as well) opening a new location or hiring new staff members, we base our assumptions and conclusions solely on our understanding of our business’s past experience, or simply our past experience. However, these decisions and their outcome play out over an extended time frame.

For example, think back two-and-a-half to three years ago, which was the end of 2006. Did you think your business would be where it is today? Did you know that the world would be in the middle of a global recession? If you had started your business in 2006, would you do it again at the same time you did knowing what you know now, or would you have chosen to work for someone else or perhaps wait two or three years? If you expanded your business, opened a new location, hired new crew or purchased new equipment in 2006, would you do the same knowing what you know now? Would you finance it the same way?

It is safe to say that the majority of small business owners, if asked this question today, would answer no. Most of us did not know that we were going to be in this particular place and having known that then, we would all make different choices. At the time we take action, we do not know what the future will bring. There are many more unknowns than facts at the time. However, those actions will affect our business for several years to come, and they will potentially keep us in – or take us out of – business.

Another story that is equally disturbing involves a business owner who had been in his service-oriented business serving the medical industry (the medical industry is perceived to be recession proof) for more than 20 years, with total annual sales exceeding $3 million. He had excellent credit, excellent cash flow and a great net worth. For the past six years, he had a $250,000 unsecured line of credit with a local bank.

One day, his banker invited him in and said, “You are one of our best clients. You have been paying your loan on time, you cycle over $3 million a year through our bank, and we really appreciate your business. However, you have two choices: (1) provide us with collateral greater than $250,000 or (2) pay off your line of credit.”

The bank wasn’t completely cold-hearted. It did give him 45 days to pay off the
line of credit.

Tales like these aren’t designed to keep people from seeking lines of credit. Far from it. The idea is to understand the risk of the program at hand, understand ALL the options, and plan accordingly so that you minimize the chances of somehow falling prey to one of these lenders. Or if you have fallen prey, protect yourself so that it doesn’t wipe out your bank accounts or, worse, put you out of business. The inability to understand that we do not know what the future will bring and not being prepared for the worst will result in bad decisions that could ultimately cost us our business.

**It is very sad when you know that many of the “out of business” signs that are the victims of this recession could have been avoided with proper capital planning.**

**Consider future needs**

When it comes to money, there are two things a business must have at all times:

1) Access to a large sum of money in order to jump on an unexpected opportunity that requires an initial capital investment or periodic capital injections.

2) Access to a large sum of money to survive an extended period of time with a negative cash flow, for example, the current recession.

Most small businesses do not have either one. It is very sad when you know that many of the “out of business” signs that are the victims of this recession could have been avoided with proper capital planning. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions for the business owner who doesn’t want to find himself or herself on the wrong end of an “out of business” sign because of lack of capital:

- Be sure to finance what you will need.

A great number of start-ups and small business owners are, quite understandably, afraid of debt. As a result, they borrow too little money up-front, and while their growing business needs an occasional or ongoing capital injection, they run out of working capital.

- Be careful when borrowing against your home or retirement savings. There is the perception that “paying yourself back with interest” by borrowing against a 401(k) is the way to fund a business. Taking a home equity line of credit is another common way people get started in business, or they use their home equity to expand their business. These options are both fine in certain situations and at the right time – but frequently, people take these options too early in the process without fully understanding the consequences and/or exploring other options. As a result, many run out of money and are experiencing severe cash flow challenges when they attempt to expand their business or simply survive a downturn in collections.

- Read the fine print. There’s a reason the “fine print” is so small. Read it carefully! Most financing programs have fine print such as, but not limited to, early termination clauses, end of lease buyouts, future borrowing restrictions and more. Not understanding the details may affect future growing decisions.

- Consider the consequences of credit in both names. More common with husband and wife teams, they take loans or acquire credit cards in both names and diminish their future borrowing power. Next time they need money to expand their business, open a new location, buy equipment or some other large expense, they have a hard time obtaining the much needed capital.

- Don’t consider just the interest rate in selecting a lender. In all finance transactions, there are many variables that will affect the business’s growth and bottom line cost. Interest rate is only one of many. Concentrating on that alone can cost the business owner his/her business.

Luck is when opportunity and preparation meet. Are you prepared to be lucky?

Itamar Chalif is president of Atlantic Capital Solutions of Middleboro, Massachusetts, a company that helps small businesses across the country find funding and lines of credit to buy or lease equipment, expand or make other improvements. Chalif will present a session, “Things You Must Know About Business Financing and Don’t Know to Ask,” at TCI EXPO in Baltimore in November.
**Accidents in the tree care industry that occurred during the month of August 2009. Graphic compiled from reports gathered by, or submitted to, TCIA staff.**

### August 2009

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**Honey bees attack trimmer**

A tree trimmer required medical treatment after being attacked by bees while removing a gum tree with a crane and bucket truck in Lafayette, Louisiana, August 2, 2009. The trunk was about 45 feet tall and had three vertical limbs, each about 30 feet long, according to a post from the victim on www.treebuzz.com.

He’d noticed a cavity with honeybees about 10 feet above the trunk. He cut the limb and the crane put the limb down, then did the same with the second limb. After strapping the third limb, the bees attacked, stinging him more than 100 times. The trimmer was able to get down and into his truck, but passed out en route to the hospital. “I did not feel nauseous, but did pass out and even stopped breathing; fortunately I was in the ambulance at that time,” the victim wrote. “I think an EpiPen saved my life. My son ran into a doctor’s office and told them what happened and they came out and stuck me with a pen, which the paramedics said probably saved me. I will be carrying one with me now.”*

* Contributed to TCI by Paul M. Mautz, CTSP, forester, City of Southfield, Michigan.

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**Firefighter dies doing tree work**

Brian Ball, 34, an off-duty Bartlett, Tennessee, firefighter was killed August 3, 2009, doing tree work in an area of Memphis damaged by tornados a week earlier. Memphis firefighters received a report of a tree falling on Ball, but it was removed by the time they arrived. Working a second job, Ball was apparently working on trees damaged by the storm when he was trapped under a fallen tree. He was pronounced dead from the injuries at Saint Francis Hospital-Bartlett.*

**Car hits crane truck**

A crane truck working with a tree service collided with a car on Route 113 in Pepperell, Massachussetts, August 6, 2009, trapping the driver of the car. The Jaws of Life was used to remove the driver, who was rushed to a hospital. The tree service and crane were getting set up. The driver of the car, possibly blinded by glare from the morning sun, hit the rear two axles of the crane. The car’s driver was the only one injured.*

**Trimmer electrocuted, falls**

A tree trimmer died August 6, 2009, after he fell onto a power line while working on a tree in Irving Park, Illinois. Emergency crews found Marian Malewski, 64, of North Nottingham, on the ground with serious head trauma and serious burns to his arms and hands. He was pronounced dead at the scene.*

**Chipper accident kills one, injures one**

Bradley Michael Newberry, 39, of Bessemer, Michigan, was killed and another man injured in a wood chipper accident August 12, 2009, in Ironwood, Mich. The accident occurred as a work crew cleared brush along a trail. Several news reports cited a “chipper malfunction” as the cause accident, but offered no further details. The injured 25-year-old Ironwood man was treated at a local hospital. The Ironwood Public Safety Department and Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration were investigating.*

* Contributed to TCI by Paul M. Mautz, CTSP, forester, City of Southfield, Michigan.

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(Continued on page 54)
Certified Treecare Safety Professional

Improve Your Productivity and Profitability with a Culture of Safety

How it works:
One or more employees enroll in the program to become your organization’s internal safety trainer(s). They have up to 18 months to complete a study guide with exercises, attend a workshop and pass the certification test.

The benefits to having a CTSP on staff:
- Control at-risk behaviors to reduce accidents and associated costs
- Improve customers’ perception of your professionalism through your commitment to safety
- Improve employee morale, productivity, retention and recruitment
- Offer a rewarding new career path for key employees

NEW - TCIA member companies with CTSPs on staff are eligible to be considered for workers’ comp coverage under the new ArborMAX insurance program.

The results are in.
TCIA Member companies with employees enrolled in the Certified Treecare Safety Professional program are ten times less likely to experience a lost workday incident compared with members that do not have a CTSP on staff.

Additionally, members with employees enrolled in the CTSP program are nearly four times less likely to experience a recordable accident (one that requires medical attention beyond treatment in the field) than members without a CTSP on staff.

The numbers don’t lie... safety-conscious tree care companies that get involved with the CTSP program experience fewer accidents, fewer injuries, and less lost time—PERIOD.

Upcoming 2009 Workshop
November 3 & 4
In conjunction with TCI EXPO Baltimore, Maryland

The CTSP Workshop is the last step in the certification process. Learn more and enroll at tcia.org
Or e-mail Irina at kochurov@tcia.org

Call 1-800-733-2622 to begin building your company’s safety culture today!
I am not an accountant. Quite frankly, I do not even like to balance my own checkbook. But I understand the huge benefits of job costing and I help other companies master the process.

My seminar, “Secrets of Successful Job Costing and Creating Measurable Goals,” evolved from many interactions with contractors of all sizes who did not pay much attention to all the facets of job costing. Job costing ties into so many other aspects of business that it amazes me how it is under-utilized and often overlooked.

Let’s explore some of the benefits of job costing:

- job costing integrates with both sales and expense budgets that help predict overall profitability.
- constant refinement of “true costing” translates into accuracy and production improvements.
- once a company knows it costs, it can then start to uncover factual places to save money.
- once a company understands its costs, it can use the information to better price jobs to win.

Accurate job costing interfaces with field production rates. One of the biggest complaints between sales and operations is that each feels the expectation from the other side is not being met. Boiling down job costing allows your company to right-size crews while planning for proper equipment and material staging.

On the estimating side, it holds estimators accountable to calculating the necessary time for each phase of a project. A typical one week project that was estimated at 40 hours will be severely off on time if there are move-offs and additional mobilizations. This is just one example of how estimators can sometimes overlook the obvious.

Think about a project you do around your home. This past weekend my better half was going to trim some evergreens in front of one of our homes. She told me it would take her about an hour. When the trimmer wouldn’t start, I jumped in to assist. Our “home labor” rate doubled. Fortunately, I had all the things necessary to fix the trimmer so we avoided having to make an unexpected trip to the hardware or auto parts store. However, by the time I mixed the special ratio of gas with oil and got the two cycle motor running, the blades wouldn’t move. After careful diagnosis of the problem, I determined the last person who used the trimmer bent one of the teeth, which was remedied with pliers and vise grips. All this took about 45 minutes with Sandy watching and helping.

Isn’t this the same thing that happens so often on the job? Somebody forgets to load a tool or you don’t have the right one or it isn’t working properly. Bad directions or no gas for small tools also happens frequently. I am sure this never happens in your company – or nobody tells you about it.

How does all this relate to true job costing? Even experienced estimators have difficulty accurately calculating the time it will take to accomplish a project. A suggested remedy is to insist that estimators and sales people spend time with crews every year.

Over time, accurate job costing helps you find your “sweet spots” where you win projects at a higher percentage rate. Isn’t it helpful to know where you win?

Spending more time and effort on the bids that you have the best chance of winning will grow your business over time. Conversely, there may be some obvious reasons why you are not successful on other types of quotes. Careful analysis could help you figure out why a competitor is doing better on that type of job or in a specific price range.

Job costing is not very complex compared to many other aspects of statistical business management. Sophisticated man-

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Paying part of compensation on gross profit means the sales person is mutually invested in the overall profit of the job!
Manufacturing and construction companies take costing to the next level, which is called “activity based costing.” This takes into account all the methods used in “true costing” and applies it to the time and difficulty of specific activities. This is a worthy goal to aim for once true costing is achieved.

With the right technology, you can generate useful data to run reports in real-time so you can determine where you are on a project on any given day. Usually your firm size and IT investment will determine the type of software you need and use. For purposes of discussion, we will assume most companies are at least using spreadsheets or mainline accounting software such as Quick Books Pro.

Often companies only use this type of software for creating quotes, work orders, invoices, and statements. This is an underutilization of the software but a good foundation to the next steps.

If you enter the actual data from the field you can easily generate many useful reports. Simply comparing reports of estimated versus actual usage of time, materials and equipment can help identify where and why you are making money. Automating tracking of all parts and components that are used on projects can help reduce inventories or allow your company to buy at better quantity levels to achieve discounts.

Suppose you suspect that one estimator is not figuring in all the time it will take to do the project. This results in less anticipated profit and sometimes even a loss on a job. You will determine this by viewing estimated versus actual times on those jobs.

If you use true costing correctly, you will eliminate ALL losing jobs! For companies that pay salespeople on commission, being able to know the direct costs of each project accurately makes it easier to migrate to paying commission on gross profit rather than gross sales. Paying part of compensation on gross profit means the salesperson is mutually invested in the overall profit of the job!

Let’s move to the production side. Is one field team continually bringing jobs in under budget while another team is above? Actual job cost can help identify operational issues to improve production and increase capacity. Collecting the field data and applying it through job costing can set minimum benchmarks for productivity. On a more positive note, implementing a reward system that is based on bringing jobs in under estimated budgets while maintaining quality standards are powerful incentives.

Implementing true job costing will help you create measurable goals, which could very well help you create a measurable increase in profits.

Guy Gruenberg is president of Grow Consulting, a company that focuses on helping owners and managers grow the profits of construction companies. He accomplishes this through coaching owners and managers on sales, marketing, costing, and hiring the right people. This article is excerpted from the presentation, “Successful Job Costing and Creating Measurable Goals,” that he will present at TCI EXPO in Baltimore in November.
By Veronica Leonard

Recently I read an article with the title, “The Hispanic-Latino Worker a Cultural Investment” by Larry Fish. The article made me think that despite the fact that ‘they’ have been in the United States since the 17th century, we know very little about the culture of “Hispanics” or “Latinos” or “Latin-American” or “Spanish” – or whatever they are called.

What the “Hispanic” term means?

Here is what Wikipedia says about the term “Hispanic”: “...more recently, the term has been extended to the culture and people of countries formerly ruled by Spain, usually with a majority population of Spanish heritage and speaking the Spanish language. These include Mexico and most Central and South American countries, some of the Greater Antilles nations, and the African nations of Equatorial Guinea[1] and Western Sahara.”

As you can see, the word “Hispanic” and other derivations of the word are very broad terms.

Then what should we call “Hispanics”?

Calling all Spanish speaking persons Hispanic would be just as misleading as if you would view a New Yorker in the same cultural light as an Idahoan. The differences are even greater when you talk about countries.

A Mexican is very different than a Guatemalan or a Peruvian. Those working for, or with, you will appreciate it if you make the effort to differentiate them as individuals. Take the time and have the courtesy to find out where Jose is from. And, if he is from Jalisco, look at a map and see where Jalisco is. An interesting exercise is to hang a map of Mexico (or Peru or Guatemala) in your office and ask your workers to put a pin on their home state or town. This will go a long way to build trust and confidence in your workers as individuals. Educate yourself and your workers and motivate your work force by not referring to Jose as Hispanic and never confuse a Peruvian for a Mexican or a Chilean.

Are all Mexicans the same?

No, just as a New Yorker is not the same as an Idahoan. A Mexican from Oaxaca state in the south will be very different from a Mexican in Sinaloa state in the north. But the greatest difference is that in Mexico there are two social classes: the wealthy and the poor.

Most wealthy people in Mexico are people that migrated to Mexico from Europe, mostly from Spain. Being wealthy in Mexico means: your parents can afford to give their children a private education, have a home and a car and a very comfortable life. On the other side, poor means: being part of a large family, limited public education (up to the grade 6) and hard work from a young age to help support the family. The great majority of poor people in Mexico, as in other Latin-American countries, are Amerindian subjugated by the Spanish conquerors. I have been living in the United States 20 years and I have only met a few wealthy Mexicans living in the United States, the people who usually immigrate to this country from Mexico are the poor, uneducated class.

Why Mexicans come to this country so desperately?

Mexicans come to the U.S. mainly for one reason: to survive. The United States represents a promise of a better life. People know that once they cross the border, the rules have changed. They have to work long hours; they have to work hard and must make sacrifices. Above all, they quickly learn that if they don’t follow the country rules, they are not going to survive. Not everyone makes it. This country is only for the ones with courage and determination.

Why Mexicans don’t speak English, and Americans don’t speak Spanish?

After graduating from a private University in Mexico, I came to Houston to learn about greenhouse operations. My first cultural shock was to listen to the Mexican workers talk. They were not speaking Spanish or English, but a mixture of both languages, or “Spanglish.” For example, to say “wash your hands,” they’ll take the word “wash” and mix it with the Spanish word “lavate” to form the word: “wash-ate las manos.”

I grew up in a bi-cultural household with an American mother and a Mexican father and my mother always told me to use English or Spanish and not to mix them. This was great advice. I also believe that each language should be spoken and written correctly. Sadly, I often see poor Spanish written on warning signs, instruction brochures, company announcements, even HR communications with employees. We can do better than this. We all should make a better attempt to speak both languages correctly.

Learning a language is not easy, like losing weight, there is not a magic pill. Learning Spanish or English takes work; most importantly, it takes practice. My best advice is to learn the basics from a native speaker (my best English professors were native speakers) and after that, spend one summer, or at least a long vacation, in a foreign country. Another tip, every time I am driving, I put on an NPR radio program and I repeat everything the speaker says; this keeps the English side of my brain working. Turn your TV channel to Spanish.
CNN and start the same exercise. The trick to learning a language is “necessity.” If you have to learn a language, you will.

**What is important to Mexicans?**

Mexicans live day to day and are not long term planners. We also live in a cash economy. Most people in Mexico don’t have long-term debt; they own their homes and their cars. If you don’t have money, you cannot buy it – it is that simple.

Most Mexicans in Mexico don’t have insurance. We don’t have medical, life, home and, many times, car insurance. What we have is a strong family bond. One of the people working for me called me recently to tell me her cousin died unexpectedly of a heart attack. She was raising money to send her cousin’s body from Idaho Falls, Idaho, to Michoacan, Mexico, to be buried in his home town cemetery. When we have emergencies, instead of calling the insurance company, we call our relatives for help. Therefore, family is highly important to Mexicans. Once you hire one person from a little town in Jalisco, soon you will have half of the town working for you – all related to each other.

It is a good idea to celebrate Mexican holidays, such as Mexican Independence Day (September 15), and invite your workers’ families for a “carne asada” (barbeque). Please don’t celebrate “Cinco de Mayo.” Mexicans don’t celebrate this holiday, only Americans do.

Is it a good idea to hire Mexican relatives?

Even though it seems like a “dream come true” to find abundant, trustful, hard working and cheap labor from the same source, be careful. A group of people in a tight-knit community can cause a lot of harm and conflict to a business. I believe in diversity and competition.

I worked for a small greenhouse ruled by a Mexican family. The head of this family had total control of the workers. No one could sit at her “table” without her approval, no one could use her “stool” or her “tools” and she would not share her knowledge with other workers if they were not part of her close group. New employees who were not family members could only succeed if they were “approved” by this worker. The American supervisors were not aware of this “under-the-surface” situation; they seldom are. If good Mexican employees are leaving your company, you may have a problem such as this. Success is, or should be, helping each other.

**Are Mexicans leaders or followers?**

This is a hard question to answer because when the Spaniards arrived in Mexico they eliminated all the Indian leaders and, to a great extent, the Spaniard’s new generations continue to be the country’s leaders. In our company, the foreman wants the control of the workers, but does not follow any of these leadership rules:

- Managers administer, leaders innovate
- Managers ask how and when, leaders ask what and why
- Managers focus on systems, leaders focus on people
- Managers do things right, leaders do the right things
- Managers maintain, leaders develop
- Managers rely on control, leaders inspire trust
- Managers have a short-term perspective, leaders have a longer-term perspective
- Managers accept the status-quo, leaders challenge the status-quo
- Managers have an eye on the bottom line, leaders have an eye on the horizon
- Managers imitate, leaders originate
- Managers emulate the classic good soldier, leaders are their own person
- Managers copy, leaders show originality

It is easy for me to understand why a Mexican would start his own small landscape company rather than become a manager or a leader in the company he currently works for. From my own experience, Americans don’t seem comfortable with foreign leadership. The average Mexican worker may be too raw to polish into a leader. However the second generation is the one we need to watch.

The second generation of Mexicans is the one with leadership potential. As a Mexican born in the U.S., he will be the leader who keeps the high family values, learns both languages, has a strong work ethic, has the opportunity to go to college and understands the Mexican-American culture. It is the second generation of Mexicans that may lead the green industry in the future.

Veronica Leonard, originally from Mexico and now living in Buhl, Idaho, is an agricultural engineer and freelance writer with a masters degree in horticulture crops, and co-author of the Ball Floriculture Dictionary, an English/Spanish dictionary, for Ball Publishing.
Confidentiality in the Information Age

By Mark T. Green

In the age of always-on information, the line between public and private is becoming increasingly blurred.

News programs and articles are filled with unnamed sources divulging corporate secrets and leaking policy decisions. Armies of paparazzi follow celebrities’ every move, turning the most intimate details of their lives into fodder for tabloid magazines. The information on MySpace and Facebook pages stealthily spreads across the Internet, turning private information public without the original author’s knowledge or consent. In short, nothing is confidential.

Only a generation ago, people valued confidentiality and privacy, equating it with loyalty. Airing your own or others’ dirty laundry in public simply wasn’t done, even by the media. Today, however, the notion of confidentiality hardly exists. People rarely keep secrets; individuals share their private thoughts with total strangers in blogs and online forums. Therefore, it is reasonable to be concerned that many in your family-owned business will treat non-personal and confidential business information at least as nonchalantly.

Even if a strong sense of privacy has eroded in our broader culture, businesses still need ways to handle confidential information. This can be particularly challenging in a family business, where the additional distinction between business and family can add complexity to notions of confidentiality. Based on my experience working with family businesses, I offer the following tips on handling confidential information in an age where confidentiality and privacy are increasingly undervalued.

Assume a breach of confidentiality

First, assume that most information will not be kept confidential. Many people do not understand confidentiality, and the younger generation in particular has been raised in an environment where people rarely keep secrets. Assume that whatever you say, even behind closed doors or in a private meeting, can and will be shared with others. For those decision makers with whom you must share confidential information, be explicit in your explanations of what you mean by “confidential” and remind them that part of earning the full trust of leadership means demonstrating an ability to reliably keep necessary confidences.

In addition, assume that all electronic files will be shared. Documents, spreadsheets – and especially e-mails tend to have a life of their own, reaching far beyond their intended audience. Never use e-mail when you need to communicate something privately, since e-mails can be forwarded with a simple click. Confidential information is most safely shared through face-to-face communication.

Close the doors

Trust is often one of the greatest assets of the family business, so enterprising families have a lot to lose if they don’t safeguard trust effectively. For any family business to succeed, the family must agree that what happens behind closed doors stays there. As a consultant, I often teach family business owners that conflict and disagreements are fine, as long as they are worked through behind closed doors. When the stakeholders in a family business have a closed-door conversation, no matter what type of conflicts or heated discussions may occur, they need to be able to present a united front as soon as the doors are reopened. Doing anything less violates trust and invites others to second-guess the business’ leadership.

Family businesses cannot risk appearing divided when they are in front of their employees. Adopting a formal code of conduct that touches on these types of issues can be beneficial, because it sets rules and guidelines for working through confidential matters while establishing clear consequences for violating those rules.

Seek a common definition of confidentiality

In a multigenerational workplace, employees have very different understandings, assumptions, and expectations of confidentiality, even when they come from a single family. Generations X and Y (people born between the mid 1960s and the early 1990s) have grown up in a culture that does not strive to maintain confidentiality. In general, they do not understand or respect privacy. This is not a criticism; it is merely a fact. This is different from the world in which the older generations were raised, when privacy and confidentiality were respected and highly valued.

Because of these different assumptions and understanding, we must be more careful with our language. Stock phrases such as “keep this under your hat” and “you didn’t hear it from me” have lost their meaning. Today we might be more likely to use these phrases to get others’ attention and practically guarantee that it will be spread around, rather than to mean that we truly expect what we say to be held in confidence.

Family businesses have to make concerted efforts to establish clearer boundaries for handling private information. Some families with whom we have worked meet this challenge by prefacing confidential information, reminding each other: “You’ll be told things here that you shouldn’t even tell your significant other.” While that may sound extreme or even inappropriate, it does make explicit where the boundaries lie.

In addition, we would recommend that families invest time and energy in educating (Continued on page 39)
Letters & E-mails

Shocking lack of knowledge

I wanted to comment on an item in the Accident Briefs of your latest (TCI, September 2009) issue. In the item, “Tree trimming electrician saves own life with quick thinking,” the victim of the story states that it was his knowledge of electricity that saved him when a tree he was “trimming” fell backward and lodged in some power lines. I would like to point out that it was his lack of knowledge about trees that almost killed him.

Thank you for printing these briefs each month. I use them in my safety meetings with staff as a learning tool.

Chad Peavy, grounds supervisor
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia

Confidentiality

(Continued from page 38)

t heir younger generation about what confidentiality means, why it is important, and how they can ensure they are not inadvertently violating an important confidence of the business. There certainly is an argument to be made for open and honest communication, but there is also a need to respect privacy and prevent leaks that could be harmful to the family or the business.

As it is virtually impossible to keep a secret in the information age, the most viable long-term strategy for a family business to confront this challenge includes education and caution. First, educate. Don’t assume that the younger generation understands confidentiality in the same way you might. Second, be cautious.

Only share truly sensitive information once a person has consistently demonstrated he or she can appropriately handle confidential information.

Hopefully these tips have provided you some guidance to help you manage this in your business.

Mark T. Green is a senior associate of The Family Business Consulting Group, Inc. in Marietta, Georgia, and an active educator, speaker, researcher and advisor on succession, governance, entrepreneurship and professionalization of the family business. This article is a preview of the presentation, “Five Keys to Family Business Success,” that he will make at TCI EXPO 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland, in November, and a similar presentation he will make at Winter Management Conference in Hawaii this February.
The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) recently announced a revision of the regulatory guidance concerning the applicability of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) to mobile cranes operated in interstate commerce. Henceforth, truck-mounted cranes will be considered to be commercial motor vehicles.

The agency’s guidance is generally applicable to drivers, commercial motor vehicles (CMVs), and motor carrier operations subject to the FMCSRs. This guidance revision is intended to provide the motor carrier industry and Federal, State, and local law enforcement officials with uniform information for assessing the applicability of the FMCSRs to the operations of mobile cranes. It became effective on August 27.

A CMV is defined in 49 CFR 390.5 as any self-propelled or towed motor vehicle used on a highway in interstate commerce to transport passengers or property when the vehicle:

- Has a gross vehicle weight rating or gross combination weight rating, or gross vehicle weight or gross combination weight, of 10,001 pounds (4,536 kg) or more, whichever is greater; or
- Is designed or used to transport more than eight passengers (including the driver) for compensation; or
- Is designed or used to transport more than 15 passengers, including the driver, and is not used to transport passengers for compensation; or
- Is used in transporting material found by the Secretary of Transportation to be hazardous under 49 U.S.C. 5103 and transported in a quantity requiring placarding.

FMCSA’s clarification of its guidance was prompted by crane owners arguing that the crane, rather than being “property”, was unitized part of the vehicle itself and hence; when the crane was on the road, it was transporting neither passengers nor property.

FMCSA has asserted that the crane is still property, no matter that it is permanently affixed to the chassis.

Some operators may have an “out” based upon the interpretation of what constitutes Interstate commerce. In 49 CFR Part 390.5 it is defined as:

(1) Between a place in a State and a place outside of such State (including a place outside of the United States);

(2) Between two places in a State through another State or a place outside of the United States; or

(3) Between two places in a State as part of trade, traffic, or transportation originating or terminating outside the State or the United States.

Tree care crane operators are advised to be sure that cranes and their drivers comply with vehicle and driver fitness requirements under 49 CFR. In most cases, the crane operator/driver will be required to have a CDL.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry.
By Rebecca Fater

Somewhere in the back of his mind as a young boy, Erik G. Haupt II had dreamt about a career in flight. “I always had aspirations to become an airline pilot,” reflects Haupt, president of The Haupt Tree Co. of Sheffield, Mass., a TCIA member company since 1960. “At the time, my family didn’t have the money for both college and expensive flight training.”

While that dream never became reality, Haupt ended up finding reward and satisfaction in a field that still very much involved heights – but in a dramatically different way. He found himself in tree care. “My father started the business,” says Haupt. “It’s fairly typical among the friends and acquaintances I have in the tree care industry, that when you’re a young man growing up with a father in the tree business you inevitably end up working on a crew in the summertime. Like many, including my brother and oldest son, I started in the tree business at quite a young age, working as a groundsmen, and progressed into climbing, running an aerial lift, crew leader, sales and eventually manager. It was in my last years of college that I came to the decision that joining The Haupt Tree Company was a wonderful opportunity that would be a shame to pass up. The company was a well-respected business – and tree care was something I enjoyed doing.”

His father, Erik H. Haupt, also found his way into the field as a young man. He began working in tree care to make extra money while he was a student at Colgate University in New York. After graduation from Colgate, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps. After completing his duty, he returned to the tree business and formally launched The Haupt Tree Co. in the Berkshires region of Western Massachusetts in 1957. But the work itself was just the beginning of what would turn into a lifelong career in tree care for the elder Haupt and his family. In addition to running his company, three years later he joined what was then the National Arborist Association (NAA, now TCIA) and served as its president (and later received the NAA Award of Merit). He was also president of the Massachusetts Arborists Association, chair of the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers, was appointed by then Governor Michael Dukakis to serve on the Massachusetts Pesticide Board, and was president-elect of the American Society of Consulting Arborists before his untimely death in 1992. “Dad was very involved, and dedicated to the tree care industry,” says the younger Haupt. He was also part of the committee that created the very first safety programs for the industry, or you could say what was the infancy of today’s Accreditation program.”

Haupt’s mother, Susan Haupt, was also passionate about tree care. She served as the first female president of NAA, and was the company’s business manager up until her retirement in 1996. Today, Erik Haupt is joined by his brother, Peter Haupt, as well as Erik’s oldest son, Peter J. Haupt II, who is a Mass. certified arborist, CTSP, and is finishing his last year at the University of Massachusetts beginning this fall. Likely due to his military experience, the founding father demanded a rigorous sense of order from and within his business, reflected in the physical appearance of his vehicles and workers. “I think because of his exposure to the Marine Corps and the order that prevails as a result of being a Marine Corp officer, his new company had a distinctive military flair,” Haupt says. “Everything was uniform. The trucks were all the same color and well organized, with tools color coded for each truck; foremen wore a different color hard hat to distinguish them as foremen, etcetera.” His company was one of the few at the time wearing hard hats. That attitude also translated into an expectation for safety and responsibility that, up to that time, had been unheard of in the tree care industry, Haupt adds. “From the beginning, he was very safety conscious,” Haupt says. “He made sure his workers wore hard hats, as well as eye and
ear protection. Tree care at that time was still evolving as an industry. There was very little in the way of safe working practices.”

“Today we are still a very polished organization,” Haupt says. “Our trucks are all immaculate. We insist on things being done properly and professionally and we don’t settle for people not doing the best they can do. We’re lucky to have a great staff of people who are committed to doing high quality work.”

In deciding to pursue TCIA Accreditation, rather than expecting that credential to enhance the reputation of his business – that reputation was already there, Haupt says – achieving Accreditation was necessary to maintain it. “We have long been known as the leading tree care company in the area – and we don’t take that for granted,” Haupt says, adding that what spurred him to action last year was learning that a fellow local tree care company had achieved Accreditation. “I was dragging my feet until I read that they had become accredited.”

After that discovery, Haupt started the process and relied upon his office manager to pull together the required paperwork and files. The process itself was not too difficult, he recalls, because the company had most of the necessary policies and practices already in place. When a TCIA auditor arrived to observe The Haupt Tree Co. workers in the field and examine office paperwork, things went smoothly. “It was a fairly painless experience,” Haupt says.

The company received Accreditation in October 2008. And while employees at The Haupt Tree Co. already were using the practices and policies required by Accreditation, “it was a positive step to confirm that we were, for the most part, in compliance, as well as to find out where we were lacking with any record keeping or training to ensure our company stays the leading tree company in our service area,” Haupt says.

Today, Haupt still holds on to his fondness for flying; he earned his pilot’s license 25 years ago and routinely flies out to the islands of Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, off the coast of Cape Cod, to visit clients’ properties. But he wouldn’t change the path his life and career have taken. “I’m not sure I would have gravitated to tree care if it hadn’t been in the family,” he reflects. “But I did, and it just becomes part of who you are.”

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What a difference a year makes. Crude oil prices have dropped and with them prices of most energy products, firewood included.

Just 12 months ago, as home heating oil began to flirt with the unheard of market price of $5 a gallon, firewood was making its own market run, upwards of $300-350 per cord in some places – making it a hot commodity in some regions.

Now, prices have dropped to an unofficial average about $150 to $200 per cord, based on a countrywide check just prior to the turn of the fall season. But there are other factors at work that may belie the fact that there is a decent, if not strengthening, market ahead for cut firewood. (Much of the information in this article also applies to other wood-based energy products, such as biofuels, wood pellets, etc.; this article deals specifically with cut firewood.)

Contrast the market statistics with a predicted nasty-cold winter for the nation’s midsection and the Northeast, and it’s a reasonable assumption that we may be facing another costly heating season. With that factor alone, rising demand for oil and gas could be in order – and with it a corresponding rising demand for this renewable energy source, firewood. So, what’s seen as an ever-so-slightly weaker market could reverse itself quickly.

Currently, with respect to falling prices, two factors are in play that affect the availability as well as current and future pricing of firewood: 1) changes in forestry and logging practices, and 2) a series of insect infestations that have resulted in localized quarantines on the transport of firewood.

In the first case, the trend for “offshore” production of goods coming from China and the current worldwide economic recession have curbed demand for domestic wood, especially hardwood for everything from furniture to hardwood flooring. That means loggers aren’t in the woods as much as they were in recent years prospecting for the high-grade hardwood timber. Connected with that, according to recent radio and published reports, is the trend among landowners who are not eager to sell off standing timber, instead waiting (or hoping) for a return of high market prices.

Either way, loggers aren’t logging as much as they were, and they’re using their idle time to make their own firewood rather than contracting to have tops and limbs processed. In a supply and demand economy, when supplies tighten, that tends to buoy prices of the product in demand. How much have supplies been affected? According to a study entitled the U.S. Hardwood Market Report, U.S. harvest numbers dropped by more than 50 percent in the decade leading up to 2009. So, one source of firewood is softening since, logically, mills aren’t milling as much. (In fact,
one report indicates that up to 30 percent of the family-owned mills are shuttered.)

The resulting downturn is a two-edged sword for tree care operators looking to turn firewood into a secondary profit center, because while there is little in terms of that one source of raw material (logging) to process into firewood for those with the equipment and skills to do the job, there is also a bit of a growing shortage of material in general.

In the second case affecting supply of firewood, infestations of the emerald ash border and the Asian longhorned beetle (plus the onset of the sudden oak death pathogen) have triggered first warnings, then outright quarantines on the movement of firewood into or out of regions. Some of those quarantines can trigger fines of up to $1,000 per event. The purpose, of course, is to limit the spread of these outbreaks, which in the course of just a few years have killed millions of trees.

You have only to search the Internet to see listings of emerald ash borer quarantines that have expanded to include regions in Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin and New York, and into Canada. Or listen to public service announcements, largely aimed at consumers, warning not to transport or burn firewood that is not indigenous to the region where it is located. The mantra is “burn it where you buy it.” Even high-profile types like Minnesota Twins catcher Mike Redmond (like most big leaguers, he uses ash bats) are getting involved in delivering the message. The state of Nebraska is promoting a “buy locally” campaign.

The state of Pennsylvania, historically one of the most active when it comes to agricultural protectionism, this past summer set in place a ban that provides for up to 90 days imprisonment and a fine of up to $300 for criminal violations and up to $20,000 for each civil violation with respect to the movement of ash trees, or any parts thereof, along with “non-coniferous (hardwood) bark and wood chips larger than one inch in two dimensions.” Permits and certifications such as those issued by the USDA and other exceptions may apply.

It needs to be made clear that these quarantines apply not just to firewood, but to all cut or waste material. Firewood is a target area, especially for consumers, who can unwittingly transport small amounts of infested firewood long distances in relatively brief periods of time or unwittingly receive “free” material or purchase quarantined materials at below-market prices.

From a business perspective, the ability to cut, process and promote indigenous and/or approved firewood creates not so much a supply problem as a potential market opportunity.

According to Judy Antipin, public affairs specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, “The U.S. Forest Service does not set quarantines. That is done by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), which also comes under the USDA. In some cases (e.g. Pennsylvania), quarantines are instituted by the state department of agriculture.”

Furthermore, she says, “Different states may have very well set quarantines for any wood coming into or leaving a state, not necessarily firewood. That’s important for your members to keep in mind. A quarantine is really about the movement of specified wood material inter or intrastate, and that includes lumber and pulp.”

Judy Antipin, USFS

“Different states may have very well set quarantines for any wood coming into or leaving a state, not necessarily firewood. That’s important for your members to keep in mind. A quarantine is really about the movement of specified wood material inter or intrastate, and that includes lumber and pulp.”

Lance Chambeau, owner of TCIA member Mobile Firewood Processing in Pawlet, Vermont, turns logs into firewood for fellow TCIA member Philip DiLorenzo of DiLorenzo Tree Care in Highland, New York, using a Multitek firewood processor.
One marketing angle for firewood dealers, she said, is that consumers “need to know where their firewood comes from and don’t even take gifts of firewood.”

From a business perspective, the bottom line assessment, then, is that there are growing opportunities to sell firewood – in one’s own market – now that the regulating authorities are regulating movement of materials. With competition from outlying sources being restricted due to the regional infestations, opportunities abound.

Suzanne Bond, who handles public affairs for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, says “A growing number of states are instituting quarantines on wood moved into their state from another state and not allowing it in parks. If you move in wood from outside a quarantine area, you are subject to fines.”

She notes that tree care companies have an option to go through material handling compliance training (as in programs around Worcester, Massachusetts, a ground-zero for the Asian longhorn beetle) to learn and know the federal and inter/intrastate rules and sign agreements that allow them to move firewood. In the case of the Worcester area, she says, the APHIS headquarters there provides compliance training.

The federal government is working in parallel with state governments to curb and eradicate wood pests and pestilence and has set in place a ban on importation of firewood from Canada to the U.S. unless it has been heat treated, (e.g. kiln-dried). Bond advises that more information on this hot topic can be gathered by logging onto www.aphis.usda.gov.

Other sources referred to by Antipin and Bond include www.dontmovefirewood.org, an information site supported by a group of organizations including The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service.

“As far as prices going up or down, we do not get into retail,” says TCIA member Lance Chambeau of Mobile Firewood Processing of Pawlet, Vermont. His com-
pany contracts out to do bulk firewood processing, capable of processing three cords an hour or more, and 25 to 30 cords a day. Speaking anecdotally though, and referring to numerous customer comments, Chambeau says that the firewood market is, indeed, more competitive than just a year ago and that everyone is looking to maximize their situation.” That includes, he says, “some who have chosen to drop prices. They’re definitely not getting the prices they did last year.”

Chambeau says that the New York State ban or quarantine on firewood (New York is very aggressive in its regulations) going into effect this fall is going to limit the market regionally. His company recently traveled from Vermont to Rochester, N.Y., clear on the other side of the Empire State, specifically to handle a 325-cord processing job in anticipation of a coming shortage.

“On our end, mobile firewood processing is seeing a definite slowdown. Some people we did work for in past are loggers, and the reason loggers would pay us to do firewood is that they could make far more money getting out the high grade timber. But they are not in the woods as much and more and more, they are processing their own wood.”

“I definitely think the market is still good, but not in the woods from high grade timber. Last year we were working on a six- to seven-week backlog, but we are not seeing that this year,” Chambeau says. Since his is a market that processes months ahead of time, he says, “I plan to take six months off and wait for the market to recover. We started our new business at the time of high oil prices, and as quick as oil went up, it went down – and the processing market also dropped. We will make a decision on our next move in firewood when people (our customers) make their decisions on processing for next year.”

Terry Hughes, founder and president of Terry Hughes Tree Service in Nebraska, sees virtually no change in the market in the U.S. midsection. “Right now (around Labor Day), is too early to say, but at the first cold snap, stuff (cut firewood) will go like wildfire. We have not seen much of a change (in purchasing patterns) compared with previous years.”

He did have some very interesting advice for tree care pros either in the business or getting into it. Hughes had the foresight or the fondness to hold onto an antique Vermeer log splitter that was pressed into service in early September when the A-team unit was down for repair. “Don’t have just one log splitter, or one piece of equipment. Timing in the firewood business is important; you’ve got to be prepared. A simple breakdown can kill you if you’re not prepared.”

He also advised that a good wood splitter becomes a very good profit-making tool, especially if it can make multiple splits (6 to 8 ways) and when teamed with a conveyor. Another caution, Hughes stressed, is to match your firewood-making equipment to the material in your market. For example, he points out that Nebraska trees are far from straight, therefore making a six-figure firewood processor hard to use and to capitalize on. That same unit in the Northeast or Northwest could be a goldmine. “Invest in the kind of equipment that will get you the best yield for your material,” he advises.

A final bit of advice from Hughes relates to his seeing a soft economy creating a lot of competition among people looking to make a buck. The key, he says, will be sourcing raw material.

Conclusions to be drawn from our annual review of the firewood market boil down to sourcing material, making sure it is the right material, that it is legal and promoting it as “safe” firewood, then matching your equipment to your resources.
Man killed in struck-by

Doug Krout, 29, of Covington, Indiana, died August 12, 2009, after being injured while cutting a tree in Covington. Krout was apparently cutting a tree that had blown down during a storm the previous week. The tall stump, or spar, was still standing, and a rope was attached to the truck, according to police. Krout was cutting the stump when it apparently split and hit him in the back of the head.

Krout had a pulse and medical personnel attempted to revive him, but he was pronounced dead at the scene.*

Tree trimmer stung more than 200 times

Jon Sigurdson, 52, of Cambria, California, was cutting limbs from a eucalyptus tree August 14, 2009, on a ranch in Santa Paula when he was stung numerous times by Africanized honeybees, also known as “killer bees.” Sigurdson was about 75 feet in the air and trying to take down a limb that had bees swarming around it. He didn’t notice anything unusual about the bees, so he cut the limb, which fell to the ground. Moments later, the bees were back, stinging his eyelids, ears and face while others flew up his shirt. He kicked away from the tree, hoping to get away from them and rappel down the rope that was attached above, but his backup harness was getting caught on the tree. A ground worker with him was unable to help.

When Sigurdson finally reached the ground, the ground worker tried to help but was chased off by the swarm. He came back with a hose and scared most of the bees off, but many were still tangled in Sigurdson’s hair. Stingers jutted from his eyelids.

The ranch owner heard the commotion and ran out with a shot of epinephrine, which helps counteract allergic reactions to bee stings that can be lethal. Sigurdson was apparently having trouble breathing when the ambulance showed up, according to a report in the Ventura County Star. Nurses at the hospital later counted more than 200 stings all over his body.

Trimmer stung by angry bees

A man working for a tree-trimming contractor in St. Petersburg, Florida, was stung about 20 times August 17, 2009, after cutting a limb containing a bees’ nest. A street was blocked off on both sides as authorities dealt with the bees as well as power lines brought down by the falling limb. The injured tree trimmer was stung so many times that firefighters advised him to go to a hospital.*

Homeowner strikes line trimmer with car

A utility worker trimming trees in Dallas, Texas, was struck by an irate homeowner’s car August 19, 2009.

A 61-year-old homeowner became upset that a utility work crew was pruning branches of his tree. The homeowner tried to block the utility truck with his own vehi-
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Equipment needs for the plowing contractor can run the gamut of hand shovels to massive 24-foot-wide snow pushers, depending upon the need of the customer.

How you price your services can have a decided effect on what kind of equipment is needed to complete a particular plowing project. If a contractor is pricing services strictly “by the hour,” then finding the most productive equipment to do the job can present a Catch 22. If a piece of plowing equipment (a snow pusher or box plow, for example) makes a loader five times more efficient, it is very difficult to upcharge the customer’s hourly rate by five fold. Customers just won’t accept it. However, in per-push, per-inch, per-storm or seasonal pricing situations, increasing productivity five fold means higher margins for the contractor.

Unfortunately, plowing snow is done today much like it was 75 years ago. While the advances in technology for moving snow have been minor and mostly limited to making the ease of operation more attractive – snow is, for the most part, still moved today much like it was decades ago. Way back then, horse-drawn carriages pulled plows that pushed snow off to the side — much like the standard straight plow does today on the front of pickup trucks. Motorized vehicles made the process faster, but the process is still the same. With the advent of motorized vehicles, plows moved to the front of the “carriage” but, again, the fundamental process remained the same. Even today, snowplowing operations are a reflection of the same philosophy in that we push the snow out of the way, usually to the left or right of the vehicle. We put a piece of steel on something with rubber tires, and push the snow to one side or the other. Along with hydraulically operated plows came ease of operation. Hydraulics made it much easier to maneuver the plow set up, and allowed operators to stay inside the cab to move the plow from side to side. The addition of electrically operated switches saved on cramped fingers, but again the mechanics of moving snow from pavement surfaces remained basically the same. Loaders made it easier to move large quantities of snow, but were very inefficient in that one was using a large piece of equipment to move a (relatively) light amount of product. Skid steers (small loaders) have made sidewalk snow clearing quicker, as these units are considerably more productive than a human operating alone with a shovel. Stairways, however, are still a job for hand labor.

Probably the most effective means of increasing efficiency in snow operations that has come along in the past decade has been the snow pusher. Pioneered in the snow belts of the Rochester, N.Y., area, snow pushers are widely accepted in the snow marketplace as more and more units become available for more and more types of equipment. These “box plows” have increased snow removal efficiency by as
much as five times over that of the standard plow truck. The use of snow pushers on all sizes of loaders has drawn in more potential operators for moving snow.

Snow pushers also provide a competitive edge when quoting against someone with inefficient equipment. Everyone has to figure up the time it takes to clear a particular lot. If they figure this using only plows on trucks it takes a set amount of time to clear the entire lot. If they refigure the time including a payloader and 16-foot snow pusher, the total amount of time required to complete the operation may be cut as much as 50 percent. Even allowing for a higher hourly expenditure for the payloader, the total cost to clear the lot is often reduced dramatically. If the contractor is figuring a “cost plus margin” price to the customer, their price drops, thus supplying a competitive advantage. Many times, the price advantage to the customer results in increased profit for the contractor.

Additionally, loader owners and site managers can get more use of their equipment in winter, and snowplow operators have a new source of equipment to use on commercial, retail and industrial sites. Contractors and municipalities around the country are purchasing snow pushers in record numbers and hiring in loaders and operators to move large quantities of snow off such sites. Contractors own the pushers, and hire in the equipment to use in conjunction with these units. This frees up plow trucks to service smaller (and usually higher margin) sites. Site managers who have the equipment can increase productivity dramatically by adding snow pushers to their arsenal of available equipment. Pushers are not expensive and can be easily justified for budget purposes. Additionally, for-profit snow contractors are finding that they are increasing margins (on per push and seasonal accounts) simply because they are increasing efficiency on these larger sites. Snow is becoming a profit center that deserves the attention of tree care contractors in the northern regions of the United States and Canada. One caveat is that plowing roadways is still done the old fashioned way – and probably will be done this way for the foreseeable future.

Snow pushers are also becoming popular for sidewalk snow removal. These can be purchased for skid steers and smaller loaders, too. They come as small as 5 feet in width, which is ideal for a lot of retail centers walks. Moving massive quantities of snow with one operator has cut sidewalk snow removal times by as much as two thirds. And with the decreased labor market in recent years, mechanizing sidewalk snow removal operations have become quite attractive to snow contractors everywhere.

Laborers are still needed even with the new technology, however there are some new developments here, too, to make it easier on the backs of laborers. Power walk-behind brooms speed up production in lighter snowfalls. New developments for hand pushers have made life easier for laborers, too. Hand pushers made of plastic, curved to allow for ease of moving snow along with walk-behind, two-wheeled pushers, mean far less bending over and straining of back muscles. Polyurethane plow blade cutting edges have increased productivity, too. Steel cutting edges wear – and quickly. All those sparks you see when running down the road with the plow down means that the steel is coming apart from the grinding that takes place when steel meets pavement. Polyurethane doesn’t tear like rubber and is considerably more stiff, thus allowing for some cutting action on the pavement surface. Polyurethane slides but is durable enough to have some cutting action, too.

Tree care companies can maximize the use of equipment they may already have, such as the Bobcat S650 M-Series loader shown here, with a snow V-blade or other snow removal attachment.

TCIA PRODUCTS

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By John A. Allin
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Even though more expensive (initially) than steel, polyurethane plow blades are becoming increasingly popular everywhere, because polyurethane lasts up to four times longer than a steel cutting edge. Combine the productivity of snow pushers with the advanced technology in polyurethane cutting edges and you will be more environmentally friendly, more efficient in your methodology and probably increase margins significantly when pricing properly.

Snowplows themselves have also advanced over the past decade. All the major manufacturers now offer “V” plows. “V” blades increase efficiencies as much as 50 percent over old fashioned straight blades. Expandable plows increase efficiency over the old straight plows considerably. These units have hydraulically expandable wings that automatically tilt forward allowing for unique versatility over the straight blade.

Snow pushers are available that are sectional in nature, allowing sections of the box to “move” up and down with imperfections in the pavement surface. Some pushers offer side panels that move 180 degrees to allow for changeability from pusher box to large plow. Wing plows for payloaders give versatility to the old straight plows that were modified for use on such loaders. As plowing contractors became more inventive and manufacturers started to pay attention to the needs of the industry – advances were bound to happen.

However, some folks would like to think that with all the technological advances of the recent years we should be able to find a better way to move snow in winter months. Possibly by doing it all chemically, or electronically, or even metaphysically. Unfortunately, in this instance it appears that the old fashioned way is still the best way – with some slight productivity increases that come with the use of snow pushers and advances in plow design and function. Also, chemicals can’t do everything. And often using more chemicals than less is not very friendly to our environment.

Even with these advances in equipment technology and performance, running a poor business will outweigh the benefits of these advances. Therefore, in addition to the emergence of more productive equipment, contractors must also strive to be better educated businessmen.

John Allin is a snow industry consultant, founder of the Snow & Ice Management Association (SIMA), and author of Managing Snow and Ice, considered the bible for snow contractors looking to become more productive and profitable and available from the TCIA bookstore at tcia.org.
Thanks to many dedicated volunteers, sponsors and donors at its events this past summer, the Tree Research Education and Endowment (TREE) Fund will be able to keep the torch burning for arboricultural research and education in a tough economy.

In July, the TREE Fund Board of Trustees approved the funding of several grants and scholarships, including a Hyland Johns Grant to Prof. Dan Herms of Ohio State University. His project will investigate a number of native ash trees with some degree of tolerance to emerald ash borer. It appears that the primarily cloned cultivars in urban and suburban settings have no resistance to EAB.

Understanding the genetics and biochemical characteristics of “linger” native ash trees will provide the first step in establishing breeding programs that will ultimately restore the status of ash as a desired shade tree and profitable nursery tree throughout the U.S.

The TREE Fund awarded its Arboricultural Education Program Grant to the Maryland Forestry Board Foundation in support of its annual Natural Resources Careers Conference for high school students. The Board awarded its $3,000 Robert Felix Memorial Scholarship to Frank Grano of the Pennsylvania State University at Mont Alto, and its first $2,000 John Wright Memorial Scholarship to Christine Walsh of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Christine is studying natural resource ecology and has recently completed a semester working on a research project in a rainforest region of Australia. Frank has just completed an associate’s degree in forest technology and is advancing into the study of urban forestry.
Training Center helps expand training opportunities, revenue sources

TCIA's new "Training Center" Web page is already providing greater opportunities for arborist training as well as helping develop a new revenue source for those willing to offer training classes and workshops.

The Training Center (click the "Training Center" tab at tcia.org) provides one-stop shopping for all courses, workshops, meetings and seminars held by TCIA or TCIA-approved trainers. They must use TCIA training materials, such as EHAP and Tree Care Academy, and must open the classes and workshops to tree workers outside of their own company.

Training Center went live in late July. A number of workshops were listed and continue to be listed. The first EHAP workshop listed on Training Center was for The Tree Doctor, a 10-year TCIA member company in Clarence, N.Y., near Buffalo.

Held just two weeks after Training Center went live, the Web notice helped increase attendance. The company had six of its own employees and an additional 16 employees from other companies or institutions attend. At least three of those attendees from other companies said they found out about the workshop from Training Center, according to The Tree Doctor's Jadriene "Jay" Balduf, senior office manager.

Jeff Phelps, president of The Tree Doctor, says he has been hosting annual training sessions for his and other local companies for about seven years, but that they often had trouble finding competent instructors, particularly for EHAP training.

“We've always had difficulty getting someone to come in,” says Phelps. “It was a problem.”

With The Tree Doctor's own Daniel Mosher, CTSP, now an approved EHAP trainer, Phelps will no longer have trouble finding a trainer. Also, not only will he be able to train his and other local employees at a lower cost, but he sees having Mosher's trainer credential as a potential revenue source for hosting other safety and EHAP training at his shop or even sending him on the road during the slower winter months.

Phelps said he was pleased with the results of the workshop and is planning to use the Training Center to help promote those future training sessions.

Training at your fingertips

Whether you're looking for introductory courses in basic tree care, electrical hazard training or aerial rescue – you'll find it on the Training Center. For instance, Westchester Community College has posted several upcoming training seminars, including a six-session Tree Care Academy "Aerial Lift Specialist" course in Valhalla, N.Y., beginning October 13.

You'll also find tools to run your business safely, efficiently and more effectively with a variety of business and safety topics.

If you are thinking about hosting a particular training, say an EHAP workshop, and want to be sure you can get enough participants to make it worthwhile, now you can post it on the Training Center and get others in your area to sign up. It works pretty much the same for individuals looking for training; they can check here to see who is offering the training they are looking for in their area.

Visit TCIA's Training Center at www.tcia.org/training to find courses near you and check back frequently, as subject matter and course offerings will change. If you have a meeting or class that you would like to add, please contact Bob Rouse (rouse@tcia.org) for program and participation requirements.

Voice for Trees

Christi Layman, right, director of federal relations with Ulman Public Policy, at a fund-raiser for Rep. Tom Price (R-GA). Layman is one of TCIA's lobbyists in Washington. Price, a respected member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, was one of several Representatives who pressed for increased safety in the tree care industry. He remains accessible to TCIA staff on this and other OSHA issues. This Congress, Price took over as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections, replacing Joe Wilson.
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I spent time recently with a group of achievement-minded tree, lawn and landscape business leaders, exploring ways they can grow their business.

While listening to these leaders discuss what they “focus” on, it hit me that how we “react” to a problem determines what we think about the problem, how we feel about the problem, and what we do about the problem. Your reaction to a problem determines how much money you make.

For example: One business leader was discussing how poorly one of his branches was performing. It had been performing poorly for years. It was still performing poorly this year. It had been rocked by turnover, etc.

While the profits were eking by, sales at this branch were off by about 40 percent from what they should be. This problem had been going on for five years and looked intractable.

Or was it? Perhaps it was not a problem at all. Perhaps it was an opportunity disguised as a problem?

- Perhaps the branch manager had never received the benefit of the mentoring division managers at “headquarters” that had received.
- Perhaps the company owners had not spent enough time at the branch, since profits were (just barely) in the black.
- Perhaps the branch received less marketing monies to support it.
- Perhaps this branch underperformed because of an attitude “between the ears” of the executives running the company.

(If you are wondering what happens at a peer group meeting— one of the things we do is help business leaders rethink how they approach their issues. And that is what we did, together, with this issue.)

Turn problems into opportunities

We looked at this issue from all sides, from the perspective of each of the different members, and how they had experienced somewhat similar issues, and what they did with the issue. Then, we looked at the personal implications of this issue. How did this issue affect this business leader personally? What did he think about this issue, and what would solving it mean to him personally?

We concluded that this long-standing problem was really an opportunity disguised, waiting for him to embrace it and own it.

Your plate is full of problems, right?

Your company has 10 different big problems on its plate...

What if you grabbed one of them, sunk an extra couple hours a week into “owning” the problem, getting to know the problem personally, becoming the expert in this problem? What would that mean to you and your business? To your career? To your bottom line?

But where will the time come from? Ah, the $20,000 question— what do you need to stop doing in order to free up a couple of hours a week? Here is what separates the wanna-be’s from the gonna-be’s.

If we all take a look at what occupies our time, it tends to be “reactive” stuff. Reacting to:

- client complaints personally.
- e-mails and phone calls.
- problems that someone else can handle.
- tasks that we should (but don’t) even be thinking about.
- problems that don’t need immediate attention.

We tend to spend time “reacting” to what rolls in front of us that day.

Business Growth Starts “Between Your Ears”

By Jeffrey Scott

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www.tcia.org
“Bio-reactor” uses wood chips to clean groundwater

Iowa farmers are experimenting with a “bio-reactor” that uses wood chips to clean water discharged from crop fields in order to keep nitrates and byproducts out of groundwater. One reactor was recently installed near Webster City, the second of five planned for Iowa.

They consist of a large hole in the ground that’s filled with wood chips then flooded with water, according to a report from channel KQWC and found on www.timberbuysell.com. The wood chips allow microbial activity to occur that filter clean the water.

The bio-reactor is intended to reduce nitrate levels in the discharge. Officials monitoring the water going into and out of the system say they’re seeing a dramatic reduction in nitrate levels, up to 70 percent.

They are being used in areas used for growing corn and soybeans, which have a lot of nitrogen that leaks out of the system.

Learn more at the Iowa Soybean Association’s Web site, www.iiasoybeans.com, and click on Environmental Programs.

Fungus to take on kudzu

Scientists with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, have formulated a biologically based herbicide that could provide control of the kudzu invasive weed. By one estimate, kudzu spreads at the rate of 150,000 acres annually, easily outpacing the use of herbicide spraying and mowing, as well increasing the costs of these controls.

ARS plant pathologist Doug Boyette and colleagues are testing a fungus named Myrothecium verrucaria that infects kudzu with an astonishing speed of its own. In fact, the fungus works so quickly that kudzu plants sprayed with it in the morning start showing signs of damage by midafternoon, according to Boyette.

In greenhouse experiments, spray formulations killed 100 percent of kudzu seedlings and 90 to 100 percent of older plants in outdoor trials. Myrothecium also worked its anti-kudzu magic under a wide range of conditions, including the absence of dew. Additionally, tests showed that Myrothecium caused little or no injury to many of the woody plants known to occur in kudzu-infested habitats, including oak, cedar, pine, hickory, pecan, sassafras and blackberry.

Read more about the research in the July 2009 issue of Agricultural Research magazine, or visit www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr/2009/090716.htm. Courtesy Nursery Management & Production newsletter.

EAB kites flying in Wisconsin

If you spent much time driving in rural Wisconsin this summer, you likely saw something resembling a purple box kite hanging in an ash tree along the road. About 8,000 of these 1-by-3-foot triangular “kites” are specialized traps that are part of a state and federal effort to detect emerald ash borer, according to a Wisconsin State Journal article. The traps are coated with a sticky substance, so the beetles can’t leave once they land.

Because scientists haven’t yet identified EAB pheromones, they rely on large purple surfaces to attract male EAB beetles. The assumption is that EAB males are smitten by purple because it resembles the backside of female ash-borers. The larger the purple surface, the higher the concentration of willing partners, apparently.

Although there’s little chance of eradicating EAB beetles, scientists hope to track and slow their spread. Wisconsin is home to an estimated 770 million ash trees. EAB was found for the first time in Wisconsin in August of last year.

So far, Wisconsin has found no EAB beetles in its traps, which in summer 2008 numbered 3,800, about half of this year’s total. Because EAB is most likely spread by people transporting logs or firewood, many traps are placed at public and private campgrounds, near nurseries and sawmills, and along river corridors, high-traffic areas and public forests with lots of ash trees.

Courtesy of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Insider newsletter.

Send Tree News Digest items to: editor@tcia.org
Landscaper electrocuted using leaf blower

A landscaper was electrocuted August 19, 2009, while blowing leaves at an apartment complex in southwest Houston, Texas. An eyewitness says the worker’s leaf blower came in contact with an air conditioning unit and electrocuted the worker. Three other workers tried to help, but also got shocked. They finally used a board to move the worker away from the air conditioner. Doctors pronounced him dead at a hospital.*

Landscaper injured in fall from tree

A landscaping worker fell at least 30 feet from a tree while trimming tree branches August 20, 2009, in Lakewood, California. The 49-year-old man was working with other employees trimming tree branches at a residence when the fall occurred. The cause of the fall is unknown. The man was flown to a hospital, where he was treated for severe back pain and injuries to his left leg. *

Man suffers multiple fractures in fall from tree

A 40-year-old man was hospitalized after falling from a tree and suffering multiple bone fractures on August 21, 2009, in Fountain City, Indiana, near Richmond. The man was working for a tree-trimming service, according to the Palladium-Item report. Following the incident, the man was airlifted to Miami Valley Hospital in Dayton, Ohio, to be treated for the injuries. *

* Contributed by Paul M. Mautz, CTSP, forester, City of Southfield, Michigan.

For more August accident briefs, or for other months, visit www.tcia.org/public/safety_accident_briefs.htm
By Denise Foery

Our local chamber of commerce, the Mount Snow Valley Chamber of Commerce, last fall had a scarecrow contest as part of a “Fall Celebration” in the area. One of the categories was “Best Themed to Business.” I had the idea of entering an arborist scarecrow working in a tree at a high visibility location, in the center of town at the Crafts Inn in Wilmington.

Hannah Senecal, who works in our office, spent a day making him, using our company shirt and climbing gear, complete with saddle, helmet, spikes, etc. I purchased a toy chain saw for him to use. He was on display for the month of October and won “Best Themed to Business.” We were all quite proud of what a great job Hannah did creating him.

We always need to be aware of the opportunity to promote our industry (even if it is in a scarecrow contest!). Since Bill was in that big maple getting the scarecrow set up, he was able to do an evaluation. There was a lot of deadwood in the tree and, as you can see from the picture, it is a high-traffic, in-town location and that tree was considered a hazard if left the way it was.

We recommended the tree be pruned. We got the job, pruned the tree and it looks great this season!

I haven’t heard whether the Chamber is doing that contest again this year, but our scarecrow is still in our shop ready for another opportunity to climb.

Bill and I really enjoy being members of TCIA and find the services really valuable, and all of the staff is so friendly and helpful! Thank you!

Denise Foery and her husband, Bill, own and operate Black Diamond Tree Service Inc., an 11-year TCIA member, in Wilmington, Vermont.
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