

Like A Boss: Choosing The Right Mower Fleet



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Tom Smith, division fleet manager
for LandCare

Tom Smith, division fleet manager for [LandCare](#), which is headquartered in Frederick, Maryland but has 50 branches nationwide, and a corporate office in San Diego, says that choosing the right mowers for the company's fleet is a never-ending process. This is not only because LandCare is so big, but also because the company is always adding new projects to their routes and taking on new direct report sites. Although there is no one-size-fits-all approach, Smith says they take a very data-based approach to determining the right mix of mowers for the fleet.

Smith says that it comes down to an evaluation process. LandCare monitors and reports on the hours of use on all mowers on both a weekly and a monthly basis in order to determine if they are achieving the proper amount of usage from each machine. "This tracking process plays a key role in budgeting for the following season because we can see which machines were used more than others and do more research to find out why," Smith says. "No two jobs or routes are alike, so detecting a usage pattern is always useful in evaluating mower efficiency. It allows us to compare this historical data to other crews and projects in similar situations in order to determine the best mower mix – size, type, and quantity – for each job scenario."

The evaluations continue in the form of a complete inventory audit toward the end of the summer to properly assess the fleet and analyze the condition of each machine. Smith says this enables LandCare to make the right decisions during the fall budgeting period. It also gives them ample time to order replacements for broken or damaged mowers and to add any new machines to anticipate projected growth.

To keep the fleet in top working order, Smith says there is a strong emphasis on training employees, which includes instructions on safe operating techniques, proper sequence in which to perform work, and hands-on training on maintenance and preventative care of the mowers.

"This is so important so that crews not only have a thorough understanding of the machines but also take pride in being responsible for the general maintenance of their equipment," he says. "They also learn about the importance of having sharp blades and a daily maintenance routine to keep the mowers in top condition."



Photo: LandCare

Currently, the company has approximately 1,000 large mowers across their 50 branches. Approximately 30 percent are riding mowers while 70 percent are walk-behind or hybrid mowers with foot platforms.

"This is a good mix for us because we service clients that vary greatly in terms of size and scope, so we need to have enough variety to efficiently complete each job," Smith says. "For regular four- or five-man crews, two to three mowers are often ideal, however, it depends on the specifications of each client."

Smith says the company believes in having quality, frontline equipment for the crews, which reduces its dependency on spare or inferior equipment.

"This leads to improved team morale, ensures safety, and helps provide better service for our customers," he says. "The ability to consistently upgrade our equipment also helps to ensure the products are well-supported by a network of dealers near each of our business units."

Our [Like a Boss](#) series highlights some common business challenges landscape professionals face and how they conquer them.