

10 Solutions To Common Business Problems



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Sometimes the simplest solution is overlooked for months or years, but once implemented, it can make all the difference. Here are some of the best solutions landscape business owners have shared with us, so you, too, can start incorporating one or more of these problem-solvers. Start conquering your worst challenges [like a boss](#).

1. Testing battery-powered equipment

John McCaughey, owner of Terren Landscapes, says he started implementing new battery-powered chain saws, string-trimmers, hedge-trimmers and blowers to stay a step ahead of noise-reducing trends. Crews were challenged to find the pros and cons of each new piece of equipment. In order to test the equipment without sacrificing time and money on jobs in the process the new machines were sent out in the field with their gas-powered equivalents. If the new technology failed in some way or slowed a crew's pace on high-pressure jobs, they always had a back-up ready.

Read more: [Testing Battery Power without Losing Profit](#)

2. Overcoming proposal pushbacks

Richard Cording Sr., LIC, owner of CLC Landscape Design found that clients typically don't want to share a budget and often have unrealistic expectations of landscape costs. Because of sticker shock, Cording would get pushback on proposals for projects. By itemizing his proposals and including the optional upgrades listed out, a large majority of his clients will end up going for the upsell once the project is underway. Because of this change in the initial project proposal, not only has he been able to sell more jobs, but clients will usually sign up for the add-ons.

Read more: [Overcoming Proposal Pushbacks](#)

3. Making time to train employees

When work was at its busiest, they needed more employees. But they were too busy to put in the time to properly train them. That's when the idea for creating training videos was born. Two years ago, Snow & Sons Tree & Landscaping began to make training videos that provided a visual demonstration. This has included proper ways to park and unload a truck, how to hook up a truck and trailer, or even the proper way to mulch a garden from start to finish. Using this visual training procedure has been a great way for new employees to learn techniques even if there wasn't a lot of time to spend with them for field training.

Read more: [How This Company Made Time to Train Employees](#)

4. Budget based on weather

Contractors are asking: Should I adjust my snow budget midseason if the season produces below-average precipitation? Because of the seasonality of the snow business, budgeting carefully so you don't overspend or extend yourself financially is crucial. Overhead expenses, labor, equipment maintenance, equipment financing and taxes all need to be based on a 12-month year. You need to know you'll have enough funding to cover those expenses during the time you have limited or no cash flow. Always be aware of the ebb and flow of your seasonal snow business, and review your budgets often to help maintain cash flow throughout the offseason.

Read more: [How Snow Warriors Can Budget Based on Weather](#)

5. Handling employee overtime

First determine why overtime is happening at your company, then you can determine what needs to be done to minimize or eliminate it. Get your team involved, identify the sources or reasons, build a game plan, measure, track and also consider special recognition for those who help lower your overtime and show efficiency in their work. Once you build and implement your game plan, measure your progress regularly. This may require a weekly tracking of payroll and the number of overtime hours or overtime as a percent of revenue.

Read more: [Dealing with Employee Overtime](#)

6. Irrigation stock inventory

Diagnosing an issue with irrigation before getting to the job site can be tricky and cause a mishap with bringing the right parts to get the job done. Knowing which parts and how many to stock is a challenge of irrigation work that's not as common in other segments of landscaping. Having the right parts on each job site helps avoid time wasted driving to a supply house. Make sure your irrigation crews have their own vehicles in order to carry an inventory of parts to every job.

Read more: [Constantly Seeking Irrigation Efficiency](#)

7. Storing snow plows

Once winter is over, snow plows do nothing but take up space in your warehouse. But even during the snow season, plows need to be accessible, yet out the way. Joe Flake, owner of Target Lawn Care in Paola, Kansas, solved his snow plow storage problem by setting each plow on a pallet to make them more maneuverable with the warehouse pallet jack.

Read more: [Smarter Snow Plow Storage](#)

8. Skills for better time management

"When you need time, you don't have it and when you have time, you don't need it." According to *Entrepreneur's* Joe Mathews, Don Debolt and Deb Percival, there are only three ways business owners should spend their time: thoughts, conversations and actions. Carry a schedule and record your activities for the week and don't forget to schedule time for interruptions. Practice not answering the phone just because it's ringing and not answering emails just because they arrive in your inbox. Schedule specific time to answer email and return phone calls.

Read more: [Time Management Tips for Business Owners](#)

9. Finding value in grass clippings

Wyoming LCO and entrepreneur Todd Graus says it's time we view lawn clippings for their value rather than as an expensive waste. He has spent the past six years developing the Biopac'r, his product to turn grass clippings into livestock silage. Typically lawn clippings are seen as a waste that is hauled to a landfill, composted, mulched or just left on the client's lawn where they fall. Graus has continued to develop the Biopac'r and a business system to help other landscape professionals sell the resulting grass silage to feed lots across North America.

Read more: [How Grass Clippings May Change Our Industry Forever](#)

10. Keeping equipment grease sheets

Most business owners invest a lot of hard-earned capital into equipment. Making sure the machines are always running efficiently can sometimes be a challenge during the busy season. Greasing and regular maintenance of equipment can get overwhelming for a mechanic who is dealing with so many other issues. To be more proactive, a machine log system was developed at Lynch Landscape & Tree Service, Inc. that put the responsibility of greasing equipment in the hands of the employees, which also gave them a sense of pride and ownership.

Read more: [Equipment Maintenance Solutions](#)