

How to Get Noticed by Landscape Grads



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Greenscape Inc. created a unique way to generate excitement and engage with landscape and horticulture students through a contest called #CEOcamp. The lucky winner – Scott Mendenhall of Oklahoma State University – was flown into Raleigh in April and became Greenscape’s CEO for the day. Greenscape shares what they learned with others in the industry here:

Inspired. Passionate. Energetic. Driven. Talented. Today’s landscape and horticulture students are all these things and more. We want them to know Greenscape Inc. as a top employer and see all the opportunities ahead of them as they pursue their careers. Our response? We created #CEOcamp: an opportunity for one lucky winner to enjoy an action-packed all expenses paid trip to experience life as a CEO in the green industry.

Our Green Team members were slated to volunteer at PLANET’s 39th annual Student Career Days in March. Student Career Days is the industry’s leading recruitment event, and this year it was held in our backyard at NC State University. This exciting event draws more than 800 students each year from top-notch landscape programs across the country to meet green industry employers and participate in more than two-dozen individual and team competitions. This year, we decided simply participating wasn’t enough.

#Social is Big

The team brainstormed ways to engage students and help them learn about the company. The final plan to engage students and get our name out there: selfies! Thus, #CEOcamp was born. We offered each student coming by our booth a pair of green, heart-shaped glasses (the “heart” represents Greenscape’s “I-H-A-R-T” leadership principles: integrity, honesty, accountability, respect and trust), and encouraged them to take selfies and post them on Instagram using the #CEOcamp hashtag and our Instagram account handle [@greenteamnc](https://www.instagram.com/greenteamnc).

The green glasses and students hamming it up for the cameras drew more interest and then more students, as they came over to see what was happening. The more students who got involved, the more intense the competition became!

Why #CEOcamp?

"We set up #CEOcamp as a contest where the winner would receive an all expenses paid trip to spend two days with our team at our headquarters outside Raleigh – to basically step into my shoes for a brief period to get a real feel for what running a landscaping business is like," says Daniel Currin, President and CEO of Greenscape. "We felt this was something unique – something that would engage the students and really get them interested in learning more about the industry in a way just attending career days could not."

A little competition is a good thing. Since a contest winner would be chosen from photos with the most likes, contestants had to encourage their friends and family members to like their pictures, getting everyone involved.

"Greenscape is passionate about developing emerging leaders in the green industry," adds Currin. "We wanted to step it up and do something no one else was doing. The #CEOcamp winner got to tour our operational hubs, meet with clients to get their perspective, delve into the company's financials to see how we remain profitable, and contribute in an executive committee meeting. Our team was very excited to spend time with a promising landscaping student."

The itinerary included an introduction on day one followed by a Green Team employee and family event attending a [Durham Bulls](#) baseball game that evening. (Greenscape's [Weed Man](#) franchises have been named the 'Official Lawn Care Provider of the Durham Bulls.') Day two started early, meeting the production crews at 6:15 a.m. when they left for the day. A leadership team meeting, branch tours, client site visits, a vendor lunch and a Come Alive Outside conference call comprised the rest of the second day before our real CEO was debriefed by our temporary CEO before he headed home.

And the Winner Is...

The contest was heated for a while there, but Scott Mendenhall, a senior at [Oklahoma State University](#) in Stillwater, beat out the competition. Scott is from Oklahoma City and attends OSU as a student in the Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department. He also works at [The Botanic Garden](#) at the University.

"I really wanted to be the one who could experience such a great opportunity so I did everything I could to get as many likes as possible," says Mendenhall. "I was on Facebook for close to 2 hours the night before the competition ended messaging as many people as possible to try and win. Luckily just about everyone was able to like my picture, and a few people actually had some of their friends like it as well."

Mendenhall flew into Raleigh on April 15th and was picked up at the airport by Green Team member Aaron Culler. "Scott was really excited he was selected

for #CEOcamp,” says Culler. “Our team was excited to have him here, too. I think the idea behind #CEOcamp is just great and hope we get to repeat it next year.”

Mendenhall met with Jerry Hall, Residential Client Relations Manager, to visit a recently completed job site that showcased a number of unique features. “We had a frank discussion about the design, estimating and creation process,” says Hall. “You can come up with some incredible landscape designs but have to take into account how those translate into the real dollars we must receive for each job so we can provide the people and equipment to support these creative designs. I think that gave Scott some food for thought.”

“I learned so much from my time with the Green Team,” says Mendenhall. “As far as my career path goes, I discovered I need to spend some more time learning about the business and financial side of things because my knowledge in those areas is lacking. I also need to do more to become a better leader and gain more knowledge in as many areas of the industry as I can so that I too can make the best decisions possible in helping our industry grow.”

Play it Again, Sam

After talking with Scott about his experience and polling all the Green Team members who were involved in #CEOcamp, the team has unanimously decided we need to do this again in 2016! “I think #CEOcamp was a big success,” says Paul Brooks, Vice President in charge of Weed Man operations. “I think it gives the student a great perspective into all the moving parts of the company. That realistic view of the industry is something you simply can’t get in a classroom.”

“I agree #CEOcamp was a great experience for everyone,” adds Keith Updyke, Branch Manager of the Holly Springs office. “But next year I’d like to see us choose more than one winner to attend the camp!”

“After having shadowed Daniel for a day, there is so much more to being CEO than I initially thought,” says Mendenhall. “It was great getting to see so many different sides of the industry, as well as realizing how much more is involved with a landscape company than just knowing about plants. I hope Greenscape holds another #CEOcamp next year. If they do, I would tell other students to go for it! This is an amazing opportunity and a great learning experience. On top of that, you get to meet some incredible people along the way. It is not every day that you can shadow the CEO of well-established company like Greenscape. I also felt like #CEOcamp was a great networking opportunity.”

“We need talented young people involved in landscaping and horticulture to move the industry forward,” adds Currin. “I believe #CEOcamp provided Scott with a great opportunity to get to know more about the industry and about [Greenscape](#). I hope he shares his story with classmates who will enter the industry and get them excited about the possibilities we see for the future.”

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