

Finding Your Niche In The Market

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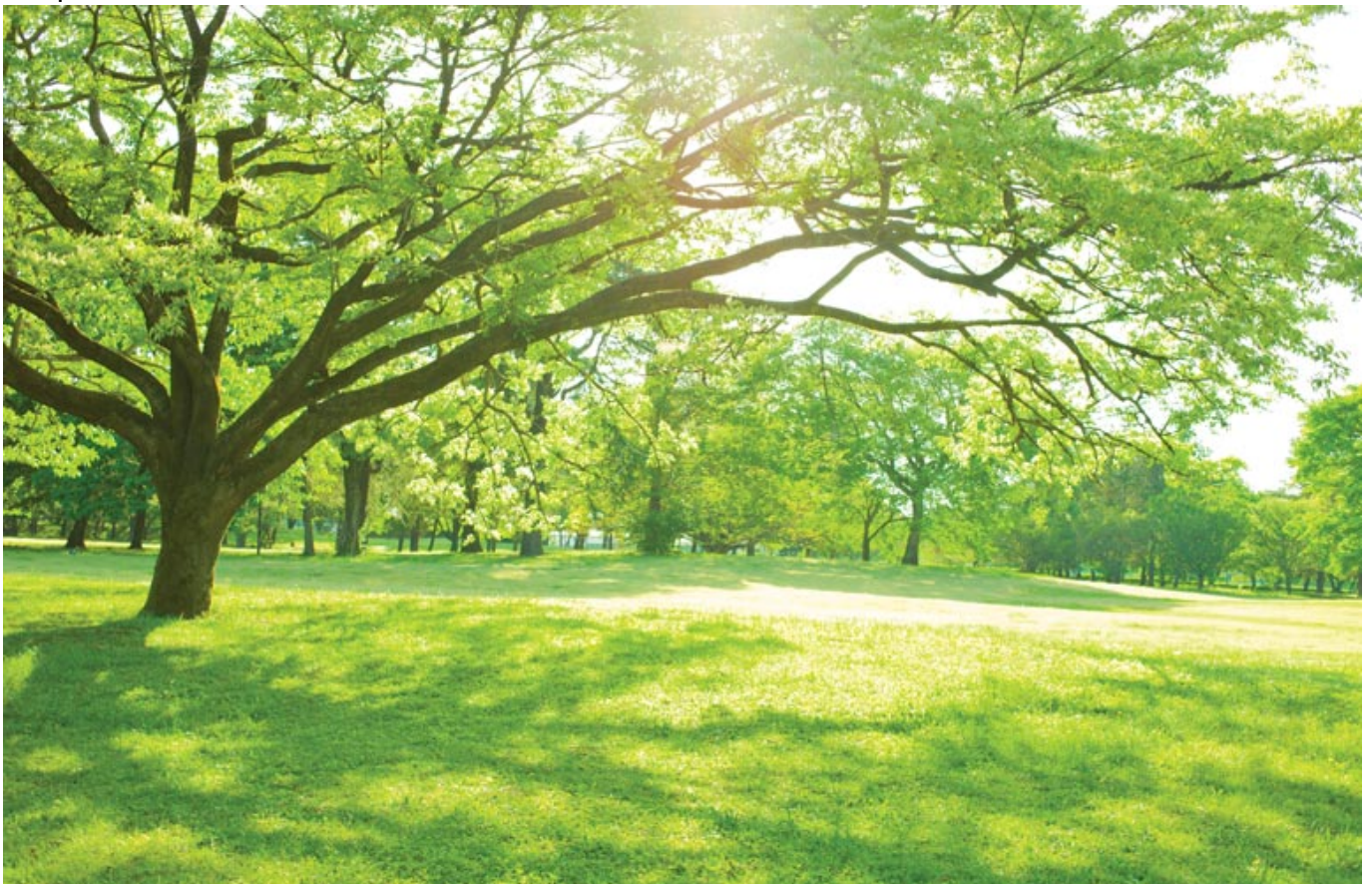
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[dropcap]H[/dropcap]ow do you stand out from your competitors? Why should a homeowner call you before they call the other lawn and landscape maintenance company down the street? In many cities, there's increased competition among landscaping and lawn care service companies. So, you need to stand out. Many green industry companies successfully diversify their business models to stay competitive.



Majestic Lawn Care & Landscape

In New City, NY, Majestic Lawn Care & Landscape, Inc. has been in business for over 26 years. The company's President, Joe Holland, wears many hats in the company, including one as a certified arborist.



Joe Holland, President,
Majestic Lawn Care &
Landscape

Holland describes his business as a lawn and landscape business that provides tree care and removal services. He started a company back in the late 1980s that focused solely on trees. When he left that business, he opened Majestic Lawn Care & Landscape. Later, he included tree care services with the landscape and lawn maintenance services, which was a natural fit.

"I started taking classes in tree care, and the next thing you know, I'm taking the arborist test. I learned a lot by going through the educational side [of tree care]," explains Holland. And he keeps up his certification by taking continuing education courses in tree care. "I knew the mechanics of trees, not the biology," he says.

Holland found that the tree care education opened his eyes and helped him appreciate trees more. "I'm not as quick to suggest removal anymore," he states.

Plus, Holland doesn't have to subcontract out tree care services because he's a certified arborist. For example, when working with municipalities in New York, Holland must provide a report explaining why a tree needs to be removed. As a certified arborist, he now has the authority to write those reports and even has other tree care companies come to him to write these types of reports.

Other scenarios bring in work as well. Holland's staff will remind customers of Majestic's tree services with a certified arborist after major storms hit the area.

Holland's assistant, Linda Montemarano, manages the company's Facebook and Instagram accounts, and notes she doesn't post photos of Majestic's arborist services. She points out that the company's tree work comes mostly from word of mouth.

Tomlinson and Bomberger Lawn Care, Landscape & Pest Control

Tomlinson and Bomberger Lawn Care, Landscape & Pest Control in Lancaster, PA has expanded its property services to include spotted lanternfly control.

With certified arborists already on staff, the company believed that specializing in controlling the newest pest to Pennsylvania would be a perfect fit. (Editor's Note: Spotted lanternfly has been found in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. The insects present a significant threat to agriculture industries. For background on the invasive spotted lanternfly, [read an article](#) written by *Turf* managing editor, Christine Menapace.)



Tomlinson and Bomberger Lawn Care, Landscape & Pest Control developed expertise for spotted lanternfly control.

According to Jay Worth, marketing coordinator at Tomlinson and Bomberger, the company set out and researched ways to fix the growing spotted lanternfly problem in their region. They worked with Penn State University Extension's Spotted Lanternfly Task Force to learn best practices protecting residential and commercial trees from the spotted lanternfly.

"We've been treating this pest for over a year. In that time, we've found that we were able to reduce the number of treatments we originally offered and still get excellent control," Worth says. When asked why the company decided to add this service, Worth states that "the company felt it was a need and saw an opportunity to offer SLF control."

He adds, "We've done a lot to increase our position as a tree care service. We have many more certified arborists on-site compared to many competitors."

When it comes to online search results, Worth says, "We're popping up as the top result for 'How to Get Rid of Spotted Lanternfly.' This move has really worked for us." For social media, Worth says that the company used both organic search and Google ads to spread the word about its spotted lanternfly expertise. The company publishes blog posts on its website, as well as pushes the information on its social media channels.

Throughout the growing season, Tomlinson and Bomberger's crews took pictures of spotted lanternflies throughout south central Pennsylvania. They upload these pictures, so homeowners would be on the lookout in their neighborhoods.

"Our service helps homeowners feel more at ease, more comfortable that we're positioned to keep public and private outdoor areas from spotted lanternfly. [These insects] are harmless to people, but their honeydew secretions make a mess on picnic tables, outdoor furniture, and hardscapes."

And, spotted lanternflies become a nuisance in the early fall when they're actively looking for mates and laying eggs.

Tomlinson and Bomberger use a multi-step program for controlling spotted lanternfly. Their program uses a systemic approach that starts at the bark to stop nymphs from developing into adult spotted lanternflies.

Worth and his team invested in print magazine ads around the service, as well as with door hangers to communities impacted by the invasive insect. "We put the door hangers in neighborhoods we know have been affected by spotted lanternfly," says Worth. "The door hangers have been enormously productive for us."

With extensive reach in south central and southeastern Pennsylvania, Tomlinson and Bomberger Lawn Care, Landscape & Pest Control saw the need to be on the cutting edge of spotted lanternfly best practices. The company's customers responded, along with sales prospects who became customers due to this developed expertise and outreach effort.

C.E. Pontz Sons, Inc.

C.E. Pontz Sons landscape contractors of Lancaster, PA have specialized in building and maintaining water features for the past 20 years. Specifically, the company creates and maintains the following.



C.E. Pontz Sons has distinguished itself in its market by constructing and maintaining quality, attractive water features.

- Fountains
- Ponds
- Pondless waterfalls
- Pond restoration
- Rainwater harvesting
- Stormwater solutions
- Water features
- Water gardening

Bobby Kenyon, creative solutions guru with C.E. Pontz, says, “We’ve continued to attempt to push the boundaries and [have] been much more than a ‘landscaping’ company for many years.”

“We typically use the term ‘landscape construction’ because we do so much more than what is typically associated with landscaping. We actually offer very few of the services that ‘typical’ landscape companies offer,” Kenyon states. He believes more landscaping companies should specialize in a service or offer more than what their competitors provide to set themselves apart in the market.

In the water features space, C.E. Pontz often ends up rebuilding other contractors’ mistakes. Kenyon says that up to 50% of their water feature business is fixing someone’s “hideous mistakes.” Most errors come from landscapers instead of DIYers, he says. Problems they’ve encountered include leaks, unattractive rockwork, and improper filtration, among other blunders.

Kenyon says, “We offer what we know and what we do best. I think the industry as a whole would benefit if others followed suit.”

Recently, C.E. Pontz finished a pond rebuild at a McDonald's restaurant. "The McDonald's projects were rebuilds of another landscaper who installed problematic, very unattractive water features in the first go-round," says Kenyon.

Still, C.E. Pontz doesn't perform a lot of commercial work. Kenyon says the company has 90% residential accounts. As such, most of the water feature construction is made up of residential clients.

Kenyon is responsible for all of C.E. Pontz's social media, and he takes great pride in the job. He gets the word out through Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. "We like to showcase our creative style and personality. What you see is what you get. Not only do we like to post pictures and videos of our projects, but we also like to showcase our employees and the process through which the projects are completed," Kenyon explains.

Kenyon goes on to state that the final product matters a lot, but it's also the customer experience throughout the process. "Your future customers can get to know who they're dealing with and have a good idea of what the process of the project looks like. The progress photos and videos throughout the project help immensely," he says.

Kenyon says that C.E. Pontz is known as the "water features contractor in Lancaster County, PA," as well as the surrounding area. And he says there isn't a lot of competition for the type of work they do.

"We do see some new faces popping up here and there, but we've been well established for a long time."

Kenyon concludes that he thinks it's ideal to know what your company is good at and build your business around those talents. "Build your name and reputation on that certain niche by installing quality projects and giving the customer the best experience you can," he says. "The work will follow."

Komancheck has a passion for helping small- to medium- size companies succeed. She writes blogs, website content and other digital marketing pieces for the lawn care and landscape industries.

Do you have a comment? Share your thoughts in the Comments section below or send an e-mail to the Editor at cmenapace@grouppc.com.

Want to talk about strategies for growing your business with fellow lawn care and landscape professionals? Join the discussions in the [Business Management Forums](#) at www.expired-link.com.