

New to the Game But Poised for Fame

Seven companies that are quickly making names for themselves through a fresh, modern approach to landscape contracting—alongside tried and true tactics that have worked for decades

Founded in 2008 or later, the following seven Landscape Industry Hidden Gems are showing clout through the creation of custom management tools, unique market positioning, and other creative management strategies. Read on to learn how these contractors who are new to the landscaping game just might be helping to change it.

Horticare Landscape Company in Lafayette, LA – Founded in 2008

Brooke Inzerella, owner of

Horticare Landscape Company, has focused on education, innovation and service from day one. A self-proclaimed forward-thinker, he has stayed on top of the landscape game with the help of his own custom-created app.

"Not only is our time entry recorded through the app, it also has customized reports that are emailed to me after each stop," explains Inzerella. "The report is an easy way to record time, materials and actions on the job. It also has a quick checklist that

must be filled out regarding abnormalities in the landscape and any special notes. This has been invaluable in training my people in what to look for."

The app increases response time, saves paper, and has embedded GPS to help route trucks. Inzerella calls it the heartbeat of their efficiency and the tie that binds each division.

Hydrozone Landscape Corp. in Baytown, TX – Founded in 2009

Juan Hernandez's father actually founded Hydrozone Landscape in 1983. But after he suffered a massive heart attack in 2007, Juan decided to regroup for a year or so before relaunching the company in 2009. Now with a heightened focus on irrigation and water conservation, Hydrozone has returned to the market with a new approach: partnering with competition.

"We have partnered with national and regional landscape companies on their projects," Juan relates. "We have provided the labor force to renovate or retrofit old irrigation systems with new-technology components that will save water and money for the client. It's been very good business partnering with my competition."

Midwest Landscape Specialists in St. John, IN – Founded in 2009

Midwest Landscape Specialists in St. John, IN, places a lot of emphasis on website presentation. "Before this year I never really saw how having a website could make that big of a



› Enviro Mow Pro's owner Donny Koellen says they are working to help customers to see the value in sustainable landscaping. Fleet vehicles sport the company logo ready to capture the sustainable market when it takes off in the Spokane, WA, area.

difference—but I was wrong," says owner Shawn O'Keefe. "I hired one of the best website designers to design my website (mlslandscape.net) and help make things 'modern'. Since our website has been completed, our customers have been raving about it. I strictly get calls just from how professional the website looks."

The way Midwest Landscape Specialists has begun presenting landscape designs has also been turning some heads. "When we do our 3D designs, we bring our laptop to a customer's home and do a real-time 3D walkthrough of their home," O'Keefe explains. "When they see it, they are blown away. A lot of the

companies I bid against also do the same kind of 3D design, but make the mistake of printing five or six big pictures to give to the client. We all know the first design is just a starting point. With a laptop, we can change everything right then and there to accommodate any need the client might have. Time and efficiency are crucial when meeting and booking jobs with customers."

TimberLine Outdoors in Hixson, TN – Founded in 2011

John Crider started in landscaping

as a way to pay for college while studying business, marketing and entrepreneurship. He quickly developed a passion for it. With the help of his current partner, Duane Blomberg, Crider is building a business that values relationships above all else.

"We have our clients' best interests in mind," says Crider. "I would rather build long-time, lasting relationships with the client than nickel and dime them. If they know I am looking out for them, they will look out for me."

› continued



› The clean and presentable Cypress Point Landscapes truck follows owner Ron Ratliff's vision for operational excellence that will improve the Green Industry's image.

LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY			SERVICES OFFERED											
Hidden Gems			Maintenance	Lawn Care	Lawn Renovation	Tree Care	Installation	Hardscaping	Landscape Lighting	Water Features	Irrigation	Snow Removal	Holiday Decorating	Pest Control
Company	Year Founded	Estimated Number of Employees												
Horticare Landscape Company in Lafayette, LA	2008	11-20	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●			●
Hydrozone Landscape Corporation in Baytown, TX	2009 (1983)	11-20	●				●				●			
Midwest Landscape Specialists in St. John, IN	2009	less than 10	●				●	●	●	●		●	●	
Good Natured Lawn & Landscape in Newton Falls, OH	2010	less than 10	●	●			●					●		
TimberLine Outdoors in Hixson, TN	2011	less than 10	●		●	●	●	●						
Cypress Point Landscapes in Charlotte, NC	2008	less than 10	●	●	●									
Enviro Mow Pro's in Spokane, WA	2009	less than 10	●	●	●	●					●	●		

Crider and Blomberg are constantly looking for ways to improve their services and processes in order to better serve clients. They are quick to go the extra mile without charging an extra fee, saving customers money while nurturing relationships. For instance, they have done minor home repairs for select clients, and even rescued a family of birds from one customer's attic.

Cypress Point Landscapes in Charlotte, NC – Founded in 2008

At Cypress Point Landscapes, owner Ron Ratliff has taken a "holistic" approach to landscaping. He has built a sustainable organization that focuses on improved operations, strong leadership and community involvement. Additionally, the company strives to improve the Green

Industry's image while solidifying their own place in the market.

The company's vision for operational excellence, specifically, is realized through discipline and carefully executed procedures. "We have developed

a comprehensive and coordinated approach to our business," says Ratliff. Cypress Point

Landscapes has carefully defined policies and procedures focused on efficient workflow planning to minimize fuel cost and equipment use, market segmentation, business growth planning, and consistent methodologies for customer contact



At Midwest Landscape Specialists, they do 3D designs on-site for customers. Owner Shawn O'Keefe credits this approach for their success in closing sales and booking jobs.

such as always being in uniform and shutting down equipment while in the presence of others.

Good Natured Lawn & Landscape in Newton Falls, OH – Founded in 2010

Jack Harvey of Good Natured Lawn

& Landscape in Newton Falls, OH, entered the Green Industry with an understanding of the social and environmental responsibilities involved. He's convinced that education and regulation are the key to sustainable operations.

"I think there should be more education and regulation in our industry with the environment in mind," says Harvey. "It's about protecting the earth, what we have, for future generations to come."

Enviro Mow Pro's in Spokane, WA – Founded in 2009

At Enviro Mow Pro's, they have taken a similar environmentally driven approach to lawn care. They are currently using organic fertilizers and mulch with 95% of their customers. Owner Donny Koellen says

they are working to help customers to see the value of an investment in sustainable landscaping.

"We try to 'go green' as much as possible, but some clients are not willing to spend the extra money as of right now," says Koellen. "We are always coaching them on the long-term benefits, however, of what going green can mean in the long run."

Located four hours east of Seattle, Koellen knew he was ahead of his market when choosing the sustainable approach to landscaping. He will be ready when the market catches up.

"Organic lawn care hasn't taken off here yet," says Koellen. "Spokane is years behind the rest of the market. When it reaches that point, I want to be noticed by that clientele." >

TAKE-HOME TIPS

Building a new, sustainable landscaping company in a maturing industry

- > Commit to professional, consistent website marketing
- > Focus on building long-term relationships with clients
- > Always look for unique market positions you can assume, which may even include performing specialized services for your competitors
- > Embrace technology such as mobile apps and real-time 3D landscape designs to drive productivity and enhance the customer experience
- > Develop written policies and procedures to help guide your company as it grows
- > Embrace education and even regulation, which help protect both our planet and our profession
- > Don't be afraid to take risks and lead your market on new products and approaches to landscaping and lawn care

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