

WALKER TALK

SERVING LAWN MAINTENANCE PROFESSIONALS

**Time
management tips**

**Prescription
for success
in Florida**

**Mulch
madness**

Turf on a roof in Atlanta

*Quality, competitive advantages
pay big dividends for Scares'
owner Steve Coffey*

WALKER TALK

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Welcome to Walker Talk

The lawn maintenance industry is entering a new phase. Gone are the days when all one had to do was take orders. Competition is tough everywhere and it's tough for all size businesses. Large or small, to compete successfully today, owners and operators must take advantage of any and all efficiencies.

Walker mowers are designed to help lawn maintenance owners and operators become more efficient. Yet they alone won't ensure success, just like a car alone won't ensure drivers get to their destination on time.

The stories inside this new publication share some of our experiences at Walker. They tell how professionals across the country approach an ever-changing marketplace. How they meld together equipment, employees and business management and marketing skills to successfully meet challenges head on.

To be sure, the landscape/lawn maintenance industry has been very good to Walker Manufacturing. The industry has supported our products, introduced us to new friends and given us an education we could never have found elsewhere. It's time to give back something in return.

Please enjoy this premier issue of *Walker Talk*. Hopefully, it will help users of our product — lawn maintenance professionals — find success and reach their goals on time.

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Bob Walker
Bob Walker
President

Turf on a roof in Atlanta

*Scapes owner
Stephen Coffey knows
no job too tall,
too tough.*

Steve Coffey is not your ordinary landscape contractor. Sure, he does installation and construction, and he maintains the majority of the projects his crews complete in the Atlanta area. Yet, in many ways, he stands head and shoulders above the competition. His company Scapes not only does quality work, it does much of it overlooking the streets below.

Rooftops of parking garages, apartment complexes, condominiums, hotels and especially giant office complexes are fair game for Scapes. In Atlanta since the '80s and in landscape construction and maintenance since the mid-'70s, Steve has earned a reputation as the one to call for "on-structure" plantings.

And you have to believe installing

***"Our employees were
walking 30 to 40 miles
a day."***

and maintaining landscapes stories above the ground floor is a different kind of challenge for a landscaper. How does the soil get there? And the trees, they don't grow naturally on rooftops, do they? Not to mention mowing the grass and maintaining the plantings once installed.

Talking with Steve, you get the impression no challenge is too tall. He has countless horror stories about tower cranes being torn down just as his crews were ready to use them to "hoist soil." One job required his crews to shore up the parking garages below before they could drive a crane on the roof above. They had to shore it up during the weekend when there was no traffic. Take the shoring down. Then reshore it after the job was done, again on the weekend.

The minimum setup charge for a crane on one job was \$15,000.

There are countless other challenges, like making sure the right soil is mixed properly so a roof area doesn't exceed weight limitations.

*Quality, competitive advantages
pay big dividends for Scapes*

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"Just one collapsed section over a ballroom and you'll never get insurance again," he relates.

This is Steve's 17th year in the landscaping business. Scapes last year had total sales in excess of \$5.5 million. The company has won some major installation and maintenance awards and just last year, its resourceful owner was named businessman of the year for Cobb County. Yet Steve doesn't take anything for granted, in part because his memory of the rocky road to the top is still very vivid.

Born and raised in Detroit, in an environment where working on cars and other mechanical devices was a birthright, Steve's mind infrequently, if ever, turned to green plants. After high school he became a machinist and used his free time to tear apart anything with an engine and a transmission. He moved to Knoxville, Tennessee, in the early '70s to be near his dad. Again, he put bread on the table as a machinist. Two layoffs later and an uncertain future forced him to look elsewhere for work.

"I helped a church acquaintance named Wilbur mow a couple of lawns one day," Steve recalls. "It took me 20

"I didn't know when to say no."

minutes to mow and trim each of them. When Wilbur told me he made \$5 for each yard, the gears in my head start to turn. That was more than I ever made per hour and I could do three an hour."

That was the humble beginning of Scapes. By the spring of the 1976 season in Knoxville, Steve, with a push mower hanging out of the back of his Triumph Spitfire, had grossed \$12,000 mowing lawns. The figure jumped to \$58,000 the next year, \$139,000 the year after that and \$248,000 a year later.

The World's Fair in Knoxville really provided the boost to Steve's fledgling operation. For two years his crews worked to help prepare the grounds,



Scapes tried out its first Walker two years ago. The units now maintain a high profile both on the job and within equipment ranks.

with employee rolls swelling to 16 at the peak. The day the fair opened, though, was the last day of new work for installation contractors.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Steve moved his company to Atlanta where he was already involved in a couple of projects. Timing was everything, again. He moved in just prior to the building boom. Once established, the door was wide open for the young, growing company.

"We had more work than we knew what to do with," Steve relates. "The downside, I didn't know when to say no. We quickly overextended ourselves. One year we grossed over \$6 million. We also lost money that year."

The boom days taught Steve a lesson in business management. He quickly pulled back to \$4 million in sales. Growth is more planned and steady now, he emphasizes, pointing out that between their Washington, D.C., office and Atlanta, they still have yet to reach the dollar volume of the boom days. Yet, financially, Scapes is much better off today, during a time when Atlanta is still recovering.

Hard lesson

The boom years taught Steve the importance of knowing, measuring and controlling costs. He compares those "wild" years in '84, '85 and '86 to a basketball team playing without the benefit of a score board.

"Without knowing the score, a basketball team doesn't know how hard to play or what strategies to use. We were operating in the same void because we didn't have a way to measure our performance." Not anymore. Scapes' managers receive two reports — one on installation and one on maintenance — on a regular basis.

Maintenance reports contain similar data, minus the materials. Daily reports, however, are unnecessary since lawns are maintained only once a week.

Competitive edge

When the Atlanta construction boom collapsed, Steve and his managers projected slower growth on the installation side and more growth in maintenance. Unfortunately, competitors projected the same. Steve had to

find ways to make both his installation and maintenance side of his operation more competitive.

Job type, job size and equipment all play a roll in helping Scapes separate itself from the competition.

Scapes, for example, is only one of a few companies in the area specializing in "on structure" plantings. And even one of fewer still to do big projects that require the contractor to be bonded.

"Big may not always be better," explains Steve. "But I like the big projects. Fewer and fewer companies are able to compete in that market."

With his mechanical background, Steve believes in Scapes' personnel repairing and servicing their own equipment. He's also a frustrated inventor who's constantly on the prowl for better, more efficient ways to get the job done. "It frustrates me that so few companies design and manufacture equipment specifically for landscapers," he laments. "When it comes down to machines for digging and pushing dirt, we have to borrow from the ag industry and heavy construction industry. In many ways, we are still forced to move dirt the old-fashioned way, by hand."



The boom days taught Steve a lesson. Growth is more planned and steady now.

Profile:

*Scapes
Marietta, Georgia
Owner, Steve Coffey*

- In business since 1975
- Landscape maintenance and construction
- Eight Walker mowers
- Annual sales of \$5.5 million

Business philosophy: Strive to make a fair price and give the client value-added

Since Scapes' business is 50/50 construction/maintenance, Steve spends equal time trying to find and buy efficiencies for maintenance crews. He remembers one day in particular in D.C. watching employees mowing with intermediate walk mowers.

"The temperature was over 95 F, and it was humid. I asked the division manager how fast they were walking. He told me about 4 mph. It didn't take me long to figure they were walking between 35 and 40 miles a day. No wonder employee turnover was high, not to mention a natural loss of productivity as the day wears on."

Upon his return to Atlanta, Steve bought his first Walker mower. And eventually he replaced all of his intermediates, except for a few that are used for steep hills.

"I tried Walkers out when we were thinking about replacing the intermediates. But they appeared too small for our projects. But we tried them again. Our intent was to find a mower that would do the terraces in front of our biggest project, North Park. The Walker was the only one able to accommodate the rolling terrain and tight turns."

The Walkers had some other surprises in store for maintenance crews. They were compact enough to fit in North Park service elevators. Crew members drove them into the elevator, rode them to the roof and proceeded to mow the large grass strips.

"Before trying the Walkers, we were using small push reel mowers," Steve relates. "After we tried the Walkers on the roof for the first time, the building manager asked us to continue using the new machines because they left a great-looking cut."

"That was a win, win situation for both of us. For us because it cut down our mowing time. For him, because he liked the look of the cut."

"We found, too, the Walkers were small in appearance, only. They were able to do all but our biggest jobs. Now we own eight of them."

Winning combination

Win, win is truly the nature of the game in the landscape/lawn maintenance market, today. Steve explains that to go into a new job with one party holding an advantage will eventually cause a problem.

The ideal situation, he adds, is to be able to make a fair price on the job, and give the client value-added. And the only way to be able to afford to do that is to know what your costs are and do the jobs in the most efficient manner possible. Not surprising, one of his pet peeves is the contractor who, like himself a few years back, doesn't understand costing.

"The first year you're in business, you can make a buck because equipment is new. Trucks, trailers and mowers will have little downtime. The second year you make a little less because there will be more repairs. The third year, you might lose money. The fourth year, you lose a lot of money."

The point is, he continues, whether you're a lawn maintenance operator or landscaper or both, you also have to be a business person, too. You have to do quality work, do quality work efficiently, give your clients the best possible service, anticipate your costs and plug them in. After all, trees can grow on roofs, but money doesn't grow on trees.

Prescription for success

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OFFICE HOURS
By Appointment

NAME Richard Heim DATE 1-26-90

ADDRESS _____ Disp. _____

Pt. needs a walker
Sig. grass cutting system
to help alleviate
excessive use of the
shoulder.

PLEASE LABEL
REFILL BY DATE
P.M. ☐ M. ☐ H. ☐ W. ☐ T. ☐ F. ☐ S. ☐ Sun. ☐

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NECESSARY

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Sig. _____

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SUBSTITUTION
MEDICALLY
NECESSARY

Disp. _____

Dick Heim was being forced into retirement. Then his doctor prescribed a Walker

After Dick told his doctor about the Walker, the doctor wrote the prescription.

Dick Heim had finished with his day's work. His trailer was loaded and he was tired. Ahead he could see his driveway. The furthest thing from his mind was the accident about to occur. As he slowed to make the turn, a vehicle behind slammed into the rear of his maintenance trailer, driving Dick and his trailer into a tree.

"I could see in my rear view mirror the guy wasn't paying attention," Dick recalls. "There was nothing I could do but hang on. I was banged up pretty bad, especially my right shoulder."

After several weeks of recovery, he tried to go back to work mowing lawns, but couldn't. His shoulder wouldn't let him shift his front-cut rider into forward or reverse.

That was three years ago. At the time, Dick nearly panicked. If he couldn't resume mowing and maintaining lawns, he would have to find a new career. Not a pretty picture for a man in his mid-40s. On top of that, his only other career path had been closed to him prior to moving to Florida. An allergic condition forced him out of a Smith & Wesson factory in Massachusetts where he had worked for



Dick can easily maneuver his Walker without using his bad right shoulder.



An innovative truck/trailer arrangement allows Dick to back up two ramps and unload in his dump truck — all in about 30 seconds time.

put on disability. Voila!! His doctor wrote him a prescription for a Walker. His insurance paid for the machine. And the rest is history.

Today, Dick is far from retired. He does 150 yards per week, about 30 a day, with his lone Walker. And he's enjoying it more than ever, bad shoulder and all.

Tight niche

Dick moved down from Massachusetts in 1978. After working with his dad mowing mobile home parks,

employees go and sought maintenance work once again from mobile-home owners.

Despite the fact there were a "ton" of mobile homes in Zephyrhills (Dick says about 170 plus parks and 300,000 mobile homes), he looked 10 miles south to Plant City where there were fewer homes and fewer competitors. He developed some good relationships with a couple of mobile-home owners

His shoulder wouldn't let him shift his front-cut rider into forward or reverse.



nearly 20 years.

"I was allergic to the oil and once you leave a factory job for something like that, you can't get another," he adds.

Dick's family doctor had a solution. He was going to put him "out to pasture" with 100 percent disability. Dick resisted. "I wanted to work. I just couldn't imagine spending the rest of my life sitting around watching television."

The sky around Dick's home was looking pretty gray until a fellow lawn maintenance contractor introduced him to a Walker mower. "It was perfect for the size lots I was doing," Dick tells. "And there was no shifting to bother my shoulder. The only problem? I didn't have the money to buy the unit."

He told his doctor about the Walker. He told his doctor using the Walker was one way to get away from being

The furthest thing from his mind was the accident about to occur.

the younger Heim set out on his own. His business evolved. He moved from trailer parks to commercial properties, bought more equipment and hired on more help.

Then the competition arrived. In 1978, there were three other maintenance contractors in the Zephyrhills area where Dick and his dad had set up shop. Now, there are at least 75 maintenance companies. With overhead and competition taking their toll, Dick gave up his commercial properties five years ago, let his em-

and built his business to the 150 yards he does today, all in one park.

"I did it all on credibility," he adds. "Building a business takes time, but the process is accelerated in mobile-home parks where yards are small and neighbors get a ready glimpse of the type of work you're doing."

Dick Heim does good work, and he does it at a pace he enjoys. He gets to the park around 8:30 or 9:00 every morning; edges, trims and mows five or six lawns per hour until around 2:30 — with a long lunch hour, he adds with a smile; then returns home to unload his clippings, relax a little and get his machines ready for the next workday.

"You can't beat it," he tells. "I charge \$8 per lawn, mow five lawns per hour and do 30 a day. That comes out to about \$240 a day five days a week. And I have virtually no over-

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head."

On average, Dick mows each lawn about 40 times a year. With nearly a third of his clients requesting full service, e.g., bug and weed control and washing and waxing the mobile homes, Dick grosses over \$50,000 annually.

Easy street?

Even with the Walker mower, maintaining 30 yards a day, alone, is not as easy as Dick conveys. Midsummer Florida heat and humidity can be "killing" and he still walks several miles every day edging and trimming. Short-cuts are in order.

"My new rider allowed me to go back to work, but I still had to fork the clippings off my trailer at night," Dick adds. In addition to taking an hour to unload the trailer, the process was also taking its toll on his shoulder.

To rectify the situation, Dick came up with plans for a unique trailer that allows him to back his Walker up the trailer ramp to another ramp on the back of his dump truck. Up the trailer, up the dump truck ramp, unload and off again. The entire process takes about 30 seconds. At the end of the workday, he drives the rig home, unhooks it from his trailer and dumps the clippings in the back of his yard where he lets the pile compost. Toward season's end, strawberry farmers from

the Plant City area truck it away at \$25 per load.

Borrowing an old cliché, Dick believes in "working smarter and not harder" and it's paid off for him. And he attributes a lot of his success to his equipment.

"Lawn maintenance people can skimp a little on trailers and trucks. But when it comes to their maintenance equipment, they have to go top-of-the-line. Period."

Dick's Walker, for example, is in its third season and has over 900 hours. Every day he backs it up the two ramps at least a dozen times, carrying his 250 pounds and another 200 pounds of grass clippings. "Never a

hint of a problem," he boasts, adding, too, that mowing conditions in Florida are notorious for being the most difficult in the country. He sharpens his blades every day and replaces the 20/50 weight oil twice a week. "You need the higher viscosity because of the high temperatures," he notes.

Dick found his niche. And frankly he's proud of it. He's also proud of his Walker which, he claims, saved his career. "The secret's out in Florida about these mowers," he adds. "You can't find a used one anywhere. People just know if you want something durable and easy-to-maintain, buy a Walker. It will last a good long time." Not to mention the fact it's easy to operate.



Mowing mobile-home parks requires the agility of a walk-behind and the stamina of a rider; Dick's Walker provides both.

Profile:

*Dick Heim Lawn Service
Crystal Springs, Florida
Dick Heim, owner/operator*

- In business since 1978
- 150 mobile home customers
- One Walker mower
- Annual sales of more than \$50,000

Business philosophy: Small operators can be profitable, too

WALKER DOES TOP LEVEL WORK ON THE ROOF

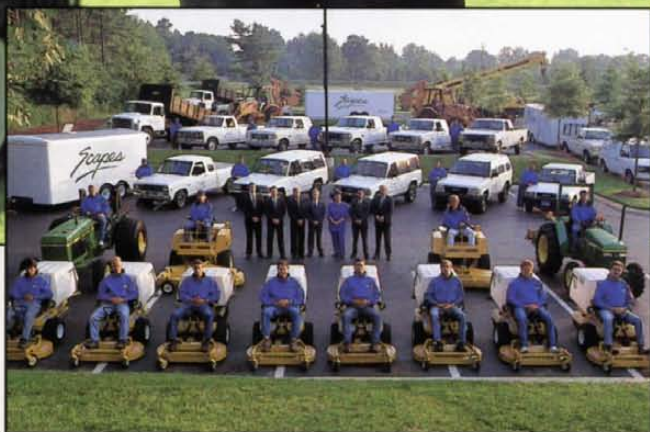


When Atlanta based landscape contractor, **Scapes Landscape Management**, wanted to improve efficiency in mowing the award winning Northpark Town Center Rooftop Park, they found Walker fit the job.

Steven Coffey, owner of Scapes, told us:

We were surprised to find the Walker gave a better quality cutting job on the Zoysia turf grass than the walk behind reel mower we had been using. In fact, the building management asked us to continue using the "new" mower on their project after the first week we used Walker. Best of all, while improving quality, we cut our job time with the efficiency of the Walker rider. And Walker fits the job because it was compact enough to fit in the service elevator to ride to the third floor park.

We invite you to discover Walker quality and efficiency on your top level work.



Mulch madness

On the ground, around young plants or in compost bins, clippings make great mulch

In plain English, when it comes to mulching grass clippings, sometimes you can and sometimes you can't.

Generally speaking, leaving clippings on the ground is only common sense. Clippings contribute little to thatch buildup since they consist mostly of water (85 to 95 percent), and contain only small quantities of decay-resistant lignin. In fact, these tiny particles can benefit the lawn. Grass leaves contain nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and calcium. When recycled they contribute 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet annually. Their decomposition also adds organic matter to the soil as well as humus and gums, which helps improve soil structure.

Mulching decks facilitate the breakdown of clippings. After mower blades clip off the ends of the grass plant, the ends circulate within the mower housing and get

clipped again and again. When conditions are right, mulched clippings are left out of sight to decompose.

Remember, mowing with a mulching deck, or with any deck for that matter, is most effective when only 30 to 40 percent of the grass shoot length is removed. By removing more than that, operators risk injury to grass plants and put an unnecessary heavy burden on their mower, not to mention leaving lawns a little less tidy.

Rainy days

Mother Nature doesn't always cooperate with a mowing schedule. A particularly rainy season, combined with even a normal fertilizing schedule, can turn your customers' yards into jungles. Mulching in these conditions is impractical . . . if not impossible.

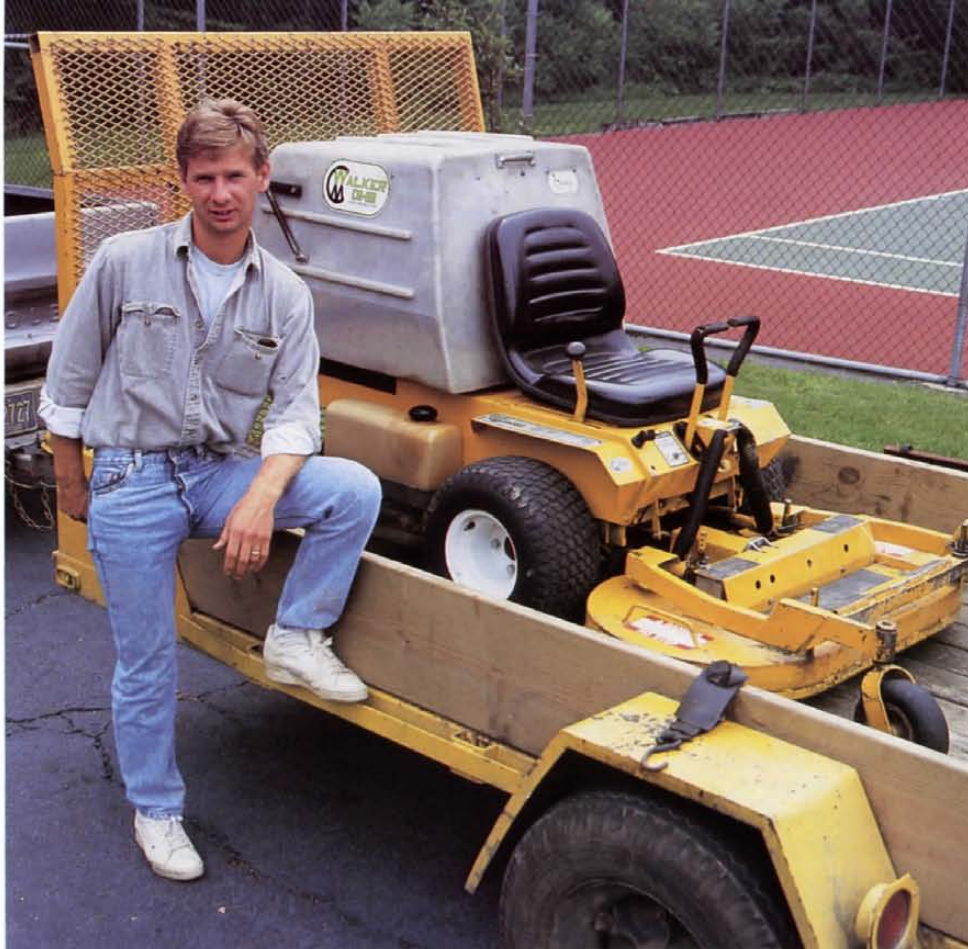
The alternative is to collect. But even then, grass clippings

can be put to good use.

A thin layer of clippings not treated with chemicals makes a perfect light mulch to shade tender plants and to help retain moisture. Because clippings decompose rapidly, you might want to supplement them with shredded leaves and chipped branches.

Clippings, of course, make excellent compost material. The key is to find a place to compost them. Not all lawn maintenance professionals are as lucky as Dick Heim (see Page 6) who has a built-in demand for decomposed clippings. But a little research and some creativity just might uncover a demand for the byproduct of your labor.

When it comes to mulching clippings, try to take advantage of the best of both worlds: Mulch when you can, and when you can't, collect clippings and find a second home for them.



The climb is steep but rewarding in hilly Pittsburgh

Contractor's search for efficiency shapes equipment choice

Make no mistake about it: John Flucker is in it for the money.

And at age 27, he's made impressive progress toward his goal to be the largest full-service landscape contractor in the Pittsburgh area. His 6-year-old company, Turfmaster, services one of the most prestigious condominium complexes in the area, the Trimont.

"My passion is to be a businessman and not a landscaper," Flucker says, non-apologetically. To some industry

John Flucker wants to be the biggest and best full-service contractor in the Pittsburgh area.

purists, that may sound like heresy. But not to Flucker. Because to be the biggest, he reasons, you need to be the best.

Flucker's quest to be the biggest and the best was born in 1986 while he was working part time at Sears. One day, in the employee lounge, he saw

an article about a young man who was making it big in landscape maintenance.

Flucker knew nothing about landscape maintenance, but he was anxious to better his position in life. Having recently gotten out of the service, he was enrolled in a two-year business program at a community college. His previous work experience included a stint as a chemical salesman

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and as an assistant manager of a nursery.

Grass cutting seemed like a good way to get some cash while he attended classes. So he picked up a couple of Sears mowers and started knocking on doors and posting fliers in supermarkets.

So far the story sounds pretty common. Flucker trucked around in his Volkswagen Rabbit, charging \$5 to \$10 an hour. Then opportunity rang, literally speaking.

Opportunity rings

Flucker got a call from a condominium association manager who saw his ad in the Yellow Pages. The manager was anxious to get someone right away, and wasn't interested in putting the job out for bids. Flucker said he'd do it.

"The job scared me," he recalls. "It was probably the first time I ever set foot on a condo."

With little idea what type of equip-

"We can charge as much as somebody that might take twice as long to do the work."

ment or manpower he'd need to handle the 80-unit complex, Flucker hurried to a local power equipment dealership. He leased a pair of midsize walk-behinds.

With two helpers, he began his initiation into the strenuous world of multifamily property maintenance. The physical strain was much harder than the single-family properties. But he managed to keep the property serviced to the manager's satisfaction, and he has kept the contract ever since.

Flucker saw a gold mine in condo maintenance. The trick was to do as much high-quality work as quickly as possible. "To this day, I am an efficiency fanatic," he says. "I'm always look-

Profile

*Turfmaster
Clinton, Pennsylvania
John Flucker, owner*

- Maintenance, turf management, installation and landscape design
 - Four Walker riding mowers, two intermediate push-behind mowers, five self-propelled walk-behind mowers, six string trimmers
 - Two maintenance foremen, four maintenance laborers, one installation foreman, three installation laborers, one seasonal landscape architect
- Customer focus:**
Condominiums

ing for the better routing system or a better way of doing something at a condo complex."

During 1987, when he was servicing that first condo complex, his knowledge of equipment was elementary. But that didn't stop him from seeking more work. That first job provided him with a reference in seeking other condo jobs.

Flucker also solicited restaurants, banks and other roadside properties that had high public visibility. He figured such accounts would provide good advertising to prospective customers.

The equipment search

Having the best equipment became a priority. In his first two years servicing condo properties, Flucker experimented with various intermediate and midsize walk-behinds. He found them tough to use on the Pittsburgh area's steep hills. "We don't take care of one condo complex that doesn't have at least one hill that is difficult to maintain," he says.

The intermediates were not easy to maneuver around shrubs and flower beds. "I don't have any accounts where I have big open fields with no

obstacles," he says, referring to the chairs, swingsets, tables and pools, many of which are installed on the premises.

Flucker's search for better equipment seemed never-ending. "They (intermediate walk-behinds) did a nice job as far as appearance of the cutting was concerned," he says, but they couldn't bag enough clippings as quickly as he wanted.

Maintenance costs were a regular drain on his cash flow and productivity. "We were going through belts on a weekly basis with the walk-behinds," he says.

Maneuverability was limited. Flucker notes that some of the units had no reverse drive.

"The other main issue was operator fatigue," he adds.

A lucky acquisition

In January 1989, Flucker came across an opportunity to buy out one of his competitors. It seemed to be a good idea, since it would provide more customers and equipment for his young company. But at the time, he had no idea just how good a move it would be.

Among the equipment he gained in that acquisition was a Walker riding mower with zero turn radius. Flucker had never seen a Walker unit before, so he took it out in the field to see how it worked. The unit had not been well-maintained, so he called the manufacturer's headquarters in Fort Collins, Colorado. Bob Walker, company president, answered the phone.

"The thing that impressed me is that he (Walker) actually answered the call," Flucker says.

But Flucker was even more impressed — with the machine's performance — after he received and installed the new parts Walker sent him free of charge.

The zero turn riding mower was very maneuverable, fairly light, had great bagging capability, was easy to load onto a trailer and took up less space than the intermediates. In addition, employees found it easy to learn how to use.

This all translates into great productivity on Pittsburgh's steep terrains.



One advantage of the Walker mower Flucker likes is that its use is easy to teach. Seated is employee Bill Merow.

"The Walker really has worked well in that environment because of the adverse terrain many of the condos in the Pittsburgh area are set on," Flucker says.

Turfmaster's productivity has more than doubled with the Walker mowers. Maintenance crews have been able to get the units running on a customer's property one minute after they pull into the driveway.

The superior productivity gave him a higher level of confidence in bidding for more condo work. Some competitors take a day to do what Flucker's

crews can do in three hours.

"We can charge as much as somebody that might take twice as long to do the work," he says. Besides the Walker riding units, Flucker has a few rotary walk-behinds for narrow turf areas, and two midsize units for really steep hillsides.

The labor challenge

Having the right equipment is only part of the battle, Flucker notes. Equally important is having the right employees. Flucker feels he has struggled with this challenge as much



Turfmaster employees are, kneeling: Bill Merow (left) and Ron Gregory; standing: John Flucker (left), Mark Sluka and Bryan Folwer.

as any contractor. He notes that five good employees are more valuable than nine mediocre ones.

As a practice, he hires well-groomed, clean-shaven people with short hair. On the job, they wear uniform T-shirts and are expected to behave in a professional and courteous manner. "We try to be as professional as we can be," he says.

The ground rules are explained to the employees in the beginning, and those who don't abide by them don't stay.

Flucker takes advantage of manufacturer training programs.

Will he realize his goal of becoming the biggest full-service landscaper in Pittsburgh?

Like other contractors, Flucker has learned that good design capability holds the key to lucrative maintenance contracts. He works with a capable landscape architect who has helped him win a design award from a local garden club.

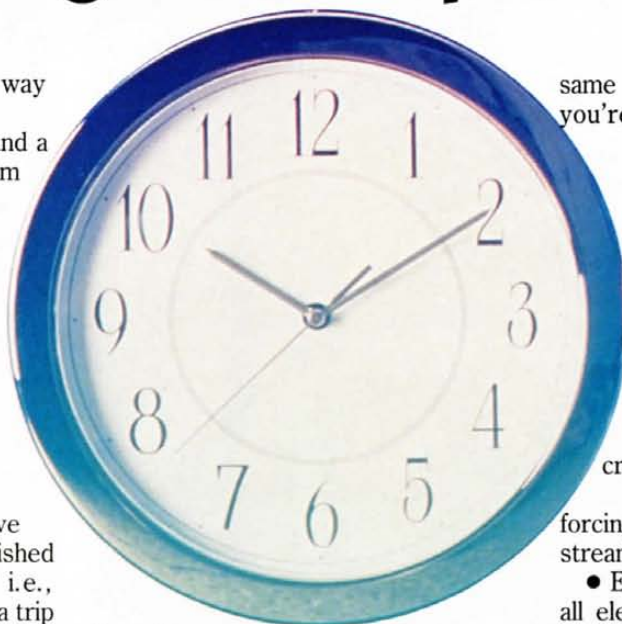
This year, Flucker won the bid on the Trimont condominium complex overlooking Three Rivers Stadium. In the running were some firms who had 20-year veteran landscape architects.

"We go for the people that are insistent on high quality," Flucker says. "We get a premium price for what we like to think is a premium service."

Time management tips

Time is money. Find a faster way to get the job done without sacrificing quality and you've found a way to send money to the bottom line. The following are just a few ways to save time and money.

- Implement an employee training program. Training employees early on to operate equipment safely and efficiently cuts down on downtime.
- Develop a preventive maintenance routine, and follow it.
- Encourage employees to give a "once around" after they've finished a job. Picking up "loose ends," i.e., gas cans, a trimmer, etc., saves a trip back later that day.
- Match crew size to your business. Some operators find it easier (faster) to work with smaller crews. Others prefer larger crews. Others still have a "finish" crew that lags behind to clean up. Do a time study of various size crews to see which size



best fits your operation.

- Make sure employees use the same equipment every day. They'll take pride in and better care of equipment if they know they'll be the ones using it.
- Consider an answering service. An answering machine serves the

same function, yet gives the illusion you're not available and therefore won't be timely. Neither will promote timeliness, however, if they're ignored.

- Learn to carry spare parts. A portable air compressor or mounted tire will save a trip back to the office.
- Commercial and residential customers have different demands. Dedicate a crew to one or the other. Mixing properties slows a crew by forcing it to change gears in "mid-stream."
- Encourage crew leaders to finish all elements of the job at the same time. One "waiting" crew member takes money from the bottom line.
- Consider offering on-time bonuses for employees.

Have a time management tip? Send it to Walker Talk, 1233 Janesville Ave., Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin 53538. We'll share it with readers next issue.

Stressed out by work?

Just how many ways can work get you down? Probably more than you care to admit. Too much rain, equipment abuse, tardy employees, broken windows, flat tires, cash flow . . . and more are enough to put you on edge or worse yet, over the edge.

You can't control most on-the-job events, but you can learn to control the stress they cause. The following are three ways to help keep your stress level under control:

1) Exercise. "Right! That's just what I need is a little more work," you

say. Before you completely discount the idea, consider a brisk 20-minute walk three times a week. Strive to do your walking away from the job. And focus on pleasant thoughts.

2) Try deep breathing. When you can't escape, when events have you trapped, the best thing to do is relax. Breathing deep (breathing with stomach muscles instead of chest muscles) helps. It works to help relax long-distance runners with a side ache. It just might work for you, too.

3) Think positive thoughts. You

know the old sayings that talk about silver linings, glasses that are half full instead of half empty and bright sides. Since most if not all stressful events are out of your control, the only thing you can control is how you react to them. Try putting them in the best light possible, and move forward. A client's broken window, for example, is your headache. But a quick, positive response will quickly turn a bad situation into a positive one, and might even earn you some additional business down the road.

WALKER NEWS



New products for '93

Walker introduces the new Model "T" tractor powered by a 20-hp Kohler Command V-Twin engine. The 624cc engine features OHV design and full-pressure lubrication for fuel efficiency and long life (approximately twice the service life estimate compared to the 16-hp single-cylinder Kohler used in Walker Model C).

Designed specifically for commercial service, Model T packs a powerful engine into a compact midsize tractor to provide high productivity without sacrificing maneuverability. Model T has the same compact dimensions as other Walker riders — in fact, the overall frame dimensions are the same as the original 11-hp Walker.

To work with more powerful Model D or Model T tractors, Walker is offering a larger 48-inch grass collection (GHS) mowing deck. The deck is similar in design and interchangeable with other Walker GHS decks, using two 25-inch counterrotating mower blades with unitized gear drive.

A new option for Model D and T in '93 models is a parking brake. The brake is lever actuated from the operator's seat and operates by engaging a transmission locking pin, providing a very secure, positive parking action. The brake may be ordered as a factory-installed option or dealer installed on '93 Model D or T units.

"Working across America" video captures Walker in action

A new 18-minute promotional video has been produced this summer. Bob Walker and a professional video camera crew visited 11 cities (from New Jersey to California) across the United States during June and taped a wide variety of commercial mowing operations using Walker mowers. On-camera interviews with operators/owners give a "testimonial" theme to back up the action. Both little (one machine) and big (60 machines) operators tell why they switched to Walker and the benefits to their business.

Walker export sales growing

Walker mowers are being exported to 19 countries outside the United States and since the mid-'80s, export sales have grown steadily. For fiscal '92, export sales will amount to one-third of Walker's total sales. Walker attributes the export sales to finding good distributors in each country to introduce the product to their market and to the fact that there is an emerging worldwide demand for midsize commercial mowing equipment. This demand follows increasing development and maintenance of landscaped turf areas around the world.

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