

# WALKER TALK



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## FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE IN BUSINESS

Beyond the mechanics of operating a business are the ways a business behaves toward all of its stakeholders. With an economic system of free enterprise and free markets like we enjoy in the U.S., business behavior often moves to bad and selfish unless guided by moral principle. As a life-long student of good business behavior and watching my dad and grandpa Walker follow good moral principles in business, I believe there are principles that serve as our moral compass in business. I would quickly add that following good morals in business is not always easy—we know sometimes there can be dilemmas and tough choices to be made, and we have not always succeeded in finding the "perfect" way to take care of our stakeholders.

I have read a book titled "Redeeming Capitalism" by Kenneth J. Barnes, and I want to give him credit for sparking some of this writing about using virtues as corporate values. If we define virtues as "moral excellence", Barnes lists seven virtues that should form the basis of practicing moral excellence in business: Prudence, Justice, Courage, Temperance, Faith, Hope and Love. From this list I would highlight the latter three, and especially "love" as taught in the Bible (1 Corinthians 13), as corporate values that we try to put into action at Walker Manufacturing.

Faith and trust are really two sides of the same coin. Without faith there can be no trust, and all social and business interactions are built on trust. There is a saying that I think originated with Abraham Lincoln and my dad used to quote: "If you trust, you will be disappointed occasionally, but if you mistrust you will be miserable all the time."

Hope is found in optimism that the God who provided the opportunity for the business in the beginning, will continue to provide for the future. As Barnes says it: "Where there is economic activity, there is hope for the discovery of new things, the betterment of society, and the flourishing of humankind."

The virtue of "love" in business is best of all—loving people that is (and not loving money). In the business setting, love is expressed as a concern for the interest of others while considering your own self-interest (see Philippians 2:4 in the Bible), or to say it another way, take care of others who are invested at the same time as you take care of yourself. There is great guidance in business decisions if you consider the interests of other stakeholders along with your own interests. Enterprise operated this way works for all stakeholders, not just those at the top.

Bob Walker, Chairman





# HAVING FUN IN GREEN BAY

Ricky Blosser maintains  
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Not everyone can say they have fun at their jobs. After all, work is work. But Ricky Blosser is one who can and does. The owner of Ricky B's EZ Cut'n Lawns, in Suamico, WI, just a short drive from Green Bay, maintains 70 high-end residential properties, with more than half located right in his neighborhood. "I like to stay close to home," he remarked. "I'll let my employees go to the other side of town. Me, I stay right here and mow my neighbors' lawns. You can't beat that."

Blosser mows them with one of his three 48-inch GHS commemorative Walker

Mowers. When asked why three, he kind of shrugs his shoulders and said, "I've always liked Walker Mowers and I'm now in a financial position to afford these rather unique ones. They're kind of cool looking, with their lights and different paint, and frankly it means a lot to me to have three of them. There were only 235 built and I'm proud to say I have numbers 78, 86 and 87."

They're not just for show and tell, either. All three join forces today with two model B's, all with 48-inch decks, to keep properties looking neat and, yes, striped.

"Walker Mowers weigh less and have



Blosser's commemorative mowers are not just for show. All three join forces with two model B's to keep properties looking neat and striped.



Ricky Blosser learned that while double cutting is a bit more time consuming, it also has benefits.



a smaller footprint than other mowers I've tried," Blosser explained. "Their bagger systems are more compact, controls are easy to use, and you can't beat out front cutting for visibility and trimming around garden beds, trees, and other obstacles."

Having all five with 48-inch decks allows his company to keep patterns the same from one property to another, an effect that truly stands out when mowing neighbors' lawns.

### AS EASY AS 1-2-3

Blosser divides his company's evolution into three stages: hobby, career, and fun. In the late 90s, having spent several years in sales management in the automotive industry, he wanted to try something different and make a little extra money. Making a few thousand dollars in one month dethatching lawns convinced him there was a future in mowing and maintaining yards. Purchasing a Scag zero-turn mower and a Husky walk-behind added lawn mowing to the service mix, and his hobby was underway.

In 2003, Blosser, with wife Kim, who he emphasized has been an integral part of the business from the start, became more serious while picking up properties beyond his neighborhood. A year later, he purchased his first Walker Mower, a diesel, followed by another diesel two years later. Each, he added, had accumulated 4,000 hours of mowing time before he traded them in.

During this growth period, the now career-minded Walker Mower user picked up a few tricks of the trade. A degree in business and entrepreneurship gave him a

good handle on how important it is to know his costs. When fuel went through the roof preceding the '08 recession, Blosser sent a letter to customers asking them for a one-time donation to help defray costs. He received \$2,200 from customers, helping him avoid a mandatory surcharge and then a price increase that may well have become a permanent fixture.

Not to say a price increase is bad. To the contrary, knowing the cost of doing business was always going to rise, he decided early on to raise his cutting rate one or two percent a year versus a more sizeable jump every few years. As he put it, "One to two percent is understandable, whereas customers are more likely to question the need for a five or ten percent price hike."

Blosser also learned that while double cutting is a bit more time consuming, it also has benefits. "There's really no place to dump clippings around here," he emphasized. "Mowing first with a side-discharge deck and following up with a GHS deck left some of the recut clippings on the lawn, adding important nutrients. It also meant that fewer were caught in the catcher and had to be disposed of. Another side benefit? The mowers' already natural striping effect was even more pronounced."

### LONG WINTERS

Football fans know that Green Bay winters come early and can be brutal. Yet Blosser was not to be left in the cold when it came to creating a seasonal competitive advantage.

"We don't plow snow, but instead rely on snow blowers to clear our customers' drives," he explained. "Snowplows can wreak havoc with brick drives, and they're costly to operate."

Currently, Blosser uses all Ariens snow blowers, but a Walker Mower Model H with a hard cab may be in his future plans.

What isn't is expansion. As he put it, he's having fun now. "I've made a conscious decision to stay relatively small," he said. "Most



Having all five mowers with 48-inch decks keeps patterns the same from one property to another, an effect that truly stands out when mowing neighbors' lawns.

of my employees are part-timers, although they have plenty of mowing experience. I've learned to say 'no' to prospective customers while maintaining focus on customers with whom I enjoy doing business."

Being near Green Bay, it's not surprising that many of his customers are Packer players and coaches. He noted they appreciate his attention to details and fair-mindedness.

"I try to treat all my customers the same way whether they play football or not," he said. "One thing I've learned about Packer players is they want to talk less about football and more about how I can help them get even more enjoyment out of their properties. That may mean getting in touch with an arborist to remove a storm-damaged tree, finding a landscape

designer for a renovation project, or getting assurance the beautiful stripes left by my Walker Mowers will be here next year.

"I tell them not to worry because next year, just like this year, the owner of Ricky B's EZ Cut'n Lawns will be busy cutting their lawns with a commemorative Walker Mower." ☺

**"I try and treat all my customers the same way whether they play football or not."**

**– Ricky Blosser,  
Ricky B's EZ Cut'n Lawns**



# TAMING THE HOA TIGER



**The Clarks have done it almost exclusively with Walker Mowers and employees who take ownership of them.**

Homeowners Associations (HOAs) are among the most difficult accounts to maintain for landscapers. Even though there's usually only one point of contact, the HOA Board or the property manager, individual homeowners often want their "say" and communicate directly with the landscape contractor. Boards are often very cost conscious, trying to juggle landscaping with a myriad of other expenses. In addition, board members come and go, as do the property managers who often act as a liaison between the board and service providers, so developing relationships can be very difficult.

When working with an HOA, the challenge is to tame the tiger. That's something Troy and Kristyn Clark have been doing for more than 20 years. The owners of Krew Cuts Lawn and Landscape, LLC in Greeley, CO offer full-service landscape maintenance exclusively to HOAs. They do it, working with seven property managers, 33 different HOA Boards, 19 Walker Mowers and only eight full-time employees.

## **GAME CHANGER**

Kristyn and Troy grew up in nearby Fort Lupton and both attended the University of Northern

Colorado in Greeley. Needing a way to pay for college, Troy suggested mowing lawns, and they did for four years. They picked up a few yards in their hometown and started cold calling in Greeley. By the end of their freshman year, they were mowing 25 to 30 small residential properties.

"We didn't have a normal college life," Kristyn recalled. "I paid for our first mower with my college scholarship, and when not attending classes, we were mowing lawns and working our other jobs as well."

The year 2000 was huge for them. They graduated, were married, purchased their first home and received a big break from a property management company to maintain an HOA in Greeley. The couple also bought their first Walker Mower, a 26hp EFI with a 48-inch GHS deck and a 62-inch side-discharge deck.

"I don't remember exactly how much we paid for the mower and decks, but it was more than \$10,000," said Troy. "It was a lot of money for us, but we knew we needed it to maintain the HOA to their expectations."

"I call the Walker Mower a game changer," added Kristyn. "It allowed us to get that first property, which we still maintain 19 years later. We knew it was very versatile with the two decks, and its cut exceeded homeowner expectations."

Over the next few years, Krew Cuts gravitated away from the residential market and more toward HOAs. By 2008, the company was working exclusively with HOA property managers, providing a variety of landscape maintenance services for their clients.

"At the time, we had 70 accounts we maintained during the week and spent every weekend for three years installing landscapes for the hot housing market," Kristyn recalled. "When the recession hit, our customers went from hiring several contractors to asking one contractor to provide full-service for them. The HOAs wanted one point



**The Clark's son Zachary enjoys the Walker Mowers for their ability to mulch larger turf areas.**

of contact to include irrigation maintenance and installation, fertilizer application, pesticide and herbicide control, pruning, snow removal, and other services."

Troy immediately went to work to earn all the required licenses, and he became a Certified Landscape Technician (CLT) through the Colorado Landscape Association. By the following year, most if not all their maintenance contracts were inclusive, and they still are today.

## **ALWAYS BE PREPARED**

In 2008, Krew Cuts also purchased its first Super B. By then, their Walker Mower fleet had grown to eight, and with all-inclusive contracts, they became even more valuable.

"We collected grass and leaves with the GHS decks and used the mulching decks for mowing larger turf areas," said Troy. "I even designed, fabricated and put into use a couple 60-inch snow blades for them, along with a sprayer/spreader attachment."

They were saving time and labor with their mowers, and bidding became easier and more exact because they were predictable, remarked Kristyn.

"When bidding an HOA, I never strug-

**The Krew Cuts family and their first Walker Mower purchased in 2000. Troy and Kristyn with (L to R) sons Zachary, Maddox, and Tyler.**





**Krew Cuts versatile Walker Mowers collect grass and leaves with GHS Decks as employees Jayden Howell (left) and Matt Lutters demonstrate.**

gled with estimating how much time it would take to mow the property," she said. "We could get the job done with more quality and efficiency, and our price was very competitive, falling generally midpoint between the highest and lowest bidders."

Ironically, saving time is one of the reasons Krew Cuts has so many different Walker Mowers and attachments today.

"Even though changing decks is easy, we didn't want our crews taking time to do it," Troy explained. "So today, we virtually have a mower for every type of job. Pruning crews have catch mowers. Mowing crews have mulchers for summer and catch mowers for spring and fall. Snow crews have mowers set up with snow tires, light kits and blades."

"Having so many Walker Mowers also allows us to have a backup for a backup, and that ensures we're always prepared for most contingencies," he said. "We felt that by employing the Walker Mower's versatility, i.e., having snow blade and sprayer-spreader attachments, dethatchers, and brooms, this would make it unnecessary to purchase other different equipment down the road. In other words, we thought we might as well make use of the equipment we had, and we did."

Saving costs and providing a better-looking end-product are two ways to help tame the HOA tiger. Troy also confesses to never being able to say no, which gives new meaning to "full-service."

"There's virtually nothing we won't do," he said. "We pour concrete, build fences, design landscapes and more. Being versatile gives our employees full time, year-round work and simplifies the life for the property

manager and HOA Board."

He also maps out every irrigation system he installs and maintains. If a call comes in about an issue, Troy needs only to look at a map and see the likely source and repair it in a fraction of the time it would typically take.

Removing snow is a big part of the equation for all-inclusive contracts, not so much from a revenue point of view, but from a time and equipment commitment, noted Kristyn.

"We equip our four Super Bs with snow blades, two with the 60-inch redesigned Boss blades and two with Walker factory blades," she said. "Five Bs and three GHS mowers also have factory blades. The mowers clear drives quickly and safely, allowing us to clear snow from all our HOAs within six hours of a snowfall stopping. This is how we keep our clients."

## BEHIND THE SCENES

What's the old saying, not having a plan is planning to fail? The Clarks have a strategic plan in place to ensure properties are maintained in a timely fashion and retain that expected manicured look. It starts with their Walker Mowers, but it doesn't end there. Troy, who maintains all the company's equipment, starts each day at 4 a.m., removing and sharpening all mower blades.

"You can tell the difference," he emphasizes.

Having backup mowers and working ahead when the weather dictates helps the company keep on schedule. The company always knows the forecast and will work ahead so weather never puts them behind. Their policy not to take on additional work throughout the year helps to ensure they

don't overbook and will stay on schedule. If an HOA is dissatisfied with its current service provider, it will have to wait for the following year for Krew Cuts to submit a bid.

Kristyn noted that having reliable sub-contractors for specialized services, such as trenching, installing curbing, and excavating, is critical to being successful in the HOA all-inclusive arena.

"We have two subs that have worked with us for the last 19 years, JC Underground and Wamsley Construction," she said. "They are the best of the best, and our HOA management companies know they can trust them."

"Last but not least is the most important element, having great employees. Our employees are extended family," Kristyn said. "We want the people we work with to feel secure. We dedicate a lot of time and attention to providing work to keep them employed full-time, year-round. They are reliable, they take pride in their job, and they have a desire to grow as industry professionals. They also know there is nothing that we would ask them to do that we have not and will not do ourselves."

Added Troy, "When employees have the best equipment available, they can do the best job possible with greater ease. Beyond the equipment they operate, our employees drive clean, well-kept trucks and trailers. They are also given Krew Cuts uniforms, and they can earn certifications and licenses if they choose, paid for by the company."

So how does one tame the HOA tiger? For Krew Cuts, it requires following a plan that saves the HOA money and provides a product and level of service second to none. The Clarks have done it almost exclusively with their Walker Mowers and employees who take ownership of them. ☺



**In the winter, Troy uses his Walker mower to push snow, as shown here with one of his 60-inch redesigned Boss blades.**





# “HE’S NOT A COMPETITOR IF...”

**Ben May, owner of Quality Lawn Care and Towing, is serious about mowing in Cumberland, MD.**

If a landscape contractor wanted to start a mowing business, relocating to Cumberland, MD, would likely not be his or her first choice. A mountainous terrain and an economy once bolstered by a now dying coal-mining industry doesn't paint a picture of opportunity. But if you live there and want to make a living by mowing lawns, then choice is not an option. What is an option is doing some research and finding a machine that will give a competitive advantage.

That is just what Ben May, owner of Quality Lawn Care and Towing, did in the mid-1980s when he wanted to get serious about mowing lawns.

“I had a couple old mowers, but I just couldn't make any money with them,” he explained. “We have a lot of leaves around here. I wanted something that would pick them up and be maneuverable and easy for me to operate. I have MS and getting on those zero-turn mowers with the long steering levers would be difficult.”



As he went on to explain, a dealer showed him one of those long-handled mowers. When spotting a used Walker Mower in the shop, he interrupted the sales pitch and said, “That’s what I want.” He continued “It had seen better days, and it smoked a bit, but I took it home just the same. Today, I have seven Walker Mowers, most with 48-inch GHS decks.”

#### TRUCK POOR, WALKER MOWER RICH

In addition to his seven Walker Mowers, May owns an F-450 truck, a Chevy 3500 rollback, a Chevy 3500 wrecker and an old van. All told, he estimates his equipment is worth approaching \$65,000, maybe \$25,000 in vehicles and \$40,000 in mowers.

“I would sell my trucks before I would sell any of my mowers,” he emphasized. “In fact, I will never let one of my mowers go. Without my mowers, I would have nothing. My equipment is what counts.”

“Right now, I have three I’m working on, and three are backups for my main mower,” May said. “I just can’t be without one for any length of time, and the nearest dealer is between one and a half to two hours away. I’ve never purchased a new Walker Mower, but I would like to someday.”

May recalled an incident a few years back before he had a stable of mowers and backups. “My Walker Mower was in the shop for repairs and I was forced to use a different mower on my properties,” he said. “While I was mowing, the homeowner came out and asked about my Walker Mower. When I explained it was in the repair shop, he handed me \$60 to get it fixed.”



**“I really can’t emphasize how valuable these machines are.”**

**– Ben May, Quality Lawn Care and Towing**

May didn’t take the money, but while telling the story, he nearly teared up thinking about how nice and appreciative some customers can be, not to mention how much this customer took notice of the job his Walker Mower was doing.

#### VERSATILITY COUNTS

Of all the vehicles, he places the most value on his rollback, which doubles as a tow truck. The truck not only transports his equipment and lawn debris, it also gives him another way to sustain cash flow when the mowing season ends. He is also thinking about expanding into the wood pellet market by using one of his Walker Mowers and its front PTO to operate a milling machine that transforms raw material into pellets.

“I really can’t emphasize how valuable these machines are,” he said. “They don’t tear up the lawns like other zero-turn mowers and nothing handles leaves like they do. I also have one with a Hi-Dump, and a snow blower attachment on another just adds to their versatility.”

“Last year a new mowing contractor showed up. When a friend asked me about my new ‘competition’, I said, he’s not a competitor if he doesn’t have a Walker Mower.”

Today, he has about 20 to 25 customers in and around

Cumberland, a town of approximately 20,000 people.

“Most of my customers are elderly, and some I’ve had since I started mowing,” May noted. “This time of year, with all the leaves and cleanup, I can only do about four lawns a day. I’m moving, too, always moving because



May’s rollback truck doubles as a tow truck, helping him sustain cash flow when the mowing season ends.

if I’m not moving and mowing, I’m not making any money.”

The owner of Quality Lawn Care and Towing doesn’t mow high-profile HOAs or high-end residential accounts and commercial properties. Unlike most mowing contractors, he’s never purchased a new mower but relies instead on what he terms the Walker Mower’s “ease of maintenance” to keep his fleet going.

For sure, this 62-year old doesn’t have the opportunities for growth that operators in other parts of the country may have. A difficult upbringing, MS, and a recent bout with cancer have further complicated his life. But what he has is what many successful people in all walks of life possess: a strong faith and work ethic to help carry the day and the tools they require to get the job done. ☺



**Ben May wanted a maneuverable mower that does a good job picking up leaves. Having MS, it is imperative to have equipment that is easy to operate.**



# A MAGNIFICENT STEP BACK IN TIME

Stan Hywet Hall & Garden is much more than a portal to the past



Tom Hrivnak (standing) with Walker Mower operator Tom Bouton, one of nearly 600 volunteers who help maintain the estate

Ever wonder what life was like during the Roaring Twenties? One can get a glimpse of it by visiting Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens located in Akron, OH. Once the home of The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company co-founder, F.A. Seiberling, this historic estate and museum features a 64,500 sq. ft. Manor House and a landscape filled with eye-catching vistas and colorful gardens.

The Manor House was built between 1912 and 1915 and contains 18 bedrooms, 25 bathrooms, 23 fireplaces, and 12 chimneys. The gardens, designed by notable landscape architect, Warren Manning, are no less spectacular and highlight the estate in nine formal settings intended to be used and enjoyed by family, friends and guests from around the world.

The Seiberling family enjoyed its American Country Estate for several decades. In 1957, it became a non-profit museum. Today, the hall and gardens, restored to their



The impressive Manor House contains 18 bedrooms, 25 bathrooms, 23 fireplaces, and 12 chimneys.

Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens

near natural state, are open to the public for nine months out of the year, six days a week.

## LARGE TASK

More than 40 full-time employees and upwards of 600 volunteers help maintain Stan Hywet, Old English for “stone quarry” and the property’s most prominent natural feature.

“The estate is comprised of 70 acres,

35 of which are maintained grounds,” explained Tom Hrivnak, a 21-year veteran employee. Under his supervision fall the grounds, greenhouses, maintenance department and facilities.

“One of the unique things about the estate is the attention to detail,” Hrivnak emphasized. “The Manor House features the Seiberling family’s actual personal and household items, giving visitors an authentic view of how they lived. The same holds true of the gardens. Although their original blueprints were damaged or lost over time, correspondence letters, thousands of black and white photos, and Warren

**“The gardens are one of the reasons we’ve used a Walker Mower for the last two decades.”**

**– Tom Hrivnak, Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens**



Attachments for the Walker Mower, including a fertilizer spreader and Hi-Dump, help save valuable time around the property. Here, operator Tom Bouton easily drops leaves and clippings into piles to be later sucked up by a vacuum.



Manning's plant list have allowed them to be restored very close to the way they were in the 1920s."

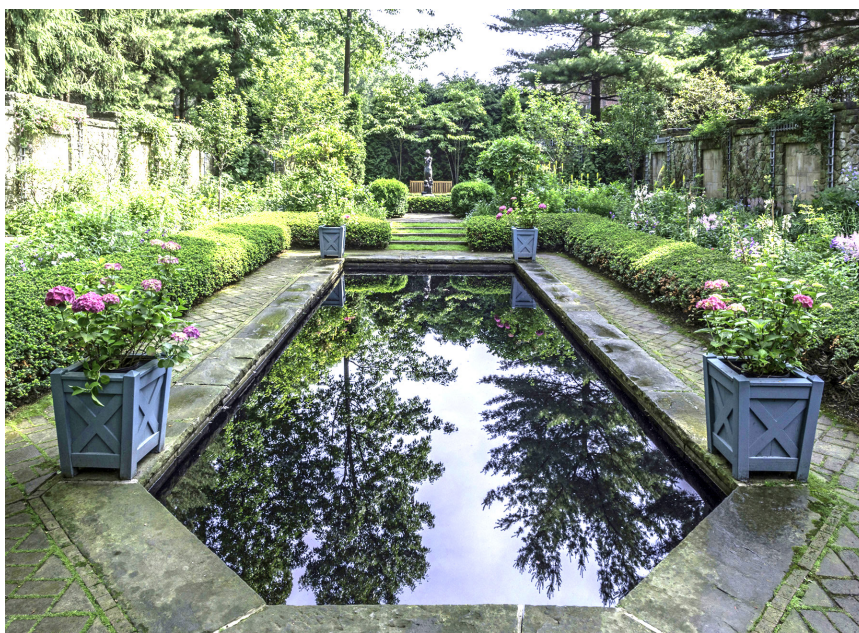
Of the nine formal gardens, he noted the English Garden, redesigned by Ellen Biddle Shipman in 1928, was one of family matriarch Gertrude Seiberling's favorite outdoor spaces. Restored in the early 1990s, it is said to be one of

the only fully restored gardens designed by Shipman that is open to the public.

"The gardens are one of the reasons we've used a Walker Mower for the last two decades," added Hrivnak. "Having a good collection system is a requisite to keep clippings and other debris out of the gardens, and the Great Garden alone features 5,000 linear feet of pathway. Our choice was to either use a push mower or a compact mower like the Walker Mower to keep it maintained. That really wasn't a choice."

"Not to minimize the importance of the machine's quality of cut," said employee Tony Stopar, who is the Stan Hywet turf specialist. "The quality is beyond anything I've seen, thanks to its counter-rotating blades and vacuum system," he said. "The results help to provide a great staging area for the several events and many weddings the estate hosts each year. The mower is also easy to operate, something that mowing volunteer Tom Bouton appreciates."

"Tom is one of the many regular volunteers who works in the horticulture department," noted Hrivnak. "He has compiled thousands of hours of volunteering over more than 18 years working in the greenhouse and



**The English Garden was one of Gertrude Seiberling's favorite outdoor spaces.**

Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens

spends two days a week on a Hustler wide-area mower, and a Toro push mower also gets a weekly workout in and around the gardens. A couple of attachments for the Walker Mower, including a fertilizer spreader

and Hi-Dump, help save valuable time. The Hi-Dump easily drops leaves and clippings into piles to be later sucked up by a vacuum. It can also deposit them in a pickup bed, ideal for less accessible areas around the estate."

using the Walker Mower. All told, we definitely couldn't do what we do here without volunteer help."

#### CUSTOM APPROACH

Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens is much more than a portal to the past. The estate is an educational and cultural resource for the community and a venue that hosts several holiday and other special events throughout the year. It has also become a popular setting for unique garden weddings.

"The events pose one of the biggest challenges for us," explained Hrivnak. "They dictate much of Tony Stopar's turf maintenance schedule, from mowing all the way to when and how much fertilization is applied, and which areas will need reseeding in the fall. What makes it more interesting is the primary event season occurs during the months

of June, September, and October, our busiest time of year for landscape maintenance."

He continued, "As a general rule, our Walker Mower, equipped with a 42-inch GHS deck, operates four hours a day, four days a week. Volunteer Wayne Huston

**"As a general rule, our Walker Mower operates four hours a day, four days a week."**

**— Tom Hrivnak, Stan Hyet Hall and Gardens**

#### SECOND SEASON

The Deck the Hall celebration, extending from the end of November through December 30th, treats visitors to a dazzling display of more than 1 million lights, an animated light show, and much more. This special season-ending event for Stan Hywet marks the beginning of the second season for Hrivnak and his team.

"We stay very busy through most of January and February with winter pruning, tree work, and cleaning up 20 acres of woods," he explained. "Some of our volunteers like Tom and Wayne also enjoy working in the greenhouse, readying plant material for the upcoming season or pruning trees on the estate."

Hrivnak and Stopar emphasize one of the benefits of working at the estate from a landscape or horticultural perspective is being able to see plans come to fruition over time. That's something tourists and groups that visit this magnificent estate annually can appreciate, as well. For more information, contact Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens at 330-836-5533 or visit [stanhywet.org](http://stanhywet.org). ☺



# CUTTING INTO THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE



A glimpse into the online footprint of landscape contractors

If a picture is worth a thousand words, what message does a landscape contractor's digital footprint convey? Landscape contractors each have a different approach to utilizing the digital landscape to market their services, network with other contractors, or use it as a tool to not only grow their businesses, but grow the industry as well.

Below, a handful of contractors share the variety of digital methods used to deliver their messages. Their intent may be to market their services, inform their customers, share good ideas, help grow the industry, or include any combination thereof.

Their overall implied message to contractors still questioning whether to venture into the digital landscape is to get off the fence and take advantage of how just a few images or videos of their work can say so much about their company, the work they do, how they do it, and the message they want to convey.

Paul Camara, owner of Spring Green Landscaping in Exeter, RI, is a prime example. He started Spring Green in 2000 and named the business after one his grandfather started in the 60s.

As he described, the landscaping industry has been part of his life forever. In addition

▲ Relatively new to the industry, Jack Haraden is in the growth mode and uses his website as the main showcase for his company.

to running his company, Camara is also president of the Rhode Island Nursery & Landscape Association (RINLA).

Spring Green Landscaping operates three GHS Walker Mowers and specializes in detailed landscape maintenance. The company has between 30 and 35 customers, one half of whom receive full mowing/maintenance services; the others opt for specialized



► Sam Grobel recently started sharing ideas online with other landscape contractors, including images of a ramp system he designed for his company's F-250 pickup.

services and/or Camara acts as a property manager for them.

His 16 to 18 mowing customers range from older folks with smaller properties to larger estates. All are very particular about their properties, and most have been with him from the beginning.

"I don't want to grow my business, so social media is less a marketing tool and more a way to mentor younger contractors who are just starting out in the business," Camara emphasized. "Many of my followers on Instagram are contractors who want to do good work, but really don't know what good work is."

"Everyday, I try to post something different on Instagram. The posting might be the Plant of the Day, a comparison of different plant types, or include a video showing a service such as a topiary pruning job," he said. "Facebook, on the other hand, targets current customers, reminding them about spring cleanup or other timely services."

Originally, he had little interest in social media until friends showed him how easy it is to get involved.

"Now, I've found it to be a great tool for not only mentoring younger folks, but to inspire them, as well," Camara said.

## IN GROWTH MODE

Starting his business in 2018, Jack Haraden, owner of Haraden Landscaping in Hampton, NH, is at a different point in his business cycle. Even though he has worked a couple of years with a landscaping contractor and has a horticulture degree, he's still relatively new to the industry and very much in the growth mode.

He calls his website "the main showcase for his company." Hence, it features images of his service offerings, all the way from weekly mowing with his Walker Mower to mulching, spring/fall cleanup, dethatching, edging/weeding, pruning, and snow removal. It also illustrates various projects, provides the all-important contact information, and features links to LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook.



Like Camara, he refers to Instagram as his business showcase and tries to post daily. Facebook, he noted, is a vehicle he employs to keep his name out in the community.

"I've advertised on Facebook, targeting a specific audience and location, but I would rather spend my money on equipment," Haraden said. "I still think word-of-mouth is the best marketing around, and having an online presence is a great way to take advantage of it."

Haraden is referring to a Google My Business tool that helps him interact with customers.

Google My Business is a useful tool that can increase local search engine optimization if used correctly.

He noted that it's easy for business owners to claim a business by clicking on it and clicking claim. Upon entering some basic details, business owners have an opportunity to upload various details including pictures, opening times and more.

A common error with Google My Business is for owners to claim the site and then fail to keep it updated or have inaccurate information available online. Incorrect or missing information can make a bad first impression when it comes to customer experience.

He encourages customers to review his work, recognizing that what people say about his business matters. Haraden says if a customer leaves a review, whether it's good or bad, it's important to reply to them and

address their concerns in a helpful and professional manner.

When a potential customer keys in Haraden's company name, reviews pop up. To date, all have been very positive and he's striving to keep it that way.



## SHARING IDEAS

Shadow Green Lawn Care in Andover, MN, has been in business 10 years. Owner, Sam Grobel, sends out two mowing rigs and six Walker Mowers to maintain 80 property maintenance accounts weekly. They include large single-family homes, strip malls, auto dealerships and parts stores, and a few group homes.

"Within the last few years, I've started to spend more time working on my business, and that includes expanding our social media presence on Instagram and Facebook," said Grobel. "My goal has been two-fold: to promote the quality of our work and network with other contractors."

Regarding the latter, he attended the Green Industry Expo (GIE) in Louisville, KY, for the first time last year and was impressed by all the networking opportunities.

Seeing social media as an extension of

that, Grobel started sharing ideas online, including showing images of a ramp system he designed for the back of his company's F-250 pickup. The ramp allows him to transport two Walker Mowers without having to tow a trailer.

To better promote his company, Grobel recently purchased a drone. "The birds-eye view gives potential customers a better understanding of the size of some of our properties and the type of equipment we use to get the job done," he said. "We don't need narration; the videos will tell the story."

## BEFORE AND AFTER

When Cleat Bell first started mowing, door hangers were among his most effective marketing tools. Now, it's social media, and he says there's no comparison.

"Marketing with door hangers was costly and very time consuming, and maybe I would get a handful of responses," said the owner of Muscle Mowing in Amarillo, TX. "Social media is not only free, I can contact 2,000 potential customers with a few key strokes and they can immediately see the quality of my work."

The latter is so important, he added.

"I have between 110 and 125 mowing and maintenance accounts, many of whom are millennials who want instant gratification," Bell said. "They can see the quality of work right on Facebook and Instagram and contact me immediately if they're interested. Consumers want value and to see what they're going to get with their own eyes. For example, what's more effective than to show a few before and after images or a video of how my two Walker Mowers handle leaves?"

Bell, a former police officer, said he tries to post something on either Facebook or Instagram two or three times a week. He makes them content specific, too.

"One of my pet peeves is postings that show landscape contractors doing something other than their work," he remarked.

After all, Muscle Mowing wasn't voted Best Landscaper in Amarillo by Channel 10 in 2017 for its postings about going on vacation.

## MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME

Mowing and Growing, Central Coast NSW, Australia, was founded in 2005, and today services more than 120 customers. Family owned and operated, it wasn't until four years ago that it launched its website and started posting on Instagram and other social media.

According to company president Martyn Safiti, the website is designed to reach potential customers and keep current customers informed. As such, it introduces a bit of the company's history and service offering, while allowing customers to book a job. It also features a photo gallery and videos, along with testimonials.

"Our website also acts as our online hub where all our other online platforms are directed," he explained. "I see Instagram as a social networking platform to connect with other industry professionals, whereas our business Facebook, where we like to showcase our work, is also used to reach customers."

"We post on Facebook once or twice a week compared to Instagram where something is posted every day. On Instagram, we like to post stories of how our day is progressing," Safiti said.

Mowing and Growing has three full-time employees and a part-timer on call. The company uses a Walker MTGHS, along with a couple of other mowers to service a mix of lifestyle properties, residential homes, and large complexes.

"Our website is ranked on page one on Google for our location and the services we provide," Safiti added. "This has helped us acquire the type of customers we want for the niche market we specialize in. We have a webmaster who manages our website, and because our business has grown over the past three years, we are due for an update." ☺

**"My goal has been two-fold: to promote the quality of our work and network with other contractors."**

**— Sam Grobel, Shadow Green Lawn Care**



# WALKER NEWS & PRODUCTS

## WALKER RESIDENTIAL MODEL ANNOUNCED

The Model R21 is a new Walker design for the residential customer and acreage owner. Both the tractor and mower deck feature simplified construction, reduced weight and a lower selling price, while retaining the front-mount, tilt-up mower deck, and the precision steering and handling of other Walker Mower models. The powertrain for the Model R has a 21-hp Kohler engine, Hydro-Gear EZT transmissions and an Ogura electric blade clutch. Two side-discharge mower decks are available: 42" and 48", each available with an optional bolt-in mulch kit. A three-year, 300-hour warranty is offered.



## BIG TIRE KIT FOR MODEL B

An optional dealer-installed kit fits larger, 20-inch drive tires and taller wheel forks on the caster wheels of the Model B to increase the maximum deck cutting height to 5 inches. Also the bigger drive tires increase the maximum ground travel speed slightly (to 9 mph). Order P/N 5076-10 for decks with 8" tires and 5076-11 for decks with 11" tires.



## MODEL T27I REPLACES T25I

For 2020, the engine power rating of the Model T25i has been increased to 27 HP, offering increased performance. The extra performance is added while maintaining the great fuel economy of an electronic fuel injection (EFI) Kohler engine and with little change in the selling price.



**The leadership team at Walker Manufacturing: Vice President of Engineering, Ted Walker; Executive Vice President and Board Vice Chairman, Dean Walker; Chairman of the Board, Bob Walker; and President, Ryan Walker.**

## THIRD GENERATION TAKES THE LEAD AT WALKER MANUFACTURING

Effective Oct. 1, Walker Manufacturing President Bob Walker transitioned to the role of chairman of the board, and third-generation family member Ryan Walker has been named president. Ryan assumes this position after working 10 years at Walker in sales, marketing and business development.

Additional changes in Walker's executive leadership also included Dean Walker moving to executive vice president and board vice chairman, while Ted Walker (Dean and Suzanne's oldest son) has moved into the position of vice president of engineering.

"The commitment Ted and I have made to Bob and Dean and our entire family is to continue to operate Walker Manufacturing with the core principles we have been taught and seen work well for our grandparents and parents," Ryan says. "We are steadfast in our covenant to our family to manage this business in a way that will allow us to hand off an even better Walker Manufacturing to the fourth generation of Walker family."

Bob and Dean will remain active in day-to-day operations, including ongoing mentoring to next generation leadership.

"My plan is to follow my dad's (Max) lead and work as long as I am able," Bob explains. "My dad gracefully transitioned leadership of the company to my brother Dean and me, while still giving us guidance and working alongside us as long as he was physically able."

## 2019 FIVE-STAR DEALERS

Five-star dealers are a group of five top-tier dealers that were nominated by their distributor and then selected by the Walker factory team for recognition as the best of the best Walker dealers around the world. For 2019 the Five-star dealers were:

- **Master Mower**, R. C. Zwolsky, Marietta, Georgia
- **Stephen Roy Power Equipment**, Stephen Roy, North Smithfield, Rhode Island
- **Chad Little Outdoor Power Equipment**, Bruce Weeks & Art Hewes, Scarborough, Maine
- **Meadow Green Sales**, Mike & Michelle McKnire, Billings, Montana
- **MAC Equipment**, John, Clifton, Ronald and Chris McCrimmon, Loveland, Colorado

## OED JOINS WALKER FOR MID-ATLANTIC STATES

Walker Manufacturing is pleased to welcome Outdoor Equipment Distributors (OED) of Raleigh, North Carolina to their distribution team for the Mid-Atlantic states. OED has purchased the Walker distribution territory from GHS Corporation of Denton, North Carolina who has distributed Walker Mowers since 1985 as pioneering members of the Walker program.

"During this time of transition, we look back and are very thankful for the 34 years we worked with the GHS Corporation and the Hopkins family," reflects Walker President, Bob Walker. "And we look forward with anticipation and confidence as the Zucker family and the team at OED take on the Walker program."

Outdoor Equipment Distributors is a third generation wholesale distributor founded in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1931 that has transitioned throughout their history from auto parts wholesale to outdoor power equipment. Their strengths include strong sales and marketing programs and support for dealers and robust customer service and shipping departments.

"We are absolutely delighted to join the Walker family and have been very impressed with the on-boarding process and the way they have welcomed us to the team," explains OED President, Rob Zucker. "Walker Mowers fit beautifully into the offerings we provide to our dealer network, and we look forward to a long and prosperous future for all parties as we work together to grow the Walker Mower line."





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# Model **R**

## Bring Home Fast, Easy, Beautiful Mowing

The Model R is the perfect Walker Mower for residential properties. The belt-driven mower blades make operation smooth and quiet without compromising on the Walker Mower's distinct advantages. The Model R provides the premium Walker experience at our lowest price yet so you can bring home fast, easy, beautiful mowing.

See more at  
[walker.com/model-r](http://walker.com/model-r)

