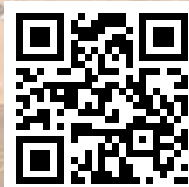


JUNE 2020

Offshoot

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President's Message

Willie Valdez



I'll dare to start by name dropping—how about Warren Buffett, the legendary investor/owner of Berkshire Hathaway. The humble Mr. Buffett is renowned for his spectacular abilities and thoughts when it comes to spotting undervalued or underperforming assets. He also coined the phrase “circle of competence.” Have you ever heard that before? It's a popular investment strategy that says if you stay within the areas of expertise that you know and understand, avoid the areas that you only think you know, and then also avoid areas you don't know or understand at all, you will have an advantage. Of course, the circle of competence only works if you're willing to maintain your discipline and stay within the boundaries of that circle.

The very nature of landscaping itself has always been an open invitation to move outside the circle of competence; most landscapers are naturally curious when it comes to this crazy and passionate form of living art. Landscaping curiosity has always tended to go way outside the circle by the sheer desire to learn, create, compete, and understand.

Unfortunately, most of the time, the learning curve comes at a high cost: lost time and money. Yet sometimes that's not enough to break the bad habit. A recent discussion I had with a very, very successful landscape contractor verified a similar pattern. He described a change he had to make to his company, where he was leaving the construction side of the landscaping business (also known as hardscaping or design-build services). The reason he stated was this: time after time, job cost accounting revealed results that showed a pattern where they would win one, but lose two: money and time. Yikes, I hate losing both of those!

Furthermore, the cost accounting revelation overlapped with clients raving about the maintenance services and grumbling about all factors related to the construction side, despite the fact that he had tried hard in both categories. Still, he just came to realize truthfully, as a company, the maintenance divisions systems were always

performing consistently and providing margins that led to profit. The landscape construction side was not only a struggle financially, it also hurt his hard-won brand, which had been built over many years of hard work. He concluded to close the construction division down and retreat to his winner's circle.

That's one of the many things I love about the CLCA fellowship: members can tell you about their circle of competence. That perk alone is worth my membership when led by my inclinations. I've been known to lose both time and money – ouch – not to mention damaging my brand.

How about you or your company, do you stay inside the circle? Just naturally curious....

Best always! ~Willie

P.S. To gain valuable knowledge and insights that may be outside your circle, I challenge you to sit in on a SPONSOR SOAPBOX – the best 15 minutes outside my circle! These are Thursday afternoons and links are emailed twice a week. Catch one – you'll get hooked.



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Coming Events

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Summer TBA

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August 11

San Diego Chapter General Meeting. All welcome. Due to health guidelines, this will be a virtual meeting. To attend, email amy@conradpr.com for the Zoom link.

September 8

San Diego Chapter General Meeting. All welcome. 8:45 a.m. breakfast/networking, 9:15 a.m. meeting. *Mimi's Cafe, 10788 Westview Pkwy, San Diego.*

October 8

San Diego Chapter Golf Tournament. *Rancho Bernardo Inn: 17550 Bernardo Oaks Dr., San Diego.*

October 13

San Diego Chapter General Meeting. All welcome. 8:45 a.m. breakfast/networking, 9:15 a.m. meeting. *Mimi's Cafe, 10788 Westview Pkwy, San Diego.*

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First Individuals Complete NALP's Landscape Management Apprenticeship Program

Merino Landscape, Inc., based in San Diego, California, is the first company with individuals to complete NALP's Landscape Management Apprenticeship Program (LMAP), with three apprentices finishing the program in May.



While typically it takes apprentices 12 to 15 months to complete the program, apprentices Julien Alcaraz, Jaime Alcaraz, and Krystian Merino were able to finish the program at an accelerated rate due to prior experience. All three apprentices are current employees.

Jaime Alcaraz said that with the testing and exams they were able to feel confident in their skills of the trade and the tests helped them become a stronger individual in the trade. Krystian Merino commented that he appreciated how the program brought things back to the fundamentals of the trade.

Owner Chris Merino said the program worked well for them and it was cost-effective. He added that he plans to use the apprenticeship program again in the future, but will have someone else handle the mentoring aspect of the apprenticeship. As the mentor this time around, he found it interesting to show the apprentices the different aspects of the work.

One of the reasons Merino decided to participate in the program is due to a new law in California that requires companies bidding on public work

contracts to employ individuals who have graduated from a *Registered Apprenticeship Program*.

Merino said that the program has a good mix of online training and hands-on work and there isn't anything about the program that he would change.

"The work I was doing in the online classroom was great because it went perfectly with reinforcing knowledge of the trade," Jaime Alcaraz said. Julien Alcaraz agreed that the online classroom training reassured him that each task was done the proper way.

Continued on Next Page...

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NALP's Landscape Management Apprenticeship Program

...Continued from Previous Page

The NALP Landscape Management Apprenticeship Program was launched in February 2019. The program requires 2,000 hours of on-the-job training, as well as a minimum of 144 hours in the classroom or online equivalent. The 2,000 hours of on-the-job training is broken down into 17 job tasks, which helps apprentices receive well-rounded training.

Individuals who complete the program hold the status of Journeyman for the occupation of Landscape Management Technician and earn up to 14 college credits that can be transferred to over 300 colleges or universities.

Visit www.landscapeprofessionals.org/apprenticeship to learn more about the program and to enroll.

Apprenticeships are Opening Doors to a Better Future

Government agencies have identified apprenticeship programs as a proven solution for recruiting, training, and retaining top-tier talent. The new Landscape Management Apprenticeship Program™ (LMAP), sponsored by the National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) and registered by the Department of Labor, offers job seekers a path to a new career through a paid apprenticeship with a landscape company that includes on-the-job training.

Who should consider an apprenticeship program?

Companies that have trouble finding employees, are challenged by high turnover, or have difficulty training staff with relevant skills are ideal candidates for apprenticeship programs. Companies in industries with long-established apprenticeship programs describe them as the "golden ticket" of recruiting.

What does the LMAP™ encompass?

The apprenticeship program focuses on the skills needed by a landscape technician in maintenance, installation, and irrigation. The heavy emphasis is on landscape maintenance. The program requires 2,000 hours of on-the-job training, as well as a minimum of 144 hours in the classroom or online equivalent. NALP has developed the LMAP™ materials into online courses to meet the education component. This ensures that every apprentice across the country, receives the same training. The 2,000 hours of on-the-job instruction are divided into 17 job tasks with required hours for each. The apprentice must reach an acceptable competency level in each of the outlined tasks.

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Designing Equipment Safety Training

By Steven Cesare, Ph.D., The Harvest Group

In developing the overview of a training program, basic equipment training content is typically organized across three simplistic timeframes for each piece of equipment:

Pre-operational

Before starting the equipment, inspect it for loose screws, fluid levels/leaks, filters, tires, spark plugs, engine pull cords, mixed or clean fuel, fueling locations and procedures, muffler, etc.

Operational

While the equipment is running, understand how to turn the equipment on and off, keep hands and fingers away from hazard elements like blades, proper body ergonomics, correct use of the “choke,” never point a blower toward a client’s house or use it while between vehicles in a parking lot, etc.

Post-operational

With the equipment turned off, inspect the equipment for any sign of wear and tear or noteworthy damage, cleaning procedures, proper storage and security using a metal chain, report any safety issues to a supervisor immediately, etc.

With the training content established, basic training delivery is typically presented across three points of focus:

1) Employee: Ensure all required PPE is being worn

properly (e.g., safety glasses, back brace, earplugs, leather gloves, safety vest, work boots, dust mask) prior to using the equipment.

2) Equipment: Inspect the piece of equipment thoroughly following a front-to-back progression, reviewing all elements carefully in a linear and easy-to-follow path (e.g., string trimmer head, line, shaft, handle, engine, spark plug, fuel level, purge bulb, engine cord, muffler, and its protector).

3) Environment: With the employee and equipment inspected for safety, now constantly scan the environment for potential hazards (e.g., vehicles, pedestrians, pets, windows, roots, sprinklers, wet areas, low branches, holes in the turf, signs).


With the basic training content and delivery method defined, it is always important to ensure that detailed administrative procedures, including proper record keeping (e.g., training date, training content, attendees, sign-off sheets), are always conducted in that such documentation will be quickly requested by any OSHA auditor or workers’ compensation vendor performing an evaluation of a company’s safety compliance procedures.

If you have any questions about this topic or anything else related to human resources, call Steve at (760) 685-3800. This article was excerpted from the Harvest Group blog, Tuesdays with Steve Cesare.



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San Diego Chapter Member Milestones

Congratulations to the following companies for reaching membership milestones this month.

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22 Year Member Ciro's Landscaping	LaBahn's Landscaping Free Flow Products
17 Year Member Abundant Life Landscape Maintenance	5 Year Member Nick Martin Landscape Architect
14 Year Member Mariposa Landscape	2 Year Member Landscape Management Network
11 Year Member Evergreen Distributors	1 Year Members Anderson Chevrolet GrowUp GreenWalls
8 Year Member SD County Water Auth.	

ASABE Releases New Standard for Soil Moisture Sensors

Article Excerpted from IA Times at www.irrigation.org

The American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers recently released a new standard for testing soil moisture sensors used to control landscape irrigation. The new standard has been published as ANSI/ASABE S633 Testing Protocol for Landscape Irrigation Soil Moisture-Based Control Technologies. This standard defines a procedure to test a soil moisture sensor and interface device's response to changes in soil moisture conditions. The test procedure covers soil water content (volumetric) and soil water tension (matric potential) sensors.

The new standard provides a method using two different soil media — one to represent moderately coarse soils such as sandy loam and the other to represent moderately fine soils similar to a silty clay loam or clay loam soil. The soil moisture sensors are tested at three water depletion levels and two water salinities in each soil type to determine if the sensor and the associated interface device

will enable/disable an irrigation event at preset or selected soil water values in a consistent, repeatable and reliable manner.

Typically, these soil moisture sensors and interface devices are meant to be used with an existing controller and to prevent or disable planned irrigation events when adequate soil moisture is present. While these products have been available in the marketplace for a long time, compliance with this testing standard provides some assurance that the products do work when installed and managed correctly.

Tom Penning, president of Irrrometer Company and member of ASABE, served as the committee chair for

this standard. Penning thanked the committee members including IA Industry Development Director Brent Mecham, CID, CLWM, CIC, CLIA, CAIS, and the various labs for doing trial testing, which included the Center for Irrigation Technology, Texas A&M and Florida State University. Richard Harris, who recently retired from East Bay Municipal Utility District in California, helped secure funding for the testing and provided guidance during the development of the standard. As noted by Penning, "While a long time in the making, this standard provides a basis for the EPA's WaterSense specification to certify and label soil moisture sensor-based irrigation control devices."

To request a copy of the standard, email ASABE headquarters at orderstandard@asabe.org.



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