

**CASE STUDY: OUR WAY**

# Happy, healthy employees

How one landscape company used a weight-loss challenge to promote wellness. **BY CASEY PAYTON**

**H**ealthy employees are happy employees—and happy employees are good for business. That’s one reason why Hillsboro, Ore.-based Pacific Landscape Management implemented a weight-loss contest in which the majority of its management team participated. Owner Bob Grover says that the idea also stemmed from the fact that the company truly cares about its team. Pacific Landscape Management operates like a family in many ways, Grover says, and he wants the best for employees, including their health.

Grover’s business partner, Elias Godinez, first had the idea to run a company weight-loss contest. He thought it would be a great way to encourage employees to take better care of themselves—and have some fun competition at the same time. Twenty-five account managers and operations managers signed up. Everyone put \$100 in the pot for a total prize of \$2,500. The goal was to lose 6 percent body weight between April and July. Those who met the goal would split the pot.

“Half made it, so the winners doubled their money,” Grover says.

The contest was fun and also put a lot of focus on health, he says. It’s something he believes will stick with people even though the contest is over.

“I believe the group will try to maintain their healthy habits,” he adds. “For me, personally, I’m back to ‘high school skinny’ and plan to stay that way.”

In total, the group lost 284 pounds. But beyond the weight loss, Grover says emphasizing a healthy lifestyle was valuable and showed employees their company cares about them.

Grover says that although he’s led an active lifestyle, he still struggles with healthy eating and exercising as often as he should, but being part of a group effort was motivating for him. He believes it was an incentive for the other participants, as well.

“I just read a book called *Younger Next Year* that speaks to how you can live actively into your 80s with just regular exercise and a moderate diet,” Grover says. “Like aging athletes, we, as landscapers, need to focus on better exercise and diets as we move away from doing the physical work every day. This weight-loss challenge did that for me and, I think, our entire management team.”

While participants did their exercising and other weight-loss activities on an individual basis, the company promotes physical activity with several different team sports. Pacific has two soccer teams that play year-round, and each summer they pit teams from the three branches and one from corporate against each other for some friendly competition. The company also has a Hood to Coast Relay team that participates in a 200-mile relay run, and some Pacific team members are cyclists and do organized rides together.



Team sports and activities are part of Pacific Landscape’s dedication to wellness initiatives.



In addition to physical activity, the company worked as a team to encourage healthy eating around the office. It wasn’t exactly an easy feat when Pacific also hosted a biweekly BBQ for its employees. Grover acknowledges there was some “anguish” as several employees struggled to control their intake of carne asada and carnitas during company meals.

Overall, Grover says it was a successful contest and one he’d do again. One of the best things about it, he says, was its simplicity. He advises other landscape companies who consider doing something like this to keep it easy. It was a lot of fun and he had a great payoff—yes, in cash, but even better, in healthier habits. 

Payton is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia.

## BUSINESS BREAKDOWN

**COMPANY:** Pacific Landscape Management

**LOCATION:** Hillsboro, Ore.

**REVENUE:** \$17 million

**NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** 240

**SERVICE MIX:** 60% maintenance, 40% renovations/enhancements

**CLIENT MIX:** 70% commercial, 30% homeowner associations