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Home (<https://blog.landscapeprofessionals.org/>) » Business Advice & Stories (<https://blog.landscapeprofessionals.org/category/landscape-business/>) » Meet NALP Member Bob Grover of Pacific Landscape Management

## Meet NALP Member Bob Grover of Pacific Landscape Management

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### Bob Grover - Pacific Landscape Management

Bob Grover was a self-described “outdoorsy kid” growing up.

“I grew up in the 1960s and 1970s,” he explains. “We had three television channels. Kids’ TV shows only happened on Saturday mornings. There were no video games. We went outside and played. I had the fortune of living on 1 acre in suburbia. It was the spot where all of the neighbors played. We built forts, played baseball, and I helped my dad work on his garden.”

**Pacific Landscape Management****Location:** Portland, Oregon**Year Founded:** 2001**Client Mix:** 70% commercial, 30% homeowner's associations**Service Mix:** 60% commercial maintenance, 40% landscape enhancement**Revenue:** \$22 million**Business Motto:** Serve your customers and serve your people.

Bob Grover

When he was old enough to work, the closest place he could get a job was at a retail nursery that was a block and a half from his house.

NALP recently caught up with Grover, owner of Pacific Landscape Management in Portland, Oregon, to learn more about why growth and development of business and people are his top priorities and how, even during good times, he's always preparing for an economic recession.

"Actually, I've never worked outside of the green industry," he shares. "I love the outdoors. I love plants. And I love working with and serving people. It is the perfect fit."

**What is your proudest moment in business?**

We have hosted several industry events and had other companies visit us throughout the years. When I speak of our culture, I frequently hear back from visitors to our company that they saw it throughout our organization. I am very proud when I get confirmation that all of our people align with our culture and our mission. Seeing people strive to fulfill a collective mission is incredibly rewarding.

**What is your biggest business challenge today?**

We had a phenomenal economy back in the early 2000s, but then had an economic crisis and recession in 2008, 2009 and 2010. I can remember thinking that it was never going to be as good as years like 2005 or 2006 for us, but then it was. In fact, years 2016, 2017 and 2018 were even better; the economy had clearly come back strong.

I worry there is a pattern here: A pending recession could impact business in general in America once again. As a result, I spend a lot of time thinking about how we as a company can prepare for the next downturn; we always prepare for the worst. We have spent a lot of time reducing debt and are currently a debt-free company. To prepare, we pay cash for vehicles and equipment and are very financially conservative.

**What motivates you on Monday mornings?**

I love to go to work with great people in order to be able to serve great people. The opportunity to be able to interact with employees and customers every day is what gets me out of bed. The truth is, with the current marketplace, this would be a great time to sell my business—but I absolutely cannot imagine my life without this business. I love our team and our customers.

**What business worry keeps you up most at night?**

Seasonal labor is my biggest worry. We have been a long-time user of the H-2B program, using it during low unemployment times during great economies, and have relied on the stable seasonal labor that it provides. Although some contractors did not receive visas over the last two years, we were lucky and "won the lottery" getting ours. But we're always worried about what will happen if we don't. We worked diligently to lobby for expansion of this program and eagerly await good news of our receiving visas for 2019. I personally have gone to Washington up to three times a year to meet with congressional staff and have ongoing relationships and correspondence with these folks throughout the year as legislation comes up.

**Who is your business mentor or idol?**

My first job out of college was with a company called Northwest Landscape Industries run by two incredible landscape icons, Rich Akerman and Jim Wathey. I learned a lot from working with them for 18 years. They had so much passion for customer service. A lot of what I do today came from them showing me what a well-run, customer-centered company looks like. They also exposed me to different conferences and industry events they were attending and are a big reason why I got involved myself.

## What is your favorite business book?

I read dozens of books about business, and I'm always interested in those that talk about a culture of service. "Delivering Knock Your Socks Off Service" ([https://www.amazon.com/Delivering-Knock-Your-Socks-Service/dp/0814417558/ref=pd\\_lpo\\_sbs\\_14\\_t\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=ZHSGSCW6H1XYJAQWPY0V](https://www.amazon.com/Delivering-Knock-Your-Socks-Service/dp/0814417558/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_t_0?_encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=ZHSGSCW6H1XYJAQWPY0V)) is one that I particularly like. It focuses on what motivates me—the human interaction—but it also talks about having customers that want YOU. The fact is, we can't do any work without having a happy customer and that needs to be a focus.

## What does it mean to you to be a landscape professional?

It means always getting better. I think our industry is very complex and technical. However, many people don't treat it that way. We need to continue as an industry to evolve and develop. I am highly motivated to lead that effort.

## What does it mean to you to be a member of NALP?

I've been involved with NALP for 35 years. Rich Akerman, one of my mentors early in my career, encouraged me to get involved. I have learned so much from so many people. As a result, I appreciate the relationships that I've developed through NALP. They have helped advance my personal career and company success. I would not be where I am today without all I've learned from these people. It has all come from my involvement in NALP.

## In five years where do you see your business going? Where will you be?

We will continue to grow and develop but we're aware that our market is beginning to impact our potential growth. We will be looking for opportunities to expand our service into similar areas, but we have no desire to grow significantly from a geographic standpoint. Personally, I may be 57, but I feel young. I look forward to, in the next decade, continuing to work and see my organization and its people develop.

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