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## Pacific Landscape Management

Focus on customer service and employees fertilizes revenue growth.

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Contributing writer

If you're trying to place Pacific Landscape Management, just think orange. The color is an essential part of the Hillsboro-based company's brand; its fleet of trucks is orange and so are employees' uniforms.

"We're known more by the color than by our name," says company President Bob Grover.

That color recognition has helped Pacific Landscape Management to grow rapidly even though that company has taken what Grover describes as "a relatively passive sales approach" since it was founded in 2001. Revenue increased 45 percent from 2005 to 2007, from \$3.6 million to \$5.2 million.

The primary drivers of new business are direct marketing and referrals from current clients, which include a number of property management companies, as well as individual properties such as Pacific University, Charbonneau Country Club and the AmberGlen Business Center.

Pacific Landscape Management's goal is to be at the top of potential clients' lists when it comes to selecting a landscape management service for Class A and commercial properties.

"If they've heard about us doing great work elsewhere, when it comes time to change vendors we're their first choice," Grover says.

Staying front-and-center in potential clients' minds is key in the competitive industry of landscape management, where new companies crop up often.

"We're constantly battling less professional startups who don't know what they're doing and underbid," says Grover.

He points out that many other industries have a higher barrier to entry that helps maintain professionalism.

"You can't start a high-tech company with a lawn mower and a pick-up truck."

Grover largely attributes Pacific Landscape Management's success to the company's commitment to customer service. He says that the employees of Pacific Landscape Management are "passionate about understanding (clients') needs and being champions of their landscapes."

"As we've grown, we've attracted some very capable and experienced people in our organization," adds Grover.

Accordingly, Pacific Landscape Management –



COURTESY OF PACIFIC LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

Bob Grover, President of Pacific Landscape Management, says the company invests a great deal in the training and growth of employees.

more specifically, co-founder Elias Godinez – has instituted a number of programs aimed at making sure its employees succeed.

"I don't think there's another organization in the industry that spends the time developing and training people that we do," Grover says.

For instance, employees receive a half-hour training every week and have the option of taking additional professional courses after work. They also participate in an annual brainstorming session that guides planning for the subsequent year.

Taking its cue from clients in the high-tech industry, Pacific Landscape Management also organizes a variety of social activities for its employees, such as a soccer team and bi-weekly barbecues and pizza feeds.

These perks keep employee turnover low. Pacific Landscape Management hasn't formally tracked turnover, but Grover estimates that the company's supervisors and managers have an average tenure of five years.

Low employee turnover translates into better service for Pacific Landscape Management's clients. Because each property is unique and each client has

different needs, having the same supervisor on site from year to year helps minimize the number of mistakes made.

Prior to founding Pacific Landscape Management, Grover, Godinez and Ron Knesal worked together for years at Northwest Landscape Industries. In 1998, Northwest Landscape Industries was sold to TruGreen LandCare, a subsidiary of the Fortune 500 company ServiceMaster.

"It was a great, high-profile, hi-paying job," says Grover, in reference to his role with TruGreen LandCare. "But it took me away from dealing with the work, with the customers and employees."

So, after varying lengths of time with TruGreen LandCare, Grover, Knesal and Godinez each left the national company, then joined up to start Pacific Landscape Management. Their pooled experience in the industry has helped them avoid the steep learning curve of many startup businesses.

"We had learned how a large, successful landscape company is operated," says Grover. "We knew what systems we needed, so we had them in place as we needed them instead of having a problem and then having to develop a system."