

# ACUTABOVE

GREEN INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE LEADERS » BY DAN JACOBS

Over the past 40 years, Mission Landscape Cos. has become one of the largest landscape companies in the industry. Since its inception, the enterprise has added services and now comprises seven separate entities covering all aspects of the Green Industry. Five years ago, the Irvine, CA-based enterprise began operating as an employee stock ownership plan. President and CEO **David DuBois** discusses how his company remains a maintenance leader.



Mission Landscape's David DuBois views obstacles as opportunities.

## INSIDE INFO

**Company:** Mission Landscape Cos.

**Headquarters:** Irvine, CA

**Year founded:** 1970

**Employees:** 500+

**Annual revenue:** \$26 million

**Web site:** MissionLandscape.com

**Key to being a Maintenance Leader:** Staying on top of the company's vision, cash and culture, and always building our brand.

## TOP TRENDS

» **Can you hear us now?** We are increasing in the type and frequency of communications. Because clients have reduced staff levels and support and are wearing more hats today, it's often more difficult to reach them. Investing in the appropriate communications and reporting technology — and in the training to aid our staff — has provided very positive feedback from our clients, proving us to be a timely and informative resource for them.

» **Liquid gold.** Water management continues to grow in interest, as a result of regulation, price increases and media attention to California's escalating water shortage. It ranges from installing smart controllers and low-precipitation nozzles to utilizing drip systems with clients wanting to understand their overall impact and value. Conducting thorough irrigation audits with detailed solutions that help save money and increase returns on investments also have become very popular.

» **More mulch.** Renovating landscape with indigenous and drought-tolerant plants, and removing ground covers and replacing them with topper mulch, are both becoming commonplace. Especially in older, mature landscapes, the mulch really helps enhance property appearance — providing a welcomed facelift and saving water along the way.

## TOP OBSTACLES

» **The speed of change.** Keeping up with the volume and speed of change in governmental regulations to finance and human resources is the first obstacle. Adapting our business, and then the rate at which we need to communicate changes to our clients for implementation, are other key challenges. Many industry

colleagues share their comments on how things "used to be" and how much has changed. This reinforces my belief that we need to continue to focus on changes in management, as change will only become faster and more furious in the future. There will be some good companies in our industry that will disappear as a result of being caught off guard and not able to react quickly enough to some of these changes.

## TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Property partners.** There are many challenges right now that can all be looked at as opportunities, such as commercial properties experiencing higher vacancies. Meeting with clients to assist with leasing needs of their properties not only has reinforced and strengthened our relationships, but has allowed us to propose upgrades that help make the site more appealing while reducing the owners' costs. Smart property owners know doing the right thing for their clients and sites will increase their occupancy rates and reputations, while adding value to their properties.

» **Going green.** The growing demands for all things green and sustainable — from water management, rain harvesting, erosion control, organic soil amendments and pest control, as well as recycling and integrated plant health care — can lead to additional business for the maintenance industry.

» **Tech advantage.** Technology with product, customer relationship management and sales forecasting, communications and accounting — and even hybrid lawn mowers — all have come so far to help the landscape maintenance industry better serve our clients' needs.

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