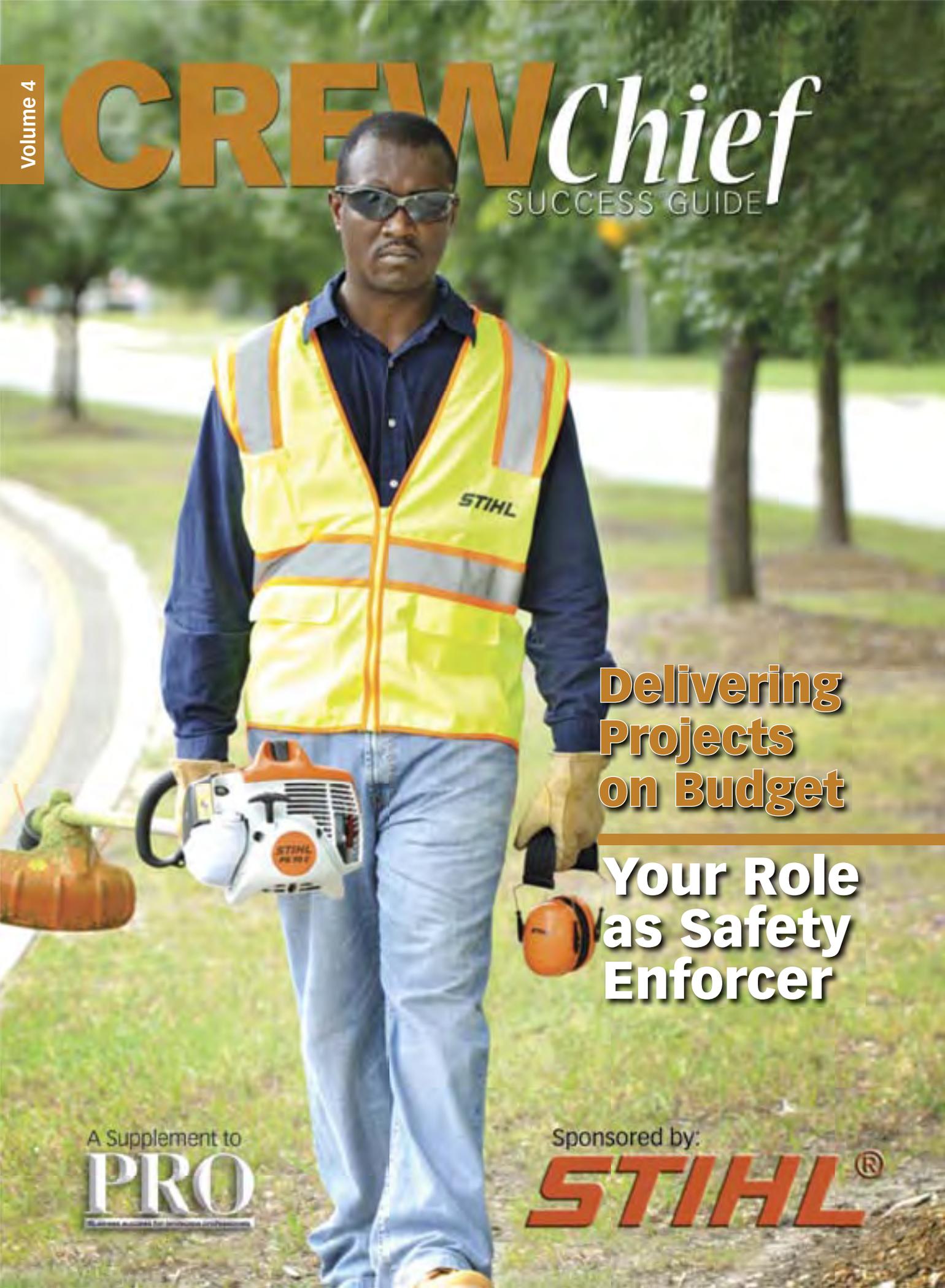


CREW Chief

SUCCESS GUIDE



**Delivering
Projects
on Budget**

**Your Role
as Safety
Enforcer**

A Supplement to
PRO
Business Success For Construction Professionals

Sponsored by:
STIHL®

Preserving Safety and Productivity



Dear Crew Chiefs,

It's been said that "safety is something that happens between your ears, not something you hold in your hands." A good safety program should ultimately instill proper safety procedures in the minds of your crew, and part of your job is to ensure that it does.

Beyond just preserving the safety and productivity of your employees, bottom line business reasons to establish and adhere to a safety program include lowering total costs of risk by reducing hazards and injuries, avoidance of OSHA penalties, and minimizing lost time to keep projects on-time and on-budget. Helping keep employees and others in proximity to the job site safe is truly a win-win for every member of your company.

Does your company have a safety program in place? Does it have the elements to be truly effective? An effective safety program needs to be embraced at every level of the company and supported with resources, recognition and rewards.

In addition to articles like the one on equipment safety in this issue of *Crew Chief Success Guide*, "Become a Safety Maniac," you can find information on safety programs and resources at the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET) Web site, www.landcarenetwork.org, resources like, "Preventing Pain & Injury in the Green Industry – Simple Safety Policies and Training Plans CD" – includes both English and Spanish.

Crew chiefs are uniquely qualified to implement and evaluate effective safety programs. Be sure to provide feedback with all the right people to continuously improve your crew's safety.

Wishing you continued success,

John Keeler
National Training Manager
STIHL Inc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Become a Safety Maniac4

It is the crew chief's job to make sure the safety message preached at the shop is actually executed on the jobsite.



Staying on Budget8

Crew chiefs must know what the budget is, track it, identify problems and help find solutions.



Double Sales by Turning Foremen Into Mini Owners..... **Online**

Are You 'Invaluable'?

Welcome to this fourth edition of *Crew Chief Success Guide*. If you're reading this, chances are you see your role as "crew chief for some landscape company" as more than just a job. You want to be the best foreman you can be, and maybe even aspire to move further up the ranks in your company. Seeking information and knowledge is an important first step.

This volume examines two very important subjects: **safety** and **project profitability**. As crew chief, you are the person who can best ensure that each is executed properly. Think about it—your bosses can provide you with all the equipment, training and safety meetings you could ever ask for. They can have the best estimating systems in place. They can employ the best salespeople in the Green Industry. But once your crew is on the jobsite performing the work, it is up to you.

That's a lot of responsibility, isn't it? So let me ask you: Are you responsible? Here's another question: Are you invaluable?

The Green Industry has gone through a couple of very interesting years—and it's not over yet. Most landscape companies do not have the extraordinary amount of work they'd grown accustomed to. In turn, most do not need the same amount of workers they'd needed in the past.

What landscape companies do need in the current economy is the best workers—especially crew chiefs. Keep that in mind as you work through property after property and project after project this year. When you become "invaluable," you will be rewarded—in one way or another.

ProMagazine.com/CrewChiefSuccess

Download past volumes of Crew Chief Success Guide

Forward articles to other members of your team

Ask questions, offer comments

Become a Safety Maniac

By Gregg Wartgow

IT IS THE CREW CHIEF'S JOB TO MAKE SURE THE SAFETY MESSAGE PREACHED AT THE SHOP IS ACTUALLY EXECUTED ON THE JOBSITE.

The owners of your company invest in the safest, most highly productive equipment they can find. Then they invest in safety training, tools and gear for their workers. Then they pay an arm and a leg (not literally we hope) for workers' comp insurance. Here's how you can pay them back: Start laying the law down with your crew!

Every reputable landscape company conducts weekly (if not daily) safety meetings at the shop before crews dispatch for the day. Crews are told how to dress on jobsites, what safety gear to wear, how to safely operate equipment, and so on. Companies spend a considerable amount of time conveying this safety message to employees. Companies can also be subject to OSHA fines when not in compliance with OSHA regulations.

Why is it, then, that when *PRO Magazine* editors make their way out onto jobsites, more than half of the time there are blatant safety violations at seemingly every turn?

There could be several specific reasons, of course, but each ties back to one of two main flaws in a company's safety culture:

- Safety meetings and training are "go through the motions" events
- Foremen are not ensuring that the safety message being preached back at the shop is being executed in the field.

"The early morning or tailgate meetings can be an effective method to get the message to a company's employees," says John Keeler, STIHL Inc.'s national training manager. "And with the support and reinforcement of the owners or management, along with formal training sessions, good results can be achieved."

SAFETY ESSENTIALS

The following safety items should be worn at all times, regardless of which type of power equipment you're running:

- ANSI-approved safety glasses
- Hearing protection
- Boots or other protective footwear
- Any other protective gear that may be required by OSHA for the location where you are working

"Additionally, you never want to wear short pants—no matter how hot it is," Keeler says. Gloves are also good to wear because they not only help protect the hands and wrists, but also help absorb vibration and make operating equipment more comfortable." Long pants and hand protection are increasingly important when it comes to the operation of handheld equip-



ment such as line trimmers, hedgetrimmers and debris blowers.

TREE CARE ESSENTIALS

With chain saws and pole pruners, a whole new layer of safety comes into play. "When operating this type of equipment, where you're often cutting things overhead, you need



With chain saws and pole pruners, a whole new layer of safety comes into play.

an appropriately rated helmet," Keeler says. "Preferably you want a helmet system with a face shield on it. And you need to wear protective glasses even with the shield. Then, you also need a heavier form of footwear, such as a steel-toed boot. And when you're operating a chain saw, you always need a pair of chain saw protective pants, or chaps for ground crews."

HARDSCAPE ESSENTIALS

If your company has a hardscape division where employees are operating concrete abrasive cut-off machines, safety goes even one step further. "When you're grinding concrete, you're dealing with a lot of dust," Keeler says. "You have to worry about employees contracting a disease called silicosis. We advise operators to, at minimum, always wear a dust respirator that's approved for the material they're

cutting, but ideally you should operate these tools with a wet-cutting attachment to better control the amount of airborne particles." Another benefit of utilizing wet cutting is the lubrication it provides to the wheel which can result in reduced kickback energy.

For more on protecting workers from silicosis, look for the article "Beware of the Air" by clicking on the "personnel" link at ProMagazine.com/business.

LAWN CARE ESSENTIALS

If your company has a lawn care division where employees are applying fertilizers and chemicals, it's important to provide appropriate respirators since chemicals are airborne. Gloves and a long sleeve shirt are important for that same reason. If spraying overhead, wear a broad-brimmed hat to help protect the operator's head.

SAFE & RESPECTFUL OPERATION

There's more to jobsite safety than hardhats and safety glasses. Foremen must also monitor equipment use to ensure safe and respectful operation.

The instruction manual for a given piece of equipment is a great place to start; this will provide the basic do's and don'ts that should be drilled into the minds of employees. For instance, never alter any piece of equipment, which could compromise various safety features; i.e. disabling guards on line trimmers or discharge chute guards on mowers, folding down ROPS on mowers, etc.

Be aware of your surroundings when operating equipment. For instance:

- Don't blow dirt and debris toward parked cars.
- Don't line trim with someone right next to you.
- If you're discharging grass clippings, stop the mower when a pedestrian is walking down the sidewalk in your vicinity.
- Don't edge with a line trimmer, as

the guard no longer provides the protection for which it is intended and often results in throwing gravel and other debris all over, possibly damaging property or causing harm to individuals.

Aside from monitoring safe and courteous use of equipment, the foreman must also do the following:

Lead by example. "A foreman can never be caught without all of his safety gear on," Keeler points out. "And of course, he must operate equipment safely at all times."

Break old habits. "The Green Industry is at a transition point," Keeler says. "We've gone from rakes and high school kids to a professional industry with highly skilled workers. I believe we are in the final phase of this transition." In other words, employees you've had a while need to forget about their working habits of the past. It's your job as crew chief to help them break those habits and embrace the new and safer way of doing things.

Correct problems immediately. Breaking bad habits is best achieved through immediate and continuous intervention. "If one of your crew members is cited making a mistake, stop him or her immediately and correct them," Keeler advises. "Jotting down a note on a piece of paper, and then waiting until next week's safety meeting to address the problem with the employee isn't effective or safe."

Safety meetings, in theory, are indeed effective—and critical to a company's overall safety culture. But what matters even more is how the crew chief accepts the responsibility of making sure the safety message preached back at the shop is executed in the field. **PRO**

Don't miss the story on page 10 where three leading contractors discuss how their foremen help enforce safety on the jobsite.

Increased Durability. Improved Technology. Reduced Maintenance.

Save time and money on the job with these new products from STIHL!

NEW STIHL Magnum™ BR 600 Backpack Blower

Tough. Efficient. Powerful.

The STIHL Magnum™ BR 600 offers the standard STIHL proven fuel efficiency—up to 28% more fuel efficient as compared to competitive models tested*, an impressive power-to-weight ratio and a host of new enhancements to deliver superior product durability – all backed with a new 2-year limited commercial warranty!

- Improved engine design for increased durability and operational life
- Enhanced nozzle with extended wear area for longer nozzle life

- New, improved nylon harness for higher wear resistance
- 69% cleaner than current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements, making it one of the cleanest running backpack blowers in its class*

Indicate **101** on inquiry card or visit promagazine.com/einquiry



NEW STIHL MS 362 and MS 362 C-Q Chain Saws

Engineered for Efficiency.

The new STIHL MS 362 professional chain saw delivers an ideal combination of torque, power, fuel savings, and weight, all designed to save your crew both time and money. Because of the low-emission, fuel-efficient engine technology, you'll use up to 20% less fuel and produce up to 70% less emissions as compared to previous models.

- Advanced anti-vibration system allows customers to work comfortably for longer periods of use during most applications.
- New pre-separation air filtration system allows fewer filter changes for longer run times
- STIHL MS 362 C-Q model includes Quickstop® and a manually-activated chain braking system

Indicate **102** on inquiry card or visit promagazine.com/einquiry



STIHL High Performance Oil

Highly Biodegradable. High Performance. Clean.

STIHL HP Ultra 2-Cycle Engine Oil

STIHL HP Ultra is a fully synthetic 2-cycle engine oil specially suited for high performance chain saws and power tools. This oil has outstanding engine cleaning characteristics, plus "ultra" superior lubricating qualities in comparison to other 2-cycle engine oils. This oil is biodegradable, degrading by 80% in 21 days.



Indicate **103** on inquiry card or visit promagazine.com/einquiry

STIHL BioPlus™ Bar Oil

Made with a vegetable oil base, STIHL BioPlus™ bar oil is less harmful to humans, animals, micro-organisms and plants. STIHL BioPlus oil also offers excellent flow characteristics at low temperatures and has a high flash point. Available in 1-quart, 1-gallon, 5-gallon and 55-gallon containers. Rated by the Coordinating European Council to be 93.8% biodegradable in only 21 days.



NEW STIHL FS 70 RC-E String Trimmer

Fuel Efficient. Durable. Lightweight.

Save time and money with the new STIHL FS 70 RC-E grass trimmer. Featuring a low-emission, fuel-efficient engine for longer run times between refueling, up to 28% less fuel consumption and a low weight of 10.6 pounds, the FS 70 RC-E is engineered for the professional user trimming all day.

- STIHL Easy2Start™ system makes the starting process almost effortless
- Semi-automatic choke lever creates a smoother start and helps prevent flooding

Indicate **104** on inquiry card or visit promagazine.com/einquiry



- Easy-to-use, low-maintenance TapAction™, 2-line AUTOCUT® head
- High durability forged connecting rod and four-bearing gearbox for longer service life



NEW STIHL FC 70 C-E Edger

Fuel efficient. High performance. Easy to use.

The only STIHL professional edger with advanced Easy2Start™ technology for fast and easy starting, the STIHL FC 70 C-E provides an ideal blend of performance and ease of use. Powered by a low-emission, fuel-efficient engine, this curved-shaft edger allows for longer run times between refuelings and up to 28% fuel savings as compared to previous models. Impressive power-to-weight ratio for optimal balance and reduced fatigue.

- Low-emission engine is 28% more fuel-efficient for longer run times between fuelings
- STIHL Easy2Start™ system makes the starting process almost effortless

Indicate **105** on inquiry card or visit promagazine.com/einquiry



- Semi-automatic choke lever creates a smoother start and helps prevent flooding
- Optimal balance and low vibration for extended use and reduced fatigue



Introducing a Warranty as Tough as You Are

2-Year Limited Warranty Now Available on Trimmers, Brushcutters, Blowers, Sprayers and More!

STIHL ups the standard – again. It's not enough to be the number one selling brand of chain saws and cut-off machines worldwide. STIHL continues to raise the bar with a 2-year limited warranty coverage on STIHL lawn care products and other selected power tools for homeowners and commercial users alike, extending the coverage period for defects in materials and workmanship. Add on the benefits of the industry-leading extended warranty coverage STIHL customers presently enjoy, like lifetime drive shaft coverage, lifetime clutch warranty and more; and you have another reason to trust legendary STIHL equipment and service.



*Fuel consumption data provided by a third-party, independent laboratory: Porsche Engineering Group GmbH. 1240 hours of run time (equal to 2 seasons). Information based on EPA Web site as of March 2009. For more information, please visit www.epa.org or www.stihlusa.com/BR600.

Staying on Budget

CREW CHIEFS MUST KNOW WHAT THE BUDGET IS, TRACK IT, IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND HELP FIND SOLUTIONS.

By Rod Dickens

Crew chiefs are accountable for safety, job quality and customer satisfaction. That's a lot of responsibility! Here's one more assignment: Ensure that projects and properties are profitable.

KNOW THE BUDGET

Staying on budget requires knowing what the budget is. "When our foremen pick up their work orders in the morning, the budgeted hours for each property are on them," says Bruce Moore Sr., president of Eastern Land Management in Stamford, CT. "They're responsible for the budget hours, and we have an incentive program in place that's tied to their performance."

"Our foremen have PDA's, so the budgeted hours for each property are right at

their fingertips," adds Miles Kuperus Jr., owner of Farmside Landscape & Design in Wantage, NJ. "They key-in when they check in to a job and also when they check out. They know precisely how their

a crew member might have called in sick, or there was an equipment glitch, e.g., flat tire, broken starter rope, and so forth. The point is that it's great to stay on budget on every property every day. But,

"(Foremen) are responsible for the budget hours, and we have an incentive program in place that's tied to their performance."

– Bruce Moore Sr., Eastern Land Management in Stamford, CT

crews are doing that day, and whether or not they are on schedule."

How crews perform on a given day, however, is only a snapshot of their overall performance on a property. Maybe traffic was exceptionally heavy that day,

as the saying goes, "things happen." The big picture is making sure properties are not trending in the wrong direction.

HELP SOLVE PROBLEMS

"We hold weekly meetings with all of our six foremen," explains Farmside's lawn maintenance supervisor Chris Dragon. "During these meetings, we discuss properties that may be consistently running over budget or otherwise encountering another issue. If there are budget concerns, we may take a closer look at routing, make sure the equipment is the right size for the project, and so forth. This is the time when foremen are encouraged to bring up specific concerns to me."

Stuart Griffith, Albuquerque branch manager for Heads Up Landscaping, started out in the field but now oversees the company's field supervisors, who oversee the crew chiefs. "Once a month, I print out a performance report that details percentage of hours used for each property," says Griffith. "The program sorts by jobs that are on budget, over budget and under budget. I print out



Chris Dragon with Rob Roy (left), one of Farmside's six foremen. Dragon holds weekly meetings with his foremen, at which time they are encouraged to bring up specific concerns about their properties.

this report for our field supervisors, and give them a couple of days to digest it before holding our meeting.

"If there is a problem, the field supervisor discusses it directly with crew leaders to determine if the issue is chronic or something that can be fixed by tweaking how a project is approached," Griffith continues. "If it's chronic, we may have to go back and change the allotted hours. Otherwise, it could be the route. Maybe excessive traffic is the issue; we include windshield time in the job cost.

"Or maybe it's how the job is being performed. Crews might be starting at the wrong end of a property or otherwise not being as efficient as they can be. Or it could be a breakdown in planning, with a crew leader failing to adequately plan out the week. It could be a communication issue, with tasks not properly allocated for each crew member."

In other words, it could be any number of things that cause a property to run over budget. Regardless, the foreman must work with his supervisor or the company owner to help get the property back on track.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE BOSS FINDS OUT

The best crew chiefs help fix problems as soon as they emerge, rather than waiting for that weekly or monthly meeting when the boss is upset.

"If crew leaders see a problem developing, I want them to ask for different equipment or otherwise help figure out what the best approach is to keeping a property on budget," Griffith says. "Not all crew leaders operate this way, but being proactive helps the company's bottom line and works to keep the customer satisfied if it's a quality issue."

"On maintenance projects, staying on budget is all about hours," says Jim Van Heemst, general manager for New Jersey-based Jacobsen Landscape Design & Construction. "Construction projects are slightly more complicated. Rain can stop maintenance for a day, but it can slow down a construction project for several days. Then there are materials to consider."

That said, a common problem with construction still involves hours. "A project may have two days left in the budget but require four days to complete the job," Van Heemst relates. At that point, all you can do is add a couple of crew members or different equipment to complete the job. This will hurt job profitability. But ideally, the crew chief would have spotted the impending issue ahead of time and found other ways to keep the project moving on schedule and within the budget.

QUALITY IS JUST AS IMPORTANT

The above contractors re-emphasize

that making budget is only part of the bigger picture. "We never sacrifice quality or safety for profits," says Heads Up's Griffith. "Reaching all three goals requires a team effort, which means a strong training program is an absolute must. I tell our team that training is not an event, it's a process."

In addition to having a strong training program, Eastern Land Management finds other ways to ensure that quality and safety are not sacrificed for meeting budgets. "Account managers routinely inspect sites," says Moore. "A crew needs to achieve a quality score of 85 to 90 from the inspection to qualify for a quarterly incentive. Our safety program is based on crews accruing points based on safety infractions, e.g., the type of accident, dollar value, damage to equipment, and so forth. Getting 12 points within a year could result in termination."

ALWAYS STAY FOCUSED ON THE BUDGET

The other part of the big picture is simply staying true to the budget to start with. "It's part of our company culture to stay within the allotted hours," says Bill Horn of California-based Terracare Associates. Horn rarely, if ever, adds crew members to a project or authorizes overtime. "In maintenance, when you don't meet the labor budget, you lose."

Horn explains that the company's estimate sheet breaks out hours by the month, January through December, based on need. Depending on the time of year, the monthly hours will vary, but it's the foreman's responsibility to make sure his or her crews stays within the budgeted labor hours for the year.

"Throwing more personnel at a project is a slippery slope," says Dan Palmer, Terracare's Sacramento branch manager. As Palmer puts it, a crew doesn't fix a problem by adding hours. "It's all about establishing priorities and sticking to them," he adds. "If a crew cannot meet

Heads Up Landscaping field supervisor Rigo Zavala (left) with branch manager Stuart Griffith. Says Griffith, "It could be any number of things that cause a property to run over budget. The supervisor works with the foreman to get the property back on track."



the hours, it could mean they're not staying on task or keeping priorities straight."

"Maintenance jobs are never done," Horn adds. "Crews cannot do everything every time they stop at a property, and it's their responsibility to stay within the hours for which the client has paid." Agreeing with Griffith, Horn emphasizes that training (e.g., establishing priorities and tasks and defining procedures) goes a long way toward staying within or actually beating budgeted hours.

"As a company, you don't want to battle the budget issue," Horn relates. "Staying within budgeted hours has been something we have worked on for years. Yes, there are occasions when budgets are missed, but they are few and far



Foremen must speak up and ask questions, raise red flags and propose solutions at venues such as weekly meetings.

between, which makes missing them a little less painful."

Whether a company is big or small, and has (or lacks) a budget-making culture, performing within a budget is ultimately the responsibility of the crew chief. He or she has to know and track the budget,

and then identify a property that's trending the wrong way. A relatively simple adjustment in routing or tasking may fix the problem. If not, proactive foremen will address the issue with their immediate supervisors and help find a way to bring the property back in line. **PRO**

Safety – How the Pros Do It

Three leading landscape contractors with solid safety track records share how their foremen are integral figures in their companies' safety cultures.

Jeff Pizzuti, facility supervisor at Vila & Son's West Palm Beach, FL, branch – Weekly safety meetings are held every Tuesday with all employees at all branches. I also have safety committee meetings every other Tuesday with all operations supervisors, account managers and foremen from all of our divisions. We go over any accident reports, discussing ways we can avoid these types of things in the future. The foremen are very involved in these discussions.

At Vila & Son, foremen are also required to take first aid training and adult CPR classes.

To create a highly safe company, you need accountability. Our employees are assigned their own safety gear; we then keep an inventory for replacing worn-out items or if a guy forgets something one day. Foremen run through a safety checklist in the morning to make sure everyone has what he or she needs.

We also think it's important to reward employees when they do operate safely. We have BBQ's and raffles quarterly when there are no accidents. Guys can win some pretty neat things like big-screen TV's.

Jesse Stegman, water conservation manager and chair of the safety committee at Willamette Landscape Services in Tualatin, OR – When we hire large groups of employees, as is the case when the growing season is in full

swing, we conduct one- to two-day job task and safety training courses. When we hire one or two employees throughout the year, though, we assign this training to the crew chief and/or area supervisor.

During an employee's first couple weeks of employment, we always encourage our crew leaders to work directly with new employees to continue their training.

In addition to this on-site training, crew leaders are responsible for overseeing all the tasks being performed by their crews. If a foreman encounters a situation where someone else is misusing or abusing a piece of equipment, the foreman is trained to stop the operator immediately and correct their actions. Depending on the situation, additional training or discipline may be required.

Tony Rosado, president of Rosado & Sons Inc., Landscape Construction Co. in Westborough, MA – Every morning our foremen fill out a mandatory safety checklist for vehicles, equipment and personnel. We also have half-hour safety meetings once a week.

Foremen also fill out progress reports when crew members are observed in violation of our safety policies. The reports are given to one of the company owners, and a physical meeting with the employee often takes place to determine what further action may need to take place. **PRO**



*Jonathan Souers
Maintenance Division Director
Cornerstone Solutions Group
Tampa, Florida*

21 crews, 187 contracts and just one product: STIHL

"Why STIHL? We build neighborhoods, not just landscape lawns and streets, and with an operation this big, we can't afford to use products that don't work as hard as we do. Running one handheld product line streamlines crew training, inventory, and maintenance, which means less downtime.

It only takes one inferior machine to break down to see the difference in total repair cost. Tough times require tough equipment. STIHL helps keep us running and profitable."

www.stihlusa.com 1 800 GO STIHL



BR 600 STIHL Magnum™: The name says it all.

When jobs call for power that goes above and beyond, you need the professional backpack blower with Magnum force. You need the BR 600 STIHL Magnum™. Tough, efficient and powerful are no mere buzzwords for this brute that offers the same proven fuel efficiency – 28% greater compared to competitive models tested – and an impressive power-to-weight ratio. Additional enhancements include an improved engine that increases durability and extends engine life,

a new nozzle with extended wear area and a new nylon harness with high wear-resistance. This is also one of the cleanest backpack blowers in its class, with emissions 69% cleaner than current EPA requirements. For heavy-duty cleanup, put a STIHL Magnum™ in your arsenal.

To learn more visit www.stihlusa.com/BR600

STIHL®

Indicate **107** on inquiry card or visit promagazine.com/einquiry