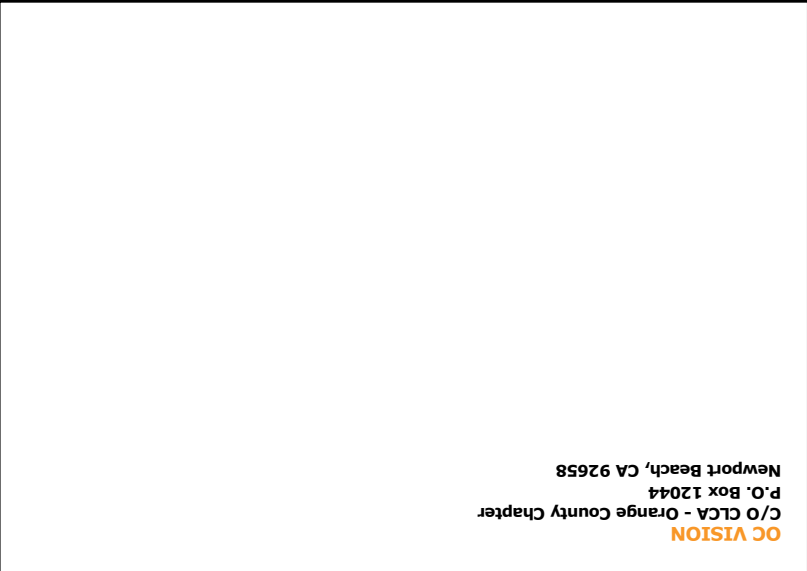


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# OC Vision

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OC VISION  
C/O CLCA - Orange County Chapter  
P.O. Box 12044  
Newport Beach, CA 92658



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## Continual Learning is the Key to Success

I am finally adapting to a sleepless schedule and maneuvering my time around our newborn. Since his arrival, I have been trying to disconnect from my business and let my staff run things while I'm gone. Not an easy task, but it's been working for the most part. I am only involved in our weekly meetings, and anything major that requires legal consent.

During my time off, I've made it a priority not to be idle. It is very easy to get lazy and lose motivation. I've been focusing on both my health and personal growth. I have joined a kickboxing gym near my house in an effort to be more active and lose weight. I have also resumed reading my books about business and real estate and am focusing on my daily bible studies at church. I've always been a believer in continual learning, regardless of the topic.

Continual learning is a great entrepreneurial trait and the key to success. Understanding that, CLCA offers several resources to support your learning. At the state level, there are webinars on a variety of topics. There are also educational opportunities at the annual convention, this year being held November 9-11 in Indian Wells, CA. At the local level, we have our CLCA Universities. Our next

one is scheduled for October 12 on the topic of *Marketing your Business and Increasing Sales*. As CLCA members, we also have access to fellow members who are educators. One such person is Lori Pullman, an educator at Orange Coast College. She has been a member for a while and has some great insight on our industry. Early on in my business I took some of her design and horticulture courses. Those classes enabled me to take my business to the next level. This fall, she will be teaching a C-27 course that will be useful to those interested in getting licensed or as a refresher course for those of us who already are. If you are serious about your business, your learning should never stop. That is what is going to keep you at the top of your game.

Lastly, you should plan to attend the chapter Beautification Awards on September 17. We're excited to bring back our awards program after a two year break. Join me and your CLCA friends at the Mission Viejo Country Club to learn who the winners of this year's competition are. I hope to see you there! ~Sincerely, Sal



**Sal Hernandez**  
Pacific Breeze Landscape  
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2022 CLCA-OC Calendar	
Mark Your Calendars & Save the Dates Now!	
Sept. 17	OC Chapter Beautification Awards, Mission Viejo. <i>MV Country Club: 26200 Country Club Dr.</i> Reserve your seat at <a href="http://www.clca-orangecounty.org">www.clca-orangecounty.org</a>
Oct. 12	CLCA University, Class #3. <i>This will be online.</i> Topic: Marketing your Business & Increasing Sales.
Oct. 21	DMWN Oceanside Open House, 9 a.m. <i>Tour the Oceanside growing ground, enjoy lunch, and a chance to network with other landscape pros. This event is free to attend, but requires registration.</i> <a href="http://www.devilmountainnursery.com/upcoming-events/">www.devilmountainnursery.com/upcoming-events/</a>
Nov. 9-11	CLCA Convention & Trophy Awards. More info at <a href="http://www.clca.org/convention">www.clca.org/convention</a> .
Nov. 16-17	The Landscape Expo, Anaheim. More information at <a href="http://www.thelandscapeexpo.com">www.thelandscapeexpo.com</a> .
Dec. TBD	Chapter Holiday Party, Location TBD.

**Don't Miss Our Biggest Event of the Year!**  
**Beautification Awards Gala Set for Sept. 17 at Mission Viejo Country Club**  
*All Green Industry Professionals Welcome!*

Join us Saturday, September 17, at the Mission Viejo Country Club for this year's Beautification Awards ceremony. Starting at 6 p.m., mingle with industry friends before dining on a delicious dinner and cheering on this year's winners, being honored for the highest level of craftsmanship in landscaping in our region.

**Looking to sponsor and get in front of the largest crowd of contractors at any of our events?** Register to be a sponsor! There are a variety of opportunities available.

Didn't enter a project? Plan on attending anyway. Photos of the winning properties are showcased in a multi-media presentation during the awards ceremony, providing inspiration for your projects.

This is THE EVENT to attend! Rub elbows with other top-notch contractors, make new friends, and reconnect with old ones. Don't miss it!

Tickets to the event are just \$100 each. Reserve your seat online at [www.clca-orangecounty.org](http://www.clca-orangecounty.org). Call (949) 466-1222 with questions or for more information.

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# Business Smarts: Practices to Improve Job Estimate Accuracy



If you're tired of breaking even or even losing on jobs frequently, it may be time to review your current estimating practices.

Like some other landscape contractors, you might not even have a formal estimating system. David Arnold, managing partner at Two Twelve Advisors, LLC, points out that while smaller companies might not have the resources to develop accurate production rates, even certain large businesses still practice guesstimating because that's how they've always done it.

"I would suggest to all those companies, big and small, that think they don't have time to establish a process for estimating that they should think second about that," Arnold says. "Ultimately, it's the ability to be consistent and stop losing on jobs. We can consistently be profitable on jobs."

Sometimes it takes financial pain to force you to bring consistency into the estimating process, but being able to create accurate estimates job after job will allow you to be more confident and secure in your numbers.

## Why Estimating Is a Struggle

The main reason landscape companies struggle with accurate estimating is because they do not know their actual costs. This includes everything from overhead costs to direct project costs. Consider the costs it takes to run your business, the costs to produce the work, and your desired net profit.

"Small business owners are usually stretched thin, so it is easier to create a simple multiplier formula to come up with a project estimate," says Scott Burk, president of Scott's Landscaping, Inc., based in Centre Hall, Pennsylvania. "This is a fast method of estimating, but yields varied results of which most are inaccurate."

Rather than basing your estimates off personal experience, you need to utilize a mathematical estimating process. Arnold says when you don't take a mathematical approach to estimating, you can't adjust your numbers to make sure the next job isn't just guesswork as well.

Tony Bass, founder of Tony Bass Consulting, says a lot of contractors can be in a hurry when estimating and skip gathering certain details in the field. While they collect the square footage of the property, they might have failed to count the number of shrubs on the property that will need to

be pruned and the frequency of pruning required.

"A proper estimating process will account for every single task that would be involved in completing a job," Bass says.

Bass says that each and every task, no matter how small, should be listed as part of the estimating process. He says underestimating labor and not allocating a fee for the equipment used on the job are two of the most frequent estimating mistakes he sees. Bass says there should be an hourly rate for each piece of equipment you use and to include that charge in your estimate, especially now as inflation and acquisition costs are going up faster on equipment.

Burk adds that landscape companies should have an accurate annual budget to use as a financial roadmap for the year.

"Many companies lack the financial data required on a monthly basis to know where their company is at financially," Burk says. "Tracking your costs on a monthly basis will show you where your company is at 12 times per year! If the company is not on track three months into the year, changes can be made to become profitable before the end of the year. Purchases of equipment should be based on the financial standing of the company and not based on need."

Burk says another common mistake is not having accurate production rates for your company. These will vary for every company based on the different tasks and equipment you have. A company that does large retention walls regularly is going to have a better production rate than a less experienced company.

"If these two companies have the exact same hourly rate and material costs, the more experienced company is going to have a more competitive price to build the exact same wall then the less experienced company," Burk says. "There is nothing wrong with this. It is just the fact that the more experienced company is more efficient in that particular scope of work. If you know your company's actual production rates and use them to bid your projects, you will become much more accurate and you will get the projects that you are most efficient at."

Another issue is when there is a disconnect between the estimating staff and the production crew.

"Closing that loop and making sure you've got consistent feedback and communication between the estimator and production is critical," says Andrew Dickson, vice president of operations with LandOpt.

Dickson advises having a subject matter expert look over the draft the estimator produces to make sure it's realistic and accurate. This helps create ownership over the budget from the start of the job, instead of shifting the blame when a job runs over. Dickson says it's good for estimators to have a strong understanding of how the work is done in the field.

*Continued on next page...*

## Improve Job Estimate Accuracy

...Continued from previous page

“The production person, when that estimate gets to them, may have a completely different way of looking at the job or the estimator didn’t really think through it,” Dickson says. “So, it’s critical to have someone that’s been out in the field to be on the estimator.”

Crews should also be aware of what their budgets are and what they’re trying to achieve on each job.

### Adjusting Rates for Inflation

If you already have an estimating system in place, you could still be losing out if you are not keeping your costs up to date, as inflation causes price increases across the board. Dickson says if you are using an Excel spreadsheet to calculate your estimates but haven’t updated your costs and production rates recently, you can find you’re not performing well three quarters into the year.

“With costs fluctuating as much as they are in the current market, watching your actual to budget costs each month might lead you to adjust your overhead rate mid-season this year!” Burk says.

Because prices are so unpredictable, Bass encourages having language in your contracts that allows for change orders as material prices shift.

“Make sure you’re getting written quotations from your vendors in advance,” Bass says. “Second, request that they give you an expiration date of how long the quote is for. If you’re able to get an expiration date, then communicate that with the customer in advance.”

Some estimating software packages will update material costs automatically when a vendor changes their prices, but you should be reviewing your estimating system’s cost at least annually. Bass and Arnold suggest reviewing your costs twice due to the current market.

When calculating the hourly rate of your equipment, Bass says you need consider the inflation rate in the replacement cost of equipment.

“We’ve been calculating inflation rates on future costs of equipment, 2 to 3 percent for the last 40 years,” Bass says. “Now, equipment is going up at rates of 10 to 15 percent per year. Many contractors are missing this inflation rate in the replacement cost of their future equipment.”

With the rapid inflation going on right now, Arnold suggests not making your estimates so tight.

“If I estimate plant material, a one-gallon shrub, is going to cost me \$5 and if it costs me \$5.50 or \$5.75 and that’s going to be detrimental to my gross margin, that’s potentially a problem,” Arnold says.

*This article, authored by Jill Odom, was originally posted on the National Association of Landscape Professionals’ blog at <https://blog.landscapeprofessionals.org/>.*

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# PFL Grant Money for Small Employers

By Kim Gusman, President & CEO, California Employers Association

Small businesses in California with 1-100 employees with at least one (1) employee who has utilized California's Paid Family Leave (PFL) program (on or after June 1, 2022) are eligible to apply for grants up to \$2,000 to offset the increased costs associated with their employee(s) out on leave.

California's Paid Family Leave program allows California workers to take paid leave to bond with a new child (through birth, adoption, or foster care) or to care for a seriously ill family member.

Back on July 1, 2020, the PFL program expanded benefits from six to eight weeks for all businesses regardless of size. At that same time, the legislature also expanded the California Family Rights Act, which provides up to a twelve week non-paid protected leave to eligible employees working for businesses with 5 or more employees (whereas previously the employer only needed to employ 50 or more

**The PFL Small Business Grant will pay up to \$2,000 to small businesses impacted by paid family leave to offset costs related to hiring or cross-training.**

employees). These changes may have caused a hardship for you and this grant program is designed to lessen the financial burden on employers.

### Pay Outs & Grant Eligibility

Payments are made directly to the employer and are designed to cover costs for:

- Training/cross-training existing staff to cover the duties of the employee on PFL;
- Marketing, recruitment, and other reasonably foreseeable training costs.

### Eligibility

- Small businesses in California with 1-100 employees who have at least one (1) employee utilizing California's Paid Family Leave program (on or after June 1, 2022).
- Businesses must be registered to do business in the State of California.
- Must be in active status with the California Secretary of State's Office.
- Must have an active California Employer Account Number (CEAN) under which their employees are listed for payroll.

*NOTE: Small businesses utilizing a Professional Employer Organization (PEO) for payroll services are not eligible to participate.*

FAQ's and more information available at <https://californiapfl.com>.

*This article was excerpted from the California Employers Association blog at [www.employers.org/blog](http://www.employers.org/blog).*

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# Green Industry Achievers to be Inducted Into the Green Industry Hall of Fame October 22 in Yorba Linda, CA

The honoring of the newest inductees into the prestigious Green Industry Hall of Fame on October 22 in Yorba Linda will spotlight some of the brightest and most dedicated individuals in the industry. The Green Industry Hall of Fame induction ceremonies will take place on Saturday, October 22, 2022, 6 p.m. at Black Gold Golf Club, 1 Black Gold Dr, Yorba Linda, CA 92886. This gala will be the backdrop for their third annual television extravaganza that will air on the award-winning PBS|KLCS television show, *Things Green*.



Green Industry Hall of Fame co-founders Richard Daigle and Charles Nunley list the following purposes of the Green Industry Hall of Fame:

- To honor individuals, past and present, for their significant impact on the green industry;
- To preserve green industry equipment from previous eras;
- To educate the public about the profound impact these individuals and pieces of equipment continue to have on the green industry today.

The following green industry achievers will be inducted that evening:

- Perry Cardoza - NUVIS, Inc.**
- David Cox - L.E. Cooke**
- Dick Greenland - Storm Manufacturing**
- Janet Hartin - UC ANR**
- Steve List - Sylmar Charter High School**
- Tim Nord - Nord Landscape**
- Vicki Phillipy - Phillipy + Company Association Mgmt**
- Kathryn Rudnyk - Picture Perfect Construction**
- Phil Steinhauer - Designsapes Colorado**

Don't miss the yearly event that draws scores of what many would consider the "Who's Who" of the green industry today. Reserve your seats by October 1, 2022. Dinner is \$120 per person.

Visit [www.greenindustryhalloffame.org](http://www.greenindustryhalloffame.org) and follow the links for registration to make your reservations online. While there, explore the rest of the site to learn more about the organization and past Green Industry Hall of Fame inductees. Questions should be directed to [info@greenindustryhalloffame.org](mailto:info@greenindustryhalloffame.org).



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# Establishing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Across Your Business

**A**fter investing time and effort in recruiting, you've selected the best person for the job. All finished, right? Actually, you're just getting started... the real work begins right after you've made the hire and transitioned them into their new role.

Why is that? Because it remains to be seen whether you've indeed chosen the right person!

But that doesn't matter anymore. The more important question is: How well is that person performing? Or perhaps: How do you motivate your employees to perform better?

As a business owner, you must be aggressive to make the most of your investment. You have to set your staff on fire. And by that I mean lighting a fire within your employees – a sense of passion, dedication, and enthusiasm for their work!

It's a simple concept: when your employees perform halfheartedly on the job, it's usually because they're not incentivized to do quality work.

So, how do you improve productivity? Tie their earnings to their performance! When employees know that they will earn more by performing better, they'll stay more engaged in their work. And even when they're not feeling particularly motivated, the risk of loss keeps them going when they might otherwise slack off.

This is a win-win solution for you and your employees... your fixed costs fall as your profits rise, because now you're paying for RESULTS – not just for someone to show up and fill space!

This exemplifies why salespeople work by commission. There's a false belief that only sales people can have their compensation dependent on their performance, but everyone can be incentivized in this way.

But how will you do it? Use KPIs and implement an

incentive system that will motivate employees to perform better every time. Here's how:

---

***“Use KPIs and implement an incentive system that will motivate employees to perform better every time.”***

---

**1. Determine the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each job.** It is critical that you identify your key activities and metrics. Key Performance Indicators, or KPIs, are commonly used to measure and evaluate performance. They can be applied to your business as a whole, or to a specific area, task, or activity. You must first determine specific operational or strategic goals as a basis for evaluating performance. To identify your KPIs, define a set of values to measure against, such as the amount of output per unit of time. Choose three to five KPIs that are most important for each position.

**2. Base your incentives on actual past experience.** It's critical that you set goals that are challenging but achievable – erring on one side or the other can have disastrous results. I once worked with a business owner who arbitrarily assigned sales goals that were all but statistically impossible for his staff to achieve. When the new incentive system was implemented, not even his star performers could keep up. Discouraged by their dwindling paychecks, they quit en masse. He lost some great employees because he set the bar too high.

On the other hand, I know plenty of business owners who have the opposite problem: they set the bar too low, so employees don't have to work very hard at all to reach their targets and collect their bonuses. These businesses expend very high labor costs and don't motivate their employees. Finding a happy medium can be a challenge, but it could be the single most important factor in staff performance.

**3. Work with employees to improve their numbers.** Now that your employees are motivated by clearly defined, realistic objectives, work with them to achieve their goals. Review their efforts regularly and focus on improving their KPIs. Make sure they have the resources they need to perform at their best. Provide ongoing training to hone and sharpen their skills. The more invested you are in your employees' success, the more motivated they'll be to achieve.

*This article was excerpted from the The Goldhill Group blog at [www.thegoldhillgroup.com/blog](http://www.thegoldhillgroup.com/blog).*

**Join the 2023 Chapter Board of Directors!**

The OC Chapter is accepting nominations for the 2023 year. If you're interested in joining the board and making a difference, please reach out to Chapter President Sal Hernandez at (714) 909-3784.

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- Standalone Mode can be used with FX Luminaire EX, PX, and DX models as well as any standard low-voltage transformer, allowing users to manually set Hue, Saturation, and Intensity values.
- Luxor Mode allows a Luxor Controller to assign a Group and set Hue, Saturation, and Intensity values.

### Installation Is a Breeze

While traditional installation methods require up to 20 complicated steps, SRP RGBW Strip Lights reduce setup to three simple tasks. Installers simply insert the LED spacer, slide the splice connector into the strip plate, and snap the connector clip in place.

- All necessary installation components come standard with each strip light, so there's no need for installers to purchase expensive accessories to complete a job.
- Each unit comes in 10' (3.1 m) lengths with 2" (51 mm) cutmarks for precision customization.
- A preinstalled 10' (3.1 m) power feed, splice connectors, end caps, and all necessary accessories are included too.
- The unique splice connector design means heat shrink or adhesive are no longer needed for a proper connection.
- Plus, the specially designed silicone body delivers soft, even lighting without hot spots or diffusers.

"Strip lighting is a popular and elegant addition to hardscapes in any setting. With the SRP RGBW Strip Light, contractors have a reliable, easy-to-install solution backed by the high quality and unmatched performance synonymous with the FX Luminaire name." -James Cervantes, Product Manager

The SRP RGBW Strip Light is available now. [www.fx1.com](http://www.fx1.com)

## ICC2 Cellular Connection Module Offers Faster, Easier Way to Connect ICC2 Controllers

Installing a commercial controller is challenging without an internet connection. So what can contractors do when local Wi-Fi or LAN access is out of range or unavailable, or they aren't allowed to log in to their customers' secure network? Use the ICC2 Cellular Connection Module.

### A Secure, Reliable Connection

The new ICC2 Cellular Connection Module integrates seamlessly with ICC2 Controllers and Centralus™ Software to overcome these obstacles. The simple, plug-in module gives contractors full system and hydraulic control from the palm of their hand.

- Connects directly to 4G LTE networks so contractors can manage controller setup independently
- Preinstalled SIM card provides quick data activation and convenient service plan options within the Centralus Irrigation Management Platform
- Enables flow monitoring capabilities via the cloud to provide system-level flow rates and totals with automatic high-flow shutdown and alert notifications

"The sleek design of the ICC2 Cellular Connection Module allows for quick and easy internet access with the option to extend the cellular antenna for optimal signal strength," said Ben Sacks, Product Manager at Hunter Industries. "This flexibility helps ensure a reliable connection to Centralus Software and the local cellular network."

The ICC2 Cellular Connection Module is available now.

[www.hunterindustries.com](http://www.hunterindustries.com)

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