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OC Vision

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**COMPLETE 2023 CHAPTER BEAUTIFICATION AWARDS
COVERAGE WILL BE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE OC VISION!**

OC VISION
C/O CLCA - Orange County Chapter
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California Landscape Contractors Association - Orange County Chapter



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Never Settle

For the last year I have struggled to find quality employees. Experienced ones are even harder to find. With unemployment at one of its lowest levels ever, there just doesn't seem to be much to pick from.

Being understaffed can sometimes make you feel desperate to hire just about anybody. This past spring, I was doing just that. During my last round of hiring though, I realized that by not hiring the right people, I was dropping my company standards. I felt like I was settling and that really bothered me. When it comes to employees and business, I have always lived by the saying, "The tail doesn't wag the dog."

So, I decided to change what I was doing. I was not going to drop our standards, our quality, or put the company at risk any longer. Just because we were understaffed didn't mean I was going to sacrifice our quality and high standards. While challenging, refocusing did deliver several significant benefits.

I sustained my reputation. Consistently delivering high-quality work, even when resources are scarce, helps to uphold my company's reputation. Clients are more likely to trust and continue doing business with a company they know they can rely on for their commitment to excellence.

I mitigated my risk. Maintaining high standards reduces the risk of errors, accidents, or compliance issues that could

result from subpar work. This helps to save my company from costly legal issues or damage to its reputation.

I improved employee morale. When employees see that the company is committed to quality and that their work is valued, they are more likely to stay motivated and engaged. They will also take pride in their work. I talked to my supervisors and expressed my concerns. I reminded them of our goals and values, of our commitment to producing high quality work. It starts at the top; it starts with us. And what about those hires made out of desperation? I knew that those employees who don't share the same values, the bad apples as I call them, would surface and eventually work themselves out of a job.

While upholding high standards when understaffed can be demanding, the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term challenges. Since making the decision to change, the bad apples went away, productivity increased, and our quality is back to where it should be. The stress of supervision has also eased. It's always easier to manage employees that are motivated and engaged and want to be there.

Never settle. ~Sincerely, Dave



Dave Horton
So Cal Concepts
Chapter President

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2024 Chapter Planning Meeting & Board Elections Set for Thursday, October 19, in Irvine

All CLCA members welcome!



Connect, Learn and Grow at CLCA's 2023 Annual Convention

Are you looking for ways to get involved with the Orange County Chapter of CLCA? Looking to make a difference? Want to be a part of the decision-making process for chapter events and programs now that things are opening back up? Now's your chance!

Join us for our 2024 planning meeting on Thursday, October 19, at the North Park Community Clubhouse in Irvine from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Chapter elections will be held at 11 a.m.

At this planning meeting, we will brainstorm ideas for our 2024 events and educational programs, assess past events (what worked, what didn't), detail a 2024 budget, and more!

Attending this meeting will give you the opportunity to voice any ideas you have, volunteer for a committee you're interested in helping on, or simply get a first-hand look at how we come up with the fun and educational programs we offer throughout the year. Interested in serving on the 2024 board? Call Chapter President Dave Horton at (949) 653-1101 to submit your nomination.

This meeting is FREE to attend and includes lunch. RSVP's are required to ensure we have enough food. Reach out to Bronwyn Miller and let her know you plan to attend. She can be reached by calling (949) 466-1222 or emailing bronwyn@eyescapes.net.

Can't stay for the entire time? No worries! Join us for as little or as long as you can. All members are welcome and encouraged to attend. We hope to see you there!

The North Park Community Clubhouse is located at 10 Meadow Valley, Irvine, CA 92602.

Join friends and colleagues in beautiful Monterey November 8-11 for CLCA's 2023 Annual Convention. Monterey is a vibrant coastal town brimming with beaches, scenic trails, wineries, shopping streets and a world-class aquarium. Cannery Row, the one-time center of the sardine-packing industry, was immortalized by novelist John Steinbeck and is now treasured by visitors. Come grow with us!

Connect!

Plan on joining us at the Recognition Luncheon as we honor our green industry leaders. At the General Membership Meeting, help grow the future of your professional association. Take advantage of formal and casual opportunities to share ideas and war stories with friends and future friends.

Learn!

Join us for the Breakfast of Champions, roundtable discussions on pressing topics such as Mastering Social Media, Profiting from Water Management and Effectively Managing Clients. They're short, concise and practical!

Planning on retiring some day? In our keynote presentation "Plan for Your Future: What's Your Exit Strategy?," learn how to set up your company for acquisition or sale, whether two years from now or 40. Business strategist Jim Huston will outline steps you can — and should — take now to maximize your company's true worth. Added bonus: Learn how to set the best price when using acquisition to grow your company.

Need help attracting clients? The experts at Intrigue Media will help you fix five marketing mistakes landscape entrepreneurs frequently make. In this interactive session, you will learn:

- How to optimize your revenue model for new and current customers
- How to flip your messaging to stand out from the crowd and get the best clients you want to work with
- How to have crystal clear marketing reporting to track every dollar and every lead

Grow!

The Trophy Awards dinner and ceremony will amaze you with a display of excellence in California landscaping.

Golf!

And, of course, there will be golf.

Learn more and register at www.clca.org/convention.

2023 CLCA-OC Calendar	
Mark Your Calendars & Save the Dates Now!	
Oct. 19	2024 Chapter Planning Meeting & Board Elections. Interested in serving on the 2024 OC Chapter Board of Directors? Call Chapter President Dave Horton at (949) 653-1101 to submit your nomination.
Nov. 8-11	CLCA Annual Convention, Monterey, CA. More information at www.clca.org/convention
Nov. TBD	CLCA OC Lunch & Learn. Details TBD. Topic: Drip Irrigation. More info coming soon!
Dec. TBD	Chapter Holiday Party, Location TBD.

California's Minimum Wage to Increase to \$16 per hour in January 2024

California's minimum wage will increase to \$16 per hour for all employers on January 1, 2024. Some cities and counties in California have a local minimum wage that is higher than the state rate.

State law requires that most California workers be paid the minimum wage. Workers paid less than the minimum wage are urged to contact the Labor Commissioner's Office in their area to file a wage claim.

The change in the minimum wage also affects the minimum salary an employee must earn to meet one part of the overtime exemption test. Exempt employees are not subject to the payment of overtime for hours worked. An employee must earn no less than two times the state's minimum wage for full-time work to meet this initial requirement of the exemption test. As of January 1, 2024, employees in California must earn an annual salary of no less than \$66,560 to meet this threshold requirement.

In 2023, the minimum wage is \$15.50 for all employees regardless of employer size.

One of the protections of the minimum wage law is an annual review of the wage rate using the U.S. Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (U.S. CPI-W). The Department of Finance calculated that the U.S. CPI-W increased by 6.16 percent for the period from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, compared to the prior 12-month period. The minimum wage increases each year by the lesser of 3.5 percent, and the rate of change in the averages of the two most recent U.S. CPI-W, unless those averages are negative. If the averages are negative, there is no change in the minimum wage for the following year. On July 31, 2023, Governor Newsom certified the minimum wage increase for all employers for 2024.

Employers must post the Minimum Wage Order and the Wage Order applicable to their workplace at a worksite area accessible to employees. The wage orders can be downloaded and printed from the workplace postings page on the The California Department of Industrial Relations website: www.dir.ca.gov.

Employers must ensure that the wage rate is displayed on the employee's pay stub, and that employees are paid at least the minimum wage even when employees are paid at piece rate.



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New Criminal History Hiring Practices in California

What HR Pros Need to Know

For years, California's Fair Chance Act has been shaping how employers consider criminal history in their hiring processes. As of July 24, 2023, significant modifications have been approved, set to roll out on October 1, 2023.

This article dives into the key alterations HR pros need to be aware of to ensure compliance and fair hiring practices.

Key Changes

Delayed Inquiry into Criminal History

Employers must wait until after extending a conditional job offer to ask about or consider an applicant's criminal history. This also applies to existing employees in scenarios such as promotions, training, layoffs, or terminations. An important expansion is that the definition of "applicant" now encompasses existing employees being evaluated due to organizational changes in ownership, management, policies or practices.

Transparent Job Advertisements

It's now prohibited to include statements in job ads that suggest individuals with criminal history won't be considered. This helps promote inclusivity from the very start of the recruitment process.

Voluntary Disclosure Timing

If an applicant voluntarily discloses their criminal history

before receiving a conditional offer, the employer cannot consider this information until after deciding on the offer. This ensures that initial judgments are not swayed by such disclosures.

Exceptions for Mandated Checks

Employers exempted from these regulations are those compelled by law to conduct criminal background checks, for example, Federal employees. It's clarified that this exemption applies only if the employer is legally mandated to conduct the background check, not if another entity, such as a licensing board, is required to do so.

Initial and Thorough Individualized Assessment

When considering an applicant's criminal history, employers are required to conduct an individualized assessment that takes into account the nature of the offense, time passed since the incident, and the relevance to the job. This helps ensure a more informed decision-making process by gathering essential information beforehand. The revised regulations offer illustrative examples to aid this assessment. This assessment must be completed before sending a preliminary decision notice.

Rehabilitation and Mitigating Evidence

Applicants are given the chance to present evidence of rehabilitation or mitigating circumstances voluntarily. This can include factors such as trauma or disabilities that may have influenced their past actions.

Transparent Evaluation Process

Employers are prohibited from mandating specific disclosures or requiring certain information from applicants. This promotes a fair and open evaluation process.

Responsive Reassessment

If an applicant provides evidence of rehabilitation or mitigation in response to a preliminary decision notice, employers must reevaluate the situation, considering the additional information.

Preparing for These Changes

In light of these regulatory shifts, it's wise for employers to conduct a thorough review of their background screening practices with experienced legal counsel. Additionally, remember that other jurisdictions, such as Illinois, New York, and Wisconsin, have their own "job relatedness" requirements for using criminal history information. Ensuring compliance with regulations like the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and other state-specific statutes is crucial, as employers have faced lawsuits over their background check processes.

The Fair Chance Act's updates mark a significant step toward fair and inclusive hiring practices. HR professionals in California should be proactive in adapting their processes and policies to align with these changes, fostering a just and transparent employment environment for all.

This article was excerpted from the California Employers Association blog at www.employers.org/blog.

~KURAPIA~

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4 Ways to Heat Up Your Revenue Stream Before Christmas

Christmas is less than three months away and with that comes cooler weather, shorter days, and a general slowdown for turf and landscape work.

There are still opportunities you can take advantage of to keep invoice generation up, however. Here are four to consider:

1. Overseeding

Overseeding is a great option for keeping revenue up. Current prices are quite a bit lower than last year, making this a more economical choice for some. Ewing offers many options for seed, and below are two that are most common.

Annual ryegrass is typically used for more native and pasture areas, as well as soil erosion areas. EMPRO Ace, EMPRO Birdie and EMPRO Par, 3-way perennial ryegrass blends, take slightly longer to germinate than annual ryegrass, but should have a darker green color and will be more stress-tolerant.

Applying a starter fertilizer during the overseeding process will also encourage more complete germination and better root development. A commonly used starter fertilizer in the area is EMPRO 13-13-13 in the gulf coast region.

2. Turf Painting

For those property owners who do not want the extra work or expense of an overseeded lawn but still want the



green color, there are options there as well. EMPRO Green Turf Paint is available and can be sprayed on dormant turf to give it a lasting green color for the winter.

3. Soil Testing & Irrigation Audits

Another opportunity is offering soil testing and irrigation audits. By offering soil testing, you can determine the surpluses and deficiencies of nutrients in the rootzone to recommend ideal products for their particular property which will boost plant performance. You will also be able to determine soil pH, revealing what nutrients are available and that may have potentially become insoluble and unavailable to the plant. Organic matter is another add-on test that can be evaluated. With this data, you can build a soil soil/root development program for optimum plant health.

Irrigation audits are a great way of determining how much water is being delivered over a given period of time.

The information obtained will allow you to make better recommendations on the property in terms of irrigation duration and frequency. Water is the No. 1 limiting factor in plant health and only by obtaining audit data can you determine exactly what the needs are. The other bit of information that can be unveiled is effective coverage. Skips and missed areas can reduce some fertilizer and pesticide effectiveness and allow turf to struggle.

4. Holiday Lighting

Speaking of Christmas, holiday lighting is another way to boost the bottom line heading into the end of the year. This space has grown exponentially in recent years with landscape professionals offering installation and removal of holiday lighting on both residential and commercial properties. Some will even offer storage for a fee as well.

This article by Kevin Lewis was excerpted from Ewing Outdoor Supply's blog at www.ewingoutdoorsupply.com.



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Presented in Spanish in Laguna Hills
Classes Start on October 31, 2023



This free, one-of-a-kind certification and educational opportunity is brought to you by CLCA and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). It will be presented in Spanish and hosted at the Moulton Niguel Water District in Laguna Hills.

This joint effort combines the CLCA Water Management Certification Program with the Qualified Water Efficient Landscaper program to offer the landscape industry an opportunity to obtain two nationally recognized EPA WaterSense Professional Certifications with one course and one written test.

Presented in three six-hour classes, these workshops will offer CEUs for your current certifications and provide you with a participation certificate. They are free and available only to those in select counties of Southern California within the Metropolitan Water District's service area.

The combined curriculum focuses on landscaping fundamentals in one convenient course and includes topics like:

- Where Our Water Comes From
- Sustainable Landscaping
- Landscape Water
- Soils
- Irrigation Systems
- Irrigation Maintenance & Trouble Shooting
- Irrigation System Auditing
- Irrigation Scheduling
- Irrigation Controllers
- Landscape Water Management
- Landscape Water Budgeting

Register online at <https://clca.org/certification-center/water-efficiency-landscape-dual-certification-program/>



Mastering Water Efficient Landscapes (MWEL) Workshop Oct. 11, 2023, in Mission Viejo

Earn CEUs for your APLD, IA, ISA, QWEL and NALP certifications

Register to attend this MWELO workshop at the Santa Margarita Water District in Mission Viejo where you'll take a closer look at different Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance compliance and enforcement roles.

Keep informed and add to your MWELO expertise — gain new information and explore a new approach to understanding the ordinance! Workshop attendees will learn about recent updates and changes to MWELO and have the opportunity to participate in question and answer sessions with subject experts.

Presented in-person, this workshop will offer CEUs for your current certifications and provide you with a participation certificate.

This workshop is free and available only to those in select counties of Southern California within the Metropolitan Water District's service area.

To take advantage of this offer, you must:

- Register with CLCA and place a \$50 deposit* on the workshop you wish to attend.
- Attend the entire day's workshop.
- Upon full attendance at the workshop, you will receive your \$50 deposit back.

**Your \$50 deposit becomes non-refundable if you do not attend the workshop, attend less than 90 percent of the workshop, or if you cancel your attendance within seven days before the workshop session date.*

REGISTER AT [CLCA.ORG/MWEL](https://clca.org/mwel)

CLCA's mission is to serve and protect the interests of its members, promote professionalism, and advance public awareness of the landscape industry. Learn more at www.clca.org

Are You A Super Computer?

By Steven Cesare, Ph.D., The Harvest Group

An enlightened business owner from Minnesota called me the other day to talk about the wide-ranging roles she fills each day. To wit: The business owner performs many executive tasks like focusing on aligning internal systems to promote efficiency, serving as the champion of the organization's brand by participating in community groups to extend the company's partnership network, and constantly considering value-added change initiatives to improve the company culture, work environment, and employee well-being.

Green light.

She also completes varied managerial tasks like ensuring material deliveries are made on time, tracking the work schedule to verify employee attendance, and attending a never-ending sequence of meetings to catalyze and monitor progress on projects reliant on inter-departmental communication.

Yellow light.

Lamentably, an increasingly large proportion of her day is consumed by her allowing herself to be drawn into administrivia, operational tactics, and procedural inanity. These examples include responding to: employees' requests about where to display the newly-delivered plants in the retail center, what questions should be included as part of the entry-level crew member selection interview protocol, and approving ad-hoc requests from employees to work at home tomorrow because the employee's child is home from school.

Red light.

When presented with this assorted survey of responsibilities, I asked the business owner "Are you a super computer?" I could hear her eyes blink twice over the phone, as she pressed it closer to her now-receptive ear. Intelligent by trait, inquisitive by state, the business owner replied, "what do you mean, Steve?"

I proceeded to elaborate accordingly, as ego-gratifying as it may be, the business owner had unconsciously centralized the entire decision-making locus onto herself, to the point that she was now a single point of failure, being the sole answer source for every question in the company. With that mindset, can she really take a peaceful two-week vacation with her family and unplug, refresh, and enjoy?

Oh, by the way, can you say burnout?

Next, her unchallenged confidence inexorably robbed her subordinates of their chance to make even basic decisions by usurping their input, necessarily negating their ability to evaluate their own decision-making efficacy, ultimately depriving them of self-induced professional feedback and development.

As a capitalist, I suggested she diversify her value by discussing, engaging, and mentoring her employees, by not answering every tactical question directed her way. Instead,

she must invert the vertical roles by asking the employees their opinion, and then evaluate their answer in light of the company's business goals (e.g., revenue generation, plant quality, customer service, safety). Then watch the employees' eyes widen in appreciation as the owner invests wisdom into their decision-making awareness, in place of that blank Stepford-wife stare from the employees, as they robotically obey the owner's unilateral dictum.

Every business owner's primary role is as a coach, focused on broadening and fortifying employees' skill sets to reach a goal; not to be a single point of failure, not to be the know it all, not to be a super computer.

Instead of being a super computer having every self-righteous answer, pivot, pause, and prompt your employees to propose their recommendations for the question they are asking of you, examine their understanding of the antecedent issues at hand in light of a business goal, and coach them to improvement.

You're not a super computer. Trust me: You're not! So, stop acting like one. You're more like a computer server, providing energy, information, and services to numerous end users, making them more productive.

With that coaching mindset, it will be a lot easier to plan, take, and enjoy your two-week vacation.

This article was excerpted from the Harvest Group blog, Tuesdays with Steve Cesare.

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How to Influence Consumer Buying Decisions



Because landscape and lawn care services are mostly discretionary purchases and there is an abundance of choice when it comes to providers, it's critical you can persuade your client base to select you over other options.

Your marketing efforts can be highly effective at influencing consumer behavior if you consider some of the main factors behind their actions. Consumer behavior is influenced

by psychological, personal and social factors.

Psychological Factors

While you'd like to think that people solely make decisions based on logical reasoning, it has been found that a consumer's emotional response plays a major part in the brands they choose.

How someone responds to your direct mail campaign will vary based on

their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, and motivation. Advertisements, customer reviews, and social media coverage all influence a customer's perception of your brand. If you aren't monitoring and responding to your customer reviews, a Google rating could give them a poor perception of your business.

Meanwhile, their attitudes and beliefs are their preconceived notions and ideas about a service. For instance, they could think that if you come to service their lawn once, they should see instant results. Because they expect and want this outcome, they may be more likely to call your company than someone who believes lawn care is bad for the environment.

Lastly, motivation has to deal with that client's various needs. If a customer takes pride in having the best lawn in the neighborhood, you could be able to meet that esteem need and motivate them to hire your business. Social media ads that allude to being the pride of the neighborhood can trigger the emotional response you want.

Continued on Next Page...

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How to Influence Consumer Buying Decisions

...Continued from previous page

Personal Factors

Other factors that will vary from person to person include their age, income and lifestyle.

Obviously, an elderly client is more likely to seek out help with services they can no longer do themselves, or if they want to craft a landscape that their grandchildren can enjoy. A young homeowner may be less interested in landscaping services if they have the free time to handle their own maintenance. Thus, how you message your services should vary based on your target demographic's age.

Income is a major influencer on a consumer's choices as their personal budget will dictate whether they can afford a new outdoor living area. Customers with higher incomes are much more likely to buy luxurious items while those with a lower income will have a harder time justifying purchases beyond those that meet their basic needs.

Depending on who you're marketing to, you could highlight just how extravagant their future landscape could be if money isn't an object, while for those who have more restrictive budgets, you could emphasize the benefits and return on investment they'll get by revamping their landscape. A client's lifestyle also drives their decision-making process. Those who are environmentally conscious are more likely to seek out a landscape company that aligns with their values.

Social Factors

Socially, people want to imitate others and be accepted. A consumer's reference group and family can both influence a person's buying behavior in their attempts to fit in.

A reference group is who that person associates themselves with. They typically share the same behaviors and influence each other's consumer habits. For instance, if everyone else on their street has well-cared-for lawns, the person who does not will feel some level of pressure and desire to achieve the same look on their property.

If you have salespeople going door-to-door, making note of their lawn's current condition could trigger the emotional response of feeling left out. This should be addressed considerably, as it could cause defensiveness or anger if brought up the wrong way.

An individual's family also models buying habits and helps establish a sense of trust with certain brands. The longer your landscape company is around, the more likely you can end up caring for multiple generations of a family's homes as that level of confidence in your brand is established.

This article by Jill Odom was excerpted from the National Association of Landscape Professionals' blog at <https://blog.landscapeprofessionals.org/>

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