

Who are the Key Account Customers in European Landscaping?

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By Claes Anders Malmberg

Overall Discussion About the Major Customers and Their Conditions in Europe

The Major Customer Groups

There are two main groups of customers. The Landscape Contractors and the Public Ground Maintenance organizations. Within these two major customer-groups there are different sub-categories.

The Contractors are increasing rapidly in all Europe. They are also working actively together to form a stronger unity when it comes to definitions, contracts, maintenance-methods, lobbying etc. They are most often family-businesses with less than 50 employees. In Europe there are more than 50000 companies with some 300.000 employees. Not all are working with green maintenance, but as the new green constructional works often come irregularly and can be difficult to make enough profit to live on, more and more contractors are getting into the green maintenance business. Not necessarily working for public authorities. In fact the public authorities is becoming less important for the contractors. Only in very few countries does public contracts reach more than 50% of the orders. However, it is mainly the fact that the public investments in new Green constructions have decreased the last years, that is decreasing their importance for the contractors. The maintenance work, given out from public authorities, is in reality increasing but it is not fully replacing the loss of public green constructional works.

Contractors hardly ever buy machines on pre-planned basis. It is almost exclusively the current need that initiates purchases. They are also extremely vulnerable when it comes to maintenance and repair of the machines, as they seldomly have a repair-shop of their own. Contractors also, in general, have less educated staff than the public authorities and their staff is also more season-employed than the staff in the public sector.

The more contractors that enters into maintenance, they more is their demand for grasscare machines. Some will start out with buying used machines, some will have capital enough to buy new machines. In the public sector, very few authorities buys used machines.

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Contractors also have another problem. They have little administrative and engineering competence, as they most often are small family-businesses with practical skills and a high working capability as their major assets.

Public Green Maintenance

The Public Ground maintenance organizations can be Park/Leisure/Ground-maintenance-authorities, Cemetery-authorities, Public-Housing companies etc. Generally we see a strong tendency to reduce the number of independent authorities within a City or a Unitary Authority and especially in the technical sector it is common to create one technical authority within different sections, like Street Maintenance, Water and sewer, Ground Maintenance, Cemeteries etc.

Here a general tendency is also that the overall managers have less and less Green Background and are more administrators/economy-educated, compared with the traditional independent Ground Maintenance organizations where almost all the managers were Landscape Architects or Garden

Engineers.

However this group of customers is very large. See the regional information below.

For more details about what we know of the structure and number of customers see the enclosed graphic Green Network-maps of Germany, France and Great Britain and the market description of Germany, France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Austria etc, which was made a year ago.

The Cities and municipalities have less money today for green maintenance than they had ten years ago. But they have larger areas that they have maintenance on. And their relative competition capacity is not what it used to be. The needs of the Schools, Hospitals, Children-care, Elderly-care etc have a much higher political interest and the political attractiveness of such services as Street-maintenance, Park-maintenance etc (technical services) are often little. Within the public technical services the maintenance of green areas have less attractiveness as street maintenance, water services etc.

Decision-Makers and Influential Organizations

Who are the Decision Makers ?

In the public sector they have two kind of backgrounds. Either they are green men and women, mostly landscape architects or garden-engineers. But an increasing number of new technical maintenance organizations with either all technical sectors gathered in one technical authority or as it is in Germany, organizations taking care of all ground maintenance within a city, including the cemeteries; means that there are coming more and more generalists into the green sector. Men and women with an administrative or economical background, but with no or little green experience. And with no green education what so ever.

In the landscaping firms it is so that the larger firms have their own gardening engineers or landscape-architects, while the small family businesses are based upon practical knowledge and experience.

The students of today will be the decision-makers of tomorrow. Those taking their exams this spring,

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will already this autumn be making decisions in the public sector and at the private landscaping firms. The teachers of today's students is another target-group for the future marketing.

The landscape-architects that plan and draw the green areas is another interesting group of influential people. If we can convince them to study the consequences of their plans, namely the future maintenance, on beforehand and have them accepting our methods, then we can also have them help us establishing our machines on the market.

Another group of people that we have to co-operate closely with is the European Landscape Contractors Association, ELCA. They are working actively with classification and structuralization as a means of marketing their own services, offering more than just maintenance-work to their customers. They too, offer transition of know-how as a part of their marketing. With 12 national landscaping organizations as members they have a strong position.

The public green sector does have an international organization IFPRA, but it is however very weak and mostly functions as an organization for international conferences. In Germany and France, like in the Scandinavian countries there are relatively strong organizations for Park and Cemetery managers. In Great Britain there is an organization for Burial authorities, CBA, and a strong organization for leisure managers, ILAM. However there are no real European organization yet.

With this article I hope to have given you a short insight to who the decisionmakers are and how the structure of the European landscaping industry is built up.

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<http://www.acama.se>

Landscaping, An American Pass Time

By James Calvin

Landscaping has been a favorite American pass time for hundreds of years. Recently through the added exposure of popular TV shows, the interest in sprucing up one's landscaping has become greater than ever. Today, many shows are introducing everyone to new and fun ways to enjoy landscaping. There are even dedicated television channels, such as the Home and Garden channel, that explore all things beautiful to improve one's living space and take it from just functional to luxurious through improved landscaping.

Landscaping is a pass time no longer limited to just seniors or those that enjoy a relaxing activity.

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Today, all across our great country, families are finding landscaping to be a great activity that everyone from Grandma and Grandpa down to the youngest children can enjoy together. Landscaping is a family activity that everyone can get on board with.

Landscaping, although relaxing, can also be a good source for exercise. With an ever increasing spot light on weight loss, adding landscaping to your routine can increase calorie burn.

Landscaping's appeal has so many facets. Those looking to improve the look of home they want to sell as well as those looking to improve the look of their current home and neighborhood are finding landscaping to be a viable option. It is simply amazing to see what a difference a little landscaping can do to add curb appeal to a home or neighborhood. Many communities are improving their aesthetic appeal with professional landscaping.

To be an expert in landscaping, one must understand that it is not as easy as it seems. You need to do appropriate research, design and implementation in order for any landscaper to appreciate the outcome. This of it the way an artist looks at an empty canvas. The beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Take that into landscaping and you'll see results that you never thought you could achieve.

James Calvin is bringing awareness to the web topics such as landscaping through his website

<http://www.landscaping-ideas.org>

For more details on landscaping be sure to visit his website. You

may freely distribute or publish his article as long as this bio and an active hyperlink are accompanied with it.

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