



Article: ***Full-Service Firm is Fussy in Fargo***

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Full-Service Firm is Fussy in Fargo

Precision Lawn & Landscape's motto is "always in our element," which speaks to the company's ability to deliver a range of landscape design/build, lawn care and snow removal services. But it's the element of consistency that has allowed the Precision team to continue living up to the company name.

"When I started the company, I did all of the work myself and was very meticulous about everything," says Skyler Akason, founder and president of Precision Lawn & Landscape in Fargo, North Dakota. "As we've grown and

I've had to rely more on other people, I've been very fortunate to have a great group of employees who care as much about the company as I do."

It's difficult to teach employees to care, but company leaders can inspire them with their own attitudes and actions. The training component is also crucial. Precision Lawn & Landscape's Chief Operations Officer, Brady, oversees the hiring and training processes. He relies heavily on his division managers and foremen to ensure that skills are developed and standards are maintained.

"Luckily, we've seen the post-COVID labor market flow in the right direction," says Brady, a veteran of the U.S. Air Force who joined Precision Lawn & Landscape in June 2023, after transitioning back to civilian life. "We're seeing more applicants nowadays, and we're seeing higher-quality candidates."

Precision Lawn & Landscape has some strong, long-term employees, but also relies on college students to help support its seasonal employment needs. Brady says the company is utilizing a hybrid hiring approach, meaning that



Seated are company owners Skyler and Jen Akason. Standing are Brady, Chief Operations Officer (left), and Jon, Lawn Operations Manager.

employees could work on a lawn care crew one day and a landscaping crew the next. It all depends on where the manpower is needed at a particular point in time, because every aspect of Precision Lawn & Landscape's business has been booming.

Mowing Lawns Beats Becoming a Doctor

Skyler Akason started his company in 1997 while still in high school, mowing a handful of neighbors' lawns with a push mower. He kept things going while attending college as a pre-med student. His customer list continued to grow, though, and the workload got to be too much. After three years of college, Skyler decided he'd rather have a string trimmer in his hands than a stethoscope around his neck. He dropped out of college to focus on his business.

Skyler continued adding mowing accounts and soon branched into



snow removal. Landscape installation followed that. Mowing services were eventually supplemented with fertilizing and weed control. Skyler was also having to hire more and more employees, which was perhaps the biggest adjustment of them all.

"I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so I had a tough time trusting other people," Skyler relates. "I just felt like I needed to do everything myself, so I just kept pushing myself. But it got to a point where I

wasn't going to be able to keep growing like that."

Precision Lawn & Landscape now employs roughly 40 people during the growing season. Head count doubles during the snow season, though the majority are on-call positions.

"Snow removal is about half of our business in a typical year," says Skyler's wife, Jen, co-owner and Chief Financial Officer. The other half skews a bit

heavier toward landscaping. That said, mowing and lawn care have continued to provide a consistent, growing revenue stream over the past 10-plus years.

"We are mowing 28 commercial accounts, three of which are larger HOAs," says Jon, lawn operations manager. If you add up the individual units within those HOAs, together with the 208 residential properties and 25 other commercial properties the Precision crews mow, you're talking about a roster of nearly 500 lawns.

Precision's lawn care division has also seen strong growth with dethatching services, which they utilize their Walker Mowers to help deliver. "This spring we performed 184 dethatchings, along with all of the other normal spring cleanup services we provide," Jon points out. With respect to fertilizing and weed control, Precision has nearly 600 accounts. The company also added mosquito control to its service offering a couple of years ago.

Precision Lawn & Landscape has also added a new landscape installation service in recent years. "Fencing and decking were something completely new to us when we established them in 2020, after acquiring another company," Jen says. "We've continued to provide more services over the years as we've identified different customer needs."

"We offer everything a homeowner or property manager could want. That gives us an advantage because the customer can just deal with one company to get it all done."

"There are a lot of companies around here that are strictly landscaping or strictly lawn care," Skyler adds. "Plus, a lot of companies stay away from the snow removal side, simply because of the logistics involved. We offer everything a homeowner or property



Precision Lawn & Landscape's landscape installation team, from left: Kyle, senior lead landscape designer; Austin, landscaping project manager; Garrett, lead landscape designer; Lisa, lead landscape designer; Rory, decking and fencing operations manager.

manager could want. That gives us an advantage because the customer can just deal with one company to get it all done."

Work of Art, Model for Efficiency

Customers can also count on Precision Lawn & Landscape to get it all done right.

"We've implemented something we call 'instant customer engagement,'" Brady says. "Anytime a customer expresses a concern to a crew, either myself and/or Jon will arrange to meet with that customer immediately."

With as many properties as Precision's lawn care division is servicing, Brady says it's unrealistic to think crews will be perfect every single week. "As a

hour every morning before being dispatched. Brady, Jon and other leaders pass along any mishaps from the prior day so crews can learn from those mistakes.

"We also pass along any compliments we've received," Brady adds. "That includes Google reviews and customers who call in. And if we receive any positive feedback throughout the day, we'll text the crew immediately while they are still in the field." When a company is as fussy as Precision Lawn & Landscape, positive reinforcement goes a long way in helping keep employees motivated.

Few are as motivated and impassioned as Jon. He became the lawn operations manager toward the end of 2023. He first joined Precision Lawn & Landscape in 2018 after the company he'd been working for was acquired by Precision. He started out operating Walker Mowers, just as he'd done throughout his previous 20-year career. While he has enjoyed the elevation to a management position, Jon can't hide the fact that he misses being in the field on a regular basis.

"I'm honestly jealous of my team members every day," Jon says. "We do try to get Jon out in the field once in a while," Skyler adds. Jon actually handles the company's lawn spraying

company, you have to be committed to mitigating a customer's concerns as quickly as possible," Brady says.

To further enhance the client experience, Precision lawn care crews meet for at least half an

in some of the company's more distant market areas. He also helps mow from time to time when the workload requires it. For the majority of the time, however, Jon is making sure the lawn care crews have what they need to maintain the high quality standard that has been set.

"The way I've always looked at things, the lawn is the canvas and the Walker Mower is our paintbrush," Jon says. "The artistry of mowing a lawn has always been the most rewarding thing for me, even now when I see the work our crews are doing when I'm out doing quality checks."

Precision Lawn & Landscape has a fleet of 13 Walkers. Aside from one older Model B with a side-discharge deck, the standardized machine

"The way I've always looked at things, the lawn is the canvas and the Walker Mower is our paint brush."

is a Model T, typically a T27i. The company generally fields two three-man commercial crews and three two-man residential crews. Each crew has two Model Ts, one with a 42-inch deck and the other with a 48. Clippings are always collected. Trailers feature hydraulic dump beds

to make it more efficient to unload the clippings at a local compost site at the end of the day.

Although he's only been in his management position for less than a year, Jon has made one astute

observation. Having consistent equipment across crews helps ensure consistent service delivery. Well-trained team members and standardized equipment make it easy for crews to share resources as needed. It has to be the right equipment, though.



Precision Lawn & Landscape has standardized grass collection with a Walker Model T across all of its maintenance crews.

"We've found that the Walker Mower is the most efficient machine we can put in our operation," Jon says. "The maneuverability, flex deck and grass-handling capability really drive the efficiency of our mowing crews."

Jon says his Walker operators feel the same way he does, even the newbies who are just getting into lawn care. The easy operation of a Walker, coupled with the ability to create a beautiful picture, really seems to strike a chord. And once employees begin to refine their mowing skills, their pride grows even stronger.

"Our Walker operators look back and see that striping on a property," Jon says. "That image is rewarding to them, too, and inspires them to create new pieces of art."



"Mark the lead mechanic" used to work in the field as both a mower operator and landscaping laborer. Now he's in charge of maintaining the company's massive fleet of 13 Walkers, countless pieces of handheld equipment, and a storage building full of trucks, tractors, skid loaders, snowplows and other equipment.

See Skyler's story by watching this video.



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