

*I would like to share the thoughts of **Terena Hantelman, RSE.***

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Terena has invested a great deal of time putting together her thoughts on the challenges with the Landscape Horticulture Program and her words of wisdom need to be shared with everyone. Please take the time to read her ideas and suggestions:

“I have my Red Seal and am so proud to have it. I actively recruit for the apprenticeship program with Apprenticeship MB and on my own time. It literally blows my mind how low the numbers are when it is such as positive program for everyone involved. Last year was the first time in over 12 years where we had all 3 programs run at once here in Manitoba! It was worth all of legwork and emailing needed to achieve that increase. I would be disheartened if the Landscape Horticulture Program dissolved. I give you my thoughts in hopes a difference can be made”

Below are the obstacles I encounter here in Winnipeg and my suggestions/thoughts (in blue).

FROM EMPLOYERS

1 - Resistance from employers because they feel like their staff will leave after being trained and start their own business

- Encourage and invest in staff and they will stay.
- Have incentives for those that complete certification (of any sort).
- Competition is a good thing. Quality workmanship and a good reputation will overcome most competition. If your employee wants to start a business encourage a specialization and work together to achieve a greater portion of the market. Encouraging the growth of a ‘sister’ company would benefit all involved.

2 – Employers don’t want to pay apprenticeship wages

- Making employers more aware of the financial benefits from Apprenticeship and that a skilled and trained employee is worth the money they are paid.
- Maybe clear spreadsheets showing this... Or facts/Stats promoting this.
- If a panel of apprentice employers was invited to speak to a group of employers considering apprenticeship, maybe these concerns could be addressed.

3 - Employers need these guys for snow removal/ greenhouse work in the winter

- School term is only 11 weeks; Sending someone away for a short time and having them come back as a skilled employee should be worth an 11 week inconvenience.
- Stress that investing in an employee has many returns.
- Speak to the employer in terms of nickels and dimes, long term vs current season.
- Have employers offer different shifts, that accommodate the schooling
- I worked during my schooling doing snow removal and greenhouse shifts. I talked to my employers and compromised on shifts.

4 - Employers claim no one would be interested, or they have to long term employees

- Address to companies how to secure long term employees. I feel it comes down to showing appreciation and investing in employees.
- Most employees are unaware of schooling in the industry. Having an advertising campaign.... would be great!
- Where to advertise?
 - Honestly in bathroom stalls at bars and lounges. Most landscapers will go for a beer after a long week.
 - At stadiums, sporting events. Its true most landscapers are men... and most men like sports.
 - I don't mean to stereotype landscapers.... But I feel this would honestly be effective for over half of landscapers. Reaching half is better than none.
- If my employer ever suggested I go to school, I would be honored and want to make them proud. I would feel they saw potential in me.
 - The jobs I left were because I felt under-appreciated or taken advantage of.
 - The jobs I stayed at I felt part of the team, I felt important

5 – I own the company.... So I can't get my Red Seal through apprenticeship?

- Apprenticeship is about the 'Master' of the trade showing apprentices the skills needed, and applying practical examples for the technical training learned in school.
- If there were a database of journeyman (through CNLA) willing to take a company owner under their wings and do project together... then the Journeyman/apprenticeship relationship would exist and the hours needed would add up. This situation would benefit all parties involved and create more of a sense of community within the industry
- If the owner of the company can't get a Red Seal, his employees can't get a Red Seal. There is the option to become a designated trainer, but most owners aren't willing to have their staff with a Red Seal and them without....

FROM EMPLOYEES

1 – Employees can't afford not to work in the winter. E.I isn't enough for them to live on.

- The apprenticeship grant is a GREAT option! It is a matter of creating awareness about it.
- Offering financial planning. Money is hard. In Winnipeg we have a short season where we make a lot, then a long season where we make very little. This can be hard to budget for a lot of people.
- Being aware of the changes to E.I. and knowing how to extend your benefits once they run out, due to being in school.
- Possible Scholarships!

2 - Why should Employees go to school, they 'know' everything already

- They in fact do not know everything. Offer a quiz that shows industry standards and see if they can in fact answer the questions. Could be part of the advertising campaign
- I once saw an poster at Rona with a pic of a plant on it and it said "if you can name this plant, we want to hire you"
- I have been in the industry since 1999, and still learn something new every day!
- I worked as a landscaper and in a commercial greenhouse prior to going to school, what school taught me was why I was doing things. It really taught me the reason I was cutting petunia's back... the reason

I was putting 6" of soil under sod. Because I knew the science and reasoning I was able to do a more conscientious job, and even stop and explain to my peers how to do it right and why.

3 - Employees can sit at home and collect E.I. or they can go to school and get E.I. Sitting at home is easier.

- This is a hard one... I feel my Red Seal opens doors. I am employable across Canada. I feel I have better, higher paying job opportunities because of my Red Seal and am employable year round. Having a Red Seal is an investment in my future. I may never have to go in E.I. again.
- Most of the group I graduated with all have full time/year round pay.
- What are the benefits of having a Red Seal specifically in the landscape industry? Most documentation just shows the overall benefits...

4 - Employees' boss does not require them to have any certification

- Educate the employer on the benefits of having certified employees
- Find a new employer...
- Encouraging large companies like PCL or BIRD to only hire landscaper companies who are involved in apprenticeship would make it a requirement on the company and therefore of the employee. The City of Wpg. has a similar policy in effect.
- Members of CNLA/Landscape MB must have a certain percentage of staff enrolled in a professional development program such as apprenticeship. If CNLA believes in professionalism and education, make it part of a requirement of being a member...

FROM ENROLLED APPRENTICES

1 - School is academically challenging. They though it would be all in the shop vs in the desk.

- Yes it is hard. However RRC and most colleges offer amazing services to assist students.
- Have industry tutoring from members of CNLA. Have a true apprenticeship network. Employers may specialize in hardscaping, and the apprentice is studying greenhouse operations. Create a data base of industry tutors who believe in education and professionalism in the industry.

2 - Apprentices complain that they are learning more than actually use on their job sites. They do not want surplus knowledge. Only what is directly linked to the tasks they perform.

- This is a complaint I actually receive from employers as well.
- Have a general year (or part of each year) where you learn the basics, then fork off into three avenues... Hardscaping, softscaping, and greenhouse operations. The Red Seal test does not cover all that is taught....
- This would affect the hours allocated to each course
- Have a set of national books used for courses like soil, fertilizer, botany to ensure everyone is learning the baseline of what is tested. Then offer specialization.
 - Having a set of national books would also create a uniform knowledge base across the country. (possibly the Planet or Industry certified books)

FROM HOME/BUSINESS OWNERS WHO WANT WORK DONE

- 1 - They are unaware that there is certification for landscaping and therefore do not ask for it.
 - The general population has NO IDEA to ask for certification.
 - Create a check list for homeowners to ask, on your website, on all members websites.
 - How many homeowners look at CNLA websites... or is it mostly those in the industry??
- 2 - They are unaware of the true cost of hiring amateur vs a professional.
 - Commercials of 'horror stories'. In general advertising works on shame. Think gum, cologne, deodorant, clothes. Gum ads push how important it is to have fresh breath, and that smelling like lunch is the most horrible thing.
 - Play on this and have one neighbor ask the other if they had a Red Seal landscaper do the job? And then be appalled when they didn't! Show the 'smart' neighbor looking around the property and seeing dollar \$\$ signs at all the errors.
 - Show a Red Seal check in the other neighbor's yard that has met standards such as slope, aggregate depth etc.
- 3 - They want the cheapest price.
 - You get what you pay for....
 - Promote the quote " if you think it is expensive to hire an professional, wait till you hire an amateur"
 - Where to Promote?? On company website, on billboards.

FROM INDUSTRY

- 1- Little sense of community. Everyone is out to make a buck. They are more concerned with their own bottom line, vs the industry.
 - Have apprenticeship meetings, were networking happens. This will create more referrals of certified companies. Giving them more business and therefore creating more awareness of why you should hire a professional.
- 2- The graduates who received their Red Seal are happy with it, but do no recruit.
 - Find out why this is....??
 - I tell almost every landscape company I run into about the program. I keep info material in all my vehicles to hand out. I especially encourage companies that are just starting or I see making errors in their work.
 - I recently was on a job site where I had to explain to the 'landscaper' how to plant 2 gallon shrubs and how to mulch. The company has been in business for 5 years.... My jaw dropped thinking of all the other jobs they have done, that are not up to standards.
 - Have awards or acknowledgements for Journeymen that have the highest percentage of apprentices. This is more important than showing which companies have the most, as that can be dependent on the actual size of the company.
 - Make it a bigger deal! Give special benefits to Red Seal Companies through CNLA. Offer them a few additional benefits or promotions.
 - At the end of the course stress to the new Red Seal Landscape Horticulturists the importance of industry recruitment, otherwise like the last Male White Rhino, Professional landscapers too will be extinct. All that will be left are the guys who can by skid steers and mess up a property for cheap!

3- Well I can just challenge the Red Seal... So why bother sending anyone. It doesn't mean anything. I can do all the same jobs as now... Can I charge more money if I have a Red Seal??

- Make it so companies can't do all same jobs! Meet with large Project Management groups and promote the importance. If there is a demand for Red Seal Landscapers and no supply, the seats would fill up quickly.
- If only it could be a law that you had to have certification to do jobs of a certain scope or value.
- If insurance companies would require a Red Seal to sign off on large jobs, much like electrical. Homeowners and handyman can only do so much until a certified electrician has to come in. An example of what I mean is: an insurance company wouldn't sign off on flooding of a newly landscaped yard; due to the fact the landscaper with the lowest bid also had the lowest knowledge on positive drainage away from structures.

4 – I have “blank” certification. What's the difference??

- Not all certification are equal. Know the differences. Have a chart to compare college run programs, Apprenticeship programs, and industry certified programs (even I struggle with the differences and likely have misdirected opinions).
- Why are the college run programs filling up and the apprenticeship programs loosing?
 - They advertise
 - It's on college websites
- A gradual takeover... I mean incorporation of college run programs with apprenticeship programs, would boost the numbers. We are dividing the number of people in our industry wanting a designation among too many programs. Reduce the # of programs and enrollment will increase.
- 2 winters ago I was a judge for the Landscape Manitoba Industry Certification tests and was shocked at the outcome. The candidates I encountered had very little knowledge of industry standards and 100% failed the stations I judged. If only they had gone to a few courses they would have passed. I thought what if they could attend the courses related to tested units; they would have the know-how, not just the experience.
- I am still unclear the benefits to be industry certified vs having your Red Seal. From what I gather is the Industry certification is a vein of the industry and the Red Seal is more encompassing.
 - Why would I desire to become industry certified after I had my Red Seal? I see it as paying to take the very similar tests again, almost a duplication.
- If there was a way to incorporate those wanting industry certification and those wanting their Red Seal that would be good
 - Allowing those taking wanting industry certification a fast track through school, with selective course they can attend. As it is not a full apprenticeship there would likely be a fee for these courses. However it would increase the pass rate of industry certification and they may then decide that they wanted to take further courses and attend full apprenticeship. They could use the grade they achieved in the course the first time... or re-do it to achieve a higher grade while working towards the red seal.
 - Having the Industry Certification books and/or Planet books used for the Red Seal.... It seems it would benefit the sellers of the books, create a more uniform knowledge base, and to possibly create a path to acquire both certifications

FROM OTHER TRADES

1 - They laugh, when I say I went to school for landscaping

- Why is it more impressive to be a carpenter than a landscaper in the world of trades? Of course a plumber, electrician, and carpenter (etc.) went to school... there is a lot to learn for those trades. But a landscaper??!! Lol all they need to know is how to shovel dirt and snow ha ha ha.
- The program is actually very academic. It has many courses that have comparable course taught at Universities
- Create awareness and show the difference in jobs done by professionals by amateurs
- The amateurs are giving the professionals a bad rep... If there was a commercial of a scruffy guy in a beat up pick up giving a quote to a large developer, and then a pan out to a professional and ask, "who would you hire?"

2 - Tradespeople who have attended technical colleges such as Red River College have no idea such a program even exists

- It is because we have such small numbers...
- If you go online to RRC website, the apprenticeship program does not show up as a course, the other apprenticeship programs such as carpentry do. There is no signage on our classroom doors... it's as if we don't exist...
- Have sign and posters promoting the program in the classrooms

Ideas:

Here in Manitoba Landscaping is a very seasonal profession; combined with the fact they we get a lot of greenhouse production workers in the course who work in the winter months when the course is typically offered I have two suggestions.

1 - Offer evening classes (possibly year round)... this would make school less overwhelming for most students; less overwhelming academically and financially. It would also make it so no one would have to be absent from their job for 3 months.

2 – Possibly some correspondence classes? I think of Soils, Botany, Plant ID, Math... and a few others that a majority of the info could be learned via textbook; with several days of labs mixed and of course testing done on set days with supervision. This does reduce the sense of community that is often achieved in a classroom setting, but may promote more enrollments.

- I have a friend who works fulltime and he chose the Prairie Hort. Degree vs Apprenticeship because he could do it on his own time. He has a family and it was a more flexible option. He works full time and didn't want to leave his job, but he did want an education.

Maybe due to the seasonality we need to be more flexible.

Terena's final comments were "I believe in professionalism and continued education in the industry. I believe that one day all home and business owners will ask for proof of certification prior to hiring anyone to landscape their properties. "

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