

OCTOBER 2018



# SNOW BUSINESS

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## SPRAYING THE WAY

Processes and best practices guide Cornerstone Partners Horticultural Services toward a growing brine program

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**STATE OF THE  
INDUSTRY  
2018**

COVERAGE BEGINS ON PAGE 29

# SUBBING FOR SUCCESS

Hiring and managing those who work on your behalf can be rewarding, but finding the best takes work

BY RICK KIER, CSP

### HELP WANTED?

» Respondents were more likely to hire subcontractors than to work as one. Of those who use subcontractors, most (42%) use them on less than 25% of their properties.

# 59%

Do not work as subcontractors.

# 33%

Do not hire subcontractors.

Using subcontractors is a great way to increase your snow and ice service capacity; but managing the process — from hiring to quality control to insurance and invoicing — can be time-consuming.

At Pro Scapes, we use about 30 subcontractors to help service our clients. Building a base of people that we can count on requires a lot of legwork.

### Where to look

I've tried myriad methods to find good subs: Craigslist, working with equipment dealers, even cold calling. About five years ago, we had a huge storm coming and were short one subcontractor in a particular area. I got in my truck and drove around, ringing doorbells of people with plow trucks in their driveway. The person I ended up hiring has worked for me as a subcontractor ever since.

The best approach I have found, however, is in referrals from our existing subcontractor

network. We take good care of our subs and they come back year after year. Building those relationships based on mutual respect and care has been the best conduit to identifying new subcontractor prospects.

### What to look for

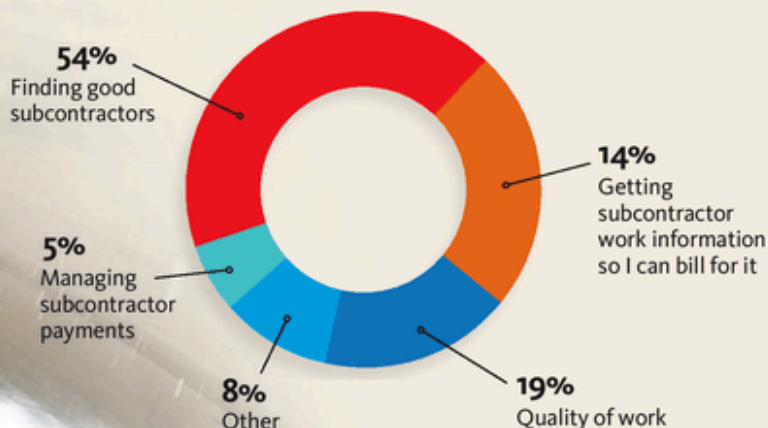
When I'm seeking new subcontractors, what matters most is reliability. I don't care if they have one truck or four. I'm looking at how they respond to the recruitment process.

We require all potential subcontractors to fill out a detailed application on our website. They must upload pictures of their equipment and answer multiple questions, including some open-ended ones, about their operations and experience. I want to see how well they answer those questions.

If I like what I see, I invite them in for a personal interview. I won't hire anyone who won't come in and sit down with us. Committing to that interview shows that they have the dedication and customer service skills to represent Pro Scapes in the field.

## SUBCONTRACTOR MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

» Your subcontractors are a reflection on your company so take the time to find the best. Make sure you pay them on time and hold them accountable.



SOURCE: HINDSITE SOFTWARE / WWW.HINDSITESOFTWARE.COM

### Quality control

We ultimately answer to the client, so it's imperative that our subs are delivering on the promises we've made. The key is to have a good contract that outlines in great detail exactly what is expected of the subcontractor. They need to read that contract and understand what you're asking of them before committing to the work.

During an event we have area managers that check in at each site and we hold the subs responsible. If something isn't right we have them go back and fix it. If we have to do it, we deduct those costs from their payment.

Our subs are required to use our software for service verification and documentation. They must log in to receive their work orders and receive site maps, site-specific instructions, etc. Our software allows us to know up to the minute when they are on site and performing. We also require our


subs to monitor the weather and self-initiate service. If we see an event is in progress and they haven't logged in, we follow up. They get back-charged if we have to call them out. All of our subs are financially motivated to take ownership of the properties we have entrusted to them.

Although we have decided to create a software application for these details, it can be done with paper and pen or through use of any number of online forms that are available. Whatever method you use, you need standard operating procedures in place to ensure you receive the data you need by the deadlines you've established in the contract.

### Keep them coming back

As I mentioned earlier, we have built strong relationships with our subs. A key component to building that loyalty is prompt and accurate payments. No matter when and how you decide to

pay them, spell it out in your contracts and include the requirements that must be met before they are paid (e.g., prompt documentation, timely submission of written invoices, proof of insurance requirements, etc.).

Whatever terms you and the subcontractor agree to, it's essential that you also maintain your end of the deal. If you've agreed to pay them every month but your customers haven't paid you, still pay your subs on time — even if you have to borrow money from the bank to do it. Never leave your subs hanging. If you pay on time every time, they will appreciate it; and when you need them to go the extra mile, they will be there for you. 

**Rick Kier**, CSP is president of Pro Scapes in Jamesville, NY, and a managing partner of Forge Ahead Consulting. He is a founding member of SIMA and a member of the *Snow Business* Editorial Advisory Committee. Email him at [rick@proscapes.com](mailto:rick@proscapes.com).

# MORE SNOW IN LESS TIME = BIGGER PROFIT



## SAVE TIME AND MONEY

- Put an end to trucking costs
- No need for on-site snowbanks
- Save clients 50% or more on snow budgets
- Eliminate snow removal delays
- Eco-friendly and energy efficient
- Eliminate snow dumpsite fees



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