

Start at the Beginning

One company's experience in making professionalism its mission.

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For some companies, professionalism isn't something the owner woke up one day and decided to pursue. It was a focus and a priority from day one.

"It is part of the mission statement we developed when we started this company," says Jason Cupp of Highland Outdoor in Olathe, Kansas. "We had to figure out what we wanted this business to be. Then we put it in writing and we show it to everyone. It's on our Web site. It's in our proposals to clients. They aren't just words. We live it and breathe it."

Jason says that he took his management team to a retreat out of the office and brainstormed on action verbs describing what they want to be as a company. "By defining what our clients can expect from us, we have a policy that we follow," says Jason. "It eliminates guesswork. There is no opportunity to depart from that."

Jason says that this empowers his team members, and that it allows a sense of trust — for himself and for his clients. "With our mission statement, and the culture we've created through it, there is consistency," says Jason. "Our team members know how to respond to any situation. Our clients know they will get the same high level of service, and the same answers from any person on my team as they would me."

Jason's company is very new, but it is a merger between two existing landscape companies. Granted, they had both the resources and experience to approach creating a vision and culture of professionalism. But that doesn't mean a young company can't approach the concept in a similar fashion.

"When I first started my own company, my mind wasn't on 'professionalism' from the start," says Jason, who was just a teenager when he founded the Kincaide Co., one of the companies that merged to create Highland Outdoor. "It took experience to realize how important that is to a company. My advice is to get in that mindset from the start. No matter what size you are and how limited your resources, there are things you can do to make an immediate impact."

Highland Outdoor mission statement

Enriching our client's lives through the enjoyment and enhancement of their outdoor environment.

Values. Highland Outdoor believes the following values represent who we are, who we aspire to be, and contribute to accomplishing our Mission Statement.

Loyal. We have a feeling of devotion or attachment to the client. Trustworthy. We have confidence and reliance on good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor and ability.

Dedicated. We are wholeheartedly devoted or committed to a project.

Integrity. We adhere to the quality of possessing and steadfastly adhering to high moral principles and professional standards.

Innovative. We are consistently taking a new and original approach.

Relational. We believe in a significant connection and similarity between our team and the client by their involvement with each other.

Professional. We consistently show a high degree of skill and competence.

Creative. We use our imagination to create new ideas and things.

Respected. We are held in high regard by equals as well as subordinates.

Unique. We are different from others in a way that makes something worthy of note.

Focused. We are very concentrated on a single thing.

Collaborative. We attain achievements by working together and with others.

Fun. We believe in a time of enjoyment with one another within our team.

Educated. We benefit from having experience and knowledge.

Certified. We declare and require that our team members have passed a test and achieved a certain standard related to their job.

Passion. We have a keen enthusiasm and intense desire for our industry.

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