

Case Study – Scotts LawnService improves their technician’s landscape with Mobile Assistant and integrated CoPilot® Live™ Professional GPS navigation solution from ALK Technologies

“By removing the time technicians take to manually work out their daily route and by minimizing the drive time between stops, we anticipate adding an appointment per employee each day in the first year of deployment.”

- Mark Ochs, Director of Services Support, Scotts LawnService

Streamlines operations, eliminates paperwork and optimizes operations

Company Overview:

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, (Scotts Miracle-Gro), along with its subsidiaries, is engaged in the manufacturing, marketing and sale of lawn and garden care products to residential and professional horticulture customers. The Company’s products are sold primarily in North America and the European Union.

The Company also operates the Scotts LawnService business, which provides residential lawn care, lawn aeration, tree and shrub care and pest control services in the United States.

The Challenge:

With over 1100 technicians across the U.S. servicing 25-35 customer sites a day, the Service Support team at Scotts LawnService saw an opportunity to improve mobile worker efficiency in two key areas:

- Reduce the time spent planning routes and driving between appointments.
- Automate and standardize the process of recording services delivered on site.

Previously, the technicians were heavily

reliant on paper-based maps, which proved cumbersome and a source of driver stress and distraction while on the road. Paper maps were difficult to read and even harder to follow. Mark Ochs, Director of Services Support, Scotts LawnService explains:

“One of the main frustrations that our technicians had was being lost especially on a day when they had a property goal to hit. Anything we can do to reduce that by getting them to the property sooner and allowing them to focus on doing the job really benefits our business.”

It became obvious that the process needed to be automated but as with any large scale workforce, different levels of computer capabilities meant that any solution deployed had to be easy to implement, easy to use and easy to understand to guarantee universal adoption throughout the business.

The Solution

Scotts LawnService consulted with Real Green Systems, lawn care industry software specialists and developers of Mobile Assistant. Designed to replace paper-based systems, Mobile Assistant provides a standardized



menu function that allows the technician to input data such as lawn size, treatment products used and customer signature capture directly into a mobile device. The data is then automatically synchronized when the technician returns to the depot. Paper use is reduced to simply printing a customer receipt/invoice.

Choosing which GPS software to integrate into the project proved to be a straightforward task.

Joe McPhail, Vice President at Real Green Systems explains:

“We started working with ALK Technologies in 2008, using the CoPilot® Live™ Professional Software Developer Kit (SDK) integrated with Mobile Assistant.



The Company

Scotts LawnService provides residential gardening services nationally within the United States.

The Requirement

To automate data collection from field technicians and improve driving efficiency between stops

The Solution

Mobile Assistant from Real Green with integrated ALK's CoPilot Live Professional

One touch, optimized routing between appointments
One touch navigation

The Benefits

- 4% increase in workforce efficiency
- 33% reduction in year on year insurance claims

The Software

- Mobile Assistant
- CoPilot Live Professional

The Hardware

- HP Mini Notebooks running Windows 7

The Size of Implementation

- 1100 field technicians

We were confident that CoPilot Live could deliver technician productivity benefits against Scotts Lawn Services project requirements.”

A pilot at several of Scotts LawnService locations utilizing rugged handhelds confirmed that the proof of concept worked but technicians’ concerns about the lack of printing functionality and small screen size meant that Real Green Systems needed to identify an alternative solution.

Inspired by the possibilities of netbooks, Real Green Systems set about developing a touch screen version of Mobile Assistant.

McPhail continues: “The biggest factor that helped us with the project was the acceptance of the netbook by the technicians. The touch screen simplifies access to Mobile Assistant. The larger screen size provides a better display for driving with CoPilot Live GPS navigation solution.”

Managing Process

Each day begins with the technician synchronizing their netbook at the depot and receiving a list of optimized appointments loaded into Mobile Assistant.

All the stops are automatically passed into CoPilot Live Professional and the planned route is displayed on a map. The technician then has the choice to follow the suggested stop order or override the schedule if a customer has a preferred appointment time.

In all instances, CoPilot Live Professional provides the technician with familiar, GPS-based, visual and audible turn-by-turn guidance to each appointment.

If later in the day the technician wants to re-optimize their route, CoPilot Live Professional can complete the task on the netbook.

Removing the Paper, Improving Safety

The combined solution has eliminated the reliance on printed invoices and paper maps, the use of which also had safety implications as Ochs comments:



“One of the advantages we have with CoPilot Live is the spoken turn-by-turn instructions. It allows our technicians to keep their eyes focused on the road.”

The Business Benefits

“By reducing the time technicians manually work out their route for the day and by minimizing the drive time between stops, we anticipate adding at least one appointment per employee each day,” said Mark Ochs, Scotts LawnService.

Across a fleet of 1100 technicians, this represents a conservative 4% improvement in workforce productivity.

An added benefit to the business is a year over year 33% reduction in insurance claims as a direct result of the process automation.

Future Plans

Currently, Scotts LawnService technicians synchronize their netbooks at the beginning and end of the day. The deployment of Real Green’s Mobile Assistant Live and ALK’s CoPilot Live Professional will enable Scotts to manage their technician workforce remotely.

Features will include the ability to sync the devices via the mobile internet and enable dispatch to send additional stops directly to technicians who will be able to receive and optimize the new route within CoPilot Live.

With this functionality and the ability to track technician locations, Scotts LawnService will continue to enhance their response to customer needs by taking advantage of technology and applying it to their business models.



For further information, on CoPilot Live Professional go to www.alk.com