

President's letter

by Robert Boyle, IANY President



Robert Boyle

Even though we are experiencing relief from COVID, finding unskilled and skilled labor continues to be an issue locally as well as nationally in many different industries.

We are all working long hours and as much as we can to keep up with our workloads. We have had to be creative in ways to find additional help.

I went back to basics, word of mouth and asked anyone I interacted with if they knew anybody that's "looking for an opportunity to work outdoors in the beautiful Hamptons." We posted flyers at local businesses and those we frequent related to irrigation.

We signed up and posted on BOCES, local college websites and on the Suffolk County, New York, website: <https://scnyforward.info>. Your local Long Island Patch online is another good place to post a job; it is free to do a neighbor post in your local neighborhood Patch, which you select when you sign up.

After a certain number of days, you can change your location and post a job in another Patch area that you prefer. In addition, Facebook allows job posts, which stay on your Facebook page for about a month. That is also free and can be renewed.

Without allowable travel due to COVID restrictions on work visas, the number of workers coming from abroad that our local economy depends upon has been reduced. And although housing workers has always been challenging, the influx of new residents have resulted in soaring rents, high demand and higher housing prices.

But on a more positive note, we have more work! Everyone is spending more time at home and spending more money on improving and caring for their homes.

Remember, without hard work nothing grows but weeds.

RB Boyle is owner of RB Irrigation and president of the Irrigation Association of New York.



Register today: September 29 IANY Top Golf tournament

The Irrigation Association of New York has declared "game on" and you don't want to miss it! Join your fellow irrigation contractors Sept. 29 from 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. at Top Golf in Holtsville, New York, for an evening of friendly competition and festive fundraising. Compete in games that will test your touch, accuracy and strategy, all while raising money that directly supports IANY membership and activities.

- \$120 - 1 golfer in shared bay - Includes 2 drink tickets, BBQ buffet, Top Golf
- \$850 - 6 golfers in private bay - Includes 12 drink tickets, BBQ buffet, Top Golf

Registration closes September 19; register early as this event will sell out quickly!
Visit <https://iany.org/top-golf-tournament/> to register.



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Is it time for a website overhaul?

by Jeff Carowitz, Strategic Force Marketing



Jeff Carowitz

Are you guilty of poor maintenance of one of your most valuable assets? Your website is an important resource for your marketing. It brings you a stream of new business from searchers who have immediate needs.

Maintaining a powerful website is more than just some brochure text and pretty images. It deserves real strategy and ongoing TLC. Here are some signs it might be time to give your site an overhaul:

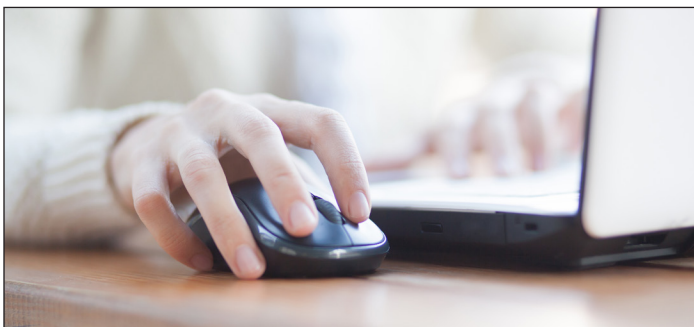
The last time you updated content was more than six months ago. Google prioritizes sites with fresh content and a growing number of pages/posts. Plus, potential customers' perception is definitely influenced by the expert content you provide. If you are not continually building and changing your site, you're declining.

Your site misses the basics. Where's your phone number? Your street address? Are your forms clunky? Users have less and less patience for those who don't have their act together. Be sure that's not you!

Your images are outdated. Use of stock photography or amateur shots can really drag down your company's perceived authority and professionalism. Invest in good photography and video to showcase your company in the best light. Hire professionals.

Your site is not designed with the customer's path in mind. Follow the "journey" of a prospective customer. What are they looking to accomplish? Where will they click first? Then where after that? Identify the paths your users will follow to learn about your product or service. Think about people who are new to your services. Where will they get stuck or be confused?

Your website is not mobile-friendly. Over half of the traffic to most sites is from mobile devices (phones, tablets).



Google changed its search algorithm to give priority to sites that give full access to mobile users. For example, they must have navigation menus that are tap-friendly. Mobile-friendly (and device-responsive design) are not the new frontier. They're a must. For similar reasons, make sure your site has an SSL secure certificate.

You have mega drop-downs. If there are too many pages in your drop-down menus, customers are going to have difficulty finding what they're looking for. If you offer a lot of different services, redesign the main page to give glimpses of more of them.

You don't offer helpful buyer's information. Offering a "tips for making a wise decision" booklet or a white paper on a critical buyer issue is certain to get attention. But it will disappoint if the information served up is merely product literature that doesn't answer the need. Good content that helps customers builds trust and encourages them to rely on you. Weak content will drive browsers to others who have better information.

With over three decades of experience in our industry, Jeff Carowitz helps leading firms with strategic planning and marketing implementation. Connect with him at Jeff@StrategicForceMarketing.com.

The advertisement is for Borg & Borg Insurance, featuring a blue and yellow border. At the top left is a logo with a stylized 'B' and a star. To its right is the text 'BORG & BORG, INC. Insurance'. Further right is contact information: '148 East Main Street, Huntington, New York 11750', '631-673-7600', '631-351-1750', 'www.borgborg.com', and 'Insurance with Risk Management Solutions'. Below this is the heading 'Work With An Independent Agent'. The text continues: 'Borg & Borg has been providing insurance services since 1971', 'We have competitive rates & discounts from several carriers', 'For all of your Personal & Commercial Insurances...', 'Contact us for a Free Quote!', 'You Will Love Our Proven Results!', 'We Guarantee It!', and 'Relax in the Confidence that comes with Personalized Service... we have you covered!'. The company name 'Borg & Borg Inc.' and phone number '631-673-7600' are prominently displayed. At the bottom, two agents are listed: 'David M. Borg' with email 'DMBorg@borgborg.com' and 'Patti Muldoon' with email 'PattiM@borgborg.com'.

Avoiding fear to profitably sell

by Lorraine Hart, President of Ideal Consulting Services



Lorraine Hart

Do you have difficulty with lowball competition?

No worries – you can still have an increased number of profitably sold products and services without resorting to lowball tactics.

Not only do you want to outsell your competition, but you want to do it profitably. As we all know there isn't any benefit to sell if the sales are not profitable. Although that seems like an obvious statement, it is often missed.

Many business owners and salespeople concentrate so much on closing the deal that they forget that the "deal" must lead to company profits. I have seen many scenarios where owners have kept salespeople on because they are so good at closing in spite of the fact that many of their sales are barely enough to cover direct costs. I have had clients tell me that they sell for cash flow. Unfortunately, both situations result in loss of profit and added stress on the business.

Often what I find in working with our clients is that there is an underlying prevalent fear when it comes to selling, and because of this, the salesperson drops the price. Unfortunately, when a salesperson is or becomes fearful, they have also lost control of the whole process. Part of the reason for this is that a person in fear is so worried about losing the sale that they don't pay proper attention to the prospect and the prospect's needs.

Someone worrying about a sale is concentrating their attention and energy inward on themselves instead of outward on the prospect. With this worry comes the tendency to lower the price to get the sale.

We can probably all think of a time when we were considering purchasing something when a salesperson approached us to let us know they could do better. Perhaps you were ready to pay the full price. Now that the salesperson opened the door to negotiation, more than likely you probably tried to get an even better deal. Although the better deal was good for you, it likely negatively affected the other company's profits.

In these somewhat tough times, we often look for ways to sell better, close better, and outsell the competition or handle the unfair competition. We are often afraid to be viewed as a salesman, or as so many clients have said to me, "I don't want to seem desperate."

So instead of desperation, instead of feeling like the tin man or a used-car salesman, we have to change our view of sales and what we can do for our customers. Before we can change our viewpoint, we need to first ask why we are doing what we are doing and what we are trying to achieve.

For more information, contact Ideal Consulting Services/Websites by Ideal at 516.826.6725.



Get smart with smart controllers

by Michael Dwyer, CIC



Michael Dwyer, CIC

If you haven't used a smart controller yet, now is the time. Water districts are starting to require them. Your customers are self-installing them without you. The good news is that we are into the 2nd and 3rd generation on most of these controllers.

The cloud-based version of smart controllers is your friend. They give you the ability to control remotely, and they can alert you to electrical problems before your customer's lawn or flower bed becomes an emergency visit. Adding a flow sensor can alert you to a broken head or pipe. It can also alert you to low flow or a valve not opening.

Yes, there is a learning curve with every brand. When the industry went from analog (mechanical) clocks to digital, that was a pain. Every brand had a different procedure to input start times, run times and day schedule. Some brands were intuitive, while others were difficult, even if you had the manual. I recall users becoming frustrated when they would program a schedule, and then when they checked it, nothing was there. We quickly learned that you have to press the ENTER button after each input. But, we got through it.

Why am I pushing you to start using smart controllers? Long Island is surrounded by saltwater, and the drinking water below us is filling a space that the saltwater is trying to get into. If we draw out too much drinking water, the saltwater will creep in. Once that happens our drinking water will be salty.

We can do something about this. If we can reduce our water use to a 2012 volume we will get to the point where

rainfall equals how much we take out. This is the balance that will allow us to keep our customers' lawns green and not have to worry about saltwater intrusion.

The Department of Environmental Conservation looks for what is called low-hanging fruit. That means finding the easiest thing to do with the greatest results. Using smart controllers to gain better control of irrigation run times throughout the year is an example of low-hanging fruit.

When we turn most of our customers' systems on in the spring we set the watering run time for July/August. That means that in March, April, May, June, September, October and November we are over watering. Think about that. For seven months we are wasting water, all for a two-month period of time.

This is why it is important to install a smart controller. You program it for the July/August run time. The smart controller talks to a local weather station over the web. The data from the weather station is used to determine how long to run the zone based on the weather. If we have a freaky heat wave, your water run time increases. This means no nuisance phone calls when you are crazy busy. Rainy days are also factored in. The smart controller uses the rainfall data from the weather station to keep the system from watering until the lawn has used up most of the rainwater. This feature can save your customer from being hit with a high water bill.

Customers don't like to spend money, but if you show them a green lawn and lower water bills in the spring and fall, you will be a hero.

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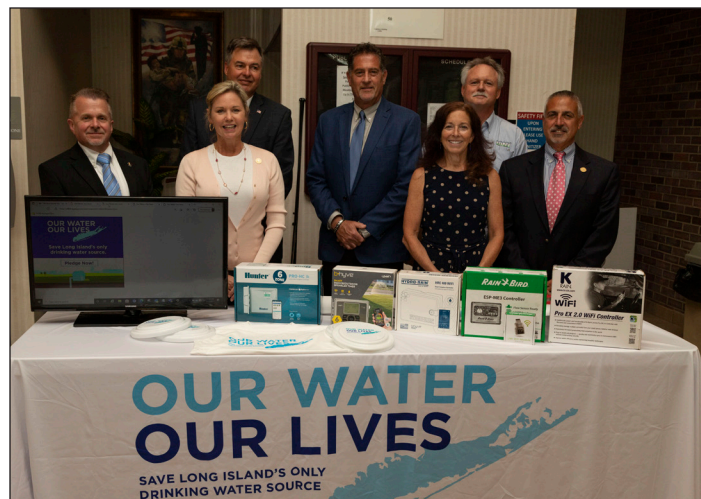
by Michael Dwyer, CIC

It was a busy spring. I hope you had time to tune in to the seminars we hosted with the Port Washington Water District and Suffolk County Water Authority. Both seminars were virtual and can still be viewed on their websites. The topic was basic water conservation measures. These include proper placement of rain sensors, use of smart controllers and proper nozzle selection to achieve a more uniform application of water.

During the SCWA seminar we discussed trying to get contractors/customers to alter start times. Contractors are being asked to spread out their start times. For example, all my customers will get a 2 a.m. start time unless they have a preference. This is not a problem since all my customers are located in Nassau County, which has multiple independent water suppliers.

When it comes to Suffolk County, SCWA is the predominate water supplier. In addition, there is Dix Hills, South Huntington, Hampton Bays, Riverhead and a few small community systems. In SCWA, if everybody uses a 2 a.m. start time, the impact is tremendous. If some clients start at midnight, 1 a.m., 2 a.m., 3 a.m. and 4 a.m., it helps spread the demand on the water supply system over a longer period of time.

This allows the wells (pumps) to operate at a keeping-up mode, instead of fighting a losing battle. Spreading out the draw of the water keeps the water pressure up and the cost of water down. We are all in this together, and a little cooperation and understanding between the users and suppliers makes all our lives easier.



On May 7, I was part of a press conference at South Farmingdale Water. I spoke about water conservation technologies. We had good coverage from Channel 2 News. Unfortunately, there was a large fire that morning that deterred other press.

On July 22, I was invited to attend a press conference for the kickoff of Smart Lawn Watering Month. This came out of my participation in the “Our Water Our Lives” campaign, which is funded by Nassau and Suffolk counties to help educate people about water use. The goal is to help people reduce their daily water use. It advocates for using native plants, low-flow shower heads, high-efficiency washing machines and smart irrigation controllers, to name a few.

There is a small rebate available to SCWA customers for stalling a water-saving device. Check their website for details at <https://www.scwa.com/waterwise>. Rain sensors and smart controllers are two of the rebate options. While at the SCWA website check out my interview on the Water Authority’s podcast “What About Water?”



Learn more and watch water conservation seminars on proper placement of rain sensors, use of smart controllers and proper nozzle selection online today.

Port Washington Water District
<http://pwwd.org/>

Suffolk County Water Authority
<https://www.scwa.com/>

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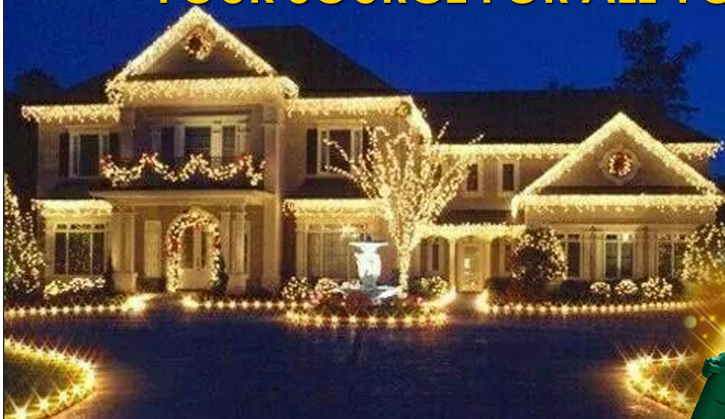
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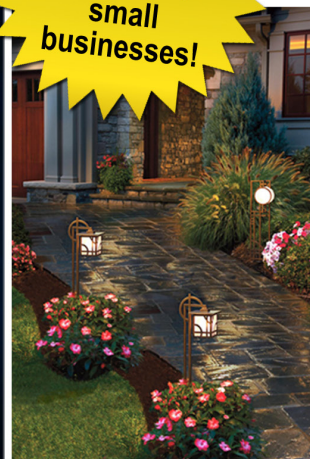
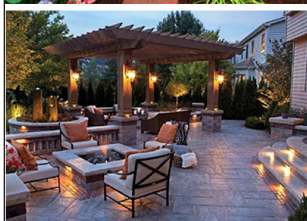
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