



Water Management: A Guide to Diversifying Your Business and Increasing Revenues

With fewer new irrigation system installations and more competition for jobs, the past few years have been challenging for irrigation and landscape contracting businesses. While promoting water-efficient irrigation upgrades has helped many businesses remain profitable, most contractors must continue to think outside the box and identify additional revenue sources. As water prices continue to increase throughout the United States, many business owners are adding water management services to create a very desirable revenue stream.

At its most basic definition, water management involves managing irrigation systems for clients like homeowners associations, university campuses, shopping centers and business parks. Contractors who diversify their businesses by offering water management go beyond installation and maintenance to help their clients achieve an important goal—operating their irrigation systems as efficiently as possible. Similar to the way a company like ADT® monitors its clients' security systems, these businesses monitor and adjust their clients' irrigation systems, as well as generate status reports on a regular basis.

Many of the irrigation contractors who first added water management to their services portfolio were located in the more arid regions of the Western United States. However, as the entire country has become increasingly aware of the need to conserve water, similar businesses are successfully marketing water management services in traditionally wetter climates like the Northeast, Midwest, South and Pacific Northwest. Unpredictable weather conditions throughout the U.S. over the past few years have demonstrated that drought can happen anywhere at any time. As a result, more people now recognize the value of water management, creating a win-win situation for both contractors and the environment.



Irrigation and landscape contracting businesses can generate additional revenue and set themselves apart from their competition by offering water management. However, successfully providing this service requires the right balance of time, skills, resources and knowledge. Simply having a staff that knows how to design, install and maintain irrigation systems is not necessarily enough. If you'd like to diversify and strengthen your business by offering water management services, consider taking these steps first for greater success.

Create a Customized Menu of Services

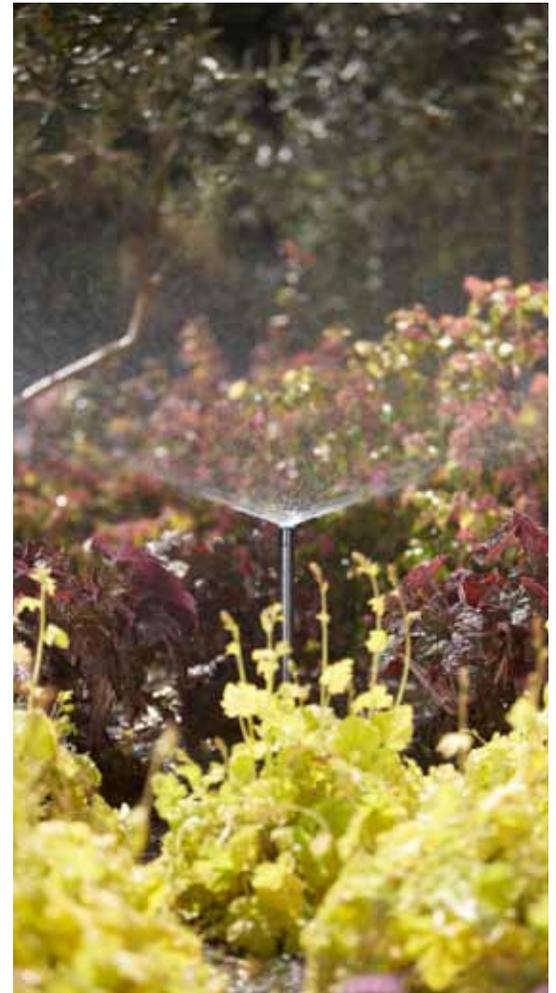
Although water management services are more commonplace, the way that businesses define these services can differ greatly. Some businesses may only offer remote irrigation system management through the use of a central control system like Rain Bird's multi-site Maxicom²® or IQ™ v2.0 products. Others may include a base number of site visits and system adjustments for an additional fee. Contractors are uniquely positioned to provide a "one-stop-shop" for their clients because they can install and maintain their irrigation systems, as well as monitor and manage the amount of water those systems use.

Many businesses also audit and map irrigation systems and create irrigation databases. Irrigation mapping entails using a CAD file to produce a color map that shows the area covered by each valve, the plant type in each valve zone, the type of irrigation head and the controller to which each valve is connected. Irrigation databases incorporate a system's flow rates, sun exposure and estimated precipitation rates to build an effective irrigation schedule.

Enhance and Exploit Your Knowledge of Plant, Soil and Water Relationships

Irrigation and landscape contractors spend many hours out in the field, working directly with irrigation systems, plants, turf, soil and water. Because water management involves balancing plant and turf needs with just the right amount of water, it's often relatively simple for contractors to offer this service. Businesses that have offered irrigation and landscape maintenance for many years can use that experience to market themselves as seasoned water management partners.

Many of the firms offering water management services also have a certified landscape irrigation auditor (CLIA) or a certified landscape water manager (CLWM) on staff. Both certifications highlight the skills needed to evaluate, operate, manage and improve irrigation systems to achieve the highest possible level of water conservation. Having one or more staff members with these certifications can be a useful marketing tool and attract additional revenue-generating opportunities like irrigation audits. Both Rain Bird Academy and the Irrigation Association offer educational opportunities that can help individuals achieve those certifications.



Invest In a Flexible, High-Quality Central Control System

Some businesses may take over the management of a client's existing central control system. However, because many clients don't have their own systems, businesses will often purchase a multi-site central control system and then use it to remotely manage irrigation for a number of sites—a process commonly known as "selling seats." When selecting a central control system, it pays to do your homework and purchase one that can serve both your business and your clients well, now and in the future.

As you explore your central control options, consider both your clients and the services you plan to offer. Obviously, if your business's approach to water management includes managing multiple irrigation sites remotely, you'll need a central control system with this capability. You'll also want to think



about current trends in irrigation and how those trends may affect your future ability to attract and retain customers. For example, a growing number of commercial irrigation sites now use non-potable or reclaimed water, and often, this practice requires them to generate detailed water usage reports. If your business will be working with commercial clients, you may want to consider purchasing a central control system that offers advanced reporting capabilities—or at the very least, the option of adding those capabilities in the future. Systems like Rain Bird's Maxicom² come with all the bells and whistles included, while a modular system like Rain Bird's IQ v2.0 can be enhanced with Advanced Feature Packs when budgets and needs allow.

Rain Bird's newest guide, *Nine Key Questions When Choosing Irrigation Control*, can help you narrow down your options and make the right choice for your business.

Get Fully Trained in the Use of Your Central Control System

Whether you're using your own central control system or a client's, your business can't provide effective water management services unless you're well-versed in its capabilities. Central control systems can run the gamut from relatively simple to extremely complex. Regardless of how many features a system offers, knowing and understanding how to use those features correctly is essential for successful water management. Manufacturers often offer specialized

training that can help you learn all about their central control systems. For example, Rain Bird Academy provides hardware and software training for all of Rain Bird's central control systems, including Maxicom², IQ v2.0 and SiteControl. Taking advantage of training opportunities can make a huge difference in your ability to effectively manage your clients' irrigation systems.

brought to you by

