



USER

Everthrive Landscape Inc.

LOCATION

Riverside, California

FOUNDERS

Nick Mokhlessin
Jonathan Caceres

SERVICES

Everthrive designs, manages and maintains a variety of landscapes and specializes in: Landscape Design, Landscape Construction, Landscape Maintenance and Water Management

WEBSITE

<https://everthrivelandscape.com/>



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Everthrive Landscape: Shift to Milwaukee® M18™ Tools Benefits Our Clients and Our People, While Sharply Boosting Productivity

Putting customer and employee needs first, California landscaper moves to battery-powered tools from Milwaukee Tool to shield crews from the noise, fumes and fatigue of gas equipment. Meanwhile, eliminating time-wasting trips to the gas station cuts one client's landscape rotation cycle 20% — from 5 weeks to 4.

RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA — From the start, Nick Mokhlessin and Jonathan Caceres knew they wanted to build a different kind of business.

The pair originally befriended one another a decade ago while working for a large national landscape-maintenance provider in Southern California. When Nick departed that company to join Caceres at his newly formed commercial landscaping firm serving Southern California's Inland Empire, the two immediately agreed to create a much different sort of environment than the one in their rearview mirror: an enterprise that put people first, both customers and workforce.

"We saw what it was like to be a small cog in a big wheel and to have your clientele reduced to numbers on a spreadsheet," explains Mokhlessin, who shares co-owner and managing partner responsibilities with Caceres. "When Jonathan and I came together, we committed to building a culture that put both our people and the clients we serve above the bottom line."

Founded in 2016, Everthrive Landscape Company, now with 50 employees, must drive sales and profits just like any other for-profit business. But as Mokhlessin points out, being a commercial landscaping company that focuses on homeowners associations, or HOAs, necessarily entails "a whole new level of scrutiny" of the products and services the company delivers. Maximizing bottom-line profitability at the expense of employees and clients is not a successful strategy:

"These are peoples' homes," he explains. "What we do professionally is deeply personal for them. People take pride in where they live. So we, in turn, take pride in being a local, independent, boutique provider of high-quality landscaping and gardening services."

The objective? “To leave our clients feeling happy when they return home each day.”

The strong commitment Everthrive has made to its clientele goes hand-in-hand with an equally strong commitment to the safety and welfare of its employees. “High-quality landscaping” is inevitably the outgrowth of a healthy, highly motivated, highly productive workforce, insists Caceres. “Taking care of our people is really taking care of our company and the clients we serve.”

Moving to Milwaukee and Battery Power

The company’s deep commitment to clients and employees provided a powerful impetus for management’s recent decision to shift gradually, but decisively, from gasoline to battery power in its outdoor power equipment.

This transition is part of a fast-growing, national movement banning gas-powered leaf blowers in towns across the country: from Pasadena, California, to Evanston, Illinois, to Marblehead, Massachusetts, where a countermovement to overturn a recent ban was defeated. Most critically for Everthrive, the State of California recently passed legislation banning the sale of gas-powered tools statewide starting January 1, 2024.

Since January 2023, Everthrive has fully outfitted two of its 12 full-time maintenance crews with approximately 30 pieces of outdoor equipment — blowers, string trimmers, hedge trimmers, pole saws, etc. All are battery-powered. All are manufactured by Milwaukee Tool.

Everthrive makes heavy use of Milwaukee’s M18 FUEL™ QUIK-LOK™ Attachment System that features a single M18 FUEL™ Power Head to handle multiple, interchangeable attachments — a huge time-saver and productivity booster on properties, as well as creating more storage space on a crew’s truck.

Everthrive is hardly a newcomer to Milwaukee Tool products, having routinely used its drills, chainsaws, and SAWZALL® Reciprocating Saw products to cut roots and small tree stumps for years. “We have used Milwaukee to meet our other power hand-tool needs for several years and found the M18™ platform to be very reliable,” says Caceres. “That did play a factor in our confidence in the company’s outdoor power equipment line.”

Nonetheless, the recent decision to shift to Milwaukee’s Battery Powered Outdoor Equipment was made only after company crews actively tested various equipment from multiple companies — Husqvarna®, Makita®, and Stihl® as well as Milwaukee — on actual properties throughout Everthrive’s market.

There were pricing and performance issues with the other brands, reports the Everthrive team. But their negatives also included battery packs that were too heavy and unwieldy, plus the time-wasting need to switch from one battery type to another, depending on the tool. As will be seen, maintaining a crew member’s comfort and safety as well as their productivity were high priorities for Mokhlessin and Caceres.

Beyond the M18 FUEL™ QUIK-LOK™ Attachment System, a number of differentiating factors ultimately persuaded Everthrive management and crews to go with Milwaukee Tool:



■ One Battery for Multiple Tools:

In contrast to the competition, Milwaukee Tool equipment operates on the same M12™ and M18™ platforms, the latter encompassing more than 250 tools — another major saver of time, labor and truck space. “Battery interchangeability means less time spent learning the equipment,” says Mokhlessin, “and that has been an important benefit as well.”



■ Rapid Charging for Multiple Batteries:

Milwaukee Tool offers a number of charging solutions, including the M18™ PACKOUT™ Six Bay Rapid Charger and M18™ Six Pack Sequential Charger, that will recharge multiple batteries sequentially, allowing for efficient charging and easy transport of charged batteries to remote job sites. Competitor chargers with just two ports won’t cut it, explains Caceres. “Many yards we service are a little more remote.”

Being able to charge and easily carry as many batteries as we can before arriving on the job is a big deal for us.”

■ Superior Warranty + Local Distribution:

Milwaukee Tool's three-year service warranty program “stood out to us for sure,” says Caceres, who connects these benefits to another: the proximity of a Milwaukee Tool authorized service center, one of many nationwide. Should a tool have a problem, “the warranty allows us to bring it into the nearby service center and deal with the problem quickly and easily.” Competitor facilities were too far a drive for Everthrive's needs.

■ Local Representation:

Here again, the ready availability of a local Milwaukee sales agent-partner was a “big, big factor” for Everthrive, according to Caceres. “We didn't want to be dealing with a brand that didn't have boots on the ground here to help us.”

In the end, Everthrive concluded that Milwaukee Tool simply had a better solution for the problems of its Southern California operation. “It was pretty clear to us Milwaukee invested a lot of thought into its outdoor power equipment line and what landscapers need,” says Caceres. “The M18™ platform checked all the boxes of what we were looking for.”

Why Battery Power Over Gasoline?

The shift to battery-powered equipment has been well-received by Everthrive clientele, and it's not difficult to understand why. “From the perspective of our primary client, HOAs, battery-powered equipment just makes more sense,” comments Mokhlessin. “It is much quieter, while still allowing us to get the job done well.”

Everthrive has received favorable comments from customers who say they don't notice the crews on their property so much anymore, notes Caceres. “We used to start our gas-powered equipment at seven in the morning, which wasn't so bad then because most people were getting ready or leaving for work. Today, a lot more people are working from home. If you're on a Zoom call, it's a nuisance to have noisy, smelly, gas-powered equipment operating right outside your window.”

Meanwhile, less noise and no fumes along with the light weight of the equipment are substantial benefits for Everthrive's workforce. The on-the-job fatigue factor is far less with battery power, reports Mokhlessin.

“The vibration of an operating, gas-powered machine is much higher than a battery unit,” he says. “Vibration tends to tire the muscles and joints a lot faster when you are using the machine up to eight hours a day.”

Of course, the noise that might bother a homeowner through a closed window is far worse for a workman, who often must hold whatever tool he is using at face level. “The noise level of a gas-powered machine at your head is very, very strong and hard on the ears,” says Caceres, adding that for landscaping veterans with years of service, tinnitus, and hearing loss are not uncommon. Finally, the gas fumes from that same machine are not likely to deliver many health benefits, either.

Consequently, by shifting from gas to battery, Everthrive management clearly saw they would be doing right by their workforce as well as their HOA clients: less fatigue, fewer hearing problems, and no more fumes.

It is interesting to note that Everthrive's crews were somewhat skeptical of the transition at first. But, Mokhlessin reports, “We're not getting complaints anymore. When we have asked crew members how they like the new equipment, the response is invariably: It's much more comfortable.”

Field-Tested

Of course, a dramatic reset in work methods and tools is bound to encounter resistance in a professional setting: “Change of any sort is scary,” Mokhlessin continues. “That's why we put the crews in charge of our search for the right battery platform: We gave them the first chance to say which tools they didn't like and which they liked the best. They demoed tools from every manufacturer that we considered.”



Everthrive crews quickly learned that machine weight could be a problem for battery-powered equipment too, impacting worker safety as well as productivity. The larger batteries offered by some manufacturers may last longer, but their significantly greater weight was a concern, especially with all the slope work the crews must handle:

“You can easily lose your balance with that heavy battery on your back,” says Caceres, who adds that one manufacturer does offer a lighter-weight battery for its hedge trimmer.

But, as already noted, Everthrive rejected the idea of using different batteries for their primary equipment.

The lighter-weight equipment from Milwaukee Tool has allowed Everthrive crews to work more quickly as well, while the switch to battery power has generated time savings on other fronts:

■ **Faster Startups:**

According to Caceres, a battery-powered tool starts immediately every time. With a gas-powered tool, even a veteran crew member might need to crank it “five or 10 times” to get it going on a cold morning. In the hands of a less experienced worker, multiple startup attempts could result in a flooded engine and even more lost time.

■ **Less Maintenance:**

Because there are no air filters to change out and “just fewer moving parts overall,” says Caceres, “there is less downtime for this equipment in the shop.”

■ **No More Mixing Gas and Oil:**

Each time a gas can is filled, a certain fraction of oil must also be mixed in. Getting that blend just right in a can still partially filled is “tricky,” says Caceres. “We end up with equipment breakdowns because the mixture is too lean or too heavy” — resulting in even more wasted time.



■ **Fewer Trips to the Gas Station:**

This is the biggest time-saver of all for Everthrive. First, there is the transit time back and forth to the filling station. In addition, while the crews can always fill up their five-gallon gas cans when they fill up the truck, the former must be replenished more often than the trucks. As a result, in-between trips are unavoidable, Mokhlessin laments: “There are four men in our crews and they are all sitting in that truck, waiting while those cans are filled. All that unbillable time away from the job is wasted.”

All of the above savings have been substantial for Everthrive, resulting in the most critical payoff of all from the shift to battery power: the heightened productivity of their crews.

The company recently landed a contract with a large HOA, stipulating the same budget, including manpower, as the previous vendor. The agreement also called for Everthrive to service the property on a five-week rotation. The upshot? With the entire crew using Milwaukee Tool battery-powered equipment, the same-sized Everthrive crew has shrunk the cycle by a full week, from five to four, a 20 percent savings in time.

“In our business, such a savings is huge, and it was done without adding to our crew,” says Caceres, “Meanwhile, our customer is happy because we are meeting his budget on a tighter schedule that keeps their property always looking professionally maintained.”

Responsible Stewards

Everthrive management will eventually outfit all of its field crews with battery-powered equipment, using Milwaukee Tool exclusively. Mokhlessin and Caceres also plan to incorporate solar into their new headquarters for charging the battery-run equipment.

“We know Milwaukee is deeply invested in maintaining the compatibility of their battery systems for the long term,” says Caceres. “That commitment is absolutely vital for us, given how many cordless tool systems are on the market today.”

That’s because Everthrive is also all-in with its commitment to battery-powered outdoor tools. Its two co-owners, who seven years ago forged a business alliance dedicated to doing things differently, see no reason to look back.

“The shift to electric allows us to continue our philosophy and reflects our core values,” says Mokhlessin. “We built our company on being responsible stewards of people’s landscapes, while also being responsible for our people, who maintain those landscapes. This move to battery power allows us to continue doing both.”

