



A clean reputation

The high-profile and celebrity clients Daley Landscape serve in the Los Angeles and Santa Barbara market trust the company to safely enter their properties and perform quality work. And homeowners don't invite just anyone onto their grounds.

"When you work on someone's property you are essentially coming into the home, and because clients entrust us to go into their homes at any time – whether for maintenance, renovation or fixing a leaky sprinkler – we want them to know that the work will get done, that our people are clean," Daley says.

Daley Landscape began drug testing about four years ago, when Daley noticed that insurers were asking the question: Do you have a safety program? Do you perform pre-employment screening, and if so do you require a drug test? Do you conduct background checks?

So, the company decided to ramp up its application process and institute these pre-employment screening tests, including checking employees' driving records and criminal records, and testing for drugs.

Daley began by reviewing the application for employment and adding a couple of key questions: Have you been convicted of a misdemeanor or a felony? If yes, provide a date of conviction, state and county, and describe the circumstances.

The application asks: Has your employment with anyone ever been involuntarily terminated? If so, please explain.

After offering a prospect a job, Daley Landscape asks the potential hire to go immediately to get a drug test through its third-party provider, HireRight.

Employment is contingent on getting the drug test, and the complete screening

● For Lawn & Landscape's survey results on landscapers' views on drug testing, turn to pg. 18.

This is only a test

While drug testing can be used as a marketing tool and a way to weed out bad workers, it can also limit the employee pool.

By Kristen Hampshire

Who are you really hiring? And, could this person potentially sacrifice the safety of a crew because of irresponsible lifestyle choices? These are questions that employers consider when putting a drug testing program in place. There are two camps: companies that wonder, "What organization can afford not to test?" and businesses that believe life happens; people make bad choices. If someone is on a clean track, give him a chance to work and be a productive contributor. What employees do on their own time is their own business.

Some insurance providers want to know if your company requires pre-employment, post-accident or random drug testing. Elana Daley, co-owner of Daley Landscape in Ojai, Calif., says clients might not directly ask the question, but they want assurance that workers on their properties are living responsibly.

This month, Lawn & Landscape spoke with three firms about their drug testing policies and how the choice to test, or not, affects hiring, retention and the overall business environment.



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package costs the company about \$150 per candidate. “This process has made a difference with hiring, and it has shown us that we can’t always trust our own experience about a person,” Daley says.

For example, the company hired one candidate who admitted to a drug conviction on his application. He explained that he had cleaned up his life. He passed the pre-employment drug test, so Daley hired him.

However, because of the drug conviction, Daley’s insurance company would not allow this employee to drive a company vehicle. “We knew we had a guy we could hire, but we could not let him drive a vehicle, which posed a problem,” Daley says.

But Daley decided to give him a chance and hire him anyway. “He came to work for us for a week and he showed his true colors, and then we cut him loose,” she says. “There was a red flag there, and you learn.”

Daley has had job applicants refuse the drug test, though this does not happen often because they know that it’s part of the onboarding process. “I have had guys who have great references but they won’t go in and test,” she says.

“We offered them a job. We said we’d love for you to come work for us, you interviewed successfully, now if you can demonstrate by a drug test and background screening, we will be assured that what you are telling us is, in fact, what you are living.”

This frustrates Daley because the reality is, sometimes the background screening does not match what the prospect reveals on an application. But, because the application does ask pointed questions about a person’s background, she says that the company tends to attract clean, reliable candidates most of the time.

“If something shows up on their background check that they do not reveal on the application, we can immediately terminate the (hiring) process because they falsified the application,” Daley says.

Daley doesn’t directly advertise to clients that employees are drug-tested, but she does promote that the people who will work on their properties are of high integrity. “I let them know we hire people who want to work and who are interested in leading a clean life,” she says.



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DALEY LANDSCAPE

(FROM PG. 36)

Elana Daley, co-owner

LOCATION:

Ojai, Calif.

ESTABLISHED:

1992

EMPLOYEES:

9

2014 REVENUES:

\$750,000

CUSTOMERS:

99% residential, 1% commercial

SERVICES:

Design/build and maintenance

TAKE-AWAY TIPS

REVIEW THE APPLICATION.

Be sure your application for employment is compliant with the law. You can ask questions about a candidate's background, but you must ask those questions in a manner that is legal. "We had to change our application a few years back, and the one we use now is simple, in compliance with state law and it works for us," Daley says.

GO BEYOND A RESUME.

Resumes provide helpful information, but every candidate must fill out the company job application. Otherwise, Daley might not collect the information she needs to move forward with a hire. "That sentence about previous misdemeanors or convictions has to be filled out," she says.

FIND A REPUTABLE PARTNER.

Select a third-party vendor to manage the background screening and drug testing. As part of the hiring process, every candidate is screened through a national company before they are officially made an employee, Daley says.