



## 35 Years + Still Pushing Forward

People, technology continue driving H&M Landscaping, Snow Pros' brand ahead

Story & Photos By Scott Esterly

**M**ark Mazzurco, president and owner of H&M Landscaping and H&M Snow Pros, was cutting lawns in his own neighborhood in the late 1980s. When he started, he wasn't even old enough to drive as he went from yard to yard.

"Once I was able to drive, it expanded from there," says Mazzurco. "I was supposed to attend John Carroll University on a bunch of grants, but I ended up choosing to run the business because I enjoyed it so much."

Now, with more than 200 employees at the peak of summertime, H&M Landscaping is entering its 35th year. Currently, H&M maintains two physical locations – one on Kinsman Road in Newbury Township and the other on Acorn Drive in Oakwood Village.

The company grew at a steady pace but in the early 1990s business really began to take off.

"It was around 1992 that I brought both of my brothers into the company as partners," Mazzurco says. "We were growing leaps and bounds at that time. You know, you always kind of gravitate back

towards family. At that point, we probably only had 20 or 25 employees and just one location. That's when I finally figured

*"We capture a lot of information because I'm of the opinion that if you can't track it, you can't control it. If you can't cost it, you can't make money."*

**Mark Mazzurco**

*H&M Landscaping and H&M Snow Pros*

out: I'm investing in people. We don't just sell a service, we sell relationships."

H&M Landscaping prides itself on being a design, build and maintain service provider for its customers. About 90% of its customer base on the landscaping side is commercial and 10%

is residential. The common thread amongst both commercial and residential is that H&M Landscaping's work is primarily high-end detail and design work.

The combined service territory of H&M Landscaping and H&M Snow Pros covers a large swath of Northeast Ohio. "We go all the way out to Elyria on the west side. We go out to Conneaut on the east side, and we'll go down the Medina for snow and ice," says Mazzurco.

H&M has also done some landscaping work for customers in West Virginia, Kentucky and Chautauqua, New York.

### Adding snow to the mix

Mazzurco added snow removal to his list of service offerings around 2000. Originally, safeguarding his employees



**POWER IN NUMBERS** H&M President/Owner Mark Mazzurco (top) attributes the continued success and growth of his companies to the people that surround him. “As you hire good people, they take on more responsibility,” he says. “They allow you to grow.”

was the catalyst. He wanted to ensure that his summertime employees had work in the landscaping off-season.

“I started the snow removal and ice management business to take care of my guys. I was just trying to make sure that they had money coming in and could feed their families,” he says. “And then I found out that it was one of the most profitable parts in our company.”

H&M Snow Pros services approximately 600 commercial sites every winter. It does this with approximately 130 regular full-time employees.

“We’re really dialed into the larger properties like hospitals and multi-tenant buildings where there’s a lot of people that are coming and going,” says Mazzurco.

In addition to the full-time employees, H&M Snow Pros employs around 150 subcontractors. “We call them partners,” he says.

“They’re the seasonal employees that we pay a premium to because, if you think about it, they get up in the middle of the night and they’re working four or five hours helping to service our clientele.”

To make the logistics work during wintertime, H&M Snow Pros activates about a dozen satellite stations every winter. These are strategically placed, often at or near customer sites, to store material, loaders and trucks. Generally, the number of satellite stations is linked to the number of managers that oversee snow removal operations to cut down on the distances that workers need to travel to their zone in inclement weather.

Mazzurco’s philosophy on snow removal is keeping his employees happy and well taken care of, because it’s a competitive industry.

“Everyone’s got the same snowplow service,” says Mazzurco. “Snow and ice management is a culture and lifestyle. My staff will literally put their lives on hold in the winter. If it’s Thanksgiving and it’s snowing, they’re out working. If



it’s Christmas and it’s snowing, they’re out working. It snowed on Christmas last year. I was out and about delivering coffee, hot chocolate and donuts and supporting the team.”

### People

Mazzurco attributes the continued success and growth of his companies to the people that surround him. He points directly to a decision he made during the Great Recession as a major turning point.

“I really invested heavily in the company in 2008,” says Mazzurco. “We went through that recession and my thought

process was, there are a lot of good people that are out of work and you could probably get them right now. So I went out and started hiring. My brothers thought I was crazy. In 2008, we were doing about \$7 million a year. Now, we’re at nearly \$22 million. The only difference is the people. As you hire good people, they take on more responsibility. They allow you to grow.”

### Data + technology

“I have always been an analytical, historical data kind of guy,” he says. “We capture a lot of information because I’m of the opinion that if you can’t track it,





**LOADING UP** Around the year 2000, H&M Snow Pros invested in pusher boxes, which meant the company's snow removal team could tackle large parking lots, like malls and shopping centers and multi-tenant commercial properties.

you can't control it. If you can't cost it, you can't make money."

That philosophy has driven Mazzurco and his businesses from the very beginning. He knew from the data he had collected that investing in growth during an economic downturn would yield positive results. The same can be said with his embracing of technology, particularly on the snow side of the business.

"It was around the year 2000, when I really got into technology and that's when we invested in pusher boxes," he says. "A standard plow goes on the front of a truck and you roll snow. Pusher boxes allow you to grab more snow and push it to the end of a parking lot. When those first came on the market, we were on the forefront."

Investing in pusher boxes meant H&M Snow Pros could tackle large parking lots, like malls and shopping centers and multi-tenant commercial properties. That has been a major income driver and allows the company to continue investing in people, equipment and trucks. Being willing to utilize and experiment with technology has also showed Mazzurco what works and what doesn't.

"We try to drive efficiencies with technology, not only with GPS, but all the latest and greatest ways to apply de-icing products," says Mazzurco. "We found that some of the stuff on the market just doesn't work for us."

Technology has also allowed Mazzurco more flexibility when it comes to running the business while

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*H&M Landscaping and H&M Snow Pros*

simultaneously being a major value-add for customers.

"All the technologies, like our operating system, are real-time," says Mazzurco. "I can run the snow business from anywhere in the world because I can pull it up and I know exactly where our trucks are. I can send a customer a GPS report saying we were in your

parking lot from this time to that time. It not only helps you with collections, but also helps you with building trust and a relationship with your customer."

### Optimistic for the future

Mazzurco has experienced years of tremendous growth, where his companies have grown 30% year to year.

He's also seen that growth drop off right away. To combat such big swings, Mazzurco manages a realistic controlled growth target of anywhere from 5% to 10% every year. Rather than focusing on tremendous growth numbers, he now emphasizes keeping his customers happy and prioritizes renewals.

"I really track our renewal rates hard, and we try to stay at about 92%," he continues. "In other words, if I have a million dollars of maintenance or snow contracts, I want to renew \$920,000 of that because that tells me I'm providing a good quality service."

"I'm a glass half full guy," says Mazzurco. "I definitely think we've recovered after the pandemic. Our last three years have been really strong. I've got a great team and we've got great relationships." **P**





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