

Texas Legislature Gives Water a Boost!

The 89th Texas Legislative Session (2025) generated significant legislation focused on addressing water supply and infrastructure needs and flood mitigation efforts in Texas, as well as the science and planning that contribute to those efforts. The bills that passed will have a large impact on the work of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)—the state's water and flood planning, science, and financing agency.

The 89th Legislature's work isn't finished, however, as Governor Abbott has [called for a special session](#) to address a variety of issues—including water and flood—that need further attention. The 30-day special session starts on July 21.

What follows in this article are the highlights from the regular session that support the TWDB in fulfilling its mission to ensure a secure water future for Texas.

\$20 billion over 20 years to the Texas Water Fund

Senate Bill (SB) 7 and House Joint Resolution (HJR) 7 were two headliners from the 89th Session. HJR 7 proposes a constitutional amendment that dedicates



Governor Greg Abbott shakes hands with TWDB Chairwomen L'Oreal Stepney after signing SB7 into law

\$1 billion of state sales and use tax revenue annually for 20 years to the Texas Water Fund beginning September 1, 2027. If Texas voters pass Proposition 4 in November, it will help ensure a stable, long-term funding stream for water, wastewater, and flood projects across Texas.

SB 7 updates the statutory framework of the Texas Water Fund to strengthen the capacity of the TWDB to support critical water, wastewater, and flood mitigation needs throughout the state. It also creates the Texas Water Fund Administrative Fund, broadens

(See TEXAS, PAGE 10)



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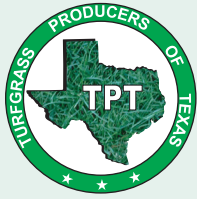
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Gen Z Trades Textbooks for Toolbelts: How To Attract Them to The Turfgrass Industry

- Gen Z has started to be dubbed the 'toolbelt generation' as more of them are forgoing traditional 4-year colleges and pursuing the trades instead.
- In fact, for the third consecutive year, vocational community colleges have had substantial growth in enrollment (+11.7%, +91,000), according to the [National Student Clearinghouse Research Center](#). Since spring 2020, enrollment in trade-focused institutions has increased by almost 20 percent.
- This trend is being driven by several factors, including rising costs of post-secondary education and shrinking white-collar jobs due to AI automation. Dario Amodei, CEO of Anthropic, an AI safety and research company, has [predicted](#) that AI could wipe out half of all entry-level white-collar jobs in the next one to five years.
- Social media has also been boosting the perception of blue-collar jobs. According to Thumbtack's 2024 [Annual Future of the Skilled Trades Report](#), 84% of Gen Zers express a high respect for the skilled trades and 55% are considering a skilled trade career (up 12% from 2023).
- If you want to tap into this promising generation, below are some of the factors to highlight that are attracting younger workers to the trades.

Competitive Pay

- With the cost of a college education more than doubling in the U.S., young workers are eager to find a field that pays well without requiring them to become saddled with six figures of debt.
- Don't let the perception that lawn care and landscaping are low-skill, low-paying jobs hold your company back. Be upfront and share your starting rates for crew members as well as where they can climb to over time.
- Parental pressure can also play a major role in whether Gen Zers pursue a college degree. By getting involved with your local schools and counselors, you can help shift the narrative about the landscape industry and share average salaries for different roles.
- "Guidance counselors are dealing with these students and are starving for information," says Chris Joyce, president of The Joyce Companies, based in Marstons Mills, Massachusetts. "If any of us reached out to our local schools or trade schools, to the guidance department and said you'd be willing to come in and talk about our industry, they want you there in a second."

Job Security and Career Ladders

- Many Gen Zers are considering the trades because they see manual labor as more insulated from the AI threat of replacing their jobs outright. While some may consider this fear overblown, Amodei and others have been sounding the alarm that AI will eliminate millions of
(See PURPOSEFUL, Page 16)

How AI Will Affect HR

By
TODD DOWNING

The future is now. Generative AI (Artificial Intelligence), which can create new content and perform many job functions, continues evolving in every industry. We're fortunate that a smart group of horticulture professionals is helping educate people on utilizing AI in production, marketing, sales, IT, accounting and even customer service.

What about AI's possibilities to enhance Human Resource departments? This is a complex question, as the bridging of AI with human interaction can be concerning. Human Resources is about people and where's the tipping point between using a computer to manage human interaction before we dehumanize the process?

Current applications for AI in Human Resources

The current and near-future application of AI in Human Resources borrows from similar efficiencies AI is supporting in other departments. Most notably in creating and generating communication, such as:

- Job descriptions that translate industry language and create job postings to have a wider impact
- Marketing content that better portrays the positives of your company culture and why you're an employer of choice
- Interview questions based on specific job descriptions, which will save interviewers time and increase the relevance of the question

AI also can improve data analysis and analytics by:

- Identifying trends in employee retention
- Determining ROI for specific investments in headcount, HR Information Systems or other HR initiatives or software expenditures
- Forecasting HR budget
- It can increase efficiency and productivity of HR professionals via:



- Applicant tracking
- Overall task automation of repeated transactional HR responsibilities
- Project management, including employee training and the onboarding process

Areas of concern and potential conflict

AI applications unique to Human Resources are where the balance between human interaction and AI remains conflicting. Of note, increasing the accuracy and speed in identifying and hiring candidates. In theory, we use a job description and skill set keywords. AI is regenerative. Thus, the process of "teaching" the AI software what the right keywords are for a specific job will get better and more accurate. However, this becomes dependent on the resumes or social media bios to include these. Having read thousands of resumes, it's impossible to note all the meaningful responsibilities, expertise or achievements on paper. Thus, how many candidates are still not found? An experienced horticulture industry professional, whether HR or hiring manager, will have the intuition to read enough in a resume to set up a conversation where the missing elements can be assessed in communication.

Several global companies utilize specific AI bots to conduct the first interview with candidates. While time saving is apparent in doing so, this is an application of AI that's polarizing. AI will help with employee professional development with its ability

(See AI, Page 14)

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Labor Department Suspends Contested H-2A Worker Contested Rule

The U.S. Department of Labor has suspended a contested measure that extended protections to H-2A workers who organize to form labor unions.

Components of the rule, “Improving Protections for Workers in Temporary [Agricultural Employment](#) in the United States,” had been enjoined nationwide since December 2024.

On June 20, the Labor Department’s Wage and Hour Division suspended the rule, citing “significant legal uncertainty, inconsistency and operational challenges for farmers lawfully employing H-2A workers.”

The Labor Department said it will not be enforcing the rule effective immediately. The move does not change [existing regulations](#) or limit the division’s authority to enforce H-2A requirements put into place before the 2024 final rule, according to a [news release](#).

In December, a preliminary injunction issued by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi enjoined components of the rule nationwide. Previous rulings in Georgia and Kentucky had stayed the rule in 21 states which had filed suit, along with members of five agricultural associations.

The National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE), which filed suit in Kentucky last September, applauded the announcement.

“NCAE and our members were shocked and offended by the promulgation of the Worker Protection Rule,” Michael Marsh, NCAE president and CEO, said in a news release. “America’s farm and ranch families care about their workers and work each day to ensure that [their business operations](#) are in compliance with local, state and federal regulations at significant expense.

“From the outset, it was clear that the pejorative nature and tenor of the rule was intended to feed and foster false and inappropriate narratives about America’s agricultural community. America’s farmers and ranchers are excited and relieved that this administration put this rule out to pasture.”

The rule, which took effect in June 2024, shielded migrant workers with H-2A temporary work visas who organize to form labor unions and against wage theft and trafficking. Opponents argued it was unconstitutional and beyond the Labor Department’s

statutory authority, imposing unlawful demands on agricultural employers and creating disruption across the farming industry.

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Special Session Brings Water & Housing Policy Back into Focus

By CURTIS SMITH



The 2nd special session of the 89th Texas Legislature adjourned in the early hours of September 4 with one bill on the Governor’s desk that directly touches the green industry: **Senate Bill 14 (Perry, R-Lubbock)**. SB 14 would require cities and other local entities to grant **credits against water and wastewater impact fees** when a project installs eligible **water-reuse or conservation** measures that exceed baseline requirements. In simple terms: if a development verifiably saves water or reduces wastewater load, a portion of the impact fees should come off the top.

Why this matters for our industry

Impact fees are one-time charges assessed on new development to help pay for the capacity growth requires—pipes, pumps, treatment, and related infrastructure. They’re intended to keep growth from shifting costs to existing ratepayers. Over the last decade, these fees have **grown substantially** in many Texas markets, and that affects **housing affordability** and **project budgets**—issues that ripple into plant selection, irrigation design, and landscape installation timelines.

What it costs today (illustrative examples):

- **Austin:** about \$7,700 per single-family home
- **San Antonio:** roughly \$7,343–\$11,528, depending on location and elevation
- **Houston:** about \$1,618
- **Fort Worth:** about \$2,999

While each city uses its own formulas and schedules, the point is clear: what used to be a few hundred dollars can now be several thousand per home. On a typical Texas home (~\$300,000), that’s a noticeable line item.

What SB 14 actually does

SB 14 keeps local impact fee programs in place but requires cities to offer **fee credits** when a developer provides **above-minimum** conservation or reuse features. The bill does **not** dictate a one-size-fits-all plant list or specific landscape designs. Instead, it leaves it to cities to publish **transparent procedures** that define:

- Which conservation/reuse measures are eligible
- How credits are calculated and verified
- How applicants document savings and receive the credit

That local flexibility matters. It means communities can tailor credits to their water supply realities—drought stage, reuse opportunities, soil conditions—while offering builders a predictable path to fee relief if they go beyond code.

The opportunity—and the caution—for turfgrass & landscape

For turfgrass producers, irrigators, and landscape contractors, SB 14 creates a **performance-based on-ramp** to highlight the measurable value of modern practices. Cities could recognize, for example:

- **Turf variety:** Proven varieties of turf that require less water.
- **High-efficiency irrigation** (pressure regulation, matched precipitation, soil-moisture sensors, smart controllers)
- **Subsurface or zone-optimized irrigation** that reduces overall demand
- **Soil building/engineered soils** that improve infiltration and plant water-holding capacity
- **On-site reuse**, such as rainwater harvesting or laundry-to-landscape graywater, or connections to purple-pipe non-potable systems
- **Documented landscape water budgets** that meet or beat local performance targets

The caution is straightforward: if local programs lean too heavily on **prescriptive checklists** or **fixed plant lists**, credits could unintentionally narrow design choice or penalize proven turf systems. Our industry should advocate for **performance metrics** (actual gallons saved, verified demand reductions) rather than blanket species mandates. That keeps room for **high-performing turf** in the right places, with the right soils and irrigation, while still meeting conservation goals.

What to watch next

- **Local rulemaking.** Expect updates to impact-fee ordinances and the publication of credit “menus.” Industry voices should be at the table to help shape pragmatic, measurable options.

(See **BOTTOM**, Page 21)

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Texas Legislature Dedicates 20-yr Water Assistance

(Continued from Page 1)

project eligibility under the New Water Supply for Texas Fund, and increases the amount of financial assistance that is potentially available to communities through the Economically Distressed Areas Program.

Other funding for water infrastructure, administration, and research

While SB 7 and HJR 7 may have received most of the media attention this session, the legislature provided other funding that will help strengthen Texas' water infrastructure as well. House Bill 500 appropriates over \$2.6 billion in one-time funding to the TWDB in multiple areas, including the following:

- \$1.03 billion for water supply and infrastructure projects
- \$881 million from the Texas Water Fund
- \$581 million for specific local water projects outlined in the state budget
- \$131 million to the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds—which ensures those funds will receive hundreds of millions more in federal grants
- \$1.1 million for IT risk mitigation measures to enhance security and operational stability
- \$2.7 million for data center services so the TWDB can maintain its obligations under the state's shared services model

In addition, SB 1 provides funding for new employees to help the TWDB administer these funds as well as \$7.5 million in the General Appropriations Act to fund grants to groundwater conservation districts for research, science, and data collection projects.

Rural and economically distressed community assistance

The passage of SB 7 expands financial assistance available through the Economically Distressed Areas Program, which offers grants and loans to help extend water supply and wastewater services to underserved

and low-income communities that lack access to basic infrastructure. Specifically, the bill increases the TWDB's bonding authority to \$100 million annually and raises the cap on the grant component of funding through the program from 70 to 90 percent.

Additionally, \$1.5 million per year for the next two years will go to the Water Utilities Technical Assistance Program, which provides Texas water and wastewater utilities with the financial, managerial, and technical assistance necessary to apply for financial assistance from the TWDB.

Also, SB 971 corrects a scrivener's error made during the 88th Legislature in defining the term "rural political subdivision." The updated definition standardizes eligibility across TWDB financial assistance programs and explicitly excludes political subdivisions with service areas whose population exceeds 50,000.

TexMesonet expansion

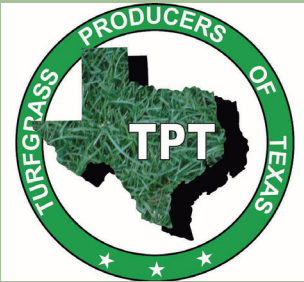
The legislature provided nearly \$1 million for the TexMesonet network, a statewide resource for hydrometeorological data benefitting weather forecasting, flood preparedness, drought monitoring, wildfire management, water resource planning, and similar efforts. This funding will help expand the TexMesonet network by approximately 25 stations and get Texas closer to achieving statewide hydrometeorological coverage. It also includes the development of a statewide evapotranspiration dataset vital for agricultural and conservation planning.

Other notable water-related legislative changes include the following:

- HB 29 addresses water loss at large, municipally owned utilities and requires those utilities to create and implement comprehensive water loss mitigation plans to improve their conservation efforts.
- HB 2078 revises joint groundwater planning requirements in Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code to increase transparency and accountability for achieving desired future conditions in groundwater management areas.
- SB 1261 authorizes the TWDB to offer 40-

(See WATER FUND Page 23)

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Individual – Largest Slot Trout, Largest Slot Red, Largest Flounder
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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Sunday, October 12th	6:30 p.m.	Dinner, Fireman’s Hall, Matagorda
Monday, October 13th	6:00 a.m.	Tournament Begins
	1:00 p.m.	Weigh-in Begins
	2:00 p.m.	Anglers must be back on the dock at Matagorda Harbor for official weigh-in
	2:30 p.m.	Lunch & Awards Presentation Fireman’s Hall, Matagorda

Tournament Rules

1. Fish must be caught on rod and reel on day of tournament.
2. You may use artificial or live bait.
3. No more than four people plus guide per team.
4. Teams can leave from any place at any time.
5. Teams may not start fishing before 6:00 a.m.
6. Teams must be back on the dock at the Harbor Store by 2:00 p.m.
7. Fish must be legal length to qualify (no oversized reds or trout).
8. Fish scored by weight. In the event of a tie, tiebreaker will be first weighed in.
9. Teams can only win one place, but individuals can win several categories.
10. Guides are allowed and can fish as a team member for stringer weight but are not eligible for individual categories.
11. Prizes will be awarded following the lunch. **(Four prizes per team)**
12. In case of bad weather, money will be refunded.
13. This is a fun tournament and will be based on honor.

Texas Housing Insight | July 2025

Home sales activity continued to build momentum in July, extending June's strong rebound with a 3.3 percent year-over-year (YoY) increase.

July Home Sales

▲ **3.3% YOY**

Home Price Index

▼ **0.4% YOY**

Home sales activity continued to build momentum in July, extending June's strong rebound with a 3.3 percent year-over-year (YoY) increase. For the first time in 2025, year-to-date (YTD) sales surpassed those of 2024. Forward-looking indicators, including pending sales data, point to sustained momentum into August.

Supply pressures persist. However, the imbalance between inventory and constrained affordability has created favorable pricing conditions for buyers, with many seizing on the shifting market dynamics, contributing to rising sales. Amid the pricing pressures, average home prices in Texas recorded a small YoY decline.

In the post-spring buying season, inventory continues to climb to the cyclical high despite slowing new-listing activity. This means significant inventory pressure going into the fall and winter months. With average days-on-market among active inventory nearing 90 days, many sellers are motivated to close a deal soon.

Inventory levels for low-priced entry-level

homes remain notably higher than those in the mid- and upper-tier segments. Since June, while inventory for high-priced homes (above \$800,000) has declined following the peak spring and

Active Inventory

▲ **27.6% YOY**

Single-Family Permits

▼ **6.9% YTD**

summer buying season, entry-level inventory (below \$250,000) has instead seen a more pronounced increase.

On the flip side, elevated inventory in the low-priced entry-level segment is creating greater availability for first-time and modest-income buyers, many of whom are expected to re-enter the market as mortgage rates have declined. This week, the Federal Reserve announced a 25-basis point policy rate cut in response to concerns over a softening labor market and downside risks to employment and economic growth. Anticipation of the cut had already driven mortgage rates sharply lower from their spring peak of 7 percent to a 12-month low in the low 6 percent range. More affordable borrowing costs are expected to draw buyers back into the market.

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By Manuel Chavez PRD

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AI Affects on HR

(Continued from Page 4)

to answer what career path a professional's current skills and experiences may lead to. It can identify what additional training or education will help that professional progress forward.

Human Resource professionals in other industries are lauding the positive impact on the performance review and engagement process. Please note AI is NOT being used to determine a person's performance assessment. This will always require human judgment, empathy and the right interpersonal communication. While better suited again for larger organizations, AI will compile performance data faster so that the manager can make human decisions more accurately and quickly.

"Passive candidates" and AI's role

Passive candidates are professionals who aren't looking at a career change. Here's why AI isn't cutting it:

- Relationships STILL matter: Passive candidates respond to people they trust within their

network or contacts that exhibits that the person reaching out knows what they do, their industry and has common connections. These professionals will only respond to a genuine conversation, not an AI-generated message.

- No emotional connection: AI cannot provide empathy or have a real conversation about someone's goals and concern. That's where recruiters shine—listening, understanding and building trust.
- Personalized communication and tone: AI is great for sending out mass, generic or more transactional communication. Passive candidates, though, will only respond when the message meets them where they are. The tone of communication matters. Be "real" and write in your own words. Many smart people have shared they can quickly identify AI-generated communication versus what was individually written by a person.

How to gain passive candidate trust

1. Use AI for research, not outreach. Let AI help you gather insights, but keep outreach personal.
2. Build long-term relationships. Communication that's authentic in getting to know their career goals is critical. Follow up with them, share industry-related information that relates to what they do and acknowledge their achievements.
3. Be discreet. Make confidentiality a priority and be clear about it.
4. Keep it "real." Be available to answer questions and offer guidance. Show you care about their career long term.
5. It's about them—not you. Customize your communication to match their skills and goals. Make it about them, not just the job.

Current risks of AI in hiring and personnel management

What are the risks associated with utilizing AI in the hiring process and managing individuals? A recent LinkedIn survey provides insight into how candidates and employees view the use of AI.

Overall, 19% of respondents reported that they "Mostly trust" AI-driven decisions and 7% indicated that they "Completely trust" these decisions. A significant proportion, 43%, remained neutral on the

(See *TRUST*, Page 20)



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Are You Guilty of These Common Mistakes of Digital Recruiting?

By JILL ODOM

For many, recruiting employees is a never-ending challenge. From a low response rate to poor candidates applying, it can be frustrating, to say the least.

However, reviewing your current practices can reveal areas for improvement and, in turn, boost your recruitment pipeline.

Episodic Recruiting

The cardinal mistake of poor digital recruiting is only bothering to seek out job candidates when there is a dire need.

“Many companies wait until they’re desperate, which leads to lowering standards, whereas they could be more selective when operating in an ‘always hiring’ mindset,” says Carlos del Pozo, CEO of [Team Engine](#), based in Boulder, Colorado.

Instead of treating recruiting like a task, del Pozo suggests seeing it as an ongoing process. It’s hard to build a consistent employer brand when you’re only posting sporadically.

Poor Company Branding

Tito Caceres, managing director of [Bloom Talent Solutions](#), based in Miami, Florida, says you cannot overlook your digital presence.

“If you’re not standing out and your branding is weak, they’re looking at you as someone that’s just not staying ahead of the curve,” Caceres says.

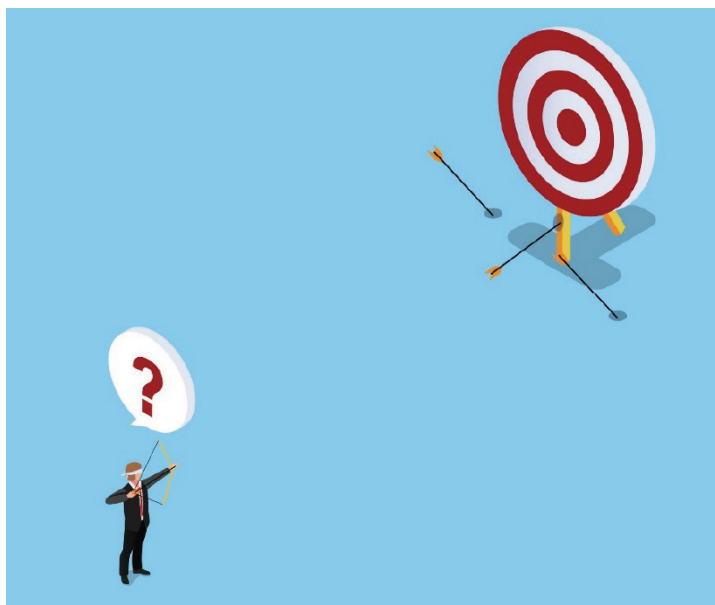
Your branding should highlight your company culture as well as what makes your organization unique. You need to have a compelling reason why someone should choose your business over a competitor.

“If you’re looking to attract top talent into your organization, you need to recognize that nowadays, the first thing anyone does is go on your website, and it’s so instant,” Caceres says.

Failing to Personalize Postings

Caceres says that too often job descriptions read like contracts.

“There’s really no soul, no hook,” Caceres says. “Why should you join us? Give specifics about your company and things that are different from your competitors. Every company is different in this industry. I don’t care who you are, even if you do the same thing. Be more specific, and give it a little bit more personalization, specifically job descriptions.”



Caceres also says typically companies are casting too broad a net instead of attracting the people who are going to be a good fit for their specific culture.

Del Pozo says a lot of times companies make the mistake of advertising the job by posting job

(See *PROACTIVE*, Page 19)



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Purposeful Work Paramount to Gen Zers

(Continued from Page 3)

white-collar entry-level jobs. This will effectively break the lower rungs of the career ladder as companies stop listing new jobs, cease backfilling old ones and replace workers with AI agents.

While you may utilize robotic mowers or AI to streamline some of your processes, at the end of the day, you still need boots on the ground to get the work done on a daily basis. Lean into this fact and share how your crews make a difference on properties regularly.

- Outline how your organization offers a clear career path, enabling young people to acquire the skills necessary for advancement within the company.

Meaningful Work

- Additionally, job satisfaction matters greatly to Gen Zers. They don't want to simply collect a paycheck. They want to know that what they

do matters. As stewards of the environment, this is one competitive advantage against some of the other trades available.

- “Young people feel excited when they learn about our mission and vision, and see the work we do in the community,” says Elizabeth Elliott, owner of Himmel’s Landscape and Garden Center, based in Pasadena, Maryland. “They know that we walk the walk.”
- Another reason Gen Zers are interested in the trades is their dislike of being stuck inside all day, staring at a computer screen, which has driven them towards blue-collar work.
- While trades like plumbing and welding allow them to work with their hands, the landscape industry has the added bonus of allowing them to work outside. Many who have made their way to this field have noted that one of their favorite aspects is seeing the fruits of their labor after a long day.



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Executive Director's Message

By **BRENT BATCHELOR**



Ten Year Run

It is hard to believe that as of August 15th, 2025, I have been the Turfgrass Producers of Texas Executive Director for 10 years! It seems like only yesterday that John Cosper called me and said he was retiring from the position and asked if I would be interested in applying for the position. I said I would like to apply and after an interview with the board I was offered the position.

Although there were some twists and turns Kelli and I enjoyed the opportunity to work with a great group of folks. I thank John & Dianna Cosper often for setting up the processes and procedures that we still use today and for being a phone call away in the first year to help answer questions. I would also like to thank the TPT Board of Directors and the past Presidents for their guidance and input over the years.

Some of the things I am most proud of are.

- The total re-vamp of the texasgrass.com website
- An online payment integration for members
- Continuing to produce the Pallet newsletter
- Continuing to conduct the Fishing & Golf Tournament
- Keeping the Annual Meeting a Trade Show relevant

I also want to thank our business partners for their contributions and support.

Market Slow Down

I am sure you have noticed a slowdown in sales over the past few quarters. I'm not an economist but here are my thoughts on what is happening. Since the bulk of grass sales are to residential properties, we will use the housing market and the builders as our parameter and the Federal Reserve as our control entity.

The Federal Reserve sole purpose is to keep the economy on the road and running not to slow and not to fast. The two things they study are labor and inflation. The only lever they can operate is

the federal funds rate that influences interest rates.

The U.S. economy is arguably the most robust and resilient economy in history, and the Texas economy continues to shine in the state category. For illustration purposes I will compare the U.S. Economy to a high-end sports car and since it is the United States, I will use the Corvette as my example. Our car, like the economy, is built for speed and stability.

Permit me to wander back in time to 2019 when everything seemed to be moving along at an even pace, our corvette is idling along, and the gas pedal is just lightly pressed.

Enter the Pandemic and all the things that came along with it. The economy and our Corvette jolted to a stop because of the orders to stay at home. As time passed the federal reserve did what they are supposed to do, they lowered interest rates and, in this case, implemented emergency cuts to get the fed rate to near zero. The low rates were like putting the pedal to the floor on our Corvette, plus the Federal Government printed more money and sent it to us in the form of payments. This combination of low interest and new money put our Corvette into overdrive, and the economy was off to the races! We saw this spur the housing market and real estate into a rarely seen frenzy of buyers bidding over asking and sellers basically holding an action for houses. Our friends, the builders, took full advantage and ramped up new construction to a blinding pace. Turf producers sold a lot of grass and inventory fell. This combined with the big February freeze in 2021 dropped inventory even more.

Fast forward to 2022 our Corvette is racing along, and the economy is racing along with us. But the inflation was also running rampant and the Federal Reserve needed to act. So, instead of letting up on the gas pedal they slammed on the brakes by raising interest rates to slow down the economy. Our Corvette decelerated but the momentum carried in the housing market for a short time as builders bought down rates to clean out existing stocks and filled in some houses to complete projects, But the fix was working.

Home sales in 2023-today have been the lowest on record! Lower than after the 2008 crash or any other time in recorded history. However, the economy

(See DIRECTOR'S, Page 21)

MARKETING MATTERS

Get More Google Reviews

By STACIE ZINN ROBERTS

In today's competitive Google-driven marketplace, the most powerful form of customer testimonial is the Google Review.

What is a Google Review?

A Google Review is a process that allows customers to praise your company or lodge a complaint online. These reviews show up when your company lands as the top hit in a Google search, appears with your listing on a Google Map, or when someone types in your company name directly into Google. Managed through your Google My Business Profile, (yeah, that's a lot of Googles in one paragraph), Google Reviews are the new gold standard for customers doing comparative online shopping for products and services.

For all of this to work together seamlessly, it's important that you set up your Google My Business Profile before you can start asking for reviews. The service is free but it will take some investment of time on your part to set it up. It's here that you'll provide your business hours, website, phone number, photos, and location info so they're visible to customers on Google.

Why You Want Google Reviews

I agree that a 24/7 online complaint box could open your company up to negative reviews, but the rewards outweigh the risks. And, let's face it, this is simply how business is conducted these days. If you don't have a Google My Business account and zero reviews, it could make your company look outdated and unprofessional. If your farm is selling to homeowners in Gen X, Y, and Z, which is basically everyone, Google Reviews are expected when new customers shop for products and services.

How to Get Google Reviews

As in real life, the most straightforward way to get anything is to ask for it. The same goes for Google Reviews. If you want your current customers to share



their honest feedback on the quality of your sod or the professionalism of your installation, ask them. Google makes it easy to generate a link or QR code that guides customers directly to the right place to leave a review.

Follow these steps:

[Go to your Business Profile](https://business.google.com/) at <https://business.google.com/>

Select Read reviews > Get more reviews

Share the link or QR code with your customers

Once you have these tools in place, here's what to do next:

- Insert the link into your email signature line. Below your name and contact info, add a line that says, Leave Us a Review. Hyperlink those words in your email signature so that when clicked, it goes directly to the review page in Google My Business.
- Generate a digital newsletter with a few sentences requesting your customers leave a review
- Add the link to social media posts
- Print the QR code on your invoices

Why Reply to Google Reviews

When Google Reviews come in, it's important that you or someone on your team replies to them in a reasonable amount of time. Google expects you to reply to every review, even if it's just to say thank you. It's better to reply with a more personal note, but do reply. Be sure to handle complaints in a respectful manner, say we're sorry there's an issue, then follow up by phone or email to resolve the issue.

For step-by-step instructions and easy-to-follow video tutorials, go to [Google.com](https://www.google.com/business/learning-center/) and search "Google Business Profile Learning Center." For additional help, contact me directly at stacie@whartsyouravocado.com.

Proactive Sourcing Key to Success

(Continued from Page 15)

descriptions instead of creating job ads.

“Job advertisements should lead with the company’s unique employer proposition – its values, work culture, and/or opportunities for growth – not lead with all the requirements and disqualifiers,” del Pozo says. “The goal should be to have a lot of motivated applicants, not just the folks who are applying to every job in sight.”

Caceres says featuring a career path in your job descriptions could make a huge difference in whether you attract better talent as many companies are neglecting that aspect.

Overreliance on Job Postings

You also cannot simply create a posting on a job board and call it a day.

“People are just posting and waiting, instead of being proactive and sourcing and selling their company,” Caceres says.

Mike Voories, founder and CEO of [Business Resources One](#), based in Brighton, Michigan, agrees you shouldn’t limit your approach to posting jobs online and relying on actively searching individuals.

“We post jobs too, but consider this going after the low-hanging fruit – sometimes we get lucky and find a great candidate who’s actively looking for a new job,” Voories says. “A large majority of our best candidates come from passive recruiting. Using digital tools to tell the world you have an opening isn’t enough. The tools and technologies available today are quite powerful and are only getting better. My advice is to leverage technology to locate and engage ideal candidates instead of waiting for them to apply.”

Slow Response Rate

Once you actually have candidates applying, don’t squander these relationships by keeping applicants in limbo.

“Candidates that are good, they’re off the market in days, not weeks,” Caceres says.

Setting up automations or guidelines for how quickly your recruiting team should respond to candidates can make a serious impression. Caceres says frequently, with skilled labor, whoever reaches out first is the company that will end up hiring that employee.

“Text messaging works especially well to reach people quickly and keep them engaged,” del Pozo says. “We’ve also seen companies boost their hiring results

and ROI on job board spend significantly by using automation to make it scalable and consistent.”

Lack of Performance Tracking

Don’t fly blind with your digital recruiting efforts. Track the drop-off points, conversion rates and the time it takes to fill a role. All these metrics will help your team determine what you’re doing well, along with what could use improvement.

Terry Shaffer, co-founder and CEO of [Summit Lawn and Landscape](#), based in Grandview, Missouri, says they measure and track all of their efforts through the Team Engine platform.

Caceres recommends hiring someone with expertise in technology who can effectively integrate various digital recruiting tools into your business.

“If you hire one of these people, your recruiting is going to increase exponentially,” Caceres says. “Don’t just think that you can do it on your own. It’s time-consuming, and I do think that there’s a massive opportunity in it.”



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Trust in AI Decisions are Mixed Among Users

(Continued from Page 14)

subject. Meanwhile, 23% expressed that they “Trust a little” and 8% reported that they “Do not trust at all” the accuracy of AI-driven decision-making in hiring.

- **Hiring bias:** Inputting the data of a perfect candidate, especially when replicating a current strong performer, historical job description or a subset of top employees lends itself to hiring the same demographic, same thinking and same background individual. Diversity in skills, thoughts and backgrounds is critical to company growth. Companies could find this counter to their efforts.
- **Ability to assess for behaviors:** Is an AI bot capable of the proper human interaction to make a decision that considers human soft skills? Picture yourself as a candidate being interviewed by an AI bot— how well do you think you would interview and how would this leave you feeling about that company?
- **HR compliance:** Human Resources regulations and laws are constantly evolving at the federal, state and municipal levels. How AI is utilized in hiring and helping HR manage employees will have to be considered, and rushing into its use without properly inputting AI data to account for compliance will lead to issues. For example, currently nine states and six major cities have enacted Pay Transparency Laws in the hiring process and internally with employees, with more coming sooner than later. AI is not capable of providing accurate data on Human Resource regulations and laws currently.
- **Intellectual property and confidentiality protection:** Although AI can generate content closely resembling human output, it is not human. And since intellectual property (IP) in the U.S. focuses explicitly on non-physical creations or assets made by humans, AI presents a major challenge for legal disputes over patents and IP ownership, namely who owns AI-generated content.

Legal considerations for use of AI

1. **Discrimination laws.** Wherever AI is a factor in employment decisions, there’s also exposure to employment discrimination. If there’s a

statistically significant disparity in decisions involving AI, the potential for a disparate impact claim under Title VII or other statutes are at risk.

2. **Other employment law.** AI can be used to test integrity. However, such uses may trigger exposure under the law, which limits using lie detector tests for pre-employment screening or during employment.

AI can be used to measure individual employee productivity or activity to determine if an employee is working properly and/or achieving individual KPIs. These systems may send real-time alerts to employers upon detecting that an employee is not “working” and thus tempt employers to use those records to limit pay, which may lead to wage and hour violations. AI state-specific laws. As of the end of 2024, 113 state bills have been enacted into law, covering areas such as high-risk AI uses, digital replicas, deepfakes and government AI applications. More laws are anticipated in 2025. [GO HERE](#) to see states with enacted AI legislation.

How to prepare for the future of AI in Human Resources

Overcome the fear of AI replacing human jobs by beginning to play with and explore AI being the solution to how it can eliminate mundane HR tasks they don’t want to do to improve efficiency and job satisfaction. HR leaders will continue to play an influential role in how we keep the emphasis on humans in Human Resources. Get out in front of the right HR application of AI and be the steward of your employees’ careers and company culture. While generative AI will continue its progress in being utilized by Human Resources in the horticulture industry, it’ll never replace the HUMAN in Human Resources. At the end of the day, professionals want to work for an authentic company. Employees will stay and flourish at companies with a positive interpersonal culture, and companies emphasizing human interaction will continue to be the most successful. GT

Best Practices for HR Teams Using AI

(See, *BEST*, Page 23)

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Director's Message –

(Continued from Page 17)

overall remained strong with inflation slowing down and job growth holding steady.

What is next? The Federal Reserve will meet again in September to talk rates. The latest Jobs report shows the labor numbers are turning South and although inflation is above ideal a rate cut is expected. The magic number seems to be 6% for home sales to pick up and builders to start building again. So, time will tell.

On another note, you may have heard that President Trump is putting pressure on the Fed to lower rates and he gets to pick a new fed chair in 2026, It does look like rates are headed down but if labor stabilizes and inflation ticks up the rates could tick back up

That was way too much information, but I hope it was useful.

As always let me know if you need anything & I hope to see you at the fishing or golf event.

Bottom Line –

(Continued from Page 8)

Bottom Line

SB 14 won't solve Texas's water or housing challenges on its own, but it **nudges policy toward rewarding water-smart development**. If cities implement **performance-driven** credits, the green industry can showcase how modern turf systems, improved soils, and efficient irrigation deliver **quantifiable water savings**—supporting utilities, protecting landscapes, and keeping design flexibility intact. As implementation moves forward, engagement from turfgrass producers and landscape professionals will be essential to ensure the final programs reflect **real-world performance**, not one-size-fits-all prescriptions.



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Best Practices for AI Users

(Continued from Page 21)

- Geography: Be aware of your state and municipal laws.
- Risk financing: Employers will want contractual protection from their AI vendors. Ideally, indemnity, but at the very least representations that can be reliably enforced. And, if there's EPLI or other insurance, what's covered?
 - Cost-benefit assessment: There's a risk in AI from both AI-specific statutes and general employment statutes, but also rewards. For each AI use in HR, there will need to be a considered judgment of whether the rewards are concrete and exceed the risks.
 - Diligence: Vet outside vendors to ensure that they've adopted certified procedures designed to promote non-discriminatory outputs.
 - Customization: Explore whether AI vendors

(or your own programmers) can customize AI programs to focus on a limited number of non-discriminatory candidate characteristics that matter most to your organization.

- Anticipation: Anticipate the need for and incorporate processes for accommodating candidates with disabilities or other special needs.
- Vigilance: Running the numbers on a RIF is now the standard operating procedure. The same should be done with AI assessments. Early notice of problems permits correcting small problems before those become immense. Testing also ensures that qualified candidates aren't unintentionally excluded. Continue to test after implementation.

Todd Downing (t Downing@bhcgagroup.com) is a Managing Partner for BEST Human Capital Advisory Group and leads the Horticulture & Green Industry executive search and advisory services. He has more than 30 years of experience in the industry and a passion for supporting its continued professional growth.

Water Fund to Impact Variety of Issues

(Continued from Page 10)

- year loan terms through the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas for water supply projects recommended in the state water plan with combined capital costs of at least \$750 million, which enhances the financial viability of long-term, high-impact investments.
- SB 1967 expands the TWDB's ability to award financial assistance under the Water Loan Assistance Fund, the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas, and the Flood Infrastructure Fund by broadening project eligibility and prioritization criteria.

The investments made during the 89th legislative session set the state up well for the future. Providing the TWDB with additional financial and administrative support ensures the agency is better equipped than ever to ensure that Texans have access to sufficient, clean, and affordable water supplies moving forward.

Turfgrass Producers of Texas

ANNUAL MEETING

We are trying something different for the TPT Annual Meeting! We are partnering with the Texas Turfgrass Association for this year's TPT Annual Meeting. More details to come.



Date: December 10, 2025



Time: At NOON

Location: Embassy Suites by Hilton Denton Convention Center

More Information:

979.533.9750
brent@texasgrass.com





Turfgrass Producers of Texas
Fishing Tournament October 13th
2025 Dinner October 12th Matagorda
Golf Tournament November 11th
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We are excited to announce the 2025 TPT Fishing and Golf tournaments are set!!! Registration and details will be out latter this Fall.



Turfgrass Producers of Texas
Looking forward to seeing you !

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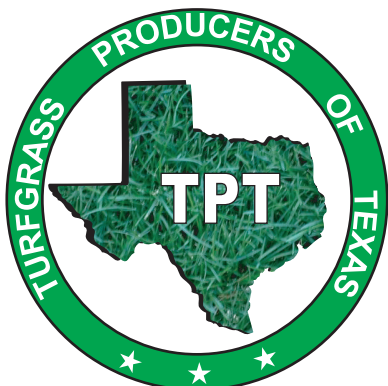
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