

Rental

PRODUCT NEWS

January 2006

Cygnus Publishing



One man, one machine

A compact utility loader and its attachment package play an integral role in the success of Dominion Rental

Page 12

**Need a
new niche?**

Decorative concrete could be just what you're looking for

Page 28

FLEXIBLE rentals, FAVORABLE returns

Rental center owner/operator builds business with easy-to-use equipment and unique rental model



We all know that running a rental center is not easy. It takes dedicated individuals to continually offer exceptional customer service while withstanding the long hours and hard work that come with the job. It also takes high-quality, reliable equipment that gets the job done.

Operating a one-man rental center is especially demanding. Without other employees to assist with maintaining equipment or even answering the phone, this type of owner/operator must have a true passion for the business. He or she also needs equipment that is as versatile as it is durable.

As the owner and sole employee of Dominion Rental Center in Chesapeake, VA, Shane Morrison handles every aspect of his business, from customer service, to machine maintenance, to equipment purchasing. He began his career as a small-engine mechanic for a rental center, then moved on to manage a store and even had the opportunity to help a fellow rental professional open a new facility.

"I'd pretty much done everything in the rental business except for owning, and now here I am as an owner," Morrison says. "And I love it."

In business for three years, Dominion Rental Center serves both contractors and do-it-yourselfers. Because the company rents to both professionals and novices, Morrison builds his fleet with equipment that is simple to operate and gets a customer's job done efficiently and effectively. It's also necessary that the equipment be easy for Morrison to maintain and provide opportunity to further build his business. The less time he spends on the details of running his company, the more time he can dedicate to his customers.

Shane Morrison is the owner and sole employee of Dominion Rental Center in Chesapeake, VA.

Why not try a CUL?

While looking for a new piece of equipment to add to his fleet, a fellow rental center operator suggested Morrison demo the Toro Dingo TX 413 compact utility loader, which is smaller and weighs less than larger loaders and is offered with a trailer exclusively through Toro dealers. After Mason Morton of STI-Turf Care Equipment, the Chesapeake-area Toro Dingo dealer, showed Morrison the potential of the compact utility loader, he determined that the unit fit his customers' needs as well as his business model.

The machine's simple operation was one of the main features Morrison knew would appeal to his customers. "There are a lot of homeowners out there who are a bit scared about operating equipment, but that's what makes the TX 413 ideal," he says. "When an inexperienced customer realizes how easy it is to operate, it gives them the confidence they need to attack their projects."

Not only does Morrison take the time to show his customers how to run the unit, he goes out of his way to offer a few words of wisdom as well.

"I try to go beyond just telling a customer how to operate the machine," he says. "I take into account the experience level of my customers — including contractors — and I try to enhance the rental by giving them some sound words of advice. I feel it's my responsibility to tell people how to use the equipment

"There are a lot of homeowners out there who are a bit scared about operating equipment, but that's what makes the TX 413 ideal, ... When an inexperienced customer realizes how easy it is to operate, it gives them the confidence they need to attack their projects."

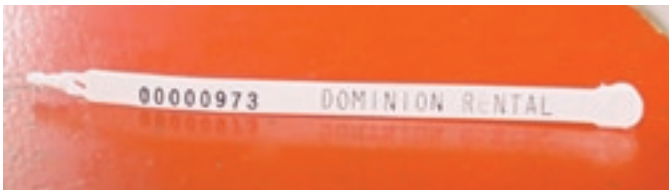
— *Shane Morrison, owner,
Dominion Rental Center,
Chesapeake, VA*



efficiently, not just rent them a piece of equipment. I think that's what keeps people coming back to Dominion Rental Center. It's the personal service and going the extra mile for the customer."

Customer-controlled rentals

Toro's packaging of the TX 413 as a "system" also appealed to Morrison. The base unit is sold with a trailer package that contains the most popular attachments for the machine, including a bucket, auger power head and two-foot trencher. The trailer package improves transportation, storage and maintenance of the equipment, ultimately increasing the utilization of the machine.



Dominion Rental Center places custom-printed tags on the latch pins for the Dingo TX 413 attachments.

Additionally, a mid-size sport utility vehicle can tow the 3,500-pound GVW trailer.

"I liked the whole package Toro offered for rental operations," he says. "It was a great way for me to get the most for my money." Morrison has since purchased numerous additional attachments for the loader, including two augers, pallet forks, a ground leveler and a multi-purpose tool.

In fact, Toro's packaging inspired Morrison to take the concept one step further. He created a unique rental model that benefits his customers while boosting his bottom line.

Dominion Rental Center's standard TX 413 rental price includes the compact utility loader unit and bucket. When a customer picks up the machine, however, it's loaded on a trailer with not only the bucket, but all of the unit's other attachments as well. Morrison places a specially printed tag on each attachment's latch pin. If a customer desires to use an attachment other than the bucket they've rented, they simply break off the tag and are charged for the use of the additional attachment when they return the unit. Customers are truly in control of their rental, since every attachment is available at their fingertips.

"I really wanted to be able to accommodate my customers, and I think they enjoy this rental method because it allows them to be more flexible," he says. "If they decide they want a particular attachment, they don't have to run back to my store to pick it up. They can just pull off the tag and use it. Everything is at the jobsite, and they have the power to make their own decisions as to which attachments to use."

Morrison believes this rental model not only saves time for his customers, but makes his job more efficient as well. "I don't need to run a different attachment out to a jobsite, because it's all with the customer," he says. "I can stay at the store to work on maintenance jobs or help out whoever might come in."

Plus, since a renter returns the compact utility loader and all attachments on one trailer, Morrison isn't required to repackage the unit for the next customer. After checking over the equipment for potential maintenance needs and replacing any tags that have been removed, the system is ready for the next rental.

Good things come in small packages

The versatility of the unit and its multiple attachments have empowered Morrison's customers to tackle a wide variety of jobs.

"People are doing everything from backfilling around poles, cutting out pathways and laying pavers to fixing drainage issues, planting trees and doing fence work," he says. Having all the attachments available to use often inspires customers to not only complete the project for which the unit was rented, but also take on additional projects that might not have been considered initially.

The efficiency of the machine often surprises customers as well. "Customers can't believe just how fast this product gets the job done. They usually end up overestimating how long they'll need it and end up bringing it back early," he says. "In fact, it gets kind of hard to make reservations for the machine, but it's a good problem to have."

Since Morrison doesn't have any employees, it's also important the equipment in his fleet be easy to maintain. "I'm very small compared to a lot of other operations around here, and I can only do so much with the limited resources of just myself," he says. "I try to have equipment here that's going to go out and come back in without any major issues."

"The unit has helped introduce more people to my business. It's such a unique tool that when someone rents it, their neighbors go over to ask about it, and the next thing I know, the neighbor rents it. Word of mouth has worked to increase rentals."

— *Shane Morrison,*
Dominion Rental Center

The TX 413 fits Morrison's need for easily maintained equipment. "The machine is designed to be very accommodating for maintenance," he says. "It's very quick to change oil or the hydraulic filter." Fast maintenance means the unit can be serviced quickly to get it into a customer's hands.

Morrison sometimes finds it difficult to schedule maintenance for the unit since it



Mason Morton of STI-Turf Care Equipment, the Chesapeake, VA Toro dealer, helped Morrison, right, find the right compact utility loader for his business.

is rented out so often. "For the past three months, the machine has been rented out nearly every day," he says. "It's hard for me to squeeze in an oil change because it's always gone."

The addition of the compact utility loader to Dominion Rental Center's fleet of plate compactors, pressure washers, lawn mowers and other equipment has helped Morrison grow his young business and set himself apart from his larger competitors.

"The unit has helped introduce more people to my business," he says. "It's such a unique tool that when someone rents it, their neighbors go over to ask about it, and the next thing I know, the neighbor rents it. Word-of-mouth has worked to increase rentals."

The popularity of Dominion Rental Center's rental model and the efficiency of the compact utility loader have led Morrison to purchase a second, larger machine, which he plans to pair with attachments and offer much like the TX 413. "The machine and my method for renting it have helped me establish credibility," he says. "It's also helped customers realize that the next time they need my services, I can assist them with whatever they need." **RPN**