

## Enterprise

## Landscapers dig satisfied clients

by ROSE SIMONE, Record Staff

### ELMIRA

When Mark Schwarz was a partner at Brock Solutions, a Kitchener firm that designs and manages automation, process-drive systems and other large projects for big industries, his job was all about meeting customer expectations on time, every time, no matter how big the project, and staying on budget.

Schwarz sold his shares in Brock about six years ago and since 2005 he's been a partner with Sam Bauman in Earthscape Creative Landscapes, an Elmira firm that creates landscaped environments.

While his shift from automation to landscaping looks radical, the business principles are much the same, Schwarz says.

"It's still about meeting with customers, meeting their expectations and getting things done on schedule, and on budget. It's still hard work and using engineering project methodology."

Schwarz, 47, and Bauman, 22, worked together at another landscaping firm before launching their business. With Bauman's background as a horticultural technician and stonemason and Schwarz's engineering and business skills, they can take on any size of project involving water, rocks, trees, plants, wood and patio stones -- from front and back landscaping for subdivision homes to much more complex designs on larger properties. Billings for projects they've done so far range from \$3,000 to \$500,000.

For one recent project along Erbsville Road in Waterloo, they transformed the huge back lawn of a rural residence in



six weeks to a cottagelike environment with waterscape features. This included installing an electrical supply and pumps to help create a 55-metre-long stream leading to a 27-by-15-metre pond and moving six-metre high spruce trees from the back of the property to the pond area.

A large deck and gazebo completed the project, which delighted the clients.

Earthscape hires about eight seasonal workers. In the winter months, the owners prepare designs and source materials.

Schwarz says the key to getting projects done on time is "not being overly optimistic" in the scheduling.

The business was launched with the help of an informal advisory team that included people with construction

experience. "So we got a lot of good advice," Schwarz says.

Earthscape ([www.earthscape.ca](http://www.earthscape.ca)) has won design awards from Landscape Ontario. And now that it has completed some projects, it's getting word-of-mouth referrals.

Schwarz says he never imagined when he left Brock Solutions that he would end up with a landscaping business. But he has always loved the outdoors, he says, so it has turned out to be a perfect fit.

The job satisfaction and customer satisfaction are also much greater.

"With the automation projects, customers don't get that emotional. You do a perfect job, but that's what's expected," Schwarz says.

"Here, we are involved in people's  
personal lives and personal space, so you  
do a perfect job and they are overjoyed."

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[rsimone@therecord.com](mailto:rsimone@therecord.com)