

TRUST

IT'S ABOUT



Oetman's 90ZV-2 is outfitted with a bucket and 72-inch forks. The company takes jobs within a 3- to 4-hour, 250-mile radius, and typically works about 30 to 40 sites a year.

About 25 miles east of Lake Michigan is the small town of Wayland, Michigan. Home to farmers and other hard-working people, it's where time-honored American values like faith, honor, and trust still run deep. It's where school-yard buddies often end up in business together, and a sense of community spirit and watching out for your neighbor are givens.

So it's not surprising to find out that Steve Oetman of Oetman Excavating sponsors 4-H, # 37/Terry Sennecker at Kalamazoo Speedway, Men's Fast-Pitch softball through the Michigan Amateur Softball Association, and is a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. From his perspective, being involved with area communities is just as important as satisfying his customers with a job well done.

FRESH FROM THE FARM

Oetman's success was a long time coming and he doesn't take it for granted.

"I started in 1988 with one bulldozer. I had 800-dollars' worth of work lined up and I stepped out on faith. I ran two years without any employees, just me. Today, I have

several pieces of equipment and about 20 people. We used to have 30 to 40, but the slow economy has hit us. Initially I did all residential, but about ten years ago I got into commercial. My specialty is site development, and schools in particular have been great for me.

"I have good people that work for me and I have good customers. When you surround yourself with good people, it allows you to do what you do best."

Wayland, Michigan, doesn't have a big pool of construction workers from which to draw, so Oetman trains his own — and that's just fine with him. "A lot of my guys come from a farming background. In fact, I farm too. So I take time with them. I teach them on the job what I want done and how I want it done. Some of these guys are very close to me now. I'm blessed that way."

SIMPLE IS BETTER

When it comes to equipment, Oetman has a "simple" perspective. "I'm a simple guy. And I want to run something simple. I don't need all of those gadgets to go wrong. And I don't want to pay \$20,000 more for gadgets — or have to maintain them. And that was my big attraction to the Kawasaki loader. We have lots of other brands we still use, but our Kawasaki 90ZV-2 is our workhorse. If my operators could choose, that's the one they'd sit in and operate all day long."

In addition to simplicity, Oetman chose his Kawasaki for other reasons, too. One, he trusted the recommendation of a good friend who'd gone to work for the local Kawasaki dealer, Grand Equipment. He told him the quality was second to none. Next, he talked to three different companies in the Chicago area who ran Kawasaki. All three gave positive endorsements. Then, unlike some other area dealers, Grand Equipment had no hesitation in bringing out a demo unit for them to try for a few days. And finally, he really liked the way it ran, especially the auto transmission. And so the Kawasaki joined their fleet.



Steve Oetman, Owner, Oetman Excavating, and Troy Koetje, Sales Rep, Grand Equipment

Jeff Ensing, his site foreman at a school parking lot project they are currently working on, is in and out of the various loaders all the time. It's clear the 90ZV-2 is his favorite.

"I really like the Kawasaki. It is quite smooth and definitely faster than the other loaders. It has more power too. Compared to the Cat 972G you can really tell the difference in fuel. Since this is a big site, we do a lot of running back and forth, and using the Fuel Efficient Mode on the 90 saves us a lot. At the end of the day, we're hunting for fuel for the Cat, but we've got a quarter of a tank left on the Kawasaki. I like that automatic too. It shifts a lot smoother than the others."

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"Trust is a real issue," concludes Oetman. "You've got to trust the people you work with." And that holds true whether you're talking about your crew — or your heavy equipment dealership. "Grand Equipment is great at support. Equipment is so hard to keep. If you're not going to service or support what you sell, you might as well not sell. That's definitely not a problem with Grand."

From Grand Equipment's perspective, they wouldn't have it any other way. Support is everything.

"My brother and I started with just four pieces of equipment," explains Jeff Grasman, President, Grand Equipment. "I'd been a mechanic, then an office manager over two

equipment rental stores, then my brother and I struck out on our own. I had to learn in a hurry. We grew through our service department. And I don't mean just fixing things. I mean being there when that call comes at 2 in the morning. We get out of bed and do what we need to do."



Site development for schools provides a lot of business for Oetman Excavating. The company isn't necessarily the low bidder on the jobs they win. Being local and doing satisfactory work previously for the district has made the difference.

"Contractors know who was with them when things were down," adds Troy Koetje, Oetman's sales rep at Grand Equipment. "We have six Peterbilt service trucks and can be anywhere in the state in 90 minutes. Contractors need local suppliers who are going to work for them. That's what makes the difference."

Oetman Excavating is serviced by Grand Equipment, Hudsonville, Michigan.