STARTING A LAWN CARE BUSINESS

How To Start Your Own Lawncare Business
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INTRODUCTION

Do you want to be your own employer? Do you think you could run your own business? Moreover, are you interested in building a business you can then sell for more than what you paid into it? If so, you should consider starting a lawn care business.

A lawn care business offers you an opportunity to become financially successful through self-employment. In fact, there are many advantages to becoming involved in this type of business. They range from independence to low cash input to easy entry.

ADVANTAGES OF A LAWN CARE BUSINESS:

1. There is an easy entry to the trade. A boy with a lawnmower is a lawn care provider. So, too, is someone with a stenciled cube van or pickup truck and several employees.

2. You are your own boss.

3. The hours are flexible. Within reason, you can set your own hours.

4. You can work out of your own home, cutting down on costs associated with a more complex business start-up.

5. It is outdoor work.
6. If you offer top quality service you will always have plenty of work.

7. There is room to grow.

8. To start up your business requires little financial outlay or investment.

9. Usually, you do not have to have a license.

10. Any specific or specialist knowledge you may require for a job, you can learn.

**DISADVANTAGES OF A LAWN CARE BUSINESS**
1. The hours are flexible within reason.

2. The winter months are slack. Little work is required up to and following the advent of the cold season when grass becomes dormant.

3. The work is heavy. It requires lifting, lugging and hauling machinery of various types.

4. Depending upon what type of lawn care services you offer, you may be handling toxic substances.

5. You may be working with potentially dangerous machinery.

You need to consider both advantages and disadvantages carefully before you decide to start-up in this business. You also need to look at your own character. Are you capable of running a small business?

**QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SELF:**

- **Can you work alone?**
  If you are fond of company and/or require a push to get going, do not consider any form of self-employment let alone starting up a lawn care business. The same applies if you spend more time procrastinating than actually working. You need to set a schedule. You may even have to lay out other schedules for employees. Furthermore, this type of
business sometimes demands you do the job now before the grass grows any higher or the crab grass problem becomes worse.

- **Are you a self-starter?**
  You have to be able to put together a business plan. You must consider all the angles. You need to be confident in your own qualities and character to start and move on the project.

- **Can you initiate the project and maintain high levels of involvement from start to finish?**
  It is not simply good enough to start out at a high level of enthusiasm and commitment. You need to maintain a high level of energy and involvement throughout all aspects over the duration. If you do not see to the running of all aspects of your company/business, it will not be a success. Every business requires tweaking and ongoing maintenance. You have to be fully engaged in the process from the initial decision to the final move to sell the company. If you cannot commit yourself to a set period-of-time, do not begin to open a business.

- **Are you good at sales?**
  Can you sell yourself and your work? You will need to do this. At the beginning, you will need to sell both yourself and your work. You are new in a field where there is already competition. You have to sell yourself to clients as being the best for the job. You have to present yourself and your business as professional, reliable, apt and more than acceptable. If you are a one-person-show, you will also have to sell your business on paper, on the net and in other forms of media. You may even end up doing cable TV shows or radio talk shows to improve or garner business. Can you handle needing to be a sales person?
• **Are you a people-person?**
  
  If not you are wasting your time. The lawn care business is a service industry. By its very definition, this means you are serving other people. Therefore, your daily work and business involves public relations as much as it does lawn care. You must deal with people on a day-to-day basis to ensure your company is doing the right job. You have to talk to people to obtain more customers. You have to set up a means of communicating with possible customers. You also have to deal with employees. You will need to train and instruct them. In the process, you also have enough self-awareness to know who to delegate to and when. This also requires the psychological ability to understand the employees and their needs. Being aware will also help you in hiring the right people for your business and firing the wrong types. Hiring refers to not only the people you employ to work in the company but those you need to ensure you have the right logo on your vehicles, to print the business cards, to advertise your business on their web site or in print and to handle your accounts.

Throughout the analysis process provided above, be honest in your answers. Be truthful in your assessment of your character. If you believe the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, then consider it a step in the right direction. If you are a self-start, self-motivator and determined, this is a positive. If you are also a conscientious people-person, this is also a good indicator you may be successful. Yet, before you let yourself become too excited, launching yourself into the work immediately, you need to take stop and do what every sane and practical businessperson does. You need to sit down with pen and paper, or computer and printer, and set out your goals. You also need to formulate at least an elementary business plan. These two steps are an integral part of starting up.
Starting a lawn care business requires you take into consideration multiple factors. You need to be clear on several matters and understand specific aspects of the business. You have to be aware that, even to set up the smallest of businesses, you need to have more than a glimmer of what you want to do. You need to formulate goals and objectives. You also need to look at the location – of your clients. This means deciding to whom you wish to appeal. It also means branding yourself within a specific market: residential or non-residential, pesticide, organic and/or integrated. You also have to consider such things as equipment requirements. What type will I need and amount. There are also other considerations such as finances and legal issues

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Anyone who runs a business, any business, must have an objective or goal. It is up to you to decide what your goal is in starting your own business. Do you have one? Is it short or long term? Is your current goal predicated on the here-and-now or is it directed towards the future?

Approach your goals realistically. Initially, you will probably be looking at short-term goals. You want to set up a business so you can be independent. You want to support yourself. You want to support your future, existent or
growing family. In other words, your initial goal is immediate. You may not have any long-term objectives.

There is nothing wrong with this type of approach when you first start out. In fact, the initial simplicity of this objective allows you to think clearly. You are not befuddled by conflicting goals. This places the onus on immediate and careful action in setting up your lawn care business. In your goals and objectives for the lawn care business, you need first to look at the present before you can focus on the future.

Do not, however, lock yourself into a specific time frame or only one goal. What may seem to be your goal when you start your business can and probably will change. Goals are malleable. They will alter as the business develops. You will probably need to reconsider your objectives after only one year. With a year’s experience behind you, you can then sit down and evaluate what you have accomplished. Then, you can reassess what you wish to do with the business.

**LOCATION**

There is some truth in the old real estate rant of “location, location, location.” Starting a business in an area that cannot support it is the kiss of death. If you do not find the right market for your services, you will not be successful. You need to decide two basic things: Who are your possible clients? Where are they located? Only then can you plan a marketing strategy.

There are two basic types of market: residential and non-residential. If you live in an area where home ownership is popular and increasing, you have a ready-made market. Owners of homes, particularly new homes, require the services of lawn care services. In these new residences, two things may occur. The owners want an expansive lawn to replace the make-do one of the
developer. If they are a two-income family, the owners may not have time to spend on the daily, weekly or even monthly upkeep of their lawns. They will require someone to ensure the lawn maintains the pristine character of the nearby homes. This can sometimes end up in a snowball effect. If one person is content with how you do their lawn, their neighbor or neighbors may want to sign on.

In older homes, in areas of a stable population, people often want their lawns refreshed and renovated. They may want the old grass removed. They may desire native grasses to replace the lawn sod. The residents of these homes tend to be older. They also frequently have higher incomes. Because of their age, they may want someone else to take care of the demanding requirements of lawn maintenance.

If you are looking at apartment areas, it is also possible to obtain some work. While often the work, for residential apartments is usually handled by a subsidiary, you may be able to obtain some contract work. The same is true for condominium complexes. They may want someone to handle the lawn care for the grounds or the inner courtyard. Another option in a similar area is real estate properties. Some firms may want a company to spruce up or maintain the properties they currently own and are in the process of selling.

The non-residential market is also a possible target for your market. There is plenty of opportunity for you to obtain a contract to maintain the grounds of light and high industrial properties. It has become fashionable to green the grounds of more than just the corporate headquarters of companies. Many manufacturing concerns want to have a pleasing presence in the community. They require the greens of their property be maintained in excellent condition.

While the opportunity is less frequent, there is also a chance you obtain work from the municipality or other levels of government. Although local
governments often have their own employees to maintain the public property and grounds, spending cuts and tightened budgets are an opening. You may be able to bid on one or more contracts. If you want the work, and have the equipment to take on larger scale jobs, there is not reason why you cannot place your bid.

Another factor tied closely to your selected target market is services. What type of services do you plan to offer? Lawn care, after all, can cover a variety of different goods. You may want to stick to a niche product, be more general or try to be all things to all customers and possible customers. Each of these approaches has their advantages and disadvantages.

A lawn care business may focus solely on cutting and trimming lawns. This is a good way to start. It is also a simplistic approach guaranteed to help you decide whether the business is feasible for you and your needs. Yet, lawn care companies, specifically the ones who want to grow, do more than cut the lawn. They offer other related services. They plant different types of grasses and replace sod. The larger and more versified businesses remove pests and treat the lawns with organic or non-organic herbicides and pesticides. A lawn company that wants to become more than a one-trick-pony and a single person operation provides all these services.

If you opt for the chemical route, you may have to obtain some licenses for the handling of toxic substances. It depends upon the requirements of your municipality as well as higher legislative restrictions. There will also be an increase in cost outlay. Be sure it does not increase your client base at the cost of your profit margin. Also be prepared to take a course on chemical usage, storage, handling and toxicity. Always be aware of any negative effects. Do try to attend seminars on the subject. It will help you provide a more informed opinion to offer your clients. It may also help you decide what type of service – organic or non-organic, to recommend to your clients.
When you take on the responsibility of treating lawns for pests, either organically or chemically, you up the ante for your business becoming a success. This is true for many different sectors of the population. They are concerned with the environment. As a result, they will try to select services that reflect their own philosophy.

Are you capable of understanding and handling the increased workload this may incur? Do you have the patience and the skills to learn this alternative approach? It may require more than reading of articles. You may have to attend classes, lectures or workshops on the subject. In the end, you may become the local expert. This could play into you increasing your client base as well as income potential.

Yet, in the end, do you need to decide whether the type of approach to take is organic or non-organic? Are you going to occupy the organic or natural niche in the marketplace? Would you rather stick to traditional lawn care methods? You could be flexible. You could offer an integrated pest management system (IPMS). This incorporates aspects of both methods. In this way, you may be able to satisfy all types of customers. But, do not be surprised if the chemical free individuals express an interest in dealing with lawn care specialist who only deal with organic means. In the end, your choice may be a personal or moral option or one based on the perceived and actual needs of your market.

**EQUIPMENT**

Before you embark on your business venture, you have to figure out what equipment and supplies you will need. These could be the very basics required to mow lawns, trim grass, and rake and haul away the waste. Initially, you might simply have a truck, a lawn mower, a pair of clippers, a
rake and a wheelbarrow. If this is all you have and all you need to begin with, it is fine for going along with. Lawn businesses have started out with less than this before moving on to acquire material and machinery as the growth and the need demanded.

If you do not have a truck, you will probably have to purchase one. This is a necessary capital expense. Do not buy one, however, if you are not serious about making this work. Do not purchase a truck if the indicators of your decision-making process reveal a lawn care business is not feasible at this time. Fortunately, you can always turn a truck to other advantages. It can haul away debris and junk. In winter, you can use it for ploughing snow.

A brand new truck is not always the way to go. It must, however, look capable of doing the job. The truck must be reliable. It has to be able to haul the equipment you require around from job-to-job. Nothing will work against you more than failure to show up or complete a job because of unreliable transportation.

The truck must also fit into your new professional image. If you can afford a logo or deco on the truck, do so. It will heighten your visibility. It also acts as an inexpensive form of advertising. Make sure everything is spelled correctly. Include the name of your lawn care business, phone number, web site and/or e-mail.

As you expand, you may want another vehicle. It is not a good decision, unless you can make an extremely good deal, to purchase immediately a larger truck or van. Instead, you can rent one temporarily to see if your customer base is actually growing or if it is simply a glitch. You can also make the more practical decision to buy a trailer. Remember, for every vehicle you purchase, you will have to increase business liability insurance. A commercial vehicle license is also required.

Other capital expenses involve the actual lawn maintenance equipment. If you have a lawnmower, you must consider such things as power source. This
relates to fuel efficiency and your clientele. If you have an energy efficient machine, it will reduce your costs. If you use a cordless, electric mower, it will help you maintain good relations with your customers in a number of ways. The quieter lawn mower will not upset neighbors or disrupt sleeping children or adults. An energy efficient lawnmower may also help you gain environmentally conscious clients. A push mower is also a possibility. The problem with this type of machine, however, is it is impractical for larger lots.

It is not advisable to purchase a large rider mower immediately. If you already have one, use it when applicable. If you do not have one, do not purchase one unless it proves to be necessary. If you are doing the lawns of estates or large commercial properties, such a machine is requisite. If you are mowing the average lawn, it is not. Save its purchase until you require it as you grow.

If you decide to increase the customer base, you will need to hire people to carry out the work. Keep this in mind when you purchase new equipment. Not only will you need to understand how to operate the equipment safely, you will need to teach them how to use it wisely and carefully. Be aware, as well, your liability may also increase with the purchase of new equipment.

You will require different types of equipment for your business. Some will make it easier for you to keep up with the customers’ needs. You can find further information in various literature on the subject. Periodicals and internet sources can provide you with further information on make, style, performance and suitability for your requirements.

One thing you should not neglect is maintenance. You need to treat your tools with care. Do not neglect them or they will not serve the purpose for which you intend them. Take good care of your equipment and your business will benefit from it. It also means that you will be able to resell or trade in to your own benefit.
There is one further point for you to consider before ending the basics on equipment. Always research thoroughly before you make a decision to purchase any piece of equipment. Talk to others in the business. Read the trades. Look at the specs and analysis the pros and cons of the gear. You also need to consider several factors. These include your financial situation, your current needs, close future requirements and the necessities of your clients, present and future. Do not buy frivolously. Make sure you are focusing not on the hottest new lawn toy, but are looking at the realities and near future business needs.

**SUPPLIES**

Besides equipment, you will have to purchase a variety of supplies. These include office materials, a computer - if you do not already have one, stationary and a separate telephone line or cell phone.

- To facilitate such things as billing and accounting, make sure you have the right programs for your computer. There are several good programs out there capable of handling your accounting. Computers also make your letter writing and book keeping easier and more professional. In these early stages, a quality computer with the right programs will save you time and money. Make sure your computer is capable of expanding as you grow. If you need to upgrade your current computer to handle the extra tasks, do so. Save hiring an accountant for the future.

- You will require business cards and other promotional material. You can have these designed and printed by a professional. You can also run the material off on your computer. It depends upon your skills,
your computer and your printer. In many instances, is just as inexpensive and convenient to present a simple design to a printer and have them run it off.

- A separate telephone is essential. You can choose either a landline or a more flexible cell phone. This will prevent your children, roommates or significant other forgetting or losing messages. It is also far more professional for you and not your 3-year-old child to answer the phone. Always keep records of these calls for personal and business reasons for a year. It will help you show the amount of interest annually. It will also help jog a finite memory.

- Other business supplies such as paper, envelopes and similar material require less thought. If you do send material out, make sure it looks professional. Also, ensure it is not on cheap paper or in cheap-looking envelopes. Store these and all other equipment in a separate room or space. If you are working out of your home - which in the early stages most small lawn care business do, make sure this space or room is not utilized for anything else. You need to keep all records and material pertaining to the business separate from your mundane life.

In your vehicle, you can carry your cell phone. If it is programmable, you may be able to keep all records on the specific job on this. A day planner - paper or computerized is also a possibility. If you have something comparable to a Blackberry already, it will come in handy for storing and recording required material. If you do not currently own one, do not purchase it. Wait until it becomes a necessary investment. Until then, you can manage the old-fashioned way - clipboard and papers.

**FINANCES**
You need to consider you finances on a number of levels. You must take into account the amount of money you have currently. You must look at such things as immediate outlay or capital expenditures as well as maintenance costs and general upkeep and wear and tear. At the beginning, you will have to project what you need and what you will spend. The above sections will have provided you with some idea of what you need. You may need to consider a bank loan, a line of credit, an investor or even a partner. Be prepared to fully disclose all financial sources, estimated costs including capital and day-to-day costs.

To ensure the process is thorough and complete, you need to prepare a rough business plan. Even though your first plan will consist of a bunch of “guesstimates,” it is essential for you to create it. If you plan to run your business successfully, you need to start out on the right financial foot. Preparing a business plan will help ensure you are completely aware of all the aspects of setting up and running a successful lawn care business.
The Business Plan

Description:

Former American president and military leader, Dwight D. Eisenhower, once wrote, “The plan is nothing; planning is everything.” You need to follow his advice. You need to create a business plan and utilize it, changing the plan as new information and experience dictate. The business plan is a mainstay of any business. It helps you, particularly at this early stage to accomplish the following things:

1. It makes you analyze the entire business financially

2. It lets you manage and check your results against the initial and subsequent plans

3. It helps other interested parties, such as lenders, bankers, and possible partners, understand the objectives, financial standing, potential earnings and other pertinent information.

A business plan is a detailed blueprint of your goals and objectives. It includes every aspect of your company from proposed name to location to marketing to financing and accounting. The more complex the business, the more intricate the business plan. In fact, you will need to up-date, the plan as your company goes into business. This is the initial reality check. You then need other updates as you expand.
When you start out creating your business, the plan may be simple and direct. It will expand and alter as you and your company come to learn the restraints and realities of your business. Your first business plan and subsequent ones are reflections of the world in which you are operating. They reveal growth and decline. A business plan is ever changing to meet with your current and future situation. It will help you grow and reflect that growth. It will help prove your company’s worth when you decide to expand and when you want to cash out.

**COMPANY INFORMATION**

Your first business plan does not need to be elaborate. It should contain, however, such information as the name of your company, its address, telephone number and a basic description. Other required information is the products and service you offer, the projected market and possible or actual competition. List all these facts under the title “Company Information.”

Company Information should also provide the basic details on the goals of the business, the financial requirements and currently available funds or funding. You need to list the projections of earnings for the month, year and subsequent years. You can provide a graph for the first year and a 1-5 year projection. If you are talking to or considering investors, you also need to provide them with the potential return of the outlay.

**SERVICES**

The next major section is on services. You need to provide an ample description of what the company does. List all commodities you plan to offer.
Provide a complete list. Include current and future offerings. Disclose and update all possibilities. This will indicate whether you have done adequate and accurate research into your market potential.

The next part of this section focuses on your competition. A thorough business plan has scouted the location. You will already know who you will need to go up against in establishing and maintaining your lawn care business. List and describe them. Show why you can successfully compete or reveal why they are not actually in competition against you.

Describe clearly any unique services you plan to offer. This will help you and any possible investors distinguish your company from any others in the lawn care business. This will indicate the direction toward which your company is heading. List any niche products or services you are planning to (or already) offer. This may include Integrated Pest Management (IPM) or organic grass treatments. Stress how such services differentiate you from your competition and will help you succeed.

**MARKET ANALYSIS**

The section on marketing analysis is an essential part of selling your business and yourself. This applies to you, possible investors, customers and a possible future buyer of your company. You need to provide information on such things as the marketplace, your competition, the current lawn care industry and future trends in the business. You also need to include any data on your purposed target or niche market.

Obtaining material requires research. You need to be aware of the conditions of the current marketplace. What are the actual demands? What is the potential for growth? Will a recession affect the market? Will it influence your proposed entry? In doing the research, you will clarify your goals and add a touch of reality to what you plan to do.
A thorough market analysis will help you narrow or broaden your focus. You may find it better to address your services to a particular niche. It may make more sense to have a broader base. This may change over time. This section, like the rest of the business plan, is not set in concrete. It is subject to change. The market does fluctuate and later over time. It is up to you to continually be aware of these changes and adjust your business and its market approach accordingly.

**MARKETING STRATEGY**

Your marketing strategy is a very important component of your business plan. If you do not know how you are going to sell your lawn care business to potential customers, you are in serious trouble. You need to know from the start not only how your product fits into the overall market, but also, how to see it obtains, retains and even increases its share.

How are you going to market your services? You will need to go into specifics here. (Possible approaches you may take are elaborated on in **Chapter 3: Marketing your Services**.) What methods are you planning to utilize? Do you plan to use print, the internet, TV, radio or any other form of media? How you will meet your marketing goals is also a concern.

Marketing also concerns the more mundane aspects. These include such things as invoicing. Do you have a plan in place to pay for these various services? Do you have a means of paying in kind? Can you be creative in ensuring you obtain the best coverage at the least cost?

Another aspect you need to include in your plan is pricing. Before you start your business, you have to figure out the costs. How much will it cost you for each service? How much are you going to charge your customers? You need
to break the figures down. You also need to be very aware of what your competition is charging.

In order to set your prices, you have to look first at the broader picture. You need to look at the value of what you offer for and in the marketplace. Next, you must consider what your competition is charging for the same or comparable services. This will give you a more than rough estimate of what you can charge. It also provides you with information to show clients how you are charging the same or less than your competitors do.

The figures you arrive at are, of course, subject to change. You need to be flexible. Costs change as do demands. You may want to offer a lower introductory price. You may want to start off at a lower rate than your other companies while you build up your business. Do not set it too low or it will be counter productive to both your pocket book and future growth.

**MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The management plan is a more complex and often not applicable part of the business plan. Such aspects as business structure and staffing plan are not usually an actuality. These aspects are part of your plan for growth. You need to be aware of the various aspects of being an employer. You have to consider the number of employees and their responsibilities. You also have to consider where and how you will find them.

You need to be aware that as you grow, you will need to hire people to work for and with you. You need to consider, now, how many and what your style of management will be. The source of employees, the need for training and the legal aspects are also part of this decision to be an employer. Much of this is covered in *Chapter 4 – Growth*.
The portion of the business plan titled facilities is also part of the future intent of your lawn care business. At the beginning, your company may consist of only your home office and, perhaps, a rented shed for storage of equipment. In the future, you may have to purchase or rent larger and separate facilities. Consider your present and future needs as well as any possible improvements for now and for the future.

The operating plan of this section deals with the business affairs on hand, the prospective business you have in mind and your plans to generate new business. Initially, you may focus on getting and retaining a solid customer base. As you expand, you need to consider how to generate new customers. You also have to project the kind of growth and its extent.

**FINANCIAL DATA**

A solid business requires a solid financial base. If you plan approaching anyone to become a partner or investor, you need to be accurate. You will need to provide a lender with your personal financial statement for the last 3 to 5 years of your life.

If you are starting out using your own money, you need to compile figures indicating the direction of the first financial year of your business. You need to project your profits, your losses and the profit margin. You need to prepare a balance sheet illustrating the changing or stable nature of this first year in operation. You should also prepare monthly cash flow charts, indicating where the money is going out and how much is coming in. Furthermore, you need to prepare projected capital expenditures. This includes such things as the purchase of a vehicle and lawn care equipment.

The last portion of the financial data of the management section of your business plan will focus on your projections for the next 2 to 5 years. Be sure
to cover all aspects. An investor, lender or potential buyer will need to look at these figures before they make a decision. You also need to have these figures to provide yourself with a guideline for future expenditures and direction.

To sum up, the average business plan should conform to the following outline or adopt a similar pattern:

**Company Information**

- Description of business
- Name and address
- Location
- Products and services
- Personnel
- Market
- Competition

**Services**

- Description
- Comparison to competition
- Unique or special services you offer
**Market Analysis**

- Description of the total market
- Competition
- Industry and market trends
- Your target market or niche market

**Marketing Strategy**

- General strategy
- How your own product or service fits into the market
  - Method of marketing
  - Method of obtaining fulfillment
  - Method of invoicing
- Pricing policy
  - Compare to market

**Management Plan**

- Business Structure
- Staffing Plan
  - Number of Employees
  - Responsibilities
- Facilities Plan
  - Description
  - Improvements

- Operating Plan
  - Business on hand
  - Prospective business
  - Plans to generate new business
  - Projections

**Financial Data**

- Financial statement for past 3-5 years (personal information)

- First year financial projections
  - Profit and loss statement
  - Balance sheet
  - Monthly cash flow charts
  - Projected capital expenditure

- Annual financial projections for the next 5 years
MARKETING YOUR SERVICES:

No matter what your business is, you have to be somewhat of a salesperson to succeed. This is particularly true in the lawn care business where you depend upon customer relations and interpersonal communication to be successful in obtaining and retaining customers. If you cannot sell yourself and your services, you might as well not enter into the fray.

Yet, before you begin to decide on what form of advertising addresses and suits your needs, you need to make the first step. You have to give yourself a name. This is an important part of selling yourself and your company. You have to come up with the right name.

You can take one of two different approaches. You can adopt a simple name or a more complex one. For example, you could name your company after yourself e.g. McCall’s Lawn Care Business. You could also call it Excel’s Lawn Care and Services for the East Side of Wellington County. There are pros and cons for each. If it is short, people will easily recall its name. As a result, they can look it up on line or in the phone book without a problem. People might also like the personal touch of a specific or family name.

The drawback to a name-specific business is its use of your name. It may come across as amateur. The use of your name may also cause problems in the future. When you sell the company, you sell the name. If you or your children which to start up a similar business some time in the future, you will not be able to use your own name in the title.
If you use an overlong or convoluted name, you may confuse customers. It may be forgotten easily. It may be too specific. It may also not catch on. If you want to advertise your business, you have to give it the right sort of name. It has to be able to be memorable. It must provide some indication of what you do. It must also be clear, concise and catchy. On a practical level, the name has to fit the side of your truck and be easily placed in an advertisement.

To enhance further the quality of your product and name, you might want to create a symbol, add a picture or cartoon-figure or object or even create an icon. You might wish to add something that catches the eye and remains in your customer’s mind. At the same time, it must be simple enough to appear on literature, vehicles and letterhead. When you appear at a client’s residence or business, or drive around, the sign on your vehicle becomes a form of advertising.

Advertising comes in many different forms. There are many different ways to advertise yourself and your company. Below are a few ways to approach and use the various forms of marketing available to you.

**STRATEGIES FOR MAKING SALES**

**FINDING THE RIGHT NAME FOR YOU AND YOUR COMPANY**

There is one simple rule of thumb regarding advertising. This applies to beginners and mature business people. Never rely on any one promotion, advertisement or mailing. Before you embark on any type of campaign, you need to look at the industry and customer trends. You must study how others in the lawn care business market themselves and their services.
Compile a list of their approaches and see if they are applicable to your demands and needs. Be prepared to alter your initial approach if it does not turn out to be feasible or effective. Be aware that your basic approach to marketing may have to change as you grow. Also, keep in mind if you want to sell a successful company sometime down the road, you will want to provide a complete package. This means your Lawn Care Company is easily recognized. It has a familiar and identifiable name. The right type of advertising will help you obtain a sort of brand recognition.

**TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING**

In the past, business people have relied on two types of media: print and audio/visual. You advertised your products and services in the newspaper and through fliers, pamphlets and other print formats. You ran off and posted fliers. You distributed through the mail or hired someone to place fliers describing your services in mailboxes. A business ran an ad in a newspaper.

Another more expensive source of traditional advertising has been television and radio. While costing more, some advertisers felt this was the way to reach a larger audience. Using local or cable TV was considered a sure fire method of promoting the business. If the company had reached a specific level, it could even sponsor a show.

Cable TV or local networks can still carry your advertisements. You can still place an ad in the paper and send off fliers. These are still viable means of increasing awareness of your lawn care business. These forms of mass media can be effective in certain instances. In deciding to utilize the print and visual media, need to look at several factors including your financial situation. Another aspect is the effectiveness. Will traditional forms of advertising be able to help you build-up your business?
The answer to this question is not a simple yes or no. It can vary from instance to instance. Usually, however, a business benefits from using a variety of advertising forms and formats. You should run off pamphlets and (responsibly) post fliers. If it is financially feasible, run a small ad in the newspaper, or place one on the local TV or radio station. Do not, however, ever, restrict yourself to one form of advertising. To do so will create other problems and deny you your potential to gain customers.

NON-TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING

Advertising has evolved in leaps and bounds with the creation and evolution of the internet. This new medium allows everyone to become their own promoter. It also encourages them to sell their services and products on line. You should take full advantage of the possibilities inherent in the internet.

There are a number of ways to utilize the potential power of the internet. You can and should establish a web presence. Set up (or have someone do it for you) your own web page. This does not have to be elaborate. It can be a simple but effective page or two describing your services. It should also include a brief biography on you noting your qualifications. You can add such things as lawn care tips and the latest issues affecting your region.

Another possible addition to your web page are testimonials. You can ask customers whether they wish to describe and/or promote your work. Alternatively, you can place pictures of before and after lawn care work performed by you. This will clearly illustrate the capabilities of your company. You can also try promoting your company through writing or creating interlinking Hub pages, using Twitter or joining Facebook or any of the other useful web groups. All these will help heighten awareness of you, what you do and stand for and your lawn care company.
CREATIVE ADVERTISING

If you wish to increase your customer base and establish your business on firm ground, you need to become creative. There are various ways to do so. One of the possibilities is to send out media or press releases. These can talk about such things as what your company is doing. It can show expansion. It can also point out how you are effectively adopting environmentally friendly methods of battling a specific pest. Such releases can also comment or bring to notice the need for treatment in the area of such-and-such or the increase of a specific lawn-related problem.

Another option to heighten the visibility of your lawn care business is to establish yourself as an “expert.” It helps if you have a background in specific area. It also requires a confidence and the ability to sell yourself. You could start off with a few articles in the local paper. You could also see if you can take part in a cable show. This will help establish credentials.

If you are capable and literate enough, try for publication in a trade magazine. See if you can be part of a radio talk show on the subject. Some local stations have phone-in shows where they ask questions of the experts. Make sure you are on the list. Yet, make sure you are knowledgeable and comfortable before you take on these types of promotion. You do not want any negative publicity.

Charity work, taking part in the local Santa Claus or other type of parade, sponsoring a little league team, and other similar work can also help your lawn care business. It makes you and your lawn care business more visible. It also shows you care for your community. Being involved actively on different levels within your home or operative town enhances the image of your business. It also leads to contact within the community. These, in turn, may result in an increased customer base.
OTHER FORMS

The logo on your truck or van is advertising. Make sure it contains the pertinent information. The signage should also be simple, clear and effective. A potential customer should not have to hunt for your phone number, website or e-mail.

Do not ever forget your performance on the job and your relationship with your customers is the best form of advertising. Personal contact is a primary aspect of good advertising. Clear communications helps you obtain and retain clients. Be in contact with your customers. Answer their questions clearly. Make sure they understand the terms of your services and the contract. Be clear in your billing practices and all other aspects of your job. Do a follow up. If they pay on time, acknowledge it. As in all service industries, be polite, reasonable and on time. This can lead to a traditional and conventional type of advertising – word-of-mouth. This form of promotion is very effective in gaining or losing business. Never, ever, underestimate the power of the person-to-person recommendation.

CONCLUSION

Advertising your business requires utilizing various forms of print, visual and oral media. You can opt for newspapers, fliers, television or radio. You can also choose to use the internet creating colorful and informative web pages. Such things as articles in trade magazine or appearances on talk shows can help you build-up your customer base. You can also achieve higher visibility if you take part in charity events, support local teams and efforts and have a float, or sponsor one, in an annual parade. The internet is an effective tool if
used correctly. Yet, you can also advertise simply by placing a logo on your truck or vehicle.

Never forget the personal touch. Word-of-mouth can be a very effective way of building or destroying a customer base. Be sure your interpersonal skills, work habits and work speak volumes about your lawn care company. This will be important for both short and long-term results. When you sell your company to someone else, you are including its reputation.

In the end, it is best not to rely on one type of advertising to promote your services and product. You will have to dabble in what you think is effective. As you gain experience, you will be able to invest your money in the most cost-effective forms of advertising. In order to do this, you need to be aware of your customer base. You have to ask questions, plan a survey and find out how your clients heard about you and your company.

To ensure you have selected the right forms of advertising you will need to keep track on a regular basis. Be practical. Monitor what seems to be working. Ask your customers where they heard about you. Did they read about you or hear about you from a friend, neighbor, the radio or television? This is a simple way to determine how effective a specific type of promotional medium is. Be ready to alter your advertising pattern if your initial approach reveals itself as either ineffective or inappropriate. Like everything else in your business plan, advertising requires fine-tuning as you go and go along and grow.
GROWING PAINS: TYPOLOGY AND CHARACTERISTICS.

If you have a healthy business, it will grow. Growth should be an integral part of your business plan, but growing is not always a pleasurable experience. There will be starts, stops, plateaus and spurts of growth during the life of your company. You need to realize this and plan for each stage. There is not necessarily a set sequence for the growth of your company. There is also not an exact formula. Nevertheless, you need to formulate a plan for growth. You need to include it in your business plan and be aware of the various facets you need to address along the way.

One thing to be aware of is the speed and size of growth. It cannot and should not occur over night. If you grow too quickly, you will not be able to fine-tune the resulting problems and requirements of a growth spurt. This can result in you and your company crashing and burning as fast as you rose to prominence. Slow and steady is the optimal approach to increasing the size and extent of your company. Grow correctly and you will be able to sell your lawn care business for an impressive profit.

This leads to the question, “What kind of growth should I consider?” While growth is a given and even a necessity, you need to look at what kind of growth you wish to undertake. There are two basic types to consider. You
can increase your company’s goods and services. This means you expand internally. You retain, essentially, the same customer base, but you offer these clients enhanced or increased services and products.

An alternative form of growth is to expand your customer base. This involves deliberating seeking out and acquiring more customers. It will involve greater effort on your part to identify the target area. This type of expansion can take one of two forms. You expand within your range keeping it within the parameters of your initial area. In a sense, you are simply intensifying your customer base. You can also take a bigger and opt for extending your company and its services outside your current area or region of operation. This can be a higher risk operation. It also can prove to be more expensive since it requires increased advertising, more energy and higher expenditure.

Before you select one or the other forms of growth, you need to examine the way that produces the greatest profits. Theoretically, expanding your services and increasing your products is the easiest and most profitable. Increasing your customer base is riskier. It involves the cost of fuel for your equipment increasing. You will have to pay more for the gas and oil driving your trucks, vans and assorted lawn care equipment.

In addition to the increased fuel expense is the higher rate of insurance and the cost of your employees. More employees mean a larger payroll. If you are working further afield you have to place more employees on the road traveling longer distances. This may result in you paying for time when they are not working.

Yet, you should not rule out expansion of territory on potential capital outlay. If you expand your company base, you will also increase your profits. If the margin of your profits exceeds what you have made previously, you are on the right path. You need to monitor carefully such things as service charges, costs, daily expenses, specific one-time outlays or capital expenses and compare it to your income. This will help to ensure the path you have taken is the correct one.
There are several things to concern yourself with when you address issues of growth. Each of these factors can and will affect how your company faces the future. Be honest in your assessment of each modification or characteristic. Compile a list of possible aspects, their dynamics and solutions. Look at the economic and legal aspects but do not neglect the personal and interpersonal facets. Carefully consider the factors and characteristics listed below.

**PERSONAL LIMITATIONS:**

Always keep in mind your own personal limitations when planning growth. Are you capable of handling expansion? Do you know what expansion will create and how it will affect you personally, in terms of time spent with the business? Do you know how to delegate? Can you work with a larger crew? Can you handle the increased paper work and demands? Are you capable of addressing the increased needs and changes within the company?

- **You need to take stock of your personal position**
  You are no longer the employee-boss. You have just become “Management.” This entails increased responsibilities. It also may mean taking a course or crash study on management policies and styles. Above all, you need to establish order and organization. If your techniques of management are poor or very disorganized in time, human resources, money, customers, vendors and growth, it will mean a loss of profits, customers and, eventually, your lawn care business.

- **You need to evaluate yourself as an employer and work on such skills as communication**
  Can you convey instructions clearly? Are you precise in your directions to your work crews and your clientele? You can be a boss who simply orders and rules through some form of coercion – usually financial.
You could also decide to be a manager. A manager leads, provides incentives, and earns and offers respect.

**EMPLOYEES**

A growing company will move away from a one-man-show. It will require the hiring and training of personnel. You will need to establish guidelines and set boundaries. Time will be required for training new personnel and retraining old personnel in new equipment and procedures.

As your company grows, you will have to establish a specific hiring process. You will need to consider the source of your employees. Where are you going to obtain them? Will use an ad in the newspaper? Will you post it at governmental or private employment services? Can you utilize any government programs to defray the costs? e.g. training under unemployment insurance benefits, or young person’s programs.

Once you hire the employees, you have to set up a training program. You cannot afford financially, legally or morally to send an untrained or semi-trained person unsupervised on a job. You also have to decide on what basis you are hiring them. Initially, it is a good idea to hire someone provisionally or part-time. This gives you time to access their performance on the job site. If the employee shows promise, you can then promote him or her to permanent status.

**EXPENSES**
A growing company acquires increased expenses. You will need to augment such things as insurance, health care and worker’s compensation. These include more paperwork, including the filling in of various government forms. Bureaucracy and its involvement does increase with the growth of your lawn care business.

You will also face further capital layout in addition to the increased spending on day-to-day matters. With more employees, you need to face such issues as higher transportation costs. With the volume of business up, you will also need to worry about such things as implementing a payroll system. This also leads to a change in how you handle your taxes. You will have to fine-tune your current system. This may mean abandoning a paper system for that of a computer. You may have to consider hiring someone to do your taxes or even an accountant. These positions do not need to be full-time. Part-time is sufficient.

**EQUIPMENT AND SPACE**

The need for more vehicles and equipment is part of any expansion process. It can be expensive in more-ways-than-one. While you may have babied and taken exemplar care of your tools, this may not be the case of your workers. They do not have a vested interest. As a result, your maintenance and even replacement costs may increase.

You may need an office separate from the space you currently have in your home. If you purchase more equipment, it will also need a larger storage shed. In some instances, it is possible to build on your own property a combination shed and office. You may also be able to tack-on an addition. On the other hand, you may have to completely severe your residence from your workplace. Factors such as available space and local by-laws will help direct
you in your decision. However, either way, it will cost you money. You need to look at the viability and feasibility of all these options.

**GROWING PAINS: THE RESULTS**

You cannot grow indefinitely. Growth is finite in any business. You can, however, take a small one-person lawn care business and create of it a company with a strong customer base and many employees. When you have reached a peak or no longer have an interest you can always retrench or sell.
Once you have established a secure and financially viable business, you may want to sell it. There are many reasons, personal, financial and commercial why you may wish to do so. Some people like to start a business. They are excited at the beginning of something, but grow less content after the growing pains stop. They like a challenge or creating a viable business. Once the business can stand on its own without their daily interference, they lose interest. They want to move on to something else.

Some people want to retire. They no longer have the time or energy to devote to ensuring the business runs smoothly. Others no longer have the desire to keep up with the changes common in many small businesses. They do no want to read on lawn care. They want to spend more time with their family or their spouse. They might even want to have time to relax, vacation and find a spouse. Running a small business, even one as seasonal as lawn care, can be and usually is demanding.

If you do decide to sell off, this is where all you hard work and attention to detail will be paid off. If you have a strong and highly visible image and if your company is consistently profitable, you will be able to attract a buyer. If you can show a prospective buyer how and why your business plan works, you are more likely to secure a sale. If your company has a strong customer base, continuing to show a profit annually, in both good and bad times, not only will you not have to worry about seeking a buyer, someone may make you an offer.
Before you decide to sell, make sure you have everything in order. Selling the company to someone is comparable to obtaining a customer. You require similar skills. You need to research where and when to advertise. You must make sure you can deliver what your ad promises. You need to be clear in all communications about what and what is not, part of the sale. If you wish to exclude something be sure the party or parties know and explain why.

When you meet a prospective buyer, have all the paperwork detailing the company’s financial state presently and the projected figures for the next 2 to 5 years. The sales pitch is similar to preparing a business plan. The difference is you already have the figures and statistics at your fingertips. By now, you know what works and what does not. You are aware of all the foibles. You can explain any losses or gains. These are not “guesstimates” anymore. Your company has a track record and you can prove your company’s worth.

If you do decide to sell, you also need to consider the welfare of your employees. Talk over your decision to sell with them. It is possible, they might want to make an investment in their future. Someone might have or be able to come up with the money to purchase this going concern. At the very least, you are including them in the process. It is your company and your decision, but it will affect their lives. They need to have time to adjust to a new owner. It also allows them to decide whether they want to remain or move on.

You should also discuss employees with the future buyer. You can indicate the need for continuity among your customers. This may insure the right employees remain in paying positions. It is always the right thing to do the right thing for those who now depend upon you.

In the end, it is up to you to make the decision whether to sell or not. Be aware how it will affect your life and the lives of your clients and employees. Depending upon the arrangement, you may retain the name, sell the name with the company, let your customers know of the change or leave
everything to the new owner. Whatever you decide, know, if you have handled your business in an orderly and professional fashion, you will be leaving behind a credit to your name and skills. You will also be taking with you a respectable sum of money.
CONCLUSION

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, “I am a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.” This should be the motto of any and every small businessperson. You start the business hoping good luck and hard work will help you establish a small and thriving enterprise. You want, initially, to provide for yourself and/or your family’s needs. You may have a calling or feel this is the way to go.

You prepare a solid business plan and put it into place, monitoring it as you develop and hone your business skills. Through its ups-and-downs, you find yourself creating a small company. It thrives and you face changes. You look for newer sources of income, hire employees, buy equipment, set up a separate office and arrange for someone else to handle the books and payroll.

In the end, you keep on going and develop the business further, filling in a spot here, some different services there, or you sell it. It is your choice. Whatever you decide to do, realize this company has grown out of nothing to become a viable financial concern of which you can be proud. You have received and easily can get more than your set-up money’s worth.