



HOW TO MAKE THE OFF-SEASON YOUR GROWTH SEASON

**An Actionable Guide to Maximizing Your
Lawn Business's Marketing, Tools and Revenue**

As a lawn business owner,

you know that the off-season doesn't have to be a time of hibernation for your company. Quite the opposite: It can be a golden opportunity to revitalize your resources and set the stage for significant growth. Consider this eBook your go-to resource for turning the traditionally slower months into a time of innovation, strategic planning and increased profits. We've filled these pages with real information and actionable suggestions, all geared toward helping you harness serious untapped potential. Whether you're a seasoned lawn entrepreneur or just starting out, get ready to transform this off-season into another growth season that

SETS YOU UP FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS!



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Maximize Your MARKETING

CHAPTER 1 DIGITAL MARKETING

As green industry professionals, you're working a big chunk of the year to keep your customers' lawns looking lush and green. That doesn't leave a lot of time to reconsider your digital marketing efforts. The off-season gives you the perfect opportunity to work on your strategy and get ahead of the competition. Use this time wisely, and you can improve your online presence, build your brand and attract more customers. **Let's talk about how you can make the most of your off-season.**

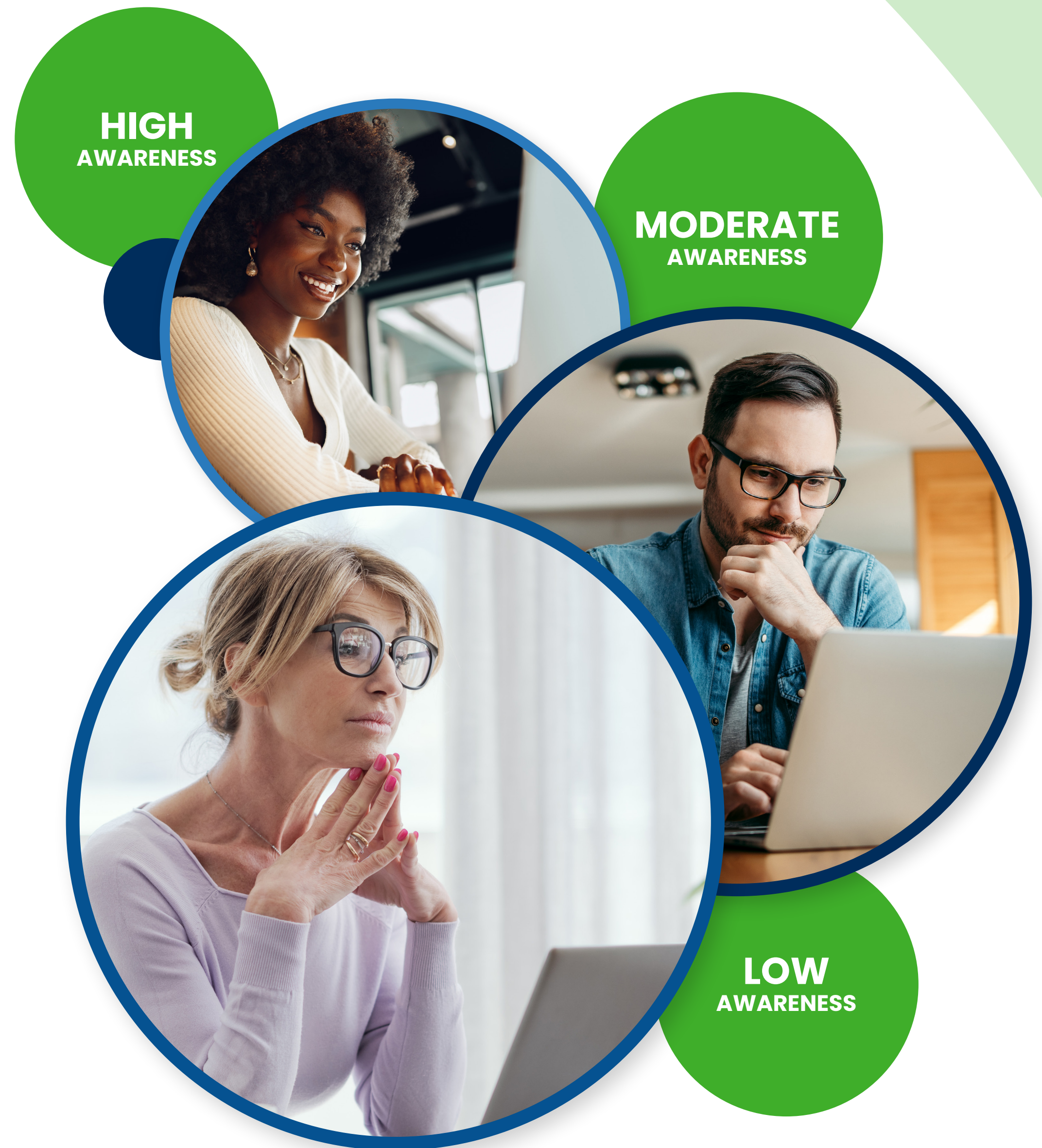


1 OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE

It's no longer enough to toss together a decent-looking website and expect the leads to pour in. Your website is a powerful and necessary marketing tool that should be actively working to grow your business. It should be optimized to bring in leads, convert those leads into customers and provide them with the information they're looking for.

THINK OF YOUR WEBSITE AS A JOURNEY FOR EVERY VISITOR:

Your goal is to guide them through their decision-making process to get to the end, contacting you and signing up for your services. You can accomplish this by keeping the journey short and informative based on the user's needs.



Continue reading to see how each visitor has a different starting point based on what they've already searched for and what they already know

HIGH AWARENESS CUSTOMERS



High-awareness customers already know all about you. Often, they land on your homepage – the number one visited page of your website – because they have searched for you directly or recognize your brand when they search for a service. Your website should make it easy for them to contact you and close the sale. You can do this by:

- ✓ Providing an easy way to see your package information.
- ✓ Including strong calls to action and easy-to-access contact forms.
- ✓ Simplifying the webforms on your site. Requiring users to provide too much information could keep them from filling out your form. You can always get more information in your follow-ups. The goal here is to get a name and phone number or email.
- ✓ Adding click-to-text and live chat functionality to allow potential customers to contact you in the way that is easiest for them.
- ✓ Starting a customer referral program. This is an easy way to create awareness for your business and generate more opportunities from this high awareness level group.

MODERATE AWARENESS CUSTOMERS



Moderate-awareness customers know what they are looking for. They're aware of your brand and what you do, but they want to make sure you're the right choice for them. Typically they've arrived at your site without knowing your brand specifically and are doing "city + service" types of searches online. This is where your site really needs to shine.

Your website needs to include pages that are geared towards a specific geographic area and optimized for "city + service" searches – for example, "lawn care in Springfield." Those pages should be designed to educate on your company's value and your various service offerings. Make them most effective by:

- ✓ Including positive Google reviews that highlight good customer experiences and a high rating – this is the #1 most important thing you can do to promote your business.
- ✓ Clearly communicating the benefits of working with you – do you offer a money-back guarantee? Same-day service? What do you offer that your competitors don't?
- ✓ Highlighting your professionalism and expertise. How many years have you been in business? Any industry certifications to highlight? Professional associations?
- ✓ Show them your company culture! Add personalized pics of your crew.
- ✓ Showcase your service offerings with clear, straightforward package information.

LOW AWARENESS CUSTOMERS



Low-awareness customers aren't sure they need a solution, and they don't know much about you. This is where blog pages come in. People searching for tips and advice aren't necessarily ready to buy right away, but these pages are great for both bringing in new visitors and demonstrating to Google that your site is a "subject matter expert," which will help other pages on your site rank better.

For the reader, blog pages introduce your brand, showcase your company as knowledgeable and trustworthy, and gently encourage them to hire you.

2 REFRESH YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media accounts are essential for companies like yours – it's a great way to connect with customers. These platforms provide an opportunity to showcase your company's services and expertise, share industry-related news and information, and interact with customers by responding to their inquiries and feedback almost in real time. Additionally, social media can help increase brand awareness, drive website traffic and generate leads, making it a valuable tool for marketing and business growth.

Here are a few simple things you can do:

- **MAKE IT PERSONAL!** Use social media to share behind-the-scenes snapshots of your team, customer success stories and community engagement. Encourage happy customers to share photos of their beautiful yards; share candid photos of your techs out in the field or your crew enjoying team building activities; highlight any charity or pro bono work you do in your community.
- Social media is also a great place to share any awards you've won or professional associations you're involved with.
- Keep your profiles updated with current profile and cover photos, accurate hours of operation, contact info and current branding.
- Your social media bios and "about us" sections should align with your SEO plans and keywords – making it even easier for customers to find you.
- Ensure that your company profiles on sites like Yelp, HomeAdvisor and Nextdoor are uniform, up-to-date and reflect your company's branding.

3 OUTLINE AND STRATEGIZE YOUR PAY-PER-CLICK ADVERTISING

As a lawn professional, you understand the importance of marketing your services to attract new clients and keep existing ones coming back for more. One way to do this is through PPC (Pay-Per-Click) advertising. PPC advertising is a form of digital advertising where you pay each time someone clicks on one of your ads. This type of advertising is vital because it allows you to target your ads to specific keywords, locations and demographics, ensuring that your ads are seen by the right people at the right time.

To get started with a PPC advertising plan, you should first identify your target audience and the keywords and phrases they will likely use when searching for lawn services. You can then create ad campaigns focusing on these keywords and phrases, using ad copy and images that are engaging and relevant to your audience. You can also set a budget for your campaigns, ensuring that you are only paying for clicks that are likely to convert into leads or sales.

50% PPC traffic converts **BETTER** than organic site visitors.

4 EMAIL MARKETING – EASY AND COST-EFFECTIVE

Email marketing is another cost-effective way to market your lawn services to potential and existing customers. With email marketing, you can share helpful tips and information about lawn and let your customers know about new services or special offers available to them. To get started with an email marketing plan, you should first build an email list of current and potential customers.

There are several ways to make this happen:

- ✓ Collect email addresses via your website by offering a newsletter or special promotions
- ✓ Encourage people to sign up for your email list on social media
- ✓ Ask existing customers to provide email addresses during service visits or through follow-up emails or texts
- ✓ Purchase a list of potential customers from a reputable marketing company



5 CONSIDER YOUR BRANDING

Your company's brand image is critical when selling a service like law instead of a tangible product. It's one of the main factors that will elevate you above your competitors and keep you top of mind when potential customers are looking for your services. Not only does a well-established brand foster trust, recognition and loyalty, but it can also increase customer retention and attract new employees.

START by defining your brand identity.

What's your mission statement? What are the core values your company stands for? What's your unique selling proposition?

Next, focus on your brand name and logo – even if you already have these, you can always update and refine them. Your name should be easy to remember, spell and pronounce, and your logo should be visually appealing and reflect your brand's personality. Does it look outdated? Now is a good time to adjust.

Think also about your “brand voice” – how you communicate with potential customers, including your tone and language. Do you want to sound professional and buttoned-up? Friendly and conversational? Select a tone that aligns with your brand image and will resonate with your target audience. Whatever you decide, keep it consistent.

It's important that you carry your branding across all channels. Everything potential customers see should be consistent and reinforce your brand name and image. Not just your website and digital advertising either. This goes for truck logos, signage, uniforms, business forms – everything should have the same look and feel to make your brand instantly recognizable.

6 CUSTOMER REVIEWS ARE CRUCIALLY IMPORTANT

What's one of the first things you do when checking out a business? Chances are, you go online to see what their reviews say. Well, your potential customers are doing the same when considering your company – a recent study showed that 91% of customers rely on reviews when making their purchase decision. Positive reviews provide social proof that your business is trustworthy and reliable, while negative reviews can steer potential customers away. Plus, reviews make it easier for you to get found online by providing a consistent pipeline of positive content that is constantly refreshing, helping your brand reach the top of search results.

- ✓ Start by claiming and optimizing your business listing on all major review sites – Google My Business, Yelp, Facebook, Angie's List, etc. Ensure all your information is complete and up-to-date, and add photos and videos of your business, services and team. You might consider offering small incentives for leaving reviews, such as a discount on future service or a piece of company-branded "swag."

91%

OF CUSTOMERS
rely on reviews when making
their purchase decision.

- ✓ The most important part of gathering reviews is the ask. Most happy customers will gladly share their positive experiences with your business. Train your team to ask for reviews when they've completed service – let them know about the importance of reviews and train them to ask politely and professionally. You can also send follow-up emails or texts thanking customers for their business and asking them to leave reviews. Include links to your listings and provide clear instructions on how to leave a review; the goal is to make it as easy as possible for the customer. You might consider offering small incentives for leaving reviews, such as a discount on future service or a piece of company-branded "swag."
- ✓ Once you start getting reviews, make sure you respond in a professional manner to all of them, both positive and negative. Thank positive reviewers for their business, and address any concerns in the negative reviews. You can't stop people from leaving negative reviews, but leaving thoughtful responses shows potential customers that you are willing to make things right.
- ✓ There are also services available that help streamline the review-gathering process. Using a program like ReviewBot can help your company get a lot of reviews, fast. ReviewBot sends an automated message to your customers, making it easy for them to leave reviews. Any negative reviews go back to you without being posted, so you can address them and turn them around!

7 PARTNER WITH EXPERTS

As you can see, there's a lot that goes into effective digital marketing. We've only scratched the surface here – and the landscape is constantly shifting! It can help to partner with digital marketing experts who understand how to create strategically powerful, cost-effective lead-generation campaigns and have deep knowledge of your industry.

A company like Coalmarch knows what it takes to help your business grow, and their proven platform is built on products and services that work together to provide you with the insights that matter most. From website development, to pay-per-click campaigns, to local search marketing and so much more,





Maximize Your **MARKETING**

CHAPTER 2 **PRINT MARKETING**



LEVERAGE THE POWER OF PRINT MARKETING:

In a world where we're bombarded with digital messages all day, print marketing makes an immediate impact. Part of the reason that print still works: It sticks around.

A printed piece doesn't have to be looked at right away; a well-designed piece is more likely to be set aside to be read later or even passed on to someone else.

PLUS, PRINT IS EFFECTIVE:

For your lawn business, the importance of print marketing cannot be underestimated. It is a tangible, effective and targeted approach to reaching your audience and building a lasting brand presence, cutting through the digital clutter and getting customers to pay attention.

90%

of millennials say that they think direct mail is "reliable"

70%

of Americans believe that mail is more personal than the internet

50%

of people actually WANT to receive mail from brands they are interested in

42%

of people at least scan their direct mail on a regular basis

BRANDING IN PRINT

We talked about branding in the **last chapter**, but printed materials are a big part of creating a cohesive identity for your company, including:

LOGO DESIGN

Your logo is the visual cornerstone of your brand. It should be memorable, distinctive and reflective of your services and brand personality. If it's been a minute since you've updated your logo, does it look outdated? Maybe it's time for a refresh.

TRUCK GRAPHICS

Your service vehicles are mobile billboards. Make sure they have your logo, contact details and an eye-catching design that captures positive attention while on the road.

LAWN SIGNS

Lawn signs are a great way to advertise your services and promote your brand. They should be simple, eye-catching and easy to recognize at a glance.

PRINT MATERIALS

Consistency in all of your printed materials – business cards, letterhead, invoices, brochures, forms, etc. – creates a professional, polished image and makes your company easy to remember.

USING PRINT TO GENERATE OFF-SEASON INCOME

Keeping consistent cash flow into your business during the off-season is always a challenge for lawn businesses, but there are opportunities as well. You can utilize print marketing to generate income even when your services aren't in high demand:

PRE-PAY LETTERS

The off-season is the time to lock in customers for next year. Send a letter that gives them the option to pre-pay for next year's services – an effective prepay letter will be very detailed and look almost like an invoice. Consider offering a special discount when they pay up front to encourage more people to sign on.

WIN-BACK CAMPAIGNS

This is also prime time to market to those customers who left your business. A good win-back letter will highlight any new service offerings, improvements or discounts – done right, you can achieve 4-7% success with win-back letters.

UNSOLD PITCH FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

Reach back out to those customers who didn't commit after receiving an estimate or sales pitch. A thoughtful follow-up letter can address their concerns and re-focus on the benefits of your services while winning up to 4% of these previously lost leads.

REACH NEW CUSTOMERS WITH PRINT

Print marketing is an effective and cost-effective way to reach a broader audience when you are looking to grow your business, add more customers or expand into new areas. You can opt for direct mail, leave-behinds, brochures and more.

POSTCARDS

Postcards are an efficient way to deliver a concise message and pack a visual punch. Include a stunning image of a well-maintained lawn, your logo and contact information and a brief call to action (CTA) or offer: "Get your first service for 20% off!" The simplicity of postcards makes them affordable to send, and easy to read and remember.

BROCHURES

You can use brochures to provide a deeper, more specific level of detail about your company and services. Include before-and-after pictures of lawns you've worked on, testimonials from happy clients, and a clear breakdown of the services and packages you offer.

SEASONAL PROMOTIONS

Tailor your direct mail to the seasons – send out fall-themed mailers promoting leaf removal and aeration services. In spring, focus on lawn rejuvenation and maintenance. If you offer mosquito control, summer's the time to promote it.

NEWSLETTERS

Regular newsletters offer ongoing value – this is your chance to provide meaningful content. Include tips for lawn care, gardening advice and updates about your business. Position yourself as a trusted authority in lawn by consistently providing useful, expert advice.

DOOR HANGERS

Looking to expand into a particular neighborhood? Consider leaving door-hangers with your contact information and a simple message like, "We'll keep your lawn looking green and gorgeous." Door hangers are can't-miss, useful reminders and help increase your brand's visibility.

PERSONALIZED LETTERS

Craft personalized letters to introduce your business to a specific neighborhood. Highlight your local ties, showcase success stories and offer an exclusive neighborhood discount to entice buy-in.

TARGETED DIRECT MAIL: FINDING YOUR IDEAL CUSTOMERS

Direct mail is even more effective when it's targeted to the customers who are most likely to purchase your services. Instead of blanketing every address in every zip code you're targeting, a strategically effective mailing list will send only to your best prospects. RealGreen's print marketing experts have been doing this for decades, and we can help you with:

DATA-DRIVEN DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS

Our proven print marketing system is designed to maximize the effectiveness of your direct mail campaigns. We'll refine your data, create targeted lists and handle all aspects of creating, mailing and tracking postcards, letters and more.

NO HASSLE MARKETING

You won't need to worry about mail lists, permits, hidden costs, USPS paperwork or drop-offs. We'll streamline that entire process, so you can focus on growing your business.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Our system provides a comprehensive view of each campaign's performance. Tracking numbers, custom URLs and other tools allow you to gauge effectiveness and make informed decisions.

AUTOMATED NEW MOVE-IN MAILINGS

Reach new residents in your service areas with postcards welcoming them to the neighborhood and introducing your lawn services.

UPSELL OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the year, you can capitalize on upsell opportunities, offering additional services or promotions to existing customers through well-timed postcards or letters.



CONNECTING WITH LANDLINE USERS

It's not print, but it is old-school: Have you stopped reaching out to customers with landline phones? Our First Connect lists provide an impressive match rate, enabling you to reach potential customers who prefer traditional communication methods. This can give you a competitive edge in reaching a segment of the market that others might be ignoring.

27%

of sellers say that
COLD CALLING
is 5-10X more effective
than email campaigns



TRANSFORMING YOUR LAWN BUSINESS WITH PRINT MARKETING

In a world dominated by digital marketing, print materials remain an invaluable tool for lawn businesses. From establishing a strong brand identity to generating revenue during the off-season and reaching a diverse audience, print marketing offers unique advantages. With our data-driven approach and comprehensive solutions, you can harness the power of print to enhance your marketing strategies.

Propel your lawn business
**TO NEW HEIGHTS OF
SUCCESS!**





Maximize Your REVENUE

CHAPTER 3 SNOW REMOVAL

How can you keep the “green” coming in when the entire landscape turns white?

By adding snow removal to your offerings. Snow removal services are a natural fit for many lawn companies – it’s another way to tap into a new market and transform your business into a year-round moneymaker. Once you’ve got the right plan in place, you’re ready to start plowing, shoveling and snow blowing your way to growth.



EQUIP YOUR TEAM

You have the trucks – but you'll need the right equipment to make snow removal a reality for your crew.

Here's the key equipment you'll need:

- ✓ **Snow plows.** These are essential for clearing large areas, fast. Just make sure your plows match the size of your trucks and can be adjusted for different snow depths.
- ✓ **Snow throwers.** For smaller areas like sidewalks, narrow residential driveways, etc. you'll need to add snow throwers to your toolkit. Single-stage machines are effective for light to moderate snowfall, while two-stage blowers are better suited for heavy snow. Consider investing in both types depending on your climate and customer needs.
- ✓ **Shovels.** You may still need to go totally manual for stairs, narrow walkways and hard-to-reach areas. Look for durable shovels with ergonomic handles to minimize strain on your crew.
- ✓ **Ice melt.** Ice melt products are key for ensuring safety on surfaces prone to freezing. There are various options available, including rock salt and calcium chloride. Make sure to find out if the municipalities you service have regulations on ice melt products before utilizing them.

Finally, proper maintenance and storage of your equipment is crucial. Regularly inspect and tune up your snow removal equipment to prevent breakdowns. Store your tools in a dry, clean space to protect them from rust and damage.



RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL – OR BOTH?

Consider whether you want to concentrate on residential or commercial snow removal services, or consider offering both if you have the bandwidth. Commercial properties might offer larger jobs with fewer stops, but also might require larger equipment and specific time constraints – an office building will need its parking lot and walkways cleared well before start of business, for example. Residential snow removal means smaller jobs, more frequent stops and the potential for more hands-on labor like pushing a snow thrower or even using a shovel, but comes with a bit more flexibility.

THINK IN FOUR SEASONS

When you offer winter services, no season is the off-season! It's important that your current and potential clients are aware that you will be offering snow removal services. Dedicate a section of your website to snow removal, update your online business listings and post on your social media channels. Direct mail or door hangers will spread the word even further in the areas you hope to service. Consider offering your current customers a seasonal discount for adding your new service; referral discounts are also a good way to build business for your new offerings.

WHAT ABOUT THE SCHEDULE?

Lawn and snow removal have very different scheduling needs. Where you can plan out your lawn schedule in advance, snow removal is almost always an urgent need, and you can't control the weather. Plus, your customers will want the snow gone ASAP, even if that means a middle-of-the-night visit. Commercial accounts may have certain municipal regulations and restrictions they need to follow. A robust scheduling and routing software will be essential for this, helping minimize day-of confusion and maximize efficiencies even if you have to send crews out in the middle of the night.

GET ORGANIZED

Weather is unpredictable and we all know that forecasts don't always get it right. You need to be able to have tight control on the things you CAN control, so you can get moving right away when the snow comes. This is especially true when dealing with major snow events like heavy, multi-day accumulations that might require multiple visits per property. Effectively communicating your "snow day" plans to your customers is a big part of this, so that you can manage their expectations and avoid conflict down the road.



ADDRESS STAFFING CHALLENGES


The current labor environment has created multiple challenges for all field service businesses. It's important to realize that the expectations for snow removal are different – and in many ways more difficult – than lawn care, maintenance or landscaping. Snow removal teams can expect to work at virtually any time of the day or night, in harsh weather conditions, with less-than-ideal road conditions. Snow removal also requires specific skills and knowledge to ensure safety and quality of work. Train your team members on proper snow removal techniques, including safe operation of equipment and proper handling of de-icing materials. Make sure your team is up to the task, so you don't find yourself stranded in the middle of the snowy season.

DETERMINE YOUR PRICING STRUCTURE

There are several factors to consider when determining how to price out your snow removal services: The size of the area to be cleared, the amount of snowfall expected in your region, the type of equipment required, the time and labor involved and the competitive rates in your area. Will you charge by the job, by the month or levy a flat seasonal rate? Will you offer different pricing tiers and packages for different types of jobs and to serve different customer needs?

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT AND YOUR CREW

Check with the cities in your service area to make sure your snow removal business doesn't require additional licenses or permits, and note any municipal codes about acceptable hours to run power equipment, snow disposal, etc. It's also important to ensure you have appropriate insurance coverage to protect against the unique risks and liabilities involved with snow removal.



Traditional
snowplowing services
is expected to generate
\$12 BILLION
and account for a
47% share of industry
revenue in 2023.

If you already use RealGreen for your business software,

one thing you won't need to worry about is switching up your software game. We offer all the functionality you need to manage your snow removal services and we've recently added new features designed to make running your snow removal business easier. We're here to make sure your business is in growth mode every day, all day – no matter the season.





Maximize Your **REVENUE**

CHAPTER 4 **HOLIDAY LIGHTS**



HOLIDAY LIGHT INSTALLATION: A FESTIVE ADDITIONAL INCOME STREAM

If you haven't considered adding holiday light installation to your portfolio of services, there are plenty of reasons that make this an excellent option to keep your business buzzing during the off-season.

A few benefits include:

- ✓ Use existing skills and equipment. You probably already have most of what you need to install holiday lights – which means minimal initial investment for a cost-effective venture.
- ✓ High seasonal demand. The holiday season brings with it a high demand for festive light displays. Why not take advantage of this potential market while also creating repeat business, year after year?
- ✓ Diversify your customer base. It's pretty simple: The more service offerings you have, the broader your potential customer base. And adding additional services gives you more opportunities to upsell to your current customers, who already know and trust you.
- ✓ Repeat customers and referrals: Providing excellent service and stunning light displays can lead to loyal customers who return year after year. Satisfied customers are more likely to refer your services to their friends, family and neighbors – as well as look to you when it comes to their lawn needs.

Here's what to consider when planning to add holiday light installation to your services:

IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET MARKET

Do you want to focus on residential customers, commercial properties or both? Consider factors like budget, location and specific lighting preferences.

THINK PAST THE HOLIDAYS

The demand for professional lighting displays is not limited to just the holidays. Any event where customers might want a festive, vibrant atmosphere – weddings, corporate events, graduation parties, etc. – is an option for professional lighting services.

CONSIDER YOUR COMPETITION

Research the holiday lighting market in your service area – check out your competitors' websites, social media pages and customer reviews to get an idea of their work, their reputation and to whether there are any service gaps you can tap into.

DETERMINE YOUR PRICING STRATEGY

To start, research the industry average pricing for holiday light installation services, which will give you a general benchmark. Then calculate the expenses involved in adding this to your business – any extra equipment needed, cost of lights, additional labor, insurance, etc. There are also different pricing models to consider: selling or leasing the lights to customers, adding extra fees for complex or challenging installations, hourly or flat fee structure.

PROMOTE YOUR NEW SERVICES

Update your website and social media accounts, your website and your online business listings to reflect your new offering. Consider doing a direct mail campaign in your service area to bring more attention and attract more potential customers. And be sure to let your existing customers know that you can now help them create professional, festive holiday displays for them!

KNOW THE RULES

When starting a holiday lights business, it is crucial to understand and comply with local rules, regulations and licensing requirements. These regulations vary from city to city and even within different neighborhoods, so thorough research is necessary. To ensure compliance, it is important to contact the relevant departments in your area to gather all necessary documentation and permits.

LET THERE BE LIGHT... AND LADDERS.

Once you've laid the groundwork, make sure you have the right equipment, starting with the lights themselves.

There are several types of lights commonly used in holiday lighting businesses. String lights are the most common and versatile; these are the lights you'll see wrapped around trees, bushes and other objects. Icicle lights are typically hung along rooflines and eaves, creating a beautiful cascading effect. Net lights are a quick and efficient way to cover larger areas, such as shrubs or hedges. Projection lights can be aimed at walls or other surfaces to project festive patterns or images.

Next, consider whether to use commercial-grade lights or lights purchased in bulk from big box stores. Commercial-grade lights are built to withstand harsh weather conditions, have longer lifespans and often come with warranty protection. On the other hand, lights from big box stores may be more affordable initially, but may not have the same durability or quality.

Another important consideration is the choice between LED and incandescent lights. LED lights are energy-efficient, have a longer lifespan and produce less heat. Incandescent lights are less expensive up front but consume more energy and have a shorter lifespan. Evaluate the specific needs and preferences of your clients to determine which type of light is best suited for their installation.

Americans
spend on average
\$6 BILLION
annually for holiday
decorations.

Beyond the lights themselves, there are other important pieces of equipment for any holiday lights business:

Consider these:

- ✓ To reach high rooflines and trees, you'll need sturdy, reliable ladders or potentially even a cherry-picker. If you already offer arbor care services, you likely have this equipment.
- ✓ Wire cutters, zip ties, light clips and electrical tape for adjusting and securing the lights to buildings, gutters, fences, trees, bushes, etc.
- ✓ Heavy-duty outdoor extension cords are essential to connect and power the lights throughout each display area.

Turn your quiet off-season
**INTO A FESTIVE
MONEY-MAKER,**
one with year-round money making potential.





Maximize Your REVENUE

CHAPTER 5

PRICE INCREASES

One of the most important – and challenging – strategic decisions you can make for your business is when to raise your prices. It's never a fun call to make, but it's a crucial one. There's no doubt that the lawn industry has seen some volatility in recent years, with rising costs affecting fuel and equipment, supply chain disruptions, a tight labor market and increased competition. Staying competitive and maintaining a healthy profit margin sometimes means increasing the price for your services. While it's undoubtedly a tough call to make, it can also be the right one.



WHY NOW?

The off-season is a good time to introduce price increases.

HERE ARE A FEW REASONS WHY:

- ✓ Your customers are less likely to be put off by a price increase during the off-season when they're not actively looking for (and paying for) lawn services. They're less likely to be checking out the competition or comparing prices from one month to the next than they would during the busy season.
- ✓ It's easier for you and your team to handle the transition during the off-season. When you're not in the thick of it, you can evaluate and adjust your pricing strategies without adding to an already heavy workload. It also gives you the chance to focus on effectively communicating the reasons for the increase and addressing customer concerns without the risk of totally overwhelming your staff.
- ✓ You can help offset any increased costs or expenses from the previous year and anticipate the costs for the following season. Did you face increased costs from equipment, supplies, materials or labor? This is your chance to adjust accordingly.

INCREASE THE PROFITABILITY OF YOUR CUSTOMER BASE

Beyond simply offsetting increased expenses, a well-timed price increase can help you "right-size" your customer base, keeping only those customers you want to keep. By adjusting your pricing structure and targeting effectively, you can attract (and retain) higher-paying, higher-profit customers while shedding customers who aren't as valuable to your bottom line.

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

- ✓ Identify those accounts in sparse, outlying areas – the places at the margins of your service areas where you have poor route density.
- ✓ Do you have customers who routinely require excessive time, resources and supplies? Target that group for a price increase as well.
- ✓ Increase pricing for those customers who routinely pay late, miss payments or fail to pay.

When planning these kinds of targeted price increases, think about the customers you want to lose as much as the customers you wish to keep. Some of those previously underpriced customers will leave – that's right-sizing. You'll increase profitability on the ones who stay. Right-sizing your customer base will further help you improve profitability by freeing up valuable technician time, which will help your growth potential.

Breaking the News: How to Communicate Price Increases

1 EVALUATE AND JUSTIFY

Before communicating a price increase to your customers, make sure you can evaluate and justify the reasoning behind it. This will help you confidently explain the reasons for the adjustment when discussing it with your customers.

2 GIVE ADVANCE NOTICE

Nobody likes surprises, especially when it comes to finances. Give your customers ample time to adjust to the new price by providing advance notice. Aim to inform them at least 30 days before the increase takes effect. This will give them enough time to consider their options and make necessary adjustments to their budget, if needed.

3 BE TRANSPARENT AND CLEAR IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

When discussing the price increase, be open and transparent with your customers. Clearly outline the reasons behind the adjustment and emphasize the continued value they will receive from your services. Highlight any improvements, additional offerings or enhanced benefits that justify the increased price. This will help customers understand that the increase is necessary to maintain the level of quality they have come to expect.

4 OFFER OPTIONS AND SOLUTIONS

Some customers might be resistant to the price increase, and that's understandable. To ease their concerns, consider offering alternative options or solutions. For example, you could introduce different service packages with varying prices or offer a discount for customers who commit to a longer-term contract.

5 EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS

During your communication, emphasize the value of a long-term partnership. Remind your customers of the relationship you have built and highlight the benefits of continuing to work together. Reassure them that the price increase is necessary to sustain and improve the quality of your services, ensuring their lawn remains in great condition year-round.

6 FOLLOW UP AND ADDRESS CONCERNS

After communicating the price increase, be prepared for questions or concerns from your customers. Be proactive in following up with them to address any issues they may have. Listen attentively, empathize with their concerns and provide clear explanations. Offering excellent customer service during this transition period will help solidify their trust and loyalty.



Maximize Your TOOLS

CHAPTER 6

AUTOMATED MARKETING

Automated marketing can be a valuable tool for your lawn business – streamlining your marketing efforts and helping you save time and resources while still effectively engaging with customers and prospects. **Having the right programs and processes in place enables you to market with almost zero effort** – and winter is the perfect time to work on setting everything up if you aren't already taking advantage of this amazing tool.



WITH AUTOMATED MARKETING IN PLACE, YOU CAN:

PERSONALIZE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

One of the main benefits of automated marketing is the ability to improve the customer experience. You can use customer data gathered from your CRM to deliver tailored emails, offers and other communications based on their actual behavior and preferences – delivering a more relevant and engaging experience.

EFFECTIVELY TARGET POTENTIALS

By analyzing the data and behavior of your current customers, you can create a profile of your “ideal” customer and target your marketing accordingly. This not only helps in attracting likely new customers, but also in nurturing loyalty in your current customers by providing them with the right information at the right time.

INCREASE CONVERSION RATES

Through targeted and personal marketing campaigns, you can guide customers through their journey more efficiently, resulting in higher conversion rates and, ultimately, increased revenue.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

What should you look for in an automated marketing program? Continue reading to find out!

Marketing automation
is viewed as the
**MOST
EFFECTIVE**
marketing technique (along
with content marketing) –
by 17.4% of marketers.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN AUTOMATED MARKETING SOLUTION:

ROBUST AUTOMATION CAPABILITIES

Look for a platform that offers advanced automation features such as email campaigns, social media scheduling and personalized messaging. You want “set it and forget it” functionality so you don't have to worry about what's going out and when – you just know it's going to happen when you want it to.

INTEGRATION WITH OTHER TOOLS

Consider how well the platform integrates with other marketing tools you may already be using, such as your CRM or job scheduling software. Seamless integration will ensure that all aspects of your marketing efforts work together

SALES TEAM SUPPORT

An effective platform will assist your sales team in effectively managing leads by providing detailed information on leads generated through various marketing campaigns. This will enable your team to track interactions with various clients, ensuring no potential customer is missed. Plus, it will help automate follow-up emails, reminders and notifications.

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

You can use your automated marketing tool to send various different email campaigns to prospects and customers alike – promotions, upsell and cross-sell letters, general customer communications, before and after service emails, and more.

CUSTOMIZABLE TEMPLATES

Effective templates make content creation easier by allowing you to create and personalize customer communications. Design your campaigns and tailor your automated marketing materials to match each customer's unique needs and reflect your company's branding and voice. It saves time and effort by eliminating the need to create marketing materials from scratch – just select a template and customize it as much or as little as you want with your own text, images and branding elements. In addition, customizable templates allow for quick and easy updates. If you need to make changes to your messaging, promotions or seasonal offerings, you can simply modify the template without starting from scratch.

REAL-TIME ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

The ability to track, analyze and measure the success of your marketing campaigns is essential. Look for a platform that provides detailed analytics and reporting features so you can make data-driven decisions to optimize your marketing strategies.

By considering these important features when selecting an automated marketing platform for your lawn company, you can ensure that you choose a solution that aligns with your specific needs and goals. This will help you

**DRIVE MORE LEADS,
INCREASE CONVERSION RATES
AND ULTIMATELY GROW...**
all year round.



Maximize Your TOOLS

CHAPTER 7

CUSTOMER SELF SERVICE

Did you know that 90% of people expect brands or companies to have a self-service support portal? Customers want a seamless experience – they can tap for a coffee, swipe for a ride, text for food delivery – and that goes for their lawn services as well. Most of your customers don't want to have to make a phone call or mail a check. The easier you make it for them to schedule service, get their questions answered and pay their bills, the more likely they are to do business with you. Set up a customer portal this off-season and you'll start reaping the rewards right away.



WHAT IS A CUSTOMER SELF-SERVICE PORTAL?

A self-service portal is a website that allows customers to independently access and manage their lawn services and provides a centralized hub for all customer information — job details and history, appointment schedules, invoices and payments, etc. An effective portal will have a user-friendly interface that can be accessed from any device, making it simple for customers to update their information, request additional services, make online payments and communicate with your team. A customer portal is a boon for your business by making life easier for everyone.

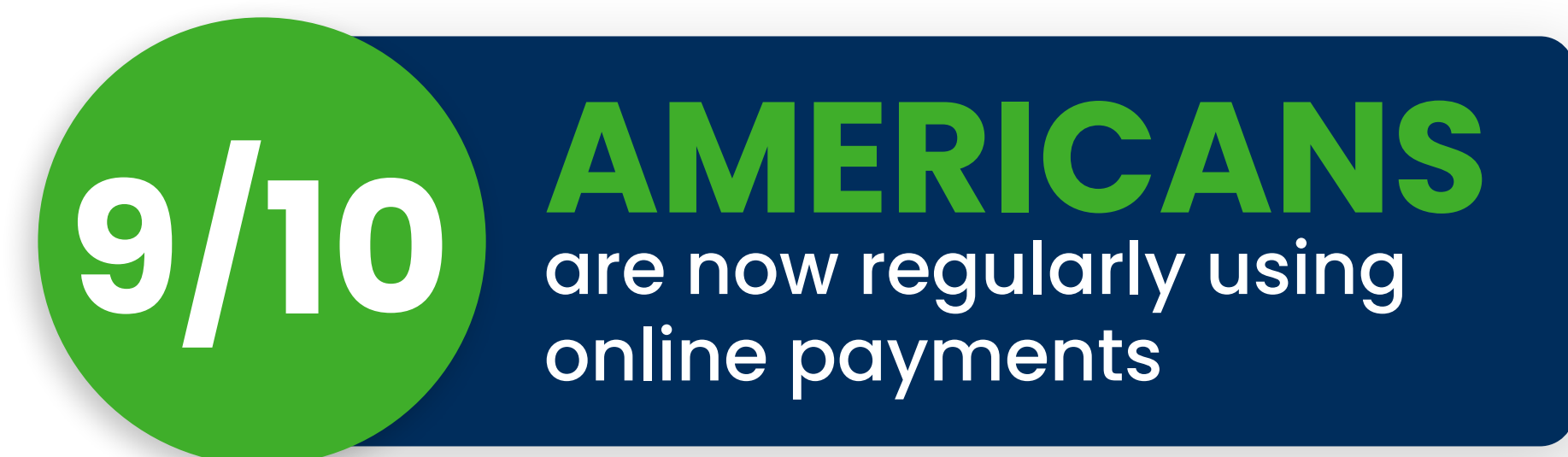
HERE ARE A FEW REASONS WHY:

- ✓ Improved customer satisfaction: When they're getting what they want, when they want it, the way they want it, your customers will be happier with the service you are providing.
- ✓ Efficient business processes: Drastically reduce the number of incoming phone calls, messages, mail and checks. Save time by not having to make manual account updates. Get more done in less time when your customers can manage their own accounts.
- ✓ Automate sales and service: Giving your customers the power to schedule their own services, request additional service or change service means you don't have to. Do more, with less.

IMPROVE CASH FLOW WITH CUSTOMER SELF-SERVICE

Healthy, consistent cash flow is essential to any business. A self-serve portal that smooths the way for your customers to pay you will help you avoid the "boom and bust" cash flow issues that can crop up in the off-season by streamlining your payment processes and getting money flowing through your business faster.

- ✓ Reduce late or missed payments when your customers can pay at their own convenience
- ✓ Eliminate trips to the bank with paper checks — and avoid having to wait several days for checks to clear
- ✓ Accept each customer's preferred form of payment
- ✓ Increase pre-pay and auto-pay



WHAT SHOULD A CUSTOMER PORTAL LOOK LIKE?

It's right there in the name: A customer portal is designed for your customers. So it should put their needs and expectations front and center. The best portals are simply and efficiently designed; easy to navigate for those with all levels of computer literacy; and work well on both desktop and mobile devices.

Consider the experience you want your customers to have when they visit your portal. Make sure they can quickly find what they are looking for and point them to common navigation areas like your FAQs, payments and scheduling. You might even want to give your customers the option to personalize their own portal so they can access the parts of their account that they use most frequently.

When you give your customers what they want, they'll keep coming back. A customer portal makes your company available to your customers on their time and lets them interact with you the way they want to. It makes your business more customer-friendly, more efficient and more self-sufficient. And most importantly, it helps improve your cash flow – especially in the off-season.





Maximize Your TOOLS

CHAPTER 8

SET UP A 24/7 OFFICE

In today's competitive market, your customers expect immediate responses and round-the-clock availability. But as an owner, being available all day, every day – even if you want to – just isn't sustainable. With the right systems in place – like call center services and automated or AI solutions – you can have your business up and running round the clock. Use this off-season to get your 24/7 office ready to go: **never miss a call, never miss a lead, never miss a sale, no matter when they happen.**



CALL CENTER TECHNOLOGY

If potential customers are calling you and getting voicemail, they might not still be around when you finally get back to them. That's why setting up a call center is a great way to enhance your customer service capabilities, improve overall efficiency and increase your speed-to-lead.

Look for a reliable solution that is tailored to the needs of the green industry. You want your call center software to be user-friendly and focused on the features most helpful to you. Look for automated call routing, call recording and integration with other tools you're using, like appointment scheduling and customer relationship management (CRM) software. This will help streamline operations, reduce manual errors and improve response times.

**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

74%
of customers go
with whichever
provider responds
to them first

42%
of sales calls come in
after hours and
on weekends

60%
of customers give
up after waiting 60
seconds on hold

AUTOMATED MARKETING AND CUSTOMER SELF-SERVICE

We talked about these more in-depth in **chapters six** and **seven**, but it's worth repeating. Good customer communication is essential to building loyalty, trust and lasting relationships, but writing and sending marketing communications and responding to customer requests is time-consuming and challenging. With the right software in place you can "outsource" many of these tasks to automated solutions that will do the heavy lifting.

If you're already using RealGreen's Service Assistant software to run your business, you're ahead of the game. With Automated Marketing Assistant (AMA) and Customer Assistant Websites (CAW), your virtual office is open all day, every day.

AMA takes over the task of communicating with leads, customers and lost customers by automatically sending timely, personalized and effective marketing messages. After one simple setup, you have access to an entire library of customizable "set it and forget it" auto-generated communications. It works in the background to effectively communicate in a way that you don't always have time to.

Adding a CAW to your portfolio gives your customers the option of self-service at their own convenience.

WITH A CAW, YOUR CUSTOMERS CAN:

- ✓ Safely and securely pay their bills and check their account information
- ✓ Sign up for and manage auto- and pre-pay agreements
- ✓ Make service requests, changes and cancellations
- ✓ Add new services to their account
- ✓ Reach out with questions

Not only do AMA and CAW work hand-in-hand, but they both seamlessly integrate with Service Assistant 5, making customer outreach and prospect marketing simple and ensuring that you always have the most up-to-date information available. It's just like adding another administrator to your office staff.

LEAN INTO AI AND MACHINE LEARNING

Another way to get more done with less staff? Lean into artificial intelligence and “machine learning.” If you’ve heard of Chat GPT or some of the other AI-assisted content programs currently flooding the internet – yes, those are tools you can use (more on that in a bit). But you might be surprised by how many ways AI can work in the background – or foreground – to help make things easier for you and your business. Here are some options:

CHATBOT SALES

The right AI tool can help your company grow by making sales easy and helping you capture leads you might otherwise lose. With an AI-enabled chatbot on your website, you can respond to leads whenever they come in.

A tool like ServiceBot will guide visitors through the entire sales process with a brief text-based chat, asking them leading questions about their property and what they’re looking for, then providing them with accurate estimates and customized program recommendations, even overcoming common sales objections. It ensures quick responses to inbound leads, makes sure there’s a standard set of probing questions for each prospect, records information for every lead, sends an instant proposal and makes it easy for customers to buy and pay right away.

ServiceBot also uses your branding and price tables, so when customers visit your site and engage with the bot, they only see your company. ServiceBot also integrates with CRM programs like RealGreen’s Service Assistant, so everything is automatically input into your system – even if the bot doesn’t close the sale, you’ll see the customer’s information and be able to follow up on it.

A large blue circle containing the text '83%' in white. Below the circle, the text 'overall customer satisfaction rating from customers using web chat' is written in white. The background features abstract blue and green shapes.

83%

overall customer satisfaction
rating from customers
using web chat

CHAT GPT AND AI CONTENT CREATION

If you haven't yet heard of Chat GPT, Jasper or the many other AI writing tools currently taking over the internet, you soon will. AI-assisted writing is making a major splash. There are plenty of signs that this will not be a passing technology fad: Google has invested in its own AI writing technology and Microsoft has committed \$10 billion to ChatGPT creator OpenAI. It's pretty clear that AI-assisted and AI-generated content is here to stay. The question is: How can you use that to your advantage?

This could be a game-changer for home services industries like lawn care or pest control. A tool like ChatGPT can revolutionize how you approach customer service, recruiting and hiring, and more. It can be used to create personalized sales pitches based on customer data. You can have the tool compose social media posts, email subject lines, internal memos or emails to coworkers, or even rapidly write accurate and effective job descriptions in minutes.

However, it's important to note that AI-generated content can be far from perfect. OpenAI even says as much on their website, noting that, "ChatGPT sometimes writes plausible-sounding but incorrect or nonsensical answers."

Right now, the best way to approach an AI writing tool is to use it as just that – a tool. AI is an excellent, efficient way to jump-start content that might actually take you hours to compose from scratch – but you probably shouldn't just cut and paste whatever the bot gives you without giving it a solid edit and making sure that it's saying what you actually want it to say, the way you want to say it.



Don't let the off season slow you down! Use this time wisely to sharpen your skills, nurture customer relationships and explore new revenue streams. With some hustle, determination and the insights gained from this e-book, you'll be building the next phase of your lawn empire in no time. Put these strategies into action and

WATCH YOUR BUSINESS THRIVE

12 months out of every year.



ARE YOU READY TO SELL 24/7, without working 24/7?



Green industry's leading lawn software



AI chatbot for 24/7 e-commerce



Digital marketing services

Our software shows up to work everyday to make sure you always have new customers and work orders to fill. Wake up to new leads with digital marketing from Coalmarch. Sell 24/7 on your website with ServiceBot. And sleep easy at night knowing it's all integrated with RealGreen.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND OUT MORE!

Call 800.422.7478 or visit realgreen.com

