

Landscaping Service

2007-01-05 13:10:46



A landscaping or gardening business is one of those rare work at home business's that you can start with very little capital, but still has the potential to grow into a fully fledged business capable of extending far beyond your home office. Landscaping and gardening services provide an essential service to both residential and commercial customers. The work is outdoors, physical and often tiring if you have a green thumb or want to learn quickly then starting a landscaping or gardening service from home is the job for you.

Before The Start-Up ' Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

There aren't any specific qualifications required to start your own landscaping or gardening service, although a qualification in landscape architecture or a related field such as horticulture will be helpful.

The specific skills you'll need to get the job done will differ depending on whether you decide to start a landscaping or gardening service. However both services will require basic gardening knowledge including knowledge of plants, grass, trees, growing seasons and regional climates.

If you're not already an experienced home gardener never fear, there is a book out there for everything. If you think this could be a job you'd enjoy and are keen to learn we recommend starting with the Sunset Book Garden Book and the Sunset Western Landscaping Book.

Don't forget, this a physical job, you'll be spending most of your time outdoors in all weather conditions, commercial gardening or landscaping is quite different to gardening as a hobby.

The Start-Up

Starting your own garden or landscaping service doesn't have to mean a bank loan or second mortgage, many entrepreneurs start services with only a few hand tools. However if you do have the capital its best to start out with a little more; a truck or large trailer will form the basis of your business and will be your greatest expense. If you already have a truck or suitable trailer you are in luck!

To start a gardening service you'll need a lawn mower, weed-eater or suitable edge tool, rake, broom, clippers both large and small, spade and other small hand tools for more delicate work. To start a landscaping service you'll need a very similar setup with the exception of a lawn mower and weed-eater as landscaping services usually don't offer routine maintenance work. Landscaping jobs often require the use of small earth moving equipment, rather rent tools initially and buy them once you have the capital. Equity financing is always safer than debt financing although it's not always suitable.

Depending on where you live in the world you might need to acquire various permits to start operating; these could include a general business license and a permit to spray pesticides. Inquire at

your local government small business office to make sure you do things legally from the start. Also consider getting insurance, in some countries it may be compulsory. Get insurance as soon as you can afford it, accidents can and do happen!

Having prepared all the hands on assets you need to run your service its time to think about the business side of things. Create a small work area or office at your house, you'll also need business cards, a pricing structure, brochures if you have the capital and an invoice and receipt book. You might be interested in this related The Work Pad article on [business stationary](#). If you have a computer consider getting an accounting program such as Quicken to do your books, consider using an open source option such as GNU Cash or TurboCash.

Making It Work

Besides the usual advice of hard work, great service and competitive pricing it's very important to look professional and make your clients feel comfortable. As a small service you'll be initially targeting your services at residential clients only. While it's always important to always look professional, it's especially important when working in private gardens as clients have to trust you coming into their personal environment. A uniform, clean hair cut and being punctual are the easiest ways to portray a professional image.

Marketing

There are many ways to market a small business; you'll have the best results marketing your service using local classifieds, direct mail targeted at small areas and word of mouth. Word of mouth is free and classifieds and direct mail are relatively targeted and very affordable. If you are desperate consider calling door to door in your target areas, this usually gets a similar response to using flyers but is cheaper.

If you have the capital get a small business website built, include useful gardening tips and content to attract clients. Be sure to register you site with niche directories and services like Google Local if you live in the U.S.

If you do live in the U.S it's really worth the time to learn how to run a pay per click campaign on Google Adwords. In certain countries like the U.S. Google allows you to geo target ads at your specific area making them very cost effective.

Don't Forget

Many business's fail by expanding too quickly, when you become busy you'll need to hire staff, buy more equipment and possibly expand to an office. Be careful as you grow and consider the financial pros and cons of every new addition to your business.