

STEP 1 – REGISTRATIONS, LEGALITIES, BANK INSURANCE

REGISTRATIONS

Some of the things you will need to do when you start:

- The first step in creating a company is to come up with a name.
- Create an email address with the company name.
- When you are ready to start, go to your country's Companies' Office and register your company.
- You are required to find your own accountant and keep up to date with all applicable legal and tax obligations.
- Some accountants use different software which can make keeping track of accounts simpler but the choice is at your own discretion. I would recommend Xero.

PHONE & PLAN

- Choose a phone and internet plan. You are going to need sufficient calling minutes, texts and data to manage your business.

BANK

- Contact your bank and open a business savings & a business spending account. You will need to take in your company's extract that you will receive when you create your company on your national website; this usually has a small fee that continues annually.

INSURANCE

- Insurance is crucial. You will need business insurance including public liability and statutory liability insurance; these are going to cover you in case of any damages upon the property or any legal issues.
- It is not mandatory but recommended that you get vehicle insurance and also tool insurance so you are able to replace your gear in case of any unfortunate events.

STEP 2 – PURCHASES

NECESSITIES

- Van
- Mower
- Weedeater
- Blower
- 2 stroke oil
- Linetrimmer line
- X10 fadges
- Gas can
- Business cards
- Advertising flyers
- Sign writing on van

Vans - A key point is to not over capitalise on your vans. \$4-10k is ideal. Grass clipping and the general industry can wear out a van very fast.

Mowers – We recommend the Testarossa body with any engine. I have used Koler , GGP and Honda and they are all good. It is the bodies that wear out the fastest. Your local Stihl shop will have plenty of options to suit everyone.

Weedeater – We recommend a Stihl FS55 or FS85, which usually retail for between \$400-\$800.

Blower – We recommend the Stihl blower which retails for around \$400.

Extra bits & pieces – 2 stroke oil to mix with the fuel for the 2 stroke engines, line for your line trimmer (some trimmers take square line & some take circle so make sure you get the right one for your trimmer).

10x fadges - Ideally if you can get 10 secondhand or even new fadges, that should be enough to get you started. They are usually around \$10 from Farmlands or you can try Mitre10 Mega.

2x gas cans - One can for your 2 stroke and one for your 4 stroke engines, 5-10ltr is big enough. Any bigger and it starts to become harder to work around and to handle.

Business cards - To start with, a pack of 250 cards should be plenty. You can get cards with your logo, contact details and account number for roughly \$100.

Flyers - To start with, 250 flyers should be plenty. You can get flyers with your logo, contact details and account number for roughly \$100.

Signwriting on van – This is a great way to establish your company in your city. It is like a mobile billboard. Key tip - don't make the writing too small or logo too complex. Keep it simple and easy to read.

STEP 3 – ADVERTISING

- Sign up to the NZLGR.
- Create a logo for your company. A slogan can be helpful too.
- I recommend you do two weeks of full-on advertising to begin.

After your first couple of weeks you should have a few jobs starting to come in. The great thing about mowing is that every lawn you do, depending on the time of the year and the client, you should technically be returning in the next fortnight to 4 weeks.

Once you pick up one client you don't just pick up \$50 a fortnight you make \$1300 over a year.

It's not going to take you long before you can fill up all of your working week!

Ways to advertise:

- When quoting new jobs try to match the energy and tempo of the person to whom you are pitching.
- Go into your local Age Concern organisation and leave cards.
- Go to all your local property agents and leave flyers.
- Door knocking is so easy because once you have met the person and seen the lawns, you can quote right there on the spot. They know what they are getting, plus they have met you and feel comfortable.

- Flyer drops.
- Target retirement villages as usually they are house-proud but physically unable.
- Contact businesses that have grass as they will usually contract someone to maintain them.
- Get your vehicle sign written and be proud to be a business owner.
- Advertise on your local Facebook pages as usually they will have multiple places you could post about looking for lawn mowing work.
- Create a Facebook page for your company and ask happy clients to leave a review.

Tips and tricks of the industry:

There are many ways to grow your clientele. The most effective method I have found has been door knocking. By going door to door to meet people it gives them the opportunity to have a quote done then and there and leave all of your contact details on a flyer or card. They will keep you in mind if you have left a good impression and come across as polite and humble.

Flyer drops are also an effective way of covering a lot of houses. In my city there are 60,000 houses alone. All I needed was 1% and that's 600 lawns.

Approaching different local businesses such as real estate agencies (as they come across a lot of houses) or elderly centers (where people who are physically unable to do their lawns any more).

Although you are there primarily for the lawns, there are also plenty of opportunities to approach the client about any other work you see at the property, such as hedges that may need trimming, gardens that may need turning over, weeding or spraying. If you have the skill set and the time in your schedule, there are many other opportunities to be noticed.

INDUSTRY BENEFITS

There are many benefits to the mowing industry as there are always going to be lawns to mow and there will forever be people who will need them done for them. For example, elderly people, people with disabilities and people who are on ACC. There are so many opportunities where people who are unable to do it themselves will need their lawns done.

It can also be beneficial, depending on your schedule, to have a cleanup job on the go that may take you a week or two to complete in total, but space it out at the end of your weeks over a month or so to allow you room to bump some lawns back in the week if you have a wet week or maybe a break down. This works well if the client is in no great rush to have the job done straight away.

STEP 4 – BOOKKEEPING

BOOKKEEPING

Each day you will note with a tick or cross next to each lawn on your schedule as to whether or not you have completed it. Also note whether the client has paid on the day or received an invoice. There will also be a section for any notes that may need to be taken for further jobs or contact details.

At the end of each day, go through the schedule and move any clients that didn't get completed that day, to the next day/week or place them where they need to go according to their request.

You can also add in any new clients that need to be added in your weekly client base update.

END OF WEEK PAYMENTS

At the end of every week you will need to go through your client schedule for that week and balance it against your online transactions. This means you will go through the online deposits for that week back until your last recorded date and add “paid” to the client schedule from that week. All extra transactions will be added to your accounts book as they will be payments from previous weeks mows or either credits to some clients’ accounts.

INVOICING

At the end of every month you will send all of your clients an online statement for that months’ worth of mowing, balanced against what has been paid, what is still owing and what may be in credit.

ACCEPTING PAYMENTS

There are different ways of accepting payment for the lawns.

- The most preferable form of payment is an online payment as it means there is no need for the client to withdraw cash or have to leave it hidden for you to collect. Online payment means we are able to go in, do the job, leave an invoice and move on to the next lawn without having to go searching around for the money or even having to speak to the client
- Cash & cheque on the day. For some elderly folk this is the most preferred payment method for them. The cash that we receive throughout the week we deposit into the account at the end of that month.
- Automatic payments & direct debits are both as good as they are made directly into your business account. However there are a couple of extra precautions with this in that you will have to ensure these clients are mowed every week that they are due. If rain pushes it back a week it can make everything get out of routine and half of your client base may be in credit for your services.

Some clients that you have built rapport with and that you trust will let you stockpile their lawn bills and then pay them every 3 months. This option is at your own discretion.

YOUR CLIENT BASE

Your client base will be made up of many individual customers and each one will be different in some way. The lawns are all different shapes and sizes and it is up to us to evaluate the time needed to do the job.

It is more efficient to mow clients in the same area on the same day to cut down on running costs and time travelling to and from areas.

Some clients will have different regularities which can range from weekly to annually, but most common is fortnightly.

Some clients will want a range of quality jobs. Some will just want the lawns to be mowed as quick and cheaply as possible, some will want a top quality mow and it is up to us to evaluate the client’s needs.

It is good moral to strive to keep our clients happy therefore if you make a mistake it is up to you to rectify it and cover the costs to do so.

When gaining new clients it is best to get their full name, number, address, email and how regular they require the lawns done.

HOW TO TEXT CLIENTS

There are many ways to approach your clients. When texting regarding lawns that are usually due that day it is best to text to confirm rather than question whether you will be over that day to do the lawns for them.

For example:

Hi there, we will be over today to do the lawns for you. (=

Compared to saying:

Hi there, would you like the lawns done today?

The first way implies that it will work better for you and doesn't allow the option to move it out of regularity. The same thing applies when texting clients about bills that may be unpaid. We want the clients to feel comfortable but within reason. Although, if the client is not happy with you coming on that day it is up to you to find a day that works for the both of you and not make the client feel uncomfortable in any way. These are people's homes we are going to and they need to feel happy for us to be there.

Symbols on the client list

Some clients will have a symbol on their client schedule to say that they will need a reminder text about the due lawns.

Some will have other symbols like these:

t = this client needs to be text before we come to do the lawns for them

f/n = the lawn needs to be done fortnightly

l/m = last mow for this client

n/w = they would like the lawns done next week

m/w = more work available at the property that can be completed

n/f = hold till next fortnight

x = do not do this lawn

There is also a place on the schedule for edging quality. Some will range from 0 where there is no edging required to a 10 where they request the highest quality that we can provide.

Some clients that want

weekly mowing are colored RED

3 weekly are colored PURPLE

4 weekly are GREEN

- It usually always helps to add a due date in the notes for these as well.

ROTATION SYSTEM

Ideally you want to have some rhythm to your run. For example, if your city has 8 suburbs, you would aim to mow in two of those suburbs that are closest to each other and work from one side of the city to the other over the next four days.

Then it is a good idea to keep the 5th day up your sleeve as a day to catch up on missed rainy days, lawns that may have been missed or extras that you have picked up during the week from areas you have already covered.

The night before you go out mowing you should send all your clients a text reminder to let them know you will be over the next day to do the lawns for them.

TERMS OF TRADE

This is a good way to cover yourself in the case that a client may not pay. You can send it to Collections and if the client has viewed or signed your Terms of Trade then it is up to the client to pay the Collection Agency's fees to.

MOBILE EFTPOS

A system which allows us to take Eftpos payments through our phones on the spot. This requires a small outlay of \$100- \$150 for the product, then at just \$10 per month it is definitely a useful option.

STEP 5 – HOW TO MOW A LAWN

TIPS:

- Start in the center of the lawns when there are two of you, so that the other person can do all of the edges.
- If mowing alone, do 2-3 strips forwards and backwards.
- Start the mower height high and come down lower if needed.
- When turning, bring the mower closer to the chest then use your full body and momentum to get going into the next line.
- If the grass starts to leave some trails behind the mower, the catcher is too full. Empty it!
- Cradle the mower.
- If the property has a trampoline - grab the legs as low as possible and roll it in circles if it has feet on it.
- Break the lawns down into sections.
- Empty the catcher at the end of your strips closest to the fadge.
- Pull fadge to the van.
- Fill the fadge in the van to save extra lifting.

LINE TRIMMING

The first step when you arrive at a lawn is to use the line trimmer. Take the line trimmer at the start of the day, prime it three times, then click the choke on. Next, pull the ripcord and it will start. If it doesn't start on the first try, give it a couple more pulls.

You will then trim around the full perimeter of the lawn, including around any objects like gardens, trees or statues.

There are different ways to hold the line trimmer, each with a different result. The names we use are **horizontal, vertical & a bevel edge**. Some also have what we call a double edge, which is when you do it once on a horizontal edge, then once on a vertical edge.

Edging the lawn clockwise will flick all of the cut edges off the edge of the lawn and anticlockwise will flick all of the cut grass onto the lawn.

MOWING THE LAWN

The mowers have two two different levers for changing the height of the blades - one on the front and one on the back.

It is our job to assess the height of the grass and how much to cut off it to leave a nice, healthy height whilst still giving it a good quality cut.

We start by mowing two strips around the entire perimeter to pick up all the mess that the line trimmer has flicked up. We then mow lines back and forth, leaving even lines across the entire lawn.

If the grass is long you will have to change the catcher more frequently.

USING THE BLOWER

Pump the primer three times, click the choke on and then pull the cord.

The purpose of the blower is to blow down any grass that may be scattered around to leave a nice clean and tidy result for the client.

Ideally, it is best to blow the grass back onto the lawns before mowing so that it doesn't get blown back onto the nicely mowed lawns.

STEP 6 – MAINTENANCE

Keeping your equipment well maintained makes less work for yourself and will also mean your equipment has a longer life.

It is important to maintain a professional appearance by keeping your equipment clean and looked after.

If your equipment breaks you need to get it fixed. If you are unable to fix something yourself, take it to an expert.

It is recommended that you clean the air filters on your mower, blower and line trimmer once a month and also change the oil on your mower once a month.

Bookwork maintenance is crucial for record keeping and to ensure that everything is in functional, working order and easily accessible.

STEP 7 – TERRITORY RISKS OF THE INDUSTRY

TERRITORY

Napier and Hastings are both very big areas, with over 60,000 people in Napier alone. The majority of houses having lawns allows us a great opportunity to grow within the area.

Hawke's Bay can have amazing weather all year round, which is always great for lawn mowing. Even through the slowest periods of the year we still have steady growth in many areas. The combination of wet winters and the regular Hawke's Bay sunshine make for steady growth within the region.

RISKS IN THE INDUSTRY

The most common risk within the mowing industry is the weather. It is important to track the weather when planning your week. We can mow in the rain, however it is preferable to avoid it if possible. Met service is most helpful as it gives details such as rain mm count, as well as keeping up to date with general forecasts.

Obviously during major events such as fires, floods or earthquakes, lawns will be unable to be mowed however there will be plenty of work to help clear up properties afterwards.

We recommend using a risk analysis sheet to put precautions and plans in place for events such as serious injury leaving you unable to work, or any circumstances that stop you completing jobs.

WEATHER

Different seasons provide different opportunities and require different adjustments while working.

Autumn:

This time of year means the lawns will be just starting to slow their growth from the summer sun. The leaves will fall and there will be plenty of lawns under big trees that will require leaves to be collected and dumped. Some of the fruit trees will have just come into season and some clients may want their fruit collected for them. Daylight Savings also kicks in mid-season so you will need to adjust your working times accordingly.

Winter:

In winter the growth is slow; some clients will change from fortnightly to three-weekly. The days are shorter, with sunset around 5pm in the middle of winter, and potentially a lot of wet days. It is critical in winter to take every opportunity you can, even if the weather clears for only a few hours. If you have a full schedule with 4-5 full days of mowing each week and it rains for 4/7 days, you can end up with a big backlog of lawns to be mowed. I do also recommend to all my team to use their holidays in winter as this is a good time for rest for landscapers.

Spring:

Spring means that growth begins to increase again. Lawns begin to grow very fast in spring and some clients will change to every 10 days, or even weekly. If a client is unable to afford a weekly mow during this time, ensure that you cut the lawns nice and short to sustain the fortnightly period. The daylight hours become longer which allows more time for mowing. There are also more fruit trees due for fruit collection.

Summer:

During a hot, dry summer it is important not to cut the lawns too low as they will burn off and stop growing. A wet summer means that the combination of sun and rain results in fast growing lawns, which will need to be regularly maintained. This time of year has the longest days, leaving it possible to work right through until 8pm if you have clients happy for you to do so. This also means you are able to maximise your daily earnings.

In summer, over the Christmas period, you can approach your clients about collecting their Christmas tree after the season and dumping it for them.

STEP 8 - QUOTING WORK

Factors to take into account when quoting jobs include:

- How thick and long the lawns are.
- How much green waste needs to be removed.
- How thick the edges are.

There are many different elements but what it all comes down to is time. Most lawn mowers work out to roughly one dollar per minute/\$60 per hour. I will recommend a good starting rate for yourself after evaluating your skills during the training period.

When quoting a lawn I break it down in my head into sections - how long is it going to take me to do the edge, 10mins/ to mow the lawns, 15mins/clean up and blow the mess down, 5min/ so in total it will take 30 minutes, which will work out to \$30.

If you are uncertain exactly how much the lawn will cost you can give the client a price range if they are happy for you to do so and this allows you some flexibility with the job. Make sure you give yourself a fair price but don't go over the top figure you have quoted.

When quoting, it is up to us to find out exactly what the client wants so that there is no confusion when the work is completed.

STEP 9 – HEALTH & SAFETY

You are to comply with all of your country's Health and Safety precautions and also keep up to date with any changes or attend any extra training to ensure this.

You are to always keep all of the correct safety equipment in the vehicle at all times (eyes, ears, head and foot protection etc.) and also to always keep a stocked safety/first aid kit in the van as well as a fire extinguisher.

We have also attached a list of standard operating procedures to go through for you and your staff.

STEP 10 - FINAL THOUGHTS

Don't overcompensate.

Minimal outgoings = maximum profit.

Invest in assets that can generate a profit. E.g. hedge trimmers, spray packs, bigger machinery.

There is always the opportunity to get a ride on mower but at the same time, if you can fill your clientele with enough smaller lawns it reduces the initial outlay of purchasing a ride on mower which will therefore keep your profits high.

There is a lot to learn within this industry and I am looking forward to helping you grow and succeed.