

Simple Steps To Building A Successful Landscape Business

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6 Steps To Life Changing Results

You build dream gardens and projects for your customers, but you don't earn as much as you should. Does this sound familiar?

For many companies, this is the sad reality for all the blood sweat and tears they put in. But why is this the case? Let's explain how you can fix this and start making life changing profits ...

Step 1: Know your final destination

Start with the end in mind. If you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you've got there? When you know what your business looks like when it's "finished" you can then start to formulate a plan on how to get there.

Step 2: Know your numbers

Become an expert on the financial side of your business. Do you truly understand your margins and do you price your work accordingly? Don't be afraid to be the most expensive in your area. BUT there's a huge caveat here ... For you to justify 5-star prices, your business needs to be 5-star in all areas. Someone needs to be the most expensive, why not make it you?

Step 3: Get the right people on the bus

To attract the best people, you need to be an attractive company to work for. By charging appropriately, you can afford to pay the best wages in your area. It is a false economy to skimp on wages. This will help you to attract and retain the best people, which will improve your quality and productivity. Great people work for great companies – average people work for average companies.

Step 4: Be systematic in your approach

The finest businesses are based on solid systems. Make sure that you have your processes mapped out, documented and your people trained on them thoroughly. Draft out the step-by-step customer journey from start to finish. From how they hear about you, (lead generation) to how you sell to them, (sales process) to how you deliver your projects (delivery process). This will improve your stress levels, productivity, profitability and produce consistent results that will lead to far more referrals from your happy clients.

Step 5: Communication is key

To deliver your projects on time, communication is the key! Ensure that you have a regular routine of the right meetings. Daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly. They need to be disciplined, structured, consistent and with clear accountability for all involved. Make sure that every person on site understands what the daily work schedule is and what targets must be achieved every day. When you hit your daily targets, you hit your weekly targets and then you'll hit your project completion targets. Always add in some contingency for the unexpected to happen and price this in from the start.

Step 6: Get a business coach!

All successful athletes and teams have great coaches behind them ... It's the same in business! Don't use your own trial and error! This can be expensive, stressful and exhausting. If YOU don't have a coach and your competitors DO, who do you think is most likely to win? Contact us today to get started on your journey to life changing results.

5 Things You Should Know Before You Grow ...

You're passionate about building dream gardens for your clients, you're excited about building your dream business but what are the vital things you need to have in place? Avoid the common mistakes that many business owners make by following some of these basic principles ...

Here are 5 things you **MUST** consider ...

1. Know your numbers

If you were playing a game of golf or tennis, how would you know if you were winning or losing if you didn't keep score? It's the same in business. You need a score card to know whether you're winning or not. Do you know your true margins? Your monthly breakeven number? Marketing ROI? Productivity KPIs? "Knowing your numbers" is vital to making the right decisions to make your business a success.

2. Establish your "Vision" & "Values"

You wouldn't start a long journey without knowing where you're going or how you're going to get there. You'll need to have a clear understanding of what your business looks like when it's "finished". Then you can go to work "ON" your business and not just work a job "IN" your business. Having a clear vision and solid values will help to attract like-minded individuals to achieve your goals. If you haven't done so already, you must read a great book called, "The E-Myth Revisited" that explains how to get started.

3. Follow a structured recruitment process to attract great people

Great people work for great companies. Average people work for average companies. If you want to attract the best people you need to be an attractive business to work for. Learning and following a successful recruitment process is the key to building a winning team of great people. If you're consistently frustrated with your team, it maybe time to assess your recruitment process and find out what changes you need to make.

4. Get organised and efficient

Map out your critical business processes that are performed on a regular basis, break them down into simple steps and train the relevant people in those tasks. For example; What's your marketing process? Customer sales journey? Daily operations/delivery processes? Accounting systems? etc. If everyone executes their tasks in the correct way and in a consistent manner, there will be less mistakes ... which means you'll be more efficient and more profitable as a result!

5. Integrate the right IT systems

80% Systemisation, 20% Humanisation! 80% of tasks in a business are performed on a regular basis. Either hourly, daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly. Great businesses are built on great systems run by great people. Make sure you research the right IT systems in the key departments. Remember the acronym for S.Y.S.T.E.M ... Save Yourself Stress Time Energy & Money!

What's The Point Of YOUR Business?

This may sound like a strange question but it's one you need to ask yourself.

Many people start their business initially to work for themselves and to at least replace the salary they had when they left their previous job. If they think they were working for an idiot before, they soon realise they're working for a bigger lunatic in themselves 😊

By asking the question above, it helps you to establish 'WHY' you exist as a company and what is the vision, common goal and purpose of everything you do.

Who do you want to serve? Who is your ideal target market? What projects do you want to work on? What impact do you want to make in your community or your industry?

There's a far bigger purpose than just replacing your income to give you more freedom. Unfortunately, in many cases, the dream of more freedom and more income doesn't always materialise. Instead, the reality can be quite the opposite – Less time, less income and more stress!

When you are crystal clear on your vision and purpose of 'WHY' you exist, there is a greater force driving you and your team. You become inspired and inspiring to your team and your clients/prospects.

Simon Sinek said it best in his book 'Start with why' when he states, "My why is to inspire people to do the things that inspire them, so, together, each of us can change our world for the better!"

Once you have clarity on your company's 'WHY', the decisions you make will all be focused on achieving this vision and not send you veering off course. If you don't have a clear vision of your future, how can you put a plan into place to get you there?

You wouldn't get in the car to go on a family holiday without knowing the final destination because you would waste so much time taking wrong turns, getting lost and experience lots of the stress along the way. You would organise and plan the journey in great detail. It's the same when planning the route to the success of your business.

Once you've defined the 'PURPOSE' of your business, you then need to create a whole bunch of 'ground rules' that will enable you to inspire the right team members and clients along the way. These are called your company's 'VALUES'. These values underpin and define exactly 'WHO' you are and support 'WHY' you exist.

If you currently do not have these in place, you need to decide what values are important to you as a person and whether these would resonate with the kind of team members and clients you wish to appeal to.

6 Steps To Recruiting A Dream Team

There are 4 key principles to remember when recruiting:

1. Attract a large pool of applicants and you're more likely to get the right person
2. Implement multiple levels of screening and you'll waste less time in lengthy interviews with under-qualified candidates.
3. Observe a short list of applicants performing the essentials of the position in real time and you're less likely to be surprised on their first day.
4. Assess your short list of applicants to make sure that you're making an appropriate match. e.g. DISC behavioural profiling.

Here's a PROVEN 6 Step Recruitment Process:

STEP 1: Develop a Clear Job Description

- Get total clarity on the values/character traits of your ideal candidate along with the key responsibilities, tasks & skills required
- Hours required
- Pay range

STEP 2: Write Advert For Position

- Follow the AIDA formula – Attention, Interest, Desire, Action
- Include a good headline that's easy to understand – (longer ones work better than short ones)
- The headline should be a question
- Focus on the benefits of the job
- Be specific and exciting
- Qualify the reader
- Get to the point as soon as possible
- Include a call to action
- NB Watch out for government regulations on discriminatory language

STEP 3: Generate Leads For Position

- Look within your organisation first
- Place advert online, Indeed.com works very well these days
- You could contact landscape related colleges and send them your advert
- Create a financial reward for existing team members for successful introductions of a new team member
- If absolutely necessary, you could use a specialist recruitment agency
- Rate candidates A-D by comparing CVs to job description

A - has necessary qualifications plus other qualities

B - has the necessary qualifications

C - missing some elements but interesting candidate (maybe of interest for a different job or another time)

D - not even close

STEP 4: Phone Screening of Leads

- Set up a dedicated voicemail for phone screening
- Write a script & record a voicemail greeting, including 3 qualifying questions
- Instruct qualifying candidates to phone the number
- Listen to responses & de-select unsuitable candidates
- Phone interesting candidates for a 10-minute screening call
- Develop a short list of candidates, A ratings or A and B ratings

STEP 5: Arrange individual interviews from short list

- Prepare your company history/story and its Vision / Values / Purpose
- Develop questions to uncover actual past experience pertaining to skill set and tasks required for position
- Use same set of questions for all interviewees
- Open-ended vs. closed: "what have you... how have you..."
- DISC profile preferred candidates
- Negotiate salary and make offer, **subject to references!**

STEP 6: Making the job offer

- Initially by phone or face to face
- Do this QUICKLY and tell them why you think they would fit in. You are selling to them. Do it warmly, sincerely and as fast as possible!
- General principle is to recruit slowly but hire fast when great candidates show up!

The Keys to Time Management

Basic Principles:

Accept – you will never be able to do everything you want ... because there is just too much to do.

Purpose – the driving force behind managing your time is to accomplish your ultimate goal(s).

4 skills required to use your time wisely ...

1. Analysis
2. Planning
3. Delegation
4. Self Management

The Process For Success:

What to do:

- Spend your time doing what is key to the success of your business.
- Work on tasks that can only be done effectively by you.

(4 “D’s” -- Do it.... Delegate it....Defer it....or Dump it).

When to do:

Plan your time/organise your work schedule so that you are never working the issues that fall into the two “Not Important” categories.

How to do: (organise)

- Create a default diary for each time period – month/week/day - which allocates time periods for specific types of tasks. Ex: travel to customers, return/place phone calls; do quiet work, organize paperwork, read.
- Tool – Time blocking chart.

How to do: (discipline)

- The key to efficient use of time is planning.
- Work from lists & mark the items for priority (A,B,C).
- Tool – Daily, Weekly lists.

Planning:

For efficiency

- Do it in advance -- Friday night or weekend for next week; the night before, for the next day, rather than the morning of.
- Gather your materials in advance, so can “hit the ground running”.

For motivation

- Put as much on your list as you can, momentum gained as you check off.
- When large projects, break them into small steps so you can see progress.

For effectiveness

Each major project should be planned out over time periods - with other activities interspersed.

Hints For Success:

- Incremental progress is key. So for projects, "divide to multiply".
- Start now, step by step.
- Do the toughest things first.
 - stops procrastination
 - you'll feel great... therefore...
 - you'll be inspired to do everything else required for the day
- Delegate.
 - Include scheduled time in your plan to oversee/ train/ obtain & review reports on the work you have delegated.
 - Do not slip into the habit of doing it.

If you schedule on importance, not urgency - the urgent will almost never occur!

In order to grow your business, you'll need to carve 5 to 10 hours a week out of your busy schedule. Considering that you are probably working 40 to 60 hours, this may be difficult but should not be impossible. Once you have some time to invest in team building and marketing, you will see your business begin to grow.

Sack your clients & make more money!

I know what you're thinking, how could I sack my clients and make more money? Well hopefully when you've finished reading this article it will make much more sense and get you thinking differently.

I'm sure you've had some clients in the past that, with the benefit of hindsight, you would've rather not had. You know the ones! They beat you down on price, take up all of your time, sometimes they're rude, they don't value your knowledge and getting paid can seem like a long drawn out battle.

Sound familiar?

The solution is simple. 5 simple little questions will help you to minimise this in the future.

WHO is your ideal client? Get crystal clear on the profile of your perfect client. Demographic, attitude, net-worth, personality, values, character traits, interests, etc.

WHERE can you find them in the highest concentration? Geographically, where do they hang out, what social circles do they mix in, what clubs might they be members of, do they belong to a business group, etc.

WHY should they choose your company? What makes you unique, what are your USPs, are you multi-award winning, do you have recognised qualifications, do you belong to a respected governing body, do you have bundles of 5 star Google reviews, etc.

WHAT is the product or service that is relevant and most desirable to your perfect client? Do they want Technical expertise, outdoor kitchens, garden rooms, swimming pools, water features, etc.

HOW are you going to communicate your message to them? Establish which marketing strategy is appropriate to generate the most leads? Do you have a referral system, do you collaborate with strategic alliances to give you consistent high quality leads, does your website reflect your work with strong case studies, etc.

These 5 questions should help you to experience less frustration of dealing with C or D grade clients and more enjoyment of working with more A & B grade clients who value your work.

You need to set the criteria of what YOU describe as an A & B grade client and what traits a C or D grade client has. Once you have defined your criteria you might want to go through all of your past clients and grade them A, B, C or D.

This should help you decide to “Sack” the Cs & Ds in the future and put all of your efforts into gaining a great bunch of A & B grade customers! How much more profitable will your business be and what effect will it have on your stress levels?

Please set some time aside to do this exercise for *your* business. The rewards will be incredible! ... Increased profits, less stress and more time to yourself.

Systems run your business, but why systemise?

I'm sure you've heard of the importance of having systems in your business but what is meant by needing "systems in a business"? By definition, a "system" is *an organised collection of parts (or subsystems) that are highly integrated to accomplish an overall goal.*

80% of tasks in a business are repetitive tasks that are done either hourly, daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly. These tasks can be systemised and documented as these are processes that are performed on a regular basis.

All processes can be broken down into manageable steps and then an IT based system can be used to manage these steps through to completion of the task.

All great businesses are run on great systems and processes BUT they are only as good as the people who run them. The rule of thumb is 80% systemisation, 20% humanisation!

So, what systems do you use in *your* business? No doubt you will have an accounts system such as Xero, QuickBooks or Sage. Maybe a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system? A quoting system? A project management system?

In a nutshell, you'll have various IT systems for all of the different departments in your business; accounts, sales, marketing, HR, operations & administration. These systems should be set up based on the proven step by step processes you have identified and put in place for each of your critical business paths.

Once you have all of these processes set up and fully documented, the way you induct and train new members of staff to get up to speed will be transformed. By having this structure in place, you will get everyone following your proven methodology to a consistently high standard, which will in turn, make you a far more efficient and profitable as a business.

This may all sound difficult and confusing, but it really doesn't need to be. It is actually fairly straight forward and a simple process when you know how. And do you know what the best thing is? YOU, as the business owner, will not be documenting a single process yourself! Phew, "what a relief" I hear you say!

Many business owners I speak to are continually frustrated when their team do things wrong or don't perform tasks in the way they would like them to. This means they are constantly having to get involved in all areas of the business, which can be exhausting and demoralising. As the owner of the business, you should be the *least* busy person in it, therefore focusing the majority of *your* time working ON the business and not being forced to work a job IN your business.

4 Things Every Business Owner Should Know About KPIs ...

"Key Performance Indicators are quantifiable measurements

that reflect the critical success factors of a business."

1. The profitability of the business depends on how well your team members consistently perform critical activities.
2. Employees perform best when they understand how their performance affects the bottom line, and how their performance is measured.
3. Small changes in critical areas can have a great impact on the bottom line.
4. What gets measured gets done and what gets rewarded gets done again.

Why are KPI's important:

- Owners are overwhelmed and distracted with day to day activities and tasks.
- Owners must make important decisions quickly with greater consequences and often with limited information on hand.
- Owners concentrate on the tactical decisions and neglect the strategic ones.

KPI's should be used for:

- Communication
- Informing
- Diagnosing
- Learning
- Making decisions and taking action

... NOT CONTROLLING!

How To Implement KPI's:

Step 1: Define your strategy

- Strategy reflects Vision, Mission and Values
- Set goals
- Most important business objectives
- What “drivers” are critical to success
- What impacts driver results
- Align team members on strategic issues
- Identify barriers

Step 2: Audit Existing Measures

- Assess strategic fit
- Identify what data is available
- Review measurement processes
- Accuracy
- Timelines
- Identify gaps

Step 3: Develop New Measures

- Bridge the gaps identified in Step 2
- Measures must reflect performance and progress of business
- Must be quantifiable
- Must be comparable with another number
- Last year
- Budget
- Goal
- Trend
- Can be acted upon

Step 4: Analyse and Report

- - Easy to read
 - One page summary
 - Graphs

Step 5: Continuous Improvements

- - Set priorities based on strategy
 - SMART goals
 - Assign accountability
 - Track improvement
 - Set new goals!

What is a KPI dashboard?

Make sure you keep a KPI dashboard, just like you have in your car, to warn you when something needs your attention. This can be a real-time visualisation (on mobile, desktop or to a wall-mounted TV in your office) of the KPIs you've selected. The best KPI dashboards are customisable, allowing you to, among other things, change colours, organise your KPIs and see your progress at a single glance.

In Summary:

You can't manage what you do not measure. Having relevant KPIs for your business helps you measure the critical areas of your business in a clear and easy way to spot any underperformance. Early awareness alerts you to address these issues before they escalate any further.

5 Ways to Build Trust in Your Business

As businesses reopen and ramp up operations in a “Post-Covid” environment, they will be anxious to move quickly and it could leave employees feeling a bit shell-shocked. An organisation that isn’t focused on employee-centric policies could find their comeback facing major obstacles.

In a Harvard Business Review article, some very startling statistics were published that you should find interesting:

. “Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report: 74% less stress, 106% more energy at work, 50% higher productivity, 13% fewer sick days, 76% more engagement, 29% more satisfaction with their lives, 40% less burnout”.

Here are 5 steps to build T.R.U.S.T in your organisation:

Transparent

Open, candid communication and information flow eliminates misunderstanding or isolation. Include everyone and don’t have favourites.

Respect your team

Don’t make assumptions and ensure that they feel respected and valued. Establish a “no tolerance” policy for disrespectful behaviour amongst your team and model the behaviours you want.

Unite your team

Organise more group activities and inclusive projects to build unity and cohesiveness. Don’t tolerate cliques or gossip.

Show that you care

Keep in mind that employees spend most of their time at work and if you show that you truly care about them, they will feel more at ease. Provide support and additional services to ensure they are healthy, safe and maintain a positive mindset.

Trust building activities

Create activities and exercises to build trust among your team. Offer additional training and educational sessions to allow employees to build confidence and skills. These two areas build morale which ultimately reflect a trustworthy organisation.

To further improve morale and build trust, ensure managers are equipped and experienced. Managers' competency and skills can go a long way to galvanising a team. Make sure that "difficult" issues are addressed quickly. Don't let things linger - that causes employees to be sceptical about your commitment to an employee-centric environment.

Listen and be open to hearing from your team directly. Ensure that even if their recommendations or ideas are not adopted, they are valued. Make sure you offer training, education and skill building to further develop competencies.

5 Questions That Determine If You're a Trustworthy Leader:

1. Do people constantly question your expectations of them?
2. Would most people describe you as someone who is reliable?
3. Is there a high amount of gossip and disrespect among your team?
4. Do the majority of team members underperform at the tasks you ask them to do?
5. Do you trust people to take on new responsibilities?

If the answer questions 1, 3, and 4 are yes, and 2 and 5 are no, there's work to be done!

Thank you for reading to the end of this guide, hope you found it useful ...

Nick Ruddle specialises in transforming the profitability and overall performance of companies in the landscape industry. He works with business owners to develop an amazing culture to attract & retain the best talent available. Nick has coached over 5,000 hours of 1-2-1 business coaching and has worked with the majority of the UK's High Street banks since 2007. As a Certified SYSTEMologist, Nick also works with business owners to extract them from the day to day operations of their business and by doing so, increasing the value of the business so it can become a saleable asset.

If you would like to get in touch with Nick, please go to:

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