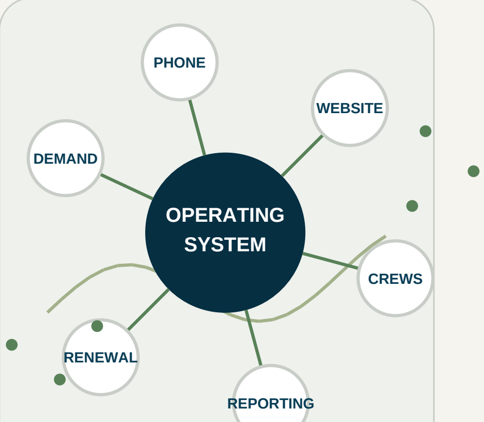
GROWTH

How to Grow a Landscaping Company Without Losing Margin

A capacity-first operating plan for owners who are busy, booked, and still watching gross margin per crew hour slide.



CHANNELS FOLLOW CAPACITY, QUALIFICATION, AND OWNERSHIP

THE CONSTRAINT

More enquiries do not fix a crew-capacity problem. When drive time, unqualified estimates, weak pricing, or poor route density consume the week, extra demand can make the company busier and less profitable.

USE THIS WHEN

Use this when revenue is rising but cash, margin, or owner confidence is not.

DO NOT START HERE

Do not increase marketing until you can name the service lines, territories, and crew hours that should absorb the work.

Inputs to gather before the first meeting

1. Gross margin per crew hour by service
2. Average drive time between recurring stops
3. Estimate close rate by job type
4. Backlog measured in staffed crew days

The five-step playbook

Run the steps in order. A channel should never move faster than the operation that receives the work.

01 Build the service-line baseline

Separate maintenance, enhancement, design-build, irrigation, tree care, and snow work. Record revenue, direct labour, materials, subcontractors, drive time, and callbacks. Monthly revenue alone hides the service line that is consuming capacity.

02 Set a capacity ceiling

Translate staffed crews into sellable hours for the next eight weeks. Remove expected weather loss, training, maintenance, and existing contract work. The remaining hours are the amount marketing can safely fill.

03 Choose the work worth buying

Rank services by margin per crew hour, route fit, repeat value, and sales effort. Give paid media and sales follow-up a clear order instead of treating every enquiry as equal.

04 Add weekly guardrails

Review backlog, drive time, estimate volume, close rate, and production margin every week. Reduce spend or tighten territory before the schedule becomes the problem.

05 Move the bottleneck deliberately

Once capacity is full, work on price, route density, estimator productivity, renewals, or hiring. Demand returns only when the next operational constraint can absorb it.

Measure the operating result

These measures keep the playbook tied to booked work, delivery capacity, and client retention.

01	02	03	04
Margin / crew hour	Booked estimate cost	Route drive time	Backlog in crew days

Thirty-day rollout

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
build the service-line baseline.	set capacity ceilings and target work.	align campaigns, qualification, and sales follow-up.	review the first operating scorecard.

Stop and scale rules

- Scale demand only when the next four weeks contain staffed capacity.
- Pause a service campaign when backlog exceeds the delivery standard you publish.
- Do not judge a channel by lead count. Judge it by booked work and margin per crew hour.

Launch checklist

- ☐ One owner for weekly capacity numbers
- ☐ Service-level margin visible
- ☐ Territory boundaries documented
- ☐ Estimate qualification written
- ☐ Campaign stop rules agreed
- ☐ Monthly pricing review scheduled

One playbook fixes one constraint. We run the whole growth system.

Marketing, AI, website and reporting from $2,000/mo. Ad spend is excluded.

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