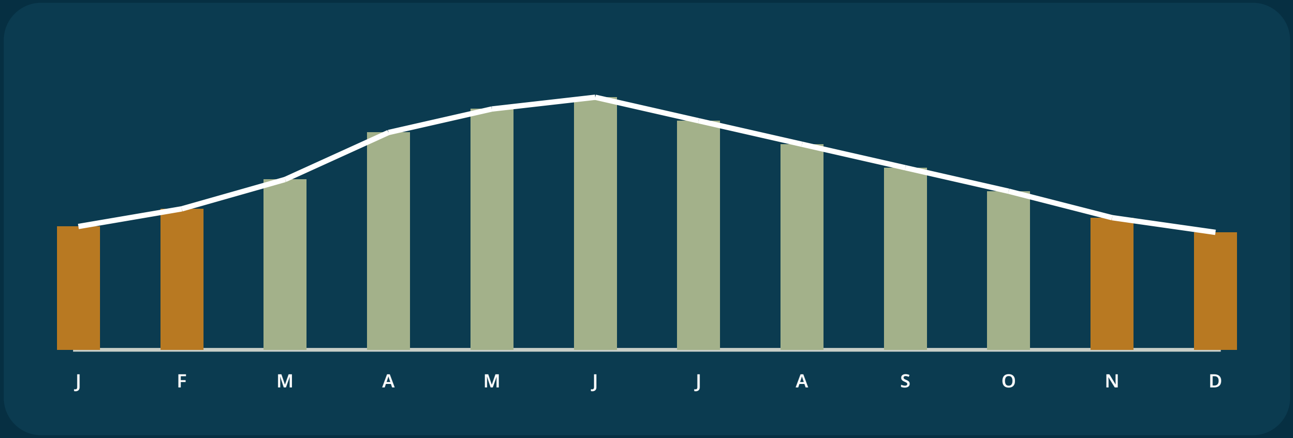
VORTOX LAB WHITEPAPER

The Seasonal Cash Flow Playbook for Design-Build Firms

Design agreements, deposits, progress billing, proposal control, and winter pipeline work.



Built for landscaping and green-industry companies running crews, estimates, contracts, and seasonal demand.

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HOW TO USE THIS PAPER

Read the constraint before the channel

Design-build cash flow improves when design is sold before installation, deposits match procurement and mobilisation, progress billing follows completed stages, and winter pipeline work starts before crews slow down.

EVIDENCE NOTE

This paper is an operating framework. It does not claim an unpublished client dataset or client result.
Worked examples and diagrams are illustrative until replaced with your verified data.

Built for

Landscape design-build owners with a full installation season, long proposal cycles, uneven deposits, and a winter cash gap.

Three decisions this paper should change

- Signed proposals do not pay payroll until deposits arrive.
- Long proposal ageing pushes spring starts into summer and creates a winter hole.
- Revenue reporting hides cash timing, committed materials, and crew backlog.

Use the method, then audit the full system.

A written growth audit identifies the constraint, account gaps, and first ninety-day priorities.

Book a growth audit

Growth packages from $2,000/mo

THE OPERATING PROBLEM

More activity does not fix the wrong constraint

Design-build cash flow improves when design is sold before installation, deposits match procurement and mobilisation, progress billing follows completed stages, and winter pipeline work starts before crews slow down.

01	Signed proposals do not pay payroll until deposits arrive.
02	Long proposal ageing pushes spring starts into summer and creates a winter hole.
03	Revenue reporting hides cash timing, committed materials, and crew backlog.

OWNER TEST

Can you name the point where a new enquiry becomes booked work, profitable crew time, and retained revenue? If not, the report stops too early.

DIAGNOSTIC

Find the weak layer before changing spend

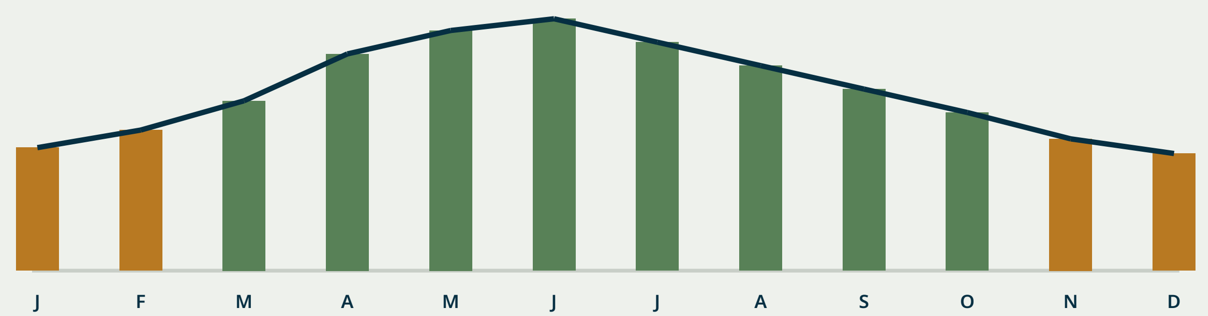
Layer	Question	Failure signal
Demand	Are enquiries for the work and territory you want?	Price shoppers, wrong services, out-of-zone requests
Response	Does one person or system own the first action?	Voicemail, slow forms, duplicate follow-up
Sales	Do qualified leads book, attend, and close?	Proposal ageing, no-shows, weak handoff
Delivery	Can crews service the work at the planned margin?	Overtime, drive time, backlog, rework
Retention	Does recurring or contract work renew?	Late renewal, complaints, price-only conversations

- [ ] One source name per channel
- [ ] One owner per lead
- [ ] One booked-estimate definition
- [ ] One capacity view by week
- [ ] One renewal date per contract or programme
- [ ] One exception list for missing data

THE MODEL

The cash flow sequence

Treat the design agreement, deposit, procurement, mobilisation, progress billing, change control, and final collection as one commercial system.



Design agreement: paid discovery and documented scope.

Deposit: covers approved mobilisation and procurement exposure.

Progress billing: tied to visible stages and contract terms.

Change control: written scope, price, and schedule approval.

Winter pipeline: design sales, permits, selections, and spring deposits.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Any sample values in this paper show the calculation method only. Replace them with verified account, sales, job, and margin data before publishing or making a budget decision.

THE OPERATING METHOD

Run the work in a sequence the team can repeat

01	Map every current project from signed design through final collection.
02	Set commercial gates before scheduling design, procurement, or crews.
03	Build one proposal-ageing and deposit report.
04	Sequence winter marketing toward design agreements and spring starts.
05	Review backlog, cash, and crew capacity every week in season.

The weekly meeting

Review exceptions before averages.

Name the owner and due date for every correction.

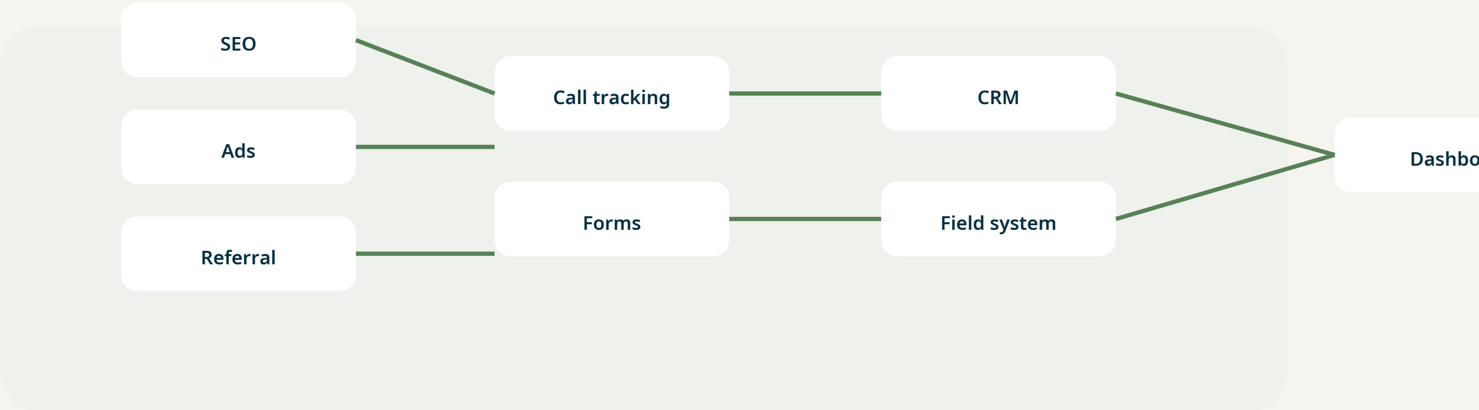
Separate marketing action from sales or operations action.

Stop spend when capacity or route fit is the binding constraint.

SYSTEMS AND OWNERSHIP

Keep one source of truth for each operating layer

Your CRM should hold the opportunity and proposal history. Project management and accounting should hold committed cost, billing stage, collections, and change orders. The dashboard reconciles them without replacing either system.



Layer	System owner	Minimum record
Website and channel	Marketing	Source, campaign, landing page, call or form ID
Sales	CRM or pipeline	Lead owner, qualification, estimate, status, next action
Delivery	Field software	Job, crew, route, schedule, invoice, service history
Financial	Accounting	Collected revenue, committed cost, margin inputs
Management	Dashboard	Exceptions, operating measures, decisions, owner

GREEN INDUSTRY CONTEXT

Plan around the operating calendar, not a flat twelve-month budget

The winter is not a discount quarter. It is the design, permit, selection, and deposit quarter that determines how much profitable work is ready when installation weather returns.

Window	Primary operating question
January to March	What systems, scripts, pages, and spring capacity must be ready before demand rises?
April to June	Where is response, estimating, route fit, or crew capacity losing the value of demand?
July to September	Which services, contracts, and fall campaigns deserve budget and operational attention?
October to December	Which renewals, winter offers, reporting fixes, and next-spring builds happen now?

MEASUREMENT

Report the operating decision, not a pile of channel numbers

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Design agreements sold				
Proposal ageing				
Deposit conversion				
Backlog by start month				
Committed cost				
Progress billing due				
Change orders approved				
Cash collected against plan				

Monthly report order

What changed against the company baseline.

Why it changed, with exceptions named.

What the team changed this month.

What will be measured next.

What cannot yet be claimed because the data is incomplete.

PROOF RULE

A result becomes publishable only when a named client approves the figure and the measurement method.
Until then, show the process and the measures.

NINETY-DAY PLAN

Build the minimum system, then improve it from live data

Days 1-15	map proposal, deposit, billing, and collection stages.
Days 16-30	define gates, owners, and ageing alerts.
Days 31-60	launch winter design offers and backlog reporting.
Days 61-90	reprice weak stages and remove work that blocks cash or crews.

What Vortox Lab would inspect first

Account ownership and access.

Tracking from source to booked work.

Response and qualification rules.

Service-line capacity and route fit.

Seasonal priorities and renewal dates.

OPERATOR WORKSHEET

Put your own baseline into the model

Use one row per service line, branch, route, campaign, contract, or operating period. The purpose is to identify the next decision, not to create another report nobody uses.

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ Definition agreed
- ☐ Source verified
- ☐ Owner named
- ☐ Baseline entered
- ☐ Target tied to capacity
- ☐ Next action dated
- ☐ Exception recorded
- ☐ Review scheduled

NO DATA YET

Start with ten manually reconciled records. A small accurate sample is more useful than a dashboard built on unmatched names and missing outcomes.

OPERATOR APPENDIX

January cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

February cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
- ☐ Which assumption is still unverified?
- ☐ What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- ☐ Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

March cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

April cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

May cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
- ☐ Which assumption is still unverified?
- ☐ What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- ☐ Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

June cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

July cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

August cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

September cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

October cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

November cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
- ☐ Which assumption is still unverified?
- ☐ What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- ☐ Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

December cash and backlog sheet

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

Design agreement economics

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Deposit requirement

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Procurement exposure

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Progress billing schedule

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

Change-order control

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
- [ ] Which assumption is still unverified?
- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

Final collection

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
- ☐ Which assumption is still unverified?
- ☐ What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- ☐ Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

Proposal ageing report

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Start-month backlog

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
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- ☐ What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Crew-capacity forecast

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Winter design campaign

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- [ ] What changed since the last review?
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- [ ] What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- [ ] Who owns the next action and when is it due?

OPERATOR APPENDIX

Spring deposit plan

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
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OPERATOR APPENDIX

Weekly cash meeting

Track cash timing separately from revenue. A signed proposal, scheduled start, ordered material, completed stage, and collected invoice are different operating events.

Owner	Review date	Status
____________________	____________________	Not started / Active / Closed

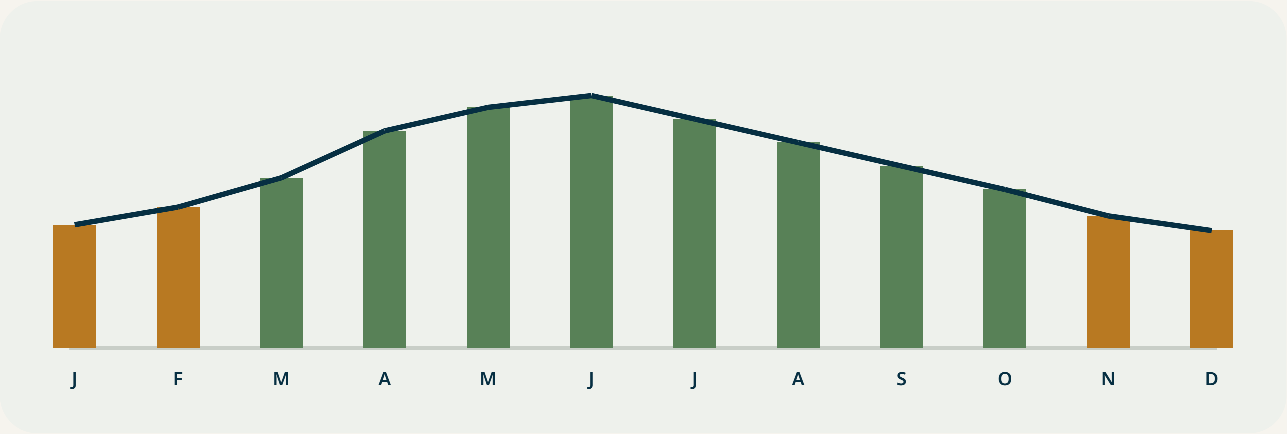
Measure	Current	Target	Owner	Next action
Project or stage				
Contract value				
Deposit due				
Committed cost				
Billing due				
Cash received				
Crew start				
Risk				

- ☐ What changed since the last review?
- ☐ Which assumption is still unverified?
- ☐ What costs time, margin, or renewal risk if nothing changes?
- ☐ Who owns the next action and when is it due?

NEXT STEP

Pipeline is one part of it. We run the whole growth system.

Marketing, website, AI, and reporting planned around the installation calendar.



The growth audit

We review the accounts, website, tracking, response path, service mix, seasonal priorities, and the operating constraint. You receive a written priority list within three working days, then a 30-minute call. No contract, no obligation, and no mailing-list add.

Book a growth audit. See the constraint clearly.

Growth packages start at $2,000 per month. Ad spend is excluded.

Book a growth audit

Growth packages from $2,000/mo

vortoxlab.com | growth audit | growth packages