

Fly-By-Night Guys Aren't Taking Your Business

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Does this sound familiar? “Hey John, we won’t be continuing lawn services with you. We’ve found someone that will do it for less than \$30. Thank you, you’ve been great!” You probably shut your eyes and shake your head, annoyed, as you read this. I see it all the time. Lawn guys and landscapers getting frustrated in groups and the [www.expired-link.com forum](http://www.expired-link.com/forum) that the \$25, “fly-by-night” guys are snagging clients and taking away business. And the responses are always the same: You agree to lower prices. You underbid to secure jobs. You relentlessly bid on more projects at lower costs to justify “volume equals profitability.”

But you’re not winning. You can’t come down to \$25 per cut because it doesn’t even cover your overhead, and your customers keep telling you about that guy that can take that tree out at half your cost. Do they even realize you’re licensed and insured?



(Photo: Getty Images)

Everything comes down to cost, and no one sees the value and quality you offer. You're likely second-guessing your pricing whenever you bid on new jobs because these fly-by-night guys keep stealing your clients! But what if I told you they aren't.

Is your interest piqued? If yes, I'm assuming you're still figuring out how to deal with this. We have to take a step back and understand that business isn't a series of sales. It's a matrix of relationships, and with any relationship, it goes both ways.

You have to qualify your customers just as they have to qualify you. Not all potential customers are going to be ones you want to work with. This is why these guys aren't stealing your clients. They're not your clients. At least they're not the ones you want. In marketing, we call this an audience. A quality audience isn't on Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace. Let the \$25 per cut guys fish here.

Your target audience cares about value and quality more than price. Price comes into play, but your ideal customer understands the relationship between price and quality. And yes, they do exist. The problem could be you're fishing in the wrong pond, trying to catch minnows when you should go down the road to catch bass. So how do you go about finding these customers?

First, you'll need to understand who your customers are. I mean the ideal ones, not the ones who will drop you for the neighbor kid. Do some research in the market and see what kind of customer profiles you come up with. They should look something like this: 50/50 Male/Female, Average Income (somewhere in upper middle class), Job Position (Management, Finance, IT, Entrepreneur), Children (2-4), Neighborhood (Newer development), and Lot Size (about 9,000 square feet).

These are not your Craigslist shoppers or Facebook Marketplace browsers. They're likely not your Nextdoor neighbors or belong to your local swap page. If a lot of customers are dropping you for cheap services, ask yourself if they're coming from these places. If they're not, then think about the neighborhoods you're canvassing with door hangers.

So, the million dollar question is... where do I find these ideal customers?

Well, you already know who they are and roughly where they live. But here's how to target them. It starts with you. Brand yourself as quality and professional. Don't use words like, "cheap" or "affordable." Instead, use "quality" and "professional." If your sales technique is enticing customers into an "affordable" solution, they expect a low price.

If you have a client or two in an upscale neighborhood (or one that fits your target audience), do a quick 5-around with door hangers. After you finish work on your customer's yard, go to the direct neighbors of your customer and the three across the street that mirror with door hangers. So yes, even door hangers can be targeted.

Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) seems like a good, affordable option, but the

return rate is 1% or less, and you're limited to specific postal routes, quantities, and postcard sizes. Find a direct mail marketing agency, like Inside the Box Marketing, that can blanket an area, targeting specific customer demographics as granular as: Household Size, Lot Size, Income, Job Title, and New Movers.

And, put technology to work. Focus on optimizing your website for search engines, like Google and Bing, and simplistic usability. 71% of all consumers start their buying journey on search engines, and 74% use them for researching during the consideration stage. The customer that visits your search engine optimized (SEO) site does their own research; they're looking for a quality lawn care service provider or landscaper to fit their needs. If you don't optimize for words on your site like "cheap landscaping" or "affordable lawn care," chances are you won't get that type of traffic.

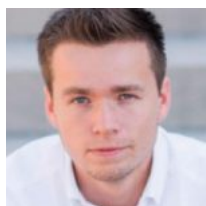
Also, utilize Facebook's hypertargeting. The great thing about social media for a savvy advertiser is the information people are willing to put on there. Learn your target audience, and really target them utilizing Facebook Ads Manager. Target identifying factors, including: Age, Gender, Location, Interests, Job Titles, Groups, and Custom Audiences.

The targeting options are almost limitless. Don't use a generic worm to catch those basses; use bass jigs.

Lastly, Qualify Your Customers

When a potential customer reaches out, don't let your first reaction be to close the sale. Treat them as if it's going to be a partnership. I recently spoke with Rich Blood, owner of Guru Gardens, who's an expert at qualifying customers in the Lawn Care Juggernaut Facebook group, and he said the way you conduct scheduling and prepayment of deposits does a fairly decent job of eliminating tire kickers. He'll give them a ballpark estimate based on what was described to him before taking time to go to the customer. He'll then follow up with what I think is the most brilliant phrasing, "If that fits your budget, I can come out to do a proper assessment."

You're frustrated the "fly-by-night" guys are taking your customers, but if I were a betting man, I'd say you're hesitant to take my advice. But, dropping your price to keep or earn a customer is like a tar pit, the more you fight, the stickier it gets. As long as you market yourself properly and to the right people, it will be business as usual. Except that business will be there to stay, and you'll be earning a much higher profit margin.



Hundley is CEO of [Evergrow Marketing](#), a digital marketing agency that caters to the landscaping and lawn care industry. The firm creates digital marketing strategies utilizing SEO, SEM, social media, website development, and UX optimization to deliver high quality leads.

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