

Should I Hire a Business Consultant?



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Some landscape contractors will tell you their business has completely changed since they've hired a business consultant. Others might say it was too expensive. But taking your business to the next level may require both research and an experienced person to lead you in the right direction. Here are some opinions from www.expired-link.com members on what worked for them when they were using a consultant to expand their businesses.

RedSox4Life: I'm at a point with my business that I need to make some decisions about which direction to go in. I have all the usual issues: I need to be out of the truck more, need to find and retain quality employees, need to develop systems to keep everything running smoothly, etc. My problem is I'm not a businessman; I'm a landscaper. And I don't really have anyone to talk to and bounce ideas off of. In short, I don't know where to go from here. I'm wondering if anyone's been in my shoes and looked outside for help? Would some sort of consultant or business coach be a help to me? How did they help you? What were the good questions you did, or would, ask?

La Chandler: An excellent and needed question. Especially in the strategy and financial area. Talk to all your friends, contacts, customers, etc. Can anyone put you in contact with a successful businessman or retired businessman who could coach you?

grass man 11: Professional business groups and consultants are completely worth it. Don't be afraid to spend some money along your way in search of the right person or group. Ultimately, you have to decide what you want to do with your business, but they can be a huge help.

Efficiency: Consultants will be most valuable when you have specific goals for them to achieve. Break it down: What are some of the specifics you are struggling with? Maybe some of us can help and others gain through this.

GRANTSKI: Follow Dirt Monkey on YouTube. Watch all his videos and you can learn a lot!

Green Insurance Guy: You might contact Steven Cohen with GreenMark Consulting. He specializes in the landscaping industry.

TPendagast: What part of the country are you in? Massachusetts, I assume because Red Sox? But, it depends on who's in your neck of the woods and what help you need specifically.

serviceautopilot: Mike Callahan is in New York. He's had some great results recently.

lawnpropm: Do you have a SBA (small business association) near you? It could be a tool to get you going in the right direction.

marcusmac99: Your question is fair and important for many of us. I tried the SBA and the people there are very enthusiastic to help. Finding a counselor/consultant will be of great help. However, it needs to be someone with experience in this particular service industry. Plus, it would help a lot if you found a resource in your area of the country. What would work in Massachusetts would likely not work as effectively here in Florida. The input above gave you some names and contact information. Try them and look locally, too.

brycez28: Dirt Monkey on YouTube also has a program that you can subscribe to and will allow you to ask him and some of his contacts specific questions. I get the impression that you also get a forum-type experience with other members of his group. I haven't done this (yet), so I don't know all the details.

snomaha: Years ago, I made the decision to hire an outside facilitator to run our annual and quarterly strategy meetings. The person we chose had no green industry background, but had corporate experience in operations and financials. He now also facilitates our weekly manager meeting where we review division dashboards and discuss any employee or customer headlines. Having him facilitate and run these meetings has allowed me to be an active participant in shaping the strategy, rather than running the meetings. He is able to take my vision and help form smart goals that division managers are held accountable to. We spend \$15-20k with him a year and it's money well spent.

Marine03112: If you can hire a salesman to give initial estimates and once you find out a lead is very interested, you can seal the deal. You have to formulate a plan that plays to your strengths. Only you know what that is. Then implement a plan that can work for you to be able to tolerate the work you do to be profitable. I sometimes have to put on my "actors face," as I call it. Getting into character. Exuding confidence and enthusiasm to a potential sale or current client. Takes practice and discipline. It can be done. You need to really think on what will work for you. Then march forward.

marcusmac99: Another option is to look at local colleges to find a professor who may be willing to consult with you. There will be marketing, operations, sales and/or finance professors you could talk to first before deciding on who to hire. I will offer this advice: If your goals for what you are looking

to do are vague, then expect most advice to be just as vague. If you can be more specific, with objective-based goals, such as, "I want to increase revenue by 12 percent next year and improve my profit margin by 3 percent," then you will get more specific directions from an experienced advisor. You cannot manage it if you cannot measure it with accurate numbers.

grassmasterswilson: I think the biggest hurdle is on the employee side. Finding/training is my biggest issue. I need to spend more time training to ensure jobs are done correct. Employees are the main reason I consider getting out of business.

landscape2014: I have used all of the things you are talking about. I have hired consultants, business coaches, etc. I am not a huge fan of expensive consultants. I hired Vander Koi when he was alive and it was just OK. The good consultants are going to charge \$15-30k and that is a lot of money to spend. I think some are probably worth it, if you are really committed to following through. I will probably use one in the future when I commit mentally to building my company to \$5 million-plus. I go to conferences with my staff two to three times a year. "Grow!" by Marty Grunder is a really good value for the money. NALP has several conferences that are really good. The Service Autopilot conference in November is awesome. I have made friends at these events, and I touch base with on a monthly or even daily basis. I am also a member of a Jeffrey Scott's peer group that holds each other accountable, teaches you how to run a business and is a great support team. This has been one of the best things I have ever done. My numbers show it. We have been able to grow above \$2 million in revenue maintaining a 20 percent plus net while paying myself a six-figure salary. I also feel like my overall life is going in a better trajectory. I also use a life coach that I call once per week to make sure I am implementing my goals, making sure I am strong mentally, and talking through issues, booking assignments, strategy development, talking through problems and maintaining the life balance I want. You are reaching out for help which is great. Start trying some of the things I mentioned and you will get the right cocktail for what you need.

lawntennis: SCORE gives free advice to all types of business. I have not used them but my father-in-law is very involved. I think it stands for Service Corps of Retired Executives.