

Uber-Like Services For Landscaping: Companies Tap Into Industry's Growth



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When I was 12 and 13, I made pocket money mowing lawns in a small housing development. The neighborhood consisted of about 30 aluminum-sided, virtually identical ranches. Lined up ticky-tack style on sandy quarter-acre lots, some were pale blue or green, others yellow and a few were pink. (Yes, pink houses!)

Once a week, usually Saturday morning, I peddled my J.C. Higgins bike, pulling my small, gas-powered push mower behind me, to the still-new neighborhood. Knocking on doors, I mowed lawns on-demand, usually for three or four semiregular customers. I got \$2 per lawn. Good money then.

If you are an experienced landscaper and now operating a successful company you may be able to share a similar story – getting your first taste of the business mowing neighbors' lawns.

That same dynamic doesn't seem to be as prevalent today. Youngsters don't knock on the door of my home and ask if they can mow my lawn or shovel my sidewalk after a snowstorm. Never.

Today's digital, hyperconnected world is increasingly populated with companies that offer products and services on-demand, literally at the touch of an app. Thanks to the convenience of shopping and ordering online, these companies are putting older business models virtually under siege.

This past winter's sudden closing of two of the anchors (Sears and Macy's) in a mall in my town drove that point home for me. And, of course, who is not familiar with Uber or Lyft?

[TaskEasy](#) and [Plowz & Mowz](#) are two of the most established Uber-like companies now offering basic landscape and property management services for property owners, mostly homeowners. Some of you may view them (and similar app-driven

companies) as industry disrupters. Others of you have partnered with them or see partnering with them as an opportunity to make more money. Regardless, you're almost certain to hear more about them as time goes on.

Uber-like services? Let me explain.

Both companies offer on-demand mowing and related services directly to property owners through their free mobile apps. They offer convenience for time-crunched homeowners. Basically, they can go to an app and request a landscape service. They type in the service they want and when they want it done. Then TaskEasy or Plowz & Mowz (or other companies with similar platforms) alerts landscape companies they have partnered with and offers them these on-demand jobs.

The benefit to the property owner is that they usually get the service performed pronto. For the contractor, an extra job here and there (often tucked into their daily route) means more revenue. Apart from picking up some extra cash, the contractor can benefit even more if they can turn the one-time stop into a monthly or seasonal account.

There's a charge for this, of course. TaskEasy, Plowz & Mowz – or a similar company – books the work and then takes a percentage of what the property owner pays for the service. Each of these companies spells out the percentage along with vetting the properties to be serviced – size, difficulty, etc. Their fee basically covers the costs that would be incurred by a contractor for marketing and back office duties, including payables, they explain.

Read more: [How Will We Embrace the New Industrial Revolution?](#)

TaskEasy, which claims to be the largest and most established service in this space, recently launched TaskEasy Yard Care, its free consumer mobile app on the iOS and Android platforms.

"This new technology puts simple and powerful tools in the hands of TaskEasy customers, letting them schedule and manage home exterior services for personal or rental properties from their mobile device," says the company in a release.

Plowz & Mowz has an app, too, of course. "Customers download the app, type in their information, get an exact price on a snowplow and then that request is dispatched to drivers who contract with the company. Generally, those drivers are already out on their routes. They can accept or reject the job, depending on distance and schedules," says the company.

TaskEasy, based in Salt Lake City, was founded by Ken Davis, who developed his system after being in charge of multiple properties himself. He said the frustrations he experienced in keeping the properties under his care maintained properly and in a timely fashion sparked the idea that caught the attention of savvy investors who ponied up seed money to help him and his management team develop its platform – the website, the financial system, the support apps and strong network security.

"The result is a powerful ecosystem that automates and audits exterior

property maintenance services, manages exceptions, and provides reporting and accountability to clients,” says TaskEasy, which claims a footprint in all 50 states.

Read more: [Lawn Maintenance Matchmakers](#)

William Mahoney and Andrew Englander, two Syracuse University graduates, launched Plowz & Mowz in 2013. The idea for their company was inspired, at least in part, when Mahoney’s mother called him in the midst of a snowstorm. She was upset because she couldn’t get her car out of her driveway. What to do? Everybody Mahoney said he called and called but couldn’t find anyone to clear the driveway. That experience eventually led him and Englander to create the app to allow property owners to directly book private snowplow drivers.

As with many things in life, timing mattered. Plowz & Mowz was up and running prior to the massive snowstorms that slammed the Boston region in 2015. When snow management companies there had trouble keeping up with demand, Plowz drivers from other regions of the Northeast cashed in, as well.

Realizing their business needed year-round revenue, the co-founders soon thereafter incorporated mowing and leaf removal services into their platform. It wasn’t long before the plowing business began generating leads for mowing services and vice versa.

Read more: [TaskEasy Links Property Owners with Contractors](#)

Plowz & Mowz says it has established relationships with professional service contractors in more than 30 cities – from Syracuse to Austin and many cities in between.

Both TaskEasy and Plowz & Mowz require contractors to use commercial-grade equipment, possess required licenses and to have general liability insurance. Both companies get a percentage of the cost of the service, which they feel is reasonable given that they incur the cost of marketing and other back-office expenses normally falling to contractors.

How much of an impact will companies, such as TaskEasy and Plowz & Mowz, have on the \$70-plus-billion, highly fragmented landscape services industry? Time will tell.

But, given that there are about 89 million single-family homes in the United States and the majority of them have yet to hire a professional landscape service provider, the numbers certainly suggest the industry as a whole (and not just these relatively new Uber-like companies) has a lot more room to grow yet.

“We anticipate building on our success in 2016 by more than doubling our business in 2017,” says Davis, TaskEasy’s founder.