

How To Prepare Winning Quotes For Your Lawnmowing And Gardening Business
- Everything Successful Contractors Need To Know About Quoting On Jobs

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Everything Successful Contractors Need To Know About Quoting On Jobs

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Introduction

Did you know that when a contractor provides a quotation (or quote) to a prospect (or to an existing customer) and the quote is accepted, the quote becomes the contract (that is, a legally binding agreement) between the 2 parties.

In this situation, both parties are providing something to each other that is mutually beneficial. That is, the contractor provides the product and/or service, and the customer provides the cash.

***In my eyes,
neither the contractor nor customer,
is more important.***

They both need each other to survive.

I think we need to remind ourselves of this inter-dependence for a couple of reasons:

- If you back your own abilities then no one has a right to treat you like \$hit, and
- If you are a good operator, then you should be rewarded well

No doubt, you can see where I am going with this...if you are good at what you do (that is, working with your hands) then you should be rewarded handsomely for it.

However, you need to believe in yourself!

With this self belief, you will come across to most people as being confident. This is important because when you submit quotes to your customers and prospects you want them to have confidence in your pricing and your ability.

Don't worry!

You will quickly arrive to a point **where you're telephone is like a honey pot attracting all the bees.**

You will be busy getting quotes done and one day you will wake up thinking why haven't I felt this confident before.

I guess the important thing now is to take my advice, put into practice the stuff I am about to tell you, and believe in your self now and all the good you desire will be coming your way.

I have met many people in the course of my previous work as a Landscape Maintenance contractor and later as a specialist provider of Weed and Feed Lawn Care services (go to www.LawnGreen.com.au). One thing I have noticed is how much contractors take personally the rejections that come their way. They say how difficult business is and how hard it is to convert their leads into new sales.

Well, I am here to say that all this can change with the right tools and attitude!

Now, if you want to grow your business with some *higher dollar value per hour* contracts and accounts then you need to be able to put together nicely worded and well presented Proposals. On top of that you will need to look the part with a well presented Company Image and importantly a Professional looking YOU.

Quoting For Work & Building Your Business

Around 25 years ago, when I first started out mowing a few house lawns, I would write on the back of a business card the following:

*Cost to mow and edge lawn = \$30 (\$120 initial)
every 2 weeks from October - May, and
every 4 weeks from June - September inc.*

That was my quote! Mmmm... At least it wasn't as bad as other contractors' quotes on the back of cigarette packets...**true!!!**

Well, I quickly realised that the jobs that were going to help keep "the wolves away from the front door" were the regular domestic and commercial style jobs.

Besides good residential contracts, the commercial contracts and accounts were good because:

- they were generally bigger jobs, and you were in the one place for longer - LESS TRAVELLING TIME
- they allowed for the use of bigger equipment, so your hourly rate was much higher - HIGHER HOURLY RATE
- they provided regular income, that is - RECURRING INCOME
- they usually involved a customer with some other sites that needed looking after - MULTIPLE SITES
- they are generally the type of customers you want – YOUR TARGET MARKET

The commercial accounts (the Target Market) included anything that was NOT a house lawn on a quarter acre block. So the commercial accounts we were interested in included the following:

- Corporate customers like the headquarters of large corporations
- Factories, large industrial and commercial sites
- Large community estates including residential strata and community sites and associations
- Multi residential apartments and Home units and apartment blocks
- Multi family housing estates
- The managers of all the sites above and
- Other managers including Development Managers, Strata Managers, Property Managers etc

All of these potential customers have 1 thing in common and that is they all have common lawn and garden areas that need to be maintained and serviced.

Besides the need for maintenance, they must be maintained on a regular basis. *This is “Recurring Income” – this is very good!!*

All these residential and corporate customers are lucrative customers to have on your roster as they provide a solid, secure and lasting Recurring Income. **This Recurring Income would easily exceed the income (and hourly rate) earned by mowing little HOUSE LAWNS.**

Your Presentation – Your Brand, Your Appearance & Your Written Quote

I have talked before about how important your Brand is, and part of your Brand is your Image and the way you look and your business looks.

When people talk about “Brand” it is a combination of all the things about your business that prospects and customers can see, feel, touch and smell.

Your image includes the First Impression you give to your prospects. People are happy to buy off you because they feel you are professional and they have confidence in your ability. A lot of the perception that people have of you is based on what they see.

A Professional Appearance Is Essential For Success, and First Impressions are everything.

Look at the successful Landscaping, Plumbing, Electrical and other companies around your area.

All their staff wear Professional uniforms and outfits.

A Professional Outfit and Uniform (Livery) includes:

1. Professional Company Shirts – Go with a standardised shirt, and advertise your company name, phone number, website address on it. Think about your corporate colours and a professionally designed Logo. Personally, I am not a fan of the fluoro safety shirts

but if you have to have these then wear a safety vest over your uniform so you can take the vest off to show off your uniform

2. Work trousers – these can be jeans, or just even khaki shorts. Make sure your work trousers or shorts are “work” pants, not a pair of gym shorts or shorts with holes in them. Make sure the trousers are of a colour that presents you professionally. Remember that You and your crew will be working in nice neighborhoods or at retail or commercial locations, so you want to look professional at all times
3. Work boots – your work boots should be boots, not tennis shoes! Your footwear should complement your uniform, and should also be appropriate for type of work you are carrying out – keeping in mind the danger of work as well. You are performing a serious task with sometimes dangerous equipment, so you and your employees should wear the appropriate footwear and safety equipment
4. Company hats – standardized company hats also create a good First Impression. Do your employees wear hats? Get hats or caps with your company name and Logo on them
5. Personal appearance – make sure all your staff are clean, well groomed, clean shaven, neat haircuts and No visible Body Piercings! As part of the employee's employment contract you can insist on ZERO body piercings!

As you are in the business of growing your business, and You want more customers, and more importantly lucrative customers, then you need to create a good First Impression.

People & Companies are willing to pay for a high level of service and professionalism.

Although you may be running the best business in the world, nobody will know, if you (and your employees) don't look the part.

To be professional looking, you will need to do the following:

- Get your business logo professionally designed
- Use a designed logo that can be printed straight on to computer paper
- I don't think you need to have fancy coloured logos
- For the first sheet of your hard copy quote - Use a coloured sheet - preferably something that matches the business your in. Lawn Green uses a Veni Green (fluoro green sheet) coloured sheet as its cover page for quotes.
- Ask your accountant what information needs to be on the quote form

Tips for Incoming telephone calls:

- Answer the telephone within 3 - 4 rings.
- Use the words: "Welcome to Lawn Green. This is Gerry speaking. How can I help you?" OR "Lawn Green, this is Gerry."
- Always finish telephone call with "Thanks for your call"

Tips for Returning telephone calls:

- Return all telephone calls on the same business day or within 24 hours at the latest.

Pricing Jobs

Consider the following:

1. When quoting on larger sites like stratas or large community associations (residential estates) you should keep in mind that with a lot of owners (in the Owners Corporation) you can justify the cost of your service on a "per lot per month" basis or "per lot per annum" basis - it may even help to draw attention to this when drafting your quote
2. If your quote is more expensive than your competitor's quotes then you need to highlight why you are better - that is, you need to highlight your "point of difference"
3. When quoting on these larger jobs, the customer is not getting a quote from some part-time / retiree / non-English speaking contractor who does not have the "3 Key Things You Need To Win These Commercial Contracts" – Presentation, Safety Policy, Insurances
4. The customer is getting quotes from big contractors, or rather, contractors who look big or who look the part

***So you need to look the part, that is,
like the big contractor!***

How To Quote Like A Professional - when you get to the prospect's or customer's property

All new enquiries and quotes must be completed within 7 days or earlier.

Remember to “strike while the iron is hot”.

Quote Procedure:

1. Arrive at site address on time - there is nothing worse than arriving late unless you have phoned ahead saying you will be 5-10 minutes late - instead of giving a fixed time appointment like 7am, you can tell them you will be there between 6.45 and 7.15am. Always Under Promise and Over Deliver!
2. Take off sun glasses - most people like to see eye contact - this helps in gaining trust. If needs be ask the customer if you can step in a shady spot if the glare is bothering you
3. Collect Business Card and Quote Folder from the vehicle
4. Ring doorbell, and stand at least 1.5 metres away from door. Standing away from door is less intimidating to the home-owner than when you have your nose against the screen door. By doing this you are respecting their personal space
5. Greet Prospect - introduce yourself, that is, say, "Hello, I am Gerry!" - talk to them with a smile and direct eye contact. Hand them your business card.

6. After (very) small talk say, "Let's have a look around". This lets them know that you are busy. It is important to let your prospects and customers know from your "verbal" and "non-verbal" language that you are there for a reason. It's really important that people understand your time is money.
7. I am not a big fan of chatting (for more than a few minutes) with a prospect. Generally, I don't engage the prospect with much small talk, unless you have signed them up for over a \$1,000 worth of work. When you get into the habit of chatting with prospects or customers, I think you can give the impression you are not busy.
8. How to quote different jobs like Lawn Mowing, Gardening, Irrigation etc - refer to the next Chapter
9. You need to have a Quote Folder with letter head style quote sheets for the customer, and a copy for yourself – you can use carbon paper or whatever works for you. Maybe have a printout of all possible tasks for a job site (this will be your office copy), and tick the relevant tasks that apply to the new job being quoted
10. If you are looking at a lawn situation then measure all areas of nature strip (N), front lawn (F) and rear lawn (R), and note the lawn types, Kikuyu (K), Couch (C), Buffalo (B), Zoysia (Z), Queensland Blue Couch (QBC) – use shorthand for all your own paper work
11. You will end up having a nice record of every site you have quoted on. In fact, when a customer rings you down the track and they want extra work done, you will then be able to quote the job task over the phone (no problems in this scenario)
12. If Buffalo, ask what type. Explain why we need to know. That is, there are 10 different Buffalo varieties on the market and 4 of them are adversely affected by the broadleaf weed herbicides, these 4 are the American ST varieties which are ST26, ST 85 and ST91 Buffalo and also Palmetto Buffalo – the North American

equivalent of the Australian Buffalo grass is known as St Augustine grass.

13. The idea with each quote is to demonstrate clear knowledge of all turf grasses (generally being buffalo, couch & kikuyu, occasionally zoysia, and sometimes Durban) and all the factors (like shade, soil depth, climate) that affect the grasses - refer to Youtube for our videos on different grasses etc
www.YouTube.com/user/YourLawnAndGarden
14. Each quote should only take 15 minutes with a quick stock-take of the prospect's lawn and delivery of spiel (this should be scripted as much as possible)
15. Spiel as below, if they haven't given go ahead we tell them that if they go ahead we can do job within 7 days, or by the end of next week. Customers love hearing when they can expect things to happen
16. Document everything about the quote including measurements of lawns, all gardens areas for re-mulching etc
17. Always up-sell your services without being rude about it - if you are there for a Lawn Mowing Quote, ask them if they want the lawn weeds sprayed etc, ask them if they want the gardens tidied up, ask them like at McDonalds "Would You Like Fries With That".
18. Have your phone on silent whilst you are dealing with a new prospect – it is good manners

Other Notes About Quoting:

- If a bystander asks you how much you are doing a customer's job for - tell them you are happy to meet at their property to give them a quote. Don't fall into the trap of giving prices or hourly rates, these people hold you to it.
- Some nationalities want to bargain you down on price. If there surname originates from India, then bump the price up to allow for some bargaining. Otherwise, if you cannot handle this then have a policy of telling them you are too busy and are not taking on any new work. I am only giving this sort of advice because 1. it works and 2. it does not offend.
- Never give quotes over the phone – as a general rule do not give quotes over the phone, unless you have already seen the job and you may be making alterations to pre-existing quote
- If someone says you are expensive compared to other quotes, politely tell them you are providing a free quote. I have had people say to me I am too expensive, yet I was the only contractor that bothered to quote on the job. True! The customer actually told me over the phone that my competitor was not returning calls to her. So I was the only one quoting on the job. I told the customer that it was a free quote (in other words, take it or leave it!) and that I was better than my competitor because I arrived at the quote on time and on the right day.
- Re Booking Prospects and Quotes: My diary page for the following Sunday page is filled with Prospects to contact by the Tuesday or Wednesday. Sometimes if I am busier I will call people earlier on the Monday to book in a run of quotes for Tuesday am. The Prospects on the Sunday page are then marked with Pencil M,T,W, Th or Fr for the days I want to visit those addresses. After the Day marked is another Pencil marking with the numerical order of quotes for that Day. These quotes are numbered in order from furthest away at say Vacluse, then heading back to Office/Cherrybrook via North Shore. Those quotes are then written up for the relevant Day that week. The

first quote is usually between 6.30 and 7 am. Each quote is blocked out for say 7-8 for the first 2 quotes, then say 8-10 for the next 3 quotes, etc

***THIS REALLY HAPPENED TO ME:
Like a good contractor, once I showed up at a 7am quote appointment with a prospect on time as you should. However, the look of bewilderment on the prospect's face was amusing. After the lady settled down she said, "I was giving contractors a bad name by arriving on time, and for that matter, on the right day!"***

In the following Chapters, we see different pricing and quoting tactics used.

These samples are based on real jobs acquired by Lawn Green in the past.

Presently, Lawn Green is a supplier (only) of weed and feed Lawn Care services to residential and commercial customers.

Lawn Green no longer targets mowing and gardening jobs!

Just a reminder to you, that Lawn Green is ONLY interested in growing its business with Weed & Feed Lawn Care as advertised in www.LawnGreen.com.au

So it is for this reason, I am sharing all my knowledge and expertise of How To Prepare Winning Quotes For Lawn Mowing and Gardening Jobs!

More Notes about Quoting:

1. With customers or prospects, I like to refer to “quotes” or “quotations” as “Proposals”. It sounds better! But there is a very good reason for doing this. Refer to points 3 and 4 below.
2. When you are organizing appointments for quotes, it is OK to refer to them as quotes. However, your paperwork should have the word “Proposal” instead of “Quotation” or “Quote”
3. Getting a Quote generally implies getting a quote price where everyone is competing on price.
4. When you are presenting a Proposal to a prospect you are able to dictate the terms of quoting for other contractors. If you are smart, you will be the first contractor proving a quote (Proposal). In order to compare apples with apples, you will tell the prospect that they can use your proposal for other contractors to quote on. Make sure the prospect does not show the prices at the bottom of the proposal.
5. With a proposal, and with a well-written proposal, you have a chance to itemise all the things that need to be achieved on site. The proposal also demonstrates your knowledge and experience with Landscape Maintenance issues.
6. When I was competing for the larger corporate jobs, there were the key figures you had to deal with. These key figures,

also known as the Key Decision Makers, were the people you wanted to identify quickly. You don't want to waste your time "shooting arrows in the dark" or "p!ssing in the wind". The point here is you want to know who your target is!

7. In preparing quotes, you need to know what lawn types you are dealing with. In most cases, the lawn types in your area are going to be either warm season grasses or cool season grasses depending on the latitude of your location.
8. Don't worry too much about grasses as they tend to be fairly constant for the local climate.
9. Also, in preparing quotes, you need to know what plants you are dealing with. In most cases, the plants and trees used in your area or city are going to be a constant in your local climate. To get familiar with the plants commonly used, you can go to your local nursery once a fortnight to learn the Common names of the plants. If you are real keen, you can learn the Botanical or Latin Names of these plants. In the sample quotes below, I generally refer to plants by there Common Names, and in some cases, the common name of the plant is the first name or part of the plant's Botanical name, for example, Viburnum from *Viburnum odoratissimum*
10. Also, in the case of garden plants, they tend to be similar in the local climate. For the high end residential market and corporate sites, the landscape designs are fairly similar.
11. Your knowledge of Turf Grasses and Plant species will give you a competitive advantage. Almost always, the Key Decision Maker (the owner, property manager or whatever) is planning to meet you on site. This is your chance to impress this person with your knowledge and demeanour.

12. The larger Commercial or Corporate jobs tend to attract more attention and because of this there is more "contractor churn".
13. That is, the big sites are more obvious to other contractors. So if you are doing a sh!t job, other contractors will point this out to your customer.
14. Remember, Your Customer is Another Contractor's Prospect!
15. The smaller jobs are better because they attract less attention. So when you get these jobs they tend to stay with you a long time.
16. There is 1 contract worth around \$25,000 per year that we used to look after. We looked after this commercial site for 15 years. Big is not necessarily beautiful!
17. Small is good, so cultivate your business with high yielding small jobs of \$5,000 pa to \$35,000 pa. That is, target the small jobs that are worth \$5,000 to \$35,000 pa. Build you business with these contracts.
18. When the occasional big job comes along, take it but don't "put all your eggs in 1 basket"
19. Remember that the smaller jobs attract less contractors, so the quote prices are not driven down by competing contractors.

Big is not necessarily beautiful!

How To Quote For Lawn Mowing?

It is best to price lawn mowing jobs based on what type of equipment is used!

When using walk behind mowers, your quotes on jobs will be influenced by what your competitors are charging. So if the going rate for a 200 square metre lawn is say \$65, then you will be forced to charge this to stay competitive.

However, if the job site you are looking at is larger at say 1,000 square metres, then you will charge around \$300.

The trick with the larger jobs is to measure all lawn areas – either with a measuring wheel or by your own "pacing out" measuring.

After a while you will have *a record of all jobs quoted on (successful and unsuccessful)*, this information will help you to be more precise when quoting on future lawn mowing jobs.

For a 10,000 square metre lawn site, the rate per square metre will be lower - this is to be expected as you will be using bigger machinery like ride-on mowers for these jobs. The bigger equipment gets through the job quickly compared with the small walk behind equipment. Now, even though the square metre rate might be less than the smaller lawns, the bigger equipment will still get a good return for you.

So, it will pay for you to invest in a Ride On Lawn Mower!

Although, I would start with a smaller machine when you are "cutting your teeth" on the larger lawns.

Some tips with lawnmowing can be found at www.LawnGreen.com.au - but the thing I want to draw your

attention to is using ride on mowers around trees. Where there is a build up of leaves from trees it really is important to make sure this debris is collected (either by catcher or by wind rowing the leaves). Quite often I have noticed on some of our customers' lawns - where they have a contractor mowing without a catcher - the turf under the trees have eventually weakened and died.

How To Quote For Gardening?

Gardening is a very subjective job especially when taking into account all the different tasks that make up the job.

The important thing with gardening is to **make sure your unadvertised hourly rate** is equal to or more than what professional landscapers and landscaping bodies recommend as an hourly going rate.

For example, the Landscape Contractors Association of NSW (or your provincial Peak/Professional Landscape Organization) issues a handout with rates for different landscaping tasks etc. The hourly rate for labour with basic garden equipment is around \$70 (2011 rates in Australia).

Over time you will develop a sense for estimating the weekly, fortnightly or monthly cost of garden maintenance for a site regardless of how large or small it is.

It is best to estimate the cost of gardening by breaking down all the garden areas into 1 hour components, then multiplying the total hours with a desirable hourly rate. Quite often, when quoting a larger job, extra hourly components maybe added in to safe guard you.

On top of this estimate, you need to account for rubbish removal and disposal.

The important thing when quoting for any commercial site is to itemise all the tasks that are required for regular maintenance.

How to quote for lawnmowing and gardening?

Where you have a site with some lawn areas and garden areas, you can present the quote in a way that the customer needs to compare quotes by asking other contractors to use your quote as the standard. That way the customer gets other contractors to present a quote on all the tasks involved (the same tasks you have quoted on).

How to quote for Irrigation repairs and maintenance?

Irrigation work is a great area to be involved with. Here in Australia, contractors are meant to be qualified with a TAFE trade course or be a qualified Plumber.

The skill required for irrigation work means that contractors can charge customers similar rates as plumbers.

So, for lawn and garden irrigation installation, repairs and maintenance, the hourly rate is upward of \$80 - \$100.

It is good to offer your customers a safeguard cap as follows:

Cost Per Irrigation Repairs & Maintenance (Labour)...\$75.00 per hour (inc GST)

(Normally, it is in the client's interest to cap this service to say 4 hours if carry ing out investigative or troubleshooting work.)

This 4 hour cap gives the customer some security knowing they can get some resolution to their irrigation problems. Irrigation problems are usually below ground (and out of sight) so the customer has some assurance they won't be up for an unexpected whopping huge bill.

How To Quote For Top Dressing?

Top dressing lawns is only required where you need to remove any lumps or bumps in the lawn.

Note: You should never top dress the entire lawn - there is no therapeutic benefit to the lawn whatsoever. You may top dress an entire lawn with high river sand content top-dressing soil after coring a lawn. The benefit is in altering the physical property of the soil by aerating the lawn and improving the soil porosity with river sand.

***Never top dress the whole of the lawn areas!
Only fill in the dips in the lawn.***

Now we have the theory out of the way, let's focus on the pricing!

Generally we agree that the customer only needs enough top-dressing soil to fill lumps in the lawn.

So it makes sense to give the customer a rate for say 1/2 tonne or maybe 1 tonne as follows.

So your pricing for Top Dressing a Lawn will be as follows:

Cost per Top Dressing Lawn Areas...\$195 per supply & spread 1 tonne of sand / soil (usually 80% sand and 20% soil)

You may want to use some of the above wording to describe your service.

How To Quote For Tree Work?

Large scale tree work should be done by qualified tree surgeons/loppers.

If a customer wants a large tree taken down or just pruned - then get a tree contractor in to give you a quote, then copy and paste their quote onto your Letter head for your quote with 10% or 20% mark-up.

For a small job price of say under \$500, you might want to mark up the price to \$600. However, for a large job price of say \$2,000 you might want to mark up to \$2,200 for your troubles. Basically you are providing your customer a service by doing all the negotiating with tree contractors, so you should expect to make some money out of the arrangement.

The other issue here is that over time you will get to know who the better tree contractors are, so you are providing a good service to your customers based on getting good tree contractors on site.

Note: Don't forget to make sure the Tree Contractors have all their Insurances and OHS documents in place.

How To Quote For Lawn Aeration?

Lawn aeration can be done with different machines based on the size of the lawn in question.

Large area lawns (over say 2,000 square metres) should be aerated using tractor mounted Aerovators, and small lawn areas should be aerated with walk behind (self-propelled) lawn coring machines.

Both these machines are expensive pieces of capital, so don't be ashamed of asking good money for these jobs. The small lawn coring walk behinds are around \$6,000, this is quite a bit more than your average lawn mower, so you need to charge for it.

If you don't have the equipment then you can sub-contract this out to people that do.

For small lawns under 200 square metres, you can charge \$250-\$300 (for lawn coring and raking up the plugs of soil. Any lawn under 100 square metres, you should have standard starting price of say \$200.

For lawns larger than 200 square metres, charge a square metre rate of around \$1.80

You may offer the customer a \$50 discount if you leave the plugs of soil on top of the lawn. This is only a suggestion.

How To Quote For Weed And Feed Lawn Care?

I will be creating a report on this later. I will show you (a warts and all) how to do Basic Weed and Feed Lawn Care.

How to quote for Mulch & Gravel Installation?

Small gardens or Large Gardens or AnySize Areas??

This is a No-Brainer!

Gone are the days where you mulch large gardens with shovels and garbage bins.

The best thing here is to get a quote from www.BarkBlowers.com.au (or similar provider) for the supply and installation of whatever mulch or gravel you need.

The advantages this way are:

1. It frees you up to do other work
2. You can add a 10-30% markup depending on the size of the job
3. This system is cleaner as the mulch is pumped right to where it is meant to be
4. You can measure the garden areas up in your quote, get the BarkBlowers quote (rate per square metre) over the phone and submit your price with markup
5. You can offer this to your customers every 1, 2 or 3 years

Templates of Quotes - available at
www.YourLawnAndGarden.com

If you are finding it difficult writing up quotes for similar jobs, then you can have a look at our \$7 report on "Ready-To-Use Templates of Real Quotes and Proposals for Residential, Commercial & Industrial Sites".

All you have to do is cut and paste the information into your own word processor and letter head, and presto, you have your own well written and technically sounding quote.

For this report go to www.YourLawnAndGarden.com – coming soon!

Two Ways Of Doing Business - the Easy or The Hard Way...

Some Contractors "bang on" about "How hard things are?". What they need to do is to learn to do business the easy way (as opposed to the hard way).

Well, in order to make doing business easier I want to consider some of the following things:

1. if you are in a competitive industry where profit margins are slim, then you will need to consider how you can submit quotes that will give you an edge over the competitors
2. how do you present yourself to prospects - do you look like a winner - you need to convey an air of superiority with your image and how you dress (uniform)
3. what are the industry standards and norms - you will need to look at "the going rate" for standard jobs - when you are quoting a fixed price for a job you need to make sure that (at the end of the day) you do exceed this "going rate" or "hourly rate"
4. can you charge a consultation fee if the prospect looks like they are just "picking your brains" - this fee can be deducted from the quote if they go ahead with any further work
5. are there industry (or association) pro-forma documents that you can use in helping you draft your quotes
6. do you have a system of quoting that accounts for breaking even and making a profit? Do you consider the cost of materials,

transport and other factors including the time you spend quoting and even the business cost of bad debts?

7. does your industry have a history of bad debts? How will you manage bad debts and what systems have you got in place for bad debt management and collection?
8. do you have a plan in place for Cost plus quoting?
9. how will you guarantee your work, for how long and exactly what is guaranteed? Labour costs only? Materials?
10. what are your payment terms? For example, will you offer a better price for faster payment, for cash or for a bulk purchase? Do you need some money upfront to make sure your cash-flow stays healthy if you need to buy expensive materials to start a job? Will you accept cheques, credit or cash?
11. will customers expect a reduction or will you be penalised if the work is not done on time?
12. if the customer asks for changes to the original, how will this be charged (often called 'variations')? In some industries, the contractors expect lots of changes before the customer is happy
13. ask for a deposit up front before starting a big job - this is something to consider with large one off jobs. Ask for 30% deposit to start the job...builders do it, why can't you?

Programming and Frequency Of Lawn Mowing and Gardening

Some contractors starting out are unsure how often lawns should be mowed.

Residential Customers:

For house lawns, *non house proud customers* (in the Sydney, Australia - Temperate climate at Latitude 33 degrees South) want a basic service like every 2 weeks in summer and every 4 weeks in Winter. This is a total of around 20 cuts per year.

In the Sydney climate, 20 cuts per year is not ideal (for the contractor) in the sense that you have to work harder pushing your mower through those jobs. The point here is that the grass grows quickly in the summer months and you have to work harder for your money, and if you have to dispose of grass clippings this is an added cost of doing business.

For the *house proud customer*, they may want their lawn mowed every week in summer, every 2 weeks in Autumn and Spring, and every 4 weeks in Winter. This is a total of around 30-35 visits per year.

Then you have the issues with trees in lawns. Deciduous trees drop lots of leaves in autumn & winter so you need to be mowing (with catchers) more often than every 4 weeks.

Corporate Customers:

Commercial sites should be mowed every week in Spring and Summer and every 2 weeks in Autumn and Winter. Some commercial customers may want more than this. You need to ask the prospects these questions.

Programming and Scheduling Lawn Mowing and Gardening Jobs:

Make sure you program your different activities at weekly, 2 weekly or 4 weekly cycles, so you make it easier scheduling and travelling to different areas in your city or town.

Never program a job for 3 weekly visits as it will be out of sync with other jobs!

Invoicing:

Invoice all jobs done on a 2 weekly or 4 weekly cycle, or monthly.

Residential Customers:

You can invoice as often as you want with Residential customers. Generally, they expect that you want to be paid promptly.

Offer them options for paying direct into your bank account via EFT (electronic funds transfer), by bank cheque, by cheque or cash and / or by Credit Card.

You may even want to become a Credit Card Merchant – these days you can get the Portable Cordless mobile Credit Card reader – so your residential customers will be able to pay on the spot if they don't have cash on them.

Commercial Customers:

With commercial accounts, they like to be invoiced monthly. You just need to make sure they pay within 2 weeks of invoicing.

Generally, if they are well cashed up businesses they will pay quickly. Offer them options for paying direct into your bank account via EFT (electronic funds transfer), by bank cheque, by cheque or cash and / or by Credit Card.

Price Increases:

Always have a general notes section at end of quote (as follows) which covers general stipulations.

NOTES:

1. All proposed costs in this proposal are inclusive of the 10% Goods & Services Tax.
2. All proposed costs in this proposal will be subject to an increase in line with CPI increases at the beginning of each new financial year.

This allows you the opportunity to bring up such issues as price increases after looking after a site for 1-2 years.

Don't forget the customers are going to shop around anyway! If you are light on with the pricing this gives you the chance to bring your prices in line with the market.

You only need to give a month's warning that prices are about to creep up by 4% and they are usually OK with this.

It's when you try catch up after 3 years of doing a job for someone, and you request a price rise of 12%, that you will have trouble convincing them.

***Price Increases are a good for
protecting your profit margins!***

Sources Of Information Helping Your Business:

<http://www.Youtube.com/user/YourLawnAndGarden> – over 100 videos of useful lawn information

http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Gerry_Faehrmann – over 100 Expert Articles on Lawn Care and Business

<http://www.facebook.com/YourLawnAndGarden> – please LIKE us here to stay posted with weekly updates

<http://www.facebook.com/LawnGreen> – please LIKE this page to stay posted with weekly updates

<http://www.LawnGreen.com.au/Sitemap> – over 100 Lawn Green web pages of Lawn Care information

<http://www.YourLawnAndGarden.com/> – leave comments for us to interact with you

Any Questions:

If you have any questions, queries or compliments please go to <http://www.facebook.com/YourLawnAndGarden> & LIKE us, then ask away!

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You have just read Version 1.0 of “How To Do Quotes For Your Lawn Mowing And Gardening Business - Everything You Need To Know About Quoting On Jobs”, published in April 2012.

The Report will be changed, or added to, from time to time. If you are on our email database, we will let you know of Content changes and additions made to the Report.

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I urge everyone that reads this document to make their own legal, taxation & financial enquiries. You need to seek your own professional counsel to ensure you and your business are compliant with the prevailing authorities.

To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation of your country or province. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

Financial Advice

The Report does not make any actual or implied promises with forecasts for profits or sales.

Lawn Care Referrals

If you are a contractor and have Customers that need the services of Lawn Green, then please contact us:

1. Via www.LawnGreen.com.au and fill out the “Free Quote Request” Quote Box, or
2. Simply telephone Lawn Green at 1300 55 74 72 and we can follow up the Referral by calling the Customer directly, or
3. Refer your customers to www.LawnGreen.com.au where they can get a Free Copy of “The 5 Secrets To A Great Looking Lawn” Report

Internet and Contact Details

www.LawnGreen.com.au - for Greener Weed Free Lawns

www.YourLawnAndGarden.com - "The Place Where Successful Contractors Meet"

<http://www.facebook.com/YourLawnAndGarden>

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