

Landscaping Service: G & D Landscaping

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"Company Summary"

G & D Landscaping will offer lawn care for suburban upper middle class and middle class homeowners. The company's target customer will be those who are unable to manage their own lawns, whether because of size (too large), no time to care for their lawn, and those with no interest in maintaining their lawn. Other customers will be those unable to do their own lawn care because of age or physical challenge. The partners have been cutting lawns for several years, but have decided to formalize their business into an actual limited liability company (LLC) to allow them to hire additional help more easily.

"Management Summary"

Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado have been friends since high school. Guillermo began cutting lawns during summer vacations in high school, and Frank Delgado helped on as-needed basis when Guillermo was away on vacation or needed help to catch up on lawn care because of weather delays. The two decided to form a partnership when they were freshmen in college with the goal of formalizing the business as an LLC with the two sharing responsibility equally. Guillermo and Delgado have built a reputation for quality work done professionally at competitive prices. Guillermo is majoring in landscaping with a minor in environmental science, which enables him to put his newly-acquired knowledge to work immediately on his customers' lawns. Delgado is an education major with a concentration in math and science. The owners will hire part-time help as their business grows. Robert Guillermo's mother is an accountant currently working in a small office and will assist with bookkeeping and other financial paperwork, such as payroll and payment of taxes.

"Mission Statement"

G & D Landscaping will meet and surpass customer needs and expectations, providing 100 percent satisfaction in lawn care, including mowing, edging, trimming, and clean-up.

"Vision Statement"

Robert Guillermo & Frank Delgado will maintain the current 20 contracts and grow 5 percent per year, hiring additional crew as needed to maintain profitability and a living income for both owners. G & D will build its reputation and target their own neighbors and their current customer base to avoid driving between job sites.

"Values Statement"

G & D Landscaping brings experience, a commitment to quality, and a professional approach to every service and customer.

"Business Philosophy"

The owners' goal is 100 percent customer satisfaction. This will be achieved by building on the reputation of their informal business. G & D Landscaping will continue to provide reliable, affordable landscaping to its customers. Their experience has shown that by remaining a small, service-oriented business they can maintain personal interaction with every customer and address concerns immediately. Recognizing that landscaping is seasonal, Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado will expand their business to include spring and fall clean-up services, as well as snow removal in winter months.

"Organization Structure"

G & D Landscaping will be a limited liability partnership owned by Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado, who will share the responsibilities of the business. Both will canvass their immediate neighborhoods to increase their current customer base slowly.

Part-time employees will be hired as the business expands in order to maintain high-quality, individualized services. Within six months G & D expects to hire a master gardener to handle landscape design and implementation.

"Advertising and Promotion"

Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado will promote G & D Landscaping initially by talking directly with their current customers and providing them with a rate sheet that will reflect their continuing services, as well as new services being offered. They will discuss individual lawn care needs and provide customers with a personalized plan for lawn care and landscaping needs. The owners will then spend a minimum of four evenings a week talking to their immediate neighbors about their landscaping services, encouraging them to become customers. As neighbors, they know Guillermo and Delgado and are likely to trust them with their landscaping needs.

In addition, Guillermo and Delgado will scout problem lawns and prepare plans of action that they can present to the homeowner, showing what can be done to make their lawn beautiful and addressing perceived landscaping needs.

Flyers and brochures will be printed for distribution to prospective customers. Flyers will be placed on community bulletin boards at local garden centers and hardware stores. They will include bullet points of services offered by G & D Landscaping, one or two testimonials from current customers, and contact information. Brochures will be given to prospective customers, detailing services, flat rate costs, and testimonials, along with photos of current customers' lawns and landscaping.

Small advertisements will be placed in local weekly newspapers that serve the community once the business is established and the company has identified potential employees who share the owners' work ethic and dedication to quality service.

"Customer Base"

G & D Landscaping will build on its current customer base slowly to enable the company to continue to provide quality, personalized landscaping needs to every customer. Upper middle class and middle class suburban homeowners are the target market for the company.

The partners will build on this base in the immediate neighborhoods of current customers. The plan is to increase the company's customer base slowly, adding part-time help as needed and as services are expanded to meet the year-round development of landscaping, clean-up, and snow removal offerings.

"Products and Services"

G & D Landscaping will offer basic lawn care service, landscaping care, design, and implementation; spring and fall clean-up; and snow removal service. Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado will work with customers and potential customers to determine the frequency of any and all services and to personalize the needs for every lawn.

Basic residential lawn care will include:

- Lawn mowing
- Trimming
- Edging
- Removal of clippings

Extended residential lawn care will include:

- Hedge trimming
- Small tree trimming
- Weeding of garden areas
- Fertilizing

Landscaping design and implementation will include:

- Consultation with customer to determine needs and viability of those needs (for example, soil testing to determine any additional services to improve the soil for desired plantings)
- Computer-based illustrations of proposed landscape design for approval by customer (including making any changes requested by customer)
- Purchase of required shrubbery and plantings
- Planting of shrubbery and other plantings
- Maintenance of shrubbery and plantings

Spring clean-up will include:

- Raking
- Aeration
- Preparation of garden beds

Fall clean-up will include:

- Leaf removal
- Weeding
- Application of organic weed-killers in garden beds

Snow removal will include:

- Snowblowing of driveways and all requested walkways
- Shoveling of areas too small for snowblower
- Application of lawn-safe ice-melting pellets on driveways and walkways

Pricing will be affordable and competitive with local companies offering similar services.

"Personnel Requirements"

Initially, Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado will continue to care for the customers they have served for the last three years. As they add customers, they will add two part-time employees. Each owner will train one of those part-time employees, taking them with them as they work on customers' lawns. As the company continues to grow, those part-time employees will be offered full-time positions and new part-time employees will be hired.

Guillermo and Delgado will make decisions as a team, supervising employees and having direct contact with customers to ensure quality standards are met by G & D Landscaping.

Robert Guillermo's mother, who is a bookkeeper and office manager in a small office, will handle G & D Landscaping's books, including payroll, taxes, and insurance, as well as accounts payable and receivable.

"Location"

Initially, G & D Landscaping will continue to house their pick-up truck and equipment in Robert Guillermo's garage. As the company grows and services expand, the owners plan to rent a garage to house their truck and equipment. Within two years they will move record-keeping and bookkeeping activities into a small office in the garage.

"Store Design and Equipment"

G & D Landscaping will not require a store-front office, but will use Frank Delgado's laptop to maintain databases of customers and prospective customers, as well as landscape designs. The laptop will also have any necessary financial software, so information can be transferred via e-mail and/or flash drive storage from Mrs. Guillermo's computer. The office will require an all-in-one printer for printing customer invoices, proposals, and even flyers. A four-drawer filing cabinet will be housed in the garage at Guillermo's house for hard copies of data saved on computers as needed. The owners will have pager-style cell phones.

The truck with trailer currently being used by the owners will continue to serve G & D Landscaping, with the addition of commercial magnets on the driver and passenger doors, advertising the name of the company, phone number, and e-mail address. The company will continue to use its two commercial mowers, trimmers, edgers, blowers, hedge trimming equipment, safety equipment (steel-toed shoes, goggles, gloves), and tools for simple repairs to equipment. Future employees will be required to have their own cell phones to remain in contact with their employers.

"Financial"

Start-up costs are expected to be minimal because the owners already have two commercial lawn mowers, two edgers, multiple trimmers and blowers, rakes, and gasoline containers to hold the special mixtures required by each piece of gas-powered equipment. The company will incur legal costs related to filing the company name, forming the LLC structure, and reviewing liability and workers' compensation policies.

Within a year, Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado plan to rent a garage to house their truck and equipment, which will add to their overhead. In addition, they will be purchasing snow removal equipment, along with such landscaping tools as shovels and, eventually, a Bobcat to move larger amounts of dirt as the landscaping offerings are expanded to include design and implementation.

Guillermo and Delgado will purchase payroll and landscaping software for the company's laptop computer. They will invest in a professional all-in-one printer that will enable them to print personalized landscaping plans and estimates for potential customers.

Ongoing expenses will include gas for transportation and equipment; maintenance of equipment, such as blade sharpening; payroll for bookkeeping and part time help; printing of flyers and brochures; and miscellaneous office supplies. Cell phones for the owners will also incur ongoing costs.

Revenues are expected to be the highest in late spring through early fall, which will help support slower winter months. These revenues will allow the partners time to build their spring and fall growth, as well as the introduction of landscape design and implementation and snow removal services.

G & D Landscaping will also incur costs for the printing of flyers, brochures, business cards, and business stationary. In addition, they will require liability insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and property/casualty insurance.

"Professional and Advisory Support"

Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado have begun to work with an attorney to file the necessary paperwork with the state of Michigan to become an LLC, including "doing business as" (DBA) paperwork. They will continue to work with their attorney to ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations for a small business. The attorney will also handle any paperwork involved with future lease arrangements for the proposed garage/office.

Guillermo's mother will handle all financial aspects of the G & D Landscaping, consulting fellow CPAs as the need arises.

The owners will join local small business organizations in the area to promote their business, as well as to network with other small business owners. This will potentially serve as an additional way to identify potential customers for G & D Landscaping.

"Business and Growth Strategy"

G & D Landscaping will build on the informal business established in their community over the last three years. Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado will maintain their reputation of quality, timely work and depend on face-to-face meetings with their own neighbors, as well as neighbors of the current customers. They will expand slowly, using flyers, brochures, and referrals to inform potential customers of their work and work ethic. G & D Landscaping will advertise that they treat every lawn and garden as if it was their own. They will return calls promptly, be on time, and take breaks only when not in view of customers' homes.

Personal contact with current and prospective customers will be an integral part of the owners' and employees' work ethic. Part-time employees will have at least two years experience in landscape and lawn care and will be trained personally by the owners.

As the company grows, Guillermo and Delgado will add a landscape designer/master gardener to the company's staff to build the business. Additional employees will be hired as needed to implement design plans.

"Competition"

Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado recognize that there is a great deal of competition in the area, including several small, private landscapers and many large, commercial companies, as well as local high school and college students looking to make a "quick buck" over their summer vacations.

However, because G & D Landscaping will be building on its owners' current customer base, they can turn their reputation to an advantage, especially for customer referrals. They will continue to provide high-quality work and maintain professionalism and a good work ethic. They realize that landscaping could be considered a luxury and is vulnerable to recession, but they

have weathered the economic downturn of the latter half of the first decade of the twenty-first century and even have added customers during that downturn. They are confident that their reputation will help them succeed in the face of tough economic times and when dealing with their competition.

"Web Site"

Because the owners want to build the business slowly and remain local, an Internet presence is not an immediate requirement. Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado will build a company Web site, but will not launch it until year-round service has been implemented and the owners have identified and retained reliable part-time help.

The Web site will provide information about services the company offers and the target neighborhoods served by G & D Landscaping. It will also include contact information and testimonials of current customers.

"Conclusion"

Robert Guillermo and Frank Delgado, as the owners of G & D Landscaping, look forward to building their business by maintaining their reputation for high-quality lawn care and by adding landscape design, spring and fall clean up services, and snow removal. This will move them from an informal lawn service to a small, competitive, growing business. The owners will bring their experience not only for lawn care, but also for customer service. As an LLC, G & D Landscaping will continue to grow, expanding its services from summer lawn care to year-round landscaping and maintenance. Careful planning, slow growth, and a solid reputation for high-quality work will ensure continued profitability for the company and its owners.

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