



Tree
Traction

THE TREE SERVICE OWNER'S

Marketing Playbook

How to build a steady, predictable stream of tree work, from your first reviews to a marketing system that grows with you.

A free guide from Tree Traction

Built for tree service owners who are tired of the feast-or-famine cycle and want to know exactly which marketing moves to make at every stage of growth.

START HERE

The right marketing depends on where you are

Most tree service owners waste money copying what bigger companies do before they're ready for it. The truth is simpler: every revenue stage has a handful of moves that matter most, and almost nothing else is worth your time until those are done. This guide walks you through them in order, so don't skip ahead. Find your stage below, then work the chapters that apply to you.

Find your stage

STAGE 1 — GETTING FOUND

Under \$350K / year

Focus: Free and near-free channels. Dial in your Google presence, build a review engine, and answer every call. Highest return on time of anything in this guide.

STAGE 2 — CREATING DEMAND

\$350K+ / year

Focus: Reach homeowners who aren't searching yet. Strategic direct mail puts your offer in front of households with trees and money, generating work in slow months and clustering jobs. See page 10.

STAGE 3 — SCALING & OPTIMIZING

Once mail is consistent

Focus: Keep scaling mail, and layer in paid Google. Local Services Ads and Search ads capture the homeowners who *are* searching, on top of the demand your mail creates.

UNDERNEATH ALL OF IT

The fundamentals never stop

Focus: Reviews, fast call response, and tracking. These compound at every stage. Bigger companies don't drop them, they get better at them.

CHAPTER 1

Own your Google Business Profile

Your Google Business Profile is the single most valuable piece of free real estate you have. When someone searches "tree service near me," the map results show up before everything else, and they're free. This is the first thing to fix and the highest return on your time anywhere in this guide.

Think of your profile like a storefront on the busiest street in town. Google decides who walks past it based on three things: how complete and active your profile is, how close you are to the searcher, and how many quality reviews you have. You control two of those three. Here's how to win them.

Your setup checklist

- Claim and verify your profile** at google.com/business. Do this today if you haven't, unverified profiles barely show up.
- Use your real business name**, exactly as on your truck. Don't stuff keywords, Google can suspend you for it.
- Pick the right primary category**: "Tree Service." Then add secondary categories you actually do.
- Set a service area**, not a storefront address. List the towns and zip codes you serve.
- Fill in every field**: hours, phone, website, services, and a real description of what you do.
- Add photos, and keep adding them**. Before-and-after shots, your crew, big removals. Fresh photos get more calls.

THE MISTAKE THAT KILLS MOST PROFILES

Owners set it up once and never touch it again. Google rewards activity. Post a photo from a recent job once a week, it takes two minutes from your phone and signals that you're active and legitimate.

The five-minute weekly habit

Once a week, from the truck: upload one or two job photos, reply to new reviews, answer any new questions. That's it. This habit alone puts you ahead of most competitors, because almost none of them bother.

CHAPTER 2

Build a review engine

Reviews are the closest thing to free advertising that actually compounds. They push you up the Google map rankings, and they're the first thing a homeowner reads before deciding whether to trust you with a chainsaw next to their house. A steady flow of recent five-star reviews is worth more than almost any ad you could run at this stage.

The key word is **recent**. Ten reviews from this year beat fifty reviews from four years ago. You want a system that produces a few new ones every single week without you thinking about it.

The simple system that works

- 1 Ask at the moment of maximum happiness.** Right after the job, when the customer's standing there looking at their cleaned-up yard. Not three days later by email.
- 2 Make it one tap.** Pull up your Google review link on your phone, or have a QR code on a card. Hand it to them. Less friction, more reviews.
- 3 Say it like a human.** "Reviews are how folks around here find us, would you mind leaving a quick one? Means a lot." That's it.
- 4 Reply to every review,** good or bad. Thank the happy ones by name. Respond to bad ones calmly, future customers are watching.

GET YOUR REVIEW LINK

In your Google Business Profile, look for "Get more reviews." It gives you a short link you can text to customers or turn into a QR code. Save it in your phone so it's always one tap away.

What to do about a bad review

You'll get one eventually. Don't argue, don't ignore it. Reply briefly, acknowledge their experience, and offer to make it right offline. A calm response often impresses future readers more than a wall of perfect reviews, it shows you stand behind your work.

TARGETS TO AIM FOR

Five to ten new reviews a month, every month. Get to 30 to 40 total before you spend a dollar on Google Local Service Ads (see Chapter 6), they need a base of reviews to perform.

CHAPTER 3

Answer the phone (the leak nobody talks about)

You can do everything else in this guide perfectly and still lose half your leads at the finish line, by not answering the phone. This is the most expensive, most common, and most fixable problem in the entire tree service industry.

Here's the math that should keep you up at night. If a homeowner calls and you don't pick up, most won't leave a voicemail. They'll just call the next tree service on the list. Studies across home services show the large majority of callers go with whoever responds first. Every missed call is a job that walked next door, and you paid to generate that call whether it was a review, an ad, or a mailer.

How to plug the leak

- **Answer live whenever humanly possible.** A real voice beats everything. If you're up a tree, this is exactly why you eventually hire an office person, it pays for itself fast.
- **Call missed calls back within 5 minutes.** Not end of day. Five minutes. The faster you call back, the more likely they haven't booked someone else.
- **Set up automatic text-back.** If you can't answer, an instant text ("Thanks for calling [Business], we're with a customer, what's the best number and address for your tree?") keeps the lead warm and stops them from calling a competitor.
- **Track your missed calls.** If you don't know how many you're missing, you can't fix it. Even a simple log tells you whether you need help answering.

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE AS YOU GROW

When you start spending real money on ads or mail, missed calls get expensive fast, you're literally paying to make the phone ring and then letting it ring out. Fixing this *before* you scale spending is one of the highest-return moves in this whole playbook.

The hidden bonus

Fast, reliable call handling doesn't just save leads, it earns reviews. Customers remember when a business actually picked up and showed up. That experience is what turns a one-time job into a referral and a five-star review, feeding the engine from Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 4

Door hangers, the cheapest grassroots play

This chapter and the next come straight from coaching conversations our CEO has with tree service owners who aren't yet at the point of hiring a marketing company. If you're under about \$30K a month and need leads now, this is the single highest-ROI move you can make this week. Specific numbers, specific resources, no theory.

The economics

Order 500 door hangers from **Vistaprint for about \$100**. Get the design done on Fiverr for about \$15 to \$25 (search for tree service flyer designers, give them your logo, phone, and website). Total cost in the door: roughly \$125 for 500 pieces.

At a typical 1% response rate, that's around 5 phone calls per 500 hangers. Close half and you've got 2 to 3 jobs from one afternoon of work. Run a thousand pieces and you're looking at 6 jobs minimum, often closer to 10. The math beats almost any paid channel at this stage.

The double-tap (this is the unlock)

Hit the same neighborhood again 1.5 to 2 weeks later. The first round introduces you. The second round is when people recognize the name, remember seeing your truck on the street, and actually call. Response rates on the second pass are usually noticeably higher than the first because you've already built recognition.

Distribution mechanics

- **Pace:** one person can hang 100 to 150 per hour. 500 pieces is about half a day solo, or 2 to 3 hours with a helper.
- **Targeting:** good-income neighborhoods with mature trees. Drive a block before you start hanging to confirm the area fits.
- **Never put anything inside a mailbox.** Federal offense. Use the door slip so it falls inside when they open the door, or proper hangers that loop onto the knob.
- **Track what pulls.** Mark which streets you hit. The ones that produce calls are where you go again next time. The rest, drop.

CHAPTER 5

The Neighborhood Effect

This is one of those moves where you read it, think "really, that works?" and then try it once and never stop. Our CEO has watched sales reps turn one quote into two or three more, in the same hour, just by knocking the next 10 doors with a single sentence different from a cold pitch.

The move

You just finished giving a quote to Susan at 1247 Oak Street. Before you leave, knock the 10 doors on either side of hers. The opener is something like:

THE SCRIPT (STEAL IT)

"Hey, this is John with Sawyer Tree Service. I was just over talking to Susan next door, we're going to be doing some tree work in the area. Anything I can take a look at while we're already here?"

That's it. The whole pitch is "I was just over at your neighbor's." You're not selling, you're offering convenience. People who would have ignored a cold knock will open the door because you have a name they recognize.

Why it works

Three things stack at once: you have an implicit referral (Susan's name), you're already in the area so there's no trip charge friction, and you've made the homeowner's "I should deal with that tree" thought suddenly easy to act on. Our CEO has seen this turn one estimate into two or three new quotes almost every time, off 20 doors.

It compounds with door hangers

Hang door hangers in the area first (Chapter 4). A week later, when you're doing the neighborhood knock after a quote, half the homeowners will say "wait, that was you?" Now there's a face on the brand. Next time they need tree work, you're the only name they remember.

CHAPTER 6

Google Local Service Ads

LSAs are the ads at the very top of Google search results with a green Google Guaranteed checkmark. You pay per lead, not per click, so there's no "clicks that go nowhere" tax. For most tree services, this is the first paid channel worth spending real money on, but only after the prerequisite is in place.

The 30 to 40 review prerequisite

Don't even think about LSAs until you've got at least 30 to 40 Google reviews. Google ranks LSA placement partly by your review profile, so without that base you'll either not show or you'll show and lose to competitors with stronger profiles. If you're not there yet, Chapter 2 is your real next step, not this one.

How to set them up

- 1 Apply at google.com/localservices.** Pick your service categories and target zip codes.
- 2 Verify your license and insurance.** Google requires both for the Guaranteed badge. Have your documents ready in PDF before you start.
- 3 Set a weekly budget.** Start small (a few hundred a week) and increase only once you've seen which categories actually convert.
- 4 Connect your Google Business Profile.** Your reviews and photos feed directly into the ad, so the better the profile, the better the ads.

Dispute junk leads weekly

You'll get spam calls, wrong-area calls, and people asking for services you don't offer. Google will refund those if you flag them in the LSA dashboard within a week. Spend 15 minutes every Friday going through the lead log and disputing the junk. Owners who skip this step pay 20 to 30 percent more than they should.

BE CAREFUL WITH PAY-PER-LEAD SERVICES

Be cautious of pay-per-lead companies asking for \$300 upfront and \$65 a lead with no guarantees. They typically sell the same lead to four or five contractors, so close rates are low and you're racing the others to the phone. Stick with LSAs first.

CHAPTER 7

Make every job worth more

Money isn't what comes into the bank account, it's what's left at the end. Before you spend a dollar trying to get more jobs, look at the jobs you already have. Almost every tree service we coach is leaving 50%+ profit on the table without realizing it, fixing this is faster, cheaper, and more durable than any marketing campaign.

The 20/57 rule

Your job costs (fuel, labor, dump fees, equipment, insurance) stay exactly the same whether you charge \$1,000 or \$1,200 for the work. So at a typical 35% margin, a **20% price increase becomes a 57% profit increase**. Same crew, same truck, same day. The price you quote is the single highest-leverage number in your business.

The close-rate diagnostic

Of your last 10 estimates, how many turned into jobs? Most owners answer 8 or 9 with pride. That's the problem. The biggest tree services in the country aim for a close rate closer to **55%**. They're not bad at sales, they're charging what their work is worth and walking away from the customers who won't pay it.

If you're closing 80%+, raise quotes 15 to 20% for the next two weeks and watch what happens. Your costs don't change, so every closed job at the new price is pure profit. If you ever need volume back, drop prices and it feels like a 20% discount.

Stop being the bottleneck

Estimating doesn't make money. Answering the phone doesn't make money. Doing the work makes money. If you're the only person who can give a bid or pick up a call, your business is capped at your own calendar. Hiring even a part-time admin or a second estimator is usually cheaper than the work it frees you up to do.

CHAPTER 8

When you're ready for direct mail

Everything in Stage 1, the Google profile, reviews, door hangers, LSAs, only reaches homeowners who are already either searching or who happened to see your hanger. But most homeowners with trees that need work aren't in either group. They drive past the dead limb every week and never think to call anyone.

Direct mail is the channel that reaches them. It's also the channel that makes sense around the \$30,000 a month revenue mark, when your free and grassroots channels have plateaued and you have the truck capacity to handle a bigger inbound volume.

Why \$30K a month is the threshold

Below that, a real direct mail program (the kind that actually moves the needle) costs more than the marginal revenue it brings in. Above it, the math flips, the targeting precision and consistency pay for themselves quickly. If you're not there yet, work the earlier chapters until you are. If you are there, this is the next lever.

What separates direct mail that works from money in the trash

- **Targeting beats volume.** Mailing 50,000 random homes loses money. The wins come from mailing the right neighborhoods, homeowners with the income and tree density to need you.
- **Tracking turns mail into a system.** If you can't see which neighborhoods generate calls, you're paying to mail areas that produce nothing. Route-level measurement is what makes results improve month over month.
- **Consistency compounds.** One mailing is a gamble. Steady, optimized mailing builds recognition and a predictable flow of work.
- **It clusters your jobs.** Concentrated mailing means estimates in the same neighborhoods, less drive time, more jobs per day.

WHERE TREE TRACTION FITS

Direct mail at this level is operationally heavy: route selection, tracking numbers, design testing, performance analysis. It's the one channel in this guide that's hard to do well yourself, which is exactly the problem we exist to solve.

CHAPTER 9

Scale what's working, then add Google Search

Once direct mail is running consistently and the schedule is filling, you're not looking for new channels, you're looking to get more from what's working and add one more on top.

Scale the mail first

Before adding anything new, push the channel that's already producing. Mail more neighborhoods that look like your best-performing ones. Cut underperforming routes. Add a second monthly mailing in your strongest areas. Most tree services leave huge growth on the table by treating mail as a fixed-volume habit instead of something to keep tuning.

Then layer in Google Search Ads

With LSAs already running (Chapter 6) and demand creation handled by mail, Google Search Ads capture the homeowners actively typing "tree removal near me" who don't click the LSAs. Pay per click, more skill required than LSAs, but worth it once the rest of the system is in place.

- **Bid on high-intent terms** like "tree removal near me," not vague ones like "trees."
- **Add negative keywords** ("free," "DIY," "jobs," "climbing gear") to stop paying for clicks that never convert.
- **Track cost per booked job**, not cost per click. Clicks lie. Booked jobs don't.
- **Send clicks to a focused landing page**, not your homepage. Phone number above the fold, one form, no menu distractions.

THE ORDER THAT COMPOUNDS

Mail creates demand. LSAs and Search capture it. Reviews and call response convert both. When all three run together, you stop being at the mercy of any one channel and the whole system gets steadier every month.

TEAR-OUT CHEAT SHEET

Your marketing by revenue stage

Pin this up. It's the whole playbook on one page, what to focus on, what to add next, and what to ignore until you're ready.

Stage	Do this first	Then add	Not yet
Under \$30K/mo Getting Found	Google Business Profile complete. Review engine running. Phone answered every time.	Door hangers in good neighborhoods, hit each area twice. The Neighborhood Effect after every quote.	Pay-per-lead services. Paid Google. Direct mail.
\$15K to \$30K/mo Active Grassroots	Push door hangers and the Neighborhood Effect hard. Get to 30 to 40 reviews.	Once you hit 30 to 40 reviews, turn on Google Local Service Ads.	Direct mail program. Google Search Ads.
\$30K+/mo Creating Demand	Strategic, tracked direct mail to homeowners who aren't searching yet.	A second mailing in your strongest routes once you see which areas pull.	Google Search Ads until mail is consistent.
Every Stage Fundamentals	Reviews. Fast call response. Price your work like it's worth what it is (20/57 rule).	Tighten the schedule, stop being the bottleneck, raise prices when close rate is too high.	Ignoring these because you "got too big." That's how big companies leak money.

Five things to do this week

- Save your Google review link** in your phone and ask every customer this week.
- Order 500 door hangers** from Vistaprint (\$100) and get the design on Fiverr (\$15 to \$25).
- Try the Neighborhood Effect** on your next quote: knock 10 doors either side, use the homeowner's name.
- Count your missed calls** for one week so you know your real leak.
- Run the close-rate diagnostic.** If you close 80%+ of quotes, raise prices 15 to 20%.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

You don't need every channel. You need the **right one** for right now.

Work through the stages in order and you'll build something most tree services never do: a steady, predictable flow of work that doesn't depend on luck or word of mouth.

And when you reach the point where Google alone can't fill the schedule anymore, that's when reaching homeowners who aren't searching yet becomes your next lever for growth. Direct mail isn't the last step, it's the one that makes everything after it possible.

That's the one thing we do.

Tree Traction builds done-for-you, route-tracked direct mail exclusively for tree service companies, so the calls keep coming, even in the slow months. When you're ready to start creating demand instead of waiting for it, we should talk.

Learn more at treetraction.com



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