



# How To Sell **BIG** Commercial Landscaping Clients

*with Digital Marketing*

**BY JACK JOSTES**

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## About Jack Jostes

Jack Jostes is the CEO of Ramblin Jackson, a digital marketing agency that helps landscaping companies across the country increase their lead generation through local SEO and digital branding. Author of the Amazon best-selling book, *Get FOUND Online: The Local Business Owner's Guide To Digital Marketing*, Jack hosts the weekly YouTube show + podcast, *The Landscaper's Guide to Modern Sales & Marketing*. Jack has been featured in *Lawn and Landscape* magazine, *Colorado Green Magazine*, *Turf Magazine*, *INC Magazine*, and other industry publications. He regularly speaks at regional, national, and international business conferences, including green industry events like the ProGreen EXPO, Farwest Show, National Association of Landscape Professionals (NALP) events, and the TNLA's Nursery Landscape EXPO.



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## Introduction

**Welcome to How To Sell BIG Commercial Landscaping Clients. If you are a commercial landscape contractor tired of losing accounts on price but never finding out why, or you rely entirely on networking and upselling existing accounts and don't have a solid lead generation component to your business, you're in the right place. In this e-book, I share 3 Keys To Selling Commercial Landscaping in 2021 using real case studies... *real*... like what's working right now.**

Ramblin Jackson, the digital marketing agency I serve as CEO, has been helping the green industry get found online since 2009. Our mission is "Helping Small Businesses Ring The Bell." By that, I mean we help your business generate qualified leads, close more sales, attract better employees, and break your first million dollars in revenue.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to communicate the "Ring the Bell" philosophy and principles at national trade shows, in magazines, and many other venues. Now, I share them with you, the commercial landscape business owner.

You may be wondering, will what I teach in this e-book really work with commercial landscapers? After all, commercial is different from residential. Let me assure you that yes, this works with commercial, and I will prove it using case studies.

However, let me first address three myths regarding the difference between commercial and residential landscaping in their use of digital marketing.

## Myth #1: Commercial Landscaping Sales Are 100% Word Of Mouth

A lot of people think, "Well, commercial is different; it's all word of mouth. The people who work at HOAs and apartment complexes don't use the internet, right?" That's a myth.

## Myth #2: Commercial Clients Don't Read Online Reviews

It's also a myth that commercial clients don't read online reviews. They do. I'll prove it!

## Myth #3: Selling To Commercial Landscape Clients Is 'All About Trust And Relationships.' My Internet Presence Doesn't Matter.

This idea is also false. You have to focus on building what I call the Foundation of Digital Marketing regardless of whether you are a residential or commercial contractor.

# Build The Foundation Of Digital Marketing

The Foundation of Digital Marketing is the premise of my book, *Get Found Online*. The same principles that are true for residential are just as true for commercial. In both areas, you need to build a strong digital marketing foundation.

## The Foundational Three

Success in digital marketing starts with getting the Foundational Three — branding, website, and local SEO — down pat. Only then does it make sense to move on to channels like email marketing, social media, and online ads.

### Branding

Most people think of branding as just putting their logo on their truck, signage, or t-shirt. Don't get me wrong, branding does have a visual identity component; that's something we work on with our clients all the time. But branding is just as much about differentiation as design. Why are you different? Why should people choose you over your competition? If people don't understand the differences, why would they pay more for your services versus less expensive competitors? It's essential that both components — design and differentiation — work together to build a comprehensive branding strategy.

At Ramblin Jackson, we often work with commercial clients that have been in business for a long time but are now producing work at a much higher level than before. As a result, their branding, messaging, and imagery are way out of date.



One such client, Matt Preuss, owner of [Cutting Edge Landscape Design](#), started twenty years ago focusing on lawn mowing, lawn services, and lawn maintenance. Over time, he became a general contractor and is now a General B Contractor. Today, his services include outdoor living, landscape design and construction, commercial landscaping, and golf course design.

Because the type and quality of work Matt does outgrew the old branding, we developed a new branding scheme consisting of an updated color palette, logo, and other elements — all of which clearly define his value proposition.

*[optional: insert images of new color palette, logo, etc.]*

## Website

Branding is the first part of the Foundational Three. Your website comes next. Your site needs to communicate your branding, help people understand why you're different, and create a funnel for prospects to actually become your client.

Your website is likely the first place they will go to learn about your services. But whether it's someone unfamiliar with you or a prospect already in the estimating process, they're going to look at your website at some point and need to understand your branding: Why are you different? Why should I choose you? That's where having some key content in place will help, but more on that later.

## Local SEO

For your digital marketing to be successful, you have to get leads. That starts with people finding you online, which is where local SEO comes into play. Local SEO is all about getting found on Google and other search engines.

More and more, people use their smartphones to find information, including businesses that do commercial landscaping, and a big part of what they search for is customer reviews.

Let's pretend that you get a referral, and someone finds you via a Google search. One of the things they want to see is whether you have customer reviews and what those reveal about your business. If you come up lacking — i.e., you have several negative reviews — you can lose the sale. If you have no reviews, they will probably pass you up for a company with reviews. Stick around and, later, I'll share with you what you need to do and where to go to get online reviews.

## Other Digital Marketing Foundations

Once you start with the Foundational Three, it's time to move on to other digital marketing forms: email marketing, social media, and online advertising.

## Email Marketing

Email marketing is the next level in the Foundation of Digital Marketing. It is something you can use to reactivate old accounts, onboard new clients and help them understand what time of year you'll be doing certain services, get online reviews, and so much more.

## Social Media & Online Advertising

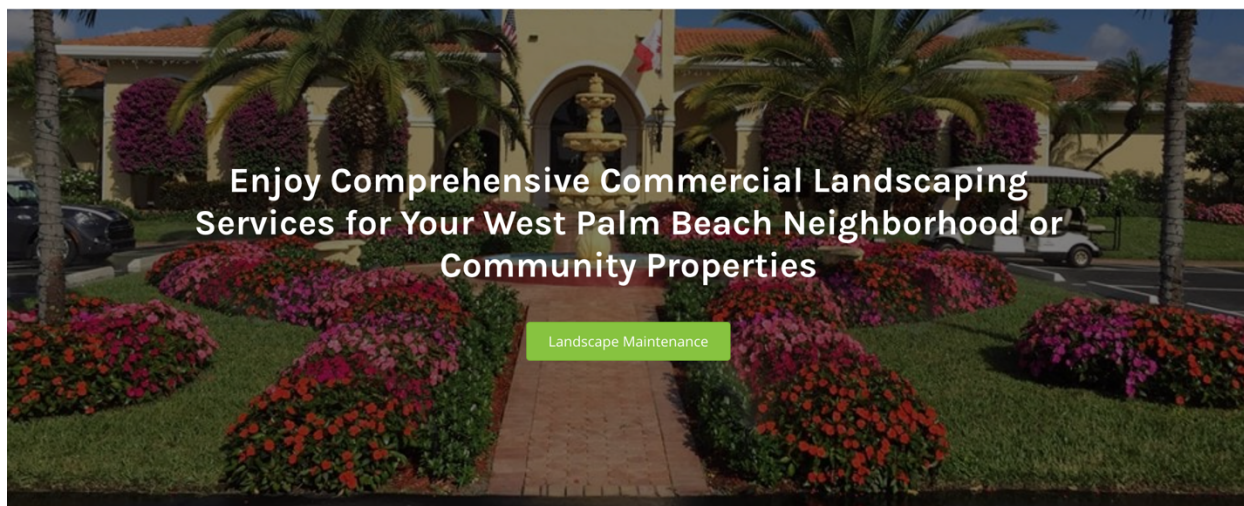
The next tier is social media and online advertising. I put those together because your advertising will likely cover both: search engines (Google, mainly) and social networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

One of the services we provide at Ramblin Jackson is digital audits, a thorough assessment of our potential clients' digital presence. In one case, I had a client who was spending nearly \$5,000 a month in online advertising between Facebook and Google and could not understand why it wasn't working. During their audit, we realized it took the website twenty seconds to load on mobile. No one is going to wait twenty seconds for anything to load! So, was their online advertising not working, or was the website, part of the Foundational Three, at fault? Clearly, it was the latter.

## SEO: Optimize Your Website For Commercial Landscaping

One of the biggest mistakes I see with search engine optimization is that often, clients don't have the right keywords on their website. They'll talk about how they do landscape maintenance, or enhancements, or landscape construction and installation, or maybe lawn mowing, lawn care, and things like that. But if you're not modifying the content with the right keyword, you're missing the point. If you are a commercial landscaping contractor, the number one word you need to include in your search engine optimization is "commercial," and feature it prominently.

One of our clients, [Forever Green Landscape Services](#), in Lake Worth, Florida, is an ideal example of optimizing the website for commercial landscaping. The company works with HOAs and communities that have multiple properties. Typically, Forever Green has hundreds of properties they do landscaping maintenance for at any given time.



In this screenshot of the homepage, you'll notice that you can read the words "Commercial Landscaping Services" very clearly. The photo also looks like the type of community where they do maintenance work, which lets people know right away that yes, they do commercial.

Scott Callenius, Forever Green's owner, attracts leads through the website and LinkedIn, where he regularly publishes videos. He's getting found on Google, connecting with people on LinkedIn, and posting content. Now, his customers participate with him in the online ecosystem he built.

One of the biggest changes Scott has seen in his more than thirty years in business is how much communication is taking place through smartphones. Many of his clients want to text him, and he has adapted his digital marketing outreach to accommodate that channel.

Now, when Scott is on a job site, he records a selfie video that says something like, "Hey, it's Scott. I want to let you know that we just replaced this palm tree. It was knocked over during the last storm. Here are recommendations for your next enhancements. We're going to be replacing this flower bed with this, this, and this." He's merely communicating what he's already doing using a channel his clients prefer.

Let's hear directly from Scott about how well his use of digital marketing is working.

*Scott Callenius:*

*Hey, Jack, just wanted to ... let you know that I'm super thrilled with all the work that you and your team have done to create a website for Forever Green Landscaping. We're a South Florida company. We've been in existence since 1989. For the last 20 years have spent servicing only commercial properties, homeowners' associations, condominiums, and other multifamily communities.*

*Since building the website, we've definitely started to see an increase in traffic to our site and it's leading to the type of leads that we would like, the opportunity to bid on or be in front of the decision-makers. Recently, we've had several phone calls for new properties, new communities, apartment complexes, even today we got one for a hotel who's looking to switch landscapers. So, we set up a meeting for that.*

*We're starting to see a lot of traction. For people out there that think that it's all about relationships and relationship building, and business development, there is some truth in that. But the reality is that they need to find you first. Once they find you, then you can obviously go and develop and build a relationship with them, and hopefully, they become a long-term client of yours.*

*But in the process, you need to have something to show them or some way for them to find you. Whether it's with Google or with its local searches. What I'm finding is that we are getting traction in that area.*

*Currently, we're having lots of wins and lots of success with this format, and I think that anybody that's in commercial landscaping should really looking at their online presence, about how they can grow and build their audience, and how they can be a resource for everybody to go to for a solution to their ongoing issues. All right, everybody, thanks Jack for all the opportunities, and thanks for being a great business partner and a friend to me and to Forever Green. Thank you.*

## Commercial Landscaping & Online Reviews

Let's role-play for a moment. Pretend that you are the HOA board president. Your last landscape company was just blowing it. They were supposed to come once a week, but it was more like every ten to thirteen days. When it was raining, the lawns were just getting way too long. They didn't clean up after themselves and were supposed to prune the shrubbery but didn't.

So, you're on the hunt for a new landscaper. What are you looking for? The experiences, negative or positive, that customers may be having with their current landscape company for one. If you've had that experience, where you've hired an employee who didn't work out, what would you do next time when you're going to hire the next person? Chances are you're going to do more online research, including reading reviews.

Where do you start? Google, most likely, or Bing if you are so predisposed. You input the keywords "commercial landscape companies" along with the city and state.

One company comes up as the top return, so you check it out. The keywords you searched for are there, prominently displayed on the homepage. There is also a relevant photo that confirms they do commercial work. You see pictures of staff and a portfolio of their work along with client



logos, adding further proof. Also, there is content on the site describing their services. Lastly, you see several four-star reviews. There are a couple of negative reviews as well, which the company responded to, so you decide to give them a call.

(Aside from your website, other places where you want to have reviews include Facebook, Houzz, for residential work, and Yelp. You also want to encourage customers to leave reviews on Google and Bing.)

I mentioned Scott, the Florida landscaper, earlier. He also benefited from reviews. In a recent meeting with an HOA board, he was told they had received estimates from three different commercial landscape companies, and he was one of the final two. When he asked what happened to the third one, they said, "When we read the online reviews, we realized that we couldn't trust that company with our account." Scott went on to win the account, and part of the reason was due to his online reviews.

He said this in his message to me:

*I also think that one thing that's been helpful is you have good reviews on Google, and have the right type of reviews, not only having reviews that are all positive, but maybe even have some negative reviews, and then how you handle them.*

*Along with that, people do look at the reviews, and recently we've had a few appointments where we've gone to the communities, and we've looked at them, and we've met with the boards, and they've told us, hey, other contractors didn't look so good online. When that happened, they basically eliminated them from the choices or the options that the rest of the community would have. We're definitely having wins. I will say that the leads come a little slower, but they're the right type of leads, and you can work through them, work your process, and they become your clients, and you build long term relationships with them.*

I'm not going to pretend that having a nice website and positive online reviews are the only keys to success. Like Scott said in his comments, you still need to build the relationship. But doing it in this way, where the offline and online presence has the same message, can help you make the sale.

## Website Content Commercial Clients Must See To TRUST You

Let me begin this section by sharing a true story about a commercial landscape contractor that subsequently we worked with.

The company did an excellent job on their first project for a client. When the client asked them to bid on a bigger project, they were surprised to find they lost it. They asked, "Because of our

relationship, could you help us understand why we didn't get the job?" The client responded, "When we looked at your website, we didn't see any photos or content about the work that you sold to us, and we didn't feel confident that you've actually done this before." The contractor lost a \$3 million sale.

The [website content that prospective customers really need to see](#) revolves mainly around services that match the prospect's requirements. Often, however, commercial landscapers will have a web page consisting of nothing more than a short, bulleted list of services they offer. That's it!

Look at Scott's internet presence. You can see he has a solid 4.7 review average, thirteen Google reviews, and professional photos. A website that used to consist of just a few pages, now clearly communicates his services and value in great detail.

## The Tree of Good Fortune

When you have a page for each service and every city where you operate, we call that the Tree of Good Fortune because it produces fruit in each of those areas.

These Tree of Good Fortune pages have a map that outlines the service areas and lets the landscaper's prospect know right off the bat the locations where they work, and if the company is in their city. Typically, it also includes photos of jobs done in the area, outlines the company's process, and contains third-party endorsements and customer reviews.

There are individual pages for each service because that's one way you can rank on search engines and generate leads. More importantly, it provides the prospective client with the necessary information to know precisely the services you offer. It isn't "thin" content, either. Each page is at least one thousand words in length.

The benefit to pages like this is that it helps prospects understand your priorities, clearly communicates your processes, offers validation from other customers, and shows how you differentiate your services from "Chuck-In-a-Truck."

Once again, put yourself in your customer's shoes. You've got three companies, one of them is disqualified because they have a three-star review average. Now, you're down to two. The budget they put in their proposals was maybe within five percent of each other. You have a good feeling about both, and one of them clearly communicates why they're different. They have a process, they have a staff and are hiring, and they're growing. You decide to work with this company. Why? Because the website content merits your trust. It is all about earning trust and fostering relationships, but it's also about understanding the internet presence you build is inseparable from that.

I'll bet you're on your phone right now looking at your email or something, right? These days, digital is just part of the work. Whether it's emailing or texting or getting directions, having

content in the right places will help people understand what makes your company different from the competition and why it's worthwhile to do business with you even if you are a little bit more expensive.

## The # 1 Sales Process Tip For Commercial Sales

If you have been in business for a while, you have likely worked with various customers, both residential and commercial. However, one key to commercial landscaping success is getting really clear on what I call your "Hell Yes" Customer.

### Clarify Your 'Hell Yes' Customer

The Hell Yes Customer is the one who, when the phone rings or you get a lead, you say, "Hell yes, I can help you with this, and we're going to do a great job." Your client is stoked, your employees love working on this account, you make a healthy profit, and it's not a stretch for your company to satisfy the client's needs.

At Ramblin Jackson, we take our clients through a process to find out who their Hell Yes Customer is. I won't go into detail here, but you can check out my podcast on the Hell Yes Customer at [ramblinjackson.com/hellyes](http://ramblinjackson.com/hellyes). It includes a downloadable worksheet that will help you get clear on things like the specific services you offer, particular areas where you want to work, customer acquisition costs, contract amounts, and more.

I will say this: Gaining clarity on numbers is vital to the success of your business. Hell Yes Customers are willing to invest a certain amount of money for an annual maintenance contract, so you need to determine your minimum and maximum contract amounts and post those to your website. Let prospects know that your commercial maintenance plans start at \$3,000 a year, for example.

Why put pricing on your website? It will save you a ton of time for one. By culling out the "window shoppers," you can get to the point where you are picking and choosing the right leads — the Hell Yes Customers you want to attract. No longer will you have to bid on every job. Again, check out the podcast to learn more.

### Clarify Your 'Hell No' Customer

Another important part of the clarifying process consists of knowing your "Hell No" Customer.

Determine the services you do not offer, areas you don't serve, projects that are too small, and the signs of "PITAs," Pain In The Ass clients that will burn out your employees and kill your profits.

**The key to your success is to say *NO* to Hell No Customers and yes to Hell Yes Customers.**

Put the Hell No Customer guidelines in writing (and by that, I mean literally put them in writing and print them out). That way, when a prospective Hell Yes Customer or Hell No Customer calls, whoever answers the phone can quickly disqualify the bad leads, so you spend your valuable time and resources only with those who are a good fit.

## Post Your Process On Your Website

A moment ago, I talked about listing prices on your website. Your process is something you should communicate as well.

For example, let's say you have a three-part process:

1. Hold an initial phone call with the prospect;
2. Conduct a site walkthrough to determine the prospect's needs;
3. Meet with the prospect to review the commercial maintenance plan estimate.

Publishing your process on the website comes with some pretty significant benefits. More than likely, prospects are shopping around based on one of two factors: price or quality.

Price shoppers won't want to meet with you; they just want an estimate. If you are not the cheapest, you will lose the sale. By publishing your process, you turn many of them away at the gate.

However, if quality is what they're looking for, the door is open to a much deeper conversation. You can respond by explaining you don't just send estimates, that part of your process is to meet with the prospect to gain a full understanding of the needs. When you do, your chance of closing this account goes way up. You are in a position to negotiate, build a relationship, and explain your value.

## Use Video To Close Sales

Another way to close sales, especially when the possibility of meeting in person is limited, is to use video. Let me mention two options: [Zoom](#), the popular virtual meeting platform, and [Soapbox](#), a Google Chrome browser extension that enables you to quickly create short, personalized videos using only your webcam and link to a webpage at the end.

Let's use Soapbox as an example.

You have created a proposal for an HOA, and the board president says, "I want to work with you, but I need to go back to my HOA board to get approval." You can send a link to the video



via email, which the person can forward to everyone else or play at the next board meeting. Either way, they hear directly from you.

Soapbox also comes with analytics that let you see how many people watched the video and how often to know whether the video is gaining traction.

Think about the advantages of using these state-of-the-art video platforms offer. You are in a competitive situation. It's come down to you and one other company. You have met virtually or sent a video that explains precisely the services you will provide and at what cost. You have a link to a web page listing your value proposition, the services you offer, several customer reviews, and other content that demonstrates what differentiates you from the competition. A video that took just minutes to make puts you in a much better position to win the account.

I'm not going to say that making a video of you talking directly and personally to the HOA board is all it will take, but in today's world where people are meeting face-to-face less often, this is a surefire way to help you seal the deal.

## Key Takeaways

Let me conclude this e-book by reviewing some key takeaways. These may differ depending on your situation, but I want to make sure you walk away with something of value that's actionable.

Let's do a quick self-assessment. Take out a pen and piece of paper and answer the following questions:

1. **After reading this e-book, what was your most important takeaway?** Was it that your branding and differentiation, your foundational three are out of line? Was it that you need to enhance your website to have pages that describe the services you offer? Was it getting found on Google? Do you have the right keywords, like "commercial," on your website? Is it to have better reviews online? It could be any number of things.
2. **What are you going to do within the first four weeks?** Pick something and set a deadline to get it done. How to do it is up to you: Maybe you do it yourself or work with a vendor, but whatever it is, pick something and take action.
3. **What's a bigger fish to fry before Spring?** You're going to get busy in a few months, and everything you learned by reading this e-book will be on the back burner. Nothing will have changed, and you still haven't solved the problem. What's more important than taking the necessary steps to grow your online presence and your business?

## Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-book. I hope that you found at least one thing you can use to increase your sales this year. As a reminder, we're here to help you. You don't need to go it alone. At Ramblin Jackson, we're your green industry, digital marketing and branding team. If you'd like to get a personalized review of your marketing, contact us at our website: [ramblinjackson.com](http://ramblinjackson.com). Also, listen to our podcast while you're there. Hopefully, I will get to meet you sometime at one of our events.

**Check out this episode of The Landscaper's Guide to Modern Sales and Marketing Podcast:** [\*What Commercial Landscape Clients Want To See On Your Website.\*](#)

