

The Starving-Crowd Test for Your ZIP Codes

Score your own streets, not the country. All three have to come back yes before you spend a dollar.

Pain: what does an irrigation failure cost the households on your target streets — money, lawn, embarrassment?

Purchasing power: what did you see from the road that says these households can pay a professional rate?

Targetability: how many systems did you count, and how would you reach those owners twice a year?

The verdict: yes, no, or widen the radius — and the one fact that decided it.

Your Homeowner Avatar

Write one real person, not a demographic. If you cannot picture her garage, you do not know her yet.

Who is she, what does she do, and how did she end up owning a system she did not choose?

What is she afraid of the moment a stranger in her driveway says the word trench?

What has she already tried, and who let her down doing it?

What would make her say yes in the driveway, before she calls anybody else?

Personal Runway Worksheet

The only numbers in this book that are genuinely yours. Fill it in with the household's real spending, then divide.

MONTHLY LINE	AMOUNT	COULD YOU CUT IT?	NOTES
Housing			
Utilities			
Food and household			
Fuel and vehicle			
Insurance, all lines			
Debt minimums			
Childcare or school			
Phone and internet			
Health care			
Everything else			
TOTAL monthly need			
Cash on hand today			
Runway, in months			

Installed-System Count by Neighborhood

Your market is visible from the road. Drive it on a Sunday and count what is already in the ground.

[illegible]

Demand by Month — Irrigation

The printed index is a seasonal shape for the trade, not a measurement of your county. Write your own last-frost and first-freeze dates beside it, then plan against those.

MONTH	DEMAND INDEX	SYSTEMS YOU EXPECT TO SERVICE	REVENUE YOU EXPECT	WHAT YOU WILL DO IN THE DEAD MONTHS
Jan	0.58			
Feb	0.59			
Mar	0.86			
Apr	1.35			
May	1.57			
Jun	1.58			
Jul	1.28			
Aug	1.03			
Sep	0.91			
Oct	1.06			
Nov	0.65			
Dec	0.54			
Year				

Demand index: 1.00 = an average month for this trade nationally (source in Resources). Your ZIP will differ — pencil your own index in the slow and busy months.

Dream Outcome Builder

Her words, not yours. A specific result, by a specific date, so that a specific worry goes away.

The result she wants, written the way she would say it to a neighbor over the fence:

By when — and what is happening in her life on that date that makes it matter?

The worry that goes away when it happens:

The one sentence that combines all three. Read it aloud before you write it down.

Obstacle → Solution Map

Fifteen obstacles, four buckets. Reverse every one into something you deliver. Then you will have an offer instead of a price list.

#	BUCKET	WHAT STANDS IN HER WAY	WHAT YOU DELIVER SO IT DOES NOT
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

Your Value Stack

Score each line on what it is worth to her and what it costs you. Cut anything cheap for you and boring to her.

Anchor Set — What Else Costs About This

Before you name a price, name three things in her life that cost about the same. An anchor she already owns beats an argument.

YOUR OFFER	YOUR PRICE	WHAT ELSE COSTS ABOUT THAT	WHAT SHE GETS FOR IT THERE

Guarantee and Offer Name

Two promises you control, and the exclusions written on the same page. If the exclusions embarrass you, shrink the promise.

The workmanship promise — what you touched, and what you will do about it if it fails:

The diagnostic promise — what happens if you cannot find the cause on the first visit:

The exclusions, said out loud in the driveway. Pre-existing pipe, other people’s freeze damage, cut wire, utility pressure:

Three candidate names. Say each one aloud and have somebody outside the trade repeat it back:

Service Area and Jobs You Will Not Do

Rings in minutes, drawn at the hour you actually drive. Then the list that saves you more days than any other page here.

Inner ring — the drive time you will accept for any job, including a small repair. Name the towns:

Outer ring — how far you go, and the minimum job that has to be attached to earn the trip:

Beyond the ring: who do you refer it to, and what do you ask for in return?

The jobs you will not do, and the one sentence you say on the phone when one is offered:

Ten-Competitor Scan

Read them like a homeowner, not like a rival. You are hunting for a promise somebody could be held to. Count the blanks.

#	COMPANY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY PROMISE	ARRIVAL WINDOW?	ANY PRICE SHOWN?	THE GAP YOU COULD TAKE
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Referral Partners Who Already Have Your Customer

Landscapers, lawn crews, fence builders, plumbers, realtors, pool companies. They break it or inherit it; you fix it.

[illegible]

Your One-Liner and Positioning Statement

Three beats: the problem she has, the plan you follow, the life she gets. Nothing about how long you have been doing this.

The problem, in her language, not the trade's:

The plan — three steps at most, plain words, no jargon a homeowner has to decode:

The success — what her yard and her week look like when it is done:

All three as one spoken sentence. Rewrite it until it sounds like you talking, not you reading:

Entity, EIN and Bank Setup

One afternoon of errands that separates a business from a hobby with a truck. Tick the date beside each.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| ☐ Decide the entity type with your attorney or accountant, in writing, before filing anything | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Register the entity with your Secretary of State and save the confirmation | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Apply for the federal employer identification number | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Open a business checking account in the business name | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Open a second account for tax set-asides on the same day | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Get a business debit or credit card and stop using the personal one for fuel | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Register for state sales tax if parts are taxable where you work | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Find out whether your city or county requires a separate business registration | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Set up bookkeeping software before the first invoice, not after the first shoebox | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Register the business name and buy the matching domain before you print anything | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Get a business phone number that is not your personal cell forever | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Save every registration document in one folder, named so you can find it in a minute | DATE _____ |
-
-
-
-
-

License Requirements by State — Irrigation

Researched at the time of writing and printed here so you have a starting point, not a final answer. Verify your own state on the board's own site before you rely on a line of it — fees and rules move, and the board is the only source that counts.

STATE	LICENSE REQUIRED?	LICENSE	BOARD	FEE	EXAM
Kentucky	No statewide	—	Check city / county	—	No
Texas	Yes	Landscape Irrigator (LI) license	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)	\$111	Yes
California	Yes	C-27 Landscaping Contractor license (covers irrigation installation)	California Contractors State License Board (CSLB)	\$450–\$650	Yes
Florida	Yes	Voluntary State-Certified Irrigation Sprinkler Contractor credential (exam-based; pre-empts the county/city irrigation contractor licenses that are otherwise mandatory locally)	Florida Irrigation Society (FIS) exam program / local county-city licensing authorities	\$100–\$350	Yes
New York	No statewide	—	Check city / county	—	No
Pennsylvania	No statewide	—	Check city / county	—	No
Illinois	Yes	Irrigation Contractor Registration (requires sign-off from an Illinois-licensed master plumber before state registration)	Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)	\$50–\$200	No
Ohio	No statewide	—	Check city / county	—	No
Georgia	No statewide	—	Check city / county	—	No
North Carolina	Yes	Irrigation Contractor license	NC Irrigation Contractors' Licensing Board (NCICLB)	\$100–\$440	Yes
Michigan	No statewide	—	Check city / county	—	No
New Jersey	Yes	Landscape Irrigation Contractor License	NJ Division of Consumer Affairs (DCA)	\$45–\$300	Yes

Rules change — confirm with the board before you spend a dollar.

Backflow and Cross-Connection Questions for Your Water Provider

One phone call answers most of this. Make it before you quote anything that touches a potable supply.

☐ Who is permitted to test a backflow assembly in this service area?	DATE _____
☐ What certification do you recognize, and who issues it here?	DATE _____
☐ How often must an irrigation assembly be tested, and who files the result?	DATE _____
☐ Do you keep a public list of approved testers, and how do I get on it?	DATE _____
☐ Which assembly types are approved for residential irrigation here?	DATE _____
☐ Is a permit or an inspection required when a system is installed or a device replaced?	DATE _____
☐ Are there watering-day or time-of-day ordinances my controller programming must respect?	DATE _____
☐ Is a rain or moisture shutoff device required on systems installed in this jurisdiction?	DATE _____
☐ What do you require from an irrigation contractor before work begins?	DATE _____
☐ Who do I call here when I suspect a cross-connection on an existing system?	DATE _____

Insurance Lines and Annual Cost Ranges

Researched ranges for a small operation in this trade. Your own quotes will land somewhere on these lines depending on payroll, vehicle and claims history.

COVERAGE	TYPICAL ANNUAL COST	WHAT IT COVERS	YOUR QUOTE
General liability	\$360–\$1,200	Damage or injury you cause to others	
Workers comp	3–6 per \$100 payroll	Your crew, hurt on the job	
Commercial auto	\$1,200–\$4,800	The truck and what it hits	
Bond	\$10,000–\$25,000	Of the 12 researched states, only North Carolina's Irrigation Contractors' Licensing Board carries a fixed-amount bond requirement for irrigation contractors specifically (\$10,000 surety bond or irrevocable letter of credit, required after passing the licensing exam). California's C-27 Landscaping classification (used by CA irrigation installers) falls under CSLB's general contractor bond requirement, which is \$25,000 for all classifications. No other researched state licenses (TX, FL, NJ, IL) carry a stated bond requirement.	
Tools & equipment		Theft from the truck or site	
Umbrella		Above the GL limit	

Insurance Quote Log

Three agents, the same questions, written answers. The underground-exclusion column is the one that matters most in a digging trade.

Questions for Your Attorney and Accountant

Questions, not templates. Walk in with these written down and you will get more from an hour than from a year of worrying.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| ☐ Which entity type fits how I actually work, and what does it cost me to maintain each year? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Draft a services agreement for my state that I can use on every job, large and small | DATE _____ |
| ☐ How should a change order be documented so it holds up when somebody disputes it? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ What has to appear on my estimates and invoices to comply with state consumer rules? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Where exactly does my work stop and licensed plumbing work begin in this state? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ What is my exposure if a system I serviced is later linked to a cross-connection? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Are parts taxable, is labor taxable, and how do I bill and remit correctly? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Cash or accrual books, and when should that change as I grow? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ What share of every deposit should I set aside for tax, and how often do I pay? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ How do I document the sub-versus-employee test before I hire my first helper? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ Which records do I keep, in what form, and for how long? | DATE _____ |
| ☐ What should I do differently in the first year that I will thank you for in the third? | DATE _____ |

Equipment Budget — Irrigation

Researched ranges for this trade, split into what you need on day one and what can wait or be rented. Price your own local suppliers into the blank column before you commit to anything.

ITEM	LOW	HIGH	DAY ONE?	YOUR PRICE	BOUGHT
PVC pipe cutters and pipe repair tools	\$100	\$400	Yes		
Shovels and hand trenching tools	\$75	\$250	Yes		
Wire tracer / valve locator	\$200	\$700	Yes		
Digital multimeter for electrical troubleshooting	\$50	\$150	Yes		
Starter inventory of fittings, valves and PVC/poly pipe	\$500	\$1,500	Yes		
Starter stock of sprinkler heads (bubbler, pop-up, rotary, gear-driven)	\$63	\$1,000	Yes		
Backflow preventer testing kit (if certified)	\$300	\$900	Yes		
Smart/Wi-Fi irrigation controller (starter unit)	\$50	\$300	Yes		
Safety gear: eye/ear protection, gloves, high-visibility vests	\$75	\$250	Yes		
General hand tool kit (wrenches, PVC glue/primer, pliers)	\$100	\$300	Yes		
Walk-behind trencher (entry-level, buy vs. rent-first)	\$1,500	\$4,000	Later		
Vibratory pipe/cable plow	\$2,000	\$6,000	Later		
Compaction tool (plate compactor / tamper)	\$300	\$1,200	Later		
Essential equipment	\$1,513	\$5,750			

Ranges are retail prices at the time of research (sources in Resources). Used and rental are the day-one shortcuts.

Total Startup Budget

Essential kit, vehicle, first-year liability cover and launch marketing. Your reserve is deliberately not inside this total — write it separately and do not touch it.

LINE	LOW	HIGH	YOUR NUMBER
Essential equipment (previous page)	\$1,513	\$5,750	
Used work truck/van (starter)	\$10,000	\$22,000	
General liability, year one	\$360	\$1,200	
Launch marketing	\$1,000	\$5,000	
Licenses and permits			
Software and phone, 3 months			
Personal runway (chapter 1)			
Reserve (10% of the total)			
Total startup	\$12,873	\$33,950	

Rent or Buy Decision Log

Own what you use weekly, rent what you use in bursts. Log every rental for one season and let the invoices make the decision.

MACHINE	DAY RATE HERE	DAYS USED THIS SEASON	SEASON RENTAL TOTAL	BUY PRICE	VERDICT

Funding Sources

Rank them by what each one costs you on a bad month, not by how quickly the money arrives.

SOURCE	AMOUNT AVAILABLE	WHAT IT COSTS	WHAT IS AT RISK IF THE SEASON IS SLOW	USE IT FOR

Client-Financed Acquisition Plan

Every job hands you the money to go and find the next one. Write down exactly how that loop runs in your business.

What you collect up front on an install, and precisely what that money is allowed to buy:

What you collect on the day for a start-up, a repair or a blowout, and how you collect it:

The share of every payment that goes straight back into finding the next customer:

The rule you will not break when cash gets tight, written now while you are calm:

Typical Jobs and Price Ranges — Irrigation

Published ranges for this trade with typical hours beside them. Write your own price in the blank column, then check it against your break-even hour before you quote it.

TYPICAL JOB	LOW	HIGH	HOURS	PER HOUR (HIGH ÷ HOURS)	YOUR PRICE
New in-ground sprinkler system install (avg. 1/4-acre lawn)	\$1,636	\$3,595	12	\$300	
Fall winterization / blowout	\$50	\$230	1	\$230	
Spring system start-up / activation	\$50	\$230	1.25	\$184	
General sprinkler repair (valve, line, or head)	\$130	\$400	2	\$200	
Add a zone / extend coverage	\$500	\$1,000	4	\$250	
Smart/Wi-Fi controller upgrade and install	\$50	\$300	1.5	\$200	

Crews in this trade bill \$50–\$100 an hour (flat pricing). Technicians earn \$19–\$31 an hour.

Good / Better / Best Builder

Three options on one page, presented from the top down. Build them for your most common job first.

TIER	WHAT IS INCLUDED	WHAT IT SOLVES FOR HER	YOUR PRICE	YOUR COST
BEST — everything the system needs				
BEST — add-ons included				
BEST — seasonal agreement included				
BETTER — the fault plus its causes				
BETTER — add-ons included				
GOOD — today's fault, done properly				
GOOD — what is deliberately excluded				
Which one you expect most people to take				
What you will say after you hand it over				

Break-Even Hourly Rate

Everything the business costs whether or not you work, divided by the hours somebody will actually pay you for.

OVERHEAD LINE	PER YEAR	NOTES
Insurance, all lines		
Vehicle payment and fuel		
Vehicle maintenance and tyres		
Phone and internet		
Software and payments		
Accountant and bookkeeper		
Marketing and website		
Storage, yard or shop		
Licences, renewals and dues		
Tools, replacement and repair		
Everything else		
TOTAL annual overhead		
Billable hours you will truly sell		
BREAK-EVEN HOURLY RATE		
Your wage per hour on top		
Profit per hour on top		
THE RATE YOU QUOTE		

Markup vs Margin Table

Markup is figured on what you paid. Margin is figured on what you charged. Fill this in once and keep it in the truck.

PART OR JOB	YOUR COST	MARKUP APPLIED	PRICE CHARGED	GROSS PROFIT	ACTUAL MARGIN

Price Ladder — The Next Ten Quotes

One job, ten quotes, one raised price. Write down every answer. If all ten say yes, raise it again and run it back.

#	JOB AND DATE	OLD PRICE	PRICE QUOTED	YES OR NO	WHAT SHE ACTUALLY SAID
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Your Attraction Offer

A paid, low-friction reason to be in her yard with the system running. Name it, price it, and say what it reveals.

The offer, named the way you would say it on the phone:

What she gets, in the order you will do it while she watches:

What it costs, and what happens to that fee if she books work the same day:

What it reliably reveals — the three faults you find on almost every system:

Upsell Ladder by Trigger

The system hands you the order. Write the trigger you will see, the offer it earns, and the sentence you say.

WHAT YOU FIND	WHAT IT EARNS HER	WHAT YOU OFFER NEXT	YOUR PRICE	THE SENTENCE YOU SAY

Upsell and Downsell Plan

Upsells are what a solved problem makes visible. Downsells change the deal or the timing, never the price of the same work.

The upsell you will offer on almost every job, and the moment in the visit you will offer it:

Your three downsells: less work, later work, or split payments. Write all three:

What you will honestly tell her she can do herself, and why that is good business:

The line you will not cross on price, decided now while nobody is standing in front of you:

Continuity or Referral Plan

The annual agreement: what is in it, what is excluded, what it costs, when you sell it, and how it renews.

ELEMENT	WHAT IT INCLUDES	WHAT IT EXCLUDES	PRICE	WHEN YOU SELL IT
Spring system start-up				
Mid-season inspection				
Fall winterization and blowout				
Parts and labour on repairs				
Priority scheduling and response time				
Controller programming changes				
Backflow testing arrangement				
Renewal terms and how it ends				
Prepaid or split across the season				
Referral reward for the customer				

Job-Start Checklist

Before a tool comes out of the van. Short on purpose, because a list nobody uses is worse than no list at all.

☐ Arrival window met, and a text sent if it was not	DATE _____
☐ Locate filed, waiting period elapsed, marks photographed with the date	DATE _____
☐ Walk the yard with the homeowner and agree what is being done today	DATE _____
☐ Main shut-off located and tested before anything is cut	DATE _____
☐ Lawn, beds and drive photographed exactly as you found them	DATE _____
☐ Existing damage pointed out and photographed before you start	DATE _____
☐ Visible heads and valve boxes flagged so nothing is driven over	DATE _____
☐ Spoil tarp down before the first shovel, drive and walks protected	DATE _____
☐ Pets confirmed inside, gates and latches agreed	DATE _____
☐ Access to the controller and the power to it confirmed working	DATE _____
☐ Parking agreed so you are not blocking a drive at school pickup	DATE _____
☐ Price and scope for today restated out loud before work begins	DATE _____

Job-Close Checklist

Leave nothing for her to find after you have gone. This is the list that decides what she tells her neighbours.

☐ Every zone run with the homeowner standing beside you	DATE _____
☐ Heads adjusted so nothing sprays the drive, the walk or the siding	DATE _____
☐ Controller programmed for the season and the schedule written on a card in the panel door	DATE _____
☐ Sod replaced and watered in the same day, spoil removed	DATE _____
☐ Valve box lids seated flush and clear of trip hazards	DATE _____
☐ As-built map drawn, photographed and filed under her address	DATE _____
☐ Finished work photographed from the same spots as the before shots	DATE _____
☐ Tools counted back into the van before you move it	DATE _____
☐ Locate marks tidied where the utility allows it	DATE _____
☐ Invoice presented and payment collected on the spot	DATE _____
☐ Review asked for at the door, while she is looking at the work	DATE _____
☐ Seven-day follow-up scheduled before you drive away	DATE _____

As-Built System Record

One page per system. It halves your time on the next visit and makes every competitor who follows you look like a guess.

[illegible]

Family Worksheet

Routes, equipment care and certifications — the three things that decide whether your season runs or runs you.

Your route plan: which towns run on which days in blowout season, and what you tell customers:

Machine service dates: compressor, small engines, truck. Written as dates, not intentions:

Certifications you hold or want, who issues them here, and when the education hours are due:

Your weather rule: what happens when a freeze warning moves, who is called first, what slides:

Equipment Log

What you paid, when you serviced it, and what it costs to run. This is how you learn which cheap tool is the expensive one.

[illegible]

Your Warm 100 — 1 of 2

A hundred names, not a hundred leads. Contacts, old workmates, the supply counter, neighbours, the school run, church.

#	NAME	HOW YOU KNOW THEM	CONTACTED	REPLY	REFERRED ANYBODY?
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					

Your Warm 100 — 2 of 2

#	NAME	HOW YOU KNOW THEM	CONTACTED	REPLY	REFERRED ANYBODY?
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					
31					
32					
33					
34					
35					
36					
37					
38					
39					
40					
41					
42					
43					
44					
45					
46					
47					
48					
49					
50					

Lead Magnet Plan

Something small and genuinely useful that quietly reveals the next problem. Design it, then design where it lives.

ELEMENT	WHAT IT SAYS	THE PROBLEM IT REVEALS	WHERE YOU HAND IT OUT
Title on the front			
Local charge-up date			
Local drain-down date			
Watering rules in your area			
Blank: zone count			
Blank: valve locations			
Blank: controller make and model			
Blank: head types by zone			
Your name, number and one promise			
Where it is printed and stocked			
Where it lives on your website			
What you send the day after she takes one			

Channel Test Log

One channel at a time, a fixed budget, a fixed window. Judge it on booked jobs, never on impressions.

CHANNEL	WHAT YOU SPENT	HOURS IT TOOK	LEADS	JOBS BOOKED	KEEP, FIX OR KILL

LTGP : CAC Worksheet

What a customer costs against what a customer is worth across a decade of seasonal visits, not across one invoice.

LINE	YOUR NUMBER	HOW YOU WORKED IT OUT
Cost per lead		
Close rate on those leads		
Cost to acquire one customer		
First job gross profit		
Repairs per customer per year		
Seasonal visits per year		
Agreement value per year		
Years you keep the house		
Lifetime gross profit		
LTGP divided by CAC		
Referrals each customer sends		
What that ratio lets you spend next month		

Rule of 100 — Daily Tracker

A hundred actions a day, whatever the mix. Front-load them into the fortnight before the frost and the fortnight before the freeze.

MEASURE	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Warm outreach — calls and individual messages												
Doors knocked or hangers left												
Referral partners visited in person												
Content posted where neighbours actually are												
Follow-ups on open estimates												
Reviews asked for												
Total touches today												

WEEK NOTES

Estimate Visit Checklist

The visit is a demonstration with a price at the end. Run it the same way every time and the nerves stop mattering.

☐ Arrive inside the window, in a clean shirt, with the truck lettered	DATE _____
☐ Ask what made her call today before you look at anything	DATE _____
☐ Locate the controller and note the make, model and current programme	DATE _____
☐ Run every zone with her walking beside you, not from the driveway	DATE _____
☐ Photograph every fault as you find it, on her phone as well as yours	DATE _____
☐ Ask the three questions: how long, what did the bill do, what were you planning	DATE _____
☐ Fix one small thing free before you quote anything	DATE _____
☐ Say plainly what you are not certain about and what it would take to be sure	DATE _____
☐ Offer the certificate of insurance before she asks for it	DATE _____
☐ Present Good, Better and Best on one page, from the top down	DATE _____
☐ Give the price, then stop talking	DATE _____
☐ Book the date and the arrival window before you leave the drive	DATE _____

Objections and Replies — Irrigation

What she says, what she means, and your reply in your own words. A reply you copied will sound copied in a driveway.

WHAT THEY SAY	WHAT IT REALLY MEANS	YOUR REPLY
My cousin does sprinklers on the side. He said about half that.	I cannot see what the extra buys me, and I do not want to feel like the person who overpaid.	
Can you just tell me what is wrong over the phone?	I am trying to avoid paying for a visit that might not fix anything.	
The last guy charged me less for the same thing.	I have an anchor in my head and you have not given me a reason to move it.	
I do not want you digging a trench across my lawn.	I have seen what a bad crew leaves behind and I am picturing my yard in ruins.	
Why do I have to pay to test the backflow every year? It worked last year.	This feels like a made-up fee that benefits you and not me.	
Let me get a couple more quotes.	I do not have a way to compare you to anybody, so I am buying time.	
Can we skip the blowout this year? Last winter was mild.	This looks like the easiest line to cut and I am not sure it is real.	
The system came with the house. Should the home warranty not cover it?	I am hoping somebody else is responsible for this.	

Proof Kit Inventory

Proof is specific, local and on your phone in under ten seconds. Build it deliberately, job by job.

PROOF ITEM	WHERE IT LIVES	WHEN YOU SHOW IT	HAVE YOU GOT IT YET?
Before and after photos of a valve repair			
Before and after photos of a dry-spot fix			
Photo of an as-built map you drew			
Video of a zone running properly after adjustment			
Review from somebody in her ZIP code			
Certificate of insurance, current			
Licence or registration where your state requires one			
Backflow tester certification, yours or your tester's			
Written guarantee with its exclusions			
A Good, Better, Best page for the common job			
Photo of a lawn restored after trenching			
The seven-day follow-up text you send			

Review Request Script

At the door, while she is looking at the finished work. The timing is the technique and everybody gets it wrong.

Your ask, word for word. Read it aloud until it stops sounding like a script:

The one detail you will ask her to mention, so the review sells the next job for you:

The text you send before you pull off the street, with the link in it:

What you say and do when somebody says no, and how you leave it open for later:

How you answer a review that is unfair, in public, without arguing:

First-Hire Scorecard

Score the candidate against the job you are actually hiring for, not against how much you liked the conversation.

WHAT THE ROLE NEEDS	MUST HAVE OR CAN LEARN	HOW YOU WILL TEST IT	SCORE OUT OF TEN
Turns up on time, every time			
Physically able to dig and work in weather			
Clean licence and can be insured on your vehicle			
Can speak to a homeowner without you there			
Follows a written checklist without shortcuts			
Careful with somebody else's lawn and property			
Basic electrical sense for solenoids and wire			
Willing to learn the locator and the multimeter			
Honest about a mistake before you find it			
Understands and accepts the seasonal shape of the work			
Would you put them in front of your best customer?			
Would you rehire them next spring?			

Pay Mix and What It Rewards

Whatever you attach money to is what you will get more of. Write down the behaviour each line actually buys.

PAY ELEMENT	AMOUNT OR RATE	THE BEHAVIOUR IT REWARDS	THE BEHAVIOUR IT COULD CORRUPT
Hourly base			
Overtime in peak weeks			
Per-visit bonus in blowout season			
Callback-free quality bonus			
Review-mentioned bonus			
Certification or licence attained			
Seasonal completion bonus			
Payroll taxes and workers compensation load			
Total real cost per billable hour			

30 / 60 / 90 Ramp Plan

Three visible stages with a written standard at each one, so both of you know whether it is going well.

STAGE	WHAT THEY DO UNSUPERVISED	WHAT THEY NEVER TOUCH YET	HOW YOU CHECK IT	PASS OR EXTEND
Week one — van, tools, safety, locates				
Days 1-30 — dig, glue, backfill, restore				
Days 1-30 — checklists learned by doing				
Days 31-60 — heads and nozzles solo				
Days 31-60 — second hose on blowout route				
Days 31-60 — explains the guarantee correctly				
Days 61-90 — wire tracing and solenoid testing				
Days 61-90 — runs a start-up alone				
Days 61-90 — draws a filed as-built map				
Ninety-day review and what changes after it				

Org Chart at \$250k, \$500k and \$1M

Draw all three now. The point is not the boxes, it is seeing which job you are supposed to stop doing next.

At \$250k: who does what, and which hours are still only yours?

At \$500k: who runs service without you, and who answers the phone in business hours?

At \$1M: what does the day look like when you are off the truck for good?

Which standard has to be written down before each of those steps can happen?

Twelve-Month Forecast

The printed index is a seasonal shape for the trade, not a measurement of your county. Correct it against your own last-frost and first-freeze dates, then write in what you actually believe.

MONTH	DEMAND INDEX	JOBS	AVG TICKET	REVENUE	COSTS	PROFIT
Jan	0.58					
Feb	0.59					
Mar	0.86					
Apr	1.35					
May	1.57					
Jun	1.58					
Jul	1.28					
Aug	1.03					
Sep	0.91					
Oct	1.06					
Nov	0.65					
Dec	0.54					
Year						

Demand index: 1.00 = an average month for this trade nationally (source in Resources). Your ZIP will differ — pencil your own index in the slow and busy months.

Cash Flow Log

One line a week. Deposits held and prepaid agreements are money in your bank that is not yours — keep that column honest and it will keep you solvent.

[illegible]

Profit First Allocations

Money moves on two fixed dates a month, before anything is spent. Start with a share so small it feels symbolic, then raise it each quarter.

ACCOUNT	TARGET %	THIS MONTH \$	ACTUAL %
Income (100%)			
Profit			
Owner pay			
Tax			
Operating expenses			
Parts and rental pass-through			
Off-season reserve			

KPI Scorecard — Irrigation

Published benchmarks for this trade, several of them drawn from companies larger than yours. Compare yourself to last month first, and to the benchmark second.

MEASURE	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Gross profit margin (target 40%)												
Average job ticket (target 500 USD)												
Sales close rate on Google Ads leads (target 40%)												
Cost per lead, Google Ads (irrigation) (target 43.17 USD)												
Landing page conversion rate, Google Ads (irrigation) (target 6.24%)												
Click-through rate, Google Ads (irrigation) (target 4.91%)												

WEEK NOTES

Monthly P&L

Parts, rental and field wages stay separate from overhead. Mixing them is why most operators cannot say which work actually makes money.

MONTH	REVENUE	PARTS AND RENTAL	FIELD WAGES	OVERHEAD	NET PROFIT

Days 1–30: Get Cash

One objective: one paying customer and a repeatable way to find the next. Not a website. Date every line as you finish it.

☐ Entity registered, tax number issued, both bank accounts open	DATE _____
☐ General liability and commercial auto bound, certificate saved	DATE _____
☐ Your state's licence position confirmed with the board, not with a forum	DATE _____
☐ Water provider called about backflow rules and approved testers	DATE _____
☐ Attraction offer named, priced and written on one page	DATE _____
☐ Wire locator and multimeter bought before anything with an engine	DATE _____
☐ Van stocked with the heads, nozzles, fittings and valves that actually fail	DATE _____
☐ Warm hundred written out in full — all hundred names	DATE _____
☐ Twenty individual messages sent every day until the list is worked	DATE _____
☐ Truck lettered and a business phone number live	DATE _____
☐ First paying job completed at your real price	DATE _____
☐ Job run to the checklists, map drawn, review asked for at the door	DATE _____

Days 31–60: Get More Cash

Get more out of every driveway you were already standing in. Habits built now cost nothing; built in October they cost a season.

☐ Upsell offered on every single job, not only the easy ones	DATE _____
☐ Good, Better, Best presented on one page instead of a single number	DATE _____
☐ Price raised once on your most common job	DATE _____
☐ Next ten quote answers logged on the price ladder sheet	DATE _____
☐ Diagnostic fee set and stated on the phone before you drive	DATE _____
☐ Review asked for at the door on every job, link sent before leaving	DATE _____
☐ Four referral partners visited in person with something to hand out	DATE _____
☐ Lead magnet printed with your county's two dates on it	DATE _____
☐ Door hangers left either side of every job you run	DATE _____
☐ Booking by street and by day rather than by who called first	DATE _____
☐ Break-even hourly rate calculated and taped inside the van	DATE _____
☐ Weekly office hour happening on a named day, every week	DATE _____

Days 61–90: Get the Most Cash

Turn customers into a calendar you own, then decide about the first hire on evidence rather than on a feeling.

☐ Annual agreement written: scope, exclusions, price, renewal, how it ends	DATE _____
☐ Agreement offered at every seasonal visit and every completed repair	DATE _____
☐ Prepaid agreement money tracked separately as money not yet earned	DATE _____
☐ Referral ask built into the job-close routine	DATE _____
☐ One week of your own hours tracked and split into delegatable and only-me	DATE _____
☐ First-hire decision made from that sheet, with the winter answer written down	DATE _____
☐ Sub-versus-employee question asked of your accountant in writing	DATE _____
☐ Route plan drawn for the coming peak season, towns assigned to days	DATE _____
☐ Compressor and machine service dates booked before the season, not during	DATE _____
☐ Forecast reviewed against what actually happened and corrected	DATE _____
☐ Six tripwires set with real numbers and a recurring check in your phone	DATE _____
☐ Next ninety days written before this one ends	DATE _____

Milestones and Tripwires

A milestone is where you meant to be. A tripwire is the number that tells you early, plus the thing you already decided to do.

[illegible]

Decision Log

Date, decision, and what you expected. Read it back each quarter. It is the cheapest way anybody has ever found to get better at judgement.

[illegible]