

The illustration shows a silhouette of a person wearing a hat and pushing a lawnmower on a green lawn. A large tree with green and yellow foliage is on the left. A path winds through the lawn. From the lawnmower, a stream of money, represented by dollar signs and arrows, is being ejected. The background is white, and the bottom half of the cover is a solid light green color.

how to
**MAKE BIG
MONEY**

**MOWING
SMALL
LAWNS**

Robert A. Welcome

How *TO*
MAKE BIG MONEY
MOWING SMALL LAWNS

*For Teens, Retirees, and
Anyone in Between*

*“The Classic Book”
To start and operate a lawn mowing business*

By
Robert A. Welcome

Ferncliff Publications

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Lee, Massachusetts

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Fourth Edition

First printing, September 1984

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Third printing, May 2005

Fourth printing, October 2007

Most of the changes in this fourth edition are associated with costs and prices that have increased since the third edition. These changes, to a great extent, are related to the estimation of prices for mowing jobs. Many of the changes were made, however, without losing the original baseline data.

E-PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**THIS IS THE ORIGINAL CLASSIC BOOK RECENTLY UPDATED BY
THE AUTHOR**

NOTE: It was decided to break away from conventional book layout methods where all chapters typically begin on a right-hand page. This decision saves you, the reader, approximately 6 pages of paper.

REVIEWS

Unexpected offerings from grass roots ...journey to the land of publishing gems, ...some wonderful tips.

San Francisco Chronicle

A lawn mower's route to success.

Charlotte Observer

...presents classic summertime employment...as a profitable and challenging junior business.

Boston Globe (Sunday Magazine)

...guides teens to summer profits.

Springfield Republican

[There are] tables to help the reader make profitable estimates and offers ... field-tested advice.

Miami Herald

Lawn mowing tycoon ...illustrated guide explaining how to start and operate a lawn-mowing business.

Boston Globe

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is the result of a cooperative effort between the author and his son, John.

Thanks to John for having the motivation to work for himself, part-time, during his high school years and for his cooperative effort to keep making changes that would continually improve upon his little business. Many changes were made by experimenting with marketing, advertising, estimating, pricing, scheduling and all phases of the business; this is quite difficult, even for mature adults.

And, thanks to my wife, John's mother, Janice, for her patience and ability to smooth over the delicate phone calls, when John would occasionally be late, or forget to mow a lawn.

Also, much appreciation to Donna Murphy for her typing services and to Georgia Wirth for her help with typesetting and layout work, for the first edition.

Robert A. Welcome

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND HIS SON

Author's Son,
John



The author is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts, with a B.S. Degree (cum laude) in Electrical Engineering. He was employed with GE Aerospace Industries, 30 years, where he enjoyed a wide variety of responsibilities. He was a Design Engineer; a Systems Engineer; a Test-Berth Director; a Cost Analyst; and he held several business development and management positions. He also was

Author



the GE Rep to the International Society of Parametric Analyst (ISPA), a prestigious, high-level, corporate appointment to do international analyses and reporting work for both the U.S. Government and GE-related enterprises (associated with the Department of Defense). During his last 15-years of employment he worked on advanced plans and programs and authored many documents for GE and the U.S. Government.

In his private life, he and his wife, Janice, raised three children. The children (Michael, John and Angela) were raised with a sense of knowing what it is to be in their own business. Each of them had their own paper routes. They also shared in a night-crawler sales business and in a business of selling U.S. postage stamps in vending machines in 11 local retail stores. This eventually let to his son John, at age 14, wanting to start a lawn-mowing business. After four years of effort to perfect John's business, and to track and record all the data, this book was written.

For info about John: see AUTHOR'S NOTES (page 9) and EPILOGUE (page 145 & 146); and, he is shown in pictures on pages 29, 103, 125 & 126.

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

Mowing lawns can be considered as a junior business for teenage part-timers. It can also be considered as a part-time business or stepping-stone business for teenagers, middle-agers, or retirees. Or, it can be considered as a full-fledged business for those who do it exclusively for a living.

For John, the teenager who did the mowing work described in this book, mowing lawns was a part-time venture which also turned out to be a stepping-stone business. In addition to running his mowing business, John learned the basics of investing, marketing, advertising, estimating, pricing, and scheduling; the disciplines of commitment and reliability; and, how to establish good public relations, keep records, and pay taxes. And, he learned these essential aspects of business in a simple, uncomplicated way, as described in the book. Furthermore, he was able to use this knowledge, much to his advantage, later in his adult life.

Since the first edition of this book was printed, John has graduated from high school, served four years in the U. S. Air Force, became a Christian minister, and now operates two businesses: he is a Realtor and a general contractor, building and remodeling homes. His business background from mowing lawns helped to provide him with business foresight toward becoming a contractor; and, in this respect, mowing lawns had become a stepping-stone business for him.

Another young man, "Rick" White formerly of Pittsfield, MA, purchased a copy of the book and went into the mowing business when he graduated from high school. About seven years later (in 1992), I saw "Rick" at a local town fair and asked him what he was doing for work. He told me, with enthusiasm, that he was the proud owner of a large mowing business, and that he had several employees working for him. He also said that when he got started, he "followed the book exactly, to every detail." So, for "Rick", mowing lawns became a full-fledged business.

And, as for retirees: "Russ" White of Lenox, MA (not related to "Rick" White), purchased a copy of the book a few years before he retired and started a part-time mowing business, which he had continued and expanded during his retirement. He says that he "enjoys mowing lawns"; it gives him "plenty of

AUTHOR'S NOTES

good exercise” and “it pays good, too”. He also informed me that his book is barely readable because he let many retirees borrow it, and it has become quite frayed. "Now," he says, "I see quite a few of these guys out mowing lawns,"

For "Russ", and other retirees, mowing lawns is principally a part-time business. It helps them to remain physically active, to have a source of income (without tight schedules) that can appreciably supplement their pensions, and it helps to promote a greater sense of independence.

In addition, this book has been used in various Trade Schools. Also, at Purdue University. Purdue used it in their Landscaping course for students who have abundant technical knowledge about all kinds of plants; but, according to Professor Glen Voris, they lack the “know-how” about how to build a business.

The original reason for writing this book was to have it be available mainly to high school and college students, to help them with employment during the summer vacation period. Sales data from the first edition, however, have shown the scope of interest to be much broader than expected. The data (from copies sold throughout the U. S., from the Atlantic to Pacific coasts, and from Florida to as far north as Anchorage, AK) shows the book to be of interest to youths, retirees, and others in between, who intend to go into his/her own business. There is also a very strong interest for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends of teenagers and/or young adults to purchase the book as a gift item for birthdays, Christmas, and periods before and during the mowing season.

A broad interest has resulted from the fact that mowing lawns is a simple, straight-forward business, not requiring any high technology skill. And, it stands out as one of the very best low-investment, high-return businesses available. Also, there is personal satisfaction in the work because, upon completion of mowing a lawn, the finished work is immediately noticeable. The pay is quite satisfying as well, which can easily be triple the federal minimum wage rate of pay.

It is of the greatest personal satisfaction to me to know that so many people have found an interest in the book. Therefore, I would like to thank all of you who have purchased a copy. And I hope that you find a good return for your investment.

Robert A. Welcome

FORWARD

Mowing lawns is a highly independent way of life. I have enjoyed earning a comfortable living at it for 22 years.

My business had originally involved doing mowing and rototilling work for the general public. But now I have a select group of customers. They include homeowners with small lawns; small, wealthy, private estates; and some professional business establishments. And my overall work now consists of mowing, fertilizing, planting shrubs and hedges, trimming shrubs and hedges, and rototilling. Most of the work, however, is mowing.

A review of this book has left me with two distinct impressions: One, I wish it had been available to me when I was just getting started. Two, it is a great book for anyone who wants to go into the mowing business. It's a complete guide. Some of the information is of value even to those, like myself, who are well established in the business.

Besides being most informative, the book is written in a style that instills self motivation. There has long been a need for a book like this. It will be a classic for those who want to get started in the mowing business.

PETER COLLINS
GREEN THUMB
Lawn and Garden Service
Lee, MA

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Mowing lawns is an excellent way to earn money. It's healthy, outside work with plenty of fresh air and good exercise. When done on a part-time basis, there are no tight schedules. Grass can be cut at your own convenience, without interfering with other activities. It's an ideal way to accept responsibility, be appreciated, and get well paid for it.

Cutting grass can be more than just a summertime job. Lawns need to be mowed during the spring, summer, and fall seasons of the year. In northern regions of the United States, an average annual mowing season starts in late April or early May and ends in mid October, nearly a six-month period. As one moves southward from northern regions, the mowing season progressively lengthens. It extends up to approximately a ten-month period in some areas of the Deep South.

So, depending upon where you live in the United States, work is available from six to ten months of the year. There are only a few exceptions. The southern half of Alaska has a short mowing season that varies from three to five months, depending on altitude and location. In Hawaii and at the southern tip of Florida the mowing season is year-round.

GRASS EVERYWHERE

There's an immense amount of grass that needs to be cut. We see lawns at golf courses, cemeteries, schools, parks, and along the sides of roadways. These jobs are for contractors with expensive, fast-cutting mowers. We also see lawns on the properties of homes, apartment houses, professional business buildings, restaurants, and motels. These jobs can be done by anyone using an ordinary rotary lawn mower. They are the easiest jobs to get. They're also highly profitable.

A big part of the mowing market consists of doing lawns for homes. There is an estimated 20,000 square miles of home lawns in the United States; This is enough grass to more than cover the entire area of the states of Delaware,

How to Make Big Money Mowing Small Lawns

Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. The home lawn market is huge. There's a large demand for mowing services.

America is a nation hungry for all kinds of services. There has been a rapid growth of fast-food restaurants, automotive quick tune-up shops, and speedy exhaust system installation centers. Moreover, we've seen a continual rise in the number of drive-in banks, one-day photo development sheds, and home-cleaning businesses that further contribute to the trend. These types of businesses all appeal to the same drive toward a more service oriented society. People want more leisure time; the movement also includes a great demand for mowing lawns. Projections of market growth for service industries as a whole are expected to increase through the 21st century.

POTENTIAL INCOME

How much money can you make? It will depend on how ambitious you are. If you're ambitious, you can make big money. Prices are charged by the job, not by the hour. However, if figured on an hourly basis, the average pay is far more than the federal minimum wage guideline. It's even reasonable to expect higher hourly earnings than the average working man.

During 1981, when the initial pricing data in this book was being established, the average working man in the United States was earning \$7.19 per hour. At this same time the prices for mowing small house lots were yielding an equivalent of about \$10 to \$12 an hour. Lawn mowing can indeed be highly profitable work. And there's always increased potential for earnings, by expanding and hiring help to work for you at the federal minimum wage.

There are some lawn mowing companies that employ crews of people to tend lawns and have reported incomes of over a million dollars a year. So the sky's the limit. This is a business that can be run either as a one-man operation or as a large enterprise. It can also be done on just a part-time basis. You have the flexibility of operating at any scale desired.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

Location is not a crucial decision. You can operate directly from your home.

Chapter One Introduction

What's more, you won't need a lot of money to get started. The investment in equipment is minimal. Basically, you'll need a lawn mower. And for some jobs, it's not even essential to have your own mower. Sometimes the customer will have one you can use. However, to get the best prices, you should have your own mower. When you are the one providing the mower, you're always able to charge more money for your services. And the customers are willing to pay more.

This is a business that requires only about five percent practical knowledge. The other 95 percent know-how is plain and simple business sense. It's just a matter of understanding the nature of the business, what must be done, and then acting accordingly. Getting started should be fairly easy. Everything you will need to know is covered in the chapters that follow.

You'll find out all the various reasons why different people want to hire you. Knowing these reasons will give you a feeling for what causes the demand for mowing services. This is the easiest way to understand the lawn mowing market. You'll gain rapid insight into the business.

Further revealed are the secrets of how to advertise by using the least expensive and most effective ways to acquire customers. These are simple, tried and proven methods of advertising. They're easily accomplished by anyone, at practically no cost. Therefore, you'll know how to get the jobs. This is one of the keys to success in any service business.

Many examples of lawn mowing jobs are given. Each example contains an interesting collection of statistical data.

The data consists of important information that tells you the size of the house lot, mowing time, price, and the hourly rate of pay. From this data, you'll see how easy it is to operate the business most efficiently. For instance, you'll know which particular sizes of house lots to concentrate on to maximize your income. Certain sizes of properties can be considerably more profitable than others.

To assist you in quoting the right prices, there is information on estimating. Estimating can be done by selecting any one of several different methods of

How to Make Big Money Mowing Small Lawns

your choice. You'll be shown how to quickly estimate the size of a house lot, the amount of mowing time required, and the most reasonable, profitable prices to charge. Also included is a handy set of price estimating tables.

Once the business starts taking off, it becomes necessary to have a schedule. Therefore, a system has been developed for doing this with very little effort. The paperwork can be reduced to such a simple procedure that it can be done on a single sheet of paper. All record keeping can be done with ease.

Furthermore, you'll be given the basic rules of safety for using a power mower and also some information on the operation and minor maintenance of a mower. Every business has certain things that one should avoid doing; the mowing business is no different in this respect. So you'll be advised of shortcomings that are associated with such things as mowing large, time-consuming lawns and mowing lawns with steep slopes. You will be prepared to pick and choose the best jobs.

AGE GROUPS

Those who mow lawns include the young, the old, and everyone in between. High school students and college students do it part-time, primarily during the summer recess period. Older people with full-time jobs mow lawns part-time evenings after work and on weekends for additional income.

There are also a few people who, during their early retirement years, do it part-time to supplement their retirement income. And then there are some who mow lawns for full-time employment, either as a one-man operation or as big business with crews of hired help.

Unfortunately, many of those who mow lawns part-time do it under very limited conditions. They do it strictly based on the five percent practical knowledge required to push a mower; it's quite easy to compete with them. They're hardly aware of the other 95 percent business knowledge that would improve their overall efficiency and earnings.

A COMPLETE GUIDE

Recommended for Ages 15 and Older

This book explains how to start and operate your own lawn mowing business:

- It shows the easiest ways to get customers . . .
- how to pick and choose the best jobs . . .
- how to set prices . . .
- how to make the most income per hour of work . . .
- how to keep a simple schedule . . .
- and much more . . .

tells everything you need to know.

There are many illustrations, including examples of mowing jobs.

* * *

Mowing lawns is an excellent way to earn money. It's healthy, outside work with plenty of fresh air and good exercise.

When done on a part-time basis, there are no tight schedules. Grass can be cut at your own convenience, without interfering with other activities.

Grass grows and work is available during three seasons of the year.

Only a minimum investment is required to get started. There's practically no investment if you already have a mower. (Some jobs can even be done using a customer's mower.)

Expected earnings can be three to four times higher than the minimum wage rate of pay, sometimes more.

Since 1984, this has become a "classic" book on the subject of starting and operating a lawn-mowing business.