

In Your Own Words

The logo for Turf, featuring the word "Turf" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A green grass blade graphic is integrated into the letter 'T'.The logo for Tree Services, featuring the words "Tree Services" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small green leaf graphic is above the 'e' in "Services". Below the main text is the tagline "Taking Tree Care to New Heights" in a smaller, italicized font.The logo for DesignBuild, featuring the word "Design" in a black, sans-serif font and "Build" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange square graphic is above the 'i' in "Design".The logo for PLOW, featuring the word "PLOW" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted to the right.

Source: www.TurfMagazine.com

Making Foreclosures Pay

lkendall: "It's a little late to ask now, but has anyone become a contractor for property management companies who manage foreclosure properties? Just wondering because I just got 40 to 60 lawns through this company. It sounds like a lot, but they are only every other week. It's still great, especially with everyone trying to get lawns, but they want a ton of pictures at each place. Just seeing if anyone out here has worked in this type of situation."

ptjackson: "During my day job we manage foreclosures for a commercial property. What's the biggest challenge with them? I assume you're using iPhone or Android to take pics?"

lkendall: "I have an Android, but I have a camera just for it, since there will be around 500 pictures a day on average. I was just wondering if they were real strict, like it has to be done on Tuesday not Wednesday."

BOSS LAWN 2343: "I've worked with more banks then I can count on my hands. They are a good landing to get, when you first start mowing for them. They'll pay on time and return your calls for the first four to six weeks. After that, you better have some extra cash. You won't hear from them after that point."

"I have to say from my experience every single bank I have worked with has worked this method."

zmancgc: "I do some property maintenance on foreclosure homes. Not a big company, just subcontracting from bank to middleman – pays the bills, and hope to expand when my new Gravely's come in this month. Every bank/M&M is different regarding how strict they are. I have some companies that want property condition reports (interior photos of all rooms) at every reoccurring lawn cut I go to; others just want before/after pics and a photo of the front of the house/address."

"An important thing to remember is to keep them updated. If you can't get to a job or jobs on time, make sure they know ahead of time. They will usually work with you and allow extra time within reason, especially on grass cuts (unless they are a rush initially with potential city violation/fine). I typically have to take before and after photos with date stamps for some companies.

"Also, unless they require it, don't worry about manicuring the yard, they just want it cleaned up and presentable for agents to show the house and to avoid city citations. Don't spend more time than necessary, but do the job well.

"Whenever you can, I highly recommend spraying weed/grass killer on the edging and trimming. This will save you loads of time and effort for the next several re-cuts, and the better you're able to complete jobs on time and per your company's specifications, the better your grade with them will be."

BOSS LAWN 2343: "One bank that we worked with had us take action shots of us mowing, trimming, edging at each property for three months. Imagine that."

Maco Services: "It is a very time-consuming process that will never give you consistent income. There are too many variables: clients change, frequencies change, people you work with change.

"I have been in this biz for three years and planned to do minor maintenance. It ballooned and did well, then the photo lists got larger, requirements became more rigid, inspections became an issue. Oh, and you will have to do interior cleaning of a home, and if you miss something you'll need to go back to it for free.

"Your insurance will need to be high. On top of all the add-ons for work requirements, the pay cycles have gotten longer and the price/lawn have decreased by 20 percent.

"All are a little different, but most of these you are never able to build a relationship with your client, which is a big downside. You are a commodity. If you will not do it cheaper, others will. And the back end photo work will take hours per day. Enjoy your days working your behind off, and nights uploading work.

"It used to be a niche, but it's pretty ridiculous at the moment. You need patience, cash to burn, and expect to get taken advantage of, so move forward with a very guarded point of view. Lots of new people come in, take the lowest price, and then get run into the ground.

"Tough business. Can be good, can be horrible. Good luck!"

Tha5150: "An idea I have looked into is getting in good with a realtor or realty business in town. They need maintenance done to better the appearance on the rental or sale of the homes they list. If you do a good job, maybe the homeowner would get your card, you know? That's an option I am open to. Still trying to get more than five accounts, so I am new, too."

BOSS LAWN 2343: "I did that. When the house sells I send a card two weeks later. Have gotten about 12 new customers that way."

Tha5150: "What was your initial approach to the realtor or company? Offer one cut free or something?"

BOSS LAWN 2343: "They came to us. Most of them were references bounced off each other."

Ducke: "I was dealing with a foreclosure company last year out of Alberta. I was charging \$60 per single cut and \$45 for and repeats. I emailed my bill after each job and three days later I had an e-transfer to my bank.

"I guess I've been lucky as I have never had a problem."

dhardin53: "As a rule these companies are nothing more than a job broker. They will get tons of foreclosures from several banks and loan companies. Then find several guys to do all the mowing. All in all that don't sound bad, but the fact is these middlemen are making more money than the guy doing all the work.

"If they can find someone to do it cheaper, they will. Some, not all, get paid a flat rate for each property. So if they can find someone to mow cheaper, they make more money. Other companies get a flat percentage over and above your mowing charges. I myself work directly with the banks and skip this middleman."