



78 - How Bryan Clayton Grew GreenPal To Over 300,000 Active Users Using A Handful Of Traffic Strategies

By: Ilana Wechsler

Brief Background About Bryan Clayton

- Bryan Clayton is the Founder and CEO of [GreenPal](#), a Tennessee based lawn mowing service company.
- [GreenPal](#) offers lawn care services, instead of looking for someone to take care of your lawn on Craigslist or Facebook you would just hop into their app and book for someone to take care of your lawn. Kind of like how Uber operates.
- They're also operating nationwide in the United States for 7 years now and 300,000 people use their platform to get their grass cut.



How GreenPal Came To Life

- The idea for GreenPal is a very obvious one I saw every single day how difficult it was for homeowners just to hire a great lawn mowing service. There's no way to figure out who's good, who's not. These smaller service providers. They don't have any sort of online brand or presence on the internet. And so we saw this every day running my first business and so the idea for GreenPal was really clear.

Toughest Sell In the Marketplace When Starting Out

- When you're starting one of these multi sided marketplaces, that's one of the hardest parts, it's that chicken and the egg problem and getting over the cold start, because if you don't have service providers, then and then when lot when homeowners come onto the platform, it's a ghost town, they're going to leave.
- The way you get over that in most marketplaces is you focus on one side first, and then you attract the other.
- And so what we would do is, we would cold call dial for dollars off of Craigslist, and Yelp and, and Angie's List, I don't know, if you hit you know, I don't know if you have these sites in Australia or not. But these are like websites to aggregate information for local businesses. And so we would cold call like 100 or 200 of these people a day, and just pitch them on the idea for GreenPal.
- The way that we kind of sweetened the pot was, I would offer free consulting to these business owners as a way to kind of earn their attention, because I knew everything there is to know and I still do about building a lawn mowing business from scratch.



Assessing Volume of Competition in Keywords Everywhere

- So what I would do then is actually run that search and see what comes up, because you would then see what videos are shown and what your competition or potential competition might be for that.
- So you've just run a YouTube search for that best video editing software. And you see which ones come up, you could then actually do a Ctrl F or Command F to search that page, those search results.
- And you can actually see who has optimized their content for that based on the title of their video, have they included those exact words in that order? In the title in the description, not that they'll obviously highlight in yellow if you've done a search on Chrome or on Firefox, or Safari.
- But I wouldn't be trying to optimize every one of your videos for super competitive search term search terms, I would say go a mix.

Early Stages and Challenges of Building the Marketplace

- That's one of the beautiful things of business is that it will require things of you that you didn't think you were capable of and quite frankly, you would never do. But the business extracts it from you. If you want to be in the game, you're just going to have to do it.



Getting The Message Out There

- Doesn't matter how good the product is, if you don't have some sort of distribution, like baked into the product, and you don't have, like some sort of innovation going on with the distribution.
- We passed out door hangers, and I was giving out free coaching as a way to get supply and demand going that got us through level one, maybe level two.
- But then we had to figure out okay, how do we get some sort of sales engine at the core of this thing and get some sort of repeatable acquisition strategy. And so like I said, we started hitting on organic search, we started seeing some results there.
- For us, we we spent three years just in Nashville, Tennessee, perfecting the product, teaching ourselves how to code building the product, making sure the push a button, get the lawn mowed, experience works reliably and seamlessly, over three years, and part of that, too, was organic search strategy, we only competed just in Nashville.



SEO & PR As Their Primary Channel

- Because there's product market fit, there's building a product that people want to pay for, but there's, but there's also product channel fit.
- And so for us, like we've experimented in paid channels, but the economics just don't make sense. Like, we only take a small piece of the transaction. So we can't, you know, we can't afford to spend two or \$300. To acquire a homeowner, we have to think of other ways to do it organically. And so for us, SEO is the primary channel.
- We're getting the signals from an SEO perspective, so like PR, and SEO, and SEO are our primary channels. And it took us three years to figure out that they would be our primary channels, because we experimented and everything else.
- If your result satisfies the query better than anybody else, and you're doing everything you can to optimize around that, then you're probably going to be okay.



Challenges of A Growing Business

- So on the one hand, it's in a weird way, it's easier to run a million dollar a year business than it is a \$100,000 a year business. And another weird way, it's easier to run a \$10 million a year business than it is a million dollar a year business.
- Because as you grow, if you do it right, you're building out systems, and you're building out processes, and you're and you're tuning those, and you're optimizing those, and, and you're and you're surrounding yourself with practitioners of things that are doing them better than what you can, and they can focus on them and execute better than than you could when you were doing them.
- A lot of times, it boils down to the difference between working on your business and in your business. And so as when you're first getting started, you're working in your business, you know, seven days a week, just trying to get it going. So you know, in my example, would be passing out door hangers and talking to Mrs. Smith on the phone, as the wiregrass didn't get cut, that's working in the business. But working on the business is really taking a day out of the week and developing the system around.

Frequency of Posting Videos

- Ideally, I would say if you're able to strive for one video per week, one optimized video per week, well, you've done that research upfront, you're creating an engaging thumbnail, and you've actually, you know, structured your video in a way to deliver value, give your viewers what they need. And to keep them watching.



Books & People That Inspired Him With The Thought Process

- At a very fundamental level, like the essence of this idea of in it and on is a book called The E-Myth, and Michael Gerber, and that is just like a really good book for anybody almost at any level of business to read to understand that differences between, like building a, you know, having a job and building a business.
- Good to Great - that book talks about is like the core fundamentals of the business and like the flywheel effect, at the center of your business. So as you start building a big company, you have to think about things like a flywheel internally of your business, like what is it that it does, that helps it propel it to the next level.
- And so, like, for us, our flywheel is like, the more homeowners that use GreenPal, the more vendors will want to use it, the more that vendors want to use it, the more vendors that we get per zip code that drives down costs, so that makes more homeowners want to use it, which makes more vendors want to use it. So this self fulfilling loop.



Growing & Scaling His Business Today

- For us, we've just scratched the surface on this one channel for SEO and PR, we still have a lot, a lot more depth to go. In terms of content that we're creating, in terms of reaching the smaller mid level markets throughout the United States. Yeah, we're in every major city, but there's a lot of, there's a lot of mid level markets that only have 1000 people or so that we're not in yet. So we have a long way to go there.
- You know, we're not done so we got a long way to go. And so I think like having that singular focus and going deep and not wide is part of our strategy. I'm not saying going deep is better than going wide like horizontal versus vertical, I think it is a, you know, you can be successful in either approach.

Piece Of Advice For People Starting Out

- I can't place enough emphasis on focus, and just focusing on one or two things that you can work on, and treating almost everything as a continuous experiment.
- Like a never ending, like relentless attitude towards experimentation to where you can try stuff, learn, and then reapply. And then and going through that loop over and over and over again, can help get you through the first three or four years figuring out what works.



What Drives GreenPal Everyday

- And this is what I want to do. And so until like, this thing is, is a major, like a household name, we're not going to be completed with it. Um, and so for me, like, my business is the thing that causes me to, to have purpose in life, I think to have an interesting life, you have to have an interesting story. And I think business can be the cause of that story, it can be the thing that writes that story. And so, for me, like that is what GreenPal is, and that's what I'll be doing for the next 10 years.
- Continuing to distribute the platform throughout the United States, and then UK and, and in Australia, and Canada, and expanding into those markets.
- I'll give entrepreneurs a long game. Look, you know, understand you're going to be at this for a decade or two and and figure out ways to no matter what you'll be, you'll be default alive so you can stay in the game. Because it's only when you're in the game and only when you can win.