



## Landscape Ontario Podcast

### Marketing options for small businesses:

#### When it's time to work with an external marketing partner

**Host:** Karina Sinclair

**Guest:** Vanessa McQuade and Rob Murray from Intrigue Media

### Transcription

#### INTRO:

Karina: If you own or manage a landscaping business, I'm guessing you're already pretty busy. From early spring to late fall, there's a whirlwind of installing new landscapes, maintaining existing ones, staying on top of design trends and new products, building relationships with clients, training your staff and fixing equipment, or even researching what to buy next. But let me ask you something... "where does marketing fit into all of that?"

If you're a small or medium-sized business owner, don't assume you have to do it all yourself. If marketing tasks are something you keep putting on the back burner, then this episode of the Landscape Ontario Podcast is for you. I'm your host, Karina Sinclair.

I've invited Vanessa McQuade and Rob Murray from Intrigue Media to talk about what it's like to partner with a marketing agency. And in the same way you're an expert in landscaping, Rob and Vanessa are experts in helping landscaping companies like yours grow revenue and build local awareness. In fact, one of their happy clients stated that since working with Intrigue, their revenues had increased by 68 per cent in six months. So if costs or uncertainty has been holding you back, listen up. Today we're talking about budget expectations, setting marketing goals and the value of building relationships with an external marketing agency, so you don't have to do it **all** by yourself.

#### Music transition

## INTERVIEW:

Karina: Welcome to the podcast, Vanessa and Rob. I'm so glad you're here today because I think a lot of small- and medium-sized business owners have questions related to marketing, but they don't even know where to start or who to ask. They might not even be sure that marketing is right for them or if they can afford it. And I know you're both very passionate about seeing landscapers succeed in this space. So thanks for coming on the show to share your insights.

Vanessa: Thanks for having us.

Rob: Yeah. It's an absolute pleasure. We're pumped to be here.

Karina: That's great. Now, we all know that entrepreneurs wear a lot of hats, But a lot of these small business owners, they probably start off managing their own marketing. What are some signs that it's time to delegate that role to somebody else?

Rob: It's a good question. Honestly, I think because there's so much when someone says the word marketing, and you cover things from, signs on a yard to truck wraps, to even the proposals that you send to people, your website, your uniforms. If you think about marketing as, like, it's kind of anything that a prospect or a customer will interact with, it's a pretty large category of work.

I think when we start to get a bit more specific around marketing, around the idea to attract a customer, to try to find ways to acquire new business or to engage current or past customers, it becomes a bit more clear. And I think the one piece that a lot of people miss out of the gate is trying to identify what the objective of the investment is: of time, of money, of people, whatever it might be.

So, if you're doing marketing for the sake of marketing and you've got lots of customers coming in and you're happy with what's going on, keep it up. If you're at a spot where your lead generation isn't what you want, your referral sources aren't necessarily as strong as they used to be, or you need more business to grow the company based on the capacity you have or the goals that you have, and you don't have a clear outcome that you're striving for, so there's not a

clear goal in mind.... Like, for example, you're in, say, November of 2024 and you're planning for 2025 and you say with your group, "Okay, for marketing this year, based on what we did last year, we're going to need 300 new leads, whether it comes from referral, digital, print, whatever. Now let's go build a plan to get those 300 leads through the door."

If you're not having those conversations, then I think it's time to start talking to somebody maybe a bit more professional about what it is you're trying to accomplish. The key is the business objectives. And if you're not having that conversation and you want to, then I think that's probably a good sign to start talking to somebody.

Vanessa: And how to reverse engineer those numbers to figure out exactly what it is that you need from your marketing to get you to hit those goals.

Rob: Yeah, and that's a really good point that Ness brings up, because a lot of people don't necessarily have a good idea of what their revenue model looks like. And so we have a piece we do with our clients called a growth engine, which is essentially a revenue model that pretty much every landscape company works on top of. And it's pretty simple. It's like your leads and then we have a qualification rate. So out of ten people that inquire how many of them are actually qualified, meaning they have the money and they want the service that you do. And then based on how many are qualified, well, how many those turned into either customers or designs. You know, some people will have people pay for designs before they start a project, for good reason.

And then out of those people that pay for designs, some of them turn into, say, a construction project or how many of those qualified people that get a quote turned into customers? And then, there's more to the revenue model, but that portion, it really alludes to the point, or that's part of the point that Vanessa was talking about a reverse engineering, because if you understand your conversion rates, you can really understand how many leads you need to grow your business. So if you need, say, 20 projects, and your conversion rate on qualified prospects is 50%, well, then you need 40 qualified prospects. And let's say out of every ten inquiries, four of them are qualified. Well then you need 100 leads. And so once we understand, we need 100 leads where we need to go figure out, well, how much does it cost us to generate a lead. And

then that'll start to actually delve into another part of the conversation around budget and how much it costs to get the attention of a customer to come speak to you.

Karina: Do you think this is something that applies to really, really small companies? Maybe somebody who's been in the business for just a couple of years and maybe only has two or three people on their crew. Companies that aren't doing the big multimillion dollar budget projects just yet, or what do you think about those companies that want to stay small on purpose, but still want to generate good revenue? Is it still a good idea for them to engage with a marketing agency? And then how do they set themselves apart from the other companies that seem to be using the same kinds of words on their websites, like "customer centric," and "committed to quality"? Can marketing help them stand out in a crowd like that?

Vanessa: The revenue model definitely does lay on top of all the businesses, whether you're small, medium, or large. It's a matter of figuring out what do we need? Because maybe to your point, they are staying small on purpose. So maybe they don't need as many leads and to Rob's point before, if it's word of mouth at that stage, which is a lot of times, maybe they don't need to partner with a marketing company at that point.

But if they've gotten to a point where their goals are more than what they're getting from their referrals and word of mouth, then that could be the stage. And a rough rule of thumb is around like a two to five per cent of revenue for your marketing budget. And it varies depending on what you're trying to accomplish. So, for example, if you have some foundational pieces like your website and some stuff done, and you have like steady leads coming and you just want to increase a little bit, then a two per cent could be very possible opposed to, you know, we have some people come on that don't have any foundational pieces.

We kind of have to restructure and do everything. They might be looking more around like the three to four per cent, so that range does help people kind of have a starting point. And then sometimes, if they've never done marketing before, going up to the two per cent, depending on what the revenue is at might be a little bit overkill for them based on their goal.

So it really is tying it always back to the goal. So that's just a rough rule of thumb. But if you can tie it back to the goals and you can maybe just start to get your foot in the door and get used to

this idea of partnering with a marketing company, you might be able to do like a one or one point five per cent. So it definitely does vary based on those goals.

Rob: Yeah. And especially for the smaller businesses that you're referring to. First things first is owner's pay. So the person running the business with, say, 2 or 3 staff, maybe one crew, are they getting what they need out of the company to live the life they want? And if the answer's no, well, that's the first question to address.

And if the answer is yes and they're paying their crews and then they've got money left over based on the budget that they're looking at, and they want to invest in something that's going to start building a bit more of a predictable lead system as opposed to being dependent on hopefully somebody calls in, that's a good time to do it.

Even if you're a \$300,000 business, \$400,000 business, you can still invest seven, eight thousand bucks, it doesn't have to be crazy. And there are options for folks with smaller budgets to be able to do things that are easier to accommodate, like lead gen for smaller budgets... and if they're doing smaller jobs, they're actually easier to generate.

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Speaker 1

So, you know, if you're a smaller business and you're, let's say, doing lawn maintenance as an example or you're doing smaller hardscape projects or you're doing more patios and pavers and average job size is maybe 7 or 8 grand, something like that... those jobs are actually more affordable to get. There's more of them and they're easier to get and using a simple Google Ad strategy, it can bear a lot of fruit.

Now doing it yourself, there's a huge asterisk that, you know, there's a million ways to configure Google Ads. So I would still recommend reaching out to somebody who knows what they're doing and has a track record of doing a good job with it. But that's why one of the things and I mean, I'm not trying to plug us, but just to give you an example, there are companies that will essentially lend you a Google Ads campaign so you don't have to pay to have it fully built for you. And you could run a Google Ads campaign through your shoulder season into peak season for seven, eight, maybe nine thousand bucks a year. And it'll bear fruit. And I think one of the

things that a lot of people need to understand, marketing done poorly is an expense that people shouldn't afford. Marketing done properly is an investment that pays for itself.

And so, you know, another question coming later in this interview, and maybe we dovetail into it, is what can you expect from a marketing partner? Well, people should be talking about ROI. This marketing done right is not something that you hope works. There's enough demand in the marketplace to capture your fair share. And so a marketing partner that knows what's up will be able to show you and demonstrate how this thing should make money, whether it does or not.

And there's macro forces at play. So sometimes things do go a bit wonky. But for the most part, someone worth their salt can prove to you how it's going to make money with, again, an asterisk that your sales process is like half decent because marketing companies don't close deals. You still have to visit people and build trust and get people to sign agreements.

Karina: That's a really good point, that it shouldn't be something that you approach as a potential waste of money, but rather that this is an investment that's going to make you more money. It's that old adage you can't earn money without spending money. So I think this is an important thing to consider.

Rob: Done right.

Vanessa: That's the only thing... a lot of times, especially those smaller companies, you know, 7 to ten thousand dollars is a lot of money for them. And if they're doing it and not doing it in the right way, it can be a waste of money. But if you have somebody that you're partnering with, it's no longer wondering about what you're going to get out of digital marketing, like Rob was mentioning. You can measure things. You can predict things very clearly based on data and tracking and benchmark data that the company should have if you're working with them. So they should have a very specific, clear goal of what they're going to be able to generate for you for the amount of money that you're putting in.

Or if not, we have a lot of people come to us and are like, 'we're trying marketing, we're dabbling here, we're doing this.' And they are unfortunately wasting the amount of money that

is important to them. So just make sure that you're partnering with someone that can give you that data.

Rob: Yeah. I mean, that's a really good point, because, you know, \$7,000 or \$8,000 on \$300,000 is a good vacation for a family. And you'd be better off spending it that way if a person that you're talking to doesn't know for sure. This is also why we niched and actually why we in our talks, we talk about, helping landscapers also niche. Because once you start to do the same thing over and over again, it becomes predictable and really consistent. And this is why we picked the green industry because, well, to be quite blunt, yeah, it's a fun crew. and it's the only place that's actually truly a green industry. Landscapers plant plants, you know, we're putting organics back into the planet.

And they're just a fun crew. It's an industry. We've worked with a lot of other ones in the past. It's so open. Everybody's super collaborative. It's a work hard, play hard culture. And we're just lucky enough to be a part of it. But in doing it repetitively over time, we've got, I'd say 99% accuracy in what we can expect in terms of result and not everyone is like that. And we weren't like that before. So I'm not trying to pretend like, you know, we've got it all figured out. We're just lucky enough that we've been in the game long enough to get our stuff right. And so I think that's where when someone's looking and it's a bit higher risk in terms of, 'I can't waste this cash,' find someone that's been in your space that knows what can be expected.

Vanessa: And to your point, Karina, that kind of leans into the idea of every website is like "quality, customer-centric" and that type of thing, but if you can layer on top of what you're great at and what you do well, you'll be able to repeat those projects over and over again, become more profitable. Your team will be able to specialize in it. Your clients will be happier. It's all this piece that works really well together, and then it can allow you to kind of differentiate and focus your marketing dollars. Like one of our clients, we found a really good win for them with retaining walls. It was a good foot in the door that led to larger projects out of the gate because people are searching for it specifically. And he can make jokes like, "I'm like the Retaining Wall King now." But yeah, just finding that sweet spot of what you can be productive and profitable at that you can just repeat over and over again is helpful and helps differentiate you from just that, like "quality and customer-centric."

Rob: Full service landscaping company.

Vanessa: Actually to your point, THAT'S what we typically see, is just "full service design/build."

Karina: It is tempting to want to offer that wide range of services and say, 'whatever you need. I can do it all.' But when you have something that you're an expert in, or have some really deep knowledge of, that does give you an advantage. A very young company might not have that yet, but it should be something to aspire to.

Rob: Well, and I think the idea is "say yes to go." So to get out of the gate, you say yes. You take the check in a heartbeat. That's a qualified customer, but eventually once you get to a certain level, and we usually see this around the million dollar mark in revenue, you say no to grow. And it's almost more strategic to say no to things. And what you say no to is part of your strategy just as much as what you say yes to. But I still think if you're talking about sub million, you've got to say yes to go.

Karina: Right. So when you say "saying no in order to grow," do you mean that's not accepting those smaller jobs or the types of jobs you don't want to necessarily focus on, so that you save space in your schedule for other kinds of jobs?

Rob: Maybe. It depends on the nature of the business and what they're really good at and the type of customer they want to work with. And the area they're in, so different geographies, different cities, different town, whether you're rural, urban, suburban, if you're in a highly populated or low populated area, those all have impacts.

The founder might have a specialty, for example, they might be a mason by trade. And then they started a business. So they're really good at stonework. That usually lends itself to getting over a million to become a bit more either artisan or niche around the idea of beautiful stonework hardscapes. And that's just an example to make it tangible.

Karina: If a business already has somebody on staff who is dedicated to some marketing tasks, perhaps they're posting on social media or responding to emails or even putting ads in the



paper or something, do they still need to engage with an external marketing agency? And if they do, how could those two roles work together?

Rob: So I'm going to let Vanessa take this one. But first things first — take your ads out of the paper, for crying out loud. Anyway, sorry.

Karina: Except Landscape Ontario magazines.

Rob: No, no, that's a trade publication. Totally different. Totally different.

Vanessa: That's very specific.

Rob: Trade publications are totally different. Your local newspaper. God bless the news. God bless the news.

Karina: Why is that? Why would you say that?

Rob: Because it's hard to measure. It's really expensive, and it has no shelf life, so that edition is gone quick. And your ability to attribute your lead gen to it is difficult at best. So it's like that saying from the 60s of 'half my marketing's working, half isn't. The problem is, I don't know which half.' There's so many opportunities to work within a space where you can measure everything to a budget up to like \$60,000-\$80,000. If you're at \$150,000-\$200,000 budget because you're a larger company going after a big marketplace, then there's room to do these types of channels. But when you're trying to measure your dollars and really make it so that you're not wasting your dollars, there's a lot of better alternatives to start.

But back to the marketing coordinator and in-house person.

Vanessa: Yeah. And to that question, it also does depend on the goal and where they're at. Like if they have an internal marketing company and they're hitting their goals and their targets like we were saying before, then you might not need to partner with a marketing company. A lot of times what we do is, we love actually having companies that have that internal representative.

When they get to that stage, it's usually at that tipping point where they have someone in-house that specializes and maybe they're doing their social, their content creation, that type of thing. And they're at the stage now where they want to level up or get more leads or they're not hitting their revenue targets. And then we partner with them on the lead generation side.

And it's awesome having that internal marketing partner because as you know, entrepreneurs are very busy and sometimes they're not the easiest to get a hold of and to get content from. So it actually really does add a lot of value, and it allows the company itself to have this internal representative and it's not just like that jack of all trades, master of none. You don't have one person doing everything for you because then they can partner with a marketing agency that has 30 people that all specialize in their own area. So they get benefits of both worlds, which is super helpful.

Karina: Marketing trends are always changing. There's always new technology, new platforms, new techniques. How do marketers stay on top of those trends? I imagine that it would be great to have somebody like you doing that, instead of the entrepreneur trying to do that themselves and still offer great quality service to their customers. So how do you stay on top of those trends, to be able to provide that fresh information to your clients?

Vanessa: I think it's about having a marketing partner that does have the time. Like you're saying, as an entrepreneur in the landscape space, they're running their own business. So for them to stay on top of all the marketing trends is just impossible, just like it would be impossible for us to stay on top of all the landscaping trends, we leave that up to our clients.

So for us, we have the team. We have the time to be able to dig into those and stay on top of it and also make sure that we're not like squirreling just for the sake of a new trend that's coming in. We do want to tie it back to the data and what's going to actually get the best results, is what we always pull it back to.

So we'll see things. We'll often test things on ourselves, make sure that it's working and then roll it out to our clients at that point and then bring it to them and let them know it's an option that does exist, because that is something that we find another pain point in the industry. A lot of a lot of people come to us being like 'we were partnering with someone, but we always felt

like we had to bring them ideas, or we were the ones that had to do the research.' So making sure that the partner that you do find is the one that's staying ahead of that stuff and bringing it to you so that you can focus on your business.

Rob: Yeah, and a couple of examples of that. Like, you know, TikTok. It went bananas, and so you have people like, 'hey, can you help us with TikTok?' And it's like, 'no, because we want to keep you as a client for a while. And if we help you with TikTok, it's not going to last.' One of the things about TikTok that's actually really cool is that a video can go viral quick, that's the way that whole platform works. It could be the most random, drive-through order at McDonald's that ends up getting tens of millions of views, and a person becomes a celebrity overnight. But that doesn't help a local landscape business. So you end up with millions of views with people all over the world. That's great. Okay. But locally, from a customer perspective, is that helping you grow your business?

And so one of the things we do, and Vanessa kind of alluded to it, is we put everything to this filter of 'is it going to work for our customer?' AI obviously is a massive boom of technology disruption. And there's a bunch of people using it very poorly and there's few people using it really well and learning how to use something like that well in order to maintain results. And it always comes back to this idea.

There's also fundamental principles. There's two things. One is will this new trend allow people to get results. And also keep in mind what doesn't change is people are buying from people. There's a human on the end of this thing. And it's really interesting because if you consider how much attention, say, TikTok got or gets, and the social media strategy that comes along with the business and people, the amount of inquiries we get for help with social media, and really it's leads and revenue is what they want. But they say social media, but no one has a phone strategy. Very few people put time and effort into training their team on how to answer a question and respond on the phone. But you could argue that the phone is a more meaningful customer interaction that probably should get more attention. And I think if entrepreneurs and marketers alike always keep in mind that we're here to support people and help people make good decisions to enhance their lives, whether it's in their backyards or anything, that fundamental principle is timeless, at least for now. I mean, who knows if robots are buying landscapes, but that's not that's not here yet.

Karina: Maybe next week!

Rob: Maybe next week, exactly!

Vanessa: Yeah. To that point of making sure that if you are investing dollars again, whether you're small or a large business, making sure that the dollars that you are investing in the marketing aren't like falling through the funnel on the sales side of things. I've met with a lot of clients that are like, 'oh, we have our calls go to a recording and then we'll call them all back.'

But if someone's ready to call you and talk now, just by picking up the phone you might increase your conversion rate by 20 per cent. And then again, that marketing dollars that you're putting into it, you're getting way more back and way more return on investment for that. So as much as we are on the marketing side of things, always looking at it from that sales lens of how do you get the most out of these leads? Because you don't want to just have to keep investing in the marketing side. You could maybe keep your same marketing budget and just improve the sales side of things too.

Karina: That's such a great point because I think of all the times where I've called somebody and then been surprised when a human actually picks up. I'm more ready and prepared to leave a message and then I'm startled when there's somebody who actually says hello!

Rob: And those companies are winning. And they are larger. And they're not larger so they can answer the phone. No, they've been answering the phone since they were small, and that helped them grow. It's so ridiculously simple.

Karina: Yeah, it seems obvious, but obviously it's not.

Rob: No, it's crazy.

Karina: So with marketing, there's lots of terms that you guys have been using because you live and breathe it. You talk about lead generation, conversions, digital marketing strategies, Google ads. These may all be terms that are unfamiliar to somebody whose life has been

focused on learning their own trade. They might know everything there is to know about landscaping, masonry, construction or horticulture, but they're not familiar with the terms that you're using.

So how would somebody in that position even know what to ask when they're coming to you? You mentioned a minute ago that people often ask for help with their social media, or that they've heard about TikTok or some new platform that's big, and they want to get on that, but it sounds like you probably have to offer a lot of education to help them understand there are a lot of other things involved in marketing that could be helping them first.

Vanessa: Similarly, if I was going to do my landscape, I wouldn't know really what to ask for. But if I partnered with someone properly, they'd be able to ask me the right questions to get out what I was actually looking for. Because in a lot of times, like Rob was saying, people will call us and say, well, we want social media. It's not necessarily important that they know all the terms or know what it is, but whoever you're partnering with is asking you questions to get to the bottom of what it is that you're actually looking for, and not just necessarily like order taking.

So people call and be like, oh, we need social media posting. And then once we've asked them so many questions and dug down into it, we realize it's not necessarily social media posting. You could have somebody do that for you, but the key here is that you're not hitting your revenue targets or there is another piece to it. So it's up to whoever you partner with to be able to dig into that with you, to help you get to the actual root of what it is that you're looking for, and then give you the solution to it and educate you at that point and let you know what it is that would be like best for you.

And if you're partnering with someone, they'll be able to explain those things to you, because it is a lot of words and jargon, just like there is in the landscape space too. So just making sure that whoever you are partnering with can break it down and make it more simple for you.

Rob: Yeah. And to simplify that, and this is for anybody listening, a lot of times people will think they need to do what they see. So a lot of people consume social. So they're on Facebook, they're on Instagram, they're on TikTok, and they're seeing things being done by others, and

they think they need to do it too. And they don't know if it's working or not, but they see it and think, 'we're not doing that,' or 'well, that's a good company. I want to be like them.'

What we need to think about from a fundamental perspective, and this is marketing 101, be where your customers are. Okay. So if you're a landscape company and you go to a home show, — classic stuff, you got all these people and they're not as popular anymore — but you go to a home show, you're where customers are. If you're a landscaper and you go to a fishing show, it's just not the right crew.

There might be some. People that fish might have money; people that have money, might have homes. But you're like three, four degrees of separation away from what could be a customer. So when we're looking at digital stuff, we really want to simplify this thing to search to start. If somebody is on Google looking for a landscape contractor, that's a good place for you to show up because someone's looking for what you do.

And then when they get there, your website needs to be easy and frictionless. If you want to know what frictionless design looks like, buy something on Amazon. Swipe. Purchased. It doesn't get any easier than that.

But if you go to your website and if you're listening to this now, go to your website. Is it clear what someone should do when they get to your site? Do they have to scroll, do they have to click? Can they get a quote in less than 30 seconds without having to go anywhere? We have to make it as simple as possible for someone to reach out and, and we have to be where they are when they're looking. And that's just that's as simple as it gets to start.

You can grow from there. But being around when someone searches, whether it's organic search or paid search and having a good website, that's the starting point of a good fundamental digital marketing approach. And that's just to try to oversimplify this idea and really focus on, again, these timeless principles of "be where your customers."

Vanessa: And get really good Google Reviews.

Rob: Oh, yeah. Reviews. Reviews. Yeah. No one thinks you're great. They want to hear from everybody else.

Karina: It sounds like these business owners don't need to have all the answers. The point is to seek out the experts who do understand it all, and then trust that there will be a process to sift through their needs and build a solid plan.

Rob: Yeah. But if you're listening to this as a landscape entrepreneur, understand that a really good website that's easy to reach out and a good search approach, so being there when people are looking is, where you should start. Once you're tapped out of that and leads have dried up and you're not even spending your ad budget in, say, Google Ads, or you've invested a bunch in search engine optimization and you're ranking for everything and you're not still getting enough leads, well, then you can move into another channel.

But if you look at it like a bull's eye out, the bull's eye is the site, the red one. The green one, that's search. And then after that, it's just a bunch of numbers, darts may hit, may not, but those two are muy importante.

Karina: Now as we speak, it's currently July. It's toasty across a lot of the country. It's in the middle of the busy growing season for all of our landscapers. So they're already so busy, their timing is maxed out. Is it better to wait until the season slows down and then start planning some marketing strategies for next year? Or should they be doing something right now to get ahead of the curve for next year?

Rob: So quick one, and then I'm going to pass over to Vanessa. The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is when?

Karina: Right now.

Rob: Today.

Vanessa: We get calls around this time, and everyone's like, oh, we need it now. I was like, I would love for you to have called us a few months ago so that we could have had some better

momentum up to this point. But to Rob's point, it is the time now. So if you're not hitting a revenue target or you're not where you want to be now, then you likely won't be next year either.

So getting started now so you can get that website and get some of those foundational pieces, like Rob was saying, that Google Ads and your SEO in check, right now, so that it can start impacting and building momentum so that you're set up really well for the next season is super helpful. And anything like website or SEO related does take time, so by doing that now, you'll feel the impact in six months out, so that'll start really impacting your next season.

Rob: Yeah. And now is now. There is no good time to start. But there is a caveat to that which is cash flow. So, for some of these folks, if they don't have a winter season, if they're not doing snow, or they don't live in the southern hemisphere, it can be tough maybe to get going, in, say, February. Right? So maybe in that case, you want to consider the fall as a good starting point. But I can tell you with 100% confidence, everybody who starts now has a better spring of 2025 than if they start in November or January. And there's a lot of reasons as to why that's the case. And the biggest one Vanessa mentioned which is things do take time.

It also takes time to get everything built. Algorithms to optimize what you're doing take time. And sometimes you stumble out of the block and you think it's supposed to be one thing, then the market shifts a little bit. You have to learn and react. We had a customer, name is Chris Scheer. He came to us in August of 2022. He saw the headwinds kind of changing. You know, we all know 2020, 2021, 2022. It was gangbusters. The winds at our back. He saw it kind of shifting. He was doing stuff on his own, like literally doing it himself. And he's like, I think I need to up my game and get ahead of this so that come spring of 2023, I'm in a really good position. And, you know, in the fall things sputtered a little bit. We were working on the account, we had to adjust the site, blah, blah, blah. And then come February it was just banging. So, it makes it so that you have a bit of room for error when you go through the peak season, because you've got the chance to adjust before.

Karina: And imagine those landscapers who feel really busy right now and feel like maybe they don't have enough space in their day, or the mental calories to put towards something like this, that's the whole point of working with an agency, is to maybe do a little bit of that exploratory



stuff together upfront, but then leave it to the experts to start building it out so they can keep focusing on their own customers.

Vanessa: Yeah. One hundred percent.

Rob: We kind of look at it like personal training. We're going to set up the sessions, maybe a 45 minute or an hour at a time to get what we need to get going. It's not like you have to dedicate full days to get stuff off the ground. And we're almost like an accountability partner to get people working on the business. Everybody hears it right? Stop working **in** the business, work **on** the business. Everyone is like, okay, great, thanks. That sounds great. But I'm busy as — . Carving that time out can be difficult. And I know for myself, the only meeting I miss is the one with myself.

If I've got a session with Vanessa set up or with Hunter or with you, I'm there. And I think we can bring that accountability to folks. So it makes it easy for them to start working on their business in bite-sized chunks. They don't have to think this daunting, overwhelming. Three full days for three weeks — it doesn't have to be like that.

Karina: So it sounds like it actually becomes a much lower barrier to get into the service that's going to help them grow their business and their revenue and support their staff with the lifestyles that they all want to have.

Rob: Boom.

Vanessa: Yeah.

Karina: Nice. Do you have any parting advice for those small- and medium-sized business owners? Is there anything that you'd like to leave them thinking about?

Vanessa: We kind of touched on it, but didn't dig into it specifically, but I would say around the idea of making sure whoever you're partnering with is tracking everything very clearly so that you can see those goals, even if you're doing it yourself, making sure you have like Google Analytics or Ga4, set up with goals set up so that you can see how many phone calls and how

many forms are coming through and what medium they're coming from, is really important if you're partnering with anyone else or even yourself.

There's a tool called [What Converts](#), which is amazing, and it really allows you to track from the lead to the dollar of, you know, this lead came in on this date. We quoted them at this amount. And then you can put in your sales value. And that sales value will actually feed back into Google's algorithm as well and try to find more people like that.

But the big piece with What Converts is it really lets us see what campaigns are working well, what money should be put into the campaigns that are bringing you the best return on investment, making adjustments to the ones that aren't performing as well as they should be, or pausing those ones entirely. So it just makes it so that you can get the most out of your marketing dollars from, like the Google Ads side of things, or SEO or any of these pieces, because it tracks every single lead where it's coming from and which ones are actually converting for you. So I would say, yeah, if there's anything that we didn't make in terms of a specific piece there, What Converts is a really great tool to look into.

Rob: Game changing.

Vanessa: Or call us if you have any questions.

Rob: Yeah. Happy to help, no matter what. There's two things I want to just leave with. For all the entrepreneurs listening, the business is meant to serve you. If you're in a position where you feel like you serve and you are doing everything for the business, it's a good opportunity to maybe come this fall when things slow down to take a check of like, what are we trying to accomplish here?

Oftentimes we see people missing dinners with their families, not being able to get away because they're trying to serve this business, and to their own detriment. And so, we're a marketing company. We help people make money. But one of the things we have to understand is are you getting paid what you *need* to get paid, what you *want* to get paid? And then how can we reverse engineer this business to help you do that?

And one of the things on top of that is a mindset I think is really important. And we see this, in a lot of places, everything that you want is possible. You've got to believe it's possible. And I think one of the best ways to do that is with a peer group. And if you can join a group of people, whether it's through an association like Landscape Ontario, whether it's a private peer group, whatever it might be with people that are past where you are, they're maybe even past where you think you can go and people that are maybe smaller than you so you can show them what's possible.

I think the peer group is an invaluable place to help get your 'in-between your ears' right. Because these entrepreneurs work their butts off, you know, they're the ones that put mortgages on their houses so they can buy equipment and grow their businesses and hire the people in our communities and support our soccer teams and hospitals and all that stuff.

And so I think it's just really important that you all understand that are listening that you can do it. And there's some good people out there that can help you out, whether it's peers, associations, and dare I say, even us, but we're here to help.

Karina: Oh, it's so important to remind everyone that they're not alone. It can be a very lonely place to be a business owner and operator, and feeling that responsibility of carrying the livelihoods of other people and the expectations of your clients. Those worries would keep you up at night. And if there's something like this, or working with a marketing agency that can help you get past that to boost your business and grow your revenue, it's maybe something to consider putting some money aside and building out that marketing strategy.

So thank you to you both, Rob and Vanessa. I appreciate your expertise and the time you've taken to share some of your insights today. I hope the audience really finds it useful and inspires them to look at the different ways that they can really start to maximize the potential of their businesses.

Rob: Awesome. Thank you so much for doing this. Great. I really appreciate it.

Vanessa: Yeah, thank you so much.

Karina: My pleasure.

## Music transition

### EXTRO:

Karina: Do you think you're ready to lean into marketing your business now? You don't have to worry about going viral or spending a huge amount of money... working with an expert marketing partner can help you identify your niche in your local market to reach qualified clients. This allows you to focus on what you're really good at, and maybe even gives you a little bit of free time back for yourself. Who couldn't use that?

If you'd like to read the full transcription of today's interview, you can find it and relevant links on this episode's web page at [landscapeontario.com/podcast](https://landscapeontario.com/podcast).

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## Resources relevant to this episode

[Digital Marketing for Landscaping Companies](#)

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[WhatConverts](#)