



THE CLENDENIN PLAYBOOK

The \$100M Operating System: How to Scale
Service Without Losing Quality

"Greg Clendenin spent more than four decades building and leading lawn and pest-control organizations. His record makes the central lesson difficult to dismiss: growth becomes durable only after service quality, management capacity, operating metrics, and people development can support it."

THE GROWTH RECORD

CAREER START

1979

joined a business producing
roughly \$200,000 annually

BUILT FROM SCRATCH

\$100M

in 14 years, without
acquisitions

MIDDLETON GROWTH

\$8M → \$35M

in 9 years — a reported
19% CAGR

No Acquisitions

The \$27 million added at
Middleton came from organic
growth alone

6,000+ Ideas

The "Speak Up" program
generated more than 6,000
ideas from frontline
employees.

Operator-Reported

Figures are historical and self-
reported, offered as case
evidence to adapt.

The numbers are historical and operator-reported. What follows is the operating system Greg says made that growth possible.

1

Verify service quality
before you
accelerate

2

Standardize the
non-negotiables

3

Measure at the level
where action
happens

4

Build a referral
engine, not a one-
time campaign

5

Design the org chart
for the next stage

6

Train closely, then
empower

7

Turn frontline ideas
into operating
advantage



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VERIFY BEFORE YOU SCALE



The important verb is verified. Employees did not confirm that they understood the process; leaders showed the work, watched it performed, corrected it, and established one standard across the company

Verify Service Quality Before You Accelerate

When Greg returned full-time to Middleton at \$8 million, his first move was not more advertising. He verified the quality of service across the organization. The company needed something excellent to sell – and a delivery model that could sustain new volume.

Top Down

- Greg performed a treatment with the vice president of operations and aligned on the standard.
- The vice president trained and observed the regional managers.

Cascade to Frontline

- Regional managers repeated the process with branch managers.
- Branch leaders retrained and verified the frontline team.

THE NON-NEGOTIABLES

Standardize the Non-Negotiables

Greg's scale prerequisites combined culture and operating discipline.

- Professional behavior and the expectation that people treat one another well.
- Verified and documented training.
- Reliable, efficient equipment.
- Documented systems, procedures, and policies.
- A small set of useful metrics.
- A healthy work environment – management behavior, compensation, benefits, facilities, and hours.
- Cost controls and asset-protection systems



Greg's shorthand: "Systems are the scar tissue of past failures." A system earns its keep when it prevents the same costly mistake from recurring.



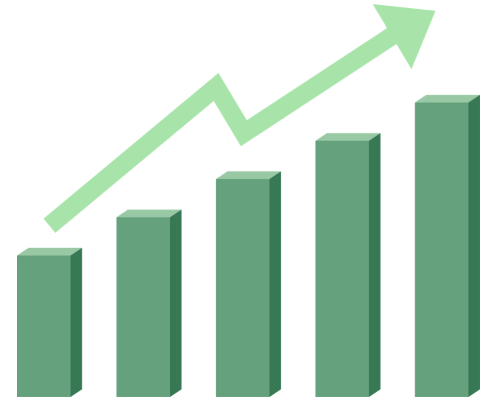
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MEASURE WHERE ACTION HAPPENS

Measure at the Level Where Action Happens

Company-wide metrics show direction, but Greg pushed measurement down to the individual salesperson, technician, and branch. That makes a miss diagnosable and coachable.



Sales Scorecard

- Leads received & close rate
- Annual service vs. one-time work
- Proposals per lead
- Total dollars sold per lead
- Customer retention by territory

Technician Scorecard

- Total production
- Route completion
- Service-call volume and reason
- Customer retention by route
- Chemical use

Economic control points: payroll, vehicles, and chemical use are the three largest operating costs in pest and lawn service. Pair growth metrics with capacity and cost – production per labor hour, vehicle utilization and cost, chemical cost per service, reservice burden, retention, and revenue per lead.

When a technician produces repeated German-roach service calls, do not wait for a branch-level average to hide the pattern. Find the route, inspect the cause, retrain, and verify the result.



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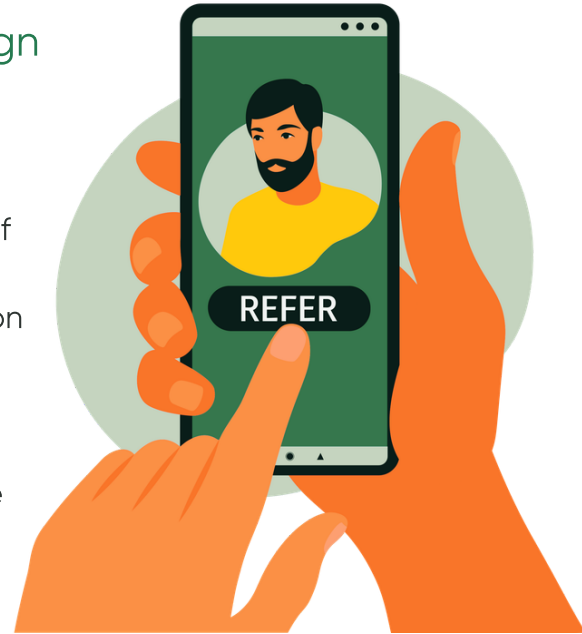
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THE REFERRAL ENGINE

Build a Referral Engine, Not a One-Time Campaign

Greg considered referrals the highest-ROI lead source and built incentives for customers, technicians, and salespeople.

- Customers received "Middleton Money" – an account credit of roughly \$50 for a referral.
- Technicians who sold an account earned the same commission rate as a salesperson.
- When a technician handed a lead to sales, the technician received 25% of the sales commission.
- Salespeople and technicians trained and met together so the two functions operated as one revenue team.
- Field teams built relationships with landscapers, lawn crews, painters, plumbers, and other home-service professionals



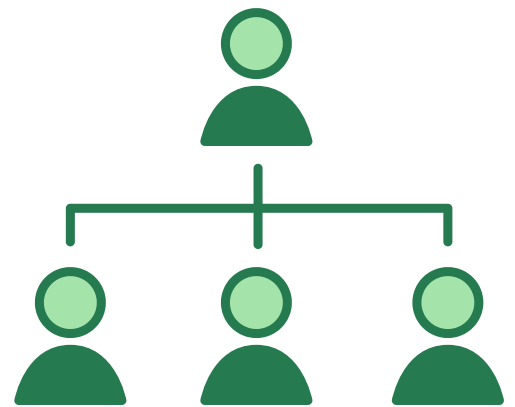
The incentive design removed internal competition. A salesperson keeping 75% of a commission on a technician-sourced opportunity was still better off than earning 100% of no sale.

THE ORG CHART

Design the Org Chart for the Next Stage

Greg warns that managers become bottlenecks when they carry too many people, spend all day troubleshooting, or refuse to delegate. His guideline was one supervisor for every 7–10 frontline employees, usually closer to 10.

- Draw the organization required for future growth, not just the one the business can afford today.
- Add enough management capacity for coaching and people development – not only emergency response.
- At roughly \$10 million, hired a full-time IT leader rather than continuing to outsource the core function.
- Maintain a management bench before a vacancy appears.
- Assess management fit – the best salesperson or technician is not automatically the best manager.



Promotion should not be the only path to progress. Greg built career paths that increased responsibility and compensation for strong technicians even when their job title did not change.



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TRAIN, THEN EMPOWER



Train Closely, Then Empower

Greg expected intensive support during a new employee's first three months, even when the person arrived with experience. After that, persistent micromanagement was a warning sign: either the employee was not ready, the training was incomplete, or the manager had become the bottleneck.

Train & Verify

- Hire for integrity, professionalism, and role fit.
- Train and verify the technical work.

Then Empower

- Give clear policies, systems, core values, and an actionable strategic principle.
- Define the decisions they can make without approval.
- Review outcomes and exceptions instead of requiring permission for every normal decision.

SPEAK UP

Turn Frontline Ideas Into Operating Advantage

Greg's "Speak Up" program generated more than 6,000 ideas from frontline employees, and the company implemented about 600 – roughly one in ten.



SUBMITTED

6,000+

ideas from frontline
employees

IMPLEMENTED

~600

ideas put into practice

HIT RATE

1 in 10

implementation rate



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- Greg personally read every suggestion.
- A cross-functional, multi-level committee evaluated each idea.
- Employees received a response even when the company declined the suggestion.
- Implemented ideas earned recognition such as a letter, dinner, or bottle of wine.

The 10% implementation rate is not a failure rate. It is evidence that the system was open enough to invite ideas and disciplined enough to select the ones worth standardizing.

THE 90-DAY OPERATOR PLAN

DAYS 1–30

Verify one core service from executive level to frontline execution; document the exact standard and failure modes.

DAYS 31–60

Install individual sales and technician scorecards, then review the first patterns in coaching sessions.

DAYS 61–90

Redraw the future org chart, identify the next management-capacity gap, and launch a frontline idea channel.

Growth capital works harder after this foundation is in place. Otherwise, advertising and sales simply push more volume into inconsistent service, overloaded managers, and invisible cost leaks.

DATA & SOURCE NOTE

Figures and practices are operator-reported from Apruv's Pest Playbook interview with Greg Clendenin and describe historical companies and operating periods. The \$50 customer referral credit was stated from memory. Use the benchmarks as case evidence and adapt them to current labor economics, regulation, service mix, and company size.