

CONTRACTOR'S GUIDE: IRRIGATION MONITORING & REMOTE MANAGEMENT





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WHY THIS GUIDE?

WHAT WE HEAR:

The Top 5 Most Common Approaches

WHAT WE RECOMMEND:

Generating New Revenue with Monitored Systems

WHAT TO AVOID:

The 4 Most Common Mistakes

WHY THIS GUIDE?

The rise of the machines is here, so why not take advantage of it? Wifi enabled controllers are commonplace - many contractors refuse to install anything else but Hunter Hydrowise controllers at this point - and they bring new opportunities to scale and strengthen your service business. Will you use them to create a new revenue stream? To provide better customer service? To get onsite more often? To tie your customers closer to you, year after year? Or how about all of the above?

As of this writing, there's not another guide out there that outlines the simple strategies to leverage this now-standard technology to grow your business. And given how often we hear people talking about it, and how often our clients say they don't have a clear plan, there's clearly a need. So let's dive into ways to build a better service department, improve customer satisfaction, and - frankly - make more money.

A quick note on what this guide isn't...

This is not a user manual for wifi controllers, so we won't talk about installation best practices, troubleshooting home networks, or configurations. Instead we're solely focused on the business best practices that we hear from hundreds of contractors, that we've distilled and focused into 5 standards. This is the recipe book for success when it comes to a new strategy to leverage wifi controllers to grow your service business.

What's the problem you're trying to solve?

Your customers don't want to think about their yard. They may say they do, but they don't. They just want a beautiful yard that manages itself. But we all know, there's work involved here. How do we take the work out of it for your customers, and provide them with a seamless experience and a beautiful yard?

- Hunter's Hydrawise will connect you to the problem (monitoring and water management)
- HindSite's FieldCentral will help you manage the work around the problem (and get paid for it!)
- And this guide will give you the strategy that connects all this technology

With the growing install base of Hydrawise, and the lack of consistent approaches to water management, be one of the first to turn this into a great experience for your customers, while also generating more revenue.



WHAT WE HEAR: THE 5 MOST COMMON APPROACHES

- Never give for more than 1yr free; set the hook, but tell them what the plan is – set the expectations
- Educate up front and then stop sending the water reports if they don't sign up.

The Top Spots Go To

1. Annual Service Offering

The most common approach by far. The goal is to get everyone, regardless of if they already have a seasonal agreement with you or not, on this offering. Admittedly, many contractors add this as a separate line on any maintenance / service agreement, and those customers are more likely to sign up for this additional service, but there's no reason - for qualified customers - to NOT offer this service!

We see annual, pre-paid agreements as the most common, with a price range (in 2024) between \$80 - \$150 for the year. But we've heard this scaling up rapidly to \$500 or more for very high end customers. If you bill monthly, we most commonly hear between \$10 - \$24.

2. Add to Top Tier Package

The goal here is to get more of your customers on your highest-tier, auto-renewing "Platinum" packages. You focus on providing exceptional customer service on an all-inclusive plan. While many of these features we include with the various offerings in the next section, the highlights include seasonal and vacation-related adjustments, updates based on local water restrictions, updates based on weather patterns (hint: Hydrowise can already do much of this, but you can take some credit for it!)... in other words, white glove remote management, with no added cost.

3. “First Year Free with Upgrade”

Selling the hardware is the main focus, as a way to boost work during slow periods or over the northern winter months, and deferring the “monetization” worry until after you’ve already established value. It’s critical to clearly communicate this is a one-year deal, and contractors never give more than 1 year for free (otherwise it’s hard to get people to pay). If a customer doesn’t want to pay, stopping the delivery of the monthly Hydrowise reports frequently gets them to reengage. It’s important to focus on and include educational content as part of that first year to really build that value, in order to make “the ask” and easy “yes.”

Two Others We Hear, But Do Not Recommend

4. Offer for Free to Generate More Service Calls

We get it. You make the most money when you’re on the property, so using monitoring as a “loss-leader” to get more service visits is a logical conclusion. And the more time your techs are onsite, the more opportunity there is for them to walk the property and find more work. But, at the end of the day, we can’t recommend giving away your time and service for free. Your expertise is worth something, and monitoring and water management is no different.

5. Split Water Savings Over the Term of the Agreement

This is primarily for large properties and commercial deals. You identify last year’s water bill, and agree to split the savings after this year with your pro water management. Most contractors move to a recurring maintenance fee after the first year. The goal is to prove the value for those focused on conservation and savings, and overcome price objections by “splitting the difference.” This is of course an option, but we don’t like putting your revenue in the hands of the weather more than it already is. Any variation in precipitation and you might not make up the difference, missing out on revenue or even the renewal. Practically requiring you to have a designated account manager for the property, this approach places the burden of ongoing documentation on you.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND: MONITOR SYSTEMS. DRIVE NEW REVENUE.

Doing all of this manually is tedious, expensive (labor cost), and awkward. And your clients can tell. Instead, follow this playbook to create an automated system that continually generates revenue for your business.

1. Find The Right Customers

It all starts by taking a look at your customer list. Let's put them into three groups.

- A. Which customers already have Hydrawise installed?
- B. Which customers have Hydrawise and flow sensors?
- C. Which customers are a good candidate to get an upgrade to Hydrawise + flow sensor?

Each of these is a prime target for a bid, but that last group obviously provides the sweet spot (retrofitting service AND water management revenue). You'll be selling them an "equipment upgrade" package.

So, how do you know if they're a good candidate?

Focus on the larger property sizes (i.e. large residential, commercial properties), on groups that will be very picky (like the budget conscious Karen on the condo association board), and on your high end homeowners (i.e. snowbirds, second home, jet-setters). But please, for everyone's sake, stay away from the retired couple who measure the grass every day. You are finding the people who will either (1) welcome a water savings pitch or (2) have the income and the expectations to go with it.

2. Create a Quote

Log into FieldCentral, and build your estimate templates for these three groups.



WHY FIELDCENTRAL TEMPLATES:

QUICK & EASY TO USE, FROM CREATING IN BULK TO MASS SENDING. IN FIELDCENTRAL, EVERY STEP OF THIS PROCESS IS FAST, AUTOMATED, & REPEATABLE - ALLOWING YOU TO SMOOTHLY MOVE THROUGH ALL STAGES OF THE DEALS:



GROUP A: STANDARD MONITORING

1. Seasonal Adjustments
2. Adjust based on local restrictions & customer travel
3. Weather even shutdowns
4. Electrical system alarm responses

GROUP B: ENHANCED WATER MANAGEMENT

1. All of Group A, plus:
2. System runtime monitoring
(alert if system didn't run when it was expected to)
3. Monthly water usage reporting
4. Flow alerts *(flow when there shouldn't be)*

GROUP C: EQUIPMENT UPGRADE PACKAGE

1. Hydrowise upgrade
2. Optional flow-sensor upgrade
3. Free system diagnosis, to see if any other upgrades would be recommended

Three more points:

1. Almost everyone, regardless of the approach, also provides a discount on alert-related service calls. It varies widely, from 5-10%, but is usually only applied to materials. Your labor is already expensive, don't discount it and protect your margin.
2. Consider asking for pre-approval of up to \$250 for repairs on a trip (or a set amount for the season, say up to \$500, or whatever's appropriate). Remember, at the end of the day you make the most money by getting onsite. If your techs know they can do work up to \$300 without having to stop and ask for approval, everything moves a bit faster, you keep costs down and your team can do more billable work.
3. As always, be mindful of your timing! Ideally bids go out before the season kicks off, depending on what you're actually installing. It's a nice way to boost that off-season cash flow. Or it can also be used for a mid/late summer or bad weather slump.

PRICING

Please, do not think of this as a loss leader! You are giving them peace of mind, as a result of your years of experience and expertise. And your goal is to build long term revenue growth. If you give it away for free, it's very hard to convince people to pay for it later on.

As always with pricing, make sure you think through your costs. What are the equipment costs? What does it take to get started, to make a system “monitorable,” with the controller, flow sense, and a master valve? What are your repeat costs, in terms of overhead to monitor the system? And of course, don't forget the usual things like what your market will bear, PITA taxes, etc. Make sure you factor those in a healthy service margin. Finally, we recommend setting your price per zone (just as you likely do for start-ups and winterizations, if you're a northerner). Make sure you're charging more for the higher level, Enhanced Water Management package, and of course look for opportunities to upsell Group A into Group B to get more people on that package.



FIELDCENTRAL'S PRICE MATRIX:

SIMPLIFY, SCALE, & SAVE TIME WHILE ALWAYS PROTECTING YOUR MARGINS
FIELDCENTRAL ALLOWS YOU TO MASS-UPDATE PRICING IN ONE SPOT. FROM NUMBER OF ZONES TO WATER SOURCE & EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN - BUILD, EDIT & UPDATE PRICING MODIFIERS FOR ANY & ALL PROPERTIES.

CONTRACTS

When you create your contract template in FieldCentral (more on our “Bid to Buy” workflow later), there are a few things to consider. If you charge monthly, collect the first month upfront upon acceptance. If you want this to be annual, collect the whole amount up front. Again, FieldCentral can automate this for you.

Call this a “membership.” Your customers are now part of the club (congrats!), and we all know that memberships have something magical about them... they automatically renew, month over month, year over year. Make sure you specify that in your terms. And yes, FieldCentral will queue up those renewals for next year for you.

3. Messaging & Delivery

When you write the text for the emails (yes, you want to deliver these by email, because (1) it's faster, (2) it's cheaper, (3) customers expect it, and (4) FieldCentral makes it SO DAMN EASY).

Remember, this is about service and benefits, not about hardware. Your customer does not care about the brand, or the hardware, installed on their wall. They care about the results it provides: a beautiful lawn. And they care about the service you provide. They trust you, and this is a means to continue building that trust. You're taking away the worries, and managing water rates, being proactive about flooding, about knowing before they do if there's a real problem, etc.

Ultimately, you're asking them to hire YOU to ensure a beautiful lawn that's well managed. And you're selling peace of mind. According to Kevin Battistoni, Hunter's National Customer Experience Manager, the best sales pitch we hear comes down to this: "We're putting a virtual service technician onsite, 24/7, 365. They'll monitor the electrical and hydraulic integrity of your system, and (depending on the product) will make adjustments based on hyper-local weather reports. You simply have nothing to worry about."

Then, with a few clicks, you're emailing out these bids and packages to that list of clients you identified. Check out the sidebar for details.



FIELDCENTRAL'S BID TO BUY WORKFLOW

FIELDCENTRAL'S ESTIMATING WORKFLOW MAKES IT EASY TO CREATE, DELIVER, & GET PAID UP FRONT. **HERE'S HOW IT WORKS:** WITH A TEMPLATE CREATED, YOU CAN BUILD AN ESTIMATE, IN JUST A FEW CLICKS, FOR AS MANY PEOPLE AS YOU NEED. THAT ESTIMATE OR MULTI-BID CAN THEN BE MASS-EMAILED. TRACKING EACH EMAIL (DELIVERED, BOUNCED, OPENED, CLICKED), FIELDCENTRAL WILL COLLECT A DIGITAL ACCEPTANCE & PRE-PAYMENT WHEN A CUSTOMER CLICKS "ACCEPT". THE ACCEPTED WORK IS AUTOMATICALLY QUEUED UP FOR SCHEDULING (NOTIFYING YOU ALONG THE WAY).

4. Do the Work: Responding to Alerts

When you do get that alert that requires a visit - and please, take the time to set up a default configuration, otherwise you will absolutely be overwhelmed, and pretty soon Hydrowise will be crying wolf - here's a few ways to respond.

- Don't forget, turn off the system!
- If you have the billing pre-approval, text the client letting them know a tech is on their way to solve the issue. The tech can take a few pictures with the FieldCentral mobile app, and then use FieldCentral to hit the card on file. Easy peasy.
- Otherwise, send a text message to the client letting them know you identified an issue (yes, take credit for your monitoring!), and asking if you can send out a technician.
- Always report that the service is complete (except we're not even sure why we wrote this, as FieldCentral will do it for you), and email or text the payment link (if not pre-approved).

Remember, you are solving a problem for them proactively and expertly. Removing the hassle for your customer and communicating what you've done is key to building trust, which in turn equals long-term revenue.

5. Report Back to Your Customer

The Hydrowise controller has some impressive reporting. Use that to your advantage!

Include the monthly report with a monthly invoice, if that's how you run billing.

Otherwise, email it out to your clients directly. This provides tangible proof that "things are happening," even if you didn't go onsite. And if a client is not in the flow sensor group, it's a great opportunity to upsell them by highlighting the lack of water usage data (i.e., "you could be getting even more"). Also include the number and type of alarms, especially anything to which you reacted. And lastly, consider some educational content. Quarterly is plenty for this, but it puts a spotlight on your expertise. You're the pro, don't be afraid to demonstrate that.

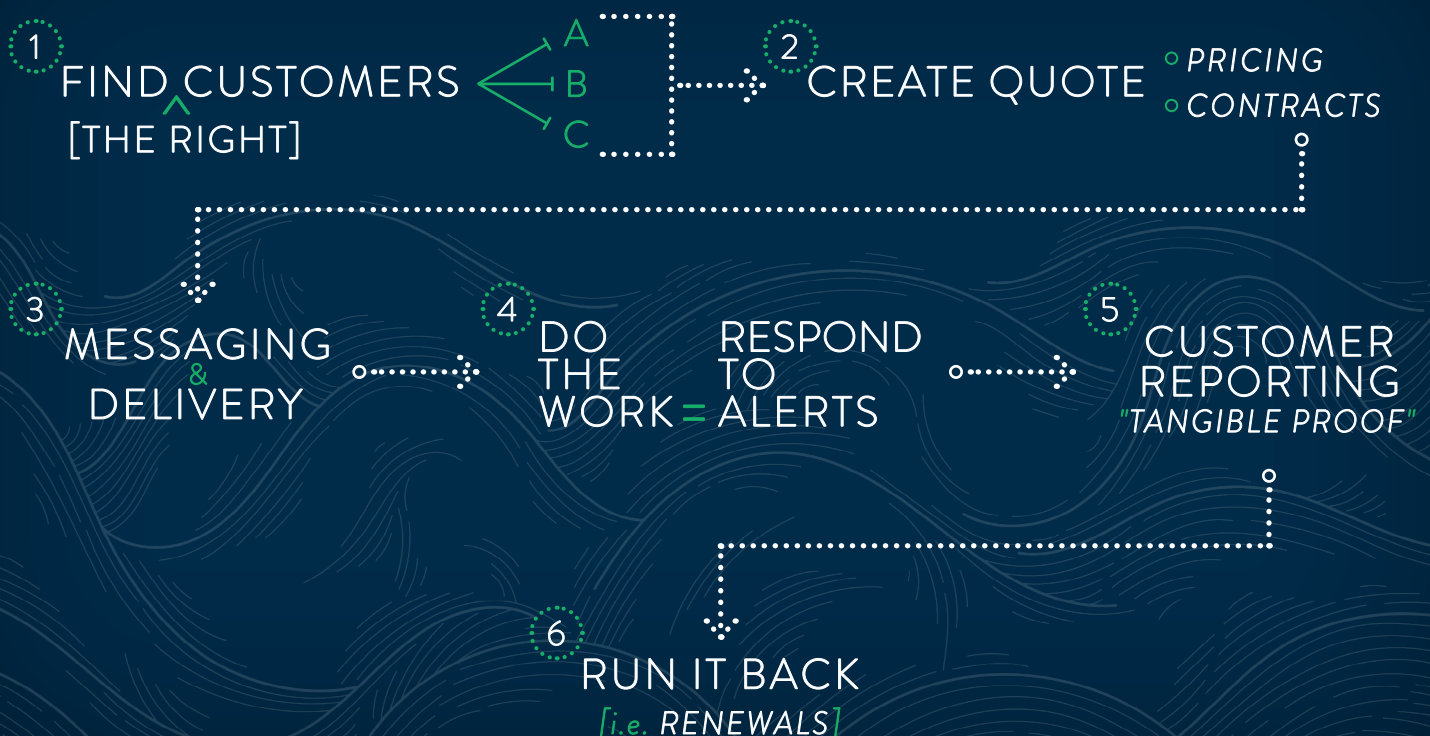
6. Lastly, Do It All Over Again: Renewals

If you put it in your terms, and set it up in FieldCentral, you can run your auto-renewals without concern. Regardless, review your actual costs and revenue, make any changes (please don't be afraid of price increases), and get ready to send out the contracts again.

As you're about to do that, consider sending out a survey to the customer, or have the office staff or an account manager (if you have that role), ask them if they've been happy with your service. In other words, make sure you have a satisfied customer before sending the renewal... and if not, fix that problem before asking for more money. At HindSite, we're a big fan of the Net Promoter Score (NPS), where you ask the specific question "How likely are you to recommend our services to a friend or colleague?" Learn more about NPS [here](#).

Include an annual version of the monthly report, and then have FieldCentral send out the renewals, including the "click to confirm," and the pre-payment. Done and done.

OVERVIEW: LET'S PUT IT ALL TOGETHER



WHAT TO AVOID: THE 4 MOST COMMON MISTAKES

There are a couple of things we want you to be mindful of, a few pitfalls that make these programs unsuccessful.

TRYING TO SELL TO EVERYONE

- **Misconception:** Believing that every homeowner or business needs a high-end irrigation system and remote management.
- **Reality:** Many customers may not have the budget, landscape, or water usage to justify a complex system.
- **Solution:** Segment the market and tailor sales pitches accordingly. Offer basic, affordable options for smaller properties. For large or commercial properties, emphasize the savings and convenience of advanced systems. Remember, you're solving a problem for them proactively and expertly. Explaining what you've done is key to building trust, which in turn equals long-term revenue.

SELLING SMALL SYSTEMS VS. LARGE

- **Misconception:** Focusing solely on selling large, expensive systems to maximize profit.
- **Reality:** Smaller systems can be profitable and may be a better fit for many customers.
- **Solution:** Offer a range of system sizes and pricing to appeal to a broader customer base. Emphasize the scalability of systems and the ability to upgrade as needs change.

FOCUSING ON WATER USAGE VS. PROBLEM PREVENTION

- **Misconception:** Emphasizing only the potential water savings of an irrigation system..
- **Reality:** Customers are often more motivated by preventing problems like dead plants, flooding, and erosion.
- **Solution:** Highlight the broader benefits of an irrigation system, including plant health, landscape protection, and reduced maintenance costs. Use real-world examples and case studies to illustrate the potential consequences of inadequate irrigation.

NO CUSTOMER COMMUNICATION PROCESS

- **Misconception:** Assuming that customers will be satisfied with simply having a lower water bill.
- **Reality:** Customers with monitoring systems want to feel that their irrigation is being managed effectively and that they are receiving value for their investment. They need to hear from you, which means you need to plan for that.
- **Solution:** Develop a proactive communication strategy that includes regular updates on system performance, water usage, and potential issues. Offer personalized recommendations and support to ensure that customers feel valued and informed.

And There You Go

There is a lot to consider when it comes to leveraging this great technology (between Hunter Hydrowise and HindSite's FieldCentral) to deliver incredible customer service and grow your service revenue through monitoring and water management. We hope this playbook helps you think through a strong approach, and execute it with the same excellence you bring to your job every day.

