


# GLAMPING GROWTH PLAYBOOK

How to Scale Sustainably, Increase Bookings & Grow Revenue in the Outdoor Accommodations Industry



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## **Glamping Growth Playbook**

**How to Scale Sustainably, Increase Bookings & Grow Revenue in The  
Unique Outdoor Hospitality industry.**

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## Table of Contents

Introduction: The Why, Who & What . . . . .	3
Chapter 1: The Harsh Truth About Glamping Businesses . . . . .	4
Chapter 2: Five Essential Growth hacks (you can do yourself) . . . . .	7
Chapter 3: Your Unique Value Proposition (UVP) & Ideal Customer Profile (ICP). . . . .	10
Chapter 4: The Risk of Not Growing & The Power of Momentum . . . . .	11
Chapter 5: The Outsourcing & Partnership Advantage . . . . .	13
Chapter 6: How to Increase Your Prices Without Losing Your Ideal Customer . . . . .	14
Chapter 7: Guest Retention Hacks . . . . .	16
Chapter 8: How to Stop Paying OTA Fees & Shift More Bookings to Your Website . . . . .	17
Chapter 9: A Social Media Strategy That Actually Sells . . . . .	17
Chapter 10: Why Marketing is Crucial for Outdoor Hospitality . . . . .	18
Next Steps – Are You Ready to Take Control of Your Growth? . . . . .	19
Glamping Business Growth Scorecard. . . . .	19
Brand Values Worksheet . . . . .	21

## Introduction: The Why, Who & What

Our family loves to get away. Quick trips with the kiddos (3 ranging from 5-10 years old) to local, and far way destinations (Moab Utah being one of our favorites!). My wife is a family travel photographer, and we have been all kinds of places documenting our journey as the kids grow. Unique accommodations and glamping locations are our very favorite type of stays, giving us some of the comforts of home coupled with an escape into the wild.

I stepped away from a 15-year career helping one business grow and took a leap of faith in 2023 to build a Growth Performance Marketing Business to help many businesses grow! My favorite niche continues to be in the glamping and unique outdoor accommodations space, where I can combine all my creative skills, along with tactical growth and business skills to partner with good people to help see their vision come to fruition. We've done the hard part, so you don't have to, and have the results from clients to prove it. So do it yourself, or partner with us—but let's see your dreams and visions expand!

As you know, the glamping industry is growing fast, with annual growth rates of 10%! More treehouses, geodomes, and yurts pop up every day. **Competition is getting fierce, and simply having a unique stay and organic growth strategy is no longer enough.**

### **This Playbook is for you if:**

- You're busy running a glamping business—you don't have a lot of time to master marketing.
- You'd rather spend more time on acquiring, building or operating than marketing.
- You want more direct bookings and to stop relying on Airbnb, VRBO & Hipcamp
- You're tired of spending hours and money on your website & marketing with little or no return.
- You're starting to consider outsourcing to a Marketing Growth Partner rather than building an expensive internal team, and start being intentional about your brand and growth.

This is a **proven blueprint** tailored for glamping businesses. **By the end, you'll either have an exact action plan—or you realize you need some trusted help to scale.**

✅ Good Marketing should return \$3+ for every \$1 spent.

It's an investment, not an expense.

**Let's go! 🚀**

## Chapter 1: The Harsh Truth About Glamping Businesses

### Many Glamping Businesses Are Making These Costly Mistakes:


**Mistake #1: Your logo, brand, photos, and website are self-made, lack elevation and your company brand values are not coming through.**

Self made no-code website builders are nice way to start out, but at some point soon you will need to be intentional and differentiate your brand in order to stand out. Our clients tend to build their brand and websites over many years, without a clear direction.

The information you provide on the website is important yes... but how does the website make people feel? Thoughtful brand elevation and design, very professional photographic imagery, along with conversion optimization techniques can set you apart and convey the brand experience you have in your mind—but haven't articulated well online.

**Note: A strong, on-brand and asset rich website should drive 50-70% of your bookings directly.**

- ✓ "A strong website should pay for itself multiple times over by increasing direct bookings, building trust, and supporting long-term growth. It's an investment, not an expense."

 **Action Step:** Complete the Brand Values exercise at the end of this Playbook! If your "why" is not identified, how can you build out a brand and website that clearly conveys it?

**Mistake #2: You rely on OTAs (Online Travel Agencies) too much.**

If Airbnb or other OTA platforms are your primary booking sources, then you don't really own your audience. You're playing by someone else's business rules. These platforms control your exposure and cost you money — a bad review, algorithm change, or policy shift can kill your bookings overnight.

**Note: Direct bookings give you control. The strongest brands in glamping OWN their audience by owning their guest booking journey from end to end (saving 5-20% on booking fees).**

**Mistake #3: You assume marketing is a nice-to-have.**

- ✓ Good Marketing should return \$3+ for every \$1 spent. It's an investment, not an expense.

Many glamping businesses think, "We will grow organically and through word of mouth and providing a great experience! Marketing is too expensive." Then they go ahead and **spend countless hours per month** doing sub-par work on tasks that keep them away from enhancing guest experience and expanding their offerings. What about the opportunity cost of taking 10 years to ramp up organically, vs 2 years with intentional marketing strategies, expanding offerings and creating epic guest experiences?

Here are some common tasks that can become big time-wasters for owners and could be systematized better, or maybe even better outsourced:

## 1. Social Media Content

- **Why it's a drain:** Creating visuals, writing captions, editing reels, and staying on trend is actually quite time-intensive — and results are a slow long game unless it's tied to a broader strategy. Plus, if you are relying heavily on building an audience here keep in mind that META owns your audience! Nothing wrong with organic content and personal stories along the way (in fact that is where the biggest impact can be to guest retention!), but don't double down your efforts here until your newsletter subscribers

**Hint:**

*Focus on newsletter subscribers first! More on this later.*

## 2. Managing OTA Listings Across Platforms

- **Why it's a drain:** Keeping Airbnb, Hipcamp, Booking.com, etc., all synced and optimized is time-consuming and error-prone especially when it comes to calendars. You can pay for and use a channel manager tool or hire a VA, but that costs a pretty penny too. Ideally though, you get the best of both worlds! Build out your own direct booking experience as early as you can, and leverage direct booking software instead, that supports channel management too.

**Hint:**

*There are many direct booking platforms that are not an OTA. Lodgify is one we endorse for a strong price to value ratio — you can get a special offer by using this link:*

[Visit Lodgify](#)

In the glamping and outdoor accommodations industry, Lodgify is used by property owners and hosts to create and manage their own branded booking websites, while also handling reservations, customer messaging, payments, and calendar syncs across multiple OTAs like Airbnb, Booking.com, and VRBO. This significantly reduces your time managing these platforms and calendars and allows you to focus more time on growing your direct booking strategy.

Lodgify helps glamping businesses reduce OTA dependency, capture more direct bookings, and streamline backend operations — all while keeping 5-20% more revenue in-house.

[Try Lodgify](#)

## 3. Email Marketing Setup & Campaigns

- **Why it's a drain:** Writing and designing newsletters, automating flows (abandoned cart, post-stay

thank-yous, etc.), and optimizing for conversion can be technical and tedious. Setting this up and having an intentional automated email drip strategy is the key to building your newsletter subscriber list!

**Hint:**

*Get a specialist to build out your initial core flows and templates, then just plug in your updates or new promotions as needed and self-manage from there.*

- ✓ Good Marketing should return \$3+ for every \$1 spent. It's an investment, not an expense.

#### 4. Website Updates, Performance & SEO Tasks

- **Why it's a drain:** Tinkering with your website to make it "better" often leads to lost hours and inconsistent results, look and feel. Announcement bar updates are often outdated and inconsistent. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is often forgotten or done poorly—affecting searchability in Google. Website performance overall can be awful and not optimized for mobile where most of the searches come from in this industry.



**Hint:**

*To show up better in organic Google searches, and increase conversions on your website through faster page speed performance—consider a web partner familiar with the glamping industry to maintain the site, improve scores, and optimize for keywords relevant to glamping, local tourism, and experiences.*

- 🚀 **Action Step:** Run a performance audit on your website right now to see how your website scores. Use a third party checker: <https://pagespeed.web.dev/>

#### 5. Paid Ad Management (Google/Facebook/Instagram)

- **Why it's a drain:** Without the right targeting, funnel setup, or tracking, ad spend gets wasted quickly. Many owners assume that simply boosting a social post will give them the results they need, but in reality this is a **HUGE** waste of money. Designing, testing and launching ad campaigns is an absolute skillset and art. Ads should never be created and launched without an experienced ad manager partner.



**Hint:**

*Unless you're trained and highly skilled in ad management, this is one area you should not be doing yourself. Hire someone who knows how to run local, seasonal, and retargeting campaigns specifically for this industry. It may cost you up front, but you can expect \$3 back in bookings for every \$1 spent from a good Growth Partner.*

- ✅ Good Marketing should return \$3+ for every \$1 spent. It's an investment, not an expense.

**Reach out to us for a free audit!**

**BOOK FREE CALL**

**Where Owners Should Focus Their Time:**

- Crafting and refining guest experiences
  - Reputation & Google Review Management
  - Building partnerships with local vendors, guides, and tourism boards
  - Developing new accommodations or packages
  - Hosting and relationship-building with repeat guests
  - Gathering high-impact content (guest stories, testimonials, photos)
  - On-the-ground operations and surprise/delight moments
- ✅ Good Marketing should return \$3+ for every \$1 spent. It's an investment, not an expense.
- 📌 **Reality Check:** If your occupancy rates haven't grown in the last 12 months, your current marketing efforts aren't working. A 5% increase annually should be a minimum!


## Chapter 2: Five Essential Growth hacks (you can do yourself)

### 1. Ensure your website converts clickers into bookers! (Conversion Optimization)

- ✅ **Clear Unique Value Proposition.** Highlight Your Key Differentiator
- ✅ **High-quality photos & drone videos!** (Don't settle. This can cost you 10's of thousands).
- ✅ **Easy Navigation:** Keep menus simple and few!
- ✅ **Guest testimonials & social proof.** Use 5 star google reviews and highlight them!




- ✓ **Pricing & availability.** Displayed clearly and accessible with zero friction!
- ✓ **Strong Calls to Action (CTA's).** Use bold, action-driven buttons. Don't get cute. **BOOK NOW**
- ✓ **External URL's.** Don't send people away from your site! Open new windows for external links.
- ✓ **Mobile-Friendly:** Ensure a responsive design and high mobile score (<https://pagespeed.web.dev/>)
- ✓ **Fast Load Times:** Optimize for speed. People bounce quick! (<https://pagespeed.web.dev/>)
- ✓ **Simplify Forms:** Minimize the required fields in form submissions to the lowest possible.
- ✓ **Email Subscribers:** Add Newsletter Sign up promising exclusive discounts for VIP's
- Remember, website visitors are inherently lazy and impatient. Remove all friction keeping them from finding what they want immediately, and don't overload them with information. Think about how fast you move on when your online experience takes too long or gets overly complex. Don't make guests jump through hoops, reduce the steps to buying from you down to very few!

 **Action Step:** Audit your own website and check the boxes above to see how you fare. If you score less than 8 you're leaving money on the table! If your website isn't converting, **you're losing money.**

## 2. Outsource Paid META Ads to Fill Shoulder Seasons & Weekdays

- Facebook & Instagram ads drive **thousands of direct bookings** when optimized properly.
- **Seasonality kills consistent revenue** if you don't have a specific plan to address this.
- Add 15% off promo codes to paid ads to drive exclusivity, scarcity, and FOMO.
- Leverage drone videos and carousels for ads, they perform the best!
- The earlier in the season you fill up your peak dates, the more in demand your last minute bookings will be. This scarcity effect makes visitors feel availability is rare, booking earlier and earlier each year so they don't miss out!

Use paid Ads channels to acquire first-time guests, then use email to turn them into repeat visitors, brand advocates, and referral drivers.

 **Action Step:** Explore a Growth Marketing Partner to build you campaigns that can fill in the gaps, **and stop losing revenue.**

- ✓ Good Marketing should return \$3+ for every \$1 spent. It's an investment, not an expense.

### 3. Leverage Email Newsletter for Repeat Guests (VIP's)

- Email drives more repeat bookings than any other channel, and creates long term guests
- Guests need reminders—they forget how much they loved their stay.
- Provide exclusive monthly deals— Use a 20% promo code for accommodations that are low in bookings that month, or for filling up any un-booked accommodation last minute (ie. This weekend!). This teaches your subscribers to keep an eye out for last minute offers and to actually read your newsletter.

For glamping and boutique accommodations, **email newsletters consistently delivers one of the highest ROIs** across all marketing channels. Industry benchmarks (from hospitality, tourism, and travel-adjacent sectors) suggest **\$36–\$42 return for every \$1 spent on email marketing**

(Source: DMA, Litmus, HubSpot — varies by quality of list and execution). That's because email reaches people who already know you, have stayed with you, or have shown interest. You're not paying to reach them again (unlike paid ads), and they're often looking for a reason to come back.



**Action Step:** Set up a simple monthly email newsletter campaign with **exclusive deals & updates**.

Open an account brevo.com and build a newsletter template or find a Growth Marketing Partner to set this up for you. Email marketing is the best return on investment when it comes to guests that have previously visited!

### 4. Optimize Your Google Profile



Your **Google listing is more important than your Instagram**.

**You need:**



Professional photos – Crucial!



Google reviews — At least 50 guest reviews with 4.5 stars are better. Call in favors!



A Direct booking link – Reduce friction for guests, remember?



**Action Step: Search your business on Google right now.** If it doesn't look professional, take 30 mins to **fix it**. Make sure your location is accurate, and business information is up to date.

### 5. High-Quality Photos & Video equals More Bookings

- Bad photos kill your conversion rate.
- Guests book based on visuals first, details second.



**Action Step:** If your photos aren't **pro-level**, invest in a photographer immediately.

Reach out to us for a Free Growth Assessment!

BOOK FREE CALL

### Chapter 3: Your Unique Value Proposition (UVP) & Ideal Customer Profile (ICP).

#### What Makes Your Glamping Business Different?

You can't just be "a cool place to stay." You need a Unique Value Proposition—a clear reason guests should choose you over competitors. You also need to know who your ideal customer is, specifically...who are you building this for?

##### Unique Value Proposition (UVP):

- ✅ Are you the most luxurious? The most remote? The most family-friendly? Off grid?
- ✅ What emotional experiences do you offer?
- ✅ Why should guests book directly with you instead of Airbnb?

**Weak UVP** = "We offer a unique and relaxing glamping experience in nature."

##### Why it's weak:

- Vague and generic — could describe thousands of properties.
- No clear differentiator, emotional hook, or target audience.
- Doesn't answer *why* a guest should choose them over another listing or book direct.

**Strong UVP** = "Private, pet-friendly domes just 40 minutes from the city — with wood-fired hot tubs, dark-sky stargazing, and zero cell reception. Built for couples who want to disconnect and recharge in comfort."

##### Why it works:

- Specific about location, features, and who it's for.
- Highlights a clear emotional value: disconnection, relaxation.
- Communicates what makes the experience unique — and who it's built for.



**Action Step:** Write your UVP in 1-2 short sentences. If it's unclear, neither is your brand or your offerings.

##### Ideal Customer Profile (ICP):

- ✅ **Age & Life Stage** – Are they young professionals, couples, families, or retirees?

- ✓ **Income Level** – Are they budget-conscious travelers or high-spending experience seekers?
- ✓ **Location** – Are they local stay-cationers or out-of-province/international travelers?
- ✓ **Mindset & Motivation** – Are they looking to escape, celebrate, reconnect, explore, or just rest? Understanding *why* they book helps shape the experience and the messaging.
- ✓ **Booking Behavior** – Do they plan in advance or book last-minute? Are they loyal returners or one-time splurgers? This affects pricing strategy and timing for promotions.
- ✓ **Tech Comfort Level** – Are they digital-first (use social media, book on mobile) or need more guidance (prefer email, phone, detailed instructions)? This impacts how you communicate and guide them through the process.
- ✓ **Values & Priorities** – Do they care most about sustainability, privacy, amenities, family time, or aesthetic appeal? Aligning your offering with their values builds deeper loyalty.

“Your best guests are usually a reflection of your strongest offering. Look at who’s already leaving great reviews — that’s often your ICP in real time.”



**Action Step:** Write your ICP down as well, who specifically do you want to attract?

## Chapter 4: The Risk of Not Growing & The Power of Momentum

If you’re not growing intentionally and consistently, your glamping business is actually in decline. How could that be? As momentum builds, you need to ride the wave—but relying on organic growth can take literal decades!

One of my favorite clients & retreat owners spent 20 years building a campground that barely paid the bills, and 5 years intentionally expanding their offerings (adding more geodomes, event venue, and Nordic Sauna) taking advantage of the momentum by re-investing 5-10% of revenues into an outsourced, intentional marketing partner. They went from barely paying the bills to a valuation of \$2.2M in only a few short years!

### 1. Inflation Eats Margin

- At **\$150,000/year** in bookings, **3% inflation**, drops your real purchasing power by **\$4,500/year**.
- ✓ Growth offsets inflation. Stagnation means declining profitability.

### 2. OTA & Platform Fees Increase Over Time

- Airbnb, Booking.com, and others may raise fees or change algorithms, which can **erode your margins** or **reduce visibility**. If you’re not actively growing direct bookings, you’re at the mercy of their changes.
- ✓ Without tactics like improving direct bookings, your cost of acquiring guests increases.

### 3. Customer Acquisition Becomes Harder Over Time

- Market saturation: As more glamping spots open, you face more competition over time for the same customers. Without investment in brand, reputation, or marketing, **your property becomes less visible and less competitive.**
- ✓ Growth helps maintain visibility and relevance in a changing market.

### 4. Deferred Maintenance and Experience Decay

- If revenue plateaus, so does reinvestment. Over time, tents wear, trails fade, and guest experiences decline — leading to worse reviews and lower occupancy.
- ✓ Without growth, reinvestment slows. Without reinvestment, quality drops.

### 5. Lifetime Value Plateaus or Drops

- If you're not building repeat guest strategies (email marketing, loyalty offers, upsells), you rely solely on **first-time bookings**, which are more expensive to acquire and less profitable over time
- ✓ Growing guest lifetime value is the most sustainable path to profitability.

### 6. Opportunity Cost of Not Expanding

Even if your current units stay booked, choosing not to grow — by adding new offerings, upgrading amenities, or introducing packages — means you're **leaving revenue on the table** every season.

#### Example:

- Let's say you have 5 units that generate **\$30,000/year each = \$150,000/year** total.
- You have the land and the demand to add 2 more units.
- If each new unit adds \$30,000/year, that's **\$60,000/year** in *lost potential revenue* — just by not expanding.
- ✓ Over 5 years, that's **\$300,000 in missed revenue opportunity** — not including add-on revenue from upsells, activities, or repeat stays. It's massive! Expansion is absolutely necessary.

#### Stagnation isn't neutral — it's a declining curve hidden by short-term stability.

Example rule to follow: If your glamping business isn't growing by at least **5–10% per year**, you're likely falling behind due to:

- Inflation (Minus 3%)
- Rising platform fees (Minus 1–2%)
- Maintenance & Depreciation (Minus 2–4%)
- Competitive pressure (Minus 1–3%)

That's a silent **7–12%** annual erosion — even if your topline stays flat!



**Action Step:** Write down one **big growth goal** including expansion of offerings over the next 12 months. Then write down how you will get there, be specific but don't make this a chore and don't overthink it! Stick to what you know works, try not to go too far outside of your experience and abilities.

## Chapter 5: The Outsourcing & Partnership Advantage

**Marketing is not always a DIY job. As you can see it is a LOT of work to do it right!**

- ✓ If you don't have a marketing guru, and also not outsourcing—you're losing money.
- ✓ If your website isn't converting, you're not competing with intention.
- ✓ If you're not running ads & sending newsletters properly, you're leaving \$\$\$ on the table.

Running an outdoor accommodations business both big and small is hard enough on its own, never mind building brand, website and marketing strategies—and executing well on them. This is why many glamping businesses have partnered with Mercado Growth Partners to help. You may have another person or group in mind instead, whether it's us or someone else there is a huge advantage to relying on an external, outsourced partner to fast-track your growth path. Glamping owners can stay focused on acquiring more land, adding more value, building, maintaining, customer experience, HR, finances and operations—and a good Growth Marketing Partner keeps you full and busy! Most of your competitors are spending 5%, up to a whopping 25% of revenues on marketing activities to re-invest into the business.

**Whether as a permanent Growth Marketing Partner to your glamping business, or project work, or even paid consulting to help you self-execute—we are here to support all things marketing.**

### REAL CASE STUDY

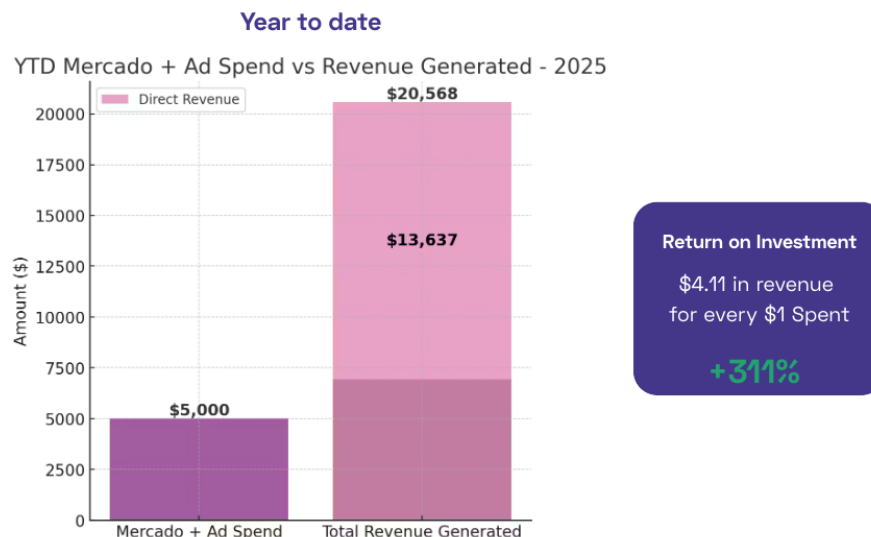
**(Current Glamping Retreat Client)**

**ROI YTD is \$4 revenue for every \$1 spent.**

Great start to the year! We expect it to level out at about \$3 to \$1 by end of year.

## Return on Investment (ROI)

2025



## Steps we took:

- ✓ **Website Revamp** — Higher conversion rates and elevated the brand from campy to retreat
- ✓ **Strategic Meta Ads** — Increased bookings through A/B testing & retargeting website visitors
- ✓ **Monthly Email Campaigns** — Drove repeat guests and retention
- ✓ **Ongoing Website Management** — Eliminated tech headaches and time consuming updates

**The Result? 21% revenue growth in 2024 directly driven by us, and this year is looking exceptional for them! (See above chart)**

**Want to fast track growth from decades down to years?**

**Book a Free Growth Assessment!**

**BOOK FREE CALL**

## Chapter 6: How to Increase Your Prices Without Losing Your Ideal Customer

Pricing incorrectly is one of the biggest mistakes glamping businesses make. Some owners are afraid to raise their rates because they think guests behave the same as they do. Bias can cause owners to assume everyone sees value the same way.

There are several well-studied psychological and economic phenomena that explain **why different people assign different value to the same thing**. Here are the most relevant ones, especially in the context of glamping, hospitality, and customer behavior:



### 1. Subjective Value Theory (Behavioral Economics)

- **Core idea:** Value is not inherent in an object or service — it's assigned based on personal preferences, experiences, emotions, and context.
- **Example:** A \$400/night glamping dome might seem overpriced to a budget traveler, but to a couple celebrating an anniversary, it's a great value.

### 2. Framing Effect

- **Core idea:** The way something is presented (framed) affects how people perceive its value.
- **Example:** "\$450 for a weekend under the stars with a private hot tub" feels different than "\$225/night for a glamping unit."

### 3. Anchoring Bias

- **Core idea:** People rely heavily on the first piece of information they get when making decisions.
- **Example:** If they first see a comparable Airbnb at \$600/night, your \$450 dome feels like a great deal. If they first saw a tent at \$90/night, it may seem expensive.

### 4. Endowment Effect

- **Core idea:** People assign more value to things they "own" or feel emotionally connected to.
- **Example:** A returning guest may value your property more because they've built memories there — and will be more willing to pay for upgrades or new offerings.

### 5. Perceived Value vs. Price

- **Core idea:** Price is objective. *Perceived value* is shaped by design, experience, storytelling, and trust.
- **Example:** A beautifully branded glamping stay with great photos, reviews, and a seamless booking experience can charge more than an identical property without those layers.

### Why this matters:

Understanding that value is **subjective and fluid** gives you leverage. You're not selling sleep in a tent — you're selling meaning, escape, and connection. Different guests will value different aspects (privacy, novelty, comfort, location), and how you position and present the offering directly shapes perceived value.



**Action Step:** A good litmus test for seeing how this phenomenon work is by asking 5-10 different people, from different demographics but within your ideal customer profiles "what is the most you would be willing to pay to stay a night in one of your specific accommodations?" **You will get 5-10 different answers! A majority will be higher than you think.**


### Here's the truth:

If your prices are too low, you predominantly attract price-sensitive guests. Focus on elevating your offerings to

attract customers who value experience or other things more than just cost. You want them to value what you offer on merit, not just because it's cheap. Leading with price is the worst thing you can do, and it's a mad race to the bottom!

### How to Raise Your Prices Without Scaring Off Guests:

- ✓ Use tiered pricing: Increase rates on weekends & peak seasons.
- ✓ Use scarcity to drive higher prices: Show "limited availability" messaging and share loudly when you're booked up. (ie. June is already 85% booked up!)
- ✓ Charge for premium experiences: Private fire pits or hot tubs, Sauna's, order-in meals, family friendly upgrades or activities, and of course...late checkout.
- ✓ Leverage promos quietly: Set your pricing high enough that you have room to offer intermittent promos of 15% off for marketing efforts. If your prices are on the low end to start, there is not much room to work in VIP discounts, returning guest promos, newsletter offers etc. If people follow you and subscribe, they see the benefit in doing so while also valuing your initial price points having paid them before.

 **Action Step:** Look at your top competitors' pricing, and pricing model. If you're undercharging, raise your rates **by at least 10-20%** on your most popular accommodation and track conversions. Use this specific accommodation as your lead offer in marketing efforts and make sure your Unique Value Proposition shines through to attract your Ideal Customer Profile. Monitor if occupancy is impacted, and then implement across all.

## Chapter 7: Guest Retention Hacks

**As you now know, your best source of revenue isn't new guests—it's repeat guests**

### Why?

- It costs 5X more to acquire a new guest than to keep an existing one.
- Repeat guests spend 30-50% more than first-time visitors.
- They refer new guests—for free! People like to be the ones to have found a hidden gem first!

### How to Encourage Previous Guests to Return & Refer Friends:

- ✓ Personalized Thank You Emails → Send a follow-up offer for a discount on their next stay.
- ✓ Referral Incentives → "Refer a friend & get 20% off your next booking."
- ✓ Exclusive VIP Offers → Give past guests priority booking or private VIP discounts.
- ✓ Loyalty Program → "Stay 3 times, get a free upgrade (or merch)."

Email **your last 100 guests** and offer them **VIP promo** for booking again.

## Chapter 8: How to Stop Paying OTA Fees & Shift More Bookings to Your Website

**If you don't use OTA's then skip over this section!**

As mentioned previously, OTA fees carve out 5-20% of your revenue. Here is how to move guests to your website directly.

### How to Convert OTA Guests into Direct-Booking Customers:

- ✅ **Offer a "Direct Booking Discount"** at checkout (e.g., "Book direct next time & save 10%.")
- ✅ **Put a QR code in every unit** that links to your direct booking site.
- ✅ **Capture their email before they leave** so you can market to them directly later.
- ✅ **Follow up via email** with exclusive direct booking perks.
- ✅ **Mention on your OTA listings:** *"Returning guests get VIP pricing when booking direct."*

With social media, you don't OWN your audience, but you DO own your email list. If Instagram changes their algorithm, or shuts down—you lose your audience. The same goes with OTA's, you are at the will of their fees and algorithms, own your audience by driving direct bookings as exclusively as possible. One of our best Glamping retreat clients do not use ANY OTA platforms, and direct book 100% of their customers!



**Action Step:** Add direct booking incentives to your check-in process immediately. Consider raising prices to cover your fees on the OTA platforms and make direct booking your best offer.

## Chapter 9: A Social Media Strategy That Actually Sells

Most glamping businesses waste a lot of time on Instagram, posting random content that doesn't drive actual bookings. It's fun to be on social media! Maybe it's fun for you to paint this amazing picture of what your life is like running these businesses. Or maybe you hate being in the spotlight and avoid it altogether.


One thing is certain, if you haven't executed on the action steps above yet, start there first. Social can be a nice addition to your broader marketing strategy, but if your brand, website, SEO, newsletter, ad campaigns, pricing, UVP, ICP and other steps above are not finished—do those first! Social can be a long game (you need it but it's slow burning).

### How to Generate Short Term Bookings from Social Media:

Keep it simple, and follow the formula!

- ✅ Reels, Reels, Reels → Video content gets 5X more engagement than photos.

- ✓ Showcase real guest experiences and reviews → ideally, use user-generated content.
- ✓ Create urgency → “We are 80% booked for July! Book now to secure your escape.”
- ✓ A Clear Call to Action → A button that says “Book Now” or “Book your Escape”. Short and direct, don’t get creative here—we want people to activate with clear instructions.

 **Action Step:** Plan just one Instagram Reel per week showcasing experiences and add a Call to Action (Book Now) to every post. Use your social media to grow your email lists by incentivizing subscribing to your newsletter—so you own your audience!

## Chapter 10: Why Marketing is Crucial for Outdoor Hospitality


Most glamping businesses don’t have a marketing strategy beyond fleeting ideas from inexperienced partners or friends. Many assume if they build it, people will begin to show up!

### Instead, they rely on

- ✗ Word-of-mouth (not scalable and takes decades)
- ✗ OTAs like Airbnb (taking a 5-20% cut)
- ✗ Social media posts (without a conversion focus)

### Here’s what intentional Growth Marketing can do:

- ✓ Direct bookings increase 2-5X when optimized properly.
- ✓ META Ads + email marketing creates predictable, repeatable NEW customer bookings.
- ✓ SEO & Google rankings bring in organic leads for free.
- ✓ META Ads + email marketing creates predictable, repeatable NEW customer bookings.

 **Action Step:** Pick one growth marketing tactic and commit to implementing it this month. Then another in month 2, etc. After 1 year you will have 12 new tactics to help you scale. Sounds simple, but why aren’t you doing it? Action beats ideas every day of the week.

## Next Steps – Are You Ready to Take Control of Your Growth?

**Stop waiting. Stop guessing. Start growing.**

**Get Your Free Glamping Growth Assessment**

**BOOK FREE CALL**

[www.mercadogrowth.com/glamping](http://www.mercadogrowth.com/glamping)

You will be surprised at how quickly you can get a positive return on your investment by hiring Mercado as your Glamping Industry Growth Partner. Expect \$2-\$3 back for every \$1 you spend. What other kind of investment gives those returns? Book a quick call, and talk to the Founder & CEO directly, and receive your free Growth Assessment. Keep it and use the plan yourself (Done With You), or have it Done For You for less than you think!

*“Glamping Show America’s annual glamping reports that the #2 concern for operators was marketing.”*

Read the supporting article: [Why glamping needs marketing to survive](#)

## Glamping Business Growth Scorecard

*Evaluate your business across 10 key growth areas. Score each from 1 (needs work) to 5 (fully optimized). Then total your score and use the guide at the end to determine your growth stage.*

### 1. Direct Bookings & Website

Do you have a functioning, mobile & conversion optimized direct booking website in line with your intended brand?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

### 2. Unique Value Proposition (UVP)

Can you clearly articulate what makes your glamping business different, and is it consistent across platforms?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

### 3. Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)

Do you know exactly who you’re targeting? Are your offerings and messaging aligned with that customer?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

### 4. Email Marketing & Re-engagement

Do you collect guest emails and send regular monthly updates, last minute offers, or rebooking campaigns?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

## 5. OTA Dependency & Channel Mix

Are you overly dependent on Airbnb, Hipcamp, or Booking.com? Do you have a plan to grow direct bookings?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

## 6. Pricing Strategy

Do you adjust your pricing based on season, demand, and market trends? Is your pricing based on your own biases or market data?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

## 7. Social Media & User-Generated Content

Are you actively using reels on social media to showcase experiences? Do guests tag or share their stays online?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

## 8. Expansion & Revenue Growth Planning

Are you working toward new revenue streams (e.g. add-on experiences, more units, sauna, retail, events space etc)?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

## 9. Reviews & Reputation

Are you consistently receiving positive guest reviews? Do you respond, improve, and leverage them in marketing?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

## 10. Guest Experience Optimization

Are you delivering a smooth, memorable experience from booking to checkout that earns referrals and repeat stays?

**Score:** 1 2 3 4 5

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 50

## Score Summary

Total Score	Growth Stage	Suggested Focus
40–50	Growth-Ready	Scale, optimize, and expand offerings
30–39	Foundation Set	Identify bottlenecks, focus on UVP & direct bookings
Below 30	Missed Opportunities	Start with core systems: website, brand, guest flow

Reach out to Mercado for a Free Growth Assessment!

BOOK FREE CALL

## Brand Values Worksheet

Business Name: Elk Island Retreat ([www.elkislandretreat.com](http://www.elkislandretreat.com))

Service Category: Glamping/Outdoor Hospitality

Walk through a sticky note session with your team to help define what you want people to feel & experience when they interact with your brand.

(Grab some sticky notes!)





**Then, identify 5 values that define your brand.**

**Use the sticky notes from the branding exercise to identify similar themes.**

Eg. Sustainability: Designing low-impact experiences that protect the environment, support local communities, and ensure long-term operational responsibility.

2. Eg. Dependability: Someone customers can count on, demonstrating reliability through actions and offerings.

3. Eg. Integrity: Following through on their word, ensuring honesty in how they conduct business and communicate.

4. Eg. Well-being: Empowering others to live a healthy life, striving to create a healthy home environment.

5. Eg. Lasting Impact: Concern for the future of the environment, making a difference in the world, and offering quality experience that lasts 100 years.

**Suggest one or more ways that your brand can demonstrate your values to customers & the market:**

- Eg. Partner with organizations and donate a portion of proceeds to sustainability projects.
- Eg. Implement composting on-site to give back to earth and create an eco-connection for guests to the property.

**Suggest one or more ways that your brand can demonstrate your values to customers through the content on your website and/or social media accounts.**

- Eg. Share educational content on sustainable practices and the impact of small changes.
- Eg. Highlight customer stories that show the long-lasting quality of your experience.
- Eg. Provide transparency about product sourcing, manufacturing processes, and company sustainability initiatives.

**Brand Voice Characteristics: On a scale of 1-5, rate where your brand should fall on each dimension.**

Friendly vs. Authoritative: 2 We aim to be approachable and engaging, yet it's crucial that we also exude confidence and authority, given our expertise in the space.

Casual vs. Formal: 3 We believe in communicating in a way that's relatable and down-to-earth, but we also uphold a sense of professionalism that our clients expect from a leader in the industry.

Simple vs. Complex: 2 Even though the experience we provide is wide reaching, we're committed to explaining our offerings in a clear and straightforward manner so everyone can understand the value we bring.

Modern vs. Traditional: 1 We're all about pushing the envelope and staying ahead of the curve, so our brand voice is decidedly modern, aligning with the innovative and forward thinking approaches.

**Consider your target audience. What kind of communication do they respond to? Analyze your competitors' brand voice. How do you want to differentiate?**

My target audience primarily consists of guests who...(fill this in!)

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### Personas

#### **The Nature-Seeking Escape Artist**

This guest is craving a break from routine. They're not necessarily experienced campers, but they're drawn to nature, quiet, and a slower pace. They value ease, comfort, and a chance to unplug without roughing it. Experiences that emphasize peace, simplicity, and minimal planning effort appeal to them. They respond well to imagery and messaging that paints a clear picture of relaxation, connection, and the outdoors.

#### **The Outdoor Family Planner**

This guest is coordinating for a group — often with kids — and wants a getaway that balances comfort, safety, and outdoor activities. They look for options that are accessible, with amenities like firepits, clean bathrooms, and open space to explore. Their priorities include easy booking, clear information, and knowing what to expect. They respond to practical content, family-focused itineraries, and answers to common logistical questions.

#### **The Experience-First Adventurer**

This guest is driven by unique, memory-making experiences. They're active, visually inspired, and likely to post about their stay. They're looking for something that feels off-the-beaten-path but still comfortable — think

stargazing, paddleboarding, or a dome with a view. They value aesthetic and atmosphere as much as utility. Messaging that showcases immersive experiences, standout moments, and share-worthy visuals speaks to them.

### **The Comfort-Driven Minimalist**

This guest is looking to get closer to nature without sacrificing comfort. They're not necessarily "outdoorsy," but they love the idea of slow mornings in the woods, cozy linens, and fresh air. They prioritize simple but well-thought-out amenities, ease of access, and clear communication. Messaging should emphasize creature comforts, clean design, and light planning — a getaway made easy.

### **Communication Style:**

Our audience values clarity, realism, and inspiration. They're looking for assurance — that the experience will match the promise — without fluff or overstatement. Storytelling should feel grounded and visual, guiding them through what to expect while sparking the desire to explore. Transparency, real guest stories, and content that answers their questions before they ask them helps build trust.

### **Competitors:**

Many glamping providers lean heavily into aesthetics and trendiness but can overlook the full guest journey — from booking clarity to on-site experience. That's where we differentiate: by combining great design and comfort with practical, thoughtful service. We create an experience that's not just beautiful, but seamless.

## **Strategic Differentiation:**

### **Highlight the Full Journey**

We don't just show the tent — we show what it feels like to spend a weekend here. Through storytelling, itineraries, and guest features, we'll walk our audience through the full experience from arrival to departure.

### **Build with Transparency**

We'll communicate using clear, friendly language and provide all the practical info upfront — what to pack, what's provided, what to expect. This builds confidence in first-time bookers and trust in returning guests.

**Send me a note directly!**

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**Or connect & follow on LinkedIn:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/boelefebvre>