

BUSINESS DIAGNOSTIC · €650

Turnstone Garden Centre

What you sell ranked by what actually makes money, where customers really come from, three routes costed, and the two things to stop doing.

9

lines ranked by margin

3

growth routes, each
costed

2

things to stop doing

30

day plan at the back

Portfolio sample. Turnstone is invented. Every figure here is illustrative and marked as such — a real audit uses your own till and your own supplier invoices, and shows you where each number came from.

WHERE YOU STAND TODAY

A good garden centre with a café that is quietly running the place.

Six acres, thirty years old, and known. The plants are better than the two chains within twenty minutes and the staff genuinely know things — a customer asked about clematis wilt while I was there and got a two-minute answer that was correct.

The café was added in 2019 as an amenity. It now takes more money on a Saturday than the plant area does, and it is being run as though it were still a side offer: no menu online, one photograph of it in three years, and it closes at four while the centre stays open until six.

That is the audit in one paragraph. The rest of this document is the working.

WHAT WAS LOOKED AT

Twelve months of till data by category. Supplier invoices for the eight biggest lines. The site walked as a customer on a Saturday and a Tuesday. Both chains visited and priced on fourteen comparable items. Your listing, your reviews and the last sixty days of posts.

THE UNCOMFORTABLE ONE

Bedding plants are 31% of turnover and, once you count the losses, roughly 6% of profit. You are running a large, labour-intensive operation that mostly exists to make the car park look busy in May.

PLAIN JUDGEMENTS, FROM PUBLIC EVIDENCE

Product	Pricing	Findability	Repeat
Strong. Genuinely better stock than either chain.	Under-confident. You are 8-12% below the chains on things you are better at.	Weak. No café menu anywhere online and hours are wrong on the listing.	Untested. No list, no way to tell anybody anything.

THE SHAPE OF YOUR YEAR

PERIOD	SHARE OF TURNOVER	WHAT IS CARRYING IT	STAFFED FOR
Mar-Jun	52%	Bedding, compost, the car park being full	Peak
Jul-Aug	14%	Café, pots, watering	Peak
Sep-Oct	12%	Trees and shrubs — your best margin window	Reduced
Nov-Dec	16%	Christmas, at 55% margin, over five weeks	Reduced
Jan-Feb	6%	Very little, and the tunnels already running	Full cost

Two of your three best-margin periods are the two you staff down for. That is not a scheduling error, it is a consequence of thinking of the business as a bedding-plant operation with other bits attached.

WHAT YOU SELL, RANKED BY WHAT IT MAKES

Not by turnover. Turnover is why the bedding plants look important.

LINE	SHARE OF TURNOVER	GROSS MARGIN	SHARE OF GROSS PROFIT	VERDICT
Café	19%	68%	34%	Grow it
Pots & containers	11%	52%	15%	Grow it
Trees & shrubs	14%	44%	16%	Hold
Compost & growing media	9%	38%	9%	Hold
Gifts & homeware	7%	46%	8%	Hold
Bedding plants	31%	19% after losses	6%	Shrink
Furniture	5%	22%	4%	Stop
Tools & sundries	3%	36%	4%	Hold
Christmas	1% annualised	55%	4%	Grow it

Illustrative figures. In a real audit each margin comes from your own invoices and the losses on bedding are counted from your own waste records, not estimated.

HOW TO READ THIS TABLE

The fourth column is the only one that matters. Share of turnover tells you what is busy; share of gross profit tells you what is paying the wages. When those two columns disagree by more than about fifteen points, you have found the thing to change.

WHERE THE BEDDING LOSSES COME FROM

Not theft or damage — unsold stock at the end of a season, and the labour already spent on it. A tray grown in February and skipped in June cost you twice: once to grow, once to throw. Bought-in trays cost more per unit and can be reordered weekly against actual weather.

THE PICTURE IN ONE LINE

Two lines that are 30% of turnover make 49% of the profit. One line that is 31% of turnover makes 6%. Every decision in the rest of this document follows from that sentence.

WHY NOBODY NOTICES

Because the till reports turnover and turnover is what you see every evening. Margin by line takes an afternoon to work out once, and almost nobody does it — which is why this is the first page of every growth audit I write.

WHERE CUSTOMERS ACTUALLY COME FROM

Against where you think they come from.

SOURCE	YOU SAID	ACTUALLY
Word of mouth	"Most of it"	38%
Passing / signage	"A fair bit"	27%
Google search / maps	"Some"	24%
Social	"That's where they all are"	6%
Local press / radio	"Waste of money"	5%

From 140 till-side answers over three weekends. Illustrative here; in a real audit it is your own count and it takes a jar and a biro.

The finding that matters

A quarter of your customers arrive through Google, and your Google listing has the wrong closing time, no café menu and eleven photographs, nine of which are of bedding plants. You are spending your effort on the channel that brings 6% and neglecting the one that brings 24%.

What this does not mean

Stop posting. It means stop treating posting as the marketing. Social is a way of keeping the 38% who already know you feeling like they know you — it is retention, not acquisition, and it should be judged that way.

You are working hardest on the channel that brings the fewest people.

WHAT THE LISTING IS MISSING, PRECISELY

Hours

Says 5pm. You close at 6. Wrong hours are the commonest reason a listing loses a visit.

Category

Set to *Garden centre* only. Add *Café* — it is a separate search entirely.

Menu

Absent. A café with no menu online is a café people drive past.

Reviews

Eighty-one, at 4.1, none answered. The chains have four hundred each.

THREE ROUTES TO MORE MONEY

Each one costed, with the assumption stated.

01

Run the café like a business, not an amenity

What it is — menu online and on the listing, open until five thirty rather than four, one proper coffee machine, and a Saturday breakfast until eleven. Nothing structural; the room exists and the staff exist.

Cost — €4,200 for the machine, roughly €9,000 a year in extra hours. **Assumption** — the extra ninety minutes a day performs at 60% of the current hourly average. **If it does** — about €31,000 more turnover at 68% margin, so roughly €12,000 of profit after the extra wages. *Illustrative.*

02

Fix the twenty-four percent you are ignoring

What it is — the Google listing corrected and filled: right hours, café menu, thirty photographs that are not bedding plants, and forty reviews asked for by text over one month.

Cost — nothing but an afternoon and some asking. **Assumption** — a listing at four-point-six with photographs converts about a fifth better than one at four-point-one without. **If it does** — roughly 5% more visits, which on your averages is around €18,000 turnover. *Illustrative, and the cheapest line in this document.*

03

Sell the pot with the plant

What it is — pots moved from the back wall to beside the shrubs, priced as pairs, with one line of staff script: *that will need a twelve-inch — they are just there.*

Cost — a day of moving stock. **Assumption** — attach rate on containers rises from about 9% to 15% of plant transactions. **If it does** — around €14,000 more turnover at 52%, so roughly €7,000 of profit. *Illustrative.*

If you only do one

Route two. It is free, it takes an afternoon, and it addresses a quarter of your customers. Doing it first also means routes one and three are measured against a corrected baseline rather than a broken one.

Why every assumption is written down

Because the assumption is the part most likely to be wrong, and you are the one who can judge it. A route costed without its assumption stated is a guess dressed as a forecast — and if you think the café's extra ninety minutes will do better than 60%, the whole number moves and you should say so.

THE TWO THINGS TO STOP

Both of them feel like the business. Neither pays for itself.

One. Garden furniture.

Five percent of turnover, 22% margin, and it occupies the best-lit 400 square metres you own for seven months a year. The chains buy it in container loads and sell it below what you pay. You are not losing money on it — you are losing the space, which is worse because the space is invisible on a spreadsheet.

Instead — pots and containers, which make more than twice the margin and sell all year.

Two. Growing all your own bedding.

Three polytunnels, two full-time people from February, and a 19% margin after losses. The losses are the point: you grow to a plan made in January for weather that arrives in May.

Instead — grow the specialities and the things the chains cannot sell, buy the standard trays in. Same shelf, a third of the labour, and the tunnels free for something with a margin.

WHAT THIS FREES UP

Two people, from February

Not redundancies — the café needs hours and nobody currently has them.

400 square metres

The best-lit part of the site, back in use for something that makes twice the margin.

Three polytunnels

Which is a separate conversation and possibly a separate business.

Both of these will feel wrong. Furniture and bedding are what a garden centre *is*, and stopping them looks like retreating. The figures say otherwise, and the figures are yours — this document only put them beside each other.

HOW TO STOP SOMETHING WITHOUT A BAD MONTH

Do not clear it out

Sell through what you have at full price. Stopping means not reordering, which is a decision made once, in a chair, before the spring order.

Tell nobody it is going

No closing-down signage on a category. Customers do not notice absences the way owners assume; they notice the pots that are now beside the shrubs.

Give the space a job first

Decide what fills it before the furniture leaves. Empty space gets filled with whatever a rep is selling that week, and then you have replaced one 22% line with another.

THE FIRST THIRTY DAYS

In the order that costs least.

WHEN	WHAT	WHO	COST
This week	Correct the Google listing: hours, category, phone. Add thirty photographs, none of bedding.	You, one afternoon	€0
This week	Photograph the café menu and put it on the listing and the profile.	You, twenty minutes	€0
Week two	Ask forty recent customers for a review, by text, one line each.	Whoever is on the till	€0
Week two	Move the pots beside the shrubs. Agree the one line of staff script.	Two staff, one day	€0
Week three	Extend café hours to 5.30 on a trial. Count covers after four o'clock.	Café staff	Hours only
Week four	Pull the margin figures for the eight biggest lines yourself, so you own the numbers.	You, an afternoon	€0
Month two	Decide on furniture before the spring order goes in. That is the deadline that matters.	You	Decision

Everything in the first month is free

That is deliberate. Nothing here needs the coffee machine or a new sign, and doing the free things first tells you whether the diagnosis is right before you spend anything on it.

What is not in this audit

Staffing structure, the polytunnel question, and whether the site is worth more as something else. All three are real and none of them is a growth question. If one of them is the actual bottleneck, that is a conversation, not a document.

WHAT IS ALREADY WORKING — DO NOT BREAK IT

The staff know things

A correct two-minute answer about clematis wilt is worth more than any campaign, and it is the one thing the chains structurally cannot copy. Whatever changes, do not thin the floor staff to pay for it.

The stock is genuinely better

On fourteen comparable items you are better on nine and cheaper on eleven. Being better and cheaper is not a position — it is a pricing decision waiting to be made.

Thirty years of goodwill

38% of customers come by word of mouth without you doing anything. That is an asset most businesses would pay for, and it is the reason route two works so cheaply.

WHAT THIS IS JUDGED ON

Gross profit per square metre, not turnover.

Turnover is what makes a garden centre look busy in May and closes it in November. The number that decides whether this business is well run is what each part of the site earns for the space it occupies.

Today**€41**

per square metre of trading area, per year. Illustrative
— work it out from your own figures before you start.

Twelve months**€55**

If furniture goes, pots move up and the café runs
proper hours. Nothing here requires more customers.

**Nothing in this document needs a single extra
customer through the gate.**

Turnstone is invented. It exists to show what the €650 business diagnostic contains — what you sell ranked by what it earns, where customers really come from, three routes with the assumptions stated, the two things to stop, and a thirty-day plan where everything is free.