



Evergreen Growth

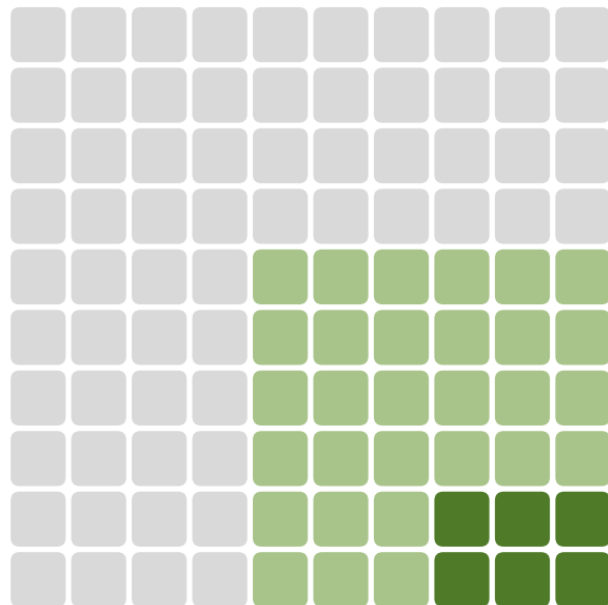
Consumer Insights for Christmas Tree Growers: What Michigan Buyers Told Us

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36% of Artificial-Tree Households Are Open to a Real Tree. 6% Plan to Act

Of every 100 Michigan households with an artificial tree (N = 233)



- 64 are not open
 - 30 are open, but no plan yet
 - 6 are open AND plan a real tree next season
- 36 are open.
6 of them have a plan.**

Your task:

Give people who are already open to a real tree a reason, and an easy way, to act.

Agenda for Today

Three questions for the next 30 minutes

1 How do customers find you?

2 What do real and artificial buyers want?

3 What would move an artificial buyer toward a real tree?

Based on 8 focus groups (32 consumers) and a statewide survey of 316 Michigan adults, 2025.



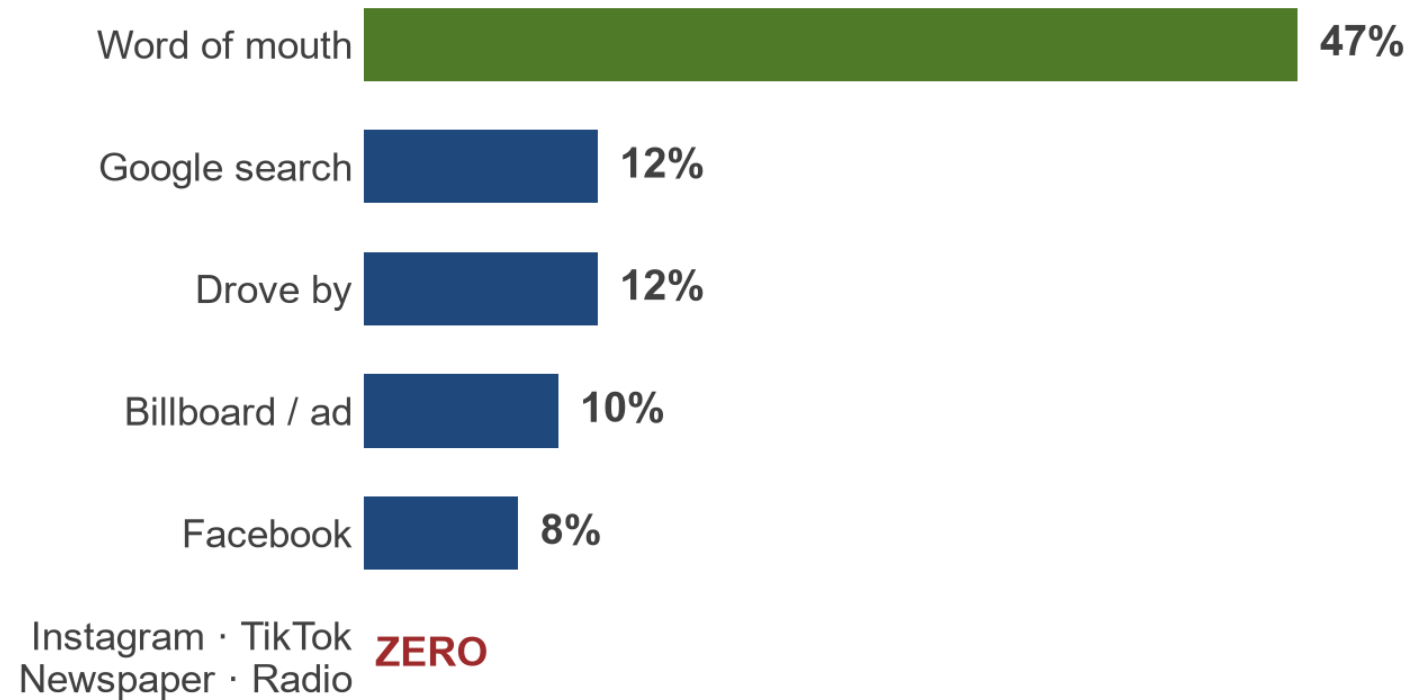
How Do Customers Find You?

Word of mouth, and what earns it

Word of Mouth Is How They Find You

How real-tree buyers found the place they bought from

- 47% found their farm or lot through family or friends.
- 12% found their farm or lot through Google, and 12% found their farm or lot by driving past.



Real-tree buyers, N = 51.

Word of Mouth Is a Driver

WORD OF MOUTH:

- Provides the **most trusted source** of information a customer has
- Spreads outside of your 'official' channels
- Can be a **low-cost driver** of engagement and sales

ON YOUR OPERATION

EARN IT

- › You want happy customers who will talk about what they liked.
- › You can incentivize word of mouth some, but the experience will drive it.
- › It is not just about getting people to the farm or retail lot.
- › Remember that you can't be all things to all people.
- › The experience, your marketing, and your strategy are all connected.

MAKE IT EASY TO ACT ON

- › Engineer referrals: bring-a-friend, refer-a-neighbor, ask for reviews.
- › Be findable: a complete Google Business Profile (hours, prices, varieties, photos) and clear road signage.
- › Use social and your website to inform people who already know you.

"Focus on what makes your beer taste better" – Jeff Bezos

Put the effort where the customer tastes it, not where they never look.

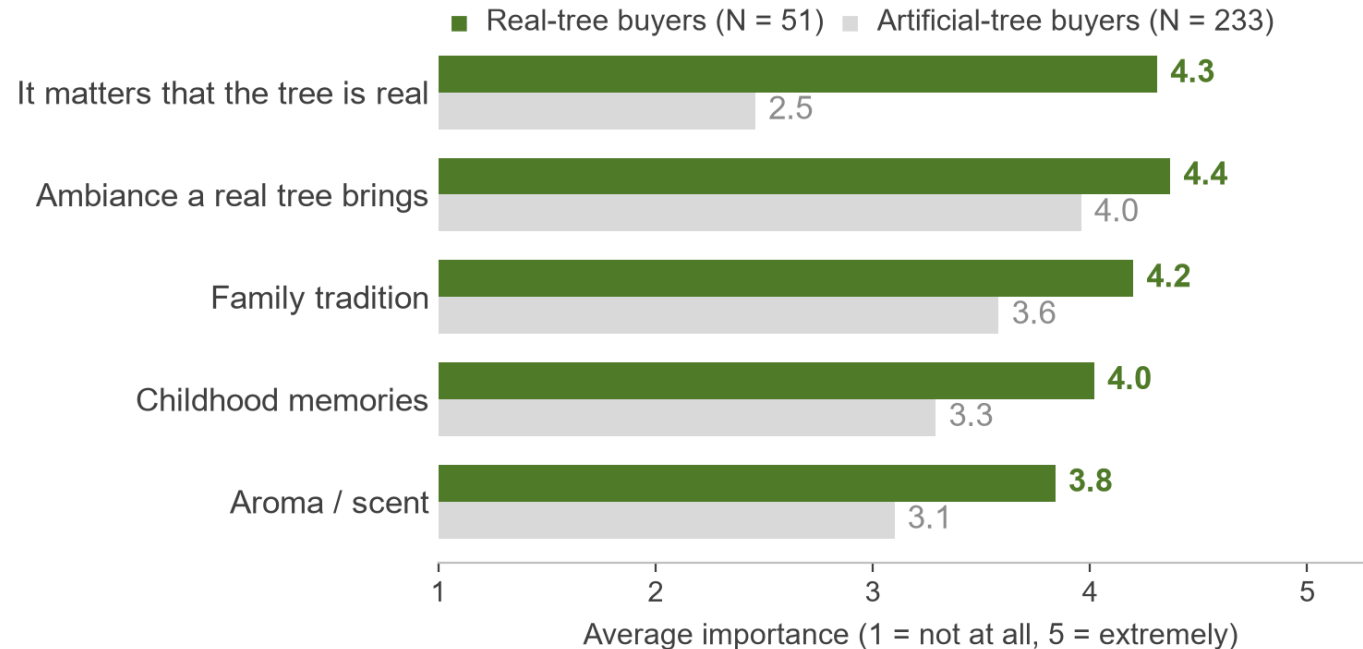


What Do Real and Artificial Buyers Want?

The experience that earns the recommendation: the tree, the service, and what you say about it

Real and Artificial Buyers Want Different Things. Price Isn't One of Them

What real-tree buyers value more

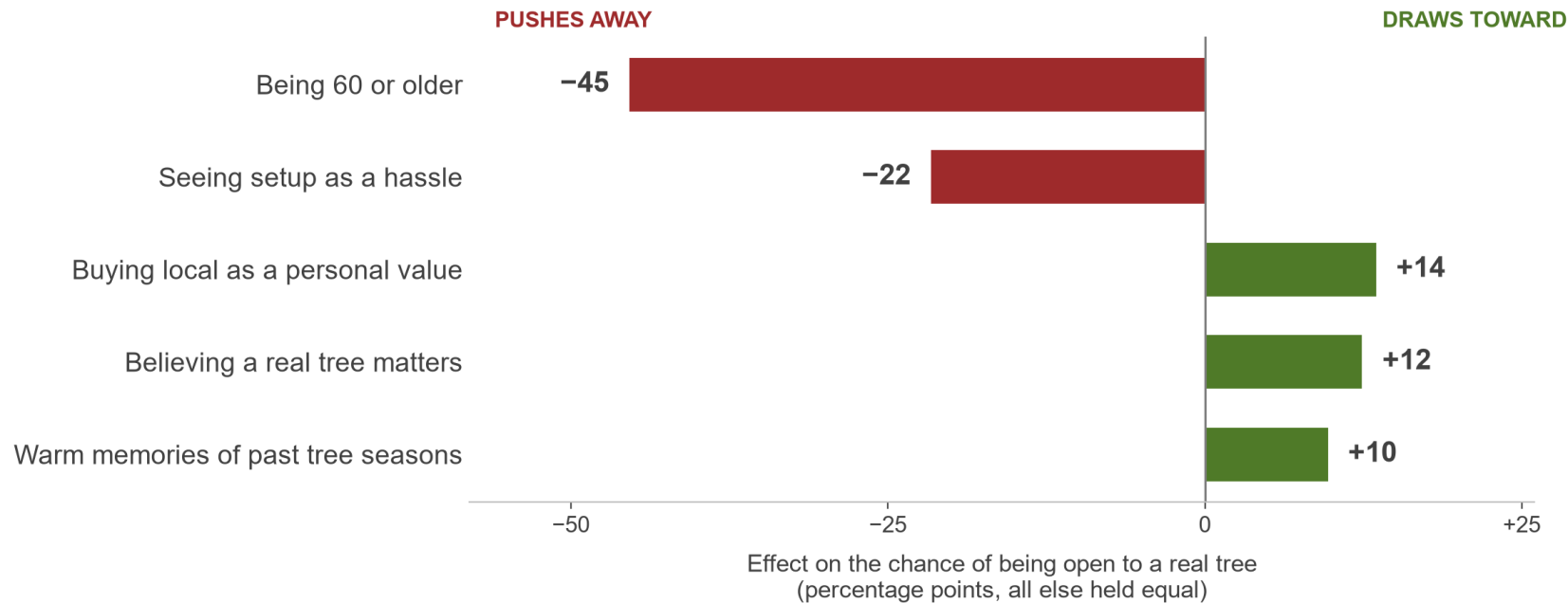


You won't win a pure cost argument past year two. You don't need to.

Cost doesn't separate who's open from who isn't. What someone paid for their artificial tree doesn't either.

Artificial buyers also rate every real-tree hassle higher than people who actually live with one, and having had a real tree before doesn't change that.

Five Things Separate Consumers Who Are Open to a Real Tree from the Rest



Not on the list: cost, income, where they live, or what they paid for their artificial tree.

Marketing Messages Should Highlight Authenticity

WHAT WE FOUND

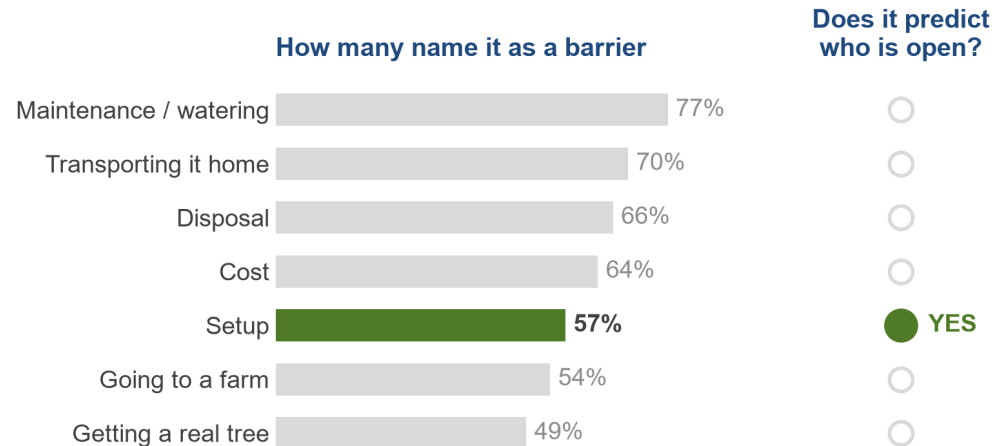
- Realness is the message. It predicts openness better than anything else we measured, and it's where real and artificial buyers differ most.
- Scent is part of "real," not a separate reason to purchase a real Christmas tree. Lead with the "real" or "authentic" message, and let the fresh scent of a Christmas tree support it.
- Think about incorporating nostalgia into your messaging.

ON YOUR OPERATION

- › Lead with it: "Nothing compares to the real thing."
- › Use scent, tradition, and atmosphere as support for that message, not as the campaign.
- › Make it visible: harvest-date tags, "cut this week on our farm," named varieties.

Setup Is the Barrier to Address in Your Marketing

WHAT WE FOUND



Cost is named by nearly two-thirds, and tells you nothing about who might convert.

- **Of the seven barriers, only one separates the open from the not-open: setup.**

ON YOUR OPERATION

- › Delivery, setup, and removal. One couple over 60 paid a premium for exactly this.
- › Market if you sell pre-fitted stands, stand-fit help, fresh-cut or pre-drilled trunks (even if it seems obvious to you).
- › Shake, bale, and wrap before it leaves the lot; make disposal easy; and tell customers it's easy.
- › "Easier than you think" works on the already-open, not on high-concern buyers.

Make the Visit Feel Local, Unhurried,

71%

travel 30 minutes
or less

90%

spend 11+ minutes
on site

59%

shop with a
partner

39%

shop with
children

- Add-ons: ornaments 43% · wreaths 33% · garland 24%. 31% buy nothing extra.
- Families buy roughly twice the add-ons (1.4 vs 0.7 items).

This is the visit people tell their friends about.

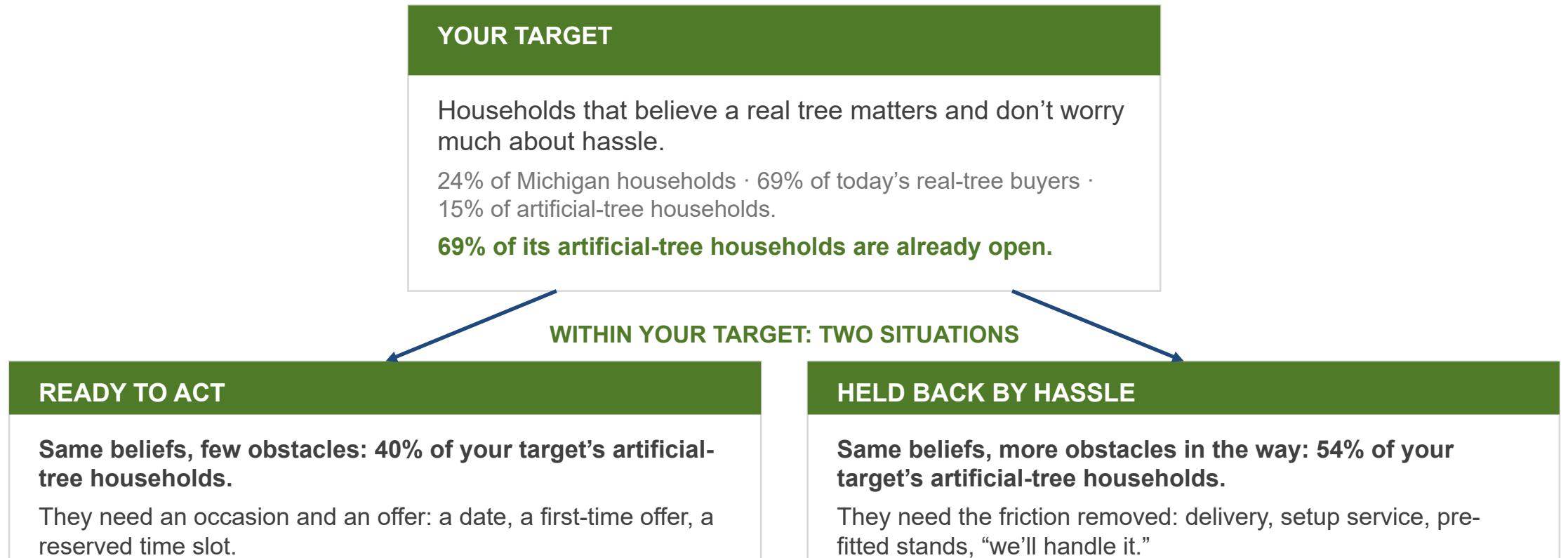
Stock add-ons at the point of sale. Keep it feeling like a farm, not a production.



What Would Move an Artificial Buyer Toward a Real Tree?

Who to aim at, who to keep, and where to find them

Target an Attitude, Not a Demographic



Neither group needs convincing that real trees are good, but both need it to be EASY TO ACT.

Consumers Who Value Buying Local Are More Open to a Real Tree

WHAT WE FOUND

- They are more open to a real tree: +14 points per step on our buy-local scale.
- It's the trait most tied to having switched tree types before.
- But it predicts switching in both directions. In other words, it identifies consumers willing to change.

ON YOUR OPERATION

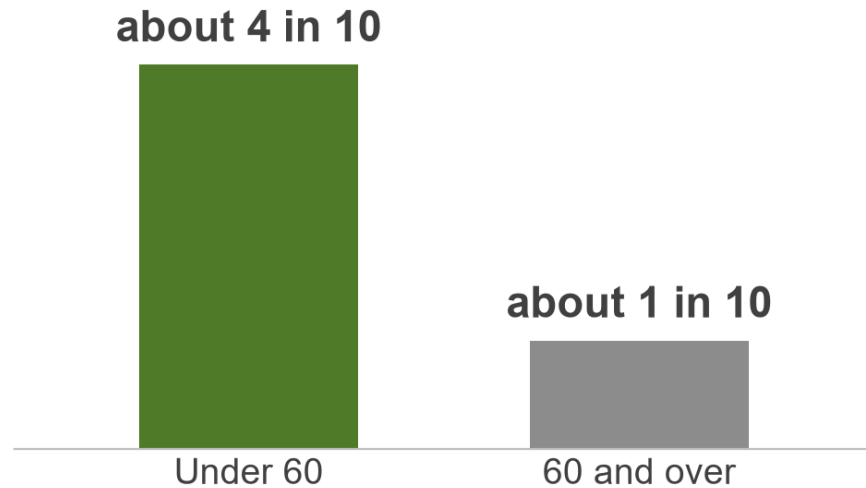
- › Co-market with farmers markets, shop-local weekends, and neighboring businesses.
- › Put “local” on the sign; it doubles as proof the tree is real.
- › Then bring the authenticity and setup messages once you have their attention.

“Once you find a place that you like, atmosphere, people, trees, you tend to go back.”

The 60+ Cliff: Don't Target, but Can You Retain Them?

WHAT WE FOUND

Share of artificial-tree households open to a real tree



- **Not one artificial-tree household aged 60+ strongly agreed.**
- It isn't barriers, nostalgia, or empty nests; we tested each.

ON YOUR OPERATION

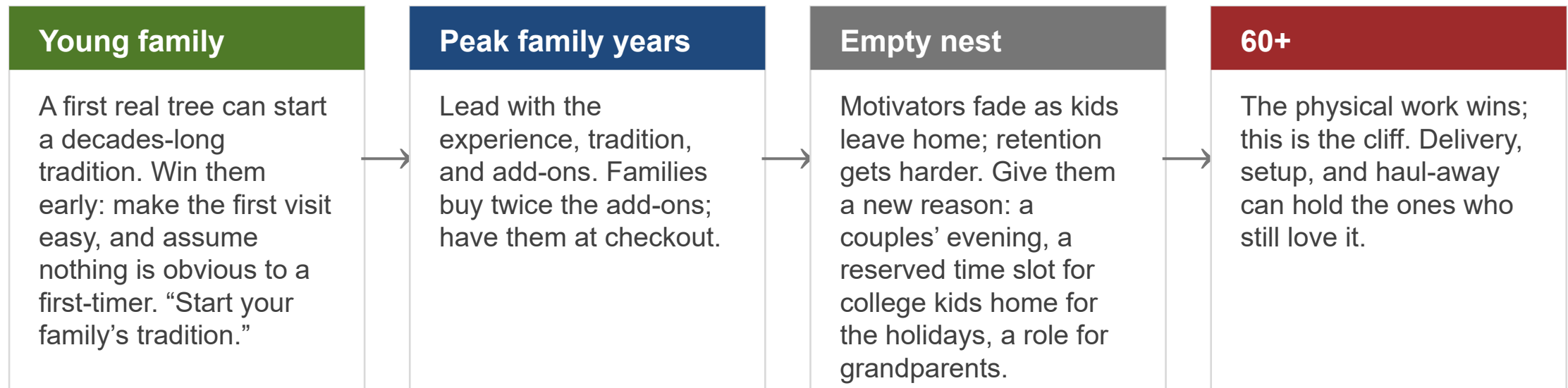
- › Don't aim conversion at 60+.
- › Delivery + setup keeps the older real-tree buyers you already have.
- › Watch your own customer age mix. If it skews 60+, plan now to replace that demand.

"You don't have grandkids that are willing to go with us anymore ... we might have to just give up on this tradition."

Family alone is 35% of all discovery. Are you serving the whole family, grandparents included?

Consider Life Stages

The same customer needs different things at different points in life.



Match the message to the stage, and watch which way your own customer base is drifting.

What to Do This Season

EARN THE RECOMMENDATION

1. **Lead with authenticity.** “Nothing compares to the real thing.” Fold scent and tradition inside it.
→ *Your Story · Brand Framework Worksheet*
2. **Post harvest-date tags and “grown here” signage.** Cheap; signals real and local at once.
→ *Making Your Farm Easy to Visit*
3. **Attack setup and mess.** Delivery + setup, pre-fitted stands, shake-and-wrap, haul-away.
→ *Making Your Farm Easy to Visit*

MAKE IT EASY TO ACT ON

4. **Engineer referrals.** Bring-a-friend, refer-a-neighbor, ask for reviews. Word of mouth is 47% of discovery.
→ *Referral Program Templates*
5. **Fix your Google presence and signage.** That’s the next 24%. → *Google Business Profile How-To · Making Your Farm Easy to Visit*
6. **Give the already-open an occasion and an offer.** A date, a first-time offer, a reserved slot.
→ *Three Emails, Ready to Send · Referral Program Templates*

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

7. **Know your customer age mix.** If it skews 60+, plan replacement demand now.
→ *Basic Customer Insights Tracking*



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Practitioner report on the site; full report from us by email.

Thank You

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Toolkit, practitioner report, and this deck:
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