The Numbers Behind a Holiday Lighting Installation Business

A free field guide from Bytell Press. The figures come from our example financial model for a part-time, one-person seasonal holiday lighting business. They are planning assumptions, not quotes for your market; the worksheet at the end is for your own numbers.

Most new holiday lighting businesses do not fail on the ladder. They fail because nobody worked out how many jobs one short season has to hold before the first box of bulbs was bought. This guide gives you that arithmetic in two pages.

1. How the work is priced

Roofline lighting is sold by the **linear foot installed**, and add-ons by the piece. The example model uses:

Service line	Model price
Roofline lighting, first year, product and labor	$2–$6 per foot
Tree wraps	$75–$250 per tree
Wreaths and garland, installed	$30–$150 per piece
Typical single-family job	$450–$1,200
Blended across the mix	**About $650 per job, 60% gross margin**

The margin is in the second year. A first-year job in the model is $800 with about $320 of product and job cost, leaving about $480. The next year the same stored set goes back up for $550 with about $80 of cost, leaving about $470. The model takes a 25% to 50% deposit at booking, which pays for much of the product.

2. What it costs to open

The example model opens on about **$5,000**, paid from savings with no loan.

Use of funds	Amount
Ladders	$300–$700
Fall-protection gear	$200–$450
Installation tools	$300–$650
First inventory of commercial-grade product	$1,500–$3,500
Storage bins, racks and labels	$150–$400
Ladder rack and cargo setup for your own vehicle	$150–$500
Business setup and first insurance payment	$400–$800

Use of funds	Amount
Starter marketing	$300–$700
Total	**$3,300–$7,700**

The model also starts with about $3,000 of working cash.

3. What it costs to stay open

The model has no lease and no payroll. Its fixed costs are **about $180 a month**, and they exclude owner pay, which is a draw taken from profit:

Monthly cost	Amount
Insurance, phone and scheduling app, admin, small items	$180
Owner draw, averaged across the year	$900
Total	**$1,080**

4. The break-even: the one number to know

Break-even revenue = monthly fixed costs ÷ margin.

The model's gross margin is 60%, but two more costs move with every sale: card processing at about 2.8% of revenue and marketing at about 6%. Take those off and the margin that pays the fixed costs is 60% – 2.8% – 6% = **51.2%**.

To cover the fixed costs alone: $180 ÷ 0.512 = about $352 a month, or about $4,200 a year. At $650 a job, that is **about 7 jobs a season**.

To cover the owner draw as well: $1,080 ÷ 0.512 = about **$2,109 a month**, or about $25,300 a year. That is **about 39 jobs a season**. Nearly all of them have to fit between October and January.

5. Plan for the quiet months before they arrive

The model's first year brings in about $26,000, nearly all of it in one burst:

Time of year	Model revenue
November, the peak install month	About $7,920
December	About $6,960
Average month across the year	About $2,400
Spring and summer	Near zero

The $180 of fixed costs runs all twelve months. In the model, first-year profit is about $10,900 and the draw is about $10,800, so the cash cushion only grows from about $3,000 to about $3,500. Money earned in November has to be held back for the quiet months.

6. Your numbers

Fill this in with prices from your own market before you spend anything.

Question	Model	Yours
Price per foot of roofline you can charge	$2–$6	_____
Average job size in dollars	$650	_____
Margin after product, card fees and marketing	51.2%	_____
Monthly fixed costs, before your pay	$180	_____
What you need to draw each month	$900	_____
Break-even revenue for the year	$25,300	_____
Jobs a season to break even	39	_____

If your break-even needs more jobs than you can install in one season on your own, fix the plan before you buy product: raise the average job with add-ons, sign returning customers, or plan on a smaller draw.

This guide is general business information, not legal, tax, accounting or investment advice. The figures are illustrative assumptions from an example model and are not a forecast or a promise of results. Licensing and insurance requirements vary by state and are not covered here; check yours with the state agency.

Bytell Press publishes the full business plan, the editable financial model behind these numbers, and the operating playbooks for a holiday lighting installation business.

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