

Title:

How to Start a Cleaning Business on a Shoestring Budget

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893

Summary:

No matter where you live, there is always a need for cleaning services. After all, life is messy! By taking the right steps at the beginning, you can start your cleaning business with very low up-front costs, and, unlike many small businesses, you can actually clear a profit in your first year of operation!

Keywords:

how to start a cleaning business, shoestring budget

Article Body:

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No matter where you live, there is always a need for cleaning services. After all, life is messy! Commercial buildings of all types and sizes need to be cleaned daily, weekly, monthly, or somewhere in-between. By offering commercial cleaning services you can satisfy a need in your community and can build a profitable cleaning business at the same time. By taking the right steps at the beginning, you can start your cleaning business with very low up-front costs, and, unlike many small businesses, you can actually clear a profit in your first year of operation!

What are the advantages of starting a cleaning business as opposed to owning and operating another type of business?

* A successful cleaning business can easily be started by one person who does everything from billing to marketing to the actual cleaning. You can start the business part-time and keep a full-time job until the business grows and can support your lifestyle.

* You'll provide the cleaning services at the client's building, so more than likely clients will never go to your "place of business". Therefore, you can easily run a commercial cleaning business out of your home. A spare room or garage can hold your supplies and equipment, and you can use a spare bedroom or small corner of any room to do your paperwork. Working out of your home saves the cost of leasing or owning a building and you can write off part of your home

mortgage and utilities as business expenses.

* You can start a cleaning business with only a small investment in supplies and equipment. As your business grows and you offer more services such as carpet cleaning or stripping floors, you can buy or lease equipment.

* When just starting out you will probably do most, if not all, of the work by yourself. If you need employees you can work with a temporary employment agency and avoid the challenging tasks of payroll and paying employment taxes, social security, unemployment, and worker's compensation.

* A cleaning business can start out as a sole proprietorship, which is the easiest and cheapest way to set up a business entity. As the business grows you can consider changing the structure to a corporation or limited liability corporation, which may require an attorney and an investment of several hundred dollars.

What steps are needed to not only start a cleaning business, but to make sure that it is a successful cleaning business?

* Begin by writing a business plan. This does not have to be a long document, but a three-to five page document that you prepare to help you focus and decide the basic parameters of your cleaning business. Include the following in your business plan: business name, location, geographic area you will serve, competition, business structure, marketing plan, accounting procedures and a cash flow spreadsheet. Remember, a business plan is to help get you focused - it is not a hard and fast document that outlines the day-to-day operations of how you will run your cleaning business.

* After deciding on a business name and business structure, it is important to decide on a particular "niche" for your cleaning business. Do you want to clean small office buildings, large office buildings, medical clinics, banks, new construction or government buildings? It is much easier to start with one particular niche and focus your marketing efforts on a select group, rather than spreading yourself too thin.

* When just starting out your cleaning business you can easily operate on a shoestring marketing budget. Avoid the expensive and often ineffective newspaper and radio ads. Market your cleaning services through networking (especially through your local chamber), cold calling (in-person and by telephone), talking to property managers, and watching for new buildings going up in your area.

* Once you decide to start a cleaning business, develop a relationship with a

janitorial supplies distributor. Although it may seem like buying supplies through a distributor is more expensive than buying through a "big box retail store", there are many advantages in working with a distributor.

A distributor can teach you how to use supplies and equipment properly, which will save your cleaning business time and money. A distributor has knowledge of new products and can let you know when a cheaper product works just as well as a more expensive item. Through a distributor you will be able to buy concentrated and more effective cleaning chemicals. Knowing what chemicals to use and how to use them can directly affect your bottom line. This is advice you cannot get from a big box store! And besides giving advice and training, a janitorial supplies distributor may have leads and referrals that can lead to profitable cleaning accounts.

* Another important person to find right at the start of your cleaning business is an accountant. A good accountant does much more than figure out your taxes at the end of the year. He or she will provide financial advice and guidance throughout the year and help you make important financial decisions such as when to buy or lease a piece of equipment or whether you should rent office space. This will help to save you money.

Hard work, dedication and attention to detail will keep your cleaning business going. Taking the time to make plans for your cleaning business will help to ensure that your cleaning business is successful!