

How To Start Your Own Successful Window Washing Service



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Here's a business that, almost more than any other with equal potential for real wealth, meets the most stringent requirements of just about any skeptic. In fact, there's so much in favor of the "little guy" with this business, it's a real mystery why more people don't choose this one as the vehicle for their ultimate independence and financial security.

This is a business that can make you rich very quickly... It's a kind of service business that can very profitably be operated by one person – male or female... The basic knowledge needed for success is simple and easy to learn... Very little monetary investment is needed for equipment – usually less than \$100... There are virtually no storage space requirements... You can operate out of your home for virtually as long as you like, and yet, there's a real demand for this type of business everywhere...

The success potential for window washing services is present in the smallest of towns as well as the largest metropolitan areas. Your risks will be minimal, while your rewards can far surpass even your wildest dreams. Generally, a one man operation in a city of 50,000 can expect to gross \$4,000 or more per month after just 90 days. Operating expenses for one person operations grossing this amount should be less than \$1,000 per month.

Ideally, your plan should be to solicit new accounts, do the work yourself and establish a regular customer route. Once you've established such a service route, and you're beginning to realize a good profit, you should hire part-time help to do the work while you solicit new accounts and establish more regular customer routes.

You should concentrate on providing regular window washing services for all the one and two story office buildings and storefronts in your area, start with those closest to your home and expand your efforts outward. Choose a busy thoroughfare leading into your city's downtown area. Select the one closest to your home and begin calling on business owners and store managers all along this street into the downtown area.

Usually, you won't have to do much more than introduce yourself, briefly explain your services, and leave your business card. We did this regularly on a once-a-week basis, and after 6 weeks, we had enough business to keep one man busy – 6 hours a day, 5 days a week.

Until you become well-established, don't even bother soliciting work on windows higher than the second story. However, it's best to call on every business, one after the other as you make your way to the downtown area. Later on, you can call upon churches, private schools, businesses located on side streets branching off the main thoroughfares, and even homes if you'd like to try that market. Generally though, you'll find the residential market too time-consuming to make your efforts really profitable, plus the fact that you simply won't be able to charge enough to make it worthwhile in comparison to your commercial customers. Apartment houses and condominiums are quite a different story however, particularly when you can land several customers in the same building.

As mentioned earlier, you can headquarter in and operate completely out of your home. You can store your cleaning equipment and supplies in a corner of your garage. Your bookkeeping and other paperwork can be taken care of at your kitchen table, with

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whatever office supplies you need, easily stored in a dresser drawer.

Speaking of office supplies, you should have a supply of business cards – and an adequate supply of billing statements with your business name and address, plus mailing envelopes and return reply envelopes. You can get away with rubber-stamping your business name and address on your statements and envelopes, but your business will grow faster – you’ll probably also save time and money as well – by going with printed supplies from the beginning.

There are no “real reasons” not to list your home address as your business address, but listing a post office box number -if you prefer – will not really harm your image. The important thing is personal contact – someone from your company regularly calling upon your prospective customers.

Talk with them. Listen to them. Get to know them. Find out who’s currently doing their windows for them, if they have any complaints and how you can offer them a better deal. When you’ve actually investigated the service they’re already contracted for, and you’re certain you can offer them a better deal, put your ideas into the

form of a written proposal and give it to them. Don't be afraid to submit a proposal for a better deal, but remember when you do, your proposal should offer more than just a price break. Under-cutting a competitor's price usually means less profit for you, and an overall deterioration of your reputation. It may temporarily result in more work for you, but you're in business to attain wealth – not work yourself into an early grave.

If your spouse is home during the day, she can answer the phone for you and generally set up appointments for you, while you're out making sales calls. She can also type out your monthly statements, see that they're sent out on time, and pretty much handle your bookkeeping for you. Should it not be feasible, or for some reason, inconvenient for your wife to handle your incoming calls for you, look around until you find a good, dependable Telephone Answering Service. Many of these telephone answering services also handle typing jobs as well, so if you're lacking someone to handle these chores for you, chances are you can find all the services you need without too much of a search.

It's important with this type of business that you have a "live" voice answering your calls. Selecting the right people to handle your calls, and spending the extra time

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necessary to train them according to your desires – even paying a little more to have things done the way you want them done – is almost always well worth the time and added expense. Remember, this is a service business with your growth dependent upon the personal contact you and your representatives have with prospective clients. Work on it, develop it, and cultivate your personal contact transactions.

As the size of your company increases and you hire crews of people to handle work assignments, you can usually get your answering service to take on the added duties of job assignment notification or dispatcher. All of this simply points up the possibilities of operating your business out of your home indefinitely, should you choose to do so.

If somewhere along the line you decide to set up an office in a location other than your home, you might want to make an offer or otherwise induce one or two of the people from your telephone answering service. Regardless of how large your work force becomes, it's always best if you supply the window washing equipment and supplies.

Employees should be allowed to take the equipment

home with them, and required to use their own vehicles for transportation to each job site. By all means, spend the extra money to supply your workers with uniforms. Matching shirt and trousers with a big patch on the back of the shirts, listing your company name and phone number, is not only impressive in projecting a professional image, it is also one of your cheapest and best advertising methods.

Once you have hired people to do the actual window washing for you, get a couple of magnetic signs showing your company name and telephone number. Be sure to “wear” these signs on your car as you make your sales calls and spot check on the progress of your work crews. Later on, you can get similar signs for your crew chiefs. If you should opt for company-owned vehicles, you’ll find vans to be the most convenient and serve your needs the most efficiently. Be sure to have your company name, phone number and logo printed on each side of these vehicles – and allow your crew chiefs to drive them home at night – all of which benefits you with practically free advertising.

The kind of equipment you’ll need to professionally wash windows is relatively simple... A 12 or 18 inch window brush, aluminum telescopic brush handle... 6 inch, 10 inch and 18 inch squeegees with replacement

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rubber blades... A couple of plastic or galvanized water pails, one 2 gallon and the other 5 gallon' And an 8 – foot step ladder, plus maybe a 6 foot straight ladder.

Your start-up supplies should include 5 gallons of liquid soap... a good supply of clean rags, towels and chamois... And a sharp razor blade scraper...

This entire list of equipment and supplies should total no more than \$250 in cost. You will need to add to your equipment only as your business grows and you have the need to hire more personnel.

Some professional window washers are proclaiming an alternative or “better method” than with the use of window brushes and squeegees. They’re advocating the use of “strip washers.” These are 3/4 inch pieces of aluminum pipe covered with a nylon sleeve that fits the pipe. These are similar in appearance to the handy do-it-yourself paint rollers, and are used in much the same manner. These strip washers reportedly work very well on all but the dirtiest of windows.

Another alternative is an extension pole and brush device. Water is pumped through the handle and out the brush in a rinse-wash-rinse cycle. Most professionals

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claim this device is ideal for second story windows, but for best quality workmanship, they still prefer the basic brush and squeegee approach.

Still another alternative is a hose-water-fed brush that utilizes deionized water where ladders aren't feasible. Deionized water is a kind of water from which all minerals and foreign elements have been removed. Using this kind of water assures the window washer an easier and faster job with no worries about streaking or water drops.

Your prices should range between \$20 and \$25 per hour. Pay for hired help should start at \$5 per hour. It's important that you do some homework on the various glass treatments in vogue these days. Many of these coatings or coverings require special treatment such as the use of soft towels instead of brushes that might scratch the surface of the window coating.

The professional technique for washing windows cleanly and in the least amount of time is as follows: A few drops of cleaning solution in your bucket of water. Remember, too many soap suds are detrimental to quality work. Wet your brush from the bucket and then scrub the window. Take your squeegee and make one

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wiping pass across the top of the window. Be sure to keep the end of the squeegee pressed firmly against the molding or top sill of the window frame. Wipe the squeegee, and then do the same thing down each side of the window. From this point on, it's just a matter of wiping the window clean with one continuous stroke. You do this by arching and looping your wiping strokes across the window pane, back and forth, never stopping or lifting the squeegee blade from the glass. With this method, you can wipe even the largest window clean in just a matter of seconds. Practice at home on your own windows and those of your neighbors. You will quickly develop a knack for this method and wonder why you never discovered it before, when you've finished with the squeegee, take a chamois and carefully "blot-wipe" any excess water that may not have been picked up along the sides and bottom of the window frame. In reality, that's all there is to it.

You'll find the spring and summer months to be your busiest, but because of the increasing popularity of painting holiday scenes and special sale announcements on business windows, be alert for year round opportunities along these lines as well. Keep plugging away and offering your services to businesses throughout your area, particularly along those busy thoroughfares where moving traffic contributes to the

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build-up of dirt & grime on windows.

When you're ready to hire helpers or people to do the work for you, a simple ad in your local newspaper's "Help Wanted" column should bring you more applicants than you will ever use. After you have hired the one or the ones you want, keep a record of the ones you liked but did not hire, and check with them when you want to add onto your crew of workers again.

Bulletin Board notices will also bring in a surprising number of applicants. Another good idea is to spread the word that you're looking for part-time help, amongst your local firemen, policemen and teachers. Depending on your area's pay scales, you can also do pretty well by contacting the temporary help services in your area.

About the only regular advertising you'll need to do is a medium to large display ad in the yellow pages. This is a must because once you're established, you'll find at least 50% of your business coming from having seen your ad in the yellow pages. An "insider's" trick to advertising in the yellow pages – Try to name your business with the very first letter of your business name beginning with A-B or X-Y-Z. Statistics and surveys tend to prove that when people look for a service in the

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yellow pages, they invariably pick from either the top or the bottom of the alphabet.

Aside from the yellow pages, your next best advertising will be the “reminder” kind, such as note pads with your company name imprinted on them, special calendars or holders, special date or appointment books, and/or sports caps with your company name/emblem on them. However, as this kind of advertising is quite expensive, it’s good to keep it in mind, but best to hold off on it until you can well afford it.

Any radio, television, newspaper and/or direct mail advertising efforts will cost you much more than any business you receive from it, so don’t even consider this type of advertising. However, do think about, and submit “press release” material to these media as often as you can, because any publicity coverage they give you will surely be well worthwhile.

Telephone soliciting for business works very well, but you should have a list of businesses and their telephone numbers, plotted out according to new routes you are trying to build. Time spent travelling between jobs will cost you money, just as time spent looking up telephone numbers along a certain planned route will seemingly

take forever. If and when you do decide to drum up new business by phone, you'll have much greater success if you can offer some sort of promotional gimmick to get them to try your service.

We had great success one time by offering to do the windows for free if they'd let us put a sign in the window – These windows cleaned by AAA Window Cleaning Service – 666-5824... Another time, we did the windows for half price as an introductory offer... And still another time, we joined with our telephone answering service – on a combined promotion... half price on three months of telephone answering service just for trying our window washing service... The ideas, gimmicks and promotions you can use are limited only by your imagination.

Later on, we hire some good-looking college girls – on a commission basis – to call on businesses along the new routes we were trying to develop. They just introduced themselves as representatives of our firm, explained our services and offered a half price introductory service. They ended up selling better than 60% of the businesses they called upon.

During one summer, we even tried a crew of these

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young ladies as window washers – they weren't the best. We dressed them in snappy red & white suspender-type short-shorts and drew quite a crowd on each job. It was good advertising for us – we got free newspaper and television coverage, and an untold number of new business leads – but the glamour of the whole thing grew old very quickly. But it was a gimmick that brought in new business, caused a lot of people to recognize that we were in the window cleaning business, and made our selling job easier.

Truly, this is an easy business to start... and with just a little bit of imagination on your part, as well as persistence and quality work man ship, you can easily become as financially secure as you want. All it takes is action on your part, so reach for it and may you always enjoy the fruits of a bountiful success.

OTHER SOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

International Sanitary Supply Association
5330 North Elston Avenue
Chicago, IL 60630

BUILDING SERVICE CONTRACTORS
International Association

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301 Tower, Suite 525
Vienna, VA 22180

American Institute of Maintenance
1120 Chevy Chase Drive
Glendale, CA 91205

BUILDING SERVICE CONTRACTING
Economic Development Administrators
Department of Commerce
Washington, DC 20001

Tucker Manufacturing
PO Box 848
Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

UNGAR (Strip-washer Distributor)
254 West Lincoln Avenue
Mt Vernon, NY 10550

Von Schrader Company
9112 Place
Racine, WI 53403

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PO Box 2712
Appleton, WI 5493

Barra Chemical Corporation
8851 N. 21st
Phoenix, AZ 85015

SERVICEMASTER INDUSTRIES
2300 Warrenville Road
Downers Grove, IL 60515

ARMSTRONG BUILDING MAINTENANCE COMPANY
Franchise Division
5308 Cole, SE
Albuquerque, NM 87108

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