

**Start your own cleaning business!**

FabJob Guide to  
**Become a  
Cleaning  
Business  
Owner**



**BRENNA PEARCE**

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## 1. Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to become a cleaning business owner. Few industries have so many opportunities for the new business owner. You're about to enter a fast-paced, diverse industry where you will be providing a service that is always in demand. Whether you're thinking about offering your services to homeowners and other residential clients or you have your sights set on commercial contracts, there is plenty of opportunity to thrive.

As a cleaning business owner you'll have the joy of being self-employed. You'll be the decision maker and call all the shots to make your business the go-to company for the best cleaning services available. You'll have the opportunity to expand your business and potentially make a great deal of money. You will also have lots of opportunity to meet new people and help improve the quality of life of many.

So if you're ready to find out more about this exciting industry, let's get started!

## 1.1 The Cleaning Industry

### 1.1.1 Growth of the Industry

There is no doubt that the cleaning industry is healthy. According to U.S. Economic Census data for 2007 (the most recent complete figures available), the number of firms in the janitorial services sector grew from about 51,000 to nearly 53,000 over the previous five years. This doesn't mean that there isn't room for growth, though.

The actual revenues each company in the sector earns has actually grown dramatically. During 2002-2007, revenues per company in the industry grew from approximately \$530,000 to nearly \$625,000. This is an increase of more than 20%.

Of course, times have changed since 2007. However, the cleaning industry is still showing growth. According to a recent study by Marketdata Enterprises, contract cleaning services sector (i.e. janitorial services) revenues are expected to grow by more than 5% over the next three years. While this is a smaller growth rate than in years past, the industry is still holding its own and actually growing.

Studies also indicate that consumers are becoming more and more likely to use services that increase the quality of their lives. This includes residential cleaning services. For example, a consumer spending survey by National Public Radio in 2009 indicated that one in seven of its listeners has used a cleaning service in the past year. Data from U.S. Department of Labor Consumer Expenditure Surveys suggest that consumer spending on personal household services, including cleaning services, has been stable for the past several years at around \$400 annually. One of the primary groups spending money on cleaning services are the Baby Boomers (i.e. 50-64 year olds).

### 1.1.2 Trends in the Cleaning Industry

As you might expect, one of the major trends in the industry is that of green cleaning. Both household consumers and businesses are in-

creasingly using greener products in order to make their environments healthier. Housekeeping Solutions magazine reports that contract cleaners surveyed in 2009 had increased their green product usage by 54% over the previous year. A full 90% of those surveyed believed that the green cleaning trend will continue.

Another trend to watch is the tendency of clients to hire one cleaner to do multiple cleaning tasks. This includes not only general cleaning, but also carpet cleaning, window cleaning, and stripping and waxing floors. If you plan to target offices as your principle clientele, then you should also think about other vendors you can hire to help you meet your client's needs. We'll show you how to do that in the next chapter.

## 1.2 Cleaning Services You Can Offer

Cleaning businesses come in many different variations. We'll explore some of these later on in this guide. You probably have your own vision of what kind of cleaning services you want to provide, and whether you'll be targeting residential or commercial clients or both.

### Residential Cleaning

A residential cleaning service provides cleaning for clients' homes. These could be houses, apartments, condos, or cottages, RVs, and even boats. No matter where people spend their non-working time, they need to keep their living spaces clean.

As you'll learn later in this guide, the services you'll provide to your residential clients are basically the same, no matter how big or how small the home is. Most homes have a kitchen, a bathroom, living room and at least one bedroom. So cleaning those areas is really the heart of your business. However, there are many different cleaning services you can offer within that spectrum. You can also divide your service offerings into first-time services and maintenance service.

First time services are essentially the same as maintenance services, however, you'll need to spend more time at them than you normally would when you visit the client's home. Maintenance are the cleaning tasks that you'll perform each time you visit the home. Anything beyond is something that you will charge extra for.

## Commercial Cleaning

Many people who decide to start their own cleaning businesses choose commercial cleaning. This is because, as you're probably aware, commercial accounts tend to last longer and pay better than residential accounts. Still, there are a few things you should be aware of as you contemplate this cleaning business specialty.

Most commercial contracts represent big jobs. That means you'll probably need to hire staff and learn personnel management if you don't have any experience in that area. (We'll look at how to hire staff for your cleaning business in section 4.3.)

Commercial cleaners often need specialized equipment. Clients these days often want one company who can look after all their cleaning needs, so this means that you may need to think about floor care equipment, carpet cleaning equipment, and other special equipment to meet your clients' needs.

## Crime Scene Cleaning

Crime scene cleaning is a fast-growing specialty area in the cleaning industry. In fact, one crime scene cleaning business, Chicago Crime Scene Cleanup, was voted one of America's Most Promising Startups of 2009 by BusinessWeek magazine.

As you might imagine, this type of business requires some special training and specialized equipment. It's not for everyone, but it can be both lucrative and rewarding. We'll take you through what it takes to start this kind of business in starting in section 2.4 of the guide.

## Additional Cleaning Services You Can Offer

There are many related services that you can offer, either as add-ons to your regular services or as areas of specialization themselves. These include exterior cleaning and floor care services such as carpet cleaning. The next chapter provides information about a variety of cleaning services you can choose to offer.

## 1.3 Benefits of Owning a Cleaning Business

### Be Your Own Boss

Owning your own business will give you freedom in numerous ways. If you're coming into this industry from a full-time day job, think of the independence you will have by being your own boss. No more nine-to-five, and you can come and go as you please.

You'll be the decision maker in your business. This will give you a chance to exercise your creativity in coming up with marketing campaigns. You'll be able to plan for the future of your company and then watch it thrive and grow.

As Gloria Juarez, owner of cleaning company The Marriage Savers says:

*"I really like the freedom and flexibility I have as a business owner. I also love to talk with people, and this business gives me the opportunity to do that on a daily basis."*

### Start Right Now

One of the best things about owning a cleaning business is that you can start right now, today (although we recommend you read this guide first). Start-up costs are low, and you can get started for less than \$1,000 if you want to. Few other businesses have such low start-up expenses and the potential for such high incomes.

### Make Money

This type of business offers the potential for big financial rewards. Although you'll have to get through the initial growing pains, once you're up and running there's really no limit to how much you can earn. Many cleaning owners are satisfied making enough for their employees and themselves to live on, but if you have ambitions to become a regional, state, or even national company someday, then this business will let you do that.

## Help Improve Quality of Life

In addition to the many personal rewards of running your own cleaning business, you can also help others. Many people are so busy with work, family, and other commitments that they just don't have time to give proper attention to the household chores. As a cleaning business owner, you'll help to bring peace and order into people's lives.

It doesn't stop there. You can also help improve people's working environments by choosing greener, more environment-friendly products instead of harsh chemicals. And, though you might not have thought about it, a crime scene cleaner helps people to put an often horrendous event behind them and regain their quality of life.

### 1.4 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Cleaning Business Owner* is arranged to take you in a step-by-step manner through getting started and succeeding as a cleaning business owner. These steps, and the chapters they appear in, are as follows:

Chapter 2, *Running a Cleaning Business*, explains the different services cleaning companies provide. In this chapter you will learn about the cleaning specializations you can choose. We'll also look at how to do each type of service and do a client consultation. You'll learn what equipment and supplies you'll need for each and how to find subcontractors you can work with to provide extra services to your clients.

Once you know what the job involves, Chapter 3 will give you helpful information on *Getting Ready* so you can succeed in this career. You will find resources for enhancing your interpersonal skills, organizational ability, and learn more about the cleaning industry. This chapter also covers the best resources for learning about cleaning, and explains how to get experience.

Chapter 4 focuses on *Starting Your Own Business*. Here you will find practical information and the best resources for setting up your business. We'll take you through creating a business plan to map out your future business. As you do that, you'll need to decide on a legal structure, choose a business name, decide whether to go it on your own or

purchase a franchise, and so on. This is the chapter where we look at setting your fees and getting paid, as well. We'll look at these topics and much more in this chapter.

Finally, Chapter 5 takes you through how to get clients for your business. We'll also take you through various marketing techniques you can use such as advertising, networking and other effective techniques, including ways to get free publicity for your business. The chapter also gives advice on selling your services and concludes with how to create client contracts.

When you're finished with this guide you will know what step to take next and where to go from there. By applying what you learn here, it's just a matter of time before you'll be where you want to be... in a rewarding career as a Cleaning Business Owner.