



How to Run a Cleaning Business

A How-to Guide

If you are...

Thinking about starting a cleaning business, or if you're looking for ways to run your existing business better, this guide is for you. We've designed it for both beginners and seasoned pros looking for new tips and best practices.

Read it front to back, or jump to the section you're most interested in. And along the way, find helpful freebies that you can download and put into action in your own business.

In this guide:

1. Meet our industry expert
2. Starting your Business
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Meet Our Industry Expert

“Work through what you would want from a cleaning company, and then give that to the world.” — Katie Pearce



Meet Katie Pearce, a cleaning entrepreneur and online marketing specialist. In 2008, Katie co-founded a housecleaning business in Canada called the Green Clean Squad. In the beginning, Katie and her partner worked part-time, doing all the cleaning themselves at nights and on weekends while holding down full-time day jobs. Just three-and-a-half years later, the company made its first million.

And over seven years, the company’s hourly rate tripled— from \$62/hour to \$180/hour.

Today, Katie helps others build modern cleaning businesses as The Maid Mentor. You can learn more about Katie and the services she offers at www.themaidentor.com. We worked closely with her to create this guide, and she’ll be sharing her experiences and insights throughout.

Starting Your Business

To plan your housecleaning business, it's necessary to think about what you want to achieve with your business. Here are five big questions you should answer, along with some supporting questions to help you flesh out your answers.

1. How Big Do You Want to Be?

Do you want to be a one-person part-time business? Do you have ambitions like our industry expert Katie Pearse for a bigger venture that will grow over time? Or would you like to develop a business somewhere in between? What are your business goals?

2. What Will Your Day-to-Day Operations be Like?

Who's doing the cleaning? When are they doing it? Will your cleaners work alone or in teams? Who's scheduling the jobs? How do you want your operations to grow and change over time?

See [Chapter 5: Operations](#) for help with these questions.

3. What Type of Clients Are You Going to Target?

Who do you want your clients to be? Bachelors? Seniors in upscale condo communities? Moms? (Katie says stay-at-home moms were one of her biggest groups of clientele.) Where do your target clients live? What's their income level?

4. How Are You Going to Connect with Target Clients?

How will you advertise?

See [Chapter 6: Branding and Promotion](#) for help with this.

5. What's Going to Make Your Cleaning Special?

How are you going to be special and different from your competitors? Having a good answer to this question is one of the keys to leaping ahead of your competition.

Katie's company strived to make its housecleaning special and different in a lot of ways.

Here are just a few of them:

- They took time to understand each client's cleaning needs and then customized their cleaning for each client.
- They tried to pair up regular clients with the same cleaners as much as possible. This fostered friendly relationships between cleaners and clients and made everyone feel more comfortable. It also improved the performance of the cleaners because they'd be extra familiar with the cleaning tasks for a particular client.

- And because Katie’s company believed in trying to make the whole cleaning experience as hassle-free as possible, they made it easy for their clients to book and pay for their cleaning online.

To sum it up, what makes your cleaning special is the specific things you do to offer excellent service for your clients. It’s who you are and what you believe in as a company—the basis for your philosophy about cleaning, your competitive advantages, and ultimately your brand. Planning to do even just two or three special things is likely to put you ahead of much of your competition.

4 Final Basics to Get Your Business Started

Have you figured out your business goals and envisioned what your business operations will be like?

If so, congratulations! It’s time to work through these 4 final basic steps for getting your housecleaning business up and running.

1. Set Your Business up with the Government

United States: The IRS has a website called Starting a Business, which you can find at www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-&self-employed/starting-a-business, that will take you through all the steps for meeting legal and tax requirements.

Canada: The CRA has put together a helpful collection of its information for small businesses and self-employed people which you can find here: www.cra-arc.gc.ca/selfemployed. Highlights include a checklist for new small businesses and a Starting Your Business video series.

2. Choose Software to Help You Run Your Business

You (or your staff) will need to schedule jobs, prepare quotes, drive all over the place from one job to another, invoice clients, collect payments, and keep records.

You can try to do it all with a mish-mash of paper files, spreadsheets, Google maps and text docs, but guess what it's much easier to use software (like [Jobber](#)) that is specifically designed for managing service businesses like housecleaning.

Software puts almost everything you need to do in one easy system. You'll even be able to get your admin work done with your smartphone.



“I would recommend Jobber to other businesses, small or large. It has saved me a good three hours a day—just on paper work.”

WATCH MORE >

3. Create a “Uniform” Based on Dress Code

Don't waste your money ordering full-on uniforms—instead, come up with a dress code for your cleaning staff. Because cleaning is a job where you work up a sweat, we recommend a dress code of stretchy, athletic clothes, like what you might wear for a yoga class. Also, choose a color for your dress code. (Katie's was black.)

With a dress code in effect, the only part of the uniform you'll need to get for your staff is an apron or a T-shirt with your company name and logo. Katie likes the apron option best because with T-shirts, it's pretty much guaranteed that you'll sweat a lot and otherwise get a T-shirt dirty over the course of one workday. You'll need a clean shirt for the very next day. If your staff have only one T-shirt, this means they'd have to do laundry every night.

But if you're really in love with T-shirts, Katie says there is a way to get around the dirty-day dilemma: buy T-shirts in bulk, which can be quite affordable, and give each cleaner five shirts. This way they have enough shirts to get through a week of work without having to do laundry every night.

4. Set Up Your Online Presence

If people can't find you on the Internet, they may feel a little suspicious about your credibility. A Facebook page is a great place to begin when you're getting started. If you're ready to take your online presence to the next level, a simple website will often do the trick.

Using a free platform like Wix (learn more at www.wix.com) or a low cost option like Squarespace (learn more at www.squarespace.com), you can set up a simple website very quickly and easily. Later, you might want to upgrade to a more sophisticated website, as it can be a powerful marketing tool for your business.

Hiring

Finding good staff and motivating them to stay with your company are some of the biggest challenges in the residential cleaning industry.

Our industry expert, Katie Pearce, says staffing was by far the toughest part of her housecleaning business. After experimenting with various hiring processes, Katie and her partner eventually built a core group of eight loyal staff who stayed with the company for several years. But to build to that loyal eight, Katie estimates over 200 staff came and went. The average time most of these people stayed with the company was three months.

What Traits to Look For

In the beginning of your business, “the right people” are most likely to be you and any business partners you start your company with. It’s harder to hand off the cleaning work to someone else when you’re starting out. “We really had to do it ourselves in the beginning while we got the hang of our business and worked out our hiring process,” says Katie.

In her case, she and her partner did all their cleaning until they got so busy that they had to hire staff to help them. This took just three months, by the way! If you’re busy enough that you need to hire staff, here are the traits you should look for when hiring.

Previous Cleaning Experience

You can lose a lot of time and money training people who are new to cleaning and who might quit after a few months. “It’s very physical, and it’s just hard for some people,” Katie explains.

...try to look for people who do have cleaning experience and even want to make a career out of it.

Although you’ll probably need to hire some people who don’t have a lot of experience, try to look for people who do have cleaning experience and even want to make a career out of it. They already know how to do the job, they already understand what hard work it is, and they already know they like cleaning.

Independent, Self-Motivated, and Hard-Working

Cleaners go out into the field on their own, so housecleaning is a job for people who are highly independent and self-motivated.

“You definitely need people who like to work on their own, because you are working alone most of the time,” says Katie. “You might have a partner, but you’re not working side by side.”

So your staff need to be comfortable working alone and able to do their work without a supervisor standing over their shoulder.

They also need to be able to work hard physically, because the job is physically demanding.

Commitment to the Job and Loyalty to the Clients

Your staff must be able to commit to showing up every day without the other commitments in their lives getting in the way.

“You have to be committed to serving your clientele,” says Katie.

“If you don’t show up, there’s nobody else who can step in.”

“I had a few staff with such a high level of commitment that they would genuinely be upset if they got sick. They felt bad that their clients weren’t going to get their houses cleaned that day.”

*“You genuinely have to care about your clientele,
and you have to be committed to serving them.”*

— Katie Pearce

Friendly

Although your ideal cleaners are the kind of people who are comfortable working alone, it’s still important that they’re friendly too, as quite often they will communicate with clients on your behalf. In many ways, your cleaners are the face of your company—to your clients, they are the company. It’s essential that they make a good impression.

3 Reasons Employees Stay, and 1 Why They Don't

In the early years of Katie's business, the churn of staff coming and going was a constant grind. Towards the end of her time with the company, she resolved to figure out the solution to staffing once and for all.

"I went through everything—went through my records over eight years and tried to figure it out," she says.

Her biggest discovery?

Money is not as good a motivator as you might think.

"It's not money at all," says Katie. "In later years we were paying almost double what we paid in the first years, but the same amount of people didn't make it through training and ended up leaving. It didn't improve our retention at all."

Fortunately, Katie found three other factors that did motivate staff to stay.

1. Health Benefits

When Katie's company put a health benefits program in place, it "changed everything, literally almost overnight," she says. "People started looking at our company as a place for a career."

"We got better quality of applicants. We got serious people who wanted to clean for a living and who identified themselves as career cleaners. And then staff retention was great."

“We didn’t pay 100%—we couldn’t afford it—but we asked for the best package possible. We said, ‘Give us everything you can,’ and we paid 50%. So our staff had health care, vision, dental And their kids had prescription coverage. I think it said a lot about the company. It showed that we cared.”

2. Empowering Your Staff

“As an owner, you’re not out there meeting your clients. There’s no way you can meet everybody,” says Katie. “So you’ve got to have your staff be your representatives. I was always huge on empowering them and giving them all the tools they needed in order to make decisions.”

“They never had to run things through me,” she explains. “I tried to educate them on what my philosophy was, what I wanted the customer experience to be, and then I would support them in delivering that, however they felt it should be done.”

In other words, Katie gave her staff autonomy. Autonomy is one of the most powerful factors for making people feel engaged with and committed to their jobs. Why? It feels gratifying to know that you are trusted to “be in charge” and make your own decisions. You’re more likely to take pride in your job.

One example was the responsibility she gave her managers for the hiring process. Her managers were completely in charge of deciding whether or not to hire job candidates.

“Create a senior position of manager for your cleaners who are ready to supervise other cleaners and help you with hiring and training new staff.”

— Katie Pearce

3. True Connections Between Cleaners and Clients

Cleaners who form a connection with their clients—who feel loyal to them and care about helping them—are far more likely to stick around.

Katie recommends that you look carefully for this trait during the hiring process, and encourage your staff to develop it more through your customer service philosophy.

Finding Candidates

Where and How to Advertise Jobs

The best places to advertise cleaning jobs are craigslist for the U.S. and Kijiji for Canada.

Because Katie's company was in Canada, she found that Kijiji worked the best. "We tried a few different things like Monster and Facebook, but it was always Kijiji that worked like a charm," she says.

With craigslist and Kijiji, you can make applying as simple as asking people to respond to your job ad with a message of interest.

*"Keep your job advertising simple and cheap.
Advertise for free on craigslist and Kijiji."*

— Katie Pearce

How to Write an Effective Job Ad

Try to make your job ad sound like the kind of applicants you want to hire. For example, you want your staff to be professional and friendly, so try to make your job ad sound professional and friendly.

“I looked at the job ads for luxury hotels and tried to mirror their terminology,” explains Katie. For example, the Four Seasons would talk about the “ladies and gentlemen of the Four Seasons.” Katie liked this respectful portrayal of the work and tried to make her job ads sound respectful too.

Also, Make Sure Your Job Ad Includes This Information:

- Say that previous cleaning experience is preferred, but you’ll also consider people who are hard-working and have experience with physical labor.
- Specify if your staff need their own car to drive from job to job.
- Highlight any benefits you offer. For example, if you offer health benefits, feature the health benefits prominently in your ad. Katie says she got far better applicants after her company started offering health benefits.

“The kind of people who respond to an ad like this, which emphasizes the importance of the service—those are the kind of people who are going to be very committed.”

— Katie Pearse



Download Our Free Job Ad Toolkit

Want some more help writing your job ad? Download our job ad toolkit, and copy and paste the wording right into your ad.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

The Hiring Process

“In my two-person cleaning teams, I always had one person who was the manager,” says Katie. “When we had a potential new hire, I would say to a manager, ‘I’ve got somebody starting with you tomorrow.’ That person would be an extra third person who would come in and shadow the manager all day.”

Auditions Instead of Interviews

The “interview” was actually an audition in which candidates went out with a cleaning team and tried to do the job.

“It’s an audition,” says Katie. “That’s how I thought of it, and that’s what I even called it. I would pay them for the audition but explain they had to pass the audition to become an actual employee. I would say, ‘Come in, the manager will tell you exactly what to do, and just do your best.’”

“You need to literally watch your job candidates clean,” Katie explains. “You have to know what they do. There’s no point going through the official hiring process with someone if they can’t clean or don’t show much potential to learn.”

“You’re never leaving them alone,” Katie adds. “You clean with them: the manager and her shadow. It literally has to be a shadow.”

“You have to know how your cleaners clean. If you can’t observe them in a client’s house, get them to clean your house or a friend’s house so you can see how they clean.”

— Katie Pearce

Katie’s Hiring Process

STEP 1: Katie posted her job ad on craigslist and Kijiji. She asked people to respond with a phone call or email. She would also ask them to submit resumes or cover letters if they had them. The main goal was to get them in for an audition.

STEP 2: When an applicant was qualified, Katie would invite for training, orientation, and an audition.

STEP 3: The applicant would then do an audition: working for a day, on real housecleaning jobs, under the close supervision of a manager.

STEP 4: Based on that audition, the manager decided whether or not to hire the applicant. At the end of the day, the manager would give the applicant feedback and tell her whether or not she was hired. The manager would also tell Katie the outcome of the audition.

If the applicant was not hired: Katie would pay the applicant for the audition work via a check or an e-Transfer.

If the applicant was hired: Katie went through her hiring checklist to make sure her new hire filled out all the required forms and received everything she needed to get started.

Training & Evaluating Staff

Any business is only as good as its employees. That's why it's important for your staff to be good at much more than just cleaning. Great cleaning staff knows how to be efficient, deliver great customer service, and can deal with worst case scenarios.

Speed Cleaning and Cleaning Efficiently

Do you know how to clean efficiently? Do you know how to speed clean? If your answer is yes, great! If your answer is no, you should learn—even if you're not planning to do much cleaning yourself. Cleaning efficiently is not as simple as some people think, and like any business, it's important to understand what goes on at the ground level. Also, you can use your cleaning skills to train your new hires.

Whether you're an expert cleaner or a beginner, we recommend you check out these speed cleaning rules.

The website www.speedcleaning.com also has regularly updated content that is perfect for both learning skills that are new to you or refreshing the cleaning skills you already have.

Training in Pairs

Train your new hires by going out on jobs with them and cleaning as a pair. If your staffing model is one cleaner per job, send your new staff members out on their own once you're confident that they're ready. If your staffing model is cleaning teams of two or more, make it a habit to pair up newer cleaners with more experienced cleaners. This way, newer cleaners get ongoing training and support from someone with more experience.

Sometimes it's good to pair up two experienced cleaners who haven't worked together before so they can learn from each other. It's common for experienced cleaners to have their own tricks, even their own cleaning style. So two experienced cleaners could learn new things from each other.

As your team grows, you also want to be on the lookout for staff who are ready to step into an official training role and take some of this work off your hands.

The Importance of Soft Skills

Loyal clients who ask you to come back again and again are one of the cornerstones of a successful housecleaning business. To get loyal clients, you have to build relationships with them. Building relationships starts with soft skills, also known as social skills.

Even though cleaners spend much of their day alone, you should still make sure their soft skills are in place, as they will be

“Housecleaning isn't about cleaning. It really isn't. It's about service, and it's about the personal relationships.”

— Katie Pearce

communicating with clients on your behalf. The first lesson in soft skills is how to meet a new client (or someone new at a client's house).

Once a cleaner and a client are introduced to each other, they will both feel more comfortable, and that comfort level will grow every time they see each other. This can be the beginning of a loyal relationship.

While we were writing this guide, one Jobber staff member told a story about her dad, who's had the same cleaner for years. At this point it's more about the friendship they have than the cleaning she does. "She's so great. I love hearing about her family," her dad says.

Be Sensitive to Your Clients' Feelings

This is common sense, really, but when it comes to being sensitive to your clients' feelings, it never hurts to reinforce good habits.

Talk to your staff about the importance of being sensitive to your clients' feelings. And remind them not to make negative comments about clients' homes, even though it might be tempting to do this when you come across a particularly messy or dirty home.

The key message for your staff is that you never want to make clients feel ashamed of their homes. Clients may already feel nervous and uncomfortable about letting you in to clean. The last thing you want to do is make them feel even more uncomfortable. Instead, you need to put them at ease by being nice and respectful.

"Always treat your clients with sensitivity and respect, whether they're standing in front of you or not."

— Katie Pearse

Even if clients aren't around while you're cleaning, you still shouldn't make negative comments. It puts you in a more negative frame of mind, and you never know when someone could show up and overhear what you're saying.

To sum up, your cleaners are the face of your company. If your cleaners have good soft skills, your clients will have positive experiences whenever they interact with them. And the more positive experiences your clients have, the more likely they are to ask you back and recommend you to others.

2 Parts of the Business that Your Staff Need to Know

Beyond cleaning skills and soft skills, there are two other important parts of the house cleaning business that you need to train your staff on.

Customer Service: Good customer service starts with good soft skills, but at a lot of companies, customer service goes much deeper than that. For example, the company of our industry expert Katie Pearse strived to provide exceptional customer service in several ways, so she would talk to her new staff about the company's customer service philosophy and what they could do to ensure an exceptional customer experience.

Breakage and Damage: Accidentally breaking or damaging something during a cleaning is a normal part of the business that happens from time to time. So you need to train your staff on how to deal with it. Good news: we've got just the thing to help you do this.



Download Our Free Breakage and Damage Toolkit

This toolkit explains how to set up a foolproof process for dealing with breakage and damage. It includes a script that tells your staff what to say to clients.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

Evaluating Your Staff with Mystery Shoppers

To evaluate the performance of her cleaning staff, Katie decided to do something that, to our knowledge, no one had ever tried to do before in the residential cleaning industry.

“I started a mystery shopping program,” she says. “Mystery shopper clients would get 50% off a cleaning to do an evaluation report on one of my cleaning teams.”

“I would have mystery shoppers evaluate teams pretty thoroughly,” she explains. “They would grade them on everything: did they say hello, did they introduce themselves, what were their names, did they leave behind a cleaning checklist, how was the cleaning I’d have them evaluate all of that.”

Applying mystery shopping to the business of housecleaning turned out to be a runaway success. “This was the easiest way I found to have eyes and ears everywhere,” Katie says. “And it definitely improved the performance of staff,

because they never knew if they were being evaluated or not. Plus they would get a cash bonus if they got a certain grade.”

The evaluation reports were also a perfect way to gather customer reviews for the company website and other marketing materials. “These people care, and they’re really engaged, so you get great testimonial quotes,” Katie says. “You get a lot of good suggestions for improvement too.”

“And if I had holes in the schedule, I didn’t have to devalue our service by offering cheap cleanings,” she adds. “I would simply email my mystery shopper people and say, ‘Hey I’ve got three teams next week who need an evaluation. Who wants to sign up and get a half-price cleaning? People just loved it”

Building Your Email List of Secret Shoppers

Katie had a main email list of her cleaning clientele, but she built a separate email list of clients who specifically wanted to be secret shoppers. The reason was that a lot of her regular clients didn’t want to do it. She asked them of course, but most of them just weren’t interested.

So what did Katie do to round up her secret shoppers? “I would advertise it on our Facebook group, and I did some paid Facebook advertising as well,” she says. “The ads would basically say, ‘Want half-price cleanings? Sign up for this program.’ And then they would click on the link and find out how it all worked.”

“I definitely made them do some work, but they just loved it,” she says. And she loved reaching a whole new group of people. “It was getting a whole new list of over 400 people who wanted to be mystery shoppers—a whole other target market.”

Operations: The Day to Day

Getting your cleaning business up and running is only the first step, after that, you'll need to learn the ins and outs of the day to day operations.

“A cleaning business is a lot of moving parts. I had five teams, with each team cleaning three houses a day. That’s 15 clients every day that you have to make happy—or 75 bosses a week.”

— Katie Pearse

How to Staff Jobs and Customize Cleaning for Each Client

Some companies staff one cleaner per job, but we recommend two-person teams consisting of a supervising cleaner who's in charge—the manager, and an assistant.

Here's why:

- Two people clean faster than one person.
- A two-person team helps you justify a higher hourly rate.
- Training with teams of two is a fast, easy way to get new staff started, which is ideal if you plan to grow your business quickly.

Our industry expert, Katie Pearce, also recommends keeping the same two people working together as a team as much as possible.

Match Each Client with One Cleaning Team

Your clients will have a better customer experience with your company if you match each of them up with a particular cleaning team.

“A lot of companies will not guarantee your cleaning team. You can have different people all the time. So this was a huge competitive difference for us,” says Katie. “Why on earth would you want different people at your house every time? That’s the opposite of what I would want as a client.”

“So my idea was to match you up with this wonderful cleaning team of two people who are almost like your personal staff.”

Clients are impressed with this more personal service touch. It also makes cleaning more efficient, because the cleaners get to know the needs of a client very well. But most importantly, it will create the opportunity for cleaners and clients to build loyal, long-term relationships with each other. These loyal relationships are a cornerstone of any successful housecleaning business.

How to Match Clients with The Right Cleaners

So how do you decide which cleaning team goes with which client? “It’s a matter of finding out what your clients’ priorities are and then matching them up with the perfect team to deliver that,” Katie says.

“Some people just want the cat fur gone or their bathroom cleaned. Some people need help dealing with their clutter, and they want their home to be beautifully staged, almost like a show home.”

“Likewise, I had some cleaners who were especially good at decluttering. I also had certain staff who knew how to fluff the pillows and fold the end of the toilet paper in that fancy way and make a home look absolutely beautiful.”

To be a good matchmaker, find out how your cleaners clean by talking to them about their cleaning style and observing them in action. And to find out what your clients want, have all your new clients fill out a client profile.

Customize Cleaning with a Client Profile

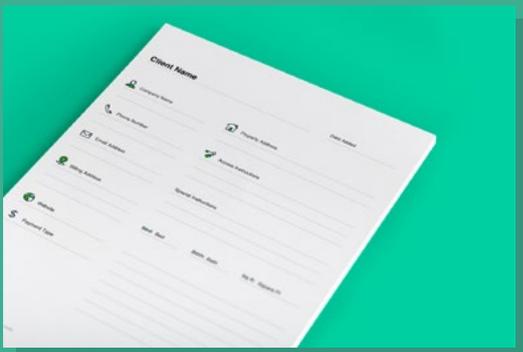
The client profile is a form that asks your new clients to provide detailed information about their cleaning needs so that you can customize your cleaning for them.

“That client profile is incredibly important,” Katie says. “I would ask them everything. I would really make them spend some time. But it was all about customizing that appointment to them—we want to know your pets, we want to know what’s important. Do you want help with decluttering, or is it your showers?”

The more you customize, the more your client will feel that your team knows everything they need to know. This will put your customer at ease and they will appreciate that.

“You need to know how your cleaners clean, and you need to understand what your clients want. Then you can connect each client with the right cleaners.”

— Katie Pearse



Download Our Free Client Profile Toolkit

Want to start collecting your own client profiles? Download this free client profile toolkit to get started. A print and web version are both included with this toolkit.

[**DOWNLOAD**](#)

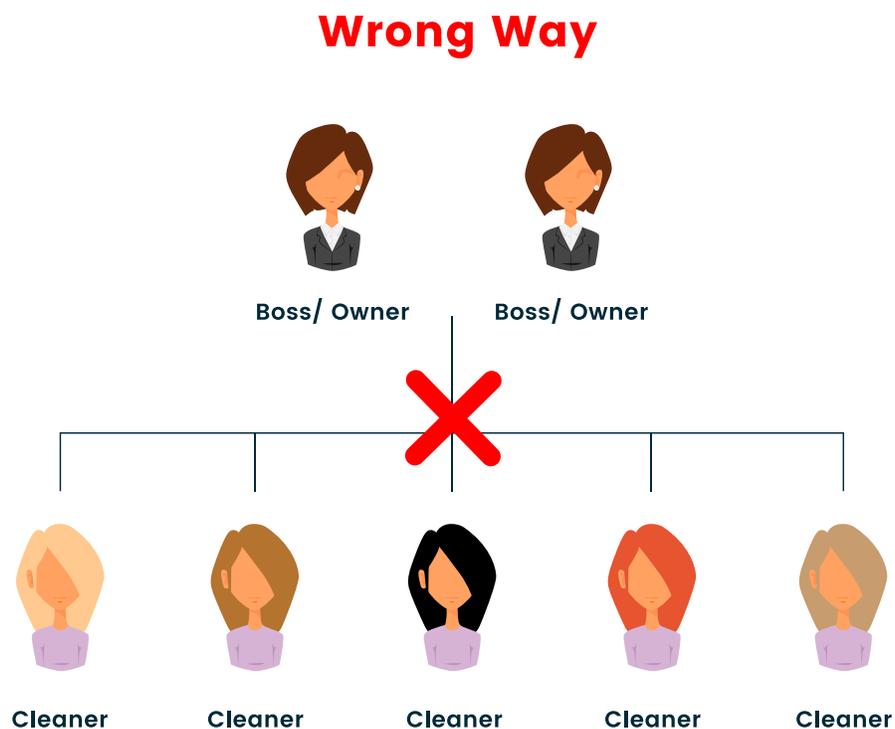
2 Ways to Cut Down on Admin Staff Costs

You can cut down on your admin staff costs by using a receptionist service like Ruby Receptionists (www.callruby.com) or Pink Callers (www.pinkscallers.com) in combination with business software like Jobber.

These two helpers make admin work highly manageable, radically reducing the amount of time and energy you need to put into admin. They're so effective that you might not even need to hire admin staff if your business is smaller.

A Better Way to Think About Your Company Structure

The old way of thinking about company structure is that the owners are the head honchos "on top" of the company. Employees are a level "below" them. If we put it in an org chart, it looks like this:

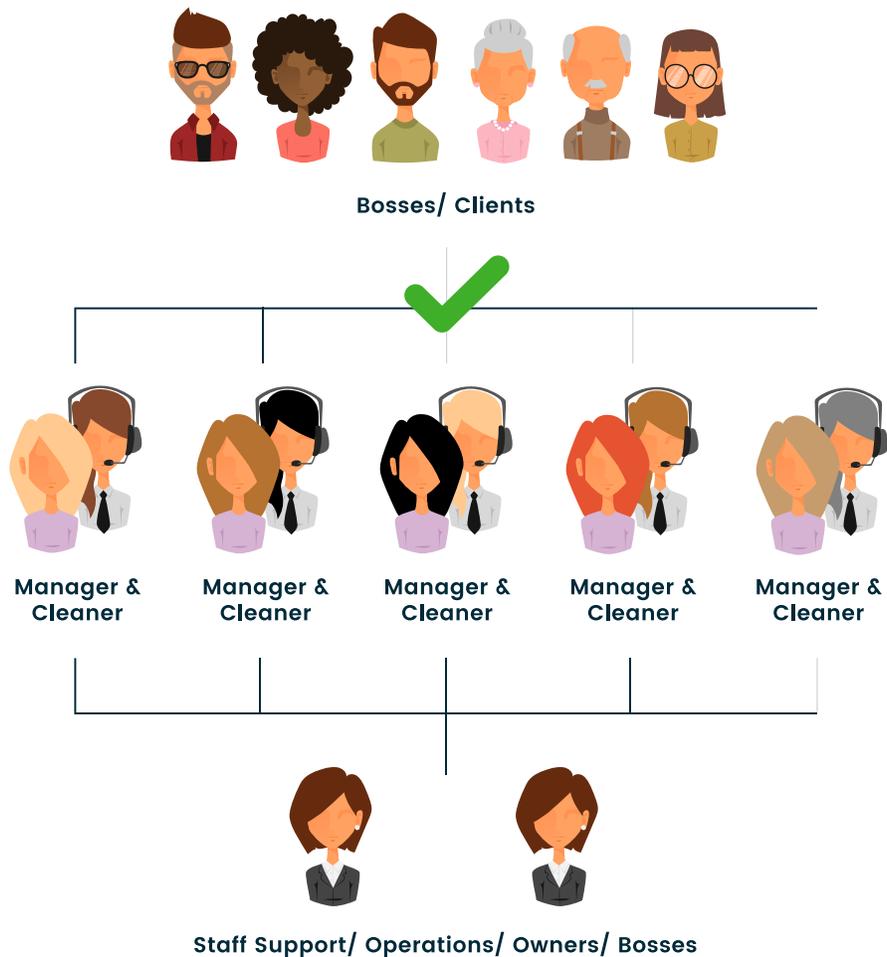


But in the housecleaning business, the owner is not the most important boss—your clients are. They’re the ones who everybody needs to focus on, because if they’re not happy, you don’t have a business.

Also, unless you’re out cleaning, you’re not going to know your clients directly. Who does? Your staff. “Your staff really are the faces of your company, the ones who your clients know,” says Katie.

“I wanted the staff to develop those relationships with the clients. I always felt like I was at the bottom to support my staff to go out there and make our bosses happy. You’re working for your staff in a way, lifting them up as opposed to looking down on them.”

Right Way



In this “bottom-up” company structure, the owners empower the cleaners to go out and make their own decisions about how to best serve the most important bosses, the clients.

This fed straight into Katie’s philosophy of empowering her staff while also making her work easier. “The staff were the ones who knew everything,” she says. “They’d tell me what clients were saying and what clients needed.”

Think of your company structure this way, and you’ll find yourself in a mindset where you’re focused on serving your clients and empowering your staff—two habits that can launch you far ahead of the competition. And, as Katie can attest, it’s the kind of mindset that sets the stage for vigorous company growth.

How to Price and Quote Your Services

The hourly rate for cleaning varies a lot depending on the company. The lesson is that what you decide to charge per hour is very much up to you. And don’t be afraid to experiment with your pricing. “I would test the market all the time,” says Katie. “If things were slow, I would say, ‘Okay, let’s change the prices a bit and see what happens.’”

“A lot of housecleaning companies are undercharging. They could charge a lot more.”

— Katie Pearce

Another important lesson: you’ll be able to charge higher rates if you come across as a high-end, professional company. This is what Katie’s company did, and over seven years they tripled their hourly rate from \$62 to \$180. You might not want to pursue an hourly rate that high, and that’s fine—we just want you to think about the possibility that you could charge more.

How Speed Cleaning Can Triple Your Revenue

If you don't use speed cleaning techniques, you need to start. Speed cleaning can literally triple your revenue.

Here's how:

Say you've got a cleaner who charges \$35/hour. It takes her 3 hours to clean a 1,000 square foot condo. But with speed cleaning, the same job takes an hour or less, and the quality of work is just as good or better. So it's reasonable for a speed cleaner to charge an hourly rate that is three times as high as a slow cleaner, because the price will be the same for the client—or even less.

Find 13 speed cleaning rules at www.speedcleaning.com

How to Prepare Quotes and Estimates

Quotes and estimates are another part of business that gets easier to do when you use software. With Jobber, for example, you can prepare and email quotes while you're out in the field with Jobber's mobile app, and you can filter quotes by status so you know which ones you need to follow up on.

A lot of companies visit new clients in person to prepare a quote, but you can also set yourself up for online quotes. This is what Katie did. She prepared quotes with the help of an online form so that the first in-person visit from her company was the first cleaning appointment.

To get an online quote from Katie, people would fill out a simple Get a Quote form on the company website and provide some basic information about their home. For example, the form would ask for the square footage of the home. Katie would then apply standard time estimates for how long it takes to clean a home with that square footage.

"I also included a disclaimer with quotes," Katie adds. "It basically said that if

we feel we need more time once we arrive and see your place, we will inform you. In those cases we would talk to them and say something like, ‘The house needs more work than we estimated, so we might need an extra hour. Are you okay with paying that?’ If they weren’t, we would ask what to focus on within the time limit because we wouldn’t be able to get to everything.”

“But for the most part, people are okay with a little extra time now and then. And it was rare that our estimates didn’t work.”

You might prefer the personal touch of visiting a new client in person to prepare the quote. If so, great! That’s an equally valid way to prepare quotes, and you can make it part of your customer service philosophy. But if you’re interested in taking your quote process online

Make the Payment Process Easy for Both You and Your Clients

A cumbersome payment process—like asking your clients to set up their own e-Transfer to pay you—can annoy them and make them less likely to pay you promptly.

Also: if you’re busy or plan to be, you better set yourself up to handle a high volume of payments, or else some of your money could fall through the cracks.

“We used invoicing software, and I don’t know how I would have run that business without it,” says Katie. “We just emailed the invoice, they clicked, they paid—otherwise I don’t know how we would have kept track of everything.”



ARTICLES

5 Strategies for Getting Paid Fast and Managing Your Cash Flow

All Industries

Do you have problems getting some of your customers to pay on time? Use these five

With Jobber software, you can invoice in batches and use payment tracking to keep a close eye on which clients owe you money. And with Jobber's ePayments feature you can email invoices with a Pay Now button. All your clients have to do is click on the button to pay you online with their credit card. Learn more about these Jobber features [here](#).

Jobber is also integrated with Square, which sets you up to take credit card payments from your clients with your smartphone or tablet.

You might feel like it's too early in your business to use software for payments, but the earlier you get started, the better. If you have software in place before business is booming, then you won't have to worry about getting started with it when you're super busy.

“Without software, it's much easier to miss payments or forget something because you're handling so much money all the time.”

— Katie Pearce

How Software Can Help

In this chapter, we've noted a few times how software makes operating a cleaning business easier than ever before. We talked about how it makes admin work so quick and straightforward that you might not need admin staff. We also mentioned how it can streamline the quoting process and make payments easy and painless for both you and your clients.

In short, a whole bunch of processes that used to be manual—like quoting, scheduling, invoicing, and mapping your driving routes to jobs—can all be automated through affordable software like Jobber.

At Jobber, we give you training and customer support as part of your subscription package. We'll help you solve any problems you might run into and show you how to get the most out of our software.

“Now, with technology, you can run a very lean, flexible business. You can be a profitable cleaning company that lasts thanks to technology.”

— Katie Pearce

Want to learn more about how Jobber can help your business? All Jobber customers get a free trial.

Give us a call at **1.888.721.1115** or visit getjobber.com to get started.

Branding & Promotion

You've started your business, hired your employees and learned the ins and outs of running your day. The next most important thing you'll do to get customers is market and promote your awesome cleaning business.

Branding Basics:

What You Need to Understand About Brand

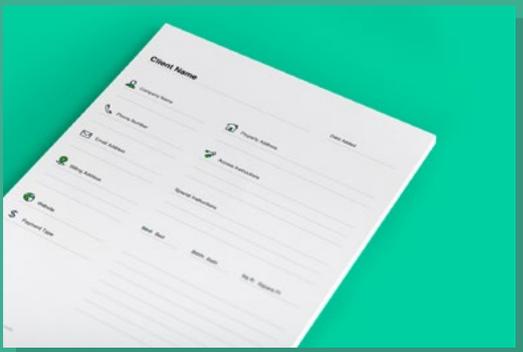
There's a common misconception that branding just means your logo. But branding is a lot more than that—it's what your values are as a company, what you believe in, and the experience you want your customers to have when they do business with you.

It's what makes you different than your competitors, and it gives you a competitive advantage over them.

For example, if one of your company values is protecting the environment, then part of the experience you could offer your clients is eco-friendly cleaning in which you use green cleaning products. This is a competitive advantage because people who believe in protecting the environment will choose you over a competitor that doesn't do this.

“Tailor your company to exactly what you truly like and believe in and what you would want from a cleaning company,” says Katie Pearce, our industry expert. “That’s what branding is—working through what you would want from a cleaning company and then giving that to the world.”

“And for branding, the one thing everybody has to ask themselves is what are they doing that’s different? There has to be something different and hopefully lots of things that are different. What are you bringing to the market that nobody else is doing? Figure that out.”

A white worksheet titled "Client Name" is shown at an angle against a teal background. The form contains several sections with icons and labels: "Phone Number" (with a phone icon), "Email Address" (with an envelope icon), "Social Media" (with a social media icon), "Physical Address" (with a location pin icon), "Website" (with a globe icon), and "Business Name" (with a checkmark icon). There are also lines for "Street Address", "City/State/Zip", and "Business Hours".

Download Our Free Branding Exercise

This exercise will help you get started in understanding and defining your brand.

[DOWNLOAD](#)

7 Ways to Create an Exceptional Customer Experience

One of the most important aspects of your brand is your customer service philosophy. Essentially, this means the experience you want your clients to have when they hire you to clean. Many house cleaning companies have room to improve when it comes to customer experience, so if you do a good job of this, you'll be miles ahead.

A top-notch customer experience will keep your clients coming back again and again. It also leads to lots of positive word of mouth as your happy clients will be inspired to tell other people how awesome you are. You may even want to start a referral program for your business to encourage this behavior. Visit our [Referrals for Your Service Business](#) post for more information.

Need some ideas for how to create an exceptional customer experience? Here, we're pleased to offer you seven.

1. Hold Yourself to High Professional Standards

If you hold yourself to high professional standards, you'll also be able to charge high rates—and people will gladly pay.

"I wanted to make housecleaning a professional, high-end service," Katie says. So she held her company to high standards in every way she could, from using the best cleaning techniques to having a beautiful logo and an impressive website and even training staff to be sensitive to client feelings. This professionalism impressed clients, and Katie's company was able to

justify raising its hourly rate. It took several years, but the rate eventually rose to \$180/hour. This may not be the hourly rate you want to pursue, but we just wanted you to know that it's possible.

2. Do Some Market Research—Hire Other Companies to Clean Your Home

You'll get some incredibly revealing market research if you hire two or three other house cleaning companies to do some cleaning for you.

"See what they do, and note what you wish they would have done. That's the best way to figure out what's missing from your market," says Katie. "We did some of that over the years, and I'll tell you, it really wakes you up, especially if you've been at it for a long time. My gosh, the things you will learn or fix in your own company."

"You can even hire them to clean your staff's house. Then your staff can see what the experience is like from a customer perspective. Worst-case scenario—you'll get your house cleaned," she says.

"Whether you're just starting a cleaning business or you've been at it for years, you'll learn a lot from hiring other companies to clean your house and observing what they do."

Katie Pearce

3. Customize Cleaning for Each Client

“I’ve had cleaners from other companies who would just show up and do their thing and leave. It seemed careless and impersonal. So I was always big on tailoring everything,” Katie says.

“Customizing is an attitude that shows you care—that you do actually care they have three cats, for example, so you’ll spend another half hour vacuuming.”

You can personalize the customer experience even more by matching each of your clients up with one cleaning team that cleans their house every time.

“You’ll never succeed in the house cleaning business if you don’t care. You have to care.”

— Katie Pearce

For more on how to customize cleaning, see [How to Staff Jobs and Customize Cleaning for Each Client](#)

4. Take the Stress Out of Hiring a Housecleaner

“A lot of people never hire cleaners because they think they have to clean up the whole house before the cleaners come,” Katie says. “You know, take everything off the table, because if you don’t, the cleaners won’t wipe the table.”

“But if you’re paying for a service, it should be stress-free. If you’re saying gosh, I have to go home and clean before they come, or jeez, the payment process is such a pain. Why on earth would anybody use this service? Who wants all that stress?”

So make your service a stress-free experience for your clients. For example, you could make it part of your service to move items so that your clients don't have to. And look for ways to make your payment process as easy as possible.

5. Give Small Gifts for Customer Appreciation

Holidays, a new baby, some random act of kindness. Any time you have an excuse to give a client a small gift of thanks or appreciation, do it.

"I'd send them a \$5 e-gift from Starbucks and say, 'Have a latte on me,'" says Katie. "I would also do a lot of cards and little things I could easily mail, because it's fun getting something in the mail that's nice for a change and not a bill."

6. Pay Attention to "The Little things," Because They're Actually Very Big

Train your staff to pay attention to the details and do little things for clients that show you care about them and their families.

"My staff would refill a cat's water dish and leave a note that said, 'I refilled Fluffy's water because I noticed it was low.' They knew the name of the cat," Katie says. "And they kept track of what was going on in the lives of clients. They were the ones who told me if somebody had a new baby, so I could send a gift to the house."

"Anybody can clean a toilet. What's really going to differentiate you are all those details that everyone else overlooks or just doesn't care about."

— Katie Pearse

7. Train Your Staff to Represent Your Company Well

Did you notice how much some of these ideas depend on your staff? Your staff are the key to creating an exceptional customer experience, because they're the faces of your company. They're the ones out there in the homes of your clients, talking to them and often getting to know them well. Therefore, it's essential that you train them to be ambassadors of your company.

A good place to start with this training is soft skills. Then move up to explaining what you want the customer experience to be and talking to them about how they can make that experience happen in their day-to-day work.

Ultimately, it comes down to empowering your staff to go out into the field and provide the best customer service they can using their own judgment. Empower your staff, and the customer experience your company offers will truly become something special.

Logo: The Visual Representation of Your Brand

Your logo and the colors you use in it are the visual representation of your brand.

Having a snazzy logo and specially chosen colors to use on your uniforms, invoices, website and social media will help your business come across as

“You don't have to spend a lot of time on your logo in the beginning, because you can always change it as you get bigger. But you definitely need a professional appearance if you want to be successful.”

— Katie Pearse

professional, and people will take you more seriously. One study by Due.com even found that when you have a logo on your invoice, you're 3 times more likely to get paid.

Options for How to Get Your Logo Made

To get a professional-looking visual brand, the best thing to do is to hire a graphic designer. If the cost of hiring a designer is a concern, you have a few options:

Etsy

www.etsy.com

At sites like Etsy, you can buy pre-made logos and get them customized to your company.

Fiverr

www.fiverr.com

Fiverr is the world's largest marketplace for digital services. Get logo design starting from only \$5.

Canva

www.canva.com

If you want to try your hand at designing your own logo, give it a shot with Canva, a free design program created specifically for beginners.

“However you get your logo, just make sure you have that professional look,” Katie emphasizes. “You’re not going to be able to charge a higher rate without it.”

— Katie Pearse

Setting Up Your Online Presence

Your online presence—and by that we mean your website and social media—is crucial to marketing your business. Some companies depend on their online presence so much that they wouldn't even have clients without it.

In the case of Katie's housecleaning company, Facebook advertising was the main way they found clients, especially in the beginning. Later, they used email marketing quite successfully to persuade their clients to stick around. Both the Facebook advertising and the email marketing depended on the company website, as they enticed people to go to the website to book cleaning appointments.

Setting up an effective online presence is a huge topic, and it can get complicated. But there's no need to be intimidated. You can start small and work your way up to bigger things when you're ready. Here we give you some basic pointers on how to get started with your online presence along with some leads for how to take it up a notch when you're ready.

Social Media: Start with Facebook

If you use just one social network for your house cleaning business, make it Facebook. With well over 1.5 billion users in 2016, Facebook has the most users out of all social media. And the demographics of people who use Facebook show that millions of them are the kind of people who use housecleaning services. [Learn More](#)

Katie has first-hand proof of this—Facebook advertising was the biggest way her company found new clients. “Facebook advertising is fairly easy to set up,” she says. “And you can target specific groups of people really well.”

Online Reviews

Online reviews are one of the best ways to amplify your online presence. Additionally, anything your customers are saying about your company will carry more credibility than what you say about your own company. Good online reviews are an authentic way to promote your business and speak to your credibility.

There are a number of places online where you can list your cleaning business and start getting online reviews. As a starting point, Google Business Listings, your Facebook page, and Yelp are great places to start.

As an added bonus, testimonials or quotes from customers can be a great source for website content.

Your Website

Your website is the home base for your business, the place people expect to find if they hear about your company through word of mouth. It should answer the common questions people will have about your company and make it easy for them to sign up and become your client.

You can start out by building a simple website with a free platform like Wix, at www.wix.com. Wix makes it easy for just about anyone to put together a small website.

If you're ready to do something a little fancier, there are excellent, affordable

platforms that allow you to make an impressive website without having a lot of technical skills. We recommend that you check out Squarespace and WordPress. (Katie loves Squarespace, and that's what she uses to make her websites.) You can also look for a web developer to help you out.

For in-depth information on what goes into making a really awesome website, see the Jobber Academy article [Why Your Field Service Business Needs a Website](#)

Thanks for Reading!

Whether you're just getting started with a new business or you've been successfully running a cleaning company for years, you'll encounter new challenges and we hope this guide has been valuable. At Jobber, our goal is to help small businesses succeed through knowledge and technology.

Check out more of free guides, articles, and tools at academy.gejobber.com and learn more about Jobber software at getjobber.com

Thanks for reading!