

# Boat Cleaning / Maintenance Service

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Boating and yachting is an extremely popular pastime amongst the upper-middle class and rich. These are people with plenty of disposable income and generally very little time. While they enjoy taking their boats out for a pleasurable day out on the lake or ocean, they often don't have the time or will to take care of maintenance and cleaning. If you live near a large lake or the ocean, the local boating community could be the clientele for your new work at home business.

Boat cleaning and maintenance offers opportunities for those with mechanical skills, and those without. If you like working with boats and don't mind getting dirty, this is a work at home business with low start-up costs and excellent potential for expansion.

## Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

The experience and qualifications required for this business depend on what services you plan on offering. If you only plan on offering a boat cleaning service then very little experience is required, you'll need to have a thorough knowledge of boat types, surfaces and cleaning materials, to ensure you use the right chemicals for the right boats. It's easy to gain this knowledge and experience by reading specialized books and taking a job for a brief period with an existing boat cleaning company.

If on the other hand you plan on offer boat maintenance you'll need significantly more experience and knowledge. A mechanic qualification isn't required but is very helpful. If you don't have any experience in this field, your own business isn't the place to gain it. Become an apprentice for an existing boat mechanic and get to know the ropes before starting out own your own.

## The Start-Up

The first step to getting started is to decide on the services you plan to offer. You can either choose to specialize in cleaning or maintenance or do both. It's also possible to offer maintenance limited to a specific area, such as engine maintenance, fiber glass repairs and painting.

The services you offer will determine what equipment you'll need to get started. For cleaning you'll need all the necessary chemicals as well as cleaning implements such as cloths, mops, brushes etc. For boat maintenance you'll need the specific tools required to complete any task, such as engine repair tools, fiber glassing supplies and equipment and painting supplies and equipment.

No matter what services you offer you'll need the following essential items. A cell phone; you'll be mobile most of your working day so a cell phone is essential. Remember to record an informative message for your voice mail; include your business's name, any alternate contact numbers and your website address if you have one. You'll also need transport for your equipment if you plan on working at different locations; a truck is perfect or alternatively a trailer for your car. Alternatively, if you work at one location you might want to rent some storage space to store your equipment. This however is an overhead, so don't do it unless its really necessary and the storage space is well priced.

Spend time developing a good logo and name for your business. Print business cards and if possible get signage for your car or truck. Business cards are inexpensive, especially if you make them on your home computer; make sure you always have plenty on you.

Finally, construct several pricing options and packages for your clients to choose from. Offer all-in-one packages as well as prices for specific jobs. Typical fees are \$50 (USD) per hour for maintenance and \$25 (USD) for cleaning.

## **Making It Work**

Depending on where you live you may encounter competition in the industry, don't be put off by competition, smart entrepreneurs go where the competition is. Spend some time investigating their operations, pricing and customer satisfaction. Look for ways to differentiate your business from theirs. Examples of this could be; offering more complete pricing, offering better service, offering better after service support, working after office hours, being on call 24 hours a day or even using superior cleaning products. How you differentiate your business from the competition will depend on your skills, capital and creativity.

## **Marketing**

Spend money on marketing wisely. Target your efforts at the boating community by advertising at boat storage yards, marina's, boat clubs, slipways, boating shops and anywhere else you might find people in need of your services.

## **Don't Forget**

Your equipment will need to be maintained and replaced every so often. It's important to account for this hidden cost.