

Carpet/Upholstery Cleaning

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Calling all dirt busters and cleaning fanatics! Red wine spills, greasy stains and wear and tear from the family and pets, mean that carpets, chairs and furniture need a little professional cleaning from time to time. A carpet/upholstery business is ideal to be run from home and can turn a handsome profit in the first year. If you just can't let a stain be, don't mind hard work and getting dirty and are looking for a business with the potential to expand; this just might be your next home business success.

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

The great news is that there aren't any qualifications or certifications required to start a carpet cleaning business; you will however need to be prepared for plenty of physical labour. As with all businesses, past experience is a bonus. If you have no experience in the industry, we recommend starting out with an existing company before going it alone.

The Start-Up

To get started you'll need the basics. These include reliable transport (a van is ideal), a commercial cleaning machine, plenty of commercial cleaning products and a vacuum cleaner. A new cleaning machine costs between \$700 and \$3,800, if you don't have the capital for this consider leasing. Leasing costs between \$300 and \$400 a month. When shopping around for a cleaning machine you'll have to choose between a rotary shampooer and a steam extractor. Rotary shampooers are the preferred choice of most services as they have a deeper cleaning action.

A vacuum cleaner is your next most vital piece of equipment. Make sure yours lasts by buying a robust canister model from between \$400 and \$600 (USD). Just as with cleaning machines it's possible to lease; a vacuum cleaner costs anywhere from \$100 to \$250 a month to lease.

To be successful you'll also need a memorable name for your business, logo, letterhead and plenty of business cards. As you'll be on the road a lot, hand written invoices will be ideal.

Shop around using the Yellow Pages before deciding on your price structure. On average, cleaning services charge 20 cents per square foot for the first room and around \$40 per room after that. Upholstery cleaning is usually charged per piece, prices vary from \$50 to \$150.

Be careful not to undervalue yourself in the beginning, many customers judge the quality of a business simply by looking at the price.

Making It Work

There is a huge trend in all consumer products towards organic production. Although this is often just marketing hype it still has to be taken seriously. Make sure you reach out to this audience by offering the use of organic products as one of your packages.

Marketing

Market your services by building a strong business network within the cleaning industry. Make contacts with Apartment Preparation Services, Commercial Plant Watering Services and even Interior Designers. Once you've been operating for some time, word of mouth will hopefully account for a large part of your new business. Consider helping this process along by offering a discount to customers or businesses that bring in referrals.

Advertise your services in local newspapers, the Yellow Pages, coupon books and by sending out direct mailers. Coupon books have an excellent track record in the carpet cleaning industry; this is a good place to start advertising. Look out for books with the widest circulation and best value, combined. Finally don't forget to invest in quality sign writing for your vehicle, its one of the only places you can advertise for free!

Don't Forget

Transport costs are a hidden expense that can creep up on you if you're not careful. Stay on top of your financial situation by taking careful note of all your transport related expenses, including petrol, tires and services.