



JUMPSTART A LOCAL CLEANING BUSINESS

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The low-cost of entry and low competition by big firms, makes the commercial and residential cleaning industry a very lucrative place for small businesses. Although the industry is relatively recession-proof, successful entrepreneurs know that smart marketing and continued growth is critical to the success and survival of any cleaning business.

Whether you're thinking of starting a cleaning business, or just need an injection of fresh ideas, here are eight ways to grow your cleaning business. These are strategies recommended by the cleaning industry's top marketers and small business experts.

1. Picture the Kind of Cleaning Business You Want

We all start businesses with a goal in mind, but as days roll into months and months into years, we often lose sight of our goals and dreams. So as you think about growing your cleaning business, step back and think about what your dream business looks like and feels like and what's involved in getting to that point.

As Dan Liebrecht, Co-Founder of CleanGuru and marketing coach to the cleaning industry explains in this quick tip, your dream might be happy customers, employees and happy owners – the kind of set-up that provides stability and satisfaction for all.

But how do you make this dream a reality? It starts with defining your ideal customer.

2. Be Human, and Share What Makes You Different

In a crowded market, differentiating yourself is essential. Customers want to know what it is you can do for them that other cleaning firms can't. Start by assessing your competition – what do they do that's unique, not only in their messaging but in their actions? Use Facebook, online reviews, and word of mouth to listen to what the market is saying about your competitor's services. What needs aren't being served? From a service delivery standpoint, it might involve a greater emphasis on green cleaning products, flexible cleaning schedules (evenings and weekends), and so on.

Communicate clearly to your customers how you are different by building more intimate relationships through your marketing. Start a blog, or send out newsletters offering cleaning tips (you want to show yourself as an expert in your field) or to introduce your team (bios or videos are great), so that your customers know who they are dealing

with. Offering that information can help prospects connect with you, leading to loyal customers later on.

3. Focus on Customers in Each Step of the Marketing Cycle

Many small businesses are so involved in the day-to-day running of their company that they rarely step back and think about how marketing can help them grow their business. What you need is a marketing action plan so you can lay out a path to follow.

To do this, you need to define your company's buying cycle. It's likely you have prospects and clients at every stage of the cycle – from awareness (customers know about your business but aren't sure what you have to offer) through discovery and engagement (where they try to learn more about you and take action that may or may not lead to a sale), and all the way to referral status (when they are so happy with you, they want to tell everyone about you).

Of course, there are other steps in between, but the point is that you should have a plan that focuses on customers in each step of the buying cycle. While some of the tools may be the same, the messages and call to actions might be different – you might want to use a direct marketing campaign to steer prospects to your website so they can learn more about you while for customers in the engagement phase you might offer a coupon as an incentive for them to hire you.

4. Earn More Business with Email

Email marketing isn't new anymore...businesses of all kinds have been doing it for years. You may be doing it already, but chances are, there are ways to get more mileage out of your campaigns. If you're still sending a single newsletter to all of your customers instead of

segmenting them and customizing those campaigns by segment, that's one place to start.

If you haven't set up automated email campaigns yet, why not make that your next marketing and customer retention initiative? Email automation is easier than you might think, and it's an extremely effective way to convert a prospect into a customer, or to engage a part customer for repeat business.

5. Keep Knocking on Doors

From restaurants to churches to medical practices, door-to-door sales can be a very effective sales strategy for commercial and janitorial cleaning businesses explains "Stringer," a business expert and AskMeHelpDesk.com member.

Here's what he has to say: "[You] need to spend a lot of time knocking on doors. Never stop prospecting for leads, ever. You can get a lot of names and phone numbers (and email addresses) of the correct person to contact later... when you stop at a building to make a call simply ask who you would speak with that 'contract' for their nightly janitorial service, too many times this follow up does not happen and it is a shame as this direct line is your blood line to new business."

6. Get in Front of Clients Through the Side Door

Don't just knock on doors of commercial properties or make cold calls to residential clients. Get in front of potential clients through the side door. How?

- Pitch your business to real estate agents. Many real estate pros offer their clients complimentary cleaning services as part of the home sale...which can lead to more business for you.
- What about home builders? They also send in cleaning crews once homes are built.

- Invest in new home buyer mailing lists and send out direct marketing pieces once a month to higher-income residences. List sellers include Melissa Data, Experian, and others. You can narrow your search down to very specific demographics, too.

7. Network More (and More)

There's almost certainly multiple groups for your business niche or industry; you just need to find them! Try looking for networking groups for your business, services, and location on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Alignable. If you're interested in local events for professionals and business owners like you, MeetUp and Eventbrite are great places to start hunting for local networking events.

Beyond attending meetups and events for entrepreneurs like yourself, consider attending events that cater to your dream customer or target markets. It's a great way to meet more people and learn about what makes your customer tick...and how to win them over.

8. Actively Build Your Reputation Offline

The internet is a great tool for getting the word out, but it's a good idea to work on your brand offline, too. Writing for eHow, Elizabeth Smith stresses the importance of getting out in the community to build brand recognition offline as well as online.

“Put up flyers around town in places where business customers will see. Look for bulletin boards in large office buildings or shopping centers, or put flyers up in coffee shops near the offices of clients you want to secure. Use a bold headline that mentions office cleaning services, and consider tacking a few business cards up with the flyer.”

Don't ignore community events and sponsorship opportunities. Festivals, fairs, and other local events are a great way to market your business to residents and event-goers and show your community spirit.

Be Proactive In Everything You Do

The cleaning business is dynamic...always changing and evolving. To be a leader you'll need to be changing and resetting your business compass from time to time.

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