



# The Remote Cleaning CEO Handbook

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**Part 1**

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**Intro**

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# My Story

First things first, why did I write this book? I wrote this book because I spent over \$3,000 on a program to learn how to start a cleaning company remotely and still lost money for nine months straight, all while watching the people who sold it to me boast on social media about how easy it is to succeed in this business. The program that I purchased, along with every other related product on the market, was egregiously overpriced (and now it's more than double what I bought it for) and lacked the valuable knowledge and advice I needed to succeed. So, I created the handbook I wish I would've had when I started my company.

The knowledge I have now, which I've included in this handbook, would have steered me away from every single mistake I made when I started my cleaning company, saving me months of hardship and several thousand dollars. I spent months banging my head against the wall, making mistake after mistake, waking up in cold sweats, and living in constant stress; I was sinking money into a company and failing to gain momentum. I did more research and tested different strategies, and finally, after months of hard work and what felt like a lifetime, I actually made money.

After building a profitable cleaning company remotely, I can tell you that it's possible. However, as with any business, there are a lot of decisions that you'll need to make along the way, and these decisions will determine if your company succeeds or if it fails. I've gone into painstaking detail to include not only every decision I've had to make, but the decisions of countless other cleaning company CEOs I interviewed while writing this book. This is a culmination of my personal experience and a cross-examination of other business owners, detailing the successes and failures that we experienced along the way.

This book has been well over a year in the making, and I believe from the bottom of my heart that it is the single best resource available for successfully starting and running a cleaning company from your computer. In fact, this book goes so far into the weeds that I believe anyone interested in starting any service business could benefit tremendously from reading it. At least, that's my hope.

Personally, when I see a business model on the internet that sounds like a great opportunity, I'm always asking myself, "If it's so easy, then why doesn't everyone do it?" This book answers that question and explains how to deal with some of the most frustrating situations you'll run into while operating a home services business remotely.

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So, you might be wondering, why house cleaning?

“Cleaning houses?” you might be thinking. “I’m not cleaning houses!”

Don’t worry. You don’t have to. In this book, I’ll start by explaining the general business model that allows you to run a cleaning business while working remotely. However, before I do, I want to take a second to explain why home cleaning is such a phenomenal opportunity, why it’s primed for disruption, and why it’s so easy to compete in.

First, it’s a low-tech industry that not many people are aware of. When you tell people you own a cleaning business, they don’t act impressed like they would if you told them you owned a software company... and that’s a good thing. Because when nobody wants to brag about being in an industry, most people choose not to compete in it, and it becomes less competitive.

When you Google “cleaning business near me,” most of them probably don’t even have websites, and the ones that do usually aren’t very good. If you decide you want to offer fully online booking to customers, there’s a good chance you’ll be the only cleaning business in your area that does it. It’s uncompetitive, super fragmented, and generally unsaturated with competition. These factors make the home cleaning industry ripe for disruption.

Additionally, local markets are inherently less competitive because you’re only competing against companies in your geographic location. It’s very different from e-commerce and other internet service companies, where you’re competing against everyone on earth. This is part of why I believe there’s room in the market for more people to start these businesses; when a person starts a new cleaning company, the entire industry doesn’t get more competitive like it would with an SEO company or a social media marketing company, just the local market that you’re competing in. And, if you do your due diligence before starting (which I’ll teach you how to do), you’ll be able to pick and choose the least competitive markets that NEED better cleaning companies. In these areas, providing an A-level service in a market with only B and C-level players can be the differentiator that allows your business to succeed.

Not to mention that customers in the cleaning industry are sticky; most want to hire a recurring service, and once they like the cleaner coming to their home, it’s hard to get rid of them. This recurring revenue is the backbone of the cleaning industry. Houses continue to get dirty, and they will continue to need cleaners.

Finally, the real kicker that got me into home cleaning; there is a greater demand for cleaning companies than there are people providing it as a service. When demand is greater than supply, it’s like selling food to people who are starving. I learned this while running a small web development company. I was trying to find an underserved market - somewhere I could specialize and excel.

So, I started researching all the different industries I could specialize in and created a spreadsheet with over 30 different “boring” industries. I looked at everything from HVAC repair to dentistry to plumbing, and I landed on home cleaning as the “most boring,” aka least competitive industry that I could build websites for. I chose cleaning because I discovered that most cleaning businesses didn’t even have websites, and the ones that did were awful. Most didn’t even work on your phone, and virtually none offered online booking. Plus, I learned that the average cleaning company in the US has less than three employees. It’s an uncompetitive industry with tons of small players, and looking at this through the lens of someone trying to sell websites, I thought to myself, “jackpot, tons of customers who all need websites! How could I lose?” I built a few templates that were much more professional than the average cleaning company’s website, and I started selling.

I cold-emailed about 200 cleaning companies and included videos explaining who I was and how I could help them. These emails were written with a high degree of personalization, not just copy-paste, lazy cold emails. When I got almost no responses and zero interest in the product I was selling, I started sending physical letters to businesses, thinking, “These are old-fashioned businesses; maybe they’ll appreciate physical letters!” Nothing.

After reaching out to a few hundred businesses and getting almost no responses, I finally started cold calling. I cold-called dozens of businesses and finally got someone on the phone willing to talk to me about potentially creating a custom website for him. I explained that I could create a custom, fully responsive website that would allow customers to book cleanings directly online, which would be a game changer for his business, considering his company didn’t even have a website. What he said next made me realize I was in the wrong industry. He told me:

“I don’t need a website; I’m already fully booked for the next month. Why would I pay for a website when I already have more customers than I can handle?”

That’s a good question! I had been fighting tooth and nail to get customers for my web development business. Meanwhile, this guy just told me that in the 21st century, he didn’t even have a website, and he was turning customers away because there were so many more customers than providers.

“I gotta start a cleaning business.” I thought to myself.

So, I followed all the cleaning business-related influencers on Twitter, read all the content I could get my hands on, and bought all the informational products I could find on how to start a cleaning business remotely. Still, I lost almost \$5,000 in the first six months. Yes, it’s an amazing industry. Yes, the customers are plentiful and sticky, and yes, the competition is terrible, but despite all these things, just like any other business, it’s not as easy as it sounds. You can make a lot of money in the cleaning business... but you can also lose a lot of money.

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It's rare to find opportunities as good as this, and the primary reason there's so much opportunity with home cleaning is that even five years ago, it would have been impossible to run a cleaning business remotely because most of the technology that it takes to do so didn't even exist yet. Over the next decade, I believe people will move towards this business model to consolidate and streamline their cleaning companies and build massive fortunes while they do it. My goal with this book is to teach you how you can do it too.

This book is meant to be highlighted, bookmarked, and referred back to. This chapter is the longest that I'll ramble; my goal is to be direct and to the point, explaining how to handle every situation you'll face when running a cleaning business remotely.

I'll talk through the tech stack you'll need to succeed, the hiring strategies to give you the best advantage in the competitive labor market, and the mistakes you need to avoid. I'll cover every marketing platform you could use to market your business, including some things you probably haven't even considered. I'll even break down all the individual "fires" you'll run into when running a remote cleaning company. If there's anything in this book you're still curious about after reading it cover to cover, shoot me an email at: [info@ponto.dev](mailto:info@ponto.dev), and I'll answer it for you free of charge. So, let's dive in.

## The Remote Cleaning Business Structure

To start off, the company operates by hiring cleaners as 1099 contractors. This is helpful in the company's ability to operate remotely because independent contractors are required by law to provide their own gear and insurance, so when you only hire an independent contractor, you don't have any of the overhead associated with paying for and storing supplies. Additionally, a contractor is much easier to manage because you don't need to withhold taxes from their paycheck or worry about insurance and workers' compensation. These factors make the 1099 contractor route a much easier way to hire someone compared to hiring them as a W2 employee. The extent of your responsibility is having them sign a contractor agreement before working for you and providing them with a 1099 form during tax season each year (both of which I've included with the purchase of this handbook). Beyond this, all you need to do is find their work and assign them to the jobs. For a more detailed look at the differences between hiring a 1099 contractor and a W2 employee, you can refer to page 106 in the taxes/accounting crash course at the end of this book.

After getting at least one person to agree to work for you, you need to find customers, which you can do via paid advertisements on platforms like Google, Yelp, or Angi's List. Your role in this equation is to act as a middleman between customers and cleaners, matching people looking for house cleaning services with people willing to provide that service.

After you have your first customer, you can assign the job to the cleaner via a customer relationship manager (CRM). The CRM I use for my own cleaning business is called BookingKoala - I will refer to it frequently in this book because it's the CRM I have the most experience with. However, there are thousands of CRMs to choose from. The primary reason it's important to have one is that it will allow you to assign customers to cleaners, manage cleaners' availability, and allow cleaners to clock in and out via their cell phones. These core features will allow you to operate the business remotely once it is up and running.

You make money in the margin between what you pay your cleaners and what you charge customers. Typically, this margin should be at least 50%, meaning you charge at least double what you pay your cleaners. A good baseline for a remote cleaning business is to pay cleaners \$25 per hour and charge customers \$55 per hour. This should result in you being one of the highest-paying cleaning companies in your market while still making a 55% margin on jobs. These numbers may vary based on your location, so the best way to determine what you should pay and what you can charge is by researching your specific market. First, go on Indeed and type in "house cleaner" to see what your competitors are paying; try to be on the higher end, if not the highest-paying company in your area. Then, call 5-10 cleaning companies in your area and pose as a customer to try and get a quote for your own home. This should give you a range of what comparable businesses are charging and an idea of your market's competitiveness. If most companies are booked out for several weeks or don't pick up the phone at all, you're in an uncompetitive market, which is ideal.

A good target for pricing your services is to charge over 50% of what you're paying your cleaners while paying your cleaners more than anyone else in your area. This will likely result in you being one of the more expensive companies in your market, but this is necessary for building a profitable business. I'll discuss how you can justify this higher price to customers later in this book.

Before I go any further, it's important to highlight that while it is possible to operate this business remotely once it's up and running, it's a huge advance to be on the ground talking to customers and meeting your cleaners in person when you're first starting. Initially, there will be instances where cleaners don't show up to jobs or have to call in sick. To provide customers with the best possible experience, you'll need to service these jobs yourself. As you get bigger, you'll grow your staff to be large enough to fill in when these things happen, but when you're first starting, you'll likely need to be a "last resort" option to clean homes if the cleaner is unable to do so. Additionally, interviewing cleaners in person is a huge advantage to determining if you're talking to someone you'll be able to count on. Their ability to show up to an interview on time is a reflection of their ability to show up to a job on time. If they blow off an interview, they'll probably blow off a job too. At a minimum, it's better to facetime cleaners than to call them. Regardless, especially when you're first starting, you need to make sure that you're hiring people you can count on, and the best way to determine this is by meeting them in person.

Eventually, you'll be able to operate the business remotely after you've built up a team that you can trust and have extra cleaners to fall back on if someone calls in sick or no-shows to a job. And, once you have mostly recurring customers, you won't need to put much time into the business each week to keep things going.

However, while this is a best practice for helping your business succeed, if you want to, you can start the business fully remote, interview cleaners over the phone, and tell customers you have to reschedule when jobs fall through rather than doing them yourself. Nonetheless, if you're willing to do some things in person and put in some sweat while you're building the foundation of the company, you'll grow a much more solid business that you can eventually operate fully remotely from anywhere in the world, and if you choose, you'll be able to keep it running with only a few hours of work every week. So, let's dive into how to make this a reality.

## The steps to starting a remote cleaning company

Now that you understand the business' structure, here are some step-by-step instructions for starting your cleaning business. I'm going into very little detail because I'm going to do a deeper dive into each of these steps later, but this thirteen-step process is an overview of everything you need to get started:

1. Create a website and get a CRM. I use [BookingKoala](#) as my CRM and host my website through them.
2. Set up Stripe and integrate it with BookingKoala to easily charge customers and pay cleaners.
3. Get a business phone number. This isn't essential, but it's incredibly useful to know when someone is calling your business rather than your personal phone, and it's nice not needing to give your personal phone number to customers. For this, I use Google Voice. It costs \$3 per month, is easy to set up, and works great.
4. Create a business bank account. There's a variety of places that you can go to have this done, from fully online banking options, such as Bank Novo or Ally Bank, to more local options with physical locations. I prefer to use my local credit union because of the customer service they're able to provide. Regardless, creating a business bank account in order to separate your personal assets from your business assets is an important step to starting any business.

5. Next, you need insurance for your business and separate insurance for your cleaners, assuming you're hiring them as 1099 contractors. Thimble and Hiscox are affordable, fully online options for basic insurance. However, talk to an insurance professional in your state to determine everything necessary to protect your business. In general, the policies you should consider are:

- For yourself: General Liability insurance and Cyber Insurance.
- For your cleaners: Auto insurance, General Liability insurance, Voluntary Property Damage insurance, and Errors & Omissions insurance. (Cleaners must pay for this assuming you're hiring them as 1099 contractors).

6. Next, it's a good idea to consult with an attorney to talk through structuring your business to protect yourself from legal liability if anything ever goes wrong on a job, as well as have them read through your contractor agreement to make sure it's compliant with employment laws in your state. You can also ask for additional advice on things like insurance to make sure you're fully covered.

7. To hire cleaners, Indeed is the best platform available, but it can be difficult to get approved when you start out. If you don't get approved on Indeed, ZipRecruiter will also work.

The script I use for interviewing cleaners is included with the purchase of this handbook.

8. Before you hire anyone, you'll need them to sign a contractor agreement. For this, I use DocuSign. One alternative to DocuSign that you can also consider using is PandaDoc, they have a free plan that allows you to enter unlimited signatures in pre-made documents, and their paid plans are also cheaper than DocuSign.

Although this handbook comes with a contractor agreement template, you should still consult with an attorney before using it because employment laws vary by state. This book, and any of its additional contents, do not constitute legal advice.

Also, READ the contractor agreement before using it. Don't be intimidated by the legal jargon. Although some parts of it may be difficult to understand, the agreement will give you a detailed understanding of how hiring an independent contractor actually works and what you are legally allowed and not allowed to do.

9. After a contractor agreement is signed, you'll need to conduct a background check on the cleaner - for this, I use Certn.

10. Next, the cleaner will need to fill out a W-9 form to collect tax information. You'll need this info and the total amount the cleaner made within the year to file taxes, assuming they earned more than \$600.

A W-9 template is also included with the purchase of this handbook in the “Tax Forms” zip file.

11. Next, set up direct deposit for the cleaner using Stripe and connect their Stripe account to BookingKoala.

12. After you get your first cleaner, you'll need customers. For this, Google Local Service Ads is your best option. Also, create accounts for yourself on every online directory available to help people find you when they search for you.

13. Finally, assign the cleaners to the customers and make money on the margin between what you charge your customers and what you pay your cleaners.

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And just like that, you're ready to go. Easy, right? Sort of. In the next chapters, I'll dive deeply into these steps. Then, I'll go through all the reasons that, despite setting your business up to succeed, it will still fail. This is the most important section because it's essential to understand why some people don't find success so that you can learn from their mistakes. My hope, however, is that with the help of this handbook, you'll have all of the tools you need to succeed and take advantage of the incredible opportunity this business model presents.



**Part 2**

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**Hiring**

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Hiring is arguably the most difficult and important thing to get right when running a cleaning business. It's not easy to find people willing to do manual labor, and of that pool of people, even fewer are willing to show up on time every day and put in the necessary effort to do a good job.

The people you hire are the foundation of your business. You can be great at managing customers and responding quickly, but if you don't have reliable cleaners who consistently do a good job, you will not be successful. Poor staff will lead to a poor reputation in your market, bad reviews, and potentially the failure of your company. The only way to prevent this is by being selective and strictly hiring people whom you can trust to do a good job.

## Who should you be hiring?

First, don't hire anyone without at least one year of residential cleaning experience. If you're hiring people as contractors, you can't offer much in terms of training, so you can avoid needing to worry about training cleaners by only hiring people with previous cleaning experience.

Additionally, the following questions should be asked on your job application and are non-negotiable in terms of hiring:

1. Do you have a valid driver's license?
2. Do you have access to a motor vehicle?
3. Do you have car insurance?
4. Are you willing to consent to a background check?

Any cleaner who answers "no" to any of these questions should not be considered for hire. This business model requires cleaners to travel to customers' houses, so they need transportation and a valid driver's license. In addition, it requires cleaners to enter customers' houses with very little supervision, so you must do your due diligence and background check everyone you hire. Bonding and insurance will protect you from legal liability if anything goes wrong on the job. Still, you owe it to your customers to background check every cleaner, so you know exactly who you're sending into their houses.

My favorite people to hire are those who already own their own small cleaning companies and are looking for more customers. These people are the best because they typically already have their own insurance, the necessary gear, and the knowledge of dealing with customers and doing a thorough job. You usually won't have to do any training beyond getting them set up in your CRM and showing them how to track bookings.



Finally, one thing to consider is that when hiring cleaners, you can either choose to have headaches during the hiring process or you can have headaches during the actual jobs. What I mean by this is that some level of headache is unavoidable. However, the headache of not being able to find anyone who meets your quality guidelines is a cheaper headache than having things go wrong during jobs. If you're selective about who you hire and only hire the best cleaners (people with relevant experience who come off as trustworthy on the phone and can provide multiple references), you'll have to turn down most people who apply. It will be difficult and can take multiple weeks to conduct interviews. However, if you're careful about who you hire, there will be fewer headaches during the actual jobs. This is the tradeoff you'll need to make when making hiring decisions, but the issues associated with hiring low-quality people are far worse than headaches related to struggling to find anyone.

## How much should you pay?

Like I said in the last chapter, to get an initial idea of how much to pay, you can Google "house cleaner jobs near me" and look at the different job postings. Determine what the highest paying cleaning companies are paying cleaners and offer \$1 to \$2 more per hour. Depending on the market, this will typically fall between \$23 to \$26 per hour.

When you're first starting, it may seem like a good idea to pay significantly more than anyone else in the area. You might think, "I'm charging customers \$55 per hour; I could pay \$35 or \$40 per hour!" However, the impact this will have on your margins can be detrimental. You'll need to hire more cleaners and manage more customers to cover costs, which will create headaches and can cause a worse experience for your cleaners, customers, and you. This is especially tempting when you first start because you may feel desperate to get people on board. However, overpaying will cut your margins and can come across as a scam depending on how much more you're paying than the average market rate.

When I was first starting out, I desperately needed a house cleaner because I started paying for ads to get customers before hiring any staff. I had people requesting house cleanings from me and could not satisfy the demand. I increased my pay to \$35 per hour, significantly more than any other company in the area, and expected the applications to come flooding in. But, to my surprise, they never came.

I was dumbfounded and eventually talked to a representative from ZipRecruiter about the situation. He mentioned that I might not be getting applicants because people think it's too good to be true and that it's some sort of scam, which I hadn't even considered. Eventually, I hired someone at \$35 per hour, then decreased pay to \$25 per hour, and got almost double the applicants in the same time frame. During the interview with the woman I eventually hired at \$35 per hour, I spent most of the call trying to explain that the job wasn't "too good to be

true” - a hurdle I didn’t even have to think about when paying \$10 per hour less.

This is an interesting lesson. It’s easier to compete with other employers when you pay slightly better than them rather than pay significantly more because you don’t have to explain to the applicant why you’re paying so much better.

By the way, there are two reasons you can afford to pay more than other cleaning companies. First, this is a leaner business model because there are no costs associated with paying for a headquarters. After all, you’re running the company remotely. Second, hiring a contractor is less expensive for the employer because you don’t need to pay social security and medicare taxes, nor do you have to pay for workers comp or health insurance. Plus, you don’t need to worry about withholding these things on the cleaner’s behalf, making it a more straightforward process and allowing you to save money on tax software. These costs get passed on to the cleaner, so there’s an obligation to pay higher wages to compensate for this. After the cost of supplies, insurance, and additional taxes that cleaners pay, \$25 per hour can be closer to the equivalent of \$15 per hour if they were a W2 employee. This is an important fact to be aware of as a business owner and should be something you’re transparent about during the hiring process. I’ll go further in-depth on the additional taxes that 1099 contractors have to pay on page 106 of this book.

## How do you get cleaners to apply?

Tons of different platforms exist to get people to apply for jobs, which can be overwhelming when you start out. Here’s everything you need to know about all the best platforms.

## Indeed

When I started my business, I could not get approved with Indeed in the time frame that I wanted because they require extensive documentation. Indeed requires business owners to provide proof that their company exists in the form of LLC information, insurance information, or some other identifier that proves the business is legitimate. While this is a nice feature for established businesses because it establishes credibility with job applicants, it can hinder brand-new businesses from getting onto the platform.

After I did eventually get set up with Indeed, it not only consistently delivered the highest quality applicants but also allows you to pay per application rather than a fixed cost per month like most similar services. Additionally, you can turn Indeed on and off at any time, which

is great for not overspending after you've hired all the cleaners you need.

The largest challenge in this industry is balancing the ratio of cleaners to customers. The key is for cleaners to have consistent work but not be overwhelmed, and Indeed is the best tool for managing this effectively on the staffing side. In addition, Indeed refunds you for applicants who don't meet your specifications. While other platforms and job boards allow people with less experience to apply, Indeed will allow you to reject people before interviewing them and get a full refund for the lead cost. A typical price per application is usually around \$20-25; however, this varies based on your location and how competitive it is.

If you find it difficult to get approved with Indeed when you're first starting out, you'll probably find it much easier to get approved on ZipRecruiter.

## ZipRecruiter

When I started my business, I used ZipRecruiter to hire my first cleaners, and while it doesn't offer the same level of flexibility that Indeed does, it can still provide great applicants.

The primary drawback with ZipRecruiter compared to Indeed is that you're required to pay a fixed monthly fee regardless of the number of applications you get. Additionally, many of these applicants will likely not meet all your criteria in terms of hiring. There are no discounts or refunds if you get applicants without cleaning experience or who don't meet basic application requirements, and you can't pause your subscription after you've made the hires you need. For this reason, I frequently received additional job applicants that I didn't even interview. However, ZipRecruiter does have an AI feature that allows you to "like" and "dislike" cleaners based on their applications, which will eventually filter your applicants to strictly candidates that meet your criteria.

The key to finding high-quality workers with both ZipRecruiter and Indeed is to call people as soon as possible after they apply. Like any other customer, converting a great cleaner can be difficult. The best way to secure applicants and hire great staff is to call immediately while the job application is still on their mind.

## Care.com

Care.com is an underrated platform when it comes to hiring cleaners. Care.com is nice because the only people on the platform are individuals who are already cleaning houses, so

many of them will already have cleaning experience and will be open to the idea of providing their own gear and insurance. Additionally, you can search through all the house cleaners in your area using Care.com and only reach out to those who have positive reviews.

Care.com also allows you to post jobs on their platform for only \$100 per month, making it a less expensive option than other job boards. However, posting an application won't attract nearly as many applicants as reaching out to people directly. Sifting through house cleaners in your area and sending them a personal message is far more effective on this platform. Care.com has an internal messaging feature that allows you to do this quickly and easily. While it is less expensive, Care.com is also a much smaller platform than ZipRecruiter and Indeed, so your pool of potential employees will likely be smaller.

When I started, I signed up for three months of hiring on Care.com at \$100 per month. I found 67 cleaners who had accounts in my market and personally messaged each of them, eventually locking down one cleaner. The response rates were low, and I only got a handful of applications from the actual job post. This would have been fine if I'd only paid for one month and used that month to reach out to everyone in my market. In terms of pricing, \$100 is a low price for a good cleaner, so definitely take advantage of the platform. Just be aware that it probably won't be your ideal long-term hiring solution.

## Employee-incentivized Referrals

Once you have a few high-quality cleaners on your staff, employee referrals should be your primary avenue for hiring. You'll typically find higher-quality people this way because your most reliable cleaners will only recommend people they trust, and you can structure your referral program to only pay when you hire people.

When implementing this, you can offer current cleaners a \$100 bonus if they refer someone who ends up getting hired, as well as a \$100 bonus to the new hire, contingent that these will be paid out AFTER the new hire's first clean. \$200 is a fair price for a good cleaner, and you don't have to pay anything until they have completed their first job. Once you have a pool of trustworthy cleaners, this is my favorite way to hire people, but it's only an option after the business is established.

## Craigslist

This is going to be a short section. Don't use Craigslist to find workers. It's cheap for a reason,

and you'll get unreliable people. Stick to the first four strategies for getting cleaners, and stay off Craigslist.

## Retaining Staff

When it comes to retaining great people, it takes more than just paying better than other companies. To keep your people happy and incentivize professional conduct simultaneously, you can pay cleaners monthly bonuses to encourage actions that benefit the business. For example, paying a monthly \$50 bonus to cleaners who only get four and five-star reviews and get to every job on time is a small price to encourage reliability and consistent quality.

Cleaners calling in is one of the most frustrating headaches you'll encounter as the CEO of a remote cleaning company, and bonuses can help reduce this by a significant margin. Additionally, your cleaners will be motivated to provide higher quality work, so everybody wins.

Another incentive program you can utilize is a \$100 "new hire bonus," designed to help compensate the new hire for the cost of supplies and insurance. My preferred structure is to break this up into four smaller bonuses spread across the individual's first four cleans to protect you if a cleaner leaves after the first clean. Because you'll typically make at least \$25 on each job, the cost of this bonus is covered by each clean and shouldn't create any cash flow issues.

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Finally, communicating with your cleaners is the most important tool for maintaining a great team. At least once per month, make a point of reaching out to each person working for you and ask them the following questions:

1. Are you happy with the number of customers you're serving right now?
2. Is there anything I could do to improve your happiness in this role?
3. Are there any customers who you don't want to continue serving?
  - a. Make it clear you may not be able to do anything about this today, but it's a great thing to be aware of; difficult customers can be draining for your best cleaners, and you may not even know it's happening unless you ask.

This will give you a solid pulse on the state of your cleaning company and show you what you can do to improve the job for your cleaners. It's important to do this often because people's life situations are constantly changing.

Before I started doing these check-ins, I randomly decided to reach out to my best cleaner after not talking to her about anything other than specific job-related things for several months. I didn't see a reason to question her work, considering she was only serving recurring customers and previously voiced that she didn't have the capacity for any new clients. When I asked if she was happy with the number of customers she was serving, she responded that she now had more availability and needed more clients and that if she didn't get more work, she would have to get another job.

At first, I was frustrated because she didn't communicate that her life situation had changed. However, many people don't communicate things like this, so it's important to be proactive and continually ask these questions. Because I reached out to her, I could provide her with more work and keep her from leaving. If I had waited even 1-2 more weeks to reach out, I probably would have lost my best cleaner. Moral of the story; prioritize checking in on your people to ensure you're doing everything possible to retain them.

Retaining people is important for two reasons. Firstly, hiring people is expensive, and recurring customers typically expect the same cleaner to come in each time. Second, the cost of acquiring a new cleaner is often between \$200-400 per cleaner after the cost of advertisements and background checks. The best way to keep customers happy and save money on hiring new cleaners is by keeping your current cleaners onboard for as long as possible - and the only way to achieve this is by keeping them happy.

## When to Fire

Knowing when to stop assigning jobs to a cleaner can be difficult to determine when you're starting off, but a general rule of thumb is always to be proactive rather than reactive. "Always be hiring" is a mantra that I live by, especially when the company is in its early stages because if you're always hiring, you can fire fast when something goes wrong. Oftentimes, when you start seeing red flags that a cleaner's interest in working for you might be dwindling, it usually means that they're preparing to walk out, and this can cause huge problems in your business if you're not prepared for it. These red flags can take many forms, but some of the most common are that they're not responding to calls or texts, calling in "sick" to jobs more frequently, or getting poor customer reviews.

A cleaner no-showing to a job can be a disaster for your business because it can damage your reputation in your local market, garner poor reviews, and potentially lose a major customer if the customer is recurring. Address the issue before it happens by being proactive and reaching out to the cleaner. Tell them blatantly that you've noticed their enthusiasm seems to be dwindling, and ask them if there's anything you can do to improve their working situation.

Try to determine the root cause of their behavior, and if it seems like they're about to quit, focus on hiring until you have someone who can take their work at a moment's notice. One nice thing about hiring people as 1099 contractors is that you don't need to formally "fire" anyone; you can just reassign their work, so the key is always to have the capacity to reassign work, especially when your workforce is shaky.

When I first started, I hired a woman that I'll call "Becca." When she first started, Becca seemed like the ideal cleaner - she was available almost all the time, had previously owned her own cleaning company, and was responsive on the phone. However, over time I realized that Becca was "sick" a lot. She called in more often and started making excuses about why she couldn't get to jobs. She got less responsive to texts and phone calls and started getting low-star reviews. It was clear that something was taking her interest away from the business.

These issues should have been red flags, but it wasn't until she fully no-showed for a job that I decided to replace her entirely. The customer was so angry that they left us 1-star reviews on Angi's List, Facebook, AND Google - every platform I was on. This was a major black eye to our brand-new company, and I could have avoided the situation by immediately working to hire a replacement as soon as her performance dwindled.

Luckily, I had just hired a new cleaner who could take over most of her work. This new cleaner was much more reliable and consistently did a better job. I was fortunate to find a replacement so quickly, because if I didn't have a new cleaner lined up right when Becca quit, I would have lost thousands of dollars in recurring revenue.

The moral of the story is that when you're first starting off, you may find yourself working with less reliable people. So, continuously investing in getting new people in your pipeline will allow you to expand and build a strong base of cleaners you know you can trust.

One indicator of how reliable a cleaner will be is their enthusiasm during the initial interview. While this obviously doesn't directly relate to their ability to clean houses, it's a red flag if someone has very little enthusiasm during your conversations with them. This could be about how they're talking about the actual job or even the tone of their voice. A general rule of thumb that I use is if someone has more enthusiasm during the interview, they're going to be a more reliable employee because it's an indicator that working for you is something that they genuinely want to do and will take seriously.



**Part 3**

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# Marketing



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So, you've hired your first cleaners and got the systems and bonuses to keep them around for the foreseeable future. Now all you need are some customers, and lucky for you, there are many ways to find them. Before jumping in, I'll preface this section by saying that different lead generation platforms work better or worse depending on your location - Google is best in some places, while Angi's List or Yelp may be better in others. I'll be speaking directly from my experience starting my company in Wisconsin and feedback that I collected from a handful of other cleaning business CEOs operating across the US.

This section lists marketing platforms in the order that I believe you should set them up to give your business the best chance of success. Starting off, if you can get your business into every local and national business directory available, then put your paid advertising dollars into Google, you may not need any of the other available options that I'll mention. However, it's important to understand all the available tools, and I believe it's good practice to experiment with each of these to better understand where you'll get the best bang for your buck in your market.

## Directories

Before paying for advertising, get your business listed on every free directory/platform you can find. Clean your own home and take a few before and after pictures that you can use to build up your brand on the following profiles:

1. Google My Business
2. Facebook
3. Yelp
4. Nextdoor
5. Thumbtack
6. HomeAdvisor
7. Apple Maps
8. Yahoo
9. Bing Places For Business
10. Manta
11. Your local Chamber of Commerce
12. The Better Business Bureau

Having authentic and high-quality accounts on each platform will improve your company's SEO when people search for you and provide organic leads from customers who find your business naturally. The beautiful thing about local businesses is that there's a limited number of them in whatever area you're trying to serve, so it's much easier to stumble upon a cleaning company

# Google

Google is a monster, which is why it's necessary for your cleaning business. To start, set up a Google My Business profile, add a few before and after pictures, set your hours, and try to get a few reviews. Setting up your Google My Business profile should be one of the first steps you take when starting your business because it's the primary way customers will find you. For this reason, reviews on Google are incredibly valuable, and once you build up enough 5-star reviews, you can stop paying for advertising altogether. Once you get started, being direct and asking customers for reviews on Google, then sending them a link via email or text to make it easy for them, is a great way to build up your profile. Every positive review will dramatically improve the odds that someone who stumbles upon your company will hire you.

## Google Local Service Ads (LSA)

The screenshot shows a Google search for "cleaning companies in phoenix arizona". The search bar includes a search icon, a microphone icon, a camera icon, and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation options: All, Maps, Images, Shopping, News, and More. The search results show "About 22,000,000 results (0.70 seconds)". The results are for "Phoenix, AZ" and are categorized as "Ads · House Cleaners | Phoenix". Three Local Service Ads are displayed:

Quality Maids LLC	El Dorado Cleaning...	Tidy Casa
✓ GOOGLE GUARANTEED	✓ GOOGLE GUARANTEED	✓ GOOGLE GUARANTEED
5.0 ★★★★★ (12)	5.0 ★★★★★ (6)	4.8 ★★★★★ (415)
1 year in business	5 years in business	4 years in business
Open now until 10 PM ET	Open now until 5 PM MST	Open now until 5 PM MST

Regarding paid advertising, Google Local Service Ads (LSA) is my favorite option for any local service business. LSA utilizes your Google My Business profile, so for this reason, it's extremely important to get your first 3-5 reviews on your Google profile to start converting a higher percentage of customers. It's common for Google to flag reviews as illegitimate even if they're real, so it can sometimes take up to 10 reviews to get 3-5 to actually "stick" on your profile. The screenshot above shows a few cleaning companies utilizing LSA to advertise their business, and as you can see, you only need a handful of reviews to get started.

Additionally, LSA allows you to pay per lead for customers and typically costs between \$20-25 per lead. This is the lowest cost per lead for any digital advertising platform that you can easily turn on and off. Also, LSA allows you to dispute bad leads, so if you get a duplicate customer who contacts you multiple times or a person looking for a house cleaner in the wrong zip code, you can dispute the lead with Google and get a full refund.

You can also set up LSA to only show your business during your hours of operation, so you don't need to worry about getting calls after hours. Once your profile is set up, you choose which zip codes you want your business to appear in, so you only get customers in the specific area you want to service. This is a valuable feature because, after onboarding a new cleaner, you can adjust the zip codes you're targeting and connect them with customers close to their home.

Furthermore, LSA takes the least maintenance because Google runs your advertising campaign. You don't need to worry about which keywords your advertisement will target because Google will automatically show your Google My Business profile to people who are showing intent to hire a cleaning company based on their search. This makes it the most user-friendly form of digital advertising and a great place to start in terms of marketing your cleaning business.

On top of this, LSA is great when you're first starting because the strength of your website doesn't matter to the success of the campaign. When people click an LSA ad from Google, it brings the customer to a separate screen where they can call you, send you a message, or book online rather than send them to your website.

The primary drawback of LSA is that it can be difficult to get approved. You need to pass a background check which can sometimes take multiple weeks. Additionally, Google is smart, and they'll suspend your account if you receive suspicious reviews. One thing that Google looks for is the location of the IP address of the person leaving you reviews. If Google notices that people who don't live in your company's service area are leaving reviews on your profile, they might flag your account, and it can be very difficult to get an account back once Google has suspended it. LSA is arguably the most powerful form of digital advertising for local businesses, so in my opinion, it's never worth the risk of posting fake reviews to boost your profile.

# Google Ads

Compared to Google Local Service Ads, which charges you per lead, Google Ads charges you per click. For this reason, your cost per lead can vary widely when using Google Ads because the success of your advertising campaign depends on more factors than LSA. The most important of these factors is the strength of your website; if you have a clean, high-converting website that allows customers to book online easily, you'll pay significantly less per lead than if you have a poor website that doesn't convert well. With Google Ads, you're paying for traffic, not customers. However, this doesn't mean you shouldn't use Google Ads.

There is a lot of upkeep with a Google Ads account because you need to design a campaign with keywords that you think will do well. This is why many people hire experts to oversee their Google Ads campaigns, unlike LSA, which does not require specialized knowledge to manage. However, if you do hire an expert (or choose to become one yourself) and have a solid website, you might be able to convert customers at a lower cost than Local Service Ads.

Although LSA is often the preferred choice for marketing a local business, using Google Ads can give you an edge if you know what you're doing. With a strong website and an optimized advertising campaign, Google Ads can outperform almost any marketing platform. Depending on your location, you might find that one works better than the other, so it's worth experimenting with both platforms and seeing which works best for your business.

# Facebook Ads

Facebook Ads can be used to acquire both customers and cleaners. However, I'm writing about it in this section because it's a much better way to find customers than cleaners. Typically, when people are looking for work, they don't respond well to social media campaigns because their intent for using Facebook isn't to find a job. A platform like Indeed that will charge closer to \$20 per lead is significantly cheaper than what you'll pay on Facebook for employees. Additionally, platforms like Indeed and ZipRecruiter let you vet potential employees immediately through application questions - this is much harder to do on Facebook, where you're paying per click regardless of who is clicking on the ad.

However, Facebook Ads can effectively generate new leads for a cleaning business, assuming you do one thing... target women. In my own personal experience and the experience of others in the industry, the vast majority of house cleaning leads came from women when using Facebook Ads. Facebook is unique because it can target specific demographics, and middle-aged women in the upper-middle class hire a disproportionate number of cleaning companies in the United States.

If you target women and have a well-optimized campaign, you can expect to pay between \$25-35 per lead. This is solid, considering Facebook is another platform that allows you to target specific locations and turn ads on and off, making it a flexible and effective platform for generating leads. If you're struggling with Google, Facebook is typically the second-best platform for lead generation for a cleaning company in most parts of the US.

Something to consider with Facebook is that if their algorithm determines that your ad is "housing-related" and targets a specific gender or age, they will ban it. So, when doing this, be careful not to use the words "home" or "residential" in the actual ad. It can take time to test different advertisements on Facebook, and it's common to need to try 4-5 different ad campaigns before one really works. When testing different campaigns, always let the ads run for 3-5 days before making any changes to give them a fair chance.

## Yelp

Yelp is a phenomenal marketing outlet if you're on the West Coast. In California, Yelp performs better than almost any pay-per-click advertising. However, in most other parts of the United States, Yelp does not perform nearly as well as platforms like Google or Facebook. That said, you should still consider creating a free Yelp account and filling in all the relevant account information when you start.

This will improve your SEO, as it's another place that your business will show up when customers search for you. However, paid advertising on Yelp can be one of the most frustrating platforms to advertise on because Yelp is notorious for removing reviews even though they're legitimate. In some cases, it can take up to 30-50 reviews for a handful of 5-star reviews to start showing up on your profile, which can be infuriating, especially when you're first starting.

Additionally, from the customer's perspective, when a customer requests a quote, it allows them to copy and paste the same message to other cleaning companies who are also on Yelp. This causes a low response rate among customers when using Yelp. For these reasons, I believe that Yelp is not the best place to start in terms of marketing for a cleaning business, but it should be considered if you're operating in California.

## Angi Ads

In the early days of my business, I was kicked off Google My Business, which I'll elaborate on later in this book. When this happened, Angi Ads was our saving grace. For several months I

was unable to run ads through Google, and customers couldn't see our Google reviews. However, customers can leave reviews on your Angi profile that are separate from Google, and many customers use Angi as their search engine when looking for home service companies.

Angi, in the same way as Yelp, can diversify the way your business appears online, and for the period that I couldn't use Google, it was the only way that customers could see our 5-star reviews. It's a good idea not to put all your lead generation eggs in one basket because it's easy to get kicked off a platform. Our cost per lead on Angi Ads was around \$22 per lead, which is the most comparable price to Google available by any other marketing platform. However, Angi sends the lead to multiple cleaning companies, so for \$22, you're competing against a handful of other businesses in the area, so although the cost per lead is comparable to Google, your conversion rate will likely be lower.

The primary drawback with Angi Ads is that they make you sign a 12-month contract, and if you choose to end the contract early for any reason, they'll charge you 35% of your outstanding balance. So, if you're spending \$500 per month on advertising and you decide to stop advertising on Angi after seven months, they'll charge you \$875 just to get out of the contract. This can be detrimental to a business that's just starting compared to platforms like Google and Facebook, which allow you to generate leads at almost an equivalent cost without entering into a contract.

When advertising a cleaning business, it's a good idea to always be investing some money into getting new clients. However, the need to generate new customers is sporadic because it's based on the capacity of your cleaners. For this reason, it's nice to have the ability to increase and decrease the amount you're spending on advertising, which Angi Ads doesn't let you do. So, it's better to start with something like Google or Facebook because it's much easier to turn your ads on and off.

On top of this, Angi Ads also doesn't allow as specific of location-based advertising, whereas Google and Facebook do, AND all the lead generation happens inside the Angi app. Customers will reach out through Angi to send you "quote requests" that you must reply to VERY quickly if you want them to respond because the quote requests are being sent to multiple companies. Because of this format, you'll need to manage all of the customers who you get through Angi Ads within the Angi app, which can be annoying, and if you don't respond to them within 5 minutes you probably won't close them.

## Angi Leads (Formerly HomeAdvisor)

Angi Leads has some significant drawbacks compared to other available marketing platforms. The nice thing about Angi Leads is that they allow you to switch your leads on and off and

target specific zip codes. However, this is where the benefits end. The cost per lead on Angi Leads is typically around \$40 per lead, double the price of Google or Angi Ads. While you do have the option to pause your leads, they make it very difficult to do so; on the mobile app, the longest you can pause leads is 48 hours. If you navigate to the Angi Leads website on your computer, you can pause them for up to 2 weeks, but the only way to completely turn them off is to delete your account and leave the platform entirely - which you need to reach out to a representative in order to do.

Also, this may have been a one-off situation, but when I was working with them, I was told I would get \$300 worth of ad credit for only \$250. However, they charged me the full \$300 and never gave me the \$50 back I was promised. I'm unsure if this has happened to others, but it's worth noting because, based on the aggressiveness of the salesperson that I worked with, it wouldn't surprise me if similar things happened to other people. After working extensively with support and explaining the situation, they refused to help me. So, I may be a little bitter about Angi Leads, but I think it's important to note that the salespeople are willing to lie to get you onto the platform.

The cherry on top is that Angi Leads sends the lead to two different companies other than just you, so you're competing against another company for a lead that costs significantly more than paying per lead on other platforms like Google or Angi Ads.

## Nextdoor

Nextdoor is a relatively new platform for generating customers for a cleaning business. While Nextdoor ads typically do not perform very well (and often bring in more price-sensitive customers), responding to Nextdoor posts in your local community when people request cleaning services is a great way to generate new leads. Although paid advertising isn't nearly as effective as other platforms, creating a free profile, populating it with information about your business, and commenting on people's posts can be an effective, free way to drum up business for your cleaning company.

Another note about Nextdoor: it's designed for communities to discuss things happening in that community, so the platform is extremely averse to people creating accounts who don't live in the area. Prior to creating your account, the Nextdoor app will ask to track your location to verify that you're in the community that you say you are. Additionally, using the app when you're not in the location that you claim to be can cause issues with your account getting suspended, so this is a platform that will typically only be useful if you're living in the community where you're operating your cleaning company. However, when you're first starting, this is one of the best ways to generate customers without paying for advertisements.



Commenting on posts where people are asking for home cleaners is the digital equivalent of knocking on doors. It works, and it doesn't cost you anything.

## Thumbtack

When a customer requests a quote using Thumbtack, they send the customer's information to 10-15 companies in the area. This causes an extremely low response rate among customers because it bombards them with marketing materials from a ton of businesses, so customers also hate the experience. Additionally, when a large pool of cleaning companies competes for the same customer, the customer often goes with the company offering the lowest prices, so it's a race to the bottom in terms of profitability.

## Cold DM's

When you're starting out, you might be tempted to try cold DMing people on platforms like Instagram and Twitter to generate new business. Typically, this is an inefficient way to generate customers compared to the effort you'll need to put in to succeed. The best way to find customers (and cleaners) is to fish where the fish are.

Platforms like Google, Yelp, and Facebook allow you to target your ads at people actively searching for cleaning businesses. In the same way, platforms like Indeed and ZipRecruiter match up people looking for cleaning jobs with companies that can provide them. Utilize these platforms to show your company to the specific people who are interested in it. Cold DMing people will likely lead to your account being suspended for sending out spam and probably won't generate any leads.

## Door Hangers

If you're willing to hustle, door hangers are a great way to drum up business and reach a different demographic than any digital marketing outlet. The company Dope360 is a great place to go for this. With door hangers on people's houses, you're likely to get a conversion rate of around 3-5%, which is between 15-25 leads if you buy 500 door hangers. On Dope360, 500 door hangers will cost you \$175, which is between \$7-\$11.67 per lead, which is very low compared to anything you'll get online. Obviously, the tradeoff is that you need to manually hang 500 door hangers, which could take several days.

However, on top of the immediate leads that door hangers will generate, they'll also help you grow brand awareness in whatever community you're in, so you're likely to get additional calls down the road when people in the area need a house cleaner. Plus, you can choose to hang them in whatever area you want, so you can target the biggest, nicest houses in the area that'll pay the most for a single house cleaning job.

Overall, door hangers are a great way to diversify your marketing mix and generate new leads on a tight budget, but the tradeoff is that you can't do it from behind a computer screen. However, if you're willing to invest the sweat equity, you'll find that you'll get one of the best returns on your investment with a door-hanger-based advertising campaign.

## Direct Mail

I tried direct mail specifically for this handbook so I could dedicate a chapter to it because direct mail is one of the oldest and most utilized forms of marketing. I went through Dope360 for this as well and bought 500 direct mailers. Of these 500 direct mailers, I didn't get a single new customer. This may perform better in your market, but based on my experience, I can't recommend direct mail as a viable form of marketing.

One caveat to this is that handwritten letters can work extremely well compared to unpersonalized bulk mail. This is another example of needing to invest time and effort into your marketing; however, if you have a specific neighborhood in your area with houses that you want to make an impression on, handwriting letters, or even just signing them personally, can have a positive impression on people that allows you to convert them into customers.

## Bonus Marketing Strategy

If you're looking for a creative way to drum up new business, when you have a customer who's extremely happy with your service, have the customer leave a positive review on their Facebook or Nextdoor account. Having a customer write a public review on their own social media page will create social proof that goes further than any marketing campaign because people inherently trust their friends more than any paid advertisement. If the person has a modest number of followers, you'll likely bring in 3-5 new leads without spending a single dollar on marketing.



**Part 4**

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# **Branding/Website**

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So, you have a great understanding of all the tools available for hiring and marketing your business, but what about your brand? In 2023, if you don't have a website, you don't have a business, and in this industry specifically, this is the section that will allow you to really set your business apart. In this section, I will talk specifically about the website and branding decisions I made with my business, as well as a few options that you could pursue based on personal experiences that I've had building websites outside of the cleaning business. Let's dive in.

## Choosing a Name

First things first, you need to decide on a name for your cleaning company. Don't overthink this. The company's success or failure will come down to the quality and consistency of the service you provide, not the name you choose. However, although the name of your business isn't the most important factor to consider when you're getting started, there are a few basic guidelines you can follow to give your company a headstart.

First, include the name of the area you're servicing in the company's name. This is for one reason and one reason only... SEO. When someone Googles "cleaning companies in Cedar Rapids" (or wherever you're operating), you want your company to be the first thing they see.

Second, include "clean, cleaning, maid" or something that explains specifically what the company does. This is for the same reason; if you're operating in Cedar Rapids, a great name would be Cedar Rapids Quality Cleaners. Not only will it help you rank higher in search results when someone is Googling cleaning companies in Cedar Rapids, but it instantly explains to the customer that you're offering specifically what they're seeking - a cleaning company located where they live.

## Creating a Logo

Once you've decided on a name for your business, you'll need a logo. When creating a logo for your cleaning company, resist the urge to hire a professional (at least in the beginning). There are so many cheap and free options for logo creation, and once again, in the boring residential cleaning industry, your logo doesn't matter that much. For this reason, Fiverr is my go-to place for logo creation because you can typically get a logo made for as little as \$5, and for less than \$50, you can typically get multiple iterations of an extremely high-quality logo.

If you'd rather create the logo yourself, Canva is a great option. The pro version of Canva is \$12.99 per month, which you can cancel after you've created your logo. Again, don't obsess over this; once the company is bigger and you have some money coming in, if you want to

invest in a professional logo, you can, but it's not the factor that's going to determine whether or not your business succeeds.

Another great tool for logo and website creation is [svgrepo.com](https://svgrepo.com). They have thousands of free icons that you can use for whatever purpose you want, and it's all completely free.

## Building Your Website

Building a clean and reliable website is the most important factor in differentiating yourself as a tech-forward cleaning company. At a minimum, your website should do the following three things:

1. Explain the services you offer
2. Deliver instant quotes for the price of the cleaning
3. Allow fully online booking
  - a. (Needs to be able to accept all major credit cards)

This isn't rocket science, but it's more than most of the cleaning industry is currently doing. A large part of your competitive advantage will be ensuring your website has this functionality built in. In order to accomplish this, you'll need the help of a customer relationship manager (CRM).

A CRM is a software that will allow you to do everything from track bookings, assign cleaners to customers, pay cleaners, charge customers, send automated reminders to customers and cleaners to remind them about bookings, and even allow cleaners to clock in and out of jobs. For these reasons, your CRM will provide you with all of the necessary tools to operate your business remotely, and using one is a key advantage that you'll have over many of the old-fashioned cleaning companies you'll be competing with. However, a CRM by itself is not a website, although some CRMs allow you to host websites directly through them in addition to everything else they offer. This is one of the primary advantages of using BookingKoala over alternatives such as Jobber. BookingKoala allows you to host your website through them and use them as your CRM, so you can have all your information in one place. Nonetheless, when it comes to building your website, there are an overwhelming number of options. To cut through the noise and help you understand a few of the most popular routes for building a website, I'll break down my favorite website hosting options below.

# BookingKoala

As I mentioned above, a web editor built directly into BookingKoala allows you to create your website through them and use them as a CRM at no additional cost. The website editing functionality isn't even close to the most robust (if you want to make more granular edits to your website, I've got better suggestions below). Still, BookingKoala is a user-friendly and fast way to get your website up and running while delivering everything that you need it to do.

The best thing about building directly in BookingKoala is that you don't have to worry about integrating your booking forms into an external web builder. This provides peace of mind that when a customer makes a booking on your website, it'll flow seamlessly into your CRM, where you'll be able to collect all the customer's information and easily assign the cleaning to one of your cleaners. The booking forms through BookingKoala provide automatic quotes based on the number of beds and baths in the customer's home and allow the customer to enter their billing information to finalize the booking without ever needing to work with a human. These forms are the most important part of the website. You can also choose to have BookingKoala automatically assign cleaners to new jobs. However, I prefer doing this manually to ensure I balance cleaner workloads and that the assigned job is geographically close to the cleaner's home.

One thing that can be frustrating about the website editor in BookingKoala is that you are essentially building two totally separate websites; one for desktop and one for mobile. When you edit the website in the desktop version of the site, it won't automatically make changes to the mobile site. This is important to note because it's easy to focus on the desktop version while neglecting the mobile version of the site, which can cause your business to appear unfinished on mobile. The good news is that cleaning is such a low-tech industry that if your mobile site functions at a basic level, you'll be leaps and bounds ahead of your competitors.

Finally, because BookingKoala provides both a website editor and a CRM, there's no additional cost to using them to host your website, so it's essentially free if you're already using them for your CRM.

# Wix

If you want to add more detail to your website but still want something user-friendly, Wix is a great option. Wix will allow you to move elements more easily, create more complex animations, and build a more aesthetically pleasing website for your users. While it's slightly more advanced, it's still a drag-and-drop solution that the average user can pick up relatively

quickly. The main drawback to using Wix compared to BookingKoala is that Wix isn't a CRM, so you'll still need to use BookingKoala (or an alternative like Jobber) to track your cleaners and customers, and you'll need to manually integrate your booking forms into the website, which can be confusing and will require some troubleshooting to make sure everything is working properly. The price for the subscription that's necessary for a cleaning website is \$22, which will be in addition to the subscription you'll already be paying for a CRM.

## Webflow

Webflow is my personal favorite website editor. Prior to starting a cleaning company, I did web development as a freelancer, and Webflow was my go-to solution for building websites. Webflow will allow you to edit your website with incredible detail; essentially, anything you can imagine for your website, you can build with Webflow. However, because of the amount of functionality built into it, Webflow is not nearly as user-friendly as Wix or BookingKoala.

Webflow has a user interface that allows you to edit any web element in any way that you could if you were coding the website from scratch, which is both amazing and overwhelming. Webflow is essentially the website builder equivalent of Photoshop; Photoshop might be the best professional solution available for editing photos, but it's also not as user-friendly as editing a photo on your phone. For professional photographers, this is necessary, but for someone who's never edited a photo before and just needs to crop someone out of a picture, Photoshop would be overkill; Webflow is the same way.

Once your company is making money and you have additional cash to spend on things like websites, I believe having a professional web developer rebuild your site with Webflow is a great investment. It'll likely load faster and be much more visually appealing than if you make it yourself in BookingKoala or Wix, but when you're first starting out, it's unnecessary. Simply having a website that's easy to navigate and allows customers to book directly online is enough to get you started. And again, Webflow isn't a CRM, so you would be using it in addition to BookingKoala and would need to pay for a subscription on both platforms, which is \$29 per month if you pay monthly.

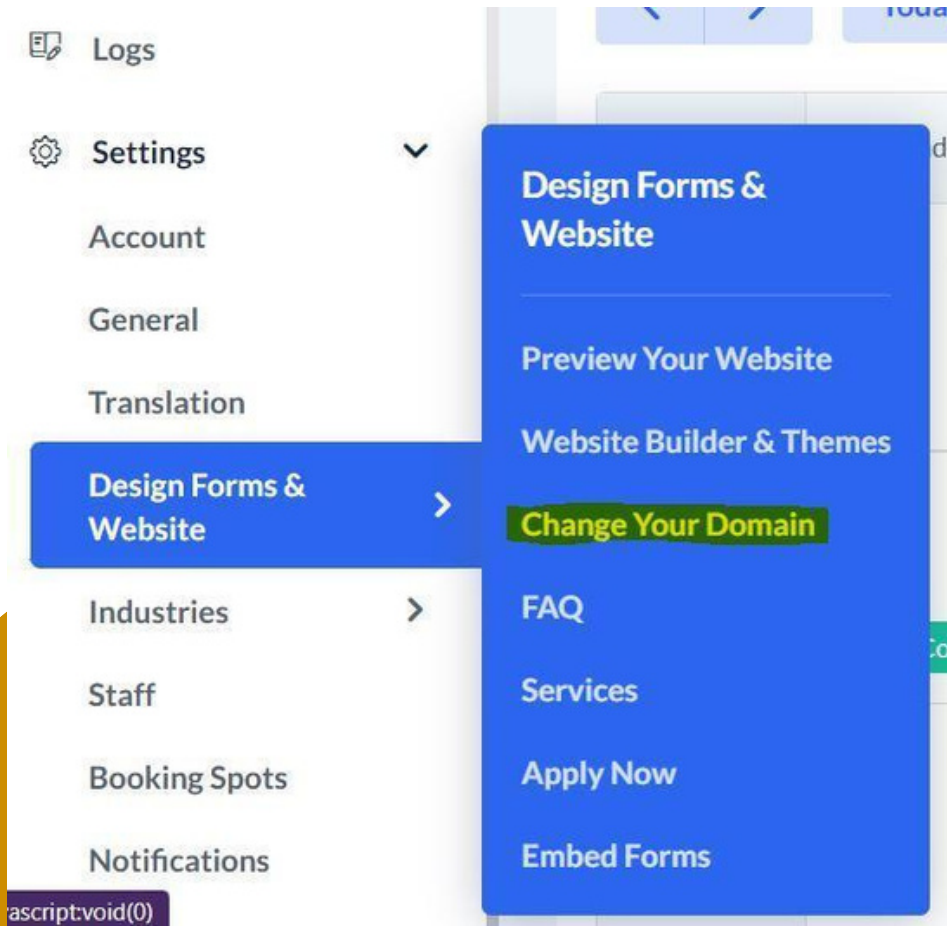
## Buying Your Domain

Before your website hits the internet, you will need to purchase a domain. To do this, the best solution, in my opinion, is Google Domains. Linking your domain to your website from Google domains can be confusing, but I'll break down the steps below with a few pictures to help guide

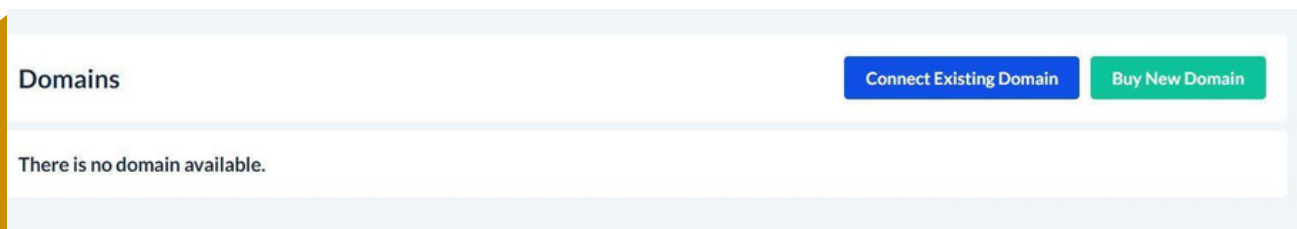


you. For this example, I'll show how to link your domain directly to BookingKoala, but most other platforms will have similar steps.

1. First, navigate to Google Domains and purchase the domain.
2. After the domain is purchased, Go to BookingKoala, navigate to Design Forms & Website, and click Change Your Domain.



3. Next, navigate to Connect Existing Domain.



4. Type in the domain you want to connect in the Connect Existing Domain screen.

## Connect existing domain

Enter the domain you want to connect.

Next








To connect your domain, you need to log in to your account and change your settings. Follow the step-by-step instructions to get started.

### If you are familiar with DNS then follow the steps below to add IP in A record

1. Login to your domain registrar account.
2. Go to DNS settings edit page.
3. Edit @ record of A type and change IP to [REDACTED] as shown in screenshot.

Type	Name	Value
A	@	[REDACTED]

5. Next, log into your Google domains account and navigate to the DNS screen.

-  Domain overview
-  Registration settings
-  DNS
-  Website
-  Reports
-  Email
-  Security

## 6. Select Manage custom records.

Default name servers (Active) Custom name servers

✓ These DNS settings are active. Changes are published immediately, but may take time to propagate

Resource records [Export DNS records](#)

Resource records point to the services your domain uses, including web and email services. [Learn more about resource records](#)

Custom records [Manage custom records](#)

Host name	Type	TTL	Data
[REDACTED]	A	1 hour	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	CNAME	1 hour	[REDACTED]

Google Workspace [REDACTED]

Dynamic DNS [REDACTED] bookingkoala.com [REDACTED]

Required  
Informational only records

7. Enter A as the type, 3600 as the TTL, and the IP address in the Data field provided by BookingKoala in the Connect Existing Domain screen.

8. Create a new record, enter www as the Hostname, CNAME as the type, 3600 as the TTL, and your domain in the Data field, then hit Save.

Resource records [Export DNS records](#)

Resource records point to the services your domain uses, including web and email services. [Learn more about resource records](#)

Custom records

Host name	Type	TTL	Data
<input type="text"/>	A	3600	[REDACTED]
www	CNAME	3600	[REDACTED]

[+ Add more to this record](#)

[Create new record](#) [Cancel](#) [Save](#)

9. Finally, go back to the Connect Existing Domain screen in BookingKoala and click Verify Connection.

Verify the connection to make sure your domain is set up correctly.

Verify Connection

## Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

There are thousands of books on SEO, and this isn't one of them. However, understanding the fundamentals of SEO will allow you to take advantage of it for your business because most of your competitors in the cleaning industry aren't even thinking about it. I don't claim to be an expert on SEO, nor is this a book intended to make you an SEO expert, but I do believe that as the CEO of any company in 2023, you should have a big-picture understanding of how it works. If you want to dive deeper into how to crush it in SEO, *3 Months to No.1* by Will Coombe is a great read, and a significant portion of this information is summarized from this book. So, what is search engine optimization? SEO is the practice of making your website show up as high as possible on Google's search results, and it comes down to four key pillars:

- 1.Relevance
- 2.Crawlability
- 3.Engagement
- 4.Authority

### Relevance

Relevance is the primary pillar that people think about with SEO because it's purely about the content on your website. To start, write detailed pages about your cleaning company's services (regular cleans, deep cleans, move-in/out cleans, etc.). Shoot for around 1,000 words on each of these pages explaining the benefits of getting these services done, and be sure to include plenty of "book now" buttons on the page so you can convert your visitors.

Next, once you have filled your website with details about the services you provide, determine a topic you want to rank for and identify a primary keyword with strong buying intent. For example, you may want to rank for “how to hire a recurring house cleaner” because this is a phrase with a significant amount of buying intent; anyone who searches for this is trying to hire a house cleaner on a recurring basis. Google the phrase you want to rank for and study the articles on the first page, taking note of how many words they use and how often they use the specific keyword. Then, write an article on the same topic that is better than what currently exists, and try to use around the same number of words as the articles on the first page.

Finally, write 3-4 more supporting blog posts about related topics after writing your first blog post and link them back to your original article. For example, you could write blog posts about deep cleans versus standard cleans, how often you should have a cleaning service return to your home, and the best cleaning products to use regularly. The most important thing is to link these articles back to the original article because that will signal to Google that the original article is highly relevant to your blog and should be considered relevant to people searching for that topic.

## Crawlability

Crawlability refers to how easy it is for Google to “crawl” your website and determine how high each website should rank for certain keywords, so ensuring that you have a website that can be navigated easily will improve your search ranking on Google. However, a few things make a website easier to navigate for a computer that a human cannot see. This is primarily regarding using H1, H2, and H3 tags appropriately and ensuring that all the links on your website work. Even if you know nothing about web development, having relevant headings and subheadings on your website will make Google rank your site higher. However, first things first, make sure your website is optimized for mobile. This will improve your website's crawlability and, thus, your SEO, as well as make you available to customers searching for cleaning companies with their cell phones.

Next, keep your content updated. Continuously post fresh things to give Google new things to crawl, and remove repetitive content or unnecessary pages. Repetitive content is a red flag to Google and will cause your site to rank lower.

Finally, get your site secured. This means ensuring that your website URL starts with HTTPS rather than just HTTP - the “S” stands for secure. This is known as SSL encryption, and it tells the browser to encrypt the data exchanged on a web page. This is especially important for a website that allows customers to enter credit card information to book cleanings online, so it should be secured regardless of SEO. Luckily, when setting up your Google Business Profile, Google will automatically add SSL encryption to your website, so you don't have to think about it.

# Engagement

Google monitors how long people stay on your pages after they click on them, so if they stay longer, you will rank better because Google will use this information to determine that you have useful and relevant content. You can keep users engaged by including high-quality pictures and videos, keeping your sentences short, using simple words, and shooting for around 1,000 words per page. This will reflect positively on your website's ranking. Also, avoid popup ads. People hate them, and because people hate them, Google hates them too.

# Authority

When other websites link to your website, it shows Google that you are credible, improving your website's ranking. There are a few ways to get other websites to link to your website. If you are really dedicated to improving your website's SEO, you can do guest posting on other people's websites. For example, if you find a cleaning-related blog, you could offer to write an article for them about "the best cleaning supplies for wooden floors." In exchange for authoring the article, have them agree to let you post a few links back to articles on your own website that the reader might find interesting. Doing this takes work, but doing it consistently will have a huge impact on your website's ranking.

One thing to note when doing this is the anchor text that links back to your website (the words that are highlighted when a user clicks a link). Anchor text tells Google what the linked page is about, so if you're trying to set up a link back to a post on your own website about "the best cleaning products for windows," for example, make sure that the highlighted text the user clicks specifically says "the best cleaning products for windows."

A straightforward way to improve your website's authority is to get listed in as many business directories as possible, which I've already touched on in this book. Creating accounts for your business on different platforms that include links to your website will improve your domain authority and increase your site's rank organically.



**Part 5**

# **Why Your Remote Cleaning Business is Going to Fail**

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Now that you fully understand how to start and run a business in an industry primed for disruption, with recurring customers and poor competition, you're almost ready to start. But, before you do, many things can go wrong once you begin operating the business that you might not have considered. That's why I wrote this chapter; an entire chapter dedicated to managing all of the headaches and "fires" that you might run into while you're running the business and how to handle them.

## Different cleaners will take different amounts of time, so quoting jobs accurately will be impossible

Your quotes will never be perfect, but getting a new cleaner can cause them to be WAY off. You need to have a policy in place in case this happens. Different cleaners clean in different ways, and especially with the remote business model of hiring independent contractors, you have even less control over how they work. So how will you handle a situation where you quote a customer that a job will take two hours, but it ends up taking three or four? Are you going to eat the cost, paying the cleaner for the time they were there, and charging the customer for the time you quoted? Or will you pass on the loss to the customer? Or the cleaner? This situation will happen, and it can be a huge headache if you don't have a system to handle it.

The solution is simple - pictures. If you just hired a new cleaner and you do not know how quickly they work, ask customers to provide a few pictures of their home, including all of the rooms that they want to have cleaned, then send the pictures directly to the cleaner you're planning on assigning to the job and ask them how long they expect the cleaning to take. You should only be hiring people with at least one year of residential cleaning experience, so they should understand how long a job will take based on this information.

After sending cleaners a picture of a given job 3-5 times, you should have a much better idea of how long an average job will take them and quote it more accurately without needing to work with the cleaner every single time. Regardless of if you are sending the pictures directly to a cleaner, having customers send you pictures of their home prior to cleaning is the best way to accurately quote jobs without physically being there.

Additionally, inform the customer that you charge by the hour. The quote is an estimate, and if it takes longer than what you quoted, that will be reflected on their bill. Inform them that after the first cleaning, you will clearly understand how long the job will take, and the cost of the

cleaning should not fluctuate much from there on out. Charging hourly ensures your cleaners are compensated if a job takes longer than expected, which is important because cleaners are more valuable than customers. Customer acquisition costs are much lower than cleaner acquisition costs, so when in doubt, pass your costs on to the customer rather than the cleaner.

While it's ideal to ask customers for pictures of their homes prior to a job, if a customer is booking directly on your website, you'll need to provide them with an automated quote without first looking at pictures. I estimate 60 minutes per bedroom and 30 minutes per bathroom to generate these quotes. Then, I have three add-ons that customers can select: "Inside Cabinets," "Inside Fridge," and "Inside Oven," and for each of these add-ons, I estimate an additional hour of cleaning time. This is often more time than these things take; however, I always attempt to quote higher than the cost ends up being rather than lower. Customers are always delighted to pay less than expected, but even a customer who is not price-sensitive may be angry if the price of the cleaning is significantly higher than expected. I have the words: "This quote is an estimate. If the cleaning takes longer than anticipated, that will be reflected on your bill" in bold letters on the booking page of my website for this reason. While I understand that this definitely negatively impacts my company's conversion rate, it's worth it to eliminate the headache of dealing with an angry customer if I need to bill them more than expected.

## There will be bad cleaners

This is inevitable, and it can be especially prevalent in the beginning. This is because finding good people is REALLY hard. Over time you'll be able to replace bad cleaners with good ones, and you'll also get better at judging if someone is going to be a good hire during the interview, but when you're first starting, you may have to take on a few people who aren't amazing just to get started. As the company progresses, you can slowly eliminate less reliable cleaners and replace them with more reliable ones.

But how do you deal with situations that arise from cleaners that do a bad job? When dealing with angry customers, always call the customer directly. First, reach out to the cleaner to get their side of the story. Then, talk to the customer to hear their side, and work with them to find a solution. Most people will calm down when they hear your voice and realize you're working on finding a solution for them. It's much easier to text cleaners and customers when things go awry, but it isn't the most effective way to deal with the situation and could leave everyone angry. If this only happens once, and the cleaner seems apologetic, it's okay to give them another chance, but always be looking for a better cleaner to take their place in case it happens again. Replacing bad cleaners with good ones is the primary way your service will improve over time.

# Cleaners will leave if they are not happy

The truth of the matter is that if you're billing customers \$55 per hour and you're only paying cleaners \$25 while they're providing their own materials and have their own insurance, they could easily go into business on their own and make more money if they're not happy.

For this reason, if you're going to keep good people, you need to be hyper-aware of this reality and actively fight to provide them with the best possible working situation so it doesn't make sense for them to leave. People are choosing to work for you so they don't have to worry about finding work on their own. In the same way, you COULD go around handing out business cards, offering people rides in your car, and probably make way more money per ride than you would if you drove for Uber, but as an Uber driver, Uber is providing you with a service. When driving for Uber, you don't have to worry about finding customers because they ensure your schedule is full. Also, they rate people using the service and allow drivers to see potential customers' ratings, so drivers can decide if they want to drive for them. In the same way, your job is not only to ensure that your cleaner's schedules are full but also to match them up with people they actually want to work with.

This will be hard to do in the beginning, but as you go along, you will start finding better customers. A great customer is recurring, polite when you talk to them on the phone, and the cleaner assigned to them enjoys being in their home. The best possible indicator of a great customer is one who leaves a 5-star review without you even needing to ask. Generally, anybody who is going to take the time to do this will be very kind, and it's often an indication that they got along with the cleaner, so people who do this are your top-priority customers.

Once you have a base of solid customers built up, try to pair your best customers with your best cleaners. By ensuring that your cleaners have full schedules filled with recurring customers who the cleaners actually enjoy working for, they'll fall in love with working for you, and you won't have to worry about them leaving.

This is easier said than done because you're not always going to know if a customer is nice, but a recurring customer is always better than a one-time customer in terms of quality. There is a level of discomfort associated with going into someone's house for the first time, and the less often cleaners need to enter a person's house for the first time, the more they'll enjoy their job. So, if you load up a cleaner with exclusively recurring cleans, they'll enjoy working for you far more. Also, by giving your best customers to your best cleaners, you'll ensure that the customers won't leave either.

## My system for matching up customers with cleaners is as follows:

- 5-star customer = recurring + left a 5-star review
- 4-star customer = recurring + larger job (greater than \$200)
- 3-star customer = recurring + smaller job (less than \$200)
- 2-star customer = one-time clean
- 1-star customer = move-out clean

Grouping customers into categories makes it easy to understand where you should be assigning your best cleaners. In terms of cleaners, I don't rate cleaners on a five-star scale, even though BookingKoala does do this automatically based on reviews from customers. However, the issue with this is that it only factors in the quality of their work. Obviously, this is a huge factor in terms of how good a cleaner is, but an even more important factor to the stability of your business is how reliable they are. If a cleaner consistently does a great job, but calls in sick every other week, they should not be getting your best jobs. For this reason, I group cleaners into just two categories:

- High-tier cleaners
  - Shows up on time every time and does a good job of solving problems without getting you involved.
- Low-tier cleaners
  - Unreliable and/or generally does a poor job, doesn't try to solve problems when they arise.

Usually, the most reliable cleaners are also the ones doing the best job, so it's pretty black and white in terms of who you can trust once they start working for you. If you have low-tier cleaners on your staff, they can still be assets because you can assign them to lower-star jobs that you don't want your rockstars to worry about. Especially when you're first starting out, rather than fully eliminating your worst cleaners, keep them onboard and assign them to 1 and 2-star jobs so you can serve one-time customers without burning out your best cleaners. One-time cleans and move-in/out cleans are stressful, and over time, giving your best people too many of these jobs will hurt their morale. Eventually, the goal may be to only accept 3+ star jobs - this would lead to significantly fewer headaches, but it's very difficult to do in the first year if you want to make enough money to cover costs.

When a cleaner is starting, the ideal first job to assign them is a 2-star job because if they don't do a good job or don't show up at all, you're not risking losing a recurring customer. However, ideally, you don't want their first job to be a move-out clean because these jobs are much harder physically and can hurt the cleaner's morale if they think these are the only jobs they will be getting.

To better understand the quality of your cleaners, after their first job is completed, call the customer and ask them how the cleaner did. The cleaner may have done a good enough job not to warrant a complaint, but you can tell a lot from the tone of someone's voice. Ask the customer if they're happy with the cleaning and would hire you again if they knew the same cleaner was coming back. Ask them if anything went poorly and if there's anything the cleaner could improve on. Not only will this tell you a lot about the caliber of the cleaner, but it will also provide you with some good coaching opportunities to help the new hire improve. If the customer says the cleaner could have improved on a few things, don't panic; just respectfully pass this information on to the cleaner and assign them another one-time clean. Repeat the process of calling customers to learn more about how the cleaner did, and if the cleaner does not improve, try not to give them any jobs that you would rate above three stars. However, many people will improve over time, and you will gain a much greater understanding of the people you have working for you by doing this.

My favorite formula in the world of remote cleaning:

**Good cleaner + 3-5 star customer = no headaches.**

## It's difficult to balance the number of customers and cleaners

This challenging dance will slowly get easier as you grow but is incredibly difficult initially. When you first start, you won't have any customers or cleaners, which presents a sort of "chicken or the egg" problem. Do you get your first cleaner or your first customer first? The easiest solution to this problem is to clean the first few houses yourself. Then when you get your first cleaner, you'll already have a base of recurring jobs to hand off to them.

This is the ideal scenario, even if it's just a couple of customers to get your first cleaner started. However, if you're unable to clean houses yourself, hire the cleaner first and be transparent about the fact that it'll be 2-4 weeks before you can get them any customers. From there, figure out what their total capacity is. For example, if you have a solid cleaner who only wants to work Wednesdays and Thursdays between the hours of 9-4, then you would ideally schedule two customers for them every Wednesday and Thursday, one at 9 a.m. and one at 1 p.m. This means they'll be able to take on four cleanings per week, 16 per month. Each recurring customer you get fills 1, 2, or 4 of those spots depending on whether they are weekly, biweekly, or monthly.

After you start growing and you have a foundation of cleaners that you trust, only bring one person on at a time and focus on filling their schedule before you bring on another person. Once they reach around 50% of their capacity with recurring customers, start interviewing to

bring on another person. It will likely take you around four weeks to bring on a second cleaner after you start searching for one, and by then, the original cleaner's schedule should be even more full.

If you have a cleaner at 75% of their capacity, that means they can only take on very specific customers. For example, they'll only have availability on "the third Wednesday of each month at 9 am and the second Thursday of each month at 1 pm." When you get customers who request those specific times, you can give them to that cleaner, but a cleaner at 75% capacity is usually happy enough with their amount of work to keep working for you. You risk burning them out if they're at 100% of their capacity. Communication is key to see if they're happy with their current workload or would like you to find customers to fill their remaining availability.

When building your cleaning company, you must manage your employee pipeline just as attentively as your customer pipeline. You never want to be in the position where "if Sally quits, I'm in trouble." If you realize that you are so dependent on a handful of cleaners that you would not be able to reassign their work to anyone if one left, it's time to hire a new person.

However, when you're still small, if you bring on an additional cleaner before your current staff is near capacity, you risk not being able to provide your people with enough work, which may cause them to start looking for new jobs or taking additional cleaning jobs on the side, which can interfere with their desire to work for you. So, every time you bring on a new person, increase your ad spend so that everyone has enough work to keep them busy. This problem gets easier with scale; if you have ten cleaners, it's easier to shuffle customers around than if you have two.

This is the "great filter" of remote cleaning businesses. A remote cleaning business with 4-5 cleaners is significantly more stable than a cleaning business with 1-2 because you can shuffle around your customers without losing them if a cleaner quits unexpectedly. When you're first starting out, don't stop investing in your cleaner pipeline until you have at least 2 people working for you, then invest heavily into Google Local Service Ads (or some platform that can be easily turned on and off) to ensure that you're cleaners have enough work.

As soon as you are approaching 50% capacity on your first two cleaners, turn your employee pipeline ad spending back on to get a third cleaner, then increase your customer ad spending accordingly once you have a third person on board. You can begin to relax a little once you have at least three people onboard because your business won't be detrimentally harmed if one of the cleaners leaves. As you grow, the business will continue getting more stable with every person you bring on. Balancing customers and cleaners is the most difficult challenge in the first 6-12 months of running a remote cleaning business, but it gets easier with time and scale.

# Your direct deposit won't work, and you won't be able to pay people on time

Okay, this one may sound specific, but that's because it is. I include it because it nearly caused my business to fail. In the early days of my cleaning company, I didn't realize that it could take multiple days to get direct deposit set up. I used QuickBooks to start off, then switched to Stripe because it was cheaper and integrated directly with BookingKoala. The process of switching payment providers was a headache that lasted multiple weeks, and even initially using QuickBooks, it took over a week to work out the kinks in our process.

The result? I was two weeks late paying my first cleaner, and I ended up needing to pay her in cash that I delivered to her house, just so she knew I wasn't trying to scam her. For the first few weeks, something went wrong almost every time I tried to pay someone, and I needed to pay people directly out of my own pocket via ApplePay multiple times just to ensure people would continue working for me. If either of our first two cleaners had quit because they were frustrated with being paid late, I wouldn't have been able to support our small but growing customer base, and it would have been enough to put the company under, or at least set it back to square one with no customers or cleaners.

To make sure this doesn't happen:

1. Troubleshoot your payment processes internally, so you know exactly how everything works.
2. Make sure direct deposit is one of the first things you set up when you hire someone, and send a test payment to your first cleaner before their first cleaning to ensure everything is working correctly. This is also valuable because you'll learn how long it takes for money to land in their bank account.
3. Initially, tell cleaners you'll pay them on Friday, but plan on sending them their payment on Monday. This way, there's a buffer between their promised payment date and their actual payment date. Nobody has ever complained about getting paid earlier than expected, but if you make a habit of paying people late, nobody will continue working for you. Do not shoot for paying people on Friday when you're first starting because if you miss payday on Friday, they have to wait until Monday to get their money.

Additionally, pay cleaners weekly. If you're charging customers the day after a cleaning is completed, there's no reason not to pay cleaners every week rather than paying biweekly like most companies. This is an easy benefit that your cleaners will love.



# You'll accept jobs more complicated than basic house cleaning

This mistake can occur early on when starting a remote cleaning company because when you're first starting, it's easy to overextend and accept jobs outside the realm of basic residential cleaning. This only ever causes headaches and a negative impression on customers.

When I was first starting out, I had a job where the customer wanted us to clean their unfinished basement. I didn't think much of it, but I now know that this is a harder, more specialized job than basic house cleaning and requires special equipment. However, the first time a customer asked for it, I accepted it just like any other residential cleaning job. When the cleaner arrived, they called me telling me they couldn't do the job because they didn't have the materials. The customer was VERY angry and yelled at me for not knowing how to clean an unfinished basement. "Some cleaning company!" They exclaimed... and they were right.

To keep things simple: don't scrub walls, clean unfinished basements, clean exterior windows, or agree to move heavy furniture or equipment. Not taking jobs that are offered to you can feel counterintuitive in the beginning, but it's much better to turn down a job that the cleaner wouldn't have been able to do than to accept a job and send a cleaner to a job site, only to have them call you and tell you that they can't do it, or that it's going to take them way longer than you quoted. Turning down jobs can feel like turning down money, but in the beginning, the most likely outcome when it comes to accepting obscure jobs is a headache where the only one who loses money is you.

# Your cleaners won't be able to get into customers' houses/apartments

Cleaners' inability to get into the customer's homes is probably the most common headache you'll have to deal with while operating a remote cleaning company. It's especially hard to deal with due to the remote nature of the business because you can't physically be there to help when the cleaner has a problem. This is especially prevalent when you're dealing with apartments. If the customer isn't going to be there, typically, the only way to get into an apartment is by having a physical key, and customers shouldn't be forced to hide a key somewhere outside of their apartment for security reasons. For this reason, apartments can be especially tricky if the customer isn't going to be there.



The best way to deal with apartment-related issues is to utilize the desk attendant at the building if there is one available. Before the cleaning, instruct the customer to tell whoever is working at the front desk that they will have a cleaner coming in who will need help getting into the apartment. This is the best way to get a cleaner into an apartment when the customer isn't there.

If a desk attendant isn't available, someone will need to be there to let the cleaner in. You might be thinking, "why can't the cleaner just get a spare key from the customer?" While this might work, I don't advise having cleaners collect keys from customers because keeping keys can lead to huge legal headaches if anything goes wrong. If the apartment gets robbed after one of your cleaners collects a key, your business is suspect #1, and for good reason. So, this is a scenario that I avoid whenever possible. For this reason, if the only way the cleaner is going to be able to complete a job is by keeping a key to the residence, I'll usually turn down the job.

Additionally, if the company is based in a big city, parking can be a significant headache that you will run into. If you have a customer that lives downtown, the cleaner may have to pay to get into a parking garage. If this is the case, these costs should be passed onto the customer whenever possible. Although this may hurt your conversion rate when dealing with customers in big cities, it's better to lose the occasional customer than to reduce the amount your cleaners are making on a job or eat away at your own margins. Especially for a job that has a high probability of causing logistical headaches. If you lose a customer who lives downtown, it may not be a huge loss.

If you haven't started your company yet, consider basing the business somewhere rural where you won't need to deal with apartments or parking issues. Not only will this save you headaches on jobs, but if you base the company somewhere where there are primarily houses instead of apartments, the jobs will often be bigger. Plus, it may also be an older demographic with more disposable income to spend on services like house cleaners. Even if you live in a city, find the wealthiest suburb and base the company there. Not only will you be able to run a more profitable business, but you'll avoid the majority of issues with cleaners not being able to get into homes.

To avoid all of these problems in the first place, ask every single customer the following two questions before you even create the booking in your CRM:

1. "Where can the cleaner plan on parking?"
  - a. If the only option for parking is a parking garage that costs money, inform the customer that this cost will be added to the price of the cleaning.
2. "How can the cleaner plan on getting into your home?"
  - a. Will the customer be there? Is there a hidden Key? Combination lock? Etc.

By being diligent and asking every customer these questions before accepting jobs, you'll eliminate the most common headaches that cleaning services run into on a consistent basis.

# The cleaner who you want to take a job will live too far away from the customer

This is a common problem, especially when hiring cleaners as contractors, because there's no central location for your business. This means cleaners will be driving to jobs directly from their houses, which will be scattered throughout whatever city you operate in, and some of your best cleaners may not live in the most central locations.

A solution to this is offering bonuses to compensate cleaners for long drives. It's more straightforward than paying for mileage and achieves the same thing. A good bonus structure that's been effective in my own business is:

- \$5 for 25 to 30-minute drives
- \$10 for 30 to 45-minute drives
- \$15 for 45+ minute drives

Depending on the cleaner, they may dislike needing to drive long distances to get to jobs regardless of how much you compensate them (especially if the distance is over 45 minutes, at that point, consider not taking the job). However, this will help reduce resistance if you ask people to drive a long way.

Additionally, this policy will align your interest with the cleaners because you'll be financially incentivized to reduce their driving time to work. Everyone hates a long commute, so reducing commutes among cleaners will increase their job satisfaction while eliminating the need for you to pay bonuses so you make more money on each job. You can reduce this by investing in pay-as-you-go marketing platforms like Google LSA in the zip codes where your cleaners live every time you bring on a new cleaner. When a new cleaner gets onboarded, make them aware that they may have to take some jobs that are further from home, but you're actively investing in a marketing campaign to get them closer work. This will decrease resistance when you do have to assign jobs that will require a long drive.

## Cleaners will break things

This fear is at the top of the mind of many CEOs of cleaning companies of all sizes, and there's only one way to protect yourself in this scenario: insurance.

First of all, the type of insurance you'll need depends on whether you're hiring W2 employees or 1099 contractors. If you're hiring employees, you only need to get insurance for your business, and your cleaners will be covered. However, if you're hiring independent contractors, you're essentially working with independent business owners, so they'll need to get their own insurance (that they'll be responsible for paying for) on top of the insurance that you must get as the owner of the business.

To start, you'll need to get general liability insurance to protect against any potential damage your business may have caused. In addition, it's a good idea to consider Cyber insurance. Cyber insurance protects you if you get hacked, and your cleaner's private information is stolen. In the event of a hack where a hacker is able to take banking info and other private information from the people working for you, if you have Cyber insurance, the insurance company will notify all of the cleaners on your behalf and provide them with credit monitoring services, in addition to protecting you from liability if you get sued for leaking their private information.

In contrast to this, there are four different types of insurance that your cleaners should consider in order to protect them from liability while they're working:

1. Basic car insurance
2. General liability insurance
3. Voluntary property damage insurance
4. Errors and omissions (E&O) insurance

Car insurance is important because cleaners will be expected to transport themselves to job sites with their own vehicles, so in the event that a cleaner crashes into a customer's car when they're pulling into a job site, it's important that your cleaner is protected. In the event that the cleaner doesn't have car insurance, the customer could come after you because you sent the cleaner to their home.

General liability insurance is the most basic form of insurance that every cleaner should carry beyond auto insurance. General liability will protect them if something breaks while they're on the job site. However, there's a little-known loophole with general liability insurance: general liability doesn't protect you from your own work. So, if you're a cleaner and you break a chandelier, and the chandelier falls and breaks a table, general liability covers the table, NOT the chandelier.

In order to protect yourself from things that you're working on directly, you'll need a voluntary property damage policy. Additionally, neither of these policies will protect you from liability if you make a mistake on a job site that causes damage, such as putting the wrong floor cleaner on a hardwood floor. In the event that you make a mistake, and that mistake causes damage to the customer's property, you'll need E&O insurance to make sure that you're protected.

One example of why it's still a good idea for cleaners to carry general liability insurance despite this is if a customer's house burns down because a cleaner accidentally left the stove on. In this instance, general liability insurance would cover the cleaner. This also represents the importance of getting a policy that will protect cleaners from a high enough dollar amount of liability. In many cases, the recommended minimum is \$500,000 of coverage - far higher than many cleaning company owners recommend their cleaners get.

Insurance laws vary widely from state to state, so it's a good idea to consult with an insurance professional to ensure that you and your cleaners are fully protected. In the meantime, Thimble is a great, user-friendly online provider that will sell you general liability insurance without ever needing to talk to an agent. At a minimum, you should have general liability insurance for yourself and your cleaners and verify that your cleaners have at least the legal minimum for car insurance. Additionally, instruct your cleaners to inform their car insurance company that they're using their car for business purposes to ensure that they're fully protected if an accident or mistake happens.

Before sending anyone to a job, you can request that cleaners name you as an additional insured on their insurance policy and provide you with a certificate of insurance to verify that they carry the necessary insurance and you're fully protected.

## Cleaners will steal things

Being insured will protect you if a cleaner breaks something, but being bonded will protect you if a cleaner steals something. Often, customers will ask if your company is "bonded and insured." Many people will answer "yes" even if they are not bonded because they think they're bonded simply by having insurance. This is not the case. A bond is what is known as a "rider" on an insurance policy, which means that it's an add-on to an already existing policy that will provide you with even greater protection.

However, although it is possible in many states to get bonding when hiring contractors, bonding is much more common in businesses that hire W2 employees rather than contractors. Bonding is a unique form of insurance because if you file a claim against a cleaner for stealing from a customer, the insurance company will come after the cleaner for the crime, attempting to get the cleaner arrested and charged with stealing from a customer. This is how the insurance company pays back the customer who had something stolen, so the customer will only be paid back if the cleaner is prosecuted, arrested, and convicted. This means it typically doesn't make sense to get bonding that only offers low coverage because any small claim (<\$5,000) will likely not be enough to charge the cleaner. Additionally, because of this process, unlike other forms of insurance, you can't get bonding on yourself because bonding is an insurance policy for business owners against their cleaners committing crimes.

Although bonding is uncommon for cleaning companies hiring independent contractors, and it typically doesn't make sense for smaller claims, getting a Janitorial Services Bond for your business is a great way to appear more professional and provide your customers with additional peace of mind. For this reason, it's something to look into regardless of the size and structure of your business.

## **You'll try to get a P.O. Box for your business because you think it'll be more professional than using your house as the headquarters, and your Google My Business account will get banned**

Okay, I'll admit it, this one is pretty specific, but it happened to me and was a huge setback for my business, so make sure it doesn't happen to you.

Google My Business doesn't like P.O. boxes. In fact, Google banned them from being used for the purpose of creating a Google My Business account. Rather than buying a P.O. box, just use your home as your business's address and hide the address from your public profile. Google also has a policy that if you're going to create a Google My Business account, you need to be conducting business out of the address that you put down. This can be your home if you are conducting business out of your house, but don't make the mistake of accidentally telling Google that you don't actually conduct business out of the address that you entered while filing a claim to get your account back... because I did, and it made the whole situation even worse.

Once you've built up a solid base of Google reviews, you can stop paying for advertising and just field calls from people who find you organically on the internet, so do not make the mistake that I made and shoot yourself in the foot by doing something blatantly against their terms and conditions. I write about the P.O. box situation because it happened to me, but in general, if you are thinking about doing something that may or may not violate Google's terms, it's probably best to not do it. At the very least, seek counsel from an expert because Google is the most important platform at your disposal as a tech-forward cleaning company.

# You accidentally created a second Stripe account, and now you're banned from Stripe

This is an easier mistake to make than you might think because when you're first setting up Stripe, you may decide to change an account like a CRM or Website. When this happens, creating an all-new Stripe account can be easier than unlinking the old one from your old site and linking it to the new site.

However, having two Stripe accounts under the same name and EIN number is a red flag to Stripe that you're committing fraud, and it can get you banned. If you do run into issues with this, typically, a call to Stripe support can sort the whole thing out. But working with support people doesn't always go smoothly, and I would personally rather get a root canal than fight with an unhelpful support person. So, if you do have two Stripe accounts, delete the account you aren't using to avoid getting flagged, and if you're considering creating a second account for the same business to save time, don't.

# You got scammed by a "customer"

Any time a customer offers to pay you in any way other than a credit or debit card, run. It can be tempting, especially when you're first starting out, but customers trying to pay with a paper check are almost always doing it for dishonest reasons. This can sometimes cause resistance because it isn't always the case, and many people are used to paying for cleaning services with cash, but accepting a check or trying to have your cleaners accept cash is just asking for headaches that will make the job itself not worth it.

This is especially true with the remote business model since you're not actually going to the jobs yourself or even working with cleaners face-to-face, so if you have cleaners accepting payment on your behalf, it can result in problems for your business.

In addition, if you ever get an email from a customer saying they're willing to pay more for the service than you quoted, unless it's someone who you personally know or they're asking for additional services in exchange for the money, they're probably not planning on paying you at all. Most of the time, if they say they are willing to pay more for the job in exchange for being able to pay you in a specific way, like a cashier's check or money order, there's something fishy. Even on the off chance that the customer is being genuine, the odds that the person is trying to scam you are simply too high to justify accepting the offer. There has never been a customer

on earth (who isn't a friend or family member) who wants to pay a single dollar more than they have to.

## You want to find property managers to get leads but don't know where to look

The best way to find property managers is to navigate to Zillow and click through properties. Often, the management company responsible for the house or apartment will have contact information listed that will allow you to call or email them.

When calling, leave a voicemail if they don't pick up the first time, and in 48 hours, if they haven't gotten back to you, don't be afraid to call them a second time and leave another voicemail. Typically, if they haven't responded after two voicemails, you won't be able to reach them at all, but many people will ignore you the first time you call, so it's worth calling a second time.

## No one will respond to your cold emails

When sending cold emails, don't quit until you've sent three total emails per potential customer. The first email should outline the basic information you want them to know about your business and a deal to convince them to hire you. This could be a satisfaction guarantee, a percentage discount on recurring cleans, or even a one-time deal on the first clean if they choose to work with you. The important thing is that you're including some information that sways them to hire you because if they have no reason to hire you over other cleaning companies, they probably won't respond to the email.

Cold emails are hard, and even if you contact the potential customer three times, it doesn't guarantee that the customer will open the email or even that they'll see the email in the first place. To improve the odds that your email gets seen, you need to take action to make sure it doesn't end up in spam folders.

The first step to staying out of spam folders is "warming up" your email inbox. Warming up an email address is an important and often forgotten step in the world of cold emails. It refers to

using your new company email address enough that Google (or whatever email service you're using) knows that you're a real person and not a robot or spammer. To warm up an email address, you need to use it to send and receive emails. The ratio of sent versus received emails is important because sending out significantly more emails than you've received is a huge red flag to email providers.

By setting up your email and using it to create accounts that send you automated emails, you've already started warming up the email address. However, if you want to speed things up, you can use a service like Instantly to warm up your email. To warm up your email, you simply give them your email address and pay their monthly fee, and they'll send you a few hundred auto-generated emails per month, as well as send out emails on your behalf to automated inboxes to give Google the illusion that you have an active email inbox.

Next, you need to make sure that your emails are personalized. To accomplish this, when reaching out to property managers, do a little research on the properties that they manage and who they are as a company. Then, pick out 1-3 reasons you want to work with them. Saying something like, "I noticed your property on Johnson street, and it's conveniently located near one of our best cleaners," will improve the odds that the person will respond. Bonus points if you use the property manager's name in the email subject line.

Additionally, creating urgency will go a long way in getting people to respond. Saying, "We're offering 20% off recurring cleans but only for customers who sign up in the next week," will push them to respond much faster than if you don't set a timeline for them. You could also use the tactic of saying, "We're at 90% capacity and soon won't be able to take on new customers," which can have the same effect without you needing to offer any kind of promotion.

Finally, keep it brief. Attention spans have never been shorter, so keep your subject lines below 60 characters and cut out as much fluff as possible in the email body. House cleaning isn't complicated, so don't make it complicated. Explain who you are and the value you can provide and cut out the rest.

## You don't know how to quote studio apartments

Studio apartments and smaller properties can be difficult to quote because you want to make sure that you are making a profit on every job that you send a cleaner to. At the same time, you also want to make sure that the cleaner is fairly compensated for their time. Remember, it takes the same effort for a cleaner to drive to a one-bedroom apartment that it does for them to drive to a 4-bedroom house, but they don't make nearly as much money on a studio apartment. So, establish a minimum.



The minimum that works well in my own business is \$100. I never send a cleaner to a property for less than \$100, and of that \$100, I pay my cleaners \$60 minimum. The mistake that many people make is having a minimum price that they'll charge the customer but no minimum that they pay their cleaners. This may sound like a good strategy in terms of making more profit on smaller jobs, but it doesn't consider that small jobs will hurt cleaners' morale, especially if it's a one-time job. Cleaners don't want to go through the effort of driving to a new house and worrying about how to get inside when they're only going to work for one hour, so the minimum is just as much to protect your cleaners as it is to protect your bottom line.

## You don't know how to handle customers canceling

If a customer cancels the day before a job, cancel the job and make sure you notify the cleaner. While this can be annoying, because you're using subcontractors, nobody loses any money in this scenario. Then, try to get the customer rebooked another time and notify the cleaner directly via text that the customer canceled their original cleaning and had to reschedule. Even though BookingKoala sends an automated email to cleaners informing them that the job was canceled, it's important to reach out to them directly via text as well because you don't want them missing the email and driving to a job that was canceled.

If the customer cancels after the cleaner has left their home, charge them a \$50 cancellation fee and give that money to the cleaner to compensate them for wasted time and the missed opportunity. This will typically only be possible when the customer has already entered their billing information, so make sure this is entered prior to the booking.

Occasionally, customers will disappear after a cleaning occurs, and it can be very difficult to get them to pay you if they haven't already entered their billing information. Every customer who doesn't enter their billing information before a cleaning isn't trying to steal from you, but every customer who wants to steal from you will refuse to enter their billing information, so it's important to be strict about getting billing info prior to sending cleaners to a house.

## You won't be able to get enough work for your cleaners

This is a huge challenge you'll face when running a remote cleaning company, and it's the primary reason cleaners will stop working for you. It can be challenging to find enough work for

cleaners will stop working for you. It can be challenging to find enough work for cleaners, especially when first starting out, so give a more conservative estimate than you expect for how long it'll take you to get your first cleaner work. I typically say it can take 2-4 weeks to start getting cleaners consistent work after they've been onboarded, even though I can usually do it in 1-2.

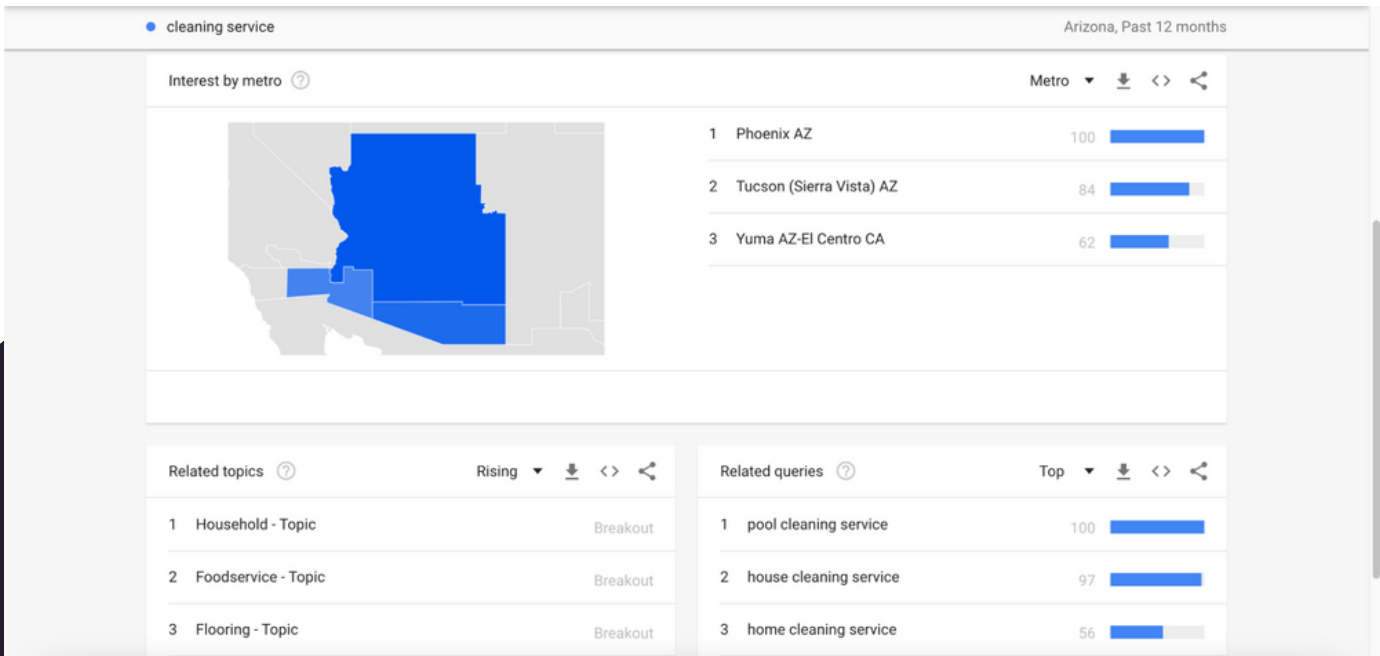
As soon as a new cleaner gets onboarded, invest \$200-300 in advertising in zip codes close to that cleaner's location. If you're using Google LSA, this budget should get a decent amount of customers in the door and help get the new cleaner started. In terms of filling cleaners' schedules who want to be full-time, be transparent that this can take several months. You may be able to fill a cleaner's schedule faster than this, but managing expectations, under-promising, and over-delivering is the best way to keep people happy.

## **You'll start your business in a place where there aren't any customers**

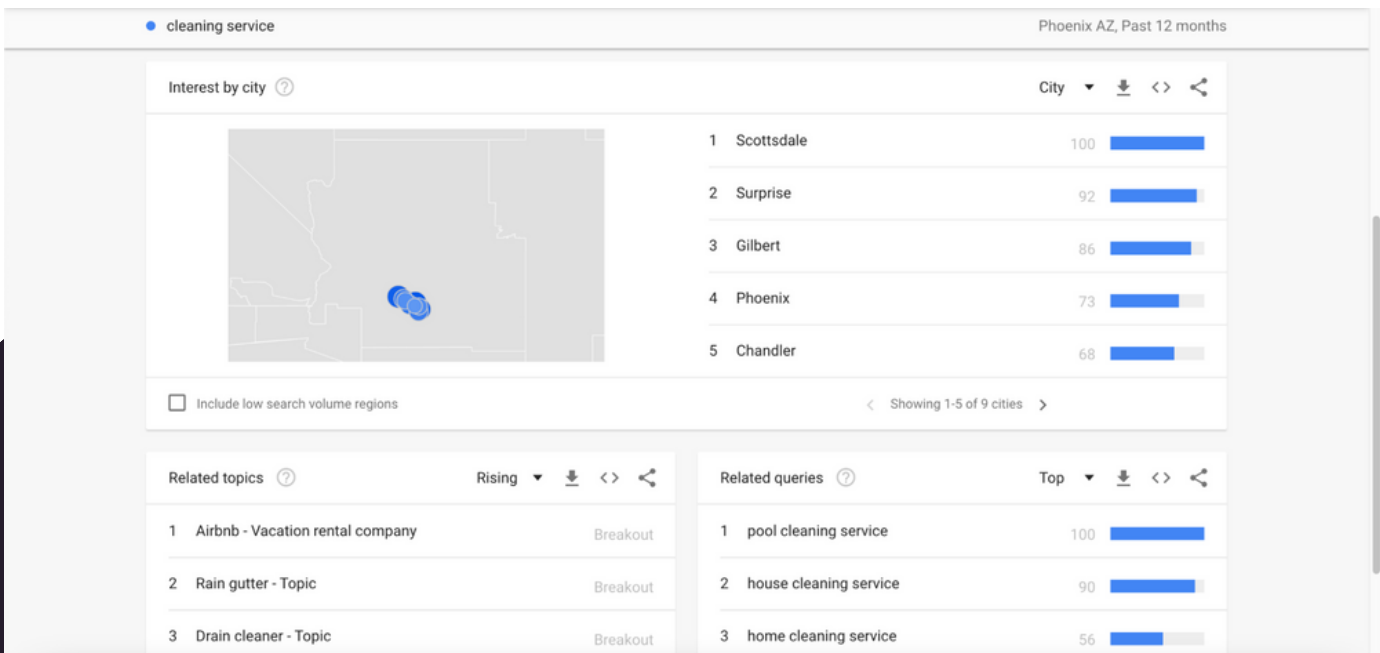
Oftentimes, this is an unwarranted concern. There's a huge demand for cleaning companies all across the country. However, what if the economy crashes and this changes? How can you guarantee that you'll start your business in a place with plenty of paying customers to support your business?

Because of the remote nature of the business, you can base the company anywhere. So how can you decide which areas are the best for starting a cleaning company? My favorite tool for this is Google Trends, because you can compare the search volume of keywords in different cities and determine where more people are searching for house cleaners.

One thing to keep in mind with Google trends is that there is typically only enough data to test out broader keywords such as "House cleaning" and "Maid Service" rather than more specific keywords like "Hire maid service in \_ city." The real selling point with Google Trends is how it allows you to drill down into specific regions of each state to see which cities and towns have the highest volume of people looking for house cleaning services.



For example, from the screenshot above, looking at the search volume of people searching for cleaning services in Arizona, we can see that Google breaks it down into three different regions: Phoenix, Tucson, and Yuma. No surprise Phoenix has the highest volume, but another interesting takeaway is looking at the related queries on the bottom right of the screen. From this search, we can see that there's a greater demand for pool cleaning services in Arizona than there is for house cleaning. This makes sense considering this is Arizona, but it's an example of how Google Trends can help you uncover opportunities.



Additionally, if we drill deeper into Phoenix, we can see that Phoenix only has the fourth-highest volume of people searching for cleaning services! The other suburbs of Scottsdale, Surprise, and Gilbert all have more people searching for cleaning services than Phoenix. This would be an extremely interesting and valuable takeaway if you were planning on starting a cleaning service in Arizona.

Finally, you can determine how competitive the market is for cleaning companies by looking up which cleaning companies are currently operating in each market. First, look at the number of competitors, then call a few in each market and see which ones are picking up their phones. The market where you get the worst service will likely be the easiest to compete in.

## You're overwhelmed talking to potential customers

Talking to customers on the phone can be overwhelming, and it's something you may struggle with in the early stages of operating your cleaning business. The good news is, after some practice, it'll begin to feel much more natural. A typical conversation with a customer can be broken down into six sections:

1. Introduction
2. Understanding the customer's needs
3. Explaining the service you provide
4. Answering questions + handling objections
5. Closing the customer
6. Explaining next steps

First, let's assume the customer is calling you. They found you online and want to hire you to clean their home. Introductions are typically short and go something like this:  
The customer says something along the lines of...

"Hello! Is this XYZ Cleaning?"

To which you'll respond...

"Yes! This is \_ with XYZ Cleaning; how can I help you today?"

Depending on the customer, some small talk may be involved in this part of the call, but generally, the introduction stage of the call is short. The customer is calling you because they need their house cleaned, not because they're looking for a new best friend.

After introducing yourself to the customer, the customer will explain what they need. When you're listening to the customer explain the job that they want to hire you for, there are a few questions you need to answer in order to fully understand the job.

1. How many beds/bathrooms are in the home?
  - a. From this info, you should be able to provide a rough quote. However, this is where you can also ask the customer to provide a few pictures of the home. Especially if the customer is requesting a move-out clean or mentions that there are elements of this job that might make it more difficult than a standard cleaning, this is a good idea.
    - i. Avoid telling the customer the price at this point in the call. It's better to wait until you've explained the service that you provide and sold them on it before revealing the price.
2. Are there any additional services beyond basic house cleaning the customer is seeking?
3. What is the customer's address?
4. How can the cleaner plan on entering the home?
5. Is there parking available on the premises?
6. How soon are they hoping to have the first cleaning done?

After this, you can dive into explaining the service that you provide. Based on other information in this handbook, you should be able to provide an accurate quote to the customer at this point. Explain that the customer service you can provide is your unfair advantage, and all of your cleaners are insured and have a minimum of one year of experience. Finally, ensure you've explained everything the cleaning doesn't include. The customer must know that a typical cleaning service does not include exterior windows, walls, or unfinished basements. This will prevent a huge amount of headaches down the road. After you've fully explained everything that a cleaning does and doesn't include, ask the customer how this sounds. If the customer says, "that sounds great; that's what I'm looking for." THEN, give them the price. They may object at this point, and that's okay. If they do, there are a handful of different ways that you can deal with the objection:

- Tell them that you need to charge a higher price in order to pay enough to attract the very best cleaners. You would charge less if you were okay with hiring worse people and providing a lower-quality service.
- Explain that you don't hire anyone without at least one year of residential cleaning experience.
- Explain that your cleaners are all bonded and insured.
- Offer a discount if the customer signs on for a recurring clean (I offer \$20 off the first clean if they sign on for a recurring clean).
- Explain that they're paying for quality AND convenience by offering fully online bill pay and a portal that provides easy scheduling.

Additionally, if the call is going well, you can use this as an opportunity to upsell customers on other things you offer. Explain that they can add on cleaning the inside of cabinets and appliances, but these things will take an extra 60 minutes each, which will be reflected in their bill.

Finally, you may need to answer a few questions from the customer at this point in the call. These often include:

- Are you bonded and insured?
  - a. The answer should be “yes.”
- Could you provide a reference for the service that you provide?
  - b. In order to do this, prior to the call, you can find a recurring customer who you’re confident will provide you with a five-star review. Then, reach out to them to make sure it’s alright if you use them as a reference. Make sure you never use anyone as a reference without first getting their consent.
    - i. If you don’t want to deal with this, say you keep the identity of your customers confidential, then refer them to your reviews on Google or any other platform. This should be sufficient in terms of references. Oftentimes if someone is asking for a reference it’s an indication that they’re going to be a difficult customer, so it’s not the end of the world if you choose not to provide this.
- Do you provide your own gear?
  - c. Yes, the cleaners provide all of their own gear.
- Objection: “I need to ask my spouse, so I can’t hire you today.”
  - d. Be polite, but explain that your schedule fills up quickly, and you can’t guarantee that you’ll be able to get them in as soon if they don’t hire you today.

Finally, it’s time to close the customer. To do this, determine the best cleaner to take the job while you have the customer on the phone (refer to the Cleaners Will Leave If They’re Not Happy section on page 60 for my system of matching up customers and cleaners). Then, look at their schedule, see when their next available opening is, and offer that specific time and date to the customer by saying:

“We have an opening on (date) at (time). Will this work for you to get started?”

It’s important to present a specific time and date to the customer and ask them a simple yes or no question when trying to close them. This takes the burden off of the customer during the sales process and gets you to “yes” more quickly.

After the customer has agreed to a time and date for the cleaning, explain what comes next. Tell them that they’ll be getting an automated email that will allow them to create an account with your website. This will let them enter their payment information and adjust any dates or times they need future cleanings. Explain that they must enter their billing information to

confirm the cleaning, or you may be forced to give their time slot to another customer. Then, ask the customer if they have any additional questions, and if not, say, “Great! We’re looking forward to cleaning your home!” and hang up the phone.

One common mistake when talking to customers is to oversell or continue trying to sell the customer after they’ve already said yes. Once the customer agrees to a price, date, and time, the sale is over. Giving any additional information, trying to convince them that they’ve made the right choice, or even trying to upsell them too late in the sales process could risk losing the customer.

## Customers/cleaners will ghost you

This is inevitable. Cleaners will stop responding during the hiring/onboarding process, and customers will ghost you constantly. However, there are a few ways to decrease the number of times it happens.

When hiring people, call them directly. Don’t waste your time messaging them over whatever app you’re using (Indeed/Zip Recruiter), and don’t send them an email saying you want to interview them. Call them and ask: “Is this a good time to do an interview?” If you don’t call them directly, most of them will never get back to you. After talking through some initial application questions on the phone, you can ask them to meet in person, or you can choose to do the entire interview virtually. Regardless, people willing to do manual labor are in incredibly high demand, and you’re competing with hundreds of other companies for them, so you need to sell them on working for you before someone else does.

After you’ve had a cleaner sign a contractor agreement, pass a background check, and get onboarded into your CRM, they typically won’t disappear on you. Most of the time, when someone stops responding to you, it’s during the onboarding process. However, like I said in the last chapter, the best job to get a cleaner started is a one-time clean, and once they’ve completed their first job successfully, you can go into future jobs with a much higher level of confidence that they won’t no-show on a customer.

In terms of getting customers not to ghost you, when a customer reaches out, ANSWER THE PHONE. If you answer the phone consistently, you will beat most people in the residential cleaning industry.

If the customer reaches out in some way other than calling directly, respond as quickly as possible. If you are using a platform where you can message them (Angi or Yelp, for example), the faster you respond, the more likely you are to close them. Seconds matter, and often the first company to reach out to them with a quote will win their business. Don’t be afraid to call

customers directly if they don't respond to a message, especially if it's a customer who lives near a cleaner whose schedule you're trying to fill. Sending a message and calling a few minutes later if you haven't heard anything is a great way to get people's attention, and it'll help you close a much higher percentage of customers. Response time is one of my favorite KPIs within my cleaning business, and by tracking it and working to improve it, I've increased the percentage of customers that I close by a significant margin.

## A handful of customers will cause all of your headaches

In any business model, a small handful of individuals will cause most of your problems. The cleaning industry is no different, so in order to build a stable company that doesn't take all of your time and energy. I recommend following the 3/97 rule.

The 3/97 rule states that 3% of your customers will cause 97% of your headaches, so every year, fire the most frustrating 3% of customers to keep things running smoothly and free up your time for the 97% of customers that aren't causing problems. This rule can also apply to cleaners, but it can be hard to fully eliminate a cleaner unless you have someone onboard with enough capacity to take on their work. After you've hired enough cleaners that replacing one person's workload isn't a big deal, firing your least reliable cleaner(s) each year will also improve the overall quality of your service. Obviously, only do this if you can afford to, but if possible, it'll be the best thing you do for yourself and your business each year.





**Part 6**

**A Crash Course in  
Taxes and  
Accounting**

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“Taxes are so fun. They’re so straightforward and easy!” – Said no one, ever. Taxes, and accounting in general, deter many people from starting businesses. There are so many different business structures to choose from, the amount you pay in taxes is largely determined by how you present your finances, and it’s very difficult to get straightforward, unbiased information on the best way to handle all of this. That’s why I decided to write this. Because doing your taxes and managing your accounting throughout the year shouldn’t be that hard. In the next chapter, I’m going to break down all of the different business structures you can choose from for your cleaning company (or any company), the tax forms you’ll need for each structure, how the laws vary between states, and what you can do throughout the year to keep things organized.

A few disclaimers before I go any further: this chapter specifically targets people living in the United States. Although this business model could succeed in other parts of the world, this section will not be nearly as relevant unless you live in the US. Additionally, this chapter is designed to provide you with a holistic understanding of everything you need to know about taxes and accounting so you can make your own decisions about how you want to handle each of these things within your business. It’s useful to have a big-picture understanding of how all of this stuff works before talking to a CPA, so you can make informed and intelligent decisions that align with your business goals. This section isn’t designed to make you a CPA; it’s designed to help you hold a conversation with one. Once again, my lawyer would like me to tell you that this is for educational purposes only, and should not be considered legal, tax, or financial advice. Before acting on any of this information, consult with a registered accountant.

## How and when do you file taxes?

“How do I even file my taxes?” Great question. Let’s assume you’re not using software like TurboTax to file your taxes and want to do it directly with the government. To file your taxes, you can E-file them with the IRS through this link:

[https://www.irs.gov/e-file-providers/e-file-for-business-and-self-employed-taxpayers.](https://www.irs.gov/e-file-providers/e-file-for-business-and-self-employed-taxpayers)

“Great. But when are they due?” Another amazing question. There are a few key deadlines that you need to keep in mind as a business owner:

- **January 31st:** Deadline for any employees or contractors hired over the past year to receive their W-2 or 1099-NEC forms.
  - If you use QuickBooks, you can file these forms easily through them. If not, you can use a service like 1099online.com to file them. Each year, you’ll need to file three copies of each form for each employee/contractor: one for yourself, one for the cleaner, and one for the IRS.

- Note: There are many different kinds of 1099 forms depending on the type of income that you need to report. However, you'll need to use a 1099-NEC form for your cleaners. 1099-NEC is used to report nonemployee compensation.
- **March 15th:** Deadline to file business tax returns for partnerships, S Corporations, or LLCs taxed as partnerships.
  - This is also the deadline to file a 2553 form, which allows you to switch your business election to an S corporation in the following year. This means if you file a 2553 form to become an S-Corp on March 1st of 2022, you'll still pay taxes for 2022 as an LLC and won't file taxes as an S-Corp until the following year. I'll cover the pros and cons of electing to file as an S-corp later in this chapter.
- **April 15th:** Deadline for C-corporations, sole proprietorships, single-member LLCs, or LLCs taxed as corporations and individuals to file their tax returns.
  - This is also the deadline for your personal tax returns.

## Paying your taxes quarterly

You can pay your taxes quarterly rather than annually as a business owner. This is known as paying "estimated taxes," and it's based on what you made over the previous three-month period. Technically, you're expected to pay these taxes if you plan on needing to pay more than \$1,000 in unpaid taxes when your annual return is filed. If you choose not to pay quarterly taxes, the IRS will penalize you 0.5% of the amount unpaid for each month or part of the month that the tax isn't paid. Additionally, by staying on top of your taxes and paying them each quarter, you'll avoid needing to make a massive payment at the end of the year, so this strategy not only mitigates fees from the IRS, but it also helps you keep your tax bill under control. The easiest way to pay these quarterly taxes is by navigating to [irs.gov/payments](https://irs.gov/payments). To streamline this process, you can take your total tax burden throughout the previous year, divide that number by four, and pay that amount in taxes each quarter. Although this will not be completely accurate, it will satisfy your obligation to pay quarterly taxes and can be reconciled after the year is over. Below are the deadlines for filing quarterly taxes if you choose to do so.

- **April 15th:** First quarter deadline
- **June 15th:** Second quarter deadline
- **September 15th:** Third quarter deadline
- **January 15th:** Fourth quarter deadline

# What do you pay taxes on?

Regardless of your business structure, you'll pay taxes on the profit your company makes rather than the revenue it brings in. For example, if your cleaning company makes \$100,000 in the calendar year of 2022, and you paid employee wages of \$50,000, marketing expenses of \$10,000, and subscriptions/miscellaneous fees of \$5,000, you would be paying taxes on \$35,000 ( $100,000 - (50,000 + 10,000 + 5,000) = 35,000$ ), rather than the total \$100,000 that your company made in revenue.

[As an entrepreneur, you pay taxes on profit, not revenue:](#)

$$\text{Revenue} - \text{Expenses} = \text{Profit}$$

## Additional Notes:

In this chapter, I'll refer to "employment taxes" and "self-employment taxes." These refer to the same 15.3% tax that covers the cost of social security, medicare, unemployment insurance, and the cost of other social programs. The only difference is that when you are self-employed, they are called "self-employment taxes," and you are liable for the full 15.3%. If you are employed or have a business that hires employees, it is known as "employment tax." As the business owner, you split this tax with the employee 50/50, so each of you must pay 7.65%. Additionally, I refer to "State and Federal taxes" in this chapter, which refers to the income tax everyone must pay depending on their tax bracket. If I use the term "state and federal taxes," this refers to "income tax" and vice versa.

## How should you structure your business?

There's a wide variety of ways that you can choose to structure your business, from a basic sole proprietorship or general partnership to an LLC or even an S or C Corporation. The short answer to the question "how should you structure your business?" in my opinion, for most people, is as a Limited Liability Company (LLC). This structure protects you from personal liability if someone sues your company for any reason and doesn't add significant complexity to your taxes. However, I'm not a CPA or a licensed attorney, and the goal of this section isn't to provide you with advice; it's to give you all the relevant information you need to make your own

decisions. In doing so, the following few pages will break down all the different business structures available to choose from for your business, some high-level pros and cons of each structure, and everything you need to know about how to file taxes for each one.

## Sole Proprietorship

To start, a sole proprietorship is the most basic business structure you can choose because you don't need to file any documentation when launching your business. A sole proprietorship is an enterprise owned by an individual entrepreneur, with no distinction between the owner and the business.

The primary advantage of a sole proprietorship is that it is easy and inexpensive to form, and it's easy to change the business's legal structure later. The primary disadvantage is that there is no legal distinction between you and your business. For this reason, you have unlimited liability for the business's debts. If your business gets sued, the person pressing charges could come after your personal assets (like your home, car, or personal stock portfolio).

Although you might be planning on creating an LLC for your cleaning business, most of your cleaners will likely file taxes as sole proprietors. For this reason, it's crucial to have a big-picture understanding of how taxes and business liability work for a sole proprietorship so you can explain these topics to your cleaners and help them be as successful as possible and avoid any potential headaches down the road.

## How to file taxes as a sole proprietor

As a sole proprietor, you're what's known as a disregarded entity, which means the money you earn in your business is treated as your personal income when you file taxes. **To file taxes as a sole proprietor, you must file a Schedule C, which is part of the 1040 Form needed to file your personal taxes.** On this form, you must report the business income (revenue) you received over the previous year and all of the "ordinary and necessary" expenses you incurred while running your business. Examples of ordinary and necessary expenses are employee wages, website expenses, and subscriptions that you use to operate the business. If you're unsure about what qualifies as an ordinary and necessary expense within your business, work with a CPA.

For your cleaners who are filing taxes as sole proprietors, their “revenue” will be all of the money that you’ve paid them for cleanings, and their “expenses” will include their insurance, their cost of supplies, and any travel expenses to get to jobs (the cost of gas). These expenses are all deductions they can use to decrease their tax burden, so it’s good advice to tell them to track these things. If you choose, you can provide them with resources to help them track their expenses. Even a basic spreadsheet with formulas that track categories like “insurance,” “supplies,” and “gas” can be hugely beneficial to helping your cleaners track their expenses and save money on taxes each year.

The taxes that you’re responsible for as a sole proprietor include federal income taxes, state income taxes, and self-employment taxes. Self-employment taxes are an additional tax that can surprise people working as sole proprietors. It is an additional 15.3% tax that the sole proprietor is responsible for paying. Self-employment taxes cover the employer and employee portions of medicare and social security taxes. If you’re working as a W2 employee, this tax is split between the employer and the employee (so each party pays 7.65%). However, you’re fully responsible for these taxes as a sole proprietor. This shift in the tax burden for self-employment taxes is one of the reasons that it is less expensive to hire cleaners as 1099 contractors rather than W2 employees because the tax is passed off from the business owner to the cleaner.

## General Partnership (GP)

In a general partnership, similar to a sole proprietorship, the company is unincorporated, so you don’t need to submit any paperwork to form a general partnership. However, it’s a best practice to create a partnership agreement between the business owners to provide structure for dealing with disagreements. The agreement should outline everyone’s responsibilities, the percentage of ownership in the company, and how profits will eventually be distributed.

In a general partnership, if the company owes a significant amount of money, creditors have the ability to decide who they want to come after for their personal assets. This is known as being “Joint and Severally Liable.” So, if one partner has more personal assets than the other, creditors will go after this partner’s assets because it presents the greatest opportunity for them to be paid back. This is an important concept to be aware of. If you have a 50/50 partnership with someone and your company gets sued, creditors probably won’t come after you both equally. If you have more money than your partner, they might only come after you.

# How to file taxes in a general partnership

To file taxes in a general partnership, every partner must submit a Schedule K-1 Form; then, the business must submit Tax Form 1065 to report on the company's gains or losses. The 1065 form shows the profit the business made, and the K1 form shows the share of the business that each partner owns and, thus, what they personally made in profits that they must pay taxes on.

An important distinction with partnerships is that partnerships are taxed based on how much profit the company made rather than how much money was actually distributed to the partners. For example, if your company made \$100,000 in profit in 2022, and you have one equal partner (so you own 50% of the company), you would be taxed on \$50,000... even if you never “distributed” the money to yourself. Meaning the money could stay in a business bank account. You don't need to transfer it into your personal bank account for you to have to pay taxes on it.

The purpose of the Schedule K1 form is to tell the government about the \$50,000. If one year later, you want to send the remaining money (whatever is left after you pay taxes on the \$50,000) into your personal bank account, you will then receive this money “tax-free” because you already paid taxes on it.

Finally, one additional thing to be aware of is that your tax burden may become more complicated if you or one of your partners get paid a fixed salary from the business. If this is the case, the salary is what's known as a guaranteed payment, and it would count as an expense for the business. For this reason, the employee making the salary would need to pay income tax on this money, PLUS their share of taxes from the profits of the business. If this is something that applies to your business, ask your CPA about how guaranteed payments impact the amount of money your company needs to pay in taxes.

## An example of how guaranteed payments could impact your taxes:

You and a partner each own 50% of a cleaning company. Your company made \$100,000 in profit in 2022, BUT you paid yourself a fixed salary of \$2,000 per month throughout the year (\$24,000 total for 2022). This counts as an expense to the business, so the business would technically only profit \$76,000 ( $\$100,000 - \$24,000 = \$76,000$ ). This means that each partner would need to pay taxes on half of this \$76,000, so each of you would need to pay taxes on



\$38,000 ( $76,000/2 = 38,000$ ). Because you received the salary, you must pay income and self-employment taxes on the \$24,000. This means your tax burden is \$38,000 in profits, plus \$24,000 in salary, so you must pay taxes on \$62,000. Your partner, who didn't get paid a salary, only needs to pay taxes on their share of the profits, so they only pay taxes on \$38,000.

Where this gets crazy is that it doesn't matter how the \$76,000 in profit actually gets distributed. Theoretically, your partner could wire the full \$76,000 into their personal bank account in one lump-sum payment, and you would still each be liable to pay taxes on half of it because you each own 50% of the business. Prior to starting the company, it's a good idea to agree on how profits will be distributed and write them into a partnership agreement that both parties sign to prevent unfair situations like this.

## Limited Partnership (LP)

A limited partnership files taxes in the same way as a general partnership. The difference is in who is liable for the business's debts, especially if the company gets sued. Limited partners can only be pursued for up to what they've committed in financial resources, so they have limited liability. This means that if you formed a limited partnership with an investor who invested \$50,000 into the business, and the company got sued, the partner who invested the money, AKA the limited partner, could only be sued for up to \$50,000. You, the general partner, could be personally liable for an unlimited amount of money. Meaning they could come after you for much more than just \$50,000. In return for this limited risk, limited partners can not be responsible for the day-to-day decision-making of the firm. This is a good structure for bringing on investors who will not be running the business. **This business structure would be uncommon for a cleaning business because, typically, you would not need to raise significant money to start and operate a cleaning business.**

The only tax difference between a limited partnership and a general partnership applies to the limited partner. A limited partner does not need to pay self-employment tax. So, they are only liable to pay income taxes and would not need to pay the additional 15.3% tax that you, the general partner, would need to pay on your share of the profits.

## Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)

A limited liability partnership is a partnership where no partner can be held liable for any other partner's malpractice. LLPs are normal in professions like accounting and law because it prevents an accountant, for example, from getting in trouble for another accountant's unrelated malpractice, even if they belong to the same firm. I won't be going into detail

regarding the tax implications of structuring as an LLP because filing as an LLP would not make sense for a cleaning business.

## Limited Liability Corporation (LLC)

Structuring as an LLC is, in my opinion, the best choice for a cleaning business. However, before we dive in, let's get one major misconception about LLCs out of the way. An LLC is a business structure designed to protect you from legal liability, not a way to save money on taxes. When you're an LLC, you don't file taxes "as an LLC." Instead, you file taxes in one of three ways: as an Individual, as a partnership, or as an S-Corporation.

The advantage of filing as an LLC is that it creates a legal barrier between you and your business. If someone sues your company, they might be able to take all of your business' assets, but your personal assets, such as your home, car, or investment portfolio, will be protected.

For any LLC, you must file Articles of Incorporation with the state you plan on basing the LLC. It's not required to file the LLC with the state you live in, although this is the most common choice among entrepreneurs with LLCs. Filing as an LLC also includes completing an operating agreement between the members of the LLC if the LLC has multiple members.

## Paying taxes as an LLC

### IMPORTANT:

If you own a single-member LLC, you file taxes as if you were a sole proprietor.  
If you own part of a multi-member LLC, you file taxes as if you were in a general partnership.

This means every member of the LLC must pay federal, state, and self-employment taxes on the profits of the LLC. Finally, if you have an LLC, you can choose to file as an S-Corporation or a C-Corporation. I won't spend as much time explaining what a C-Corporation is because it is unlikely that it would make sense to file as a C-Corp for your cleaning business. However, I will explain what an S-Corp is because, depending on the size of your business, it may make sense to file as an S-Corp.

# S-Corporation

In contrast to an LLC, an S-Corporation is NOT a formal business structure. It is a tax classification. If you own an LLC, whether it's a single-member LLC or a multi-member LLC, you can choose to file as an S-corporation.

The primary reason you would consider filing as an S-Corp rather than as a single or multi-member LLC is that if your business makes enough money, you can save on taxes. The reason is that if you're the owner of an LLC, you can't technically be paid a salary. Instead, you must pay yourself a "distribution" of your company's profits. You have to pay income tax and self-employment tax on distributions from your LLC, just like you would if you were a sole proprietor or general partner.

**In an S-Corp, you don't have to pay self-employment tax on distributions.** However, this is on the condition that if you own an S-Corp, you pay yourself a "reasonable salary," and you must pay self-employment taxes on that salary. Self-employment tax is 15.3%, so you get a 15.3% tax break on the money you pay yourself as a distribution if you have an S-Corp.

## An example of how filing as an S-Corp can save you money on taxes:

If you have a Single-Member LLC that made \$100,000 in profit in 2022, and you determine that a reasonable salary for managing your business would be \$60,000, you can pay yourself a salary of \$60,000, then take a distribution of \$40,000. This \$40,000 distribution would be subject to income tax but not self-employment tax. **This would save you \$6,120 ( $\$40,000 * 15.3\%$ ) in taxes.**

One precaution when filing as an S-Corp is to consult with your lawyer and accountant to determine what a "reasonable salary" is for your role. This will depend on factors such as location, your role within the business, and more. It's advantageous for this number to be as low as possible, but if you make your salary too low, the government could charge you fines and back taxes. For this reason, work with experts when putting this together.

# How to form an S-Corporation

To form an S-Corporation, owners must file Articles of Incorporation and an additional form called Form 2553. Additionally, you'll need to take steps such as writing corporate bylaws, appointing directors, and holding director/shareholder meetings. Because of these additional steps, and because the process varies by state, it is essential to consult with an accountant and attorney before jumping from filing taxes as an LLC to an S-Corporation.

S-Corporation filing fees vary by state; however, they are typically between \$500-\$800, plus the cost of a CPA and attorney to set it up. For this reason, the additional cost of creating an S-Corp could be upwards of \$2,000, plus a significant time commitment to put everything together. For this reason, filing as an S-Corporation is not advantageous until you have a profitable company that can afford to pay a reasonable salary plus a high enough distribution to offset these costs. This number is likely around \$100,000 in profit per year. However, once again, it will vary by state and situation, so work with your experts to make this decision.

Additionally, if you're paying yourself a salary, it's a best practice to use a payroll management system to pay yourself just like you would if you hired an employee. Platforms like Gusto or ADT work great for this and allow you to file a W2 for yourself, just like you would if you were an employee with no ownership in the company. Using a payroll management platform removes the headaches related to employee and payroll taxes.

## S-Corporation Limitations

There are a handful of limitations to keep in mind if you want to file as an S-Corp, none of which will probably be relevant to a cleaning company. The primary limitation is that an S-Corp cannot have more than 100 shareholders, and every shareholder needs to be a US Citizen rather than a corporation or a citizen of another country. Additionally, you can only have one class of stock in an S-Corporation.

## C-Corporation

If you own an LLC, you can also file as a C-Corporation, although you probably don't want to. C-Corporations are corporate structures that are designed primarily for companies that are preparing to go public. This is because C-Corporations can have an unlimited amount of shares and shareholders. For this reason, every publicly traded company is a C-Corporation.

There are a variety of reasons that it probably doesn't make sense for your cleaning company to file as a C-Corporation. The most obvious reason it might be a bad fit is that C-Corporations face double taxation, meaning they must pay a 21% corporate tax rate on their earnings plus personal tax rates on shareholder dividends. If your business is big enough to even consider this corporate structure, you should be getting advice from a whole team of experts.

One interesting rule that helps explain one way that corporations avoid paying taxes is that C-Corporations are the only business structure that can deduct charitable donations as a business expense from their taxable income (up to 10% of their total income). C-Corporations are filled with loopholes that allow them to avoid paying taxes. However, they're designed for huge companies with over 100 shareholders.

## Employees VS Contractors: what do you need to know?

When running your cleaning business, one of the most important decisions you'll need to make is if you hire your cleaners as W2 employees or independent contractors. Although the handbook already touches on this topic, this section will provide a deeper dive into the differences between the two forms of employment.

First of all, the terms "W2" employee and "1099" contractor refer to the tax documents that you're required to send the worker by January 31st of each calendar year. Each document needs to outline how much money you paid them, and a W2 Form should also outline how much money you withheld for Federal and State taxes. A 1099 Form is more basic and simply states the amount you paid them over the past calendar year, their name, address, and social security number.

A few key differences exist between hiring a W2 employee and a 1099 contractor. The most obvious difference is that contractors are legally independent business owners, so legally, you can't provide them with their own gear, supplies, or insurance because they "must be in a position to succeed or fail if business expense exceeds income." Additionally, you can't tell them how or when to work. They must provide you with their availability, and you can assign them jobs within that availability. This structure of hiring someone is the same way that Uber hires drivers. If you drive for Uber, Uber can't tell you when you have to drive. Rather, you decide when you want to drive, and Uber provides you with customers during that availability.

Laws vary widely from state to state, but 1099 contractors are also required to get their own Federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) in many states. This free and relatively easy

process can be done through the IRS via this link:  
(<https://sa.www4.irs.gov/modiein/individual/index.jsp>).

Finally, 1099 contractors must be able to take additional jobs unrelated to the work you've provided them. It's completely fine to have a non-compete clause in your contractor agreement saying they can't poach customers that you've provided, but in order to truly be an independent business owner, they must have the ability to take additional jobs outside of your business if they choose to.

In contrast, you can provide a W2 employee with branded clothing, cleaning supplies, insurance, and tell them how and when to work (within the bounds of the law). These are huge advantages to hiring a W2 employee, so why wouldn't you hire one?

The most obvious advantages of hiring contractors compared to employees are that it is less expensive from a tax perspective and less administrative work to keep track of throughout the year. When you hire an employee, you must pay half of their employment taxes (half of the 15.3% tax I've mentioned above, so an additional 7.65% in taxes for every dollar you pay them). If you don't make your payroll tax deposits on time, you could risk having your company shut down by the government, so it's an additional thing you'll have to stay on top of.

Additionally, you must withhold state and federal taxes from the employee's paycheck. This amount will vary by tax bracket, and it is your responsibility to take care of it on behalf of your employee. Plus, you have to pay additional taxes such as FICA and FUTA taxes, and depending on the state, you may have to pay state payroll taxes and state disability insurance. Finally, you may have additional local taxes that must be withheld from your employee's paycheck or that you must pay directly. All of this is almost impossible to manage by yourself, so if you choose to go the W2 employee route, use a payroll provider like Gusto to help manage these expenses and, once again, work with CPAs and attorneys.

In contrast to this, if you hire cleaners as 1099 contractors, you don't need to worry about any of these taxes because you are essentially hiring an independent business owner to clean houses. Instead, all you need to do is have them fill out a contractor agreement and W9 form when you hire them. Then, you must fill out a 1099-NEC tax form for them at the end of the year. For a 1099-NEC form, you just need to provide their name, address, and social security number. The purpose of having them fill out the W9 form is to get this information.

When you choose to operate your business this way, the 7.65% portion of employment taxes gets passed onto them, as well as the responsibility to track what is owed in Federal and State Taxes. For this reason, this chapter's "Sole Proprietor" section likely applies to them. Feel free to use it as your guide to explain how working for you will work and what their personal tax burden is. At the very least, let them know that they need to track their income and expenses throughout the year so they can pay their taxes and maximize their own deductions.

# Things to ask when hiring a CPA

You've heard me say it a million times... hire a CPA. Part of this is to protect me from legal liability, but most of it is because it's actually good advice. The reason that it's good advice is that a good CPA isn't just a bookkeeper who will crunch the numbers and spit out a tax bill. They're also an advisor who can help you navigate difficult business problems. Things like when to expand, when to reduce spending, and when to invest in your business are important topics that a CPA can help you flesh out. So, what should you ask someone that you're considering hiring?

First, you want to ensure they have experience working with clients similar to you. If you own a small cleaning business, you don't want to hire a CPA that's only ever done auditing for Fortune 500 companies. You want someone with experience helping small "Main Street" business owners, ideally cleaning companies.

Ask them about their current client mix and if they've ever advised someone who uses contractors before (assuming you're hiring contractors), and make sure they've worked with companies that have faced the same problems as you. Finally, ask them what state they passed their CPA exam in. Accounting laws vary by state, and for this reason, you want to work with someone who has expertise in dealing with the exact laws that your company will face.

Finally, determine if this is a person you want to form a relationship with who can act as a long-term advisor to you and your business. A CPA is a valuable mentor to you as the CEO of a company, so make sure you're working with a person you like working with, just like you would if you were hiring a full-time employee. Think about hiring a CPA like you're hiring another employee, because you basically are.



**Part 9**

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# **Additional course docs**



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# Cleaner Job Description

Use “fill and replace” to fill in (company name), (company location), and (pay amount).

(company name) is hiring **full and part-time** house cleaners in the (company location) area.

At (company name), not only are we the highest-paying cleaning company in the area (many of our cleaners make more than **\$30+ per hour after tips and bonuses**), but we're also the most flexible. (company name) is unlike other cleaning companies because we allow you to set your own schedule and work when YOU want to work.

When you work at (company name), you'll be able to set your availability through our mobile app and clock in and out right from your phone. It's like being an Uber driver - but we'll start you off at (pay amount) per hour, plus tips! At (company name), you set your own schedule, and we assign you jobs based on your availability. Only want to work on Mondays? Perfect. Want to work every day and make this your full-time job? Also perfect. We'll work with you to ensure you're happy and able to make great money on YOUR time.

The best part: over time, after you build up a base of recurring customers, you'll be able to work exclusively with people you know and are comfortable with. So after a few months, there will no longer be any one-time cleans - just people you know (and recurring customers often tip exceptionally well).

(Company name) does **NOT** provide gear or insurance; however, we provide customers and allow you to work on your own time. This is a 1099 contractor role where you'll be expected to work independently.

We're looking for A-level people to join our team. To be selected, you **MUST** consistently show up on time, communicate well, and be exceedingly respectful to our customers. Additionally, because of the independent nature of the job, we require at least one year of residential cleaning experience.

**Job Types: Full-time, Part-time**

**Salary: (pay amount) per hour**

**Benefits:**

- Flexible schedule

### Supplemental pay types:

- Signing bonus
- Tips

### Application Question(s):

- Do you have a driver's license?
- Do you have access to a vehicle? (Cleaners will be expected to transport themselves between different cleaning locations.)
- Do you have car insurance?
- Are you willing to consent to a background check?
- Are you comfortable providing your own gear and insurance for this job?
- Do you have at least one year of residential cleaning experience?

A recommended cleaning supplies list will be provided.

### Experience:

- Residential Cleaning or Housekeeping: 1 year (Required)

### Language:

- English (Required)

Work Location: On the road

# Interview Script for Hiring Independent Contractors

## Things to keep in mind during the interview:

I like to start with some brief small talk, then explain the agenda for everything the call will cover to provide structure and help the applicant understand everything we'll be discussing. Before you ask how they're doing, explain that you're calling on behalf of the job application they submitted, this will prevent them from thinking that the call is spam and hanging up on you. Also, remember to use this script as a guideline; if additional questions come up during the call that you want to ask or there are different things you want to say based on the applicant, don't let this script limit you. Interviewing people is a skill that you'll get more comfortable with over time. This script is designed to give you some initial structure and an understanding of everything you should cover to help you get started.

Additionally, this script gives a detailed description of how I operate my business. Please read through this script before interviewing anyone to ensure everything is accurate for your business. This is especially evident in the "talk about the company" section.

## Introduction and small talk

"Hello, my name is (your name). I'm calling on behalf of the application you submitted to work for (company name), is now a good time to talk? Awesome, I appreciate you taking the time to chat with me today. How is your day going?"

# Layout the agenda for the interview

“So, a typical agenda for an interview with us is as follows:

- Reconfirm some of the info on your application.
  - Ask about your prior cleaning experience.
  - Ask a few additional questions.
  - Talk a little about the company.
  - If it sounds like you’re a good fit, I’ll talk through our onboarding process.
- Sound good? Awesome.”

## Reask application questions

“So, to get started, I’d like to begin by reconfirming some application questions...

- First of all, how many years of cleaning experience do you have?
  - Needs to be at least one year of RESIDENTIAL cleaning experience.
- “Do you have a valid driver’s license?”
  - Needs to answer “yes.”
- “Do you have access to a motor vehicle?”
  - Needs to answer “yes.”
- “Do you have car insurance?”
  - Needs to answer “yes.”
- “Would you be willing to consent to a background check?”
  - Needs to answer “yes.”

## Ask about prior cleaning experience

- “Awesome, so now that we have that out of the way, could you tell me more about your previous cleaning experience? What did your previous job entail?”
- “Did you usually work alone or with others? In this role, you’d primarily be working by yourself. Is this something you would be comfortable with?”
- “Do you have any experience with move-in/out cleans?”
- “Could you provide a reference from your previous job?”

# Additional questions

“Awesome, now for a few additional questions...”

- “How many hours per week are you hoping to work?”
- “What does your availability look like?”
- If you were at a job by yourself and could not get into the property, how would you handle that situation?
  - This last one is optional to see how they’d handle a stressful situation.

# Talk about the company

“Awesome, all of that sounds great. Thank you for answering those questions. So, I’d love to tell you a little about the company. The primary thing that sets us apart from other cleaning companies is that we prioritize technology. We’re one of the only cleaning companies in the area that offer fully online booking and automatic quotes for jobs, and we track everything via a mobile app (refer to whatever CRM you use). Once you download the app, you’ll be able to track all of your jobs directly from your phone, and we’ll pay you via direct deposit every Friday.

However, our goal isn’t just to provide customers with the best cleaning experience in the area. It’s also to provide our cleaners with a way to make extra money on their own terms by allowing you to set your own availability and work independently. We operate our business in a similar way to Uber, where we’re looking to hire cleaners as 1099 contractors, meaning you provide your own supplies and insurance, then YOU set your own availability, and we assign you jobs within that availability. So, we provide you with the customers and handle all the headaches. You just need to show up, and we’ll pay you every Friday. We have a recommended cleaning supplies checklist to help you get started and a \$100 bonus program to help you cover the initial costs. The bonus is structured as four individual \$25 bonuses spread out over your first four cleans in addition to your normal wages and tips.

We ask that you update your availability so that when we assign you a job, you can take that job, because the worst thing for our business is canceling or rescheduling customers. Because not needing to cancel or reschedule is so important to us, we also have a \$50 bonus program per month if you complete five cleans within the month and don’t need to cancel or reschedule any cleans.

We have a zero-tolerance policy for no-showing to jobs without calling in. We will typically hold off from assigning you jobs if you show a pattern of calling in, especially at the last second, because we prioritize our best jobs for our most reliable cleaners. Our best jobs are large recurring jobs that are closest to your location.

Our pay, in addition to all of these bonuses and the tips that you'll receive from customers (which you keep 100% of), is \_\_\_\_\_, the highest in the area. How does that sound? Do you have any questions?"

## Talk through the onboarding process

- "Based on everything you've said, I believe you would be great for this position. When can you get started?"
- "Great, then let's go through some next steps..."
  1. First, we'll send you a Contractor agreement via DocuSign that lays out the legal structure of hiring you as a 1099 contractor.
  2. After you sign, we'll send you a background check via email. Just to confirm, is this the correct email address to reach you at: (verify the email provided by Indeed or ZipRecruiter).
  3. Next, you'll need to apply for a federal employer identification number (EIN). This is a free and easy process that solidifies your standing as an independent contractor.
    - a. You can do so by following this link: <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>.
  4. Next, we'll email you links to get you Onboarded to our CRM. To use BookingKoala, you'll need to download the BookingKoala app to your phone. If you have any issues while setting this up, please feel free to give us a call or shoot us a text.
    - a. In addition, we'll send you a recommended supplies checklist and a document that explains everything a house cleaning includes to help guide you during the first few cleans.
  5. Finally, you'll need to create a Stripe account to get paid. I'll include a document outlining step-by-step instructions for setting this up with your other onboarding materials.

"And that's it! Do you have any additional questions? We can't wait for you to get started. I'll send over that contractor agreement as soon as we get off this call. Looking forward to working with you! Have a great rest of your day!"

# Cleaner Onboarding Checklist

- Successful interview.
- Signed contractor agreement.
- Passed background check.
- The cleaner is fully informed regarding all types of insurance they can choose to carry, and has provided a certificate of insurance for both auto and general liability insurance policies.
  - More info on insurance can be found on page 72 of this book.
- Apply for Federal Employer Identification Number.
  - [Click here to navigate to the IRS website to apply for an EIN.](#)
- Filled out W9 tax form.
- Direct deposit set up with Stripe.
- Stripe is integrated with CRM.
- Test payment sent.



# Stripe Setup Guide

Stripe is a quick, inexpensive, and secure way to pay people via direct deposit, and it integrates directly with BookingKoala. However, getting a cleaner setup with Stripe can be complicated, so I've broken down the steps to getting this set up below. Feel free to delete this paragraph and send cleaners the instructions below to help them get started. However, before doing this, take note of the instructions at the very bottom of the document because I've also included step-by-step instructions on how you can link their Stripe account to BookingKoala once they've created their account and provided you with their Account ID.

The following section is designed to be provided to the cleaner:

There are three main steps to creating a Stripe account so you can get paid:

1. Creating an account
2. Filling in additional business information
3. Finding your account ID and sending it to us, so we have the necessary information to pay you

## First, create an account with Stripe:

1. Go to Stripe.com
2. Navigate to "Sign in"
3. Select "Don't have an account? Sign up"
4. Create your account using a valid email address, your full name, and a password
5. Verify the email by clicking the link in the auto-generated email Stripe sends after creating your account

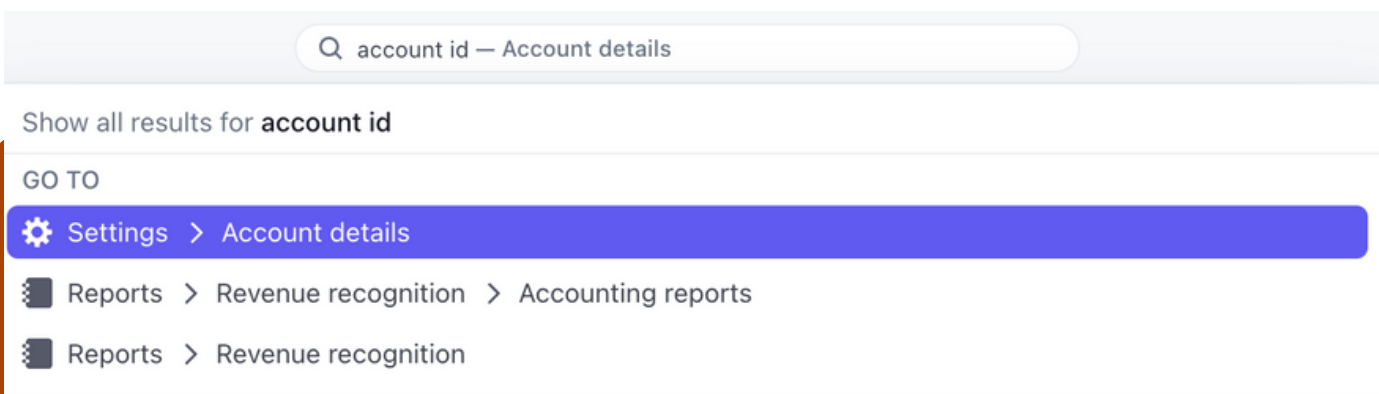
## Second, activate your account

1. Once you've logged into Stripe, select "Activate account" in the top left corner of the screen.
2. Fill out the necessary information to activate your account:

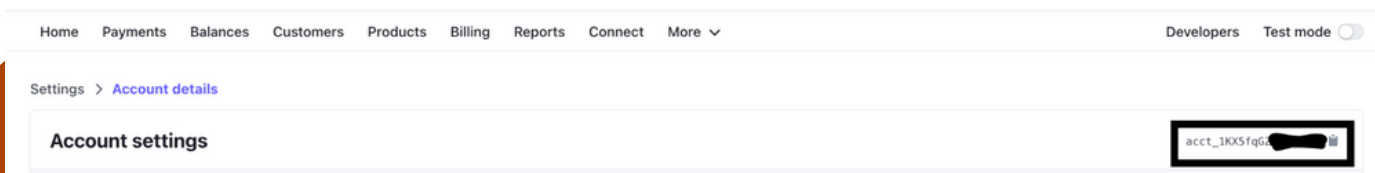
- a. Business structure: you'll likely be a sole proprietor, so just fill in your personal information, then select "Individual" as the Type of business.
- b. Business representative: fill in your personal information.
- c. Business details: select "Laundry or cleaning services." You don't need to fill in a website or product description.
- d. Fulfillment details: select Within 2 weeks.
- e. Support details: The business name will be your own name if you are a sole proprietor (most likely). Enter your phone number. This is the number that Stripe will reach out to if there is an issue processing your payment.
- f. Bank details: Link your bank account so you can get paid. If you do online banking, you can log in to your account right on Stripe. If not, you just need your routing and account number.
- g. Two-step authentication: helps keep your account secure. You can do this however you choose.
- h. Tax calculation: select General - Services.
- i. Climate contribution: up to you.
- j. Summary: Make sure everything is completed correctly, and click submit.

## Third, provide your account ID

1. Navigate back to the Stripe home screen
2. In the search bar, type: "account id"
  - a. Select: Settings -> Account details



3. Click the copy icon next to your account ID, which can be found on the top right side of the screen (has a box around it in the screenshot below, I blurred out the last few letters of mine for security reasons).



The following are instructions on linking the cleaner's Stripe account to BookingKoala.

## Connect the provider's account ID to BookingKoala:

1. After adding them as a provider, navigate to Providers and select "Providers."
2. Select the cleaner whose Stripe you'll be linking to BookingKoala
3. Select Payment processor at the top of the screen
4. Enable "Provider Stripe Connect"
5. Paste their account ID and click "Save."

# Recommended supplies for cleaners

## Reminder:

If you're hiring cleaners as subcontractors, you can't legally tell them what supplies to bring to a job. However, the following document is designed to guide your cleaners and help them understand everything they'll need to clean houses.

Additionally, as long as they have something in each category, it shouldn't matter much which products they choose. All of these products (except the vacuum) have links to Amazon to make it as easy as possible for the cleaners.

# Materials checklist

- Vacuum cleaner
- Mop
- Toilet bowl cleaning supplies
  - Scrubbing mechanism for toilet
  - Disinfectant toilet bowl cleaner
  - Bleach-based toilet bowl cleaner
- Windex
- Chemicals
  - All-purpose disinfectant
  - Neutral pH general floor cleaner
  - Hardwood floor cleaner
  - Stovetop cleaner
- Miscellaneous
  - Microfiber cleaning cloths
  - Mr. Clean Magic Eraser Cleaning Pads (optional)
  - Rubber gloves

# Recommended Products

## Vacuum cleaner

Recommended vacuum: BISSELL Power Force Compact Bagless Vacuum, 2112. This deal is currently only at Walmart. There are other Bissell vacuums available on Amazon for closer to \$100.

- Price: \$50
- Link: [here](#)



## Mop

Recommended product: EasyWring Spin Mop & Bucket System. (There are much cheaper mops, and you'll be fine if you buy a basic mop for \$5-\$10. This one is just my favorite. It's made with microfibers, so it works on hardwood floors, and it doesn't hold too much water.)

- Price: \$35
- Link: [here](#)



# Toilet bowl cleaning supplies

## Scrubbing mechanism for toilet

Recommended product: Clorox ToiletWand, Disposable Toilet Cleaning System. (There are cheaper alternatives to this, but I like this one.)

- Price: \$12 - 6 refills
- Link: [here](#)
  - Link to refill: [here](#)



## Bleach-based toilet bowl cleaner

Recommended product: Lysol Toilet Bowl Cleaner W. Bleach (Bleach is good for cutting through rust and hard water stains, so having a bleach-based toilet bowl cleaner is great to have in addition to the basic ToiletWand. This is especially important for deep and one-time cleans.)

- Price: \$6
- Link: [here](#)



# Interior window/mirror cleaning supplies

Recommended product: Windex Glass and Window Cleaner Spray.

- Price: \$4
- Link: [here](#)



# Chemicals

## All-purpose disinfectant

Recommended product: Lysol All Purpose Cleaner.

- Price: \$4
- Link: [here](#)



## Neutral pH general floor cleaner

Recommended product: Bona Floor Cleaner.

- Price: \$8
- Link: [here](#)
  - Link to refill: [here](#)



## Hardwood floor cleaner

Recommended product: Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner.

- Price: \$9
- Link: [here](#)
  - Link to refill: [here](#)



## Hardwood floor cleaner

Recommended product: Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner.

- Price: \$9
- Link: [here](#)
  - Link to refill: [here](#)





# Miscellaneous

## Cleaning towels

Recommended product: HOMEXCEL Microfiber Cleaning Cloth.

- Price: \$7 - 12 pack
- Link: [here](#)



## Mr Clean Magic Eraser

Recommended product: Mr. Clean Magic Eraser Original Cleaning Pads.

- Price: \$14 - 10 pack
- Link: [here](#)



## Rubber gloves

Recommended product: SteadMax Yellow Cleaning Dish Gloves.

- Price: \$8 - 3 pack
  - Link: [here](#)



# Dependable Cleaner Bonus Program

Our goal is to make your life and our customers' lives better. In the pursuit of this mission, we've implemented a bonus program to reward our most dependable cleaners every month. **This bonus will be a \$50 payment, applied to your paycheck on the 1st of every month.**

To qualify for this bonus, we require that once you have accepted a booking:

1. You do not cancel for any reason
2. You do not reschedule for any reason
3. You arrive within 15 minutes of the agreed-upon start time for every cleaning

Additionally, you must complete at least 5 cleans in the given month to qualify for this bonus.

On the first of every month, regardless of if you received a bonus the month prior, your cleans will reset, and you will get a fresh chance at the bonus.

# Long Drive Bonus Program

Everyone hates driving a long way to get to jobs. We're working hard to reduce this, but occasionally we might still count on you to drive a long way to get to a job. For this reason, we've decided to implement a bonus program in addition to your base compensation for long drives to compensate you for this time. This compensation will be:

25-30 minute commute (one way): \$5 bonus

30-45 minute commute (one way): 10\$ bonus

Every additional 15 minutes: extra \$5 bonus; this should never happen

We aim to assign you jobs as close to your home as possible to minimize these instances. Still, this bonus program will act as an incentive to service far-away customers when necessary and an incentive for us to reduce your commute times.

# “What does the cleaning include?” Checklist

Intro

Hiring

Marketing

Branding/  
Website

Reasons For  
Failure

Taxes/  
Accounting

Appendix

# Bedrooms

	General Cleaning	Deep Cleaning	Move-in/Move-out
Thorough walkthrough of the home prior to cleaning	X	X	X
Make beds	X	X	X
Dust ceiling fan(s)	X	X	X
Clean mirror(s)	X	X	X
Dust horizontal surfaces	X	X	X
Disinfect light switches	X	X	X
Empty garbage, replace bag	X	X	X
Wipe exterior garbage can	X	X	X
Vacuum, sweep and mop floors	X	X	X
Dust window sills	X	X	X
Wipe interior windows	X	X	X
Dust and wipe baseboards		X	X
Dust and wipe walls			X
Clean inside cabinets and drawers			X
Vacuum and dust inside closet			X
Clean inside refrigerator			X
Clean inside oven			X
Wipe down blinds			X

# Bathrooms

	General Cleaning	Deep Cleaning	Move-in/Move-out
Clean the sink(s) and faucet(s)	X	X	X
Clean the backsplash	X	X	X
Clean mirror(s)	X	X	X
Disinfect light switches	X	X	X
Clean exterior cabinets and vanities	X	X	X
Clean toilet bowl and exterior	X	X	X
Clean bathtub and shower	X	X	X
Clean shower head(s)	X	X	X
Wipe down garbage can	X	X	X
Buff toilet paper holder, towel racks	X	X	X
Detailed dusting of all surfaces	X	X	X
Vacuum, sweep and mop floors	X	X	X
Dust window sills	X	X	X
Wipe interior windows	X	X	X
Scrub all tile grout		X	X
Dust and wipe baseboards		X	X
Vacuum and dust inside closet(s)			X

Clean inside cabinets and drawers			X
Wipe down blinds			X

## Kitchen

	General Cleaning	Deep Cleaning	Move-In/Move-Out
Gather all dishes and glassware from around the house (load dishwasher if possible)	X	X	X
Empty garbage and replace bag	X	X	X
Take out all trash and recycling	X	X	X
Clean counters and backsplash	X	X	X
Clean appliance exteriors	X	X	X
Clean inside and outside of microwave	X	X	X
Clean exterior cabinets and handles	X	X	X
Disinfect light switches	X	X	X
Clean stove top	X	X	X
Wipe exterior of garbage can	X	X	X

Tidy up papers and objects	X	X	X
Vacuum, sweep and mop floors	X	X	X
Dust window sills	X	X	X
Wipe interior windows	X	X	X
Dust and wipe baseboards		X	X
Dust and wipe walls			X
Clean inside cabinets and drawers			X
Clean inside refrigerator			X
Clean inside oven			X
Wipe down blinds			X



# Differences in S-Corp filings by state

- In New York, you need to file an additional form to file as an S-Corp (Form CT-6). This form is an election to be Treated As a New York S-Corporation.
- In New Jersey, you must file Form CBT-2553, and all shareholders must consent to switching to an S-Corp.
- In Utah, no additional forms are needed to file as an S-Corp. However, they require a copy of the company's Notice Acceptance as an S-Corporation from the IRS. That notice must be attached to Form TC-20S the first time the company files its tax return.
- The following states do not allow S-Corporation tax treatment and will typically treat your S-Corporation as a C-Corporation.
  - District of Columbia
  - Louisiana
  - New Hampshire
  - Tennessee
  - Texas
  - California

# Conclusion

I hope that you found this book valuable. If you did, I would really appreciate it if you would shout me out on Twitter. That's the main way I'm trying to grow my audience. My handle is @pontodotdev. I'm working continuously to improve this book to make it as valuable as possible, so if there's anything you have questions about or wish I would expand on more, please tell me about it! You can email me at: info@ponto.dev. I'd love to hear your feedback as well as any ideas about how I could make this better. Thanks for reading!