

HOW TO START A CAR DETAILING BUSINESS

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Introduction

You've decided that you are interested in starting your own business and you need a little bit of help in getting started. The car detailing market is a growth industry. With careful planning and knowledge of your market, car detailing is a good choice!

This ebook will be your comprehensive guide to starting a car detailing business. A multi-billion dollar industry, the car detailing business can be initiated and started even in your own home.

Perhaps you already own a car wash. You might want to consider adding to your existing service. A car detailing business will add greatly to your current income.

Getting Started

There are many car detailing business options available to you.

When you are first starting out and with limited funds, consider a pre-packaged business opportunity. This comes complete with manuals, equipment, custom signage, and a trailer or truck mounted unit. It is a "business to go!"

With a franchise comes on-going support but this comes at a cost. You pay ongoing fees and payments that are known as royalties. The fees all vary, so investigate this possibility thoroughly.

Once you have your plan and are ready to begin you will need to decide on the type of business that interests you.

This ebook has been written to assist you with your decision.

Now comes the fun part!

Where do you begin? With the car detailing business your possibilities are endless. If you choose to go mobile or have a secondary mobile service available you could branch out even further.

The car detailing business often features great add-on profit centers. These can include:

- Gold plating services
- Dent repair services
- Windshield repair services
- Pin stripping and graphic services
- Wood grain and interior paneling services
- Vinyl and leather repair services
- Paint touch-up services
- Engine steam-cleaning services
- Accessories services
- Rust proofing services
- Odor elimination services

As you can see, there is a lot to consider in starting a car detailing business. We will go into more detail about providing services after we cover the essentials.

Initial Considerations

There is risk involved in starting any new business. All you really need is the right advice to help you figure out where to start.

This is your comprehensive guide to starting your own car detailing business.

You will learn the initial start-up aspects of a new business, such as:

- Preparing your business plan

- Where to start
- Knowing your competition
- Marketing
- Insurance
- Registrations, permits, and licensees
- Merchandising

Is Business Ownership Right for Me?

Before moving on to the finer points in car detailing, let's examine business ownership in more detail. Owning a business can be a very costly endeavor and is not for everyone.

For all of those who have actually had the thought of starting their own business, many don't follow through. There are many reasons why people don't take their ideals of running a business past the initial thought stage. Perhaps they fear quitting the comforts of a regular paycheck. Some fear that they lack the intelligence or commitment to follow through.

It does take a lot of gumption for anyone to start his or her own business. Business ownership sets you up against fierce competition and with literally millions of successful businesses currently in operation across the world, many will go under.

There are a great many reasons why a person might want to start their own business, but before you do, ask yourself these questions.

- Can I afford to open my own retail business?
- Am I eligible for a loan from a bank?
- Do I have the right attitude to start my own business?
- What type business do I want to own?
- What type of business can I succeed in?
- Can I handle the decision making process as a business owner?
- How good am I at multi-tasking?
- Can I handle the stress of being a business owner?
- Do I feel comfortable being someone else's boss?

If you can honestly answer yes to these questions, then you are a candidate to own your own business.

A few more good questions to consider are:

- Do I have good people skills?
- Am I well organized?

- Am I a driven worker?
- How will starting my own business affect my family?

All of these questions are important considerations when wanting to start up your own business.

Reasons to start your own business

Take time to consider why it would be a good idea to start your own business. There are many reasons to do this if you are a great inventor in life.

Here are just some of the reasons many go into business for themselves.

- You can be your own boss.
- You won't have to answer to someone else's demands or criticisms.
- You can set your own hours.
- You will no longer have to abide by any specifically set amount of hours, and your lunches are your own.
- Your earning potential can be much higher when you own your own business.
- It is a very exciting and challenging way of life. A great opportunity for those who like to experience changes each and every day.
- It is a chance to always learn new things and meet new and interesting people.
- It is a good opportunity to do some good in your community by producing jobs, and helping with charities, etc.

As you can see, there are a great many reasons why owning your own business can be a very rewarding experience. Of course there are many more, too.

Different Business Types

There are different types of business that you will have to choose from when you are considering business ownership.

Sole Proprietorship

A sole proprietorship is a business that has only one owner. There can be many benefits and pitfalls to running your business as a sole proprietor.

The Benefits

- You can keep more of your business monies earned.
- There are fewer hassles than there might be with other proprietors.
- You can run the business in any manner that you please.
- It is the least costly way of starting a business.
- It is easier to get your business started and apply for your permits, licenses, etc.
- Dealing with the issue of taxes is less complicated and cheaper.

Pitfalls

- It is more costly when the business is faced with losses.
- All responsibility falls solely upon the owner's shoulders.
- All of the costs that go along with maintaining the business, such as keeping it running smoothly, are solely the owner's.
- All decisions are made at the owner's discretion.
- Basically, everything is the owner's responsibility.

There are many reasons why you should consider running a business on your own; however, you do have other options.

Partnership

There are many types of partnerships that you can delve into. The most commonly chosen are general partnerships and limited partnerships. General partnerships can be entered into with a mere oral agreement or you can have lawyers draw up legal and binding partnership documents.

If you are considering the idea of having a partnership you should know that signing a legal partnership agreement is the best way to go about it. The legal fees for these documents are more costly than a sole proprietorship.

When you decide to enter into a partnership, you should be certain to add only the specifics of the agreement that you can both agree to.

Here is a list of some of the other things that you should have in place in a partnership agreement.

You need to know the following:

- The type of business that you plan to run.
- The correct amount of equity that both parties will invest.
- How you will divide your profits and losses.

- How much you are each compensated.
- How you will divide your profits and losses.
- How long will you plan to be in business together?
- Set up provisions for any changes made and closing down.
- Dispute settlement clause.
- Restriction of authority and expenditures.
- A reasonable settlement in case one partner dies or is incapacitated.

As you can see, there are many things to consider when starting a partnership. As with running a sole proprietorship, there are a lot of benefits and pitfalls as well.

Benefits

- The cost of investing in the business is cheaper since they are divided among two people instead of one.
- The money needed to process legal fees and everything else that requires money is cheaper.
- There is assistance in dealing with the everyday tasks like, merchandising, employee issues, general dealings with the public and all general business concerns.
- With two people running the business, each can have more time with their families and friends.
- A partnership generally makes the profits and revenue much higher.
- Losses are shared by both and are thus actually easier to deal with.

Retail Franchises

Franchises are businesses that you can buy into that are already on the market. They are generally already popular. The good thing about buying into a franchise retail business is that you already know that it is a popular idea. It can cut some of your work in half. Of course, you will still need to ensure that you are buying into a viable choice for your locale.

Online Retailing

These are more centered around selling products and services on the Internet. It is a cheaper method of beginning your retail outlet as there is not a necessary need for leasing a new property,

You can simply display pictures of your products and post them online for people to purchase by credit card. However cheaper it may be, online retail chains do not have a better record of success than the standard retail outlet. It is just a cheaper way of having one.

General Merchant Store

When most people think of opening a retail business this is what they are talking about. This is an actual store set up on a leased piece of property. You will have to go through a great deal of research and finances in order to open one of these, but the benefits can be outstanding.

Knowing which of these types of businesses you would feel more comfortable investing in is a good way to begin. You may not want to buy into a franchise, but then again, you might. In order to know which of these best suits you, you have to know yourself and your abilities pretty well first.

If you do choose to buy into a franchise, you should be fully aware of what that company is about, and how you can best add your own personal touch to it.

Starting a retail business from an established idea is a sure-fire way to start because as there are already established stores on the market, you can be sure to add what you think would make a good impact on the existing market. You can also change what you think needs to be improved as a consumer.

It gets pretty tricky though when you are trying to open a retail outlet that hasn't already been on the market before. If you plan to begin your very own retail concept, you must spend an extra amount of time on your business plan if you are to convince the loan officer, and your potential customers that you are providing a service that they will indeed need.

It is very difficult to offer a product that hasn't been on the market yet or if you are planning on beginning a business that is selling something that is not generally available. For this type of venture you will need to thoroughly assess your potential market first.

Know Your Market

Before you decide to start any retail business, you must know what the market is for your specific type of business.

Generally when a person decides to open a retail business it is because they have observed a need for a certain type of product in their neighborhood. To get the precise amount of knowledge to be successful, you will need to do your research. Part of this research is in knowing what the market is like.

You will obviously want to know what the consumer demand is. That just means you will want to know what the consumers need so that you can provide it to them. You certainly don't want to

open a store in an area that already has 12 just like it because then you are lessening your chances of success.

80% of new retail businesses will fail within their first year of business.

You certainly do not want to be a statistic. Naturally, choosing the right market to start your business in is just the first step in choosing the right retail outlet to invest your time and money in. You will also want to know what your competition is.

In order for you to properly assess your potential market you will want to do your research.

Here are some of the popular ways that companies use to gather critical information.

Surveys

Companies will often use market research surveys when they want to test the market with their customers. You can conduct question and answer periods with consumers, written surveys that ask your consumers what they want and how they would like to receive it; you can conduct hidden surveys, which is where your consumers do not know that they are being monitored.

Surveys are a very popular method that companies use to get consumer opinions. They are also used in order to get a consumer's opinion about their competition's products and services also. When you conduct a survey it is good to offer some sort of incentive or gift from the people that are volunteering their time. You can get a better response that way.

Product Testing

Product testing takes place when one company offers their product against another company so that they can attempt to convince consumers that theirs is better. Of course it would serve you best to advertise the results if they are positive.

Product testing is also a way for a new company to learn what is wrong with their merchandise before it reaches the market. It is a good way to get the general opinion of your potential consumer before you officially open for business. It helps get the "kinks" out first.

Offering A Pre-opening

This is a lot like hosting a sneak preview to a movie. This is where you can invite a select number of people into your retail outlet so that they can catch a glimpse of what you are hoping to accomplish.

You must understand that this is not the same as actually letting people into your leased property. This is more of allowing them to see what your idea is and offering a look at it in its expected reality. To do this, you would have to project a video replication of your store's concept. This gives potential consumers a chance to see your idea before them, without you having to spend all of the money that it takes to begin a business first.

This is becoming a popular way for people to get an idea of their business as well as for you to get the consumer's reaction to your idea without having to make it a full realization first. You can also make a computer generated CD-ROM and give your presentation to consumers to take home.

What Are Your Business Strengths?

You need to know what you can do and what you can't do if you are going to run your own business. It isn't going to serve you well if you try to manage your own accounts and are not very good at book keeping.

Here is a list of some of the things that you are going to have to know about if you want to run your own business with success.

- ***Basic bookkeeping***: so that you can keep an accurate account of all of the money you owe, the money owed to you, and what is left afterwards.
- ***Stock and inventory***: you have to be able to keep track of how much merchandise you have; how much you need to order, and how to arrange it properly.
- ***Merchandising***: you want to be able to arrange your merchandise in an appealing way.
- ***Payroll***: you have to be able to keep enough money to pay employees and keep track of monies paid.
- ***Marketing***: you will need to know how to market your store, keep up with demand, and monitor the buying trends of your customers.
- ***Basic economics***: you will need to be able to follow the economic trends so that you can maintain a profit for your business.
- ***Networking***: it is beneficial for you to gather and maintain business contacts. They will prove invaluable to your growth.

These are some key considerations that you will need to understand in order to maintain a good business. If you find that you will have problems doing some of these things, then you can get someone else to handle them for you.

Know Your Competition

Once you have decided what type of retail business is best for you, you need to know who your competition is. Knowing this will help you to decide what your plan of action will be in dealing with them.

You will want to know what their successes have been and what their pitfalls have been as well. You will want to avoid making the same mistakes that they have, but it is always good to know what works as well if you plan to compete.

In some cases, you may find that the best way to compete with your competition is to not compete at all, especially if they have established a long and trusted reputation with their consumers. In this case, you will want to compete with them but be invisible at doing it. Below are some ways that you can do that.

You do not want to alienate your competition or build feuds with them because they can be a source of great help to you if you know how to approach them.

Here are some good examples of ways that you can create a good rapport with them.

- Offer to be an affiliate of theirs. This way you can ensure that they will send business your way if they cannot meet the present needs of a customer that you can supply.

- Offer to not place certain items on your shelves that they stock and ask them to do the same. Grocery stores have this idea down pat. What they do is divide certain popular goods among themselves so that only each chain only serves certain hard to find items that are popular. This ensures that each chain will not be in direct competition for certain items. Each gets special items that no other store has. It is a great way to promote one another without causing any problems. This is a nice way to cross advertise.

- Do not place your store directly across from any major competition. Doing this will only give you a 50% chance of success; lower if they are already long since established. Satisfied customers rarely wander into the new competitor's store.

- Try to market your prices at a better bargain than your competitors. If you can't, place your inventory in a more satisfactory arrangement. Sometimes it is all about the appearance of things.

- Assess your competitor's success rate. Learn what they are doing that is so great and offer something better or at a more reasonable price.

These are just some of the things that you can do to present yourself in the best light possible when dealing with your competition. Of course nothing beats putting yourself in your consumers' position.

Think of what you would like in a retail outlet so that you can best compete in the market.

You should also keep your eye on your competition's marketing and promotional techniques because it will help you to keep up with them better. All of this stuff should be placed directly in your business plan if you want to show that you are prepared for the tasks and potential problems that can arise.

You will want to know how the competition is faring in the market also. You do not want to get into a market that is already unsuccessful. You must assume that if your competition is doing badly, that the market isn't as good as you may have hoped. Naturally you should double-check your information because it is possible that your competition may just not be meeting the current demand properly. If this is the case, then you should look for the best way to meet the need in a better manner.

Location Is Everything

As with the purchase or lease of any property, you will have to take into account the location that you will occupy. You cannot expect to run a successful retail business if you lease a property that is in a district that doesn't support the type of environment that would suit your business.

Choose an area that will set your store up as a unique place of business. You will want to stand out. You cannot stand out in an area that is filled with retail businesses that provides the exact same products and services that your business does.

Once you have the ideal location, be sure that you can bring something in good demand to the table so that you can compete with others. A great marketing and advertising campaign is a good place to start.

Identify Your Target Market

Understanding the basics of starting a car detailing business, you need to have a good marketing plan.

- Who will be your target market and what needs will you be fulfilling?
- Why did you choose this particular business?
- Who are your products/services meant for?
- Who do you want to do business with?
- What is unique about your product?

Your goal is to sell products used in automotive detailing. Vehicle owners are your unique target market. Your business will help them take pride in how their vehicles look.

Break your target market down into smaller sections.

Eliminate groups that are unsuitable such as those who bring their cars into the shop for any detailing. You want to appeal to the customers who will do their own detailing at home.

Your niche group or target group is an automobile owner who likes to do their car detailing on their own, likely at their own home. They take pride in caring for their own car and they take the time needed to make sure their car looks great!

Now assess whether or not your unique target market exists in enough numbers that would make your business a viable one. If you feel that it is you can move on.

Profile Your Target Market

You want to define specifics here.

- How much do you know about your target customers?
- What are their spending habits and where do they shop?
- How much do they spend on their car care needs?
- Where do they live and what is the car detailing market like in that area?
- What kind of car do they own?
- What kind of spending power do they have?
- Where do they shop for their car care needs?

You need to have an entire profile on your prospective customers in order to understand how your niche business will best meet their needs.

Once you have successfully identified your target market you can now do more intensive research. This will conclude, in exact terms, if there will be enough business in your target market area to support your business at every proposed stage of growth. You will prove that a specific need exists for your car detailing business.

Look for good research using:

- Local and international business directories
- Internet resource directories
- Car care statistics
- Local and regional newspaper articles
- Magazine articles
- Market research surveys and focus groups

It is also critical to know your competition! There are excellent on-line sources for this information. Find out the market share for your car detailing business as well as future trends and predictions. A good source for this information will be your department of labor and statistics.

Once you have compiled all of your research you are ready to move forward with your plans.

A Winning Marketing Plan

Nothing is better for an emerging retail business than a really good marketing strategy. This is when all of your research will work to your advantage. In order to build a good marketing strategy you must first:

Correctly assess your competition and what they are doing to market their businesses. You have to offer your consumers something that is fresh and different if you want to get their attention.

Survey your potential market beforehand so that you can establish what your consumers are missing in their current needs. You will want to know what they want and give it to them.

Learn what types of advertisements work best in your business' locale. Sometimes commercials are best whereas other areas exact a better response by utilizing the local newspaper or pennysaver.

Begin your promotion before you plan to open so that you can garner an interest in your merchandise before you open. Building up some interest ahead of time can help to ensure a good grand opening.

Promotions and discounts are a necessity to running a successful retail business. You must make sure that you are in a position to compete in this manner. Your "grand opening" will run a lot better if you begin with a special promotion.

The key to successful marketing will be your ability to meet the basic supply and demand of your community. Be sure to stay on top of this because trends come and go.

You should be able to keep up with market changes and try to anticipate them beforehand because it keeps you a step ahead of the average consumer. This will prove invaluable to you later.

Registrations Permits and Licensing

After you have met the above-mentioned requirements for starting your business, and you've decided to follow through, you will need to apply for all of the needed permits and licenses that you may require.

Business Registration

You will need to register the name of your business before you can place it on the market. You will need to think of a name that is catchy and easy to remember. The law requires you to register your business' name so that no other company uses the same name as you do. Each state and municipality has their own laws regarding this so you would be better off asking your local registrars office what the proper procedure is beforehand. Registering your business will ensure that it has its own business number that you can use when setting up accounts with warehouses that host your merchandise.

Vendors' Permits

You will also need to register for your vendor's permits. This is basically a piece of paper that states that you are legally allowed to charge money for certain merchandise. Your vendor permit should be placed in an area that is visible to the public at all times.

The reason that you need a vendor's permit is because you will also have to charge taxes on your merchandise. You can't tax your merchandise without a vendor's permit. Permits are always very particular, so you will need to include the exact type of merchandise that you plan to sell in order to receive the correct permit.

Taxes

Believe it or not, you also have to register for a special tax number so that you can charge the taxes to your customers. You need this number because each time you process a purchase and charge the necessary taxes; the taxes go directly to the internal revenue service. If you don't charge taxes to your customers, then you will be responsible to pay all of that money yourself. You must file the yearly taxes with the IRA each fiscal year end. This means that your business taxes are due every year around the same time as you first began your business. You would have a lot to account for if you didn't charge any taxes to your customers and if you weren't properly registered with your local tax service.

Insurance

Although it is not necessary that you apply for insurance on your residential property, you must apply for insurance on your business property. With the crime rate being what it is, you have to have insurance.

There are at least 3 types that you must apply for when starting your own retail business, and they are:

1. *Workman's compensation*: you have to be able to support your employees should they get hurt on the job. You must apply for this from a private insurance company.
2. *Liability insurance*: this is in the event that a consumer is injured on your property. At the least you have to apply for 'limited liability' insurance.
3. *Property*: naturally this type of insurance will protect you in the event of a fire or theft etc. It just helps to know that you can regain some of your property or merchandise back in case of a disaster or crisis.

Merchandising and Inventory

Since the sole purpose of opening a new business is to provide products and services, you should be certain to know exactly what types of merchandise you plan to sell, and also to know which merchandise to include in your shop.

When thinking about your merchandise you should also consider the correct positioning of it. This can often be the difference between selling your goods and not selling them. For example, you should place your sales items in an obvious and easy to see place if you want that promotion to work.

When stocking your inventory, you should place like items together. If you were to open a car dealership, you would want to place your convertibles together and your vans together because it makes better sense. A consumer that is looking to buy a convertible would not want to have to travel all over the place just to find the one he or she likes best.

You will also want to place accessory items together and in a nearby position because they will be more likely to be purchased if they are near the item that it best fits with and in plain view.

Common Mistakes for a New Business

As mentioned a bit earlier, at least 80% of new businesses fail within their first year of being open. There are many reasons why businesses tend to fail, and it is best to list them here so that you can try to avoid making these common mistakes when you open your own business.

Advertising

Many new businesses fail to advertise properly. It wouldn't occur to most business owners that insufficient advertising might cause a problem with keeping their business afloat, but during tough times, advertising might be your best weapon.

When the economy is running badly, you should have enough money put aside to advertise special promotions and sales to your customers. When you do advertise, you should try to be everywhere. You want people to see your businesses name no matter where they turn.

Here are some of the ways that you can advertise to ensure that cannot be forgotten:

- Newspaper and magazine ads
- Newspaper and direct mailbox inserts
- Flyers and posts
- Commercial and media ads
- Websites, complete with online store

You should know that advertising does not need to cost you an arm and a leg. Commercials can be costly, but these others don't have to be. Running a website can be free or cheap, and the software to host your own online store can also be cheap or free. You just need someone that can keep track of orders for you.

Improper advertising can leave the community not knowing that your business exists -- especially during hard times. You want to stay available to all of your customers because if you disappear from view, so will your customers.

Improper Bookkeeping

It doesn't matter what you do to keep your business running at its best. If you do not keep proper track of your monies coming and goings, you will eventually be left with none.

If it is at all possible, do your own bookkeeping so that you know exactly where your money is going. If you do not know much about it, you should hire someone that does, but also someone that you can trust. If you must, hire someone just to watch the bookkeeper so that you don't get ripped off.

As the business owner, you need to know exactly how much money that your business has. You should know exactly how much profit you are gaining each month so that you can use your

money wisely. It is not always easy to keep track of all of your money, especially if you are generating a lot of business, but it doesn't have to be impossible.

Even with a good book keeper, you should look into popular accounting software like Quickbooks and Microsoft Money because they do most of the work for you. All you really have to do yourself is add the right numbers and let the software add and subtract for you.

Every year many businesses go under due to bad book keeping. They spend money they don't have or they make errors processing payroll deposits. Don't let this happen to you.

Credit Problems

The worst thing that a business owner can do is to run up too much credit. Each day it gets easier and easier for new businesses to gain credit accounts and credit cards from various companies. All too often, these companies run up more credit than they can repay.

It just goes to say that you have to live and run your business within your means. All too often business owners find themselves buying things that the business simply doesn't need. They also buy things for themselves on company credit. This is a big no-no in the business world.

Once a business spends too much money on credit, they learn all too late that the interest rates on credit cards can force hundreds of extra dollars in expenses. New and small businesses just can't afford to pay them. There is also the fact that overbuying supplies and merchandise can be a far bigger problem than businesses expect.

Overpaying employees can run any business into the ground. Any successfully run business owner knows that you start off small, and hopefully build your way up. That is impossible if you are living and running your business above your means.

Opening at the Wrong Time

It is impossible to succeed at business if you open your business in a bare market. You do not want to choose the wrong time to host a grand opening. If you are trying to open your business during a depression for example, you will undoubtedly fail unless it is a dollar store that you are planning on.

Even a dollar store can fail under a depression because they rarely sell anything that is essentially needed. Some things they do sell are needed but most are simply knick-knacks that are of little importance.

As a budding entrepreneur, you will have to keep up with economic trends. These days, the economy is constantly changing. You should avoid opening your business during an economic collapse. If at all possible you want to open your business during a steady economic period or when your market is on the rise. That is not always possible, but you must try.

Unreasonable Prices

It is really common sense, but many companies have a tendency to over charge their customers. It sounds like an easy thing to avoid, but sometimes, a business owner might have to charge more money for their wares because of financial difficulties or tax problems.

Many business owners take advantage of adverse economic situations. They overcharge as a means of capitalizing off of the consumer's desperate needs. This can be devastating to any business if others aren't doing this or if the demand just doesn't meet the standard that the owner might have predicted.

Tax Problems

You would be surprised at how often a business owner fails to properly deal with the taxes on their goods and property. It would seem to be an easily dealt with issue, but the unseasoned proprietor can easily fall prey to the IRS.

Poor calculation can be a costly problem, but failing to properly fill out your tax forms and missing valuable monies can be a problem as well. Sometimes it is simply an issue of filing your taxes late. Keeping up with your fiscal year's end can be frightfully easy to forget. A good accountant is needed to avoid common tax problems like these and others.

Poor Location

It is very easy to fall into the common problem of choosing a poor location for your business, but it happens every day. Businesses that open in a hard to get to area often find themselves without customers, but this is not the only problem with location.

Sometimes a business can be greatly situated but be poorly accommodated. Basically, this is when a proprietor buys or leases a damaged piece of property. Sometimes a person can be in such a hurry to garner the property that they fail to see its flaws. This can run up a lot of debt in trying to salvage it.

You should always try to ask why the business that was there before you went under. Whoever the realtor, they are sure to know the details. If they don't I wouldn't trust that realtor. A failure to keep any piece of real estate is a common problem of the inexperienced proprietor.

Before you agree to take on any property, you should have knowledge of the property's background. You should have someone with you that know the basics of plumbing and all of the other property damage that the average person cannot see.

Writing Your Business Plan

Even a one-man operation will benefit from a good business plan. It will be your tool for managing and marketing your business. You will know your goals and where you want your business to go.

Your business plan will be divided into four sections:

- Knowing your business
- Marketing plan
- Financial plan
- Management plan

When you write your business plan you will be examining all areas of the detailing business mark. You will be able to make educated and critical assessments using probable and achievable timelines. This will be essential to predict your business growth.

You will benefit from being able to compare personal projections with real accomplishments. You will be able to readily allocate valuable business resources, take on unexpected business problems, make informed business choices, and avoid costly mistakes.

Once you have mastered the fine details, your business plan will assist you with reaching your projected sales goals.

If you need financing, any proposed lender will need your business plan.

How to Start Your Business Plan

To start you will need a good budget, establish reasonable goals and develop a viable sales strategy. This will need to be revised approximately every six months.

When creating your plan be mindful that there are lots of existing detail businesses that provide good quality services, have the best equipment, and have experienced and trained employees. Many of these are struggling to stay in business. Why? Many are only focused on what is in front of them today. If they had a good business plan they would know the direction to move forward in and the best way to get there.

Business Plan Outline

Your outline contains different parts:

-Cover sheet -- This will include a title, company name, your contact information, a current date and the names of the principal or principals.

-Table of contents

-Executive summary

The first two pages will summarize your business plan.

Give a brief account of your detail business.

If you are creating the plan to apply for a loan, include the amount that you are requesting and account for how you will use the money.

Business Profile

Fully describe your car detailing business. State what and how you do your service, your target customers and any other information that will explain your business profile.

Describe how your customer's needs for car detailing will be met using your service. Cover both retail and wholesale ends. Show that your business offers good potential as well as practical appeal now and in the future.

State whether your business is a sole proprietorship, partnership, franchise, corporation, s-corporation, or LLC.

Define if your detail business is a start-up, if you are expanding an established detail business, or if you are purchasing an existing detail business. State your proposed date of business opening.

Getting the Loan

Be entirely prepared before you apply for the loan. Have all documents in good order.

Financials

Applying for Your Loan

Detail precisely how much money you need to accomplish the goals of your car detailing business.

Detail exactly why you need the money, whether it is for new equipment, start-ups costs or for any other reasons.

Stipulate the terms needed on the loan including the number of years you will need to pay it back, etc.

Declare what kind of collateral that you can offer.

Financial Statements

When operating an existing business, provide financial statements, balance sheets and income tax returns going back two years prior and also show an interim statement that is no older than 90 days.

Capital Equipment List

Account for all costs on the present value of your existing equipment as well as the equipment that you will be purchasing.

Income Projection

Write a projection of your profits and losses over two years. Calculate what you anticipate will take place with the business, each month, for the next two years.

Show a full one-year projection of the seasons of the detail business, including all ups and downs.

Show how you detailed these figures; what is relevant to coming to them in every aspect in support of your statement.

Project your cash flow over a two-year period. Your projection should show whether or not you would have the necessary funds to run a business.

Create a comprehensive balance sheet, listing all assets and liabilities of your business.

Your business plan will include a start-up balance sheet and a projected balance sheet at one year out.

Supporting Documents

- Tax returns for principals for the past three years
- Personal financial statement (available from banks)

- Copy of proposed lease or purchase agreement for the building space
- Copy of licenses and legal documents
- Copy of resumes for all principals
- Copies of letters of intent from suppliers, etc.
- Marketing studies, articles, etc.

When you develop a realistic business plan you can expect to receive a very good outcome. So long as your credit and collateral is viable, you can expect to get your loan on very good terms!

Preparing your business plan is the most important aspect in getting started on your new business venture. It is the best way for you to build your strategy and plan your course of action.

THE DYNAMICS OF A CAR DETAILING BUSINESS

First Things First

The Car Detailing business is a secure, well-established growth market!

There are three key plans of action to be taken when starting a car detailing business: registering your business, finding a supplier for the products your business will use and purchasing your equipment.

Hiring a Supplier

You will find that there are a host of automotive detailing suppliers. Call up your local car detailing business and ask them which products they would recommend that you use and why. Go online and look up car detailing forums and ask on a public board, as well. The bottom line is you might need to try a few to find out which products appeal to you most. You may need to find this out, too, through trial and error and over time. Any way you do it; there are so many good products out there to choose from. With time, you will have the exact products that suit you best.

Buying Your Supplies

You can build an “A” list car detailing kit from the following products:

Wash: Zaino Z7

Clay: Clay Magic Blue Clay (AutoZone or Autodetail.com)

Cleaning: Meguiar's Dual Action Cleaner Polish (CMA)

Swirl Remover: 3M Swirl Mark Remover (CMA)

Glaze/Polish: P21S Paintwork Cleanser Lotion (CMA)

Wax/Protectant: Many choices --

Klasse AIO (CMA) put on 2 coats, decent longevity

Zaino Z5/ZFX (Zainobros.com) put on 3 coats, excellent longevity

P21S Carnauba Wax (CMA) excellent shine, 5-8 weeks durability

Souveran Carnauba Wax (CMA) similar to P21S, \$40 more

Tire Cleaner: Eagle One Tire Cleaner (any parts store or CMA)

Wheel Cleaner: Many choices --

Eagle One A2Z (parts store or CMA)

P21S Wheel Gel (CMA)

Sonus Wheel Gel (CMA)

Tire Dressing: Zaino Z16 (Zainobros.com)

Interior Cleaner: Griots Interior Cleaner (Griotsgarage.com)

Leather Dressing: Griot's Leather conditioner or Pinnacle (CMA)

Glass Cleaner: Any product w/#0000 steel wool & microfiber towel

Microfiber towels: CMA all the way. Best, most consistent towels I've ever used. There are cheaper towels available, but the bitter taste of poor quality quickly overwhelms the sweetness of a good deal.

Drying: CMA's Big Blue Drying Towel. 1 single towel will dry our Tahoe without any trouble.

Here's a list of preferred car detailing products common to the car detailing business.

303 Aerospace Protectant (there are an additional 303 products as well!)

AG AutoGlym

AIO Klasse All In One

A2Z Eagle One A2Z Wheel Cleaner

AZ Auto Zone (Auto Parts Store)

BA Black Again

BCS P21S Bodywork Conditioning Shampoo

BF BlackFire detailing product

CB Clay Bar

CD or CCD California Car Duster

CM or PCM Pinnacle Crystal Mist detailing spray

CMA Classic Motoring Accessories (Board Sponsor)

CP Eimann Fabrik Clear Pearl detail spray

CW Cleaner Wax

CWB California Water Blade

EF Eimann Fabrik brand

EFBO Eimann Fabrik Black Opal

EFCC Eimann Fabrik Carpet Cleaner

EFCP Eimann Fabrik Clear Pearl instant detailer

EFCV Eimann Fabrik Clear Vision

EFHI Eimann Fabrik High Intensity cleaner

EFPW Eimann Fabrik Power Wash shampoo

EFSR Eimann Fabrik Spot Remover

EFTR Eimann Fabrik Tar Remover

EO Eagle One

FB Forever Black

FI Meguiars Final Inspection Quick Detailer

FI-II 3M Finesse IT

GC Gold Class (Meguiar's name for various products)

GEPC P21S product, Gloss-Enhancing Paintwork Cleanser

HI Eimann Fabrik High Intensity Cleaner

IG Stoner's Invisible Glass

IHG 3M's Imperial Hand Glaze

KSG Klasse Sealant Glaze (sometimes referred to as "SG")

LG Liquid Glass

Meguiar's Products, all listed by their "number"

Meguiar's #1 Medium Cut Cleaner

Meguiar's #2 Fine Cut Cleaner

Meguiar's #3 Machine Glaze

Meguiar's #4 Heavy Cut Cleaner

Meguiar's #5 New Car Glaze

Meguiar's #6 Cleaner/Wax

Meguiar's #7 Show Car Glaze

Meguiar's #9 Swirl remover 2.0

Meguiar's #16 Professional Paste Wax

Meguiar's #20 Polymer Sealant

Meguiar's #26 Hi Tech Yellow Wax

Meguiar's #34 Final Inspection

Meguiar's #36 Hi-Tech Cleaner

Meguiar's #39 Heavy Duty Vinyl Cleaner

Meguiar's #40 Vinyl & Rubber Cleaner/Conditioner

Meguiar's #60 Hi Tech wash

Meguiar's #62 Car Wash Shampoo and Conditioner

Meguiar's #66 Quick Detailer

Meguiar's BSPHP Body Shop Professional Hand Polish

Meguiar's BSPSFP Body Shop Professional Swirl Free Polish

Meguiar's DACP Dual Action Cleaner/Polish

MF Microfiber or Microfiber Towel

MG Meguiars Mirror Glaze product line

MGC Meguiars Gold Class product (includes the whole line: wash, wax, wheel cleaner, etc.)

MSLT Stoner's More Shine Less Time spray

ND Never Dull Metal Polishing Wads

OP Orbital Polisher

OG One Grand Products

P21S A brand of Detailing Products

PB Pep Boys

PBS Pinnacle Bodywork Shampoo

PC Porter Cable (most of the time, in reference to Porter Cable #7424, though the 7428 is often mentioned. 7424 is Dual Action, 7428 is rotary)

PCL P21S Paintwork Cleansing Lotion (same as GEPC)

PI3 or PI-III 3M Perfect it III products

PI II 3M Perfect It 2

PS Pinnacle Souveran

PUPP Platinum Ultimate Paint Protection

QD Quick Detailer

QW Meguiars Quick Wax

ROB Random Orbital Buffer

SG or KSG Klasse Sealant Glaze

SIG Stoners Invisible Glass

SMR Swirl Mark Remover (might be Meguiar's or 3M)

TW Turtle Wax products

UV Ultraviolet Light

WM Wash Mitt

WWB P21S Windshield Wash Booster

Z Zaino (synthetic wax manufactured by Sal Zaino)

Z1 Zaino Show Car Polish LOK PreCleaner and Gloss Enhancer

Z2 Zaino Show Car Polish for Clear Coated Finishes
Z3 Zaino Show Car Polish for Regular Paint
Z5 Zaino Polish for Swirl Marks & Fine Scratches
Z6 Zaino Ultra Clean Gloss Enhancer Spray
Z7 Zaino Show Car Wash
Z9 Zaino Leather Soft Spray Cleaner
Z10 Zaino Leather in a Bottle Treatment and Conditioner
Z12 Zaino Clear View Glass Polish
Z14 Zaino Plastic Magic Cleaner & Polish
Z16 Zaino Perfect Tire Gloss
Z18 Zaino ClayBar
ZFX Zaino Flash Cure Accelerator Additive For Z2, Z3, Z5

Purchasing Your Equipment

Car detailing makes a very good and efficient first time business. You can get started without having to buy a lot of fancy, expensive equipment.

The very basics are:

- Pressure washer
- Wet/dry vacuum
- Bucket
- Wash mitt
- Towels
- Small soft-bristled brush
- Upholstery brush and towels

You can buy these supplies from any hardware or automotive parts store.

Once you have a good idea of what you are doing in your car detailing business, consider buying some more advanced equipment. Buy equipment that is more specialized and so you can be certain that your business is well established enough before making a bigger investment in new equipment.

What Exactly Is Involved in Car Detailing?

Let's take a look at some of the primary details.

Automotive finishes are quite thin and generally range from 4 to 6 mils in total thickness. This includes anti-corrosion coatings. The color coat on a vehicle is typically the thinnest coating. The exterior paint layer is a clear coat and it is thermo set. This clear finish is only 2 mils thick, and compares to the thickness of a piece of paper.

The car's bumper and softer parts are all plastic. The plastic is painted with a modified paint that is plasticized to endure the impact of stone chipping.

General Cleaning

In order to do an appropriate paint evaluation on all vehicles, first thoroughly wash, clean and dry. A bug and tar remover will have been used to remove any unwanted stains.

Paint Finish

Along with your customer, conduct a thorough evaluation of the paint finish. This will determine the best care treatment.

This technique works well to promote your services and products when done with the customer. Ask for their input and share your expertise on all of your services and products as it relates to their needs.

Swirl Marks

When evaluating the paint finish, pay careful attention to any swirl marks present on the finish. The reduction of swirl marks will lead to your best service in revealing the vehicle's shine and beauty.

Always study the paint condition while in bright light. Swirl marks will appear in bright light even on light colored cars, using this technique.

Use the palm of your hand to assess the smoothness of the finish. If the finish feels rough to your touch, this means that contaminants have bonded to the finish.

Also take note that surface stains, black marks, or water-run marks can appear to be under the paint and this will show up as a result of surface contaminants.

Swirl Removal

A variety of vehicles will have several different finishes all on the same vehicle.

Hand use of the swirl removable works best. Where there are softer coatings, such as the lower body panels and bumper areas, start with the less aggressive removals or compounds. You want to just cut into the swirl and nothing more. The harder the paint, the harder the cleaning agent can be used.

Use of Clay Bars

Clay bars work well with dark vehicles that have not been detailed properly.

Once you have washed the vehicle, use a one step liquid wax to apply to the exterior paint. This will give you the additional lubrication necessary for the clay bar cleaning process.

Clay bars are combined with a liquid spray lubricant. This will prevent the clay from sticking where the spray lubricant thins out. Using the clay bar will safely remove all surface contaminants.

Clay bars come in two types: mild cleaning and heavier cleaning formulations.

A medium grit clay bar will work well with vehicles that are more than three years in age and that may be in poor condition. A milder clay bar works well on a well-maintained vehicle where maximum gloss is wanted. This is especially true of darker finishes.

Once you have completed the clay bar process, feel for a good smooth finish. The clay must be kneaded after applying to each panel in order to remove all contaminants.

Know Your Products and Services

Car Detailing – Vehicle Is New or Well Maintained

Find out the vehicle's manufacturer's date. The day the vehicle rolled off the assembly line and not the day it was picked up. Look for this information on the inside of the driver's doorjamb or just under the car hood, in front of the radiator.

As a rule most vehicles on a dealer's lot will be two months old after the date of manufacture. The vehicle needs this amount of time for the paint to properly cure before applying wax. Apply liquid or paste wax directly onto the washed surface. This will maintain the water resistance the new finish had.

Apply the paste wax as thin and uniformly as possible for best results. You can apply liquid wax heavier than a paste. Four fluid ounces are generally required to wax a mid-size car. As the wax begins to dry it will start to change from translucent to white. At this point wipe off all excess before moving onto the next section.

Tell your customers that new cars should be washed every two weeks to prevent build up of road tars and pollution stains. Using a carnauba detailer after a wash will also boost the shine and protection of the wax.

Car Detailing – Vehicle Is Two to Five Years Old

A vehicle that has not had any kind of detailing service for a few years can need special care and a lot depends on the climate or where the vehicle was kept.

Look for obvious signs of neglect such as paint degradation. There will be lack of water beading and rinse water will just lie flat on a horizontal surface.

Look for two specific problems on the outer clear coat:

1. The surface clear coat resin will begin to break down. This is called polymer scission and ultra violet rays will begin this process.
2. Look for damage caused by acid rain, local pollution, soil and road grime and minerals. These will etch the upper paint surface of a car.

A very dull appearance replaces the once clear finish and there will be a series of light swirl marks on the finish, as well.

To remedy this, deep clean the car. Apply a pre-wax cleaner or swirl remover to take care of the surface contamination. For the swirl marks, use a scratch and swirl remover as a pre-wax. Apply a paste or liquid wax immediately.

Car Detailing – Vehicle Is More Than Five Years of Age, With Little Car-Care

Even the worst neglected cars can be brought back to life with special care!

The car itself provides plenty of ammunition. Bodies have better corrosion details and finishes are made to last and of better quality. Wax and polish formulations are superior and easier to use, as well, so this provides more than enough to work with to get good results!

With the older vehicles, take special time and careful attention to the evaluation process. The condition of the car needs to be properly assessed before applying product. Besides obvious wear and tear, look for build up of tar and other assorted grime to have built up over time. You will definitely need to work with stubborn spots, as well.

Specialty cleaners should be used prior to waxing, such as a polishing compound. These work well to remove tougher stains and they will minimize the effects of deeper scratches. In all cases, be very mindful that automotive exteriors and finishes will change just as car-care requirements do.

The Finer Details in Car Detailing

Interior Car Care

Research proves that body oils on interior surfaces can cause significant life-shortening damage to your car via body oil emission.

Perspiration can be harmful

A customer who jumps into their vehicle during the warmer weather wearing very little can cause serious damage to the interior surfaces of their car, truck or van.

The pH in perspiration is highly acidic and can damage a vehicle's interior surface coatings, including:

- Leather steering wheel covers
- Shift knobs
- Door panels
- Arm rests

Remind your customers, often, of the potential for damage. This should motivate more frequent cleaning to safeguard high-risk areas.

Inform Your Customers

Your customers will appreciate understanding the full need for quick, convenient interior care. Once this is understood, inform them of the non-basics in car care.

You can assemble a package of after-care services. This will identify and then meet the unique needs of your customers. Offer this as a value-added price.

Vinyl Interior Detailing

A heat-weld method of vinyl interior work will yield the best results. This is a unique vinyl fusion process that re-grains or re-textures the repaired area. This process is so effective that it produces practically invisible results.

In order to achieve the desired heat-weld method in interior work, the detailer must first master the technique of color matching. Interested detailers can learn of this process using color matching guides and training videos. As far as detailing goes, this skill is a valuable one to have!

Stain Cleaning

Removing stains is a big part of car detailing.

Common and troublesome stains on the interior, carpet and seats, include:

- oil
- grease
- butter
- vegetable oil
- margarine
- cosmetics
- blood

Always use a neutral soap or neutral products with a pH of 7. You will avoid a chemical reaction with this soap.

Your best choice in cleaning solutions for these types of stains are solvent based and so should be used with great care.

Begin to clean the stains by scraping all excess and then reduce the stain to as small an area as possible. Try a plastic razor blade for this purpose. They work well. Next, gently dab your solvent cleaner onto the stain without ripping and it should start to come up. If there is no form of discoloration from this process then you can now wipe away gently.

Too complete, use a foam type upholstery cleaner and wipe. Finish with warm water on a rag and your stain will be cleaned.

Paint Chip Protection

Paint chips are a very common problem for car owners and they will pop up with little to no warning. A simple paint touch-up is not a permanent solution. Even a few power washings can remove the paint!

If you want to believe that an auto bra solves the problem, you're mistaken. Vibration will cause the bra to rub the surface. Dust will get under the bra and scratch the paint. UV radiation then fades the exposed paint, although not the paint under the bra. This becomes a mess!

Cover the vehicle's vulnerable areas with a clear, chip resistant tape. The tape stays in place until it is removed and it is transparent so the paint ages evenly. There is no problem with dust.

The door edges commonly become chipped. Use door edge molding strips for good protection

Your business will grow as you gain expert industry knowledge. In order for the detailer to gain confidence from customers, they must be able to educate the consumer.

Leather Detailing

Leather is durable and lasts but it also shows wear. Cars with leather interiors need detailing on a regular basis to look half-decent.

American leather comes with a durable vinyl coating and refinishes and re-colors well. Seats that look like a detailed road map do well to be restored and this increases the resale value of a car by several hundreds of dollars.

How to Detail Leather:

- Thoroughly clean all leather panels to be restored. Use a water based and alcohol cleaner for best results.
- Sand out all cracks using 320 or 400 grit sandpaper, as far down as to bare leather if necessary.
- Once you have achieved your level of surface smoothness, seal all of the cracks and sanded areas using a water-based leather sealer or primer. Be diligent in this process, as if the leather is not sealed adequately it will absorb moisture and then stiffen.

You can re-color or re-coat water based leather using vinyl paint. The result is highly flexible. This process is not to be mistaken for dyeing.

- Your last step is the clincher and seals the deal! Finish with a clear coat (non-aerosol.) The gloss can be adjusted with a duller or gloss reducer additive.

Using this method a well-trained detailer will produce an exceptional result that is durable and pleasing to the eye.

Keep in mind that this is not the same process used for a crack and peel job.

Color Matching Detailing

The number one rated, top color in automobiles is gray. Here is how to match the color gray.

Begin with the lightest color of the pigment structure.

- White, then yellow (90% of time it is yellow,) then black.

It is common for a detailer to select a small amount of red or orange between the yellow and black. This helps to dirty up the mix. The eye matches best!

Detailers can hone their skills practicing. They will go to an upholstery warehouse and request an auto vinyl sample book or pick up scraps used at an auto trim shop. They have all of the colors to work with and can take their time learning until they get it just right.

Detailers will also visit car-wrecking yards and purchase car parts such as a seat, console, headrest, or a door panel. They then set up a workshop and get busy. By the time they are done they are well skilled in this area of color matching. Practical experience is a good teacher in this case!

For practical reasons it is a good idea to work on both colors and repairs. Do some good damage to your practice piece and then work to repair and re-color it.

When the detailer feels they are comfortable with this process they can move next to doing work on a willing friend's car.

Even after receiving expert instruction a detailer is smart to continue practicing until they feel entirely skilled in these specialized areas.

The best and most qualified car detailing shops can go to great expense in providing superior franchised equipment, however, unless they can also provide the best and experienced detailers to operate the equipment, using the proper technique, they can very well find themselves without any customers. The bottom line will always be in customer satisfaction and quality of service.

You can't have one without the other.

Sealant or Glaze Application

You will need:

- 2 or 3 microfiber towels
- 2 applicator pads
- a sealer or glaze product
- (optional) orbital buffer.

1) Using a cotton terry applicator, apply the sealer/glaze evenly onto the vehicle surface. Use circular motions. Start with a 2' x 2' section.

2) Once your sealer/glaze has dried to a haze, buff off with a microfiber towel or a clean terry towel.

Follow this procedure until you have applied the sealer/glaze on the entire vehicle surface. An orbital buffer works well to speed up the job.

You can now wax the vehicle.

Wax is available in three forms:

- Liquid
- Paste
- Spray

Liquid wax smooths on easily, although the durability is not as good as with the paste products.

Carnauba is a natural material taken from the leaves of Brazilian palm trees. A wax with a high Carnauba content works well.

Using Carnauba Wax:

You will need:

- 2 or 3 microfiber towels
- 2 applicator pads
- Carnauba wax
- (optional) orbital buffer

1) With a round terry wax pad, apply even coat of wax on the vehicle surface. Work in circular motions. Begin with a 2' x 2' section.

Don't be heavy with your wax application because you will end up having to remove an excess amount of wax residue.

2) Using a microfiber towel or a clean cotton terry towel, remove all residue. An orbital buffer will work well, too.

Remember to remove all wax residue from the various creases and edges.

Use a soft bristled toothbrush to remove wax residue from all fixed items such as the radio antennas.

Use special care, as being too aggressive will result in scratches.

Environmental Car Damage

Acid Rain and Mineral Deposits

90% of water spots in paint will be caused by "acid rain". When mineral-laden wash water or polluted rain dries on the car surface the concentrated mineral residue will etch craters on the clear coat and sometimes into the color coat. This happens commonly in large cities, and near airports.

A bit of paint restoration will lessen the jagged appearance of the craters. Inspect the craters under magnification to see the real damage.

The edge of the crater is more visible than depth. Level the "edge" until it is smooth. This will make it much less visible. A professional polishing process will bring you the desired. Finish your "leveling" process with a swirl remover.

Oxidization Damage

UV radiation burns the exterior "skin" of motor vehicles. This process is termed "oxidation." Every surface is affected, including paint, plastic, rubber, and vinyl, among others.

Paint first turns dull and then chalky. Rubber seals and bumpers will turn white, dry out, and then become hard as granite. Vinyl trim will turn white and then crack. Hard plastic reacts much the same as paint.

Tar and Sap Removal

Remove sticky substances right away. Dissolve tar with a petroleum-based cleaner, or with a citrus-based degreaser. Only use products that won't harm the vehicle's paint or vinyl trim.

Sap is stubborn, especially evergreen tree sap, which is extremely sticky. Use a tar remover to release the cohesion. If it has been on longer and has hardened, use a bug block or even a clay overspray remover. Bug blocks also work well to remove aged tar. Follow sap removal with a light paint cleaner and wax.

Several coats of a good paste wax will provide a barrier between the paint and these contaminants.

Preferred Tools of the Trade

Your tools and equipment are critical to your success. You need to know the reasons why certain tools are preferred over others.

There are two main buffer types that a detailer will use: an orbital buffer and a high-speed rotary buffer. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes, weights, colors and speeds.

The Orbital Polisher

This essential detailing tool was made to eliminate swirl marks, mars, or burns from being put into the paint by the common use of speed, heat, and friction. This is associated with the rotary action buffers.

The orbital concept came from the success of the classic floor polisher, which is used to bring up a high gloss shine on marble or wood flooring. The orbital polisher does not leaving swirl marks. The orbital polisher is very effective. It creates an oscillating effect; produces zero rpms and recreates the motion of hand waxing at 1700 oscillations per minute.

The Orbital Polisher:

- Leaves no swirl marks
- Does not require the use of glazes
- Provides consistent results.

The High Speed Rotary Polisher:

- Best choice for auto body shop to strip/prepare vehicle for new paint job
- Best for heavy duty compounding
- Is lighter in weight
- Offers variable speed options.

Both types of detailing polishers provide specific advantages when used appropriately according to the customer's need.

Skill Level in Polishing

Using the high-speed rotary requires considerable skill learned over time and experience. A beginning detailer who is still learning would not be able to manage this highly skilled machine. Furthermore, they could do considerable damage to a customer's car.

The orbital polisher, on the other hand, is perfectly safe to use for all skill levels of detailers. The orbital is weighty, but it also exacts a deeper, more brilliant shine. If you find the weight an issue you can also buy a plastic model.

Brush motors can burn out quickly with regular use, while the ball bearing capacitor motors (no brushes, no gears) won't.

The orbital polisher works great for maintenance once the car has been stripped, repainted, and compounded.

To convert your high speed and avoid the need for glazes, buy an orbital adapter kit. These will screw into top of any high speed.

Extractor Machine

A professional detail shop will use an extractor machine.

You will not exact the same results by performing an interior detail by hand with a bucket, brush, and wet/dry vacuum.

A good quality extraction machine supplies the heat, water pressure, and vacuum lift and does a professional job that delights the customer's expectations.

Using an extractor, the customer is guaranteed a professional job every time!

Investing in an Extractor

Buy the best! You will receive back years of solid performance when you spend a little bit more.

A local distributor should offer better pricing than direct factory pricing in most cases. You also benefit from help with training and support.

You are more likely to be able to order parts for immediate repair so the machine won't need to be shipped out to be repaired.

Features

Heat provides maximum performance of the extractor as well as the chemicals used.

The temperature of approximately 185 degrees works best. Too much heat could destroy carpet fibers and warp rubber backing.

Heat Sources

In-line Heaters

You don't need to warm up or preheat cleaning solution. Produces vibrant heat immediately.

You must use two power cords due to the high amperage draw. You may need to plug into two separate shop circuits. This can be inconvenient if one power cord goes in one direction and the other goes across the shop to an independent circuit.

In-tank Heaters

Turn on the machine to preheat the cleaning solution.

Once the machine is warm and if it has a stainless steel tank it will work fine throughout the day. Use the preheat setting between details.

In-tank heaters draw less power and require only one cord to operate.

Using Chemicals

Extractors use fewer chemicals than manual cleaning.

Using a spray bottle, spot spray grease or heavy traffic areas for best results. Avoid putting a more aggressive cleaner through the extractor pump.

Clean your pump with a 3:1 solution of white vinegar and water. Run this through the machine once a month. This will keep your machine in prime condition and it will perform expertly.

Highly Efficient

Your extractor machine easily replaces cleaning by hand with a bucket and brush. You are much more efficient using this method of cleaning.

Extractor Cleaning Instructions

To begin, vacuum the interior and remove all debris. No need to get the small, lint type dirt, as the extractor removes all of the smaller, lint type particles as well as the really deep dirt.

Spray the cleaning solution throughout the area to be cleaned. Use a pre-spotter with heavy soiled stains and allow this solution to penetrate well.

Go for a small, short bristled brush to help dislodge the toughest stains and ground in dirt. Use the solution/vac to remove the dirt.

You will find that drying time is quicker using this method compared to hand vacuuming.

To make your time more efficient, use the various styles of tools available. They are made of both stainless steel and plastic.

The standard upholstery wand is used more than any other is. Use it to clean some 95% of the work on your average customer's car interior.

Use the crevice tool to clean in between seats and areas that cannot be reached with the standard upholstery tool.

The floor wand is a detailer's preferred tool. Use it for vans and in your showroom. Some shops take their show on the road using this tool and clean carpets in restaurants, offices, and other venues.

Cleaning the Battery

Consider doing a brisk business with detailing under the hood. Pay special attention to the much neglected battery box, battery, cables and terminals.

Customers are more than willing to pay the extra \$10.00 to have their battery free of greenish-white residue common on some batteries. That thin film of battery acid on the out side of the battery also causes alarm to the customer. This will cause a 2% negative charge and slowly drain the battery.

Supplies Needed to Thoroughly Clean the Battery Are:

- A plastic terminal wire brush cleaner
- A metal brush with a wood handle
- An air hose
- Safety glasses
- One-half inch wrenches
- Loctite battery protector and sealer
- An empty water bottle with a pot sip cap
- One-gallon container of distilled water
- Protectant gloves and baking soda
- A tray to lay your equipment on.

Let your customers know that they will need to reset everything, such as clocks, afterwards. To begin, remove the battery and clean the battery tray with baking soda and water. As this self-cleans spray water on the battery itself and sprinkle baking soda on it. Next, dry the battery off using the air hose. You can also spray degreaser on the sides and top of the battery and then wipe that off.

Now, wire brush clean the posts and remove them if you think you need to. Don't touch both posts at the same time! Spray the battery with rubber dressing and then wipe it off. If you have removed the posts now is the time to put them back on. Check the water level and fill it up evenly using distilled water.

For a sealed battery and if you popped the tops, clean underneath and then add the water if needed. Put the caps back on and then re-install the battery. Make sure that you look at the cables and if they are damaged, clip them and then re-attach the cables after cleaning the terminals as closely to the ends as you can get. Note: if you do need to replace the terminals you can charge an additional \$10.00.

Going Mobile: Batten Down the Hatch

It is all too common to be driving down the road or highway and see something along the side of the road like a towel or brush. You might wonder if someone is losing their laundry as they travel but more likely than not, these items will belong to a business owner.

Mobile car detailers must take special care to secure all of their supplies and equipment inside their vehicles. Otherwise, if they are careless in just this way, they can expect to lose some of their inventory and, of course, their profits!

Before leaving on your next mobile detailing call check to ensure the following:

- your towels are packed down
- there is no loose paper or trash taken from previous cars laying around loose in the truck bed or on the mobile detailing trailer
- the pressure hose is rolled up
- the vacuum hoses are secure
- no products or supply containers under one-quarter full are laying around
- operational flood lights won't be whipped around in the wind

In addition, check your vacuum hoses for holes and every day wear and tear. As your power cords are moved from here to there watch for rips as they are dragged around tires. Your electric buffers, carpet extractors and vacuums won't do the job if they are damaged.

Once your pressure washer guns have been dragged behind a vehicle they might never work quite right again and if they catch on a tire it could rip the entire pressure washer, unloader assemble or hose entirely from the vehicle or trailer.

Use sensible precautions and protect your investment!

Define Your Standard of Quality

To be successful, you are going to have to walk the walk and not just talk the talk as some car detailing businesses will. This means being able to show your goods and services as being the best in quality and standard.

How will you define quality in your car detailing business?

Ask yourself a few important questions about the quality that you provide, keeping in mind your customers own standard.

- How fit are your products and services for use?
- How well do your products and services conform to industry specifications?
- Do you provide zero defects in your products and services?
- Do you provide total customer satisfaction?
- Do you provide commitment to on-time delivery?
- Do you provide commitment to continuous improvement?

When considering where you can improve keep in mind that the greatest cost to your business is in hidden costs and that this will contribute largely to poor quality, over all.

- What can you put in place immediately to improve?
- Where will you begin for best impact?
- How will you recognize that you have achieved quality?

Establish a quality standard according to your judgement of excellence. If another detailing shop is providing a service that you are not and you want to do the same, go about your business implementing that change. Make sure, that as you do this, you are still providing your customers with a level of care that is above reproach.

Look at your entire operation and decide which parts of your operation need immediate attention and which elements can wait. Make sure your suppliers know that you want top quality in what they deliver to you, as well. Don't settle for less than top quality.. Don't look for ways to cut costs at the expense of your quality service and performance. Be the real deal, the total package and your customers will know this about you without a doubt! The more confident your customers are in your services and products, the more the news will get out that you are the car detailing business to visit.

Prepare Your Employees

If you are dedicated to providing your customers with only the best in quality care and service you will need to know that all of your employees are on board with your level of standard.

Points to Consider:

-Make sure your employees share your same standard and commitment to being a customer-driven, quality-production detail shop.

-Begin your employee relations with a sound understanding of clear communication. Tell them exactly what is expected of your crew.

-Don't simply tell your employees of your level of standard – show them.

-Explain to your employees that they will be part of a quality-conscious organization and they will discover that quality does equal production, profits and customer satisfaction.

Growing Your Car Detailing Business

If you are looking to grow your business, take full advantage of new marketing and promotional ideas.

By making that extra effort to add-on sales and by making your detail business pop, your customers will notice.

Your Customer's Tax Return Money

Car detailing shops can take full advantage of the tax refund season. While most returns were issued in March, some will arrive in February and some in January.

Large numbers of consumers would be only too interested in a car detailing service, if only they had the extra funds. Come tax time, the government is handing out a lot of money to those who have overpaid on their taxes. You will find new customers in and amongst this group.

A clever detailer will appeal to those with extra funds to burn during tax season. Target this group in particular as many are just looking for a good place to spend.

For those who feel car detailing might be too extravagant — offer them a “buy now” discount and watch as they make their way into your shop!

Set That Appointment

Cater to the customer that just can't quite come to buy now. Lock them into an appointment time and mark it in your books! Give them a reminder call the day before. You will have them dreaming about their car detailing job.

Another good approach during tax season is to offer specials that promote packages and make special offers.

Promote using your regular channels of advertising, including direct mail, print, radio, etc. Make the specials limited offers with a time-date attached. This will bring them in quickest.

Tax refund months can be a bonanza time for the car detailing industry so be sure to get the word out early to your loyal customer base and prepare to bring in new customers during this high growth period.

Practice Preferred Customer Service

A successful detailer will take their customer care seriously. Be on a first name basis as much as you can. This promotes confidence and makes your customer's purchasing experience more pleasurable and memorable. Once you have an established relationship with your customers, you will benefit immensely in customer loyalty and loads of valuable new referrals.

As you grow in your business, work hard on developing a unique presentation. Offer something that will set you apart from the rest. Do this and you will gain momentum in leaps and bounds!

Personalize Your Customer's Experience

Take a digital picture of your customer standing next to their car! Let your customer leave your shop with more than just a great detailing job! Take a digital photo of your customer's car and feature your shop's logo along with it. This is great advertising and your customer will be proud. You can take the digital photo to any copy place or publishing company. If you really want to make a great impression, offer to have your photo made into a poster. When your customer comes back for their copy tell them about a new product or service you are offering.

At the same time you could do up a customer appreciation wall. When you do up a photo or poster for a customer, do a second and feature their detail job on your shop wall. This is a great promotional idea and your customers will love to see their pictures showcased on your shop wall, too!

A Memorable Experience

Give your customer a small gift. As you finish your detailing job, leave a small gift such as a piece of fine chocolate for the men and a single flower such as a rose for the ladies. This goes over like gangbusters!

Handle With Care

After any great detailing job, your customer will love to receive a hand-wash. This tells your customer that you care about their car and their business.

Gift of Appreciation

As your customer must wait for their detailing to be completed, offer them some refreshment. A cold bottle of water or soda is a very nice touch. Such attention to your customers will speak volumes and will leave a good impression so that they will want to return and give referrals.

Immediate Transportation

For your customers who must leave their vehicles behind to be detailed, offer a mode of transportation for their convenience. You can go with a shuttle service or a personal pick-up service. This will be impressive and show you are a professional shop and that you take your customer's every need seriously.

Price Is Critical

Your advertising and marketing needs to be dynamic in order that you can best get the public's attention and move them to act.

A sure-fire way to do this is to promote a popular service and offer it at an attractive price. This can be accomplished through regular advertising avenues and can also be done at your shop itself.

Go for vinyl letter signage nearest to your street. Draw up attractive and unique posters or banners and place them on the outside of your building. These must be clearly visible from the road in order to be most effective. Don't forget to advertise those popular basics like a wash and wax. Don't assume your customer will know what you do just by reading your shop sign.

Once you have brought your customer into your shop, you now have a golden opportunity to use your clever sales skills and techniques. Your job is to up-sell them on other services that their vehicle needs.

Leave Them With a Reason To Buy Again Soon

Promotion comes in many shapes and forms and you can be creative when wanting to send a message to your customers. The next time you do a detail job; send your customer home with a thank-you card. This lets your customer know that they are special and that you care about them. It also says, "Come back again soon to get special treatment!" Every customer wants to hear this. We all want to think that we are special.

Little thoughtful touches in the detailing business will leave a most favorable impression in your customer's minds. This can also lead to new referrals coming your way. Word of mouth is one of the most dynamic ways of promoting.

Within your thank-you card, tuck away a discount coupon. Include an appropriate expiration date of no less than 30 days and no more than 45 days. You want your customers back quickly. You can expect to see many repeat customers using this method and you can also enjoy repeat purchases this way! Your customer gets good, quality service, a discount and your cash register sings! This is a win-win situation to be sure.

Try offering a second car discount with the thank-you note! When your customer leaves entirely happy they will willingly pass on a discount opportunity to someone they know like a family member.

Promote Your Add-ons

Make no mistake about it, in the detail business; it's the up-sells that promote best. This is where the regular sale becomes the bigger, better sale! Here is where your revenue grows.

Sell-ups attract a lot of buzz and can include: a hand wash and wax, carpet shampooing, paint sealants, fabric protectants, deodorizing of the air conditioner and interior, all work very well! Consider drawing up a comprehensive list of add-ons you and your employees feel would work best in your shop. As loyal customers come and go ask them how they feel about your add-ons and would they appreciate them. Customers can provide valuable feedback about your services this way and you also learn what it is that people are looking for that you are not yet providing.

Over time, it can be those attractive up-sells that will make your register sing the best. Once you have an established base in services, begin to offer the up-sells to go right along with them. This will make your business more profitable.

Services such as paintless dent removal (pdr) and paint touch-up provide your customers with added convenience. They can receive multiple services in one stop. This is a real perk for both shop owner and customer.

Time to Reassess

Before you start to plan for serious upgrades to your services and/or equipment, there are several things a shop owner needs to take into account, such as:

- How well do you know your competition?
- All aspects of training
- Tools and supplies issues
- Staffing issues
- Pricing wholesale and/or retail issues
- Subcontracting issues.

Get very familiar with who your competition is, what they are charging, what the quality of their services and products are like, and how much business they command.

Ready to Make the Commitment?

As with any good and viable business idea, some will do very well and have complete success while commanding a good part of the market, while others just subsist, struggling day by day. Even those who are considered leaders within the car detailing industry can, in fact, be nothing special.

What sets the winners apart from the losers?

C o m m i t m e n t !

It is this one single word that reveals true promise and measurable results. All the same, commitment requires unique effort and sustainability to leave any kind of favorable impression in the business world.

This alone is the key to the kind of real success in business that even matters.

Obstacles to Commitment

Just how sure are you of your decision to start a car detailing business? If you have the least doubt, a lack of commitment will be evident in all that you do. It will drain you of your precious resources to work at your best and to accomplish your goals.

Without a high level of commitment to your business, you are stunted before you ever start. A lack of commitment is the number one cause of business failure. This is a weakness that can be conquered if the desire is there to change.

Begin with taking it day by day and step by step. As soon as you decide that you will commit 100%, the stage will be set for forward progression. Your goals and career will take on a new life of their own and you will be there to facilitate the process.

The car detailing business is a rigorous one. It demands your complete attention and efforts. You will be well rewarded for every step forward that you do take.

Now go out and live your dream!

Make owning a car detailing business your reality!

Using the guidance learned in this ebook will be just the beginning!

