

Starting a Cleaning Business — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into the documents and decisions you need to actually launch: a niche and setup plan, a true-cost and pricing calculator, an estimate and booking workflow, and a hiring, quality, and retention system. Work through one section per module, completing each worksheet and checklist as you go. By the end you will have a registered launch plan, a pricing model that protects your margin, and the operating tools to run real cleaning jobs.

Foundations: Niche, Legal Setup, and Money Basics

Lock in your niche, complete the legal and insurance setup, and build a realistic startup budget before you take a single job.

Exercise: Score and Choose Your Niche

List the three lanes (residential, commercial, specialty) and score each from 1 to 5 on four factors: speed to first paying job, startup cost to look credible, how well the schedule fits your life, and how much recurring revenue it generates. Total the scores and commit to one primary lane and one upsell service. Write one sentence on why this lane fits your situation.

- Which lane scores highest on speed-to-first-client and recurring revenue for you, and why?

- What schedule does your top lane require (daytime, evenings, lumpy specialty work), and can you sustain it?

- What is one specialty service (move-out, post-construction, vacation-rental turnover) you can upsell to your core clients later?

Worksheet: Business Setup and Registration Plan

Fill in each field as you complete the step. Do not take a paying job until the insurance and registration rows are done. Keep copies of every certificate in one folder for clients to request.

Legal structure chosen (sole proprietor or LLC) and reason

Business name and whether it is available / registered

EIN obtained (date)

Business bank account opened (yes/no)

General liability insurer, coverage amount, and annual premium

Janitorial / surety bond provider and amount

Workers' comp plan (needed once you hire? yes/no)

Local business license obtained (date)

Worksheet: Startup Budget

Enter your real estimated cost for each line, then total it. Add a personal reserve of at least one month of living expenses. Aim for a lean but professional launch rather than buying everything at once.
Registration / LLC filing

General liability insurance (first payment)

Core equipment (vacuum, mop system, caddies)

Initial cleaning supplies and chemicals

Scheduling / invoicing software (first months)

Logo, website, business cards

Initial marketing (flyers, signs, ads)

Personal cash reserve (1 month of expenses)

TOTAL startup cost

Checklist: Pre-Launch Legal and Supply Checklist

- Niche and primary service decided and written down
- Business entity registered and EIN obtained
- General liability insurance active with a certificate on file
- Janitorial bond in place if clients will hand over keys
- Separate business bank account opened
- Pro supply kit assembled with color-coded microfiber and a flat-mop system
- Supply cost per job estimated (target 3 to 5 dollars)

Pricing for Real Profit

Calculate your true cost per billable hour and build flat-rate prices that hit a target margin on every job.

Exercise: Build Your True-Cost-Per-Hour Number

Using your real wage and overhead, work through the five steps from the lesson to arrive at your true cost per billable hour. Then set a billable rate above it that produces your target margin. Keep this number visible whenever you quote.

- Start with your cleaner base wage, then add labor burden of 15 to 30 percent. What is the burdened wage?
- Add supplies per hour and unpaid drive time. How much does each add per billable hour?
- Divide your monthly overhead by your billable cleaner-hours. What overhead cost per hour does that add,

and what is your final true cost per hour?

Worksheet: True Cost and Rate Calculator

Fill each value to compute your cost floor and your client rate. Any job priced below the true-cost line is a job to decline.

Cleaner base hourly wage

Labor burden percent (taxes, comp, PTO)

Burdened wage per hour

Supply cost allocated per hour

Unpaid drive-time cost per billable hour

Overhead cost per billable hour

TRUE COST per billable hour

Target net margin percent

Client billable rate per hour

Worksheet: Flat-Rate Quote Builder

Use this to convert a home or office into a flat price a client will accept. Estimate hours from a production rate, multiply by your billable rate, then adjust for difficulty before quoting one clean number.

Cleanable square footage

Service type (recurring / deep / move-out)

Production rate used (sq ft per hour)

Estimated labor hours

Base price (hours x billable rate)

Difficulty adjustments (pets, clutter, extra baths)

Adjusted flat price quoted to client

Estimated profit and margin on this job

Checklist: Pricing Discipline Checklist

- True cost per billable hour calculated and written down
- Target net margin (15 to 30 percent) chosen
- Flat prices always derived from hours, never guessed
- Difficulty factors (pets, clutter, bathrooms) built into quotes
- A clear re-clean guarantee included to justify a premium price
- Rule set: decline any job that would fall below the true-cost floor

Getting Clients and Running the Schedule

Win your first ten clients with low-cost channels, then route and schedule them into efficient recurring plans.

Exercise: Your First-Ten-Clients Campaign

Plan exactly how you will reach your first ten clients across warm network, referrals, and local channels. Set a target number of clients from each source, write your referral offer, and draft a one-line response you will send within an hour of any new inquiry.

- Which warm contacts and neighborhoods will you ask first, and what is your exact referral reward?

- Which two or three local channels (Google Business Profile, Nextdoor, door hangers, a realtor partner) will you set up this week?

- What recurring plan will you pitch as the default in every quote, and at what rate versus a one-time clean?

Worksheet: Lead Source and Conversion Tracker

Log every inquiry and where it came from so you learn which channels and referrals actually produce paying, recurring clients. Review weekly and double down on what works.

Client / inquiry name

Source (referral, Google, Nextdoor, door hanger, realtor)

Date of first contact and response time

Quoted price and service type

Booked? (yes/no)

Converted to recurring plan? (cadence)

Notes / follow-up needed

Worksheet: Weekly Route and Schedule Planner

Group recurring clients by neighborhood and day to cut drive time. Assign each job a day, time block, cleaner, and area cluster, and note estimated drive time between stops so you can tighten the route.

Day of week

Client and neighborhood / zip

Time block and estimated job hours

Cleaner assigned

Area cluster (group jobs that are close together)

Estimated drive time from previous job

Recurring cadence (weekly / biweekly / monthly)

Checklist: Booking and Scheduling Setup Checklist

- Google Business Profile fully completed with photos and review requests
- Scheduling software chosen (Jobber, Housecall Pro, or ZenMaid) and set up
- Referral reward defined and announced to existing clients
- Service area limited to a few adjacent zip codes for route density
- Recurring plan offered as the default in every quote
- Card-on-file billing and a 48-hour cancellation policy in place
- Automated visit reminders turned on (24 to 48 hours ahead)

Hiring, Quality, and Keeping Clients

Hire and pay your first cleaners legally, standardize the clean with checklists, and run a retention and complaint-recovery system that keeps clients for years.

Exercise: Plan Your First Hire

Decide the trigger that tells you it is time to hire, choose the correct worker classification, and pick a pay structure. Write a short hiring plan covering how you will screen, trial, and certify the new cleaner before they work a client home solo.

- What specific signal (full book, waitlist, unsustainable hours) will tell you it is time to make your first hire?
- Given that you set the schedule and supply the tools, should this cleaner be a W-2 employee or a 1099 contractor, and why?
- Which pay structure (hourly, per-job, or percentage) will you use, and how will you still meet minimum-wage and overtime law?

Worksheet: Room-by-Room Cleaning Checklist

List every task per room for your standard recurring clean so any cleaner delivers the same result. Cleaners check off each item every visit; you inspect against it for quality control. Build separate versions later for deep and move-out cleans.

Kitchen tasks (counters, appliances, sink, floors, etc.)

Bathroom tasks (toilet, shower/tub, mirrors, floors, etc.)

Bedroom tasks (dusting, surfaces, floors, beds)

Living areas tasks (dusting, baseboards, floors, glass)

Whole-home tasks (trash, high-touch surfaces, final walkthrough)

Client-specific requests (no scented products, priority rooms, pets)

Worksheet: Complaint-Recovery Log

Record every complaint and how you resolved it. Use it to spot patterns by cleaner or task, retrain, and update the checklist so the same miss does not repeat.

Date and client

What was missed or the issue raised

Cleaner assigned to that job

Acknowledged within (hours)

Resolution (re-clean date, free fix, etc.)

Prevention step taken (retraining, checklist update)

Client confirmed happy after next visit? (yes/no)

Checklist: Hiring, Quality, and Retention Checklist

- Worker classification (W-2 vs 1099) decided correctly and documented
- Background check and reference verification done before solo work
- New hire trained with show, do-together, do-solo-and-inspect, certify steps
- Digital checklist attached to every job in your software
- Same cleaner or small team assigned to each recurring client
- Re-clean guarantee communicated to every client
- Retention and churn rates tracked at 6 and 12 months

Your Action Plan

1. Choose your primary niche and one upsell service, then register the business and get an EIN this week.
2. Buy general liability insurance and a janitorial bond before booking any paying job, and store the certificates in one folder.
3. Assemble a professional supply kit (color-coded microfiber, flat-mop system, identical caddies) and record your supply cost per job.
4. Calculate your true cost per billable hour and set a billable rate that hits your target net margin.
5. Build flat-rate quotes from production rates and difficulty factors, and write a re-clean guarantee into every quote.
6. Set up a Google Business Profile and one scheduling tool (Jobber, Housecall Pro, or ZenMaid), and launch a referral offer.

7. Run your first-ten-clients campaign and convert as many as possible to weekly, biweekly, or monthly recurring plans.
8. Group recurring clients by neighborhood and day to cut drive time, and turn on automated visit reminders and card-on-file billing.
9. When your book is full and you have a waitlist, make your first hire, classify them correctly, and train them with the show-do-certify process.
10. Stand up your retention system: per-job checklists, fast free complaint recovery, and tracking of retention and churn at 6 and 12 months.

