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CEILING CLEANING - A PROFITABLE FUTURE IN LOOKING UP

What goes up must come down. I once heard it said that opportunity knocks only once. Well, in this high-tech age, we find that opportunity is now ringing the door bell and running like mad. So for us to be able to seize opportunity, we have to be alert to potential possibilities.

Ceiling cleaning is one of these opportunities. Just as you may be looking down and around for carpet and upholstery cleaning opportunities, take time to look up. Here is a whole new world for the professional cleaner. In order to provide any service for which you will get paid, you to understand the need of the customer (and how your service provides benefits to fill that need). But with ceiling cleaning, let's face it, creating the need is more difficult than waiting for our customer to think of the need and call us. Unlike many other diversification opportunities that you may have examined, perhaps the greatest challenge with ceiling cleaning is in awareness. Most of your potential customers have never really thought about having their ceilings cleaned, so they are probably are also unaware there are systems to get their acoustical ceilings cleaned. But here, creating the need is nothing more than educating customers that ceilings and walls can effectively and economically be cleaned. The best way of doing this is to get them to compare the cost of replacement and the cost of cleaning. If they will do this, cleaning comes out on top. Secondly, compare the value of cleaning in relation to painting, which is the primary alternative to replacement. With painting, the acoustics are destroyed, the surface requires sealing and painting to avoid tainting the paint. The paint also seals in the soils causing premature aging of tile. Add to this that painting also means unwanted odors and that means down-time to a business. Again, cleaning seems to be the better alternative.

Because customers do not perceive the need of ceiling cleaning, one of the hardest things to do is to convince them to get the acoustical ceilings cleaned in their business. Here is where a small demonstration may be necessary. Mix a quart of ceiling cleaning chemical and a 1/4 of a bottle of activator and spray an area where four ceiling tiles meet. With a damp sponge, wipe the grid and show them the amount of soils on the sponge. Explain that it's these soils that shorten ceiling life, contribute to a more polluted atmosphere, darken a room and costs the business dearly in the long run. Be sure to point out that the porous tile surface will be clean when it dries and that you would like to get his opinion on the cleaning tomorrow. When you return, point out the success and ask him if he would like to protect his ceiling investment with this program.

Basically, there are two types of ceilings that require a special ceiling cleaning solution that we can clean. "Fixed" ceilings are usually dry wall that has been finished and textured with a blown acoustic material. "Suspended" ceilings are just that. They are more often found in commercial areas and consist of a variety of types and styles of drop-in or locked-in acoustical tile. Obviously ceiling cleaning solutions and systems must be effective on two types of ceiling surfaces, those that cannot be wiped, and those that can be wiped. The technology in these chemicals is geared to work on acoustic or other types of blown in or popcorn ceilings. Maintaining it only makes sense, but many are not aware that it can be cleaned and the investment value extended. This is where the professional ceiling cleaner comes into the picture.

But let's back-track a little. What does the ceiling cleaner need to know? Where does he get his training? Who would benefit most from this service? And just how much money can he really make? Good questions!

First of all, recognize that reading this article does not make you a ceiling cleaner. The first rule in getting professional results is

to train the professional. So, honestly, count on going to school or workshop, buying a manual, and learning from experience what you need to know about the business. Learning the basics is not really difficult. Learning to identify degrees of soiling, as well as difficult, time-consuming jobs, is more of an experience process. So be aware of that when you start out.

Three things are required. The first is training which we have discussed. The second is chemical. The success of this business heavily depends on the chemical, as well as its application. So cheap, ineffective chemicals are not a replacement for the professional mixture. These cleaning chemicals are a two-part mixture of a delicately balanced cleaning agent with a chemical booster (hydrogen-peroxide) mixed on-site. Though hydrogen peroxide is involved in the boosting of the chemical effectiveness, this is not a bleaching process! Don't be fooled! Stick with a supplier that stands behind the product.

Third is the equipment requirement. This is very important! The chemical has to be applied at the right distance (10" - 12") from the spray, in the right manner or pattern, and with the right p.s.i. (40 - 45 p.s.i.) from a constant velocity pump. In addition to this, the equipment should provide a "center" for keeping extension poles, grab clamps, sponges, extension tubes, drop cloths, as well as a rinse bucket and storage of chemical being dispensed. The advantage here is that, in comparison to the profits, the equipment investment is very low (under \$1,000.00). Don't compromise quality. It should be sturdy as well as functional. Also involved in equipment is basic safety considerations, such as a respirator, eye protection, gloves and a baseball cap.

The exact marketing procedures and cleaning requirements can be obtained in a manual on ceiling cleaning. What may concern you is how much you can make and how much does it cost to get into it. One thing that will surprise you is that for under \$1,000, you can get a professional machine, tools, sponges, manual, and chemical that will not only pay for itself but make you clear profit on your initial investment. I can't think of many business opportunities that can claim that. The other value to this is that ceilings are not your only market. Wall cleaning and smoke damage clean up are also areas that ceiling cleaning technology applies.

How much can you make? Well, I have heard some wild claims, but frankly a \$50 to \$70 an hour **profit** is not unheard of. Take into consideration that it requires a small investment, that it requires marketing and sales, and that it requires educating customers to the need of cleaning. If you are willing to take advantage of this opportunity, you, too, will benefit from the growing need for professional ceiling cleaning.

About The Author:

Steam Way International manufactures a complete line of ceiling cleaning equipment and chemicals under the Magna-Bright® brand name. For more information, you may contact Steam Way International, Inc. at 1-800-447-8326.