



INCORPORATED

4550 Jackson Street Denver, CO 80216
FAX (303) 355-3516 / (800) 447-8326

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For More Information, Contact Steam Way International at (303) 355-3566

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MARKETING DEODORIZATION SERVICES

Very often, the whole concept of deodorization and odor control gets swept up into a category for serious restoration companies that also do restorative drying and fire damage restoration. Odor Control is often considered to be a sub-category of these common restoration practices. This should not necessarily be the case. The first thing to communicate in our discussion of marketing deodorization services is that if your company is mainly a carpet and upholstery cleaning company, I hope you haven't skipped this article, because you were assuming it only applied to restoration companies. Deodorization and odor control can not easily be defined. These two terms cover a massively wide array of subjects. However, all professional cleaners and restorers will eventually do some kind of odor control or deodorization service. It is our firm belief that most cleaners don't make more money by providing deodorization services simply because they don't know how to market it, and don't place a special emphasis upon it.

According to the standard outline that the IICRC has developed in reference to its curriculum for odor control, we can list the following services as just some of the potential odor control problems that need to be solved:

- Pet and Human Urine and Excrement
- Cigarette and Tobacco Smoke
- Mold and Mildew Odors
- Fire and Smoke Odor
- Cooking Odors
- Chemical Odors and Chemical Off-Gassing odors
- New Carpet Odors
- Skunk Odors
- Fuel Oil Spill Odors
- Tear Gas Odors
- Decomposing Protein Odors
- Blood Odors

Even if a professional cleaner wants to clean carpets only, and to avoid "restoration" work altogether, there are three common odors that he/she will have to deal with quite often in carpet cleaning - urine, cigarette smoke, and mold and mildew odors. The first part of developing a marketing plan for odor control services lies then in deciding what, precisely, your company can and is willing to do. Do you want to take on more serious deodorization services, that may require many aspects of restoration, or do you want to keep things simple, and remain primarily a carpet cleaner? This decision will obviously influence who you market deodorization services to.

Let's start though with a list of people or organizations that have traditionally served as primary markets for deodorization services:

- 1) Your Present Customers
- 2) Consumers
- 3) Insurance Adjusters and Agents
- 4) Fire & Police Departments
- 5) Coroners

- 6) Apartment Owners and Apartment Owners Associations
- 7) Real Estate Agents
- 8) Hotels
- 9) "High End" Automobile Dealerships Who Sell Used Cars
- 10) Commercial Building Property Managers

Although this list does not cover everyone who might need odor control services, it does make up the large majority of them. It is a good place to start in developing a marketing plan.

You start with an understanding that you are going to market yourself as an "Odor Control Specialist," even if you just want to be a carpet cleaner. The reason that you do this is simple. Any person living with obnoxious odors in an environment has a problem. They need a problem solver to help them. There are a lot of people out there living with odors that they don't like, but they simply don't know that they can hire someone to eliminate these odors. You need to communicate your willingness and competency to do it in a manner that they will understand. Identifying your company as an Odor Control Specialist is the first step in doing this. Next, you identify who your primary targets are from the above list, and determine whether direct mail, personal visits, community involvement, etc., will be part of your approach.

If you want to be just a carpet cleaner, then you are trying to expand the amount of income that you earn at each customer's home or business. Odor Control services become an add-on service to your regular carpet cleaning. The mistake that many cleaners make is that they simply list on a brochure or a business card they can do odor control. This brochure or card is given to the customer when they are in the home or business. Typically, this listing is part of a larger service menu in which the service of odor control gets lost. If a professional cleaner truly wants to make more money with deodorization services, he/she is going to have to discuss it with their customers. Ask them whether they have any odors in the home that are a nuisance. In addition, in their follow-up marketing to existing customers through direct mail, they make their odor control services a priority.

The professional restorer takes a much broader approach to marketing deodorization services. Everyone on the above list is a potential customer, but obviously, a great deal of emphasis is given to insurance work. This is where being a full line deodorization company can really pay off. Look through your Yellow Pages; there are a lot of companies who claim to do water damage restoration. There are many who do fire damage restoration. Very often, many of these companies are larger than yours and have long-established working relationships with insurance adjusters. If an adjuster needs to find someone to do a water damage restoration job, there are many who claim they are qualified. Many of the disasters we have talked about above are not that common. An adjuster may have only a few suicide clean up jobs assigned to him/her during an entire career. A skunk caught under or in the house is not very common. How many times would an adjuster be in charge of restoring an environment where tear gas was used? These uncommon disasters can be the backbone of your beginning a relationship with an insurance company. If you can take care of these uncommon, but to be blunt, often gross situations, it may be your in road into the more common restoration work. Almost everyone will market water or fire damage, but how many companies effectively communicate they can do all of the services above? Once again, by being a problem solver, you can make new customers.

There are a lot of good marketing ideas available in the industry for water damage restoration or fire damage restoration. Maybe it's time to set yourself apart from the pack by communicating the more uncommon odor problems you are trained to solve. Whether this is done by direct mail, personal visits, agent/adjuster seminars, community involvement/public relations, or any other avenue, the main point is that you need to take a look at focusing on odor control in your marketing. Recently, we received a letter from a carpet cleaner who had attended, two years previously, an odor control class sponsored by one of our distributors. His interest in odor control led him to make it one of the main focal points of his marketing campaign in his cleaning and restoration business. He said that he had increased his sales during that two year period 66%, and he believed that it was his emphasis upon odor control that was opening up so many new opportunities and customers to his business. Your results may not be that dramatic; but the truth is, listing odor control on your service menu does not qualify your company as having an aggressive odor control marketing campaign. Experts tell us that marketing simply boils down to how well we are communicating our purpose. A successful marketing campaign for odor control must start with the admission that we need to give odor control a special emphasis in communicating our purpose.

About the author:

R. Doyle Bloss is the Chief Executive Officer for Steam Way International, Inc. in Denver, Colorado. Doyle teaches more IICRC Approved Odor Control classes than any other instructor in the industry, and has made deodorization a key focal point in helping cleaners and restorers become more successful. Steam Way International manufactures a complete line of odor control products and solutions. You can reach Doyle by calling 1-800-447-8326.