

7 COMMON MISTAKES CARPET CLEANERS CAN MAKE

BY TONY GUTHRIE



Introduction to the Carpet Cleaning Business

Before I get into the 7 Common Mistakes a Carpet Cleaner Can Make, I want to share the first chapter of my eBook with you.

If interested you can learn more about it at:

<https://howtostartacarpetcleaningbusiness.com/ebook>

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Here's the first chapter ...

So, you want to be a Carpet Cleaner!?! Well, that's probably not a totally accurate statement. I don't imagine you woke up one morning and just thought to yourself, "Boy, a carpet cleaner's life must be just wonderful ... wonder how you become one?" No, the likelihood is that you just want to work for yourself and be in control of your life. And I can testify that carpet cleaning is a great vehicle to get you there. I know because I live it! What you really want is a number of things to be the reality of your life (or at least some possibilities you might be open to).

- First, (and as mentioned) you simply would like to work for yourself and be your own boss, either on a full-time OR part-time basis. There is great freedom and a real sense of joy knowing that you answer to no one but yourself.
- Second, you probably want a business that will bring in GOOD MONEY QUICKLY so the business must possess high profit potential. Carpet and floor cleaning IS that business. The reason this is true is because once your equipment is paid for (and I will show you how to get it quickly and inexpensively), you are looking at a business that can generate between 65% and 95% in pure profit (depending on your business model, the chemicals and equipment you use, and your approach to advertising).

- Third, you are probably very interested in a business that requires low start-up costs or investments. Again, carpet cleaning IS that business. It is very possible to start a profitable business for under \$1000 (and it is entirely possible to start with significantly less than that! I know, because I did! More on that in the pages that follow.) Another wonderful reality with carpet cleaning is that it is a business you can move into gradually and on a part-time basis if need be or if you would like to.

So, let's say you just can't up and quit your miserable job right now. NO PROBLEM! The reason is because carpet cleaning can often be done in the evenings and on weekends. And if you are good at it (and you will be if you follow this book to the letter) you will be making great money part-time in a matter of weeks and before you know it you can tell your job "C ya!!!!" (that is, if you want to).

I know what you are really wondering. I know enough about human beings to anticipate your REAL question:

“How much can I REALISTICALLY expect to earn each day in carpet cleaning?”

No beating around the bush here ... you can realistically expect to earn anywhere between \$125 and \$750 per day depending on how many jobs you do and how many additional services you offer in your business (oftentimes carpet cleaners offer a variety of additional cleaning services – I focus mainly on carpet and upholstery cleaning. This way I can keep equipment costs down and “specialize” in one area and customers always love a “specialist.”)

And a beautiful reality of carpet cleaning is that if you only want to work 2-3 hours a day and earn \$125 to \$300 (or more) with just one job per day ... it is VERY do-able. Another question you may have is:

“Can a woman do this type of work?”

The answer is yes. While there may be some physical limitations depending on size and strength, most women can do this kind of work quite easily regardless of those limitations. If she has a reputation as an excellent cleaner, many people will *prefer* her to do the work. In 99% of cases furniture isn't moved OR only small pieces are moved. Any particularly heavy furniture can be moved out ahead of time by the homeowners (if they desire the furniture to be moved, and in most cases they are happy with only having the open areas cleaned).

Women actually have some advantages in the carpet cleaning business. Most customers are women (or in most cases they are usually the ones at home when the job is done) and they simply feel more comfortable with a woman in their home. A little creative thought is all it takes to deal with the matter of “Can a woman be a carpet cleaner?”

A final question you probably have is,

“Why am I (the author) willing to write and sell this book if I am doing so well in carpet cleaning?”

Well, I will just tell you the truth. Lots of people want to go into business and can't find the information. Most books on starting a business are far too technical, long, and boring (I know because I have bought many of them). And honestly, you paid me a fee for this book.

I sell a service when I clean carpets and, in this age of information, I thought it would be nice to get paid for sharing the information I have. This is what

colleges do and those who write and sell self-help books. So, I want to help you with an easy approach AND I want to earn a few dollars doing so. Fair enough?

Okay then, let's get into it. You bought this book to learn how to get going in a profit-generating carpet cleaning business. So, I will tell you exactly what you need to know and do. I won't bore you with lots of stories and theory. I will give you only what you need to get started. Very likely your interest will be peaked and there will be some other sources you will purchase from other places as you see the need. But trust me ... all you need for now is what you are reading now.

A Little About Me.

My name is Tony Guthrie and I own and operate a carpet cleaning business.

<https://www.carpetcleaninghuntsville.com/>



I enjoy the business and love the FAST money I can make. But, after reading Robert Kiyosaki's ***Rich Dad Poor Dad*** my approach to earning money changed. I actually have several sources of income.

I do carpet cleaning because I LOVE IT and love the money I make. I know that if my other sources of income "dry up," I can always depend on my carpet cleaning efforts and continue to make excellent money.

In 1981 I was 2 years out of High School and a college drop out. I worked for my dad's construction company as a clean-up man. I hated it! So, I was always

thinking of how I could work for myself. I found an ***Entrepreneur Magazine*** in a drug store and started studying types of businesses to start.

That is when I saw an ad for a carpet cleaning business. In those days there were no online request forms, so I sent off (snail mail) for the information packet. About 3 weeks later my packet showed up. I read it extensively but was disheartened at the \$1850.00 cost of the machine. I didn't have any money or any credit. I simply couldn't purchase it.

But my interest in carpet cleaning had been born! So, I started searching the "help wanted" ads of the local newspaper. I was stunned (and glad) to see ads for "carpet cleaners, no experience, will train." I responded to the first ad and was hired on the spot. I found out immediately how much I loved the business and was shocked to see how much money my company was making doing a few jobs a day. I was being paid a small commission and was strongly encouraged by my bosses to up-sell (more on this later) every customer so I could earn even more.

I learned the business, but I was always more interested in doing a great job rather than up-selling. I saw a weakness in this industry almost immediately. Customer satisfaction is never a priority for most companies; making as much money as possible is. To make a long story short, over the next 20 years I was in and out of the business. But I have always loved it.

Today, I am an adjunct college professor, a pastor of a church, and operate my business.

If you'd like to grab a copy of the full eBook simply go to;

<https://howtostartacarpetcleaningbusiness.com/ebook>

Now on to the ...

7 Common Mistakes New Carpet and Floor Cleaners Make

Let's just cut through the chase.

Here are the 7 Common Mistakes (there are others too)

1. Possessing the mindset that, 'It's just carpet cleaning ... it has to be easy!' TRUTH: It's simple, but not easy.
2. Not fully understanding the limitations of your skills and/or equipment. (failing to properly set customer expectations).
3. Thinking that carpet and floor cleaning is not a "real" profession and, therefore, doesn't have to be treated as a true profession.
4. Not developing appropriate people skills
5. Not understanding the market that you are trying to serve.
6. Thinking that you don't need a business license or business insurance.
7. Being envious of the success of other carpet and floor cleaners.

Now, let's briefly delve into each of these.

Mistake #1

Possessing the mindset that, "It's just carpet cleaning ... it has to be easy!"

Too many beginning carpet cleaners think that since this is "*just carpet cleaning*," it can't be that hard. They think that since they have rented a carpet cleaning machine from a retail store a few times to clean their own house and saw a lot of dirt in the recovery tank, then the carpet is as clean as it can be.

If that were true, however, then there simply would not be a need for the multi-billion-dollar carpet and floor cleaning industry.

Seeing dirt in a tank doesn't tell the entire story ... not by a long shot.

A professional carpet cleaner understands LOTS of things. Things like:

- PH and its relation to carpet cleaning
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7V1hWSCg2c>)
- Types of carpet fiber and what cleaning approach is best for different fibers.
- Why carpet cleaning and rug cleaning are 2 entirely different things.
- Why you should avoid certain types of rugs at all costs!
- Why low moisture cleaning is sometimes a better choice than Hot Water Extraction (AKA steam cleaning).

- Why Hot Water Extraction is sometimes a better choice than low moisture cleaning (AKA VLM – Very Low Moisture).
- The differences between all the types of carpet cleaning equipment and why it is such a debate in the industry.
- What causes “wicking” and how to eliminate the problem.
- What chemistry is best for different spots or stains.
- How to treat urine stains and odors the professional way

And many, many other factors.

Learning everything there is to know about professional carpet cleaning takes time and experience. But the learning curve is simple.

But don't assume that it is easy and just anybody can do it.

That would be a mistake and unfortunately many who enter this business make it.

Mistake #2

***Not fully understanding the limitations of your skills and/or equipment
(failing to properly set customer expectations)***



This means that you understand what you can and can't do for your customers. I have done this for so long now that I can simply look at a carpet

and its traffic lanes and stains and know just how clean I can get it. But this ability came after years of doing this.

Look closely at the picture on the page above. This carpet was heavily soiled with oily dirt. It was caused by an elderly man who worked on lawn mower motors in his garage. He had placed a plastic office chair pad on the carpet to try to keep it from getting so dirty. You can see the outline of the chair pad.

A newbie carpet cleaner simply would not know what to do to clean this type of dirt. Most would simply spray a carpet cleaning detergent on it and then try to extract it. Of course, that would do no good.

I knew exactly what to use and what to do AND I knew how to set the expectations of the customer. I told him that I could get 100% of it out but there would still be slight visibility of the oil. If you look closely at the “after” picture you can see that slight remnant.

Newbie carpet cleaners typically don't know that oil will discolor a carpet. So, after the cleaning it's not the oil that can be seen. It is the discoloration that's visible. I got ALL of the oil out of that carpet, but I had already explained to the customer that there would be a slight visible discoloration. You ALWAYS tell the customer what to expect BEFORE you begin the cleaning process.

Because I have this ability, I can set the expectations for results with my customers. I have, in my opinion, the best equipment on the market. I also use the highest quality chemicals available to professional carpet cleaners. But that doesn't mean that I can make every carpet look brand new.

There are some traffic patterns that will come perfectly clean while there are others that will only look 80% better. There are also some spots and stains that come perfectly clean while there are others that are permanent.

So, because I know these things I can explain to my customer what she can expect. If I don't set her expectations then she may be very disappointed with the final result.

Please don't misunderstand. In MOST cases I make carpets look virtually brand new. 99 times out of 100 my customers are very pleasantly surprised at how great their carpets look after I clean them. Many times, customers will tell me before I start to clean. *“Just do the best you can. These carpets will never look good again.”* I love it when they say that because I know that a huge surprise is coming their way.

At first you will not know as much as you need to know. But with time and experience you will. Learn to set customer expectations. This will come with practice and time.

Mistake #3

Thinking that carpet and floor cleaning is not a “real” profession and, therefore, doesn’t have to be treated as a true profession.



I am always amazed at the guys (and gals) who think that carpet cleaning is on the low end of the professionalism scale. They think that they can show up at a customer’s house wearing faded blue jeans, dirty sneakers, and tee-shirts/muscle shirts.

Absurd!

I make over six figures doing this and I know guys who make over 250k a year, with one van, doing it. The ones that do ... treat it as a ***real profession.***

I am a true believer in acting, dressing, and serving like a true service professional. I mean; Think about it. People are inviting you into their homes and businesses to perform a service for them. They are paying good money. Don’t they deserve the finest service experience possible?

This means that our vehicle is well-lettered, clean, and well-maintained. Our equipment is clean and visibly appealing. We, ourselves, are well-groomed and we wear a professional uniform and look the part of an experienced and caring service professional.



The picture above is me. Obviously I know that I am not the best-looking man on the planet. But I strive to look as professional as I can for my clients.

Notice my uniform. I bought the shirt from Vistaprint.com and the pants and shoes from Walmart. The pants are Dickies, and they are very comfortable. And yes, in the summer I will wear shorts BUT they are not cut-off jeans. They are Dickies uniform shorts.

The shoes are Tred Safe slip resistant shoes. Most shoes are not appropriate for carpet cleaning. If you step from a damp carpet onto a tile floor it is easy to slip and fall. This can be devastating in a number of ways. My shoes prevent me from slipping.

In the summer I keep 3 shirts on my van so I can change between jobs. I live in the south and it gets amazingly hot in the summer. I am one of those guys that sweat profusely, and my shirt gets quite wet. So, before I arrive at my next customers' home, I put on a fresh one.

I can tell you many stories of people who called me and said that they saw me on Facebook or YouTube and said they simply liked how I looked and THAT IS THE REASON they called me instead of the last guy who showed up looking like he was going to do his own yard work!

BE PROFESSIONAL!

Mistake #4

Not developing appropriate people skills



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This basically comes down to what you focus on when you are in a customer's home. You are there to clean the carpets. This is the ONLY thing you talk about with your client. I can't stress enough how important this is!

For example, many times a customer will have a TV on as she is showing you the areas you are there to clean.

She could have the news on and there is political commentary taking place among the talking

heads on the screen. No matter what your political views are PLEASE do not state your opinion to the customer. This is NEVER appropriate. You have not been invited into her home to share your political insights.

You may notice the family pictures and see that some members of the family are quite attractive. Make no mention of that even if you merely want to give a harmless compliment. Just resist the urge.

These days many homes have cameras and listening devices. Always assume that you are being watched and/or listened to. A husband or wife may be watching or listening from his/her place of employment while you are walking through the home. Being mindful of this will help you stay focused.

You might see photos of professional sports teams and other sports paraphernalia. Resist the urge to say anything about it EVEN if you are a fan of the same team and they just won a championship!

Now, if THEY say something like, "Did ya' catch the game?" Then feel free to speak about it but avoid the temptation to talk about it in the same way you speak to your buddies who watched the game with you. All I ever say is, "I did. It was a great game." That's about it.

Trust me, it's not a good idea to speak about anything other than what you are there to do and there are a number of reasons for this.

Here's just one possibility:

Many people work from home these days and they have scheduled you for a cleaning at a particular time. You arrive and they simply want to show you the areas to be cleaned but need to get back to a conference call in their home office (this is VERY common today). They may not have time to engage in small talk about anything other than why you are there.

You show incredible skill and professionalism just by introducing yourself at the door and asking them, "What am I here to clean for you today?" Then focus ONLY on that!

Politics, religion, how gorgeous their daughter's picture is ... are big NO-NOs. Don't go there.

Develop the skill of focusing only on what you are there to do. Small talk will happen, but let the customer bring things up and then keep your responses short and appropriate.

Mistake #5

Not understanding the market that you are trying to serve.



This is a big one. There are tons of information on the internet about target marketing and knowing the market you serve. It is a GREAT idea to learn as much as you can about the people you want to serve and their spending habits.

It's interesting that we often think that we are all in the same boat economically. But the interesting thing is that some people can spend \$500 on carpet and floor cleaning and not flinch at that price while some people have trouble letting go of \$89.95.

Many carpet cleaners only market to the high-end clientele because they know they will likely not have to negotiate price with that clientele. For many high-end customers \$650 is a walk in the park. They don't even flinch when you quote \$225 for 4 rooms and a hall. They think \$225 is what some people call "chump change."

One professional cleaner I know says, "Always remember, YOU ARE NOT YOUR CUSTOMER!" This means that if something seems expensive to you, it doesn't mean it's expensive to everyone else.

I did a job once for a man who wanted 2 sofas, 6 rooms, and 4 area rugs cleaned. I nervously quoted him \$680. I was thinking to myself "Yeesh, that seems high!" His response was, "Really, I thought it would be a lot more." To him, \$680 was chump change. To me it was a small fortune.

Determine the clientele you want to serve and strive to learn all you can about them and their spending habits. Don't make assumptions. Get as much information as you can about the demographic you want to serve.

Learn all you can about people's spending habits and how to determine your "perfect customer" and market to those customers first and foremost.

Let's say you want to market to young married couples with small children. This will help you with your marketing. You can target only those families through social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.

It's a bad idea to think that everyone is your customer. Don't take a shotgun approach to marketing. Shoot your marketing bullets at one or two demographics. This will save you LOTS of money in advertising.

Mistake #6

Thinking you don't need a business license or insurance.

Wrong.

Things happen in all work-related areas. You will eventually break something or unintentionally damage something. Fortunately, I have not broken anything or caused damage in over 20 years, but I did once tip over an antique wine case that had old goblets and wine bottles in it. When it fell from the table and hit the floor it sounded like a nuclear explosion as the case broke open and the glass shattered. It was a \$2500 antique!!!

Glad I had insurance.

I always tell carpet cleaners who come to me for training, “Always remember the number one rule of carpet cleaning!” They’ll say, “What is the number one rule?” And I say ...

Always be aware of what is behind you!!!

You also need a business license because some cities and counties will fine you if you conduct business without one. A license is inexpensive. Don’t do business without one.

Mistake #7

Being envious of the success of other carpet and floor cleaners



One of the realities of being in business for yourself is that your success (or lack thereof) really comes down to how you think.

How you use your mind will either make you or break you. This is the simple reality.

In the carpet cleaning industry, there are guys (and gals) who run a single truck operation and there are those who run multiple van operations. They may have 2 vans, or they may have 20. MANY things factor into this reality.

As I mentioned earlier, I know some guys who earn over \$250K with just one van. They are young. They are motivated. And they eat, sleep, and drink their business. Many of them are setting huge portions of their income aside so can have money to invest in something else later in life (like flipping houses or something similar).

Some want to grow their one-van operation into a multi-van operation then hire people to manage it for them while they spend their time enjoying an easier life.

I never wanted that. I have always been happy and content to run my one-van operation. If my son wants to partner with me one day then I’ll add another van

and gradually let him take it over and let me receive a residual. But that may or may not happen.

I could make a LOT more than I make now. But it would require a LOT more work and effort and I want to do other things with my time.

The best part about being in business for yourself, at least to me, is being able to live life on your terms. There's no one telling you what you have to do, how much you can make, and when you have to be there or when you can leave.

So, back to being envious of the success of others.

It's easy to do. When you are starting out the money isn't all that good. You have to invest time and energy to build it.

But focusing on others' success only bogs your mind down and is very non-productive. I'd decided years ago to be happy for them and do all I can to learn as much as I can from them.

When I started focusing on my business and my goals rather than bogging myself down by wishing I had what the other guys had (vans, jobs, employees, lots of customers, etc.) I started doing really well.

I decided how I wanted to run my business. I learned some things from the other guys and implemented them. I also decided to not do a lot of things they were doing. I didn't want to copy them at all.

I still remember my first \$700 day. I did it in my second month in business. Now THAT was exciting!

That made me focus even more on ME and what I was doing.

So, only focus on what you are doing. Be happy for the guys that are making way more than you. In a relatively short period of time, if you want to, you can make as much or even more.

Thank you so much for reading 😊



There is **SO MUCH MORE** to learn about this business. When I started out all those years ago there was NO ONE teaching anything about starting a successful carpet cleaning business.

Almost everything I have learned came through trial and error and the dreaded School of Hard Knocks. Sadly, I was enrolled in that school for many, MANY years.

But you don't have to be. You can get a wealth of education in one easy-to-read eBook. You will be so glad you did.

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