



Getting Started and Staying in Business as a Contractor

Eight Tips Especially for Women

by Lee Comer

- I**f you are a woman and considering getting into business as a power washing contractor, here are eight tips to help assure success. Some of these tips are unique to women; others are just good business sense.
1. **Don't start too soon.** Analyze the situation and make sure that you are physically prepared and capable of working in this industry—do this first before you invest time and money. In other words, even though you may have learned how to operate a pressure washer (and perhaps own one), that doesn't mean by a long shot that you're set to go.
 2. **Let people know that you are a woman.** And that your company is woman-owned and operated. Highlight this fact in every advertisement.
 3. **People you know are the best bet for your first customers.** This is where you can gain experience and start a buzz. You may even have to do a couple of freebies, especially if they are job situations where you are learning and need to practice.
 4. **Educate yourself.** You will get a lot of people asking questions and prejudging the situation. When a woman shows up for the job, often people assume they have been short-changed. They don't think that you can possibly do

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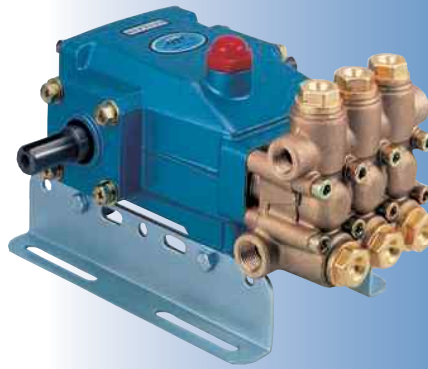
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the work. Change their minds! Know as much as you can about the industry. Professionalism is first exhibited with the bidding process, then through your knowledge of safety measures, applications, chemicals, expected results, and how often your services will be needed.

5. **Start and keep building relationships.** Particularly important are pressure washer service techs and chemical and supply merchants. They can save you a lot of time by offering solutions for mechanical problems or giving advice for which cleaning method is best. Once these people know you and respect what you do, they will go the extra mile for you.

6. **Develop one or two sectors of your business.** Build relationships with specific customers (such as lot washes, residential, commercial contractors, home builders, and management companies).

a. Personally visit the sectors that are dominated by men (e.g. building contractors). A phone call just won't do. Believe me, you will be a welcomed sight! If you are confident and knowledgeable, they will take you seriously, and most will really want to give you a chance.

b. Start with the sector that you are most interested in. It may become your niche, or just one part of the business.

7. **Add a woman's touch.** Follow up quickly on leads; stay organized; be professional, reliable, and prompt; keep job sites clean and safe; take care of the customer and go the extra mile. Give them what they ask for, plus a little bit more (and make sure they notice).

8. **Believe in yourself.** Be confident, knowledgeable, capable, and do a great job. That's what they will remember and will tell their friends and family...and that you are a woman!

Lee Comer owns The Water Pump, a power washing contractor in Decatur, GA. cr