



DEVELOPING YOUR OWN EXTERIOR WOOD CARE BUSINESS

CONTACT INFORMATION

**Wolman Wood Care Products
Attn: Product Support Group
11 Hawthorn Parkway
Vernon Hills, IL 60061**

QUESTIONS

**Phone: 1-800-556-7737
Fax: 1-800-678-1617
Email: info@wolman.com
Web site: www.wolman.com**

Reminder: Wolman Contractor Certification Test can be taken online



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BUSINESS PLANNING – Setting the Groundwork

Once you've made the decision to begin or expand into exterior wood care, get started by following these 7 important steps:

1. Establish specific goals

How many decks do you want to do in years 1,2,3, etc.? (You should start to get repeat business by year 3.) What income are you looking for? You'll have to determine how long it takes to do projects of different sizes and types and with different types of Wolman coatings, and then develop a price schedule that provides the income you desire.

2. Train your employees

Will you develop "specialists" that work primarily on deck jobs? Consider hiring temporary summer help. Try to use the same employees every year so you won't have to spend time training new employees.

3. Do "trial" deck jobs

Complete two or more "trial" deck jobs to get accustomed to proper application procedures and equipment. Use the trials to determine average labor time and material cost, so you can formulate an effective approach to pricing.

4. Choose geographic areas to target

Concentration in select areas is important to develop early word-of-mouth recognition. Consider the level of competition in your desired target territories; you may want to focus your initial efforts where there are few or no competitors.

5. Sign up a few "demonstration" decks

Pursue landing a few "demonstration" decks in each targeted area. These will be your "showcases."

6. Select sales strategies

What promotional tools might work for you? Ask your Wolman Wood Care Products Certified Dealer for help with ideas.

7. Promote your business with as many tools as possible

Take advantage of the many Wolman-produced promotional materials, including full-color brochures, yard and truck signs and direct mail postcards, to name a few. The creative work has been done for you, so you can concentrate on prospecting and doing a professional job!



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OBTAINING CUSTOMERS – Tips and Techniques

Identify prospective clients by targeting these various groups and business opportunities:

1. Current Customers

The easiest and fastest way to get a few, quick deck jobs is to look at your current customer base. Take a look – **one out of every three of your current residential customers has a deck**, and most of those probably appear worn and faded, discolored, weathered-gray or generally unattractive. They can use a “facelift” – an opportunity for you! When you start a new painting, pressure-cleaning, landscaping or remodeling job, take along your deck care brochures and portfolio of before/after photos. **Show your customers that you can make their deck look as great as the rest of the house** – and at a surprisingly low price since you are already at the job site. If extra convincing is needed, **do a demonstration on an inconspicuous area of the deck**. With a little effort, you can usually persuade most customers to let you restore and protect their “outdoor living room” – a source of great pride for most homeowners.

2. Home and Garden Shows

These shows are usually put on in the late Winter and early Spring, and are great for exposing your business to thousands of local homeowners. Chances are many will have decks or fences that are starting to weather and look unattractive. Rent a small booth space at the next show and set up an attractive display to draw interest.

3. The Neighborhood “Showcase” Deck – Reduced Price Strategy

Find a conspicuous deck on a street with good traffic flow. Offer to treat it at a reduced price in exchange for permission to post your deck care business signs on the lawn. Make sure the customer understands that he is getting a promotional deal that is to be kept confidential. Otherwise, future customers in the neighborhood may find out they are paying more and become unhappy ex-customers.

4. Neighborhood Meetings and Homeowners’ Associations

Offer reduced, group rates on volume business if neighbors get together and arrange three or more deck jobs simultaneously in the same block. Use brochures or flyers to get them talking about your deck care business.

5. Real Estate Offices

Contact and tell the sales managers about your deck care service. Leave your brochures behind. Real estate agents know that good-looking decks help sell houses at higher prices. In addition, many new homeowners will be thrilled to have their newly acquired decks spruced up. Also, see if your town has a “Welcome Wagon,” an organization that introduces new homeowners to local businesses through a direct mail package of coupons and discounts. Consider adding your business notice with a coupon or discount promotion.



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Utilize publicity to increase awareness of your deck care service.

Here are some ways to obtain free publicity:

1. Volunteer Your Labor for a Civic Project or Worthy Cause

If a deck, fence or other building project is going up for a non-profit organization, such as at a church, park or even Ronald McDonald House or Habitat For Humanity, volunteer your labor and wood care service to the job. You will surely gain personal satisfaction in giving to others that need help, while at the same time meeting local civic leaders/organizations that can refer your service to others they know. Plus, the finished project may garner a photo and write up in the organization's newsletter, the local/city newspaper, and maybe even on the local TV news channel!

2. Seek Opportunities to Work on Historic Homes or Public Projects

Look for opportunities to water seal or stain new exterior wood projects or restore existing ones at noteworthy, newsworthy properties, such as historic home sites, brand new condominium/apartment complexes, or even newly developed recreation facilities and parks. By bidding on and winning the deck, dock, fence, gazebo/bandstand or jungle gym job (to name a few), your work may well end up featured in newspaper and TV, and the general public may see the beautiful result during home tours or daily visits to the project site.

Referrals are your best source of promotion!

Probably the best perk you receive after completing a deck job is the owners' genuine thrill upon seeing the dramatic results – the "WOW, what a great job!" reaction. That "WOW" will often lead to referrals for more deck jobs or other exterior wood care projects! After all, you produced great results on the deck, right? Not only will you be building a source of repeat deck care business, but you will also be creating a list of new customers for ALL your professional contracting services.

The great work that you do is your best sales tool!