

Polish Up For Higher Profits

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"I have a 31-step process. I shampoo seats, do the dashboard with Q-tips, clean the trunk, dress the engine, etc. It takes 3 hours for what I do, and I charge \$120. That's detailed." This would be a typical response of someone who does Auto Detailing when asked what they can do for your car and how much they would charge you for it.

The age of upscale carwash is here. As we keep our cars longer (average length is 7.5 years) we take better care of them. This is why the carwash business is booming with \$8 billion in revenue, and so is auto detailing.

EXECUTIVE PARKING

Many auto detail services nest their business in executive parking lots. They get a permit from the city and from the business whose lot they use.

This is convenient for employees who otherwise may not have time to bring their cars to a shop that would take 3 hours to get detailing done.

In a mobile operation such as this, you will need a van or pickup truck and access to running water and preferably AC power. In some cities, there are companies that convert and customize pickup trucks into mobile detail shops with its own reservoir and portable power generator.

140 MILLION CARS

Although many auto detailers will swear that a bulk of their business comes from car dealers, in reality the car dealer market is small and extremely competitive. Most car dealers need cars detailed before a used car is offered in an auction or is displayed in the lot.

However, the biggest market of all is still on the road, individual car owners, representing all of 140 million passenger cars plus another 30 million pickup trucks on the road. This market, with an average age of 7.5 years, is ripe for a detail job at least twice a year.

BUDGET DETAIL

The best way to build up a base in this business is to introduce a mid-priced service that offers extras that carwashes do not offer. Detail jobs in the range of \$30 to \$49 will open up a new market that can provide a stream of customers. You can provide a written list of what you do and how you build up your rates from the basic price of \$30 to the premium rate \$49. With 5 customers a day, at 1 hour each, you can average \$200 a day.