

# School Janitorial Business



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52 Years of Experience in the Janitorial Business

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## How to Start a School Janitorial Business

A focus on 2022 should be aimed at markets that will reap the maximum benefits. We should target some and back off on others. But the question is which? With massive layoffs in manufacturing, this market is not a good choice. Job layoffs also are prevalent in white collar businesses. With the glut of commercial office space, this market should not be tops on your list either. The retail market is soft because our current recession is lasting longer than expected.

To maximize your marketing efforts, you should address markets that look the most promising. Schools and universities will fit that bill. Although there may be some cutbacks, this should be to the advantage of the contract cleaner to address the rising enrollments more school construction is now underway. Nationwide about 11.4 billion dollars was spent in 1991 on new construction in public schools. Construction means more square footage to be cleaned. Although this recession is putting a crimp on school budgets, rising enrollments means larger income from taxes.

When strings need to be pulled, usually you'll see a move from in-house to the sensibility of contract cleaning. The market is immense. Currently there are almost 50 million students in the United States. This represents 20% of our total population. A business could be built on only schools and universities. However, as a wise man once said, it's not a good idea to put all your eggs in one basket.

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The market is unique in that most contracts are awarded to the lowest qualified bidder. If you have a good insight on: **1)** your competition. **2)** and past bidding results, you can expect better than average results. The market commands anywhere from .05 cents to .15 cents per square foot per month. The bid documents and specifications are usually very thorough and may appear as “government contracts” that seem complicated, however, most of the documents contain boiler plates that are standard on all bidding documents. Once you see through all the red tape, the rest is easy.



In the school and university field, occasionally you'll run across politics. There is little that can be done to combat this other than to get familiar as soon as possible with all the key players such as the school superintendent, the business manager, the purchasing director, and when possible the board members. It sounds like a lot of work but the rewards are enormous.



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Projects usually range from \$250,000.00 to \$500,000.00 per year and most are multi-year contracts. The majority of schools are in-house 60/40 as compared to contracted services but as budgets become tighter and the need to trim out the fat contracted services becomes the welcome alternative.



Day-to-day operations of cleaning schools and universities are just slightly different to office cleaning but the major differences lie in the scheduling, as schools are being used constantly. Tile floors, carpeting, wood gym floors, waste removal, washroom/locker room cleaning furniture, chalk boards, and administrative offices are the primary areas to target. During the year, schools and universities have three breaks: Winter, Spring, and Summer. During this period major cleaning takes place. It is mandatory that the sanitation services be as close to perfect as humanly possible considering the number of students and teachers. Virus colds, flu, and other germs must be addressed with disinfectants.

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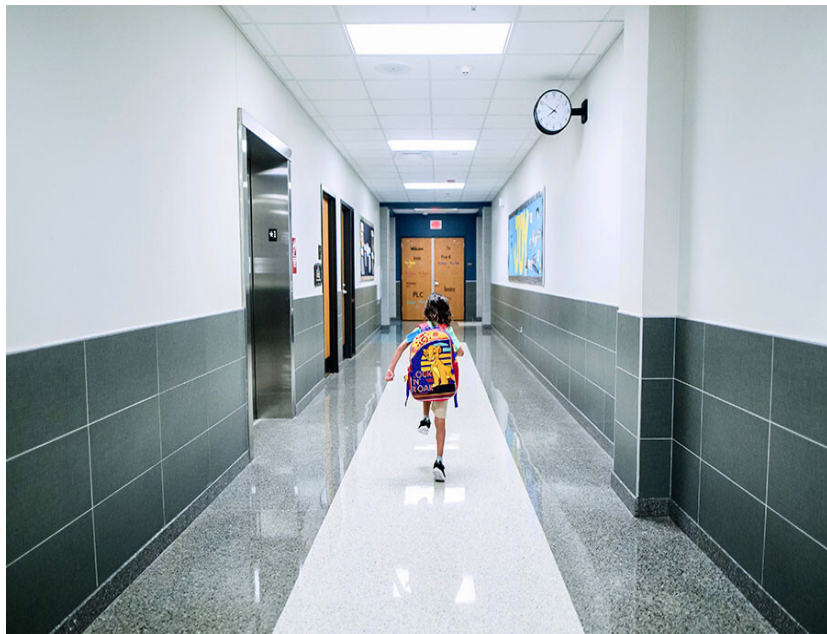
Daily inspections by supervisory staff guarantee that the quality of services will remain high. A monthly walk thru with the customer is a very good idea to keep the communications open. Marketing schools begin by developing a list or profile report for each one in your market area. First contact your state department of education for a small expense purchase a mailing list from a list broker. The best time to make initial contact is between January and March. Bidding usually takes place from March thru May for June or September start-ups. Your initial contact should be made on the phone to expedite the information that you want such as: 1) in house or contract cleaning 2) contract expiration 3) bidding begins 4) how to be placed on their bidders list 5) contact person Later you can find out 1) current contract price.

**NOTE:** Don't become dependent on the current price when evaluating your bid. Make sure your specifications haven't changed. With this in hand you can send your request letter and any promotional material that you have to the customer.

I strongly recommend a personal visit about one or two after mailing just to meet with the people involved. Keeping a calendar of upcoming bids or bid opening days is also a good idea. Most schools and universities will have a walk through a week or two after the bid packages are mailed out. This is a good time to gather more information such as which contractors have shown an interest in bidding. How does the customer relate to the current contractor? What is the overall condition of the facilities? It should look as good as the current contractor usually has one to two weeks to beef up the job to look extra clean. If it doesn't, you could be sure the current contractor is having problems.

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The bid packages range from simple to unbelievably complex, but determination should prevail. Considering all bidders must use the same documents – the day of the bid opening is almost like a lotto drawing; the excitement is high but bear in mind the low bidder must prove to be the lowest qualified bidder. Being 2nd or 3rd isn't the end of the world. If by chance you are not awarded the contract, it's a good idea to stay friendly with the customer.



(Send the customer a thank you card or a short note thanking them for the opportunity) Keep your records and bid results on file. Schedule a call back every 6 months to see what's going on. Persistence usually pays off. The thing to keep in mind is to always dress and act professionally. You are being judged by the whole cast of players.

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## In the United States currently there are:

- 15,700 - Public School Districts
- 8,876 - Catholic Schools
- 13,988 - Private Schools
- 45,574 Public Elementary Schools
- 12,436 Public Junior High Schools
- 13,402 Public Senior High Schools
- 7,672 Colleges and Universities

**Total 117,648**

That's one huge market and it's not as difficult to enter as one may think. While reviewing your current business plan, adding schools and universities to your marketing section is a sound idea.

Good Luck!!

Wayne Baxtrom

# About the Author



Wayne Baxtrom, The Janitorial Coach, has over 52 years experience in the cleaning business. He has started 3 multi-million dollar Janitorial Businesses — the last being sold for over \$6,000,000. Recently retired, Wayne still feels the fire in his belly to stay active. He is motivated by his desire to help any and all folks making their living in the cleaning industry. Wayne offers Janitorial Business Programs for startups and seasoned pros. To learn more about how Wayne can help your business grow, visit [www.TheJanitorialCoach.com](http://www.TheJanitorialCoach.com) and schedule your free Discovery Call.