CLEANING IN MOTION

FROM THE FRONTLINES



YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR NAVIGATING THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE IN 2024-2025



THIS IS YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR NAVIGATING THE COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE IN 2024

Welcome to ***From the Frontlines,*** a hands-on guide crafted to provide you with proven strategies for success in the commercial cleaning industry. This is not just another theoretical manual—it's built on real-world insights, tested by industry leaders who are currently thriving in the field. Whether you're facing challenges with appointment quality, access to decision-makers, or fierce competition on pricing, these actionable strategies will help you take control and dominate your market.

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KEY CHALLENGES IN THE COMMERCIAL CLEANING MARKET AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

1

Improving appointment quality

Getting qualified appointments is the backbone of any successful sales strategy. However, our field research highlights a significant gap between inside sales (cold callers or appointment setters) and outside sales. The challenge? Many appointments don't meet the criteria for recurring contracts, instead focusing on one-time services or prospects who aren't actively in the market. The disconnect between inside sales (appointment setters or cold callers, both in-house and outsourced) and outside sales is a significant issue. With outside sales rating appointment quality at 7 out of 10, there's clear room for improvement. The main concerns include:

What's happening

MISALIGNED TARGETING
Inside sales teams often set appointments in industries that don't match the outside sales team's priorities.

ONE-TIME SERVICES
About 35% of appointments focus on one-off cleaning jobs rather than ongoing contracts.

LACK OF LEAD QUALIFICATION
Appointments are often set without determining if the prospect is actively seeking new services.

What's the solution

TRACK APPOINTMENT OUTCOMES
Implement CRM tools to track how many appointments turn into proposals, and how many proposals convert to sales. This will help you refine your strategy.

RIGOROUS QUALIFICATION
Refine the lead qualification process with strict criteria for setting appointments. Ensure that leads fit the profile for recurring contracts, and not just one-time services.

ALIGN COMMUNICATION
Regular meetings between inside and outside sales teams are crucial for ensuring alignment on target industries and client profiles.

MY THOUGHTS

Managing a team of 45 inside salespeople, I've noticed two types of clients: those focused on recurring cleaning services and those open to broader opportunities like post-construction cleaning or specials. The first group is easy to work with, but limiting yourself too much can cause you to miss potential opportunities. If you can reach decision-makers at companies with the budget for recurring services, that's a win. Building relationships, even with those outside your ideal scenario, creates future opportunities, and a strong follow-up process ensures you don't leave any potential on the table. If you're behind your sales goals or struggling to close sales, consider opening up to a broader sales pipeline by not limiting yourself to only work with prospects who are ready to buy. This can help you identify your ideal clients for the future and build a stronger sales pipeline.

2 Gaining access to decision-makers

What's happening

Sales cycles are unnecessarily extended when your reps meet with non-decision makers. This slows down the sales process and reduces the effectiveness of your pitch. Often, gatekeepers block access to decision-makers, or your reps meet with someone whose priorities don't align with those of the decision-maker.

DIFFERENT PRIORITIES
Non-decision makers may focus on concerns that don't align with those of the ultimate purchaser, weakening your presentation's impact.

GATEKEEPERS
Non-decision makers filter or limit the information that reaches the actual decision-maker.

What's the solution

CHAMPION CULTIVATION
Implement CRM tools to track how many appointments turn into proposals, and how many proposals convert to sales. This data will help you refine your strategy.

MULTI-THREADED APPROACH
Engage with multiple stakeholders in the organization to increase your chances of reaching the decision-maker.

PROBING QUESTIONS
Encourage reps to ask strategic questions to uncover the decision-making structure and process.

DOWNLOAD OUR MASTERING WALKTHROUGH GUIDE

MY THOUGHTS

Accessing decision-makers is a critical challenge in sales. One effective strategy is nurturing internal champions. Even if the first person you meet is not the decision-maker, they can become your advocate within the organization. Decision-making is rarely linear, and having multiple points of contact can help you progress. I encourage our representatives to build relationships with anyone they encounter, as you never know who might open the door to a sale. Be sure to capture people's information so you can follow up, and leave a lasting impression so they remember you. Consider how you can disrupt their routine in a positive way, whether it's leaving some chocolates or finding small ways to brighten their day.

HANDLING OBJECTIONS IN REAL-TIME

1 Handling pricing objections

What's happening

Pricing is a common objection, especially in price-sensitive markets. When you're positioned as a premium provider, many prospects are anchored to lower prices from competitors. Organizations often operate within strict budgets, making it harder to justify higher prices, and some clients struggle to understand the long-term value of premium services.

PRICE ANCHORING
Prospects compare your pricing to that of lower-cost providers.

VALUE PERCEPTION
Clients may struggle to see the long-term benefits of a higher-quality service.

BUDGET CONSTRAINTS
Many organizations have preset cleaning service budgets, which may not align with your premium pricing.

What's the solution

CLEAR VALUE PROPOSITIONS
Develop and communicate strong, **quantifiable** value propositions that justify higher pricing.

TIERED OFFERINGS
Offer different service levels to accommodate varying budgets while maintaining premium options.

VALUE-BASED SELLING
Train your team to sell based on long-term value rather than price alone.

TIERED OFFERINGS
By allowing clients to try your services without committing to an annual contract.

MAINTAIN TRANSPARENCY
By ensuring clients understand your pricing, the products you use, the communication process, and how you guarantee quality. Clearly explain what clients will receive in return for their investment.

MY THOUGHTS

Pricing objections are common, especially when offering premium services. The key is confidence - believe in the value you provide and ensure prospects understand that value. We've had success using case studies to demonstrate long-term savings and offering flexible, tiered options that cater to different budgets. If you have a good number of positive reviews on Google, use them to justify premium prices. Anticipating client objections and addressing them proactively is always a winning strategy. Remember, it's not about being the cheapest, but about being the best fit for the client's needs.

DOWNLOAD OUR OBJECTION HANDLING PLAYBOOK, WHICH INCLUDES THE MOST COMMON OBJECTIONS THAT COMMERCIAL CLEANING COMPANY OWNERS FACE

2 Mastering walkthroughs

What's happening

Despite the growing preference for remote quotes, in-person walkthroughs remain critical. They provide an opportunity to build rapport, identify specific needs, and showcase your expertise. However, walkthroughs can sometimes feel rushed or superficial, especially if decision-makers are pressed for time or facilities are busy.

CLIENT RESISTANCE
Some clients prefer quick, remote quotes over in-person walkthroughs.

GATEKEEPERS
Non-decision makers filter or limit the information that reaches the actual decision-maker.

What’s the solution

STRUCTURED WALKTHROUGHS
Develop a checklist tailored to the client’s industry and use it to guide the walkthrough. Share the checklist with your prospects.

USE MOBILE TECHNOLOGY
Capture photos, notes, and measurements during the walkthrough to streamline data collection.

VIRTUAL OPTIONS
When in-person visits aren’t possible, offer virtual walkthroughs as a backup.

CONDUCT A GAP ANALYSIS
Between their current service and what your company can provide. Highlight differences.

MY THOUGHTS

Walkthroughs are still one of the most powerful tools we have in the sales process. There’s no substitute for being on-site, seeing the facility, and building rapport with potential clients. A structured, efficient walkthrough not only helps you gather important information but also shows that you’re invested in their specific needs. Even in a rushed environment, a good walkthrough can be the difference between closing a deal or not. Come prepared, arrive early, show professionalism and always find a way to stand out from the crowd.



3 Enhancing Follow-Up

What's happening

Follow-up is an area where many sales teams fall short. Traditional follow-up cycles of 4-6 months are often too slow in today's fast-paced market. This can result in lost opportunities, as prospects who weren't ready to buy initially may have moved on by the time you reach out again.

SLOW FOLLOW-UP CYCLES
Current market conditions demand more frequent check-ins.

LOST OPPORTUNITIES
Prospects who aren't ready to buy initially are often overlooked or forgotten.

WORKING WITH COMPETITORS
If you are doing efficient prospecting efforts, you will identify leads on a monthly basis that are working with competitors. These are small wins if you follow up consistently with them. Same with In-House cleaning services.

What's the solution

SHORTEN FOLLOW-UP CYCLES
Reduce the time between follow-ups to every 2-3 months, keeping your brand top-of-mind.

AUTOMATED SYSTEMS
Implement a structured, automated follow-up process using CRM tools to ensure no lead falls through the cracks.

NURTURE CAMPAIGNS
When in-person visits aren't possible, offer virtual walkthroughs as a backup.

CONDUCT A GAP ANALYSIS
Develop ongoing email campaigns that provide valuable insights, helping prospects see the value of your services even if they aren't ready to buy today.

MY THOUGHTS

I can't emphasize enough the importance of follow-up. Too many leads are lost simply because they weren't followed up with quickly enough. At Cleaning in Motion, we've shortened our follow-up timelines and automated much of the process to ensure we stay top-of-mind. Even if a client isn't ready to buy today, keeping the conversation going puts you in the best position to close the deal when the timing is right.

We see less loyalty in today's market. Clients who are not satisfied with their cleaning providers won't adhere to their contracts or will find ways to get out. That's why it's so important to follow up every 2 months with leads that are using a cleaning provider or that you lost to a competitor.

4 Pricing strategies & models

What's happening

The commercial cleaning industry is fiercely competitive, with major players like Jani-King, Jan-Pro, Coverall, and Citywide leading the market. These companies often employ aggressive pricing strategies, especially when targeting large accounts, making it difficult for smaller or regional cleaning companies to compete. Additionally, some competitors have moved away from the franchise model, which allows for greater pricing flexibility and streamlined operations, further intensifying the competitive landscape.

FRANCHISE VS. SUBCONTRACTING MODELS
Some competitors have shifted away from franchising to subcontracting, giving them more flexibility in pricing and operations.

PRICING PRESSURE
Clients, especially those managing larger facilities, tend to focus heavily on cost, which can overshadow the value proposition of premium services.

AGGRESSIVE PRICING
Large companies are often able to offer lower prices, making it difficult to compete on cost alone, especially for larger accounts.

What's the solution

TIERED SERVICE OFFERINGS
Introduce a tiered pricing model that caters to a range of client needs. This allows you to offer competitive pricing for more budget-conscious clients, while still maintaining premium options for those seeking higher quality and specialized services.

LEVERAGE FRANCHISE STRENGTHS
Highlight the benefits of the franchise model—like local ownership, accountability, and consistent service quality. These advantages can be critical in client decisions, particularly when they value personalized service and local market knowledge over the lowest price.

UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITIONS (USPS)
Focus on what makes your company different, such as higher-quality services, personalized customer care, and local expertise. Emphasize these strengths in marketing materials and sales pitches to differentiate from cost-driven competitors.

REGULAR COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS
Conduct frequent market research to stay informed about your competitors' strategies, pricing, and service offerings. This ensures that you are always one step ahead and can adjust your approach as necessary.

MY THOUGHTS

As a business owner, I know how tempting it can be to try and compete on price alone, especially when you're up against industry giants who seem to have endless resources. However, I've learned that the key to sustainable success is not in offering the cheapest service, but in offering the best service. At Cleaning in Motion, we focus on delivering quality and building relationships with clients who understand the long-term value of consistent, premium services. We can't always beat the big players on price, but we can beat them on personalized service and reliability. When clients value local ownership and accountability, we shine.

5 Adapting to market trends

What's happening

The commercial cleaning industry is shifting, with more clients opting for shorter-term contracts and smaller, more frequent cleaning jobs. Economic pressures have increased price sensitivity, with clients seeking more flexible arrangements that allow them to adjust their service levels based on immediate needs. Long-term commitments are becoming less common, with businesses prioritizing flexibility over consistency in their cleaning contracts.

PRICE SENSITIVITY
Budget constraints are leading to more cautious spending on cleaning services, with many clients opting for lower-cost, shorter-term solutions.

FREQUENT, SMALLER CONTRACTS
The demand for smaller, more frequent cleaning jobs is growing as businesses prioritize flexibility.

SHORT-TERM COMMITMENTS
Clients are moving away from long-term contracts, preferring more flexible arrangements.

What's the solution

SERVICE PACKAGES
Create service packages that cater to clients seeking smaller-scale, frequent cleaning jobs. These packages should be easy to scale up or down based on the client's changing needs.

EDUCATE CLIENTS ON CONSISTENCY
While flexibility is important, help clients understand the value of consistent, professional cleaning. Position your services as essential to maintaining a clean, safe, and efficient work environment, which can reduce long-term costs by preventing larger, more expensive issues.

FLEXIBLE CONTRACT STRUCTURES
Offer contract options that allow clients to adjust the frequency and scale of their cleaning services as needed. This could include monthly, quarterly, or semi-annual agreements instead of long-term commitments.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY
Ensure your operations are optimized to handle smaller, more frequent jobs without sacrificing profitability. This may involve route optimization, better resource allocation, or streamlining service delivery processes.

MY THOUGHTS

As the market shifts towards more flexibility, it's important to remain adaptable. Embrace this trend by offering more contract flexibility and service packages that cater to the evolving needs of your clients. Additionally, educate your clients on the importance of consistency. Clients who commit to regular, professional cleaning see better results in the long term. While flexibility is a selling point, it's also your responsibility to demonstrate the benefits of maintaining a consistent cleaning schedule.

6 Corporate consolidation trends

What's happening

There is a growing trend among large corporations to consolidate their cleaning services with nationwide vendors, which is putting significant pressure on local and regional cleaning companies. In 2024, a notable 35% of Fortune 500 companies have opted to consolidate their cleaning services under a single national provider, up from 22% in 2021. This consolidation is driven by cost savings and streamlined vendor management, but it has left many mid-sized and local companies struggling to retain large corporate clients.

CONSOLIDATION IMPACT

42% of mid-sized cleaning companies (with annual revenue between $5M-$20M) reported losing at least one major corporate client to a national provider in the last year.

INCREASED MARKET SHARE

The top five national cleaning service providers have increased their market share from 30% to 38% since 2022.

COST SAVINGS

Large corporations report saving 15-20% by consolidating services with a single vendor across multiple locations.

INDUSTRY CONCENTRATION

Retail (52% consolidation rate), banking (47%), and healthcare systems (41%) are the industries where consolidation is most pronounced.

What's the solution

DIFFERENTIATE THROUGH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Emphasize your local expertise and the personalized service that national providers often lack. Highlight the fact that 22% of companies who consolidated their services reported decreased satisfaction due to a loss of personalized service and local market knowledge.

SPECIALIZED SERVICES

Focus on offering specialized services that national providers may not emphasize, such as eco-friendly cleaning, niche industries, or facilities with unique compliance needs.

FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Build strong, lasting relationships with facility managers to maintain loyalty even when consolidation trends affect the market. Demonstrate the value of personalized service and fast response times.

BUILD ALLIANCES

Form partnerships or networks with other regional cleaning companies to compete for national contracts. By joining forces, you can offer a broader geographic reach and more competitive pricing while maintaining local service quality.

MY THOUGHTS

As a business owner, I've seen firsthand how difficult it can be to compete against the pricing and convenience offered by large, national providers. However, I firmly believe that local cleaning companies have a critical advantage—the deep knowledge of the local market and our ability to provide highly personalized service. This has allowed us to retain clients who might otherwise have been tempted by the cost savings of consolidation. The key is to position yourself not just as a cleaning provider, but as a trusted partner who understands their business at a local level.

7 Industry focus

What's happening

Certain industries are proving to be strong verticals for growth, especially as they have specific cleaning requirements and higher demand for specialized services. Key industries such as manufacturing, medical clinics, churches, and car dealerships are showing steady growth in their need for reliable and professional cleaning services. However, each of these industries has unique buying cycles and requirements that must be addressed.

DIFFERENT NEEDS
Each industry has distinct cleaning needs. For example, medical facilities require higher sanitation standards, while manufacturing plants may need industrial-strength cleaning solutions.

DEMANDING CLIENTS
Some sectors, particularly healthcare, have more knowledgeable and demanding clients when it comes to cleaning standards.

SEASONAL FLUCTUATIONS
Industries like education see seasonal demand, especially during the summer months when schools require deep cleaning.

What's the solution

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC SALES CYCLES
Align sales and marketing efforts with the buying cycles of target industries. For example, approach educational institutions between April and July for upcoming school year cleaning.

CASE STUDIES AND TESTIMONIALS
Build credibility with case studies and testimonials from clients in focus industries, especially where peer recommendations, like healthcare, matter.

UNIQUE SERVICE OFFERINGS
Offer tailored services, such as clean room cleaning for manufacturing plants or specialized sanitization protocols for medical facilities.

SPECIALIZED TEAMS
Develop dedicated teams that are trained to handle the unique needs of high-potential industries such as medical, manufacturing, and automotive. This ensures your company has the expertise to meet specific client requirements.

TAILORED MARKETING
Customize your marketing materials and value propositions to address the needs of each industry. For instance, highlight your adherence to healthcare sanitation protocols when targeting medical facilities.

MY THOUGHTS

From my experience, industry focus can be a game-changer for commercial cleaning companies. By positioning yourself as an expert in specific sectors, you can offer tailored solutions that large, generalist competitors simply can't provide. At Cleaning in Motion, we've found success by specializing in industries that require more than just basic marketing. It's not enough to offer a standard package—you need to show prospects that you understand their business challenges and are equipped to meet their specific needs. This level of customization builds trust and helps you stand out in a crowded market.

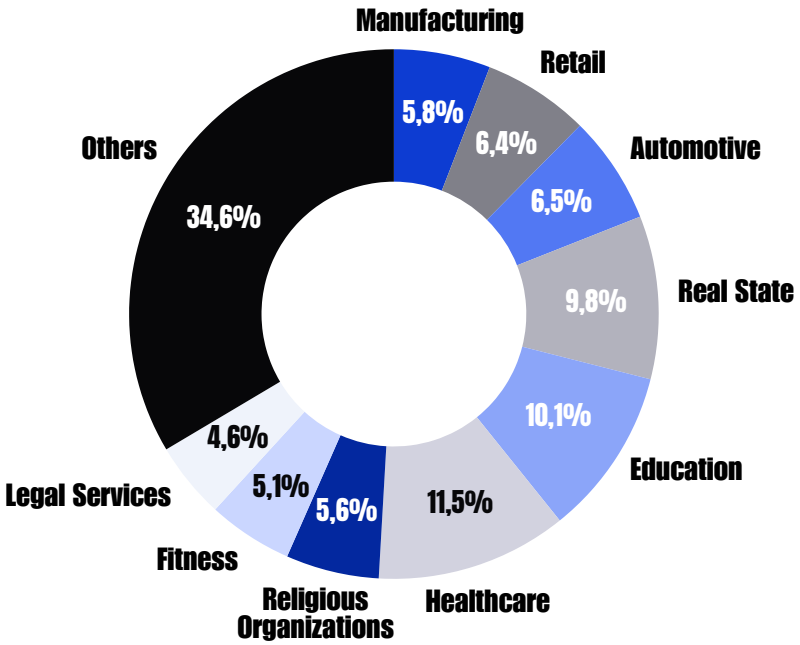
8 Market Opportunities: Top Industries for Commercial Cleaning in 2024

What's happening

As competition in the commercial cleaning industry intensifies, targeting the right industries is crucial for maximizing lead generation and securing recurring contracts. Based on appointment data from the first six months of the year, the Healthcare (11.5%), Education (10.1%), and Real Estate (9.8%) sectors emerge as the most significant sources of opportunity. Other high-potential markets include Automotive, Retail, and Manufacturing. These industries tend to have specific cleaning needs due to high foot traffic, regulatory requirements, and the need for consistent cleanliness standards.

Industry distribution in appointments

(First 6 months)



The pie chart shows the percentage distribution of appointments across various industries for the first six months of the year from our inside sales team at Cleaning in Motion. We have booked more than 1,000 appointments for the commercial cleaning industry, and this is the appointment distribution by industry. Healthcare leads with 11.5% of appointments, followed closely by Education (10.1%) and Real Estate (9.8%), indicating that these sectors offer significant opportunities for commercial cleaning services. Other notable industries include Automotive (6.5%), Retail (6.4%), and Manufacturing (5.8%). This distribution highlights which industries should be prioritized in your marketing and sales outreach to maximize growth opportunities.

What's the solution

FOCUS ON HIGH-DEMAND SECTORS
Prioritize outreach to industries like Healthcare, Education, and Real Estate that demonstrate the highest demand for cleaning services. Custom-tailored marketing campaigns emphasizing industry-specific benefits (e.g., compliance with healthcare sanitation regulations, educational facilities' high-traffic areas) will resonate better with prospects.

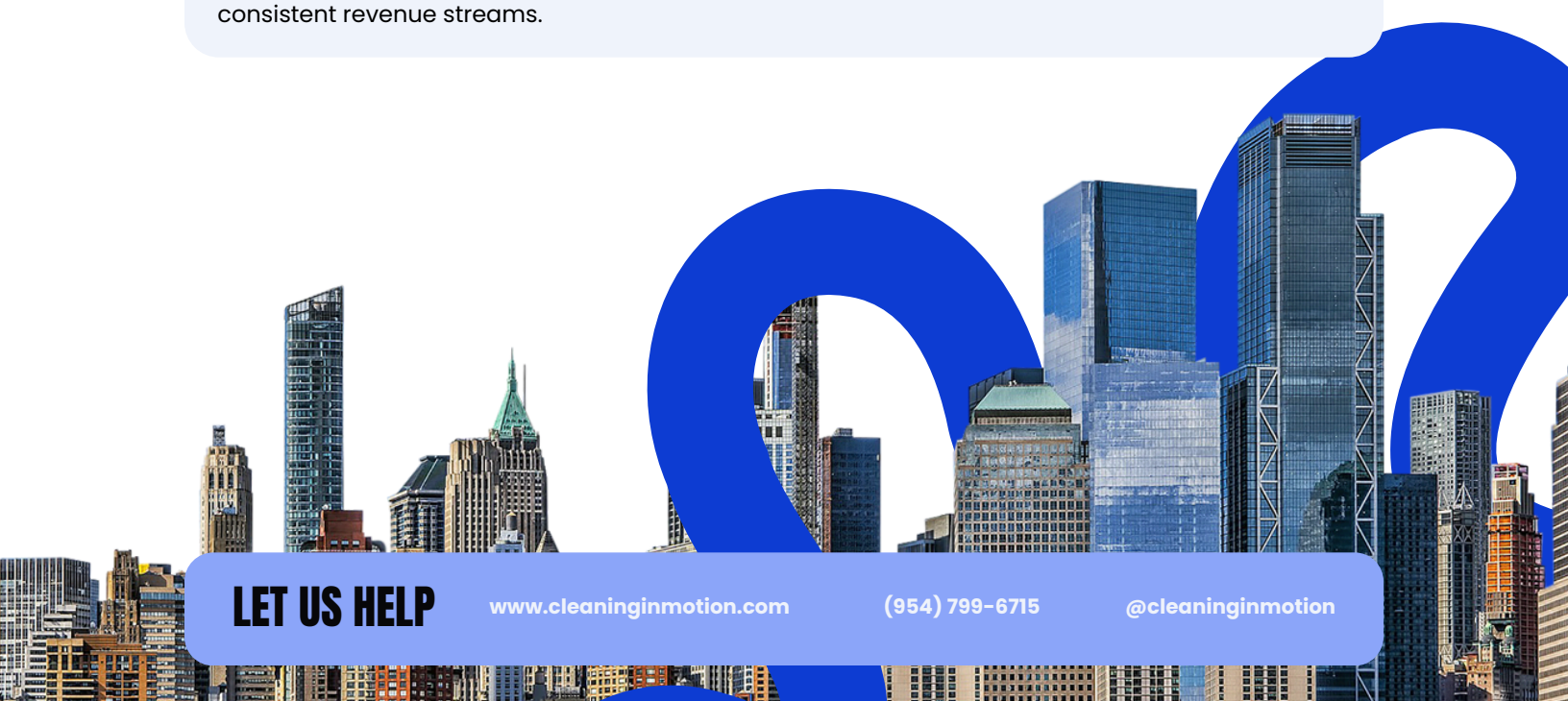
DEVELOP INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC SERVICE OFFERINGS
Leverage specialized services such as medical-grade cleaning for healthcare, regular sanitization for schools, and move-in/move-out cleaning for real estate clients. Highlight your ability to meet industry standards, particularly in sectors with high cleanliness expectations.

EXPAND FOOTPRINT IN GROWING INDUSTRIES
Sectors like Religious Organizations, Fitness, and Legal Services have also shown strong demand. These markets often require specialized cleaning services and frequent maintenance, making them ideal for securing long-term contracts.

MY THOUGHTS

The data shows clear industry preferences, with Healthcare and Education leading the way. Cleaning companies should not only focus on expanding within these sectors but also diversify their service offerings to cater to industry-specific needs. For example, the healthcare industry has stringent regulatory standards, making it a prime candidate for premium, high-margin cleaning services. Similarly, educational institutions value consistency and reliability, which should be highlighted in marketing materials and sales conversations.

Additionally, it's important to capitalize on seasonality when planning outreach and sales strategies. Schools and educational facilities tend to ramp up their cleaning efforts in the first two quarters of the year as they prepare for the school year's end, summer programs, and the subsequent start of the fall term. Cleaning companies should proactively target schools in Q1 and Q2, offering deep cleaning services and ongoing maintenance contracts to prepare these facilities for the next academic year. By building relationships during these peak seasons, companies can establish long-term agreements that carry over into the slower months, ensuring consistent revenue streams.



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9 Additional insights

Client education

As the commercial cleaning industry evolves, there is an increasing need to educate clients on the differences between franchise-based cleaning companies and those employing direct staff. Many clients have had negative experiences with either subcontractors in the franchise model or with in-house employee-based services, making it critical to explain the benefits and limitations of each.

EDUCATE ON FRANCHISE MODELS
One of the key advantages of a franchise-based model is local ownership. Franchisees are deeply invested in the success of their operations, providing a level of accountability that can surpass employee-based services. Clients who have had negative experiences with less accountable subcontractors will benefit from understanding this distinction.

ADDRESS CONCERNS ABOUT EMPLOYEE MODELS
On the flip side, some clients prefer employee-based models due to consistency and direct management. It's important to explain that franchisees are often just as dedicated, if not more, to maintaining high standards of service, while the local ownership adds flexibility and responsiveness.

Technological impact

As the commercial cleaning industry evolves, there is an increasing need to educate clients on the differences between franchise-based cleaning companies and those employing direct staff. Many clients have had negative experiences with either subcontractors in the franchise model or with in-house employee-based services, making it critical to explain the benefits and limitations of each.

Geographical Nuances

Different markets have distinct characteristics. For example, some areas may experience higher construction activity, while others may have more established industries with a slower pace of growth. Tailor your sales and marketing strategies to reflect the local business landscape.

Economic factors

Budget constraints are a significant factor influencing purchasing decisions in today's market. Be prepared to demonstrate value, not just in terms of cost, but by showing how your services can save clients money in the long run by preventing larger issues and improving efficiency.

Regulatory compliance

Stay ahead of industry-specific regulations, particularly in sectors like healthcare and manufacturing. Use compliance as a selling point, especially when your services can help clients meet legal and industry standards.

CONCLUSION- MOVING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

This comprehensive playbook has been designed to provide actionable insights and strategies that will help your business navigate the complex and competitive commercial cleaning landscape in 2024. Whether you're competing against industry giants, adapting to changing market trends, or targeting growth industries, the key to success lies in maintaining flexibility, providing specialized services, and building strong relationships with your clients.

At the end of the day, commercial cleaning is about more than just providing a service—**it's about offering solutions that make a real difference in your clients' operations.** By staying informed, adaptive, and client-focused, your company can not only survive but thrive in this evolving market.

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