

CLEAN BEAT

Lasting IMPRESSION

Five Lessons I have Learned In 40 Years in Business

By Jerry Kessie

Running a small carpet cleaning business for the past 40 years has been a rewarding odyssey filled with lessons, laughter, and life's little surprises. Over the decades, I've cleaned the carpets of homes that would amaze the world's wealthiest and worked in spaces where you could hardly turn around. Through it all, I've learned that currency isn't always cash and that people really don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Here are five lessons that have shaped my business philosophy and personal life.

Promptness Builds Character



Early in my career, I realized the importance of being punctual. Showing up on time not only shows respect for your customer's time but also reflects your dedication and reliability. I remember one morning, the sun barely up, I arrived at a job where the customer had already prepared breakfast for me. That simple act of kindness etched in my memory how much promptness can foster mutual respect and trust.

Act as If What You Do Makes a Difference—Because It Does

Every task, no matter how small, contributes to the bigger picture. There were days when I wondered if scrubbing another carpet would make a difference in the world. Over time, I learned that my work did make a difference, often in unexpected ways. Once, after finishing a job, a customer handed me a dozen fresh eggs from her backyard coop. With a watery smile, she told me how much it meant to her to have a clean home. That's when I realized that our actions, no matter how mundane they may seem, have the power to touch lives.

Relationship is Business

In business, relationships are as vital as transactions. Building strong connections with clients has been the foundation of my business. I'll never forget the time a customer couldn't afford to pay for my services. Instead of turning her away, I accepted a tub of homemade ice cream as payment. She became one of my most loyal customers, often referring me to friends and family. The bonds we form today can pave the way for the success of tomorrow.

SUCCESS



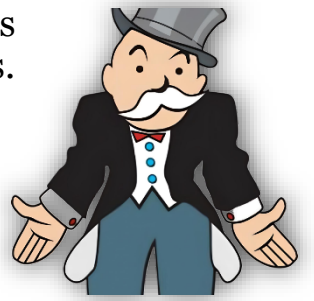
Success Equals Customer Satisfaction

Success in business isn't solely defined by profit margins. It's also about the satisfaction and happiness of your customers. One of my favorite quotes is, "Measure success by the satisfaction of your customers, not just your profit margin." Over the years, I've received various forms of payments, from fresh produce to heartfelt hugs. Each of these moments reminded me that true success is about more than just financial gain—it's about making a positive impact on people's lives.

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Give What You Can, Even When You Can't

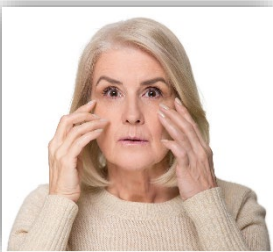
There's a Bible verse that says, *"I do not have silver and gold, but what I have I give to you."* This philosophy has guided me through many challenging times. I am a bit reluctant to mention this, especially in the wake of being audited a couple of years ago, but I have learned that everyone's currency is not the same. I never turned down a job because someone couldn't afford my services. Sometimes, it meant that I brought home eggs, ice cream, or even a simple breakfast cooked by a grateful customer. These experiences taught me the value of generosity and the profound impact it can have on both the giver and the receiver. Where do these go on a General Ledger or balance sheet? They don't – they go on the *"Doing What's Right"* sheet . . . and Tallahassee can let their *"Bean Counters"* figure it out.



Closing Reflection

And there you have it—five lessons from my forty-year adventure in the carpet cleaning business. From showing up on time, building relationships, and showing compassion to everyone, these principles have guided me through countless spills, stains, and surprises.

Running a business, just like cleaning a stubborn spot on a shag carpet, often requires a blend of persistence, patience, and a good sense of humor. Looking back, I remember more than a few mishaps—like that time I accidentally flooded Mrs. Jenkins' living room. She was not amused, but she called us back the following year, laughter in her voice. *"What else could you possibly mess up?"* she joked. Turns out, mistakes can build trust and rapport when managed with honesty and a hearty laugh.



To those of you just starting out, or even those who are seasoned but looking for a fresh perspective, remember this: business isn't just about profits or perfect carpets. It's about the relationships you build, the communities you serve, and the stories you create along the way.

And sometimes, it's about learning to laugh at yourself when the carpet cleaning solution ends up on the ceiling instead of the floor.

A Carpet Bagger refers to a candidate or politician who seeks election or holds office in a geographic area where they have limited or no established residency or roots. The term originated in the United States during the Reconstruction Era following the Civil War, specifically referring to Northerners who moved to the Southern states. These individuals were often perceived as opportunists aiming to capitalize on political upheaval, economic instability, or favorable electoral conditions.

Fraudulent Activity Alert

In mid-July, I received a voicemail from a woman living in Virginia inquiring about a \$1,014 charge to her credit or debit card that she believed was made by my company in June. Her voice was pleasant, and she seemed genuinely concerned. I promptly returned her call to clarify that our records showed no such transaction. It did not appear on our merchant account's transaction list, nor was it reflected in our operational account.

I assured her of my willingness to help in resolving this issue, but unfortunately, I never heard back from her after that first conversation. Concerned, I contacted our bank's fraud department. They suggested that the woman might be a scammer, but I found it hard to believe. To gather more insights, I also consulted a close friend who is a Senior Vice President at Flagship Bank with extensive experience in banking. She confirmed that she had never met this specific type of fraud before.

Despite my best efforts to uncover the truth, I was only able to discover that the actual scammer used my company's name and phone number to attach to this fraudulent transaction. Consequently, **JP Morgan**, the woman's bank named my company as high-risk for fraud placing me on a Blacklist which resulted in **North American Bancard** canceling our merchant account. Not suspended, pending further investigation . . . just *Bye-Bye!*

We take such matters very seriously and are committed to keeping the highest standards of security and integrity in all our operations. We will continue to work diligently to ensure that we and our clients are not unduly affected by fraudulent activities.

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