

COMMERCIAL ACCOUNTS – THE BEST KEPT SECRET

Take a drive around the market area of any local coin laundry. Most are well lit, clean, and visible from a major road. The same equipment is used everywhere. Still, one or two laundries in any given area are always bustling with activity – unlike their competitors.

Time and again the owners of really busy coin-ops have discovered that their secret to success lies in **commercial accounts**.

Commercial accounts are any local business that may need their towels, linens, rags, uniforms, etc. cleaned by your laundromat. If you really brainstorm a list you'll soon recognize that the possibilities are almost endless: **small hotels or motels, barber shops, beauty salons, restaurants, nursing homes, day care centers, health spas, auto mechanic shops, cleaning companies and car washes**, to name just a few.

Many more target businesses exist. Try driving down any major street or along the beach with a note pad to jot down ideas. Also make use of the local yellow pages for even more potential accounts.

Commercial accounts are an excellent way for an owner to turn a modest laundry into a very successful one, or to put a good laundry over the top.

The real secret behind this added business is that your laundry's two largest expenses, typically the rent and mortgage payments, remain constant even though you've increased the sales and maximized use of the existing equipment and staff. Higher utility bills will be offset by the commercial revenue, leaving most of the profit as net to you.

Commercial accounts require front load washers – the larger the better.

You'll also need someone to wash and package the loads, probably one or more attendants. If you choose to offer pick-up and delivery as an additional service you'll need a reliable vehicle.

The best way to contact potential accounts in order to pitch your laundry's services depends on the range of businesses you've targeted. Some owners simply call or stop into a certain number of businesses each week; others mail a flyer or a business card, then follow up with a call or visit.

Persistence is a must during this process: 10 or 15 owners or managers may say no until one finally says yes. Remember too that some small business owners need to hear an idea a few times before they're comfortable enough with

it (and with you) to change the way they presently operate. Sometimes the owner of a seasonal business won't feel they need your service if you pitch the idea during their slow times, but approach them again during their busier months and they may feel differently.

You may decide to **market your commercial laundry service to a particular target group or niche**. One owner I know targeted dentists and now has over 30 accounts, many referred by other dentists. Another has a goal of adding one new restaurant account each week. He now has 25 restaurants and is constantly adding more.

Other owners have one or two very large accounts – a large nursing home or sports complex, for example – that give them all the business they can handle.

Some smart owners actually **have a separate staff that processes their commercial accounts during off hours**, when the coin laundry itself is closed to the public. This leaves the self-service customers all day to use the machines without interruption, and maximizes their coin-op's efficiency.

Still think there aren't many commercial accounts out there, or they are too hard to get? Take another drive by that busy competitor's laundry. He knows the "secret" – that a few phone calls and some legwork bring in big rewards. Now you do, too.