

# **How A Carpet Cleaner Doubled His Business In 6 Months - Without Spending A Cent On Marketing**

## **An Interview With A Successful Sydney Carpet Cleaner About Starting And Growing A Carpet Cleaning Business - In Today's Competitive Market**

Chris is the owner of Gentle Giant, a Sydney based company. In this candid interview, he talks about his favorite strategies for growing a carpet cleaning business.

**Interviewer: Can you tell me a little about your background and how you got started in carpet cleaning?**

Chris: I was in the corporate world for just over 20 years. One day I realised that I didn't want to work to make somebody else rich anymore. I decided to take the plunge and do my own thing.

I researched several opportunities. I wanted something that was potentially lucrative, but required low skill/no skill to get started.

After about six months, I stumbled across carpet cleaning. I had done some research and found there was a complete disconnect between consumer expectation and delivery in the industry. I saw a great opportunity.

**Interviewer: How did you start growing the business?**

Chris: From the beginning, I focused on under-promising and over-delivering. I asked clients what they wanted.

For example, I called many of the existing cleaners in my area and said, "What do you charge for carpet cleaning for a two bedroom and for a one bedroom?" Lo and behold, everyone gave me a price over the phone.

No one asked some basic questions like:

- How long have you been living there?
- When was the last time you had your carpets professionally cleaned?
- Do you have any pets?
- Do you have any children?

As soon as I started asking these questions, I saw a significant change in the response. Clients could see that I was genuinely interested in helping them. Within the first six months, the business almost doubled without doing any marketing.

I think that's how I could grow the business in such a short period of time - asking questions to my target audience, listening to them, and simply providing the service that they expected.

**Interviewer: Did you then start marketing your services?**

Chris: Most of the marketing that is currently done by carpet cleaners is very haphazard. If you call a carpet cleaner and say, "Do you have a marketing plan for the next 12 months? What is your marketing plan? What's your online marketing plan? What's your offline marketing plan?"... they'll probably look at you like you're from another planet.

I saw a great opportunity to attract a steady stream of new clients. I started using Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), which is a free way to get your website in front of people who search Google.

I also tried AdWords, since they've been around for so long. However, given the competitive landscape, the cost you just do not get a return. You're looking at average, from \$10 per click. When carpet cleaning services start at \$100, you're not going to make money. Especially because the clientele coming through AdWords were not as good as the client from Search Engine Optimisation.

**Interviewer: What are the biggest myths and lies about starting a carpet cleaning business?**

Chris: To answer this, let me tell you a story...

When I was younger I reached out to a very successful man who started a business 30 years ago in the removal industry. This guy went from zero to almost \$50 million a year in revenue.

He gave me three pieces of advice, which resonated with me. I constantly deploy these every single day in the business.

He said to me, "Chris, there are only three things that you need to do."

"The first one is always answer your phone because you never know when a client has a \$2,000 urgent water flooding job... and if you don't answer your phone on the first ring, they will call someone else. And you've just lost \$2,000."

The second piece of advice, he said to me, "Always show up on time." It's basic stuff that most people don't do, especially in this industry. Being late creates a bad first impression and makes people feel like you don't value them.

The third thing he told me, is "Don't just do a good job, do a great job," he said, "you have to do an absolutely amazing job."

Richard Branson talks about this all the time. You need to have raving fans. If you don't, you can't build a sustainable business.

This is particularly true in this industry because so much works comes from referrals and repeat business. When you focus on delivering great quality works, people will be blown away by the results and refer you to friends.

**Interviewer: What would be the biggest issue for someone starting a carpet cleaning business now?**

Chris: I think the biggest problem is that this industry is unregulated. Anyone can be a carpet cleaner. You don't need a licence. You don't need any qualifications. As long as you have a cleaner and some chemicals, you can offer your services. This unfortunately means that clients get poor service.

For example, if someone calls you and says, "*I've got this stain on my carpet. I've put bicarb soda on it. I've put vinegar on it, and Dr. Google said I should do this, this and this.*"

An educated cleaner will know immediately that bi-carb or vinegar can ruin the fibres in the carpet and tell the client what steps to take to prevent that. But unqualified carpet cleaners often don't have the knowledge or the experience needed to offer sound advice.

For that reason, I would advise anyone new to upskill themselves, become a carpet expert clients can trust. That way you will never have to compete on price.

**Interviewer: Are there any mistakes that even successful carpet cleaners make?**

Chris: There is one cleaning company I would call the Louis Vuitton of carpet cleaning. They're not cheap and cheerful. In fact, they are extremely expensive because they have highly skilled, highly trained technicians.

However, when it comes to marketing, they have no automation in place. They don't have any SMS reminders. They don't have any follow ups in place. They don't have a referral marketing system. They are missing out on thousands of dollars in potential profits because they never follow up with their clients.

**Interviewer: If you were starting a carpet cleaning business from scratch again and you had 60 days to get clients, what would you do?**

Chris: I would identify the 'best clients'. For instance, if you look at my overall revenue for the last 12 months, it's the old 80/20 rule. My top 20 clients have given me 80% of that revenue. They are real estate agents. It's consistent, day in and day out cashflow.

Knowing this, I would contact real estate agents to introduce myself. If they don't respond I would pick up the phone, follow up within 48 hours. When they answer, I would offer an opportunity to go clean one room or a hallway to showcase my services.

If you are in a major capital city, property managers are crying out for reliable cleaners. There is so much work out there. Tenants move every single day across Australia. It's a matter of taking action and winning these jobs.

**Interviewer: When it comes to equipment, would you recommend that they rent or buy equipment initially?**

Chris: You need to invest in your business. If you are serious about this, you need to purchase good equipment. Rental equipment just doesn't cut it.

**Interviewer: If I was a new carpet cleaner in Sydney or Melbourne, how could I launch a new business when there's a lot of competition around?**

Chris: My advice is to get out there, even hire some equipment. It'll cost you probably \$50 or \$100 a day. Go and clean some carpets. Post that video on YouTube. Send it over to 50 or 100 property managers in Sydney.

You'll get at least three or four property managers within the week who are willing to trial your services. If you show up on time, answer your phone, and do an amazing job, there's nothing stopping you from being successful.

**Interviewer: What advice would you give to someone if they felt uncomfortable selling? They feel a bit awkward about getting on the phone and trying to pitch themselves.**

Chris: Video marketing would be my recommendation. If you can put together a video for a property manager, they can visually see that you are competent. If you don't want to get on the phone, you can follow up with an email. Or you can send a direct mail piece.

**Interviewer: How has carpet cleaning changed your life?**

Chris: I wish that I could have become a carpet cleaner 20 years ago, because it is a fantastic lifestyle.

I have more flexibility. There are weeks when I can work only three days and take a four-day weekend. If I want to sleep in, I can make appointments and start at 11am. If I want to finish early, I can be done by noon.

Obviously, you need to be organised and do a great job for clients. But unlike working in an office, your destiny is in your hands.