

START & RUN A HANDYMAN BUSINESS

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Chapter 1

THE HANDYMAN BUSINESS: AN OPPORTUNITY WAITING FOR YOU

1. What a Handyman Does

First and foremost, handymen (and women) are those skilled individuals who can solve problems. Generally their services are geared to home owners who need small jobs done around the house, such as fixing a leaky faucet, installing a light fixture, repairing drywall, or cleaning out a garage. Depending on the skill and ability of the handyman, other services may be offered, such as painting, snow removal, yard work, assembling furniture or equipment, laying carpet, removing junk, or just about anything else you can think of!

The most successful handymen have a wide range of knowledge to draw upon. If you want to start up a handyman business, you should be prepared to work in many areas, including the following:

- ↳ Electrical
- ↳ Plumbing
- ↳ Carpentry



You'll need to be prepared to be called on to do any number of tasks.

- ↳ Refinishing surfaces
- ↳ Furniture restoration
- ↳ Mechanical
- ↳ Painting
- ↳ Tiling
- ↳ Carpet laying
- ↳ Drywall

It is also helpful if you have experience working with other tradespeople and you understand when a licensed tradesperson is needed. In other words, you need to know what your limits are.

If you're reading this book, you likely already have the skill to carry out jobs in many, if not most, of these areas. You'll need to be prepared to be called on to do any number of other tasks, as well, depending on your customers' needs. That, simply, is the nature of the handyman business, and it is what makes a handyman so valuable.

2. Do You Have What It Takes?

To run a successful handyman business, you need more than the skills listed above. There are many people who can fix things and pick up the odd job, but without some basic business skills and personal traits, your handyman business will not be truly successful. Take the time to complete Worksheet 1 now to help you in your assessment of your business idea.

Starting a business is easy. But making and keeping it successful are the tricky parts. Success in business requires basic know-how. So, on top of your handyman skills, to keep things running smoothly you need to be able to do the following:

- ↳ Keep accurate financial records for accounting and tax purposes
- ↳ Organize customer information
- ↳ Organize your time and work schedule
- ↳ Understand basic marketing and advertising principles and practices
- ↳ Practise good communication skills

WORKSHEET 1

IS THE HANDYMAN BUSINESS RIGHT FOR YOU?

Answer the following questions honestly. Knowing yourself and how prepared you are to run your own business are key to your success.

1. Are you able to diagnose and fix most household problems? yes no
2. Are you often asked by neighbors and friends for advice on fixing things? yes no
3. Do you enjoy the challenge of repairing things around the home? yes no
4. Can you organize yourself to get a job done? yes no
5. Are you able to do physical work? yes no
6. Do you have the tools, vehicle, and home space necessary to run a home-based business? yes no
7. Are you willing and able to market yourself and your business? yes no
8. Can you work on your own, with little supervision? yes no
9. Do you enjoy working with all kinds of people? yes no
10. Are you a creative problem-solver? yes no
11. Can you accept criticism? yes no
12. Can you learn new things and apply them? yes no
13. Can you read instructions and use them? yes no
14. Are you willing and able to get help as you need it? yes no



Think carefully about what you want for your business.

- ↳ Learn new things
- ↳ Keep interested in business
- ↳ Be self-motivated
- ↳ Be trustworthy, honest, and respectful

That expertise, the knowledge and skills to meet challenges and problems and overcome them, is necessary for anyone planning a business venture. The good news is that you can learn almost everything you need to know. You can learn from this book, you can learn from talking with other successful businesspeople, you can take courses, and you can read other manuals. The Internet offers a world of knowledge; stores run do-it-yourself seminars; tv shows provide information on home renovations, organization, and maintenance; and self-help tapes and DVDs are available at your local library. The sources of information are almost endless. And, of course, professional help in areas such as accounting and legal advice are available when you need them (see section 6. of chapter 2).

Your first step is to think carefully about what you want for your business. If you decide that starting a handyman business is for you, the next step is to take action to ensure your goals become reality. A clear understanding of the risks and rewards of running your own business is a good place to start your thinking process.

3. Advantages and Disadvantages

The handyman business, like any business, has its upsides and its downsides. As a handyman, you will work fairly independently, set your own hours, and choose your own customers. But you will also be responsible for finding your own work, estimating how long it takes, and dealing with a new boss (your customer) with every job.

Let's compare the pros and cons of running your own handyman business, shown in Table 1.

4. Part Time or Full Time?

The wonderful thing about having your own business is how flexible it can be. As the owner of your business you can decide when, where, and on what you will work. You will also decide for whom and for how much money. The key is finding the right balance of working the way you want and making enough money to meet your goals.

TABLE 1
THE HANDYMAN BUSINESS: PROS AND CONS

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Can work independently	Solely responsible for work
Can set your own hours	Must be able to cope with both slack times and over-busy times
Can set your own pay (don't need to ask for a raise)	Must sell yourself and your skills to every new customer
Can run the business the way you want to	Must run your business as well as do all the handyman work
Can work from a home office; no need to invest in retail or warehouse space	Family life may be disrupted by home office environment
Do the work you enjoy	Must look for jobs all the time
Opportunity to improve people's homes and make customers happy	Must deal with all kinds of people, even the unfriendly and difficult ones
Jobs and tasks are varied	Some jobs are monotonous and dirty
No boss or coworkers to worry about	Must be able to work alone
Can set your own goals	Must review goals regularly and ensure they are reached to enjoy success

Handymen and women are often part-timers. The handyman business is often a great fit for retirees who are too young to stop working entirely, but who don't want the nine-to-five grind any longer. As a part-time business it also works well for anyone caring for other family members, be they children or elderly parents, and who wants or needs to work part time outside the home.



Working part time can work well if you have other responsibilities that just don't allow you to work full-time hours.

But the handyman business can also be an extremely lucrative full-time job. Let's look at the two options.

4.1 Part time

Running a part-time handyman business, and by that we mean less than about 30 hours per week, can work very well if you have other responsibilities that just don't allow you to work full-time hours. You may choose to work two or three days a week, or you may choose to work only when your time allows (e.g., when your spouse is on shift, or when the children are in school). Whatever works for you, you can be successful if you consider yourself — and sell yourself — as a professional.

Time management becomes a challenge if you choose the part-time option. As a handyman you are likely to run into jobs that will require long hours to complete and that must be done in one session. For example, a customer might need a staircase painted, and won't appreciate your disrupting the home by taking three days to complete an eight-hour job. Any jobs that require the power or water supply being turned off are other obvious cases when your schedule should not overly inconvenience your customer. If you choose to work part time, consider carefully how you will meet this kind of challenge and be clear about your schedule up front. One solution might be to team up with another part-time handyman and share some of the jobs, expenses and, of course profits.

As a part-time handyman, you will need to invest in the same amount of money and energy in starting and developing your business as a full-timer. You will need the same inventory of tools and equipment for completing jobs, a vehicle to get you around, and home headquarters in which to keep your records. A part-timer will likely get the same variety of jobs and will need a similar wide range of skills and abilities as a full-timer. Finally, marketing your business will require the same kind of attention and care as a full-time business.

4.2 Full time

Full-time handymen and women are professional and their work should show it. As with those who choose to work part time, a real commitment must be made by full-timers not only to working for customers as they hire you, but in managing your business.

Working full time means that you can realize the full potential of your business. You can make a very good wage if you can manage your customers and your business. Full time means scheduling work for yourself, 30 to 45 or more hours per week. Some weeks will be lighter and others will be heavier, but on average you can expect full-time hours and a full-time income.

Scheduling has its own challenges for those with a full time commitment. You must be accurate with your estimates of how long a job will take. You must also be able to let customers know that if they have additional work they want you to do once you are on site, you may or may not be able to squeeze it in.

Full-time handymen often have a tendency to never take a day off, a vacation, or even a statutory holiday! As a self-employed person, it's always tempting to work that one extra hour or day for the extra income, or because you're not sure when the next job will be offered to you. But be aware, for the sake of your business and your personal health, working full time does not mean all the time.

How you handle your schedule is up to you and your situation and goals. Consider carefully; if you don't give your needs the consideration they deserve, you will not be happy in your job, nor are you likely to be successful.