THE CLEANING BUSINESS PRICING GUIDE

How to price cleaning jobs without guessing - and know whether the job is actually profitable.

Simple math. Better quotes. Healthier margins.

FREE GUIDE FROM CLEANING PROFITS LAB

1. Stop pricing by feel

A profitable cleaning price starts with your own costs and your own production time - not with what someone in a Facebook group says they charge.

Your price has to cover labor + supplies + overhead + profit. If one of those is missing, the quote can look good and still lose money.

The five numbers to know before you quote

1. **Estimated labor hours**
   How many total worker-hours should the job take? Two cleaners for three hours equals six labor hours.
2. **Fully loaded labor cost**
   Include wages plus payroll taxes, workers' comp, benefits, and other labor-related costs where applicable.
3. **Supplies and equipment**
   Chemicals, liners, consumables, equipment wear, specialty tools, and any job-specific materials.
4. **Overhead**
   Insurance, software, fuel, office/admin time, marketing, phones, bookkeeping, vehicles, and other costs required to operate.
5. **Target profit margin**
   Profit is not what is left over by accident. Decide what margin the business needs before you send the quote.

Industry note: ISSA pricing guidance emphasizes estimating labor time, using a fully loaded labor rate, adding overhead, and then adding a reasonable profit margin. ISSA also notes that local market conditions and productivity matter.

2. Use a simple pricing formula

Start with the job's total cost. Then calculate the selling price required to achieve your target profit margin.

STEP 1	**Total Cost = Labor + Supplies + Overhead**
STEP 2	**Price = Total Cost ÷ (1 - Target Margin)**

Example

Estimated labor	$150
Supplies	$20
Allocated overhead	$30
Total cost	**$200**
Target margin	20%
Required selling price	**$250**

Why $250? At a $250 selling price, a $200 total cost leaves $50 profit. $50 ÷ $250 = 20% profit margin.

Do not confuse margin with markup

Markup is profit divided by cost. **Margin** is profit divided by selling price. A 25% markup on $200 produces a $250 price, but that equals a 20% margin - not a 25% margin.

3. Choose the pricing model that fits the job

There is no single pricing model that works for every cleaning job. Use the model that best matches how predictable the work is.

Hourly	Useful when scope or condition is uncertain - especially initial cleans, one-time work, or jobs with unknown variables.
Flat rate	Works well when you understand the scope and can estimate labor time reliably. The customer gets a simple price while you manage efficiency internally.
Per square foot	Often useful in commercial work with repeatable scope and larger facilities. Adjust for building type, frequency, soil level, and service complexity.

What should change your price?

• Heavy soil, clutter, pet hair, grease, buildup, or unusually detailed work.

• More bathrooms, kitchens, touchpoints, stairs, glass, or specialty surfaces.

• Travel time, parking, access restrictions, keys, security requirements, or after-hours work.

• Frequency: recurring work may become more efficient; first-time or infrequent cleans may require more labor.

• Specialty equipment, floor care, carpet care, post-construction debris, or specialty chemicals.

• Local wage levels and competition - but market rates should be a reference point, not the entire pricing formula.

ISSA specifically recommends comparing rates within your geographic market while still basing the price on your own labor, overhead, productivity, and profit requirements.

4. Avoid the most expensive pricing mistakes

1. **Quoting revenue instead of profit**
   A $500 job is not a good job if it costs $475 to deliver.
2. **Forgetting owner labor**
   If you clean the job yourself, your labor still has a cost. Otherwise the business can look profitable while you work for free.
3. **Ignoring drive/admin time**
   Bidding, scheduling, invoicing, supply runs, travel, and collections are real costs of delivering the service.
4. **Using one rate for every job**
   Condition, scope, frequency, access, and productivity vary. Your price should reflect the job.
5. **Copying competitors blindly**
   Their wages, overhead, efficiency, and profit goals are not your numbers.
6. **No scope protection**
   Spell out what is included, what is excluded, and what triggers an extra charge.

Quick margin check

ISSA's commercial-cleaning guidance cites a healthy profit-margin range of roughly **10%-30%** as a general benchmark. Treat that as a reference, not a promise: your sustainable target depends on your service type, location, labor model, overhead, and risk.

5. One-page quote checklist

Before you send a price, answer these questions.

- ■ Did I estimate total worker-hours, not just clock time?
- ■ Did I use my fully loaded labor cost?
- ■ Did I include supplies and equipment wear?
- ■ Did I allocate overhead?
- ■ Did I account for drive time, admin time, and unusual access?
- ■ Is the scope written clearly enough to prevent free extras?
- ■ Did I calculate the actual profit margin on the selling price?
- ■ If the margin is thin, do I know exactly why?
- ■ If this job runs long, what happens to my profit?
- ■ Does this price still make sense after I compare it with my local market?

Want to know if your current cleaning price actually makes money?

Run the numbers with the free Cleaning Profits Lab calculator at **www.cleaningprofitslab.com**.

Important: This guide is educational and is not accounting, legal, tax, or financial advice. Your costs, taxes, wage obligations, insurance, and market conditions may differ. Use your actual business numbers and consult qualified professionals when needed.

Industry references: ISSA - Cleaning Industry Management Standard pricing guidance; ISSA commercial cleaning rate guidance. Accessed September 2026.