

# PWC International

Window Cleaning exists in various forms all over the globe. More often than not, window cleaners in any given country have their own unique ways of doing things. Cultural, legal and social differences make window cleaning in every country unique. But wherever window cleaners are to be found, there also exists a strong work ethic and a professional attitude

PWC asked American trade association *The Master Window Cleaners of America* for their thoughts on window cleaning. Their comments about the industry in The USA (as well as the perception of window cleaners in Britain) were very interesting.

Most of the time the weather in Southern California ranges from cool to very hot (40 to 110 degrees). Perfect for window cleaners. I've lived in So Calif. and worked outside all my life (construction, mechanic, and now window cleaning). I have never had the urge to move anywhere else (except when I'm stuck in traffic on one of our over crowded freeways).

When I first went into business I did a lot of walking and ringing door bells. After awhile I stopped ringing door bells and just left my card. The first year I put out about 8000 business cards. That's a lot of walking, but it was good exercise. And I got a lot of good customers that way because I got to pick which homes I wanted to do. I work by myself so I can't do some of the really big homes. Besides I'm closer to fifty than I am twenty and I don't want to work that hard anymore.

Ninety percent of my accounts are residential customers. Compared to what I've read in some of the posts on the web, the windows in So. Calif. are pretty easy. Very few Pella's and no storm windows to worry about.

I have quite a few two story homes on my customer address list so I carry ladders on my '98 Ford Ranger a lot. I use a ladder rack system called 'Rail and Rack'. It's manufactured in Washington State (USA). The cool thing about it is it folds down and looks like a tie down rail and bed protector when I'm not using it for ladders. When I pull off my magnetic signs you can't tell it's a window cleaning truck. When the rack is up it looks like any other standard ladder rack.

I like to have all my stuff handy so I use a tool belt with a bucket on a belt, 6" Triumph scraper, and a Unger bottle holder. When I'm inside a residential account I use the bottle on a belt system. It can save a lot of time and you don't have to risk bringing a bucket full of water inside the home. I leave the bucket just outside incase I need to rinse the washer out.

I like the microfiber towels and use them almost exclusively. I find they work best when it's warm which is most of the time. Sometimes I detail some windows with a cotton 'bar towel'. Just depends on my mood.

We have very hard water in this area and a lot of my customers get spots on their windows because of their sprinklers. I recently purchased a polisher and a felt wheel and the Scratch Hog 2 system. Soon I'm going to begin marketing my hard water spot remover business.

Southern California is a great place to live and work. The only problem is everyone else thinks so too and we have way to many people living here now. I'm really glad I work for myself and can schedule my own jobs. If I had to drive the freeways everyday so I could go to work for someone else I would probably have to consider moving elsewhere.

Mike Hatcher  
Window Magic Co.  
California, USA

Dear Editor

I couldn't have picked a better business to go into here in the desert southwest of the United States. 350 days of sunshine a year on average, hot dry climate and lots of retired folks combine for a great business environment. We have many winter only residents so it gets really busy in the fall when they return. Our city is spread out with a plethora of one story houses which makes for a fairly easy work day but lots of driving. There are so many one story houses that I turn down 2 story and above jobs and still stay as busy as I want to be. Solar Sun Screens to block the suns rays are abundant here. They have to be taken down, cleaned and reinstalled which is a nice add on to the job.

We're busiest in the fall, winter and spring. The slow time here is July and August when the summer monsoon rains come in. I do very little work in the summer but when I do I quit by noon because it's too hot to work in the afternoon. I plan on this down time and use this period to go to on vacation.

Arizona is a great place to live and work and the residential window cleaning business is excellent. I have not found any negative attitude toward the window cleaning industry here. My customers are always happy to see me and treat me with the utmost respect. I do mostly high end residential work and my prices are never questioned. If you're always on time and give high quality detailed work you can be very successful in the residential window cleaning business here or anywhere in the US.

Howard Connet  
Five Star Window Cleaning  
Tucson  
Arizona, USA

Dear Editor

I don't know much about how windows are done in the UK, but there seems to be a lot of regulation. Just the opposite here. Every year, I find 2 or 3 new guys trying to make a buck here. I can't complain too much because I was the new guy 24 years ago. In my area we have about 4 or 5 guys who have been in the business and do it for a living. There is more work than we can handle. New guys come in and try to bottom feed. They charge little or nothing to clean windows. They buy \$30 worth of tools and a step ladder and they are in business.

They have no insurance coverage, most don't collect tax (which in Maryland we have to) and they aren't very dependable. I guess that makes me look more professional. I have had a few customers ask why my prices are so high. I explain that I buy new equipment as needed including ladders, up keep of the truck, insurances and even the professional shirts that I wear are an expense. It's a total package.

I love cleaning windows, I can make my own schedule and have any day off that I want. I work 6 days a week, but mostly work 6 hour days so I can take my son to school and pick him up. If I need a day off, or want to go on holiday (here we call that vacation) I schedule it that way. I have never made the kind of money I do now, working for someone else. I am respected and I make a positive contribution to my community.

I live in an area where we get 4 seasons ( though spring is the shortest ) So I have a lot of time off in the winter. I do a lot of planning for spring and summer during that time. Taxes are due on April 15th every year, so I get my paper work ready for the accountant by Jan 1st, then more on to the direct mailing of about 400 customers. Over 90% call me back every year and I get 25 to 50 new customers every year. Part of the reason only 90% call me back is that about 20% of my business are senior citizens and a few don't last through from year to year.

Most of my work is within 20 miles of my home. I have gotten to the point that I can pick and choose the jobs I want and don't want. I have stayed small by choice. In my operation it's just my nephew and me. I am in a nice small town (about 21,000 people) so travel doesn't take any time at all.

Jack Nelson  
Cumberland  
Maryland, USA



Jack Nelson is the Executive Director of The MWCoA

For more information about The MWCoA, visit their website at [www.mwcoa.com](http://www.mwcoa.com)