

FIVE STEPS FOR

# RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SPRAY FOAM BUSINESS

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR YEAR-ROUND SUCCESS



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# FIVE STEPS FOR RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL SPRAY FOAM BUSINESS

## THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR YEAR-ROUND SUCCESS

Maybe you are researching what it takes to start a spray foam business, or maybe you are already in the trade and looking for tips on how to turn a better profit. Either way, this guide can help you learn the basics and then take it to the next level. With our five steps to a spray foam business, we'll cover the basics from getting started, to choosing the right equipment, to making sure people know about you and that you can work at any time of year. It will require dedication, knowledge, and the commitment to an investment, but you can get there.

Our goal is to help you know what to do to optimize your yield, make sure you choose the right product, and help it go as far as possible.

Get ready to learn how to run a successful spray foam business in any season.

### #1 SAFETY AND TRAINING

Starting or maintaining any kind of business requires some background knowledge of the field, and spray foam is no different. There are many uses for spray foam as well as guidelines to ensure your safety as you enter this trade. In order to be successful in your spray foam business, you need to know how to apply it to all kinds of projects, whether that's roofing, insulation, or coatings. It's wise to explore all of the options spray foam offers before choosing the specialty for your business.

#### SAFETY

In order to start a spray foam business, you must be certified through the Center for Polyurethanes Industry (CPI) Health and Safety Training. This is a free online training course on the use and disposal of SPF, possible health hazards, and handling and control measures. This class is offered as part of a larger certification program through [sprayfoam.org](http://sprayfoam.org).

As for safety basics, inhalation of the gases and chemicals emitted during the application of SPF can be harmful and can cause irritation of the respiratory system, as well as blurred vision or an irregular heartbeat. Contact with skin can cause irritation and allergy evidenced by swelling, itching, and reddening. Personal protective equipment should be worn and should include at a minimum chemical resistant gloves, protective clothing, eye and face protection, and respiratory protection.

Spray foam business owners as well as their employees should have an extensive knowledge of the Safety Data Sheet for each chemical being used. Prior to using spray foam, the Safety Data Sheet should be read cover to cover and the guidelines implemented.

#### CHOOSING A SPECIALTY

Whether you choose to focus on roofing, insulation, or another aspect of the spray foam business, that's up to you. When you do choose your specialty, you need to be certified for that

aspect of spray foam through the SPFA Professional

Certification Program (PCP). Register for the PCP for either roofing or insulation and as mentioned above and this program also includes the safety training materials. Visit [sprayfoam.org](http://sprayfoam.org) to get started on your certification.

#### ROOFING

Spray Polyurethane Foam (SPF) is applied as a fluid to fill cracks and gaps in the roof. After application, the foam dries within seconds and expands to at least 30 times its original volume to form a hard, consistent surface. This results in a weather tight sheet covering the roof, which is then covered with gravel or an elastomeric coating to protect the SPF from the sun.

Since SPF is lightweight, it adds little density to the roof and building structure, but can provide immense insulation value that is reflected in utility bills. Roofs treated with SPF should be inspected at least once a year or after events that may cause damage. Small cracks can be repaired with

the elastomeric coating but typically roofs should be fully recoated every 10-15 years.

#### INSULATION

To insulate using SPF, the foam is sprayed into the wall cavity and allowed to expand. Similar to the effects the foam has on roofing, when used as insulation it will also lower utility costs and prevent air and moisture from seeping in. Foam insulation will reduce dampness and mold, make a home more acoustically sound, and improve the overall stability of the structure.

Depending on the wall or area requiring insulation, SPF can be applied in several ways. If the home is in the process of being built, it can be sprayed directly into the wall cavity. However if the structure is already complete, a hole can be drilled into the drywall and the foam can be applied through that hole.

### #2 PRODUCT PURCHASING

Purchasing the right product and equipment can make a world of difference in the success of your business. Prices and quality can vary and can depend on the type of business you choose to run and what your specialties will be.

#### CHOOSING A SUPPLIER

There are many factors to consider when choosing a supplier. Most foam suppliers offer foam, equipment, and support services, so you will





need to decide what is the best match for you. Here are some questions to ask when looking into your options:

- Do they have the equipment you need for your business with the necessary approvals?
- Does their location allow you to easily support your business with materials, parts, and as-needed service?
- Do they have experience in the applications you are interested in?
- Are they a trusted brand?

### USING THE RIGHT PRODUCT

For your business, you will have the choice of two main types of foam: Open-cell foam and closed-cell foam. The type you need to use will depend on your specialty and the jobs you will be doing.

Open-cell foam is lighter, less expensive, and more sponge-like in appearance. It provides an exceptional air barrier but it is not watertight, and therefore is not recommended for outdoor use. Open-cell foam is often used for interior walls because it also provides great sound reduction.

Closed-cell foam is denser and more compact, and in addition to being an air barrier it is also a water vapor barrier. For this reason, it is used for roofing and other outdoor projects, but can also be used inside.

### CALCULATING ORDER AMOUNTS

The best way to calculate how much a certain project will cost is through the use of the “board foot,” or the volume of the place that the foam will be applied. This number is width (in feet) x height (in feet) x thickness (in inches). For example, if you have a wall cavity that needs to be insulated that is 15 feet wide, 8 feet tall, and the cavity is 3 inches thick, 15 x 8 x 3 is 360 board feet.

Once you have your figure for board feet, you multiply that number by the cost of the material per board foot. The prices are continuously fluctuating, and closed-cell foam will be slightly

more expensive per board foot than open-cell foam. In this example, let’s say you are ordering open-cell foam at \$0.50 per board foot. 360 x 0.50 is \$180, the average amount that this job would cost.

## #3 EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

The importance of maintaining your spray foam equipment and keeping it in good shape cannot be stressed enough. Proper care of your products can save you the money that you would have to spend on pricey new equipment had you not maintained it properly and allow you to continue to grow your business.

### BUYING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Three main pieces of equipment are required to run a spray foam business: a proportioning machine, spray gun, and heated hose. There are many different types and manufacturers to choose from when you are looking into buying your equipment. The proportioning machines, which heat and distribute the foam into the right ratio, come in many sizes and types and the one you choose may limit your options on the type of hose you can buy.

The spray gun itself is where the two chemicals used in the foam are mixed and begin to react. If all this material is not sprayed out of the gun, it will harden and make the gun unusable. The feature that prevents this from happening is called purging, and there are three different purging systems to choose from when buying the gun: air purge, mechanical purge, and solvent purge. It is up to you as far as what type will work best for your business.

It is almost always necessary to buy additional equipment to these three pieces, but it will depend on the equipment you choose to use and how you want to run your business. Some of these appliances could include auxiliary equipment, pneumatic machines, or mobile spray rigs.

### CLEANING PRODUCTS

Of all the equipment, the spray foam gun should be cleaned the most regularly. There are many methods of cleaning, but the most common is using a cleaning product to soak the gun overnight. Many types of chemicals can be used for cleaning and some depend on the type of gun you decide to buy. Before cleaning your gun, make sure that the cleaning product you choose will not harm any of the parts of your equipment and know if you should take the gun apart before cleaning it.

### PROPER ADJUSTMENT

Most spray foams must be within a specified temperature range in order to be applied properly. This temperature is usually around 140°F-160°F, but may fluctuate depending on the foam and the equipment you are using. Often, the surface you are spraying must also be a certain temperature, frequently between 60°F and 80°F.

## #4 MARKETING

If no one knows your spray foam business exists, you will never sell any of your services, which is why marketing is so important. It is the process of getting your name out there, proving you are a credible business, and attracting customers to your product.

*“Marketing nowadays isn’t about blasting your message to a million people. To grow your business, you need to understand who your target buyer is. What motivates them? What do they care about? Where do they look for information? Once you know who they are and where they go to find businesses like yours, you can get your message in front of the right people at*

*the moment when they are most likely to care about what you have to say,” said Dave Bascom, CEO Fit Marketing.*

### BUILDING A WEBSITE

One of the tools—if not the most important—to have in order to market your business is a well-designed, user friendly website. This will give potential customers a place to find out about spray foam and give them an easy way to get in contact with you. Make sure your website makes your contact information easy to find and lists your services in an way that’s easy to understand.

If you don’t have experience in building a website, there are plenty of hosting sites that make it easy for you to get started. Sources like <http://www.sprayfoam.com/> even provide a template specifically designed for spray foam businesses where you can plug in your information.

### JOINING CONTRACTOR LISTINGS

Many industry websites give you the option to pay to become a featured contractor on their site. Although it can be expensive, it creates the opportunity to get your name out there and gain credibility as a business.



### EDUCATING YOUR COMMUNITY

Whether you do this by hitting the streets, capturing leads on your website, or a mixture of both, it's important to make sure your potential customers know about spray foam and what it can do for them. The more people know about the process, costs, and benefits that your business can provide, the more likely they will be to purchase your product.

Create some literature—pamphlets, guides, or postcards—and start getting them out to your community. Once you start building up your leads and email lists, you can send out newsletters and coupons to your customers that will further entice them to make that purchase.

### #5 TEMPERATURE ISSUES

Spray foam itself as well as the equipment functions best at specified temperatures, and extremes on either end—colder or hotter—can cause problems and lead to product waste.

#### COLD TEMPERATURE ISSUES

One of the main temperature issues is foam shrinkage, which happens when the foam or the surface it's being applied to is too cold. Cold temperatures cause the chemical reaction of the foam to lose quality, which then can cause the foam to expand improperly. Likewise, if the surface is too cold, the foam will not adhere as it should and begins to shrink away from the surface.

If the temperature of the foam reaches extremely cold temperatures, it will not work at all, resulting in lost work time and a lower yield. This can cause your business to lose money as well as lead to disappointment from valuable customers.

#### HEATING ISSUES

In order to compensate for the cold temperatures, some spray foam business owners choose to use band heaters to heat their equip-

ment. However, this can cause additional problems on the other end of the spectrum. When the foam gets too hot, it begins to burn and flake off, clogging equipment and often causing permanent damage.

Because band heaters are inconsistent, they can heat the foam irregularly which will make the application of the foam inconsistent as well. It can also cause the foam to react in the barrel or tank instead of in the gun, and slow the rate of flow, leading to lost time and resources.

#### AVOIDING PRODUCT WASTE

Evading the problems that temperature can cause with spray foam is vital for your business, but band heaters are not the only answer. Another option is the spray foam heater from Powerblanket, an insulated unit that heats the spray foam equipment evenly.



Powerblanket's spray foam heating blanket covers the entire spray foam cylinder and prevents the heat from leaking out, allowing you to keep running your business through the cold winter months. Avoiding product waste caused by temperature issues can lead to a much higher yield and better business.

We want to help your business become the best it can be. Feel free to contact us and we will do all we can to assist you in building a successful spray foam business.

**LEARN MORE**

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