



How to Use an iPad in Your Cleaning Business

by Allison Hester, Editor

Apple broke all sales records with the launch of its third generation iPad last month, selling over 3 million of the new tablet computers opening weekend alone.

But, as our recent industry survey indicated, only about 50 percent of the pressure washing industry is sold on using any form of tablet technology. And it's understandable. The low-end version of the new iPad starts at around \$600 and the price rises significantly from there.

The good news, however, is that a lot of techy-types are upgrading to the new version and getting rid of their iPad 2s at record deals. And from what I've read, most critics agree that the new iPads are better for gaming, but not really much different for doing business. So if you're comfortable buying used, it might be time to hit Craigslist, Ebay or Amazon to get an older version in great shape.

A quick note: In our recent survey, of those business owners who used tablets, the iPad was the top pick by 86 percent, so this article focuses on the iPad. Other tablets are available with similar features and worth researching if you're interested in comparing products.

However, the other thing I learned from our survey is that most contractors really don't know how to use their iPads for much other

than checking email and the weather. This article will hopefully give contractors some new ideas.

Business Related Apps:

The iPad has a number of useful features, including internet/email access, front and rear cameras (in the iPad2 and later), GPS capabilities (varies by model), and online book/magazine readability.

Of course, it's the apps that make the iPad unique, and there are thousands to choose from. I've collected a few apps for businesses that were recommended by industry members as well as from a variety of articles by business publications. Note that while I'm writing about the iPad, a number of these apps are available on the iPhone and iPod as well.

1. Skype is an online phone service that allows users to chat by voice or video. It is free to use as long as both callers are registered with Skype. The traditional use of Skype has allowed grandparents to video chat with their grandchildren who live across the country, or for deployed military personnel to communicate online with their families. However, Skype – combined with the iPad's video cameras – can be a money saving application for cleaning operations as well, particularly for companies that have multiple crews out in the field.

Assume, for instance, that a problem arises with a crew while out in the field. Rather than having to drive across town to the location while your crew idly waits for your arrival, you can have one of your technicians Skype a live video feed of what the problem looks like, and potentially problem solve the issue right on the spot – from anywhere.

2. DropBox is a free service that allows you to save files (photos, documents and videos) online in a private account so that they are accessible to you on any computer or mobile device. That way you can access any of your files, anywhere. And, if something

TIP: To print from an iPad, you need a printer that is capable of "AirPrint." These are growing in popularity and small, portable printers can be purchased for \$75 and up.

happens to your computer, your documents are still safe.

3. Square is a mobile credit card reader that allows you to swipe and process credit card payments while in the field. It's a small credit card reader that attaches to your iPad, iPhone or Android. Best of all, the device is free and there's no monthly contract or payment. Square simply takes a flat 2.75% of each payment (which is less than many credit card programs). There's no limit to the amount of payments you can receive, and most payments are deposited into your account within 24 hours. "I use square all the time and I love it," said Doug Rucker of Clean and Green Solutions, Houston.

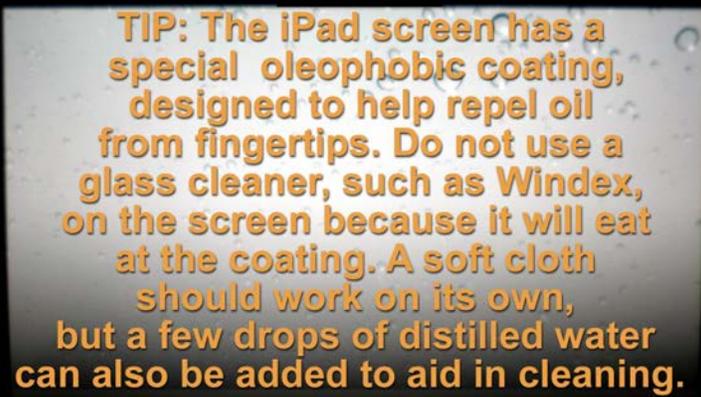
4. Pocket Informant is a "fully integrated calendar, task, contacts and notes solution for your iPad that lets you focus on everything you do in a day – not just your tasks list." It is a "highly customizable" tool that allows you to set things up your way. The cost for the iPad app is \$8.99

5. Documents to Go Premium (\$16.99) allows you to view, edit, and create Microsoft Excel, Word, and PowerPoint files on the iPad. The original version – i.e., not the premium version – costs less, at \$9.99, but does not support PowerPoint editing or cloud synchronization.

6. Quickbooks Mobile is free for Quickbooks Online users. The app lets you access and change customer information, manage outstanding balances, and create/email invoices, among other things. "Quickbooks online is a great app for route companies," added Jason Wellman of FilterShine USA. "My employees can add services, accept payments and email invoice with receipt at the job site. Almost no paperwork being printed anymore."

7. Handshake is a free program that will primarily benefit those who have products to sell. It allows distributors/suppliers to create a product catalog on their iPad, then take orders and deliver confirmations while out in the field.

8. Keynote: The iPad is a great tool for making customer presentations, and Keynote seems to be the app of choice among contract cleaners. Built specifically for the iPad, iPod and iPhone, it allows you to make



TIP: The iPad screen has a special oleophobic coating, designed to help repel oil from fingertips. Do not use a glass cleaner, such as Windex, on the screen because it will eat at the coating. A soft cloth should work on its own, but a few drops of distilled water can also be added to aid in cleaning.

presentations that can include your own photos and videos, along with charts and animated transitions, "as simple as touching and tapping." The app costs \$9.99.

9. Line2 lets you give your iPad a usable phone number (or add a second line to your iPhone) that can be used for calling and texting. The app itself is free to download, but the phone line starts at \$9.95 a month or \$99.50 a year.

10. Invoice2Go lets you create professional invoices, estimates, credit memos, purchase orders and more on your iPad. The iPad app costs \$14.99. There is a free "lite" version so you can try it out and see if you like it. The iPhone version costs \$9.99.

11. Forms-2-Go Hd lets you create over 20 types of business forms, including invoices, work orders, estimates, etc., that can include "spreadsheet like formulas for automatic calculations" and signature sheets so you can collect your customers' signatures right on your iPad. The App is free.

12. Tapatalk: Whether you're a "forum junkie" or just need some help from other contractors on a specific project, Tapatalk is a free app that makes navigating through the industry forums on your iPad easier than by using the web browser alone.

13. iBooks is a free app needed for downloading books. The bookstore offers just about any book you can think of, including several free business-related books. A couple to start with: *iPad at Work*, and *iPad at Work Volume 2*.

And if you still need convincing, remember that eClean magazine is now available to read on your iPad as well.