

Introducing Street Bidder

A New Mobile App That May Put an End to the Flyer

by Allison Hester, eClean Editor

Window cleaner turned entrepreneur, Josh Latimer, stresses that he is just an ordinary guy. “I enjoy being a husband. Playing with my kids. I love God. I like my work. I try to do my best at whatever I do, but I am not obsessed with power or money. I just want to be able to spend more time with my family.”

Six years ago, Josh made a bold career move, leaving the security of his job as a banker to start a window-cleaning business in an economically struggling area in Michigan. “My wife was pregnant with our first child, and I wanted to be able to take the winters off to be home with my family,” he explained. “Window cleaning seemed like it could make that happen... and it has. But that first year about killed us financially.”

Today, however, Birds Beware Window Cleaning has grown significantly, due largely to the dedication and hard work of the company’s 13 full-time staff members, as well as the implementation of several unique marketing

“When I started using pictures of peoples’ houses on our estimates, something **MAGICAL** happened!”

– Josh Latimer
Founder of Street Bidder &
Owner of Birds Beware Window Cleaning

approaches that have paid off – big time.

Their most successful marketing idea to date began with a simple concept – putting photos of people’s houses on the front of his company’s estimates. “When homeowners saw pictures of their homes, something magical happened. Suddenly we had much higher closing rates. We made more dollars per job. It was a simple, special touch – and homeowners loved it.”

That got Latimer thinking: rather than distributing generic flyers around

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neighborhoods – you know, the ones that often end up in trash cans or littering the streets – he could create custom postcards for potential customers featuring their house and an estimate.

“It’s a tool we used in our own business,” Latimer explained. “We were trying to figure out a really awesome way to control our growth. We wanted a predictable, measurable system in place to drive phone calls. That’s when we came up with Street Bidder.”

Initially, Latimer only planned to use Street Bidder for his own window cleaning/pressure washing company. However, “as we started implementing the process and we saw our profits begin to significantly rise, we realized this was a tool that a lot of companies could benefit from.”

And so Street Bidder was born.

This past week, after more than nine months of development, Latimer introduced the new Street Bidder mobile app to a select mobile cleaning market – members of the Window Cleaning Resource Association (WCRA) and the Pressure Washing Resource Association (PWRA). In July, the app will be available for all.

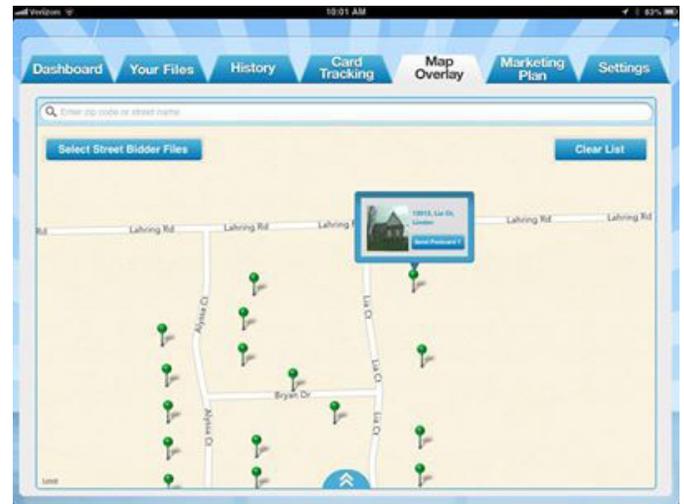
How it Works

To use Street Bidder, contractors first download the app on their mobile device, such as an iPad. Next they take pictures of houses in a neighborhood that they want to target. (Note that this is perfectly legal as long as photos are taken from the public street.) “You go capture Street Bidder files. You go take a picture, load the address, add a price. The process literally takes about six seconds per house,” Latimer explained. “The Street Bidder app remembers which road you’re on so you don’t have to fill in the full address each time. Just take the picture, add the house number, and move on to the next one.”

At any point after the photos are taken, contractors can order individualized postcards

An example of one of many roof cleaning cards available.

by choosing from the pre-designed cards and adding the home’s customized information. The map overlay feature places pins on a map for each home that you enter. To send to a specific neighborhood, simply circle the pinned area on the map with your finger, hit send, and you’re done.



With the simple click of a button, postcards are ordered, printed, stamped and mailed within 48 hours, and should arrive at the potential customers’ house three to eight days later. “The response rate we are getting from our



postcards is amazing. They really do work!”

When Will It Be Available?

As mentioned, Street Bidder was exclusively introduced to WCRA and PWRA members this past week. The app will be available to all sometime in July.

“We’re excited to work with the WCRA and PWRA so that we can have a small initial adopting group. This will allow us to work through the unforeseen details that arise, and help ensure we are equipped to provide quality customer support. I don’t want to have 10,000 people buy the app all at once, then struggle to keep up with our customers’ needs. Starting with a small group is going to make Street Bidder even better for everyone.”

How Much Will It Cost?

The Street Bidder app itself can be downloaded for free. To send postcards, you have two options.

First there’s the free plan, which allows you to send Street Bidder postcards for as low as \$.79 each – depending on the number of credits purchased. Street Bidder data is stored on their servers for 90 days.

Then there’s the Platinum Plan. This one lets you send postcards for as low as \$.47 each – depending on the number of credits purchased. There is also a monthly charge of \$39.95 (\$29.95 for WCRA and PWRA members), and the Street Bidder data is stored on their servers forever. This plan also allows access to the map overlay feature.

“You need to assess how many cards you expect to send out, then figure out which plan makes more sense,” said Latimer. “There is no minimum quantity, so you can send as few – or as many – postcards as you want. If you only anticipate sending a handful of cards, then the free plan would be the right choice. If you’re going to send out a lot of cards, then Platinum makes more sense.”

But What About _____?

Since word of Street Bidder has hit the online mobile cleaning communities, the overwhelming response has been extremely positive. However, some contractors have voiced a few concerns. I asked Latimer to tackle these:

I don’t have time to take all those pictures. Sounds like a lot of work.

“The Street Bidder app doesn’t take any longer than it would to distribute flyers throughout a neighborhood, and the good news is once you’ve walked a neighborhood, you never have to do it again. The files are saved and you can mail to those potential customers any time you want.”

Additionally, Latimer has found in his company’s experience that the read/response rate for the postcards has been significantly higher from the individualized postcards than from generic flyers. “If they see a picture of

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their house on a postcard in the mail, they *will* look at it rather than just throw it away.”

Finally, there are other types of personalized cards that can be sent using Street Bidder – including thank you cards. “After you finish a job, you can take a quick snapshot of yourself standing in front of your customer’s shiny clean house, hit a button, and you’ve got a customized thank you card on its way. The card not only builds goodwill with your customer, it reminds them how nice their house looked when it was cleaned, and most importantly, that you are the one to call when it’s time to clean it again.”

I’m afraid potential customers will be mad when they see I’ve photographed their home.

This can happen, but it doesn’t happen very often. Latimer adds that if an unhappy homeowner does call and complain, Street Bidder has an option to permanently remove that address from its files so that you can never add it again. Apologize to the homeowner. Tell them you intended no harm and assure them you will permanently remove their photo from your files.

As a sidenote, one of the early testers of Street Bidder had an upset customer call about the photo on the postcard. Guess what? After talking to the contractor on the phone, the homeowner ended up hiring the window cleaner.

Soon, there will be another solution available as well. For those who prefer not to take photos of houses, Street Bidder will allow you to instead take a photo of a street sign, or a development entry sign, or whatever landmark you select that is easily identifiable by your target neighborhood. “That way you are still sending them a customized card, but one that’s less intrusive.”

I can’t afford to spend several thousands of dollars on postcards.

You don’t have to. As mentioned before, you can purchase a single postcard if you want. “We designed Street Bidder to give the little guy an

affordable option to help professionalize his image without costing a fortune.”

A Few Final Words from a “Nerd in Training”

“I’m just a window cleaner. A colleague,” Latimer stressed. “This is all new to me, and this is the hardest thing I’ve ever done.” Latimer said he had no idea when he started developing Street Bidder how to go about creating an app, but he worked with a variety of designers and developers and is slowly become a “tech nerd.” He adds, “It’s taken a massive amount of time and effort to create a tool that I believe will truly benefit a wide variety of markets. We’re starting close to home, with the mobile cleaning contractor, and we hope customers can be a little patient as we get started and work through a few growing pains.”

Latimer also stressed that as the product is introduced and tested this month, Street Bidder will get better and better. “As we hear back on what you want, I’m certain we’ll come with ideas to make it faster. Cooler. Everything you need it do to help your business grow.”

Where can I Learn More?

You can read more about Street Bidder on the company’s website, www.flyersaredead.com. Additionally, there is a new Facebook group page located at <https://www.facebook.com/Streetbidder?fref=ts>. Finally, Latimer will also be talking more about the product as a presenter and an exhibitor at the upcoming PWRA National Convention, August 23 and 24 in Nashville, Tennessee. Read more about the PWRA and the National Convention on page 24.

