



25 Key Steps When Buying a Window Cleaning Business in the UK

For WCA Members: What to Do in the First 100 Days of Acquiring a Distressed Business

1. Understand TUPE & Consult Early

If staff are transferring, ensure you're compliant with TUPE regulations. Begin consultations early—even if there are fewer than 20 employees. Consider legal advice or HR support to avoid future claims.

2. Take Full Control of Payments

Gain access to all business bank accounts and payment platforms. Halt outgoing payments temporarily until you review liabilities. Use this time to create a 100-day cashflow plan.

3. Review Wage Costs vs. Turnover

In window cleaning, especially domestic rounds, wages can quickly erode profits. Aim to keep salary-to-revenue ratios healthy—typically no more than 40% unless using subcontractors.

4. Communicate the Transition to Customers

Don't hide the change of ownership—be upfront. If you're retaining the old brand for now, use it to deliver any necessary "bad news" before relaunching or rebranding.

5. Challenge Business Rates (if Applicable)

If the business has a unit or office, contact the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) to explore rate reductions, especially if the property has been underused or partly empty.

6. Renegotiate Utilities and Services

Use utility brokers to get better deals on electricity, water (if metered), and broadband. Every saving counts in the early days.

7. Add or Package in New Revenue Streams

Consider bundling services—e.g. adding gutter or conservatory roof cleaning if the business didn't offer them before.

8. Share a Clear Plan with the Team

Whether good or bad, clarity builds trust. Let retained staff know your vision, expectations, and their role in turning things around.

9. Validate Information From All Sides

When buying a distressed business, don't take everything at face value. Cross-check customer databases, pricing, and cancellation lists.

10. Talk to the Landlord or Storage Provider

If there's a physical premises or storage unit, engage the landlord early. A good relationship can help if rent needs renegotiating or access becomes an issue.

11. Retain Customer Trust

Communicate with customers carefully. Let them know it's "business as usual," and introduce yourself to build confidence.

12. Audit and Cancel Unnecessary Subscriptions

From cleaning chemical contracts to CRM software and uniform services—review all third-party contracts and cancel what's no longer needed (in writing).

13. Secure Your Position Financially

If you've loaned the business money, consider placing a charge or debenture on the company's assets (speak to an accountant/solicitor).

14. Check Vehicle and Lease Agreements

If vans or equipment are leased, check contract terms and whether they can be transferred, settled, or renegotiated.

15. Change Access to All Systems

Immediately change passwords for all software (e.g. Squeegie, bookkeeping tools, domain hosting, Gmail, Stripe, etc.). Revoke old employee access.

16. Check for Data Theft

Use seeded emails or hidden customer entries to check if anyone is using the database without permission.

17. Let Non-Essential Staff Go Quickly

Unless they hold critical skills or relationships, make swift decisions. Don't delay difficult conversations.

18. Take Ownership of Digital Assets

Make sure domains, email accounts, Google listings, and social media accounts are in your name. If needed, transfer them.

19. Liquidate Unused Equipment

Old poles, vacuums, or van-mounted systems? Sell what's unnecessary to generate fast cashflow.

20. Secure the Bank and Financial Info

Meet the bank in person, cancel all company debit cards and direct debits, and make yourself the sole signatory.

21. Physically Secure the Premises

Change locks if you inherit a unit. Even ex-staff with good intentions can create risk.

22. Redirect Mail

Redirect all mail to your home or main office to ensure you see invoices, legal notices, and correspondence.

23. Update the Registered Office Address

Don't rely on the seller's accountant or agent—file a change of registered office with Companies House immediately.

24. Log All Utility Readings

Water, electric, fuel cards—log all meter readings on Day 1 for accurate billing and accountability.

25. If Bailiffs Appear – Stay Calm

It's not uncommon in distressed purchases. Ask for evidence, log details, and deal with them respectfully. You may not be liable for previous debts if you bought assets, not shares.

Disclaimer: This document is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or business advice. Members of the Window Cleaners Association should seek professional guidance specific to their circumstances before acting on any of the steps outlined. Neither the author nor the Window Cleaners Association accepts any liability for decisions made based on this document.