

Dan Galvin's Journey: An American Success Story

A New Englander starts small, then learns how to build a solid power wash business.

By Allison Hester



Dan and his wife Heather

Dan Galvin spent a long time searching for the right career.

After high school in Plymouth, Massachusetts, he joined the U.S. Navy where he was a strike force team leader, a missile technician, and a rescue swimmer on board ships. He found the Navy a lot of fun, but knew it wasn't for him.

Next, he became a broker for the family insurance business. "I worked on my own but I had to wear a suit and tie every day. I was stuck in an office, and I absolutely hated it," he said. So in 2000, Dan went out on his own and started selling insurance software. "I was still stuck in a suit but, at least it got me outside, talking to people. But it still just wasn't me."

Lost on what to do next, Dan got a phone call from his uncle, who said, "Hey, do I have a deal for you!" The uncle had been in the pressure washing business since 1977 and was ready to retire.

Dan realized the offer might actually have some potential.

So Dan paid \$10,000 for "about \$2000 worth of equipment, including old, beat-up pressure washer." But the main thing he was buying was his uncle's knowledge, which he knew was priceless. He also got his uncle's two accounts; one was for an electric company's vehicles, and the other was for graffiti removal at Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox. "That was all I had. I think the monthly income was around \$500 between the two of them."

Dan's wife Heather was less than thrilled. "She said, 'How the hell are you going to make money with a garden hose?'" Dan laughed. "Like so many people, she was clueless to what power washing was and how to make money from it."

Dan said his uncle was the best around, but he didn't know how to mar-

ket to make that six figure income. "It took me less than three months to make my \$10,000 back, so my wife was happy," he said. "And that was with me having no clue how to market. I was ecstatic."

Growing and Changing

In the neighborhoods surrounding his home, Dan noticed a lot of vinyl houses that were moldy. So he hit them hard with a home-made postcard. "I was just spraying and praying," sending out postcards to anyone and everyone and praying he'd get some jobs.

By 2007, after buying out a couple of competitors, Dan's East Coast Power Washing had moved on to cleaning heavy equipment for large construction companies. Then the economy hit all those companies hard and he lost most of his accounts. So he had to go back to where he started...house washing.

Dan knew that house washing means



Spraying Fenway Park with a coating to protect it from graffiti



Cleaning the Jefferson Memorial in Washington D.C.



East Coast Power Washing in Plymouth, Massachusetts



a never-ending challenge to find and keep clients. He also knew he had to be 'different' than all the other power washers in the area. Dan had learned from an article in the EnviroSpec 2002 Catalog that the use of 'proper cleaners' was huge to house washing clients. Dan says, "I wasn't selling power washing, I was selling safety! You can't use the word 'chemical,' which scares people; you need to say something like 'cleaning products.'"

Dan knew he used the best cleaners, because they were from EnviroSpec, and he knew he did the best job around; but that alone did not get him the number of clients he wanted. Then when he was attending a marketing class he heard a phrase that changed the way he thought about selling his services.

The Quote: "If you truly believe that you have the best product or you do the best job, then you are doing your prospects a total disservice by not convincing

them to use you. If you don't have the best product or service, *change it*, so you do have the best product or service."

"That hit me like a ton of bricks" says Dan. "I knew I did the best job around, but never realized I was hurting people by letting those 'splash and dash' power washers sucker those people in on price alone."

That's when Dan figured out that he was now a consumer advocate in the power washing industry. He says "It all stems back to that 2002 EnviroSpec catalog. That catalog helped me lay the foundation of my business; I just didn't know it at the time."

A Competitive Advantage

The one product that EnviroSpec introduced Dan to that has made him hundreds of thousands of dollars, and has put him in the top 10% of power washers in the country, is Plex-Master. It's a surface

sealant with mildew formation retardant that Dan applied after he washed the house, so he could guarantee customers that their house would be mold-free for one year. In an area where mold will typically start growing on a house in as little as one month after it's washed, Dan was guaranteeing no mold or mildew for a year! This easily set him apart from other power washers in his area.

Dan tells the story of a house he washed, where the next-door neighbor was also washing his house the same day. "I finished washing and sealing the entire house with Plex-Master in a little under two hours. The neighbor had taken two hours just to wash his garage! He yells over to me, 'hey how do you do that so fast?' I said I have the right equipment and use the best soaps. He said, 'soap?' I just shook my head and walked away. The next year, after the neighbor saw that the house I cleaned still looked good, he

called me to wash *his* house.”

In 2008, when most companies were downsizing or going out of business, Dan’s wife Heather joined the East Coast team, and the company’s residential business boomed. In fact, Dan says that with the help of EnviroSpec’s informative catalog, their soaps, and Plex-Master, he has made well over a million dollars.

As his company has grown, so has his ability to give back. In 2006, Dan participated in the “Clean Across America” project, cleaning around the Lincoln Memorial. Every year, his company donates community service projects, including the cleaning of local schools and churches. “We spend about 40 to 60 man-hours in giving back. I truly believe that giving back helps you grow.”

Power Washers of North America

On the advice of his uncle, Dan had joined the PWNA (Power Washers of North America) and attended his first convention in 2005. “I learned more from two days at the convention than I did the two years I was in business. I became absolutely hooked.” It was at that first PWNA meeting that Dan realized power washing was an actual industry. “I didn’t realize there were thousands of other power washers out there doing the same thing, struggling with the same struggles I was having.”

At dinner one evening, Dan met Daryl Mirza. “I was in business for two years making \$250,000 and thinking I was doing really well. Then Daryl mentioned that he had 500 employees. Wow! I never even fathomed the idea that there could be a nationwide power washing company,” Dan laughed. “So you go from little corner store to nationwide. The connections you make through PWNA really are incredible, and everyone is there to help everybody.”

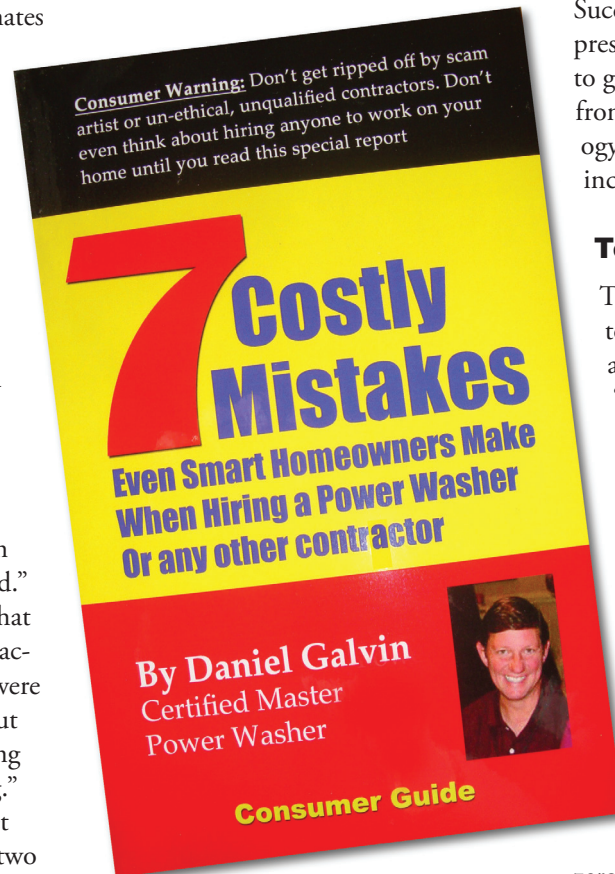
Dan was later elected to the PWNA Board, and then served as President from 2008 to 2010.

Finding His Company’s ‘Sweet Spot’

During the 2010 PWNA conference,

several million-dollar producers participated in a panel discussion where they mentioned finding your company’s ‘sweet spot’ – the place where you are making the right amount of money for you.

Dan said he is currently in such a place, and struggles with the idea of whether or not to grow the business. “I would like to grow, but my wife is really comfortable right now,” he said. “She likes it where we can go away when we want to go away.”



One of Dan’s biggest focuses is getting systems in place so that the business will continue to run without him. In addition to the need for the right systems, Dan offers this bonus tip: “If you want to make a profit and be successful in business, let your wife keep your books.”

Marketing Makes a Difference

Dan has also written a consumer guide called *7 Costly Mistakes Even Smart Homeowners Make When Hiring a Power Washer*. He gives it to his higher-end clients for free. “The book

is a marketing tool. For one, it gives you instant credibility because you wrote the book,” he explained. “Just one more tool that puts you heads above every other power washer in the area.”

“I’ve spent well over \$50,000 to educate myself on marketing,” Dan says. “How to speak properly. How to speak to customers. What to put in postcards to customers.”

In late 2010, Dan began a program to give back to an industry that has been so good to him and his wife. SuccessInPowerWashing.com teaches pressure washing company owners how to get more leads, separate their company from their competition, use technology and the internet, and double their income without adding more clients.

Teaming Up to Educate

To further help in training contractors, Dan has teamed up with John and Shelley Allison of EnviroSpec. “John and Shelley have an amazing love for this industry; they know if you educate the contractor, the contractor will become more successful, and in turn the industry becomes more successful. It’s not about the money with John and Shelley; their rewards come from the success of their customers. They are the most amazing people I have ever met.”

Dan will teach the step-by-step systems he used to take his power washing business from zero to \$250,000 in less than three years. He’ll offer to-the-point marketing ideas that contractors can take home and implement immediately.

“There’s enough business out there for everybody if you are educated,” Dan says.



Dan with James Malinchak, star of ‘ABC Secret Millionaire’.