The Numbers Behind a Mobile Auto Detailing Business

A free field guide from Bytell Press. The figures come from our example financial model for a one-van mobile detailing company with a billable technician. They are planning assumptions, not quotes for your market; the worksheet at the end is for your own numbers.

A mobile detailing business is cheap to start and easy to keep busy. The harder question is how many cars a month it takes before the business pays its bills and pays you too.

1. How the work is priced

Detailing is sold **by the job**, on a menu built as a ladder. The example model uses these lines:

Service line	Model price
Express service, 45 to 75 minutes	$75–$125
Full interior and exterior detail, 2 to 4 hours	$150–$300
Paint correction and coating	$300–$1,500
Fleet and dealer accounts	$40–$90 per vehicle
Headlight restoration add-on	$75–$150
Blended across the mix	**About $180 per job, about 55% gross margin**

The 55% is what is left after the technician's wages and the materials, which together run about 45% of revenue. Correction and coating is the profit line. A customer who calls for a wash is often a candidate for a full detail, and a business that only washes works at the bottom of the table.

2. What it costs to open

The example model opens on roughly **$5,000 to $30,000**. The spread depends on whether you already own a suitable vehicle. The model orders the spending like this, largest first:

Use of funds	What it covers
Work vehicle and build-out	Tank, power, shelving, reels
Core equipment	Pressure washer, polishers, extractor, steamer, vacuum, tools
Opening inventory	Chemicals and coatings
First-year insurance and fees	The first year's baseline
Digital setup	Booking system, website, first marketing

The model also starts with about **$12,000 of cash** in the bank. Price each line with your own quotes.

3. What it costs to stay open

The model carries about **$8,350 a month** in costs that do not move with the number of cars:

Monthly cost	Amount
Non-labor fixed costs (insurance, van, fuel, software, phone, base marketing)	$3,200
Part-time admin helper	$1,800
Equipment financing payment	$350
Subtotal before owner pay	**$5,350**
Owner draw	$3,000
Total	**$8,350**

The technician's wages are not here. They sit in the 45% cost of doing the work.

4. The break-even: the one number to know

Break-even revenue = monthly fixed costs ÷ gross margin.

Before owner pay: $5,350 ÷ 0.55 = about **$9,700 a month**. At $180 a job, that is about 54 jobs a month.

With the $3,000 owner draw: $8,350 ÷ 0.55 = about **$15,200 a month**. That is about 84 jobs a month.

The gap between the two, about 30 jobs a month, is your pay.

Margin moves this number fast. If discounting takes five points off the margin, the second sum becomes $8,350 ÷ 0.50 = $16,700 a month, about 93 jobs.

5. The risk the numbers show: the first year

The model's first year brings in about $166,900, which averages about $13,900 a month. That clears the $9,700 level but sits below the $15,200 needed to cover the full owner draw. The first year ends about $8,400 short after the owner takes $36,000.

The model starts with $12,000 and ends the first year with about $3,600. The early months fall in winter, when demand is lowest, so the cash dips before it builds.

In the model's second year revenue averages about $17,600 a month, and the business is past both break-even points. The costs stay the same; the volume grows.

6. Your numbers

Fill this in before you spend anything.

Question	Model	Yours
Average ticket per job	$180	_____
Gross margin after technician labor and materials	55%	_____

Question	Model	Yours
Monthly costs before owner pay	$5,350	_____
Owner draw you need each month	$3,000	_____
Break-even revenue with your draw (costs ÷ margin)	$15,200	_____
Jobs a month to break even	About 84	_____
Starting cash in dollars	$12,000	_____

If your break-even needs more jobs than one van can do in a month, fix the plan before you buy the van: raise the ticket by selling up the ladder, cut a fixed cost, or start with a smaller draw.

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Bytell Press publishes the full business plan, the editable financial model behind these numbers, and the operating playbooks for a mobile auto detailing business.

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