

10 Steps to Start your Inflatable Business

Step 1: Researching the Competition

1. **Check the Yellow Pages:** Checking the yellow pages for competition is the easiest way to start the research process. Most listings for bounce houses will be under the heading Party Supplies, although some might be under the heading Party Planning, or Parties. Once you have found the listing check for websites and if you have a computer go online and look up those listed. Call all the companies without websites. You will need to check for the following information:
 - a. How many companies are listed in the yellow pages?
 - b. How large are the ads?
 - c. What types of jumps do those companies listed have? (Play zones, slide, obstacle courses or other)
 - d. How much do they charge and is it the same for Saturday, Sunday and weekdays? Which time slots do they offer? (2 hours, 4 hours, 6 hours) Do they set up the inflatable or does the customer choose to pick up? (Do they ask what time you party is or tell you which times are available?)
 - e. What other items do they offer? (Cotton candy, snow cones, chairs or tables)
 - f. In which areas do they deliver?
 - g. Do they deliver to parks?
 - h. How early do they deliver and how late do they pick up?
 - i. Will they accommodate slumber parties or overnights?
 - j. Are they insured?
 - k. Do they have anything available for the upcoming weekend?
 - l. Is a deposit required?
 - m. Are they able to take credit cards or checks?
 - n. Do they leave a company attendant?

After acquiring all the information you can, about the existing businesses in you area it's time to take a look at how you might fit in to the mix. (If there are no other businesses then you've hit pay dirt) Question number 11 is important if there are several companies without availability and it's nice outside. If no one has anything available, then it's safe to assume there is a need. Although if a company has units available it may be that their units are in poor shape, unclean, or perhaps that company is unreliable. Often a restaurant will sit empty while the one next door is overflowing. If you set your goal to be on time, friendly, and with clean jumpers, chances are you'll have more customers than you can handle; the unreliable companies will see their business continue to dwindle

Step 2: Setting up your Business

Now that you've decided to move forward there are many decisions to be made on how to set up your business. The following is a checklist of issues that need to be addressed in order to move forward.

1. Establishing a place of operation
2. Deciding on how many and which units to purchase
3. Your business name
4. Obtaining a business license or permit
5. To incorporate or not to incorporate
6. Setting up a business bank account
7. Cash, checks, and credit cards
8. Phone lines
9. Insurance
10. Contacting the parks
11. Determining chargeable and free delivery areas
12. What to charge

- 13. Purchasing equipment needed to operate your business
- 14. To attend or not to attend
- 15. Associations & Organizations your business should join
- 16. Your website
- 17. Industry periodicals

1. Where will you operate your business?

The best place to store your inflatable is your garage, because there is no additional overhead and you can spend your money on growing your business instead of rent. You might be able to write off part of your home expenses as long as they are business related. Check with your accountant to see which expenses apply.

If you live in an apartment or in an area with a homeowners association you might need to rent a storage facility. A storage unit is less expensive than a warehouse and requires no additional overhead such as electricity, water, gas, etc. Check with the storage rental companies in your area regarding their time restrictions. You will likely need to negotiate the hours in order to accommodate your weekend schedule. Storage companies are generally flexible.

If you must get a storage room, it is best to find a location which is central to the area where you plan to deliver as opposed to close to home. If you live on one side of a large town and intend to deliver to the entire area, you will do less driving if your pivotal point is in the center or near a major thoroughfare. For example: if you discover that your customer needs a generator, or that you left your hand truck it will be faster to if you are central or near a major artery. It could mean the difference from being on time to being late to your next customer.

After you have twenty-five + units, its time to consider opening a warehouse.

2. How many units should you start with?

Much of this decision is determined by available funds. Although funding is discussed later, at this point we will only discuss the practical side of numbers. When deciding how many units to purchase initially it would be good to first look at what you are planning to use to deliver and how many trucks are available to you.

A small pickup (Ford Ranger or a Chevy S-10) can easily accommodate 3 jumps at one time. A large truck (Ford F-150 or a Chevrolet half ton) can accommodate 5 jumps at a time. While a smaller truck can return to reload, a large truck is full and will keep you busy all day. (Units aren't necessarily one rented one per day; if the times are well slotted they can be rented up to three times per day, but this is rate.)

Rule of thumb is to only schedule one delivery per hour of one pickup per hour, even though it is sometimes possible to do more. Frequently a delivery will require additional time. When scheduling drivers, one driver can usually handle 4 deliveries per day. Although at times it will be necessary to schedule 5 or 6. It is not unheard of to deliver 8 in one day, but that is extreme and a long hard day that begins early and ends late.

Delivery time: it take a minimum of 10 minutes to set up a jump, if it's clean; if the renter has predetermined the location and the location is easy to get to.

Pickup time: It takes a minimum of 20 minutes to clean a jump, deflate it and get it into the back of your pickup.

3. You Company Name

When deciding on a name, pick something that isn't already listed in the phone book. You want something fun, colorful and upbeat that will be easily remembered by customers.

Looking in a thesaurus might be helpful under *happy* or *jump* or *kids*. Many customers like to incorporate their own name in the title for example: Kenny's Jumpers, Smith's Inflatables, or Mikes Moonwalks. Another idea is to use names from children's fairy tales or nursery rhymes like, Bo Peep's Bouncers, Jumping Jack's or Tom Thumb's Tumblers. Don't use anything that is a trademarked item, otherwise you will have to change it down the road.

Consider your choice carefully, customers think that a name change implies that you have changed or services or raised your prices. If they are returning to you they want the reassurance that you are still offering the same reliable service and the same prices.

4. Getting a business license

City buildings or the town hall are the usual locations to purchase a business license. Normally it cost around \$25.00 - \$55.00 but it varies from city to city. Look in your blue or government pages under the listing **business licenses**. You will need to purchase a license for **rental equipment**.

If you are opening the business on your own or with your spouse you will need a sole proprietor license, which means that you have no outside partners. If you do have partners you will be listed as a partnership.

5. To incorporate or not to incorporate

Incorporation is not necessary when you initially open your business, however advisable. Your accountant will recommend incorporation. The benefits of incorporation are the protection of your personal assets.

Example: A customer, Sue Happy, rented an inflatable from you. The kids got wild and someone was seriously injured. Sue files a claim against your insurance which is a standard million dollar policy; Sue's attorney decided that a million dollars isn't enough. If you aren't incorporated, the attorney and Mrs. Happy will sue for your personal assets, your house, your boat or your savings, and she can go after your business. If you're incorporated she can only sue for your business assets.

Ask your accountant about an S-corporation or an LLC (limited liability Corporation). These corporations are designed for small business and your money only taxed once.

An attorney may charge upwards of \$1000 dollars to fill out and file the incorporation paperwork for you. It is somewhat costly but if you can, it's advisable. It's less expensive if you go to the corporation commission and the paperwork yourself. It will cost around \$60. to file and an additional \$300 to run in the newspaper. The forms are self-explanatory and the clerks will answer any of your questions.

If you are opening your business as a partnership you most definitely want to incorporate.

6. Setting up your bank account

Finding good bank rates requires time on the phone. Try at least 4 banks to find the best rates, paying particular attention to monthly fees and any minimums they require.

Credit Unions offer very good rates but not all credit unions handle business accounts. If you belong to a credit union, call them first.

Remember, your relationship with the bank is paramount. This is a relationship that will probably last for as long as the business is in operation so choose carefully.

7. Credit cards, Cash, Checks & Deposits

You might be tempted to start off taking only cash, many jump businesses do. In doing so you may give the impression that you are not running a legitimate business.

Checks are a risk and many companies have been burned by customers who've written bad checks. They are a standard form of payment and if you intend to take checks it's a good idea to have an attorney on binder to write letters to those who are not inclined to make good on their bad checks. In some states writing bad checks is prosecutable and the state will go after the writer of the bad check, the process is free, but slow.

Credit cards are an expense, but convenient for the customer. Credit cards will cost you a percentage of your receipt, how much of a percentage is determined by several variables.

8. The rate given to you by the credit card service.

9. Whether you swipe the card or punch in the number. (Punching is more expensive)

On the up side customers tend to spend more when using credit cards and you know if the credit card is good immediately.

You won't necessarily need a credit card service until you have the higher priced rental equipment or require a deposit.

Deposits are required in some areas. However, if you run the business out of your home they are inconvenient. This is the instance where an office is good. You don't necessarily want to parade the customers in and out of your house so that they can drop off deposits. Unfortunately customers are generally disinclined to mail deposit, although some companies have had success with requesting a mailed deposit. If you intend to require a deposit it's more practical if you have a credit card service. If you decide that you want to accept credit cards call around for merchant services. Bank fees are usually higher than merchant services. Pay close attention to the monthly fees and ask for a reduction; **fees are negotiable.**

8. Phone services

You will need a way for customers to find out about your business; a phone with a yellow pages listing is initially the best way for them to locate you. The first step is to find out when the new directories are released; in most areas there is more than one directory to choose from. It might be wise to plan your grand opening around the time the new yellow pages are released with your ad. There are other forms of advertising that will be discussed later, but having a phone book ad requires the least amount of effort and initially gets the most results.

You can easily change your home number to a business line just by calling the phone company. The advantage of doing this is that even if you don't purchase an ad you will still be listed in the yellow pages under your party supplies heading. Having a business line will cost you around \$10 extra a month but your first party will more that cover the cost. Our might consider adding an additional phone line to your home, if you intend to operate out of your home.

Handling the phones yourself is preferred since you can answer any questions the customer might have and schedule their party immediately. If you intend to use your home phone, instruct family member to answer with the company name. IE: *"Hello this is Susan with 'the Happy Jumper'. How can I help you?"*

If there isn't anyone available to answer the phone it presents another problem. Do you get a message machine, have the phones forwarded to your cell, use a beeper or hire an answering service.

Some customers are reluctant to leave messages with their private information on an answering machine, it is a step above using a beeper number, which is very unprofessional and discourages customers from calling at all.

Cell phones have become an industry norm; however, they are not always reliable. Answering services are more expensive, (you are charged by the minute) but more dependable and more professional.

One idea is to pay an elderly friend \$5.00 for every rental they schedule and is successfully delivered. It gives them extra money and they are home anyhow. Some home based companies also use this five dollar strategy to motivate their children to answer the phone.

9. Insurance

Liability insurance requirements vary from state to state, town to town. Most likely you will need a million or a two million policy with the ability to add additional insured's. The price of this insurance varies.

Additional insured's may be required by larger companies, schools, or parks. What this means is that they have a copy of your policy listing their name, *Big City Public Schools*, as an additional insured, on your policy. Insurance companies will either charge for this service in one flat fee or per addition, it depends on the carrier. Ask in advance about the charges for adding additional insured's. You will need from 3-10 additional insured's per year, and as your business grows so will that number.

The best place to start looking for insurance is your local insurance broker; however, there are national insurance brokers that handle inflatable insurance listed in the back of this booklet.

10. Contacting the parks

Parties are often held in the city and county parks. Requirements for setup in the parks can be obtained through the parks department in your community. The following are the details you need to know about parks in your area.

- a. Do they allow inflatables?
- b. Are there any size restrictions or inflatables?
- c. Do the parks require you to add them as additional insured?
- d. Do they have electrical outlets and can they be used for inflatables?
- e. What are their hours of operation?
- f. Can they provide you with maps of the parks?

If your parks allow inflatables and have electrical outlets for the customers use, you need inform the customers that the blower requires a dedicated outlet. If they intend to plug in anything with a heating element to the outlet where your blower is plugged in it could blow the circuit. If the customer requires additional power suggest they rent a generator.

11. Determining chargeable and free-delivery areas

Determining the parameters of your delivery area depends on how densely populated your area is and how far your area is and how far you're willing to drive. Most of your day will be windshield time. First look at the map of your area and figure out how far you can go in any direction from your business location in twenty minutes. If it takes longer than twenty minutes to get there then add an additional \$20 to \$100 dollars for delivery. (If there are areas of the community that you feel are unpleasant you may want to remove them from your delivery zone immediately.)

The best way to determine delivery charges is to find out what is currently being charged by your competitors.

12. What to Charge

Never-never go lower than the going rate. You have an advantage, your units are new, your business is new and you can charge whatever you want. If you start high it's very easy to go down, and more difficult to go up.

As business owners we tend to over estimate what we will earn and underestimate what our expenses will be. Many new business owners are prone to go into panic mode immediately and feel that the only way they can get business is undercutting the competition, please rethink. This short-sightedness is what drives down the prices and destroys the market. You will have customers; you don't have to be the cheapest jump in town. If you want to offer value, put a coupon in the paper or offer a grand opening special, don't sell down the price. Someone will come into that very same market and do the same to you.

Remember, there are customers being born every second and plenty of work for everyone. Keep the rates healthy, make lots of money and don't war out your equipment before it's paid for.

13. Purchasing Equipment needed to operate your Business

The following is a list of equipment you will need in addition to the inflatable bouncers; forms will be discussed later in this booklet.

- a. Truck (or vehicle with tow bar and trailer)
- b. Heavy duty hand truck with fenders (1 per truck)
- c. 5lb sledge hammer (1 per truck)
- d. Sandbags (4 per inflatable)
- e. 100ft heavy duty extension cords with reels (1 per blower)
- f. Legal size metal notebook (1 per truck)
- g. Ground tarps (1 per inflatable)
- h. Hand-held vacuum 1.5 HP with 20ft cord & power strip (1 per truck)
- i. Clean Rags
- j. Diluted Orange cleaner in spray bottle (approx 1 cup concentrate per gallon of water)

14. To attend or not to attend

When setting up your first jumps at a park or someone's home it's hard to just walk away and leave your investment sitting there. . . vulnerable. You might be tempted to have an attendant stay with your jumper just to protect your investment. But isn't that what you wanted to avoid, swapping your time for money? It limits the number of units you can put up in a weekend. If you have a large family or only 1 unit you might want to consider requiring an attendant. Attending 100% of the time is easier in theory than in reality.

Some insurance companies will offer a discount if you intend to attend. However there is logical argument that if you attend and something happens you are responsible, (it was your responsibility to insure that the jumpers were playing safe). If you don't attend and something happens, the customer has to prove that the equipment was faulty, (it is their responsibility to tend the jumpers).

You might compromise and offer attending as an option for \$20 dollars + per hour for larger events.

15. Organizations you business should belong to

An association called the IIPG&A or International Inflatable Products & Games Association has been formed and should be helpful with news and information (407-438-8813)

If there isn't an association in your area there is one you might want to look into called ASPIRE Entertainment Group (1-888-394-5692) they are located in Southern Arizona but currently are expanding into other parts of the country.

Your local Chamber of Commerce will no doubt contact you, depending on the size of your community you may want to join. Joining the chamber can be on the costly side. However through the chamber you get information like the new businesses which are opening in your area and the sizes of the businesses that belong. Grand openings and company picnics are events that often use jumpers.

There is also an organization called IAAPA, International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions. The tradeshow produced by IAAPA is in November every year and is the largest in the world. You can find IAAPA online at www.iaapa.org If you decide to get into the business of renting inflatables you should plan to attend the IAAPA tradeshow at some point. It offers the latest, most innovative inflatables on the market at the very best prices. The venue for IAAPA changes occasionally so visit the website for the most recent information.

16. Your Website

Having a website for your bouncers is becoming the norm. Analysts predict that in the not so distant future we as a society will do most of our shopping and errands online. Change is the fundamental nature of our culture; 20 years ago the World Wide Web was unheard of. 30 years ago no one had a PC, answering machine, cable television, or cell phone. 100 years ago if you wanted to travel across the country you would board a train.

The point is that people change their habits as innovations come along to make life more convenient. The ability to see the bounce house before it is delivered and possible schedule the unit online at your leisure is more convenient. It is information at your fingertips.

Having a website for your business will only cost you in the area of \$25 per month. It is an inexpensive form of advertising. There are many web designers available, some more costly than others. It's best to work with someone familiar with the industry, who might make suggestions on how to set up your site to enable your customers to access the information they are most interested in. Industry trained web designers are listed in the back of this book.

17. Industry Periodicals

At the writing of this book, only one periodical exists solely for inflatables. It is called Inflatable News and is available online at www.inflatablenews.com

Step 3: Purchasing

You need first to decide how much you have to invest then what to invest in. If all you have is \$5000.00 dollars you want to get the most for your money, buy two bouncers and sock every dollar aside to buy the next two. There are options on purchasing and that's what this section deals with.

Funding

Credit Cards: Some customers opt to use credit cards; the best reason to use a credit card is on something that can generate revenue. On the down side you are using up your revolving credit. If you intend to use credit cards make sure your rates are reasonable.

Leasing: If you intend to finance through a leasing company (several are listed in the back of this booklet), expect to pay the same rates as you would a credit card. When starting your business the leasing company will be looking at your personal credit, since your business has no credit history. On the up side the loan is completely tax deductible and some leasing companies can offer very competitive insurance rates which include replacement value of your jumpers. Leasing doesn't tie up your revolving credit line.

Step 4: Forms and Software

This book will provide you with some basic forms to organize your day to day business. However, some industry related software programs have been designed to enable you to track everything from the usage of your jumpers through when to reschedule a re-contact. You can do all of this by hand, but the programs will do it much more accurately and efficiently. Software programs are designed to show you what is working and what isn't. If you intend to purchase software you won't need the following forms. Forms are an important component when running a business. They structure your conversation and keep you focused. All the forms listed in this book are vital to each different segment of the rental process which should flow something like this:

1. Call: The customer will initially call you for pricing and availability. You will check your rental book to see what is available.
2. Reserve: Reserve the inflatable as requested by the customer and fill out a **delivery order form** with the customer's information; after the call transfer that same information to your **rental book**.
3. Verify: The Wednesday before the weekend call the customers scheduled in your **rental book** and verify the order.
4. Chart: It will be necessary to map your delivery days' activities by scheduling your deliveries on a **flow chart**. (Thursday is a good day to fill out paperwork for the weekend. Print a map on the back of the **delivery order form**, so that the driver has a copy of your original agreement. Fill out completely, the **rental agreement form**. Staple the **delivery order form** map side up to the rental agreement form. Put the forms in order to deliver in the metal ledger with a copy of the flow chart visible on the other side.
5. Deliver: Deliver the jump on time; have a customer sign a **Rental agreement form**, and provide them with a copy.
6. Pickup: Pickup and clean the unit in a timely manner. Thank your customer.
7. Remind: Re-contact the customer the following year with their information provided on your **delivery order form**.

Delivery Order Form

Date: _____

Time _____ to _____

Name:

Address:	Park:
Zip: _____ Surface: _____	

Phone: _____	2nd Phone: _____
	Cell: ----- Work: ----- Friend: -----

		4 hours	6 hours	
101	Castle	\$ 90.00	\$ 120.00	\$
102	Birthday Cake	\$ 90.00	\$ 120.00	\$
103	Tiger	\$ 90.00	\$ 120.00	\$
104	Seaworld	\$ 90.00	\$ 120.00	\$
168	16ft Slide	\$ 130.00	\$ 160.00	\$
169	Obstacle Course	\$200 (3 hours)	\$50 add/hour	\$
812	20ft Slide	\$230 (3 hours)	\$50 add/hour	\$
102	Dragon	\$ 90.00	\$ 120.00	\$

Generator Rental	\$ 70.00	\$
Delivery Fee		\$
Attendant Fees	\$25 / hr	\$

Tax \$

CC: _____ Exp: _____ Total Due: \$

The party is for: _____ Age: _____

Directions:
Employee: _____ Date: _____

The **delivery order form** is a worksheet. It's what you fill out when gathering information about your customer. This information will be used to file in your database for customer profiles and used the following year to send out postcard reminders for the customer's upcoming birthday party. It's a good idea to have these preprinted to fill in, then flip over the original to print a computer generated map on the other side, that way the delivery person has all the information with him or her when doing the actual delivery. Although most of the information on this form is self explanatory, after the address and zip code of the customer there is an area that asks for surface information. This is asking what type of surface the unit will be placed on (IE: gravel, grass, dirt, concrete) and will tell your driver if they need extra sandbags or tarps. (Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when setting up inflatables) Whether or not you decide to use this template for your order forms always get 2 phone numbers. If you're delivering to a park make sure you get a cell number. It will help you avoid confusion and frustration when there was a miss-communication during the information gathering process regarding the Park Ramada number or time. The following is an excerpt from a **rental book** it is a brief synopsis of the information in the order form and will help you organize your day at a glance; weekdays don't necessarily require the listing of all the units since it will be rare that you completely book all your

weekday slots. (Halloween, even when it falls on a weekday will generally book up, Forth of July as well.)

Saturday July 11

#101 Castle	#102 Birthday Cake
Name: _____	Name: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Phone: _____ Other: _____	Phone: _____ Other: _____
Deliver To: _____	Deliver To: _____
c Generator Other: _____	c Generator Other: _____
TO	TO

The flow chart is used to look at your day in brief and easily see where you need to be if you are delivering or where your truck s are if you are at the office and a customer calls looking for his jump. A flow chart will at a glance tell you where you are and where you are going next. Use different colored highlighters to distinguish between different routes. For example: use green to show which jumps Tom is delivering and yellow to highlight Greg's deliveries. Have a flow chart for every drive and a master copy for the office. On the flow charts for the drivers, only highlight their route.

Date: _____, 2003 Day: _____

	9 am	10 am	11 am	12 pm	1 pm	2 pm	3 pm	4 pm	5 pm	6 pm	7 pm	8 pm
#101 <input type="checkbox"/> Castle		Deliver 10am Big Park				Pickup 12am Big Park		Deliver 4pm New Town			Pickup 7pm New Town	
#102 <input type="checkbox"/> BirthdayC				Deliver 12am Walnut St								Pickup 8pm Walnut St
#103 <input type="checkbox"/> Tiger			Deliver 11am JFK School				Pickup 3pm JFK School			Deliver 6pm Baptist Church		Overnite
#168 <input type="checkbox"/> Slide	Deliver 9am Grant Rd											Pickup 8pm Grant Rd

You will need to become familiar with your area. When filling out the flow chart direct drivers by using familiar landmarks and major crossroads so they have an idea of where the next inflatable is being delivered and how much time they have in between deliveries. As you become more familiar with the distances and areas you will be able to plan your deliveries in closer sequence. For example if Big Park

is 2 blocks from FDR school you might want to put those deliveries on the same truck unless Happy Town is a distance away, then you would need to have them on separate trucks.

The rental agreement form is a two part, and the most important form you have. It is the disclaimer that relieves you of any responsibility if anything should happen. Of course, your attorney would remind you that no contract is worth the paper it's written on and every contract signed could be contested in court. However, it is vitally important you have that document signed because without it you won't have protection.

Time of Rental: 11-3 pm		Total Units: 1
Unit #1	Castle	#101
Unit #2		

General Rules for Lessee Installation

Units must be operated over a smooth, compatible surface such as grass or a hard top surface. The unit may not be operated on rough surface such as brick, glass or any jagged object. Unit must be anchored prior to use and deflated in high winds or gusts. The unit positively may not be located within 5 feet of any wall.

Lessee must furnish electrical outlet with slo-blo fuse or 30 amp fuse circuit without anything else connected. Use of more than one extension cord may cause motor to burn up! Use only one blower per fuse circuit. Use of extension cords other than those provided by the lessor is strictly prohibited.

Rules of Conduct

Shoes must be removed before playing on any unit!

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Always have an ADULT present to supervise riders. | 6. Never put a hose or water on unit. |
| 2. Never jump on partially inflated unit. | 7. In case of rain remove riders and unplug motor and extension cord from wall. After deflated fold unit on itself and keep play area dry. |
| 3. Do not allow riders to play or climb on walls. | 8. Be sure unit is on a level surface. |
| 4. Follow number of riders listed on rental agreement. | 9. Do not allow riders to hang or pull on netting. |
| 5. Do not plug and unplug blower repeatedly, as it will cause it to burn. | 10. NO FOOD, NO DRINK OR SILLY STRING ON UNIT. |

Children of same age group must play on unit at same time only.

Maximum number of riders is as follows

Under 5 years	8 years and under	9 - 13 years	Older teen & adults
10	8	6	3

Do not overload!

Terms of lease: The lessee or using party shall be in charge of operation and is fully responsible for operation after receiving the unit. Lessor is not responsible for any injuries occurring to lessee or to any person using the leased property. Lessee further agrees to hold lessor free and harmless of any claims, further, lessor shall be indemnified for any and all costs involving the use of this leased equipment. Lessee will provide own liability insurance unless otherwise specified. Lessee is responsible for the replacement value of the new leased object in the event of theft, vandalism, fire or any act which damages or destroys the leased property.

Some rentals may be paid by check or credit card by previous agreement. If a check or credit card voucher comes back unpaid, the check or voucher or credit card ply a \$25.00 service fee must be paid in cash when notified. If payment is not received at the below address, the check will be turned over to an attorney for collection. Minimum charge being \$75.00 plus all costs for attorney's fees, and other expenses of enforcing this Agreement shall be paid to the prevailing party by the losing party.

Failure to comply with the terms of the agreement or failure to make payment or failure to have **Your Company Name** equipment returned as agreed to shall make lessee liable to lessor for an additional one day rental fee per day until all equipment is returned. In addition all court, legal and/or attorney fees incurred in order to obtain return of these rented products.

Silly string: Warning! Silly string damages inflatable bouncers and should not be in any instance used around or inside units. In the event that silly string is used around units the customer agrees to pay \$50.00 per house for removal, or replacement cost of unit, in the event that removal is not possible

Rain Cancellation/Refund Policy: The lessee has the option to cancel at the time the equipment is delivered. Refund or rain checks will not be issued in the event of the leased equipment is not used for any reason. If the equipment does not work properly it is up to the lessee to notify the lessor to correct it.

Lessee:		Lessor:	
Sue Happy	Best Jumpers	Unit Fee	\$ 125.36
124 Elm Drive	9315 Sunland Blvd.	Delivery Fee	\$ 15.00
Big Town, CA	Sun Valley, CA 91352	Accessory Fee	\$ na
(818) 123-4567		Tax	\$ 8.95
Accepted or represented by:	Best Jumpers rep	Total Due	\$ 149.31

I have read and understand the rules to follow and been instructed on how to use the leased equipment ____int.

Check information

Name:		Check Number:	
Date of Birth:		Expiration Date:	

Step 5: **Advertising:** *Get to know everyone and they will know you.*

Advertising is the process of getting your business known to potential clients. Because of the appeal of inflatables you have a ready made clientele. Family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and associates are all potential customers. Every time your inflatable goes up, it is advertising your business.

Targeting your market

Targeting you market is an easy process; you are looking for families with children between the ages of 2 and 12. There are several places you might want to start:

1. Schools & Churches
2. Grocery Store
3. Flea Markets / Swap meets
4. Dealerships

Schools & Churches, all have PTA’s or PTO’s and carnival and chances are you have children in school or know someone who does. The main objective of the PTA is to fundraise and they are constantly looking for ways to achieve that goal. Your goal is to advertise and every child in that school is a potential client. Provide the PTA with a coupon that offers a \$5 or \$10 discount off a jump rental. That \$5 isn’t for the customer but is a donation that goes to the PTA. This works well for churches too. **Grocery Stores:** If you don’t know your local grocery store manager – get to know him or her. (All mothers shop at grocery stores.) Ask the manager if you might schedule a morning (double coupon day if available) to set up a jump. You can either charge the store or if not just volunteer the unit. (You might need to add the store as an additional insured to satisfy the corporation.) You need to take plenty of business cards, consider having your prices stamped on the back of your card,

Flea Markets & Swap meets: If you live near a flea market or swap meet make a trip to visit it on a Friday or Saturday evening and see just how busy it is. Some businesses have been built solely on the referrals they get from flea markets. How you do it is this. . . Set up a jump, (it’s a good idea to take folding chairs, people are always looking for a place to sit) Charge a dollar or two for kids to jump and while they jumping pass out business cards to the parents with your prices stamped on the back. Take your rental book.

Dealerships: The bane of car dealerships is children. Children can make or break a deal. Particularly bored children often become restless and distract potential buyers. On the weekend when the traffic is heavy Dealerships will be more inclined to spend the money on inflatables.

Tools of the trade

1. Business cards
2. Thank you notes
3. Reminder postcards
4. Yellow pages advertising
5. Coupon advertising
6. Television advertising
7. Radio advertising
8. T-Shirts
9. Magnetic door panels
10. Pens

1. **Business cards** are very important to utilize. People will ask for business cards frequently and if you fail to provide them then more than likely you will lose a potential customer. With business cards you might want to consider using them a couple of different ways: (a) Magnets and (b) Pricelists

(a) Magnets: You can easily turn your business card into a refrigerator magnet by purchasing business cards sized adhesive magnets at an office supply store. If you plan to do this have your cards printed in full color so the customer will be more likely to display them. This advertisement reminds the customer who they rented from and saves them the trouble of leafing through the yellow pages.

(b) Pricelists: Business cards can be transformed into price lists which are passed out at parties by purchasing a business cards sized stamp with your pricing on it. The stamps are around 25 dollars, a real saving when you consider the cost of printing double sided business cards. The stamps can be changed is you decide to raise or lower your prices.

2. **Thank you notes:** Notes should be sent a few days after your party. If you have an inflatable software system it will likely have a selection of notes with fields that are automatically filled with the customer's information. However thank you notes can be done by hand and is a very nice touch.

3. **Reminder postcards:** Postcards are cheaper as reminder notes than letter. They can be colorful, fun and feature your newest unit. Reminder cards should be sent out a month prior to the previous year's rental. For example: If Billy Brown had a jump delivered in September of last year for his birthday, you would want to send out a reminder in early August. The reminder should read something like this, "*its Billy's 7th birthday party on September 14th. Let's make a date! Happy Birthday Billy! Best Jumpers.*"

4. **Yellow Pages Advertising:** As discussed previously, the yellow pages are initially the easiest way to get your name in front of the buying public. If possible, coordinate your grand opening with the release of the yellow pages ad for the greatest impact. The size of the ad initially should be small, no larger than a 16th of a page. Even if you buy eight or more jumps, ease yourself into the business, become familiar with it before aggressively marketing yourself. You want to establish your style of operation and familiarize yourself with the industry prior to pushing the growth.

5. **Coupon Advertising:** Coupon ads can be costly or free. If you go with a mailing publication they will cost per delivery are, however, the sales person can provide you with the demographic makeup of your mailing area. IE: the density of single family homes with children in elementary school. If there is an Entertainment Book distributed in your area, the advertising is free. It's a good way to get your name out and offer a savings, and find new customers. Any time you can get advertising for free, do it. Every time

your name is heard its advertising. You want your name to become synonymous with the industry, like McDonald's is to hamburgers.

6. Television Advertising: Television advertising is effective. You will get business from it, but chances are that you won't have the equipment or staff to accommodate the events or the calls. Cable advertising offers you demographic time slots that are as effective as the network slots at a fraction of the price. If you intend to grow your business to the capacity of television advertising, start planning now.

7. Radio Advertising: Radio advertising is a different kind of media, these are traders and barterers. If you are good enough at trading you may never have to pay for your advertising on a radio station. Radio's frequency broadcast from location. They are paid to air their programs from these locations by the merchants. The job of the radio stations is to use their celebrity to draw these customers. You have entertainment value in you inflatables. Offer the radio advertisers a supervise jump whenever they are broadcasting from a mall, toy store, car dealership anything that can be construed as child related, and their party of the deal is to tell consumers who is providing the inflatable.

8. T-Shirts: T-shirts are a form of advertising that not only reminds customers who is providing their jumper, but also adds a touch of professionalism to your business. If you use T-shirts to advertise, make sure you keep them clean and pressed, toss the only ratty one out.

9. Magnet Door Panels: Only use door panel is you have an attractive vehicle to attach them to. Hanging your advertisement to a beat up jalopy is hardly going to win over new customers. However, a door panel can be a mobile form of advertising and every bit of advertising counts.

10. Pens: Pens are the only form of advertising that is arguably a waste of money. It is doubtful that any inflatable company in the history of business has ever rented a single bounce house from the phone number on a pen. You do need pens and they add, somewhat, to name recognition. Very soon after you start your business you will be bombarded with salesmen wanting to sell you personalized pens. It is superfluous but your choice.

Step 6: **Setting up a database**

Information should be entered into your database in that order. Customers should be categorized by month of rental in order to re-contact them the following year with a reminder card.

1. Month of rental
2. Customer
3. Address
4. Phone numbers
5. Inflatable
6. Children / Ages
7. Birthdates

Databases are crucial in the maintenance of your customer base. Customers like to feel that they are important to you. In turn they will respond by giving you their business year after year and referring to heir friends. If you can, use industry software, however, if you don't there are sever good database on the market which include Microsoft Outlook and Act by Symantec.

Step 7: **Taking Orders:** *Be in control, be professional, be ethical and be in business ten years.*

"What do you have available?" "What are your prices?" The tow most commonly asked questions in the Jump rental biz. It's easy to rattle off the themes you carry and your prices. It takes a little salesmanship, enthusiasm and belief in your business to convince a customer that they found their jump.

For Example:

Joe Customer: "What themes do have available?"

You: "We have lots of fun themes to choose from. What is your event?"

Joe Customer: "It's a birthday party."

You: "Wonderful, is it for a little girl or a boy?"

Joe Customer: "My son."

You: "Does your party have a theme?"

Joe Customer: "I think my wife said it's going to be Harry Potter."

You: "Excellent. I have the perfect unit for your party. We have a green dragon with big red toenails and a ridge of orange tips down his back. He's fun, whimsical but not scary and couldn't be more perfect for Harry Potter theme."

Joe Customer: "Let's do it."

Customers are looking for a reason to stop calling around and you have just convinced them that they just found their jump. The rest of the call is fairly easy after that, you fill in all the blanks on your delivery order form, repeat all the information back to the customer and promise to give them a reminder call the Wednesday prior to the party to reconfirm their reservation.

Wednesday reminder calls are very important; they remind the customer that they have a jump coming so if they had an emergency and aren't going to have the party after all, you'll know. That gives you several days to find another customer for that jump.

Deposits: As discussed earlier if others in your area aren't taking deposit it's hard to justify taking them. When working from your home, you likely would prefer not to have customers knocking on your door to deliver a deposit. It's inconvenient for customer and a possible sale spoiler. On the other had taking credit card numbers over the phone is easy enough and you get pre-paid.

Be ethical while conducting your business; always treat customers how you wish to be treated. If you are fully booked a customer begs you to rent him or her, a unit that is already rented; they offer you more money; don't do it. Three people will know what you did. The original customer, the second customer and you will know. Don't do anything deliberate that you have to apologize for. It's not worth the few extra dollars to get a reputation of being unreliable.

Step 8: Deliveries: "Be on early, be considerate, and be safe and pickup on time"

Organization is key in the rental business. Paperwork for the deliveries should be read by Thursday afternoon or Friday morning. Flow Charts should be done by Friday afternoon at the very latest. From the rental agreement forms you can determine which bouncers go out and what equipment you will need its good to devise a checklist in advance to inventory your truck before you leave. A checklist should contain some of the following information:

Checklist			
Delivery Forms: -----		Rags: -----	
Hand Truck: -----		Cleaner: -----	
Sledge Hammer: -----		Vaccuum: -----	
Bouncers			
1. _____	Ext. Cord ----	Tarp ----	Stakes ---- Sandbags ----
2. _____	Ext. Cord ----	Tarp ----	Stakes ---- Sandbags ----
3. _____	Ext. Cord ----	Tarp ----	Stakes ---- Sandbags ----

Also, do a dry run before you set out on your first delivery, choose a location and determine the time it takes from load up to set up. You need to allow for any unexpected snafus, the customer is late or the setup location is difficult to get to. Many things can happen to slow the delivery process.

Being early by at least a half hour is a good habit. Seasoned business owners will tell you they'd rather be 2 hours early than 2 minutes late. Customers will rarely complain about an early delivery but will expect a refund if you're even a few minutes behind schedule. If you are more than a half hour early call the customer to okay the delivery time and to assure you that they will be at that location to accept the delivery.

When scheduling the driver allow at the most one delivery per hour in case of any snafus. The only exception to that rule is if you have 2 jumps going to the same customer. Take into consideration driving time.

Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations on the setup of your equipment. Even when running late you must always make certain that the equipment is working correctly and is properly installed.

Just as key as being prompt for the delivery, picking up a unit on time is very important. A prompt pickup demonstrates the professionalism of your company. Particularly when delivering to a park you need to watch the clock. Generally when a customer has given a time for the pickup they are ready to leave either at that time or prior to that time. Giving them your cell number is helpful, but explain that it may take you some extra time if they request an early pickup.

There is a certain etiquette that needs to be followed when delivering to parks. The parks have rules that must be adhered to by the drivers. Certain parks don't have drive areas so units must be wheeled to the setup area. Some parks don't have electricity and generators are needed. Customers may be running late so additional time may be needed. Ask your local parks department what the rules are regarding the setup of inflatables.

When delivering to parks explain to the customer that the unit is their responsibility until you arrive. Jumps are expensive and if left unattended that can be stolen or vandalized.

Step 9: Accountants & Attorneys

Although there is an abundance of accounting software on the market, nothing beats an accountant to walk you through the process of keeping your books in order. Even if you merely use them to set up and do your taxes monthly, it will save you lots of grief, not to mention penalties and fines for late and incorrect payments.

Attorneys are also highly recommended when setting up the legal aspects of your business. It is recommended that you have an attorney read your rental agreement form (even if you intend to use the form provided in this book) to make recommendations for changes. It is also good to have an attorney to call in case you receive a bad check. You might want to sign a contract with a collection firm to handle bad checks but an attorney usually has more impact.

Step 10: Getting to know your competition

Getting to know your competitors is both the most difficult and the most constructive thing you can do to move your business ahead. There is a certain amount of apprehension when one considers the prospect of calling up your competitor and saying . . . *"Hi I just went into business and notice that you were doing the same exact thing. I'd like to get to know you and find out what you're doing and how it's working for you."* You might hear a click . . . or you might be surprised and they might have a very enlightening conversation. You could suggest sharing information on bad check writers. Turn over business on the weekends you may be out of town. Use each others generators when you have exceptionally busy weekend or occasionally do a pickup for each other. Of course this won't happen over night and certainly shouldn't be suggested at the first conversation. This business owner may warily regard you initially, but as time goes on they might begin to trust you and eventually be helpful to you.

This booklet was designed to help an entrepreneur get started in the inflatables industry. Hopefully it has achieved that goal. If you have any question or comments free free to email Best Jumpers at info@bestjumpers.com