



JOHN BRUMMETT & BJ WINDHORST

Owners, Air Free Duct Cleaning

Industry: Cleaning & Service

AT A GLANCE



Increased Value Builder Score™ from 51 to 60



Increased revenue by 50% in first year



Primary Key Driver: Monopoly Control



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VALUE BUILDER BUSINESS OWNER STORY: Air Free Duct Cleaning Increased Revenue by 50% in its First Year Working with a Certified Value Builder™

BACKGROUND

In 2018 John Brummett and BJ Windhorst partnered to purchase Air Free Duct Cleaning. Together, they had a diverse background in sales, insurance, and business management, giving them the experience necessary to take over the company successfully. Their goal was to purchase a healthy business, grow the company, and have the option of selling.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

After taking over, Brummett and Windhorst agreed to keep the previous owner on board for a few months. Their first observation was that the owner was too involved in the company's day-to-day operations. They noticed him completing paper timecards, writing paychecks, conducting sales, managing invoices, and doing the air duct cleaning. Brummett and Windhorst knew these manual processes needed to be delegated or automated with the previous owner departing.

They also realized that training new employees took six to nine months. In a high-turnover industry, this timeframe had to be reduced. With a better understanding of the air duct cleaning industry, they prioritized cross-training all staff. **"We wanted to find a way to have teams learn all roles (lead and support) as much as possible,"** Windhorst said. In doing so, they would have less reliance on specific employees and a more agile workforce.

Brummett and Windhorst knew how to address the operational side of the business. They now needed guidance on how to grow the business. This led them to search for a consultant who could get their hands dirty and provide useful, actionable plans for growing the company.

WORKING WITH A CERTIFIED VALUE BUILDER™

Susan Clements is the CEO of Benchmark Business Group (BGG) and is a Certified Value Builder™. With over 20 years of business consulting experience, she has helped hundreds of business owners gain control of their companies and increase value. Brummett saw Bob Clements, Susan's partner, speak at a Remodelers Association event. The presentation discussed strategies for designing a business to increase value and mentioned how The Value Builder System™ can help. After seeing this and speaking to existing clients, Brummett was convinced BBG was the right choice.

When discussing her first impressions, Clements said, **"I saw two owners; both wanted to grow but thought differently. The most important thing was to make sure they had a common vision on how to grow and scale."** To create alignment, Clements leveraged The Value Builder System™. By providing 12 simple modules for them to follow, Brummett and Windhorst found a common language and worked together on improving the business one step at a time.

Reflecting on how this impacted the owners, Clements said, **"The Value Builder System™ does a lot of the heavy lifting. They both went through exercises and came together to discuss it. They began to see things more clearly and wanted to grow and create a turnkey business that would work without them."**

The first step in leveraging The Value Builder System™ is the Value Builder Questionnaire. This online assessment gives business owners a score on how valuable their business is based on the 8 Key Drivers of Company Value. One key driver they focused on was Monopoly Control—how well-differentiated the business is from competitors. At the time, Air Free Duct Cleaning was like any other duct cleaning company. To stand out, they decided to invest heavily in marketing. The rebranding exercise included a new logo, a redesigned website, updated messaging, and eye-catching



SUSAN CLEMENTS

CEO, Benchmark
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direct mail promotions. In identifying this as a turning point, Clements said, ***“Once they focused on improving Monopoly Control, it flipped for all the other Key Drivers.”***

By addressing Monopoly Control, they created differentiation in the market. They repositioned Air Free Duct Cleaning as a full-service air quality company for homes. Brummett and Windhorst also diversified their offering to include dryer vent cleanings and laundry room inspections.

A beautifully designed direct mail campaign fueled new business and positively impacted another key driver, Growth Potential, which assesses the business’s likelihood of growth. A renewed focus on marketing helped to increase their Growth Potential score from 53 to 73. This rebranding effort enabled them to increase revenue by 50% and gave them the ability to add a third truck and crew.

Brummett and Windhorst decided to delegate specific functions to other employees. They replaced an office admin with a salesperson and added a field supervisor. They also cut down training time by half and cross-trained technicians to handle multiple roles. The company can now operate smoothly without direct involvement from Brummett or Windhorst. These changes enabled Windhorst to sell more large commercial jobs as they continued to scale.



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RESULTS

Before Brummett and Windhorst began working with Clements, they had already made several process improvements. They deployed mobile calendars, a digital invoicing app, QuickBooks, and direct deposit. Clements and The Value Builder System™ helped identify other vital areas that were impeding growth. When describing how applicable The Value Builder System™ is over time, Brummett said, ***“The value has really been in meeting us where we need it. The tool has something for every phase of the growth path.”***

After redoing the Value Builder Questionnaire, Brummett and Windhorst discovered they increased their score from 51 to 60. Describing the journey so far, Brummett said, ***“This increase is validation that we are headed on the right path. Working with Susan has kept us focused.”***

In their second year of working with a Certified Value Builder™, Clements notes, ***“Now they are asking, what progress did we make, and what is the next level of achievement?”*** Improving processes, identifying growth potential, and differentiating themselves from competitors is only the beginning. Brummett and Windhorst are on the right path towards building a valuable, sellable company.



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