Special Report

The "Almost Perfect" Vacuum: Top Recommended Vacuums for Residential Cleaning Services

Solve your vacuum conundrum with these guidelines about uprights, canisters, backpacks and handheld models, PLUS download the 2014 Report on Professional Vacuums for Residential Cleaning Services.

"In 13 years as a Proctor & Gamble cleaning products sales rep and director and another almost 7 years owning and growing both residential and commercial cleaning businesses, I've learned this: there's no such thing as the perfect vacuum." ~Derek Christian, My Maid Service

How to Choose the "Almost Perfect" Vacuum

One of the most frustrating answers any business owner receives in response to a question is "it depends," but it's the best answer any consultant or even salesperson can give. At any given time, a business owner has different and changing goals s/he is trying to achieve; this leads to prioritizing different features of a vacuum – or any cleaning product or tool – at different times in the life of the business.

To combat the analysis paralysis, use these steps, originally presented in "Choosing the Right Professional Vacuum":

1. Survey your current and immediate future needs.
2. Compare the features and performance differences among upright, canister, backpack, and handheld vacuums to see which type of vacuum is, in general, most suited to meeting your needs.
3. Make a decision about filtration and dust containment options.
4. Research different brands/models and test for ease of use.
5. Investigate warranty and service options.
6. Consider other design features relevant to your needs.

Adopting a vacuum replacement or adding a new type of vacuum to your cleaning procedure requires time, patience, and documentation. And once you've made your choice, revise your training procedures and ensure that all current staff are re-trained thoroughly on the new equipment.

But before delving into the details of one vacuum versus another, arguably the most important distinction about vacuums that a cleaning service owner can make is the one between a consumer vacuum and a professional vacuum. Professional vacuums are designed to withstand 6-8 hours of daily use in a variety of dirt conditions; consumer vacuums are designed for light use, approximately 30 minutes per week. In addition, professional vacuums typically have much longer warranty periods than consumer vacuums, saving you money in repairs and replacements.

While the consumer vacuum available at your local big box or home store can assist technicians through a surprise contract opportunity or serve as a backup, the professional vacuums available from reputable distributors are the time and money-saving equipment and training investment cleaning business owners need to push through stagnant growth.

Reliable Resources on Professional Vacuum Performance

Beyond the product specifications, business owners and cleaning technicians want to know how different models hold up in the field – how they perform. For verification of specifications by a third party testing organization, turn to the Carpet and Rug Institute, which confers the CRI Seal of Approval for both consumer and professional-grade vacuums. Nearly all of the models presented in our 2014 report and recommended by manufacturers have the CRI Seal.

For efficiency benchmarks, consult the ISSA 540 Cleaning Times Booklet and Calculator, which includes a side-by-side time comparison of upright, canister, and backpack models. This is an especially useful tool for businesses looking to improve net income by reducing labor costs; tools that can help technicians achieve the same level of quality faster are cost savers.

For research studies focused on ways to improve indoor air quality, consult the library at the Toxic Use Reduction Institute (TURI), based in Massachusetts. With over 14,000 studies in its catalogs, this library is an invaluable resource for companies basing their unique selling points on environmental and health benefits of cleaning – and vacuums, in particular – to clients and to the natural environment.

The 2014 Report on Professional Vacuums for Residential Cleaning Services

In this first report on professional vacuums for residential cleaning services, three vacuum manufacturers accepted CBT's invitation to participate at no charge:

Founded by Anna and Melville Bissell in 1876, Bissell remains a family-owned company passionate about helping you effectively and easily clean your home so you can put down the vacuum, enjoy life and come home to a deeper clean. Bissell is in the fourth generation of family leadership and is currently the seventh oldest privately-held manufacturing company in the United States. Bissell BigGreen Commercial is committed to offering the best in professional deep cleaning equipment, including an extensive product line for all floor care cleaning needs. From carpet to hardwood floors and more our superior product line will have the equipment available for a variety of surfaces. Bissell BigGreen Commercial takes pride in our convenient customer service. We know that equipment down time can cost a cleaning company money, so we pride ourselves on the ability to reduce this problem. With a wide variety of products, Bissell BigGreen Commercial has the experience and attention to customer service to provide your cleaning business with a cost effective and reliable floor care product.

CleanMax is a division of Tacony Corporation which is a 60-year-old, privately-held organization based in Fenton, MO. We have been manufacturing vacuums for over 30 years and have a track record of providing superior products and service to the consumer and commercial markets. The CleanMax value proposition to the end user is very simple: provide a product with excellent cleaning capabilities, unique features at a fair price; and, a lower cost of ownership.

ProTeam is recognized as the original innovator of lightweight ergonomic backpack vacuum cleaners. Through continued research and development, our mission is to be the premier manufacturer of high performance vacuum cleaners for every commercial cleaner's need or preference. Today we have 25+ different vacuums for all cleaning applications. Our company was founded in 1987 by experienced cleaning professionals looking for a way to work more productively and sustainably. Worker and building occupant health have been guiding forces that go into every vacuum we make. All ProTeam vacuums have advanced Four Level® Filtration systems and comfortable ergonomic designs. We have directly or indirectly published hundreds of articles and research papers outlining the operational and Cleaning for Health® benefits of our backpack vacuum technology. We continue to market our products through education, and believe in promoting highly productive programs such as Team Cleaning® to help customers do more with less while enhancing health and safety. ProTeam's success in the commercial cleaning industry, driven largely by our resolve to educate the marketplace, effectively positioned us to expand our product line to embrace a full line of vacuums—including backpack, hipstyle, upright, canister, wet/dry, and battery machines.

More than 20 vacuum manufacturers representing over 40 vacuum brands were invited to participate in our survey at no cost.

2014 Report on Professional Vacuums for Residential Cleaning Services

Because, as My Maid Service owner Derek Christian says, there is no such thing as the "perfect vacuum," many cleaning companies choose to incorporate multiple models into their cleaning procedures to maximize the largest array of benefits. But for those companies seeking a more uniform procedure, as well as other advantages, selecting one type of vacuum may be of the highest benefit. Toward that end, this first section of the Professional Vacuums for Residential Cleaning Services report presents the averaged data provided by participants.

Common Specifications				
	Upright	Canister	Backpack	Handheld
MSRP	$425.99	$494.00	$575.99	$212.83
Useful (expected) Life	3-5 years	1-3 years	3-5 years	1-3 years
Height	46.75"	18.75"	16.75"	13.5"
Length		18"	12"	17.25"
Width	12.625"	14.5"	19"	9.75"
Weight (empty)	14"	16"	10.5"	8.3"
Capacity		9.5 lbs	6 qt	
Noise Level (dB)	69 dBA	63 dBA	68.75 dBA	75 dBA
Cord Length (max)	45'	50'	50'	25'
Motor Wattage	790 watts	1269 watts	972 watts	
CFM	110 CFM	128 CFM	122 CFM	76 CFM
Suction Capabilities				
Airflow (liters/second)	110 CFM	128 CFM	122 CFM	76 CFM
Water Lift	91"	99.2"	75"	72.5"
Filtration Options				
HEPA filter (Y/N)	Y	N	Y	Y
True HEPA filtration (Y/N)	Y	N	N	N
Multi-level filtration (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cyclonic (Y/N)	N	N	N	N
Bags or Bagless	Bag	Bag	Bag	Bagless
Resuable or Disposable Filters	Disposable	Disposable	Disposable	N/A
Average Floor Settings or Attachments				
Hard Floor (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Low-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Medium-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Plush Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pet Hair (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y
Adjustable (Y/N)	Y	N	N	N

More than 20 vacuum manufacturers with over 40 vacuum brand lines were invited to participate in our survey at no cost. All data reported is provided by the vacuum manufacturer or brand leadership provider. Supreme Mullet Media, LLC and *Cleaning Business Today* make no warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability or availability of the reported data. To the fullest extent permissible under applicable law, we disclaim all warranties, express or implies, including but not limited to implied warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose, title, and non-infringement. Any reliance you place on such information is, therefore, strictly at your own risk.

Survey: Uprights for Residential Cleaning Services

The most popular domestic and commercial model used in the US is the upright vacuum. The dirty-air/direct fan type of upright used primarily in professional cleaning applications is known for creating an efficient airflow with a low amount of power.

Advantages of Upright Models:

- Most efficient airflow system
- Dual motor models provide efficient airflow and optimal suction

Disadvantages of Upright Models:

- Generally heavier than other models
- Low maneuverability due to size and bulk
- Low performance on hard flooring

Uprights: Model Information

Common Name	Lightweight	Pro-Series Zero	ProGen® 12
Make	Bissell	CleanMax	ProTeam®
Model Number	BGU8000	CMPS-QDZ	107329
MSRP	$199	$589.99	$489
Discounts for members of (list all, including cleaning industry associations)	Discounts available to professional cleaning companies		
Booth # at ISSA/INTERCLEAN North America 2014 in Orlando, FL	Booth #601	Booth #1967	Booth #701

Uprights: Common Specifications

	Bissell: Lightweight	CleanMax: Pro-Series Zero	ProTeam: ProGen® 12
Height	47”	N/R	46.5”
Length	9.5”	N/R	N/R
Width	13.25”	N/R	12-inch powerhead
Weight (empty)	8.4 lbs	17 lbs	17 lbs
Capacity	N/R	N/R	3.25 qt
Noise Level (dB)	N/R	Less than 70 dBA	69 dBA
Cord Length (max)	40’	60’	40’
Motor Wattage	480 watts	10 amp	1100 watts
CFM Average	N/R	120 CFM	100 CFM

Uprights: Suction Capabilities

	Bissell: Lightweight	CleanMax: Pro-Series Zero	ProTeam: ProGen® 12
Airflow (liters/second)	N/R	120 CFM	100 CFM
Water Lift		89”	93”

Uprights: Filtration Options

	Bissell: Lightweight	CleanMax: Pro-Series Zero	ProTeam: ProGen® 12
HEPA filter (Y/N)	N	Y	Y
True HEPA filtration (Y/N)	N	Y	Y
Multi-level Filtration (Y/N)	Y	N	Y
Cyclonic (Y/N)	N	N	N
Bags or Bagless	Bags	Bags	Bags
Resuable or Disposable Filters	Disposable	Both	Disposable

Uprights: Floor Settings or Attachments

	Bissell: Lightweight	CleanMax: Pro-Series Zero	ProTeam: ProGen® 12
Hard Floor (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Low-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Medium-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Plush Carpet (Y/N)	N	Y	Y
Pet Hair (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Adjustable (Y/N)	Y	Automatic	N

Uprights: Warranty and Repair

	Bissell: Lightweight	CleanMax: Pro-Series Zero	ProTeam: ProGen® 12
Useful Life (include use assumptions)	N/R	4 years with proper maintenance	N/R
Lifetime Manufacturer Warranty (Y/N)	N	Y – belt only	N
Limited Manufacturer Warranty (specify duration)	1 year	2 years on motor 1 year comprehensive	3 years on parts, labor, motor, and molded body parts
Parts Manufacturer Warranty (specify parts and duration)	1 year	N/R	3 years
Certified Repair Technicians/Centers (Y/N)	Y	Y	N/R

Uprights: Certifications and Awards

	Bissell: Lightweight	CleanMax: Pro-Series Zero	ProTeam: ProGen® 12
CRI Seal/Certification for this model	None	CERTIFIED SILVER	CERTIFIED SILVER
Industry Awards for this model	None	2008 ISSA Innovation Award	None

Survey: Canisters for Residential Cleaning Services

More commonly adopted in the European market, canister vacuums have gained popularity in the US primarily due to their small profile and ease of transportation from job to job.

Advantages of Canister Models:

- Flexibility in application using a variety of unit heads and attachments
- Maneuverability around and under furniture
- Availability of both hard floor and motorized carpet heads

Disadvantages of Canister Models:

- Management of two moveable parts simultaneously
- Motorized power head for carpet cleaning often not available

Canisters: Model Information

Common Name	High-filtration Canister Vacuum	RunningVac®
Make	Bissell	ProTeam®
Model Number	BGCOMP9H	107150
MSRP	$399.00	$589.00
Discounts for members of (list all, including cleaning industry associations)	Discounts available to professional cleaning companies	
Booth # at ISSA/INTERCLEAN North America 2014 in Orlando, FL	Booth #601	Booth #701
Other Data for identifying the correct model when ordering		RunningVac w/Xover Floor Tool Kit D (Model # 107100)

Canisters: Common Specifications

	Bissell: High-filtration Canister Vacuum	ProTeam: RunningVac®
Height	21”	16.5”
Length	16”	20”
Width	17”	12”
Weight (empty)	20 lbs	12 lbs
Capacity	9 qt	10 qt
Noise Level (dB)	60 dB	66 dB
Cord Length (max)	50’	50’
Motor Wattage	1350 watts	1188 watts
CFM	106 CFM	150 CFM

Canisters: Suction Capabilities

	Bissell: High-filtration Canister Vacuum	ProTeam: RunningVac®
Airflow (liters/second)	106 CFM	150 CFM
Water Lift	98.4”	100”

Canisters: Filtration Options

	Bissell: High-filtration Canister Vacuum	ProTeam: RunningVac®
HEPA filter (Y/N)	Y	N
True HEPA filtration (Y/N)	N	N
Multi-level Filtration (Y/N)	Y	Y
Cyclonic (Y/N)	N	N
Bags or Bagless	Bags	Bags
Resuable or Disposable Filters	Disposable	Disposable

Canisters: Floor Settings or Attachments

	Bissell: High-filtration Canister Vacuum	ProTeam: RunningVac®
Hard Floor (Y/N)	Y	Y
Low-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y
Medium-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y
Plush Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y
Pet Hair (Y/N)	Y	Y
Adjustable (Y/N)	N	N

Canisters: Warranty and Repair

	Bissell: High-filtration Canister Vacuum	ProTeam: RunningVac®
Useful Life (include use assumptions)	N/R	N/R
Lifetime Manufacturer Warranty (Y/N)	Y – on fan	Y – molded body parts
Limited Manufacturer Warranty (specify duration)	1 year	3 years on parts, labor, and motor
Parts Manufacturer Warranty (specify parts and duration)	1 year	3 years
Certified Repair Technicians/Centers (Y/N)	N/R	N/R

Canisters: Certifications and Awards

	Bissell: High-filtration Canister Vacuum	ProTeam: RunningVac®
CRI Seal/Certification for this model	None	CERTIFIED GOLD

Survey: Backpacks for Residential Cleaning Services

ProTeam holds the distinction of inventing the first backpack vacuum in the mid-1980s, focusing on a lightweight construction and ergonomic design to reduce stress and fatigue for cleaning technicians. Originally marketed to commercial cleaning services, backpacks have also been embraced by residential cleaning companies focused on improving efficiency and productivity, which can reduce labor costs.

Advantages of Backpack Models:

- Allows for rapid movement over large amounts of floor space
- Lighter weight than uprights or canisters in most cases

Disadvantages of Backpack Models:

- Changes the technician's body profile and risks damage to client's home; resolve with dedicated and thorough training
- Technician discomfort, usually associated with improper adjustments and fitting

Backpacks: Model Information

Common Name	Pro Series	6-quart Backpack	Sierra®
Make	Bissell	CleanMax	ProTeam®
Model Number	BGPRO6A	CMBP-6	103242
MSRP	$349.00	$429.99	$949.00
Discounts for members of (list all, including cleaning industry associations)	Discounts available to professional cleaning companies		Discounts available to ARCSI members through select distributors
Booth # at ISSA/INTERCLEAN North America 2014 in Orlando, FL	Booth #601	Booth #1967	Booth #701
Other Data for identifying the correct model when ordering			Sierra w/Commercial Power Nozzle Kit (Model # 103224)

Backpacks: Common Specifications

	Bissell: Pro Series	CleanMax: 6-quart Backpack	ProTeam: Sierra®
Height	11"	N/R	22.5"
Length	13"	N/R	11"
Width	30"	N/R	8"
Weight (empty)	10 lbs	11.5 lbs	10 lbs
Capacity	6 qt	N/R	6 qt
Noise Level (dB)	N/R	69.5 dBA	68 dBA
Cord Length (max)	50'	50'	50'
Motor Wattage	1200 wawtts	11.5 amp	744 watts
CFM	122 CFM	120 CFM	124 CFM

Backpacks: Suction Capabilities

	Bissell: Pro Series	CleanMax: 6-quart Backpack	ProTeam: Sierra®
Airflow (liters/second)	122 CFM	120 CFM	124 CFM
Water Lift	N/R	N/R	75”

Backpacks: Filtration Options

	Bissell: Pro Series	CleanMax: 6-quart Backpack	ProTeam: Sierra®
HEPA filter (Y/N)	N	Y	N
True HEPA filtration (Y/N)	N	Y	N
Multi-level Filtration (Y/N)	Y	N	Y
Cyclonic (Y/N)	N	N	N
Bags or Bagless	Bags	Bag	Bags
Resuable or Disposable Filters	Disposable	Both	Disposable

Backpacks: Floor Settings or Attachments

	Bissell: Pro Series	CleanMax: 6-quart Backpack	ProTeam: Sierra®
Hard Floor (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Low-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Medium-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Plush Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Pet Hair (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Adjustable (Y/N)	N	N/A	N

Backpacks: Warranty and Repair

	Bissell: Pro Series	CleanMax: 6-quart Backpack	ProTeam: Sierra®
Useful Life (include use assumptions)	N/R	4 years with proper maintenance	N/R
Lifetime Manufacturer Warranty (Y/N)	N	N	Y – molded body parts
Limited Manufacturer Warranty (specify duration)	1 year	1 year overall	3 years on parts, labor, and motor
Parts Manufacturer Warranty (specify parts and duration)	5 years – motor	N/R	3 years
Certified Repair Technicians/Centers (Y/N)	Y	Y	N/R

Backpacks: Certifications and Awards

	Bissell: Pro Series	CleanMax: 6-quart Backpack	ProTeam: Sierra®
CRI Seal/Certification for this model	None	BRONZE	CERTIFIED GOLD

Survey: Handhelds for Residential Cleaning Services

Smaller handheld models have been adapted from both upright and canister systems to provide powerful and durable units for extremely small jobs and to offer smaller units for transport by bicycle or using mass transportation in urban areas.

Advantages of Handheld Models:

- Smallest profile for easy transport
- Wet/dry options allow for spot-cleaning service add-ons (upsells)

Disadvantages of Handheld Models:

- Reduced airflow and suction in many models; can take longer to complete a job
- Odors and cross-contamination potential is high for wet/dry systems when not properly maintained

Handhelds: Model Information

Common Name	Little Hercules	Portable Detail Jet	ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
Make	Bissell	CleanMax	ProTeam®
Model Number	BGC2000	CM-JET	107127
MSRP	$99.50	$199.99	$339.00
Discounts for members of (list all, including cleaning industry associations)	Discounts available to professional cleaning companies		
Booth # at ISSA/INTERCLEAN North America 2014 in Orlando, FL	Booth #601	Booth #1967	Booth #701

Handhelds: Common Specifications

	Bissell: Little Hercules	CleanMax: Portable Detail Jet	ProTeam: ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
Height	11”	N/R	16”
Length	19”	N/R	15.5”
Width	11”	N/R	8.5”
Weight (empty)	8 lbs	6.5 lbs	10.5 lbs
Capacity	N/R	N/R	3 gal.
Noise Level (dB)	84 dBA	Less than 70 dBA	72 dBA
Cord Length (max)	15’	35’ (2 30’ pigtailed cords)	Cordless
Motor Wattage	1000 watts	8 amp	18 volt

Handhelds: Suction Capabilities

	Bissell: Little Hercules	CleanMax: Portable Detail Jet	ProTeam: ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
Airflow (liters/second)	N/R	N/R	60 CFM
Water Lift	N/R	107”	38”

Handhelds: Filtration Options

	Bissell: Little Hercules	CleanMax: Portable Detail Jet	ProTeam: ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
HEPA filter (Y/N)	N	Y	N
True HEPA filtration (Y/N)	N	Y	N
Multi-level filtration (Y/N)	N	N	Y
Cyclonic (Y/N)	Y	N	N
Bags or Bagless	Bagless	Bag	Bagless
Resuable or Disposable Filters	N/A	Both	N/A

Handhelds: Floor Settings or Attachments

	Bissell: Little Hercules	CleanMax: Portable Detail Jet	ProTeam: ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
Hard Floor (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Low-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Medium-pile Carpet (Y/N)	Y	N	Y
Plush Carpet (Y/N)	Y	N	Y
Pet Hair (Y/N)	Y	N	Y
Adjustable (Y/N)	N	N/A	N

Handhelds: Warranty and Repair

	Bissell: Little Hercules	CleanMax: Portable Detail Jet	ProTeam: ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
Useful Life (include use assumptions)	N/R	3 years with proper maintenance	N/R
Lifetime Manufacturer Warranty (Y/N)	N	N	Y – molded body parts
Limited Manufacturer Warranty (specify duration)	1 year	1 year overall	3 years on parts and labor 1 year on motor, battery, and charger
Parts Manufacturer Warranty (specify parts and duration)	1 year	N/R	3 years
Certified Repair Technicians/Centers (Y/N)	Y	Y	N/R

Handhelds: Certifications and Awards

	Bissell: Little Hercules	CleanMax: Portable Detail Jet	ProTeam: ProGuard® LI 3 Cordless Wet/Dry
CRI Seal/Certification for this model	None	BRONZE	None