

Yes! You Can

**Make money as a
Certified RV
Inspector**



*The first step into a new life
as a self-employed RV
inspector.*

By Terry Cooper



Yes, You Can Make Money as a Certified RV Inspector

The National RV Inspectors Association

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Introduction

Following the recessions of 2001, 2009 and 2020, one thing is certain: Regardless of what you do for a living, your job is not safe. It could come to an end at any moment through no fault of your own.

That's why you need a "side hustle," or a business that you alone control so you can't be fired, laid off or stuck in a dead-end job. That way, if anything happens to your primary job, the biggest impact on your life will be deciding how to celebrate this new direction.

A side business is a wonderful way to grow a secondary income without putting everything on the line to jump right into launching a full-time business. It's all about having options and giving you more control over the direction of your life. Who cares more about you and your family than you?

Here are some other benefits of having a side business:

- More money for savings or your retirement account.
- More money to pay off bills so you can enter retirement totally debt free.

This booklet will look at the growing opportunity to start a business inspecting recreation vehicles (RVs).

If you have good attention to detail and a desire to provide a valuable service to grateful people, then this business might be for you. You don't need a lot of technical skill or even knowledge, just a desire to help others feel more comfortable about a major purchase.

As you read this booklet, I am convinced that you will see the potential of owning an RV inspection business. I, along with the rest of the staff at the National RV Training Center and the National RV Inspectors Association, stand ready to help get you started the right way on a very lucrative business, whether you opt to do it full- or part-time.

You've been thinking about "doing something." Perhaps you've been praying for an answer to a financial challenge. Maybe you're just tired of going through the motions at your job and you're looking for something that really ignites your spirit to give you hope for a better future.

Whatever your motivation may be for investigating this business, we'll open the door for you to step in and peek around. Then, when you're ready, we'll help you take the next steps to turning this idea into reality. So, buckle up, this could be an amazing adventure!

TERRY "COOPER" COOPER
President
National RV Inspectors Association

CHAPTER ONE

The need for RV inspectors

If you have ever purchased a home, chances are very good that you had it inspected before you finalized the loan documents. It's the same in the marine industry. You may have had a marine survey prior to purchasing a boat. You may have done the same thing when buying a used car by having a mechanic you trust check it over for potential problems.

RV inspectors perform similar services. Inspectors aren't going to advise people as to whether or not they should buy a particular RV. Their job is to check it over from top to bottom and identify issues with the unit, whether it is a pop-up camper, travel trailer, fifth wheel or motorhome.

There is a common misconception that only fully-trained and certified RV technicians are knowledgeable enough to inspect a recreation vehicle. That is not true at all.

It does not take a rocket scientist to see a stain on the ceiling to know there is water coming in from somewhere. Nor does it take a lot of skill to ensure the appliances work, water comes on, the outlets deliver electricity, and there aren't any holes in the roof.

Yes, inspectors need some technical skills. They need to use a tool to check tire and water pressure, as well as use a manometer to test pressure in propane lines – all of which are easy to learn to use. Inspectors also learn how to extract fluid from a motorhome to send to a lab for analysis.

But, they do not need to identify the source of a water leak, the reason why the television doesn't come on or determine why the refrigerator temperature doesn't get lower than 50 degrees. All the inspector does is discover the problem and report results.

Having RVs inspected by qualified third-parties is a relatively new benefit available to buyers.

In the past, people have paid RV dealers to do inspections. However, their service departments are often weeks behind in fixing all the RVs needing repair. If a dealer does an inspection, it won't be nearly as thorough as one performed by an independent third-party.

Buyers may also wonder if the dealership is noting a deficiency just so its service department can profit from having the problem fixed.

Inspectors certified by the National RV Inspectors Association are prohibited through the association's code of ethics from making any repairs for problems discovered during the evaluation. That gives more credibility to the final report because there is no motivation for inspectors to suggest unnecessary repairs.

Trained inspectors

Inspectors trained and certified by the National RV Inspectors Association (NRVIA) are capable of evaluating any recreation vehicle. They are looking at all systems to ensure they work properly. They are familiar with the three types of power onboard every RV:

- 120-volt AC system – Electricity used to operate appliances, lights, televisions, etc., whenever the RV is plugged into a power pole.

- 12-volt DC home system – This includes things that run off a bank of batteries to provide creature comforts, like lights, even if the RV isn't plugged in.
- 12-volt DC auto system – These items operate off a standard automotive battery, like leveling jacks, and a motorhome's engine.

Inspectors also have a basic understanding of propane systems used to deliver fuel to the oven, furnace and, sometimes, an absorption refrigerator.

The inspectors have extra training to understand how to evaluate the inner workings of a recreation vehicle. They are shown how to conduct a top-to-bottom inspection and prepare detailed reports. They also learn to collect samples for fluid analysis on motorhomes.

Because people who complete this training, pass a written exam and submit two actual inspections (one travel trailer and one motorhome) can attain official certification, NRVIA Certified RV Inspectors often command higher prices for their evaluations.

They are hired by buyers to complete a thorough analysis of an RV they're thinking of purchasing. They can also be hired by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to inspect RVs being purchased by the federal government to serve as emergency homes following natural disasters.

Why is an inspection important?

People would never buy a home without an inspection. It should reason they'd never buy a home on wheels without an inspection either. In fact, it's probably even more important for someone to have an RV evaluated before buying it.

RVs shake, rattle and roll down highways at speeds up to 70 mph. A tropical storm is considered a hurricane when its wind speeds reach 75 mph. As a result, things on an RV WILL break – and often.

Demand is so high for RVs that the units are completely built in just four days. While some manufacturers have rigorous quality control checks, others aren't as diligent. Dealers give the RVs a cursory review when they arrive on the lots just to make sure they are ready for display.

A thorough RV inspection is essential to protect buyers from purchasing a lemon and, more importantly, from incurring a lot of expense by having a litany of items repaired after they take delivery of the unit. Even if the post-sale repairs are covered by warranty, it can often take months to get the RV back from the service department. Yet, the buyer must continue to make monthly payments and, of course, doesn't get to enjoy using the RV.

An inspection will uncover major and minor problems during the evaluation. With that list in hand, buyers are in a much better position to:

- Negotiate a lower price on the RV. In fact, many times the savings more than covers the cost of having the unit inspected.
- Ensure broken items are repaired or replaced before accepting delivery of the unit. You'd be surprised how quickly problems can be repaired by an RV dealer if a delay impedes the sale of the RV.
- Have a better understanding of how much additional investment will be needed to completely address all the problems uncovered in the inspection.

- Prioritize repairs. A leaking roof takes precedence over a leaky faucet. An owner might live with a temperamental drawer that doesn't always close properly, but not a refrigerator door that swings open during travel.

It is infinitely better to have an RV evaluated by a trained professional inspector than it would be for the buyer to look over the RV himself – even with years of RVing experience.

An inspection is critical for anyone just entering the RV lifestyle. Someone new to the RV industry doesn't even know what questions to ask about an RV, let alone know what to look for to ensure the vehicle is okay to use. RV manufacturers put a lot of bling inside their units, and that can distract buyers so they don't see potential problems with essential components and structures.

Finally, a thorough, well-documented inspection prevents an RV buyer from being taken advantage of by an unscrupulous seller. The National RV Inspectors Association (NRVIA) has received reports of buyers purchasing an RV and driving it away only to discover one of the televisions was missing, or an upgraded component was replaced with a cheaper alternative.

But, because the buyer had the RV inspected, he or she had proof of its pre-sale condition. Inspections work to keep sellers honest.

Some sellers are even beginning to recognize the benefit of having an RV inspected before listing the unit for sale. Not only does it give them a punch list of major problems to resolve before listing the RV, sellers can also share the inspection report with buyers and explain what work was done to correct any deficiencies discovered.

Banks, insurance companies and firms offering extended warranties have also discovered the advantages of having an RV inspected before agreeing to provide coverage. Think about it:

- Wholesale lenders that help dealers buy RVs to resell want to make sure that the vehicle being held on paper as collateral is the same unit sitting on the dealer's lot. They also want to make sure the used RV they are loaning money to the dealer to buy is likely in good enough condition to be resold.
- Extended warranty companies are on the hook for three to seven years to cover any major problem with an RV. Those companies would certainly like to know if there is any evidence of pre-existing conditions that could cost them a lot of money to fix a year or two later.
- Before extending coverage on a new or used RV, insurance companies would be very interested in knowing the propane system is safe, the refrigerator isn't likely to catch on fire, and all the carbon monoxide or smoke detectors work.

And for all the above, the firms want to know if the vehicle identification number (VIN) on the loan document or insurance policy is the same number on the unit in question. Inspections are a win-win for not just the buyer, but other parties, too.

Is this a full- or part-time business?

The beauty of launching an RV inspection business is that you can put in as much time as you would like, based on available time.

So, if you have a full-time job and can only do inspections on your days off, it is still possible to enjoy a very good income.

Later in this booklet, you'll discover how much money you can make doing just two inspections per month. For many families, an extra \$500 per month can buy a lot of breathing room in making ends meet. By doing inspections, you can make even more than that on just a part-time basis.

If your situation allows you to jump right into the opportunity on a full-time basis, you'll discover you can make several thousand dollars a week.

Jill Andrew, the owner of Indy RV Inspection, became a certified inspector in June 2020 and completed six paid evaluations in her first month.

"Within a few months, I was making so much doing inspections that I was able to leave my full-time job," she explained. "I can make more in a few days doing inspections than I could make in a whole month working for someone else."

People who are fortunate enough to have a full-time job with flexible hours, like firefighters who work 24 hours straight and have two or three days off, will find an RV inspection business fits nicely into that schedule.

As with any business, your potential is determined by your desire to be in business, and the amount of effort you put in to making it succeed.

Benefits of an RV inspection business

Men and women of all ages are taking training and starting RV inspection businesses around the nation for several reasons:

- Low point of entry – You can be fully certified, acquire all the tools you need, and register the business with government entities for less than \$8,000.
- Completely portable – You can run the business out of your RV or a sticks-and-bricks home wherever you want to live. All you need is a phone, laptop and smart tablet.
- A high-margin service – Other than travel, marketing and annual membership fees, there are few expenses to offset the income earned from performing RV inspections.
- Tax benefits – The U.S. Tax Code is set up to reward people who participate in the free enterprise system. With a job, you earn money and pay taxes on the top line. Not so with a small business. You can deduct things like a cell phone, computer, vehicle mileage and even a home office to reduce the amount of your taxable income. We'll have more on that in a later chapter.
- Unregulated business – Some businesses are so heavily-regulated by government entities that the owner can't blow his nose without submitting a report. An RV inspection business has no special regulations outside of those applying to all businesses, like having a tax ID number.
- Set your own hours – When you work is between you and your clients. If you don't want to get up at 6 a.m. on a Saturday to do an inspection, then nobody will force you to do so, although you might lose the client.
- Work with whomever you want – As a business owner, you get to choose whom you get to serve. If you get "bad vibes" after talking with a prospective client, nobody is going to force you to accept the job.
- Cash business – You conduct an inspection and are paid on the spot.

- No inventory – You don't have to maintain a storeroom full of supplies or even a truck full of spare parts. Most inspectors keep a few fluid analysis kits on hand for when they evaluate a motorhome, but the cost is under \$45 per kit.
- No staff needed – One of the biggest advantages to being an RV inspector is that you don't need to hire, train and supervise other people. Employing others opens the door to insane amounts of regulation, government reporting and added costs beyond the wage you would pay.
- Excellent family business – Many inspectors work with their spouses or adult children when evaluating RVs. One checks the interior components while the other reviews the RV's exterior. Both people are often certified RV inspectors, although NRVIA standards require the person signing the report to be certified. NRVIA strongly discourages inspectors from taking young children with them when evaluating an RV. Kids can be cute ambassadors for your business, but tremendously distracting. You certainly don't want a child to break something on an RV or at the seller's location.
- No cold calling – You will always want to market your company and the services it provides. But, you don't have to call people out of the blue to offer them inspections. People who need inspections look for you on the NRVIA's public inspector locator map: www.nrvia.org/locate NRVIA will send out notices about people who contact the association looking for inspectors, but it is always up to you whether to reach out to those people who are eager to hire someone.

There are few opportunities that allow people to make as good an income, on their own schedule, working with people they chose, with limited expenses and excellent tax advantages as an RV inspection business.

CHAPTER TWO

The Market for RV Inspections

By now, you should see why RV inspections are necessary and how owning a business providing the service is a viable money-making opportunity. But, is there enough demand to warrant the investment of time, money and sweat equity?

Let's look at some of the numbers.

According to the RV Industry Association (RVIA), the RV industry has been surging in recent years, even before COVID-19 shook up the business world. The industry reported significant numbers of new RVs being built over the past five years:

2020 = 430,412

2019 = 406,000

2018 = 483,700

2017 = 504,600

2016 = 430,700

Each one of the new RVs should go through some type of inspection. Dealers may use inspectors to conduct an initial delivery inspection before making the RV available to customers. Buyers, on the other hand, would hire an NRVIA Certified RV Inspector to thoroughly review the RV.

That's more than 8,349 new RVs needing to be inspected every week, or nearly 1,200 per day.

The used RV market is even bigger. Although nobody can point to a specific number of vehicles sold each year because there is no centralized reporting authority; however, we can make an educated guess.

A company called Statistical Surveys does collect information on RV registrations from state agencies, when allowed. While the firm can't get data from all the states, over the years it has developed a process to estimate numbers in a way that has proven to be very reliable.

Statistical Surveys revealed there were 729,747 used RVs sold in America in 2019. That's 2,000 per day.

Add the 2,000 used RVs sold daily to the 1,200 brand new units being built and there is an opportunity to inspect more than 3,000 recreation vehicles every day of the year

For years, RVIA has claimed there are 9 million RV-owning households in America. That number rarely fluctuates even with 400,000 new RVs being built each year. Why is that? The units fall apart or burn up to the tune of nearly half a million RVs per year – proving the need for having a used RV inspected before buying it.

RVIA also made plenty of data available regarding the size of the market by state. You can access it for free at www.rvia.org/reports-trends. The RVs Move America report was compiled in 2017, but it can still give you an idea as to how popular RVing is in the state you'd like to do business.

As of January 2021, RV Trader's website (www.rvtrader.com) offered more than 33,000 used RVs for sale. Its competitor, RVT.com, listed 24,700. Spring is often a hot time for families to buy RVs and so is fall when snowbirds generally start looking to make a purchase.

Those numbers don't include RVs advertised through Facebook Marketplace, Craigslist and local sources, like newspapers and community bulletin boards.

There are a few Facebook groups devoted to buying and selling used RVs:

- RV Classifieds boasts 31,000 members
- Class C RVs for Sale has 41,000 members
- RV Camping & Exchange has 4,300 members
- Campers Buy/Sell/Trade lists 27,200 members

The bottom line is there are a lot of RVs sold each year in the United States. Whether used or new, the buyers would benefit greatly by having their motorhome, fifth wheel or travel trailer inspected.

Because so many RVs are sold online, they attract a lot of out-of-state buyers. It is very difficult for a distance buyer to assess the true value of an RV by simply looking at pictures and reading descriptions posted by sellers.

Many out-of-state buyers discovered the convenience of paying a local inspector to evaluate the RV before incurring costs to fly or drive to the seller's location.

It is much less expensive to hire an inspector to give a buyer peace-of-mind about moving forward with the purchase than it is to go directly to the seller's location. With an inspection, buyers can be confident of the RV's condition so they can finalize the deal and drive or tow their new unit back home – enjoying their first vacation along the way.

Competition among inspectors

The National RV Inspectors Association is the only credentialing source to certify people performing RV inspections in the United States. Yes, there are some independent inspectors offering their services. But without the certification, they lack the marketing advantages and credibility afforded to NRVIA Certified Inspectors.

Knowing that, there were more than 500 certified members of NRVIA in January 2021. Approximately 25 new inspectors are added to the ranks every two months. Some of them are doing inspections full time, while others are looking for part-time income.

That may seem like a lot, but when there are 3,000 RVs that should be inspected every day of the week, the market is pretty much wide open for entrepreneurs to start their own businesses.

Florida is one of the biggest states for RV sales in America. As of August 2020, there were approximately six full-time RV inspectors in Florida, and most of them were located in the central part of the state. During winter months, that number can balloon to two dozen. However, increased RV sales and the presence of snowbirds during those months create even more demand for inspection services.

Yet, the rest of the state only has one or two inspectors running businesses in major markets.

NRVIA maintains a map at www.nrvia.com that shows where its members are currently located. From that map, you can get an idea as to how many inspectors are in a specific market area at the moment. Keep in mind, there are more inspectors in southern states during the winter months.

As expected, larger metropolitan areas tend to draw more inspectors than rural parts of a state. Your market area will be defined by how far you're willing to travel to complete an inspection.

To evaluate your own market area, do an internet search to count the number of:

- RV dealers in a 25-, 50- and 100-mile radius. That helps you gauge demand for new and used recreation vehicles.
- RV repair centers and mobile service technicians within the same radius. Sometimes desperate buyers will turn to a mobile technician to give an RV a quick evaluation. It also helps gauge the level of interest in RVing in your market.
- RV inspectors in your area. You might have to look up similar terms, like "rv inspectors" and "rv inspection services." You can ignore RV dealers appearing in the results.
- Motorhomes and travel trailers registered in your state. Most motor vehicle departments make that data available annually, if not each month. If RVs are being registered, they must be purchased first and each one represents an inspection opportunity.
- RV storage facilities. If people aren't actively using RVs, they'll store them. If they store them too often or for too long, they'll eventually wind up selling them rather than continue to incur monthly costs of ownership.

That should help you gauge the size of the inspection market in your area – or in any area, if you're looking to relocate. But, remember, you determine your market size by how far you are willing to travel to complete an inspection.

CHAPTER THREE

What Does an Inspection Involve?

If you've ever had a home inspected, it is almost criminal how quickly inspectors complete the jobs – and how much is overlooked.

That's not the case with evaluations performed by people who are NRVIA Certified RV Inspectors. These are thorough, top-to-bottom and inside-to-out inspections of the RV as well as every component in it.

NRVIA members have access to a software system that guides them through every step of the inspection process to ensure nothing is missed. The software is preloaded with an itemized checklist of hundreds of tasks that must be completed to ensure a thorough inspection is performed.

Many inspectors use a smart tablet to check off items as they are reviewed, and to insert comments or photos next to the items. The software compiles the final report and merges the comments and photos into the proper areas so buyers can easily find and understand the results.

Without giving away all the trade secrets, here is an overview of some items evaluated during an inspection:

Life Safety

- Do the motorhome seatbelts work as expected?
- Can the exit windows be opened?
- Are the carbon monoxide and smoke detectors working properly?
- Is there an electrical issue that could create a "hot skin" condition?
- Are there any leaks in propane lines?

Exterior

- Are there any holes or tears in the roof membrane that could allow water to enter the RV?
- Are there any bubbles in the sidewalls indicating a delamination process has begun?
- Are the compartments clean, and do the doors latch properly?
- Do the levelers go up and down as expected?
- Do the slideouts go in and out?

Appliances

- Does every burner on the stove light up?
- Does the refrigerator cool to a temperature of 34 degrees?
- Does the freezer cool to a temperature of 10 degrees?
- Does the microwave heat water?

- Do the televisions turn on?

Interior

- Does every outlet plug deliver electricity?
- Do the doors and drawers open, close and latch properly?
- Do all the light switches work?
- Are there any rips or holes in the furniture?
- Is there any evidence of water getting inside the RV?

Major systems

- Does the propane line maintain proper pressure?
- Is the power cord in good condition with no frays?
- Does the water pump deliver adequate flow and pressure?
- Are all the batteries charged?
- Does the generator turn on and deliver appropriate current?

Tires

- Once properly inflated, are there any slow leaks?
- Is the manufactured date of tires still within the acceptable range?
- Are there signs of excessive wear?

Bathroom

- Does the toilet flush?
- Are the tank-level indicators accurate?
- Does hot and cold water come out of the shower?

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning

- Does the furnace deliver heat?
- Does the air conditioner blow cool air?
- Do the vents open when fans are on?

On motorhomes, inspectors also collect samples of engine oil, radiator fluid and transmission fluid. A fluid analysis is also performed for towables with onboard generators.

The items above represent about one-tenth of the things evaluated on a typical RV inspection.

How long does an inspection take?

The length of time will vary on the size of the RV and its complexity. For example, it will take significantly more time to evaluate a 45-foot diesel motorhome with five slideouts than it would to inspect a 20-foot travel trailer with no slideouts.

It will also depend upon the levels of service you opt to provide. Will you just offer a standard inspection of key components? Then you might invest two to three hours evaluating the RV. Will you offer an enhanced inspection and review every inch of the unit and all its components? Then you could spend seven or eight hours to do it the right way.

What makes RV inspections so valuable are the comments and photographs provided in the final report. However, capturing images adds to the length of time it takes to complete an evaluation.

It is not uncommon to include more than 100 photos in the report, and larger motorhomes or RVs with discernible problems may feature hundreds of images. That means each photo has to be taken, uploaded and inserted into the report.

NRVIA highly recommends that inspectors maintain backup copies of all photos and notes for at least three years in the event someone has questions later.

You also need to factor in time to review the report with customers. Although some inspectors opt to meet with clients personally to go over key findings, many inspectors simply email the report and then call the client or meet on a platform like Zoom to discuss results.

You should never just send the report and hope the client can figure it out for himself or herself.

Inspecting an RV isn't difficult work, but it can require a lot of time and energy. Most inspectors will only schedule one job per day to ensure they have enough time to thoroughly evaluate an RV, complete the report and review results with the client.

Some inspectors may have the opportunity to complete more evaluations on a long day, but attempting to do more than one is discouraged – for your sanity and to be sure your report is deliverable same day.

The need for photos

There is an old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words. When it comes to RV inspections, a few pictures can speak volumes about the condition of a unit at that point in time.

NRVIA strongly encourages inspectors to take lots of pictures of each rig they evaluate. That should include images of the RV from every angle, as well as every component on the roof.

Every room should be photographed too, along with every appliance. It is beneficial to snap photos of test results, too. For example:

- Do the stove burners work? Show a picture with blue flame coming out of each burner.
- Does the refrigerator actually cool down? Show an image of the thermometer inside the RV.
- Does the water just dribble out of the shower? A video will easily convey that information.
- Does the generator sputter when turned on? A video will indicate the equipment needs service.

Photos not only help tell the story of an RV's condition, but they also work to protect you and the buyer.

That way, if a buyer picks up a unit that has been inspected, but later discovers something is broken, ripped, torn or missing, a photograph serves as proof that was not always the case. Nobody can accuse you of having missed checking an item and documenting a problem, especially with photographic evidence.

If a service center claims a repair was done on the RV, the buyer can look at inspection photos to see if it was really completed. But, if the problem appears to be the same after service work was performed as it was at the time an inspection photo was taken, then the RV owner has more reason to question the repair.

The good news is that you don't need expensive photo or video equipment. The quality of images captured on today's cell phone will suffice. You will just need to develop a system to sort the photos by assignment.

The final report

You've finished the inspection and ensured that all items on the checklist were evaluated. You took good notes of your findings and backed them up with photos and videos. Now it's time to compile that information into a useful, easy-to-understand report.

That's where the HomeGauge software will save you hours of time.

Because you entered information and photos while doing the inspection, the software already knows where that data is located. It works its magic and prepares a detailed report.

All you need to do is make sure the report formatted properly and deliver it to the client. Many inspectors simply email reports to buyers and leave it up to them to print the report, if desired.

The report is broken down into these key categories:

- Life safety issues – Problems that, if not addressed, could cause injury or death.
- Major issues – Indications of potentially-expensive problems.
- Minor issues – Problems that need to be addressed by a qualified RV service technician.
- Comments – This is where extensive notes appear documenting each item you evaluated during the inspection.

By keeping the data together, it makes it super easy for clients to understand results. As you review the report with clients, you should draw their attention to problem areas.

Remember, it's not your job to advise a client that an RV is a good purchase to make. Your job is to convey its true condition. The buyer must ultimately decide for himself whether the RV is worth the price.

However, to help buyers reach that conclusion, you can point out trouble areas. For example, if there were stains on the ceiling or mold in a basement compartment, you should alert the buyer because it suggests water is getting in somehow, someday.

It is not your job to say the leak is coming from a specific place, nor do you have to explain what needs to be done to fix it. By simply shining a spotlight on a potential problem, you give your client information to make an informed decision to proceed with the purchase or simply walk away.

Depending upon the RV, a final report can be as large as 100 pages. That can be information overload for a buyer, especially if he or she has not had any experience owning an RV in the past.

NRIVA recommends reviewing the report with a client on the phone or in person, but also making yourself available for a follow-up conversation once the client has time to digest the information and prepare additional questions.

That's it. From the moment you arrive wherever the RV is located until you review the final report with a customer, you are likely to invest six to 10 hours of time.

"On the average, we probably put in an eight- to 10-hour day from when we arrive on site for the inspection until we review the finished report with the customer," said Al Pearce, with A&L Inspection.

For someone new to the field, it takes Jill Andrew four to eight hours to review an RV and work up a report. "Just looking at the roof can take an hour of crawling on my hands and knees looking for any tear or penetration," she explained. "I literally look at every single thing on the camper to make sure it works."

An important question still remains. Is it time well spent so that you can really make money inspecting RVs? We'll answer that in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Income Potential

So, how much money can really be made by doing inspections?

People are accustomed to seeing business claims suggesting they can make \$10,000 a month just by stuffing envelopes or making \$100,000 working just four hours a week. Few people believe that and those who fall for the bait are often seriously disappointed.

There is an old proverb that proclaims, “A fool and his money are soon parted.” There’s also the old saying, “There is a sucker born every minute.”

NRVIA’s goal is not to extract money from people, but to help them start successful businesses of their own.

Most people have been invited into some type of network marketing business at some point during their lives. Yes, it’s true that people can make a very good living in those businesses, but only if they are willing to do the work.

But, if all they do is build networks of people hoping to make money off their work, it will never be a long-term success. If those business owners don’t buy or use their own products, but only recruit a bunch of people who don’t buy or use the products either, then the network will eventually collapse.

But, when people are willing to put in the necessary work, and follow examples set by others who have already traveled the same path, amazing things can happen.

With that in mind, let’s explore the income potential of starting an RV inspection business.

While business owners can set their prices at whatever levels they want, there are three common pricing models that inspectors generally use in setting fees for the services they provide.

Model 1 – Good, Better, Best

Some inspectors set three levels of service. The goal here is to give customers a level of service they can afford while having various components reviewed at a level that makes them comfortable.

For example, a basic inspection might be limited to evaluating life safety issues and major components, while the mid-level package may evaluate all the components, and the premium package is a true top-to-bottom, inside-and-out review of the RV’s condition.

Model 2 – Type of RV

This model bases pricing on the time it would typically take to perform an inspection. As was mentioned before, it would take far less time to evaluate a 14-foot pop-up trailer than it would a 45-foot motorhome with five slideouts.

Model 3 – Hybrid approach

Some inspectors combine elements of Model 1 with those of Model 2 to create a hybrid pricing plan that offers various levels of service based on the type of RV. Perhaps they have two tiers of inspections for travel trailers and three for motorhomes.

Examples

- Lisa and Jason Carletti, from My RV Inspection, charge \$350 for a smaller travel trailer and \$1,000 for a motorhome.
- Geoff Baker, with Inspect RV, charges a flat-rate of \$495 for towables, Class B and Class C motorhomes. That rises to \$595 for two-axle Class A motorhomes and Class C super diesels. Inspecting a three-axle motorhome will cost \$645.
- Bryan Carbonnell, with Tech-Reational Vehicle Services, offers two levels of service. A life-safety inspection focuses on the RV's safety elements while a comprehensive evaluation is a thorough inspection of the RV interior, exterior and all components. For a life-safety inspection, he charges \$325 for a towable or truck camper and \$379 for a motorhome of any type. For a comprehensive inspection, he charges \$545 for towables and \$645 for motorhomes. (These are U.S. equivalents because his company is based part-time in Canada)
- John Gaver looks for what he calls "major show stoppers" right away during the inspection process. If he uncovers something he thinks might end the likelihood of proceeding with a purchase, he sends photos in a text message to the client, and follows with a phone call. If the client tells him to go home, he doesn't charge his full inspection fee of \$699 for towables and \$799 for motorhomes. Rather, he charges them \$100 per hour for his actual time spent (a minimum of two hours) plus any mileage fees over 50 miles.

Add-on services

In addition to evaluating the RV itself, inspectors can make additional money by offering add-on services. Here are just a few optional revenue sources:

Fluid analysis – This is like getting blood tested when you go in for a physical examination. It offers insight into what's really going on inside the RV's engine, transmission and radiator. A fluid analysis looks at the complex and expensive driveline and power generation components from the inside. It's a whole new level of diagnostics.

A technician uses a special tool to withdraw vials of oil, radiator fluid and transmission fluid. On fifth wheels and motorhomes, samples are taken from the generator, too. Occasionally, if the tow vehicle is included in the RV purchase, samples from it are evaluated as well.

The samples are sent to a private laboratory where a series of microscopic tests are performed. For example:

- Oil analysis measures additive levels, wear metals, contaminants (such as water or internal coolant or fuel leaks), soot levels, viscosity, oxidation and nitration. The oil is checked for viscosity loss (thinned out oil) and thermal breakdown (too much heat). It also checks for signs of fuel and coolant mixing, which is caused by faulty injectors or leaking head gaskets. It also looks for the presence of nitration, which may indicate improper fuel/air mixtures.
- Coolant analysis measures glycol content, additive levels, freeze point, boiling point, total hardness and dissolved solid levels (mineral content).

- Transmission analysis looks for signs of metal in the fluid, which could indicate a problem when shifting. If there is copper in the fluid, it may indicate the gasket has started to disintegrate.

By adding a complete fluid analysis to the inspection report, you can significantly reduce your client's risks of buying RVs facing expensive engine, transmission or generator problems. It can also save them money up front. Why go to the major expense of changing the oil, coolant or transmission fluid if the analysis shows it still has plenty of useful life in it?

Inspectors typically charge \$75 for each type of fluid to be inspected, and bundle all five types of RV and generator fluids for \$350. Pricing varies from inspector to inspector and can be set at what you feel comfortable charging.

RV orientations – Once a buyer purchases an RV, he or she needs to know how to use it. Many times, dealers will overwhelm buyers with an encyclopedia of information when they pick up the unit, most of which will be forgotten before they drive off the lot. The dealer “walk-through” presentations are rarely recorded and generally last 30- to 60-minutes.

Inspectors have found a lucrative add-on service of conducting detailed orientations to explain how to use a specific RV. It's one thing for an RV dealer to explain how to dump the holding tanks, but an entirely different matter to have someone standing next to the buyer as he or she connects a sewer hose and flushes tanks.

Showing someone how to lower and raise levelers is helpful, but not nearly as helpful as learning the nuances that come from experience to know for sure that an RV is level.

These orientations can be conducted at the buyer's home before the first trip, or the inspectors meet buyers at a local campground where he or she can also help them set up camp for the first time.

Recording the orientations is encouraged so buyers can reference the material frequently.

Some inspectors charge by the hour (usually \$50), while others set a flat rate of \$99 to \$199 based on the estimated time.

Dealer inspections – Some RV inspectors have developed relationships with local dealerships to conduct basic inspections when an RV arrives on the dealer's lot. These inspections determine what items need to be repaired before the unit is offered for sale.

Other dealers hire inspectors to perform what is known as a pre-delivery inspection (PDI), which ensures that the RV is ready to be delivered to the buyer. All the components are checked to ensure they work properly.

Sometimes, dealers will hire inspectors to conduct a walk-through presentation with customers.

The benefit to dealers is that they hire knowledgeable people to do the work without having to pull a technician away from his or her duties to do the task. Most technicians are paid based per repair, not per hour.

So, to pull a tech off the job to do a PDI or walk-through is a waste of time for both the technician and the dealership. Technician time can be billed at up to \$150 per hour to do repairs. So, if a dealer can hire an inspector to do the work for \$50, it is money well spent.

FEMA inspections – Through its relationship with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), NRVIA is often called in to perform RV inspections on units used as temporary housing following disasters.

After a hurricane, flood, wildfire, tornado, explosion or any other disaster, FEMA is tasked with providing emergency housing. RVs make the ideal emergency homes because they are portable and offer the essentials of a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom.

The last thing the agency wants to do is put a family that just lost everything into a temporary home that doesn't work. It adds unnecessary stress to the situation, and makes the agency look inept.

Because they are readily available, FEMA will purchase hundreds of RVs from dealers and manufacturers. The units are transported to a staging area near the disaster zone.

FEMA contracts with NRVIA to inspect the RVs before they are turned over to disaster victims. In turn, NRVIA subcontracts with individual inspectors to crank out basic evaluations of the RVs and make lists of items that need to be repaired immediately.

The amount of compensation is based on the number of inspections that must be provided during a certain period of time. However, following recent hurricanes, inspectors have made \$3,000 per week for several months to evaluate the emergency shelters.

This type of income is unreliable due to the timing of disasters and FEMA's needs for emergency housing. Inspectors should not expect that this add-on income is regularly available. But, when it is, NRVIA alerts its members of the opportunity and those inspectors who have the ability to travel to a staging site for an extended period of time will be invited to join the effort.

Pass-on expenses -- As a general rule, RV inspectors factor local mileage into the rates they charge. Most inspections include mileage to jobs within a 50-mile radius of the inspector's location. Again, inspectors can decide for themselves when to charge for mileage and at what rate.

However, when a job is out of the inspector's primary market area, it is not uncommon for them to recover travel and overnight costs.

For example, if an inspector resides in Indiana, but someone really needs an RV evaluated in Wisconsin that weekend. So the inspector may factor in travel time, mileage and even hotel costs and meals when pricing the service.

Demand for inspections is increasing all the time. But the lack of certified inspectors does create opportunities for desperate buyers to hire people from out-of-area, and they are willing to pay the additional expenses.

After all, when the buyer is about to spend \$150,000 on a new motorhome, it is often well worth an additional few hundred dollars to get it inspected quickly by a professional.

Bottom line

So, what can you expect to make as an RV inspector?

For purposes of comparison, we will estimate the average inspection generates \$400 for towables and \$700 for motorhomes. Most of the inspections will be towable RVs because they account for 80 percent of all RVs manufactured in the United States.

Once a month

If you performed one RV inspection per month, over the course of a year, you will likely encounter 10 travel trailers and two motorhomes. As a result, you would generate \$5,400 annually, or \$648 per month by running a part-time business.

$$(10 \times \$400) + (2 \times \$700) = \$5,400 / 12 = \$648 \text{ per month}$$

If you found a part-time job working for someone else and it paid \$15 per hour, you would have to invest 43 hours per month to make the same income.

Once a week

What would happen if you bumped that number to one inspection per week? Over the course of a year, you would likely encounter 41 travel trailers and 11 motorhomes. Then, you would generate \$24,100 per year in revenue or \$2,008 per month while self-employed.

$$(41 * \$400) + (11 * \$700) = \$24,100 / 12 = \$2,008 \text{ monthly}$$

By comparison, if you found a part-time job paying \$15 an hour, you'd have to work 142 hours per month – or nearly full-time – to make that amount.

Every other day

Let's say you really got serious about the opportunity and charged at the market by conducting one inspection every other day.

During that year, you would perform 182 inspections, of which 146 would be travel trailers and 36 would be motorhomes. Then, you could expect to bring in \$83,600 annually or \$6,967 per month by being your own boss.

$$(146 * \$400) + (36 * \$700) = \$83,600 / 12 = \$6,967 \text{ per month}$$

In case you're wondering, that's the equivalent of working 464 hours per month at \$15 an hour.

Granted, we've presented top-line income dollars. There will be some expenses that cut into that figure; however, you will also enjoy some tax benefits that add dollars back into that mix. We'll look at those in the next chapter.

Incomes enjoyed by actual inspectors

So, can you make money as an RV inspector? We asked a few to tell us themselves.

For the first three years he was inspecting RVs, Geoff Baker made about \$15,000 per year. For the past two years, that figure jumped to \$50,000 and that's after taking four months off each year to travel.

Bryan Carbonnell said he brings in between \$1,200 and \$1,400 per month doing inspections on a part-time basis. He makes more money as a mobile service technician, but doing inspections remains a significant portion of his monthly income.

Jason Carletti started My RV Inspection in August 2017 out of his home in central Florida. The most he ever made as an inspector was \$200,000 in 2018, but that was an exceptional year due to a large disaster-relief project in which he was participating.

In 2019, Jason was injured in an automobile accident and lost several months to recovery. His wife, Lisa, jumped into the business also as an NRVA Certified RV Inspector. They still managed to break the \$100,000 mark that year. In 2020, they exceeded their total 2019 income by August. However, he credits spending more than \$75,000 on marketing with his ability to bring in that much business.

Mark Anderson started RV Smart Inspections as a part-time business in August 2018 near Louisville, Ky. That year, he grossed \$4,500. In 2019, that jumped to \$18,200 and exceeded \$20,000 by early August 2020. In fact, Mark completed 17 inspections in July and August of 2020 alone.

"I started the inspection business as a supplement and hopefully something to do when I retire in a few years," he said. "Being in Kentucky, I am not exactly in an RV hotspot, and there aren't many inspectors around here. So, I do a lot of traveling to Ohio, the entire state of Kentucky, southern Indiana and central Tennessee.

"For me, I'm very happy. I love the work and can't believe I'm getting paid to do this," said Mark. "I'm blessed that my day job is flexible and I can work from home, so I have the ability to fit inspections in to my schedule during the week."

John Gaver launched his inspection business in the Houston area, which is home to the nation's largest RV consignment dealership as well as three mega-dealerships and host of smaller RV dealers. He intentionally limits his schedule to two inspections per week.

"I am now averaging two phone calls or emails a day. Because of my excellent SEO (search engine optimization), about 10% of those contacts are from well outside my travel range," John explained. "I prefer to do only two inspections a week, because I like inspecting RVs and I don't want it to start feeling like work."

It was noted earlier that Jill Andrew made enough money in her first year inspecting RVs, that she was able to quit her full-time job.

CHAPTER FIVE

Business Expenses

The income you make as an RV inspector is nice, but that must be offset by some expenses. Every business has certain expenses, and this opportunity is no different. Let's look at some of the expenses an inspector will incur in the normal course of doing business.

Start-up expenses

Let's assume you are starting out with nothing but a dream to be in business for yourself, and an idea to make money inspecting recreation vehicles. Here is what you'll need to acquire before you accept your first client.

Education – The first essential expense is formal training to learn how to be an inspector, what to inspect and what tools to use. Because certification gives you much more credibility, we'll look at costs to attain that credential. You will need to complete three weeks of intensive, hands-on courses at the National RV Training Academy (NRVTA) and the costs associated with that include:

- Tuition for Recreational Vehicle Inspector = \$4,893
- Registration fee = \$100
- Booklets and Supplies = \$450
- Tools for proper evaluation = \$600-\$800
- Tests to attain certification = \$543
- First-year membership in National RV Inspectors Association is included (a \$299 value)
- Lodging for three weeks. RV sites at seasonal rate, Cabins are available, too. Call the Texan RV Park at 903-677-3326 for current rate information.
- Food budget for three weeks at \$25 per day = \$525
- Transportation to get to Athens, Texas = \$_____ (variable based on mode of travel)

Business license – This is a cost imposed by a local government to give you permission to operate a business within their jurisdiction. You will need to check with your local, county and state agencies to see what fees, if any, they will charge to get a license.

Tax Identification Number – Most states require business to pay sales tax on transactions; however, some states impose taxes only on products sold, rather than services rendered. Check to see if your state requires a fee to obtain the number. Wisconsin charges \$20 to acquire a business tax number.

Fortunately, the Internal Revenue Service imposes no fees on business owners to get a federal Employer Identification Number (EIN), which is required to pay annual income taxes.

Business insurance – All smart business owners purchase insurance to cover them in case something goes wrong during an inspection. Insurance rates will vary upon location and the amount of coverage you will require. Fortunately, you can shop around to get the best rates for the following coverages:

- a. Personal property damage – If you break something on a client's RV.
- b. Personal liability coverage – If someone trips over a cord, ladder or tool you set out.
- c. Professional liability coverage – Protects against any advice given, such as coming to the wrong conclusion; as well as performing the wrong service or failing to provide an important service, such as forgetting to evaluate a component or noting something worked when it really did not. This type of coverage even provides legal defense against frivolous lawsuits.
- d. General liability – Provides coverage when you're on someone else's property. This is great insurance to have when conducting inspections at a campground, RV dealership or storage lot. It is also required if you exhibit at a RV show.
- e. Errors and omissions – If you inspect an RV and forget to review something the client considers to be essential, and the lack of information causes problems down the road, this offers protection against those claims.
- f. Personal vehicle insurance – You will want to let your insurance company know you're using your vehicle for business-related travel. That way, if you are involved in an accident on the way to or from an inspection job, you do not want the insurance company to disallow coverage because the firm was unaware you were using the vehicle for business use.
- g. Umbrella liability – This coverage gives you additional protection for anything else that may go wrong. It is generally very affordable and offers protection up to \$1 million.

Fortunately, NRVA offers a group insurance policy through its membership benefits that includes \$1 million in liability coverage with deductibles ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 (depending upon the state). It covers certified RV inspectors against any negligence, such as breaking something on a client's RV or if the customer is somehow injured during the inspection process.

Because it is a group policy, rates are significantly lower than if you sought coverage on your own. In fact, as of this writing, the policy is made available for \$750 per year. Having insurance is a good marketing tool, too. The ability to tell prospective clients that you are a certified and insured inspector conveys a great deal of confidence in your professionalism.

Corporate registration – It is highly recommended that inspectors form a separate corporation or limited liability company (LLC). Not only does this prove that you are serious about owning a business, but having a separate entity offers additional liability protection to you and opens the door to some tremendous tax benefits as well.

Costs will vary by state. Texas charges \$300 to register an LLC, while Florida charges \$160. Filing an LLC is generally an easy process that most people can comfortably do on their own within a few minutes.

However, if you want to hire an attorney, that will add to the cost. Some law firms offer packages to business owners to create and file the necessary paperwork. NRVTA works closely with the Kohler law firm, and their lawyers can file the required business forms for any state. You can get more information at www.kkoslawyers.com.

Business phone – Many RV inspectors use their cell phones as a business phone. It's an inexpensive option, but it may be worth it to have a dedicated virtual business line.

GoDaddy offers such an option for \$11 per month, but you can set office hours so the phone doesn't ring all day or night long. It redirects callers to voicemail after hours. With a separate phone number, you don't have to worry about posting your personal cell phone number on the internet for the entire world to discover.

The SmartLine has voicemail included and will automatically convert that message to an email and send it to you. You can select a local telephone number, too.

Business website – You will want to have a presence on the internet because it gives you more credibility and allows clients to learn about your company 24 hours a day.

You can hire a professional web designer to create a website for you, or you can use a plug-and-play template offered by many website hosts. Many businesses use GoDaddy (www.godaddy.com). All you do is fill in the blanks with information and photos.

Many RV Inspectors use the web solutions that HomeGauge offers. HomeGauge is the inspection reporting software recommended by NRVIA. Their websites are high-quality and work well for having your customers interact with their final inspection report on your website.

Do not use a free website, like those offered by WordPress or Squarespace. That reeks of unprofessionalism because the domain is tied to those companies. You always want full control of your business name so that it can't be accidentally or intentionally shut off.

An inspection website is not that complicated; however, you will incur these costs:

- Domain registration (your website name that starts with www) = \$15
- Website hosting (where your site lives on the internet) = \$180
- Template (many are free, but you can buy one at ThemeForest) = \$60

Logo – Once you create your business name and set up a website, you'll want to get the word out that you're doing inspections. A logo is a great way to convey what you do in a picture, not just words.

Some logos just use a pre-existing drawing or other graphic element, while others are professionally designed exclusively for your company. If you need a designer, websites like fiver.com and freelancer.com can connect you to qualified people around the world.

Just be careful that you don't use another company's logo as your own. Some unscrupulous designers have been known to copy another logo, change the color and call it an "original." Using another company's logo is an invitation for an expensive lawsuit or embarrassing cease-and-desist letter.

Business cards – A professional business card remains one of the most cost-effective ways to promote an inspection business. They can be dropped off at campgrounds and RV dealerships, or stapled to community billboards in places like grocery stores.

With firms like Print Runner, you can get 1,500 business cards printed and shipped within a week for less than \$50. The company has a do-it-yourself design tool to create the cards, or you could offer the person who created your logo a little more money to design a unique card for you. Find out more at www.printrunner.com.

Financial software – Keeping track of money coming in and going out is an essential part of operating a viable inspection business. Because you don't have inventory to maintain, you can use a simple accounting program like Quicken to track income and expenses.

It works just like a checkbook, but with the ability to add categories to every transaction. Doing so produces easy-to-read reports later – and that's helpful during tax time. The cost is less than \$40 per year.

However, besides having to pay an annual fee to use the program (all financial software does that now), the basic Quicken program doesn't produce invoices, nor does it allow you to email invoices to clients.

A workaround to that problem is to set up a free account at Square or Stripe. Both allow you to create and electronically send invoices as well as accept payments by credit card. Generally, you will pay a 2.9% fee when the payment is submitted plus a 35-cent transaction fee. That fee is automatically deducted and the balance deposited directly into your checking account.

Tablet computer – The inspection software is designed to be used on a laptop, tablet or both. Many inspectors use a laptop or desktop computer to manage their businesses, but rely on tablets when performing inspections because they are easy to use and not too heavy or cumbersome.

Tablets are also less expensive to replace than a laptop, and prices keep falling. You can get a brand name tablet for less than \$400. The best thing for inspectors is that tablets have cameras included, which helps capture pictures and videos of items you've inspected.

Just be sure the device has access to the internet so data can be easily uploaded and backed up. Some inspectors like using 8-inch screens, while others prefer 10-inch screens for better visibility.

One important tip – the device with the most internal memory wins the day for storing images and videos. You will never regret having too much memory. At \$40 for a 256 gigabyte SD card, it's one of the cheapest investments you'll make.

HomeGauge software – NRVIA's recommended software is leased every year at a cost of \$59 per month per user. So, if a husband and wife do inspections together and each want to enter data while doing the evaluations, it will cost \$118 per month.

HomeGauge is an essential business expense for an inspector. Not only does it remind you of what to inspect in each section of the RV, but it includes an opportunity to add notes, pictures or videos to every item being evaluated.

Once the data is entered, it instantly prepares a professional looking report, which saves you hours of time designing one by yourself.

Cloud storage – It is very important that you securely back up all the inspection data, reports and business records. Technology has improved to make it almost seamless to make backup copies of any data.

Yes, companies like Apple, Microsoft and Google offer free storage, but it's a better idea to pay for that storage. A paid storage service generally offers much more space, which allows you to store your inspection notes, reports and photos indefinitely without worrying about running out.

Dropbox is a favorite of business owners for its ease of use and annual cost of \$120 per year for 2 terabytes of data (2,000 gigabytes). Plus, it can be used across a variety of devices. For \$16.50 per month, you can automatically add watermarks (nearly opaque copies of your logo or business name) to any document or photograph uploaded to Dropbox. For more information, visit www.dropbox.com.

Marketing and advertising – As a new business, you will want to ensure that people know about you and the services you provide. With advertising, there really is no limit to what you can spend. There are thousands of options available to small business owners, but the effectiveness of each option is questionable.

For example, is spending \$100 for an ad to appear in the local high school yearbook a good investment to promote your business, or is it a feel-good transaction to support a cause you like?

You can pay a professional web developer a few thousand dollars to build a website that helps your business appear at the top of search results so that you don't have to spend much more money on actual advertising. Or you can identify a few key opportunities, like Google or Facebook ads, and set a monthly limit as to how much you want to spend. Of course, the more you pay, the more often your ads appear.

You can print up some brochures or produce a video about you and your company. You should spend something to promote your business and the recommended minimum is \$50 per month.

Startup cost summary

Here is a summary of the start-up costs you can expect to incur to launch an inspection business:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Low End</u>	<u>High End</u>
Training	\$7,093	\$9,000
Business license	\$0	\$200
Tax ID number	\$0	\$200
Business insurance	\$75	\$2,000
Corporate registration	\$150	\$1,500
Business phone	\$0	\$120
Website	\$200	\$1,000
Logo	\$25	\$500
Business cards	\$15	\$50
Financial software	\$30	\$840
Tablet computer	\$100	\$700
HomeGauge software	\$720	\$720
Cloud Storage	\$0	\$120
Marketing & advertising	<u>\$300</u>	<u>\$1,500</u>
TOTAL	\$8,708	\$18,450

Do you need a trademark?

As a new business, do you really need to go to the expense and hassle of securing a trademark for your company name and/or logo? That's debatable.

Trademarks and tradenames offer a higher degree of protection over not registering the name and design. However, it often comes down to cost.

You will pay \$275 to file a trademark application with the federal government, if you do all the work yourself. Hiring a lawyer adds significantly to that cost.

The problem with trademarks is that you must constantly defend them to preserve control of the name or mark. So, if you hear of someone using your business name to do similar work, you have to contact that firm to explain you own the trademark or tradename and insist they stop using it.

If the firm doesn't listen, then you need to go to court to enforce the mark. The government will not do the enforcement on your behalf. Going to court to enforce a trademark can cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Annual expenses

Some of the start-up expenses are repeated annually, but often at lower costs. However, in creating your business plan and projecting your profitability in subsequent years, consider these annual costs.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Low End</u>	<u>High End</u>
Training ¹	\$0	\$1,000
Business license	\$0	\$200
Tax ID number	\$0	\$200
NRVIA membership	\$299	\$299
Business insurance	\$750	\$750
LLC annual fee ²	\$0	\$500
Business phone	\$0	\$120
Website	\$50	\$250
Financial software	\$30	\$840
Marketing & advertising ³	\$1,000	\$2,500
Accounting ⁴	\$80	\$600
Cloud storage	\$0	\$120
HomeGauge software ⁵	<u>\$720</u>	<u>\$1,440</u>
TOTAL	\$2,929	\$8,819

¹ To maintain your credentials as a professional NRVIA Certified RV Inspector, you will need to complete 24 hours of continuing education credits starting in your second year as an inspector. The classes are offered by various RV manufacturers, suppliers and the National RV Training Academy. Some are free, but most charge a small enrollment fee.

² The fee to maintain an LLC will depend upon the state where the business is located.

³ This would include costs for technical support, pay-per-click advertising, more business cards and replacement uniforms.

⁴ Even if you're comfortable doing your own taxes, you'll likely need to buy some type of tax preparation software. The high-end cost would cover hiring a professional accountant.

⁵ This is the cost for an annual subscription to HomeGauge for one inspector. If you have a partner helping you, and both use the program, the cost would be \$720 per year for each person.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tax Benefits

The American free enterprise system works to reward people who take risks in starting their own businesses to serve others. It is one of the hallmarks that truly makes America the “Land of Opportunity.”

The entire tax code is centered around rewarding entrepreneurs, rather than people who simply work for others. Whether that is fair or not is a matter for another discussion. However, it is true and as a self-employed business owner, you can really benefit from tax laws that help fuel the economy and provide incentives for people to work for themselves.

One of the primary benefits to being self-employed is the ability to deduct expenses from your top-line income which reduces the amount of taxes you pay on the bottom line. People working for others don't get that advantage; however, people who own the businesses that employ them certainly do.

You are strongly encouraged to consult with a tax professional to see whether any of these deductions apply to you in your state.

Let's explore some of the items that you can deduct from your income to reduce the amount of taxes you will pay on whatever you earn. Here are some common tax deductions for self-employed people:

Home office

In order to be in business, you need a place to conduct business. Yes, RV inspections are done on site, but you still need an office where you make plans, communicate with potential customers, store business records and manage the day-to-day operations.

You don't have to rent an office or retail property. An inspection business can be run from a single desk. However, that desk is located in a room and, as a result, that becomes your office.

When you use that space exclusively for business, tax laws in America allow you to deduct costs to have that workspace. Your “office” may be a 50-square-foot room in a 1,200-square-foot house (or 40 square feet of a 400-square-foot RV). For simplicity's sake, let's say your office occupies 8% of the total space in your home.

That means you can deduct 8% of the cost for your electricity, water, sewer, property taxes, property insurance, natural gas or solar energy, garbage pickup, mortgage interest and home depreciation.

You can also deduct all the costs associated with maintaining that small corner of the house. For example, if you paint your office, you can deduct the whole cost associated with sprucing up the room.

Caution: Home office deductions are closely monitored by the Internal Revenue Service because a lot of unscrupulous people have tried to take advantage of this deduction. If you keep good records, and use that space exclusively for business (not storing your kids' old clothing), then you'll be fine claiming this often-overlooked deduction. Consult with a tax professional on how you can take full advantage of the home office deduction.

Telephone

Your customers need to get in touch with you, and you'll need to confirm appointments. So, you can deduct part of the cost to have a cell phone. If half of the time you spend on the phone involves your business, then you can deduct half the cost of having the phone.

That includes the cost to acquire the phone itself and the monthly service charges assessed by the phone company.

If you have a separate phone just for business, then you can deduct 100% of the cost for that phone and monthly service. Even if you sign up for a second line through GoDaddy that routes all business calls to your cell phone, all of those charges can be deducted.

Internet

The same is true for internet service needed to maintain your website, exchange emails with potential customers and store backup copies of inspection reports and data.

No, you can't deduct time spent watching movies for pleasure, but if you spend \$100 per month on internet service, and you spend 25% of your time online for business, then you can deduct 25% of the cost of that monthly fee.

Equipment and tools

Because you need a computer or tablet to conduct inspections, the cost to buy, insure and maintain that equipment is deductible. You can also include costs for a printer, copier or scanner.

To be fair, if you use your computer 50% of the time for business and the rest to "surf the web," you should only deduct half the cost to buy the machines. However, many inspectors have a separate tablet or laptop exclusively for use when conducting inspection and 100% of that cost is deductible.

All of the cost to acquire or replace tools needed for your inspection business can be deducted. That includes ladders, flashlights, pressure gauges, a creeper to get under vehicles, etc. If you buy a separate camera to take pictures or videos, add that to the list.

Supplies and software

Items you buy to run your business, like pens, clipboards, paper, bookends, a book shelf, storage containers, file folders, etc., should be deducted.

That includes software you need to run your business, such as the monthly HomeGauge fees, accounting software, a time management app, contact management system (when you get really big) and recurring costs for online storage, like Dropbox.

Be sure to deduct supplies you use in the course of running your business, like fluid analysis kits.

Promotional materials

Business cards aren't the only thing you can deduct. You can also include brochures, flyers, postcards and thank you notes.

This includes advertising, too. So, the money you spend for online banners and search engine listings count as business expenses. Some inspectors create signs that sit on the ground promoting their services while the inspection is underway. You never know who might walk by and know of someone needing an inspection.

Don't overlook your website. Deduct the costs to get the site designed and monthly fees to host it as well as technical support charges you'll eventually incur to fix whatever breaks.

You can even deduct those shirts embroidered with your company's name and logo on them. You can't do that for clothes you buy to work for someone else!

It's possible to get magnetic signs made for your car or work truck that display your business name, phone number and website. Some inspectors even have their cars specially wrapped or painted to transform them into mobile billboards promoting their companies. All of it is deductible.

Gifts

Did a former client recommend your company to someone looking for an inspection? That \$10 Starbucks gift card is tax deductible. So is the \$20 you paid for a few boxes of donuts for the staff at a local RV dealership who refers you to customers or hires you to conduct inspections on their behalf.

Postage and shipping

Any costs incurred to send letters or packages in the course of your business should be added to the list of deductible expenses. It would apply to thank you notes and holiday greeting cards.

This also includes the cost to rent a post office box for your business, if necessary.

Training and education

Everything from the RV Fundamentals course to the Principles of RV Inspections and Advanced Inspectors course can be deducted. That includes all tuition, books and test-taking fees as well as any continuing education classes you must take to maintain your certifications.

This applies to any live or online course you take that improves your business. Want to take a small business management class at a local community college? It's deductible. So is an online class to learn how to improve search engine optimization, time management or create better Facebook ads.

Costs to buy books, CDs, videos and audiobooks can be deducted, too, if the materials are somehow related to your business. If you think reading a business magazine will help improve your skills, the subscription can be deducted, too.

Memberships

Many inspectors would automatically deduct annual fees to belong to the National RV Inspectors Association, but this also applies to the cost to join a discount shopping organization, like Costco. You could even deduct costs to join the local chamber of commerce or a community service organization, like the Rotary Club.

Bank charges

Any monthly service fees you incur to have a bank account for business can be deducted. It would also include costs to buy checks or get money orders. Any fees you pay to process credit cards are deductible as well.

Interest expense

When you paid for training or purchased tools, did you put it on a credit card? If so, any interest you paid on those charges can be deducted. In fact, any interest incurred on any business expense is deductible.

Professional services

Whenever you need to hire an accountant, technical support guru, lawyer, marketing specialist or even consult with another inspector, the entire cost associated with using those professional services can be deducted.

Taxes

Yes, it seems rather silly that you can deduct taxes from your taxes, but it is one of the many advantages to owning a business. This includes any business-related taxes paid to the federal, state or local government.

Licenses

Do you need a local business license or are required to pay annual fees to keep your LLC in good graces with state government? Then deduct that cost, too.

Travel

When it comes to deducting costs for a business vehicle, you have a number of options. Check with an accountant as to whether it is better in your situation to take a standard mileage deduction or to write off the full cost of owning that vehicle.

Most RV inspectors simply keep track of their mileage to and from jobs as well as any business-related mileage, like travel to the post office or bank. It's really simple to do and the federal government is rather generous in your ability to deduct 56 cents for every mile driven, as of 2021.

Yes, the standard deduction is supposed to help you cover the costs to fill the vehicle with gas, pay for tires, oil changes, major repairs and cover depreciation. Still, you'll be surprised how much that adds up to a nice deduction every year.

Not only do you get to deduct the mileage cost, it creates tax-free income for you, too. For example, if you drive 500 miles per month for business, or 6,000 miles per year, you will be able to deduct \$3,360 from your taxes for the use of your personal vehicle.

Although your business incurs the expense, it can reimburse you for that cost. So, when your business reimburses you that 56 cents per mile, it doesn't count as true "income." Therefore, you can pay yourself \$3,360 per year without paying taxes on it, based on the example above.

Sometimes, an inspector can incur other travel expenses as well, such as an overnight hotel stay when the client lives quite a distance away. Even airfare and hotels are deductible to get to training or to attend an annual convention of RV inspectors.

When travel is required for business, and it is not reasonable to expect you to return home for a meal, then the cost of food can be deducted. Usually, you can only deduct 50 percent of the cost, but it's still better than nothing!

Remember, when you're saving on taxes, you're still spending money

Tax benefits aren't magical. You'll never get rich from tax deductions alone.

Even though something is tax deductible, you still need to spend money in order to deduct it from your taxes. In a best-case scenario, you will only be able to reduce the amount you pay in taxes by 37%, which is the highest tax bracket as of this writing.

That means for every dollar you spend and deduct, it will only reduce the amount you pay in taxes by 37 cents. Still, it's better to be self-employed and take advantage of a plethora of deductions to share your business costs with the government than it is to be working for someone else without those benefits.

Consult with a tax professional for specific guidance on what you can do to reduce your tax liability.

If you'd like more help on understanding how to manage business expenses and what can or cannot be deducted, consider enrolling in the Small Biz RVer course offered by Workamper News. It is a comprehensive resource for starting and managing a small business the right way.

Don't forget to deduct the cost of that training!

CHAPTER EIGHT

Risks with Inspections

Every business faces risks of some type. So, what are the risks inspectors face? Howard Jaros, one of the instructors at the National RV Training Academy, described several risks that staff addresses with students. Here are a few:

Breaking a client's RV

Because inspectors are climbing on top of and crawling around inside someone's recreation vehicle, it is possible to damage the unit. Not only is that embarrassing for the inspector, it can be costly, too.

Damage can occur if the inspector does not know how to operate the components being tested, or doesn't understand how to properly take apart the few things that must be removed in order to verify operation and manufacturing dates.

However, if you do not know how to properly operate something, you should try to learn how to do so before the inspection. In the worst-case scenario, you may be able to ask the RV owner to demonstrate its operation.

As RVs become more complicated, many times owners appreciate being involved in the process so the inspectors don't accidentally create problems for them.

In the event of a mishap, RV inspectors should have liability insurance that will help cover the cost to fix or replace a damaged part, if that expense is too high to cover out-of-pocket.

Falling from the roof

It is very important to be aware of where you are whenever climbing onto the roof of an RV. It is possible to get distracted and trip over a component attached to the roof, like a vent. One inspector did fall from a roof years ago when he was walking backward and stepped off the RV.

If an inspector uses common sense, practices good safety protocols and remains aware of his or her surroundings, it is unlikely that a problem will ever occur.

While some people are afraid to climb onto an RV roof, it's probably climbing down that spooks them the most. However, thanks to modern technology, you don't have to climb on the roof itself.

You will still need to inspect the condition of the roof, but that can be done by moving a ladder to different sections of the roof and conducting a perimeter evaluation to see if anything needs to be addressed. Using a selfie stick, you'll be able to take pictures and videos of the roof without actually climbing on top.

Some inspectors fly drones overhead to take images of the roof and installed components. However, using drones, selfie sticks and ladders to evaluate a roof's condition does not allow the inspector to physically determine if there are any soft spots and note them in the final report. It's for that reason inspectors should make every effort to evaluate the roof. Just be careful!

Errors and omissions

Mistakes happen. It's part of life and no business or job is immune. RV inspectors are paid to analyze vehicles and note discrepancies. But, what if something is missed during the inspection process – something that turns out to be costly to fix later?

Inspectors who are concerned about missing an item, saying something wrong or giving inaccurate advice, can purchase errors and omissions insurance. It's common coverage for businesses, so it should not cost a lot to get that piece-of-mind.

In the advanced inspection classes, students learn how to avoid creating these types of situations during the risk management portion of training.

The instructors describe examples of situations that could happen and how to handle them properly. That, in itself, gives new inspectors a better level of comfort as they start their business and interact with clients.

Yet, with errors and omissions insurance, you can enjoy piece of mind in knowing that if something really important is overlooked, it won't break you financially.

Losing tools

This is a common problem when inspecting an RV. Inspectors open dozens of cabinets, cupboards, drawers and compartments. They also look in, on, under and around various components. Invariably, they will leave a tool behind somewhere.

Most inspectors set up a budget each year to replace lost tools.

You can minimize your risk by setting up a "check-out" system where you write down the tools as you remove them from a toolbox or vehicle, and check them back in when they are returned.

The bottom line is that although there are risks associated with being an RV inspector, they are quite minimal and should not dissuade you from pursuing the business opportunity.

CHAPTER NINE

Ethical Considerations

Being an RV inspector requires a degree of trust with clients. It is essential that customers believe inspectors are truly working on their behalf and looking out for their best interests.

The National RV Inspectors Association adopted a code of ethics that reflects the responsibility of certified inspectors to report inspection results in a fair, professional and impartial manner. The code also strives to avoid conflicts of interest that would call into question the credibility of the inspection process and other NRVA members.

As a result, the following twelve rules were established to govern the standards by which each client and RV inspection shall be treated.

Code of Ethics Number One

RV inspectors shall be objective in their reporting and not knowingly understate or overstate the details and impact of the findings from any RV inspection.

For example, if an inspector hoped to get more business from an RV dealer, it would be unethical to understate problems in hopes of earning a future favor. Nor would it be professional to overstate problems with a particular RV just because the inspector does not like the seller.

Code of Ethics Number Two

RV inspectors shall perform their inspections and express their opinions (written or verbal) based upon genuine conviction and only within the level of their education, skills, training and experience.

For example, an inspector who has no training or experience in diagnosing the condition of a motorhome's transmission really shouldn't be expressing an opinion on the viability of that component.

Code of Ethics Number Three

RV inspectors shall not disclose any inspection findings, test results or client information without the client's approval. Inspectors may disclose observed hazards that will impact the occupant's safety and well-being.

For example, an inspector should not share the final report with the seller unless the buyer paying for the inspection agrees to do so. Even then, it is probably a better idea for the buyer to give the report directly to the seller rather than have the inspector serve as an intermediary.

Code of Ethics Number Four

RV inspectors will not inspect for compensation any recreation vehicles in which the inspector has or expects to have a financial interest in the outcome of the inspection.

In other words, inspectors should not point out a deficiency and then offer to correct that problem for any type of compensation. Should they do it for free? That's a gray area and it would

probably be best for all parties if the inspector focused only upon evaluation and turns over repairs to a certified RV technician.

Code of Ethics Number Five

RV inspectors will not inspect any vehicles under any type of compensation, contingent fee or future referrals that is dependent upon reported findings or the sale of the unit.

For example, a seller can't pay an inspector to overlook problems that could negatively impact an RV's value. Nor should an inspector be enticed to downgrade an RV in order to help the buyer negotiate a lower price.

Code of Ethics Number Six

RV inspectors will not directly or indirectly compensate any party having a financial interest in the sale, lease or rental of a recreation vehicle.

In other words, an inspector can't offer to give an RV dealership a kickback if the business agrees to recommend the inspector to potential buyers.

Code of Ethics Number Seven

RV inspectors will not receive compensation for an inspection from more than one party unless all parties agree to such arrangement.

For example, an inspector should not bill the buyer for an inspection as well the seller. However, if the buyer and seller agree to share the costs, that would be allowed if the agreement was put in writing.

Code of Ethics Number Eight

RV inspectors will not accept any type of direct or indirect compensation for recommending service providers, products or other features to parties having an interest in the RV being inspected.

Many inspectors have a network of business associates to whom they refer clients for needed service, when necessary. However, it would be unethical for inspectors to be paid a bonus or commission for the referral.

This is important so that clients know that the person to whom he or she is being referred really has the skill, talent and ability to fix the problem and that the referral wasn't made just because the inspector will be compensated.

Code of Ethics Number Nine

RV inspectors shall not perform any repair, service or upgrade for compensation any RV systems or components covered by the NRVIA Standards of Practice for a minimum of one year from the RV inspection date.

Some RV inspectors are also experienced technicians. However, they should not be working directly on recreation vehicles they inspected and certainly not on RVs for which they recommended work be done.

What if the client experiences a problem with a component that was not disclosed during the inspection, such as a lock that was broken after the RV was purchased? Can the inspector be paid to replace the lock?

Under NRVIA's Code of Ethics, the answer would still be "no," unless a year has passed since the initial inspection was performed. The whole point is to maintain a degree of separation between inspections and repairs completed by the same person.

Code of Ethics Number Ten

RV inspectors will avoid activities that may harm the public, discredit themselves or reduce public confidence in the RV inspection profession.

So, don't engage in fraud by accepting payment for inspections, but fail to complete the work. If the action could wind up appearing in a local newspaper and shed a negative light on the inspection profession, avoid it at all costs.

Code of Ethics Number Eleven

RV inspectors will not market, advertise or promote their RV inspection services or qualifications in a deceptive, false and misleading way.

For example, if you're just starting out as an RV inspector, it would be unethical to promote having years of experience evaluating recreation vehicles unless, of course, you really do.

Code of Ethics Number Twelve

RV inspectors will make every effort to maintain and improve the professional practice and integrity of the NRVIA membership. Any willful violations of the NRVIA Code of Ethics and Standards of Performance shall be reported to National RV Inspectors Association for review and possible disciplinary actions.

If you know of an inspector in your market who is causing problems, you have a duty to report that person to the NRVIA. But, don't report a fellow inspector who is doing a fine job and taking market share simply because of his reputation for good work. That would be unethical.

It's all about integrity

The whole point of establishing a code of ethics in the first place is to ensure that RV inspectors can operate their businesses on level playing fields without one bad actor destroying the market for others.

Certification is an important credential to have. It elevates an inspector's professionalism and gives buyers confidence in the inspection process.

Unethical businesses threaten the integrity of the entire inspection industry. In this era, when disgruntled people can express their dissatisfaction to thousands of others on social media, it is truly important that inspectors operate their businesses above board in an open, honest and ethical manner.

CHAPTER TEN

Getting Customers

The first step to getting customers as an RV inspector is to define your primary market area. That can be a city, county, region within a state or even a multi-state zone. As an independent business owner, you can determine your own market size based on how far you want to travel to complete an inspection.

Chapter Two includes links to statistics regarding the size of many statewide markets.

Once you determine your market area, then you can go about promoting your company to potential customers. Let's look at some cost-effective ways to build awareness of your services.

Turn your vehicle into a billboard

One of the best ways to build awareness is by putting professional signs on your car or truck. You'd be surprised at how much attention it would get as people scurry around to run errands. Companies like VistaPrint can design and print two car door magnets for less than \$75.

If you have a truck or van that you use to conduct inspections, then you can wrap the whole vehicle in an advertisement for less than \$2,500.

Reach out to RV dealers

RV dealers may be a good source for inspections, but some dealers see inspectors as thwarting their effort to sell new and used RVs as well as their ability to unload lemons taking up space on their sales lots. But, it's usually worth a visit to the dealership to introduce yourself to the sales manager and drop off a few business cards.

Talking with the sales manager or service manager is a good opportunity to promote your ability to help the dealership by inspecting new units being delivered by manufacturers or being taken in on trade.

Really smart RV dealers often conduct open houses or weekend seminars to educate people on buying and owning an RV. Perhaps they'll let you set up a table to help connect with potential buyers. Not all RV dealers are suspicious of RV inspectors. Many realize that their dealerships are likely going to be tapped to fix whatever the inspector discovered.

Hint: If you're looking for business, pave the way with a box of bakery donuts. This low-cost treat will certainly leave an impression.

Check out RV storage centers

Visit local RV storage centers to see if you could post a flyer or leave a few business cards in a conspicuous place. People who don't use their RVs that often will eventually decide to sell their units. Having the RV inspected in advance is a great selling tool to provide reassurance to potential buyers.

Storage centers are often the site of many RV inspections, so getting to know the staff will certainly help build your sources for future referrals.

Conduct a campground seminar

While not generally a good source for inspection jobs, campgrounds may be willing to allow you to do a free presentation to people staying there. Check with the campground manager to see if you might be allowed to meet in a building or pavilion to lead a 30-minute presentation about the need for inspections followed by a question-and-answer session.

It's a good opportunity to educate RVers as to why they need an inspection, and to let them know that you're available to help them evaluate their next RV purchase.

On-site sandwich boards

When doing an inspection, consider setting out sandwich boards promoting your services so people driving or walking by will be able to see what you're doing. Remember, part of your mission is to make people aware that inspections are an available option for RV buyers.

Setting up such a board near the RV being inspected also serves as a warning sign, especially if the RV is parked on the street. Although they typically cost more, you can get boards in different colors than the standard white.

Many discount printers, like Staples and Build-A-Sign sell sandwich boards with custom messages for less than \$200 each.

Encourage referrals

There are few better ways to get new business than a referral by a satisfied customer. Why not offer a satisfied customer a gift card or even a cash stipend for recommending your services to people they know?

When the inspection is completed, it's a good gesture to drop a thank you note to your former customer along with a few business cards and a small token of your appreciation. The gifts are tax deductible.

Join online community groups

Facebook is a good resource for promoting local business for free, if you do it as part of a community group. Search for groups in your area and ask to join. If you're already a resident, you should have no problem being admitted.

Just be sure you aren't spamming people with messages about your company and its services. A welcome message telling people who you are and what you do for a living is generally allowed. Make sure your Facebook profile shows that you are an inspector.

Then, whenever you see people talking about buying RVs, chime in with some practical advice and an offer to inspect the RVs. If the group's rules allow, you might be able to post interesting stories about a recent inspection. For example, "I inspected an RV today that had a wasp's nest in one of the compartments."

Frequently post to your Facebook account

There are no restrictions to what you can post on your personal Facebook account. So, feel free to announce when you have been hired to do an inspection, what you found and what you inspected.

You can also post regular messages to your followers reminding them of the importance of having RVs inspected before signing any agreements. Chances are very good that someone you know is aware of someone else who is looking for or about to buy an RV.

Remember, the whole point of social media is to be social. If you post too much spam, then people will wind up unfollowing or blocking you – and you won't even know it.

Hint: Before you use Facebook to promote your business, it would be a very good idea to scrub your account of any political posts or anything that could be considered controversial. Yes, you have the right to free speech, but with America nearly divided 50-50 on just about every issue, you may not want to risk offending half of your potential customer base right out of the gate.

Use community bulletin boards

Okay, this isn't likely going to bring in a hoard of potential customers, but it does help build awareness of your company and the services you provide. Best of all, it costs virtually nothing to take advantage of the opportunity.

Many retail stores and restaurants have bulletin boards where local people are invited to post just about anything. It can be as small as a business card, or as large as an 8x5x11 flyer. Half-sheet flyers are good attention-getters in that they are big enough to display more information, yet small enough that it's not likely to be taken down to make room for someone else's information.

Join a local civic group

Whether it is Rotary Club, Lions Club, the Moose Lodge, Elks Club or Kiwanis, these types of groups are excellent sources of potential business. Many of the members are small business owners themselves or upper-level managers, which means each of them is connected to a larger group of other people.

Working side-by-side on a community service project is a great way to get to know these influential leaders who can, in turn, open doors for you.

Most groups have weekly or monthly meetings, which are excellent ways to network. You never know when someone you meet could use an RV inspection.

Participate in RV shows

Every fall, and especially each spring, RV shows pop up in communities all over America. Some are put on by RV dealerships, while some are set up by associations. Either way, they attract scores of people who are in the market to buy an RV.

Booths at these events can be pricey, especially if buyers are attracted from a very wide area. However, perhaps there is an opportunity to partner with one or two other inspectors or mobile RV service technicians to share the cost of a booth or registration.

Prepare some flyers and have plenty of business cards on hand to pass out. In fact, leave them on the table. Some people don't like the idea of talking to people for fear they will be caught up in a sales pitch. They would rather grab a business card and, if they decide they need an inspection, to call you later. Yet, some people will book inspections right at the show.

Put out a bowl with some candies to give people an incentive to stop at the booth. Mini Tootsie Rolls are always a crowd favorite, as are mint-flavored Lifesavers. After all, people are going to be talking to others, and they'll enjoy having fresh breath.

Most booths come with nothing more than a draped eight-foot table, and you'd have to rent other furniture, like chairs, for exorbitant prices, depending on the venue. You may be allowed to bring in your own, but you won't likely be allowed to serve food or drinks without buying them at greatly-inflated prices from the convention center.

Whether the show is at an RV dealership or a larger venue, you will want a professional looking background. You can get rolled vinyl displays or retractable banners for about \$100 each from larger office supply stores or VistaPrint. The key is to have the banners professionally designed. Luckily, most firms that print those displays will offer affordable design services, too.

Check with the organizers to see if you could make an educational presentation at the show. You won't be allowed to turn it into a commercial for your business, but you will be allowed to mention your company and how people can get in touch with you.

Keep the subject matter focused on why people need inspections, what they uncover, and how a professional inspector can save them lots of money or grief later. Some sessions can attract hundreds of people. Whether it's a dozen people or 200, these presentations instantly convey that you are an important, educated and trusted professional.

Advertising

There is an old business adage that says it costs money to make money, and advertising is one of those necessary costs. That's especially true for a service business, like RV inspections, where it is hard to find people at the exact moment they need your services.

You are also at a disadvantage by not having a retail space that people can pass by on a regular basis. As a result, your message must be constantly or frequently displayed so that it is readily visible to people when they start shopping for the services you offer.

However, a big problem with advertising is that you can spend enormous amounts of money with little practical return on the investment. There is no shortage of companies willing to sell advertising to business owners.

Think about all the types of advertising sources that are, just like you, seeking people to give them money to provide a service. In this case, that service is promotion. There are traditional outlets of television, radio, billboards, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, bulk mail and weekly shoppers.

There are also hundreds of non-traditional outlets seeking ads for things like school plays, sports leagues, community events, charitable functions, restaurant menus, church bulletins, etc.

But opportunities for promotion exploded with the arrival of the internet. Now there are more than 110 million unique websites in America alone and nearly 50,000 new websites being created every day.

So, how do you promote your company in a loud, chaotic sea of voices all clamoring for the people's attention and business? You can pretty much ignore most traditional media sources due to their extraordinary costs. But there are still a few viable options.

Newspapers

While newspapers appear to be a dying venue almost everywhere, they are still an appreciated resource in small towns. The big cities focus on big city news, so people living in suburban areas still rely on local newspapers for news and information about their communities.

For that reason, advertising in a local, small-town newspaper still makes sense. So, if there are a lot of RV owners in your area, this may be an option.

Display advertising, those bigger ads on news and feature pages, can be pricey. However, classified ads can still be affordable. In fact, most local newspapers are part of a regional cooperative that will offer one price for a classified ad to appear in multiple publications. Just be sure to insist that ads appear in the RV sections, and not the section offering a variety of other services.

Direct mail

Direct mail is regaining popularity because it can be personalized and it's harder to ignore. Unlike a spam email that can be deleted without opening the message, with direct mail, chances are good the recipient will at least glance at the content on its way to the recycle bin.

Direct communication with current customers and prospects remains an effective promotional tool. However, that mailing list is compiled over time, which does not make it a viable option for a new business owner.

NEVER buy a mailing list. Regardless of the seller's claim, the lists are often full of errors and people's names wind up on them without their knowledge or permission. That makes the lists useless when considering the expense of printing items and paying for postage.

One type of direct mail may be beneficial for an inspector. Those are the envelopes that arrive with a dozen or so unrelated flyers or coupons in them. Valpak has offered this service for years.

The reason this option may work is that people who are thinking of buying an RV at some point may retain that flyer until they need an inspection. It's also likely that someone who opens the envelope will know someone in the process of buying an RV, and may pass the flyer on to your potential customer.

You might offer to split the cost of this type of advertising with a mobile RV technician.

Online advertising

The bulk of all advertising currently takes place online. In fact, Google, Twitter and Facebook now account for 85 percent of all money spent on online advertising. It's a very popular opportunity because:

- It's fast – You can create an ad and have it working for you in a few minutes. You don't have to worry about someone else's deadline or delivery schedule.
- It's efficient – Your ads can often be targeted directly to people who are most likely to need your services. For example, rather than spend money on a newspaper ad that reaches 10,000 people, of which a few dozen may need an inspection, online ads let you zero in on people of a specific age range, sex and income level who are actively shopping for an RV based on their search histories. Companies like Google and Facebook also know what people are interested in, and will ensure that ads pertaining to those interests are seen more often.
- It's cost-effective – Most of the time, you pay money only when someone clicks on the ad, but some venues are starting to charge an "impression fee" to simply show the ad to people. Even if you paid \$1 per click (it is often much lower than that), and it cost you \$100 to reach a hundred active buyers, chances are very high that you'll get some type of response to the advertisement.

The problem with online advertising occurs if you're not careful in tightly defining the types of people you want to see your ad. It would take longer to burn a \$100 bill in an ash tray than it would for you to spend \$100 on "boosting" social media posts, or just displaying ads to everyone online.

Major online advertising platforms, like Facebook and Google, have developed tools that help you target your ads to the right people. You log into your account, and the site's artificial intelligence robots guide you in creating a headline, adding pictures, and including text in the right places. But, you'll still have to know what words to use in creating a headline and text.

That requires a little thought on your part to ensure that people who need to see your ads actually get to see them before you expend your budget and the platform doesn't allow more ads to be displayed.

That all boils down to keyword selection. Yes, you could tell platforms to display your ad whenever anyone looks for RV inspections, and you'll wind up displaying your ads in all four corners of the country even though you're located near St. Louis.

It's much better to tell the platforms to display your ad only if the person likely to view it meets these criteria:

- Age 45-65 – The sweet spot for RV buyers.
- Male – This is tricky. Research shows that most ideas to get an RV generate with husbands, but no purchase takes place without the support of a wife.
- Professional – Less likely to be familiar with the mechanics of an RV, and more likely to need someone to evaluate the unit for him.
- Lives within 80 miles of a specific area, like where you are located, so you can easily serve that client.
- Income above \$50,000 – More likely to afford the add-on cost of an inspection.
- Likes outdoor activities and travel – An RV would fit in nicely in that lifestyle.
- Married – A spouse may support the need for an inspection, or insist upon one.

By entering as many keywords and identifiers as you can, you are very likely to reach the type of customers you would really like to bump into on the street; people who are in the market at exactly that moment for the inspection service you offer.

This is not to say that you're not going to connect with a 40-year-old blue-collar worker who makes \$45,000 a year and is unmarried. Yes, you will have customers like that. But, if you're fishing for customers, you want your pond stocked with more of the type of fish you want to catch.

One of the other great advantages to online advertising is that you can try multiple messages relatively quickly to see which ones attract the most inquiries. Then, you can direct the platforms to display the best-working ads more often, and you can quickly discontinue any ads that don't make the phone ring.

The bottom line is that there are lots of opportunities to promote your business. The challenge will be to discover what messages resonate with buyers in your area.

Your website

A number of inspectors have enjoyed tremendous success by using what's called "search engine optimization" to inject key words and phrases into their webpages.

Search engines, like Google, Bing and Duck Duck Go, deploy electronic robots, or “bots,” to constantly scan web pages to catalog the content so it knows what pages to suggest when people search for specific things.

Tapping into this requires more science than luck. It requires modifications to webpages themselves to ensure key words and phrases people are searching for actually appear on your website.

So, if your inspection business is located near Portland, Maine, you will want the phrases “RV inspection” and “Portland, Maine” to appear prominently. You don’t want people from Portland, Oregon, or the two dozen other cities by that name in America, to accidentally call you just because you do inspections in “Portland.”

This requires website developers to think like consumers by imaging how they would search for your company. Using the above example, people would likely enter either of these into a search bar:

- Professional RV inspection
- Experienced RV inspector in central Maine
- Get my RV inspected in Portland Maine
- Affordable qualified RV inspector
- Certified RV inspector in New England
- Trained RV inspector in Maine

The benefit is that, when search engine optimization is done right, you really don’t need to do any other promotion to get the phone to ring. It’s for that reason that some RV inspectors are willing to invest \$5,000 or more in designing their sites to take advantage of search engine optimization.

Encourage reviews

People put a lot of weight and credibility into online reviews. So, encourage your satisfied clients to leave reviews on Google, Facebook, Yelp and other sites. That does require you to establish specific pages about your business on those sites so that people can leave reviews.

Most of the time, creating a business page is free. But, its content is often added to search engine results. The more positive reviews you have, the better because it improves the order in which your site is listed in search results.

Building the right website and ensuring that it is optimized for higher search results, is essential. NRVA can recommend people who understand the inspection business and have built successful websites for other inspectors.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Getting Training

As of this writing, there is only one place where RV inspectors can get trained to do the evaluations and learn how to use software that makes inspections easier to complete: The National RV Training Academy (NRVTA) in Athens, Texas. The National RV Training Academy is the only certified licensed education provider from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

Terry and Evada Cooper founded the academy in 2018 after conducting similar training programs all over the nation for many years as the RV Mobile Academy. Eventually, demand for courses increased so much that they were unable to accommodate all students seeking training during classes set up in hotels and other rented spaces.

Today, courses are taught in The Big Red School House, a 15,000-square-foot facility encompassing three climate-controlled classrooms and three service bays that allow RVs to be brought in for students to study. An overhead observation area lets students see what takes place on an RV's roof without everyone climbing onboard.

What makes NRVTA unique is that it is located adjacent to The Texan RV Park, an 89-site campground that also features nearly a dozen cabins. Students can stay directly on site while taking training and mingling with other students at night and on weekends.

The best part about being connected to a campground is that RV inspectors are exposed to dozens of different RVs, which helps them understand how systems may differ from one brand to another.

Not only does the academy train RV inspectors, it's also one of a handful of professional education centers where technicians and RV owners get basic and advanced training to diagnose or repair an RV.

The academy is staffed with a team of instructors who lead students through an RV Fundamentals class as well as two advanced training courses.

RV Fundamentals Training

Whether students wish to become certified RV inspectors or RV technicians – or just want to learn how to fix their own RVs – everyone takes the same RV Fundamentals class.

This week-long course is a combination of in-depth, live classroom instruction and hands-on labs. Students meet eight hours a day Monday through Friday. There are multiple hands-on labs scheduled so students can take equipment apart and use tools to test or diagnose problems.

The first two days address the three electrical systems onboard an RV: house 12-volt, chassis 12-volt and house 120-volt AC. Inspectors learn how to use a volt ohm meter to troubleshoot the systems and are taught to calculate electrical loads or consumption rates for any circuit.

Day Three zeros in on propane and water systems. Inspectors learn correct procedures to test for gas leaks and document results. They also learn about the two sewer and two fresh water systems onboard every RV as well as how to ensure that various components are operating correctly.

Classes on Day Four center on common issues that can occur with RV air conditioners and the absorption refrigerators commonly found in recreation vehicles. Inspectors learn basic troubleshooting procedures and the location of various test points to ensure the components work properly.

The last day of class addresses water heaters, furnaces and RV exterior systems, like slideouts, roofs and levelers. Inspectors learn how the components are designed to work as well as how to troubleshoot potential problems.

In 2021, tuition for the RV Fundamentals course is \$1,644, which includes a workbook used in class.

Principles of RV Inspection Training and Advanced RV Inspection Training (two weeks)

During these two week-long live courses, students learn skills to assess and properly diagnose RV systems in order to deliver a thorough inspection report.

The intensive courses combine classroom training with hands-on experience conducting mock inspections under the guidance of an experienced instructor. Students begin with a towable mock inspection and then complete a motorhome mock inspection the following week, both of which are graded by the instructor.

During these weeks, students learn how to use NRVA's recommended HomeGauge software and specially-developed templates that help guide inspectors through each step of an evaluation.

Curriculum focuses on risk management and how to conduct a fluid analysis by capturing samples of oil, transmission fluid and coolant. Students also learn how to complete paperwork required to send samples to the lab for analysis.

It's important for students to learn a system for inspecting RVs that follows a specific order to ensure that components are tested in a certain way so that final reports are as accurate as possible.

In addition to the process of an inspection, instructors go over setting up a business, pricing, marketing and managing a company efficiently.

Students will advance their inspection skills via a thorough application of industry-specific software and hardware.

Certification exam

After successful completion of both weeks of advanced training, students can attain their certification by taking a written exam the Saturday following the last day of live training. In 2021, the cost to take the exam is \$543 and includes a first-year membership in the National RV Inspectors Association (NRVA), which is a \$299 value itself.

To maintain the certification, all inspectors must complete 24 hours of continuing education per year. The courses are offered at NRVTA as well as by suppliers themselves at locations around the country. Whether the classes are taught by NRVTA instructors or by RV manufacturers or suppliers, students receive credit for each course they complete.

Tuition

As of 2021, tuition for the Recreational Vehicle Inspector course is \$4,893. Course materials are \$450 and a registration fee of \$100. Students will need to purchase vacuum pumps plus two separate kits to

capture oil and coolant samples for analysis. Students will also need to bring a laptop, a smart phone or tablet and their tools from the RV Fundamentals class.

Tuition also includes a complimentary first-year membership in the National RV Inspectors Association for all graduates who attain their certification credentials.

To enroll in training to become an NRVIA Certified RV Inspector, visit www.nrvta.com, email info@nrvta.com or call (903) 386-0444.

CHAPTER TWELVE

What's the Next Step?

Are you convinced the RV inspection business is a viable option for you?

If so, then let's launch you into a successful business, whether you opt to do inspections part time or make it a full-time career. Here are the first twelve first steps you need to take.

1. Schedule training

Visit the National RV Training Academy website at www.nrvta.com. Then click on Programs > RV Inspector. It will show you the dates of upcoming RV Fundamentals courses. Pick a class that fits into your schedule so that you can take advantage of the invaluable hands-on labs and call (903) 386-0444 or click the contact link. The two advanced courses will immediately follow the RV Fundamentals class.

2. Think of a business name

It can be as simple as Joe's RV Inspections or something that pertains to your market area, like Rhode Island RV Inspections. If you feel creative, dream up something really unique that people are likely to remember.

Do a quick Google search to see if a similar business is already operating with the same name. Many states maintain a registry of business names that have already been incorporated. It's often maintained by the secretary of state's office, so you can also check there, too, to make sure you're not copying another company name.

If there is a similarly-named inspection company already operating somewhere, but it's several states away, it probably won't matter, unless that firm has secured a trademark for the company name. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office allows you to conduct free searches at www.uspto.gov.

3. Acquire a domain name

You're going to want a website, so make sure that domain name is available at an affordable price. Squatters – people who buy a bunch of domain names and hold them for years just waiting to sell them at hyper-inflated prices – may want thousands of dollars for the domain you were hoping to get. Don't play that game unless you have your heart set on a specific name.

To see if your domain name is available, visit www.godaddy.com. You'll see a place to enter in your desired business name as one word. The shorter the better!

So, if your official business name is Madison RV Inspection Services, see if www.mrvs.com is available. Many people use their cell phones to look up websites and it's much easier to thumb in five to 10 characters than it is to type 20 or more.

In the past, .com domains were considered business gold while .org applied to charities. But, that's no longer the case. There are dozens of extensions offered today. So, if a squatter is demanding \$5,000 for the .com domain, perhaps the .biz or .us option is available for far less money.

Ideally, you want to spend less than \$20 to secure a domain name. But, once you buy it, it's yours forever as long as you renew it each year for less than \$20.

Some domain providers, like epic.com, includes privacy protection with the price of a new domain. Others, like GoDaddy, will give you the option of paying \$9.99 or more per year to ensure your domain ownership information remains private. If you're really concerned about privacy, then pay the money.

But, your contact information is likely going to be available on your website anyway, so you really don't need to invest the money now. You can always add it later if you think you're getting spam calls or emails.

As soon as you register a domain, you will start to get email messages from folks all over the world, primarily India, offering to help you build a website, improve search engine optimization (SEO) or ensure your site appears No. 1 in Google. Don't respond. Many of the emails are robots and once you respond, then the spam really pours in.

4. Set up an email address

When you register your domain name, GoDaddy will likely offer you an opportunity to add an email plan to the package. This is a good investment and it is relatively affordable. Start small and pay for the Email Essentials plan, which cost about \$6 per month in 2021. You can easily upgrade later if you find you need more oomph in your email service.

Firms like Epik include email with their website hosting plans, but you'll need more tech skills to set up the domain, email and website. If you want the setup process to be simple and easy, stick with GoDaddy.com.

5. Decide on a phone number

Now is the time to decide whether to use your personal cell phone number to conduct business, or to secure a separate number just for your business.

Before making that decision, you can check out GoDaddy's SmartLine option at www.godaddy.com/smartline. You do not need a toll-free number. When is the last time you paid for a long-distance call?

Just click on Start for Free and enter the area code where your business will be headquartered. If you're a full-time RVer, enter the area code for your domicile state. GoDaddy will display a list of available telephone numbers in that area. If you don't like any of those, click Search Again to see more numbers.

If you find one you like, then snatch it quickly! You will receive instructions on how to set up your cell phone to receive business calls during certain hours and how to record a voicemail message.

6. Set up a website

Thanks to GoDaddy's Website Builder service, you can create a decent looking website with relatively little effort. It will walk you through the steps to add pictures and text to customize the website to your business.

You're only providing information and encouraging people to contact you to set up an appointment. You're not selling inventory, so you don't have to worry about creating a "shopping cart" experience.

If you're really uncomfortable setting up a basic website by yourself, you can probably hire a high school or college student to do it for you for the price of a few pizzas.

However, if you'd like a really top-notch website, then look for a web developer to create a custom site for you. It's worth the extra money to work with someone in the United States or Canada. Not only is it

easier to communicate with U.S.-based developers, they work during the same times you do. Overseas developers can be in a different time zone 12 hours earlier or later, and that just creates unnecessary logistical challenges.

7. Get an Employer Identification Number (EIN)

If you plan to hire an attorney to set up your company, he or she will likely do this for you, but check to be sure.

It's very easy to get a federal EIN by visiting www.irs.gov and search for EIN. It will lead you to the right site to apply online. Just fill in the required information and submit it to the IRS.

Your EIN number will be displayed on the screen. Be sure to print several copies and store them in a secure location. The IRS no longer mails the EIN numbers to business owners, and you will need that number for EVERY federal and most state tax forms you ever fill out.

Once you have the federal EIN number, check to see if your state requires a separate ID number for your business. Most states mercifully allow you to use your federal EIN to file state forms, but some will insist on a separate number, and they'll charge you a fee to get it.

8. Incorporate your business

Now you will have to decide whether to bring in a law firm or if you're comfortable doing this yourself. Each state's requirements are different, so be sure to check requirements in your area. **NRVIA recommends that people seek the advice of legal counsel when setting up a corporation.**

Technically, you do not need to "incorporate" your company. You can be a sole proprietor and still operate a legal business. Incorporation or forming a limited liability company (LLC) will offer a degree of legal protection that being a sole proprietor does not.

If you think you can do the job yourself, most states allow you to create LLCs or incorporate online. Do an online search for "create llc in ____" for whatever state you'd like to set up your business. Then look for the official government website ending in .gov. There will be dozens of law firms offering to help you do the job.

Once you get to the right website, you'll find forms and instructions for officially setting up your company. There will be a filing fee, but don't worry, the state will tell you what that's going to be before you submit the registration.

If you'd rather not fuss with the hassle of trying to figure out a government bureaucracy, the National RV Inspectors Association has an arrangement with the law firm of Kyler, Kohler, Ostermiller and Sorenson.

Mark Kohler is one of the senior partners and he's also a certified public accountant. His firm has set up thousands of companies and provided legal or tax advice to many small businesses connected to the RV industry. Mark has been a frequent guest speaker at the Workamper Rendezvous and was instrumental in establishing the Small Business RVer School with Workamper News.

In 2021, you can hire one of their lawyers to set up your company in any state for \$800 plus whatever the state's filing fee may be. Or, you can save money by using one of the firm's paralegals to set up your company for \$450 plus a filing fee.

You'll find more information at www.kkoslawyers.com.

9. Get a business license

Some communities require businesses to have a license in order to operate legally within their jurisdictions.

Check with your local county and city governments to see what, if any, requirements and fees are associated with establishing a business within their borders. Sometimes you will need a state, county and city license.

10. Create a logo

After you've ensured your company is on everyone's radar as a legitimate business, now it's time to have some fun. Designing a logo is a way to inject fun and color into your business venture. A logo is as simple as using a picture or design. It does not have to be unique, although that helps.

By using companies like Fiver, you can get a professional logo designed for less than \$50. Be sure to hire a reputable designer. You don't want to hire someone who simply copies another company's unique logo and adds your name to the design. That's an invitation to all sorts of legal trouble.

11. Order business cards and shirts

Once you are trained to be a certified RV inspector, have legally established your business, and your website is up and running, then it's time to start promoting your company. Business cards are the essential basic marketing tool.

Go to a local print shop or office supply store, like Staples, to order some cards. PrintRunner.com is another popular place to get good looking cards printed quickly and affordably.

Now might be a good time to take a copy of your logo to a local embroidery shop and create some business shirts to wear during inspections or when meeting with people. You'll have to pay a set-up charge to "digitize" the logo, but after that, it should cost less than \$10 to apply the logo to whatever shirt you select.

If you're in a northern climate, long-sleeve shirts would be good since you'll be outdoors much of the time. For that reason, short-sleeve is probably the best option for working outdoors in southern states.

12. Spread the word

With a stack of business cards in hand while wearing a professional-looking uniform shirt, now it's time to let people know you're in business.

Give out cards to friends and family, and ask them to pass the cards on to people who might be able to use your services. Stop into an RV dealership or two and introduce yourself. Begin engaging people on social media.

You are finally a professional NRVA Certified RV Inspector!

Treat your business like a business in a consistent and professional manner. You're on your way to a new life as an entrepreneur!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Frequently Asked Questions

NRVIA compiled a list of frequently asked questions the association receives from inspectors and people considering starting an inspection business. If you have additional questions, feel free to contact the National RV Inspectors Association at (855) 472-9948 or by email at info@nrvia.org.

Q. Do I need employees?

Most inspectors who complete training are singles and couples, and opt to go in business by themselves or with a spouse. They seem to understand that taking on an employee severely adds to the risk and expenses associated with their business.

An employee will never take the same care or responsibility for your business as you do as the owner. Employees are not necessary because a four- to eight-hour inspection can be done alone, or with the help of a spouse or family member.

Yes, you can complete more inspections with the help of paid employees. However, you will have to crunch the numbers to see if the costs and liability associated with hiring employees still makes it a profitable decision.

Don't forget, with employees you will not only pay an hourly wage, you will need to pay unemployment insurance and the employer's portion of the Social Security tax.

Q. Can my family help?

This is a great business model for a husband and wife to work together, especially if both are NRVIA Certified RV Inspectors. Clients enjoy seeing husband/wife teams assisting them with their buying decisions.

Some inspectors have brought their adult children to class so they can work together as inspectors. But, it is strongly discouraged that inspectors involve children under 18 in any aspect of on-site inspections.

Q. Is there an age limit to being an inspector?

NRVIA has inspectors who are in their mid-seventies. Depending on an individual's health and mobility, there really is no age limit to working as an inspector. It is a physical job in that inspectors climb ladders, crawl around the RV, kneel and squat to completely evaluate the vehicle during the inspection process.

Q. Can I retake a training class?

The RV Fundamentals Class, Principles of an RV Inspection class and Advanced RV Inspector Training course can be re-taken, but for an additional fee. Most students say the way material is presented, and because they leave with a two-gigabyte flash drive containing all the class material plus additional business resources, they usually have what they need for future review. The National RV Training Academy does allow spouses to sit in on the business portion of the RV Fundamentals class to help inspectors recall information after the class ends.

Q. Why is certification important?

NRVIA certification shows potential clients the inspector has successfully completed a training process so they are capable of doing the best job possible for clients. Because NRVIA membership requires 24 continuing education credits each year to maintain certification, and also recommends certification as a registered RV technician, this assures NRVIA inspectors are qualified and able to perform the tasks necessary to offer high-quality RV inspections.

Q. Do you offer help setting up a business?

Yes! During the Week One class, instructors teach a business topic during each morning session. They speak in broad strokes about starting an RV service business. The two advanced training courses refine that instruction even more.

The next step for those who really want extra help starting, managing and growing a business, is to enroll in the optional Workamper News Small Business RVer School. It is a 90-day online program to assist inspectors with all they need to launch successful businesses. There is more information about that program in Chapter Fifteen.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The National RV Inspectors Association

The National Recreation Vehicle Inspectors Association (NRVIA) is a membership organization providing certification and credentials for professional recreation vehicle inspectors throughout North America.

NRVIA's mission is to provide credibility through testing and awarding of credentials to qualified inspectors. NRVIA inspector members are required to follow specific standards of practice and a code of ethics that will ensure consumers receive inspections of the highest quality and caliber.

When people hire an NRVIA Certified RV Inspector, they are assured of receiving a professional, standardized and thorough inspection of their RV equipment.

NRVIA tests and certifies inspectors in addition to connecting them with clients who need inspections done before the purchase or sale of an RV.

The association helps ensure the success of members by giving them professional accreditation, which sets them apart from amateur and untrained inspectors. Members enjoy a number of benefits, such as:

- A free online community for inspectors who can share tips and ideas as well as answer questions or offer advice.
- Promotion of a member's business on the NRVIA website listing the inspector's location and contact information.
- Regular notification of people looking for inspectors in their area. It's the member's responsibility to follow through to make contact with a client and book the business.
- Business-building advice to help inspectors grow their companies and promote their services.
- An annual online training event for both RV Inspectors and RV Technicians to earn substantial continuing education credits.
- A video library showing how to fine-tune the inspection process or identify often overlooked areas to inspect.
- Opportunities for collaboration with NRVIA partners seeking inspectors for large-scale operations.
- The ability to use NRVIA's logo to promote an inspection business on signs, shirts, business cards and websites.

There are two levels of certification offered through NRVIA. They are:

NRVIA Certified RV Inspector

This person has completed all three weeks of inspector training as well as mock inspections and passed the certification exam.

This credential ensures the public that the inspector is fully qualified to perform a top-to-bottom inspection of a new or used RV.

NRVIA Master Certified RV Inspector

This credential is achieved not by attending classes, but at the discretion of NRVIA to honor those inspectors who have a significant amount of experience in completing RV inspections and for their involvement in the RV industry.

Perhaps they lead classes to train other inspectors, write articles appearing in publications, make presentations at various RV shows or they mentor newer inspectors. Either way, the NRVIA Master Certification is the highest credential an inspector can receive from the association.

People can apply for NRVIA Master Certification once they have been in business for a minimum of 24 months and completed 50 inspections that meet report-quality standards. The association will consider client reviews and feedback in determining whether the inspector qualifies for this level. Applications are processed once per quarter and those who are selected for master certification are notified by email.

If a student is turned down for NRVIA Master Certification, he or she can apply again and provide updated information as to why the inspector is deserving of the honor. All NRVIA Master Certified Inspectors must be actively evaluating RVs, complete continuing education and other maintain other membership requirements.

Cost to maintain NRVIA Certification

The first year's membership is paid through the advanced training at the National RV Training Academy. Membership is renewed each year for \$299.

To renew NRVIA certification, inspectors must complete an annual survey that describes the average number of inspections they performed each month, the average cost per inspection and other variables that pertain to their business, such as busy times, location and market area, etc.

For more information on becoming a member, visit www.nrvia.org or email info@nrvia.org.

Chapter Fifteen

Small Business RVer School

Since 1987, the Workamper organization has helped connect full-time RVers with short-term jobs that are either full- or part-time at locations throughout North America.

Around 2010, Workamper News expanded its services to help people start, launch and support successful businesses they can operate anywhere from their recreation vehicles. As more people started businesses, they were asking for more assistance in helping to turn their dreams into reality.

In 2020, Workamper News launched the Small Business RVer School for Entrepreneurs on the Move. Its goal was to help RVers develop systems to make money, save on taxes and avoid stress while enjoying the benefits of being their own boss.

By helping them get started on the right foot with the right business success tools, the school assists these “campreneurs” in developing a plan for personal and financial freedom.

This community of like-minded people ensures that mobile small business owners don’t have to navigate the journey by themselves. With the Kick-Starter Business Boot Camp, entrepreneurs are aligned with tools they need to build their businesses and strengthen the soft skills that ensure they maintain forward momentum.

Led by Steve Anderson, the president and director of possibilities for Workamper International, the school incorporates practical business instruction with the best personal practices developed by the legendary Zig Ziglar.

The Tuition includes the following materials that will be shipped to you or made available online:

- *Eight Steps to Start & Grow Your Business*, a program developed by attorney and certified public accountant Mark J. Kohler. It includes a printed book and access to an online interactive suite, which is a \$99 value.
- Online access to the Kohler Tax & Legal Library, a \$399 value.
- The DISC Advantage Personality Profile Assessment and course, a \$99 value.
- The Ziglar Performance Planner and course, a \$49 value.
- The Ziglar Goal Setting and Achievement Course, a \$69 value.
- The Ziglar Building the Best You Course, a \$69 value.
- Twelve monthly live webinar-style question-and-answer sessions with Mark Kohler, a \$500 value.

The Kick-Starter Business Boot Camp features more than 40 recorded videos on topics such as:

- Starting with Why – Your motivation for being in business.
- Three plans for developing a small business.
- Establishing a strategic plan to accomplish your 10-year vision.

- Creating a successful business plan.
- Choosing the best business entity for your company.
- Controlling start-up, fixed and variable costs.
- Determining your break-even point.
- Bookkeeping basics and setting up various accounts.
- Creating an affordable marketing plan.
- Taking advantage of legal tax deductions.
- Paying yourself, family members and sub-contractors the right way.

For more information about the course and to enroll in it, visit www.smallbizrver.com.

So put your passion into action and take the necessary first steps toward complete personal and financial independence.

***“You are what you are, and where you are because of what has gone into your mind.
You can change what you are and where you are by changing what goes into your mind.”***
- Zig Ziglar

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Don't Wait – Start Your Own Business Today

A few years ago, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported there were 9.6 million self-employed individuals in 2016, and that number was expected to rise to 10.3 million by 2026.

However, the agency could not have been further off in its estimate, if it tried.

By July of 2019, the agency reported there were 16 million self-employed Americans. Following the recession of 2020, that number has likely jumped significantly.

In fact, the agency noted the No. 1 source for growth in new companies and corresponding jobs will be personal care and services. RV inspections are certainly providing an important service to people looking to enjoy the RV lifestyle.

Whenever you take steps to control your own destiny, you are always better off in the long-term by working for yourself than you would be working for someone else.

Don't be held back by fear because you were designed for more!

Take the first step into a new life as a self-employed RV inspector. Your only regret will be that you didn't take that step one year ago.