

# 123 JUNK

JUNK REMOVAL MADE SIMPLE

## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS: HOW 123JUNK GOT IT'S START

Told by our CEO, Collin Wheeler,



TODAY

2008



## **THE BACKSTORY**

I was a year out of college and I was wearing a tie every day to work. I had an excellent job in sales with one of the top moving companies in the Washington DC area. I had a company car and a relatively flexible

schedule. I enjoyed my coworkers and I took pride in what I was doing. The CEO of my company was a self-made millionaire and a smart business man. I had almost unlimited access to him, which was uncommon for somebody in my position.

Earning an entry level salary, I lived comfortably with my three roommates. My rent was low and I had some spending money each week, which I successfully burned through each weekend. I had stress typical of any full time professional, but my work-personal life balance was relatively healthy. Still, there was a void in my career... I just wasn't sure what it was.

As a moving consultant, I became aware of a common concern that each of my clients shared. It seemed as though they all had unwanted items in their homes that they no longer had a use for. In some cases, it was a ratty old appliance or a worn out sofa. In other instances, it was a whole basement, attic or garage worth of

miscellaneous stuff. They certainly didn't want to pay a moving company hundreds or thousands of dollars to move these items.

## **THIS CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED JUNK REMOVAL**

I had heard that a service existed that would come into your home and remove your unwanted items for a fee, but I didn't know the first thing about how it worked. Moving was competitive and I needed an edge (a resource) that I could introduce to my clients that would provide them value and cast me in a positive light. I reached out to three contacts in the junk hauling industry and invited them to join me for coffee in order for us to get better acquainted.

To my surprise I was blown off by all three of them. Here, I was telling them that I was in a position to refer them recurring business and they didn't have the time to grab coffee with me. I thought to myself, either they are oblivious to the fact that somebody like me could help them, or they have so much business that they simply don't have time to meet with me.

Either way, I saw an opportunity. That day, I began writing a business plan. I was determined to make a splash in the junk removal industry!

## **WHAT JUNK REMOVAL WAS MISSING**

I quickly noticed some opportunities that were

being missed by our existing competitors. Very few, if any, were going to great lengths to donate or recycle the items they picked up. Valuable stuff was being landfilled. I couldn't find a company that made responsible disposal a priority, or one that had built their brand around their disposal process.

I remembered a few months earlier, cleaning out my own home and having a great deal of trouble parting with some old pots and pans that I no longer needed. I put them in bags and boxes and threw them in the trunk of my car. I ended up driving around with them for a month, before I finally made it to a charity. I remembered how important donating those items were to me



and I was pretty certain I wasn't alone. I decided that what we did with our customers' stuff would be our differentiator – our value proposition – our main focus – our brand!

## ***HUMBLE BEGINNINGS***

I still remember the savings account bank statement. It read \$4,127. Although this was a good deal of money to a 23 year old, I knew it wouldn't get me very far. I wasn't living in the 1950's.



I told a few friends about my intentions to put in my two week notice and start hauling junk for a living. The collective feedback sounded something like: "You're an idiot." On a certain level, I agreed with them, but I figured I had little to lose. After

all, the only person I was supporting financially was myself and I had seen the demand for these services first hand as a moving consultant.

So I flipped over the couch cushions and scraped together every last cent I had to my name. I purchased an old truck from my Uncle for \$4,000, which he graciously financed to me on a no interest loan. He gave me a good deal, but this thing was “a beater” in the true sense of the word. The side view mirrors literally flapped in the wind at highway speeds. The entire bed was framed with wooden 2x4’s. I had to spray paint it just to get it presentable and to hide the rust. In order to dump it, you had to remove the doors and they weighed 90

pounds each. It wasn’t the proudest vehicle I had ever called my own, but it usually started up when we turned the key. Plus, it was much larger than a pickup truck. Our first year, we grossed \$89K with that old truck. I thought to myself, “Maybe there’s some potential here.”

## **THE COMPANY'S FIRST EMPLOYEES**

It’s hard to hire staff when you don’t have any work to promise them. Because of this fact, I decided to hire high school students. They didn’t have as many bills

to pay, so inconsistent work was more tolerated. Plus, I had a younger brother who was a junior in high school and had a million friends who were athletes. There was never shortage of manpower if somebody called out. I think in many ways that helped us. People seemed more impressed about their experience when they realized the median age of our staff. I guess it’s easier to exceed client expectations when you’re “just a kid.”





## **WHAT HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO?**

In the early months, the phone wasn't exactly ringing off the hook. We needed business and we were willing to take just about anything that came our way. We had no idea what we were doing.

We received our first call on January 5, 2008 from a Washington Post ad. It was a lady who had a huge shed in her back yard made of solid wood. She wanted it removed, as well as a riding lawn mower, some lawn equipment and several dozen blocks of large concrete that sat inside. I gave her the price - \$350 - and I clenched as I watched her reaction. Surprisingly, she accepted the price without hesitation. I

thought to myself, "Collin, you smooth son of a gun. You just got away with murder!"

Three and a half hours later, we were only half way through the job and running out of sunlight. I was bleeding in two places and I had nearly admitted defeat. One of my new employees had already told me that this would be his last day of work and that he wasn't cut out for the junk hauling business. By that point, I was strongly considering getting out of the business myself. I remembered that somebody had once warned me, starting your own business takes blood, sweat and tears. I had never taken the figure of speech literally until this point.



We ran out of sunlight and ended up coming back out the following day to finish. Our disposal fees ended up being over \$120. I had to pay my team the sum of \$200. Two trips to the client's property put our fuel expense somewhere around \$50. We had lost money! This was no way to run a business!

## **REDEMPTION**

Just as I was getting ready to throw in the towel, we received a call from a Realtor. She was selling a property for a family who had recently moved and had left a ton of stuff behind. I was floored when I arrived on site to find four full truck loads worth of junk. You have to

understand that, at this point in the business, this was the MOTHER LOAD! We had to triple our staff just to handle the volume.

This time, we charged a more appropriate fee and I realized that maybe I could make money in this industry. Perhaps just as importantly, I learned another valuable lesson: not all of our junk jobs consisted of "junk." That day I took home some 500 bottles of unopened, aged wine. As you might imagine, for the following month, my house became a very popular gathering spot as my friends and family came over in droves to taste the wine!

## ***MORE INFORMATION ABOUT 123JUNK***

Today, 123JUNK is positioned as the prominent Eco-Friendly Junk Removal Service of our Nation's Capital and the surrounding areas of Northern Virginia and Maryland.

123JUNK specializes in the removal of unwanted items from your home or place of business. Our proprietary three step disposal process is a reflection of our name and the essence of our brand:



**1 - DONATE**



**2 - RECYCLE**



**3 - DISPOSE**

Through this process we are able to minimize landfill mass and maximize the recycling potential for your unwanted items. We'll even provide a charitable receipt for those items we're able to donate on your behalf.



Located in Chantilly VA, 123JUNK is proud to be a young, local, independently owned company that services exclusively Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington DC. Our reputation was built on professionalism, customer service, and the environment. Look out for our shiny red trucks in a neighborhood near you!

**800-364-5778**  
**WWW.123JUNK.COM**