

# Junk Removal Done Differently

By **Natasha Legay**

Most of us have been there. Every day you see the pile of junk you have been meaning to get rid of.

It can look different to everyone. Whether it's remnants of your latest renovation that's damaging the curb appeal of your home, or household clutter that has begun to consume your life, one thing is certain: junk is almost always unpleasant to the eye and mind.

Perhaps your personal relationships may have even started to be affected. Your frustration with your spouse or family member—who agreed to remove the junk on the next sunny weekend three months ago—has finally hit a breaking point.

Whatever the situation is, the idea of hiring someone to remove junk can seem unnecessary or stressful. Luckily, Ginny Sterling Boddie, co-founder of Junkery has set out to provide clients with a stress-free, customizable junk removal experience.

“What I noticed was that junk is dirty and unpleasant, and I felt that the junk removal process didn't need to be,” says Sterling Boddie. “So the opportunity I saw was offering a more convenient and more pleasant junk removal service.”

Junkery is a customer-focused, affordable junk removal company locally owned and operated in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In addition to offering regular junk pickup, Junkery has its signature Junkery Bags, a less-expensive and more flexible alternative to traditional bin rentals. According to Sterling Boddie, Junkery Bags give clients the option to have full control of the process; they can keep the bag as long as they



need to, and because disposal is included in the price, there are no surprises when it comes to cost.

Sterling Boddie hopes to change the way people think about junk removal. She feels the junk removal process should be considered a part of any job, project or renovation. Sterling Boddie says that once a reno or project is finished, people are excited by the final product, but when they realize what's left over to dispose of, their excitement ends abruptly. They look at the pile of junk materials leftover and think ‘ugh, now what do I do with this?!’

“People think of getting rid of what's left over at the end, and I just wanted people to think about [Junkery] as an option, and as a part of the process, not just an afterthought.”

Junk wasn't always Sterling Boddie's forte. Prior to starting Junkery with her husband, Sterling Boddie spent 10 years working in information

management in healthcare for Northwood, a large senior care company. After that, she worked in the recruitment industry for just over 10 years, and on the side operated her own management company where she helped small business owners with everything from marketing to payroll.

Like many entrepreneurs, Sterling Boddie is a serial business-owner. Over the years she and her husband owned and sold several businesses, but Sterling Boddie admits that becoming an entrepreneur wasn't something she envisioned from the start.

"It was something I grew into. My husband is a corporate commercial lawyer, and [becoming an entrepreneur] kind of fed from his view that I was already doing all this work for other businesses, so why not invest that time into my own [business]?"

The idea to start Junkery was born during a conversation with a colleague. Sterling Boddie and her husband were at a point where they were trying to figure out what to do next. Their colleague, who had previous experience from a human resources perspective in the waste management industry, mentioned that there was an opportunity in the industry for a company to compete with some of the other residential waste removal companies.

Most entrepreneurs will agree, running a small business doesn't come without challenges. For Junkery, Sterling Boddie says standing out among competition has been a hurdle.

"We are competing against national junk removal franchises, and we're new so there's definitely an awareness and marketing challenge."

She says to combat this challenge, the Junkery team spent a considerable amount of time crafting their brand and messaging. Junkery has also increased the business's visibility by creating a strong online presence, attending trade shows, and participating in community events.

Another challenge for Junkery is related to the junk removal process itself. Sometimes junk removal companies are hired to remove junk

that has sentimental value. For instance a retired couple is downsizing from a home they've lived in for decades, or a family member living on their own has passed away and the family needs to clear out the house. There are even reality television shows depicting extreme cases of people's attachment to their belongings, such as TLCs "Hoarders."

"We understood that, for many people, there is a psychological aspect when purging belongings. We wanted to ensure we are sensitive to everyone's situation because these items are memories for them, not junk," says Sterling Boddie.

Sterling Boddie says that many people approach junk removal differently. She explains some people are quick to make the call, and some are more hesitant to call a junk removal company. To accommodate people's differences, Junkery looked at how they could structure their services to meet customers' needs.

"We started to look at customizing our services to make the call a completely custom option for our clients. Having the option to use the Junkery Bags, use the Junkery Pick Up service, or use a combination of both services has really resonated with our clients."

Junkery takes it one step further and makes the process even easier for clients by sorting out materials at their sorting facility. "If [a client] has finally made the call, for us to say 'we'd be happy to help you but we can only accept this, this and this, and you have to sort it yourself,' then it doesn't make it easy for them."

Junkery's sorting process also it helps divert items that don't belong in a landfill to places where they will be recycled or repurposed. So far, less than five per cent of the total tonnage that Junkery picks up has gone to the landfill.

"It's a significant number, and it's something that we wanted to be able to tangibly track," says Sterling Boddie.

In business, there tends to always be someone doing something similar to you. Sterling Boddie

knew this was true for Junkery. So she feels it's more important than ever to embrace being different if a business is going to stand out among its competitors.

"If we are going to be competing against national franchises, we need to look like one, but we also need to differentiate ourselves from how they're doing what they're doing."

While Sterling Boddie feels looking like a franchise was important to be taken seriously as a professional service, she thinks individuality is key when it comes to providing customers with the best experience possible. "The more we were trying to create an individual presence for our self, through our research, the more it became apparent that the people making the call for junk removal is a very individual thing as well.

Although purchasing a franchise is a popular choice for many starting out in the junk removal industry, starting a small business allowed Sterling Boddie and her husband more control and freedom to be creative.

"I'm a problem child" jokes Sterling Boddie. "I would not have been able to colour within the lines. I think my hands would have been tied and creativity stifled if we had bought into a pre-existing business under a franchise model. I like to be able to create and morph as we go."

She says that she doesn't believe franchising is a bad idea, and even mentioned that Junkery may very well adopt the franchising model someday. But as of now, she is happy with how owning a small business allows her to incorporate aspects of community involvement, and expand on many ideas she has for the company.

One of the best things an entrepreneur can do when starting a business is to take advantage of the resources they have available. When Sterling Boddie joined the Centre for Women in Business, she already had years of experience in different areas of operating a business, but wanted to refine some of her existing skills. So she sought out the Centre's assistance through the Business Certificate Program in small business marketing offered through a partnership between the Centre

and Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

While in the 10-week workshop, Sterling Boddie says she was able to meet other incredible women business owners and share her experiences with them while receiving constructive feedback from. "My favourite part of that class was being able to bounce ideas off one another," she says.

Sterling Boddie adds that she feels women business owners, start-ups particularly, deal with so many challenges, and having programs and services like ones offered by the Centre are important. "I look forward to using the Centre for Women for Business's resources as my business grows."

Junkery began operation January of this year, and is now in the midst of its busiest season. According to Sterling Boddie, there are endless opportunities for future growth for the company.

"The fun part is that [the growth opportunities] are almost unlimited," says Sterling Boddie. "There is expansion by way of services we offer, there is expansion by way of geographic area, there's a lot of potential for Junkery and we're very excited about it."

<http://www.junkery.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/theartofjunk>

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