



Northwest

POWERING UP: Cleaning With Z+H

Meet Zack, of Z&H Janitorial. Zack and his family moved to the United States from Kosovo to escape war. With no connections to the community and limited English language skills, Zack found the adjustment to be challenging. But, he kept at it and persevered. He eventually found work as a janitor for a local school district and spent years in the custodial industry. Then, in 2007, he began Z&H Janitorial with his wife Hamide as a source of side income.



Although hardship hit in 2008 when he was laid off, Zack says, “I was very happy that year because Kosovo became a new state and gained independence; I got my US citizenship, got a house, and heard about Mercy Corps Northwest so I enrolled in my first Foundations course.”

It was then that Zack decided to strike out on his own full-time and pursue self-employment.

Through business education courses, personalized business counseling, and the matched savings account grant program (IDA), Zack was able to gather the knowledge and capital needed to start and grow Z + H Janitorial. The increased capital helped Zack purchase the necessary cleaning equipment, and his family has since doubled their household income.

Zack and Hamide grew their business the old-fashioned way - by providing excellent service and the word of mouth referrals keep coming. They receive great reviews on Angie’s List, and have become a preferred vendor, ranking in the top 5% in the PDX metro area for the last two years. Zack and Hamide have watched their small business thrive, but they are not done yet.

“My goal for the business is to expand – expanding slowly, step by step. We would like to expand and hire maybe 2 other employees, and do larger accounts.”



IDA Purchases

With his matching savings grant, Zack purchased a commercial carpet machine, a smaller stain removing carpet machine, 2 backpack vacuum cleaners with hypo-allergen filters, 2 commercial air movers for drying carpets, and a few other smaller items.



“The equipment we purchased through the IDA was very helpful to our business. Thanks to Mercy Corps I got my equipment and it takes less time to finish my job,” says Zack. “When you have nice equipment, you just don’t waste your time,” he adds.

Greater time savings and efficiencies equals greater capacity to take on additional jobs. Zack and his wife travel from Sherwood to Hillsboro, Tigard and Portland for various jobs, so managing their time efficiently is a priority.

“That helps a lot too because we added a few other services with the equipment we purchased.” Z&H Janitorial primarily does commercial cleaning services, but expanded their residential offerings in the last few years with their new equipment.

“When I did residential jobs they would ask about window cleaning, carpet cleaning, spot stain removal. I didn’t use to have the equipment for that. Now, the customer will have all those things done with one cleaning company – with us.”

Zack also previously rented his equipment each month to do his jobs. With his new equipment, he was able to eliminate a large monthly expense. “There is a big difference between renting and owning the equipment.”

Ultimately, Z&H Janitorial provides a means to support their family and serve others. “We take pride in our jobs. We are very hardworking, me and my wife. We’ve grown our business by 50%. We support our family from the business income – we are very happy with it.”

