

The Short-Term Rental Profitability Playbook

How independent hosts squeeze more profit from every property — without more guests or higher nightly rates.

7

Proven Strategies

\$6,200

Avg. Annual Gain

30 min

To Implement

What You'll Learn

1

Why Most Hosts Leave Money on the Table

The hidden profit leak killing indie host margins

2

The 7 Profitability Levers

Each one worth \$500–\$2,000/year per property

3

Turnover Cost Calculator

Find your real cost-per-turnover in 5 minutes

4

The 90-Day Operations Audit

A step-by-step checklist to tighten your operation

5

Benchmarks: Are You on Track?

Real numbers from top-performing indie hosts

★

Your Quick-Win Action Plan

30-minute moves that compound over time

Who this guide is for

Independent Airbnb and VRBO hosts managing 1–10 properties. If you run more than 10, these strategies still apply but you're ready for enterprise tools.

CHAPTER 1

Why Most Hosts Leave \$6,200/Year on the Table

The problem isn't your nightly rate. It isn't your occupancy. It's the invisible operational waste that compounds quietly — one missed supply restock, one rushed turnover, one untracked maintenance call at a time.

\$847

Over-purchased supplies

Average annual waste from
untracked restocking

\$1,940

Avoidable bad reviews

Revenue impact of 1-star
drops from cleanliness
complaints

\$3,420

Maintenance surprises

Emergency fixes that proper
alerts would have prevented

The 7 Profitability Levers

Each lever below is independent — you can activate them in any order. Start with #1 or the one that matches your biggest pain point.

1

Standardize Your Turnover Checklist +\$800–\$1,200/yr

A missed item during turnover costs you a bad review. A bad review costs you 2–4 future bookings. Build a room-by-room digital checklist your cleaner signs off on every single time — non-negotiable.

QUICK ACTION

List every room. List every task in that room. Give it to your cleaner digitally — not on paper they can lose. Require a photo confirmation for kitchen and bathrooms.

2

Track Supplies by Property, Not by Gut +\$600–\$900/yr

Most hosts over-buy because they don't know what's at each property. Others run out of toilet paper between cleanings. Both are avoidable. Track soap, paper goods, and cleaning supplies per property with a par level — a minimum you restock to, not guessing.

QUICK ACTION

Set par levels: 6 rolls toilet paper, 4 hand soap bottles, 2 dish soap. Your cleaner flags when stock drops below par. You restock only what's needed — nothing more.

3

Automate Pre-Arrival Guest Messaging

+\$500–\$1,100/yr

Guests who arrive confused call you. Every call you take is time and stress. Guests who arrive with clear instructions give 5-star reviews. Send a check-in message 24 hours before arrival — every time, automatically.

QUICK ACTION

Write one template per property: parking, door code, WiFi, what to do with trash. Schedule it to send 24 hours before check-in. Stop answering the same questions 20 times a month.

4

Schedule Preventive Maintenance Quarterly

+\$1,200–\$2,400/yr

Emergency calls cost 2–3x more than scheduled work. A \$120 AC check in April prevents a \$600 emergency in July. Create a quarterly maintenance calendar — HVAC filters, grout, weather stripping, appliance checks — and book it before you need it.

QUICK ACTION

Block one day per quarter for a maintenance sweep. Do it during a low-occupancy period. Your checklist: filters, drains, caulking, smoke/CO detectors, lockbox batteries, outdoor lighting.

5

Know Your Real Cost Per Turnover

+\$400–\$700/yr

Most hosts guess. "My cleaner charges \$120." That's not your turnover cost. Add supplies consumed, laundry, your time, and the platform cleaning fee you collect. When you know the real number, you set the right cleaning fee, you catch cost creep, and you make smarter decisions.

FORMULA

Real Turnover Cost = Cleaner fee + (Supplies cost ÷ turnovers) + Laundry + (Your hours × \$25) + Any incidentals

6

Build a Cleaner Backup Network

Risk reduction

A cleaner cancels the morning of a same-day turnover and you have guests arriving at 3pm. Without a backup, you're scrambling — or worse, canceling a booking. Every host with more than 2 properties needs at least 2 vetted cleaners they can call.

QUICK ACTION

Find one backup on Turno, Properly, or local Facebook groups. Walk them through one actual turnover so they know your standard. Test them before you need them.

7

Review Your Numbers Monthly — Actually Review Them

Foundation

You can't improve what you don't measure. Set a 30-minute monthly "ops review" — revenue vs. last month, cost per turnover trend, maintenance spend, occupancy rate. Look for drift. Small changes compound fast over a 12-month horizon.

MONTHLY REVIEW AGENDA

Revenue vs. prior month → Occupancy trend → Cost per turnover → Maintenance spend → Guest rating average → One thing to improve next month

CHAPTER 3

Your Turnover Cost Calculator

Fill in your numbers. Do the math once. Know your real number.

Your Inputs

Cleaner fee per turnover \$ _____

Monthly supplies cost ÷
turnovers \$ _____

Laundry cost per turnover \$ _____

Your time (hours × \$25) \$ _____

Other incidentals \$ _____

Your Results

Real cost per turnover

\$ _____

Annual turnover cost (× yearly turnovers)

\$ _____

Is your cleaning fee covering it?

Cleaning fee – Real cost =

\$ _____



Benchmark: What's a healthy turnover cost?

Top-performing hosts in the US keep turnover costs at 8–12% of their average nightly rate. If yours is above 15%, you have room to improve — start with supplies tracking and scheduling efficiency.

CHAPTER 4

The 90-Day Operations Audit

Run this checklist once a quarter. Each item is a yes/no question — any "no" is a profit leak.



Cleaning & Turnover

☐

I have a written, room-by-room turnover checklist for each property

☐

My cleaner signs off (digitally) on every completed checklist

☐

I have at least one backup cleaner vetted and ready to deploy

☐

I know my real cost per turnover (not just the cleaner fee)



Supplies

☐

I have par levels set for each supply category at each property

☐

My cleaner reports low-stock during every turnover — not when something runs out

☐

I track supply spend per property monthly, not in one combined account



Maintenance

☐

I have a quarterly preventive maintenance calendar with scheduled dates

☐

HVAC filters were changed in the last 90 days at every property

☐

Smoke and CO detectors tested and batteries replaced this quarter

☐

I have 2 reliable contractors on speed-dial for emergencies (plumbing, electrical)

Guest Communication

- ☐ A check-in message goes out automatically 24 hours before every guest arrival
- ☐ I have a mid-stay message template asking "Is everything great?" to catch issues early
- ☐ A checkout reminder goes out the morning of departure with checkout instructions

CHAPTER 5

How Do You Stack Up?

Benchmarks from top-performing US indie hosts (1–10 properties, 2025 data)

TURNOVER EFFICIENCY

Turnover cost as % of nightly rate **8–12%**

Same-day turnover success rate **>95%**

Cleanliness review score **>4.8 ★**

GUEST EXPERIENCE

Response time to guest messages **<1 hour**

Pre-arrival message sent before check-in **100%**

Overall review score **>4.85 ★**

MAINTENANCE

Preventive vs. emergency maintenance **75% / 25%**

Annual maintenance as % of revenue **5–8%**

FINANCIAL

Net operating margin **28–38%**

Supply cost as % of revenue **<4%**

Ops review cadence **Monthly**

Emergency call-outs per property/yr <3

YOUR ACTION PLAN

30-Minute Quick Wins

Do these this week. Each one pays off within your next booking cycle.

5 min

Calculate your real turnover cost today

Use the formula in Chapter 3. Write the number down. Text your cleaner and ask for last month's supply usage if you don't have it.

10 min

Write your first turnover checklist

Pick your most-booked property. Walk through it mentally room by room. Write every task. Share it with your cleaner before their next turnover.

8 min

Write your check-in message template

Parking, door code, WiFi, trash, check-out time. Draft it once. Schedule it to send 24 hours before every arrival. Guests who arrive prepared give better reviews.

7 min

Book your Q3 maintenance sweep

Pick a low-occupancy date. Put it in your calendar right now. Schedule HVAC filters, smoke detector batteries, and a drain check. Call your handyman today to hold the date.



Ready to Run a Tighter Operation?

StayReady brings cleaning schedules, turnover checklists, supply tracking, maintenance alerts, and guest messaging into one platform built for independent hosts.

- ✓ Turnover checklists
- ✓ Maintenance alerts
- ✓ Cleaner scheduling
- ✓ Supply tracking
- ✓ Guest messaging
- ✓ Profitability dashboards

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