
How to Hire a Janitorial Service

What you Should Know about this Important Decision



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This report is a free offer from The Green Clean Institute. Our goal is to promote a practical application of good business and Green businesses. You will find, however, that there are several ways to Go Green. Basically, there is some form of **Greenwashing**, or the legitimate way of making the changes that a Green business should make for the benefit of the community and business. Our program is the right way to Go Green, by making a Green change.



You will also find some excellent information in this brief report that we believe will greatly help you find and hire the correct janitorial service. The more you know about how this industry works, the easier it becomes to determine which janitorial service you want to service your building.

As you might suppose, there is no one **defining standard** for a good janitorial service. You will often find that janitorial websites or brochures often display associations and affiliations that require only that they pay the annual dues. In return, the member gets magazines, website access, discount offerings, and the chance to attend the annual convention at a better price. So, what conclusions should you draw from these seemingly prestigious insignias and membership? Frankly, put no value at all on them. They are bought and paid for mostly to impress you with something besides the actual work they do. While this is not a condemnation of these associations or the people that participate in the programs, it has little value to you unless the association has provided an education and improvement in the people who are in the program.

Secondly, do not get overly impressed with the look of the janitorial website. It is good that someone invested the time or money to create an attractive website, but what is seen on the website may have no bearing on the strength or professionalism of the company. Websites are an easy way to combine words, graphics, and design to convey an impression. Hopefully, the

company will live up to the boasts and promises of the website, but that is something that will be seen in time.

Thirdly, do not think that a salesman for the firm equals a better company. Larger firms must use sales people to keep their number of accounts sufficient in order to pay the ongoing expenses. It may seem to be an advantage to have a sales person or account manager for your business, but these people do not generally impact the quality of the service given. That job belongs to a completely different crew that works the night shift and reports to their crew leader.

Does the janitorial service require uniforms, drive better trucks, or advertise more than their competitors? These may be indicative of a more professional approach to business, but they do not guarantee the quality of the cleaning service. These items are positive items to notice in the review of a company, but not sufficient to determine whether a janitorial company is a good choice for your job.

Selecting from the Yellow Pages is not the best method. The Yellow Pages might work to get a list of names to contact for a bid opportunity, but you cannot judge a company from the size of the ad in the Yellow Pages. You will find that this is the same advice as using Google and checking out websites on the Internet. Everything I have mentioned thus far refers to the more superficial aspects of business and is only indicative of what might be true of the company.

In this brief report, I have tried to address the most urgent issues regarding hiring a janitorial service. In the end, finding the right service can be a great relief, and finding the wrong one can be a constant headache.

R Michael Richmond
Green Business League

CHAPTER ONE

ISSUES OF CONSEQUENCE

The issues of consequence in hiring a janitorial service will require more than a passive review of what is presented. It is normal to sit back and let the parade of sales people, company reps, or proposals come to you. In many cases, it is like a beauty contest as we eventually select the one that seems to impress us the most. You will have to live with this decision for the length of the contract, or go through the hassle of breaking the contract and hiring another service. Therefore, in any outsourcing opportunity, you are looking for a company that will deliver the quality of service you require more than the price that is offered.



As you will discover, there are several key issues that need to be considered when hiring a cleaning service. One issue that will be discussed is the sheer necessity of finding a Green janitorial service. Cleaning is the fundamental duty, and customers want to know that regardless of all the claims, associations, or certifications. The basic question is whether a company is going to do a good job for the money that is paid to them.

Therefore, one of the due diligence issues is a discovery of past performance. The price is no guarantee of a better or worse service. While cut-throat services will under-bid the job and then under-support the project, the amount paid for the service is not a reliable way to judge a cleaning service.

The best way to discover a reliable service is to check with companies already using the service. This means not just the ones that are listed on their reference sheet, but other less-conspicuous accounts. Everyone has their premium accounts that they service well. The question is how they treat their other accounts. This is, unfortunately, one of the hardest tasks to accomplish since no one offers their marginal relationship as a reference.

Realize that many contracts are 3 to 5 year agreements that may be difficult to break and troublesome to replace. It is worth checking around to find out the reputation of a service rather than accepting self-written boasts of the quality and diligence of their own service. As stated, marketing seems to give a wide allowance to promote a business regardless of the facts of the true

operation of the service. At the very least, interview key representatives of services to learn as much about their program and their commitment to the satisfaction of their customers.

Avoid Special Favors

Do not be surprised to discover that various firms will “Go the extra mile” to get your business. In most cases, these favors expect reciprocation even if they claim that the perks are part of their company’s broad policies. It is never a good idea to get involved in kick-backs, perks, and favors regardless of the causal attitude about such matters by the agent.

Giving business as a pay-back is bad practice, and if your business is related to the government in any way, you might one day discover that it is a criminal concern. Bribery, price fixing, and manipulation of business are wrong and should be avoided. In fact, if anyone offers you a bribe or inappropriate gift, it is best to dismiss that company from any participation in your bid or quote process.

If undisclosed favors come to light, it could also cost you your job. Taking undisclosed favors is a liability. That is not to say that you can’t enjoy a meal with people you work with, have a drink with them, or even vacation with them. Keep relationships on an even balance. Treat who pays the bill or buys the drinks as a separate issue. Make sure that any business relationship is one that you would have no problem disclosing to others in the firm.

CHAPTER TWO

The Green Building Transition

Cities are increasingly encouraging the “Go Green” theme to area buildings. It is a hard issue to neglect as it seems like a fundamental duty that everyone must adopt. We have been taught that everyone must participate in the Green program since pollution and energy management is everyone’s duty. Frankly, we have emerged from at least a decade of Green rhetoric to finally enter a period of implementation. Ever since President Clinton signed **Executive Order 13101** in 2000, the mandate has been in place to require safer products and new cleaning procedures to deliver a better workplace. This executive order did not become effective until Dec 6th, 2006, and this means that we are still in the early stages of the Green revolution.



President George W. Bush signed another Executive Order (EO 13423) strengthening the Green practices of all federal agencies, and that means that the movement will continue at all levels. You can expect each new administration to press the environmental issues further and further each year. This is the best time to get prepared for the mandates that are sure to come.

In late 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order 13514 requiring all agencies to comply with various mandates. These mandates included: reducing carbon emissions, working on a Greener fleet of vehicles, and reducing energy use. There were requirements for water, trash, and energy by all agencies as well. Finally all agencies were required to install a sustainability officer and prepare a sustainability plan. This is something we will soon see pass to the business community as well, so pay attention to the warnings.

Years of Green rhetoric have created more than a public awareness. We are watching a cascade of federal, state, and municipal regulations which seek to require area agencies, businesses, and building owners to take action in the Green transition of their facilities. The problem is that Going Green is somewhat amorphous, and it is difficult to say what constitutes a Green building.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) has become the most recognized credential for Green building status. However, the LEED

system of earning points for a wide variety of environmental issues makes a LEED certification very expensive and difficult to obtain.

Green Business League offers the Green Business certification that is affordable and practical following the three-part guideline of Green practices, Green Products, and Green Management. It has been correctly said that Going Green starts in the janitor closet. It is here that you will find some of the most powerful and dangerous products in your building. Even bleach is considered a dangerous and non-Green product by the EPA. Read the instructions, and you will see why this is true. You will find pesticides, drain cleaning, floor stripper, chrome cleaner, disinfectants. These chemicals are used almost daily in the building. Floor stripping and finishing products use some of the most powerful chemicals in the industry. Even air fresheners have problem ingredients that people think help the air but actually make the air worse.

Taking a company to a Green status as a GCI Green business has to have a common starting point for everyone. It is not the replacement of CFL bulbs which may save energy but do not necessary create a Green environment for workers.

The Definition of Green Clean

First of all, it might be helpful to understand the concept of environmentalism versus the meaning of Green. Environmentalism is a broad term that refers to the preservation or improvement of the world. It includes people who are concerned about the use of resources, the pollution of our communities, and the disposal of our trash. **Environmentalism** is a concern for the homeostasis (wellbeing) of the world. **Green** is a part of the environmental, but it is a subdivision that is concerned for the health of the people in the system. The idea of going Green is primarily a process providing a healthier home, school, office, or plant for the people under our care while seeing the bigger picture of how our local actions also impact the world at large.

In the prioritization of the Green building, the emphasis is first to improve the health of the people in the facility. This brings up issues of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), Indoor Air Quality (IAQ), acute and chronic exposure to repeated use of chemical agents. Bioaccumulation and biomagnification of the compounding effect of whatever product that is used in the sealed environment of the building drives home the point that the cleaning process is really Ground Zero for making a building Green. We cannot circumvent the system by putting a green garden on the roof using a catch tank for rainwater to water the grass.

This is where there is the classic misappropriation of Green by referring to environmental issues.

Green is a concern for the specific and general health of people and living things, whereas environmentalism looks at the world as a living thing that needs protection and help as well. Frankly, extreme environmentalism may mean an imposition on people in favor of the contrasting environmental concern. It is a subject that few will discuss, but a common clash of interests happened when the health of people and the protection of the environment mean different things. Oil is the perfect example. The universal use of plastic, lubrication, oil products, and even certain medicines and chemicals are produced from oil that mankind must have. Gas, though we decry it, is a staple of a commercial world until an innovative and affordable alternative is found. Yet, an extreme environmentalist would have all oil pumping stopped and the world turn to bicycles. It is not uncommon to have opposing environmental issues.

We are told that fish is a healthier part of our diet, but environmentalists dispute fishing practices telling us that we are depleting the seas of this resource. Manufacturing cannot be done without some form of pollution, but any pollution is unacceptable by the extreme environmentalist. Therefore, our focus is on the health of people who are under our care, and secondarily on the world that we live in. This does not negate environmental concerns or anyone's concern for a better world. It is a process of prioritizing your agenda. Frankly, your first obligation is to a healthier workplace, and then a better world.

With that said, it is easier to understand why we return to the janitorial service as the starting point. For decades, the office nightshift (the janitorial crew) has been rather untouched by the cares of the rest of the world seeking only to deliver a clean and presentable office for the workers when they return. It made little difference what they used to get the job done. The only requirement was that the job got done ... and done right.

Task Oriented Workers

Janitorial work, therefore, was primarily a **Task Oriented** issue. That the job (task) got done was all that mattered. How it got done was not an issue ... until now. Please realize how this changes the game. People who operated a task oriented business have been forced to consider a two step program change. As Green issues came up, the answer was to buy new, Green products for cleaning, right? Well, that is true, but this means that cleaning services must

become “**Product Oriented**” thinking that the introduction of Green cleaning products solved the problem. But, it didn’t.

“Green does not come in a bottle.” claims the director of Green Clean Institute, R. Michael Richmond. Tools are not the singular answer. This is true of a mechanic who buys tools, or a golfer who buys new clubs. There must be a “knowledge-base” for the operation of a Green cleaning service. Tools do not make a backyard mechanic into a great mechanic. Better clubs do not make a poor golfer a great golfer. And, **Green products** do not make an average janitorial service into a Green janitorial service.

Green Practices are the counterpart to Green Products. The training and certification of janitorial services means that the janitorial service has finally crossed over to the professional level that the Green mandates expect. He is no longer merely task-oriented, thinking only about getting the job done. He is not fooling everyone (Greenwashing) by merely putting Green products on his cart and claiming to be a Green service. This is product oriented and short-sighted.

When the people in the system understand how and why Green works, the janitorial service will have graduated to the concept of “**Service Oriented**” and has installed Green Practices throughout the cleaning business. This is a subject missed by many businesses who fail to understand where the process starts and what it takes to have an operational Green program. When the issue is only the lowest price, you are likely going to opt for a “Task Oriented” service that gets the job done without cutting corners. When you consider the ongoing health and safety issues of the workplace and the workers, you are going to ask for more than the cheapest work or a few chemicals on the cart. You will look for a janitorial firm that brings you a Green Service as well as Green products. Sure, it is assumed that the job will be done, and done right, but it must also reach a higher standard of Green programming.

CHAPTER THREE

Green Building Management



While two of the three fundamental issues are resolved by bringing a Green janitorial service into place and assurances that the janitor service actually has Green products and equipment in use, there is a third major part of the Green building formulation. We refer to this as the **Green Management** program that shifts the area of duty to the actual company involved in the Greening process. **Green Management** refers to a progressive (rather than immediate) program that guides nearly any business toward a high level of Green compliance year after year. This is something that the janitorial service cannot normally do for you, although they may be a source and resource for Green guidance.

Green Management starts with a **Green Survey** offered through the Green Business League (www.GreenBusinessLeague.com) that represents the starting point assessment of the building's Green cleaning compliance. The Green Survey is a voluntary assessment of the current status of the building. In response to the Green Survey, the company is given basic guidelines of prioritized improvements of the facility. This does not prevent the Green Building certification, except in cases where obvious failures exist. In nearly every case, these issues can be resolved in less than 30 days at a very small cost. Our opinion is that Going Green does not have to be instantaneous or expensive. It does, however, take a commitment to change.

The Green Survey is the prelude to certification, and this survey is followed in a three to four month cycle by a Green Audit. It is here that a representative of the Green Clean Institute will do a walkthrough of the building to assure that the items mentioned in the Green Survey and suggestions by the Green Clean Institute are accomplished or going in place. The Green Clean Institute will then issue a GCI Green Building Certification which demonstrates that the participating facility is in compliance with the Green Clean Institute standards for a Green Building and part of the progressive process of the Green Management program.

The Green Management program is a once-a-month report that outlines key issues in a Green Building transition project that can be applied with little or modest cost to the business or workplace. Surprisingly, there are hundreds of

Green Building ideas that can be applied in this kind of program to protect the financial bottom line of the company while taking it to a higher Green standard of compliance. For example, if the company is planning to repaint any part of the facility, there are two very low cost options for the Green building program. First of all, the office personnel have been taught through our Green Management program how to select low-VOC paint. This allows so that an informed decision to be made. Secondly, the company's contact person (Environmental Officer) can call our office at any time during business hours for guidance on Green applications for nearly any issue.

Over the period of one year, and each year thereafter, the key people in the office or building are given a progressive education that encourages them to do something routinely to maintain their GBL Green business status. Each year, the Green Survey and Green Audit process is repeated with reasonable expectations that the standard of Green compliance is improved by a proactive approach to the actual facility.

All contracts by a Green business need to require Green compliance from the vendors or services bidding on the contract. The janitorial service is no different. The Green Business League offers 15 points in the 100 point certification program for a Green Certified Janitorial service. By adding in a Green certification requirement, the janitorial services are encouraged to first upgrade their program before getting the contract award. This is not a difficult task since it often requires modest training and replacing existing non-Green products with a Green replacement as they repurchase cleaning products and equipment.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Request for Proposal

Staying with the fundamentals, it will likely cause some distress upon the quasi-Green and self-appointed firms to put the Green Practices Clause (found in Appendix A of this report) in the Request for Proposal (RFP). In fact, any firm quoting on your building may also be required to comply with the Green Practices Clause as well. You will recall that there must be a common starting point for Going Green, and we believe that that starting point is the requiring of the cleaning services to honestly prove that they use Green Practices and Green Products. The brand of the product is frankly irrelevant since there are now a wide variety of supposedly Green products.



The **Green Practices Clause** is not trademarked or copyrighted, so it may be used freely, amended to your situation, or modified by your legal department. It is a straightforward statement that requires that those wishing to bid or quote on your facility demonstrate that they have a standard of Green compliance in their firm.

The objection to the Green Practices Clause is that a company wishes to stand in their own measure of Green compliance. This suggests that they both know how to offer a Green service and that a national standard need not apply to them. Unfortunately, unregulated services lend themselves to being abused and ignored unless there is some form of oversight and ongoing training. The Green building program is evolving, and we certainly do not believe that a Green service is accomplished by adding in a few or several Green products by the cleaning service.

Also, beware of frivolous Green Clean certifications. Knowing that their customers are anxious to get any kind of Green Clean certification, a variety of less-than-independent chemical companies have hosted Green cleaning seminars. These seminars offer a portion of Green training that includes a very overt promotion of the chemical company's Green product line. This may be smart marketing by the chemical companies, but it is a disservice to the firms and businesses that these cleaning companies serve.

Attracted by free food and a free certification, various cleaning services will attend these speculative Green seminars, leaving a few hours later as a Green Clean company according to the Xeroxed copy of the Green Clean certificate handed out as the attendee leave. Obviously, the hope is to get an inside track with the janitorial firms for their Green products, but the reality is that these otherwise fine folks in the janitorial service are not well served by these biased presentations. This goes back to an argument that a Green product is not the singular evidence of a Green cleaning service. It is, at best, only one-third of the issue that should be addressed in the Green Building certification process.

CHAPTER FIVE

Common Mistakes in Hiring

Thoroughly investigating the capabilities of the service provider is critical. While reference checks are paramount, they do not tell the whole story. A commitment to initial and ongoing training is essential to success. What are employee turnover contingencies? Do they cross-train all of their employees? Do they know how to implement team cleaning processes? Do they know how to organize the work load properly and execute the plan to service the facility efficiently?



By doing the reference checks and asking the right questions beforehand, facility professionals can avoid hiring the wrong provider. Listed below are common mistakes made in the janitorial service provider selection process:

1. The service provider can not deliver what was promised.
2. The service provider does not provide adequate initial or ongoing training.
3. The service doesn't supply adequate crew to perform the services required.
4. The facility manager selects the service based on price, instead of a combination of price and quality service.
5. The facility manager does not check references of the service provider adequately.
6. Ongoing communication does not take place between the service provider and the facility manager.
7. The expectations are not clearly defined to all parties.
8. Special service schedules are not adequately planned or communicated to all parties involved.
9. Problem resolution is not executed either timely or effectively between tenants, service providers, and facility management staff members.

10. Security provisions are not adequately taken into consideration.

Simple Issues of Cleaning Matter

As is the case in numerous fields, better technology is providing tremendous tools for cleaning companies. The use of micro fiber in maintenance products, for example, is allowing a never before realized opportunity to aid janitorial crews in working dryer, greener, and cleaner.

Microfibers are densely constructed polyester and polyamide (nylon) fibers that are approximately 1/16 the size of a human hair. The density of the material enables it to hold six times its weight in water, making it more absorbent than a conventional cloth or mop.

Additionally, the positively charged microfibers attract dust, which has a negative charge, and tiny fibers are able to penetrate the microscopic surface pores of any material. These characteristics make microfiber an effective dusting or mopping material.

There are three main benefits to using microfiber in commercial facilities:

- Reduces chemical usage and disposal. This allows for a more environmentally friendly approach as well as definitive cost savings.
- Reduces cleaning times. Labor is the single largest cost component in most commercial cleaning bids. There are numerous case studies that have documented time savings when using microfiber.
- Reduces workers' compensation claims. This is primarily true of the microfiber mop system when compared to conventional mop bucket and wringer systems. The microfiber system typically utilizes a flat mop without the need of a bucket that reduces the lifting and wringing motion that can lead to custodial staff injuries. Again, there is documented evidence to back up this contention.

Chemicals

There are three main considerations when dealing with chemicals: environmental impact, worker safety, and product performance. Several top chemical manufacturers have created specialty lines with current and future global environmental concerns in mind. The purpose is to offer an opportunity to become part of the environmental solution.

The main characteristics for a facility manager and his or her team to look for in responsible cleaning solutions are:

- no persistent, bioaccumulative or toxic chemicals;
- no ozone depleting compounds;
- no or low volatile organic compound content;
- no hazardous waste characteristics;
- no phosphate, phthalates or phosphonates;
- no carcinogens, mutagens, or teratogen.

Facility managers need to speak with their contract cleaning management to insure that they are using safe cleaning solutions.

Building Security

Given today's heightened security climate, the outsourced cleaning service should not add to the end user's security risk. When selecting a maintenance company, facility professionals should confirm the following characteristics are part of the contract cleaner's business model:

- background checks;
- owner operator or experienced supervisor on site at all times;
- fully insured with sufficient limits (standard \$1-\$2 million liability coverage);
- workers' compensation coverage for all;
- janitorial bond coverage is in place for all;
- identification badges are utilized at all times;
- uniforms are worn by all cleaners at all times;
- security access is limited; and
- key and alarm code policy is consistent with the building management's policy.

Any maintenance company that is selected should employ the above systems and processes. Thorough reference checks go a long way in preventing problematic situations.

Special Compliance Issues

In light of **Sarbanes-Oxley**, INS crackdowns and terrorism, banks cannot take chances with their vendors. Through outsourcing with a large, respected provider, the onus is on the facilities service company to follow correct accounting, disclosure, reporting, hiring and subcontracting practices when providing services such as commercial cleaning. For banks, safety, security and environmental concerns should also be a top priority. With the bank having centralized control over the relationship, the branch managers are relieved of that responsibility and risk. The contract with the banking janitorial services company is managed either directly by the bank's facilities manager or, increasingly, through a management company.

Immigration is, unfortunately, a major issue in the janitorial business. The pay scale and easy-entry into the cleaning crews provides an easy place for illegal aliens to find a job.

It is also an easy arena for people with criminal backgrounds, drug users, and other less-than-desirable sorts to find work. This is not an indictment of the cleaning industry because there are many similar jobs that offer an opportunity for hard-working people to find good employment.

Therefore, it is important that the cleaning service run background checks on employees, drug screening, and validate the credentials of all employees. While it is unfortunate that these steps must be imposed, it must be remembered that these people are given easy access to your office and potentially valuable information.

Be aware that sensitive information in your files, in your computers, and sitting on your desk that are easily viewed, copied, or stolen by any less-than-scrupulous office workers. When there is no normal supervision, as you will find in the daytime office operation, there is little to stop the clandestine information thief. Therefore, while the janitorial service should provide a diligent review of the workers used in your building, it is your job to protect information from anyone who is not authorized to see the sensitive information.

Finally, security systems are appropriate ways to check up on the work being done, the action of workers, and any security issues. Keycard passes can validate the time spent on the job and who was present in the facility if this question comes up. It is possible to finish the job quicker if more employees are

brought in. However, if you contracted for five days a week and three hours per night, you might want to verify that you are getting what was promised.

Camera systems at the workplace also provide a chance to review the work and hours of a cleaning service. It is best not to disclose the use of these systems, and do not neglect to check a few nights of the work to make sure you are getting what you contacted.

Green Practices Clauses

Do us all a favor and hire a Green cleaning service. This need not cost you anything in real costs since it is the obligation of the applicant services to obtain Green Clean certification. You may adopt, modify, or amend the following Green Practices Clause as you see fit for your contract requirements:

Model Green Practices Clause:

Our company/school participates in a Green Practices agenda understanding that the growing federal, state, and municipal regulations will require greater levels of Green practices and products. A Green Program is understood to be the use of Green products and Green practices by those who service the facilities of this school/office/building.

"In harmony with the Green Practices Initiative, we (require/prefer/desire) that all bids submitted include the use of Green Products and Green Clean Certification of the workers involved from a bona fide source. Green Clean Certification training can be found on the Internet. Green Practices is understood as training of the workforce concerning basic Green Clean standards of practice."