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## How to Hire a Janitorial Service

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What you Should Know about this Important Decision



Offered by Green Business League, Inc.

Contributed by Green Clean Institute Certified™

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## THE EPA "Environmentally Preferred Purchasing" Program

Here's something to consider! What will happen to all the great Green programs if no one buys them or hire available Green services? They will die and go away. To make Green business a viable reality, it is only logical that any company attempting to hold itself out as a Green business and sell its products or services as Green, that it should also be a green consumer.



The public has matured, and they now understand that there is hypocrisy at work in a one-sided Green program. For a company to be Green there needs to be what has been called a "Green Supply Chain." Most people agree that it is misleading and even dishonest to ask customers to buy their Green product or service if the company absolutely ignores this advice in their purchases.

The EPA has strongly promoted a similar agenda in its "Environmentally Preferred Purchasing" protocol. If the price is only marginally more, the other benefits should drive a decision to always choose the Green provider over the other choices.

In the "Buy/Sell" nature of any economy, we must encourage ethical and reputable purchasing programs. For example, does buying stolen goods from a "fence" who bought the good from a thief seem proper or intelligent? The "fence" endeavors to legitimize the process, but it is still wrong.

What if a distributor knowingly bought tainted meat that was resold as Grade A safe meat to the unsuspecting public? When it comes to legitimate and honest business, we must look at the source to assure that we are not participating in something that will cause us problems later on.

The **Green Business League** is a business network promoting business connections between legitimate Green businesses across America and in your community. Your local certified Green Consultant seeks to grow an active and robust flow of business between Green businesses. Their motto frankly says it all: "Go Green, Buy Green, Hire Green."

We are in an hour when the goal has become how to save our earth, our lifestyles, and even our health. For decade, we have ignored the stewardship duty that we have been given, and we have lapsed into a period of excesses, waste, and sheer stupidity while the world that sustains us was pillaged.

The crisis we face is whether we will continue to ruin our health, our communities, and use up the resources of the world until they are exhausted. Will pollution merely be better concealed, and will we all be buried under a mountain of plastic water bottles some day?

We solicit your participation to join the Green Business League chapter in the area, and learn how Green actually happens. Here's something that will surprise you. When solid environmental practices are installed with the help of a certified Green Consultant, worker productivity goes up, costs of operation go down, and we all win!

While many people know a few things about Green, your certified Green Consultant know hundreds of affordable Green practices that will earn your company points toward its Green Business certification. Want to know more about the Green Business League? Visit [www.GreenBusinessLeague.com](http://www.GreenBusinessLeague.com).

# CHAPTER ONE

## ISSUES OF CONSEQUENCE

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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 casual 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

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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 6<sup>th</sup>, 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.

Other mandates have come into place since then. **Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR)** are some 1927 pages in length. If you are familiar with FAR 23.703, you already know that all federal buildings are required to improve their “Green Status” Pages 544-564 by following these standards.

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 amorphic, 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 Clean Institute offers the Green Clean Institute Green Building 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 building to a Green status as a GCI Green Building, 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 bring 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

## The Request for Proposal

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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 is 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 FOUR

## Common Mistakes in Hiring

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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 cannot 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:

- HEPA vacuums and microfiber tools
- 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, hormone disruptors or teratogens.
- No sprays and artificial fragrances
- No ammonia in window cleaners
- No acid bowl cleaners

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."*

### **RFP Inclusion**

Add this kind of clause to all contracts related to your vendors and service providers. If they are not Green Certified, suggest that they contact the Green Clean Institute for assistance. [www.GreenCleanInstitute.com](http://www.GreenCleanInstitute.com).