



Evaluating Commercial Cleaning Providers

A JaniTek Cleaning Solutions Checklist

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Introduction

Delegating the task of cleaning your office, shop, or manufacturing facility is no easy job. There are many things to consider including value, facility security, and cleanliness standards. Trust is huge! Take a look at the following guide for some tips and questions to help you on your search.

Attentiveness to Security

How well do you know your janitorial company? How well do they know their employees? Janitorial staff, both in-house and contracted, have unique access to the facilities they service. This access normally includes all areas of your facility, including record keeping, server rooms, executive offices, etc. The janitorial industry has perhaps the most access to sensitive business information and the least scrutiny when it comes to sGreeurity.

If you select a cleaning company with the correct security precautions, this threat is mitigated. Check to be sure your new janitorial company conducts background checks on their janitors and has continuous security education programs. Not all background checks are the same, so ensure that your company checks multiple databases including county and federal criminal records, and social security verification to ensure they are hiring the most trustworthy employees.

Keep an eye out for companies with a high turnover rate. If they hire and fire often, it may be a sign that they do not conduct background checks, or they have many customer complaints.

Do they have a check-in system? Are the same people going to be cleaning your facility each time? Remote check-in systems are more common amongst larger firms, but are a valuable tool for peace of mind. For larger organizations, janitors should have identification badges with photos. It is also good to request the same janitorial team to clean your facility each time. Over time they will become more efficient at cleaning the facility and your employees will also recognize the cleaning staff. Eventually, employees and staff will learn who is usually cleaning where and when they will be cleaning.

Price

Of course pricing for janitorial services will be critical in your decision making process, as it should be. However, many companies find that by basing their decision only on price (low-bid) they inevitably end up paying far more than ever expected.

Unexpected costs associated with choosing the low-bid can include; costs to have another provider “fix” the work already provided, administrative costs of managing your provider to do what they are supposed to do, costs associated with choosing another provider.

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Don't hesitate to discuss pricing with the service provider you are considering. They should be willing to explain their pricing models (cost plus, fixed pricing, cost per sqft) and their assumptions (staffing levels and labor hours, supplies, equipment, overhead and profit).

If you see a large variance between competing prices, investigate thoroughly. You may find the low-cost provider didn't accurately account for something within the RFP. Ask to see a breakout for comparison purposes of labor hours, taxes by category, equipment, and supplies. Any large discrepancy in labor hours or taxes should serve as a red-flag.

Green Cleaning and Equipment Used in Your Facilities

Do you know what chemicals you are exposing your staff and customers too? You should. When looking for a new janitorial company, it is important to clearly state which cleaning supplies are to be used where. When drafting a quote and contract, the cost of specific brands and products must be factored in to avoid being under/over charged. Once you have signed on a new janitorial company, you may pop in for a surprise visit to see what cleaning products they have on their carts.

Are the products being used environmentally friendly? Virtually all companies are on the road to being more "green". In fact most cleaning companies use environmentally friendly products. Unfortunately few companies implement effective environmental stewardship throughout the entire cleaning process. Attention to the whole cleaning process is important when considering the fact that a clean facility decreases employee sick days. By using green practices to enhance air quality and cleaning regimens, businesses can reduce the presence of cold, flu, and other common viruses and bacteria by as much as 80%.

To ensure that a company uses green products in conjunction with environmentally friendly processes, you should look for "green certifications" on their website and marketing materials.

For Commercial and Industrial Cleaning service providers, the highest third party green certification comes from Green Seal. Green Seal is the most trusted name in green product and service standards. The specific certification you should be looking for is Green Seal-42, which specifies the certification is for the provider themselves and not just the products used.

What equipment are you responsible to provide? What cleaning equipment are they responsible to provide? Some companies will require you to provide more supplies and equipment than others. Costs for equipment, cleaning supplies, and common restocking items (like toilet paper and paper towels in the bathroom) should also be factored in and agreed upon before signing a contract.

Liability Insurance, Workman's Compensation and Ethical Treatment of Employees

Commercial janitorial companies with lower turnover rates usually treat their employees well. They should have good workman's compensation and liability insurance to protect you, their company, and their janitors.

Some janitorial companies like to tell prospective clients that they are "bonded" as a way of distracting you from the fact they don't have insurance. Surety bonding in the cleaning business means that the company pays about \$100 per year for an insurance policy which is basically useless, especially to you. If one of their janitors steals from you, is caught and found guilty in a court of law, the surety bond kicks in to reimburse you for your loss -- but not a moment before a conviction is in place. That can be a long time to wait around for your computer or other expensive item to be replaced.

Reputable companies are insured and bonded, and guarantee their employees won't steal from you. Though they may carry a bond, it is for their safety, not yours. In the event of a theft, they will reimburse you immediately so that you don't have to wait for a conviction.

Extensive Walkthrough and Quote

One of the most important actions to take when hiring a new professional janitorial company is to do an extensive walkthrough and evaluation of your facility. The new cleaning company must know the current state of your facility so they know how many resources to allocate to your account. All businesses are different, so all businesses have different cleaning needs.

Specificity is key! Before the walkthrough, fully list all rooms and areas in your office and their approximate square footage. A floorplan of your office will also be helpful. This list will be extremely important in calculating an accurate quote. Then, write down how often you would like each room cleaned and with what products (if you have any favorites). During the walkthrough, ask what equipment is needed to clean each space. It will also help to ask how long the janitors will take to clean each area.

Trash Disposal

Where does your shop's trash go after the bin? Many employees forget about their trash as soon as they toss their leftovers in there. But, identity thieves and competitors count on employees throwing away proposal drafts, financial reports, etc. amongst the thai lunches.

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See if your new janitorial company offers paper shredding or works closely with a company that does. Whether at home or the office, it is a good practice to shred vulnerable financial documents. When doing a walkthrough and putting together a contract, be sure to clearly state how your trash is to be disposed of and where. Do you recycle? Make sure you tell them where your recyclables are to go or ask them about any recycling programs they may have.

In Closing

Finding the right commercial janitorial company to fit your needs is no quick task. But with some guidance, specificity, and trust you will find the right fit for your facility. Just be sure to ask all the right questions.

