

HOW TO EVALUATE
**CONTRACT
CLEANING
COMPANIES**



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4M
Building Solutions
PRECISION-GRADE CLEAN™

HOW TO EVALUATE CONTRACT CLEANING COMPANIES

There are many different factors to consider when a business is seeking a contract cleaning company that's the right fit for their unique needs.

Do they understand the company culture? How do they plan to implement the owner's objectives? Are they trying to meet the tenant's expectations or are they focused on maintaining the status quo?

From the building manager to the tenants and stakeholders, it can be surprising just how many variables must be considered. This white paper covers the many essential factors to consider when looking for a cleaning provider who is the right fit.



COMPANY BACKGROUND

There are approximately 50,000 contract-cleaning businesses in the United States. In any given market, selecting one can be a daunting task for any building manager.

In such a large, wide-ranging marketplace, it's critical to find a cleaning provider with strong protocols that ensure rigorous quality control and staffing excellence, while allowing flexibility for management to find unique solutions for each individual customer's needs.

4M Building Solutions follows proven best practices that often surpass the requirements and guidelines of industry accreditations. Plus, 4M's deep experience in green cleaning and LEED certification criteria makes us an ideal partner for helping customers reach their sustainability goals.

Contract-cleaning companies that achieve these types of certifications have often been in business long enough to perfect their operations. Because each building and each customer is different, there are always new challenges facing management and Team Members.

However, companies with a proven track record of finding unique and effective solutions for all types of clients know to approach any problem analytically and thoughtfully—all while keeping a close eye on metrics and continually striving for consistent, incremental progress.

Through experience, expertise, and excellent staffing, janitorial-services contractors can meet a wide array of facility specifications, so long as they have adequate resources for the size and scope of work. People make up the largest and most important part of a company's resources, so the cleaning company's culture is paramount to a successful partnership. This begins with the most important part of the team: the cleaning technicians.

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WHO'S CLEANING MY BUILDING?

The cleaning market is competitive. It can be a race to the bottom for price, and many are tempted to join the race. Reducing overhead is a near-universal business goal. But when a cleaning provider cuts costs, consider what else is being cut. And what are the consequences? Cost-reduction measures can affect the quality of cleaning technicians or supplies and reduce environmentally conscious practices. Additionally, planning, evaluation, and quality assurance are all areas that could go by the wayside when costs are cut.

The most important area to consider, however, is where cleaning companies incur the largest proportion of costs. On average, 70 to 80% of costs incurred by contract-cleaning companies come from labor. Naturally, much of a cleaning program's success depends on the team the company assembles and how management empowers them. In the race to the bottom, cut-rate cleaners must decide where to cut their rates within their labor force.

Because so much of a contract-cleaning company's resources are devoted to their hardest-working Team Members, a building manager should evaluate not only the quality of their work, but also their relationship with the customer and internal leadership. Often, companies that adhere to best practices understand the investment they are making in their Team Members and enable their professional development. Making a large investment in training and ongoing development for a career path is a good signal that a company is staffing not just for today, but also tomorrow and years down the road.

With this in mind, subcontracting specific cleaning jobs to other companies may sometimes still be necessary. It's important to remember, however, that when this type of delegation is not properly managed, it can lower the personal ownership of cleaners attending to the building and create a more transactional approach to customer relationships.

Real-world situations do arise where subcontracting with specialized companies can present opportunities for better results. For example, small, specialized jobs that are single-run or seasonal, like painting, patching, and power washing, are often better left to specialists who can perform the work more effectively. Their specialized knowledge may also provide cost savings. In these instances, you'll want assurance that these subcontractors will still follow established protocols, are consistently monitored for quality, and uphold the highest standards of professionalism.

In the long run, the best cost savings for a contract-cleaning company come from hiring highly qualified Team Members and investing in a compensation and benefits package that ensures they stay in the position long-term. Additionally, the efficiency that comes from a knowledgeable, highly experienced staff minimizes costly mistakes while maximizing institutional knowledge and cleaning expertise.

*A recent study by Gallup showed that well-recognized employees are **45% less likely** to have turned over after two years of employment.*

Most importantly, successful cleaning companies ensure that their prized Team Members understand how appreciated they are. These contract-cleaning companies create a culture that not only rewards employees financially but also recognizes and celebrates their milestones.

Reinforcing financial incentives with recognition motivates Team Members to stay with the company and continually try to reach higher performance benchmarks. In fact, a recent study by Gallup showed that well-recognized employees are 45% less likely to have turned over after two years of employment.

High turnover within an organization almost always leads to lower-quality candidates and, subsequently, substandard results. This is often caused by cost-cutting measures at the employee level, which can become increasingly detrimental over time. Because of historically low unemployment, the competitive market to hire and retain the best employees has become more challenging in recent years. The priority a company puts into creating a work environment and compensation package that maximizes employee retention can be very important.

At 4M Building Solutions, we're proud to have one of the best employee retention rates in the industry. We achieve this by cultivating a positive culture of excellence where Team Members are given opportunities for career growth, celebrated for their contributions, and rewarded for their performance.

The best Team Members find both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in the work they do, which play a large part in meeting and exceeding a company's goals. It can sometimes be easy to underestimate the importance of great leadership, especially because great leaders often give so much of the credit to their teams. That's why 4M's boots-on-the-ground approach to on-site management works better for everyone involved. High accountability leads to personal ownership, which motivates our Team Members to continue defying expectations every day.

When evaluating contract-cleaning businesses, price is certainly an important consideration, but many more elements can positively or negatively affect a client's business and their building. To fully understand the big picture, building managers must consider the full range of value derived from their contract-cleaning partners and not just the price.

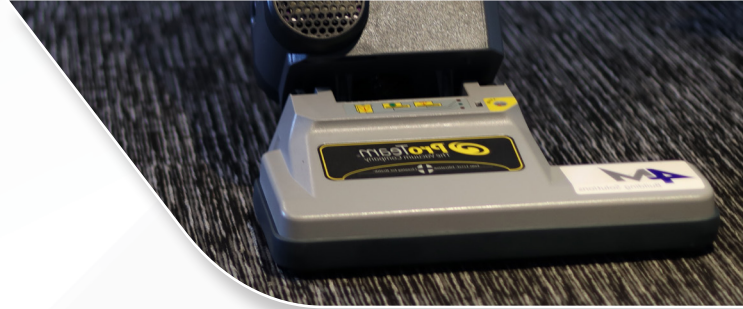


TEAM LEADERSHIP

When selecting a contract cleaner, a close inspection of the management structure can be very telling. How involved is management with their Team Members? A close relationship not only helps provide guidance, instruction, and feedback for the team, but it is also indicative of a company's culture. Successful companies develop management who lead by example and earn their Team Members' respect. They understand their customer's needs and effectively show their Team Members how they can meet those needs, while helping them understand how important they are to the process.

Effective managers understand how strongly their actions and attitude affect their Team Members. Good leadership cascades down at all levels. Like Vince Lombardi said, great leaders know that "winning is not a sometime thing, it is an all the time thing." Great managers understand the importance of accountability. When selecting a contract-cleaning company, a customer should understand exactly who will be accountable for the team's performance. A strong leader will work directly with the customer, take charge when problems arise, and ensure the team takes measures to remedy the situation.





Does management fully understand the relationship with the client? Are the customer's needs being effectively communicated to the company's management and employees? Are all customer concerns being addressed? What kind of review and evaluation is taking place? Customers like to know they are being listened to and that what they say is taken seriously and acted upon.

Leadership's approach to planning and preparation is another important element for prospective clients to evaluate. Does management have a proactive or reactive style? A proactive leader has a strong plan and implements it effectively. They have contingencies in place for anything that may arise and are ready to address whatever comes their way.

On the other hand, a reactive management style can easily be overwhelmed. By thinking one step at a time instead of many steps ahead, unforeseen circumstances can have a ripple effect, especially when there's no plan in place for handling any surprises. In those cases, small problems regularly escalate into much larger issues.

Finally, a customer should examine the procedures a leader has in place before undertaking a job, as well as their methods for evaluating performance and using data as a tool for improvement.



LABOR:
80% OF COSTS



COMPANIES:
OVER 50,000



**RESULT: COMPETITIVE
LABOR MARKET**

WHAT WORKS FOR YOU?

A wide range of factors should be considered when selecting a contract-cleaning company, and many of those depend on each client's unique needs. How will the contract cleaner adapt to meet those needs, and how can they find new and unique ways to do so? What processes do they use, and how will they fit within your scope of work?

And perhaps the most overlooked aspect of the whole process is to ask, "Does this feel right?" Sometimes it all boils down to whether or not the contract-cleaning provider jibes with your own company. Will the cleaning technicians feel comfortable in your work environment? What's the company culture like? Does it mesh well with your office environment? How does the provider's leadership work in conjunction with your leadership team?

Each company is different, just like every building is different. Finding the right contract-cleaning company involves many factors that extend far beyond up-front costs. These factors can directly affect the tenants' health, assets, and overall bottom line. Make sure to understand what exactly is needed from a building-services partner and how those factors can affect the company and the building. The right choice is not just a number. It is also a consideration of long-term benefits and how even the smallest nuances can become a big deal.



NEXT STEP: BRING IT ALL TOGETHER WITH AN RFP

Now that you know the main points to consider when evaluating a cleaning partner, it's time to put that knowledge into action by creating a request for proposal (RFP). A well-structured RFP is where all these considerations come together, providing a practical way to evaluate each candidate against the same expectations. Done right, an RFP can also set the foundation for a stronger, more accountable partnership. Here's a three-step process for creating an RFP for your business.



Step 1: Define what success looks like.

Instead of starting with square footage and a task list, begin your RFP by outlining your priorities. Whether it's more consistent service, better communication, improved safety, or greater accountability, what challenges do you want to eliminate and what outcomes do you want to achieve? When expectations are clear from the start, cleaning providers can explain how their approach, leadership, and processes support your goals. This keeps the evaluation focused on results, not just routines.





Step 2: Understand the people and processes behind the service.

Since cleaning is a labor-driven service, your RFP should ask how work gets done day-to-day. This includes:

- How Team Members are hired and trained
- Whether labor is direct or subcontracted
- Who is responsible for supervision and quality control
- How performance issues are identified and corrected

Clear answers in this area often separate companies built for consistency and long-term partnerships from those competing primarily on cost.



Step 3: Evaluate a candidate's long-term value.

When proposals are returned, price should be viewed in the context of your established goals. A lower price today doesn't always translate to better value tomorrow. Consider how each candidate:

- Aligns with your stated goals
- Plans to transition into your building
- Measures and reports performance
- Improves service over time

The right cleaning partner should demonstrate a clear understanding of your operation and have a structured approach to supporting you over the long term.

Sample RFP Outline

The outline below is provided as a starting point for developing an RFP for contract-cleaning services.

1. Organizational Overview (completed by you)

- Brief description of your organization and facility
- Building type(s), square footage, and occupancy
- Operating hours and any special considerations
- Any unique considerations (security compliance, etc.)

2. Objectives & Expectations (completed by you)

- Primary goals for the cleaning program
- Current challenges or pain points
- Definition of a successful partnership

3. Scope of Work (completed by you)

- Daily, periodic, and specialty services required
- Areas included and excluded from service
- Industry-specific requirements (healthcare, education, industrial, etc.)

4. Staffing & Labor Practices (completed by respondents)

- Employment model (direct labor vs. subcontracting)
- Hiring, screening, and training processes
- Supervision structure and on-site management presence
- Team member retention and continuity practices

5. Quality Control & Performance Management (completed by respondents)

- Inspection processes and frequency
- Methods for tracking and reporting service quality
- Use of KPIs or other performance metrics
- Process for addressing deficiencies and continuous improvement

Sample RFP Outline Cont...

6. Transition & Implementation Plan (completed by respondents)

- Start-up timeline and onboarding approach
- Site assessments and documentation prior to service start
- Communication during the transition period
- Early-stage performance review and adjustment process

7. Safety, Security, & Compliance (completed by respondents)

- Safety training and protocols
- Background checks and security measures
- Regulatory or compliance experience relevant to the facility

8. Pricing & Assumptions (completed by respondents)

- Pricing structure and cost breakdown
- Labor assumptions and service frequencies
- Clarification of what is included and excluded
- Additional services not previously mentioned

9. References & Experience (completed by respondents)

- Relevant client references
- Experience with similar facilities or industries
- Length and stability of customer relationships

10. Proposal Instructions & Evaluation Criteria (completed by you)

- Submission deadlines and format
- Key factors used in proposal evaluation
- Anticipated decision timeline

ARE YOU READY TO EXPERIENCE A PRECISION-GRADE CLEAN™?

At 4M Building Solutions, we know there's no one-size-fits-all approach to commercial cleaning. That's why our on-site management and dedicated Team Members—the vast majority of whom are directly employed by 4M—take the time to get to know every facet of your facilities down to the square inch. It's how we deliver next-level service that redefines what clean really means for our customers.

Equipped with our Operational Playbook and Guaranteed Seamless Transition™ checklist, we eliminate all the headaches associated with switching providers or outsourcing for the first time. Our proactive planning, collaborative communication style, and meticulous attention to detail enable us to deliver a Precision-Grade Clean™ that will leave every square inch of your facilities sparkling from day one.

It's time to see for yourself how 4M is bringing new meaning to cleaning.



Contact us today to start your precision plan!
4-M.COM | 800.535.6282

