

[operations & maintenance]

BY GAVIN BAJIN



STARTING FRESH WITH A SUPPLIER

Before tendering a commercial cleaning contract, a facility manager should establish criteria for qualifying suppliers. Quality control, communication and security rank high in Gavin Bajin's guidelines for evaluating prospective companies

With all of the choices available, finding the right commercial cleaning company may seem like a daunting task. The tendering process can be time-consuming, so it's best to have a clearly defined direction and outline of an organization's needs upfront. Failing this, a facility manager could end up hiring a supplier who falls short and be forced to go back to tender.

When determining an organization's criteria, the facility manager should consider not only the everyday service requirements, but also any specialty cleaning needs. Focus, too, on the organization's relationship expectations, especially as they pertain to communication and quality control.

With an organization's list of needs in place, a facility manager's next step is to identify commercial cleaning companies that have experience with similar facilities and a screening process for their employees. This is particularly important when, once engaged, a commercial cleaning company will have virtually unlimited access to the premises.

It's important to conduct a careful examination of candidates prior to engaging a supplier. Herewith, a list of 10 critical factors a facility manager should take into account when tendering a commercial cleaning contract.

1. CAPABILITY

Narrow down the candidates to the cleaning companies that can effectively cover the locations and types of building(s) to be serviced and provide the range of services required.

2. REPUTATION

When screening potential suppliers, verify their reputation through references and testimonials from other customers who have similar facilities and requirements.

3. SECURITY

Ask whether the commercial cleaning company is able to provide evidence of what type of process, if any, it uses to screen prospective hires. For instance, does the supplier conduct background checks on its employees?

4. INSURANCE

Don't forget the importance of insurance such as Commercial General Liability and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Make sure that the commercial cleaning company is interested in protecting both its clients and its employees.

5. SERVICES

Assess the range of services a supplier can provide. Are its offerings limited to basic cleaning and trash removal, or does it offer customized services geared toward cleaning, maintaining and preserving the numerous materials and surfaces found in a commercial building? Can the commercial cleaning company provide services on an emergency-response basis?

6. FLEXIBILITY

Engage a supplier that can provide the flexibility to design schedules and services around an organization's specific requirements.

7. QUALITY CONTROL

Ensure the commercial cleaning company has a defined quality control process. For example, a supplier might employ supervisors who regularly communicate with building management and monitor the work of cleaning staff.

8. COMMUNICATION

Since most of the work a cleaning company performs is after hours, having an effective communication mechanism in place is essential to a positive, long-term working relationship.

9. EQUIPMENT

Commercial cleaning duties demand specialized equipment and processes. An organization is entrusting a supplier with its valuable assets, so it's good practice to look for industry leaders, who can be identified by their use of proprietary products, processes and industry-certified equipment.

10. CONTRACT

The service contract is the most important item that a facility manager needs to compare between cleaning companies. Above all, the service contract should clearly outline what an organization is getting for its money. Don't focus solely on the dollar amount, though. While one company might be less expensive, another might actually be providing a more comprehensive service plan.

A facility manager should hire a commercial cleaning company that balances high-quality service with strong communication and security. The tendering process does take up valuable time and resources, so it makes sense to get it right the first time and select a supplier that can meet all of an organization's current and future anticipated cleaning requirements. | CFM&D

Gavin Bajin is director of business services at ServiceMaster of Canada. He and his team support 70 franchises delivering janitorial and specialty cleaning services from coast to coast. Gavin can be reached at commercial@servicemaster.ca.