



2008 forecast trends: The cleaning and maintenance industry has finally come into its own

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Just a few months ago, nearly 15,000 cleaning and maintenance industry professionals from all over the world, gathered together in Orlando, Florida, to attend the largest cleaning trade show in North America. Their goal: to get the scoop on the latest services and products available in the business. With the advancement of technology accessible to make cleaning more efficient and more environmentally sustainable I think it is safe to say that the industry has arrived and it is red hot with demand and innovation.

According to the "Commercial & Residential Cleaning Services forecasts to 2011 & 2016" report: in 2006, cleaning and janitorial services, made the largest share of revenues, with nearly three-quarters of the total. This dominance resulted from the availability and variety of services offered to customers. Due to pure lack of sufficient time and the steering away from the "do it yourself mentality," our society as a whole has grown accustomed to hiring services to do tedious yet necessary tasks such as cleaning. Thus, the U.S. revenues for building cleaning and maintenance services are expected to rise 5.6% a year through 2011. Furthermore, according to this study, the institutional and office markets are the largest nonresidential consumers of cleaning services. Through 2011, these sectors are expected to see major increases as a result of steady construction spending, establishment growth and increase in office space.

In fact, as significant trends in the cleaning industry continue to develop via sophisticated methods and emerging technology, property owners have a variety of options in relation to providing for the well being of both their building and their tenants. Therefore, it is essential for building managers to research, evaluate and utilize effective cleaning methods and equipment.

Good cleaning and maintenance companies are developing new and innovative ways to monitor and ensure that high quality job performance is not only implemented but is successfully maintained.

For example, First Quality Maintenance (FQM), a division of Alliance Building Services that provides cleaning and maintenance services, employs a quality control expert to meticulously and consistently monitor a variety of its properties throughout the New York metropolitan area. Known as "mystery shoppers," FQM quality control expert makes unexpected visits to examine and measure the quality of the janitorial services. From the highly visible windows to the obscure base of a light fixture, a careful assessment of every aspect of a building's hygiene and cleanliness is meticulously recorded. FQM also makes sure that their account executives visit the buildings on a regular basis and take a thorough look at the kind of service that is being provided, similar to how a landlord would act. Due to the effectiveness, this form of quality control is becoming a trend to watch out for.

In regards, to the advancement in cleaning, the quality of sustainable products continues to develop.

For example in late 2007, a green cleaning technology that electrically stimulates tap water was introduced. Using 70% less water than traditional cleaning methods and acting like a powerful

detergent without any added chemicals, the device is used to clean hard surfaces such as tile or wood floors. The significant customer advantages include: lower costs, improved operator safety simple use, as well as an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional cleaning methods. Since, this technology does not leave residue on the floor and eliminates the need for chemicals it greatly enhances worker safety and decreases costs for the buying and disposal of chemicals.

Another type of emerging trend is the utilization of dry steam vapor. Using a minimal amount of water and electricity to clean without chemicals, this technology virtually eliminates chemical residue. Other tools becoming increasingly popular in the industry include: dual-compartment buckets, microfiber and the implementation of color-coding systems.

So in 2008, as the appeal for the \$69.9 billion U.S. building cleaning and maintenance industry continues to grow so will the level of service and product availability. Property owners can keep up to date with new technology by staying informed. They can do so by establishing good communication with their facility management and building service providers.

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