



# Introduction to *Raising Standards*

*CIMS can help change the landscape of the cleaning industry. Are you onboard?*

By: Dave Frank

This is an exciting time to be working in the cleaning industry, especially for industry veterans like me.

Personally, I have waited 30 years for a universal standard to help guide, lend credibility to, and elevate the cleaning profession.

Then last year, ISSA introduced the Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) and already 23 cleaning organizations have gotten certified and many more are preparing for certification.

Over 200 industry professionals have completed the ISSA Certified Expert (ICE) course.

Considering this is the first management standard for the cleaning industry, that's excellent progress and, I think, we're going to see the industry start to change for the better.

One thing is and always has been constant: Customers want service from quality, well-managed, customer-focused cleaning operations.

But, what does that mean?

CIMS, which is based on universally-accepted management principles, provides a quality framework for both in-house cleaning organizations and building service contractors.

Those that apply for and earn CIMS certification gain a "stamp of approval" in: Quality systems; service delivery; human resources; health, safety, and environmental stewardship; and management commitment.

This designation takes the guesswork out of selecting the right contractor and provides support and credibility to in-house operations.

## *Why do we need standards now?*

There are many cleaning organizations that already have their own top-notch quality and management policies in place, and that's great.

There are many organizations that are lacking in this department as well.

Often organizations get caught up in day-to-day struggles, such as dealing with the pressure to reduce costs and the total number of FTEs.

Either way, all types of organizations can benefit from universal cleaning industry standards.

Take UGL Unikko, for example:

The company has a 95 percent customer retention rate.

It already has its own stringent management systems and processes, so what did CIMS certification provide? Validation.

Now Unikko knows that its policies have been recognized by an independent, third-party organization.

The same can be said for any in-house operation.

Just ask the University of Michigan's Plant Building and Grounds Services department.

The certification process encouraged the department to pull all of its policies together, get organized, and look for ways to improve.

Through CIMS's five fundamental management principles, the basic components of an organization form a solid foundation for high performance.

By putting the focus back on delivering what is promised — efficiency and quality service — cleaning organizations will begin to see reduced labor, inventory, and operations costs.

## *CIMS compliance*

Pulling together all the right people and documentation for certification may take months, depending on the size of the organization.

However, the process will be a learning experience for everyone involved.

CIMS assessor checklists cover all five principles and completing the lists will likely require help from human resources departments, training coordinators, purchasing departments, and managers.

With many departments and managers working together as a team, the certification process provides the opportunity to create a centralized, easily accessible way of organizing policies across the organization.

## *What's in it for your organization?*

CIMS is not only a reference guide for quality operations; it provides third-party recognition and credibility to all types and sizes of cleaning service providers.

Certified contractors set their businesses apart from competitors and demonstrate their commitment to quality and customer satisfaction.

The certification can also be used as a valuable marketing tool.

In-house organizations have proof of improved efficiency with CIMS certification.

In addition, they can better face the pressures to do more with less.

Having an industry standard helps define high-performance cleaning organizations and provides a quality framework for both in-house cleaning organizations and building service contractors.

I think it's an idea whose time has arrived, and I cannot wait to see the results. How about you?

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