

Growth without Growing Pains

Avoid the pain of learning the hard way by following a business framework

By Jim Peduto

We have all heard the expression “sometimes it’s better to learn the hard way.” Throughout our lives, there are many opportunities to learn things the hard way. These lessons lead to twists and turns, and stumbles and falls, or “growing pains.” I am sure you can think of a time or two in your life when you learned a lesson the hard way, and are glad (or not) that you did.

As a business expands, management may experience growing pains. For many building service contractors the challenge is not getting more business; it’s keeping it. All too often, we see businesses losing accounts as quickly as they win them. Taking your lumps may be part of life but it should not be part of growing your business. With your business at risk, it’s essential to create a framework for growth that enables you to build the proper foundation for managing growth.

A standard framework

Fortunately, our industry already has already developed a framework for growth that can be applied to all types of organizations, including BSC organizations. That framework is found in ISSA’s Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS), which sets forth processes and procedures for achieving well-run, customer-focused businesses.

Following the CIMS structure ensures that your organization has the right pieces in place to operate efficiently as operations expand. The best practice is to use the CIMS five management principles as a “platform for growth.” Well managed BSCs conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to see where they are doing well and where they need to improve. Fixing the areas that shout “needs improvement” now prevent growing pains later.

1. **Quality Systems** – This first principle ensures organizations have an effective quality system. This includes defining cleaning service requirements, implementing a quality plan, measuring performance, obtaining relevant feedback from customers, and committing to continual improvement.
2. **Service Delivery** – To ensure acceptable service delivery, organizations must have a service delivery plan that outlines the organization’s customer-related processes, including workloading, staffing, purchasing, and handling of unexpected events.
3. **Human Resources** – A cleaning organization will only operate in an efficient and professional manner if its employees are well-trained, customer-focused and dedicated to delivering a quality service. From hiring to training to the actual delivery of service, an organization’s human resources must be prepared to uphold its commitment to quality.
4. **Health, Safety and Environmental Stewardship** – Businesses have to comply with existing legal and regulatory obligations. Documentation of this compliance is

important. This also includes any other processes and systems related to health, safety and sustainability initiatives. An optional “green” component is also available.

5. Management Commitment – BSCs should have a clearly defined vision for the future and an understanding of its mission. Well-defined organizational roles and responsibilities as well as an effective communication plan are also must-haves. All of this will prepare BSCs for times of organizational change.

When a business goes through growth spurts, its owners should experience exciting times not tumultuous ones. A framework that helps prepare BSCs for steady, organized growth ensures owners avoid the pitfalls and growing pains so they can reap the benefits of a well-run, thriving business.

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