



By: Dave Frank

# Communicating standards in the boardroom

The many facility service providers who have pursued and achieved ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) certification did so because they saw several benefits in CIMS: Identification of strengths and weaknesses, improved efficiency, third-party recognition, credibility, and more.

Each of the five key elements within the CIMS framework provides a learning experience.

One of these five key elements calls for management commitment.

It is imperative that organizations have full support from management to demonstrate that the organization has effective management systems in place and a clearly defined mission.

In addition, projects that have this level of commitment are most often successful; the ones lacking commitment are more likely to fail.

This element does not solely apply to cleaning management.

It includes the entire organization, including facility executives, property managers, CEOs and building administrators.

This commitment helps bring the organization together under one goal and prepares it for times of organizational change and improvement.

The first step in gaining executive-level support is introducing organizational leaders to CIMS and, more importantly, communicating the value behind the standard.

It is the cleaning management professional who has his or her pulse on the industry and who should be the organization's CIMS champion.

There are two sets of tools that can help the CIMS champion deliver his or her presentation: Use the language of executives and use the CIMS elements to point out the value of the standard.

## Speaking at C-level

To speak the language of CEOs and facility executives is to understand their point of view.

C-level people see cleaning as both a cost and a profit center — more often a cost — so they are going to want to know how any project is going to cost or save money.

Estimates for just anything are not going to cut it.

These people are driven by data, structure and documentation.

This is another instance during which the binders of information collected during the CIMS documentation process come in handy.

While executive-level people can be concerned about people and programs, they respond more favorably to messages that skip the minor details and link directly to real business issues.

Some of the phrases that capture their attention include “increase revenue,” “decrease operating expenses,” “improve customer satisfaction,” “beat the competition,” “improve employ-

ee performance,” and “improve reputation.”

It is critical to validate what the cleaning staff are doing and how.

Any presentations backed with structure or by a standard work well in the boardroom.

Executives are not going to see more comprehensive data or documentation through any management and operations program for the cleaning industry other than CIMS.

Each element aligns with business objectives that speak to organizational leaders.

## Quality systems

A quality system includes defining cleaning service requirements, implementing a quality plan, measuring performance, obtaining relevant customer feedback, and committing to actual improvement.

Executive points of interest: This piece articulates what is being done and how; aims to decrease operating expenses and increase revenue; promises execution of a detailed plan.

## Service delivery

A service delivery plan hones in on customer-related processes to ensure customers' needs are being met and service is provided as expected.

Executive points of interest: Improved customer satisfaction; beat the competition.

## Human resources

From hiring and training to actual delivery of service, an organization's human resources, including both management and cleaning personnel, must be prepared to uphold the organization's commitment to quality.

Executive point of interest: Improved employee performance.

## Health, safety and environmental stewardship

This includes processes, systems and documentation covering the organization's commitment to health, safety and environmental stewardship.

Executive points of interest: Improve reputation; decrease operating expense; decrease impact on human health and environment.

Lastly, use the management commitment element to drive home the need for support from management and leadership to ensure success.

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