



By: Dave Frank

Verify. Validate. Value.

Managers who understand how to use 'the three Vs' can consider themselves masters in cleaning management.

There is no such thing as a degree in cleaning management, but if there was, "the three Vs" would have to be a major part of the curriculum.

In other words, it is paramount that cleaning management professionals understand how to: Verify business numbers; validate business practices; and communicate the value of the cleaning organization.

By mastering the three Vs, cleaning managers are positioned to maintain full-time employees (FTE) and service levels, gain more business as building service contractors and/or secure the viability of in-house operations as in-house cleaning managers.

The three Vs are essential to a cleaning manager's success.

Verify Business Numbers

Managing the cleaning of a building includes much more than making sure the work gets done.

It's grasping how many workers are required to get the work done, how many hours it takes and how much it costs. It is knowing production rates and budget numbers.

Basic workloading equations — or workloading software programs — can provide a lot of this information.

Workloading is "Cleaning Management 101."

It's a basic, required skill all cleaning managers should have in their back pockets.

What managers have to be most prepared for now is a bit more advanced — zero-base budgeting and task-based workloading.

Zero-base budgeting is basically budgeting backwards.

Instead of the traditional "frontwards" way of workloading a building — inputting building data to come up with the cost to clean the building — managers start with the cost or the budget and work backwards.

This is how a lot of cleaning organizations have to operate today to meet very strict, tight budgets.

Cleaning managers are given a number and are asked, "How clean can we make the building based on this budget?"

Managers have to be prepared to move to task-based workloading, entering the most important tasks first, subtracting them from the budget, then moving on to the next important tasks, and so on.

Once cleaning organizations have had to move to zero-base budgeting and task-based workloading, it is highly likely that some tasks or frequencies are not going to make the cut.

Not everyone in the organization is going to understand why.

Organization leaders may call for a smaller cleaning budget, but still expect the same level of cleanliness in buildings.

That's why managers need to be conversant in validating business practices.

There are certain areas of a building that are non-negotiable areas when it comes to frequent or daily cleaning, such as restrooms, hospital patient rooms and high-traffic or high-touch areas.

Others, such as office areas, are the first to be skipped.

Hopefully, it will not be difficult to explain that, but in any case, managers should be prepared to do so.

It is to cleaning managers' benefit to be quick on their feet and armed with the facts.

A great strategy for preparing to field questions, complaints or concerns is to build a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) in regard to cleaning operations.

This list will not only force managers to come up with descriptive answers ahead of time, it will offer building executives and occupants with the information they are seeking before they have to ask for it.

Communicate Value

Cleaning managers should be striving to change the way building executives think of cleaning.

More often than not, executives — especially finance executives — think of cleaning as a cost above all else.

What they do not realize is that cleaning is actually an excellent marketing tool.

The appearance of a building is one of the major elements that distinguishes that building from others.

A clean, healthy building attracts patients, students and customers and retains tenants.

Cleaning also preserves and protects building assets, such as floor surfaces and equipment, extending the lifecycle and keeping them looking brand new.

These are just a few examples of the value cleaning provides to buildings.

At a minimum, cleaning managers should make a one-page list of bullet points, describing the ways in which cleaning provides value to the building and the organization, and share it with building executives and occupants.

The list can cite industry studies and surveys and include charts and graphs to illustrate points.

Even if managers lack a cleaning degree, they can do their homework to school their organization's leaders.

Next month, "Raising Standards" will provide part two of this column: Using Industry Standards To Accomplish The Three Vs. *CM*

David Frank is a 30-year industry veteran and the president of the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences. AICS is the registrar for the ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) certification program.