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Industry News

(OS1) System Benefits State of Washington

The (OS1) system for providing janitorial services brings multiple benefits to the State of Washington custodial staff.

A need to work more efficiently to be competitive, and a desire to go "green" may not always be the impetus for change in most instances, but it was certainly the case for the Washington Department of General Administration's (GA) custodial managers in the State of Washington. A revision in state law that would change how and who could provide custodial services in State buildings challenged GA custodial managers to find a new way to do business. The answer was the (OS1) cleaning program. Since its implementation, the GA's custodial staff is working more efficiently and in ways that are more environmentally positive.

The Situation

Personnel in the GA oversee and manage custodial services and recycling in 35 buildings on Washington State's Capitol Campus in Olympia, including offices, laboratories, cafeterias, and conference rooms. Buildings were cleaned, but there was room for improvement on several fronts.

"The change in our State law would have allowed state agencies to use outside sources for cleaning services rather than state employees as had previously been mandated," says Pattie Williams, the GA's facility support services manager. "We had to find a way for the State's employees to efficiently provide a higher level of service. We evaluated our options, and the (OS1) system was the appropriate answer for our needs."

Williams learned about (OS1) through her contacts at The Boeing Company. She attended Janitor University, a comprehensive workshop on the system, and came away believing that it would benefit her employees. Williams talked with her supervisors upon her return, and received permission to invest in (OS1).

Implementing OS1

The (OS1) system, developed by John Walker of ManageMen, is based on three key factors - standardization, protection of the indoor and outdoor environment, and safety. The system simplifies the cleaning process and offers a roadmap for cleaning facilities of all types. The tested and established set of standards is easy to learn and provides focused cleaning tasks for employees. Individuals perform the same task, in the same way, with the same equipment everyday, which enables employees to become very proficient at what they do.

Williams concedes that employees were skeptical regarding a major shift in operations. "We were very candid with our employees regarding the situation they faced," she says. "John Walker and individuals with Boeing talked with our union leaders and employees about (OS1), and Boeing partnered with ManageMen to conduct the initial training for us. Their partnership was invaluable."

A room dedicated for custodial training accommodates (OS1) training for new employees as well as on-going professional development activities. The GA used a phased training program for the 100 members of the custodial staff and managers.

The Results

The results achieved since the GA implemented (OS1) two-and-a-half years ago are very positive. Williams maintains that the program is successful because the State invested in the professionalism of its employees and because the (OS1) system is followed without modifications. In her opinion, implementing the (OS1) system resulted in numerous benefits including:

- Cleaning contracts stayed with State employees.
- The majority of employees embraced the new way of working and would not go back to the previous system.
- Custodial personnel are now viewed as process improvement leaders.
- The use of all chemicals and supplies is now tracked and use evaluated by building, area and task.
- (OS1) allows the State to capture costs for custodial services, which it could not fully do before. Cost savings with (OS1) are approximately \$300,000 since its implementation.

Another benefit according to Williams is the improved environmental responsibility - a very important focus in Washington State.

The custodial staff is using fewer chemicals and in smaller quantities. Packing decreased, so less waste is deposited in landfills, indoor air quality is improved, and storage requirements are decreased. In addition, the line item for purchasing chemicals is considerably lower.

"Sustainable cleaning is increasingly important," Williams says. "(OS1) has dramatically assisted our efforts in this area. The green benefits we achieved are as important as the operational and economic benefits."

Teams address any issues among their members without compromising the schedule or level of service. Employees and teams manage their own destinies in a greater way than ever before.

The proof of the successful transition to the (OS1) system is illustrated in many ways. Williams frequently touts the system's benefits to other facility managers in both the public and private sectors. "The results speak for themselves," she says. "Our employees and those they serve notice the difference in our operations today versus the past. We expect the positive results to continue."

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