



**CONSUMER AWARENESS GUIDE:**

# Employing Commercial Cleaners



## INTRODUCTION:

Hi! My name is John Waddell, thank you for your enquiry. I appreciate the opportunity to provide you with information about Professional Services in the Commercial Cleaning field. Based in Bunbury, Western Australia I have been in business for over 30 years with my partner Jenny Waddell.

In that time, we have discovered that choosing a commercial cleaner is the subject of confusion and trepidation for many business owners. In fact, there seem to be so many misconceptions about the Commercial Cleaning industry that we have decided to offer this informative guide, so when you select a cleaning company you can make an informed, intelligent decision.

We will help clarify NINE costly misconceptions about the industry, plus offer recommendations that will save you money. We will also give you questions you should ask any service provider you invite into your business.

## MISCONCEPTION #1

# All cleaners provide their own equipment and cleaning products.

Only some cleaners provide all equipment and products required to clean your premises. Some provide some equipment. Others will provide no equipment. You shouldn't have to pay twice: Once for a cleaner and then the again for the equipment.

It is a common OH&S requirement for all electrical equipment in the workplace (including vacuum cleaners and extension cords) to be tested and tagged by a qualified electrician. So if your cleaner doesn't provide their own equipment you will be responsible for the purchase and maintenance costs.

Cleaners will also require a mop and bucket, industry recognised cleaning compounds (that effectively and harmlessly eliminate bacteria), cleaning cloths and in some cases specialised cleaning equipment.

If you were to provide the cleaning products you would also be responsible for the OH&S obligations including: sourcing up to date MSD Sheets and conducting Risk Assessments for any substances which are deemed "Hazardous".

In addition, you should receive bin liners free of charge and have your bathroom products ordered and delivered stress free at competitive rates.

## MISCONCEPTION #2

# Commercial Cleaners only supply a “one size fits all” approach to all businesses in all industries.

A standard approach is easy for the supplier but each business is individual and has specific requirements.

An office environment will not require the same treatment as a workshop and so your cleaning should be tailored to suit your business. E.g. specialized timber flooring, super gloss desk surfaces, medical/human waste disposal, confidential document disposal or recycling.

### **How do you know that you are getting an individually tailored service?**

- When you ask for a quote, a reputable contractor will ask to visit your premises, at a time that suits you.
- The representative should ask questions about exactly what services you would like quoted e.g. “Do your staff wash their own dishes, or would you like the cleaner to do that?”
- They may even recommend services that you didn’t know you could have e.g. “Would you like us to supply, deliver and refill your bathroom products?” or “We can also Strip & Seal your vinyl floor annually”

## MISCONCEPTION #3

# Employing outside suppliers is a waste of money.

**Your people may not think so. Consider the following scenarios:**

- Some staff may see cleaning as a menial task and be offended if asked to complete cleaning work as part of their duties. This could lead to ill-feeling.
- Staff may leave because they are asked to do the cleaning. They won't tell you or write it on their Exit Form but it happens more often than you may think.
- Can lead to ill-feeling between staff when one or two are made responsible and the rest of the staff do not respect their efforts. E.g. Tension over who left the dirty coffee cups can really escalate and affect the morale of the whole office!

**Hiring an outside cleaner can prevent these issues. Family & Friends may also sound like a good idea but:**

- Do you want to tell them if the standard isn't good enough?
- Do you want to accept without question if they have an excuse for not turning up again?
- Do you want the hassle and family complication of letting them go? Imagine looking at them over the Christmas table.

## MISCONCEPTION #4

# Commercial cleaners will promise the earth and not deliver.

**A respectable commercial cleaning company will have systems in place to address concerns promptly and to your satisfaction. This should include:**

- A written "Scope of Works" detailing exactly what is expected in each service. This ensures that you are getting what you pay for.
- A communication book to leave messages to/from the cleaner.
- A supervisor/manager that you can contact (at any time).
- Regular inspections by the supervisor/manager to ensure quality.
- Flexibility to discuss changing requirements as your business grows or as quiet times occur.

**It is also advisable to look for a guarantee. You should not have to pay because someone else has not done their job properly. So what should be guaranteed?**

- The cleaning should be completed to the standard agreed upon when quoted.
- Cleaning is conducted strictly to the scope of works.
- Continuity of service i.e. if your cleaner goes on holidays or is ill another cleaner should be seamlessly installed.

**Cleaning is subjective – your standard and the cleaner's standard may vary. The guarantee should be structured around your expectations.**

## MISCONCEPTION #5

# Cleaners are always contractors and you are not responsible for the contractors Super and Payroll Tax.

Unfortunately there are sham contractors out there. Just because the cleaner you employ has their own ABN is no guarantee that they are a contractor. They may even have business cards and signage on their vehicle. Still this is no certainty.

**If your cleaner works for you for more than 80% of their time, then they are actually employed by you. You are then engaged in a fake sub-contractor relationship.**

This leaves you liable for their Super and Tax and a fine on top. Non-compliance is a \$35,000.00 fine. Reference: [www.ato.gov.au/employeecontractor](http://www.ato.gov.au/employeecontractor)

## MISCONCEPTION #6

# Cleaning contractors all provide the same service.

**While it is true that cleaning does tend to repeat tasks (after all everyone has offices, kitchens, toilets and receptions) the desires of each business is uniquely individual and should be targeted to your specific requirements.**

Just as all builders, electricians or accountants complete the same tasks, not all will complete them to the same standard.

The same care should be taken in selecting your cleaning contractor as with any other tradesperson or professional service provider.



## MISCONCEPTION #7

# Irregular cleaning is just as effective and it costs less.

**It might appear more economical to only clean less frequently but this is actually false economy. Ingrained dirt and grime:**

- Is harder to remove
- Looks unsightly
- Rarely comes off to leave that "NEW" look
- Takes longer to achieve a less than satisfactory result

In certain areas such as kitchens and bathrooms it is also unhygienic and can lead to health issues within your workforce e.g. such as the spread of viral infection like colds, flu or gastroenteritis.

**Imagine the impact on productivity if your workforce were affected by such a bug. This can be avoided with regular cleaning.**

## MISCONCEPTION #8

# Outside cleaners will force me to change my existing systems to theirs.

**A reputable cleaning contractor will be customer focused and willing to accommodate any and all reasonable requests. Things that you may like to consider are:**

- Time of day is important - You shouldn't be dictated to by the contractor. It is your choice to be cleaned inside or outside of your normal operating hours.
- How flexible are your security protocols? - Your contractor should be able to work within these constraints.
- Reliability is important - If you have agreed on a schedule that fits you, your contractor should not be "chopping and changing" to suit themselves.

In short, your contractor should have a large enough workforce to draw on so that you can have what you want. Make sure you work with someone who can offer a regular time and service to suit you.

## MISCONCEPTION #9

# Outside Contractors are a security risk.

**It is natural to be apprehensive about giving a cleaner (or any outside contractor) total access to your business and premises. Ask your potential contractor about their security protocols, including:**

- Have all their staff been screened for National Police clearances?
- Do they have a Drug & Alcohol policy?
- Do they have a documented, confidential process for handling keys and alarm codes?
- How will your information be stored?
- Do they have a Confidentiality Policy? Your contractor should ensure that cleaning staff must not repeat what they see or experience on your premises.

**An honest and professional cleaning company will have the strictest of protocols in this regard.**

## BEFORE YOU START THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR YOUR NEW CLEANER YOU MUST:

### Step 1

#### Ask yourself what you want and be clear

There is nothing worse than walking into your office on the morning after the cleaners' service, and you did not get what you expected. Make sure any cleaner you engage has a clear understanding of:

1. Your requirements in all areas such as:
  - Floors
  - Windows
  - Cobwebs
  - Toilets
  - Computers
  - Kitchen/dishes
  - Special requirements
  - Reception/entrance
  - Car parks
2. B. Your standards
3. C. Your frequency

### Step 2

#### Set up a system that works even when you or the cleaner are on holidays.

A cleaner's holidays and sickness are not your problem. There should be a seamless relief procedure set up by the contractor.

The contractor should also provide clear, documented guidelines that have been agreed upon, so that if you are not available, your staff know what to expect from the cleaning service.

### Step 3

#### Make sure there is a guarantee in place.

Ask what policies are in place to guarantee the quality of service. Remember "You should not have to pay because someone else has not done their job properly".

### Step 4

#### Make sure there is a documented security policy in place.

- All staff should be screened by the cleaning company for Police clearances, criminal record and may provide drug testing.
- Handling of keys, alarm codes should have documented policy that ensures your security.
- Confidentiality of information.

### Step 5

#### Beware of rip offs. If the deal looks too good to be true, it may well be.

Be aware of cleaning contractors who quote cheaply for the job with no intention of fulfilling your requirements. Only deal with commercial cleaners who are prepared to supervise and check their own work against your cleaning contract on a regular basis. Just a few more things to be aware of:

#### Have you heard the expression: "Just give it a quick once over"? You don't want to get caught with a pretend clean. Common short cuts to be aware of:

- Paying for daily cleaning and only getting a full clean every second day. The "off" day is just "a quick once over"
- "Round Corners" - This is another expression used in the industry for lazy cleaners who don't get into the corners with a mop, vacuum cleaner or cloth.
- Cleaning chemicals may be watered down or substituted for inferior products by unscrupulous contractors to save costs.
- Not disposing of cleaning chemicals, including mop water, as per council regulations. Dodgy contractors have been known to simply use your storm water drains. Council fines of up to \$5000 will apply. (City of Bunbury 2012)

## CONCLUSION

By considering this information, you'll gain all the facts needed to make an informed, intelligent decision.

**If you want a quick, cheap cleaning job many companies can help you.  
Or you could do the job yourself.**

But if you want your office cleaned professionally and thoroughly - every time, all the time – then I invite you to call me. To reach me call 0419 048 759.

Thanks very much for taking the time to read this guide. I hope you found this consumer message helpful. If you have questions or comments – or if you'd like to schedule a free Cleaning Audit (Quote), please call 0419 048 759

**On behalf of Bunbury Cleaning Services – I thank you for your kind attention. We wish you success in a long term relationship with your office commercial cleaner.**

### Bunbury Cleaning Services

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