



COMPANY:

IH Services

HEADQUARTERS:

Greenville, SC

EMPLOYEES:

264 locations, 3,960 employees



CIMS Offers Contractor's Customers Assurance of Quality

For a company like IH Services, which strives to provide clean and healthy working environments for industrial, commercial, manufacturing and institutional clients, training is of the utmost importance. That's because IH Services' janitorial employees often work on and around heavy machinery and in many cases, operate machinery of their own when performing cleaning tasks.

"We're not out there cleaning homes or office buildings," says president Taylor Bruce. "We're in environments with heavy machinery. The careful training of our people is necessary, not only for utmost customer satisfaction, but also for the safety of our employees."

Given IH Services' preexisting focus on providing effective employee training, Bruce and his team figured that they probably would not learn anything new when internally assessing compliance with the training requirements found in the ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS). But, after completing the CIMS self-assessment process, Bruce was surprised to learn that their training documentation wasn't as thorough as it should be.

"We learned that we were providing the training, but we had not documented it on an individual basis," Bruce explains.

Before IH Services sought CIMS certification, the organization tracked training by specific job function: janitors received one type of training, those using machinery received another, and maids were subject to their own curriculum. Overall, the approach seemed to be working, but left IH Services with no way of tracking who had received what.

"The process seemed fine, but when we were preparing for the CIMS assessment, we found that we didn't have a way to see if any given individual had taken any given training course," Bruce says.

The solution, spurred by the CIMS preparation process, was to create individual employee training logs.

"Now, if a customer asks if so-and-so has training, we can go back to the logs and see that it is documented on paper," Bruce says.

Another area where the CIMS preparation process identified the need for improved documentation concerned purchasing. Though the CIMS process, Jim Sheehy, head of purchasing for IH Services, noticed some room for improvement in the manner in which he documented and justified purchases.

"When I recommend buying something, whether it's new equipment or a new type of floor wax, it has been based on my experience and knowledge of the products," Sheehy explains. "But through CIMS, we had to quantify on paper what I was buying, what I was comparing it to, and how all of the choices stacked up."

Now when Sheehy makes a purchase, the facts and research behind the purchasing decision are documented. The data is there for all to see. He says it has caused his department to be more organized and efficient, saving money along the way.

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*~Taylor Bruce,
President, IH Services*

**BEST TIP
FOR COMPANIES
THINKING ABOUT
CERTIFICATION:**

Take a look at the materials you already have in place early on. That way, you can see exactly what you'll need to put together before the assessment.

"We can see right there on paper that we're comparing apples to apples, and why we purchased what we did," he says.

Parker Moore, who spearheaded the CIMS process within IH Services, explains that looking within was not a foreign concept to his company.

"We review all of our processes continually. We don't hesitate to make changes if they'll make our company better, and we saw very early on that CIMS would make us a better company, for us internally and for our customers."


While Moore was convinced almost immediately of the benefits of CIMS and achieving certification, Bruce admits that he was initially skeptical of the CIMS process — and of the Standard itself.

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Bruce also saw something else: What it would mean to his customers if IH Services achieved CIMS certification.

"Many of our customers are big manufacturers, and those industries have their own certifications and standards, ISO 9001 and so forth," he explains. "When we're bidding for new jobs, our potential customers always ask us what kinds of certifications we have. In the past, we've had to say, 'Well, our industry doesn't have much of that.' But now we have CIMS. The fact that we are certified is really going to mean something to our clients because they have standards of their own. They know what is entailed in achieving them."

Parker Moore is confident that, ultimately, the work put in by everyone in his company to achieve certification was worth it.

"We knew that CIMS would be a good marketing tool for us," says Moore. "This type of standard is important because it is made on the basis of an outside assessment. But more than just a marketing tool, CIMS made us a better company. And that's what it's all about." 

About CIMS:

CIMS is the first comprehensive management and operations standard for cleaning organizations. Administered by ISSA and the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences, CIMS is a standard of excellence designed to help building service contractors and in-house service providers develop quality, customer-centered organizations.

The CIMS framework is built around five quality principles that have proven to be the hallmarks of well-managed, successful cleaning operations:

- Quality Systems
- Human Resources
- Management Commitment
- Service Delivery
- Health, Safety & Environmental Stewardship

Why should a company certify to CIMS? Daniel Wagner, director of CIMS for ISSA, explains: "Implementation of the Standard's elements affords an organization a tremendous opportunity to validate its management systems and processes. Professional, customer-centered cleaning organizations finally have a touchstone resource, a common rallying point around which all members of the industry can gather and work toward achieving an unprecedented level of professionalism and excellence."

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