

ISSA CIMS™ CERTIFICATION CASE STUDY

COMPANY:
K-tech Kleening Systems, Inc.

HEADQUARTERS:
Weston, WI

EMPLOYEES:
80 full-time employees



CIMS Helps Contractor Reach New Level of Organizational Growth

For years, Craig Kersemeier, second generation family owner of K-tech Kleening Systems in Weston, WI, sought a platform that his organization could use as the basis for implementing effective management policies. K-tech had always prided itself on being more than a traditional cleaning company but lacked a seminal resource that could be used to set their company apart. Founded in 1975, K-tech was recognized for its residential carpet cleaning, commercial facility management, and a myriad of other services such as recycling and document destruction, but maintaining quality can sometimes prove difficult.

At last, Kersemeier was introduced to the Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) and immediately identified CIMS as the platform on which his growing company can stand firm. The CIMS process gave Kersemeier and his team the opportunity to sit back, focus on their company's policies and procedures, change what needed to be changed and get everyone on the same page as they moved into the future.

Casey Nick, who initially heard about CIMS through ISSA and lobbied in favor of seeking certification, explains that she was interested in where certification could take K-tech as a company.

"I presented it to management because I saw that it would improve our processes and procedures," Nick says. "For us, CIMS was an internal audit. We used it as an opportunity to really look at our policies and procedures that we've had in place for years and make sure they were working for us. We saw it as a way to update our existing policies for 2007 and beyond."

One existing way of doing things that had become stale and needed updating was the manner in which Kersemeier and his team implemented changes in procedures.

"In the past, we've talked about a change we need to make in a given procedure and then we just went out and implemented it," Kersemeier explains. "We still do that, but now we write it down and document it. CIMS forced us into certain behaviors we just hadn't done before in terms of documenting everything."

The result? The entire team is on the same page regarding policies and procedures. "We came together more as a team knowing we were all abiding under the same policies and procedures as a result of the CIMS requirements," says Nick.

Another area that Kersemeier found needed change was the company's job descriptions. "We're a small, family-owned company and in the past, people here wore five and six hats in terms of job responsibilities," he says. "Everyone did a little bit of everything. Now, because we're in a rapid growth phase and have hired more people, we can wear maybe two or three hats."



“As a result of the CIMS process, employees really got to see that the procedures that they perform on a day-to-day basis are the key to our company's success. What they do is the heart of our company, and through CIMS, they were able to see that. They feel a sense of pride as a result.”

~Casey Nick,
K-tech Kleening Systems

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

Go through the checklist piece by piece and direct the appropriate department heads to provide evidence of compliance with those elements that fall under their responsibility.

But, taking off those old hats is not always easy for many of K-tech employees, who were used to doing things the old way. Old habits die hard, and without concrete job descriptions, it was easy for people to remain overly involved in areas of the job that were no longer their responsibility. Such a situation caused undesirable confusion about who should be doing what.

Fortunately, CIMS and the certification process helped remedy the situation. Through the CIMS process, Kersemeier and his team created job descriptions for each employee and established expectations for everyone in the company.

“Now, everyone has clear expectations, job descriptions and performance requirements, where we didn’t have those before,” Kersemeier says. “It’ll make life much easier because everyone knows exactly what they’re supposed to do and not do, and exactly what’s expected of them.”

The CIMS process also highlighted trouble within individual jobs themselves.

“People have been sort of flying by the seat of their pants just to keep up with the day-to-day job requirements,” Kersemeier explains. “They’re not always sure of how to do certain things, and because we didn’t have a written policy on something or they weren’t sure where to find the policy, they just fudged along, doing what they thought was right.”


The CIMS process helped Kersemeier and the K-tech team recognize that the company suffered from a problem that exists in nearly every workplace – unwillingness of employees to readily admit they are not 100 percent on top of everything they’re supposed to be doing.

“With CIMS, we finally had a forum to talk about all of these issues. It was an eye-opener. We thought everyone was on the same page, but they weren’t. We found that we as managers didn’t know what our employees didn’t know.”

An example of an employee misunderstanding in terms of company procedure concerns paperwork flow. Before the CIMS process, there was no telling whether paperwork would be filed in the right place, if at all.

“Now, because we went through the CIMS process, we have a written policy about where each piece of paperwork is supposed to go,” Kersemeier explains. “The paperwork flow is documented in a flow chart so people know, without a doubt, one copy goes here, one goes there. That sort of checklist makes things so much easier for employees because they know exactly what they’re supposed to do.”

In addition to streamlining the company’s policies and procedures, Nick notes that the process has also been a confidence boost for K-tech’s front-line employees.

“As a result of the CIMS process, employees really got to see that the procedures that they perform on a day-to-day basis are the key to our company’s success,” she says. “What they do is the heart of our company, and they were able to see that. Employees found they were not just janitors, their day-to-day job is what makes our company successful. They feel a sense of pride as a result.” 

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

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.”

ISSA[®]

The Worldwide Cleaning Industry Association

For more information contact
800-225-4772 or visit
www.issa.com/standard.