

Challenge Unlimited, Inc. Empowers Employees and Enhances Cleaning Consistency through CIMS-GB Certification

Opportunity

For more than 50 years, Challenge Unlimited, Inc. has provided facility management, production, and staffing services across five states, including servicing the Department of Defense (DOD), federal and state governments, and clients in the commercial sector like offices, schools, medical facilities, and more.

It is also focused on creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities and an authorized partner of the AbilityOne® Program. Challenge Unlimited employs 1,000 workers, of which approximately 600 have a disability. It established its U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)-registered apprenticeship program in 2018, and, at that time, was only one of two AbilityOne nonprofit agencies to provide an apprenticeship program for individuals with disabilities.

"Challenge Unlimited subscribes to the belief that there are no challenges that we cannot meet," said Deb Snyder, Vice President of Operations, Challenge Unlimited, Inc. "A few years ago, many of our customers were pushing ISO standards, so we wanted to identify and participate in a similar certification process that was specific to the cleaning industry."

Solution



After thorough research, Challenge Unlimited determined that ISSA's Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) certification was the right fit for their needs. CIMS provides third-party validation of the quality of custodial providers' systems, processes, and policies. It is also endorsed by the International Facility Management Association (IFMA), as it enables facility managers to pre-qualify contractors.

Challenge Unlimited initially pursued CIMS certification in 2014. It then received CIMS Green Building (CIMS-GB) certification with Honors in December 2014 and has been recertified every two years.



Challenge Unlimited



"CIMS was ideal because we wanted to position Challenge Unlimited as a credible and customer-focused organization that is capable of delivering a comprehensive green cleaning program and distinguish ourselves from other companies," added Snyder. "Plus, CIMS-GB is a health standard that facility managers, tenants, and visitors want."

Results



Through CIMS and CIMS-GB certification, Challenge Unlimited has been able to:

Boost its credibility and competitiveness.

"Being a CIMS-GB certified cleaning service provider has increased our credibility tenfold," says Snyder. "We provide healthier and cleaner environments for our customers, which has been especially important during COVID." This creates a competitive advantage when negotiating contracts and has allowed Challenge Unlimited to secure additional contracts with current customers.

Improve the quality of clean and customer satisfaction.

Challenge Unlimited uses a Quality Inspection System based on CIMS and ISO 9001:2015 guidance. The two systems ensure that all cleaning tasks are maintained in compliance throughout the term of each custodial contract. Because CIMS takes the guesswork out of how



CIMS SUCCESS STORY

to clean, Challenge Unlimited has experienced fewer customer complaints. According to Mary Hanson, Project Manager at Fort McCoy Army Base, “CIMS is one of the best tools to enhance customer satisfaction.”

Navigate the pandemic more easily. During the pandemic, Challenge Unlimited had to clean faster, more thoroughly, and more often while facing labor shortages. Because cleaning teams were used to CIMS’ demand for consistency, they were able to easily keep up with continually changing guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Enhance its workplace culture and productivity. Challenge Unlimited has a comprehensive training program in place that emphasizes CIMS-GB best practices, safety, and environmental stewardship. Its apprenticeship program is also based on CIMS-GB standards. The standardized processes are especially helpful when training individuals with disabilities and new hires, including temporary labor during the pandemic.

CIMS-GB has created an inclusive teamwork environment that experiences less downtime and better employee retention. In fact, the company’s annual janitorial turnover rate from 2015-2020 averages out to 34.6%, which is over 20% below the national average. According to Cliff Beiser, CIMS-GB auditor, “Employees are engaged and have a keen understanding of what CIMS is, why they should care about it, and how they can each do their part to fulfill the CIMS standards.”

Realize benefits in other areas of the business. Challenge Unlimited is leveraging the CIMS-GB standards beyond its custodial services, as the core processes are easily transferrable to other business practices like grounds maintenance, food service, commissary, and more.

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“ We have always had a goal of being universally standardized. CIMS-GB showed us a clear direction of how to get there and has been a great catalyst for continuous improvement. We take pride in our certification and can rest assured that we are providing clean and healthy facilities for our customers, allocating resources effectively, and increasing worker productivity. ”

—Deb Snyder
Vice President of Operations
Challenge Unlimited, Inc.



About CIMS

CIMS sets forth a management framework designed to assist building service contractors and in-house cleaning departments to develop and maintain quality, customer-focused organizations. The standard is nonprescriptive, meaning that each organization has the flexibility to choose the most effective ways in which to meet its requirements. CIMS was created through a true consensus-based process that brought together representatives of the cleaning, facilities management, and purchasing communities. ISSA speaks at numerous facility management and purchasing industry events throughout the year to outline the value of working with CIMS certified cleaning companies as well as certifying in-house operations.