



CASE STUDY



ABOUT



With more than 10,500 members — including distributors, manufacturers, manufacturer representatives, wholesalers, building service contractors, in-house service providers, residential cleaners and associated service members — ISSA is the world's leading trade association for the cleaning industry.

The association is committed to changing the way the world views cleaning by providing its members with the business tools they need to promote cleaning as an investment in human health, the environment and an improved bottom line.

Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill, USA, the association has regional offices in Mainz, Germany; Whitby, Canada; Parramatta, Australia; Seoul, South Korea; and Shanghai, China. For more information about ISSA, visit www.issa.com or call 800-225-4772 (North America) or 847-982-0800.

Created by the industry, for the industry, CIMS is the cleaning industry's first consensus-based management standard. It assists cleaning organizations in developing an operational system that improves cleanliness outcomes and contains costs at the same time.



CIMS CERTIFICATION THE 'MISSING LINK' FOR FM SERVICES GROUP TO SCALE

FM Services Group, a contract cleaning and support services company based in Donegal, Ireland, has a vision to create change in the industry – to make cleaning a valued career in a valued sector.



FM SERVICES GROUP

With approximately **100 employees**, the company primarily services the North West of Ireland, **providing contract cleaning services** to a vast range of commercial clients along with pest control, hygiene and washroom services.

The group also has a residential cleaning division under the brand Cleaners in a Click, and provides skills and development training in-house with its company, Bright Academy.

To help achieve its lofty ambitions, FM Services Group looked to the ISSA Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) Certification.



A HIGHLY VALUABLE PROCESS

FM Services Group began its CIMS journey when Managing Director, Annette Houston, undertook the CIMS Expert Certification in September 2017 at the ISSA Convention – a decision that has since proved highly valuable.

“I can’t begin to express how valuable this process has been for our company,” says Houston.

“In order to gain the maximum benefit for the organisation, we decided to work through the standard requirements ourselves and not employ a consultant to assist us with certification. Was this more challenging? Certainly, but we feel we learned a huge amount more as an organisation by taking this route.”

Houston claims the certification process has helped the company identify areas for improvement across quality management systems, service delivery, human resources, health, safety and environmental stewardship, and management commitment.

But why did the organisation aim for CIMS Certification in the first place?

“Over the course of our two decades in business at that point, we had many of the requirements in place. But it was obvious to us we could still be better,” says Houston.

“We had undertaken the ISO triple standards of 9001, 14001 and 45001 in 2018 and while this was hugely beneficial to the company, we required industry-specific frameworks to establish a solid base enabling us to scale successfully. CIMS was the missing link – it drilled down further in each of the five key areas and gave us tools, best practice and strategies.”

A SUCCESSFUL METHOD

To gain maximum learning for the organisation and development of its people, FM Services Group prepared for the CIMS certification process by setting up a CIMS working group with key areas of responsibility being assigned to specific people in the relevant roles.



We learned how companies much larger than ours navigate the same issues and what we could adopt into our operations. It helped us to identify new objectives for the future and gave us a clear road map to get there,” explains Houston.



ANNETTE HOUSTON
Managing Director,
FM Services Group

“We met with a wider selection of the team and we set out the vision for what we wanted to achieve and by when. The COVID-19 challenge delayed this whole process by a year, but we got there in the end,” explains Houston.

“We then assigned a project lead, involved site supervisors and team leads across the organisation to assist in performing the gap analysis for all areas to see where we were and how much work needed to be done before we could proceed with certification.

“From there we set about closing the gaps. We looked at the big pieces of work first such as implementation of new software etc. that would take time to implement. We had regular meetings with the working group, continued to pull together the evidence base for the audit, and closed out any gaps.”

POSITIVE OUTCOMES ACROSS THE BOARD

The initial outcomes of FM Services Group achieving CIMS certification have been extremely positive.

“One of the biggest benefits for us was the development of our team. Each of us working on the project learned so much about areas of the business we are not exposed to regularly. We learned how companies much larger than ours navigate the same issues and what we could adopt into our operations. It helped us to identify new objectives for the future and gave us a clear road map to get there,” explains Houston.

“One very welcome outcome that we didn’t expect was the feedback from our clients. We knew we had good relationships with them and we learn from them every day, but we certainly didn’t expect the level of recognition we received. It is amazing to know how much our clients value the work our teams do day in, day out,” she says.

“Specifically, the establishment of client feedback surveys has helped us gain so much insight into what elements of our service provision our clients value most. We have also seen where by recording and analysing client feedback and complaints more closely we can identify the root cause of issues more easily and resolve them quicker across the entire operations.”

And the indirect benefits of CIMS Certification go even further. “We have implemented a leadership development program through the CIMS process and to date we have 12 high potential leaders in placements throughout the company,” says Houston.

“We meet every two weeks and focus on developing team performance and continuous improvement of the services we provide. The learning we have all gained as part of this wider meet has been great. They regularly audit across each other’s sites and share learnings from the wider organisation,” she adds.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

Looking to the future, FM Services Group recognises other areas for potential improvement based on CIMS Certification.

“The actual audit highlighted a number of areas for improvement that will bring greater consistency

and improvement to the site – including the development of standardised templates for client scopes of work for all sites,” says Houston. In terms of the impact CIMS will have on the overall industry in Ireland, Houston believes the global health emergency has highlighted the vital work the industry undertakes to protect its communities day after day.

“We now have clients requesting to see cleaning plans. They want high visibility cleaning carried out during daytime hours, which was unheard of a few years ago,” she says.



“CIMS gives us a solid internationally recognised standard that clients can use to assess their potential providers. We hope that there is an uptake of CIMS Certification from other cleaning services providers, and that it becomes the gold standard in what businesses look for when appointing a new vendor.”

- ANNETTE HOUSTON

Houston even has some advice for companies still considering CIMS certification.

“Use the CIMS process to help you identify the areas of your business needing support. The chances are that by fixing these areas, you will eliminate many of the repetitive challenges you are facing in the day-to-day operations of your company,” she says.

“Should you proceed, seek out champions within your business that will help you through the process. Involve them early and get their insight – our teams usually have solutions that we never thought of. Harness the learning for everyone.”



For more information and the schedule of upcoming industry training, visit issa.com/emea

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