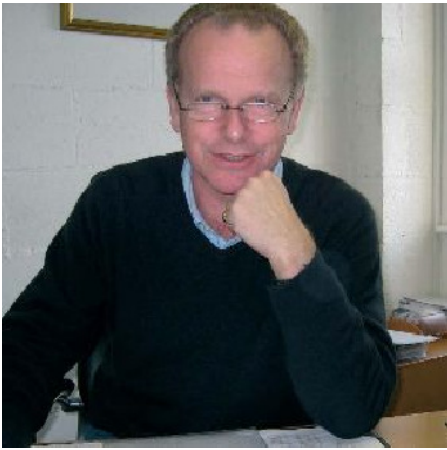


Can a supplier make a difference?



Brian Chapman, Managing Director of The Supplies House, describes how a good distributor supplier can help a contract cleaner win more business.

For a contract cleaner just setting out, or looking to expand, there are so many things to think about. Finding business, dealing with staff, and managing those unexpected problem phone calls are just a few of the key ingredients. Along with these, the cost, management and quality of the janitorial supplies will affect the success of the business.

Keeping costs down is vital, but when you are focusing on the client, tracking the changing costs and deals from all the manufacturers is a major effort, and in fact impractical for most cleaners. This is where a good supplier or distributor will add real value for you. They will track the manufacturers, getting them to compete with one another on costs and quality. Because of their volume, a good supplier will often be able to get better deals – getting a better price for you. They will also manage the pain of holding stocks and getting them to the right place at the right time. This means you don't have to hold major stocks (saving cost) and manage the distribution logistics. For example we deliver different products to over

800 individual office buildings for one contract cleaning client alone.

A good supplier will be tracking the latest technology and trends in cleaning. Why does this matter? New ways of doing things can often be far more efficient than the old ways. The latest Microfibre cloths cost more than cotton – and if basic cost is all you look at, you will rule them out. However they last many times longer, use less water and chemicals, and staff work more efficiently with them. So that extra few pence per cloth is worth many pounds of savings in use, which is why you have to look at the wider picture to be competitive.



You will often be competing against other contract cleaners, some of whom will be established and may be a client's preferred supplier. If you can offer something different, such as new cleaning methods which reduce cost, then that gives you an added advantage, particularly if the incumbent hasn't been keeping up to date. A good supplier will help you win business. We often help contract cleaners with their proposals to potential clients, helping show how cleaning could be done better and more efficiently.

What are your client's big issues? Obviously cost is key, but after that they may have different agenda. Are they keen to be seen as green, or have they unusual problems?



For example a new floor type at a shopping centre couldn't be cleaned properly with existing cleaning methods – the architects hadn't thought of that! We researched a range of solutions from different manufacturers, and organised testing with the client on-site on the contract cleaner's behalf. Result – sparkling floors, everyone happy and the contract cleaner being made to look good.

Don't just take my word for it... as our client Brian Harrison, Area Manager for KM Contract Services, a relatively new contract cleaner explains; "When we started, we looked at number of janitorial supplies companies. The Supplies House were very competitive in price, but added something more in the way they helped us address cleaning problems. We get demanding clients who want problems sorted right now, and they have been excellent in helping us meet those needs. Now we are growing our business, we know getting the right distributor alongside has been a significant part of the success."

Thus a good supplier will make a real difference to a new or expanding contract cleaner – keeping up with the latest cleaning techniques, helping them reduce costs (not just product, but stock and management as well) and actually help them win business; which is what we all want.

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