



A guide to supporting companies in choosing the right cleaning contractor for them.

'The right decision, minimal fuss'

Welcome and Overview

I'm Sharon Hammond, Managing Director of The Green Elf Eco Cleaning Company. We specialise in providing *caring, cost-effective, high quality cleaning* services to the commercial sector, limiting the impact on the environment by only ever using *environmentally friendly products*. Our staff retention rates are high due to the fact that we pay above the minimum wage, ensuring that we retain good quality staff, and our carbon footprint is low as we always try to use public transport when carrying out our business.



Our intention, in writing this guide, is to support you in making a more informed choice when it comes to selecting a cleaning company. This information is designed to provide an impartial guide and, by the time you've finished reading this, we hope that you will;

- ❖ Understand how to set clear expectations for your chosen supplier.
- ❖ Be able to manage your expectations within your budget.
- ❖ Feel more confident when meeting and choosing a potential supplier.
- ❖ Gain a trusting and successful client/supplier relationship.



This guide is intended to help companies choose the right cleaning contractor for you to give you peace of mind.

Whether you choose to do business with The Green Elf or use another reputable cleaning contractor, we want to share some thoughts on choosing the right company for your needs. For some buyers it's as simple as saying 'yes' to the next company that knocks on your door.

But, short of being lucky, picking the right cleaning contractor often takes time, and allowing other people into your company can be a daunting experience, so it's best to make a considered decision.

Benefits to choosing a cleaning contractor

- ❖ Fewer work hazards
- ❖ Flexibility in working hours
- ❖ Additional cleaning at short notice
- ❖ Qualified workers
- ❖ Lower employee benefit costs
- ❖ External management in dealing with staffing issues

Forethought and preparation: the most important areas that should be considered, to help you make an informed decision.

- ❖ Request proposals/quotes
- ❖ Clear specifications
- ❖ Setting a budget
- ❖ Interviewing your contractor
- ❖ Contract considerations/cancellation clauses
- ❖ Written notifications
- ❖ Dealing with senior management
- ❖ Understanding your buying process
- ❖ How many proposals/bids to take
- ❖ Understanding the client/buyer dynamic



Request for proposals/quotes



Requesting a proposal or quote is a good way to ensure that everyone is providing you with identical specifications. You need to have a clear understanding of the scope and detail your company requires for the cleaning contract. To support you with this, go through your prior cleaning contract and decide what specifications you want and need now, as an organisation. You can then start an open process for contractors to provide you with quotes.

Setting a budget

Gain a clear understanding of what your organisation defines as 'clean'.

This is best worked out based on how each area is used, and the staff who use the area. Remember to remain cautious about the demands of others, especially if there are no cost implications. However, if you are a smaller company you may want to ask the staff for feedback, to manage expectations.

Write cleaning specifications to produce the desired results. Ensure that the spec is clear and covers, in detail, all the areas that will need to be cleaned. Also, check with the supplier what equipment they provide and what you will need.

Estimate the average amount of time

needed to do the work. [Note: most contractors

are reluctant to share time estimates with current or prospective customers.] You can base your estimate on cleaning times by observing your current cleaners.



Determine a reasonable hourly wage for staff and add a percentage for wage overhead. Again, your current or prospective contractor may not always be willing to share this information.

Take the labour/hours estimate, multiply by the wage estimate, add a good faith estimate for supplies, equipment, and profit, and you'll have an idea of a budget. Be sure to add a reasonable plus/minus range so you can begin assessing bids that fall within the range.

Who are these cleaning contractors? Likely the people you meet with will rarely, if ever, spend much time with you after the contract is signed. And, if the salespeople are owner/operators and initially spend time with you, how long before their business grows and they can't dedicate the same time to you anymore? One way to combat this is to meet the operations supervisors, or cleaners, who will work with you.



Contract considerations and cancellation clauses

In cleaning services, the contract is vital to a successful relationship:

The contract should spell out all the important details to help avoid disputes. As with most customer/supplier arrangements, the supplier typically initiates the contract and provides the template from which the final agreement is fashioned. However, especially in the case

of managed properties, it is not uncommon for the buyer to initiate the agreement. In either case, make sure the contract addresses all of the necessary terms, pricing, specifications, and includes pricing for extras that may be provided at a later date. Most importantly, make sure the contract gives you, the buyer, the opportunity to end the contract prematurely in the event of poor service or any other critical factor, such as; security violations, change of ownership, destruction of premises, etc. Providing the contractor with a period of time to resolve an issue



is customary and appropriate, but limit the number of times the same issue can be resolved. If there are 'no issues' early termination clause, make sure there is fixed fee for doing so, don't allow the cost of early termination to be determined in court.

If future pricing is important, or the contractor has a large investment in equipment that needs to be accounted for over a long period of time, you may want to consider a long-term contract. Short-term contracts have the advantage of being easy to end if some non-service issue arises, but they reduce the commitment level, on both sides of the fence, especially early on. It's wise to remember that, ultimately both parties want a committed relationship, which they'll benefit from in the long run.

How many bids/quotes to take

How many is enough, and how many is too many?

There are a number of reasons to interview quite a few companies, especially when you are concerned with business culture, personnel, or other non-price factors. Do not limit the number of companies you interview, but don't take bids/quotes until you've determined the companies that you do want work with. Following the advice above, break the process into two components so you are not overwhelmed. Once you've determined who will bid, then you can limit the number of actual bids you take, thereby cutting down your time commitment.

Understanding the client/supplier dynamics

Getting the service you want and working

with people you like. As with your employees, it's great to work with a contractor who not only does a good job, but who you genuinely like, too. Matching the supplier/client dynamic is difficult but worthwhile, especially when seeking a long-term relationship. Get

to understand how the contractor does business by uncovering their business processes, then match the contractor's business processes to your organisation. Is your organisation's culture for paying suppliers different than what your supplier needs or expects? Does your supplier require advance notice, but your organisation's culture demands immediate response? Is your supplier's business philosophy similar to your organisation's? Does your supplier provide clear and concise invoicing? Are they available after-hours and/or weekends, and can they do emergency work? Understanding your organisation's culture and matching it to your contractors culture is important, and key to a successful long-term relationship.



What to do next?

By now, it should be pretty apparent what the key factors are, to take into consideration, when choosing the right cleaning contractor for your company.

The Green Elf is the premier leading eco-cleaning company in the London region, and we'd be happy to speak to you and provide you with information and a quote to see if we can match your needs.

We can also provide references from our existing customers.

So, if you are considering choosing or changing your cleaning contractor, now or in the future, simply call or email us to set up a no-pressure, no-hassle consultation on;

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Managing Director

'Looking after the planet's elf'