Four common cleaning industry challenges and how to solve them

The digital age is here, and the cleaning industry must adapt and embrace the solutions being provided, explains Virtual Mgr managing director **Anil Patel**.

Commercial cleaning continues to grow exponentially year-on-year with technology impacting the sector significantly. Analysts forecast the industry to grow at a Cumulative Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 4.67 per cent from 2017 through to 2021.

Despite the rapid growth and innovation within the cleaning industry, there are still some key challenges being faced by operators, from large scale cleaning companies to SMEs, these issues are felt throughout.

Four key challenges and solutions

1. Increased labour and supervisory costs: As the costs of operating a cleaning company increase year-on-year, margins are becoming further eroded.

Solution: Of course, supervisors are important, but there are cost-effective ways to combine supervisors, upper management and frontline staff with software applications. With just a smartphone, tablet or computer, all of the important elements of your cleaning teams' timesheet reporting, arrival notifications and site audits can be combined, helping you significantly reduce both labour and supervisory costs.

One client I have worked with is saving $750,000/annum in reduction of timesheet fraud via specifically date, geocoding and time stamping of clocking in and out plus eliminating expensive biometric solutions. Priority tasks can also be rescheduled on-the-fly via software deploying tasks to smartphones, ensuring that important client jobs are completed in time further reducing phone call times/pager usage.

Also, standard policies and compliance information can be indicated digitally on the software. This will ensure frontline staff know what is expected of them, leading to a limited need for supervisors and less face to face training.

2. Employee engagement and empowerment: With the industry experiencing continued high employee turnover and often remote works, employee engagement remains a challenge.

Solution: The ability to provide staff with vital information on their smartphones including training modules, MSDS digital cards and company information will increase their daily interaction with the business.

Instant feedback can also be sent from management and clients alike via unique 'Kudos' applications further enhancing a cleaning staff worker's day. We have seen clients using instant feedback applications have far greater staff retention by approximately 35 per cent.

3. Adapting to the digital age: These days everything appears to be going in a digital direction including sales and marketing. Adapting to the internet age is something that many cleaning companies and staff have found challenging to do. Whether or not we like it, the digital age is here to stay, and the sooner we adapt, the better for the industry

Solution: For one, online marketing is a sure-fire way to reach new customers. The growth in social media usage with applications such as Linkedin have provided clear paths and contacts to target for prospects.

Facebook has become one of the most successful tools we have witnessed clients winning new business. Facebook allows a unique approach to target prospects so specifically and provides them with real time reporting on the success of campaigns.

The best part of internet marketing is that you get to choose the exact psychographic and demographic traits you want to target, so conversions are more likely than in traditional advertising.

4. Inability to analyse customer data and manage customer satisfaction: We all know the popular business saying that 'the customer is king'. In order to build a successful business, you need to ensure a wonderful customer experience. One of the biggest challenges plaguing the cleaning industry is the inability to analyse customer data, collect feedback and improve customer experience.

Solution: A simple solution would be incorporating software dashboards that can be used to monitor cleaning performance to ensure clients see vale 'real time'. Clients can also mine data via analytics solutions to optimise labour solutions and highlight trends leading to further savings.

There are many opportunities in the cleaning industry. However, for these opportunities to be fully harnessed, the challenges in the industry have to be embraced and understood – and many of these challenges can be solved with technology and software.

www.virtualmgr.com/au