

What's Next After Green?

Author ponders future trends and JanSan movements.

By: Christopher Tricozzi

About 30 years ago, a contract cleaning company in California specialized in cleaning restaurant kitchens.

Often, they were called in when a restaurant was cited for health code violations.

In other cases, they were contracted to clean the kitchen one or more times per week just to ensure it would always pass a surprise inspection.

Typically, a powerful degreaser was “decked” onto the floors as well as walls and some other surface areas.

The entire kitchen would then be hosed down with gallons of hot water to help melt away grease and thoroughly rinse the floors and surfaces.

This procedure was used for years until California suffered through one of its worst droughts in the late 1970s.

Instead of using 20, 30 or more gallons of water per cleaning, the crew was limited to using only two gallons of water throughout the entire kitchen.

Further, the use of hot water was restricted due to rising energy costs.

Although nobody realized it at the time, this was a sign of things to come.

The contract cleaner was put on notice that water and fuel, along with many other natural resources, was no longer unlimited or inexpensive.

The cleaning company had to start becoming more sustainable, not only in how it cleaned its customers' facilities, but also in how it conducted its own business operations.

What Is Sustainable?

Sustainable has become a buzzword as of late, and many believe it is simply another word for green.

However, sustainability goes far beyond green, taking a broader view of not only how we treat the environment, but also how we use present resources so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to use them and meet their needs.

For instance, in the previous example, although California finally did pull out of its severe drought, the state's population has grown significantly in the past 30 years and water shortages have become an ongoing problem.

Using 30 or more gallons of water every day just to clean one commercial kitchen is no longer a sustainable practice.

It appears that end customers, who have driven the need for green cleaning, are

now evaluating companies as to their overall sustainability.

This means that vendor selection in the future may be based not just on whether building service contractors (BSCs) use environmentally preferable cleaning products, but on whether they have their own houses in “environmental order” and operate in a sustainable manner.

This will take into account what is called the “triple bottom line.”

It refers to companies, in this case BSCs, which are incorporating economic, environmental and social-value issues into their business decision making and dealings.

Clarifying The Triple Bottom Line

Before analyzing how a BSC can become more sustainable, some clarification of the triple bottom line is in order.

The first part — the economic bottom line — refers to profits, historically the main reason businesses are created and exist.

The environmental bottom line means that the BSC is doing no harm to the environment — using green cleaning products and taking significant steps to help protect the environment.

A good example of this would be recycling and waste reduction.

For many years, the floor pads used on floor machines were discarded as they were used.

But now those pads can be cleaned and reused, saving resources and minimizing landfill waste.

Further, some BSCs have switched to cylindrical brush floor machines that use brushes instead of pads.

The brushes can last as much as 100



End users must consider all factors, such as water usage and labor cost, when looking to be sustainable.

times longer than pads. Auto-dispensing systems are another example.

These systems dispense just enough water and cleaning solution to perform cleaning tasks satisfactorily.

This helps eliminate waste.

The last component in the triple bottom line, social values, means that all dealings with workers, customers and the community at large are ethical and the BSC contributes to the health and well-being of the community.

Putting Sustainability Into Practice

Enough of the theoretical, let's talk practical.

How can a BSC become more sustainable and address the environmental and social components of the triple bottom line?

Here are some examples:

- Use more fuel-efficient cars, vans and trucks; this can also be a considerable cost savings
- Recycle, reduce and reuse products used to conduct business as well as

those used for cleaning

- Switch to certified-green cleaning products
- Become conscious of cleaning noise. Some cleaning equipment is noisy and disturbing to nearby offices and residents; studies in hospitals have found that vacuum cleaners are one of the chief "noise culprits" in medical facilities
- Participate in organizations that focus on the well-being of the community. An example is a project called "Cleaning for Cancer" which provides discounted or free cleaning programs for cancer patients.

New technologies are already helping the cleaning industry become more sustainable.

For instance, eco-matting systems have recently been introduced.

The carpet surface on these mats is made from 100 percent recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic, which is used to make plastic bottles.

It is estimated that more than 3 billion plastic bottles are manufactured every year, with more than 85 percent ending up in landfills.

Recycling those bottles for use in these eco-mats helps reduce that waste.

Because sustainability is a broad and evolving concept, there is no single approach that will be right for all BSCs.

However, for those companies seeking ways to be more sustainable and operate their businesses with the triple bottom line in mind, the best way to start is to simply begin asking themselves questions such as: Are our business practices harming or protecting the environment, and how can we help our customers become more sustainable in their business operations? **CM**

Christopher Tricozzi is vice president of sales and marketing for Crown Mats and Matting, one of the oldest and leading manufacturers of matting systems in the United States. He may be reached at ctricozzi@crown-mats.com.



©Copyright 2009 Grand View Media Group
Reprinted with permission from **CM/Cleaning & Maintenance Management**® magazine.

For free subscription to **CM/Cleaning & Maintenance Management**® magazine call 518-783-1281, Ext. 3112
www.cmmonline.com

