



## **Sustainable Facility Blog**

Stephen P. Ashkin is president of The Ashkin Group, a consulting firm specializing in greening the cleaning industry and is coauthor of both *The Business of Green Cleaning* and *Green Cleaning for Dummies*. Ashkin has worked in the cleaning industry since 1981 and has held senior management positions in leading consumer and commercial product companies. He began his work on green cleaning in 1990 and today is thought of as the “father of Green cleaning”. For more information, visit [www.AshkinGroup.com](http://www.AshkinGroup.com) .

### **Icing on the Cake**

**Facility managers are turning to cleaning workers as guides to make facilities healthier and more sustainable.**

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By: Stephen P. Ashkin

We are witnessing a very big change in the professional cleaning industry. The change is not specifically about green cleaning but as a result of it.

The role of cleaning workers is not only being elevated, facility managers are turning to them as guides to making the facilities healthier and more sustainable.

There are several reasons for this. Among them are the following:

- Cleaning workers, and not facility managers, are often much more aware of the client’s buildings than anyone else.

- Cleaning workers know which areas need the most cleaning attention and the problem and unsafe areas of the facility, and where building operations could be improved to protect the health of the location and its occupants.
- Cleaning workers are more attuned to the negative health impacts of certain cleaning chemicals, equipment and procedures; conversely, they are more familiar with the benefits of environmentally preferable cleaning products and equipment.
- Cleaning professionals have a better understanding of green certification; what it means; how a product becomes green certified; and how it can help protect health, the environment and promote sustainability.
- Cleaning workers are well aware that not all green cleaning products perform the same and that due diligence and testing are required to select the most effective environmentally preferable products according to the facility's specific needs.
- Cleaning professionals are more mindful of wasteful practices in a facility, such as leaving lights and air-conditioning systems on all night, and can suggest ways to reduce this misuse, which invariably becomes a cost savings and promotes sustainability.

And just as the professional cleaning industry is getting more sustainable, as well as green, we can expect cleaning professionals to help managers become more sustainable as well. For instance, many facilities are turning to Web-based "dashboards" to monitor waste and the use of energy, fuel, water and other natural resources. Often, janitorial crews are directly involved in collecting and inputting this data, which not only helps reduce resource consumption and improve sustainability but cut costs as well.

I have always known that green cleaning would be adopted by the professional cleaning industry and that facility managers for all types of locations would see its value. However, some of the side benefits, such as the elevation of cleaning workers to cleaning professionals and now as guides, helping managers make their facilities healthier and more sustainable, has been icing on the cake.