

CLEANING

The Professionals

Anyone who has had experience of a competent, well-trained cleaner will know that there is a world of difference between this type of operative and those who simply move the dirt around the floor with a swirl of water and a sign that says "Caution: wet floor".

Unfortunately, cleaning is often regarded as being a Cinderella industry, which gives rise to 'cleaners' being underpaid and untrained (anybody can sweep a floor, use a vacuum, etc), not realising the damage that can be done – and the cost involved – if the floors are not given the proper attention and treatment.

The answer for anyone with a requirement for regular cleaning is to enter into a contract with a professional cleaning company, preferably one that is a member of the National Contract Cleaners Association and has established a firm reputation for service and workmanship in the marketplace.

FLOORS in Africa posed several questions to the Supercare Services Group, which is one of South Africa's leading contract cleaning services companies providing a wide range of specialised services. The response from chief executive Philip Kruger is shown here.

When and why should companies/organisations outsource their cleaning?

Companies that focus on contract cleaning, such as Supercare, are known to be specialists – as all industry-related research, methodology and application is their core focus.

Clients in production, manufacturing, health and education, and others, must ensure that their environment is clean and hygienically safe, as it impacts on their staff, product and/or service delivery. The delivering of these non-core functions requires commitment and focus; most clients don't have the time or the expertise to give cleaning and hygiene the attention it deserves.

We focus on service delivery. We research, source and purchase state-of-the-art equipment and environment-friendly chemicals, consumables and equipment, thus making

it possible to render a professional cleaning service.

Contract cleaning companies play a major role in the protection of the environment and waste management. It makes good financial and business sense to outsource non-core functions, as time spent on such repetitive support functions can then be spent on production and/or manufacturing. It also outsources all personnel issues and related responsibilities and risks.

Other benefits to businesses include no added HR/IR responsibilities; an all-inclusive fixed cost; no capital investment; and trained and skilled labour.

How do you ascertain their requirements and, having done so, do you implement a planned cleaning and maintenance programme both with their staff and your own? What checking/supervision is provided?

It is vital to understand and research the individual needs and requirements of each client. We ensure that service delivery is contractually agreed between both parties prior to commencement of the service.

Planning and scheduling of cleaning functions depend on various aspects such as the location, the state of the building and/or surfaces to be cleaned, the expected outcome and, most importantly, the service to be delivered.

Supercare provides a full range of checking/supervision activities, including daily and weekly site inspections (on-site "supervision"); weekly and monthly site inspections (off-site "Area Manager"); and independent quality assurance audits.

Are there instances when you would train their staff to carry out the duties you perform?
Only when employed as a section 197. If

and when companies wish to have this service, Supercare would then place trained, skilled and competent staff to deliver this service, and will supervise and manage those staff members, reporting to their management and supervisors.

How do you train your staff, and are they graded in accordance with skill and performance?

All training is basic, in line with Industry Best Practice standards. If and when a person is placed on a specialised contract (in relation to industry requirements), specialised training will be done prior to placement.

How effective is the Services Sector Education & Training Authority (SETA) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) within the cleaning industry?

The Services SETA has worked closely and in partnership with its stakeholders to ensure that all its actions, development and decisions revolve around stakeholder needs. The SETA ensures that all legislative requirements are met and that funding is made available as per sectorial needs identified through its various chambers in the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and Annual Training Report (ATR).

SAQA is responsible for the registration of unit standards, short learning modules as well as qualifications. SAQA also includes and gets input from subject matter experts within the industry to identify and develop the same.

Do you offer heavy industry cleaning that may incorporate the use of large scrubbers, polishers, etc? Can you give examples?

Yes. Industrial, commercial as well as specialised cleaning forms part of the contract cleaning scope of deliverables. Examples include ride-on scrubbers and polishers for commercial and industrial sites when cleaning basements, parking areas and outside areas; high-pressure cleaning; and specialist cleaning.

Anything else you feel would be of interest to our readers?

Supercare was awarded the *Cleaning Company of the Year* title at the annual Golden Service Awards. With 16 nominations, 4 awards and the overall winning award, Supercare shone at the glittering black-tie event on 21st October 2010.

Arranged by Kimberly-Clark Professional, The Golden Service Awards are South Africa's premier cleaning service awards, recognising the achievement and commitment to the highest standards of excellence in the cleaning industry.

Supercare attributes this success to dedicated employees, partners, suppliers and, of course, its customers. ■