



Interviewing a Commercial Cleaner Checklist

A comprehensive step-by-step guideline for companies and individuals who are looking to hire a professional cleaning company

by Nicholas Pastras

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The outsourcing of cleaning services is now the standard way to manage office and commercial cleaning needs.

Below is a list of 37 individual questions listed under 7 topics. Each has a checkbox so you can work through the list and question any prospective cleaning company.

Put a tick or a cross in the checkbox and you will be able to gauge how professional and thorough the prospective company is.

This list was compiled by Nicholas Pastras of [Smart Cleaning Solutions](#), a CEO with 22 years' experience in the Commercial Cleaning industry and it's designed to help you hire the right cleaning company, i.e. one that will do a professional job day in day out.

1. How Many Years Have You Been Cleaning? And do you have any Clients similar to us?

Note: "Don't fall into the trap of thinking enthusiasm and a good attitude are all that's needed for a cleaner to be able to do the job. That's a big mistake." says Pastras. "The biggest complaints from people sacking a former cleaner and looking for a new one is "they promised us the world but they just didn't deliver and "we kept asking them to fix the same issues over and over but they just didn't listen." Both these issues are symptoms of using an inexperienced cleaner.

- How many years have you been cleaning.
- How many clients similar to us do you currently clean for.

2. Quality Control Processes

Note: Anyone can tell you that they will clean your business reliably day in day out, but it's much harder to do than say. It's important that your cleaning requirements are documented and that your cleaner is able to demonstrate systems and processes they have in place to ensure that your cleaning standards are maintained and met consistently. To get a gauge on how well managed cleaning staff are by the company you are interviewing ask the following questions.

- What Quality Control Processes do you use to Ensure Consistent Cleaning Standards?
- How do you audit cleaning standards once a cleaning contract is started?

Note: This is probably the most important question to ask because it really sorts out professional service providers from the rest. If the sales rep you're asking doesn't give you an immediate and definitive response to this question, cross their company off your list and interview another one. The best companies will run weekly checks and perform monthly audits.

- Ask what is your policy around response times to feedback and requests regarding a problem?

Note: In emergencies, this should be an immediate response and nothing more than 24 hours in non-urgent situations.

- Ask them how they ensure any issues identified in checks or audits are rectified by their cleaners?
- Ask them how day to day feedback issues are handled?
- Ask them if they actually work on site with the cleaners from time to time to direct them as required?
- And finally ask if they have an externally accredited and regularly audited management system like an ISO 9001 endorsement.

Note: This is a sign of a real commitment to quality management processes and systems. ISO 9001 management systems are audited yearly by independent auditors and means the company audited has a very high standard of communication and management processes in place.

3. Security Issues

Exposure to theft is always a concern when cleaners are operating in your business after hours. So is security. Cleaners need to unlock and lock your premises so it's critical that they are reliable, responsible and honest. If they aren't, you unwittingly put your assets, property and even your IP at risk. So don't be shy. Ask if the cleaning company's staff has had a police check, and after that, a few more questions you'd be wise to ask about their staff include:

- Do you Screen Employees with Police Checks?
- Are all staff trained in the importance of maintaining security on premises?
- Are all staff VEVO checked via immigration to ensure they are allowed to work in the country?
- Are all staff trained and vetted to ensure they have the skills to do the job?
- Are all staff in uniform when they clean your business?

4. Work Care & Legal Liability

- Is Your Company Insured and do you have Work Care Policies in place to Protect our Legal Liability?

Note: When cleaners are on your premises you are exposed to legal liabilities. That's why, as a minimum, a cleaning company should carry \$10,000,000.00 in public liability insurance so if an accident occurs, it's not your insurance policy that is exposed to a claim. You should also ask if they carry a current work care policy for all cleaning staff that work on your site so you aren't exposed to a personal injury claim.

5. Communication with Cleaners

Note: Your cleaning services provider should have clear, documented communications processes in place so you can be sure they are professional enough to respond to any feedback you give them, as well as any special or unusual circumstances as they arise. This is extremely important and right up front a cleaning company's sales representative should be able to tell you:

- How Do I Communicate Feedback and any Special Needs to Cleaners on a Day to Day Basis?
- If someone from the company is available to sight a problem in business hours (if the cleaners work at nights)?
- The name and number of a specific account manager or contact person available to you during business hours.
- Ask the rep how the company communicates issues and requirements to their cleaners?
- Ask them what back up procedures they have for when cleaners are sick?
- Make sure you are introduced to the cleaners that will be cleaning the site before they commence.

6. Cleaning Schedule and Scope of Works

Note: The cleaning schedule and scope of works is the guts of your agreement with the cleaning contractor and it needs to be clear, written and definitive as this is the documentation that people will go back to if you have disputes or misunderstandings. To ensure you get an adequate schedule and scope of works:

- Is the salesperson listening to what you want and taking notes?
- Are all the areas you want cleaned detailed in the scope of works?
- Does it detail and frequency of cleaning tasks is in a clearly legible schedule?
- Make sure there are no allowances or estimates given, you want all figures clear, specific and in writing.
- Make sure any extra non-regular services are clearly stated and charges for these are detailed.

Note: Examples are window cleaning, steam cleaning, floor strip and sealing, polishing etc. It's best to get either a fixed quote for these services or as a minimum m2 rates so you can calculate any occasional extra expenses.

- Make sure you have time to review the schedule and scope without pressure from the company
- Make sure you are given an opportunity to meet with a salesperson and go through the specification together in person.
- Make sure you are given the opportunity to question, change, modify, and make inclusions or anything else you feel is necessary to the scope of works and the frequency of cleaning tasks before you sign an agreement.

7. What to Check when Looking Over a Proposed Cleaning Contract

Note: The final step in the process of hiring a cleaning company is entering into a services agreement. A written agreement is desirable as it sets out exactly what is agreed to be cleaned and the price you will pay for the service. But there can be a number of gotcha points in a cleaning contract agreement so when you look over a proposed agreement make sure the contract:

- Clearly states the agreed price with GST included.
- Clearly lists specifications you've agreed to in the scope of works and cleaning schedule with items broken down into daily, weekly, and monthly tasks for the purpose of clarity.
- Clearly details an issue resolution process in case of misunderstandings or disagreements.
- Make sure there is an option for you to cancel the agreement and a detailed process so you have the ability to legally opt out if the company doesn't perform.
- You should note that most reputable companies will have a clause that allows you to opt out of an agreement by providing written intention to do so 30 days prior to the last clean. If this isn't in the standard agreement you are presented with alarm bells should be going off.
- Make sure the payment terms are clearly stated in the agreement so you are aware of the frequency which they expect payments to be made?
- Ask the cleaning company if they will offer you a week's trial before you sign an agreement to show you what they can deliver before you sign a long-term agreement.
- If your contract term is greater than 12 months, make sure there isn't a clause that automatically gives the company the right to increase its charges every year.

If you are in Australia and would like a representative from Smart Cleaning Solutions to come and talk to you about your cleaning requirements don't hesitate to contact us.

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