



Influencing the future

Family-owned CSU has managed to change the face of outsourced cleaning with its FM Coalition concept. Ann Laffeaty finds out what earned the company a European Cleaning & Hygiene Excellence in Client/Contractor Partnerships Award in 2018.

The nature of outsourced cleaning provision has changed significantly over recent years. Clients are becoming better informed and increasingly expecting more from their contractor rather than simply a service provided at the cheapest price.

They are also demanding greater transparency and accountability in all operations with key performance indicators becoming the norm. And they are seeking closer communication with all parties.

It was against this background that family-owned cleaning company CSU introduced the Facility Management Coalition at Circl, ABN AMRO's site in Amsterdam. All facility service providers collaborate with one another and with Circl on site in a fully transparent system. And the results are said to include accountability, tangible KPIs for all service providers and closer communications across the board.

The decision to instigate the coalition stemmed from an ongoing quest to improve the building user's experience while also increasing client satisfaction, says CSU's marketing and communications manager Erwin Vos.

"Facility managers always want to achieve higher levels of efficiency and quality while spending less time dealing with facility management organisations,"

he said. "One often sees agreements made between facility service providers at operational level, but not at strategic or tactical level. We wanted to break that pattern and improve on it.

"So we convinced Circl of our strategic vision to form a coalition in order to provide the best possible service through optimal coordination and cohesion."

The Facility Management Coalition comprises six service providers plus Circl owner ABN AMRO. "Each facility company retains its independence while the coordination of all tasks and schedules is optimised in collaboration with other service providers," said Vos. "This eliminates any overlap in services and optimises resources.

"Establishing trust between all bodies is a key element in this process, so we at CSU deploy a Facility Connector to act as an 'educator' behind the scenes." Other practical tools are applied to mould the FM Coalition into one unified, successful team.

"It didn't take long for the facility partners, who regularly meet one another in different contexts, to implement an intensive cooperation system where trust and respect are basic factors," said Vos. "This adds value to the services on the ground which is experienced directly by the client."

Benefits of the coalition include a higher level of efficiency, improved quality and greater satisfaction among clients, employees and guests, he says.

"It is often the case that many facility service providers are active in a single building and often cross paths, but each has its own interests at heart and they rarely cooperate with one another," said Vos. "The FM Coalition changes this.

"Cleaning and other facility workers

become part of a multi-disciplinary team and are assigned a broader range of tasks. This provides them with a higher degree of job satisfaction which is noticed by both building users and guests. And this strategy results in leaner facility operations because any activities that add no value disappear altogether."

Another effect of the FM Coalition is that all problems are communicated and solved directly between the parties involved, he says. "This reduces the number of recorded complaints by up to 40 per cent," said Vos. "Our strategy has led to total facility cost savings of €140,000 a year."

The FM Coalition brings service providers together and translates customer requests into practical solutions, he says.

"For example, a receptionist will do a toilet round when required while the cleaners will assist their catering colleagues when a buffet needs to be cleared away. It's fantastic that cleaning and catering partners will help one another out at peak times like this, and that the security officer will immediately contact the technical services department about a defective light.

"We inspire other facility service providers to coordinate various processes and to promote innovation."

European Cleaning & Hygiene Awards judge and ECJ editor Michelle Marshall says the panel were genuinely impressed with the level of cooperation, respect and trust between all stakeholders in the FM Coalition. "It gives rise to practical solutions in the facility workplace, bringing service providers together and finding areas where they may overlap," she said. "It's an interesting insight into how a facilities organisation of the future may look"