



CERTIFICATION CASE STUDY



COMPANY:

Executive Management Services (EMS)

HEADQUARTERS:

Indianapolis, IN, USA

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

5,000



CIMS Validates BSC's Professionalism and Commitment to Customer Service

Customer satisfaction. Sounds simple, right? Yet despite the fact that virtually every cleaning service organization claims that a commitment to customer satisfaction lies at the heart of its mission, reality suggests that far too many cleaning companies fail to live up to this promise. After all, a true commitment demands continually evaluating what is important to customers and how their expectations can be met.

But the good news is there are companies that live up to the mantra. One such company is Executive Management Services (EMS), a family-owned organization that has client satisfaction ingrained in its DNA. This unfettered focus on its clients has helped EMS become one of the most respected cleaning service provider organizations, with a team of more than 5,000 professionals servicing 100 million-plus square feet of space in the United States. Yet providing services for a diverse set of customers, including everything from schools and health care facilities to industrial warehouses and Class A office buildings, can present quite a challenge.

Kelly Simerly, oversight director with EMS, stresses the company's commitment to meeting each client's needs. "Our goal is to provide personalized service to each unique facility focusing on client satisfaction and the highest standards in quality," she says. "With this goal in mind, EMS is constantly on the lookout for ways to improve service delivery, exceed customer expectations, and set itself apart from the competition as a reliable, professional organization, capable of truly partnering in aspects of a customer's business."

In the quest for continuous improvement, EMS came upon ISSA's Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) Certification and green cleaning designation—CIMS-Green Building (GB). Simerly recalls that it was actually customers who introduced EMS to the program. "We began to hear about CIMS and CIMS-GB through some RFPs we were seeing in our south and west markets," she says.

As the EMS management team reviewed the CIMS and CIMS-GB requirements and began to consider certification, the path forward became clear. "We knew we already had a quality organization throughout," Simerly notes. "But we also recognized that CIMS gave us the opportunity to showcase our strengths, gain insight on areas where we could improve, and validate the professionalism of EMS as a company."

Preparing for their assessment demanded that EMS take a fresh look at how things were being accomplished. "The process allowed us to determine where a new approach to our current operation was needed," Simerly says. "Ultimately, we found areas where we were extremely strong and others that we needed to re-visit and demanded a little more attention." With such an intense focus on continuous improvement, EMS was able to use the CIMS and CIMS-GB certification process as a tool to polish both its methods of documentation and its services at all customer accounts.

Unexpected Benefits

EMS enjoyed some unexpected benefits along the way. In particular, Simerly points to the CIMS process' impact on cross-communication and its effect of bringing members of the EMS team together and giving them an appreciation for everyone's individual role. "There are so many things an organization does on a day-to-day basis that it easy to forget what a colleague is doing, even if they are in the next cubicle," she says. "Going through the certification process strengthened the appreciation for every role in the company, from the cleaning service worker who is responsible for keeping facilities healthy and clean to the president of the company who sets the tone."

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—Kelly Simerly,
Oversight Director, EMS

BEST TIP FOR COMPANIES THINKING ABOUT CERTIFICATION:

Start immediately upon getting the application. The process certainly takes an investment from the beginning, but the pay-off is well worth it.

Simerly recognized the importance of having a comprehensive third-party review EMS' management and operations and believes this, too, had a positive impact on EMS' operations. "It is always good to have someone outside of the organization review your processes," she says. "That is how one learns. You have your culture and your company standards that you hold all of your employees to, but there is great value in having a third-party review your strengths and weaknesses."

This belief was reaffirmed when EMS' assessor reviewed the company's documentation and visited randomly selected customer locations to confirm implementation of the CIMS and CIMS-GB criteria. "The CIMS assessment itself was a great experience," Simerly says. "Not only did our assessor verify compliance with the requirements, he also identified opportunities for us to improve to an even greater degree. We expected a general audit but were pleasantly surprised at the thoroughness from our assessor at each site."

The detailed assessment even provided further insight into current customer expectations and whether EMS is living up to its commitment to client satisfaction, "The discussions our assessor had with our customers provided valuable feedback that we would not otherwise receive from a survey or meeting," Simerly says.

So how did EMS' customers respond to the company's pursuit of certification? "We had great, positive feedback from our customers, even those not directly involved, who heard we were going through the certification," Simerly stresses. "Many commented on how the process and certification shows that EMS is a professional and quality organization constantly searching for ways to improve for its customers' benefit. In fact, we have had many customers tell us that they will look at implementing the certification as a requirement during their next bid process."

Additionally, by achieving CIMS-GB certification, EMS distinguished itself as a cleaning provider fully capable of delivering a comprehensive green cleaning program and able to partner with customers in the pursuit of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design: Existing Buildings Operations & Maintenance certification—or LEED:EBOM.

"CIMS-GB absolutely helps us market our green services and products and allows us to provide the highest level of green certification to our clients," Simerly notes.

Ultimately, Simerly recognizes that CIMS and CIMS-GB certification is not just a benefit to EMS, but can help take the cleaning industry to the next level and help change the way the world views cleaning; "I think the process helps companies focus on the core of their business," she says. "Because of the current nature of the economy, it is easy to get swept up in price. But our industry is so much more than that. We have to remember that the environments we clean are where many people spend most of their time. A clean, well-maintained facility makes the internal customer more productive and is a benefit not only to our direct contacts but everyone who enters the door."

ABOUT CIMS AND CIMS-GB:

CIMS is the first comprehensive management and operations standard for cleaning organizations. Administered by ISSA and the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences, CIMS is a standard of excellence designed to help building service contractors and in-house service providers develop quality, customer-focused organizations.

The core CIMS framework is built around five quality principles that have proven to be the hallmarks of well-managed, successful cleaning organizations: Quality Systems; Service Delivery; Human Resources; Health, Safety and Environmental Stewardship; and Management Commitment.

The optional sixth dimension of the Standard, CIMS-GB, enables cleaning organizations to help their customers achieve points with the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance (LEED-EBOM) Green Building Rating System, while greening their operations overall.

Why should a company certify to CIMS and CIMS-GB? ISSA Director of Facility Service Programs Dan Wagner explains: "Implementation of the Standard's elements affords an organization a tremendous opportunity to validate its management systems and processes. Professional, customer-focused cleaning organizations finally have a touchstone resource, a common rallying point around which all members of the industry can gather and work toward achieving an unprecedented level of professionalism and excellence."



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