

10 Key Factors

to Consider Before Signing an

Office Cleaning Contract



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Introduction

It can be daunting to select the right cleaning contractor from the many thousands available in big cities such as London. However the ten points below should help you to avoid making a mistake when you're awarding this vital service contract.

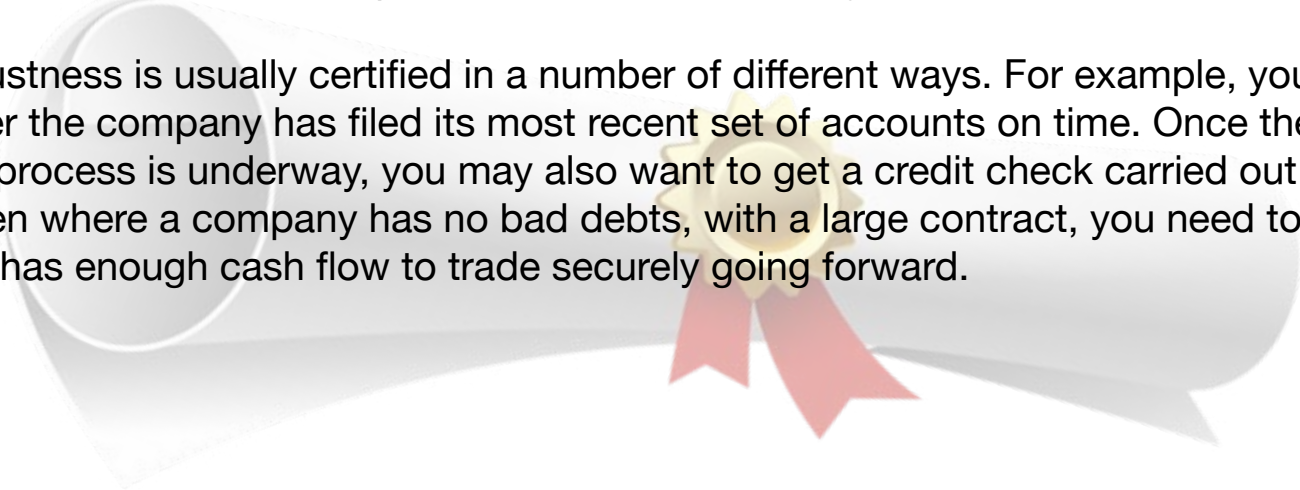


1 Check the company's credentials

Procurement professionals and office managers will always want to check that a company tendering for a cleaning contract is properly registered and run. These pre-contract checks form part of the due diligence that is necessary before contract award. Where the client is a public sector organisation, there are even more checks that need to be made.

First of all, you will want to check the Companies House register to confirm that the company is indeed registered, and that its registered office is in the UK. At the same time, it is usual for a procurement professional to scrutinise the company's governance. These checks can include whether any director has been disqualified or convicted of any criminal offences.

Financial robustness is usually certified in a number of different ways. For example, you should check whether the company has filed its most recent set of accounts on time. Once the procurement process is underway, you may also want to get a credit check carried out on the company. Even where a company has no bad debts, with a large contract, you need to be sure that the company has enough cash flow to trade securely going forward.



2 Check for professional body membership

Once you are happy about the supplier's financial stability, you need to assure yourself that they are capable of carrying out a professional job with consistency and that they have the expertise to meet any difficult cleaning challenges that may arise during the contract.

There are two main bodies to be aware of. The first is the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS). With over 10,000 corporate and individual members, BICS is the largest education and training provider in the cleaning industry. Their qualifications start with an entry-level "Licence to Practice" which cleaning operators take in order to demonstrate that they are proficient in the basic cleaning skills necessary for carrying out a ground level role. As well as specialist training qualifications, under BICS, cleaning professionals can progress to high-level professional and managerial qualifications.

The other professional body to look for is the British Institute of Facility Management (BIFM). This body provides training with a slightly wider remit – to enable managers to safely run an entire facility or building, including a range of services.



3 Is the company accredited?

The first relevant certification here is ISO 9001 which is used throughout business and industry, as an assurance that a fully functioning quality management system is in place. The second is ISO 14001. This standard sets out the protocol for an environmentally sound management system within a company.

Again, this standard is used across all sectors and business activities to indicate that a company can establish and run a compliant environmental management system. This is particularly important for organisations which are operating in the environmental sector and therefore need a cleaning service company which is aligned with these values and operating practices.

4 Check all insurances

It is vital to check that any company that will have access to your buildings and other employee locations, has the correct insurance. This must include public liability insurance in case any of its activities injure a member of the public or any of your staff.

It's very important that these insurances are held at a realistic level. Your own insurer will be able to advise but for public liability £5 million is usually a starting point. You may also want to carry out a risk assessment to see what particular risks the activities of the cleaning company could pose to your business.

5 Ask about compliance with health and safety and other legislations

It's important to remember that you cannot divest your responsibility for health and safety onto a contractor. The primary responsibility always stays with you. However you do have a duty to check that the potential supplier has safe working systems, properly trained staff, risk assessments and accident reporting procedures.

You also need to carry out any checks on the company's environmental compliance. You may wish to ask whether they have ever carried out an environmental impact assessment, or you might want to check their recycling and disposal policies. Many office managers now take an interest in the particular products being used by cleaning companies, to ensure that they are environmentally friendly.

In the public sector, equality policies apply to contractors and suppliers. Procurement managers in the public sector will often ask for evidence that the potential supplier has policies ensuring that all staff are treated fairly and equally.

6 Performance and employee management

You should find out how the company manages the performance of its staff, particularly when they may be working without direct supervision, at times when the building is quiet. A competent company should have mechanisms for collecting your feedback on how they are doing.

Furthermore, check how they treat their employees. Are they part of the *Minimum Living Wage Foundation*? Do they pay them fairly? Companies that really care about their employees generally have a very low turnover of staff, which in the industry it's usually very high, and this could impact negatively on the performance and the standard of the cleaning.

7 Customise your cleaning package

Avoid companies that want to push you into a standard package of services. This may not suit your business or building and can mean that you are paying for services you don't require, while not getting those that you need.

Your cleaning supplier is the expert & can be a source of efficiency tips. For example, the cleaning company may advise you to swap individual wastepaper bins for communal bins because they are faster to empty & encourage recycling. You can consider whether this is or isn't appropriate for your type of building and environment.

8 How are supplies and equipment sourced?

In the public sector, and increasingly in environmentally aware commercial companies, procurement managers are interested in where the supplier buys their materials and what kind of products they use. Public sector procurement managers often have a duty to consider local suppliers in order to encourage local or regional industry.

Managers are also looking for efficiencies all the way through the supply chain and will want to know how cleaning companies are getting best value out of their suppliers.



9 Check the contract's terms conditions

Many larger clients will have a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with their cleaning services supplier, on top of the contract. An SLA can be useful in providing detailed guidance on the services to be supplied, their frequency and the level of quality required. If you don't have an SLA, you need to make sure that the contract specifically states what will be done, how often and at what times. The contract also needs to be specific about the grounds that would lead to contract termination. One area that can cause disagreement unless it's carefully described in the contract, is which services will incur an extra charge. So make sure you agree this in advance.

10 Get Personal

The contract will go more smoothly if you can establish a personal rapport with the person managing your account. It can be helpful to agree in advance what kind of dress and behaviour will be expected of the cleaning staff. As well as this, find out the process for replacing any staff who are not able to get the job done.

Conclusion



You can shorten and streamline the procurement process by directly contacting professional cleaning companies such as Green Facilities who will be able to supply both environmental awareness and professional expertise, and who can tick all of the boxes described above.

A reputable cleaning services company like this will help you to formulate your requirements and can advise you on the best way to achieve the results you're aiming for.

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