



# **QUALITY CONTROL IN CLEANING SERVICES**

**Case: Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu**

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Abstract  <p>Quality control is a phenomenon that has come to play a significant role in the cleaning industry today. Cleaning companies and customers alike are now more than ever, well informed of how important it is to maintain a healthy working environment and the structural well being of the facility. The need for a clean environment both indoors and outdoors is constantly and continuously being emphasized by the need to improve cleaning methods and services.</p> <p>The aim of this research was to find out how cleaning companies can effectively implement quality control procedures in the cleaning service. The thesis highlights the importance of quality control in cleaning, and has been designed to bring together the concept of quality and how quality control procedures can be applied in the cleaning service. The nature of the research is qualitative and the approach used was through an interview with the company's CEO, questionnaires to 8 workers, a 5 month company data entry complaints log, 15 customer survey analysis, and a 5 month working hands on practical experience of the cleaning work in the company.</p> <p>The paper is divided into three parts: The theoretical part is based on published literature and introduces quality and its concepts whilst the later examines a case study of Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu (cleaning company) and the methods it employs to ensure quality control procedures are adhered to. Finally, conclusions examine and offer alternate solutions and future trends in monitoring effective quality control procedures in the industry. The findings can be adapted by any cleaning company and also used by scholars as well as customers to further their knowledge in understanding what quality control procedures are and what to expect in the overall cleaning quality service.</p>		
Keywords Cleaning, company, control, customers, management, procedures, quality, service.		
Miscellaneous Model of a Basic Cleaning Manual		

**“Good order is the foundation of all good things”**

**Edmund Burke, 1791**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In cleaning services, emphasis on the quality is a vital aspect in that it determines the level or degree of customer satisfaction. It also helps a company maintain a competitive edge, allows for cost cutting in the long run, and, is an essential requirement for a company's successful growth. In recent years, emphasis on quality has shifted from products to services. In the service industry, customers expect a high level of quality. The service quality is not measurable and high expectations can lead to unwarranted complains and dissatisfaction.

Cleaning companies face a daunting task when it comes to determining what levels of quality are acceptable in cleaning as each customer perceives quality from a different point of view. Quality management is needed to evaluate the end result of the cleaning services. International accepted quality control measuring systems have been developed to enable companies conform to cleaning services quality standards. Most notably are ISO 9000 series and INSTA 800.

Many cleaning companies have developed their own quality control systems that are used to determine what levels of cleaning quality are to be maintained. However, to what extent do these systems work? And, can the cleaning companies improve the effectiveness of the systems? Quality service is a continuous process that involves strict quality control management techniques which cleaning companies cannot afford to ignore.

### **1.1 Research objectives**

The aim of this research was to find out how cleaning companies can effectively implement quality control procedures in the cleaning service. Using the case study, my research on the topic was based on the question of what is quality control in cleaning with emphasis being put on how cleaning companies can effectively apply quality control

methods to improve and determine the overall expected cleaning quality in facilities, and most important, how to better implement the procedures for the benefit of the cleaning companies and customers alike.

Cleaning is part of a facility maintenance activity that aims at increasing and maintaining the overall life cycle of the facility and, at the same time, provides a human support for an effective working environment to the facility's occupiers.

**Cleaning** is a process that is systematic in nature and aims at the removal of unwanted matter in our environment. The end result of cleaning is to ensure that unwanted matter is cleaned and maintained to a certain safe degree zone that reduces risk levels to human health. The cleaning process then needs to be achieved by using the highest degree of monitoring systems or standards available at the time. These standards are controls, which are implemented in order to effectively achieve the desired quality in the cleaning. That process of implementing and monitoring can then be classified as quality control.

In order to implement quality control procedures, one has to have a clear understanding of the concepts. Cleaning companies cannot implement quality control procedures if they do not understand what quality control is, and what it means to the outcome of the cleaning service. Cleaning is a science, and in the thesis, I dealt in depth in quality and quality control, their definitions and concepts, before I applied them into real situations in the cleaning service. For without quality control, the cleaning service can be deemed as perpetually useless.

## **2. QUALITY AND ITS COMPONENTS**

### **2.1 Definitions of quality**

As stated in the introduction, quality is subjective in nature and therefore, cannot be easily measured as it is perceived differently by every individual. In most cases, quality



signifies excellence and reliability, but again, this also differs from each customer's point of view.

The term quality exists in many definitions and many scholars have endeavored to define quality as it is used in different contexts:

- ✓ In services operations, quality can be defined as: "The right thing, at the right place, at the right time" (Wright 1999, 169).
- ✓ In management, quality is seen as "meeting the customer requirements" (Oakland 1993, 5).
- ✓ In hospitality management, service quality is defined from two perspectives. The notion of quality as the difference between what the consumer expects and what the consumer perceives to have received. Here, the customer defines quality. The second notion is a value-based approach where quality is defined in costs and prices. Quality thus is a service where the consumer focuses on perceiving value (Knowles 1998, 292).
- ✓ In the cleaning industry, cleaning service quality is the ability to meet the customer's expectations and needs. If the customer's experiences of the cleaning service correspond with his assumptions, then he considers the overall quality good (Huilaja 1998, 22).

Cleaning quality can also be defined and described as the extent to which the cleaning upkeep satisfies and continues to satisfy the requirements specified for the use and functions of the rooms (Bound 2002, 10-11). The quality is good if the users of the room in question are satisfied and remain so. This applies when the cleaning can be carried out properly, with the correct frequency and under normal conditions.

## **2.2 Classification of Quality**

The overall cleaning quality service can be classified into four distinct categories:

- **Technical quality**
- **Functional quality**
- **Aesthetic quality**
- **Process quality.**

Eija Huilaja (1998, 22) asserts that **technical quality** of cleaning is assumed as the result of actual cleaning work of which is agreed upon with the customer or the cleanliness promised to him. This quality is in turn affected by:

- The cleaning frequency
- Applied technology
- Service organization
- Control systems and follow up
- Technical and professional skills of personnel.

Customers of cleaning services in return expect that the organization providing the cleaning services display friendly behaviour and flexibility accustomed to a health centre. This part of service quality is known as **functional quality**.

**Functional quality** is the cooperation between the service producing organization and the persons and personnel using the service. Each customer likes to be treated like an individual and also listened to. Instances can conclude that the quality as experienced by the customer is a result of functional quality factors that they experience. The factors that affect functional quality and which play an important role of how the customer perceives the service provider can be summed up as:

- Service speed
- Flexibility
- The personnel attitudes.

**Aesthetic** quality incorporates the aspect of care and it relates to the setup as well as the approach of the service supplied. On the other hand, **process quality** relates to fitting in with an existing organization. It can depict how the organization adapts to working hours or how it deals with disasters or emergencies.

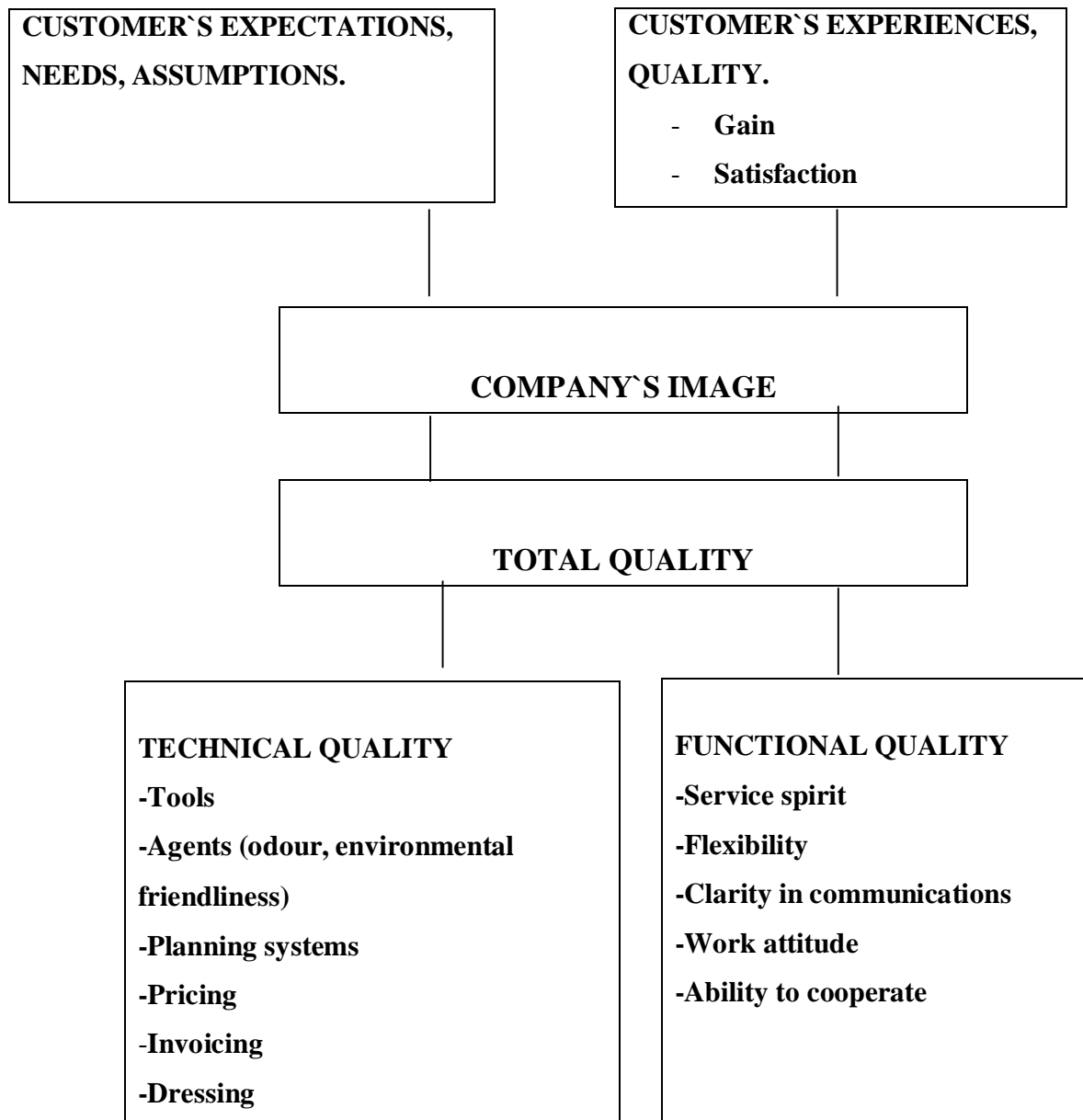


FIGURE 1. Quality of cleaning services (Huilaja 1998, 22)

### **3. DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY**

Most people, if asked and when confronted from the business point of view, will argue that the customer is always right. In this context, it means that the customer determines the quality of work. However, the overall quality of the cleaning service (Bound 2002, 10) is determined by:

- ✓ **Cost (price)**
- ✓ **Reliability of the service provider**
- ✓ **Responding to disasters and resolving complaints**
- ✓ **Customer needs and expectations**
- ✓ **The organization's principles and working mechanisms (the efficient use of resources and technology, competition analysis etc )**
- ✓ **Cleaning quality.**

#### **3.1 Cost/Price**

Quality does not come cheap. Cost has always been and will continue to be the first determinant of quality. Cost bears heavily in a customer's mind as it is used to gauge the level of quality desired. The more the customer needs and expectations are clarified the more the cost will be and vice versa. When defining the level of quality, one should compare the effect of various quality levels with the cost. For example, spaces with a low frequency use and which collect little dirt and employ sparse cleaning are not worth the most expensive alternative. Thus they reduce the cost of cleaning.

Costs can also work to the detriment of quality. While cleaning companies maintain to achieve profits they are most liable to cut down costs by reducing the overall hours of a particular job. A good example exists in competitive tendering and contracting where price is the determinant of the winning bid which is or can be associated with

uncompensated increases in the demand for work intensity. Workers are therefore overburdened with time limitations that eventually lead to a decline in quality.

Cleaning companies should be aware of this fact when negotiating for cleaning contracts. It is not unusual for a customer to inquire the price of a cleaning service before commencing on with other requirements. Cleaning is a support service that many customers, especially in small enterprises and home cleaning, can afford to do without, if their financial gains happen to take a downfall.

### **3.2 Reliability of the service provider**

Reliability of the service provider means that services are provided in a continuous consistent way. Customers are assured of good quality and the delivery system, which is the cleaning company, offers guarantees, to that effect. It is important that things are made right at the first time. That means that all the information given to the customers is true and that it is the same that they must expect (Kukkonen 1996, 10). When cleaning agreements have been reached and finalized, then it is up to the cleaning company to fulfill the cleaning obligations stated in the contract. Reliability will also include certain factors as flexibility, fulfilling promises, quality assurance, responding to disasters and resolving complaints.

### **3.3 Responding to disasters and resolving complaints**

Cleaning companies have an obligation to respond to a crisis caused during the process of cleaning and also unforeseen customer emergencies. For example, a contracted customer having hosted a party may request emergency cleaning services for spills, broken glass, other damages etc. It is up to the cleaning company to respond to that customer's needs by arranging that the service be delivered and performed to meet the customer's expectations.

Customers need to build trust for the service providers. Cleaning companies in turn should respond the same way by guaranteeing and maintaining a stable relationship with the customer. The relationship should work both ways.

### **3.4 Customer needs and expectations**

Cleaning companies at the first introduction to a customer should avail the need to tailor services according to the customer's expectations, needs and assumptions. In Uusi Era difficulties in the cleaning services have been known to arise when at the first introduction, no clear objectives for the customer needs were discussed. Negotiations entered should focus on finding out what the work details entail. Then in turn, the cleaning company can afford to measure and question whether it is capable of delivering the kind of cleaning quality for the expectations desired. Quality is estimated from the point of view of those participating in the service. The quality is good when the users and buyers of the service are satisfied (Huilaja 1998, 27).

### **3.5 The organization's principles and working mechanisms**

The organization or cleaning company takes full responsibility of the quality once an agreement has been reached and a contract signed with a client. This is the moment of truth and the company should be able to demonstrate an increased and sustained level of quality in order to maintain its customer base and trust. Broken promises or misguided truths are time bombs that reflect negatively on the company's image and performance. Assumed mistakes will be;

- Unduly difficult to rectify
- Time consuming
- Generally increased operational costs to the company.

Once quality standards have been decided upon, there is no turning back. The company will in effect employ its resources and technology efficiently and effectively to ensure that workers perform as required or demanded upon. Knowledge and the company's mission and vision are therefore put into question. The principles of technical, functional, aesthetic and process quality must be emphasized.

In cleaning services competition is rife. Customers will not hesitate to terminate cleaning contracts in the event that their needs and expectations are not met. Cleaning companies on the other hand should make their employees aware of the company's mission and vision. Why are we here? And, where do we go from here? Professionalism dictates that employees perform exemplarily. Competence is therefore applied to guarantee that skills and knowledge of all employees are at the desired level at all times and are applied on demand. Quality management tools should be put into practice, cleaning plans should be developed to tackle all circumstances mentioned in the cleaning agreements or contracts, whilst supervision and evaluation, which are some of the methods employed as tools in quality control that need to be emphasized and used to gauge the continuous process of providing quality, and new innovative ideas are put into practice to allow for creativity and cost cutting.

On the other hand, employees should be aware of how to use cleaning equipment to best effect quality. Knowledge of soaps, cleaning tools for example, mops, brushes, rugs etc, allergies and environmental issues are some of the demands required. The level of quality provided must be a strategic decision based on what the competition is doing and what can be afforded, with a clear appreciation that, once started, there is no turning back (Wright 1999, 169).

### **3.6 Cleaning quality**

The cleaning quality is the major concern that all customers requesting cleaning services wish fulfilled. It is important that the cleaning quality meets the requirements and

expectations of the residents and customers at an affordable price and that the process should always remain clearly defined so as to provide satisfaction to both parties.

### **3.6.1 The purpose of cleaning**

In order for one to understand what the quality of cleaning is, one must first understand the purpose or the reason for the cleaning. Both of the two factors comprehend each other, and none can function without the other.

Cleaning has a purpose and the five major reasons for cleaning are stipulated as (Allen 1993, 198-199):

- Prevention of the spread of infection and disease
- Dust control
- Preservation of the fabric, fixtures, fittings and furnishings
- Provision of a socially acceptable environment
- Safety.

### **3.6.2 Prevention of the spread of infection and disease**

The most important aspect of cleaning is the prevention and removal of disease causing bacteria. This leads to a cleaner environment. Different spaces require different standards of hygiene and also methods of cleaning. High risk areas include hospitals, operating theatres, clinics, kitchens and sanitary accommodations.

### **3.6.3 Dust control**

Dust levels have to be controlled to certain acceptable levels. Not only does this apply to industrial working environments e.g. in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and electronics



to mention a few, but also to schools, offices, kindergartens and homes. High levels of dust or fumes in the atmosphere are harmful to human health. These levels must be controlled through cleaning.

#### **3.6.4 Preservation of the fabric, fixtures, fittings and furnishings**

The accumulation of dust, grease and other types of soils eventually lead to the progressive deterioration of buildings and their furnishings. Neglect of the process of cleaning accelerates damage and the eventual costs of repairs are higher and the methods applied to restore the facility can also cause further damage.

#### **3.6.5 Provision of a socially acceptable environment**

A socially acceptable and attractive working environment enhances productivity. People working in clean environments are more likely to yield higher productivity than their counterparts. A clean environment is not only respectable, but also offers mental comfort and employee happiness.

#### **3.6.6 Safety**

The cleaning process includes the removal of obstacles and substances that tend to obstruct. The act alone allows for minor or major accidents to be controlled. Standards of cleaning must be sufficient to meet health and safety at work requirements.

### **4. QUALITY AWARENESS**

Quality goes beyond just providing cleaning quality services or observing high quality control procedures. In most cases, it is these extra services that tend to distinguish a company's quality control protocol from the others. Going that extra mile to satisfy the

customer could mean the difference between winning and loosing out to the competition. For example, some cleaning companies will provide free transport to the carpet dry cleaners for customers who request carpet cleaning services; others will provide discounts to senior citizens and long-term contract customers.

The secret to providing quality services is for the organization to recognize what areas it is good in and where it excels the most. Quality control is a dynamic process that continuously demands improvement. According to John Bound (2002, 12), quality experience of the customer goes (much) further than “only the proper execution of the cleaning work.”

In addition to the work undertaken, there is also a quality expectation in relation to matters such as (Bound 2002, 12):

- § Additional services
- § Attention
- § Being addressed by telephonists / receptionist
- § Speed of being called back
- § Accessibility
- § Communications/contact
- § Flexibility
- § Fulfilling promises
- § Safety
- § Staff
- § Company dress code
- § Legitimization
- § Inspection, instructions, training
- § Recruitment, selection, training and supervision
- § Professionalism
- § Empathy (having the customer’s interests at heart)

- § “Partnership or co-maker ship”, in other words, collaborating towards joint objectives which have been laid down
- § Responding to requirements
- § Continuity
- § Right price/quality ratio.

#### **4.1 Quality Implications**

Retaining and maintaining customers is crucial for a company’s growth. Installing a quality culture in an organization takes time, requires commitment and costs money. However, the benefits of retaining customers far outweigh losing customers. In order for cleaning companies to maintain their competitive edge and improve the way they offer services, they must be prepared to measure quality.

The best way to measure quality is by using defection rates as an indicator. By gathering feedback from defectors, organizations are able to identify and prevent the underlying reasons for customer loss. This in turn enables the organization to act on the information, adjust services and processes to meet customer needs and expectations.

Other important indicators also include; how often the same cleaning work has to be redone. For example, if a customer continuously complains about a particular type of cleaning task, then it is obviously clear that the task must be repeated over and over again. That means that the aspect of quality is neglected. The number of customer complains from the complaints log also indicates failure for the cleaning service to be provided adequately. Finally, customer perception surveys carried out periodically help to pinpoint areas of weaknesses and those that the cleaning service need to improve. Customers will in most cases, respond to perception surveys as it enables them be part of the quality awareness and control process.

Christopher H Lovelock (1992, 251) emphasizes on the fact that organizations can ferret out the weaknesses that really matter and strengthen them before profits start to dwindle. If companies knew how much it really costs to loose a customer, they would be able to make accurate evaluations of investments designed to retain customers. He argues that accounting systems do not capture the value of a customer. Instead, they project on the current period costs and revenues and ignore expected cash flows over a customer's lifetime. It is a known fact that the longer a company keeps a customer, the more money it stands to make.

## **4.2 Advantages of quality services**

Quality services will ensure in the long run a sustainable long-term relationship between the customer and the organization. Depending on the industry, cost savings and additional revenues will combine to produce a steadily increase in profits over the course of time.

Long -term serving customers provide a source of free advertising. Christopher H Lovelock (1992, 251) further maintains that loyal customers do a lot of talking and drum up a lot of business. Some companies have admitted that referrals are one of their highest contributors in sales.

Another advantage from the sustainable relationship between the organization and the customer stems from the fact that companies will at one time or the other benefit from customer loyalty even when the prices of the services are increased. Customers loyal to a company often turn a blind eye to costs as they are aware of the quality services provided. Many customers will prefer to use expensive services that they trust than to take chances on less expensive competitors. Long-term customers will most often pay a premium for service quality which they have experienced and liked.

When organizations lower the defection rates, the average customer relationship lasts longer and profits climb steadily. Defection rates refer to those customers who will not

come back. Cleaning companies need to understand the mechanisms employed in reducing defection rates. Defection rates cannot reach zero levels as no service providing company is capable of fulfilling its customer base needs and expectations up to 100%. Customers' quality levels vary, and by minimizing the defection rates to a reasonable value, only then will cleaning companies fully understand its benefits.

### Industrial Laundry Services

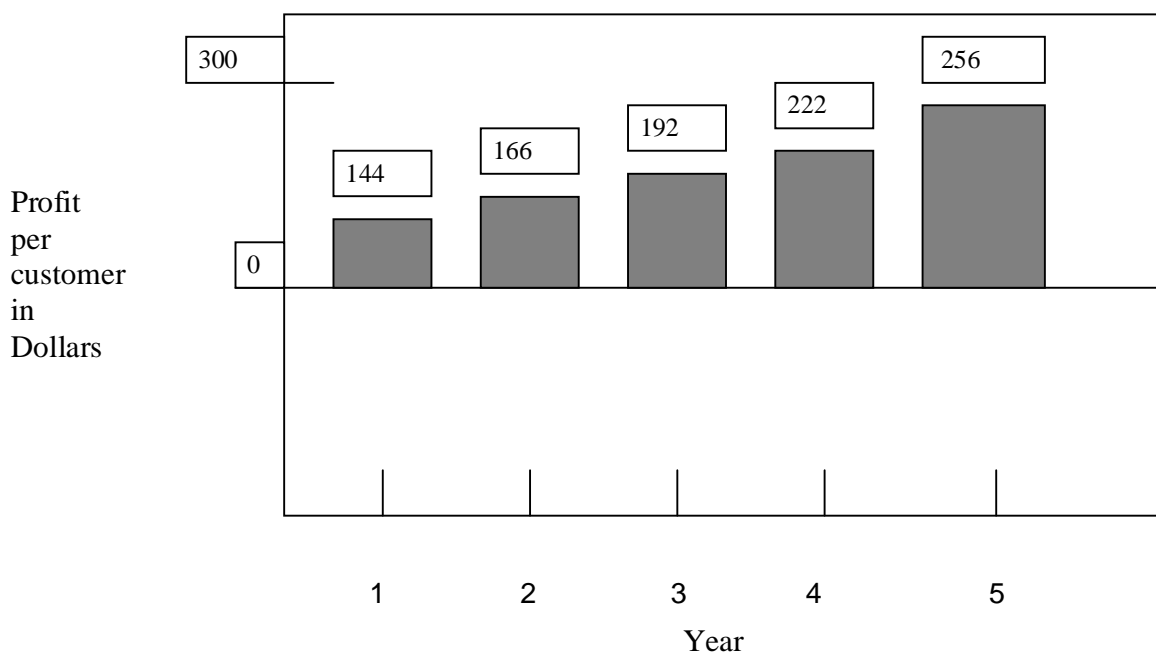


FIGURE 2. How much profit a customer generates over time (Lovelock, 1992, 252)

### 4.3 Quality limitations

When quality does not conform to the customer's needs or expectations the inefficiencies that occur are known as non-conformance costs. Non-conformance costs are when work or service is not performed to the standard set by the organization (Wright 1999, 170).

When this occurs the following remedies have to take place:

- The work has to be corrected by doing it again, or
- The customer has to be recompensed.

The kinds of costs cleaning companies will eventually incur are

- Increased costs in terms of increased wages. The work has to be done twice.
- Wasted time. Time is money, and time taken to correct defaulted work affects both the customer, the management of the organization and the employees.
- Waste in materials. Materials will have to be re-used over again. In cleaning companies, errors in certain jobs can have profound impacts on the costs of materials. For example, in refurbishing floors, waxing when applied and rendered faulty will result in stripping the new wax, and, reinstalling it again. This exercise alone, demands a lot of input in terms of labour, time and materials.

## **5. QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

Quality management is a broad term that carries many definitions depending on the applicable situation that it can be used. Various definitions exist that can be applied in cleaning services which are and can be explicitly defined as;

- The system that encompasses both quality assurance and quality improvement, describing a program of evaluating the quality of services using a variety of techniques.
- The application of a quality management system in managing a process to achieve maximum customer satisfaction at the lowest overall cost to the organization while continuing to improve the process.
- An ongoing effort to provide services that meet or exceed customer expectations through a structured, systematic process for creating organizational participation in planning and implementing quality improvements.

## **5.1 Levels of quality management**

Three levels of quality management can be identified which act as guiding tools and when implemented, can improve the level of service quality in the cleaning industry.

**A. Quality control and inspection**

**B. Quality assurance**

**C. Total quality.**

### **5.1.1 Quality control and inspection**

Quality inspection relies on supervision as the most basic approach to minimize errors. Simply put, the mistakes are inspected and then corrected. On the other hand, quality control is more detailed in nature and involves; inspection, correction and the investigation of problems to find cause and prevent mistakes reoccurring.

Quality control takes place in the work place by inspecting;

- The work programme and how well it is carried out
- The necessary activities, are they carried out properly?
- The frequencies listed in the cleaning programme and how they are met
- The methods applied and if they are the right ones.

Quality control involves the processes of

- Quality analysis
- Quality assessment
- Quality measuring systems.

In cleaning services, quality analysis tackles the aspect of restricting ourselves to the absence of dirt, visible contamination and disorder. Deviations from clean are determined and affected areas recorded in order to achieve a sound assessment.

Quality assessment on the other hand tends to measure the extent of departures from “clean” after the analysis has been carried out and compared to the quality specifications for example, in buildings. The comparison of the quality analysis to the current quality specification is therefore known as quality assessment (Bound 2002, 17).

Quality measuring systems are tools by which cleaning companies can or employ to ensure that the overall quality of cleaning services is maintained to acceptable standards. These tools can either be institutionally developed as The Nen 2075 and Total Quality Management (TQM) or through customer perception surveys and direct observation and interviews to determine whether the cleaning activities are being undertaken according to the expectations.

### **5.1.2 Quality assurance**

Quality assurance combines the setting of standards and the process of documentation of the method of checking against the specified standards (Wright 1999, 173). Quality assurance will in most cases include a third party approval from a recognized authority namely: ISO 9000 series or INSTA 800. Quality assurance also uses inspection and control as its basis approach and in addition, requires a detailed or comprehensive quality manual, recording of quality costs and the occasional use of statistical process control as well as sampling techniques for random checking. In quality assurance, a complete audit of quality systems must be done.

The rules for certification in cleaning are developed with the aim of providing quality cleaning that encourages a good indoor environment. Certified cleaning means the



cleaning that is performed in accordance with the requirements specified in the certification rules, by an approved cleaning contractor (Ericson& Johansson 2002, 20).

### **ISO 9000**

ISO 9000 (International Standard Organization) series is the most recent standard recognized worldwide. In order to gain certification, organizations must meet rigorous standards from the accreditation authority.

ISO 9000 exists to give the customer confidence and that services or products provided will continuously meet certain specified standards of performance. The services and products must always be consistent with those standards. ISO 9000 performance is driven from top (management) to bottom (staff). The management sets the standard and the process of agreeing and recording improvements begins. ISO 9000 is best described by the “wedge” whereby, quality is seen as a continuous process that is prevented from slipping backwards.

ISO 9000 however, has its limitations. It has been argued that it is too costly for small organizations to adopt. The certification process requires months of designing of new increased check procedures and a method of recording that each check or test has been done. Determining standards does not necessarily imply that the most efficient methods are being utilized. The standard adopted merely means that there is now a standard. How efficient it is, is another question.

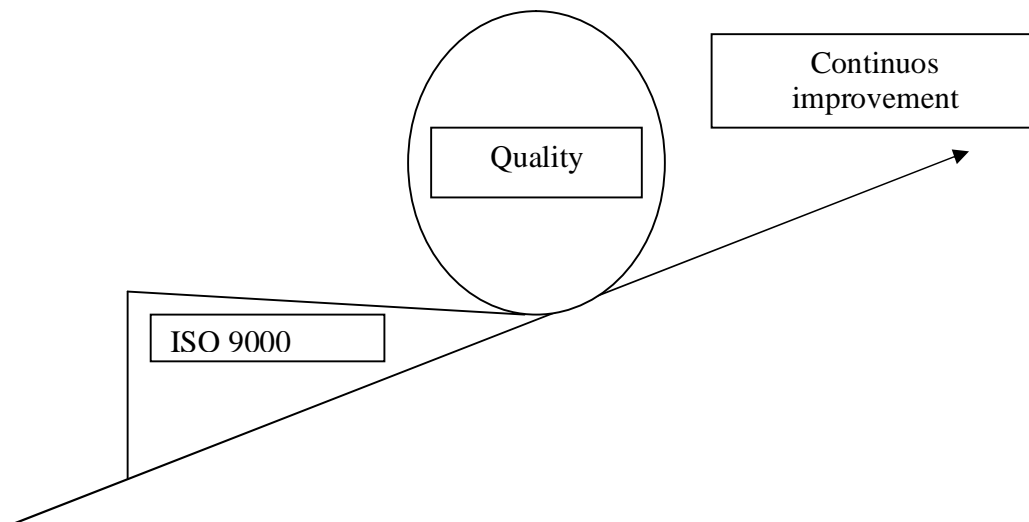


FIGURE 3. The wedge (Wright 1999, 177)

### **INSTA 800**

INSTA 800 is probably the most recognized measuring system for the assessment and evaluation of cleaning efficiency and quality in the Nordic countries. INSTA 800 standardizes quantitative methods for measuring

- Dust on a surface
- The hygiene quality indoors
- Friction
- Gloss
- Static Electricity
- Electric conduction.

Certification rules for cleaning require that cleaning is based on both visual inspection and the objective measurement of surface dust since the indoor environment is influenced especially by dust (Ericson & Johansson 2002, 20). There is no simple relationship between surface dust and airborne dust, however, the less the surface dust the less the potential to disperse airborne dust.

### **5.1.3 Total quality management**

Total quality management is an approach to improving the competitiveness, effectiveness and the flexibility of the whole organization. It is essentially in a way of planning, organizing and understanding each activity, and depends on each individual at each level (Oakland 1993, 22). In order for an organization to be fully effective, each part of the organization must work properly and together towards the same goals as each must recognize that each part and activity depends on the other.

Total quality management must be applied throughout the whole organization and must involve top executives to the basic staff. It is a way of improving performance by reducing time wasted on ineffective policies and calls for a problem-prevention mentality by removing barriers that exist in all key areas. TQM is a vision of continuous quality and demands a culture whereby all members of an organization must on a daily basis continually improve quality by finding ways of improving performance. The vision of quality must begin with the chief executive and pass down to the staff. If a passion for quality exists, then the process will paradoxically work in from top-down, down-top and vice versa.

In cleaning services, it is often the cleaning staff (front-line staff) that physically interacts with customers and the general public when providing the cleaning services.

Consequently, the customer or public will perceive the company's image from the point of view of the cleaning staff. It is at this lowest level that the company must rely on the continuing of the daily level of quality. Front-line staff have a significant role to play in an organization's TQM implementation process.

A culture of quality must be observed and be ingrained in all members of the organization. The management will of course carry the continuous responsibility for planning and providing the resources or tools necessary to enable the workers perform their jobs. The front-line staff, that includes, the cleaning workers, van driver, telephone

operator, plumber etc. are in the frontline of the quality war. If they are not committed to TQM, then the process will definitely fail. TQM goes beyond the boundaries of the organization to involve suppliers, customers, and the general public.

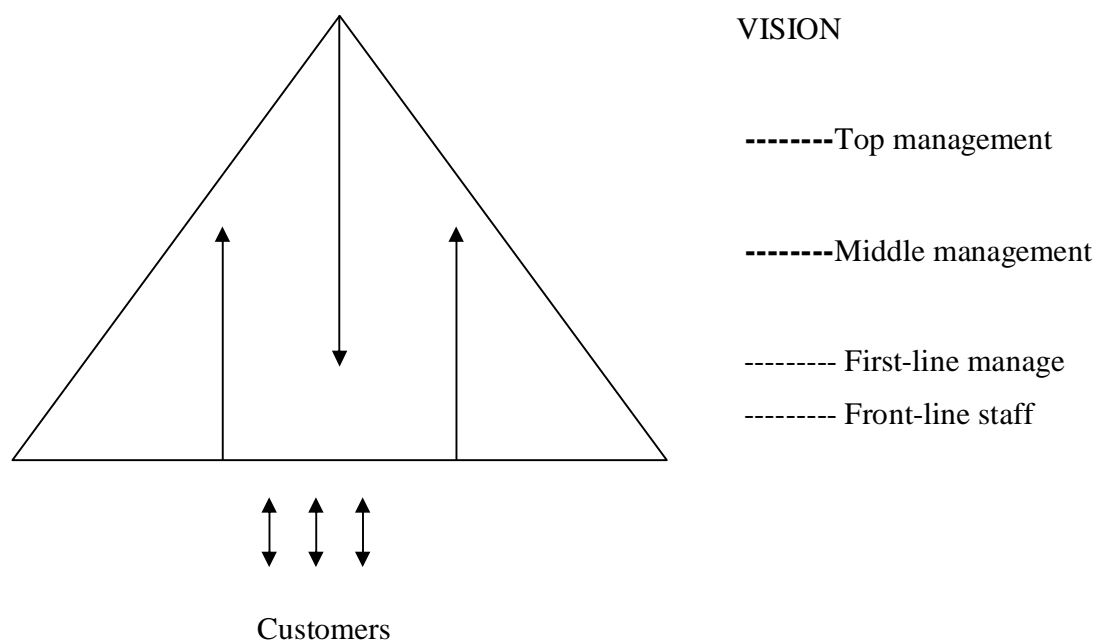


FIGURE 4. Quality and the driving force (Wright 1999, 174)

## 5.2 The future of cleaning quality

### 5.2.1 Nilfisk-Advance (INSTA 800)

The demands of good quality indoor air are increasingly putting pressure on cleaning companies to better their cleaning services. It is a known fact that better facilities provide a conducive environment for improving productivity of employees in offices and also in other environments. The inside environment is affected by bad ventilation, lack of maintenance, choice of materials, cleaning methods, outside environment and the human being (Holmefalk 2002, 91).

The new Nordic cleaning standard INSTA 800 is a new measuring system with the aim of setting standards for different kinds of methods within the professional cleaning. The Nilfisk-advance methods shall be communicated through a software program, web sites, cd disks, leaflets and technical descriptions. The system is being developed bearing in mind tomorrow's cleaning needs. It is being developed in conjunction with cleaning organizations, floor manufactures, owners of general buildings, retailers, contract cleaning companies and the end users. Its focus is on finding solutions as to quality, best function and ergonomically thinking. Training and education are important tools to enable the cleaning service providers to adapt to new solutions.

### **5.2.2 IT Clean System**

Another option for the future is to adapt to the IT clean concept (Holm 2002, 106). This is a revolutionary intelligent system that enables measuring the cleaning environment by data collection. It is based on facts and aims at cutting down cleaning costs by 40%. Not a bad idea for the customer but definitely, losses to the cleaning company profits. The system works by collecting data from cleaning activities which are processed and calculated in a database.

IT clean uses the method whereby the cleaner has to wear a hand device and all the instructions are communicated via a radio to the device. When the cleaner enters a premise (s) he/she must log in and then perform the tasks that are provided via the device. When the tasks are completed the data is updated in the system and he/she logs out and moves to another location. By using the system, all tasks performed by the cleaner are logged for time and quality and can be evaluated later on.

The main advantages of the IT clean system are that; the open system is constantly elaborated, it enhances communication, offers full support and staff training, it increases efficiency by advocating for doing the right thing at the right time, it is constantly up to date and ensures the technical cleanliness of the premise.

### **5.3 How to guarantee a continuous quality performance**

The success of any quality maintenance program requires that guidelines be developed for continuous success. These guidelines are based on five key elements; staffing, training, scheduling, budgeting and records (Brown, Facility maintenance, 1996, 213). The mechanisms for developing the guidelines are founded in quality control, quality assurance, continuous quality improvement and total quality. Using Edward Deming's (Brown, 1996, 214) fourteen points of improving quality, facility managers can pinpoint most of the quality problems and find plausible solutions in order to successfully satisfy customer needs and compete in business.

Simply put, quality is achieved when cleaning companies:

- A. Create a consistency of purpose toward improvement of product and service with the aim of becoming competitive, to stay in business and to provide jobs.  
Cleaning companies' end product is to provide cleaning services. The companies need to prepare and maintain all company assets in order for them to be in top class condition such that they can use them at any time when they are needed. The assets to acquire and maintain are staff, training, scheduling, budgets, records and support of peers and subordinates. Success will be a team and all members are part of the team.
- B. Adapt new philosophies and technologies. In this case, new missions and goal statements must be written down carefully so that authority is achieved as well as the support to enable maintenance management program and recovery tasks be carried out. With responsibilities and authorities properly established, management is in a position to exercise the leadership necessary to carry out activities in their proper inclusion.

- C. Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality. This is done by building quality into the production from the first instance. This is an example whereby inspection is on a continuous basis and everyone becomes an inspector. For this to be achieved, everyone must be satisfied with their own work and perform always to achieve quality.
  
- D. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of a price tag alone. Instead, minimize total cost. Total cost is minimized by avoiding quick, easy and cheap methods of application. Under pricing the service in order to win cleaning contracts means that eventually, the costs for maintaining the facility have to be pushed to rock bottom material and labour prices as the company strives to cut down costs by slashing working hours and buying cheap materials.
  
- E. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service to improve quality and productivity and these constantly decrease costs. By applying consistency in improving quality in the products, service and attitudes, the long term effect is a decrease in maintenance operating budget. The result of quality at all times ensures reduced material and systems breakdown creating efficiency of all systems in the long run.
  
- F. Institute training on the job. The greatest responsibility for managers is to help employees reach far beyond their imaginations. A strong on the job training guarantees that employees can perform more and better. Employers should encourage more quality output by recognizing jobs well done and also by encouraging training and tasking opportunities.
  
- G. Institute leadership. The aim of leadership should be to help people and machines and gadgets to do a better job. Management should recognize the need to train managers and supervisors into leadership roles. Leadership is empowerment and empowerment comes with added responsibilities with the aim of achieving quality results.

- H. Drive out fear so that everyone may work effectively for the company. One overcomes job fear through self confidence, confidence in leaders and managers, confidence in the department and confidence in the company. Open communication policy encourages positive partnerships that allow for teamwork.
- I. Break down barriers between departments. All people must work as a team, so as to oversee problems of providing the service. All efforts of teamwork should be based on company mission and goals. Sales, research, production teams etc. should focus on working as a team and not as individuals.
- J. Apply quality improvement program to the system and not to bits and pieces of the assigned work. When employees are empowered and the training program takes hold, then employees will in a matter of natural progress adapt to providing quality service to the whole system. That means they can also address issues and offer suggestions as to how to better address the needs of the service system.
- K. Eliminate management by objectives and substitute with leadership. Leadership at all levels including the workforce in it self is the answer to the quality problems. Leaders are designed to help people do exactly what they have always wanted to do. Empowerment is sharing authority and responsibility. Participative management includes planning, setting up schedules, coordinating, etc. all this being leadership roles geared towards success of the service. Allow for mistakes and address them privately. Do not broadcast them. Correct, forgive and learn from mistakes and move on. That way, then members learn and progress.
- L. The responsibility of supervisors must be changed from sheer numbers to quality. Numbers are only figures that do not guarantee quality. When the process is reversed to quality, then the numbers are will automatically appear as a result of demand from the clients or customers. It is important to provide quality before quantity.



- M. Institute a vigorous education program and self improvement. Always evaluate training needs to suit the company expectations and goals. By finding teaching resources and assigning employees to attend training programmes and seminars, employees feel recognized and honoured to be selected as participants.
  
- N. Put everyone in the company to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everyone's job. In any form of organization, change is always inevitable when it comes to instilling new ideas that are required in order to allow the organization progress forward. When an organization is being transformed for the better, then all individuals must work together to achieve the change. The change is a process that cannot alienate certain individuals of a group or certain departments of any organization.

The above points are self explanatory and easy to adapt. Cleaning companies have the capacity to improve on quality if they can make a commitment using Deming's fourteen point theory.

## **6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESEARCH**

I read a lot of literature and publications that tackled quality in the service industry. Most of the written works were similar in nature and barely explored extensively quality in cleaning but in services. The methodology I employed for my research was qualitative. I interviewed the CEO of Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu (Appendix 1) on how she perceives and understands quality and quality control procedures in cleaning as well as what the company's future goals are.

I also used an employee job satisfaction questionnaire (Appendix 2). The questionnaire was send to eight employees. My questions were designed to find out if the employees were happy with their work, their working conditions and whether they were familiar with any quality control procedures introduced by the company. If so, did they

understand what quality means when executing cleaning work? In my opinion, a satisfied employee respects his work, and is the best asset for the company. That employee will display the best possible results as they are motivated.

I used A 5 month data entry company's complaints log (Appendix 3) to determine the frequency and nature at which complains were being reported on a monthly basis. In conjunction to this, I also went through 15 customer opinion and satisfaction survey questionnaire (Appendix 4) of the company which is issued every other third month of the year. Finally, I used a quality control checklist that I designed to identify possible problems existing in the company's quality control procedures, as I was actively involved in direct observation as a cleaner and supervisor for five months from April to August 2005, approximately 5 months.

## **7. THE CASE STUDY - UUSI ERA SIIVOUS PALVELU**

Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu is a family run cleaning company that provides cleaning services to the following:

- Homes
- Construction areas
- Facilities
- Window cleaning
- Carpets and linen chairs
- Contract cleaning
- General cleaning.

Contract cleaning services are categorised into the following groups;

- A. Home and Facilities. Homes represent personal homes whilst facilities include offices, kindergartens, clinics or dispensaries and all visible structures in general.

The nature of the work performed in homes and facilities includes daily cleaning as well as periodic maintenance scheduled tasks for example, floor refurbishing, window cleaning etc. The nature of the agreement is such that it can be long term or a one time work offer.

- B. General and Construction sites cleaning. In general and construction cleaning, focus is in providing the service when the builders have finished the facility and before the occupiers have settled in. The work includes vacuuming, spot cleaning of left over paints or glues and window cleaning. This kind of cleaning is mainly focused on removing all aspects of building waste and dust.
  
- C. Floor restoration (striping and waxing) Window cleaning, Carpet and Linen chairs cleaning. The activities carried out are specific in this type of work. For example, floor restoration is on contract basis and is performed in a facility once or twice a year. The same applies for the window cleaning but the instance in this case refers only to summer work. Linen chairs and carpets are cleaned only in on demand. They include homes, offices, restaurants and bars.

The above A and B are ongoing long-term contract activities for the company, whilst the group C is on short-term contract, and mainly available in summer. Due to the prevailing long winter conditions, windows in Finland can only be cleaned during the summer months and commercial carpet cleaning is advisable to be done at the same time too so that the carpets are given ample time to dry.

As a result, Uusi Era employees find themselves in various working situations all year round with additional labour available for the summer months. Employees thus comprise of permanent workers as well as casual labourers. Casual employees comprise of students who often seek short-term work contracts.

## 7.1 History of the company

Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu was first started in the summer of 1999. Initially, the company's aims were directed in providing **cleaning** as well as **catering** services. However, 2 years later, the catering service was abandoned as a core activity of the company and the specialization of providing cleaning and maintenance services was now the only activity that was focused on.

Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu cleaning services are adversely affected by the change in seasons. For instance, in summer, more work is concentrated in outdoors work, cleaning windows and waxing (refurbishing floors) as the climate suits this kind of work. In autumn, home cleaning services are witnessed by the reopening of schools, and the end of the Finnish national summer holiday season. More work is also indoors. The flow of workers is also affected by the above in that many informal workers who comprise of students participate in summer.

To date, the company has a strong will to continue to provide quality cleaning services at all times. The fact that it is backed by quality management and experienced workers, makes this realization a challenging task as the company competes for attention and recognition in the ever competitive cleaning services industry.

As previously stated, Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu is a small family company and as such the company organisation structure is simple. The management is responsible for:

- ✓ **Getting the work (sales and marketing)**
- ✓ **Carrying out the work (operations)**
- ✓ **Getting the staff (personnel)**
- ✓ **Recording transactions and arranging the finance (finance)**

## 7.2 Company Organisation

All core functions of the company are controlled by the CEO, whilst, informal staff and workers report directly to the line managers. The functions of the managers include Coaching, Delegation, Leading, Managing Work, Motivating and Planning. Marketing and sales functions are typically carried out by the CEO (but are sometimes relegated to the managers) whilst the finance department has been outsourced but directly commutes to the CEO.

## 7.3 Company Vision and Mission

Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu is a service-oriented company that fruitfully seeks to satisfy its entire customer cleaning needs. The company's mission is to; **provide quality cleaning services at all times.**

The company's values incorporate:

- a) **Integrity and honesty**
- b) **Openness and respectfulness to the customers' requirements**
- c) **Adapting to new and demanding challenges**
- d) **Need for self-evaluation, self-criticism, self-improvement, and personal excellence**
- e) **Accountability to customers and employees for quality, commitments and results.**

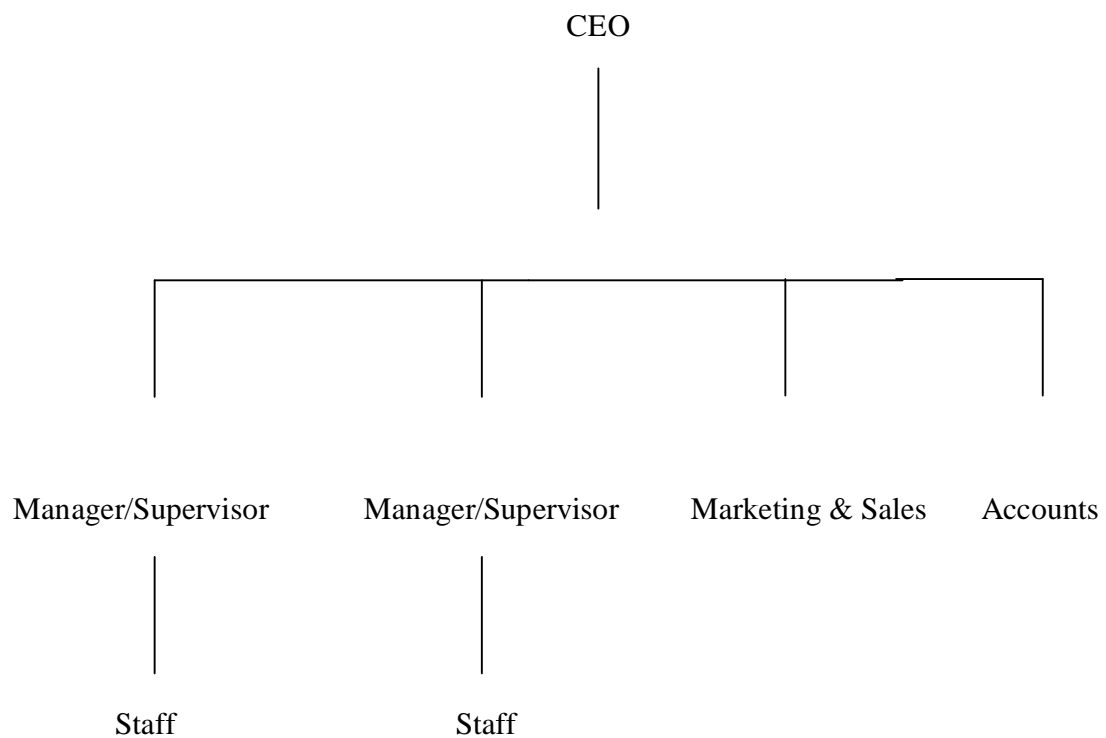


FIGURE 5. Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu Organization Structure

When I interviewed the CEO, she made it clear that these were the fundamental guidelines that all employees were made aware of when the initial first contact was done in the employment process.

*“It is important that employees are aware that quality is important when delivering the cleaning service.”*

Interview (Mwinzi, 2005)

Most workers that are employed by the company are students. The workers I met were all attending a degree programme in various institutions. In cleaning, common sense is a virtue that should be exercised at all times. Workers who have some type of higher education exhibit some level of common sense than their counterparts.

Typical of a small family run business, responses to customers requirements and market opportunities are fast. Confusion in delegating of responsibilities and decision making is minimized by the fact that bureaucracy is avoided as the staff report directly to the managers and also have access to the CEO at all times. The manager works hand in hand with the employees and the responsibilities have well in advance been properly and effectively communicated. The principle working application for all management is to exercise a “hands on” approach.

It is the responsibility of the management to respond to emergencies. This is very crucial since emergencies need a very quick response in delay times. The management must make sure that the delay time is minimized to the shortest time possible. As such, the management bears full responsibility of any shortcomings that may hinder delivery of the cleaning service. It is the responsibility of the management to never tailor to one person. The tasks are spread so that in multiple situations all managers can act independently.

## **8. RESEARCH RESULTS**

### **8.1 How to effectively implement quality control procedures in Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu**

Today, quality management is a very well-known concept, and many companies have obtained significant advantages, internally as well as externally, from developing and implementing an efficient quality management system. Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu is no exception. The process of guaranteeing continuous quality must begin somewhere. For the process to be successful, it must involve all members of the company, from the top management to the bottom.

When implementing my thesis research, I used the methods mentioned (page 30). Then and only then, would I have conclusive deductions as to my research theme. When

drawing my conclusions, I discarded one employee job satisfaction questionnaire. It was answered incorrectly at the personal detail information. The employee had indicated that she had a master's degree. When reviewing the employee work application forms, none of the employees had acquired that level of education. The average age was 28 years, with the highest being 35 years old and the youngest 24.

My questions were designed to find out if the employees were happy with their work, their working conditions and whether they were familiar with any quality control procedures/plan introduced by the company and if so, if they understood what quality means when executing cleaning work. In my opinion, a satisfied employee respects his work, and is the best asset for the company. Those employees display the best possible results as they are inspired and motivated in their work. Eighty-six percent of the employees understood the definition of the word quality, and how quality is implemented. All employees were happy and satisfied working for the company.

One employee claimed that he was never aware of any existing quality control manual. He too was not satisfied with the working conditions and he was unsure if the work was recognized by the management. Ironically, the same employee had been working for the company for four years. Two employees claimed that they were not team players.

Four complaints were lodged and logged during my research term. These were made via telephone. The first complaint was about an unsatisfied home cleaning customer who had wanted to know why his carpets had not been removed outside for fresh air and busting. The second was about restaurant cleaning whereby the toilets had not been properly cleaned and disinfected. On observation, visible stains, smells and dirt were evident. The third complaint was in office premises whereby a number of office staff complained about evidence of dust in the shelves and office equipment.

The final complaint was in a food cafeteria. The complaint dealt on the fact that the cleaner was not applying common sense to set-up toilet papers and hand towels in their respective handling bins. He overfilled the hand towel bin to a point whereby the clients



could not extract them for wiping their hands after washing them in the sink. Toilet papers were also placed in the holding bins unwrapped, making it difficult for a user to unroll the paper for use. The customer demanded to know why the cleaner had ignored her advice and written requests on the correct procedure even after visually drawing them.

During my observation, I used a checklist (below) containing the information to note a few if any, shortcomings evident amongst the quality criteria recommendation. I classified the concerns as emanating from the management and employees.

- Personal hygiene, are the employees presentable and clean enough to work in public environments?
- Dress code, were the employees ignoring dress codes in exchange of their own personal dressing styles?
- Employee performance, was work being done as planned in the contract or in a rush?
- Communication skills, were the employees able to communicate effectively their work to the customers and the management? In case of cleaning grievances due to unexpected demands?
- Materials management, were the employees taking excellent care of the cleaning tools or equipment and also the cleaning store as expected?
- Technology (machine use), were the employees able to use the tools and equipment as expected in the user manuals (e.g. waxing machines, floor cleaning machines etc).

### **8.1.1 Management concerns**

My interview with the CEO was detailed and it went very well. I spent a lot of time with her when she visited the facilities that are cleaned by the company. She was very helpful and also she had a vast knowledge of cleaning and quality. The only problem that I noted

was that despite the fact that a quality control plan was readily available the company lacked a cleaning manual.

A cleaning manual (Appendix 8) is a cleaning tool that should always be used by cleaning companies. It should have a clear stated purpose and include the cleaning goals. Cleaning is a group effort or team work that should assign responsibility to all users of a facility. A cleaning manual should be a must and made available to all employees as well as customers as it provides the basis of the information on the process of cleaning. It is also used as a guide for the safety and materials maintenance.

Another problem was that the company sometimes did not provide as promised to the customers the customer opinion and satisfaction survey questionnaire. Most of the clients who had a long working relationship with the company had opted not to demand one. When I inquired the CEO told me that after a few months in the working relationship she had noticed that many customers preferred to make phone calls. The questionnaires had impact only in the first one to one and a half years. She explained that in Finland phone calls are cheap and many customers call her anytime they please if any cleaning issue is to be discussed. The use of the Internet e-mails has also reduced the need for the surveys. I felt that there is a need to give the surveys to customers as recommended and as a requirement.

The customer opinion and satisfaction questionnaire is an important tool to measure quality. When customers make phone calls and send e-mails some issues may not be clearly addressed. For example, customers may only focus on the service at the moment and neglect to comment on employee hygiene and cleanliness. The survey allows the customer to focus on all aspects of the cleaning service in question and the company benefits by collecting the data and compiling it for future reference in analyzing quality control problems.

## **8.1.2 Employee concerns**

### **8.1.2.1 Procedure neglect**

The employee complains that I came across had most of the time to do with negligence from the cleaner. In the first complaint, a failure to remove the carpets was an excuse. When the premise was visited and the employees questioned, they admitted that they did not see the need to remove the carpets as they looked clean. How clean is clean then? Carpets are very excellent agents for trapping dust and as such, one cannot use a naked eye to conclude that they are clean. It is company policy that carpets are removed outside for buffing at all times when conditions allow. Apart from buffing, exposure of carpets to outside air improves smells that accumulate on the material as carpets are never washed or cleaned frequently.

### **8.1.2.2 Employee and customer conflict**

In the case where the complaint lodged was about dust in the offices, it was apparently clear that the presence of dust was a lot. When I visited the premise, I also noticed that that particular office was overly congested with books and other materials and the cleaner was unable to perform dusting duties well. In this kind of a situation, customers should be able to compromise to the fact that they are also part of the cleaning process and that they should allow room or space for cleaning. The cleaner too should have communicated the problem as it seemed to have accumulated over a period of time. That allows for the problem to be solved in the shortest time possible. Here, both the cleaner and the customer had to share the blame.

### **8.1.2.3 Training conflict and negligence**

It never made any sense for the cleaner who ignored to clean the toilets in the restaurant well, and yet the other spaces were well done. It is important that the work programme is followed as proposed at all times. The employee should have worked in all spaces with the same level of cleanliness and quality in mind. Restaurant/night club toilets are often very dirty and sometimes pose a health hazard to the employee in the event that blood stains, vomit, urine etc are evident in the space. In this case, the available equipment e.g. gloves, disinfectants, scrubbers, masks, etc were available to ensure that the employee was not exposed to any health dangers and that the work should have been performed diligently. Effective training in the cleaning work plays an important roll in making it clear that all areas demand the same kind of cleaning at all times.

### **8.1.2.4 Employee negligence**

Finally, a complaint about hand towels and toilet papers were repeatedly handled in the wrong way, again is a case of negligence. The customer had explained and visually drawn pictures and offered explanations to inform the cleaner how to proceed with the process. Why then did this particular case become a recurring problem? Simply, the cleaner was either in a hurry to perform that particular task or chose to ignore the process. This was a very disturbing case because the customer got the impression that the cleaner and the company were not working to solve that particular problem. The customer requested that the employee be dismissed from working in that cafeteria or she terminates the working contract.

On occasion I noticed too that workers preferred not to wear work uniform. All workers are presented with two t-shirts and trousers. When I inquired why, most of them said that they worked in facilities which were free from any customers and that they felt that it was not necessary to wear the uniform. From the company point of view, it is compulsory to

wear the uniform at all times when performing cleaning duties. That way they identify with the company and enhance its image.

#### **8.1.2.5 Communication conflict**

The biggest problem that I encountered with most workers and one that I thought should be addressed without compromise was the inability for half of the company workers to communicate well in the Finnish language. When I inquired from the CEO, she told me that it was becoming increasingly difficult for the company to employ Finnish speakers because most of the jobs that the company has, range from two to three hours per shift. These types of jobs attract mainly foreign students since the work hours are few and flexible.

How come then, the company does not employ students who are fluent in the Finnish language? She responded;

*“Foreign students don’t receive any government financial support for their studies, and that is the reason why they preferred to work a few hours to earn income to support some of their extra financial needs. Their counterparts would rather not work the few hours as they are financially secure and prefer to concentrate on their studies.”*

Interview (Mwinzi, 2005)

How then does the company organize its work if the workers cannot communicate with the clients? She explained that

*“In most cases, many of the clients do not mind if the cleaner doesn’t speak Finnish. It is the quality of the work that determines the cleaning relationship. In the event that any complains arise there is a rapid reaction team that responds towards any emergency. The members of that team, including myself, all have the necessary language skills.”*

Interview (Mwinzi, 2005)

### **8.1.2.6 Materials management and hygiene conflict**

When I conducted my research, I didn't fail to recognize the fact that some employees were unable to keep their tools and especially the cleaning equipment storage room clean. Uusi Era out sources the maintenance and management of its machines and equipment. The company that undertakes this responsibility then does routine maintenance checks and also recommends replacements and provides the records. Thus, the machines are very well maintained.

The responsibility of cleaning the equipment falls in the hands of the cleaners themselves. Machines should be kept clean at all times and failures reported so that the necessary steps are taken to correct the malfunction. It is very unfortunate if the cleaning machines and materials are dirty and smelly. The machines should be cleaned after each use. I questioned the frequency the cleaning rugs are washed and the supervisors told me that all dirty mops and rugs are taken once a week to the laundry.

Most indoor wet wiping and dusting is done using static mops, dusters and disposable linens. Enough floor mops are provided to ensure that the frequency of use is limited to one mop per every cleaning session per space. E.g. if a house has two bedrooms, one mop should be used for the two rooms, and another for the sitting room, kitchen, and other spaces excluding the toilets. Toilet floors are cleaned with disposable linens. This is because there is a tendency of human waste such as urine, on the floor surface. That raises the issue why in some instances, the mops were dirty. The only explanation can be attributed to the fact that the cleaners did not rotate the mops and only used a single mop over and over again.

The question of keeping the storage room clean was also the responsibility of the employee. Failure in keeping the storage rooms clean, neat and tidy was totally out of neglect or ignorance. There are two supervisors who also work full-time in Uusi Era and 20 storages. I observed that the supervisors had no time to make the rounds to all the

storages in one week. That meant that monitoring the storage spaces needed at least two weeks. In that time it is not surprising to find that neglect of materials can lead to dirt and smells.

## **9. DISCUSSIONS**

### **9.1 Improving quality in the cleaning service**

Quality starts with the organization. In Uusi Era, the workers were very clean. They observed personal hygiene very well. That is because the company is small and it is possible for supervisors to engage the workers on frequent occasions. Most work is done in pairs depending on the space to be cleaned, and during the training programme the workers are constantly reminded of personal hygiene as very important. If you are clean, then you can clean. Cleanliness begins with the individual.

Uusi Era uses a daily cleaning employee time schedule list (Appendix 5) to monitor the employees' attendance. An employee must sign the paper on a daily basis. It is not unusual to find cleaning company employees requesting their counterparts to perform cleaning work on their behalf when they need to take off. In the case where students are the majority of the workers, during exam periods, this is a very common habit.

In order to monitor the performance and maintain the quality it is important to follow up on who did what and when and how they did it. It is also a must that the cleaning programme/manual (Appendix 6) be available in the storage room. The programme helps remind the employee of the cleaning tasks that should be performed. It also guides the customers as to how the cleaning tasks have been defined. It is necessary also in times of emergencies and a replacement is required to perform the tasks, then they can follow the programme.

Quality control is a process that demands both the company's management and workers and the customers of the cleaning service be in contact at all times when need be in order

to evaluate the cleaning process and how best to improve it. It works in both ways from the company's cleaning policy to the customer's cleaning needs or requirements.

### **9.1.1 The cleaning service role or procedure**

The cleaning service role can be defined as the process that contributes towards the end product of quality cleaning. Cleaning companies have the obligation of developing guidelines and standards that conform towards providing better cleaning services at all times. The process should be continuous and proactive measures used as the theme for developing continuous and better cleaning quality. The cleaning service role includes

- A. The cleaning plan or programme**
- B. The cleaning procedure**
- C. Materials and methods**
- D. Quality control (Continuous Inspection)**

### **9.1.2 The cleaning plan/programme**

The cleaning programme (Appendix 6) is the product upkeep of the cleaning specification. This is the agreement that the customer and the cleaning company enter into when they first make a contract. It is a description of the work to be done which acts as the master plan for maintaining the quality specification in a reasonable or efficient manner. The plan is also available in competitive bidding so that companies are aware of the cleaning requirements before submitting their offers. The cleaning plan specifies areas that are to be cleaned and the frequency of cleaning. The planning will in most cases include cleaning tasks such as

- Daily or weekly cleaning
- Dusting and wiping of batteries once every month



- Periodic facility maintenance cleaning for example, window cleaning once a year at every beginning of the summer, floor refurbishing twice a year every six months etc.
- In some cases, time specifications are included in order to facilitate the use of a substitute when emergencies occur.

Care should be taken when writing down the plan as there is a need to create a balance that does not result in tension between the quality supplied and the subjective assessment by users of the building. Agreed tolerance margins should be noted in any case where complaints are raised and the plan put into question.

Cleaning demands for the customer should not seem to exaggerate the quality and cost expected for the cleaning work. In Uusi Era, the plan is in most cases subjected to scrutiny and discussion with the customer over a period of time to determine if changes are necessary in the original cleaning plan and whether some cleaning demands need a more detailed cleaning specification than originally requested.

The cleaning plan should also contain the cleaning manual. A cleaning manual (Appendix 8) should have a purpose and include goals. Cleaning is a group effort or team work that should assign responsibility to all users of a facility. The cleaning manual **MUST** contain:

- Hygiene regulations
- Cleaning techniques
- Safety regulations.

The cleaning manual is a guideline for the cleaning work and should be made available even to customers so as they are aware of the cleaning process.

### **9.1.3 The cleaning procedure**

The cleaning procedure will in most cases be the task of the company management that has developed as part of the company culture over a period of time, and will include the process that the company has educated or trained its workers to perform the specific cleaning assignments or tasks. Nowadays, many cleaning companies prefer to tailor the cleaning services with the customer's desires as the guiding tools. Some customers may prefer, due to health reasons, certain soaps and cleaning methods. Others may prefer that the cleaning company uses their own equipment for example vacuums, mops, soaps etc.

In Uusi Era, there has been a recorded case whereby a home cleaner has expressed that her home Arabian carpets should be taken outside in winter, placed on the ground and covered with snow for an hour before they were brushed then hanged on the carpet rail for bonnet buffing. This is not unusual.

Customers will always have a certain way of want to express their interests in the cleaning process. However, exaggerated expectations which might pose danger and damage to the facility and stress to equipment or materials should be limited and discouraged as they result to the overall increase in the cost of the cleaning or maintenance and the diminishing quality equals the risk of running down the facility, equipments and materials.

Uusi Era uses the below step by step model of a simple quality geared procedure for any small facility cleaning (home) in the following order:

- a. In the event where carpets are in the home, they must first be vacuumed, then removed and hanged outdoors on the carpet rail for buffing. Carpets are great carriers of dust, and one of the most important aims of cleaning is to eliminate the presence of indoor dust. In the event the weather is extremely cold and poses a threat to the worker, then vacuuming is allowed to be done indoors. The carpets are then rolled and set aside to allow room for the floor cleaning. Vacuums used

- are industrial, non-smelling and clean. They must differentiate the use where there are pets and where there are no pets because of smells and allergies.
- b. Wiping of surface dust with a moist disposable linen or cloth in all areas the customer has requested is next. Disposable wipes are required to maintain high hygiene levels. Where disposable wipes are not present, then colour coded micro fiber cloth is used. Red stands for use only in toilets, toilet sinks and bathrooms, green is only for use in kitchens while blue is only used in all other areas.
  - c. Cleaning and disinfecting of sinks, toilets, bathrooms and sauna follows. In the sauna cold water and recommended disinfectant is used to avoid build up of bacteria. Again, disposable wipes are used for hygiene purposes.
  - d. Garbage is then removed and all garbage disposed accordingly. Bio waste belongs to the bio garbage bin, cans and metals to the recycling bin, and dry household waste into the dry waste bin. Garbage bags are distinguished according to colour. Blue bags are only used in toilets and baths, white bags in all other areas.
  - e. Finally, floors are then vacuumed and cleaned appropriately with the recommended cleaning mop and chemical detergent depending on the type of the floor and customer request.
  - f. The work is then declared complete when the carpets are returned indoors, to a dry clean floor and every aspect of the work counterchecked by the cleaner in case of any errors. In this case, any complaint arising from the facility demands an explanation from the worker.

In Uusi Era, all cleaning materials are purchased in certified recognized cleaning materials and detergents merchants in Finland. New soaps, materials and machines are introduced to workers and details of usage explained and demonstrated. In most cases, workers perform their tasks in teams of two. The company's historical cleaning

background has found it necessary to pair workers in the same job if the tasks demanded and the time allocated can be shared equally and benefit the two. Two is better than one is the philosophy when it comes to cleaning work. The overall quality is improved as the pair shares opinions and challenges. The pair has also been empowered to certify its own quality as per company requirements. That way responsibilities of poor performances lie on their shoulders.

#### **9.1.4 Materials and methods**

Materials and methods include all form of tools and application methods that are used when facilitating cleaning. In cleaning all service deliveries are performed using cleaning tools. Tools and methods of applications are very important in the cleaning work.

Workers should be familiar with their use, safety and application. A degree of learning and understanding the use of equipment is very important in that cleaners often handle chemicals which can be hazardous to their health and to the customer, and, if not carefully applied and administered, overall damage will show to humans, the facility and the environment.

Indoor cleaning tools may include;

- a. Cleaning equipments: cleaning rugs, disposable linen, brushes and mops, squeegees, trolleys and ladders, scrubbers and washers, vacuums etc.
- b. Cleaning agents are mainly water, chemical agents, detergents, acids etc.
- c. Electrical equipment: floor cleaning machines, waxing machines, buffers etc.

In order for cleaning companies to maintain a successful quality maintenance plan, the correct care, use and safety and storage of the tools is essential. Unless the tools are in proper working condition and are reliable, the results can be attributed to safety hazards and a diversion in the cleaning programmes. A diversion in the cleaning programme results in delays and complaints which contribute to quality failure. As mentioned Uusi Era out sources the technical part of maintaining the machines. Outsourcing the service

means that liability of blame is shifted to an outsider. In return, it is the responsibility of the technical maintenance team to guarantee the equipment is in perfect working condition.

### **9.1.5 Quality control**

Quality control must be a continuous process of inspection of the facility working environment that should focus on the following: the working programme is being carried out well, the necessary activities are being carried out properly, the frequency listed in the cleaning programme is being met and the methods applied are the right ones. The four aspects of quality; technical, functional, aesthetic and process quality should be the focus of the company in ensuring that the quality goals are met. In Uusi Era, a customer opinion and satisfaction survey questionnaire should be sent out every three months to all customers so that the feedback can be used to improve the cleaning service.

Uusi Era does not employ any laboratory tests to measure the amount of indoor dust in facilities in case of any complains. Visual inspection and white linen or glove system are the only methods applied to determine the cleanliness of the facility. White linen or a white glove is used to wipe surfaces and the results counterchecked against dust or dirt used. Quality inspections are carried out periodically each three months and also when complaints are reported. The quality control checklist (Appendix 7) is used to measure the level of the required cleanliness.

I felt that it is important to carry out laboratory tests occasionally so that they can also be used to improve the cleaning. However, Uusi Era does not participate in contracts that demand periodic laboratory test analysis. This is because the company is small and does not offer ventilation cleaning services. Various factors influence the overall results of the indoor dust laboratory tests. For example, if ventilation systems are not properly maintained, indoor dust cannot be controlled effectively. Also, the company management thinks that the tests are expensive to run. The customer can, however, do the tests by their

own accord and if cleaning is a major factor that contributes to the dirt, then the company takes the necessary steps to correct the situation.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

To conclude, cleaning companies must focus on providing quality to customers. Maintaining customers determine the overall success for staying in business. In today's world, tastes are changing and demands to fulfill customer cleaning needs have become an important aspect of the home and more, the business world. A failure to implement quality cleaning services is a failure to promote the well-being of the facility, the customers and the environment as a whole.

### **10.1 The plan**

The plan is to embrace and adapt the four aspects of cleaning quality; technical, functional, aesthetic and process quality in order to deliver quality demanded by the customers in the cleaning industry. This quality in return should be tailored to meet the cleaning specifications acceptable by both parties in order to sustain a balance between perceived quality versus actual quality.

Management demands for cleaning companies should, both old and new players in the industry, adapt to quality management techniques e.g. quality awareness and quality control and inspection in order to guarantee quality cleaning results. To adapt the processes requires time, and it costs, but, once adapted, the continuity for results can only be hampered by a lack of motivation from the management and employees.

Measurement systems must also be put into place so that there is a level of commitment in the quality performance. The whole process of quality control is a learning venture for everyone involved in the service. All applications that will bear fruit to the service must be implemented. That means the total quality management, INSTA 800 and IT Clean should be considered for application.

Deming's fourteen point's theory is a step towards managerial goals in implementing a long-lasting quality culture in the organization. That culture in turn, reflects on the quality results of the cleaning service. One aspect that should be laid emphasis on is the employees. The employees are the backbone of the organization.

In Uusi Era, employee appraisals include free boat trips to Sweden, free concert tickets to Pori Jazz, Christmas wine and chocolate gifts, etc. This motivating factors help to improve performance levels in the work force. Alternatively, Uusi Era sends out Christmas chocolate and other gifts to the customers. This is a show of appreciation for the relationship that they share. The customer is the biggest asset in financial terms to any organization. These gestures no matter how small they are can alleviate some former problems in the service signifying new beginnings.

## 10.2 The future

It is important that future cleaning quality demands are met by technologies that should accommodate them. Future cleaning needs will be comparatively different compared to those of today. Quality control measures must also meet the demands and challenges for the future cleaning. The fact is that the foundations necessary have been laid down. The way forward is to develop the systems so as to adapt.

The **INSTA 800** and **IT Clean solutions** are practical solutions paving the way forward for these kinds of developments. Theoretical solutions that have been developed act as guidelines for the organization so that it can position itself to provide quality cleaning services. Factors that affect our inside environment are the cause of continuous research and development for cleaner and better solutions.

**INSTA 800** for instance, takes into consideration ergonomics as the welfare of the cleaners need. Cleaning is a service delivery that mostly utilizes manpower to be effective. It demands long hours standing. By law, workers should work in short intervals

and then take short breaks. In competitive bidding, the demands are such that workers may lose this kind of comfort.

Where worker concerns are questionable, ergonomics must be emphasized. The use of ergonomically friendly footwear that enables the support of human weight for long periods of time, the use of adjustable mops that consider different human heights and adjustable vacuum/suction head poles are some of the factors that could increase the workers' performance.

The choice of material and equipments determine and enable how effectively the cleaning tasks will be carried out. Poor choices will lead to poor performances. Ergonomically conscious choices will outperform the former. The same applies to soaps and chemicals. Allergies and damage to the environment are some of the awareness issues that take into consideration the use of eco-friendly choices.

**IT Clean system** is a perfect model for monitoring future quality control procedures. Not only are the workers trained on site, the data collected aims at improving the cleaning delivery objectives. Some might argue that it takes away the employee rights since one's presence in the facility is constantly monitored. However, cleaning is perfected with less time being utilized in areas with less frequency of use while the most time is allocated where high priority attention is expected.

Other factors which have been considered by Uusi Era include, allocating certain tasks to "privileged" workers which has been and continues to be questioned or debated. Tailoring the job to the worker e.g. in window cleaning tasks, tall workers are preferred because they have easy access to cleaning windows which are generally high in location, versus chair or carpet cleaning tasks where shorter people have the advantage.

In the research process, I made it a point to be a learner as well as a doer. Using the knowledge that I had acquired at the university and the experience I had accumulated



over the years in cleaning work, I can only conclude that the future of cleaning lays in the quality control.

In the case study, the results indicate that the overall frequency of complaints versus the number of cleaning jobs that Uusi Era performs on a daily basis does not qualify the company as a non-provider of quality services. There were only four complaints against a dozen and more jobs performed on a daily routine over a six-month research period. It is typical for all cleaning companies to face these kinds of problems.

Quality cannot be guaranteed 100%. However, these problems should act as warning signs for future problems and solutions. Cleaning companies should view quality problems now as solutions for the future and use the difficulties exposed as stepping stones to solving and adapting new ways to improve the delivery of quality cleaning services.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1. Questionnaire interview with Uusi Era Siivous CEO**

I am currently in the process of writing my thesis on quality in cleaning services. My thesis topic is “how to effectively implement quality control procedures in Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu”. I am interested in your objective opinion as an employee of Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu on the subject mentioned based on the questions provided. Your contributed answers will undoubtedly play a significant role in the completion of the thesis and also be used to identify solutions towards providing quality cleaning services for the customers. All the information you provide is voluntary and confidential, and, cannot be used to affect any of your roles in the company. I thank you for your cooperation.

#### **CEO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

##### **Quality**

1. What is your definition of quality?
2. Does the company have an existing training/cleaning manual?
3. Explain the company’s training program?
4. Does the company have an existing quality control plan?
5. How does Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu perceive quality (control)?
6. Are you aware or familiar with any quality control measuring systems?
7. Do you use any measuring systems to monitor quality?

8. What process do you employ in order to achieve uniform required quality to the customer?
9. What strategy do you or the company apply when it comes to implementing quality control procedures?
10. What difficulties do you or have you encountered when implementing quality control?
11. In the event when customers are unsatisfied or complain, what steps do you take?

What are the company's future goals?

### **Employees**

12. What criteria do you use when hiring employees?
13. What kind of program(s) does the company implement for employees to enhance productivity?
14. Are your employees aware of the company's training/cleaning manual?
15. Are your employees aware of the company's quality control procedure?
16. How do you encourage employees do develop good quality?
17. Are your customers satisfied with the company's cleaning service delivery?

**Appendix 2. Employee job satisfaction survey questionnaire.**

Age

Gender

Level of education

How long have you been working for Uusi Era?

**QUALITY**

1. Are you aware of any existing Uusi Era Siivous training cleaning manual?

**YES**                       **NO**

2. Are you aware of any existing Uusi Era Siivous quality control manual?

**YES**                       **NO**

3. Do you feel that you are given authority/chance to determine and develop the quality of your work?

**YES**                       **NO**

4. What does quality mean to you? Explain.

5. Do you think that you contribute positively towards the goals and the overall image of the company?

**YES**                       **NO**

6. Is their adequate communication between the management and you, as the employee?

**YES**  **NO**

7. Are your ideas/suggestions on how to improve/better the work implemented by the company?

**YES**  **NO**

8. Do you receive any feedback for the progress of your work?

**YES**  **NO**

## **B. MANAGEMENT**

1. Do you have confidence in the company's leadership and management?

**YES**  **NO**

2. Does the management recognize your personal contribution?

**YES**  **NO**

3. Does the management recognize your personal problems?

**YES**  **NO**

4. Have you ever enjoyed any benefits from the company?

**YES**       **NO**

**Explain the benefits**

5. Are you satisfied with the current work training programme?

**YES**       **NO**

6. Are you satisfied with the working conditions?

**YES**       **NO**

7. Are you satisfied with your work?

**YES**       **NO**

8. If you are a good worker, do you think you stand to get promoted or earn more money?

**YES**       **NO**

**Explain the reason**

**C. EMPLOYEES ROLE**

1. Do you believe in teamwork?

**YES**       **NO**



2. Are you a team player?

YES  NO

3. Are you satisfied with the materials and equipment offered in order to do your job well?

YES  NO

4. Is your workload reasonable?

YES  NO

5. Is there a balance between your workload and your personal life?

YES  NO

6. Do you like working for Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu?

YES  NO

**Explain why**

7. Would you recommend the company for employment to any one you know?

YES  NO

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

What can Uusi Era Siivous Palvelu do to increase your job satisfaction as an employee?



## Appendix 4. Customer opinion and satisfaction survey questionnaire



**Uusi Era Siivouspalvelu, PL, 15, 33201 Tampere, Finland.**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Date:**

**NOTE: CIRCLE APPROPRIATELY AS APPLIES TO THE CLEANING AGREEMENT AND YOUR CURRENT CLEANING NEEDS.**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Poor</b>		
<b>How would you rate our Staff:</b>					
Front desk	5	4	3	2	1
Managers/Supervisors	5	4	3	2	1
In door cleaners	5	4	3	2	1
Home cleaning	5	4	3	2	1
Emergency response team	5	4	3	2	1
<b>How would you rate our Services:</b>					
Front desk service	5	4	3	2	1
Managers/Supervisors service	5	4	3	2	1
Indoor cleaning service	5	4	3	2	1

Home cleaning service	5	4	3	2	1
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Emergency response team service	5	4	3	2	1
---------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

**How would you rate:**

Kitchen cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Bathroom cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Bedroom cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---

All other rooms	5	4	3	2	1
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---

**How would you rate:**

Office cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Toilet cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
--------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Bathroom cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
----------------------	---	---	---	---	---

Storage room/s cleanliness	5	4	3	2	1
----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---

All other rooms	5	4	3	2	1
-----------------	---	---	---	---	---

<b>1. Overall, how would you rate the cleaning?</b>	5	4	3	2	1
---	---	---	---	---	---

7. What changes would you recommend necessary in order for us to improve the quality of the cleaning service, OR any other comments.

SIGNATURE.

DATE.

---

**Appendix 5. Employee work and time tracking schedule list****UUSI ERA EMPLOYEE WORK TRACKING SCHEDULE LIST**

Paiva	Siivooja Nimi	Allekirjoitus	Kommentti
(Date)	(Cleaner's Name)	(Signature)	(Comments)

## Appendix 6. Example of a cleaning programme/plan

**Uusi Era Palvelu**

**SIIVOUSTYÖOHJELMA**

**05.11.2003**

**Customer**

As Oy

**Work address**

**Jaakonmäenkatu 90**

**Job**

**Porras- ja yleiset tilat**

**How many times**

1 x week

### **STAIRS**

#### **Once a week cleaning jobs:**

- Stain removing from the outside doors and glasses
- Door carpets cleaning or vacuuming
- Stairs and stair rails wet wiping
- Spot cleaning by removing stain from the walls and inner doors
- Dust wiping from the stairs rail 1 x week
- Stairs light waxing 3 x year

### **GENERAL AREAS**

- Once a week cleaning:
- Basement halls wet wiping

#### **Once a week cleaning:**

- Attic areas storage cleaning
- Outing clothes storage cleaning

### **SAUNA AND BATHROOM AREAS:**

#### **Once a week cleaning:**

- Sauna basic cleaning and disinfecting
- Bathroom floors and walls, brushed, cleaned and disinfected
- Taps and mirrors cleaned and wiped clean.

### Appendix 7. Uusi Era Quality control checklist

Asiakas:	Päiväys:
Yhdyseshenkilö:	Puhelin:

Ylläpitosiivouksen laatu	Kiitettävä	Hyvä	Tyydyttävä	Heikko
Lattioden siisteys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tasapintojen siisteys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ovien, peilien ja välilasiens siisteys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roskakorien siisteys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Huonekalujen siisteys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Astioden puhtaus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WC-tilojen siisteys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Tilastöiden laatu</b>				
Lattioden vahaukset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ikkunoiden pesut	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WC-suursiivous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Muu tilaustyö	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Kokonaisvaikutelma palvelusta</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Muu palaute:</b> .....				
.....				
.....				

#### Allekirjoitukset:

.....	.....
Asikas	Uusi Era Siivouspalvelu

## **Appendix 8. Basic example of a cleaning manual.**

### **A BASIC EXAMPLE MODEL OF A CLEANING MANUAL**

**Adopted from the Health and Safety executive SR 4 COSHH essentials for service and retail. Manual cleaning and disinfecting surfaces.**

**Hand hygiene is the single most effective method of preventing cross infection - always wash your hands or use an alcohol gel prior to entering and on leaving the room/area.**

A cleaning manual should have a purpose and include goals. Cleaning is a group effort or team work that should assign responsibility to all users of a facility. The cleaning manual MUST contain:

- Hygiene regulations
- Cleaning techniques
- Safety regulations.

This information is meant to help employers (including the self-employed and franchisees) comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to control exposure and protect workers' health. It is also useful for trade union safety representatives.

This sheet describes good practice using personal protective equipment (PPE). It covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level. It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures. Disinfectants are biocidal products. Authorized products are safe for use so long as you follow the instructions on the label. Some chemicals can be flammable, so your controls must suit those hazards too. Look at the safety data sheet for more information.



## **Main points**

- ✓ **Can you get the products ‘ready for use’?**
- ✓ **Avoid or minimize skin contact with chemicals.**
- ✓ **Check that all the controls are being used properly.**

**Consider substituting with safer products.**

## **Access and premises**

- Mark any pedestrian routes that can become slippery when wet.
- Provide good washing facilities.

## **Equipment**

- Do you need colour-coded cloths, mops and buckets to minimize cross-contamination?
- Provide protective gloves.
- Remove heavy dirt deposits first.

**Caution: Never decant concentrate into an unlabelled container. Never re-use a concentrate container - dispose of it safely or return it to your supplier. Don’t store more than 50 litres of flammable liquid indoors - use a flammable store.**

## **Personal protective equipment (PPE)**

- Follow the instructions on product labels.
- Ask your supplier to help you choose the right PPE.
- Provide protective gloves - single-use gloves are acceptable. If you must use latex gloves, use only ‘low-protein, powder-free’ gloves.
- Throw away single-use gloves every time they are taken off.
- Provide waterproof, slip-resistant footwear.
- Skin creams are important for skin condition. They help in washing contamination from the skin. After work creams help to replace skin oils.

**Caution: 'barrier creams' do not make a full barrier.**

### **Procedures**

- Store products securely in a cool, dry, dark place, capable of keeping in spills. Don't store far more than you need.
- Ensure that workers follow the instructions for use by reading the label, and make up solutions for immediate use only.
- Put the cap back on the container immediately.
- Keep products off your skin. Workers should wash off any splashes and avoid contact with surfaces until they are dry.

### **Special care**

- Contact with many products can lead to dermatitis. Some can also damage the eyes.
- Some products may cause asthma - check the safety data sheet.
- Take special care using caustic soda (sodium hydroxide). Splashes in the eye can cause blindness.
- Never add any other chemical to concentrates that contain bleach (sodium hypochlorite solution). This can cause a dangerous gas (chlorine) to be given off.

### **Health monitoring**

- Ask your workers to check their skin for dryness or soreness every month.
- If you use a product labeled 'may cause sensitization by skin contact' or 'may cause sensitization by inhalation', seek specialist advice - see 'Useful links'.

### **Cleaning and housekeeping**

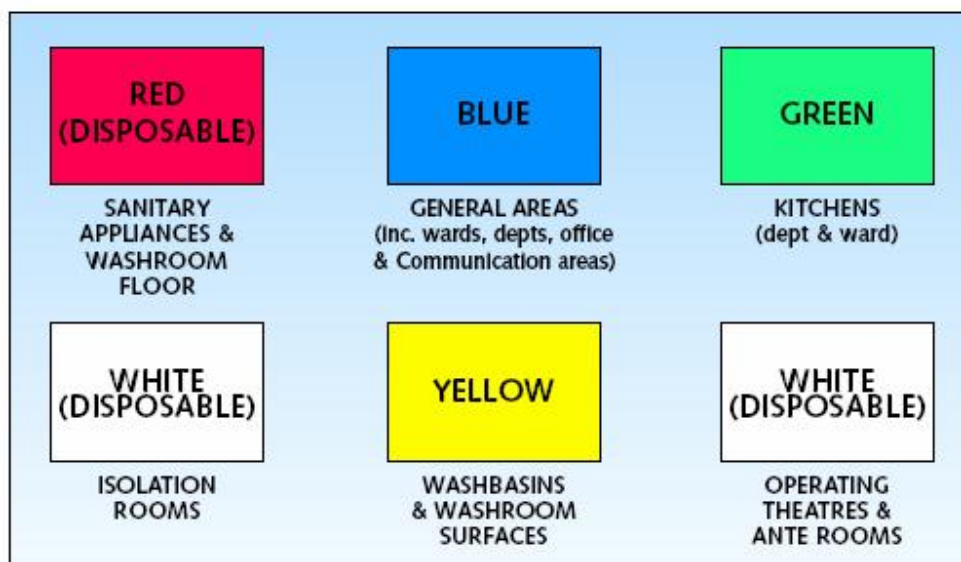
- Wash out the equipment after use. Dispose of the waste liquid safely.
- Clean up spills promptly - practice how to do this.

## Training and supervision

- Tell workers about the risks of using the product - see products labels or Section 15 of the safety data sheet.
- Working in the right way and using the controls correctly is important for exposure control. Train and supervise workers. See sheet SR0.

## Colour Code for Hygiene

Based on the National Colour-Coding System for the British Institute of Cleaning Science



**THE GOLDEN RULE: WORK FROM THE CLEANEST AREA TOWARD THE DIRTIEST AREA. THIS GREATLY REDUCES THE RISK OF CROSS CONTAMINATION.**

1. The aim of a colour coding system is to prevent cross contamination.
2. It is vital that such a system forms part of any employee induction or continuous training programme.

3. A minority of people are colour blind in one or more colours. Some individuals may not know this and colour identification testing should form part of any induction training.
4. Always use two colours within the washroom/sanitary area.
5. The colour-coding system must relate to all cleaning equipment, cloths and gloves  
Monitoring of the system and control of colour-coded disposable items against new stock release is extremely important.

### **Further information**

*Assessing and managing risks at work from skin exposure to chemical agents: Guidance for employers and health and safety specialists* HSG205 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 1826 9

*Preventing dermatitis at work: Advice for employers and employees* Leaflet INDG233 HSE Books 1996 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1246 5)

Posters on protective gloves and skin care – see [www.hse.gov.uk/skin/information.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin/information.htm)