



office cleaning specialists

# 10 mistakes you must avoid

when choosing an  
Office Cleaning  
Contractor



## Not asking for references

Most people would agree that a list of referees is a good indication that you're dealing with a safe company. Past and current customers will tell you exactly what to expect from a cleaning service provider.

**How long have you used their cleaning service?**

**Did their cleaning measure up to your expectations?**

**Have they maintained their cleaning standard over time or has their standard deteriorated?**

**What made you decide to choose and stay with them?**

**How quick are they to respond to any issues?**

These questions will give you a very good idea of the level of service you can expect from them. Be wary of cleaning companies that are reluctant to share more than one client referral or who will only share recent client referrals.

ask:

## Paying too much or too little

*I'm about to reveal the pricing secrets of the cleaning industry known only to industry insiders.*

No one wants to pay more than they have to for cleaning services. However choosing the lowest price could mean taking on a lot more risk than you bargained for. Like any industry there are those willing to cut corners and ignore the law just to get a quick buck. Low prices should alert you to the following rogue practices



### Sham contracting

This is the practice of winning contracts and then subcontracting the work out to contractors who are essentially employees and often at pay well below industry award rates. In fact, if that cleaning company comes under the scrutiny of Fair Work Australia, you may also be fined and prosecuted.

### Vague about cleaning specifications

By being vague, they can tell you later that things that you thought were included in the quote, are actually extra.

### Bait and Switch

A low price gets the cleaning company in the door. When you realize that the service offered is too basic and not enough for your building, the cleaning company offers a higher price for a higher level of service.

### Quality Free fall

You are very happy for the first few months, and then quality and service drop significantly. The cleaning company is starting to cut labour in order not to lose money cleaning your office.

## Paying too much or too little (*cont'd*)

### The solution:

Ask the cleaning company to break down their costs and estimate the number of hours required to do the job. You'll want to see included:

- Estimated hours per month
- Staff wages
- Associated staff costs such as Workcover, superannuation, sick leave etc.
- Insurances
- Equipment maintenance and supplies
- Management and training expenses including OH&S expenses
- Profit

Not only will you see exactly what you're getting for your money, by getting this information from the contractor you can prove to any third party such as Fair Work Australia that you took all reasonable care to ensure you engaged a contractor who had made an allowance to pay their staff fairly and perform their job safely.

### Pricing Secrets

As a general rule, it takes approximately 1 hour to clean every 200m<sup>2</sup> of office space when cleaned 5 days a week. Cleaning times will vary obviously according to what needs cleaning, the cleaning specifications and the cleaning frequency. As of writing current award rates for permanent part time office cleaners are above \$22 per hour for cleaning performed weekdays between 4pm and midnight. After all other costs are added, it will normally cost \$27- 30 per hour for a cleaning company to service your building legally. A reasonable gross profit margin for a cleaning business is 10- 20%. This means a cleaning company that quotes below \$28/hour is very likely cutting corners. A \$30- 40 range is an acceptable price in the industry.

Bear in mind that if your office is small or only requires a weekly or fortnightly service, such detail is not normally necessary and your rates will generally be higher than a larger office that requires daily cleaning. Even in this case, it's always good to ask them how much time they estimate the cleaning to take.

## Finding out about their quality control (or lack thereof) after you hired them

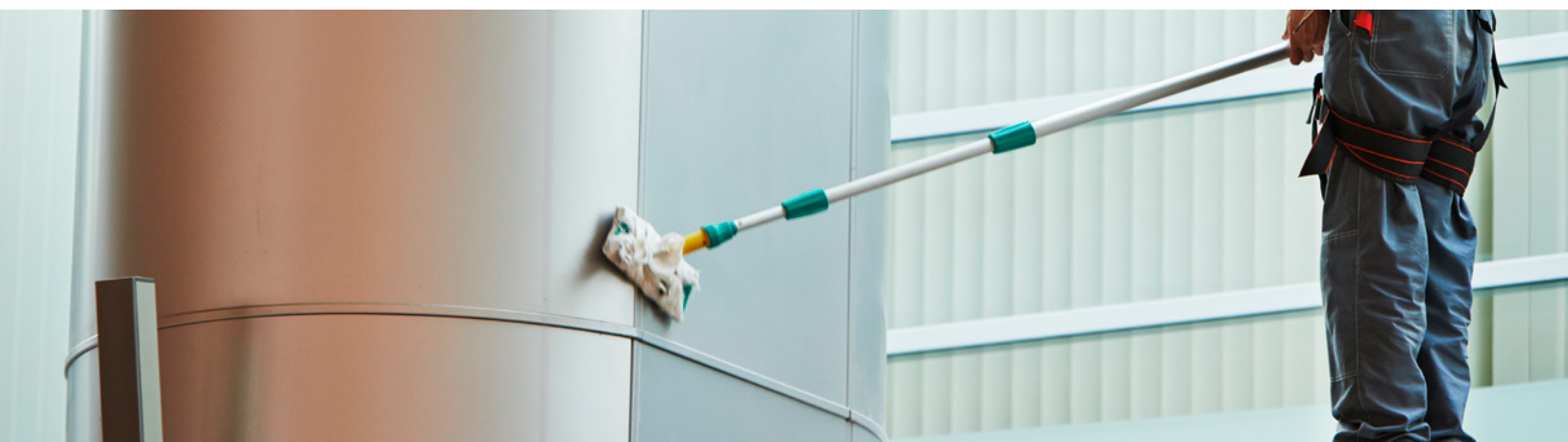
If a cleaning company promises to keep standards high, ask them how. If they answer they only hire the best cleaners, be worried! Cleaning is not a rare and highly specialized skill that requires years of study and training.

Beware of companies that rely **entirely** on finding detail orientated, hard working, and experienced staff to keep quality high. These people do exist, but they cannot be relied on as the sole means of keeping quality high. They will have a hard time maintaining consistency, as quality will rely entirely on each individual cleaner. **Systems and processes are much more important** in ensuring consistent high quality cleaning. The following are essential

- A detailed Training and Induction Program
- Checklists
- Site audits and reporting
- A communication strategy
- Tools and Technology to keep cleaners accountable and on top of their jobs.

Learn how they make sure cleaners complete all scheduled tasks. Ask how communication will happen between you, the cleaners and management. How often are inspections carried out and how is the cleaning assessed and monitored?

Mobile technology is radically changing industry practices. It is now possible to be notified in real time of the arrival and departure of your cleaning crew and to receive a cleaning report with photos of that evening's clean. Ask us how our customized mobile app - Janiflow can keep your cleaners accountable. As a special thank you for reading this we can arrange for your cleaners to have access to this technology for your office for free. Contact us on 1300 787 745 and mention this eBook



mistake

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## Learning too late that they have no OH&S policies or SWMS in place

*Are you aware that current legislation requires you to have at your office Material Safety Data Sheets of all cleaning chemicals used or stored in your office?*

*Are you also aware that it is a legal requirement that a cleaning company have a Safe Work Method Statement and have active OH&S policies in place?*

Should an accident or incident occur without these in place not only will the cleaning company face severe penalties, but it is possible that the customer could share some responsibility if there is no evidence the customer sought information about their OH&S procedures. Needless to say this could prove catastrophic for a business in the case of a serious injury.

It's definitely in your interest to ask to see copies of all MSDS and their SWMS.





## Wondering if any of their staff get trained properly

Cleaning may not be rocket science, but there are definitely right ways and wrong ways to clean. But it's not just cleaning that's important. Locking up, key handling, storage of chemicals and onsite behavior all require staff training. An operations or training manual is essential.

You'll want to see that a manual has easy step- by- step procedures for all tasks. Find out how the cleaners are assessed as competent. At the Urban Clean academy we show new cleaners how to clean following the step- by- step procedures in the manual. They perform cleaning tasks in front of trainers and they get feedback until they follow the steps perfectly themselves. Trainers then sign off on successfully completed cleaning tasks.

Trainees successfully complete each tasks unassisted 7 times. The repetition ensures they really get it. This is normally a two- week intensive training program. Our cleaners also get the opportunity of advancing their skills and knowledge by completing a certificate III in Cleaning Operations.



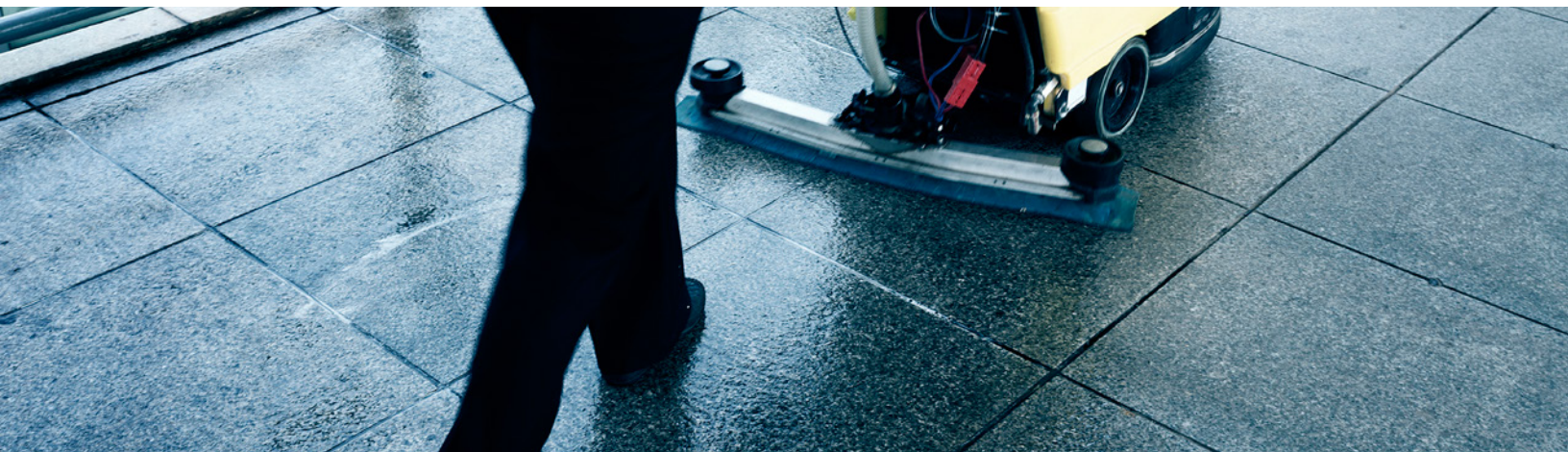
## Finding out that their guarantees are non-existent or useless

As a consumer you are protected by Australian Consumer Law. This means it's your right to demand rectification or refund if the job was performed poorly and incompetently. It makes sense then for a cleaning company to be transparent about offering a guarantee. The law forces them in any case.

However not all companies know this fact and some will even argue with you should you complain and ask for something to get fixed. Avoid these cleaning companies.

Cleaning companies can also offer guarantees that go beyond statutory requirements. That's a good thing. Just be sure to check with them what they would do if a guarantee was ever called on.

Make sure their guarantees aren't just promises. For instance *"We guarantee you'll be 100% happy with our service"* is not really a guarantee just a promise. Whereas *"If you're not 100% clean with your clean, let us know and we'll fix it at no cost to you within 24hrs"* has consequences for the cleaning company if they don't meet your standards. So has this powerful guarantee *"Should you ever leave us because you were dissatisfied with the quality of our cleaning, we'll pay for the first two week of your new cleaning service"*.





## Getting calls from staff working late wondering if the people who seem to be cleaning are the real cleaners or not

You show cleaning companies incredible trust when you hand over keys and alarm codes to cleaners. An essential part of security is knowing who is in your office at any time. That's why it's so important that there's no mistaking who the cleaning staff are. Nothing could be more worrying for your staff working late than seeing some people walk around their office who they've never seen before and can't identify.

Your staff should not have to guess by what they're doing as to who they are. It should be obvious by their uniform that they are the cleaners.



## Being told by your cleaning company that they lost the keys which have your address written on them



Some questions you should ask about the cleaning companies security procedures during an interview is:

- ***How do they identify keys*** (make sure that the keys are identifiable only by numbers or code that cannot make your office identifiable)
- ***Where do they place keys when not cleaning your office*** (make sure that they are not left in vehicles overnight and are place somewhere securely)
- ***How do they make sure doors are locked*** (a reminder system helps as do checklists)

## Handing over keys to criminals

You wouldn't want to give your keys over to criminals so ask your cleaning company how they vet their staff. A police check is the very minimum. Character checks are good. Cleaners are generally very honest since their livelihoods depend on it, but no one needs to take chances.

Lastly, find out if the cleaning company has a policy about the confidentiality of client information. If there is none, there may be ambiguity among cleaning staff about what can or cannot be discussed or looked at. Your business might be at risk of having confidential information inadvertently divulged.

A professional cleaning company should make it very clear that anything seen or heard at a clients premise is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone.



**CONFIDENTIAL**

## Thinking your boss' housecleaner would do just the same job as a professional office cleaner



If you have a small office you might be tempted to get someone's auntie who does a bit of cleaning to service your office. This might work all right for you and there's a good chance you'll pay a lot less than a professional office cleaning service. This could also be a big mistake for all the reasons so far mentioned.

Not only will a professional office cleaning service know how to keep a workplace hygienic and clean, you'll also have peace of mind knowing that you're covered in the event of anything going wrong. A professional service will have OH&S procedures, professional communication, proper insurances, uniforms and quality control procedures that ensure the job is done well and your business stays safe.



If you are looking for a cleaning company that ticks all the boxes, contact **Urban Clean** on

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**1300 787 745**

**FOR A NO OBLIGATION  
CLEANING ASSESSMENT**

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OR EMAIL US AT

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