Cleaning

Custodial and cleaning service seems to be one of the most often contracted services used by many companies. Why do you suppose it is? Well, maybe because a lot of the cleaning is done after hours, when most people have gone home. If you have workers, you probably have to have a supervisor working. Is there sufficient work for the supervisor to do? Maybe not. So what do you do with him for the rest of the time? However, with a contracted cleaning force, staffing and hours worked are not an issue. If you need extra work periodically (waxing floors, shampooing carpets, etc.) the contractor can bring in whatever manpower is needed. If there are problems, you don't need to worry about HR issues, you only have to deal with the company's contact to resolve the problems.

But what if you are a production shop with lots of square footage that needs to be kept clean? Who does that? Do the operators clean, sweep and pickup after themselves, or is their time better served by doing productive work? If not the operator, who cleans up the leftover "stuff", another employee or a contract worker? And what about the common areas? There is always the discussion about "ownership", that people who "live" there (employees) tend to take better care of a facility than someone who just comes in as a contractor and has no vested interest. One could argue about familiarity with a facility, about the cleaning personnel knowing the layout, operations, and operators, whereas a contractor just sees work.

Does contracted cleaning save money? It probably does, or at least maybe. Besides the personnel issues discussed earlier, the company would not need to stock large quantities of cleaning chemicals, supplies, and special equipment the way a cleaning contractor would. Thus it could even save space. Does it save time? Probably not significantly, if you have trained custodial/cleaning personnel on staff. So should a company contract the cleaning services? That would be a resounding, maybe. Once again, all of the identifiable factors would have to be evaluated, then tempered with the non-scientific "gut factor" and a decision made.

Site work

There are a lot of site work issues that could be addressed: landscaping and mowing; snow removal; pavement patching and sealing, etc. All of these are great candidates to have contracted work, some of them on an as-needed basis. Unless you have the manpower flexibility to shuffle people around without risking some area getting far behind, then it probably isn't worth trying to do the work in-house.

Summary
The purpose of this lesson was to understand that some services may be contracted or outsourced, and to understand why it may be an advantage to do so. We discussed several functions possibly within the purview of the facility manager that could be contracted instead of being self-performed. Did we make any decisions about which ones we should actually contract? No, because there are many factors that need to be considered before making those decisions. Conversely, those same evaluations need to be made to determine whether a previously contracted function is replaced by in-house services. But, hopefully, you have a better idea of what options exist for the facility manager, and that we have just touched on a few of those functions.

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