

Switching to Day Cleaning Results in Dramatic Savings

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The Company / Background

State Farm is a Fortune 500 insurance and finance company with 65,000 employees and 18,000 agents. Its multi-building corporate headquarters are in Bloomington, Illinois, and the company is also building large hubs in Atlanta, Dallas, and Phoenix, and has hundreds of smaller operations centers sprinkled across the country. Over the last 18 years, the company has been switching most of its facilities to day cleaning with dramatic results.

The Problem / Challenges

In 1994, Steve Spencer joined State Farm as Facilities Specialist. He was responsible for managing the contract cleaning of the company’s nearly 700 buildings. State Farm wasn’t satisfied with the results BSCs were delivering, and Spencer believed the company’s use of traditional night cleaning might be to blame.

“The labor force at night wasn’t ideal,” Spencer says. “There were people working it as a second job and they were tired, or there were people who couldn’t find work anywhere else.”

State Farm’s Monroe, Louisiana, facility had the worst rating for cleaning in the entire company. In addition to a jaw-dropping 600% janitor turnover rate, the location averaged eight theft calls per evening, for everything from candy to laptops. Even worse, female employees who left late in the evening reported being inappropriately approached by male custodians.

The Solution / Opportunities

Accustomed to first-shift cleaning from his years in hospitality and healthcare, Spencer decided in 1998 to create a pilot program for day cleaning at the Monroe facility. While that building’s night crews turnover rates were astronomical, the rates among its day maids and porters were negligible.

After a three-hour pitch to 30 managers and the regional vice president, Spencer convinced Monroe to flip the switch. He signed a 6-month trial contract with the local BSC, who had no experience with day cleaning.

Crews started at 5:30 am to knock out all disruptive work like cleaning restroom floors and important public spaces like the lobby before the building opened. During business hours, janitors cleaned windows, conference rooms, break rooms, and restrooms. Cubicle and office cleaning was scheduled for Saturday mornings, with a separate crew made up mostly of college students.

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Steve Spencer
Facilities Manager, State Farm Insurance

The Outcomes / Successes

Since 1998, Spencer has overseen the transition of about 90% of State Farm’s nearly 20 million square feet to day cleaning. The modern approach to cleaning has been so popular, he says, because the company has experienced clear and impressive results, including:

Cost savings: By turning off the lights at night, buildings cut energy costs by 8%, and eliminating day maids and porters and reducing supervision saved 10% on cleaning costs. That translated into \$350,000 and \$100,000 in savings per year, respectively, at State Farm’s Federick, Maryland State Farm location. There were also savings on HVAC costs, but Spencer says those are tougher to calculate.

Improvements in cleanliness: While night crews can cut corners without being noticed, day crews know they are being watched and typically deliver better results. Also, building occupants tend to be less messy because they develop personal connections with and empathy for the cleaning crews.

Fewer complaints: In the past, night cleaners at State Farm were caught playing poker and football, reading newspapers, and taking naps. Day crews are under scrutiny and simply can’t fool around without being noticed. In addition to making supervision simpler, this has reduced theft complaints to almost zero.

Quality workers: More people want to work daytime hours than after dark, which has given State Farm BSCs a larger and more dependable labor pool. Cleaning crews now include a combination of full-time employees and part-timers like stay-at-home parents and retired individuals. “You can’t get those people at night,” Spencer says.

Better morale: By working alongside building occupants, day cleaners become faces and names rather than anonymous janitors. “They get more respect,” Spencer says. “When they have people saying hello to them and thanking them for doing their job, they are less likely to quit.” In fact, the Monroe building went from 600% turnover per year to losing just one janitor in seven years



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