

MW Cleaning Services

MW Cleaning Services is a commercial cleaning service based on the North Shore of Auckland. The business is 36-years-old and has doubled in the last few years. They hire between 20-30 teams, with teams varying in their size from one to four people per team, so they have anywhere between 40 and 60 contractors. About 50 per cent to 60 per cent of their staff are people of ethnic backgrounds from a number of countries, like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Macedonia, Kenya, and Brazil.

MW saw that a lot of New Zealanders perceive cleaning as being 'below' them. Even if they take it on as a job, it's often only temporary. Many migrants, however, approach cleaning as a business opportunity. Their motivation is high and they're willing to work hard.

MW hires people of many different ethnic backgrounds because of their emphasis on good cleaning, strong commitment, and willingness to work hard. The company didn't have to invest financially for an ethnically diverse workforce but did need to adjust some of their initiatives to make sure that they're understood and accepted.

What MW Cleaning Services do

- Use basic language when recruiting, or if there are words that interviewees don't understand that are important (like skirting boards), show them to candidates. They try to make the interviewing process comfortable.
- Tailor training and induction from a group setting to a one-to-one approach.
- Get contractors together to build rapport, especially at Christmas (and getting the catering for different food requirements right).
- Give extra time off to staff who celebrate holidays and festivals not officially recognised in New Zealand, providing other staff can be found to cover for them.
- Are sure to spell and pronounce names correctly.

- Avoid offence from people's different ways of approaching each other (for example, being careful to respect gender, careful to avoid pairing people whose cultures might be in conflict).
- Pay well.

- Keep language simple.
- Assess your current training to make sure it's clear, to avoid new people missing out on key learning.

What happens as a result?

- Good work attitude.
- Good feedback from customers.
- Much lower staff turnover.
- Employing many former franchise owners because of MW's good reputation.

What are MW Cleaning Services's challenges?

Sometimes contractors won't understand what they need to do or how to do it. MW Cleaning Services will go to the property and physically show them.

Because people of one ethnicity don't always get along with people from other ethnicities, MW needed to make sure they had the right mix of the contractors in teams to avoid conflict.

What MW Cleaning Services recommend

- Hire on merit – experience, and skills.
- Change your interviewing approach to make sure that you can assess skills and potential of your possible future employees accurately.
- Avoid making assumptions – don't limit the right responses to only those you expect.



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