

Investing in Success: The Impact of Training in Commercial Cleaning with Brant Insero

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Tim Clagg: Welcome to the Business of Cleaning podcast, your number one source of information on the commercial cleaning industry. We release new episodes monthly live from the Janitorial Manager studio located in Toledo, Ohio. I'm Tim Clagg, the marketing communication specialist at Double A Solutions, and the host of the Business of Cleaning podcast. This month's episode we have the pleasure of sitting down with Brant Insero. Brant is ISSA's Director of Global Education Training Certification in standards. Brant brings over 20 years of industry experience to the show. Welcome to the show, Brant, it's so glad to have you. And it's an exciting time right now at ISSA as well.

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Brant Insero: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. It's a complete honor. We've been partnering with the organization for many years, and have been looking forward to this opportunity. So thank you very much.

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Tim Clagg: And Brant, I mean, you have an interesting story. You've been with ISSA cleaning Management Institute for over 10 years now. And your story's fascinating, your journey to working with ISSA, can you share that story with how you landed in this position, because there were some bumpy times some bumpy roads leading to your position currently.

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Brant Insero: you know, I think about this, this podcast last night, I was having dinner with my wife. And I said something to her that really stuck. And I didn't find this industry, this industry found me. And because of that, it keeps me grounded in what I do. And it's quite honestly, it's been a wonderful experience the last 10 years and how it started, you know, really in my 20s. And coming out of my first stab at college, I didn't know who I was as a person. So it really took me some time to figure out who I was and what my gifts were, I tend to look at a lot of my employees and staff and colleagues and I say what are their gifts, because ultimately, if we can take those gifts, we can unwrap them and share them with the world, we're going to be successful. So throughout my 20s and early 30s, I really found myself falling in love with providing solutions that are lasting, and I came from telecommunications, publishing and some other organizations that really helped business owners and entrepreneurs find success

through marketing and sales. I had an opportunity to be a sales trainer for a major organization up here in the Northeast. And then, unfortunately, I had a job that just kind of fell apart. And I eventually made it over to Cleaning Management Institute. And I started this job. And Tim, I didn't know what it was I got hired on by one of my mentors Mica Ogburn. He's in charge of ISSA media. And they literally brought me into this room and said, Hey, Brant, you know, we're looking to move Matt into another position and we need you to sell training. And I'm like, I didn't even know this existed, right? So if I wish I had the books on me, but the very first set of books, they threw on the table and said, this is what you're selling. Like I'm selling a spiral bound book, what? Like, what is this? You know, so I took the job I didn't I needed something to support my family. So a couple months go by and I go out to my first training, the trainer event with a gentleman I love dearly. His name is Marion Ivy. He's a former master trainer for CMI. And he's retired but dice from the Northwest. And I sat through that course and quickly realize what it meant to be in the cleaning industry, it was a community. And I felt accepted. And I felt like it was the right fit. So fast forward a few years 2014 Cleaning Management Institute and CMM magazine, shut their doors. We had nothing our parent company went through and just cleared all these brands out of their portfolio. And we were one of them. And then ISSA saved the day. A gentleman by the name of John Garfinkel, who was our former executive director, acquired CMM magazine and Cleaning Management Institute. And then the rest is really history, if you will, it was a beautiful opportunity to go from zero revenue to a multi-million dollar business unit in a short period of time, dedicated to changing lives in the cleaning industry. And it really felt like home. So here we are today.

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Tim Clagg: I'm interested to I mean, I come from a telecommunications background. I have several colleagues that have graduated that I still keep in touch with that came from telecommunications background. How did that degree in your prior experience, prepare and allow you to take the tools from that to apply with isa today?

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Brant Inero: So I'm gonna go way back right so let's go back to my high school days, and I'll tell you how I got into this because it'll all come full circle. So I want you to picture not this one handsome face you see today, a dork. A dorky kid, acne, spiked hair in there.

Tim Clagg: We've all been there!

Brant Inero: Like that puberty stage, right? But, you know, no friends I was an introvert but I was really passionate about the sport of bowling. And I had a few 300 games I was I was really into it. And I was 16/17 years old, but I had the pleasure of attending a fundraiser for children that were blind and deaf and they were raising money for these children. And I said to myself, I need to do this for something. It almost like just wrapped its arms around. Brant you need to go help somebody else use the sport of bowling to do so. So my first year we ran this event and we raised a few thousand dollars and I had all the local news personalities and radio stations show up and it was beat the celebrities. So, during that event, one of the radio stations back then known as Albany's number one hit music station, big shout out to them. They were there. They called me and said, Hey, would you like to come tour our radio station the next day, we really liked your personality. I didn't know it was an interview. And I literally was offered a job the next day, I took that cow. And I started you know, Tim, this is going back

\$7 an hour minimum wage. And I would go out and I'd set up all the events go to the concerts, I was the guy behind the scenes and then quickly, I was on air. So I would do overnights, I did a little bit in the evening hours. And then I started a DJ'ing company, I broke out of my shell during this time, I was forced to be on stage in front of 10,000 people or 5000 people and essentially be a talent or an entertainer with no background, no training. And it was figured out you're on fire, go do it. And that's how it all started and my love for public speaking and being in front of people to help make change. It really started back when I was you know, 17, 18, 19 years old.

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Tim Clagg: And it's come full circle. You've traveled internationally to certify people in the industry from Europe, South America, Australia, Canada, and Mexico to certify over 350,000 industry professionals. That's an impressive number to help change lives and allow people to get that training so that they can help other people, their employees. When you think about that number, because it is mind boggling. What does that mean to you personally, especially that 17 year old kid that wanted to help people?

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Brant Inero: Yeah, you know, it's funny, Tim, I did a podcast with one of our members maybe a year or two ago. And every time I think about it, I tend to get a little teary eyed and choked up because I didn't personally train and certify 350,000 people, it was a group effort with all of our master trainers. And it's the stories that come to life. And just to share a couple with you because I think it really brings it home. But I'll never forget this gentleman who I'm still dear friends with I text quite often, I met this gentleman in 2014. And just starting out a little puppy running a contracting business essentially just we didn't know where this person was going to be in 2024. But today, multimillion dollar contracting company, software company, consulting, I mean, you name it, they're involved. To see somebody go from nothing to being one of the industry leaders in less than 10 years is amazing and to create those bonds. But I'll tell you, my I guess my thing that I'm probably closest to right now, you know, I was showing you before we jumped on air. But I had a couple articles, and these two articles for me. Not because my pictures in there again. But it's it really is what we're doing with these organizations. It's the workforce development programs. It's individuals that are homeless, they were abused, they were on drugs, they were alcoholics, maybe they're in prison. They are taking our training and certification courses because they say I want to be better. I don't want to be the person I used to be in coming from the faith that I come from, I know what that's like, you know, you want to jump ship from who you were to be that better person today. And we are giving the opportunities as a gift from ISSA. It's something we do at the core foundation. And for me watching these individuals go from living on the streets, to getting some support in a home, to taking our training and our certifications and going to work for \$20 \$30 an hour. That's what it's all about. There's nothing else that matters more in my day than seeing that happen.

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Tim Clagg: And that's gonna keep you coming back every single day to know that the impact that you, ISSA are having and literally changing lives. And this is a monumental year for ISSA, in November ISSA North America show, Viva Las Vegas on the strip marks the 100th anniversary celebration and it is going to be a great show. What does this milestone mean as the industry leaders and basically, the

founders of helping push, this movement over the last 100 years mean to you to the organization as a company?

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Brant Inero: You know, I go back to our brand promise, our brand promise has been consistent for many years even before I started at ISSA. And it's powerful. Changing the way the world views cleaning, it's a simple statement. But it's been our promise to the industry for quite some time. And that's really what ISSA has done for 100 years, not many companies say they can celebrate 100 years in business. We're one of the few. However, if for those of the organizations that are listening, that have been involved with the association, either since its inception in 1923, or have come into the association over the years and seen the change, they'll quickly identify that ISSA went from being a supply chain based trade association to essentially being the circus tent where everybody is welcome. Right. And you know, when you go back to the early 2000s, when ISSA opened their doors to what we call the end users, right? Those are those universities and building service contractors. All of a sudden, our whole entire industry shifted, you know, and as we're seeing a lot of disruption in the industry today, we're still continuing to reimagine what ISSA is going to be for the next 100 years. So, I think as a takeaway for the trade show, it's we want to pay homage we want to celebrate 100 years. But for us disruptors in the world, we're looking to the next 100 years. So, we're going to celebrate in Vegas, but we're going to look to the future of what our industry is going to look like. And I would say to you, and anyone that's listening to this, if you are not at the ISSA show this year, it will be one of your biggest regrets in 2024. It really sets the stage to creating goals and objectives each year. But I think this year in particular is more important as we truly bring together the icons of the industry and celebrate their success. And again, look at our young emerging professionals and know where we're going to be going.

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Tim Clagg: It's all about that next generation looking forward, can you give us a little bit of a sneak peek brand on some of the things that you have in store and that you in particular are looking forward to come November?

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Brant Inero: So first and foremost, the one thing that I always look forward to is the networking 100% and throughout the year, I will come across people that I've met at the tradeshow 10 years ago that I don't even remember them. But they will come up and say, Hey, Brant, I took your class in 2014. Do you remember me? And I'm like, oh, yeah, of course I do. But I hear that story so many times from members and industry leaders, that they make the connection at the show, and then a friendship is created for a lifetime. That's the magic of the show. So for me, networking is always number one on my list. And you would think I would say education, right. But that's number two for me. Because you learn peer to peer, you know in real life situations. But I will tell you that this year in particular, when it comes to the commercial side of the education lineup, we focused on trying to find new speakers for every session. Over the years, we've had a lot of duplication, and which is great. People want to see their old friends again. But we are also trying to create a diverse pool of speakers. So we have a brand new author coming to the table that started in our industry, built a beautiful sales career, who's now a professor for Virginia Tech, and an author. So he's going to come talk about building a lifestyle of success and getting out of the daily grind of selling to being somebody in the boardroom. We also have

organizations that are members that are going to be speaking such as JLL talking about how to partner with property management firms if you're a contractor. So we really want to try to create value for everybody across the board, whether they're a future leader learning from a college professor, if it's somebody that's learning from a property management organization on how to do business with them. And a big thing this year for us we're going to blow it up is sustainability. It's a hot button right now. And we're going to tackle that big time this year. Now some other key things Tim, you're gonna go right don't tell me you're not going after this.

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Tim Clagg: Waiting to see if I get the green light on that. I'm hopeful, my hands and my fingers are crossed. So

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Brant Inero: Alright, so I don't take that answer. I don't like it. So we're gonna take that as yes, you're going. I'll make some I'll make it happen, right? Here's why, Tuesday night is our 100th anniversary bash, and it is going to be a party, for the first time, in a long, long time that ISSA has hosted this event, we're going to have a live band, we're gonna have food, we're gonna have energy, and fun on Tuesday night. Wednesday night is something again, near and dear to my heart. It's empowering women. It's the hygiene networking event. I think last year, we had 700 or 800 people attend this event.

Tim Clagg: That's awesome.

Brant Inero: So I'm just scratching the surface. But if anybody goes to the ISSA show website, they can take a look at the basically the whole session and the whole schedule. What I will say is, don't get overwhelmed. If I could give any tips about the trade show is to pre plan as much as possible. You have limited windows to get on the show floor and see what you want to see and start to map it out. But if you go to the show, and you don't plan first, you'll be overwhelmed.

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Tim Clagg: You mentioned some of those sessions over safety training and sustainability, safety and training have gone through a revolution in the industry over the last decade and continues to be one of the most important issues in the industry. During your time with ISSA. How would you describe the rise in training and awareness that has been presented? And what is fueled that change over the last decade? Then let's say the last 20 or 25 years?

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Brant Inero: Great question. So let me talk about where the gap is first, because I think that'll help us dictate kind of why there's such a significance and training, that the biggest gap that we have, when it comes to training, whether it's safety related, or just vocational studies for cleaning. Some of the biggest gaps is fractioned. So everyone has their own version of training, there's a lack of consistency between organizations, which at times is needed, but at times, it's also pretty bad. So I think one of the things that is really driving movement is more organizations, whether it's a government level, private entities, they're requiring certifications, they're requiring training, to help reduce liability. They want to save lives, they want a healthier built environments, but also consistency. So we have seen a

significant growth in our education department really since 2016/2017 timeframe. And it continues to climb, and is driven by the customer requirements.

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Tim Clagg: And one of the area's to that has kind of fueled this growth, the public perception, awareness. And people are aware more than ever of their surroundings, myself in particular, I mean, I've got a daughter, so I'm constantly, she's 11 months. So I'm constantly kind of scoping things out ahead of time, keep my head on a swivel, but now to the surroundings. In that growth. It's fueled that responsibility in training. So with the public in the perception, do you believe it's created more respect and validation for people in the industry more than ever before?

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Brant Inero: Yes, short answer is yes. And I think you're kind of touching on something. And it's fear. We had the big catastrophe a few years ago, everyone doesn't really want to talk about that P word. But the pandemic was a serious situation. And the line that I use when I speak at events is that for the first time, because of the pandemic, the cleaning industry stepped foot out of the custodial closet, we had the spotlight for once. There's a lot of investment, private equity that's happening inside of the cleaning industry as well, which is also a driving factor into the growth of the commercial cleaning industry. But there is still a challenge, right? So as we as we think about what clean means. There's, you know, clean air, there's clean surfaces. And there's also building limitations. And just to talk about this, so all three things are tied together. So as building usage increases, the need to clean surface increases, and the need for clean air increases. And now the hot button after clean surfaces from the pandemic, it's all about clean air. The public, the government, the scientists, everybody understands that viruses and bacteria predominantly will spread through air before surface. So there's some requirements that are coming out but I do want to tell you that I truly believe the hottest trend when it comes to those three things will be clean air for the next 12 to 24 months in the foreseeable future after that.

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Tim Clagg: Mark it down. You heard it first here. We're speaking with Brant Inero. Brant is ISSA's senior director of Global Education Send training certification and standards, ISSA had a successful campaign that I enjoyed watching following the growth and it involved Howie Mandel in three different videos. Rethink clean and checking how clean certain places are. Especially there was one episode like a hotel room. What kind of awareness Did you guys see from everyday people outside the industry during this campaign, because looking at the video numbers, each video had over 2 million views.

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Brant Inero: What a campaign! Huge and first and foremost, I gotta say a couple of things, before I get into the stats. Number one, to the board of directors of ISSA, we should say thank you. It was their decision to invest almost \$5 million into a viral ad campaign. For the first time in ISSA's history. The intent was not to drive business to ISSA, but to continue to take John Barrett's quo of lubricating commerce, we wanted to ensure that organizations were still doing business with our contractors or distributors, or manufacturers and so on. So the whole campaign was focused on two elements primarily. One was consumer awareness. And then the second was business to business. So when you

think of a consumer awareness campaign, we had over 525 million total impressions, from a B2B, over 114 million impressions. So when you look at the landscape of the impressions, amazing, and who better than Howie Mandel could be with us, right, like amazing.

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Tim Clagg: Has the increase of customer expectations demand for that quality cleaning, have it led to a greater focus on training to meet these standards?

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Brant Inero: I think a lot of things have shifted since that rethink clean campaign came out. And again, if you haven't seen the videos, it's rethinkclean.org. The videos are still live. I encourage anybody down there, they can share them. They're funny. They're also serious and they're short. What I will say to you, though, Tim, is it's shifting in here's what we're finding is when the pandemic hit, and right post pandemic, right after that, everything was about disinfecting, right, we need to disinfect every surface. You saw people just spraying anything they could in the air, causing damage to assets and human health. And then all of a sudden, we're trying to figure out how do we get people back into buildings? How do we get them back into office space, but because we were forced to learn how to work virtually, it's been difficult to get people back into the office, especially with the younger generation. So certain market segments like the commercial office space is still trying to play catch up. But then I mean, Taylor Swift's on tour selling out every stadium, right?

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Tim Clagg: Oh my gosh, yeah. It's a phenomenon. It's gone crazy. The summer 2023.

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Brant Inero: Yeah, it's amazing. So all these concerts are coming back. And you're a music guy like I am. Nobody's wearing a mask. Nobody's washing their hands. Nobody's using hand sanitizers, they're all dancing, having a good time. So from a consumer standpoint, it's almost like we're back to nothing ever happened. We're back to just visual cleaning. While they're smarter, and they understand how important it is to disinfect. It's not a top priority for them. So they're not focusing on it. So that's starting to shift. We're coming out of the issues of supply chain, where we were having a hard time getting raw materials and chips for scrubbers and things like that, to now saying, we don't actually have labor to clean so we're back to where we weren't pre pandemic. We have the tools and equipment, we have the chemistry, we don't have the people. So currently, some of the biggest things that we're finding as far as trends, they need help work loading, they need help identifying productivity rates, they need people to come in and redesign their cleaning system because the traffic flows are different in the buildings than they were 2/3/4 years ago. So there's there's a lot of things shifting. And again, the other big thing that's shifting is the government. So the government you saw in New York City recently, there was an article that they're going to require certain things around indoor air quality inside the built environment and the city. So that shift is going to be a trickle effect and other areas are going to start taking that on and implementing requirements

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Tim Clagg: in things like events that are going on right now. Obviously, you live in upstate New York, obviously, the wildfire smoke from just north of the border our friends in Canada. I mean, I've seen the pictures and it has been a eerie eerie sight. So again, going back because I know I had to change from the smoke here in Ohio, I had to go in and change my filter for my HVAC system a month ahead two months ahead of the required scheduled time. So that kind of goes hand in hand with what you're talking about in keeping the air inside clean, where it's not going to harm people.

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Brant Inero: Absolutely. You know what, I'm actually doing a kitchen remodel at my house right now. And for anyone that has ever done this, you know, the pain that we're going through as a family without a sink or stove. But the worst pain that I've seen was in my wife's face, when she's trying to keep the house clean, because of all the dust settling, you know, and you go down and look in the filter and how clogged and how fast it gets clogged. And just think about that and imagine to have a commercial building during the State of New York and policies and everything is yellow, how often that stuff is coming in, and you're breathing that in. So you know, I think, tend to be honest with you, it's going to continue. And I think the requirements are going to come down from a federal level, as well as state levels. So again, to me, I would say if there's one, one key takeaway out of our entire podcast, is pay attention to that IAQ.

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Tim Clagg: There are so many different options available when it comes to training now for a cleaner, as well as an owner from in person training, online programs, videos and certification. And ISSA, really has a complete anthology of items when it comes to training, can you take us through all of the different types of training that is available for people to take advantage of,

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Brant Inero: you know, we wouldn't be here, Tim for probably a month. So I'm gonna, I'm gonna start high level. One of the unique things people have looked at ISSA for the last 6-7-8 years and said, Who's ISSA, it's not the same that we've known before. And during the tenure of our current Executive Director, Mr. John Barrett, who is a dear friend and mentor to me personally, in my career growth. It was really amazing to watch him work, we were able to either merge acquire or partner with nearly two dozen organizations. And during that time, people were saying, I don't understand what does this mean to ISSA. And we're now going through the process of saying, Hey, if you are IEHA, which is the division of ISSA, you're probably somebody from health care or hospitality, because that's where their programming aligns to. So they have their courses, whether it's in person or online, dedicated to those markets. You may recognize a brand like Cleaning Management Institute, which has been around since the 1960s, and really dedicated to the commercial space, higher education BSC's. But no matter what division or department that ISSA has brought together in this giant circus tent for the last, you know, again, six, seven years, the coursework is dedicated about creating a career pathway. The one thing that I've tried to instill in the team here is that we don't want to be a one and done location. We want to see somebody grow from a frontline cleaning professional, to a lead a supervisor, a manager, an auditor, may be a trainer may be a work loading specialist. It could be a registered environmental housekeeper, the list goes on and on. But I can honestly tell you a quick story about a gentleman that I met several years ago, and again, I have stories like nobody else, right? But this gentleman came to a

CMI class in Baltimore, Maryland, flew out took the class. And I think at that time, maybe a lead maybe a frontline, I don't remember exactly. But today, he is a high-level individual inside of a university in Maryland, in just less than 10 years. But it started with the certifications. What we are noticing when it comes to training and certification is that organizations like the federal government, OSU, University of Tennessee, I said OSU just for you, by the way. These organizations actually require certifications from ISSA as part of the career pathway. And it allows them to basically say, if you hit a certain level, you're going to bump and pay or you're going to title change. So you keep climbing that career ladder. And I think that's critical to the success of employee retention, employee turnover rate. It's all about ongoing career pathway and progression to keep people engaged in your organization.

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Tim Clagg: And I feel like too, there's been a higher demand in people wanting that development to be able to have that growth, to have that option. You know, it hasn't always been there for commercial cleaners, and now we're seeing it really soar. And people can truly take advantage. I mean, there's so many stories, you documented people being able to start from the bottom and work their way up into a role, which, you know, is that kind of self fulfilling that goals we all have, and it's great to continue to see that thirst, right, we're all wanting to be better versions of ourselves.

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Brant Inero: 100% You know, typically starts from the top down, right? You typically have a leader, a manager or somebody as a vice president, that values education. You know, a good friend of mine, Mark Warner, who's been a master trainer used to work here at ISSA. A dear, dear friend, him and I were talking about this a couple of weeks ago, what I think organizations are struggling with is how to identify the ROI, right? So what's the return on investment? If I say to you, I'm going to invest \$1,000 in employee for education? Well, the one school system that that Mark helps us out with quite a bit, we found that for every dollar they spend on education, in return, they're saving about \$11 per person. So it's a pretty significant amount. So, we look at the magnitude if they're spending \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, across the landscape of their employees, what's that return look like that year. So I think, you know, to kind of go back to it, it has to be something that the company embraces, and is part of the culture. And culture is critical, when it comes to transit certification, if the culture doesn't exist, nobody's gonna buy in. So it really top down is critical.

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Tim Clagg: With so many options more so than ever before. You kind of have that tough job. How do you decide, or how do you work with a business owner that's coming to you? We want to go through some training, how do they how do you research and find, what are the best types of trainings that they as the owner go through, and their employees?

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Brant Inero: It's very interesting. So, you can break it down based on building service contractors first. So if you look at BSC's, based on revenue size, or employee counts, they have similarities and trends based on buckets. So, an organization that's under a million dollars in revenue as a contractor has totally different needs than somebody that's a \$20 million or \$100 million operation. Typically, those that are on their early days and are starting out or owner operator types of contracting businesses. So

what they're trying to do is prove to their brand new customers that they know what they're doing. And through that, they're looking for technician type certifications for themselves, that their floor care specialist or they know how to wash exterior windows. And they're looking for that little notch that digital badge, the certificate to show proof, when you start to get to that level of, you know, \$10million, \$20million, \$30million, \$40 million in revenue. Now we start looking at your company holistically. And we're starting to look at your structure, your SOPs, and in that process, we're trying to show as a company, you have this percentage of individuals that are certified to do these tasks. Meanwhile, you're also trying to create that leadership and management development pathway, because now you have established structure and teams. When you look at the in house service providers, there's over the years we've seen a shift. Back when labor wasn't as big of a challenge as it is today, they would have onboarding exams. Basically, testing somebody in the post office still does this for their , custodians, they will take 20 to 50 question test on the tools and resources you use as a cleaner just to see if you have the basic skills. Once you get hired in then you start at an entry level point. This is what you do on a daily basis, to an interim, to a restorative basis before you start getting that management training. But it's really, it all comes back to two things, a risk assessment and a needs assessment. So what are the levels of risk inside your organization, maybe we need to have specific training based on that. And then that needs assessment is a little bit more unique if we're looking at your actual personnel, career journeys and pathways to success. But then also looking at your goals and objectives as a cleaning organization, whether you're outsourced or you're in house.

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Tim Clagg: It's an industry that is ever changing, always evolving, always growing new equipment, the latest and greatest continually coming out new procedures. So how often do you recommend? Or what would be your recommendation to how often you need to update your training? Because there's so many different options you mentioned, we could be here all day, and then some. So what do you kind of recommend based on, you know, each customer's needs that comes to you?

34:19

Brant Inero: Sure. So I'm obviously selfishly, I'm a big advocate of hiring somebody else to provide the training, put the onus on them to update their curriculum, it really needs to be evaluated on an annual basis updated no more than two years out. So less than two years, everything is shifting, right. So, you mentioned technology. So, the biggest trend that was happening before the pandemic and a little bit after is robotics, AI, virtual reality, all that sort of stuff. And we have not caught up from a training perspective just yet and all of that technology so we're starting to fall behind again because there's so much investment taking place in our industry. So, I'm a big advocate, outsource your training and certifications to an independent organization that provides an enhanced level of value, integrity to your training and another thing too, is some, some companies will rely on their partners, their distributors and manufacturers for training. And oftentimes, when there's a change in leadership, there's a change in products and brands that they're using. And then all of a sudden, your training starts to fall apart again, because you're relying on your vendor. So, if you find someone that's in the space of training in the space of certification, use them, and then basically work with your other distributors and manufacturers to have that add on that's specific to what they're doing. We often see this Tim with floor care companies. So each one has a different, a little bit of a different nuance when it comes to stripping and refinishing or maintaining a gymnasium floor. That's specific to using that product, that process. But

what's the core competencies that everybody needs to know. And I think that's where every organization should start. And then again, that needs assessment, where are the gaps? But during the course that we teach, we teach a course called train the trainer here at ISSA, the designation is certified professional trainer. And that's where we work with individuals from organizations that are looking to deploy or enhance their training. And we try to help them look at it from a holistic view of 12 months. So, what's the onboarding training protocols that they'd have? What is their ongoing review training? Everybody needs to have their OSHA safety training on an annual basis, but are we stopping there are we going to have enhanced safety training courses. And once we start to dive into that, we also help them identify their cost of training, we'll help them identify who they want to train when they want to train and build up the whole schedule. So I know I'm kind of going down a rabbit hole. But to get back to the very basics of your question, it starts off and that needs assessment. But keep it within a two year timeframe of updating content.

37:07

Tim Clagg: And also, importantly, this training helps with your reputation with strengthening those relationships with your customers and attracting new bids, new leads with, Hey, we've got all of these certifications with ISSA. And that can help build your brand awareness and create new opportunities for you that may not have happened, if you didn't come to ISSA for this proper training that everybody needs.

37:34

Brant Inero: You're right. And I think that's the missing component. You know, when you start to think about this, and I'm kind of hesitating. And I want to say this for a second, because we work with people historically, on the operation side, when it comes to deploying Sims as an example, the cleaning industry management standard, or training courses, we're not talking necessarily to the salesperson of the contractor, or the human resources professional. So the reason why I'm going down this route is that there's a massive disconnect from what somebody's doing inside of the cleaning department if it's in house, or on the operation sides, from a contractor to the sales side, to the communication side. And because of that gap, often times the stakeholder or the consumer that's buying the cleaning, or is using the environment where the cleaning is happening, doesn't know what they're doing in that cleaning. So I love this, I love this topic of discussion. And I'm happy to spend some time on this. But ultimately, whatever's happening inside from a training certification Career Pathway program should be told it's a story that has to be told. Because if I'm the parent, and I'm sending my daughter to middle school, actually, she's going to high school this year, it's crazy to think about. I want to know that the custodian that's cleaning that restroom has been trained and certified. And I can tell you, and I'm not bashing the school district that I went to, I went to it, and my daughter goes through it, they're not trained, they are not. You walk in and you can visually smell or visually see it, you can smell it. You can hear the kids talking about how gross things are. So if they were trained and certified, it was cleaned effectively, that visual perception would be there for the parents, the taxpayers, but then that custodial crew can communicate that out through the PTO to say, hey, we're investing in our people, which invested in your health of your children. So why aren't we doing those things are the questions.

Tim Clagg: Seems like a no brainer to me.

39:34

Brant Inero: I think it's a no brainer. And I think part of the problem though is nobody really knows how to communicate that message. So what I did here at ISSA several years ago, if you're familiar with this, ISSA offers a product or a benefit, call the ISSA value of clean and the value of clean talks about how do you reduce asset damage, reduce presenteeism and reduce absenteeism through cleaning for health. And as we start to do these things, we want to communicate out those value propositions, those wins back to the audience. So I actually created a value of training based off that same data, because it correlates. If we're using the right tools, the right chemistry with the right training, we will have a cleaner, healthier, safer environment. It's simple. But now we have to take that information and communicate it back to the audience that needs to hear the message.

40:31

Tim Clagg: You touched on a hot topic, not just in this industry, but in every industry right now worldwide. And it's not just chat GPT. I mean, it had over 150 million users subscribe. I'm one of them. In the first week of its inception, I mean, there's a new AI popping up daily, I'm doing my research, kind of seeing what you know, I can use to help benefit me in my position. It's helping all these industries. How do you think that right now, AI like this, or new developing resources is going to continue to grow? And how's it going to shape the training that you present to companies in the future? And by future, I mean, almost right now? Because it is, it is happening so fast.

41:25

Brant Inero: You know, it's this topic is always a conflict when I started thinking about training specifically, you know, not to talk about my daughter again, but I said to her the other day said, Hey, Chloe, I gotta ask you a question. What is this whole chat GPT thing everyone is talking about? Like your dad's in training, I should know about this stuff. And she goes, Oh, I just use that to write my bonus paper the other day. And I'm like, what do you what do you mean, she goes, I said to it helped me write my bonus paper on whatever it was and it literally pulled this information in wrote a paper for her that she could submit for bonus credit. That's the disadvantage. That's the bad press.

42:03

Tim Clagg: Yes, it is.

42:04

Brant Inero: We are allowing technology to think for us. It's almost like saying, all right, I'm gonna go have heart surgery. And my surgeon at the time of surgery is gonna say, How do I perform open heart surgery and then take step by step instructions? We wouldn't want that. Why would we allow that for a cleaning professional that's saving lives every single day, we wouldn't write. So I think there's pros and cons. I think the Pro to this is when it comes to translation services. It helps people that might not be able to read properly. You know, when you have individuals with lower education levels, you may want to leverage technology, imagery, virtual reality, augmented reality and things like that, to help them advance in their career and not hold them back. However, those that take advantage of it for the wrong reasons are never going to be successful later on. It's just a short term solution. So where I kind of see this all coming together, honestly, we actually have a member of ours based out of Tennessee that has a brilliant technology, where you can hold an iPad or an iPhone up to something and you see the room,

and you could press buttons. And it'll tell you step by step how to do something with a video. So I think things like that are going to be really instrumental in moving forward. But tools that simply just give the answers without helping somebody think through the process is a bad thing.

43:30

Tim Clagg: If you're using it for that cutting corners, that's only going to be temporary, it's not going to help in the long term growth development. Interested, for your responses there. So if a new cleaner owner is currently listening to this show, what advice would you give them to implementing comprehensive training program into their business?

43:59

Brant Inero: Great question. And I personally feel the first thing is get connected. Join whether it's ISSA or another group, join an association and learn from your peers because there's failures that have taken place. Because I can tell you exactly what to do to implement a training program. But when it goes to actually being in the field, and you have your first account, it's worth, you know, \$10,000 or \$20,000 annually, you freeze. And something's going to happen and you're not going to know what to do. So I always say get connected, where you can ask experts quickly, right? So that's, that's the first thing. Then implement a core competency. So knowing what your new accounts are going to look like. Maybe it's just coming in vacuuming, taking out the trash, dusting, mopping, and then you go out and you're done with that account. If that's the case, construct your training on that first, so you can get going, but don't wait until it's too far down that account. In that contract, you want to start earlier, one of the things that I've seen people make mistakes on is that they wait until they sell something, they get the contract in their hand, then they need to hire five people to clean that building, and they have on the job training, but on the job training is specific to just that account. So where I always like to suggest things of create a core competency baseline onboarding program. And then you do your site specific training based on the site specific scope of work and quality expectations. And then you start to build out your training in an ongoing training based on sites that you really need to have that core competency to get started. That's a really critical component and often missed.

45:46

Tim Clagg: Take notes, business owners listening, Brant knows what he's talking about over 20 years of experience in the industry. Hopefully, you're taking notes during this episode. We mentioned sustainability a little bit earlier on kind of in the introduction to this episode. But there's been so much advancement, eco friendly cleaning practice and evolving regulations that pertain to ongoing training, education, keep up with those changes. They're crucial for understanding of those products, especially with kind of some of the unfortunate disasters we've seen in 2023 alone. So where do you see the direction of sustainability and accountability right now? And where do you see it evolving, and continuing to grow in the near future?

46:35

Brant Inero: So today, I think sustainability is confusing. People don't know what it really means. I think what you're going to see happen first is people defining what sustainability means for them. So that's going to be the starting point. I think moving forward, it's already started a little bit. But moving forward, you are going to see more organizations requiring data and analytics on what their vendors are

doing for sustainability. So as an example, I did go visit a university in upstate New York recently, they require as part of their sustainability plan that when a distributor shows up with a truck, they remove all packaging materials with them before they leave their campus. They want 100% recycling, zero waste. So, you're starting to see those things. But where it gets confusing, people just assume sustainability is strictly based on the products they use. But they're not understanding how that impacts everything else and what else sustainability includes. Now you fast forward a little bit and ESG is becoming a hot topic. So now people are saying, well, what's the difference between ESG and sustainability? So what I would suggest, is coming to the show, listening to experts like Steve Ashkin and our sustainability council, which has over 100 industry experts from around the world. Listen to what they're talking about, because they're going to tell you what the trends are. They're going to educate you on where things are today. But I would encourage anyone that's listening now. Have somebody on your team dedicated to understanding and putting a plan in place for sustainability for your company, and know that it is going to evolve on a monthly basis or a quarterly basis until we start getting traction with regulations.

48:16

Tim Clagg: Brant, this has been a great informative interview here. I appreciate you coming on the show, sharing your proficiency in training and education. How can people reach out to you if they are interested in training for themselves or their company?

48:32

Brant Inero: Tim, I would say it's more than that. I don't want to just limit us to training today if that's okay. I really want people to know that ISSA is a home. It's not just training. It's not just membership. We are a home, we're a community, it's a safe place to share knowledge, ask for knowledge. And it all starts by becoming a member. And I would encourage people to go to issa.com, click on membership, hit join. If you're a contractor, it's as little as I think maybe 530 bucks. It's it will pay dividends, if you do this, I can promise you those that become members will get a return. Typically it's six, seven months if not sooner, become a member, get engaged, come to the trade show. That's another great way to get engaged with ISSA, start looking at our publications like CMM, clean fax, and then determine where your goals are going to be and then invest in training. We often put training first, which is a lot of times the correct thing to do, but I really feel if you don't have a goal or objective in mind for your company or your cleaning department. Don't invest in training so you know what that long term objective is going to be.

49:44

Tim Clagg: Great advice. Everybody take advantage, especially too if you haven't signed up yet. For the 100th anniversary celebration in Las Vegas in November. Please do that today. I mean so many great sessions we've talked about Brant here today. A I'm looking forward to hopefully seeing you I know we will have obviously a huge amount of our people in the office going. But I appreciate your expertise and your time today on our show.

50:14

Brant Inero: It's my pleasure, bring your podcast on the road, come to Vegas and everybody, we'll see you in November 13 at our show.

50:21

Tim Clagg: That's what we're kind of. We got some things in store here. Don't want quite give everything away yet. But when we do that, I want to have you there as well, because I think we just kind of scratched the surface and have so much more we can expand upon my friend.

Brant Inero: Absolutely. I'm here to help. We'll talk soon.

Tim Clagg: That will conclude this month's edition of the Business of Cleaning podcast. Be sure to subscribe to us on Spotify, Apple podcast, Google podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts from. Also, be sure to leave us a five-star review and your comments from everyone at Janitorial Manager, my guest Brant Inero, and I'm Tim Clagg saying, so long! Until next time.