

Adapting and Thriving: Commercial Cleaning Sales Today With MJ Mrga

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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 here at Double A Solutions, and your host of the Business of Cleaning podcast. This month we are talking with MJ Mrga, the manager of business development for GDI services. MJ has worked with GDI for the last eight years. We're glad to have you on this month's episode.

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MJ Mrga: Thanks for the invite.

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Tim Clagg: Absolutely, so. Let's start at the beginning. So what kind of started and piqued your interest in business and sales? When did that start for you?

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MJ Mrga: Wow, I think always growing up. You know, being in high school and picking up that part time job. It's always been at the mall and doing sales there as an associate. And you know, things flourished. I ended up moving over to Caesars Windsor, dealt with the big fish there, and marketing and sales and bringing in new people. So I had the opportunity GDI it opened up. And I've been there ever since.

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Tim Clagg: Can you describe to the audience, your role, manager of business development, the responsibilities that you have that comes along with your job.

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MJ Mrga: I think our main role in sales is growth for the company and establishing the relationships with clients and ensuring that its long term, and we meet all the needs and services that we sell to the client.

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Tim Clagg: You mentioned the word long term. Well, long term GDI has a long term, 97 years in the commercial cleaning industry. And I'm just fascinated from the beginning back in 1926, originally established for janitorial services in Quebec. And today now you guys are the premier company with over 30,000 employees, 48 acquisitions since 2008. What led to kind of that, that hotbed that growth, from the company from 2008, and all the way up until 2023.

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MJ Mrga: I think it's we were a \$2.5 billion company. And in order to be structured in a way you'd have to acquire new companies, so you can almost be on a national point and be at a local touch as well. We cover pretty much all of Canada, and we also are in the US. So by acquiring other companies, it just gives us more opportunities for different states and cities. And we can cater to a lot more clients that way.

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Tim Clagg: With competition and competitors right now at an all time high, especially in this industry that has kind of boomed the last really three to five years. What does GDI do to continue to adapt, grow and meet the needs of your customers?

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MJ Mrga: You're right on that there's a lot more competition than when I first started off. And it's amazing to see and it's great for the industry, I think it's important to develop the relationships which GDI does and the long expertise in the many years that we've been in the industry and understanding what growth needed to be made and now offering various types of services in the industry such as the chemical solution side, the mechanical and technical portion. It's really helped us grow and understanding what the client does need, in the end. Really listening to what the client needs, being flexible and bringing the innovation that may help the industry.

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Tim Clagg: Over 18 different services that you guys provide. I mean, it is a healthy list. What do you think that you would attribute to the competition, the growth, overall industry, obviously, huge demand during you know, 2020 when the world was kind of flipped upside down? But where do you think that you hear from your customers that has been responsible, besides, obviously high demand?

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MJ Mrga: You know, GDI is a national company, but we operate as a local company, which really does help us in the industry and being very close to our clients. When it comes to distance and time-wise, it's an hour. We're pretty much an hour away from majority of our customers so we can provide that service that's up close and kind of personal and really listening and understanding what the client's needs are. I think it's quite important. It's not just here's the services, and here's our market bucket, our frontline staff, and we're good to go. It's really understanding the needs and the pain points of the client, and ensuring that they're focused in their business, whether it's, producing, manufacturing, customer satisfaction with their tenants, occupants, whatever the case may be, and doing what we do best, the janitorial services on our end or mechanical, technical, and the chemical solutions.

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Tim Clagg: The phrase that kept appearing and popping up when gathering information on GDI was “they pride themselves on customer-centric approach.” So, having that reputation, obviously, is key, when you’ve been around for 97 years, to uphold those standards, and be able to deliver time and time again, to your customers.

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MJ Mrga: I think it's, building that long-term relationship with these clients really is beneficial. Some of our clients are based in Canada in the US and being able to provide the same service in Canada, and the US is helpful. But once again, I'll go back to that local touch, and really knowing the client because I always find in sales that if the client doesn't like you, they're not going to buy anything from you. So, it's important to really listen, and building a customized solution for the client, in order for it to be successful. And you know what, we deal with a lot of frontline staff, and we're all people at the end of the day, learning from any mistakes that we do make and improving on that is beneficial on its own.

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Tim Clagg: And I always talk to people, I personally believe that it is a true art of sales in business. And really, things have changed for you and the approach and everybody in the landscape for the last three and a half years. What are some of the challenges that you guys have seen, in that time frame the last three years of how you deal with handling sales?

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MJ Mrga: Oh, that's a great question. And it has been challenging for sure. I'm really big on meeting the client face to face and getting to know them. But as we all know, it's been difficult and a lot of people work from home, coinciding your schedules with their schedules. Zoom is a great example, getting into a Zoom meeting, or a team's meeting, or whatever the case may be. So at least you can, you can have that face-to-name recognition. So, I think that's helpful on its own. Phone calls and emails, I think everybody's so busy with their schedules, and with that hybrid working model. People are overly busy, trying to do the balance of working from home. I find that even working from home, you tend to work a lot more than you would say, at the office. So, being able to put a face to a name is very important when it comes to sales, and I try my best in order to meet that need. And whether it be scheduling a lunch or just as simple as a Zoom meeting. Yeah, that's all you can really do. I find that having that phone call, kind of sales thing doesn't work anymore. It does not. People are too busy for it.

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Tim Clagg: So does that change your approach? Because there's a typical timeframe, let's say you were in person, maybe you'd have an hour to talk with somebody face to face where a lot of teams meetings, sometimes you may only have 30 minutes, does that change? Or has that changed kind of your approach your team's approach, when trying to establish that connection? To get the pain points from your customer and hear their needs?

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MJ Mrga: I guess it would help with kind of understanding what doing social media, looking up who the client is understanding what they like, whether there's interests or hobbies, whether they're a part of a chamber of commerce or, they play a golfing League. That's something that you have to kind of look at so then you can arrange your schedule, be a part of that commerce or Chamber of Commerce, do the

golf and meeting them that way. I think that's helped me quite a bit and just being a part of any networking type of conference or events that other companies may have. Conventions, you just have to be a part of, you have to be out there in order to meet that one client that you're looking to get a hold of.

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Tim Clagg: And taking the time to do that research to find what somebody is interested in, that goes a long way, because it shows that you care about what they're interested in. And who doesn't like to talk about themselves a little bit, right?

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MJ Mrga: Absolutely, absolutely. And that's why I always say, we're, we're part of a generation that is based on social media. So, you can find a lot about a person just by looking up social media or LinkedIn, reposting stories of what they found interesting and having a conversation just based on that.

10:58

Tim Clagg: And that's one thing I'm finding out, I'm still fairly new to the community, and the industry. And I'll tell you, I've been so impressed with just honestly how a tight-knit group they truly are and supporting one another. The cause to support and share each other's growth and accomplishments, kind of astounded me because sometimes in other industries, that's not always the case.

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MJ Mrga: Yeah, and you know what, knowing as many people as you can just to get out there and hoping that there's going to be referral in that type of industry, or in the same industry or outside of the industry, knowing someone will probably get you in the right path of getting to know that one person that you want to get to know. So, I think for myself, it hasn't been an issue, because I am kind of sociable, and it does help in sales.

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Tim Clagg: Absolutely, yeah, it's you mentioned something that I kind of want to talk about here a little bit more sales and marketing, they work closely together. What advice can you give listeners to leverage on digital marketing, their online presence that may help them in their company to lead to more sales, especially if it's somebody trying to in the commercial cleaning industry looking to lock down a contract.

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MJ Mrga: Listen, listening to the client, I think really listening to the client, and understanding what the needs are, instead of, I find that we're selling. In general selling before we actually know what the client really needs. So, listening to what some of the pain points are and really customizing a solution fit for them. And then bring that information back to marketing, you'll see a trend of what some of the issues are the pain points of the client, bringing it back to marketing, where they can do their job and put it on the social platforms, and speaking to those pain points a little bit more.

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Tim Clagg: A strong presence can go a long way, especially with a company in the commercial cleaning industry having to do their own independent research. So, if you guys share that data and put

it out there, your clients are going to see that they're going to retain that and then try and make those changes with their company. You mentioned something too, pain points. As we enter the Q4 of 2023, hard to believe it's already here. But what are some of the things from your clients that you're listening to, your hearing that might have popped up on the radar here as far as pain points that are being brought to your attention?

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MJ Mrga: Flexibility, a lot of clients are looking for flexible partner. Somebody who can adapt to their environment. For instance, let's take the office market, the commercial office market. They're working on a hybrid model. So, they need a scope that's adjusted for their new future, that's everybody's livelihood. Now they work from home and the office. So, bringing that solution to the client, because we see that, the scopes that the client does provide has been around since they've occupied that space. So it's, it's going back to the client and saying, hey, you know what, instead of doing it this way, we find that there's more traffic on these days and then adjusting the scope to their needs, and keep I on saying their needs, but it is their needs and that solution customized for them.

14:48

Tim Clagg: And kind of that's something that's interesting that you just brought up the hybrid model and that's something I've kind of started to see here in the last handful of months is commercial cleaning companies may be focusing on going to a four day work week. This is when we are the busiest, when our customer, the contract their busy days and they're getting the heaviest traffic where they're going to need more attention for us and our staff to come in and complete the tasks that we need to do. Is that something you think might catch on more here and as we get ready to head into 2024?

15:27

MJ Mrga: Oh, it's already been here. I think that a lot of companies do work on the hybrid model. And all of the competition, including whether it be mechanical, technical side, or janitorial, we've all had to be flexible and adapt to what the client's work schedules are. It's a new norm, I'd say.

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Tim Clagg: Things aren't always going to go according to plan. How do you handle customer complaints? Feedback? What guidance and points can you give listeners when these situations do pop up? Because they certainly will.

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MJ Mrga: Listen, don't be defensive. You're dealing with people, we're not dealing with robots. It's not perfect, this world is not perfect. So, listening to what they have to say, and coming up with an action plan and being proactive, and not reactive. I find that sometimes if we don't hear anything from a client, things aren't going well. Well, that's not necessarily true. So being in communication and contact with the client, ensuring that you take care of the problem prior to it actually happening. You have to be close with them, close with your staff, being that support system for them, ensuring that all the service levels are going to be met. So being proactive and listening, instead of reactive.

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Tim Clagg: and especially too, people hear the problem, and the wheels start spinning, right? We're a society where some people, a lot of people actually are trying to prepare their move, right, instead of being an active listener. What are some strategies, you know, that you work with, with your team to try and improve that listening skill overall, because I know, as a married man of five years, plus, I'm still always trying to improve my listening skills.

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MJ Mrga: I said just frequent meetings to sit down and, ensuring that all the services are being met, is extremely helpful. So having those KPI meetings, the items of topic that are important to the client, and ensuring that, we're tracking those items, and having a quarterly meeting, monthly meeting, whatever the clients are looking for, fit down and communicate even the hard topics. The hard conversations and, and really kind of attacking the pain points and ensuring that you're moving forward in a positive way. Really understanding what's going on, right? Whether it's even software, like the software of holding yourself accountable with the assistance of software, ensuring that tasks are being complete.

18:41

Tim Clagg: We're talking with MJ Mrga, MJ is the manager of business development for GDI services. And you had mentioned a little bit ago, we've mentioned hybrid model, the different look, that is the office environment now. It's changing, it's going to continue to change. Obviously, so many businesses hit hard by the pandemic, matter of fact, some places starting to have some re-issue mask mandates. How will this continue to impact your clients, the industry? And this time, If it does happen again, we think that there will be a more of a seamless transition, if that is the case.

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MJ Mrga: Well, you'd hope so. I'd hope so just because we've already been here before. So, you know, learning from what had happened initially when it first started and taking some notes then and providing some of the solutions now. I believe that we can be ahead of the game and ensuring that it is a seamless transition by learning from what had been prior so as being ahead of the game by, you know, whether it be services or the infectious touch points, ensuring that you're constantly doing those services and meeting those, those important tasks. I think we shouldn't be affected by it as much.

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Tim Clagg: One thing you just touched on, that I kind of want to dive a little bit further into is software in the industry, it is a more common thing. And what would that do for your clients and customers to better streamline their organization? What would be the biggest benefits? Based on the pain points that you've heard? I know, you mentioned organization. But what other things would they benefit from?

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MJ Mrga: Transparency? I think it just shows a level of transparency with the software's that are out there, accountability. For instance, you know, having our employees check off tasks, when they're completed. How long did it actually take them? Where are they in the building? Did they just check in, and then you can find them for the rest of the shift. So it's really showing the client a level of trust with the company and ensuring that, the transparency and honesty are there. And it's extremely important because clients these days, want to know what they're paying for. And providing reports and showing

exactly what topics they're, they're interested in, and we can show it in black and white that is positive feedback.

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Tim Clagg: Then you have that documentation too, to collaborate with absolutely that customer, that employee, and kind of build that trust that relationship, and continue to grow there. I think something that ties hand in hand, you and I kind of talked about it in our initial conversation was the growth and it's here, it's already continuing to grow. I use ChatGPT every day, now a \$90 billion tool that's out there. But the focus and growth of AI that could take the industry by storm, and really is taking the industry by storm here in the future.

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MJ Mrga: It's extremely important. It doesn't even just help the client, it helps us as the vendor with specific characteristics that these software developers are making. It's astounding to provide photo feedback and, open work orders and inventory levels that the current supplies is at. It's astounding, and it's extremely beneficial for both client and vendor. It keeps on developing, as you keep on saying something, always new is coming up, I have some of the software developers call me and say, "hey, you know, we're rolling out, geofencing, it's going to be active within the short timeframe." Honestly, I get blown away each time.

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Tim Clagg: GDI, approaching 100 years. So the growth has been exponential. Where do you guys see where are you focusing here in the future for your company, as you continue to expand and seek new opportunities for the future?

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MJ Mrga: That's a good question! I think just providing that little bit of service that we've always been providing for 100 years, and having those relationships within the industry, and moving towards providing more services to the client, understanding what their needs are. Anywhere from janitorial to the mechanical technical side, everything is now moving towards a digital type of system, like the clouds and, building more of a service, catering to that. The innovation is here, and we need to keep up with it and sharing, we're looking at our competitors and what they're doing and getting that feedback and, growing along the lines of that.

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Tim Clagg: And with that, too, obviously there's going to be some people who might be concerned or a little bit apprehensive. What have you heard as far as, okay, well, maybe my concern with going that route here is security. You know, that's always a big issue. Is that something that you've gotten any feedback or heard from any of your customers?

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MJ Mrga: Um, no, not as of yet. I think every it's always been kind of more of a positive feedback. I think. Clients are excited to see that transparency, understanding exactly what is going on and exactly what they're pairing They're paying for so I've so far, I haven't heard any of the issues with security as

of yet. But I believe with the software's that are out right now, that I think they're ahead of the game when it comes to security, ensuring that everything is up to par on that end.

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Tim Clagg: On a transition real quick, back to some sales things, kind of want to get some knowledge from you, as we kind of go back to the training aspect. How is it? And what is a great way to stay up to date for you guys with new techniques always trying to improve? Right? That's what we're all trying to do, whether it's in our jobs or our own lives outside of work. What are some things that you found some new techniques that can help in 2023, and pay off for you guys to continue to meet the needs and continue to improve the approach?

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MJ Mrga: That's a good question. I think really ensuring that we are looking at our competitors and seeing what their service offerings are. And taking it back to the team here and seeing how we can build from that and grow from that. Training, when it comes to even our frontline staff, I believe it's very important to ensure that, they're with the times even when it comes to robotics, the different apps that they have on their mobile devices. And, ensuring that there's a comfort there, I feel that the more you train, whether it be at an executive level to the frontline level, the more people train and understand, whether it be a new software or a piece of equipment, the more comfort there is, and the better the service becomes.

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Tim Clagg: Tremendous feedback and I do appreciate you I know it's been a busy week for you enjoying some vacation. We don't want to take up too much of your time. MJ, I do appreciate you coming by the show here, sharing your experience in sales, and giving us a look inside of GDI. How can possible customers or anybody looking for more information about the company, about your services, where can they find that information?

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MJ Mrga: Online [Laughs]! Just like we find everything else. Take a visit to www.gdi.com and you'll find everything you need there. If not, there's some contact information, and you can speak to one of our representatives.

27:32

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