

# Future Horizons: Dave Thompson on the Metaverse and Industry Advancements

## SPEAKERS

Dave Thompson, Tim Clagg

### **Tim Clagg** 00:00

Welcome to The Business of Cleaning podcast your number one source for 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. We have a very special guest today as we welcome the director of The Academy of Cleaning of Excellence, Dave Thompson. Fifty years of experience in the commercial cleaning industry, and he has been in every role in every position and we'll talk about that. So glad to have you on the show! What's the weather like in sunny Orlando, Florida this morning on this Monday?

### **Dave Thompson** 00:41

Very sunny, hot, and humid as it always is in May!

### **Tim Clagg** 00:46

Kind of the theme right now finally, we had a record month of rain here in the Midwest and now had to flip on the AC yesterday because it is in the 90s as well here. Dave, your journey started as a very, very young man in 1971 with a call to the principal's office. And I imagine you're thinking, "What did I do now?" What do you recall most from getting that call being page down to the principal's office at that time?

### **Dave Thompson** 01:18

Well, I was in class at the time, and it probably wasn't one of my better classes, and I was glad to get out of class. But getting called to the principal's office over the intercom is usually not the right way.

### **Tim Clagg** 01:31

And when you get there, you find out that the school custodian was going to be out for some time and you had the keys bringing them into the office. And that conversation went from just that conversation to you being the one, as a student in school, taking care of his responsibilities. Was that your first introduction to the industry? And what do you recall? I mean, a young man having those responsibilities kind of being thrown all thrown to the wolves, so to speak.

### **Dave Thompson** 02:08

Well, I wasn't the popular kid, in the school. Matter of fact, I was kind of the butt of a bunch of jokes, because I wasn't very aggressive. So you know, the thing is, I don't remember exactly, Tim, how I came to know. I do remember that in school, the heat was driven by a coal furnace. And so I had helped the custodian shovel coal into the coal bin and everything. And somewhere along the line, I guess I became friends with him. I don't really know for sure. I mean, you know, how do you know these things? How do you get started? You know, I've tried to remember, but it just wasn't there. But nonetheless, I became popular because I was the only kid who had keys to the school building and could get anywhere I wanted to. And I quickly learned that there's also a responsibility that comes with that. And so, whenever somebody says, "Oh, I'm a janitor. I'm a custodian." I said, yeah, well, you have a responsibility that goes along with that. So it's a very important position. Now, how did I know how to do cleaning? I don't know. But years later, my wife didn't believe that story. I mean, we went back there. We were on a motorcycle trip. We went there. It was a summer. I walked in, walked underneath the wood bleachers, that were still there, reached up, turned on the light, grabbed the dust mop, and turned around and looked at her and she was white, as a ghost!

**Tim Clagg** 03:45

She tried calling you on your bluff, and you were spot on my friend.

**Dave Thompson** 03:49

You know, it was still in the same place. Everything was right. And, it was just an automatic thing. It was there the way it should have been. And that was well, we won't talk about how many years later that was.

**Tim Clagg** 04:02

And you have worked in every sector, every partisan, starting as a frontline worker, transitioning to sales, owning your own business. Now, as a consultant, and a teacher, how have all these experiences during your journey helped you understand each of those roles, and their importance to what you're currently doing?

**Dave Thompson** 04:25

You know, I think that's one of the interesting things about careers. We don't plan most of them. There are a series of things that happen and as they happen, they fit but I will say that I kind of had a method to the madness, if you will. Sometimes I can guarantee you it was madness. But I did I went from you know, doing that cleaning along with, you know, a full-time job. I soon realized that the full-time job was not making the money that my part-time job was because my dad happened to be a councilman in the local city. And he said, well, City Hall needs to be cleaner, the contracts coming up. So, I had to start up a business to get the contract. And I quit my full-time job and started doing that. And then another gentleman came along and said, hey, I'd like for you to run my company. Well, I won't tell you all the bad things that happened. But let's say the good thing is I learned a whole lot in the next four years. And then I said, well, I need to change. And it did something that most people would never actually think of doing. I left center, left Tulsa, and went to St. Louis, never been there before in my life didn't know anything. So, you're looking at a city like St. Louis, how do you find a job? So, I went and interviewed janitorial supply houses. It's not something that normally people would do for you to find a job, but I went and interviewed them. And the whole idea was, I went in and said, I'm a cleaning

contractor, I'm just coming into town. And the one that treated me the best, I went back to them and said, I need a sales job with you. Well, two companies later, and 35 years of selling janitorial supplies in the Missouri rural area of Missouri, I got the opportunity to move down here to Florida, and then take all of that knowledge, all of that skill, all of the, you know, working hand in glove with end users, all of that, and then go into what my passion was. And that's helping people. And I do it continually now through Well, yeah, it was interesting. One guy said the other day, he said, Professor Dave-

**Tim Clagg** 06:58

Was that the first time? Or what does it feel like to be called that? Did it kind of take you back a little bit by surprise?

**Dave Thompson** 07:08

I won't say it did. But it was there's been many people along the path that have said that in joking, in jest, and you know, and you're having fun with it. But I guess that was the first time the guy just walked up. He never met me before. And just that was his first professor Dave and that and so you know, I guess now I have a moniker that I put up. And I'm, you know, I'm a custodial professor, when somebody says, who are you? What do you do? I'm a custodial Professor now.

**Tim Clagg** 07:36

And you have a great analogy watching. You speak at conferences online, that you came up with about commercial cleaning workers relating to bees, can you go ahead and share that analogy with this? Because it did stop me dead in my tracks, thinking about it, analyzing it. And really, it was spot on.

**Dave Thompson** 08:02

Like, you know, the thing about it is, is, you know, there's a lot of little things in our world that we don't give credit to. And when it comes to food, which of course, I mean, everybody needs food, I don't care what nationality, what planet, part of the planet you're on. But it's BS, without BS, there is no food. Absolutely. And everybody goes, well, you know, I'm a vegetarian, I'm vegan, or I, you know, I believe in beef or whatever, I don't care. None of that, including ourselves, can survive without bees. And so what I do is I think about this, you know, and I have a good friend in the industry that, you know, says a few different things. And I think we all repurpose things. No, we don't.

**Tim Clagg** 08:48

Yep. apps every day. Yes. And,

**Dave Thompson** 08:50

you know, one of the things that he and I have always agreed on, is that we are the frontline defenders of health. We are truly the frontline defenders of health. They say that right? I want to make sure everybody understands that. Because without us, the hospitals, and the clinics could not keep up with the influx of sick people. We protect the health of people and we're not saying like BS, we go about our job, we do what we need to do, but without us, the world would not survive.

**Tim Clagg** 09:34

Think about that. That's deep. Your passion comes through because this topic, in particular, is so dear to you because working in the industry, especially as a frontline worker during your time, you developed asthma, acute asthma at a very young age and that's stuck with you and affected your day-to-day life.

**Dave Thompson** 09:55

Well, Tim, the worst part of that is, you know, I mean Yes, I did it to myself. And this was in the 80s. When we were running our floor care business, we did over 50. Walmart's in the state of Oklahoma at the time. And we'd put down chemical stripper to strip the floors. And then we would run to the back of the building because we couldn't breathe. And we'd have to wait for a while and make folks I got to tell you that was back in the day, when they locked you in the building. You locked in, you're locked in at 10 p.m., and they let you out at seven o'clock in the morning. So, you're talking about these are 10-hour nights, of breathing all of these fumes from the stripper. Now, as I'm saying this, just to show you how old I am. OSHA was only five years old. So, nobody knew what was happening to us there was you have OSHA, you have people that understand these things. Now, in those days, we didn't, we were and I have been the guinea pig. Unfortunately, Tim, the worst part of that story, I have 50 people who depended on me, and I was the owner, and I told them what to do. And what I did to my health, I am sure that I did it to them. And it's something that weighs heavy on my chest every day.

**Tim Clagg** 11:19

And that's where the passion comes from, especially in this particular topic, and we're going to get into employees and why they're the number one priority, we're going to get into that here a little bit later, during our conversation, something so simple as a company's reputation goes a long way in determining whether you're successful, or you're closing the doors very quickly in the industry, what specific factors Dave, contribute to helping you build and maintaining that's the most important part, once you've established that reputation, it's been able to maintain that positive reputation in the commercial cleaning industry, what are some of the key strategies that you've seen and developed during your tenure?

**Dave Thompson** 12:03

Well, you know, I think the thing about it is, hey, I mean, we're in the year 2024, come on, if you don't have a website, you're not a viable business anymore. It's just kind of the way it is back in my day, you had to have Yellow Pages, you had to have an ad in the Yellow Pages, you know, the bigger the ad in the Yellow Pages, the more that you were a business. So, it's one thing to say stuff. And I teach this in class all the time. You know, they know you're a cleaning business. Don't say you wash windows, don't say you clean toilets. That's the reason they came to you in the first place. Tell them what they want to hear. Well, you know, we make your place look beautiful. Come on. Everybody knows you do that. Right? What's the real thing? What's the thing? And I think you said that what's the passion that drives your business that makes you different from the other cleaner companies in the world? And I think the thing is, you have to realize here is we're in the service business. Anybody that's in the service business, listening to me today, I think will agree, that if you don't have the people, you don't have a business. So really what it is that keeps people employed and keeps your reputation is how those people feel about your company.

**Tim Clagg** 13:25

And they're the ones to that the employees that are seen every day at these sites, the interactions they have on-site with the customer, building that trust building that relationship, because you they're the ones that are there every day, numerous times through the week. So, building that rapport and building that trust is vital.

**Dave Thompson** 13:46

Oh, absolutely. I mean, without them. I mean, they're the frontline people. They're not just your frontline cleaners that do the work. They are, you're face to your company, you're just you're just in the background, you're just an entrepreneur, you're just the one that pulls the strings and makes all these things happen. Without you, it wouldn't exist. I understand that I get it. But without them, you have no business because you can only do so much. And I think that's where most entrepreneurs get caught. Because they start you know, like any cleaning business, Tim, we all start small. We're doing it ourselves. We're doing everything we're doing the bucks. We're doing all of it. At some point. We have to step back and let them do it. But we don't realize they're more important than you.

**Tim Clagg** 14:35

Yes, they are. And it's a simple concept that a lot of people forget about. I want to ask you while we're in the conversation of reputation, let's say a little roleplay. A company has just struggled with what steps should they take responding effectively and efficiently to a negative reputation or Negative reviews, how important is it to get out on front in front of that, and try to really turn that around quickly, especially if you are in a competitive market?

**Dave Thompson** 15:11

Well, negative reviews demand your attention. They don't go away. I think here's one of the things that I was taught at a very, very early age, I was working in a 24-hour grocery store. And the manager came in every the morning to review our work from the night. And he grabbed me by the ear. And he hauled me to the back of the store. Now this was in front of my employees. And I'm like, you know, this was embarrassing. Wow. But I was younger, he was older, and I was taught to respect my elders. And apparently, he had a mission, and he had something I needed to learn. And boy, did I learn it. Oh, man, I still remember today. And it had to be well over 40 years ago.

**Tim Clagg** 16:05

Wow. What was the lesson? Yeah, right.

**Dave Thompson** 16:09

What was the lesson that he still remembers, after 40 years, he pointed to some milk the, in the cooler there. He said, You know, when a lady walks out of here, with a bad gallon of milk, if she talks to me, and gives me a chance, I'll make it right, I'll pay attention. But when she leaves, and it's bad, and she never says anything, to me, I don't have a chance to make it right. Because what she's going to say is more important to everybody else than what I have to say. And so he said, I'm giving you the opportunity here to correct something so that I don't give you a bad reputation. I've never forgotten it my entire life reputation, when you're in the cleaning industry, is what those people out there every night that people see. And the performance that they give? I mean, what they do speaks almost louder than what they say. It'll speak volumes. But that's the problem with entrepreneurs in the cleaning industry.

We don't listen, because we're not paying attention to the people that you know, I hear this all the time. We can't send them in for class. We're too busy. We got to lost this many employees getting some more problems or focusing on the wrong thing. You're focusing on the cleaning and the people.

**Tim Clagg** 17:33

Yeah, and without the people, the business goes away, you shut the doors very quickly. safety protocol, how does a company cleaning company's reputation for safety protocols, and compliance with regulations now more than ever affect its relationship with clients who are now also more aware of safety protocols since 2020? How has that relationship? Have you seen that develop in the last step for four and a half years now?

**Dave Thompson** 18:03

We have millions of infection prevention experts in the world now. Yes, we do. We do. We listened to Dr. Fauci For how many months in a row? The thing about it is is people think they know something. And this is the problem with our industry as a whole. I will just say it that way. I'm not saying everybody in the industry. Don't get me wrong, folks. I'm not trying to talk to you particularly. But I hear this all the time. I see it every time in class when students come in here to class. We think we know. But where did we actually learn what to do? Did we actually learn the safety protocols? No. I didn't learn those. I just did it. And so the thing is, who are we learning from somebody that really knows these safety protocols? Or somebody who saw some advertising and thought it was a great thing? I mean, you know, I know I'm gonna step on some toes here. But, you know, this, this misleading information about this wonderful disinfection device called an electrostatic sprayer was the biggest first or was in the cleaning industry over the last few years. Because it's not a disinfection device is simply an application of a disinfectant. But marketing and money and all of this got involved. And so now today, what are we left with? We're gonna leave with people that were misled. They believed 100%. And so now are the safety protocols that they're talking about? Correct. And this is why continuing education from a professional source like ours here, you know, I'm a third-party certification organization. I have no responsibilities to anybody except for the health of the frontline worker. That is the only thing I'm here for, if I protect their health, I protect everybody else's house. So, you know, learn from somebody that actually has skin in the game, actually taking care of health and I guarantee it with COPD now on \$700 a month for one medication, I can guarantee you, I do know.

**Tim Clagg** 20:21

And you lead right in my next topic, which is certification. In today's industry certification is vital. I can't express it enough.

**Dave Thompson** 20:33

I wish that I wish everybody thought that though. Tim.

**Tim Clagg** 20:38

Can you break it down? Dave, what certifications do you recommend having? And how has it now become a not only must-have but a basic necessity for cleaners and companies?

**Dave Thompson** 20:55

Well, I think the thing about it is anybody can put up a certification on their website, I have a certificate that says this. And you know, I have people that call us here at the academy and go, Hey, we you know, these people have a certificate from you. I'm Grant, I'm very grateful that they called us and gave us an opportunity to talk with them about it. But does it certify performance. It certifies their ability and their knowledge. And I think that's where when you're looking for a certification, what type of certification and what is the reality of what you're going to do with that? Do you want it just for a piece of paper or shingled hanging on your website? Or do you want it to actually set a part of safety protocols and processes? You I think it's interesting how people walk in and they have these cell phones, right? This is a cell phone. This is a \$1,400 computer that's in your hand and is almost in the handle of almost every frontline technician. But yet, when it comes to the equipment and the tools and the processes, they haven't changed them in 2030 5080 years, folks, it's time to wake up. Certifications today need to focus on advancement, they need to focus on using new technology. I've been listening to the History Channel the other night. And they're the foods that built America, the cars that built America. And if anybody's moving forward, they're using technology. They're not using the same technology that they did 80 years before. Yeah, I think that's where cleaning companies today need to look for the certifications that move them forward using current processes and technology. Some of it is very, very basic. But I'll tell you this, you know, Tim, there is probably not one class in a month that I teach. That hasn't changed from the previous month. That's progressive, yes. Certification.

**Tim Clagg** 23:07

And what are the differences? Especially there are various niches across the industry, such as working cleaning for healthcare facilities, and food service establishments. How do certifications vary across the board for those specific niches in general?

**Dave Thompson** 23:29

I'm not a big fan of nit-n niche certifications. I'm really, I'm really not until somebody understands the basic principles. I mean, I asked somebody when they come into class, would you please define me clean? He would think that's a very basic simple question. But I get all kinds of answers. And the problem is we don't understand what clean means. It's not using a disinfectant. It's not what you use, it's what the outcome is the result of what you're doing. And so before we can get into this, these niches, we need to understand what the basics are. I mean, people don't understand what the pH of a product means. And what is its result and its impact on your health. Yes. So how can I as a health care worker, back to your niche, you know, in a health care establishment, how can I understand the protocols and the severity of the protocols I need to follow? If I don't understand the basics first. And so much of the time we're concerned with certifying us for a healthcare operation, and I see that quite often. But we don't understand what the basics are. And so this is why we have onboarding programs. Many, many, many cleaners go out every day and do not understand the basics, because we take no time, for them to understand. So the first certification I'm gonna tell Tim, is they have to have the basic understanding. And this isn't something that usually the cleaning contractor or the in-house operation is really qualified to provide. Because they don't have it.

**Tim Clagg** 25:23

Yeah, it's hard to train somebody when you don't even have that certification yourself. Wow. Right, right.



**Dave Thompson** 25:29

Absolutely. We don't even understand that I ask business owners that come in here for a Master's class, the first question on the first day, define a claim. Give me a process, that you have to do this job. These have 400 employees, and they don't have a process of how to do the job. That tells me that as big as an organization is they are lacking in a process. So what is not being done? They don't even have to have a basic understanding. It's all about Well, we went out and did the job. The customer was happy we moved on. And that's all we have the time for.

**Tim Clagg** 26:08

And you just mentioned something important factor right there time? Well, we don't have time for it. Well, you got to make time for it.

**Dave Thompson** 26:17

So the thing about it is, do you know, what the average cost of retraining, rehiring and putting another person in a place that just left

**Tim Clagg** 26:27

I did see some numbers. It's bringing in new employees around I want to say 2500 - \$3,000?

**Dave Thompson** 26:36

You better get you better get with the program, my friend. It's a whole lot more than that. To bring in somebody and replace now I remember when you bring on somebody replacing somebody else. Right. And now you're going to replace them with this person, and you got to bring them up to speed just to where the person was whenever they left. And then hopefully, you'll retain them. So you don't have to continue to do that over again. \$30,000.

**Tim Clagg** 27:06

Just for one, that's one person, imagine a company that's struggling and let's say goes through this cycle 510 times a year.

**Dave Thompson** 27:16

So well, yeah, I mean, you know, I know some I know, some cleaning operations. And I'm talking to folks here, not just contractors, I'm talking in-house as well that have 100% turnover in a year. What does that cost? Yeah, and I love the I see a lot of things, right? We're all on LinkedIn, and we follow all the media, right? Yeah, how much they don't have the time, because we're so busy trying to put another person in to replace the last person. You know. And, you know, I love the fact that people come and say, Well, you know, what, if I train them, then what happens when they leave? Well, what happens if they stay?

**Tim Clagg** 27:56

Exactly.

**Dave Thompson** 27:59



And that's the problem that that happens. Whenever you don't have you know, I think it's interesting as I look at it, you know, some of our courses here, average courses, 200 bucks, just think about it, you're going to bring this person on, you know nothing about another and they say they can claim and you haven't tested them, you haven't done anything. And you're going to give them the keys to this building. And you're giving them 1000s of dollars of tools. And you can't spend \$200 to train them. Yeah, that shows where, our passion lies.

**Tim Clagg** 28:46

And it's not with the person putting that business in front of number one, which is your employees. Dave, one thing I've gathered from speaking with you is you are very passionate, very involved with our youth, and have worked with them a lot during the course of your career, shutting the light with them on what the industry does. Where did that passion for our youth come from? From you?

**Dave Thompson** 29:14

Well, you know, as I've aged through my career, I've been able to go to some different schools and look at how are you going to, I mean, have you as a cleaner as an entrepreneur that's listening today? Have you ever gone to the local school and bid part of Career Day? I have. Now just think about how are you going to go to a career day for a bunch of sixth graders. And then take it to make cleaning? Exciting. You're not going to do it by using a spray bottle in Iraq. Right. Okay, so think about this, if this is what you're doing for your current employees, how are you making it engaging? How are you making it? Fun? You have to think outside the box. And I guarantee you, the youth will push you in your mental boundaries. So what did I do I use technology.

**Tim Clagg** 30:20

Yeah, absolutely.

**Dave Thompson** 30:23

There where our youth lives. And who's putting them there, the adults are putting them into technology. They're using technology. So if you're not using technology, you are not inspiring the people that are there. And as I've grown older in my career, hey, I got to realize that there's going to be someday that somebody's going to take care of me, and they're not going to be my age, they're going to be younger. So who do I want to help, I want to help the younger people so that when I get to that point and needed, I need the right kind of help them.

**Tim Clagg** 30:55

And that goes hand in hand with the aging workforce overall, in this industry average age, is in the mid-50s 55-56. Ish. So what you're doing is creating opportunities for that next generation of cleaners. What steps, you know, can be taken, that you've seen, to attract youth to fill these essential roles, whether it's as a frontline worker, whether it's getting management experience, maybe being a manager, maybe being a business owner, ensuring that you know, the sustainable future of the industry is in good hands. Because that's, you know, you hear the phrase, any job or even a coach, I want to leave this business, I want to leave that position better than what I found it in.

**Dave Thompson** 31:45

Well, I think any of us who have stayed around the career as long as I have feels that same way. We want to leave a good legacy to it. And when we're in our younger days in the career, we don't want to give any thought to that, you know, for obvious reasons, right? But I will say it's how are you going to leave that? You know, I had one of my customers ask me who's going to replace you when you're gone. It makes you stop and think what are you doing now that will continue your after you leave this career? Well, I want that message to be, it always has been and will always be no matter, what the results are of what we do. There isn't only one thing that is valuable to every person on the planet. And we have to recognize that it's our health. COVID did that for us in big ways, good, bad, and indifferent. But if there's any one thing that we take out of that it's that health is the number one thing, of course, I've always realized that because of the exposures and the roughness I've had from my health. And probably you hear me talk in spurts because it's hard for me to breathe even still here today. That being said, what we need to do is to focus on this one thing, how am I going to as the guy said, a professor of cleaning now profess the right thing? And what is that to take care of your health? So a professor that I learned from gave me a great clue one time and he said, Are you having trouble keeping your people engaged in class? I said yes. He said You need to use Kahoot built games. Yep. And put it in there. And it changed the dynamics. Totally. I use it all the time. We use I use it in conferences where I go during COVID. I was using it on Zoom calls like this with 100 students on it at one time. Yes, it was a challenge for me. I'm a little guy. I don't know how to use all of this. But I've taken that and you know, now after eight years of podcasting have my own podcast and ones like with you here, Tim, you know, these are things that I do to bring technology in. Whenever COVID hit. We had a studio already built. We had the cameras, we had the TV, we had the connections we were already practiced in it. I mean, when everything shut down, we were going we were ready the next day. We were ready when it happened. What are you going to be ready for when the next thing happens? And I think as an entrepreneur, if you're listening to this, this is your job. How are you going to take your operation and move it forward? You have to understand it's about those people. How do they learn? I did one the other day it's called general generational communication. We are dealing with Five different generations of people in the cleaning industry. And you darn well better know how to communicate with all of them effectively and be able to navigate between them. Or you're missing the big thing. I think this is back to that person who's shoveling people in and shoveling them out. Now, training and certification is the last thing on the list. It's the afterthought, right, folks, that needs to be the first thought.

**Tim Clagg 35:28**

You raised a tremendous point there, Dave, about the five generations, that just kind of made me stop and think because each generation as you've figured out in your classes, your travels, how I communicate with somebody my age, is different than somebody 510 years younger than me somebody 510 20 years older than me, and knowing how to efficiently and effectively communicate because what is in message A, to the younger generation, if I try relaying that same message, the translation is going to be lost into that older generation. So that's a vital point.

**Dave Thompson 36:12**

You know, the thing is, if you look at what people call, quality control surveys, and there are all kinds of different words for these online apps to use to verify that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing and everything. And, you know, I completely turn it upside down. Most generations don't want to be beaten over the head about what they're doing wrong. I will tell you, folks, if you're listening to my voice

today, everybody knows what they're doing wrong. You don't have to tell them. What you do have to tell them is what they're doing. Right. Right. So if you use your survey program, whatever it is that you have, as a reward program, just think of this, will you get more reward? If you keep rewarding people? Or do you not get rewards when you keep beating them over the head about what they did wrong? You know, what you're gonna get what the old saying is you reap what you sow 100% of us. So reward and you so positive, you're going to get more of that. So whenever you're looking at your frontline workers, how do we maintain keeping them employed? You know, it's through engagement. And I guarantee you that whenever I started using Kahoot, there is hardly a generation today that doesn't carry one of these. We're all using them. So when I start one of my presentations you mentioned at a conference, in the first minute, I tell everybody to take it out. Oh, you know, people don't want to take it out. They're afraid you're gonna get hit with oh, it's something bad. I say, take it out, turn it on, we're gonna use it. Do you take away the negative? Yeah. And now what do you get, get the positive. Folks, if you will do this with your people, you will start getting them to engage and to listen and to be a part of, and I've done this in the crowds of 300 custodians. In a whole auditorium, it's great to see how there are people that sit back and they're not going to do it. You're not going to do that. By the third question. Everybody's trying to figure out how to do it. So you might only have 50, to start for the first question. But by the time you get through, you'll probably two-thirds of that 300 are engaged with you, and a part of you by the time you play the second Kahoot during the presentation, everybody's there. It's a wonderful thing. And you build that positive. And I mean, it can't help but have fun. I mean, the passion just comes through, you enjoy it.

**Tim Clagg 38:48**

We're talking with Dave Thompson, director of the Academy of cleaning excellence for over 50 years in the commercial cleaning industry. And you're very knowledgeable at technology and staying ahead of the curve. I know you said well for an old guy like me, but speaking with you, you know what's going on, first of all, and you're one step ahead of the game, and technology in this industry, obviously right now. The big thing last year and a half, two years, everything AI It's a never-ending learning experience with technology. One of the resource companies is starting to get more involved with, obviously chat GPT but you're going one step further, Dave, you are leaping literally into the metaverse for a new interactive way of learning. How will this change the way things are done in the industry? Not only education for certification but for even you look at the training aspect because you and I talked like I'm from come from a racing background. The motorsports simulators they have nowadays I feel like it's just a matter of time before there's a setup similar to that, but being trained on how to run a specific piece of equipment for the commercial cleaning industry.

**Dave Thompson 40:20**

Well, there's a whole lot in what you just said there. Thank you for paying attention. And yes, you're right. We have already folks here at the Academy. We have jumped into the metaverse. So if you go to our website, you will find that you can jump into the metaverse right now. You can do it through your phone, your laptop, your desktop computer, or VR if you want. And you can actually stroll through the gallery of courses. So just like you would walk into an art gallery, Tim, you can walk through the gallery, look at the pictures on the wall, click on them, and they usually have a video. And if you're interested, you can actually go to the link and go right to the course. There's nobody else in our industry that I know right here while we're broadcasting this today, that is doing this today. That's not changing

anything. There's nobody really using it. I have a few people here in there. Is it making a big splash? No. But just like with every other technology, the people who are operating it have to learn. And I think that's where I'm at right now. I have to learn what a lot of the youngsters know already. They're already there. This is where they live. So back to the youth. If we in the cleaning industry are going to bring the youth into this industry. Wake up get with it. This is where they're at. Now to your simulator. That's even jumping way further. I was talking to the metaverse. So tomorrow, Tim, just as we're having to be taping this. Tomorrow. I have another lecture in my lecture hall in the metaverse. I have already people from the Netherlands Chile, Argentina from Hawaii, and several people from the United States are all joining in to the lecture hall. And it looks just like it works just like a lecture hall. If you go to a conference, everybody sits in their chair. You listen to the lecture, you can raise your hand I can talk with you. We can have questions, but all of these people. So what is the metaverse the metaverse is simply an artificial universe outside the one you're sitting in right now today. That's all it is. Zoom stream yard all of our streaming is simply a step towards that. And here folks, I want to tell you also while you're listening to this, it has nothing to do with the Facebook meta that just was an after Metaverse long before that came about. So don't Don't be Miss misguided here that the two are the same. They are not. And so what did I have to do, Tim? I spent two years learning about the metaverse so that I could put together my gallery of courses so I could put together the lecture hall. What does that teach me? A whole lot of things. And I can use those in my classes. Because the person from the Netherlands I talked with just before we got on here, says I can't come to Orlando. How can I learn from you? How can I get a certification? Join us in the lecture hall tomorrow we'll talk about it.

**Tim Clagg 43:59**

It's going to change the way things are done it already is starting to happen. Dave, when did you when you first learned about this? What immediately went off and triggered this movement in your head? What did you learn to say you don't want we have a chance to do something big do something that hasn't been done. And I'm going to have to work at it. But I think it's something that's really going to change the way training and certifications and just education in the industry. When did you put all those pieces to the puzzle?

**Dave Thompson 44:40**

Well, the thing about it is I as a professor providing the education and put the curriculum together. I have to learn to I have to continually be looking and searching and I think that's part of just being a good business person. You have to do that. So what do I know? I'll So know that there is a company in England that has put together I should not say even though I think they're Germany actually. And they put together glasses that you can that you're going to be able to wear. That as you do it, it'll quality check. And the glasses will tell you, you haven't done it right, or you need to do this. All of this stuff, this AI that you mentioned, Tim is coming out, you just need to be there. And the problem with the cleaning industry, as you probably know, is we're very, very, very slow to adapt to anything change. I mean, you would think that, well, we're still trying to get people to quit using a sloppy, dirty, filthy, nasty, ugly mop. You know, we can't get him to change that now. Hey, folks, I know some of you said, I'm using microfiber, and thank you very much. But, you know, why do we still have to tell people to change these things? Because this is the way humans work. Change is heart. So what am I having to do I needed to learn what is going on. Because my learners have a life that's happening. Yeah, the thing that you have to understand here is we're teaching adults, when they walk into my classroom, life is going on, in more

ways than I would then I even have any idea, I have to be forward thinking I have to be doing something different. I can't be just talking about how to mop a floor or how to clean a toilet. There has to be something real, more tangible than that. And when you can bring more technology in this inspires people to be a part of it because it's not the same thing. So if you're training programs, which skills training and knowledge are two different things, folks, they're totally different. They have to understand why they're doing and this is the underlying thing of everything I do, Tim, we are not getting people to understand why. Why am I on the metaverse I need to be able to put somebody on a \$16,000 writing auto scrubber to learn that machine and everything about it and how to use it before I ever want to give them the key to actually run on the physical unit? That's where we need to go. But you know, we're slow to get there. So I got to get them into that Metaverse on their computer, their laptop where they live right now before I could ever get them to go to that simulator.

**Tim Clagg** 47:42

Another great tool, I think at this, you mentioned life. everybody's situation is different. And yeah, you know, I like giving people the freedom to select what courses they think are, you know, going to be beneficial for them their certifications, but being able to go at their own pace, rather than Oh, man, you know, I've got to get this done in a month or something like that, just using that timeframe as an example. But being able, being able to develop and learn at your own pace instead of feeling pressure sometimes like you do the traditional route.

**Dave Thompson** 48:22

You know, and I think that's the thing the gentleman from the Netherlands this morning. He says I need floor care certification. That was the way he started the conversation. I said which one? Stone VCT LV carpet. He goes to all of them. I go there individual classes, and many organizations that are in the same sphere what I do, lump everything together. And the problem is, is that learners can't learn everything together. They came to us for a reason, because they don't have the knowledge, if what you're providing to them really has a lot of value, and it's different. And it and we're involving them. At least I feel that frontline learner needs to learn things in small bites. I mean, think of it. I mean, does anybody watch a YouTube video for longer than two minutes?

**Tim Clagg** 49:16

Not anymore.

**Dave Thompson** 49:19

I mean, look, even at TV, everything is broken down into clips, we watch a little bit and then we get away from it. Then we watch a little bit we get away from it, folks, you've got to understand how people learn. This isn't cramming something into them, so that I can say, oh, yeah, oh, we did it. And then watch them struggle through a test. Because that's not learning. That's just simply getting a certification. And I think that's where I differ from some of the other certification programs. I break out everything so that you can take it as your life will let you absorb the information.

**Tim Clagg** 49:59

You mentioned the industry being a little bit slow to change just because of what has always worked in the past. Well, it leads me to an old saying, If it ain't broke, don't fix it, right? But it's been broken. How

can you use this to introduce them to kind of show them? This is not only here and now, but will be here for the future to get them pointed in the right direction and adapt.

**Dave Thompson 50:28**

Well, that's why we're doing the deal in the metaverse, those who want to come in and give it a shot can learn. And all of the lectures in the metaverse are going to be free. You're gonna be about an hour-long introduction, introductory type information. So you can learn a whole lot of things, and we're gonna have fun with it. I mean, you're the one that we did last month, the person ran around the room, couldn't find a seat couldn't figure out how to get there. Okay, but they were there. They were in the room, they just, you know, okay. It'll take some time. But that's part of learning. That's learning a skill as well as how to clean. Yes, folks, if you're listening to this, I can guarantee you the first time I went in here to the metaverse, I was lost. I guarantee I'm still not proficient in everything. But I'm learning. And that's what we're talking about learning is finding out why you have to understand why we're there to begin with. We're here to learn. It's not to get the end result. It'll take us some time. So I think the thing here is whenever you're learning a skill, you I say this from y'all about somebody that wanted to get into Metaverse, he goes well how to do it. I said, what's been your introduction to it? And the only the first thing everybody thinks of is oh, I saw that commercial with they had the VR and they were running into the TV and all that. I said, No, no, no. That is VR in the metaverse. But you can use the metaverse from your computer, never get out of your chair, and use your mouse just like you do now. So that's where we're at. Because we have to, if you will crawl before we couldn't walk, walk before we can run, eventually, yes, we'll get you up into a VR headset. And we're doing that I'm already working with people on those programs so that when you're ready, we'll be ready. But we're not there yet. And that's the beautiful thing about the last part of my career here, though, man is taking all of the knowledge. I'm going back to what you asked earlier, Tim, taking everything I've learned all of the paths and everything that's happened in my career, and now looking to the future, so that when I leave. It's in the metaverse for that next generation that'll be coming along. I wrote a book several years ago called The New Generation of cleaning. I put my granddaughter on the front page. She is the new generation of cleaning. She just turned 16 last year.

**Tim Clagg 53:08**

Wow. David, I have to ask you, you just hit on something. They're talking about your goals for the metaverse, but I kind of want to ask you something a little deeper. You've been around 50 years, what do you what is? What does Dave Thompson want his legacy to be? When you are done in this industry? What would you hope that your legacy is?

**Dave Thompson 53:30**

That I protected people's health. That is that early issue that has lived with? I'm sorry, I'm gonna get emotional. That has lived with me for 50 for 40 years. I did that to those people. It's never left me. I can deal with what I did to myself. What's the hardest thing in life to deal with? And the last thing I want to be remembered is taking care of somebody's health, because folks, these people rely on us as the entrepreneurs as the managers. They rely on us to do the right thing for them. They're just trying to make a living for themselves and their family. And if you can do anything, is to make sure that you protect the health of the person that's working for you. I don't care what is happening. That is the most



important part of your job. And if you want to have a reputation, be known for that. And that's what I want to be known for.

**Tim Clagg** 54:37

Absolutely Powerful. Dave, I want to thank you for coming to this month's episode. teaching us about the metaverse as a training ground a resource as a tool. Putting your employees first and also working with the use youth the generation is here. They are the ones they're the they're the now They are the future of this industry. Where can people find your website online? And as well as following you on social media channels?

**Dave Thompson** 55:10

Well, you can get to almost everything I do through our website, Academy of Cleaning.com. At the header, you'll find our live classes and our online classes. You scroll down through there, you'll find the metaverse on there that is available to you right now. So you can go through all the courses, as we talked about. You know, we're, I think we have a YouTube channel with over 650 videos on it, I'm sure that you can get a lot of learning information there. Remember, learning is one thing. That is why you have to know why you're doing something before you actually can put that into skill training is putting the whys into skill. So basically, I look at it this way. The online classes are for learning. The in-person courses are for skills. You know, I have people that take the online course. And then they come into the in-person class for the skills so they can get that hands-on. But we're doing it at all levels. And I think that's what we're talking about today, Tim, you know, you're using social media. We're using all of these avenues. Just join us.

**Tim Clagg** 56:29

Dave, I appreciate your time. It has been a fun conversation, eye-opening and a lot of learning. And I'm very grateful for you to come on this program with us.

**Dave Thompson** 56:42

I have to ask you a question here to leave on a higher note. Do you ever clean a gold-plated toilet?

**Tim Clagg** 56:49

I can't say that I have.

**Dave Thompson** 56:50

Have you ever seen one?

**Tim Clagg** 56:54

I can't say that I have done that either.

**Dave Thompson** 56:58

Well, I have and a gold-plated toilet folks is a lot easier to clean than you might think. All you have to have is a cotton diaper. And jewelers rouge!

**Tim Clagg** 57:11



I would not have guessed that and where did you clean this?

**Dave Thompson** 57:19

I had to reach back in those days because I was working in Tulsa, Oklahoma. And I was at one of the oil barons' penthouse. And in his penthouse, there was a Black Onyx and marble, everything. But he had a gold-plated toilet gold fixtures knobs gold door handle and a Waterford Crystal Chandelier are some things in the cleaning industry.

**Tim Clagg** 57:50

And that is certainly one of them a great story that will conclude this month's edition of the Business of Cleaning podcast Be sure to subscribe to us on Spotify, Apple podcasts, Amazon 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, our guest, Dave Thompson. I'm Tim Clagg saying so long. Until next time!