

Sweeping Success: A Cop's Transition to Cleaning Industry Leadership

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SPEAKERS

Tim Clagg, Dr. Ian Charlery

Tim Clagg 00:01

Janitorial Manager presents The Business of Cleaning Podcast, the podcast that brings you the information you need to be successful in the cleaning industry. The Business of Cleaning Podcast provides in depth interviews with successful personalities from the commercial cleaning industry, as well as discussing the trending topics that matter to you and your organization, welcome into 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 Communications Specialist here at Janitorial Manager and your host of The Business of Cleaning Podcast. We kick off the new year talking with our friend Dr. Ian Charlery, owner of A1 Cleaning Services in the Cayman Islands and recently named as ISSA's 30 emerging leaders under the age of 40. It's great to have you on board. We've been talking since, gosh, this summer, able to meet at ISSA, but I want to congratulate you again on that amazing accomplishment, Ian.

Dr. Ian Charlery 01:14

Thank you. Thank you for having me. It's a real pleasure to be here, to speak to you. I just saw you in Vegas. Here we are now, we're having some good times. I'm loving it.

Tim Clagg 01:24

And we're glad to have you on the show too because your path into the cleaning industry, it's very unique and a great story overall, how you got to this point and how you've been so successful so far. I want to start back, your prior career. You were a police officer for 11 years, correct?

Dr. Ian Charlery 01:47

Correct. Well, I was a police officer for eight years, and then I was a trade officer, which is a law enforcement officer for businesses, for three years.

Tim Clagg 01:56

How did this career, that prior career, help you develop your leadership skills because your community involvement, the conversations you're having to have. I mean, it is probably the most difficult job in the world. I couldn't do it. It takes very special individuals to do it. How did that career shape your leadership skills for your future?

Dr. Ian Charlery 02:22

Well, I 100% agree it takes a special person to become and to remain a police officer. And it's definitely had a major impact. I'd say that my decade of service as a police officer in the Cayman Islands was foundational to my leadership journey. The role taught me to stay calm under pressure, make decisions quickly and remain accountable for the outcomes, qualities that I think are essential in any leadership position, like as a Detective Constable, I learned to manage teams effectively, whether it was coordinating complex investigations or building trust and collaboration among officers and the community. Leadership in law enforcement requires a balance between empathy and authority, and so to me, those skills have been invaluable as I've been able to transition them into business, especially when I'm guiding my teams through challenges and inspiring them toward a shared vision. So that experience has also helped me to develop resilience and adaptability. Each day presented new, unpredictable challenges. These are used to teach you to embrace change and think critically about solutions, whether it's crisis management or long term planning in business, these lessons, to me, have been pivotal for my growth as a leader, so I don't take them lightly. It wasn't always nice, it wasn't always beautiful, but smooth seas don't make great sailors.

Tim Clagg 03:48

What were kind of the deciding factors that led to your decision wanting to venture into a new industry and go back to school, get your Masters, and most recently, your Doctorate, which you just received here recently.

Dr. Ian Charlery 04:04

Well, I left law enforcement to make a broader impact and create a better future for my family. You know, the higher education journey was a way to expand my skills, embrace innovation, and set examples for my children, while pursuing my passion for leadership and growth. It's really as simple as that.

Tim Clagg 04:20

You're in school, you're still working at this time, when and where does the idea of cleaning enter this picture?

Dr. Ian Charlery 04:29

Well, I initially aimed to become a lawyer, but I missed the entrance exam by one point, and that led me to pivot.

Tim Clagg 04:30

Oh my, ugh.

Dr. Ian Charlery 04:35

Yeah, yeah. And actually, I held the study groups and everybody else that I held the study groups for, they passed. Some of them are lawyers now. Some of them have actually become politicians. Some of them have become other things. But that helped me to pivot. Not being able to accomplish that helped me to pivot to social sciences, and I still had the intention of converting to a law degree however, as it goes, life unfolds and plans shifts, and I saw an opportunity in the cleaning industry. It combined my interest in leadership and systems and with a chance to make a tangible impact, leading me to build a successful business from the ground up. So, you gotta go with the flow sometimes. Don't resist it too much.

Tim Clagg 05:29

Did it come up in just general research? Or did you know somebody, or did you just, you know, in class, kind of observe the people that were there doing those duties in that job when you were inside the classroom?

Dr. Ian Charlery 05:47

The truth is, I didn't spend much time researching cleaning at all because the opportunity presented itself unexpectedly. The previous owners were ready to shut down due to challenges they were facing, but I saw the potential. I focused on learning the industry from scratch and applying my passion for business and systems and treating the business as a seed to be nurtured. Today, A1 cleaning services holds the highest international designations in the industry, a testament to that vision.

Tim Clagg 06:16

And time management during this time. You're still working, you got a family, you're having to juggle multiple hats here. How did all of that, because I'm looking back, when I got my undergrad, I had a job, but I didn't have a family and I was in that young stage figuring out who I wanted to be. How were you able to do that? And how did that help you for what was ahead?

Dr. Ian Charlery 06:48

Well, the truth about the time management is the motivation has to be there. Once you're motivated, you can pretty much do anything. So, my biggest motivation was my mother because I grew up with my mother working triple shifts and as I was saying to you just then, I didn't live with my mom. After 10 years old, she moved to the Cayman Islands. I couldn't move with her. I did come to the Cayman Islands eventually, but I couldn't stay here because she worked as a bartender, and they figured that she couldn't make enough money to actually take care of me, so she had to send me to Jamaica, which was one hour away. I went. I didn't know who I was living with. I had never met those people before in my life, and I lived there and went to school, and the motivation for me was that I had this main goal. I wanted to take my kids to school, and I wanted to pick them up from school. So as it relates to time management, obviously it was challenging to balance work, school, family, but I learned to prioritize what truly mattered, and I planned meticulously. I stayed disciplined and I focused. That focus helped me to turn those demanding moments into opportunities for growth and resilience. And everything was just spurred on by the vision and the memory of my mother not being able to spend time with me where she was just always working. So, motivation.

Tim Clagg 08:20

So you really had to grow up at a young age. Maturity and understanding the situation where it's different from the next door neighbor or somebody like that. How much, looking back now older, wiser, are you grateful for those experiences? Because talking with you, you're very well spoken, you're very well versed. And I'm sure, looking back now, you think, wow, it was difficult, but I'm grateful for that experience, because it shaped you into who you are, I imagine.

Dr. Ian Charlery 09:00

Absolutely, I wouldn't change anything. Obviously there is some sadness, quite frankly, a lot of sadness. There's anger. But, those moments create you. They have an opportunity to create a more positive Ian, and whether I think it was worth it or not, hey, man, listen, I look at my kids, I look at my son, and it's like a little mini Ian and I'm just overwhelmed with joy. Like, no, I did everything the right way. I didn't get to enjoy some of the things that some of my other friends were enjoying. Obviously, they had their parents, some of them, they were a lot more fortunate in some cases and I always wanted that for myself. So, here I am, I'm actually living the dream right now. I have my kids with me all the time. I have my wife. We have a nice house. We live in the Cayman Islands. It's expensive, but, hey.

Tim Clagg 09:55

I mean, you sent me a picture on New Year's, you're out on the boat. Here in Toledo, I told you it was 20 degrees and snowing, so the good life. You mentioned, just a minute ago, the prior owners were looking to get out of the business. You at this time, you said you didn't do a lot of research, so you go into buying the company. What happens then?

Dr. Ian Charlery 10:21

So essentially, let me think for a second so I could tell you this story the right way. So, this business was a seed. It was in the ground. I guess to them, it was buried, and it didn't have much value, or any value. It had a negative value because there was a lot of legal ramifications and suppliers that are owed and employers that are owed, employees, sorry. Hospital owed, health insurance is owed like, everything is just like ugh, you know? But again, I knew that this couldn't kill me, man, this couldn't kill me. I was with the police service. This is a walk in the park as far as I'm concerned. No one's trying to hurt me. This wasn't, to me, it wasn't anything that was difficult. I don't want to downplay, but this has been the attitude that I've always had about it. I didn't think that it was anything that was difficult to accomplish. I always thought that it was my opportunity to give back love, and maybe in the way that I wanted my mom to receive love from her employers, because working as a bartender or working as a cleaner, even as a female, there's a lot of exploitation that happens in this kind of industry, and it's not spoken about. Everyone just kind of stays quiet about it, because it's not them and the people with the voice, the cleaners, well, you don't get to hear from them that often. So I just kept on putting myself in my mother's employer's shoes, and I said, hey, you know what? I want to build a successful business, but I want to build it in a way that people want to come here. People want to be here, and they will stay here. And as a result, I've had people, there are people that are in this business, that have been here longer than I have.

Tim Clagg 12:24

That empathy goes a long way. Understanding the situation, putting yourself literally front and center in their shoes, has definitely gone a long way. What strategies, when you started out, did you use to train and motivate your cleaning staff to maintain the high standards that you knew you were going to operate at?

Dr. Ian Charlery 12:51

Well, we focus on continuous training, clear communication, and set measurable goals. We emphasize the importance of quality through regular inspections. We provide incentives for exceptional performance. We ensure our team feels valued. We empower our staff with the right tools, and recognizing their efforts are key to maintaining high standards. Our staff, sometimes it's a matter of just connecting to the human being, right? Because here's the truth, majority of my staff, and I would say 99.9% of my staff are from countries all over the world. You have Nicaragua, you have Nepal, you got Jamaica, you have Guyana, you have Grenada, you have India, you have Honduras, you have Costa Rica. Oh, man, I could keep going on, man. I have at least 15 or 20 different nationalities here. And here's the truth. How do I empower and motivate my staff? Well, the truth is, I say sometimes when someone's performance is down, it's not because they don't want to do the work. These folks have left their families from far away, and they've come here to seek a better life. Which is the same thing that my mom did. So for me, how do I train and motivate them? I sit with them and we say, hey, listen, we get it. Your performance has dropped recently, what's going on? And some of them will tell you, hey, I'm homesick. Hey, I have some trouble back home. My mom's sick. She has cancer, she's ill. She needs some money, and this is where we step in. We say, hey, listen, I can't lend you all the money, but I will absolutely lend you some money on a 0% interest loan and you can get some of that money. And you work hard, you take care of us, we will take care of you. And as a result, our staff, we're a family, we stick together. And sometimes it's hard to get people to understand that message, because some of them have never really, truly experienced love in the workplace. So trying to get that message across is extremely difficult. Some of them are feral. I love them, but it's the truth. Some of them are feral and we have to have some patience in working with them. And in saying all of that, I don't want you to think that they get a pass if they don't perform and stuff. We say to them the most important thing is that we make sure that this wheel keeps spinning because if it doesn't the five people that you take care of back home, we're not going to be able to do that. So, yeah, that's our approach.

Tim Clagg 15:29

At this point, still a new business, still new in the industry. What did you find to be the most effective ways to market your cleaning business to stand out at that time from your competition and competitors.

Dr. Ian Charlery 15:44

So, I have a confession. I did not do much marketing. Yeah, I sold a different approach, because this industry is not regulated. I'm coming from a regulatory background. This industry is not regulated. Anybody can get into this industry. Broom, mop, van, sign, they're cleaners. They offer janitorial services. For me, I apply a red ocean strategy, sorry, I apply not a red ocean strategy, a blue ocean strategy. A red ocean strategy implies that the competition is bloody. The water is bloody. It's intense competition. Everybody's looking at what everyone else is doing, whereas I, I live in the Cayman Islands, so this is perfect, but I apply a blue ocean strategy where there's no blood in my water. I'm not

competing directly against the other players in the market. Instead, I'm focused on creating a new market space. I'm focused on offering innovative solutions, emphasizing quality, and building strong client relationships. Naturally, we then differentiate ourselves because of that. The certifications that we showcase, that showcase, sorry, our expertise, and leveraging the Client Testimonial, those things help us to stand out. So I'm not necessarily out here marketing and thinking about competitors and what they're doing. I just want to do my own thing. That's why we're the only one on Island to have the international designations that we have. You know what I mean? It's just a testament to the hard work that we've been doing.

Tim Clagg 17:30

And you mentioned a word right there, certifications, again showing you're committed to bettering your staff, your cleaners, the people that are part of this success. And I'm sure, too, a lot of the people, maybe before they came to work for you, never had that. Never had somebody, hey, I'm committed to you as not only a person, but working for this company. So I imagine you dedicating pain, believing in them to get those certifications and pass those tests, certainly, certainly meant the world to them, and went a long way.

Dr. Ian Charlery 17:54

Absolutely, it absolutely did.

Tim Clagg 18:11

Now I'm curious, looking back, early on, were there any mistakes or anything where you're like, man, you know, I wish I could change this one thing. And if there is something, what do you think that you learned from that opportunity?

Dr. Ian Charlery 18:31

Well, early on, I underestimated the importance of setting clear expectations and boundaries with staff. This led to some confusion and resistance during the transition, and if I could go back, I'd focus on clear communication from the start. The experience has taught me that clarity and consistency are essential for building trust and alignment within a team.

Tim Clagg 18:51

And one of the things too, you look in this industry right now, younger people are getting in it. The average age is around 55 so you essentially could have employees ranging from 18 to, let's say, mid 60s, and that is a huge, broad gap of communication. How you and I are communicating, it's going to be quite different than an 18 year old, and also, versus the other end, somebody in their mid to late 60s.

Dr. Ian Charlery 19:16

Absolutely, absolutely. I obviously had some challenges, because when I first took over this business, I was 30 years old. A lot of the staff was older than I was, some 50, some 60. But, I always led with respect, and I always knew how to speak to people, because I had 11 years in the industry, and, sorry, my kid, I have 11 years in the industry, and that's kind of helped me to become stronger in communicating with people and connecting with them. I'd say that that was it.

Tim Clagg 20:07

We're talking with Dr. Ian Charlery, Owner, President of A1 Cleaning Services in the Cayman Islands. One of the most important qualities that affects our lives is leadership. We mentioned it just scratching the surface at the top, whether it's at our job, our career, or in our personal lives, I know it's something that certainly helped A1 Cleaning Services to be successful. How would you define your particular leadership style, and how has it evolved from some of those life experiences that you've gone through?

Dr. Ian Charlery 20:41

Those life experiences will teach you that you need to be malleable. You know, as I said earlier, go with the flow. Sometimes you gotta push against things, but sometimes you just gotta be like water, just like Bruce Lee said. So my leadership style is collaborative and adaptable, grounded in clear communication and accountability. My time as a police officer taught me to lead under pressure and build trust, while my Master's degree expanded my perspective, emphasizing strategic thinking and innovation. Together, these experiences shape my ability to inspire and guide teams towards shared goals.

Tim Clagg 21:19

And in an industry now that's going through change, how do you ensure that you stay adaptable in the face of an industry that's right now going, and I think in the next few years, going to continue to go through some changes for the better?

Dr. Ian Charlery 21:37

Absolutely, absolutely. I think those, I agree with you so much that this industry is growing at a rapid rate. The advancements in technology are finally at a precipice where things are going to happen that are going to change the face of the cleaning industry. So for me, how do I stay on top of it? I stay adaptable by embracing continuous learning, leveraging technology, fostering a culture of innovation within my team. Staying close to industry trends, listening to clients' needs, being willing to pivot. That's a big one. Being willing to pivot when necessary. This will ensure that we remain resilient and ahead of the curve. And one thing in my Master's degree, my specialization was in change management. And there was always this one analogy that always stuck out to me. It was that in business, the bigger a business gets, the harder it is for it to change. So I came in saying, well, everyone else that is in this business has probably figured out how they're doing it. And me, I'm brand new, and I always have fresh eyes. I always want to see, how can I do it better? So, what I do is

Tim Clagg 22:56

absolutely.

Dr. Ian Charlery 22:56

Sorry?

Tim Clagg 22:56

I said absolutely.

Dr. Ian Charlery 22:58

Yeah, right. And for me, it was like, hey, if you don't constantly be curious about how to provide a better service, then you're going to be lackadaisical, and that's going to cause not just some pain, but some money and some future for some people that this is one of their biggest moments of their lives, to work here with us, to experience what they experience from us. They leave us better people, which is the entire thing. I know it's a cleaning company, but we're also looking to change lives, so you have to stay on top of it and remain resilient in order to complete that goal.

Tim Clagg 23:46

And I like what you said, obviously, as a leader, the learning never stops. There's continuous growth, not only for a company, but for yourself as an individual. As a human being we want to continue that personal development, that personal growth, so we can grow in our personal lives as well. One of the most exciting things, I think that a lot of people may not know if they're watching the video portion right now. They can see it. There's a three monitor setup in the back. You see this outline of the seat right there. What they don't know about you is your successful motorsports, sim racer, and this last fall, you were able to represent the Cayman Islands in Valencia, Spain with the FIA motorsport games in 2024 let's talk about that a bit, because looking back at that event, the pageantry, I watched some of it being a motorsports enthusiast, what did it mean? Because this is the first time the Cayman Islands has been invited in the event.

Dr. Ian Charlery 24:45

Yeah, yeah, it was, honestly, we're so early, because it's considered the motor sports Olympics, right? And for me, you know, I've always had a dream of going to the Olympics. And although we're early and it's not officially called the motor sports Olympics, when we got there, it was clear that it was the motor sports Olympics. Over 100 different nations, different disciplines in motor sports. You have from drifting to, autocross, to carton and dirt carton and track racing and the Ferrari GT challenge to the to the, everything! I was in heaven. I was in heaven, you know. But the representing the Cayman Islands at the FIA motor sports games was a profound honor. It was incredible to showcase my passion for sim racing on a global stage. And just carried a pride of the country with me. That experience helped deepen my appreciation for perseverance and importance of the community in supporting us in pursuing our dreams. I started sim racing just as a thing to pass the time during the pandemic. And a friend and I, we both started it, and we were like, wow, look at us now. We're at the actual FIA motor sports games, remarkable.

Tim Clagg 26:09

And I want to go a step further and paint that picture, because they have the introductions going on. You have your hosts up on the stage. They're introducing up on the stage every representative for their country. So when you hear the Cayman Island representatives, you hear your name. You're carrying that flag up to the stage. I mean, what were the emotions? I can see you smiling. What were the emotions like, the goosebumps and just the adrenaline?

Dr. Ian Charlery 26:40

You know, it was like, oh, man. Once people saw our uniforms, and it said, Cayman Islands. We were the smallest nation there, by the way, obviously. But we had other Caribbean islands there, but we were the smallest nation there. And so once people saw that, man, the energy was just electric. So to

be there, and then everybody back home was just extremely happy. We were featured in articles by the FIA. We were featured in pictures. I mean, we were all over the place, and it was just an amazing experience, through and through, just to be a person that can represent an entire nation, I get goosebumps. And, you know, I'm starting to feel warm just thinking about it. It is truly an experience, wow.

Tim Clagg 27:32

Well, I can't wait to watch when you go back for the second time. How long is it? Is it just like the Olympics, you have to wait two or four years?

Dr. Ian Charlery 27:42

Two years. Every two years.

Tim Clagg 27:43

Oh, two years. Four is a little far.

Dr. Ian Charlery 27:46

Four is a little far. Maybe I don't go back, but what I'd like to do is I'd like to coach and mentor someone who's young for them to be able to attend. And I could be attending with them and ensure they have a good experience and then maybe we just keep having more youngsters in it.

Tim Clagg 28:01

Absolutely, all about the next generation. And that's something too, you just said the word on, coaching. And I know that's something that you take very seriously. You have a coach as well. How has that helped you in business? Having somebody, that mentor, that coach, that can kind of just help you and guide you a little bit.

Dr. Ian Charlery 28:24

You can't ever overlook or even overstate the importance of having a coach. I am also a trained coach from the Beautiful Accomplishment Coaching. So as my coach, Jason Dukes, he's awesome. And the truth is, accountability is the biggest thing, right? We say that we want to do things, and sometimes we make stories as to why we can't do them. And if you don't have the accountability you might not follow through. And anything you practice, you become. So if you practice not following through, well, you become someone who can't follow through. My favorite basketball player is Kobe Bryant. You can vaguely see that Lakers sign above the AC. Mine too. Mine too. It is? Oh!

Tim Clagg 29:13

There will never be another.

Dr. Ian Charlery 29:14

There will never be another. He was my greatest mentor and in truth, he's a shooter. You know, he's a shooting guard. And I see it as I am a shooter as well. I like to take all the shots available, and I'm going to miss some, absolutely. I mean, I've missed so many, but what am I going to do? Stop shooting? Absolutely not. The accountability on, hey, Ian, you said you were going to finish the stock trade.

What's up with it? You're two years, three years late. You gotta finish it before 40. Okay, no problem. Let's put our head down and get it done. Hey, Ian, you want to be innovative? You want to bring AI cleaning robots? Well, here they are. They're available. You need to take the leap and learn what you need to learn and get them deployed. And we did that. So it's just about not taking the conventional approach, but being brave, having a mentor, having a coach. I've never really had a mentor that was real, that I could talk to, because I've never spoken to Kobe Bryant myself, right? However, he taught me so much, and he continues to teach me so much about the mamba mentality, about being able to apply perseverance even in the face of hardship and it's difficult. That's how I was able to just do the time management thing properly.

Tim Clagg 30:37

One thing that I want to get your opinion on myself looking at this, looking back at that day when he tore his achilles. Wanted no help. Gonna walk back to the huddle for the time out. I don't want no help coming back on. I'm gonna stand at the line. I'm gonna make both free throws, and I'm gonna go out on my own. That kind of mentality. You know, I watch a lot of inspirational videos, and obviously, you being a Mamba fan as well. That kind of embeds and sits right at the front of my head. If I have any excuses, well I'm just too darn tired today, I don't have enough energy. Here's a guy that, literally, one of the most difficult injuries in all of sports, didn't ask for help. You saw other athletes have the same injury in wheelchairs, not Kobe. And that just kind of resonates a lot with me and myself.

Dr. Ian Charlery 31:37

Yeah, absolutely, it resonates so deeply to see that. It was a moment where he could have taken the easy way out and the guy said no. And I remember seeing him crying because he wasn't sure what would happen, if his career would be over. But the things I remember about Kobe is he stuck out because when everyone else was playing and going to the club, he was working. And it's not that he didn't have fun, but he had fun with the most important people in his family. So I take a lot of that on board. That perseverance, and it's such a good thing to believe in yourself and to believe that you can do it, because if you don't believe in yourself, man, who the heck is going to believe in you?

Tim Clagg 32:31

Absolutely. You mentioned AI robots. Well, you and I have had some discussions about technology a few different times in our conversations, especially, AI. You made some great points on how your employees feel. And I think there's a little bit of misconception in the industry that employees are maybe fearful. However, you raised a really good point to me that kind of got the wheels turning the other direction. And it's not that employees are against the technology. They want to be prepared to be able to digest and understand the technology.

Dr. Ian Charlery 33:08

Yes, exactly. Because people fear what they don't understand and even sometimes you understand it and you still fear it. But generally, people fear what they don't understand. And so a lot of this adopting new technology, it comes with challenges, particularly helping the staff feel prepared and comfortable is one of the biggest challenges. You as the operator, could feel like, Oh, this is easy I could just do that. And I've been there, I feel like everybody has my brain, and they can just be able to overcome these challenges and switch gears and open another tab and create a new skill now. But that's not everyone,

and not everyone will do it the way that you do it, not everyone will do it the way that I do it. So for me, I realized that they needed better tools and support to digest the changes, and we just committed to providing phones and data plans for all of our staff, and this enables easy communication access to Janitorial Manager's features. While it added overhead costs, it showed our commitment to becoming a more data driven business while prioritizing our employees needs. Listening to their concerns and involving them in the process was key to finding a resolution and foster interest. Because the truth is, technology is going to constantly be changing. The technological sea level is constantly rising. It's going up, and the cleaners are considered low socioeconomic standing individuals. Cleaning does not make them a whole lot of money that they could buy Mercedes Benz and all sorts of luxuries. However, whereas we may not think that it's that big of a deal, every hour of work counts for them. So instead of putting the burden on them to always have data plans on their phones and have good phones that could take pictures and use their applications, we just decided, hey, listen, we're going to provide every single one of you with phones and data plans, and this is going to help you to communicate so you don't have to think about having data, whether you have data or Wi Fi, you can communicate with us anytime. And this is a major deal. This is something often overlooked. And I know a lot of companies don't want to take this on because they just think about overhead, but in the grand scheme of things, what's a couple thousand dollars to your bottom line when your staff are all sorted out? That's how I look at it.

Tim Clagg 35:41

How are you guys able to work as a team, to listen to everybody's concerns and end up comfortably at a resolution together?

Dr. Ian Charlery 35:51

Well, communication. Working as a team all comes down to being a team and you can't fake it. You just have to listen, give everyone a chance to speak, and let them be heard. I have it that once people are heard, they can actually feel like they're actually part of a team. You can get so much out of them. I have a story that I can share. I recently made a new hire. It was a dear friend of mine that was in the police services as well, but he'd left there a long time ago. He left there about maybe four or five years in, because he had to go take care of his mother who was passing away, and he's finally, now came back to the island, but he was on rock bottom. So I gave him a job, and we've been in communication ever since. And listen, he's went from janitor in that short space of time to working in the office with us, and he's a pivotal moment, like he is one of the key characters of our entire team. And he always brings the love, he always brings the gratitude, he always adds value. You'll just randomly see, hey, I fixed this. Hey, I fixed this. He tells me he's like, listen, I don't feel stressed. I love this job. I come here every day, I'm so excited. That makes me happy because that's the kind of environment that I'm trying to create. But how did I get there? By listening to him.

Tim Clagg 37:20

I'm glad you mentioned that and said the key word, the trigger word, right now, stress. Because I subscribe to Clean Link, the ISSA daily emails. And what was the survey that I read today? It was 71%. Let me say it again, 71% of employees in the industry, feel stressed. That's a huge number, huge.

Dr. Ian Charlery 37:48

That's basically all of them.

Tim Clagg 37:49

Yeah, you're almost at three quarters. I mean, what would be your advice to somebody that's listening or watching this episode with you here today to help them if this is an area they're struggling, what advice would you offer them to try and help eliminate employee stress and burnout?

Dr. Ian Charlery 38:14

Oh, man, okay. My advice would be first and foremost if you're an operator, I mean, you have a more disposable income, get you a coach. Get, and I'm bias, so get you an accomplishment coaching, coach. And together, work with your coach on a plan to create the ideal vision of what you want, because sometimes you can't see your stuff. And we all have stuff. We have traumas, we have experiences that influence the way that we conduct ourselves and even the way that we interact with other people. So some owners, they talk down to their staff, and they belittle their staff, and there's no privacy. So those staff, it's hard for them to actually be in relationship with them. And I have it that if you are in relationship with your staff, and you can have that honest conversation, like, Hey guys, we're all working as one here. We're a part of a team, and this is what I expect from you. And you ask them, what do you expect from me? Well, they're expecting to work in a place that fosters respect, fosters them some growth. And the big one, love. To feel some love. It's not all on a transactional relationship, man. Everyone is on this transactional vibes. And it's like, you can't be transactional with human beings. Even if you go to the grocery store, say hello, oh, how are you doing? You see the cleaner, or maybe you're not the owner of the company, but you see the cleaner, man, just say hello, hey, how you doing? How was your Christmas? How was your new year? Wish them some good time. You have no idea how much that impacts someone's entire day and week. And for them to get that from the company that they work with, that, to me, is like the biggest, most awesome, like coming together. These ingredients can create a successful business, in my opinion.

Tim Clagg 38:17

As we kick off 2025 there's different challenges in the industry, whether it's on the east coast, the United States, the Midwest, the West Coast, or even our friends in the North and Canada. What's an issue in the Midwest? It's totally different in Canada. I'm curious to kind of get your take to see what you think the biggest issues are in the industry that your company faced in 2024 in the Cayman Islands, if they're similar, or if it's something a little bit different.

Dr. Ian Charlery 41:02

Well, you know, it's no surprise that our biggest challenge in 2024 was about adapting technological advancements and managing the employee readiness for these changes. So the balancing the cost of innovation with maintaining a high standard of service. That was another hurdle. But we prioritize training, communication, and data driven solutions. We addressed these head on and positioned ourselves for growth and I imagine it's probably the same for every cleaning company out there. If you're not growing, well, you're doing the opposite of growing, and that's not so nice. So yeah, that would obviously be my experience since I'm always trying to learn, always trying to improve, and just have this innovative mentality.

Tim Clagg 41:54

We mentioned during the intro. You were recently named, as ISSA's 30 emerging leaders under the age of 40. When you found that out in October that you made this distinguished list, what was your initial reaction then and now that you've had a few months, three months, you were at the presentation in Vegas, what's different now that you've had time to just kind of let things settle.

Dr. Ian Charlery 42:24

I was deeply honored and humbled. Being the only person chosen from the Caribbean made it an even bigger honor. It felt incredible to have my work recognized on such a distinguished level, and it motivated me to continue striving for excellence and representing my region proudly. Now that I take time and I take it all in, I'm not even sure if I have, but, thinking about taking it all in, it was amazing to receive this 10 years in and I'm looking forward to what other leaders that I can actually grow and nurture, that maybe they can win this kind of award as well. Maybe they can get some recognition as well, because I really do have some strong people on my team, and I believe that they're fully capable of making waves in the industry.

Tim Clagg 43:22

What role do you think programs like this, through ISAA's Emerging Leaders, because it's a new program can play in shaping the future the industry. Because, I hate to say it, we're in 2025 sometimes there still are those stigmas around janitorial work and cleaners. How will programs like this continue to push it forward and get rid of that narrative altogether?

Dr. Ian Charlery 43:47

Yeah, cleaning industries always looked down upon and you know, quite frankly, it's something that I don't know if we'll be able to escape it until maybe there's like, another pandemic, then we're important again. But, the key for me is letting my staff just understand that although we're not appreciated right now, which is something I know about from being a police officer, people just love you when they need you, when they don't need you, boy, are you terrible. So, it is what it is. But the ISSA, to me, is the biggest treasure, the biggest gold, the most amazing organization out there that is actually pushing this industry, which has no regulatory body, but it's pushing this industry to some standardization that is globally impacted. So for me, programs like the ISSA Emerging Leader, that is crucial for shaping the future of the industry. They provide a platform to develop, connect and empower the next generation of leaders. And I think that by fostering innovation and collaboration, these programs ensure the industry evolves with fresh ideas and strong leadership.

Tim Clagg 45:10

Last year was ISSA's 100th anniversary. This was the 101st show, and I think they're off to a pretty darn strong second 100 years with this last year's show. Ian, I want to greatly thank you. I appreciate you coming on this month's episode, talking to us about your journey, your story that led you to the commercial cleaning industry. And I'm also proud to call you a friend here, we've done a lot of work here over the last three or four months together, and I'm so glad to see your success, especially everything that you've gone through, and it's very deserving.

Dr. Ian Charlery 45:48

Thank you. I am so honored to be here, be on this podcast, and I hope that people could feel the good vibes and get something positive from it. In truth, we have an industry that is often overlooked. But we don't need to act as if it's overlooked. We need to sing it on the mountain top that it is awesome. It is necessary. Even without a pandemic, we are still life savers. So, I take it very seriously. I thank you for taking it very seriously, and your entire team at Janitorial Manager.

Tim Clagg 46:24

I appreciate that. Ian, you're very active on LinkedIn. Is that the best place where people listening to this, watching this, can get in contact with you on social media?

Dr. Ian Charlery 46:35

Yes, absolutely. Shoot me a message. I'd be happy to talk.

Tim Clagg 46:40

Alright. And, very active, shares a lot of great stories and shares a lot of great insights from other minds as well. So again, appreciate you, my friend, and I'm looking forward to us connecting up here again in the coming months.

Dr. Ian Charlery 46:59

Definitely, if you're going to any racing events, let me know, because I will be very active this year in the racing scene in North America.

Tim Clagg 47:08

Oh, it can't get here soon enough. That will conclude this month's edition of The Business of Cleaning Podcast. Be sure to subscribe to us on Spotify, Apple Podcast, Amazon Podcast, or wherever you get your podcasts from. Also, be sure to leave a five star review and your comments. From everyone at Janitorial Manager, our guest, Dr Ian Charlery, I'm Tim Clagg saying so long, until next time.