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Cleanology – repositioning cleaning in the new normal

It goes without saying that the last few months have been challenging and, with no vaccine available and queries over the value of antibodies against Covid-19, we still face an uncertain time ahead. The profile of cleaning has never been so high and, as businesses start to reopen, hygiene is top of everyone's agenda.

We are hearing a great deal of talk around 'the new normal', with questions about whether we can change attitudes to the environment and pollution. However, one area that is already undergoing major change is the cleaning industry.

Key workers have played a crucial role in recent months, and it has been gratifying to see cleaners applauded alongside NHS staff. Hopefully, we will begin to see greater recognition for our front-line staff translate into wider support for the real Living Wage.

When it comes to pay, perception plays a large part. In 2019, Cleanology commissioned the first independent research into attitudes around wage levels and perceptions towards cleaners' pay. The results painted a clear picture. While 63 per cent of employees were concerned that cleaners should be paid fairly, only 39 per cent had an accurate idea of the real figures on pay.

At Cleanology, we support the view that commitment and fair pay go hand in hand. Almost half of our clients pay Real Living Wage rates, and we include the Real Living Wage rate as mandatory in 40 per cent of our bids. This is not a luxury – when staff feel they are paid fairly, they invest in the job, in the client, and in their own future. They work to a higher level, stay longer, and become a valued member of the team in the building where they work.

At the same time, it has become clear that many established ways of working are not fit for purpose under the new regime. For many cleaning businesses, the arrival of Covid-19 meant 'normal rules of engagement' ceased to exist. Clients suspended and cancelled contracts, and it remains to be seen how many of our competitors will survive.

While the furlough scheme has helped provide many employees with stability, the nature of our industry means that some have fallen through the net. As we return to work, we are finding that some staff who returned to their home countries for lockdown have chosen to stay with their families.

At the same time, the need to provide extra cleaning in workplaces means Cleanology is likely to fast-track existing plans to replace large numbers of part-time cleaners with a smaller group working full-time hours. We see this as a positive move, which we were already working towards.

As we navigate new waters, we urge clients to recognise the crucial role played by cleaners and reward them accordingly. We are all facing new challenges – some predictable, others unknown – but we do know that responsible, responsive cleaners will play a large part.

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Notes for editors:

At Cleanology, we provide commercial cleaning, facilities management and support services across London and Manchester.

We are a family business and have built up a long list of high-profile clients; both corporate such as the Bank of Brazil and Argus Media, and some of the world's most famous brands including Harrods, Smeg and Hermes.

We are a certified partner of the Living Wage Foundation, with a strong belief in paying above the minimum wage to attract and retain the best people.

With a focus on quality and social responsibility, we are also highly accredited and thoroughly audited with ISO:14001, ISO:9001 and Safe Contractor, and are a member of the Green Organisation for environmental innovation.

To find out more about Cleanology or for a free quote, please email sales@cleanology.com or call 0800 121 4835.