

Cool to Clean



Owner Dean Yershon



High-quality commercial cleaning services

FACTS ABOUT COOL TO CLEAN

- » Owner: Dean Yershon
- » Established in 2012
- » Based in northeast London
- » Services: Commercial cleaning service
- » No. of employees: 55 full and part-time staff
- » www.cooltoclean.co.uk

Operating across London and Essex, Cool To Clean provides professional and ethical cleaning services to commercial clients. Managing Director Dean Yershon tells *The Parliamentary Review* that he saw a gap in the market in which a high-quality, courteous and cost-effective cleaning service could thrive; with 25 years of experience in the media, he felt his time in an office environment had equipped him well to establish the business in 2013. Dean discusses Cool To Clean's journey and how profitability continues to be an issue in the commercial cleaning sector.

Prior to establishing the business, my entire career, from the age of 17, was in the world of media, having worked for a newspaper sales house in Fleet Street before spending the next 24 years at News UK, formerly News International, publishers of *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Sun* and *News of the World*. Following the stripping-out of middle management, I accepted voluntary redundancy and decided to leave corporate life and start my own business.

The journey of our business

Completely out of the blue, my then partner suggested I start a commercial cleaning company. The skills I had learnt in my previous roles gave me confidence that I could establish a successful company and within a week I came up with a name and registered it at Companies House as Cool To Clean Ltd.

The next six months was spent at morning networking groups. I did this for a year and even though it wasn't profitable, it did give me my first client, a fair-sized

community hall in Brentwood. As our number of staff amounted to one, myself, I requested the help of my parents and two other women I'd been put in touch with. Under the direction of my mother, and her incredibly high standards, we completed the job and received a very positive testimonial. This gave me the incentive to move forward in terms of knowing how to clean, what to look out for when cleaning, which supplies to use and where to get them.

I joined a different networking group, as the previous one was costing me more than I was making. The networking offered an opportunity to get to know people but in my heart of hearts I knew it wasn't bringing me clients. It did offer me some good suppliers, however, many of whom I have since used.

Every business needs a leg up and mine came six months after starting the business. My partner was telling me about the cleaners of her office and how their standard was poor and the management unresponsive. I knew this was my opportunity. We managed to secure the contract and our focus shifted towards making sure we did a spotless job. It is testament to our high standards that we still have this founding client five years later.

Six years on, we are a VAT-registered company with 37 contracts, offering main office cleaning, pre and post-tenancy cleaning, the cleaning of leisure facilities and community centres and some 55 full-time and part-time staff as well as an HR supplier, accountants and other suppliers. Despite our recent growth, we still have just the same desire to carry on developing, learning and growing.

Balancing service with profitability

There are many elements involved in running a successful business, one of which is profitability. As a cleaning company, we are a cost to businesses, so they want to keep this cost as low as possible in order to maximise their own profitability. The downside of this is that some clients pay less to a commercial cleaning company than they pay their domestic cleaning lady despite the latter having none of the costs of the former, namely public liability insurance and the payroll costs of pensions, holidays and national insurance contributions.

Commercial cleaners only get paid the minimum wage of £8.21 an hour. Realistically, this is not enough in this day and age with rental costs

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Working across London and Essex to deliver commercial cleaning services





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higher than that of a mortgage, let alone living costs, but there has to be enough of a margin for the cleaning company to be profitable. In an ideal world, each person would be paid the living wage and companies would pay an additional amount to the cleaning company to action this.

We have our staff on payroll and they rightly enjoy the associated benefits. However, many companies do not in order to avoid these associated costs. This allows them to be more competitive, giving them a huge advantage over companies who are compliant and look after their staff. Of course, this is not right, but the government does not have the resources to pursue each company.

I prefer to know we are doing the right thing and giving our staff the respect they deserve. Sadly, some companies are not put off by using suppliers whose staff are not on the payroll as it keeps the cleaning costs to a minimum. This is something we would like to see changed.

Developing relationships with our staff

Staff retention and management is another area of difficulty. As the owner, you are always going to be working as hard as possible, including working late nights and at weekends.

Cleaning staff are not realistically going to be invested in the business, and in the vast number of instances, they live hand to mouth. It has been hugely important to try and develop the relationships we have with our staff, something which is especially difficult as most of our staff are not English.

Fortunately, the vast majority of our staff are absolutely fantastic and have an astonishing work ethic. We support these workers as much as possible while ensuring those who do not meet our standards are moved on.

Our company is made by each and every person working for it. In order for the business to have a soul, and a community feel, I nurture a relationship with each and every person we employ. Our growth depends on these relationships and so this is a constant priority for myself and our management team.

The fundamentals of any business are honesty, decency, transparency and reliability. We always stick to these essential criteria and as long as we do this, there is no reason why we can't continue to grow. While we are extremely ambitious, we are humble enough to recognise that we do not have all the answers and that it is through a process of ongoing learning that we will be able to improve.