

The Nviro People Strategy

Achieve more with less, without compromise



So you're in procurement or facilities management, and you're told (not for the first time) that you need to achieve a seemingly impossible task: do more with less.

What do you do? Hunt down the cheapest options? Figure out where standards can afford to slip? Look to reduce any breathing room you've gained?

We understand that now is a time when budgets are tight, and the issue of cost is more pressing than ever. It would be understandable if you simply looked for the tender applications that offered you the most hours worked for the least amount of money. However, we've seen the way this goes in the cleaning services business for over 30 years.

People are given little oversight, turnover is high, and while the promise may have been to manage with a reduced budget – perhaps by streamlining the process and introducing new technology – the actual outcome is usually reduced standards.

This is inevitable when a cleaning provider chooses to compromise on people and management. They incur a People Debt – high turnover, high recruitment costs, high onboarding costs. And this results in financial cost later down the line when you're forced to deep clean, repair and even replace areas and items that should have been maintained to a high standard. The Nviro People Strategy is a proactive counter to this problem. We mitigate the long term costs of cleaning with low turnover, strong systems, and on-site management. It's a people strategy that pays off.

What you pay for depends on systems and management

We know what it's like to take over from other providers, and it's not an understatement to say that, sometimes, it's a little like taming chaos.

In our article on our [*mobilisation process](#), we shared some of the stories we've seen: cleaners using their own supermarket-bought chemicals, bringing their families with them, being unaware that they were entitled to holidays under UK law.

The lack of management isn't always so extreme, of course. Often it's simply a case of cleaners having picked up bad habits under former cleaning providers. Things like not using separate colour-coded cloths for the toilet and the sink. Or using too much or too little of one chemical or another. Or slipping into unmanaged absenteeism.

If you've agreed an upfront cost with your provider, you won't pay for this People Debt in direct fees – but you will incur a cost somewhere. And your provider is unlikely to cover it on your behalf if they're playing with the smallest possible margins. Your service level agreement might barely be met. The service might be chaotic. And clean might not always mean clean (and it certainly doesn't always mean [*hygienic](#)).



This is why we don't manage teams from afar

We are quick to get on site in the onboarding process so we can see where KPIs have slipped and where we need to course correct, adding in new systems and processes. Our training and processes ensure best practice, and they also teach our people to get more done in less time – without cutting corners.

Then we stay onsite, ensuring every cleaning team has a strong manager. The result isn't just that your facilities are kept in premium condition – since we don't allow standards to slip – it also means we can be smarter about what we clean and when.

In other words, it's a streamlined way of ensuring the highest standards – backed by testing, evaluation and reporting. When we introduced a managed process to one education client, we quickly created a critical improvement in absence rates. Then we increased engagement through clear management, training and managing standards and expectations. This meant an uptake of development opportunities, better productivity rates and a fall in health and safety incidents.

People are rarely motivated by a checklist

Rather than chucking cleaning hours at a checklist, we can see what needs attention and what can wait, adjusting our focus so you always get the most value from the team.

Our ways of working also help us to share feedback and recognise successes. Whenever a member of the team does a good job, we want to make sure they know someone is taking notice. This isn't checklist cleaning, it's cleaning that's making a difference to people... to staff, visitors, students. We ask building users to offer feedback so our cleaners can a) keep on growing and b) know what they do matters to someone.

It's time to stop the cleaning team merry-go-round

At Nviro, it's not that we expect more of our people for nothing. We make sure we look after them with a Real Living Wage and flexible fixed contracts. We don't do zero hours contracts – we want our people to be able to plan their lives. And we don't take what they do for granted.

On the surface, paying the Real Living Wage might sound like a recipe for increased costs, but it's actually good for business, as the Living Wage Foundation reports. Of course there is a cost involved but it's far better than the alternative: incurring more People Debt, which is what Nviro has managed to protect our customers against.



While other cleaning providers for the public sector traditionally see a very high turnover rate, we buck the trend. Our staff retention figures from a longstanding university client show:

- **71.3%** of the cleaning team had more than two years service / experience with Nviro
- **50%** have more than five years service / experience with Nviro
- **30%** have more than 10 years service / experience with Nviro

We embraced Real Living Wage in 2021, so we should only expect these rates to improve in the years to come. It's already showing in the smaller percentage of cleaning vacancies we have compared to many others in the industry.

The reward for keeping people longer is we have a stable service. We don't engage in a merry-go-round of recruitment – a situation that means much of what a customer pays for is spent on recruitment and onboarding. Instead we're able to invest that recruitment budget in better management, with managers who have time to provide better oversight, training and equipment for a more motivated team – who in turn have a greater opportunity to receive a promotion.

Less recruitment costs = better benefits package = less absence

These efficiencies mean we can offer better wellbeing benefits packages. And these benefits help us to reduce absence even more. Our people have access to an online doctor, dentist appointments, counselling, fitness and diet advice and quit-smoking resources. They can't be effective when they're sick, so we do all we can to keep them in work and on good form.

Our on-site team managers see this benefit first hand. They don't have to waste their energies firefighting and trying to sort cover for an often absent team. Nor do they have to keep onboarding new team members. And when a few new recruits do come on board, we free our managers up there too – providing digital training to new team members directly, so they're more productive from day one.

The sum total of this is our managers aren't holding a strained service together, they're overseeing a well-oiled system and focusing on where they can add value. Meanwhile, their team members are motivated, carrying out best practice, and acting where they're needed most.

Build a better (and savvier) society with us

Our People Strategy is creating financial and social value for our clients and our people. This is an outcome that the Government advocates for: to use procurement to "achieve wider financial and non-financial outcomes... improving wellbeing of individuals, communities and the environment by making social value a decision-making criterion when awarding contracts."

We've worked with job centres and other organisations who help the long term unemployed back into meaningful work, as well as with organisations that support groups like the armed forces into civilian employment. They're not just getting employment with us, but an employer that takes care of them – with the Real Living Wage, comprehensive training and development, progression opportunities and a way of working that's actually motivating.

Nviro has been operating for 30 years and we clean 2.5 million square metres of space each day. Smart systems and policies that ensure our people don't feel like cogs in a machine and our clients don't feel short changed – many have stayed with us for over 20 years as satisfied clients. It's achieving more with less, without compromise.

*Mobilisation blog:

www.nviro.co.uk/2023/04/01/new-cleaning-contractor-no-problem-nviro-and-the-mobilisation-process/

*Hygienic blog:

www.nviro.co.uk/2022/07/01/what-happens-when-hygienic-is-not-as-clean-as-you-think/

*Real Living Wage report:

www.livingwage.org.uk/good-for-business/

*Government Social Value:

www.local.gov.uk/our-support/procurement-hub/national-procurement-strategy/social-value-achieving-community-benefits/

Find out more

To learn more about how this works, please contact our sales team:

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