



The industry's impending training review will ensure the qualifications offered are fit-for-purpose and continue to reflect industry trends re-shaping the sector.

The commercial cleaning industry is facing rapid change. New technologies, increasing social responsibility and the drive for sustainable business practices are all factors reshaping the industry landscape.

To support this transformation while continuing to meet the needs of the sector, frontline staff, management and employers all need to be equipped with the latest knowledge.

This has led to a review of the industry's current training practices. From June this year, an examination will begin of the cleaning qualifications listed on the New Zealand Qualification Framework (NZQF).

This includes the New Zealand Certificate in Cleaning (Level 2) with optional endorsement in Healthcare Facilities Cleaning and the New Zealand Certificate in Cleaning (Level 3) with optional strands in Specialist Cleaning and Supervision.

Industry training organisation (ITO) Careerforce is the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) developer for the cleaning industry, as well as the government appointed body that sets skills standards and facilitates the achievement of NZQA qualifications for the sector.

Careerforce offers qualifications to advance the skills of the cleaning workforce from entry level to providing specialist skills in areas such as healthcare facility cleaning, carpet and textiles, contagion and specialised infection control, hard floor surfaces, food production and high-risk environments.

Jane Wenman, CEO of Careerforce, says the impending review will ensure the qualifications offered are fit-for-purpose and continue to reflect industry requirements.

"There have been a few changes within the industry in recent years such as the increased use of chemical free cleaning and new

[equipment] technology. Because of this we want to make sure the qualifications [Certificate in Cleaning (Level 2) and Certificate in Cleaning (Level 3)] remain relevant," she says.

"These qualifications are also often the first step for trainees in their learning journey so it's important they are given the most up-to-date industry knowledge."

Careerforce will be working closely with individuals, interest groups, sector representatives, tertiary education organisations and employers to gather feedback. This is expected to be via a combination of online consultation and face to face meetings.

The review will consider the qualification details, specifications and conditions to ensure they reflect the skills, knowledge and application expected to be demonstrated as graduate outcomes.

"A big part of the review is that we have all stakeholders engaged in the process. It is really important we hear from as many people as possible about what they need in the qualifications."

Retention benefits

Training is often an overlooked aspect of business yet is one of the most important. It is understood there are around 40,000 people currently employed in New Zealand's cleaning sector, with growth expected in the coming years.

However, the retention of frontline team members is a continual challenge facing the industry, with many companies failing to realise training is an investment in the stability and longevity of their business. Wenman agrees and says training should be viewed as a motivation and retention tool.

“We often hear that employers are weary of [investing in] training because there is a high turnover of staff [in the cleaning sector]. But when you offer training and provide a pathway it helps retain employees. Staff are more likely to stay when they know there is a learning journey ahead of them.

“Training should be used as a retention tool, rather than be seen as a risk – that after you provide [training] to staff you may lose some of them. However, it’s really not playing out that way in the workforce.”

Commercial cleaning service provider Kleenrite puts every staff member who has been with the company for a year through training to achieve the New Zealand Certificate in Cleaning Level 2. The service provider also offers those interested to progress to higher level qualifications.

Kleenrite general manager Chris Begley says formal recognition of training for staff has been an ongoing company ethos since its inception 25 years ago.

“We feel strongly that our people be recognised for the skills they have and it gives them a formal qualification they can take with them should they move on from our employment.

“We feel proud to be able to go to our client and say to them that all of the staff working on their site are formally qualified and we have achieved a lot of positive recognition from our client base as a result of this. Formal training has had a positive impact on reduction in client complaints and health and safety incidents.”

Kleenrite has more than 120 staff across its brands Kleenrite (Auckland), Orbit Cleaning and ToTal Maintenance Solutions. The company’s goal is to be as close as possible to 100 per cent fully trained on Level 2.

“We have noticed a substantial increase in staff confidence when they have achieved certification – they are proud of having achieved and been given recognition for the skills that they have. All of this has led to improved outcomes for both ourselves and our client so a good all round win for everybody.”

Yvonne Percival, Kleenrite customer services manager, can also attest to the quality of work and service improving as a result of training. Supporting staff to achieve a qualification is an investment

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Kleenrite is happy to make – since they believe it pays off in terms of client satisfaction.

“It also gives them a sense of ownership. A sense of self-worth. We get it back tenfold,” says Percival. “I think [staff] sometimes don’t quite believe that the certificate is theirs, like it’s the company’s, but it’s not. It’s theirs.”

Second chance learning

Wenman says Careerforce’s on-the-job, practical training model better supports ‘second chance learners’.

“Careerforce programs are mostly on-the-job. Within the cleaning sector, [the programs] are a reflection of the cost and labour pressures companies face. We have found that employers find it hard to release staff from the worksite to undertake training, however, on-the-job training offers an alternative to this issue.

“On-the-job training provides one-on-one contact and immediate feedback. For some, they are new to learning or attaining qualifications so this provides them with better support than an institutional classroom environment. We base our training on what [staff] are doing day-to-day rather than abstract ideology learnt from a book.



Kleenrite staff on-site



“With the employer supporting trainees to learn on the job, and assessments being carried out on the job, there’s a much better chance of keeping that knowledge and learning that knowledge rather than being abstract theory in a classroom.”

Begley says on-the-job training is ideal for Kleenrite as it allow staff to continue working without the need to attend off site courses and take them away from their main job.

“[On-the-job] training allows them to apply their learnings immediately on site. Being on job is less intimidating for staff who are in their familiar environment and retain their learnings more so than if they had to go off site.”

Sarah McBride CEO of the Building Service Contractors of New Zealand (BSCNZ) and a Careerforce director, says collaboration is key for training to be increased in the industry.

“Careerforce is working with a number of commercial cleaning companies throughout New Zealand to ensure the content of their training is what the industry needs. If the industry works together on process, content and outcome we will see the levels of training increase,” she says.

“Staff turnover in the commercial cleaning industry is high and investing in training for any business is an expense, so how commercial cleaning companies invest in training needs to be well thought-out, fit for purpose and sustainable.”

“If the wider business community starts to understand that our service is made up of ‘people’ and that they are investing their buying power into people, then we hope they will understand the value of training.”

McBride says the industry has witnessed a change in the government’s approach to procuring commercial cleaning, with tenders now including specific standards of training.

“Training is very much a part of the [government’s] investment. We have seen evidence of this in the latest Ministry of Social Development (MSD) tender, which stipulates training levels for supervisors and cleaners.”

McBride said as part of the multi-employer agreement (MECA) that was finalised for public hospital service workers, including cleaners, in November 2018, cleaners now have access to formal training. As cleaners receive their qualifications their pay scale will increase, incentivising training for the cleaner.

“Training is a multi-levelled expense; the cost of training the cleaner, then the increase in wage due to that cleaner being more qualified. This isn’t always an expense that commercial buildings are willing to invest their buying power into.

“If the wider business community starts to understand that our service is made up of ‘people’ and that they are investing their buying power into people, then we hope they will understand the value of training and how this impacts and reflects upon the service levels and people’s livelihoods.

“We have a good, dedicated cleaning workforce. If we develop our workforce, our frontline staff, we’re ensuring that the quality of service and safety is there.”

Wenman says there are significant benefits to both the organisation as well as individual team members, including greater efficiency and increased productivity.

“Creating a pathway is really important because often these second chance learners haven’t achieved success academically in the past, and this is the first step on their learning journey. The joy we see when people receive their Level 2 or Level 3 qualification is amazing.”

Anyone wishing to participate in the review can register their interest by contacting Careerforce via email qualreview@careerforce.org.nz

www.careerforce.org.nz