

The Natural Step: Green Cleaning Project

Our Green Clean Project established in its charter at the end of 2006 to develop standards and train Engineering, Water Utility and Central Library facility managers and maintenance personnel in healthy and environmentally friendly cleaning practices.

Our team was headed by Larry Nelson as project sponsor. I acted as project manager, and was assisted by Kathy Cryan in Engineering and Gail Glasser in the Water Utility. Greg McManners, Jeff Griffith and Connie Thompson from Monona Terrace provided invaluable guidance from their experience in getting Green Cleaning points for their LEED-EB certification for Monona Terrace. They were the “A” in our TNS Awareness model, for they had already recognized the need for green cleaning at their facility. Bryant Moroder from Sustain Dane kept us on track as project coach. Brian Joiner was also kept apprised of our progress, and his approach to fast cycle change meetings was greatly appreciated. Paul Stauffer from Engineering, Chuck Bowe from the Library and Scott Van Horn from Water Utility, all in charge of maintenance at their facilities, attended our training sessions and made sure the line crews also received their detailed training in Green Cleaning procedures. Monette Maguire headed the effort in Purchasing to obtain our contract with Kranz Incorporated to purchase green materials. Kranz has also been in active partner in providing custodial items and conducting and arranging training sessions with vendors.

In December of 2006 our team finalized its Project Charter.

On February 12th our team met and we decided to conduct a survey of all the facilities indicated in our charter. Jeff Griffith assisted greatly in identifying the types of questions we should ask. We had therefore established the “B” in our TNS model, the need to establish a baseline for future project management.

On March 14th Purchasing held the Kickoff Meeting for the Green Cleaning contract awarded to Kranz incorporated. The efficiency and ease of dealing with one committed vendor has streamlined the green clean procurement process, and the kickoff meeting gave attendees the opportunity to make new contacts and sample new products.

On April 14th our team met with Kathy at Engineering to review the survey questions before they were released to the facility managers. The surveys were then released for completion. Kathy compiled the results, and they indicated that prior to our initiative there was no formal, documented training program. New employees were trained by existing employees. There were no refresher or update training sessions. The facilities in question possessed inadequate or out of date equipment, and a host of cleaning chemicals, very few of which were green.

On May 23rd Kranz hosted a meeting at Monona Terrace for facility managers. This detailed meeting covered key points in green cleaning training procedures. The lecture was accompanied by comprehensive literature meant to assist the managers in their training with line crews. All facility managers reported that after this session training went ahead as planned. This was the “C” in our TNS model, for as the group discussed their current methods, and the opportunities for change outlined at this meeting, a compelling vision of how the facilities could be maintained emerged. It was after this

meeting that the “D” or “Down to Action” phase really commenced, as line crews were trained and purchasing habits changed in a sometimes smooth, sometimes rocky, process. In July of 2007 it was confirmed that trackable orders for green products were now being placed through Kranz, and that a committee had been established to review purchases and recommend changes when appropriate. Documented training had taken place, and Engineering, the Water Utility and the Library all had standard operating procedures in place and methods to conduct refresher training when required.

In August of 2007 the Library ordered micro-fiber cleaning equipment. Micro fiber materials grab more particulates and involve less effort by the custodian to accomplish the same task as synthetics or cotton.

In October 2007 the Library replaced its high-decibel, dust spewing vacuum cleaners with quiet HEPA filter vacuums. The library also changed our paper towel dispensers to hands free, portion control dispensers.

Our project did not so much move things in the right direction, as capitalize on a previous effort. Monona Terrace’s LEED-EB certification process meant that in Jeff Griffith and Connie Thompson, the City possessed two sources of invaluable green clean knowledge. Our team simply applied most of those concepts to our wider effort. We also took advantage of the exhaustive effort put forth by Purchasing in awarding the vendor contract to Kranz, who has provided so many of the materials and training that were vital to our project. (Note: It is important to remember that an independent approach to cleaning is still a vital aspect. Steam cleaning is an excellent way to periodically disinfect bathrooms, yet not many vendors promote this method.)

The return on investment for this project will undoubtedly come in phases. Staff morale is very high, as they understand that City management is interested in protecting their health and that of building users by using green cleaning methods. It is very hard to quantify a lung ailment that does not occur. I have been approached by a different vendor, Corporate Express, that has just developed a large green cleaning line. Their new Oak Creek facility features a large area dedicated to a variety of floor and wall finishes, including sustainable surfaces. Greater competition among vendors will undoubtedly drive down prices.

System Condition One: We avoid using materials that are rarely found in nature, and disposal of items is conducted in a “tight” technical cycle.

SC Two: Some cleaning chemicals, even when they’re green, are unsustainable at certain concentrations. Facility managers and line crews have been trained to use green cleaning chemicals at their proper dilution rates.

SC Three: We try to avoid the encroachment into large natural areas by emphasizing proper paper towel use. Paper towels represent one of the least sustainable aspects of building custodianship. Most facility managers have settled on one of two approaches: If they realize they are installing paper towels in an area where use cannot be supervised, they are using high recycle content paper. If greater quality paper is required, the focus is on portion control.

SC Four: We are meeting the needs of our building users and custodians by using green cleaning chemicals and processes. In the case of HEPA filter vacuum cleaners, we are

already enjoying a quieter workplace, and one with less particulates. The training process has also introduced employees across agency lines, and helpful partnerships have sprung up from those training sessions.

The facilities not targeted in our charter should have the same procedure applied to them. We are still some ways from being able to say that every City of Madison facility is green cleaned.

The lesson I would share from others is never to underestimate the collaborative benefits of joining together to complete a sustainable project. I have worked with so many friendly, knowledgeable people during this process. Sustainability, when pursued in this manner, can also be considered a self-fulfilling process. Not only did we complete this project, but I am enthused about future ones and continuing the partnerships that it generated.

(Note: Since the completion of this report, it has been learned that the City of Madison will pursue an APM mandating green cleaning practices for all city buildings. The team constructed to pursue this APM will be comprised of many of the people involved in earlier green clean projects. We hope to bring the same level of energy and Natural Step processes to this endeavor.)