

A Trusted *Cleaning Partner* in Chicago

Written by Jen Hocken

Commercial cleaning company Bee Line Support, based in the Chicago metropolitan area, focuses primarily on the medical and surgical cleaning markets. Using these same surgical-grade standards, the company also provides comprehensive cleaning services to corporate facilities, schools, industrial facilities, and hotels.

After moving to its new headquarters location in Chicago, Bee Line developed a fully-operational in-house medical cleaning training center to offer hands-on education to its staff in an authentic medical setting.

"We have a training center here that is an exact replica of an exam room and a bathroom in a medical facility, so we're able to train our folks and our managers in a hands-on, realistic medical setting," says Bee Line Support Chief Executive Officer Jamie Henry.

Bee Line also has a specialist on board who has received a Certificate of Mastery in Infection Prevention from the Association for the Healthcare Environment (AHE), and the company expects these high standards from all employees in the field. Whether it is cleaning a hospital, school, or corporate ►►







- office, every space is cleaned as if it were a surgical center based on the training protocols it has put in place for disinfection.

The company was established in the 1960s as an appliance repair store with a few janitorial contracts. After incorporating Bee Line in 1997, Jamie expanded it into the company it is today. It now serves a hundred-mile radius of its headquarters in Chicago, and it cleans over two hundred medical sites every night of the week.

Unlike much of the competition, Bee Line does not subcontract any of its work, and all employees are on the company's payroll. When other competitors use subcontractors, their clients often tend to lose track of who is in their space to clean. Bee Line refuses to jeopardize its clients' integrity and security, and always makes sure to perform thorough background checks on all its employees.

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Bee Line strives to promote from within, and its entire management team started as cleaners before moving up. “We’re always looking for our shining stars who we can promote from cleaners to leadership positions, giving them the opportunity to work their way up through the organization. We find that this is a big reason that our retention rate is so much better than our competitors. We have less turnover and more experienced management because of that,” explains Jamie.

Bee Line’s efforts go far beyond promotions. It encourages a progressive workplace culture, and it provides incredible benefits to its over four hundred employees. “It forms into really close-knit

relationships because the managers work closely with cleaners, and it’s very much like hands-on training. When it comes to the corporate culture, it’s very comfortable and fun, and we work really hard to make it a welcoming, positive environment,” says Bee Line Support Head of Marketing, Paige Weber. To stay ahead of the labor pool challenges, the company also pays a higher rate than its competition to recruit quality employees who will choose to stick around.

These close relationships with employees help keep its retention rate up, and the part-time employees and those in the field are not forgotten since they are equally important to the company. Bee Line provides luncheons for the staff every Monday, has a rooftop deck courtyard area to encourage them to enjoy the property, and hosts an annual company picnic. It acknowledges birthdays and anniversaries with gift cards, and when an employee is expecting a baby, they are given a branded onesie for their little one to go along with other merchandise provided by the company.

The company partners with numerous organizations to ensure that it delivers the highest quality results, and always strives to influence the community in a positive way. After an expansive vetting process, Bee Line became a member of Chicago Anchors for a Strong Economy (CASE), and it was recently granted its first contract through that venture. Bee Line is also proud to be certified as a Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) company because it believes that diversity is the key to innovation.

Bee Line has partnered with BSCAI, the leading association for the cleaning industry, to raise awareness about the importance of cleaning standards and procedures worldwide. With the help of its members, BSCAI aims to change the world’s perspective on cleaning.

The advantage of being highly involved in various organizations in the cleaning industry is that Bee Line is always using the newest equipment, and it can keep up with the latest trends in the market.

Its cleaners are trained to watch for potential hazards or problems with the building while working. The client testimonials demonstrate how much the extra effort is appreciated. “We like to empower our cleaners to be the eyes and the ears of the building, so they’re not just going in there to clean, but they’re also trained to give any feedback back to their manager,” says Jamie. For example, if a leak is discovered in a bathroom while it is being cleaned, it will not be ignored but will be reported back to the client right away. “Our pledge to our clients is that we’ll keep an eye out for things in the building in the evening when they’re not there.”

The auditing procedures of its own staff are very rare in the cleaning industry. Due to its strong focus on the medical and surgical markets, Bee Line offers a free black light audit system to its clients that will show how well the building is being cleaned. The process begins with the auditor spraying an invisible solution on the high touch points that have been identified in exam rooms before any cleaning commences.

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There are seven points that a patient touches most frequently in a medical exam room, including the doorknob, toilet handle, and sink handles. Unaware that the auditing is taking place, the cleaners come in to clean at night, and the next day, the auditor returns with a lighting device that clearly demonstrates if the area was cleaned properly, partially, or missed completely. It reports the results to the client to ensure they are aware of any issues or overlooked touchpoints, and the company can use the information to fix any problems.

Bee Line offers this service to its existing clients, potential clients that already have a cleaning crew, and it incorporates the process into its employee training and continued education to avoid future mistakes. The auditing allows Bee Line to calculate how well its employees are performing. “We can spot trends and work proactively to correct them,” explains Jamie. “You see that type of auditing sometimes in a hospital setting, but I don’t think there’s anybody else in our space that does it from a janitorial services provider standpoint.”

The company is growing rapidly. From approximately two hundred employees in 2017, the Bee Line team quickly grew to three hundred by 2018 and four hundred by 2019. They plan to continue making a name for themselves as the expert in cleaning and disinfection.

The company values the importance of training, continued education, and showing its employees respect and appreciation. Bee Line regularly highlights the staff on social media and uses the digital platform to educate its followers with topics from cleaning tips and techniques to the proper method to wash your hands. “As unglamorous as cleaning a toilet and mopping the floors may seem, we’ve worked hard to rebrand our business to create a fun, authentic and innovative voice. Our goal is to give this important profession the exposure it deserves while always remaining on the cutting edge of clean,” says Paige. ■

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