

# The Connection™

Marvin's View

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## Can We Talk

**The challenges and opportunities facing our industry today are too numerous to list. The economy is causing reductions in budgets, environmental programs require extensive changes and new laws demand healthier cleaning. At the same time, the cost of products, energy and operations are skyrocketing. Not simple problems for any of us to resolve.**

**Unfortunately, these facts of business life are not covered in publications or industry seminars where these issues are often glossed over. One way I judge the state of our industry is the number of excellent maintenance, custodial and food service executives who are retiring. There is not a lot of fun in our industry these days.**

**But there is a bright side... wild economic times and recessions offer unique opportunities for improvement and change. When the pressure is on, management is open to new ideas and programs. And there are many things we can consider to not only face these challenges, but to capitalize on them.**

**1. Move to the front of the line on environmental leadership.** You probably have the most sustainable program in your organization, but are you getting credit for your leadership? Take a look at my [recent article](#) in Target, the prestigious publication of The Association for Manufacturing Excellence. It is aimed at Lean engineers in manufacturing plants and helps you review and communicate the impact of your programs. It is a rather long article but whether you are a school, hospital, correctional facility, contractor or industrial plant, it may help you to take credit for what you have accomplished and give your management the facts so they can take credit too.

**2. Propose a realistic budget that gives the resources you need to improve cleanliness and relate that to the improvement you can deliver in attendance, productivity and profit.** You help keep people healthy. A healthy building makes more money. A clean school raises attendance and test scores. More resources for your department may well be the best investment management can make. Do you believe it? If you do, put it in writing and lay it on them.

**3. Get support from your suppliers.** It starts with telling the purchasing department that janitorial supplies are no different than medical, educational and industrial production materials. For all too long Janitorial Supplies have been put out to bid for the lowest price. Of course you want the best price, but you also need to get the material to get the job done effectively with maximum productivity.

You might also want to consider purchasing your cleaning material on a set cost or shared savings program. One of our recent recognitions was Mayor Daley's prestigious GreenWorks Award for set cost distribution programs. This is an old concept (Our SFSPac and RMS programs work well for thousands of facilities) but many more should consider it. If you need additional information on these programs, read [Chemical Management](#) by Thomas J. Bierma and Francis L. Waterstraat Jr., or let us know.

But, one way or another, long and complicated RFP's and bids that cost thousands to award based only on initial cost need to be history. **You and your suppliers have to be on the same side of the table with the same goals of helping your department fulfill your mission.**

Well, as you probably guessed, I could go on. But maybe these three major areas are a place to start. As always I look forward to getting your input and suggestions.

**Let's talk, act and lead our industry to the front of the line. You owe it to your staff, your company and most of all to yourself.**

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