

Green Business Awards Finalist: Innovation

CleanOffice Inc.

When companies strive to become green businesses they usually pay plenty of attention to the obvious elements: Building materials. Air quality. Recycling.

But they rarely glance at their maintenance company's cleaning supply labels.

The cleaning industry has leaned heavily on chemicals and equipment that aren't exactly environmentally friendly. Cleaning a building and keeping the environment clean were often at odds.

But it doesn't have to be that way.

And Chantilly-based cleaning company CleanOffice Inc. set out to prove it by developing its GreenZone cleaning program.

In commercial cleaning, the hazardous products are part of the problem. But they're followed closely by a less obvious counterpart: a traditional lack of concern about recovering the pollutants. Cleaning companies run vacuums and floor buffers to rid offices of dirt and pollutants, but often the very act just scatters and redistributes them back into the environment.

CleanOffice decided to work toward the Green Seal organization's Environmental Leadership Standard for Commercial Cleaning Services, which consists of following detailed steps in planning, product and equipment choices, and training.

In its pilot program location, the 350,000-square-foot Concourse Building in Tysons Corner, CleanOffice found ways to clean up its act, such as identifying and using alternative cleaning products and equipment. The efforts worked: CleanOffice's GreenZone program earned Green Seal's approval July 2, only the third program to do so in Virginia by that time.

GreenZone has expanded to other locations. Vacuums with highly efficient filtration systems allow the company to capture 99.7 percent of dirt and allergens from floors and carpets. CleanOffice scrapped single-use paper towels in favor of microfiber cloths that can be cleaned and reused up to 1,500 times. In addition, the company no longer uses aerosol and has stocked more environmentally friendly solutions.

CleanOffice also offers a daytime cleaning option, which cuts down on late-night energy support.