Lisa Hamblet, Staples Facility Solutions, Shares Her Top 3 Trends in Facilities Management

**Name:** Lisa Hamblet  
**Title:** Vice President  
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**Quote:** "Some of the most remarkable building services contractor executives I’ve encountered demonstrate true entrepreneurship with the ability to reinvent themselves and their businesses..."

As vice president of Staples Facility Solutions, Lisa Hamblet has had years of experience working with building service contractors to address the challenges they face when trying to reduce product costs, maximize productivity and ensure consistency between servicing multiple client locations. Here, she identifies three trends related to these challenges: simplifying of the supply chain, worker safety and infection control.

**What are some of the trends you are recognizing in facilities management?**

As with most areas of business today, many of the conversations we’re having with building service contractors are focused on the challenges they’re facing when trying to reduce product costs, maximize productivity and ensure consistency between servicing multiple client locations. In many cases, it boils down to doing more with less.

With labor costs on the rise, building service contractors are seeking new ways to control and reduce costs. One way in which they’re doing so is by evaluating their products to ensure they’re the most cost-efficient and high-performing, and that they’re being used in the right quantities. The improper use of certain products can result in significant dollars lost and waste generated. BSCs are looking for ways to train their staff on proper usage and dilution measures to ensure they’re getting the most of each product.

One key trend we’re seeing to meet cost, productivity and consistency needs is the simplifying of the supply chain. Previously, building service contractors had to juggle getting supplies and equipment from multiple vendors. Today,
however, building service contractors can streamline procurement with large, holistic suppliers and get everything they need from one source. Other benefits of a simplified supply chain include consistency in using the same manufacturers and price structure regardless of location, delivery method, reporting, training and relationship management – allowing for personal account managers who can ensure the right quantity of products are being purchased with no duplication. Account managers can also continually suggest new products.

Another continuing trend for building service contractors in facilities management is worker safety and EPA/LEED requirements. We’re regularly discussing how occupants and tenants of a building are placing an emphasis on healthy building interiors. Doing so helps to minimize wellness issues and health problems in the workforce, preventing a decrease in productivity that costs businesses money. LEED/EPA expertise and sustainability capabilities can help building service contractors attract and retain business. Additionally, environmentally preferable cleaning chemicals and sustainable product selection are good investments for building service contractors to ensure worker safety with existing clients and help them win additional business.

Finally, one seasonal trend that’s particularly important this time of year is battling flu season. In a typical year, the flu causes about 70 million missed workdays and an estimated $10 billion in lost office productivity. (Source: 2010 study by Challenger, Gray & Christmas). Facility managers and building service contractors are often the first line of defense for creating a healthy building environment by utilizing a range of solutions from supplying bottles of hand sanitizer, touch-free fixtures and motion-sensor dispensers in bathrooms, to industrial cleaning techniques – all that can keep a workforce healthy. We’re seeing an increased trend in building service contractors being better prepared for flu season.

Is there any trend that you would consider most pertinent for the changing economic landscape we’re in these days?

With the rising cost of healthcare and labor costs, building service contractors need to find ways to reduce cost and labor time. The use of innovative products and education on new cleaning techniques that yield the same results in less time will help them meet their cost control goals.

Infection control is always an important topic in the building service contracting industry. In your opinion, what top three things should be top of mind for building service contractors (BSCs) when thinking about infection control?

1. Question each product used will help building service contractors make informed decisions about how to keep germs at bay by choosing the most effective and affordable products.

2. Building service contractors must have access to environmentally preferable, high-performance cleaning products that help break the chain of infection, and are less toxic for building occupants.

3. Finally, ensuring that clear-cut “standards of clean” are clearly communicated to staff, effectively implemented and reinforced through training and objectively measured in quality.

How is the partnership between Staples and BSCAI’s Purchase Advantage Program beneficial for members?
BSCAI members now have the opportunity to experience the benefits of Staples Facility Solutions for procuring janitorial and sanitation supplies. This means streamlined distribution including free, next-day delivery; a best-in-class online ordering interface with a low order minimum, so there’s no need to stock up on inventory; and the ability to standardize product supply in all locations nationally.

**What do BSCs need to consider when selecting cleaning products and other facility supplies?**

There are a number of considerations when selecting cleaning products and facility supplies – specifically an examination of the effectiveness and performance of products, training tools on how to use products and cleaning techniques, the product’s effect on the health of employees and clients, along with the cost per end use or square foot of products. Finally, the opportunity for continued awareness on the latest innovations relevant to the industry is also achieved via relationship with a trusted supplier.

Here are some specific considerations for building services contractors to consider to ensure they are selecting the appropriate solutions for their facility:

1. Are the active ingredients listed on the product label?
2. Is the product safe for daily use by custodians, employees and clients?
3. Will the product harm or damage surfaces?
4. What is the dilution ratio of the product being considered?
5. Is the product a disinfectant, a one-step disinfectant-cleaner or a sanitizer?
6. Is the product effective in hard water?
7. What is the end-use cost of the product? Cost per square foot?

**From your travel and interaction with BSC executives, what are some of the most impressive and desirable traits that you’ve witnessed?**

Some of the most remarkable building services contractor executives I’ve encountered demonstrate true entrepreneurship with the ability to reinvent themselves and their businesses—whether it’s their willingness to incorporate new, proven cleaning methods or ability to tie in the latest products to their “standards of clean.”

Another desirable trait I’ve come across is an extreme sense of customer centricity. Building services contractors who are able to adapt and meet the unique needs of their customers are the ones who truly excel. Those who become integrated into their customers’ businesses while onsite are the ones who best manage whatever these needs may be.
What do you wish BSCs would do differently?

BSCs can take into consideration not only the product cost but the value of the entire supply chain process. Suppliers that can provide a wide-range of high-quality products, consistent across all locations of the buildings they serve will help BSCs save overall costs and experience a better overall value.

What are you looking forward to most at the BSCAI Annual Convention?

It will be great to have some live interaction with BSCAI members instead of just over the phone. I’m looking forward to putting faces to the many names I’ve spoken with, while making some new connections and catching up with old friends.

As a facilities supplier, what does Staples Advantage want BSCs to know?

It’s important for building services contractors to team with a supplier who can accommodate their unique network of buildings reliably and efficiently and with consistent lines of products in all locations nationally. This uniformity allows building services contractors to establish their “standards of clean” across all of the facilities they service, no matter how far apart they are.

Staples Facility Solutions is a true destination for Jan/San, offering nationwide reliability and access to the same high-quality products in all locations nationally through easy online ordering and next day delivery. We have the technical know-how to have strategic conversations with building service contractors and property managers to help them choose the right products for their facilities, grow their business and save money along the way.

Business and employee management

What do you believe makes for a good working relationship with customers?

Formulating a plan to meet the customers’ needs is imperative and by having a strong understanding of both the building service contractor and the end-clients’ needs.

How would you describe your management style?

My management style is collaborative but results-driven. I am open to new ideas and encourage my team to take risks and try new approaches.

What do you do to increase employee retention?

Communicate and be open.
What is the best piece of advice you’ve received in your career?

To keep learning. It’s important to get out of your comfort zone and take risks. By following this advice it has allowed me to look at issues/opportunities through a different lens and have new perspectives.