Transblue is a national consolidated facility management services provider.  One of the services provided by Transblue is Snow Removal. Transblue has been a leader in self-perform snow services, having worked for National firms, a third party, and has hired third party sub-contractors to provide snow services.

One of the major obstacles faced by National firms utilizing third party vendors is having the ability to control the sub-contractor and validate his performance. Another challenge is ensuring that smaller, localized snow firms are hiring “legal working” laborers. The third area of focus and last challenge we will address in this Best Practice is the use of single source materials and deicing agents.

A lot of national facilities management companies will utilize modern technology to track work performance by the subcontractors. The most widely utilized platform is the IVR system. This system calls for the firm or subcontractor to call into a centralized phone tracking system which records the service when they arrive and leave or when they leave or a variation of that combination. The problem is that in most cases the vendor may not have to be onsite to call into that number and record services. One thing often heard or called out to a vendor is, “You called in the IVR, but the location manager said your crew did not show up.” As IVR technology has improved, vendors are now required to call in the IVR directly from the store phone, but this is also a flawed work around. With this updated IVR system, the 1st tier contractor can still not see the service results. Additionally Geo-Tagging has been implemented to track services, but during harsh storms or out of the area locations this also has drops in service.

Because of these problems, many firms use a mixture of boots on the ground and IVR technology to provide quality assurance. While this combination produces good results, it does not produce great results. Utilizing technology as it continues its rapid growth will provide companies and contractors with the necessary controls to limit the heavy expense of labor with frequent site visits, and uncontrolled services by third party vendors.

The Goal: Utilize proprietary software to enhance service levels and provide a greater level of accountability.

The major problems identified are:

1. A lack of control with current IVR technology
2. A heightened expense attributed to frequent site visits
3. The legality of employees. It is important to ensure that third party vendors are using legal employment practices when staffing for snow assignments
4. The use of approved chemicals. Third party snow firms will often use unapproved de-icing agents which the 1st tier contractor does not have approved MSDS sheets for, and the 1st tear contractor also has trouble enforcing the use of approved deicers based on cost or availability.

Two solutions have been identified to solve these problems.

1. Develop a software system that allows for accountability. Provide all third party vendors with software system training. Develop a background check and I-9 policy requirement for all subcontractors and provide deicer directly to third party vendors. If the third party vendor does not have the necessary funds to procure the approved deicer, we set up a material account and provide the snow subcontractor with the materials and remove the cost from their base payment amount. If they do purchase the approved deicer verify the use of the preapproved deicer on the initial site walk through and continually throughout the snow season.
2. Add additional self-perform crews in markets which are not currently self-perform.

Transblue reviewed both options carefully and chose to create our own proprietary software. The software is named the SRS. Under the SRS, a vendor is set up with a work order. The Vendor then accepts the work orders, enters the service times, and schedules each event as required by the contract. Once the work order is accepted, Transblue and the

Transblue client is notified via email with an approximate arrival time and the schedule of service. Once the vendor arrives at the site, they photograph the building and predetermined areas of the store so we can ensure service is being performed as contracted. The photograph(s) start the time the vendor is on site. The client can now see the work order has started and accountability has been provided through the photo verification. Once the service is complete, the vendor takes the required completion photos and the work order is complete. The client is sent an email and the service can be graded. The grades are used to determine the vendor’s customer service and industry specific knowledge. If vendors do not receive good grades, they are removed from being an “eligible” vendor. The SRS then creates the invoice and sends it directly to the client’s billing department as specified in the contract agreement. By creating and implementing the SRS we can track the start time of the vendor and the completion time of the project. We have provided photo verification “accountability” that the work was completed. We utilizes the feedback to continually “raise the standard” in the maintenance industry. To take it one step further, all of the work order verification can be sent directly to the location manager’s smart phone or company email through text message or tablet.

Once this system is in place, accountability is created. The next step is to very employment. Our software and onboarding process, which approves the hired vendors, requires that each vendor upload the required background check and 1-9 verification forms, and that they tell us who is going to be onsite and when they are going to be onsite. We then verify the 1-9 and employee on site, and because we are receiving the work acknowledgements directly through our software that works via text message, we can ensure the phone number the work tickets are coming from are the phone numbers provided in the initial background check. We can also verify that the right employees are on site providing service to our clients.

We still verify the deicer via site visit and site walk throughs, but we have them add the deicer type directly into the SRS, and it verifies they have uploaded the contracted materials and acknowledged use of the proper chemicals.

When we look at successful business models for large retail cliental, the self-perform model falls short. There is too much time spent by upper management and store management controlling the service level and working environment. Additionally, changing vendors can be difficult as store labor budgets do not allocate time for continual vetting and continual walk throughs for new local vendor service providers. National Service providers excel in managing third party vendors and can allocate the proper amount of labor to ensure the service is of the highest quality and the management teams running store locations can focus on running their various store locations and generating higher store profits instead of ensuring the entire lot was properly plowed and the deicing was actually completed.

By thoroughly reviewing the obstacles and detailing a plan of action, we are able to provide the most extensive and complete accountability for our clients. We understand that technology is growing by leaps and bounds, and we dedicate a full team of software experts to ensure we are up-to-date on the latest advances. Our mission is to continue to raise the bar and set the industry standard when it comes to utilizing technology to advance the accountability and service level for our clients. The Transblue facility plan is simple: We provide peace of mind while controlling costs and providing optimum service and quantitative facility solutions.

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