

Hiring, automation on cleaning companies' agenda

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Business is brisk at PuroClean and finding employees remains a priority to aid growth.

Businesses often hear the advice: “Meet clients where they are.” Eric Roudi, the CEO and founder of commercial cleaning franchise OpenWorks, takes that counsel to heart—quite literally.

The franchise has instituted a hyperlocal model of business, setting up shop close to where the work is. “This isn’t an industry you can phone into, you need boots on the ground,” Roudi says. “We have been strategic in opening offices in regions where our

clients' needs weren't being met. This enabled us to open offices where we already had business and we could immediately start hunting for new business for our franchisees."

OpenWorks follows the money. "We select cities where there is significant population growth and forecasted growth," Roudi says, implying that a precursor of economic activity is more likely to drum up business for ancillary players such as the commercial cleaning industry.

The strategy has worked for the Phoenix-based franchise, which in just the last three years has jumped from five offices nationwide to 23.

OpenWorks' success reflects the strength of the commercial cleaning segment overall, which grew 5.1 percent in sales to \$5.1 billion, according to Franchise Times Top 200+.

The B2B services franchising model is becoming increasingly popular, says Jeff Oddo, CEO of City Wide Maintenance, which he describes as "a property manager's ally."

Commercial property managers essentially want all their headaches (commercial cleaning being one of them) solved and they're more than willing to lean on a B2B franchise such as City Wide Maintenance to deliver, Oddo points out. The Kansas-based brand was among the top three in sales growth within the cleaning services segment of FT's Top 200+, thanks to its systemwide increase of 23.7 percent to \$207 million in 2017.

The financial success of commercial cleaning concepts just may give these franchises enough stability to weather—and turn into opportunity—potential disruptions on the horizon: the challenges of a strong economy, the evolution of technology and the increasing demand for sustainable practices in the industry.