



Los Angeles Convention Center



How Smart Janitorial Helps the Bottom Line

More than 70% of exhibition halls in the U.S. run in the red and are subsidized with tax revenues. Such was the case with the Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC) until private management took over in December 2013 and saved the City of Los Angeles about \$4.5 million in the first year alone.

LACC is renowned internationally as a prime site for conventions, trade shows, and exhibitions. In fiscal year 2016, the center reported an operating profit of \$8.1 million. They surpassed the city's five-year goal for establishing a \$2.1 million reserve, and now the reserve exceeds \$6 million. The center also generates more than \$548 million in annual economic impact.



Just how big is LACC? It hosts more than 300 events bringing in over 2.5 million visitors a year—think the entire population of New Mexico—and its exhibit hall can hold 15 football fields. Yet, LACC is big in other important ways too. It has hosted the Grammy's and live performances by all the Beatles, except John. It's the first and also the largest convention center in the U.S. to receive the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing Buildings (LEED-EB) Gold award.

As the janitorial partner since 2013, ABM has played a role in helping LACC green its operations and profits. Here are some important areas of impact.

Social Responsibility

Sustainability is highly important to LACC, the management company, and many of the center's customers. ABM has been an innovator in green cleaning since the beginning of the concept. They implemented a hand-sorted recycling process at LACC, bringing its waste diversion rate up to a healthy 75%. They recycle glass, plastic, paper, aluminum, pallets, scrap metal/steel, toner/ink cartridges, wood, cardboard, and more. The result is so impressive, other convention centers have visited the facility to learn the process. What's more, working with the U.S. Green Building Council and partners during the 2016 Greenbuild conference, ABM helped LACC achieve an industry-leading, record-breaking 90.3% waste diversion rate for the event. In order to gain expertise, ABM had shadowed Greenbuild management throughout the 2015 conference.

LACC's meeting rooms and exhibit hall have trash and recycling bins made from 97% recycled milk jugs. About 95% of the janitorial products ABM uses there are environmentally friendly and cost effective. The client also relies on ABM for advice on sustainable restroom and janitorial equipment. The center now has nearly 1700 minimal waste, cost-effective dispensers (towel, paper, and soap) in restrooms. And when LA Mayor Eric Garcetti mandated water restrictions during the drought, LACC replaced 710 conventional toilets with low-flow, self-flushing units, and installed 15 waterless urinals to decrease water use by 20-25%.

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Outsourcing Efficiencies

Prior to the current management company taking over, the convention center's event and day cleaning services were performed by in-house staff, while night cleaning and back-of-house cleaning were handled by vendors. With ABM, these services became consolidated under one manager, giving ABM the ability to precisely control scheduling, processes, and outcomes—without a net increase in staff, except under special circumstances. ABM is responsible for cleaning 800,000 square feet, including meeting rooms, event halls, show offices, executive offices, security offices, and back of house.

LACC's Director of Facility Operations Estella Flores says, "There is a night and day difference now in the quality and efficiency of our janitorial services. Working together as partners with ABM, we overcame the challenges of a complicated transition to create an operation that now works like a well-oiled machine. We don't think of ABM as contractors—they're part of our team and have our full trust. This is an environment of constant change, and therefore, open and frequent communication is vital. We have that with ABM. Our customers are pleased, too: The manager of our most-visited event, the Anime Expo, is impressed with the cleanliness since we assumed management of the center."

Event Cleaning Process Improvements

Any time there is an event, ABM is responsible for all public spaces and the 57 restrooms, before, during and after. While this always requires expert orchestration, some events present special janitorial challenges. The yearly Anime Expo is an example. About 90,000 people attend each day, many of them kids naturally prone to messes and accidents. From a cleaning perspective, the crowds have been likened to a tornado roaring through the facility. ABM rose to the challenge by bringing on extra staff and implementing efficient processes. They deploy three overlapping shifts of about 30-45 people during each day of the convention (which can extend into the night if there's an evening concert). These public-facing employees represent LACC and embody its customer-service standards. The day staff's main task is to maintain restrooms, keeping them well stocked and clean, while troubleshooting problems such as leaking water. ABM then brings in a cleanup crew at closing time—as security pushes out hoards of people, ABM is on their heels cleaning. Their goal is to make the facility look untouched by crowds when the doors open the next day. This includes sweeping floors; buffing terrazzo; vacuuming, shampooing and spot cleaning carpets; pressure washing the exterior and sidewalks; and sanitizing restrooms.

Cleaning for Event Managers and Exhibitors

Event managers hire various general service contractors for their shows, meetings, or conventions, and therefore, sometimes companies other than ABM clean the event spaces. In this scenario ABM helps oversee the cleaning contractor as a second set of eyes for facility management, ensuring that the center's standards are met. When ABM is contracted to clean for events, ABM's expertise in orchestrating janitorial services comes into play again, and is further appreciated when ABM is also hired by exhibitors to clean their booths.

Event Turnover Process Improvements

With 350 events a year, back-to-back events are common. ABM may have only 24 hours to turn a used space into a pristine one. Efficient processes, the right equipment (including tractor-sized sweepers and scrubbers), and hardworking well-trained staff are key. Depending on the event, the work might entail anything from construction cleanup (inside and out) to standard janitorial maintenance, which is especially challenging in such a large space and because so much of the facility is glass. There's also very little downtime between events for deep and detailed cleaning, therefore, ABM has to be equipped on non-event days to perform all the extra cleaning tasks that keep LACC immaculate.

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Bringing Customers Back

When the current management took over, LACC's exhibit halls maintained an average occupancy rate of 55%. In 2016, it was 72%, exceeding the industry's "practical maximum" of 70%. The center also boasted 93% favorable ratings from show managers and received the 2016 Venue Excellence Award by the International Association of Venue Managers.

LACC's customer satisfaction has been impacted by ABM's frontline janitorial employees, who understand that they play a role in the facility's success and visitor satisfaction. Recently, a cleaner found a Cartier watch and engagement ring at the LA Build Expo: It was returned to the ecstatic owner. At another show, an ABM employee spotted a bank bag in the restroom as he cleaned, so he called his supervisor, who opened it and found \$10,000 cash. He immediately turned it into security, who tracked down the owner: It was an exhibitor's register bank for the day.

Flores commented, "These examples of integrity are testaments that ABM has instilled our shared values in their onsite employees. They are our eyes and ears, interacting with our clients and guests daily, so it's vital that they embody our standards."

ABM recognizes and rewards employees for exemplifying company values of teamwork, pride, and integrity. They're also trained in ABM's standard processes that yield high quality outcomes, and they participate in the client's guest training program, which focuses on "safety, smiles, sizzle, and synergy." A customer who is the Director of Meetings at American Association of Dental Research (AADR) wrote, "We were impressed with the hard-working and dedicated Convention Center staff and received service of the highest caliber. All levels of staff were knowledgeable, efficient, patient, flexible, and wonderful to work with."

Partnership for Consistent Standards

By using the same janitorial partner for multiple venues, the client is able to maintain their trademark high standards, maximize efficiencies, strengthen their brand, and reinforce their commitment to sustainability. The partnership with ABM also works because both companies are focused on creating memorable experiences for audiences.

About ABM

ABM (NYSE: ABM) is a leading provider of facility services in the United States and various international locations. ABM's comprehensive capabilities include janitorial, electrical & lighting, energy solutions, facilities engineering, HVAC & mechanical, landscape & turf, mission critical solutions and parking, provided through stand-alone or integrated solutions. ABM provides custom facility solutions in urban, suburban and rural areas to properties of all sizes - from schools and commercial buildings to hospitals, data centers, manufacturing plants and airports. ABM Industries Incorporated, which operates through its subsidiaries, was founded in 1909. For more information, visit ABM.com.

