

TAKE THE WHEEL

Drive the narrative with your clients so they don't feel the need to dictate



Developing site requirements and site specifications is a collaborative process between a company and client; but deciding trigger points for service or for using materials should be left to the snow pro. There's a variety of reasons this should fall on your shoulders, and it's important to convey this to the client during specification development and event response.

Proper mitigation

While some clients may know how to successfully partner on snow contracts, the service provider should inform them of how to properly mitigate snow and ice concerns, as well as make the decisions on when to treat surfaces and clear snow.

Many times, when the decision-making is given to the client, they may hold back from performing additional but necessary services such as pretreating and anti-icing to save money, only to have the snow operations manager get a call about ice or snow buildup due to no surface treatment. Then the snow contractor must remobilize and provide the service, which typically costs the client more money than if they had elected to have the contractor make the decision at response time.

Not only does this cause operational issues for the contractor, it causes panic

and worry of potential slip and fall incidents on the client's property prior to treatment.

Safety concerns

While many snow contractors understand that responding to unplanned and emergency services requires a shift in operational direction, it can also cause issues on the client side.

For instance, you have a commercial site where you finished plowing during response time, and the service of treating the surface wasn't requested. The temperature drops 5-10° F, and all of a sudden you have a fresh layer of ice throughout the parking lot and in front of the building. Slips, falls, accidents and liability now worry the client; and customers walking in and out of the business have the perception of a business that doesn't keep them safe.

Relay the importance of letting the snow pro make the decisions based on weather analysis and planning, and then having the ability to properly treat the surface to prepare the client for the opening of their business. It's not only the snow contractor who must perform their duties to keep people safe; it's the client as well.

Be certified and trained

As a snow professional, if you're telling your clients they must leave trigger decisions up to you, it's important that you have the knowledge required to do so. Several courses and resources are available to give you the confidence

and support from your client in the decision-making process. If you're implementing much of the material you've learned, you will be performing snow and ice management operations at the same level of other exceptional businesses across the entire industry.

Being trained and certified also helps in the process of obtaining and retaining clients, and it can help gain or return access to liability insurance. Lastly, if you ever have a lawsuit you must respond to, being certified lets others know you've been through industry-standard training. Only make decisions when you have the knowledge to carry out an objective with exceptional performance in mind.

Trustworthy relationships

Finally, focus on developing a relationship of mutual trust and respect with your client. While this may take some time, especially if you have new clients or if you're rebuilding broken relationships, be diligent and don't give up.

Learn from previous situations, and always work to build an understanding from your client that you will make the best decision possible for them to meet the expected service. There are definitely some situations that may strain a relationship, such as navigating through a legal battle and finding discrepancies over liability; not showing up and performing the agreed upon service; or billing a client for additional services without prior notice of services performed or requested. While it can be difficult to develop trust in the relationship, it only takes one bad decision to permanently harm the relationship.

Lastly, this is a great time to teach the client and property managers about proper snow and ice management, and how to effectively work as a partnership to solve a problem. **SB***

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GET IT IN WRITING

➔ If a property owner/manager wants to dictate how, when and where services are to be performed, ensure that liability for that discretion lies with them. The contract should make clear that if the owner declines or decides not to have the contractor apply the services to any portion of the premises, the owner acknowledges that the contractor is not responsible for any damages or claims whatsoever relating to or caused, in whole or in part, by the failure to apply the services to the premises in any circumstance.