

B Corp Success for Julius Rutherford & Co

1 year ago



With the ever-increasing pressure on businesses to reduce their environmental and social impact, many companies are looking to the B Corp certification to reflect their ethical values and practices. This certification shows that a company that has been certified by B Lab for its social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

In 2024, London-based commercial cleaning company [Julius Rutherford & Co](#) achieved their certification. To hear more about it, we caught up with Chris Jarvis, Managing Director, and Lauren Hanley, Customer Services Director.

Can you tell me a little bit about your specialisms within the commercial cleaning sector?

Chris: We provide expert, tailored cleaning services to workplaces across London and we specialise in workplaces that require unique ways of working. We work across a huge range of sectors, from classic corporate office and educational settings to more modern science and tech facilities. We're also highly experienced in working with heritage sites and listed buildings. This diverse property range means we're often working with clients that have very unique demands and so it's our tailored approach that makes us so well-known in the industry. We are a 'no compromise on quality' provider and everything we do is focused on ultimately providing a high-quality service to the client by using the best technology and following well-established processes. We are committed to providing the highest quality output for any environment under whichever demands are required.

What motivated the company to pursue the B Corp certification?

Chris: It's about having the right standards of professionalism. We wanted to make sure that those working for us, and those working for our clients, are treated well, paid fairly and given proper employment rights. We believed that the B Corp Certification would be a great way for us to demonstrate how we run our

business, to measure ourselves against best practise and provide us with a framework to enable us to continue to improve.

What steps did the company take to achieve the certification?

Lauren: As customer services director I have a dedicated quality, sustainability and environment manager on my team who was designated as the owner of the project.

To get B Corp certification, businesses need to go through a business impact assessment. This is a detailed questionnaire related to all areas of the B Corp process, such as community, workers, the environment and sustainability etc. You gain points for each response and the more points you get, the higher your score. When you've

reached the minimum required score, B Corp examines your assessment, explores the evidence you've given and ensures that your score is accurate. It's a very thorough process designed to make sure you're doing what you say you're doing. Once you've evidenced everything and they're happy, you achieve your certification.

The fact that we've got somebody in-house that we could dedicate to the project meant that we achieved it much quicker than a lot of other businesses in the industry. We began in November 2023 and were certified by August 2024.

How does the certification align with the company's existing values and business practises in your opinion?

Chris: The founding value of the business was the desire to create a fairer, higher quality cleaning company, and to ultimately impact the industry in a positive way. That aligns very well with B Corp's values, which revolve around accountability and responsibility. We're passionate about having effective processes in place to regulate the way we operate, and I think it was thanks to that that the certification process was reasonably smooth. We already had a lot of what you'd need for the B Corp certification in place.

We're not perfect and there's lots more to be done but, it's great to get that recognition. The challenge now is looking at what can we do to improve. Complacency is a dangerous thing. You can't rest on your laurels; you must keep moving.

So how do you demonstrate your commitment to social and environmental responsibility beyond the B Corp certification?

Lauren: One of the main sentiments behind the B Corp certification is using business as a force for good. As we were already doing a lot of things before beginning the process, we had a head start. We've always done lots of charity and volunteer work, including with a food waste charity in London called The Felix Project. We want to contribute more than just money; we want to make a real impact and so we've recently increased our volunteering hours by 80% from last year.

Similarly, sustainability goes hand-in-hand with the industry as well. There's lots of potential in cleaning to improve sustainability and we've made real leaps in doing what we can in all areas of the business. For example, we've minimised our single-use plastics at head office, actively seeking out different providers

that we can work with to help improve our own recycle rates. We try and find a recycle stream for everything. We have around 10 different bins in head office for everything from coffee grounds to flexible plastics to batteries.

It's important for us to demonstrate to both our customers and the community that it can be done. Part of the B Corp process is sharing the concept of using business as a force for good.

You need to be recertified every three years, and so we need to ensure we maintain or improve our assessment score next time. We are always looking for opportunities to improve by thinking outside the box and considering what more can we do as a business to have that positive impact on the community around us.

Can you tell me about how you approach contract management and client relationships to ensure ethical and sustainable practises throughout the entire service life cycle?

Lauren: A considerable part of my role is supporting our operations team with the management of our contracts. Most of our contracts have a monthly meeting with their line operations manager where we update them with everything that's happened that month. This includes everything that's happened on site with regards to staffing as well as any financial updates. We also publish an annual sustainability report. This gives our clients a clear picture of what we're doing as a business in terms of sustainability and social responsibility, including our recycling closed loop practises and being a recognised London Living Wage provider for over 10 years.

How do you view the current landscape of the commercial cleaning sector, what are the key challenges and how are you using tech to enhance your cleaning practises and to enhance sustainability of the business?

Chris: Like many other industries in the UK, we have a shrinking workforce. When you have a shrinking workforce, you need to pay more for staff and on top of that, the government is putting more taxes on the cost of employing people. So ultimately the challenge in the cleaning industry now is about how to become more productive and how to do more with less resources.

You have to look to technology to solve that problem. We spend a lot of time looking at technology and we invest a lot in equipment that supports our cleaning staff to do their jobs effectively with less effort, enhancing their productivity.

We also look at which cleaning products the staff are using. We use multi-purpose chemical-free cleaning products. By using just one product to do a number of different tasks, we're improving efficiency.

Something the industry is headed towards is data-led cleaning, using smart building technology. This allows us to align tasks to where the traffic in the building is. These technologies are still in their infancy, but I definitely see more of this in the future of cleaning.

What sets you apart from your competitors?

Chris: Firstly, we take a people centric approach; we prioritise the workforce. We understand the increasing value of our workforce. We put them first by offering stable shifts, fair pay and opportunities for development. This focus on people means we have

really good staff retention rates. The longer a team member stays with us, the better they will get at their job which ultimately means the client is going to be happier.

Secondly, we set up the business so that our frontline staff can fully focus on their job and not be distracted by administrative issues. They're also free from the distractions that can come from substandard tools, products and machinery because we only use high-quality and effective resources. Because of this, our staff are able to provide undivided attention to the tasks at hand. And ultimately, if you can give your undivided attention to a task, you're going to get the best result possible. That's where we think our clients notice the difference with us.

And finally, what are your key priorities and ambitions for this year and beyond?

Lauren: The B Corp certification is a project that my team has managed and so for this year I think for me it's about just strengthening the understanding across the business and clients of what it actually means. I want to make sure we keep having these conversations to ensure that eventually our staff live and breathe the values and standards of the certification.

Chris: We've got a fantastic portfolio of clients and in 2025 I want to continue to push our business forward. We'll be sharing what we've done to achieve B Corp certification. By us having it means that our clients will be able to get it and we're part of their supply chain.

Some already say that the service we provide is the absolute best in the market. We want to continue to help our clients and help them on their sustainability journey.