



AN INTERVIEW GUIDE FROM MY TRADE TALENT

Commercial Cleaning & Facilities Maintenance *Interview Guide*

Role-specific interview questions and scorecards for hiring commercial trades talent — from field to leadership.

AUTHOR

Michael Carter

President, My Trade Talent

SPECIALIZED RECRUITING FOR COMMERCIAL TRADES • PIPELINE-DRIVEN • FLAT-RATE



A Note from Michael Carter

Most bad supervisor hires in commercial cleaning and facilities maintenance are not bad on paper. They interview well. They have the right resume. They say the right things in a first-round conversation. The reason they fail is that the interview never got below the surface into the four things that actually predict success.

What follows is the interview framework we use with the cleaning and FM firms we work with. It is built around four dimensions -- technical skill, work history and stability, cultural fit, and trajectory -- and it applies to every role from front-line team member to VP of operations. The questions get more sophisticated as the role gets more senior, but the framework is the same.

Use this to structure your interviews consistently, evaluate candidates fairly, and stop losing supervisor seats to hires that never should have been made.

-- Michael Carter, President, My Trade Talent

The Framework

Every interview should cover four dimensions in this order:

1. Technical skill. Can they actually do the job? Not can they describe it -- can they demonstrate specific knowledge and past performance?
2. Work history and stability. Why did they leave their last three positions? Have they progressed or moved laterally? What does their tenure pattern predict about how long they will stay with you?
3. Cultural fit. Will they fit the team, work well with your other supervisors, represent your firm well to clients?
4. Trajectory. Where do they want to go? Are they ambitious and looking for growth, or comfortable and stable? Both can be right for different roles -- but you need to know which you are hiring before you make the offer.

Role-Specific Questions

Cleaning Team Member / Janitor (front-line)



Technical skill:

- **Walk me through your typical day at your last cleaning job.** What was your route?
- What chemicals have you worked with, and how do you know when to use which?
- **Describe a time you had to clean something outside your normal routine.** What did you do?
- How do you handle a spill or biohazard situation?

Stability:

- Why did you leave your last two cleaning positions?
- What was the longest you have stayed at any cleaning job? What kept you there?

Cultural fit:

- **Describe your best supervisor.** What made them good?
- **Tell me about a time you disagreed with a co-worker.** How did you handle it?

Trajectory:

- Where do you want to be in two years? In five?
- If we offered you additional training or a supervisor track, would you want it?

Cleaning Team Lead / Supervisor

Technical skill:

- Walk me through how you build a route sheet for a new account.
- **Describe the last quality issue you caught before the client did.** How did you find it?
- How do you handle a team member who is consistently underperforming?
- What is your process when a team member calls out at the last minute?

Stability:

- Why did you leave your last supervisor role?
- Have you ever been passed over for a promotion? What did you learn?



Cultural fit:

- **Tell me about the toughest client you have ever managed.** What made them tough, and how did you keep them happy?
- What is one thing your last firm did well? One thing they did poorly?

Trajectory:

- Are you interested in eventually running your own account as a site manager?
- Are you interested in earning your ISSA CMI or working toward CIMS certification?

Site Manager / Account Manager

Technical skill:

- **Walk me through the P&L of the largest account you have run.** What was the revenue, the margin, the labor cost as a percentage?
- **Describe the last significant client complaint you resolved.** What was it, and what did you do?
- How do you decide when to escalate a client issue to your regional manager versus handle it yourself?
- If we gave you a new \$500,000 account starting Monday, what are the first three things you would do?

Stability:

- Have you ever lost an account you were managing? Why did it happen? What did you learn?
- Why did you leave your last two account manager roles?

Cultural fit:

- **Describe the culture of your current firm.** What do you love? What frustrates you?
- **Tell me about a time you disagreed with your regional manager.** What happened?

Trajectory:

- Do you eventually want to be a regional operations manager or a facilities manager?



- Are you CIMS-certified? If not, would you pursue it if we paid for it?

Regional Operations Manager

Technical skill:

- How do you decide how to allocate a new hire across your portfolio?
- Walk me through how you manage the P&L across a \$10M portfolio.
- **Tell me about the last time you had to fire a site manager.** What led up to it? What did you learn?
- How do you know when an account is at risk of non-renewal before the client tells you?

Stability:

- Why did you leave your last regional role?
- What is the longest tenure you have had at any firm? What kept you there? Why did you eventually leave?

Cultural fit:

- **Describe the leadership team at your current firm.** What is your honest assessment?
- How do you develop the site managers who report to you?

Trajectory:

- Do you eventually want to be a VP of operations, or do you see yourself specializing in a specific portfolio type?

Facilities Manager

Technical skill:

- **Walk me through your last building operations plan.** How did you allocate capital across MEP maintenance, tenant improvements, and reactive repairs?
- **Describe a vendor management decision you made recently.** What was the situation? What did you decide?
- How do you handle a major MEP failure -- what are the first three steps?



- What building automation systems have you worked with directly?

Stability:

- Why did you leave your last FM role?
- What is your tenure pattern at your last three positions?

Cultural fit:

- **Describe the property owner or building owner you enjoyed working with most.** Why?
- **Tell me about a time you had to push back on ownership.** What was the outcome?

Trajectory:

- Do you have FMP, BOMI, or CFM credentials? If not, are you working toward any?
- Where do you want your FM career to go over the next five years?

Healthcare Cleaning Specialist

Technical skill:

- Walk me through your infection-control protocols.
- **Describe the last time you had to respond to a code situation.** What did you do?
- What healthcare-grade certifications do you hold?
- How do you handle a survey visit from Joint Commission or CMS?

Stability:

- Why did you leave your last healthcare cleaning role?
- What environment do you work best in -- hospital, ambulatory, long-term care, or lab?

Cultural fit:

- Describe your working relationship with nursing staff at your current facility.
- Tell me about a time you had to correct a co-worker on infection-control protocol.



Trajectory:

- Are you interested in pursuing CHESP certification if we paid for it?

Data Center / Cleanroom Cleaner

Technical skill:

- Walk me through your cleanroom protocols.
- What ISO cleanroom class have you worked in?
- Describe the PPE you use and when you switch protocols.
- How do you handle a particle-count violation?

Stability:

- Why did you leave your last cleanroom role?

Cultural fit:

- Describe your working relationship with the facility engineers.
- How do you handle strict access-control requirements?

VP of Operations

Technical skill:

- **Walk me through the multi-metro portfolio you run today.** What are the KPIs you watch weekly?
- **Describe the last account you lost.** What went wrong? What have you changed?
- How do you decide when to open a new market versus deepen an existing one?
- What is your framework for hiring regional operations managers?

Stability:

- **Walk me through your career progression.** Why did you make each move?
- What is the longest you have stayed at any firm? What kept you? What would make you leave?

Cultural fit:



- **Describe the leadership team of the firm you are looking to leave.** Be candid.
- What kind of leadership team do you thrive in?

Trajectory:

- Do you see yourself as a career VP of operations, or eventually a COO or CEO?
- What would need to be true about our firm for you to be here in five years?

Interview Structure That Wins

For front-line and supervisor roles: 30-minute phone screen with recruiter or ops leader; 60-minute in-person or video with hiring manager (site walk if possible); reference check in parallel; offer within 48 hours of a positive decision.

For account manager and above: 30-minute phone screen; 60-minute video with hiring manager; 45-minute technical/scenario conversation with a peer; 30-minute conversation with leadership; reference check in parallel; offer within 48 hours.

For FM, senior FM, and VP roles: same structure as above, plus a portfolio walkthrough where the candidate presents how they would manage a specific account or portfolio type.

Total elapsed time from first contact to offer: one week for supervisor roles, two weeks for senior FM and VP roles.

Red Flags to Watch

Front-line: gaps in employment they cannot explain; frequent switches between residential and commercial cleaning; unwillingness to describe their route in detail.

Supervisor: cannot describe P&L basics; blames every past client complaint on someone else; unwilling to name a supervisor they respected.

FM: no credential and no interest in pursuing one; describes vendor management as "just paperwork"; cannot describe a specific MEP system they oversaw.

VP: cannot give a straight answer on why they are leaving; describes past teams generically; cannot articulate what would make them stay.



The Bottom Line

The candidates worth winning will be respected in the process. Fast responses. Clear communication. Structured evaluation. Real feedback whether or not they get the offer.

The candidates who fail interviews well-structured for them fail them for a reason. Trust that.

If you would like help sourcing the candidates and running the process, that is what My Trade Talent does.



About the Author

Michael Carter

President, My Trade Talent

 [Connect on LinkedIn](#)

Michael Carter, President, My Trade Talent.



About My Trade Talent

My Trade Talent is a national recruiting firm focused exclusively on the commercial trades. Flat-rate pricing. Pipeline-driven recruiting. Trade-specific expertise including commercial cleaning and facilities maintenance.

Ready to build your pipeline?

Schedule a discovery call with Michael and the My Trade Talent team.

READY TO HIRE SMARTER?

Stop starting from *zero* every time a seat opens.

My Trade Talent maintains a continuous pipeline of vetted commercial trades talent — sourcing candidates by trade, specialty, and vertical experience so open roles fill in weeks, not months.

Schedule a discovery call with Michael and the team.

[MYTRADETALENT.COM](https://mytradetalent.com)

