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6 Things Big-Box Retailers Look For When They Tour Food Manufacturing Facilities

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By Dan Rowe, JustfoodERP

When a big-box retailer tours a food manufacturing facility to vet the company's operations, every process needs to be fully optimized and prepared for scrutiny. Below are the essentials that need to be covered to meet the needs of big-box retailers.

Here's what big-box retailers looking for



Every big-box retailer will be looking for different things, of course, but they aren't that different from one another. If you know what one wants, you can assume the others have similar expectations.

Here are six items we know big-box retailers are seeking when they review your operations.

1. Production sanitary practices match claims

One of the first things a big-box retailer will look at is your sanitary practices. But they're not just studying how you handle food items; they want to know that your practices match your claims.

In other words, are you saying one thing and doing another? Or do you live up to the promises you make? After all, there isn't a food processor or distributor on the market that doesn't claim to have incredibly high standards.

Here are specific things they'll be looking at:

- **Staff attire.** Are employees wearing the appropriate gloves, masks, and coats?
- **Allergen management.** If you claim to run a peanut-free zone, is it properly partitioned from the rest of the warehouse?
- **Hand-washing.** You probably have a hand-washing procedure, but do employees observe it?
- **Cross Contamination.** How is machinery cleaned and does any accidental cross-contamination ever occur?

Basically, if you're making a claim, you have to back it up. And if you aren't claiming a process you should, you'll want to rise to industry standards.

2. Facilities are clean

Chances are, you've boasted at one time or another — whether in front of clients or in a broad marketing campaign — about your facility's cleanliness. Having the right attire, keeping a sharp eye on allergens, maintaining good hand-washing habits, and avoiding cross-contamination are all essential, but big-box retailers also look for less obvious signs of cleanliness: things that can't be swept under the proverbial rug.

Some of the items that savvy retailers look for when they tour a facility include standing water in and around the warehouse, signs of rodents, holes and cracks in walls and ceilings, the presence of thermometers (in refrigerated areas), and clean floors.

3. Shelves are stocked and organized

Cleanliness and organization tend to go hand in hand. Retailers want to know that your shelves and bins are properly stocked and efficiently organized.

Why does this matter? The first reason is that good organization reflects the leadership of a company. If vital details are addressed, then big-picture responsibilities are also probably being dealt with in the right manner.

There are also selfish reasons to evaluate stocking procedures and organization. The retailer wants to know that, should it need a rush order, you'll be ready to pack, pull, and ship it without any unnecessary delay.

4. Credentials and certifications are listed

Are all your credentials and certifications clearly listed so everyone can see them, or are you obscuring something by sticking them away in a corner? Honesty and transparency are big for retailers. Even if your scores are not as high as they should be, being honest enough to present those credentials up front speaks well of your leadership.

5. Employees enjoy their jobs

One of the intangibles retailers will study when they tour a facility is employee interactions. Do workers seem to enjoy their jobs, or are they waiting to punch the clock and doing just enough to get by? Employees don't have to smile perpetually from ear to ear, but they should look engaged and take pride in their work.

6. Technology is modern and advanced

Retailers want to make sure you're working with the most up to date and modern systems available in order to ensure the best quality. That means the best processing, storage and packaging equipment along with internal systems and software. If you're doing business with the big retailers, they want to ensure that you've invested in the tools needed to ensure consistent products that always arrive on-time.

Leveraging business software to win big-box retailers

Along with all of the points above, investing in integrated business software is one of the major ways that you prove to your customers that you're a reliable company that is looking to grow your business and become a more valuable partner. Big box retailers know that the more investment you put into your systems means more consistent production, higher quality products, food safety and accurate scheduling.

If you're interested in learning more, check out our guide on how you can leverage integrated business software at your food manufacturing company to win business with big box retailers.



Dan Rowe works on the Product Management Team, assisting product marketing and product direction at IndustryBuilt Software. His direct involvement with 40+ customer implementations, along with site audits, discoveries and sales activities, provides him with plenty of ideas on ways to improve our customers' experience with IndustryBuilt products. He's always interested in hearing another point of view. Dan can be reached at dan.rowe@industrybuilt.com