



By: Dave Frank

Don't Let Finances Impact Cleaning Quality

While many organizations are feeling the squeeze, there are management strategies that can help.

Many facilities of all types are growing.

Both occupant population and square footage are on the rise.

This growth increases the workload for cleaning managers; but instead of beefing up the cleaning staff, organizations — in an effort to keep costs down — are expecting managers to continue to deliver the same results with the same amount of workers.

As I work with cleaning managers, gathering data and plotting information on a chart or graph, the visual is interesting.

Picture two horizontal lines, one increasing (square footage) and one decreasing (number of cleaning workers).

The image that results is what I call “the lobster claw” effect, and cleaning managers are feeling the pinch.

They are challenged to do more with less while also struggling to meet or manage expectations that were set long before the increase in workload with a reduced staff.

As a cleaning manager, there are a few different ways to respond to this challenge.

Some managers choose to scale back on cleaning frequencies; some look for more efficient, creative management strategies to get the job done; and others choose to present a case for additional staff.

Regardless of the strategy, cleaning managers must have the right data and expertise to best manage their changing workload with the best results.

Skip Cleaning

Feeling spread thin, some managers turn to “skip cleaning.”

To perform skip cleaning properly, managers must prioritize all cleaning tasks based on risk, traffic flow and appearance expectations.

The lowest priority areas are then skipped

and only cleaned every other day or even once per week.

Skip cleaning can work well for office areas.

Where it does not work well is in restrooms, busy lobbies and healthcare facilities.

With continuous staffing and budget cuts, extreme skip cleaning can take a facility to a point where areas start to deteriorate and the risk for potential outbreaks increases.

This is when another strategy is needed.

Other Strategies

When following the principles of ISSA's Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS), cleaning managers gather data and put together data points, statistics and information.

Part of this information collection includes completing a workloading exercise.

The CIMS Service Delivery principle specifically requires organizations to use an industry-accepted workloading tool to determine the number of labor hours needed to clean a facility.

The traditional way to workload a building is to collect times, tasks and frequencies for the entire facility, then calculate the number of labor hours needed.

But when managers are working to meet a specific budget number or headcount, it's best to work in reverse.

Always start with calculating the cost and labor hours needed for the facility's most critical areas, such as restrooms and patient areas, because these areas need to be cleaned to prevent the spread of infection.

ISSA's *Cleaning Times* is a good resource for establishing how long it takes for specific tasks.

Take that task time and multiply it by the number of instances that task needs to be performed to get the total time needed.

Multiply that number as needed to get weekly, monthly or annual costs for that task.

Subtract the annual cost from the annual budget number and then move onto the next highest priority tasks, subtracting them from the budget.

Toward the end of this process, managers will find there is only enough left in the budget to perform lower-priority tasks a few times a week versus daily.

Low-priority tasks include office cleaning and floor stripping and refinishing.

Presenting The Case

With workloading data in hand, managers not only know what their cleaning teams can accomplish on a daily, weekly or annual basis, but they also have valuable information to present to finance leaders to reset expectations or justify another employee.

These numbers and data points will help others understand what high-risk areas are and what happens when cleaning budgets are reduced and areas are skipped.

With a simple adjustment in data, they can see the impact of increased or decreased cleaning.

While many organizations are feeling squeezed, there are management strategies that can help cleaning managers work with what they've got, and lower overall cleaning costs and increase productivity without impacting cleaning quality.

Moreover, managers who have the right data and knowledge can come to the table with a solid case for getting the resources they need to keep facilities clean and healthy. **CM**

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