



Briefing 12-14 March 2012

# Team Cleaning

This briefing provides an overview of the concept of Team Cleaning and the opportunities it presents for making efficiencies within the cleaning regime whilst preserving standards of cleanliness. Other briefings in the series highlight Daytime Cleaning and Reduced-Frequency Cleaning.

## Key issues

- Team cleaning can produce savings of up to 30% in cleaning costs without compromising cleanliness
- The method provides a consistent quality of service whilst improving satisfaction amongst staff and benefitting both staff retention and absence.

## Description:

Team cleaning is the method of cleaning whereby a building is cleaned as a single unit. Each cleaning operative performs the same task during the cleaning session i.e. one vacuums whilst another dusts and a third mops. The distribution of work reflects the time requirement for each cleaning type.

Ideally the operatives move through the building together and complete each room/section in turn. It is not however the same as gang cleaning as the method is task based so dependent on the cleaning requirement members of the team may move ahead of the remaining staff.

Generally Team cleaning favours larger offices and buildings which have traditionally been cleaned by several cleaners each responsible for a particular floor or section. For the largest buildings it may be necessary to establish several teams throughout the building. For smaller premises requiring a few hours per week it is unlikely to be economical unless the building forms part of a larger cleaning commitment.

An ideal team size is four cleaning operatives, organised with one as starter (sweeping and some chair displacement where necessary), two for the main tasks of vacuuming and mopping and the fourth as finisher, performing dusting and replacing furniture etc.

## Benefits:

Team cleaning means that staff are not isolated during the cleaning exercise. This can make the job more stimulating and in many cases a more rewarding and sociable working environment with consequent reductions in absence. With several cleaners there is little opportunity to take unplanned breaks and there are time savings in using the same

equipment without change. Productivity is consequently increased with 30% improvement not being untypical.

The cleaners will also get to know the entire building so in the event of holidays and sickness, there is a limited if any need to relearn the building requirement and quality levels should be maintained. The teams usually become 'self-policing' which whilst dramatically deterring absence also leads to improved and more consistent quality throughout the building. At one local authority the team approach has meant that at some locations, where staff retention was previously difficult, there are now stable teams with dramatically reduced staff turnover. 'Self-policing' teams require lower supervision allowing for the removal of unit supervisors to be replaced by cluster managers responsible for around 10 buildings each at significantly reduced cost.

The level of equipment required can be drastically reduced to one piece per team instead of one per area. A change to team cleaning can often be the spur to change the equipment with some finding rucksack vacuum cleaners more beneficial along with the use of flat head mops

### **Drawbacks:**

Completing the same task every day can lead to an element of boredom and it is suggested that rotating the tasks on a weekly basis is the ideal. That way the job contains more variety and each operative learns all the cleaning tasks within a short period.

With multiple cleaners it becomes less possible to identify poor quality to an individual cleaner in each area of a building. However the team now carry the responsibility so there is likely to be peer pressure to improve if one member is delivering to a lower quality.

For maximum productivity, the flow of cleaning through the building should be systematically developed to capture the best efficiency. This may be an iterative task over several weeks or longer and there may be a consequent slight increase in managerial time during implementation.

### **Implementation**

Ideally the Authority should maintain a database of all its maintained buildings with the ability to draw down detailed list of areas and room designation i.e. office/washroom/corridor etc. and hence cleaning requirement. This information is essential in balancing the cleaning requirement across the team and it is likely to be different for each building cleaned.

In the simple example below, the building approximately breaks down into 40% carpet (vacuum), 32% vinyl (mop), 19% tiles and 9% verticals (dusting and cloth wipe). One operative may therefore do vacuum, another mopping and the third spot vertical cleaning and dusting. Responsibility for additional tasks such as moving furniture and rubbish might be allocated to help balance the time for each operative.

Room Type	size m2	Carpet	Vinyl	Tile	Spot vertical
<b>Productivity m<sup>2</sup>/h</b>		<b>300</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>
Corridor	600	450	150		20
Offices	2100	1500	600		90
Washroom	300		50	250	20
Canteen	300		300		10
Meeting Room	100	100			10
<b>Total</b>	<b>3400</b>	<b>2050</b>	<b>1100</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>150</b>
Hours / day		6.83	5.50	3.33	1.50
Proportion		40%	32%	19%	9%

Inevitably there can be some resistance to change and it is essential to involve the staff at all stages of the process. There are reductions in hours, but often this has been achieved through natural turnover or the deletion of vacant posts with the remaining positions being more secure.

Resistance to use of new machines may be encountered and the system may take a few weeks to bed down. Encouraging the staff to make suggestions on improving the process can aid buy in and ownership of the result.

**APSE Comment:**

APSE welcomes innovative ways of improving efficiency whilst maintaining similar or better service outcomes. Properly planned and implemented, team cleaning provides both a better working environment for cleaning staff whilst offering cost savings of up to 30%.

Further advice is freely available to APSE members in local authorities. This includes access to productivity data and support on understanding and implementing the concept. Detailed on-site support from defining the cleaning requirement through to designing the flow can be obtained at reduced rates from APSE Solutions.

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