

## **Rebuttal**

**By Paul Regan**

I would like to respond by exploring a few quotes from Jim Harris Sr.'s article.

*“There is without question a learning curve that is challenging to practitioners of Zone Cleaning, however the uninitiated pick up Team Cleaning quickly and are productive within hours, not days or weeks. The greatest barrier to this system change is management, not the custodian.”*

The reason I took on participating in this debate is because of the tiresome assertion that the only reason anyone would not use Team Cleaning is because they resist change.

Rubbish!

In my work, I bring change constantly, and I would change to Team Cleaning if I thought it was better. Frankly, it's not.

Change for the sake of change is a waste of time, and for many competent operations out there that is exactly what a switch to Team Cleaning would amount to — change for the sake of change.

*“The Light Duty Specialist (Starter) is followed by the Vac Specialist (Closer) who covers approximately the same assigned square footage. There is where the Team Cleaning system really shines.”*

Will someone please explain to me how it is possible to save time by walking into every office twice instead of once?

Though Jim thinks this “is where the Team Cleaning system really shines,” in fact, it is precisely its weakest link.

The single most expensive item in a cleaning budget is labor, and sending a second person through an area to perform a redundant task is a waste of time and money.

The last time I checked, a good back-pack vacuum cost less than a week of a custodian’s wages. And since in both systems you end up buying the same number of vacuums in the long run anyway, go ahead and buy one now and save 50 times that in labor.

*“One of the most important aspects of Team Cleaning is the demand for clearly defined standards.”*

As Ronald Reagan was famous for saying, “There you go again.” The best way to lose an argument is to allow your opponent to set the terms of the debate.

Since when does Zone Cleaning = No Standards? Without rigorous, clearly defined, widely recognized and enforced standards, you don’t have a cleaning system, Zone or Team.

*“The best process to establish standards is to incorporate standard-setting as we test and evaluate how we clean on a regular basis.”*

I agree, especially because this was borrowed from Standardized Zone Cleaning going back more than 50 years.

*“The Team Cleaning system demands that you validate production rates, queue gaps, assigned duties, costs and training requirements.”*

Zone Cleaning demands are simpler — validated production rates, assigned duties, costs and training requirements. Queue gaps are an unnecessary complication brought on by Team Cleaning’s insistence that there is only one correct way to clean.

This is an example of something Microsoft pioneered — take a software bug and call it a “feature.”

Let’s examine the following statements:

- *“There are really only two ways we assign cleaning work — by space or by task.”*
- *“Each Starter and Closer team is assigned a specific amount of cleanable square feet to cover for its shift.”*
- *“Cleaning work assigned by space uses a zone or area as the priority and is utilized by most cleaning systems.”*

So what's really going on here? I would say, and here the differences really are semantic, that there is only one way to assign cleaning work, and that is by tasks.

How those tasks are then grouped, within a compact zone assigned to a single person or to a larger area assigned to a team is a decision a manager makes based on the needs of the facility.

Team Cleaning proponents claim the following are the characteristics of a Zone Cleaning operation:

- *A zone or area usually assigned to one worker.* No argument here.
- *Based solely on CSF (cleanable square feet).* Totally incorrect. Time and space assigned is based on what needs to be cleaned, how often, and to what level. We don't allow 10,000 square feet of gym space the same amount of time as 10,000 square feet of offices, classrooms or locker rooms.
- *The worker determines quality.* Who says so? Certainly not in a standards-driven system.
- *Equipment, such as a vacuum sitting in a janitorial closet, sits idle 60 percent of the time.* Better equipment should sit idle than people. Equipment sitting idle costs nothing, since it will all be used anyway.
- *Is difficult and time-consuming to measure.* No more so than team cleaning, it simply requires standards.

- *Has static conditions and poor design for continuous improvement.* Again, says who? “Poor design” in this context simply means, “If it’s not our design, it’s a poor design.”

Most daily tasks can be performed by a single person in a single trip through an area. The notion that sending a second person through is either faster or more efficient defies common sense.

Frankly, this emperor has no clothes. And asserting that we don’t see it because we resist change just won’t wash (if you’ll pardon the pun).

A Standardized Zone Cleaning system is a rigorous, scientific, standards-driven system that is professional, efficient and extraordinarily cost-efficient.

It uses the best that every custodian and manager has to offer and concedes nothing to Team Cleaning in any debate on efficiency, cost effectiveness or its treatment of labor.

The key to the efficiency of both systems is standardization, and Team Cleaning’s claim to the high ground lies in the fallacy that standardization applies only to their system.