

Dep-Great Debate-Team Cleaning Jim Harris-cmm0606

Zone or Team Cleaning: Which is better?

Writing in favor of Team Cleaning

By Jim Harris Sr.

As I have spoken to, taught and worked with over 3,200 organizations over the past 13 years about the application of the Team Cleaning system into their operations, I, as many others, have come to the conclusion that this is currently the best cleaning system to satisfy the most stringent demands for high performing cleaning requirements that face our industry today.

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.

Frankly, we have not effectively trained managers to lead and institute better processes that encourage and motivate the worker to offer ideas for improvement.

Simplified work redistribution

Team Cleaning is really work simplification and redistribution.

The introduction of the backpack vacuum has been an important factor in the evolution of Team Cleaning and this simplification and redistribution.

The backpack vacuum suction technology produces less operator body stress and fatigue, greater particle capture through improved filtration, easier access to hard-to-reach areas, and improved production.

Where in the past, most general cleaning personnel had to vacuum as part of their duties, we now have made that a specialist's job resulting in

what we call a team — one worker starts the cleaning process by dusting, collecting trash, etc., followed by another who vacuums and performs quality checks on the first worker.

This comprises the *key* “team” in Team Cleaning.

The Light Duty Specialist (Starter) is followed by the Vac Specialists (Closer) who covers approximately the same assigned square footage.

There is where the Team Cleaning system really shines.

Bridging the gap with efficiency

Depending upon the type of facility, there is a queuing gap that needs to be determined which has the added Team Cleaning benefit of promoting efficiency.

For example, in an office building the Closer will cover about 30 percent more square footage per hour than the Starter, therefore the queue gap is one to two hours depending on part-time or full-time shifts.

In the school classroom environment, this is reversed; the Starter will cover 30 percent to 40 percent more square footage per hour. In the school example, the gap may be as little as 10 minutes and will grow.

These estimates are based on assigned duties and frequencies and allow for more efficient scheduling of custodians.

Also, while the Starter is working, the Closer is free to do other tasks such as stocking of supplies while he or she waits to be queued up.

Supporting tools

Quadrant design and Job Assignment Cards are two unique tools that aid in the management of daily work and support Team Cleaning’s efficient workflow.

Each Starter and Closer team is assigned a specific amount of cleanable square feet to cover for its shift. The assigned space is then divided into quadrants.

Quadrants are utilized to rotate routine, detail and project cleaning frequencies. Monday through Friday has a detail quad and the first through the fourth Friday is used for some type of project cleaning.

Routine cleaning usually means a daily frequency, detail cleaning usually means a weekly frequency and projects or periodic cleaning is usually a monthly frequency

The Job Assignment Cards are a critical communication tool for the specialists and management. The cards should contain information as to exactly where the specialists go, what task to perform and how long it should take to complete a quad (25 percent of their total assigned square footage).

There is an actual room by room or area by area routing specified on the card to further enhance efficiency.

In the overall Team Cleaning picture, there are four specialist disciplines:

- Light Duty Specialists (Starter).
- Vac Specialists (Closer).
- Restroom Specialists (Sanitor).
- Utility Specialists I, II, III, and IV.

Complementing the *team* work of the Light Duty and Vac Specialists, but working independently, the Restroom Specialists are assigned restrooms, locker rooms, drinking fountains or any other tasks as determined by management.

The Utility Specialists category takes care of such assignments as removing trash to a dumpster to aseptic and clean room cleaning.

Utility duties might include:

- Utility 1 — Entrances, stairs, distribute supplies and trash collection to dumpster.
- Utility 2 — Heavy mopping (hospital), machine operation, hard surface floor care.
- Utility 3 — Medical waste disposal, carpet spotting, carpet cleaning, carpet repair.
- Utility 4 — Aseptic cleaning (hospital), clean areas, clean rooms, and work requiring protective gowning.

This gives us a total of seven positions in which to place assigned duties with Restroom and Utility Specialists working independently of Light Duty and Vac Specialists.

Setting strong standards

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

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

Edwards Deming (considered by most to be the father of Quality Management as we know it today) uses the “Shewhart Cycle” or PDSA, which is easily incorporated into standard-setting for Team Cleaning.

Elements of the Shewhart Cycle are:

- Plan – a change aimed at improvement
- Do – test the change on a small scale
- Study – the results. What did we learn? What did we do wrong?
- Act – go with the change, drop it or run through the process again, but take action!

This will bring clarity and confidence to your system.

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

Space vs. task work

Today, we seem to be inundated with cleaning systems — Zone Cleaning, Day Cleaning, Speed Cleaning, Cooperative Cleaning and now Green Cleaning.

But think about the fact that there are really only two ways we assign cleaning work — by space or by task.

Cleaning work assigned by space uses a zone or area as the priority and is utilized by most cleaning systems.

Work assigned by space includes the following features:

- A zone or area usually assigned to one worker.
- Based solely on CSF (cleanable square feet).
- The worker determines quality.
- Equipment, such as a vacuum sitting in a janitorial closet, sits idle 60 percent of the time.
- Is difficult and time-consuming to measure.
- Has static conditions and poor design for continuous improvement.

Work assigned by task, which is the basis of Team Cleaning, offers the following advantageous alternatives:

- Duties assigned to specialists.
- Equipment, such as backpacks operated by Vac Specialists, utilized 90 percent of the time.
- System drives quality, not worker.
- Fluid conditions, modification and replacement built in.

- Specialists embrace continuous improvement as a standard process.
- Quality monitoring on multi-levels, also built in.

Due to Team Cleaning's simplified processes, clarity of responsibility and time restrictions, each specialist is trained to think in terms of performance quality with the previously mentioned job assignment cards and a multi-level inspection process supporting this concept.

Thus Team Cleaning, based on task vs. space dominated work assignments, has clear advantages.

Teams with other systems

Team Cleaning can also be an integral part of Day Cleaning and Green Cleaning in general.

Day Cleaning is perfectly suited to use the Team Cleaning concept of specialists with assigned duties. With its ease of communication, it allows day cleaners to adjust quickly to daily changes in schedules.

Remember, the specialists follow Job Cards and this information is also shared with facility occupants. Thus, Team Cleaning helps enhance one of the strongest benefits of Day Cleaning, the mutual respect between specialists and the facility population.

As for Green Cleaning, Team Cleaning, operating within Cleaning for Health standards, has been green before Green Cleaning became popular. From a "cleaning science" perspective, Team Cleaning, the frequencies and the acquired expertise of each trained specialist has yielded the highest performance at an efficient cost with the least impact on the environment.

Playing the percentages

With the various cleaning systems in today's world, there is a very high percentage of cleaning employees who have virtually no training; a high

percentage of management that has little management training; and a high percentage of organizations that have no viable training program, no effective inspection process, and actually pollute as they clean and are clueless as to where they really are.

However, there are some organizations that utilize Team Cleaning which demands well-managed, focused systems thinking, maintaining the built environment with a focus on human health and are constantly searching for improvement.

Those are the organizations that are using the best known system in our industry.

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