

# Daytime cleaning is the right choice for progressive facilities managers

For progressive facilities and property managers looking for a closely managed, high quality, cost competitive and socially responsible cleaning solution the choice is easy; choose a daytime cleaning regime.

Old-fashioned and negative attitudes towards cleaning persist. Many see it as a low paid, low skilled profession with transient staff who have little commitment to their employers or their work. In addition, daytime office occupiers do not see the hard work that is carried out by their 'out of hours' cleaning team and are therefore inclined to jump to negative conclusions if things aren't quite right during the day.

A far better way of cleaning, which still keeps costs low and maintains high standards, is to have a full time service which predominantly takes place during normal working hours. It operates under an output specification requiring the cleaning team to take a smarter approach and only clean areas that actually need cleaning. This is 'daytime cleaning' and it is the only way for the cleaning industry to finally shake off the poor perceptions about it. Unfortunately it is often not very well understood or accepted because culturally it seems too big a step to take.

## WHAT IS DAYTIME CLEANING?

Cleaning services can be provided by a full time cleaning workforce with tasks such as the removal of waste, maintaining the cleanliness of toilets and kitchenettes and dusting, damp wiping and polishing carried out during normal working hours. Noisy and potentially intrusive cleaning tasks such as floor machine work or vacuuming are still done outside of

normal working hours. Typically a daytime cleaning shift is from 5am to 2pm or from 12 noon to 9pm or a combination of both shifts, so there is coverage right the way through the working day.

In large buildings, each cleaning operative is given responsibility for a particular section of the building and is expected to learn the routine and patterns of working in that area so he can carry out the cleaning without interrupting or intruding on the work carried

out by the building occupants. The cleaning operatives work much more closely with the client's staff, which leads to enhanced communication and a greater sense of the cleaners being part of the 'team'.

All high profile and heavily used areas are cleaned daily, but other areas such as desks are cleaned when they need to be, which may be every

other day – or weekly. The expectation is that the output specification is met, in other words that areas are kept looking clean and that the cleaning operative, with a bit of initial guidance, is the best person to decide how best to achieve this.

An interesting by-product is that because the building users can see the work taking place, their perception of the cleaning service improves. Facilities managers get fewer cleaning-related calls because if something needs doing during the day the cleaner is just asked by the staff member if they can do it. In addition the housekeeping habits of building occupants improve; messy individuals are less likely to continue their messy habits and risk embarrassment if they know the person who will be cleaning it up.

There are many more compelling reasons why UK industry needs to switch to daytime cleaning:

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### (1) RECRUITMENT & RELIABILITY BENEFITS

Staff turnover in the cleaning industry is very high due to the significant proportion of part time staff employed. A cleaning organisation with a 75% part time workforce who employs 4,000 staff can expect to employ double this number in any one year in order to maintain the workforce at that level: this equates to 100% staff turnover.

In most industries this would be considered to be an administrative disaster, and it is compounded by the higher absenteeism levels associated with a predominantly part time work force. With all the possible pitfalls of checking legal entitlements to work and reside in the UK, aside from assessing basic suitability to do the job, recruiting staff becomes full of risk.

With a much more stable workforce of daytime cleaners, contractors can spend more time focusing professional attention on recruiting the right staff – people who may become career cleaners and who recognise the great opportunities within the soft services industry for people with the right diligence and attitude.

### (2) FORMAL TRAINING BENEFITS/A MORE SKILLED WORKFORCE

There are plenty of formal training opportunities for cleaning and supervisory staff. These include NVQ Level 2 Cleaning and Support Services, Customer Service, Team Leading and a range of other relevant First Aid, Health & Safety, Adult Skills Numeracy and Literacy Courses and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Some of these courses are free or government sponsored. However the best that one can do with part time staff is often to have them assessed on the job in a limited number of cleaning routines through the British Institute

of Cleaning Science schemes. 'Part timers' often have other family or work commitments which mean that the sacrifice of giving up time outside of their routine work hours is either not possible or doesn't have enough incentive. Given the practical difficulties of getting part timers to attend these courses it is hardly surprising, bearing in mind high staff turnover, that employers are reluctant to spend the administrative time and money to organise them.

By employing a daytime cleaning regime it becomes practical to formally train staff with all the long term benefits that can be gained from this.

### (3) MORE PRODUCTIVE/BETTER RATES OF PAY

A more reliable, more committed and better trained workforce is more productive. A full time shift has less down time proportionately in setting up and putting away equipment than a two hour part time shift.

Further, where there is an 'out of hours' clean supplemented by daytime servicing to heavily used areas, there is some saving in time associated with combining these servicing roles with the daily clean as a single operation.

Daytime cleaning should be more productive, which in turn allows for the staff to be paid at more reasonable 'Living Wages' without the need for them to work the ridiculous hours that we sometimes find in the industry. In London, research by The London School of Economics and the Greater London Authority has calculated that on a 35 hour working week the minimum hourly rate to get above the poverty line is £7.20 per hour. This rate is being called the London Living Wage. This recognition that the current Legal Minimum Wage is far too low in certain areas of the country has been affirmed

### Working Time Directive – Night Workers

1. A night worker is someone who works at least 3 hours at night.
2. Night time is normally classified as between 11pm and 6am.
3. Night workers should not work more than 8 hours per day on average calculated over a 17 week period.
4. Night workers cannot opt out of the night work limitation on hours.
5. Mobile workers are excluded from night work limits but instead are expected to be given 'adequate rest'.
6. Employers must provide night workers with a free health assessment before they start work and thereafter should carry out assessments at least at annual intervals.

## Working Time Directive – Working Hours & Holidays

1. Employees cannot be forced to work more than 48 hours per week without their written consent.
2. Employees are entitled to a rest period of 11 uninterrupted hours between each work day.
3. Employees are entitled to at least 1 whole day off per week.
4. From 1st October 2007 employees are entitled to 4.8 weeks paid holiday (24 days for a full time worker). From 1st April 2009 this entitlement will increase to 5.6 weeks (28 days for a full time worker). Employers are allowed to include Bank Holidays within these entitlements.

by Gordon Brown announcing plans that the minimum wage legislation will vary in the future according to region, with the South East of England seeing the current £5.52 rate rise to £6.90 per hour.

However it is socially correct to offer £7.20 per hour as the minimum wage right now for any job in London and many parts of the South East, and more and more employers and property managers are recognising this.

### (4) THE HEALTH BENEFITS

Night workers are more prone to serious health problems involving cardiovascular, osteo articular (bones and joints) and digestive systems. At the root of these problems is the disruption of the body's natural rhythms, causing detrimental health effects. Studies show that night workers were found to be twice as likely as daytime workers to develop an irregular heartbeat. This in turn is an indicator of the development of more serious heart problems. The heart is programmed to slow down during hours when it expects the body to sleep and therefore does not respond well to being made to work.

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Compounding this is the fact that cleaning is a physically demanding job and as the ISSA recently reported, in many situations a cleaning operative uses several muscle groups more intensively than during a typical gym workout.

Insomnia and sleep deprivation go hand in hand with shift work as well. Research shows that night shift workers are more likely to have poor sleep habits, increasing the likelihood of serious errors resulting from poor psychomotor performance. Chronic sleep deprivation, insomnia and sleep apnea rises to 11% compared to 2-4% for the general population. In the cleaning industry this is compounded by poor pay rates which encourage workers to have several jobs and work long hours just to make ends meet.

Daytime cleaning reduces the health problems associated with night working. Working during the day follows the body's natural rhythms; employees are healthier, happier and more productive. An added benefit to the employer is the removal of the inconvenience and expense of losing hours through sickness. Progressive organisations are starting to recognise that daytime cleaning is a way of demonstrating corporate social responsibility.

### (5) REDUCTION IN CARBON FOOTPRINT & ENERGY COSTS

Using energy more efficiently is one of the most cost effective means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Energy is the largest controllable outgoing in running office buildings and averages 22% of total costs in the UK. Lighting, air conditioning and heating costs can be reduced significantly by cutting down the amount of cleaning that takes place outside of working hours. If cleaning is carried out through the night or as a part time out of hours operation there will be greater energy use throughout the building.

There is an environmental duty to reduce energy use, and by selecting a daytime clean you should be able to achieve this.

## (6) IMPROVEMENT IN BUILDING SECURITY AND REDUCTION IN MANNED GUARDING COSTS

By having a stable, reliable daytime cleaning staff who are recognised and known by building occupiers, it greatly increases the security of the building. Daytime cleaning means there may also be potential for reducing the manned guarding cover and the costs required to keep your premises safe and secure.

### IMPLEMENTING A DAYTIME CLEANING SERVICE

Forward-thinking facilities managers will be keen to introduce daytime cleaning to their premises but like any change it has to be managed carefully.

- Your contractor must allow a proper consultation period to take place with the existing cleaning staff, and notice period and redundancy costs need to be considered.
- The change needs to be communicated to the building occupiers both in terms of what service they can expect to receive and at what time of day.
- The general image and appearance of the cleaning staff needs to be agreed; after all, one of the reasons for changing to a full time day clean is to enhance the image of the service. Machinery that has to be used during the

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day should be selected to be quiet and preferably without any trailing cables.

- All cleaning staff must be able to communicate well in English, and their induction training needs to include clear instructions on the work that each individual will be expected to perform and the level of contact that these staff will be expected to have with the building users. Some ground rules must be laid out right at the beginning to ensure that the cleaning staff interact in an appropriate way with your staff and that they understand what reasonable requests may be made of them by the building users. These requests must not be to the detriment of completing their daily work routines.

- A sufficient level of ongoing supervision and management time needs to be built into the service by your contractor. You mustn't allow a change to daytime cleaning to result in you ending up managing the service. That is the contractor's responsibility and under a daytime cleaning regime you should expect any negative comments or complaints to reduce.

Get all of this right with your cleaning contractor, and you may well be remembered as the person who brought your cleaning service into the 21st century.

**Sandy Aird, Axiom-Maintain Ltd**

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