

## **The Clean Age**

*How innovative equipment and ideas made Team Cleaning® an industry future.*

Cleaning is as old as dirt. Cleaning tools and strategies, on the other hand, are rapidly evolving. Janitorial closets now showcase state-of-the-art technology in the form of micro-fiber cloths, machines and liquid agents. In the age of innovations, many industry professionals also rely on a science-based cleaning system to improve efficiency and environmental health.

The concept of Team Cleaning was introduced over 20 years ago, and has since gained both converts and skeptics across the world. Team Cleaning rethinks long-held traditions and standards to create a process that focuses on cleaning for health with maximum productivity. So where did the idea come from, and how does it work in the real world?

### **The origins of a cleaning movement**

In the early 1980s, cleaning professionals faced many of the same business challenges they do today. Quality contract cleaners were being out-bid by companies with illegal labor or shoddy practices. Productivity and effectiveness were always top of mind.

Larry Shideler, a contract cleaner in Boise, Idaho, began to look at the costs and problems of his daily routine. A building with eight floors assigned to eight different workers required eight complete sets of equipment, and resulted in eight different levels of quality. Shideler wanted to maintain consistent quality while simplifying the work process. He began assigning specialists for certain tasks. One person would clean restrooms in the entire building, another would vacuum, and so on.

As he shifted to this new system, he also began to play with an invention in his garage. Working with PVC pipe, multiple filters and a high-powered motor, he created the original lightweight backpack vacuum. The invention dramatically shortened the time it took to clean both carpet and hard floors. Covering an average of 10,000 sq. ft. an hour, his backpack vacuum improved productivity and effectiveness.

Shideler's ideas soon became a phenomenon in the industry.

“Today, Team Cleaning is superior to what Larry had in the early 80s, but conceptually it's not that far off,” says Jim Harris, the president and CEO of Concepts4, a Team Cleaning training company based in Albany, New York. “Improvement came from those who adopted the system. I, and many others, have come to the conclusion that this is the best cleaning system to absorb the most stringent demands for high-performance cleaning that face our industry today.”

### **How Team Cleaning works**

Cleaning work can be assigned either by space or by task. In zone cleaning, a worker is given a certain area to clean, and performs all the tasks required in that space. In Team

Cleaning, a worker is given one of four specialties. A light-duty specialist empties trash, captures dust, cleans boards and spot cleans. A vacuum specialist vacuums, repositions furniture, checks the quality of the starter's work, and turns off lights. A restroom specialist cleans restrooms and fills dispensers. A utility specialist vacuums stairwells, cleans brass, glass, blinds and carpets, and does periodic specialty services as needed.

"It's not just about speed, it's about developing a standard for cleaning for health," says Harris. "It all starts with a system. So the system drives the quality, not the worker, and quality monitoring and controls are built-in."

In Team Cleaning, the worker is routed through a building on a set time-schedule with specific tasks. The cleanable space is typically divided into four sections, or quads. A specialist performs daily routine cleaning in each quad. So the vacuum specialist, for example, covers high-traffic areas in each room, everyday. Work that needs to be done on a weekly basis, like vacuuming under furniture, is performed in one quad a day. So by the end of four days, all sections are covered. Then, work that should be done monthly, like vacuuming upholstered furniture or the ceiling filter, is done in one quad on the fifth workday, usually Friday. So by the end of the month, all detail work is complete.

"Ultimately, workers are motivated," says Harris. "They know what they're supposed to do. They know how long it's going to take. They have the right tools. Then, they can create greater efficiency by modifying the system to work better for a specific environment."

Job cards map out daily work paths and time frames, and help keep specialists and supervisors on track.

"Job cards also create feedback loops," says Harris. "So workers can offer inspection notes and improvement ideas to managers."

### **Implementing Team Cleaning in the real world**

Team Cleaning brings new concepts to a long-entrenched practice, and implementing the new system takes a dedicated, educated management and well-informed staff. The biggest hurdle to incorporating Team Cleaning often stems from change management, and the difficulty caused by restricted time, insufficient training resources and a lack of experience in leading change.

Today, several Team Cleaning training schools and programs are in operation throughout the US and beyond. Many now offer support programs and training kits to assist in teaching and implementation. On-site workshops are also available from many instructors.

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#### **Upcoming Team Cleaning Seminars**

Concepts4 provides Team Cleaning training to custodial supervisors, environmental service directors, sales executives, facility and operations managers, and owners or CEOs. They have trained over 4,600 attendees since 1991.

Topics include the science of cleaning, critical industry trends, systems thinking, an introduction to team cleaning and more. Seminars allow attendees to work with actual floor plans, with a complete set-up of a facility, including a task schedule and job cards for all specialists.

**When and Where:**

July 22-23, Executive Seminar: High Performance Team Cleaning in Las Vegas, NV at the Treasure Island.

Aug. 20-21, Executive Seminar: High Performance Team Cleaning in Chicago, IL at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare

For more information, visit [www.teamcleaning.com](http://www.teamcleaning.com) or call (888) 494-3687.

**BYLINE:**

By Jessica Holmes

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