

Can green, clean and cost control ever get along?

The case for a flexible hard-floor scrubbing program

You've heard the old saying, "How do you want it—fast, cheap or good? You can choose two." The message, of course, is that you can't have everything. But cleaning professionals today are being asked to deliver "everything"—environmental sustainability, high levels of cleanliness AND cost efficiency. So how can they do it all?

According to Ciprus Ltd. LLC's latest Commercial Flooring Maintenance study reported in October of 2009, nearly 69% of all commercial floors are hard surfaces. These floors are routinely cleaned and maintained with automatic floor scrubbers that, in the past, were not equipped to handle variable soil loads and different hard surface types. Similarly, buildings with carpet and hard floor surfaces have had to purchase both carpet extractors and hard floor scrubbers to effectively clean their floors.

Maintaining the flexibility to achieve the exact cleanliness level required for different areas, surface types and soil levels with the minimum effort, time and resources is a key to meeting the competing requirements for green, clean and cost-efficient floor cleaning. Here's a closer look at three factors that contribute to a flexible floor-scrubbing program.

1. Rotate solutions (water and detergents) for different soils, areas and surface types.

Because there is no single "best" approach for every hard-floor scrubbing need, being able to match the solution to the soil level and surface type is an important factor in an effective cleaning program. Certainly, cleaning with just water reduces environmental impacts (no chemicals to dispose of) and possible health impacts (no detergent exposure for workers or building occupants). Using only water as a cleaning solution works well for removing surface dirt, can help remove detergent residue that accumulates on floors and can also reduce costs because there are no detergents to buy.

However, water alone often can't adequately clean high-traffic areas or cut through certain soil types such as greasy, oily messes. A flexible scrubbing program allows cleaning staff to easily select the proper detergent type and strength—or clean with water only—as required by different floor conditions and areas of the building. Proper application of water, detergent and down pressure eliminates the risk of exposing building occupants to excessive detergent use. It also reduces the costs and environmental impacts of overusing water and detergents while ensuring that floors are properly cleaned.



2. Spend more time cleaning, less time getting ready to clean

With labor contributing up to 90% of the total cost to clean, the more time workers are actually cleaning, the more cost-efficient your cleaning program is. Proper planning and the right equipment can reduce set-up/clean-up processes, making it possible for staff to make adjustments while they're cleaning.

In a flexible scrubbing program, workers have the equipment and practices to handle high-traffic areas such as entryways or tough soils like grease without stopping to modify their cleaning approach. Ideally, a floor scrubber dispenses water and detergent separately so that workers don't have to pre-mix solution or empty tanks to change detergents or solution strength. A program that allows cleaners to minimize time spent prepping machines and make fewer cleaning passes through a facility is not only flexible, it's time- and cost-efficient.

3. Use fewer machines for more tasks

Automatic floor scrubbers can represent a significant capital investment for facilities or building services contractors, and the purchase cost is only one part of the overall cost of machine



Flexible scrubbers such as the Adfinity with EcoFlex™ System from Advance allow workers to scrub using water only, with varying detergent dilutions or even with a "burst of power" for heavily soiled areas such as entries and hallways.

ownership. Maintenance and operating costs also influence the total cost of ownership. Every cleaning machine requires specific training for operators, space for storage, plus parts and ongoing maintenance. A floor scrubber with flexible cleaning modes can mean buying fewer machines and reducing training and maintenance costs. The most flexible machines are capable of cleaning in multiple ways and allow staff to use the same piece of equipment for any floor-scrubbing job, which leads to reduced costs and higher cleaning productivity.

And what about floors with carpet?

Sure, hard floors comprise most of the floor space in facilities, but carpets are often more difficult to maintain and require additional equipment and detergents. Multi-function machines such as combination scrubber-extractors can eliminate the need to buy a separate machine for extracting carpets and reduce the number of times staff have to return to the supply closet to change machines.

There's a commonality in these factors that contribute to a flexible scrubbing program. They all empower cleaning staff to match the way they clean to what they need to clean. Putting this control into the hands of in-house cleaners and BSCs allows them to combine environmentally preferable practices with effective cleaning and maximum cost efficiency. The result is a cleaning program that works in perfect harmony.

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