Want to Increase Your Employees' Productivity? Clean Their Office Chairs.

By Kathy Edwards, Account Executive, APEX Surface Care

Facility managers understand the importance of having a clean office. They hire commercial cleaning companies to vacuum their floors and scrub their bathrooms. They bring in specialty surface care companies to polish their floors and restore their grout. They enlist professional window washers to keep their windows sparkling inside and out.

But there's one area that's often neglected: textiles. This includes the furniture and fabrics found throughout any office environment such as lobby benches, drapes and cubicle walls. Office chairs in particular are rarely cleaned despite the fact that they can be—and often are—downright filthy.

Employees spend the majority of their day at their desk. More specifically, they spend most of their time sitting in their office chair. They sit in the same exact chair day after day, month after month, year after year. Mud from their shoes transfers to the wheels and legs of the chair, bacteria from their hands take up residence on the arms of the chair, and crumbs from all the meals eaten at their desk get embedded in the seat of the chair.

And that's not even mentioning the organic matter their bodies naturally discard onto the chair every minute. Fun fact: The average person sheds about 300 hairs and 300,000 skin cells every day.

Over time, that once-pristine chair is essentially buried under layers of germs and dirt. Most of it may not be visible to the naked eye (except for those coffee stains, of course), but it's there. While that thought is disturbing enough, consider the fact that it doesn't necessarily stay there. Every time an employee sits down on their office chair, some of the matter on that chair becomes airborne and therefore can be breathed in by other employees.

If you think your employees aren't bothered by the state of their office chair (and those dingy cubicle walls), think again. Research has found over and over again that a dirty office environment affects employee morale. An unclean workspace makes employees feel unappreciated, undervalued, unhappy and unmotivated. This in turn lowers their productivity.

But it's not just the mental health of employees that's at stake. Their physical health is also at risk. Exposing employees to bacteria and viruses increases the likelihood that they will get sick. This again lowers productivity: The more often employees are out on sick leave, the less work they are getting done.

Thankfully, textiles can be cleaned just like any other surface in the work environment. Specialty surface care companies like APEX Surface Care follow a proven three-step process to remove dirt, dust and other debris from office chairs and other textiles.

First, they remove loose soil from the chair. "Loose soil" refers to material that has not deeply bonded to the chair. This soil can be removed in a variety of ways, including vacuuming fabric, wiping down plastic components, and scraping off stubborn residue with a nylon putty knife.

Second, they deep clean the chair. Office chairs are made of a variety of materials, from leather to mesh to fabric. These different materials require different cleaning approaches. To prevent discoloration and other damage when deep cleaning, it's extremely important to follow the manufacturer's instructions, which usually entail using a low-moisture water extraction system.

Finally, they sanitize the chair. Textiles can't be disinfected, only sanitized. This is because they are porous, meaning they contain pores, or holes, where pathogens can hide. However, porous surfaces can be sanitized, thereby removing at least 99.9% of bacteria on them. The safest and most effective products have a near-neutral pH and are certified for use on soft/porous surfaces.

A good office chair can last up to a decade. Why replace it when you can just clean it? Periodic deep cleaning can improve the appearance of your textiles, help keep your indoor environment healthy, and show your employees that you are committed to their comfort and happiness.



For more than 20 years, APEX Surface Care has maintained and restored millions of interior square feet for image-conscious companies. APEX is committed to providing excellence in professional carpet care, architectural surface care, furniture and textile care, tile and grout cleaning, and stone and terrazzo care. A Certified B Corporation, APEX is a wholly owned subsidiary of Corporate Floors and the sister company to Texas Carpet Recycling and APEX Property Services. To learn more about APEX, including the

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