# How to Improve Your Company's Bottom Line and Overall Productivity

**By: Thomas Holland, CEO, APEX Surface Care/Corporate Floors**

It's an undeniable truth: flooring surfaces wear out. They get dirty, abused and scratched.

And it is no wonder. How many thousands of people walk through your doors every day or week? Studies have found that, in just four weeks, 1,000 people can track in up to 24 pounds of dirt through your building entrance. Removing a single pound of soil from a building costs approximately $1,000.

Over the last 25 years, we've worked with thousands of facilities in developing flooring maintenance programs that extend the life of their assets and improve their brand. And one thing we know from that experience is another undeniable truth: proper maintenance isn't inexpensive, but improper maintenance (or the lack of it) can end up costing far more.

Take, for example, a study conducted by Jeffrey Campbell called "Cleanliness and Learning in Higher Education." It explored how different levels of cleanliness affected productivity and learning at Brigham Young University. The study categorized five levels of cleanliness:

Level 1: Orderly Spotlessness
Level 2: Ordinary Tidiness
Level 3: Casual Inattention
Level 4: Moderate Dinginess
Level 5: Unkempt Neglect

- 88% of the university's students said that lack of cleanliness affected their productivity. In fact, in buildings they ranked as a Level 4 or 5 in cleanliness, students said the neglect was a distraction to their learning.
- More than three-fourths (78%) said that a lack of cleanliness affected their health and increased the chances of allergies and the spread of germs.
- To create a decent learning environment, 84% students said buildings should be at a Level 1 or 2 in cleanliness. An uncleaned building triggered a negative impact on students' mindset and heightened their stress levels.

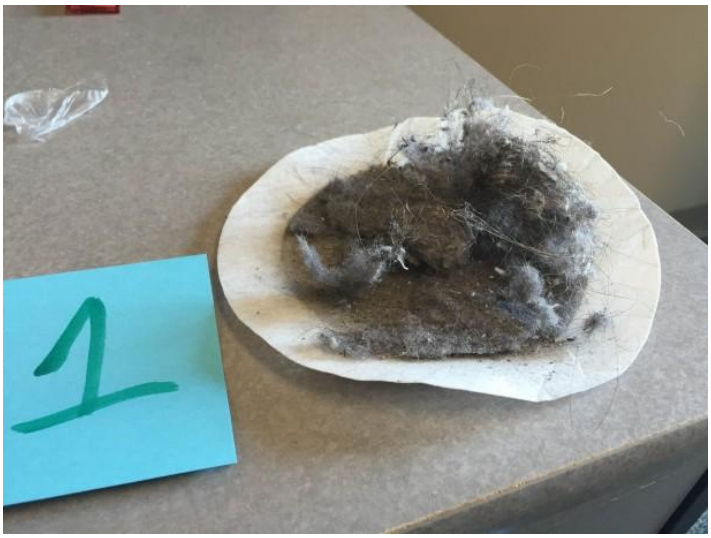
Bottom line, building maintenance has implications far beyond simply extending the life of the flooring. While that is an important goal in and of itself, what if your maintenance programs could also improve productivity and reduce turnover? Here are a few ways you can make sure you are getting what you are paying for and improve your company's image with little to no change in budget.

**Hint #1: Create Clear Expectations of What Cleanliness Means.**
"Clean" can be a very subjective term and difficult to quantify when it comes to grading a maintenance company's performance. So, before hiring one, make sure you have a clear expectation of how you will measure their performance. Do they have a simple but transparent method of grading their own performance? What specifically do they measure? Complaints, call backs, missed appointments? How will their response time be measured?

**Hint #2 - Measure Turnover Rate at The Right Level.**
A very effective tool for measuring a service company at the bidding stage is to make sure they disclose their technician turnover rate, separately from their staff turnover rate. Low technician turnover results in more skilled, customer service-focused field employees working in your facility in the dead of night when you are asleep at home. The alternative can be pretty scary.

**Hint #3: Use the Right Equipment.**
The number one contributor to an employees' view of your workplace cleanliness is the condition of the bathrooms. Number two? The cleanliness and condition of the floors, which in most offices are primarily carpet.

Try a dirt scope test to audit the effectiveness of your cleaning crews. A dirt scope is simply a device that attaches to a vacuum and captures, in a clear canister, what the vacuum removes from the floor.




The dirt scope test in this photo was conducted on a 10x10 area the morning after it was supposedly vacuumed by the night staff. Want to guess what kind of vacuums the night crews used? Back packs. And, when was the last time the nightly crew was audited by the facilities department? No one could remember.

When a customer asks us to help save costs by reducing our deep cleaning frequencies, we use dirt scope tests to illustrate why that's not such a good idea. A facility manager can make the biggest impact to their building's carpet appearance by simply demanding that the areas that are supposed to get vacuumed do actually get vacuumed, and with the right piece of equipment. Instead of a backpack, informed FM's know to require dual motor upright vacuums for the nightly staff.

Effective flooring maintenance programs should not be complicated or expensive in relation to the overall maintenance costs for a building. Giving your vendor clear expectations and making sure they are using the right equipment with the best people will result in a program that adds to the productivity of your office -- and makes you the hero you should be!

*Thomas Holland is the founder and CEO of Corporate Floors, a commercial flooring installation company with offices throughout Texas. APEX Surface Care, a national provider of commercial surface care and Texas Carpet Recycling, the states only commercial post construction recycling company. With a family of flooring-focused companies, we provide commercial clients with a true end-to-end solution.*

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