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Briefing 10-18

Daytime Cleaning – An overview

This briefing is provided to APSE members throughout the United Kingdom. It will be of particular interest to those working in Building Cleaning and Facilities Management.

- Daytime cleaning is an environmentally friendly and potentially cost saving alternative to early morning and evening cleaning.
- Cleaning staff are seen as part of the office team and customer satisfaction and absenteeism both benefit.
- Daytime cleaning offers the potential for full time cleaning positions, allowing for fewer, better trained and more productive staff.

Daytime Cleaning

Daytime Cleaning is becoming an increasingly attractive option, especially for offices. There are several immediate benefits from moving to the daytime regime:

Environmental

Having cleaning staff on-site during the day reduces the requirement to heat and light the building outside normal working hours. Saving a couple of hours a day in the evening or early morning has been calculated to save as much as 23% on energy costs, an increasingly important consideration following the start of the CRC Energy Efficiency scheme on 1st April.

In addition the consequent reduction in the required opening times of the building means that security costs may be reduced and the building secured earlier.

Staff on-site allows for unforeseen spillages to be dealt with rapidly and washroom facilities be kept fresher, both improving the working environment.

Operational

The increasing use of microfibre cloths is a bonus to a day-time cleaning regime. Microfibre requires less use of cleaning solutions, use of which may be undesirable in an office with staff present.

Improvements in technology have provided quieter and smaller, often battery powered, cleaning equipment that better suits an office environment. Reducing the amount of air born particulates is important so filters in vacuum equipment may need to be specified higher than normal.

As cleaning staff are employed during the day they are unlikely to be viewed as lone workers and therefore Health and Safety requirements are likely to be less onerous than might be the case for those in the evening.

Social

With cleaning staff visible during working hours, they become regarded as part of the team and quickly known to other employees. This not only makes for a friendlier environment for the cleaning staff and absenteeism drops, but other staff become more conscious of how the offices are cleaned and change their behaviour and habits to assist. Satisfaction levels, derived through client surveys, have risen substantially where this human contact exists.

The fact that there is more people about during the day often leads to better productivity and less requirement for supervision as cleaning staff are 'on display' to other staff.

For many, daytime working, as opposed to early morning and evening work, allows for a more balanced home life and becomes a more attractive employment proposition. Churn rates in the private sector can be as high as 100% so reducing this saves recruitment costs and requires less retraining. Public transport is often more frequent than very early morning or evening and this can again be a deciding factor in retaining and attracting staff.

Working during the day often means that fewer staff are required working longer hours. Again this makes the employment proposition more desirable for the employee and reduces costs associated with multiple employees, including payroll, supervision and training.

In practice

In practice there are some caveats to a successful implementation. Daytime cleaning often increases the expectation of cleanliness and washrooms and kitchen areas require cleaning more frequently which adds cost.

Whilst there is a reduction in the number of staff (an example would be 24 part-time down to 9 full-time in a large building) daytime cleaning only really works best in large buildings. Efficiencies can be lost if the cleaning team has to travel around a busy city during the day and spends time stuck in traffic.

Low noise equipment is often required and this comes at a premium. A low noise vacuum cleaner may cost in the region of £140 whilst a standard one would be closer to £70. Low noise is however not 'no' noise so some sensitivity is still required about when and where to use the vacuum cleaners. Typically a building is split into zones for cleaning purposes with each zone given a deep clean once per week with spot cleaning on other days.

The use of microfibre cloths has many benefits, however the cloths need to be cleaned themselves otherwise they become grubby looking and don't convey the professional

image that the cleaning team strive to achieve. For larger buildings the installation of a commercial washing machine (typical cost £1200) is therefore recommended.

The general movement within Councils to consolidate office space, usually into larger buildings is often accompanied by a move to workstations, hot-desking, communal meeting areas and flexible spaces. Hot-desking works well, but one employee might leave a workstation in need of a clean at the end of the day. Some cleaning shifts are therefore still required to start early in the morning (6am) to ensure the workstations are clean before there next visitors arrive.

Birmingham City Council is one of the few Local authorities currently undertaking daytime cleaning. It is exclusively within office buildings

APSE comment

APSE supports measures that can increase the productivity and efficiency of front-line services. The move to daytime cleaning, with the better job prospects and consequent retention rates, makes it more practical for cleaning staff to be trained to a higher standard. This can only increase quality and customer satisfaction. If there also proves to be a demonstrable and significant energy saving for office buildings then the day time regime is likely to be encouraged and will gain momentum.

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