

Rebuttal

By Jim Harris Sr.

First of all, Paul and I are coming from completely different perspectives.

I am focused on:

1. Cleaning for health (a critical standard) — for specialists, facility occupants and visitors.
2. Systems thinking — for management, specialists and suppliers.
3. Continuous improvement — built into the system.
4. Cost efficiency — for the building ownership.
5. People development — training to strategic objectives, professionalism and personal growth.
6. Customer satisfaction — a positive service experience and asset protection.
7. Operational effectiveness — managing the daily work and efficient workflow.

I have organized my rebuttal by following Paul's article as presented to me.

Labeling the 43 percent respondents without a system as "zone cleaners."

Although I have no awareness of this survey, I have to say they probably are cleaning in a zone or area type assignment.

Most of the programs I have seen are seriously deficient of any system concept; rather, they depend almost entirely on the worker to define process.

This results in individual standards, almost impossible to effectively monitor.

The biggest myth is this: Zone Cleaning is a non-standardized, haphazard, essentially seat-of-the-pants approach to cleaning.

This may not be the way it started 60 years ago, but due to a serious lack of training it has become exactly that.

There is a critically important point to be made here; Zone Cleaning as a system is based primarily on assigned space to one individual.

There certainly can be modifications of this for specialty reasons; however, the entire process depends on the worker.

It is also much easier to schedule. Everyone starts at the same time — no waiting for the “opener” to go part way through an area before starting the “closer.”

This is just simply a wrong analysis of Team Cleaning®.

Scheduling is set by Quadrant design where the system sets the frequencies and procedures.

The term “waiting” gives the impression of no work production. This is not true.

The closer is assigned other duties prior to being queued into the first Quad.

In the same way, Team Cleaning® uses one-person “teams” when the facility calls for it. Where I come from, we call that Zone Cleaning.

I agree that this could be called Zone Cleaning. However, what we are attempting to do is to set up a consistent system for all specialists to follow.

This one-person team is really a cross-trained worker; very valuable in this concept.

Here is the difference — where we set detail cleaning in larger facilities by Quads, we set detail frequencies by days in the smaller facilities.

As an example, Monday the specialist could perform all of the light duty detail processes, Tuesday the vacuum specialist processes and so on through the week.

It is important to point out a couple of things; first, we need to have all production workers cleaning space the same way using the same system, and second, the larger the facility, the more efficient the system becomes.

Which brings me to the subject of vacuum specialists. With all due respect, sending two people into the same space when only one is needed is redundant.

Paul talks about redundancy — is it not redundant to send the same Zone Cleaner into the same space two, three or four times? With all due respect, that is redundant.

First of all, it is not the same space, it has been expanded more than twice.

Second, they are performing different duties, and finally the work is easier and at a much higher rate of productivity.

Up to 95 percent of carpeted offices require weekly vacuuming at most, and sending a second custodian into such areas for the sole purpose of making sure that the trash is emptied is a massive waste of time.

Using a small carpet sweeper, readily carried with a barrel or a cart, reduces vacuuming time by 75 percent to 80 percent at the very least.

Paul single-handedly just abolished the entire green movement, left asthmatics choking for their life and completely disregarded the “science of cleaning” in a few words.

Let’s see, we may vacuum weekly, but it’s not necessary and we can use a small carpet sweeper. I must have read these two paragraphs at least 20 times unbelieving what I’m reading.

One of our industry’s noted public health experts, Dr. Michael Berry would most likely say that this is not cleaning, it’s polluting.

I guess what shocks me the most about these statements is that it may represent the thinking of a large part of the cleaning industry; I sincerely hope that is not true.

Daily vacuuming is the most important cleaning process to remove solid airborne particulates, maintain carpet life and reduce contamination.

It is not necessary to vacuum wall-to-wall daily, only traffic areas. Weekly detail vacuuming effectively completes the cleaning process.

Although tests have shown that a greater amount of airborne particulates is found where there are hard surfaces, if carpeting is improperly maintained, it may eventually begin to release particulates due to being overloaded.

A heavy concentration of airborne particulate, from any source, may cause a health risk to some occupants with respiratory problems.

For the purpose of removing soil from carpets and not releasing it back into the air, carpet sweepers are ineffective. The back-pack vacuuming system will remove much more soil, capture it, is less tiring and is much more productive.

There is no such thing as sending a custodian into an area simply to check waste receptacles. What Paul may be referring to is the system of built-in quality checks.

These are included as a natural by-product of the process.

Travel time is the single activity that dominates a custodian's time, and when it is extended in order to separate tasks, then there are no savings.

I agree with the time issue. But Paul shoots himself in the foot.

In Team Cleaning®, we have all specialists work in complete loops. This means that once they leave the supply area, they only return to that area at the end of the shift.

The only exception to this is the utility specialist position.

In Zone Cleaning, cleaners are changing hats continuously.

Paul's comment of one vacuum for four people and reduced equipment costs.

I'm not certain I understand this comment.

Equipment costs are greatly reduced in Team Cleaning® due to specialization. There is no such thing as four people to anything. There are four positions with various duties.

Standardization and Mo Sallworth.

This is a very good reference to perhaps the best example of a forward-thinking consultant to our industry, Mo Sallworth.

If he were alive today however, he would be embracing Team Cleaning®. His approach to standard-setting was limited to cleaning technology of his day.

Paul and I are in complete agreement as to the important role standards play in systems thinking.

Paul's reference to Team Cleaning® as leaving behind the dedicated employees.

This is perhaps the most off-the-mark position Paul takes in his article.

Team Cleaning® is based on work simplification and redistribution. The system embraces the employee through training, inter-dependence, quality involvement, process improvement and considerable self direction.

I have a rant. My rant is how this industry treats the production worker. My travels have exposed me to too many organizations that herd people instead of leading and supporting them.

Summary

Paul Regan is a prominent industry consultant following a well-adapted discipline of Standards Management and he has my sincere respect.

Although we agree on many things, we are very far apart systemically. My suggestion to Paul is to attend a management course on High Performance Cleaning Utilizing Team Specialists, not to change his thinking, rather to bring his thinking and experience into the system and help take it to another level.

Perhaps I can put our differences this way: if I were to use a color graph, Team Cleaning® would be a dark shade of green and Zone Cleaning would be bright red.

I have enjoyed this exchange and I expect to learn a great deal as comments flow in from the industry readership.