



[Home](#)

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High Performance Cleaning

The benefits of setting standards

[Jim Harris Sr.](#) and [Jeff Merrihew](#)

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There are a number of undefined words and declarations made in our industry to promote various cleaning systems, processes, and methodologies. They generate from both suppliers and service providers. Among them is “high performance cleaning.”

High performance cleaning is a concept in which sustained, best-practice effort is the prime management ingredient feeding a system’s integrity. High performance cleaning must meet two key standards: cleaning efficacy and cost containment; both require optimal results and represent direct value to the customer.

This is all wrapped in a protective shell of human health, safety, and environmental safeguards. During the past 20 years, we have found that the most efficient way to reach sustained high performance is to utilize specialists, engineer workflow, and apply team interaction. The best example of this is the widely used system of specialists coordinating duties as they do with team cleaning.

Utilizing this model, the specialists produce valuable performance benefits, including the following:

- **Focus:** Retaining an expected level of performance that requires clarity of assigned duties, knowledge, and commitment.
- **Training:** This is not an option and there must be a way to verify it. Training encourages an attitude of quality workmanship, stimulates an increase in productivity, and reduces turnover.
- **Time Sensitivity:** All tasks must be completed within an accepted allocation of time. Organizations need to test and evaluate cleaning processes to establish rates of productivity that are broadly teachable and easily implemented.
- **Independence:** Specialists may have the authority to make on-the-spot decisions about a change in space utilization or other necessary modifications. This form of empowerment gives birth to new ideas, and should be encouraged.
- **Proper Equipment:** Each specialist should determine detailed material and equipment requirements by testing them on specific tasks and analyzing them for optimal efficiency. The cost of equipment and materials should be determined by their impact on worker efficiency—not price.
- **Proficiency:** Due to limited tasks and effective training, specialists gain high-production habits in a very short time frame. Proficiency breeds the foundation for sustainability.
- **Motivation:** A workforce that knows what to expect—and has the training and proper tools—operates within a culture of high performance. Employees who have the authority to make working decisions enjoy their work and are motivated to contribute.
- **Productivity and Improvement:** This is the coup de grace—meeting requirements and the discipline of improving the process while sustaining quality.
- **Inspection:** Although we inspect to assure quality standards, the additional benefit of inspection is uncovering operational deficiencies and correcting them through systemic modification.

Management’s Role

The most skilled employees may fail in a confusing, disorderly organization that relies on individual performance. Yet, even mediocre employees can excel in an orderly, focused, and systemized culture.

The key element that either supports or blocks an organization’s systemic strategy is corporate culture. There is something very interesting about corporate culture that reveals itself from the marketplace. For example, contractors work very hard on market pricing and market differential, and they react to competitive activities—this is understandable. However, what if that same motivation was internalized into better systems, training, and human resource development? By harnessing that energy, successful organizations can find enormous return on organizational investment.

As Alex Warren, the former senior vice president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, said, “Until senior management gets their egos out of the way and goes to the whole team and leads them all together...senior management will continue to miss out on the brain power and extraordinary capabilities of all their employees....”

According to author and consultant Philip Crosby, there are four absolutes that determine quality management:

- The definition of quality is the conformance to requirements.
- The system of quality is prevention.
- The performance standard is zero defects.
- The measurement of quality is price of nonconformance.

The End Goal

With an effective workflow system, an organization can attain the optimal level of quality service. However, the secret is to hold that level of performance without deviation. The very first step is to begin to understand the key role standardization plays in the pursuit of operational improvement and sustainability.

According to Henry Ford, “Today’s standardization is the necessary foundation on which tomorrow’s improvement will be based. If you think of ‘standardization’ as the best you know today, but which is to be improved tomorrow—you get somewhere. But if you think of standards as confining, then progress stops.”

Although a high performance cleaning system may mean different things to different people, it clearly strives for optimal results—it just requires a detailed plan for proper utilization.

Jim Harris Sr. is founder and CEO of Concepts4 cleaning consultants. He can be reached at jim@teamcleaning.com.

Jeff Merrihew is a senior consultant and technical advisor with Concepts4 and can be reached at jeff@systemclean.com.