



10 Myths of Team Cleaning

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For most organizations, implementing team cleaning requires a shift from old processes and procedures, which can seem threatening to those comfortably entrenched in current operating modes. This fear of change is common, and to a certain degree, may explain the misconceptions that often surround the team cleaning concept. This said, perhaps the best way to fully comprehend team cleaning is to first understand what it is not.

1. **Everyone must work together.** Functioning as a team is, of course, integral to the team cleaning concept. However, specialists perform their duties autonomously, much like today's "virtual" teams, where, linked by technology, individuals even from geographically and culturally diverse locations can contribute their expertise to the group to complete a common mission. Thus, while promoting a sense of group responsibility and camaraderie, team cleaning also fosters individual pride of workmanship and increased accountability.
2. **There must always be four members to a team.** As previously mentioned, the "classic" team consists of four members. But teams can easily include as many as seven or as few as one, depending on the size and needs of the facility. For example, a larger facility might use a team of six, with two pairs of starters and closers working simultaneously on different floors. In very small facilities, a one-person "team" can perform all the steps of the team cleaning process in a prescribed sequence to complete his/her work faster and more thoroughly than with older systems.
3. **"Go Team!" (It's just team spirit).** This myth is discredited by the many tangible benefits of team cleaning, including measurement, standardization, accountability, greater efficiency, improved quality, reduced labor costs, lower equipment and product expenditure, energy savings, and, of course, consistently better worker morale.



4. **Team cleaning requires too much training.** The falsehood of this myth is exposed by history. When the Ford Motor Co. installed its first assembly line, the invention proved to industry and the world that a short, well-focused list of responsibilities, coupled with a limited number of products/equipment to be mastered, makes training—and cross-training—significantly faster and easier. For example, training closer specialists to vacuum and just check that a few basic starter duties were completed is far easier than training them to perform a long list of diverse functions requiring multiple products, varied dilution rates, etc.
5. **Compensating for absenteeism is harder with team cleaning than with zone and other cleaning methods.** Because the list of duties each specialist must handle is brief, and cross-training is easy, compensating for absent workers is, in fact, far simpler with team cleaning than with other methods. In zone cleaning, for example, a supervisor must teach replacements every task involved in cleaning the entire specified area. In team cleaning, only the missing specialist's short list of duties must be taught. And since cross training is an integral part of the team cleaning system, already trained workers can fill voids immediately.
6. **The concept is too confusing.** Just the opposite is true. Team cleaning is a straightforward cleaning solution that provides precise scheduling and concise methods to accomplish clearly defined duties. To further assure the use of proper procedure, the system employs simple but effective safeguards, such as color-coding and job-assignment cards workers carry with them for easy reference.
7. **Team cleaning is too rigid.** Industry consultants concur that one of the biggest problems most cleaning operations suffer from is a lack of process uniformity; too often, workers are allowed to use different products to perform tasks in their own manner—even on their own schedules. This can leave vital concerns, such as service quality, productivity, and chemical usage to whim. However, once an operation is standardized, with cleaners using the best tools and specified procedures for the tasks at hand, these inconsistencies (and often a slew of other problems) disappear. Team cleaning supplies this standardization, which actually increases flexibility by reducing costs and escalating productivity, allowing workers and supervisors to take on additional responsibilities. The team cleaning system itself is flexible, with specific programs and duties tailored to the unique needs of each facility.



8. **Team cleaning cuts corners so quality suffers.** Again, the truth is the opposite: Team cleaning elevates quality by encouraging worker expertise and greater employee accountability while emphasizing more prudent product use, supervision, and scheduling. For example, team cleaning dissects buildings into quarters or quadrants so that detail and project work (non-routine cleaning) can be divided among workers and completed on a schedule rather than left to chance. There are even double-check procedures, such as closers following starters to assure that clients' No. 1 complaint—unemptied trashcans—is not overlooked.
9. **The concept is site-specific; productivity drops when team cleaning is used in facilities other than office buildings.** The dramatic increases in productivity possible with team cleaning—up to 50 percent or higher—are attainable in a variety of settings, from schools to healthcare facilities to sports arenas. Most organizations see a significant benefit that may not necessarily be monetary: the current cleaning staff is able to do more cleaning or perform at a higher level of cleaning than before.
10. **Team cleaning is easy to set up.** A final falsehood is that team cleaning is easy to implement. It is not. It takes a dedicated effort from all levels of the organization, from top management to the frontline worker. However, when correctly implemented, the team cleaning system can effectively, efficiently, and economically help a cleaning operation shine.