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## 11 Ways to Reduce Cleaning Operations Costs

By **Michael Schaffer** — posted 08/21/2014



Invariably, every business wants to find ways to cut operating costs. Many of the best-run companies in our industry regularly analyze operations and procedures to determine where cost-reducing changes can be made. Unfortunately, many building service contractors (BSCs) get so busy running their businesses on a day-to-day basis that they simply can't find the time to look for ways to reduce operating expenses. However, cutting expenditures can be one of the easiest ways to increase profits, which means it should not be overlooked.

To make your cost-cutting job a bit easier, I've distilled several proven methods into 11 suggestions. While some may actually cost money to implement, the long-term returns can help reduce expenses significantly. Others may take some time to implement, but once again, the returns can lead to larger profits and lower operating costs.

Here are 11 cost-saving suggestions for cleaning contractors to consider implementing in their daily operations:

1. **Automate cleaning.** According to a report by the University of Minnesota, it can take one person up to two hours to mop a 5,000-square-foot area. This is labor-intensive, costly, and potentially unhealthy. As the mop and water become soiled, they can actually spread virtually as much soil and contaminants as they collect, making the process both ineffective and unsanitary.

One way to reduce costs in this regard is to look for ways to automate cleaning tasks. Using our same example, the University of Minnesota study concludes that with an automatic scrubber, "[cleaning 5,000 square feet] should only take about 15-30 minutes...reducing costs and [allowing for] a smaller workforce to cover more ground."

2. **Select new equipment.** View this recommendation as spending money to save money to eventually make money. Just as computers and smartphones have vastly

improved office efficiency, some new cleaning equipment technologies not only improve cleaning results but do so faster and much more efficiently while reducing labor expenses. If you have an older automatic scrubber, for instance, and have not tried a newer machine, you probably will be surprised at the many efficiency and cost-saving technologies that have been created.

- 3. Investigate different technologies.** When considering new equipment, be sure to investigate different types. For instance, many cleaning professionals have heard that backpack vacuum cleaners and cylindrical brush floor machines can reduce cleaning time, but they still fail to research these machines further. Reducing costs may require making changes, including looking beyond the traditional cleaning equipment available. Different technologies often can help reduce labor costs, which in turn saves money.
- 4. Train your workers—and your management team.** Proper initial training along with ongoing training keeps both new and longtime employees up to date on the correct and most effective ways to clean as well as use of the latest tools. Many manufacturers and distributors provide their clients with complementary training tools on a variety of cleaning tasks.

Another way to achieve cost savings is to ensure your business is running as efficiently as possible. Reviewing and implementing the elements of ISSA's [Cleaning Industry Management Standard \(CIMS\)](#) can improve customer satisfaction while streamlining overall operations. According to a CIMS [case study](#), the University of Georgia Physical Plant Division - Services Department was able to cut cleaning-related costs by more than US\$400,000 once their staff had achieved CIMS certification.

- 5. Purchase in bulk.** In many cases, purchasing cleaning chemicals in 5-gallon sizes is less expensive than purchasing them by the gallon. Plus, bulk purchasing can be better for the environment.
- 6. Use an auto-dilution system.** The goal of an auto-dilution system is to precisely mix chemicals with water. In so doing, the system also helps prevent chemical waste that can add up over time.
- 7. Work with a distributor or manufacturer as a partner.** The cleaning contractor's job is to know cleaning while the distributor and/or manufacturer's job is to know products and solutions. An astute trade partner often will share best practices to help make cleaning more efficient and effective—both at a reduced cost.
- 8. Promote safety.** A safe work environment not only helps prevent injuries; it also can help reduce workers' compensation claims. In turn, implementing proper safety measures can keep a contractor's insurance expenses from escalating.
- 9. Go green.** The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) International reports that many of its members have found additional savings in the process of going green. According to BOMA, a single green cleaning product often takes the place of multiple traditional products, which reduces the need to stock several different chemicals and results in cost savings. Further, because most environmentally preferable cleaning products are safer to the user, they can help promote safety while minimizing the potential for work-related injuries.

10. **Schedule accounts together geographically.** While it is not always possible, contractors should try to clean locations in the same general area on specific days. This obviously reduces driving time, which helps reduce fuel expenditures on a given day.
11. **Use workloading programs.** Workloading is a system that analyzes the amount of time it takes to complete cleaning tasks and gives an accurate estimate of how much work can be completed in a specific amount of time. Having this information helps contractors schedule cleaning tasks properly as well as streamline them, which helps reduce expenses. This information can also help contractors bid on accounts more precisely. [Workloading tools](#) such as ISSA's *540 Cleaning Times* book and InfoClean software can help contractors get started.

These suggestions notwithstanding, cleaning contractors should make analyzing costs and seeing where they can be reduced an ongoing part of their business operations. This can result in significant savings and an improved bottom line, which every business seeks.



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