

# *Improve Your Image with a Low-Tech, Low-Cost Solution*

High tech tools have our attention. iPhones, tablets, social media all seem to be important aspects for work and home. But try to use these in a dirty environment. Suddenly a low tech application takes priority.

## **Cleanliness Helps Make a Good First Impression**

Cleaning and maintenance are daily requirements for any business hoping to retain customers. According to Cleaning & Maintenance Management, “Upon entering a building or a rest room, the level of cleanliness and any detectable scents are the first things a person notices.” (Cleaning & Maintenance Management, Online, 8/23/11) This first impression test is applied to all locations, offices, restaurants, retail locations. Daily exposure to smells can desensitize staff to strong odors, excessive dirt build up, and grime or scuff marks.

## **“Dinginess” Inspections**

Management should conduct a monthly inspection of the premises. A walk through with an eye to detail can maintain a high standard of cleanliness. Polled individuals by the Center for Facilities Research found that 88 percent reported that a lack of cleanliness becomes a distraction at APPA Level 4: Moderate Dinginess.

Characteristics of Moderate Dinginess include:

- Noticeable buildups of dirt and /or floor finish in corners and along walls

- Base molding is dull and dingy with streaks or splashes

- All vertical and horizontal surfaces have conspicuous dust, dirt, marks, smudges and fingerprints

- Lamp fixtures are dirty and some are burned out

- Trash receptacles contain old trash and are stained and smell sour.

When assessing the “dinginess” level be sure that the vertical and horizontal surfaces include

- Floors

- Windows, window sills

- Ceilings

- Table tops, counter tops, shelves, and cabinets

## Exterior walkways

Management typically evaluates floors, windows, and eye level shelves and counters. Running a finger along picture frames, tops of cabinets, and other above eye level items will reveal layers of dust that are contributing to a bad odor. Removing build up will help to eliminate the smell of old dirt.

### **Remember Those Ceilings and Walk Ways**

While carpets and floors are cleaned often (restaurants and office carpets and floors daily) most people neglect their ceilings. The ceiling covers as many square feet as the floor does. While it is not walked on, cooking oils, powders, customer and employee skin cells, dust, and other exterior smells adhere to the ceiling. Depending on a location's type of business a ceiling should be cleaned every 6 to 12 months (restaurants, bakeries) or 2 to 5 years (offices, retail stores) to maintain a brighter, better smelling environment.

Also, exterior walkways should be power washed every 6 months (food locations) to 2 years (office locations). This will minimize the tracking in of oils and films onto floors.

### **Who Can Eliminate Dinginess?**

The negative findings from monthly inspection results should be shared with the janitorial services and additional facility service providers contacted. If the janitorial services are aware of when the inspections occur the staff is more likely to pay more attention to details. For the ceilings or exterior walkways, by entering into an agreement for scheduled cleaning, a better price is likely.

Remember, while cleaning services are viewed as low tech, the lack of properly performed services can undermine the high tech.