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## Maintaining Carpet in a Busy World

By Joe Bshero

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Facility managers across the US must ensure that buildings and their interiors meet the needs of the people who work in and visit them. Failure to do so can result in customer complaints, lost business and reputational damage. Unfortunately, in addition to often managing long to-do lists and tight budgets, facility managers must also deal

with frequent employee turnover. In fact, JanSan (<https://www.cleanlink.com/site/brand-feature/Combating-the-Industry-Turnover-Rate--55971>) industry estimates put turnover as high as 200%. For this reason, for buildings with carpeted areas, it is important to establish a user-friendly and effective carpet care program coupled with comprehensive training that supports employee satisfaction and the bottom line.

### Maintenance Program Must-Haves

One of the top reasons (<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/3-reasons-why-janitors-quit-how-we-can-help-them-mark-ybarra/>) janitorial staff decide to leave their job is due to increasingly difficult workloads. Last year, the busiest airport welcomed over 107 million passengers (<https://www.cnn.com/travel/article/worlds-busiest-airports-2018/index.html>), and passenger traffic was estimated at 8.8 billion globally. With such high foot traffic in airports alone, cleaning professionals in both commercial and residential environments face numerous carpet challenges if equipment is outdated and difficult to use.

For example, for carpet care, some facilities still use slow, heavy bonneting machines that are often hard to control and make carpet inaccessible for several hours while it thoroughly dries. Additionally, an old vacuum may not pick up dirt and debris on the first or second try, requiring staff to clean the same area numerous times.



To create a carpet care program that leads to cleaner carpet and secures buy-in from employees, consider incorporating the following best practices:

- **Utilize user-friendly machines** – Implement carpet care machines that are easy to use and require minimal training. Consider low-moisture encapsulation machines that feature multiple rotating brushes and a low-fatigue machine-mounted solution tank to reduce on-the-job ergonomic strain. Using lightweight equipment with simple controls allows employees to easily complete carpet care tasks. The low-moisture method dries carpet in 30 minutes to help employees finish carpet cleaning more quickly and move on to other tasks that break up sometimes monotonous tasks.
- **Use safe chemistry** – Selecting effective and safe encapsulation chemistry is crucial. Many employees in the JanSan industry still use caustic cleaning chemicals, which can result in burns, headaches, respiratory issues or even death when improperly handled. Reducing the number of harsh chemicals that employees use helps uphold employee health and wellness and makes workplaces safer. Furthermore, look for a chemistry range that adequately removes embedded soils from carpet fibers and has earned Green Seal Certification. By using crystalizing polymers and an effective detergent, certain chemistry products provide consistent carpet appearance over time by removing oily or abrasive soils and extending carpet life.
- **Comprehensive training** – In the professional cleaning industry, a mixture of mentoring and on-the-job training is especially helpful for newcomers to learn how to easily and effectively complete processes like carpet care. If all new hires go through the same training program together, they can feel more comfortable with the work they're hired to do and better prepared to enter the field with firsthand knowledge. It is also

important to provide every employee with access to helpful video tutorials that feature simple instructions on how to use, clean and operate machinery. Also, it is beneficial to make the videos part of the onboarding process and require experienced employees to complete training when new carpet care equipment and chemistry is purchased. Concise videos allow employees to quickly review best practices and troubleshoot issues while they are in the field. Ideally, content should be available in various languages to meet the needs of every worker.

### Prioritizing Carpet Care

Often, carpet care becomes an afterthought or is only addressed when a difficult spot or stain arises. However, it's important for staff to understand the benefits of daily and interim carpet care, as it will help prevent long-term problems and costly maintenance or replacement down the road.

Equipped with the right tools, employees can properly clean areas of carpet quickly and effectively, allowing them to move on to other key tasks. Implementing a comprehensive carpet care system that includes a step-by-step training program and support for employees can help improve the lifespan of carpet while also curbing turnover. From something as simple as showing employees you care and value their work, to putting in the time and resources for hands-on training with equipment, facility managers must do their part to help staff maintain carpet in busy, constantly changing environments.

*Joe Bshero is the director of technical services with R.E. Whittaker Co., a family-owned business with over 30 years of experience and the pioneers of the first commercial carpet encapsulation system. For more information about low-moisture encapsulation systems from Whittaker, visit [whittakersystem.com](http://www.whittakersystem.com) (<http://www.whittakersystem.com/>) or contact [sales@whittakersystem.com](mailto:sales@whittakersystem.com). (<mailto:sales@whittakersystem.com>.)*

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