

CLEANING IN THE COVID-19 ERA:

Predicting the future, and strategizing to adapt

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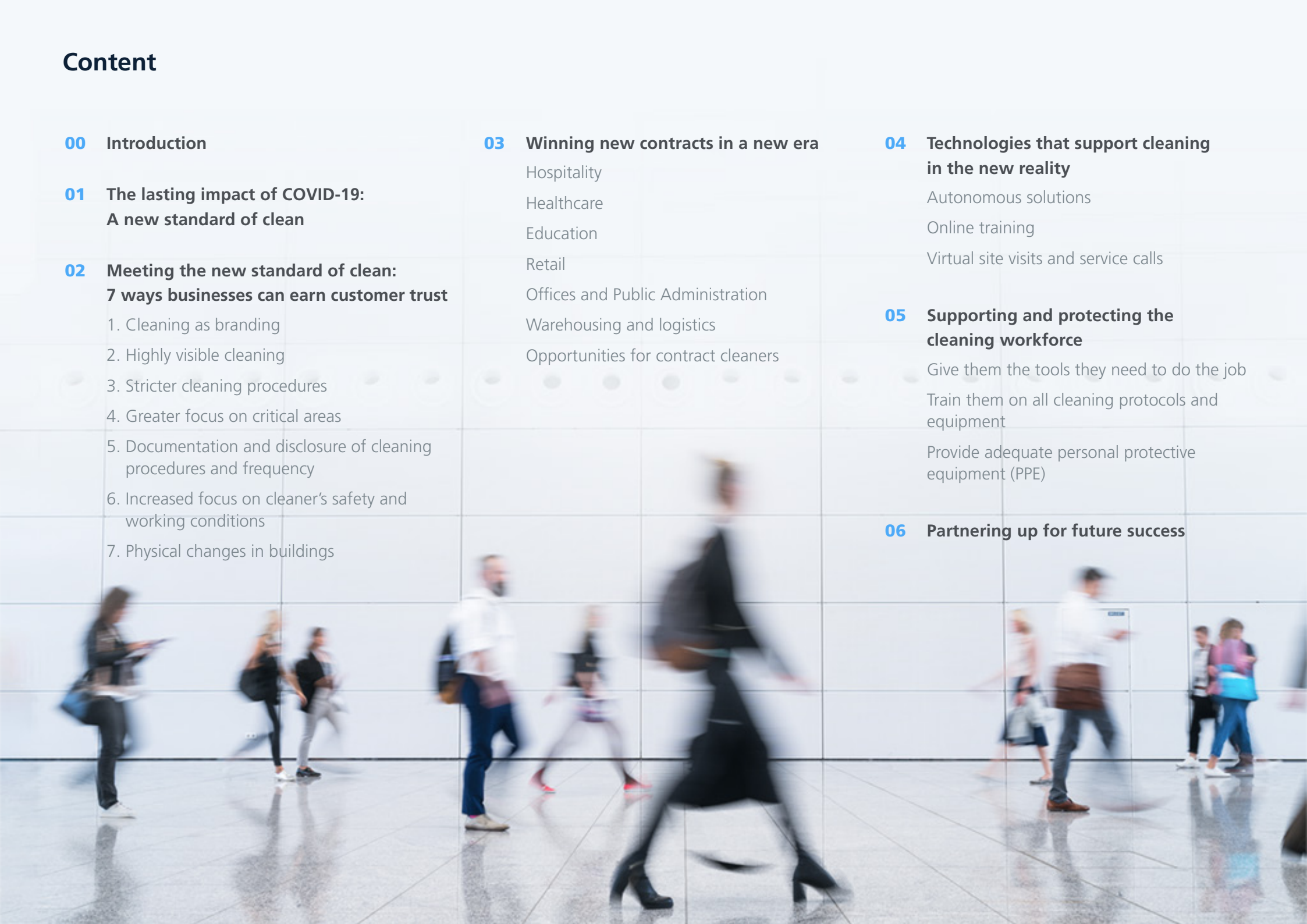
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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered many aspects of life: the way we work, the way we grocery shop, and even the way we interact with other people. Many of these changes are directly tied to maintaining a high level of cleanliness in an effort to prevent the virus from spreading.

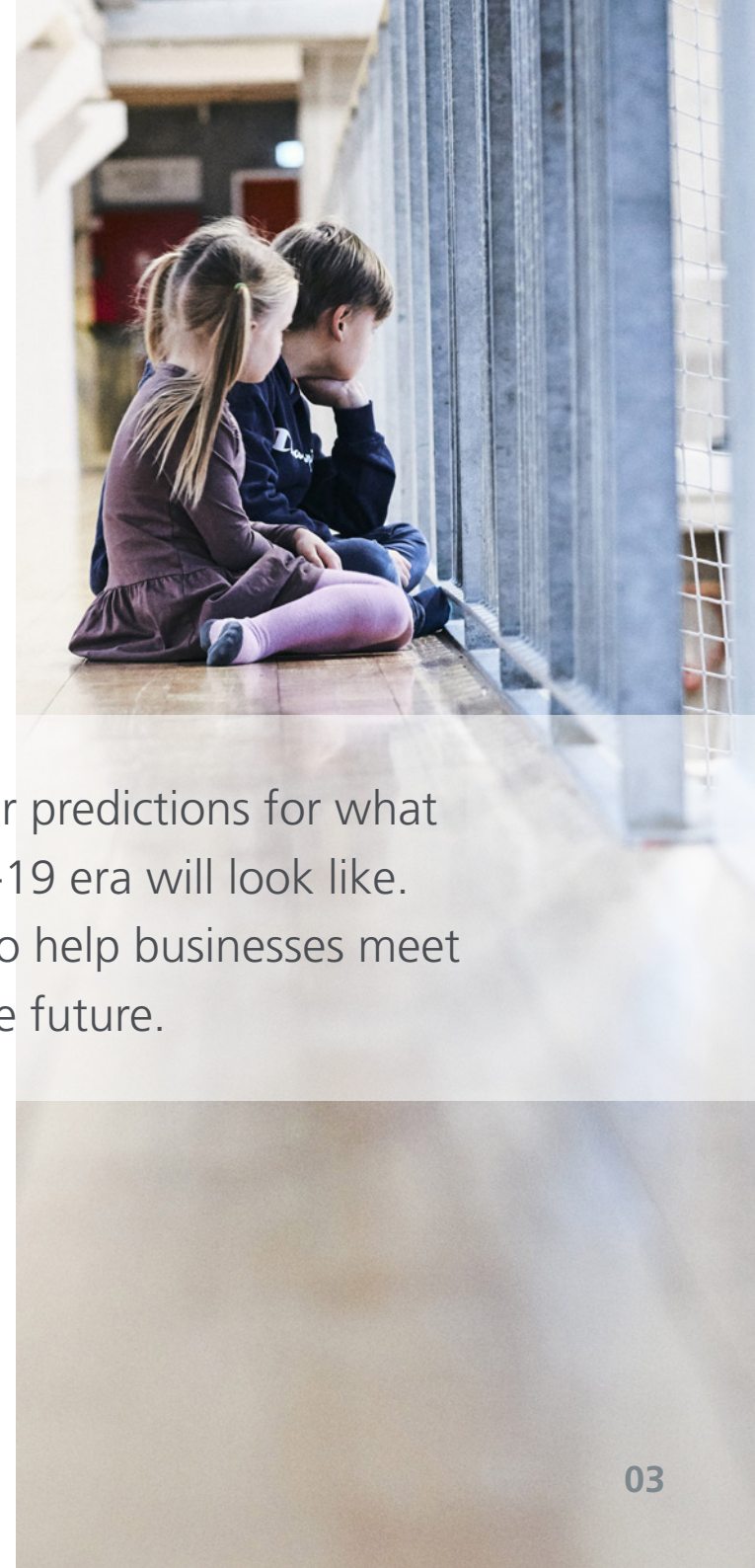
It has also caused a shift in the way we view the contributions of some members of society. In particular, cleaning professionals have emerged as essential front-line workers who frequently put their own health on the line to keep the rest of us safe.

Based on conversations with our customers and other experts across our network, we believe that the heightened awareness and demand for cleanliness will continue to shape public life. Before going to the office, staying in a hotel, attending a performance, or shopping at a retail store, people will need to be assured that the spaces they're entering are clean and safe.

As we transition from the crisis point to a new normal, the cleaning industry will play a major role in the success of our collective return to regular activities. We believe these changes will persist long after the SARS-CoV-2 threat has subsided.

In this ebook, we lay out our predictions for what cleaning in the post-COVID-19 era will look like. We also provide strategies to help businesses meet the cleaning demands of the future.

As you explore the trends in this ebook, please note that we don't have a crystal ball. The impacts described here are our best guesses about what the future may look like. Some of them may be permanent, some may be temporary, and some may never materialise at all. That said, we firmly believe that the current public health crisis will significantly change both the role of cleaning and how it's done.





01

The lasting impact of COVID-19: A new standard of clean

The general sentiment during the pandemic has been one of anxiety and fear. [According to the World Health Organization](#), elevated rates of stress or anxiety has so far been the main psychological impact of the pandemic.



Fueling this anxiety is a general uncertainty surrounding what activities are and aren't safe. This is the first time SARS-CoV-2 has occurred in humans, and there are still many unknowns when it comes to the routes of transmission. Because of this, the guidance from governments, as well as from national and world health organisations, is continually being updated.

Today, *cleaning* is synonymous with *safety*.

The new expectation is for all spaces – such as retail stores, hotel lobbies, and classrooms – to be cleaned and sanitised to a standard previously reserved for hygiene-oriented settings like healthcare facilities, food preparation areas, and pharmaceutical manufacturing suites.

Achieving this standard will be critical for earning and maintaining trust, and it will change how businesses approach cleaning, from doing it more visibly (e.g., during normal operating hours) to communicating with customers about the cleaning protocols in place. More attention will also need to be paid to hiring, training, and retaining a skilled cleaning workforce.

This will require a shift in how businesses approach the entire concept of cleaning.

The one thing that all of the guidance has included, from the very beginning, is the importance of proper and frequent cleaning. As a result, one of the biggest changes the pandemic has brought about is a shift in how we think about cleaning.



Prior to COVID-19, most businesses took a functional approach to cleaning, focusing mainly on **what cleaning does**. In this approach, cleaning is viewed as applying a set of procedures, using specific products and equipment, to meet the level of quality needed in a certain context. The other aspect of cleaning, which was not often considered before the pandemic, is psychological, focusing on **what cleaning means**. In this

approach, cleaning is viewed as a way of improving safety in order to build and maintain trust.

To succeed into the future, businesses will need to understand the interconnectedness between the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning. Most importantly, they'll need to communicate to customers about both of them.

Examples of effective corporate messages about cleaning

Forward-thinking businesses are already incorporating cleaning into their messaging. Here are two examples of companies that have developed messages that target both the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning:

- **Marriott International** – On May 6, Marriott International released [a statement and video](#) detailing the cleaning protocols that they've put in place to keep guests safe. The video, featuring Executive Chairman and Chairman of the Board, Bill Marriott, specifically focuses on the psychological aspect of safety.
- **Toronto Pearson Airport** – Toronto's Pearson Airport launched its ["Healthy Airport" program](#), which integrates new cleaning procedures (including the use of autonomous floor scrubber dryers), a more streamlined customer experience, a commitment to employee safety, and more.

In the next section, we'll look at ways businesses can adjust their cleaning operations to meet the new standard of clean.

Functional aspect

- Applying recommended methods and procedures
- Using appropriate cleaning equipment and products
- Maintaining cleaning frequency and thoroughness

Psychological aspect

- Conveying consciousness of responsibility to keep people safe
- Exhibiting the ability to clean to the expected level
- Being transparent about cleaning processes and procedures



02

Meeting the new standard of clean: 7 ways businesses can earn customer trust

Before they can feel comfortable in an indoor environment (e.g., restaurant, store, airport, office etc.), customers will need to believe the business is doing everything they can to promote cleanliness and safety. Employees will also need to know that their workplaces are safe. Here are seven ways businesses can use their cleaning operations to establish trust.

1. Cleaning as branding

As we mentioned earlier, businesses that formerly focused mainly on the functional aspect of cleaning will need to adopt a psychological approach. This is because human health and safety has made cleanliness business-critical in a way that it was not before.

To emphasize the safety message, we may see companies not only being more transparent about their safety measures and cleaning procedures but also working those messages into their branding.

Some good examples of ways this is already happening come from one of the industries that has been the hardest-hit across the board: airlines.

- **Cathay Pacific** – Cathay Pacific introduced a program called [Cathay Care](#), which details all of the safety measures, including cleaning, that the airline has put in place so travelers can “fly with confidence.”
- **Alaska Airlines** – Alaska Airlines’ branded program, [Next-Level Care](#), includes cleaning procedures on the aircraft as well as in other passenger areas like lounges. For added credibility, the airline notes that it developed and validated its cleaning program with the assistance from University of Washington Medical Directors specializing in infectious diseases.

For businesses that already maintain strong sustainability and/or CSR programs – such as [Carlsberg](#) – a branded cleaning program will contribute to the perception that they take responsibility for their customers’, and the planet’s, well-being. For those that don’t have programs in place, now is a great time to start responding to

these types of issues, which have become much more important for consumers.

No matter what industry you’re in, you should start thinking about how you can work your enhanced cleaning procedures into your brand messaging. If your competitors are adopting this type of messaging, then it will become table stakes for your industry. If they’re not, then it’s a way for you to gain a competitive advantage.



2. Highly visible cleaning

In the past, most cleaning operations were organized to be as unobtrusive as possible. In the future, this will likely change.

Rather than cleaning when areas are closed or during low-traffic hours, businesses may shift to visible cleaning to convey responsibility, promote trust, and reassure customers of the physical safety of the environment.

This idea has roots in the SARS outbreak of 2002-2004. SARS hit Hong Kong particularly hard in early 2003, infecting 1755 people and killing 299. In a 2019 study in which we interviewed global purchasers of cleaning equipment, respondents from Hong Kong were the only ones as a group to emphasize the importance of visible cleaning. Since the current pandemic has been disastrous worldwide, we expect visible cleaning to gain importance worldwide.

As you implement new cleaning procedures, think about how you can move cleaning from a backstage activity to center stage with a spotlight on it.

3. Stricter cleaning procedures

We noted earlier that businesses will be held to higher cleaning standards than they were in the past. In some regions, this may come from government regulations, as we're already seeing in Denmark and certain parts of the United States, where, for example, state reopening procedures for retail establishments include cleaning requirements.

For businesses where cleaning is not regulated, pressure for stricter cleaning procedures may come directly from consumers, who will use cleanliness as a factor in deciding where to shop.



In the B2B space, this pressure may also come from other businesses throughout the supply chain. For example, companies might demand that their warehouse service providers ramp up cleaning efforts to ensure the safety and integrity of their products. This would allow them to promote to the end users that the products have been protected from contamination across the supply chain.

To comply with regulations and also give customers the assurances they want, take the time to evaluate your existing cleaning procedures and, in many cases, adopt stricter ones. For environments such as retail stores, airports, and distribution centers, this will likely result in cleaning being performed more frequently, using EPA-approved hospital-grade disinfectants.

Increased cleaning requirements and the use of more potent cleaning chemicals will also necessitate additional training for in-house cleaning staff as well as contract cleaners – to ensure both the proper application of stricter cleaning procedures and that the proper precautions are taken to keep cleaners safe.

4. Greater focus on critical areas

High-touch areas, like door handles, light switches, and touchpoints on equipment, are already focus areas for cleaning. That focus may become even more pronounced.

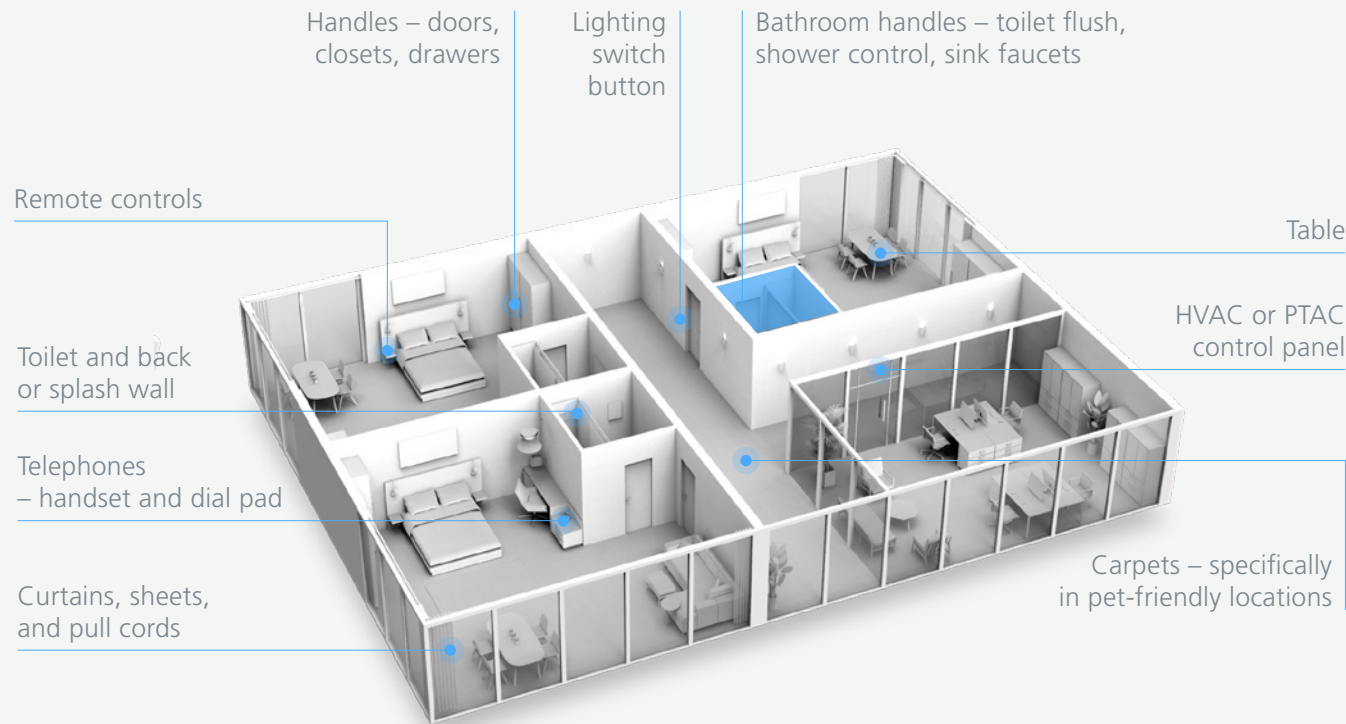
For example, in March of this year, InterContinental Hotels Group issued [cleaning and disinfection guidelines](#) for its franchises. The guidelines identify 10 “frequent touch areas” in hotel rooms that require special attention:

They also define cleaning frequencies for the “key cleaning areas” of lobbies, restaurants, meeting rooms, and floor corridors. These guidelines include:

- Disinfect floor, trash can every 2 hours
- Disinfect elevator buttons, cars every 1 hour
- Disinfect aisle door handle every 1 hour
- Disinfect public phone every 2 hours
- Disinfect public toilets every 1 hour

The increased attention to high-touch areas will bring with it an additional challenge: all other regular cleaning tasks still need to be performed, perhaps also more frequently than they were before. Irregular surfaces in particular can be extremely difficult to clean/disinfect properly. This, along with time and labor cost pressures, may drive interest in technologies that can free up cleaners’ time.

As you develop and implement new cleaning procedures, pay particular attention to tools and technologies that will enable you to achieve high-frequency cleaning of critical areas without sacrificing the tasks your team already does on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis.



Examples of productivity-boosting cleaning technologies

- **Antimicrobial coating** – Antimicrobial coatings on high-frequency touchpoints can reduce microbial contamination. For example, copper was [the first solid antimicrobial material to be registered by the EPA](#). New [research published in the New England Journal of Medicine](#) suggests it may be effective against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- **Autonomous cleaning solutions** – Autonomous floor scrubbers can clean hard floors in lobbies, corridors, and other public areas, enabling cleaning staff to spend more time in spaces that require a human touch. For more information, read [How Autonomous Cleaning Solutions Improve Cleaning Results and Help Keep Workers Safe](#).
- **Steam cleaning** – Steam is an effective way to kill pathogens in areas without a lot of dirt buildup, like patient rooms in healthcare facilities and restrooms in schools and hotels. For more information, read [Why Steam Is the Best Solution for Cleaning When Hygiene Is Critical](#).
- **Ozone or UV light disinfection** – When used correctly, both ozone and [UV light can provide disinfection](#). Be sure to follow the recommendations of your national, regional, state, and/or local authorities for ozone or UV light disinfection.



5. Documentation and disclosure of cleaning procedures and frequency

It's probably fair to say that before COVID-19, most people weren't interested in the specifics of the cleaning protocols used in shopping malls, sports arenas, or train stations. In the future, however, those protocols are likely to be posted at the entrances of these venues and more so that customers, employees, and visitors can assess the cleanliness of the facility before they enter.

This is another phenomenon that happened in Hong Kong as a result of SARS and that we expect to make its way around the globe.

At the same time, businesses will not want to scare people away by triggering their awareness of risk. So, the key will be to communicate enough information to help people feel comfortable, but still keep the focus on the enjoyable experience of traveling, going to a movie, eating at a restaurant, and so on.



Here are a few types of cleaning documentation you might consider displaying publicly:

- The standard operating procedures (SOPs) that the cleaning team follows
- Signs detailing how frequently surfaces are cleaned and disinfected
- Cleaning certificates, similar to the inspection certificates in elevators, so interested parties can learn more about the cleaning protocols
- Results of bacterial tests for critical areas like restrooms
- Certifications and other credentials obtained by members of the cleaning staff

6. Increased focus on cleaner's safety and working conditions

The cleaning profession is already short-staffed and has a notoriously high rate of employee turnover. For example, [in the United States, the turnover rate is estimated to be about 200%](#).

There are many reasons for this, but one of them is the health and safety risks. Cleaners already handle corrosive chemicals, haul heavy objects, and come into contact with potentially infectious garbage. SARS-CoV-2 is one more risk they will have to deal with. This situation is likely to make cleaning jobs even less attractive.

Because the labour shortage is not new, there are already efforts underway to improve safety and working conditions. In light of the current situation, employers will need to take even bolder actions to both protect cleaners and improve job satisfaction.

On the employer side, we predict two complementary trends:

1. **More interest in autonomous cleaning solutions** – As mentioned earlier, autonomous machines can take care of simple to-do items like floor cleaning, so human cleaners can focus on higher-value tasks.
2. **More effort to make cleaning a more attractive job prospect** – Cleaning jobs often pay minimum wage, and they don't come with many benefits or perks. To be able to attract and retain a skilled workforce, employers will need to make cleaning a more attractive job prospect. Working conditions that ensure cleaners' personal health and safety (e.g., proper training, PPE) should be standard. Additional benefits may include:
 - Higher wages
 - Training and opportunities for professional development
 - More paid leave
 - Basic and/or supplemental health insurance
 - Retirement savings programs

Your people are your most important asset. If you've been struggling to hire or retain cleaning employees, now is the time to communicate with your team about how you can become a better employer.



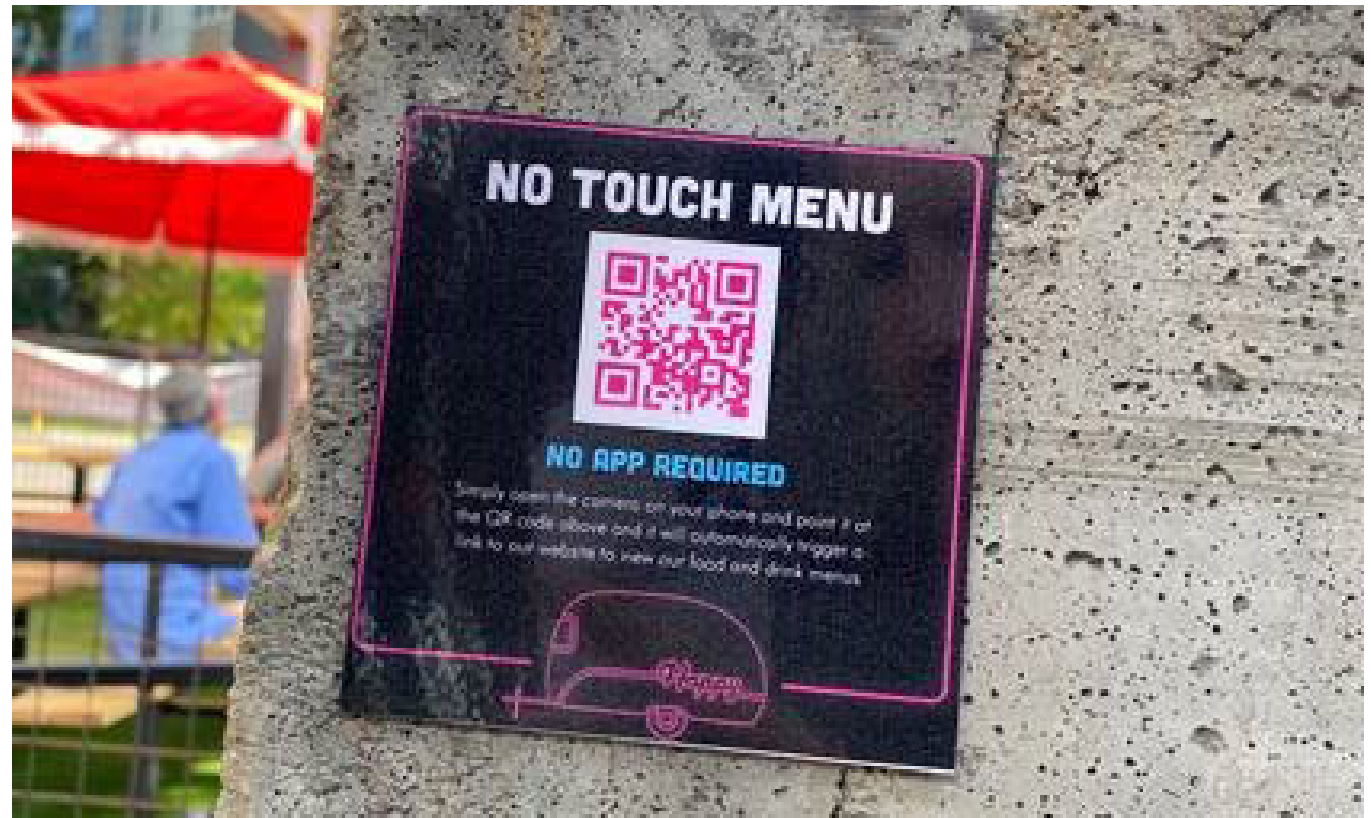
7. Physical changes in buildings

We have already witnessed businesses adapting to support social distancing and limit critical contact point risks – such as markings on the floor to indicate safe 6-foot distances and plexiglass dividers between employees and customers.

As office buildings and other workplaces reopen, we expect these same types of protections to be put in place, with a focus on room design and space utilisation. This may include replacing flooring, countertops, and other surfaces with materials that are easier to or redesigning public spaces to include fewer irregular shapes and surfaces.

If you're implementing changes to the way your space is used, be sure to strike a balance between communicating safety and also enhancing the customer / visitor experience. Digital technologies can assist in this effort. For example, Marriott

International now provides fully contactless check-in and check-out processes via smartphone apps, as well as keyless room entry. Some bars and restaurants have implemented contactless ordering and pickup using QR codes.





03

Winning new contracts in a new era

Several of the industries that typically employ contract cleaners have been hit very hard by the pandemic. Even industries that haven't been financially impacted will still face the need to enhance their cleaning protocols. As a result, businesses across the board will be looking to boost their level of cleanliness without incurring extra labour costs. This will provide opportunities for contract cleaners who can demonstrate that they understand the new expectations and can provide superior results at a reasonable price.

In the following sections, we'll take a look at six industries – hospitality, healthcare, education, retail, offices and public administration, and warehousing and logistics – which often outsource their cleaning services. For each industry, we'll explore:

- The business impact of COVID-19
- The value that cleaning provides, as identified by a large survey of cleaning equipment purchasers we conducted last year
- How the pandemic will change the industry's cleaning needs post-COVID-19



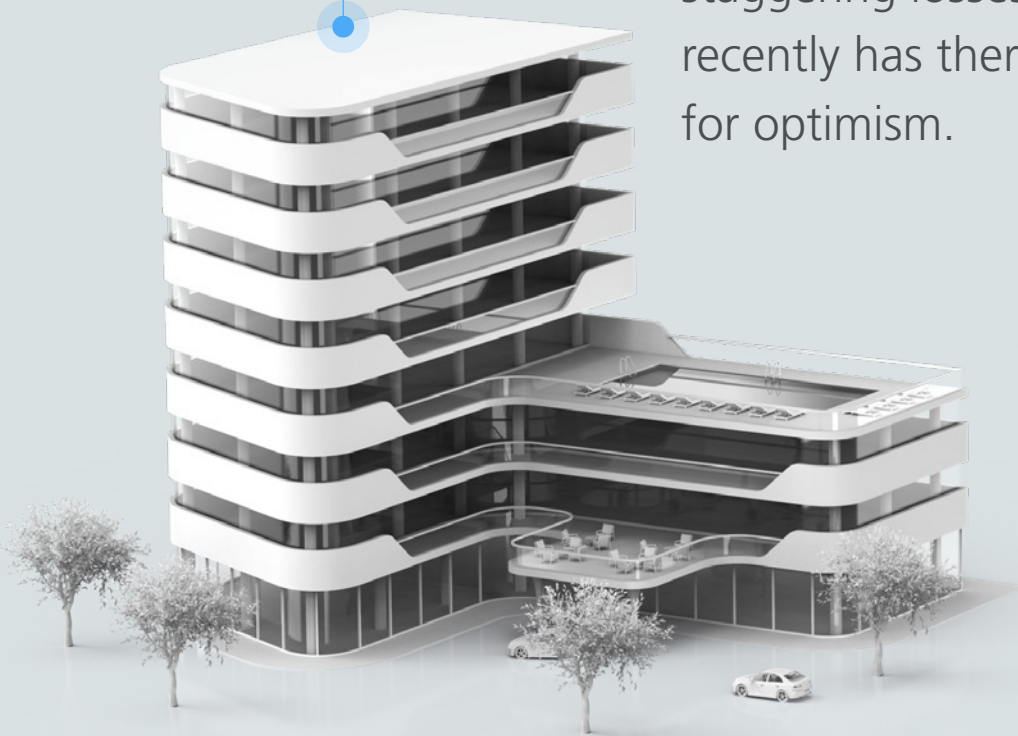
Hospitality

Business impact of COVID-19

The hospitality sector as a whole has been hit very hard, with airlines, hotels, resorts, and entertainment venues across the globe reporting staggering losses. Only very recently has there been cause for optimism.

On June 17, 2020, the [Global Business Travel Association \(GBTA\)](#) reported that, for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, their supplier members were starting to see an uptick in bookings. Not only that, but more than half of respondents to [GBTA's latest coronavirus poll](#) said they expected to resume regular domestic travel within 3 months and regular international travel within 6 months.

Business travel will likely return to normal much earlier than leisure travel, so it provides a good early warning system of what the future might hold.



Cleaning goals and values

Cleaning has always been business-critical in the hospitality industry. Our research found that in hospitality environments, cleanliness is viewed as a reflection of other services. For example, customers may determine whether or not to dine in a hotel restaurant based on the perceived cleanliness of the hotel lobby. This means that, to make a good impression on guests, every area of a hospitality environment needs to be cleaned to a very high standard.

Value that cleaning provides:

- Upholding the brand's reputation
- Reflecting the quality of service
- Delivering an excellent guest experience
- Earning repeat business / word-of-mouth recommendations

Cleaning post-COVID-19

In the post-COVID-19 era, cleaning will be even more integral to providing an excellent guest experience, and cleaning procedures will need to be even stricter in terms of both thoroughness and frequency.

In the GBTA survey cited above, respondents identified increasing cleaning standards as the single most important action hospitality businesses

could take to help alleviate concerns about health and safety. They also expressed an interest in learning more about what suppliers are doing to keep them safe. For example, 32% said they'd like more information about supplier cleaning and sanitation practices, while 34% want information about third-party inspection/verification of those sanitation practices.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

Functional

- Increase focus on cleaning and disinfecting touchpoints, such as door handles, and points of frequent human contact, like restrooms, counters, and public lounge areas
- Use hospital-grade disinfectants in key areas

Psychological

- Prioritize visible cleaning in public areas, like lobbies, elevators, restrooms, and restaurants
- Proactively communicate with guests about cleaning procedures
- Display documentation of cleaning practices and inspections
- Adopt language about cleanliness and safety into brand messaging

Healthcare

Business impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has obviously had a huge impact on the healthcare industry. Most of the areas that have been affected are beyond the scope of ebook, so we'll limit discussion to the two that are most relevant to cleaning.

First, unlike the other sectors on this list, demand for healthcare services has increased, which means hospitals and other care facilities will need to be more effective and efficient in all of their operations.

We expect increased investment in healthcare, which includes higher budgets for cleaning.

Second, healthcare systems and facilities are already starting to assess what has happened over the course of the current pandemic so that they can start preparing for future ones. This happened in Asia after SARS, which is one reason [many Asian countries were better able to respond to COVID-19](#) than countries that did not prioritize pandemic preparedness.



Cleaning goals and values

The healthcare sector already cleans to the highest standards and follows strict cleaning protocols to ensure safety. According to our research, the most important reasons for cleaning in healthcare environments are to meet health and safety standards and to avoid endangering lives.

Value that cleaning provides:

- Reassuring patients and visitors that the environment is safe for treatment and recovery
- Meeting patients' high expectations
- Ensuring that environmental conditions limit the risk of patients contracting infections or diseases that could lead to setbacks and slower-than-expected recuperation

Cleaning post-COVID-19

Because of the already-high standard for cleaning, the main changes we anticipate involve expanding existing cleaning protocols and investment in technologies to help cleaning staff be more productive.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

Functional

- Increase focus on cleaning and disinfecting touchpoints, such as door handles, and points of frequent human contact, like restrooms, counters, and public lounge areas
- Clean all areas of the facility (waiting rooms, restrooms, etc.) to the same standards as high-risk areas like operation theatres
- Implement more rigorous audits and inspections of cleaning operations
- Allocate cleaning equipment to just one area of the facility (e.g., one floor scrubber used for corridors, a different one used for patient rooms)
- Invest in new solutions, such as automatic floor scrubber dryers, to ensure a high level of hygiene and prevent cross-contamination
- Periodically retrain cleaning staff on deep cleaning procedures and protocols

Psychological

- Prioritize visible cleaning in public areas, like waiting areas, elevators, and restrooms
- Proactively communicate with patients and visitors about cleaning procedures
- Display documentation of cleaning practices and inspections

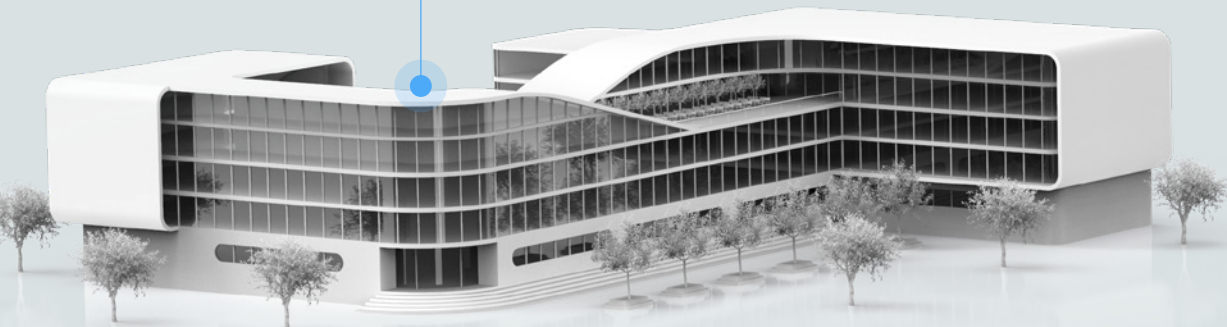
Education

Business impact of COVID-19

Schools, colleges, and universities around the world were shut down in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and most of them did not reopen before the summer break. As autumn approaches, national, regional, state, and local governments will be carefully evaluating if and how schools will be able to safely welcome students back.

Since educational facilities are made up of small spaces where many people interact, they are high-risk zones for spreading infections.

Because of this, we expect that schools will adopt higher cleaning standards post-COVID-19. Achieving these standards will require cleaning budgets, which are normally tight, to be increased.



Cleaning goals and values

In our [2019 Cleaning Survey Report](#), just over half (51%) of education respondents said that cleaning was business-critical. We suspect that if we repeated the survey today, that percentage would be closer to 100. Not only is a clean and safe environment a prerequisite for effective learning, but parents will look to the cleanliness of the facility for reassurance that their children will be safe and that they won't contract an illness that they could bring back to the family.

Value that cleaning provides

- Ensuring a safe and effective learning environment
- Minimizing the risk of infection
- Building parents' trust and confidence in their children's health and safety

Cleaning post-COVID-19

Students, parents, and employees will likely have a high level of concern about cleanliness and hygiene. To calm their fears, administrators will need to implement strict cleaning procedures and communicate extensively with all stakeholders.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

Functional

- Implement stricter cleaning procedures and increase cleaning frequency
- Increase focus on cleaning and disinfecting touchpoints, such as door handles, and points of frequent human contact, like restrooms, gyms, and cafeterias
- Require in-house cleaning staff to complete specialized training and certifications
- Hire professional contract cleaners for regular deep cleaning

Psychological

- Thoroughly document the new cleaning routines
- Proactively communicate with the community about cleaning practices
- Train students in good hygiene

Retail

Business impact of COVID-19

Many sectors of the brick-and-mortar retail industry will face an uphill battle. In various interviews and surveys, experts across the retail industry have said they expect it to take 6-12 months, or perhaps even longer, for traditional retail to recover.

Several surveys have looked at consumer sentiment about shopping in-store, and the general consensus is that most people aren't ready. For example, a [recent survey by SmarterHQ](#) found that only 36.5% of people plan to shop primarily in-store for non-essential items (beauty products, clothing, etc.) in the next year.

To lure shoppers back, not only will physical stores need to provide reassurances about safety, but they will also have to compete with e-commerce, [which continues to grow significantly across the globe.](#)

In addition to protecting customers, retail stores – like all businesses – will also need to ensure the safety of employees. We've already seen businesses implement changes, such as limiting the number of people allowed in the store at the same time, controlling the direction of traffic flow, and installing plexiglass screens at check-out counters.



Cleaning goals and values

In the past, many retailers may have underestimated the importance of cleanliness. ServiceChannel's 2019 [The State of Brick and Mortar Retail Report](#) found that 4 in 10 customers will spend less money in a store where they've had a negative experience, while 43% will patronize a competitor instead. And what's a top reason for negative experiences? Messiness. [According to customer service expert Shep Hyken](#), dirty floors, shelves, and bathrooms can "inadvertently send signals to customers that...the merchandise may not be of quality either."

Value that cleaning provides

- Providing the environment for a pleasant and smooth shopping experience
- Making shoppers stay longer and revisit
- For food-related businesses, meeting standards and quality to create trust

Cleaning post-COVID-19

Retailers will need to be extra aware of the role cleaning plays in the customer experience. Larger chains, especially, should be highly attentive to how customer sentiment affects the overall brand reputation.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

Functional

- Increase focus on cleaning and disinfecting touchpoints, such as trolleys, baskets, point-of-sale terminals, and public restrooms
- Provide specialized training for staff about cleaning, sanitising, and disinfecting procedures
- Implement more regular deep cleaning
- In larger spaces, use autonomous cleaning machines for continuous cleaning throughout the day

Psychological

- Clean more frequently and more visibly to support the reassurance of safety and build a positive brand
- Proactively communicate with customers about cleaning standards and procedures

Offices and Public Administration

Business impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has hastened the already existing trend toward working from home. Office shutdowns and restrictions on gatherings resulted in a complete revamp of how non-essential businesses and employees operate on a daily basis. It may take a very long time for many of these people to return to the office. A [survey by Gartner](#) found that almost three-quarters (74%) of CFOs expected at least some of their employees who transitioned to remote work to continue working remotely even after the pandemic.

Those that do return to work will find things much changed. Social distancing will be enforced, community spaces (like cafeterias and conference rooms) may not be accessible, and there will be zero tolerance for people coming to work even slightly ill.



Cleaning goals and values

In office buildings, the main reasons for cleaning have typically revolved around making a good impression on visitors and providing a distraction-free work environment. As office employees go back to work, the focus will need to shift to health and safety.

Value that cleaning provides

- Ensuring a productive work environment
- Showing staff that management cares about their well-being
- Promoting health and safety

Cleaning post-COVID-19

Changes in day-to-day cleaning operations will likely differ. For example, offices that don't receive a lot of visitors (e.g., tech companies) will focus on the health, safety, and well-being of their employees. Offices that do receive regular visitors

(e.g., banks) will incorporate cleaning into their brand messaging. Both will likely be obligated to implement stricter cleaning procedures than they have in the past.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

Functional

- Increase focus on cleaning and disinfecting touchpoints, such as door handles, and points of frequent human contact, like restrooms, counters, and public lounge areas
- Require in-house cleaning staff to complete specialized training and certifications
- Hire professional contract cleaners for regular deep cleaning
- Evaluate air ventilation and circulation systems to improve indoor air quality

Psychological

- Prioritize visible cleaning in public areas, like lobbies, elevators, and restrooms
- Proactively communicate with guests about cleaning procedures
- Display documentation of cleaning practices and inspections

Warehousing and logistics

Business impact of COVID-19

If anything, the pandemic has raised awareness of the crucial role warehousing and logistics plays in the convenience of our daily lives.

Finding grocery store shelves empty was a new experience for many, and it highlighted the importance of logistics and of the workers who facilitate the movement of goods.

During the outbreak, companies like Amazon have been heavily criticized for not protecting workers properly. This scrutiny is likely to support more general awareness of and attention to cleaning, especially among large corporations. Additional preventive controls include staggering shifts and limiting access to warehousing facilities.



Cleaning goals and values

Cleanliness has always contributed to warehouse profitability by enabling efficient operations. Messes create slipping hazards for people and obstacles for forklifts, dust decreases air quality, and dirt can damage mechanical systems on conveyors and other equipment.

Value that cleaning provides

- Keeping operations smooth and efficient
- Ensuring the health and safety of workers
- Ensuring the safe and effective traffic of forklifts and other vehicles
- Preserving product quality

Cleaning post-COVID-19

Since warehouses are such a key link in all supply chains, warehouse service providers will face pressure from their customers to step up their cleaning procedures and protocols. This will likely include a greater focus on the further processes of sanitising and disinfection.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

Functional

- Increase focus on cleaning and disinfecting touchpoints, such as door handles, handrails, workstations, control panels, and lifts, as well as points of frequent human interaction like restrooms, locker rooms, and break areas
- Disinfect surfaces on heavy equipment, including steering wheels, operating controls, steps, ladders, and handlebars
- Sanitise handheld devices and wearable accessories, such as wrist straps, hand straps, safety eyewear, vests, hardware belts, and headgear
- Sanitise packaging and pallets in inbound and outbound freight
- Increase cleaning frequency for systems that circulate air and capture and store dust

Psychological

- Proactively communicate with employees and customers about cleaning procedures
- Display documentation of cleaning practices and inspections
- Train employees on proper hygiene

Opportunities for contract cleaners

The post-COVID-19 period will be challenging for all of the industries that contract cleaners serve. These challenges will provide opportunities for contract cleaners to help their clients through these challenges by providing the required level of cleanliness in a cost-effective way.

Impact of COVID-19 on the contract cleaning industry

Contract cleaners are likely to experience significant changes in the way they do business on a daily basis. Cleaning standards will be stricter across the board, but there will still be differences based on customer type. As cleaning SOPs are updated, contract cleaners may find they have less flexibility in terms of products and procedures they use. In the future, ongoing training related to cleaning procedures and personal risk prevention may be mandatory.

What we can be sure of is that cleaning will become more labor intensive. For example, especially during the reopening phase, businesses may hire contract cleaners to perform more frequent deep cleans to meet the standards for disinfection set by health authorities.

At the same time, many of these same businesses have suffered financial losses, which means they will be looking to cut back on expenses. This situation will worsen if the global economy goes into a prolonged recession.

Strategies to address the functional and psychological aspects of cleaning

It's just as important for contract cleaners as it is for their clients to consider both the structural and functional aspects of cleaning.

Functional

- Integrate special attention to the disinfection of key touchpoints into SOPs
- Support staff in taking specialized training and certifications
- Use checklists to provide documentation that the required work has been performed
- Ensure the proper disinfection of cleaning equipment after each use
- Invest in autonomous cleaning equipment

Psychological

- Proactively communicate an understanding of cleaning standards and procedures, especially for critical focus areas
- Arrange schedules to meet clients' needs for more visible daytime cleaning



04

Technologies that support cleaning in the new reality

In this ebook, we've alluded several times to new innovations and technologies that are making cleaning more efficient and cleaning teams more productive. Here, we'll dig into three technology-enabled innovations that are set to define the future of cleaning. While all of these innovations were on the horizon before, the pandemic has accelerated their adoption.



Autonomous solutions

Autonomous cleaning solutions are machines that can do the work on their own, without requiring human assistance. For commercial and industrial applications, autonomous cleaning solutions come in the form of robotic floor scrubber dryers.

In the wake of COVID-19, autonomous cleaning technology provides three major benefits:

1. **It frees up human cleaning staff's time so they can get more done.** While autonomous scrubber dryers clean the floors, human cleaning staff can pay the necessary attention to door handles, counters, and the other high-touch, high-risk areas we identified in the previous section.
2. **It guarantees complete coverage.** When the stakes are this high, every surface needs to be cleaned as thoroughly as possible. Autonomous scrubber dryers follow the same path every time, regularly achieving between 98% and 99.5% coverage, which is more than what manual cleaning typically provides.

3. **It minimizes the time cleaners need to spend in populated spaces.** In areas where pathogens may be present, like healthcare facilities, autonomous solutions can decrease the possibility that the cleaning workforce will be exposed. Beyond that, robots can help companies accomplish the dual goals of cleaning visibly and protecting workers by not requiring cleaners to spend time in populated areas.

Read more: [How autonomous cleaning solutions improve cleaning results and help keep workers safe](#)



Online training

Having a qualified, trained workforce has never been more important. With stricter cleaning standards in place, we expect many businesses to require cleaning staff to participate in ongoing training. Proof of this may even be part of the documentation businesses make available to assure their customers that they're taking the steps needed to ensure safety.

Online training is a great way to get your cleaning workforce up to speed quickly and to provide ongoing professional development. Here are three places to find online training:

1. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's [virtual academy](#) offers free courses for anyone to take. This includes a collection of [microlearning courses](#) about COVID-19.
2. For a more formal training option [ISSA's Cleaning Management Institute \(CMI\)](#) offers courses for frontline cleaning professionals, managers and supervisors, and more. Their [Custodial Technician Training certification](#) can be earned online.

3. To help staff learn the ins and outs of using cleaning equipment, [Nilfisk University](#) offers on-demand operator, technical, and customer support training. The courses can be accessed from any device, making this a highly flexible, effective way for cleaners to keep their skills up to date.

Virtual site visits and service calls

When cleaning is business-critical, companies can't afford for their equipment to be out of commission. To keep machines running and also protect the workforce, many cleaning OEMs have started to offer virtual site visits and service calls. Using video conferencing software, augmented reality headsets, and more, service technicians can help customers troubleshoot and solve problems quickly, which minimizes equipment downtime and also saves companies time and money on service calls. This trend is still in its early days – we expect to see more innovation in this area as cleaning equipment manufacturers navigate the new way of working.



05

Supporting and protecting the cleaning workforce

With COVID-19, cleaning staff have finally started being recognized as the essential front-line workers they are. To hire and retain great employees (especially given the notoriously high turnover rates), companies will need to go the extra mile to support and protect them.

Earlier, we discussed ways that businesses can make the cleaning industry more attractive to job seekers. Here, we highlight three ways companies can support and protect their existing cleaning workforce.

Give them the tools they need to do the job

Professional cleaning is hard work, and with the new strict cleaning standards, it's getting harder. The only way that cleaners are going to be able to achieve all of their cleaning KPIs is if they have the tools they need to do the job.

As an example, the InterContinental Hotels Group cleaning and disinfection guidelines presented earlier specified that floors in key areas such as lobbies and restrooms should be disinfected every 2 hours. In all but the smallest hotels, this standard would likely be impossible to achieve using a mop and bucket – by the time a cleaner finished one cleaning and disinfection cycle, they'd have to start again. Not only is this inefficient, but the cleaner wouldn't have time to do anything else.

If your company has been holding off on investing in cleaning equipment, now is the time to take that step.



Train them on all cleaning protocols and equipment

On the whole, employees don't get enough training. [According to human resources and management expert Peter Cappelli](#), in 1979, young workers received an average of 2.5 weeks of training per year. By 1995, that number had dropped to under 11 hours. Data on current training numbers is difficult to find, which likely indicates that it has fallen even further.

In the cleaning industry, a lack of training puts the workforce at risk in more ways than one.

First, cleaners often work with heavy equipment and toxic chemicals. Without proper training, they could be exposed to harm. The added risk of COVID-19 makes training on personal protection even more important.

The other way that a lack of training threatens the workforce is by increasing employee turnover. In a [survey of workers in the UK](#), more than half (56%) said they would leave their job if employers didn't provide training. Almost one-third (31%) had previously left a job for exactly this reason.



The bottom line is that training is one of the most important things employers can do to protect workers' health and safety and also keep them from leaving the job.

Here are some of the topics all cleaners should be trained on:

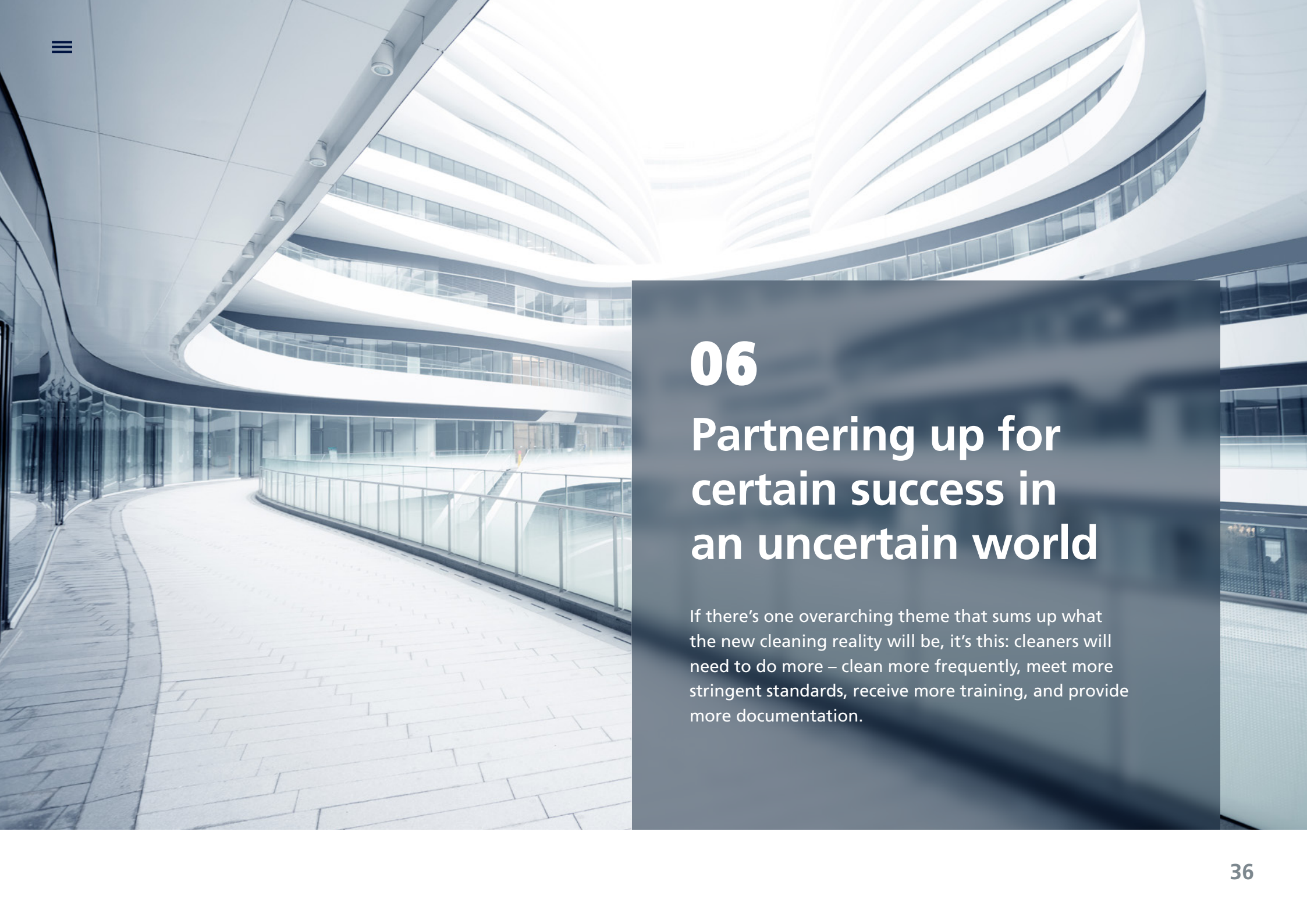
- How to perform cleaning and disinfection jobs safely, including how to sanitize the cleaning machines themselves
- When and how to change filter bags
- How to manage, dump, and dispose of wastewater

Provide adequate personal protective equipment (PPE)

It should go without saying that in the days of COVID-19, cleaners need to be provided with proper PPE. A mask alone won't do it, and employers should take the responsibility on themselves to know the requirements and to meet or exceed all national, regional, state, and/or local recommendations.

Resources about PPE recommendations and requirements:

- World Health Organization: [Rational use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) for coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Interim guidance](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [COVID-19 control and prevention](#)
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control: [Tutorial on the safe use of personal protective equipment](#)



06

Partnering up for certain success in an uncertain world

If there's one overarching theme that sums up what the new cleaning reality will be, it's this: cleaners will need to do more – clean more frequently, meet more stringent standards, receive more training, and provide more documentation.



In the past, companies may have had the budget to purchase more equipment to meet the growing demand, but the financial reality today is that they will likely be called upon to do this more with less – less budget, less time, less staff.

We expect that new supplier partnership models, specifically equipment rental and leasing programs, will gain popularity as a way for cleaning companies to deliver results in an economically sustainable way. These types of programs can take many different forms. Here are the program features that will likely be the most important in the coming months and years:

- **An end-to-end solution** – a rental or leasing package that includes setup, as well as service and maintenance
- **Flexible terms** – the ability to rent or lease any piece of equipment for any amount of time
- **Training** – hassle-free operator and administrator support

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