

# Cleaning Trends

## Cylindrical or Rotary? That Is the Question

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In several cases, cleaning professionals in Europe and other parts of the world incorporated new cleaning technologies, products, and equipment years before they became popular in the United States. For instance, microfiber cleaning cloths and mops have been used in Europe for more than 20 years. It has been only in the past few years that they have become commonplace in this country.

The same applies to cylindrical brush technology. Cylindrical floor machines—which have roller brushes on each end, as compared to traditional rotary buffers with a single rotary disk—have been used in Europe for about 20 years.

They were developed to tackle a very specific problem: many buildings in Europe are centuries old, and because of this their floors are often uneven or sloped after so much use. Additionally, many of the floors in these old buildings are made of stone, marble, and similar materials rather than the smooth surface tile or linoleum that are common in this country.

However, just like the microfiber example mentioned earlier, cylindrical floor machines have generated a growing interest and following in the United States, and a few U.S. manufacturers are now producing them. The following evaluation should help cleaning professionals better understand how cylindrical and rotary systems differ and which might better fit their needs. It may also answer a few questions and help clarify some of the features and benefits cylindrical brush technology offers.

Traditional rotary buffers use pads and rotate horizontally, from side to side, at approximately 175 to 300 revolutions per minute (rpm). Cylindrical machines have brushes and are multidirectional—they can be maneuvered side to side; forward and backward—at 1,000 to 1,400 rpm.

Some floor care experts suggest using the slower rotary machine when performing restoration work on stone-type floors. However, for more common floor care tasks, such as polishing, scrubbing, or stripping, the cylindrical machine has greater contact pressure on the floor. This along with its higher rpm can enhance cleaning results.

The pads on rotary machines have a tendency to “throw” cleaning solution on baseboards and walls. Additionally, because they are round, it is hard to line them up against the wall for edge cleaning. Because of this, some floor care technicians find it better to do “edge work” by hand instead of with the machine. Cylindrical machines have contra-rotating rollers that rotate inward, so splashing solution against walls or baseboards is not a problem. In addition, because the machines have a square base and not round like a traditional rotary machine, they can line up directly against baseboards to facilitate edge and corner cleaning.

With a rotary machine, the cleaning solution may be unevenly distributed because of the brushes’ horizontal rotation. To rectify this, floor care technicians need to make several passes over the same floor area to evenly apply the solution.

With a cylindrical machine, a film of cleaning solution forms between the two parallel rollers. This allows the machine to better penetrate the floor with detergent, apply it more evenly to the floor, and improve productivity.

For the most part, both types of machines can produce excellent results on smooth floors such as linoleum and most tiles. However, with structured floors, such as rubber-studded floors and uneven or stone floors, cylindrical technology may produce superior results. This is because of the brushes these machines use, which have greater penetrating capabilities.

For polishing a finished floor, the rotary disk machines appear to be the better choice. Both systems will produce a high shine, but when using soft polishing pads with a single-disk machine, the results tend to be a deeper shine.

Overall, cylindrical machines are more versatile than traditional rotary machines. And, because they apply cleaning solution more effectively with higher rpm and contact pressure, they are apt to be more economical as well. However, the best evaluation comes from testing these machines yourself—under “real-life” conditions. Ultimately, trying each system in your own personal work environment will help you determine which machine is best for you.

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