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Secrets to High-Gloss Floors: Two Experts Speak Out

Historically, there has been a lot of mystery associated with high-gloss-floor care. Much of this is because for decades, few training options were available and many building service contractors (BSCs) had not taken advantage of the educational opportunities provided by such organizations as the Building Service Contractors Association International (BSCAI). However, today more are making the most of these resources and more information is available, making floor care a skill that can be learned by carefully following specific guidelines and mastered with experience and training.

Two floor care experts, both well versed and experienced in floor



maintenance, were asked to share some of their knowledge along with personal tips on producing high-gloss floors. Their comments below will help remove some of the “veil of mystery” surrounding floor maintenance so

BSCs can produce high-gloss floors that are proud examples of their skill and training and can take advantage of this profitable, add-on service.

More Shine—More Time

“As a sales rep for a distributor for many years, I have worked with numerous facilities that want their floors to have a ‘wet-look’ shine like those found in hospitals and some department stores,” says Emo Moschini, with Thunder Sales, a manufacturers rep group based in Lake Zurich, Il. “I tell them I can teach them how it’s done, but I also ask them how much time and money they are willing to put into floor care—for when it comes to floors, the more shine, the more time.”

Many facility managers, according to Moschini, are unaware of how much effort is required for a floor to have a high-gloss, wet-look shine. “Burnishing a high-traffic floor once or twice a week simply won’t do it. If they want a high-gloss floor, then they have to budget the funds for daily maintenance to make it happen,” he says.

Floor care is very labor-intensive, possibly the most labor-intensive task most cleaning contractors ever encounter. “But it has gotten easier,” says Moschini. “The introduction of cylindrical floor machines has removed a lot of the stress and strain of floor work, and implementing a written floor care program provides practical, step-by-step guidelines to make sure every task is done and done correctly.”

Moschini says that cylindrical brush technology is relatively new in the United States though it has been

used in Europe for more than 20 years. “These floor machines work *with* the user, gliding over floors to make the job easier and eliminate a lot of the stress and fatigue associated with floor care,” he says.

He also thinks floor care professionals should have a written floor care plan that is facility specific and closely adhered to. “This can eliminate confusion and save a lot of time and money,” Moschini says. “In one case, I worked with a public school system that was able to reduce their refinishing cycles from every year to every five years, just by following a detailed, written floor care program.”

Although a floor care program must be designed for each facility, some of the items Moschini suggests are common to almost all floor care programs. These include the following:

- Have a daily cleaning and maintenance plan that lists which mops, buckets, and floor equipment are to be used along with which chemicals.
- Make sure that chemical mixing ratios are clearly spelled out; additionally, instructions such as whether to use cold, warm, or hot water should be plainly designated.
- Institute safety rules and regulations such as placing “Wet Floor” signs around work areas.
- The plan should list which machines are to be used for polishing or burnishing, what color pads are to be

used, and which restorers or floor gloss products should be applied.

- For scrubbing and recoating, the plan must also list all of the tools necessary to do the job including such things as two or more mops and buckets, polyethylene liners to line the buckets, two or more “finish” mops, putty knives, machine pads, and brown utility pads.

Is the Floor Worth It?

“When it comes to floor care, I always ask my clients two questions: Is their floor worth it? And how do they want it to look?” says David Frank, President of the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences (AICS), Highlands Ranch, CO, an evaluation and accreditation organization that strives to improve the professional performance of the cleaning industry.

“Facility managers have to determine if they are going to keep the floor two years or twenty years,” says Frank. “That makes a lot of difference in how much time, money, and effort they will put into maintaining the floor.”

Additionally, Frank says customers must determine how they want the floor to look. “Some customers want their floors to have no shine whatsoever; others want a high-gloss, satin-like finish. The answers to both of these questions will determine their budget for floor care as well as the products, procedures, and equipment necessary to do the job.”

Like Moschini, Frank found that a cylindrical floor machine produces a higher-gloss shine than a conventional floor machine. “Testing both machines on comparable floors and using a state-of-the-art BYK-Gardener micro-TRI-gloss meter to calculate the results, we found that the gloss units obtained by cylindrical brush technology were higher than those of a rotary machine,” Frank explains (see sidebar).

Frank says that if customers decide they want their floors to have the best shine possible, “then the BSC has to own them. This means, they have to start over, strip the floor down completely, and then begin from the bottom up, building the type of floor shine the customer wants. This is especially true when starting a new account or taking over a floor maintenance program from a previous BSC.”

According to Frank, starting over means steering clear of many of the mistakes the previous contractor may have made. Frank suggests following these guidelines to avoid some of the common mistakes that can hamper a floor’s appearance and shine:

- Do not burnish dirt into the floor finish. Always make sure the floor is clean before burnishing.
- Remove all stripper from corners and along edges before applying the finish.
- Do not “hurry up” the floor finish. Many contractors do not allow the floor enough time to dry between coats. Dry to the touch does not necessarily mean the

floor is ready for another coat. Usually 45 minutes to an hour is needed.

- Rinse and neutralize the floor before applying the finish. The cleaner the floor is, the better the finish will adhere and the brighter and more long-lasting the shine.

Frank adds that in addition to avoiding these gaffes, BSCs should set up a floor care team in which each individual has an assigned set of tasks such as moving furniture, preparing the floor, mopping, rinsing, applying finish, etc. “In most floor jobs, there is enough work to do that a minimum of two people are usually necessary. A floor care team creates a division of labor, producing greater efficiency and productivity,” he says.

One final item that both experts agree on has little to do with the floors’ shine but is more about safety. Both say that when performing floor care tasks, the cleaning professional should wear gloves and goggles. The floor machine’s electric cord should always be over the shoulder and safely behind the area being worked. Additionally, Frank suggests that floor care professionals wear steel-toed shoes as well as a back belt.

“High-gloss floors are possible with the right tools, the right training and procedures, and the right safety gear,” says Frank. “Not only can floor care be lucrative, but done well and well maintained, it’s a job a BSC can really be proud of.”

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Sidebar:

Gloss Meter Results

	18” Twin Cylindrical Brush	20” Rotary Pad
	Gloss Units	Gloss Units
Ten Feet		
Benchmark	77	78
First Scrub	79	74
Second Scrub	79	73
Third Scrub	80	71
Fourth Scrub	79	71
Fifth Scrub	77	69

Courtesy AICS Report 2004