

Good Housekeeping Does Your Business Have the Seal of Approval?

“It looks like a pigsty in here!” While most kids have heard these words at least once in regard to the conditions of their bedrooms, most successful business owners would agree, having one’s workplace resemble a “sty,” is not good business. And it’s not just about dirt and clutter. It is about order and safety, with safety being the most important factor. Dirt and dust creates health problems, and clutter in halls or on stairwells has the potential to cause serious accidents. Good housekeeping is a basic that can keep your business running more smoothly and safely.

Breaking habits

If your workers are in the habit of taking a relaxed approach to housekeeping, introducing a new housekeeping policy could be hard at first. However, the easiest way to keep the dirt and clutter under control is to create a cleaning policy and make sure it is enforced. A good housekeeping policy will integrate cleaning as part of each worker’s daily responsibility, making everyone accountable for the overall cleanliness and safety of the building and their fellow workers.

If It’s broke, fix it

The “Broken Window Theory” states that if a broken window is left unfixed, it will lead to more broken windows and a general lack of caring about a place until it falls into complete disorder. Certainly, this theory can be applied to housekeeping in the same way. It is much easier to stack boxes in a hail that is already cluttered. The same is true with throwing trash on an already messy floor. Once a dirty work space has been established, it needs to be fixed, or your business will be in total disarray, which can affect employee morale and lower standards of professionalism.

Slips, trips and the flu?

While many of us think of workplace housekeeping in terms of keeping halls and walkways clean of debris, another safety issue lurking in the dirty office is bacteria. According to microbiologist Chuck Gerba, there are 400 more bacteria on the average desktop than on a toilet seat. In fact, one study showed that employers could lose up to \$159 billion a year (MSNBC) to cold and flu viruses. Make sure your cleaning policy includes regular cleaning of phones, elevator buttons, mouse controls and coffee machines, as they could be spreading germs throughout your office.

When dirty practices go bad

Accidents that occur as a result of poor housekeeping aren’t intentional; however, the outcomes can be fatal. A bunch of paint-soaked rags may not seem

very dangerous, but what if they caught on fire and, worse yet, workers couldn't get out of the building because extra materials and ladders were stacked in the hall near the fire escape. Accidents like these can and do occur. Don't let a dirty workplace put your workers and your business in danger.

Cleaning machine

Once you get the overall cleaning out of the way and create your housekeeping policy, all that is left is to make sure consistent maintenance is taking place. With a little teamwork and some effort, you can keep your business and your employees clean and safe. Remind everyone that keeping the workplace clean makes work easier, safer and healthier for everyone. Make sure everyone has a checklist and knows their responsibilities in keeping with the plan. And before you know it, your business will be squeaky clean.

Some simple practices to remember (sidebar)

- Keep work areas clean.
- Keep floors clean and dry.
- Keep aisles clear.
- Keep exits and entrances clear.
- Store all materials in approved, labeled containers. Keep sprinklers, fire alarms and fire extinguishers clear.

Accompanying blurb:

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