

The Office Has Changed, Cleaning Must Change Too

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I've spent enough time walking real estate across London and speaking with clients to know that the conversation around workplaces has moved on. The office isn't disappearing, but the way people use it has fundamentally changed - and that shift is forcing our industry to rethink how cleaning services are delivered.

The workplace no longer follows predictable patterns

For years, office cleaning has relied on fixed schedules, input specifications and static rostering. The same routines, the same frequencies, and the same assumptions about how busy a building will be from Monday to Friday. That model made sense when office attendance followed predictable patterns. It makes far less sense today.

Occupancy levels now fluctuate across the week. Some days are busy, others noticeably quieter. Certain spaces see heavy use while others remain almost untouched.

Large-scale workplace studies confirm this shift. Utilisation sits well below historic levels, activity peaks midweek, and collaboration areas are now seeing more traffic than traditional desk zones. Yet many cleaning models still operate as if every floor is full every day.

Balancing utilisation data with workplace experience

At Excellerate, our approach has evolved because the workplace itself has evolved. Our office solutions are

based on building utilisation – how spaces are actually being used, not how they were originally planned.

Any adjustment to a cleaning schedule is evidence-based, but it is also validated through a second, equally important lens: customer experience and building user sentiment.

We track both sets of indicators in parallel so that operational decisions are not only efficient but positively felt by the people using the space. That balance matters. Data alone tells you where activity is happening, but it doesn't reveal how people experience the result. Equally, relying purely on feedback without supporting evidence leads to inconsistency. Bringing both together creates a compelling case for change that is measurable, accountable and grounded in reality.

Cleaning's growing role in workplace perception

Cleaning has also become more visible than ever. People judge workplaces quickly – often subconsciously – based on how a space feels and smells when they walk in.

When the areas people actually use are clean, fresh and well presented, it reinforces productivity and confidence in the workplace. When they're not, it undermines the entire experience.

That's why cleaning is no longer simply about completing tasks. It's about supporting how people use a building today, and that requires agility.

Demand shifts throughout the day, across the week and even seasonally. Resources need to follow activity. And that means having the confidence to move away from legacy schedules and productivity rates that no longer reflect reality.

The real opportunity: intelligent scheduling

There is a lot of discussion around automation and robotics in cleaning, and the technology has genuinely progressed far beyond the early gimmicks. It's more capable, more reliable, and in the right environments it absolutely has a role to play.

But if I'm honest, robotics may not represent the biggest opportunity ahead of us.

The real step forward lies in smarter, dynamic rostering and scheduling models that are agile enough to adapt in real time as building needs change.

Moving from reactive cleaning to predictive operations

Through our digital platform, Velocity, we use automation, machine learning and fully digital service delivery to make more informed scheduling decisions. Dynamic rostering isn't simply about moving hours around; it's about understanding how multiple data points interact and using that intelligence to anticipate demand before it happens.

When hours delivered, customer sentiment, building utilisation, audit scores and randomised dynamic inspections are analysed together, we gain a much clearer picture of what a building truly requires.

That allows us to move from reactive service delivery to predictive operations – adjusting resources, cleaning frequencies and task focus in line with real usage patterns rather than outdated assumptions.

It also opens the door to more transparent, usage-based billing models. This remains something of a taboo subject within the industry, but many clients are now looking for clearer reporting and invoicing. They want visibility over their spend and less administrative complexity associated with service credits.

Technology should enable people, not replace them

The outcome is a cleaning service that is both leaner and stronger. Teams spend more time where they create the greatest value, while clients gain confidence that service decisions are being made objectively and monitored continuously.

Technology in this sense isn't replacing people; it's enabling better judgement at scale. It gives operational leaders the information they need to make informed decisions quickly and provides frontline teams with the clarity required to deliver consistently high standards in constantly changing environments.

However, this evolution brings a reality the industry must acknowledge. A more intelligent, data-led model requires more skilled operatives – people who can work confidently with digital systems, adapt to shifting priorities and understand the wider role their work plays in the workplace experience.

That means greater investment in training, development and support, and it will inevitably lead to higher wage expectations.

For this model to work long term, cleaning providers must be willing to move beyond outdated approaches that prioritise lowest cost over long-term value and instead invest properly in their people.

A more agile future for cleaning services

The changing role of the workplace has forced operators, employers and service providers to rethink long-held assumptions. For cleaning, that means being more honest about where value is created.

Not every space needs the same attention every day. Not every building behaves the same way. And success isn't about rigidly following schedules or specifications written years ago. It's about adapting confidently while maintaining standards.

That's where I see the industry heading: evidence-led, experience-validated, people-focused and operationally agile.

Workplaces have changed. Expectations have changed. And cleaning is changing with them.

If we get this right, cleaning will stop being something people only notice when it goes wrong and instead become a quiet but essential part of why the workplace works at all.