

environmental



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WHICH IS  
PREFERABLE? **GREEN** OR  
**SUSTAINABLE?**

**N**

ot long ago, green was the topic of choice and it became

popular among property managers and their cleaning vendors. After all, green buildings are good, right? The impact of green on health, such as improved indoor air quality due to HEPA filter vacuums, is positive. The environmental benefits of green chemicals are also positive, as compared to traditional bleach or ammonia-based products. Less harmful substances and particularly biodegradable are preferable, in particular when the product's effectiveness is the same or better. Whether it's cleaning or any other aspect of a building's operation, green solutions tend to focus on products and/or services.

Sustainable cleaning is the process of using resources in a manner that doesn't damage the environment or people in it to meet human needs not only now but also for generations to come. Sustainability tends to be addressed when designing new buildings or referred to in terms of activities undertaken to protect the external environment but is often ignored in the day-to-day implementation of cleaning activities. Yet integrating green products and services into the operational maintenance plan of a

facility provides long-term health, environmental, social, and economic benefits. As a result, sustainability has become the "new" green, due to the long-term implications.

For example, installing automatic faucets and flushers can save water. But did you know that cleaning could also contribute to savings? If instead of using a mop bucket with a regular mop, a flat mop is utilized with a built-in chemical tank, there is no need to empty and refill five-gallon buckets throughout the mopping process. Instead, a concentrated measured dose of chemical (about ½ tsp.) is dispensed in the tank (32 oz.) and filled with water from any faucet, greatly reducing the need for water. The integration of multiple conservation efforts in the building would thereby contribute to the goal of less water usage, thus making this effort sustainable.

Imagine that a property plans to transition from T12 light bulbs to T8 lamps and ballasts. Clearly, there will be energy savings. However, when considering all energy reduction alternatives, the property manager may request their cleaning company to utilize more efficient floor equipment thereby utilizing less energy. Of course, the greatest potential energy-saving contribution from cleaning is day cleaning, due to reduced energy consumption during evening hours.

The seminars and new product introductions at the recent ISSA Worldwide Cleaning Conference and Show made it clear that the "green" cleaning concept has evolved from the use of environmentally preferable tools and equipment and now incorporates broader sustainability issues, such as the ones listed above. A green cleaning program should encompass social, economic, and environmental considerations, which all contribute to sustainability. Hence the term "sustainable cleaning." It makes sense from operational and financial perspectives, due to the continued economic downturn, which challenges every property manager with tight budgets.

In addition, other market forces are driving not only sustainable cleaning but also the entire concept of sustainability. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and LEED EBOM (LEED-Existing Buildings Operation Maintenance) programs continue to grow because sustainable practices reduce costs and make sense for the long term. From 2009 to 2010, the increase in LEED-EBOM registration was 80 percent. At the recent South Florida Building and Facility Maintenance Show, several USGBC members addressed

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the growing interest in LEED EBOM certification. Per the panel members, consisting of both consultants and property management executives, the benefits are as follows:

- Increased performance
- Lower costs (an average of nine percent, according to a McGraw-Hill Construction study)
- Lower environmental impacts
- Ongoing sustainable process during life of the building and its operating budget
- Engagement of staff, contractors, tenants, and visitors in sustainability

Even with the expense associated with obtaining the certification, which takes an average of 17 months to obtain, the return on investment is less than two years. Sustainability makes sense!

Clearly, not all buildings will look to obtain LEED certification; however, sustainable practices can be implemented in buildings in order to obtain decreases in the operating budget, while strengthening goodwill with building occupants.

Speak with your vendors. Are they helping your facility become more sustainable and providing a healthy environment for tenants, visitors, and those that do the actual cleaning?

*Arely Castellón, LEED Green Associate, provides sustainable LEED-based cleaning programs with SparkleTeam. For more information, visit [www.sparkleteam.com](http://www.sparkleteam.com). FT*



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