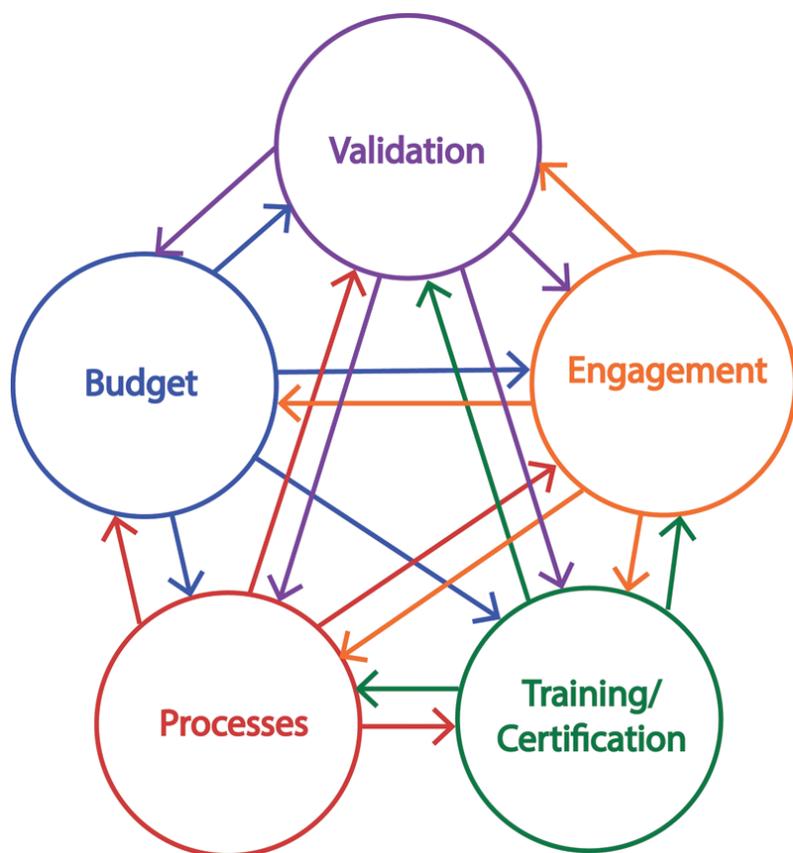


# How can Technology help you Achieve Housekeeping Management Nirvana?

By Tina Serio

More compliments and fewer complaints when you use CMMS for budgeted efficiency, trained processes and validated results!



Your hotel's perceived cleanliness image has a major impact on driving bookings, and with today's guests enamored with social media, any shortcomings are tweeted, posted, liked and virtually published sometimes before the facility manager is even aware of an issue. To increase compliments and minimize complaints, executive housekeepers

can access a tool that enables real-time insight. One acronym for that technology tool is CMMS.

## The CMMS Decision

What is CMMS? It's a common (but not the only) acronym for management software in our industry. It stands for custodial maintenance management software. Fortunately, there are

many choices today of software systems, and we hope to help you understand all of the components that you may integrate into your new system prior to deciding on a software platform.

However, if you *already* have the software, this article will help you maximize the system's capabilities.

With CMMS, the complete facility management cycle can be documented, evaluated and optimized starting with budget, then going through processes, training/certification, employee engagement and quality validation.

Many facility services professionals handle these as unique and independent, but there are efficiencies to be gained and complaints to be avoided with an aligned system. The discoveries uncovered when implementing process integration enable facility service providers to take a new and in-depth look at the impact of their department on the bottom line.

Let's look at how these five spheres integrate, enabling the facility manager to drive a continuous improvement cycle and examine various options in industry-specific software that simplifies the job.

## Budget

Typically, all cycles begin — and begin again — with budget.

When you begin planning the budget for a new fiscal year, it's the perfect time to consider how this drives the other four major spheres of your cleaning program.

Budgets must be aligned to documented cleaning processes. If you are managing your labor off of a cleaning procedure plan that is not quantified, you have a lot to gain in efficiencies by implementing a workloading program. (See sidebar.)

**Processes:** If you do have documented processes or procedures that are not quantified to align with the budget (via a workloading software program), then you definitely have the first hurdle to overcome. A workloading program should first be implemented based on your current procedures. If the labor hours that are output match your budget and your facility is at the level of cleanliness that is expected, great! If not, you will want to analyze how those procedures can be fine-tuned to achieve maximum efficiency.

There are several software programs to help you create your workload and quantify your required labor hours. However, analysis of the data that the software provides takes someone experienced in cleaning operations, equipment/supply options and methodologies. It should be analyzed and realigned every few years to be sure you are utilizing the most efficient methods.

**Training/Certification:** It is very important to budget for investment in a training and certification system. Are you utilizing an off-the-shelf system? If there is no budget money for training, you may have to depend on your vendors until efficiencies can be created to fund a more advanced system. But you can still be sure the in-service training provided reflects those processes integrated to your workload and budget.

**Engagement:** Can you invest in recognition and involvement of your employees? (Can you afford not to?) If absenteeism, presenteeism, customer service or turnover

are issues in your facility, you need to start thinking about an employee engagement program (more on this later).

**Validation:** By validation, we're referring to the quality assurance review procedures that are in place to "validate" that the processes were correctly performed. If you don't have a software system that can quantify it, you will have a hard time tracking your results and improvements. The point is, remember to budget for supervisory labor to perform quality inspections and the mobile tools necessary to perform consistent, efficient and evidence-based validation.

As you can expect, budget drives at least the starting points of the other four major spheres of your cleaning program, but there are cost-neutral ways to develop an integrated system and streamline management.

**TIP:** Define how integrated you want to be and have a five-year plan before selecting a CMMS program. But it's never too late to start your integration if you already have a CMMS in place!

## Processes

Let's move on to the critical processes sphere. You will use your workloading module of the CMMS to define, quantify, standardize and optimize your processes. Process optimization is the most intense and most (bottom line) rewarding aspect of the implementation of a workloading program. Process management is much more than cleaning.

**Training/Certification:** When you are defining and fine-tuning processes, be sure to define your procedures in enough detail that they form the basis for your training/certification curriculum.

**Engagement:** Be sure to define the engagement program in your other processes. This will

## Why Workload?

Lean operations is a systematic approach to identifying and eliminating waste (non-value added activities) through continuous improvement by flowing the product (in this case, the service) at the pull of the customer.

In housekeeping, this means standardized cleaning methods that use as little time, inventory, supplies and work as possible to provide a clean, healthy and safe facility.

Workloading is *the* lean operations tool of our industry!

both quantify the time needs and help with standardization across supervisors. Include scheduled staff meetings, expectations on employee review cycles, etc.

**Validation:** Again, not only should the process for performing quality assurance functions be documented, but the time for all validation tasks must be included in supervisory labor projections.

**Budget:** Include processes like your handwashing program, waste management, customer service procedures, safety precautions, etc. If all necessary processes cannot be accomplished with the given budget, it is the executive housekeeper's responsibility to push the proper reports *back* to the controller/CFO to gain the budget necessary to provide a clean and healthy environment.

**TIP:** Involve front-line employees in the analysis and alignment of processes to budget as they are key sources for efficiency improvement ideas, and this is an important part of the engagement program. Employees need to weigh in on the process they are expected to perform, it shows them that you feel their opinion counts.

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## TECHNOLOGY

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*Custodial maintenance management software can be used on all kinds of devices from desktop computers to tablets and smartphones, the latter two of which use web-based systems hosted by a third-party manufacturer.*

### Training/Certification

The processes that are workloaded to the budget must push to the training curriculum and certification program in order to maintain the flow of the planning/execution cycle. If you build the workload-based budget on one set of procedures to obtain the right number of FTEs, but then you take an “off-the-shelf” cleaning program to use for training/certification, you just took your budget out at the knees!

However, when you utilize a comprehensive software program and attention to detail when building your workloaded procedures, many of the popular programs have reports that will simplify creation of your site-specific training manual. This in turn becomes your complete, integrated and custom training curriculum.

**Processes:** Provide feedback. If a process is so complex that you cannot train your people on it, then that process needs to be revamped or outsourced. If it can be simplified and still achieve the intended results with the same budgetary

input, then that is the correct course. If it cannot be simplified or is too expensive to simplify, it may need outsourced to a firm that does it on a regular basis and has the proper tools and expertise to do it efficiently without culture disruption.

**Engagement:** Training is critically aligned with engagement, because your people cannot feel engaged in their job if they don't feel like their organization will invest in them enough to give them the proper training to do their job correctly. Also, as employees learn and earn certifications, formal recognition programs will further reinforce their value.

**Validation:** Validation is the triple check that provides quantifiable evidence that the surfaces that were supposed to be cleaned were actually properly cleaned. And if consistently deficient, the process and/or training must be improved.

**TIP:** Detailed process (aka task) reports with photos really simplify creating your aligned and site-specific curriculum. Keep the end

game in mind when selecting and implementing your CMMS system.

### Engagement

Where does employee engagement play into the management cycle and CMMS? Everywhere!

Let's define what we mean by engagement. Much thought today is placed into environmentally healthy workplaces — in reference to cleaning for health and the physical environment. What about the emotional/mental environment of employees and its impact on budget, image and customer service? Formal recognition programs reinforce employee value, and training programs provide an ideal way to keep employee skills current while providing a valid application for recognition.

**Budget:** “Actively disengaged employees erode an organization's bottom line while breaking the spirits of colleagues in the process. Within the U.S. workforce, Gallup estimates this cost to be more than \$300 billion in lost productivity alone.”<sup>1</sup>

**Processes:** Use your software program to define your processes for engagement. For example, monthly staff meetings should be accounted for in your FTE justifications; these are ideal for recognition activities as well. If you simply can't spare the labor hours for monthly, pull back to quarterly, and try to involve C-suite members to really reinforce that your staff is important to the organization.

**Training:** Interactive training delivery methods can build a team mentality and provide a forum for open discussions.

**Validation:** Include key front-line representatives when designing your validation system. If the front-line thought leaders in your organization do not understand and buy into it, relying on it will ignite disengagement.

**TIP:** Documentation provides

insurance against frivolous lawsuits. All training, recognition and formal employee engagement program activities should be documented in your integrated personnel management module of your CMMS.

## Validation

Validation is the last sphere in the first cycle of management. Again, by validation we are referring to your quality assurance methodologies that confirm that processes have been performed to expectations. When it comes down to it, the documented cleaning processes and aligned training programs are only as good as the evidence-based validation proves out. There are a growing number of quality assurance systems and new evidenced-based validation tools on the market. Here's how validation integrates into the cycle:

**Process:** Build the standard validations to the process. In more specific terms, create your inspection line items in your quality assurance software based on the items you specified for cleaning in your workloading program. Further, if validation consistently shows subpar results on certain lines across all employees, the process itself likely needs improved.

**Training:** An integrated validation software system will allow you to set thresholds on line items that give you the insights to prompt retraining where needed.

**Engagement:** Reaffirm to employees that what they are doing is important. Validation provides a toolset for quantifying rewards. "This quarter's Fabulous Floors Award goes to ..."

**Budget:** If consistently low results are quantified with a scientific program, and processes have been maximized to the level the budget will allow, the documentation will provide grounds for a more reasonable budget.

**TIP:** To be assured that your systems are integrated and consistently represent your objectives, the best-case scenario is to utilize the quality module that is part of your comprehensive CMMS system. Lack of a few fancy features is significantly outweighed by the integration to the total plan.

## Conclusion

Integrated systems technology can provide insights that will help facilities stay clean and healthy while proactively protecting their image.

Utilizing software to manage is nearly mainstream in our industry now. In addition to workloading (budget), task standardization (processes), training/certification, personnel management (engagement) and quality assurance (validation) modules, several programs can also offer equipment and supply management, work order systems, etc. Computing is obviously here to stay.

The next question is, are we using it correctly? If your budget is based on what it was last year, and your processes and training

are based on an off-the-shelf system approach, and your quality assurance system is utilizing yet another disparate system, it's time for you to embrace integrated facility management. ♦

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1. Gallup. (n.d.). Employee Engagement: A Leading Indicator of Financial Performance. Retrieved September 05, 2012, from Gallup: <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/52/Employee-Engagement.aspx>

***If birds of a feather flock together ...***



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