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SOLUTIONS TO "OFFICE BLIGHT"

Take a look around your firm. Is it time to make a change? Perhaps freshening the look of your office needs to be a goal you set now.



The savvy administrator cannot ignore the issue of office maintenance. A law firm, regardless of size, is a microcosm of an urban setting: graffiti, dirty sidewalks, and other unsightly blemishes, if unchecked, can quickly lead to urban blight. Reversal is often impossible.

Similarly, a law office with soiled carpets, spotted with coffee and food spills, torn seams, and soil build-up has become victim to "office blight." If left unattended, the office soon appears tacky and unkempt and the overall appearance reflects poorly on the firm.

Just as concerned residents value a clean safe neighborhood, so do employees appreciate a clean, healthy, and safe work environment. One free of dirt, dust and allergens. In such a setting, employees are more productive and require fewer sick days. The responsibility of providing such an environment usually falls to the office administrator.



The problem for many administrators, however, is prioritizing time, money, and resources to deal with office upkeep. Frequently, maintenance is dealt with only in a crisis, such as when a senior partner complains about the appearance of the conference room the day before a major client meeting, or when an employee trips on a torn carpet seam and

sustains injuries. Proactive measures such as repairing the torn seam would obviate the unpleasant possibilities of employee injuries or even lawsuits against the firm.

One solution for the administrator or facility manager is to obtain the services of a company that specializes in office maintenance. That way, the vendor can shoulder the burden of identifying the



firm's needs and prioritize them with input from the administrator. Professionalism, quick response time, and follow-up by the vendor are some of the keys to a successful maintenance program leading to a safe and healthy office.

Many managing partners do not encourage the cost of an outside company. However, the rationale is that by ignoring regularly scheduled maintenance, the investment the firm has made in carpet and other furnishings will be diminished significantly. Allowing soil to remain in carpet fibers and other fabrics will cause breakdown and early need for replacement, which is substantially more expensive than proper care and maintenance.



In many law firms maintenance is not high on the priority list. Many firms do not budget for this overhead expense, and therefore it falls through the cracks. Put a maintenance plan in place, get vendor referrals from other law firms, review the plan each year and make changes if needed. ■

About the author: Marsha Cohen is the owner of Pride of Los Angeles, Specialized Cleaning Services based in Tarzana. She was a legal administrator from 1983-1989 and served on the Board of Directors of the Beverly Hills Chapter of ALA.