

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING COBOTICS IN FM

12 steps to accelerate your cobotic journey

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the cleaning and facility management (FM) industries in the spotlight like never before. Cleaning contractors and FM providers have a critical role to play in the global economic recovery over the coming months, by driving higher cleaning standards which can prevent the transmission of the virus and instil confidence in the end users of buildings, both workers and customers. This brings with it huge pressure to deliver higher cleaning performance under the most extreme scrutiny.

However, the current situation also presents an unprecedented opportunity for the FM industry and commercial cleaning to change the way in which it is perceived, to demonstrate value and become a more strategic player within the business landscape. In doing so, it can start to achieve many of the objectives which have alluded it over recent years, protecting profit margins, driving innovation and developing real, long-term partnerships with clients.

The introduction of cobotics, the collaboration between frontline workers and machines or robots, has widely been acknowledged as a potential game changer within FM and commercial cleaning. Cobotics is essential in delivering the innovation and new business models which the industry urgently needs to survive, by adapting to rapidly evolving client needs and a highly uncertain economic landscape. Those organisations that are already deploying cobots within their cleaning operations are seeing increased performance and consistency within their service delivery, which is boosting engagement and wellbeing amongst their staff, and improving overall efficiency and productivity.

But as with any new technology implementation there are challenges and barriers to overcome. Cobotics requires fresh thinking, different skills and competencies, new business models and cultural and behavioural change.

With this in mind, SoftBank Robotics and The International Facility Management Association have come together to explore how FM providers and cleaning contractors can best overcome the challenges they are likely to encounter when implementing cobotics within their cleaning operations.

The objective was to identify key considerations for businesses as they embark on their cobotic journey and practical measures that they should follow in order to ensure a smooth and seamless implementation.

The introduction of cobotics touches multiple parts of an organisation, so therefore this guidance would need to be broad in its scope, from upskilling and educating staff and driving new behaviours, through to transforming resourcing and commercial models.

In order to do this, we have engaged with some of the leading thinkers across European FM and commercial cleaning, from all corners of the industry. Importantly, we have sought out advice and expertise from some of the innovators who are blazing a trail for cobotics within their organisations. These are the people that are on the ground, driving change, engaging stakeholders and overseeing implementation on a daily basis. Their stories and experiences have been hugely helpful in creating this guide, and we would like to extend our thanks to everybody that has contributed to this initiative.

We hope that this guide will become a valuable reference point for businesses and innovators as they embark on their cobotic journey.



PETER ANKERSTJERNE

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AT IFMA



NILS VAN DER ZIJL

VP SALES & MARKETING, SOFTBANK
ROBOTICS EMEA

Den's path can take you anywhere...

WHAT IS COBOTICS?

Cobotics can be defined as the genuine collaboration between front-line workers and machines or robots. Cobots are collaborative robots which carry out repetitive or strenuous tasks which would otherwise be performed by an employee, but they work alongside that individual or team, not in their place. Cobots are instructed and monitored by people on the ground and are there to support workers.

So within cleaning, a team of workers operates alongside a cobot with tasks assigned based on the relative strengths and capabilities of people and machines. That means that cobots do heavy-duty vacuuming of large areas of floor, which frees up workers to focus on other tasks, such as the deep sanitisation of hard surfaces, something which is critical in order to stop the transmission of coronavirus.

In basic terms, cobots carry out the repetitive and time-consuming tasks (where they can deliver a higher and more consistent level of performance than human workers), and cleaning staff undertake more valuable and varied tasks which make a real difference to overall service levels. Cleaning teams are able to focus on more fulfilling and less physically strenuous work, whilst at the same time they can develop skills operating cutting edge automation technologies.



CONTRIBUTORS

The guide is based on the discussions which took place during two webinars held over June and July 2020. There were also separate interviews with some contributors.

The contributors consist of the some of the most prominent and highly-respected voices within the European FM and cleaning industries.

[Nils van der Zijl, VP Sales and Marketing at SoftBank Robotics, EMEA](#)

Nils has extensive sales leadership experience, most recently at IBM where for 14 years he led the Watson IoT revolution for Europe and successfully set up the ISS / IBM Partnership to provide outcome-based (vested) opportunities. Today, leveraging this knowledge, Nils is forging collaborative partnerships to bring together cleaning excellence and cobotic innovation to re-invent business models throughout the FM and cleaning industry.

[Peter Ankerstjerne, Global Lead FM & Experience Services at JLL and Chairman of the Board at IFMA](#)

Peter Ankerstjerne, MBA, COP, FRICS, IFMA Fellow has more than 25 years' experience covering most aspects of FM, Service Management, Outsourcing, Marketing and Strategy. For 24 years Ankerstjerne was employed by the ISS group, where he most recently served as Chief Marketing Officer. At ISS, Ankerstjerne was responsible for developing the Integrated Facility Services model. After a year as Head of Digital FM and Workplace Experience, EMEA, at WeWork's Powered by We, he joined Jones Lang LaSalle on 1st of April 2020 as Global Lead, FM & Employee Experience.

[Dianna Steinbach, Vice President of International Services at ISSA](#)

Dianna Steinbach is the Vice President of International Services for ISSA, the worldwide cleaning industry association. She is based in Mainz, Germany and has been in the professional cleaning industry for more than 20 years, helping people identify new trends, strategically plan, develop business alliances, connect with customers and position themselves for the greatest success.

[Alexander Granderath, Director at DRG Consulting](#)

Alexander Granderath is an experienced CEO with a demonstrated history of success across service industries and manufacturing. He has held senior roles across a number of companies, starting out at AMETEK Inc. (AME) as General Manager Europe, Middle East and Africa. He then joined GE, where he was Sales General Manager for Industrial products for the European Region.

Most recently, Alexander spent 10 years at ISS where he was Country Manager for ISS Germany. He helped to develop the German business to a state-of-the-art Key Account business with annual double-digit growth rates. Alexander is a member of multiple boards and also works as a business angel.

[Elke de Jong, Innovation Specialist at CSU](#)

Elke de Jong is Innovation Specialist for one of the biggest cleaning companies in the Netherlands, CSU. She focuses professionally on sharing knowledge and best practices and supports concrete customer questions.

Elke is responsible for developing and implementing new and distinctive service concepts, products and solutions and "cobotics" is one of her focus points.

[Sascha Hartmann, Head of the Competence Center Experts, Dussman Service Deutschland](#)

Sascha Hartmann is the head of the competence center experts for building cleaning at Dussmann Service Deutschland GmbH and is responsible for everything related to building cleaning. Sascha and his team are responsible for the further development of this segment and he himself has many years of experience in the profession.

INTRODUCTION



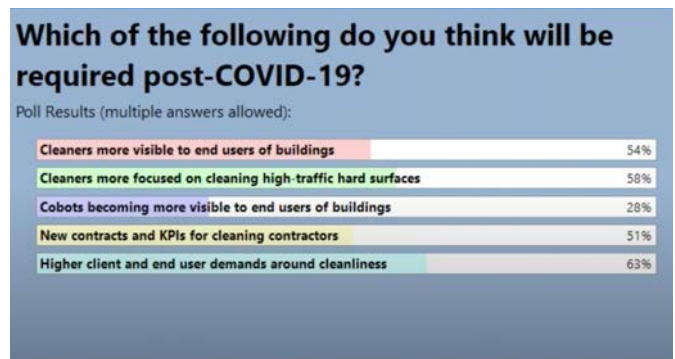
THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF COBOTICS

Cobotics delivers a wide range of benefits to FM providers and cleaning contractors. As [research conducted by SoftBank Robotics](#) shows, FM leaders cite increased performance and consistency in service delivery, reduced operational costs, enhanced organisational agility and improved staff engagement and wellbeing as the biggest benefits in deploying cobots.

At a broader level, 81% of FM leaders see cobotics as a potential solution to cleaning challenges over the next five years and 73% believe that cobotics has the potential to transform the cleaning industry.*

However, the practical, real-life deployment of cobotics is challenging for most FM and commercial cleaning organisations. A poll of almost 200 global FM leaders conducted during a webinar as part of this initiative revealed a series of barriers that organisations must overcome in order to deliver successful implementation of cobotics.

These include concerns around job displacement amongst frontline workers and senior leadership alike, difficulties with system integration, the level of investment required and a lack of skills and learning capabilities within the workforce.



At a broader level, there is a widespread legacy of innovation not delivering meaningful impact within the FM and cleaning industries, with 81% of FM leaders reporting that they have had innovation projects which have failed to deliver on required outcomes over the past two years.*

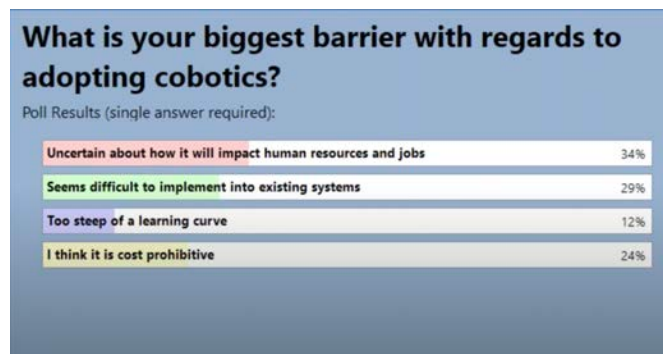
* The Cobic Evolution in Cleaning, SoftBank Robotics EMEA, May 2020

A DEFINING MOMENT FOR THE CLEANING INDUSTRY

Despite this inconsistent and often disappointing history of innovation, there is now a massive and urgent need for new approaches and solutions. The FM and cleaning industries find themselves at the forefront of the economic recovery post-lockdown, tasked with delivering the improved standards of cleanliness and hygiene that will instil confidence amongst among the general public and accelerate re-entry to buildings for businesses.

Without doubt, FM and cleaning contractors are already under more scrutiny from clients and end users of buildings.

A poll conducted during a second webinar hosted by IFMA and SoftBank Robotics showed the extent to which expectations and priorities are increasing, not only around the standards and focus of cleaning operations, but also around the visibility and measurement of cleaning within buildings to generate comfort and confidence amongst end users.



63% Higher client and end user demands around cleanliness

58% More focus on cleaning high-traffic hard surfaces

54% Cleaners more visible to end users of buildings

51% New contracts and KPIs for cleaning contractors

Cobotics presents an opportunity for FM and cleaning contractors to meet these new challenges, whilst also addressing the productivity, consistency and resourcing challenges which they have been confronting for many years.

Those organisations that had already introduced cobotics pre-COVID-19 have enjoyed a significant advantage in how they have responded to the pandemic, with far greater agility and resilience embedded into their cleaning operations to respond to change.

Now the challenge is on for other businesses to catch up, implementing cobotics as a way to negotiate new pressures and remain competitive in a highly turbulent and dynamic market.

This guide is intended to help businesses as they embark on their cobotic journey, with practical advice on how to introduce cobots into their operations in a seamless and sustainable way, and to ensure they are able to start reaping the many benefits of cobotics as quickly as possible.

The guidance is broken down into two parts. The first part looks at on-the-ground deployment and change management, covering the planning and cultural and behavioural change aspects involved in integrating cobots into the workforce. The second part looks at commercial and contractual factors, including the new financial, commercial and resourcing models that are needed to successfully implement cobotics.

Based on a collaboration between IFMA and SoftBank Robotics, and contributions from leading thinkers and practitioners from within the European FM and cleaning industries, this is the first published guide for implementing cobotics.

DEPLOYMENT AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT

1

DEVELOP A COBOTIC STRATEGY

By taking the time to develop a robust and holistic plan and to secure buy-in from all parts of the business, you can actually ensure a more seamless introduction of cobots and start to reap the benefits sooner. It can be tempting to rush the planning phase and just start placing cobots into cleaning teams but it isn't sustainable. Cobotics is a journey and you have to bring people with you.

SASCHA HARTMANN, HEAD OF THE COMPETENCE CENTER EXPERTS AT DUSSMAN SERVICE DEUTSCHLAND

Why?

Successful implementation of cobotics requires detailed planning and should be approached in the same way as any major transformation programme. Innovation projects fail when businesses focus solely on bringing in new technology and ignore the wider impact on people, processes and systems.

What?

A cobotic strategy maps out a plan for the smooth introduction of cobots into cleaning operations, from the initial scoping phase through to ongoing deployment and scaling. It should include clear and measurable objectives, with key targets and milestones along the way, identify key stakeholders, directly address potential barriers, and establish clear lines of communication and ownership.

Importantly, a cobotic strategy should take a holistic, organisation-wide approach to the introduction of cobots, to include:

- Technology integration.
- New operating and resourcing models.
- Training and upskilling.
- Cultural and behavioural change.
- Impact on clients and service delivery.
- New financial models.
- Measurement and evaluation.

How?

Innovators spearheading cobotic programmes need to engage with a wide range of stakeholders from across the organisation, to educate them around cobotics and get buy-in for these initiatives at the outset.

This means collaborating with colleagues in finance, HR, and IT, and with the senior leadership team. It also means engaging with clients and workforce representatives to ensure that they understand the benefits and are supportive of the programme.

It's also vitally important to consult with on-site facility managers and cleaning team managers during the planning phase to think through the impact on resource scheduling and team rotas. This avoids potential problems and wasted capacity further down the line.

Cobotic leaders should look to their technology partners to help them form a strategy which covers all aspects of cobotics to generate internal and external support and ensure the project runs smoothly, on time and delivers against specific KPIs.

2

START WITH A PROOF OF CONCEPT



If the cleaning industry is going to rise to the challenge of COVID-19 and in doing so change perceptions of cleaning within the wider business world, then FM and cleaning companies have to take a bold approach to innovation and cobotics. They need to be prepared to make mistakes along the way in order to learn what works best and delivers most value to their organisation and their clients. Cobotic leaders should start with a small project, see how staff and clients react and measure how cleaning standards and performance change. Then they're in a far more informed position when formulating their wider, long-term cobotic strategy.

PETER ANKERSTJERNE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AT IFMA AND GLOBAL LEAD FM & EXPERIENCE SERVICES AT JLL

Why?

With traditional approaches to innovation, organisations need to commit large upfront capital expenditure on machinery, without any real idea as to the value or benefits that this investment will deliver. Too often this leads to disappointment further down the line, as they encounter unexpected issues which derail their progress.

What?

A 'proof of concept' deployment of cobots allows all stakeholders to get a better understanding of the technology and to track and measure the benefits that it can deliver, in a controlled, low-risk environment. It also helps to identify potential issues or unforeseen barriers to adoption early on and develop plans to overcome these before a wider roll-out.

Once the ROI and wider benefits of cobotics have been demonstrated in a proof of concept, it is then easy to rapidly scale up deployment across the organisation.

How?

Cobotic leaders should identify one or two areas (and teams) within their regular cleaning operations where cobots can be introduced in a discreet way.

They should look for cleaning teams and individuals that will be most open to testing out new technology and adopting new ways of working. They should also identify innovation-driven clients who will be enthused or excited about cobotics being deployed within their buildings. It can be a good idea to commercially incentivise clients to be a part of a pilot programme – it sets the groundwork for a partnership model further down the line (see Step 7).

Clear parameters and KPIs for the pilot should be established as part of the proof of concept, with input and agreement from all internal and external stakeholders.

A one month trial, with cobots working alongside a cleaning team within a specific area of a building, is sufficient to demonstrate the benefits that cobotics can deliver and to generate key learnings around wider operational and cultural impact.

A good cobotic technology partner should help to facilitate a one month trial with clear KPIs and support FM providers and cleaning contractors to achieve the full range of benefits and maximum learning.

Stakeholders should then come together to review the pilot and refine the wider cobotic strategy as needed before a wider roll-out.



**FAIL FAST,
LEARN FASTER**

We're learning more about cobotics and what it can do for our business every day. After only a few months, we have so much more understanding of how best to deploy cobotics within our cleaning teams. And we've achieved this by trying things, whether that's how we communicate with staff and clients, how we manage resource, how we train our staff or how we measure and report on ROI and wider benefits. You have to accept that cobotics is an entirely new approach to innovation, involving new resourcing and commercial models, and it takes time to discover what will work best for your business.

ELKE DE JONG, INNOVATION SPECIALIST AT CSU

Why?

Cobotics is an entirely new approach to innovation and service delivery within the cleaning industry, and therefore there is a limited amount of guidance or case studies available.

Cleaning contractors and FM providers need to be agile in their approach, trying different methods of deployment to learn what works best for their own organisation.

What?

Businesses need to embrace cobotics as a journey of discovery and those spearheading cobotic strategies need to be prepared to experiment in order to identify the approaches that are most effective.

How?

Cobotic leaders need to adopt a 'Fail Fast' approach within their cobotic programme which will enable them to learn more quickly and, ultimately, to start to reap the full benefits of cobotics far sooner.

Such an approach should include:

- Scenario-based testing, looking at how deploying cobots within different teams and at different times impacts overall performance
- Testing different resourcing and scheduling plans to find the optimal approach
- Testing the optimal level and style of interaction between cobots and human workforce within teams
- Facilitating regular check-ins for cleaning and facility managers to report back on issues or challenges with deployment
- Creating feed-back loops so that learnings and ideas can be shared from the bottom to the top of the organisation and factored in to future plans
- Establishing feedback mechanisms for the end users of cobots regarding the visibility of cobots and subsequent visibility of cleaning delivery more broadly - do you feel more or less comfortable in this workspace as a result of cobots?
- Exploring the potential for instant feedback touchpoints within the working environment to allow for real-time engagement with end users of buildings
- Data and reports (to see how, when, and where cleaning was performed, and uncover opportunities for route optimisation)

A Fail Fast approach begins with the proof of concept, but organisations should build a culture of continual learning where they are continually looking to test new ways in which cobotics can drive efficiencies and performance, enhance employee wellbeing and improve client servicing levels.

4

TAILOR COMMUNICATIONS

A black and white photograph of a person's profile, shouting or speaking loudly into a professional studio microphone. The person's mouth is wide open, and their eyes are closed. The microphone is a large, black, ribbon-style mic on a stand with a boom arm. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

It's a good idea to consult with frontline staff to understand their day-to-day experiences and frustrations in their job, as well as to explain that the business is looking at ways to address their issues and improve their employee experience and wellbeing. This helps to frame the conversation around cobotics in the right way, and to answer the two big questions that cleaning professionals tend to have, which are 'why are cobots being introduced?' and 'what's in it for me?' You have to engage on a personal level, making all stakeholders feel invested in the cobotic journey so they take ownership for success.

DIANNA STEINBACH, VP INTERNATIONAL SERVICES AT ISSA

Why?

Cobotics delivers a wide range of benefits across the organisation, but some of these benefits and KPIs will appeal more to different stakeholder groups than others. It's therefore important to reach the right groups with the right messages.

What?

Cobotic leaders should develop a comprehensive communications plan which will educate, reassure and inspire stakeholders across the organisation.

The messages for all stakeholders are hugely positive but they need to be delivered in a tailored, relevant way for each group, sensitive to and addressing their own specific concerns and drivers.

Frontline staff will want to know how the introduction of cobots will impact their day-to-day working practices and that it won't put their jobs at risk. They'll also be interested in the benefits for them – less time doing repetitive and strenuous tasks, more varied work, an opportunity to learn new skills and manage cutting edge technology

Finance directors will be focused on costs (for both the cobots and ongoing maintenance) and ROI. They will want to understand the commercial model for accessing cobots, particularly when this is a monthly fee (see Step 9)

HR directors will want to understand how the introduction of cobotics will impact resourcing and recruitment needs, and how it can be used to improve employee engagement and wellbeing

Clients will want reassurances that the introduction of cobotics will not result in any disruption to normal operations or drop off in standards. They will be eager to hear how cobots will improve consistency in cleaning and to free up resource to focus on enhanced service delivery – and also to increase the comfort factor to allow their own employees back into the workplace

How?

Cobotic leaders should enlist the help of their internal communications and HR teams, as well as their technology partners, to make sure they get their communications plan right – it can make a massive difference to generating support and sponsorship and to ensuring a smooth implementation.

Communications need to start in advance of introducing cobots to ensure a broad level of understanding across the business and avoid any cultural resistance to adoption.

Cobotic leaders should create content and communications for each stakeholder group to answer their questions and excite them about the prospect of working alongside cobots. Again, their technology partners should be able to provide much of this.

Communications should be ongoing, rather than simply during the introduction phase – this is crucial is building momentum for the programme and ongoing success. Cobotic training should also form part of the onboarding programme for new starters who may have missed the initial rollout communications.

5

MAKE UPSKILLING A PRIORITY

Cobotics is all about connecting people to technology and machines – it's about that real collaboration. That's why businesses have to invest time and effort into ensuring the relationship works, and that means ensuring their people have the right training, skills and mindset to feel comfortable and be productive in this new environment.

**ALEXANDER GRANDERATH FROM DRG
CONSULTING**

Why?

Perhaps the most important element of any cobotics programme, it is essential for businesses to provide frontline workers with the necessary training to work effectively alongside cobots.

Without the right level of training, cleaning teams won't know how to operate the cobots or to get the maximum benefits. The danger is then that they stop using them all together.

What?

FM providers and cleaning contractors need to deliver a comprehensive upskilling programme to demonstrate their long-term commitment to cleaning staff and present an exciting vision of the future, where cleaning professionals manage cutting edge AI-driven cobots.

How?

Training needs to encompass both technical skills – how to programme, monitor and manage cobots on a daily basis – and broader education around the role of cobots within the workforce, to ensure frontline staff have the understanding and right behaviours to work in a hybrid human-cobot cleaning team.

Cobotic leaders also need to pay attention to trends within the cleaning industry and ensure their training programmes reflect changing client expectations and demands during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, many businesses will be looking for more regular cleaning during standard working hours, so that cleaning becomes much more visible to end users of buildings, whether workers or customers. This is seen as essential in reassuring people and instilling confidence around the health and safety of buildings during the pandemic.

This will mean that cleaning professionals will be more 'client-facing', and therefore more in the spotlight in terms of their skills and competencies, general demeanour and appearance. This needs to be factored into current training programmes.

When thinking about training, cobotic leaders should consider the following:

- Developing holistic training programmes for all cleaning staff to ensure effective, consistent training and to demonstrate a commitment to developing and supporting their people.
- Looking to their technology partners to provide comprehensive training kits to form the basis of an ongoing upskilling programme – this should include instruction videos, Q&A guides and webinars.
- Creating clear lines of communication for staff that have questions and concerns around cobotics and ensuring these are addressed quickly and effectively.
- Working with individual cleaning staff to map out personal development plans and future career paths.
- Providing multi-skilling and multi-tasking opportunities for cleaning staff to empower them to develop wider skills, get exposure to other job roles and provide more a varied and rewarding employee experience.

6

CREATE AMBASSADORS



How you introduce cobots into your cleaning teams can make or break the success of your whole cobotic programme. It has to be done in the right way. Our approach has been to give as much responsibility as possible over to the cleaning teams for managing and monitoring our cobots. We ensured cleaning staff received the training they needed prior to cobots being introduced, but then empowered them from day one to make it a success. This has meant that our frontline staff haven't regarded cobots as another unwanted machine that has been forced upon them, but something that they are managing and using to help them in their daily work. They've made the cobots part of the team and come to rely on them and welcome their contribution.

ELKE DE JONG, INNOVATION SPECIALIST AT CSU

Photo by DESIGNECOLOGIST on Unsplash

Why?

As well as a robust training programme, businesses should also identify frontline staff and supervisors who can act as ambassadors for cobotics within their workforces.

An ambassador programme can be extremely powerful in winning over hearts and minds, building the engagement and enthusiasm that makes such a difference to the overall success of an innovation programme.

What?

An ambassador programme is essentially about creating champions or promoters for cobotics within the business. Crucially, these ambassadors are not senior managers from the innovation department, or IT or finance.

Ambassadors should be frontline cleaning staff and team supervisors who are working alongside cobots on a daily basis and are reaping the benefits of that. Cobic leaders should look to create a small group of ambassadors which best reflects the full diversity of the cleaning workforce. And ideally, these individuals should be well-respected within their teams and happy to share their views publicly.



To discuss how you can create a high-performance cobotic culture in your organisation, book a free consultation with an expert from SoftBank Robotics

How?

FM providers and cleaning contractors should look to create an ambassador programme on the back of a successful proof of concept project, identifying a number of individuals involved in the pilot who are positive about their experiences working alongside a cobot.

These individuals are asked to become ambassadors for cobotics in the business and to share their experiences, opinions and learnings more widely across the workforce.

A cobotic ambassador programme could include:

- Talking Head videos, where ambassadors introduce the key benefits of cobotics for frontline staff and team supervisors. These videos can be shared with all staff.
- Written profiles of the ambassadors showcasing how cobotics has positively impacted their working lives.
- Input into training sessions, with ambassadors talking about how they approached working with a cobot, their learnings and advice.
- Q&A sessions with supervisors to address concerns amongst the wider frontline cleaning workforce.
- A regular voice for ambassadors within strategy meetings, representing team supervisors and frontline cleaning staff within planning for wider rollout of cobotics across the business.

It's also important to celebrate successes along the way. Cobic leaders should acknowledge and reward cleaning staff that have completed a training programme or successfully programmed and managed a cobot for the first time. They should recognise cleaning teams (both staff and cobots) that have achieved higher levels of performance or exceeded client expectations.

COMMERCIAL AND CONTRACTUAL

7

RE-FRAME EXISTING CLIENT CONTRACTS

With cobotics, cleaning contracts can become more focused on outputs and outcomes rather than input, time-based agreements. FM providers and cleaning contractors should engage in higher level conversations with their clients, seeking to collaborate on plans to smooth the path for re-entry to buildings post-lockdown in the short-term, and to re-imagine service delivery models in the future.

PETER ANKERSTJERNE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD AT IFMA AND GLOBAL LEAD FM & EXPERIENCE SERVICES AT JLL

Why?

With the introduction of cobotics, there will often be a need or demand to review existing contracts. Some clients may express a desire to review fees due to the lower costs of servicing and resourcing.

Others will be pushing for higher servicing levels, particularly during the current COVID-19 crisis.

What?

FM providers and cleaning contractors should not be afraid to review their contracts at this time – they should take advantage of the opportunity to position themselves as long-term strategic partners to their clients, as cleaning becomes a far greater consideration for business leaders in the wake of COVID-19.

The introduction of cobotics enhances this trend towards the cleaning industry securing a more influential and important voice within the business agenda. It demonstrates true innovation and sets out a vision of how cleaning can serve the needs of businesses today and in the future. Contractors need to seize this moment.

How?

FM and cleaning companies and cobotic leaders should talk openly and positively with clients about the introduction of cobotics into their cleaning operations. They should take the time to educate clients about cobotics, working with their technology partners to explain the benefits for clients, in terms of performance, consistency and higher levels of servicing.

On the back of this, they should push to review their contracts and servicing agreements to reflect the introduction of cobots into their operations. These conversations should include:

- Shifting from an input or time-based deliverables to output or outcome-focused KPIs, based around cleaning performance and consistency
- Moving to a data-driven approach to measurement, using data captured by cobots to track and evaluate cleaning performance
- How cleaning can impact and support wider business objectives. For instance, how the delivery of cleaning services can be changed and optimised to support the client's plans around re-entry to buildings
- The client's long-term ambitions around smart and connected buildings and discussing how cleaning can best support these goals

8

DEVELOP NEW CONTRACTS BASED ON SHARED GOALS

Cobotics presents an opportunity for FM providers and cleaning contactors to push for longer term innovation partnership agreements with clients, based on shared investment, risks and rewards. You need to start collaborating with clients to build a future roadmap with commitments on both sides to support future strategies and objectives.

**SASCHA HARTMANN, HEAD OF THE
COMPETENCE CENTER EXPERTS AT DUSSMAN
SERVICE DEUTSCHLAND**

Why?

By bringing in cobotics, cleaning contractors are delivering the change and innovation that clients have been demanding for many years and that will support the move towards smart buildings.

In turn, this should transform the way in which cleaning contracts are designed and executed across the industry.

What?

This may seem alien to FM providers and cleaning contractors that are used to being perceived as a commoditised service by clients, but the combination of cobotics and the impact of COVID-19 presents a unique opportunity to re-shape servicing agreements based on shared objectives and genuine partnership.

Cobotic leaders should work with stakeholders across the business to explore how cobotics can enable their organisation to re-define its proposition to clients and re-shape its service delivery model.

How?

FM providers and cleaning contractors need to take the time to fully understand clients and their changing needs, particularly in light of COVID-19. They need to enter into a more strategic conversation, demonstrating to clients how cleaning, driven by cobotics, can support and enhance their employee experience and accelerate their efforts to develop smarter, more sustainable buildings and working environments.

On the back of this, they can collaborate with clients to develop more rounded and forward-thinking servicing agreements, which go far beyond current cleaning contracts. In particular, they should include the following in a cobotic-based contract:

- Broad KPIs based around cleaning performance and consistency, but also wider impact on end user experience and satisfaction and employee experience
- Longer-term partnership model, where cleaning contractors and clients commit to working together for a number of years
- Shared risks and rewards around the introduction of cobotics and wider innovation, where both sides are invested in success
- Shared innovation roadmaps which support the client's ambitions around smart buildings and employee experience within the workplace



9

MINIMISE RISK AND INCREASE FLEXIBILITY THROUGH OPEX MODEL

Cleaning contractors and FM providers should expect their technology providers to do as much as they can to minimise financial and operational risk. Cobotics is essentially about collaboration, agility and transparency, both in terms of the way the technology is deployed on the ground, but also in the way that it is delivered. A long-term, strategic technology partner will work with contractors to establish common goals, based around shared risks and rewards. That is why accessing cobots through an ongoing opex-based model is so important.

NILS VAN DER ZIJL, SOFTBANK ROBOTICS EMEA

Why?

Traditional commercial models for new technology and machinery within cleaning have required contractors to make large capital investments upfront, but with little or no guarantees about business value or impact.

With cobotics, businesses should take advantage of far more flexible commercial models, where they access cobots through a monthly fee, based over a set period of time, to minimise their risk.

What?

An opex-based commercial model for cobotics minimises risk and reduces the need for large capital expenditure, something which the vast majority of FM providers and cleaning contractors simply cannot afford during in the current economic landscape.

FM providers and cleaning contractors should be moving away from asset heavy operations, keeping capital expenditure below 2% of overall revenue.

An Opex model ensures that organisations have the ongoing flexibility to scale their use of cobots depending on business need, which is particularly useful in a dynamic and turbulent marketplace. And it provides full transparency and control on costs throughout the entire length of contract, with no hidden surprises.

How?

FM providers and cleaning contractors need to select technology partners who can offer them an innovative, opex-based commercial model for accessing cobots.

In particular, cobotic leaders should choose a commercial model which features:

- Repair and services included within the monthly fee; replacement units provided where required
- Product upgrades included within the monthly fee to ensure ongoing access to the latest, cutting-edge technology
- Software upgrades as standard
- A commercially attractive approach to the consumables involved.

10

RE-THINK FUTURE WORKFORCE MODEL

Cleaning will remain a people business but driving greater productivity within a workforce is really hard. You can struggle to achieve 1% or 2% per year. But with cobotics you can achieve double digit productivity gains. FM providers and cleaning contractors need to create a vision of the most efficient and productive workforce model, utilising the strengths and skills of both workers and cobots. They should then develop a roadmap to reach that optimal resourcing structure over the next 12 or 24 months. Doing this will ensure they are best placed to meet current challenges and emerge stronger on the other side.

ALEXANDER GRANDERATH FROM DRG CONSULTING

Why?

Without the need to devote a significant amount of available resource to time-consuming tasks such as vacuuming large areas of floor, cleaning and facility managers need to consider how and where they can re-deploy their staff.

What?

Facility and cleaning managers need to re-assess the way in which work is allocated following the introduction of cobots. This involves significant changes to team rotas and timetables.

And at a macro level, business leaders can start to think about the size and scale of their cleaning operations. In an industry where rates of staff attrition are extremely high, the introduction of cobotics can reduce the never-ending pressure of recruiting and training new staff. In addition the need for backfilling because of staff no-shows is reduced.

At the same time, improved engagement and wellbeing amongst existing staff increases retention, further softening the need for constant recruitment.

How?

Cobotic leaders have the opportunity to engage with cleaning and facility managers to re-define the roles and responsibilities of their cleaning teams to reflect the fact that cobots will be taking over some strenuous, repetitive and time-consuming tasks.

This gives the opportunity to consider the following:

- Whether the introduction of cobots means they can operate smaller teams alongside a cobot or maintain the same size team but cover a greater area.
- Whether working shifts for cleaning teams become shorter (but potentially more frequent).
- Whether fixed cleaning teams are still required or if teams should become more agile and fluid in their nature working alongside cobots.
- Meeting changing demands for delivery of cleaning services – for instance, how resource can be deployed at different times of the day to ensure that cleaning can become more visible to clients and end users.

Business leaders have the opportunity to work with their technology partners to model their future workforce requirements, developing a clear vision and plan to achieve a more engaged, healthy and productive workforce in the future, operating alongside cobots.

11

MEASURE THE BROADEST RANGE OF KPIS

FM providers and cleaning contractors need to start building a narrative around measurement, encompassing the full range of benefits that cleaning is delivering. Cobotics provides a platform to do this, providing real-time hard, data around productivity, cleaning performance and consistency. This then links to broader metrics around client satisfaction and employee engagement. Cobotic leaders should work with their technology providers to build out a broad set of metrics which they can track from the outset so that they are able to tell positive, data-driven stories around cleaning performance and business impact.

DIANNA STEINBACH, VP INTERNATIONAL SERVICES AT ISSA

Why?

The cleaning industry has long struggled to demonstrate the value it delivers to clients and to show improvements in its delivery of services.

Robust and meaningful measurement is now critical for cleaning contractors to demonstrate value to clients, to maintain and win new business, and to increase revenue and profit margins.

What?

The deployment of cobots allows FM providers and cleaning contractors to take a far more robust and data-driven approach to measurement and evaluation than traditional approaches.

It paves the way for performance-based contracts, based on a wide range of outputs and outcomes, rather than solely on inputs (time).

FM providers and cleaning contractors should use cobotics as a platform to create a far more holistic approach to measurement, establishing a scorecard which can track performance and value against a wide set of metrics.

How?

Cobotic leaders should look to collaborate with stakeholders to understand the metrics that are most important to each group, whether that's senior leadership, finance, HR or frontline cleaning staff themselves.

As well as hard financial KPIs, it's also important to consider the softer benefits of cobotics, particularly at this time when cleaning has a vital role to play in accelerating re-entry to buildings and driving confidence amongst end users and customers in the wake of COVID-19.

A robust set of KPIs to measure the impact of cobotics should include:

- Cleaning performance such as air quality, coverage and consistency of cleaning.
- Financial metrics such as return on investment, time to value and current vs future resourcing costs.
- Client satisfaction scores and overall client retention and business development ratios.
- End user satisfaction scores around cleanliness and hygiene of buildings.
- Impact of cobotics in supporting key client objectives, for instance in accelerating re-entry to buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Employee engagement, health and wellbeing following the introduction of cobotics into cleaning teams.
- Employee retention and absence rates, and average time to recruit and train new staff.



To explore the full range of benefits that cobotics can deliver your business, book a free consultation with an expert from SoftBank Robotics

12

BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT YIELDING THE BENEFITS

Even before COVID-19, many organisations were looking to re-invest the time and financial benefits of cobotics back into their operations, rather than simply reducing their cost base. But this is even more the case now with the vast majority of organisations focusing on using the savings they derive from cobotics to re-deploy cleaning staff to other areas to drive higher cleaning standards, exceed on client demands and support with re-entry to buildings. Long-term, this could be game changing for the cleaning industry as contractors are really starting to deliver tangible and important benefits to their clients in their hour of need.

NILS VAN DER ZIJL, SOFTBANK ROBOTICS EMEA



Photo by Fabian Blank on Unsplash

Why?

Cobotics gives FM providers and cleaning contractors a whole range of game-changing advantages. It's up to them to choose how best to utilise these benefits.

Significant cost savings is one potential benefit but cobotic leaders should be open to reaping the benefits in other ways in order to meet rapidly evolving client needs.

What?

Given the challenges many FM providers and cleaning contractors are facing due to COVID-19, with ever tighter margins and pressure around labour costs, many business leaders will be eyeing up the cost saving benefits of cobotics.

But whilst cost reduction is often a principal driver for businesses when they start out on their cobotic journey, most organisations actually end up re-diverting these savings back into their operations.

COVID-19 has accentuated this trend, with contractors looking to devote more attention to the deep disinfection of hard surfaces and busy touchpoints such as door handles and lift buttons. Delivering higher cleaning standards and servicing levels is overtaking cost as the big battleground within cleaning and FM, and effective deployment of cobotics will become a critical differentiator in the market.

It's important for FM providers and cleaning contractors to build flexibility into their cobotics strategy so that they can easily change direction and harvest the benefits of cobotics in multiple ways according to immediate business needs.

How?

Cobotic leaders should create different commercial and operational models to illustrate how the benefits they generate from cobotics can be directed, including:

Overall cost savings through reduced labour costs, by introducing cobots and not replacing natural churn within the cleaning workforce

Capacity to deliver enhanced services to existing clients by re-deploying resource onto other tasks (such as deep sanitisation of high-risk or high traffic areas) and the financial impact of this (in terms of generating additional revenue)

Capacity to deliver more frequent and visible cleaning services by re-deploying existing human resources and changing shift patterns and the financial impact of this (in terms of generating additional revenue)

Capacity to take on new contracts with existing headcount by creating a greater number of smaller teams, working alongside cobotics and the financial impact of this (in terms of generating additional revenue)

FM providers and cleaning contractors should ask their technology partners to assist in this financial modelling, providing scenario-based calculators to explore the full range of potential benefits over time.

A good cobotics strategy should give FM providers and cleaning contractors the ability and flexibility to make ongoing choices around how they yield benefits, based on operational and commercial needs.

THE TIME FOR COBOTICS IS NOW

FM providers and cleaning contractors that are embarking on their cobotic journey should be in no doubt that the introduction of cobots into their operations requires careful planning and a robust, holistic strategy to ensure a smooth and seamless rollout.

There will likely be barriers to overcome along the way.

However, more than ever before, the cleaning industry needs to embrace fresh thinking and new approaches in order to rise to the challenge presented by COVID-19.

Cobotics offers FM providers and cleaning contractors an opportunity to deliver the genuine innovation and improved levels of servicing that businesses desperately need at this time and that will be so important in kickstarting an economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic.

Cobotics is here and is here to stay. It is likely to become the key difference between FM providers and cleaning contractors merely surviving or thriving over the coming months and years, as the business world attempts to recover from the devastating impact of COVID-19.

It's no surprise then that adoption rates have accelerated rapidly during the pandemic.

Now is the time for innovators within FM companies and cleaning contractors to be bold and take decisive action. These cobotic leaders need to collaborate, reassure and educate colleagues about the benefits of cobotics and ensure they have the sponsorship, support and freedom to test, learn and optimise along the journey

Cobotic leaders should also ensure they select the right technology vendor, a partner that does not simply provide technology, but offers the training, guidance and support needed throughout their journey. A partner that offers flexibility and transparency and will commit to shared goals and shared risk.

As this guide shows, introducing cobots into cleaning operations is not straightforward. But with the right strategy, ambition and support, FM providers and cleaning contractors can quickly start to reap the game-changing benefits that cobotics brings.

You've read the Guide. And now you're ready to start your cobotic journey!

Book a free consultation with one of our experts to explore the game-changing benefits that cobotics can deliver to your business!

We'll help you to get started on a winning cobotic strategy and ensure a smooth introduction of cobots into your cleaning operations.



Book your free consultation now!



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