

The Path to Autonomous Floor Cleaning



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This comprehensive guide is designed to provide simple, actionable resources for retail businesses at any point on their journey toward adopting autonomous floor cleaning.

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CHAPTER 1:

Robots Come to Retail

What's driving rapid adoption of robotic floor cleaning in the retail world?



Robots Moving from Promising to Practical

Usage Accelerating Across the Retail World

Retailers have utilized robots in various warehouse applications for decades. But with the rapid advance of safe autonomous technology, truly autonomous, intelligent robotics are now a practical — and increasingly essential — operational strategy for retailers of all types.

Some of the most innovative retailers are already using autonomous mobile robots, but that adoption and utilization is about to take off: Even before the pandemic, one report estimated that by 2025, retailers would deploy more than 150,000 new autonomous mobile robots in brick-and-mortar stores.² Analysts expect utilization of robots in retail will grow nearly 50% annually over the next decade.¹



Cleaning Robots Leading the Way

Retailers are applying sophisticated robotics technologies across a broad range of use cases — from inventory management and material handling, to both in-store and at-home delivery, to interactive customer service. In particular, robotic floor cleaning is emerging as one of the most valuable use cases of robotics in retail. Autonomous floor scrubbers and vacuums are expected to account for more than half of all retail robotics applications through 2025.³ Major retailers have made cleaning robots a core element of their forward-thinking facility operations strategies, with additional retailers committing to deploying robotic floor scrubbers in their stores in the near future.

1. Commercial & Industrial Robotics 2019, ABI Research

2. <https://www.abiresearch.com/market-research/product/1034058-mobile-robotic-systems-market-update/>

3. Commercial & Industrial Robotics 2019, ABI Research

A New Kind of Robot

The biggest driver of increasing robotics adoption in retail facility cleaning is the shift to autonomous mobile robots (AMRs). Compared to previous generation autonomous guided vehicles (AGVs) — widely used in industrial applications such as manufacturing lines — AMRs are not limited by physical tracks or magnetic beacons. This new breed of robots possesses sophisticated on-board artificial intelligence (AI) systems that enable AMRs to not only follow complex processes and make intelligent decisions about how to proceed on a task, but also to safely navigate dynamic indoor spaces, including the retail floor during business hours. In most cases, robotic floor scrubbers are the same, or very similar, to the core cleaning machines already used by many retail cleaning teams — fitted with an array of sensors and an on-board AI “brain” interface. This significantly simplifies adoption, as cleaning teams are typically already very familiar with the cleaning machines.



“Co-Bots”: Robots Supporting — Not Replacing — Staff

Robotic cleaning machines directly address the supply-demand imbalance presented by rising cleaning demands and limited labor resources. But robots aren’t replacing cleaning staff. They’re working alongside human employees to make cleaning teams more efficient. These “co-bots” are freeing human employees to focus on more complex, strategic cleaning initiatives — and can help to improve employee job satisfaction.

How Robotic Floor Cleaners Deliver Value for Retailers

Solving Facility Cleaning Challenges	Solving Labor/Operational Challenges
INCREASE CLEANING EFFICIENCY	SUPPORT EMPLOYEES
Robotic floor cleaners work alongside your cleaning staff, methodically handling essential floor cleaning while your staff simultaneously does other core cleaning tasks.	Robotic floor cleaners lift the burden of time-consuming and monotonous cleaning tasks, allowing your staff to focus on work that only a human can do — including regular deep cleaning, targeted cleaning and facility care.
DELIVER CONSISTENT CLEANING PERFORMANCE	INCREASE STAFF ENGAGEMENT/SATISFACTION
Robotic floor cleaners can execute a cleaning task with reliable consistency — particularly helpful for monotonous, dirty or unpleasant tasks.	By shifting unengaging work to robotic floor cleaners, cleaning staff can take on different responsibilities — from expanding their skillset to include robot training and management, to inventory control or customer service.
PROVIDE PROOF OF COVERAGE	REDUCE COST TO CLEAN
Robotic floor cleaners feature integrated data capture technology that delivers real-time performance and utilization tracking. You can verify cleaning has been done — and done correctly — to deliver proof of value, support compliance and ultimately drive better overall cleaning performance.	By increasing staff engagement, robotic floor cleaners can help mitigate staff turnover and even potentially reduce the costs of equipment damage from operator error during manual operation.

Enhancing the Customer Experience — Creating a Positive Brand Image

Customer expectations for facility cleaning are higher than ever. Cleanliness is a top concern among customers. In fact, a Consumer Reports survey found that cleanliness was the common denominator among all top-rated grocery stores.⁴ Robotic floor cleaners allow retailers to move floor cleaning from the night shift to the day shift, bringing customers peace of mind by showing them visible proof of continuous cleaning. This not only enhances the individual customer experience — it helps a retailer create a strong positive brand image.

4. <https://www.consumerreports.org/grocery-stores-supermarkets/cleanest-grocery-stores-in-america/>

Cleaning Robots Directly Address Retailers' Challenges Amid the Global Pandemic

The global pandemic of 2020 has made facility cleaning more critical and visible than ever. Retail leaders increasingly see how facility cleaning provides a solid foundation for helping to ensure the health and safety of customers and staff, as well as helping to protect business continuity. But the COVID-19 crisis also presents new challenges and demands in facility cleaning — challenges that are directly addressed by the unique capabilities of robotic equipment:



FOCUS STAFF ON HIGH-TOUCH CLEANING

Retailers are aiming to increase the frequency of facility cleaning and surface sanitization and disinfection to protect staff and customers. Robotic floor cleaners allow retailers to leave the frequent, methodical floor scrubbing to the robots — freeing up more time for staff to focus on wiping down and disinfecting high-touch surfaces, and other key infection-control measures in the facility.



CLEAN MORE FREQUENTLY — AND MORE CONSISTENTLY

Robotic cleaning machines allow retailers to rapidly increase cleaning frequency without increasing labor costs. Moreover, their consistent performance help give retailers confidence that facilities are being cleaned every time, thoroughly and properly.



PROVIDE PROOF OF COVERAGE

Real-time performance data from robotic cleaning machines validate cleaning, demonstrating that retailers are taking additional precautions to mitigate risks to staff and customers, and giving them hard proof that they are in compliance with any applicable new regulatory orders that may be imposed.



CHAPTER 2:

Is My Business Ready for Floor Cleaning Robots?

Key signs that robotic floor cleaning could add value to your business.



Is Your Business Ready for Floor Cleaning Robots?

Keys to Success — and Limiting Factors



The advancement of robotic technologies for retail facility cleaning is allowing more businesses to realize the real-world promise of robotic floor cleaning, which includes enhancing customer experiences, adding support for your workforce, and improving bottom lines. Most promising of all, leading vendors have made the deployment of robotic floor cleaning machines simple. A retailer can roll out robotic floor cleaning machines quickly because they require no custom infrastructure, no specialized training and provide intuitive user interfaces that are quick and easy for employees to learn. So, how can you tell if your business is ready for floor cleaning robots? In this chapter, we'll explore some of the key pain points that robotic floor cleaning machines can rapidly address, as well as environmental and operational factors that can enhance the success of a robotic floor cleaning program.

Common Challenges Facing Retailers Today

The common pain points below are all issues that can be directly and rapidly addressed through the deployment of robotic floor cleaning machines, helping a retailer realize strategic value from its investment.

Rising Labor Costs

Labor costs are always an operational concern, but the rising focus on facility cleaning means teams are cleaning more frequently. At the same time, rising average wages and changes to mandated benefits are augmenting labor cost concerns.

An Over-Extended Cleaning Team

With labor costs and cleaning requirements simultaneously on the rise, many cleaning teams struggle to manage a growing to-do list. Staff may be forced to choose between foundational cleaning tasks like floor scrubbing and more targeted tasks such as disinfecting of high-touch surfaces.

Limited Visibility/Proof of Coverage

Related to the cleaning consistency challenge, many retail facility managers are finding that they do not have the visibility and data necessary to even know if they're cleaning consistently or not. This includes a lack of visibility into the utilization and performance of floor cleaning machines — the data needed to provide proof of coverage to internal and/or external stakeholders.

Inconsistent Floor Cleaning

Amid rising expectations for facility cleanliness, in the simplest terms, many retail cleaning teams are finding it difficult to consistently achieve the higher standards of cleaning performance that their businesses (and customers) demand. Managers are increasingly focused on cleaning consistency challenges, from ensuring frequently-missed spaces get cleaned daily, to addressing decreased cleaning performance during overnight hours, and more.

Frequent User Error Issues

It's easy to see how a rushed or tired employee may be more likely to make mistakes. Increased user error can lead to employee safety incidents and/or costly damage to cleaning equipment.



Key Considerations for Successful Robotic Floor Cleaning

There is no secret formula for success with robotic floor cleaning. There are, however, some key considerations that will help get the maximum value out of your cleaning program.

Good Cellular Coverage

While robotic floor cleaning machines do not require cellular communications to run on their own, certain reporting and technical support functions require an LTE/4G connection to perform routine data uploads when not in use.

Environmental Traffic Patterns

Robotic floor cleaning machines have artificial intelligence (AI) and sensor technologies that allow them to navigate safely around people and other obstacles. That being said, it's important to think about your facility's heavy traffic flow patterns when deciding on cleaning routes and schedules to maximize cleaning efficiency and effectiveness.

Consistent, Comprehensive Scrubbing Time

Robots are great at consistently cleaning their routes the same way every time and they don't get tired or distracted. The ROI on robotic floor cleaning grows with use, so robotic cleaning machines are best suited for spaces that are cleaned at least two hours per day, 5 days per week.



Open Aisle and Runway Spaces

Robotic floor cleaning machines perform best when they have adequate space to maneuver. Narrow aisles, tight turns and frequent turnarounds can limit efficiency of robotic scrubbers and sweepers.

Employee Engagement

Designed with easy-to-understand user interfaces (UI), robotic floor cleaning machines don't require any special technical skills to operate. This makes them particularly beneficial for environments that may experience high operator turnover.

Intense Sunlight or Highly Reflective Surfaces

Highly reflective surfaces, such as shiny metal or glass and intense sunlight can affect the machine's sensors and cause navigation confusion. Simple routing considerations and adjustments account for these factors.



CHAPTER 3:

How Do Robotic Scrubbers Work

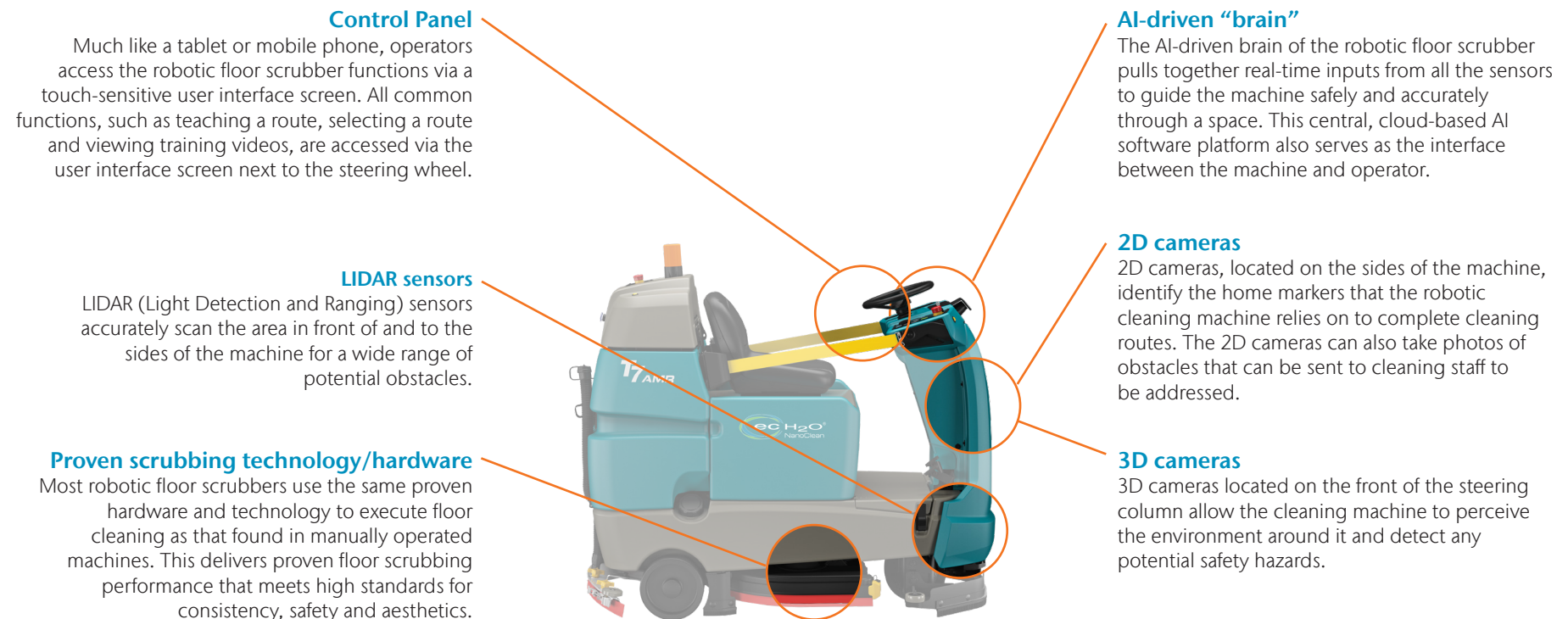
A quick look at the technical basics of autonomous cleaning robots.



What is a Robotic Floor Scrubber?

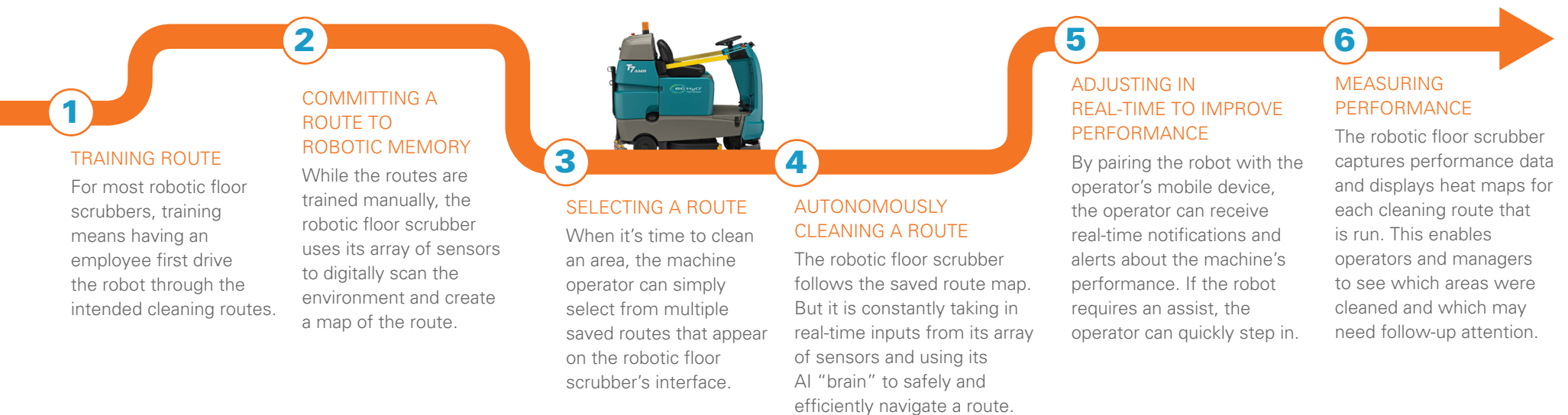
The first thing to know about robotic floor scrubbers is that they are not entirely new machines. They are typically similar to ride-on machines that most retail cleaning teams are used to — with one major difference: they are fitted with sophisticated, AI-driven technology and sensors to help the machine move and clean autonomously.

This approach offers a key advantage to retail businesses, when compared to robotic cleaning machines designed from the ground up: it combines best-in-class cleaning technology with best-in-class AI, ensuring organizations do not have to compromise on cleaning performance or autonomous functionality.



Putting it All Together: How Robotic Scrubbers Work

Now that you understand the basic components of a robotic floor scrubber, let's look at how an autonomous robot learns a cleaning route in a retail environment:



TEACH AND REPEAT

The approach described above, called "teach and repeat," has quickly become the predominant method of robotic route mapping in public spaces because of its flexibility and ease of use. It makes initial training and deployment of robotic scrubbers fast and easy — and allows your employees to handle route mapping. This teach-and-repeat approach also greatly enhances the flexibility of robotic cleaning routes. Robots can automatically adjust to obstacles in real time — and operators can easily adapt routes to address.



CHAPTER 4:

Preparing for Success with Robotic Cleaning

Tips for fast deployment & accelerated ROI.



Preparing for Success with Robotic Cleaning

5 Tips to Streamline Deployment and Accelerate the Path to ROI

Significant advances in robotic technologies mean deploying robotic floor cleaning machines is easier than ever for retailers. But it's important to note that deploying is not merely a one-for-one equipment swap. The true value in robotic cleaning lies in how it allows your business to change the way you clean — becoming more efficient and more strategic about your cleaning protocols and how you allocate resources. To realize this value, retailers need to begin considering how they can best adjust their existing cleaning processes and protocols to take advantage of the specific capabilities of robotic floor cleaners.

This chapter will provide five simple tips to help your business prepare for a successful deployment, so you can realize the full value of your robotic cleaning machine(s) as quickly as possible.



ROI

1 Treat Implementation Like a True Change Management Process

Any significant change can be difficult for employees. Robotics, in particular, can raise understandable concerns for some employees who might wonder, “Will a robot take my job?”

Start by building a solid change management plan, following best practices for establishing and managing staff expectations.

KEY MESSAGES

Co-Bots

Explain the concept of “co-bots” — how floor cleaning robots will work collaboratively with employees, allowing them to spend more time on high-touch, high-value tasks that only a human can do. Make it clear that robotic cleaning machines are meant to work alongside employees — not replace them.

Alleviating Burdens

Show employees how robotic floor cleaners will free them from monotonous floor cleaning, allowing them to focus on more complex responsibilities that will empower them to more directly contribute to the business.

Adding Skills

Explain how employees will be able to add in-demand skillsets around robot training and operation.

Supporting Tasks

Make sure you mention the cleaning tasks that employees will still have to do in order to support the robots, such as pre-sweeping and edge cleaning, in addition to removing obstacles and creating cleaning routes.



2

Get Buy-in at All Levels

Buy-in from relevant stakeholders is a prerequisite for any business initiative to succeed. In the case of robotic floor cleaning, here's what's most important:



3

Dedicate Time For Proper Route Mapping & Validation

One aspect of deployment that is sometimes overlooked is allocating enough time for thorough route planning. A thoughtful approach to mapping routes will maximize robotic floor cleaning coverage and minimize manual interventions that decrease employee productivity.

HERE ARE TIPS TO ENSURE SUCCESS

Be aware of differences between manual and autonomous scrubber operation.

Optimizing a route for autonomous scrubbing is different than cleaning with a manual machine. For example, tight turns and U-turns may impact the performance of the robotic scrubber. Recognizing and correcting for these differences will pay significant dividends in long-term efficiency.

Validate a route after training.

After an operator has completed training the robot on a cleaning route, validate that route by confirming that the robot can run the full route autonomously, without any required assists. This will minimize operator intervention in the long run.

Train the operator on pre-sweeping best practices.

As part of the autonomous training process, make sure the operator knows what support steps — such as pre-sweep and/or edge clean — will help ensure the most efficient and effective autonomous cleaning run.

Plan routes around other operational processes.

As you train the robot, make sure you are considering other aspects of your retail operations that may intersect with cleaning. For example, planning cleaning routes around stocking schedules is helpful. If you do need to stock while a machine is running, don't worry — the autonomous technology will recognize employees and automatically work around them.



4

Plan for How You'll Re-allocate Staff

A key value of robotic cleaning is that it allows retailers to re-allocate staff to other responsibilities. But some businesses make the mistake of not having a clear plan for the new responsibilities staff will take on as robotic floor cleaners free up more of their time.



Be Proactive - Don't take the "wait and see" approach.

While it's true that the initial robot training period will require more time from employees, it's important to begin planning for how you will adjust or reschedule staff before you even begin robot training. Having a plan in place early adds value to your change management efforts, giving employees more tangible ideas of how robots will impact their jobs.

Ask your employees, "What can you do with extra time?"

This is also an excellent opportunity to engage staff and make them feel like part of the strategic initiative. Ask them what they think they can do with the extra time created through autonomous floor cleaning — not as a challenge for them to prove their worth, but as an opportunity for them to set their own path.

Align re-allocation plans with key business objectives.

How can you apply newly available labor resources to top business goals? If your retail business has targeted facility cleaning, then employees can be re-focused on sanitizing high-touch surfaces — as well as validating cleaning consistency. But don't overlook opportunities to re-deploy employees to customer service roles, or other functions that directly drive value.

5

Define Your Goals — and Determine How You'll Measure Success

Another essential goal for any successful initiative: Define what you're trying to achieve — and how you'll gauge your success.

Connect with business-level objectives

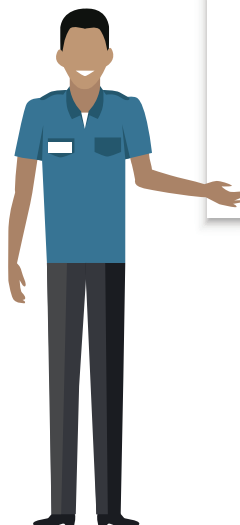
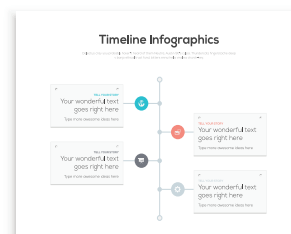
Start by looking at the top-level objectives of your business. Your robotic cleaning program should ladder up to one of these business goals, such as enhancing customer experience or optimizing operational costs.

Define value

Robotic cleaning can increase cleaning efficiency and staff productivity, but these are just two operational ways to define value or ROI. Also consider values such as increased employee satisfaction, reduced turnover or absenteeism, or improved customer satisfaction scores.

Build ongoing reporting and evaluation into cleaning operations

Make sure you're building regular reporting and evaluation into your standard cleaning operations — so you can readily report up on your success, as well as identify opportunities for improvement in real time.



Communicate your goals at all levels

Once you've defined your goals and how you'll measure success, share these objectives with employees at all levels. Senior leadership should clearly understand what you're trying to accomplish, cleaning staff managers should know what they are aiming for, and the cleaning team should see how their performance can directly drive value for the business.

Leverage on-board performance data and reporting to track KPIs

After you've defined what value or ROI looks like for your robotic cleaning program, determine how you can leverage the on-board data-gathering and reporting capabilities of your autonomous cleaning machines to track key performance indicators (KPIs). For example, leverage your robotic scrubber's proof-of-coverage usage metrics and heat maps of areas cleaned as vital KPIs to monitor the daily success of your robotic cleaning program.



CHAPTER 5:

How to Build a Business Case for Robotic Floor Cleaning

Setting goals, measuring success & capturing the full business value.



Calculating the Full Value of Smarter Floor Cleaning



“Dollar Sense” is No Longer a Simple Equation

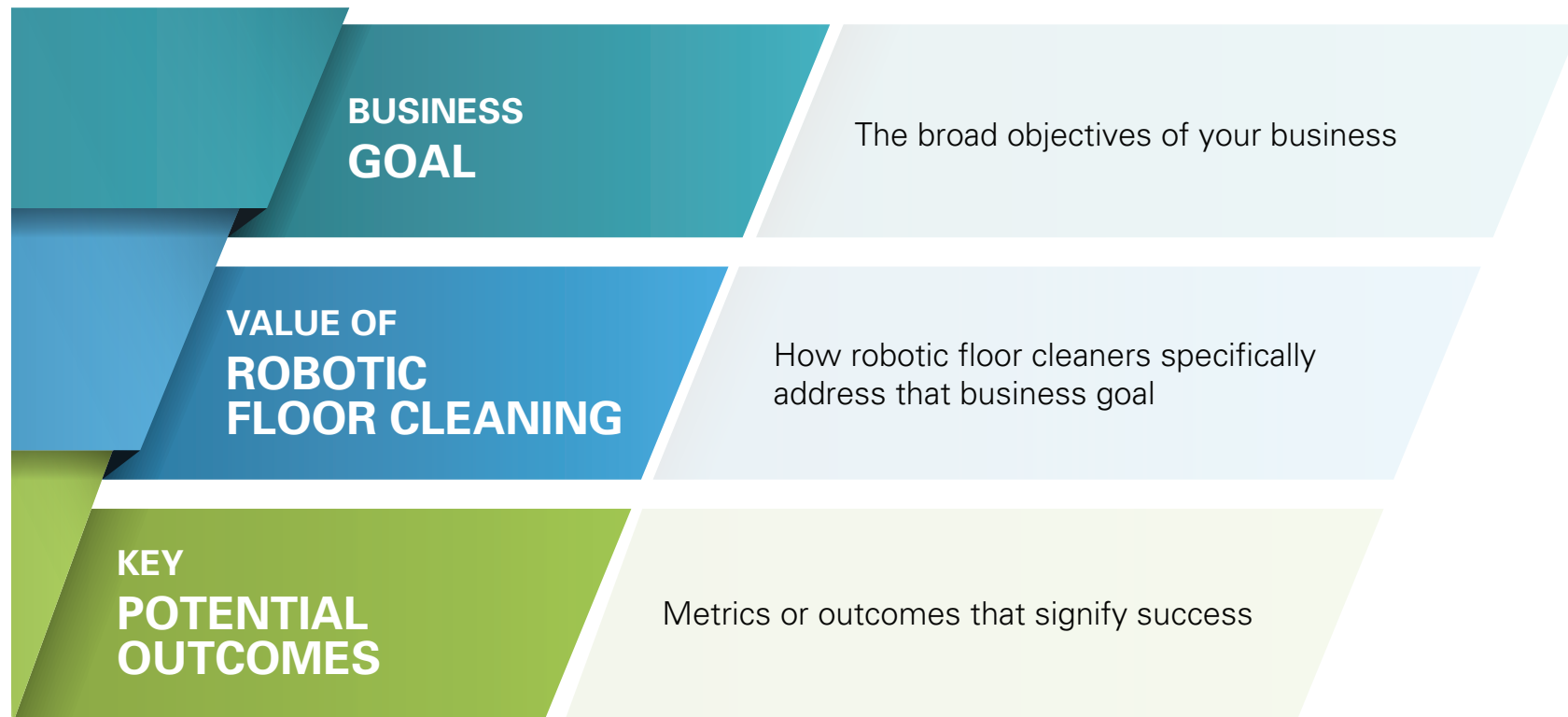
No matter how cool a new technology or how impressive the capabilities, smart businesses never make an investment unless it makes “dollar sense.” But when it comes to weighing the costs of clean, retailers are facing a new reality: the value of clean is more complex than ever — and no longer a simple matter of labor productivity. In fact, if you’re looking at labor costs as the sole focus of a robotic cleaning program, you’re missing significant value.

Defining the Value of Robotic Cleaning in Your Retail Business

In this chapter, we’ll help you consider exactly what value you should aim to achieve through your robotic floor cleaning program. This includes how to set goals around specific values, how to objectively lay out the potential ROI of robotic floor scrubbers, and how to measure achievement against your defined goals.

Start With Your Top-Level Business Goals

As we said in the previous chapter, not every robotic cleaning program will look the same. The specific goals of your program should align with the unique top-level challenges and goals of your retail business. Working from the top down, you can understand the ROI of robotic floor cleaners by constructing a hierarchy:



On the following pages, we will outline several common business goals, illustrate the relevant values from implementing robotic floor cleaning machines, and define how success might be measured.

Connecting Goals with Robotic Cleaning Outcomes

BUSINESS GOAL

Elevating Customer Experience/Improving Brand Image

The majority of businesses today compete primarily on the basis of customer experience (CX). Naturally, smart retailers are focusing on elevating CX to drive competitive advantage. Directly related to CX, brand image is a retailer's most valuable intangible asset.

VALUE OF ROBOTIC FLOOR CLEANING

Cleaning Consistency. Ensuring consistently clean floors — every day, in every facility.

Clean You Can See. Not just enhancing aesthetic clean, but moving floor scrubbing from the night shift to the day shift to give customers visible validation of cleaning.

Proof of Coverage. Giving retailers hard data to prove — to customers, media, regulators, etc. — consistent facility cleaning.

Sustainable Innovation. A highly visible sign of a retailer's commitment to investing in sustainable innovations.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Improve Customer Satisfaction Scores. Customers more pleased with in-store experiences.

Increased Net Promoter Score (NPS). Satisfied customers more likely to recommend your brand.

Increased Customer Retention. Loyal customers more likely to make additional purchases.

Connecting Goals with Robotic Cleaning Outcomes



Connecting Goals with Robotic Cleaning Outcomes



Think About TCO (Total Cost of Ownership)

Another way to think about the ROI of robotic floor scrubbers is to consider total cost of ownership, or TCO. Here are the core elements of TCO to consider:



Total Cost of Ownership

Initial Cost

This is the actual purchase price of the equipment, including the scrubber machines and additional software costs associated with the AI technology. The “sticker price” of different vendors’ robotic scrubbers varies, but will almost certainly be higher than a manually operated machine. However, the initial cost is often one of the smallest components of TCO.

Operational Cost

This is the cost of actually using the floor scrubber — including the costs associated with deployment. The operational costs of robotic floor scrubbers tend to be much lower than manual floor scrubbers, largely because there is almost zero incremental labor cost to operating a robotic floor scrubber. But deployment and training costs can vary widely between robotic cleaning machine vendors.

Downtime Cost

This is the cost of cleaning productivity that is lost when the machine is unavailable for any reason. Robotic machines have an advantage on downtime cost because they work side-by-side with employees, allowing higher utilization rates. The downtime costs of a robotic cleaning machine depend on qualities like battery life, as well as the overall reliability of the cleaning hardware.

Maintenance Cost

This includes labor and parts costs for all preventative maintenance and emergency repairs. Leading robotic cleaning machine vendors leverage proven hardware and in-house maintenance support that tends to reduce overall maintenance costs further. Don’t forget to consider software maintenance/upgrade costs. Best-in-class vendors enable seamless, cloud-driven software updates as part of the subscription.

Remaining Value

Since most retailers investing in a floor cleaning machine will seek to fully depreciate the value of the equipment, this is mostly a question of longevity and durability: How long can you expect the machine to last? Once again, proven hardware is one of the best predictors of equipment durability and longevity.



CHAPTER 6:

What to Expect from Your Cleaning Robot Manufacturer

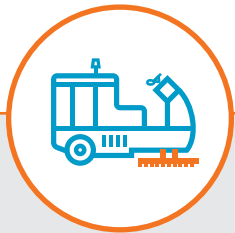
Careful considerations for choosing the right partner.



Building a Requirements List

All Robots Are NOT Created Equally

As we've covered in previous chapters, the potential value of robotic floor cleaning is broad and significant. These technologies continue to improve, becoming more practical, more cost-effective and easier to implement for retail businesses of all sizes. But not all robots are created equally. There are now many robotics manufacturers in the floor cleaning market, and different manufacturers have taken different approaches to building, deploying and supporting their autonomous cleaning machines. This chapter will help you build a requirements list for manufacturer evaluation that focuses on the four most important aspects:



THE MACHINE



THE SOFTWARE



THE PEOPLE



THE PROCESS



The Machine

We'll start with the robotic cleaning machine itself. Robotic offerings from different manufacturers vary widely in their appearance, and more importantly, what's inside. Here's what to look for:



Proven AMR Experience at Scale

The first and biggest requirement should be demonstrated experience in building and deploying robotic floor scrubbers in real-world environments. With many start-up manufacturers entering the market, proven experience at scale is critical. It's easy to build a few machines, but it is much harder to make and deploy hundreds of AMR units for a large retail organization.

Proven Floor Cleaning Hardware

Some manufacturers have attempted to build a robotic cleaning machine from the ground up, focusing on the exciting part: the AI-driven autonomous navigation software. But commercial floor cleaning is no lightweight business. These machines need to consistently clean in unpredictable conditions, and stand up to daily, rigorous use. Look for floor cleaning hardware from a trusted manufacturer that offers proven usability, performance, reliability and durability.

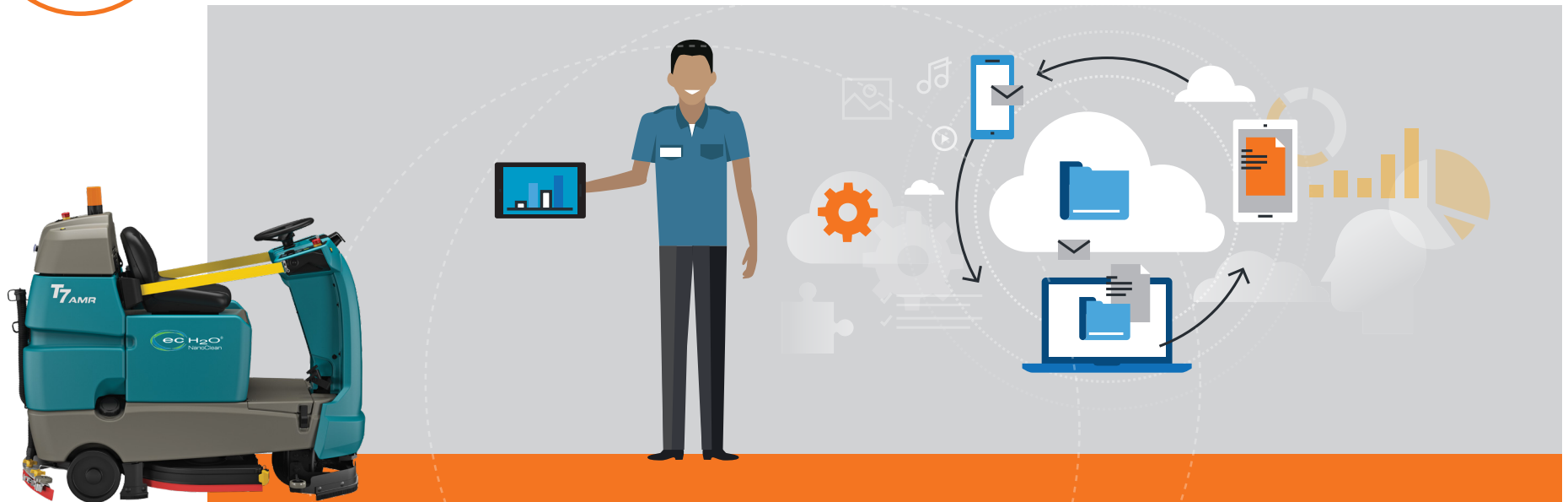
Familiar Machines

Many manufacturers have created robotic cleaning machines that cannot be operated manually. Manual operation is essential to move the autonomous scrubber into position and enable highly efficient teach-and-repeat route mapping.



The Software

The equipment does the actual cleaning, but it's the AI-driven software that enables the machine to clean autonomously.



Here's what to look for:

Safety Through Experience

Autonomously navigating around a dynamic, open-for-business retail environment is one of the most exciting capabilities of robotic floor cleaners. But can you really trust the robot to safely navigate around customers and staff? Ultimately, the proof is in experience. AI and machine learning technologies continually grow smarter with time and experience, so you want an AMR software platform with millions of hours and thousands of robots⁷. This is the only way to know that a robot is capable of operating safely in your retail facility.

Integrated Approach

You need a manufacturer with the right mix of sophisticated software and years of proven experience delivering reliable floor cleaning hardware. Look for a best-of-breed approach that combines an established equipment manufacturer with a proven AMR software platform.



The Software

Intuitive UI/UX

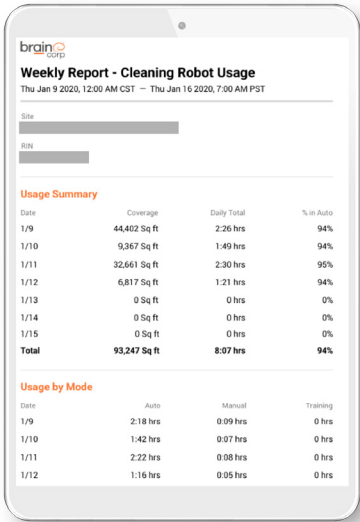
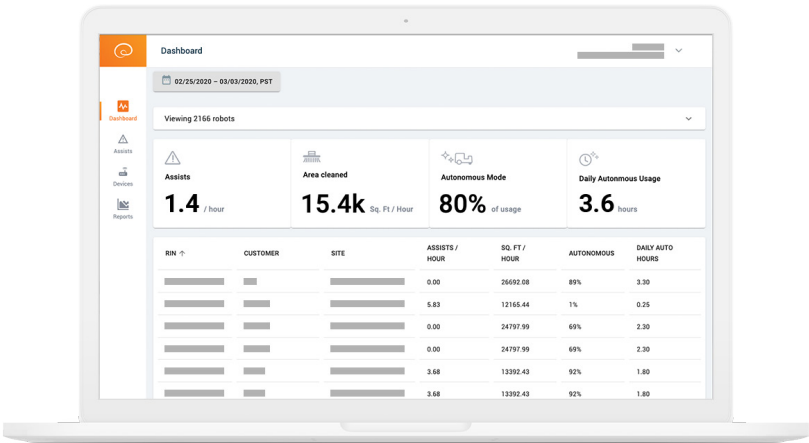
While your operators will be spending less time with a robotic floor scrubber than they do with manually operated machines, they are still the operators of the robotic machines — teaching routes, selecting routes, assisting when necessary. A simple user interface (UI) and intuitive user experience (UX) will significantly streamline training and reduce associated program costs.

Teach & Repeat Methodology

The simplicity of the teach-and-repeat approach has made it the predominant method for dynamic public spaces such as those in retail environments. Teach-and-repeat allows your employees to handle initial route mapping and make ongoing adjustments and changes to autonomous cleaning routes.

Proof of Coverage/Operational Metrics

Any established AMR software platform should be able to deliver robust performance data and real-time reporting capabilities. This should include data on machine utilization, cleaning performance and efficiency metrics. Leading software platforms even give your facility heat maps that show exactly where cleaning has and hasn't been done. Reporting should easily scale up by facility, region, state, etc., to give larger retail businesses comprehensive visibility.





The People

Even the best robotic cleaning machines still require people to map routes, train operators and troubleshoot route issues, not to mention strategically re-allocate newly available labor resources. But you shouldn't have to do it alone. Here's what to look for in a partner:

Dedicated Customer Success Team

Supporting large retail deployment at scale requires significant support resources. Best-in-class vendor partners have the breadth of support to provide you with a dedicated customer success team. This dedicated team can focus on the unique goals and challenges of your deployment. Critically, look for a support approach that continues well beyond deployment, helping you continually optimize your robotic cleaning program.

Consultative Approach

Excellent service is not reactive — it's proactive and predictive, driven by experience and expertise. Look for a vendor partner that aims to anticipate your needs and help you customize your deployment to align with your unique operational conditions and specific business goals.

Proven Process

Leading vendor partners have developed efficient and effective processes around deployment and program optimization. This includes tips and best practices to help set your program up for success and more rapidly realize value and ROI. A vendor should also have clear processes around ongoing optimization, to help you extract more value from your robotic cleaning program.

Proven Reputation for Service

Above all, don't trust promises — look for proof. Seek out a vendor partner that has built its reputation and customer relationships on service. Some of the most trusted vendors strive to maintain in-house control of nearly all elements of service to ensure the highest level of quality.



Manufacturer Evaluation Checklist

Here's a simple checklist that distills many of the points we covered on the previous pages:



THE MACHINE

- ☐ Manufacturer with experience at scale
- ☐ Proven commercial floor cleaning hardware
- ☐ Machine can be operated manually when necessary
- ☐ Automated machine diagnostics



THE SOFTWARE

- ☐ Integrated AMR software platform
- ☐ Proven real-world safety
- ☐ Intuitive UI/UX
- ☐ Teach-and-repeat route mapping
- ☐ Robust performance data and reporting
- ☐ Seamless software updates



THE PEOPLE

- ☐ A dedicated customer success team
- ☐ Ongoing optimization support
- ☐ Proven service reputation



THE PROCESS

- ☐ Change management guidance
- ☐ Best practices for strategic staff re-deployment
- ☐ Ongoing program optimization

Own, Lease or Rent: What option is right for me?

Yet another consideration when building a robotic floor cleaning program is whether you will purchase, rent or lease the machines. There is no right answer, as the best option depends on the specifics of your program. Here's a quick look at the benefits of each path:



BENEFITS OF OWNERSHIP

If you plan to use a machine at or near its full capacity — even when your workload fluctuates — then buying will generally be the best option.

- **Amortization:** You own the asset in the end and can amortize over years.
- **Predictable cost:** You know upfront the fixed price of the equipment and you won't pay additional financing or rental fees.
- **Flexibility and convenience:** You can use the equipment when and how it works best for your facility.



BENEFITS OF LEASING

With leased assets, you can avoid making large down payments and conserve capital.

- **Lower upfront costs:** Makes it possible to avoid a large down payment or having to purchase equipment outright.
- **Lower, fixed payments:** Payments are generally lower, fixed and amortized.
- **Option to buy:** Leases typically offer the opportunity to purchase at end of lease term.



BENEFITS OF RENTING

Renting offers the most flexibility, allowing you to pay for the equipment you need for a limited period. This option benefits those that don't have the resources to maintain equipment.

- **Lowest upfront costs:** Maximizes liquidity and allows you to use operating funds.
- **Faster deployment:** Accelerate speed to market with immediate access to equipment.
- **Flexibility without risk:** Scale equipment need to the labor pool, ensuring maximum productivity.

Keeping Pace with Innovation: A Must in Retail

Over the past decade, retailers have learned hard lessons about the risks of falling behind the technology curve. E-commerce, mobile shopping and digital transformation have each dramatically reshaped the retail landscape — creating clear winners and losers. Robotic automation represents yet another revolutionary technology that is already reshaping the retail world in broad, complex and profound ways.

Savvy retailers are looking for new, creative ways to leverage robotics and automation to drive operational efficiencies and create competitive advantages. Robotic floor cleaning is emerging as one of the most promising applications of robotics in retail, thanks to the growing importance and value of facility cleaning, the simple use case of robotic floor scrubbers, and the advance of practical robotic floor scrubbing machines that can offer a clear, rapid path to ROI.

For smart, forward-thinking retailers, the question is: do you want to be ahead of the curve, or chasing from behind? To stay ahead, retailers should begin identifying opportunities where robotic floor scrubbers could help their operations, and evaluating robotic cleaning manufacturers that can contribute to their success. Even if a full-scale robotic cleaning program is not yet right for your organization, launching a small pilot program can put your business in a better position to easily and rapidly scale up and expand in the future.



The bottom line is that robotics will change facility cleaning for good.

Will you be ready?

> TAKE THE ROBOTICS SELF-ASSESSMENT TODAY



About Tennant Company

Tennant Company is a world leader in designing, manufacturing and marketing solutions that empower customers to achieve quality cleaning performance, reduce their environmental impact and help create a cleaner, safer, healthier world. Our products, including industry-leading robotic floor scrubbers, help our customers clean more spaces more effectively, addressing indoor and outdoor cleaning challenges. Tennant's manufacturing operations throughout the world and sells products directly in 15 countries and through distributors in more than 100 countries, backed by the industry's most extensive global field service network. For more information, visit www.tennantco.com and www.ipcworldwide.com.



About Brain Corp

Brain Corp is a San Diego-based AI company creating transformative core technology for the robotics industry, including BrainOS, a cloud-connected operating system for commercial autonomous robots. Robots powered by BrainOS navigate autonomously, avoid obstacles, adapt to dynamic and complex environments, manage data, generate reports, and seamlessly interact with human users. Working with its manufacturing partners, Brain Corp has deployed or enabled 10,000 robots worldwide, accounting for a total of more than 1.5 million autonomous hours. Named the world's top autonomy solution provider by ABI Research, Brain Corp is funded by the SoftBank Vision Fund and Qualcomm Ventures. For more information, please visit www.braincorp.com.

Interested in learning more about the path to autonomous floor cleaning?



Learn more about how Tennant autonomous cleaning technology is already transforming retail facility cleaning.

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