

Real-Life Stories

Case Study: GMI Building Services Reduces Labor, Improves Safety With the Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart

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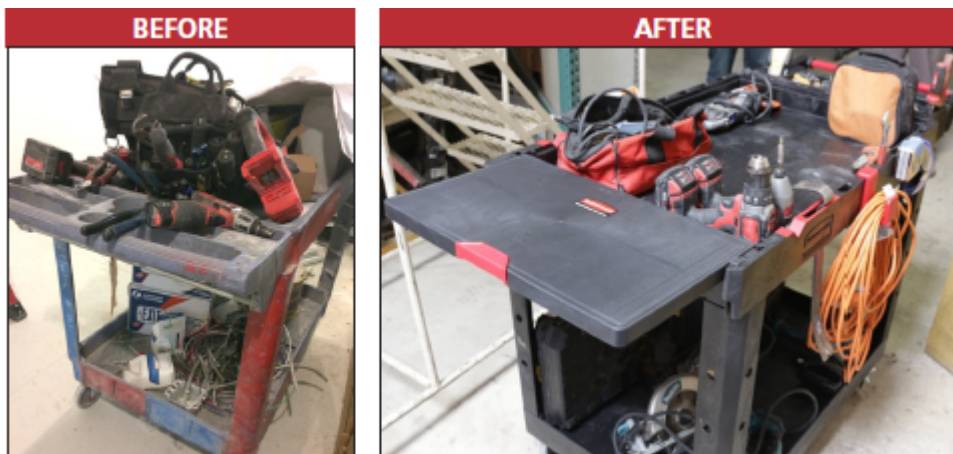
Challenge: Employee-Modified Carts Create Inefficient, Labor-Intensive Systems

Based in San Diego, GMI Building Services is an integrated facility solutions company. Employing approximately 1,300 people, GMI offers custodial and security solutions to a variety of businesses throughout Southern California, including Class A commercial office buildings, retail and manufacturing facilities. Within its custodial operations, GMI has a trade services division that provides general maintenance services, including light construction, drywall repair, painting, plumbing and woodwork.

Within the trade services division, GMI employees are assigned to two-person crews and perform a variety of tasks each day. For example, a crew might spend one day painting a lobby, then fixing holes in drywall the next. At the start of each shift, employees report to the main office where they receive their assignment. Next, they fill a cart that has been heavily modified with the necessary supplies for the day. Cart modifications include the addition of canisters for screws and nails, holsters for drills or paint sprayers and hooks to increase storage space. The cart is then loaded onto the van and transported to the job site.

In addition to the time it takes for employees to load various materials onto the cart, additional time and labor is lost if employees leave behind a tool or supply. For example, if employees are scheduled to complete a drywall project and forget to pack a screw gun, they have to travel back to the office. In total, GMI estimates that the amount of time lost with this cart system ranged from 30 to 45 minutes a day per crew.

While lost labor associated with the existing cart system was a concern, safety was another big issue. Overloaded carts might result in ergonomic or over-exertion injuries as workers pushed carts back and forth between locations. Any injury would also have a direct impact on GMI's modification (MOD) rates, which impacts their overall operational costs and, ultimately, the rates at which they are able to provide their services. The more documented injuries, the higher the premium. ***Click here to see the cost impact of workplace injuries caused by overexertion.***



With Rubbermaid's Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart everything is organized to the task, saving time and money.

Opportunity: GMI Uses the Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart to Prepare Employees for Any Job

To help employees stay organized and prepare them for any job, GMI tested the new Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart from Rubbermaid Commercial Products. Offering a variety of features that provide superior versatility to accommodate the tasks at hand, the new cart provided GMI with an all-inclusive solution to improve safety and time savings. Key features of the Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart include an adjustable handle that securely locks into four different positions, customizable organization through small-part storage areas and snap-in hooks, a flip-up shelf and a convertible work surface that extends the cart's available work area for larger materials and tasks.

"You can tell by the construction of [the Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart] that a lot more time, thought and energy went into this cart compared to other carts available," said Alan Wagemester, VP of Operations, GMI. "It is a lot easier to use and is more stable than our current cart system."

GMI used the cart's storage features to develop pre-packed carts for common jobs, such as painting. Based on their assignment, employees can easily select a pre-packed cart to bring to their job site. This new system helps workers stay organized and reduces the opportunity for supplies to become lost or left behind. ***See how GMI kitted Rubbermaid's Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart for different tasks throughout the course of this Case Study.***

Once items are placed onto the carts, crews load them onto the vans and transport them to the job location. The locking casters are a key feature in this application, as carts are transported in a van at least twice each day, and sometimes more often if there is more than one job location. The locking casters help secure the cart while in transit.

At the job site, teams use the Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart's convertible top shelf for larger-scale projects like painting and cutting drywall. With their previous cart, workers had to return to the van or find a suitable large surface for completing such tasks. The additional workspace also provides a great surface for workers to assemble small parts without having to kneel down to the ground.

"With the Heavy-Duty Adaptable Cart, we've been able to consolidate everything," said Wagemester. "Everything is organized to the task, so it's essential that the tools and materials for each of the job tasks stay together. The cart allows us to be extremely flexible with what goes on it in a given day, allowing us to carry larger pieces of equipment. It also reduces our back-and-forth on the job site, because it easily transports to various areas in a building without risk of damaging floors."

"We've experienced a tremendous labor savings from the new cart system. Within a week of labor savings, I would cover the cost difference of this cart between previous carts we've used."

Alan Wagemester
VP of Operations, GMI

Results: The Adaptable Cart is Safer to Use, Saves Time — and Money

With the new, streamlined process in place, GMI estimates that they have substantially reduced the amount of time needed to set up the carts each morning—by as much as 25 to 40 minutes a day. A conservative time-savings estimate equates to a minimum of \$15,240 a year (assuming five, two-person teams took 30 minutes to set up and load materials) and up to \$22,860 (assuming five, two-person teams took 45 minutes to set up and load materials)—more than enough to cover the cost of a new cart.

Improved safety is another key benefit of the cart for GMI. Stability, durability and built-in features such as locking casters protect workers as they load materials onto the cart and transport it to and around job sites. The cart's adjustable handle is designed with ergonomics in mind. It is easily adjusted to various heights, reducing physical strain on employees and making it easier to transport the cart.

"Safety is really key for us," added Wagemester. "We couldn't buy enough carts to save the amount that we would spend on one injury. Protecting our workers is critical to our business."

Read the complete Case Study to find out what a mere five minutes lost each day costs in annual labor dollars.

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