

Zomer and His Broom

An old janitor named Eltjo Zomer had become a legend around the manufacturing company by the time he retired. Some years ago, at a farewell party his friends threw for him, his supervisor recalled how Zomer, who had recently arrived in the United States from The Netherlands, recoiled when he first glimpsed the messy floors, greasy machines, and flyspecked windows he would be responsible for. But Zomer just shrugged his shoulders and dug in.



In those days, a little dirt in the plant was accepted as a necessary part of production. So whenever Zomer came down the aisle with his broom, the workers would josh him and purposely toss dirt behind the industrious sweeper. Before long, however, in spite of those setbacks, the department took on an unaccustomed gleam.

Then one day the company president walked through the department. He was so impressed with its cleanliness compared with other parts of the plant that he got hold of an interpreter and personally congratulated Zomer.

From then on, everyone in the department helped Zomer to keep the place tidy. The practice spread to other departments. As the surroundings became more pleasant and orderly, employees found themselves not only enjoying their work more, but also doing more work, and doing it better than before.

In such a simple way, the sweeper's broom became a contributor to quality.

We are all sweepers to some extent. The commitment to orderliness and cleanliness that we establish for our own endeavors is the first essential for quality work.

– Beecher Hunter