

Changing the Face of Hygiene



Housekeeping has undergone some serious changes of late. This profession is not only paramount to the overall well-being of the guest, it also ensures that the hotel room is hygienic, aesthetically appealing and the reflection of a job well done.

If first impressions are so important then it goes without saying that the first thing a guest notices when walking into his/her hotel room is the bed, closely followed by the overall cleanliness of the room. The bathroom is probably the most crucial area of any establishment.

When people are at home they usually place their towels on a rail or hook. However, in the hotel bathroom there's always a rail or two, as well as at least five towels per guest (one towel in the room, one in the linen stock room, one on the way to the laundry, one in the laundry, and finally, one being returned to the hotel). Guest comfort depends on their experience and in terms of housekeeping, this means choosing the right towel. Guests are looking for warmth, softness and luxury. In the hospitality industry, any given towel must retain its shape, softness and super absorbency wash after wash.

According to the professionals at Glodina, pure cotton warp knit towels are made to outlast conventional towels and



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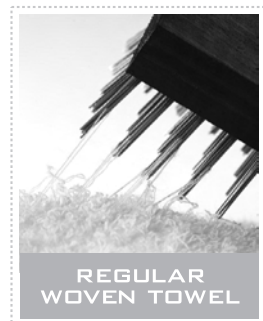
1063 | THE DREAM ROOM

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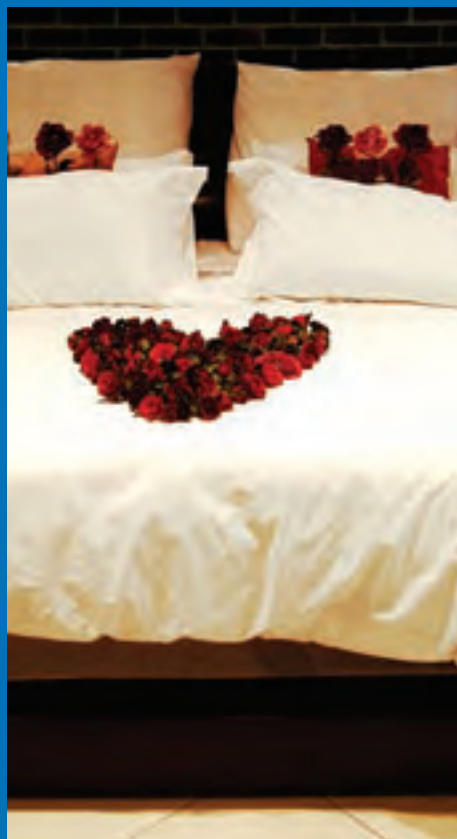


have been specially designed to keep their luxurious touch for much longer. Commercial towels also need to be strong - in other words, manufactured to withstand more than 200 commercial washes.

As with everything today, quality equates to paying a higher price. However, Dean Travis of Boston Laundries says that hotel buyers should understand that cheaper is not always the best option. "Good quality towels are often more expensive initially, but in the long run they'll save you money because they last much longer," he says.

HACCP (Hazardous Analysis Critical Control Points) is a buzzword currently being used in the hospitality industry. Despite the fact that it applies primarily to the food industry, it can also be used quite effectively in housekeeping. HACCP was developed in the 70s by NASA to ensure food safety for astronauts participating in the space programme.

Housekeeping expert, Margaret Wilson, says that the key factor in a HACCP plan is to reduce potential risks and this is based on prevention, not cure. "Many of



the principles associated with HACCP can be applied to a housekeeping function and this will help ensure that guests enjoy a clean and safe environment during their stay," she says. "This will also ensure that standards are adhered to, whether we use outsourced cleaning suppliers, chemical suppliers or cleaning equipment suppliers at the hotel. Some of our hotels are already following the colour-coded programme with the use of the appropriate equipment. The best features of this programme in a nutshell can reduce and control costs, demand quality standards from all suppliers and it ensures responsibility of all parties concerned.

"Many of our hotels are using inferior or poor quality cloths and have no management systems for them. The cloths often get lost, stolen or cannot be accounted for. This can be a substantial cost item in the cleaning budget. Cloths can contribute to the spread of contamination from one surface to another". Margaret advises all housekeepers to use the following colour-coded cloths in their work environment:

- ◆ Red – Danger (toilets and protein spillages)
- ◆ Green – Baths and wash basins and showers
- ◆ Blue – Dusting (windows and furniture)
- ◆ Yellow - Crockery

As mentioned earlier, housekeeping has become a respected profession with more and more individuals taking pride in their work, ultimately resulting in quality hygiene and presentation throughout the majority of establishments in South Africa.

Diana Parry, executive housekeeper at the Palazzo Hotel Montecasino says: “We want to give our guests a ‘home from home’ feeling.” Starting at 6:30 in the morning, Diana checks the guest list for the day before briefing the housekeeping staff as they come on duty. “I want my staff to know who the guests are in the rooms they are preparing for their arrival,” she says. “We have royalty, government officials and celebrities at the hotel, as well as business people and tourists. Regardless of the guest’s status, the staff are always proud to serve them to the best of their ability.

“We have one frequent visitor for whom we have a page long checklist,” she says with a smile. “I like making sure that he has everything he needs to have an enjoyable stay at the Palazzo. Housekeeping staff don’t have front office or other glamour jobs and they aren’t in the limelight. However, they shouldn’t be in the first place. Housekeeping staff must be unobtrusive and respect the guests’ privacy. At the same time we strive for efficiency that ensures an enjoyable stay at the hotel.”

Diana says that the image of housekeeping staff has undergone a change. “At one time, they were regarded as cleaning staff who should come through the back door,” she says.

That’s no longer the case. Today, housekeeping staff are recognised as part of the hotel team as well as contributing members to the image of the establishment.



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