



CHECK-IN

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

- ✓ **Yum! Staying at these properties is delicious.** Turndown service is a nice luxury for guests, especially when it's accompanied by a sweet surprise on their pillows. At the Caldwell House Bed and Breakfast in Salisbury Mills, NY, guests receive homemade miniature fruit pies with locally sourced fillings. And the Farmhouse Inn in Sonoma, CA, gives out s'mores kits, perfect for toasting over the in-room fireplaces. Or how about some whoopee pies in gift boxes? That's what you'll find at The Inn at Leola Village in Leola, PA.
- ✓ **So, where do you want to go on your honeymoon?** According to Facebook, the top honeymoon destinations are still Las Vegas, the Hawaiian Islands, Key West, New York City and – believe it or not – Gatlinburg, TN. Located in the Great Smoky Mountains, Gatlinburg is giving other popular honeymoon spots a run for their money.
- ✓ **Want to get away from it all? Stay here.** Accessible only by seaplane, Tikchik Narrows Lodge in the Tikchik State Park in Alaska is more than 300 miles from the nearest connecting road system. It's a dream for fishing enthusiasts and wildlife watchers. No early check-in here – you arrive on the same flight as all the other guests coming in that day.
- ✓ **Hi tech has never been hotter.** With new technology, guests can now check-in and checkout using their smartphones, which can also be used as room keys. In addition, heat-detecting body sensors are now used by housekeeping staff at some properties to show them whether or not a room is occupied.

What's In Your Linen Closet? Best Practices for Reducing Linen Loss

Of all the challenges facing hotel management teams, linen loss may sound minor. Yet wasted linen is a tangible problem that affects a hotel's bottom line. Left unchecked, it can waste hotel resources and create crises that leave guests dissatisfied and staff frustrated. If controlled, it can generate savings, both of money and staff time.

When we talk about linen loss in hotels, we're talking about the approximately 15% to 20% of linen products that are lost or discarded before the end of their useful life. That adds up. At approximately \$250 per room for a four par of basic sheets and towels, linen purchases cost the hospitality industry \$1.25 billion per year. If we factor in premium items like duvet covers, pillow shams and bath robes, that estimate goes up to \$350 per room, or \$1.75 billion. That means the cost of replacing lost linen is between \$50 and \$70 per room, or between \$2.5 million and \$3.5 million industry-wide.

Despite their cost, convenient items like hand towels and wash cloths are often thought of as disposable by guests and staff. Under these circumstances, linen loss may seem like an insurmountable problem, but hotels can understand and measure sources of loss and take steps to better manage their linens.

Why bath linens disappear

According to Eric Brady of Brady Linens, a commercial laundry serving Las Vegas hotels, linen loss falls into two broad categories: explained

loss and unexplained loss. Explained losses include stains, tears and wear out, while unexplained losses include theft. As any hotel owner knows, misuse and theft of linens is common among guests. Guests often consider hotel towels to be disposable, and use them to remove makeup or shine shoes, or they take towels with them. What is not thrown away ends up stained and damaged. Guests, as a source of loss, are difficult to control, though locking linen closets helps halt habitual thieves.

There is also a great deal of abuse of linens among staff.

Housekeepers use wash cloths and other items to clean rooms, resulting in stains and chemical damage. Maintenance workers have also been known to grab a towel off

a cart to wipe up grease or use sheets as painting dropcloths.

Textiles can also be prematurely worn out through improper handling. Laundry chutes can cause significant damage when tears develop in the metal lining, causing fabric snags and abrasions. Plus, chutes can get backed up, with many floors worth of textiles piled on top of one another; the linens languishing at the bottom of a multistory pile-up are subjected to enormous amounts of pressure which can cause further damage.

When laundry backs up, damp linens often end up piled on concrete floors when carts run out. Many people do not realize concrete contains oils that can permanently stain towels and sheets. Linen abuse can be combated through employee education, regular maintenance of chutes and designated rag programs.



Best Practices for Reducing Linen Loss...continued from page 1

Keeping track of linens

Of course, sheets and towels cannot last forever. They will wear out, but through proper measurement and tracking, you can plan appropriately for normal wear and tear and develop a better understanding of premature linen loss in your hotel.

Whether you work with a laundry contractor or have an on-premise laundry (OPL), you should track:

- ◆ Total pounds of clean laundry delivered or produced by the laundry
- ◆ Percentage of work rewashed or rejected in the laundry process
- ◆ "Ragout" – the percentage of product removed from service
- ◆ Total replacement cost/pound
- ◆ Par levels, or how much is in circulation at any given point, based on 100% occupancy

Measurement helps you understand how quickly linens are wearing out, where loss is occurring and how you should budget for replacements.

In the future, identification (RFID) tags may be able to help hotels track the flow of linens in and out of rooms. These small chips, the same as those used to track the family dog, can be sewn into linens by the manufacturer. Used in conjunction with RFID scanners in laundry carts and linen closets, the chips can provide hotels with a real-time linen inventory and better tracking of linen transit.

Hotels are adopting RFID cautiously, but we can expect more widespread use as the price of the chips declines and their ability to withstand repeated laundering improves. Commercial laundries have their eyes open to the opportunity and many are equipped with RFID readers.

Keeping linens up to par

By and large, one of the most important steps hotels can take in managing linen loss is maintaining par levels adequate to compete with the rate of loss. For many hotels with OPLs, three par is sufficient. For others, maintaining four par is necessary to keep enough linens on hand at all times.

Some hotels will deliberately or inadvertently let par levels slip down as low as two par. Yet reducing par levels only means you may have no sheets on hand when you most need them, forcing you to replace them hastily, perhaps with something off-brand. Since the linens you do have will need to be laundered more often, they will wear more quickly and need to be replaced more often.

Better linen life through chemistry

New technology in washing equipment and new chemical formulations promise to reduce premature wear and tear. In the laundering process, bleach, mechanical agitation and excessive drying time can weaken fibers. After improving chemistry formulations and machinery maintenance, one laundry reported 20% savings in textile replacement. "For linen longevity, wash chemistry is important," says Eric Brady. "For the longest time, laundries have only used detergent, bleach and softener. But there are new developments in the chemistry that are going to help us do a better job of removing stains and extending linen life."

This is thanks in part to greener technology and chemistry, including eco-friendly detergent, completely brand-new equipment and better

dryers that don't overdry. The newer technology is a little less aggressive on the product. This leads to a 20% to 30% extension of linen life.

Textiles are also contributing to longer linen life. High thread-count Egyptian cotton has long been the standard for luxurious linens in hotels, but cotton is not a particularly resilient textile. Every time it is washed, it sheds fibers from the yarn and turns more and more yellow. Thankfully, textile manufacturers have developed cotton-polyester blends that look and feel like expensive fabrics, even to seasoned hoteliers.

Laundry outsourcing as a source of savings

Many hotels point to the laundry as a loss center, so looking to outsourcing may help reduce costs associated with laundering and linen management since there are other savings that have to do with commercial laundries' expertise and economies of scale.

Well-managed commercial laundries are more adept at using chemicals properly and are more likely than OPLs to have their equipment serviced regularly. In addition, they have protocols for monitoring and repairing machines so they don't damage linens.

By working with a commercial laundry, hotels also have the option of renting linens. This way, the up-front cost of purchasing linens does not come out of your pocket. Textile service providers have rental linens available in a variety of fabrics and levels of quality.

Whether you choose to outsource or improve processes at your OPL, you cannot manage laundry by crisis. The best strategy is to be proactive in linen management, consistently tracking, measuring and replacing all textiles in a methodical way.

Reprinted from the Hotel Business Review with permission from www.HotelExecutive.com.



**Send us your ideas –
we'll send you \$25!**

**What is the most interesting question
you ask prospective employees
during job interviews?**

**Email check-in@americanhotel.com
& include your full name, property
name and address.**



Julie Baker
HR Editor

The High Cost of Missed Hires

Employers often talk about the cost of bad hires, but not about the cost of missed hires – the great employees who employers fail to hire.

In a talent shortage market, that cost is likely much higher than the cost of bad hires. In fact, Facebook recently learned this at a staggering cost, when two employees they had interviewed and subsequently rejected turned around and founded WhatsApp. Facebook purchased the startup within five years for \$19 billion. Both “rejects” are now Facebook employees, with one immediately added to their Board of Directors.

This is a striking example, because Facebook is well known and the dollar figures are high, but similar scenarios happen every day. Consider the following reasons for missed hires, along with their solutions.

The great candidates who don't apply

Perhaps they are passive candidates who never saw your job posting since they aren't actively looking, or diversity candidates you failed to target. Possibly they saw the posting, looked you up on Glassdoor.com and decided to take

a pass. Or maybe they went to your website and were unimpressed by a lackluster (or altogether missing) careers section.

SOLUTIONS: Diversify your recruiting. Complement job postings with active sourcing. And consider a tune-up for your employer branding.



The great candidates who apply and ultimately decline your offer

Maybe your compensation hasn't kept up with the changing employment market. Perhaps they had a negative candidate experience. Or maybe you (or one of your hiring managers) simply failed to sell the opportunity.

SOLUTIONS: Conduct job analyses and compensation benchmarking on a regular basis. Take a close look at your EVP – employer value proposition.

Make sure that everyone who comes in contact with candidates understands the importance of “wowing” them.

The great candidates who apply, but who you don't hire

This can be the result of hiring managers with undisclosed prejudices, many of which are inappropriate or even illegal. Another common scenario is the inappropriate application of pre-hire assessments, such as using the results to bump a candidate, rather than to guide probing interview questions.

SOLUTIONS: Train everyone involved in the hiring process and make sure your hiring managers are conducting compliant, effective interviews. If you use pre-hire assessments, make sure they are validated and that hiring managers are properly utilizing the results. For key roles in particular, don't let a single hiring manager reject a candidate.

As the economy continues to improve, baby boomers retire in record numbers and the skills shortage widens, you can't afford to let great candidates slip by!

Source: *HR Digest*, 6/14

We Love Hearing From You!

Thank you all for these great “home remedy” ideas!

Julie Martin of The Cinnamon Valley in Eureka Springs, AR, writes: “Here are a few [home remedies] we use around our property:

- Vinegar: Great for cleaning glass and coffee pots
- Alcohol: For cleaning bathrooms, glass, kitchen sinks
- Baking soda/vinegar mixture: degreaser for stoves and ovens
- Moth balls: If you are in the country (as we are), they are great for keeping bats out of our log cabins

- Essential Oils: Again, being in the country, there are lots of ticks, mosquitos and other bugs. A natural remedy that we use on-property (usually because it smells so good!) is a mixture of eucalyptus, lemongrass, and water. Ticks hate it and it has a very spa-like smell!”

Tiffany Sterling, Executive Housekeeper, The Port-O-Call Hotel in Ocean City NJ, offers a tried and true remedy: “Here's a simple and inexpensive way to immediately eliminate unpleasant bathroom odors: light a match in a small bathroom. In a large public restroom, carefully

light four or five at a time, blow them out, and all odors are gone in a few seconds!”

Amber Byrd, Hotel Manager at the Hampton Inn in Owings Mills, MD, writes: “We use several home remedies at our property. One of my favorites is canola oil and apple cider vinegar mixed together to repair scratches in desk, dressers and night stands. I used this at home successfully and thought, why not give it a try at my hotel? The wood drinks up the mixture! Although the scratches are still there, they are less visible.”

2015 Spring Calendar

Find out what's new and what's happening in the industry by attending these upcoming trade shows or conferences:

BITAC® Luxury 2015
3/8 - 3/10; Coronado, CA; bitac.net

Ocean City Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Spring Trade Expo
3/8 - 3/9; Ocean City, MD; oceancitytradeexpo.com

Midwest Foodservice Expo
3/9 - 3/11; Milwaukee, WI; wirestaurant.org/expo

InnDependent Lodging Summit & Trade Show 2015
3/15 - 3/17; Tucson, AZ; independentlodgingsummit.com

HI Connect® 2015
3/25 - 3/27; Nashville, TN; bitac.net

Nightclub & Bar Convention & Trade Show
3/30 - 4/1; Las Vegas, NV; ncbshow.com

11th Annual Hotel Technology Forum
4/22 - 4/24; Puerto Rico; hospitalitytechnology.edgl.com

Quick Quote

Travel makes one modest, you see what a tiny place you occupy in the world.

Gustave Flaubert, b. 1821, French writer

✓ Check Out

We hope you've enjoyed this issue.

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas make our newsletter interesting and useful. Please take a moment to send us your thoughts.

Email: check-in@americanhotel.com

Mail: American Hotel Register Company
Attention: Check-In
100 South Milwaukee Ave., Vernon Hills, IL 60061

Please note: Submitted photos and information are not returnable. Submissions may be edited.

Check-In is published four times a year by American Hotel Register Company.

Editor: Lynda Jeppesen



Jim Leahy

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Friend,

We all carry in us memories of failures and embarrassments. We all struggle to overcome our limitations. All of us have been criticized, sometimes unfairly.

Yet in the end, we want to be special and we're afraid we can't. We remember our failures and the criticism. Often it's those "tapes" inside our memories that tell us we can't be what we want to be.

But we CAN overcome those "tapes" and memories. We have had victories. We have been complimented. And we are capable. Too often, it's the fear of failure, the voices inside that stop us from even trying.

1. To overcome this, stop blaming "others." Take ownership of your hopes and future. Be willing to take a shot and give it your best.
2. Take a personality assessment, like the Myers-Briggs, to understand your strengths and uniqueness.
3. Ask for help in this journey from significant people you trust. Have someone who cares about you offer support.
4. Consciously "listen to the tapes" you tell yourself about succeeding.
5. What real roadblocks are in your way that might prevent success? Education? Language? Professional training?
6. Read books that open your mind to bigger and grander thoughts. How have others approached the things you're facing?
7. Change the words you use in describing yourself.
8. Spend time daily in meditation to make sense out of your life. Reflect on the meaning of your life. I do this every day.
9. Journal. Write your thoughts down with your worries and concerns, but also list the things you're grateful for. It seems to create balance for me. I do this during my meditation time.
10. List what you like about yourself. What are you proud of? What is special about you? Keep that in front of you!

I wish you peace and love on your journey.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads 'Jim'.

If you want to read any of Jim's previously published letters, go to americanhotel.com/check-in.

Read Check-In online at americanhotel.com/check-in