



# Housekeeping

by Glenn Hasek

## Dispensers offer affordable amenity solution while reducing waste

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! \*\*\*Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.\*\*\* College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com*

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Ten billion. That is the estimated number of shower amenity packaging pieces that are thrown away annually by the world's hotels. Thanks to efforts by dispenser vendors and participating hotels, however, those mountains of shampoo bottles are getting just a little bit smaller.



Especially in four and five-diamond hotels, resistance to using dispensers has been great.

"Franchisors oftentimes don't consider them as safe, secure and attractive," says Ray Burger, president of Saint Charles, MO based Pineapple Hospitality, a seller of amenity dispensers.

Dispensers are becoming more common in three-star and lower properties. The perception has been that guests love to take home the plastic bottles. Time and time again, however, that perception has been proved false.

"An increasing number of hotel companies are accepting them, including Americas Best Value Inns and Best Western International," Burger says.

"Most of the time, guests are very enthusiastic," says Heather Manness, a representative of London, Ontario-based Dispenser Amenities Inc. "They see the environmental benefits.

Many already have implemented them in their homes and expect them."

### Test programs prove acceptance

For hotel operators leery of making the switch, Dispenser Amenities offers a 90-day test program for 10 guestrooms. "Hotel operators are always astonished at the program's success," Manness says. "I may have had just one hotel out of hundreds that did not want to move forward with the program."

Green Suites International, based in Upland, Calif., also offers a 90-day trial program for 10 rooms. "We have never had less than a 95 percent approval rating," says Dan Bornholdt, president of the company.

It is difficult to argue against the cost of dispensers when compared with individual bottles. Although it may take several months before the initial investment is recovered, the long-term financial benefits are significant. Whereas the cost of bottles can run from 15 cents each to even \$1.00 in upscale hotels, a single use of shampoo from a dispenser may cost just a few cents.

"From a financial standpoint, there is nothing better than a dispenser program," says Burger, who adds that a dispenser program can result in a 70 percent cost savings.

Shampoo, conditioner and soaps can be purchased in bulk containers up to 55 gallons in size that can be recycled. Housekeepers require less time to manage dispensers. They no longer have to restock their carts, clean up unused containers, restock the room and dispose of the waste.

From an environmental standpoint, less energy and resources are needed to produce the bulk product. Packaging is minimal. According to Bornholdt, a dispenser program will eliminate more than 1,000 amenity packages a year from going to a landfill. Waste disposal costs are lower in hotels using dispensers. Many hotels that use amenity bottles end up having to throw away partially used containers. That problem disappears when dispensers are used.

### Dispenser design improves

When dispensers were first introduced to the lodging industry, design was not a priority. Today, however, dispensers can be classy and customized to fit the design of a guestroom. Maintenance is minimal; they need to be wiped regularly and filled as seldom as once a month, depending on usage. Each dispenser comes with a lock to prevent tampering.

“We encourage the use of tent cards to educate guests,” Manness says. “On the dispensers themselves, product identification is important so guests know what is in the dispenser.”

Bornholdt agrees that guest education is important. “We always offer signage that explains the quality of the product,” he says.

In regard to the quality of the product that can be used, there is no limit and vendors offer such established name products as Neutrogena® and others. In fact, because so much money is saved through the elimination of the bottles, higher quality shampoos, soaps and lotions become more affordable. “Our lotion is 80 percent pure aloe vera gel,” Bornholdt says.

The Inn at Stonington, Stonington, Conn., switched to dispensers from Dispenser Amenities four years ago. “It was not an easy decision to make at first, but we have never gotten a complaint about them,” says Bill Griffin, owner. Griffin says he lets his guests know that a quality product is in the dispenser. “In the sink area, we have an attractive soap dispenser,” he says. “It matches the hardware in the bathroom. We still give our guests the option of using a bar of soap.”

Until the lodging industry gets over the idea that dispensers cannot be safe, secure and attractive, widespread adoption will take time. In the meantime, guests just might start forcing the issue.

“Any type of change is difficult to make, but it is just a matter of time,” Manness says. <sup>2</sup>

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