



## Self-contained engineering cart increases efficiency and productivity

*Another great article from The Rooms Chronicle<sup>®</sup>, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management<sup>®</sup>! \*\*\*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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Few challenges associated with owning or operating a lodging property can be as frustrating as worker productivity issues.

As a hotel manager, imagine walking the property and noticing that hotel engineers or maintenance workers never seem to have the necessary tools or parts to complete a work assignment. Instead of getting the job done quickly and moving on to the next one, they are forced to return to the maintenance shop and search for the misplaced tool or drive to the hardware store to buy a single, two-cent screw.

These diversions can become frustrating and costly; the wasted time cuts into employee efficiency. But these situations can be avoided. Many chief engineers have discovered that a self-contained yet portable maintenance cart that incorporates the vast majority of the tools and parts needed for guestroom repairs, as well as scheduled and preventive maintenance tasks, is the answer to concerns about not only productivity, but professional appearance and employee responsibility.

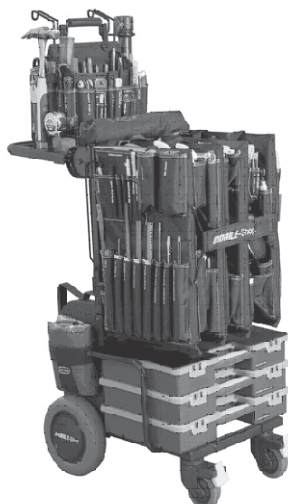
One such maintenance cart is the Mobile-Shop System. The Mobile-Shop System is a self-contained, 138-pound unit on wheels that comes with 230 tools and 160 parts stored in individually marked pockets and bins. It was developed in a seven-year period that saw the creation of a dozen prototypes that were tested at hundreds of job sites. If a user had to leave the job site, they were instructed to write down the reason why. A focus group of maintenance and property management professionals was consulted to enhance the process. Every four to six months, the Mobile-Shop System was redesigned to address any shortcomings.

The result of this research: Mobile-Shop users can now wheel everything they need – or might need – to the job site, in a system that provides simple accountability for everything it carries. Included items range from the obvious collection of drills and screwdrivers, to less-obvious items such as a camera to take photographs of property damage for insurance purposes. By marking each storage slot, it became easy for engineers to learn where the tools and parts were stored, and also to quickly realize if a particular one was missing. In less than a minute, a maintenance engineer can inventory the entire Mobile-Shop System. In contrast, a person using a toolbox without individually marked storage slots might not even realize an item had been misplaced or stolen.

With the inventory control feature, instead of constantly purchasing various tools, many hotels have found that they could make a single purchase and then virtually eliminate their tool budgets. The Mobile-Shop System is stocked with a wide range of respected brands, including Craftsman, DeWalt, Stanley, Fuller and certain tools manufactured under the Mobile-Shop name.

This specialized engineering cart incorporates additional enhancements, including an anti-theft system that allows an engineer to cover the unit and lock it with an alarm mechanism. Storage lockers are also available for hotels who wanted an extra layer of protection. To address

Pictured below: The Mobile-Shop System contains 230 tools and 160 parts in a single, self-contained mobile unit. Parts can be replenished through the Parts Center at the right.



the needs of engineering workers at resort-style properties, Mobile-Shop designed a golf cart bed to protect the system from weather and theft. For greater ease of portability, the system was also designed to be disassembled into four smaller pieces, including a “service bag” that holds 100 of the most commonly needed tools.

To ensure that maintenance engineers wouldn’t have to leave the property to replenish the Mobile-Shop System’s parts holders, the company developed a Parts Center. Each engineering shop receives a completely assembled, self-standing center that contains numbered, labeled storage units for each part in the Mobile-Shop System. The Parts Center can be restocked by calling or faxing an order, or via Mobile-Shop’s web site. The parts are then shipped to the hotel.

Instead of stuffing tools and parts into a collection of boxes and wheeling them around on an unsightly cart, this self-contained mobile unit keeps everything neatly stored in a professional-looking cart, ensuring that the system is visually appealing to hotel guests. Feedback gleaned from the development process revealed that maintenance employees exhibited greater pride and efficiency in their work by having all their tools and parts at hand. Additionally, training for new maintenance employees can be made easier as the standardization allows supervisors to seamlessly shift between units whose tools and parts are stored in identical places.

For hotels looking to upgrade their productivity and organization while simultaneously cutting back on expenses, the Mobile-Shop System has become an ideal all-in-one solution. ✧

*(Edward “Jerry” Guirlinger is the President of Mobile-Shop LLC of Columbus, Ohio, which manufactures and sells the Mobile-Shop System and related products. To learn more about the Mobile-Shop System, visit [www.mobile-shop.com](http://www.mobile-shop.com) or call 866-771-8665.)*