



Housekeeping

by Elizabeth Kozlowski

Triple-sheeting and the comfort revolution: Companies make sweeping changes

*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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During the past few months the hospitality industry has seen quite a few articles come its way regarding the revitalization of hotel rooms across the industry. Marriott has announced their plan to change 628,000 beds worldwide this year, costing nearly \$190 million between its own hotels and franchisees. Doubletree has made a \$300 million commitment to “product enhancement,” which a good part of the money is focused on the “sleep experience.” Among other changes for its other brands, the Intercontinental Hotel Group has instituted the “Inviting Ready Room” for its Holiday Inn® hotels and Holiday Inn Sunspree® resorts.

Why the sudden splurge on guestroom amenities and linens? All the programs have one thing in common: guest comfort. It is an arms race among the hotels to upgrade and improve their guestrooms to get back to the basics and give people more of what they really want: a home away from home. Comfort is the best place to start.

One of the ways in which hotels are improving guestroom comfort is through the use of triple-sheeting on the beds. This provides an extra comfort and service for the guest but oftentimes can become more of a strain on both the hotel’s physical, human, and financial resources.

Is guest satisfaction increased enough that it makes it worth all the added expense and effort? Franchisees and corporate owned and managed properties alike have no choice but to implement new standards as they receive the notice from the brand’s headquarters. This article will examine whether hoteliers can feel peace of mind knowing that their extra time and money are being spent well.

Added linen costs

The first step in implementing triple-sheeting is making sure there is enough linen on hand. Diane McGinty, the Executive Housekeeper at the Holiday Inn in Grand Island, New York, maintains three par of bed linens on hand at her hotel. While the par number will not change under the new triple-sheeting standard, the size of the each par has to change.

There are 263 rooms in the hotel: 194 double rooms, 61 king rooms, 5 king suites, and 3 double suites. Rollaway beds, cribs, and sofa beds in the suites do not require triple-sheeting. The cost per king sheet is \$6.66. The cost per double sheet is about \$5.00.

To increase its par to the required triple-sheeting level, the hotel would have to purchase 66 king sheets and 197 double sheets per par. Multiplying these numbers by three to accommodate the triple-sheet standard, the hotel will have to purchase 198 king sheets and 591

Pictured below: This room attendant demonstrates how a triple-sheeted bed encases the blanket so as not to come into contact with the guests’ skin.



double sheets total. Multiply these totals by the respective cost per sheet size and the hotel must expend \$1,318 for new king sheets and \$2,955 for new double sheets, totaling an incurred cost of \$4,273.

One can imagine how much larger these expenses would be for a hotel or resort with more guestrooms, more linen par on hand, or one which uses higher quality sheets that are more expensive, such as 400-thread count Egyptian cotton sheets.

Employee performance concerns

The second step is training the housekeeping staff the correct procedure for making a triple-sheeted bed. The inclusion of a third sheet can pose unique challenges that staff members may not be accustomed to dealing with. According to McGinty, the triple-sheeting process slows down her room attendants by 5-10 minutes per room, yet the housekeepers still have the same allotted time of thirty minutes maximum to clean each room. As a result, many of the housekeepers are feeling frustrated because they are experiencing difficulty adjusting to this new performance standard.

Another challenge is that many of McGinty's room attendants used to make "one-sided beds," where one side of the bed is completely finished first then the other side is completed, as opposed to walking back and forth from one side of the bed to the other. Under the new triple-sheet system, the room attendants are unable to use their accustomed one-sided bed system.

Another concern is that the quality of the cleanliness of the guestrooms might be compromised as housekeepers get frustrated and also

Pictured below: The room attendant is putting the finishing touches on a triple-sheeted bed.



are slowed down in cleaning the rooms yet have the same time frame to finish them in. A solution that Ms. McGinty has used is to allow the housekeepers to use team cleaning so everyone can help each other get the rooms done faster.

More laundry

Aside from the challenges posed in making the triple-sheeted beds, executive housekeepers face a budgetary dilemma as the time, expense, and labor associated with handling and laundering more bed linens increase by as much as 33%. Increased chemical and energy consumption as well as heavier workloads for laundry workers cannot be avoided.

Positive aspects

So what about the positive aspects of triple-sheeting? It is foremost a more sanitary way of preparing the room for the guest. It is very difficult for any hotel to wash all of the guestroom blankets or comforters on a regular basis. As with many hotels, McGinty's policy is that if the blanket is dirty, it is obviously removed from the bed and laundered. But other than that, the blankets in the hotel are washed approximately four times a year. Her hotel has less than two pairs of blankets, so not all guestrooms may have the blankets changed out at the same time, resulting in a constant rotation of blankets.

Traditional steps to making a double-sheeted bed:

- 1) The fitted or a flat sheet goes on first.
- 2) A flat sheet goes on next.
- 3) The blanket goes on third.
- 4) The comforter is placed on top and pulled down halfway.
- 5) The pillows are placed on the bed.
- 6) The comforter is pulled over the pillows.

However, when the bed needs to be triple-sheeted, this adds a few more steps:

- 1) The fitted or a flat sheet goes on first.
- 2) A flat sheet goes on next.
- 3) The blanket goes on third.
- 4) Another flat sheet goes over the blanket.
- 5) The comforter is placed on top and pulled down halfway.

From here, there are two approaches one can take:

- 6) The pillows are placed on the bed.
- 7) The comforter is pulled over the pillows.

- or -

- 6) Fold back one corner of the middle sheet, blanket, and top sheet 12-15 inches (30-38 cm) diagonally from the top of the bed.
- 7) Hold the bottom corner of the diagonal fold. Fold it up so that it is parallel to the edge of the bed.
- 8) Tuck the ends neatly under the diagonal fold.
- 9) Tuck the sheets and blanket under the mattress.
- 10) Straighten the end of the fold on the other side of the bed.
- 11) Pull the turned down bedspread (with liner exposed) up to the point that the turned down edge of the bedspread meets the diagonal fold.
- 12) Fold a piece of the bedspread back up toward the pillow to hide the lining.
- 13) Stand the pillows up, leaning them against the headboard across the bed.

The latter method, while more time consuming and labor intensive, better presents the extra effort taken to triple-sheet the bed for the guests' extra comfort and cleanliness.

With the triple-sheet standard, the third sheet provides somewhat of an extra separation between the guest and the blanket. The guests' minds are more at ease and blankets tend not to soil quite as rapidly.

Although many guests may not notice the difference, or even think that the room has not been finished, the overall benefit of triple-sheeting is noticed by many, especially in regards to comfort. It depends on the particular hotel and its intended image whether triple-sheeting is right for them to implement. Management has to look at the tradeoffs between stretching financial, human, and physical resources and how much overall guest satisfaction will increase or how much more guests are willing to pay. ✧

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