



# Housekeeping

by William D Frye, Ph.D., CHE

## Personal touches can brighten a guest stay

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Most people realize that the hospitality industry is part of the service sector; as such, there is an expectation by guests that they will be serviced in a warm and hospitable manner. How a hotel's employees treat their guests when the traveler is not present can speak volumes about the commitment of the property to serving its clientele and to making each guest's stay memorable.

### The small things

Chuck Tomlinson, director of services at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort in Indian Wells, Calif., challenges his room attendants to do more than just clean their assigned guestrooms according to Marriott housekeeping standards. Every morning he asks his housekeepers to add their "personal touches" in the guestrooms of stayover guests as part of their daily efforts. Realizing that it is the small gestures that guests will remember, even when they are not present in the hotel room, Tomlinson asks his guestroom and turndown attendants to provide a more inviting atmosphere for the hotel guests by lining up guests' footwear along the baseboard, reassembling messy newspapers and placing them on the guestroom desk, aligning personal toiletry and grooming items on the bathroom counter, and restoring irons and ironing boards left out by guests.

### Baby supplies

When a guest at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort calls down and requests a crib, Tomlinson's staff also delivers a complimentary Johnson's® "take-along pack" to the room. Each factory-sealed pack contains baby shampoo, baby powder, baby wash, diaper rash cream, baby lotion, and two gentle

cleansing cloths. Given that many bathroom amenity items such as soap and shampoo may be too irritating for babies, most guests find this well-thought-out gesture a small blessing and an immense convenience.

### Teddy bears

The real memories at Tomlinson's property are created by the room attendants. If there is a child staying in the room, a housekeeper can call down to the housekeeping department and have a teddy bear sent up. Rather than the once-customary mint on the pillow, the Renaissance Esmeralda's youngest guests are likely to be greeted by a 10" teddy bear sitting on the pillow of their bed.

According to Tomlinson, the \$2.75 per bear and \$3 for each Johnson's® take-along pack that he pays is a small expense for his department to incur in order to brighten a guest's day and ensure a memorable stay at his property.

### Rubber ducks and more

At The Colonnade hotel in Boston, housekeepers keep a Boston hotel legend alive by equipping each guestroom with its own rubber ducky. Guests are welcome to keep their duck as a memento of their stay.

According to Mary Friedman, executive housekeeper at the Radisson Hotel South in Bloomington, Minn., her property has

provided guests with child-resistant protective covers for electrical outlets as well as doorknob and bathtub faucet handle covers that come in a form of a rubber pig.

The small little things that housekeepers can do to brighten a guest's stay need not cost much. Even small gestures such as a warm smile and greeting initiated by a housekeeper when guests pass her in the corridors can go a long way to instilling positive impressions and lasting memories in the mind of a guest. Memories are not bought and provided; they are created in the minds of hotel guests, one positive experience at a time.

Yet, it is about individual pride and a sense of personal ownership over their section of guestrooms that spurs many room attendants to continuously deliver their heartfelt best every day, even when guests aren't there to immediately witness it. Some hospitality professionals refer to this philosophy as the "heart to serve." Others attest that housekeeping is about providing memorable experiences without being seen. Without question, room attendants retain the opportunity to captivate their guests on a daily basis.

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Pictured at right: Thoughtful gestures such as a complimentary teddy bear for children and baby supplies delivered with a crib can create lasting memories for hotel guests.

