



Ask Gail

by Aleta A. Nitschke, CHA

Questions about handling housekeeper tips

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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Dear Gail:

Can you offer any advice about how to handle gratuities with housekeeping personnel? Is a tip envelope a good idea? How do you split up tips for a room that was serviced by several different housekeepers? Tips are often a hot topic at our property.

Shannon
Atlanta, GA

Dear Shannon:

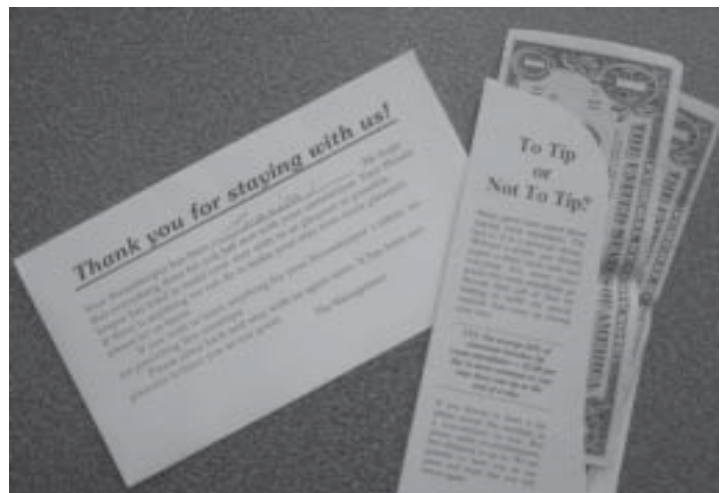
I don't believe you will find much support from the large chains for providing tip envelopes for guests. For instance, in one large convention hotel tip envelopes were used until the hotel was converted and reflagged under a different major brand. When the new management team took over the hotel, they ordered that tip envelopes be removed from guestrooms. Speaking with that Executive Housekeeper, she relates that the tips for guestroom attendants occurred far more often with envelopes provided than when the envelopes were removed. The downside of using tip envelopes, of course, is that guests may be insulted by the envelope appearing to ASK for a tip. Moreover, the most aggravating and ironic thing from a guest's perspective is to find a tip envelope that is crumpled or coffee stained. So, there are both negatives and positives to leaving tip envelopes. I would advise you to consider the atmosphere of your property, the goals of your staff, and make your decision accordingly.

As to splitting tips, you again should consider your property's situation. First, are your room cleaners generally in the same section of the hotel every day? On their days off, are they generally replaced by the same workers? If so, you may consider a system similar to restaurant tips where the team involved in busing and serving a table split the tip. If you move workers all over the hotel and/or if you have multiple night length of stays, splitting tips becomes more complicated. Oftentimes, the housekeeper who cleans the room on the day the tip is left just quietly pockets the tip. There are so many factors to consider – the average length of guest stay, the hotel's room cleaning structure (i.e., use of team cleaning), its use of floor supervisors/inspectors, and so on.

One question to consider is if your hotel has supervisors who are checking rooms prior to the room attendants entering the guestroom. Is it possible supervisors are pocketing tips meant for room attendants? We know of situations where supervisors have been caught red-handed and fired for such behavior.

In instances where the tip is received by the Director of Housekeeping, it is split by dividing it into shares equal to the number of nights and the number of rooms. For example, if a group stays 3 nights in 30 rooms, the tip is divided

Pictured below: Placing a tip envelope in each guestroom can make it easier for guests to show their appreciation for their room attendant's conscientious efforts.



into 90 shares, and every room cleaner is entitled to one share for each group room she/he cleaned. If the meeting planner left \$200 for housekeeping, each of the 90 shares is worth \$2.22. If a housekeeper worked two days of the meeting and cleaned six of the rooms each day, she/he is entitled to 12 shares, or \$26.66 in tips.

I'm glad tips are a hot topic at your property ... it means that at least your staff is receiving tips. If you have an atmosphere of tipping in your hotel, and your staff is delivering excellent service, worrying about how to divide the tips is a great problem to have. Talk with your staff individually. Ask them what they think about tips and how to handle them. Questions to ask include:

- How to encourage guests to leave tips?
- How to provide the appropriate level of service that will generate tips?
- How to manage tips internally?
- How to divide tips appropriately?

I believe you will find consensus among your staff and determine a solution that best fits your operation. ✧

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