



Housekeeping

by Elizabeth Kozlowski

Top ten problem areas to watch for when housekeepers service public areas

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Housekeeping managers would all like to think that their employees are doing exactly what they're supposed to be doing at all times, cleaning to the standardized specifications of their brand and/or property. Yet, this is not always the case, and given the repetitive nature of the housekeeping business, some employees choose to deviate from established standards and employ shortcuts to accomplish their work quickly or more conveniently. Inevitably, this will lead to a loss of control by Management, and along with it, diminished quality for the hotel.

It is of utmost importance to have hotel corridors and guestrooms as clean and inviting as possible. Given that these areas are the most intimate spots for a guest during their stay, it is quite obvious. However, although guests generally spend the most time in their guestroom over any other area of the hotel, before they reach it they pass through the corridor. But before they even reach the corridor they must pass through the main entrance and lobby area. Furthermore, some of the hotel's guests never even reach the guest floors or rooms. With the resurgence of hotel restaurants and bars as a trendy spot to be seen and now often backed by the names of world-renowned celebrity chefs, many locals and tourists go to a hotel simply to visit the hotel lobby and enjoy the various F&B outlets. Therefore, the public areas serve as a firsthand advertisement for the hotel.

This is the third of a series of articles highlighting the most commonly observed deficiencies among the different positions of the housekeeping team. Explored here are the top ten problem areas where public area attendants fail to meet standards:

10) *Dust surfaces* - It is important for the public area attendants to regularly pass through the lobby and wipe down any countertops, shelves, and armoires that are found throughout these spaces. These surfaces collect dust when neglected and do so especially fast in big cities where there is a lot of dust blowing in the air as it enters through the hotel's entrance doors.

9) *Water spots on mirrors* - Just as in the guestrooms, oftentimes an attendant misses water spots on the mirror. Most spots are found on the lower part of the mirror closest to the faucet as the water splashes as guests wash their hands.

8) *Elevators* - Generally on the inside of the guest elevators, one is surrounded by mirrors. Naturally, they become filled with fingerprints and smudges as guests put their hands on them for balance and lean their heads against the walls during the ride. Periodic patrols of all the elevators are necessary to wipe away any marks. It is also vital to check the elevator doors for marks and dust the railings inside

7) *Vacuum* - Ideally, the public area attendants should have two vacuum cleaners at their disposal — a regular heavy duty vacuum cleaner and a small stick-vac for quick pick-ups. For lobbies that only have small carpeted areas, such as at the entrance area, it is reasonable to vacuum these spots two or three times a shift to prevent any dirt from tracking through the lobby. For those that are carpeted throughout, vacuuming once a shift is fine so as not to disturb or inconvenience guests extensively. An important aspect to remember is have the attendants vacuum rain mats before removing them but after the rain has stopped. Make sure the mats are mostly dry



before vacuuming to avoid electrical shock, or use a non-electric carpet sweeper to remove debris before removing the mats.

6) *Fingerprints on windows/doors* - Hotel lobbies generally have large windows and glass doors to allow as much light in as possible and to make the lobby appear more inviting. However, glass construction materials are prone to fingerprints and smudges which will literally stick out like a “sore thumb”. Heavily trafficked areas that contain glass panels need to be monitored closely for these unsightly marks. Don’t forget about the lower half of the panels which might contain marks from children.



5) *Ashtrays/cigarette butts* - With smoking generally banned inside most public buildings and the common areas of many hotels, cigarette butts will likely be concentrated in one area: the front of the hotel. Besides emptying the ashtrays frequently and wiping clean any ashes, attendants must be diligent to sweep up the cigarette butts discarded on the ground by restaurant patrons, waiting guests and bored taxi drivers. Keep in mind that 80% of the American public does not smoke, and most of these guests find smoking refuse to be offensive and unsightly. Failure to keep ashtrays clean and entrances free of butts is an instant turn-off for most guests and conveys an image that Management does not care about cleanliness.

4) *Replenish toilet paper* - It is important for attendants to remember that a roll of toilet paper can be used pretty quickly, especially during a busy time. There should always be an extra roll in each stall at all times to prevent any awkward situations for the guests. Have public area attendants check on restrooms hourly to refill toilet paper and paper towel dispensers and check on sinks and soap containers.

3) *Garbage* - Similar to the challenge that housemen face on the guest floors, public area attendants must be mindful of random bits of garbage scattered around. This includes garbage left in plants, dropped on the floor and ground outside, or left on tables and credenzas. The best way to combat this is to constantly be walking around with eyes wide open, especially on busy days. In the restrooms, the garbage cans must constantly be emptied. Special attention must be paid to restrooms used near the bar area and function spaces as they will be used more frequently and can be prone to overflowing garbage. Sometimes in a matter of five minutes a freshly emptied garbage receptacle may be full again after a meeting’s coffee break. Lastly, outside garbage cans must constantly be monitored since not only guests, but others passing by, will deposit garbage there as well.



2) *Mop the floor* - Depending on a hotel’s protocol, it may or may not be an assigned duty of the daytime shift lobby attendants to mop the floors. However, when it is raining or snowing, the attendants should have a mop ready to soak up excess water that is tracked through the lobby by guests where carpeting is not present. Don’t forget that “walk-off” mats placed near entrances will have a saturation point at which they will no longer absorb moisture. Any guest that walks on a saturated mat will track the water onto any non-porous

service at the end of the mat, thus creating a prime environment for potential slip and fall accidents. Change out saturated mats, place “wet floor” signs near entrances, and frequently mop dry moist areas in the lobby during these periods.

1) *Clean toilets* - There is never an excuse for a soiled toilet. It is one of the biggest turn-offs for guests in a hotel. Constant monitoring of the restrooms must include toilet checks to look not only at the top of the seat but to lift it up and look underneath as well. An area to watch for is also on the floor in the front and sides of the toilet and, in the men’s room, on the sides of the urinal and the floor below for any splashes.

Being mindful of these key points can set the tone for a guest’s stay as they arrive. First impressions really are everything and keeping the lobby area immaculate will easily clue in patrons about what lies within. Clean and inviting public areas speak for themselves. ✧

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