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# MANAGEMENT

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# Housekeeping best practices help improve productivity

By David W. Heath  
HM COLUMNIST

I've always enjoyed collecting good ideas. Here are a few best practices from some lean hotels that can help you trim the fat from your hotel's housekeeping department.

**Level the playing field.** Ask any guestroom attendant and

they'll tell you that it takes much more time and effort to clean a checkout room than a stayover. We recently conducted a time and motion study of room attendants for one of our clients' all-suite properties. We observed 60 rooms being cleaned (30 checkouts and 30 stayovers). On average, it took 43 minutes

to clean a checkout room, but it took just 23 minutes on average to clean a stayover room.

Room attendants at this hotel dreaded heavy checkout days when their workload (in terms of time required) often increased by as much as 80 percent. When possible, the manager reduced the number

of rooms assigned—reducing productivity. Conversely, on days with few checkouts, room attendants found themselves trying to stretch five hours of work to fill their eight-hour day.

Guestroom credit values were adjusted so that room attendants received twice the credits for cleaning a checkout room than

for a stayover room. Daily credit quotas were adjusted to fill the standard eight-hour shift. Room attendants could work at a comfortable pace no matter what the mix of checkouts and stayovers. The shift resulted in an 11-percent increase in productivity.

**Trust but verify.** Back in the day, the average housekeeping department included inspectors tasked with following behind each room attendant to check every room they cleaned. The notion that a room attendant who has cleaned the same rooms for years can't be trusted to do so without constant supervision seems fairly absurd.

Industrial engineering principals tell us that properly documented random inspections produce higher quality than continuous inspection of every unit (or every room). A more efficient solution is to empower your room attendants to release their own rooms and employ a smaller quality-control team to randomly select rooms for inspection.

**Keep score and pay for performance.** It's important that quality inspections be recorded and shared with the employees involved. Tallying and analyzing scores enables management to pinpoint problem areas. Documented QC scores can also be used to identify employees who may be struggling to meet standards.

Documented quality scores should be used to recognize and reward superior performance. In one client hotel, room attendants receive an additional \$1 per hour for consistently completing their work assignments on time and maintaining excellent quality scores. Another property allows their room attendants to leave early and receive a full day's pay once they've completed their assignments so long as they maintain a certain quality score threshold. **HM**

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