

OPL 101

Designing an on-premises laundry room

Creating laundry with optimal workflow boosts employee efficiency while cutting expenses

BY JOSH STEINHARDT

The design and layout of an on-premises laundry room directly impact the workflow and productivity of the laundry staff. A "perfect" laundry room benefits not only the staff and the owner/operator, but also the cleanliness of the finished product.

Designing a laundry room with optimal workflow increases employee efficiency and decreases labor expenses, ultimately providing laundry managers with a long-term, cost-effective laundry facility.

Optimal workflow is best created when soiled linen begins processing on one side, and clean and folded are left on the other. The concept is similar to a cutting board; cross-contamination between raw meat and fresh produce is not desired. The same holds true for soiled linen coming in contact with finished, clean laundry.

The ideal laundry room also has ample space for employees to maneuver laundry carts and storage for linens. The end goal is to create a cost-effective, efficient operation. Because labor costs amount to the largest expense in an on-premises laundry, the ideal facility will require the least number of employees working for the shortest period of time.

No matter what point of the design process a laundry manager may be in, distributors and manufacturers can get involved, offering a range of services from preliminary drawing to outfitting a finalized laundry room.

Thus, there are many variables and conditions that affect how to approach a laundry room design. While there is no official first step when designing an on-premises laundry room, reputable distribu-

tors, manufacturers and architects will follow certain best-practice guidelines.

Discovering the Nature of the Laundry Facility

The general process starts with a list of questions whose answers help determine the amount and kind of laundry that will be processed at the facility.

- Questions may include:
- What types of materials are being processed?
 - How much laundry will be generated each day?
 - How many days will laundry be generated and processed?
 - How many hours each day will laundry be processed?

These basic questions help identify what processing capacity will be needed for the laundry operation. The answers likely will determine the ideal equipment mix for the operation, and identify any additional laundry equipment that may be needed.

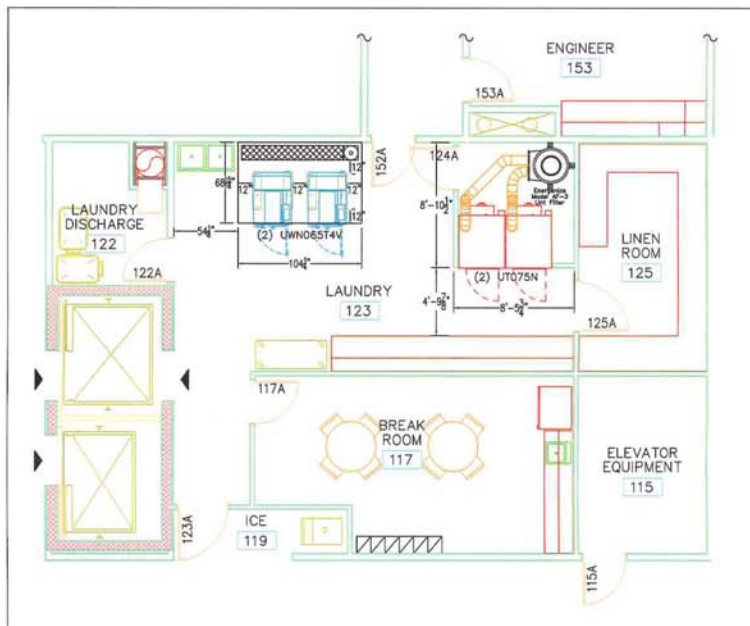
Laundry Room Logistics

After the laundry processing capacity has been determined, laundry design experts can begin to analyze the space allocated for the laundry room.

There are two different types of design projects: refurbishing an existing laundry room, and starting from scratch, also known as a "clean sheet" project.

When working within the confines of an existing laundry room, experts need to take into account the total space available and where the laundry room is located. This information will determine what type and size of equipment can be used.

For example, if the laundry facility is located on the second floor, soft-mount washer-extractors are required. Hard-mount washer-



Ideally, the laundry designer will be involved with all elements of a project from its inception, UniMac's Josh Steinhardt says. (Image: UniMac)

extractors only can be used when located on the lowest level and installed on concrete on top of hard-packed soil.

Next, the designer must determine if any equipment will be repurposed, and what utilities are currently available. The space may not be ideal because of pre-existing conditions, such as limited utilities, pillars that might interrupt employee workflow, or ceilings that may not be high enough to fit larger-capacity tumble dryers.

Working on a clean sheet project alleviates many of these infrastructure issues. "Perfect" laundry rooms do exist throughout the hotel industry; many manufacturers begin with layouts that have previously been designed effectively to create optimal workflow. When the laundry designer is a part of the project from its inception, he/she can specify that foundation, utility, room size/shape and door frames be designed to accommodate machines, and that other utility capabilities be added.

Whether for a remodel or a clean sheet, designers also need to take into consideration other potential equipment that will go in the laundry room besides washer-extractors or tumble dryers.

Depending on the industry (hospitality, healthcare, etc.) or the requirements of the operation itself, many items come into play: folding tables, ironers, laundry carts, soak sinks, storage racks and more.

New Technology

To help plan for all of the necessary equipment, some manufacturers utilize advanced software systems that provide layouts of the laundry room based on the facility's current building specifications. Some systems even allow

the perfect laundry room has an optimal workflow and cuts down on labor costs and increases efficiency by helping ensure that the equipment is continually in operation, with little downtime.

A laundry room cannot run at maximum efficiency if employees have a hard time using the equipment properly. Employees have the potential to get injured due to overexertion in an unsafe or inconvenient work environment.

Laundry designers must also adhere to local regulations. For example, if a fire suppression system is mandated within the laundry facility, designers need to know exactly where sprinkler heads are placed. Once aware, designers will make sure they do not place a dryer directly beneath the sprinkler so the heat does not set off the system.

As with any construction project, achieving the perfect laundry room takes time and the support of a knowledgeable team. Consider working with a partner that can help guide and design an on-premises laundry room with the ideal workflow. ALN

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the customer to see his or her future laundry room with 3-D renderings. These renderings offer the on-premises laundry manager a better feel for the size and spatial layout of the room. The design can then be tweaked based on the manager's feedback.

Special Considerations

Laundry design experts must also be mindful of human requirements and local regulations.

Staff requirements to consider include personal safety, a layout that doesn't require overreaching for equipment, or overexertion, and ease of use. As previously stated,



The laundry room should have ample space for employees to maneuver carts. (Image: UniMac)



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