

# A Better Way to Manage Your Laundry Operations



Advanced controls help monitor efficiency.

By Neel Shah

Laundry is a critical component of hotel operations and ultimately, essential to guest satisfaction. But with so many other components of hotel operation requiring management's attention, sometimes the details of laundry operations can go unsupervised.

Lack of management presence can lead to inefficient laundry operations and the mishandling of laundry, leading to an increase in payroll, utility and product costs, thereby reducing profitability.

Growing up as the son of a hotel owner, I saw first hand how scenarios such as this have occurred. For example, labor accounts for 50 percent of the cost to operate a laundry. With that in mind it's easy to see why it makes sense for management to monitor staff activity. For me there's tremendous value to being able to pull a report from the washer's control and quickly identify when laundry cycles started and ended. If I see too much idle time between cycles, I know staff is not working efficiently. Likewise, I'm looking for when cycles are started each day, starting cycle times should be within minutes of employees punching in to start their work day. For added efficiency during busy times, I can even program the control to start a load at a certain time in the morning automatically. This saves me over a half hour of payroll per day at each property, because my laundry attendant arrives in the morning as the first loads of wash are being completed, not started.

As an owner, I'm also always concerned about making sure guests receive high quality linens. Advanced controls make it possible for me to verify whether laundry policies that impact this quality are being followed across multiple hotels. Again, I can generate a report that shows information, such as when a cycle was rapid advanced or whether the machines were under loaded. Rapid advance

seems like a minor issue, but the result to finished quality is quite major. Linens might hit the floor with stains, poorly cleaned, not as soft, or smelling strongly of chemicals. In addition to poor quality for guests, such continued mistreatment of the linens will cause them to wear out sooner. With the report, I can identify if incorrect cycles or shortcuts are impacting the cleanliness of the linens. This is essential, especially when it comes to customer satisfaction. A customer will likely complain if linens are dirty, rough or smelling heavily of bleach. That's something they will remember about a hotel, and they are less likely to return if things relating to their comfort were an issue.

I also see great value in having the ability to customize cycles. When I want terry cloth cleaned differently than a duvet or decorative pillow covers, I pre-set the wash settings. I can also adjust the chemicals to determine if I want a prewash or more than one rinse. Customized cycles are essential because different fabrics demand different care. With customization, I can ensure the fabrics are being treated properly, which reduces my replacement expenses significantly.

Laundry technologies are a significant investment, and as with any large purchase, it's important to make sure machines are well maintained. That's why it's a huge benefit that my machines' controls alert me when they need maintenance. On the display or in a report, the control automatically gives me a maintenance reminder. And when service is required, it offers troubleshooting options directly from

the control panel. If I can't fix the issue, the control provides me with my local distributor's contact information so I can begin the repair process. All this means quicker service and reduced down time.



Shown here is UniMac's UniLine control, which can be set into multiple languages, designed to keep track of laundry operations, and measure worker productivity and efficiency.

As a hotel owner, it's important to monitor every component of my business, but it's impossible to be everywhere all the time. Taking advantage of technologies that help you run your business more efficiently can help combat this issue. The most important aspect though, is that these technologies provide a peace of mind in that the details of laundry operations are being continuously monitored for efficiency, thereby allowing me to focus on other areas of the hotels and my other businesses. **ALB**

Neel Shah is the president of Hotel Evolution, a hotel management company, and also the owner of four hotels: Hampton Inn and Suites, Scottsboro, Ala.; Holiday Inn Express and Suites, Newberry, S.C.; Hilton Garden Inn, Atlanta Airport, Ga.; and Hilton Garden Inn, Columbia, S.C. He can be reached at (648) 514-2340 or [Neel@HotelEvolution.Net](mailto:Neel@HotelEvolution.Net).