

Laundry:

DIY laundry anyone?

AN IN-HOUSE LAUNDRY MIGHT SEEM LIKE A MONEY SAVER. IT SOUNDS A GOOD IDEA - BUY YOUR OWN LINEN AND HAVE A LITTLE LAUNDRY. THE REALITY IS FAR DIFFERENT. HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Cost of equipment

Good laundry gear is expensive and you'll need to over-cater. If a machine breaks down you'll need to be able to process without it.

Cost of linen

Generally speaking you'll need three sets of sheets and pillowslips for each bed. Then you'll want three of each towel item for each guest at maximum capacity. Because you'll own and service your own linen you just cannot afford to ever run out.

Cost of staff. You'll need full cover with staff that know what they are doing. An untrained operator can ruin a third of your linen in one day.

Loss of hair

Do you need the extra stress? Is managing a laundry what you are good at? Will you be in serious trouble if someone overheats the sheets and they all shrink so much they are unusable?

So now I've scared you, read on. You can run an in-house laundry. Indeed if you're a single motel you can get away with simply having good equipment, space, and time. So let's look at some choices.

In-house laundry of sheets and towels

You buy all your own sheets, towels and whatever else you use and process it all in-house. Whatever your size you'll need plenty of capacity, back up equipment and, importantly, a way of flattening sheets.

If you're a smaller motel and you have time, a simple large press can work. You simply buy the right sheets, fold them carefully and press them folded. Depending on how fussy you are you might be happy with no ironing at all but you will need to tumble dry only and fold flat quickly.

Towelling only

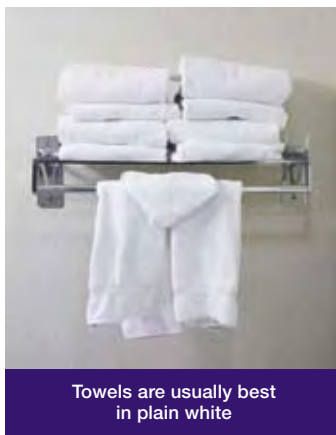
Another option is to take on the ownership and processing of your towelling goods only as they are easier to service and require no pressing. Good quality commercial washers and dryers will suffice. Then you hire your sheets and slips from a commercial laundry company who will send you crisp flat sheets when you need them.

Hire it all

Ask around and get some quotes. Then compare hire costs against the cost of goods, the interest on the money tied up in goods and equipment, staff costs, time, bother and so on. Many decide to simply hire it from the experts.

If you still want to do some laundry in-house you'll need to buy the goods and know how to launder them.

What to buy: Sheets - we recommend a 50/50 cotton/polyester mix as this will last longer, dry quicker and wrinkle less than cotton. Good commercial quality blends will not 'pill' and can feel very much like cotton. Pilling is caused by cotton threads working loose and getting caught up in



the stronger polyester thread and eventually forming a little ball. A good commercial sheet will have a 'singeing' process that seals the sheet for the first few washes until this problem is eliminated.

A 4+ pill rate is good

A standard sheet is around 180 thread count (percale) and a better one is around 250 (sometimes called supercale). A special one might be over 300 thread count. With mattresses getting thicker the sizes of sheets have crept up to cope so beware of small sheets.

Towels - best in plain white; they don't fade, can be bleached if needed, provide consistency, are easier to launder and are cheaper.

Good commercial towels should be ring spun (rather than a courser feeling open-end yarn) and 100% cotton. Top grade ones will use Egyptian cotton that will always feel softer and are usually made heavier too.

Around 450gm is a basic towel, 500-600 a premium one, and 600-plus a top grade. Then there are larger 'spa' and 'bathsheet sizes'. Alternatives like bamboo have not held up to the demands of commercial use.

How to care - some generic advice: always put fresh linen on the bottom of a pile so it revolves in use. Never store on concrete floors, timber or other porous surfaces.

Towel care: first wash of white towels should be at a high temperature (80-100°C), with a generous dose of good quality detergent, followed by a cold rinse. This will shrink the product and lock the fabric loops together. Then remove any loose threads.

Always rinse well

Tumble drying helps fluff up the towels. If you sundry use white towels and a 15-minute tumble at end.

Limit whitening products to lengthen life. Approved specialty chemicals can be used instead of high wash temperatures to sanitise linen.

Sheet care. Polycotton (if using cotton seek advice of supplier) sheets - under load the washing machine to about 80-85% of full capacity. This will help prevent excessive creasing and greying of the fabric.

Do not over dry

Think of the polyester portion as plastic - if you heat it up it will wrinkle, shrivel and melt. Dry at little more than 100° and don't leave in the sun too long - excess sun will damage the thread and turn the sheet floppy.

Properly cared for a good towel should last at least one hundred washes and sheets should last many hundreds. But if you overheat them, subject them to excess chemicals and plain don't take care, you'll ruin them real quick. ■

Tim Monck - Mason has a long career in sales and marketing and joined Britannia Textiles a year ago. The fact that he knew nothing about linen at the time is of no consequence as between them his work colleagues must be the most experienced laundry/linen supplier folk in the land. He learned quickly. What you might not know is that he is also a professional writer and used to work as a copywriter for large corporates until he got terribly bored.