



FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE

Great Impressions Start with the Restrooms

BY DAN SILVER

As visitors flock to open house weekends, hundreds of potential students and their families are exploring each campus. Many administrators imagine that what will leave the biggest impression is the new student housing, the well-equipped classrooms, and the state-of-the-art sports facilities.

In reality, it's quite likely to be the restrooms. When restrooms are clean, bright, and well-stocked, visitors walk away without giving them a second thought. However, a bad experience in a dirty, odor-filled, or poorly-stocked restroom could trigger viral comments across social media.

Numbers Tell the Tale

The Cascades 2015 U.S. School Restroom Survey revealed that 65% of respondents said that restrooms colored their perception about the overall quality of the school. Additionally, 60% advised prospective students to include restroom quality before deciding to enroll.

On the flip side, a recent study by Bradley Corporation reports that 77% of millennials say that they frequent specific businesses because their restrooms are clean and well-maintained.

What Constitutes a Cringeworthy Restroom?

According to a number of restroom industry surveys and studies, the biggest turnoffs are strong odors, clogged or unflushed toilets, and an overall unkempt, dirty appearance. Lack of soap, paper towels and toilet paper, and wet, slippery floors also rank as major irritations. The Bradley Corporation report also notes that

people will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid contact with dirty surfaces, such as flushing the toilet with their foot, using paper towels to close doors, or hovering over the toilet seat.

The Culprits Behind Most Odors

According to a Harris restroom survey, 83% of adults aged 18-34 say that odor contributes to their perception that the restroom is dirty. Even when the restroom looks clean, lingering odors send the signal that it is not. Where do these odors come from? In men's rooms, the obvious culprit is urine that dries on the floor, leaving material that feeds naturally occurring bacteria. The byproducts of these bacteria create the odors that greet visitors to the restroom. In women's rooms, odors may stem from used diapers or sanitary products in the trash or urine cross contamination from the men's room that occurs when the floors are mopped.

Perpetuating a Bad Situation

That quick mop at the end of the daily cleaning protocol may be doing more harm

than good. Urine that reaches the floor can find its way into hard-to-reach corners and penetrate porous surfaces like grout lines. A few passes with a mop are unlikely to eradicate all of the urine and bacteria on the floor; moreover, wetting the area can essentially reactivate the odor sources by adding moisture that bacteria thrive on.

A Two-Step Approach

To keep odors under control, all restroom surfaces first need to be deep cleaned, especially the floor. It's best to schedule deep cleans during off-peak hours. This timing allows the disinfectants enough time to do their work of killing odor-causing bacteria. The maintenance personnel should be sure to get a good application on porous surfaces like grout lines. After sufficient dwell time, the cleaner should rinse and extract the excess water. How often the restrooms are deep cleaned depends on traffic—and smell. If the restrooms consistently smell

fresh and clean, the deep cleaning schedule is probably adequate.

The second step to odor control is protecting the floor with urinal and restroom mats. Without mats in place to catch drips and splashes around urinals, these fluids end up on the floor and seep into grout lines. They can also be tracked into other areas of the restroom and beyond. A properly placed mat, however, will catch those splashes before they ever hit the floor.

Recent developments in the restroom supply industry have resulted in a new line of antimicrobial urinal and restroom mats. These mats prevent the growth of odor-causing bacteria and mold on the surface, and they have adhesive backings that keep them in place, so they don't shift out of position. In addition to their use near urinals, the mats can also be used in front of sinks and toilets, as well as under hand dryers and towel dispensers to absorb water and prevent the floor from becoming slippery.

In the Cascades Restroom survey, 90% of respondents said that hygiene was important to them and that restrooms are critical to their educational experience. Clean, bright, and well-supplied restrooms across the campus don't just help students stay healthy; they also send a powerful message about the university's concern for their well-being.

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Send the Right Message

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Important Steps to Creating Appealing Restrooms

Inspect and spot clean on a schedule: The best way to keep restrooms up to standard is to check and spot clean them as needed. A minimum cleaning protocol would include wiping down surfaces, removing trash, replacing supplies, and sweeping the floor. Most facilities monitor every hour; depending on traffic and use; during special events, a walk-through may be needed as frequently as every half hour.

Follow a checklist for daily cleaning: Daily cleaning picks up where the spot cleaning leaves off. The checklist should include disinfecting sinks, toilets, urinals, and other surfaces, as well as checking and restocking dispensers, removing trash, and mopping the floor.

Deep clean periodically: Every restroom requires a good scrub to remove soil buildup and residues in places that regular cleaning doesn't touch. Deep cleaning typically includes floors, walls, sinks, toilets, urinals, and stalls, along with vents, fans, and other hard-to-reach areas. It's especially important to treat porous surfaces like grout lines to remove odor-causing materials and bacteria.

Use antimicrobial adhesive-backed restroom mats: Antimicrobial restroom mats prevent odor-causing drips and splashes from reaching the floor. Restroom mats with adhesive backings won't shift out of position, and they stay in place during regular mopping, which cleans their surface and greatly extends

their useful lifespan. In addition to being placed at urinals, these mats can be used in front of sinks and toilets, as well as under hand dryers and towel dispensers to keep water from making the floor slippery.

Upgrade the fixtures: The fewer surfaces people have to touch in a restroom, the happier they are. That's why restrooms with automatic toilets and urinals, faucets and towel dispensers are preferred to those with traditional fixtures. No-touch fixtures keep restrooms cleaner, reduce water consumption, and conserve supplies.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dan Silver has been the Vice President of Product Development at New Pig since 2007, leading an award-winning group that thrives on fast-paced, insight-driven innovation. For more information, visit www.newpig.com.

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