

## **Protecting Your Reputation with Hygienic Paper Products**

Restrooms come in different shapes and sizes: big or small, bright or dimly lit, ornate or simple. But there's one thing that all restrooms should be – clean. Walking into a dirty public restroom can be off-putting to customers and guests. Unfortunately, it is a fairly common occurrence. From stall doors that won't lock to clogged toilets to dirty floors – a poorly maintained restroom can quickly turn customers away.

Restroom cleanliness is important to the overall health and success of a business. If a company wants to reflect quality service and clean and safe practices, the restroom must project this image as well. While the overall appearance should always be spotless (mopped floors, streak-free mirrors, unclogged toilets, etc.), hygiene products like paper towels and toilet paper should always be stocked in order to ensure a sanitary restroom – and protect an organization's brand and bottom line.

### **Restroom Perceptions**

The state of a business's restrooms speaks volumes to customers, who expect restrooms to meet basic requirements. For instance, restrooms should be clean smelling, well-stocked with high-quality essentials and visually appealing (updated, clean looking). However, many businesses let customers down when it comes to restrooms.

According to a 2015 survey by restroom fixture manufacturer Bradley Corp., two-thirds of Americans say they've had a particularly unpleasant experience in a public restroom due to the condition of the facilities<sup>1</sup>. The most frequently mentioned complaints are: a really bad smell, toilets that are clogged or not flushed and an overall appearance that's dirty, unkempt or old.

In addition to cleanliness, Americans' other top requests for a better restroom experience include more frequent stocking of supplies, greater access to touchless fixtures and positioning paper towels and trash cans near restroom doors so guests can use paper towels to avoid touching the exit door.

### **The Business Impact**

It's no secret that customers like a clean public restroom. Even a one-time incident involving a restroom can have a big impact on business. Bradley Corp.'s survey found that the majority of American consumers believe an unclean restroom indicates poor management (69 percent), lowers their opinion of the company (67 percent) and signifies that the business doesn't care

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bradleycorp.com/aboutus/pressrelease/101>

about customers (63 percent). If a customer encounters a restroom that does not meet their expectations, they may choose to take their business elsewhere.

But a poor experience can result in more than just one lost customer. Today, it's extremely easy for patrons to share their disappointment with a few quick keystrokes on social media and review sites such as Yelp and TripAdvisor. There are even numerous review apps available that allow customers to share their feedback regarding public restroom cleanliness, accessibility, design and more.

A scathing public review has far-reaching implications. A study conducted by Harvard Business School<sup>2</sup> revealed that a one-star increase in Yelp rating leads to a 5-9 percent increase in revenue. These reviews can range from food quality to the sanitary state of the business, including the restroom. To ensure reviews won't negatively impact revenue, it's up to businesses to provide a great experience for guests.

### **The Great Debate: Paper Towels vs. Hand Dryers**

Eighty percent of infections in the U.S. are transmitted by hand contact. Thus, it's important for restroom users to perform hand hygiene. Hand washing helps remove germs and reduce their spread to other people and surfaces.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), germs are more easily passed from wet skin than dry skin. Thus, hand hygiene should not only involve soap and water, but a means for properly drying hands. But which hand drying method is best?

There's a long-running debate about whether paper towels or hand dryers are the better solution. Today, there are numerous options available, from varying paper thicknesses to hand dryers that blow air upwards rather than downwards.

Although customer and employee preferences may vary, it's important for a facility manager to understand how to best promote hygiene. According to a recent study by the University of Westminster<sup>3</sup>, the air movement caused by jet air hand dryers actually spreads more germs – 1,300 times more than paper towels.

In the study, participants wearing gloves dipped their hands into a liquid containing a virus, and dried their hands using different methods. The study found that paper towels produced the lowest spread from hands to the surrounding environment when compared to warm air dryers

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facId=602417&facInfo=res>

<sup>3</sup> <http://europeantissue.com/pdfs/090618%20Westminster%20University%20Study%20key%20findings.pdf>

and jet air dryers, making them the most hygienic drying system. The results are attributed to the fact that paper towels remove water by absorption, create friction and produce little air movement, meaning that bacteria left on hands is not dispersed into the air

In addition to being more hygienic, paper towels are also more convenient. As Bradley Corp.'s survey highlights, paper towels are not only used for hand drying. Customers want access to paper towels so that they can exit restrooms without touching door handles, and undoing the hand hygiene they just performed.

### **Selecting the Best Paper Products**

Maintaining a clean reputation inside and outside the restroom requires careful selection of paper products. Facility managers should look for products that:

- Are durable – paper towels and toilet paper shouldn't fall apart as they're being used
- Expand – paper that expands when it is used improves performance
- Sanitize – today, paper technology enables paper to sanitize pipes and sumps to reduce blockage
- Break down quickly - paper that breaks down quickly when it comes into contact with water in pipes further reduces the opportunity for clogged drains
- Are absorbent – paper towels that are thick and absorb quickly result in less waste
- Are soft – comfort is important, and paper towels that are soft will keep hands in good shape while presenting a better image to guests
- Are environmentally friendly – paper products that are made sustainably can help conserve forestry, reduce CO2 emissions and increase renewable resources

In order to build customer trust and loyalty, and grow a five-star Yelp review business, it's important for an organization to maintain clean restrooms and stock them with key, high-quality essentials. These include strong, dependable and useful paper products such as paper towels and toilet paper. It doesn't matter if a restroom has a crystal chandelier and marble countertops; if the toilet is backed up and the smell is unbearable, or the paper towels are nowhere in sight, it will lead to a bad restroom experience, and potentially a negative review.

Taking the time to research and understand the benefits of restroom paper products, along with the many other sanitary requirements a restroom needs, is crucial for every business owner. Doing so will protect customers – and an organization's bottom line.