The practice of resort housekeeping is a critical component of how our owners/guests experience a particular resort and enjoy the overall vacation experience. The amount of resources dedicated to it—whether human or monetary—will have a far-reaching impact on its success.

Our task force created this best practices guide to highlight some of the key strategic items that each resort property needs to consider when developing or improving operations. First, everyone should recognize that this process of evaluating housekeeping should be ongoing—a continual striving for perfection, as each operation team improves upon quality by paying close attention to detail and applying key standards. We also realize that every property is unique in its layout, available storage, and facilities, so these tips will need to be tailored to best fit your environment. Decisions regarding equipment, cleaning supplies, linens, and in-room kits will vary greatly, too, depending upon budgets, staff resources, and other key factors.

Key Factors for All Operations
These factors must first be considered before creating a plan:

- Resort location,
- Property size,
- Annual budget,
- Staffing levels,
- Physical lay-out,
- Storage facilities,
- Unit size and variety,
- Amenities,
- Contractual agreements,
- Capital reserves, and
- Demographics of owners/guests.

There are many different kinds of housekeeping contractual arrangements as well, but this article will focus more on the actual housekeeping procedures from an operations perspective.

Standard Housekeeping Procedures for Vacation Ownership Properties
Most locations split the responsibilities for room turnover cleaning into three areas of focus: initial preparation, focused cleaning, and inspection. These three areas are assigned in a variety of ways—once again adapted to best suit a specific resort property.

In general, the initial preparation includes a first check of rooms to be cleaned to (1) identify any maintenance issues and (2) deliver linens, welcome kits/sundries, and disposable cleaning supplies. In some cases, this responsibility for preparation is handled by the same person or position that does the inspecting after the actual cleaning.

The actual functions and duties of cleaning then falls upon the housekeeper or housekeeping staff (whether in-house or contract staff). Often, an established amount of time is allocated for the entire cleaning of a unit or villa—sometimes as efficient as 45 minutes to an hour per unit, depending upon unit size.

The final step of careful inspection is completed after the housekeeper has completed the room cleaning. This is a very important final opportunity to ensure the room is properly cleaned, that all appliances, electronics, lights and other items are in proper working condition, and that the best possible first impression will be made upon the next guests to occupy this space.

Prep Work: Necessary Supplies for Cart/Caddy
This particular section was the topic of much discussion among our task force members. In creating our final list of supplies, it is important to note this should be adapted to meet the needs of each specific property and its budgeted resources.

Key Contents (to be modified for caddy):

- Commercial grade vacuum
- Mop and bucket
- Sponges
- Clean rags
- All purpose cleaner
• Lemon oil for wood furniture
• Glass cleaner
• Shower, tub, tile and mildew cleaner
• Broom and dust pan
• Extra trash liners
• Cleaning gloves
• Extra light bulbs

* Use vacuum cleaners with strong suction, adjustable brushes, beater bars, good filtration (1 micron), and an enclosed filter bag. Carpets act as large flat air filters, trapping dust particles and other allergens that can be blown back into the air during vacuuming. Using HEPA filters will ensure that these pollutants stay in the filter bag, and out of the air your guests breathe.

Having a uniform punch-list of all items to check once inside the unit (electronics, lights, HVAC filters, etc.) will keep the process very efficient.

Room Entry Guideline Recommendations

All staff should be well-trained on protocol for entry into guestrooms or units. It is important to follow these same guidelines, regardless of whether or not you believe a specific unit/villa is occupied or vacant.

Our experts recommend that upon arrival at the guest door, staff members should knock loudly followed by a firm verbal announcement identifying yourself as “housekeeping/front desk/maintenance”. Wait a minute, and then repeat with same two knocks followed by verbal announcement. If it appears that the room is vacant, then place key in door and partially open door, once again identifying yourself with a loud enough voice to be heard clearly in areas furthest away from front door. If your announcement does not get a response, then proceed into room.

As you enter the unit, begin checking exterior and interior lighting; look for any dripping faucets in kitchen or bathrooms. Check dishwasher and kitchen sink for any dirty dishes; if so, place in dishwasher and start the clean cycle. Before you begin cleaning, make sure you have the supplies and cleaning equipment you will need (see section above), and then place clean linens and disposable supplies inside the units/rooms.

We recommend starting the process in the bedroom. Some executive housekeepers recommend always starting in kitchens, as this room usually takes the most time and energy; others recommend that cleaning be done room-to-room, moving left to right or right to left. Any of these recommendations will work equally well at any given property—just be consistent in how you train your staff.

Cleaning the Units

Bedrooms
• Strip and make-up beds as necessary.
• Clean windows with appropriate cleaner and wipe off window sills and door casings.
• Wipe television screen with appropriate cleaner.
• Dust and clean wood furniture with lemon oil.

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