



MAINTENANCE AND FACILITIES

by Dan Silver

Great Impressions Start with Your Restrooms

Picture this: It's open house weekend and hundreds of potential students and their families are exploring your campus. What do you think will leave the biggest impression? Your new student housing? Well-equipped classrooms? State-of-the-art sports facilities? Actually, it's quite likely to be your restrooms.

If your restrooms are clean, bright, and well-stocked, your visitors walk away without giving them a second thought. However, a bad experience in a dirty, odor-filled, or poorly-stocked restroom could trigger comments across social media faster than you can say "Facebook."

Numbers Tell the Tale

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

On the flipside, a recent study by Bradley Corporation reports that 77% of millennials say 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 your 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 your 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 your floor; moreover, wetting the area can essentially reactivate the odor sources by adding moisture that bacteria thrive on.

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

You Need a Two-Step Approach

To keep odors under control, you first need to deep clean all restroom surfaces, but especially the floor. When you do a deep clean, it's a good idea to schedule it during off-peak hours. This allows your disinfectants enough time to do their work killing odor-causing bacteria. Be sure to get a good application on porous surfaces like grout lines.

After sufficient dwell time, rinse and extract the excess water. How often you deep clean depends on traffic—and your nose. If your restrooms consistently smell fresh

and clean, your 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, they end up on the floor and seep into grout lines. They can also be tracked into other areas of the restroom and beyond. But a properly placed mat will catch those splashes before they ever hit the floor.

Recent developments in the restroom supply industry has resulted in a new line of antimicrobial urinal and restroom mats. These mats

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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, and under hand dryers and towel dispensers to absorb water and prevent the floor from becoming slippery.

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—especially during special events—you may need to do a walk-through as frequently as every half hour.

Follow a checklist for daily cleaning: Daily cleaning picks up where your spot cleaning leaves off. Your 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 stay in place during regular mopping, which cleans their surface and greatly extends their useful lifespan. In addition to urinals, these mats can be used in front of sinks and toilets, and under hand dryers and towel dispensers to keep water from making the floor slippery.

Upgrade your fixtures: The fewer surfaces people have to touch in a restroom, the better they like it. 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.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Dan Silver has led an energetic group as Vice President of Product Development since 2007, the New Pig Product Team. They are an award-winning group that thrives on fast-paced, insight-driven innovation. For more information, visit newpig.com.



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