



Royal Jersey Laundry Enhances Linen Inventory Management for London's Prestigious 5-Star Hotels With HID Acuity and LinTRAK RFID Tag Solution

Every year, millions of international and domestic travelers visit London for business, pleasure and tourism. The metropolis is thriving, with a wide range of accommodation available to cater for every budget. At the top end, London boasts twenty-one 5-star hotels — the second highest number in a city in the world — with these properties demanding the very best quality linen for guests.

Founded in 1915 by Walter Westcott — and now owned by his grandson, Chris Westcott — Royal Jersey Laundry specializes in servicing the luxury hotel sector and is one of the few cleaners able to do so at the scale and quality its customers require.

Based in a 25,000 square-foot, purpose-built facility in Dagenham, east of London — totally rebuilt in 2021 at a cost of £20 million after a fire destroyed the original premises — Royal Jersey Laundry works with most 5-star hotels in London and counts The Dorchester, The Carlton Tower Jumeriah, The Peninsula and The Ritz as clients, along with Estelle Manor in Oxford and Atalian Servest, the outsourcer who provides the linen to the Caledonian Sleeper overnight train service between London and Edinburgh.

Supporting the 5-star segment is demanding given the constant communication required between hotel and laundry, customers' exacting standards and the range of items that have to be cleaned. This includes duvets, sheets, towels and bath robes — as one might expect — but also extra smaller items like foot mats, drink coasters, shaving towels, tea cozies, along with dry cleaning for guests.

"Customer service and attention to detail is really what sets us apart. We had one hotel phone us up to say a guest's child had lost his teddy bear. We went through the hotel's linen for the whole day and found it had got caught in a sheet when housekeeping changed a bed. So, we sent it back in a taxi. The national laundry chains would just never do something like that," says Barry Quinn, Royal Jersey Laundry's General Manager.

The workload is therefore high. Royal Jersey Laundry operates 24/7, employs 150 staff and caters for 550,000 pieces per week. This equates to a whopping 40 tons of washing per day which is managed by various departments: wash house, production and finishing, dry cleaning and transportation.

CHALLENGE

In contrast with budget and mid-level hotels, a key differentiator with the 5-star segment is that the hotels prefer to use linen they own. Around 80% have 300-thread-count Egyptian cotton bedding, some choose softer 400, with occasionally the top rooms and suites fitted with superior silky smooth 600-thread count. Similarly, most hotels use quality 650 grams per square meter (gsm) towels.

"Luxury hotels keep five sets of everything — in the jargon it's called Five Par Stock," explains Quinn. "One set will be on the bed, one at the laundry, one stripped and two on the shelf in housekeeping for emergencies given items do get stolen or damaged."

This requires significant investment. "An average 300-bed hotel will have around 30,000 items of linen which will cost around £250,000," says James Lincoln, Royal Jersey Laundry's managing director. "The volume of linen is so high and it's always moving such that accurate inventory control was a major challenge verging on the impossible."

This was because everything was done manually. Staff at the laundry would literally check items off ironing machines — a totally inefficient process and prone to error — and log the quantities on pieces of paper.

Despite housekeeping doing monthly counts — with people employed to do this job — the hotels themselves also didn't know precisely where items were either. "On occasion, we'd get a hotel phoning to say they'd lost pillowcases, which meant we'd emergency wash more and do an extra delivery, only to be told a few hours later that they'd be found in the linen room," adds Lincoln.

"We actually started using RFID to solve management issues about 10 years ago but the system deployed was poor, hence switching to HID. It is the web-based access offered and the ability to immediately see where items are — and the quantity — which is so crucially helpful. It takes the guesswork out of the whole process."

James Lincoln
Managing Director
Royal Jersey Laundry

Solutions:

- LinTRAK™ RFID tags
- Acuity™ software

The operational overhead for the laundry was exacerbated as the various linen items from the different hotels had to be kept separate, too. "Linen is everywhere: on beds, in cupboards, in transit and at the laundry — yet no one had full insight into stock levels and, when things went missing — which often happened — typically we'd get blamed," says Lincoln.

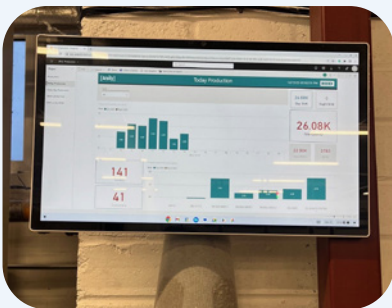
Furthermore, with so many customer deliveries each day, it was easy for simple errors to creep in, such as a driver omitting to drop off one out of 12 trolleys to a particular site. "We're effectively two businesses: the laundry itself and a logistics operation. We run a mixed fleet of lorries and electric vans, which nip in and out of London three times a day picking up and delivering garments for hotel customers using us for guest work," adds Lincoln.

SOLUTION

To address these problems, Royal Jersey Laundry has installed a real-time IoT laundry linen inventory management system from HID combining LinTRAK RFID laundry tags, table scanners, one cabinet scanning unit, along with cloud-based Acuity software.

The discrete LinTRAK tags are either sewn into bed and bath linen items by laundry staff themselves — using a modified sewing machine — or the linen manufacturers do this for the hotels at the point of sale. Some hotels also use LinTRAK tags to manage staff uniforms and restaurant linen like napkins and tablecloths.

Around 40% of the laundry's hotel customers have now transitioned to the HID system. Once cleaned, their linen is packed into dedicated trolleys and the whole unit is scanned in seconds with the RFID cabinet station. This happens on a daily basis. Items are automatically counted and delivery notes generated along with billing information. HID's Acuity platform integrates with the laundry's Sage accounting software so that the invoices can be generated. Hotel customers then connect to the system via a portal so they have clear visibility of their own stock levels. For those customers yet to adopt the RFID approach, manual counting is still done and the information input into Acuity, too.



"Innovation is something we've always looked to introduce at the laundry," explains Lincoln. "We actually started using RFID to solve management issues about 10 years ago but the system deployed was poor, hence switching to HID. It is the web-based access offered and the ability to immediately see where items are — and the quantity — which is so crucially helpful. It takes the guesswork out of the whole process."



RESULT

The implementation of HID LinTRAK textile tags and the Acuity software platform has radically changed how Royal Jersey Laundry operates, with a range of benefits realized:

- Better use of people resources. Staff no longer have to waste time on dull and resource-intensive activities such as counting linen and have been redeployed to more productive work. Scanners at each station and computers on key equipment like ironers and towel-folding machines enable this. "For example, the ironing machine will spit out 10 sheets, the staff at the station will log this for a particular hotel by tapping on a computer screen, put the sheets in the trolley and that's it — it's done," says Lincoln.
- Enhanced reliability and productivity. The laundry operates more efficiently as tagged items can never be lost or misplaced, and the process of scanning results is fast for all items. Similarly, the benefit on-site at hotels is considerable as housekeeping staff avoid wasting time on stock counting. Since the fire, Royal Jersey Laundry has expanded its use of HID technology.
- Increased security of expensive linen assets. While theft of linen at 5-star hotels is the exception rather than the rule, it does happen, with RFID tagging enabling hotels to better control and monitor their expensive bedding and towel investments.
- Better visibility of stock levels. As hotels know exactly where linen is and the quantity available, it means they are better positioned to aid customers day-to-day and can easily cater for peak demand, such as during big events and when rooms are sold out. The Acuity portal gives them access to delivery notes, all billing information and real-time inventory status.
- Responsive customer service. Access to in-depth data generated by the RFID tags means that Royal Jersey Laundry is able to quickly answer any customer queries.
- Fast return on investment. Royal Jersey Laundry estimates that since the installation of the HID equipment in 2019, the system has paid for itself given the efficiency and productivity gains. "Our hotel clients make a huge investment in linen," says Lincoln. "Capitalizing on the HID LinTRAK and Acuity solution, we give them complete transparency about where their linen is in the cleaning and delivery cycle. There are just no grey areas anymore."

Looking to the future, the plan is to introduce barcodes at each hotel site so that drivers can scan trolleys as they are delivered — rather than using paperwork as is currently done — with the HID system preventing erroneous deliveries. This then provides a complete end-to-end management process from laundry to client and back again.

[Learn more about HID's real-time linen inventory management solutions here.](#)

