How to make sure that the hygiene of your bathroom will keep your customers coming back, TIME and TIME again!

By: Paul Wiffen, David Potter and Gavin Buckett

"Did you know that 90% of unhappy customers will never tell you the reason why they will not return to your business?"

—James Grima
CEO - Positive Training Solutions

It often amazes me how much time, money and effort goes into making the “front of house” look fantastic, while no consideration is given to the “back of house” or public amenities. I recently met David Potter and Paul Wiffen from Impact Hygiene. They specialise in the cleaning of bathrooms in restaurants, fast food chains, factories and other businesses. They were both so passionate about what they did that I asked them to prepare an article on bathroom hygiene, as I believe that it can make or break a food businesses reputation.

My wife Angela (Joint Director of The Gourmet Guardian) is also a chef. When we go out for dinner, she judges the restaurant equally on the food and the bathroom facilities. One “Three hat restaurant” in Melbourne comes to mind. I had possibly the best meal of the year at this restaurant, but Angela won’t go back because of the bathrooms. Fortunately for me, I didn’t need “to go”, but it is at the back of my mind what she might have seen.

This document is a combination of helpful tips and information that Paul has prepared for clients of The Gourmet Guardian and subscribers to Simplot Australia’s Food 4 Thought magazine, and I feel that is vital “Must Read” for all food businesses and businesses that have public amenities. Of course if you want professionals to take care of your bathrooms for you, you can contact Paul and David directly.

What does Hygienic really mean?
Firstly some definitions

- **Cleanliness**: Relates to the scientific study or principles of cleanliness
- **Promoting Health**: Promoting health or cleanliness
- **Germ-Free**: Clean or free from disease-causing microorganisms

Presenting a Positive Restroom Experience for your Clients

One of the key expectations of customers is having a clean front of house and Hygienic restrooms. **That’s an absolute must.**

A dirty restroom can say a lot about the kitchen and the way everything else in the place is handled. It’s a statement that says “I don’t care about you as my customer.”

If your restrooms are **Hygienic** and well maintained you may well attract large numbers of customers that specifically stop into your business buy your products AND to use your restrooms.

Parents are a key target group for you to concentrate on, because they seek Hygienic restrooms where they can take their young children.
If you’re not doing a great job of keeping your restroom in tip-top shape, chances are the competition down the street is…

Your business will be rewarded with a lot of customers who refuse to go to a business without hygienic restrooms.

**Restroom Tips**

Most businesses have a planned cleaning schedule for their kitchens, however you will need to ensure that your restrooms are included on the schedule.

While having a cleaning schedule is important, that alone is not always sufficient. Your employees also need to be ready to respond to various factors. For example, bad weather days can lead customers to track in mud, or a hot day could see a huge influx in customers using the restroom to refresh themselves, meaning more frequent cleaning and restocking could be necessary.

A restroom cleaning checklist or monitoring form should be developed to accompany the cleaning schedule that highlights the points that the employees need to check. As a minimum, restroom facilities should be checked for any issues a minimum of two times per shift and the checklist completed and signed by the employee responsible. However checking isn’t the only task they should do. They should also be trained to clean and correct any problems they might see when they themselves use the restroom.

The checklists and cleaning schedules are the most important factor in restroom cleanliness. All food businesses should have a written procedure that details how a restroom is cleaned, as well as how often. The checklist that is prepared needs to be referenced in the procedure and must be visible to employees.

**Developing your Checklist**

Before you start, you must make sure your employees have the correct equipment and supplies to make the cleaning process more efficient. There is no point telling your team what to do, if they don’t have appropriate equipment to conduct the tasks allocated.
A restroom checklist for employees should include

- Checking supplies of toilet paper, soap and paper towels, as well as emptying rubbish bins and cleaning any wet spots on the floor
- Sinks must be cleaned and the handles checked to ensure they are working.
- Equipment, such as hand driers, should be tested regularly and repaired if necessary
- Checks to make sure the bathroom smells inviting
- Automatic air fresheners should be checked and replaced if needed
- The overall condition of the restroom. If paint is chipping off the wall or the floor is in disrepair that defeats the purpose of cleaning the restroom

A common mistake is not making sure everything in the restroom works. A broken hand drier alone can ruin a bathroom that is otherwise perfect. If everything else is stocked and ready to go, but the hand drier doesn’t work and they’re out of paper towels, then somebody can’t complete their hygiene ritual inside that restroom. This results in a poor customer’s experience and therefore their perception of your business is a negative one.

Finally a checklist must assign a particular employee or shift position to the task of cleaning of the restroom. Cleaning restrooms is a task that employees will not want to do, so the manager or supervisor will need to schedule the cleaning. This way, there will be no argument between employees over who is responsible for the cleaning, if you remove the

What Products should you use?

HAND TOWEL Ideally a high-quality, no-touch delivery system that dispenses one towel at a time to users, is a cost-effective way to add a better, higher-quality product and system while improving restroom hygiene and cleanliness. Customers generally prefer touching only the towel they need.

TOILET PAPER Toilet paper or tissue is another area that can be improved to deliver better hygiene, reduce waste and provide a high-quality product at no additional cost. By installing an enclosed bathroom tissue system that dispenses one two-ply sheet of tissue at a time, customers are provided a more sanitary alternative to standard roll bathroom tissue.

Unlike standard roll tissue, an enclosed system protects against dirt collecting on an exposed roll. These high-capacity systems provide as much bathroom tissue as four standard rolls. They also eliminate stub rolls and cores and reduce waste through controlled dispensing.

HAND SOAP Hand soap needs to be in a liquid form that that can be dispensed. Bars of soap are unhygienic and a major cause of cross contamination in food businesses. From a customer’s point of view, soap can generate many complaints. Watery soap that clogs dispensers or leaves residue on countertops detracts from restroom cleanliness, while a thicker, concentrated soap provides a rich feel, adding to an overall perception of quality that will improve the image of restrooms.

AIR FRESHENERS Odour and air quality rank highly on the list of customer expectations, so make sure you counter odour problems with a cost-effective, flexible system that lets you program dispensing intervals to fit your facility’s needs, however before you go and install an expensive system, a word of warning. Did you know that odour problems can be caused by poor hygiene systems in the restroom? While air fresheners attempt to mask over other problems, if you have restroom odour problems you may need to seek advice from a professional hygiene company.
potential for arguing away from the employees it’s more likely to get done. Of course, if you rotate the responsibilities through all employees, you will have less confrontations and a equitable workplace.

**Solutions**

A professional service provider can support your ‘in-house’ cleaning systems, they offer a series of programs designed to minimise all of the hygiene dangers prevalent in your restrooms, promoting the well being of the customers you serve and the employees who provide that service. PLUS your employees will be thankful that they don’t need to spend time cleaning up other peoples mess.

A professional service can also assist you with chemical products, soaps, sanitisers, odour control systems, hygiene systems, sanitation units and no-touch cleaning systems.

**Feedback**

You must encourage your customers to provide feedback if they are unhappy with the condition of the restroom, as something may have happened in between staff inspections. Perhaps a sign in the restroom to encourage your customers let staff know of current or potential problems.

If an employee receives customer feedback, instruct them to thank the customer and then to take immediate action to address the problem.
About the Authors

Gavin Buckett is a multi award winning qualified chef, with tertiary qualifications in Food Technology and Confectionery Manufacture, who started his own specialised food safety business. Founded in 2005, by Gavin and Angela Buckett, The Gourmet Guardian (formally AGB Solutions) is a specialist provider of Food Safety Services and Quality Assurance Services to all manner of industries including food and beverage manufacturers, distributors, restaurants, caterers, hospitals and aged care facilities to name just a few.

Mr Buckett has vast food industry experience that includes 15 years as a qualified chef. His current responsibilities include delivering food safety training, developing and implementing more than 50 HACCP certified systems to at least a dozen different market sectors and six years as a registered food safety auditor, which in 2008 culminated in him achieving Level 4 - High Risk Auditor in the National Food Safety Auditor Scheme (the highest possible).

Utilising his experience as a chef, Mr Buckett has a very practical approach to food safety. While food safety is vitally important to your business, there are many simple things that you can do to ensure not only the health of your business, but also the health of your number one asset; your customers.

By combining a unique blend of practical experience, a thorough knowledge of food legislation, using language that food operators understand and a belief that good food can also be prepared safely, Mr Buckett ensures that safety of his clients’ businesses and their customers is paramount. He adds value to the services that he provides through free workshops, a food safety bulletin email service, a food safety blog and random surprises that his clients receive, which enable them to ensure that their products are safer than their competitors. Mr Buckett lives by the quote:

"Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone." - Pablo Picasso

Paul Wiffen is the Principal and owner of Hygenx Pty Ltd Trading as Impact Hygiene.

Paul has over 11 years experience in the commercial Hygiene Industry, Paul began as a franchisee with Swisher Hygiene the most respected name in the hygiene services industry worldwide.

Paul travelled several times to the United States to learn from the Swisher organisation’s 20 years of experience in the Hygiene business. The trips to the United States also allowed Paul to keep abreast of latest trends, innovations and technologies entering the industry and then of course to bring them back and implement them into Australia.

Paul was able to build his Swisher franchise into the biggest in the Southern Hemisphere at the time, servicing hundreds of business and thousands of restrooms.

Swisher Hygiene made the decision to withdraw from Australian market and sold their Australian interests to another company, this was the catalyst for Paul to set up his own Hygiene business Impact Hygiene.

Paul’s years of experience, research and training have allowed him to set up a unique service offer for his clients, the business’s client value proposition is built around the Impact Clean™ a totally unique no touch system which is increasingly being embraced by the fast food chains, independent restaurants, businesses and factories.

The Impact Clean™ is a comprehensive system that sanitises the entire restroom area including all fixtures, fittings, walls, floors, vents and drains, leaving the restroom fresh, odour free and hygienic. This system treats the causes of odours and germs in the restroom, most companies attempt to mask them with strong air fresheners.

Telephone: 1800 494 369
Fax: 03 8678 1759
Email: sales@impacthygiene.com.au
Web: www.impacthygiene.com.au