

Management by Numbers

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The role of the Director or Manager of a large laundry processing facility is very much like the conductor of an orchestra. For the symphony to be a success it requires that each instrument be fine-tuned, that each musician be trained and dedicated, and the conductor must possess the ability to synchronize each individual's efforts into a unified melody. They must know immediately when one tune is off and make an immediate correction.

The Laundry Director/Manager needs to utilize every tool at their disposal to determine when factors instrumental to their operations success are out of alignment. If the water report is higher than typical, an immediate assessment is made of drain/fill times. If the rewash rate makes a drastic increase, the chemical dispensing units are checked. And if the soiled to clean factor drops, it may be time to go on a linen hunt!

However, the soiled to clean factor is often an overlooked management tool. This calculation can provide a quick snapshot of linen use or abuse. The clean to soiled linen factor reveals how much soiled linen is coming back from the customer in comparison to the clean linen that was delivered.

First, a few of the basics must be confirmed. Soiled linen returned to the laundry will undoubtedly weigh more than the same clean linen weighed when it left the laundry. Obviously, the weight of the soil and fluids are the contributing factor here. The clean to soiled factor is reported as a percentage representing that difference in weight.

The national averages for clean to soiled linen are typically between 6-15% (see details on ranges) depending upon the customer and their products. Hospitality is usually on the lower end of the range with healthcare in the middle and long-term care reflected on the high end of the scale. There are many considerations that play into the clean to soiled factor for a facility. But by consistently measuring and tracking these metrics the manager will be able to identify potential problems, initiate research and take action.

Percentages Facility Type

- 6 – 8% Hospitality - Percentage varies based on services/amenities provided such as food & beverage only; bedding & bath; or spa, fitness center and pool, etc.
- 9 – 12% Healthcare – Percentage can vary based on the amount of disposables vs. reusables, surgical services, labor & delivery, etc.
- 13 – 15% Long-term care – Percentage can vary based on amount of disposables, patient acuity, level of mobility, etc.

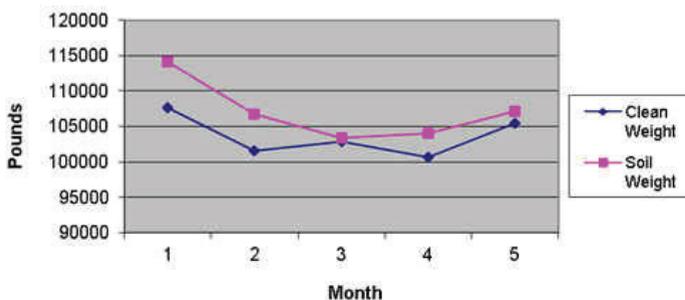
A hospitality operation that only processes table-top products may likely be at the low end of the scale. If a hotel provides quality terry products in the fitness center, in the high-end spa, and to an active pool-towel service, it's reasonable to conclude they will run toward the high end for the hospitality scale.

Variances within healthcare facilities can result from a long-term care unit, a labor and delivery department, the use of reusable incontinent pads and reusable textiles in the operating room. These departments/services will produce a greater likelihood of a higher factor.

Whether measuring over a week, month or quarter; this factor can determine if the customer is hoarding/misusing the linen or can indicate linen loss. Linen loss or mysterious disappearance will often occur due to theft, linen thrown away, patient transfers, and EMS taking linens from a hospital and returning them to another facility. This often results in a higher linen replacement/cost regardless, if the customer utilizes their own goods (COG) or rental. If an operation utilizes rental goods, the laundry processor can help the customer to understand the cost associated with this loss.

Trends will reflect proper management of the operation. In the two graphs that follow, Hospital A fails to utilize the data reported to manage the problem. In Hospital B, data reveals continual management providing optimal clean to soil factors.

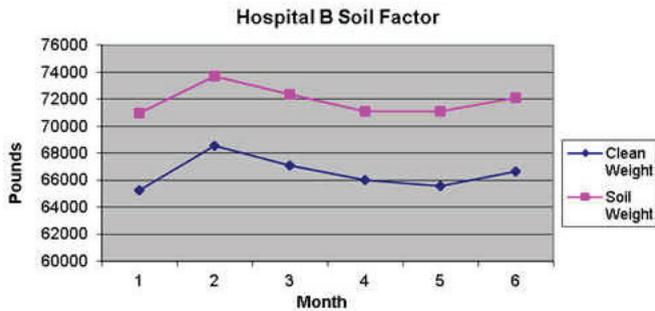
Hospital A Soil Factor



	Clean Weight	Soiled Weight	Clean to Soiled Factor
March	107,582	114,066	5.68%
April	101,521	106,787	4.93%
May	102,863	103,404	0.52%
June	100,632	103,967	3.21%
July	105,396	107,178	1.66%

Of note at Hospital A:

- Initially below normal at 3.35%
- Large swings indicate potential loss (check plant procedures first)
- Variance in day weighted can affect % but will level out over time
- Account likely experiencing loss through theft, EMS, misuse, or thrown away



	Clean Weight	Soiled Weight	Clean to Soiled Factor
Feb	65,234	70,974	8.09%
March	68,545	73,672	6.96%
April	67,117	72,351	7.23%
May	66,010	71,111	7.17%
June	65,555	71,099	7.80%
July	66,676	72,123	7.55%

Of note to Hospital B:

- Steady % difference indicating return of linen
- Minor fluctuations normal but within several points due to customer characteristics
- Safe assumption that there is good system in place and loss is at a minimum

Let's take a look at two scenarios. In the first, ABC laundry sends 100 lbs of clean linen per day to a patient care floor and the soiled linen returning from that user area typically weights 109 lbs (a 9% clean: soiled ratio). However, the past two deliveries from that unit reflect a 20% clean: soiled factor of 120 lbs. What accounted for this sudden change?

A change in patient acuity could easily account for such an increase. Sicker patients with increased incontinence creates a heavier soiled product; accounting for the additional 11%. This could easily be confirmed by an increase in the number of loads requiring a high soil wash formula. This scenario is simply due to fluctuations in patient needs and the care provided; the cost of doing business.

Let's review a second scenario. A laundry supervisor detects a drop in clean: soiled linen factor, what are the concerns here? 100 lbs of clean linen was delivered to the customer. Typically 110 lbs of soiled linen is returned; but for the past three days only 104 lbs has been returned from this customer. The first thought is hoarding. The unit/department is keeping clean linen they didn't need/use; perhaps during low census fearing that

if they report under utilization the day will come when they need that linen and with their par levels lowered they will not be able to meet patient demand.

Another option could be destroyed linen. A well-meaning healthcare provider realizes the unit/department is charged by soiled linen weight. To reduce the soiled linen weight they discard/dispose of the soiled linen to avoid paying that charge. (No one told them about the charge for lost/missing linen.)

In today's market, laundry processors must provide "services" beyond processing the textiles. Due to economic constraints, customers are relying on the laundry processor to provide expertise to help manage/minimize laundry costs. Beyond informing the customer and charging for linen loss, the soiled to clean factor reported to Linen Committees can drive policy and process changes for the customer.

By utilizing the clean to soiled factor, laundry processors can bring added value to customers while ensuring laundry operations are minimizing costs. Consistent monitoring, measuring and understanding the significance of this metric can reduce costs and create a positive working environment. A good laundry will educate the customer; a poor service provider will simply charge the customer for the lost goods.



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