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IAHTM's Laundry Performance Program

By Rocco Romeo, Board President of the International Association of Healthcare Textile Managers (IAHTM)

You've no doubt heard of B2B (business-to-business), which is the exchange of products, services and information between businesses, rather than between businesses and consumers (B2C).

Similarly, the **International Association for Healthcare Textile Management** (IAHTM) is a peer-to-peer (P2P) network of senior-level experts in textile management who regularly share ideas and information for the mutual and continuing success of their respective healthcare laundry cooperatives. IAHTM's P2P network of like-minded persons in the same industry niche share the same professional responsibilities, experiences, goals and challenges.



One of the most popular aspects of IAHTM membership is its *Peer Assessment & Evaluation* review program, where, by request, a team of IAHTM members visit the facility of an existing member where – peer-to-peer – they share their challenges, experiences and expertise on any operational or procedural matter. The outcome of this review process usually results in some form of recommendation from the team so the existing member can optimize his or her laundry's performance.

The Process

In every instance where there's a request for a review, IAHTM team members are selected based on their relevant experience to the challenge at hand. The team usually comprises three IAHTM members, one who is designated the team's leader and who serves as the primary liaison to the laundry representative.

The process begins with the development of a pre-review questionnaire requesting production statistics, financials, layout, equipment inventory and other pertinent information. This questionnaire is submitted to the laundry and it's requested that it be completed at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the actual peer review.

The team begins its fieldwork following its review of the financial and production data. This usually includes a comprehensive tour of the facility where team members speak with employees, look for problem areas or issues where process improvements can be made (e.g., for saving labor, adding a conveyor, reconfiguration of the work space, etc.). The intent of the walkabout is to understand the operations and be able to make financial and operational recommendations that will be positive for the laundry.

A report is issued to the laundry or its board before the team leaves.

For example, after assessment and evaluation on plant expansion, a recent IAHTM peer review concluded with a recommendation and presentation by an IAHTM team to a laundry's board of directors. The laundry wanted to more effectively manage new volume and tap potential market growth. The board approved the expansion – by 30,000 square feet – because of IAHTM's presentation and its recommendations for how to successfully implement the project. Expansion was completed within 18 months.

Over the past several years, peer reviews have included:

- The recommendation to a laundry of the purchase of a new tunnel washer in a facility to better handle increasing volume and bottleneck issues
- A review of the financial performance of a plant comprised of an analysis and comparison of costs (e.g., labor and linen expenses) and recommendations for improving efficiencies and controls
- A review of the maintenance operations of a facility that included recommendations for how to improve preventative procedures, inventory room control, training and monitoring.

The Peer Assessment and Evaluation Experience

“Among the many benefits of being an IAHTM member, I never really appreciated its peer review process. That is, until recently,” says Myles Noel, IAHTM member and CEO of COMTEX (Central Ohio Medical Textiles) of Columbus Ohio. “I had struggled with finding justification for a third tunnel system for the plant. The external validation of making the purchase along with numerous examples of the advantages was the key to convincing my board of directors of the wisdom of this purchase.

“Sometimes boards just need to hear the same message from someone else,” Noel adds. “I know that others have used the peer review process to come to their rescue when a challenge arose in their plant. But being proactive – *when things are going well* – can be even more rewarding. Given the opportunity, I would take full advantage of another peer review anytime in the future where I felt the need.”

Speaking for myself, as CEO of HLS Linen Services of Ottawa, Canada, I have also gone through this process. We wanted an independent review of our maintenance operations. Throughout, we found the IAHTM team to be very hands-on in its approach, examining and analyzing all aspects of our laundry's maintenance operations, including staffing, skill sets, preventative maintenance programs and overall knowledge of the maintenance department.

The team was able to recommend improvements in HLS's preventative maintenance programs and provided valuable insights to our maintenance team staff. Within six months of their report we saw a rapid turnaround in the maintenance department and this was reflected in the equipment and related downtime.

We can all use a hand sometimes from people who understand and have experienced our challenges. Give IAHTM's Peer Review a try – your peers await you.

If you're already an IAHTM member and are interested in a P2P review, click [here](#).

If you're interested in knowing more about IAHTM membership, click [here](#).

Rocco Romeo is board president of the International Association of Healthcare Textile Managers (IAHTM). IAHTM is a nonprofit membership organization for healthcare laundry cooperatives that provides senior-level textile managers with resources and support to maximize their laundries' efficiencies and control costs. He is also the CEO of HLS Linen Services in Ottawa, Canada.