

BEST PRACTICES

Linen maker sleeping pretty

By Val Prevish
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READING - Standard Textile and Gary Heiman are out to revolutionize the bed linens that put the world's hotel guests to sleep.

Until recently, most hotel linens were made of the same cotton yarns that have been used for years, says Heiman, Standard Textile's president and chief executive.



The sheets were soft enough for guests, but they lacked design updates and were easily damaged by the harsh chemicals and rough treatment of repeated laundering. The result: Despite their cost, their useful life was short.

Now, Heiman says, his company has developed the most innovative bedsheets ever, with a patented fabric that's not only soft but durable, lasting through 60 washings instead of the usual 30. Add in a new stylish look by renowned hospitality designer Todd-Avery Lenahan, and Standard Textile is poised to dominate the hotel market over the next few years, he says.

The innovation comes as hotels worldwide are adopting a more luxurious sleeping experience for their guests. Hoteliers are demanding lofty duvets and satin-like sheets in all white or highlighted with subtle colors or patterns.

At the same time, the hospitality industry will soon begin a flurry of property renovations and building as the economy improves, Heiman projects. In addition, the Asian hospitality market is booming with new properties being developed in China, Singapore and the Middle East.

All this could propel double-digit growth for Standard Textile's hospitality business, which now accounts for about 40 percent of its overall sales of more than \$700 million.

"In the next three to five years we will be the No. 1 hospitality textile supplier in the U.S.," Heiman says. The company now ranks third behind American Hotel Register Co. in Vernon Hills, Ill., and Sysco Guest Supply in Monmouth Junction, N.J.

"I truly believe we are going to see a surge in 2012 in hospitality and in other sectors. Properties are renovated every five to seven years, and it's been a while. There are many due."

From founder's apartment to presence around globe

Standard already has strong relationships with many of the world's top hotel property owners. They were built over decades.

The company was started by Charles Heiman, Gary's grandfather, as a small linen distribution business in his Cincinnati apartment in 1940. His son, Paul, Gary's father, took over in the 1960s, building the current facility in Reading and focusing on

health-care textiles. Today, the company is the No.1 healthcare textile provider in the U.S., which, along with institutional textiles, accounts for 60 percent of sales.

Gary Heiman, 60, took the company into the hotel business, helping it become a design and manufacturing leader. He started with a manufacturing plant in Israel that he built and ran during 17 years spent living there. It was the start of a booming international business that now includes 23 manufacturing or distribution centers serving 55 export markets.

Heiman also guided the company through eight acquisitions.

Partnership with P&G on pre-washed linens

Today, the company holds 60 patents and has introduced some of the first truly "engineered" textile products in the hospitality market.

Standard Textile pioneered towels with a woven pattern on each end



Gary Heiman, CEO of Standard Textile, sits in a showroom displaying the company's collection of high-end, more durable linens. THE ENQUIRER/AMANDA DAVIDSON

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that's attractive and cost-effective. Guests remain pleased because they mostly use the plush middle of the towel. Less fabric on the ends reduces the towel's overall weight, which cuts manufacturing and laundering costs and drying time.

Standard Textile also collaborated with Procter & Gamble Co. on another first: pre-washed hotel linens that come in boxes with P&G's signature Tide detergent logo.

"You can just take them out of the box and go," says Denise Vandersall, managing director of the Cincinnati Hotel downtown. "I don't know any other company that pre-washes linens for you, and it's such a time saver."

Vandersall says she has been using Standard's hospitality products for three years. She says she notices a big difference between those linens and previous products from a European supplier.

"We've seen an overall savings of about 30 percent," she says. "We don't have to replace the linens nearly as often, and the laundering costs are lower. I also don't have to keep as much in stock, which means I don't have money sitting on the shelf."

Vandersall hasn't yet purchased anything from the TAL Collection, but she says the look and feel of the products are a perfect match for the needs of her hotel.

"It's such a lovely, high-end product," she says. "We very well may renovate soon, and we would definitely consider buying the new (collection.)"

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