

CASE STUDY

Empowering People: RFID simplifies laundry management to create a positive work environment for people with disabilities



Valais, Switzerland

HygieClean and HID Global's RAIN UHF RFID technology enables people with disabilities to work in commercial laundry facility.

Established in 1970, Foundation of Valais in Favor of Mentally Handicapped Persons (FOVAHM) is a foundation to safeguard and train people with disabilities. Currently, more than 360 disabled people live and attend classes and workshops at the center for dependent and retired people in Valais, Switzerland. FOVAHM's mission is to improve their quality of life and encourage their social inclusion. FOVAHM advocates development in their residents regardless of disability. The foundation provides training for 17 different professions via 22 workshops that are specialized and adapted to their capabilities.

Built and managed by the FOVAHM, the "mARTigny boutique-hôtel" was created specifically for integrating people with disabilities into a professional work environment. Currently 40 residents of FOVAHM are employed by the hotel in various roles.

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Daniel Zufferey
FOVAHM workshops

Challenge

The ability to integrate people with disabilities in a commercial laundry facility, while maintaining the highest level of quality required in a hotel environment, was the main goal for the hotel's "La Romaine" laundry department.

The challenge was to implement a system providing a safe, efficient environment that allows people with disabilities to work under limited supervision, while maintaining a high standard of quality. A major issue was to create a system that sorted the linens automatically, so that their team members do not need to determine laundry treatments for particular items, which would be a challenge for them. Furthermore they needed a solution to automatically identify each owner of an item, as laundry facility also cleaned the hotel linens and personal clothing items of the FOVAHM residents.

FOVAHM collaborated with HygieClean to define an efficient linen traceability system. The mission was to create a laundry system with technology that accommodates their team, while streamlining efficient operations. Due to the system's unique requirements, it was essential to create a workflow that prevents handling errors and is easy to use.

"La Romaine" laundry facility includes multiple RAIN UHF RFID enabled workstations:

- Two stations to prepare and heat-seal the HID Global LinTag UHF on the linens
- One sorting station using an automatic conveyor belt
- One station to reassemble the cleaned linen.





Solution

The “La Romaine” laundry facility was a major undertaking for FOVAHM. They worked with HygieClean Ltd. to design an operational program that accommodated laundry standards for separating clean and dirty linens, and could be used by a person with disabilities.

HID Global, HygieClean and FOVAHM collaborated to design and architect an RFID solution that is simple and easy to use, enabling unique personnel to work successfully in a commercial laundry environment. HID Global was chosen as the trusted partner for HygieClean due to the RFID expertise and quality manufacturing processes.

HID Global’s LinTag™ UHF transponders were securely and discreetly embedded into bed linens, towels, garments and clothes. HID tags were selected due to their high robustness withstanding repeated washings (up to 300), drying and ironing and easy application to the linen. “Especially the small size and easy application compared to competitive products was a main argument for us to select the tags from HID Global” said Hervé Bargibant, CEO of HygieClean “additionally, HID Global’s international culture, location and French speaking engineers provided quick and easy response time for the design and deployment.”

HygieClean used additional partner technologies for sorting, conveyor belts, weighting systems and management software to create a safe and efficient specialized laundry system. Incorporating these technologies, the new laundry facility began operations in October 2015, and has expanded beyond cleaning the hotel’s linens, to now include managing laundry for multiple other FOVAHM sites. Daily, the laundry facility team processes over 450 kg (990 lbs.) of laundry with capacity of up to 1.2 tons (2.645 lbs.) in future.

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Leveraging HID Global’s LinTag UHF, every piece of laundry is uniquely identified by the owner’s name, laundry type, color and specific treatment for the garment or linen to control inventories and laundry prior to delivery. Standard hotel laundry items, including napkins, bedsheets and towels, are tagged during production and ready to use upon delivery to the hotel. The FOVAHM residents’ private clothing items are tagged using heat-seal on the clothes when they first arrive at the laundry for processing.

Optimizing the laundry process

The laundry is collected from every FOVAHM site and driven to “La Romaine” laundry facility at the “mARTigny boutique-hôtel”. When the laundry arrives, it is directly placed on a conveyor belt with integrated RAIN UHF antennas. The system reads all the tagged items and automatically sorts them in separate trollies by cleaning type and drying process.

Once cleaned and prior to delivery, the linen is stored in roll-cages and scanned again for accuracy. The laundry is then placed in a specialized truck configured for clean and dirty laundry and driven to destination. The correct location receives the shipment and the right persons receive their garments.



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Bertrand Gross, Director
mARTigny boutique-hôtel

RFID successfully enables the laundry team to:

- Sort linens and clothing by cleaning and drying process effectively
- Uniquely identify, pack, and stage items by destination minimizing shipping errors
- Store and manage hotel inventory quickly and precisely

“Accurately managing linen lifecycles and inventory levels save us valuable resources – our management is able to focus on providing superb hospitality to our guests” said Bertrand Gross Director of the “mARTigny boutique-hôtel”.

Results

The laundry “La Romaine” is an innovative concept that had never been experienced before. “People working in the laundry department are happy to work at the hotel and feel proud to use innovative technology in their daily lives,” said Daniel Zufferey responsible of FOVAHM workshops.

By using RFID technology, major errors are avoided by using a simplified experience to achieve success regardless of a handicap. The new laundry solution delivers many benefits across the organization:

- Creates a professional and efficient system that is ideal for internal and external customers
- Opens new opportunities and offers a safe, ergonomic workplace
- Ensures a stable and easily accessible workplace
- Motivates employees

“Being a part of the FOVAHM organization alone is a true benefit, and we are now also seeing beneficial business results using RFID technology”, said Bertrand Gross Director of the “mARTigny boutique-hôtel”. Precise inventory tracking – hundreds of laundry items can be counted in seconds with no error, saving the team hours of work. The solution proves using innovative technology and associating daily activities with cognitive abilities – people with disabilities can pursue a life of quality and be proud to work in a challenging profession.

