

The Vantage® FORUM



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A For Profit Company that Forms Health Care Partnerships to Create Revenue, Savings and New Services.

Clean Linen and Much More *Vantage® Healthcare Linen Services Provides Customers with a Basketful of Efficiencies, Quality and Cost-Savings*

By John Fries

In the healthcare environment, the need for cleanliness is beyond important - it's absolutely crucial. And when you're talking about linens used in surgical suites and patient rooms, among other places, the need for near-purity is even more pronounced.

However, it hasn't always been easy for healthcare facilities to get clean linen. Just ask the Northwestern Pennsylvania group of hospitals that own the Vantage® Health Care Network. In 1995, after experiencing dissatisfaction with the level of quality and cleanliness that was being provided by their laundry companies, they decided to do something that would ensure them with access to the cleanest linen possible at the most reasonable price: they formed Vantage® Healthcare Linen Services (VHLS).

Based in Erie, VHLS has been providing those hospitals - as well as doctors' offices, clinics, surgical centers and nursing homes - with clean linen and cost-effective service for nearly ten years. VHLS is so successful that it now performs this service at a very competitive price to other non owner hospitals throughout Northwestern PA and into New York.



Inline dryer bank and conveyors

such areas as obstetrics and delivery, housekeeping, dietary, and surgery, and such specialized items as pediatric products. Because the cost of the linen is included in the laundry service, VHLS customers can save the money they would otherwise have to spend on equipment, linen and labor.

Cost-Effective Service Combined With High Standards

A part-owner in Premier, one of the nation's largest group purchasing organizations, VHLS buys the highest quality linen items from the most reputable suppliers in the industry, then rents them to its customers. This includes bed linens, bath linens, patient and employee apparel, linens used in

Specialty Designed Facility Ensures Maximum Cleanliness

The VHLS physical plant was designed to meet Vantage's high standards by one of the foremost experts in the linen and laundry industry. The facility includes a number of features that set it apart from other laundries, including two separate and distinct areas for soiled linens and clean linens. At VHLS, the two never meet. "Quality assurance and infection control are our number one priorities," said Fred Harrington, VHLS director. "We even disinfect our pickup and delivery trucks on a regular basis to ensure that the same level of quality is maintained from our plant to our customers' doors."

This is highly impressive when you consider that about 3,000 pounds of laundry is processed and hour by the plant's huge tunnel washer, resulting in, on average, nine million pounds of linen a year. Even with that volume, Harrington said the plant has the capability to take on up to three million additional pounds a year, expanding the laundry's service area.

Technology Further Enhances Efficiencies

Harrington also noted the strong role technology plays at VHLS. One highly efficient process incorporated into the facility's design allows VHLS to operate using half the energy resources of a typical in-house hospital laundry, adding to the cost savings enjoyed by customers. This year, VHLS takes another giant step forward launching the latest state-of-the-art computerized linen order and tracking system to which customers will have access.



*Cindy Steele scans customer
code for delivery*

"Our carts already have barcodes for identification," said Harrington. "Now the remainder of the system is up and running, all the inventory and service records will be computerized. Customers will be able to pull up a report containing current information about how much linen they've received, and how much soil they have returned in addition to other reports. They'll also be able to place orders via the new system."



*Incoming and outgoing linen are weighed,
scanned and coded*

Customer Input Important

In addition to quality, efficiency, cleanliness, and cost savings, VHLS has a strong focus on customer service that unquestionably sets it apart from its competitors. For example, VHLS officials often meet with linen room personnel to evaluate the quality of laundry received by their hospitals. Harrington and his staff also present special customer forums. "Once each quarter," he said "we invite our customers to a meeting at VHLS. The heads of the linen rooms meet for an idea exchange, which is beneficial, not only to them, but to us as well."

An Important Part of the Vantage® Family



*Fred Harrington, Director of VHLS,
next to the 16 chamber Tunnel Washer*

Vantage® Healthcare Linen Services, (VHLS), is one of 13 service companies owned by the Vantage® partnership of community hospitals. Started in 1984, Vantage's mission is to develop partnership services, formally structured with commitment to share risk and revenue. Each hospital is a shareholder, based upon formal investment, and the hospital shareholders appoint the Board of Directors. For the past 20 years, Vantage® has successfully

provided its owner hospitals with millions of dollars in cost savings and year-end profitability, while introducing new technology and growth to the rural communities of Northwestern Pennsylvania and New York.

For more information about Vantage® Healthcare Linen Services in Erie, PA, call Fred Harrington, Director of VHLS, at 814-835-4140 or fredh@vantagehealthcare.com.com. For general information on all Vantage® services, contact Tom Surman, Vice President of Communications and Marketing, at tomsurman@vantagehealthcare.com or 814-336-1781, ext. 124. More information about Vantage®, and an overview of its owners and services, can be found at www.vantagehealthcare.com.

