



CASE STUDY

Pulse™ Microfibre Cleaning System - Bluewater Shopping Centre, UK

September 10, 2008

Vita Lend Lease

Industry

Retail



Interview with:

Seundouss Laroussi

Soft Services Manager,
Lend Lease

Client Overview

Nestling in a redundant chalk quarry at Greenhithe just off the orbital M25 motorway in northwest Kent, Bluewater Shopping Centre has successfully combined retail and leisure to offer a day out destination for over 27 million visitors per annum.

Since opening in March 1999, Bluewater is widely acknowledged to have set the benchmark for quality British retailing. It is also the second largest shopping centre in the United Kingdom, comprising a sales floor area of 154,000 m² (1,600,000 ft²) and a floor plan that is a triangular in shape with 330 stores - including the 3 “anchors” of House of Fraser, John Lewis and Marks & Spencer at each corner – spread over three distinct malls on two levels. In addition within the development here are also over 40 cafés, bars and restaurants as well as extensive leisure activities such as fishing, climbing, cycling, boating and a 13-screen cinema.

Bluewater is jointly owned by four major UK-based institutions, Prudential, Lend Lease Europe Ltd, the Lend Lease Retail Partnership and Hermes. Vita Lend Lease is the Group’s facilities and estates management business in the UK and is responsible for all cleaning services and facilities management at Bluewater.

Lend Lease’s very public goal at Bluewater is to make shopping an enjoyable, refreshing experience by treating its customers as guests. To achieve this, trained hosts are on hand to give a ‘helping hand’, provide information about where to shop or eat and to maintain the centre in a pristine, clean condition throughout its extended opening hours.

The Challenge

With over 74,000 people visiting Bluewater every day, and with each guest spending an average of over three hours per visit, keeping such a busy Centre clean and hygienic is a clear challenge for Vita Lend Lease.



Vita Lend Lease

- Responsible for all internal and external facilities management at Bluewater
- Over 100 hosts
- Treat shoppers as guests

Bluewater Shopping Centre

- 27 million visitors per annum
- 330 stores
- UK's second largest shopping centre

Consequently, Vita Lend Lease has a team of 12 - 16 hosts deep cleaning the Centre's malls and toilet areas at night. Two further day-time shifts each with 10 – 12 hosts work zone by zone walking through the Centre. They respond immediately to clear up spillages of ice-cream, crisps, sweets and fizzy soft drinks which tend to be absorbed by the malls' stone flooring and attend to cleaning those areas – such as the dark marble walling in the hallways to the car parks and toilets - which are liable to show dirt and dust the quickest or which are not able to be cleaned at night.

Historically, cleaning at Bluewater was carried out by conventional methods based on cotton mops, buckets, water and numerous chemicals for planned cleaning. Such a system relied heavily on the use of large amounts of cleaning chemicals in the water in order to work properly, with the associated expense, waste and environmental consideration that this brings. Bluewater also found that the reasonable life expectancy of the mop-heads was also short due to their frequent use and hosts' understandable concerns over the continuing effectiveness of all but the most recently replaced mop-head. Unwilling to compromise on hygiene standards, the regular mop-head replacements needed therefore were also a considerable expense for Vita Lend Lease.

The conventional method also was a burden to the Centre's hosts in that each time they needed to change the water, they had to walk some way to empty and refill their buckets and then carry the buckets all the way back to the zone to be cleaned. The same laborious process was followed if different cleaning tools were needed and was physically tiring for the staff as well as being highly inefficient.

For daytime spillages, copious amounts of blue roll were also used to deal with spillages as they happened but this would leave smears all over the stone floors and there was often a lot of paper wasted just to clean a small area of spillage.

However at that time Vita Lend Lease had no alternative as, from a





Rubbermaid Products

Indoor Cleaning

- Pulse™ floor cleaning kits - Q969-58
- Pulse™ caddies - Q966
- Cleaning carts

Outdoor Waste Management

- Howard tone bins - H1N/HPSM
- Howard Regent bins - R25T50

health & safety perspective, cleaning with mops left an unacceptable amount of water on the floor after use when guests were in the Centre presenting an unacceptable slips and trips risk. This in turn had meant that treated areas then had to be cordoned off for an extended drying-off time.

The Solution

Seundouss Laroussi joined Vita Lend Lease as the Soft Services Manager for Bluewater in May 2007 assuming responsibility for cleaning, concierge services, pest control and window cleaning. She immediately sensed that there had to be a better way of cleaning and simultaneously invoking the sense of professional pride that was latent in her team of hosts.

As she recalls: “Bluewater is always looking for the best and most innovative ways of working. We are driving sustainability to the maximum and constantly looking for more environmentally friendly ways of working. Yet when I joined, I could see there was an extremely unproductive and inefficient way of cleaning that did not benefit guests, hosts or management”.

After a thorough evaluation of the most innovative cleaning solutions on the market, she decided to trial a smarter cleaning system comprising the Rubbermaid Pulse™ Floor Cleaning Kit and Rubbermaid Pulse™ Caddy integrated into a Rubbermaid Cleaning Cart.

Initially Seundouss Laroussi trialled the Rubbermaid system in Lend Lease’s own management suite within Bluewater’s upper level so that she could personally see how the try out went. This initial trial was a resounding success according to Seundouss who said: “The user took to the Pulse™ immediately and was almost in tears when I told that we only had the system on trial”. Seundouss then extended the trial to two experienced night-shift cleaning teams at Bluewater too, where the results were similarly positive from both teams of hosts.”





Consequently, Vita Lend Lease then ordered the Pulse™ Floor Cleaning Kits, Caddy units and Cleaning Carts for use by both the day-time and night shift teams.

Reasons for Selecting the Rubbermaid Solution

Several factors were instrumental in Seundouss Laroussi's decision to purchase products from Rubbermaid.

A key benefit of the Pulse™ Microfibre Floor Mop was that it allows the Bluewater hosts to clean more metres of floor in less time. With an on-board reservoir of 0.6L the Pulse™ can clean up to 80m² on a single tank with water dispensed in three precisely controlled streams. Weighing just 1.7kg even when the reservoir is full, the Pulse™ has many other in-use benefits for the hosts at Bluewater including an ergonomic trigger handle and a quick change mechanism for the colour coded microfibre pads.

Microfibre is widely recognised to be much more effective than cotton at collecting dirt, and this allied to the sheer manoeuvrability and ease of use of the flat Pulse™ mops were other important factors that helped make up Seundouss Laroussi's mind. This combination of product benefits was particularly helpful to the hosts as it allowed cleaning right to the very edges of the malls or markedly improved the ease of cleaning the strip of stone flooring on the other side of protective railings safeguarding the first floor balconies.

The purchase of the Rubbermaid Caddy units for use with the Pulse™ mops increases still further the speed with which hosts can clean the floor. The caddies, which provide hands free no drip refilling of the Pulse™ handles fit neatly into the Rubbermaid Cleaning Carts when not in use, have a capacity of 7.5 litres. This would fill the reservoir in a Pulse™ mop 12 times which proved ample to get hosts through an entire shift at Bluewater.





In her pursuing her desire to find a better way of working Seundouss Laroussi did review cleaning trolleys with integrated microfibre floor cleaning kits available from competing manufacturers but found that, unlike the Rubbermaid product, they were not sufficiently sturdy.

For her, the quality of design and construction was very important as she commented: “I wanted something that was robust enough to cope with being used to push open double doors; stable when wheeled around the Centre; and that had a lockable compartment. I am also impressed with the smart appearance of the trolleys and I think the fact with the Rubbermaid cart – unlike with some other systems – there is no product hanging over the edge of the trolley which helps give our hosts a more professional image.”

Another deciding factor in choosing Rubbermaid was the strong customer support that Vita Lend Lease and many of its retailers had always previously received from the company when purchasing other products such as smoking management systems; safety and floor signs; and waste management products.

As Seundouss Laroussi said: “Rubbermaid makes extremely good products. It then backs them with fantastic, very helpful support. When I speak to Rubbermaid, I genuinely feel that they are trying to provide us with the best possible solution to our needs rather than just sell the products they have.”

The Benefits

Since rolling out the Pulse™ Mopping kits, caddies and carts, Vita Lend Lease has experienced in Seundouss Laroussi’s own words “no problems whatsoever with any of the Rubbermaid products”.

In fact the use of the Pulse™ Mopping kit has saved significant time for the hosts as they have everything that they need immediately to hand on the Rubbermaid trolley – rather than repeatedly having to go to and from the janitors room for emptying out and refilling of buckets or picking up more supplies. This time saving has meant





that the day-time shifts in particular have been able to undertake more planned cleaning tasks rather than continually attending to spillages.

The Pulse™ has also stood out for its ability to control water while using the mop wet and its marked improvement over cotton mops in dirt and dust pick-up to the point that Seundouss Laroussi no longer buys cotton mops at all. The cleaning performance of the Rubbermaid Microfibre has also been such that chemical use has been reduced virtually to nil in the main malls and walkways with fiscal and environmental benefits.

Other advantages from an environmental standpoint are that there has been far less water consumed and the wasteful use of blue roll at the Centre has been stopped.

With each Pulse™ Microfibre pad capable of being washed, dried and reused up to 500 times, Vita Lend Lease has also seen savings of many thousands of pounds each year on consumables and light cleaning equip such as mops and buckets.

So impressed were Seundouss Laroussi and her team of hosts with the Rubbermaid Pulse™ Floor Cleaning Kits, Caddies and Cleaning Carts, that when her Vita Lend Lease colleague Stu Meades, who is the External Guest Service Manager, was looking for waste management products, she recommended Rubbermaid.

As a result, 12 Rubbermaid Howard Towne bins mounted on a pole have been cemented into the ground adjacent to the 9 fishing platforms in one of the lakes. Constructed from 18 gauge perforated steel and powder coated steel, the design of the Howard Towne was perfect for this use, as drain holes in bottom prevent water accumulating from the wet waste regularly placed in the bin by fishermen. The 0.95cm perforations allow ventilation to quickly disperse foul smells and also reduce the weight for easy maintenance. As the receptacles are sited in a very secluded area, the mesh styling is important too as it allows maintenance staff to





easily visually check what has been placed in the bin.

Stu Meades also ordered 25 Howard Regent bins for use in the landscaping immediately around the shopping centre. With a heavy duty galvanised steel body fitted inside a slatted wooden cover, the bins have a removable green top for easy emptying. Importantly for areas used by thousands of people each day, the Howard Regent bins have no sharp edges to snag clothes or catch children's fingers and are fade and corrosion resistant.

Conclusions

In summary, Vita Lend Lease chose the Rubbermaid Pulse™ kits and associated products because they provide a much more effective way to clean the floors from one convenient mobile cleaning workstation, and also because of the outstanding support received from the Rubbermaid sales staff.

The new solution has brought major benefits to Bluewater including increased safety for shoppers; enhanced cost control and reduction of stock holding per annum on consumable cleaning products; the environmental gain of lower water consumption and the near elimination of use of chemicals; and improved worker morale and productivity,

With her determination to improve and modernise the way Bluewater was cleaned being the initial catalyst for the selection of the Rubbermaid Pulse™, Caddies and Carts, it is fitting that the final word should go to Vita Lend Lease's Seundouss Laroussi. She said: "My hosts would be devastated if they couldn't have the Pulse™ mops. In fact everyone in Bluewater knows the improvements the Pulse™ has brought about so that the challenge now is that we have to hide them from our retailers as they want them too!"

