

FROM THE TRENCHES | BY MYRNA SISLEN

Bathrooms Are People, Too

A few months ago I went to a tap recital at The Dance Place, a Washington, D.C. landmark dance venue since 1978. I hadn't been there for quite a while and when I had to use the bathroom during the intermission, I remembered how truly funky — and not in a good way — those bathrooms were. Much to my surprise, I opened the door to find a sleek and clean new facility. It certainly renewed my desire to return to The Dance Place soon.

It's impossible to over-emphasize how important a beautiful, clean bathroom can be in reinforcing our customer's positive attitudes towards us. I know you might think I am overstating things a bit, but I don't think so. Remember, women — especially moms — make up the majority of our customers, which is not to say that men don't notice as well.



Don't underestimate the importance of sprucing up your restroom

BATHROOM UPGRADE

I first experienced this reaction myself some years ago. When the RPMDA convention was held in Milwaukee, we all took a side trip to Hal Leonard's Corporate Headquarters in Winona, Minnesota. On the way we stopped to visit Ward Brodt Music. It was a wonderful store, but what impressed me most were their bathrooms: They had papered the walls with old sheet music. It made such an impression on me that I immediately stole the idea, went back to Middle C Music, and papered my bathroom walls with old choral print music. My customers loved it.

Fast forward to the present. I have to admit that I have not paid enough attention to my own public bathroom and over the years kids had peeled portions off a few of the music sheets, and there were places on the walls that had come unglued and worn away. The sink had stains that couldn't be removed and the floor was dingy.

Let me be clear: that bathroom is always clean. I have my entire store cleaned professionally three times a week, and have done so for many years. In addition, my staff makes sure the bathroom is clean every day. But, honestly, it had lost its sparkle. It wasn't inviting or classy anymore.

When one of my teachers mentioned the condition of the bathroom, I thought, now is the time to act. First I found a professional paper hanger. For years I have been collecting antique sheet music from the early 1900s, because the covers are so beautiful, but mostly because I was hoping that someday they would become very valuable. Unfortunately that hasn't happened, so I thought, what could possibly be better than to use those covers to fix and transform the Middle C Music bathroom.

It has worked beautifully. But, of course with the walls looking absolutely magnificent, everything else really looked terrible. So, I decided to replace the floor, and the sink and cabinet. And then I decided to paint the remaining wall cabinet to match the new sink and cabinet. I was able to find floor tiles and a sink/cabinet/faucet unit at Home Depot. Paint for the wall unit came from my local Ace Hardware. The entire job cost \$1,200 including all installation and labor.

What a difference! I now have customers lining up just to experience our bathroom. Yes, I probably should have fixed it a long time ago, but now my customers know just how serious we are about customer service. **MI**

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