

Outsourcing vs in-house housekeeping: benefits and drawbacks

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I. INTRODUCTION

Housekeeping plays one of the most crucial and influential roles in the hospitality industry, as it directly shapes the guest experience, impacts online reviews, and contributes significantly to the overall reputation and rating of a hotel. A clean room, fresh linens, spotless bathrooms, and well-maintained public spaces are not merely operational tasks—they form the foundation of guest comfort, trust, and satisfaction. In many cases, the quality of housekeeping determines whether guests return, recommend the property, or leave positive feedback on online platforms. Because of this, every hotel must carefully choose how to manage its housekeeping operations: either by maintaining an internal housekeeping team or by outsourcing the function to a professional service provider. In-house housekeeping gives hotels complete control over every aspect of cleaning operations. Management can personally oversee hiring, training, workflow design, supervision, and the implementation of brand-specific standards. This model allows hotels to build a strong internal culture, create a close-knit team, encourage loyalty, and maintain direct communication with housekeeping staff. It also enables the hotel to customize cleaning procedures, room turnaround times, and service styles to match its unique identity and guest expectations. However, running an in-house team comes with significant responsibilities. Hotels must manage recruitment, shift scheduling, attendance tracking, performance monitoring, skill development, HR formalities, and compliance with labor laws. Additionally, handling challenges like staff shortages,

turnover, and inconsistent work quality can require extra time, money, and management effort. In contrast, outsourcing housekeeping has become increasingly popular across the hospitality sector as hotels seek efficiency, consistency, and flexibility in their operations. By outsourcing, hotels transfer staffing, training, supervision, and operational responsibilities to an external housekeeping company that already has trained manpower, advanced cleaning tools, and standardized cleaning processes. This reduces the administrative burden on hotel management and ensures that cleaning operations continue smoothly even during peak seasons, special events, or unexpected staff absences. Outsourcing allows hotels to maintain high-quality cleaning without continuously investing in training, monitoring, or replacing employees. Professional housekeeping companies also stay updated on industry best practices, new cleaning technologies, safety standards, and hygiene protocols—ensuring that the hotel receives expert-level service. Both in-house and outsourced housekeeping models have their own advantages, and the choice depends on factors such as the size of the hotel, available budget, occupancy fluctuations, quality expectations, and long-term growth plans. Large luxury hotels may prefer in-house teams for brand consistency, while budget or mid-scale hotels might choose outsourcing for cost efficiency and streamlined management. By understanding the strengths, challenges, and operational impact of each model, hotel management can make an informed decision that aligns with their business goals and helps deliver the high level of cleanliness and service that modern guests demand.

Aspect	Outsourcing housekeeping	In-House housekeeping	Key Insight
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1. Meaning	Cleaning handled by external company	Cleaning handled by hotel's own employees	Two different staffing models
2. Employment Source	Vendor recruits & trains staff	Hotel directly hires & manages	Responsibility differs
3. Managerial Control	Limited direct control	Full operational control	In-house = higher control
4. Quality Stability	Can fluctuate with changing crews	More consistent due to steady team	Stability varies
5. Cost Structure	Lower long-term cost	Higher cost due to HR & salaries	Outsourcing saves cost
6. Flexibility	Easy to scale manpower	Harder to adjust quickly%	Outsourcing adapts faster
7. Training System	Vendor provides general training	Hotel provides customized training	Training style differs
8. Equipment & Tools	Vendor supplies tools & machines	Hotel must invest in tools	Outsourcing reduces investment
9. Security Level	Slightly higher risk (outsiders)	Safer (internal staff)	Security depends on staffing source
10. Response Speed	Slower due to communication layers	Faster, direct action	In-house responds quickly
11. Loyalty & Commitment	Lower — loyalty to vendor	Higher — loyalty to hotel	In-house builds stronger bonds
12. HR Responsibilities	Vendor handles HR tasks	Hotel manages HR workload	Outsourcing reduces HR burden
13. Supervision	Vendor supervisors oversee	Hotel supervisors directly manage	Supervision approach differs
14. Consistency During Peak Seasons	Easily scalable	Struggles due to fixed staff	Outsourcing suits peak periods
15. Legal/Compliance Risk	Vendor handles injuries & compliance	Hotel bears legal risks	Outsourcing reduces Liability

II. OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To define, contextualize, and explain the functioning of both outsourcing and in-house housekeeping models.
- ❖ To analyze the responsibilities, tasks, and service scope handled under each housekeeping model.
- ❖ To evaluate the financial implications of outsourcing and in-house housekeeping.

- ❖ To identify the limitations, risks, and challenges associated with outsourcing and in-house housekeeping.
- ❖ To evaluate the roles of training, technology, supervision, and quality control within both models.

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IV. BENEFITS OF OUTSOURCING HOUSEKEEPING

1. Flexibility & Scalable Staffing

Outsourcing lets hotels increase or reduce staff quickly based on occupancy, seasons, events, or emergencies. Providers can supply extra workers anytime, ensuring smooth operations.

2. Cost Reduction & Lower Financial Burden

Labor costs, training, benefits, insurance, and recruitment are handled by the vendor. Hotels pay a fixed contract rate, reducing expenses and improving budget predictability.

3. Access to Trained Experts

Vendors supply professionally trained housekeeping staff skilled in cleaning techniques, safety protocols, and hotel standards. This ensures consistent quality without internal training costs.

4. Use of Modern Technology & Equipment

Outsourced teams bring advanced machinery, cleaning tools, and digital housekeeping systems. Hotels benefit from high-tech cleaning without investing in equipment.

5. Reduced Managerial & HR Workload

Vendors handle HR tasks—recruitment, payroll, scheduling, replacements, and legal compliance. Managers focus more on guest service instead of staffing issues.

6. Consistent Standards Through SOPs

Outsourcing companies use structured checklists, audits, and quality control systems, ensuring uniform cleanliness even during staff changes.

7. Lower Impact From Turnover

The vendor manages absenteeism, staffing shortages, and replacements. Hotels remain unaffected by turnover, ensuring smooth daily operations.

8. Better Focus on Core Services

With routine work handled externally, hotels can concentrate on improving guest experience, service quality, and revenue-generating activities

BENEFIT	DESCRIPTION	KEY ADVANTAGE
1. Flexibility & Scalability	Staff levels can be increased or decreased based on occupancy, events, or seasonal demand.	Better manpower management
2. Cost Efficiency	Reduces salaries, benefits, training costs, and recruitment expenses. Payments are contract-based.	Lower long-term expenses
3. Reduced HR Burden	Vendor handles hiring, scheduling, payroll, compliance, and staff replacement.	Less administrative workload
4. Access to Trained Professionals	Outsourced staff are trained in standard cleaning methods, chemical handling, and safety protocols.	Higher cleaning expertise
5. Consistent Service Quality	Standardized SOPs, checklists, and audits ensure uniform cleaning across all rooms and areas.	Steady quality standards
6. Reduced Impact of Turnover	Vendor absorbs the impact of resignations, absenteeism, and hiring needs.	Stable operations
7. Faster Deployment	Additional workers can be deployed quickly during emergencies, VIP check-ins, or peak seasons.	Immediate workforce availability
8. Enhanced Productivity	Outsourced teams follow optimized workflows that minimize time wastage and improve room turnaround speed.	Higher operational efficiency
9. Lower Training Costs	Training duties shift to the vendor.	Savings on internal training

V. BENEFITS OF IN-HOUSE HOUSEKEEPING

1. Higher Control Over Standards

In-house teams allow hotels to directly set, monitor, and maintain quality standards. Managers can customize procedures based on brand expectations.

2. Personalized & Property-Specific Service

Internal staff know room layouts, guest preferences, and property routines well. Their familiarity leads to more precise and customized cleaning.

3. Stronger Culture & Team Connection

In-house employees become part of the hotel’s culture, improving teamwork, loyalty, service attitude, and commitment to guest satisfaction.

4. Faster Communication & Response Time

Direct communication between departments allows quick handling of requests, maintenance issues, or guest complaints—reducing delays.

5. Greater Accountability

Employees feel responsible for their performance since they work directly for the hotel. Daily supervision results in higher reliability and consistency.

6. Higher Security & Guest Trust

Internal staff undergo strict hotel checks, lowering risks of privacy issues or mishandled guest belongings. Guests feel safer with hotel-employed staff.

7. Ability to Maintain Customized SOPs

In-house teams follow detailed, property-specific cleaning procedures—especially important for luxury hotels or properties with unique room designs.

8. Better Employee Growth & Retention

Hotels can train staff long-term, offer promotions, and build strong skill development programs. This improves retention and builds a skilled workforce.

BENEFITS	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEY ADVANTANGE
1. Strong control over standards	Hotel directly control cleaning methods and quality	Full operational control
2. Consistent service quality	Same staff ensure steady, reliable results.	Higher consistency
3. Better Familiarity with Property	Staff know rooms, layouts, and guest needs well.	More accurate cleaning
4. Improved Communication	Direct communication speeds up responses.	Quick coordination
5. Stronger Cultural Alignment	Staff follow hotel values and brand culture.	Better brand representation
6. Higher Security & Trust	Internal staff undergo strict checks.	Increased safety
7. Personalized Guest Service	Staff can offer customized, thoughtful service.	Better guest satisfaction
8. Greater Accountability	Staff feel responsible for their work.	Reliable output
9. Direct Performance Monitoring	Managers can correct issues immediately.	Better quality control
10. Stable Team Loyalty	Employees stay longer and build loyalty.	Higher retention

VI. DRAWBACKS OF OUTSOURCING

1. Loss of Direct Control

Hotels lose immediate oversight of cleaning procedures, staff performance, and service standards. Outsourced teams may respond slower to urgent requests because communication passes through vendor supervisors, reducing operational efficiency and consistency.

2. Inconsistent Quality

Rotating outsourced staff often leads to variations in cleanliness and room preparation. Unlike in-house teams, outsourced workers may lack familiarity with guest preferences, room layouts, or brand standards,

resulting in inconsistent service and more re-cleaning or inspections.

3. Communication Challenges

Communication becomes more complicated due to coordination with third-party supervisors. Misunderstandings, delays, and incomplete task updates can occur, especially when language or cultural differences exist. This creates extra follow-up work for hotel managers.

4. Security Risks

External workers entering guest rooms pose higher risks to guest property and privacy. Background checks may be less rigorous than hotel standards, making accountability difficult if theft or damage

occurs. Any security breach can severely harm hotel reputation.

5. Hidden or Unexpected Costs

Outsourcing may bring unforeseen expenses such as overtime charges, emergency staffing fees, contract modifications, and extra quality audits. Time spent managing vendor relationships also becomes an indirect cost, reducing expected savings.

6. Reduced Employee Morale

Internal staff may feel undervalued when key responsibilities are outsourced, leading to tension and lower engagement. Outsourced workers often have high turnover and limited loyalty, affecting teamwork, productivity, and guest interaction quality.

7. Decline in Internal Responsibility

Departments may become less proactive about maintaining cleanliness when they assume outsourced teams will handle everything. This can cause untidy staff areas, lower hygiene standards, and greater dependence on external cleaners.

8. Limited Alignment with Brand Identity

Outsourced housekeeping teams may struggle to fully embody the hotel’s brand values, service culture, and personalized style of guest interaction. Since they work for a third-party provider, not the hotel, their commitment to the brand’s unique service philosophy is often weaker.

DRAWBACKS	SHOET DESPCRITION	KEY CONCERN
1. Loss of Direct Control	Hotel cannot supervise daily cleaning directly.	Reduced oversight
2. Inconsistent Quality	Rotating staff leads to varying cleaning standards	Unstable service delivery
3. Communication Barriers	Instructions pass through vendor supervisors.	Delays & misunderstandings
4. Slower Response Time	External staff react slower to urgent requests.	Poor guest experience
5. Security Risks	Outsiders accessing rooms may pose safety concerns.	Risk to guest belongings
6. Limited Cultural Fit	Outsourced staff may not follow hotel values.	Weak brand alignment
7. Hidden Costs	Extra fees for overtime, emergencies, or retraining.	Reduced cost-saving benefits
8. Accountability Issues	Vendor staff may not take full ownership of tasks.	Harder to enforce responsibility
9. High Staff Turnover	Vendor workers change frequently.	Lack of familiarity with property
10. Quality Monitoring Required	Hotels must track performance constantly.	Increased supervision workload

VII. DRAWBACKS OF IN-HOUSE HOUSEKEEPING

1. Physically Demanding Work & Occupational Strain

Housekeepers perform repetitive, labour-intensive tasks such as lifting heavy mattresses, pushing carts, and deep cleaning. This leads to high rates of musculoskeletal disorders, chronic back pain, joint injuries, and fatigue. Heavier bedding and modern room designs have increased the physical workload dramatically.

2. High Risk of Slips, Trips & Falls

Wet floors, cluttered equipment, narrow hallways, and rushed cleaning deadlines make slips and falls common. Poor signage or limited communication can further increase accident risks.

3. Exposure to Chemical & Biological Hazards

In-house staff handle strong chemicals and disinfectants daily, increasing risks of burns, allergies, and respiratory issues. They are also exposed to biohazards such as bodily fluids, soiled linens, and contaminated surfaces—especially in hospitals and high-occupancy hotels.

4. Ergonomic Challenges & Poor Workspace Design

Awkward cleaning positions, tight spaces, overloaded carts, and poorly organized storage areas contribute to muscle strain and long-term injuries. Many work environments lack ergonomic design, making tasks more physically stressful.

5. Safety Hazards from Poor Internal Housekeeping Practices

Disorganized storage rooms, improperly stored chemicals, blocked corridors, or cluttered equipment create additional hazards. These conditions reduce efficiency, increase frustration, and violate health and safety standards.

6. Limited Guest Interaction & Reduced Job Satisfaction

In-house housekeepers often work alone and have minimal guest communication, which can lead to isolation and low morale. Lack of recognition for their work further reduces job satisfaction and motivation.

7. Communication Barriers & Language Issues

Multilingual teams may struggle with instructions, safety guidelines, or guest requests. Miscommunication slows productivity, increases errors, and complicates supervision.

8. Long-Term Health Issues & Insufficient Breaks

Strict quotas, time pressure, and staff shortages often prevent housekeepers from taking adequate breaks. This leads to exhaustion, dehydration, chronic pain, burnout, and reduced career longevity.

DRAWBACKS	SHORT DESCRIPTION	KEY CONCERN
1. Physically Demanding Work	Staff face heavy lifting, bending, and repetitive strain.	High risk of injuries
2. Risk of Slips, Trips & Falls	Wet floors, clutter, and tight spaces cause accidents.	Safety hazards
3. Chemical Exposure	Frequent contact with strong chemicals and disinfectants.	Skin & respiratory risks
4. Exposure to Biohazards	Handling soiled linens and waste increases infection risk.	Health concerns
5. Ergonomic Challenges	Awkward postures, tight areas, and heavy carts strain muscles.	Long-term physical issues
6. Poor Storage Practices	Disorganized supply rooms and equipment create hazards.	Inefficient & unsafe workspace
7. Limited Guest Interaction	Minimal communication can reduce motivation.	Lower job satisfaction
8. Language Barriers	Multilingual teams may misunderstand instructions.	Communication issues
9. High Physical Fatigue	Strict quotas and time pressure cause exhaustion.	Burnout & low stamina
10. Long-Term Health Problems	Many staff develop chronic pain and MSDs over time.	Reduced career longevity