



## Hygiene firm keeps customers in control with on-demand design and engineering

### Customer

Initial Hygiene

### Industry

Manufacturing

### Customer Profile

Initial Hygiene is a global hygiene group that provides feminine hygiene, toilet hygiene and clinical-waste services in washrooms at corporate, commercial and government premises.

### Service benefits

- Resolving design challenges, first time
- Transparent costs and capabilities
- A flexible production resource
- A force for operational efficiency

*“I came up with the idea, Richard and Terry designed it, and FountainLine built it. The first prototype had no defects; it was perfect. From order to delivery of a brand new product took just five weeks. That’s trust—fulfilled.”*

John Nicholls, National Warehouse Manager, Initial

Washroom hygiene specialist, Initial, services thousands of sanitary bins each day in hospitals, prisons, commercial properties and business premises. To adapt to each new customer, Initial needs to design and manufacture unique metal enclosures and fittings. Since 1995, Initial has used Sydney-based FountainLine. By resolving complex design challenges quickly, reliably and at a predictable cost, FountainLine has helped Initial improve operational efficiency, increase commercial flexibility, and expand its services.

### Business Needs

For over a decade, Pink Hygiene vans have been the iconic face of a highly complex hygiene logistics operation. The firm supplies thousands of premises with feminine sanitary bins and syringe receptacles, which staff collect, empty and replenish from a logistics and incineration facilities. Today, as part of the Initial hygiene group, this Australian company is part of a growing international waste disposal firm.

Most of the plastic bins that staff use are manufactured overseas. Initial customers, however, frequently require Initial to adapt these bins to suit the particular requirements of their own premises. Hospitals, prisons, and council-owned facilities, for example, need their hygiene units to be particularly well secured. As a result, Initial needs to design and manufacture numerous additional enclosures and devices.

In 1995, Sydney Council presented Initial with one such challenge. To provide city-wide facilities for used-needle deposits, the council wanted wall-mounted disposal units that were exceptionally robust and vandal proof. Initial had the facilities to build the needle receptacles themselves, but needed design input and metal manufacturing expertise to create vandal-proof receptacle holders and wall-mounted enclosures.

“To conform to council requirements we were looking at a very curious design,” says John Nicholls. “The wall-mounted enclosure had to be highly engineered but our staff had to be able to access and extract the needle bins without even the slightest risk of coming into physical contact with the contents. It was a difficult design and manufacturing challenge; we looked around for ideas.”





Initial vehicle with livery

*“FountainLine has proved they are masters at creative metal engineering. If our challenge involves metal, we go to FountainLine.”*

John Nicholls  
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## Solution

Nicholls approached a number of to-order manufacturing companies, before meeting executives Terry Ibrahim and Richard Harris, from Kogarah-based FountainLine IMS. Founded 70 years ago, FountainLine is an industrial design and production company that fabricates metal components using precision machining, laser-cutting, stamping and coatings facilities at a 1500m<sup>2</sup> factory facility in Kogarah.

“We presented the executives with the challenge, and explained exactly what we needed,” says Nicholls. “We also showed them enclosures we had previously used, which our customer needed us to improve on.”

According to Nicholls, FountainLine distinguished itself with a highly consultative approach to resolving design challenges. “They took the time to understand all the factors involved,” he says. “After the first meeting they brought in various design drawings with different approaches to the lid and locking mechanism. Together, we came up with the one that would be easiest for our service staff to work with, while also eliminating the potentially lethal risk associated with contamination.”

FountainLine IMS began manufacturing the new syringe disposal enclosure and holder—a design that has withstood the test of time right up until the present day.

“We stuck with the FountainLine design, year after year, because it exactly fulfils the purpose it’s intended for,” says Nicholls. “In the meantime, however, FountainLine has steadily grown its business with us to become a key supplier. FountainLine now performs numerous one-off design and manufacturing services for us, from hybrid wire bin fittings, to all-purpose trolleys.”

## Benefits

With help from FountainLine, Initial can quickly design and manufacture solutions to operational problems, ensuring the firm adapts quickly to changes in customer demand.

### Resolving design challenges, first time

A key feature of the FountainLine service, according to Nicholls, is the speed of reaction. “Terry and Richard offer a great design service. I can phone them up, and they will come round quickly: we will look at a new challenge together, and then solve it together. Sometimes, this response is critical to business operations.”

In June 2013, the UK manufacturer of one of Initial’s principal hygiene bins suddenly changed bin specifications. This meant Initial staff could no longer use their own specially-designed trolleys to move bins around customer sites.

“We wanted to keep the same basic frame, but needed a different tray, so the trolleys could carry eight or ten bins instead of six,” says Nicholls. “I came up with the idea, Richard and Terry designed it, and FountainLine built it. The first prototype had no defects; it was perfect. From order to delivery of a brand new product took just five weeks. That’s trust—fulfilled.”



Commercial washroom

*“Cost is a very big factor in our decision to keep using FountainLine,” he says. “FountainLine isn’t in the habit of coming to us and saying the costs have changed, or that a slight alteration is going to make a big difference in cost.”*

John Nicholls  
National Warehouse Manager  
Initial

### **Transparent costs and capabilities**

With FountainLine, Nicholls also has confidence that production costs and schedules will stay on track. “Cost is a very big factor in our decision to keep using FountainLine,” he says.

“FountainLine are also very transparent about their capabilities: they make sure we know what they can do and when, and that’s proved the foundation of a very, very good relationship. With FountainLine, we don’t get surprises.”

### **A flexible production resource**

To ensure that stock will always be available when it is needed, Nicholls maintains a fixed production-forecast agreement with FountainLine. If stocks at the logistics centre run down, Nicholls can order replacements with guaranteed delivery within two weeks. To meet unforeseen demand, FountainLine has a strategic part-production policy.

“With some stock items, for example syringe enclosures, FountainLine cuts extra steel plates with each production run, and then holds them in reserve,” says Nicholls. “If we hit sudden demand, they proceed straight to folding and drilling. As a result, they can produce 20-30 enclosures within a couple of weeks if we need them urgently. That flexibility is a great business asset.”

### **A force for operational efficiency**

Nicholls has also consulted with FountainLine to find ways of improving staff productivity. In mid-2013, FountainLine took delivery of a new range of hygiene bins that took an excessive amount of time to empty.

“Our field staff service hundreds of bins per day, so speed is crucial,” says Nicholls. “FountainLine came up with a unique wire-framed bag-holder device that enables our guys to empty the bins, faster, safely and hygienically. This has proved a real time-saver for us, and popular with our staff.”

“Richard and Terry–FountainLine–have proved they are masters at creative metal engineering,” he adds. “If our challenge involves metal, we go to FountainLine.”