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Eager learners soak up seminars

When the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute hosted its first educational session on Thursday, June 20 at the Clean Show in New Orleans, it was clear that attendees had come to pay attention. Even early in the morning, the seats were filled with a lively crowd as motivational speaker Bruce Hamilton presented “No Bad Days: Positive Attitude is Everything.”

“When was the last time you had a bad day that it did you any good?” he asked, acknowledging that... yes, bad things happens all the time. However, letting it affect your attitude in a negative way means you’ve already lost.

“Here’s what I know about the Messenger of Misery,” Hamilton added. “He’s either at your house right now, or he just left your house, or he’s on his way to your house.”

Hamilton recalled a time when that same Messenger of Misery visited him in 2002 at a Holiday Inn. He suffered a stroke

and found himself paralyzed on the floor of his room for many hours. He was eventually hospitalized and faced a tough road of rehabilitation ahead.

“I decided to focus on what I could do, not what I couldn’t do,” he said.

While he still isn’t 100 percent — his vision is compromised considerably — his outlook has remained positive.

“Attitude makes a difference,” he emphasized. “If you’re not excited about getting new customers, someone else will be. I guarantee that.”

One big way to get new customers was covered by many speakers at the show — cultivating a strong online presence. It’s where people are going to find a cleaners before they ever step foot in an actual plant.

“People buy from people they know, and that they remember and trust,” emphasized Brian Rashid during his program. “You have to think of yourself as a me-

dia company.”

Experience has taught Rashid that most small business owners

are lost when it comes to telling their own story on social media. The problem is, most people

think that all of their digital content has to be based on a specific

Continued on page 24



After telling how her wash-dry-fold business has grown significantly in recent years, Rita Foley (left) had cleaners lining up to learn more following her Saturday morning session.

Giving new life to an old business

Sometimes, making one crucial change to your business can have a big impact overnight. Then again, sometimes it takes thousands of days doing a million little



Bobby Patel telling his Clean Show audience how he revived a tired business and continues to make improvements.

things to generate a complete overhaul of your company and its brand.

During Clean 2019 in New Orleans, Bobby Patel told the story of his California business, Kona Cleaners, which very much falls in the latter category.

When searching for a business to own, he came upon Kona, which was floundering under its present two-man ownership, “an alcoholic and a bartender.”

When he bought the one location in 1995, he described it as “dingy” and “run-down.” In fact, he didn’t even like the place, which then had a marketing plan of “low pricing.”

Patel knew he had to come up with a better marketing plan and that had to begin at the core of Kona. So, he began branding the company name and logo on everything inside the store and out, including employee uniforms.

“All of a sudden, my business started to look professional. It looked better than it was,” he confessed.

Patel cleaned up the storefront and decorated it. Upon learning that “Kona” was a Hawaiian reference, he stuck to that theme including adding a fish tank with live underwater occupants in the lobby which

“help keep customers from getting too angry.”

For advertising, his early plan was to stick with direct mail, Val-Pak and the like. As the business grew, new locations were added, which meant redecorating more lobbies and adding more fish tanks. There was an identity to maintain and it did not come without some sacrifice.

“We have to reinvest in the business,” Patel emphasized. “The lobbies have to look fresh and it doesn’t cost a lot of money to do that. It just needs to be clean with new graphics and the customers will notice that.”

Each year brought more changes, such as switching to GreenEarth for cleaning, updating the logo and, about eight years ago, instigating an e-mail marketing program, which has proven to be quite successful.

“The customers love the fact that we acknowledge that we miss them. We have so many clients and they want to feel special,” he noted. “This will make them feel special.”

It didn’t happen overnight, and it certainly was not without effort, but the business had created and cultivated strong and

positive brand recognition.

“It’s not one thing,” Patel said. “It’s all these little things that we do that increase sales.”

Having a strong social media presence was perhaps one of the most vital components. Patel, who founded BeCreative360 with Dave Troemel and Bryon Eser in 2013, has long generated a visible social media presence for Kona.

Patel was good at keeping up with technology, but he was willing to draw the line at SMS marketing. Because he hated receiving texts, he was reluctant to market to customers that way.

Then he tried it.

“The customers love this. I was a hurdle in my own business,” he smiled. “How many of us are hurdles in our own businesses? It’s not really [about] what I like.”

“As owners, we need to put ourselves out of the equation and let the experts guide us,” he added. “If you have a website that is ten years old, take it down. It’s better not to have a website than to have a crappy website because the customers who are going on there are judging you based on what they see. Your store could be beautiful and

Continued on page 8



Sneak Peek

6 Staying in the game

It has been a 75-year rollercoaster ride for LaFrance Cleaners in Youngstown but the company has adapted and is still on track.



James Peuster sees a parallel between New Orleans’ struggles and those of the industry with both recovering.



Don Desrosiers saw a lot to like at the Clean Show and begins his review of the innovations on display in this issue.



Bruce Grossman says simple testing can keep check valves in good working order and prevent serious and costly problems.



16 Lessons from Clean

22 Clean Show review

34 Checking check valves

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34 **Bruce Grossman** Make sure you follow these tips when locating faulty check valves in your boiler system

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The Weiss guys

Like so many others, the Weiss family had to live on the run during World War I. The hope was to all stay together.

"My grandfather Ernest was an immigrant who was from Austria-Hungary," recalled Stephen Weiss, third generation owner of LaFrance Cleaners in Youngstown, OH. "There was a lot of political unrest, so his dad left and took their family in 1918. They fled from Hungary." Well, not quite all.

"They conscripted people into the Army if you were able-bodied. So they kept him," he added, noting that his grandfather was only "12 or 13" at the time. "His family left him. He had to escape on his own."

Fortunately, about three years later, Ernest caught up with the family in Cleveland, OH, where relatives operated a drycleaning business.

Later, he worked at another plant in Akron and eventually became owner with a partner who, in time, bought him out and he moved to Arizona.

"He found himself retired at a very young age," Stephen noted.

The problem with retiring and moving to Arizona is that, as things turned out, Ernest didn't like either very much. He moved back to Ohio and bought Barton Drycleaners in December of 1944.

The name was changed to LaFrance because Stephen's grandmother Lillian thought it "sounded fancy."

"The timing ended up being good because the war was almost over coinciding with when he bought it. The war ended and troops were coming home," Stephen said.

The Ohio town of Youngstown is actually not so young (it was established in 1797). It has two histories: one that takes place before Black Monday (1977) and one after.

"This town is not growing like it did in 1945. It's been through very rough times," Stephen said, referring mostly to the aforementioned event over 40 years ago when 5,000 people suddenly lost their jobs as Youngstown Sheet and Tube shut down its steel plant.

"For a long time after Black Monday, people were kind of waiting for the steel mills to come back," he added.

Long before, Youngstown thrived from steel production. After Black Monday, the town never fully recovered with no big industry to sustain it. Its population was 168,300 in 1950 near its peak; in 2017, it was 64,604.

Fortunately for Ernest Weiss, his first ten years as owner of LaFrance were during very prosperous years.

"In a pretty short amount of time the war was over, everybody had come back, the economy was booming and he was off to the races," Stephen said.

He estimates that Ernest grew the company to include 25 stores plus delivery routes. "He was pretty aggressive," Stephen recalled.

"He was tough. I knew him when I was a kid and... he was very tough," he continued. "There were a lot of big cleaners in this town at one time. None of them — not one — is still around in any way, shape or form. We're the only ones who survived."

Bernard certainly inherited some of his father's grittiness. He came into the family business in the late 1950s and took over in 1965. Then, the 1970s came along. LaFrance was hit particularly hard with a double whammy; polyester clothing had reduced revenue for cleaners in general and Youngstown itself was reeling from Black Monday.

"The town was losing population. The industry was struggling and it was a matter of coming up with ways to

80/20 rule in business that posits the bulk of your revenues comes from a small percentage of customers. Stephen thinks it's more like 90/10 in the drycleaning industry.

"In most of America, not a lot of people use the drycleaner. It's just something people do not do that much," he said. "The people who do it — it is very important — and that's why we've been successful. We pay attention to our customers."

trust you. There's a lot of trust involved and they know they're going to be treated right."

While Youngstown has lived through hardships, much of the city remains strong even in the wake of GM's recent announcement to close its Lordstown Chevy Cruze assembly plant, affecting thousands of employees and local suppliers. At the same time, high-tech firms fo-

www.lafrancecleaners.com



Stephen Weiss

make things work," Stephen said. "My dad was a survivor."

In an effort to maintain profitability, Bernard made a lot of hard choices. He had to close many locations.

"He closed the main plant that had been there since the 1940s and put in place a couple of really interesting concepts to deal with things," Stephen added.

In order to increase profitability, Bernard converted some locations to package plants, but he divided each of them right down the middle, using half the space for a "micro plant" that could offer same day service requiring only a couple of employees. The other half would become a laundromat.

"He actually thought it was pretty inventive and he opened a few of those and got in the laundromat business a little bit," Stephen explained. "He did a really good job. We made it though those years."

Speedy service was a crucial factor in LaFrance's success during those years, but it was not the most important. The main factor took a lot more time.

"We always had a good relationships with customers. That's the number one thing," Stephen noted.

He believes that it requires making a conscious effort every day. Every visit has to be treated with equal care. The end goal is to keep customers; they are not an unlimited resource.

"The drycleaning business is a small business. We don't deal with millions — were not like Amazon.com. We don't deal with millions of customers," he explained. "I think most cleaners rarely look at who's supporting their business and analyze their customer base, which we did and we still do. We pay a lot of attention."

Stephen is a proponent of the Pareto principle, also known as the principle of factor sparsity. Essentially, it's the

"Like most cleaners, we are dealing with a relatively small number of people when you really look at the ones who are really paying the bills, people who are doing 80 to 90 percent of the business," he added. "It's a really small number."

A really small number might be a good way to describe Stephen's chances of following in his family's footsteps. He wanted out of Ohio, badly. So, he earned an Economics degree and moved out west.

"I moved to California with, really, no job prospects," he recalled. "I ended up getting a job in finance."

For a handful of years, Stephen worked as an options trader and as a stock broker while learning an important lesson: "I didn't love it out there," he said. "I wasn't loving what I was doing as far as work and my dad needed help so I thought I'd give this a try."

That was over 30 years ago. Much has changed since then. The company consolidated and pared down to a central store model with two other stores and three pickup and delivery trucks.

LaFrance, on the precipice of being 75 years old under the Weiss family, has managed to keep up with modern times, including a strong online presence. They have an average of 4.9 stars from 334 reviews, many of which, are of the "raving fan" variety. That is no accident. Much of the business's marketing plan is to focus closely on existing customers.

"If you live in an area where there's tremendous wealth and there's always an influx of people and the population density is huge, maybe people feel they don't need to do that," Stephen said. "We do because we're in an area where every customer is valuable to us. Your customers are not just a pair of pants. They're a person with a name and you know them and they know you. They

cussing on 3D printing and robotics have been welcomed in the city, which hopes technology can be the new industry to drive the town forward as steel once did.

"There are businesses here that are doing really well," Stephen said.

Regardless of the city's future fate, he will rely mostly on keeping his current customers happy. In order to do that, he needs happy employees. Thus, the interview process tends to be a selective one, probably because many of LaFrance's employees have been around for five, ten, 15 years and up.

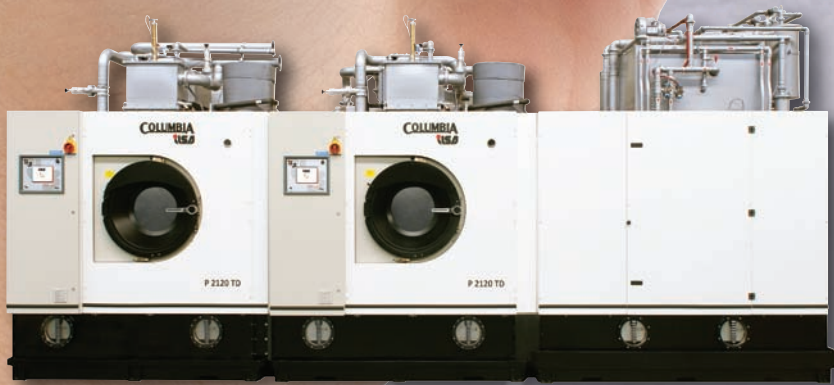
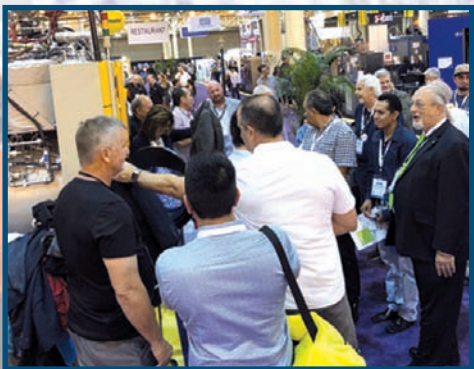
"We hire for people who fit our mold. They may not fit somebody else's mold, but they fit our mold," Stephen said, noting that one bad CSR could undo all the marketing efforts in the world. "If the experience doesn't really match what people are expecting, it's not going to work."

"We put a lot into having people care about these things. We look for employees who are very picky about things and we really are looking for people who care — who care about other employees and all the customers," he added.

That means looking for new ways to serve customers, too. Stephen has made a concerted effort to continue expanding delivery routes. He also noted that his business is called LaFrance Cleaners, not Drycleaners.

The family closed down the smaller laundromats years ago, but Stephen has a successful Super Laundry Express business and now is working on growing the laundry offerings for LaFrance.

"One of the things that we are really focussing on these days and have started developing is wash and fold," he said. "The one thing that's nice about laundry is everybody has it. People have it and there is a certain amount of people who don't want to do it."



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Mary Scalco has served the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute in various capacities for more than 40 years, including the past eight years as its CEO. She was honored at the Clean Show by the DLI board with a plaque recognizing her hard work and dedication to the institute. Presenting the award was Dennis Schmitt who became DLI president during the show. Newly elected members joining the board in New Orleans include Kathy Benzinger, owner of Benzinger’s Dry Cleaning in Hamburg, NY, as District 1 Director and Ed Longanecker, owner of Iris City Cleaners in Mount Pleasant, IA, as their District 5 Director.

New life for a tired business

Continued from page 1
you have a website that’s ten years old, guess what? They haven’t been in your store yet.”

In keeping up with technological trends, Patel also decided that his company should have an app... as long as it was useful.

“You cannot have an app just for the sake of having an app. It has to be functional,” he said. “One very functional thing we have on here is called ‘On my way.’”

Customers about to go there can hit that button and alert Kona that they are coming to pick up their order. Employees retrieve the clothes to speed up the checkout process. Patel admitted he copied the model from Starbucks, but the customers absolutely love it.

“We do everything to make it easier for our clients,” he said, noting that most of the younger ones “really don’t want to see you.”

More recently, Kona has upgraded one of its 17 locations to include lockers for customer convenience and more will follow in the future.

Of course, there might not be a future if the company doesn’t maintain its strong online presence. As Patel pointed out, “We all need to focus on this. It’s going to make you the most money.”

Once upon a time Kona’s online presence consisted of five reviews. The average? One solitary star. Over a long period of time, Patel has purposely worked to improve the brand, but he doesn’t do it by trying to block out the negative feedback.

“Everything we send out has a happy/sad face. If they click on happy, we send them on to [give] positive reviews,” he explained. “If they’re sad, I learn about it and am all over it before it gets online.”

“We are giving the customer

every opportunity to tell me what is wrong with my business... and I want to know. I don’t want to find out from Yelp and Google.”

By focussing on those negative reviews, Patel has figured out ways to improve his business. Whenever problems with customers arise, Patel believes in swallowing the costs of claims to prevent word-of-mouth repercussions that could prove much costlier.

“Think of it as a marketing budget. Put your ego out of it,” he said.

By “killing them with kindness,” he wants to change customers’ minds and have them change their negative reviews to positive ones. He never asks them to do it, either.

If that sounds risky, it has proved to be anything but. The numbers behind Kona’s online reputation as of this year: a 4.5 star average out of 7,032 reviews.

GreenEarth joins effort to filter out microplastics

GreenEarth Cleaning announced an initiative to help reduce the amount of microplastic fibers that are discharged into wastewater treatment systems as a result of laundering synthetic materials, such as polyester, nylon or acrylic.

GreenEarth is joining with the Plastic Soup foundation and PlanetCare in the effort which the company announced during the Clean Show in New Orleans in June. They will be testing and installing washing machine filters designed and manufactured by PlanetCare, a Slovenian company. GreenEarth has performed alpha testing on PlanetCare’s initial filter designs and will begin beta testing at selected GreenEarth locations in California. A U.S. national rollout is scheduled for 2020.

“While we have been focused on achieving maximized sustainability in drycleaning over our 20 year history, we welcome the opportunity to turn our attention to the emission problems associated with the laundry side of our affiliates’ business,” said Ron Benjamin, co-founder and managing director of GreenEarth Cleaning. “We intend to provide operational and financial support for Plastic Soup’s overall mission.”

GreenEarth said its affiliates wash some 25 million shirts annually in the United States and the company will be Plastic Soup’s exclusive partner in the endeavor.

Plastic Soup’s mission is “No plastic waste in our water!” and it aims to tackle the issue at its sources.

Maria Westerbos, founder and director of the Plastic Soup Foundation, said, “We’re excited to enter into this joint effort with Green Earth and PlanetCare as we continue to seek ways to meet our mission of having no plastic waste in our water!”

Plastic Soup’s website is www.plasticsoupfoundation.org.



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OUR HISTORY

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The Sankosha Dry Cleaning Store provided the inspiration to create new and innovative pressing equipment for future generations of our Industry.



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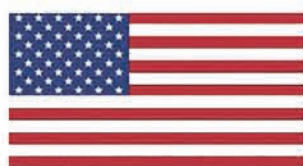
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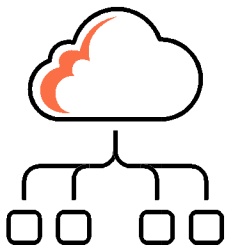
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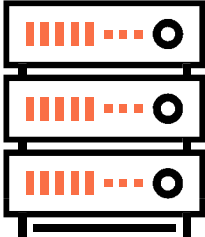


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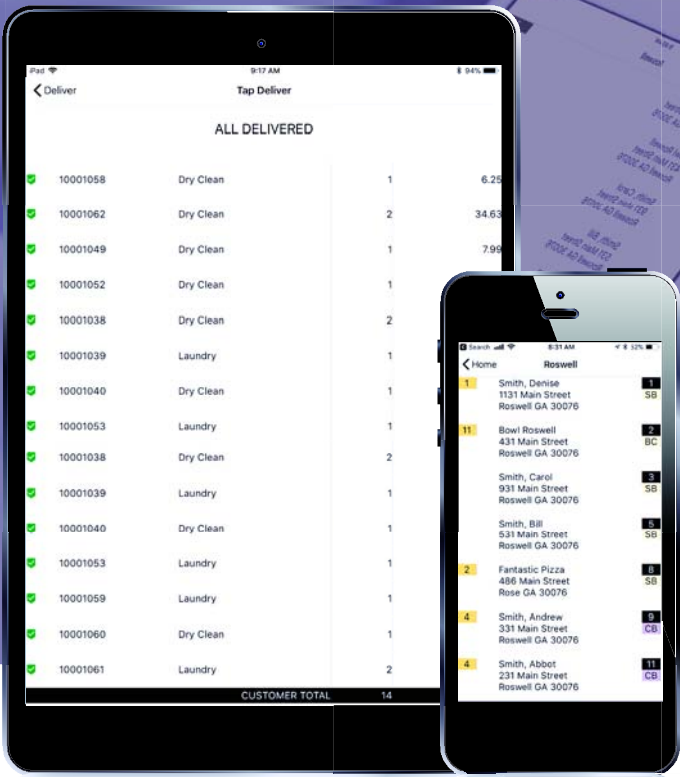
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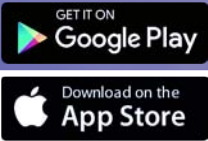
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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

Lessons learned from New Orleans

Another Clean Show. Another chance for cleaners to see what is new, better or unchanged, compare equipment, POS systems and network with fellow cleaners.

2019 may be remembered as the year we got out just in time before Barry (Not Gershenson) did his damage to the city of New Orleans. At the time of writing this article, tropical storm Barry was heading towards Louisiana. No matter what, New Orleans is sure to get hit hard.

The city itself has survived many a storm, much like our industry. From floods to heatwaves and other factors, New Orleans always rebuilds and moves forward again.

This is how I feel about the

history of the drycleaning industry. Every decade has thrown our world a curve ball and most operators tend to rebuild, rebound and set their sights on the future. The biggest challenge right now is

that predicting what will happen to our industry in the 2020s is much like guessing when and where a tropical storm will hit and how hard.

One thing that stood out the most from the Clean Show was

the various point of sales options that are entering our world. The computer system options continue to baffle operators as they look at where their systems need to be. They all have bells and whistles, features that pique anyone's interest and shortcomings that may or may not ever be overcome.

But here is what I suggest: first work with your current system to see if they are moving forward into 2020.

Second, measure the POS by the support given. I don't care how powerful a system may look, the back end support outweighs it all.

Third, make sure to compare to what you got. I hear it all the time: "I sure miss what my previous POS did."

Don't be that person. Make sure to look at credit card processing, marketing reports, retention programs and the counter processes before making a big decision. Finally, decide how sustainable the product is. Will it be around another 10 years?

With that being said, as your options expand, do what's best for your company.

Another reoccurring theme I witnessed at the show was a lot of new players entering the industry. Every year we see it, but it looks like there are new faces entering who are looking to make a difference.

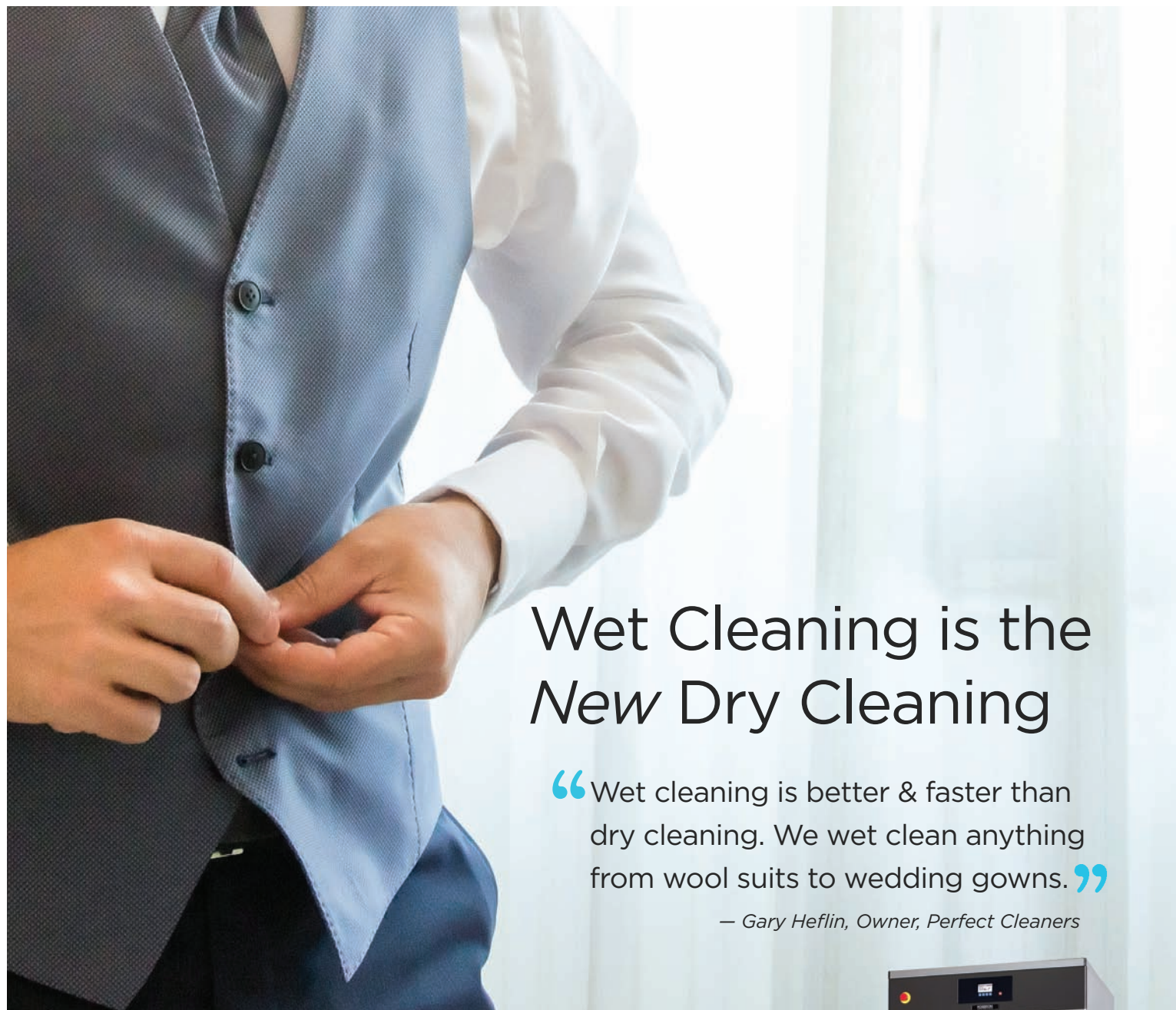
While the tendency is to shun such thoughts, we see some new blood that is making noises and growing right out of the gate. Some are the younger generation while others bought in to the drycleaning world. Trust me, we'll watch them produce like never before.

Finally, the importance of delivering wash-dry-fold is continuing to be on the rise. It's now time to stop making excuses and do it.

Many laundromat companies entered our booth looking for guidance and support on delivering laundry.

What makes it so important is that *everyone* is a potential customer, not just those who live in apartments, go to college or just moved in to their new home. Make it happen and watch your profits grow. **James Peuster is a consultant who specializes in route development, management and maintenance. He offers onsite consulting as well as ongoing coaching across the country. He also has cost groups to monitor route efficiency. For information, call (816) 739-2066 or visit www.theroutepro.com.**

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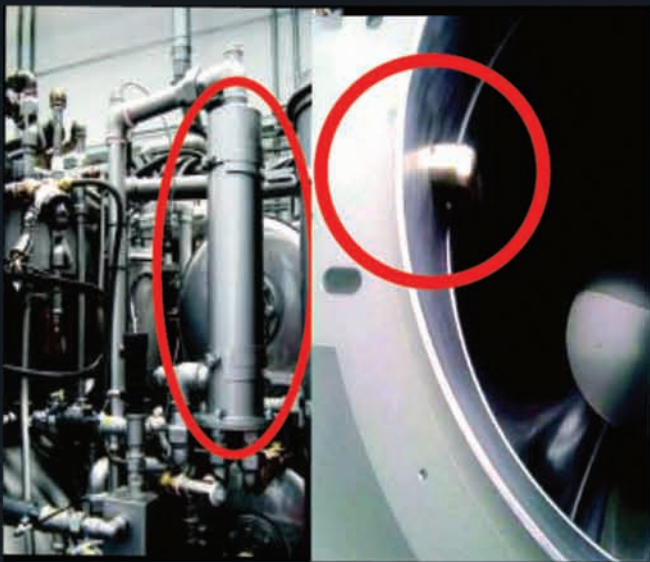
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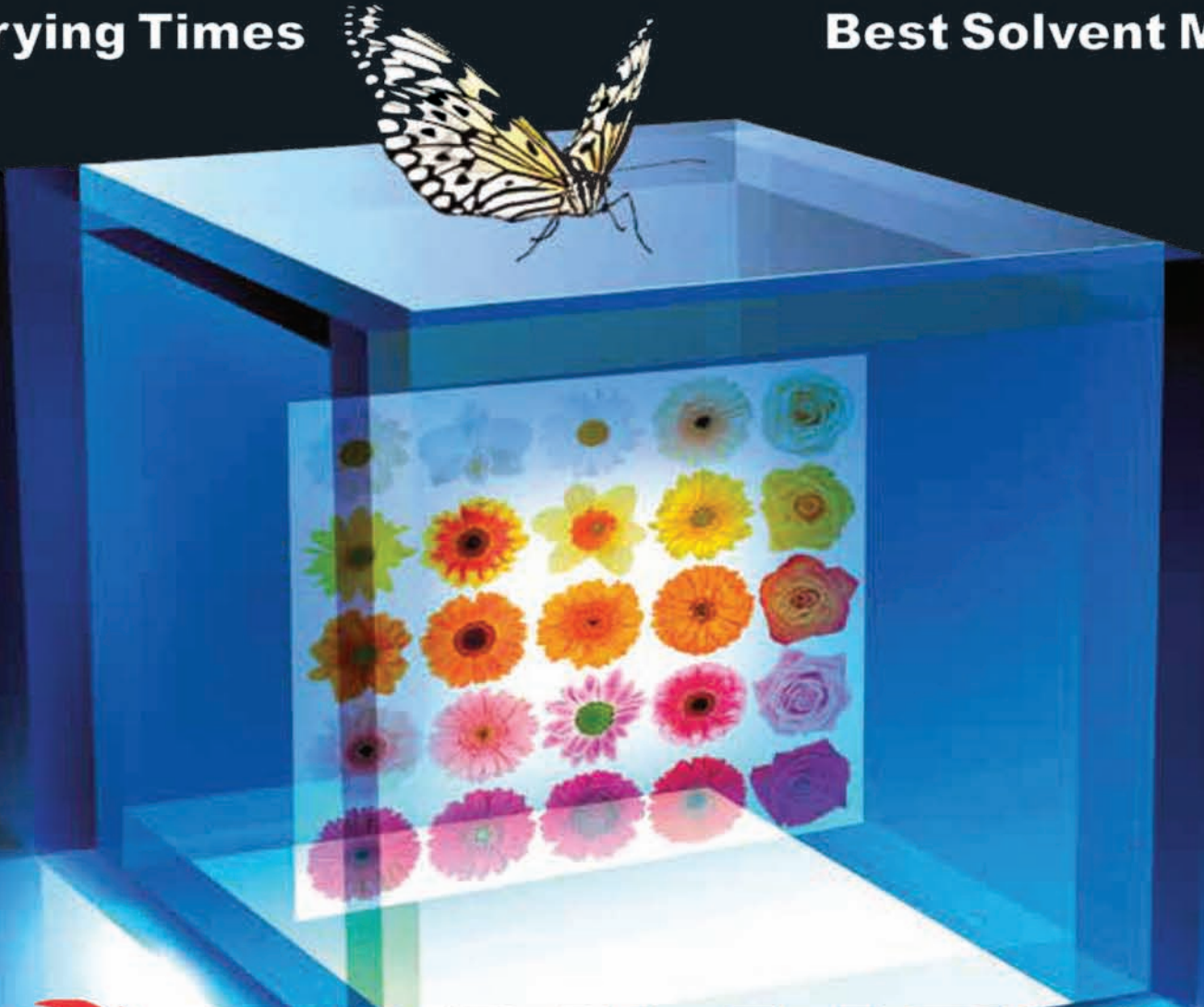


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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

The limits of employee dress codes

First impressions are important. Last week, I was on vacation and walked out of a restaurant because the wait staff looked like people I did not want to handle my food.

I frequently judge a business by the personal appearance of its employees. There is no law requiring me to shop in a particular store, so whether I patronize a business with unkempt employees depends on how badly I need the product.

Employers must also evaluate the personal appearance of its employees to insure that customers are not turned off by particularly “strange-looking” employees.

That process usually begins at the interview, but sometimes individuals, once hired, dress and groom differently than

they did when they wanted to be hired.

Increasingly, however, laws are being passed to make personal appearance a protected

Some jurisdictions prohibit “personal appearance” discrimination, and California has just added “discrimination on the basis of hairstyle” as a pro-

hibited employment practice. government civil rights agencies recognize certain hairstyles as being connected with African American identity — dreadlocks, cornrows, Afros, and

It helps if your business has a dress code that emphasizes hygiene, professionalism, and good grooming, giving guidelines that comport with your

If you make a decision based on an employee’s personal appearance, justify the decision based on good hygiene and good taste, not the prejudices of your customers.

characteristic, just like race, sex, age, and so forth. Your decisions based on personal appearance may no longer be appropriate.

Currently, federal law does not expressly prohibit personal appearance discrimination. State and local jurisdictions have taken a different approach.

hibited employment practice.

Does this mean that employees who are in danger of being fired for performance reasons can forestall their termination by shaving their heads, cutting their hair in an odd way, or dyeing their hair to look like a rainbow? Perhaps.

In some jurisdictions, gov-

Bantu knots for example. Actions based on those hairstyles could be viewed as race discrimination in those jurisdictions.

There can also be issues related to religious dress, such as yarmulkes, burkas, and certain jewelry, such as crosses. Religious practices are required to be accommodated unless unreasonable.

My recommendation is for employers to be aware that decisions based on personal appearance must be carefully evaluated. Your emphasis needs to be on hygiene, professionalism, and good grooming. Neatness counts (tuck in your shirt), employees should not smell bad, and employees should not wear clothing that borders on the indecent.

After that, however, employers need to decide if the employee’s appearance is somehow connected to a protected classification. Gender based differences could be a further problem. If there are potential legal issues, seek advice.

jurisdiction’s laws on personal appearance.

That code should also take into account the possibility that you may need to accommodate a religious practice, that a rule might be considered improperly sex-based, and that there could be cultural reasons affecting an employee’s dress.

Again, you need to have a good policy that can adapt to changes in the law and culture.

Finally, you must also keep in mind that the Americans with Disabilities Act may play a role in your personal appearance decisions. A disfigurement or physical characteristic could be a protected disability, and excluding an employee because of physical appearance could be a violation of the ADA.

One of the toughest cases I had to deal with involved a pediatric nurse who wanted to return to the pediatric ward after her face was horribly disfigured in an automobile accident. Some young patients were frightened by her appearance, and the hospital wanted to keep a good nurse, so it took some creative accommodation to resolve the problem.

The nurse ultimately decided that her appearance was having an effect on her young patients, and sought a transfer.

If you must make a decision based on an employee or applicant’s personal appearance, do your best to justify the decision based on good hygiene and good taste.

The prejudices of your customers, however, are not a good reason for a decision. The customer has a right to expect good, courteous service from a clean, neatly dressed employee, not necessarily an employee with the same cultural background or taste in clothes, hairstyle, or jewelry.

Frank Kollman is a partner in the law firm of Kollman & Saucier, PA, in Baltimore, MD. He can be reached by phone at (410) 727-4300 or fax (410) 727-4391. His firm’s web site can be found at www.kollmanlaw.com. It has articles, sample policies, news and other information on employee/employer relations.



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RMFA to host Peak of Performance conference

The Rocky Mountain Fabricare Association has enlisted Kermit Engh and Bill Alber to headline its “Peak of Performance” management conference set to take place in Denver on Saturday, Oct. 5.

The event will take place at the

Marriott Hotel in the Denver Tech Center, the same site of the association’s 2015 Drycleaning Alternatives Fair that has undergone quite a few redesigned renovations.

At the event, the association plans to help attendees embrace

the latest in business management analytical tools that they can use to mine data in order to improve profitability and take better control of their business..

There will be two in-depth educational programs as well as vendor displays.

Things will kick off at 9 a.m. when Kermit Engh presents a two-hour program called “Know Your Numbers.”

In addition to being a managing partner of Methods for Management, Inc., Engh also has been a successful drycleaner for almost 30 years with Fashion Cleaners of Omaha, NE.

He will help business owners and managers examine their financial versus operational numbers, explaining the how and why behind the budgeting process and helping them establish KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to help increase profitability and stay on top of your operation.

Upon the conclusion of the opening seminar, there will be a two-hour break for lunch with plenty of time to view the industry vendors’ booths at the conference.

At 1 p.m., Bill Alber will tackle the topic of “Growing Your Business and Finding Your Future” until about 3 p.m.

Alber is also a drycleaner, as well as an inventor and CEO of SMRT Systems, which is a provider of information technology services to cleaners. The company provides cloud-based soft-

ware to help them run their businesses by giving them delivery, assembly and payment related services.

Some of the topics that he will cover include: branding to stand out, achieving more with less, remaining consistent and strategy. Alber sees numbers, automation and consolidation as key factors for the future. Will you lead, follow or get out of the way?

RMFA will host a reception and vendor display afterwards from 3 to 5 p.m. in the Pikes Peak room, allowing vendors and attendees more time to socialize and conduct business.

Registration for the event is \$100, which includes the programs, paid parking and a catered lunch as well as the RFMA reception. Additional guests from the same business are also welcome to attend at a reduced cost of only \$50 per person.

Those who wish to sign up or find out more about the event can contact Mary Ewing at RMFA by calling (970) 534-1038 or sending email to: info@rmfa.org, or call Joe Blaha at (303) 810-3508 or email him at jblaha@greenearthcleaning.com.



ATTENDEES OF THE 2015 DRYCLEANING ALTERNATIVES FAIR (above) will remember the Marriott Hotel in Denver that hosted the event. The same setting will house the 2019 Peak of Performance Management Conference, though it has been redesigned since then, including 50,000 sq. ft. of newly transformed venue space.

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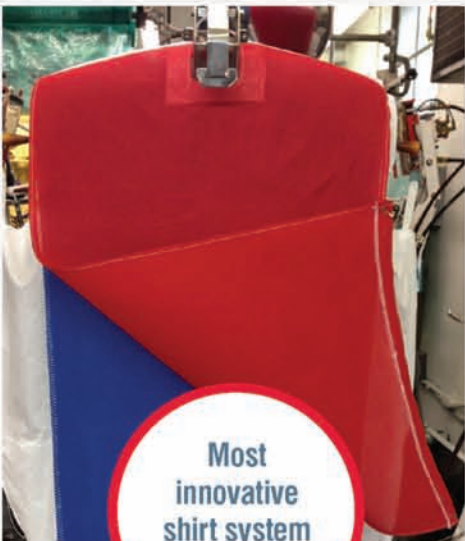
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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Impressed by presses at Clean '19

The Clean Show of 2019 has come and gone and so comes my self-proclaimed responsibility to tell you all about it, at least as far as shirt pressing equipment goes.

There are still many players in the game. Some have opted

important. It is one thing if you see an experienced factory representative pressing flawlessly on a shirt unit, but it is another thing entirely when you see a completely different person (me) with a very short training pressing excellent shirts. This is why I do this.

Sankosha's shirt units are always fun to press on but they also added a self-contained spotting board, an all new tensioning steam form and a must-see stationary washer (see my column in DLI's *Fabricare*.)

Forenta really should sell

It's one thing to see an experienced factory rep pressing flawlessly but another thing to see someone with little training.

out, some are still waiting for their turn at bat, some waiting for their moment in the sun and there is a brand new player.

Allow me to tell you a wee bit about each now, and then I'll go into detail over the next three months. There is a lot to cover.

As usual, I have taken lots of photos at the booths and made movies of the equipment. In many cases, the movies are of yours truly pressing on the shirt equipment. I think that this is very

Unipress had a brand new shirt unit to show. And — get this — it is a price point that is \$3,000 less than last year's model and has a feature that will blow your mind!

Weishi Fuji from China continues to offer a very unique one-piece unit.

Pony has at least three shirt units. I love the black Teflon coated steam chests.

Hi-Steam continues to improve its tensioning shirt units. It now features a pneumatic collar clamp and double heat exchangers.

more shirt units because they are so easy to dress and do such a nice job with no effort

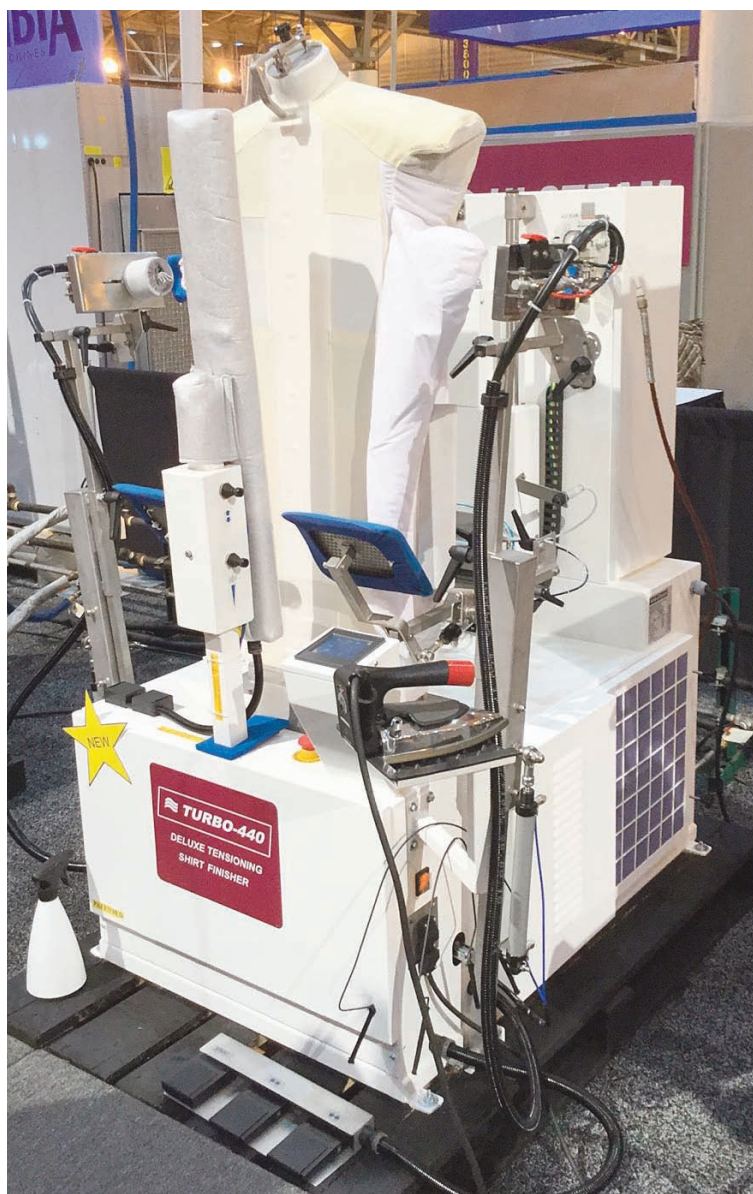
YAC Japan is famous for easy loading shirt units; they've made it easier still. Now they have a "hand" that wipes the back of the shirt. It doesn't just pull the tail like other pull-downs, it starts at the middle of the back and wipes the entirety of the back. Interesting.

Itsumi introduced a new multi-former model GF 750AS-A. If this thing could only do

Continued on page 23



Terrance White demonstrates the Sankosha LP190U double buck shirt unit. Hi-Steam has greatly improved their Cobra unit and renamed it the Hi-Steam 440. They have added a pneumatic collar clamp, front paddles and double heat exchangers.



The Hi-Steam 440 is a world-class tensioning shirt finisher new and improved for 2019. See the Hi-Steam 440 in action at www.tailwindsystems.com.

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Don Desrosiers

Impressed by presses at Clean '19

Continued from page 22

pants, it would be the only press you would need in a plant.

You can watch a movie of the same operator pressing (in succession) a size 2 blouse (wet), a size XS shirt (wet), a size 18 37 shirt (wet) a wool coat and a sequin dress all with complete success. It is amazing. Check it out.

Barbanti is a new name in the shirt equipment business but they have been

making shirt units for other brands for 30 years. The double-buck that they demonstrated was quite the attention getter!

This month, let's take an in-depth look at Sankosha, Itsumi and Hi-Steam.

Sankosha's LP190u is a great choice among shirt units. It is a quality unit that produces a great shirt.

You need a lot of space for this unit though, so be prepared. This is a monster, but it is a joy to operate. My friend

Terrance demonstrates this at the show, but I jump in and press and I do a great job with ease as well.

See this unit in action on my website at www.tailwindsystems.com.

Join me again next month while I explore more of your options in the world of shirt pressing equipment!

Don Desrosiers has been in the drycleaning and shirt laundering business since 1978. He is a work-flow engineer and a

management consultant who provides services to shirt launderers and drycleaners through Tailwind Systems. He is a member of the Society of Professional Consultants and winner of DLI's Commitment to Professionalism award. He can be reached at 186 Narrow Ave., Westport, MA 02790 or at his office by fax (508) 636-8839; by cell (508) 965-3163; or e-mail at tailwindsystems@charter.net. The Tailwind web site is www.tailwind-systems.com.



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Itsumi's single buck unit the BT-150 is equally easy to operate and does a terrific job. Go to www.tailwindsystems.com to see these units in operation. Great shirts with very little effort!



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The last roundup for Riddle

If there has been one constant in the Clean Show over the years, it is John Riddle who, with his staff at Riddle & Associates, has managed the show since 1993. His involvement with the show actually dates back to 1981 before his company became the official show management firm.



John Riddle (left) and David Cotter of TCATA as Riddle was winding up his tenure as manager of the Clean Show.

Riddle's run ended at the Clean Show in New Orleans. He officially retired and passed the torch to the show's new owners, Messe Frankfurt of Germany. The firm purchased the show from the five U.S. trade associations that have owned it and it now becomes a part of the portfolio of trade shows that Messe Frankfurt manages around the world.

The last Riddle-managed show was largely successful with more than 11,000 registrants and some 430 exhibiting companies occupying 224,500 net square feet at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

At the show's conclusion, the Textile Care Allied Trades Association presented Riddle with a plaque and a gift on behalf of TCATA and its members who have exhibited at the show over the years.

"It has been an honor to have been associated with the Clean Show for so many years, and I thank everyone for the opportunity to have been a part of it," Riddle said in accepting the honors. "I absolutely could not have accomplished this without all the members of my staff who are, in my opinion, the best in the trade show industry. I have made many friends over the years that I will miss very much."

Learning at Clean

Continued from page 1

business or industry. It doesn't.

As an example, Rashid suggested that cleaners can start their own "Local Heroes" TV show that is less than 12 minutes long and can be watched on YouTube.

"I'm going to do a TV show, filmed on my cell phone, for free, where I'm going to interview the local leaders of the community," he outlined. "I would urge you all to do video unless you are horrified at video. Video is the best."

He also noted that you should not put the video link for a YouTube video on Facebook. Because they are competitors, Facebook will make sure nobody sees it, he said.

Many small businesses fall into the trap of believing that all content must be sales oriented. Yet, Rashid noted that having access to stories about local leaders in the community adds much greater brand value and creates deeper

loyalty because they can't get that information from anybody else.

Additionally, employee spotlight posts and a playful "Don't Hire Me" series with stain removal recommendations can help build trust, as well.

"You need to decide before you put out every single piece of content, if it's a brand piece or a sales piece and you can't confuse your audience," he said.

Your brand online

Online branding continued to be a popular topic during a Friday morning session with Nick Chapleau, CEO and co-founder of Starchup, and Rachel Delehanty, Starchup Customer Success.

"Online is where people are going shopping these days," Chapleau noted. "The number one goal of your website is to convert them into a customer."

"Your website is an opportunity to tell a story about who you are as a business, both through how the website looks and the impression it makes on the prospect, but also you can tell your stories through your customers," he added, referring to testimonials.

Delehanty shared some surprising statistics with the audience, such as 94 percent of potential customers search online for new businesses and services.

"Your online presences is comprised of a few different things, not just your website," she pointed out. It also includes external links to your brand, online directories, paid media like Google Ads, and of course, all forms of social media.

"The most important thing when it comes to social, whether you're doing advertising or whether you're just setting up accounts is: it's better to not have an account at all than to just have one set up with nothing on it," she added with the caveat that a Facebook business page might be the one exception.

Another speaker during the show, technical strategist and futurist Crystal Washington, spoke to a packed afternoon seminar about how online isn't just a place to craft your brand; it's also a good place to try and simplify your offline life.

The problem, she says, is that technology does not free up our time as it is supposed to do; instead, the way we use technology is adding to the problem.

"Start thinking about unusual ways that you can use technology," she suggested.

Services like fiverr, Fancy Hands, Upwork and TaskRabbit allow people to outsource tasks to freelancers (such as executive assistants, website designers and graphic artists) who have already had their backgrounds checked.

Washington is also a proponent of automation tools that can be quite invaluable. If you want to manage your online reputation, sign up for Google Alerts and find out when somebody mentions your company online. Or you can "lovingly stalk" potential clients through LinkedIn so you can congratulate them when they are promoted or know when they change jobs.

Continued on page 26

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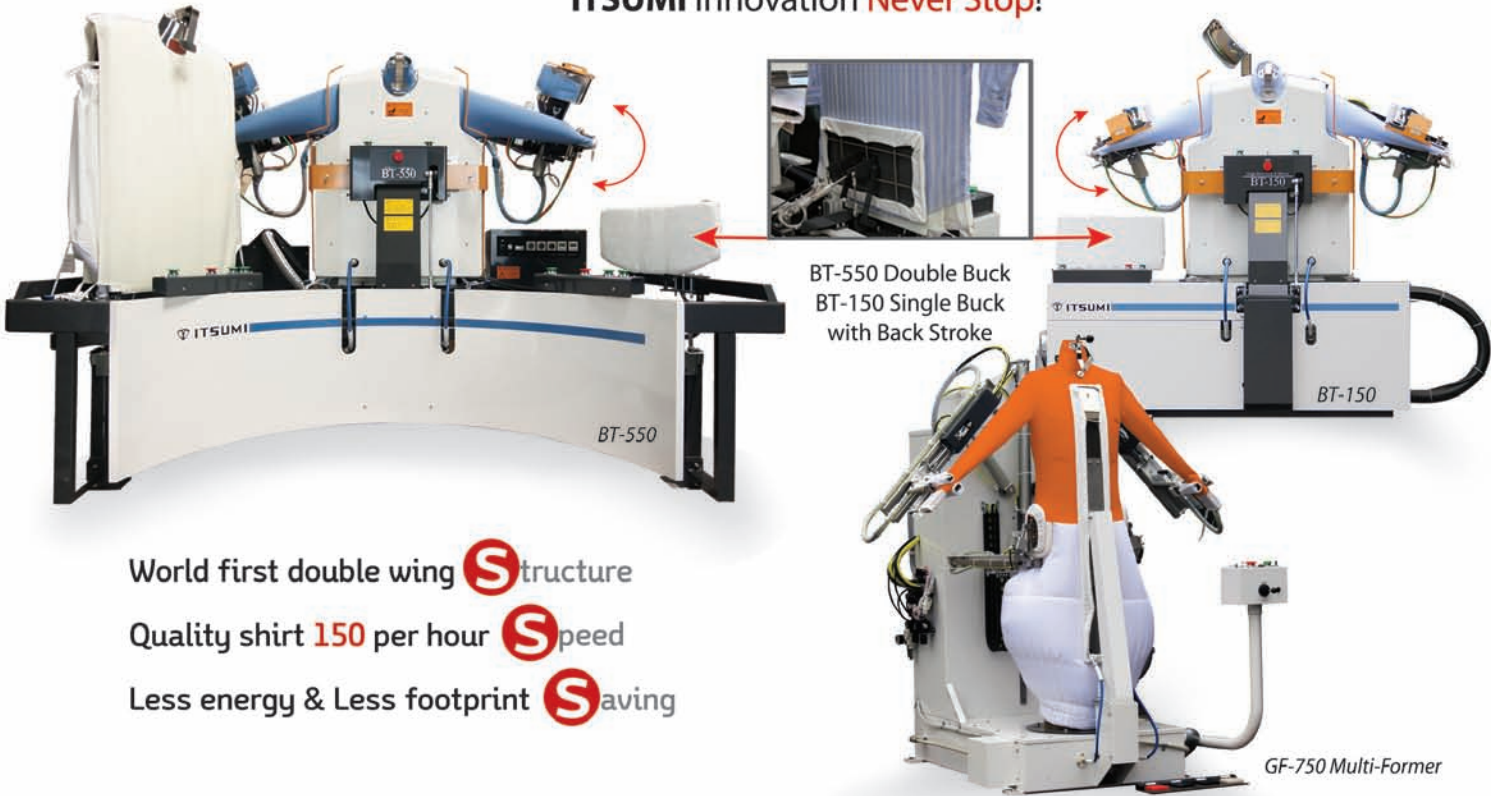
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Ideas abound at Clean for business building

Continued from page 24
The important thing is to never lose sight of the idea that technology should make your life easier, not harder.

“So only use something I’ve mentioned today if it’s going to help you grow your business, grow relationships and literally take stress off of you. Don’t start using things that don’t have an obvious purpose for your business because that creates stress,” she said.

Tackling turnover

Removing stress becomes more difficult for owners and managers in the drycleaning industry thanks to the recurring issue of employee turnover. Tackling the problem of better staff retention at Clean 2019 was Arthur Greeno, owner of two Chik-fil-A franchises in Tulsa, OK.

One way to cut down on turnover is to try and create a

close-knit atmosphere with workers. By genuinely getting to know his staff, and encouraging group events where they bond together, it makes for a better work atmosphere.

“People can quit a job, but they can’t quit a family,” Greeno noted. “Believe me, I’ve tried.”

Once again, social media was praised as a useful tool, in this case to reach out to the local community and keep a pulse on where to find new hires.

“Know your surroundings,” he emphasized. “In a one-hour period, I can actually reach out to about 4,500 people because I’ve already established relationships.”

He also recommended calling personal references over professional ones because they are a better source of information.

“Personal references weren’t trained in what you’re allowed to say and what you’re not allowed to say,” he smiled.

Once he hires, trains and es-

tablishes a rapport with newer employees, it is that bond that allows him to choose something special and appropriate in terms of rewarding them for performing well.

“We have a great company culture. When I talk about culture, I’m talking about what goes on behind the scenes,” Greeno said. “Our jobs as leaders is to find out what’s going on in our team members’ lives. Because, if we do that for our team, they’re going to do that for our guests. When we do that for our guests, they become raving fans of Chik-fil-A.”

Of course, not all employees work out and some resist company policies and changes. Greeno had a plan for that, too.

“If they’re not doing their job right, we will promote them to customer status,” he joked.

Building a culture

Company culture was another central theme of a seminar pre-

sented by Jason Loeb of Sudsies.com who discussed “Being Good is Not Good Enough.”

It takes a strong company culture to be able to present customers with a memorable experience that is both invaluable and irreplaceable. And you can charge more.

“If you want to be an experience business, that will dictate the price you’re going to charge,” he said. “Price is driven by the experience of the customer.”

As an example of providing stellar customer service, Loeb talked about how he takes his management team to couture fashion retail stores and designers in an effort to better educate them on the best way to clean expensive garments and avoid damage.

One time, Loeb traveled with his team to the boutique Brunello Cucinelli in Italy. The company has 1,300 employees who don’t punch a time clock. Worker wages are 20 percent higher than the in-

dustry average and the company also donates 20 percent of its profits to charity.

They do everything by hand and all live in a 14th century castle on top of a hill and the entire company stops at lunchtime so everybody can eat together. Additionally, children of employees grow up training for a speciality, such as tailoring, so quality is never compromised.

“It makes them different and unique,” Loeb noted, which is why people are willing to pay \$2,700 for a pair of pants. Such customers expect a different caliber of experience from a drycleaners and Loeb specifically trains his employees to understand that.

“We are servicing people,” he added. “If you treat your team with the same level of respect and attitude, they will help deliver that grand promise of being the best brand in the world because we all understand we’re in the people business.”

Growing wash-dry-fold

That means giving people what they want, even if it means laundry services, as Rita Foley, owner of Regency Cleaners in Durham, NC, has found out. In 2002, the company’s wash-dry-fold service only accounted for two percent of its sales; but since pushing the service more to customers, that has gone up to 13 percent of the business and is still growing.

“The fastest growing segment of our company is wash-dry-fold,” Foley pointed out, adding that the equipment you need is already in your plant. “Run your numbers. Make sure it is profitable for you.”

During her session, she discussed the layout of her two wash-dry-fold facilities within her drycleaning plants, detailing everything from how to separate laundry (different colored net bags for whites, darks and fluorescent reds fastened shut with two pins that DO NOT go in the dryer) to how the finished laundry is presented (make sure a nice looking garment is placed neatly folded on top). It if sounds like too much work, think about this:

“If you do not want to do it, your local laundromats going after it,” she said. For Foley, that would mean 4,500 pounds of wash-dry-fold a day.

She also recommended weighing the laundry before and after (they price by the after weight so they don’t charge for moisture in towels).

If the weight has changed too much, it could indicate items are missing.

Other tips included don’t put the clothes in the laundry bag because the customers will wonder if that was cleaned. Also, put socks at the bottom so they don’t find a way to escape.

“Make sure you’re charging for the extra services you are providing,” she added, noting the dangers of pricing yourself out of the market.

Ultimately, though, she ended her program with universal advice that all attendees at the Clean Show would probably be wise to heed: “When the folding gets tough, press on.”



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Brian Robertson
Owner, Comet Cleaners of Corinth

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SOUTH



KAY CLEANERS in Roswell, GA, purchased a Union HXL-8025-C cartridge filtration cleaning machine through Gulf States Laundry Machinery. Kay Cleaners owner Yun Chun Kim (left) is pictured with MJ Choi, sales representative for Gulf States.

NCALC sets dates, venue for its Raleigh convention

The North Carolina Association of Launderers and Cleaners will be heading to Raleigh for its upcoming annual convention from Oct. 25 to 27.

It will be hosted at the Embassy Suites Raleigh Durham Airport Brier Creek.

Currently, the association's Member Services Committee has been working on creating a compelling program.

On Friday afternoon, attendees can gather to witness a facilitated roundtable discussion on

drycleaning equipment technology. On the following day, NCALC plans to include speakers on employee recruitment and retention, marketing and advertising, plant equipment maintenance, and improving plant production.

In addition to the guest speakers, there will be tabletop vendor exhibits, the annual NCALC membership meeting and a Friday evening reception.

Speaker Stan Phelps will deliver a keynote presentation during dinner. He is a Forbes con-

tributor, TEDx speaker, and IBM futurist. His program will be called "Purple Goldfish: Little Things Make the Biggest Difference in Driving Loyalty and Sales."

Phelps will focus on how customer experience and employee engagement can drive differentiation, increase loyalty and create positive word of mouth in your business.

Before concluding the convention, attendees will meet one last time on Saturday evening for the President's Reception and Recognition Banquet.

Raleigh is home to many attractions for those who want to spend down time exploring places such as the North Carolina State Capitol, the North Carolina Art Museum, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the North Carolina Museum of History, the State Farmers Market and much more.

The timing of NCALC's convention does coincide with the last few days of the North Carolina State Fair.

Look for more details about the convention, including registration information, in the near future by visiting NCALC's website at www.ncalc.org.

DSCA issues No Further Action status for 100th time

Back in September of 2002, the owner of Sno-White Cleaners and Launderers in Charlotte entered the site into the North Carolina Drycleaning Solvent Cleanup Act program.

Now, just less than 17 years later, the site has become the 100th No Further Action status awarded by the program.

The remediation for the site that was in operation from 1971 to 1999 was a lengthy one, to be sure. It required the excavation of 2,000 tons of contaminated soil and the installation and sampling of 26 monitoring wells to sample groundwater.

The business was demolished almost 20 years ago to make room for parking for the new Symphony Park at South Park Mall.

The DSCA, which has been in existence for over two decades, has spent that time working to identify or clean up 427 contaminated drycleaning sites — and, of course, issuing 100 No Further Actions overall.

The DSCA program is a voluntary one supported by the North Carolina Association of Launderers and Cleaners that has paid for 98 percent of cleanup costs to date.



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MIDWEST



SCHAFFER DRY CLEANING of Jackson, MI, has installed a QuickSort Assembly System. Steve Hanifl (left), the owner, is pictured with Brett McLeod of Garment Management Systems.

WFI to host Dry Cleaning Expo, cruise next month in Milwaukee

The Wisconsin Fabricare Institute is gearing up for a two-day Dry Cleaning Expo that will take place on Thursday and Friday, Sept. 19 and 20 at the association's offices located at 11801 W. Silver Spring Dr. in Milwaukee, WI.

Attendees will gather on Thursday evening at 4:30 p.m. for a buffet dinner at Buck Bradley's before setting sail on a two-hour Riverwalk Boat Tour which includes an open bar, soft drinks, mixers, local brews and house wines.

Exhibitors will set up on Friday morning before registration begins at 9 a.m. Then, WFI has set aside time for attendees to hear from Alonzo Kelly and John McHugh.

Kelly is a nationally recognized expert on leadership development and strategic planning, with a Bachelor's in accounting and three Master's degrees in Public Administration, Human Resources and Labor Relations, and Business Administration. (He is currently working on a Ph.D. in Multidisciplinary Human Services

and a doctorate in Business Administration.)

He is also a best-selling author, has appeared on "America's Premier Experts" and has worked on personal and professional development with many Fortune 500 companies, colleges and universities. For more on him, go to www.alonzokelly.com.

McHugh, the other speaker slated to appear at WFI's Dry Cleaning Expo, is the director of corporate communications, leadership development and training for Kwik Trip, Inc.

Prior to joining Kwik Trip in 2004, McHugh was an instructor and principal at Aquinas High School in La Crosse, WI.

After the speakers conclude, WFI will host lunch and allow time for viewing the vendor exhibits. The association's general membership meeting and live and silent auction will follow at 1:15 p.m.

Attendees have options to register for the full conference or register for the full conference as well as the dinner boat cruise.

For more information and to sign up, contact WFI at (414) 488-1692 or WFI's website www.wiscleaners.com.

MWDLI heads to Cincinnati for convention

Gambling, golf and educational seminars will highlight the Midwest Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel from Aug. 2 to 4.

Fresh from his engagement at the Clean Show this year, Brian Rashid, CEO and creator of "A Life in Shorts," will be on hand, as will Trudy Adams, the principal of Blue Egg Consulting.

Joining them will be Jeff Jordan, vice president of Business Development at Fabritec International and Mary Miller, CEO of JANCOA Janitorial Services.

Topics will range from knowing what your employees want to creating value to drive results and telling stories that sell.

Adams will deliver two separate programs on Sunday morning dealing with customer service promises and experiences.

There will also be golf on Friday morning at the Devou Park Golf Course and a cocktail reception later that night.

For more information on MWDLI's annual convention or to register, contact the association directly by calling (765) 969-5745 or visit them online at www.mwdli.org.

Attendees have the option to sign up for the full conference or individual days. Golf registration is separate.



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Bill Wright (*Royal Fine Cleaners / Northport, AL*)

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Julian Bulsara (*Prestige Cleaners / Lauderhill, FL*)

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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Checking up on those check valves

This month I'll be talking about how to locate faulty check valves in your boilers condensate return system.

The purpose of a check valve is to limit the flow of water to one direction, which is usually indicated by an arrow stamped into the body of the valve that indicates the direction of the water flow.

These types of valves are used between the boiler return pump and the boiler pressure vessel with the direction of flow towards the boiler.

When the water level in boiler drops lower than the pump activation sensor, the pump motor is then turned on and the pump pulls water out of the return tank and pushes it through the check valves into the pressure vessel of the boiler.

The filling continues until the water level reaches the pump de-activation sensor and then the pump turns off.

However, there is pressure in the boiler pressure vessel and there needs to be some

method to prevent this pressure from pushing the water back out of the boiler pressure vessel into the return tank. This is what the check valve(s) do.

When the pump is off, pressure inside the boiler holds them shut, preventing water from being forced out of the boiler pressure vessel.

Unfortunately, steam systems generate a lot of scale and steam and return piping continuously shed large particles of rust and other bits of metal as well.

This detritus often finds its way into the internals of the check valves causing them to partially fail, allowing water to be pushed out of the boiler pressure vessel into the return tank.

This valve "blow by" is costly in wasted energy with steam boiling away in the return tank.

In addition, this superheated water forced into the return tank overheats the water in the return tank often causing the return pump to "cavi-

tate" and not be able to refill the water in the boiler pressure vessel.

When the water level drops low enough the boiler will shut down on a low water fault causing expensive loss of plant production due to boiler down time.

For these reasons, it is a good thing to monitor the performance of this check valve(s) and replace them when they fail.

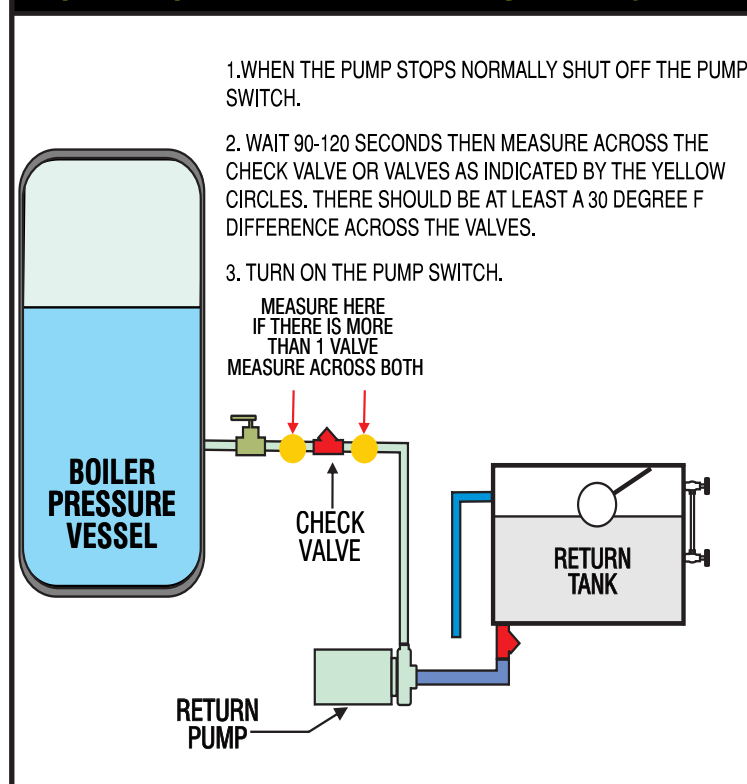
Fortunately, it's easy to run a simple temperature test which is a very accurate predictor of the condition of these valves.

After the boiler has been in operation for a couple of hours, wait for the pump to go on. Immediately after it shuts off turn off the power switch to the pump.

Now wait 90 to 120 seconds and, using a laser thermometer as described below, measure the temperatures at the points indicated on the accompanying illustration.

There should be at least a 30°F difference in temperature

CHECK VALVE TESTING



between the two points.

If there is less, it's an accurate indication the check valve has a problem.

Experience has taught me that it doesn't pay to try to clean or repair them; just replace the faulty valve. It's wise to have a replacement in your parts stock.

There's a paragraph below on the specifications for valves used on boilers. Pay attention to them; it's for your own safety and remember *never work on a boiler or any piping that is hot or under pressure!*

We will be using the laser thermometer again for these measurements. Please read the following paragraph for the best technique to obtain accurate results.

1. The surface of the target should *not* be a highly reflective color, like silver or white, or have a highly polished finish, like chrome or stainless. If it does, take a black Sharpie marker and blacken an area about the size of a quarter, use this blackened area as the target spot on the surface to be tested.

2. The laser pointer is normally used to select the target area and illuminates the center of the sensed area. Since the sensor itself measures all of the infrared energy entering the lens it becomes progressively more accurate the closer you place the sensor to the target area.

When using the laser thermometer to run these tests, be sure to position the lens of the thermometer slightly above the surface of the area being

measured. Don't just aim it and use the laser pointer to take the temperature.

A note on boiler valves

Valves used on boilers should be rated at next higher level of the maximum rated boiler operating pressure.

For example, if the rated operating pressure (usually found on the name plate attached to the boiler) is 150 PSI, then the valve should be steam rated for at least 200 PSI. This rating usually appears on the body of the valve after the SWP abbreviation for "steam working pressure" (you won't find these valves at Home Depot or Lowe's).

The numbers following the abbreviation WOG stands for the pressure rated for use with water-oil-gas and is *not the rating for steam service*.

That's it for this month, not sure what the subject will be for next month, so any suggestions are welcome.

Bruce Grossman is Chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing, maker of the EZ Level return tank water level control that replaces the troublesome ball float valve in the return tank. The Sahara and Drop in the Bucket line of high purity separator water mister/evaporators and the Tattler steam trap tester, an accurate and easy to use device, are also part of our EZtimer product line. For more information on EZtimers products, visit www.eztimers.com. Address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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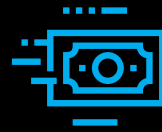
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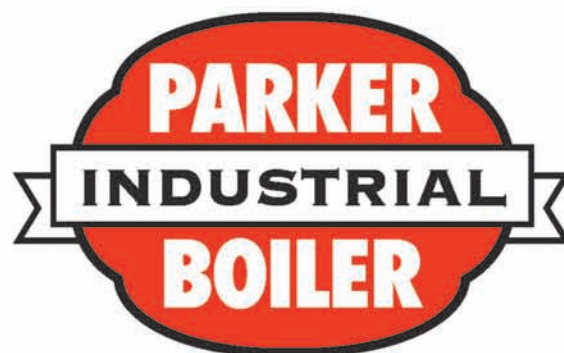
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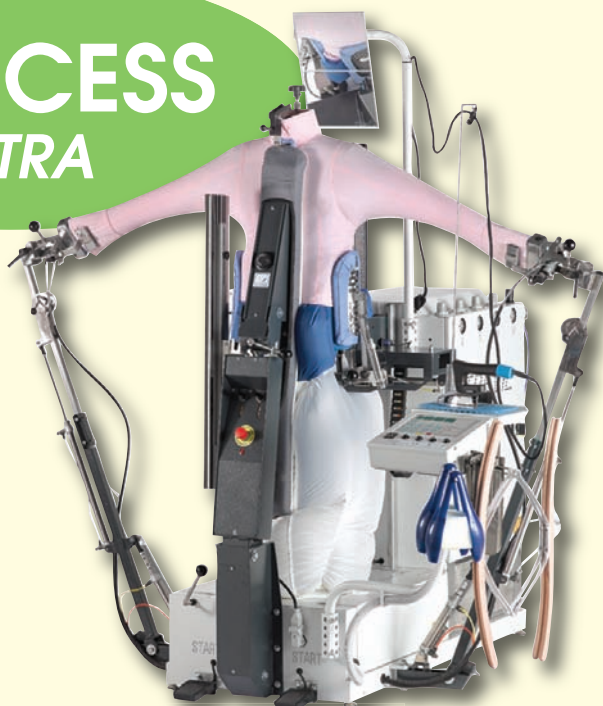


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