



National

# Clothesline

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## Leading the industry forward

In a year marred by several cancelled conventions and meetings due to the novel coronavirus, the first 2020 Leadership Forum program was a change of pace. The online event, hosted by America's Best Cleaners, featured a panel of six industry leaders: Sasha Ablitt, owner and CEO of Ablitt's Fine Cleaners and Launderers; Rich Fitzpatrick, vice president of Kreussler, Inc.; Dave Troemel, partner and marketing director at BeCreative360; Tom Beidle, general manager of Spot Business Systems; and Wesley Nelson, president of Sankosha USA.

The event was moderated by Chris White, executive director for ABC, who noted, "This event is open to all. We want to be as inclusive as we possibly can with everyone."

Catherine McCann, operations director for ABC, explained the impetus for the event. "Our intent is to provide a better sense of connection to our industry leaders and to find inspiration and guidance from them."

The first session of the six-part series was an attempt to both inspire and commiserate — ironic considering quarantine conditions of the past several months — but it was also a chance to see that the allied trades in the industry are in the same struggling boat.

Each panelist brought a different perspective about the handling of their companies during the pandemic. Ablitt's

afraid," Ablitt noted. She also felt that her transparent style of servant leadership contributed to her company's survival. "We

out to customers. "We had to make a lot of pivots," noted Tom Beidle.

His company reacted to the crisis by communicating with their customers on another level. "We were really in tune — from a customer's perspective — on what they really needed," Beidle emphasized.

Drycleaners who asked their customers what they wanted at this time were given plenty of answers: household goods, pickup/delivery service, wash-dry-fold, etc. Allied trade companies responded to help cleaners meet those needs. Marketing company BeCreative360 kept it simple. Troemel said, "Our customers have some really great ideas. We take their ideas and develop them into a project they can use."

As a chemical company, Kreussler, Inc., focussed on helping drycleaners inform their customers on the effectiveness of their cleaning methods. "We have a large resource of knowledge within our company — over 100 years of research from our company's activities. We wanted to make sure we supplied that information to our clients in the industry as best we could," Fitzpatrick explained.

As for the equipment manufacturing wing of the industry, less demand meant more space was needed — and not that of the social distance variety. "When things

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**America's Best Cleaners' first Leadership Forum on Sept. 16 pooled together industry leaders from Sankosha USA, Spot Business Systems, Kreussler, Inc., BeCreative360 and Ablitt's Fine Cleaners and Launderers. The next one is planned for Oct. 14 at 4 p.m. EST.**

drycleaning business had to reduce hours and adapt by offering to make custom masks. Customers could bring in an old, favorite t-shirt and the business would design a face mask to their specifications.

"We were in a time of such uncertainty and upheaval and everyone has been so

came together because everybody recognized that we had to stay in business if they were going to save their jobs."

For Spot Business Systems, it was a challenge to work together, remotely. That meant relying on Microsoft Teams to keep engaged. Spot also made a point to reach

## Three associations team up for Fall Fest EXPO

Next month, drycleaners will have an opportunity to take a "deep dive into the future of the fabricare industry" as the North East Fabricare Association (NEFA), the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association (PDCA) and the South Eastern Fabricare Association (SEFA) will work in concert to present Fall Fest EXPO Week.

The virtual event, which will run from Nov. 9 to 13, should be virtually cancel-proof. The weeklong schedule will feature online workshops, demonstrations and presentations designed to focus on a different aspect of a drycleaning business each day.

"We are really excited about this new

program," said Peter Blake, executive director for NEFA and SEFA. "We have developed a comprehensive schedule that will encompass training for each facet of your business. Each day we will focus on a different segment of the plant including owner/man-

ager topics, customer service, route development, production staff, and more."



Already, the Fall Fest EXPO Development Committee announced a partial slate of presenters with many notable industry experts. Participants will include: Beth Z (Your Nerdy Best Friend), economist Chris Kuehl (Armada Corporate Intelligence), Trudy Adams (Blue Egg Consulting), James

Peuster and Mark Albrecht (The Route Pros), and more.

The price should be considerably less than attending a physical convention because of a lack of travel-related costs. The per-plant registration fee is \$359 for members and \$599 for non-members (which includes a three-month Silver Membership with DLI). The registration fee includes access to the entire week-long schedule of events as well as all of the recording sessions for three months after the event.

"This is an incredible opportunity and I can't wait," noted Larry Fish, president of NEFA, "I always attended NEFA's Fall

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## Industry speaks in unified voice against FTC care label ban

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Care Label Rule reached another pivotal point recently as the deadline lapsed for submitting public comments in response to the agency's consideration of cancelling the dictum that has been in place for 49 years.

In just over a month, the number of public comments jumped from 14 to 237 on Sept. 21, the date of the deadline. Most of the comments were from drycleaners overwhelmingly in favor of the FTC keeping the Care Label Rule in place. A few asked for the agency to improve, rather than remove, care labels. Other commenters recommended removing text and utilizing symbols only.

Judging by the comments, the drycleaning industry utilizes the tags "routinely," though some cleaners might have opted for different verbiage. Carolyn Trienbenbach of Pegasus Cleaners noted that the care label instructions were her "Bible!"

For drycleaners, the rule has become a necessity. As Christopher Spaeth of Comet Cleaners in New Braunfels, TX, explained: "Since garment designers and manufacturers are the only people who know what types of fabrics are used in garments they construct and sell, it is incumbent upon them to share safe handling instructions. Without a care label my employees will not be able to guarantee safe handling of items that customers bring to my business."

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute also offered their opinion on the matter, emphasizing to the FTC that their thoughts were "submitted on behalf of the more than 6,000 U.S. fabricare specialists that are members of the Institute." CEO Mary Scalco, who authored the letter, described the care instructions as "invaluable."

"There are no benefits to the professional fabricare

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### Sneak Peek Inside

- 10 Why are your prices so high?**  
Peter Blake asks: How prepared is your staff for this loaded question?
- 12 Benefits of being essential**  
Drycleaners need to reap the benefits of being labeled essential services, notes James Peuster.
- 18 When boilers go bad**  
Bruce Grossman offers troubleshooting tips for when your boiler decides to stop working properly.
- 20 Changing with change**  
We are overly attached to the status quo, notes Don Desrosiers, when we should be adapting.





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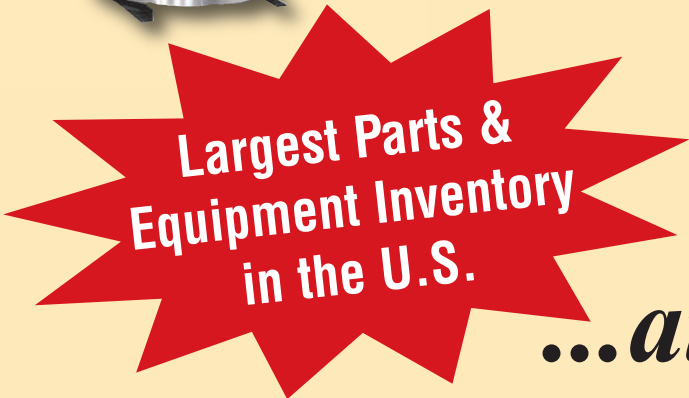
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**BPS**  
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Publisher of  
NATIONAL CLOTHESLINE  
1001 Easton Rd., Suite 107  
Willow Grove, PA 19090  
Phone: (215) 830-8467  
Fax: (215) 830-8490  
info@natclo.com  
Web: www.natclo.com

**PUBLISHER**

Carol Memberg

**EDITOR**

Hal Horning

**CONTRIBUTING WRITER**

Chris Pollay

**MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Leslie Schaeffer

**ADVERTISING**

Richard Cappel

**GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Mary Castro-Regan

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# A message from the publishers

Many years ago, we were surprised when the person who answered our Philadelphia-area ad for editorial help was a guy who had just arrived from Iowa. It took us about five minutes to realize that he was superbly competent, so we hired him on the spot. It was one of the best decisions we ever made.

Hal Horning is a first class reporter and an excellent writer. He has helped shape National Clothesline into the publication it is today. Beyond that, he fully embraced the world of drycleaning and was a source of information for all of the rules, regulations and dramas we faced. Throughout our industry, people turned to him to answer their drycleaning-related questions. He helped set up and moderated the Fabricare Forum to help cleaners share ideas and opinions.

Hal is a quiet person with a wonderful sense of humor. We are going to miss his presence in our office. We wish him lots of pleasure in his retirement, enjoying more time with his wonderful wife, Lucia, his kids and grandchildren, watching baseball games and playing his banjo.

We must also share our pleasure in celebrating the promotion of Chris Pollay to editor. Chris has been working with Hal for over twenty years and shares the same passion for the industry. — Carol and Leslie

# His watch has ended

American novelist Thomas Wolfe once aptly summed up the writing process by saying, “Writing is easy. Just put a sheet of paper in the typewriter and start bleeding.”

Granted, the technology has greatly improved since the early 20th Century, but the bleeding aspect remains unchanged, at least, if you want to become a *good* writer. Make no mistake, for over 35 years Hal Horning has done a lot of bleeding for the drycleaning industry, writing and editing the news for this publication. It is a position that he has performed with perseverance, integrity and a dry wit that has certainly made this editorial page fun to read every month. Essentially, he has watched over and chronicled the story of this industry exceptionally, month in, month out, without fail — for the past 390+ months.

But, now his watch is ending.

I am happy for him. I hope his future is full of free time spent with family and the Philadelphia Phillies. Of course, I also foresee a future where I will wish he was back in the newsroom. Working side by side with him for over two decades, I can’t think of a better mentor or partner in print. I knew next to nothing about drycleaning during my first issue (October 1999), but I remember Hal had a calming effect on me that helped instill me with confidence. By that time, he had seen everything (probably twice) and he knew full well that the publishing of a single newspaper issue could turn into an epic battle against the agents of punctuation, chaos and time constraints. That just meant it was the third week of the month. He also knew that, even when he ended the battle victorious (against all odds), it only meant experiencing the briefest of reprieves before that infernal realization: *Time to work on the next issue.*

Over the years, I had a ringside seat for the monthly battle to beat the deadline and learned that an editor is one who wears many hats... writer, grammar guru, skilled spellchecker, fact finder, relentless researcher... but most of all, an editor acts as a safety net that filters out all that is unnecessary, unhelpful or untrue so only the relevant remains for the reader.

It was a role that Hal played with unparalleled aplomb, and luckily, I had the opportunity to learn from the best. Now, I will carry the torch, knowing I must try to remain true to the same principles that he has incorporated into this publication over a lifetime of hard work. First, however, I wish to tip my hat to the man who has worn so many himself over the years.

*Thank you, Hal, old friend, for all of the stories, and all of the memories. You will always have my — and, I strongly suspect, this entire industry’s — undying gratitude. —Chris*

# Getting in the last word

The Clean Show in New Orleans in 1985 was my introduction to the drycleaning industry. I was astonished — and maybe a bit intimidated — when I walked into the exhibition hall full of equipment and people. Washers and dryers of a size beyond my imagination, presses that could finish a shirt in a fraction of the time it took me to hand iron one on a board and do a much better job, and drycleaning machines (So that’s how it’s done. I had no idea.) and wizards who could make stains disappear from a garment without the use of scissors. But most of all, it was the people, thousands of them. People of all kinds and from all places who came together to discuss problems they had in common, share hard-earned knowledge and, by the way, have fun.

I may have landed here accidentally but I landed in the right place.

The industry had its problems back then, especially an ever growing body of government regulations that at times seemed to threaten its very existence. But the equipment companies made improvements in their machinery, the chemical companies came up with cleaning solutions that helped get cleaners out of the environmentalists’ crosshairs and association leaders argued strongly on cleaners’ behalf to keep the regulators at bay. Then there were the drycleaners themselves whose hard work, creativity and readiness to adapt kept the industry going.

Coming full circle, the Clean Show in New Orleans last year will be my last. As in 1985, the industry faces serious problems today. But I am confident that once again the industry will put its nose to the grindstone and its brains to the drawing board and find solutions. I may have written my last story, but the industry still has a story to write. And I will be reading it. Meanwhile, if anybody is looking for me, I’ll be on the porch, picking the banjo. — Hal

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**Anne Cobb**  
Customer Service and Sales  
[Anne@NIEinsurance.com](mailto:Anne@NIEinsurance.com)



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Director of Korean Operations  
[Kang@NIEinsurance.com](mailto:Kang@NIEinsurance.com)



**Ann Hawkins**  
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**Benzinger's**  
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# Serious service

As a third generation drycleaner, Kathy Benzinger learned a lot about the industry at a young age, but she did not always see things eye to eye with her father.

"My grandfather was a drycleaner. My dad was a drycleaner. So, out of high school, I went to work for my dad back in the late 1970s/early 1980s," she recalled. "I was there for a while with my brother and my husband. I was deemed a troublemaker by my father, who had to let me go. And, since I was married to Joe, he had to let him go, too."

It reached the point where Kathy said they couldn't even agree to disagree. "I could see the real value of customer service," she explained. "I look back now because I struggled with that for a long time. Back then, drycleaning was a man's world and the men thought that all the money was made in production. I didn't feel that way. I felt that production and customer service were equally important and you weren't going to be successful unless you had both."

Her father had worked for R.R. Street for many years and had gained considerable knowledge. "He had the luxury of going into many drycleaners and he saw what worked and what didn't," she noted. "He was brilliant. He taught me everything I knew, but as smart as he was, there were some things that needed to be changed."

When her father let her go, he gave the couple a generous severance package that would allow them some freedom to pursue their own dreams.

"My husband and I had invested 20 years. We had two children and a mortgage so we looked at each other and said, 'Oh boy, what are we going to do?'"

The Benzingers hired Dryclean USA to build a custom cleaning plant in Hamburg, NY, from scratch in 1998, even while Kathy and Joe disagreed over the name.

"He wanted to name it Benzinger's. I was thinking nobody would really know that name, other than family," she recalled. "I wanted it to be a name that people could remember. It would be short and identify what we do. So, we came up with Custom Cleaners."

The name would change three more times over the years — to Benzinger's Custom Cleaners then to Benzinger's Drycleaning and finally to Benzinger's Clothing Care.

One thing that didn't change was Kathy's passion to make the business great. It was her dream, so much so that she bought and stored a shirt pressing unit in her garage long before a location for the business was decided upon.

Eventually, she and Joe divorced and now she is the sole owner, but in the early days, it was just the two of them and an employee whose job was to press shirts.

"I had never pressed in my life because I wasn't allowed in production because I was a girl," Kathy noted. "My dad didn't allow me in the back where it was loud and dirty."

When Custom Cleaners first opened, it did have one thing going for it. As part of her father's "severance" pack-

age, she was given a drop store location nearby in Derby, which proved to be a saving grace in the early days.

In fact, throughout its history, Benzinger's Clothing Care has benefited greatly with drop store locations in key areas.

In 2008, an incredible opportunity

customers want.

"That's what I tell people," Kathy said. "You know, drycleaning may be down, but casual wear is way up."

Benzinger's has added wash-n-fold services and has been impressed with the results so far.

"I think wash-n-fold is going to become the next house cleaners," she ex-

was not always so organized; in the old days, she would answer questions with whatever answer came to mind. In order to create consistency, the training and manual were created. Now, she doesn't know how she ever got along without such a system in place in the first place.

"It has made a huge difference for

www.benzingers.com



## Kathy Benzinger

presented itself in the form of a phone call from a fellow drycleaner in the area.

"He had a plant in Silver Creek, NY, and he had this drop store and they were probably about 40 minutes apart, maybe 50. He called us up and said, 'I've liked what I've heard [about Benzinger's]. Do you want my store?' I said, 'Excuse me?'" Kathy said. "He said, 'You can have it. I give it to you. You can come tomorrow. I'll give you the key.'"

The drop store didn't cost them a penny. Four years later, opportunity came knocking again. A drop store in an affluent area in East Aurora went up for sale, but an offer came in quickly and Kathy assumed it would be off the market. Fast forward to a year later, the purchase of the drop store still hadn't been completed.

"I guess the gentleman who was going to buy it tried to drive down the price," she added. "They called us. They sold it to us for \$10,000. It was worth way more than that. Those two drop stores are our biggest drop stores today."

The latest drop store addition to Benzinger's Clothing Care suffered a bit of bad luck in terms of timing. It opened last November.

"It took off pretty well and then Covid hit. I had to shut it down for two months," she noted. "So, that's our big challenge now — how to market a brand new store."

Despite the harsh hit the industry has taken during the pandemic, Kathy has retained her optimism.

"I'm not buying into the doom and gloom. I think the industry is changing. We changed when we had polyester. We changed a lot of things during the recession," she explained. "I think that our business dropped to 20% and now we're back up to 75, 80%, and we're heading into our busiest quarter."

At this point in time, the best thing cleaners can do is to adapt to what their

plained. "Back in the mid-1980s when people were just starting to get house cleaners, people would look at you like you were lazy or, 'It must be nice to have money.' It wasn't that at all. It gives you more time to do things that you really love, like be with your children."

In a year marred by a pandemic, racial clashes and horrible wildfires and hurricanes, people have placed a greater premium than ever on time.

"So, I think that wash-n-fold is going to become the next house cleaners," she said.

In Buffalo, Kathy estimates that there may be seven cleaners in all — all of which are "good strong" businesses, which is just fine with her. Since the beginning, she has wanted to help the industry improve its less-than-spotless reputation.

"I was bound and determined to make the drycleaning image better and how I could do that is one store at a time," she said. "I think, going forward, what's going to happen is the operators who contributed to the poor image of the industry aren't going to be here. You don't ever want to see anyone lose their hard-earned business, but I think, too, there were a lot of poor operators back in the day because it was easy money. Because it was easy money, you had some operators who didn't care about the industry. They cared only about the dollar."

Customer service is what Kathy cares the most about. "We have the four E's of customer service, which is Eye contact, Enthusiastic, Engage and Educate. We have 'never' and 'always' customer service rules. Never say 'No.' Never say 'No problem.' Never say, 'I don't know.' Never overshare and always focus. Always say, 'Certainly. My pleasure. Absolutely.'"

Customer service employees must take 120 mandatory hours of training where they can learn from the company's 80-page manual. Her system

customer service," she said. "It freed me up and freed the managers up to focus on different areas to grow."

Even as overall cleaning demand has declined, Benzinger's Clothing Care is not content to merely survive. The goal is to grow, even now.

Kathy hopes to expand routes in a subtle way with walk-in traffic. When orders are dropped off for cleaning, the customer is told when they will be ready and then asked if they can deliver it to them.

"We keep saying it over and over. We don't ask them to sign up for the service because that's overwhelming for them," she noted.

It would be easy to be overwhelmed herself, but Kathy believes problems create opportunities. Besides, it's all how you look at it.

"I always tell people this industry is recession-proof because when customers aren't buying new, they're cleaning and fixing up the old," she added.

That positive spirit has certainly been welcomed by the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute as Benzinger became the District 1 Director last year, a role she has enjoyed immensely.

"It gave me the opportunity to meet some of the smartest drycleaners in the industry," she said.

One thing she's learned is that, even though she enjoys working at the counter and in production, her business best benefits when she can focus on long-term planning.

"I can sit here and envision and plan and fix," she explained, noting that such a state of mind helps keep her stress levels down. "I think that stress comes in when you have all that in your head and you can't do anything with it because you're pressing coats or pressing shirts. Don't get me wrong. Because I was forbidden from production, I love that. I absolutely love production because you can tweak it every day just to make it one percent better."



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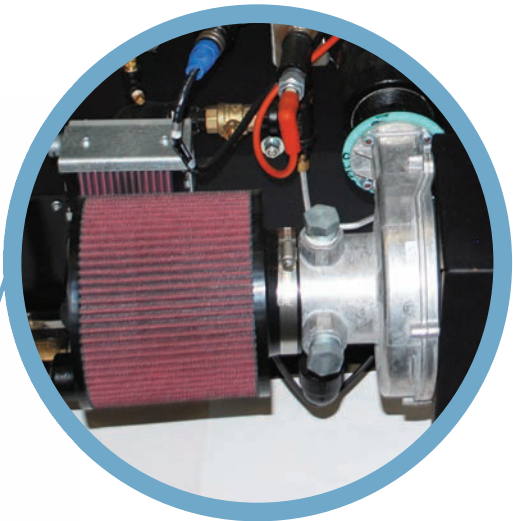
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# Leading the industry forward

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started to shut down, we already had a pipeline of containers and orders to our factory in Japan,” recalled Nelson. “So, when things slowed down here, those containers kept coming to our warehouse. We got very creative here how to stack machines and put them in places where there were normally no machines to stack.”

Nelson also noted that tough times often lead to a resurgence of the used equipment market, something Sankosha decided to embrace even though it directly competes with their interests in selling new equipment. The harsh truth is that many machines have been or will be repossessed and many remaining cleaners are not feeling confident in new investments right now. Sankosha hopes to add those searching for used equipment to its customer base. “We had our fields reps go visit

these customers, help them with the units and just treat them like an everyday customer,” Nelson added.

One interesting question posed to the panelist was what economic indicators they use to gage how the drycleaning industry is doing. Many agreed that resources such as Spot’s tracking of overall sales average figures in the industry are helpful, while most keep an eye for a lifting of public gathering bans or keep track of hotel reservations and airline flights. Another positive economic indication might be when more children are able to go back to a brick-and-mortar school and parents can go back to work full-time.

“I know it’s difficult today. It’s going to be difficult tomorrow. It’s going to be difficult for a while, but try to keep the long game in vision,” Fitzpatrick said. “I know this is a difficult time for a lot of

people, but there are still a lot of opportunities. There’s opportunities for consolidation, opportunities to expand markets. There’s lots of great resources available for you in the industry”

Beidle agreed that the current economic climate may be improving. “I would say I look at many of the days of the week and we’re not getting back to those pre-Covid numbers,” he said before adding, “There is still data that is pointing us to better and brighter times in the near future.”

Like his company has done, Nelson hopes cleaners will embrace the recent changes. “Face it head on — maybe less pivoting and a little more proactive. Use all of these experiences that we are gaining during this time to make us stronger and more agile in the future.”

Perhaps Ablitt summed up the current situation best as she

learned to never say never. “I think, as a result of this year, I’m going to take a saying out of my language, and that is: ‘Well, things, can’t get any worse,’” she said, before laughing.

Between pandemics, wildfires, hurricanes and protests, 2020 has pushed everyone to their limits. However, Ablitt sees a silver lining to the past year. “I feel when this is all over and things get back to normal, it’s going to be a different normal. And, I think in some ways maybe that a thing we keep in front of our minds is what is really important — our family connections and our kids and our own well-being.”

The second installment of the Leadership Forum will take place on Wednesday, Oct. 14 at 4 p.m. EST. Panel members will include: Victor Williams, vice president of Union Drycleaning; Harry Caranza, president of Select Risk;

Ryan Luetzow, owner of Luetzow Industries; Dan Miller, CEO of Mulberry’s Garment Care; and Jeff Shapiro, president of Cleaners Supply. For more information, visit [americasbestcleaners.com](http://americasbestcleaners.com).

## Online Fall Fest coming

*Continued from page 1*

Fest, and would bring three or four employees. By the time I was done I had invested close to \$1,500. Now, for less than a third of that, I can provide vital training for my entire staff! This is amazing. Even if they can’t attend live, I can still have employees watch the recorded sessions. In light of all we are going through, I know this will better prepare me for the future, and better prepare my staff for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.”

“We are taking all the best parts of the trade show experience and brought them into a virtual platform,” added Leslie Schaeffer, executive director of PDCA. “We are taking great care to provide as much interaction within the forum as possible. We know how valuable that peer-to-peer discussion can have. We are also bringing in the popular demonstrations and equipment showcases that live exhibits have featured. This is your opportunity to make meaningful contacts with other drycleaners, consultants, equipment manufacturers, and service providers.”

For more information, contact Peter Blake at (617) 791-0128 or Leslie Schaeffer at [Leslie@pd-clean.org](mailto:Leslie@pd-clean.org), (215) 830-8495. Keep watch on the sponsors webpages: [nefabricare.com](http://nefabricare.com), [pdclean.org](http://pdclean.org), and [SEFA.org](http://SEFA.org) for updates and new additions.

## Comments on care labeling

*Continued from page 1*

specialists or to consumers if the care labeling rule is repealed. There is only the potential for more damaged garments,” she added.

Many drycleaners used words such as “crucial,” “critical” and “imperative” to describe care labeling, while other submitters, such as Michael Leeming from Parker Boiler in Los Angeles, noted the reason behind the creation of the rule in the first place.

“The Care Label Rule helps fulfill the FTC’s mission to ‘protect and educate customers.’ If the FTC repeals the Care Label Rule, it would violate its mission by reducing consumer education and protection, resulting more in ruined garments and wasted money per American household,” Leeming explained.

Other associations contributed comments, including the Toxics Use Reduction Institute, the National Cotton Council and the Empire State Consumer Project.

The few comments that were in favor of a Care Label Rule ban indicated that they believed free markets would dictate if care labels were really necessary.



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# AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

## Why are your prices so high?

If you ever want to see your staff caught like a deer in the headlights, ask them that question out of the blue. Or better yet, have one of your friends ask them that question at the front counter. You will be amazed at the responses you will get. Typical answers I have heard include: "I don't know, I just charge what they tell me", "The bosses need to make money," "I know, crazy isn't it?" and "It's just the price." These are actual responses I have heard from drycleaning CSRs.

More often than not, these answers are followed up with a look to the floor and a very sincere, "I'm sorry." Nothing should make you cringe more than your own staff not being able to make eye contact, and then apologizing for charging a fair price.

You may think this isn't your staff, but trust me, if you don't have consistent training and systems in place you may be surprised. When put on the spot, even your best CSR can break out in a cold sweat and say the wrong thing.

Script development is a key component to effective training. Your CSRs need to be prepared to answer all the tough questions they get, or to know when to get management involved. This is just one of the more common ones.

**What is the right answer?** That is completely up to plant management. You need to develop the answers you want your staff to repeat, provide them with your accepted script, and train them until they know it. You need to develop their confidence. Nothing impresses customers more when they ask a tough question than a quick, concise, honest answer.

Here are some suggested talking points to draw your script from.

**Why are your prices high?** Because it takes a lot of resources to deliver a quality product. We take pride in delivering you the best quality cleaning, pressing and packaging possible. We professionally train our staff and keep them updated with all the latest information on today's fashions and fabrics. We invest in state-of-the-art technology and ma-

chinery to make sure we keep you looking and feeling your best, while protecting the longevity of your garments. Labor is our single greatest expense and the cost of labor is rising dramatically. Attracting and keeping a talented staff like ours can be a challenge. If you have long-term employees in production, highlight them. "Our technical staff have worked together for over 30 years, and it takes reinvestment to keep a high quality staff like ours".

I think there is value in discussing the complexity of stain removal and the intricate knowledge of stain removal agents and how they react with fibers and fabrics. I would not, however, open the discussion of solvents and/or cleaning solutions. Instead, I would focus on the professionalism of your staff and their expertise. Discussing solvents and solutions can lead your staff into places that they are not equipped to handle.

All of these answers are good starting points, but you need to develop your script based on your company brand, image and position in the mar-

ketplace.

**The "Pink" Tax.** No discussion of pricing questions is complete without exploring the so-called "pink tax" where the perception is women pay more than men for their drycleaning. This dilemma has been around as long as I have, and will not go away. There are laws popping up all over the country trying to legislate "equality pricing" and they often use drycleaners as a perfect example. Let's be clear: All pricing strategies must be based on the garment, fibers, fabrics and, essentially, the process it takes to produce a quality product. It doesn't matter who brings in the garment, but rather how it is processed.

Once you explain the process to the customer, they should understand the situation. If not, take them in back and show them the difference. Show them how you can press 55 dress shirts per hour and why you can only do a fraction of that if they don't fit on the automated presses. As I said earlier, labor is your single greatest expense and when you are doing extra work and taking extra time – you should charge more. Don't be afraid to educate them and make them understand the difference.

The problem is that too often people don't supply their CSRs with the right answers and the understanding of why word choice is so important. They fall back into bad habits, like using archaic terms like

"men's shirts" and "women's blouses." Consistency is the key. If you are going to charge more because a shirt doesn't fit on the automated presses, then you must charge the same for all garments that don't fit. That means a tuxedo shirt and a blouse will both be charged higher. A small shirt will be charged more for small women, boys, and small men.

If you have gotten one thing from this article — have someone ask your CSR why your prices are so high, and then when you hear the answer, work on your script.

When you go to a Capitol Grille and order a steak, you don't ask why it's so expensive because you know. It is a high-quality meal and cooked to perfection.

Much like you produce the best quality that's finished and packed to perfection. Be proud of your business, be confident in your pricing strategy, and communicate that to your staff.

If you need help with scripting let me know, we have some tools to assist you. If you do test your CSRs, please e-mail me at [peteblke@aol.com](mailto:peteblke@aol.com) and share some of their responses! **Peter Blake serves as executive director of the North East Fabricare Association, the Southeastern Fabricare Association, the MidAtlantic Association of Cleaners and the California Cleaners Association. He can be reached by email at [peteblke@aol.com](mailto:peteblke@aol.com) or by phone at (617) 791-0128.**

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-Mike Astorino, Fabricare Cleaners

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**CROWN CLEANERS in Des Moines, IA, recently purchased a new Columbia drycleaning system running Sensene. Pictured here are Zach Anderson from Crown Cleaners and Chris Hogard, Columbia factory representative.**



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## Intense® - You too can be a Convert!

Tampa Florida - Seitz Chemical - The Fresher Company has introduced a new, revolutionary product that is poised to storm the industry.

Most cleaners polled agree that alternative solvents have been in the forefront and on their mind for some time now. Unfortunately, until now, the only way to add alternative solvents to your plant is through a sizeable investment in a new cleaning machine with a hefty price tag of between \$25,000 and \$100,000. In order to make a solvent change, assuming you are using Hydrocarbon Solvent of some brand now, to one of today's alternative solvents, you must commit to a weekend of plant time beginning with draining and disposing of your current solvent. Bleach out, rinse, and dry your base tanks, water separator, and still. A complete filter change including cleaning out of the canister and cycling and cleaning out of spin disc filters. So far, you have had a day's work and nearly \$2,500 out of pocket. Next is the purchase of new solvent to refill the base tanks, another investment of \$2,500. Five thousand dollars and a weekend later, you can now begin to see the benefits of your labor.

No more... Seitz - The Fresher Company has introduced **Ultra Intense** - "The Conversion Solution" With the introduction of the new solvent conversion process using **Ultra Intense**, you will simply add the solvent conversion liquid to your current hydrocarbon solvent at a predetermined ratio and through its proprietary blend and binding agents you will now be cleaning with True Intense! The results of the conversion will be seen immediately. Your KB will be increased from around 24 to nearly 75 on the first load. 300% better cleaning and degreasing. Additional benefit of **Intense** is the ability to carry moisture. Hydrocarbon alone virtually carries no water/moisture. You will see that **Intense** will carry between 5-7% in

turn allowing for better solubilizing of wet side soils.

Many of you have questions about this solvent and the conversion of your machine. We asked Seitz Chemical - Here are some of the answers:

### What is Intense®?

**Intense** is a carbon- and hydrogen-atom-based along with Glycol derivatives bonded solvent newly developed by SEITZ. **Intense** has an innovative booster system that clearly increases cleaning performance. **Intense** is the brand name for this solvent, globally protected by SEITZ.

### How much research and testing of Intense® has been done in use of this as a dry cleaning solvent?

SEITZ introduced the first high flash point solvents on the German market as early as 1990. Based on this experience, Seitz's research department continued to develop this and complementary products further. **Intense** is the result of decades of research and experience in terms of modern hydrocarbon and blended solvents.

### Why was this solvent developed?

Oils, fats, and water-soluble contamination is not easily removed by hydrocarbon solvents. To be able to achieve a good cleaning results, the conventional solvent had to be changed and optimized.

### Do I still need a detergent?

A detergent not only improves the cleaning but also has a hygienic result. This, along with adding "Body" and "Touch" aids in the ease of finishing. Additionally, soil must be released from the textile and kept afloat/suspended to avoid greying/redeposition. **Intense** and the associated detergents have these properties as well.

### Where can I buy Intense®?

**Intense** can be purchased around the world, but only through SEITZ,

and/or its international branches and their authorized sales partners and distributors.

### What does Intense® smell like and will solvent odor remain in the clothes after cleaning?

**Intense** is a transparent, clear liquid and has a product-specific mild smell. With proper solvent care, the clothes will have a neutral/fresh smell after cleaning.

### What is the solvent's physical makeup?

Dissolving power: 73 kb  
Density: 0.79 g/cm3  
Flash point: >64°C (147.2°F)  
Viscosity: 1 cp  
Boiling range: 180–210°C (356–410°F)

### How safe is handling of Intense®?

Generally, there are no safety-relevant concerns when handling **Intense**. The respective safety measures should be observed when handling any solvent(s).

### What is the cleaning result like and what are the advantages of Intense® over Hydrocarbon?

**Intense** has a higher cleaning power and improved stain removal particularly water-soluble contamination can be removed much more easily thanks to the innovative booster procedure. This makes it much easier to remove water-soluble contaminations and stains from the fabric. Due to its molecular structure and the connected high KB figure, **Intense** can safely dissolve grease and wax-based stains. **Intense** cleans gently and leaves the textiles in their original shape. This makes the finishing even simpler and faster. Thanks to the special components, **Intense** offers easier spot removal and reduces the effort for pre- and post-cleaning.

### What advantages does the solvent have over Perchloroethylene or Hydrocarbon?

**Intense** is an environmentally neutral solvent and therefore has lower

requirements by Regulatory authorities than perc. Since **Intense** carries much more moisture and better water separation, this will in turn reduce the buildup of moisture and therefore reduce the potential of a bacteria and odor "Bloom" or growth that is inherent with Hydrocarbon.

### What is the solvent Mileage or consumption?

Precise consumption values can be requested from the different machine manufacturers. Many operators are enjoying mileage up to 100,000 lb of cleaning per 200 ltr (53 gl) drum. Approximately 1.5 pennies/lb cleaned.

### How does SEITZ support me in conversion and application?

SEITZ has put together a package for best use of the **Intense** procedure. It contains the generation of cleaning programs and training of your employees for the new procedures and their application.

### Which approvals do I need/which provisions do I have to observe when operating an Intense® cleaning machine as compared to hydrocarbon solvents?

According to our information there should be no difference in operating using **Intense** instead of a hydrocarbon machine. In case of doubt contact your local authorities.

### How can I dispose of distillation and filter residue?

The wastes and thus the distillation and filtration residue must be recycled or disposed of by a suitable disposal company and contact water should be treated in the same way as would that of Hydrocarbon contact water. Consult local authorities.

### In which cleaning machines can I work with Intense®?

**Intense** can be used in all cleaning machines that are sold as "multi-solvent machines" by the machine manufacturers. Machines that are made for a flash point of

>61°C can easily be operated with **Intense**.

Whether older hydrocarbon solvent machines can be retrofitted must be determined from case to case by the machine manufacturers. Best to consult the Manufacturer and your Seitz Technical Representative.

### Which manufacturers offer Intense® machines?

All nationally and internationally active dry cleaning machine manufacturers have tested **Intense**... intensely.

### Which detergents, additives, and/or aids are needed?

A number of our Detergents, Pre-spotting and Post-Spotting agents have been tested intensely in combination with **Intense** and could be used with outstanding results.

The **Intense** Injection detergents recommended for use with **Intense** solvent is:

Our Detergent for **Intense** Sigma **Intense** - W/Fresh System Scent (OR)

Sigma Clear® - Fragrance Free

Some customer require additional body in the garment so we suggest **Intense** Injection Sizing:

Nova Finish  
Seitz has great results in **Intense** brushing agent:

Polyspot Spray and Pre & Post Spotting with Solvex 1, Solvex 2 and Solvex 3.

Finally, for the Solvent Care of **Intense**, it is recommended to use Desolan NT – Additional Bacteria Inhibitor weekly.

### What tasks do the Detergents have?

The detergents used in **Intense** have the task of supporting dirt removal. The classic properties of the detergents serve to wet the goods again, along with the solvent itself, carrying the moisture, provide a higher anti-static property and contain texture and feel of the garment. Good water binding capacity makes it possible to remove water-soluble stains very well. In addition to the typical properties, the cleaning detergents have the task of removing the dissolved dirt from the solution at the same time to keep the dirt from returning to the goods (inhibit redeposition) and ensure a higher dirt carrying capacity.

We hope that we have explained most of the aspects of **Intense**. Should you have any further questions or if you would like to make an appointment with our sales technician, please contact us. We look forward to answering all your questions and to converting your current Hydrocarbon Dry Cleaning Machine to **Intense**. If you are not still convinced, we would be happy to provide you with a list of the nearly 3000 U.S. based dry cleaners already using the solvent with amazing results!

### Where do I get more information?

Please contact our office and set up a visit by one of our many field service technicians that live near you. Phone us directly at: (813) 886-2700 or by email to [Info.USA@seitz24.com](mailto:Info.USA@seitz24.com).

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Property	PER	HC	Intense
Solvent Power	90 KB	26 KB	73 KB
Density	1.6 g/ml	0.78 g/ml	0.79 g/ml
Flash Point	none	141.8°F	> 147.2°F
Viscosity	0.54 cp	1.2 cp	1 cp
Boiling Point	248°F	356–410°F	356–410°F
Odor	chlorinated	mild	mild
Machine	PER	Multi-Solvent	Multi-Solvent
Transport DOT	HAZMAT 6.1	III	III

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# THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

## Does being essential have rewards?

**W**hen this all hit, our industry was on pins and needles to see if we would be deemed essential by our local, county, state and federal authorities.

While we celebrated the fact that we were to stay open; the reality of making a profit quickly diminished. It was like we all thought that it would go back to normal in three to four weeks. Well, looks like that's not going to be the case anytime soon.

When 2008 hit, it was like an earthquake that was followed up by a tsunami. Sure, the shock waves hit us at first, but many felt like it would rebound like it always did.

Then, we soon realized that consumers have found a new normal on their own and our industry took a hit. Add the business casual mindset with the no-smoking policies and drycleaning has trended as a slowly diminishing business in which to be in.

Fast forward and many are looking for help in forums and through whatever seems to work for someone else. From creative marketing pieces to op-

eration adjustments, many of you are looking for the magic pill to save your business.

Twenty-twenty took many from thriving to surviving in a moment. Others had some wiggle room for lesser volume, but now are holding on to

tially, profitably essential! Our industry was deemed essential yet we haven't reaped the benefits of being labeled in that category.

In fact, it made us stay open and lose money in order to get back in the game when the dust settles. So, what is the re-

employees that they might have missed before.

3. Most of us have learned or verified that customer experience is one of the two essential components to ensuring that you are in business for years to come. Staying engaged with your core

customers has provided some stability.

The bottom line is that there will be a few of you reading this who won't be around past 2021.

Don't be one of those stats. Stay focused on your core customers and treat your employees as essential as your

customers. Without their loyalty and dedication, you probably wouldn't be reading this article.

Get back out there and get your business growing again. Your future depends on it.

**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](http://www.theroutepro.com).**

**Our industry was deemed essential yet we haven't reaped the benefits of being labeled in that category. In fact, it made us stay open and lose money in order to get back in the game when the dust settles.**

hope that it will return like before.

What's cool about this is the success stories we keep hearing and how that provides more than hope — it gives one the desire to thrive again and seriously take a look at what really is needed in order to grow.

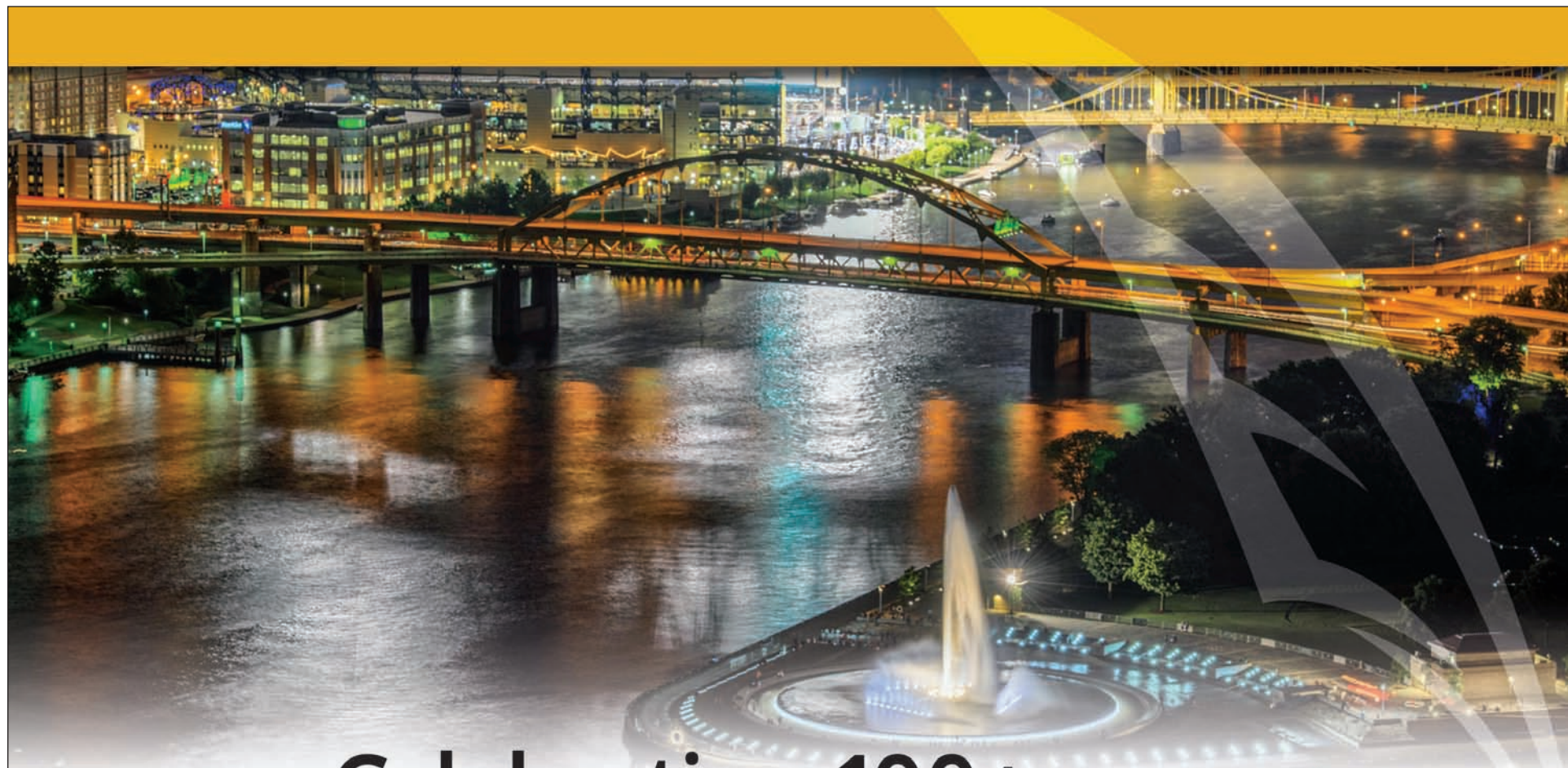
While we couldn't control what has happened to us the past few months, you can control the decisions you are making right now to become profitable again.

The hard part is where to invest in order to make your business, essen-

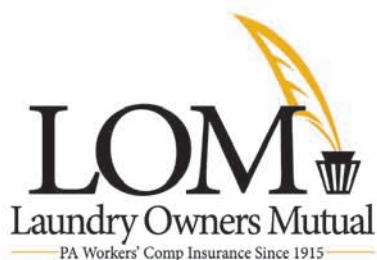
ward for all of this? I believe it comes down to three things.

1. Most of us have stepped right into the fire and are witnessing things that should have been changed or implemented. Many owners have stepped behind the wheel and are now driving more than just their van; they are driving sales.

2. Most of us have learned to appreciate the hard workers within the company. Being hands-on and getting your hands dirty has exposed the dedication, commitment and performance of their



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# THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

## Lubrication and mechanical action

**L**ubrication is a method of removing the stain by breaking up the stain, emulsifying and lifting the stain.

Lubrication differs from chemical action since the chemical structure has not changed, only the physical structure. Lubrication is used on both wet-side and dry-side insoluble stains. It is the second method of stain removal when solvent action has not re-

moved the stain.

A difficult stain must undergo lubrication before strong chemical action is to be used. Mechanical action is the art of tamping, brushing and rubbing a stain to aid lubrication.

Since lubrication provides a soft and lubricated surface the fabric is protected from the mechanical action to be used.

It is not just telling someone to use mechanical action, it is how it is used which separates

the successful spotter from the unsuccessful one.

**Lubricants** are classified as wet and dry. They are used accordingly depending upon the stain.

**Wet-side lubricants.** Neutral lubricant, glycerin, spray spot- ters, anionic detergents, non- ionic detergents, tannin formulas and protein formu- las.

These lubricants are used on tannin stains, protein stains and ground in soil.

**Dry-side lubricants.** Oily type paint remover, dryclean- ing detergent and leveling agents.

They are used on dry-side stains such as oil, grease, paint, nail polish, ink and glue. They are also used for ground in soil.

### Tools for Mechanical Action

There are both wet- and dry-side brushes. The white brushes used for wet-side spotting and the black brushes for dry-side spotting. The only difference in the brushes is the color which separates the wet- side and dry-side lubricants.

Lubricants are kept separate to avoid a chemical reaction on the dry-side lubricants.

If dry-side lubricants contact water or a wet brush it releases alcohol which can damage the dye on the fabric. Some brushes are purchased with a stiff nylon bristle while the best brushes to purchase have a soft or hairlike bristle. The softer brush is considered bet-

ter and safer to the fabric than the stiff brush.

**Silk brushes** have a padded surface and are lighter than the bristle brushes. They are safer to fragile fabrics such as silk and rayon but lack the ability to provide sufficient mechanical action. I sometimes find that putting a white sock over a bristle brush gives better mechanical action.

**Spatula.** This is referred to as a bone and must be used carefully to prevent fabric damage. It can easily mar the surface of silk, polyester and acetate.

**Steam gun.** The force and pressure of a steam gun is a form of mechanical action. It can help break up a stain when used efficiently.

**Effective mechanical action.** Tamping is using the brush to tamp the stain in a vigorous up and down motion. It pushes the lubricant into the stain while breaking it up. This is the best way of removing oxidized oil stains, paint and nail polish. These stains cannot be efficiently removed by only brushing.

Tamping is also safer to fabrics which have a tendency to crock dye such as denims and cottons.

When tamping, always tamp on a flat surface of the spotting board and not the screen area. The only time you want to tamp on a towel is when removing an ink stain that bleeds.

**Brushing.** When brushing a fabric, brush one way. On del-

icate fabrics you can angle the brush so only the outside edge of the bristles contact the fabric. This makes it safer to brush soft wools, silks and rayons.

**Spatula.** The spatula or bone should only contact the fabric with the round edge. On soft wools more pressure can be exerted to aid stain removal.

### Making Lubricants More Effective

When applying a lubricant, use enough of the lubricant to cover the stain so it protects the fabric when mechanical action is used. On difficult stains allow the lubricant to remain on the fabric for a period of time to soften the stain.

**Tannin formulas.** Acid-based lubricants help make tannin stains more soluble. These types of stains include coffee, tea, mustard, medicine, soft and hard drinks.

**Protein formulas.** The formulations are alkaline-based and aid in removing protein stains such as milk, egg, blood, perspiration and urine.

**Ammonia.** When added to any wet-side lubricant it makes the lubricant stronger and more effective in removing stains. It is very effective as an aid for removing ground-in soil.

**Nonionic lubricants.** These lubricants have an ability to remove wet-side stains with an oily base. Very effective for removing ink stains.

**Wet, dry lubricants.** These lubricants are wet-side with a solvent base. They are highly effective on wet-side stains with an oily base such as mustard and chocolate.

**Oily type paint remove.** These agents vary in strength depending upon the product. Oily type paint removers which are the darkest in color and have the most pungent odor are usually the strongest. This also makes it very dangerous if the product contacts water.

**Amyl acetate.** This is used with oily type paint remover and makes it more effective. It creates a solvent base that dissolves any plastic residue that might be in the stain. Paint remover, alone cannot remove plastic residue found in glues, nail polish and paint.

Dan Eisen, former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association, can be reached at (772) 340-0909 or (772) 579-5044, by e-mail at [cleandand@comcast.net](mailto:cleandand@comcast.net) or through his website at [www.garmentanalysis.com](http://www.garmentanalysis.com).



MARTINIZING CLEANERS in Phoenix, AZ, installed a Columbia drycleaning system using Sensene purchased from New Wave Equipment. Pictured from left are Matt Bizzack, owner of New Wave Equipment, Ben and Livia Pavlov, the owners and Chris Hogard from Columbia/ILSA.

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# WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

## Troubleshooting boilers gone bad

**N**ow! This is what you've been waiting for since the beginning of these interminable articles — information on troubleshooting. Before trying to troubleshoot any equipment, remember: Never rush in with assumptions of what is wrong. Take a moment to think about how the machine would behave when operating properly and then compare that with what is currently happening. Remember, always the "KISS" principle (Keep It Simple, Stupid). Most machinery problems are not exotic and are easily discovered.

Unfortunately, fixing the problems will probably be much more of a trial than finding it. Before beginning brain surgery, it's always a good idea to find out if that headache might be caused by a collar that is too tight. With that concept in mind, always start with the basic utilities required by the machine. You would be amazed at how many wild goose chases result from rushing into a troubleshooting session with faulty assumptions about utilities like air and power.

1. Electric power. (Don't just look at the breaker panel. Reset the circuit breakers for the machine in question).
2. Interlock switch on control panel on.
3. Emergency shut off switch outside the boiler room on.
4. Make up water line to re-

turn tank on.  
5. Gas to boiler on.  
Having eliminated the "no-brainer problems" which cause at least 20% of my service calls, let us move on to actual machine troubleshooting.  
Note: Before attempting troubleshooting, have a look at the accompanying illustration (right) and make sure your boiler is set up correctly.  
Troubleshooting any type of equipment employs four basic procedures:

**A. Observe.** Get yourself a good flashlight and do an in-depth visual inspection of the machine in question (boiler, press, drycleaning machine, etc.).

Look for discolored or misshapen wires or components in control panels, sparks, smoke or burning odor, drips or leaks of oil solvent or water, accumulations of debris such as metal or rubber dust or grounds. With the plant quiet listen for air or steam leaks. (When working around boilers and air compressors, always use protective eyewear and never put your ears or eyes anywhere near a suspected leak.)

**B. Measure.** Quantitative measurement would require instruments of some sort: volt meters, ohm meters, pyrometers, calipers, etc.

Since most of you will not have these tools readily available, we will measure qualitatively, carefully using our sense of touch and vision. (Use

### SWITCHES, CONTROLS AND VALVE SETTINGS FOR BOILER OPERATION

ELECTRICAL		
E1	Main breaker in load panel	ON
E2	Boiler emergency shut down switch	ON
E3	Control panel circuit breaker or fuses	ON
E4	Interlock on boiler control panel door	ON
E5	Burner switch	ON
E6	Pump switch	ON
E7	Low water reset switch	PRESS

CONTROL STATUS		
C1	Low water level	ON
C2	Second low water level	ON
C3	High water level	OFF
C4	Pump control	ON or OFF
C5	Operating pressure switch	ON
C6	High pressure switch (manual reset)	ON

VALVE STATUS		
V1	Blow down valves	SHUT
V2	Condensate return valve	OPEN
V3	Pump suction valve	OPEN
V4	Condensate return tank drain valve	SHUT
V5	Make-up water supply valve	OPEN

**NOTES:**  
1. CONTROLS AND VALVES COLORED GREEN ARE ON OR OPEN, COLORED RED ARE CLOSED.  
2. DEPENDING ON LOCAL CODES CONTROLS AND VALVES SHOWN ARE NOT REQUIRED OR PRESENT ON ALL BOILER INSTALLATIONS.

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only the tip of a finger when sensing temperature and ever grab or grasp an object if you are not sure of the temperatures.)

First, think about what the range of temperatures the object in question could possibly be. Then think about what the range of temperature that the object should be if the machine was operating properly. Now touch the object to see how it compares to the proper temperature.

**C. Experiment.** When you suspect a faulty part, do something to change how that part works within the machine. Is there a way to bypass it or isolate it, to turn it off or on?

Can you make the problem worse or better by doing something? Can you easily replace the part and see how the machine operates?

It's been my experience that in drycleaning/laundry operations, the most common boiler problems relate to supplying water to the boiler and maintaining the water level inside the boiler.

You'll recall that in the last month's article ("The Steam Circulation — Condensate Return) I discussed the return tank. Most of what I will be analyzing today concerns this major part of your steam system.

For now, we'll assume that the electrical/electronic level controls are operating properly and that your boiler has a sight glass which allows you to see level of water in the water column. The most common complaint would probably be "I don't have enough steam pressure."

I'm sorry but you'll have to

be more specific than that! Let's sort out just what this complaint means. There are at least four different variants of this complaint:

**1. Pressure .** So-called because the steam pressure regularly rises and falls between normal operating pressure and a lower pressure like 30-40 PSIG. This is likely a failure related to the return (condensate) pump, although the problem may not actually lie with the pump itself.

When you start the boiler or when the boiler pressure is low, the pump is able to push water from the return tank into the boiler. As the boiler pressure rises the pump can no longer generate enough head pressure to overcome the pressure inside the boiler, the water level drops below the primary low water level sensor and shuts off the flame.

When the pressure inside the boiler falls low enough, the pump can then generate sufficient pressure to overcome the internal pressure of the boiler filling the boiler with enough water to satisfy the water level sensors, thus allowing the flame to re-ignite repeating this process.

**Symptoms of this problem are:**

1. Porposing steam pressure.
2. Continuously running pump.
3. Sometimes, but not always, a low water condition which requires a manual reset.

**Causes for this problem can be:**

- A. Adjustment of the return pumps impellor clearance.
- B. Pump cavitation, usually caused by high return water

temperature and/or vapor lock.

As the return water exceeds 180° F the ability of the turbine type pumps found on almost all DC/Laundry type boilers to push feed water into the boiler begins to rapidly fail.

The result of this degrading of pump performance causes much longer pump running times required to refill the boiler. Once the water approaches 200° F it begins to violently bubble (boil) forming vapor which the pump cannot eject so the pushing of water into the boiler ceases until the water temperature drops enough to allow pumping to continue.

Vapor lock is a common culprit in boiler malfunctions and is the result of bubbles forming inside the pump.

That's it for this month. Next month we'll be getting into further troubleshooting of the boiler problems you're likely to experience.

**Bruce Grossman is the chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing, the manufacturer of the Tattler steam trap tester; Drop In The Bucket and Sahara line of high purity separator water mister/evaporators and the new EZ Level line of return tank level and temperature controllers. The EZ Level replaces the problematic ball-float valve in your boilers' return tank, helping to eliminate boiler damage and lost production caused by boiler down time. See our ad in this issue and for further information on the EZtimers product line or visit [www.eztimers.com](http://www.eztimers.com). Address any questions or comments to [bruce@eztimers.com](mailto:bruce@eztimers.com) or call (702) 376-6693.**

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Don Desrosiers

# Heming and hawing over change

Continued from page 20

denly be taken away! Sometimes the things we believe about ourselves make it harder to accept change. If you feel you deserve success, good health or an endless supply of cheese, anything that takes these things away from you will feel unfair — so much so that you might even deny the fact that change is happening at all. Hem and Haw felt deep down that Cheese Station C was a reward for their hard work. After all, they had spent tons of time looking for it! So, when the stash finally disappeared, they just couldn't accept reality. You never want to find yourself in this position. Instead, keep your eyes peeled for signs of change in your life

and adapt as soon as you can. The sooner you do, the sooner you'll find your way again. Once Sniff and Scurry realized that Cheese Station C was almost out of cheese, or was suddenly taken away, they moved on without stressing too much about it. And luckily, they found a huge stash at another station, Cheese Station N. Hem and Haw were not so lucky. Unable to cope, the pair kept returning to the empty station, growing increasingly hungry, depressed and weak. Take a lesson from these two "little people": The less you hem and haw and the sooner you adapt to change, the better off you'll be. Why do so many of us — like Hem and Haw — get blindsided by big changes? It's

fear. Fear is what makes confronting change so difficult. After all, change requires you to cope with a new situation and grapple with a new set of rules. That can be both disorienting and frustrating, so it's natural to be scared of change. For example, once they came to grips with the empty Cheese Station C, Hem and Haw had to venture again into the maze to find food. They worried that they might get lost, or find themselves in a blind alley with no way out. But, remember this: As long as you're afraid of leaving your comfort zone, things will never get better. Imagine that your partner has left you, or that an injury is keeping you from playing your favorite sport. The loss you feel — of love, of movement — can be devastat-

ing. You won't be able to recover, however, until you find a new way to fill your life with things that bring you joy again. This means that you necessarily have to look for something new. Even though Hem and Haw were hungry, they were still too fearful to explore new paths in the maze. Instead, they smashed down the walls of Cheese Station C to see if there was something to eat behind them (all in vain)! Haw eventually discovered a good way to deal with his fear. He visualized himself sitting atop a huge wedge of his favorite cheese, soft-rind French Brie. Indeed, visualizing your goal in vivid detail will actually increase your desire to attain it. So, if you find yourself stuck, or you can't tame your

fear, visualize your goal. That will stoke your desire and give you the energy to move forward. After visualizing his goal, Haw moved on to find new cheese. But Hem refused to budge. He stayed at the empty cheese station, angry and emaciated, and crucially, far too afraid to go out and search for cheese. At the same time, Haw's experience improved dramatically. When you move in a new direction, you learn how to better embrace change. If you manage to conquer your fears just once, the next time you're confronted with change, you'll have the confidence to move on again. Never again will fear paralyze you as it did previously. Haw found the courage to move on, even though he was all alone and still scared when he started his journey. But, he slowly gained confidence. Although he came across just a few bits of cheese early on, he was still proud of himself for having come so far. Life just felt better now that he was no longer dominated by his fears. Haw learned an important lesson that the fear you allow to accumulate in your mind before you move in a new direction is usually much more intense than a new situation actually deserves! And, once you start moving, it's likely that things will improve. Sure, sometimes a new situation might end up being "cheeseless," but don't fret! There's always new cheese to be found. Your new "cheese" could be a new friend, a new job, or even a new way to handle conflicts or do business. All you need to do is step outside your comfort zone and start the search. Gradually, Haw began to regain his full strength and confidence. Full of anticipation, he searched the maze until he found Cheese Station N and tons of cheese — the place where Sniff and Scurry had been all along. If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got."

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.tailwindsystems.com.



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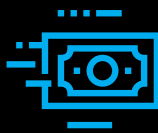
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- \*dazzling results
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- \*utility saving
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