



National

# Clothesline

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## Clean Show postponed to 2022

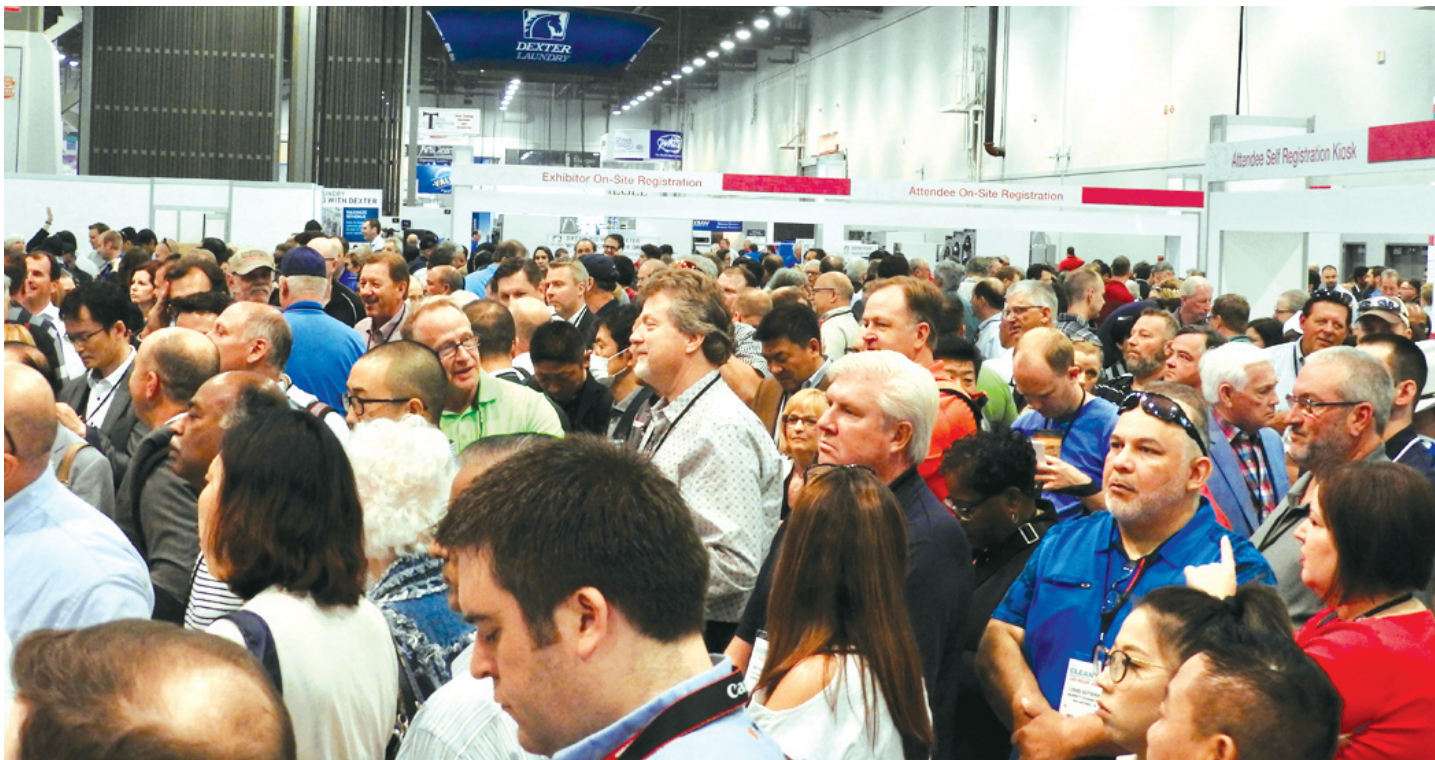
For the first time since its inception in the mid-1970s, the Clean Show will be postponed. Due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic, Messe Frankfurt recently made the tough decision to move the show back more than a year. Originally scheduled for June 2021, the next Clean Show will now take place in Atlanta, GA, from July 30 to Aug. 2, 2022.

The decision took many months and was based on numerous conversations between Messe Frankfurt and collaborating associations, exhibitors, service contractors and the Atlanta Convention Authority. The postponement was announced in mid-November at a time when Covid cases were surging, reaching a total of 11 million reported in the U.S., including one million during the span of the previous week.

“Although this has been a tough decision to make, we are confident that moving the Clean Show will allow us to provide the quality experience and return on investment our exhibitors and visitors have come to expect from Clean,” noted Greg Jira, show director.

Messe Frankfurt’s postponement also realigns the Clean Show schedule to now take place on even-numbered years. Following the next Clean in Atlanta, GA, in 2022, the ensuing installment will take place in August 2024 in Orlando, FL. Beyond that, the future of the cycle of the show will be reevaluated at a later date.

For those concerned about the next Clean Show, Messe Frankfurt released a press release announcing: “We value Textile Care Allied Trades Association’s



**A chaotic and cramped Clean Show crowd, as seen here in 2017 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, would likely be counterproductive to controlling COVID numbers, which are back on the rise. With safety concerns in question, Messe Frankfurt has opted to postpone the June 2021 Clean Show in Atlanta, GA, to July 30 to Aug. 2, 2022.**

early commitment to the Clean Show and would like to convey that appreciation by offering companies currently contracted a rate lock for the 2020 show. Should you elect to transfer your current deposits to Clean 2022, we will guarantee you no increase in exhibitor rates and your current place in the assignment queue. The revised 2022 rate table will reflect an approximate 6% increase over the current rates. The deadline to lock in these rates is Jan. 15, 2021.”

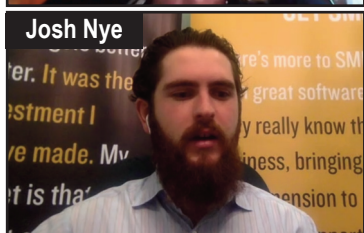
Those who opt not to transfer their commitment from Clean 2021 to Clean 2022, can request a full refund.

In the interim between now and July of 2022, Jira said to “stay tuned” as Messe Frankfurt works on alternative ways for the industry to conduct business before being able to meet again face to face at Clean 2022.

The Clean Show is organized in collaboration with five industry-leading associations: Association for Linen Man-

agement (ALM); Coin Laundry Association (CLA); Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI); Textile Care Allied Trades Association (TCATA); and Textile Rental Services Association of America (TRSA). In addition to organizing the Clean Show, Messe Frankfurt hosts numerous trade fairs and conferences for the textile-care sector in all major economic regions of the world. For more information, visit the Clean Show’s official website located at [www.cleanshow.com](http://www.cleanshow.com).

## Fall Fest EXPO fuels industry interest



Even as the news of the Clean Show next year being postponed filtered into the drycleaning industry, cleaners came out in solid numbers to attend the first major virtual offering — Fall Fest EXPO presented by the North East Fabricare Association, the South East Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association.

More importantly, the industry came to learn how to adapt and survive following many months of a COVID pandemic that has created a brutal economic landscape for many Americans, which, in turn, has translated to a host of hardships for cleaners.

Overall, Fall Fest included over 20 hours of programming and networking discussion time during the week of Nov. 9 to 13.

Keynote speaker Beth Z, Your Nerdy Best Friend, kicked off the event with a program that examined super tech tools and

apps that can improve productivity and save time during a year that most people agree has been their most stressful ever.

“You need some tools to help you get organized so that these stresses don’t stress you out so much that you cannot work,” she explained as she outlined over a dozen helpful apps that can do everything from ad blocking to creating burner email accounts to proper password protection. “If you take nothing else from this presentation, understand that you need to have a unique unguessable password for every single site you visit.”

Early in the week, a fireside chat on the “state of the industry” revealed that most cleaners believe the worst is behind them. As Wash Respress from Southside Cleaners noted of the SPOT volume numbers released during the past several months: “We just compared route sales to counter sales,” he said. “Around April 11 was the bottom. The

bottom was retail was down 77% and routes were down 67% across the country. Currently, we sort of are sitting at 43-and-a-

half for retail and 41-and-a-half for counter.

In an effort to offset volume deficiencies, many cleaners have

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December, 2020  
Volume 62 Number 3

# Even as Clean is postponed, cleaners gather virtually

Even by 2020’s standards, November was a strange time for the drycleaning industry. During the second week of the month, cleaners witnessed two historic “firsts.” On the good news front, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association, and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association hosted the first-ever Fall Fest EXPO online, which proved to be an enormous success. The event included over 20 hours of Clean Show-caliber programming that was as informative as it was ambitious — and it’s a good sign that the industry is responding to adversity.

But, being 2020, it can’t all be good news. Even while cleaners broke ground with an impressive virtual trade show, Messe Frankfurt announced that it had made the difficult decision to postpone the Clean Show for the first time since its inception in the mid-1970s.

The Clean Show has been pushed back until the summer of 2022, and, for the time being anyway, will now take place on even-numbered years.

Both major events — postponing Clean and hosting Fall Fest EXPO — were the direct products of a pandemic that has turned 2020 into “the year of living dangerously” (as coined by economist and Fall Fest speaker Chris Kuehl, who borrowed it from the 1982 film with Mel Gibson and Sigourney Weaver).

Messe Frankfurt pondered for months about the fate of the show, discussing the matter with all five collaborating associations (ALM, CLA, TRSA, TCATA and DLI), exhibitors, and health and city officials. The postponement became inevitable in November, however, as the number of COVID-19 cases in America skyrocketed. Over one million new cases were reported in one week, bringing our nation’s totals to over 11 million altogether with over 250,000 casualties.

It’s hard to fault anyone for making a decision based on safety concerns, and those concerns seem more than justified as COVID cases are rising fast in the vast majority of the states. Still, it’s also hard to be patient and wait another year for the Clean Show when an extreme amount of patience has been required for most of this year. But, this is the world we live in right now and until COVID-19 can be controlled, the future will continue to include lockdowns, restrictions and other logistical and economic complications. That doesn’t mean things are hopeless, though. If you attended the Fall Fest EXPO, you already have reason to believe that there will be economic growth next year (it may come on top of the economic fallout of a recession, but at least it will be moving in the right direction).

As economist Kuehl pointed out, there’s about 75% support among the markets and economists that there will be solid economic growth in the U.S. in 2021.

It doesn’t hurt matters that there has been significant headway on the vaccine front. Recently, Pfizer announced that its vaccine is safe and 95% effective with no serious side effects following the culmination of its Phase 3 trial. Meanwhile, Moderna achieved similar success, achieving 94.5% effectiveness in a 30,000-patient study.

During Fall Fest, Kuehl noted what we can expect soon: “The expectation is that we will probably see vaccine distribution maybe as early as December, certainly by the first of the year. The expectation beyond that is the first group of recipients will be in the medical profession or first responders. Then, it will be the high risk population — those who are elderly or have underlying conditions. After that is where we don’t have a clue. It’s kind of like a free-for-all.”

It’s easy to imagine life opening back up again soon beyond that, whenever that ends up being. Until then, though, the drycleaning industry is in the process of undergoing widespread renovations. As DLI Executive Director Mary Scalco predicts: “I think those who survive this will be well-heeled to do what they need to do.”

While the Clean Show seems like a long way away, cleaners aren’t exactly content to sit around and wait for it. It is good to see so many who are actively attending informational webinars and networking meetings online — eager to tap into new markets, fully use their POS system’s marketing capabilities, expand delivery and other convenient services, cut costs and evolve into a much stronger business.

There is no sign of that slowing down, either, as the Fall Fest EXPO committee already intends for a Spring Fest EXPO from April 14-16, 2021, and a second Fall Fest EXPO during the weeks of Nov. 1-12, 2021. Meanwhile, DLI members can zoom into weekly networking meetings and a multitude of new special online events this month (go to our site at <https://nationalclothesline.com/datetime> for a full list).

On top of that, America’s Best Cleaners continues to offer its informative Leadership Forum series free to cleaners on the second Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. EST., drawing together various cleaners and allied trades leaders to discuss best practices and issues facing the industry. Finally, we would like to invite you to our own upcoming webinar that we are hosting with EnviroForensics on Dec. 9. It is free to the public and will help guide cleaners through the selling/buying real estate process and Environmental Site Assessments. For more information and to register, go online to: <http://go.enviroforensics.com/NationalClothesline>.

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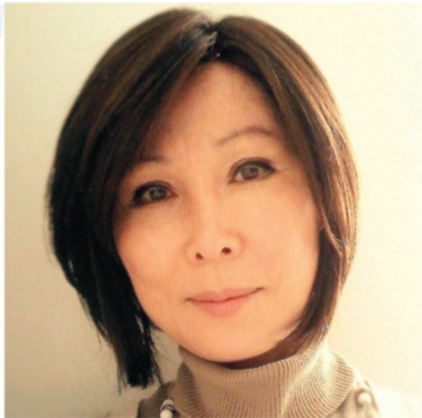


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# Wolves at the door

Many might recall the 1980s as a loud, colorful era of interesting hair choices and MTV, but Ben Combs had more pressing matters on his mind back then: namely, he had to figure out a way to explain to his wife, Mary, that purchasing a drycleaning plant was, in fact, a good idea.

At the time, Ben was working as a salesman for the Yellow Pages, traveling far too much for a man who was about to start a family. For years, local Judi's Cleaners of Sacramento handled his garments, until one day the business sold.

Quality dropped and in about six months the original owners took back control of the business and put it for sale once again. This time, Ben decided to take the plunge.

"He [the owner] said he could teach me. I said, 'OK. I'm going to do it,'" he recalled. "It took a while to convince the wife."

It also took a while to convince Ben that he made the right decision.

"I didn't think I'd be in it long. I thought I'd be in it for maybe just a couple of years and I'd get out and do something else," he explained. "By the time two years rolled around, boy, I owed everybody. I owed the suppliers. I owed taxes. I just owed everybody so there was no way for me to get out."

Desperate to increase its volume, Judi's Cleaners began to offer wholesale shirt work to make up volume. True, more work came in, but the discounted prices were not adding up. Now, he was working harder, increasing stress and his finances continued to sink. Ben refused to give up.

In the days before cell phones, he hauled wholesale work often enough that he had to buy a beeper (an ancient electronic device that beeped when you had a phone call). He knew when it went off that his wife was trying to contact him. He kept quarters on hand in case it went off and he had to pull over to a payphone, first trying the business number, then home if that didn't work.

After an exhausting several months, Ben thought he finally lost his mind one day. He kept hearing a constant ringing sound in his ears. He turned up the car stereo, but could still hear its perpetual, constant tone.

"I thought I had some sort of health problem. The stress was killing me," he said. "I get back to the plant and I went right up to my wife and I said, 'I have this ding in my ears that won't go away.' She looked at me and said, 'I hear it, too!' Then, we both looked down at my beeper which was going off because the battery was low."

The young couple looked at each other and seriously considered getting out of the drycleaning business.

Instead, they chose to get out from underneath it.

It had become abundantly clear to Ben that he needed more than "a couple of weeks worth of training from the original owner" to make the business a success.

Fortunately, he met fellow cleaner Stuart Milbrad, an excellent mentor who advised him that pickup and delivery routes were the way of the future. Ben initially thought he was a

"kook" but over time realized he was on the right track.

"He stopped in to see me and I showed him my financials," Ben said, before laughing. "He made the sign of the cross and said, 'Well, I don't know if I can help you, but I'm going to try.'"

Milbrad's teaching style was unusual. He didn't provide answers; he

Ben felt the best chance he had to keep the business would be to lower his expenses, especially rent.

"Slowly, I negotiated every one of these leases to satisfactory results with each landlord," he added. "It was a brutal time. It was 2008 to about 2010."

"At the time, we had bought a bunch of new equipment, so we had an SBA

things to hit the industry and we'll survive this."

Looking back, Ben finds it a little difficult to believe that he's owned a drycleaning business for about 36 years.

Things have changed dramatically since the early days when he would



judiscleaners.com

## Ben and Mary Combs

made Ben work his way through a problem until he found the solution himself.

"He basically taught me how to track every activity, weigh and measure everything, much like Starbucks," Ben noted. "Little by little we perfected it to the point where the staff would not allow someone to underperform for too long. I don't have to say anything."

As quality greatly improved and labor costs were controlled, Ben kept a fixed eye on KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and the business began to grow as a result.

When the early 1990s rolled around, Judi's Cleaners began to experiment with different strategies. In addition to starting routes, Ben focussed on opening several package plants.

In the meantime, Judi's Cleaners continued to bid year after year for police uniform work. For years, their price was viewed as too high even while Ben tried to explain how much more value and quality his service provided. One day, the pitch finally worked.

"Ever since then, all of the other police departments pretty much followed suit," he said. "These cities and these cops think we're the greatest thing since sliced bread."

Currently, he estimates that the plant cleans anywhere from 300 to 500 uniforms on a weekly basis.

While the various strategies originally worked, the multiple package plants did put Judi's Cleaners in a precarious position when the 2008 economic recession hit. Suddenly, the business was in serious jeopardy with so many leases to pay and less revenue coming in. In fact, Judi's had just opened up another new store.

"During the last recession, I was on four leases, basically paying \$20,000 a month in rent," Ben recalled. "I just felt like the wolves were at the door."

Once again, there was no quick fix to what ailed the business. At that point,

[Small Business Administration] loan, as well. It was just the worst of timing," he added. "I just ran a tight ship. I communicated with every landlord, all the time. I always answer my phone. I think that's one of the keys. You always answer your phone and always tell the truth. If you do that, and you come through on your promises, then the landlord will eventually say, 'Well, this guy is doing the best he can do. We don't want to crush him because we'll never get our money.'"

After "running the gamut" of landlords, Judi's Cleaners rolled on. It peaked at about 35 employees, then the COVID-19 pandemic shook things up earlier this year. After a horrible week, volume dropped like everybody else's, though the company managed to hover around the 55% mark of its regular volume even during hard weeks.

"We're at about 70% right now. Sometimes we're close to 80 to 85% of the volume that we had before the pandemic," Ben explained. "The uniforms make a big difference."

Today, the staff numbers about 20 as Ben and Mary have pivoted their business and cut back on expenses.

"At first, I thought, we're going to make these changes and start doing this and that, but the bottom line is when all the dust clears and they really get to the core of this problem when people aren't working," Ben said. "If people aren't going to work, if people aren't going to dinner, they're not wearing clothes."

Fortunately, Judi's Cleaners had been positioned well so that the pandemic did not hurt them as much as many other cleaners.

"We were better set up with a touchless transaction than anyone else in town. We also changed the strategy on the routes a little bit and went on-demand service instead of checking all of these empty porches," Ben noted. "I think this is one of the most devastating

spend all day cleaning 100 pieces by himself.

"Fast forward to today... I've raised three beautiful daughters, sent them all to private school, sent them to private colleges. I have a beautiful wife, family and home, amenities," he noted. "We live a very, very good life. It's been a real blessing, but it wasn't without its challenges. I honestly did not know how to run this business — track the KPIs — until I was in it about 15 years."

Around 20 years ago, after the business gained strength, Judi's Cleaners changed its logo and added a new tagline. Trying to figure out how the cleaners excelled was difficult to narrow. "Customers tell us that, 'You're just better,'" Ben explained. So, the tagline became: A Better Dry Cleaning Service."

That remains the main focus of the company. While the quality of the final product and Judi's Cleaners' reputation remain very much in his control, Ben knows there are just some things that he cannot.

"I think we've seen the bottom. I really do," he said. "We've seen a lot of failures already. I can't count the number of little stores that have closed up in our area, but they were typically stores that weren't very viable anyway."

"They don't realize there's not enough money in a pair of pants to pay 25 or 35 or 40% of it in rent," he added.

The wolves may no longer be clawing at the door, but that doesn't mean they can't come back again.

Still, Ben believes those who stay on top of their business numbers and pivot appropriately will come out from the other side of this hostile economic climate because people are ready to get back to how things used to be.

"We might see more of the pandemic rear its ugly head, but I think people are going to do the best they can and maintain the social distance," he said. "They're going to wash their hands a lot. I think people are going to try to be as normal as possible."



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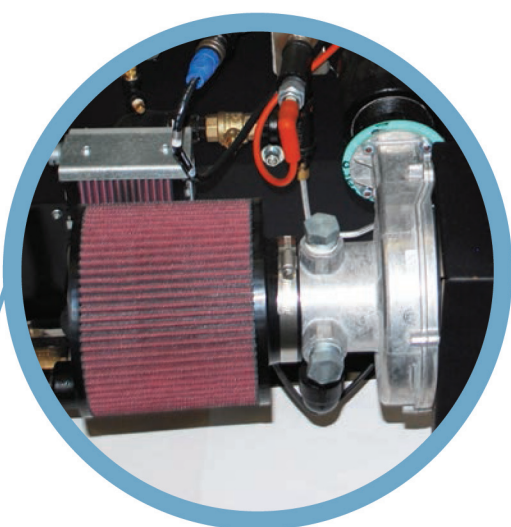
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# SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

## Santa's gonna need a bigger bag

It's (already) time for my annual Christmas wishlist. For the past decade or two, I have, somewhat whimsically, used this column to dream up some products that I believe this industry needs.

These products don't exist, but I wish that they did. They are products that would make the world of washing and pressing shirts easier, better and more profitable.

I suspect that some of the products would be logistical nightmares to develop or simply not cost-effective and therefore will never be produced.

I hate to be so blunt, but that isn't my problem. I am just playing the role of the imaginer, not the engineer.

Several years ago, when the cost of hangers was spiraling out of control, I had a conversation with the owner of Unipress Corporation. He and I talked about an idea that I had which was to incorporate a hanger-making machine into a shirt press.

The concept was that a motor would pull a wire from a spool mounted somewhere in the machine and fold the

wire into a hanger as each shirt was being pressed. I still think that it's a pretty cool idea (he did, too).

Logistically, however, he explained that the cost of a motor that would be required to pull wire of the required gauge would be prohibitive.

Still, I think that this would be a great idea. Shirt presses do a lot more than press shirts these days. Why not bend me a hanger, as well?

These are the types of problems that prevent my ideas from turning into products. Still, every year someone seems to misunderstand that my visions aren't anything more than pipe dreams.

I get calls every year... "Hey, where can I buy one of those?"

Over the years, I'm happy to say, some of my suggestions, have turned into products. Most notably are the productivity monitors on shirt presses telling you how many shirts per hour are being pressed and shirt back pull-downs to prevent wrinkles in the backs of shirts.

This year, Santa will show up with a mask on, no doubt.

But that mask should not cover his ears and his eyes, so read this, Mr. Claus, and listen up! I've got some important things to say!

Once again, I whine about folded shirts. I can't help but do this because we painstakingly press our shirts and then, with seeming reckless disregard, hack up the press job with a hapless fold job. It's even difficult to type that.

Interestingly enough, customers don't complain about it very much, but in these trying times, it is more important than ever to under-promise and over-deliver. Look under a rock and find a problem that no one is complaining about (yet), that's how you will excel. It seems like fewer and fewer plants have shirt-folding machines, especially newly built plants. Shirt-folding machines are crazy-expensive. In fact, everything related to folded shirts is expensive.

Most of the packaging supplies that you buy are for folded shirts; carry bags, shirt boards, shirt bags, butterflies, folded shirt poly bags, perhaps



shirt boxes of various sizes. A shirt-folding machine has virtually no return on investment. Heck, no matter what you upcharge for folded shirts, you are probably not even covering the additional labor for folding them, which takes more time than it takes to press the shirt in most plants, let alone the additional supplies.

Trying to amortize the cost of a shirt-folding machine is hopeless lest you charge much more for a folded shirt than you do now. Enter the need for a simple-folding device which is the next item on my wishlist for 2020.

Yes, there is the lowly Flip-fold. It has little more value than to fold Sheldon Cooper's socks. It is just too small. You can use it to fold t-shirts, but I bet that you don't. In fact, you probably have one that you don't use and that is perfectly understandable. A Flip-fold has the right idea, but it needs to be the right size! It needs to be the size of a 14-inch shirt board! Then, it would be perfect. This is not difficult to execute and there is a great need. Santa: You're gonna need a bigger bag.

You know how they tell you that you can gauge how much longer your tire threads are good for with a penny? There needs to be a device on a shirt press that tells you when your padding is no longer resilient enough to keep buttons from

breaking.

It seems like spent steel mesh or padding is the last thing that people think of when they suddenly start breaking a lot of buttons. Sometimes they wait for me to show up. They talk amongst themselves: "We'll ask Don why we are breaking so many buttons when he gets here." A few weeks go by, awaiting my arrival, and button material is being pulverized into dust every day. When I tell them that their steel mesh needs to be replaced, they sound surprised. They order it. It takes a couple of weeks. More button dust.

Suppose there had been a device that disclosed the problem long ago? It might be a sturdy needle-type device that is attached to the steam chest — let's say on the collar/cuff press. When the head closes, the needle penetrates the padding, but does not go all the way through to the steam chest below the steel mesh. Unless and until the padding has lost its resiliency at which the needle closes some sort of circuitry, indicting that the buttons are in danger. (Hey! I like that!)

Remember, I am the imaginer. Someone else needs to be the engineer. Step right up!

Happy New Year everyone! The coming year *must* be better than 2020!

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FRENCH CLEANERS in West Hartford, CT, purchased a Unisec MS-402N through Express Machinery. Plant owner Phillip Cote (center) is flanked by Jon Park of Express Machinery (left) and Robert Lee of New York Machinery.





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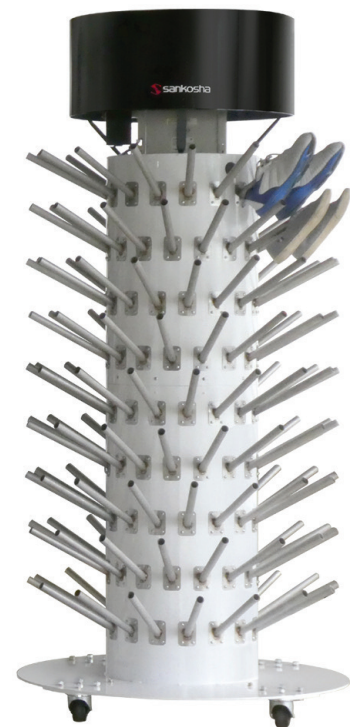
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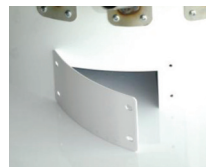
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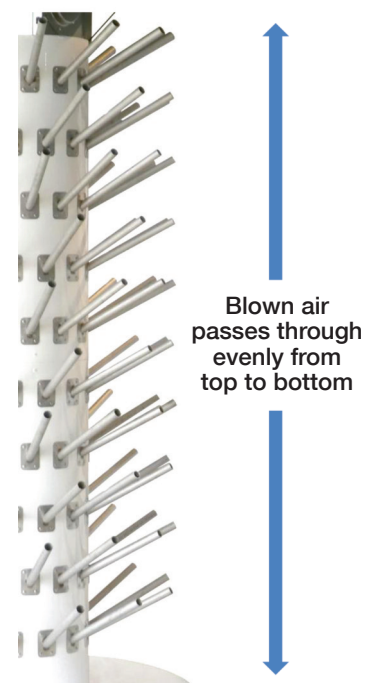
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# KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

## New labor regulations may be coming

As I write this, it is one week after the national election, and it appears that Joe Biden will be sworn in as President in January. Furthermore, we will not know whether the Senate will remain in control of the Republicans until January when the two Georgia runoff elections take place. Although its origin as a “Chinese curse” is subject to question, “may you live in interesting times” is the curse we live under today.

As a quick aside, Joe Biden attended Syracuse University College of Law nine years be-

fore I did. I ran into him at a field hockey camp where we were both registering our daughters in the 1990s, and we chatted for about 20 minutes. We sort of lost touch after that, so to speak. Whether President-Elect Biden faces a split Congress or not, he will have the authority to change the direction and composition of many federal agencies that deal with employment matters. Any pro-employer changes put in place by the previous administration will be quickly set aside, and many ostensible pro-worker regulations will follow. I say os-

tensible because the law of unintended consequences frequently results in so-called pro-employee changes for jobs that, because of the change, no longer exist. Without the employer, there are no employees.

Whoever is selected to be secretary of labor will have a huge effect on policy. The Department of Labor is responsible for OSHA, wage and hour matters, benefit plan administration, and the Office of Contract Compliance Programs, where affirmative action programs are reviewed. Changes in OSHA regulations and en-

forcement will have a direct impact on employers. Covid restrictions on a national level could come out in the form of Department of Labor workplace safety regulations, and Biden campaigned on Covid as much as any issue. Expect OSHA regulations giving employees more rights to decide when and how they want to work. Even if inspections do not increase, employees will be able to file OSHA complaints related to Covid and other safety items. The country can also expect more enforcement of regulations on the payment

of minimum wages and overtime, who is responsible for wage and hour violations, and the applicability of laws to independent contractors the Labor Department deems to be employees. If you are using independent contractors, now would be a good time to re-think that strategy. No change in the law is necessary to change interpretation and enforcement strategy. The federal courts will be just as busy reviewing new regulations and orders as they were under the Trump administration.

There is no question that once there are openings on the National Labor Relations Board, the appointments will be pro-union members who believe that all workplaces should be unionized. I will leave it to the reader to decide if pro-union is the same as pro-employee. See unintended consequences mentioned above. Moreover, the Obama NLRB enacted regulations and issued decisions making it more difficult to discipline employees for anti-employer statements and behaviors that could hurt the business.

Equal employment opportunity laws will likely be expanded to provide rights to more people. The Family and Medical Leave Act, which provides unpaid leave rights to employees in mid-sized and larger companies, will likely be a focus. There will be pressure to expand the coverage to smaller companies.

Race will undoubtedly be a major focus again in enforcement policies. Recently, disability discrimination has been the bigger issue, but race discrimination (and national origin discrimination) claims will likely see a surge. Unemployment benefits will be subject to modification, and it is likely that the Biden Administration will favor paying people for not working more than the prior administration. Temporary changes made as pandemic responses could become permanent. While it could take some time for these changes to take effect, four years is a long time. Be prepared for more enforcement, more rules, and more interference in how you run your business. Hoping for moderation will not prepare you for a shift toward employees and against employers. Remember, it's the hope that kills you.

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](http://www.kollmanlaw.com). It has articles, sample policies, news and other information on employee/employer relations.



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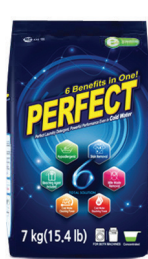
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# Fall Fest EXPO fuels industry interest

*Continued from page 1*  
emphasized delivery routes, wash-dry-fold and have been marketing more with their POS computer systems.

For Respass, his Southside Cleaners business has relied on an unorthodox approach for building routes in 2020. “Now, we use it as a selling tool and just flip the script,” he said. “What if we contact you once a week, or twice a week? If you have something, let us know. If you don’t, no big deal. Now, we have a lot more people that we’ve just added to the route just

by flipping the script.”  
Speaking of scripts, customer service expert Trudy Adams spent ample time on how to create customer service scripts for front counter personnel and how to make sure reluctant staff adhere to it. “Following a script is not about being a robot, and it’s not about being impersonal,” she noted. Instead, the right script can create a more personal experience and it’s helpful when dealing with irritated customers.  
While keeping customers is imperative, so is keeping machinery maintained, especially

during a slow period. “Now is a good time to clean your equipment, noted Michael Tunesvick from Sankosha. “Do the maintenance that you should be doing all the time on it. Pay a little more attention to the inner workings of your machines.”  
Tom Stites of Unipress added, “If you do these things as you go along, it doesn’t snowball on you.”

In a time when costs can easily snowball out of proportion, many cleaners have creatively come up with clever cost-cutting measures. Johnathan Boehmer of PuzzleHR noted that 26 states currently have a workshare program. “If you hire military veterans, you can get a tax credit.”

Larry Fish of Pier Cleaners in Rhode Island has ample experience with the initiative. “We’re using the workshare program a lot,” he explained. “They’re self-monitoring, so they’re moving faster or slower but they’re worried about ‘I can’t work more than 25 hours,’ and they might be doing 50 shirts an hour when before they were doing 38. So, our costs per shirt that we monitor has come down considerably. The quality is the same.”

Another popular topic during

Fall Fest was whether or not there may be more financial assistance coming from the government soon. The answer is a definite maybe.

“The FFCRA [Families First Coronavirus Response Act] is until Dec. 31, but we can imagine that being extended,” Boehmer noted. “There’s already talk about it just being complete adopted, forget Covid — just adopting that as part of the federal law. I’m not going to say that’s going to happen but there’s a lot of conversation about that.”

At Fall Fest, there was also a lot of conversation about the future of the drycleaning industry and overall, the speculation was of a positive nature. That doesn’t mean easy, however.

Economist Chris Kuehl from Armada Business Intelligence called 2020 “the year of living dangerously,” but he is skeptical that 2021 will be “the year of rainbows and unicorns.”

Following the November elections, it is clear that America has a very divided and angry electorate, but as Kuehl emphasized, government is now more balanced moving forward. While the pandemic will continue, so will the business world,

according to the experts.  
“There’s about 75% support for pretty solid growth in 2021,” Kuehl said. “So, among the markets and among the economists, there is confidence moving forward.”

As for what that future will look like for the industry, DLI Executive Director Mary Scalco has given that a lot of thought.

“I think we’re going back to the future,” she said. “I think we’re going to have less mom-and-pops, less one-operator stores. I think we’re going to have more dry stores and large production facilities that have less rent, less costs, out in an industrial park. We’re going to have routes. We’re going to have, basically, less cleaners in the industry.”

“I think our industry will come out stronger and better for it,” she added.

The Fall Fest committee plans to keep all videos of its programs online for at least three months so registered attendees can still access them. Those who didn’t attend but would like to watch the videos can still register for the event by visiting [www.nefabricare.com](http://www.nefabricare.com). The cost is \$359 for DLI members and \$399 for non-members.



**Peter Blake, one of the coordinators of the first Fall Fest EXPO, believes the industry is not giving up during the pandemic. “I think you’re going to see more people invested in their business than before,” he said.**

# CA phases out perc in four counties

During the 1930s, the drycleaning industry began to widely adopt a new miracle solvent — tetrachloroethylene or perchloroethylene as dubbed by scientists. Cleaners just called it perc.

It wasn’t dry and you certainly didn’t want to ingest any, but man could it clean — and that it did better than any other available solvent on the market for the better part of a century.

Now, as 2020 comes to an

end, perc’s long reign continues to gradually decline toward potential extinction by legislation as various state and federal regulations reach critical deadlines.

A major one takes place in California courtesy of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), which passed Rule 1421 with the goal to phase out perc drycleaning in the four counties it oversees: Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside and San Bernardino.

The deadline to stop using perc for drycleaning in those areas arrives Jan. 1, 2021.

From that point on, all perc drycleaning systems in those counties are expected to be removed from service by actually physically removing the machine or by disconnecting utilities to the machines and draining all perc from the tanks.

The rule was originally adopted in 1994, so drycleaners have now had over 25 years to

comply. In that time, California agencies such as SCAQMD and the California Air Resources Board (CARB) have attempted to buffer the financial blow to the industry by offering grants for cleaners who replaced perc systems with a professional wet-cleaning system or other approved technological systems with approved alternative cleaning methods.

After perc becomes fully banned from the four counties

at the start of the year, California will inch forward toward its next major milestone involving the complete phaseout of perc drycleaning from the state by Jan. 1, 2023.

California cleaners now have just over two years to completely remove all perc machines from service.

The Environmental Protection Agency approved the state ban back in 2011. The environmental watchdog group also instituted a national ban on all perc machines in co-residential buildings by Dec. 21, 2020.

While perc’s position at the top of the industry remains precarious, reports of the solvent’s demise might turn out to be a bit exaggerated. True, various cities, counties and states have often proposed phaseouts for the dynamic degreaser, but a potential federal ban seems to remain out of reach.

In April of this year, the EPA conducted its Draft Risk Evaluation Findings to determine if further federal regulations are needed on perc.

On the EPA’s “Assessing and Managing Chemicals under TSCA [Toxic Substances Control Act]” web page, the agency notes: “The risks found in the draft risk evaluation, including those associated with this chemical’s use in dry cleaning, are preliminary and do not require any action at this time.”

Following a public comment period and peer review on the agency’s research, the EPA’s opinion appears unchanged.

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# WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

## Troubleshooting boilers gone bad III

This month you will learn how to identify and repair the other common cause of low boiler pressure, which is excessive clearance between the impeller and raceway in the Burks 5 and 7 CT family of turbine pumps used on many of the return systems found in the drycleaning and laundry industry.

Unlike problems caused by excessively high water temperature in the return tank (see “Troubleshooting Boilers Gone Bad II”), the water temperature in the return tank and outlet of the return pump will not be excessive. (The pipe at the inlet side of the check valve nearest the boiler will be hot but will hardly evaporate spit).

The culprit here is pump wear; a simple pump impeller adjustment will have you running in no time. Here’s the poop as to why this happens. As the pump is used, the impeller and raceway are slowly eroded away increasing the physical clearance between them.

This results in the lowering of the pressure the pump can push against (“dead head pressure”). No, Grasshopper, increasing deadhead pressure will not get you a free Jerry Garcia-flavored ice cream cone. Eventually,

you’ll notice that the return pump is always running and the burner is being controlled by the low water level cut off.

By this time you will have wished that the low water level alarm would *just shut the \$#&% up* and will be making frequent trips to the boiler room to press the water level reset switch.

At this point we need to be careful to make sure there is a sufficient water level in the return tank and that the strainer between the return tank and condensate return pump is clear and allowing water to get to the pump.

These conditions will mimic the symptoms of a pump impeller clearance problem.

I know I repeat myself but: You **MUST** shut off the boiler and boil down until there is no boiler pressure! Do not do ANY repairs on a boiler under pressure under any circumstance!

Here’s a list of tools you’ll need for this job:

Large flat blade screwdriver; small hammer; spanner wrench for impeller adjustment nut (it is well worth investing in this tool instead of trying to use a punch); vise grip pliers (needle nose-type if possible); and a 5/16” combination open end/box wrench; spray

can of WD-40 or a good penetrating oil.

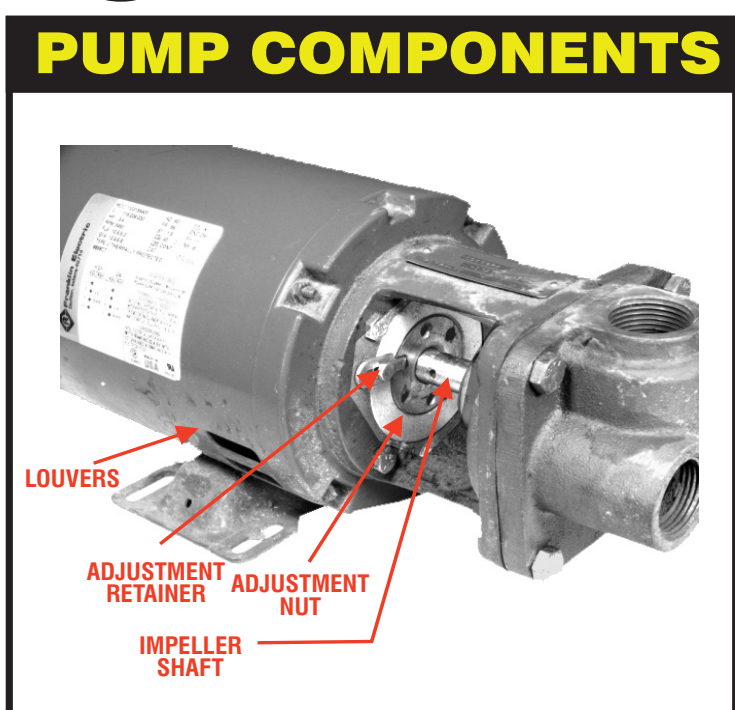
Be sure the electrical power to the boiler pump is off! Once the boiler is no longer under pressure, get some decent lighting on the area of the return pump and wipe it down removing dust and debris.

As long as you’re down there, make sure the ventilation louvers (for our non-French speaking readers, these are the cutouts at the end/ends of the motor) are free of obstructing lint. Adjust the vise grips to gently grab the impeller shaft near the motor.

Rotate the shaft. If it swings easily up and down, you will need to adjust the pump impeller. On most of these families of Burks pumps there is a plastic cap or metal plug covering the rear shaft bearing at the center of the rear of the pump.

Take the screwdriver and pry out the cap or plug if there is one present (some of the latest pumps do not have this access cap). Spray a shot of WD-40 into the opening covered by this cap or plug, NOT into the louvers.

On the pump end of the motor is a round impeller adjustment nut (see figure) about two inches in diameter that has six blind holes drilled around its circumfer-



ence. The impeller shaft goes through the center of this impeller adjustment nut, through the inboard wall of the pump housing then through a rotating seal.

The pump impeller (not visible because it is enclosed in the pump housing) is

pressed on the end of this shaft. Spray some WD-40 over the shaft and on this nut, as well as where the impeller shaft enters the inboard wall of the pump housing. If you have time, allow 10-15 minutes for the WD-40 to penetrate the parts. On the face of the pump that has the impeller adjustment nut is an adjustment retainer (a small flat slotted piece of metal with a right angled tab at the end which goes into a hole in the impeller adjustment nut) held in place by a small 5/16 headed bolt. Use the 5/16 wrench, unscrew the small adjustment retainer bolt from the pump body and remove the adjustment retainer.

Take the screwdriver, push it through the hole in the rear of the pump from which you removed the cap or plug. Place the screwdriver against the end of the impeller shaft (it will have a screw on the end; you don’t have to put the screwdriver into the screw slot we are using the screwdriver as a handy punch) and gently tap the shaft end.

Now you’re ready to actually make the adjustment.

Continued on page 18

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Bruce Grossman

# Troubleshooting boilers gone bad III

Continued from page 16

To better understand the object of this exercise, let's take a moment and visualize

ary part that also is the out-board end of the pump housing (I use the mnemonic "clockwise is closer" to recall the effect of rotating the im-

Rotate the impeller adjustment nut in a clockwise direction (I use the mnemonic "clockwise is closer" to recall the effect of rotating the im-

rotating the impeller shaft using the vise grips. Continue the adjusting until it becomes difficult to rotate the impeller shaft.

Turn the impeller adjustment nut in a counter clockwise direction about 10 degrees at a time and try to rotate the impeller shaft after each adjustment.

When the impeller shaft just drags slightly, you have reached the proper adjustment.

Place the tab end of the impeller adjustment retainer back into a hole in the impeller adjustment nut and bolt it in place with the impeller adjustment retainer bolt and replace the cap or plug at the rear of the motor. Viola! You're done.

Turn on the power and switch the pump on while listening to be sure the motor sounds smooth without straining.

If there is an indication of a problem, immediately turn off the power, check to make sure the valves between the return tank and pump, and the pump and boiler are opened.

If all valves were correct, re-adjust the impeller for slightly more clearance.

**As the pump is used, the impeller and raceway are slowly eroded away increasing the physical clearance between them. This results in the lowering of the pressure the pump can push against.**

what we're doing. Remember that the cause of our problem is too much distance between the impeller (the rotating part on the end of the motor shaft that moves the water), and the raceway (the station-

by moving the impeller closer to the raceway.

Here's how. Take your spanner and adjust the spacing between the protrusions on the end fit into holes in the impeller adjustment nut.

After about every 45 degrees of rotation on the impeller, adjustment nut once again, tap the screwdriver against the end of the impeller shaft and try

One final tap of the screwdriver against the impeller shaft and the impeller is then resting against the raceway with no clearance. Now, you are ready to make the clearance adjustment.

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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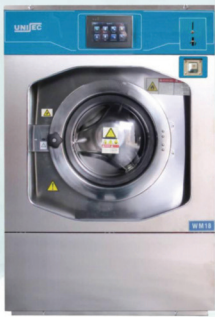


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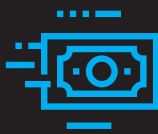
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# THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

## The key to making good decisions

**W**ith every decision comes the balancing act of the three primary factors that impact the overall decision to be made, and the corresponding politics associated with the stakeholders of each factor or faction.

If the output of any given decision is increased productivity and profitability, then think of the decision-making process in your business as a triangle.

Each side is labeled with one of the three corresponding factors that influence the output of any decision. On that triangle label:

1. Financials/Costs
2. Time/Deadlines
3. Quality/Expectations

In an ideal decision-making process, productivity would allow an individual to weigh all three factors equally and draw upon the best of each. The best being:

1. The obvious elements that comprise that factor
2. The individuals who own that factor
3. The committees, experts, vendors, personnel assets, equipment, technology, etc. associated with a factor

### 4. The ideal output from a factor to be incorporated into the final product of a decision

In reality, one of these three sides most often will be in a state of jeopardy.

With this model in mind, now you can make an educated judgment as to which side is least important if you must negotiate away or down any one factor.

You can now work, as a safety measure, a side that may be overlooked in an otherwise hastily executed decision.

This model aids in controlled conversations with colleagues, employees, superiors, clients and vendors to ensure that all sides are considered in the discussion of an impending decision and in the execution of productivity.

For example, if someone has a tight window of delivery for a decision, you might need to discuss the quality decrease that may occur or the need for additional revenue or assets to ensure that the deadline is met and no quality declines are experienced.

To increase productivity tactically, ensure that when tasked with a decision, if any of these three critical fac-

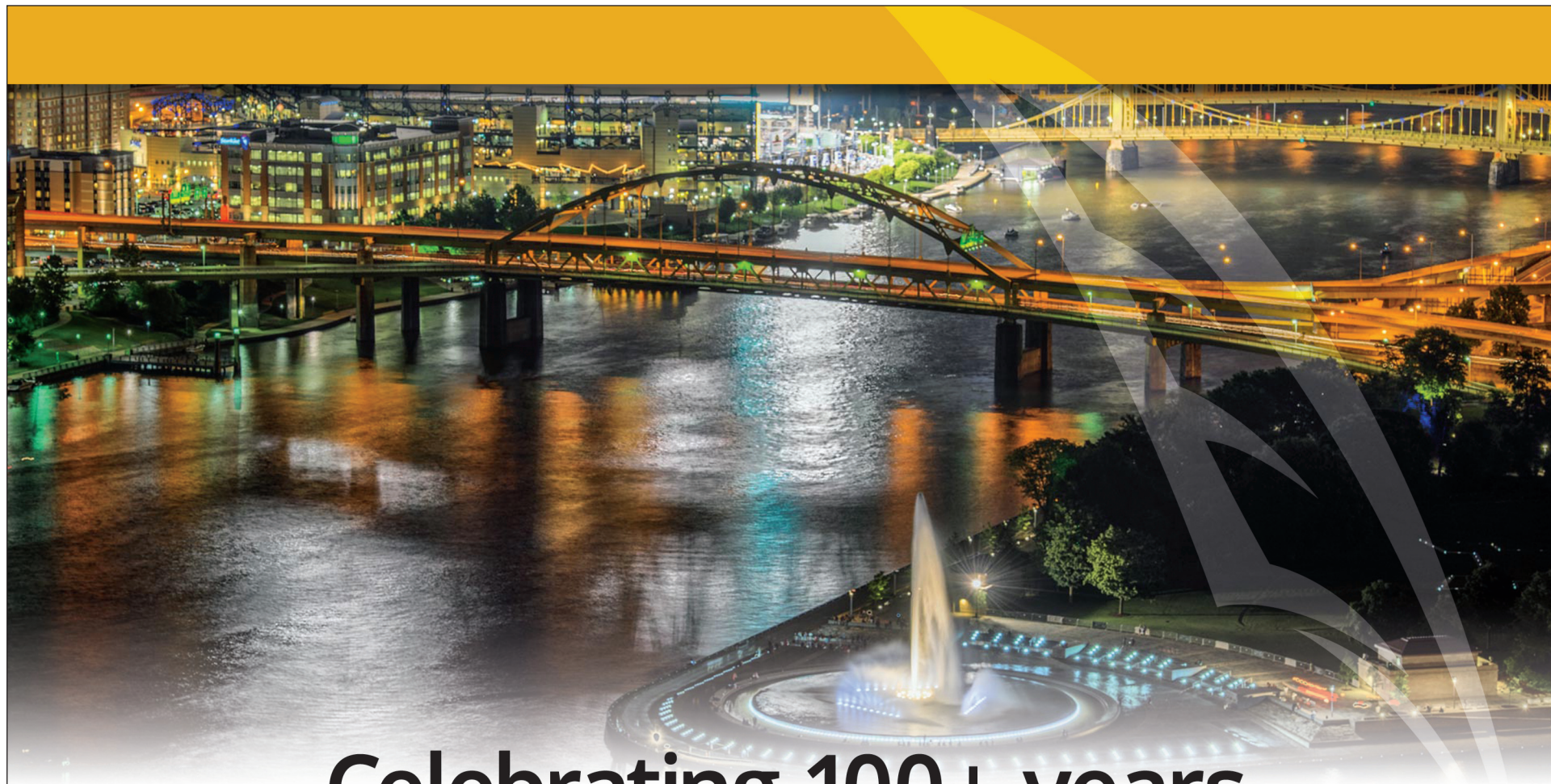
tors is outside of your sphere of experience or knowledge, you access those assets and involve them at the earliest possible time.

Don't put off the obvious in decision-making, as the longer you wait the more pressure will be placed on the three forces.

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).



Mike Baylor (right) from Classic Dry Cleaners & Laundromats in Harrisburg, PA, graduated from Route Pro University specializing in route development. He is pictured with James Peuster of the Route Pros in Kansas City, MO.



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BY DAN EISEN

# THE SPOTTING BOARD

## Digesting all the available digesters

**D**igestion is one of the four methods of stain removal. The other methods are solvent action, lubrication and chemical action. Digestion uses different enzymes to remove protein stains such as milk, eggs, perspiration and blood. Some enzymes remove starch, food, grease and oil. Enzymes associated with cleaning are proteins that act as catalysts in a biological reaction. A catalyst is defined as a substance that causes a reac-

tion to take place at a faster rate but does not change itself. An enzyme can be identified by its name, typically ending with -ase. Enzymes found in detergents include protease, urcase, amylase. Enzymes have the ability to change the staining into a soluble substance which can be flushed or washed away. Some enzymes can be mixed with chemicals and high heat. Other enzymes must be neutral and used at lower temperatures.

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art**  
When I was a consultant to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, we introduced low temperature enzymes for the cleaning of the textiles and artifacts. The enzymes effectively remove protein matter and starch which helps soil. They were absolutely safe to the fabric since they were neutral and used at low temperatures.  
**Low Temperature Enzymes**  
These powders are the

safest of all products. They are completely neutral and can be used on all fabrics including silk, wool, rayon and other similar fabrics. They are considered as safe as water.  
**Spotting Method**  
1. Put in a quarter teaspoon of enzymes in a clean six ounce bottle.  
2. The water temperature is between 90° and 120°F. Over 120 degrees F destroys the enzyme.  
3 Add ½ teaspoon of glycerin.

4. Apply to stain  
5. Wait a half hour and re-apply.  
6. Flush area.  
You can make up the enzyme formula at the start of the day. Even if it cools it will still work.  
After one day the enzyme formula can not be used and a new one is then made up.

**Bath Method**  
1. One teaspoon enzyme to a gallon of water in a clean bucket.  
2. Water temperature 90° to 120°F.  
3. Add a teaspoon of salt as a dye setter except on silk.  
4. Soak one half hour.  
5. Rinse.  
NOTE: Do not cover container. A covered container causes dye bleeding.

**Detergents**  
Enzymes are used in all types of detergents. They are used with detergents containing acid, alkali, and bleach. They work in hot water up to 140°F.

**Liquid Enzymes — Spotting Agents**  
There are some products that are enzyme mixed with detergents. They are used for a substitute for alkaline-based protein formulas. They offer a little more safety to delicate colors and silk. They do not set tannin stains.

**Alkaline-Based Enzyme Products**  
There are some alkaline-based enzyme products. They are used to remove protein stains in a soaking action. They are very effective since water temperature can be used up to 140°F. However, they may not be safe to some dyes, especially wool and silk. They are especially effective on cottons, linens and most synthetic fibers.

**Enzyme Bleach**  
These products are effective for removing mold and mildew on white colored linens, cottons, rayons and synthetics. They can not be used on wool and silk.

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 cleandan@comcast.net or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.

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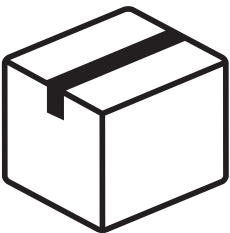
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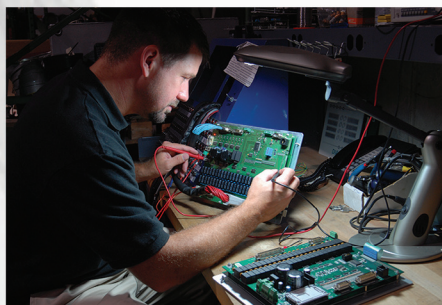
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