



# National Clothesline

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## DLI launches Inner Circle virtual group

Traditionally, peer management groups are expensive for many members, especially when you add the associated travel costs that accumulate during plant tours and face-to-face meetings.

Now, with travel restrictions, social distancing and a floundering economy, such groups are not able to physically meet.

With that in mind, the Drycleaning Laundry Institute has come up with a virtual Inner Circle Peer Management Group program that seeks to maintain the benefits of cost groups without the extra expenses.

"Management groups are traditionally cost-prohibitive for a lot of our members," noted DLI

CEO Mary Scalco. "With the virus cutting into our ability to travel and our overall shift to offering more digital connections, we realized we could help a lot more of our members with new, virtual, management groups."

The concept will remain the same: Management groups typically bring a small group of non-competing cleaners together to analyze each other's financial numbers to establish baseline figures.

So, a cleaner who belongs to a five-member group where the other four cleaners spend 33% on labor costs and they find their labor costs higher at 50%, the other cleaners might be able to help him rectify the cost discre-

pancies.

Or, to put it in other terms, Scalco noted: "It's like going to the doctor. Many people don't like to go to the doctor but they need to hear a professional tell them the hard truths. Taking a

close look at how your numbers compare can help you identify weaknesses or areas for improvement. It's not a critical analysis so much as constructive encouragement."

To make the initiative a real-

ity, DLI has partnered with Ascend Consulting Group, led by Diana Vollmer, who many in the industry will recognize from her long tenure with Methods for Management.

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**If timing is everything, then moving into a 10,000 sq. ft. facility during a pandemic seems questionable, but then again, jazz pianist and Parkway Custom Drycleaning owner Joe Simon is a master of improvisation. See his story on page 6.**

## ABC hosts fifth Leadership Forum

For almost half a year now, America's Best Cleaners has hosted five monthly online installments of its Leadership Forum featuring a multitude of industry leaders discussing their trials and tribulations of the past year, as well as strategies for planning for the murky future.

Those who attended the fifth Leadership Forum in mid-January listened to five more industry innovators, including: Dave

Coyle, owner of In the Bag Cleaners and Maverick Drycleaners; Kermit Engh, owner of Fashion Cleaners and managing director of Methods for Management; Dianne Lee, CEO of JSK Hospitality Group; Leslie Schaeffer, CEO of TCATA and managing director for *National Clothesline*; and Kurt Wickiser, executive vice president of Seitz.

Wickiser noted it's a slightly

different style working with a family-owned German company, though "they are excellent to work with and are definitely not micromanagers."

At a company with its product manufactured overseas, Wickiser is no stranger to trying to make early plans.

"We're always forecasting three months, four months, five months down the road to make sure that we always have inven-

tory," he said.

Complicating matters, Covid kept over a dozen field representatives from making in-person visits for several months. Despite that, Seitz still felt it was a good time to be aggressive.

"We've actually added a couple of employees in the last six months — one of them being a business development manager for us — Frank Briercheck. He's out aggressively pushing for

new business, new markets," Wickiser added.

Drycleaner Dave Coyle also looked for ways to grow, not exactly an easy prospect in recent times. "I think we feel most in control when we can accurately predict the outcome of situations. I think we feel least in control when the opposite is true, when you have a very unpredictable future."

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### Crying from relief

Sonny Shinn (pictured on the right), the owner of Shinn Cleaners in Little Rock, AR, was the star of a viral video online when he reacted emotionally to a \$30,000 donation from the Barstool Sports Fund, an initiative to help small business owners.

The funds came in the nick of time for the business owner, who like many, has struggled to keep the business open during the pandemic and keep all of his employees on the payroll.

In a statement of gratitude, Shinn Cleaners noted: "There really aren't adequate words to describe the impact this will have for us."

The reaction video was recorded by Shinn's daughter, Juli, but the application for the business was submitted on behalf of her friend, Logan Kloker who said of the pandemic's effect on Shinn: "It's hitting them in every possible way."



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Spotting wizard Dan Eisen breaks down the best methods for tackling stains originating from living things.



**Maybe your prices are just right.**

**Maybe your costs are where they should be.**

**Maybe your business is at peak performance.**

**Maybe so . . . Maybe not.**

**Stop Guessing  
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DLI's Inner Circle gives members a confidential and structured method of getting together to assess each other's operations and share strategies to improve overall performance. Quarterly half-day virtual meetings will be held online and hosted by Diana Vollmer with Ascend Consulting Group.

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A national newspaper  
for drycleaners and launderers  
February, 2021  
Volume 62 Number 5

# Content you can trust during a time of skepticism

For the better part of a year, drycleaners of all shapes and sizes have struggled mightily in the shadow of COVID-19, either on a personal or professional level, or both. While farmers’ fates are inexorably entwined with the whims of the weather, the destiny of drycleaners largely rests on a culture that is professionally and socially active — things that fall by the wayside during a pandemic, as we’ve learned from experience.

Of course, nobody needs to tell the industry that there has been a long, painful garment drought with too few social events to attend during lockdowns and too much professional attire gathering dust on hangers. The amount of decreasing volume from coast to coast — the likes of which this industry has never seen — has provided the toughest of obstacles to overcome.

For some of us in the media, however, it has been a similar problem, though more in reverse. That is to say, during a crisis the news cycle hungrily expands as there is an overabundance of pertinent information to share with the public.

Even for trade publications such as ours, a national crisis of this proportion has led to a huge influx of extra information to share, much of which is needed to be known by our readers if they wish to survive as entrepreneurs. Generally speaking though, having too much information is a much more enjoyable problem than that of having too little.

Unfortunately, other fiscal realities remain the same — printing costs do not go down, but advertising revenues have diminished as many companies struggling to stay in business put marketing costs on the chopping block. So, we find ourselves trying to cram more news in less space in an effort to maintain real value for all of the readers who rely on it.

For many months now, we’ve filled up our print publication to the brim (with some bits and pieces spilling over). Fortunately, that is a problem easily solved as our digital content does not share the same space restrictions. We’ve finished virtual renovations on our site recently and we urge you to check in our web page from time to time ([www.nationalclothesline.com](http://www.nationalclothesline.com)), or, better yet, follow us on Facebook so you’ll be updated when we update the site with new content. We are trying to offer as much relevant content as we can for your benefit.

Issues of content-contortionistic chaos aside, the truth is that most of our readers utilize the virtues of both our print and digital versions. It is interesting to

note that social media recently became a more popular source of news than print, albeit just slightly. According to statistics from the Pew Research Center for 2018, one-in-five U.S. adults (20%) surveyed said they often get their news from social media, compared to 16% who do so from print newspapers. That’s still pretty close, but here’s the rub: Nobody seems to trust many of their news sources these days.

Even though Americans regularly turn to various social media channels for news content, a majority from 2018 (57%) believe that the news they do receive is largely inaccurate. Unfortunately, print news sources fared even worse. Pew noted that 68% of those they surveyed believed that print publications are not always factual.

In a word, that is insane. In another, that is unacceptable. Of course, much of that has to do with the rise of polarizing political partisanship in recent times, but it’s still a sobering and depressing statistic. There is a silver lining to it all, however. Pew also discovered that more than half of Americans (52%) have changed the way they use social media as a result of the issue of “fake news,” and more than half of Americans said they have stopped following a news source because they believed it posted made-up news or information. Such actions force the dishonest media to be honest, or risk going out of business.

Just as drycleaners spent the better part of a year fixing improving their best practices, so, it seems, have some Internet perusers. Pew also noted that almost two-thirds (63%) of Americans think it’s better to be somewhat skeptical of the news media. As a member of the media, we say that is excellent advice and it includes us.

Though we strive vigorously and earnestly to report the truth and the information that is most pertinent for our readers, we still need to know when we miss the target (and not just any errors we may accidentally make). We are always happy to receive news tips and suggestions on coverage for future issues.

The real truth is, we cannot succeed unless you do. So, we have a vested interest in pursuing the best information available for our readership. It is our job, along with the other members of the drycleaning media, to inform you accurately in a way that will help you have the tools or access to resources that you need to forge a path to success.

We look forward to hearing from you.  
Good luck. Stay safe. Keep improving.

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Be sure to check out our website,  
[www.nationalclothesline.com](http://www.nationalclothesline.com), for additional coverage and news from the drycleaning industry.

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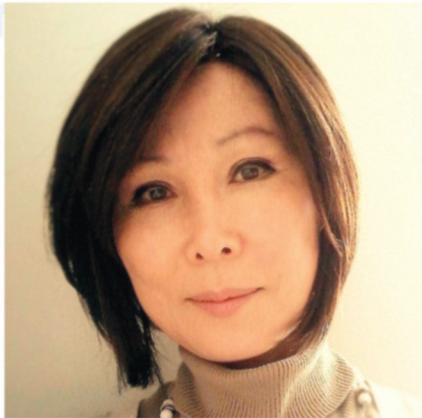


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# The improvisor

**W**hen Jon Simon was six years old, his mother heard him picking out melodies on a piano and thought it prudent to hire a music teacher. Over time, Jon spent years training at the prestigious Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY.

"I was fortunate to be there," he recalled. I trained there during my early years and through high school. Then, first I had a rock band [a.k.a. Odyssey] and then got into jazz. Eastman is known for its jazz program and that's what I planned initially to do. Write music. Perform music."

The future drycleaner studied music composition at the University of Michigan School of Music where he graduated summa cum laude. While there, he also wrote a musical.

"It was called *The Birds* and it was a jazz-rock musical based on Aristophanes' *The Birds*. I like to say that it was about the same time that Stephen Sondheim was writing a musical based on *The Frogs*, another Aristophanes' play. Of course, we know what happened to him and we know what happened to me," he laughed.

At one point, Jon was accepted at the University of Southern California to study film scoring, but he knew the road ahead would be a tough one.

"I saw what it was like to be a musician. Music is wonderful," he said. "I call it the world's greatest avocation, world's craziest vocation."

That's when he made a drastic career change and instead successfully pursued a BSIE in Industrial and Operations Engineering from the University of Michigan, followed by an MBA at Harvard Business School.

For the next two decades, he dabbled in many occupations, mostly consulting work, but he did consider taking over the family plastics business, Germanow-Simon Machine Company, founded in Rochester in 1916 by his grandfather with a partner. The company enjoyed success for designing a plastic watch crystal. Jon also bought an HVAC supply company and became a "spreadsheet guru" for numerous Internet start-up companies.

"My mother says if she had a dime for every business card I've had in my life, she'd be a very rich woman," he laughed.

**N**ot long before the turn of the century, Jon began searching for a company to run again. When a real estate company told him about Parkway Custom Drycleaning that had been around since 1926, he recalled he was "about to hang up the phone."

Reluctantly, he looked at it closer and subsequently bought the DC-area business in May of 2001. Then, a few months later, the events of 9/11 unfolded.

"After bombing the Pentagon that day, it was nothing but a complete parking lot," he recalled of the entire DC area. "It was a very early lesson on how to be resilient and think on your feet."

It didn't take too long for Jon to see that the business was a little out of rhythm and garments were often lost. He employed some of his favorite management strategies, including manage-

ment by exception and MBWA (Management By Wandering Around) and also upgraded computer systems. "I was able to reduce personnel and about double the business because of the efficiencies I put in place," he said.

Since he took over the business two decades ago, Jon has kept a focus on its high end niche. "My price point is well

no insurance policy that you could buy to insure for that if you lost it or screwed it up."

Then, there's Hollywood. Even though it's over 2,500 miles away, many crews film in the DC area allowing Parkway the opportunity to work on costumes and wardrobe from television shows such as *Veep* and *House of*

cently, he has become a primary investor (and also performer) in the Okeechobee Music & Arts Festival in Florida since it first debuted in 2016. Music remains a primary passion in his life.

"Music never put the food on the table," he said before adding: "It put the wine on the table... for me."

parkwaycustomdrycleaning.com



## Jon Simon

in the mid-\$20 [range] for the average price per garment," he said.

He has also worked consciously to expand pickup and delivery and other services while maintaining impeccable quality. Every presser and spotter has a screen where they can refer to notes on each customer, which helps them excel at handling delicate and difficult items.

"It's part of our culture, part of our secret sauce, if you will," he said.

Such precision and expertise has allowed Parkway to cultivate a lengthy list of famous clients, from clothing manufacturers such as Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, Hugo Boss, Burberry, and Saks Fifth Avenue to senators, ambassadors, sports team owners, athletes and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists.

"We were actually in the Oval Office this past summer cleaning the drapes," Jon noted. "It was pretty intense because first you had to go to an off-site base to get the truck completely security scanned like a border patrol style. It was a pretty special day — that's for sure — to stand there and look at the actual original paintings of Washington and Jefferson. Regardless of politics, it was an exciting day."

**O**ther interesting cleaning jobs include a Lou Gehrig baseball uniform that was up for auction for "several hundred thousand dollars," and lots of work for the Kennedy Center, the Curator's office of the White House and various embassies in DC.

"We've done 150-year-old tapestries off site for the Turkish Embassy, which is kind of fun and interesting," Jon explained. "We've had some handknit — like quilts — from one of the First Lady's that she personally knit."

When it comes to important historical items, it's hard to beat his favorite. "Probably the most special thing I ever did was the flag that draped Lincoln's coffin at Ford's Theater," he added. "I basically did not let it out of my sight. This is one of those things where there's

*Cards*. It certainly helps keep the job unpredictable, which only plays to Jon's strengths as an improviser (only he conducts numbers instead of notes). Fortunately, though, he still can do both as Jon has played the piano in a professional capacity often throughout the years.

In fact, Jon has recorded nine different albums under his Silver Lining Label, including solo jazz piano interpretations of classic Beatles' songs, as well as some tunes from the stage and screen and traditional Jewish melodies. (See [www.jonsimonmusic.com](http://www.jonsimonmusic.com).)

"I never intended to make any money with my music," he said. "I'm Jewish and I took music from my heritage — Jewish folk songs — and I kind of got this idea around Christmastime hearing all of this wonderful Christmas music being done in jazz and rock and country western and every genre... and this was many years ago, about 25 years ago."

Originally, he stamped out a thousand holiday CDs, not anticipating that it would be in great demand. "I started getting calls from bookstores, buying it. Then, I got calls to perform it at synagogues and community centers and fundraisers," he said.

**D**uring this past December, Jon's Hanukkah tracks on Spotify garnered over 50,000 streams. "Not bad for an old drycleaner," he laughed. "You actually get 3/10 of a cent for a listen. It takes an awful lot of listens to make the kind of money you used to make selling one CD."

"In the days before Spotify, you could actually make some money," he continued. "I'd make about \$1,500 to perform at a show. I could see another thousand plus in products in CDs off the stage. For \$2,500, I'm having the time of my life. Are you kidding?"

Jon's secondary career has included between two and three dozen concerts a year during his heyday. More re-

**B**ack in March of last year, even while the pandemic percolated and exploded throughout the country, Jon closed the deal on a 10,000 sq. ft. facility in a new location — complete with a climate-controlled storage facility for furs and off-season garments.

He spent nine months "gutting" out the building before recently moving in. "The bones were good. The brick is still here, the roof and floor — everything else is new. Plumbing, electrical, lighting, HVAC, everything."

The timing may seem questionable, but Jon still relishes the challenge. "I enjoy work. It's not a four-letter word for me," he said. "Retirement is more of a four-letter word than work."

Overall, though, he believes the risky investment will pay off in the long run. "It's hard to gage the impact on the move because we're so slow, basically," he added. "Thank goodness for our route business. It kept us alive. I don't know if I would have gone bankrupt but I would have had to dip even further in my pocket to keep the business alive."

Unfortunately, the pandemic has reduced a lot more than the drycleaning volume of work attire and high end garments. It also cost Parkway an opportunity that only comes around once every four years.

"Usually we'd be following up for all of the Inaugural balls, but not this year," Jon said.

The only thing that seems to have improved with Covid is the traffic, he joked. For Jon, it would typically be a 90-minute drive to the Capitol. Lately, it only take 35 minutes.

Convenient or not, Jon would prefer the slower drive. After all, that would mean that people are back out in full force, which, of course, will likely translate to a substantial rise in volume again.

"When traffic comes back, I'm never going to hate it again," he laughed.

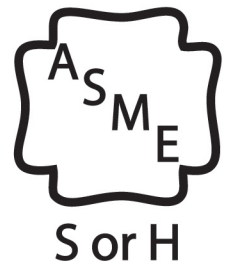


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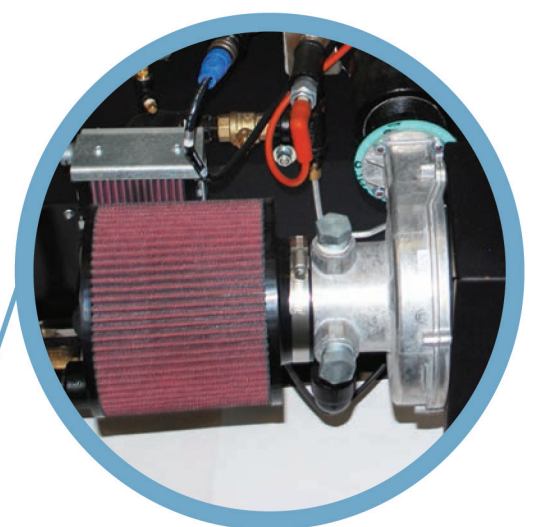
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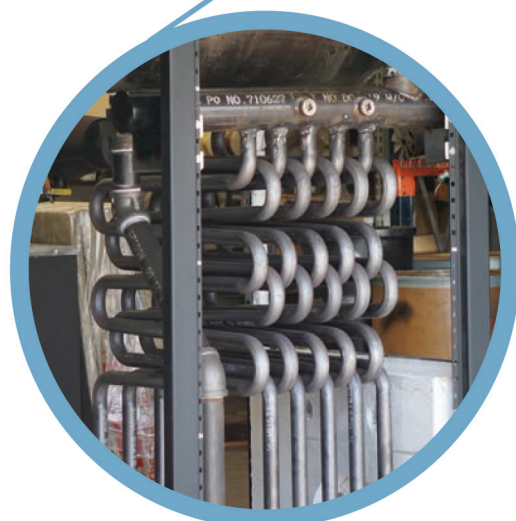
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# SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

## Busting a big steam tunnel myth

**H**ow shocked will you be to learn that adding a steam tunnel can actually increase your labor cost? I have a pair of stories to tell you about steam tunnels. The makers of these tunnels could already be poised to shoot me, but I promise that I have recommended them many times and I may be responsible for more sales of steam tunnels than some of their salesmen. However, the fact remains that what is good for one cleaner is bad for another. People doing fire restoration work, for example, should always have a steam tunnel.

Some decision-makers in this business think that they can benefit from what their peers do and simply copy them and thereby cut through all of the red tape known as due diligence. What did George Carlin say years ago, mimicking somebody's mother? "I suppose that if Johnny Finnegan jumped off the Empire State Building, you would have to jump off the Empire State Building!" Free advice is worth exactly what you pay for it.

A client purchased a used steam tunnel for \$8,000 with

the endorsement of his peer group. When I was last at his plant, the machinery was yet to be installed. I knew that when I would return there the following year, the tunnel would be in operation.

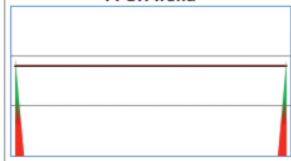
I had no idea what would become of my fact-finding and analysis, but as a pro-active manager, I wanted goals, expectations and forecasts. I was quite surprised at what I found. I will get into what I found and how in a minute, but the really important part of this experience is how I got to prove the tunnel experience both ways; adding a tunnel and costs go up and then later deleting a tunnel and costs go down. To be clear, remember that this is not tunnel-bashing. It is hardly a lesson in not investing in your business. It is a lesson in analyzing your costs. Your results could differ. There were a few unique features about the client that had just bought a tunnel:

- His pressers were on piece pay. This would prove to be very beneficial in assuring accuracy in our findings.
- His pressers average 43 pieces per hour per presser — excellent productivity. There

were six pressers.

- He had excellent records. Plenty of data. This was partly because he is a good operator and partly because he was paying pressers by the piece. Therefore, he had to have a record of pieces.
- This is a busy plant.

See a mock-up of this plants PPLH numbers for a typical week below:

| Drycleaning                |                |       |         |   | 1               |      |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|---|-----------------|------|
| Employee Name              | Job            |       |         |   |                 |      |
| Cleaning Room              |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Dc Pcs.   | Department PPOH |      |
| George                     | Cleaner        | 40    | 40.00   | 9179  | 19.4            |      |
| Thelma                     | Hanger         | 40    | 40.00   |   |                 |      |
| Geraldo                    | Wet Clean      | 20    | 20.00   |   |                 |      |
|                            |                |       |         |   |                 |      |
| Drycleaning Pressing       |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Pieces  | PPH             | Goal |
| Mary                       | Pants          | 36.00 | 36.00   | 1555  | 43.2            | 37   |
| Lupe                       | Pants          | 35.5  | 35.50   | 1495  | 42.1            | 37   |
| Maria                      | Pants          | 34.8  | 34.75   | 1500  | 43.1            | 37   |
| Beatrice                   | Utility        | 35    | 35.00   | 1480  | 42.3            | 30   |
| Frank                      | Utility        | 37.2  | 37.25   | 1700  | 45.7            | 30   |
| Maria S                    | Utility        | 35    | 35.00   | 1449  | 41.4            | 30   |
|                            | Tunnel         |       |         |   |                 | 60   |
|                            |                |       |         |   |                 |      |
|                            |                |       |         |   |                 |      |
| Insp, Assy, Bagging        |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | PPOH Trend  |                 |      |
| Betty                      | Assembly       | 40    | 40.00   |  |                 |      |
| Lisa                       | Insp/Assy      | 39    | 39.00   |   |                 |      |
| Gloria                     | Bagging        | 40    | 40.00   |   |                 |      |
| Wilma                      | Bagging/Assy   | 40    | 40.00   |   |                 |      |
|                            |                |       |         |   |                 |      |
|                            |                |       |         |   |                 |      |
| Customer Service & Drivers |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Estimated Cost/DC Piece   |                 |      |
| Marilyn                    | Shared w/ Prod |       |         | 0.56  |                 |      |
| Dominique                  | Day Shift      |       |         |   |                 |      |
| Lay                        | Night Shift    |       |         |   |                 |      |
|                            | Day Shift      |       |         |   |                 |      |
|                            | Day Shift      |       |         |   |                 |      |

The labor cost per piece in this scenario is 56 cents per piece when the average hourly rate is \$10.87. The three utility pressers are the ones that do pieces that would go to the tunnel when that tunnel is put into service. Let's guess-timate that two out of ten utility pieces are items that could be tunneled and then need no further pressing or touch-up.

ously attained! Understanding this is of paramount importance. What your pressers will actually produce now is probably not too much more than an educated and informed guess.

One thing is certain: The productivity will be measurable less than what they are attaining now, without question. Let's come up with an "educated and informed guess."

Beatrice currently presses 43 pieces per hour. It takes her an average of 84 seconds to press each piece. But eight of those pieces are really easy pieces, so let's say that it takes her half the time to do those eight pieces. This means that it takes 42 seconds to do eight of the pieces. She has 35 additional pieces to do that hour and, therefore, will spend 93 seconds on each of those pieces. Got that?

It really takes a minute and a half for each piece, but because of the easy pieces that she can bang out in half the time, she gets great productivity. If we remove the easy pieces, every piece will take 93 seconds to press and reduce Beatrice's pieces per hour to 38. That is an 11.6% reduction in productivity. How's that for an "educated and informed guess"?

Now, let's look at my production spreadsheet again (page 10, 1st chart). In this example, the utility pieces pressed by the utility pressers has been reduced by 20%, a

Continued on page 10

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This includes sweaters, scarves, jackets, coats, etc. The oft forgotten thing about a tunnel is that the easy pieces — the gravy, so to speak — is taken away from the pressers! They can no longer produce the numbers that they had previ-



PARKWAY CLEANERS plant owner Keith Kim gives the "thumbs up" gesture at the installation of his new Columbia drycleaning system running Sensene. Kim is pictured with Jose (left), the shop operator. Parkway Cleaners is located in Pikesville, MD.





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Don Desrosiers

Busting a big steam tunnel myth

Continued from page 8

tunnel operator has been added and the presser’s productivity has been reduced to 38 pieces per hour from 43. You could make an argument that one of the utility pressers would become the tunnel operator but that does not help mathematically. The utility pressers would work significantly more hours and would work many more hours than the pants pressers, and the assembly/inspection people would work longer. So now my production spreadsheet looks like the first one on the right.

So, now we have added a tunnel and another employee for a mere 15 hours per week and raised our cost per piece one cent. Not impressive. However, we are far from done. In this example, the pressers were paid by the piece. This is very important because it assures accurate figures. If they were paid hourly, they would be very likely to “pad the time clock” and take the same amount of hours to do 20% fewer pieces. Not so in this case. They were paid by the piece. No more pieces = no more money.

- The pressers have just lost 20% of their pay and they can’t make it up by dragging out the day. Result: disgruntled pressers. Disgruntled pressers are part of life if you are the big winner as the owner. But consider that you have spent money on a tunnel, paid to install it, pay every day to feed steam to it and have these disgruntled pressers, all so that you can increase your cost a penny per garment.
- At 9,700 pieces per week, every week, that \$4,700 per

| Drycleaning                |                |       |         |                         | 1               |      |  |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------|------|--|
| Employee Name              | Job            | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Dc Pcs.                 | Department PPOH |      |  |
| George                     | Cleaner        | 40    | 40.00   |                         | 9179            | 19.2 |  |
| Thelma                     | Hanger         | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Geraldo                    | Wet Clean      | 20    | 20.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Drycleaning Pressing       |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Pieces                  | PPH             | Goal |  |
| Mary                       | Pants          | 36.00 | 36.00   | 1555                    | 43.2            | 37   |  |
| Lupe                       | Pants          | 35.5  | 35.50   | 1495                    | 42.1            | 37   |  |
| Maria                      | Pants          | 34.8  | 34.75   | 1500                    | 43.1            | 37   |  |
| Beatrice                   | Utility        | 31.1  | 31.00   | 1184                    | 38.1            | 30   |  |
| Frank                      | Utility        | 35.8  | 35.75   | 1360                    | 38.0            | 30   |  |
| Maria S                    | Utility        | 30.5  | 30.50   | 1159                    | 38.0            | 30   |  |
|                            | Tunnel         | 15.4  | 15.50   | 926                     | 60.1            | 60   |  |
| Insp. Assy. Bagging        |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | PPOH Trend              |                 |      |  |
| Betty                      | Assembly       | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Lisa                       | Insp/Assy      | 39    | 39.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Gloria                     | Bagging        | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Wilma                      | Bagging/Assy   | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Customer Service & Drivers |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Estimated Cost/DC Piece |                 |      |  |
| Marilyn                    | Shared w/ Prod |       |         | 0.57                    |                 |      |  |
| Dominique                  | Day Shift      |       |         |                         |                 |      |  |
| Lay                        | Night Shift    |       |         |                         |                 |      |  |
|                            | Day Shift      |       |         |                         |                 |      |  |

year. All so that you can have a tunnel?! But wait! There’s more! The three utility pressers have seen their hours reduced. Let’s assume that they are hourly employees for now. You could use two 90-pound drycleaning machines. In them are 180 pieces. Of those, 72 are pants. Of the remaining 108 utility pieces, 22 can be tunneled. It takes 75 minutes to clean 22 pieces that can be tunneled. The biggest

| Drycleaning                |                |       |         |                         | 1               |      |  |
|----------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|-------------------------|-----------------|------|--|
| Employee Name              | Job            | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Dc Pcs.                 | Department PPOH |      |  |
| George                     | Cleaner        | 40    | 40.00   |                         | 9179            | 18.6 |  |
| Thelma                     | Hanger         | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Geraldo                    | Wet Clean      | 20    | 20.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Drycleaning Pressing       |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Pieces                  | PPH             | Goal |  |
| Mary                       | Pants          | 36.00 | 36.00   | 1555                    | 43.2            | 37   |  |
| Lupe                       | Pants          | 35.5  | 35.50   | 1495                    | 42.1            | 37   |  |
| Maria                      | Pants          | 34.8  | 34.75   | 1500                    | 43.1            | 37   |  |
| Beatrice                   | Utility        | 31.1  | 31.00   | 1184                    | 38.1            | 30   |  |
| Frank                      | Utility        | 35.8  | 35.75   | 1360                    | 38.0            | 30   |  |
| Maria S                    | Utility        | 30.5  | 30.50   | 1159                    | 38.0            | 30   |  |
| TUNNEL OP                  | Tunnel         | 15.4  | 15.50   | 926                     | 60.1            | 60   |  |
| Insp. Assy. Bagging        |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | PPOH Trend              |                 |      |  |
| Betty                      | Assembly       | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Lisa                       | Insp/Assy      | 39    | 39.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Gloria                     | Bagging        | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| Wilma                      | Bagging/Assy   | 40    | 40.00   |                         |                 |      |  |
| TUNNEL OP                  |                | 15    |         |                         |                 |      |  |
| Customer Service & Drivers |                | Hours | Rd Hrs. | Estimated Cost/DC Piece |                 |      |  |
| Marilyn                    | Shared w/ Prod |       |         | 0.58                    |                 |      |  |
| Dominique                  | Day Shift      |       |         |                         |                 |      |  |
| Lay                        | Night Shift    |       |         |                         |                 |      |  |
|                            | Day Shift      |       |         |                         |                 |      |  |

This means that all of the tunnel-able pieces for the week could be done in about five-and-a-quarter hours. This is a practical impossibility for many reasons, but even if it were not, saving ten (theoreti-

operator that would run the tunnel for 15 hours per week and then “help” the inspection department for another 15 hours per week so that his/her hours would approximately equal that of the pressers. My spreadsheet would look like this spreadsheet above on the right.

We have increased our cost per piece by two cents and lowered our pieces per labor hour from 19.4 to 18.6. This does not mean that this will be true for you, but it could be. The conventional wisdom is: “I’ll replace a presser doing 35 pieces per hour with a tunnel that does 75 pieces per hour. It is an obvious ‘can’t lose’ situation!” Hmmmm.

Last month, I was with a regular client that has had a tunnel for years. There was always some sort of productivity issue there, but I never suspected the tunnel until I experienced what I just described. This time it was far easier to test what it would be like run without the tunnel. We simply did not staff it and sent all of the easy pieces to the under-producing pressers. Result? PPLH increased a stunning 20%! I was as amazed as everyone else.

Myth busted?  
“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 40 Winchester Ln, Suite #5, Fall River, MA 02721, by cell (508) 965-3163, or email at tailwind.don@me.com. The Tailwind web site is www.tailwind-systems.com.

This means that all of the tunnel-able pieces for the week could be done in about five-and-a-quarter hours. This is a practical impossibility for many reasons.

one of them to run the tunnel. They would get their hours and you would get, uh...., oh yeah, a tunnel. So now, you have all of the above “benefits,” but not the disgruntled pressers part. My experience has shown that you won’t do it this way. Here’s why: You have

problem with a tunnel is that there are not enough pieces to do! If the drycleaning department cleaned all 9,179 pieces before the pressers came in for the week, all 926 pieces could be sent through the tunnel at once, perhaps at the rate of 175 pieces per hour.

cal) hours would have very little effect. The volume of pieces, by the way, is the reason that a tunnel works so well for those doing restoration work.

Based on my experience, what would happen: You would have a full-time tunnel



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# DLI launches Inner Circle group

*Continued from page 1*

“With over 20 years’ experience running similar management groups specifically for drycleaning business owners, I know firsthand that everyone who participates,” Vollmer explained. “The price of participation is dwarfed by the gains you can make by being involved. Being 100% open and honest will yield the best results and assure we will help you draw a realistic roadmap to increased profits.”

The Inner Circle program is designed to give members a confidential and structured setting to access each other’s performance and share observations.



Diana Vollmer

The format will consist of quarterly half-day online meetings hosted by Vollmer where participants can establish benchmarks and best practices that will help participants implement strategies to improve their overall profitability and performance. All cleaners are invited to take part in the groups. The cost is \$198 per month. There is a 50% discount available to DLI members, lowering the cost of participation to only \$99 a month.

### Webinars for February

The addition of the Inner Circle program will not interfere with the association’s online weekly meetings and webinar schedule, which will continue

this month. DLI members who attended January’s Zoom meetings, which are held every Tuesday at 10 a.m. and Wednesdays at 3 p.m., EST, discussed a wide range of topics, from DLI’s monitoring of the EPA who will be deliberating its final risk review for perc exposure to workers and consumers to issues such as the new Paycheck Protection Program and the possibility of requiring mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations for employees, a move that is legal but not necessarily wise.

On February’s itinerary will be eight more webinars that will take place at 1 p.m. EST on Tuesdays and Wednesdays throughout the month.

The first week of February includes Tuesday’s program on “Computer System Security Tips” presented by Chris Birk of

One Hour Cleaners, followed by Wednesday’s program on “Grow Your Business with Lockers” featuring Dan Stoof of Breezy Laundry Lockers.

On Tuesday, Feb. 9, Dale Kaplan of Kaplan’s Careful Cleaners will host a webinar on tailoring. The next day, James “Route Pro” Peuster will offer strategies on “Building Your Business in 2021.”

During the third week of this month, Sankosha will present a program on “Shirt Finishing” on Tuesday, Feb. 16, followed by one on Wednesday, Feb. 17 on “Five Secrets to Identify, Attract, and Acquire Your Ideal Client” by Dave Coyle of Mavericks Drycleaners.

Finally, DLI’s Communications Director Harry Kimmel will present an email workshop on Tuesday, Feb. 23 and Frank

Briercheck of Seitz, the Fresher Company, will tackle the topic of “Customer Service” the following day.

For those whose schedule does not align well with the webinars, the association now maintains an on-demand video library, adding webinar recordings weekly for those who missed them or would simply like to watch them again.

Overall, DLI currently has more than 60 videos available on a wide range of topics, including COVID-19 relief programs, diversification, stain removal, equipment maintenance, management, marketing, production, finishing and business sales and acquisitions.

To view them, DLI members can simply login to [DLIonline.org](http://DLIonline.org) and click on the program they wish to watch.

# ABC hosts Leadership Forum

*Continued from page 1*

“I do think that the people who have the most growth during times of crisis are those who are able to create some level of certainty when others are uncertain,” he added. “You know, the uncertain person almost ends up being like a turtle that crawls back into its shell. The certain person stands up and says, ‘What other problems can I solve?’”

Coyle has aggressively inflated his marketing budget from 4 to 6%, and is now targeting his top 20% of customers, as well as his competitors’ top 20%.

“We’re also pursuing a lot of affiliate opportunities,” he added. “With us having so many data points, we have the ability to do some very unique things to leverage that.”

Dianne Lee of JSK Companies, which includes The Press Drycleaning & Laundry, also

pursued sales heavily, while keeping one eye open for new hires. “Our motto has always been sales must never die and hiring must never die,” she said. “So, even if hours are short, we’re always looking for part-time employees that we can try out.”

As a rule with her employees, Lee believe in open book honesty, even when the book seems to read like a horror story.

“We don’t try to sugarcoat anything,” she emphasized. “We tell them these are the hours you probably are going to be getting. These are the opportunities you have.”

Like Lee, Kermit Engh is an advocate of open book management. “Sharing financials with employees is not something most people want to be doing,” he said. “We keep people informed about what’s happening

with the business and what’s happening around us so there are no surprises. I think it’s incredibly unfair if your employees don’t know what’s going on, and all of a sudden, one day things are not the way they used to be.”

Engh noted that Fashion Cleaners has seen a lot of growth in its bridal services during the last four months, and, of course, its routes have flourished.

“We’re restructuring our company. We’re going to be closing a store here soon. We just don’t need the brick and mortar,” he added. “We’re focussed on converting those folks to routes and we’ve been incredibly successful in doing so.”

Schaeffer, the final member of the panel, faced slightly different challenges as the CEO of TCATA and with her family’s publishing company that produces *National Clothesline*.



**America’s Best Cleaners hosted the fifth installment of its Leadership Forum series in January. The panel included: (top row, left to right) moderator Chris White of ABC, Kurt Wickiser from Seitz and Leslie Schaeffer of TCATA; (middle row, left to right) co-host Catherine McCann from ABC, Kermit Engh of Fashion Cleaners and Dave Coyle of In the Bag Cleaners; and (bottom row) Dianne Lee of JSK Companies.**

“We were trying to shift gears and pivot a little, too, because we lost a whole year of trade shows. That was devastating, not

only for the associations, but the manufacturers and suppliers, and... *the networking*,” she noted. “So, we put together, with the help of Peter Blake, a Fall Fest EXPO and it was educational, and it was five afternoons. It exceeded our expectations. We are planning to do another, shorter event in the Spring followed by a larger event again in the Fall.”

Overall, all of the participants were excited for the future after many months of challenges. Lee plans to use the experience to propel her business forward.

“There are days where I am defeated, exhausted,” she admitted. “But, I think just being resilient, being malleable, will get us through everything.”

ABC’s final installment of its Leadership Forum series will take place on Feb. 10 and feature: Nathaniel Dubasic, project director of MetalProgetti USA; Joel Lyons, CEO of Lyons, Evans Restoration; Nicole Kirby of SPOT Business Systems; Monica Mantor, vice president of Balfurd Cleaners; and Mark Hatch, general manager for The French Cleaner.

For more information, visit [americasbestcleaners.com](http://americasbestcleaners.com).

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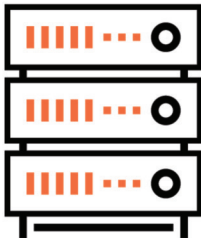


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# KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

## Be wise and document everything

Yesterday, I gave a 90-minute webinar on Covid-19. One of the participants asked if there had been any lawsuits yet against employers arising out of the pandemic. I told him that current statistics show fewer than 40 cases as of January, and many of those cases are retaliation claims made by employees who complained about the lack of employer precautions. Given that CDC (Centers for Disease Control) guidelines change, that 30 to 50 percent of

Covid cases are asymptomatic, and that every workplace has employees who overreact to many things, that caseload seems light. During the webinar, we also talked about lawsuits by customers because this particular trade association has members who visit houses. I did not have any statistics for these types of lawsuits, but I told the participants that they are surely being made. I emphasized that at least one member of management should be conversant on CDC

guidelines and recommendations. Each time the company becomes aware of employee Covid exposures or concerns, it needs to make decisions based on those guidelines, and it needs to document the reasons for those decisions. One case discussed was an employee who called in to say that his girlfriend, who lived with him, was being tested for Covid because she had had contact with a coworker who had tested positive. I said that the first thing the company

needed to do was collect all the facts it could before telling the employee whether he should report to work, be tested, or take some other action. But whatever action was taken, it needed to be justified by a documented review of the facts in the context of CDC guidelines. It turned out that the girlfriend had not had sufficient contact with the coworker to justify testing, so the answer was easy. If she had, however, the employer might have told the employee to isolate, get

tested in five days, and revisit the question of reporting to work after the test. In non-Covid news, a recent federal case made me think that I should remind readers that if your employees are harassed by customers, sexually or on the basis of any of the protected classifications, you have an obligation to put an end to it. In the federal case, a bank employee was being stalked by a customer, and the bank did very little to stop it. Just because the stalking took place off premises was not enough to relieve the bank of responsibility to take action.

If you have a customer, vendor, or independent contractor who is harassing your employees, do not ignore it. In fact, even if the employee says "it's alright," you should consider confronting the third party and asking him or her to stop. I tell clients all the time that while consent of the person being harassed is a defense, certain behavior should not be condoned because given human nature, there is a good chance it could escalate. Mild flirtation talk today could become graphic sex talk tomorrow.

Finally, I saw a maxim recently that I found interesting. "Simple, clear purpose and principles give rise to complex and intelligent behavior. Complex rules and regulations give rise to simple and stupid behavior."

Work rules should be drafted with this in mind. A complex dress code, for example, will only invite people to wear what is not prohibited. "You didn't say that I couldn't wear a bathing suit to work." On the other hand, a dress code that says "Employees are expected to dress professionally" may encourage that complex and intelligent behavior.

Do the right thing. Be moderate and wise. Have the courage to take action. Document. Those would be some simple rules to close this month's column.

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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BY DAN EISEN

## Chemicals for protein stain removal

**P**rotein stains relate to that category of stains originating from the living body. Common protein stains are milk, eggs, blood, perspiration, animal glues and so on. Protein stains are also referred to as albuminous stains.

### Identification

Protein stains are usually stiff and are only partially absorbed in a fabric. If you scratch a protein stain it may turn white and not be readily visible. When you dampen it with water, it becomes visible. Many spotters, when inspecting a garment, may steam the garment to reveal these stains.

### Set Stains

Protein stains are set by age, heat and alcohol. The chemical composition of many body stains often discolor fabrics. In laboratory tests taken, alcohol was put on a blood stain and subjected to heat. The result was a stain that could not be removed even when the most aggressive chemicals were used.

Many spotting chemicals used may contain alcohol. This includes some oily type paint re-

movers, general formulas and some quick drying wet side lubricant.

### Chemicals for Stain Removal

**1. Ammonia.** This alkali is highly volatile and very effective for protein stain removal. It does have many downsides to it because it is highly alkaline. It is very dangerous to use on wool, silk and garments with bright and vivid colors.

It is also very unpleasant to work with due to its highly volatile odor. It is not considered to be environmentally friendly to the water system.

**2. Prepared Protein Formulas.** These products have replaced ammonia as a protein stain remover.

Manufacturers have formulated these products to have a low alkalinity that is safe on wool and silk and most fabrics. It must be noted, however, that some manufacturers still use ammonia in their formulation.

### Digesters

There are several products on the market that use enzymes for breaking down protein stains. Enzymes change protein stains

to a soluble sugar so it can be flushed. This is similar to saliva in your mouth which breaks down food using enzymes. A low temperature — this is an old-time product — but it is by far the safest product for protein stain removal.

It requires a very strict process to make it work. It is a valuable product to use on a fragile and color-sensitive fabric since it does not require mechanical action or high heat.

**1. Temperature 100 to 120°F.** If the enzymes reach temperatures above 120°F, it is destroyed.

**2. Without chemicals.** Chemicals destroy enzymes. This means that acids and alkalis can not be used with this product.

**3. Time.** You must wait at least 15 minutes to one-half hour.

**4. Must be kept wet.**

### Procedures for Spotting Board Using Enzymes

1. Half a teaspoon of enzyme powder in a spotting bottle of warm water. Add glycerin or neutral lubricant to inhibit evaporation of water.

2. Apply to stain.
3. Wait.
4. Flush.

### Bath Method for Low Temperature Enzymes

Add one teaspoon to every gallon of warm water. Make sure pail is absolutely clean and has not contacted other chemicals.

### High Temperature Enzymes

These products are fast and highly effective. They are not affected by heat unless above 160°F.

Many of these products come in liquid form and can be used as an effective spotting agent. Some high temperature products may be alkaline in nature so when spotting silk and wool, caution must be used.

It must be noted that many wetcleaning detergents contain enzymes. This means that these detergents can be used when soaking items with protein stains.

### Combination Stains and Unidentified Wet Side Stains

A wet side unidentified stain can be tannin or protein or a combination of both. Some com-

bination stains can be some hard drinks, coffee and milk, chocolate, etc.

### Spotting Process

1. Flush.
2. Neutral lubricant.
3. Mechanical action.
4. Flush.
5. Tannin formula. This is used first because alkaline-based protein formulas can set tannin.
6. Mechanical action.
7. Flush.
8. Protein formula.
9. Mechanical action.
10. Flush.
11. Hydrogen peroxide. This is the safest bleach and most effective one for last traces of blood.
12. Stronger bleaches. Test.

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](mailto:cleandan@comcast.net) or through his website at [www.garmentanalysis.com](http://www.garmentanalysis.com).



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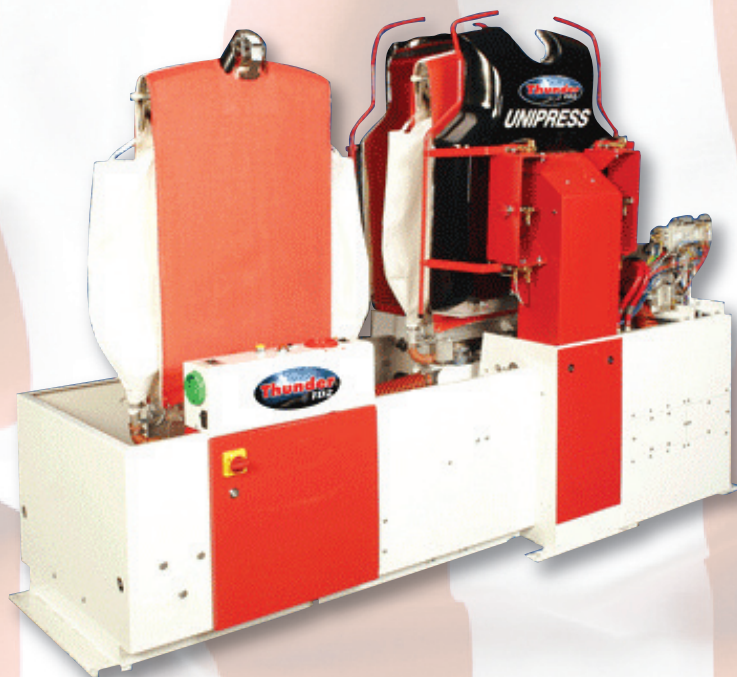
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# WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

## Stop that expensive leak — Part II

Last month was devoted to stopping solvent and vapor leaks by maintaining the gaskets which provide a seal on the various doors of the drycleaning machine. These gaskets are normally pre-formed (molded) to the precise size and shape required to fit in the door. This month we're going to cover how to seal areas that do not have pre-formed gaskets or where installing a pre-formed gasket would be difficult and time-consuming.

The two greatest gifts from the god of mechanics were the materials of Teflon and Silicone. We will be using these versatile sealants frequently, in one form or other, in the repairs covered in this and the following articles. Let's begin with the king of gasket material — Teflon.

Teflon has four wonderful qualities that are especially suited to our industry. First, its temperature range is from -50°F to around 400°F, thus allowing its use on the steam piping in a normal drycleaning/laundry operation. Second, it is chemically resistant to just about any-

thing you can slop on or over it, including any of the solvents you may be using, in either a liquid or vapor form. Third, it has self-lubricating qualities. Last, but not least, it comes in several forms each well-suited to a particular leak-stopping application. I'll give a quick list of the types of Teflon, then their uses.

**Teflon tape.** By now, you are all familiar with Teflon in the form of a tape. Teflon tape comes in various flavors for different purposes. I use three different types; a cheap thin 1/2" wide white-colored for wrapping screws and bolts to keep them from locking up from dirt or corrosion; a dense 1/2" wide white-colored for wrapping pipe threads up to and including 1/2"; a yellow 3/4" wide for wrapping threads on the pipe over 1/2". Not only do these tapes act as a sealant, but Teflon's self-lubricating qualities also allow the pipe to screw into the fitting without "galling" — meaning friction grinding metal chips off the pipe and fittings, freezing up the assembly before a good seal is accomplished

(also, galling makes it impossible to disassemble the pipe and fittings without damage).

**Teflon pipe dope.** This paste-like material comes in a can with a brush built into the lid. It is used to coat the threads in on pipe and in fitting before assembling these parts.

**Teflon string or round packing.** Resembling spaghetti, this round form of Teflon is used to pack valves and to form seals and gaskets between flanges or other flat surfaces.

**Solid Teflon sheeting.** This material comes in both solid and closed-cell foam versions. They are expensive, but at times, the only answer for sealing some very difficult leaks at irregularly-shaped flanges or uneven, warped, or pitted mating surfaces. Starting with the use of Teflon tape:

**1. For sealing pipe threads.** Wind at least three turns of tape around the circumference of the pipe; it is important to wind the tape in the correct direction, which is clockwise when facing the end of the pipe. This distributes the tape evenly and pulls it

### SELECTING TEFLON PRODUCTS

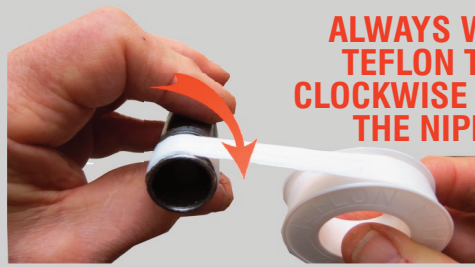
WHEN PURCHASING TEFLON TAPE BE SURE IT IS MARKED AS HIGH DENSITY. SOMETIMES IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND IN BIG BOX STORES BUT PLUMBING SUPPLY AND INDUSTRIAL HARDWARE STORES WILL USUALLY CARRY IT



WHEN PURCHASING TAPE OR PIPE DOPE (THREAD SEALANT) BE SURE IT CONTAINS TEFLON OR THE ABBREVIATION PTFE

NOTE: THE ITEMS PICTURED ARE NOT MEANT AS AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE PRODUCT OR MANUFACTURER.

### WRAPPING TEFLON TAPE



into the threads when a fitting is screwed onto the pipe (wound in the wrong direction, the tape will be pushed out of the threads and bunch up on the outside of the fitting). Use a dense 1/2" wide white-colored tape for wrapping pipe threads up to and including 1/2"; a yellow 3/4" wide tape for wrapping threads on pipe over 1/2". For extra sealing reliability, use Teflon pipe dope over the tape on the male end of the fitting and in the threads on the female fitting.

**2. For preventing nuts, screws and bolts from freezing together or locking up.** Wind two turns around the threads in a clockwise direction — same as with pipe threads — and pull the tape tight.

**3. Creating thin string packing.** You will often find small valves leaking at the stems. The shutoff valves at the top and bottom of boiler sight glass fixtures are a perfect example of this kind of leak. After completing the packing procedure and tightening down the packing nut, remember this type of valve seats with the valve completely open. (Do not do any maintenance on pressurized or hot boilers!) Compression fittings leaking steam past the compression nut is another common leak of this type. An unusually effective method to stop these leaks is to install extra Teflon packing behind the packing nut on valves, or the compression nut on fittings. You can whip up this packing in a

heartbeat by taking a 12-inch length of Teflon tape. Hold one end while "spinning" the other end between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand until it forms a soft, round string. Then, unscrew the leaking nut and slide it up the valve stem (or down the copper tubing in the case of a compression fitting nut). Hold one end of the string and wind several turns around the valve stem or copper tubing, pulling it taut. Now, while holding tension on the string, push the packing nut or compression nut onto the valve or fitting body and screw it down. The beauty of using Teflon like this is that the nut will cut through the soft Teflon so you needn't try to cut the ends of the string, losing the tension on the packing in the process.

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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Laundry Lockers

How one laundry business expanded

**By Daniel Stoof**

You have seen laundry locker locations increase in the past few years, especially since the onset of the pandemic. As consumers look for contact-free shopping options, strategically-minded laundry business owners are looking to meet the demand, investing in lockers to expand their customer base, improve delivery efficiency, and extend operating hours. Yashu Washu, a wetcleaners based in Chicago, is one such business. Jan Wodnicki, owner of Yashu Washu, had spotted Tide Cleaners and Pressbox Lockers in Chicago. As they grew in popularity, Wodnicki realized that there was a chance to compete directly with these companies, both in terms of service and consistency.

Wodnicki considered a handful of options for adding a locker element to his laundry business, handling all set-up and operations aspects internally, or going with B2B locker supplier. In 2018, Yashu Washu launched a strategic partnership with Breezy Laundry Lockers, as Wodnicki felt Breezy was the best business to help him not to reinvent the wheel.

**A Successful Partnership**

Yashu Washu’s laundry locker operations got started quickly. Breezy provided a full package set-up, including soft-

ware that integrated into Yashu Washu’s existing POS system — while still beating the competition on value for money. After a quick set-up, Yashu Washu got straight into securing locations in luxury apartment complexes in the northwest of Chicago. The luxury design of Breezy’s client-branded lockers, and details like gas-powered hinges, helped Wodnicki to win over high value clients. The flexibility and cost-effectiveness of the lockers also meant they were suitable for other locations, like offices, shops and remote places. Yashu Washu managed to expand quickly with a comprehensive marketing strategy supported by marketing and sales materials (provided by Breezy Laundry Lockers). This has allowed Yashu Washu to promote lockers through socials in apartment and office blocks, as well as monthly promos. The \$10 discount for first-time users has also been a useful incentive to acquire public locker customers. **The Benefits of Investing in Laundry Lockers During the Pandemic** Wodnicki is glad he invested in laundry lockers given the present climate. “Lockers are amazing for having a location that customers can use, while not costing you a dime,” he said. “If planned

correctly, in a single route you can pick up / drop off dozens of orders. It’s also excellent for COVID-19 frightened customers.” Wodnicki’s words ring true. In the months since the pandemic, the demand for contact-free services like laundry lockers has risen, especially in cities under lockdown or strict social distancing measures. This is part of the reason why Yashu Washu plans to continue expansion across Chicago with up to 100 locker locations in the area. **How to Set Up Your Own Laundry Locker Business** We asked Jan Wodnicki if he had any insight for other drycleaners, wetcleaners and laundry businesses looking to invest in lockers. Here’s what he had to say: **Find a B2B Supplier.** When you partner with a B2B laundry locker business, there are key benefits like hearing from industry experts and cost efficiencies in a full package set-up deal. It’s important to find the right supplier, too — in other words, a company that doesn’t just give you a lock and key, but a whole packaged laundry locker solution. **Focus on ROI.** Wodnicki suggests targeting high value clients and pitching to locker locations based on this: “Do your research in the area of lux-



Laundry Lockers have helped Yashu Washu of Chicago expand during the pandemic. The company plans to add up to 100 locker locations in the area.

ury apartment buildings and class A offices. Create a zone or route that you can line up your future lockers. Don’t spread out too much. Make a concentrated zone. **It’s All About the Pitch.** Step into the shoes of the real estate owners you are pitching to. Have an understanding of contactless trends during COVID-19, as well as the benefits of lockers. “Look at your competition and see where their pattern is heading. Once you get your first building, it gets easier to get more. Push on the design and maintenance-free amenity, as well as the flexibility of how little space it really needs,” Wodnicki added. **Daniel Stoof, who is co-founder of Breezy Laundry Lockers back in 2012, believes his company’s hard-earned lessons can help others around the world set up and grow without making many of the common mistakes that newcomers often make in the industry. Breezy provides a complete laundry locker solution to drycleaners, laundry businesses and laundromats that wish to utilize laundry lockers to complement their business. Contact Daniel Stoof at dan@breezyl.com.**

DATELINE

2021

- February 9** DLI Live Training, “Tailoring” with Dale Kaplan. Call (800) 638-2627.
- February 10** DLI Live Training, “Building Your Business in 2021” with James Peuster. Call (800) 638-2627.
- February 16** DLI Live Training, “Shirt Finishing” with Sankosha. Call (800) 638-2627.
- February 17** DLI Live Training, “Five Secrets to Identify, Attract and Acquire Your Ideal Client” by Dave Coyle. Call (800) 638-2627.
- February 23** DLI Live Training, “Email Workshop: with Harry Kimmel. Call (800) 638-2627.
- February 24** DLI Live Training, “Customer Service” with Frank Briercheck. Call (800) 638-2627.
- March 6** SDA Zoom meeting on Texas Dry Cleaner Remediation Fund update. Register at [www.sda-dryclean.com](http://www.sda-dryclean.com).
- April 14-16** Spring Fest EXPO

- virtual meeting. Contact Peter Blake at [Peter@SEFA.org](mailto:Peter@SEFA.org) or Leslie Schaeffer at [Leslie@pd-clean.org](mailto:Leslie@pd-clean.org).
- April 30-May 2** North Carolina Association of Launderers and Cleaners spring meeting, Blockade Runner Beach Resort, Wrightsville Beach, NC. Call (919) 313-4542.
- October 19-22** Textile Rental Services Association annual conference and exchange. Carlsbad, CA. Call (703) 519-0029.
- November 27- December 1** Textcare International. Frankfurt, Germany. Visit [www.messe-frankfurt.com](http://www.messe-frankfurt.com).

2022

- July 30-August 2** Clean Show. Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA. Call (770) 984-8023.

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# AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

## The cornerstone of your brand

I recently read a report that the most important issue facing small businesses today is managing their reputation. When you really spend some time to think about that, I know you will agree that your reputation, and that of your company, is more important now than at any point in recent history.

Over the course of my last few articles I have focused a lot of time and energy helping people with their marketing plans and programs. I have provided tips and tools to help develop a social media marketing strategy and to also assist in content creation. I want to now turn your focus to the need for “Reputation Management.” This is an area that is often overlooked and not given a very high priority, but like it or not, Google is the new phone book. Everyone turns to the internet when they need to

find a product or service.

Reputation management is critical to your success, and simply put, what people say about your business is more important than anything else. Almost all of your current marketing vehicles including social media, texting, print advertising, direct mail, email marketing — all prompt your target customer to do some further research. You are looking to drive them to your website, find you on Facebook, or reach out for information. If your potential customers are greeted with a number of negative reviews about your company, they’ll probably end their search right there and look elsewhere. An unfavorable online reputation is essentially a customer repellent.

*“It takes 20 years to build a reputation, and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that you will*

*do things differently.”*

— Warren Buffet

More and more people are making buying decisions based on relationships. People are choosing to do business with companies that reflect the ideals they feel are important and are often choosing to use businesses based on people, not companies.

**Key Concept: Check your Listings**

I know it sounds very simple, but you can spend a lot of time and effort knowing what is said about you and your company. The first step should be to set-up a Google business listing or profile. Just because you created a business profile does not automatically give you management and editing capabilities. You need to also create a free Google My Business account for that profile.

Next you need to do an on-

line search for your listings and reviews so you can know what is being said about you. There are some great tools to assist you with this. One of the key components of Search Engine Optimization is consistent contact and business information. You need to make sure your listing match on different websites. There are several ways to do this, but I have found YEXT.com is a great tool. You can run a free report that will identify where you have inconsistencies in your listings and profiles, and then you can fix them yourself — or use their service to help keep your profiles synced and up to date.

**Key Concept: Monitor Your Reputation**

Let’s face it, someone, somewhere is talking about you and you need to know what they are saying! Google has a free busi-

ness tool called Google Alerts where you can register keywords — including your own name, the business name, your competitor’s business, industry information, etc — and Google monitors the web for new content and notifies you via email of any mentions.

The next step is to set up a routine to monitor all review sites including Google, Yelp, Yahoo, and every other site used in your community. This can be time-consuming and frustrating but you need to do it. When you find a negative review it is critical you respond to it and work to resolve the issue. Oftentimes you can get the reviewer to change the review based on how you react. You can not let any negative review remain unanswered or ignored.

If you don’t have the time, or expertise to do it, there are some great services that will assist you with this for a reasonable fee. “Review my Drycleaner” from BeCreative360 is a great one. They help act like a watchdog for you and help to proliferate good reviews on your behalf.

**Next Steps**

The next step should be to review your social media profiles and look for consistent themes. You need to develop a strategy for highlighting the core values of your business. You need to decide what you stand for: Customer Service, Quality, Honesty. What are your buzzwords that describe your basic values?

Next month we will explore these core values and how to increase awareness. We will also explore ways to highlight community involvement and leverage your reputation to drive brand awareness and higher sales. We will also discuss best practices for dealing with negative reviews and cultivating positive reviews.

If you have any questions about the basics I have outlined in this article, please contact me and I will be glad to walk you through how to use the tools and give you tips on how to strengthen your digital presence.

Be safe, be strong, be resilient — things are getting better, and we need to start rebuilding and refocus our energy on the future. Email me at peteblke@aol.com and we can plan together.



## LIVE TRAINING FEBRUARY 2021

- **Tuesday, February 2**  
Computer system security tips with Chris Birk, One Hour Cleaners
- **Wednesday, February 3**  
Grow Your Business with Lockers featuring Dan Stoof, Breezy Laundry Lockers
- **Tuesday, February 9**  
Tailoring with Dale Kaplan, Kaplan's Careful Cleaners
- **Wednesday, February 10**  
Building Your Business in 2021 with James Peuster, The Route Pro
- **Tuesday, February 16**  
Shirt Finishing with Sankosha
- **Wednesday, February 17**  
Five Secrets to Identify, Attract & Acquire your Ideal Client, Dave Coyle, Mavericks Drycleaners
- **Tuesday, February 23**  
Email Workshop with Harry Kimmel, DLI's Communications Director
- **Wednesday, February 24**  
Customer Service with Frank Briercheck, Seitz, the Fresher Company

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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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# THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

## Finding the route for the new normal

So, it's finally 2021 and yet we are already scratching our head on what's in store for this year. Last year we all kept waiting for the "new normal" to get established and we waited and waited. Now we look at 2021 as more confusion, doubt and discouragement has hit our industry. Last year saw a division in parties as well as a division in drycleaning mindsets. Let's

Others sat in the boat waiting for the storm to stop and are still riding the wave to the vast unknown. Many completely gave up and closed their stores or at least cut their hours. How you look at the industry is based on one thing right now — how much market share do I have and how much do I need to survive and even thrive. Second, wash-dry-fold is

with the hopes of rebuilding some business. Here is what I do know constitutes normal in my world: Convenience is king. While routes have been my forte the past 20 years, I've seen the drycleaning industry get turned upside down in 2008 and hit a brick wall in 2020. However, those with routes were able to sustain some level of profit and maintain their costs in order to stay in busi-

ness. normal" look like for our industry? Many believe that routes will be 70 to 80% of their business. Others believe wash-dry-fold will continue to grow. The only way that works is to combine sales and marketing. It takes way more than a brochure and social media marketing to answer the fifty questions a prospect has. Who knows what lies ahead for our world, but sitting there

doing nothing only adds to the chances of you not making it to 2022! 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).

### Here is what I do know constitutes normal in my world: Convenience is king.

look at what I think is in store for our industry this year. First, there may never be a new normal for us for a while. Many operators finally got routes going while their stores continued to shrink or close. Some operators added two or more vans as they took to the streets to continue to grow their routes.

what many think can save them. Being a drycleaner that specializes in professional wear made it challenging to add the service as well as operate the production of laundry at a profitable level. So many forums share best practices and hope in order to give operators something to think about or even implement

ness. We witnessed many clients add vans in 2020. While many think that is a select few — we saw it all over. Now as we enter 2021, routes are a necessity for any cleaner. But, if you are late to the party, time may be ticking on your future. So, what does the "newer



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