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Drycleaning turns 200

For many years, it was widely believed drycleaning was invented in 1825 by Frenchman Jolly Belin, founder of the first commercial “dry laundry” in Paris. As the legend goes, Belin accidentally spilled kerosene (some say turpentine) from a lamp onto a grease-infested tablecloth. Once the spot dried, he observed that it was much cleaner. However, a couple of years before this in America, the science of drycleaning was officially born. Then, it was called “dry scouring” by its American inventor, Thomas L. Jennings, the first African American to be granted a patent (Patent x3306). The date was March 3, 1821.

Fortunately, Jennings had been born a free man in New York three decades before. At a

young age, he apprenticed for one of the city’s finest tailors before he opened up his first shop at the age of 19. The young couturier started experimenting with various chemicals and methods in an attempt to remove stains from his customers’ finest apparel. Those efforts culminated with him being awarded the patent in 1821. Historically, most African Americans were ineligible from owning intellectual property of their own inventions as a result of the 1793 Patent Act and other laws that had forbidden slaves from doing so. However, because Jennings had been born free, he was awarded a patent.

Its validity was tested early on. A competing tailor had illegally used the same dry scouring

techniques, so Jennings sued him in the city’s Marine Court and won \$50 when he was able to produce the Letters of Patent.

As an entrepreneur, Jennings was clearly not to be trifled with, but he was even more tenacious as a human rights defender. Utilizing the wealth he accumulated as a drycleaner, he purchased the freedom of family members and funded the abolition cause. He was one of five New York delegates to the First Annual Convention of Free People of Color that was hosted in 1831 in Philadelphia, and he was one of the originators of the Legal Rights’ Association in New York City, a group that he served as president of until his death in 1859 at the age of 68.

As a father, Jennings led by

example. His eldest son, William, worked with African American newspapers as an abolitionist leader in Boston. His daughter, Matilda, became a leading dressmaker in New York City. Another son, Thomas, served under Frederick Douglass on antislavery committees, in addition to being a renowned dentist in New Orleans. Then, there was his youngest daughter, Elizabeth, who was a schoolteacher who became a key civil rights figure when, in 1854, she insisted on having the right to ride an available New York City streetcar with segregated seating.

Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* noted in February of 1855: “She got upon one of the Company’s cars last summer, on the Sabbath, to ride to



Thomas L. Jennings
(1791-1859)

church. The conductor undertook to get her off, first alleging the car was full; when that was shown to be false, he pretended the other passengers were displeased at her presence; but

Continued on page 10

DLI marches forward with virtual events

While Covid numbers have trended down a bit lately, it’s still a long way out of the woods. As a result, don’t expect the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute to temper its virtual offerings anytime soon. In fact, the association has planned ten more

training sessions and ten more peer-to-peer Zoom meetings this month. The Zoom meetings will be held every Tuesday at 10 a.m. and Wednesday at 3 p.m., EST.

The other programs will take place at 1 p.m. EST on their respective days, starting with

“Smoke and Fire Restoration Services” with FRSTeam on March 2 and a panel discussion with industry suppliers on March 3. The following week, DLI’s Brian Johnson will present “All About Dye Stains” on March 9 and Frank Briarcheck

of Seitz will talk about “Customer Service” on March 10.

In the middle of the month, PuzzleHR will host “Little-Known Tax Breaks Can Add Up to Significant Savings” on March 16 and David Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners will explore “The Magic System that Allows

Getting Videos” with Peter Blake on March 30 and “Computer Security Systems Part II: Backups, Tips, Hard Drives, Malware Prevention Software and More” on the last day of the month.

“Our goal, as always, is to give members more value than the cost of Price Increases to DRYCLEANING & LAUNDRY membership, even in Fund You and Your INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL these challenging Team Members’ Raises” the next day.

On March 23, Yash Patel of BeCreative360 will speak on “Reputation Management,” followed by a panel discussion the next day on engaging with customers. The month will culminate with a pair of programs on “Easy Tools to Make Attention-

For more information on any upcoming programs or to access an archive of past webinars, visit dlionline.org.

Drawing much-needed blood



According to the Red Cross, supplier of about 40% of the nation’s blood supply, tens of thousands of blood drives had to be scrapped since March of last year as a result of the pandemic, causing a severe shortage for the medical and health industries. Fortunately, businesses such as Benzinger’s Clothing Care of Hamburg, NY, have found a way to try to offset that shortage by hosting its own with partner ConnectLife, a community blood center located in western New York.



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The clothes horse’s daughter

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New columnist Kermit Engh explores how drycleaners can turn a service into a product.

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Mythbusting labor costs

Contrary to popular opinion, laying off people does not always reduce your labor costs.

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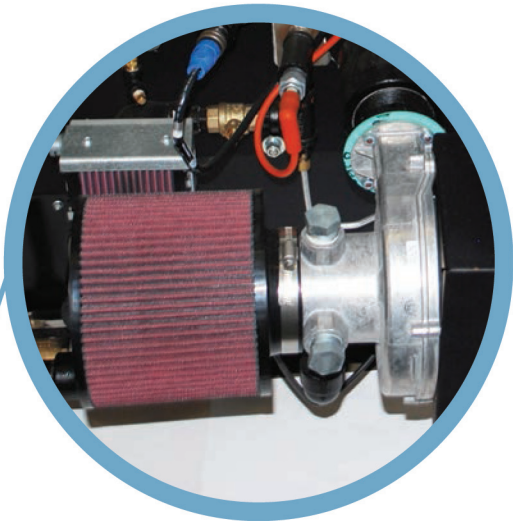
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A national newspaper
for drycleaners and launderers
March, 2021
Volume 62 Number 6

Putting the “care” in clothing care for 200 years

For two centuries now — ever since Thomas L. Jennings received his “dry scouring” patent on March 3, 2021 — the drycleaning industry has worked to make people look their best, an often thankless job that goes unnoticed. Most people seems to have little clue of what happens behind the curtain (or, in this case, the wall that typically separates the production area from the lobby). To be fair, most don’t care... as long as they don’t have to clean them.

Hundreds of years ago people cleaned their clothes with a wooden tub and a torture device/abrading utensil called a “washboard” — and they spent an entire day laboring at it. Even today, when cleaning clothes has never been easier, it is a tedious chore that most Americans would prefer to farm out, which might explain why drycleaners have often been viewed as magicians or wizards who make stains disappear and resurrect precious garments to their former glory.

The reality is a little less mythical. Professional drycleaning is part science, part alchemy and a whole hell of a lot of training and hard work to do it successfully. It also takes a constant pursuit of knowledge to keep current. Lately, we’ve been trying to help in that last category as we have expanded our collection of columnists.

In addition to our longtime contributors — Dan Desrosiers, Dan Eisen, Bruce Grossman, Frank Kollman and James Peuster — we recently added a special column by Daniel Stoof of Breezy Laundry Lockers discussing how one laundry business in Chicago expanded with laundry lockers. This month, we welcome the sharp business mind of Kermit Engh, president and CEO of Fashion Cleaners of Omaha, NE, and managing partner for Methods for Management.

Unfortunately, we are adding more content, but not pages to our print edition, which means we can’t always fit all of our columnist’s contributions in every issue. That is the case this month. In this and future print editions, look for references to columns that will be published online exclusively on the lower left column of the Table of Contents.

Speaking of content, on this 200th anniversary of the industry we’d like to stroll back through our pages with a few favorite stories about drycleaners in recent years. Perhaps you remember Dennis Valstad, owner of Vogue Dry Cleaning in Ripon, WI. After he passed away in August of 2019, 267 people attended his funeral out of respect for the man who spent much of his life leading by charitable example. To their surprise, Valstad left the sum of \$500,000 to be divided by all who attended.

Another story that stands out is the time a drycleaner was awarded a Citizen’s Medal by the president. North Carolina cleaner Jeff Miller, and his friend, Erwin Morse, were honored for starting the Honor Air program in 2006 which made it possible for veterans to travel to the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC.

In just over a decade, the Honor Flight Network had expanded to include 140 regional hubs across the U.S., escorting over 200,000 veterans to the memorials, free of cost. Back in 2008, President George W. Bush awarded Miller and Morse the Citizen’s Medals during a ceremony at the Oval Office.

The White House also issued a press release noting: “Erwin Morse and Jeff Miller exemplify the spirit of citizenship that has helped define our Nation. By providing veterans the opportunity to visit the World War II memorial, they have shown the compassion and gratitude of our Nation.”

Not all inspirational stories about drycleaners are quite so happy, unfortunately. Back in the Fall of 2003, we profiled drycleaner Phil Milto, owner of Milto Cleaners of Indianapolis and Greenwood, IN, who spearheaded the inception of a foundation to try to find a cure for a rare condition that afflicted his two sons, Nathan and P.J.

Both were diagnosed with Batten’s disease, which stems from a genetic anomaly that can typically leads to severe impairment of many physical and mental functions, including eyesight and the ability to walk. Most children diagnosed with Batten’s at a young age never live long enough to become teenagers.

Undaunted by the bleak news, Milto started the Nathan’s Battle Foundation and helped raise millions for the purpose of genetic research and treatments that seemed to have increased the lifespan of the two Milto boys. Tragically, however, Nathan’s battle against the disease ended in late 2018, though it should be noted that he was 24 at the time, survived by his brother P.J. and his other brother Nicholas.

All three drycleaners that we just mentioned — Valstad, Miller and Milto — faced very different challenges, but they are still excellent examples illustrating that maybe drycleaning still contains much of its original DNA.

After all, inventor Jennings was celebrated for his tireless efforts as a “defender of human rights” who saw injustice in the world and tried to fix it. Many of his modern-day occupational ancestors are no different. After all of these years, it seems that drycleaners continue to do a hell of a lot more than care for clothes. As it turns out, they also care a hell of a lot about people.

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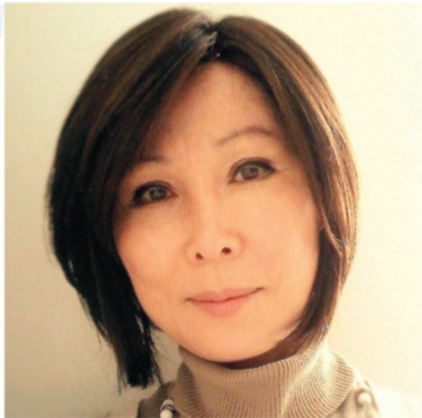


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COWBOY
CLEANERS

Clothes Together

The sun has not set yet for Cowboy Cleaners of San Antonio, Texas, but it dipped pretty close to the ground last year. Still, current owner Vicky Maisel was not ready to give up on the business started by her father 60 years ago.

Don Maisel was many things — an Air Force B-47 pilot, an insurance agent, an entrepreneur — but before any of that, he was a clothes horse.

Growing up, all Don ever wanted was to wear nice clothes and take care of them. Over 20 years before he launched Cowboy Cleaners, he dreamed of wearing pants in a time where the unspoken rule seemed to be boys always wear shorts until they reach a certain age. Young Don took issue with this idea.

"My dad, being a little boy, did not like the shorts. He hated them," Vicky explained. "So, his dad said to him, 'If you want to wear something other than what I am willing to buy you — shorts — go out and get your own money and do it.' So, my dad sold newspapers at the train station — they lived in Illinois — so he could buy himself long pants. He had to have been like six or seven when he did this."

Later in life, Don flew B-47 bomber jets for the Strategic Air Command. When he left the Air Force, he sold insurance — always dressing impeccably and having his clothes professionally cleaned. This gave his wife, Peggy, an idea. After the couple moved to San Antonio, she thought it might be wise to invest in the new coin-op drycleaning technology on the market. But, they changed their minds.

"They figured there wasn't a lot of money in throwing quarters into a machine and letting yourself do it, so he became a drycleaner," Vicky said. In 1961, he opened Cowboy Cleaners.

"They were sitting around and they said, 'We need a name that nobody will forget.' Finally, they said, 'Cowboy,'" she added. "Nobody forgets that. You've got the Dallas Cowboys. Everybody's a cowboy."

Many years later, Don considered changing the name. The business built itself up on a reputation of high quality and he felt "Cowboy" did not necessarily reflect that. Vicky felt that changing the name after 40 years was not a good idea. So, they decided to keep the name and added the slogan, "Because that's what daddy named it."

The name of the business has certainly been the source of a few jokes over the years — or, perhaps, more accurately, the same joke told ad nauseum. At least once a month, somebody asks them if they clean cowboys.

"What the hell... with Covid, why not? At this point, I'll clean them, their horse. I don't care," Vicky laughed.

The industry today doesn't quite resemble the one from the 1960s when Don and Peggy started with a laundromat and drycleaning business. Eventually, they dropped the laundry side of things, which meant, for the first time, the Maisels would have to do their laundry at home.

"We never had a washing machine

at home because we could go to our own laundromat and get it cleaned," Vicky recalled. "When my dad sold the laundromat, the first washing machine that we bought for the house was a coin-operated washing machine."

There was a method to the madness; Don reasoned that commercial machines were designed to be more

a late night club that served only drinks and desserts. She soon reached her tipping point. "I think what finally did it for me is one day I was walking into my apartment, which was pretty unappealing anyway, and in the hallway was what I thought was a cat and it wasn't. It was a very large rat. That was the rat that said, 'Vicky, go home.'"

Last year, when the sun almost set on the company, it wasn't a gradual process. "I don't know what the rest of the country was like, but here everything was zooming along just fine, and, literally from one week to the next, it died. It just... died," Vicky said. Like most drycleaners, the company struggled to keep its full staff.

cowboycleaners.com



Vicky Maisel

durable since everybody typically shoved as many clothes as they could fit in them to get the most out of their money.

"So, for years we had a commercial washing machine with the little coin slot and there was a quarter constantly sitting in there," she laughed. "People who came over would, go, 'You have a commercial washing machine?!? You have to put money in it!?'"

Fortunately, the drycleaning aspect of the business flourished over the years, even as Peggy continued to go to college, earn multiple degrees and practice law.

Drycleaners sometimes see the dirty laundry behind the dirty laundry. Don had seen many customers divorce over the years, often leaving wives with no work experience in a difficult situation. Having all daughters at home, Don prepared them all to fend for themselves.

"My dad believed that women should be independent," Vicky said. "My dad believed that we needed to learn hard work, and we needed to learn the value of a dollar."

The young Maisel women grew up working the front counter of the plant, but Vicky was the oldest and usually had more responsibilities.

"I remember one summer when one of his pressers was out on maternity and I became the shirt presser all summer long," she noted. "He would just drag me in and say, 'Somebody's missing today.' I would say, 'I don't know how.' 'I'll teach you.'"

After earning a B.A. in English from Trinity College, Vicky exerted her independence and her savings (her father made her deposit every other paycheck) in order to attend the Drama Studio in London. She spent a "fabulous" year acting in Shakespeare plays in the Bard's native country before she moved to New York where she acted in "off-, off-Broadway plays" and sang in

After moving back to San Antonio in the mid-1980s, an old pattern developed: Don would need Vicky to fill in for a position, and she would welcome the change to scouring through newspapers for acting auditions. Suddenly, just like in her childhood, the two of them were close together working on clothes together. This time, though, she never left.

Over the years, the company expanded to include six locations and a few dozen employees. At one point, the Maisels resisted the urge to hop aboard a trend of discount drycleaners offering prices of \$2.99 per garment.

"A lot of people had gravitated to that and dad said, 'Should we do that?' I said, 'I really don't want to hear the complaints,'" Vicky recalled. "I don't want to get 20 to 30 complaints a day. I'm just... no. If we get a complaint every two weeks, we're really worried about it."

It seems like Vicky worries about the business all the time, anyway. That tends to happen when the employees become your extended family.

"One of my employees... his name was Rudy. He had been there since I was in high school. Rudy always rode the bus. When I first learned to drive — God love him — Rudy used to get in the car with me and I'd drive him to the bus stop. There was a man with guts. He was the most interesting fellow. He had beautiful black hair his entire life. It never turned grey. He would always come into work wearing these really nice shoes," Vicky said.

She remembered the shoes because the pants presser used to keep a ratty old pair at his workstation to change into for the day's labor. Once finished, he would don the nice shoes again and go back to the bus stop to go home.

"He'd been with us for 20, 25 years," she continued. "He literally died [of a heart attack] at the bus stop one morning. He was a wonderful person, he really was."

Both the number of employees and store locations decreased by half during the economic paralysis caused by the pandemic.

"We tried to save as many as we could, but we just couldn't," Vicky said. "I literally sat in this office and cried. I guess that's not something a guy would admit to, but I literally had to call people up and say, 'I'm sorry. We can't do this.' And, I cried big ol' ugly mascara tears rolling down my eyes. That was one day where I thought, 'Am I really cut out for this?' But, you know, you cry, you get over it, and then you do your damndest to go on."

Cowboy Cleaners is trying to keep revenue coming in by offering to expand its cleaning services. "We really will clean almost anything. If you need it cleaned, we'll clean it," Vicky emphasized.

In terms of advice on how to proceed during the pandemic, she offered: "I would just say — whatever you got now — assume that's what it's going to be and work with that."

"And, if we get somewhat better than this, then yay for us," she continued. "But, what we're really planning on is that there's going to be kind of a lull like this for quite some time."

That lull also affected Cowboy Cleaners' annual charitable program, Operation Interdependence, which gathers snacks and toiletry items for American troops stationed overseas. Typically, the company collects and sends ten large boxes annually, but 2020 was an exception.

"The stuff you would normally put in the Operation Interdependence boxes, people were hoarding, so it didn't go well last year at all," Vicky recalled. "So, I'm not sure what this year will be like, if it's going to be back to semi-normal, normalish, or whatever. Last year was a complete dud. If people continue to work from home, they're not wearing nice clothes."

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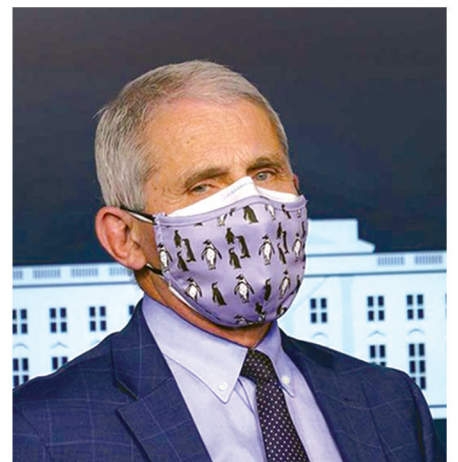


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AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

Build and enhance your reputation

Last month, I explored the basics of monitoring and getting a handle on your business reputation. This month we will explore the need to build and enhance your reputation.

This is a great time to take a personal inventory of what your own individual brand says and how that translates to your company's brand. Everyone should do this periodically and self-assess what we stand for, what we need to improve on, and how to take that next step.

Throughout the pandemic last year, I took this critical step and reviewed what my own personal brand is and what I wanted to stand for. I took a hard look at I was doing, what people thought of me and my place within the industry. Then, I explored ways I could take control of the narrative and build on the traits that are most important for me. Next, I looked at specific steps I could take to further enhance my personal brand – and as a result – the organizations I represent. I knew people were going to be looking for answers, needing information, and looking for community.

I set out to establish myself as a resource for our members to help satisfy those needs and be a person they could turn to help navigate the uncertainty and to help keep their businesses viable. In turn, that trust would reinforce the value of membership in my groups. I have

ing myself and stepping out of my comfort zone. I learned as much as I could about critical programs like PPP Funding, stimulus packages, and small business assistance programs. I embraced the new technology available like Zoom for communications, Canva for social

decide what you personally stand for — what traits and abilities you offer — and then do the same for your business and meld the two together. More so now than ever before, people are looking to do business with people they know, trust, and feel comfortable with.

your website portray that image? Is it crisp, clean, easy to navigate with some of the bells and whistles your customers would use? Does it have things like online chat windows, texting options, and an app for route sign-up/scheduling? If your brand is built as a local

You need to decide what you personally stand for — what traits and abilities you offer — and then do the same for your business and meld the two together.

worked in the industry for almost 35 years but had always kept a low profile. I felt the best way to help build up my associations was to increase the awareness of what I had to offer, and the role associations can play in our members' success.

I had to evaluate my strengths, and then established what key concepts I wanted my personal brand to stand for: knowledge, honesty, accessibility, and reliability. Once I had determined those key attributes, I needed to go about re-brand-

media, and began to explore more avenues to promote key messages like these columns for *National Clothesline*. I set out to share as much as I could with our industry to make us all stronger. I looked at what needed to be done to help our members and the association's brand stronger — then took steps to make it happen.

You Can Control Your Own Narrative

That same challenge is now right before you. You need to go through the same exercise and

The first step is to explore your reviews. What is being said about your company? Are there consistent themes? If there are negative reviews, resist the temptation to disregard them with excuses and evaluate the story they are telling you.

Next, involve your employees. Ask them to describe your business and what it stands for in one sentence. Take that feedback. Ask your customers why they choose to use your service. What brings them back? What do they enjoy and like about your business? Ask for key words, one word to sum up their thoughts of your business and service.

Once you have done your fact finding, compile all the information and review what the trends you see. How does it match with your "vision" of your brand? Is it the same? Is it close? Or have you drifted off course in the recent past?

Perception is Reality

Knowledge is power. The more information you have, the better you can take action. Surveying your customers can be an eye-opening experience. Human nature is to see what we want to see, and our own beliefs can keep us from seeing what others see. This exercise will help determine the divide from where you want to be as a company and where you are.

Once you have this information, then you can start to change or enhance your image to more closely align with what you want it to be. It all starts with a few small steps and builds from there. Take your vision and create key words, attributes you want to evoke. Then, start the process of changing and adapting.

Take a critical look at your webpage. Does your webpage convey those traits? If your brand is a high-end cleaner, does

community brand, does your website promote some of the ways you are involved in the community? Outreach programs?

Next, take moment to explore your Facebook and social media platforms and see if they are consistent with what you want your brand to be. When posting, keep an eye on your core values and make sure they are prominent in your thoughts as you create posts.

Take a look at your reviews on Google, Yelp, Yahoo, etc. What do they say about you? Are you responding? You should respond to every review, good or bad! Say thank you for their business and the chance to serve them. Thank them for taking the time to share their story. When people are looking for businesses to use they look at reviews more than anything — and look to see how active companies are on the sites. They like to see problems being resolved — and sincere appreciation for the patronage being highlighted.

You need 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 buzz words that describe your basic values?

This will get you on the path towards shrinking the chasm between your brand vision and your customer's brand perception. If I can help you in any way, please reach out.

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 or by phone at (617) 791-0128.

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Drycleaning turns 200 years old

Continued from page 1
(when) she insisted on her rights, he took hold of her by force to expel her. She resisted. The conductor got down on the platform, jammed her bonnet, soiled her dress and injured the person.”

The incident enraged the local black community, who held rallies at Jennings’ church. Elizabeth, however, sued the driver, conductor and the company (Third Avenue Railway) and won. She was awarded damages of \$225 plus \$22.50 in costs.

As for Thomas L. Jennings, he was eulogized by Frederick Douglas in the *Anglo-African* newspaper, where he referred to him as “a bold man of color” who led an “active, earnest and blameless life.” He was buried in Brooklyn with the epitaph: “Defender of Human Rights.”

While Jennings’ impact on civil rights is of significant historical value, his dry scouring invention has had quite a positive effect on the world, as well.

Drycleaning’s first century

The happy accident of Jolly Belin made the term “French cleaning” synonymous with drycleaning from early in the 19th century until late into the 20th. Regardless of the name, such cleaning relied on solvents such as naptha, gasoline, benzene and benzol — making for a potentially combustible situation. While the volatile solvents degreased garments and helped remove some stains, drycleaners also relied heavily on the use of tailors and dyes to keep customers’ garments looking seamless. Some early cleaners specialized in a convenient service called pick up and delivery, using horse-drawn carriages to transport laundry to and from customers’ homes. Climate-controlled fur vaults were also commonly kept on the premises to preserve such expensive coats.

During drycleaning’s first 100 years, washing clothes at home was somehow even more unpleasant than it is today. Some of the latest technology included a wooden tub of hot water and a washboard, a labor-intensive tool that contained several ridges that laundered garments could be

squeezed through, causing agitation to remove dirt. Back then, Laundry Day (yes, it was an entire day’s work) was an exhaustive chore until Thor saved the day. In 1910, the Hurley Electric Laundry Equipment Company patented The Thor, the first American electric washing machine on the market, which would completely transform home laundry habits.

The rise of perc

Perhaps the biggest discovery to advance the industry was the introduction of tetrachloroethylene, a.k.a. perc, as a degreasing solvent in 1934. Perc and other chlorinated solvents, such as carbon tetrachloride, were viewed as more efficient and effective cleaning agents, and much less flammable, than their petroleum counterparts. Those advantages propelled perc to the position of the most used drycleaning solvent. As the 20th century ended, perc was estimated to be used by more than 80% of commercial drycleaners. Starting in the 1970s, however, perc increasingly became a regulatory target due to its potential to harm human health and the environment. While technological advances by drycleaning equipment manufacturers ensured perc machines met every regulation, the solvent was issued a ban in California by 2023.

For drycleaners, restrictions on such an effective cleaning agent made them feel, well, like they had been taken to the cleaners, which is doubly unfortunate, because that phrase was likely never about drycleaners specifically. It seems to have evolved from the idiom, “to clean someone out” around the 1920s. The irony is, drycleaning has traditionally been largely comprised of small, trustworthy mom-and-pop shops, often handed down for many generations through difficult times precisely because they had cultivated good reputations.

As home laundry methods improved, drycleaners upped their game by offering unparalleled cleaning, finishing, stain removal and pressing. They also adapted to focus on niche markets: uniforms and hospital bedding, household items, cleaning and restoring vintage garments

as well as those damaged in fires, floods and other disasters. Speaking of disasters, the 1970s brought the much-dreaded Polyester Era. Wash-n-wear clothing exploded into popularity and drycleaners felt the blow to their bottom lines which fell sharply.

Over the years, many challenges followed — home drycleaning kits, Casual Fridays, restaurant smoking bans, costly perc contamination remediations and economic recessions, to name a few — but drycleaning survived and even peaked from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s. (The most-attended Clean Show, not surprisingly, took place in Las Vegas in 1997 with more than 21,000 visitors.) Since then, though, it has been another story.

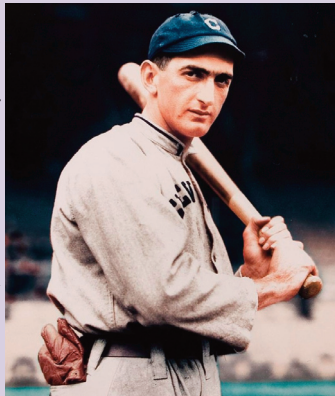
Perc use continues to wane as more cleaners are preferring alternative solvents such as DF-2000 (petroleum), GreenEarth (liquid silicone), SolvonK4 (halogen free), Sensene (modified alcohol), and others. Meanwhile, the public image of drycleaners remains somewhat shrouded in mystery. Drycleaning can be confusing, after all. It uses solvent but is called dry. Technically, the definition of drycleaning is to clean with chemical solvents that have little or no water. (Just to be more confusing, many drycleaners offer wetcleaning services, which is cleaning with water and no chemical solvents.)

Drycleaning has frequently been called a “magical” process which has only been enhanced by keeping production areas separate and out of sight. People don’t see drycleaners much in pop culture, either. Apart from Sherman Hemsley’s iconic performance as George Jefferson in *The Jeffersons* TV sitcom in the 1970s and 1980s, you might be hard pressed to name another major drycleaner character in film or TV. However, you would be harder pressed to find a major TV show or film whose wardrobes and costumes didn’t require professional drycleaning.

Despite possessing peerless skills at cleaning and repairing clothes, the industry has struggled in this century. Results from

Some Dirt on Drycleaning

Drycleaning pops up in in the strangest of places, such as crossing paths with baseball legend Shoeless Joe Jackson, the slugger who hit for an impressive .356 lifetime batting average in Major League Baseball. Unfortunately, that was overshadowed by his association with the Chicago White Sox during their infamous throwing of the 1919 World Series to the Cincinnati Reds. Jackson and seven other White Sox players were accused of accepting bribes to throw the series — a series in which Jackson batted .375 and committed no errors. The stain of being connected to the scandal kept Jackson out of the majors for the rest of his life, so he moved back to Savannah, GA, in 1922, and established a drycleaning business known as Savannah Valet Service. Sports website Sports Raid reported that he earned \$8,500 annually from drycleaning, a sum of money equal to what he made during his final season in the MLB.



Shoeless Joe Jackson

While that was a considerable amount in the 1920s, what about asking for \$67 million for a pair of ruined dress pants 85 years later? In a lawsuit filed in 2005 by Roy L. Pearson, Jr. against Customer Cleaners of Washington, DC, the plaintiff broke down into tears in the court while expressing his frustration that the cleaners lost his pants. Pearson did not win the frivolous case, and he lost his position as an administrative judge as a result. The Chungs, owners of Custom Cleaners, closed a business after accruing tens of thousands in legal fees.

Drycleaning was a funnier topic during a 2017 Superbowl commercial by Tide featuring actor Jeffery Tambor (*Arrested Development*) receiving questionable customer service at Gronk’s Cleaners, run by longtime New England Patriots’ tight end Rob Gronkowski. As funny as that was, it cannot compare to the time talk show host Ellen DeGeneres sent actress Melissa McCarthy (*Bridesmaids*) into Milt and Edie’s Master Drycleaners in Burbank, CA, in 2019, for her show. Counter employee Alexis witnessed bizarre behavior as DeGeneres played Cyrano de Bergerac to McCarthy, whispering in her ear what to say and do, including acting drugged and sleepy, cursing a lot and falling down in the lobby. The footage went viral and DeGeneres later invited Alexis to appear on her show (below) where she gave her \$20,000 for her troubles.



the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Census revealed that there were close to 40,000 drycleaning and laundry service establishments in 2007 (39,484). Ten years later, that number dwindled to 33,905.

After 2020, that number is probably much lower. No other year in drycleaning’s 200-year-history has been more difficult.

The coronavirus pandemic brutally hit the industry, acting as anathema to social events and formal workplace environments as the economy and dirty garment marketplace shrunk rapidly. Some businesses saw drops in revenue of 75% overnight as the only words worse for drycleaning than “wash-and-wear” seem to be “shelter-in-place.”

ABC’s forum highlights younger cleaners

Already, some estimate that the pandemic will cost the industry 25 to 30% of its size. Those who stay open will be the ones who adapt to consumer preferences, cut costs and expand their services. During the final Leadership Forum installment by America’s Best Cleaners, many young industry members still expressed excitement by what the future will hold.

Nathaniel Dubasic, project director at Metalprogetti USA, says his company has big plans. “We are pushing the envelope using new technology. We’re launching some new locations now that are going to be partially-staffed, not staffed, inside



Younger, leading industry members recently spoke at ABC’s sixth and final Leadership Forum, including: (clockwise from top left) Mark Hatch, Nicole Kirby, Monika Manter and Nathaniel Dubasic.

grocery stores,” he said. “We’re working on what we can do to help our customers get stronger and handle it through these tough times.”

During the session, Nicole Kirby of Spot Business Systems noted one positive sign she sees

in younger drycleaners. “I can’t tell you how many times being onsite with drycleaners I hear the phrase ‘That’s the way we’ve always done it.’ But, the newer generation tends to say more, ‘OK. We do it this way, but is there a better way to do

this?’ They are more apt to embrace change,” she said.

Mark Hatch, general manager for French Cleaners of Hartford, CT, noted that the next generation of cleaners will crave more work/life balance and won’t be afraid to use technology creatively to improve service.

“I started 3-D printing ear savers, like French Cleaners’ logo — those ear savers on the back of your mask. That was kind of fun,” he said. “That has since kind of pivoted. I’ve been 3-D printing parts for different equipment in my plant.”

As the industry’s third century begins, drycleaners are not finished evolving to satisfy con-

sumers, a large part of which stems from also keeping employees happy. Monika Manter, vice president of Balfurd Cleaners, believes company culture will be improving, as well.

“We found, specifically with our team members, when their personal lives improve, their professional lives improve and our organization gets better,” she noted, adding they recently hired a full-time dream manager, a cutting edge business concept growing in popularity.

“They meet with team members, voluntarily, and they help them work through accomplishing their goals and dreams,” she explained.

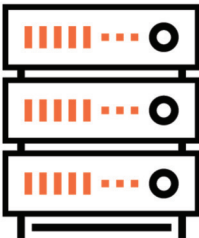


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BY KERMIT ENGH

BUILDING VALUE

Turning a service into a product

Does your drycleaning business differentiate itself through a higher level of service? If so, you are probably disproportionately impacted by the economic disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Consumers are cutting back on services to avoid human contact and conserve cash, but we are still buying products that solve a specific problem. Businesses are buying products like Zoom and Slack for teleconferencing, and consumers are dropping services in favor of products. Italy was the first western democracy to experience the brunt of the coronavirus pandemic, and it changed everything about daily life, right down to what people bought from Amazon. For example, in the week after the Italian government quarantined most of its citizens, there was a 236% increase in Italians buying sports gear, presumably to set up a home-based exercise routine instead of services like personal training. Instead of going out to enjoy the service at a great restaurant, we are buying more alcohol. According to a recent

Nielsen survey, overall sales of spirits like tequila and vodka were up 75% from the same period last year. (I personally prefer bourbon for an Old Fashioned.)

Service Providers are Pivoting to Provide a Product

Many businesses have reacted by turning their services into what appears to consumers as a tangible product:

- Los Angeles-based Guerilla Tacos typically serves up a lively dining experience and has recently pivoted to offering a product called their “Emergency Taco Kit,” a take-out survival kit for the taco lover.
- Spiffy, a US-based mobile car wash service, has switched to offering its COVID-19 “Disinfect & Protect” product.
- UK-based Encore has pivoted from a talent booking service to offering their “Personalized Music Message” product, enabling you to commission an artist to create a customized video greeting for a loved one.

To take advantage of our gravitation towards buying products, service providers can take the following eight steps:

Step 1: Niche Down. The first step is to narrow your focus to a single customer type. Many people feel uncomfortable with this stage — in times like these when you need more customers, not less. It is counterintuitive, but the first critical move in turning your service into a product is niching down because services can be adapted and customized for a variety of customers. In contrast, products need to fit one type of buyer. Picking one niche also helps you design a great product and efficiently reach potential customers through things like Facebook groups set up to serve a specific target.

Niche down further than you are comfortable, then niche down some more. Consider:

- Demographics (age, gender, income)
- Firmographics (company size, industry)
- Life stage (just married, retirement)
- Company life stage (start-up, mature, etc.)
- Psychographics (attitudes, aspirations)

Step 2: TVR-Rank Your

Services. Once you have niched down more than feels comfortable, the next step in turning your service into a product is identifying the services you offer, which are Teachable to employees, Valuable to your customers who have a Recurring need for it.

Grab a whiteboard or blank piece of paper and make a list of all the services you offer the niche you picked in step one. Then score each service on a scale of one to 10 on the degree to which you can teach employees to offer the service, how valuable it is to your niche, and how frequently they need to buy it.

Pick the service that scores the highest and move to Step 3 (you can always return to this step if you want to consider multiple products).

Step 3: Get Clear on Your Quarter-Inch Hole. Harvard Professor Theodore Levitt was famous for saying, “People don’t want to buy a quarter-inch drill. They want a quarter-inch hole.” Be clear about what problem your product solves for your niche. For example, “The Emergency Taco Kit” makes cooking at home fun for quarantined Angelinos, while the “Disinfect & Protect” product sanitizes cars for essential service providers who need to keep driving. You can promote patio cushion cleaning to get ready for warmer weather or wash-dry-fold subscriptions for busy families to take a chore off their list.

Step 4: Brand It. With a service, you are typically hiring a person. Still, with a product, you are selling a thing. Unlike people who have names, something like the “Emergency Taco Kit,” “Disinfect & Protect,” and the “Personalized Music Message” have brands. What could you name your brand of specialized service?

Step 5: List Your Ingredients. Service businesses customize their deliverables in a unique proposal for every prospect, but product companies list their ingredients. Pick up any package at a grocery store — whether it is a bottle of dishwasher detergent or a box of cereal — and you will see an itemized list of what is inside the box, which is why your offering needs to list what customers get when they buy. List your process or create an infographic showing what a customer receives when choosing

your specialized service.

Step 6: Pre-Empt Objections. When selling a service, you have the luxury of hearing your prospect’s objections firsthand, and you can dynamically address them on-the-spot. When selling a product, you do not have the benefit of a person to overcome objections, so consider what potential objections customers might have and pre-empt them. When selling the “Disinfect & Protect” car cleaning product, Spiffy anticipated the four most common concerns customers raise and pre-empts each in their marketing material.

For example, Spiffy assures prospects that they have:

- A money-back guarantee for people who are not sure
- Insurance in case they damage your car
- Trained technicians who know what they are doing
- Environmentally friendly cleaning products so they do not damage the environment.

Think of how you can pre-empt objections and address them right in your marketing.

Step 7: Price It. Services are quoted by the hour, day, or project and usually come at the end of a custom proposal. Products publish their price.

Step 8: Manufacture Scarcity. One of the benefits of a service business is that you always have sales leverage because your time is scarce. You cannot make more hours in the day, so customers know they need to act to get some of your time. With product businesses, you need to give people a reason to act today rather than tomorrow. This means you need to manufacture a reason to act through things like limited time offers, limited access products etc. Service providers have been walloped, but if you make your service look and feel more like a product, you may be able to take advantage of our society’s flight to tangible products in uncertain times.

Kermit Engh has been an owner/operator in the drycleaning industry for over 28 years and has been a Methods for Management member for over 24 years. His current position as managing partner and business coach with MfM allows him to share his extensive background in strategic planning, finance, process improvement, succession planning, packaging and branding, employee training programs, profitability, cost analysis and more. Contact him at kengh@mfmi.com.

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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Does laying off employees save labor?

This Mythbuster is a beauty. Really. Here goes: Laying off employees doesn't necessarily save labor! It might increase your labor cost!

A major international company just laid off 60,000 employees. Can you believe that? Sixty thousand. At each headquarters, the employees were called into an assembly hall of sorts and read a prepared statement that outlined the severance package, instructed them to clean out their desk by day's end and bid everyone a fond farewell. Bam! I can't help but wonder what these people were doing the week before. Were they swamped? Were they crazy busy? Were they twiddling their thumbs? Did they see the handwriting on the wall? Assuming for a minute that they were doing something, who did their jobs the next day? I will not learn the answers to my questions, largely because I don't know that business.

But, I do know this business. And it is different than many other businesses. The amount of work that needs to

be done by production employees is directly proportional to the amount of work brought in by your customers. For the purpose of this column, let's forget all about office staff and managerial people. Because, if you can cut that staff by (say) 25% and still be assured that the same amount of work is getting done, then you really need to do it today. But I truly don't know the ins and outs of your office-related duties.

But, I do know this business. Many plant owners and managers use labor percentage as a barometer. Consultants who don't understand production find comfort in that, too. This measurement of labor cost is too ambiguous. I know that some of you have been doing it for generations, but those days have passed.

When I started in this business 43 years ago, a typical major intersection had five drycleaners. You all knew each other. You were probably friends and you may have met up for a beer from time to time. There was plenty of

business for all of you. You peaceably co-existed and just made sure that your labor percentage was around 25%. Three decades later, there is barely enough business for one of those plants. These days, you must keep your labor proportional to your piece count or risk insolvency. It's that simple.

The problem with that is three-fold and significant: 1) Most drycleaners don't count pieces; 2) Most drycleaners don't measure productivity; and 3) Most drycleaners don't measure total department pieces per production labor hour nor do they understand its significance. Those are three world-class problems and the lack of attention to these issues is exactly the reason that so many of you are in financial trouble, or at least not making the money you could be!

I spoke with a manager some years ago about his pressing productivity issue. He insisted that he didn't have one. My math was clear; his pressers were averaging

18-19 pieces per hour. He claimed, nay, *insisted*, that it was 42 pieces per hour! Big difference. The next day, he came to me and said, "I just clocked the pressers again and, like I told you, they press 42 pieces per hour. I asked about his data collection method. He said, (you're not gonna believe this...) "Martha is my best presser. I approached her at 10 a.m. and told her that I was going to measure her production for the next hour." Martha pressed 42 pieces. The manager used that monumentally insignificant data to run the plant.

Extrapolating it further, he concluded that five pressers working 40 hours each pressed 42 pieces per hour! My math doesn't lie. It was 18. This is a true story. Even I have a hard time comprehending that story sometimes and I was there and heard it myself. I have said this before; having bogus data is much worse than having no data at all because it leads you to believe that you don't have a problem. In effect, you're saying, "I don't know where my problem is, but I know that it's not productivity because I checked that and it is great. I'll look somewhere else. Try as you might, if you have a productivity issue, no other 'workaround' will fix it and you are leaving money on the table.

Counting pieces can be a challenge. POS systems do not easily generate that number. But, once you have an accurate number of pieces and link them to the person that pressed them, it's easy to calculate pieces pressed per hour. Now you have two of the important pieces of information. Lastly, you need PPLH, an acronym for **P**ieces **P**er **L**abor **H**our. You're almost there. Let's lay out a couple of examples and ultimately demonstrate my point; laying people off does not necessarily cut labor.

- Your shirt pressing team, Lisa and Lucy, pressed 85 shirts in one hour.
- You counted the pieces (85 shirts).
- You counted the production hours (1, duh).

So, Lisa and Lucy press 85 shirts per hour. This statistic has limited value because it is

for a very limited scope of time. It becomes a lot more valuable when a larger sampling is considered. If your press team presses 2,550 shirts over a 30-hour work week, they press 85 shirts per hour. The fact that they often pressed 95 or 100 shirts in certain one-hour periods during the course of the week has value, but that is not an indication of what their true productivity is. It is, however, an indication of what they and your equipment are capable of. But, 85 shirts per hour is your true production number.

Now you need to know your PPLH. This will include Lisa and Lucy, plus everyone else that is involved in the production of those shirts: washer, assembler, touch-up person, etc. Because it is far more accurate and significant, let's consider the weekly total of 2,550 shirts and count the number of people/hours involved in the production of those shirts:

- Lisa, presser, 30 hours
- Lucy, presser, 30 hours
- Freddie, washman, 15 hours (Freddie is the drycleaner, but performs the washman duties. It isn't fair or accurate to allocate all of his hours to the drycleaning department, so we estimate that he devotes around three hours per day to washing shirts)
- Betty, inspection, touch-up, buttons, 35 hours
- Liz, assembly, bagging, folding, 40 hours

The total hours divided into the total number of pieces produced is of extraordinary significance and is the key to profitability. In this case, 150 hours of labor are necessary to process 2,550 shirts. This is 17 PPLH. This is not good, but very typical (95% of the people that contact me are somewhere between 16 and 18 PPLH). My goal for this scenario would be 27.5 PPLH. (FYI, that is an annual payroll difference of roughly \$35,000!)

Let's assume that you believe me and are now convinced that your shirt department production payroll is much higher than it should be. You immediately mandate that someone be laid off in your shirt department. You reason that this will cut significant hours off the payroll

Continued on page 16

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Don Desrosiers

Busting a labor saving myth

Continued from page 14
and result in measurable savings. Not really. Watch this:

Liz is terminated because Betty insists that she pads the time clock and that she can do both jobs. Mathematically, this sounds like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Hours have been reduced to 115, down from 150. The projected savings is \$1,800 per month. You figure that even if it is half that, buying a new Porsche is a real possibility.

What really happens is very different. My experience has proven time and time again that the more “backed up” the inspection/assembly arena is, the slower pressing productivity is. If you walk into your plant right now and find your assembly area backed up, your conclusion is *never* that your pressing productivity is poor. Never. You might conclude several other things such as poor quality, your inspector is slow or that your assembly person can’t get out of her own way. A back-up in assembly however, causes poor productivity. This is a fact!

I have learned that pressers operating any equipment are perfectly capable of cranking out the work at substantially higher production rates than you think. You may consider the DLI target rates for pants pressing, for example, to be lofty and perhaps unattainable, but I bet that your pressers are not only capable of doing it, but actually do attain that level for segments of time during the day.

I have often timed pressers and found that they can in-

deed press 100+ shirts per hour because they take a shirt off their body press every 30-35 seconds. Their average however, spread out over a full day is 30-40% lower than that. What gives?

Inexperienced managers, or consultants not familiar with production, draw erroneous conclusions from grossly misleading information. I once heard of a consultant that deduced that a plant operator was leaving \$78,000 on the table by observing a presser. A pants presser was observed doing a pair of pants in 95 seconds. That is equivalent to 38 pants per hour. But, because the statistics showed that this presser was averaging only 22 pants per hour, this proved that the presser was wasting 68 seconds per pants; which amounted to \$26,000 per year on this presser, multiplied by three pressers, \$78,000. I guess that he took his paycheck and ran. We all know that life isn’t that simple. The consultant was insinuating that the only thing that his client had to do was boost production and everything else would fall into place. While it remains true that poor productivity is something that I find in virtually every plant that I visit, addressing the reason why production is poor is the true remedy. An M16 in the back of a presser is hardly the cure.

If productivity is somehow improved, the pressed garments flow into an assembly area that is ill-equipped to receive such production. The result — invariably — is production that slows to a pace

that is more in tune with the post-press staff’s ability to handle it. Got that? Said in another way: when production goes up, the people that are supposed to inspect and assemble these pieces get bombed and backed up. Pressers downshift a couple of gears and you don’t notice, but you are somehow thankful! And because you aren’t keeping a careful watch on PPLH, you have no idea that your payroll has gone up in spite of your best efforts to bring it down!

So, in our hypothetical situation, we still have Lisa and Lucy pressing 85 shirts per hour and only Betty is in the inspection, assembly & bagging (IAB) area. If all goes according to plan, 85 shirts will be pressed with three labor hours (85/3=28.3 PPLH). Sorry, it’s not gonna happen. There used to be one person to do touch-up and inspection (Liz) and another to do assembly and bagging (Betty). But now Betty is alone. She may be a rock-star, but, assuming that you’re using the same system in IAB, Betty will soon realize that she can’t do the work of two people. Maybe one-and-a-half, but not two.

This leads to one of three scenarios: 1) adding another person to help Betty or 2) production slowing down to a rate that makes Betty’s job doable. Since the point was to lay off a person, adding a helper for Betty is completely out of the question. If you are a production nazi, maybe you will go in the third direction, which is that you get usual production and bomb out the

IAB area and Betty gets and stays very backed up. When all of the shirts are done, Lisa and Lucy jump in to help Betty. This is rather common, but it’s an absolute train wreck. Let’s put pencil to paper.

Production slips to 70 shirts per hour (Don’t laugh. I’m being generous. The number is usually 67). Betty keeps up perfectly. The pressers each work 37 hours and Betty works an extra hour per day to do folding and similar things. Since that puts her into overtime, that will cost you more but we will ignore that for now. So she works 42 hours and the washman, 15. That totals 131 hours to do 2,550 shirts, which equates to an improvement in PPLH... 19.5. There are a couple of problems:

- During the weeks that you do less than 2,550 shirts, your hours total will be the same. You know that I’m right. When you do only 2,200 shirts in February, your PPLH will be 16.8. Your payroll should be lower, but it’s higher.

- Betty isn’t actually going to keep up. She will love that Lisa and Lucy will help finish up. This will breed a dependency. Even if she can keep up somewhat during the course of the day, which I doubt, she will allow the department to collapse towards the end of the day because she knows that her reinforcement squad will be there shortly. Lisa and Lucy become her crutch.

- Now, everybody works an extra hour per day — at least — plus the wash time. PPLH: 17.4, at best.

OK. So that is an improvement over 17, so you may call that labor savings. I call it marginal savings during the best case scenario. Slower weeks will hose you and if you consider that overtime counts as 1.5 hours, your true “hours worked” as far as PPLH calculations are concerned is 154. PPLH is 16.5. Because you haven’t been counting pieces, hours or calculation PPLH, you are pleased because your shirt department now runs with three-and-a-half people rather than four-and-a-half. You roughly figure that you’re saving \$300-\$400 per week. But, in fact, your cost went up two cents per shirts! Maybe you think that’s insignificant, but at this volume, it amount to \$2,600 per year. If you still color that insignificant, recall that you were trying to cut labor when you laid off Liz.

The number of people that you need to run your plant has nothing to do with your labor cost! I’m not saying that there is no connection; I’m saying that there isn’t enough information. I believe that the need to measure PPLH is more important than ever, but some people that used to do it, don’t anymore because they don’t like what it says. Out of sight, out of mind I guess.

I have seen that recently when people go to automated assembly for example. They say, “We laid off two people!” But then it becomes obvious to everyone that piece counts are now lower and productivity is down! PPLH is the only true measure. How many pieces divided by the total number of production labor hours; including clean, wash, press, inspect, touch-up, buttons, assembly, packaging. What should it be? I aim for 27-29 PPLH in the shirt department and 18-18.5 PPLH in the drycleaning department. Sound lofty? Attaining that is how you stay in business.

“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.



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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Stop that expensive leak — Part III

In this issue, I'll be finishing the series on gaskets and adhesives with two more useful families of products. Cyanoacrylates, much more difficult to pronounce than use, and silicones, which are

amazingly versatile gasketing material. Let's start with cyanoacrylates, popularly known as Super Glue and Crazy glue, which have some unique qualities. It will bond to almost any-

thing and will even bond to most moist surfaces including skin and flesh (some types of cyanoacrylates are used in surgical procedures instead of sutures or staples), so be careful about getting any on yourself.

There are two types. One has a thin watery quality, the other a thicker gel-like consistency. I find the thin water-like type useful for repairing cracks in almost anything plastic. It "wicks" (flows) into cracks and fractures in plastics and will actually fuse narrow cracks or fractures in pvc, abs, polycarbonates, and many other families of plastic (do not use on cotton or leather).

The idea is to apply a small amount of glue allowing it to flow into the crack or fracture then apply pressure pushing it closed.

ing the crack or fracture closed. Generally, a few minutes is time enough to allow the glue to be adsorbed and cure. To me, the most outstanding quality of cyanoacrylate is its ability to bond most rubbers. This is especially helpful in making or repairing O-Rings (see the accompanying illustration) and gaskets. The bonded joint is usually stronger than the rubber itself.

Next on the list is silicone sealants. Silicone comes in many different types and qualities. I prefer a brand name industrial-grade like Permetex or Loctite; use the red-colored high-temperature type. It is easy to see where you have applied it and it won't degrade at the temperatures encountered in the drycleaning/laundry environment. You can't beat it for gasket forming between flat surfaces and sometimes it can even replace preformed gaskets. Silicone sealant is use-

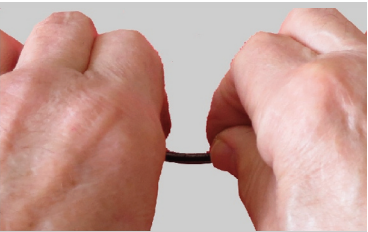
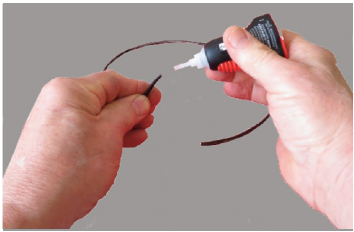
ful to waterproof and insulates electrical connections and since it stays flexible it's not overly affected by motion or vibration.

Have a look at the accompanying illustration for a couple of applications you may not have thought of. The only downside is sealing the tube or cartridge once it's opened. I found a nifty device at Harbor Freight for this purpose. It's a tapered plastic screw sort of like a tapered corkscrew that screws down into the opened tube of sealant. The Harbor Freight part number is Caulk Saver - Item#97561.

Well, that's it for this issue. I'm looking for suggestions for subjects you find interesting to write about. Call me at (702) 376-6693 or email me at with any requests or suggestions.

Bruce Grossman is the chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing, the manufacturer of the EZ DOSE boiler compound manager and return tank level control which replaces that troublesome ball float valve in the condensate return tank and automatically adds the correct amount of boiler compound to the return tank preventing oxygen corrosion and scaling. Our SAHARA and DIB-M high purity separator water mister/evaporators provide a thrifty, legal method to get rid of the separator water generated by your drycleaning machine. See our ad in this issue and for further information on the EZtimers product line or visit www.eztimers.com. Address any questions or comments to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

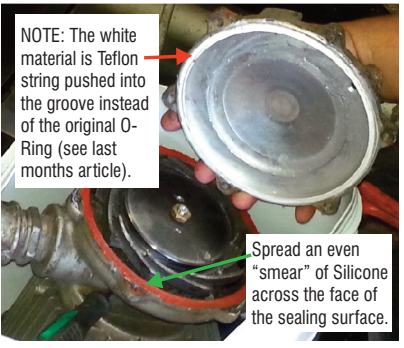

O-RING REPAIR USING CYANOACRYLATE ADHESIVES (SUPER AND CRAZY GLUE)



CAUTION! DO NOT GET GLUE NEAR FACE ESPECIALLY EYES

1. Using a single edge razor blade or a razor knife cut straight across the O-Ring. Don't try to miter (cut on a 45 degree angle) the cut.
2. Apply just enough glue to wet one surface (**DO NOT apply a big blob of glue**).
3. Carefully align the ends of the O-Ring and firmly push them together. You won't have more than a second or two for positioning so get set up and be accurate. Hold the ends together for 30 seconds. A spotting board is an excellent surface to work on. **REMEMBER THIS ADHESIVE INSTANTLY BONDS SKIN**

USING SILICONE SEALANT (RTV) STOPPING COMPRESSION FITTING LEAKS FORMING GASKETS



NOTE: The white material is Teflon string pushed into the groove instead of the original O-Ring (see last months article).

Spread an even "smear" of Silicone across the face of the sealing surface.

1. Remove old gasket material or other debris from the mating surfaces then use perc, picrin, acetone or some other solvent to clean these areas.
2. Apply a bead of Silicone on both mating surfaces then use a finger or other object to distribute the Silicone evenly. Position the parts for bolting together with a rotational motion to distribute the sealant evenly and finish bolting the parts together.

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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Using alakali and protein formulas

The new protein formulas available have changed in many ways. The big change is the safety factor. Years ago, removing a stain on a silk, wool and bright and vivid colors were a problem due to the ability of the alkali to bleed or change the color of the fabric.

The protein formulas that are now used are very mildly alkaline so the safety factor has improved drastically. Cleaners can now use the protein formulas of most chemical companies with safety when used properly. Chemical companies do not formulate protein formulas with ammonia which is a more aggressive alkali that is capable of affecting dyes.

Facts about alkali

1. Alkalies are defined as chemicals that release hydroxyl ions in the presence of water.
2. Alkalies are soluble in water and wetside chemicals.
3. Alkalies will turn pH or litmus paper to blue.
4. Used to neutralize acid.
5. Used to restore color change caused by acid.
6. Used with wet side synthetic detergents to increase soil

removal.

7. Stronger alkali should be tested on wool, silk and bright colors.

8. Used for removal of protein stains, some red inks, dye and medicine stains.

9. Used in prepared protein formulas.

10. Used to accelerate hydrogen peroxide.

Protein formulas

1. Usually a mild alkali that is safe for the dyes on wool and silk. If heat is applied, the alkali will be activated, decreasing the safety factor. On very bright and vivid colors testing is advisable.

2. Very effective for neutralizing hydrofluoric acid or rust remover.

Ammonia 260

1. Evaporation Characteristics. When ammonia is put on a fabric and left to evaporate it will not leave an alkaline residue on the fabric. It could, however, cause a color change which would need an acid to neutralize.

2. Used for the removal of protein stains.

3. Neutralizes color change caused by acids.

4. Used for the removal of some inks, dyes and medicines.

5. Effective for the removal of soil on spotting board or in wetcleaning.

6. Will accelerate hydrogen peroxide.

7. Should be tested on wools, silks and vivid colors.

8. May set tannin stains.

Protein Procedures for Wools, Silks and Colors

1. Flush
2. Neutral lubricant
3. Mechanical action
4. Flush
5. Protein formula
6. Mechanical action
7. Flush but keep steam gun at a safe distance
8. Hydrogen peroxide plus ammonia
9. Heat
10. Flush
11. Acid
12. Flush

Protein Procedures for Light Colored Cottons, Linens and Rayons

1. Flush
2. Neutral lubricant

3. Mechanical action

4. Flush

5. Neutral lubricant plus ammonia.

6. Mechanical action

7. Flush

8. Peroxide plus ammonia (Test)

9. Heat

10. Flush

11. Acid

12. Flush

Neutralizing Acid Color Changes

1. Flush
2. Apply ammonia
3. Heat
4. Flush

Alkaline-Based Boosters

There are several alkaline-based products that act as boosters to enhance the wetcleaning process. Ammonia is not a good booster since it is highly alkaline and dissipates in the wetcleaning process. A booster will make the wetcleaning detergent more aggressive and accelerates the action of oxygen-based bleaches. Some boosters also have characteristics of softening water. Boosters, being alkaline

in nature, neutralize fatty acids found in soil making cleaning more effective. A neutral pH is 7 and boosters have pH that run from 8 to 11.

Baking Soda (Sodium Bicarbonate)

This has a pH of 8.1 and will effectively accelerate oxygen bleaches and make wetcleaning detergents more aggressive. The alkalinity is low so the acceleration is not too drastic.

Borax (Sodium Borate)

This has a pH of 9.5 and so this booster is more aggressive than baking soda. It also has a characteristic of being a water softener.

Washing Soda (Sodium Carbonate)

This is the most aggressive of the boosters since it has a pH of about 11.

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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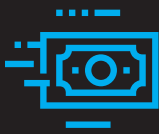
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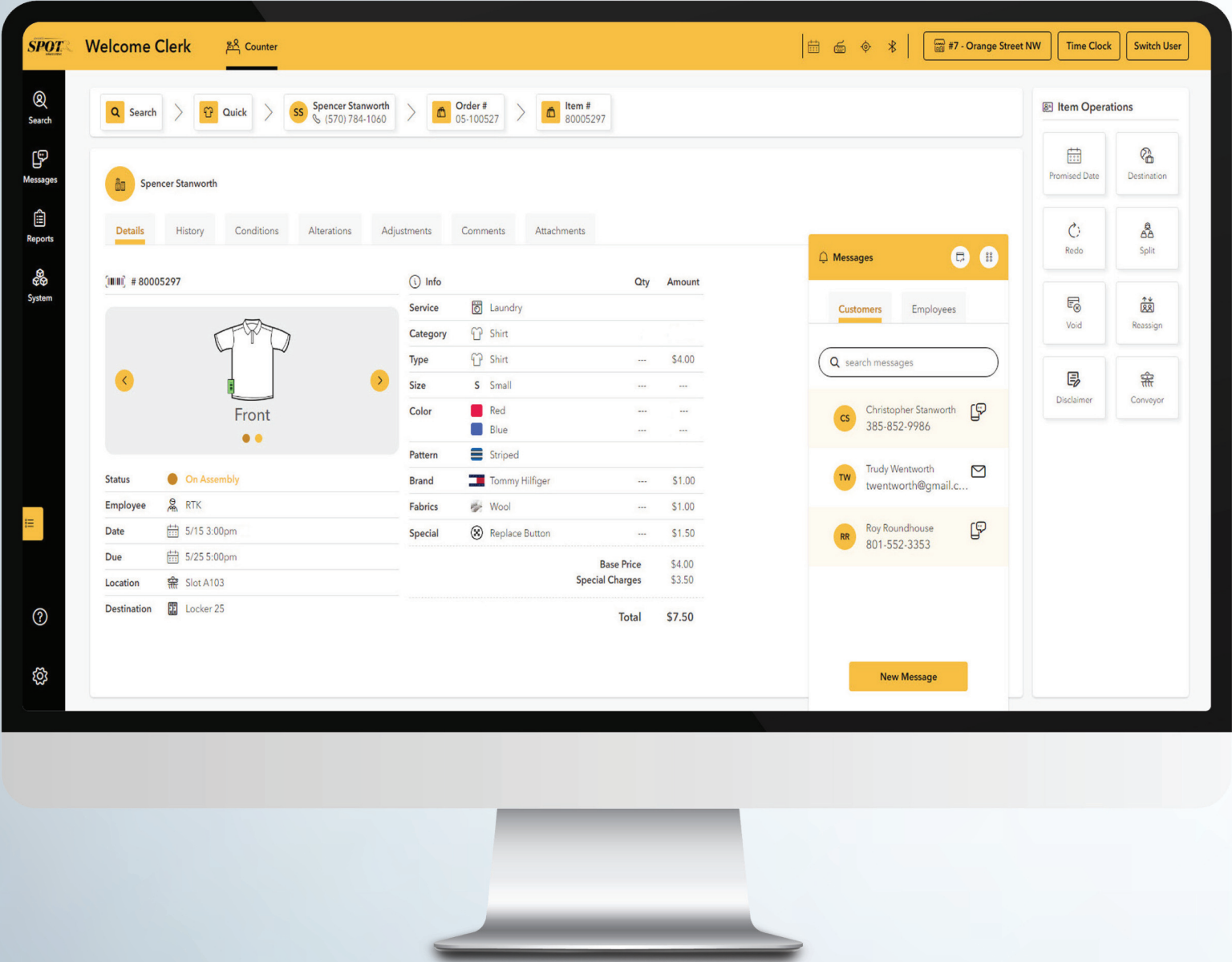
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