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Drycleaners implement new strategies to keep afloat

With Spring comes a new influx of vaccinations, more stimulus checks and, perhaps, for the first time in a long while, a feeling of hope for the future of drycleaning businesses that have struggled to stay afloat for the past year.

But, that doesn't mean things will necessarily become any easier for cleaners, or, for that matter, allied trades. During a recent DLI panel discussion among industry suppliers, one of the main topics was the ongoing disruption of the supply chain caused by various shortages.

As Mack Magnus of M&B Hangers noted, one of the most frustrating shortages is one of available trucks for shipping products.

"COVID's had an effect on

pretty much all types of transportation," he explained, adding that, at times, his company will have a truck booked a week in advance only to see it cancel at the last minute because a trucker tested positive for COVID-19 or had to be quarantined.

As a result, freight costs have risen dramatically and truck drivers find themselves in high demand with the ability to walk away from one load for another that might be more lucrative.

Also, with the delivery of all products becoming so prominent during the pandemic, big companies outside the industry are taking up a lot of other materials that cleaners need, such as plastic. Mike Ross of Aristrocraft Supply noted the nature of the problem: "We can get the prod-

Love and Laundry in L.A.



The Bower family of Los Angeles pose at the dedication of Bowers Retail Square in 2019, which honored the longtime accomplishments of Alice and Horace Bowers, Sr., (pictured flanking the street pole and holding a historic photo of their Bowers & Sons Cleaning company). Alice Bowers' parents owned the business, but Horace didn't enter the picture until after he hitchhiked across the country from Florida during the late 1940s. Once in L.A., he worked at the business for free for the first month to learn the trade and fell in love with Alice. Today, Bowers & Sons is run by the couple's daughter, Alice Bowers-Cowan (pictured to the right of Horace). For the full story, see page 6.

uct but the problem is, while our industry is struggling, there are industries that are thriving. And, if you think about every Amazon package you get, it's wrapped in

plastic in some way, shape or form. So, the price of resin is going through the roof."

Meanwhile, products shipped from overseas face delays as the

results of a shortage of shipping containers and ports are often significantly backed up due to COVID complications.

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Springfest EXPO convenes this month

Due to the popularity of last year's Fall Fest EXPO, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaning Association have decided to offer an abridged Spring version, set to take place this month from the 28th to the 30th.

This time out, the Dryclean-

ing and Laundry Institute has joined the ranks of sponsors for the three-day program.



"DLI felt last year's Fall Fest Expo was an incredible opportunity and cleaners from around the world really benefitted by participating," noted DLI President Jess Culpepper. "We are excited to be added as a sponsor and to help Springfest reach an even wider audience. This is a unique program and a great platform to get meaningful educa-

tion for your entire plant without the expense of travel."

The full slate of presenters and contributors is still being finalized; however, one keynote program will feature a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis on the drycleaning industry by leading cleaners.

Other topics will include

"Leveraging Your Brand and Solidifying Your Reputation" and a roundtable of leading cleaners will explore how they will prepare for the reopening of the industry in "How to Stay Up in a Down Market."

Also, attendees can expect more of the popular "breakout rooms" format from Fall Fest.

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DLI sets April schedule

With every new month comes another round of educational webinars from the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute. Last month, DLI offered a total of 20 events online. However, with Springfest EXPO taking place this month, that number will be a bit lower in April.

"This month's schedule is packed with more weekly training webinars covering topics that are not only important for you staff but for yourself and your management team," said DLI CEO Mary Scalco. "We also host peer-to-peer Zoom calls. Members hear how other cleaning business professionals

are adapting to the current business climate, share ideas, get answers to questions, and even just vent. DLI's doors are always open and all drycleaning professionals are invited to join DLI and participate in their events."

The association's twice-weekly peer-to-peer Zoom meetings will take place every Tuesday at 10 a.m. EST, and every Thursday at 11:30 a.m. EST.

DLI's webinar schedule for this month will be slightly different than past months in that it won't have any during the final week of the month during the Springfest EXPO. All programs will take place at 1 p.m. EST on

their respective days.

The first one will be set to take place on Tuesday, April 6 and will cover "Renegotiating and Terminating Leases for Drycleaners." It will be presented by EnviroForensics.

During the following week, DLI will host "OSHA Injury and Illness Reporting" with Mike Tatch, OSHA consultant, on Tuesday, April 13, followed by a panel discussion on "New Services Members Are Offering" the next day.

On April 20, the MidAtlantic Association of Cleaners will sponsor a panel discussion that

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DLI's Inner Circle gathers

The association's new virtual management group met for the first time in late February.

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When troubleshooting problems, cleaners should arm themselves with the right measuring tool.

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Writing things down is the most critical factor when it comes to succeeding at your business goals.

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Dan Eisen demonstrates how you can customize a training program for your drycleaning plant.

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Difficult times spur inspirational ideas for the industry

On March 11, it was the one-year anniversary of the day the coronavirus outbreak was officially declared a pandemic. Needless to say, the toll it has taken on this country has been overwhelming. Over half a million Americans have already died from COVID, and millions more struggled financially to stay above water. Even now, there are no official numbers on how many businesses closed down in that first year of the pandemic, but one Yelp! study discovered that close to 160,000 shuttered between April and September of 2020, which averages out to more than 800 businesses per day.

For most of the drycleaners left standing, it has been an exhausting year, rife with pivots and adaptations. Many have chosen similar strategies, trying to make the jump from cleaning a customer’s clothes to cleaning practically everything else inside the house, or relying heavily on their pick up and delivery routes. But, of course, every market is different, so there is no one-size-fits-all solution. So far, it has been quite fascinating to watch cleaners come up with creative and unusual methods to make their business more sustainable in the future.

While almost everybody is leaning more on delivery, Yale Cleaners found a way to raise the bar for home delivery by offering faster service, which, in this case, means same-day delivery service. The cleaners, based out of Tulsa, OK, has incorporated the use of its app for scheduling on-demand delivery, charging accordingly based on delivery distance for those who have their clothes in my noon but need them back soon. Owner John Rothrock likens the service to Door Dash, but for drycleaning.

Another company, Dublin Cleaners of Columbus, OH, recently announced that it will now be accepting cryptocurrency as a form of payment. Most people might be familiar with Bitcoin, but many other cryptocurrencies have also risen in popularity, including Ethereum, Tether, Cardano and Polkadot, to name a few. Owner Brian Butler probably doesn’t expect a big rush of cryptocurrency to hit his cleaners tomorrow, but he is letting his customers know that he is staying at the cutting edge of technology.

Meanwhile, another cleaners from Ohio — Kimmel Cleaners — found a creative way to bring in new revenue: the company recently opened up an apparel store offering sportswear and casual wear that can be customized with business logos and high school colors. One can only hope that such garments are purchased and occasionally cleaned by the company, as well. A century ago, the business started as

a small tailoring and pressing business, but it has never been afraid to expand its horizons, which is a big reason for its extended run of success.

One of the most drastic change we’ve seen from a cleaners recently belongs to Snedcor’s of Michigan. Owner Jim Gilligan closed down both brick-and-mortar locations last year and business is much better now, though that’s only because he built a state-of-the-art processing lab in an industrial park in 2019. Today, he operates without a storefront by having delivery vans drive the garments right into the facility that has an efficient layout that has helped reduce labor hours.

Perhaps there’s a lesson in all of these methods for drycleaners, but we have no doubt that there are many more out there that we have yet to hear about. After all, even in non-pandemic times, the drycleaning industry has no shortage of obstacles and challenges to overcome. For the Bowers family, owners of Bowers & Sons in Los Angeles, CA, over the years, they managed to flourish as a business even when the oppressive shadow of racism reared its ugly head.

Horace Bowers, who owned the business back during the days of the Jim Crow South, had to come up with a few creative and unusual solutions first to even get a job at a drycleaners, and then to obtain a loan from bank managers who declined him every time he had a face-to-face meeting. After reading the family’s story in this publication (see page 6), you really would be remiss if you didn’t search for *A Concierto is a Conversation* online. It is a remarkable short film — directed by Horace Bowers’ grandson, Kris, and Ben Proudfoot — that centers around both men’s personal histories. It has been nominated for an Academy Award for Best Documentary (Short Subject) and we are rooting for it to win later this month.

Throughout history, drycleaners have always faced arduous challenges to overcome, but one thing that hasn’t is the indomitable and creative spirit of those drycleaners who refuse to give up. Perhaps it’s ingrained in their collective DNA. Perhaps we are all simply a product of our times.

Either way, it has been inspiring to watch this industry working so hard through such trying times. It’s also impressive that so many business owners are sharing their ideas and best practices right now in an attempt to keep others from suffering a grim fate. As the one-year anniversary of the pandemic reminded us... this is not over yet. Unfortunately, others may not make it to the next anniversary. But, for those who do, they might just prove to be stronger than ever.

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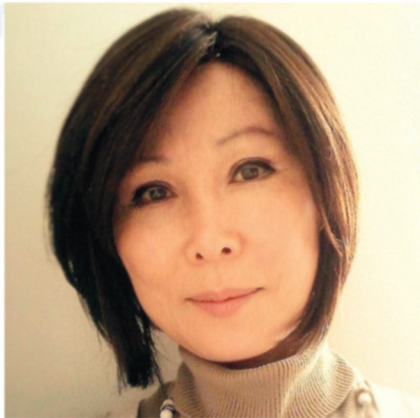


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Yet We Stand

It was during the 1940s when a young man named Horace Bowers hitchhiked from Florida to California, a prospect much more dangerous than it sounds. After all, Horace was African American and the roads he traveled were rife with unwelcome Jim Crow laws. During the journey, he overheard somebody mention the city of Los Angeles — a city he had never heard of before — and he decided that would be his final destination.

"He arrived in 1947 with \$28 in his pocket," recalled his daughter, Vivian Bowers-Cowan. "What he did was he pretended to be an employment agency and he started calling cleaners through the phone book. He started at the A's and one of the places he called where he landed a job was A Cleaners."

After the call, Horace then proceeded to send himself over to the job where he told the owner that he would be willing to work for free for a month in order to properly learn the trade.

The business belonged to Vivian's maternal grandmother and both of her future parents met there. Her mother, Alice, worked there. One day, she stepped on Horace's impeccably clean shoes. He said she owed him a lunch.

Later on, when Horace found out the family was selling the business, the twenty-year-old managed to borrow \$600 from his father to purchase it. He did have one caveat, however: Someone had to stay on board that could help him learn more about the cleaners. Alice stayed... for 71 years and counting as the couple is still married today.

Vivian noted, "Within two years, my father had gone from being homeless to being a business owner."

Horace's background included farming, so he wasn't afraid of hard work. In time, the name changed many times — Smith Cleaners, Westlake Cleaners, Bowers Cleaners and, finally, Bowers & Sons Cleaners — but one constant was the business's promise: *We care enough to add the personal touch.*

While Horace remained determined to make the business a success, Vivian and her two brothers grew up working there and learned from him firsthand how to clean and press garments the right way. Vivian's mother, Alice, loved the work and also strived for excellence.

"She would have to turn down the cuffs and take the whisk broom and dust them out and then fold them back up for the presser to press," she said. "Then, she would also take the pockets, turn them inside out, take the whisk broom and go into the crevices or the seams, and then push them back in and prepare them for the presser."

Over time, all three siblings have each taken turns at the helm of the business as adults. While her brothers eventually chose entertainment careers (screenwriting and acting), it took Vivian a while to choose drycleaning.

Instead, she originally studied clothing merchandising and worked many years for Bullock's of Los Angeles (later known as Macy's).

"It was rocky because, even though we were in Los Angeles, the racism was still there," she recalled. "It was hard

for me to move up but they could not deny my ability to work with clothing, which I go back to what I learned at the cleaners about fabric."

Vivian also spent many years working in sales for Kaiser Permanente next, a great job with great benefits, but then her father called

the effects of the recession. "Account after account after account left in 2008. It just took the wind out of my sails."

Even that challenge could not prepare her for last year's pandemic which Vivian described as "dismal." Nobody would blame her for regretting not selling the drycleaning business when she had a chance only one year before.

Department of Homeland Security, the Los Angeles Police Department and many others.

After overcoming quite a few challenges over the years, Vivian's best business advice to other cleaners is something that she has always taken to heart: "Believe in yourself. Don't give up."

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Vivian Bowers-Cowan

one day and said he was ready to close the doors of the family business. It was the early 1990s and the area around the cleaners had changed for the worse.

Vivian believes it never fully recovered following the Watts riots in 1965. By the time the 1992 Los Angeles riots erupted, the neighborhood had changed for the worse.

"By the late 1980s/early 1990s, the drug and gang culture had taken over. Business was very soft," she noted. "We were not making very much money."

Things were so bad that Vivian's oldest son was convinced the family was going to starve. However, much like her father, she possessed a steadfast determination to succeed. "At one point, back in 1996, I was doing the drycleaning, the routes, opening and closing, the machinery — I was doing it all," she recalled.

She also attended a Fast Track program at the University of Southern California where she learned about business plans, marketing, accounting and the need to raise her prices. Meanwhile, she also worked with the local community to rid the neighborhood of payphones used by drug dealers and paint over graffiti-covered storefronts. After a few years, the fruits of all that labor began to harvest.

"I was very pleased. We were very profitable," Vivian said. "By 1998, I think our business increased 200% to 300%."

By the turn of the century, things continued improving. Vivian's husband, George Cowan, joined the business and took over the delivery routes, which account for a large percentage of the company's revenue. The business also added a new logo featuring an eye-catching giraffe with the slogan "Heads above the rest."

By 2007, she was convinced that Bowers & Sons was on the verge of having record revenue numbers.

"I was feeling so good only to have the rug pulled," she recalled, describing

"The pandemic hurt us in a major way," she explained. "In the first week of March last year, yours truly was going to retire. I had signed a contract to sell the cleaners. It was a bittersweet moment."

"We were to the point of transferring the funds the week COVID hit," she said, noting that the offer was immediately taken off the table. "But, you know what? Financially, in dollars and cents, the business was worth more [last year at this time], but emotionally I am so happy."

The pandemic closed or drastically reduced many more accounts for venues like Walt Disney Hall, the Music Center and dance and drama productions for USC.

"At worse, we were down almost 60%. Today, when I look at the numbers we are about 38%," Vivian said. "Yet, we're here. Yet we stand."

To keep Bowers & Sons open during the pandemic, she relied on the PPP, loans and numerous grants. Fortunately, the business caught a few breaks, as well. Right before things really started to slow down, the company gained an account for Ritz-Carlton Residences. "In February of 2020, we had just acquired the account of all of their employees. You talk about a blessing," Vivian said.

More recently, the company received another boost of business when *Grey's Anatomy* began filming its 17th season. Bowers & Sons have cleaned items for the popular TV medical drama since it began in 2005.

"We do all of their sheets and linens that you see," she noted. "They came back with a bang. When they started shooting again — oh my gosh — because it's COVID and because it's a hospital show, there was an enormous amount of work from them. That was a big addition."

It also didn't hurt that the business has uniform cleaning accounts with the

It's never too late to be a success, a lesson Vivian knows firsthand from her own trials. However, she recently has seen her father, at the age of 92, reach new levels of accomplishment when he attended the Sundance Film Festival. He was featured in a short documentary film directed by his grandson (and Vivian's nephew), Kris Bowers, a jazz pianist and film composer whose body of work includes scores for (Best Picture Oscar winner) *Green Book* and the Netflix comedy drama show *Dear White People*.

The short film is called *A Concierto is a Conversation*, and it traces the story of Horace Bowers' struggles to travel from Florida to California and build up a drycleaning business while also following Kris Bowers' path to become an award-winning composer.

In the film, Horace noted how he could never get a loan back in the early days of Bowers & Sons despite being the owner. "I said, 'Something is wrong with this picture,'" he recalled.

Horace improvised. He surmised that bank tellers who met with him face-to-face always rejected his loan applications, so he grabbed a few applications to fill out and send by mail.

"A few days later, I got a call. 'Your loan is approved,'" he noted in the film. "I said, it's the color of my skin. I said, in the South they tell you. In Los Angeles, they *show* you. From then on, we started buying property. I would get things at the cleaner, everything, but nobody ever saw me. Everything was done by mail."

Perhaps the most poignant moment of the movie is when Horace expressed a creed he has always lived his life by, and it is one that ensuing generations have also taken fully to heart, including Vivian who has spent decades refusing to let her father's legacy end.

"People are constantly throwing up things to stop you in your life," Horace emphasized. "But, you've got to know you cannot stop me."



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Drycleaners try new strategies

Continued from page 1

Domestic or abroad, the allied trades are contending with numerous problems right now to try to keep drycleaners stocked with what they need. Some items that normally are abundant have become scarce.

“We went six months without being able to get Bounce or Downey from Proctor & Gamble, Ross added. “You don’t know what you’re going to get until it walks through the door. It makes it very difficult to plan.”

The recent winter storms also have wreaked havoc, closing dozens of chemical production companies in the Gulf Coast, including Dow, EXXON and BASF.

All these logistical issues means that drycleaners might have to make peace with the fact that they can only get, say, black hangers instead of their typical white. Distributors are offering substitutions for products facing shortages, and then helping customers adapt to the changes.

The worst thing cleaners can do now, however, is to buy in greater amounts and hoard items, which will only magnify the current supply chain situation.

Supply shortages are not the biggest shortage that most drycleaners are facing right now. Some drycleaners are coming up with creative solutions to cut overall costs, tap into new markets and become even more convenient — all in the name of increasing customers that have been hard to come by lately.

Rising to the Challenge

Yale Cleaners of Tulsa, OK, recently announced it will offer contactless *same-day* delivery within 30 miles of the customer’s closest Yale Cleaners location.

John Rothrock, president of the 77-year-old company, likened the service to “Door Dash, but for your drycleaning.”

“We want Yale Cleaners customers to feel confident that their clothes will be well taken care of when they drop their cleaning off at one of our locations,” he noted. “We know they are busy and we want to make this as convenient as we can.”

The service is exclusive to Yale Plus members who have the Yale Cleaners App (Android, iOS). They can drop off their drycleaning at any of the 11 Yale locations prior to noon.

When the order is complete, the customer is alerted on the app and from there he or she can choose to have the garments delivered on demand.

The service costs \$10 for 10 miles. The fee depends on the mileage range, but it is capped at \$19.50.

Meanwhile, over in Columbus, OH, Dublin Cleaners has expanded its customer payment options to now include accepting cryptocurrency. This is not the first time plant owner Brian Butler has embraced technology in the name of convenience. Not long ago, all of the company’s central Ohio locations went 100% cashless. Now, they are

accepting bitcoin and other forms of digital currency.

“When Tesla made their move to accept cryptocurrency, I thought why wouldn’t a small business do the same?” said Butler. “I ran the idea by our point-of-sales software company and our CPA, half expecting to hear the process would be complicated and very hard to manage for smaller and numerous transactions. Instead, they agreed it was a worthwhile investment.”

Other major companies accepting cryptocurrency include Twitter, Square, Facebook and PayPal. Though Butler doesn’t expect for customers to line up for the option just yet, he plans on offering special bonus gifts to the first ten customers who use the new payment option.

Going Bigger, Going Smaller

Other drycleaners are making much larger changes, including another company in Ohio — Kimmel Cleaners, a fourth generation family business that opted to grow aggressively during the pandemic by opening a new retail store, Kimmel Apparel. It sells t-shirts, sweatshirts and other sportswear for Wyandot County-area high schools and business clients.

The new store arrived after the company had to close six of its 10 locations during the pandemic. While drycleaning demand has dropped, the company’s director of strategic

growth, Brian Kimmel, told *Crawford County Now (CCN)* that 90% of Kimmel Corp’s revenue comes from renting uniforms, linens and other items.

Additionally, they now offer more than 18 brands of casual items, including Polo shirts, that can be adorned with company and high school logos.

“Over time, we’ve slowly looked at all the stores and just decided to do what made sense,” Kimmel told CCN. “Our society is so much more casual than what it used to be. They’re wearing Polo shirts to work, even in banks these days. It’s very casual, especially in the marketplace we’re in.”

In another market up north — in Howell, MI, to be more precise — one business adapted in perhaps the most extreme way: the business completely closed down its brick-and-mortar storefronts.

Last year, Snedcor’s owner Jim Gilligan decided that he could not keep the two locations open during the pandemic, so he didn’t. Instead, he converted to a 100% contactless pickup and delivery model.

Fortunately for Gilligan, he

had long considered going into that direction already and had made steps to do just that.

“In 2019, I built a brand new state-of-the-art process lab, and this lab is designed around delivery trucks,” he said.”

The processing lab is located in an industrial park and features 17’ tall ceilings and two tall overhead bay doors for the vans to drive through. The drycleaning equipment is laid out deliberately in a way to be the most efficient delivery system possible. The timing was perfect.

Once Gilligan realized the brick-and-mortar stores were going to contain more tumbleweeds than customers, he sped up the transition process.

“I did not envision closing our flagship store on Michigan Ave.,” Gilligan admitted. “That location has been serving drycleaning and laundry customers since 1914.”

While business is at about 40% of the pre-Covid numbers for Snedcor’s, the work now requires considerable less hours. As for the flagship store, when the economy improves Gilligan hopes to convert it into a community garden.

DLI plans April schedule

Continued from page 1

will focus on preventative maintenance and equipment repair. The next day, Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners will present “How to Stage a Grand Reopening Post-COVID.”

In addition to the live programs, DLI maintains an on-demand video library of every presentation.

To date, there are more than 70 videos covering a wide variety of topics, including: COVID-19 relief programs, diversification, maintenance, management, marketing, production, finishing, stain removal and business sales and acquisitions. The library can be accessed by DLI members by visiting DLIonline.org.



Almost every drycleaning-related topic you can think of has been covered by the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute during its past year of virtual programming. Look for the association’s first virtual stain removal program in May.

Springfest EXPO convenes soon

Continued from page 1

“Breakout rooms will be an integral part of the program,” emphasized Leslie Schaeffer, co-executive director of PDCA. “Attendees loved engaging with peers and sharing their experiences with other cleaners

throughout the country and this will be a conference highlight.”

Details of the program will be made available soon on the following sponsoring association websites: www.nefabricare.com, www.pdclean.org, and www.sefa.org.



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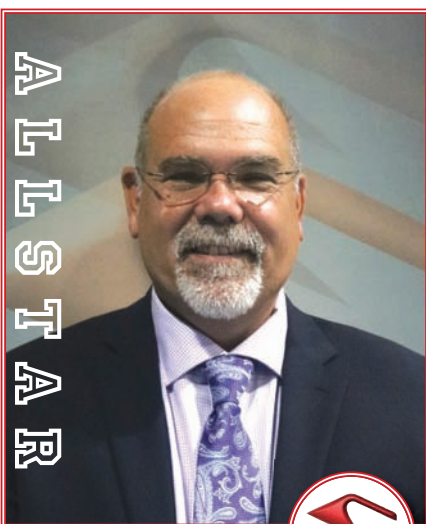


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DLI's Inner Circle hosts first meeting

In late February, the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute hosted its first meeting for its new Inner Circle virtual management group program. The new service is spearheaded by veteran management group director Diana Vollmer of Ascend Consulting Group. It is composed of 13 members from the U.S. and Canada.

During the inaugural meeting, the group had much to discuss.

"We talked about the state of the industry and what immediate opportunities are available, what you can do now, during COVID, to help sustain and grow your business," noted Brian Johnson, DLI's director of education and group liaison.

For the first outing, members of the group forged new relationships and exchanged contact information so they can discuss ideas in more detail between quar-

terly meetings.

"With the introduction of DLI's Inner Circle, there is unprecedented access to one of the savviest minds in the fabricare industry — Diana Vollmer," noted group member Jamin Soehn, owner of Classic Cleaners in Red Deer, Alberta. "After completing our first four-hour online meeting in the comfort of my own office I am already impressed with the value gained from the group."

"Every Inner Circle member has certain performance indicators and metrics that could and should be improved upon to maximize profitability," he continued.

Another group member — Kathy Benzinger of Benzinger's Clothing Care in Hamburg, NY —

agreed. "A lot has changed in our industry since the pandemic began," she said. "Diana's wisdom and knowledge of the industry are a great benefit for all of us."

Overall, Vollmer has more than 20 years' experience running similar management groups specifically for drycleaning business owners. For those concerned about the cost, she pointed out, "The price of participation is dwarfed by the gains you 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."

As a way to further reduce participation costs, DLI opted for a

virtual model in order to eliminate the cost of fees, travel, meals, lodging and other costs that can add up in order be able to meet in person.

Your New Advisory Committee

DLI's Inner Circle gives members a confidential and structured method of getting together to assess each other's performance and share observations.

Quarterly half-day meetings will be held online and hosted by Vollmer. Group meetings constitute a tool for increased profitability offering members benchmarks and best practices that participants can use to implement practical tactics and strategies to improve overall performance.

Participants gain access to multiple perspectives in the form of informal auditors without hiring a costly review board service.

How to Join a Group

DLI's first Inner Circle filled up very quickly, so the Institute is starting a second group. Space is very limited.

All cleaners are invited to join a group at \$198/month. A 50% discount applies to DLI members, bringing participation costs to just \$99/month. A link to DLI's Inner Circle program is on the DLIonline.org home page.

Foster-Stephens, Inc. celebrates 85 years

Foster-Stephens recently announced its 85th anniversary as a national supplier of textile preservation products. The company was founded in March 1936 by Elmer (Bill) Jones in Chicago, IL. Jones began by selling posters door to door to drycleaners.

Over the years, Foster-Stephens' product line expanded, and he introduced the first wedding gown preservation box, the Keepsake Pak, at a national drycleaners show in 1947.

"Reflecting on where we've been in 85 years and where we intend to go in the decades ahead, we believe we have a solid foundation for the future built on generations of trust," said Nancy L. Jones, president of Foster-Stephens. "We are proud of all the hard work and dedication our employees have shown the company and our customers over the years, especially this last year with the pandemic."

To learn more about Foster-Stephens' lines of wedding gowns, preservation boxes and muslin bags, visit the company's website at www.fosterstephens.com.

Team Products announces new laundry powder

Perfect Eucal Laundry Powder Concentrate contains eucalyptus oil, an essential oil that has been used for centuries for its health and antiseptic qualities. The detergent is 100% soluble even in cold water so it leaves no residue on your clothes. Its eco-friendly formula is greywater and septic

water safe. It is hypo-allergenic even for a very sensitive skin. It contains no artificial perfume or dye, yet its powerful formula offers you an exception performance. You can use half the amount of other detergent and still get a better cleaning performance.

You can use half the amount of other detergent and still get a better cleaning power, making it very economical. It even cleans and protects the inside of your machine. For more information, please visit www.TeamProductsUSA.com or call Shellie Hong at (201) 313-7191. Her email address is Shellie@Teamproductsusa.com.



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Schedule of Events includes - 2:00-5:00pm EST Daily

Wednesday: Cultivating Your Team

- 2:00 - 2:30 Opening Session & Welcome from Sponsors featuring a state of the industry discussion: Peter Blake, Leslie Schaeffer
- 2:30 - 3:45 "Leading through the CHAOS"
- 4:00 - 5:00 "Customer Service Consistency Leads to Excellence" featuring Jennifer Marquart
- 5:00 Daily Recap & Breakout Rooms

Thursday: Forming a Culture of Success

- 2:00 - 2:45 "Your Branding & Reputation Management Strategies Will Shape Your Future"
- 3:00 - 3:45 "What to Do When YOU Can't Do it All" – Effective Management Strategies
- 4:00 - 5:00 Fireside Chat: Finding, Hiring and Retaining A Great Team
- 5:00 Daily Recap & Breakout Rooms

Friday: The Future of Fabricare

- 2:00 - 3:30 "How to Stay Up in a Down Market?" – Industry leaders Share their Successes & Best practices
- 3:45 - 5:15 S.W.O.T. Analysis of the Drycleaning Industry: Leaders in the industry will give their perspectives
- 5:15 Cocktail Reception & Wrap-up



Cost: **Member:** \$199/per Member (unlimited attendees from member plant) **Non-Member:** \$275. Participation includes video recordings of sessions & added content for a minimum of 3 months.

For more information, contact Peter Blake at Peter@SEFA.org, 617-791-0128 or Leslie Schaeffer at Leslie@pdcclean.org, 215-830-8495



Sponsorships Available

Watch Association webpages: nefabricare.com, pdcclean.org, and SEFA.org for updates and new additions.

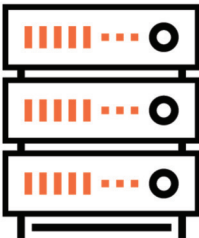


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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Delving into the safe use of meters

The next series of articles will be devoted to the safe use of meters in preventing and troubleshooting common problems encountered in the operation of your plant.

Included will be the different tests and measurements required, why they are necessary, how to take them, and the meaning of the results discovered.

Don't be concerned about being familiar with terms used in this article, they will be defined and explained as the need arises.

Also, for those of you who are hesitant to tackle electrical testing, I'll be showing you how to safely use these devices.

The list of meters which this series of articles will cover are as follows:

1. VOLT/OHM/AMMETER — General electrical testing.
2. DIGITAL LASER THERMOMETER — Boiler valve performance checks.
3. PH and TDS METERS — Boiler chemistry testing.

Lots of Different Meters — Which One to Buy?

The first type of meter in this series is used for general electrical testing and is usually a multimeter.

A multimeter has the capability of running many different tests using a single meter. The price of meters is usually dependent on accuracy, repeatability, ease of use, and ruggedness.

Requirements for plant troubleshooting are within the range of a multitude of these inexpensive multimeters available priced under \$100.

The first time you find and fix a problem using them, you'll have paid for the investment.

This is a list of convenient features a meter should have and what they do:

1. METER TYPE — Every meter will have a selection of different measuring capabilities. The three most important for our purposes are voltage, amperes, and resistance. Secondary measurements such as frequency, capacitor and transistor checks, temperature,

MEASUREMENT SELECTION OF THE CLAMP-ON DIGITAL MULTIMETER

This is the range of settings for measuring current in AMPERES.

This is the range testing diodes or for the continuity of a circuit. the selection is made by using the select push button.

This is the range of settings for measuring resistance in ohms . The symbol for OHMS is Ω . **There can be NO VOLTAGE at the points you are measuring** or you'll blow a fuse inside the meter. Before taking a measurement **Always test the meter leads by touching them together** and making sure the reading is either 0 or very low.

This button is used only to toggle between diode or continuity tests.

This button will hold the maximum reading for all voltage and current tests and is very useful for motor testing.

This button will hold the reading when it is pressed and can be used on any test.

This is the range of settings for measuring **VOLTS AC**. The symbol for VOLTS AC is $V \sim$.

This is the range of settings for measuring **VOLTS DC**. The symbol for VOLTS DC is $V \cdot$.

SYMBOLS USED

$V \cdot$ DC VOLTAGE
 $V \sim$ AC VOLTAGE
 Ω RESISTANCE (OHMS)
 \rightarrow DIODE TEST
 \rightarrow CONTINUITY
2/20A~2-20 AMP AC
200/400A~200-400 AMP AC

diode testing, etc. are rarely required at the level of troubleshooting you will be encountering in a drycleaning or laundry plant. Therefore, there is no reason to spend money on a meter that has features that you'll never use. With these parameters in mind, my choice is the versatile clamp-on volt/ohm/ammeter. The reason for this choice is the ability for this type of meter to non-inva-

sively measure AC current without interrupting the wiring of the circuit under test.

2. AUTO SHUT OFF (SLEEP MODE) — There are few things more aggravating than to attempt using a meter than discovering you had not turned it off after the previous use and the battery is dead. This is avoidable if you select a meter with auto shut-off. These meters shut down automatically after several minutes when there is no change in the reading.

3. PEAK OR MAXIMUM HOLD — When engaged at the start of a test, this feature automatically captures the maximum reading of voltage or current throughout the present test. This feature is vital for troubleshooting motors.

4. HOLD — Similar to the Peak or Maximum Hold selection but it retains whatever the meter is reading when the button is pressed.

5. AUDIBLE CONTINUITY FUNCTION — When testing fuses or tracing wires it's handy having this feature that will buzz when there is continuity (low resistance) so you needn't be watching the meter for the result of the test.

6. BACKLIGHTING — This feature illuminates the background of the LCD meter screen for better visibility in poorly lit conditions. Although this feature is handy to have, don't spend extra money or sacrifice any of the preceding features to obtain the backlighting.

There are a few more inexpensive auxiliary items that are very handy to have when using the meter.

1. CARRYING CASE — Meters are, afterall, a precision measuring device and must be kept clean and dry as well as having a place to store auxiliary leads, clips, batteries, etc. A rigid carrying case or a

rugged zip-lock plastic bag is the solution.

2. EXTRA LEADS — Extra leads that can be plugged in and used as extensions as well as adapting to alligator clips and insulation piercing devices.

3. ATTACHMENT AND PIERCING DEVICES — These tools provide access to the wiring on the devices under test.

4. EXTRA BATTERIES AND FUSES — Hopefully, you won't be using this meter frequently so rather than going to use the meter and finding a dead battery or blown fuse is frustrating.

Keeping these items in the case with your meter case is a good idea.

That's it for this month. Next month, I'll be continuing with how to use the clamp-on volt/ohm/ammeter and by then I'll also have meter kits available which include the equipment I'll be describing in the monthly article so you can easily follow along as you read the articles.

The price will be under \$100 and include everything you will require.

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. Address any questions or comments to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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-Mike Astorino, Fabricare Cleaners

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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

The wrinkles of shirt pressing

Shirts are a pain because it takes a while to train a presser. Pressing shirts is more of a specialty than other items, so much so that we sometimes overpay a shirt presser just because we have found someone that is good and we want to keep them on the staff.

If a presser does an inferior press job on a shirt, the touch up necessary may take longer than it took to press the shirt (correctly or incorrectly) in the first place. This is important and contributes heavily to the making shirts a royal pain. Conversely, when an inspector finds a pressing defect on, say, a pair of pants, the touch-up necessary to bring the garment from unacceptable to acceptable often takes mere seconds. A quick pass with the all-steam iron or dancing the pants — still on the hanger — over a puffer and you're done. Try that with shirts. It will yield poor results.

I remember the manager of a competitor telling me about 35 years ago that it took her one year of working with a

new employee before she felt like that employee could hold her own on a shirt press. She was actually much more blunt: "I gotta carry them for a year before they're any good to me."

I'm not sure that I agree with that, but they did have old clunky equipment that is very hard to train on. It isn't so difficult with the newer equipment. But when a drycleaner has three drycleaning pressers and one shirt presser, who is most expendable? Hard to say, I suppose, but I guess that you'd rather hold to the shirt presser. I have been to many plants and am told that the girl pressing pants (or some other garment type) is a brand new employee — first day or second day. I can't immediately tell. I admit that the smaller the plant, the more evident this would be, but the fact is that drycleaning pressers can often cover each other. The shirt presser is on her own. If several pressers in the drycleaning department are contributing to the total out-

put of the department, a new presser — or a weak one — will not slow down the others.

In some shirt departments, the total output is only as fast as the slowest presser. I don't think that this is ever true in the drycleaning arena. If the quality is sub-standard, it is unlikely that redoing a drycleaning piece will take longer than pressing it in the first place. Also, the new employee doesn't have a negative impact. If a new employee is being trained by your best pants presser who usually presses 36 pants per hour, but can't today because he/she is training the newcomer, you get a double-whammy: no 36 pants per hour plus entry-level productivity from the new presser. This probably doesn't happen. What is more likely is an introductory training session, followed by intermittent follow-ups. Speed will come with practice.

Conversely, in the shirt department, it takes a concerted effort to train a presser. An introductory training session will not make the grade lest

we plan to accept poor quality, which we don't. If a new employee is allowed to "learn as they go" the resulting quality will likely be very poor, as well as productivity. Worse, still, is the all-important fact that touch-up time will exceed

When we find an employee who doesn't need much training (which is extremely important because we may not be able to train him or her anyway), we pay them too much.

the original press time. This is the most distressing fact about training a shirt presser.

If you doubt this, look at it this way: If you are doing 90 shirts per hour, you are producing a shirt in 45 seconds. If the press job is unacceptable, how often can you take that shirt and make it "perfect" or acceptable in 45 seconds or less in the touch-up area? I bet 50 bucks on "never."

To make all this even more distasteful, picture a two-person unit with a new presser and an experienced one. Does the experienced presser make up for the deficiencies of the new employee? Or, does the inexperienced presser slow down the new one? You already know the answer.

I think that a key reason for all of these training issues is that, in many plants, the managers can't train because they aren't capable of pressing. Many times, I ask the manager to press. Usually I ask this so that I can evaluate the supervisor's ability to train, figuring that the first step to assuring that they can train is assuring that they know the job in the first place. Some of them are not only incapable of training or pressing but actually look down upon the chore and the people that are paid to do it. This is bad for a cornucopia of reasons, not the least

of which is the wedge that it cements between employee and employer.

You surely lose control over the employee if you are incapable of doing his or her job. When you see a substandard press job, you can not tell the difference between equipment errors and operator errors. You don't know if this defect can be prevented by follow-up training or not. Frankly, you take the presser's word for it. That is like a bookkeeper auditing himself. With the manager's inability to train, you breed laissez-faire quality and, worse, declining quality standards. Raising the quality standards is completely out of the question. How much does that suck?

So, in the final analysis, when we find an employee who doesn't need much training (which is extremely important because we may not be able to train him or her anyway) we pay them too much. We do this to keep them around. By itself, that isn't such a bad thing. A presser who can't press is worse than a singer who can't sing or a dancer who can't dance. If you have a good quality employee, you want them around and you want to keep them. But, is the presser "good" for the right reasons? Is the presser "good" because she doesn't irritate the boss? Is the presser "good" because he gets along with his co-workers? Sometimes, it is those kinds of reasons that make an employee "good." Those are important qualities, no doubt, but a quality product must remain the gold standard — just like it is for you, right?

"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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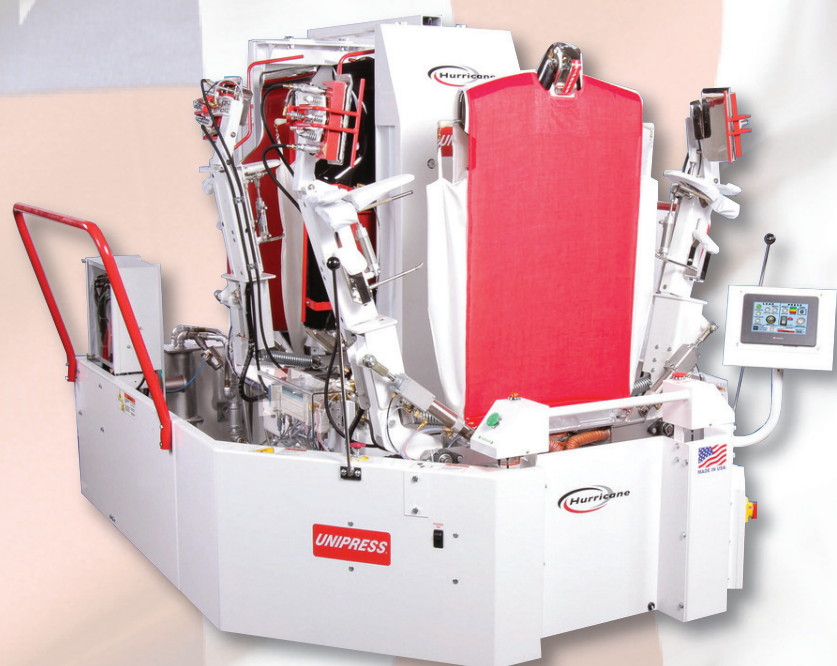
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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

Honoring a Hall-of-Fame route driver

As I enter my official 20-year anniversary in this industry, I continue to go with this saying: “A driver has to do more than just drive.” Running successful routes includes customer service, sales, inventory control and self-accountability. For Mark Albrecht and I, we

have the pleasure of coaching and learning from some of the best in the business. Mark just completed his 1,000th ride-along last year and I am approaching 20 years of route development and management in this industry. We both have worked with many drivers, but only a few truly

stand out as a Hall of Famer. The Route Pros are proud to induct Randy Unruh of The Cleanery in Albuquerque, New Mexico, as the 5th member of the Route Pros Hall of Fame.

Why Randy? For starters, he was named Route Driver of the Year in back-to-back years. He had to beat out hundreds of drivers we work with annually. He was the perfect example of raising the level of customer service while being 150% loyal to the company. He was a lifer who loved the industry and his retention standards raised the bar across the board. Character and integrity were his top two ingredients to his demeanor, and it naturally showed in the field as well as at the plant.

For anyone to have a successful route, your driver needs to exemplify attention to detail, customer care/awareness and adhere to company policies while

striving to grow. Randy Unruh excelled in all facets of that. While not being the best route developer, he was able to grow the routes through natural referrals and limited attrition due to the relationship component he developed. Owner Kurt Lucero of The Cleanery hit it on the head when he said, “Route delivery is not a transactional business, but 100% relational and Randy built and maintained his routes with ease by simply being Randy.”

Randy Unruh passed away last December of cancer at age 40. Most of his route customers felt like they lost a family member. A year earlier we had given Randy a special award — the Bill Porter Award for perseverance. His passing isn’t why he is in our Hall of Fame; his attitude is still the all-time best. If Randy was on our monthly calls today, he would say “Come on guys, what Covid?” No excuses, no hurdles and no

quit was Randy on a route, just like in life, and how he ran his routes made a difference in Route Pro Nation.

I rode with him three times and I will say it was usually the fastest eight hours I would have on a route day.

Mark Albrecht said it best, “My time with him will never go overlooked. His humbleness, attentional to detail and the qualities he brought to the team at The Cleanery.”

The bottom line is this: If you had a route team full of Randy Unruhs, you would dominate the market with ease. As Mark said, “We love you and we will miss you forever.”

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.



Route Pro Hall of Fame Inductee Randy Unruh (pictured in center) is flanked by Bill Fletcher and James Peuster, who is handing him his Bill Porter Perseverance Award, as well as by Kurt Lucero and Jackson Trigg to his right.



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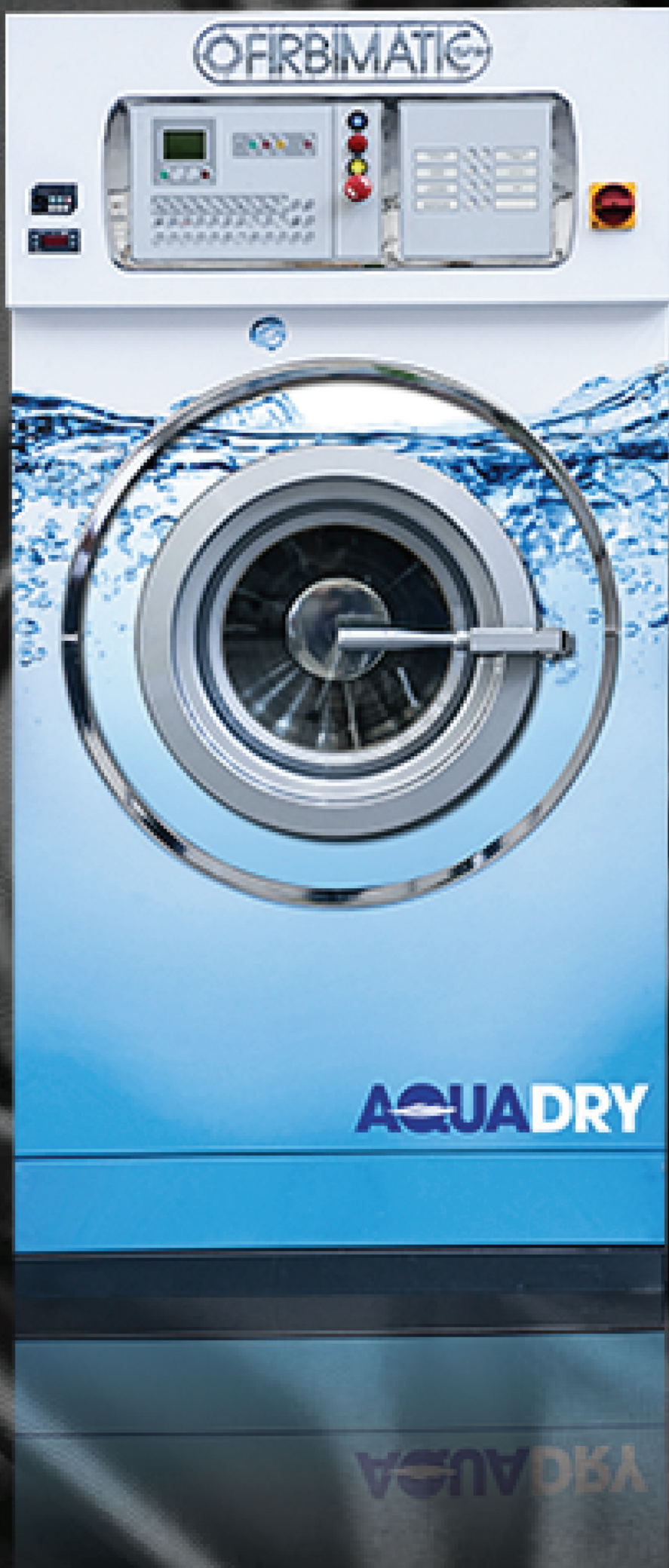
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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Be ready for OSHA inspectors

The Occupational Safety and Health Act is 52 years old. There is talk that much of federal regulation of COVID in the workplace will fall under OSHA's safety umbrella (or in state programs, the state agency charged with enforcing federal safety and health regulations). There will be new regulations and an expansion of enforcement efforts.

You would think that OSHA regulations would be simple and easy to follow, based on common sense and intelligent analysis. Unfortunately, even seasoned compliance officers (that's what OSHA calls inspectors) have to consult regulations (and their interpretations) to decide if a condition it found in a workplace was in compliance with a particular regulation. It takes OSHA months to issue citations following an inspection, in large part because it has to analyze the regulations to make them fit into a particular set of facts.

Of course, an employer is expected to know in an eye blink whether a condition violates those regulations. OSHA gets six months to decide whether to issue citations; employers must comply with regulations without the benefit of six months to analyze all the factors. Employers should not need legal advice on safety matters; safety should be prac-

ticed based on operational expertise, not legal research.

I have practiced OSHA law for over 30 years, and I have never understood why Congress adopted the current scheme of fines. When it is clear that OSHA is out to penalize employers, rather than advise them on safer ways to conduct business, employers will concentrate more on avoiding fines through compliance, and less on adopting novel, and more effective, safety practices. It's only human nature (or in some cases, self-preservation).

Over the years, I have encouraged employers to do everything in their power to provide a safe and healthy workplace, and at the same time, fight OSHA's attempts to inspect them and assess fines for violations that amount to technical failure to have a red sign instead of a yellow sign, for example.

Once citations are issued, employers should think twice before accepting a "good deal" to reduce a fine. If there is a later citation, penalties will certainly be larger. Moreover, a company that makes OSHA's life easier will also be a target for future inspections.

If you are faced with an OSHA inspection, remember first that the inspector is just like a police officer looking to get evidence of a crime. If you

do not want him to come into your plant, you can require him to obtain a warrant.

Contrary to the popular notion, inspectors do not "go easy" on employers who are cooperative and come down hard on those who don't. In fact, experience indicates that the opposite is true. The more difficult an employer makes it, the quicker the inspector leaves and goes to the next, more cooperative employer. Besides, the law requires a compliance officer to cite any violation he sees, and it is technically against the law to give an employer "a break."

An employer is expected to know in an eye blink whether a condition violates OSHA regulations.

All personnel, especially supervisors, should be told that if any government official presents himself at the shop or plant, the company safety officer or upper management should be contacted.

Even more importantly, they should be told that no one — I repeat, no one — is permitted to come into the shop or inspect the plant unless the boss says so. Most compliance offi-

cers will be willing to wait or come back later when the manager or safety person is available. If not, let them leave to obtain a warrant.

Virtually all compliance officers will accept this condition rather than run out for a warrant, which will mean more work. Do not be intimidated by the inspector. Make him be patient. He is an intruder, and he should only be admitted on your terms. He is not your friend; even if he is, his job is to find safety and health violations, cost you money, and testify against you should you contest the citations.

Any conversations with the inspector should take place in private. Ask to see his credentials. If he does not have them, throw him out. If he does, write down his name, address, telephone number, supervisor's name, and supervisor's telephone number. Then, find out why he is there. If he does not tell you specifically — in other words, does not say more than he is there to "inspect" — throw him out.

If the inspector says he is there based on a complaint, ask him for a copy. If he does not have it with him, tell him to call his office to get all the information on it. Find out who filed it, what the specifics of the complaint are, and what standard the complaint would violate, if valid.

If you cannot get straight answers, make the compliance officer get a warrant. At the risk of sounding like a salesman, if you are not getting straight answers, involve your attorney, preferably someone who knows a little about safety and health law.

If you do get straight answers, you can consider letting the compliance officer inspect. But, only let him inspect the area involved in the complaint. Do not let him inspect the entire plant; he would not be permitted to do so even with a warrant. If you are concerned that you are not in compliance, make him get a warrant and give yourself time to correct the situation. You might avoid a citation. If the inspection actually does take place, the company safety officer should limit the inspection as much as possible. You select the routes; do not let him wander.

The company representative should carry a note pad and a camera, taking photographs when the compliance officer does, and writing down what the compliance officer says. One warning, however. Do not write anything down that could be incriminating; OSHA may be entitled at a later date to see your notes.

If the inspector asks to talk to employees, insist on being present. If he wants private interviews, you can require a warrant. You do not, however, have to disrupt your work for these interviews.

It is also a good idea to let employees know ahead of time that they do not have to talk to OSHA. During an inspection, it is important not to volunteer any information that could be used against the company. Never admit a violation; at most, say you will review it. Do not help OSHA prove its case against you.

In sum, you can control an OSHA inspection more than you realize. If you do not, you may very well find yourself defending your safety practices before an administrative law judge or hearing officer.

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



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BY KERMIT ENGH

BUILDING VALUE

You may want to write this down

As we roll into the second quarter of the year, you may be finally starting to consider your business goals for this year. Given how 2020 has gone, maybe your primary ambition is to survive in 2021. Perhaps you're going to create a recurring revenue stream or finally hire that general manager. Or maybe you've decided to start preparing your exit strategy. Whatever your goals are, the most important thing you can do now is write down your plan to achieve them.

A Revealing Study

This point was driven home recently by a study published in the *British Journal of Health Psychology*. The project was designed to see what impact stimuli would have on participants' level of exercise. Researchers divided a random sample of participants into three groups. Group One was asked to read an excerpt of something not related to exercise, then asked to keep track of their workouts. Group Two was asked to read a motivational excerpt about the benefits of exercise, then asked to keep track of their

workouts. Group Three was asked to read the same motivational excerpt as the second group about the benefits of exercise but were asked to write down their exercise goals for the coming week.

The Results

When the researchers sat down to analyze the results, they were surprised to find that among the motivated group (Group Two), just 35% exercised once per week. That was slightly less exercise than Group One (36%) even though they were motivated to work out. When the researchers analyzed Group Three's exercise log, they were stunned to find that 91% of them had worked out. The only difference between Groups Two and Three was that the third group was asked to write down their goals. That simple task seems to have almost tripled their likelihood to succeed. The researchers concluded that motivation alone has virtually no impact on our actions. Instead, it is motivation coupled with a written action plan of how to achieve your goals that has the most significant impact on your results.

Every year on January 1st, I write my new year's goals down on paper. I divide them into various categories: Business, Financial, Personal, House projects, & Farm projects. For those of you who don't know me yet, my wife and I own a Christmas tree farm in Nebraska. On this day, I also call all my kids to do the same thing for their own goals. I'm not sure that they actually do this exercise, but they tell me they do. I keep my list close by to review throughout the year. It is amazing when you write down your goals, how many you accomplish. I have also done this with my employees, and they have relayed the same result. I'm sorry to say that for 2020, my success rate was below average, but 2021 is a new year.

Ten Resolutions That Will Boost the Value of Your Company

If your goal is to build a more valuable company in 2021, here are some 2021 resolutions to consider:

- 1. Stop chasing revenue.** A bigger company is not necessarily a more valuable one if the extra sales come from products and services that are too reliant

on you to deliver them.

- 2. Start surveying your customers using the Net Promoter Score methodology.** It's a fast and easy way for your customers to give you feedback, and it's predictive of your company's growth in the future.
- 3. Sell less stuff to more people.** The most valuable companies have a defensible niche selling a few differentiated products and services to many customers. The least valuable businesses sell lots of undifferentiated products and services to a concentrated group of buyers.
- 4. Drop the products or services that depend on you.** Consider dropping any services and products that require your time and cash and don't significantly contribute to your business's value.
- 5. Collect more money up front.** Turn a negative cash flow cycle into a positive one, and you boost your business's value and lessen your stress load.
- 6. Create more recurring revenue.** Predictable sales from subscriptions or recurring contracts mean less stress in the short term and a more valuable business over the long run. For example, the creation of recurring subscription revenue such as wash-dry-fold or periodic household item cleaning is ideal for a subscription service model.

- 7. Be different.** Refine your marketing strategy to emphasize the point of differentiation that customers value. Be relentless in highlighting this advantage. Many people refer to this as your value proposition. If you were to list three things that your company excels in that none of your competitors can,

claim all three.

- 8. Find a backup supplier for your most critical raw materials.** Consider placing a small order to establish a commercial relationship and diversify the sources of your most difficult-to-find materials. In this unpredictable market, many suppliers have also gone out of business. Always have a backup.
- 9. Teach them to fish.** Answer every employee question of you with "What would you do if you owned the business?" Your goal should be to cultivate employees who think like owners so they can start answering their questions without coming to you.
- 10. Create an instruction manual.** Document your most important processes so your employees can do their work independently. This is best done by your employees, reviewed and approved by you, and never changed without your concurrence. Here's to building a more valuable company in 2021 and food for thought as you are thinking about making 2021 your best year yet.

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 as a Certified Value Builders Coach allows him to share his extensive background in strategic planning, finance, process improvement, packaging and branding, employee training programs, profitability, cost analysis, acquisition analysis and succession planning. Contact him at kengh@mfm.com.



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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Creating your own training program

I must commend DLI for the fine job they have been doing with their online training efforts.

Drycleaners have been able to improve their quality and have been exposed to handling difficult items such as wedding gowns.

In these difficult times, it becomes more important for drycleaners to improve their expertise and quality.

In line with that concept, I have been designing training sessions on specific topics. The training is designed to last 45 minutes.

For example, the training sessions I did for Wedding Gown Preservation ran like this:

- We asked the people what they knew about the subject.
- We provided information.
- We had review questions.

[Editor's Note: In order to illustrate how a person might host a training session at their own drycleaning plant, Dan has included the following sample one with the topic of sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate, and sample review questions for attendees.]

Facts About Sodium Perborate and Sodium Percarbonate

1. These bleaches are oxidizing agents. They put oxygen in a fabric and stain changing them chemically.
2. Oxidizing agents are more permanent than reducing agents.
3. Sodium perborate is a solid form of hydrogen peroxide and sodium carbonate. It is alkaline in nature.
4. Sodium percarbonate is a solid form of hydrogen peroxide and sodium metaborate. Sodium percarbonate has an advantage of sodium perborate in that it dissolves easier and works at lower water temperatures better.
5. These bleaches release oxygen slowly and therefore have advantages over either bleaches.
6. Many drycleaners fail to rinse and neutralize these bleaches. If not rinsed and neutralized, they will continue to affect the fabric and cause yellowing.
7. They are referred to as color-safe bleaches. It is a misnomer. No bleach is completely color safe. They will readily

bleed colors.

8. They will whiten fabrics so both pieces of an outfit must be soaked together.

9. They will remove the last traces of wetside stains, not dry-side. This means it is more effective to remove a stain by other methods first and bleaches as the last step.

10. They are also effective as a spotting board bleach. It is applied to a stain with a lubricant to hold it in place. Use a light feather of steam to heat it and then flush. Then apply and acid and flush again. Remember, heat accelerates bleach. Every 18°F doubles the chemical action. Remember to test fabrics and color.

11. What to do if a color change occurs after bleaching and it is not removed with an acid. Use a reducing bleach such as sodium bisulphite or sodium hydrosulphite.

12. These bleaches will affect metallic fabrics and trimming.

How to Use

1. Put two ounces of bleach per gallon of water at 100°F. Add one ounce of neutral lubri-

cant per gallon of water.

2. pH paper can be used to determine if the concentration of bleach is adequate.

3. Soak a few hours or overnight.

4. Rinse.

5. An acid bath is necessary. Use oxalic acid or acetic acid at the ratio of two ounces per gallon of water.

6. Rinse again as a last step.

Review Questions

1. Temperature of water when bleaching.
2. The chemical pH of bleach.
3. How long can garments be left in a bleach bath?
4. What is mixed in with the bleach bath?
5. What stains does it work on?
6. What is the measurement for bleaching?
7. Can you test if you have enough bleach in the bath?
8. Can I bleach out soil?
9. If I get a reaction on the metallic trimming, how do I correct it?

10. What accelerates these bleaches?

11. Steps to correct color change on a white gown.

12. How do I bleach a gown with a colored trim?

13. Can I mix it with water and spray it on a garment?

14. What is a sour?

15. Why is it important to rinse and sour?

16. What is a color-safe bleach?

17. Can I use home products containing these bleaches?

18. What makes colors run when I use these bleaches?

Any person interested in conducting a training session, I would be happy to help you. I can either be part of the training, or provide you with the information free of charge.

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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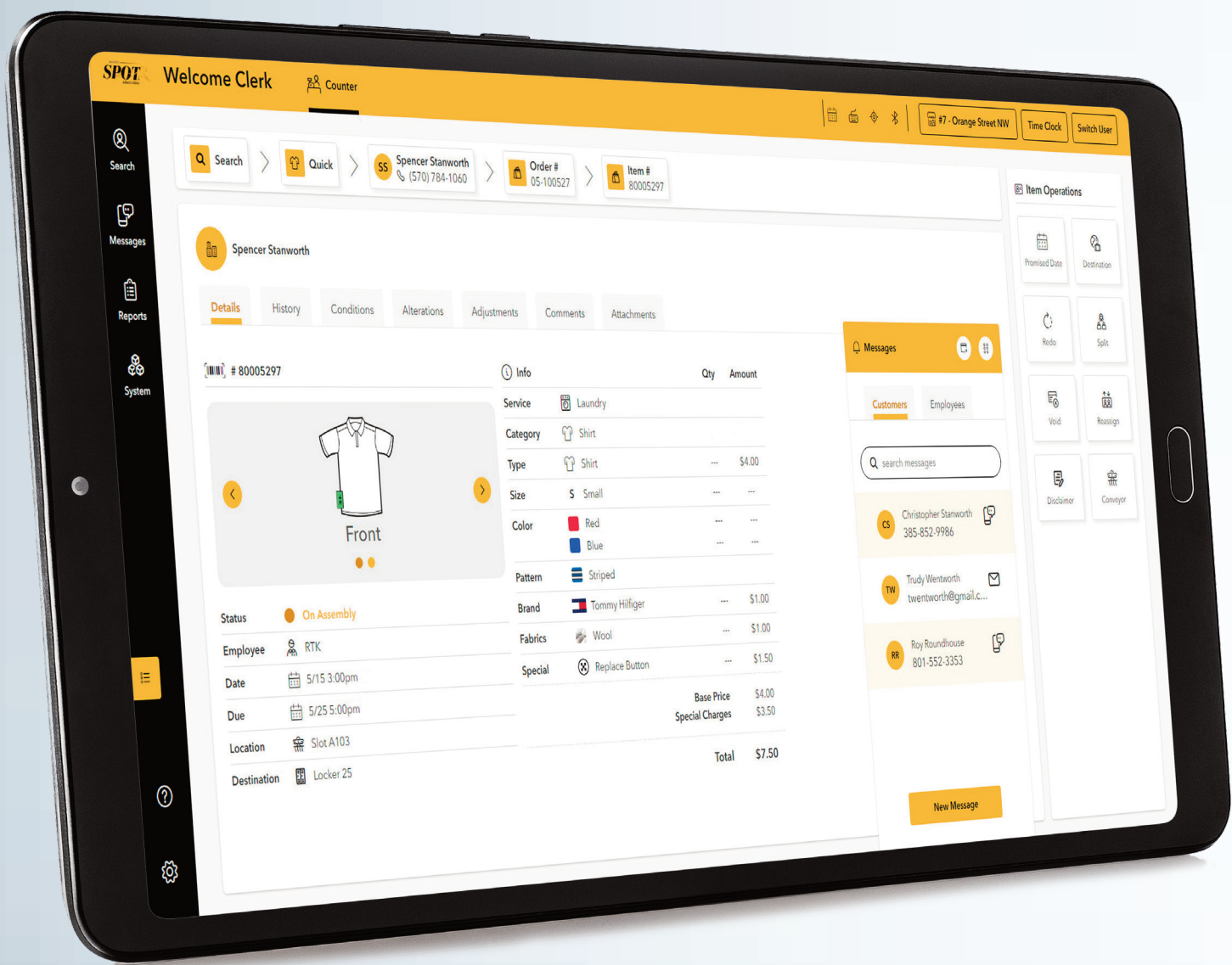
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