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Cleaners convene for SpringFest '21

The industry may have become smaller, but it has also grown stronger and more united, according to a panel of drycleaning experts who spoke on the final day of April's SpringFest EXPO 2021, hosted by NEFA, PDCA, SEFA in conjunction with the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute.

That panel, consisting of DLI CEO Mary Scalco, Bill Odorizzi of Sankosha USA, Kermit Engh from Methods for Management and Route Pros founder James Peuster, performed a SWOT analysis on the industry, listing its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. In perhaps drycleaners' most difficult year, the panel felt

many in the industry responded to the challenge with focus and grit.

Engh, who was charged with examining the industry's strengths, believes leading industry organizations and associations helped pave the way for struggling cleaners and have proven to be an excellent resource. "I don't know if it's unique to our industry, but I just can't imagine any other industry that came together this quickly," he said. "But, we were hammered so hard that it helped everybody get through it."

In addition to relying on fellow drycleaners, the industry trudged through the past year by making tough and courageous decisions to



During SpringFest, Bill Odorizzi (top left), Mary Scalco (top center), Kermit Engh (top right) and James Peuster (bottom left) performed a S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the drycleaning industry. Peter Blake (bottom right) moderated.

raise prices, add services or close stores when necessary, Engh explained. The government may have thought the industry was essential, but most of the customers didn't.

That dwindling number of regular customers is far from the only weakness cleaners now need to overcome. As Odorizzi pointed out, the industry faces a problem with

its human resources. "The pool of workers continues to get smaller," he said. "It's very challenging."

However, he believes the

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DLI unveils new Marketing Lab program

Beginning June 16 and 17, the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute will launch its new Marketing Lab program giving members a chance to develop or tweak marketing efforts together with peers.

"I have been so impressed with the exchange of ideas on the Peer-to-Peer Zoom meetings we have been hosting over the past year," said DLI CEO Mary Scalco. "I always learn something and those

who participate report feeling the same way. This series of virtual meetings will focus on marketing and who better to learn from than your peers?"

So far, enough DLI members have shown enough interest to launch three groups of 25 members, two of which will start on June 16 and the other the next day. Participants should be willing to share and handle a critique.

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The Clean Show that might have been

The drycleaning industry is experiencing the rarest of anomalies: an odd-numbered year without a Clean Show. Normally, well over 10,000 attendees would be gathering in Atlanta, GA, this month for the 44th year of the biennial event, to catch up with colleagues, listen to educational seminars and look at the latest cleaning equipment in action on the exhibit show floor.

Instead, the coronavirus wreaked untold havoc on the world economy and health. Just in the U.S., there have been more than 33 million cases to date, resulting in over 586,000 deaths.

Under the specter of un-

certainty, Messe Frankfurt made the difficult decision to postpone the 2021 edition of the Clean Show in November of last year.

The next edition will still be hosted in the city of Atlanta as originally planned, but it is now scheduled, oddly enough, during an even year: July 30 through Aug. 2, 2022.

The postponement is the first of its kind in the Clean Show history which began in the mid-1970s when three industry associations decided multiple exhibit shows annually was too expensive and time consuming, opting instead to sponsor one of significantly greater scope: the World Educational Congress

for Laundry and Drycleaning in 1977.

Later, it was dubbed the Clean Show, and it was sponsored by five major trade associations: Association for Linen Management, Coin Laundry Association, Drycleaning and Laundry Institute, Textile Care Allied Trades Association and Textile Rental Services Association of America.

The show grew significantly in size over the years and became managed by professional show management firm Riddle & Associates, starting with the 1993 show and concluding its services following the 2017 outing. At that time, Germany-based Messe Frankfurt, an international trade fair and event organizer, purchased it.

Attendance numbers had fallen on the wayside a bit

following the 2008 recession. However, the last show in Atlanta, which took place in 2015 following a 28-year ab-

sence from the city, had represented a turning point for the industry with 11,264 at-

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Package with care

Packaging enhancements should never be used to hide or distract from shirt imperfections.

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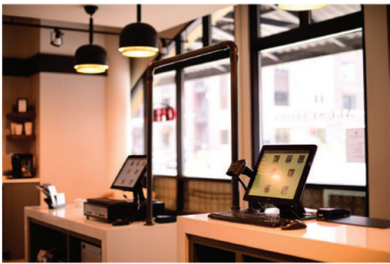
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Looking forward to a Clean Show comeback in 2022

Once up on a time — about 13 years ago or so — America began suffering through its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The Great Recession, as it is now called, lasted from December 2007 until June 2009, but its negative effects could be felt for many years to come. The country’s unemployment rate, which was at 5% at the start of the recession, rose to as high as 10% at one point. Meanwhile, the bottom completely fell out of the housing market. Home prices typically fell 30% on average... for those who kept ownership of their property. Millions of Americans were forced into foreclosure.

For many small business owners, it was the biggest challenge they had ever faced in their lifetimes. For some 170,000 small business owners, it was their last challenge. After all, that is the number of small businesses believed to have closed their doors in the U.S. between 2008 and 2010.

The drycleaning industry certainly felt the ripple of the recession, as well, and the exhibition and attendance numbers for Clean 2009 in New Orleans had certainly confirmed that. Back in 1999, the Clean Show was at its peak in popularity. It reached a record number of exhibiting companies that year with 621. Just ten years later, though, that number dropped down to about 200 fewer. Meanwhile, Clean Show attendance, which had closed in on 20,000 in 1999, plummeted by nearly half from that figure at Clean 2009 (whose attendance was approximately 25% down from the previous Clean Show two years before). Things did not improve, even when the Clean Show traveled next to Las Vegas in 2011 and back to the Big Easy in 2013 — both are venues that traditional draw in the biggest numbers historically — attendance and exhibition numbers remained stagnant.

Then, something odd happened. In 2015, the Clean Show was hosted in a city that hadn’t done so in 28 years — Atlanta, Georgia. Based on the recent lackluster attendance and exhibition numbers, some may have questioned the decision to go with a less-proven venue. However, the results were indeed surprising and all signs pointed toward an industry comeback.

Clean 2015 in Atlanta performed much better than its three predecessors, drawing 11,264 attendees to the Georgia World Congress Center, which represented a 9% increase over the 2013 attendance. There were also 437 exhibiting companies covering 195,400 sq. ft. of space in Atlanta, which was more than the three previous

shows. Best of all, Atlanta proved it could draw people from all over. Attendees arrived from all 50 states, as well as 88 other countries.

In a *National Clothesline* editorial at the time, we noted that doubts were cast aside from the show’s get-go, saying: “On the first day, attendees filled meeting rooms and began two hours before the show’s official opening. More people came as the day went on and flooded into the exhibit hall the moment the ribbon was cut. And they stayed. Unlike some shows where the crowd dwindles in the afternoon hours, the hall was still busy and full of people right up to closing time and beyond.”

Any doubts that the city of Atlanta was a suitable venue for the Clean Show were emphatically erased, and it was already scheduled in the books from June 10 to 13, 2021. Of course, the pandemic blew all such books away. Last November, Messe Frankfurt made a tough decision — and we deem the right call — to push Clean back to 2022 (July 30 to Aug. 2). That doesn’t make this week any easier, though, because most of us have been itching to go somewhere and see each other again. So, it will be interesting to see if Atlanta provides the industry with the same unbridled energy and enthusiasm we witnessed there in 2015.

Fortunately, we may not have to wait that long to see that happen. The outlook for the country is looking better every day and there have been some positive signs for the industry: schools reopening, jobless claims dropping, and the U.S. economy rising. With over 122 million people fully vaccinated in the country (or 37% of the population) during the fourth week of May, there are reasons for many of us to be optimistic again.

Perhaps the best sign of improvement is that in-person industry events have begun popping up again. The Southwest Drycleaners Association will host its Membership Meeting at the Lone Star Court in Austin, TX, from July 9-10. Meanwhile, the California Cleaners Association will present a live Fabricare 2021 Tabletop Conference in Las Vegas from Oct. 2 to 3 at the Sahara Hotel and Casino — the same time when numerous industry groups and associations have scheduled in-person meetings there.

Whether it’s Austin in July or October in Las Vegas — or some other time and place to be determined, we have a feeling we speak for everybody when we say we’re looking forward to the (not-so-distant) future.

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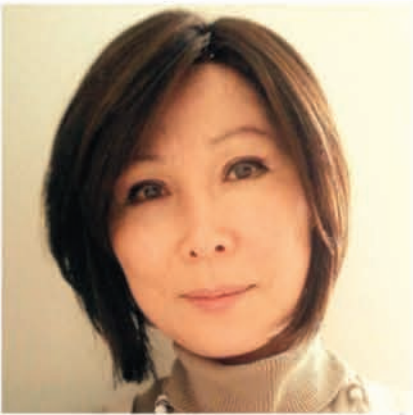


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Surviving a century

Sometimes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. When Glyndon Lord Baltimore (GLB) Cleaners first opened its doors, there was a diphtheria epidemic that peaked in the U.S. with over 200,000 cases in 1921. In mid-May of 2021, the U.S. had reported close to 33 million cases of COVID altogether.

It's a good thing the business planted strong roots from the start. Located in Baltimore County, MD, today's owners, the Harman family, did have a bit of difficulty tracing those roots.

"The deed is very convoluted, but it does show the lot was sold by a gentleman who had an ice house and butchery near here [the present day location] to John and Mary Cockey on June 14 of 1920," explained Janet Harman. "We know the laundry started in 1921."

At the time, it was called Glyndon Laundry. "Their main thing was laundry — sheets and all that," added Mike Harman, Janet's husband whose family first bought into the business in the late 1940s. "Back then, drycleaning wasn't big and everybody didn't have the home washers and dryers that they have now. It was pickup and delivery."

Mike's grandfather, Robert Mathias, additionally bought and operated a community swimming pool, which was fortunate, because that is where his daughter, Di, was on duty as a life-guard when she met her future husband, Otts.

"When my dad came in after World War II, he invested money into buying the drycleaning machines," Mike added.

The first generation of the family cemented the business's reputation for quality and service; the second generation branched out to drycleaning. Both moves are a big reason that it survived until the third generation came in.

Otts and Di had seven children altogether. It was Mike's middle brother, John, who wanted to take over the business after he graduated from college. Mike followed after he graduated in 1993. The brothers have been at the helm of GLB Cleaners for over three decades.

In the early 1990s, there was an opportunity to greatly expand the business — as well as the name.

"In 1991, a good friend of the family who we knew for years and years and years — they had a big laundry down in Baltimore called Lord Baltimore — they had a bunch of stores, routes and rental business," Mike noted. "They said they wanted to do away with everything except the rental business. We ended up buying their routes. That's how we became Glyndon Lord Baltimore."

Under Mike and John's guidance, the business continued to diversify.

"What they did was evolve to be not only a wardrobe service, like the drycleaning and laundry, but they created a home textile division," Janet pointed out. "One of the other things that we are known for is our pickup and delivery service because, since the business started 100 years ago, that was the primary service that was offered. What we want to do is create a one-stop shop, if you want to call it that, for any

wardrobe or home cleaning textile care that we can provide."

"In the drycleaning business, it's tough just to rely on drycleaning suits," Mike added.

That has especially been true over the past 14 months. "We're still down 22% from 2019," Janet said. "But, if you look at last year's numbers, we're in the

people who have reached out to us, either to offer support or we still have clients call us on a regular basis just to talk," Janet noted. She met Mike in college, but didn't come more actively involved in the business until after she worked many years for companies such as McCormick & Company, a global leader in the flavor industry,

ness Journal. The company has also worked with the Baltimore Museum of Arts for over 20 years.

"We are a recognized name in the community and we do value quality and relationships very much. We try very hard to maintain those relationships and keep that longevity," Janet said.



John, Janet and Mike Harman

black so that is making everybody optimistic."

Today, Glyndon Lord Baltimore Cleaners has two drops stores, six delivery vehicles and a processing facility that is over 10,000 sq. ft. Currently, the staff consists of 25 employees on the team.

"We did have to let ten people go at the beginning of the pandemic," Janet noted. "We just aren't at the volume yet to bring them back, so that's been a little bit challenging."

"We lost customers because of the pandemic, just like everybody else," Mike added. "Luckily, with us being so experienced with the route pickup and delivery business — we've got it down to where we're pretty good at it, where it's kind of hands-off. When the whole pandemic started and people didn't want to come into contact with one another, they gave us a call."

Glyndon Lord Baltimore never skipped a beat. The business may have shortened hours and staff size, but it remained open and operating.

"We still worked five days a week, for the most part. We still had work coming in," Mike explained. "I've found that a lot of people — even if they weren't going to work — were cleaning their house. They were cleaning their drapes or they were cleaning their rugs. They had a lot of time on their hands."

Unfortunately, many long-time reliable accounts — including some local professional sports teams and universities — had to hit the pause button.

"You still talk to people who are still not going back to the office and are still working at home for the foreseeable future, Mike said.

Even while drycleaning numbers dipped down, GLB Cleaners made a bigger effort to market and communicate with customers.

"I've been amazed at the number of

which is now a client of GLB Cleaners, as well as Rubbermaid and The Boyds Collection, the former known for its storage containers and the latter known for its Teddy Bear collectibles.

One customer, in particular, really wanted to help. "One of our clients offered, 'Can I give you guys a couple of thousand dollars even though I'm not going to use it... so I can help you guys and write it off as a credit,'" Mike recalled.

Janet offered an alternative suggestion. She knew GLB Cleaners' delivery vehicles were currently being underutilized and many local restaurants were hurting because they did not have their own vehicles for delivery.

"So, this lady — instead of giving us the money — bought over 600 meals for five or six or seven different hospitals and we picked it up and delivered it to the hospital," Mike said.

There were a few other creative ways that GLB Cleaners helped its community in the past year.

"We worked with the Maryland Institute of Art with repurposing our plastic poly," Jan said. "Students weren't in school, so we found a local career and tech center for one of the counties that we work in. Their design students were still coming in. They used the poly and created fashion items as part of their final runway project, so we developed a relationship with them."

"We're very environmentally conscious," Mike added. "Every week, I probably take 100 to 150 pounds worth of hangers up to the recycling place... the scrap yard. It's just too hard to untangle."

Additionally, he estimates that he hauls a couple hundred pounds of poly every three to four months.

All of these efforts have not gone unnoticed. Recently, GLB was designated as a 2021 Family-Owned Business Award honoree from the *Baltimore Busi-*

ness Journal. The company has also worked with the Baltimore Museum of Arts for over 20 years.

"Before we got the computer system, the [route] driver used to have these big books in their trucks of every stop. Now, everything is stored on the iPhone," Mike said. "Every night before we go to visit a customer, we can send out a text to them and if they don't have anything to pick up, they just say 'no.' It's so much easier now."

During the past year, they've certainly got to know the system better and take full advantage of it. After all, business is not likely to come knocking on the front door these days.

"I know it's hard, but you really got to go out there and get the work," Mike emphasized. "You really have to go out there and knock on doors and be visible and just network and meet people."

Fortunately, some positive signs have been popping up recently at the drycleaning business.

"Last week we just got 500 to 600 band uniforms," Mike noted. "I think people are starting to come back to school. The colleges are opening."

Janet has seen other positive indicators, as well. "Just from our friends and some of our networking things that we're involved in... people are ready, for the most part," she said. "People are excited to get back out, pull out the clothes they haven't worn in the past year and enjoy life again."

Whether business crawls back down, or spikes for a busy quarter, the Harmans will approach it in the same way that the family has done for the better part of the past century: with a willingness to change, adapt, adjust, pivot, evolve... whatever is necessary whenever it becomes necessary. They have no intention of closing their doors anytime soon. "It's a strange time," Janet said. "It's going to be interesting to see what happens this summer."

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Cleaners convene for SpringFest

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industry has made strides to improve its ongoing training for team members with some of the down time created by the pandemic. It also gave owners time to focus more on business practices. As a result, the best drycleaners have improved processes and now have a chance to turn that into more growth.

“COVID did escalate all the things we needed to do. COVID really did awake us,” Peuster noted. “Really, what it did was create an opportunity for us to understand market share.”

That market share was created when many drycleaners were forced to close their doors in the past 12 months. For all of the businesses remaining, those customers are up for grabs. “I think hats off

to the industry because it has always regrouped and dusted itself off and stood back on its feet. Like Bill said, instead of surviving, their mindset is moving forward and thriving,” Peuster added.

Unfortunately, there could be a few threats to slow things down... like dressing down. “There really is a Zoom wardrobe. We’ve all gotten really comfortable,” Scalco explained. “I don’t think it’s going to change. I think people want to be comfortable.”

Even if formal wear becomes less prominent on a permanent basis, Scalco believes the industry can still give something to customers that they can’t get enough of: free time. If the industry can do that and find ways to attract younger customers, it

stands a better chance to overcome threats such as the federal government considering raising the minimum wage and competition from businesses outside the industry. Amazon drycleaning? Scalco warned it could be a real possibility in the future.

Whether that happens someday may be irrelevant if cleaners don’t find a way to communicate what they do with their customers better. “Our industry has always had a commodity image because people don’t understand what we do, how we do it,” Engh explained. “They don’t know what goes on behind the wall, so to speak, so it’s hard for them to have an appreciation that there might be 14 people who touch a shirt before it gets back to the customer, but it only takes

one barista to push eight buttons and you get a cup of coffee... *and it costs more.*”

Perhaps the biggest strength of the industry is that it simply survived. During SpringFest, Steve Wischmann, a former Captain of the U.S. Coast Guard and president of Horizon Performance Solutions, a leadership consultant company, compared last year’s struggles for drycleaners to Search and Rescue missions that he used to conduct in the water.

“I oversaw thousands of Search and Rescue cases. Some were mundane and uneventful, and some were shockingly devastating. But, the one thing I can tell you is oftentimes after a night-long search or a day-and-a-half search, when you find someone — a young woman or a

man clinging to debris — and we could effect a successful rescue, one theme emerges (and this is true in combat, as well): you can see time and again a person’s willingness to survive, their will to live, their commitment to continue to breath is oftentimes the difference between life and death,” he explained.

Just surviving is not the goal, though. Fortunately, SpringFest had several speakers that were offering ways for cleaners to improve their own businesses. Jennifer Marquardt, a member of the Route Pros team, offered ways to simplify operations and improve consistency. Dave Coyle of Maverick Marketing, also preached consistency — when it comes to developing your brand.

Industry consultant Liz Davies stressed the need to measure production numbers and share them with the staff, and cleaners such as Monica Manter of Balfurd Cleaners, Christa Hagearty of Dependable Cleaners, Dan Miller of Mulberrys Garment Care and others offered tips on how to stay up in a down market. Overall, there were almost ten hours of informative sessions. The event was popular enough for plans to be in the mix for a second FallFest EXPO from Nov. 10 to 12.

DLI unveils Marketing Lab program

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Ideas shared in a marketing labs group are available to all members of that group.

The cost is included in DLI’s membership. For more information on any of DLI’s programs, visit DLIonline.org or call (800) 638-2627.

An odd year without a Clean Show

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tendees and 437 companies exhibiting 195,400 sq. ft. of space that year.

Those figures were all higher than those recorded in the three previous Clean shows — two of which were held in New Orleans, LA, and one in Las Vegas.

Current conditions in the country suggest it is starting to open back up and people are eager to return to normalcy, but a Clean Show this year would have likely been premature and underwhelming. Fortunately, Atlanta will have another chance to host the industry’s comeback next year.



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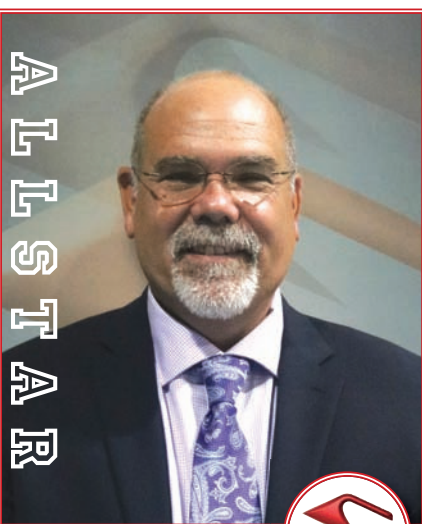


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AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

The process of talent acquisition

Nationwide, small businesses are facing the same obstacle: lack of help and inability to fully staff their operations. This is the single greatest challenge expressed by all business owners, and we are not alone. Restaurants, retail stores and other service businesses are competing for the same labor pool. We were facing this same problem before the pandemic, and now it is even worse. There are a great many reasons we can point to: FFMLA, government assistance, federal unemployment subsidies, lack of childcare services, remote schooling, fear of COVID, and the list goes on. It is a perfect storm of obstacles to re-energizing the workforce.

At the outset, I thought with the number of businesses closing, and non-essential businesses forced to stop operating at full capacity, the pre-pandemic labor shortage would reverse itself. I was confident that people would be hungry to find and get back to work, but just the opposite has happened. It is becoming harder and harder to find people, and even more difficult to hire the right people to fit into your team. Every business owner needs to be in a constant state of “talent acquisition.” You can never feel that you are fully staffed, because at the worst possible moment, you will lose a key person and you are back at square one. If you need one person, try to hire two. In the long run being a little overstaffed will always cost less than being caught understaffed. If you have extra personnel, you can always transition weaker team members to different jobs, or realize they are not a right fit and help them find something better suited for them. You always have room for talent and great additions.

Where to find talent

There is no magic bullet. I am sure you are all using message boards, Indeed, ZipRecruiter, Monster.com, Craigslist and other avenues.



I hope it is working for you, but if you are like most of the companies out there, the people you want to hire or look at seldom show up for the interview

or have already joined another staff. This can get frustrating and can waste a lot of your time.

There are a lot of things you can do to make better use of those tools. If you need help — reach out and I can share some ideas for you. If done right, those tools can be useful. You have to be quick, attentive, responsive and decisive. Everyone is using these tools and the

past year, many great employees have been kept working, but their hours have been cut. Do not be afraid to approach people with potential and offer them supplemental hours. Retail stores and restaurants are great resources. Let the prospective hire know that if they need more hours, you may have some flexible hours you can give them if they want to try

reality of today is that job applicants have many choices. With minimum wage continuing to rise and corporate pay structures in restaurants and fast-food businesses continuing to escalate, you need to set yourself apart. The days of posting an ad, getting 30 applicants, and having your choice of employee is GONE. Now you are lucky to get those who apply to even show

and you are responsive. When working on your social media pages, highlight your employees. Stress their longevity. Feature ones who have been promoted or moved up in the company. Highlight activities you have done with your staff, or any highlights or recognition. When you demonstrate the value of your team members publicly, you are showcasing

If you need one person, try to hire two. In the long run being a little overstaffed will always cost you less than being caught understaffed.

competition is fierce. Do not just rely on putting an ad on those message services and expect a great return. You must be the aggressor. You must search for candidates who actively update their information. You need to go find them. By the time they see your ad, it may be too late.

“We look for three things when we hire people: Intelligence, Initiative, and Integrity. If they don’t have the latter, the first two will kill you.”
— Warren Buffett

I am going to make a confession here. Many of the ideas that I am referencing have come from the DLI peer-to-peer Zoom calls for members. There is no better forum to discuss issues, ask for advice, and to learn new ways to approach old problems.

To really be successful, however, you need to step outside the normal everyday tools and constantly be a “talent agent.” You must be on the lookout for the type of people you want to build your staff. When you are out at a restaurant and get exceptional service, maybe leave a business card with their tip letting them know if they ever consider a career shift, you are always looking for team members. Retail stores, service technicians, home delivery people are all viable candidates for you to be on the lookout for. Any place you encounter the types of people you wish you had working for you — it is OK to put a lead out there. You can have something printed on the back of your business cards like: “Looking for a new career direction? Join the XYZ Cleaners Team. We are interested in exceptional people.”

Be prepared to recognize potential everywhere. Over the

something new. It does not always have to be a career change.

We often talk about networking for sales, but you can also do it for employees. Maybe you know another company that is struggling to give their employees the hours they need. Let them know you may be able to help the employee recover the lost time. You can work out an employee sharing program if neither business needs full-time people.

Do you have some strong staff members? Ask them for referrals. Offer to pay referral bonuses if the employee works out. Incentivize them to help you build your staff. Have you thought of your customers? They already know and like your business, or they would not be customers. It is OK to let them know through your email service, texting, or even Facebook and social media that you are looking to add assets to your team. You may be surprised what you find. Kids graduating high school looking for options or stay-at-home moms and dads whose kids are off to college and they are thinking about re-entering the workforce. The best candidates can often come from unlikely connections.

Also, keep in mind, you will rarely find the right person with drycleaning experience and someone who already knows the industry. If you do — phenomenal — but for the most part you need to look for the types of people you want to work for you. You can teach every aspect of this industry, but it may be harder to teach good teamwork, customer service instincts, and integrity. Look for the core values you desire and you can train for the rest.

The competition for candidates is fierce

Like I said earlier, everyone is facing the same challenges. The

up. Things have changed, and for the employer it is not for the better. Why aren’t they showing up for the interviews? There are probably several answers including: really don’t want a job, already took another position, and have already decided against taking your position. I think these three are the most likely.

If they don’t really want to work or are only answering job postings to prove to unemployment they are looking, you can’t do anything about that. Trust me, you will not want them anyway. Like I said before, you need to be quick and decisive. You cannot hesitate or the qualified applicants will be grabbed up and you will lose the chance. You must be flexible when scheduling phone and/or physical interviews. I hate to break it to you but working at a drycleaner is not on everyone’s priority list. You need to be proactive with your reputation. As soon as an applicant is approached by a company, it is so easy to check them out on social media, Yelp, etc. When people have choices, they will gravitate to businesses they trust, believe in, and want to work for. You have a lot of control over what they see. Make sure your Yelp and Google Reviews are good,

your work culture. You are highlighting reasons to work for you. When people are trying to decide to work for a company, these will all play a factor.

Lastly, keep in mind that while pay structure is important, it is also important to highlight the other added benefits you offer. Flexible hours, paid time off, 401K — any and all of these benefits could sway the decision in your favor. If you do not have a 401K, now may be the time to initiate one. There are significant tax breaks available that makes it almost pay for itself! Finding the right fit takes work, but you must do all the things you can to make you and your company something that people want to work for. As Mark Albrecht of the Route Pros has told me countless times: “Everyone wants to work for the cool boss and the cool company.” Your job is to make them understand: **that is you!**

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 peteblake@aol.com or by phone at (617) 791-0128.



EDEN CLEANERS of Flower Mound, TX, recently purchased a new Union HXL-8018-C, sold by Gulf States Laundry Company. Owners John Nam (left) and Theresa Coward (middle) are pictured with Matt A. Lipman of Union Drycleaning.

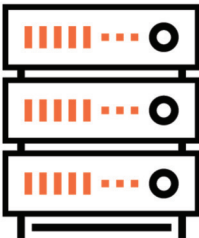


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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Boiler water testing — Part II

There is a long list of impurities that can be found in water entering a boiler. However, in the drycleaning and laundry industries, the major ones affecting the operation of boilers are dissolved solids (known as TDS, or total solids) and oxygen which is dissolved in the new city water entering the return tank.

This oxygen combines with carbon dioxide to form carbonic acid, a destroyer of the metal in the boiler and piping throughout the steam/return systems.

The concentration of acids in boiler water is indicated by the pH (pH is a scale used to specify how acidic or basic (or alkaline) a water-based solution is).

Measuring TDS and pH levels indicate the condition of the treated water entering as well as inside the boiler, which allows us to adjust the blowdown frequency as well as the volume and timing of boiler compound addition to the return tank to prevent boiler damage.

Establishing the Correct Blowdown Procedure

The two most important factors in maintaining the proper boiler water chemistry is blowdown and compound addition. No matter how efficient the water treatment program, water entering the boiler (feed water) will contain im-

purities such as salts and suspended and dissolved solids.

The process of boiling water away to generate steam leaves these impurities behind, accumulating inside the boiler during daily operations. Blowdown uses gravity and steam pressure to expel this accumulated debris, detritus and other impurities before they adhere to and/or corrode the internal surfaces of the boiler and steam system piping. Sometimes it seems like every boiler manufacturer and/or operator has their own idea about how and when to blow down their boiler. The recommendations I will be making are based upon several years' experience in troubleshooting and repairing boilers of many different manufacturers in arguably the

day are sufficient; one in the morning and the other early afternoon. (Never leave the boiler or return tank empty overnight.) While the boiler is shut down, much of the particulate matter, being heavier than water, will settle to the bottom of the boiler in an area where the blowdown is very effective.

The morning blowdown would be shortly after the boiler is started up. Wait until the steam pressure rises to about 30-40 PSI then start to blow down. For the afternoon blowdowns, shut down the boiler while you're still using steam so boiler pressure drops quickly.

When boiler pressure drops to about 30-40 PSI, initiate the blowdown procedure. You will

The most effective part of the blowdown is during the first several seconds. Therefore, short blowdowns are recommended.

worst area for boiler water impurities in the country and may be different from those recommended by the boiler manufacturer. When in doubt, follow the manufacturer's procedure.

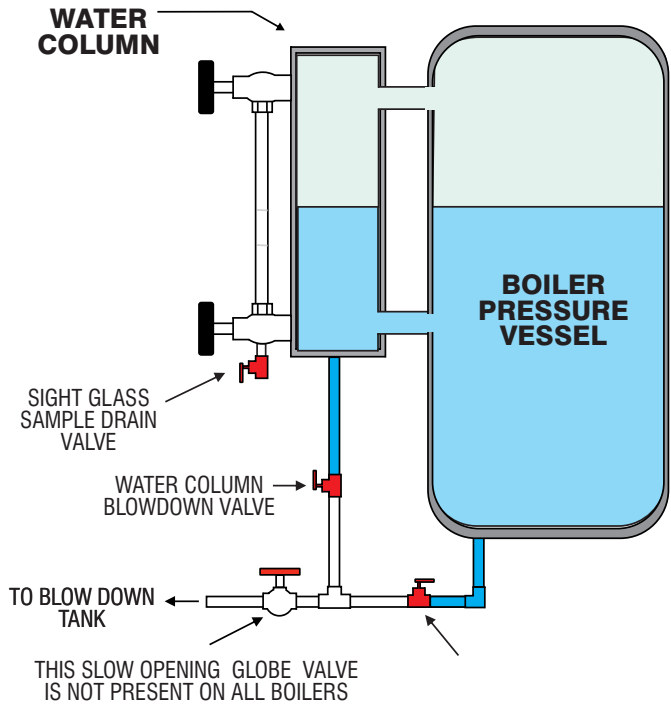
When to Blow Down

Under normal circumstances, two blowdowns per

quickly determine the length of time after a blowdown until steam pressure rises sufficiently to resume production.

Use this recovery period to calculate the best timing to minimize production loss by timing blowdowns so the recovery period occurs during an employee break or lunch period would be shortly after

BLOWDOWN VALVE LOCATIONS



the boiler is started up. Boilers used in the drycleaning and small laundry operations will usually have two to four blowdown valve locations. First is the water column. Second is the boiler shell (pressure vessel). There may also be a large slow opening globe valve and a small valve at the lower end of the sight glass fixture which can also be used to drain water samples for testing.

How to Blow Down

In addition, the most effective part of the blowdown is during the first several seconds. Therefore, short blow-

downs are recommended. Blowdowns of about 15 seconds for the water column, 25 seconds for the boiler shell (pressure vessel) and five seconds for the sight glass (if there is a valve installed for that purpose). Locate the valves shown on the illustration. Slowly open the valve and start the timing after the valve is fully open (if the boiler is specified at pressures over 80 PSI, there is generally a slow opening globe valve that must also be open during blowdown). Blowing all the water out of the boiler and/or draining the return tank and refilling with city water is NOT NECESSARY and a waste of water softening capacity and boiler compound. When blowdown is complete be sure to reset the valves for normal boiler operation.

Next month, I'll be discussing how to measure the level of impurities present in your boiler water using inexpensive TDS and pH meters.

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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Federal Funding

Taking advantage of the ERC and EIDL

By Peter Adams
The drycleaning industry has been one of the hardest hit industries by the pandemic. I know that personally, as I have a drycleaner located in central Florida and our sales were off by more than 60% in the second quarter of 2020.

If it wasn't for the two loans from the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), we would have gone out of business and all of our employees would have lost their jobs.

I know that many of you are doing everything that you can to survive COVID, just like we are. If your business needs money, I have some really good news about a program that very few people have heard of. It is called the Employee Retention Credit (ERC).

As part of the second CARES Act, eligible businesses that received loans from the Payroll Protection Program are now able to access Employee Retention Credits. Prior to Dec. 27, 2020, you could not participate in both programs.

This is big news as the Employee Retention Credit provides a lot more potential funding for your business. The way the ERC works is that you get a percentage of your payroll back from the Internal Revenue Service in the form of a check from the United States Treasury.

In fact, if your sales were off by over 50% during any quarter in 2020 as compared to the same quarter in 2019, you can retroactively get back 50% of your gross payroll from that quarter and the following quarters in 2020 up until you reach the cap of \$10,000 per employee for 2020. To give you an example, our sales were off more than 60% in the second

quarter of 2020, as compared to the second quarter of 2019 — and yours probably were, too. Using the ERC, we were able to retroactively get back 50% of our payroll up to the cap for the second, third and fourth quarters of 2020.

employee based on their individual compensation. The maximum amount of qualifying wages is \$10,000 per employee so the maximum credit you can claim is \$5,000 per employee per quarter for 2020. In 2021, the maximum qual-

penalties. They also fund extremely fast once you have submitted your application... which is probably just what everyone needs right now.

The terms of the program have recently changed, as well. Now you can borrow up to 24

The loans are forgivable as long as you spend at least 60% of the loan proceeds directly towards payroll over a period up to 24 weeks. Loan amounts of \$150,000 are automatically forgiven through completing a self-certification questionnaire as the borrower.

An important thing to note is that the PPP loan forgiveness has a direct effect on how many Employee Retention Credits you can claim... as you cannot claim the credit on wages paid with PPP funds for the same period.

Many small business owners, for the sake of simplicity, reported that they used 100% of the funding for payroll, whether that was true or not. Now that has turned around to bite them in hindsight.

Through successfully accessing all of these programs, we as business owners should all be able to financially weather the COVID storm and successfully make it to the other side. Time is of the essence. It is recommended that you apply for a Payroll Protection Program as soon as possible since they are only available until the funds are exhausted.

The deadlines to apply for both Economic Injury Disaster Loans and the Employee Retention Tax Credit is Dec. 31, 2021.

Many people are optimistic about the Payroll Protection Program being extended with another round of funding as the program has been very successful, although nothing official has been announced.

Peter Adams is a drycleaner operator, a business consultant, and an IRS-registered paid tax return preparer specializing in helping small businesses get funding. He can be reached at (719) 728-7715 or via email at FinancialNavigatorPro@gmail.com. To learn more, please visit www.FinancialNavigatorPro.com.

Using the Employee Retention Credit, we were able to retroactively get back 50% of our payroll up to the cap for the second, third and fourth quarters of 2020.

In 2021, the ERC gets even better, as the amount you claim as a credit went up to 70% of your payroll and to qualify, your quarterly sales only need to be off by over 20% as compared to the same quarter pre-COVID.

Once you have the qualifying quarter, you can keep claiming the credit until your quarterly sales return to 80% of your pre-COVID sales.

Another great feature of the program is that you can suspend making payroll tax deposits without penalty while you are in the program, which really will help you with your cash flow.

Not having to make those weekly tax deposits is really helping us make our PPP money last longer. You can also claim the ERC as an advance payment while you are in the current quarter. We filed our first advance payment request around ten weeks ago, and we just received our first check from the program.

There are some limitations at present on how much of a credit you can claim per em-

ploying wages remains the same at \$10,000, but the maximum credit goes up to \$7,000 per employee per quarter. Please note: You cannot claim the ERC on wages that were paid for with the Payroll Protection Program funds.

A very important point to mention is that the program guidelines are complicated, and they continue to change as different stimulus bills are being passed.

One of the challenges we are all running into is that the forms and returns have to go through the IRS, which is currently overwhelmed as tax law changes are being applied retroactively. You will get the money from the ERC, but it won't happen as fast as any of us want it to. As of now, the program is continuing through the end of 2021.

SBA's EIDL program

Another source of funding that you can get quickly through the Small Business Administration (SBA) is an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL). Unlike a PPP loan which can be forgiven, the EIDL is not forgivable and must be repaid.

They come with some pretty good terms such as 30-year amortization, a 3.75% interest rate, and no prepayment

months of working capital (not including payroll if you have received Payroll Protection Program loans) up to \$500,000.

If you have already received an EIDL, you can request an increase on your original loan.

On the SBA's website, they are telling business owners essentially "don't contact us as we will contact you if you qualify," which is not accurate as we have an existing EIDL, we qualify for more funding and nobody has reached out to us as of yet. We applied through email for an increase and we received a response from the SBA within 18 hours, which really surprised us.

If you need additional funding, I would highly suggest that you don't wait to hear from them, but instead contact them about an increase. Where there is no pre-payment penalty, and payments can be deferred for up to 24 months after funding, you could use this as a "bridge loan" and pay it off with the Employee Retention Credits.

If you have not already received a loan from the PPP, there is funding available for both a first and second draw. The amount of money you can borrow is based on your average monthly payroll multiplied by 2.5.

Obituary

Richard J. Greco from New Jersey

He spent over 50 years working in the drycleaning industry including many years as a consultant in recent times as president of MMA Consultants of Fair Lawn, NJ., and, previously, as the national sales manager for Hoffman-New Yorker for over 34 years from 1983 to 2017.

Last month, however, Richard J. Greco passed away at the age of 69 on May 14.

Greco was born in Pasaic, NJ, in 1952. During childhood he grew up in Garfield and was an active participant at his family's business, Cameo Cleaners.

After he completed his certifi-

cation in drycleaning, he flourished in the field for more than half a century, making numerous friends with an earnest, infectious smile.

In his spare time, he worked as a Mass Coordinator at Our Lady of Consolation RC Church, and was also an active member in the Habitat for Humanity ministry.

Richard is survived by his wife Karen; son Matthew and fiancé Tom; daughter Melanie and fiancé Joshua; brother Michael and his wife Laurette; brother Robert and his wife Jean; mother-in-law Margaret; and brother-in-law



Joseph. Relatives and friends celebrated the life of Richard in a wake held on May 18. In lieu of flowers, donations to the American Lung Association were recommended.

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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Six power ratios to start tracking

Those who know me and the work we do at Methods for Management know I enjoy numbers. Through MFM we measure nearly 150 KPIs all relating to the drycleaning clients we serve. Today, I would like to introduce six new numbers to track for your business.

Baseball's leadoff batters measure their "on-base percentage" — the number of times they get on base — as a percentage of the number of times they get the chance to try. If you know the movie "Moneyball" with Brad Pitt, you've seen this on the big screen.

Acquirers also like tracking ratios, and the more ratios you can provide a potential buyer, the more comfortable they will become with the idea of buying your business. Better than the blunt measuring stick of an aggregate number, a ratio expresses the relationship between two numbers, which gives them their power.

If you're planning to sell your company one day, here's the list of six ratios to start tracking in your business now:

1) Employees per sq ft

By calculating the number of square feet of office space you rent and dividing it by the number of employees you have, you can judge how efficiently you have designed your space. Commercial real estate agents use a general rule of 175-250 square feet of usable office space per employee. I have been in many plants over the years.

Some use space very efficiently, while others have hired layout consultants who believe in spreading everything out to fill the given space.

In my experience, the result with the latter is too much walking around to complete tasks efficiently and can result in discomfort and/or frustration for your employees.

Talk to your team and see if they have any suggestions to make their job flow easier and more enjoyable. It is important to take time to truly evaluate your space and how you are using it.

2) Ratio of promoters and detractors

Fred Reichheld and his colleagues at Bain & Company and Satmetrix developed the Net Promoter Score® methodology. It is based on asking customers a single question that is predictive of both repurchase and referral. Here's how it works. Survey your customers and ask them the question, "On a scale of one to ten, how likely are you to recommend <insert your company name> to a friend or colleague?" There is a follow-up question to this survey, which is

"Why did you score the way you did?" Figure out what percentage of the people surveyed give you a nine or ten, and label that your ratio "promoters." Calculate your ratio of detractors by figuring out the percentage of people surveyed who gave you a score of one to six.

Then, calculate your Net Pro-

moter Score (NPS) by subtracting your percentage of detractors from your percentage of promoters. The average company in the United States has an NPS of between 10 and 15%. Reichheld found companies with an above-average NPS grow faster than average-scoring businesses. I did this and found one of my stores had an NPS of 100% with zero detractors. I would like to think this is because of my leadership, but in truth it is because of our phenomenal store manager, Joan. Joan is a wonderful person — a huge asset to our team — and understands our vision. Her customers feel welcomed, appreciated and listened to. Calculating your NPS and seeing where you have great success as well as areas for improvement can exponentially improve both your customer experience and the profitability of your business.

3) Sales per sq ft

By measuring your annual sales per square foot, you can get a sense of how efficiently you are translating your real estate into sales. Most industry associations have a benchmark. For example, annual sales per square foot for a respectable retailer might be \$300. With real estate usually ranking behind payroll as a business's largest expenses, the more sales you can generate per square foot of real estate, the more profitable you are likely to be.

Use this number to evaluate your front space or drop stores. You may find you need much less space than you thought. Finding the perfect sized space may take some time. I have seen successful drop stores as small as 500 sq. ft., including the ADA-compliant bathroom.

4) Revenue per employee

Payroll is the number one expense for most businesses, which explains why maximizing your revenue per employee can translate quickly to the bottom line. Google, for example, enjoyed a revenue per em-

5) Customers per account manager

How many customers do you ask your account managers to manage? Finding a balance

too far.

For the drycleaning owner, this ratio can be applied to route customers.

A very common question is always, "When will I know when to split a route?" or, conversely, "Can I combine two routes and save the cost of a driver and vehicle?"

against yourself by carrying out tests to beat your site's current opt-in rate.

Although we benchmark the MFM Key Performance Indicators (KPI), I have always felt it was more valuable to compare yourself to yourself. Am I getting better in the specific KPI or falling backwards?

Acquirers have a healthy appetite for data. The more data you can give them — in the ratio format they're used to examining — the more attractive your business will be in their eyes. Until next time, enjoy building value.

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@mfmi.com or online at www.mfmi.com or <https://mfmbusinesscoaching.com>.

By measuring your annual sales per foot, you can get a sense of how efficiently you are translating your real estate into sales.

ployee of more than one million dollars in 2015, whereas a more traditional people-dependent company may struggle to surpass \$100,000 per employee.

Slowly increase your ratio of customers per account manager until you see the first signs of deterioration (slowing sales, drop in customer satisfaction).

That's when you know you have probably pushed it a little

6) Prospects per visitor

What proportion of your website's visitors "opt in" by giving you permission to e-mail them in the future? Dr. Karl Blake and Ben Jesson are the co-founders of Conversion Rate Experts, which advises companies like Google, Apple and Sony on how to convert more of their website traffic into customers.

Dr. Blake and Jesson state that there is no such thing as a typical opt-in rate because so much depends on the source of traffic. They recommend that, rather than benchmarking

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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

The true cost of packaging enhancements

There are dozens, perhaps hundreds or more, types of products that will enhance your finished product. You probably use many of them yourself... coat retainers, garment covers, sweater bags, plastic butterflies for shirts, cuff clips, cuff links, bust forms, shoulder guards and tissue paper are just a few examples.

Before you begin using a new one of these items, consider the true cost of these packaging enhancements. The cost goes far beyond your cost to purchase them. The labor involved to affix them can be significant. Furthermore, there can be a catastrophic backfire. Consider this: Let's say you are currently using coat retainers on sports coats and blazers and decide that the sleeves should be stuffed with tissue. Also, you are tying the cuffs on your shirts together with a cuff clip and you want to enhance your finished shirt with plastic butterflies.

Someone will need to put these on. Let's say it is the inspector in their respective departments. Now, you add these additional duties. Is there time to do it? Will you need to add an additional employee? You probably won't even consider hiring an additional person just to affix or attach packaging. And, assuming that you don't, is the result a backed-up inspection area? If so, does it mean that employees take more time to finish up after the pressing is done? The extra labor that you incur may be attributable to the packaging enhancements that you've added.

I am not discouraging the introduction of these at all. They can be a very worthwhile investment, just be aware of what that investment costs. But, suppose the inspector still keeps up to the flow of garments from the pressing arena. Is there a cost then? It is possible that the inspector no longer has time to inspect the shirts because he/she is too busy stuffing sleeves or adding butterflies? This is a catastrophe. You, in effect, have traded away quality for paper and plastic. Bad choice. Packaging should not be used to cover up substandard quality. In fact, I believe they often are.

Consider the plastic butterfly. This is a clear plastic device that is used to prevent the dreaded "droopy" collar. The droopy collar is usually easily preventable, but instead often the cause is allowed to continue and the butterfly is affixed as if it were a mask. I recommend them because they add professionalism. But be sure that you add them for the right reason. Any type of packaging device must be used to protect and retain a look, not to make it happen.



In the photo above, we have the dreaded "droopy collar." There are a number of things that could have caused this. Get-

ting to the bottom of that is what really needs to be done. If a cardboard or plastic butterfly is attached to this shirt, you may feel better about yourself and

those @#&% plastic butterflies, what was she previously doing in those 90 to 100 minutes? It can only be one of a few things:
a) He/she was talking on her

Is there a place for packaging enhancements? Absolutely, as long as it is for the right reason.

your product, but the fact is when the customer removes that fluff, they will reveal your true product which is what you see pictured. Don't think that the collar will be standing at attention. It won't. So, here is what has happened:

1. You failed to press the collar correctly.
2. You worked around that by buying plastic collar butterflies that cost a penny a piece.
3. You asked your inspector to put them on every shirt. When he/she got good at putting them on, it took about 15 second to put them on. At \$10 an hour, that has a real cost of four cents per shirts, which is exactly five times the cost that you anticipated. Remember, you bought them for a penny, but they cost you a nickel.
4. At this point, you scoff at the thought that they cost you four cents more per shirt. You do 2,000 shirts per week and your payroll did not go up \$80. Touché! The fact is, it cost you something and it is probably something you would pay \$80 a week to prevent in a heartbeat. If Betty now finds an additional 90-100 minutes per day to attach

cell phone during those 90 minutes a day. OK. I sure have seen this. Assuming that he/she is now never on the phone, you win; the plastic butterflies cost you a mere penny a piece, but you probably should have fired Betty before all of this.

b) Betty used to occupy her time touching up shirts. If this is the case, you lose! The all-important touch-up of shirts has been disregarded for the sake of a packaging enhancement that distracts from or covers up inferior quality. Once the packaging is removed — which will surely happen when the customer wears the shirt and evaluates your quality — the sourness of poor quality will be evident.

c) Betty still does all of the touch-up that she always did, plus she adds the butterflies and whatever else you have mandated. That's OK. Now, at the end of the day, she has 60 to 90 minutes worth of work to do because touch-up is backed up. There is your \$80 per week. But wait, there's more! I despise nothing more than a backup at touch-up. It's Ground Hog's Day!

5. It is very likely that your

overall quality has slipped a notch, but the paradox is that you think the reverse is true. Now your collars stand up and your finished product looks better and more professional. Somehow, minor (or not so minor) issues that used to get touched up get ignored now. Too bad. Placing a cost on that is far too cosmic. What is the cost of diminished quality? I don't think that anyone knows, but we all know that it is *something*.

So now, it costs you more to do a poorer job. Is there a place for these enhancements? Absolutely — as long as it is for the right reason. Don't cover up a droopy collar with plastic or cardboard. Press the collar correctly so that it stands at attention and then preserve it with plastic or cardboard so that the shirt looks as good when the customer wears it as it did when it was hot off the press. That is worth a nickel per shirt! (Remember, not a penny... a nickel.)

You are dying to ask me how to prevent a droopy collar, aren't you? It isn't that hard. Most likely, the collar simply is not completely dry. That could have a dozen causes:

- Low steam pressure
- Low air pressure
- Pads need to be changed
- Flannel that is too thick
- Steel mesh needs replacing
- No collar cone
- Improper use of collar cone
- Hangers stored in a collar cone
- Too short of a press time
- Too high moisture retention (which can be caused by improper programming, leaky water inlet valve, slipping v-belt on the washer extract cycle, etc.)

I think I made my point. Don't throw bodies or labor or money at the problem! Sometimes it takes a real effort to find out what the real problem is, but it is always cheaper than labor. Everything is cheaper than labor!

"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 laundries 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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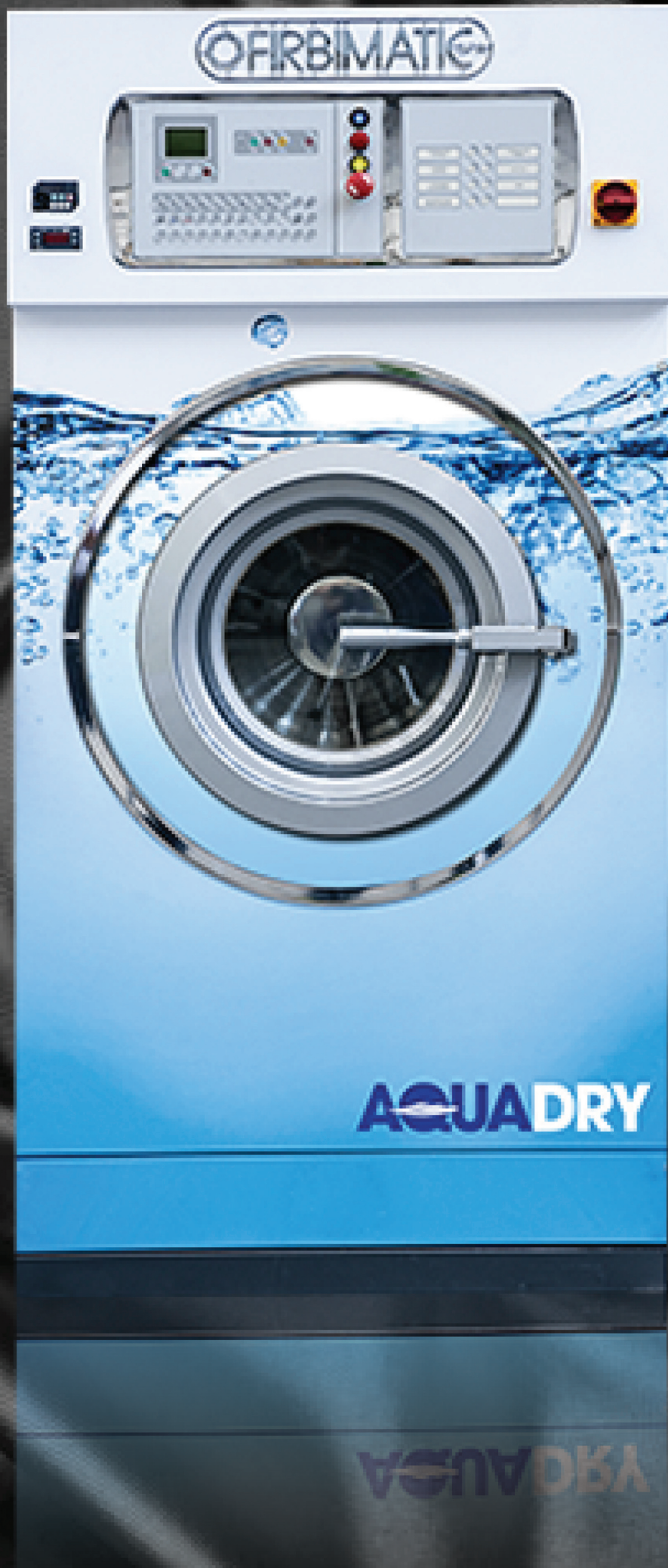
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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Solutions with acids and alkalis

Many garments received by my analysis service (International Independent Garment Analysis Service) require use of acids and alkalis for their correction. Some examples of problem solving may be:

- 1) Restoring color to acetate
- 2) Correcting shrunken leather
- 3) Restoring color change
- 4) Removing shine
- 5) Removing ground-in soils
- 6) Prevention of bleeding during wetcleaning
- 7) Expanded stain removal
- 8) Aid to bleaching
- 9) Stretching wool

Most spotters use acids and alkalis in limited use. They may use tannin and protein formulas and rust remover but they limit their potential for problem solving. Acids and alkalis are different in their chemical makeup and they must be used on specific staining. Spotters must be aware of their potential to damage fabrics and color on fabrics. Acids and alkalis neutralize each other. This means if an alkali is put on the fabric followed by an acid, the result of the chem-

ical reaction would be water and salt. This is also true if an acid is put on the fabric followed by an alkali. Acids and alkalis are water soluble and not removed by drycleaning solvents.

Acids

Acid is defined as a chemical that releases hydrogen ions in the presence of water. We measure acids using the pH scale. Seven is neutral and less than seven measures the strength of the acid. The lower number on the pH scale indicates a stronger acid.

Acids are safer on bright colors than alkalis and it is for that reason we use acids to stabilize dyes in wetcleaning. Strong acids can affect dyes and the strength of many fabrics. Prepared tannin formulas are made up of a mild acid and lubricant. This is effective for removal of many tannin stains or vegetable-based staining such as coffee, tea, soda, beer, wine, etc. The degree of stain removal can be expanded when the spotter uses other acids for stain removal.

Acetic Acid

Acetic acid should be added to the spotters arsenal for stain removal. Acetic acid is similar

to vinegar. Vinegar is produced by the action of bacteria on yeast-fermented brews. Vinegar can be made out of just about any plant that can be fermented to generate alcohol, which is subsequently generated into acetic acid. The hero of the fermentation process is acetobacter, a small microorganism that has the chemical power to transform alcohol into acetic acid. Acetic acid gives vinegar its pungent odor. Acetic acid has properties and advantages not possessed by other acids.

Acetic acid should be purchased at 28%. Concentrations over 28% will discolor dyes on fabrics and even dissolve acetate fabrics. It can be purchased in concentrations of 56 or 99%, but it is not recommended since mixing and diluting with water may not be accurate. Use 28% and even dilute it with more water so it can be used in the 20% range.

Uses of Acetic Acid

- 1) Use acetic acid after using a tannin formula. Acetic acid will have a greater effect on many tannin stains especially wine.
- 2) Delustering of acetate. Acetate fabric damage by heat and moisture can often be corrected

by spraying with acetic acid, hanging to dry and then cleaning.

3) Shine. Shine on gabardine can often be corrected by spraying with acetic acid.

4) Neutralize alkali. All alkalis should be neutralized after use to prevent yellowing.

5) Shrunken leather caused by heat can often be corrected by spraying with acetic acid which will make it soft and pliable so it can be shaped. Additional leather sprays must be used afterwards.

6) Add acetic acid to wetcleaning detergents for setting dyes on color-sensitive fabrics during wetcleaning procedures.

7) Use acetic acid to neutralize the following bleaches: peroxide and ammonia, sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate. Acetic acid is used to accelerate chlorine bleaches and all reducing bleaches.

8) Stretching wools. Acetic acid can be added to a cationic detergent in soaking a shrunken wool that has to be made soft enough to stretch.

9) Acetic acid can be used in combination with hydrogen peroxide (peracetic) for bleaching some fabrics.

Oxalic Acid

Oxalic acid comes in crystal or liquid state. Laidlaw makes a product called Rustgo which is oxalic acid in a liquid form. In crystal form, the oxalic acid should be mixed 15 parts water to one part oxalic acid. Oxalic acid can be used after acetic acid for tannin stain removal. It will remove rust staining without the damage potential of rust remover. Oxalic acid is applied to a stain and heated with the steam gun. It must be flushed after use. Remember, heat accelerates all chemicals and oxalic acid should be tested for safety prior to its use on fabrics.

Rust Remover

Hydrofluoric acid is the makeup of rust remover. This is a very effective acid but requires skill and knowledge for its use. Rust remover can be very corrosive if left on a fabric and contact on a customer's skin can cause severe burns.

After using rust remover, it must be flushed thoroughly with water and a protein formula or a mild alkali must be added to neutralize any residue the acid left. Rust remover must be tested before use and can discolor cashmere, gabardine, glass trimming and metallic trimming.

Tannin Process

- 1) Flush.
- 2) Neutral lubricant.
- 3) Mechanical action.
- 4) Flush.
- 5) Tannin formula.
- 6) Mechanical action.
- 7) Acetic acid plus neutral

- lubricant.
- 8) Mechanical action.
- 9) Flush.
- 10) Oxalic acid (Test).
- 11) Heat.
- 12) Flush.
- 13) Rust remover (Test).
- 14) Flush.
- 15) Peroxide plus ammonia (Test).
- 16) Flush.
- 17) Acetic acid.
- 18) Flush.

Alkali

Alkali releases hydroxyl ions in the presence of water. Alkali on the pH scale is above seven. The higher the number the stronger the alkali. Alkali is found in protein formulas and ammonia. Alkali is effective on protein stains or stains originating from the body. This includes eggs, milk, urine, etc. The wool and silk are sensitive to alkali.

Protein Formulas

Most commercial protein formulas are made up of a mild alkali and lubricant.

Ammonia (26)

Ammonia is a very volatile alkali and is stronger than the alkali found in most protein formulas. Ammonia is effective for neutralizing the effects of discolorations caused by acids. This usually occurs on cottons, rayons and linens. Sometimes titanium sulphate will produce a discoloration that can be neutralized by using ammonia. For removing ground-in soil, nothing works better than using ammonia mixed with a wet side lubricant.

Ammonia is very volatile and should be kept in a cool place since it can expand rapidly. Ammonia is used to increase the bleaching action of peroxide, perborate and percarbonate. Do not use ammonia and chlorine bleach since it will break down and will release chlorine gas.

Protein Spotting Procedure

- 1) Flush.
- 2) Protein formula.
- 3) Mechanical action.
- 4) Flush.
- 5) Ammonia plus neutral lubricant.
- 6) Mechanical action.
- 7) Flush.
- 8) Peroxide plus ammonia (Test).
- 9) Heat.
- 10) Flush.
- 11) Acetic acid.
- 12) Flush.
- 13) Digest.

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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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Older workers can present challenges

President Joe Biden is 78 years old. I met then Senator Biden in 1992, and I can tell you that he seemed more energetic then. Imagine that Joe Biden worked for you in some capacity. Older workers can be great. I am an older worker myself. Fifty years ago, I would have already reached retirement age, but I still make money for my firm, and my skills have not deteriorated (in my humble opinion). If I want to work and can, I should be able to do so.

The Age Discrimination Act established that as the law many years ago. With few exceptions, mandatory retirement is illegal. Older workers, however, sometimes lose their enthusiasm for their jobs, and they frequently are confronted with health issues that can prevent them from reporting to work or performing all the essential functions of the job. Although the following observations can also be stereotypes, older workers can resist change (like every time

a computer program is added or gets an update), adopt an attitude that no one can tell them how to do their job, or be oblivious to their decline in performance. What do you do with older workers whose decline is hurting your business? The first wrinkle to this question is presented by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Most ailments related to aging also qualify as disabilities under the ADA. Therefore, to avoid violating the ADA, you should sit

down and engage in the “interactive process” with workers whose performance is declining due to physical or mental problems. That means exploring in detail whether the problems can be resolved with a reasonable accommodation, and if not, whether there are other jobs that the employee may be qualified to fill. Failure to engage in that process is likely a violation of the ADA, even if you are positive that the interactive process will be futile.

This is good advice for dealing with younger employees who develop disabilities, which are broadly defined under the ADA. Even when it is apparent that someone cannot do the job because of a disability, the law still requires that “interactive process” to try to determine an accommodation that might change the equation. Whether 21, 51, or 78, the ADA applies. Once you have dealt with the ADA issues, then it becomes a matter of establishing performance standards applicable to all workers in that job, regardless of age. If the older worker meets those standards, the Age Discrimination Act says he can stay. If he does not, you can discipline the employee, up to and including discharge. In doing so, do not mention retirement or declining abilities during the disciplinary process. Treat it as a pure performance issue.

Many times, an employer’s instinct to be compassionate works against them. It is perfectly fine for a company to be sympathetic to an employee’s age or health, making accommodations such as reduced hours and workloads. But if a company intends not to accommodate declining performance, mentioning the cause — namely age or a health condition — only makes it appear that age or the health condition was a factor in the decision, regardless of the performance issue. It is similar to firing an employee for misconduct and saying: “I’m sorry I have to do this,” or “I feel terrible that I have to do this.” Apologizing only makes it appear that there may be other, improper reasons for the termination.

Finally, if you need to reduce your staff size, choosing the older worker for layoff must be justified by objective reasons, such as seniority, ability, or performance. Selecting an older worker because he is the highest paid due to his length of service, however, is a bad idea.

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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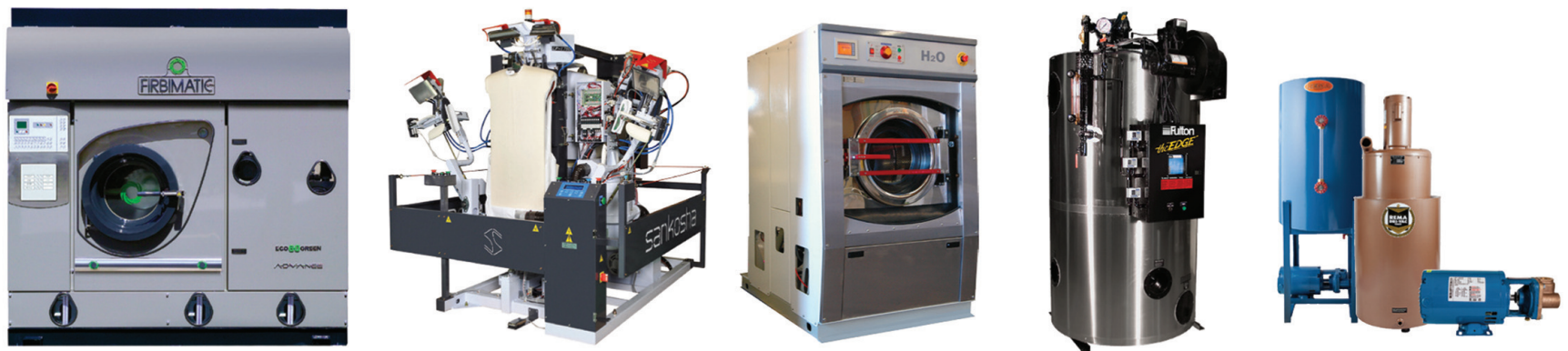
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NewsMAKERS

Lapels Dry Cleaning acquires five drycleaning brands

Lapels Dry Cleaning, an environmentally friendly drycleaning company headquartered in Hanover, Massachusetts, and its equity partner, **Greybull Stewardship, L.P. (“Greybull”)**, recently announced the acquisition of **Martinizing Dry Cleaning, 1-800-DryClean, Pressed4time, Dry Cleaning Station** and **Bizziebox**. Lapels and Greybull have now merged these leading drycleaning companies into **Clean**

Franchise Brands, LLC (“Clean Franchise Brands”), now the largest drycleaning company in the world, with 500+ stores in 40 states and nine countries.

“This acquisition creates tremendous synergies among all of our existing and new franchisees across the country,” said **Kevin Dubois**, CEO and president of Clean Franchise Brands. “The merger gives us the collective purchasing power to signifi-

cantly reduce operational costs for our franchisees in the future.”

“There will definitely be some coordination between brands to accommodate the needs of customers,” added Dubois, who is also the co-author of *Entrepreneurial Insanity in the Dry Cleaning Business*. “For example, a Lapels Dry Cleaning Plant may provide the cleaning service for a 1-800-Dry-Clean operator.”

Clean Franchise Brands is

thrilled to provide multiple offerings for new and existing franchise owners, including: a plant with retail store, a satellite store, pickup and delivery, and the newly created Lapels Laundromat. Clean Franchise Brands also offers a conversion program to independent drycleaning business owners that would like to receive international marketing and technology assistance.

“Over the years, we’ve estab-

lished Lapels as a unique franchise offering with a focus on environmentally friendly, non-toxic cleaning practices, as well as stellar customer service. That package has earned us a place in the Franchise 500 year in and year out,” said Dubois. “With this acquisition, we can provide a wide range of offerings to prospects all over the world. We’re excited about the future of all our new brands. The sky is truly the limit.”

Girbau North America recently announced two promotions within the GNA team. **Brennan Pollnow** of Milwaukee, WI, was named North American business

manager, Girbau Industrial brand, and **Tyler Willman** of Oshkosh, WI, was named regional business development manager — Canada and northwestern U.S.

“Brennan and Tyler are impressive young professionals who have proven their value with our company,” said **Vice President of Sales Joel Jorgensen**. “We are excited to offer them next steps toward building high-quality careers representing the GNA family of brands and products.”

Pollnow, who got his start with GNA in 2016 as an inside sales and customer care associate, was quickly promoted in 2018 to regional sales manager for central/southern U.S. commercial distribution and to provide lead prospect qualification and management for the company’s industrial laundry brand, Girbau Industrial (GI). In his newest role as GI

North American business manager, Pollnow works to design and implement GI strategic sales plans; support new GI product introductions; develop lasting relationships with distributors, suppliers and partners; manage ongoing GI projects; and identify emerging markets and market shifts; among many others. A 2016 graduate of University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Pollnow holds a bachelor’s degree in economics.

Tyler Willman, who joined GNA in 2020 as a regional sales manager in training, has greatly expanded responsibilities in his new role as regional sales manager. Responsible for sales and distribution within Canada and the

northwestern U.S., Willman is charged with developing lasting distributor and partner relationships, as well as assisting with new product development, competitive analyses, lead tracking and follow-up, and much more. Willman holds a bachelor’s degree in communications from University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

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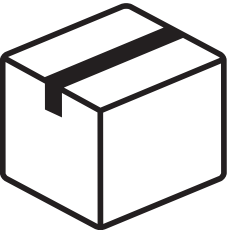
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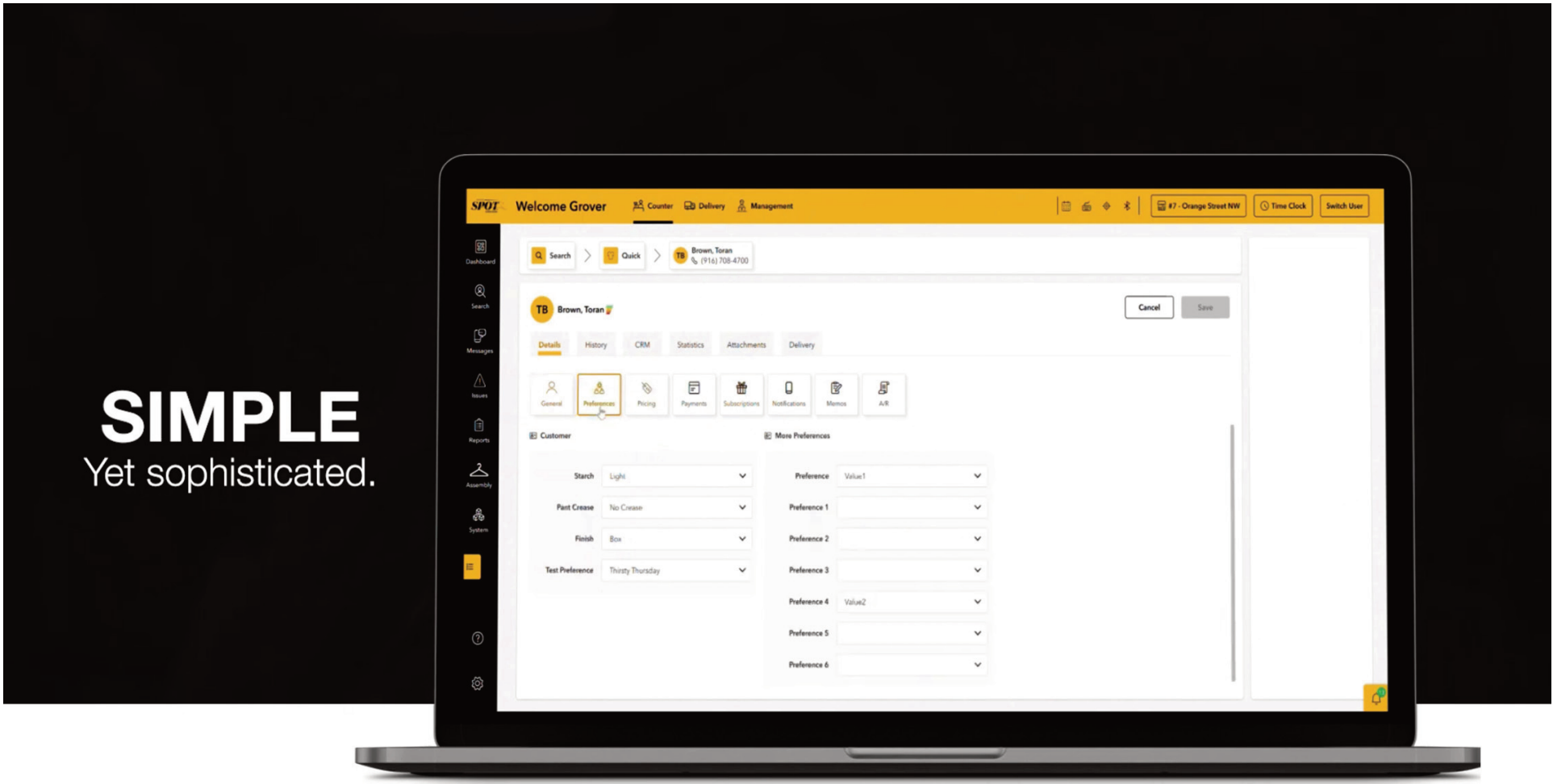


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