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WinterFest EXPO goes live this month

Last month, it was announced that FallFest EXPO 2021 would become WinterFest EXPO 2022 by moving its dates back to Jan. 19-21 of this year to accommodate requests by busy drycleaners during the holiday season. Otherwise, the virtual educational conference plans to keep the same daily schedule and programs — with one exception — Sean Abbas is not available.

The North East Fabricare Association, Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association and the South Eastern Fabricare Association have designed the event to offer attending cleaners live workshops, presentations and interactive discussions that focus on several aspects of their business.

The event will host pro-

grams from 2 to 5 p.m. EST from Wednesday, Jan. 19 through Friday, Jan. 21.

Day one of WinterFest EXPO will start with Chris

Brown of SPOT Business Systems who will examine how the industry is rebounding; Brian Fish of Pier Cleaners will focus on



Whitmarsh of The Route Pros will cover “Attracting and Managing the New Generation of Workforce” to begin the day.

Later on, Peter Blake, executive director of NEFA, and Kelby Sankey of Morellos Cleaners will discuss “Taking Advantage of High Yield Marketing Approaches.”

The final day will include programs on “How to Analyze Your Pricing Strategy” and “Understanding the Opportunities the Future Holds.”

There will also be a closing session and recap near the end of the day so attendees can get the most of their various WinterFest EXPO resources. Other highlights include vendor breakout rooms Thursday night from 5 to 7 p.m. so attendees can ask

questions about products. The conference will wrap up on Friday evening with an online cocktail reception beginning at 5 p.m.

The cost to attend is \$199 per member plant (unlimited attendees from the plant) and \$249 for non-members up until Jan. 7. After that date, the registration cost goes up to \$249 for members and \$299 for non-members.

In addition to participation, the fee also includes access to video recordings of all sessions and added content for a minimum of three months.

For information, contact Peter Blake at (617) 791-0128 or Leslie Schaeffer at (215) 830-8495. Register at any of the host’s sites: www.nefabri-care.com, www.sefa.org or www.pdclean.org.



Kuehl of Armada Business Intelligence who will present “Looking at the Economic Landscape of Today and Forecasting Tomorrow.”

Following will be a panel discussion of “The Industry’s Response to a Once in a Generation Challenge” which will include: Toran

KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators); James Peuster, owner of 21st Century Dry Cleaners, will discuss how many industry leaders have adapted; and Mike Ross of AristoCraft/Minda Supply will speak on managing supply chain disruptions. On Thursday, Jennifer



Clean ’22 attendee registration opens soon

With a new year comes new possibilities, including signing up to attend Clean 2022, which is scheduled to take place from July 30 to Aug. 2 later this year at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

It will be the first time the drycleaning industry has experienced a Clean Show since June of 2019 when it was hosted in New Orleans.

Last year’s scheduled show was postponed due to the pandemic, but exhibitors have not postponed signing

up for this year’s show. So far, over 90% of exhibit space has been sold already with anticipation of a sellout.

Overall, hundreds of diverse companies have made plans to display their products, supplies and services to the laundering and drycleaning industry this summer.

Messe Frankfurt, the company who organizes the event, anticipates that this year’s Clean Show will welcome a record number of exhibitors to the show floor.

Now, it is almost time to open up registration for the



thousands of visitors expected to attend. At this time, Messe Frankfurt plans to open registration later this month.

While the precise date registration begins is potentially fluid, attendance pricing has been set.

The cost to attend the event is \$119 for association members and \$149 for non-members for those who register by June 29. After that date, the cost to register onsite during the event is \$169 per person.

Those who attend will have the opportunity to experience live demonstrations and attend educational

sessions developed and presented by leading industry associations — the same ones that help collaborate on the show. Those associations include: the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute, the Coin Laundry Association, the Association for Linen Management, the Textile Rental Services Association of America and the Textile Care Allied Trades Association.

For more information on Clean 2022 including hotel accommodations, visit online at: www.cleanshow.com.

A new perspective in New Mexico



After spending his life in the drycleaning industry, Kurt Lucero (owner of The Cleanery in Albuquerque, NM) gained a deeper understanding of it after his long-time Route Specialist Randy Unruh passed away and the impact he had on his customers became clear. “How he could touch so many people blew my mind,” Kurt recalled. “I just want to be like him. It’s going to take the rest of my life to be like him and to show up for people like he did.” See page 6 for the full story.



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The association’s board recently met in person and made plans to head to South Carolina in April.

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Making the most of the opportunities in 2022

Finally, 2021 is over and — wow — it was a... well, it's hard to find just the right words to describe it, really. The *Oxford Dictionary* (cited as the biggest English dictionary in existence) has over 171,000 of them in current use. I suppose out of all those options, one word does spring to mind to sum up the ongoing journey of adapting to adversity: resilience. There may have been a shortage of just about everything imaginable in 2021, but there was certainly no shortage of resilience.

At times, 2021 felt like a searing inferno of endless frustration; at others, a font of inspiration and relief. There was pure pandemonium and consistent chaos, yet there was also profound enlightenment and unexpected hope. Perhaps the best way to describe the year is to use the “word of the year” as designated by the oldest dictionary publisher in the U.S., Merriam-Webster. In 2020, the company chose “pandemic” as its word of the year based on how frequently it had been looked up on their website. For 2021, they chose the word “vaccine,” which certainly seems a lot more positive than pandemic, though that didn't prevent the year from being incredibly strange and difficult.

While 2021 was many things, the most important thing it is, however, is over. Perhaps the word for the drycleaning industry in 2022 should be “opportunity.” After fighting all these months for survival, many of the drycleaners still standing have worked long and hard to shore up their strengths and fortify their weaknesses, positioning their business in the best place it can be to handle whatever bewildering business climate the future may hold.

Thankfully, there are signs in the drycleaning industry that some recovery has taken place throughout the country and many economic experts have forecasted gradual economic growth over the next 12 months, building on the momentum of the end of last year when the holiday season provided a boost for retailers.

In fact, many drycleaners were so busy during that time of year that the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association chose to push back its virtual WinterFest EXPO date until this month (Jan. 19-21). Busy or not, cleaners would be well-advised to attend this time around. The amount of helpful information shared in the past two virtual “Fest” events was incredible — and necessary — to keep pace with a world that has sped up considerably and has no intention of ever slowing back down. It is now more important than ever to keep informed as much as possible — and it's never a bad idea to embrace the best technology available.

As Bill Gates noted in his year-end blog review of 2021, “Even after this pandemic ends, it's clear that much of the digitization it brought on is here to stay. The last two years have led to monumental leaps forward in how we use technology, accelerating changes that would've taken years — if not a decade or longer — otherwise. We've seen rapid, widespread adoption of services that already existed, like ordering groceries online or having meetings over video chat. And we've seen the creation of new innovations that I think only represent the tip of the iceberg of what's to come in the years ahead.”

Another good sign of the drycleaning industry recovering is that DLI's school will be back in session full time and in numerous formats in 2022. The association will offer classes both virtually online and in person at its School of Drycleaning Technology in Laurel, MD. New this year is a hybrid offering — a blended course that combines virtual sessions and in-school class. It is a welcome sight to see industry education open back up to full time again and continue to emphasize both online and in-person platforms as both can provide invaluable benefits. After all, there is no substitute for the convenience and cost of the former, and there is no substitute for the clear communication and close camaraderie of the latter.

Of course, the biggest barometer for the industry is the state of the Clean Show, which has targeted this month as its goal for when attendee registration will open up. The show has already sold over 90% of its exhibit space, and, on top of that, show organizer Messe Frankfurt is expecting there to be a record number of exhibitors on the convention floor in Atlanta from July 30 to Aug. 2.

The only piece of the puzzle left is to see if cleaners will sign up when registration opens soon. That seems to be a forgone conclusion, though, since it has been a three-year hiatus (as opposed to the customary two-year interval) since the last Clean Show in 2019. Also, it seems reasonable to expect that an industry hungry for ways to improve their production quality and efficiency will possibly show up in record numbers, as well.

Finally, here's hoping that the 2022 word of the year from Merriam-Webster will be “endemic” — a word used when a disease is relegated to being found among particular people or in a certain area. Many experts have predicted that Covid will likely downgrade its pandemic status sometimes in 2022. So, now is the time to be hopeful, but remain resilient. Also, never stop looking for opportunities. Good luck out there.

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Publisher of

NATIONAL CLOTHESLINE

1001 Easton Rd., Suite 107

Willow Grove, PA 19090

Phone: (215) 830-8467

Fax: (215) 830-8490

info@nationalclothesline.com

www.nationalclothesline.com

PUBLISHER

Carol Memberg

EDITOR

Chris Pollay

chris@nationalclothesline.com

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Leslie Schaeffer

Leslie@bpscommunications.com

ADVERTISING

Richard Cappo

rich@nationalclothesline.com

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Mary Castro-Regan

graphics@bpscommunications.com

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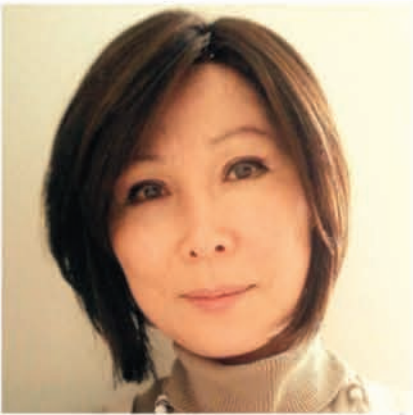


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Up for the challenge

As strange as it sounds, Kurt Lucero — the second generation owner of The Cleanery in Albuquerque, NM — actually worked in the drycleaning industry before his parents, Joe and Joy, started the family business in 1984.

As a kid, Kurt often was engaged in one money-making venture or another, including selling cinnamon oil-soaked toothpicks to other children at school.

"I think in high school, me and my friend made some flyers for — whatever people wanted or we thought that they wanted, like their deck painted — and we would add it to the list and drop off flyers," he said. "We were always trying to hustle that way."

That strong work ethic caught the attention of the Lucero's neighbor — Jack Tipps who opened Tipps Equipment in New Mexico, which primarily installed and repaired equipment in drycleaning and laundry facilities. He also had a side business making soap.

"At 12 and 13 years old, I was working in their tiny little soap plant making dry powder soap," Kurt recalled. "I would get recipes of soap and put them in this hopper upstairs and mix it in this big mixer. In the meantime, it was packaged in boxes with plastic liners at the time and I would package up the soap and it would get shipped out. They would sell it to drycleaners."

At 16, he worked for Tipps Equipment painting refurbished equipment, unclogging drains on service calls and helping install laundromat equipment.

"Then, my parents got into the drycleaning industry soon after that," he said. In 1984, Joe and Joy started The Cleanery, which originally focussed on laundry. Two years later, though, the couple expanded by purchasing a retail drycleaning plant across town in a very desirable location (so desirable, the business still stands there today).

Early on, Joe demanded a high standard of clothing care, which stemmed from the meticulous attention to detail he cultivated as a former Marine.

"There was always some sort of inspection process," Kurt said. "Back in the days when we had a lot of tags, all the tags were removed. Collar stays were always removed and put back in — making sure it's ready to wear, making sure it's lint free, making sure no thread is hanging free."

From the start, Kurt worked at the family company, but after high school he pursued studies at the University of New Mexico when his parents asked him to come work full time in the early 1990s. They believed he could grow the delivery routes.

First, though, Kurt sought a better understanding of the industry from the likes of Stan Caplan inside the classroom and Ed Delicio, founder of America's Best Cleaners, outside.

The more he learned, the more he wanted to keep learning. "I became frustrated at certain people in the business telling me that *this is how it has to be done* and *this is as good as it's going to get* — there was something inside me that said, 'There is more to this.'" Kurt

noted. "So, we put the routes on hold and I started learning all aspects of the business from the front end to the back end. Then, we began to do route sales. I hired a guy named Bill Fletcher and he has been with me ever since. We've grown it into a substantial route business," he added. "It's about 65% of our business now."

seasons to get in with *Breaking Bad* and we got in during their final season," he laughed. "I could not get into it to save my life. There was another drycleaner or two that had the business and I could not break in, even with my relatively dang-good reputation in town."

His relentless efforts finally wore them down. Once he was given a shot,

do I want to change and where do I need to apply the funds for that while I survive and cut corners? I didn't just want to sit on my hands."

Perhaps one of the biggest factors for The Cleanery's ongoing success is that Kurt doesn't sit on his hands — or cover his ears. He never

thecleanery.com



Kurt Lucero

The Cleanery
Albuquerque, NM

The routes did not grow overnight, and a large reason for their success was route specialist Randy Unruh. "I hired him when he was 19 years old and I think I was 31," Kurt recalled. "He was with me 20 years. At 40 years old, a year ago on Dec. 3, he died of pancreatic cancer."

After his longtime employee and friend passed, Kurt gained a different perspective on the industry when he realized how much of an effort Randy had put into taking care of customers.

"Randy loved his job and he loved The Cleanery and he loved his clients and co-workers. He just showed up every day as present and human as I've ever seen anybody be," he said. "And, the way he touched our clients — his clients — on the routes for the past 20 years — I didn't know that we, as a company, or he, as an individual, could touch people like that, especially picking up dirty clothes and delivering them drycleaned to your front door."

"How he could touch so many people blew my mind. I miss him even more, but it's so inspiring. I just want to be like him. It's going to take me the rest of my life to be like him and to show up for people like he did," Kurt added. "It just changed my whole outlook on what we I do, how we touch our clients, how we solve their problems. We're not just cleaning dirty clothes. It's much more than that. I'm so proud to be part of this business and part of this industry and I am so excited about the future, too."

Another area of the business that Kurt has tried to develop over the years is work for the entertainment industry. As he points out, it can be almost impossible to break into, and if you somehow manage to get in, you may decide it's just not worth it.

"Boy, did we have to work hard for the movie business. We're now working with several movies. It took me five

he made the most of it. The Cleanery has worked with the likes of NBC Studios, Santa Fe Studios and Netflix on projects ranging from television shows like *Stranger Things* and *Better Call Saul* to films like *The Lone Ranger* with Johnny Depp and *News of the World* with Tom Hanks. While it sounds glamorous, Kurt advised other drycleaners to be sure they can handle the difficult demands of the work.

"It's feast or famine in the movie industry. You might not see business for several weeks, and then you might get one in," he explained. "It is very hard work sometimes, and a lot of drycleaners may not know what they're getting into. I have literally been waiting for them at midnight with them showing up at 2:30 a.m. with three or four hundred pounds of wet, soggy wash-n-fold to get back by 7 a.m. The turnaround — we just did *Cry Macho* with Clint Eastwood during Covid — boy, we had to be on our toes. We had to pick up every night at 10 p.m. and it was back by 5 a.m. every single day, six days a week. It's not for the faint of heart. Sometimes I wonder if I'm making any money, to be honest with you."

Like much of the rest of the drycleaning industry, The Cleanery was hit hard by the pandemic.

"I was down probably about 45% in the worst part of Covid. I ended up actually closing one store," Kurt noted. "It's changed the way I view my staff, my team members. I just really come to appreciate their hard work. I have often had to throw myself in the mix many, many times running routes to drycleaning/spotting to working weekends to cleaning comforters to working 70-hour weeks — to it all."

"I started to cut costs, but I also started to spend money," he emphasized. "I developed my website. I redid it. I said, 'How do I want to come out of this whole pandemic — what things

hesitates for an opportunity to listen to industry leaders. "I'm kind of like a groupie group guy," he said. "I'm in a couple of different groups."

Some of those groups include, Maverick Drycleaners, the Association of Wedding Gown Specialists, the Green Business Bureau, The Route Pros and America's Best Cleaners.

"I think one of the best things I've ever done — I'm not the smartest guy in the drycleaning industry — but I'm very good at aligning myself with the best people in the industry," Kurt said. "Fortunately, I've been good at that."

Despite almost two years of challenges — and more to come — the entrepreneur in Kurt has stirred to life.

"My life has changed so much in the last several years. I'm more excited about the industry than I've ever been," Kurt explained. "The only thing I'm missing right now is I'm trying to carve out time for creativity — for thinking and writing all of these ideas that spin out of my head that don't really gather much steam — no pun intended. I just need time to do that. That's when I'm happiest... when I'm being creative and writing out ideas. It's been really tough because of the labor shortage where I might have to fill in here or there, that sort of thing."

Fortunately, Kurt believes The Cleanery is on strong footage for the future, and he plans to continue trying to pinpoint precisely what the ever-changing consumer currently craves.

"I think the industry has to go through some sort of consolidation, but I think if you align yourself right and you do what Randy did for our client base — knowing who the customers are and how we're getting to those people," he said, "and you continue to look for ways to be a solution to problems they have in their lives (thank you, David Coyle)... those drycleaners are going to be the ones to make it through this, in my opinion."

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DLI plans live, virtual and “blended” classes

After reopening its School of Drycleaning Technology for students in October following a long hiatus, the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute have forged a busy schedule for 2022 that consists of virtual and on-site classes, as well as “blended” courses of the two.

“We are excited to offer our courses in these formats to allow students better access to DLI’s educational opportunities,” noted DLI Director of Education Brian Johnson.

“We understand that taking time to travel and attend courses isn’t for everyone, particularly in the current travel environment. Our new virtual courses allow students to learn without having to travel at all.”

Those who want to attend DLI’s on-site introductory and advanced drycleaning courses will have three opportunities this year. The one-week Introduction to Drycleaning course will be held at the DLI School of Technology from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily on **March 7-11, Aug. 8-12 and Oct. 17-21**, while the two-week Advanced Drycleaning course is scheduled from **March 14-25, Aug. 15-26, and Oct. 24- Nov. 4, 2022.**

Tuition for the introductory course, which is suitable for those newer to the industry or with less experience, costs \$1,595 for non-members while members receive discounts ranging from 20% off to free, depending on membership level. The two-week advanced course is for graduates of the first course or those with more experience. Tuition is \$2,195 for non-members and varies between 20% off and free for members.

Anybody who takes both the classes together enjoy a reduced tuition rate of \$2,895 for non-members.

New this year will be “blended” courses, which will be composed of seven days of virtual training and two days of on-site training at DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology. The class will cover the same material as the live introductory course. Meeting dates include: **June 7 and 9 (virtual), June 14 and 16 (virtual), June 21 and 23 (virtual), June 28 (virtual) and July 14 and 15 (on-site).**

For those reticent to attend live, DLI will present two sessions of its virtual stain removal course, which will cover everything from fiber identification and character-

istics to stain removal chemistry and procedures. Each course meets over seven days. Class dates for the spring offering include: **April 26 and 28, May 3 and 5, May 10 and 12, and May 17.**

The fall offering is schedule to meet on **Sept. 13-15, Sept. 20-22, Sept. 27 and 29, and Oct. 4.**



2022 Educational Schedule

Introduction to Drycleaning (On Site):
March 7-11; Aug. 8-12; and Oct. 17-21

Advanced Drycleaning (On Site):
March 14-25; Aug. 15-26; and Oct. 24-Nov. 4

Stain Removal (Virtual)
Spring: April 26, 28, May 3, 5, 10, 12 and 17
Fall: Sept. 13-15, 20, 22, 27, 29 and Oct. 4

Introduction to Drycleaning (Blended):
Virtual: June 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23 and 28
On Site: July 14-15

Tuition is \$695 for the course for non-members and 20% less to free for members.

Additionally, DLI plans to continue its webinars and peer-to-peer meetings to assist cleaners who seem to have less free time of late. Thus, the numbers of webinars will be cut back.

“Due to increases members are reporting in business, DLI will change our educational webinar schedule to two sessions each month,” said DLI CEO Mary Scalco. “DLI will continue sharing weekly net-

working opportunities. We are still 100% focussed on helping members communicate and grow.”

DLI’s next webinar is at 1 p.m. EST on Jan. 26 and will feature Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners who will help attendees learn how to determine marketing budgets.

Membership Savings

DLI has also put together a savings package from allied trades members, industry service providers, suppliers and manufacturers worth more than \$2,000 with its new Membership Pays Package.

“This group of industry leaders believe in the industry and the association so much they are willing to share direct discounts on their products and services with DLI members,” explained DLI President Bobby Patel. “This is a significant

amount of savings.”

The package includes savings on everyday purchases, service subscriptions and capital investments such as finishing equipment and drycleaning machines. Gift certificates from participating allied trades companies are valid for one year after the start date of membership.

Bill Odorizzi, DLI allied trades director, believes the initiative will help build a stronger industry. “Allied trades companies are stepping up to help DLI’s members through these challenging times. By doing this, we’re helping to unite the industry so we may all enjoy a more prosperous future together.”

The list of participants offering gift certificates through 2023 already includes: BeCreative360, \$200; Cleaner’s Supply, \$100; EZ Products, \$150; FabriClean Supply, 10% off next order; Fabritec International, \$150; GreenEarth Cleaning LLC, \$200; Luetzow Industries, \$100; Kleerwite, \$100; Memories Gown Preservation, \$270; NIE Insurance, 6% off insurance; The Route Pros, free Route Guide (\$159 value) and quarterly consultations; Sankosha USA, 40% off covers and pads; SPOT Business Systems, \$240; Unipress Corporation, \$200; and United Fabricare Supply, Inc., \$100.

For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

Public comment period begins

EPA proposes to amend NESHAP

Last month, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed slight amendments to the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for drycleaning facilities utilizing perchloroethylene (PCE) as a cleaning solvent.

Following its recent technological review for the PCE drycleaning NESHAP, EPA proposed to add provisions to the rule which will require all dry-to-dry machines at existing major and area sources to have both refrigerated condensers and carbon absorbers as secondary controls.

The changes are only expected to affect a small number of drycleaners who own much older equipment. By the third generation, drycleaning machines began incorporating the first “closed loop” machines, which were then upgraded to include both refrigerator condensers and carbon adsorbors by the fourth generation.

EPA will be accepting public comments on the matter for a period of 45 days after its date of publication in the Federal Register.

To read the proposed rules: go online to this address: www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-12/frn_dry_cleaning_technology_review_proposal.pdf.

Those who wish to submit public comments by email should identify the Docket ID number (No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2005-0155) in the subject line and addressed to: a-and-r-docket@epa.gov.

It can also be faxed to (202) 566-9744 or mailed to the U.S. EPA, EPA Docket Center, Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2005-0155, Mail Code 28221T, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20460.

Comments may also be submitted online by visiting the federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov and submitting them there.

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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

A checklist for an employee handbook

Should you have an employee handbook? Yes. Many jurisdictions require you to have written policies on leave, harassment, discrimination and the like. Governmental agencies and courts reviewing employee terminations want to know what policy the employee violated to get fired, and where that policy is documented. In some states, like my home state of Maryland, a written vacation policy controls whether an employee can forfeit unused vacation time after termination.

Here's a list of what an employee handbook should contain:

1. **Title page with the date the handbook was issued.**
2. **Welcoming remarks.** Let's be nice.
3. **Company history.** Employees should know how the company has progressed. This section should include any interesting facts that would enable an employee to identify with the company.
4. **Disclaimer.** Although a handbook is similar to a written employment agreement, we lawyers like to say "No, it is not."
5. **Equal employment pol-**

icy — including a statement of reasonable accommodation of disabilities.

6. **Reporting concerns of harassment or discrimination.** Employees should be told of their rights and obligations under anti-discrimination laws. There should be more than one avenue for notifying management of such concerns, and employees should be told

agement.

8. **Problem resolution procedure.** This tells employees how to bring any concerns, problems and grievances to management's attention. This section is separate from the section on reporting perceived discrimination or harassment.

9. **Employee categories.** This section describes full-time, part-time and temporary em-

14. **Payroll information.** Employees should be told when to expect their paychecks. Procedures for obtaining replacement checks should be set forth. Employees should also be advised about how to seek any pay corrections that may need to occur in a particular paycheck.

15. **Fringe benefits.** Sometimes referred to as "your hid-

law is sufficient here.

27. **Standards of conduct.** Every handbook should set forth rules of conduct, as well as a system of generally progressive discipline. This section should reserve to the employer the right to forgo progressive discipline based upon the nature of the offense.

28. **Attendance guidelines.** Absenteeism and lateness are typically the biggest disciplinary problems facing employers. There should be a policy concerning absenteeism and lateness which is strictly enforced. If attendance records are maintained, say so and do so.

29. **Drug and alcohol-free workplace.**

30. **Dress code and grooming standards.** Reasonable standards of grooming and dress that are uniformly applied are legal.

31. **Computer/Electronic communication policy.** Set forth the rules regarding appropriate and inappropriate use of the company's computers, email server and other electronic communication devices.

32. **Social media policy.** With increasing frequency, use and abuse of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at and away from work can cause workplace problems. This section should set forth the company's rules regarding the use of social media and comply with the standards for acceptable restrictions on social media set forth by the National Labor Relations Board.

33. **Ending the employment relationship.** This section should address the notice employees are expected to provide if they are resigning employment and the repercussions, if any, for failure to provide sufficient notice (such as foregoing unused vacation).

In addition to the above, the company can add any specific policies it has unique to it.

Once your handbook is done, it should be reviewed by a labor and employment attorney. Most attorneys will review the handbook for a flat rate. Know what the charges will be before you proceed.

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.

With increasing frequency, use and abuse of social media sites at and away from work can cause workplace problems.

that they will not be retaliated against for good faith reports about perceived discrimination or harassment.

7. **Description of communications program.** Employees need to know "what's going on" in the company. This section should highlight some of the following communication techniques: company newsletters, open door programs, employee sounding boards, quality circles, bulletin boards, suggestion boxes, and regular employee meetings with man-

ployees and how their working conditions might differ.

10. **Evaluation period.** This section is used in lieu of a probationary period.

11. **Working hours.** Employees should be told the regular starting and quitting times.

12. **Overtime.** This section should describe the circumstances under which overtime is paid. If overtime is a regular occurrence, it should be stated that employees are expected to work overtime.

13. **Timekeeping.**

den paycheck," the company should set forth all fringe benefits received by employees.

16. **Vacation.** Employees should be advised of vacation eligibility.

17. **Sick leave.** There should be a policy for all leaves of absence involving illness or temporary disability.

18. **Personal leave.** Some employers offer "personal days" off.

19. **Holidays.** This section should set forth the holidays observed and when that occurs. A standard provision is that an employee must work (or be on approved vacation leave) the last scheduled workday before and after the holiday to receive holiday pay.

20. **Family and Medical Leave Act leave.** If an employer has more than 50 employees within a 75-mile radius of a company location, the handbook should include a specific FMLA policy.

21. **Unpaid leave of absence.** Every company should have provisions regarding unpaid leaves of absence. This is to prevent an employee from going on an indefinite personal leave.

22. **Bereavement leave.** Most companies have a policy on bereavement or funeral leave. This section should set forth the terms of that leave, including a definition of "immediate family."

23. **Jury duty and witness leave.** Check your local requirements.

24. **Voting leave.**

25. **Workforce reductions.** Commonly known as layoffs, there should be a policy setting forth the way layoffs take place.

26. **Military leave.** A general statement that says the company will adhere to all military leave requirements under the



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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY **DAN EISEN**

Preventions and cures for bleeding dyes

The laboratory analysis department of a drycleaning association has reported problems with spandex-blended fabrics consisting of rayon and polyester. Spandex is an elastic yarn similar to rubber but consists of polyurethane.

It is used to give fabrics better fit and wearability. Spandex-blended fabrics may consist of rayon or polyester, or both.

The dyes on polyester and rayon are usually stable to both drycleaning and wet-

cleaning when not blended with spandex.

When polyester and rayon yarns are blended with spandex, the fabric can be fugitive to drycleaning solvent or water, or both.

I do not know the reason why the spandex blend produces a less serviceable fabric.

The spandex-blended fabrics are often used in expensive women's designer garments.

The garments may consist of mostly black dresses or women's suits with white trim, or mostly white garments with

black trim.

Testing to Drycleaning

The serviceability of the dyes on these fabrics can easily be tested. Wipe an unexposed area with a q-tip damp with solvent or oily type paint remover. Check if the dye transferred to the q-tip. Note: If the drycleaner uses hot solvent in their cleaning machine, the test is not accurate and bleeding can occur.

Drycleaning Using Hot Solvent

The biggest source of bleed-

ing problems occur with those drycleaners using hot solvent. This was documented by the problem garments sent to my garment analysis laboratory. Many manufacturers advocate heating up solvent to increase the KB value of less aggressive solvents such as GreenEarth and hydrocarbon.

Although the drycleaner may obtain a more aggressive solvent, they run a greater risk of dye bleeding and the possibility of a damaged garment. It should be noted that drycleaners using cooler solvents have

not encountered as many problems.

Correction

I had a problem with these garments in a recent consultation. Five spandex-blended dresses with white trim bled in the drycleaning process.

The spotter tried batching the garment and wetcleaning with no results. We then tried running each one in the drycleaning machine, separately. The result was that they were corrected.

The high solvent level in agitation prevented dye transfer. The rule is, if something bleeds in drycleaning, it should be drycleaned again.

Wetcleaning

The fabrics can also bleed in wetcleaning even if labeled washable. Many drycleaners may run these garments on a gentle cycle for fabric safety. A gentle cycle or soaking creates more bleeding.

The more time a fabric soaks and is not flushed, the more chance it has of transferring dye. Dye setting agents usually do not stabilize poor dye.

Testing

The easiest way to test is to place a clean cloth under the garment and then flush with the steam gun, noting dye transfer.

Correction

The easiest way to attempt correction is to run the fabric over again in a regular run. The constant agitation and flushing with warm water prevents dye transfer from occurring.

Bleaching

On dye transfer, a titanium sulphate bath may work well. Testing is necessary to ascertain how readily the rayon is affected by the bleach.

Sometimes if the testing shows the dyes are affected by stripping agents, it can often still be stripped by immersing the garment in the bleach bath for a few seconds.

This immersion process can be repeated several times until correction is obtained. When making up the bleach bath, make sure you follow manufacturer's instructions.

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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Schedule of Events

Wednesday, January 19

2:00 - 3:30pm *Looking at the Economic Landscape of Today and Forecasting Tomorrow*
featuring Chris Kuehl (Armada Business Intelligence)

3:45 - 5:00pm *The industry's Response to "Once in a Generation" Challenges*
Panel Discussion featuring: Toran Brown (SPOT Business Systems) on how the industry is rebounding, Brian Fish (Pier Cleaners) on KPI's, James Peuster (21DC) on how industry leaders have adapted, Mike Ross (AristoCraft/Minda Supply) on managing supply chain disruptions



Chris Kuehl

Thursday, January 20

2:00 - 3:15pm *"Attracting & Managing the New Generation of Workforce"*
(What are they looking for? What do they Value?)
featuring Jennifer Whitmarsh (The Route Pros)

3:30 - 5:00pm *Taking Advantage of High Yield Marketing Approaches*
featuring Peter Blake & Kelby Sankey (Morellis Cleaners)

5:00 - 7:00pm *Vendor breakout Rooms*
Meet the Vendors - attendees will choose the rooms they want to visit



Jennifer Whitmarsh

Friday, January 21

2:00 - 3:15pm *How to Analyze Your Pricing Strategy*

3:30 - 4:30pm *Understanding the Opportunities the Future Holds*

4:30 - 5:00pm *Winter Expo Recap and Closing Session - Using Your Winter Expo Resources*

5:00pm *Cocktail Reception*

• Topics subject to change. •

Cost: **Member:** \$199/per Member (unlimited attendees from member plant) **Non-Member:** \$249 until January 7. After January 7, registration fee is \$249 for Members and \$299 for Non-Members.

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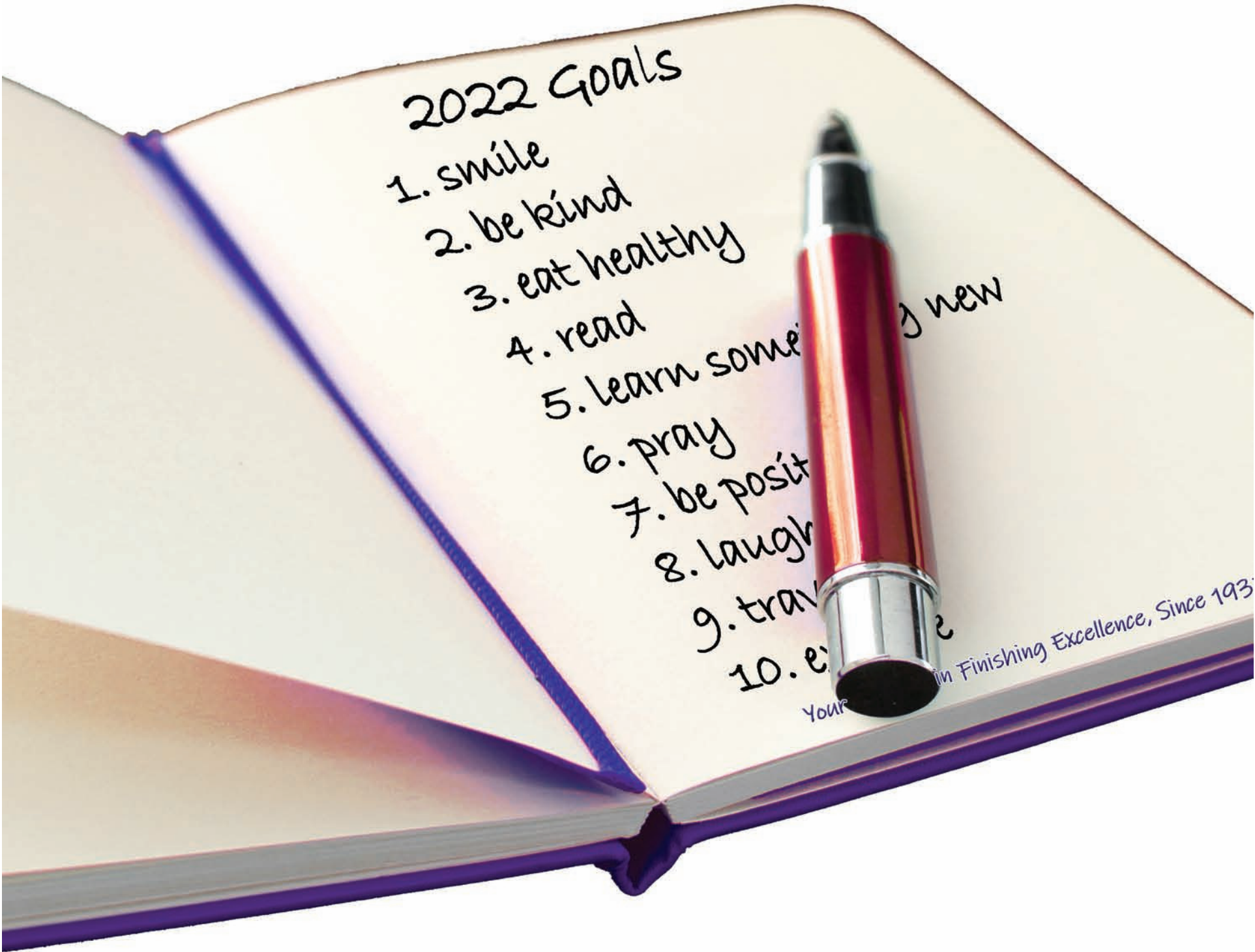
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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Creating a deep and wide competitive moat

When it comes to people who value businesses, there is, arguably, no better evaluator than Warren Buffett (who happens to be a client). As the most famous investor of all time, there are things he looks for when making an investment. He looks for companies with what he calls a “deep and wide competitive moat” around them. Why does Warren Buffett care about this? It comes down to market differentiation, where customers believe what you have is truly differentiated. The reason? It gives you pricing authority. When you have pricing authority, it means you can set the price for what you sell, and when you have control over your pricing it gives you better margins. With better margins you have more marketing dollars, and more marketing dollars allows you to invest more in sales and marketing, which then allows you to differentiate your product or service even further. This triggers the whole domino effect, which gives you more pricing authority, and it starts to build upon itself.

Now, back to Warren Buffett and the deep and wide competitive moat. It is exceedingly difficult for a competitor to compete with you when you have remarkable differentiation. We see that play out in terms of the value of the businesses we work with through the Value Builders program. When we look at the average multiple offered to our clients, it is 3.76 times their pre-tax profit, yet when we isolate the business owners who say they have a virtual monopoly on the product they sell, they get a much higher multiple. The reason for that is a buyer cannot easily replicate the product or service. Buyers will look at your business and say there is some secret sauce that has created a competitive moat that they need to cross to compete with your company. That’s when they get interested in acquiring your business. You have something that they cannot easily replicate.

Differentiating Yourself

So, you know the value of your company is going to be impacted by how well you differentiate your business. Acquirers do not buy things

they can easily replicate; they buy things that are truly differentiated in the marketplace

So, how do you go about differentiating your company? There are two ways to differentiate your product or service. First, you can produce a better mousetrap

to give you monopoly control. One company that has gone through this process is Tesla. Tesla brought out the S Model — the four-door sedan that competed with the big car companies from Europe and Japan. Now they are competing with brands like

three, no other company can claim the same three. This will make up your USP.

So, you know having a differentiated product or service will drive up the value of your company, and you know the differentiation can be either a better mousetrap or a better marketing strategy, and for a marketing strategy to have teeth you know that it’s got to differentiate you as well as be something the customers care about. Customer service is a tremendous point of differentiation for many smaller companies. The problem with using it as a marketing strategy is the customer must actually experience your customer service in order to deem it as superior. This could be a great way to keep customers, but not to win new customers. There is a second, arguably bigger reason that customer service is not a good point of differentiation for your business — tremendous customer service is usually driven by the owner.

The owner is the front-line person that sets a culture ensuring that employees deliver tremendous customer experience. The problem is that once the owner leaves or takes a vacation or does not show up one day, that culture may lack the inspiration to deliver that tremendous customer service and it goes away. This may lead to a company that is too dependent on the owner who created that sense of culture. If you want to create a truly unique and truly differentiated company that’s not dependent on you, the owner. In other words: a valuable company. You’ve got to find something that makes your business unique beyond just offering great customer service.

Here’s to a successful 2022, and 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 position as managing partner of MfM and as a Certified Value Builders Coach allow 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. To find out more about how Kermit can help you maximize the value of your business, contact him at kengh@mfmi.com and get your free Value Builders Score at mfmbusinesscoaching.com.

Not everybody has a better mousetrap, but you can still differentiate your company.

through technology so that you truly have a differentiator that sets you apart from the competitors. Now, not everybody has a better mousetrap, but you can still differentiate your company.

Second is to have better marketing. For a marketing strategy to have teeth to truly differentiate your product or service, it needs to have two factors. Number one, it must be something that makes you unique. Number two, it must be something customers care about. This way of thinking is about a marketing point of differentiation that contains something with the potential

Mercedes and BMW, and if you look at the sedans those companies create, they have incredible performance. They knew they would be competing head to head with these expensive, very established brands where the customers care about high-performance. Tesla chose to make their marketing approach as something customers care about, but it certainly would not have made them unique when you compare the Tesla model S with the BMW M5 or Mercedes AMG. You could argue that the performance of those is on par, but still something customers care about.

With performance not making Tesla different, you could say that Teslas are made and designed in California — that could be a point of differentiation because Mercedes and BMW are made in Germany. You could argue that that would make them different, and I think it does make Tesla different to those customers who care where the cars are designed. And then you stumble on zero emissions, and you realize that zero emissions are something that makes them totally unique, and there are customers who truly care about zero emissions. If Tesla had just gone with the high-performance message or just zero emissions, that would not have differentiated themselves from others. But it was the fact they had the combination of zero emissions, zero compromises as their one point of differentiation in the marketplace. You don’t have to be Tesla to come up with something that makes you unique.

A related exercise for you to conduct within your business is to determine your USP, or unique selling proposition. Create a matrix including yourself and all your competitors. In each box list all the services or unique characteristics of each company. The goal is to find up to three areas which make you different. With the list of

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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Drycleaning machine processes — Part 1

In the next several issues, I will be explaining the processes incorporated in the modern drycleaning machine, including distillation, washing and extraction, drying and the control system. Also included will be the components used in these processes and how these components are combined and coordinated to clean garments.

Distillation

Distillation is a process used to purify a liquid — in our case — solvent. Solvent both dissolves impurities it removed from the garments like grease, oil and wax, and detergent. These impurities are called non-volatiles.

In addition, solvent suspends solid impurities like lint, dust and soil. These impurities

changing from a liquid state into a vapor much like steam exiting a teapot.

2. Condensing the solvent vapor. Solvent vapor is cooled on some surface (generally a water-cooled coil), much like steam condensing on a bathroom mirror, changing from solvent vapor into a liquid solvent.

Evaporating the Solvent

Solvent in the still is vaporized using heat (usually supplied by steam) and in some machines, heat is combined with a vacuum. The addition of a vacuum is used to lower the temperature at which the solvent boils, maintaining the solvent at a temperature below the solvent's flashpoint (the lowest temperature at which a sub-

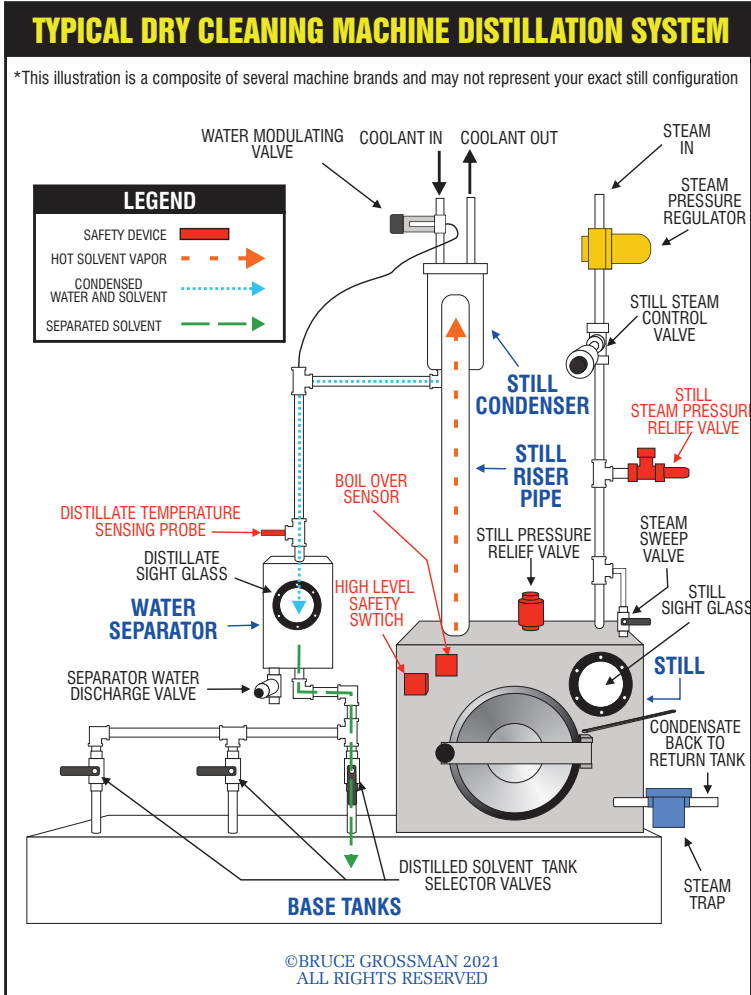
lating it from the inside of the still which heats the still similar to a flame under a kettle). In addition, there is a steam valve that turns the steam supply on and off. Steam heating also has another very positive attribute, temperature control.

Since steam temperature is a function of steam pressure, it's easy to set the heating temperature of the still by setting the steam pressure using a steam pressure regulator.

Condensing the Solvent Vapor

As the solvent is heated and vaporized, the vapor expands and flows up through a large pipe called a still riser and then enters the still condenser.

Inside the condenser is a coil of tubing which has cold water flowing through it. When the hot solvent vapor contacts the cold coil, it condenses (changes from a vapor to a liquid). Since there is also water present in the solvent when it is added to the still, the water also condenses along with the solvent and must be removed before the solvent can be reused. This is accomplished by the water separator, a device that uses the difference in the specific gravity of the solvent and water to separate the two liquids. The separated solvent flows into a separate tank called the distilled sol-



Proper distillation will return the distilled solvent to its original condition leaving impurities behind in the still bottom.

are called particulates. Proper distillation will, in most cases, return the distilled solvent to its original condition, leaving these impurities behind in the still bottom.

Two steps that comprise the distillation process are:

1. Evaporating the solvent. Liquid solvent is heated in the still until it boils and vaporizes

stance can ignite). For this article, we will use steam as the heating medium.

Anytime you use steam for heating, a steam trap is required to remove the condensate from the heated vessel — in this case — the still steam jacket (a separate chamber surrounding the still bottom which contains the steam iso-

vent or rinse tank while the water is collected in a separate area to be drained off and disposed of as hazardous waste.

Still Bottoms (Non-Volatile Residues and Particulates)

After the solvent in the still has been boiled away, what is left is a residue which is a combination of hazardous waste by-products which must eventually be removed from the still. These waste by-products are called

still bottoms.

To minimize the amount of costly solvent left in these waste by-products, in some stills there is a valve called the steam sweep valve.

This valve is used at the very end of the distillation process to conduct steam into the still, purging the remaining solvent vapor from the still bottom.

In machines using the solvent perchloroethylene, water content contained in the steam forms what is known as an azeotrope, which boils at a much lower temperature than the pure solvent, driving out the last remnants of solvent from the still bottoms.

Next month I'll be continuing on the distillation process, explaining the functions of the control and safety devices associated with stills and common problems encountered during distillation.

Bruce Grossman is the chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing. EZtimers is the manufacturer of SAHARA high purity separator water mister/evaporator providing a thrifty, legal method to get rid of the separator water generated by your drycleaning machine. See our add in this issue and for further information on EZtimers products, visit www.eztimers.com. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce at bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.



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Happy New Year, we wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2022!

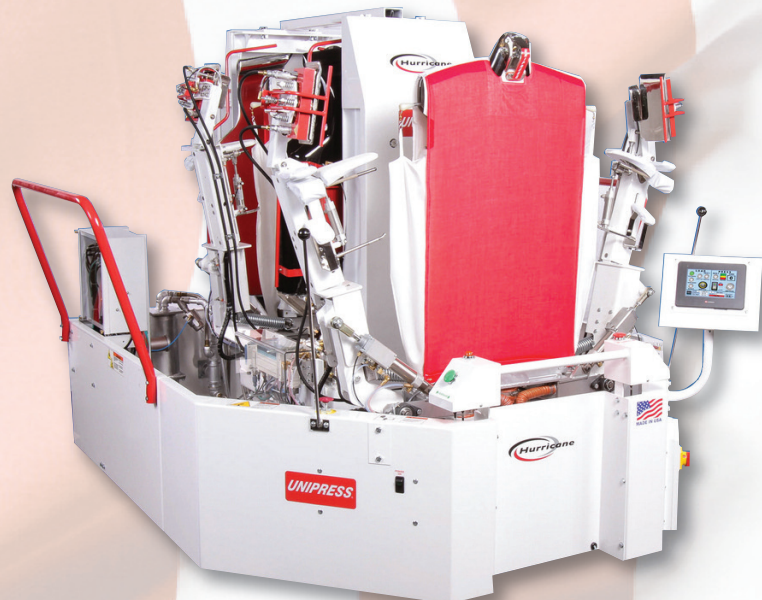
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TCATA board meets in TX, plans conference in April

After 18 months, the Textile Care Allied Trades Association held its first in-person board meeting on Nov. 7 and 8 at the Omni Barton Creek in Austin, TX.

While the TCATA Board still met regularly via Zoom during the pandemic, the association was thrilled to gather in person at long last.

While in Austin, the Board hosted a reception with roundtable industry discussions and a full board meeting.

During the meeting, new board members were introduced: Canessa Hericks of FabriClean Supply, Ty Acton of Tingle, Ben Henke of Intex Distributing and Kyle Zabrin of Equipment International.

Additionally, a more member-friendly dues structure was adopted for 2022.

During the meeting, the TCATA Board voted to hold its 2022 Annual Management and Educational Conference at the Wild Dunes Resort by Hyatt Isle of Palms, SC, from April 3 to 6. Conference details and registration information will be available in the near future.

As TCATA CEO Leslie Schaeffer noted, “We will finally be able to celebrate TCATA’s 100th anniversary and look forward to seeing many of our industry friends at the conference.”

For more information, visit www.tcata.org.



TCATA’s Board met in person recently and made plans to host its 2022 Annual Management and Educational Conference from April 3 to 6 at the Wild Dunes Resort by Hyatt in Isle of Palms in South Carolina.

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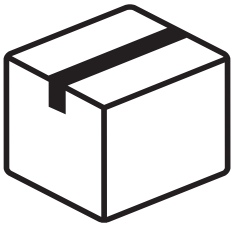
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NCL Profile
Life goes on

For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yonkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution (during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated). An old article from the Herald.

Industry balancing act to continue in 2022

As cleaners prepare to close the door on 2021 (and perhaps throw away the key), the last 11 months have proven to be another arduous challenge, harshly punctuated by shortages of every imaginable kind: hangers, plastic, computer chips, steel and other metals, lumber, packaging materials, shippers and

FallFest EXPO pushes date back

Even though interest for FallFest EXPO remains high, many cleaners are too short-staffed and overburdened to spend three days devoted to it in early December. As a result, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners

Light always follows darkness
by Peter Blake

It has been a long, interesting and challenging 18 months, to say the least. I know I have never worked harder or more hours than I have during the past year and a half. I also

Don's wishlist to St. Nick: 2021 edition
by Don Deroulers

Believe me! It is that time once again for my annual Christmas Wishlist. Every year, I send a plea to the great St. Nick for products that do not

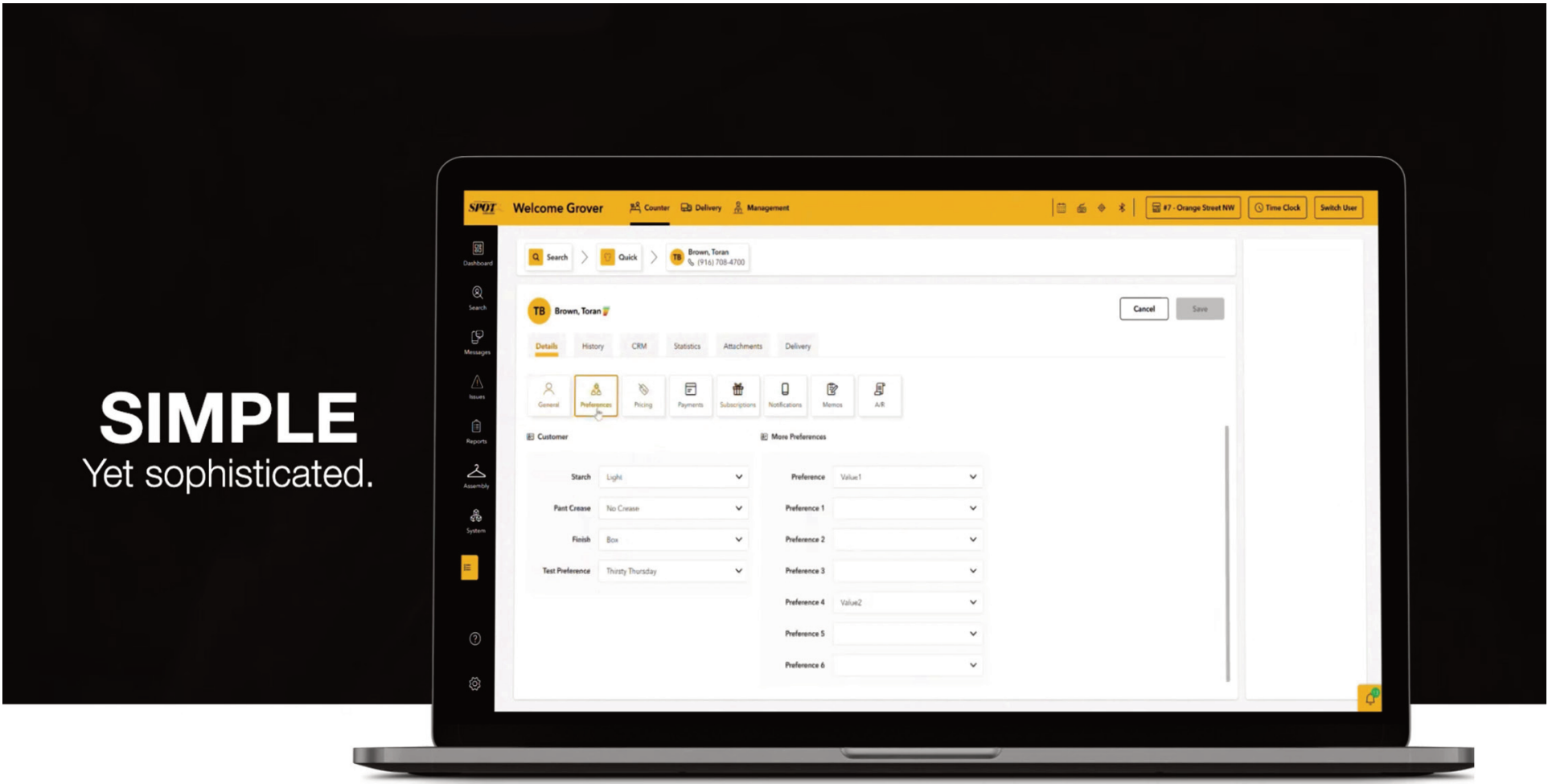
A Tribute to James Peuster
by Mark Albrecht and Jennifer Whitmarsh

As we round out 2021, let's recognize an achievement in our industry: James Peuster. JP has many know him begins his

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