



National

# Clothesline



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## DLI announces speakers for Clean 2022

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute recently announced its educational programming for Clean Show 2022, and it will cover a wide range of topics, from employee culture, point-of-sale marketing and self-service technology to instant profit activators and an economic outlook for the second half of 2022.

While many drycleaners struggle to find good help during the labor crisis, Sean Abbas of The Threads, Inc., will inform attendees at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta about what it takes to make or break a thriving employee culture. His “Best Culture Wins” session is slated for 8 a.m. on Saturday, July 30.

Attendees will learn how to build a positive workplace culture that will help elevate productivity, decrease turnover, increase loyalty and impact overall employee happiness.

After that program, Nathaniel Dubasik, sales and support manager for Metal-Progetti, will present the program “Self-Service Technology Is Here” at 9 a.m.

He will discuss how auto-

mated self-servicing kiosks can help you serve more customers with fewer employees. He will also offer insight reimagining the customer service experi-

During the first part of the program, Coyle will reveal a dozen proven activators to grow your business. Then, a panel of drycleaners will join

ways to connect with the younger workforce.

On Sunday afternoon, economist Chris Kuehl of Armada Business Intelligence will pres-

perhaps a little of both). Kuehl will address those questions and many more.

At 8 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 1, Norman Way of Puritan Cleaners will offer a primer course on “Marketing Through Your POS.” Those not using their point-of-sale system to its full potential could be missing out on valuable data about customers experiences, preferred services and spending habits — which can be used to build targeted messages to boost customer’s repeat purchases and additional spending.

Listen firsthand to Way and other experts joining him who will share ways to use this powerful tool to create personalized interaction with customers and increase revenue.

Also on Monday, CINET Professional Textile Care will host its Global Best Practices program beginning at 9 a.m. Some of the world’s best companies have been invited by an independent, international jury to take part in the presentation, which will include a variety of promising innovations and initiatives.

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**When:**  
**July 30 to August 2, 2022**

**Where:**  
**Georgia World Congress Center,  
Atlanta, GA**



**Nathaniel Dubasik**   **Chris Kuehl**   **Sean Abbas**

**Dave Coyle**   **Norman Way**   **Jennifer Whitmarsh**

ence while increasing customer convenience and decreasing employees and labor costs.

On Sunday, July 31, the morning session will feature a two-hour program presented by Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners on “12 Profit Activators Guaranteed to Create an Immediate Cash Flow Surge.”

him and discuss how they successfully implemented these profit activators.

Two sessions are scheduled to take place down on the exhibit floor. On Saturday, Jennifer Whitmarsh will speak at 2 p.m. on “Hiring and Retaining the Younger Generation” to help cleaners find creative

ent “2022 Economy — Are We Ever Going to See Normal?”

So far, the economy for 2022 has been unstable with questions lingering: are consumers going back to their old habits or have these behaviors changed forever, and are the new patterns good or bad for the drycleaning industry (or

## Signs indicate better times ahead for cleaners

The phrase “business as usual” seemed to lose all meaning a little over two years ago... not long after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

In its wake, the novel coronavirus brought about mask mandates, lockdowns and restrictions of all kinds, but that failed to compare to the toll it has taken on human health.

In fact, exactly two years to

the day President Trump declared COVID-19 a national emergency on March 13, the virus had accumulated almost 80 million cases in the U.S. alone, with 967,552 recorded fatalities. Worldwide, it should be noted, the totals reached almost 457 million cases resulting in over 6 million deaths.

During those difficult two years, the world economy has often been unstable and global supply chains have wreaked

havoc with product supply and demand in every industry. Meanwhile, COVID-19 also caused a major labor crisis, a rise in inflation, made many business and jobs shut down, plus it lead to a significant surge in chronic homelessness and mental illness diagnoses.

However, the precious commodity of hope seems to be on the rise as the pandemic begins its third year. Halfway through last month, 49 states had officially lifted mask mandates with Hawaii’s deadline to do the same set for March 26.

In early January of this year, the Omicron variant helped cases spike to a new single day record of over 1.35 million in one day domestically, yet those numbers had plummeted hard to under 40,000 daily just two months later.

Signs may also be improving for the drycleaning industry — which saw some operators lose up to 90% of their revenue during the initial lockdowns despite being labelled as “essential.” While

sales have been somewhat sluggish and unstable in many markets early in 2022, there are hints that things could improve significantly.

According to MasterCard’s SpendingPulse metric that measures anonymous aggregated sales activity in their net-

work, which they couple with surveys on other payment methods, consumer spending is indeed up. Despite high inflation, retail sales in February were up 8.7% year-over-year (YOY) and up 17.3% compared to pre-pandemic spending in

*Continued on page 8*



### A Not-So-Terrible-Two?

Early this year, the Omicron variant helped daily COVID-19 cases set a new single-day record in the U.S. with 1.35 million. However, those numbers had plummeted all the way down to under 40,000 in just two months as the pandemic reached its second anniversary last month. For now, things are looking up as every state but Hawaii had lifted indoor mask mandates — and the Aloha State announced it would drop its mandate on March 26.



## Sneak Peek Inside

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During its 99th year in business, Muldoon Cleaners was crushed by COVID-19, but it never closed its doors.

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One calculation can help you determine the quality of the neighborhood you service.

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### Permanent no more

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# How Many Dry Cleaners Has Your Insurance Agent Handled? One or Two? Three?

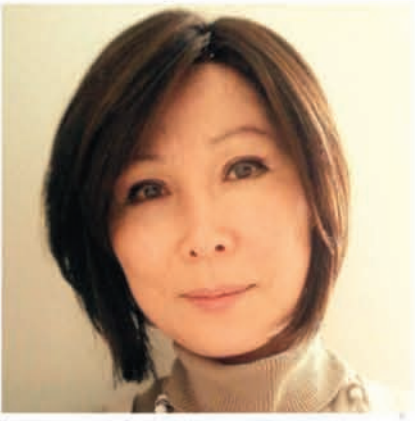


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Current Policy Expiration Date			
Today's Date	Location 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Plant <input type="checkbox"/> Drop Store <input type="checkbox"/> Coin Laundry	Location 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Plant <input type="checkbox"/> Drop Store <input type="checkbox"/> Coin Laundry	Location 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Plant <input type="checkbox"/> Drop Store <input type="checkbox"/> Coin Laundry
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# Pounding the pavement

Some of Joe Gagliostro's earliest memories of his family's drycleaning business are also some of his fondest. "I can vividly see the counter and all the bags full of laundry, and my grandparents back there on the pressers," he recalled.

Years later — around the turn of the century — a teenaged Joe greatly enjoyed learning to press from his "old school Italian" grandfather, starting with military uniform creases.

"I don't want to boast, but I loved it," he explained. "The first one I did — he literally said it was perfect! That's why I say I feel it's in my blood — absolutely. I took right to it. I love pressing. I wanted to make everything look perfect. I loved the attention to details. So, that's where I started... in the back, pressing."

After working side by side with his father and grandfather, Joe felt a moral responsibility to carry on the family business and has worked there ever since. In fact, it was where he met his wife, Diana.

"We met here at the drycleaners, over the counter. Her parents were some of our great clients and she came in when she was visiting from abroad, actually," he said.

The couple married in 2007, and then bought the Auburn, New York-based business together in 2013 and 2014, spending the next several years working extra hard and heavily investing for the future. They even expanded to include a second location (in Skaneateles) — a first in the company's 90+ year history.

With a staff size of 15, the company was operating at peak capacity. However, as Muldoon Dry Cleaner's 100th anniversary approached, things began to unravel quickly and the cleaners was completely crushed by COVID-19.

In March of 2020, Muldoon was in its 99th year of operation and Joe had to come face to face with the prospect that his family's legacy might end under his watch. "Things literally just fell off like a rock. When they shut things down in New York, we came in on Monday morning and everything was gone," he recalled. "There were no clothes, no customers coming in through the door. Everything just literally evaporated. It was the most surreal thing."

When exactly Muldoon Cleaners first opened is a bit of a mystery, but Joe knows a little of the company's early history.

"William Muldoon — this is a guy, as far as I can tell, was born in 1901. He started, literally, washing out of his house with a scrub and board and some solvents," he explained. "It morphed into his own drycleaning shop."

Based on old ads of the company pulled from newspapers, Joe believes the company was founded in 1921. After that, Muldoon was able to grow enough to move the business out of Muldoon's home.

"He got a little office space and then he grew, went to a second location here in town," Joe continued. "From what

we can gather, it was between 1930 and 1933 when he ended up with the plant and factory where we stand today."

The Gagliostro family became involved in the business in the 1950s, though they were involved in the drycleaning industry before that.

"My grandfather and my great uncle were pressing the suits at a local men's



Muldoon Dry Cleaners on Facebook

store where the guy was making custom suits," Joe recalled.

In 1954, Dominick Gagliostro joined Muldoon's, first as a pants presser, before he worked his way to co-owner and eventually sole owner of the business and its property by 1968.

Though no longer owned by any Muldoon family members, Dominick chose to keep the Muldoon name for one simple reason.

"There was a point in time in the 1950s during the heyday when there were like 15 or 16 cleaners here in a town with a population of 40,000 people," Joe noted. "We pulled ads from the newspapers that show other competing cleaners opening and actually saying, 'Grand opening of XYZ Cleaners, general manager so-and-so, 20 years experience under Muldoon Dry Cleaners.' When your opening competitor advertises that they know what the heck they're doing because they worked at Muldoon for 20 years — it shows Muldoon has always had the name of drycleaning in this city."

Under the guidance of the Gagliostro family, Muldoon's continued to be the standard in town. In the 1970s, Joe's father, Joseph, began working there as a teenager, and didn't leave until he retired. In fact, there were several years when Joe began working at the plant in the early 2000s when all three generations could be found on the premises working side by side — until Dominick passed away in 2010.

Joe learned a lot during that time, including that it takes endless hard work to keep a cleaning business successful.

"I learned work ethic, for sure, because this place isn't going to take care of itself. It's going to chew you up and spit you out if you're not here 80 hours doing what needs to be done," he said. "I learned that the wheels aren't turning unless you're coming in and you're pounding the pavement."

For Diana, owning a drycleaning business was a bit of a departure for her. Born and raised in the small country of Nicaragua in Central America, she was an attorney by study.

"When we got married, she moved here with me. She finished up some of her studies. She went on to get a Master's on top of her law degree here in

or 400 sq. ft."

The location may have been small, but it was very effective. Their customers followed them to the new store.

When 9-11 and the Great Recession took place in the 2000s, Muldoon's was hit pretty hard, but it showed the business's re-

## Joe & Diana Gagliostro

Muldoon Dry Cleaners  
Auburn, NY

the U.S.," he said. "Then, when we bought the company from my parents in 2013 and 2014 — when it was *ours*, *our future* and *our baby* and *our life* — that's when she got on board with me and she's been here with me all day, every day since."

The couple didn't waste any time in trying to make the business better.

"In 2014, we started right out of the gate reinvesting into the business. We bought a new boiler, a new drycleaning machine, a new shirt unit and a new pants presser within the first year-and-a-half to two years. In hindsight, I don't know if it was the best idea to do that much that fast because then we were strapped," he recalled. "So, the first couple of years were a real struggle. We were just telling ourselves: 'We're making these payments every month, putting it back into the business' and you know what? Now, we've got beautiful machines. We've got a beautiful finished product."

Not only did the investments pay off, the business got stronger even as a majority of drycleaners in the area shuttered in the last ten years.

Another tough challenge surfaced around the same time as Muldoon was in danger of losing its long-cultivated customer base in nearby Skaneateles. Joe's parents had worked hard in the 1980s and 1990s to establish roots there by picking up and delivering garments from spots at local hardware and video stores. However, that successful run was about to end when the last video store closed. That was unacceptable to Joe and Diana.

"We've got to pivot and do something different. These are our people who are following us or our services... so we went out and rented a teeny retail spot — super small. I think it was probably about 500 sq. ft. maybe," he recalled, before pausing. "I don't even think so to be honest with you. It's more like 300

siliency. When the pandemic lockdowns began in 2020, however, it was the ultimate test of survival.

"We furloughed the entire staff at that point in time — and Diana and I just did the little bit of work that we had," Joe said. "That's all we could do. Some days I didn't even start the boiler. I'd come in and sit in the office. Some days I'd wait up until we had enough work to make a load of clothes."

After cleaning the clothes, the couple would hop in the delivery truck and make the rounds, making for very long days. "We never closed. We never shut the door. We never reduced our hours. We never faltered," Joe emphasized.

Eventually, more and more work returned. Then, it disappeared. For 18 months, volume has surged and dropped, depending on Covid conditions, making it a constant battle to keep the right amount of staff.

"Me and my wife have five at the moment, so we have about a third of the staff back now," he added. "We promised everybody their jobs, but once the cycle came around, they either had a job or moved or weren't here anymore. We had some good, really dedicated workers who were with us for multiple years, and they're gone."

Despite all of the difficulties Muldoon's has faced lately, Joe remains optimistic about the future — one that could include a fourth generation — Joe and Diana's daughter, Sophia — overseeing the company during its second century of cleaning.

As for the milestone of reaching the 100th anniversary, a relieved Joe says he feels "super happy and proud."

"When we were featured in our local newspaper, we had a lot of people call and come in to congratulate us," he noted. "I got to see there are some old-timers who are like 90 years old who still come in and say, 'I dealt with your grandfather.' We got really good feedback from the community."





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# DLI announces speakers for Clean 2022

*Continued from page 1*

In addition to the educational programs, Clean 2022 will feature live equipment demonstrations on the show floor, which of course, will feature a full house of exhibitors displaying top-of-the-line textile care machinery and technology, and offering all of the latest industry products and services. The exhibit hall will be open from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday, July 30, and from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. on the following three days.

“The Clean Show has proven to be the ideal exposition for industry leaders to find the latest innovations in textile care, ranging from industrial machinery and conveyor equipment to computer software and business systems,” noted Show Director Greg Jira from Messe Frank-

furt, the show’s organizer.

The company works closely in collaboration with the Clean Advisory Council comprised of the associations that formerly ran the show: the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute, the Coin Laundry Association, the Textile Care Allied Trades Association, the Association for Linen Management and the Textile Rental Services Association of America.

**Attendee Registration**

Last month, attendee registration for Clean 2022 officially opened, and there is still time to take advantage of discounts for pre-registration.

For association members, the cost is \$119 through June 29. Non-members pay \$149 to sign up until that date.

Once the deadline elapses, registration costs go up to \$169 per person on site.

Visitors can register directly at the official show site, and access helpful information in the “Planning & Preparation” section, including places to explore in Atlanta and a housing information that breaks down options by each association as well as for general exhibitors and attendees.

There are numerous different options available for all attendees, including the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, which will serve as the DLI headquarters hotel. It offers a starting show rate of \$191 per night, not including taxes and fees.

**COVID Guidelines**

In February, Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens announced the city would lift numerous COVID-19-related restrictions including the indoor mask requirement in most places.

As for guidelines pertaining

specifically to the show host — the Georgia Congress World Center — Show Director Greg Jira noted during an exhibitor meeting hosted in mid-March: “There are currently no mask mandates here in Atlanta or the building, but everybody is welcome to wear masks if they’re comfortable or not. That will be the policy as long as it does not change for the show.”

It is also worth noting that the site of this year’s Clean Show was the first convention center to achieve GBAC STAR™ facility accreditation from the Global Biorisk Advisory Council.

“They’ve upgraded their filter system,” Jira noted. “Their personnel have been training in cleaning. They have done enhanced cleaning, cashless transactions — all the way

from the parking lot to at the service bar. They’ve gotten high remarks on the shows that have come in.”

When it comes to travel, however, the U.S. Transportation Security Administration recently renewed its mask mandate for airplanes, trains and buses that was set to expire on March 19. They decided to renew it for another month, so it remains to be seen if they will let it lapse at that time.

**Future Clean Dates Set**

Messe Frankfurt also recently announced the dates and locations of its next two Clean Shows.

After Atlanta, the next Clean Show will be held from Aug. 24 to 27, 2025 in Orlando, FL, followed by the next one in 2027, which will be held July 16 to 19 in Las Vegas, NV — as the event returns to its traditional every-other-year format.

## Signs indicate better times ahead for drycleaners

*Continued from page 1*

2019 — but *what* they are spending money on may be good news for drycleaners.

Mastercard said apparel sales for February were up 37.6% YOY and 34.3% pre-pandemic as consumers seemed to be updating their wardrobes in preparation of returning to offices after two years of working remotely.

Speaking of which, many major corporations have recently announced the reopening of offices, including Microsoft, Google and Apple. Of course, they may face a barrier. In February, Pew Research Center published survey results noting that slightly less than half of employees working from home (all or most of the time while their offices are closed) would be comfortable going into the workplace if it were to reopen in a month. Overall, 20% said they’d be “very comfortable” and 29% said “somewhat comfortable.”

The reason for the majority feeling discomfort, however, has less to do with Covid concerns. The same poll noted that 64% of those surveyed said switching to remote work had made it easier to balance work and personal life.

Regardless of employees’ view on the matter, the number of remote workers is decreasing. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 13% of employee people teleworked in February as a direct result of the coronavirus; that figure is down from 15.4% in the previous month.



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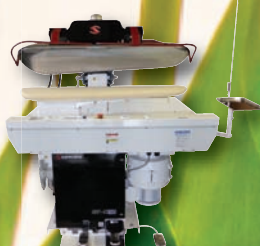
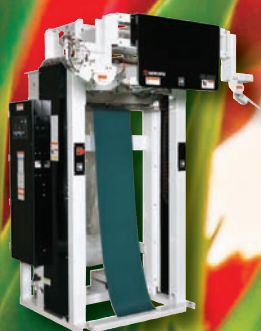
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# SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

## The true cost of buying new equipment

So, you're heading to The Clean Show in a couple of months and, if you read my column, surely you're on a mission. This month, let's consider the true cost of use; the real cost of ownership of something. This can be a challenge, no matter the product or service that you're trying to compare or understand.

There are certain everyday products that we can use as examples. They are not perfect metaphors for what I want to share with you today, but they are likely to open your mind and get you thinking. If Shick or Gillette offer you a "free" razor, it is not hard to figure out their true agenda. Once you own this razor, you will need to buy these blades which costs way too much money. If they want to sell you their razor blades, they can manufacture a customer by giving them a free gift. The true cost of that "free" razor is probably very high. In fact it surely is.

What about color ink jet printers? They are very inexpensive to buy, but the combined cost of the replacement ink cartridges is often close to,

if not more than, the cost to buy the printer in the first place! Really? I had a color laser printer in my office that cost about \$1,100 several years ago. The replacement toners, collectively cost \$775. I hated that so much. When it came time to replace the printer, it only cost a few hundred dollars to buy it and my staff was pretty smart. They looked into the cost of the replacement toners. It's only \$250. We all felt smart. Lower upfront cost. Lower maintenance cost. Lower cost per piece... I mean page. Or is it? Now, with my new printer, it seems like there is always at least one toner that needs replacing. Geez. I wish that I had figured my "cost per page" when I had the more expensive printer/toner, because, if I had, I would be able to compare the costs with what I experience today. The toner cartridges are one-third the price, but what good is that if they print a quarter of the number of pages? And, it's probably fewer pages than that!

So, you likely see my point. What is the true cost of ownership of anything that you buy? It is hard to pinpoint costs for

	25K Model	40K Model
Debt Service	\$500 x 60 months = <b>\$30,000</b>	\$850 x 60 months = <b>\$51,000</b>
Installation and Add-ons	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Shipping	<b>\$700</b>	<b>\$500</b>
Parts. (Let's say over the 10-year life of the machine you will replace 10 valves.)	<b>\$1,450</b>	<b>\$350</b>
Mechanic. Over the lifetime of the machine, you need to pay a mechanic for 25 hours.	<b>\$3,125</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>
Pads, covers and steel. These will cost you in the range of \$1,000 per year (10 changes of pads and covers) and less frequent changes of air bags and steel.	<b>\$14,000</b> (Over 10 years)	<b>\$9,000</b> (Over 10 years)
Production. Let's assume either unit requires two full-time employees (\$12/hr each), plus all payroll and tax expenses.	<b>\$614,640*</b> <small>*42 shirts pressed per hour. At 2,000 shirts per week, that's 47 hrs/wk per employee. The first 80 hours is \$960; 14 OT hours cost \$252 for a weekly labor of \$1,182.</small>	<b>\$499,200*</b> <small>*50 shirts are pressed per week in a total of 80 hours — no OT. Cost per week is \$960. Cost per year is \$49,920.</small>
Total Cost. (Over 10-year period to purchase, maintain and operate this equipment.)	<b>\$664,165</b>	<b>\$562,050</b>
Cost per shirt (to purchase, maintain and operate equipment.)	<b>66 cents</b>	<b>56 cents</b>

an example that illustrates this, so I will generalize certain costs to make my point clear.

Let's say you are considering two different shirt units. One costs \$40,000 and another one costs \$25,000. Let's give them generic brand names: 40K and 25K.

You are not full of money so

the 25K is looking really good. You can finance this for \$500 per month and have a brand new unit. If you opt for 40K, it will cost \$850. In both cases, it's a 60-month deal. *Hmmm. \$75+ more per week. Still, a single buck unit, one operator.* If you want to save money, the way to go seems obvious. You process 2,000 shirts per week.

You do some research and learn a whole bunch of other things:

- 40K will ship to your plant for \$500. 25K will ship to your plant for \$700;
- The typical pneumatic valve on 25K is proprietary to the equipment manufacturer and costs \$145 each. A similar part on 40K is in the Grainger catalog for \$35;
- 40K shirt unit comes with all the steam traps included. Plug and play, so to speak. Not so with 25K. You'll need to purchase 5 traps at \$50 each;
- Pads and covers: (let's assume that they will last 10,000 shirts on each unit). For unit 40K, it costs \$900 to replace all the pads, covers and steel. For 25K it costs \$1,700. This is the cost for a years worth of pad and cover maintenance.

Speaking of maintenance, the local distributor has a staff of maintenance people for 40K and he charges \$80/hour. 25K has fewer reps and supply and demand has pushed their rate to \$125/hour.

Now, let's look at productivity. 40K can do 50 shirts per hour, but you fail to find anybody that can do more than 42 using 25K.

Let's presume that the units will last for ten years and you will pay on them for five years, and you will do 1,000,000 shirts on them.

I will ignore the cost of training employees, but you probably should not. I will ignore the utility consumption, but you should not. I will not address the possibility that you will need to buy a bigger boiler or a new compressor for one unit, but not the other. You should definitely not ignore this either.

So, let's do some math. (See comparison above.) Ten cents more per shirt. Forever.

Now, consider this: all other factors remaining constant as described here, if shirt unit 40K cost \$140,000 it would still be less costly to own and operate than the unit costing \$25,000! These are indeed hypothetical numbers, but they are based in reality.

The lesson to be learned is simple. The price tag on the equipment that you covet at The Clean Show represents a very small portion of the true cost of operation. Do your homework!

*"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 phone (508) 965-3163, or email to: [tailwind.don@me.com](mailto:tailwind.don@me.com). The Tailwind web site is at [www.tailwindsystems.com](http://www.tailwindsystems.com).

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-Mike Astorino, Fabricare Cleaners

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# THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

## How do you measure route profitability?

**W**AD, or What Would Al Do, is often the question I fall back to when it comes to analyzing one of our client's current business situations.

Of course, I'm making a reference to Al Robson, former *National Clothesline* contributor and owner of BizBuilders for many years.

There are still some cleaners today who owe their success to Al for what he did for them over 20 years ago.

April happens to be the 20-year anniversary of Al and me sitting in a pool in Los Angeles discussing the future of the drycleaning industry.

We were sipping on a few beers and smoking a cigar as a light rain came down. For the next two hours, we developed a plan that would change the drycleaning industry.

Unfortunately, he would never see it come to pass as he believed routes were the future of drycleaning.

Fast forward to 2022, and

while some of Al's methods may be a little archaic, it still goes back to having a dashboard of how your business is doing and utilizing the numbers to run it like a business, not like a drycleaner.

I'm blessed to have an accounting degree so I understand what the numbers represent, and there are a few that really relate to your route profitability.

Some people try to make them complicated while others keep it simple. The bottom line is the bottom line and that's what we'll discuss as we look at your current situation.

One of the most common discussions I have is how many stops per hour can you service? I answer that between one and 100 — as it just depends on how well your route is laid out, developed from within specific neighborhoods, commercial versus residential, etc. Since that is a loaded question and everybody's demographics are different, I really

don't ask for people to measure this. Some people have a higher price point, but others are willing to go anywhere to make a buck.

So, here's the measure that I recommend: dollars per operating hour of the driver.

It starts when they leave the plant and ends when they come back at the end of the day. Simply take the number of dollars delivered divided by the number of hours worked. You can't make it any simpler because the bottom line is the bottom line in this situation.

By calculating this number, you are able to take a look at how much revenue is being generated per hour per van. This will help with understanding the quality of your customer, as well as the quality of the neighborhood you are servicing. If you break it down into small segments and you notice that one of your customers is taking 20 minutes to service and it's only generating \$10 — you need to realize

you're losing money that way. However, if it's in a neighborhood that can generate a lot more, then focus on developing that specific neighborhood.

The number I tend to go with is \$120 per hour for your break-even point. This includes all of your costs. Production is included in this since nothing happens until the product gets finished. By calculating this number, you can measure how efficient your route is starting to become based on the amount of sales and marketing you're doing.

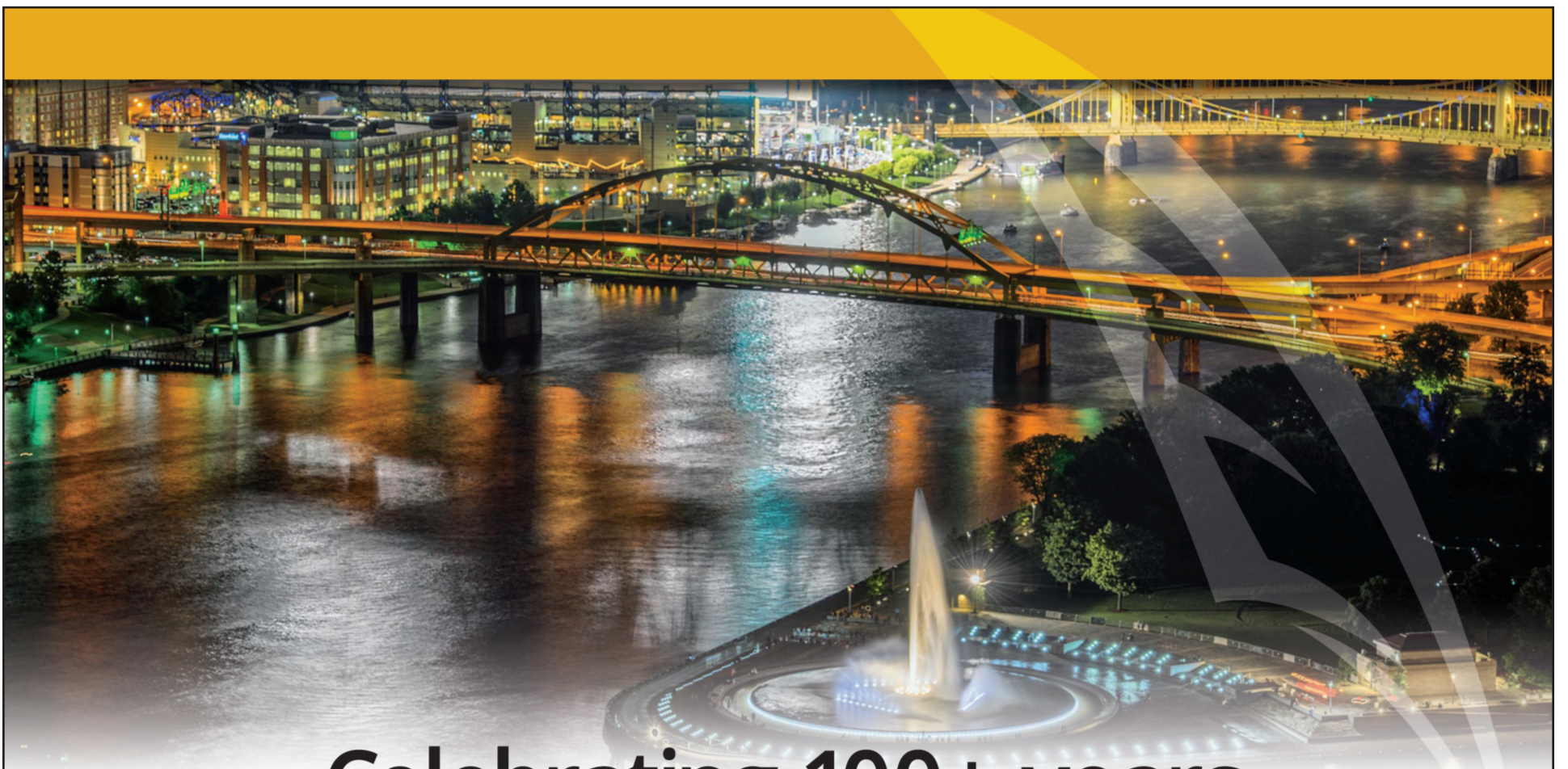
Obviously, your price point plays a part in this. The lower your price, the lower your chances are of making the amount of profit my clients do. When you get to that \$200 per hour point, you're making some serious money. Once you get to \$300 per hour, I guarantee you will have a wonderful route development program. Granted, you're always going to have elements of 15 to 20 minutes of driving that you

have no choice but to do. This is like when you run a store and nobody comes in for 45 minutes. You just have to deal with it. But, by having some sort of benchmark to measure the profitability of a route, now you can look at the individual customers to see if there's any you need to prune so that you can produce healthy customers elsewhere and focus on where the fish are.

So, the million-dollar question is: How do I make \$1 million in routes?

If you go in with the mindset of managing the growth and monitoring the profit, you will make it happen.

**James Peuster is a consultant who specializes in route development, management and maintenance. He offers onsite consulting as well as ongoing coaching across the country. He also has cost groups to monitor route efficiency. For information, call (816) 739-2066 or visit [www.therouteapro.com](http://www.therouteapro.com).**



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# BUILDING VALUE

BY KERMIT ENGH

## The standard for measuring customer loyalty

**H**ow loyal are your customers? Many companies recognize the power of loyalty and its impact on financial performance. Not only is the notion of loyalty intuitively appealing, but a growing body of empirical evidence suggests that companies which choose to ignore loyalty may find themselves on precarious footing as they attempt to ascend the ladder of financial success.

Given the link between loyalty and financial bene-

fits, increased market share, higher revenue, and lower costs, your company should be investing time and resources into developing loyalty programs that seek to measure, manage and improve loyalty performance.

Despite the growing popularity of loyalty programs, the true value of such programs are not often realized due to ambiguous or ill defined measurement systems.

The holistic NICE Satmetrix Voice of the Customer (VOC) solution

powers enterprises to combine and analyze millions of customer interactions, solicited feedback and operational data to uncover blind spots, increase customer satisfaction and improve agent performance.

To begin the path towards standardization, Satmetrix embarked on an independent research project. Their objective was to better understand the micro- and macro-economics of customer loyalty.

At the micro-level, their

research focused on finding a loyalty question that could consistently predict short-term purchase and referral behaviors.

At the macro-level, they sought to validate this metric by linking it to long-term corporate financial indicators across industry-specific companies. The results of this investigation were compelling.

Not only did they discover the most effective question for accurately measuring customer loyalty,

but they also identified **Net Promoter** as a valuable tool for assessing long-term corporate growth.

The growing acceptance of Net Promoter is not limited to academics and researchers. Through vehicles such as netpromoter.com and conferences held in North America and Europe, Net Promoter is quickly gaining widespread industry adoption.

During Forrester Research's Marketing Forum, Forrester Chairman and CEO George F. Colony said, "Net Promoter is becoming a driving force within organizations."

A single loyalty question is sufficient to gauge customer purchase and referral patterns across seemingly disparate industries. More explicitly, if customers reported that they were likely to recommend a particular company to a friend or colleague, then these same customers were also likely to repurchase from the company, as well as generate new business by referring the company via word-of-mouth.

Conversely, if customers reported that they were not likely to recommend a company, they were also less likely to engage in actual repurchase or referral behaviors.

Results of this analysis also led to the discovery of a customer classification system whereby customers can be grouped according to their joint loyalty and behavioral profiles.

Using these groupings, customers can be characterized in terms of their joint profile of *what they say* and *what they will actually do*.

**Promoters:** Customers who were highly likely to recommend a company (i.e., ratings of 9 or 10) and exhibited the highest rates of purchase and referral behaviors;

**Passive:** Customers who were somewhat likely to recommend a company (i.e., ratings of 7 or 8) and exhibited moderate rates of purchase and referral behaviors;

**Detractors:** Customers who were less likely to recommend a company (i.e., ratings of 0 thru 6) and exhibited the lowest rates of purchase and referral behaviors.

Continued on page 16



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***Kermit Engh***

# The standard for measuring customer loyalty

*Continued from page 14*

To test whether the “recommend” question would still link to financial indicators beyond the individual customer level, they aggregated company data from the benchmarking database to calculate two types of loyalty percentages:

- **% Promoter** – The percentage of respondents indicating a recommend rating of 9 or 10;

- **% Net Promoter** – The percentage of respondents indicating a recommend rating of 9 or 10, minus the percentage of respondents indicating a recommend rating of 0 thru 6 (hereafter, Net Promoter®).

Using these percentages, they correlated % **Promoter** and % **Net Promoter** to each company’s growth rate for each targeted industry.

They examined thirty-three correlation coefficients in terms of absolute magnitude and level of significance to determine whether either of the two types of loyalty percentages linked to corporate financial growth.

This comprehensive undertaking revealed unequivocal results: an individual’s propensity to recommend a company to friends and colleagues may be the most direct gauge of customer loyalty and, ultimately, financial success.

Although this finding was borne out by statistical tests, it also makes intuitive sense. When customers are truly loyal, their relationship with a particular company surpasses the basic model of economic exchange, where money is simply spent for products acquired or services rendered.

Not only do these customers remain committed to the company, despite price increases and occasional errors, they also actively recruit new customers through positive word-of-mouth.

These recommendations indicate true loyalty, since they reveal customers who are willing to risk their char-

acter, trustworthiness, and reputation with virtually no reward beyond the positive regard and thanks of others.

Furthermore, it also makes sense that the Net Promoter metric demonstrates the strongest link to long-term corporate growth.

Results from the macro-level portion of this study revealed that Net Promoter accurately measures the net effect of word-of mouth. In other words, the reason Net Promoter is such a powerful metric for gauging long-term growth is because it takes into account both the increased growth achieved through positive referrals, as well as the lost potential for

growth caused by the effects of negative word-of-mouth.

While existing research positions Net Promoter as a straightforward metric that links customer loyalty to purchase behavior and long-term growth, there is always a need for ongoing validation. To this end, Satmetrix continues to analyze the links between Net Promoter and other indicators of long-term growth, as well as to expand these analyses into other industries, market segments and countries.

For example, Satmetrix currently provides cross-cultural benchmark data to compare Net Promoter scores in different regions and countries.

Although other factors can certainly influence growth potential, companies would be well advised to begin looking at loyalty through the eyes of customers who are “likely to recommend.”

By measuring and tracking this propensity, as well as the net effect of customers who “promote” over customers who “detract,” companies can confirm the appropriateness of the Net Promoter metric in their own specific circumstances.

Over the course of time, and with repeated validation, Net Promoter is becoming the loyalty metric of choice for gauging both short term and long-term financial success.

Do you know your Net Promoter Score?

If you are curious as to how well your company is performing in the Value Drivers we’ve been discussing, go to [mfmbusinesscoaching.com](http://mfmbusinesscoaching.com) to get your free Value Builders Score.

Next month, we will dive into the 10th driver of company value, Cash Flow.

Until then, enjoy building value.

Kermit Engh has been an owner/operator in the drycleaning industry for over 29 years and has been a Methods for Management member for over 24 years. His positions 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](mailto:kengh@mfmi.com).



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# KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

## Keep an eye out for changes to the NRLA

**T**he National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) applies to almost every private employer reading this column. The NLRA provides for election procedures that allow unions to organize workers in non-union companies.

You have probably seen reports on such elections involving Amazon.

In addition, the NLRA provides remedies for employees who are unlawfully penalized for their union activities.

As I have mentioned before, President Biden prides himself on being the most pro-union president in history. He thinks all workers should be unionized, or so it seems.

In fact, most unions and their serious advocates believe that the only reason a company is non-union is that the company has done something illegal in order to prevent it.

To many of these advocates, unionization rises to the level of a sacred belief that cannot be challenged. It is blasphemy to suggest that a worker might prefer to deal directly with the employer, rather than have a union represent that person.

### Trending toward non-union

The trend, by the way, is to go non-union. In the 1950s, nearly one-third of the workforce in the private sector was unionized. It is about

6% now.

Government workers, on the other hand, are being unionized in leaps and bounds.

If you subscribe to the view that bad employers de-

working conditions with other employees even without a union present. That is why policies that prohibit employees from discussing their wages are illegal under federal law.

that a handbook rule that employees must treat each other with dignity and respect was improper because it might discourage employee discussions, which I guess the Board thought

policies unlawfully infringe on employees' rights to work together to improve job conditions.

The Trump Board had approved a range of employer policies, including decisions approving rules on arbitration agreements, social media use, moonlighting, strikes, cell phones, contact with the media, gag orders in disciplinary probes and on-duty conduct.

The Biden Board is expected to eventually reverse those rules.

It is probably a good idea to review the work rules in your employee handbook to make sure they comply, at least on their face, with the expected more restrictive NLRB rules. Why? If a company is the target of a union, wins an election, and there is an employee handbook with a problematic rule, that rule can then be used as the basis for ordering a second election.

The theory would be that the handbook rule prevented employee communication in such a way that a fair election could not be held.

### Amazon vs the NRLA

If you have been following the Amazon cases, Amazon won an election, but it must participate in a new one because it was found to have violated the NLRA in connection with employee communication.

If you have an employee handbook, and it deals with any employee communications, you might consider revisiting it now.

Eventually, new rules will be adopted by the Biden Board, but anything that happens until that time is fair game for unfair labor practice charges. And remember, a work rule does not have to be contained in an employee handbook to be enforceable.

It is better to delete questionable rules and then put at the end: "This is not a complete list of disciplinary rules."

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

## If you have been following the Amazon cases, Amazon won an election, but it must participate in a new one because it was found to have violated the NRLA in connection with employee communication.

serve to be unionized, you can understand why the trend has been to reject unions in the private sector and embrace them in the public one.

I just want to be clear that no matter how you feel about unions, not all the arguments in favor of them or against them are true.

Unionization is a topic worthy of debate, not dogmatic adherence to one view or another.

Many employers are unaware that the NLRA applies to them and their employees even when there is no union in the picture.

Under the NLRA, employees have the right to discuss their wages, hours, and

If an employee is fired for discussing wages with other employees, that is an unfair labor practice that can result in reinstatement and back pay for the employee.

During the Obama administration, many of the members of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) were people with union backgrounds and advocates who believed unionization was a sacred right.

The Obama Board made many reasonable handbook policies illegal because the policies "might" infringe on employee rights to discuss wages, hours, and working conditions.

In one of the more famous examples, the NLRB ruled

could not be conducted with dignity and respect.

In addition, policies involving social media and public company disparagement were found unlawful, restrictions on profanity were challenged, and anything requiring employees not to share their problems with customers were scrutinized.

The new Board members appointed by Trump did what they could to reverse some of these decisions, but they did not issue rules and regulations that would put those matters to bed.

The Biden Board, however, has asked for comments on a proposed restrictive test for determining if employer

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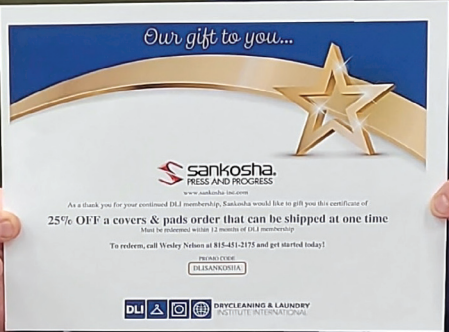
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# THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

## Methods for proper ink stain removal

**I**nk stains on garments may occur at home, in the office, at school or at an art studio. Ink stains sometimes occur when a leaking pen is carried in the pocket.

Ink stains are classified as dry side or wet side, depending on the solvent or substance in which the pigment dye is dissolved or disbursed.

Dry side inks are pigments disbursed in an oil, wax or grease base. Sometimes a binder is added for permanence.

Examples of dry side inks are marking ink, printing ink, ball point ink, India ink, carbon paper, stamp pad and inks used in some felt tip magic marker pens.

Wet side inks are dyes dissolved in water and to which a setting agent such as gallic acid is added.

Examples of wet side inks are some felt tip and magic marker pens.

The ingredients of both dry side and wet side inks which have been described are not complete since there are many variations.

They have been described merely to indicate the basis for classification in subsequent stain removal.

Inks are formulated for their permanence in use and stains from so-called washables are difficult to remove.

Success in ink stain removal depends on the following factors: how long the ink stain has been in the fabric, the fastness of fabric color and the tenacity of the staining pigment or dye to the fabric.

### Ink Stain Identification

Ink stains can be identified by the intensity of the color and the location of the stain, especially in the pocket area from a leaky pen.

India inks and marking pens' ink sometimes give the fabric some stiffness. It is difficult, if not impossible, to visibly be able to determine whether a stain is a wet side or a dry side stain.

### Drycleaning

Work on heavily ink-stained areas before entering the garment into the drycleaning machine. Otherwise, the free ink

might transfer to other areas of the same garment or to other garments in the drycleaning machine.

sorb the loosening with a towel and flush with a volatile dry solvent.

- Continue the application

### Success in stain removal depends on these factors: how long the ink stain has been in the fabric, the fastness of fabric color and the tenacity of the staining pigment or dye to the fabric.

It may be easier to cut out a heavily ink-stained pocket lining from the garment and replace it rather than attempt stain removal.

### Spotting

Stain removal on all unidentified ink stains should be started with the dry side procedure.

- Apply liberal amounts of oily type paint remover.
- Manipulate the stain with a spatula followed by a rapid light tamping motion with a spotting brush on the hard surface of the spotting board. Ab-

of lubricant, mechanical action and flushing until ink stains ceases to become loosened.

Any traces of the ink must be removed by using wet side stain removal procedures.

### Ink Stain Removers

Ink stain removers are chemical formulations made up to make ink stains soluble.

The chemical formulation contains ingredients that are similar to the chemical make-up of the ink.

In other words, adding the right ingredients to an ink stain makes the ink stain soluble because it is brought to its original state.

Ink stain removers do not work on all ink stains since the solvent composition of ink stains may differ.

It will work on the most common inks which are ball point pen ink and most magic markers.

It will also work on lipstick since the make-up of lipstick is similar to the make-up of many inks.

When using ink stain removers they are initially used with no heat to avoid setting and spreading of the stain.

Ink stain removers are more aggressive than dry sides and, therefore, must be tested on colors and fabrics before they are used.

It is for this reason that garments which were drycleaned should be worked on using the dry side method that was previously outlined.

### Wet Side Method for Ink Stains

- Place stained area on a towel.
- Flush with water gun until bleeding of ink stops.
- Apply ink remover and wait a minute or two for ink

stain to loosen.

- Apply mechanical action.
- Flush with water gun (Avoid steam).
- Continue with process until bleeding stops.
- Apply ink remover and acetic acid.
- Mechanical action.
- Flush.

The following chemicals used should be tested for safety.

- Oxalic acid or a safe rust remover.
- Heat.
- Flush.
- General formula.
- Mechanical action.
- Flush.
- Hydrofluoric acid.
- Heat.
- Flush
- Hydrogen Peroxide plus ammonia.
- Heat.
- Flush.
- Acetic acid.
- Flush.
- Bleach.

### Removal of Red Wet Side Ink Stains

On red wet side ink stains as well as traces of red dry side ink stains, use the same procedure used for wet side ink stains previously described in the preceding paragraph — **with the exception** that ink removers and ammonia should be used *before* ink remover and acetic acid.

Red dyes are usually loosened more readily by alkali.

### Soaking Method

On large ink stains, a soaking method can prove effective. Soak the garment in cool water with eight to 10 ounces of ink remover per gallon of water.

Soak for one to two hours and then wetclean the garment.





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Dan Eisen, former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association, can be reached at (772) 340-0909 or (772) 579-5044, by e-mail at [cleandan@comcast.net](mailto:cleandan@comcast.net) or through his website at [www.garmentanalysis.com](http://www.garmentanalysis.com).



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# WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

## The solvent condensing section (part one)

Last month, I concluded the section dealing with the heating of solvent in the still. Now, I will explain the other half of the distillation process: condensation.

### Solvent Vapor Condensation

**Still Condenser.** After the still has heated the liquid solvent sufficiently to vaporize, hot solvent vapor rises through a large diameter pipe called a riser into the still condenser. The still condenser is a cylindrical container enclosing a serpentine coil (think of a coiled snake) called the still condensing coil, which has a cold liquid flowing through it — usually water or a water-glycol mixture. This liquid is called a coolant. The coolant reduces the temperature of the surface of the coil on which the hot solvent vapors condense (similar to water vapor condensing on a bathroom mirror). Problems in solvent condensation are usually noticed when there is an error condition alert liked to hot condensate.

The performance of the still condenser is dependent on three parameters:

- Pressure of the coolant being forced through the condenser coil.
- The temperature of the coolant.

- Heat transfer surface.

The following paragraphs will illustrate how these parameters may be used to troubleshoot problems while distilling. Common problems associated with the still condenser:

- **Low Coolant Pressure.**

Usually, there should be at least a 15 to 30 psi difference between the inlet and outlet of the coolant across the still condenser. If this pressure is insufficient, it may be indicated by the condensate and/or the coolant exiting the condenser coil being too hot, while the coolant inlet temperature is OK.

- **Clogged Coolant Strainer.**

On some machines, especially ones that have a separate coolant flow path to the still condenser, there is usually a strainer. If this becomes clogged, the resultant problems will resemble problems with the water modulating valve (described later in this article). Whenever you're having a condenser problem, it's always wise to check all the liquid strainers on the machine.

- **Internal Scaling.** Over time, the liquid flowing through the still condensing coil may deposit a coating of scale. This scale reduces the flow of coolant through the coil, as well as acting as an insulator

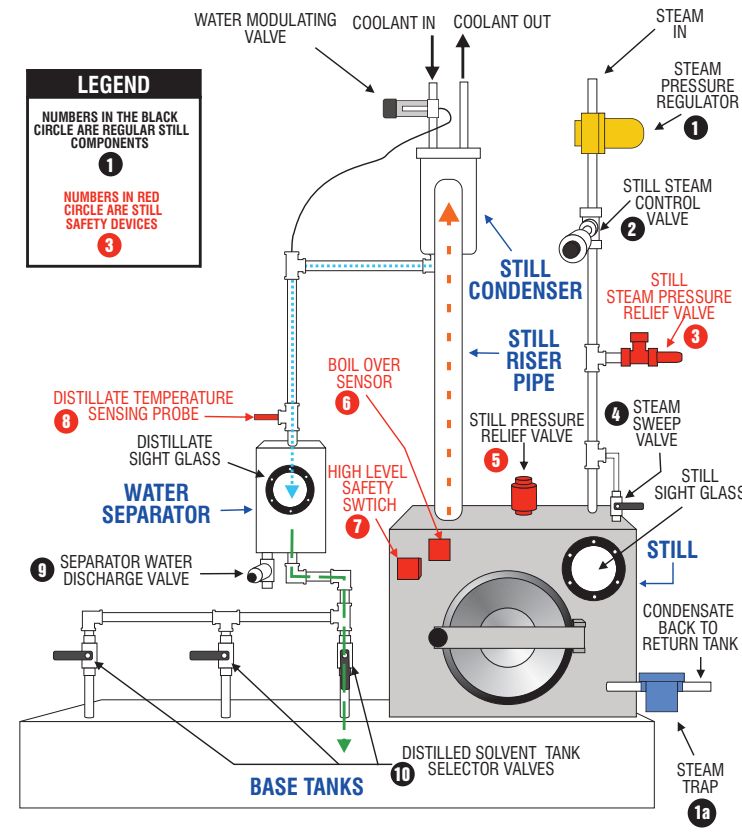
reducing the ability of the condenser coil to transfer heat and cool the solvent vapors sufficiently. This condition will result in a smaller volume of condensate as well as reducing the ability of the solvent to separate from water, which is also present along with the condensate (this condition will be discussed later in this article). Scaling can usually be identified by comparing the coolant inlet and outlet temperatures. There should be at least a few degrees difference between the two at the height of the distillation process. If the coolant exiting the condenser coil is actually hot, it usually has to do with a faulty water modulating valve or clogged coolant strainer. Scale can usually be removed fairly easily by pumping a chemical through the coil, a process known as descaling.

- **Inefficient Operation**

**Caused By High Coolant Temperature.** If the coolant temperature is too high, there will be a smaller volume of condensate as well as the condensate being much hotter. This reduces the ability of the solvent to separate from water which is also present along with the condensate (this condition will be discussed later in this article), thereby reducing the ability of

### TYPICAL DRY CLEANING MACHINE DISTILLATION SYSTEM

\*This illustration is a composite of several machine brands and may not represent your exact still configuration



the solvent to separate from the water resulting in high moisture content in the solvent. Warm coolant is easily diagnosed by measuring the temperature of coolant entering the still condenser and comparing it to the temperature specified by the machine manufacturer.

- **Inefficient Operation**

**Caused By a Faulty Water Modulating Valve.** On most distillation systems, there is a temperature-controlled valved called the still condenser water modulating valve. This valve adjusts the flow of the coolant through the still condenser coil to limit water usage when the drycleaning machine is cooled by city water, as well as a means to regulate the temperature of the condensate. It may be located on the inlet or outlet side of the still condenser's coolant flow path depending on the machine manufacturer. The water modulating valve is designed to open wider as the temperature of the coolant rises, allowing more coolant to flow through the still condenser coil. If the condensate and/or coolant exiting the condenser coil are too hot, yet the coolant temperature is OK, it's likely due to this valve or a clogged coolant strainer (before troubleshooting the water modulating valve, check for a clogged coolant strainer).

- **Clogged Still Condenser Inlet or Debris Coating the Outside of the Still Condenser Coil.** In rare cases, especially after a still boil-over, debris may clog the outlet of the still riser pipe preventing solvent vapor from entering the still condenser. Symptoms of this

rare problem are a marked decrease in distillation rate with condenser coolant inlet temperature being normal with no temperature difference between the coil inlet and outlet temperatures. If the clog is great enough, it will cause the still pressure relief valve to open and solvent vapor and condensate will be apparent on the outside of the still around the valve. Still boil-overs can also result in coating the still condenser coils with debris. This will prevent a heat transfer from the solvent vapor to the coil surface resulting in poor distillation. Clearing this clog or cleaning the coil will usually require disassembly of the condenser housing.

That's it for this issue. I'll continue with the safety devices used in the still condensation system next issue.

Bruce Grossman is the Chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing. EZtimers is the manufacturer of the new EZ DOSE boiler compound manager and return tank level control which automatically adds the correct amount of boiler compound to the return tank, preventing oxygen corrosion and scaling, as well as replacing that troublesome ball float valve in the condensate return tank. Our SAHARA, high purity separator water mister/evaporators supply a thrifty, legal method to get rid of the separator water generated by your drycleaning machine. See our ad in this issue. For more information visit online at [www.eztimers.com](http://www.eztimers.com). Please address any questions or comments to [bruce@eztimers.com](mailto:bruce@eztimers.com) or call (702) 376-6693.

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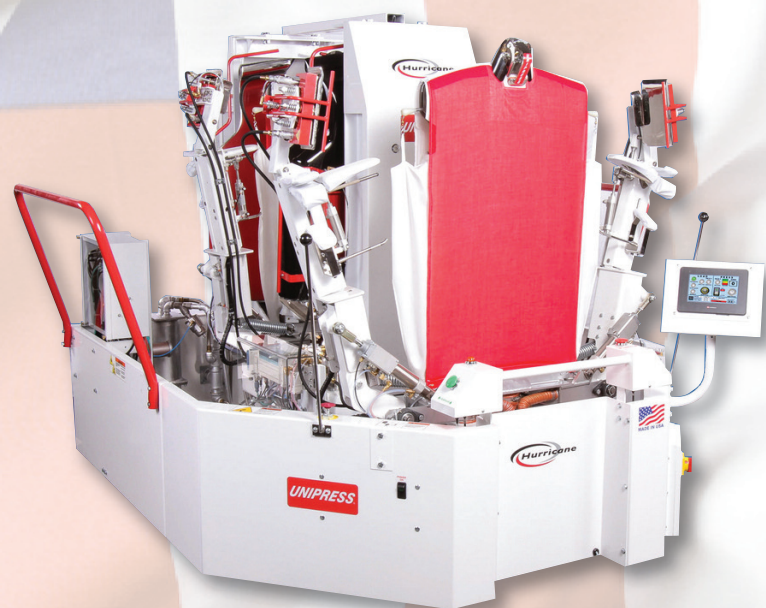
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**FallFest EXPO pushes date back**



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by Peter Blake




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by Don Deroulers



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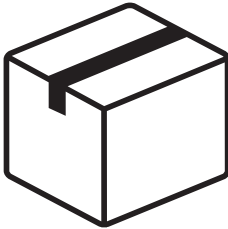


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