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Industry gatherings pick up steam

From Seattle to Silver Spring, professional garment cleaners are accruing frequent flier miles once again as various industry associations and management groups have recently hosted in-person classes and conferences all throughout the country.

In early March, the Southwest Drycleaners Association held its Annual Membership Meeting in San Antonio, TX, during which they installed board members and officers for the 2022-23 term.

Kyle Nesbit, senior vice president of business development for Edit TX, which in-

cludes the Tide Dry Cleaners franchise, supplants Danny Bahlman of Bahlman's Cleaners as the associa-



Kyle Nesbit

tion president. He will be joined by: Erika Paine, 1st vice president; Fran Stone-Beale, 2nd vice president; Keith Kocher, treasurer; Jeff Schwarz, sergeant at arms; and Danny

Bahlman becomes chairman of the board. New board member additions included Jose Abuwad, Neal Barker, Dave Coyle and Raymond Farrell.

In April, the Textile Care Al-Trades Association (TCATA) held its annual conference at the Wild Dunes Resort in Isle of Palms, SC.

During the event, the group installed John Silverman, corporate president of Tschopp Supply Co. of Buffalo, NY, as its new president.

TCATA also took time to honor Fred Schwarzmann, Jr., of A.L. Wilson Chemical Co. with its prestigious J. Morry Friedlander Award. Since it was introduced in 1994, only six people have received it.

Schwarzmann has worked hard on behalf of the association, having served in various board positions over the years, including most recently as president beginning in January of 2020.

After receiving the award he "I was certainly touched by the recognition I received, but I know that my contribution would not have

Continued on page 8



Methods for Management members were excited to be able to meet face to face in Seattle in March, including (clockwise from bottom left): Chuck Horst, Kermit Engh, Gary McCracken, Pierre Cinar, Mark Scott, Puzant Cinar, Don Mungal, David Meyer and Ramona Jaeger.



Taking Time to Honor Years of Service

Last month, the Textile Care Allied Trades Association hosted a conference in South Carolina where: (from left) TCATA Past President Bill Odorizzi, Business Manager Luci Ward and CEO Leslie Schaeffer presented Fred Schwarzmann (right) with the distinguished J. Morry Friedlander Award, a rare and prestigious distinction that has only been bestowed upon six individuals since its introduc-

Clean '22 hotel deadlines fast approaching

to go until Clean 2022 kicks off in Atlanta, drycleaners are quickly running out of time to pre-register and make housing arrangements.

Those who are still not sure whether they want to attend

With less than two months at the Georgia World Congress be the first Clean Show in

Center from July 30 to Aug. 2 may wish to reconsider.

the event had to be

postponed last year due to the goes into full effect on Jan. 1,

more than three

vears, and it is also the last one that will take place before the California perc ban on drycleaning

the event — which takes place COVID-19 pandemic, this will 2023. State regulations require

all California cleaners to stop using perc machines by the end of this year.

With over 90% of exhibition space already sold — and more than 320 companies listed on the Clean Show's website in its interactive floor plan section — there is anticipation of big attendance numbers despite recent high fuel and airfare costs.

According to the most recent Hopper's Consumer Air *Index Report*, jet fuel prices are the highest they've been since January of 2014, and the cost

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The Other Side of the Fence



When he was a boy, Justin Rings cut down his neighbor's fence so he could ride his ATV on 200 acres of farmland. That neighbor, who happened to be a successful entrepreneur, showed up on horseback demanding to know who raced around his cornfields. Fortunately, he had a soft spot for Justin and would go on to mentor him and his brother Bobby for years, eventually inspiring them to launch Rockwood Cleaners in 2007. For the full story, see page 6.

Sneak Peek Inside

Keeping on top of cash flow

Have you considered all of these ideas to ensure your cash flow (and business value) stays strong?

What shirt customers hate

Are your shirt quality standards taking into account all of the issues that customers hate the most?

Passing the fabric test

Follow these professional fabric testing procedures in order to avoid unnecessary garment damage.

Obituary: Sharon Kajiwara 20 The co-founder of Arthur Kajiwara Equipment in South El Monte, CA, passed away at the age of 77.



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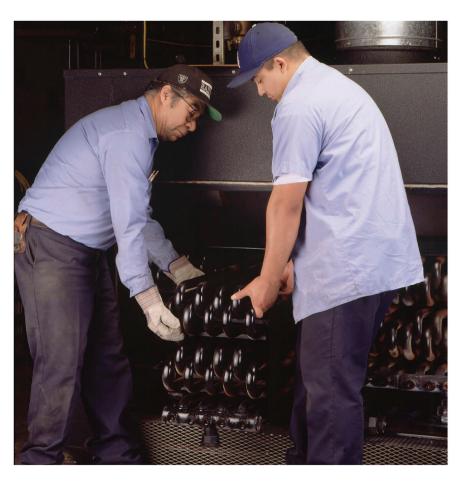
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A national newspaper for drycleaners and launderers May, 2022 Volume 60 Number 8

Let's make some history in Atlanta this summer

Back in 1836, the old ways of doing things were no longer working very well for the state of Georgia, who had long lacked a reliable form of transportation. Because its largest cities had sprung up along rivers, the waterways were considered the easiest routes. However, that didn't help residents, such as cotton growers in Savannah, who began losing overseas exports after the South Carolina Railroad was completed in the early 1830s. Naturally, the state of Georgia followed suit, and began building their own railroad to connect with the Midwest. It would be known as the Western & Atlantic Railroad. When a designated location was chosen as the railway line's terminus, or final port, a stake was driven into the ground, marking it with the Atlanta Zero Mile Post.

Yes, this is the history of Atlanta, and it is very important to keep reading even though we just used the word *history*. You see, Atlanta was not *Atlanta* then, not even by name. It was first called "Marthasville" (not nearly as catchy) in honor of the daughter of the governor at that time. Marthasville, though, was quickly nicknamed "Terminus" (catchy, but somewhat ominous) for its railway location. However, it didn't take long for the city to find its true moniker: Atlanta. This came about because it was considered the feminine equivalent of Atlantic, the latter half of the name of the railroad that would soon assist in the city's prosperity.

Originally, Atlanta consisted of a store and a few homes hastily built, but soon the settlement grew. By 1854, rail lines from four different directions passed through the town, eventually making it the rail hub for the entire Southern U.S. The city's elite status as such, however, came with a heavy cost during the Civil War when Atlanta became a target of the Union because of the important role its railways played as a distribution hub for the South. In 1864, Union General Sherman's troops set fire and destroyed all of the city's assets and buildings except for its churches and hospitals. Only 400 buildings remained. Tragically, Atlanta is haunted with the distinction of being the only city in North America to ever be destroyed by fire as an act of war.

Like the mythological bird of legend — the Phoenix — the city literally rose from the ashes. Time passed, the city began to rebuild and grow again, eventually thriving like never before. Today, it is the 38th largest city in the U.S. and it houses an airport that was ranked as the busiest in the world for more than 20 straight years before it was dethroned in 2020 by China's Guangzhou Airport. In typical Atlantan fashion, the city reclaimed the #1 spot in 2021. It seems like the perfect city to host Clean 2022 this summer and help complete the drycleaning industry's comeback.

Here in 2022, the old ways of doing thing are no longer working very well for drycleaners who have struggled through the topsy-turvy business conditions of the past two years. Consumers have changed during Covid, expanding their definitions of what they consider *quality* and *convenience*. The cost of doing business is high enough that efficiency and profitability mean more than they ever have.

All of this means this may be *the most important Clean Show* since the original one 45 years ago. Back then, the idea was to consolidate shows because it grew expensive exhibiting at regional venues every year. The biennial (every other year) format of the show was adopted to help keep exhibiting costs under control and it has worked well because two years seems to be a good time frame for manufacturers to offer significant upgrades to their equipment.

This year's show, however, exists in its own category. It will take place *more than three years after* the previous Clean Show, and the next Clean Show will not take place for *more than another three years* — not until August of 2025 (so Clean can return to the traditional odd-year format). If you skip this year, that means you will go at least *six full years* between Clean Show excursions. We're guessing that not too many cleaners can afford to do that since they've had the past two years to examine every nook and cranny of their business and should have an idea how to improve and modernize it. Whether you want to go cashless, offer a new service, upgrade your Point-of-Sale system (POS), interact with experts, or purchase a new piece of equipment, begin your research beforehand. The urge for socializing this year will probably be harder to curtail than ever, so having a game plan and prepared questions will ensure you get the most of your valuable time on the exhibit floor.

While we expect there may also be a few late nights out, don't let that keep you from attending the morning educational sessions. Every session will focus on a pertinent topic, from building a positive workplace culture to a forecast of the economy for the remainder of 2022. There will also be programs on hiring and keeping the younger generation, self-service technology for the industry, profit activators and how to market through your POS.

So, if you haven't already, start making plans to attend Clean 2022 from July 30 to Aug. 2 and make some history in Atlanta this summer. Be sure that you register for the Clean Show by June 29, so the cost is only \$119 for members and \$149 for non-members. After that date, it will go up to \$169 per person. Also, keep in mind that the deadline for Clean Show hotel reservations with Connections Housing is July 7. We hope to see you all there.

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Cutting down fences

ven at a young age, the Rings brothers were not inclined to let obstacles — even literal ones prevent them from finding new horizons to explore. Justin and Bobby grew up on an 18-acre property in Pickerington, OH — which, perhaps, should have been sufficient for recreational four-wheeling — but a fence separated them from their neighbors' 200-acre farm with more possibilities.

"When we were about 12 or 13 years old, Justin actually cut down the fence to get to the cornfield behind us and then he took the four-wheeler and went all throughout this cornfield," Bobby explained.

"Not while the corn was there," Justin cut in. "The field was just dirt. But, you're probably wondering why we're telling this story. It's an important link to our entrepreneurship."

Not long after, their neighbor rode to the Rings' house on horseback wanting to know why somebody rode an all-terrain vehicle all around his property.

"His name was Paul Stearns. Very long story short... we ended up working on his farm, working in the stalls, taking care of the horses, baling the hay, stuff like that," Justin continued. "He was actually a serial entrepreneur in Columbus. He had all kinds of businesses that he ran and started. So, he kind of opened our eyes to entrepreneurship."

Both Rings brothers also logged in time at Stearns' Sprint Lube oil change centers in Columbus as he proved to be a positive mentor in their lives. As they came of age, Bobby worked with UPS for a couple of years while Justin earned an accounting degree from Ohio State University. Next, the brothers decided they would be entrepreneurs together and begin looking at different businesses in various industries.

ne day, Stearns introduced the Rings to Wayne Wudyka, owner of Huntington Cleaners in Michigan, and their interest was piqued. They especially liked the repeat business aspect and the pickup and delivery infrastructure of drycleaning.

"We go up and see Wayne's operation with Mr. Stearns and boy oh boy... when we walked into his operation, we said, 'Holy cow! This is what you can do in this business," Bobby recalled.

In late 2007, the brothers launched Rockwood Cleaners — the Rockwood name was a reference to an early childhood residence. Originally, they farmed out the work to Harward Cleaners. Even though they weren't doing the cleaning themselves, their job proved to be much harder.

"You'd knock on 100 doors and 95 of them would tell you 'No,'" Bobby noted. However, over time, they made progress as word-of-mouth spread.

After farming out work for about a year — and with delivery routes really taking off — the brothers opted to buy Harward Cleaners, merged the businesses together, and retained the Rockwood name.

"Our focus was grow, grow, grow. We wanted to acquire as many customers, as many accounts as possible - whether it be hotels, businesses, hospitals, whatever it was," Bobby explained. "We were going after it, and, at the same time, we were trying to take the operation to the next level as far as quality, getting it done right, getting it done when we promised — all that good stuff."

to let go of some employees or put them on leave for a while, but we kept our core staff with us and we served anybody we could. We never turned anything away."

Fortunately, the business has recovered to the point that its staff is back up close to 30. "We're rocking and rolling again," Bobby explained. "We're pretty

forward despite a few formidable fences that have threatened to block its progress. According to Bobby, the secret isn't really too complicated, but it does require a persistent effort.

"I think it's just about being on that personal level and giving that personal service — whether it be your staff, whether it be your customers, whether



Justin and Bobby Rings

Rockwood Cleaners Columbus, OH

ockwood grew considerably under the Rings brothers' guidance. The business employed only eight people when they bought it; after their first decade of ownership, it had risen to a staff of around 35.

"We were hitting on all cylinders. We couldn't expand quickly enough," Bobby recalled. "We couldn't get more equipment into our building quickly enough — running eight-, nine-, tenhour production days, Saturday shifts just really hitting on all cylinders from a business level."

Not long after, their neighbor rode to the Rings' house on horseback wanting to know why somebody rode an ATV all around his property.

"We had a record January 2020, a record February 2020, a record first week of March 2020," Bobby continued. "Then, I think it was when the governor announced the shutdown. I mean, it was literally a ghost town. There were no customers walking through our doors. Customers were calling in on routes, telling us, 'Hey, we're not going to have stuff. Our offices sent us home and we're not going to work for the next four weeks.' It was nuts. It was the craziest thing I've ever experienced."

Like most drycleaners, the Rings had to make several tough decisions and changes in their business, but they remained determined... and open.

"We stayed open every day. We served any customer who would come in and needed something — we did it for them," Justin emphasized. "We had much almost back to pre-pandemic numbers."

Without hesitation, both brothers credit the employees as one of the company's biggest strengths.

"I think a large part of why we've succeeded is we have an unbelievable staff that we've continued to grow with. Our turnover is extremely low as far as the staff we have," Bobby said. "and I think it's probably a testament to our availability to everybody. We're there working with them side by side, helping to motivate, helping to lead, helping to deal with any issues they may be having personally or professionally — and just kind of chugging the team along."

ack when they first started pickup and delivery routes for Rockwood Cleaners, Bobby and Justin strongly believed it would be a wise way to differentiate themselves from other drycleaners in the area, which was quite saturated with them.

how many drycleaners are in Columbus, but in Gahanna — which is actually the suburb where we are located when we first got into the business in 2007/2008, they called Gahanna the drycleaning capital of Columbus because there were so many drycleaners, some being right next to each other practically," Bobby recalled.

While the Rings have managed to keep surviving and growing for 15 years now, other local cleaners have suffered less fortunate fates.

"Unfortunately, there have been a few that have gone out. Obviously, you don't like to see that for any business," Bobby noted. "I think consolidation is the only way you can continue to grow in any industry. I mean, there can only be so many businesses in any industry to take care of things."

While the siblings feel fortunate that Rockwood Cleaners continues to move it be your vendors — to give that authentic sincerity and care to their needs and try to help them as much as you can from an emotional standpoint to the business standpoint to whatever. I think that's probably the biggest factor," he said.

uthentic sincerity has certainly helped the company thrive throughout the years, although it also doesn't hurt to be located in a good market.

"We're extremely lucky to be in Columbus, Ohio — a massive, massive city with a lot of activity — business activity, hotel activity, individual activities," he explained. "I just think the economic scale of Columbus plays a big factor, as well. We're in a good place."

While Rockwood Cleaners continues to hold steady for the time being, the Rings are ready to cut down more fences if necessary in order to expand to other horizons.

"I see a very bright future for us in "Oh man, I couldn't even tell you our market where we're at," Bobby continued. "We would absolutely love to find another piece of real estate to purchase, but that's pretty tough right now just as far as availability in Columbus. We do believe you have to own the real estate."

> Plans can always change in the future, but the brothers aren't afraid of the road before them or any obstacles it may hold. They feel fortunate to have had a strong foundation for success.

> "We've had a lot of good connections throughout our life to kind of guide us to where we are today. We're extremely thankful for that," Bobby noted. "It all started with our parents, and after that it just kind of seemed to be like we were in the right place at the right time — and, obviously, I am thankful that my brother cut down a fence to meet Mr. Stearns, even though he did get chewed out for that for quite some time."



Cam Bastien, Carousel Cleaners, Vancouver, CA CarouselCleaners.ca | Client since 2013

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Industry gatherings pick up steam

Continued from page 1

been nearly enough in a vacuum. Only by pulling together were we able to protect TCATA through the dark days and relaunch it into a bright fu-

Proceeding with Plant Tours

Other industry groups have also taken advantage of gathering in person. The consulting group Methods for Management, for example, have returned to offering their member plant tours.

Since February, MfM has hosted a trio of meetings throughout the country, ina meeting cluding Nashville, TN, with hosts Alan, Rhonda and Aubrey Wernick of Oakwood Cleaners. In Dallas, TX, the group enjoyed the hospitality of Amin, Karen and Perry Bata of Pepper Square Cleaners. More recently, Mark Scott of Bakker's Fine Dry Cleaners in Seattle, WA, hosted a plant tour.

While the in-person atmosphere has been quickly embraced by many, MfM has opted to try to be as inclusive as possible by offering "hybrid" access so those who wish not to attend personally may have the option to join via Zoom using a new form of technology called OWL. Now the group can continue to offer helpful constructive critiques of how to improve other members' plants both in person and virtually when necessary.

Educational Opportunities

Speaking of improvement, many students are taking advantage of in-person classes offered by the National Cleaners Association (NCA) and the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI), studying to upgrade their overall garment cleaning knowledge and skills.

In fact, DLI recently presented the 379th editions of its signature Introduction to Drycleaning and Advanced Drycleaning courses, comprised of 13 and 11 students, respectively. These students graduated with in-depth knowledge of the science of drycleaning ranging from how to sort loads, proper cleaning and stain removal methods, as well as producing high quality pressed and finished gar-

Graduates of DLI's 379th Introduction to Drycleaning class in March included: (front row from left) Shawn Norred, Puritan Cleaners; Avery Rothrock, Yale Cleaners; Sumasri Ravulapalli; Ahalya Tippa; Diana Rothrock, Yale Cleaners; Carolina Monterrubio Barrera, Wash-O; and Shashidhar Gunje Narasimha, New Hamburg Cleaners; (back row, from left) Dylan Patel, Ritz French Hand Laundry; Mason Hendrickson, SoapTech; Gabor Kondorosi, Sudsies Dry Cleaners; David Zambelli, Sudsies Dry Cleaners; Nick Milto, Milto Cleaners; and Horacio Erminy, The Woodlands Cleaners.

Both NCA and DLI have more classes scheduled for the near future.

NCA will soon offer "Technical Training at the Counter for CSRs" on Sunday, May 1, and its two-day "Pressing and Finishing" course on May 21

DLI's next in-person introductory and advanced classes at its School of Drycleaning Technology are set to take place this summer (Aug. 8-12 and Aug. 15-26), though the association will first host a

blended (both virtual and inperson) version of the Introduction to Drycleaning class. It will meet virtually on the following dates: June 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23 and 28. Then, students must attend classes in person at DLI's School of Drycleaning Technology on Thursday and Friday, July 14 to 15.

For full schedules, pricing and other information on each association's upcoming class offerings, visit them online at www.nca-i.com www.dlionline.org.



Graduates of DLI's 379th Advanced Drycleaning class in March included: (front row from left) Michael Capobianco, Cappy's Cleaners; Shashidhar Gunje Narasimha, New Hamburg Cleaners; Yailene Sanchez; Wayzata Home Laundry; Diana Rothrock, Yale Cleaners; Avery Rothrock, Yale Cleaners; and Dylan Patel, Ritz French Hand Laundry; (back row, from left) Stephen Atkins, CaaStle; David Zambelli, Sudsies Dry Cleaners; Nick Milto, Milto Cleaners; Gabor Kondorosi, Sudsies Dry Cleaners; and Horacio Erminy, The Woodland Cleaners.

Clean '22 hotel deadlines fast approaching

Continued from page 1 of U.S. airfare has risen up 40% since January.

Despite such sharp in- in pre-pandemic numbers (if creases, undaunted U.S. trav- not higher) this summer — a elers are expected to come out likely consequence of many

travelers cancelling or postponing plans for the last two

While a good app and lots of patience can help you find the best airfare, Clean 2022 attendees will want to turn to Connections Housing as soon as possible because there is a hotel reservation deadline of July 7. They offer discounted rates at a variety of host hotels, including the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, which will serve as the headquarters hotel for DLI. Room rates begin at \$191 nightly and do not include local and hotel taxes.

Meanwhile, conditions in Atlanta during April certainly looked promising as the Georgia Department of Health had recently transitioned from daily to weekly COVID-19 data reports as the number of daily cases had dropped dramatically during the month.

Additionally, at press time most major airlines — including the five largest domestically: American Airlines, Alaska Air, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines and Southwest Airlines — had announced decisions to drop mask requirements for all domestic flights and some international ones following a court ruling by a federal judge in Florida.

A Delayed Debut

Now in its 45th year, this Clean Show will mark the

debut of Messe Frankfurt as the show's organizer.

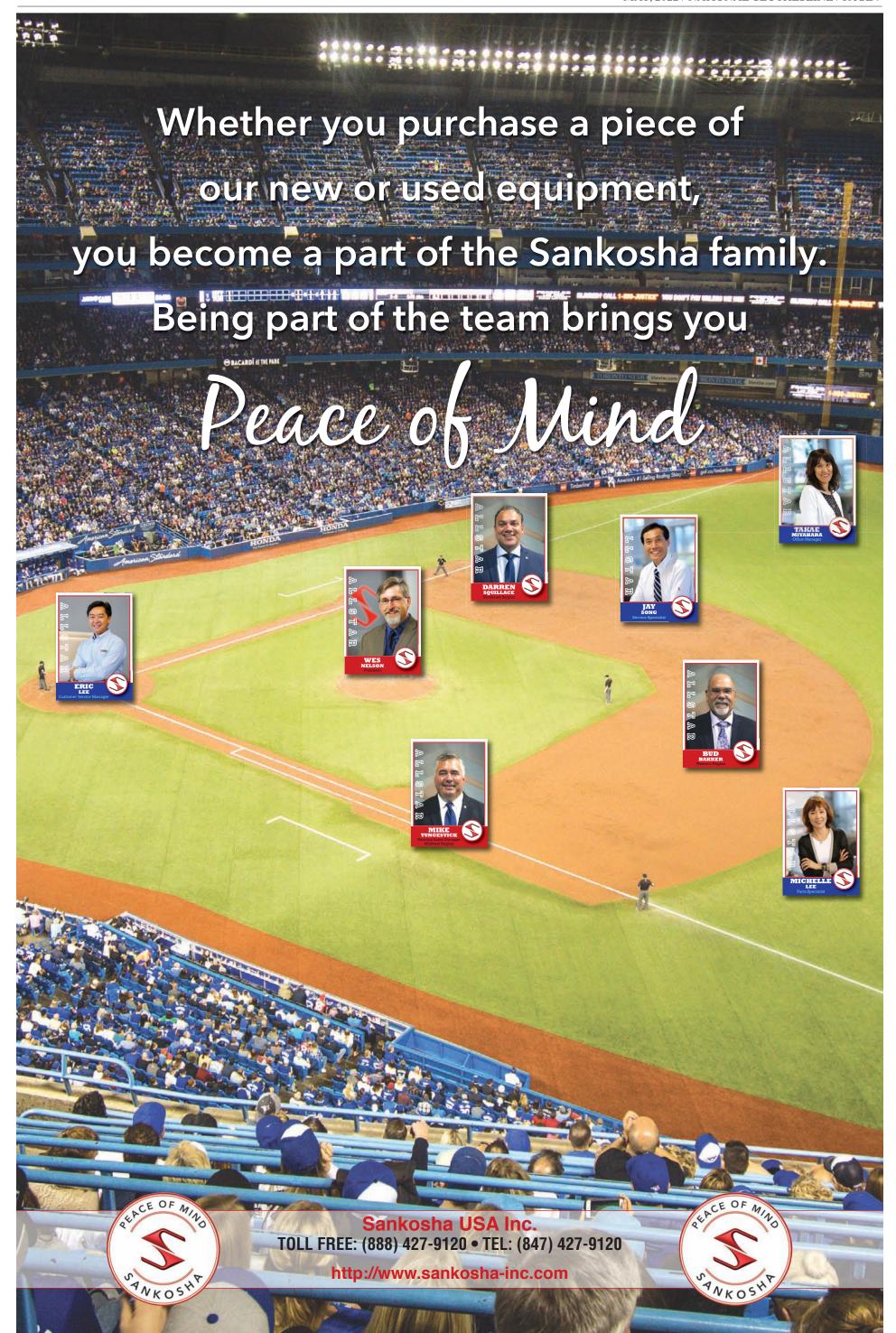
It was announced at Clean 2019 in New Orleans that the German-based company purchased the Clean Show from its sponsoring associations who have remained closely involved in the show: the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute, the Textile Care Allied Trades Association, the Coin Laundry Association, the Textile Rental Services Association of America and the Association for Linen Management.

After Messe Frankfurt postponed the 2021 edition of the Clean Show due to the pandemic, the stars have all seemed to finally align for the company to make its Clean Show debut.

Messe Frankfurt also has its eyes fixed on the future. They recently announced that the Clean Show will return to the familiar odd-year cycle following this year's event. Clean 2025 is set to take place at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, FL, from Aug. 24 to 27. Then, in 2027, it will take place from July 16 to 19 at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Nevada.

For more information or to register for the Clean Show, visit the official site at www.cleanshow.com and then head to the "Planning & Preparation" section.





BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Balancing your cash flow teeter totter

his month, we will discuss the tenth of the Value Builder drivers with our focus on cash flow. We call this teeter totter. Our goal will be to maximize cash flow coming in from the day-to-day operations of your business. This exercise is anchored by the cash flow finder tool. Once complete, you'll have a set of actions that can increase your cash flow, minimize or eliminate stressful periods of low cash flow, and increase your company's value. With that as the goal, consider these questions: Thinking of your typical customer relationship, how many days after they decide to buy do you receive their cash? Thinking of your typical supplier relationship, how many days after you agree to buy are you required to pay?

Cash Coming In

How can you shorten your payment terms? How can you be more disciplined about collecting payments (e.g. invoice faster, identify disputes sooner)? How can you get more customers to pay up front with a credit card? How can you ask customers to pay a

deposit or increase the proportion of the purchase they pay up front? How can you create an incentive for prompt payment? In what ways can you penalize customers for paying too slowly? What other ways can you get paid faster?

Cash Coming Out

How can you negotiate longer payment terms? Are there suppliers you pay up front that would accept a credit card? How can you reduce the inventory you need to carry? Is there equipment you buy today that can be borrowed, rented, leased or shared? What other ways can you delay the pace you pay suppliers?

Why Cash Flow Matters

Let's talk in-depth about the impact of cash flow on the value of your company — our teeter totter. We refer to it as such because the value of your company is going to have a direct relationship with how much cash your company throws off. I'm not talking about cash on a Profit & Loss statement; I'm talking about cash coming into your bank account. The more cash your company generates, the more valuable it is to an ac-

quirer. When a buyer goes to buy your company, they are going to have to write two checks, not just one. We always think about the check they need to write — the one to you, the owner — to pay for the company. However, there is a second check they need to write for working capital — the money your company needs to operate the moment the new buyer takes over your business. Those two things work in opposite directions.

I went cashless four years ago with no pushback from clients. It works.

The more cash your company needs to operate, the more working capital the acquirer will need to inject when they take over.

Boosting Cash Flow

You know the value of your company is impacted by your cash position. The more cash

you generate, the more valuable your company will be. Conversely, the more working capital needed, the less the business is worth. So, you need to find ways to increase your cash position to have a direct impact on your company's value.

You may be saying, "OK. I get that, but how do I do that?" Let's focus on ways you might increase cash coming into your business. I'm not intending this to be an exhaustive laundry list for you to implement today; I'm trying to give you ideas to spark your thinking. Let me give you some examples and hopefully one resonates with you. Maybe you are used to asking customers to pay in 30 days. Maybe it is time to get more disciplined about that. Can you accept credit cards for all of your transactions? We have many Methods for Management (MfM) members who have gone cashless in the past three years. No A/R or runs to the bank. No more employee "loans" from the change bag do not think this does not happen. I went cashless four years ago with no pushback from clients. It works. Most MfM members have gotten away from monthly billings altogether and now charge client cards on order completion. Imagine no delays of collection for your work, no mailed statements or the time they take to prepare. Your cash flow is now one day, not 30 to 60 days. The value of your business just went up dramatically. Yes, we all have those few legacy customers we still bill, but they were never much of an issue.

Slowing Cash Out

Let us say you are paying suppliers in 30 days. Is it reasonable to assume that they will continue to supply you if you stretch them to 45 days? Those extra 15 days can have a material impact on your cash position. Or, do you have suppliers that you can pay by credit card and take advantage of the 20 days of float you are going to have on a credit card? The points are also nice to get.

A way you can reduce the inventory you carry is to order more frequently to keep inventory down. But, in these days, I have recommended MfM members actually increase their supply inventories as none of us know when our next load will appear. We keep a very close eye on our supply reports as I get extremely aggravated when we run out of

anything that affects our brand.

One more area of cash flow might be reducing your equipment needs, like the machines that you bought last year. Did you really need to buy it, or could you have rented it?

Also, if you are using Quick-Books as your accounting platform, you can create a Cash Flow budget. I highly recommend that every business create and manage to a budget. This identifies variances between budget and actual results. This is your scorecard and will guide your decisions. Without a budget, how in the world do you know how the business is doing? I remember a conversation I had with an operator years ago regarding knowing your numbers, an integral part of our MfM analysis platform. I asked, "How do you know how the business is doing?" He said that he "looks at his bank account to see what is there." My reply was, "I could play that game, too, by just not paying my bills." I am tempted to investigate whether he is still in business.

I hope this information shows that cash flow issues can have a significant impact on the value of your company when you go to sell. Make sure the working capital calculation is stipulated in any offer to buy your business. Conversely, if you're looking to acquire an operation, study its cash flow.

Next month, we'll talk about developing a concise list of potential acquirers with a strategic reason (and the resources) to buy your company. Whether you want to sell in a year or a decade, knowing who the natural buyers are for you business will allow you to base decisions on how they might increase or decrease your attractiveness to a buyer.

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 kengh@mfmi.com.

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WRENCH WORKS



By Bruce Grossman

The solvent condensing section (part two)

n last month's issue, I concluded the section dealing with condensing solvent and common problems associated with this process. Now, I will discuss removing unwanted water from the condensed solvent.

Solvent/Water Separation and Why It Is Necessary

Garments absorb water in the form of moisture when exposed to the environment. This moisture is transferred to the solvent during the wash cycle and during distillation is vaporized and then condensed along with the solvent. To remove this water from the solvent stream, some form of "separation" is required. When two liquids are immiscible (they won't dissolve into one another), the lighter liquid floats on the surface of the heavier (think oil and water).

This principle is used to separate water from solvent in the drycleaning distillation and drying processes and is called "gravity separation." The efficiency of this type of separation depends on several major factors:

1. The difference in the specific gravity between the

solvent being used and condensed water. The larger the difference, the easier the two liquids separate. For this reason, machines using perc—which has a significant difference between the specific gravities—a single separator is sufficient. Drycleaning machines using lighter-thanwater solvents with particular gravities which are very close to each other require multiple separators.

- **2.** The volume where the separation occurs. The larger the volume of the separator, the greater the efficiency of the separation.
- **3.** The turbulence inside the separator. Separation is more efficient when there is less turbulence in mixing the liquids.
- **4.** The time allowed for the liquids to separate. The longer the separation, the more efficient.
- 5. The temperature of the liquids is important in separation. Up to a point, the cooler the liquids, the more efficient the separation.

Systems designed to separate perc are relatively straightforward and vary little between the machine manufacturers. The condensed water/solvent mixture is collected in a container where it is allowed to settle. The separated solvent sinks to the bottom while the water floating on top is conducted to a drain tube leading out of the separator for disposal.

Systems designed to use lighter-than-water solvents are a different matter entirely. It's not possible to describe the type of separation process because each equipment manufacturer has its preferred method of attacking the problems associated with this type of separation.

The close values of the specific gravity between that of water and the solvent require the following:

A. The addition of multiple separation stages provides greater volume in which to expand, settle and separate.

B. Extending the time when separation occurs by providing a dedicated separator called a pre-separator, allowing water removal from the first stage during the first 6 to 10 minutes of separation, thereby removing most of the water from the

water/solvent mixture in the pre-separation stage.

C. Providing a large volume of separation area in the form of a separate main water separator.

D. Providing a large volume dedicated water collection tank.

That's it for the series on distillation. I'm not sure what the next issue will be about, so let me know if you have any suggestions for a subject.

Bruce Grossman is the Chief of **R&D** for **EZtimers** Manufacturing. EZtimers manufactures machines that make your machines run better. For those needing to replace Zero-Waste or Galaxy misters, see our SAHARA model. For those with boiler problems, check out our EZ-Level and EZ-Dose machines. For more information on EZtimers products, visit www.eztimers.com. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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2022

May 15 National Cleaners Association's "Technical Training at the Counter for CSRs" class, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST. For more information, visit nca-i.com.

May 16 Wisconsin Fabricare Institute Brewers Game 2022. \$70 per ticket. For more information, visit wiscleaners.com.

May 21-22 National Cleaners Association's "Two-Day Pressing and Finishing" course, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. EST, Bronx, NY. Visit nca-i.com.

June 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28 (virtual) July 14-15 (on-site)
Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's "Introduction to
Drycleaning" class (blended virtual and live), DLI's School of Drycleaning Technology,
Laurel, MD. For information, visit DLIonline.org.

June 18 National Cleaners Association's "Professional Wet Cleaning" class, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Bronx, NY. For more information, visit nca-i.com.

June 21 Wisconsin Fabricare Institute's Fitzgerald Classic Golf Outing, River Club of Mequon. For more information, visit wiscleaners.com.

July 29-30 Michigan Institute of Laundering and Drycleaning summer convention, Crystal Mountain, Thompsonville MI. Call (870) 390-6453.

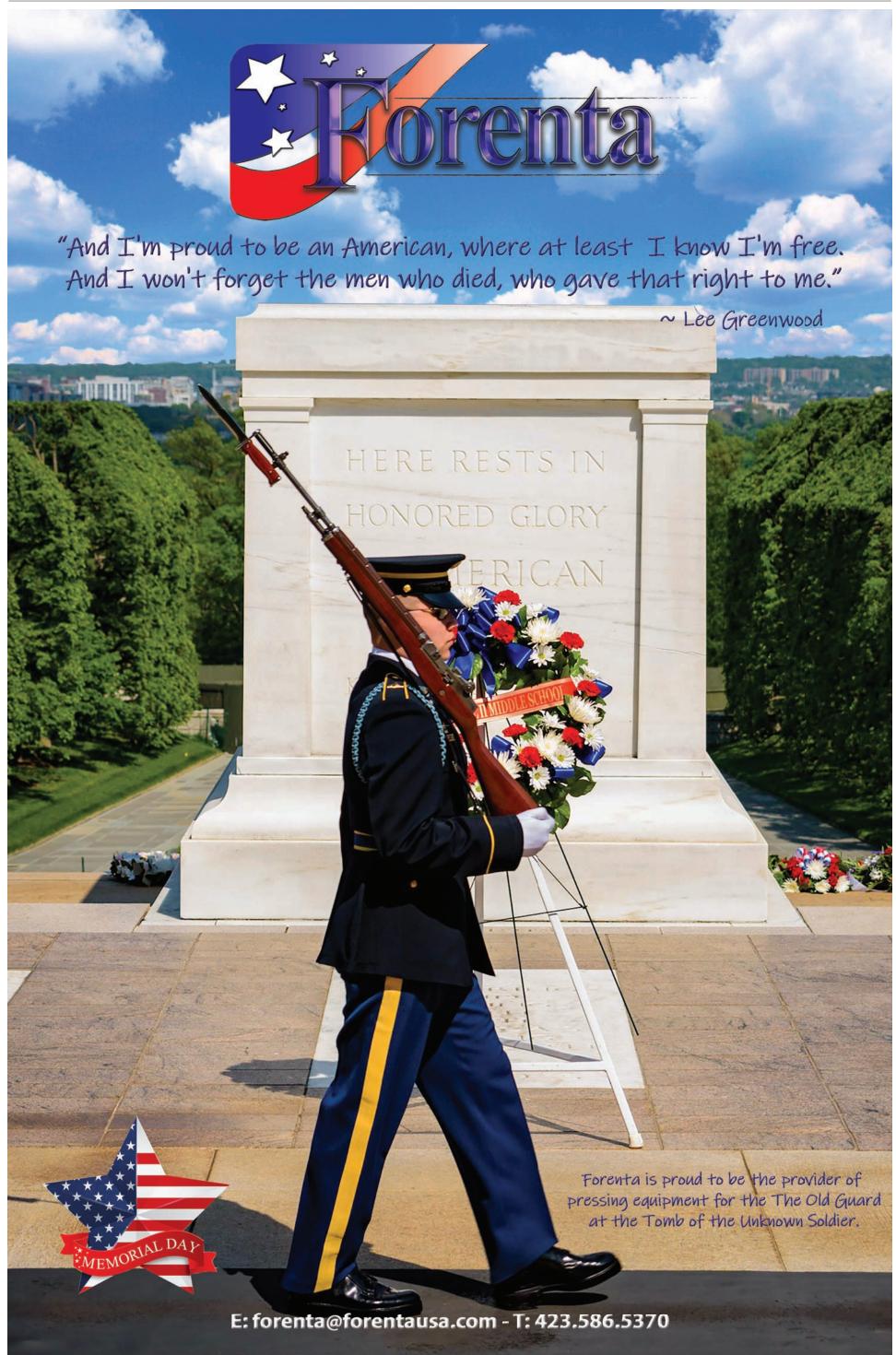
July 30-August 2 Clean Show 2022. Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA. Call (770) 984-8023.

August 8-12 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's "Introduction to Drycleaning" class, DLI's School of Drycleaning Technology, Laurel, MD. For information, visit DLIonline.org.

August 11-13 TexCare Asia & China Laundry Expo, Shanghai New International Expo Centre in China. For more information, visit texcare.com/brand.

August 15-26 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's "Advanced Drycleaning" class, DLI's School of Drycleaning Technology, Laurel, MD. For more information, visit DLIonline.org.

September 13-16 Textile Rental Services Association annual conference and exchange, Nashville, TN. Call (703) 519-0029.



SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

What do shirt customers hate the most?

f we can get inside our customers' heads, if we can understand what makes them happy and what makes them angry or annoys them, then we should be able to follow a path that leads us to a better shirt. I think that, in reality, we think that we know what is in their heads, but I suspect that many times we concentrate on our own pet peeves and forget to put ourselves in the customer's place. We forget to think like them.

The thing that makes this particular column difficult to write is that if my studies have shown that a missing button is a bigger service/quality violation than, say, a pressed-in crease across the back, then there is an implication there that suggests if a shirt has a missing button and a crease across the back, you must get the button first and, if you have time, fix the crease across the back. Or, if you replace the button but forget to fix the crease, you are better than if you fix the crease but forget to replace the button. This is not my intention at all.

My intention is to remind you to never forget to think like a customer and see the big picture, as well as the details, and to see the big picture *in spite of* the details. I believe that many launderers may overemphasize one detail while remaining oblivious to the

importance of another detail that — to a customer — is at least as significant as your personal pet peeve. You see, the customer never sees the big picture. All they ever see is that a customer could not possibly care less about anything that you did, but he will likely be perturbed about the things that you didn't do. (The realization that doing shirts is a

Based on my experience as a customer, coupled with my experience as a shirt launderer, this is my semi-subjective list of possible quality shirt defects.

their shirts — first soiled and wrinkled, then clean and pressed.

Consider this hypothetical shirt with a missing button and a wrinkle across the back. Assume that the inspection process caught one of the defects, but not the other. Take your pick. It doesn't matter which one you did and which you did not do.

There is a part of our brain that wants credit from the customer for the defect that we did fix. Yes, it may be a subconscious desire for credit.

In actuality, we (probably) don't say; "Yes, Mr. Smith, you're right. We smashed the collar buttons on your shirt and left them that way, but there used to be wrinkles in the cuff, and we fixed that. Aren't you glad about that?"

Surely, you already know

thankless job can't be a surprise.) Coming up with a list of what is important to a customer is arbitrary, but there is some logic and some science to it, so based on my experience as a *customer*, coupled with my experience as a *shirt launderer*, here is my semi-subjective list of possible quality defects.

There are but two items on

1. I have to say the worst thing that you can do is send a shirt back with a critical button missing.

A non-critical button would be one that does not render the shirt unwearable, such as a sleeve button or the bottom button on the front, or a pocket button. A critical button is probably any of the others.

I remember something that happened to me about 35 years ago when I was relatively new in the wholesale shirt business. I expected I might be recognized as the "shirt guy" when I packed my bags to attend the local DLI affiliate's trade show.

Wanting to make sure I made a good impression, I packed a neatly and professionally folded button-down dress shirt — just one —to attend the convention. I also brought along some casual clothes for the prior evening's festivities.

On the morning of the convention, I was absolutely mortified that the singular dress shirt I packed was missing a collar button! I was frantic, furious and desperate. After all, it was *my employee* that allowed this to happen.

I sought out one of those little sewing kits that you can get from the front desk at a hotel, cut off the button on the sleeve and used that button to button-down the collar. Then, I sewed the button that was in the little sewing kit to the sleeve to replace the one I'd cut off with my Swiss Army knife. I was extremely unhappy about doing this.

I did not think like a shirt launderer or a drycleaner that day. Thinking like a drycleaner may have happened if I had another shirt with me to wear. I didn't, and I was suitably annoyed.

This experience taught me to think like a customer. Way

before it was fashionable to say "think out of the box," I was out of this box that we refer to as our plants and thrust into a situation forcing me to experience a problem a customer could have. I would have learned little or nothing from this experience if I had simply tossed the unwearable shirt back into my suitcase and wore another one — perhaps just a tad sympathetic to the plight of plant employees. I got my shirts done for free. There were no allowances for that in my thought processes on this particular day. A customer would likely be even more perturbed if he or she had jingled up a few of bucks for an unwearable garment.

2. If any area in the upper, front part of the shirt has a hard, pressed-in wrinkle, like a diagonal crease going from the collar button area down towards the armpit, the shirt is unwearable.

Picture a shirt that is folded over an 8 x 14" shirt board. The collar of the shirt and any other part that is visible while the shirt is folded is the critical part of the shirt. This area is top priority. I really hate it when I see a touch-up person ironing out the wrinkles in the tail of the shirt, justifying their existence on the payroll, but leave an ugly crease in the collar or at some other clearly visible place. I guess they leave the latter because it's harder to fix. The problem here is other than simply not doing as good a job as possible — is failure to think like a customer. Do you really think that it matters to the average customer whether or not the tail of the shirt is pressed perfectly wrinkle-free? It is a low priority touch-up.

Now, my own words are misleading. Low priority touchup sounds like something that you do when you have run out of high-priority touch-ups or when there are no high-priority touch-ups to handle. This is flawed for at least two reasons. First, it leads to a variable standard. Secondly, it will cause a touch-up person to migrate towards the types of touch-up that are easy to do, not those that are important to the customer. Outwardly, your touchup person will always look

Continued on page 16





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Don Desrosiers

What do shirt customers hate the most?

Continued from page 14

busy, but the labor used will not be significantly improving your shirts. Doing unnecessary touch-up often leads to excess labor cost. It snowballs into extraordinarily high labor cost if left unchecked.

When management sets standards for touch-up people, it is easy to measure their effectiveness. For instance, let's say that the standards at XYZ Cleaners are these quality points:

1. All wrinkles removed from the tail of the shirt.

The touch-up person must remove curls or folds that have been pressed-in by the body press.

2. The box pleats on the

back of the shirt need to be within an inch of each other in length.

There are some cleaners who have this rule. Now, I want to make clear that I don't disapprove of this rule, it's just that I doubt that a customer would consider it important. More importantly, there are perhaps more generic — less specific — defects that a customer would object to, but, because the quality of the shirt cannot be judged so decisively as it can be with a yardstick in this case, management may unconsciously approve a substandard shirt.

These standards will raise the quality standard of your shirts, but these standards have an unspoken assumption. That assumption is that the shirt is already "perfect." Huh?

If you adopt standards such as these, you may have an exceptional shirt to start off with. All of the things that a customer expects must already be a given.

If you choose to raise the bar beyond that which a customer expects, then you are an exceptional business person. I once wrote, "...exceed a customers's expectations and you will succeed." This is as true as it ever

So, the key is to know what they expect — never forget it, give them that, then go beyond. Let's take a look at what they expect:

- A clean shirt, no ring around the collar, no stains;
- A smoothly pressed collar, no wrinkles;
- The collar folded exactly where it should be right on the seam;
- The perfect level of starch (or lack of it). They might not know what it's called light, heavy or secret double-heavy starch but they have in their minds what they think is right and what is wrong;
- Two collar buttons in perfect condition, firmly attached with the proper color thread. If the button is chipped, cracked or broken, they will not understand because they are not likely to be familiar with the processes through which their

shirts undergo. If a button looks like it went to war, the customer may conclude that you put the shirt through a more rigorous ordeal than they do themselves;

- A smooth, hard-pressed button-hole band. No bubbles, wrinkles or rough-dry look;
- The entire front of the shirt is free of pressed-in wrinkles. No rough dry areas. If you've raised the bar on quality and gave your customers higher expectations, then good for you. Doing things like that will certainly keep your competitors on their toes;
- The entire back of the shirt is free of pressed-in wrinkles. No rough dry areas here, either;
- There are lots more things. Frankly, I could go on and on and still forget some specifics. My point is to remind you to take care of your customer's annoyances before your own, even though you may find that your customer's annoyances are harder to measure than your own.

In a nutshell: ABC Cleaners and XYZ Cleaners both do an extraordinary shirt. ABC Cleaners wants a competitive edge over XYZ. They decided to run iron in the sleeve pleats, clip the cuffs together with clips and iron out every little crease in the tail of the shirt. ABC oozes attention to detail and trumps XYZ.

Of course, we must assume that ABC is still doing all of the things that had them doing an extraordinary shirt in the first place. If ABC gets so caught up in doing the three little things that were meant to outdo XYZ, but in the meantime allowed buttons to become a problem, ring around the collar to become more common and press quality to become an issue, does ABC still trump XYZ?

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got."

Don Desrosiers has been in the drycleaning and shirt laundering business since 1978. He is a work-flow engineer and a management consultant who provides services to shirt launderers and drycleaners through Tailwind Systems. He is a member of the Society of Professional Consultants and winner of DLI's Commitment to Professionalism award. He can be reached at 40 Winchester Ln, Suite #5, Fall River, MA 02721, by cell phone (508) 965-3163, email tailwind.don@me.com. The Tailwind web site is at www.tailwindsystems.com.



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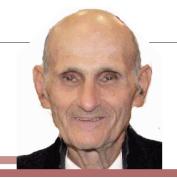
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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Methods to identify and test fabrics

he professional drycleaner who knows how to test fabrics during drycleaning and wetcleaning procedures will avoid problems and damages from ruined fabrics.

Although there are tests that require laboratory analysis, many tests can be performed by the knowledgeable drycleaner. These tests are used to ensure drycleaning, spotting and wetcleaning procedures are done correctly. They are also used to test fabrics for serviceability, dryclean-

he professional dry- ing, spotting and wetcleaning.

Drycleaning

The visual condition of your solvent is important, but it is also important to see the results of fabrics after drycleaning.

1. Swatch Test. Cut a white fabric and attach it to a garment in a light load that is drycleaned.

2. Testing Colors. Saturate a cloth with solvent and rub an unexposed area of fabric with suspected color problems. You may encounter these problems on black and white garments

blended with spandex.

3. Trimming Problems. Test plastic-coated trimming with amyl acetate.

You must always test with a solvent stronger than the one you are using. To test color of trimming and sequins, saturate a q-tip with solvent and rub trimming.

Spotting

Place a white cloth under fabric to be tested. Test dye transfer to cloth when spotting with steam gun and neutral lubricant. Test stronger chemicals on an unexposed seam.

Wetcleaning

- 1. Test the suspected fabrics for serviceability by using a steam gun and neutral lubricant on unexposed area.
- **2.** Test for dye crocking by rubbing a white cloth with neutral lubricant on an unexposed area of garment.

Bleach Testing

Use pool testing strips to check bleaching.

1. When bleaching with sodium perborate or sodium percarbonate test water solution with pool strips.

It should show an alkaline

Burn testing is a very easy way to identify unlabeled garments that do not list the fiber content.

concentration.

2. Test effectiveness of hydrogen peroxide by saturating a q-tip with titanium sulphate and then contacting the peroxide. The q-tip should turn orange if the peroxide is effective.

Identifying Fabrics and Fibers

Burn Test. It is very easy to identify fabrics using the burn test. This is used when there is no labeling or identification that lists the fiber content.

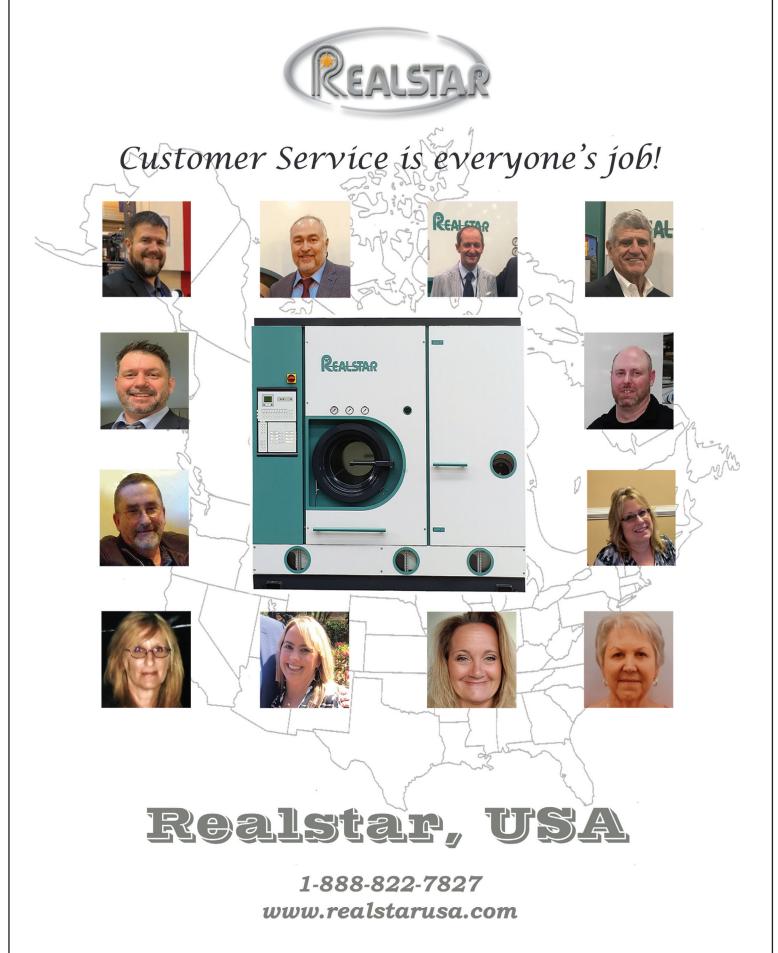
Take a small sample of fabric from an unexposed area and apply a lit match.

- 1. Silk fries and sizzles and ceases to burn after the match is removed. It smells like burning feathers or hair, and leaves a black bead that can be crushed between your fingers.
- **2. Polyester** is difficult to burn and shrinks from a flame while melting. It has a pungent odor and the bead it leaves cannot be easily crushed between your fingers.
- **3. Wool** fries and sizzles and does not support a flame. It smells like burning feathers or hair, and leaves a bead that can be easily crushed.
- **4. Acrylic** burns readily with a yellow, purple and orange flame. It leaves a bead that cannot be easily crushed.

Caution: To avoid burns, do not attempt to crush a fiber immediately after burning until it has time to sufficiently cool.

5. Polyurethane and leather. To tell the difference between these two fabrics, saturate a q-tip with paint remover. Rub sample and check to see if dye transfers to the q-tip. Dye on leather will transfer to the q-tip while dye on polyurethane will not.

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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Obituary

Sharon W. Kajiwara

Co-owner of Arthur Kajiwara Equipment

Sharon W. Kajiwara, who owned Arthur Kajiwara Equipment along with her husband — the business's namesake — passed away at Providence St. Jude Medical Center in Fullerton, CA, in March at the age of 77.

She was born to Edwin Wong Aloiau and Violet Hee in Honolulu, Hawaii, in 1944. Upon graduating in 1961 from Kalani High School there, she moved to the mainland in order to attend Woodbury University in Los Angeles, CA.

While there, she met he future husband, Arthur, who shared her passion for entrepreneurship.

Over the years, she had operated several home-based businesses ranging from Princess House to Martin Sunglasses to tupperware and jewelry sales, establishing a network of contacts and many lifelong friends. However, in 1964 — the same year she married Arthur — the pair launched their biggest venture together: the Arthur Kajiwara Equipment Co. in South El Monte, CA.

The company specializes in installing laundry and drycleaning equipment and is a license contractor in

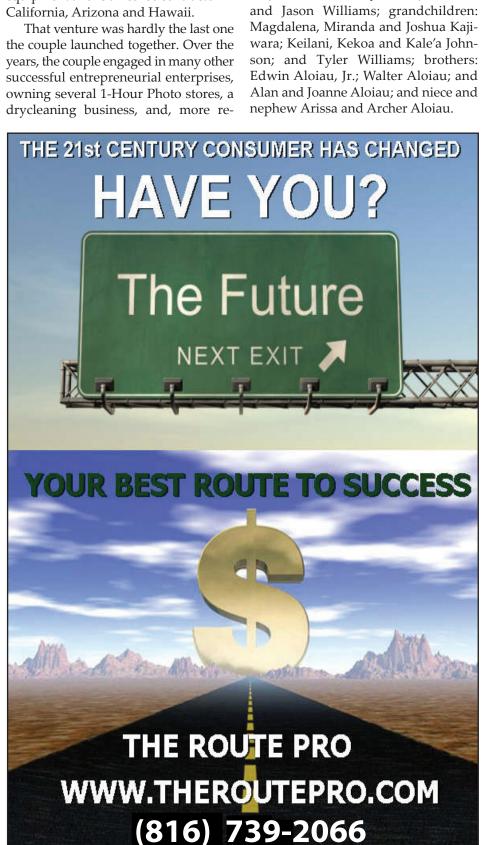


Sharon Kajiwara

cently, they opened a drycleaning/scrapbook/gift shop called This N' That.

In addition to her penchant for establishing well-respected businesses, family was incredibly important to Sharon, a.k.a. "Mama." She will be fondly remembered as a dedicated wife, mother and grandmother.

She is survived by her husband, Arthur; son Lance and Tammy Kajiwara; daughters: Diana and Chad Harrell; Debra and Ken Johnson; and Kari





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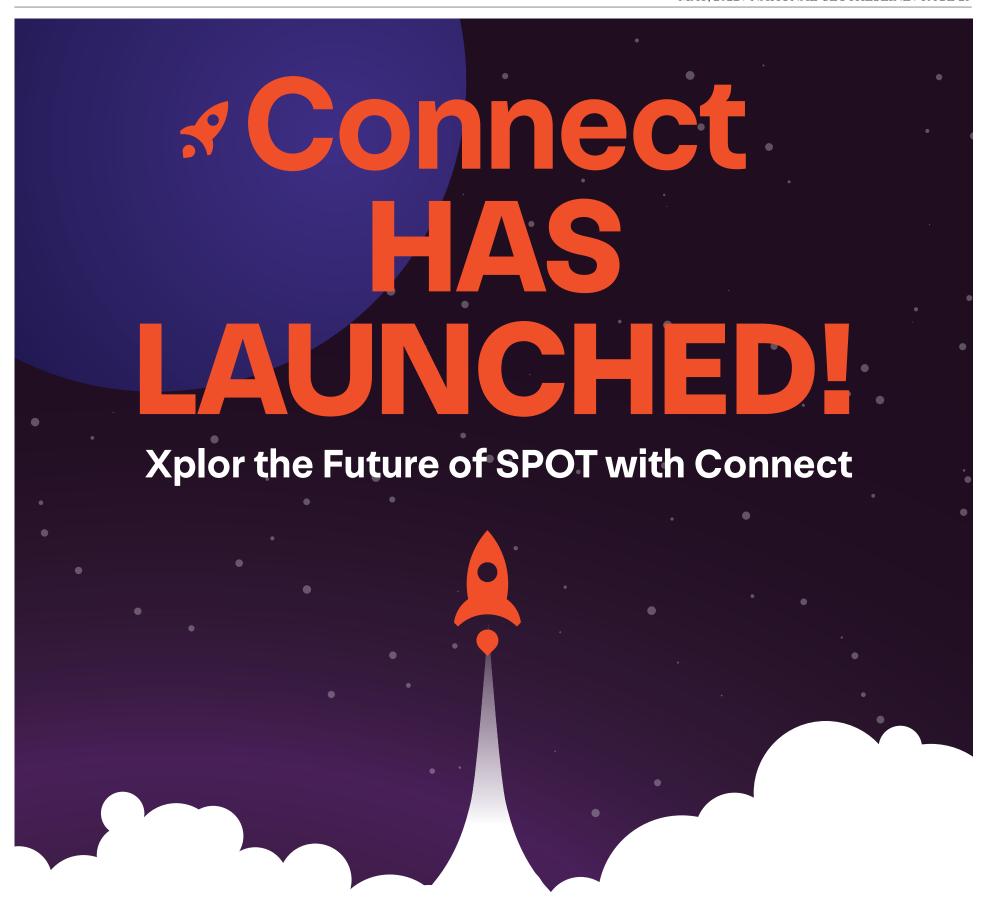


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