



National

Clothesline



June 2022

Volume 60 Number 9

www.nationalclothesline.com

Clean 2022: An early preview

Seven years have passed since The Clean Show was last hosted in the city of Atlanta. During that year, the attendance numbers for Clean '15 surpassed 11,000 people overall — in addition to including more than 430 total exhibiting companies.

Those numbers, by the way, closely paralleled those from Clean 2019 in New Orleans, the last time the show was held.

Now, the stage is set for the Clean Show to finally return after it had to be postponed last year due to the pandemic.

That was one “first” this year’s edition

will face, along with being the first show to take place in an even-numbered year.

Trying to predict this year’s attendance figures may prove a bit on the difficult side. After all, the drycleaning industry has been put through the economic wringer for the past couple of years, forcing a substantial number of operators to shutter their doors for good.

Meanwhile, many other garment care specialists seem more determined than ever to improve production efficiency and overall quality — in almost every other aspect of their business — hoping to find ways to become irreplaceable to consumers and their shifting needs.

Hopefully, that will prove to be a good sign for things to come in terms of attendance. As for exhibitors, that is much less of a mystery.

Recently, Messe Frankfurt noted that the exhibit hall space at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, GA, had

reached over 95% sold in the first half of May — with still more than two-and-a-half months left until Clean 2022 kicks off on July 30.

That means hundreds of exhibitors have committed to the Clean Show and plan to be ready to debut, display and demonstrate all of the latest drycleaning and laundry equipment and products they



ATLANTA'S MIDTOWN PEACHTREE STREET AT NIGHT is just one of several spectacular views that await attendees of Clean 2022 this summer — just make sure you are on the right one. After all, Atlanta currently has 71 streets that bear the name “Peachtree.”

©2019 Gene Phillips, Courtesy of ACVB and AtlantaPhotos.com

have to offer over the course of four days. The exhibit hall will be open for almost 30 hours altogether: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday and Monday; and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesday.

Those who miss this year’s

event or fail to take full advantage of time in the exhibit hall will then have to wait another three years for their next Clean Show visit.

Clean 2025 has been scheduled to take place at the Orange County Convention

Center in Orlando, FL, when the show returns to its traditional every-other-odd-year format.

The ensuing show is scheduled to take place in Las Vegas in 2027.

Continued on page 8

CCA plans meeting at Estado 29 Orphanage

This summer, the California Cleaners Association will host its annual meeting at the Estado 29 Orphanage near Ensenada, Mexico.

It was originally started in 1957 by Mexican minister Jose Acosta Zamora as a means to house five orphans from the town of San Luis Rio Colorado in Sonora. Over the last 65 years, it has grown consider-

ably in scope, at times exceeding over 100 occupants.

Today, it is home to between 35 and 60 children. Because orphanages in Mexico are not funded by the government, it relies primarily on donations from a variety of sources including The 3 Amigos Orphanage Foundation (go to www.3AOF.org).

Continued on page 10



Ray Rangwala (right) will be chairperson for CCA's trip to Estado 29 Orphanage. He and Bobby Patel (center) of Kona Cleaners are pictured here during a visit a few years ago.



Schedule of Events

Exhibit Hall Hours

Saturday, July 30 - 10 am to 5 pm • Sunday, July 31 - 9 am to 5 pm
Monday, August 1 - 9 am to 5 pm • Tuesday, August 2 - 9 am to 3 pm

Saturday, July 30

8 am - 9 am

Best Culture Wins

Sean Abbas, The Threads, Inc.

9 am - 10 am

Self-Service Technology is Here

Nathaniel Dubasik, Burke Cleaners

2 pm - 3 pm • **General Session**

Attracting & Managing the

New Generation of Workforce

Jennifer Whitmarsh, The Route Pros

5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

DLI-TCATA Membership Reception

DLI & TCATA Members

are invited to the joint reception at the

Marriott Marquis Hotel

Visit www.cleanshow.com
for more information
and register by June 29 for
discount pricing

Sunday, July 31

8 am - 10 am

**12 Profit Activators Guaranteed to
Create an Immediate Cash Flow Surge**

Dave Coyle, Maverick Drycleaners

2 pm - 3 pm • **General Session**

2022 Economy —

Are We Ever Going to See Normal?

Chris Kuehl, Armada Business Intelligence

Monday, August 1

8 am - 9 am

Marketing Through Your POS

Norman Way, Puritan Cleaners

9 am - 10 am

CINET PTC

Global Best Practices Program

Peter Wennekes, CINET

2 pm to 3 pm • **General Session**

Human Resource Strategy

Sue Boardman and Jonathan Boehmer,

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Fax ()		Building Construction* 1. Frame 2. Masonry w/Wood Frame 3. Metal w/Metal Roof 4. Masonry w/Metal Roof 5. Fire-resistive - Precast Concrete Roof	
Contact Name			
Email Address			
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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Keeping it fresh

As World War I erupted across Europe, many families desperately struggled to escape the conflict and upheaval, including the Zikers who were forced to make a grim decision.

"I don't know how much you know about Russia and the history, but back in 1914, if you were Jewish and within Russia, it wasn't a very good life," noted David Ziker, the third generation owner of Ziker's Dry Cleaning and Laundry Service in South Bend, IN.

Fortunately for a young Joe Ziker — David's grandfather — there was a way out. "His parents gave him 50 bucks and put him on a boat," he continued. "He never really knew what town he was from, when his birthday was or anything. Who knows how he did all that."

Not only did Joe reach America on his own, he soon used his tailoring skills to start a small shop in 1917 that serviced the outfits of vaudeville entertainers who passed through town.

When people asked him questions like "Do you sew buttons?" or "Do you clean clothes," Joe always answered "yes" and then he'd simply add another service to the business.

"Then, he got married in 1925, and it turns out my grandma was a solid business person, too," Joe noted. "She helped him with the business part of things like money and accounting back in the day."

Together, Joe and Molly expanded the small tailoring shop into a veritable empire of drycleaning and laundry stores. By the 1940s, they had 55 locations operating out of a central plant.

"During the war, we got a big contract with — it was called Bunker Hill Air Force Base — about an hour south of South Bend," David said. "That's kind of what got him going further and further away from South Bend."

After World War II, the big contract with the military base was no longer needed and the business was struggling when Joe's son (and David's father) Mort joined the company in 1948.

He helped the business become more profitable by offering commercial laundry and cutting back on locations that were simply too far away — some as much as three hours by delivery van. In 1972, Ziker's diversified to include uniform rental services, not long before David graduated from Indiana University with a degree in finance in 1978.

After working in various capacities for the business for five years, David began to focus all of his energy on the uniform rental department.

"That was kind of my baby. We really grew the hell out of it," he recalled. The influx of work forced Ziker's Dry Cleaning and Laundry Service to add on a 17,000 sq. ft. addition to the main facility. By the early 2000s, the company had about 175 full-time employees. However, it was becoming clearer that it was time for a major geographical change.

In 2014, David sold the uniform rental business for a nice sum and de-

cided to invest it into Ziker's future in a big way.

"The building that we were in for 80 years was old and tired. It was 70,000 sq. ft. They were a bunch of different buildings that all had been built and connected over time. One building was built in the 1880s," David recalled. "So, in 2014 we started looking and we fi-

Well, only 10% of the people at the time would help us out. So, it didn't really help that much. Then, the technology changed — which we're using now — where you have to opt-in. So, you have to say, 'Yes, I have an order.' Now, we're only going by the houses we're picking up at. The efficiency numbers we're seeing — we have quite a few metrics that

Fortunately, he had a system in place — one he put in place 15 years ago that helps him remotely monitor the business from the road or from his home in Arizona — which is well over 1,500 miles away from the Indiana business. Of course, he has help.

"My leadership has been with me a long time — very loyal and passionate.



www.zikerfresh.com

David Ziker

Ziker Dry Cleaning and Laundry Service
South Bend, IN

nally found this place in late 2015. It was a 17,000 sq. ft. grocery store that didn't last very long, so basically it was a beautiful, beautiful building."

Having a new building to work in meant there were no limits to what technology could be used, so David aimed high with his plant workflow goals.

"We built three cells — so, like three production lines — and each one did everything. So, they drycleaned. They wetcleaned, laundered, spotted. They pressed. They inspected and fed it to the automatic sorting system," he said. "With the help of our consultants, we did our calculation and we figured out what each line needed to keep it flowing correctly. There's a lot of math involved. Each line can produce 200 pieces an hour. So, we could produce 600 pieces an hour when fully staffed."

David was well aware that his major renovations and relocation of the company would put the company at big risk, and he would be the first to admit that he regretted the investment for a couple of years.

"We had ten stores pre-pandemic, and four home pickup delivery routes. When the pandemic hit, we needed to close two of the locations anyhow — they were really underperforming — so this was like an excuse to do it," David explained.

Meanwhile, the delivery routes were dropping off, as well and he grew tired of their inefficiency. "It used to be what we called the static route. We would go by 250 houses a day and pick up 70 orders," he said.

As people continued to work at home and their drycleaning needs declined, David recalled how a simple change in customer notification technology sounded like the solution. "They would text you and say, 'Hey, if you don't have an order, text us and we won't come by.' That's a great idea.

we use — but revenue per mile and sales per hour are just incredible."

When Ziker's Dry Cleaning and Laundry Service reached 100 years old in 2017, it did so in style — upgrading to a state-of-the-art new facility — but David felt there was still room to improve the business.

"In early 2019, we rebranded. We felt like we needed to start attracting more younger clientele. We wanted to be more relevant, and more attractive to the younger generations," David recalled. "We rebranded, and then we also added the wash-dry-fold service, and we added tailoring. We wanted in-store tailors, but we just couldn't find the staff up until a couple of years ago."

A new building with new equipment, a new brand and new levels of efficiency did not come cheap. David really did think twice about going out so far on a limb as the pandemic began.

I've got a group of six who run the company," he said. "You've got to have a good culture. You've got to treat people right. We have goals and we hold them accountable. It's a whole system."

The system is fueled by data and it requires an open book management style to keep it from stalling.

"We generate and share so much data with our employees. It's unbelievable!" David said. "It makes them feel like they are a part of something bigger. They can see how their behaviors change their metrics. We give them a report every week. We generate a report for every store. Every division of the company gets a report."

Today, those reports are tallying positive numbers. David says the business is "way past" pre-pandemic numbers. Even after investing so much heading into 2020, he continues to keep his foot on the gas pedal, looking for more ways to improve the 105-year-old business.



Signs of the Times

Original Ziker Cleaners' founder Joe Ziker (left) stands in front of his first plant that he opened during the 1930s. Today, his grandson David runs the business, which recently rebranded with a more modern look (above).





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Clean Show 2022: An early preview

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A Surplus of Solid Speaker Sessions

When cleaners aren't perusing through pressing equipment or delving deep into drycleaning machines, there will be plenty for them to do to improve their business.

In fact, there are well over 30 hours of educational sessions being offered at the show by the various trade associations who help coordinate it.

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute will host two programs on the morning of Saturday, July 30.

Sean Abbas of The Threads, Inc., will begin at 8 a.m. by closely examining what can

make or break a thriving workplace culture — something that is more important than it has ever been.

Then, at 9 a.m., Nathaniel Dubasik of Burke Cleaners will present "Self-Service Technology is Here," which explores how using automated self-service kiosks can reimagine the customer service experience and help cleaners cut down on labor costs.

On Sunday morning, DLI has tapped Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners to conduct a two-hour program that will outline "12 Profit Activators Guaranteed to Create an Immediate Cash Flow." It is scheduled to begin at 8 a.m.

Also on the schedule is a

program on Monday morning at 8 a.m. by Norman Way of Puritan Cleaners who will address the topic of "Marketing Through Your POS."

This year's Clean Show will also offer numerous general sessions that will conveniently take place on the show floor during afternoons.

On Saturday, Jennifer Whitmarsh of The Route Pros will speak at 2 p.m. on "Attracting and Managing the New Generation of Workforce."

Afterward, a panel consisting of Monika Manter of Balfurd Linen Service and Balfurd Cleaners, Dan Campbell of Wash Around the Clock and Andy Thorsen of Carolina Textile Care will each offer his or

her unique spin during "Where to Start? Tips for Entering the Commercial Laundry Industry."

On Sunday, there will be a general session for anyone interested in an economic forecast. Economist Chris Kuehl of Armada Business Intelligence will speak at 2 p.m. on "2022 Economy: Are We Ever Going to See Normal?"

Another general session will take place on Monday and feature Sue Boardman and Jonathan Boehmer of Puzzle HR. They will jointly present a program on "Human Resource Strategy."

Topics they will emphasize include how to best address the staffing shortage, which benefits employees desire and why, and policy changes that are essential to retaining employees at this time.

Registration and Hotel Accommodations

Attendees should note that the early registration deadline ends on June 29. Members pay \$119 and non-members pay \$149 to register for the Clean Show prior to that date; beginning on June 30, the cost goes up to \$169 per person.

Those planning to attend Clean 2022 are also running out of time to secure hotel reservations through Connections Housing, the only housing provider for the show.

The housing deadline is officially July 7.

Fortunately, there are several lodging options to choose from, including the Atlanta Marriott Marquis (headquarters hotel for DLI), the Omni Hotel at CNN Center, Embassy Suites Atlanta at Centennial Park and several others.

Discounted room rates range from \$175 to \$259 nightly. For current availability and additional information, call Connections Housing at (702) 675-6584, or visit the "Planning and Preparation" section located on the official Clean Show website: www.cleanshow.com.

Additionally, there are already several association meetings and social events scheduled during the Clean Show, including a hospitality reception that will be hosted from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Saturday evening by DLI and the Textile Care Allied Trades Association at the Marriott Marquis.

For up-to-date news on the show, visit cleanshow.com to learn more about activities and attractions around Atlanta, the free shuttle service schedule that runs from the host hotels to and from the Georgia World Congress Center, as well as a live interactive map of the exhibit hall that includes a complete list of exhibitors and booth numbers.



Sean Abbas



Nathaniel Dubasik



Dave Coyle



Norman Way



Jennifer Whitmarsh



Chris Kuehl



Monika Manter



Sue Boardman



ATLANTA ATTRACTIONS near the Georgia World Congress Center include the World of Coca-Cola museum (above), the Georgia Aquarium, Centennial Olympic Park, the College Football Hall of Fame and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights.

Photo by: ACVB Marketing, Melissa McAlpine

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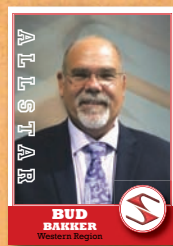
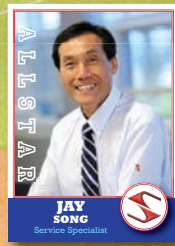
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CCA plans trip to Estado 29 in Mexico

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Several CCA members have perennially donated time and money and have grown quite close to the charitable cause.

“CCA has wanted to plan this for quite some time,” noted CCA President Sassan Rahimzadeh. “Several members of CCA support this orphanage and have made visits, but never as a group. This time, we will have one group leaving from Los Angeles and another from San Diego.”

The meeting will be open to both members and non-members. Passports are required.

For cleaners like Ray Rangwala of Esteem Cleaners in Pasadena, CA, a trip to Estado 29 won’t be a new adventure, but it’s one he really enjoys repeating.

“I have made this trip at least 125 times in the past 23 years and I can say it is the best

thing that has happened in my life. I will be the chairperson for this event and I promise it is a very humbling experience.”

Rangwala, along with Frank Lopez and Jorge Vazquez, has helped lead efforts by the Glendale Sunrise Rotary Club to improve conditions for the children. The trio comprise the trio of “amigos” in The 3 Amigos Orphanage Foundation.

“The place was in dire need of repair, but over the years, with our efforts, it has become a very nice facility,” he added.

A few years ago, Rangwala took Bobby Patel of Kona Cleaners, Jackie Smith of the Southern California Cleaners Association and Amir Imankhan of L.A. Leather for a visit and it proved to be memorable.

“I found it a wonderful experience and since returned several times bringing my fam-

ily,” Patel explained. “Seeing the smiles on the children’s faces is unforgettable.”

The impact of the efforts can be unforgettable as well, especially because those who support the orphanage do not forget about the children once they become older.

“The one thing about orphans is... the kids don’t have parents and they need a father figure — somebody they can talk to about what they can do in life after they get old enough where they’re about to leave the orphanage,” Rangwala added.

In addition to providing the children with food, shelter, education, spiritual teaching and healthcare, Estado 29 seeks to make sure the every child will be prepared to take on life’s problems when they become old enough to leave.

For more information or to



Some of the young residents of Estado 29 near Ensenada, Mexico, are orphans; others come from living environments of abuse or neglect. Some were even found trying to survive on the streets of Mexico after being abandoned. Regardless of where they come from, they all enjoy the opportunity to thrive there in a nurturing environment.

give donations to The 3 Amigos Orphanage Foundation, call Ray Rangwala at (818) 590-2416.

DLI plans pair of June webinars with Coyle, Sandy

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute plans to continue its virtual webinar series this month with a deeper look at marketing and implementing laundry lockers.

First up, Ken Sandy with Dryy in Washington, D.C., will discuss a way to make it as easy as possible for customers to pick up their garments. He will share his experience of installing drycleaning lockers in his urban multiple-location drycleaning business on Wednesday, June 8.



Ken Sandy

One week later, Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners will examine “Measuring Your Marketing — Only Do What Works” on June 15.

Both programs will begin at 1 p.m. EST.

DLI members who are unable to attend at the scheduled time will be able access DLI’s entire library of recorded presentations — over 100 videos and growing — covering topics ranging from stain removal and finishing to diversification, marketing, production and maintenance.

Additionally, DLI will continue to host its weekly Peer-to-Peer Member Zoom meetings every Tuesday at 11:30 a.m. EST.

For more information or to access DLI’s entire on-demand video library online, visit the association’s website at www.dlionline.org.



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AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

Leveraging the Clean Show experience

Have you made your plans to attend the Clean Show yet? If not, stop right now and start making them immediately.

Simply put, this is an opportunity you cannot afford to let pass you by. It has been a long time since you have had an opportunity like this to invest in your business.

When I talk to people about the Clean Show, their first thoughts are too frequently: "I am not looking at

buying any new equipment," "I am too busy. I can't get away," or even "I am not in the market for any new services."

This drives me crazy because it is clear they don't understand the tremendous opportunity they have to invest in their business — and I am not just talking about equipment. I am talking about the entire Clean Show experience.

This is *the* chance to see all

the best the industry has to offer. This is your opportunity to expand your mind and explore the potential to enhance your business.

You can learn what new services you can offer, or how to enhance your marketing efforts and bring in new lines of business. DLI and all the other partnering associations have put together incredible educational sessions.

You and your key man-

agers can learn from the best. Experience what other industry professionals throughout the country — even the world — will be sharing in Atlanta.

Here are some of my key tips for making the most of your Clean Show investment:

1) It is a much different world, and a much different industry. Keep an open mind.

2) I think it is pretty clear

life has changed. We are all living with different pressures and challenges that we have had to endure and overcome. If you are a member of DLI or other groups you have been able to stay connected with peers to keep informed and to learn. If you haven't, now is the time. You need to adapt and change, or your long-term viability is at risk.

Trust me, I hear from cleaners around the country who — let's face it — just don't like change. I don't either. I really wish what we have been doing for the past 30 years could just keep running like the well-oiled machine we built. We need to wake up to the realities though and realize some changes need to happen.

We are faced with declining drycleaning piece counts, but, at the same time, that may be replaced with an increase in laundry and wet-cleaning piece counts. I believe these two fundamental truths that are still valid: people are still wearing clothes and want to look good, and people hate to do laundry. That is where we need to look.

What are your potential customer's pain points and how can you position yourself to answer those needs? I believe many of those answers can be found at Clean. Keep an open mind and really look to expand your thinking and to explore new ideas.

3) The best products and services in the industry are on display. But, the value doesn't end there.

Don't make the mistake of thinking the only thing of value is on the show floor. Every contact and every gathering is a chance for you to learn and grow. The educational sessions, the booths on the floor, the cocktail receptions, and fellowship with your peers in the industry — they all provide opportunities for you to learn. Soak it in, immerse yourself in all possibilities.

I know people learn best from experience and through sharing the experi-

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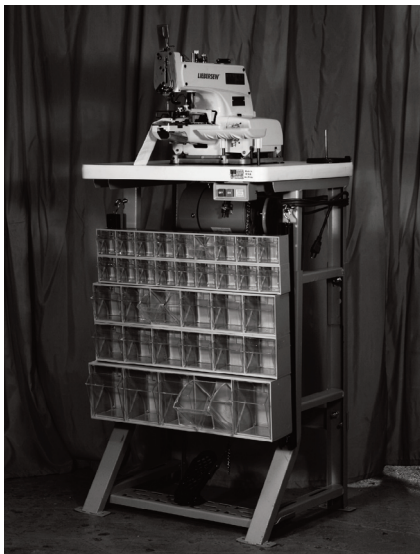
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HAPPY SUMMER!

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Peter Blake

Leveraging the Clean Show experience

Continued from page 12
ences of others. The DLI weekly Zoom calls are a perfect example of that. When you are looking at new equipment or new services, pay attention to the testimonials and the other cleaners that are utilizing the program. Find people who can share their experiences and help you make necessary transitions and changes. If you don't know of any, ask! Ask the vendor or visit the DLI booth and ask us.

We may know cleaners who have tried different services and/or equipment and we can put you in touch with them. Learn, ask questions, and don't be afraid to

be that person for someone else. Maybe you have experience with vendors; be willing to provide your insights.

4) There is a lot to see. Don't get tunnel vision.

Map out what you want to see. Take a look through the show guide in advance of attending the show and highlight the booths that are a must-see. Then, map out the best way to make sure you visit the entire list.

However, don't get so focused on your list that you don't see some of the unique equipment and services you don't even know to look for. Make yourself aware of all the opportunities. While you may not be considering a

new service or a new piece of equipment today, you very well may be down the road a few weeks or months from now.

Take this opportunity to learn facts and understand possibilities.

Inflation is climbing, energy costs are spiraling, and we all know the labor pool is still a disaster. Attend Clean and you may learn some key concepts on overcoming these challenges.

5) Don't go it alone. More ideas spark better understanding.

If you can, bring your key

staff members. They will often see things and learn things that you might not pick up on. They could provide you valuable insight into the industry by pointing out things you may not have thought of before.

Don't overlook the benefit your managers will gain from being involved. Don't underestimate the job satisfac-

tion employees feel when you invest in their future and in their education.

I know things are difficult and finding quality staff is a very real concern. If you can't bring key staff with you, meet up with some of your peers from around the country to explore with you. They will often add to your understanding and together you will make more of the experience.

If you aren't sure who will be there or how to connect with your peers, visit the DLI booth. Often members will meet up at the booth and then go off to explore the show floor. Attend the cocktail party on Saturday night and make plans to visit Clean the next day with some of your peers. There will probably be planned meeting times at the DLI booth for many different local associations for people to catch up with old friends.

6) Take advantage of every opportunity.

The challenges are only getting harder, and there will be more obstacles on the road ahead. Inflation is climbing, energy costs are spiraling, and we all know the labor pool is still a disaster. Attend Clean and you may learn some key concepts on overcoming these challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities.

Tough labor market? Maybe now is the time to invest in more automated equipment or new systems that are less labor intensive. Rising cost of gas? Might be a perfect opportunity to go into or enhance pick up and delivery.

Yes, the costs are rising for you, but they are for consumers as well, and they may be looking for ways to decrease their costs and save time.

This is the first time in three years you have had this opportunity, so don't waste it. Make your plans to attend, and plan on making the most of the investment. Come by the DLI booth and I will be glad to help you make the most of your investment.

Peter Blake serves as executive director of the North East Fabricare Association, the Southeastern Fabricare Association, and the MidAtlantic Association of Cleaners. He can be reached by email at peteblake@aol.com or by phone at (617) 791-0128.

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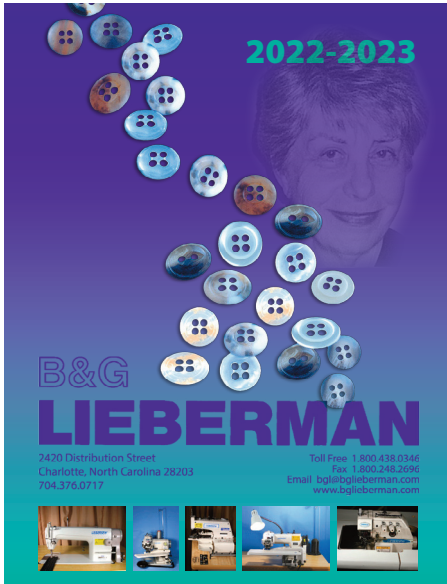
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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Keep track of the facts... just in case

No matter how you think the legal system works, it's *all about the facts*. Federal courts and most state courts are not allowed to issue advisory decisions stating how they would decide a case on *hypothetical facts*. Instead, there must be a real controversy involving real facts. In other words, a court will not tell you what it would do if someone hit you with a hammer, but it will decide a case where you were actually hit by a ham-

mer. It is much easier for a court to decide issues like damages knowing what the actual damages were. Because facts are so important, presenting the facts in any legal dispute is the key to winning or losing. What happened, when did it happen, what did you do, what did they do, and how do we prove all that? Most trials are won or lost in the opening statement where lawyers lay out the facts they intend to prove. Lawyers are not even al-

lowed to make legal arguments during opening statements, and those who try are missing the opportunity to tell the court what happened. Facts are far more important than the law in winning a case. Because facts are so important, developing the facts is essential from the minute you engage in any business or employment transaction. If something happens that could have significance down the line, document it. Documents include letters, notes, faxes, emails,

text messages, voicemails, meeting invitations, smoke signals, conversations and any other record. With respect to conversations, if someone says something that sounds like it might be important, might cause trouble down the line, or might be helpful if something goes wrong in the future, write it down... *somewhere*. On the flip side, remember that all these so-called documents could be used against you in a legal pro-

ceeding. Make sure you write clear English sentences, including in emails, that someone with an 8th grade education could understand. If you are disciplining an employee, describe what the employee did. Avoid merely saying that the employee is performing unsatisfactorily or that the employee engaged in some vague kind of misconduct. Simplicity is favored by courts, although lawyers are inclined to make things complicated. Further, never let any problems fester. If something goes wrong, do not wait to act. Waiting to discipline an employee or report a problem can have far more serious consequences than addressing or fixing it right away. It has always been my practice that bad news gets reported immediately and good news can wait.

There are plenty of stories out there where waiting to do something had horrible consequences, and plenty of stories where the immediate identification of problems saved the day. With respect to contracts, you may be asked to sign by vendors, consider sending "clarification" emails or texts for the most problematic clauses, asking for more information on what it means, or asking what would happen in certain circumstances if these clauses were invoked.

The worst that can happen is that the other party responds back "it means what it says." On the other hand, if there is no response or the response softens the interpretation of the language, you have a serious leg up. To sum it up, you can have all the law on your side, but facts matter more. If the facts make you sympathetic to a judge or jury, you are more likely to win even if the law is not entirely on your side. But facts are useless unless you can prove them. Learn to write things down.

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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Customizing your wetcleaning loads

In order to do proper wetcleaning, it is necessary to customize the loads you run. This means adding the proper detergent with the proper additives in a specific formulation for that particular load. There is not one detergent that can specifically handle all loads equally. There are some fabrics that require special additives to obtain maximum results and better cleaning. There are some loads that require color stabilization and lubricating agents necessary to prevent shrinkage.

Although the manufacturers have provided the proper chemistry, cleaners often do not understand how the chemistry works, and are often side-tracked with the easy way out. Wetcleaning is an art, and the more knowledge people have, the better cleaning results you obtain. There are many manufacturers who offer different formulations, but cleaners are not maximizing the chemistry that is available.

Facts on Wetcleaning Agents

1) Anionic - These detergents have a negative charge surfactant that cleans fabrics.

Anionic detergents obtain maximum cleaning results on most fabrics, but are not designed for wetcleaning wools, silks and fabrics with poor color fastness.

2) Cationic - These detergents have surfactants with a positive charge. These detergents tend to stay with the fabric and provide a softness to the fabric. They are very useful for cleaning wool, silk, rayon and other delicate fabrics. It is important to note the negative charge properties of this detergent. If cleaners pre-spot fabrics with an anionic detergent, there will be a breakdown of the detergent causing insoluble rings and swales. Anionic and cationic detergents are not compatible with each other. The rule is that you must always avoid mixing anionic and cationics.

3) Nonionic - These are detergents that are neutral without a positive or negative charge. They can be used to clean garments as an additive with any detergent. They do not cause a breakdown in any detergent. Nonionic detergents also provide a certain degree of softness to the fabric.

Nonionic detergents have an

ability to remove grease and oil. Nonionic detergents do not have capabilities of removing ground-in soil.

Additives

Manufacturers provide detergents with additives or cleaners can add them separately. Additives provide better cleaning and also add additional safety to fabrics and color.

1) Alkalis - These are chemicals that release hydroxyl ions in the presence of water. Alkalis increase cleaning power of any detergent or pre-spotting detergent. For example, if I wetclean a load of khakis using anionic detergent only, there will only be a certain degree of soil removal. If I add alkali to that detergent, I can possibly double the soil removal capabilities of the detergent. Some manufacturers formulate their detergents with an alkali to provide better cleaning for khakis, denim and raincoats. If I add alkali to a pre-spotting agent, the pre-spotting agent becomes much more aggressive. If I add it to a nonionic detergent, the oil and grease stain removal potential is increased. If you are wetcleaning a heavily soiled

load, you can add one to two ounces of ammonia (28) per gallon of water. If the detergent is already alkaline-based, you may not have to add as much alkali to increase soil removal.

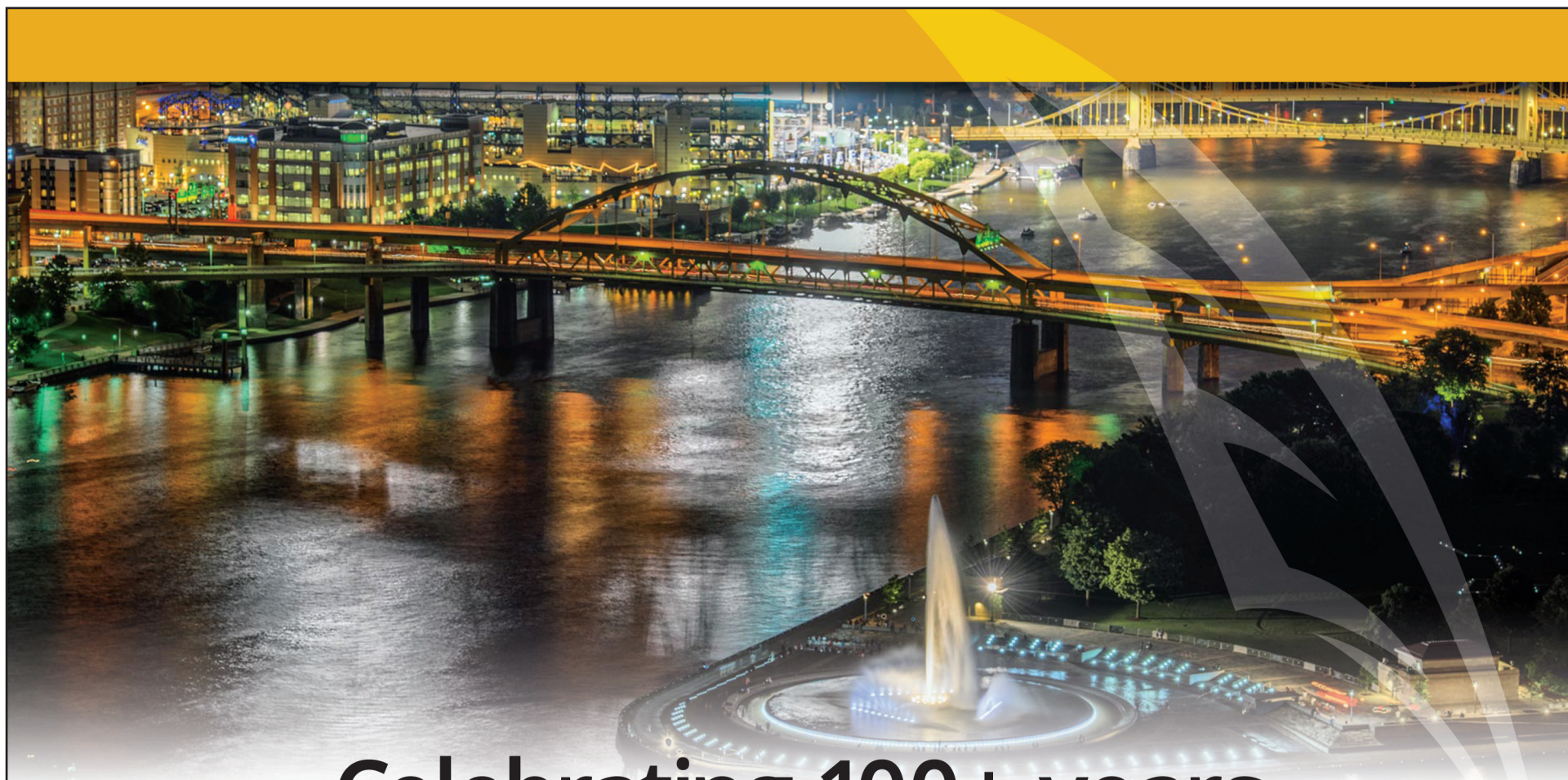
2) Acids - These are agents that release hydrogen ions in the presence of water. Acids have the ability to provide a color stabilization and softness to wool and silk. Most cationic formulations are acidic in nature but additional acid in the load for stabilizing poor color fastness can be done. The most versatile acid to add to loads is acetic acid. You can add one to two ounces of acetic acid per gallon of water. Acetic acid can be used in the rinse water to neutralize highly alkaline detergents. Acetic acid can also neutralize bleaches. Acids can also be used to add to loads that are stained with excessive amounts of tannin stains.

3) Enzymes - These are detergents with enzymes that provide additional stain removal. The enzymes used in detergents can withstand high water temperatures up to 140°F. They are also stable in the presence of mild acid, alkali and bleach.

4) Sodium Percarbonate - This is a mild oxidizing bleach that is used in detergent mixtures rather than sodium perborate. Sodium percarbonate releases more oxygen than sodium perborate and dissolves more easily in cool water. When used in detergent formulations, it has been found to be safe to most wetcleanable items provided the water temperature is cool. They should not be used on wool and silk.

5) Softening Agents - These are cationic additives used to soften the fabric and texture. They are essential when wetcleaning wool and silk. They are usually used in the rinse water when cationic detergents are used. Garments that are treated properly with softening agents usually do not have to be drycleaned to soften the fabric after wetcleaning.

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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Drying: Problems and Remedies

This month, we will delve into identifying drying problems in drycleaning machines. How can you tell if you have a drying problem? The following is a list of common symptoms associated with problems in the dry cycle:

1. Abrupt Change in Solvent Consumption. Solvent consumption is often measured in the pounds cleaned per gallon or per “drum” (50 gallons) of solvent and is referred to as solvent mileage. If you notice a spike in solvent purchases, or you are amongst the few who track your solvent consumption and notice a sharp decrease in solvent mileage, drying problems should always be suspect.

2. Strong Solvent Odor in the Environment. Before the stricter environmental regulations, there was almost always a strong solvent odor inside a drycleaning plant. With the advent of modern machinery, the solvent odor should only be detectable when removing the garments after drying (I’ll probably get an argument on this, but I’m being realistic).

3. Strong Solvent Odor on Garments After Being Removed from Machine. There will almost always be a slight odor on the garments after removal at the end of the drying cycle. Please keep in mind that the following testing is subjective. The sense

of smell is desensitized by overstimulation. If you want to do a sniff test, grab a sport jacket and hold the garment at arm’s length for about five seconds. Then, shake it for three seconds and sniff the surface (not a shoulder pad). For perc systems, if there is any odor at all, it should be very slight; with DF2000 or its derivatives and for Green Earth, a slight odor is OK; for K4 (Solvon), there will be a slightly sweet odor which will dissipate rapidly.

There are numerous causes for this condition which will be dealt with in detail next issue.

4. Poor Garment “Hand” or Feel. I’m not sure if the term *hand* is used much anymore, but it means the texture or feel and appearance of the garment’s fabric. Suppose the fabric’s surface feels stiff or scratchy and the zippers are sticky. In that case, this could indicate either over-drying (drying too long or at too high a temperature) or a lack of detergent and/or sizing dissolved in the solvent during the wash cycle.

5. Pilling and/or Shrinking. Pilling is the accumulation of compact clusters (*balls*, to most of us) of fabric or lint on the garment’s surface. Shrinking is the reduction in size or distortion of the shape of a garment. Both of these disasters are usually caused by a combination of factors. For pilling, excessive

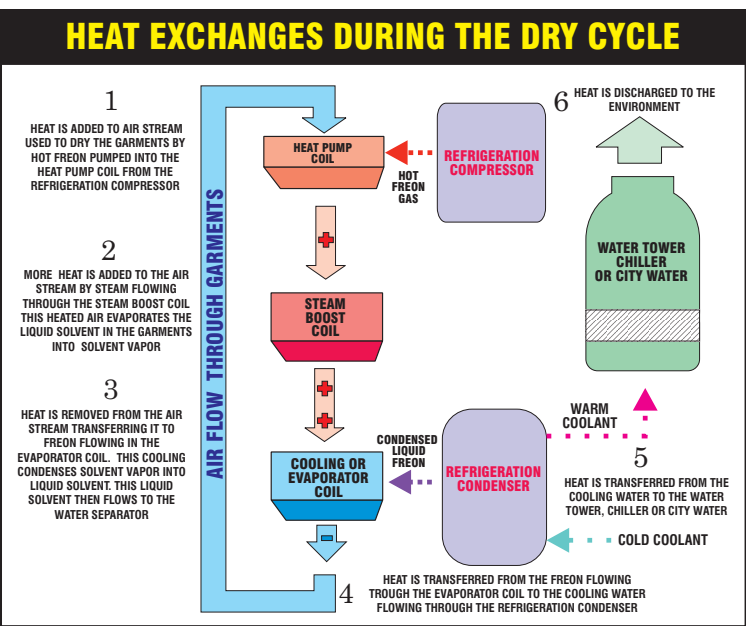
friction and overheating the garment, for shrinking, excessive heat during drying, and for both, the presence of excessive moisture during the dry cycle will significantly boost these destructive processes.

6. Wrinkling. At least four of the many causes of wrinkling are directly related to the dry cycle.

First, the lack of volume in the basket enables the garments to fall freely through the air flow caused by overloading, pure and simple. The volume of a garment is not always directly proportional to its weight. For example, ten pounds of silk garments take up far less volume than 10 pounds of comforters. Since weight is a far easier measure to work with, machinery manufacturers specify weight loading limits, which requires the drycleaner to inject judgment into machine loading.

Second, temperature of the air stream is critical. If the garments are overheated, wrinkles will be set in the fabric. That’s why a cooldown while the basket is rotating is critical to avoiding wrinkles.

Third, moisture plays a critical role in wrinkling. Excessive moisture during drying will enhance the production of wrinkles, especially on cotton and cotton blends. This is why the cotton pocket liners and waist-



bands in trousers are the first to be effected before shrinkage on woollens will occur. If you notice wrinkles in these areas — beware — it’s likely shrinkage of woollens will not be far down the line.

Fourth, although this has nothing to do with the machine itself after the drying cycle is complete, allowing garments to remain in the basket of the drycleaning machine without the basket rotating and leaving the garments in a clothes basket without hanging will allow wrinkles to set.

7. Drying Time is Too Long. How long is too long for the dry cycle? Hard to say. Back in the days when cars had fins, the machinery was of transfer type (separate washer/extractor and dryer). The dryers (also called reclaimers) had enor-

mous volume-to-weight ratios. Because of this, dry times then were short and didn’t require devices to adjust the cycle length. Current 5th generation dry to dry machinery’s dry cycle time depends on machine design (air flow and internal drying monitoring methods), solvent type, garment mix and loading.

All that being said, the drycleaner should be able to develop a baseline gained from experience for the average length of cycle time, incorporating the previous variables I listed.

As a rule of thumb, about a 45-50 minute total cycle time for perc and a 60-80 minute cycle time for the lighter than water solvents. I’m sure there will be exceptions cited from these stated time frames.

8. Garments Are Too Hot or Cold at the End of the Cycle. Garment temperature is usually one of the best barometers of dry cycle efficiency. If the fabric and/or metal of the zippers or clasps are hot or cold to the touch, there’s likely trouble in some components of the dry cycle apparatus.

Here comes another rule of thumb: Garments should feel slightly warm to the touch (90-100° F).

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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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

How to run a small drycleaning plant

I received a call from a reader a few months ago. She liked the columns that I write but she asked for a column that was aimed at running small plants. I loved this idea! Generally, I write about things that are more task-specific, but for today, let's get out of the box and think about a small plant. There are some very big operators in this country that have numerous package plants. Although they are certainly not small businesses, nor small operators, the individual plants function as small businesses. They will benefit from these philosophies, as well.

Let's imagine a plant that does 1,000 pieces per week. Let's say this is 200 pieces per day, for five days. I know that it's not *exactly that way*, but we will start there. The first step is to determine the level of profitability at which you want to run your business. A good answer is "very." The irony is that many small plant owners don't answer that question first, or at all. First, they fill

the positions they feel they obviously *must* need, and then they can't understand why they can't be efficient.

Let's imagine that plant doing 1,000 pieces per week; 500 shirts and 500 drycleaning pieces. Imagine that you have just acquired (or built) a new small plant that is doing start-up volume. The first thought is you need four or (probably) five employees. You need a drycleaner, a drycleaning presser, a shirt presser and a CSR and a part-timer to cover night shift customer service. You convince yourself that you are being efficient by utilizing the CSR for garment inspection and order assembly and bagging.

There are a number of thoughts regarding this methodology. None are particularly exciting. In order to be considered efficient, 1,000 pieces requires 45 hours of production labor. Yep! Forty-five! This does not count CSR labor, but it does count the labor needed to inspect, assemble and bag garments. So, in your portrait of

efficiency, half of a CSR's labor, during production hours, must be charged to production. It's easy and perhaps tempting to lie to yourself and not charge the labor to production here, but there is no advantage to a numbers game. In a plant that does 1,000 pieces, ideally you want to service those customers with 40

more pieces. Not true — and it's even worse because if the pieces do come, no one in the plant has ever been efficient by culture. Therefore, more pieces will breed more labor hours rather than an improved utilization of the hours that you already use. This means if you don't know how to be efficient or profitable when you are

will be done in three hours.

- 500 shirts in a week is, realistically, 10 hours per week. I allowed 30% more than that, but still, most plants doing 500 shirts per week spend more than 13 hours pressing them.

- The drycleaner comes in an hour early to turn on the boiler and start a washer load of shirts and then a half hour later puts in the first drycleaning load. He would press if he could, but there are no pieces to press. There is a bare minimum of five "wasted" hours per week. Having this person work only 13 hours per week is impossible. Hmmm.

- If you have a 60 lb. machine and can manage 50 pieces per hour out of it, you will run 10 loads per week, two per day. If this works out that way, you have hit the lottery. If this happens every day, you are cheating somewhere. Most days, you will run four loads and half of them will be short loads. This automatically requires your drycleaner to be around a minimum of five hours per day. He would have more than double my allotment.

- If you put this guy on salary, which, thanks to a new federal law, has become much more impractical and costly, his hours will not come under such scrutiny. This is because his salary will reflect a 40-hour week. I doubt you will get someone to work 40 hours for a paycheck that reflects what this industry accepts as 13 hours of work. We haven't discussed payroll cost as a percentage of gross revenue, so let's look at that for a minute: 1,000 pieces is around \$5,000 per week in gross sales. If your average burdened hourly rate is \$12 and you use 100 hours of labor, your payroll is \$1,200 per week. This is 24% — excellent. So why are you floored as you read that? Because you are probably not that efficient and are underutilizing your labor. Very often, this is culturally inbred, which makes it a real challenge to fix. You make the situation more difficult when you pay someone a 40-hour salary and still need two-and-a-half others to complete the job. Assuming, for a minute that the other two

An easy trap to get caught in is to blame it on volume. You think, "I would be more efficient if the pieces came through the door. This is not true.

hours of labor. That is a real challenge when you have a store that is open, say, 65 hours per week. This is an easy trap to get caught in; blame it on volume. You think, "I would be more efficient if the pieces came in through the door." This is especially hazardous because you become certain the only solution is getting

small, volume will do you no good. This is the hardest lesson to learn in this business.

One of your options is to staff your plant with 3 ½ production employees (the half being the shared CSR). The herculean task in that scenario is to get each of those employees to work no more than 13 hours per week and the shared employee to work 6 ½ in production. Per week. If that sounds like a nightmare, you are right. For one thing, just the boiler start-up time can kill that plan. Typically, your drycleaner comes in an hour before anyone else. You don't get to add that to the total number of hours that you can use. Those are production hours and they count. This is simple arithmetic: 500 drycleaning pieces is 15 hours of pressing time; 500 shirts represent 12 hours of pressing time. Loading, unloading and operating a drycleaning machine, along with hanging garments and spotting can easily be done in the 12 hours that remain. This is a total of 39 production hours, aside from the inspection, assembly & bagging (IAB) hours.

Here are just some of the obstacles that get in the way of making this a reality:

- Getting someone to come in to work and putting in a work day that averages less than three hours per day is very unlikely. Finding three is incomprehensible.
- Pressing 33 drycleaning pieces per hour on average is rare enough when there is a full work load. There is no chance when pressing at that rate means that the presser



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Don Desrosiers

How to run a small drycleaning plant

Continued from page 22

and-a-half people are rock stars and work precisely 32 hours combined, you are still paying for the equivalent of 72 hours, plus CSR time and your labor cost at 30%, a 25% increase. If the other employees work at a more typical pace, your labor is pushing 50%. Does that sound familiar?

Even with the scenario that has your labor up a mere 25% higher than it should be (with the salaried drycleaner), throwing away 25% is throwing away *all of your profit*. You didn't expect to make much more than 25% net profit did you? That simple mistake cost you all of your profit. This business is no fun if you aren't making money.

Finding the Right Formula

Have I spun a tale of doom? Not at all. The trick is simply to budget your hours and be certain that every sub-department is very efficient. Believe in it and stick to it. One of my favorite people in the industry once described me as the guy that reduced this business to a simple math formula. He was referring to this: If you want to run your drycleaning plant at 18 pieces per labor hour — a lofty but wholly attainable goal — and you do 1,800 pieces, you get to use 100 labor hours. If that is 1,800 pieces per week, you must do everything with 100 hours of labor. That means cleaning, spotting, hanging, pressing, inspection, assembly, bagging, scanning, whatever — all in 100 hours. That can be any combination of people and hours; four employees working 25 hours, two people working 50, three working 33.3. Or any of the other combinations that are mathematically possible.

In the shirt department, a good goal is to do 28 pieces per labor hour. Again, it's a lofty goal. If you are like most people, you are running your drycleaning department at 12 and your shirt department at 18. That is where all of your profit is hidden. This is true for large plants and it is true for small plants. My best guess as to why it is universal is because all plants are down a similar percentage of pieces. Let's say that this percentage is 50% over the past 20 years. In most cases, your plant was running 40 hours a week then, and it is still running 40 hours per week now. And the number of employees

A 300-Piece Average Day in a Hypothetical Plant							
Time	Employee	Pieces Cleaned	Pieces Pressed	Hours This Period	Cumm. Hrs. Used	Notes	PPLH
6am-7am	Drycleaner	15 (from the previous day)	0	1	1	Boiler turned on, 1st & 2nd load classified & pre-spotted, perhaps more. Wetclean load started. DC machine started by 6:30 am. This means that as soon as one load is weighed out, it goes into the machine awaiting steam pressure.	0
7-7:30	Drycleaner	0	15	1	1.5	At 7, the drycleaner becomes the presser and presses the 15 pieces left from the previous day.	15/1.5=10 (yuck)
7:30-7:40	Drycleaner	50 (day total-50)		.17	1.67	The drycleaner unloads the cleaning machine (+50) and transfer the wetcleaning to the dryer. He starts the next DC load.	
7:40-8:00	Drycleaner	40	10	.33	2	The drycleaner has 20 minutes to press and must do 10 pieces in that time.	25/2=12.5 (yuck)
8-8:30	Drycleaner	25	15	.5	2.5	The drycleaner has 30 minutes to press and must do 15 pieces in that time.	40/2.5=16 (Hmm)
8:30-9	Drycleaner	100 (day total-135)	0	.5	3	Dryer is unloaded (+35 pcs) and DC machine unloaded (+50 pcs). DC machine loaded with 3rd load. (May have time for some spotting). 35 more wetcleaning pieces and started.	40/3=13.3 (gulp)
9-10	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	35	65	2.5	5.5	The drycleaner and the presser combine to press 65 pieces the IAB person is shared with customer service. This is the 1st full production hour. The machines are all running and the presses are too.	105/5.5=19
10-10:15	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	35	0	.75	6.25	Staff break	105/6.25=16.8
10:15-11:00	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	85 (day total-220)	35	2.25	9	Drycleaning machine and dryer are both emptied adding 85 pieces to press. Cleaner is busy w/various tasks inc. starting the DC machine @10:30. No more wet-cleaning.	140/9=15.5
11-12	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	20	65	2.5	11.5	The drycleaner and the presser combine to press 65 pieces the IAB person is shared with customer service. It is mandatory that IAB is very efficient. It may be difficult to inspect, assemble and bag 65 garments per hour with some systems, but with Tailwind, for example,this is very easy.	205/11.5=17.8
12-12:30	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	20 (day total-220)		0	11.5	Staff lunch break. Unpaid	205/11.5= 17.8
12:30-1:00	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	63 (day total-270)	17	1.25	12.75	The drycleaner unloads the DC machine (+50 pcs) and restarts it with the last 40 pieces and perhaps some do-overs. The presser presses for the half hour and does 17 pieces.	222/12.75=17.4
1:00-1:45	Drycleaner Presser & IAB	53 (day total-300)	40	1.88	14.63	The drycleaner unloads the machine (+30) and performs the maintenance ritual. Productivity suffers a bit due to this. The drycleaner clocks out at 1:45. He has worked 7.25 hours.	265/14.63=18.1
1:45-2:45	Presser & IAB	17 (left for next day)	35	1.5	16.13	The press takes 45 minutes to press 25 pieces. She must leave 15 for the next day so that this can be repeated tomorrow.	300/16.13=18.6 We could have wasted ½ and still made budget.

back then was less than double what it is now. Everybody is far less efficient now than they once were.

So, how many pieces do you do in an average week? There are as many answers to that question as there are plants. I will be happy to put together a plan for you if you contact me personally, but let's play out a couple of hypotheticals.

Let's talk about drycleaning pieces only:
Weekly pieces: 1,500
PPLH goal: 18
Budgeted number of total hours (1,500/18): 83

What you need: One full-time (40 hours) hourly employee that is fully qualified as a presser, spotter and drycleaner. It's even better if he has mechanical skills. One part-time presser and one shared CSR and IAB person. The drycleaner can be "guaranteed" 40 hours, but if so, it is at the expense of the other employees. This means that it is not a salary, per se, but if he can press, the designated presser is released and the drycleaner/presser takes over. That's the deal.

Let's assume: a 60 lb. GreenEarth machine with a 60 minute cycle (50 pieces per hour capacity), a dedicated wetcleaning machine with a 50 lb. capacity and with dry time of 35 pieces per hour. We will call this the average day of 300 pieces. (See top of page.)

IAB must remain 100% "caught up" all day. That isn't as difficult as you might think. If there is still work to be done after all of the pressing is done, you will be using labor hours with no pieces produced. That is 0 pieces per labor hour. There is no way for me to tell if this is similar to your plant, but the volume is

Do not adopt the philosophy that your plant sacrifices good productivity for better quality. This is a cop-out.

similar to many small plants. I bet the labor isn't though, but this is how it's done. The plant that I've just described is a real-life plant that I have worked at many times. It isn't fictitious. But, there are smaller plants, too. Suppose you have a plant that does 200 pieces per day, including shirts... with a common assembly area. This is not difficult, but if you start with more than one production employee, it is a train wreck waiting to happen. If you combine shirts and drycleaning into a common IAB area, you will need to combine the targeted PPLH (18 for DC, 28 for shirts). Assuming a 50/50, your targeted PPLH would be 23. That means that you get to spend 8.7 hours to produce

200 pieces. Do you think that you won't meet service schedules if your plant runs nine hours? This is not an issue. Remember the CSR is a shared production person. This means that the drycleaner/presser/shirt presser works six hours and the IAB person is shared three hours/three hours with customer service and IAB.

Is this possible? It is *brutal*, I promise that, but pressing 100 shirts is two hours of labor and 100 drycleaning pieces takes three. This becomes very plausible when the IAB/CSR person is ready, willing and able to hang loads and generally keep things moving. When that person isn't afraid to press lower-skill items like sweaters, ties, etc., then you can do well with this format. Remember that you have to start this transition to a super-efficient machine with an open mind.

You might think these ideas don't apply to you and you might be right. Every plant is different, but they all deserve to run profitably and there is a way to attain extraordinary productivity

numbers. If your pieces per labor hour statistics are not like the targets that I've mentioned, then there is room for improvement.

Do not adopt the philosophy that your plant sacrifices good productivity for better quality. This is a cop-out. Every pressing productivity goal mentioned here is lower than DLI's own targets for pressing productivity and good quality is *always* a prerequisite. This is not because I disagree with the DLI goals at all. It means that I am showing you that you can attain excellent productivity numbers and still have room to improve. Contact me if you need ideas for your plant.

"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. The Tailwind web site is at www.tailwindsystems.com.

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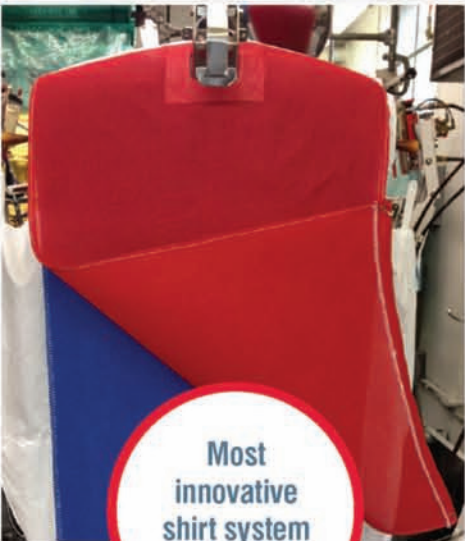
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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Who is on your shortlist of buyers?

This month, we have an extremely interesting and potentially profitable exercise. It is called the **Shortlist Builder**. We are going to develop a short list of potential strategic acquirers for your company. But before you say “Whoa! I am five or more years away from selling my business!” — you may not be. Or, you are saying, “I’m ten years away from selling, why would I bother doing this exercise?”

The reason you want to do the Shortlist Builder exercise is to look at your business through the lens of how an acquirer would view the decisions you are about to make. How do you really think through your decisions — not only from making you more profitable, but also what will make your business more valuable in the long run?

So you know you should be looking at your business through the eyes of an acquirer. The next question that you might naturally have is “How do I identify

who the natural, strategic acquirers are for my company?” In working with me, you are going to have a chance to go through and answer a series of questions which will enable you to discover who fits that bill. Before we do that, I want to give you examples of real-life acquisitions and the rationale and the backstory behind why you acquire another company, so that you can get a sense of the reasons companies do this to formulate their shortlist.

Let’s look at the Microsoft acquisition of Skype for 8 1/2 billion dollars. Keep in mind that Skype was losing money at the time of the acquisition, so using any traditional form of valuation, it was really a worthless company. This could be the exact situation you may find in your market with a competitor who has called and indicated he/she is ready to sell. Can this business stand on its own if you buy, is it at all profitable, or if folding into your existing company it

now makes sense to go forward. In this case, Microsoft decided to spend 8 1/2 billion dollars for Skype because they were looking at what it was worth in their hands, not its future stream of profits. That is the definition of a strategic acquisition.

Here is the end result: You either sell at a higher value or you have a more profitable company.

Now, let’s say we have a long list of potential acquirers for your company. The next step is to reduce the long list into a short list using the 5 to 20 rule. What is the 5/20 rule? It is defined that the natural acquirer for your company is going to be between five and twenty times larger than your business. So, for real numbers, imagine you have a company with \$1 million in sales. The typical natural acquirer for your business is going to be a company generating be-

tween five and twenty million in annual revenue.

Let me walk you through the math that drives the 5 to 20 rule. I’ll use an example of a company that falls inside the rule of 20. First, look at the inside one that is a very mature, large \$100 mil-

lion company and wants to get 15% gross each year. That would be a pretty typical growth clip for a big mature company to strive for and the CEO of his or her board is saying, “We can grow, organically, 5% extra revenue on top of one hundred million we already have because we can do a little bit better on our pricing.” Maybe we could do a little bit better, and so they think they can pick up five points of extra topline revenue through better cross-selling and some higher pricing. So, they are going to look for the incremental revenue they need to grow through acquisitions. Where can they find a \$10 million company to buy that gives them the \$15 million of incremental growth (of ten million to go with the five through organic growth) for a total top line growth of \$15 million? Acquiring a \$10 million business would fall neatly within the 5/20 rule because the acquired company of ten million in revenue and the acquiring company is one hundred million.

Before you have a chance to go through your shortlist builder exercise, I want to tackle a couple of frequently asked questions that we get on this tool. The first one is, “Why would I bother preparing my business for financial sale if a strategic buyer pays more?” You are right, the strategic buyer generally will pay a higher multiple than a financial buyer, but the analogy I use is this: Let’s imagine you have a promising athletic 12-year-old at home. Maybe they are a fantastic baseball player or a hockey player or

gymnast and their goal is to make it to the pros. As a parent, you want to do everything you can to support your child to do that, but at the same time, given that you’re older and wiser, you know the chances of her or him actually playing professional baseball, hockey or gymnastics — and that is the reason you also asked them to do their homework. You do not put all your eggs in one basket. So, preparing your business for a financial sale gives you all the options you need to seek out a strategic buyer. The last two years have taught us huge lessons about being ready for anything. I saw virtually no sales during that time based on the financials of the target company. I did see, and am seeing now, acquisitions for strategic reasons even though the financials have not recovered. That is why it is important to prepare your business for both a financial and strategic acquirer. This preparation is the foundation of the **Value Builders** system.

I hope you go back and review the **8 Drivers of Value** in the previous eight editions of *National Clothesline*. These are the drivers that buyers are looking at in your company. As they improve, the value of your company increases... and here is the end result: You either sell at a higher value or you have a more profitable company. Either way you win.

We offer a free **Value Builders** score, and I would encourage you to sign up, take it, and just see how you would look in the eyes of a buyer.

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.

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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

The Clean Show is for everybody

There is definitely excitement in the air about this year's Clean Show in Atlanta. We've all been looking forward to this because it's a chance for the industry to get back together and celebrate successes, look for creative solutions and share the lessons learned from the past three years.

While new equipment and old friends are part of the venue, just feeling like we're getting back to some sort of

normal is another reason to go. But, like I do every time a major event like this happens, this is a great opportunity to develop your people and get them to buy into the industry where we all struggle to hire and keep good people. Employee retention should always be part of your internal mindset. We all struggle with hiring, but we struggle more because we can't keep good people.

Too many who enter the

drycleaning industry as an employee feel like this is just a stopgap job and/or a position where there's no room for growth.

For the past 20 years I've seen a lot of good people that are good for our industry go on to bigger and better things. I always challenge our clients by asking them "why can't we be that bigger or better thing?"

Sure, I could promote our booth and how it's next-door

to Cleaner's Supply. I could also share how Mark will be canvassing the floor as a director of allied trades or the fact that Jen is speaking on Saturday, but I won't.

I will share that *every time* I have brought a team member — or when one of our clients did — the employee was amazed by what they saw. Even my wife didn't accept what I was doing many years ago until she went to her first Show in Las Vegas

and got the pleasure to meet Sid Tuchman for the first time.

Employee retention should always be a part of your internal mindset.

The small investment of bringing one of your key members of your team will pay off in dividends as it shows them that this industry is bigger than what they think it is.

This only works if you truly believe in developing your people to develop your business.

Those who have a negative mindset about employees usually have negative results in their business.

I always say employee turnover leads to customer turnover. So, would that mean that employee retention equals customer retention? Either way you look at it, there is no excuse for investing in your staff. Not one!

Bottom Line: We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta... and stop by and say hi to all of us. Oh yeah, we'd love to meet your team members, as well!

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



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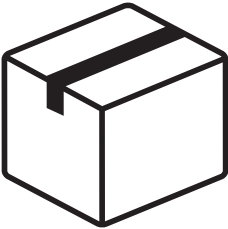
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NCL Profile Life goes on
For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yonkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated. An old article from the Herald Tribune tells the story. [Read More](#)

Industry balancing act to continue in 2022
As cleaners prepare to close the door on 2021 (and perhaps throw away the key), the last 11 months have proven to be another arduous challenge, harshly punctuated by shortages of every imaginable kind: hangers, plastic, computer chips, steel and other metals, lumber, packaging materials, zippers and more. [Read More](#)

FallFest EXPO pushes date back
Even though interest for FallFest EXPO remains high, many cleaners are too short-staffed and overburdened to spend three days devoted to it in early December. As a result, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association have decided to push the date back to January 2022. [Read More](#)

Light always follows darkness by Peter Blake
It has been a long, interesting and challenging 18 months, to say the least. I know I have never worked harder or more hours than I have during the past year and a half. I also [Read More](#)

Don's wishlist to St. Nick: 2021 edition by Don Deroulers
BH! Happy December! It is that time once again for my annual Christmas Wishlist. Every year, I send a plea to the great St. Nick for products that do not [Read More](#)

A Tribute to James Peuster by Mark Albrecht and Jennifer Whitmarsh
As we round out 2021, let's recognize an achievement of a familiar personality in our industry. James Peuster, JP has many know him begins his [Read More](#)

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