



National Clothesline



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Partnering up for profitable programs

Various cleaning associations will be teaming up in the coming months in order to offer educational events designed to help drycleaners diversify and develop their businesses.

In fact, just around the corner is a Wash-Dry-Fold Workshop presented by the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) and the Coin Laundry Association (CLA). It's scheduled to take place from Nov. 15 to 17.

The event will be held at the Hilton Chicago/Oakbrook Hills Resort and Conference

Center in Oak Brook, IL.

It will feature a packed agenda, including sessions on best folding and packaging techniques (with live demonstrations), training employees and drivers for maximum efficiency and productivity, and best practices for delivery routes.

The cost to attend the workshop is \$699 per person for members and \$899 for non-members.

For the full agenda, visit: CoinLaundry.org/WDF2022/.

A little more down the road — and a lot further eastward — DLI will join together with the National Cleaners Association

to host an upcoming installment of their popular Brainstorming and Five Star Conference.

It will be held from Jan. 12-15, 2023 at the Secrets Royal Beach Punta Cana Resort, located in the Dominican Republic. The setting is an island paradise offering breathtaking landscapes, spas, golf courses and no shortage of interesting and exotic excursions.

While the speakers and seminars have not been announced yet, in the past the associations have featured many popular speakers including John DiJulius, Arthur Greeno, Brian Rashid and Joseph Grenny.



NCA and DLI's Brainstorming and Five Star Conference will be held at the Secrets Royal Beach Punta Cana Resort (above), located in the Dominican Republic.

The price for members can enjoy free admission; otherwise the prices are: \$395 for ship type. Premier members

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Cleaners marks 40 years in unique way

It was during the spring of 2017 when the seed was first planted. Jan Barlow, owner of Jan's Professional Dry Cleaners in Clio, MI, was in New York City working as the chairperson of a committee revising the NFPA-32 fire code. During a break from the proceedings, Nora Nealis, executive director for the National Cleaners Association, proposed an interesting idea to her.

"Wouldn't it be great to partner with a local theater group and present a play that really speaks to what drycleaners do for a living?" Nealis asked Barlow, before telling her that there was already a perfect play that fit that bill.

The off-Broadway produc-

tion was called "Love Loss and What I Wore" and was written by Nora and Delia Ephron, the famous screenwriting sisters who sculpted the script for *You've Got Mail* starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan.

They based their writing from the 1995 book of the same name — *Love Loss and What I Wore* — by Ilene Beckerman, which tells the story of the narrator's life (Gingy) through the lense of various significant outfits that she wore throughout her life.

The play, which first debuted in 2008, has enjoyed numerous successful runs and has featured several famous actresses over the years, in-



cluding Tyne Daly, Rosie O'Donnell, Blythe Danner, Jane Lynch, Rita Wilson and Kristen

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Celebrating a successful play she sponsored (see inset), Jan Barlow (standing on left), owner of Jan's Professional Dry Cleaners in Clio, MI, is joined by Dawn (standing on right) and Ann (sitting on left) Hargrove and Nora Nealis (sitting on right), NCA's executive director.

Serving Burlington for seven decades



In North Carolina, Willard McPherson opened up a drycleaning business back in 1953. Over the years, it has been owned and operated by three generations of the family (including Ian and Gary, pictured left) who have adapted the business in order to stay successful throughout the years. One thing that hasn't changed, however, is the original commitment made by Willard to always do the best job that he could possibly do. Read their story on page 6.

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Doing good for your community is not just the right thing to do; it's also good for your business's bottom line.

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Recent trends involving the NLRB and the ADA signal potential issues ahead for business owners.

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Poorly-dyed silk garments can cause many issues for drycleaners who don't follow these techniques.

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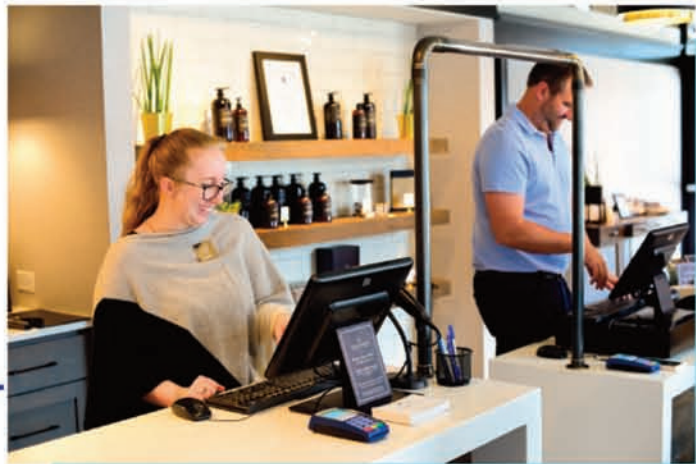
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The experience was an amazing one for Barlow, who noted that they were able to fundraise much more money for theater renovations than they initially expected — no doubt largely due to her entrepreneurial influence as the volunteer group never had the experience of a business owner coming in and helping them plan before. Thankfully, she did not just want to cut a check. Instead, it was a lot more work — all worth it, of course — because the public warmly embraced the play and its message. As Barlow noted. “People don’t remember what you say. People remember how you made them feel.”

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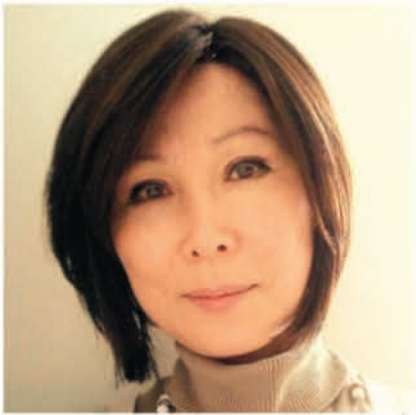


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A different world

As a young man fresh out of high school, Willard McPherson was ready to take on the world, but he'd first settle for a good job.

"It was a different world than it is now," explained Willard's son, Gary, who currently owns McPherson Cleaners of Burlington, NC, along with his son, Ian. "My dad and my uncle were just trying to find jobs back then. In that era, it was hard to find work. They washed cars. I remember him telling me — after I grew up — that the job was OK in the summertime, but in the winter, it was freezing."

This prompted Willard to seek out work with a small drycleaning business where he became quite prideful about doing a good quality cleaning job on dirty clothes.

Soon, that inspired him to launch his own business in 1953 that would eventually be known as McPherson Cleaners. From the start, Willard promised to always do the best job that he could — a motto that remains just as relevant today. Unfortunately, those high standards often led to some long days at the plant.

"I had an older brother and a younger brother, and none of us wanted to be involved in the business," Gary recalled. "We saw how hard our dad always worked. He was always working."

As more drycleaners began popping up in the area, Willard McPherson always made it a point to try to stay friendly with the competition and keep on positive speaking terms.

"It was four or five of them who owned different cleaners and they were our competitors," Gary added. "They would try to get together once a month for a meal and talk about how things were going. If one guy was down, another one might help him. You don't hear about that anymore."

As the 1990s rolled around, Gary's brother Jeff decided to join with the family business even as his father approached the half century mark in the drycleaning industry.

It was at that time that the business was rebranded as McPherson Cleaners, now utilizing a crest comprised of the families's ancestral history as an eye-catching logo. One thing that would never change, though, was the family's dedication to always do its best, which propelled more growth of the business.

"It just took off," Gary noted. "You had a busy day and the next day we were just a little bit busier. It was about that time, also, the discount cleaners started getting in our area. I remember the first one."

Ads for the new discount cleaners could be seen all over town. It was difficult not to expect the worst when it opened its doors officially.

"It was just so funny. That Monday they opened was the biggest day we had ever had," Gary laughed. "We were fearful that it was going to be the worst one."

It wasn't long after that when Willard was ready to retire. Unfortunately, Jeff was ready to do the same

thing, despite having bought the business, grew its volume considerably and relocated the business to a busier area. After a few years, he discovered, it was not what he wanted to do anymore.

Fortunately, Gary was at a point in his life where it made perfect sense for him to move his family back to the area and buy the family business.

tually running a business, it's pretty good right now."

Even as business has started to pick up, the McPhersons are concerned about finding enough skilled employees right now to keep up with demand.

"We just can't find quality people like we used to be able to — there was always an armful of names that you

thought it was an important thing to maintain people, and also not be 110° in July and August. In North Carolina, there's maybe a handful of plants that have air conditioning."

One invaluable lesson that the McPhersons have learned over the years is to try to say "no" to



Gary and Ian McPherson

McPherson Cleaners
Burlington, NC

Part of doing the best you can means taking a test to prove it. When the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute unveiled its Award of Excellence program in 2005, McPherson Cleaners jumped at the chance to join and have passed the rigid annual requirements ever since.

Possessing strong cleaning knowledge and skills has allowed the company to expand into additional services throughout the years — a strategy that helped them immensely during the Covid pandemic.

Ian, who joined in the family business in 2016 after graduating from Appalachian State University, worked to develop rug cleaning and wash-dry-fold services. Also at this time, the McPhersons closed down their slowest store.

"Customers hung with us," Gary said, gratefully. "Then we got more involved with these other things — the fire and water damage restorations, adding the ozone rooms, the rugs — all of it just tacked on a little bit more each week and people started working back in their offices... slowly business came back"

"Our bottom line for all aspects of running the business have never looked better," Gary said. "We're not doing the pieces we were doing before. Obviously, we've had to go up on prices several times because of supply costs and other reasons, but as far as ac-

could call when you needed help, or the salesmen from the different vendors would come by and they always knew somebody," Gary said. "It's not like that anymore."

"I remember reading 20 years ago, drycleaners always seemed to be in the group of top five business or franchises to get into — until you learned you had to work all the time."

Finding good people in a shallow labor pool is not so easy, so the McPhersons try to maximizing their chances by maximizing what they offer to potential candidates.

"We've always been known for paying the most money," Gary said. "If you want to work at the cleaners, you can't beat this."

Recently, the McPhersons also invested in making the work environment more comfortable by air conditioning their main plant, a project that was not easy.

"It was a big, big deal. We had looked into it before and really couldn't

as little as possible. Sometimes, it leads to some interesting work.

A few years ago, a famous race car driver who lives too far away to be a customer, suffered fire damage in their home. McPherson Cleaners was able to successfully restore textiles that had been damaged so well that it lead to another job further down the road.

That same driver was a Cup winner at one point, and the post-race celebration included quite a bit of champagne that was sprayed all over the uniform he wore that day — which eventually was tossed aside where it sat like that for several weeks. One of the driver's aides brought it in and they restored it to its former glory.

The world is now a much different place today and drycleaning is a much different industry than it was even at the start of this century.

"I remember reading 20 years ago, drycleaners always seemed to be in the group of top five businesses or franchises to get into — until you learned you had to work all the time," Gary laughed. "It's a different ballgame altogether now, but if you just adjust, it seems like it all comes out OK."

While the recent industry slowdown raised Gary's concerns a bit, knowing Ian is depending on drycleaning having a strong future. Ultimately, though, he believes it will still be around for a long time to come.

"He's got a family to raise. Does that make him worry? Well, to me it did," Gary noted. "I still think drycleaning is going to be around. Maybe this happens every 30 or 40 years — I think it is cleaning out some of the cheaper guys, some of the guys who don't care that are in it for a buck and that's it. But, I still think 20 years from now it's going to be around. I remember my dad — who actually worked in it 60 years — said there was always those hills and valleys."





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BUILDING VALUE

BY KERMIT ENGH

Silver Bullet #3: Employee acquisition plan

Hiring the right people is arguably one of the most important things you can do to support the long-term success of your enterprise — and yet so many business owners approach hiring as an afterthought. They put a half-hearted ad on their website and hope to high heaven they get lucky. And the worst disruption is that most don't start the process until they have an opening. Now you are really in a

tough place.

This is one of the biggest mistakes you can make if you want your business to succeed.

The **Silver Bullet** solution to this problem is called an **Employee Acquisition Plan** — and you simply *must* implement one if you want to reduce staff-related headaches, not to mention, find real high-quality candidates to take over your business once you decide it is time to

move on. I always like to say that hiring is a lot like fishing: the more fish on deck, the choosier you can be! Here are four simple steps to making it happen.

I just got back from a fishing trip with my brothers. Initially, you are happy to catch anything, but as the day progresses and there is a limit, you get real picky. You can't do that if you are in a hiring panic.

1. Write a Brilliant Job

Description. The best way to catch a lot of fish (especially the right kind of fish) is by using the best bait possible. Most job descriptions are anemic and weak. Make yours stand out. Write your job descriptions in *what's in it for the applicant* language. Be specific about the personality characteristics and qualifications needed; include the hours and earnings potential. Here are a couple of sam-

ples I have used with great results. Feel free to borrow it the next time you have an opening.

Superstars Only. *You can earn as much as \$50K if you are a star. Do not even call unless you are an overachiever and can prove it. Call between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m. [Number to call]. This would be for route staff specifically. Home for nights and weekends. Attend your kid's ballgame.*

If you are the customer service person we are looking for, you will be: driven, successful and great at serving over the phone; persuasive, independent when needed, sociable, assertive, and convincing.

Full-time hours, earnings potential up to \$X. And again, home for dinner, and not smelling like a fryer.

If you believe this, is you, be ready to show us why when you call before 5 p.m. this Thursday.

2. Generate Leads. When hiring, you have got to be proactive. It is not just about writing a great job description. It is about getting that description in the hands of the right people. Here are seven great ways to find quality candidates...

1. Look within your organization first; who can be promoted?

2. Call past high-quality team members and ask them, "Is there anything I can do to get you back?"

3. Post a sign on your door/window.

4. Post an ad on websites like Indeed, Craigslist, Facebook and LinkedIn.

5. Advertise in trade magazines and publications — this is a wonderful way to get highly targeted applications.

6. Create a recruiting incentive program and announce it to your team. Give staff members a bonus if they bring in a high-quality candidate. We have had a recruiting program for years. The "bounty" does change based on the degree of need we have. Currently we have lowered to \$1,000. This is paid out \$200 at 45 days of employment, \$300

Continued on page 10



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Kermit Engh

Silver Bullet #3: Employee acquisition plan

Continued from page 8
days. We have had to do this at Fashion Cleaners as Omaha's unemployment rate is currently 1.9%. That is *not a typo*.

7. Go to networking events and remember that every conversation is a potential interview.

The point is to recognize how important hiring is to your organization, and to be completely engaged in the process of finding the right fit. *It never ends!* Always be filling your pipeline.

3. Implement a Pre-Interview Screening Process. Too many business owners waste unnecessary time interviewing candidates who are not truly qualified. Fortunately, you can eliminate a lot of "dead weight" quickly, just by implementing a simple screening process. There are two strategies I recommend before you get to actual, in-person interviews:

Voice-mail Screening. Set up a special voicemail box for screening purposes. In your job description ad, have candidates call the number and leave a message *before* they even submit a CV. Listen to the responses. Ask the applicants

whose messages impress you most to send a resume or application and complete a psychometric profile. Now, please take just a couple minutes to answer the following three ques-

I always like to say that hiring is a lot like fishing: the more fish on deck, the choosier you can be!

Here is the exact scripting I recommend you use:

"Hi and thanks for calling [your company], located in [your city, state]. My name is [your name] and I am the founder of the company. Right now, we are looking for a [name of position]. The responsibilities of this position include [responsibilities]. [Your company] will provide [training, development]...

The compensation package includes health insurance, life insurance, and a retirement plan. [your company] is [describe the company and what a wonderful opportunity it will be to work for you and why]. [Your name] is a highly talented, proven winner in the field of [your field]. He/she has [name some of your accomplishments] and will personally mentor the per-

son chosen for this position. If you want to write these questions down and call back with your answer, you can feel free to do that. What actual experience have you had in X (relevant to the position)...? What actual experience have you had in X...? What actual experience have you had in X...?

After you have answered these questions, please leave your name, phone number, and address. If you fail to answer these questions, your application will not be considered. Thanks for calling [your company]!

E-Screening. Instead of a phone message, ask candidates to reply via email and include some specific questions that they should answer, in addition to submitting their CVs. You will find that a surprising percentage of applicants will not even follow this

simple instruction — which is a fast way to weed them out. Make a shortlist of promising applicants and ask them to complete a psychometric profile. Depending on the number of applicants and the nature of the job, you might even add another layer of screening: a live phone interview before you get to the final step, an in-person interview.

4. Bring Them in for a Test Drive. Now that you have narrowed the field of applicants down substantially, you are ready to invest some quality time in them. Bring them in for a four-to-eight hour on-site interview. Get a feel for their personalities. Have them complete an on-the-job task or two. Introduce them to the rest of your staff. Compare their completed psychometric profiles to the characteristics needed for the job. Create a series of interview questions that you use uniformly for all the applicants who reach this stage and have them focus on actual past experience as opposed to theoretical future possibilities. Then, make an offer to the candidate who impressed you most!

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when you have a team in place that performs well. Put in the effort required to make this happen. Your stress level and your bottom line will thank you.

If you need additional help putting together the dream team you need, call me direct at (402) 690-0066 or go to mfmbusinesscoaching.com to schedule a 15-minute complimentary Coaching Session. I have dozens of other strategies to help you find, and manage, high-quality employees. Do not neglect this critical aspect of your business for another moment! Until next time, continue building value.

Kermit Engh has been an owner/operator in the drycleaning industry for over 30 years and has been a Methods for Management member for over 25 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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DATELINE

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2022

November 9 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute virtual education session, "Making Money with Floor Mats" with Joe Rubbleke at M+A Matting, 1 p.m. EST, For more information, call (800) 638-2627.

November 13-20 National Cleaners Association's New York State DEC course, Apthorp Cleaners, Bronx, NY. For more information, call (212) 967-3002.

November 13 National Cleaners Association's Technical Training at the Counter for CSRs one-day class. For more information, call (212) 967-3002.

November 15-17 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute/Coin Laundry Association present "W-D-F Workshop" at the Hilton Chicago/Oak Brook Hills Resort and Conference Center. For more information, visit www.dlionline.org.

December 4 National Cleaners Association's Advanced Stain Removal including Bleach one-day class. For more information, call (212) 967-3002.

December 10-11 National Cleaners Association's two-day

Pressing and Finishing class. For more information, call (212) 967-3002.

2023

January 12-15 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute/National Cleaners Association present Brainstorming/Five Stars conference, Secrets Royal Beach Punta Cana Resort in the Dominican Republic. For more information, call (800) 638-2627.

April 28-30 SDA's Cleaners Showcase, Irving Convention Center, Irving, TX. Call (512) 873-8195.

May 26-29 North Carolina Association of Launderers & Cleaners annual convention, DoubleTree by Hilton Atlantic Beach Oceanfront Hotel, 2717 West Fort Macon Rd., Atlantic Beach, NC. For more information, call (919) 313-4542.

2024

November 9-13 Texcare International trade show, Frankfurt Exhibition Centre, Germany. For more information, visit texcare.com/brand.



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Continued from page 1

Gold members and \$595 for Budget and Standard members. The cost for additional members is \$295 each.

For non-members, the cost is \$795 per person.

For more information or to register, visit dlionline.org or nca-i.com.

Other Upcoming Educational Highlights

Both DLI and NCA have offerings coming up quickly this month.

On Nov. 9, DLI will host a

virtual educational session on “Making Money with Floor Mats.” It will feature Joe Rubbelke of M+A Matting.

The program will begin at 1 p.m. EST and is free to all members.

“If regular drycleaning isn’t coming in, it’s important to look for other revenue generators, and DLI has provided a host of options in our webinar series,” explained DLI CEO Mary Scalco, who also

noted. “We think this [topic] could be a good match for some cleaners and we’re pleased to be able to offer a program that covers the ins and outs of how to get started.”

Meanwhile, NCA will continue to help New York drycleaners obtain or update certification required from the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation.

The association will host an

upcoming course from Nov. 13 to 20 at Aphorpe Cleaners in the Bronx.

The cost for tuition is \$889 for members and \$1,375 for non-members.

Also on Sunday, Nov. 13, NCA will present a one-day class on “Technical Training at the Counter for Customer Service Representatives.”

Next up, on Sunday, Dec. 4, NCA will present another one-day course. This time, the topic will be “Advanced Stain Re-

moval including Bleach.”

Both one-day courses cost \$275 for members and \$375 for non-members.

NCA also has scheduled a two-day course on “Pressing and Finishing” that will take place on Dec. 10 and 11 in the Bronx.

The cost of tuition is \$455 for members and \$595 for non-members.

For more information on either offering, visit NCA online or call (212) 967-3002.



Cleaners marks 40 years in unique way

Continued from page 1

Wiig. In 2010, the original off-Broadway production won a Drama Desk Award for the Unique Theatrical Experience category.

Seven years later, Barlow decided to pursue Nealis’s idea. The only problem was, she had to figure out how. After applying for the rights to move forward with the licensed production, the Covid pandemic began. Unfortunately, that delayed the project for the next three years.

This past spring, however, the play finally began production. Barlow completely underwrote the cost of the play so that local theater company Clio Cast and Crew (CCC) could raise funds from all of

the show’s ticket sales in order to help finance the replacement of some carpeting and seating at the Clio Cast and Crew Theatre.

In an odd twist of fate, this year turned out to be extra special for both parties involved in the project. Jan’s Professional Dry Cleaners is currently enjoying its 40th year in business while CCC is simultaneously celebrating its 45th season.

By the time the group’s August run of *Love Loss and What I Wore* came to a conclusion, Barlow believed it had brought in about \$8,500, almost three times what a typical run can generate at the modest-sized 165-seat facility.

Not only was the show well-attended, it was also well-re-

ceived by its audiences, especially Barlow, who saw it five times during the run.

“It’s the kind of play that it makes you laugh and it makes you cry,” she noted. “I don’t know how you evaluate a play, but in my humble opinion, if you do both of those, then I think it’s a pretty good play.”

Certainly, some of Barlow’s entrepreneurial skills seemed to have rubbed off on many of the volunteer community players during their time together as they sought ways to be more cost-effective.

“The cool thing was that they had never had an experience with a business owner to come in and help them plan the way that I did, and it got them talking,” she said.



THE CAST MEMBERS of *Love Loss and What I Wore* posed in August at the Clio Cast and Crew Theatre. The off-Broadway production was sponsored by Jan’s Professional Dry Cleaners so that ticket sales could raise funds to help the group with some theatre renovations.

MfM hosts trio of third quarter meetings

The third quarter of the year has proven to be a busy one for the consulting firm Methods for Management (MfM). The group recently hosted August meetings in Ft. Worth, TX, and Omaha, NE, as well as a meeting last month in Winnipeg, Manitoba in Canada.

During the meetings, MfM Managing Director Kermit Engh announced the addition of new group benefits, includ-

ing an introduction to the Value Builders platform that is designed to help them transition the business or build on its value for the future.

“Regardless of their goals, the MfM member wins,” said Engh.

Members will also now be able to gain monthly access to one Value Builder module on a self-study basis, guided by a monthly discussion with Engh,

who is a certified Value Builder coach.

Also introduced was the next iteration of MfM’s financial platform, MfMBI. One notable enhancement made to the trend analysis platform is creating multiple custom KPI reports for the various department’s within each member’s company.

Each of the three meetings also included the group taking

a plant tour of the host member’s business so that they can offer compliments, constructive criticism and possible suggestions for improving the business by providing the highest quality service for their clients.

Other highlights of the gatherings included members sharing their best ideas in technology, staffing and their company’s latest marketing

and advertising efforts.

The meeting in Ft. Worth was hosted by Nathan Kite and Ronald Soonius of Kite’s Cleaners, while Fashion Cleaners, owned by Engh, was the host in Omaha.

Kevin Hiebert and Lisa Loscerbo hosted the MfM Canadian group at Best Care Dry Cleaners, located in Winnipeg. For more information, visit www.mfmi.com.



Methods for Management’s meeting at Kite’s Custom Cleaners in Ft. Worth, TX, was attended by (left to right): Kyle Matthews (Janet Davis Cleaners), Greg Gunderson (Gunderson Cleaners), facilitator Kermit Engh, Tom Prionas (Fabric Care Center), Ronald Soonius of Kite’s Custom Cleaners, Darryl Flynn (The Cleaning Co.) and Nathan Kite of Kite’s Custom Cleaners.



MfM Members who attended the recent meeting at Fashion Cleaners of Omaha, NE, included (from left to right): Pierre Cinar, Zach Orsi, Arturo Nanes, Kermit Engh (owner of Fashion Cleaners), Mark Scott, David Meyer, Derik Blaha, Randy and Ramona Jaeger, Chuck Horst, Puzant Cinar and Alberto Nanes.



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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Getting to know about solvent flow (part 3)

In this month's issue, which will conclude the solvent flow series, I will discuss valves, the devices that direct the solvent flow through the drycleaning machine.

How Solvent Flow Valves Operate

The solvent flow control valves on almost every drycleaning machine are operated by compressed air directed by a solenoid, which moves a piston inside a cylinder to position a disk. The position of this disk will either stop or allow solvent to flow through the valve. There are two types of valves: single-acting valves and double-acting valves. Single-acting valves are commonly, but not always, configured in a normally closed position (stops the solvent flow) by spring action when the valve is not activated.

Compressed air compresses the spring when the valve opens; when the air is exhausted, the spring ex-

pands, closing the valve. The other valve variant is the double-acting valve in which compressed air positions the valve in either the open or closed position.

Reasons for Valve Failure

- **Fault in the valve control systems.** Before engaging in any troubleshooting, be sure the incoming air pressure is at least 80 PSI. Problems in systems controlling the valves are often misdiagnosed as valve failures. These systems include the computer and the solenoid associated with the suspect valve.

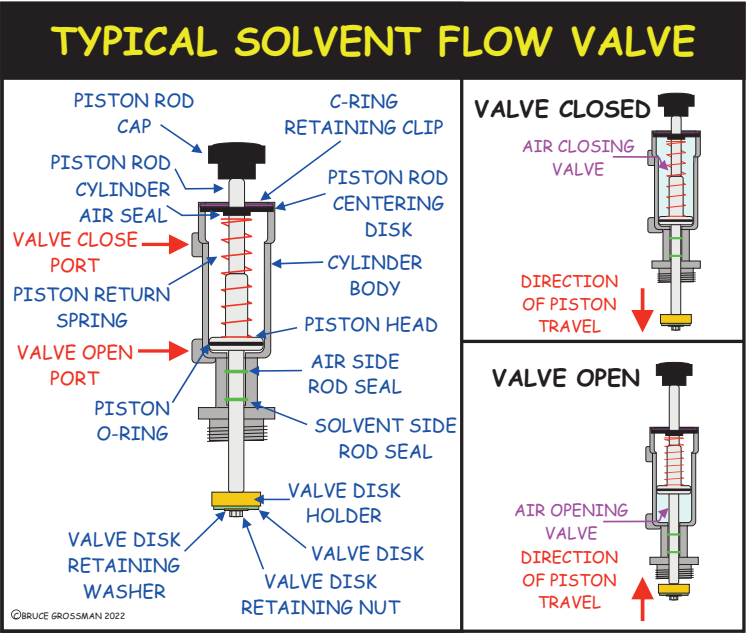
The easiest way to eliminate computer and solenoid faults is to disconnect the air line going to the suspect valve and activate the valve, either manually or through a cleaning program, to see if you get air out of the line. If there is air flow, the problem is likely in the valve itself.

- **Fouled cylinder.** Most plants don't pay proper attention to their compressed air quality. This poor quality

air leads to the accumulation in the air-operated components of grit and contamination over time. Accumulating these contaminants in the cylinder area causes deterioration of the rubber components and excessive friction and wear on the piston O-ring, cylinder walls, and other seals within the valve. Most air-operated equipment have a filter/regulator and lubricator to treat incoming air.

Most drycleaners have never checked these components to ensure the filter/regulator drains water and the lubricator has oil and is properly adjusted. *Keep up with the maintenance on these items and you will rarely have valve or solenoid problems.*

- **Faulty O-rings.** Two types of O-rings are typically found in the valve. The first type sits in a groove on the piston head and is used to seal the air on one side of the piston when the valve is operated. It is generally Buna and colored black.



The second species of O-ring is used to seal the shaft of the piston. Usually, two are found at the bottom of the valve and are used to seal the cylinder section from the solvent flowing through the valve.

On double-acting valves, at the top of the cylinder, there is another O-ring acting as a shaft seal. These O-rings are colored green or brown and made of silicone or Viton.

Contamination within the cylinder often prevents proper movement of the piston within the valve, resulting in either faulty closing (sticking partially open when compressed air is exhausted) or faulty opening (sticking partially closed when the valve is pressurized). Partial closing causes solvent leakage through the valve, and partial opening results in a reduced flow through the valve.

Careful examination of the length of the piston rod where it extends past the top of the cylinder can indicate when the valve is completely closed.

Watch the operation of a similar valve. When the valve is shut, note how far the rod extends above the top of the cylinder. If the piston rod on the suspect valve extends further, it's likely not shutting completely.

I've found that removing the air line to the faulty valve and spraying WD-40 into the valve, if possible, as well as the air line, then operating the valve several times, will often remedy this problem.

- **Debris on valve seat.** Occasionally, a pin or some other type of debris will get stuck in the area where the valve disk seats causing solvent to leak through the valve when it is shut.

The cause of this condition will be apparent when the cylinder assembly is unscrewed from the valve seat. The procedures for this type of repair will be covered in another article soon.

- **Problems caused by faulty valve operation.** Problems caused by these types of valve failures are legion; to discuss them in depth would require a dedicated article. However, I've found the three most notable symptoms of valve failure are:

1. Overfilling the still caused by the still valve sticking partially open.
2. The inability to draw solvent from solvent tanks because the button trap valve sticks partially open.
3. During the drain cycle, the non-ending flow of solvent from the wheel (basket) caused by the wheel inlet valve sticking partially open.

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.ez-timers.com. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

Doing good is just good business

Think about that headline for a moment. That small statement can have a big impact on the success of your business.

Personally, I think once you understand that philosophy and embrace it you will position your business for growth.

I don't know about you, but when I am making my purchasing decisions, I like to do business with people and companies I like. I like people who understand me, respect my values, and appreciate my patronage.

I suggest you look at your business and see if you are paying attention to those simple principals.

It comes as no surprise that social media marketing has become one of the most used tools of small businesses as they strive to reach beyond their customer base. The platforms are free (or relatively low cost if you are using a service), but you

need to pay attention to how you are using it and if it is effective.

I can't stress enough the need for companies to understand the basic principal: *it is supposed to be social.*

It is **not** display advertising. While some display ads are effective and have a place, the true benefits will be from engaging with your customers — telling them a story, highlighting accomplishments, sharing experiences.

The most effective use of social media is to engage with people. It can be uncomfortable at times for people, but you need to take a step outside your comfort zone and socialize with your clientele.

Make connections and be active. There is no need to try and make your business sound like something it is not or seem bigger than it is. You just need to keep your business in front of prospec-

tive customers. You need them to think of you whenever they have cleaning needs.

You don't need to donate thousands of dollars. You just need to be active. Most often, sweat and labor will be more rewarding professionally and personally.

I will share one bit of advice — you may want to stay clear of political and religious views and focus more on how you impact society. You do not want to be divisive or to alienate potential customers before they get to know you.

What is doing good?

I believe more and more people will make a conscience effort to align themselves with businesses who are involved in the community. Look at your company's profile and gauge how potential customers

feel about your business. Get involved with the Chamber of Commerce, town activities, and local in-

volvement in fundraisers are a must.

You don't have to donate thousands of dollars. You just need to be active. Most often, sweat and labor — really getting involved personally — will be more rewarding professionally and personally.

Always donate gift cards and services where you can and when asked. It is an extremely effective advertising tool. When approached for a donation, don't look at it as an expense, but an opportunity. If you want to build on your wash-dry-fold services, give a gift card for those services only.

Building a route? Then make it for "pick-up and delivery" within a certain area. Use it to promote your service all while you are "doing good."

I am very proud when I see so many of my association members participating in clothing drives, prom gown donations and a host of other programs. These are great public relations opportunities for the whole industry, but they also elevate the participating company's community awareness.

You don't have to support everything, but look at what is happening in your community and get involved. Pick something to support that you feel passionately about.

One member had a great response to their "Relay for Life" participation. Not only did they help with the fundraising, they also participated in the walk, formed a team, and used the opportunity to tell their own personal story. They shared their experience, and everyone benefitted. They provided their customers the

opportunity to join alongside of them.

It may take a while for these effort to become tangible and to be able to really understand the effect they have on sales, but trust me, they will have a positive effect.

There will also be hidden benefits you will not even realize. Job applicants will become easier to find and be more enticed to join your team. We all want to be a part of a company we can feel good about. We all want to work for good people who care about others.

People will talk about the positives of your business and your word-of-mouth advertising will grow. It does not take much positive traction to move the needle.

The other way of doing good is to promote the benefits of your service. *Health, safety, recycling* are all words we can use to describe our services. Just the fact that we prolong the life of a wardrobe is beneficial for preserving resources.

Promote hanger recycling, take back poly, use reusable garment bags, use reusable totes for wash-dry-fold. These are all ways to show that you care about your community.

The more you can become ingrained in your local community, the better your reputation grows and the better positioned you are for growth.

Are you involved in any community service projects? Do you support any local events or charities? I would love to hear about them. Send me pictures and updates on Facebook (or to peter@sefa.org) and I will share your experiences with my followers.

Reach out if you need help. After all, I want to follow my own advice and "do good" as well.

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

More Good Ideas for *Doing Good*

While winter coat and prom dress drives are excellent ways to give back, drycleaners have come up with many interesting ways to contribute to their communities over the years. Some of the best and most creative ideas often come from some place deeply personal. Such was the case with North Carolina cleaner Jeff Miller who helped launch the Honor Flight Network to honor veterans by creating a charity to fly them to Washington, DC, to view war memorials. Out west, many members of the California Cleaners Association have adopted their own orphanage (Estado 29) in Mexico and often take trips to see the children. There are also good deeds that are borne out of need, like when Benzinger's Clothing Care owner Kathy Benzinger hosted a blood drive in her business's parking lot to help with the shortage during the pandemic.



Kathy Benzinger (left) donates blood during a drive she hosted at her business during the pandemic. Jeff Miller (bottom left) helped launch the Honor Flight Network to help veterans like his father make trips to Washington, DC, to view war memorials. Also, various members of CCA sponsor and visit Orphanage Estado 29 in Mexico (bottom right).



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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Expect tougher labor law changes soon

This month's column is a potpourri of current labor and employment trends. I hate to add to the misery of 2022 (inflation, stock market, any kind of media), but employers still remain unloved by governments.

The National Labor Relations Board is at it again. During the Obama Administration, it was packed with zealously pro-union and anti-employer members.



Innocuous employee handbook policies were found to be illegal, and decades old election rules were drastically changed to make it easier for unions to organize non-union companies.

For example, handbook policies stating that employees were to treat each other with dignity and respect were found to violate federal labor law because, apparently, these new members of the NLRB did not believe that employees could discuss issues like unionization and still be respectful.

Many of these irrational decisions were changed under new Board members appointed by Trump, but Presi-

dent Biden claims to be the "most pro-union president in history," so the NLRB is once again on the warpath to foster unionization, whether employees want it or not.

Considering Mental Health Days for the Workplace
The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) is also getting a workout these days, especially because of Covid

sion is absolutely required, even if it is apparent that no accommodation is possible.

Independent Contractor Status
Legislatures, courts, and

doing it right.
More Attention on Harassment Laws

Harassment laws seem to be getting a lot of attention these days. I have lost track of all the words that used to be fine that are now problematic. It seems that every word uttered in the workplace is now evidence of discriminatory intent or harassment.

Texting abbreviations, for example, can have several different meanings. Have you ever heard of "double texting," which could be evidence of sexual harassment, especially if one of the texts has a possible sexual overtone?

Employees drunk text each other (which I understand is called a "tequila oopsie"), setting up potential discrimination claims if not addressed by the employer.

Remember, if an employee complains of harassment, the most prudent thing to do is address it, ask the alleged offending person to stop the behavior, and make sure there is no retaliation against the employee for making the complaint.

If you hear colorful words in the workplace that could be taken out of context in certain circumstances, take action to stop those words, even if there are no complaints.

A Vaccine Against Union Activity and Complaints

I will close with a recommendation to talk to your employees and involve them in your thinking about the business.

In addition to getting good ideas, you will have employees who feel involved, which is a vaccine against union activity and discrimination claims.

Moreover, you may learn things about the business and your employees that you did not know.

There are very few secrets in the workplace, except from the boss.

Be a boss who knows what is happening, not one who wonders what happened.

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

Talk to your employees and involve them in your thinking about the business. In addition to getting good ideas, you will have employees who feel involved, which is a vaccine against union activity and discrimination claims. You may also learn things about your business and employees that you didn't know.

Handbook policies are being targeted again, and unions are theoretically going to get more active. At the very least, you should make sure your employee handbook has been reviewed in the last few years to insure compliance.

Also, if you have never thought about what you might do if a union tried to organize your shop, you might want to learn some of the election rules, review the do's and don't's, and think about your response to a union organizing drive might be.

ADA
Americans with Disabilities Act

and a new emphasis on mental health issues in the workplace. In fact, some states are considering mandating "mental health" days in addition to sick leave requirements.

As for Covid, many symptoms of post-Covid recovery fatigue, brain fog, etc. — are disabilities that may have to be accommodated under the ADA.

Remember, whenever anyone raises a disability or the need for an accommodation, an employer at a minimum has to engage in what is called the "interactive process" with the employee to determine if an accommodation is possible.

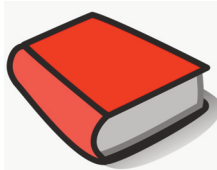
In other words, the discus-

agencies are getting tougher on companies that use independent contractors.

As I have said in previous columns, if you are not absolutely positive that an individual is an independent contractor rather than an employee, that person is likely an employee.

Any scheme designed to save withholding and FICA taxes, or to allow the person to avoid the payment of income tax, is a red flag for challenging independent contractor status.

The consequences of designating an employee an independent contractor incorrectly can be dire. Make sure you're





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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

The old and new at Clean 2022 — Part 3

Editor's Note: This is the third and final in a series of three articles highlighting shirt equipment featured at Clean 2022.

Headlining part three of my Clean Show coverage is my presentation of **Sankosha's** new single-buck shirt unit and their new companion collar/cuff press. At first glance, this new unit, dubbed LP-5600U, looks like many other Sankosha shirts except for — well, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Finally, the last shirt unit manufacturer that I'll feature is **Pony**. Their equipment now has a feature that I asked for in December of 2005!

If you're an avid reader of this column, you may remember that in December of each year, I create a fantasy list for Santa Claus. This list is comprised of products or equipment, or equipment enhancements that, to the best of my knowledge, do not exist.



I wish for them in an open letter to St. Nick, asking for them because I believe that these products would help us in our everyday business lives.

As it turns out, a few of my wishes actually have come true. I can't say for sure if I have actually inspired an engineer or two, but I'm just happy that some

products have become better along the way.

In December, 17 years ago, I thought that it would be a good idea if shirt presses could be raised or lowered to accommodate the different heights of, uh, let's say... for the *vertically challenged* members of your staff. If I remember correctly, I was thinking of a kind of hydraulic or pneumatic thing that would allow you to raise and lower your press, on the fly.

Well, that would be costly, and that is not what Pony has done. They did something that no one else is doing... and it's about time! On most of their machines, the leveling legs have a great deal of "meat" on them so that the bucks can be considerably higher or lower when installed.

And, if you don't have rigid steam pipes in your area, changing the height for a new employee takes but a few minutes.

I've been writing this column for well over 20 years. I have not been covering the Clean Show like this for quite that long, but close. I'm not sure what made me feel like it is my responsibility to cover the show this way (probably writers' block, honestly).

Anyway, back in those early days, I would ask each shirt unit manufacturer to show me only their new shirt unit; the one being introduced at the Clean Show for the first time.

Major upgrades to an existing unit qualified, so Uni-press's update to their Cyclone unit (see *National Clothesline*, September 2022) would have counted as a unit that I would have covered, and there would be about 12-15 shirt equipment manufacturers, some of them so unheard of and so obscure, (and not connected to steam) that I did not even cover them. They got zero press time.

As time went on, many units didn't change every couple of years, so I began to cover every company, every time, just to remind readers of each company's offerings. Good thing. Only one major shirt unit manufacturer introduced a completely new shirt unit this year.

I can't help but wonder

what my father or grandfather would think if they saw a modern shirt pressing machine. They look so different. They certainly don't look like an old Ajax Classic! How could they not marvel at the intricate robotic movements of a sleeve pleat press? Or, a passive mecha-

If you don't have rigid pipes in your area, changing the height for a new employee takes but a few minutes.

nism that stretches a collar or pulls down on a back while pressing?

However, no one could have imagined a body buck that can press a shirt in **10 seconds**, and I never even thought to ask Santa Claus for that, either. But, that is what the new Sankosha LP-5600U can do! Crazy huh?

Before we go on, check out the videos. You must see it to believe it. Point your smartphone camera on the QR codes to view the videos on my YouTube channel.



Sankosha
demos
LP-5600U



Don presses
on the new
LP-5600U

This unit is a game-changer. So fast is this unit, that they also had to invent a new collar-cuff unit that could keep up with it. That is the LP-6000U.

It's hard to explain how and why this unit works, but I have drawn my own conclusions. So, what I am telling you here is my own summations, not official data.

At first glance, the unit is not much different than previous models. You dress the buck in the traditional way. Then, you move to the left sleeve (always the left sleeve first).

The way the sleeve is attached assures a tight seal. Sankosha has done away with steam injection into the

Continued on page 22

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Sparkle Cleaners, Inc.
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Don Desrosiers

The old and new at Clean 2022 — Part 3

Continued from page 20
sleeves and added an additional heat exchanger. Therefore, the utility consumption nets out to be equal.
Then you actuate the left sleeve, the head moves over,

and it moves close to the buck; but, it stops about an inch away from the shirt.
I think that this does two things. There is radiant heat that is pre-heating the water in the fabric. This must make a difference.

Secondly, there is less travel remaining when the buck is indexed. It might seem like a small thing, no doubt, but that head will close onto the shirt in less than half a second. That matters!



At many plants, the head needs to travel about seven to eight inches and that takes about two seconds. This is wasted time.
When you actuate the right cuff, you do have the option to select a longer press cycle, but I pressed many shirts on this unit in Atlanta and never felt the need to do that. I never selected the long cycle, even once. The travel to the press position is very short and the head is closed in, literally, the blink of an eye. Faster than you can say “Holy Sankosha!” the cycle is done.
There is a bit of residual moisture on the pad side of the thick part of the heavier shirts. I don’t like that. But, the shirt did

continue to dry within a few minutes.

I found that pressing on this unit was actually quite relaxing — enjoyable, really. Can you really do 70 shirts per hour? Maybe.

Also, I am not aware of the moisture retention that they had in the shirts that they were pressing. If you are pressing 70-80 shirts per hour, which is what they are aiming for with one operator, you will want moisture retention on the lower side. I found that pressing on this unit was actually quite relaxing — enjoyable, really. Can you really do 70 shirt per hour? Maybe.
I wish that it had been possible to time myself. I was so busy fielding questions that I never got bogged down long enough for, say, 15 to 20 minutes to see how many shirts I could do in

that time. I think that the secret would be in the collar / cuff press — how fast can it be loaded?
Once you send in the body buck, the cycle will be finished long before you’re finished loading the collar and cuff press. That certainly doesn’t mean that you can’t do 60, 70 or 80 an hour. I just don’t know what the number is exactly.
Until next month.

“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 P.O. Box 4523, Martha’s Vineyard, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568, 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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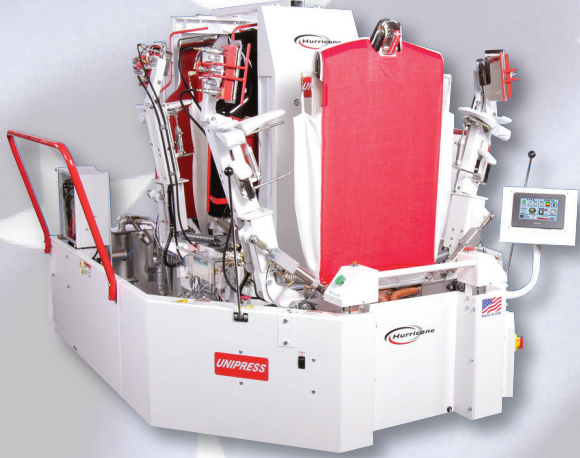
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Zips doubles down in Washington, DC area

Zips Cleaners, a nationally expanding chain of nearly 70 locations, announced that it will add two new locations in Washington, DC, by the end of next year, which would double its presence in that market.
KV Management, LLC, which operates two Zips locations already in the district, as well as two in Fairfax, VA, and another in Sterling, VA, has issued letters of intent to occupy two spaces in the central district region.
The first is slated to open in the first quarter of 2023, while the other is expected to debut in the third quarter of next year. That will bring the total number of locations run by KV Management’s partners Brett Vago and Kyo Kim to seven. The two are also founders of the Zips brand.
Vago and Kim own the rights to develop the entire District of Columbia area and say they may open additional locations there in the future.
In addition, they have

signed a development agreement to expand their presence in Loudoun County in partnership with Carlos Cadenas, a fellow Zips founder and a multi-unit Zips owner in northern Virginia.
“We are very excited to be providing more convenience and easier access to residents and workers in the District,” said Vago. “Between these new locations and the system advancements Zips has underway, we are making it easier than ever for customers to get their belongings to us, have them professionally cleaned and get them back quickly for comparatively little cost.”
Zips Cleaners provides consumer and commercial garment care centered around low-cost, in-by-9-out-by-5 drycleaning, as well as Wash N Fold laundry, pressed laundry, alterations and cleaning of household items. For more information, visit them online at www.321zips.com.





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BY DAN EISEN

Handling poorly dyed silk fabrics

Silk continues to be a troublesome fabric for drycleaners. Independent Garment Analysis Service receives many silk garments ranging from color loss due to oxidization and spotting procedures. The dye choice of the manufacturer and its application determines the fastness of the dye. Poorly dyed silk fabrics can still be processed but the inspections, spotting and cleaning methods must be changed.

Inspection

If you go into a retail store and examine silk garments on the rack, it will enlighten you to the extent that fading can occur. Just compare unexposed areas to exposes areas, such as on the shoulder. The same inspection should be done at the counter. Examine for discolorations on the underarm area, as well as weak area. Silk fabrics are highly sensitive to chloride salts found in deodorants and perspiration.

Safe Spotting Techniques

Flushing: Always place an absorbent towel under the fabric when flushing with the steam gun. This will prevent

dye transfer and indicate the stability of the dye to water and wet side agents. If you flush into a screened area, the wet area of the silk will not indicate dye loss until it is dry. If dye transfer occurs readily, the method of stain removal must be modified.

Lubrication: If dyes are stable to flushing, the garment is placed on a towel and a neutral lubricant is applied. Tamp area with a soft spotting brush and note stability of dye.

Digesters: If dyes are determined to be weak, the safest spotting agent available is a powdered enzyme. This is good for protein and aluminous stains, as well as some tannin stains. Alkali in protein formulas will bleed dyes on silk. Liquid enzymes have lubricants in their composition and require extensive flushing which is not quite as safe.

To use powdered enzymes, put 1/2 teaspoon of digester in a pint of warm water (100 to 120°F). Add a teaspoon of glycerin or neutral lubricant for better penetration and also keep the area wet. Place this mixture on stained area for 20 minutes

before flushing. This method is considered to be as safe as just applying plain water.

Tannin Stains: Most tannin formulas are safe to dyes on silk. If the lubricant tends to bleed the dye when mechanical action is applied, use a chemical action of the tannin formula. Apply to stain and heat with a steam gun, and then flush. Acetic acid can also be used for chemical action. Text oxalic and rust remover, which are generally safe to the dyes on silk.

Protein and Aluminous Stains: Refer to the section on digesters.

Bleaching: Last traces of staining can usually be removed with a mild hydrogen peroxide. This is the only neutral-based bleach available. Sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate are alkaline in nature and will discolor silk dyes. Apply hydrogen peroxide with a q-tip and allow it to be exposed to the air for 20 minutes. Then, flush and repeat the method if it has been showing results.

Feathering: Many cleaners are adept at feathering by flush-

ing the area and force drying the wet area from the outside toward the center. The only problem with this method is that the forced drying can remove dye from the silk garment, as well as chafing the yarns.

I would rather use the method of steaming the outside area of the ring and wiping the wet area with a towel so it blends into the dry area. This is the safest and most efficient way of feathering a silk fabric.

Leveling Agents: Difficult feathering can be avoided by applying a leveling agent. Look for a tannin and enzyme-based formula with a built-in leveling agent so that after spotting the area can be feathered or just hung to dry and then recleaned.

Dry Side Stains: I would rather use a mild oily type paint remover than a strong one. You can judge the strength by the color of the paint remover. The light colored paint removers are mild, while the darker ones are stronger.

The problem with oily type paint removers is that water pressure in the paint remover

will activate the alcohol that is present in its composition causing color loss.

Oily type paint remover should also be used with amyl acetate, which aids in dry side stain removal, as well as diluting the strength.


Cleaning Poorly Dyed Silk

The routine drycleaning process should not affect dyes on silk. If moisture is present, the dyes will bleed and discolor. The problem I have observed in my consultations is that a small load of silk is subjected to the same amount of soap injection as a large load.


Detergent is injected based on the amount of solvent in the wheel rather than garment weight. Batch injection detergents contain a great deal of moisture and small silk loads subjected to the moisture can bleed and discolor.

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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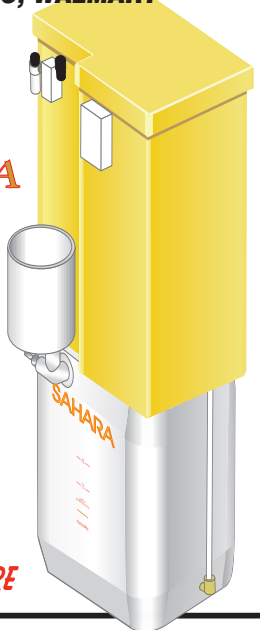
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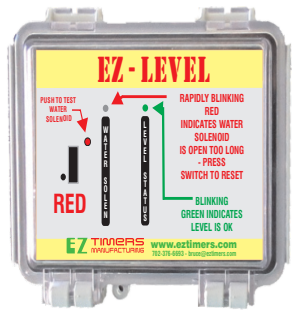
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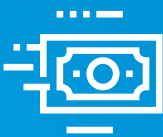
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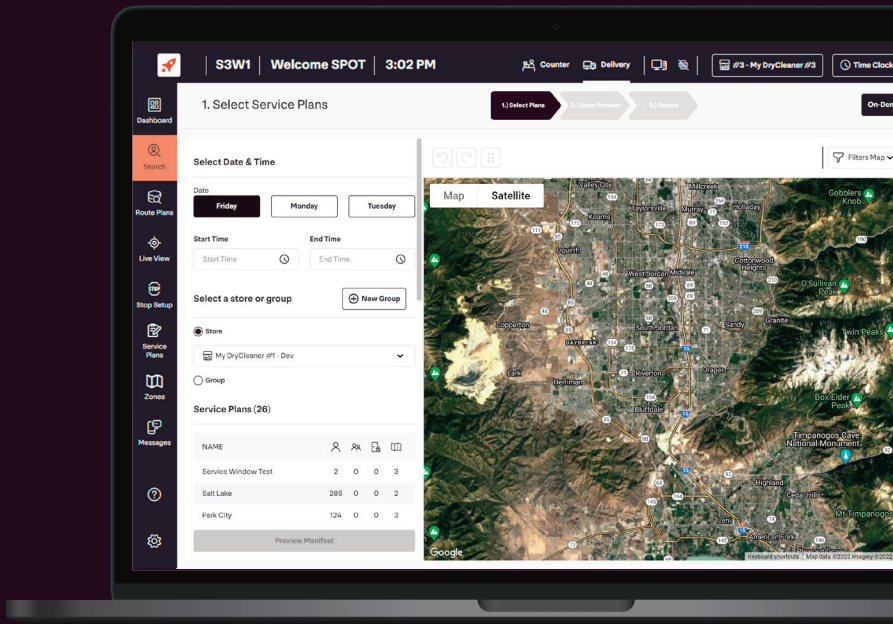
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