

December 2022 Volume 61 Number 3 www.nationalclothesline.com

ProfitFest '22 draws in record attendance

The North East Fabricare Association (NEFA) recently concluded its ProfitFest 2022 conference, and it was the largest in the 14-year history of its FallFest conferences.

"We've been doing this a long time and I continue to be amazed at the evolution of the conference," noted NEFA Pesident Larry Fish. "It continues to grow and get better each and every year — but this year? This year really stands out. The industry support and the attendees' involvement in the educational opportunities, coupled with the social functions, really made this a special event."

Speakers for the event included Dave Coyle of Maver-Drycleaners who highlighted proven strategies to increase profits.

Another program featured Sue Boardman of PuzzleHR and James Peuster of The Route Pros answering audience questions on ways to attract and retain team members.

Additionally, Cohen Wills of Cleaner Marketing explored some of the ways to leverage your marketing lead generation opportunities and NEFA's Spotlight Cleaner of the Year Rechelle Balanzat of Juliette's in New York highlighted the "Art of the Soft Sell."

On Sunday morning, Jason Loeb of Sudsies Dry Cleaners lead a program that covered a lot of ground, including the need to upgrade the image of the drycleaning industry and the need for constant education and professional development.

According to NEFA Executive Director Peter Blake, Proft-Fest 2022 ticked a lot of good boxes for cleaners. "I look at many barometers of success for events like this," he explained. "One of the best is what happens at the very end of the conference. After Jason was done with his program, after 2 1/2 hours, nobody left. The program was over, yet the room didn't clear out for another hour and a half. People stayed, talked and bonded. I left two hours later and there were still a handful of people

"Between the board reception on Friday night, Saturday's luncheon, the silent auction, and Sunday's breakfast meeting, I noticed something really incredible — a return of community," Blake added. "This has been missing from the industry for the past five to seven years. People had withdrawn from social events. Less importance has been given to sharing stories and challenges. I saw a fundamental change and I hope it continbecause there tremendous



ProfitFest 2022 attracted a record number of attendees (above left) who enjoyed the chance to socialize and listen to the educational sessions provided by speakers including Rechelle Balanzat and Jason Loeb (above right).

Your Reputation

and Amplifying

Lastly, trans-

formational speaker Dr. Alex

Ellis will share

his unique ap-

Your Business."

Five Star/Brainstorming conference announces lineup

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) and the National Cleaners Association (NCA) recently announced speakers for their Five Star/Brainstorming Conference, set to take place from Jan. 12 to 15, 2023, at the Secrets Royal Beach Punta Cana Resort located in the Dominican Republic.

Dr. Lorynn Divita is an asso-

sign and Merchandising for Baylor University and the author of Fashion Forecasting, book which examines how to

anticipate emerging fashion trends. She will present a program on "Connecting with Gen Z —



Dr. Lorynn Divita

Social media strategist Peg Fitzpatrick of Kruessler Textile Care will discuss "How to Drive Growth By Managing



Dr. Alex Ellis

Peg Fitzpatrick proach to finding and retaining employees during labor pool challenges.

association membership type.

Premier members can enjoy free admission; otherwise the prices are: \$395 for 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 The price to attend the con-register, visit dlionline.org or

Keeping clothes fresh as a Daisy



For more than a half century, the Desjardins family of New Hampshire have cleaned and restored garments impecably for residents of Salem and the surrounding areas. During that time, the company has also distinguished itself as a valued community partner, giving back to numerous charities over the years. To read the full story on current owner Jim Desjardins and the company's long history, see page 6.

Sneak Peek Inside

Finishing the job properly

It's the drycleaner's job to restore finishing agents to maintain the proper look and feel of the garment.

Are you complying? Employers are advised to stay on top of wage and hour laws — they are often more complex than you think.

A magical machine

Santa Claus is going to need a bigger bag when he finds out what Don Desrosiers asks for in his annual wishlist.

A tactical marketing plan Before you can market more effectively, you must find a way to measure which ad strategies work the best.

Wishing you



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Cleaners carry momentum into the new year

As 2023 fast approaches, so does the inclination to reflect on the successes and failures of 2022 as it winds out its final days. Overall, the drycleaning industry certainly seems to be on much stronger ground ending the year than it was at the beginning of it. After all, when registration for Clean 2022 opened earlier this year, there was an air of uncertainty over whether a Covid variant might wreak enough havoc to prompt another postponement.

Even if it didn't, however, it was still unclear what kind of attendance to expect for the first Clean Show in over 37 months.

Fortunately, the industry showed up in full force last summer with close to 10,000 in attendance at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta. It was an incredible show with a high amount of energy permeating through every aisle of the exhibit hall. It was also an inspiring sight to see audience members literally spilling out onto the side and standing in the back of full capacity crowds at the amazing array of educational programs hosted by the industry associations.

That energy carried over onto the remainder of 2022, as several groups and associations have enjoyed meeting in person more frequently. While the social networking opportunities are always appreciated, there have also been several excellent educational programs to help cleaners genuinely improve, from the North East Fabricare Association's recent Profit Fest conference to the joint Wash-Dry-Fold Workshop sponsored by the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute and the Coin Laundry Association last month. Looking ahead at next year, industry groups are building on that momentum. The calendar is already starting to fill up and there are more opportunities than ever for cleaners to become better.

In addition to covering those events, we resolve to try to help those in the industry discover ways to improve their businesses with expert columns and information designed to do just that.

This month, we have a wide variety of topics. For starters, Bruce Grossman provides some technical assistance with how to make sure your air compressors keep powering your equipment without any interruptions so you don't face any unnecessary down time. Read his full column on page 10.

If you're looking for stain removal tips, Dan Eisen (on page 12) is a human encyclopedia on the topic. This time out, he offers excellent guidance on a complicated

issue — restoring the finishing agents to garments in order for them to maintain the proper look and feel that the manufacturer intended. It's a problem that can be easily exacerbated during the drycleaning and wetcleaning processes if you don't follow Dan's methods closely.

From the spotting board, we now turn our attention to the courtroom. If you're looking to find out if you're properly following all of the laws of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), then you probably need to talk to your attorney. It's insanely complex. Or, you could read the column on page 14 from our resident attorney, Frank Kollman, who discusses how and why there is so much confusion with the FLSA, especially when it comes to the wage and hour arena. He also offers some really good (and free) legal advice.

Meanwhile, columnist Kermit Engh (page 18) offers some really good marketing advice. While most cleaners tend to believe they need to spend more time and money marketing, Engh believes the key is to create an elective tactical marketing plan — one that can measure the results of all of your marketing efforts. How else will you know what is working and what is not?

Lastly, we have a column that doesn't focus on what cleaners can do to improve. Instead, Don Desrosiers presents his annual holiday wishlist to Santa Claus, and this time he only has one item on it - a bit of a doozy, actually. As Don sees it, if Tesla can make a successful self-driving car, why can't Santa Claus and his equipment manufacturer friends design and build a machine where you can "toss in a soiled shirt at one end, and, at the other end, out it comes all cleaned, pressed, on a hanger, invoiced, bagged and ready to go." That would come in awfully handy now during the labor shortage. The funny thing is, such a machine might not all be as far-fetched as it sounds. Find out why on page 16.

Perhaps such a machine will be coming in about 15 years or so — which sounds like a very long time. However, keep in mind, it was not much longer than that when the California Air Resources Board announced that it would adopt regulatory amendments in January of 1997 to gradually phase out the use of perchloroethylene in drycleaning statewide by Jan. 1, 2023. Now, that day is less than a month away and California drycleaners have long been ready for it, showing that the industry always finds a way to adapt and stay relevant for the future.

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Distinguished service

fter serving in the U.S. Army during the 1950s, twin brothers Gabriel (Gabe) and Marcel Desjardins joined together in business to offer garment cleaning services to the residents of Salem, NH.

"I know that they actually had owned a bunch of laundromats all over the place," recalled Jim Desjardins, Gabe's son and the second generation owner of Daisy Cleaners. "For some reason, my father was kind of drawn to the drycleaning and my uncle stayed in the laundry."

In 1963, Gabe bought Daisy Cleaners on Broadway St. — the same year Jim was born. Though, he bought a few others over the years, as well.

"His whole base was always Daisy Cleaners, but he would buy and sell stores all over the place," Jim added. "He always kept Daisy. There was never even an option to sell it."

It was situated in an excellent location that "backed right up" to Salem's historic one-mile racing track known as Rockingham Park. It was originally built in 1906 and had long been used for gambling on the weekends.

Gabe, however, did not want to rely on any longshots. He tried to stack the odds in his favor by cultivating a strong work ethic, committing to give back to his community and creating new ways to expand the scope of Daisy Cleaner's services.

"He always hustled. I can remember him doing everything from tuxedo rental to state contracts to do the toll both attendants' uniforms and that type of work. At the time, there were only two plants in town and he owned both of them," Jim recalled. "He was like the only game in town, so people came from all of the surrounding communities to get their clothes cleaned."

fter Jim graduated from high school, he worked a "regular job" in shipping and receiving for a few years, before he decided it was time to go work for his father at Daisy Cleaners.

"He sent me to DLI (or IFI at the time)," he explained. "I did the general drycleaning course — and I was supposed to stay for the advanced course — but he needed me to come back and work at one of the shops."

Initially, Jim wasn't exactly enthusiastic about the job. "In the original part of my career, I think I kind of looked down at what I did for a living," he admitted. "Surely, as I've gotten older, I take great pride in what I do, and I take it seriously."

Jim soon became enthralled by the process of restoring garments to their original splendor, especially the complicated challenges of stain removal.

"I don't give up easily, but I have *learned*, he said. "I think this is what my spotting instructor told us back in the early 1980s: 'The stain belongs to the customer... until you put a hole in it. Then, the garment belongs to you.'"

After almost 40 years of experience in the art of removing stains, Jim emphasizes that the best approach is often the slowest one. "One thing that sticks in my mind is test, test and then *test again* — to make sure that before you do something, you're not going to create a devastating problem," he said.

hroughout its 55-year history, Daisy Cleaners has utilized numerous cleaning solvents, includall over town."

Sometimes, that is enough to generate quite a lot of excitement, not to mention, a lot of donations. When Jim served on the Boys & Girls Club board for several years, he always contributed a year's worth of drycleaning (valued at \$1,500) for its annual auction fundraiser event.

sponders for free," Jim recalled. "I never missed a day during the whole Covid thing because I'm not one to stay at home."

ne salvation for the business during the pandemic was wedding gown work — something Jim calls "touchy-feely" because people



Jim Desjardins

Daisy Cleaners Salem, NH

ing perc and silicone. More recently, they were also one of the first five drycleaners in the U.S. to use SYS-TEMK4.

"What I think I like most about cleaning with the K4 is — if you're a spotter of the perc generation or you hire somebody from that generation — with very few exceptions, you're utilizing the same spotting methods," Jim noted

In addition to its K4 drycleaning machine, the company now utilizes three wetcleaning machines.

"If I have the option to, I prefer to wetclean things," he said. "Nothing's more hygienic than wetcleaning."

While the company has evolved its cleaning methods and equipment over the years, it seemed like it might be time to close down when the past came back to haunt Jim.

"Lucky me, I was able to inherit my father's hazardous waste mess," he said, "and, any cleaner who's been around since the 1960s and 1970s — unless they had some pixie dust dropped and that everything was cleaned up — it's pretty likely there was contamination on the site."

"So, that took about ten years of my life. My wife and I spent about \$600,000 out of pocket working on that," he added. "It would've been much easier just to file chapter 11 and walk away... but that's not what we did."

ortunately for Salem, Daisy Cleaners lived another day so it could continue supporting the local community, something Jim is quite passionate about.

"People aren't looking to just do business with a good cleaner today or any kind of business," he said. "They're looking for a community partner and that's what we try to do."

"Honestly, I don't do a ton of cash contributions, he continued. "What I like to say is, 'I make it rain drycleaning "Several years in a row, there were bidding wars that got up to \$10,000 for that," he said. "I was a nice little conduit for money making for the kids, but it was also kind of cool that people would go absolutely crazy about drycleaning for those few years."

Jim, on the other hand, has gone absolutely crazy about finding ways to give back to Salem. Recently, he competed in his fifth straight annual hot wing-eating contest to raise funds for the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Salem. While he narrowly lost this year, he has won the event twice before and, more importantly, helped raise several thousands of dollars.

"Honestly, I don't like chicken wings," he admitted. "I just do it for the kids."

few years ago, Daisy Cleaners had to relocate from where it was headquartered for more than a half a century. due to eminent domain. Rockingham Park ran its last horse race in 2009 and closed down seven years later. Recently, the area is being redeveloped as part of the prestigious Tuscan Village project.

It has not been an easy ordeal, but Jim tries to keep things in perspective. "You try to make lemonade out of lemons. There was a lot of arguing with state officials, and I could go on for a while about that part of it, but we basically ended up with a brand new plant," he said. "When we made the transition, it was seamless. We shut down on a Saturday afternoon and on Monday morning we opened at the new location. I only moved around the corner from the original location."

Unfortunately, the timing leaved a lot to be desired. The COVID-19 pandemic was just around the corner.

"I had this brand new facility, all set up ready to go and no work coming in. So, we started giving it away. We started doing [cleaning for] first reare very passionate about them.

Donning a white smock and using the alter ego Dr. Clean, Jim has recorded several popular and entertaining social media videos that documented some of his lengthy efforts to restore severely dirty and damaged gowns. The efforts have really paid off as customers have traveled from Vermont, Maine, Connecticut and Massachusetts because of his reputation.

"During Covid, I was breaking records cleaning wedding gowns," he said, before adding that, to avoid any mishaps, customers must *always* open the box and make sure it's their gown when they pick it up.

"I always joke. I don't want to end up on *Oprah Winfrey* someday and hear, 'I opened up my wedding gown box 30 years later and it wasn't my gown!'" he laughed.

There seems little chance of that happening, although Jim was put in full view of the spotlight lately. In September, the Greater Salem Chamber of Commerce awarded him with the 2022 William A. Brown Distinguished Businessperson Award, which is presented to an individual who has greatly enhanced the local business environment.

Some accomplishments that they noted included his support of the Salem Animal Rescue League, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Salem and his recent induction to the Windham Knights of Colombus. They also noted his efforts to clean the American flag for free, something that started 25 years ago for very emotional reasons.

When his father, Gabe, passed away suddenly in 1997, Jim recalled seeing a wrinkled American flag draping his coffin — honoring his service for the country.

It didn't sit well with Jim so he had an idea. He approached the owners of Douglas & Johnson Funeral Home and let them know he would always clean burial flags for veterans free of charge.



This holiday season, we take time to reflect upon the good things we have...like working together with you.

We hope that the holidays and the coming year will bring you happiness and success.
We look forward to moving into the New Year together.





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Jury awards \$60m in Modesto verdicts against Dow Chemicals

Since 1998, the city of not warn customers properly Modesto, California, has engaged in a series of lawsuits against Dow Chemical and PPG Industries for selling tetrachloroethylene (perc) to drycleaners across the city a product attributed to causing the contamination of the soil and groundwater at 23 former plant locations. In mid-October, the 24-year-old case took a step forward when a 12-member jury hit Dow Chemicals and PPG Industries with a \$4 million verdict in damages to Modesto for cleanup costs of one site at 409 Seventh St.

The 11-day trial began on Oct. 3. According to Law360, the jury found Dow's drycleaning solvent to have a "design defect" and they did

about contamination risks. Though Dow did not directly sell the product – it was sold by distributors – the jury believed Dow and PPG did not give sufficient warnings to the third-party brokers.

That ruling was followed by another later in the month when the San Francisco Superior Court found Dow Chemical had acted with "malice" and fined them \$56.3 million in punitive damages for its role in manufacturing the chemicals that caused the groundwater and soil contaminations. The jury did not include PPG Industries in the levy of damages.

Modesto officials were pleased with the recent verdicts. A statement from Dow noted the company will seek an appeal, claiming: "The city of Modesto did not present any evidence that Dow acted with malice related to the manufacture and sale of drycleaning solvent DowPer. In addition, the punitive damages awarded by the jury far exceeded limits imposed by the U.S. Constitution and California law. Dow will appeal to overturn this verdict in which the jury clearly disregarded the evidence."

Meanwhile, the lawsuits are far from over. Modesto plans to continue pursuing litigation for more than 20 other contaminated former drycleaning establishments that are now homes, grocery stores, bars, restaurants, gyms, barbershops and more.

NewsMakers

Unipress's Stites retires

{Editor's Note: Tom Stites, sales manager of Unipress, is retiring after a long career, but not before he offers a few parting thoughts. Speaking of which, we'd like to do the same and say Thank You for everything, Tom!}

Well, it's time. After 37 years with Unipress, I have decided to retire. When I was asked to write a few words about it, I felt like I was writing my own obituary. What does one say? I'm very uncomfortable trying to write nice things about myself. Amazing how a good pour of bourbon can help clear your mind. I realized it wasn't about what I have accomplished but rather what Unipress and the industry has done for me. What I really need to write about is thanking all people who have



Tom Stites (center) retires as Jim Groshans (right) assumes his duties and Nick Slush (left) takes over his Groshan's sales territory.

helped and given me opportunities along the way.

It all started when Sol and Carol Memberg gave me an opportunity and welcomed me into the National Clothesline family. That opened the door to a great industry and a chance to meet and talk with a ton of manufacturers and distributors.

One of those manufacturers stood out above the rest. When Unipress Corp. was seeking a new sales manager, I joked with Gary Johnson that I might not run the classified ad because I would be the best candidate. We both laughed. A few days later he gave me a call and said he and Peter Hamlin would like to talk to me. Well, obviously things blossomed from there. From one family to the next. Thirty-seven years later, it's time for me to say Thank You to all the Unipress distributors and all of the great customers I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with; Thank You to the entire Unipress team that worked together long and hard to be innovative, creative, and forward thinking. The pride everyone puts into the product line that is ever improving is amazing. I can truly say that without everyone's help things wouldn't have turned out the same. Thank You.

Now, it will be up to Jim Groshans to take advantage of his opportunity to help guide Unipress in the future as my replacement. With Jim's vast industry experience and gift for gab, he will no doubt make the most of the opportunity. His attitude, values and compassion for the customer has been the trademark throughout his career. Jim has already taken a giant step in the right direction. His first official act as sales manager was to find a qualified replacement to follow in his footsteps and assume the duties of the southeast sales manager, as he did for the last four years.

Enter Nick Slush. Nick will be responsible for sales and customer *support throughout the southeast.* He comes to us with a solid background in sales, service and installations in the drycleaning industry. Nick is a 2nd generation drycleaning veteran and is eager to start building relationships with the Unipress distributors and customers in his territory.





MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

During the holiday season, our thoughts turn gratefully to those who have made our success possible. It is in this spirit that we say thank you and best wishes.



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WRENCH WORKS



By Bruce Grossman

Monitoring your compressed air system

he compressed air powering your equipment has many essential properties. Pay attention to them and you'll be rewarded with smooth, trouble-free performance of the air compressor itself, as well as the productive machinery being powered by the compressed air. Ignore them and you'll be leaving yourself open to lost production time, higher utility costs and more repairs.

NOTE: Compressed air can be dangerous! Before attempting maintenance to your air compressor system, make sure the electric power is off, no safety devices have been defeated and there is no air pressure left in the compressed air system.

Major Components

Electric Motor. Provides the torque required to operate the pump. There are two types of motors, single-phase and three-phase. Single-phase are typically used in compressors that require lower levels of horsepower (typically 7.5 HP or less) or when three-phase power is unavailable. These motors are generally capacitor start/capacitor run and

are easily identified by the protrusions on top of the motor containing the capacitors. Fortunately, most compressor motors do not require maintenance unless grease fittings are on the end bearings (these fittings are generally found on larger motors exceeding 7.5 HP).

Pump. The heart of the compressor which converts the rotational energy of the electric motor into the potential power of pressurized air. There are several families of compressor pumps; however, I'm limiting this discussion only to the reciprocating type, the family of compressors most common in our industry. It uses pistons moving inside cylinders coordinated with associated valves to compress the air. In an air compressor, the electric motor provides rotary force linked to a fly-wheel (usually via belts) which rotates a crankshaft. The crankshaft translates this rotary motion into reciprocating (up and down movement), sliding a piston inside a cylinder.

At the top of the cylinder there is a set of reed valves, an

intake and an exhaust. On the piston downstroke, the intake valve opens, allowing air to be sucked into the cylinder while the exhaust valve shuts, isolating the pump cylinder from the stored compressed air in the receiver. On the upstroke of the piston, the intake valve closes, and the exhaust valve opens, enabling the rising piston to compress the air in front of the piston head while also providing an exit path from the cylinder into the receiver.

There are many moving parts in this portion of the compressor, along with seals and gaskets requiring lubrication. All this linear and rotary motion must occur in an oil bath to reduce friction and wear. The oil is engineered for the type of lubrication service required for air compressors. (Do not use motor oil in an air compressor.) Keep in mind that, not only must the oil be designed to be compatible with the rubber, plastic and metal parts in the compressor, it must not degrade components in the machinery that will be using the compressed air.

The oil level contained in

FLY WHEEL AIR FILTER REED VALVES CYLINDER PISTON CRANK SHAFT MAIN BEARINGS FILL PLUG DRAIN PLUG SIGHT GLASS WOTOR TYPES CAPACITOR CANS SINGLE PHASE CAPACITOR START CAPACITOR RUN THREE PHASE RECEIVER TANK TYPES VERTICAL RECEIVER

compressors should be checked weekly. There's generally a small round sight glass or a dipstick located towards the bottom of the compressor pump. With the compressor shut off, a level of about ½ way up the height of the sight glass, or at the proper marking on the dipstick, should be visible. If it's low or not visible, add oil.

The oil itself should be drained and disposed of properly and then replaced at least once annually. Fill and drain plugs are usually located near the sight glass or dipstick. A second maintenance point is the belts coupling the electric motor to the compressor pump. They are subject to wear and need to be monitored at least monthly. You'll know when they begin to fail because you'll hear them squeal when the compressor starts. Do not use "belt dresslayers of rubber or cracks across the face of the belt don't wait — replace them. Belts should always be replaced in sets with the same specifications as the originals.

Receiver. Also called a tank, it stores the compressed air, serving as a reservoir to store the compressed air. Additionally, it damps pulsations from the compressor's discharge line, resulting in essentially steady pressure in the compressed air system.

It also prevents frequent cycling (the starting and stopping of the compressor). Water vapor condenses and oil carries over into the receiver, where it accumulates. Therefore, it's necessary to drain the accumulated water and oil from the receiver regularly. Draining the receiver is accomplished by opening a drain valve located at the bottom of the receiver while the receiver is pressurized, allowing pressurized air to blow the water and oil out the bottom of the receiver.

ing" to avoid adjusting or replacing failing belts. Also, be sure the electric power is off before attempting to adjust or replace belts and always replace the belt guard when finished. When the belts are properly adjusted, pressing your thumb against the outside surface of the belt about halfway between the motor pulley and fly wheel should result in about a half-inch deep arc on the belt. When adjusting belt tension, do not overtighten the belts. This causes premature belt wear and bearing failure. Look carefully at your belts. If there are loose threads, separations between

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 SAHARÁ 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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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Taking a closer look at finishing agents

read a recent article con- must be considered before apcerning a controversy over the term *sizing* and retexturizing. This prompted me to write and expand the concept, clarify and, hopefully, not confuse the issue. The proper term that describes agents or procedures added to fabrics to enhance their properties is called finishing agents. Manufacturers use finishing agents when producing fabrics and cleaners restore these finishing agents that may be lost during wear, drycleaning or wetcleaning.

The drycleaner's job in restoring finishing agents is not an easy one since the desired look and feel of the fabric plication. The problems associated with not using proper finishing agents might prompt these complaints from customers: garment lost its feel; feels limp and looks like a rag; and looks wrinkled and can not be properly pressed.

Finishing agents provide fabrics with the following desirable characteristics: feel and hand; drape; sheen and luster; softness; water repellency; and presses easier and holds the press longer. The finishing agents that provide these characteristics are starch, vegetablebased sizing, gelatins, synthetic resins, softening agents, and

heat/moisture/pressure.

These products can vary greatly when applied to some fabrics better than others. For example, starch and vegetablebased sizing give cottons and linens a nice crisp feel. Gelatin is used on rayon because it does not detract from the luster, but enhances it and gives rayon a nice hand and drape.

Softening agents lend themselves to wool while synthetic resins lend themselves to silk.

Heat, moisture and pressure also have a significant role in the feel and look of a fabric. For example, if I press cotton while it's damp, it will result in a stiffer feel than if I pressed it when the fabric was dry.

The use of finishing agents may come in a disguised form, such as detergents. For example, we are familiar with drycleaning a load of wools and silks in clear virgin solvent. The result is the wools and silks have a harsh and dry feel, lack luster and generate a lot of static electricity. We refer to this condition as squeaky clean. We now dryclean these fabrics using a drycleaning detergent and the garments now have a soft feel and lustrous look. We can also add a sizing either in a batch or charge, and the fabrics now have added characteristics that enhance the fabric.

Now, we can add a dry side sizing either in a batch or charge and this adds further characteristics to the fabric. The sizing is not used to create a stiff feel, but merely to give the fabric additional body, making it easier to press and to retain the press. It is equally as important to use the proper finishing agent in wetcleaning. I will use Laidlaw as an example since I have been using these products for many years and they have a wide range of finishing agents available. A professional cleaner must first determine the look and feel that the fabric should have and use the products accordingly.

Example 1: Wools and silks that require a soft feel would entail the use of a cationic or nonionic cleaning agent such as Soften All. The use of a cationic softening agent will add to the soft feel and hand of the fabric. After processing, the garment should be tumbled in a warm dryer for one to three minutes. The heat of the drying process is necessary to activate the softening agents left in the fabric. I have experimented many times using this procedure and it can be documented that the finishing agents used reduces the fabrics potential for shrinkage.

Example 2: A pair of jeans is received for processing. If the jeans require a soft look and feel, the same procedure should be used as outlined with the wools and silks. Dry garments on low heat and press when thoroughly dry.

Example 3: Jeans are received for processing and the customer requests a stiff feel.

Procedure: Wetclean using Power Brite. Add Aqua Size or Khaki Size. Dry garments to 90% dry and press with high heat and pressure for additional stiffness. Use a spray sizing to increase the stiffness of the fabric further.

Problem Solving

Sometimes loss or breakdown of finishing agents used in manufacture can create serious fabric problems. The following problem solving procedures can be attempted.

1) Difficult rings on satins and polyester.

Cause: During manufacture, synthetic resins are used that may break down during wear or cleaning.

Solution: Pre-spot the area with amyl acetate.

2) Shrinkage on wool.

Cause: By excessive heat, moisture and mechanical action.

Solution: In order to attempt stretching and correction, the wool fiber must be impregnated with a softening agent. I had

Continued on page 24



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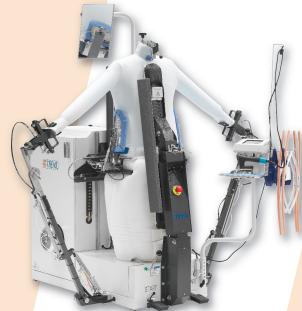


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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Stay on top of wage and hour laws

Labor Standards Act **▼**(FLSA) in 1938, establishing a minimum wage and a forty-hour workweek as the legal basis for overtime. In 1947, Congress passed the **Portal-to-Portal** Act, clearing up confusion over whether employers had to pay employees for commuting time and other time before the start of the workday or after the end of it.

The Portal-to-Portal Act said that, unless the employer required employees to report to remote parking locations, put on special equipment, or otherwise engage in extraordinary activities at the beginning and end of the workday, time spent going to or away from work was not compensable. Maryland's highest court recently ruled that the Portal-to-Portal Act was not adopted by the state when it enacted its own wage and hour laws. Note:, if a state or local wage and hour law is more generous than the FLSA, the state or local law applies. If an employee is exempt from overtime under the FLSA, but not the state or local law, the FLSA does not apply.

While the Maryland Court minute

commuting time compensable, it did muddy the issue. Plaintiffs' attorneys were delighted. I saw a TV ad recently with a plaintiff's attorney seeking employees (clients) who hadn't been properly paid under the FLSA. He said most people do not know if they are being compensated properly, and he was happy to view pay stubs and ask questions, all with a view toward suing their employers. I'm sure one question will concern commuting and when the employee is officially on the clock.

While the concepts of overtime and minimum wage seem simple, the FLSA is perhaps the most complex labor law in the land after the Family and Medical Leave Act. I guarantee that your company, no matter how sophisticated and careful, is violating the FLSA in some way. For example, were you aware that non-exempt employees must be given at least a 20-minute non-interrupted lunch hour if the company does not want to pay them for the time?

I once had a client who allowed employees to take 10smoke breaks,

wanted to know if he should have them punch out so he would not have to pay them. He was flabbergasted when I told him that, because the

(though not in all cases); travel (though not usually commuting time); training; and on-call time, except under certain circumstances.

The two biggest areas of contention in the wage and hour arena involve hours worked and exemptions from minimum wage and overtime.

breaks were less than 30 minutes, he had to pay the emthey ployees whether punched out or not. Then again, he didn't have to give them breaks at all. I never found out if he discontinued the breaks or decided to dock the employees despite my legally sound advice.

The two biggest areas of contention in the wage and hour arena involve hours worked and exemptions from minimum wage and overtime. With respect to the hours-worked issue, employees must be paid for such things as: interrupted lunch hours; time worked both before and after a scheduled shift; time spent working at home; time spent

Ironically, an employer can fire an employee for punching in early or punching out late, but he cannot refuse to pay the employee if work was performed. The law says that if you "permit" an employee to work, you must compensate him. Not stopping him from working is virtually equivalent to permitting him to work.

As to the exemptions from overtime and minimum wage, there are regulations by the Department of Labor (DOL) that are as complex as the Internal Revenue Code. The exemptions vary: some employees are exempt from minimum wage and overtime, some only overtime. There are various tests employees must meet to be exempt. Exempt employees can lose the exemption, either temporarily or permanently, depending how they are actually compensated. The exemptions are based on what the employee does, not how much he or she is paid, or how he or she is paid.

One thing is clear: hourly employees are rarely exempt, unless they are computer programmers making nearly \$30 an hour. Exemptions are for salaried employees. Salary issues arise all the time. Can I dock a salaried employee without losing the exemption? Where commissions come in? How much must the salary be?

Merely paying an employee a salary doesn't make him exempt. That employee's exempt status is based on duties, responsibilities and place in the organization. In almost all cases, the exempt employee must exercise independent judgment.

Employers are well advised to stay on top of the wage and hour laws. Employees and former employees can sue for back pay up to three years, an equal amount in liquidated damages, and attorneys' fees. Further, employees cannot agree to accept less than the amount to which they are

ongress passed the Fair of Appeals did not make all outside, twice a day. He laundering their uniforms entitled under the FLSA, even if the wage arrangement was the employee's idea. And, employees cannot settle wage and hour claims for less than the amount they are entitled to receive, even if they settled with the advice of an attorney. In other words, an employer can settle a wage and hour case, and then be sued again because the settlement amount was insufficient.

> Wage and hour complaints by employees, including lawsuits, are protected activity under the FLSA. If an employee complains about her pay, she cannot be disciplined, even if she was wrong about the pay practice. The theory is that emplovees should be able to question pay practices without fear of retaliation.

> As I said earlier, where state laws are different than the FLSA, including a higher minimum wage or different rules for exemptions, the state law trumps **federal law**. Therefore, *com*plying with federal law is no guarantee that you are paying your employees properly.

> Finally, some employers hire current employees as independent contractors to do tasks such as painting, housekeeping, or maintenance work after hours. Keep in mind, the DOL takes the position this "independent contractor" is still an employee covered by the FLSA. If the extra work puts the employee over the 40-hour threshold, the DOL wants the employee compensated at time and a half. The government allows you to set a different rate for different work, but overtime is calculated based on what work was being done when the employee worked past 40 hours.

> Don't wait to be audited or you fire an employee who hires that TV lawyer. Review your policies and practices. If you have questions, get legal advice. If you cannot afford one, go read the regulations pertinent to how you pay your employees. Also, check to see if your state or local jurisdiction has more general wage and hour requirements.

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.





SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Test driving my holiday wishlist for Santa

erage of Clean Show 2022 and bada bing, bada boom — just like that — it's the holiday season and time for me to write my Annual Wishlist to Santa Claus. For those of you who have been following my columns for a couple of decades, you know that, in December, I write a tongue-in-cheek letter to St. Nick with my list drycleaners and shirt launderers. These are products that do not yet exist, but I believe they would help plant owners and managers run a better and more profitable operation.

Over the years, some of my wishes have come true. Each of my ideas, I believe, are technically possible, although perhaps in some cases, cost prohibitive. Be that as it may, I leave the engineering and development to someone else. I am only playing the role of the *imag*ineer. Several times, readers have tried to order a product that I was merely fantasizing about, or asked where they could buy one. Sadly, I had to break the bad news.

As a youngster, when I wrote to Santa for real, I surely sent along a long tedious laundry list of things I wanted. As I got older, the list shortened, but was more desperate and insistent.

I want a mini-bike. Period. I want a car. That's all. (Neither worked) So, this one ask — and it's a big ask. And, I'll give you some extra time, too.

have completed my cov-year, I really do have only have joked and wondered if I the shirt onto a sleeve press. will still be around when there is a machine, into which, we can toss in a soiled A few months ago, I drove shirt at one end and, at the a Tesla. The self-driving other end, out it comes, all

This year I really do have only one ask — and it's a big ask. And, I'll give you some extra time, too.

things I want for function was wild! How was this all possible, I thought. The more I thought about it, the more I understood. But, when I say understood, I don't mean that I understand how it works, I mean I understand how it has evolved. There is a good chance that the car that you drove today has some components of a self-driving car: blind spot indicators; proximity sensors; cruise control; radar cruise control; emergency braking; and lane departure assistance.

> It seemed like the leap to a self-driving car was enormous. You would think that maybe the first evolution of the autonomous car would drive like a teenager and hit trash cans, and *speed*. Then, eventually, as they became more advanced, perhaps they would roll through stop signs and not fully understand a yield sign. But, of course, in order for a self-driving car to fly, so to speak, it would have to be a very good driver — better than we are.

What am I getting at? Hang on. Over the years, I cleaned, pressed, on a hanger, invoiced, bagged and ready to go. Far-fetched? Hmmm. Maybe not *that far*.

Garments can be identified by computer, either by bar code or RF, so the need for someone to look at a tag isn't necessary. There is plenty of robotic manipulation that moves fabric around and completed garments from here to there. Consider how a shirt press will grab a cuff, pull it tightly, adjust the sleeve so that the pleats will press perfectly, and then release everything once everything is done. This happens all the time nowadays.

Colmac has had a shirt buck with a hanger in it for many years. Once the press cycle is complete, the garment is already on a hanger. Similarly, Y.A.C. has a shirt press that automatically unloads the shirt from a body buck without a hanger. Although this never came to the USA, they also have a device that unloads the collar/cuff machine and drops I saw the video years ago and watched in amazement.

In industrial laundry, washers and dryers that load and unload themselves have been around for a long time. A company in Maine makes a machine for the garment manufacturing industry that automatically buttons all the buttons on a shirt in the blink of an eye.

It's probably too complicated to think about this for a load of drycleaning due to the great number of different types of garments that will be in a typical load, but let's think about a load of shirts for a few minutes.

Maybe the loading end looks like a high-tech washing machine. You fill it as you normally would. Chemicals are automatically dispensed, of course. It washes, rinses and extracts, and then unloads itself through the back of the machine into a large tumbler. An arm catches one shirt and senses the collar due to its weight and thickness. The shirt is raised up high and shaken to assure that no other shirt is tangled. The shirt is lowered onto a collar and cuff machine. Passive tension is applied to the fabric to assure a quality finish.

After this press cycle is completed, the shirt is lifted off the collar and cuff machine and lowered onto a fully automatic body press. The hanger is already inserted in the buck. The shirt is positioned with the help of electric eyes, cameras, puffs of air, vacuum and robotic arms and hands, as well as the current day passive assistance such as back pull-

downs and collar stretchers. Once this

> shirt is pressed, it can be bagged and invoiced and sent on its way or it can be set aside in self-contained holding area for the remaining pieces in that order, just like any modern-day

assembly conveyor. These days, it is difficult to find employees. This idea eliminates virtually all of them. The premium version of this probably has a batchfeed washer that has mini tunnel washer. It does one shirt per minute, day and night. That's 10,000 shirts per week. Good thing, because this contraption will set you back \$500,000 — but that's OK. You can be doing all the shirts in your city while competitors try to figure out how to press the 200 shirts they have today. Also, you can charge less because your costs are less. Imagine being able to charge less than a dollar and making more profit than you do now. This is going to take some thought, but this is going to happen. Ring! Ring! Time to wake up! There goes my alarm clock. Happy New Year everyone!

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

Don Desrosiers has been in the drycleaning and shirt laundering business since 1978. He is a work-flow engineer and a management consultant who provides services to shirt launderers and drycleaners through Tailwind Systems. He is a member of the Society of Professional Consultants and winner of DLI's Commitment to Professionalism award. He can be reached at 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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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Silver Bullet #4: Tactical marketing plan

with a new coaching client, I ask them what they think is the key to growing their business. Nine times out of ten, they tell me the same thing: "We need to spend more time and money marketing our products and services." My response? *Hogwash*.

Now, don't get me wrong. Marketing is important. In fact, I love marketing. But here is the simple truth:

Trying to grow your busi-

Thenever I sit down ness by pouring more time and money into marketing that is already ho-hum is like a boxer who steps into the ring leading with his chin: you are going to get knocked out almost before you begin.

Now, you are probably thinking: "But, in order to get new customers I need leads. And, in order to get leads, I have to advertise... or at least do something!"

Perhaps, but in a majority of cases, the answer is not simply doing more; it is

doing a better job of it.

That is why you need this next Silver Bullet: A Tactical Marketing Plan.

Before I get into the nuts and bolts of improved marketing, let me introduce you to a simple diagram that I call The Profit Equation (see graphic on page 20). It demonstrates how small, incremental improvements in a few critical areas actually leads to dramatic growth in your business over time.

With a mere 10% im-

will reap amazing results! Note that most improvements are marketing-regenerating more leads, improving your conversion rate and getting existing customers to spend more money with you more often.

How do you do it? There are two vital components.

1) Establish a system for measuring your marketing. Every ad, blog post, postcard, or letter should ask

provement in each area, you your prospect to do something as a direct result of seeing or hearing your message — so you can track the precise results. (This action does not necessarily have to be a buying decision—often it is simply the next step in your sales process.)

> Then, you must measure how well your marketing pieces perform. If you cannot measure it, then why do it? This is my biggest issue with social media, but everyone says you have to do it — why?

> Once you know which ads are effective and which are not, you have the information you need to save (and make!) a tremendous amount of money, simply by using those that bring in leads, and disregarding those that do not. In Methods for Management, we have numerous members who do A-B testing with their messaging.

If you are like most business owners, anywhere from 50% to 80% of your new customers comes from referrals and word-of-mouth.

Also, there is a fantastic TED talk that you should listen to - the "WHY" from Simon Sinek. It has accrued tens of millions of views, and it challenges you to figure out your why.

2) Begin measuring your results by implementing high-impact, low-cost mar**keting tactics.** Here are some of my favorites methods.

• Ask for referrals. If you are like most business owners, anywhere from 50%-80% of your new customers come from referrals and word-of-mouth (if that is not the case for you, you have got some major room for improvement here). And yet, many companies have no formal, incentivized referral system in place.

I have had clients more than double their lead flow

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Kermit Engh

Silver Bullet #4: Tactical marketing plan

Continued from page 18 by implementing a formal and systematic referral process.

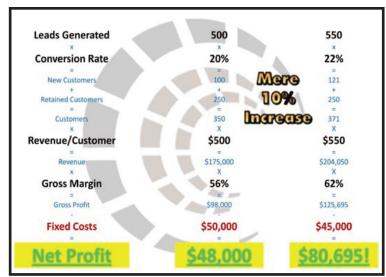
Related to this is a structured "new customer" onboarding process. This could include handwritten welcome letters, welcome emails or texts, a gift bag, branded items, and a gift certificate for their next visit.

I have always felt that we need to get that third transaction to feel we hooked a new client.

Your POS system may have a report showing the first five transactions with dates and amounts for each route or store. This information is golden.

• Create a rewards pro**gram.** Reward customers for buying frequently! Create a membership or rewards program that helps your customers feel more involved and encourages them to come back more often.

Everyone loves to feel like they belong somewhere or get special care just because of who they are. We have achieved this through our Text Club — exclusive



offers available only to these clients (but never for our core services they use already).

• Invite inactive customers back. Remember: you cannot get what you do not ask for. Send periodic invitations and unique offers to customers who have not been in for a while. You will be amazed at how much more responsive a list of former customers are than a cold list.

Many have found this to have huge results as many past customers became accustomed to not using you thru Covid.

• Understand why peo-

ple leave. Take great care to track your customers so you become aware when they have stopped coming back.

Whenever you lose someone, try to find out why they left. If possible, speak directly with them and ask what you could have done to retain their business.

It might be a little painful to hear about complaints or problems — but if one person has had a negative experience, chances are others have experienced something similar.

This information will be invaluable as you make systematic improvements in your business to increase remajor POS systems have great info to identify and track lost clients, big tunas, and out-of-pattern clients.

• Send an email newsletter. If you want to maintain a relationship with your customers, even when they do not have an immediate need for you, the answer is simple: Communicate with them!

One of the best ways to do this is through email newsletters. Send them interesting, informative articles that they can use. If you lack time to create a newsletter each month, check out Elance.com or Guru.com and search for ghostwriters, copywriters, and content writers. You can usually find surprisingly affordable content providers who will create and deploy your email newsletters for you.

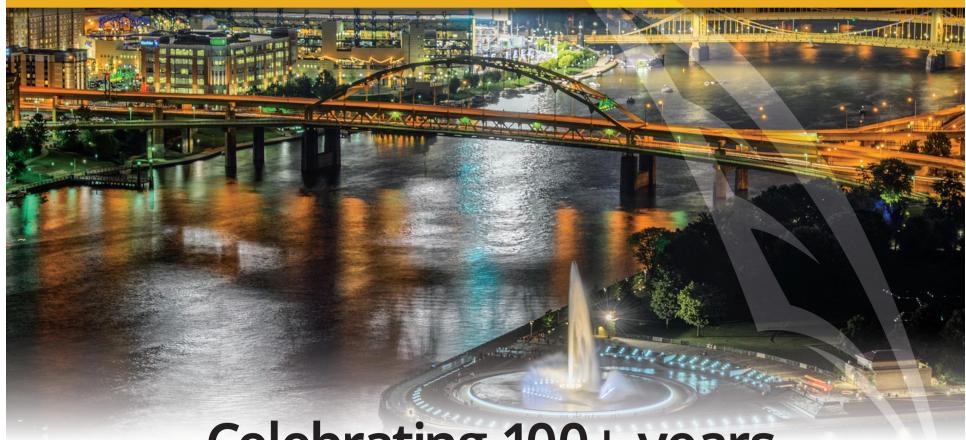
Marketing is the way to grow your business. It does not mean spending huge amounts of money. It is about message testing and knowing your client base.

There is an old theory that birds of a feather flock together. Analyze your top

tention over time. All the 20% of spenders. What do they have in common, what do they do, and how do they spend their money? They are your target. Focus

> Systemize your marketing programs. We all get distracted, but do not let that divert your marketing efforts. Hire it out if necessary or hire a virtual assistant to run it, but make sure it is getting done. Measure your results and do not be afraid to adjust tactics. Finally, watch your sales grow. 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 kengh@mfmi.com.



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Union Dry Cleaning Products, USA

Unipress Corporation

United Fabricare Supply, Inc.

U.S. Leather Cleaning

DLI Membership Pays



Dan Eisen

Finishing agents

Continued from page 12

several wool sweaters sent to me with problems of excessive shrinkage. I soaked them for 15 minutes in Laidlaw's Soft N Brite and Soften All. I did not rinse them, but merely extracted them. The garments were soft and pliable which made them easier to stretch and restore to original size.

3) Discoloration on rayon.

Cause: The sizing used on the rayon breaks down, causing a whitish or discolored area.

Solution: Use the fogging method. Hold the steam gun three to four inches from the fabric and steam the area. Use air to dry the fabric. This will cause the disturbed sizing to blend in with the

discolored area. The garment can also be steamed on a press, lightly sprayed with water and then pressed using head pressure.

I am taking orders for my new and complete manual The Art of Wetcleaning which is very much in demand. The price is \$95 which includes shipping and handling. With every order I will send you a card entitling you to a free wetcleaning kit from Laidlaw.

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.

Criteria for Proper Finishing by Dan Eisen

It is a foregone conclusion that in order to finish a garment properly you must learn correct procedures, have good padding, up-to-date equipment and adequate steam pressure. Often overlook is the proper cleaning of a garment. While I was teaching a pressing course, a student brought in some silk blouses, jeans and wool knits. He said his presser could not properly finish these garments. The blouse looked wrinkled after finishing. The jeans did not have a soft feel after steaming. The wool knits had a harsh feel and could not be blocked into shape.

The aforementioned problems related to proper cleaning and not techniques used in finishing. Many cleaners have the notion that silks and wools require clear rinsing after cleaning, or no soap addition during cleaning. When this occurs, the garments are what we call squeaky clean. All fabrics need soap as a lubricant, and using a sizing additive helps to maintain proper hand and feel of a garment and results in a properly finished garment. I recleaned the students garments with a proper soap charge and sizing. I wetcleaned the jeans with a cationic soap and softening agent. The silk blouses steamed out nicely and had a proper look after finishing. The wool knits were now soft and could be blocked into shape. Also, the jeans had a soft feel that the customer wanted.

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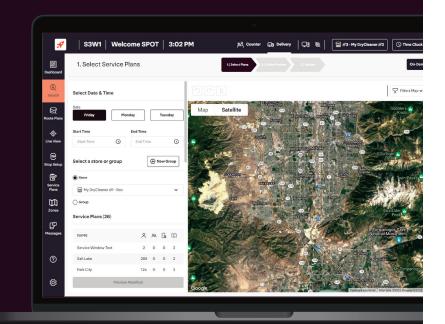
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