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CCA/DLI ward off poly bag ban in L.A.

The industry worked together last month to convince the Los Angeles City Council to keep drycleaning poly safe from the city's ordinance that bans single-use plastic bags.

Other items were voted to be added to the ban on Dec. 1, including styrofoam, plastic pharmacy, produce and farmer's market bags, as well as plastic foodware and single use plastic at all city-run facilities and events.

At this time, there currently exists plastic ban regulations on the books in California, Hawaii, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Oregon and Washington, DC, but none of them include drycleaning poly, though that could change in the near future.

During the vote, Los Angeles City Councilman Paul Koretz noted that the committee can revisit the topic at a later date. However, for now, he

noted that the "current ordinance draft as exists does not include drycleaners or any drycleaner bags."

That didn't seem to be the case just before the Thanksgiving holiday when drycleaners discovered that the L.A. City Council would be considering including drycleaning poly to its single-use plastic ban just days before a vote was set to take place.

The California Cleaners Association (CCA) and the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) quickly mobilized members to help educate the L.A. City Council on the industry's use of poly to protect clothes and allow customers to inspect them. Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. While many drycleaners offer reusable bags to customers,

some even wrap clean clothes inside poly before putting them in the bag. Other alternatives available include biodegradable bags or bags comprised of plant materials, both of which

natives, and it's clear — at least to date — that they are not interested in recycling programs because of the consumer education that's required," noted CCA President Toran Brown.

"It'd be great if every drycleaner could have a recycling program, but if nobody brings poly in or returns the poly, then you don't have one."

For now, drycleaners are actively seeking solutions. Former CCA President Jim Douglas is currently chairing a Rules, Regulations and Legislature Committee that will explore the issue and try to find sustainable and viable solutions for when cleaners are no longer exempt from such bans.

"The good thing is, we have a seat at the table and that's what you really want," emphasized DLI CEO Mary Scalco. "I

don't think it's going to happen overnight. It's not like there's a solution for everyone. It's going to take both sides."

The EPA's recent estimates from 2018 show landfills received 27 million tons of plastic. It is likely only a matter of time until a municipal board or governing body bans drycleaning poly, as well.

Brown believes that the best thing that cleaners can do is to support the associations that are supporting them.

"I think people, particularly those who are not members of DLI, need to understand that DLI is out there supporting everybody," he said. "Unless you as an operator are prepared to go down to your local capitol and advocate on behalf of this industry — which most people don't have time to do — you need somebody to represent you and that's what DLI can do."



would likely cost the industry much more money — and they have not been engineered specifically to work with drycleaning equipment.

Another option would simply be recycling, of course, but that presents a few problems, as well. "I fully expect that they will be looking for alter-

DLI releases full 2023 school schedule

With a new year comes a new batch of opportunities for newcomers and veterans alike to develop or hone their drycleaning skills at the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's School of Drycleaning Technology in Laurel, MD.

This year, the association will host three separate sessions of its comprehensive signature courses: the one week Introductory to Drycleaning course and the two-week Advanced Drycleaning course.

The five-day introductory course is more suited for individuals with less than a year of experience. It covers: sorting

loads; cleaning silk, satin and other fabrics; operating a drycleaning machine; removing coffee, ink, grease and other stains from clothing; pressing pants, coats and skirts; and using tensioning equipment to improve

finishing quality.

The first offerings will take place in Spring, with the introductory course running from March 6-10, followed by the advanced class that will meet from March 13 to 24.

Tuition is \$1,595 for non-members; \$1,195 for Budget and International members; \$956 for those with a standard membership

and \$717 for Gold members. Premier members can enjoy any three courses for free.

The advanced curriculum is suitable for those with basic stain removal and finishing techniques.

It covers a lot more material, including fabric identification; using bleaches without damaging color; pressing blouses, dresses, ties, pleated garments, silks, velvets and corduroy; wetcleaning; maintaining and changing filters; troubleshoot-

ing problems with the drycleaning machine; getting clean, white laundry; pressing laundered shirts; understanding the difference between solvents including perc, Green-Earth, hydrocarbon and Solvon K4; and designing a drycleaning plant with the most cost-effective work flow.

Tuition for the course is \$2,195 for non-members; \$1,695 for Budget and International members; \$1,356 for

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Expanding in the Emerald City



After his mother, Helena, raised her children alone while running a drycleaning company in Seattle, Will wanted nothing to do with it. However, once he started working there, he soon took the reins of the family business and now wants to honor his mother by making her name synonymous with "drycleaning" throughout the city. For the full story, go to page 6.



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A properly trained CSR will convey a sense of trust with the customer when accepting difficult garments.

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January, 2023
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Plastic bans still exclude cleaners, but for how long?

The 21st Century has not been an easy one for drycleaners who have had to contend with a calvacade of regulations, recessions, shortages and pandemic lockdowns, but many in the industry are feeling a bit optimistic about the opportunities ahead this year (see Peter Blake’s column on page 18, and James Peuster’s column on page 20). The drycleaning industry seems primed for growth in 2023, but things easily could have gone very differently for drycleaners in Los Angeles, CA, who dodged a regulatory bullet.

Just before Thanksgiving, the California Cleaners Association (CCA) and the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) discovered that the L.A. City Council would soon vote on additional items to be included in the city’s single-use plastic ban — including drycleaning poly. From that point on, association leaders raced to reach the right people and communicate to them how —and more importantly, *why* — the industry relies heavily on poly use with no simple solution for an alternative. The clean and finished clothes require something for protection, and the transparency aspect of poly makes it very convenient for customers to inspect their items without risk of ruining its pristine, wrinkle-free condition.

This situation is reminiscent of when regulators began proposing regulations to ban perc use in parts of the country. It took time for alternatives to be developed — and because the industry is so diverse — there was no simple, one size-fits-all solution for every cleaner. This is also true with the poly issue. The industry simply needs more time to create and innovate alternatives. That time was just made possible by CCA and DLI who now have a seat at the table with the L.A. City Council to work together to find mutually acceptable sustainable options for the industry.

In recent interviews with DLI CEO Mary Scalco and CCA President Toran Brown, it was clear that even the L.A. City Council is not positive on what those acceptable options might be. For example, recycling comes with its own set of complications, as Scalco noted. “They say, ‘Well, we don’t like recycling because that depends on the consumer to recycle. But, if you’re in an area where you’re predisposed to that kind of thinking — you want to protect the environment, you want to do what you can do — I don’t know that recycling is a big challenge to convince people to do it.”

Clearly, there would have to be consumer education programs to let people know

how to recycle poly and with a 9% plastic recycle rate of plastic in this country, it could fail even in a progressive state like California.

So, what other options does that leave? Plant-based poly? Biodegradable bags? Reusable bags? All the different options available at this time have potential issues for some cleaners to overcome. As alternatives, they either are more costly or more time-consuming at this time. Then, there’s the issue of whether or not any of these bag types can be incorporated into use with bar coding and automatic drycleaning equipment, as well as allow consumers to see their clothes without exposing them to the elements.

For years now, the industry has managed to escape inclusion in various single-use plastic bans throughout the country, but that time is running out. The writing is very much on the wall. If L.A. doesn’t become the first to ban drycleaning poly, some other municipal entity will happily be the first to take that step. After all, it is estimated that the world produces almost 300 tons of plastic every year, and only about 9% of it is recycled. The vast majority of the rest ends up littering the landscape or in landfills.

CCA and DLI has given the industry time to work on this problem that is not going away, and they now have a direct communication channel with the city council to help make sure that they understand the costly and logistical issues cleaners face moving forward in a poly-free reality. As CCA President Brown noted, this issue can potentially affect every cleaner — whether they are an association member or not. He hopes those who aren’t members can recognize the support they are receiving and be more willing to sign up.

“DLI has the ability to represent themselves as a voice for the industry because of the extent of their membership and because of the financial support that they receive from the industry,” he said. “I think it makes them stronger and I think it makes the industry stronger.”

There remains a lot of work ahead, but fortunately the associations are well-positioned to have an impact on the regulatory process. As Brown noted, “The good news is they were listening to us. That’s going to be sort of the next lap of this process — to educated them on the challenges that our industry faces in different sectors and how we can potentially craft perhaps multiple solutions that lead to a desired outcome.”

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Visit us at www.nationalclothesline.com for additional coverage of the drycleaning industry and issue archives going back to January of 2018.

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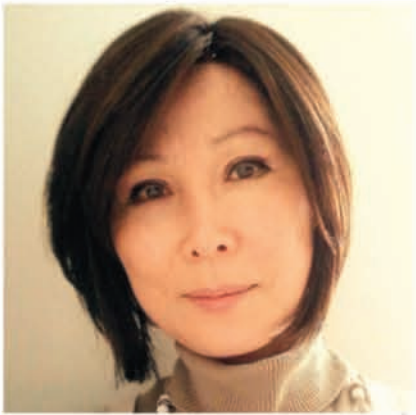


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Spotless in Seattle

This story begins many decades ago in Hawaii when a young American serving in the military met a young Chinese woman who moved there speaking little English. He was fluent in Chinese, however, and the two married and eventually settled down in Seattle, WA.

Because the young man's family had a background in the drycleaning industry, he used that knowledge to open new plants in the Emerald City.

"What my dad was really good at was opening businesses, but not running businesses," explained Will Waterstraat, owner of Helena's Cleaners. "So, that's how my mom learned drycleaning, because suddenly my dad opened a business and nobody was really running it, so she learned how to dryclean."

Will's mother is the *Helena* in the business's name, but it wasn't always that way. Originally, the company was called Aloha Cleaners. Through trial and error and a lot of hard work, she taught herself how to dryclean. With three children at home, it seemed like the couple's fairytale-esque story was carving out a happy ending. Instead, there was a rude awakening.

"My dad was kind of a hot mess and he started embezzling money. My mom didn't even know until the IRS showed up at the cleaners and said, 'Everything comes to a halt' and they started asking for every single file," Will recalled. "So, long story short... my mom and dad were in bankruptcy court at the same time they were getting a divorce. The judge ended up saying, 'You have three kids. You have no husband, so what I'm going to allow you to do is keep one of the drycleaning stores because that's how you're going to make your living.'"

Helena was also allowed to keep the house for the sake of the kids, but that was a costly victory. "She had a lien on her house of \$300,000 that my dad had racked up," Will added.

Making matters worse, Helena's ex-husband still found ways to wreak havoc in her life after they separated.

"My dad kept sending people here for money to get people off of his back," Will continued. "He would say, 'I have a drycleaners. Helena will give you the money.'"

"So, what my mom did was, one day she put a picture of herself on the wall, and then she put up a big sign that said: Helena's Cleaners. As a little kid, when people came in looking for money I would watch her say, 'Do you see Dave's name anywhere here?' She would say, 'No. I'm not paying you anything because this is not Dave's Cleaners.'"

When he was growing up, Will didn't spend too much time around the business. It wasn't where he wanted to be.

"My mom would want me to work the counter, and I wouldn't show up for work," he said. "So, I was never really in the business when I was young, other than when something went wrong and we would have to come here at night. We would literally sleep

in the mark-in bags at the counter. My mom would put those down and we would get in with a pillow and sleep."

With their father long out of the picture, Helena raised her children and kept the business going, sometimes through sheer determination.

"From 1984 until about 2006, my mom had times that were good and

Overwhelmed at the time, Will left to pursue other opportunities. Eventually his mother approached him again, more adamantly. Initially, he agreed to help out, but only at the front counter.

"So, the first year I worked here, my mom only paid for my car and health insurance because she couldn't afford to pay me," he said.



Helena and Will Waterstraat

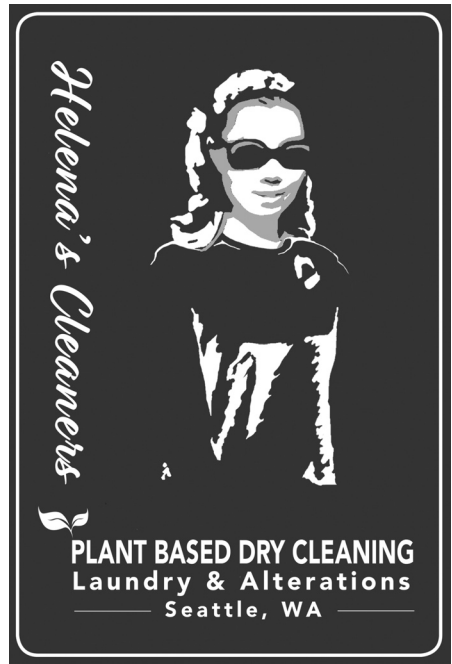
Helena's Cleaners
Seattle, WA

times that were bad, but it was always hard work," Will continued. "My mom used the house to float the business for years. She would refinance and put the money back into the business when times were rough and she had to take from somewhere. Her house was her bank."

After high school, Will couldn't seem to find the right career fit, dabbling in mortgage brokerage and working as a bartender, front desk manager and assistant general manager for the Bellevue Club. When his mother asked for him to come help at the family business, he tentatively agreed.

Will graduated from the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's introductory and advanced classes, but after using newer equipment in perfect working order, he returned to Helena's and acted "ridiculous and foolish."

"She had stomper presses that were either not working or broken down, several spotting boards that were just dirty and broke and then she had a drycleaning machine that had the computer out on it, so she was manually doing every load," he recalled.



Will worked at the counter in the morning and bartended in the evening. Next, Will was ready to learn how to press pants. So, Helena said to him, "Who are you going to let go?" That was his first lesson of business.

"So, I let go of one of our pants pressers and I took over pants pressing. No joke — after the first week of doing that, my mother is like, 'By the way, you're going to learn how to spot and dryclean right now, too,'" he recalled.

When Will became proficient at pressing, Helena said it was time to switch again. He had to train somebody to do the pants and somebody else had to train him to work on blouses and sports coats. Meanwhile, Helena continued to ask her son, "How are you going to drive sales?"

Will spent many long hours over the course of several years working to cultivate relationships with leasing agents and property managers to help Helena's establish pickup/delivery accounts in the competitive Seattle market, even as Helena refinanced her house in order to buy a new shirt machine.

In both cases, the efforts paid dividends, but Will would be the first to admit he's made his share of less successful choices, as well. Fortunately, he's now reached the point with the business where he hopes his management team is willing to do the same.

"I've made mistakes. I'm not smart. I was just able to try ideas, fail, and then get up," he explained. "So, for me — and where we are with the business now — we do have a luxury that we can make some mistakes, and they will never, ever act like me if they don't make their own mistakes."

As Will sees it, his mistakes are a necessary step in order to achieve a better understanding and appreciation. "I am not the same person at all because I finally have believed and bought into

something — which I had never done before — and I put in the work to do it," he said. "There's no doubt that to stay consistent that you have to work really hard. That's one thing that you realize: nothing is given for free and you've got to pay your dues daily. I still come to work with that attitude daily and I thank my mom for being able to

browbeat me and make me realize that you have to be detail-oriented and work hard."

Helena, who is 84 today, still comes to work a couple of days each week to chat with customers and learn what new plans and changes Will has for the business. The scale of Helena's has grown considerably over the years, from modest six-figure sales during the early days to over \$5 million in 2022.

Today, Helena's has close to 50 employees. About a year-and-a-half ago, Will orchestrated a move into a 13,000 sq. ft. plant. The company also purchased Blue Sky Cleaners and Clampitt's Cleaners to continue its growth.

"Ultimately, I just want Helena's to be synonymous with drycleaning in Seattle," Will said.

Like others in the industry, Will focussed on pickup/delivery during the pandemic, but he also fished for new business to help offset the costs of moving to the new location. Fortunately, he hooked some big fishing accounts.

"So, we work for companies like Trident and they have these very large boats," he explained. "They go out, and every time they come back — we get all the bedding on the boat, all their cold storage freezer suits that every employee wears — and you're talking hundreds of people on a boat. It's not like a tiny little trawler that goes out."

After 16 years in the industry, Will has helped transform Helena's Cleaners into a leader in a very competitive marketplace. However, he has no intention of coasting into the future. Helena simply won't let him.

"Whenever I see someone else's bag in a building or I see another drycleaning van, I get OCD-obsessed with it because I keep thinking they could be me," he said. "You always have to be worried about that one little guy, and I always think to myself, 'I was that little guy.'"



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DLI releases full 2023 school schedule

Continued from page 1
Standard members and \$1,017 for Gold members.

Both courses will also take place again during the summer and fall. The Introductory class meets July 17 to 21 and the Advanced class meets July 24 to Aug. 4. Later in the year, both classes meet again. The Introductory course will take place from Oct. 16 to 20 and the Advanced course will take place from Oct. 23 to Nov. 3.

Additional tuition discounts are available for those who sign up to take both the introductory and advanced classes together. Non-members can pay \$2,895 for both. Budget and International members pay \$1,995, Standard members pay \$1,596 and Gold members pay \$1,197.

Additionally, DLI will host two installments of its Stain Removal course. Course dates include from April 25 to May 16 and Sept. 12 to Oct. 3. Classes are held live Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1 to 3 p.m. EST using Zoom video conferencing.

Topics to be covered included: removing coffee, ink, grease and other stains from clothing; identifying cotton, silk, polyester and other fabrics; using bleaches without damaging color; using specialty products such as digesters, amyl acetate and acetone in stain removal; and identifying fibers and fabric construction.

Tuition is \$695 for non-members. Budget and International members pay \$495, Standard members pay \$394 and Gold members pay \$297 each.

In addition to its courses at its school, DLI will continue to host its weekly Peer-to-Peer Zoom meetings every Tuesday at 11:30 a.m. EST.

On Jan. 18, the association has planned a virtual education session with Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners. He will present "Optimize Your

Profits in 2023" at 1 p.m. EST.

DLI's webinar series is archived online so members can access them at anytime. Topics of past presentations cover diversification, equipment maintenance, management, marketing, production, finishing, stain removal and business sales and acquisitions. For access, visit the association at DLIONline.com.

Those seeking to sign up for any of DLI's upcoming courses should call (800) 638-2627.



Spring
Introductory to Drycleaning (March 6-10)
Advanced Drycleaning (March 13-24)

Summer
Introductory to Drycleaning (July 17-21)
Advanced Drycleaning (July 24-Aug. 4)

Fall
Introductory to Drycleaning (Oct. 16-20)
Advanced Drycleaning (Oct. 23-Nov. 3)

Virtual Stain Removal
Spring
April 25, 27; May 2, 4, 9, 11, 16
Fall
Sept. 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28; Oct. 3



Graduates from DLI's Introduction to Drycleaning Class 381 included: (left to right) Brian O'Donnell, La Nuova Drycleaners, New Plymouth, New Zealand; Jennifer Saunders, East Hills Cleaners, St. Joseph, MO; Taiwo Bade-John of Whiteice Laundry & Drycleaning, Lagos, Nigeria; Sean Rees, Magic Lockers, Inc., Montreal, Canada; and Kevin McAllister of Kreussler, Inc., Tampa, FL.



The latest batch of graduates from DLI's Advanced Drycleaning Class 381 included: (left to right) Kerry Glasgow, Sudsies Dry Cleaners, Miami Beach, FL; Sean Rees, Magic Lockers, Inc., Montreal, Canada; Taiwo Bade-John, Whiteice Laundry & Drycleaning, Lagos, Nigeria; Shawn Norred, Puritan Cleaners, Richmond, VA; Kevin McAllister, Kreussler, Inc., Tampa, FL; and Brian O'Donnell, La Nuova Drycleaners, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

Obituary Mark Watkins (1947-2022)



Born in 1947 to Tommy and Betty Watkins, Mark Watkins hailed from the city of Birmingham, AL.

He went on to start Mark's Quality Cleaners there in 1981 and serve as a long-time board member of the South Eastern Fabricare Association (SEFA) and the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI).

In late November, he passed away at the age of 74.

After earning a business degree from Jacksonville State University Mark sold ductile iron and plastic pipe for about a decade, but things changed in 1981 when he and his wife Gretchen decided to open Mark's Quality Cleaners in Birmingham.

The early days were hard, but Mark retained his sense of humor. "I was working on old junk equipment until three o'clock in the morning with a guy who didn't know how to work on them... who smoked Chesterfields... constantly," he recalled in a *National Clothesline* interview from 2021. "I'll never forget leaning over my paychecks in the heat of summer,

trying to write them and hopefully they would clear when I handed them out."

He quickly turned the business into a profitable and reputable cleaners by employing smart strategies, adding delivery routes and offering impeccable quality.

"In this industry, if you're not nitpicky and persnickety about what you do, you won't survive," he said.

In 2019, at the age of 71, he spearheaded a much-needed relocation of the company, a move that certainly helped it survive during the toughest days of the pandemic.

He was just happy to make the business stronger in the future for his son, Josh.

"Josh can continue to grow after I do the backstroke out of here, and he'll have something that is worthwhile and will be good for him for the rest of his life," he explained.

Mark also often acted as a life coach for his team members and deeply loved Alabama football and riding motorcycles. He was preceded in death by his parents, Tommy and Betty Watkins, and father-in-law Paul Wolff. He is survived by his wife, Gretchen, and their four children: Josh (Sophie), Rachel (Benjee), Sarah and Wes.

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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

How to respond to an OSHA inspection

Although the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) is over 50 years old, few employers know how to react when they see an OSHA compliance officer.

As a result, many employers find themselves fighting citations that might have been avoided with a little planning.

Keep in mind, a compliance officer is an intruder at your facility. The U.S. Supreme Court has said that a compliance officer is just like a police officer looking to gather evidence of a crime.

If you do not want him on your job site, require him to obtain a warrant.

In doing so, he must convince a magistrate that he has probable cause to conduct the inspection. Probable cause for compliance officers is not the same as for a policeman, but he still cannot obtain a warrant without good reason.

Also, a compliance officer does not necessarily respond to kindness. Inspectors do not “go easy” on employers who are cooperative and come down hard on those who don’t. In fact, experience indicates the opposite is true.

The more complex an employer makes it, the quicker the inspector leaves and goes to the next, more cooperative employer.

Besides, the law requires a compliance officer to cite any violation he sees, and it is technically against the law to give an employer “a break.”

With that in mind, you can formulate a tough policy for dealing with OSHA. To begin, select a management official to be responsible for safety, including OSHA inspections.

That person should be level-headed with the ability to say “no.” In small companies, this person will normally be called the “boss.” In larger companies, a plant manager or safety officer would be selected. That person should also be responsible for safety training and the development of safety programs, such as hazard communication, hearing preservation, machine operation, and so forth.

He should get a copy of the applicable OSHA stan-

dards and study them. Copies of standards can be obtained at www.osha.gov, the government printing of-

Once in private, ask to see the compliance officer’s credentials. If he does not have them, throw him out.

him inspect the entire facility; he would not be permitted to do so even with a warrant.

Inspectors do not go easy on employers who are cooperative and come down hard on those who don’t. In fact, experience indicates the opposite is true. The more complex an employer makes it, the quicker the inspector leaves and goes to the next, more cooperative employer.

fice, your attorney, or the local library.

It’s a wise investment of time and money to get a copy. It could save you thousands of dollars.

When An Inspector Visits

All personnel, especially supervisors, should be told that if any government official presents himself at the shop, the company safety officer should be contacted. They should also be told that no one is permitted to come into the shop or inspect the workplace unless the safety officer says so.



Most compliance officers will be willing to wait or come back later when the safety person is available.

If not, let them leave to go obtain a warrant. Virtually all compliance officers will accept this condition rather than run out for a warrant.

Do not be intimidated by the inspector. Make him or her be patient.

He is an intruder, and should only be admitted on your terms. He is not your friend; even if he is, his job is to find safety and health violations, cost you money, and testify against you should you contest the citations.

If the company safety officer is present, he should take the compliance officer to a private area — try to avoid walking through areas where work is being performed.

Anything the officer sees can be cited, even though the inspection has not formally begun.

If he does, write down his name, address, telephone number, supervisor’s name and supervisor’s phone number. Find out the reason why he is there. If he does not tell you specifically, throw him out.

If the inspector says he is there based on a complaint, ask him for a copy. If he does not have it, tell him to call his office to get all the information.



Find out who filed it, what the specifics of the complaint are, and what standard the complaint would violate, if valid.

If you cannot get straight answers, make the compliance officer get a warrant.

If you are not getting straight answers, involve your attorney, preferably someone who knows about safety and health law.

An employer should consider contesting every citation, no matter how small the penalty.

If you do get straight answers, let the officer inspect, but only the area involved in the complaint. Do not let

If you are concerned you are not in compliance, make him get a warrant. Give yourself time to correct the situation and possibly avoid a citation.

If the inspector says he is there to make a general scheduled inspection, ask him how your company was selected.

If he cannot give you a straight answer, make him get a warrant. The same advice applies if you fear that you’re not in compliance.

A general scheduled inspection is a “wall-to-wall” inspection that normally results from random selection. If OSHA shows that your company was selected properly, it can obtain a warrant. This is one area where it is easier for OSHA to get a warrant than the police.

If the inspection is an accident inspection, cooperation may be in order. There is no doubt that OSHA will be able to get a warrant.

Even so, you should still limit the inspection to the circumstances surrounding the accident.

Although it rarely happens, a compliance officer may have a warrant the first time he visits. Clearly tell him that you object to the inspection, and then limit him to the letter of the warrant.

If he tries to deviate, tell him you want to call the magistrate or judge.

What You Should and Should Not Do During an Inspection

If the inspection occurs, the safety officer should limit the inspection as much as possible. The more difficult you make it, the faster the compliance officer will move on.

You select the routes; do not let him wander.

The safety officer should

take photographs whenever the compliance officer does, and he should also write down what he says.

However, **do not** write down anything that could be incriminating for your company; OSHA may be entitled later to see your notes.

If the inspector asks to talk to employees, insist on being present.

If he wants private interviews, you can require a warrant. You do not, however, have to disrupt your work for these interviews.

It is also a good idea to let employees know ahead of time that they do not have to talk to OSHA.

During an inspection, it is important not to volunteer any information that could be used against the company.

Never admit a violation; at the most, say that you will review it.

At the closing conference to discuss the results, take detailed notes. Question the inspector extensively about the basis for any citation he might issue.

Ask him the applicable standard and to explain in detail any proposed abatement.

In sum, you can control an OSHA inspection much more than you realize.

If you do not, you may very well find yourself defending your safety practices before an administrative law judge or hearing officer.

Also, there is one last thing to consider: an employer should consider contesting every citation, no matter how small the penalty.

If you get cited for the same violation later, the penalty will be much larger, perhaps thousands of dollars.

Also, citations become part of your permanent business record with the agency to be used against you in later proceedings.

Plus, abatement costs can be very expensive, even though there is no fine. Think it through before you accept an OSHA citation or settlement.

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.



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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Silver Bullet #5: Sales management system

Before we get into this month's topic, all of us at Methods for Management would like to wish you a great New Year! I assume that each of you have created written goals for the year. All of my adult children love it when I call on New Year's Day to see if they have completed theirs. With that, let's dive in.

Regardless of your industry, one thing makes the world go around in business: sales. So, if you do not have a sales team that consist of your route drivers and customer service representatives (CSR) that sizzles, you will struggle mightily.

Poorly managed sales staff and a lack of a systematized sales process is one of the biggest problems I see business owners make. The Silver Bullet that will help you correct it? A **sales management system**.

Here's how to set it up:

1) Develop Key Performance Indicators for Your

Sales Team. First things first, you need to know what specific numbers your sales team needs to hit in order make your business thrive. This sounds simple enough, but you would be surprised at how many businesses fail to calculate these numbers! We have previously discussed about knowing your numbers, budgets and determining your break-even number. If you have yet to do this, figuring out this KPI may be a challenge.

so that you are not creating goals that are either so high they are unattainable or so low they do not stretch anyone. An easy way to get started is creating a budget through the Budget feature within QuickBooks. Begin with last year's numbers and review to adjust for this current year. For those with a higher understanding of QuickBooks, you can export the budget report into Excel. From there you can now convert the cells into ratios

pensation. When your staff has a vested, financial interest in their results, their output will soar. Some owners shy away from this but I say that almost nothing you do will prove more powerful in terms of increased effort and productivity. Those in Methods for Management have heard me speak for years on sharing your internal numbers with staff. I get immense joy visiting one of our locations with three days left in the month and the

contests with fantastic incentives. Give generous bonuses when people meet and exceed their sales objectives. Make working for you a rewarding experience — and you will be rewarded handsomely.

You need to base these numbers on actual, past results so that you are not creating goals that are either so high they are unattainable or so low they do not stretch anyone.

Of course, it is not as simple as just setting some arbitrary standard and leaving it at that. To be most effective, you need to base these numbers on actual, past results

and formulas. As you change revenue numbers, the related expenses will also adjust.

2) Tie Your Employees' Performance to their Com-

store manager knows exactly the number she needs to hit in those remaining days to hit one of the three levels of performance bonus. For a greater understanding of open book management, read *The Great Game of Business* by Jack Stack. This is one of the most interesting business books I have read.

3) Create an Environment Where Your Sales Staff Can Thrive as Individuals. Everyone is different. They are motivated by different passions and goals. Effective sales managers understand this and motivate their people by showing them how reaching their sales targets will help them achieve what they really want out of life.

One of the best things you can do is to have everyone on your staff create a "vision book" that outlines in specific, visual detail what they are really working for: the car, the house, the vacations, the ability to give to the charities and causes that mean the most to them, the financial security, whatever means the most to them. I have a free vision book template I would be happy to give you — simply follow the directions in the blue box on this page to request your own copy.

Finally, make sure the work environment is positive but includes some friendly competition. Create

4) Provide Your Staff the Resources They Need. Make sure your sales team has everything they need to be successful. This includes customer relationship management technology that makes it easy for them to track and manage all of their accounts, solid scripting, high quality leads, and ongoing training to help them hone their skills and improve their results.

5) Hold Sales Staff Accountable for Their Performance. More than any other department, you need to keep your eye on the sales team to make sure they are meeting their objectives. Review their numbers weekly. Coach them as necessary to help them improve.

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.

Bonus Resource: Free Vision Book Template


As a bonus thank you gift for reading this, I would like to give you a free vision book template you can use to train and motivate yourself and your sales team! To request it, simply email me at kengh@mfmi.com, subject line: Vision Book or call the office direct at (402) 690-0066 and reference this gift.

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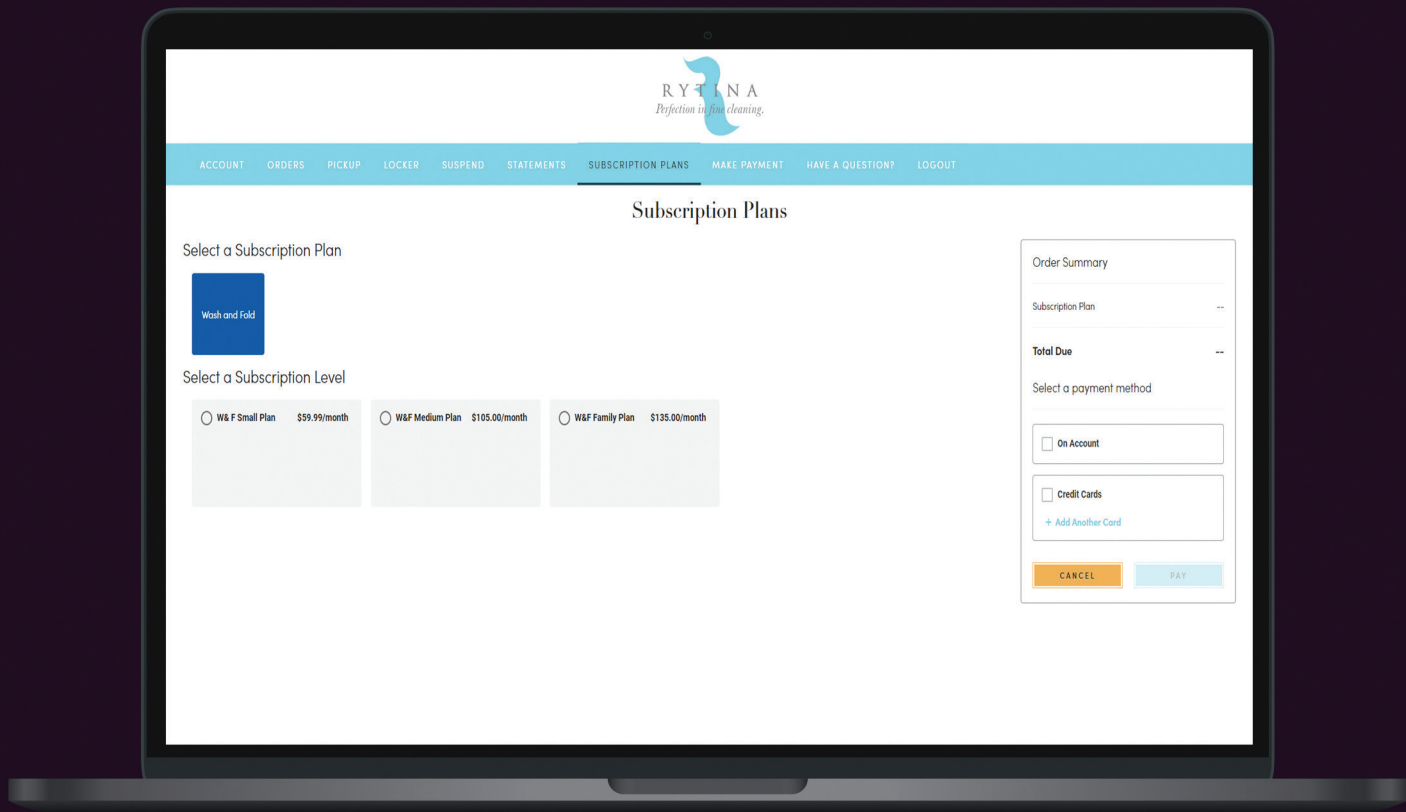
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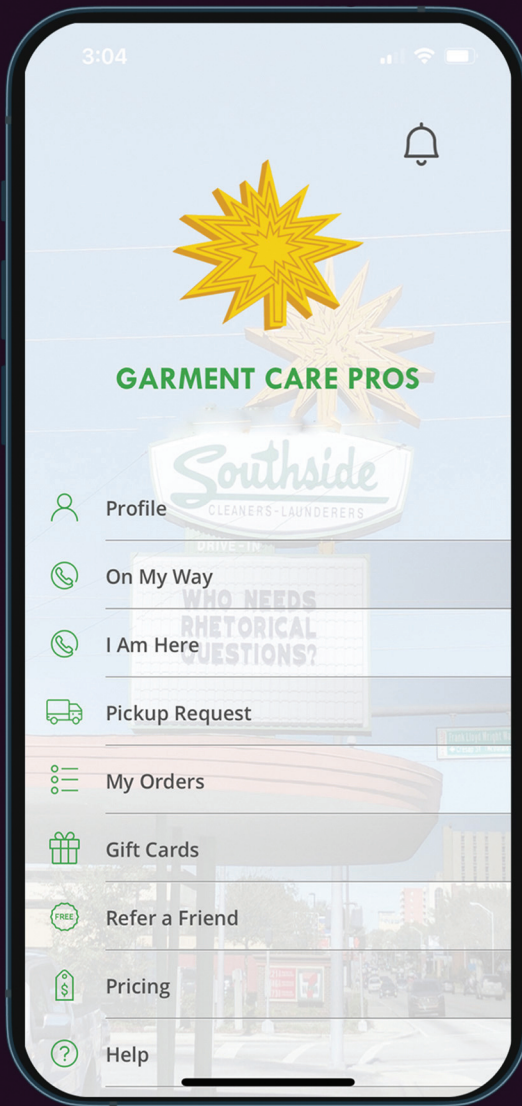
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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Monitoring your compressed air system II

Last month, I discussed the essential components of a reciprocating compressor: motor, pump, and receiver (tank) — which you'll find on every machine in this family of compressor.

This month I will be explaining the function of other components that, when combined, make up a complete air compressor.

So, in review, the electric motor is connected to the pump using belts. The motor's rotary motion turns a flywheel on the pump linked to a crankshaft, which moves piston(s) inside the pump cylinder up, compressing air and down, sucking air into the cylinder to be compressed during the next compression cycle. The compressed air leaves the cylinder through the top portion called the head and is pushed into a large vessel called a receiver or tank.

In order to familiarize yourself with air compressors, descriptions of the individual parts are as follows:

1) There is a **check valve** (Item #1 in the graphic) generally located in the tank which permits the air to flow into the receiver, but prevents the air from flowing back out.

This check valve stops the air from just flowing back from the tank into the cylinder when the piston moves down to suck in more air.

2) There is a **pressure relief valve** (Item #2) guarding against excessive pressure building up inside the cylinder. When the pressure setting of this valve exceeds, this safety device opens venting to the atmosphere, relieving excessive pressure inside the cylinder.

3) A **valve** provides a means of shutting off the airflow out of the compressor (Item #3). Ball valves serve nicely for this purpose.

4) Contaminants in the form of small amounts of oil and water accumulate in the tank and must be removed. Removal of contaminants is accomplished by using a **drain valve** located at the

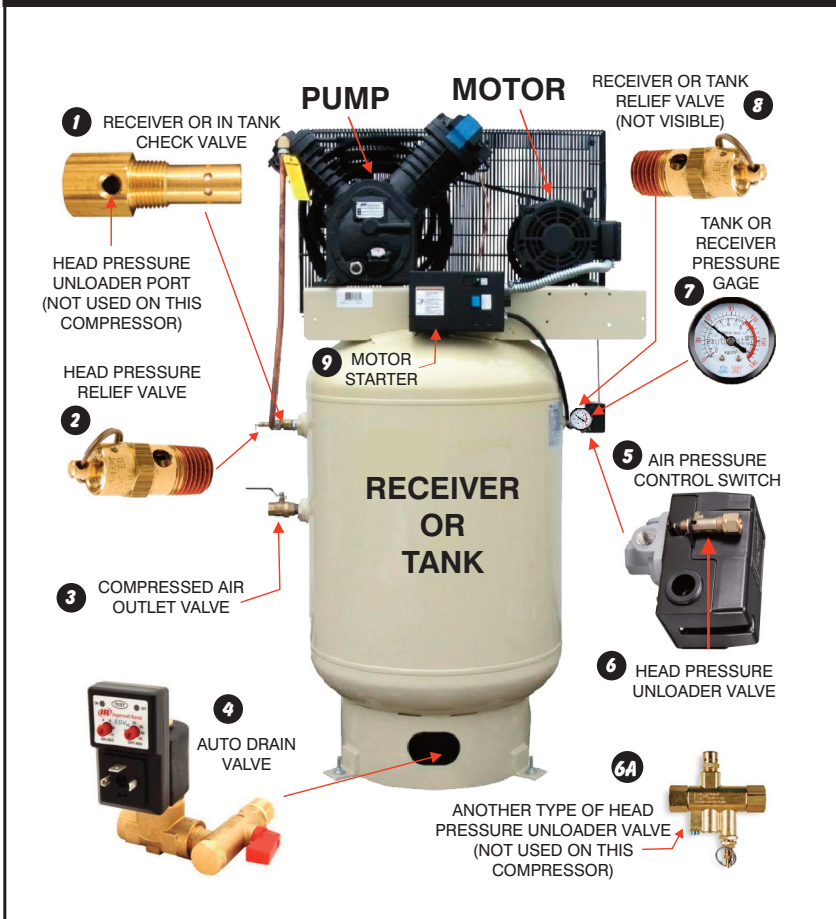
bottom of the tank, which provides a path for pressurized air to blow contaminants out of the tank (Item #4).

I highly recommend installing an auto drain type valve to accomplish this. Failing that, a ball valve will do nicely if you remember to use it.

5) As air pressure increases inside the tank, there needs to be a method to shut off the motor when the desired air pressure is reached. An **electrical air pressure control switch** (Item #5) is generally used to accomplish this. This switch opens an electrical circuit that either controls a **motor starter** (Item #9) on larger compressors or directly opens the power circuit to the motor on smaller compressors.

6) When the air pressure

AIR COMPRESSOR COMPONENTS



in the tank has reached the setting on the pressure control switch, shutting off the motor, pressurized air is trapped between the top of the cylinder and the tank check valve.

When the air pressure in the tank drops and the motor restarts, this pressurized air would resist the piston from moving up inside the pump cylinder, placing an extremely high load on the motor while it's starting. A small valve called an **unloader** (Item #6) is used to prevent this by bleeding off this high-pressure air when the pressure control switch opens.

There are some compressors (usually larger types) that when the desired pressure is reached, the motor continues to run; however, the cylinder head is unloaded to the atmosphere using an **unloader valve** (Item #6a), so there will be no further increase in tank pressure.

7) Located near the air pressure control switch is a **gauge** indicating the pressure inside the tank (Item #7).

8) A **relief valve** is used to protect the tank from excessive pressurization. These valves are generally calibrated to open at a preset pressure exhausting compressed air in the tank to the atmosphere, and should never be tampered with and

always be replaced by valves having an identical pressure rating (Item #8).

9) To safely control the motor switching on and off, a **motor starter** is used (Item #9). The term motor starter means that a magnetic motor contactor (switch) does the actual switching of the motor, and some form of motor overload protection, usually in the form of a resettable thermal overload device, are combined in one control.

If excessive current flows through the motor, the circuit automatically opens, shutting the motor off before damage can occur.

That's it for this issue. I will be back next issue with more good stuff on air compressors and compressed air systems.

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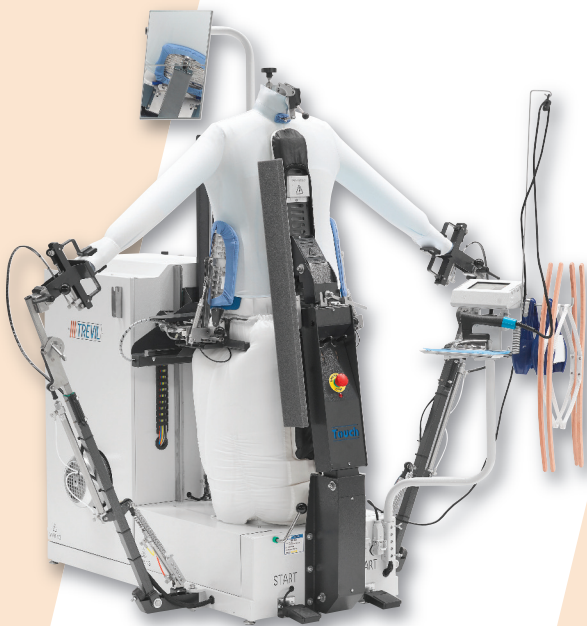


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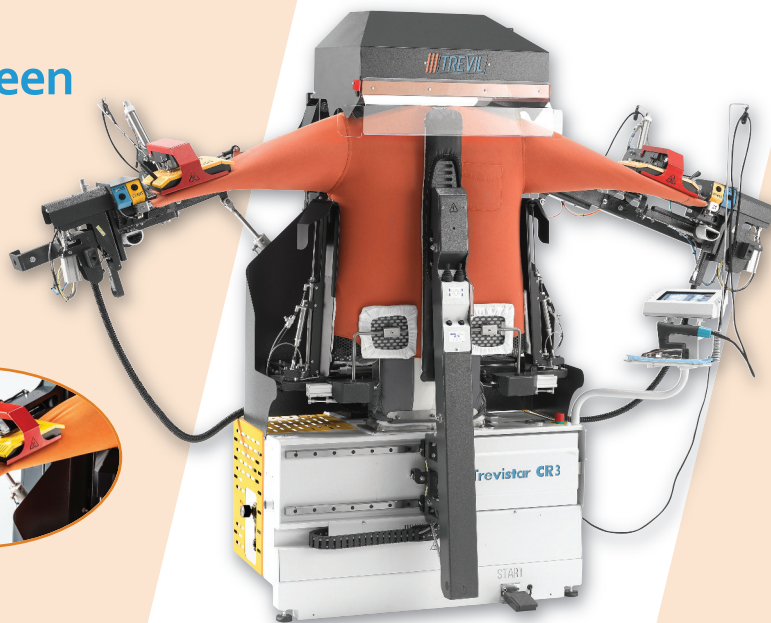
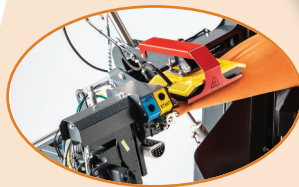
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AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE



BY PETER BLAKE

Making your business better in 2023

Usually at this time of the year, we like to reflect on the past and evaluate where we are. We make New Year's resolutions and plans to make big changes going forward. Do you do this?

I admit, while I very seldom make them public, I do make them to myself. Sorry to say, but I very rarely hit the mark, usually fail, and find myself making the same ones the following year. But, not this year. This year I have only one goal, and I hope you can do the same for you and your business. I will get back to that.

First, let me forecast my thoughts on our industry. We are poised for growth. We have a lot of opportunities ahead of us, and we have the ability, desire and tools to capitalize on them.

Those who see the challenges and react, be proactive, and invest — will succeed. Those who see the obstacles, don't learn from the past, keep their heads down, and don't utilize the plethora of business assistance tools at their disposal — will fail. To succeed takes work, effort and investment. By the sheer fact you are still here today and rebuilding, you know you have what it takes to move forward and to thrive.

As an industry we are on a good path. People are re-

turning to the office. Covid is a part of life and we have found ways to adapt. With the high inflation we are experiencing, garments are becoming less disposable. People are investing in caring for them properly to expand the life of their textiles. We can use that to our advantage. People still want to look their best, and that is what we do. We keep people looking and feeling good.

Time is still a person's most valuable asset, and through our convenient services, we save time.

Now, back to my goal for 2023. My goal is not to be better than anyone else, but to be better than I used to be. It is that simple. I am not going to worry about what others are doing. I am going to focus my efforts on controlling the things I can control. How does that relate to your business?

I plan on doing a better job. I know I have a lot to work on, and I have a lot of areas I am not very good on. But, realizing that is the biggest hurdle. Looking introspectively can be difficult but moving forward I plan to be better.

I am sure you all have areas like that, as well. Give yourself a true introspective look. Identify the areas you need help with.

Look at your quality. Is it a product you are proud of?

Are there ways to improve? If you are a DLI member, we have tools to help you do this. We can test your cleaning quality, tell you how it ranks, how well your system is performing.

With the high inflation we are experiencing, garments are becoming less disposable.

Are your Customer Service Representatives well trained? You can use DLI's Secret Shopper program or another similar service out there. How does your store front look? Ask your friends to come in and give you some feedback.

One of my good friends was telling me the other day that one of her biggest fears in her cost group was having other members visit her plant and critique her process and her plant. It was also the biggest benefit. They saw things and pointed out things that she had just become accustomed to and had developed a blind spot. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

One of the areas I am working on is helping to build a much stronger com-

munity. We have laid down the grass roots and we have done a great job getting people together on Zoom meetings and such. Now, I need to help focus on a more regional basis so you can have non-competitors visit and share insights. I need to build a better mentoring system. My father always told me if you're 18 or 80 — you still have a lot you can learn.

Look at the systems in your plant. How is your marketing? Can you do any better? What are your marketing goals? Where do you want to focus more energy? What investments will pay high dividends? If you need help, there is plenty out there. I love to discuss marketing programs and ideas, so feel free to reach out and we can have a great discussion. If you are on the East Coast, I just might be in your area and we can sit down and have a cup of coffee and review your ideas. I would love it.

There are some great marketing companies that you can also call for help. I know people that use these services and can provide some referrals and thoughts. If you are a member of DLI, Maverick Drycleaners should be no secret to you. You have probably seen some of the great work being done by Be Creative 360. They have helped their members grow

and prosper through lead generation and social media marketing.

Another great resource is Cleaner Marketing. Honestly, succeeding at marketing and branding takes commitment and investment. You can invest in these tools, or you can invest time and learn how to do much of it yourself with DLI's training and resource library. DLI has also developed a Marketing Lab program to help you create content and refine your marketing pieces.

I'm not saying your competition doesn't matter. I am saying to focus your energies instead on how to make your brand better and some of those competitive issues should fade away. I hear it all the time: "they only charge \$X, we can't make it at that price!" or "They are discounting everything!" There are so many pricing strategies, and each comes with their own benefits and obstacles. Care less about what they are charging and more about what you need to charge to make the profit you deserve and produce the quality you demand. Worry less about what their ads are saying and focus your energy on determining what you stand for, and how you convey that message to your potential customers.

Where else can you get better? What do you do for your community? What have you done to help promote your community awareness. Read my last article "Doing good is good business" [National Clothesline, December 2022] for more insight. Determine what areas you need help in, and then find ways to overcome those obstacles. You can call, email or even say "hi" on Facebook and I will help you find strategies for the bright future that lies ahead. As for me, I sincerely hope I can just be better than I used to be and keep moving forward. I would love to play a part in you also meeting that simple goal in 2023.

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



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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

What should you focus on in 2023?

A new year brings with it new hope, new concerns and new goals for each and every one of us. We get on conference calls, forums, share with our peers while keeping an eye on our competition.

We all look forward, or hold onto the past, but a meeting with a dear friend last month reminded me of one thing — *“The journey through life is slowed down by the baggage we carry with us.”*

That quote is my favorite from Wally Amos of Famous Amos cookie fame. His story made history and if you don’t know it you should.

Positivity and perseverance is probably why Wally has the same smile today as he did over 80 years ago. How this relates to our industry is simple: by focusing on these two principles, anyone can succeed.

Most of the drycleaning industry has focused more on routes, as well as the wash-dry-fold world. Judging by the amount of calls we still receive, the world of convenience dominates most decisions by business owners and consumers.

Those who are not focusing on routes seem to be back in 2008, struggling to make

the right decisions to re-establish profitability. If the last two years taught us anything, our industry will continue to see merging of companies, store closures, and route-only operators who don’t have a facility.

Do what you do best and that provides a path of profitability.

There is one thing that has held constant, and that is your drivers must do more

than just drive now. This may be more important than ever now.

Too many owners and managers got comfortable with their delivery crew and just settle on mediocre work habits and discipline.

Fear of losing staff overtook the mindset of losing customers. Thus, many companies became stagnant at best with their routes.

The bottom line is this: 2023 looks to be the year that many will know their fate in the drycleaning industry. Some will move forward rapidly, while others may lose focus and still chase var-

ious rainbows searching for that pot of gold.

Do what you do best, and that provides a path of profitability.

This can be the year you establish a solid foundation for growth. Just stay positive and persevere — it’s that easy.

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



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2023

January 12-15 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute/National Cleaners Association present Brainstorming/Five Stars con-

ference, Secrets Royal Beach Punta Cana Resort in the Dominican Republic. For more information or to register, call (800) 638-2627.

March 6-10 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, “Introduction to Drycleaning” one-week course. For information or to register, call (800)

638-2627 or visit online at www.dlionline.org.

March 13-24 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, “Advanced Drycleaning” two-week course. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit www.dlionline.org.

April 25, 27, May 2, 4, 9, 11, 16 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, virtual stain removal course meets on seven different days. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit online at www.dlionline.org.

April 28-30 SDA’s Cleaners Showcase, Irving Convention Center, Irving, TX. Call (512) 873-8195 to register or for more information.

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

July 17-21 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, “Introduction to Drycleaning” one-week course. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit online at www.dlionline.org.

July 24- Aug. 4 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, “Advanced Drycleaning” two-week course. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit www.dlionline.org.

Sept. 12, 14, 19, 21, 26, 28, Oct. 3 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, virtual stain removal course meets on seven different days. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit online at www.dlionline.org.

Oct. 16-20 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, “Introduction to Drycleaning” one-week course. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit online at www.dlionline.org.

Oct. 23 - Nov. 3 DLI’s School of Drycleaning Technology, “Advanced Drycleaning” two-week course. For information or to register, call (800) 638-2627 or visit www.dlionline.org.

2024

November 9-13 Texcare International trade show, Frankfurt Exhibition Centre, Germany. For more information or to register, visit them online at texcare.com/brand.

2025

August Clean Show 2025, Orlando, FL. Call (770) 984-8023 or www.cleanshow.com.

2027

July Clean Show 2027, Las Vegas, NV. Call (770) 984-8023 or www.cleanshow.com.

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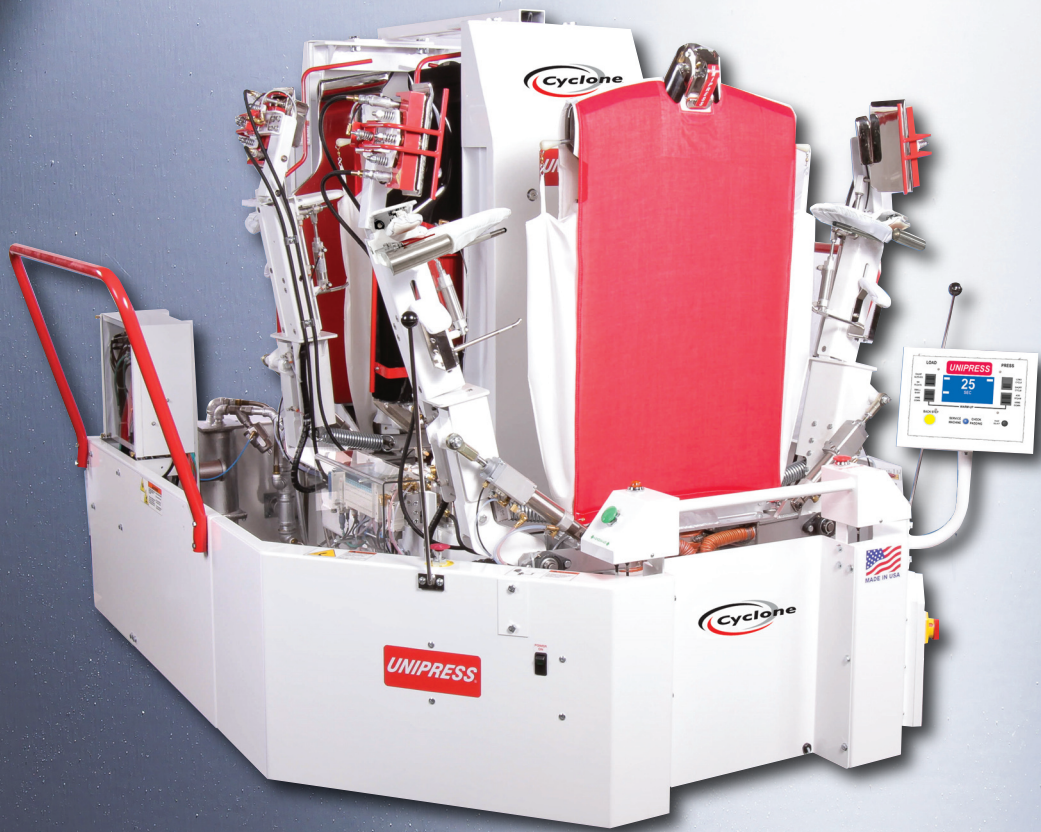
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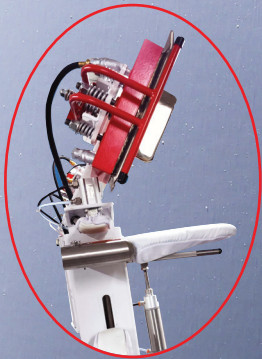
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BY DAN EISEN

How to properly train your CSRs

Your Customer Service Representatives (CSR) are the face of your company. They create a trust between your customer and the work you do.

You know the importance of the CSR when you look at the chemical and equipment manufacturers you deal with and the people that represent them.

I know that many have loyal followers because of the knowledge they impart.

I do a lot of training for prestigious companies who constantly train their CSRs. This includes Sudsies, Oceanside Cleaners, Wedding Gown Preservation, Milt & Edie's, First Class, etc. The proper format that I find is effective to set up:

- 1) Fabric knowledge.
- 2) How to interact with the customer.

This is the same format that I use when I need to train 26 Customer Service Representatives at Oceanside Cleaners in Jacksonville, Florida.

Fabric Knowledge

It is not enough to just talk about fabrics, but the CSR should receive a sample of the fabric you are talking about.

They should know the difference between silk and polyester, as well as the characteristics of the weave including satin, velvet and chiffon.

They should know feel and texture of the fabric they are dealing with.

Interaction Between the CSR and the Customer

It is one thing to give the CSR knowledge of fabrics but it is equally important to know how they relate this information to the customer. I create a common Q&A for the best way of relating this information to customers. I often find myself in disagreement of how others teach. For example, if a customer comes in with a fancy dress with fancy buttons, how should the interaction between the customer and CSR be?

Should the CSR tell the customer we will take the buttons off for safety and we will charge you a dollar a button to re sew it? I found this approach might be offending to some customers. A better approach might be to tell the customer that we will guarantee that the buttons will be safe and not tell them what you are doing.

Silk: A Sample of Interaction with the Customer

Silk remains a popular fabric even with the ability of polyester. Silk has the combination of properties which makes it very desirable and popular.

It is soft and lustrous, smooth, resilient, absorbant and comparatively strong for its fineness. Silk fabrics are luxurious in appearance and feel.

It can range from a fine and smooth fabric made from cultivated silk or the rough textured irregular slubbed yarn of raw silk. The vividness and depth of color is unequal when dyes

are used on silk.

Common Questions Posed By Customers

- Will the perspiration stain come out of my silk?

Answer: We can take out the perspiration stain but unfortunately the ingredients in perspiration can affect the dyes in silk fabrics. This includes fatty acid, chloride salts, and possible alcohol usage. The cleaning process will insure that no further damage will occur on the silk.

- Can my silk be cleaned safely without color loss?

Answer: The mild and environmentally safe solvents that we use does not affect the dyes on silk.

- My silk seems to have a washed out and faded look. Can it be restored?

Answer: Yes. We have a finishing treatment that will restore feel and depth of color to silk. Ask your spotter to give the silk mineral oil treatment.

- My colored silk is faded on the shoulders. Can it be

restored?

Answer: Unfortunately light and impurities in the air permanently affect the dyes on silk. We can remove these impurities preventing further damage and give you more extended wear.

- Can my silk be wet-cleaned safely?


Answer: Yes. We have state-of-the-art wetcleaning equipment and special finishing agents that insure the silk is returned to you in a new and wearable condition.

Summary


The CRS should not be afraid of the customer or questions the customer may ask. They should accept garments with confidence and knowledge that is transmitted to the customer.

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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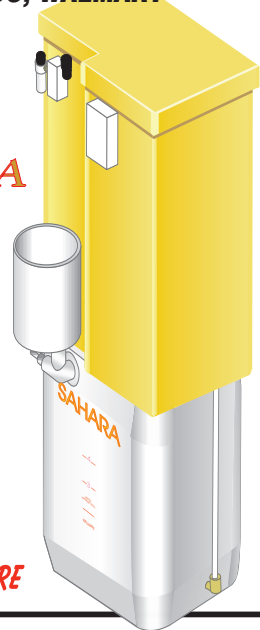
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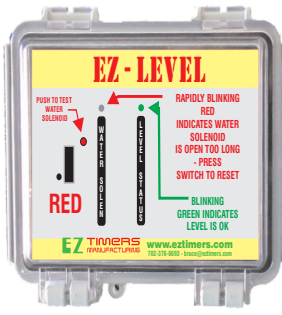
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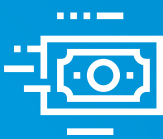
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Once enacted, similar measures are often replicated by other municipalities and states. DLI fights to protect your business from reckless legislation like this and works to keep it from spreading.

DLI can only fight for you with the resources that come from dues dollars. If you are not a member this is a perfect example of why you should be. Join today at DLIonline.org/Membership or call 800-638-2627 to discuss how membership works for you.

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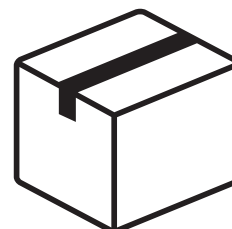
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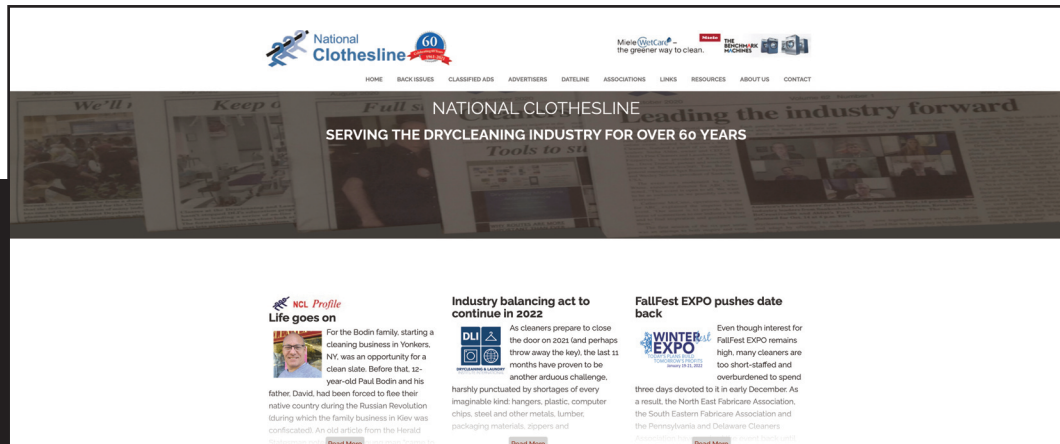
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