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Registration opens for DL EXPO West in March

Registration will officially open on Dec. 3 for the highly anticipated DL EXPO West, taking place March 27-29, 2026, at the Irving Convention Center in Irving, TX.

Registration is free for all drycleaners and coin-op operators.

The keynote speaker for the event will be Ajay Prakash, co-founder and CEO of Rinse, a company that recently made headlines when it secured a



Prakash **Wallace** **Pedzinski** **Rothrock**

\$23 million investment from LG Electronics to transform the laundry industry.

His presentation will be called "Perspectives on

Growth and Innovation for Cleaners of All Sizes."

Prakash will share how cleaners can balance modern solutions with timeless prin-



March 27-29, 2026
Irving, TX

ples like exceptional service, strategic upselling and smart expansion—offering practical takeaways on embracing change while staying

grounded in what matters most: delighting customers, driving profitability and building a business that lasts.

Other guest speakers slated to attend include Dale Pedzinski from Extract LLC. Whose program will focus on "Practical AI in the Drycleaning Industry," and Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners who will present a seminar on "Cleaning Up Your Bottom

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Industry responds quickly to Washington Post perc article

Early in November, *The Washington Post* published an article called "How dry cleaning might raise the risk of cancer, and what to do about it," which was met with a swift response in defense of the industry from the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) and the National Cleaners Association (NCA).

The story noted, "a recent study found that exposure to PCE tripled the risk of liver fibrosis, excessive scarring that can lead to liver disease and

liver cancer." Researchers concluded that "repeated exposure to PCE, which is detectable in an estimated 7 percent of the US population, increased the likelihood of liver damage."

According to Dr. Brian Lee, the study's lead author, "higher income" was one of the factors of the 1,600 adult participants that was associated with a higher risk of perc exposure. "People with higher incomes may be more likely to use drycleaning services,

which could increase their exposure to PCE," he said. "However, people who work in drycleaning facilities may also face elevated risk due to prolonged exposure to PCE at work."

While perc is primarily used for drycleaning in the U.S., it also is commonly used as a metal degreaser and is also a component in various consumer products including paint and spot removers, lubricants, polishes and adhesives.

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A publicity boost for Puritan's

For more than three dozen years, Puritan's Cleaners of Richmond, VA, has collected, cleaned and distributed nearly half a million warm winter garments as part of its annual Coats for Kids campaign. This year, however, the initiative got an unexpected boost from the past.

Last month, the business's location on Staples Mills Road received a nice surprise when one of the program's

original recipients returned to pay it forward. Ken Sandy, owner of DRYY Garment Care in the Washington DC area and a Richmond native (pictured below), showed up to support the drive that once supported him.

"In the '80s, I was on the other side of the story," Sandy explained to a local CBS News affiliate. "I received a coat from Puritan Cleaners, and they were very humble

of the largest in the region clothing giveback platforms. I just think that what that speaks to is that when the community invests in people, those people at some point reinvest."

The coat that he received about 40 years ago still burns strong in his memory – a red puffer coat that made him feel like the "coolest kid with a 'K' in class."

"That coat was dipped in love," he recalled. "I didn't just feel warm – I felt special that people were so selfless they'd repurpose things for those in need."

While visiting with plant employees, Sandy met and hugged Linda Hence who had been a Puritan employee for 44 years. It is likely she handled his red puffer all

Continued on page 8



times for my family. The reason it's so full circle is that, fast forward, I'm now a co-owner of a drycleaning solution where we launch some

Surveys suggest a drycleaning disconnect with young consumers

During the recent NextGen Expo sponsored by the Heartland Fabricare Association (HFA), speaker Katey Kratz discussed an eye-opening truth found in recent survey results that reveal a current disconnect with younger consumers that needs addressing.

Currently, it is the Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) and Gen X (born 1965 to 1980) who use drycleaners most frequently. Baby Boomers noted they visit the cleaners weekly (15.8%), monthly (31.7%) a few times a year (36.7%), and only 15.8% visit never or rarely.. Gen X answered similarly: weekly (18.5%), monthly (28.4%), a few times a year (35.8%), and 17.3% said never or rarely.

Meanwhile, Millennials (1981 to 1996) and Gen Z (1997 to 2010) have much different drycleaning habits. The large majority of Millennials (74.7%) said they go to the cleaners rarely or never, and 80% of Gen Z answered the same.

According to Kratz, however, these statistics should not scare drycleaners. Instead, the industry should realize that it has a marketing opportunity to try to connect with younger consumers.

As she noted, "The next generation isn't ignoring drycleaning — they just don't see where it fits in their lives. It's our job to show them."

To read more about how to connect with younger consumers, go to page 16.



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Economic forecast for 2026

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Santa showed up this year

Don Desrosiers has no complaints — Santa's engineers had some great new offerings at the recent Clean Show.

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The fabric of a brand

Your brand is a living, breathing entity that is woven into every single interaction you do.

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Designer denims

While they are a popular fabric, designer denims often require careful consideration when cleaning.



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Connecting with Millennials and Gen Z

As 2025 winds down its final days, perhaps now is a good time to take stock of those New Year's resolutions. We would like to recommend one thing you should add to that list of ways you want to improve the business. This year, you need to target Millennials and Gen Z much more in your marketing strategies. After all, they comprise the industry's future.

Right now, that future is not as strong as it could be. When **Katey Kratz** from S and ECC spoke at the Heartland Fabricare Association's recent NextGen event, she drew from several survey results to show how different generations believe drycleaning means different things.

The **Baby Boomers** and **Gen X** respondents see the service as something they often need. When asked, *How often do you currently use a drycleaner?*, the responses for the two generations included: weekly (15.8% BB, 18.5% Gen X); monthly (31.7% BB, 28.4% Gen X); a few times a year (36.7% BB, 35.8% Gen X); and rarely/never (15.8% BB, 17.3% Gen X).

Those numbers contrast sharply with the figures for **Millennials** and **Gen Z**. When asked the same question, respondents from those generations answered as follows: weekly (1.7% Mil, 1.4% Gen Z); monthly (3.1% Mil, 1.4% Gen Z); a few times a year (20.5% Mil, 17.1% Gen Z); and rarely/never (74.7% Mil, 80%, Gen Z).

Essentially, **75% of Millennials** and **80% of Gen Z rarely or never** use a drycleaners compared to **15.8% of Baby Boomers** and **17.3% of Gen X** who said the same. That is a huge shift in the way drycleaning is perceived by each generation, but it is not a reason to give up. According to Kratz, what all of this reveals is that there is a tremendous marketing opportunity in this industry to try to connect with younger consumers.

That will not be easy since, judging by some of the comments they provided, many of the Millennial and Gen Z respondents had very little idea of how drycleaning works. Unfortunately, that makes them a little ahead of some of the media, it seems. Adding to the confusion on the perception of drycleaning, *The Washington Post* recently published an article noting that a new study PCE claims (perc) exposure increases the risk of liver fibrosis. Of course, it does not mention that the industry has long been aware of the potential hazards of perc exposure, and have since upgraded to closed loop equipment that keeps both consumers and employees safe. Also, perc is in the process of being phased out.

Despite that, the *Post* recommended dropping drycleaning altogether and no longer buying "dryclean only" garments because it's easier to do that than try to determine if your drycleaner uses safe and sustainable alternative cleaning practices.

Like it or not, the drycleaning industry still largely remains an enigmatic black hole of knowledge when it comes to the public view — which, by the way, doesn't even realize all of the services a professional cleaners offers. Results of the surveys showed that 48.7% of the general consumers who responded were aware of *less than half of the services* available at a drycleaning business.

Fortunately, Kratz has several excellent ideas on what you can do right now to start changing younger consumer perception on professional fabricare. You can educate your audience, emphasize convenience, clarify pricing, connect with them where they are online and collaborate locally with nearby businesses for socializing the old fashioned way.

As Kratz noted, "The next generation isn't ignoring drycleaning — they just don't see where it fits in their lives. It's our job to show them."

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BPS
communications
inc.

Publisher of
NATIONAL CLOTHESLINE
1001 Easton Rd., Suite 107
Willow Grove, PA 19090
Phone: (215) 830-8467
Fax: (215) 830-8490
info@nationalclothesline.com
www.nationalclothesline.com

PUBLISHER
Carol Memberg
EDITOR
Chris Pollay
chris@nationalclothesline.com
MANAGING DIRECTOR
Leslie Schaeffer
Leslie@bpscommunications.com
ADVERTISING
Richard Cappo
rich@nationalclothesline.com
GRAPHIC DESIGN
Mary Castro-Regan
graphics@bpscommunications.com

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An Economic Outlook for 2026 and Beyond

During a recent webinar sponsored by the Textile Care Allied Trades Association (TCATA), Alex Chausovsky of The Bundy Group delivered an energetic and expansive update on the global economy, U.S. policy, and what business leaders should be preparing for as 2025 winds down. His message was both sobering and reassuring: while volatility is here to stay, so is opportunity for those who plan ahead.

"Things are going to be OK," Chausovsky told attendees. "We're living in very tumultuous times, but you don't have to know exactly what will happen in order to be confident about your ability to figure it out."

That theme of resilience ran throughout the session titled *Economic and Policy Update: What to Expect in Late 2025 and Beyond*.

He urged business owners to take time "to work on the business instead of in the business," noting that clarity and adaptability are the best tools for navigating the months ahead.

Chausovsky began with a wide-angle look at the world economy. The U.S. remains far ahead of its nearest rival, he noted, with a \$30.3 trillion economy compared to China's \$19.5 trillion.

"Despite all the talk that China is overtaking us, the numbers simply don't back that up," he said. "Their economy is still roughly a third smaller than ours."

Still, China continues to grow faster — roughly double the U.S. rate — but Chausovsky emphasized that it remains unlikely to surpass America's total output "anytime in the foreseeable future."

He also noted that much of the current U.S. administration's policy reflects a desire to slow China's advance in strategic industries such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and electric vehicles.

Beyond the U.S. and China rivalry, Chausovsky described an increasingly multipolar world — one divided into multiple centers of influence.

"If the 1900s were a bipolar world of the U.S. and USSR, and the early 2000s a unipolar world led by America, today's reality is multipolar," he said. "We have the U.S. and its allies in one corner, China and its allies in another, and a group of 'free agents' like India, Brazil, and Turkey that align issue by issue."

He added a fourth, unexpected power to the mix: the technology giants. "Companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, Nvidia, and Apple are operating at the scale of entire nations," Chausovsky said. "They generate more revenue than most countries and consume electricity and water at a national level."

Their CEOs, he noted, are now active political actors, shaping both domestic and foreign policy.

Tariffs, Trade and the Trump Administration

The session's most detailed section



Alex Chausovsky

Director of Analytics and Consulting
The Bundy Group

"Economic and Policy Update: What to Expect in Late 2025 and Beyond"

focused on trade and tariffs — what Chausovsky called "the biggest source of both friction and uncertainty right now."

The Trump administration, he explained, has adopted a far more unilateral approach than in its first term. "Back then, tariffs were targeted and often backed by Congress," he said. "This time, they're being enacted almost entirely through executive order."

Negotiation points have also shifted. While trade deficits still matter, many of today's tariff discussions revolve around unrelated issues — immigration, defense spending or even foreign political events. "We've seen tariffs on Brazil doubled overnight because of that country's treatment of its former president," Chausovsky noted. "These are not traditional trade arguments."



Such moves, he warned, carry risks.

"The danger is that we alienate historic allies like India or Brazil and push them closer to China or Russia," he said. "While I understand some of the administration's motivations, the potential unintended consequences are real."

A pending Supreme Court case could soon determine whether the president can continue imposing tariffs unilaterally under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEPA).

If overturned, Chausovsky said, "it would open quite a Pandora's box" regarding refunding billions in collected duties and the legality of past actions.

Still, the economic fallout has been milder than many expected. The effective tariff rate peaked at nearly 30% early in the year but has since settled near 18%.

"Because U.S. companies absorbed roughly half of those costs and foreign exporters lowered prices to maintain market share, inflation hasn't spiked the way people feared," he explained.

Growth Without Acceleration

Turning to the numbers, Chausovsky painted a picture of an economy that is strong but uneven.

Real GDP continues to rise about 2.1% per quarter, consistent with long-term averages.

"If someone tells you we're in a recession, challenge that," he said. "The data simply doesn't support it."

But growth has become K-shaped, with the top 20% of income earners driving consumer spending while middle- and lower-income households struggle to keep up with inflation.

"It's not that everyone's doing great," he said. "It's that the upper fifth of earners are holding up the rest."

The business-to-business economy, represented by industrial, is "essentially treading water," up less than 1% over two years. A surge in optimism before the 2024 election gave way to slower momentum after April's "Liberation Day," when new tariffs were announced.

"The data tells us the industrial economy is likely to move sideways for the next few quarters," Chausovsky said. "Not accelerating, not collapsing — just hovering."

Leading indicators like copper prices, capacity utilization, and the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) support that view. "We're looking at low single-digit growth, probably through mid-2026," he said. "That's not exciting, but it's stable."

Inflation, Interest Rates and One Big, Beautiful Bill

Inflation, Chausovsky said, remains "stubbornly above target" and will likely end 2025 around 3.5%, with potential upward pressure from additional tariffs. The Federal Reserve's planned rate cuts — one this fall, another in early 2026 — should ease conditions slightly but won't spark a boom.

"To really be stimulative, rates need to fall below 3%," he said. "The Fed's long-term target of 3.25% to 3.5% just keeps us neutral."

On the positive side, he highlighted the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, passed in July, as a major win for businesses. "It's complicated, but incredibly valuable," he said. The law reinstates 100% accelerated depreciation for capital investments and allows retroactive tax deductions for domestic R&D spending.

"If you're making major equipment or technology investments, talk to your

tax advisor," he advised. "This can help offset higher costs from tariffs and inflation."

Labor and Immigration Challenges

Employment growth has slowed sharply since spring, but Chausovsky cautioned against alarm. "The question isn't how many jobs we're adding — it's whether people who want jobs can still find them," he said. "And by and large, they can."

Layoffs remain low, roughly at 2019 levels, and unemployment sits around 4.3%. However, certain roles — particularly management, engineering, and maintenance — remain difficult to fill, with unemployment rates under 2%. His advice to employers: focus on retention.

"For year-end reviews, aim for cost-of-living raises in the three to four percent range," he said. "Anything less, and employees will feel they're falling behind, which only increases turnover."

Looking further ahead, Chausovsky called on policymakers to address not only illegal immigration but the broken legal immigration system. Without reform, he warned, the U.S. could lose "hundreds of thousands of workers every year starting in 2027."

The shortage would hit industries such as manufacturing, construction, and hospitality especially hard. "We need people with skills — and people willing to take the jobs Americans no longer want," he said.

As the session concluded, Chausovsky urged business leaders to prepare for a VUCA world — one defined by **volatility, uncertainty, complexity** and **ambiguity**.

"We're moving from a period of uncertainty to one of complexity," he said. "That means you can't plan for just one future. You have to plan for several."

He recommended specific actions that are within every company's control to take:

- Increase communication with suppliers and customers.

"If you talk to your top suppliers quarterly, make it monthly," he said. "If you meet customers monthly, make it weekly. Share what you're seeing and ask them to do the same."

- Protect margins strategically.

Instead of blanket price hikes, he suggested targeted surcharges and constant cost comparison. "Use other people's pessimism to your advantage — shop around for better rates."

- Retain your people.

Competitive pay and clear communication, he said, "will position you to move first when the next upswing comes."

Ultimately, Chausovsky's message was less about prediction and more about preparedness.

"We can't control tariffs, elections, or global politics," he concluded. "But we can control how we respond — how we plan, how we communicate, how we treat our people. That's what will determine who thrives in 2026 and beyond."

Merry Christmas

from



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Registration opens for DL EXPO West

Continued from page 1

Line: Revenue Strategies that Drive Profit."

Also scheduled to speak is Brian Wallace of the Coin Laundry Association. He will examine "Five Trends Driving Growth of the WDF and Laundry Service" and Bill Rothrock of Yale Cleaners will present a program on "Speed Spotting: Rethinking the Rules of Stain Removal."

The Westin Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas will serve as the host hotel, conveniently located next to the convention center.

There is a special hotel rate of \$189/night for convention attendees and exhibitors that is

only available through March 10th through the DL EXPO West website at www.dlexpo.org.

At this point, close to 70 exhibit booth spaces have already been sold and the planning committee expects 900 cleaners to attend — similar to last year's turnout.

Exhibit booths are still available. Those interested may see the current exhibitor list and floorplan online or contact Leslie Schaeffer at leslie@bpscommunications.com.

The DL EXPO West is produced by the Southwest Drycleaners Association and the California Cleaners Association.

Industry responds quickly to *Washington Post* perc article

Continued from page 1

Currently, perc's use in the drycleaning industry has a deadline in place set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who issued a phaseout schedule that will eliminate all of its usage as a solvent and a spotter by Dec. 19, 2034.

However, the Trump Administration is currently in the process of reconsidering certain aspects of the rule, so it remains unclear if the ruling will remain in effect as it stands right now.

The *Post* goes on to note that experts say "there are plenty of alternatives to using harmful drycleaning chemi-

cals, but some are safer than others." Instead of discussing those alternatives and which ones are not safe, the newspaper recommends to "go dryclean-free" and stop buying "dryclean only" garments.

DLI responded by noting: "The science regarding the damaging effect of perc have long been steadfast in their position that there is a health risk associated with the use of perc. DLI's position is that while we do not believe there is a risk to either consumers who use drycleaning or to those who work in the industry, with the availability of options today, the industry should move away from perc drycleaning."

"Many in the industry have already made the switch to alternative cleaning methods and the proposed regulation gives those remaining adequate time — 10 years — to make a change," the association added. "The 10-year phaseout for drycleaners is a direct result of comments provided by DLI as other industries face a near immediate ban."

Meanwhile, NCA was also contacted for *The Washington Post* article, but they were not mentioned in the final story. In a press release of its own, the association noted: "Today's drycleaning is performed in sealed, self-contained systems that reclaim and recycle solvent within allowable federal and state thresholds, preventing exposure for both workers and consumers."

NCA noted a few critical points of the study: "The study cited by media outlets is cross-sectional, meaning it cannot prove causation or identify drycleaning as the source of exposure. The EPA finalized a national PCE phase-out rule on Dec. 19, 2024, with a ten-year transition period allowing drycleaners to upgrade equipment and responsibly manage the shift to alternative systems."

Puritan's gets a boost of publicity

Continued from page 1
those years ago.

That garment, though special, is just one in a sea of almost a half a million garments with stories of their own.

Sara Moncrieff, marketing director for Puritan, is always amazed at the community's spirit of generosity that allows them to collect so many garments.

"We are just the people in the middle," she said. "We get to see our neighbors, our friends and colleagues donate coats that go on to a person who needs them."

In the end, it proved to be a strong reminder that it doesn't take much to make a substantial difference in somebody's life. "What you don't wear anymore — or what you're ready to throw away — could be a treasure for someone else," Sandy noted. "The repurposing of those things goes a long way."

For more information, visit www.puritancleaners.com.

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By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Keeping compressed air flowing properly

The compressed air powering your equipment has many essential properties. Pay attention to these properties, 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 frequent repairs. *Note: Compressed air can be dangerous! Before attempting any maintenance to your air compressor or compressed air system, be 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: a single-phase motor and a three-phase motor. Single-phase motors 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 the family of compressor pumps under discussion to only the reciprocating type. This family of compressors is the most common in our industry and uses pistons moving inside cylinders coordinated with associated valves to compress the air.

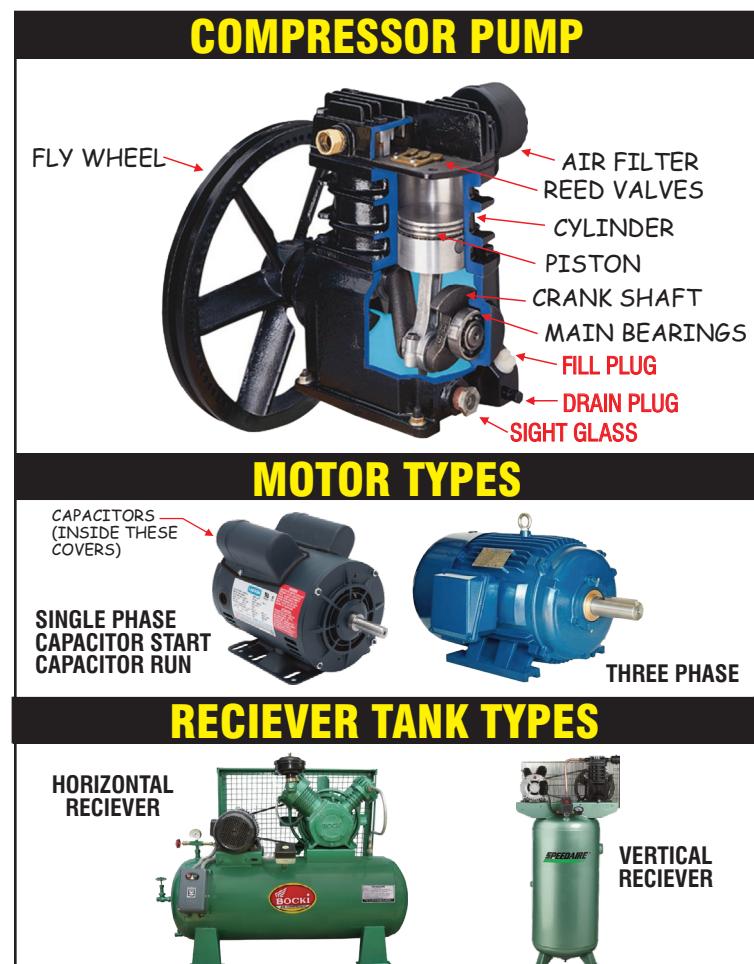
In an air compressor, the electric motor provides rotary force linked to a flywheel (usually via belts), which rotates a crankshaft. The crankshaft translates this rotary motion into reciprocating (up and down movement), sliding a piston inside a cylinder.

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 (tank). As you can imagine, 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, but it must not degrade components in the machinery that will be



using the compressed air.

The oil level contained in 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ 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 dressing" to avoid adjusting or replacing failing belts. *Note: 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ way between the motor pulley and flywheel should result in about a $\frac{1}{2}$ -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 layers 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*, 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 of the bottom of the receiver.

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 SA-HARA 2 model. For those with boiler problems, check out our EZ-Level and EZ-Dose machines. For more information on EZtimers products, visit www.eztimers.com. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

A look at Clean '25 shirt equipment: Part 3

It's time for my annual Christmas/Santa Claus column and it coincides with the final phase of my Clean Show coverage. This is great!

[Editor's Note: For parts one and two, please see our October and November 2025 issues at www.nationalclothesline.com]

Christmas 2025 brings you a host of things that you never thought of, so you could dare not wish for them.

Presso is poised to turn this industry on its head with its **AirTouch** machine (Figure 1). It could soon replace the spotting board and the employee we call the *spotter*. Picture this: There is a garment with a stain (like now). You use your experience to make an educated guess about the stain, such as whether it's wine, coffee, or something else (like now).

Then, place the fabric on the board, (like now). The similarities end here. With AirTouch, you make a selection from the touchscreen. The software will ask you for your best guess about the stain. It understands that you may not be certain, just like now. When you start the cycle, the machine will add chemical. You are allowed to

scrub if you want to, but the demo I watched did not require any scrubbing.

After chemical is applied, the AirTouch machine automatically adds steam, air, and vacuum. With exactly zero employee input, the stain is completely gone, and the fabric is dry! You must watch this demo. Follow the QR code and navigate to the podcast that has the Presso AirTouch demo. You can watch the unedited, untouched video. Prepare to get your mind blown. I'm sure that you won't all be ditching your spotting boards tomorrow. At least, not yet.

Forenta will thank you for that because they have just reinvented it. It takes a special kind of ingenuity to look at something that appears to be perfectly fine and find something (like ten things) that need to be improved upon, but that is exactly what Forenta did. They deserve a heck of a lot of credit for that. To name a few: They made the foot pedals far more



Figure 1: Presso's AirTouch machine.

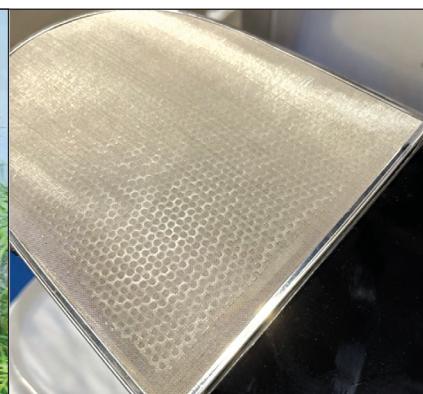


Figure 2: This is far more porous than the past teflon ones.

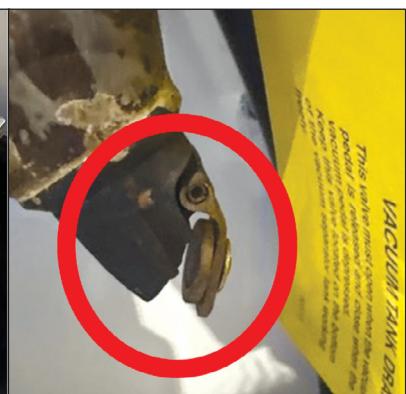


Figure 3: Forenta added a vacuum-triggered check valve.

ergonomic, the throttle valves for air and steam are now actually useful and functional, and there is also a built-in vacuum.

I now officially declare the end of central vacuum in drycleaning plants. Not because of this spotting board, per se, but because **Unipress** has finally added built-in vacuum to their drycleaning presses.

Looking further underneath the hood of the new Forenta spotting board, you will find two must-have options: an air regulator and the return of the long-lost stainless steel nose screen (Figure 2).

I feel certain that no one ever begged for a white Teflon ver-



Figure 4: The optional air regulator.

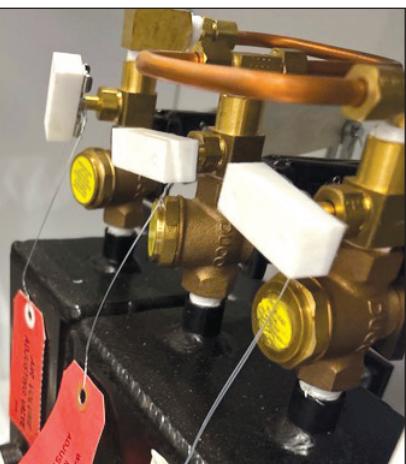


Figure 5: The regulator valves are functional and easy to use.

sion of this with 1/20th as many holes in it, but it was rammed down our throats 30 years ago and I didn't expect to see the screen again.

When you continually vacuum steam-water-chemicals from a garment, it goes somewhere, and we assume that it goes into the vacuum canister, but it rarely gets that far.

It gets logjammed in the piping. Forenta has added a vacuum-triggered check valve that drains itself (Figure 3).

Old-timers (like me) used to do this on (the now defunct) central vacuum tanks. When the vacuum was turned on, the check valve would snap shut, but when you shut the vacuum motor off, the check valve would open and automatically drain the water that was collected from the presses that day.

You probably still have a central vacuum. You should replace the drain valve with a check valve today. You don't want to buy another vacuum motor or tank because it is fast becoming a dinosaur.

It's interesting that Forenta added this because usually the elbow that it is attached to (Figure 4) is left to become clogged with gunk until the spotting board becomes junk. Keeping this elbow clean could keep that from ever happening.

But, there are many other updates to familiar products. **SPOT** has an entirely new interface. **BeCreative360** does as well and **PieceCounter** has new

reports and new, larger units.

You can see all of these things on my podcast. Following past Clean Shows, it has sometimes been difficult to come up with more products that fit within the guidelines that I set. This year, there are plenty. They fill two full-length podcasts. One of them features my absolute favorite new products from Clean. One comes from **Railex**.

Can you imagine a screw rail that allows you to have garments moving at *drastically* different speeds along the same screw? Railex does it and it is an engineering marvel.

The robotic spotting board makes the list, of course. And **Forenta** came up with an inexpensive accessory that you just won't believe that you have lived a day without. It's all on **TALK Dryclean & Laundry USA**. Happy 2026!

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

Don Desrosiers has been in the drycleaning and shirt laundering business since 1978. He is a work-flow engineer and a management consultant who provides services to shirt launderers and drycleaners through Tailwind Systems. He is a member of the Society of Professional Consultants and winner of

DLI's Commitment to Professionalism award. He can be reached by cell phone (508) 965-3163, or email to: tailwind.don@me.com.

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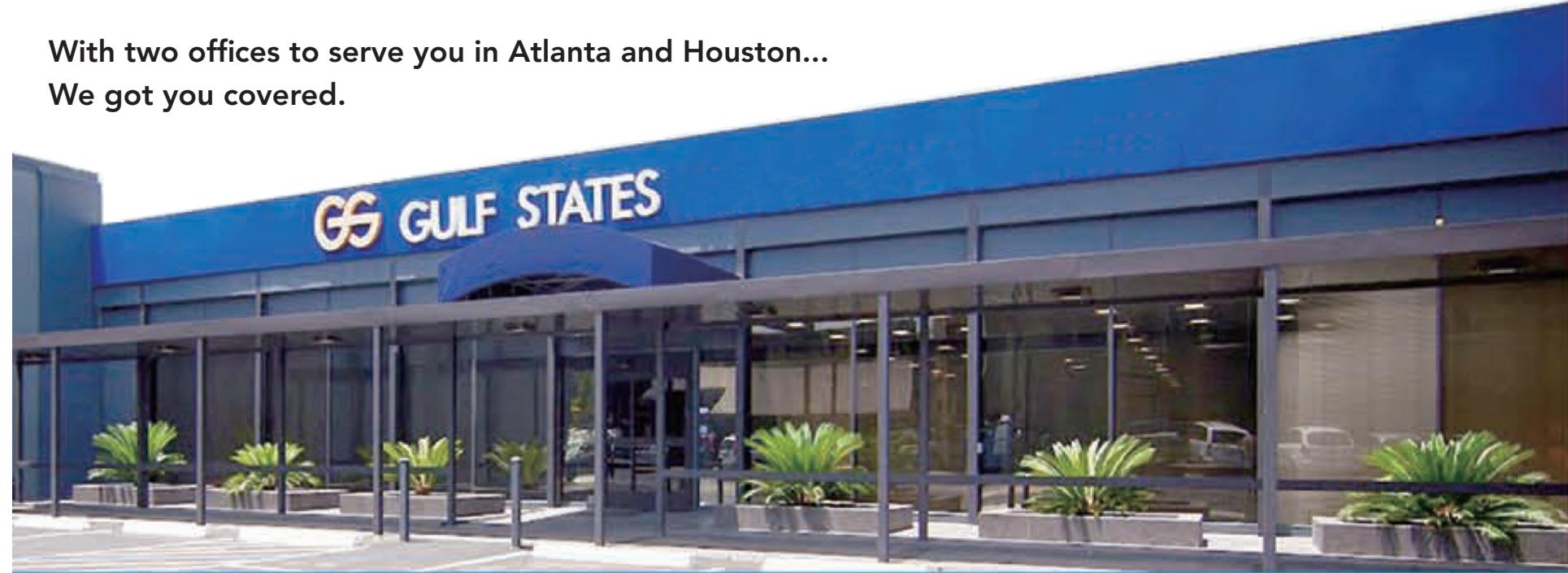
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What cleaners need to know about the next generation of consumers

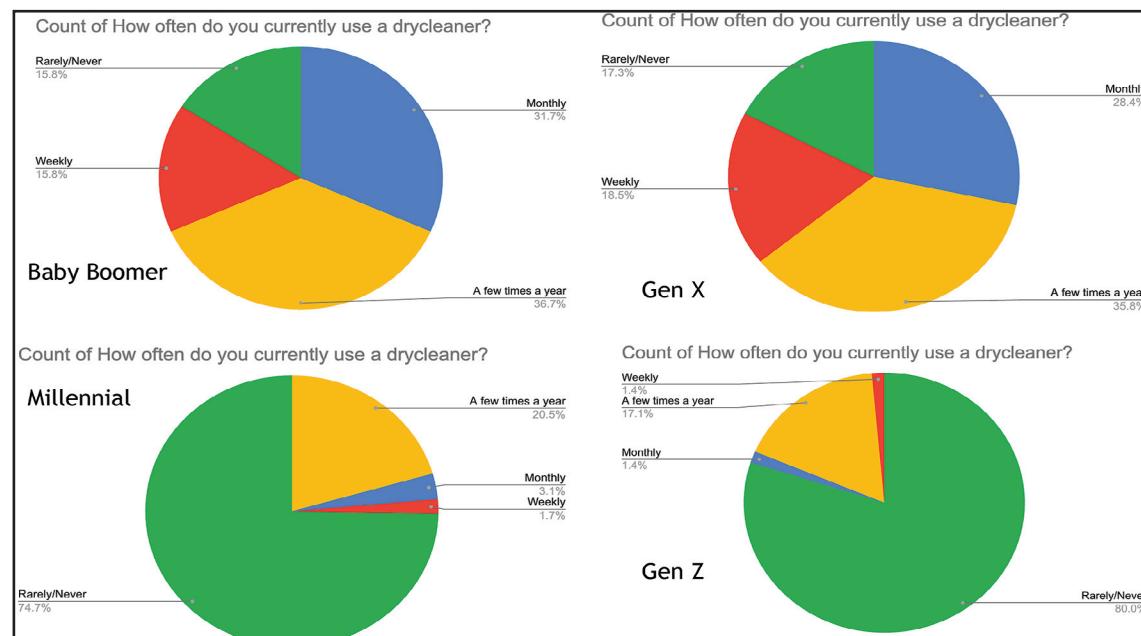
by **KATEY KRATZ**
Guest Columnist

[Editor's Note: At NexGen Expo, Katey Kratz of S and ECC presented a program on "Generations of Clean." Drawing from nearly 550 survey responses and hundreds of social media interactions, she highlighted how attitudes toward drycleaning have shifted dramatically across generations, and what businesses can do to adapt.]

My research compared responses from two survey groups: the general public and current drycleaning customers. While Baby Boomers and Gen X still make up the majority of today's clientele, their habits and perceptions differ significantly from Millennials and Gen Z — who represent the future.

The research showed that among current customers, **69% are age 59 and older**, meaning a large portion of the industry's consumer base *will age out of needing or using services in the next two decades*. This isn't a scare statistic — it's an opportunity. It's a chance to redefine how younger generations see the fabricare industry.

When attempting to collect data on the individuals who specifically have used drycleaning services recently, emails were sent to approximately 10,000 current customers encouraging them to



participate in the survey/research with the incentive of potentially winning \$100 of free cleaning. When asking individuals how often they currently utilize a cleaner, there was clearly a steep drop off in use of services for individuals under the age of 43. While there may be several factors at play, it's important to note that Millennials and Gen Z represent the future of the industry as Gen X and Baby Boomers will age out of the workforce and needing services in the next two decades. Finding ways to connect with, meet the needs of, and market to Millennials and Gen Z will be crucial in the survival of the industry.

Individuals responding to the "general consumer" survey found the link via a personal text, a social media ad, or a direct message. A targeted ad was placed on Facebook and Instagram with the link and the incentive of potentially

winning \$100 of free cleaning.

When asking individuals how often they currently utilize a cleaner, there was clearly a steep drop off in use of services for individuals under the age of 43. While there may be several factors at play, it's important to note that Millennials and Gen Z represent the future of the industry as Gen X and Baby Boomers will age out of the workforce and needing services in the next two decades. Finding ways to connect with, meet the needs of, and market to Millennials and Gen Z will be crucial in the survival of the industry.

Part of the drop off in use of services with each generation has to do with the overall per-

ception of the industry. When polled, word associations with "drycleaning" revealed a stark evolution in perception:

- **Baby Boomers** connected it with professionalism, cleanliness and specialty care.
- **Gen X** began associating the industry with "chemicals" and "formality."
- **Millennials** introduced words like "fancy," "luxury," and even "my dad."
- **Gen Z** stripped away most positive associations, often asking simply: "Where?"

The data shows that what once symbolized prestige now often feels irrelevant or inaccessible to younger consumers. This shift as the growing "opportunity gap" — a space for rebranding, education and engagement.

Another major research finding was even current customers don't fully understand what drycleaners offer. One repeated comment from Gen Z was "do drycleaners still exist?" Beyond that, nearly **28% of existing clients and 49% of general consumers** were aware of less than half of available services most fabricare specialists offer.

People don't know that cleaners often do alterations, shoe care, wash-and-fold and pickup and delivery. That's not a customer issue — it's a branding issue, and branding is something we can fix.

The casualization of work-wear has profoundly affected demand. Millennials and Gen Z favor flexible, breathable fabrics and hybrid wardrobes suited for both home and office. Traditional cleaning services no longer align with their wardrobes — but convenience services like pickup and delivery, wash and fold and alterations are gaining traction.

Millennials and Gen Z are often tight on time in a world that demands their constant attention. Making services as easy as possible for them is es-

sential to capturing their business. Several individuals suggested that wash and fold would be an incredible time saver but that pairing it with pickup and delivery would be a game changer.

With Gen Z spending an average of 8 hours per day on social apps, social media is the new word of mouth. Mailers, emails and signage may make a small impact, but they aren't what sells Gen Z or Millennials on a product or service. They view connection differently as all of their peers and interactions have moved primarily online. Influencers become trusted friends, product review videos/recommendations hold great power and behind-the-scenes content helps them understand how services work and why they should invest. The next generation is online so your business should be.

- TikTok, Instagram and Facebook dominate visibility for both Millennials and Gen Z.
- TikTok excels in organic reach, particularly for Gen Z.
- Facebook still provides the best reach for targeted ads.
- Authentic, concise, and unscripted content consistently outperforms polished branding.

Across both groups, respondents described effective "ads" as *short, clear, authentic, engaging and helpful*. They respond best to *transparent pricing, visible human connection and content that educates, not sells*.

Key Takeaways

1) Educate your audience. Consumers can't use services they don't understand. Show your process, services and care methods openly.

2) Be where they are. Engage on TikTok, Instagram and Facebook with approachable, authentic content.

3) Collaborate locally. Partner with nearby businesses, host events, and tag partners online to expand reach.

4) Emphasize convenience. Pickup and delivery and wash and fold top every generation's service wishlist.

5) Clarify pricing. Transparent cost information strongly influences buying decisions.

Katey Kratz is a founding member of Kratz Executive Solutions, the management company for Safety and Environmental Compliance Consultants. Kratz Executive Solutions offers one-on-one coaching and individualized strategies designed to address challenges faced by business owners, organizations or leadership teams. To contact Katey, email katey.kratz@gmail.com.

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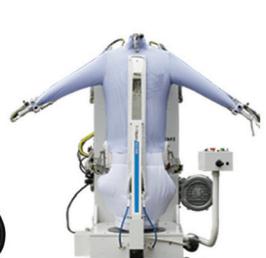
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BROAD BRANDING



FEATURING
JASON LOEB

What's on the inside? The fabric of a brand

It's easy to get caught up in only the visual allure of branding. We see countless articles touting the importance of a slick logo, a cutting-edge website, or perfectly curated colors.

Yes, these elements are important. They provide the first impression and they tell customers who you are at first glance. But, if you stop there, you've barely scratched the surface of what it truly means to build a brand that endures.

From my decades of experience building Sudsies Dry Cleaners, I've learned that a truly powerful brand isn't just a static image; it's a living, breathing entity woven into every single interaction.

It's not just about what you look like; it's about how you act and how your customers feel.

The visible tip of the iceberg

Let's be clear: a great logo, a user-friendly website, and consistent branding colors are foundational. They establish professionalism and make your business recognizable.

At Sudsies, we've invested in ensuring our visual identity reflects the quality and modern approach we bring to drycleaning. Our online presence aims to be intuitive, our messaging clear, and our aesthetic inviting. This is the entry point, the promise of what's inside.

Just like a meticulously tailored suit, its true value isn't

just in the fabric; it's in the fit, the craftsmanship, and how it makes the wearer feel.

This is where the real work of branding begins. Every single day, your business is being judged not just by its static visuals, but by its dynamic presentation.

- How your physical location looks: Is it clean, organized, welcoming? Does it smell fresh? For us, a pristine facility is non-negotiable.

- The presentation of your staff: Are they impeccably uniformed? Do they project professionalism and care?

- The tidiness of your delivery vehicles: Are they clean, well-maintained, and represent your brand on the road? How do your drivers represent themselves?

- The consistency of your service: Do you deliver the same high quality, time after time?

This daily presentation is a constant reinforcement (or detraction) from your brand promise. It's the tangible evidence that you care about details.

Attitude and connection

Perhaps the most potent, yet often overlooked, element of branding is the human connection.

- Your attitude and the attitude of your team: Are you friendly, empathetic, and genuinely helpful? Do you greet customers with a smile? Do you listen to their concerns?

We train our team not just on cleaning techniques, but on the art of exceptional customer service. It's about being approachable and ready to assist, no matter the request.

- How people feel doing business with you: This is paramount. Do they feel valued? Respected? Do they feel like their concerns are heard and addressed?

When a customer trusts us with a cherished wedding gown or a beloved family heirloom, they're not just handing over fabric; they're entrusting us with memories. The feeling of trust, reliability, and peace of mind becomes a cornerstone of our brand.

- What they think about your product/service: Beyond the visual appeal, is the core offering exceptional? Do we consistently deliver clothes that are impeccably clean, perfectly pressed and carefully inspected? For us, our *product* is the transformative experience of receiving garments that look and feel like new. We strive for excellence in every single stitch and press.

- How you deliver on customer expectations: Do you meet deadlines? Do you communicate clearly about potential challenges? Do you go the extra mile when something goes wrong?

Exceeding expectations, even in small ways, builds fierce loyalty and turns customers into brand advocates.

Heart of the community

A true brand understands it doesn't operate in a vacuum. Being part of a community isn't just good PR; it's fundamental to establishing deep-rooted trust and relevance.

- Community involvement: Being present at local events, sponsoring school fundraisers, participating in charity drives, or supporting local initiatives — it all matters.

- Letting customers know you're there for them: This means active listening, responsive feedback and understanding their needs beyond just a transaction. It's about being a reliable resource, a familiar face, and a local business that genuinely cares about the well-being of the area it serves.

The Brand that Lives and Breathes

While that sleek logo might catch an eye, the true brand is built piece by painstaking piece, every single day. It's built in the genuine smile from your counter staff, the careful handling of a delicate garment, the consistent delivery of quality and the quiet presence in your community.

Instilling these core brand values into every employee is a continuous journey that begins with leadership. It starts with modeling the behavior we expect — demonstrating the same attention to detail, positive attitude and genuine care in our daily interactions with staff as we do with cus-

tomers.

Regular, consistent communication about why these values matter, not just what they are, is crucial. This means integrating our brand ethos into onboarding, ongoing training sessions and even daily huddles, using real-world examples to illustrate how their actions contribute directly to the brand experience.

We emphasize that every touchpoint, from the friendly greeting at the counter to the careful folding of a shirt is a chance to reinforce our promise of quality and trust.

Beyond initial training, it's about empowering employees to embody these values and providing the support to do so. We encourage proactive problem-solving, open communication and taking ownership of customer satisfaction.

This involves creating channels for feedback, both from customers and from the employees themselves, allowing us to continuously refine our service delivery.

Recognizing and celebrating instances where employees exemplify these values, whether it's going above and beyond for a customer or meticulously caring for a garment, reinforces the desired behaviors and fosters a shared sense of purpose and pride in building the Sudsies brand together.

Our brand isn't just a design; it's a promise — a promise of meticulous care, unparalleled service and a commitment to earning your trust with every item you bring through our doors. It's a testament to the belief that genuine connection and consistent excellence are the strongest threads in the fabric of any truly great brand.

Jason Loeb strives to deliver exceptional results and leave a lasting impression on the customer, business partners, and the communities served by his brands. Through strategic partnerships and real estate acquisitions, he ventured into the textile care industry to realize his dream of building a remarkable "people business." Sudsies represents his commitment to preserving the integrity of couture and cherished clothing by ensuring that each garment receives the care it deserves. To contact Jason, send email to jason@sudsies.com.

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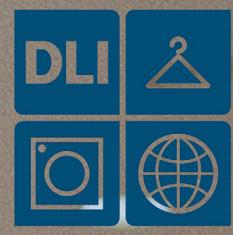
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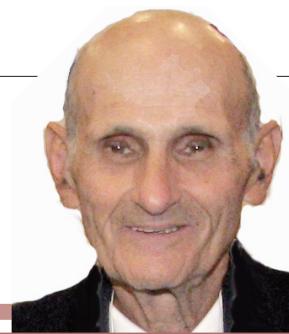
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BY DAN EISEN

Wetcleaning designer denim garments

Denim is a popular fabric both in casual wear and high style designer fabric. The basic construction of all denims are similar and the difference is due to the expense, label and the customer's preference in look and wear.

Customers who are wearing designer denims usually prefer a soft well-pressed fabric while others in casual wear may want a stiffer and more firm fabric.

Denim is a cotton twill weave with a blue indigo dye woven lengthwise with natural white yarns, giving the fabric a blue and white effect.

Some manufacturers may piece dye the denim to give a uniform color. Although denims are usually cotton, they can be blended with polyester and also spandex to give a better fit.

Wetcleaning programs for designer denims

Manufacturers can program the wetcleaning system using different detergents and softening agents.

Some manufacturer's products may work better than others. Some manufacturer's may program the wetcleaning

system better than others.

There are manufacturers who prefer using anionic detergents with softening agents while others prefer using cationic detergents with cationic softening agents.

In my on-site consultations, I have found both systems work equally well if programmed properly. It is

The following is one of the wetcleaning programs that many drycleaners have used successfully using cationic detergents with cationic softening agents.

1) Five minute wash with cationic detergent, one ounce per ten pounds
2) 90°F
3) 20 RPM

Some denim may have a yellowish discoloration and weak areas. This condition may be caused by the stone washing and acid washing used in manufacture to create a worn and distressed look.

also known that quality of product may differ from one manufacturer to another.

Objective

The designer denim you wetclean should have a soft feel, press easily and have depth of color. The proper addition of detergents, softening agents and mechanical action used prevent the denim from losing color.

The detergents used should be slightly acid-based for setting colors and contain enzymes for effective stain removal.

4) Drain
5 Mild rinse
6) 2 minutes RPM
7) Drain
8) Intermediate extraction
9) Final rinse with softener
10) 3 minutes
11) 20 RPM
12) Drain
13) Final extraction
14) Dry on a heat cycle for permanent press. Remove after 90% dry.

Additives for soiled denim

1) Hydrogen peroxide with a nonionic detergent.
2) Citrus-based degreasers

for heavily soiled denim.

Denims with spandex

1) Avoid hot water — 90°F
2) Do not add citrus-based degreasers to washing formula.
3) Do not dry in temperatures designed for cottons.
4) Dry on heat used for permanent press.

yellowish discoloration and weak areas. This condition may be caused by the stone washing and acid washing process used in manufacture to create a worn and distressed look.

The acid washing process uses bleaching agents which may not be properly rinsed and neutralized. The stone washing process uses pumice stones and other abrasive material which may also weaken the denim.

Correcting color loss

1) Apply a little blue ink on a cloth and gently rub affected area.

2) Tamp area with a white pencil which would create the denim effect.

Dan Eisen is the former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association and also an inductee of the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's Hall of Fame, the highest honor the association can bestow on an individual. For questions and concerns, he can be reached at (772) 579-5044, or by e-mail at danneyisen39@gmail.com or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.

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Dec. 10 Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's "Generations of Clean" webinar featuring Katey Kratz of Safety and Environmental Compliance Consultants at 1 p.m. EST. Visit www.DLIonline.org.

2026

Jan. 30-Feb. 1 The North Carolina Association of Cleaners and Launderers Winter Meeting, Fairfield Inn and Suites, Charlotte, NC. For information, visit www.ncalc.org.

Feb. 23-27 The South East Fabricare Association's Seminars at Sea cruise departing from Ft. Lauderdale, FL and visiting Key West and the Bahamas. For more information, visit www.sefa.org.

March 27-29 2026 Drycleaning & Laundry West EXPO, Irving, TX (Dallas area). For information, visit www.dlexpo.org.

May 1-3 The North Carolina Association of Cleaners and Launderers Spring Meeting, DoubleTree by Hilton Newbern — Riverfront. For information or to register, visit online at www.ncalc.org.

June 25-26 Southwest Drycleaning Association and California Cleaners Association Membership & Board meeting, Reno, NV. Visit www.sda-dryclean.com.

Aug. 2-5 2026 Textile Care Allied Trades Association Management & Educational Conference, The Omni Grove Park Inn, Asheville, NC. Visit www.tcata.org.

Sept. 26-27 The North Carolina Association of Launderers and Cleaners (NCALC) 2025 Annual Meeting, Durham, NC. For more information, visit www.ncalc.org.

Oct. 16-18 2026 Drycleaning & Laundry East EXPO, Washington DC. For information, visit www.dlexpo.org.

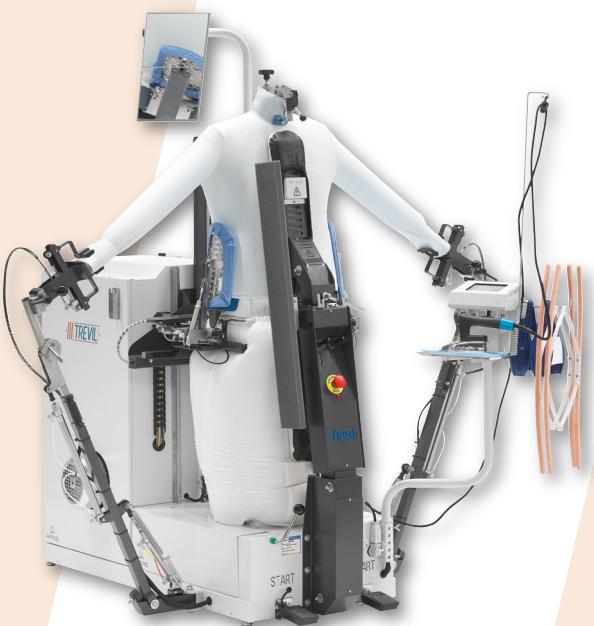


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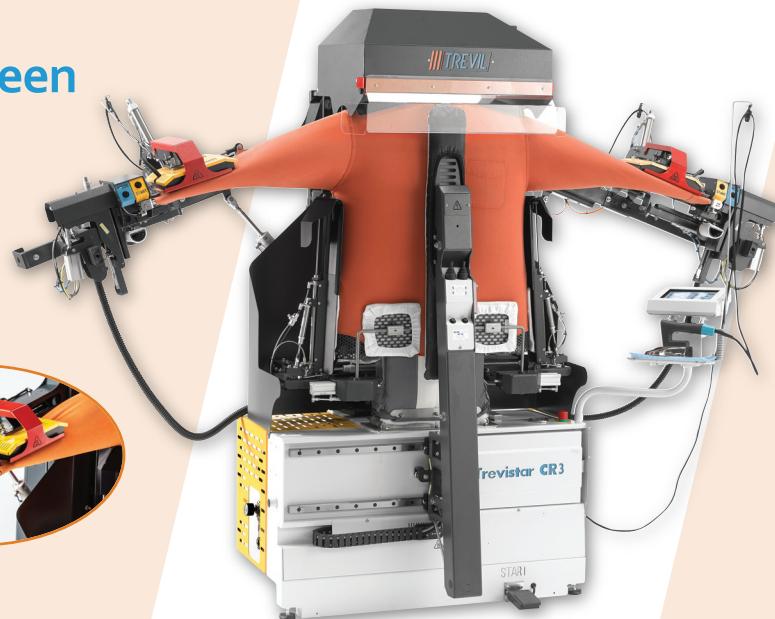
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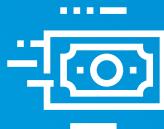
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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

Customer retention begins at initial contact

One of the biggest struggles managers have is monitoring the retention rate of a route customer.

Do you measure it by how quickly you get an order, or the second?

Do you measure it short term or long term? Should it be three months to three years?

What constitutes a true long-term customer? Is it worth measuring? *Should we be measuring?*

There are various KPI's one can calculate and measure in order to determine the ROI of a route customer.

Keep in mind that it's a marathon, not a sprint. Too often we look at acquisition cost as just that, a cost versus an investment. This is not the case.

We surveyed our customers over the years and almost all of them were up at least 5% since COVID and many were in double digits.

After going back and analyzing their internal route structure, we could summarize that most of them were following the simple pattern needed to grow: add and keep quality customers.

The basic and proven formula in route building sounds too easy and too good to be true. However, we witness a lot of other operators who tend to complicate the process, only to recycle route customers. They add as many customers as they are losing. This never-ending battle keeps their sales flat, but their costs up.

As most of you know, we try to limit discounts. More than half of the problems of doing a route stem from these customers who break the pattern, system or flow of the route driver's day.

We are striving to increase sales, not decrease the opportunity to make a profit. Year after year I listen to operators

Your route should be growing 10 to 15% every year. You will have attrition — death, divorce, unemployment, moving, etc. Control what you can control and start looking at your retention rate.

whose only growth is shown by the number of route customers they have. We are looking for dollars, not data.

Too often you are picking up pennies while tripping over dollars. The key is for your route development system to



do some pre-qualifying at the door or when they sign up online in other ways.

Also, we promote face-to-face sales. Research through the years have shown that all other methods of route customer acquisition tends to have a lower retention rate than a personal sell. Too often it is because of the initial discount on the marketing piece.

We feel that this enticement will get them to switch to us. Although it may be short term, what happens when your competitor does the same thing?

Increase the personal awareness of the route while not introducing them to a discount

which lowers your value.

The bottom line is this: Your route should be growing 10 to 15% every year.

You will have natural attrition — death, divorce, unemployment, moving, etc. Control what you can control and start looking at your retention rate.

While you need a proactive customer retention program, you can increase your retention by having a strong sales presentation. That initial contact can lead to some great, long-lasting customers.

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, email RouteProsJames@gmail.com, or visit www.theroutepro.com.

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NCL Profile
Life goes on
 For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yorkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution (during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated). An old article from the Herald Statesman notes: "Young man 'came to

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

FallFest EXPO pushes date back
 Even though interest for FallFest EXPO remains high, many cleaners are too short-staffed and overburdened to spend three days devoted to it in early December. As a result, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association have pushed the event back until



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