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Full speaker lineup set for DL EXPO West in March

The DL EXPO West will bring together some of the drycleaning industry's most respected voices when the event returns to the Irving Convention Center in Irving, TX from March 27 to 29. Admission to the event is free of charge for all attendees.

"We designed the 2026 DL EXPO West to give cleaners the ideas and tools to diversify and increase revenue, strengthen operations and market more effectively, noted Allan Cripe, chairman of DL EXPO West. "Our goal is to ensure attendees leave with strategies they can implement immediately, along with insights into emerging technologies and opportunities."

The keynote speaker for

the event will be Ajay Prakash, co-founder and CEO of Rinse. His presentation will be called "Perspectives on Growth and Innovation for Cleaners of All Sizes." He

will share how cleaners can balance modern solutions with timeless principles like exceptional service, strategic up-selling 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.

Another speaker will be

Dale Pedzinski of Extract LLC, who will present a program called "Practical AI in the Drycleaning Industry (Without the Hype)."

Brian Wallace of the Coin Laundry

Association (CLA) will speak on the topic "Five Trends Driving Growth of W-D-F and Laundry Delivery" and Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners will be on hand to offer "Cleaning Up Your Bottom Line: Revenue Strategies that Drive Profit."

Bill Rothrock of Yale Cleaners will offer a course on "Speed Spotting: Rethinking the Rules of Stain Removal" and George Ingram of NIE Insurance will discuss the "Call of the Insurance Wild."

Other programs will include "Maintaining Your Machine" by Chris Abercrombie of Christeyns North America and Katey Kratz from the Heartland Fabricare Association (HFA) will examine "Bridging the Gap Between Your Business and the Next Generation."

At this time, more than 85 exhibit booths have been sold.

For a full list of exhibitors, or to inquire about exhibiting, visit the www.dlexpo.org/dl

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Kratz



Abercrombie



Ingram



Prakash



Wallace



Pedzinski



Rothrock

Kicking off Coats for Kids



When Max I. Walker launched a brand new Coats for Kids charity drive that eventually culminated on Halloween last year, they were aiming for a goal of 300 warm winter garments. They ended up achieving 400% of their goal thanks to generous donations from the public (including these pictured bright beanies). For the full story, go to page 8.

DLI releases its 2026 education schedule

Now entering its 99th year of industry education, the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's School of Drycleaning Technology is expanding its training opportunities with brand-new on-site programs in addition to offering 14 skills-building courses for 2026. These programs are designed to help owners, managers, and staff improve quality, streamline production and strengthen customer satisfaction.

DLI's new customized on-site training option brings professional instructors directly to cleaning businesses — allowing teams to learn in their own business, on their own equipment, solving their own production challenges.

This program helps businesses: improve workflow and consistency; train entire teams without travel downtime; build confidence in customer service, cleaning, finishing, stain removal and more; and receive hands-on guidance tailored to their facility.

"Managers can finally train their whole team without shutting down or losing

production time," said Mary Scalco, DLI's CEO. "This program helps owners build stronger, more capable teams right where the work happens."

Signature courses

DLI's renowned in-person beginner and advanced drycleaning courses, hosted at its School of Drycleaning, help students master the full production process, understand the science behind cleaning and finishing, and operate equipment with confidence.

Students walk away able to: improve quality and consistency on the production floor; operate equipment correctly and safely; reduce errors through better fiber and fabric knowledge; apply stain removal chemistry with skill; and increase efficiency and turnaround time.

DLI's five-day **Introduction to Drycleaning** course is scheduled to take place: **March 9 to 13; July 13 to 17; and Oct. 5 to 9.** Tuition is \$2,295 for non-members; DLI members pay according to membership level: \$1,395 Member; \$1,116 Standard; and \$837 Premier.

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Sneak Peek Inside

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More than dryclean only

Sometimes customers forget about all of the things that are able to be professionally cleaned at the cleaners.

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A challenge or opportunity?

Surveys have shown there is a gap between younger customers and drycleaners — we must bridge it.

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Removing fabric rings

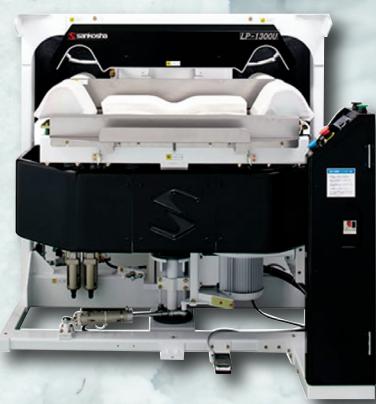
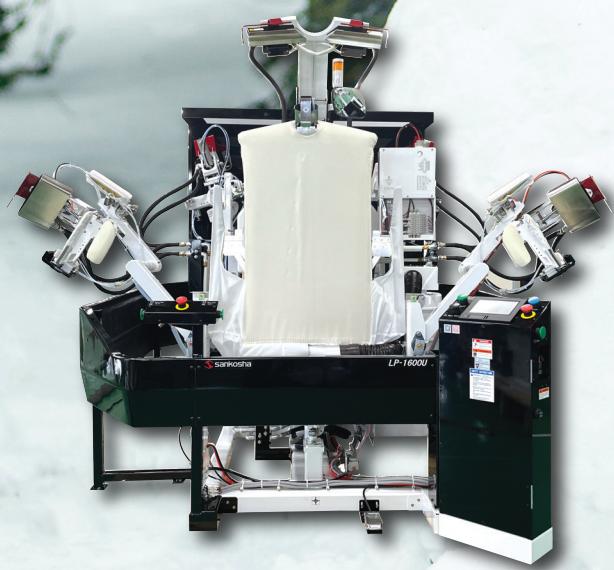
One of the most frustrating aspects of cleaning and spotting is the formation of rings. What can be done about it?

20

Go with the air flow

Bruce Grossman examines the main components of your compressed air system and what slows flow down.

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Nostalgia just isn't what it used to be

According to Pew Research conducted this past summer, 45% of polled U.S. adults said that, given the choice, they would prefer to live sometime in the past. That figure includes 25% who would live less than 50 years ago and another 20% who would live more than 50 years in the past.

In the same poll, 40% of adults said they would prefer to live in the present and only 14% said they'd rather live sometime in the future. Why would so many prefer to live in the past over the future? It all comes down to one word: nostalgia.

Humans inherently create narratives of their lives to make sense of them. The stories we make of our lives provide a sense of identity and continuity. Because of this, we tend to be more anxious during times of change and loss when the fluidity of that narrative feels stagnant.

Whenever that happens, our minds harken back to the times of stability that helped comprise that sense of identity, values and strength. It reminds us of our past successes and gives us confidence to deal with the uncertainty of the present. All of this is good, but too much of anything can be a problem. If stress persists — as it *always* does — it is easy to idealize the past and miss it even more. The higher you feel a need to escape from the present, the tighter the need to hold on to that past when the current problems did not exist yet.

This tendency can exist with entrepreneurs, as well. When a proven formula has wrought success in the past, it is easy to assume that it will be just as fruitful in the present or the future. That is the nostalgia talking.

These days there seems to be a lot less certainty than back in the "good old days." However, columnist Don Desrosiers warns us this month (in his column on page 14), that one thing is certain: "What used to be true is no longer true."

"Over the years I have said many times that you must constantly evaluate

and re-evaluate what you do to determine if what you're doing is still relevant," he adds.

While numbers usually don't lie, they can definitely change over time. If you are not re-evaluating your production numbers regularly, then you run the risk of letting your nostalgia of the past prevent you from seeing what the present numbers are telling you about your business.

On a similar subject — *important numbers you should know for your business* — drycleaners should be more than aware of the disconnect between younger Americans and professional garment care services.

Last month, we featured a column from Katey Kratz whose recent surveys revealed that, of those surveyed, 80% of Gen Z respondents said they visited the cleaners "rarely" or "never". For Millennials, 74.7% said they "rarely" or "never" visit professional cleaners.

While these figures seem like reason enough to make anybody in the industry nostalgic for the past, they do represent a tremendous opportunity.

As Ray Kroner points out in his column this month (see page 12): "As we head into the new year, let's own who we are and make a unified effort to put a new face on the industry. Let's make our industry one that not only offers garment care, but embraces environmental initiatives and takes part in community involvement."

It is imperative that the industry continues to support the latest marketing efforts from the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute. If you are not liking, sharing or commenting on their posts, then you are holding onto the old, nostalgic ways of the past. After all, as Kroner notes, "One question that keeps running through my mind is: *If we, as an industry, can't get behind a marketing strategy of redefinition, why should we expect the consumer to buy in?*"

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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Making an impact... and starting right now

Good day! I truly hope that you were able to purchase — and, more importantly, read — the *Quality Time Remaining* book I reviewed last month.

Recently, I met with a person younger than me who is dealing with potential major life-changing decisions. During our last meeting, I asked, "How do you want to spend the rest of your life?" and explained that, statistically, they only had 47 years left in their life. That reality, although sounding a long way off, hit home hard. Just how are you going to spend the time you have remaining? And then, just to really hit this point home, my friend Steve Baker, the author of the book, let me know that the cancer he suffered from in the past is back. New treatments are helping, and our prayers are with him.

We really do not know how much time we may have left. Not a downer question — just, how are you going to make the biggest impact on those around you? Make an impact. Start now.

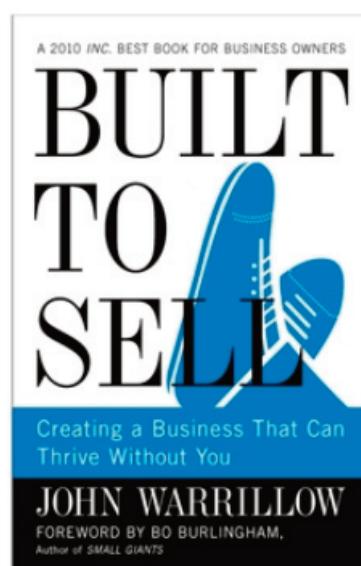
The 8 Drivers of Value

I have been privileged to have met a lot of great operators in our industry. At the recent Clean Show, I had the opportunity to visit with many. I was honored to hear that the articles I have written have hit home in many ways over the past four and a half years.

These monthly submissions have been centered on the *The 8 Drivers of Value* for your business. So, I thought I would review those drivers for those who may not have been in our industry at the time — or were overwhelmed as we were combatting the business effects of COVID.

The book *Built to Sell* by John Warrilow is a practical, no-nonsense guide for entrepreneurs and business owners who want to maximize not just their profits, but the intrinsic value of their companies. The book isn't about accounting tricks or short-term wins — it's about building an enterprise buyers are eager to snap up, or one that can thrive independently long after the founder steps back.

Let's dig into the big ideas Warrilow brings to the table, unpack each of his drivers and talk about how these concepts reshape the whole idea of what



makes a business valuable.

John Warrilow's thesis is built around what he calls the **Value Builder System**, grounded on eight core drivers. These aren't theoretical. They come from years of research, surveys from tens of thousands of entrepreneurs, and first-hand experience from people who have figured out how to build not just a good business, but a sellable, scalable, sustainable asset.

Here are the drivers, in plain language:

1. Financial Performance
2. Growth Potential
3. Switzerland Structure
4. Valuation Teeter-Totter
5. Recurring Revenue
6. Monopoly Control
7. Customer Satisfaction
8. Hub & Spoke

Let's chat through each one, explore what they mean, and get into why Warrilow thinks these are the real deal.

Financial Performance

When most business owners think *value*, they think about profit. That's table stakes, and Warrilow doesn't shy away from the fact that solid financials get you in the game. But he also harps on the importance of clean, transparent bookkeeping. Consistent profitability, professional records and the ability to explain one-off adjustments are all part of what buyers look for. If your numbers are murky, the risk goes up and value goes down.

Warrilow gives actionable advice: standardize monthly closes; normalize your financials — no unexplained anomalies; improve pricing and reduce costs with discipline. His point is clear: financial performance impresses buyers, but reliability and clarity seal the deal.

Growth Potential

Having a good year is nice.

Buyers, though, pay premiums for future potential. Warrilow pushes owners to ask: Can your business scale? Have you proven it can enter new markets, expand its offerings, or reach new customers without massive new investment?

He wants you to show not just a record of past growth, but obvious ways for a buyer to take it further. Growth potential is about a story — what's next for this company, and how big could it get with fresh energy or resources?

Switzerland Structure

Here's where it gets interesting. Named after the famously neutral country, the Switzerland Structure is all about independence. Is your company dangerously dependent on a single customer, supplier, or even employee?

Warrilow argues that heavy concentration — say, 40% of sales coming from one client — terrifies acquirers. If one relationship unravels, so does the company. He encourages spreading risk and diversifying your base so no single entity holds the fate of your company in its hands.

Valuation Teeter-Totter

Great businesses generate cash, but it's not just about profit. Warrilow introduces the idea of the valuation teeter-totter (sometimes called the *see-saw*). Some businesses suck up cash to grow, while others become "cash taps," fueling expansion with little outside funding. Why does this matter? Buyers love a company that can grow organically. Keep your capital requirements light, and your valuation multiple gets bigger. Clear, positive working capital habits mean less risk and more freedom to make bold moves.

Recurring Revenue

Warrilow is fanatical about "waking up on Jan. 1 and knowing you've already locked in a huge chunk of your revenue" for the year. He calls recurring income the **gold standard**. This could be subscription services, contracts, retainers, or any predictable, automatic flow. Predictability is everything — buyers pay higher multiples for companies with strong, stable, recurring revenue streams.

Practical tip: Find ways to shift project or transactional income into ongoing, contractual

agreements. This smooth cash flow gives you leverage in any negotiation.

Monopoly Control

Differentiation is at the heart of Monopoly Control. If your business owns a niche, has unique technology or proprietary products, or simply dominates a market segment, you enjoy what Warrilow calls Monopoly Control.

Commoditized companies that compete only on price or have nothing unique face brutal competition and shrinking margins. Warrilow urges you to build strong brand positioning or intellectual property, so competitors can't easily copy or undercut you.

Customer Satisfaction

In Warrilow's system, the voice of the customer carries weight — often measured through metrics like Net Promoter Score (NPS). If your buyers consistently return and refer others, your business is stable and valuable.

He advocates pinning value not just to sales, but to the likelihood of repurchase and word-of-mouth growth. High customer satisfaction equals low churn — a powerful selling point.

Hub & Spoke

This one hits home for most founders. If the company falls apart when you step away for a vacation (or get sick), you're the "hub" and everything "spokes" from you.

Warrilow stresses designing business systems and teams so the show goes on without you. The goal? Build something sustainable, with leadership, processes, and documentation so your absence is just a blip — not a crisis. Buyers love businesses that can thrive after the owner leaves.

How Does It All Add Up?

Warrilow's Value Builder System pulls these drivers together into a single score, which he claims is a major predictor of company value. Companies scoring high can command much higher valuation multiples — sometimes double their lower-scoring peers. He's transparent that no business is perfect in all areas, and every company will have strengths and weaknesses. But the actionable checklists, stories and exercises in the book make it much more than a theoretical framework — it's step-

by-step, practical advice for anyone thinking of selling, scaling, or securing their company's future.

Warrilow writes like someone who's spent time in the trenches with actual business owners. The reason is that he has. There's none of the corporate jargon or pie-in-the-sky theory — just direct, useful advice, delivered with an encouraging tone. The book is structured to be accessible no matter your starting point, and anecdotes from real-world companies illustrate every concept.

If you're a business owner who dreams of selling one day — or simply wants to own an asset that can withstand bumps in the road — this book is critical reading. Advisors, brokers, and leadership teams will also find practical takeaways. *Built to Sell* isn't just for those planning an exit. It's a toolkit for anyone who wants peace of mind, stronger negotiations, and a genuinely more valuable company.

Built to Sell reframes a business's worth through the lens of what really makes companies attractive — to buyers, to investors, and to future leaders. It's a must-read for entrepreneurs determined to build not just a payday, but a legacy.

If you're looking to future-proof your business and maximize its worth — with practical, conversational advice — it's hard to beat the value packed in these pages.

Kermit Engh has been an owner/operator in the drycleaning industry for over 33 years. Notable awards include CINET's 2016 Best Practices for sustainability and country. He has been a Methods for Management member for over 29 years. His current position as managing partner and business coach with them allows him to share his extensive background in strategic planning, finance, process improvement, succession planning, acquisition and disposition analysis, packaging and branding, corporate culture, employee training programs, profitability, quality and production standards, cost analysis and development of management KPIs as well as being a Certified Value Builders Coach. Contact him at kengh@mfmi.com.



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Full lineup set for DL EXPO West

Continued from page 1

expo-west or contact Leslie Schaeffer at leslie@bpscommunications.com.

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

A special hotel rate of

\$189/night for convention attendees and exhibitors is only available through March 10th on the DL EXPO West website at www.dlexpo.org.

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

DLI's first Spanish-only class proves popular

In an industry first, the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) hosted its new Spanish-language Basic Stain Removal course — taught entirely in Spanish, with no live translation.

Forty-four students from Canada to Curaçao logged in twice a week throughout November for this immersive, hands-on virtual training. They mastered stain identification, chemistry, stain board tools and step-by-step removal processes for everything from ink and nail polish stains to mustard, red wine, grass and more.

Instructor Georgina "Gina" Hernandez Loranzo, owner of Ortega Cleaners in San Juan Capistrano, CA, spent more than a year preparing the Spanish curriculum alongside

DLI Director of Education & Analysis Brian Johnson.

Her preparation included multiple English-language course sessions and attending DLI's Introduction to Drycleaning Course in Laurel, MD — all to ensure the inaugural Spanish class would deliver the same rigor, clarity, and practical value as the English version of DLI's Virtual Basic Stain Removal program.

"The most rewarding part was witnessing the students' excitement as everything clicked for them," Hernandez said. "Knowing the effort we put in directly empowered people in their day-to-day work was the highlight."

To learn more about DLI's upcoming classes, visit www.DLionline.org.

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-Mike Astorino, Fabricare Cleaners

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DLI releases its 2026 education schedule

Continued from page 1

The ten-day **Advanced Drycleaning** course will run from: **March 16 to 18; July 20 to 31; and Oct. 12 to 23.**

Tuition is \$2795 for non-members; DLI members pay: \$1,895 Member; \$1,515 Standard; and \$1,137 Premier. Students who register for both courses receive a discounted tuition rate, as well.

Virtual classes in 2026

Just around the corner is a virtual course on "Basic Stain Removal" that meets over the course of four dates and gives students practical skills they can use immediately.

The class will cover how to remove stains more efficiently; reduce recleans and callbacks; build confidence with difficult stains; increase quality and throughput; and understand the "why" behind stain chemistry.

The four-day course meets twice in English on the following dates: Feb. 17, 19, 24 and 26; and June 9, 11, 16 and 18.

The class will also be offered in Spanish in August,

meeting on Aug. 18, 20, 25 and 27.

DLI will also offer "Advanced Stain Removal" virtually that will explore more complicated techniques for removing stains.

The four-day course will meet twice this year, including: May 5, 7, 12 and 14; and Aug. 11, 13, 18 and 20.

This year, DLI will offer a new virtual course on "Fibers and Fabrics" taught by Jennifer Whitmarsh of The Route Pros and Snappy Dry Cleaning.

This two-session offering on April 14 and 16 teaches employees how to make smarter cleaning decisions that reduce claims and re-dos.

Students learn how to identify fabric risks, understand fiber behavior, test dyes before cleaning, and confidently handle delicate garments. It meets at 1 p.m. EST on both days.

Also in April, DLI will offer a two-session virtual course on "Customer Service Superstars" that will meet at 1 p.m. EST on April 21 and 23. It will also be

taught by Whitmarsh.

Later in the year, DLI will host a two-day Leadership course meant to "Inspire and Influence."

The course is designed to empower individuals to become impactful leaders in today's fast-paced world.

This program focuses on mastering the art of inspiration, building trust, creating a dynamic culture, and fostering individual leadership to drive success in any team.

Through interactive sessions, real-world scenarios, and actionable strategies, participants will learn how to effectively communicate a company's overall vision, motivate others, and create a lasting positive impact.

Whitmarsh and DLI designed this course to equip emerging leaders and seasoned professionals with the tools to lead with confidence, authenticity and purpose.

For more information on any of DLI's upcoming courses, visit them online at www.dlionline.org.

Max I. Walker launches new coat drive

Max I. Walker recently completed its inaugural Max's Coats for Kids charity initiative

with outstanding success. What began as a goal to collect 300 coats resulted in around 1,200 coats

donated, cleaned, and prepared for distribution to local children and families.

As part of the campaign, customers and community members were encouraged to donate new or gently used children's coats at Max I. Walker locations from Aug. 1 through Oct. 31. Each donated coat was professionally cleaned at no charge by the company's Uniform Rental Division before being passed on to non-profit partner Project Intentional.

The company also received assistance from organizations and customers who hosted mini-drives on their behalf. Plus, several customers purchased and donated brand new coats, including a customer who received an inheritance and chose to pay it forward by filling the donation box at the Max I. Walker Papillion store with new coats. Another customer was unable to donate coats but she hand-knitted and donated over 50 stocking caps to be given out.

The freshly cleaned coats were distributed at Project In-

tentional's annual LOVE CAN Store, a large-scale community outreach event held in early November.

Remaining coats were given away at the nonprofit organization's Thanksgiving pop-up event, which provided a free meal and essential items to individuals and families in need.

The collection effort was supported internally by Max I. Walker's Uniform Rental Operations team, who sorted, cleaned, counted and packaged the coats for delivery.

"Our Uniform Rental team is equipped to handle large volumes of donated garments, and we knew we could make a meaningful impact by combining our resources with the generosity of the Omaha community," said Steph Dordland, marketing director at Max I. Walker. "We're proud to have exceeded our goal and to help keep so many children warm this season."

In addition to coats, Max I. Walker contributed 150 pairs of new socks for Project Intentional's Thanksgiving outreach event. The company expects to expand the Max's Coats for Kids program in 2026, with updated donation resources and increased collection capacity.



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Going beyond 'dryclean only' garments

For too long, the perception of professional garment care has been narrowly confined to the explicit instructions on a care label — people know to bring their "dryclean only" garments to us but forget that drycleaners offer care for all their other clothing, too.

Understanding and articulating the broader value of our services is paramount to business growth and customer loyalty.



The truth is, the expertise and technology inherent in professional cleaning facilities offer a wealth of benefits that extend far beyond the delicate silks and tailored wools traditionally associated with the *dryclean only* tag.

By showcasing the tangible benefits beyond the label, drycleaners can position their businesses as vital partners in preserving not just delicate items, but the entire wardrobe investment of their customers.

Color preservation

Consumers often choose garments based on color. One of the most visible signs of garment wear is the gradual fading of vibrancy and boldness.

While home laundering, even with color-safe detergents, involves processes that can leach dyes through agitation and prolonged water exposure, professional cleaning employs a more controlled approach. Specialized, non-aqueous solvents are gentler on dyes, effectively lifting soil without the harshness of water-based systems.

This meticulous process ensures that vibrant hues remain rich and deep, and delicate pastels retain their subtle nuances, extending the visual lifespan of garments far beyond what a typical washing machine can achieve.

Educate your customers on how professional cleaning can safeguard their colorful investments, maintaining that *just purchased* vibrancy.

Shrinkage and distortion

Once it shrinks, clothing loses its comfort, style and appeal. The phenomenon of shrinkage is a universal laundry lament, particularly with natural fibers susceptible to

water absorption and heat.

Professional drycleaning mitigates this risk through its water-restricted environment and carefully controlled temperatures during the drying process. This is particularly critical for maintaining the intended fit and silhouette of tailored clothing, delicate knits and even some blended fabrics that can warp or distort in a standard wash cycle.

Highlight your ability to preserve the original dimensions and shape of garments, a significant advantage for customers who value the fit and form of their wardrobe.

Preserving fabric integrity at a microlevel

Washing machines can break down clothing at a much more rapid pace — and many people don't realize it. The mechanical action of a washing machine, while effective for removing surface soil, can be abrasive at a microscopic level.

Fibers can become stressed, leading to premature weakening, the formation of unsightly pills and a general degradation of the fabric's texture and hand feel.

Professional cleaning, with its gentler solvent-based approach and specialized equipment, minimizes this mechanical stress.

Furthermore, expert finishing techniques, such as professional pressing and steaming, help to restore the fabric's original drape and luster, ensuring that garments not only look clean but also retain their inherent quality and tactile appeal. Emphasize how your services protect the very fabric of their clothing, contributing to its longevity and sustained aesthetic appeal.

Addressing allergens and environmental residues

Many of our guests are careful about what they put on their bodies, and we like to educate them about how we can help. Beyond visible stains, clothing accumulates a host of invisible contaminants — allergens like dust mites and pet dander, environmental pollutants and even microscopic residues from everyday products.

These can become embedded within fabric fibers, potentially causing skin irritation, allergic reactions and lingering odors that a regular wash may not fully eradicate.

Professional cleaning processes, with their specialized solvents and thorough extraction methods, are more effective at removing these deeply ingrained impurities. This not only results in a fresher, cleaner garment but also contributes to a healthier wearing experience, a significant selling point for environmentally and health-conscious consumers.

Expanding your textile care expertise

Drycleaning businesses can also significantly expand their service offerings and customer base by highlighting their expertise in cleaning items beyond the conventional wardrobe.

Bedding, including comforters, duvets, sheets, and pillowcases, as well as table linens such as tablecloths, napkins and placemats, often require specialized care that exceeds the capacity of home washing machines.

These items can harbor dust mites, allergens and stubborn stains, and professional cleaning ensures a thorough and hygienic refresh while preserving the fabric's integrity and extending its lifespan.

By promoting these additional services, drycleaners can position themselves as comprehensive textile care

providers for the entire household, offering convenience and expert cleaning for a wider range of needs.

Travel prep and post-trip garment care

Sudsies' guests love to travel and we emphasize the services we can provide to them before they go and when they return (and even how Sudsies Express can help them while they are away). For frequent travelers and those managing multiple residences, the convenience and expertise of a professional drycleaner become invaluable assets. Market your services as a seamless solution for pre-trip wardrobe preparation, offering meticulous cleaning and pressing to ensure garments arrive wrinkle-free and ready to wear.

Furthermore, emphasize the post-trip recovery benefits, highlighting your ability to refresh travel-worn clothing, remove any lingering odors or stains acquired on the road, and handle the often-daunting task of unpacking and garment care after a long journey.

By positioning your business as a reliable partner in maintaining a polished appearance, regardless of location, you can attract and retain this valuable, mobile clientele.

The value of professional convenience

Time is an increasingly valuable commodity to our guests. The seemingly simple act of laundry encompasses numerous time-consuming tasks: sorting, pre-treating stains, operating machines, folding, and often, the arduous task of ironing. By positioning your services as a time-saving solution, you tap into a significant pain point for busy professionals and individuals.

Highlight the convenience of entrusting their entire wardrobe care to your expertise, freeing up their valuable hours for more meaningful pursuits. Emphasize the ready-to-wear convenience of professionally cleaned and pressed garments, eliminating a significant household chore.

Expanding your service narrative

To effectively promote the benefits of professional cleaning beyond the "dryclean only" label, consider the following strategies:

Educate Your Customer Base. Utilize in-store signage,

website content and social media to highlight the advantages of professional cleaning for a wider range of garments. Showcase before-and-after examples and testimonials.

Offer Tiered Cleaning Packages. Consider offering packages that cater to different wardrobe needs, including options for "everyday care" that go beyond just *dryclean only* items.

Highlight Specialized Services. Promote expertise in cleaning specific types of garments, such as athletic wear (odor removal), denim (preserving color and fit), and household textiles (allergen removal).

Partner with Local Fashion Retailers. Collaborate to educate consumers on proper garment care from the point of purchase.

Emphasize the Investment Protection Aspect. Frame professional cleaning as a way to safeguard the financial investment customers make in their clothing.

By shifting the narrative from a reactive approach (only cleaning when the label dictates) to a proactive one (professional care for wardrobe longevity and well-being), drycleaning businesses can unlock new customer segments and solidify their position as essential partners in garment care.

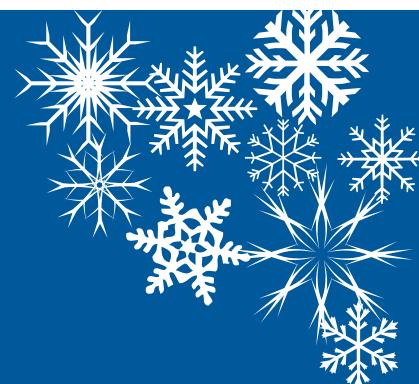
The value proposition extends far beyond the label — it encompasses color preservation, shrinkage prevention, fabric integrity, allergen removal, time savings, and ultimately, the sustained satisfaction of a well-cared-for wardrobe.

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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BROAD BRANDING



FEATURING
RAY KRONER

Opportunity awaits — if we only embrace it

A recent survey by Katey Kratz, executive director of Heartland Fabricare Association, emphasizes the disconnect that our industry has with Gen Z and Millennials. As she notes, it's an opportunity to redefine ourselves.

ment has come from the efforts of the DLI staff, which translates to minimal support from the membership.

If you're liking, sharing and commenting — thank you! If not, now is the time. SMAC has developed a solid foundation of marketing ideas, and

One question keeps running through my mind: if we, as an industry, can't get behind a marketing strategy of redefinition, why should we expect the consumer to buy in?

One of the exciting parts of being in business for yourself is figuring out how to turn obstacles into opportunity.

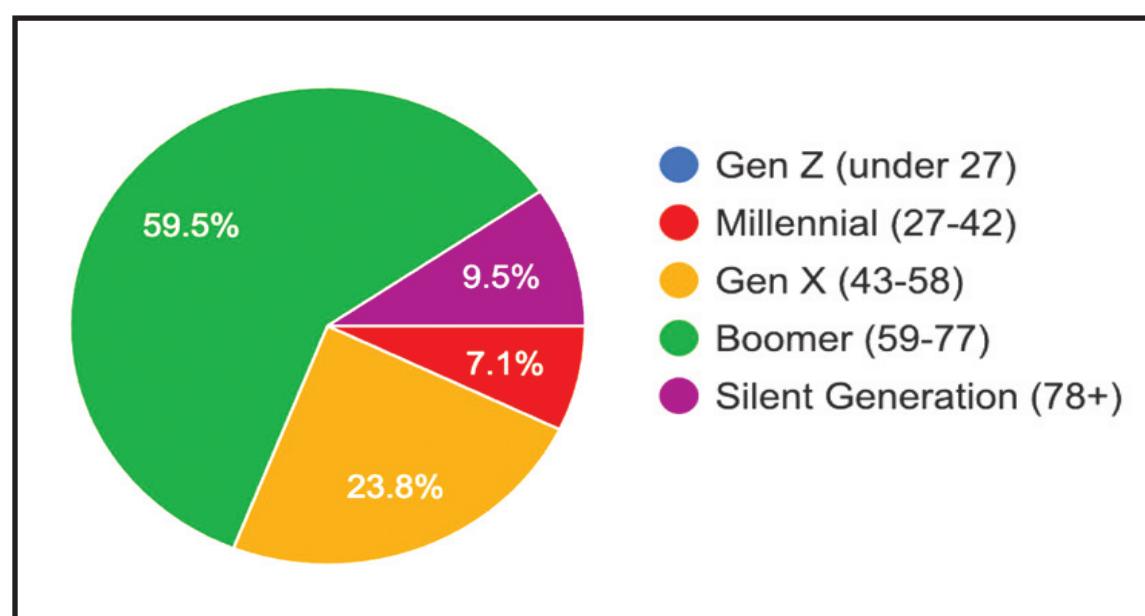
Redefinition of the industry is the mission of the DLI's Social Media Action Committee (SMAC). Since last April, we have been posting on all social media platforms.

The exposure and interaction is growing; however, it's nowhere near where it could be. A large portion of engage-

our approach is still morphing to see how best to improve it.

One question that keeps running through my mind is: if we, as an industry, can't get behind a marketing strategy of redefinition, why should we expect the consumer to buy in?

Many years ago, a sage sales representative would visit our store weekly, and through his travels to various cleaners he could tell who was driven and who was just getting by. He



One of the questions Katey Kratz asked drycleaning customers in recent surveys was: **What generation do you identify with?** By far, most of the respondents seem to be comprised of mostly Boomers (59.5%) and Generation X (23.8%). The problem lies on the other end of the age spectrum where Gen Z and Millennials do not go to the cleaners frequently. Gen Z "rarely" or "never" visit them 80% of the time while Millennials "rarely" or "never" visit 74.7% of the time.

knew those operators who stood at the counter, with chin in hands, wondering when the customers would come his way would die on the vine.

He observed how operators who were being proactive were prone to success. A business is a lot like a plant: if it's

not growing, it's dying.

This made me aware of two things; (1) how important the input of our allied trade partners is; and (2) we can't wait for something good to happen. We have to act upon it.

Katey's survey results also indicate that our target audience is social media savvy. A "Got Milk" campaign would not resonate with this demographic. We need to recreate our story and tell it where the most will hear/see it...which is social media platforms.

Back in the 1980s, one of our competitors was curious why we implemented a software program into our business model when they were still being developed. He was going to wait for the perfect system when all the wrinkles were ironed out (drycleaning pun intended).

He retired 20 years later and never initiated a software program.

We can wait for the *right time*

and *perfect* messaging approach or we can move forward and adjust as we go.

As we head into the new year, let's own who we are and make a unified effort to put a new face on our industry. Let's make our industry one that not only offers garment care but embraces environmental initiatives and takes part in community involvement.

Please stay tuned for more social media posts and be sure to like, share and comment.

Ray Kroner is the Committee Chair of DLI's Social Media Action Committee, the force behind a new ad campaign that seeks to overcome common misconceptions about professional garment care to an urban professional social media audience. Ray is also the owner of Kroner Dry Cleaners in Cincinnati. To contact him, send email to ray.kroner@kronerdrycleaners.com.



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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Drycleaners are overdue for a re-evaluation

There has been a magic formula in this industry that was never as widespread as it should have been. I'm going to share it with you, and then I'm going to explain why it is no longer prevalent.

Firstly, not many people were truly aware of it, which is unfortunate. Secondly, let's see if we can make this new formula one to live by.

In days gone by, I used to say:

There is some poetry to this business. Given 100 drycleaning pieces, 40 of them are pants and 60 of them are not. This means that in a plant that is properly equipped, you will have one pants station [a legger press and an automatic toppler], and two fully equipped utility stations [each with a utility press and a shared three-head toppler and a shared multi-function form]. The presser at the pants station presses 40 pants per hour and each presser at the utility press will press at the rate of 30 pieces per hour. This is a neat 100 pieces per hour with 3 pressers.

You can add shirts to that mix neatly as well:

With the addition of two single-buck shirt units, each producing 50 shirts per hour, an additional 100 pieces per hour are added to the mix.

This was a proper formula that worked very well for a long time. Admittedly, only the

most efficient plants ran with this formula as their daily mantra, but if you succeeded at

started to dwarf your drycleaning count, it spelled trouble. This was because 30 to 40 years

used to be in that group of 100 pieces of drycleaning. Many shirts — *many* — are now

mix of pressers and equipment is no longer valid.

For example, it's possible that your shirt presser used to come in at the same time as your drycleaning presses, but that is no longer necessary.

It could be that the shirt presser finishes with the other presses because that is what they've always done.

Perhaps they should be starting a half hour later. If you've long had three utility presses and two pants presses — because you always have — now you only need one pants presser.

One thing is certain: What used to be true is no longer true. Watch.

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.

Years ago, we could reliably count on a 50/50 mix of shirts and drycleaning. That was decades ago. In fact, if your shirt count started to dwarf your drycleaning count, it spelled trouble. This was because 30 to 40 years ago, drycleaners priced their shirts as a loss leader.

attaining those goals, you ran the most profitable plant possible.

Over the years, I have said many times that you must constantly evaluate and re-evaluate what you do to determine if what you're doing is still relevant. It is certainly time to look at this.

For years, I have said that we do 40% pants. Many dismissed that immediately, certain that they did far more than 40%. However, when challenged — thanks to the ability to mine data — their number would be right on. Rarely did the percentage deviate more than 1%+/-.

Where have the pants gone? Nowhere. They're still here.

Years ago, we could reliably count on a 50/50 mix of shirts and drycleaning. That was decades ago.

In fact, if your shirt count

ago, drycleaners priced their shirts as a *loss leader*, something that surely baffles drycleaners today.

Then, drycleaning services became less of a priority for consumers and those pieces began an aggressive decline. But, shirt service is more difficult to duplicate at home and is a bit of an addictive service. Shirt numbers outpaced drycleaning piece counts.

When public smoking was eliminated virtually nationwide, clothing became *rewearable* and drycleaners felt the pinch. Shirts are liable to absorb perspiration, but a dress or a sport jacket can hang in the closet and circumvent a trip to the drycleaner.

But, *where are the pants?*

It's not that they are missing; it's that there are more utility pieces (non-pants) than there

drycleaning pieces. Shirts with spandex. Shirts with snaps. Shirts with thick buttons. Shirts that cost \$400 to \$500. Shirts by Robert Graham and similar labels.

Correct or not, many of us are taking these and drycleaning them and finishing them on a drycleaning utility press.

This does three things: 1) It makes the percentage of pants lower by increasing the number of utility pieces; and 2) It makes the percentage of shirts appear to be lower.

The number of shirts may be roughly the same, but the number of laundered shirts is less and 3) The percentage of pants will be a smaller number.

So what does this all mean? It means that you need to take a fairly large sampling of your total pieces and see what it tells you. It is very likely that your

DATELINE

Send us your upcoming events to be added to our calendar of events. E-mail them to: info@nationalclothesline.com.

2026

Jan. 15 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Marketing Masterclass. Visit www.DLIonline.org.

Jan. 21 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) "Tracking What Matters in 2026" webinar with Dave Coyle. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

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. 17, 19, 24, 26 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Virtual Basic Stain Removal Techniques. Visit

www.DLIonline.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 9-13 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) five-day Introduction to Drycleaning course. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

March 16-28 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) ten-day Advanced Drycleaning course. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

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

April 14, 16 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) "Fibers and Fabrics" course with Jennifer Whitmarsh. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

April 21, 23 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) "Customer Service Superstars" course with Jennifer Whitmarsh. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.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.

May 5, 7, 12, 14 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Virtual Advanced Stain Removal Techniques. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

June 9, 11, 16, 18 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Virtual Basic Stain Removal Techniques. To sign up or for more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

June 25-26 Southwest Dryclean-

ing Association and California Cleaners Association Membership & Board meeting, Reno, NV. Visit www.sda-dryclean.com.

July 13-17 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) five-day Introduction to Drycleaning course. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

July 20-31 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) ten-day Advanced Drycleaning course. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

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

Aug. 11, 13, 18, 20 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Virtual Advanced Stain Removal Techniques. To sign up or for more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

Aug. 18, 20, 25, 27 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Virtual Basic Stain Removal Techniques in Spanish. For more information, visit

www.DLIonline.org.

Sept. 15, 17 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) "Inspire and Influence" course with Jennifer Whitmarsh. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.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. 5-9 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) five-day Introduction to Drycleaning course. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

Oct. 12-23 The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) ten-day Advanced Drycleaning course. For more information, visit www.DLIonline.org.

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

Oct. 23-26 EXPO Detergo International 2026 show at Fiera Milano in Italy. For more information, visit them online at www.detergo.eu.

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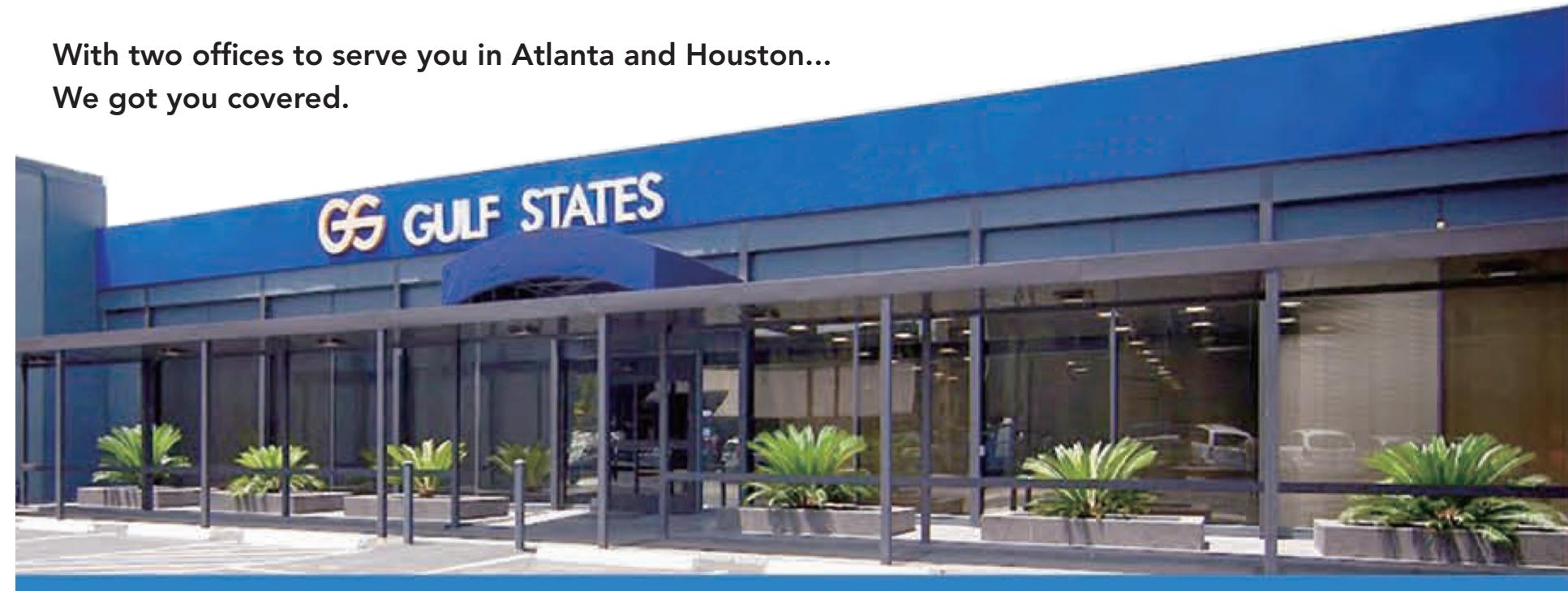
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THE SPOTTING BOARD

BY DAN EISEN



Causes and solutions for fabric rings

One of the most frustrating aspects of cleaning and spotting is the formation of rings. When a liquid contacts a fabric, the probability of a ring is high. This occurs because the liquid moves impurities to the outer edges.

Upon drying, a ring emerges. Some rings are caused by the finish and sizing in a fabric which can vary from fabric to fabric. Some finishes are water soluble while other finishes may be resin-based and not affected by the moisture.

Sometimes rings occur due to the fabric construction and the composition of the inner fabric. The following is a list of the causes of rings and the methods used for removal.

Water Rings

When any spotting is done the wet side chemicals and impurities move to the outer areas forming rings. When any spotting is done, it is advisable to flush using the steam or water gun into a towel to prevent spreading of the wet area.

Removal of Rings

1) Feathering. This is a method of breaking up a ring and using a towel to blend the wet area gradually into the dry area. It can be accomplished very easily by holding the steam gun three to four inches from the fabric and breaking up the rings with dry steam. Then, quickly take a dry towel and wipe the area from the inside of the wet area toward the outside so it blends in with the dry area.

The secret for feathering is to make sure you work in small areas doing a portion of the ring each time. If you are near a seam, try to wipe and blend the wet area towards the seam.

Dry side feathering can also be done using volatile dry solvent. Dampen the towel with volatile dry solvent and wipe in the same manner as outlined above.

2) Vacuum and drying. If you spot an area of a fabric and it is still moist, you can bring it over the screened area of the

spotting board and quickly use the air from the spotting gun and vacuum at the same time. Try to dry the rings first to prevent ringing.

3) Leveling agents. These agents have the ability to prevent rings because the leveling agent breaks up the water droplets into fine droplets.

This process spreads out the wet area and prevents the moisture from producing rings. This occurs because when moisture droplets are broken up it loses its ability to form rings.

There are many commercial leveling agents on the market ranging from spray spotters, leveling agents and drycleaning soap mixtures.

Wet Side Sizing

Many rayons and silks contain a water soluble sizing that dissolves upon contact with moisture in spotting or spillage of beverages. Sometimes the dissolved sizing leaves a ring and an area with loss of luster. This frequently occurs on matte jersey fabrics.

Removal

Fogging. This is a method of holding the steam gun away from the fabric so the steam slightly dampens the fabric but does not wet it.

When this is done the area should be dried quickly with the air gun and vacuum.

Resin Breakdown

Many satins and taffetas contain a resin finish that can break down in spotting or staining. This type of resin breakdown cannot be corrected by feathering or leveling.

Solution

Amyl acetate. Brush over the rings using amyl acetate and then immediately dryclean the garment.

Fabric Construction

Some quilted fabrics ring up in drycleaning due to the quilting construction. The outer fabric dries quickly but the quilting wets the outer fabric producing rings. The impurities in the solvent contribute to the ring problem.

Solution

The quilted fabric will ring up less if it is wetcleaned and dried in a dryer in a low temperature setting. Down filled coats and jackets may ring due to the oils and impurities left in the down during manufacture.

The best way to correct this problem is also in wetcleaning. It is also advisable to wetclean using a nonionic detergent so the oils and impurities can be removed from the down filling. After wetcleaning dry in a dryer on a low heat setting.

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 dan-eisen39@gmail.com or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.

NEWSMAKERS

ZIPS Cleaners graduated its fourth **Certified Trainer** class last month, adding another six team members to the list of individuals who have successfully matriculated through the

one-day program held at the company's Savage, MD, headquarters.

Created by the in-house ZIPS Training Team and launched in June of 2024, the

Certified Trainer program coaches participants on effective methods to enhance store-level training, increase knowledge and reduce turnover.

Attendees learn how to provide exceptional training to all new employees, existing employees (when applicable), and new managers, gaining the tools they need to coach with

confidence, communicate clearly, and deliver results.

After completing the class, they receive ongoing coaching and guidance from the Training Team and participate in periodic Certified Trainer chats where they share training success stories and challenges with fellow participants.



Earlier last year, ZIPS graduated nine additional employees from the Certified Trainer program.

So far, 48 team members have successfully completed the program to date.

"The Certified Trainer program helps build a strong training culture, improve retention, and grow a team that delivers on our brand promise every day," said **Jennifer Davis**, training and development people manager for ZIPS. "Our goal is to have at least one or two Certified Trainers per location."

For more information, visit www.321zips.com.

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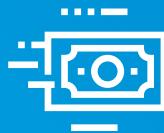
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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Keeping compressed air flowing, part II

Compressed air systems and components will be the subject of this series of articles. In the drycleaning and laundry industries, compressed air is mostly used to expand and/or contract cylinders, which actuates valves and positions parts of machinery (the head on your pants press or the buck on your shirt unit). In addition, compressed air is also used to blow out moisture and debris from fabric on your spotting board, and on far too rare occasions, dust and lint from the surface of machinery.

Some of the basic components of the compressed air system we will cover are as follows:

- 1) Air Compressor
- 2) Filters
- 3) Regulators
- 4) Lubricators
- 5) Valves
- 6) Cylinders

Well, what is compressed air? It's air forced into a closed container, raising its energy level and storing this air as a source of energy for later use. This process is called compression. The air compressor — a device which I'm sure almost

all of you could find in your plant — is designed to accomplish this task. Unlike steam, which, once outside the boiler, has one basic quality, *pressure*, the compressed air powering your equipment has several important qualities.

Pay attention to these qualities and you'll be rewarded with smooth trouble-free operation of both the air compressor and 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. There are several subjects to cover, so let's take them by the numbers.

Remember: compressed air is 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 deactivated and the internal air pressure has been bled off until there is no air pressure present.

The Air Compressor. An air compressor is comprised of a pump which compresses the air, a tank where the air is stored for use, and several

components, including check and relief valves as well as electrical pressure switches located in different areas on the compressor, which ensure the safe operation of the compressor. There are several families of compressor pumps, and I'm going to limit the family of compressor pumps under discussion to the **reciprocating type**.

This family of compressors is the most common in our industry and uses pistons moving inside cylinders, working with associated valves to compress the air. They're constructed similarly to a two-stroke gasoline engine and require basically the same type of maintenance. In a gasoline engine, expanding gases generated by the explosion of a mixture of gasoline/air vapor push a piston, linked to a crankshaft, which turns a flywheel generating rotary motion. In an air compressor, an electric motor provides the rotary motion and is linked to a flywheel (usually via belts), which rotates a crankshaft. The crankshaft translates this rotary motion into reciprocating motion, sliding a piston inside



a cylinder, compressing the air in front of the piston head; just the reverse principle of the gasoline engine.

Now, as you can imagine, there are lots of moving parts in this portion of the compressor, along with seals and gaskets requiring lubrication. In order to minimize friction and wear, all this linear and rotary motion must take place in a bath of oil. Not just any oil, but oils engineered for the type of lubrication service required for air compressors. 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. Oil levels contained in compressors should be checked weekly; there's generally a small round sight glass towards the bottom of the compressor pump, and with the compressor off, a level of about $\frac{1}{2}$ way up the height of the sight glass should be visible; if it's lower, add oil.

The oil itself should be drained and disposed of properly, then replaced once annually. A fill as well as a drain plug is usually located near the sight glass. 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 dress-

ing" to avoid adjusting or replacing failing belts.

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 belt about $\frac{1}{2}$ way between the motor pulley and flywheel should result in about a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dimple 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, do not wait; replace them. Belts should always be replaced with new ones with the exact specifications as the originals.

Well, that's it for this month, I'll be continuing on this subject next month with more easily accomplished tasks that save big bucks.

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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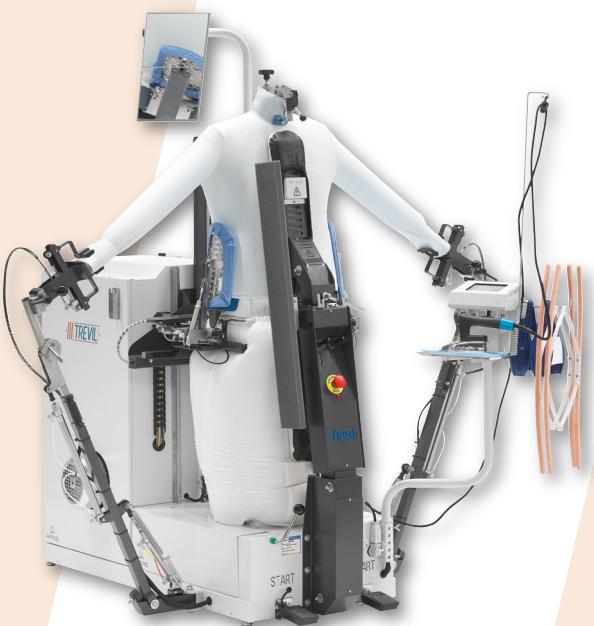


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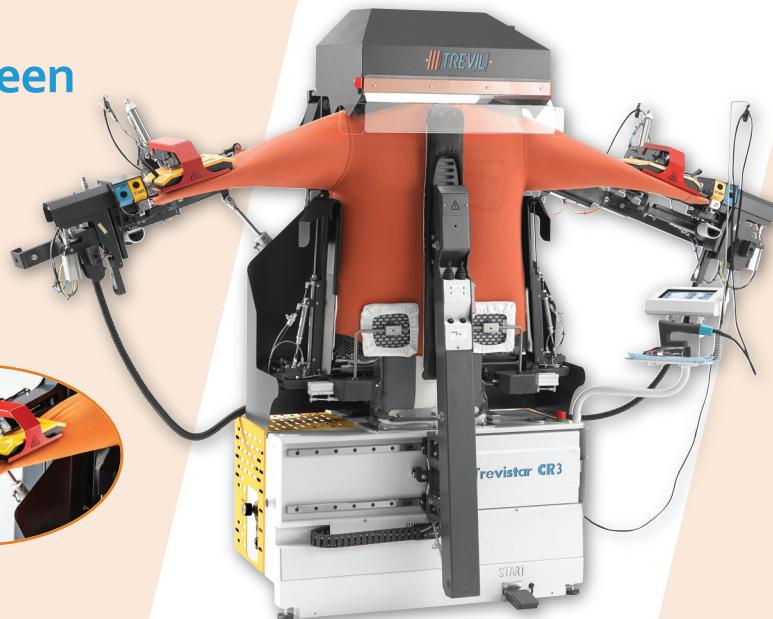
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Tide Services expands on Florida's Space Coast

Recently, Tide Services expanded its footprint on Florida's Space Coast with the acquisition and conversion of eight Crest Cleaners & Laundry locations.

The stores — spanning Cocoa Beach, Melbourne and Viera — will be operated by Clean & Press Solutions, LLC, led by multi-unit franchise partners Girish and Harry Mirpuri.

The eight-store acquisition represents a significant portion of the Mirpuris' 20-unit development commitment in the Orlando and Tampa markets and builds on the two Tide Cleaners outlets they already operate in the state.

"The Mirpuri family has a strong track record of service-driven retail, and their approach aligns closely with what makes these stores successful," said Emily Schneider, vice president of franchise development at Tide Services. "Their leadership will help ensure a smooth transition for employees and customers as these stores join the Tide Cleaners network."

The Mirpuri brothers bring more than 30 years of multigenerational,

guest-focused retail experience.

Through Mirpuri Group USA, their experience led to operations of six high volume PANDORA Jewelry concept stores and Dynasty Gallery & Gifts, employing more than 200 people across Florida.

Their roots stretch back to the family's fine-jewelry business in Toronto, later expanding into U.S. retail operations in Florida.

Known for their emphasis on integrity and long-term customer relationships, the brothers now bring that same philosophy to garment care through Clean & Press Solutions, LLC.

Under Clean & Press Solutions' leadership, the stores will see operational upgrades over time, including improved customer communication, enhanced service consistency and access to Tide Cleaners' support systems.

"These cleaners have served their neighborhoods for decades," said Harry. "Our role is to carry that forward and introduce new services and technologies that will allow the business to grow into its next chapter."

For more information, visit www.tidecleaners.com.



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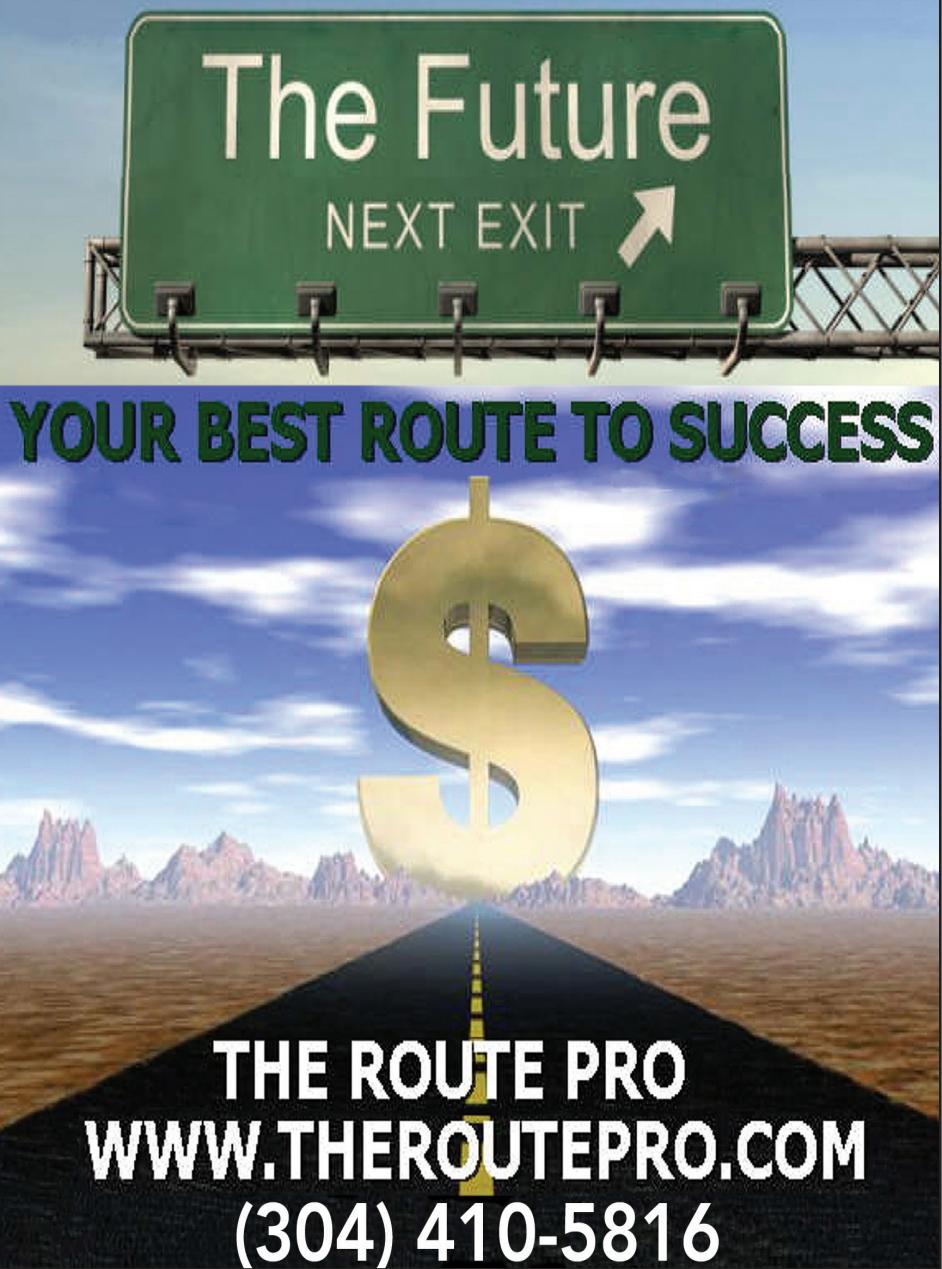
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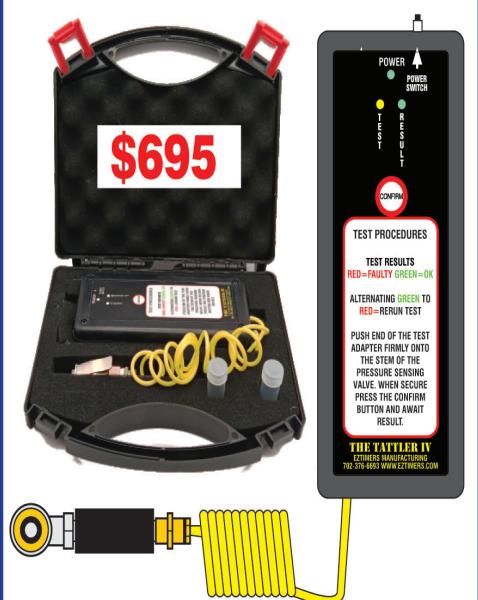
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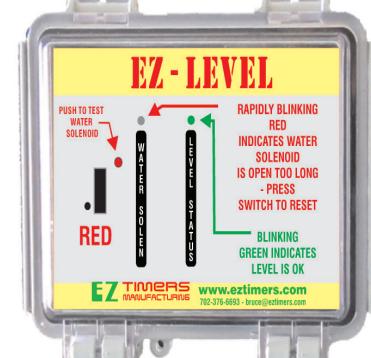
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