



National

# Clothesline



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## DL EXPO West adds exclusive plant tour

DL EXPO West 2026 — set to take place at the Irving Convention Center from March 27 to 29 — has added a behind-the-scenes plant tour that will feature three facilities in the Dallas area, all included with a single ticket.

The guided tour will take place on Friday, March 27, from 7:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. and include visits to Avon Cleaners, Sunshine Cleaners and Tide Laundromat.

Tickets are \$25 per person and cleaners can register at [DLEXPO.org/dl-expo-west](http://DLEXPO.org/dl-expo-west). Out of courtesy to the host facilities, participants must ride the official tour bus to attend.

“We’re excited to showcase some of the best cleaners we have in the Dallas area,” noted Fran Stone-Beale, SDA president and owner of A-Town Cleaners in Abilene, TX. “This tour offers attendees a rare op-

portunity to see high-performing plants in action and learn directly from industry leaders.”

Founded in 1968, Avon Cleaners operates a 20,000-square-foot facility serving customers throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex with delivery service.

The operation leverages Spot software to connect directly with customers and utilizes Union drycleaning machines with K4 solvent, a Garment Management System Quick Sort Assembly System, and finishing equipment from Sankosha and Hi-Steam (Sam 451).

Sunshine Cleaners operates a 16,000-square-foot facility designed for maximum reliability, featuring redundant systems such as dual boilers, air compressors, and chillers to ensure uninterrupted produc-

Exclusive Plant Tours of:

Prakash	Kratz	Abercrombie	Wallace
Ingram	Rothrock	Pedzinski	

tion.

Equipment includes Columbia and Union drycleaning machines, a MacPi steam tunnel, Sankosha, Forenta, and Hoffman presses, Metalprogetti conveyors, Sankosha double-buck shirt lines,

Continental washers, Clean-Chem soap injection, flatwork ironers and more.

With 85 years in business, Sunshine credits its success to first-class customer service, attention to detail, and a dedicated, low-turnover staff.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to visit a Tide Laundromat to see how the operation generates five-star reviews — 600 reviews in just six weeks since opening — while moving DIY customers

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## DLI kicks off '26 with nice educational mix

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) is kicking off the new year with a busy slate of educational seminars, including a webinar on “How to Attract Media Attention” and a Virtual Basic Stain Removal course.

The Virtual Basic Stain Removal course is set to begin on

Feb. 17 and will feature hands-on training with various stain removal techniques and processes to improve cleaning results, reduce re-cleans

and build staff confidence on the spotting board. Students will receive a set of sample stains and follow along live with DLI’s expert instructors.

The program teaches participants how to: identify stains quickly and choose the correct removal method; apply spotting chemicals safely and effectively; use tools and equipment for maximum cleaning success; avoid common mistakes that lead to damage or customer complaints; and improve first-time quality and reduce workflow slowdowns. The course is ideal for new technicians, exper-

rienced staff or team members looking to strengthen quality and customer satisfaction.

Another highlight offering of the month will be a webinar on Feb. 25 covering “How to Attract Media Attention” by Ray Kroner of Kroner Cleaners in Cincinnati, OH, and Harry A. Kimmel III, DLI’s communication director. They will help attendees learn how to develop press releases and

events to raise their profile with local media outlets.

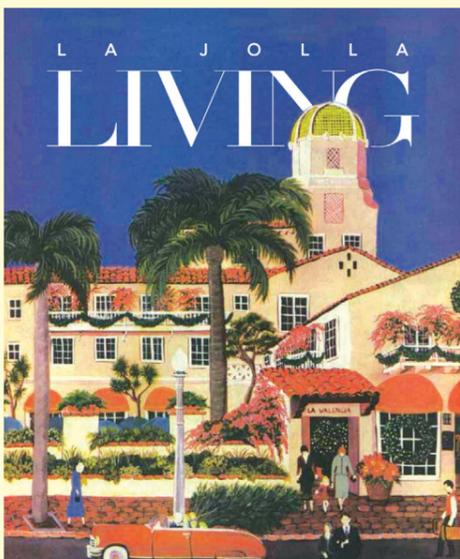
Beyond this month, DLI will also be offering numerous courses throughout the year.

**March and Beyond**

Next up will be an offering of its Introduction to Drycleaning course from March 9 to 13 at its School of Drycleaning Technology followed by Advanced Drycleaning from

*Continued on page 8*

### Margaret’s appears in *La Jolla Living*



Cover of *La Jolla Living*, Dec. 2025

Margaret’s the Couture Cleaner was recently featured in *La Jolla Living* magazine’s December 2025 issue. The article highlighted the company’s 70+ year legacy of excellence in textile preservation, haute couture cleaning and its recent humanitarian efforts restoring fire-damaged heirlooms for Pacific Palisades fire survivors.

When the Pacific Palisades fires devastated local communities last year, Margaret’s launched an immediate response program. Teams traveled from La Jolla, Los Angeles, and San Diego to collect smoke-damaged garments including wedding dresses, military uniforms, and family heirlooms.

“Every item told a story,” said Chuck Horst, president of Margaret’s. “When you return something that represents someone’s history, you’re giving them back more than clothing — you’re giving them comfort.”



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#### Rich cleaner, poor cleaner?

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#### Proper piping procedures

In order to make sure compressed air keeps flowing properly, check out your current pipe layout.

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#### Do you know the why?

Are you really sure about the main reasons that your customers keep coming to you?



*kindness*

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IT BEAUTIFIES  
EVERYTHING  
IT COVERS

~ Kahlil Gibran



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## Still trying to be what you might have been

English novelist and poet George Eliot once said, *"It is never too late to be what you might have been."* Those words were profoundly true for the writer herself whose birth name was Mary Anne Evans. She adopted the masculine nom-de-plume to overcome expectations and limitations set upon female authors during the 1800s. It wasn't until she was 37 years old that she published *Scenes of Clerical Life* in 1957, the first of many notable works. (Keep in mind, the average life expectancy at that time was estimated to be in the early forties.)

That is not to say it is good to *wait* for success to finally come to you, either. Another English author and poet named *George* — George Hérbert, born in 1593 — had something to say on that matter: *"Do not wait. The time will never be 'just right.' Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along."*

Clearly, you are already heeding that advice from the second George if you are reading this editorial. The trade publications are an excellent source of news, information and advice — a place with ideas that you can implement almost immediately into your business in order to make it better.

One question drycleaners often have to ask themselves is: *How do I choose the best stain removal agents?* For the answer to that, check out this month's column on page 12 from DLI Hall of Famer Dan Eisen, who quite possibly could know more on that topic than anyone on the planet.

*"There is not just one manufacturer who has a monopoly providing all the best chemicals,"* writes Eisen. *"The drycleaners may use different products from different manufacturers."*

There are a lot of factors to consider for a lot of spotting chemicals. Fortunately, Dan breaks down the most important characteristics that each agent should contain, from protein and tannin formulas to neutral lubricants, digesters and more so that you can make sure you've stocked your plant with all the best products to meet stain removal needs.

According to James Peuster of The Route Pros, another common question asked by drycleaners is: *How can I compete with a delivery-based app?* In his column on page 16, James outlines nine effective steps that have been proven successful for other drycleaners in practice. Truthfully, the smaller businesses can be competitive by blending traditional strengths with convenience features and affordable technology.

Another big question that drycleaners should be asking themselves, according to columnist Don Desrosiers, is: *Do you know what brings customers to you?* As he points out in his column on page 20, "Drycleaners market with price because that is the easiest promise to keep. However, it is a fact that this is unlikely the reason customers come to you. Let's hope it's not."

Once drycleaners figure out why their customers are coming in, perhaps next they can try to figure out *where the \*\$#! all the compressed flowing air went.* In the third part of an ongoing series, columnist Bruce Grossman (see page 18) takes a deep dive into your piping systems where gravity and inertia play an integral role in keeping compressed air moving in a straight line at a constant velocity. Find out what can slow things down and how you can go about eliminating any problems.

Lastly, columnist Kermit Engh doesn't have any questions to answer for you, but he does have two reading recommendations that contain timeless money lessons for today's workforce. In his column on page 6, Kermit discusses *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kioysaki and *Baby Steps* by Dave Ramsey.

While both writers agree that "financial literacy, discipline and intentionality are non-negotiable," they differ on their approaches a bit. However, as Engh points out, when utilized together, they can help you achieve greater financial freedom.

All of these excellent columns can help you *be what you might have been*, and there is no time like the present to do something about it.

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Visit us at [www.nationalclothesline.com](http://www.nationalclothesline.com) for additional coverage of the drycleaning industry including Online Exclusive columns and articles, visit our issue archives going back all the way to January of 2018.

**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](mailto:info@nationalclothesline.com)

[www.nationalclothesline.com](http://www.nationalclothesline.com)

PUBLISHER

Carol Memberg

EDITOR

Chris Pollay

[chris@nationalclothesline.com](mailto:chris@nationalclothesline.com)

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Leslie Schaeffer

[Leslie@bpscommunications.com](mailto:Leslie@bpscommunications.com)

ADVERTISING

Richard Cappo

[rich@nationalclothesline.com](mailto:rich@nationalclothesline.com)

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Mary Castro-Regan

[graphics@bpscommunications.com](mailto:graphics@bpscommunications.com)

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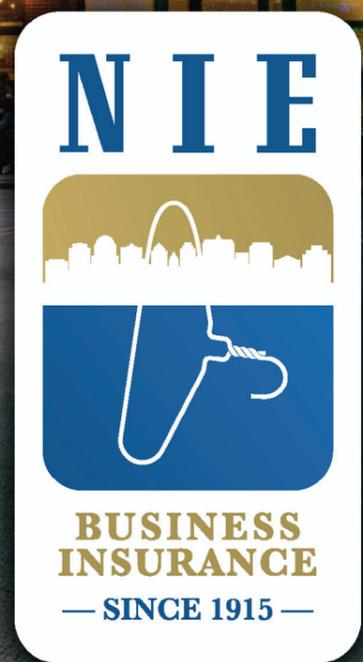
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# BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

## Two timeless money lessons for today's workforce

As most readers are aware, there are several very experienced contributors to this publication who provide expertise in specific areas of our industry. This month, I would like to take a slightly different approach.

Recently, I spoke with a young man who was struggling with his family's finances and long-term planning. We spent time identifying where his income was coming from and where it was going.

As many of us have learned the hard way, money can leak without us realizing it, leaving nothing at the end of the month. These leaks can come from our own spending habits or from others in the household.

Fortunately, we were able to pinpoint several areas to address. I then recommended two books that have stood the test of time that I have used successfully to help others.

Financial literacy is rarely taught in school. If you grew up in a household where money was spent as it came in, adulthood can be financially challenging — especially when compounded by student loan debt.

I recently read that the average age of a first-time homebuyer has now reached 40. It is no surprise, then, that many industries struggle to engage younger adults who have little disposable income.

Starting in your thirties with no financial plan can feel overwhelming, but it is not too late to build a strong financial future. The principles from *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* and Dave Ramsey's *Seven Baby Steps* offer two powerful — yet very different — roadmaps that can be combined into a practical plan.

### Two Financial Mindsets

*Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki focuses on how the wealthy think, while Dave Ramsey emphasizes how everyday people can act their way out of financial stress.

Robert Kiyosaki encourages financial education, investor thinking and the building of income-producing assets such as businesses and real estate.

I have seen members of our industry successfully reinvest profits from their cleaning operations into real estate and other ventures. The question remains: *Who is teaching the*

*next generation these principles?*

Dave Ramsey, on the other hand, offers a straightforward, step-by-step plan — known as the **Seven Baby Steps** — to eliminate debt, build an emergency fund and invest consistently.

For individuals in their thirties who may be behind on savings or overwhelmed by debt, Kiyosaki helps expand vision, while Ramsey provides structure and stability.

### Rich Dad, Poor Dad Lessons

The core message of *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* is simple: The wealthy buy assets, while the poor and middle class often buy liabilities they believe are assets. A new car, for example, is not an asset — it is a depreciating purchase.

Assets generate income, such as rental properties, businesses, or dividend-paying investments. Liabilities take money out through ongoing costs like consumer debt, vehicle loans, or even a primary residence that produces no income.

Kiyosaki also stresses the importance of financial education — understanding cash flow, reading financial statements, and learning how money works beyond a paycheck.

### Seven Baby Steps Lessons

Ramsey's *Baby Steps* provides a clear path from financial stress to stability.

**Baby Step 1:** Save a starter emergency fund of \$1,000 as fast as possible so minor surprises do not push you into more debt.

**Baby Step 2:** Pay off all non-mortgage debt using the "debt snowball" (smallest balance first) to build momentum and confidence, even if it is not mathematically perfect.

**Baby Step 3:** Build a three to six month emergency fund so job loss or big bills do not destroy your progress.

	<i>Rich Dad, Poor Dad</i>	<i>Seven Baby Steps</i>
<b>Core goal</b>	Build wealth through cash-flowing assets and financial independence.	Achieve debt-free, stable, middle-class security and generosity.
<b>View of debt</b>	Debt can be a tool if it buys income-producing assets.	Avoid debt; eliminate it quickly.
<b>1st priority</b>	Increase financial education and move toward owning assets or businesses.	Get control: emergency fund and aggressive debt payoff.
<b>Investment style</b>	Active investing, higher risk and reward.	Simple, long-term mutual fund investment after debt is gone.
<b>Best suited for</b>	Has or wants entrepreneurial drive and can study investing deeply.	Feels overwhelmed, paycheck-to-paycheck and needs strict structure.

**Baby Step 4:** Invest 15% of your household income for retirement, often in tax-advantaged accounts like 401(k)s and IRAs.

**Baby Steps 5–7:** Save for kids' college, pay off your home early, then build wealth and give generously.

For those starting without a plan, Ramsey's approach removes confusion by answering one question at a time: "What should I do next?"

### Comparing Both Approaches

Kiyosaki and Ramsey agree that financial literacy, discipline and intentionality are non-negotiable, but they differ on tactics and risk. (See graph above.) When used together, Ramsey's discipline provides stability, while Kiyosaki's mindset expands long-term possibilities.

### A Practical Starting Point

For someone in their thirties starting from scratch, a blended approach works well:

**1) Get brutally honest with your numbers.**

- List your income, all debts, and all monthly expenses to build a simple personal income statement and balance sheet.

- Compare your spending to a simple guideline like the 50-30-20 rule (needs, wants, savings/debt) to see where money is leaking.

**2) Follow Baby Steps 1–3 to create stability.**

- Stack \$1,000 quickly in a small emergency fund, even if that means selling a few things or cutting subscriptions.

- Attack debts using the debt snowball: smallest balance first, minimums on the rest, and roll freed-up payments into the next one.

- Once non-mortgage debt is gone, build three to six months of expenses in cash in

a high-yield savings account. Here I recommended CDs to short-term T-Bills.

**3) Start investing for Future You (Baby Step 4).**

- Aim to invest at least 10 to 15% of your income into retirement accounts. Even if you cannot hit 15% immediately, start somewhere and increase annually.

- If your employer offers a 401(k) match, prioritize getting the full match because it is essentially free money.

- If no plan is available, open an IRA and consider a Roth IRA if you are in a moderate tax bracket and have decades to grow.

**4) Add Rich Dad thinking once you have a base.**

- Use your growing stability to start learning about assets. Read about real estate, small business ownership and basic investing beyond retirement accounts.

- Look for ways to increase income — side work, skill upgrades, small ventures — so more money can be directed to retirement and future assets.

- When you are ready, consider small, calculated moves into assets that can produce cash flow, such as a small rentals, a side business, or other income-producing investments.

**5) Build a life you actually want, not just a big account balance.**

- Perkins, Kiyosaki, and many modern planners stress that money is a tool to create a meaningful life, not just a giant number on a statement.

- In your thirties, balance short-term upgrades (paying off debt, stabilizing cash flow) with long-term moves (investing, building assets) and meaningful experiences with family and friends.

Money should ultimately

serve life — not the other way around. Stability, growth, and meaningful experiences can co-exist when finances are intentional.

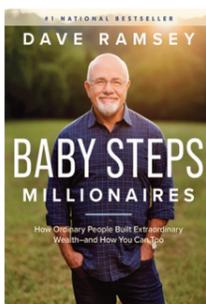
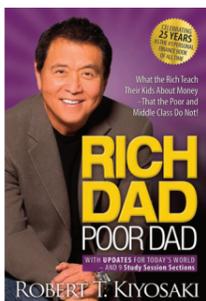
### A Final Thought

Being behind financially is not a character flaw; it is simply a starting point. Many people begin serious financial planning in their thirties. What matters most is the willingness to learn, adjust, and take action.

By combining Dave Ramsey's structure with Robert Kiyosaki's vision, individuals can move from financial stress to stability — and eventually toward true financial independence.

Dave Ramsey's organization also offers financial training programs for employees and families through online platforms. For business owners, few benefits are more valuable than helping employees build a stronger financial future.

**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@mfmfi.com](mailto:kengh@mfmfi.com).**





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# DL EXPO West adds exclusive plant tour

*Continued from page 1*

through efficiently and processing commercial and campus laundry behind the scenes.

Tide highlights its autodosing systems, build-out and staffing model as key differentiators from the competition. Equipment includes Electrolux 400G washers with autodosing pump systems and Electrolux dryers.

The exclusive plant tour is just the start to the DL EXPO West weekend. Attendees can enjoy the equipment show at no cost, as well as the attend all of the educational sessions — and there are quite a few.

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 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.

Also scheduled to appear will be Dale Pedzinski of Ex-

tract 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 scheduled to take place on the weekend will include “Maintaining Your Machine” by Chris Abercrombie of Christeys 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, close to 90 exhibit booths have already been sold, but exhibit booths are still available.

The Westin Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas will serve as the host hotel, conveniently located next to the con-

vention center.

A special hotel rate of \$189/night for convention attendees and exhibitors is only available through March 10 on the DL EXPO West website at [DLEXPO.org/dl-expo-west](http://DLEXPO.org/dl-expo-west).

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

## DL EXPO East coming soon

Later in the year, the DL EXPO East show will coming to Washington DC in October. The event will be held at the Gaylord National Resort from Oct. 16 to 18.



The inaugural installment of the DL EXPO East show was held in July of 2024 at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention in Kissimmee, FL, which proved to be quite a success.

Overall, there were over 700 attendees and exhibitors at the event, bringing in drycleaners from 32 states and three countries.

For more information, as it comes available, visit the official website located online at [DLEXPO.org/dl-expo-east](http://DLEXPO.org/dl-expo-east).

# DLI kicks off '26 with education mix

*Continued from page 1*

March 16 to 28.

The Introduction to Drycleaning class includes five days of hands-on training covering essential skills including sorting garments for drycleaning, cleaning delicate fabrics like silk and satin, operating drycleaning machines, removing common stains such as coffee, ink and grease, pressing various garments, and using tensioning equipment to enhance finishing quality.

Tuition is \$2,295 for non-members. DLI Members pay depending on membership level.

The Introduction to Drycleaning course will also be repeated twice more in 2026: once in the summer from July 13 to 17 and once in the fall from Oct. 5 to 9.

The Advanced Drycleaning course offers ten days of advanced training techniques of fiber identification, stain removal, pressing, wetcleaning, machine maintenance, customer service, and plant workflow design.

Tuition is \$2,795 for non-member and members pay based on membership level. There are additional discounts available for those who take both the Introductory and Advanced courses concurrently.

The Advanced Drycleaning class will also meet twice more in 2026: in the summer from July 20 to 31 and in the fall from Oct. 12 to 23.

In addition to its signature courses, DLI also plans to host several virtual courses. In April, the association will host two programs. The first will cover the topic of “Fibers and Fabrics” and is set to take place on April 14 and 16.

Later in the month, DLI

will host a virtual class on Customer Service on April 21 and 23. Both programs will be taught by Jennifer Whitmarsh of The Route Pros and Snappy Dry Cleaning.

The cost to attend either program is \$549 for non-members while members pay depending on membership level.

In May, DLI will host an Advanced Stain Removal course online that will take place over four separate dates: May 5, 7, 12 and 14. Tuition is \$695 for non-members while members pay based on membership level.

DLI will host another session of its Advanced Stain Removal course virtually in August. The course will meet on the following dates: Aug. 11, 13, 18 and 20.

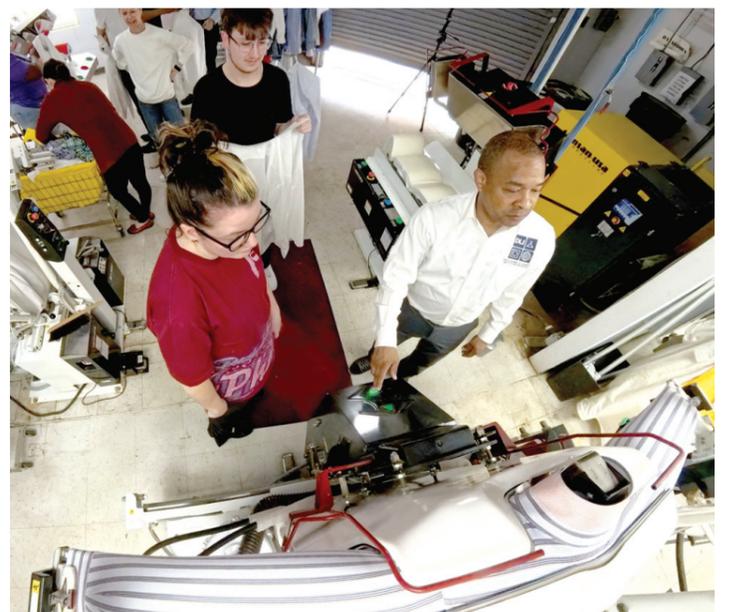
In June, DLI will present a virtual version of its Basic Stain Removal course that combines live lectures, engaging videos and hands-on stain removal activities.

The cost is \$695 for non-members and members pay depending on membership level. The course meets over the course of four dates: June 9, 11, 16 and 18.

In August, DLI will present a virtual version of its Basic Stain Removal class in Spanish. Dates for that course will be Aug. 18, 20, 25 and 27.

Finally, DLI's virtual schedule also includes a Leadership Course that will take place on Sept. 15 and 17. The program is taught by Jennifer Whitmarsh. The cost is \$549 for non-members; members vary by membership level.

To learn more about any of DLI's upcoming educational opportunities, visit them online at [DLIonline.org](http://DLIonline.org) or call (800) 638-2627.



DLI Education Director Brian Johnson (pictured on right above) guides students through the process of pressing a shirt on some of the shirt pressing equipment at the DLI School of Education in Laurel, MD. Currently, the school is in its 99th year of educating and assisting the textile care industry.

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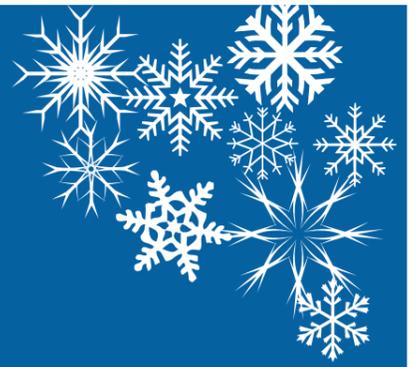
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# THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

## Choosing the best stain removal agents

In the course of my consultations and training I come across drycleaners using a large variety of different chemicals from different manufacturers. The chemical formulations offered by different manufacturers are not necessarily similar, and the drycleaner has to choose what works best for them.

There is *not just one manufacturer* who has a monopoly providing all the best chemicals. The drycleaner may use different products from different manufacturers. Drycleaners should jump at the opportunity of obtaining samples and trying different products in order to find out which one works best for them. Using

products properly is a must for obtaining the best results.

### Neutral Lubricant

This is one of the most important aids for successful wet-side stain removal. Those who does not use neutral lubricant miss out on the opportunity to remove wet-side staining without using tannin or protein formulas. The quality of the neutral lubricant that you use and the way it is used are important factors.

Neutral lubricant is used after the stain is flushed with the proper mechanical action. The neutral lubricant not only protects the fabric from damage but helps break up the stain, lift the stain so it can be easily flushed from the fabric.

### Protein Formulas

The safest protein formulas are the ones that have the lowest alkalinity. The formulation is effective on protein stains and provides safety to most fabrics including silk.

The more dangerous protein formulas are the ones with a high alkaline content and those containing ammonia.

### Tannin Formulas

An effective and safe tannin formula has a mild acid content. Tannin formulas with a higher acid content and those containing acetic acid may not have the same safety properties. Check with your chemical company or sales representative whether you can combine tannin and protein formulas. I

work with a chemical company who has shown me how a protein and tannin formula combination can be effective in removing some difficult stains.

Although combining acid- and alkaline-based chemicals are not recommended, the results of combining some products can be beneficial.

### Digesters

Digesters are enzyme-based products that convert protein stains into soluble sugar. Different manufacturers have different enzyme-based products with different properties and safety. You should know the properties of the enzyme-based products and choose the one best for you.

### 1) High Temperature En-

**zymes.** These enzymes are usually liquid and can be used at high temperatures up to 140°F and do not break down with other chemicals. They are used with mechanical action and have a relative degree of safety, but not entirely.

**2) High Temperature Alkaline-Based Enzymes.** These products can be used with soaking or mechanical action. It is not designed for safety on fabrics such as silk or those with poor color fastness.

**3) Low Temperature Powder Enzymes.** These are the safest enzymes to use and are designed for use on silks and garments with poor color fastness. They have the same degree of safety as using water.

They can be used in a bath or for spotting board use. They must be used with temperatures no higher than 120°F, no contact with chemicals and allowed to work on a fabric for at least 20 minutes. These products require no mechanical action.

### Ink Removers

There are several products manufactured for ink removal. Some have the capability of removing ink and are safe to the fiber and color. There are some ink removers produced that are more aggressive and may affect fabrics such as acetate and tri-acetate.

Some ink removers have the capability of removing plastic-based stains, which has the benefit of eliminating amylose acetate, (which is prohibited in some states).

### Oxygen Bleaches

**Sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate.** Both bleaches that are alkaline by nature, and I use them for whitening fabrics in a bath. Sodium percarbonate offers a higher degree of safety since it dissolves easier in cool water.

### Rust Removers

**Hydrofluoric acid and oxalic acid.** Both products are used for as rust removers.

Oxalic acid provides a higher degree of safety, especially on glass and metallic trimmings.

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 danneisen39@gmail.com or through his website at [www.garmentanalysis.com](http://www.garmentanalysis.com).

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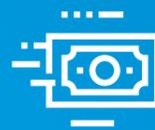


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# THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

## How can you compete with app-based services?

I have covered this topic before, but we are getting more and more calls from cleaners concerned with competing against various app-based, Uber-style services.

Competing with app-based laundry and drycleaning services can feel challenging for traditional laundromats and drycleaners, but we have discovered that many are finding successful strategies by leaning into their strengths and adapting smartly.

Here's how you can compete effectively:

**1) Highlight local, personalized service.** App services often lack face-to-face interaction and personal care. A local business can win by:

- Knowing regular customers' preferences. (Example: "Extra starch on shirts for Mark," or "delicate cycle only for these.")
- Building personal relationships. Customers who feel valued are more loyal.
- Quick, direct communication. No texting back and forth through an app — just a

friendly local phone call or in-person chat.

**2) Provide Two-Day Turnaround.** While app services may have set pickup/delivery windows, laundromats can:

- Provide same-day drop-off/pick-up (especially for local walk-ins).

TV, kids' area.

• **Self-serve plus drop-off service.** Appeals to both DIY customers and those who want convenience.

**4) Clear Value.** Some app programs may seem cheaper, but local businesses can compete by:

- Text reminders for pickup/delivery.
- Digital loyalty cards.
- Social media presence (Instagram, Facebook) to engage customers. These tools boost convenience without the complexity or cost of big app platforms.

- High-end garment care.
- Alterations and repairs.
- Specialty items (duvets, curtains, uniforms).

Being known as *the* expert for certain items builds loyal clientele.

**9) Educate Customers on Benefits.** Not every customer understands the trade-offs between app services and local laundromats/drycleaners. Communicate that you provide:

- Better garment care.
- No hidden fees.
- Local support.
- Fast turnaround when needed.

Simple signage, flyers, or social media posts can reinforce these messages.

So, to sum up: What do local businesses have that big apps often don't?

- The personal touch advantage.
- Immediate service.
- Price transparency.
- Community reputation.
- High-quality care.
- High-tech convenience.

The bottom line is: Compete by blending traditional strengths with smart, affordable tech and convenience features. Be local, personal, flexible — and make people feel the difference.

**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](mailto:RouteProsJames@gmail.com), or visit [www.therouteapro.com](http://www.therouteapro.com).**

**Competing with app-based laundry and drycleaning services can feel challenging for traditional laundromats and drycleaners, but we have discovered that many are finding successful strategies by leaning into their strengths and adapting smartly.**

- Provide express services. Charge a small premium for rush orders.

**3) Focus on Convenience In-Store.** Many customers choose laundromats because of speed and ease:

- Fast, modern machines. Large capacity washers/dryers attract bulk laundry customers.
- Amenities while customers wait — free Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, coffee stations,

- Transparency in pricing. No confusing fees or surge pricing. Many have various charges that hurt the independent contractors

• Bundled services. Reward for frequent visits, multi-item bundles (wash + dry + fold).

**5) Use Technology Strategically.** You don't have to build a full app to compete. Effective tech can include:

- Simple online booking tool or SMS scheduling.

**6) Focus On Professional Pickup and Delivery.** While big apps standardize this nationwide, local businesses can:

- Provide their own delivery within a targeted radius.
- Provide scheduled routes for regular customers. People like routines.
- Consistent drivers and service is truly what most people want. Local pickup/delivery can compete directly with apps with a personal touch.

**7) Capitalize On Local Reputation.** Word-of-mouth and community presence matter:

- Encourage reviews on Google, Yelp, Facebook.
- Partner with local businesses (salons, gyms, Airbnb hosts).

• Reward referrals.

• Participate in local events and sponsorships. Your community's trust becomes a powerful asset.

**8) Specialize in Quality or Niche Services.** Customers will pay for quality and care that apps don't always guarantee:

- Expert stain removal.



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# WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

## Keeping compressed air flowing, part III

**D**uring the air compression process, moisture, oil, debris, and other materials (which I'll call contaminants) are blown into the tank (sometimes called the receiver). To prevent these contaminants from reaching the machinery, several methods are used.

The first of these methods, and the subject of this article, is the piping itself and the components installed in it.

(To read the first two parts of this series on keeping compressed air flowing properly, see the December 2025 and January 2026 issues in our online archive at [www.nationalclothesline.com](http://www.nationalclothesline.com).)

Two physical forces are employed to remove water and debris from the compressed air stream: **gravity** — we all know what that is — and **inertia**, which is the tendency of objects to keep moving in a straight line at constant velocity. Follow along using the accompanying illustration.

**1) Gravity.** Notice first that the large pipe called a header is connected at each machine by branches, which are called drops, used to supply compressed air to each machine.

When properly designed, the drops are taken off the top of the headers. Since water is much heavier than air, it runs along the bottom of the header, pushed along by the air's flow, while the air flows along the top.

Thus, gravity provides a very effective additional stage of separation.

I've seen many installations where the drops were taken off at the bottom of the headers, literally capturing and forcing water and other contaminants down into the machinery; this is a very undesirable situation that causes machine performance nightmares.

At the end of the airline, it is always beneficial to have a drip leg.

A drip leg, in its simplest form, is nothing but a vertical piece of pipe used to collect and retain water and debris entrained in the compressed air system.

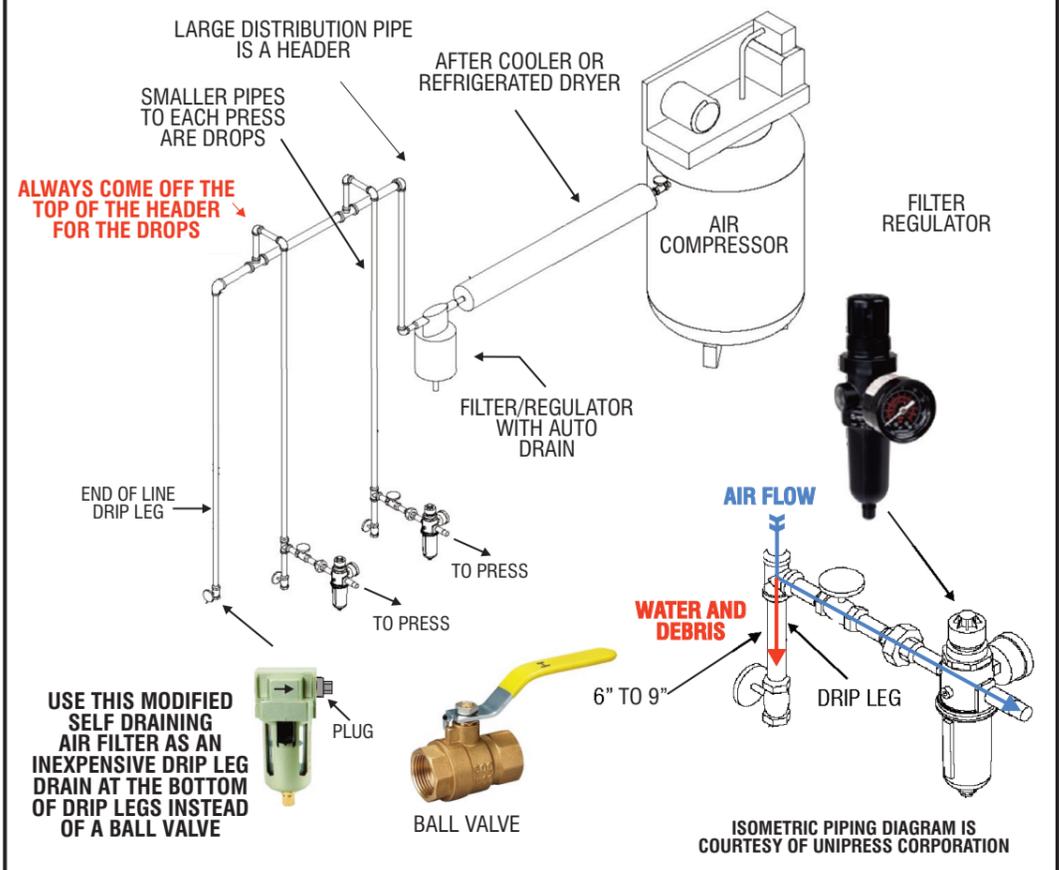
**2) Inertia.** Any remaining contaminants entrained in the compressed air are racing along through the headers and drops. Because of inertia, they want to keep moving in a straight line.

An abrupt change in direction in the drop is created by inserting a tee and piping the airflow to the machine from the side of the tee.

The lighter compressed air makes the 90-degree turn out of the tee, while the contaminants continue moving in a straight line and are captured in the drip leg.

A combination of components after the tee provides the remaining pathway, conducting the compressed air to the machinery.

### CORRECT COMPRESSED AIR PIPING PROCEDURES



A ball valve is used to shut off the compressed air flow from the drop to the machine for maintenance.

A combined filter/regulator provides another stage of contaminant removal along with air pressure regulation. Draining the drip legs can be done manually with a simple ball valve or automatically using a device known as a *drip leg drain*.

I use an inexpensive air filter purchased from Harbor Freight (Item #68279) plugged at the outlet side as a drip leg drain.

I'm aware that, in almost all cases, the piping for the machinery already exists, and you're not going to replace it because of this article. However, look at the diagram above in the lower right of the illustration.

It is very easy to re-pipe just the section at the end of the drop to the machine. Use soft copper tubing and compression fittings from the drop to the machine.

Just having this section done properly will eliminate a great many problems.

*Note: Compressed air is dangerous. Before attempting any maintenance on compressed air systems, be sure to bleed off any air in the compressor or piping until there is no air left in the compressed air system.*

That's it for now; next issue's article will be about removing moisture from the compressed air system.

Call me at (702) 376-6693 if you have any suggestions. I'm always delighted to hear from a reader.

Bruce Grossman is the Chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing. EZtimers manufactures machines that make your machines run better. For those needing to replace Zero-Waste or Galaxy misters, see our SAHARA 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](http://www.eztimers.com). Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to [bruce@eztimers.com](mailto:bruce@eztimers.com) or call (702) 376-6693.

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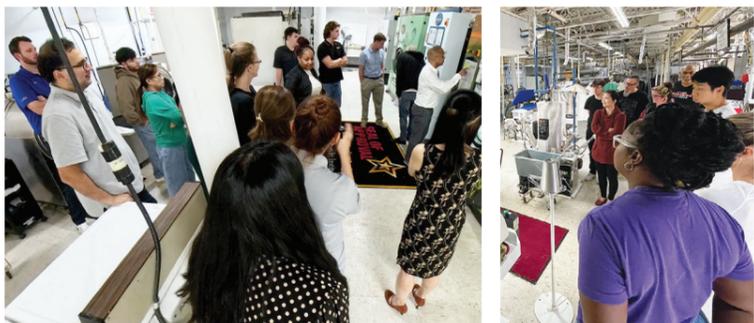
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July 13 - 17	Introduction to Drycleaning
July 20 - 31	Advanced Drycleaning
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—Nadine Rana  
Style & Grace Cleaners in Toronto, Ontario

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# SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

## Do you know what brings customers to you?

**W**hat brings customers to you? Why should a customer, who has plenty of choices for garment care, pick you over your competitors? There has to be a reason. Actually, *multiple* reasons: Quality drycleaning, dependable service, the best location in town, superior stain removal by a DLI certified spotter, beautiful newly decorated call office, friendly staff in smartly pressed uniforms, smiling faces, a clean and tidy customer area. Oh yeah, and low prices, *right*?

So many drycleaners decide that it is price that will be the focal point of their marketing. This is peculiar, but somewhat understandable. It's a management thing I guess.

If you promise a low price, say, *Shirts: Washed and pressed, \$2* — it's pretty hard to screw that up. No matter what happens — the boiler breaks, a tornado hits the building, employees don't show up for work — it doesn't matter.

You will still keep your promise to your customers of \$2 shirts. *But*, if all of your marketing efforts were hinged on

*guaranteed stain removal, or your shirts cleaned and pressed in 24 hours or it's free*, those promises can go out the window if the boiler breaks, a tornado hits the building or employees don't show up for work.

one will say that the only reason that they patronize you is because you're the cheapest cleaner in town. You really do need to talk to your customers. In my opinion, you will get much more information from a

forbid, send me a "We've missed you postcard!"

It's easy to think that he thought, "Good riddance!", but, objectively, there is not a chance that's the case. I was always treated like gold when-

tires upon noticing that the time was due. The price was almost identical to what my tire shop offered, but then he said "plus tax and installation."

I thought to myself, "Thanks for telling me exactly what the price is *not*." I had no idea what they would charge me but I knew it would be more than the number quoted.

The 80-mile drive was an issue. They don't have loaner vehicles like the dealer. I could throw money at this right? Rent a car myself, near the dealership. So it is about money? No.

I am a professional customer and this establishment charges Porsche-Dealer hourly rates. I expect to be treated like a customer.

All eight reasons didn't drop out of the sky one day, and not any two or three amount to anything. They can be explained away or dismissed as a honest mistake, an oversight or clerical issue.

But, if you've been communicating with your customers, you never got anywhere near eight reasons why your customers are disappointed with you. Drop me an email (tailwind.don@me.com) and I'll tell you about the eight reasons that this long-standing vendor had to go.

**Don't sell yourself short.** There is a reason that you have bothered to offer quality drycleaning, dependable service, the best location in town, superior stain removal by a DLI certified spotter, a beautiful newly decorated call office, friendly staff in smartly pressed uniforms, smiling faces, and a clean and tidy customer area. Oh yeah, and *fair prices*.

*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.

**Drycleaners market with price because that is the easiest promise to keep. However, it is a fact that this is unlikely the reason customers come to you. Let's hope it's not.**

Drycleaners market with price because that is the easiest promise to keep. However, it is a fact that this is unlikely to be the reason that customers come to you. Let's hope it's not. If the only thing that keeps your customers coming back is a \$2 shirt, something is seriously wrong with your business. There must be a better, more compelling reason.

So, as we begin 2026, vow to find out what customers find attractive about you. *And*, find out what they want. Then use that to spearhead your marketing program.

I'm going to guess that no

customer in a short, leading-question conversation than you'd ever get from comment on a website or a postcard.

Those of you who I've met know that I'm a **Porsche guy**. Like many of us who have been brand-loyal for decades, I have a particular mechanic who is "the only one allowed to touch my car." I've been going to this place that is 80 miles away for years. I abruptly quit going there 6 months ago.

I'm going to tell you why, but first, I am *still stunned* that the owner, a 14-year friend of mine, hasn't called me to find out where I've been. Or even, god

ever I went there. However, we will circle back to this.

Because I've known the owner since I bought the first vehicle from him in 2012, I thought that it was worth a conversation with him as a courtesy. I felt qualified as a management consultant and a professional customer to advise him on how to run his business.

He could always ignore me, but it could be that one of his employees was interacting with a customer (me) in a manner that violated his code of ethics.

There is no realistic way to learn that this is happening in a huge majority of circumstances unless the customer tells the person in charge... and that might be the supreme Queen Mother.

So, why did I quit going? The answer is really important. We can't say quality. I assume that you are a great drycleaner. I really do. You are over 600 words into this article and that honestly tells me that you care enough about your company and this industry that you work at your business and are good at it.

Quid Pro Quo: You agree that I deal with a top-tier Porsche dealer. So, we are on a level playing field when it comes to quality, so you are this dealer in the service business.

I am looking at the list of eight reasons why I quit going to my longtime drycleaner — I mean, *Porsche mechanic*. Is there an issue of price? Yes, but to a very limited extent.

At least four or five of the eight issues had to do with **trust** and that's really bad. If there was any issue with the car such as a warning light, they would research, learn and study (at my expense), then fix the problem. Another dealer would have known the problem with less research.

They offered a price for new

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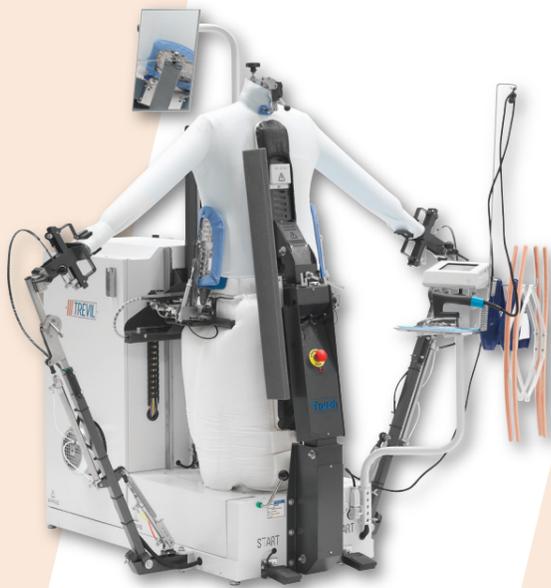


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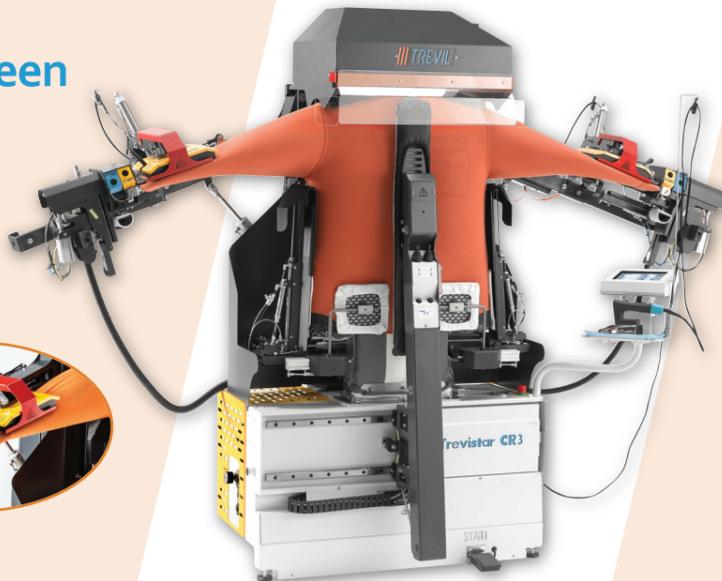
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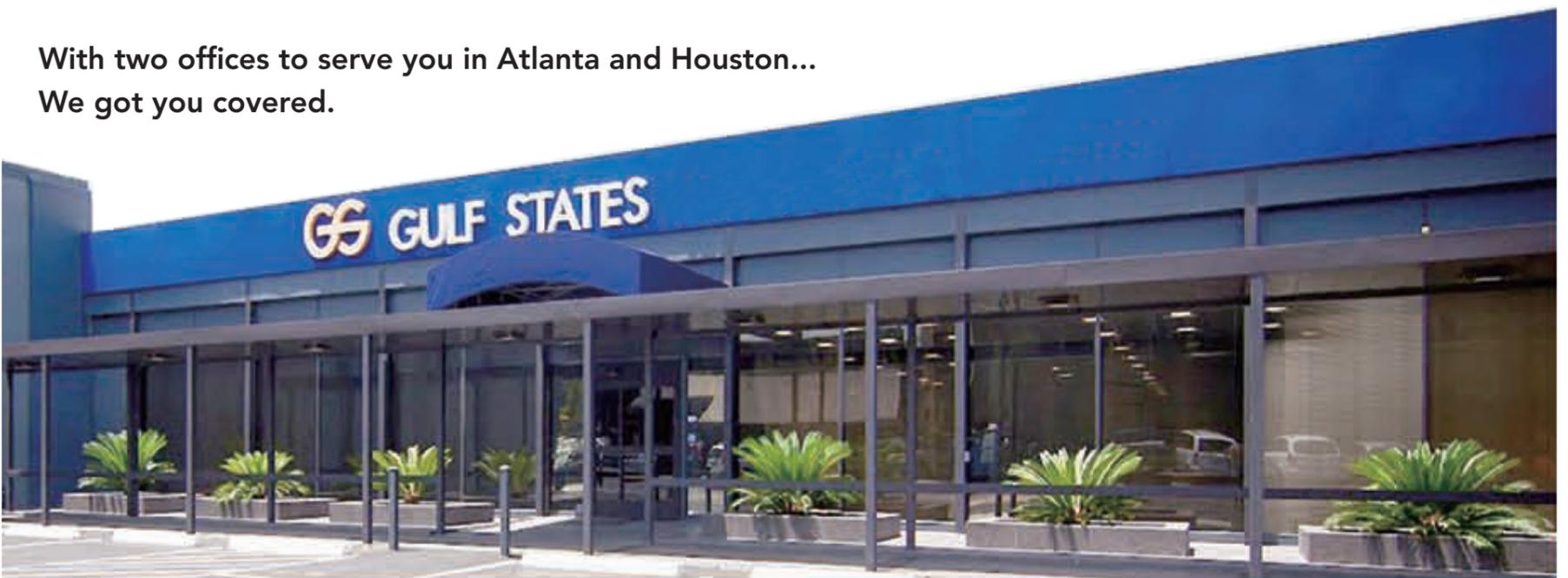
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# NEWSMAKERS

AI Phillips Cleaners of Nevada announced the appointment of laundry route expert **Ricardo "Ricky" Salazar** as vice president of client services. He will lead a major expansion in B2B dry cleaning and laundry services and route-based pickup/delivery throughout southern Nevada, including oversight of national accounts with West Coast or Las Vegas operations.



"We're very pleased to welcome Ricky to the AI Phillips team at this pivotal inflection point," said **Nick Gausling**, chief operating and financial officer for the company. "His deep expertise in route-based laundry and drycleaning, paired with strong local market knowledge and a determined focus on customer satisfaction, make him the ideal leader to expand both our pickup and delivery services and our business account portfolio."

"My mission is to make premium garment care services accessible and seamless," said Salazar. "Joining Las Vegas' most iconic drycleaner allows me to scale effortless pickup and delivery options and world-class quality to more homes, offices, hotels, and other enterprises across the region."

After several years of operational modernization and streamlining, the company is now positioned for its next phase of growth. Expanding the business account portfolio and pickup/delivery routes, both spearheaded by Salazar, are a top priority for 2026 and sit at the center of the company's overall commercial strategy.

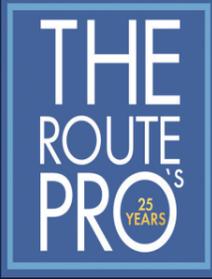
With operating brands including AI Phillips the Cleaner and Thrift DLux Cleaners, AI Phillips Cleaners ranks among the largest drycleaners in the United States and operates as a wholly owned subsidiary of Timeless Cleaners, Inc.

After more than two decades of dedicated service, **Tom Medlin**, who has served as sales manager for **Realstar USA** since 2001, retired on Dec. 31, 2025.



The company noted that Tom's leadership, integrity, and longstanding commitment have played an important role in Realstar's success over the years, and he will be greatly missed.

"We thank Tom for his many years of service and wish him health, happiness, and enjoyment in his well-earned retirement," the company added.




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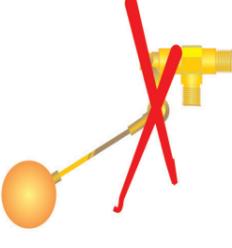
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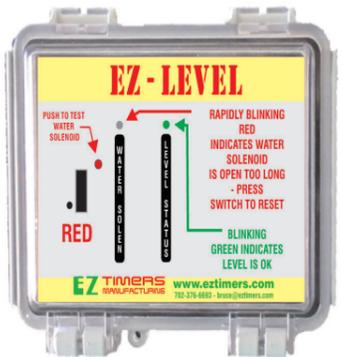
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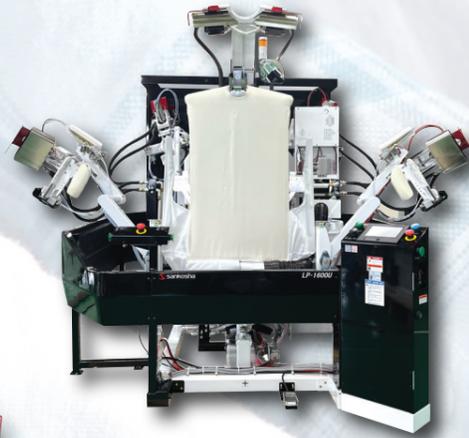
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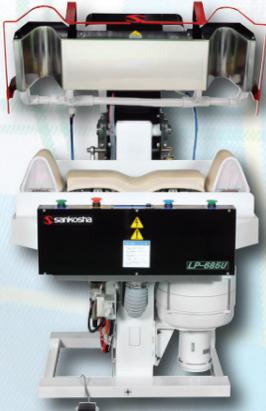
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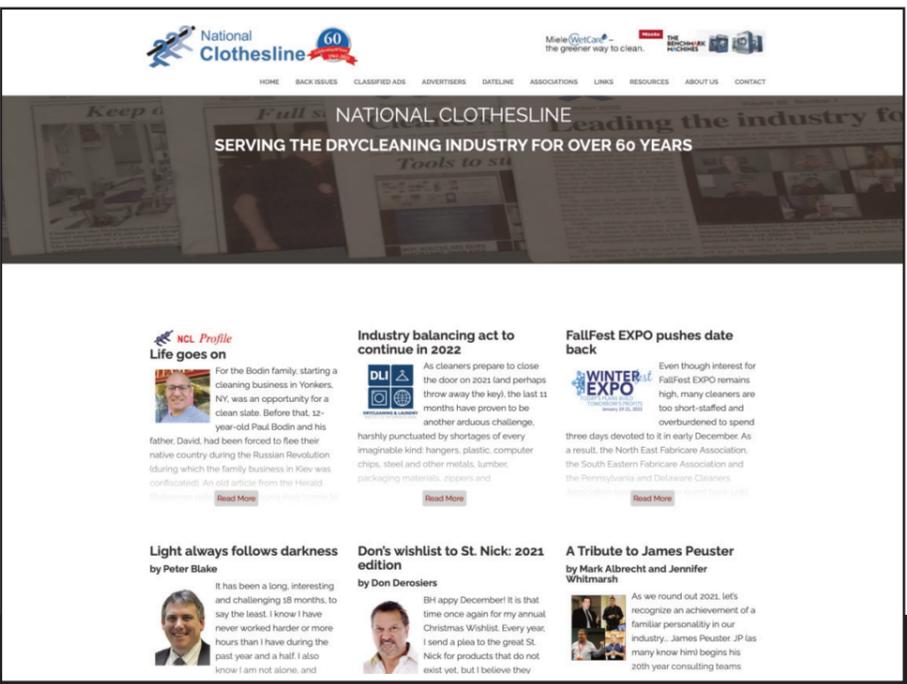
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 Life goes on  
 For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yorkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated. An old article from the Hawaii...

**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 metals, 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...

**Light always follows darkness**  
 by Peter Blake  
 It has been a long, interesting and challenging 18 months, to say the least. I know I have never worked harder or more hours than I have during the past year and a half. I also know I am not alone, and...

**Don's wishlist to St. Nick: 2021 edition**  
 by Don Derosiers  
 BH! Happy December! It is that time once again for my annual Christmas Wishlist. Every year, I send a plea to the great St. Nick for products that do not exist yet, but I believe they...

**A Tribute to James Peuster**  
 by Mark Albrecht and Jennifer Whitmarsh  
 As we round out 2021, let's recognize an achievement of a familiar personality in our industry... James Peuster, JP (as many know him) begins his 20th year consulting teams...

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