



National

Clothesline



March 2026

Volume 64 Number 6

www.nationalclothesline.com

Dry scouring turns 205 and is aging well

The industry officially turns 205 on March 3 — the day decreed to be National Drycleaning Day.

Admittedly, the industry seemed to hit a bit of a mid-life crisis of sorts during the recent pandemic, but a corner may have been turned.

According to the Cleaner's Supply recent 2026 State of the Industry Report, there appears to be more optimism among operators.

In fact, 84% of the 867 operators surveyed believe that drycleaning sales will be stable or improve this year.

That isn't the only interesting takeaway from the report. Are piece counts back up? How many locations does the typical cleaner have now? Is

PATENT COAT DRESSING.
LETTERS PATENT being granted under the GREAT SEAL OF THE U. STATES OF AMERICA unto THOMAS L. JENNINGS, Tailor, 64 Nassau street, New York, for his invention of Dry Scouring Clothes, and Woolen Fabrics in general, so that they keep their original shape, and have the polish and appearance of new, informs the public that he is ready to execute all orders entrusted to him in the above line, on reasonable terms. He also alters and repairs Gentlemen's Clothes in the neatest manner, being regularly brought up to the Taylor's business, and practising in this city the last 14 years. He also removes stains from cloth. The public may rest assured that they will have this plan in its purity, (there being many deceptions in practice) and that he is the only patented Coat Dresser and Scourer in the United States.
N. B. Directions will be given how clothes may be kept in the condition they are delivered.
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mh 21 1w*



The man credited with the first patent for drycleaning (known then as *dry scouring*) is Thomas L. Jennings who filed for it on March 3, 1821. The text above is an announcement featured in *The Evening Post* in New York from March 22, 1821.

pickup and delivery up? What about price changes — how many cleaners are planning to do it this year? How is the staffing situation in the industry? What are the biggest challenges facing the industry?

This month, Jeff Schapiro of Cleaner's Supply breaks all those questions down and much more with the much-an-

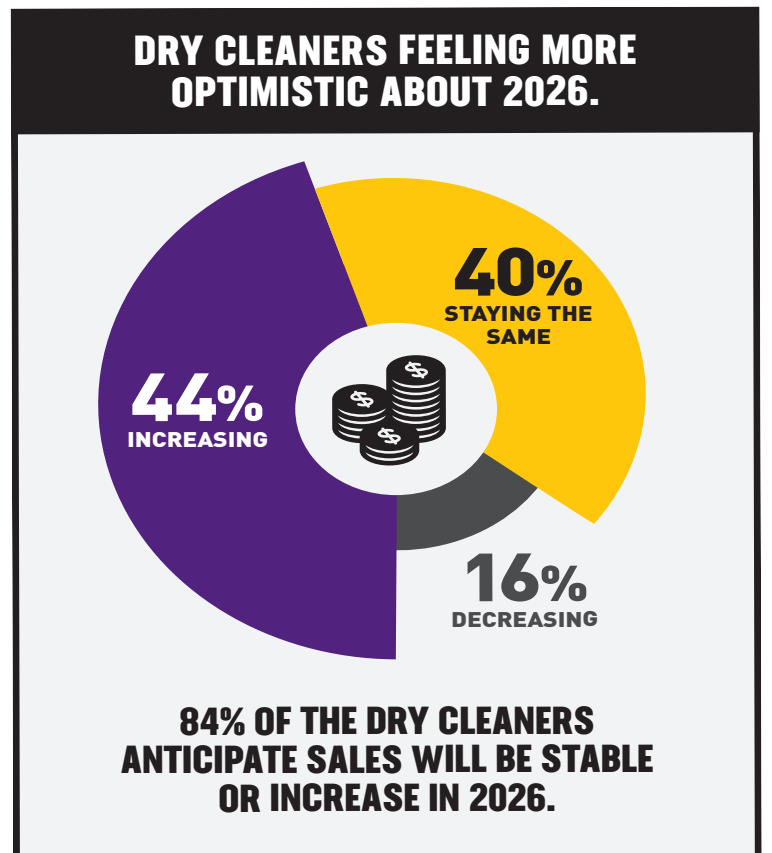
anticipated results for the latest survey (see page 6).

While drycleaners remain resolute despite facing recent adversities, it is a quality that the industry's founder possessed himself in spades.

Thomas L. Jennings is credited with recording the first patent for drycleaning (then called *dry scouring*) in 1821. He is also believed to be the first black man in America to ever receive a patent.

Jennings was born a free man in New York, he was a tailor and clothier by trade who opened his own shop at the age of 19.

He began experimenting with chemicals in an effort to
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Cleaner's Supply has published the results of its 2026 State of the Industry Report and, of the 867 cleaners surveyed, 84% of them anticipate sales will be stable or increase this year. The industry remains optimistic. For the full report, go to page 6.

Getting your fabricare fix at DL EXPO West '26

The DL EXPO West 2026 — set to take place at the Irving Convention Center in Dallas, TX, from March 27 to 29 — has already recorded 118 booths sold, a number that represents a significant increase over the inaugural 2024 show (pictured on right).

There will also be more than 65 companies represented altogether exhibiting; a complete list of vendors, the floorplan and speaker schedule is available at www.dlexpo.org.

Among the speaker sessions, owners will want to hear the panel discussion, "Own Your Cleaners, Don't Let Your Cleaners Own You." This session is for cleaners who are ready to break free from the daily grind and focus on growth. The audience will hear from owners who've cracked the code to running their operations semi-autonomously — freeing up their time to lead, innovate, and expand.

The panel will be moderated by Ryan Fish of Red

Hanger Cleaners and the panelists include Bobby Patel, Kona Cleaners (Costa Mesa, CA), Ricardo Torres, Tiffany's Couture Cleaners (Las Vegas, NV), and Nicolas Abuawad, Lavaseco Universal (San Antonio, TX).

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."

Also scheduled to appear 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."

Beyond the show floor and classrooms, DL Expo West will
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DRYCLEANING & LAUNDRY EXPO WEST



Prakash



Rothrock



Kratz



Sneak Peek Inside

- 18 What do you really offer?**
Make a list of all the things you offer customers, then make sure that they know just how much you offer.
- 22 Profits, sales or value?**
Some owners like to focus on profits and sales, but real value is having a business that thrives without you.
- 26 Broaden your narrative**
Use your creativity to overcome the traditional narrative stuck in your customers' heads and expand sales.
- 28 In the driver's seat**
Don't treat your route driving position like an easy gig; find someone who will meet the job's responsibilities.

BEE *kind*



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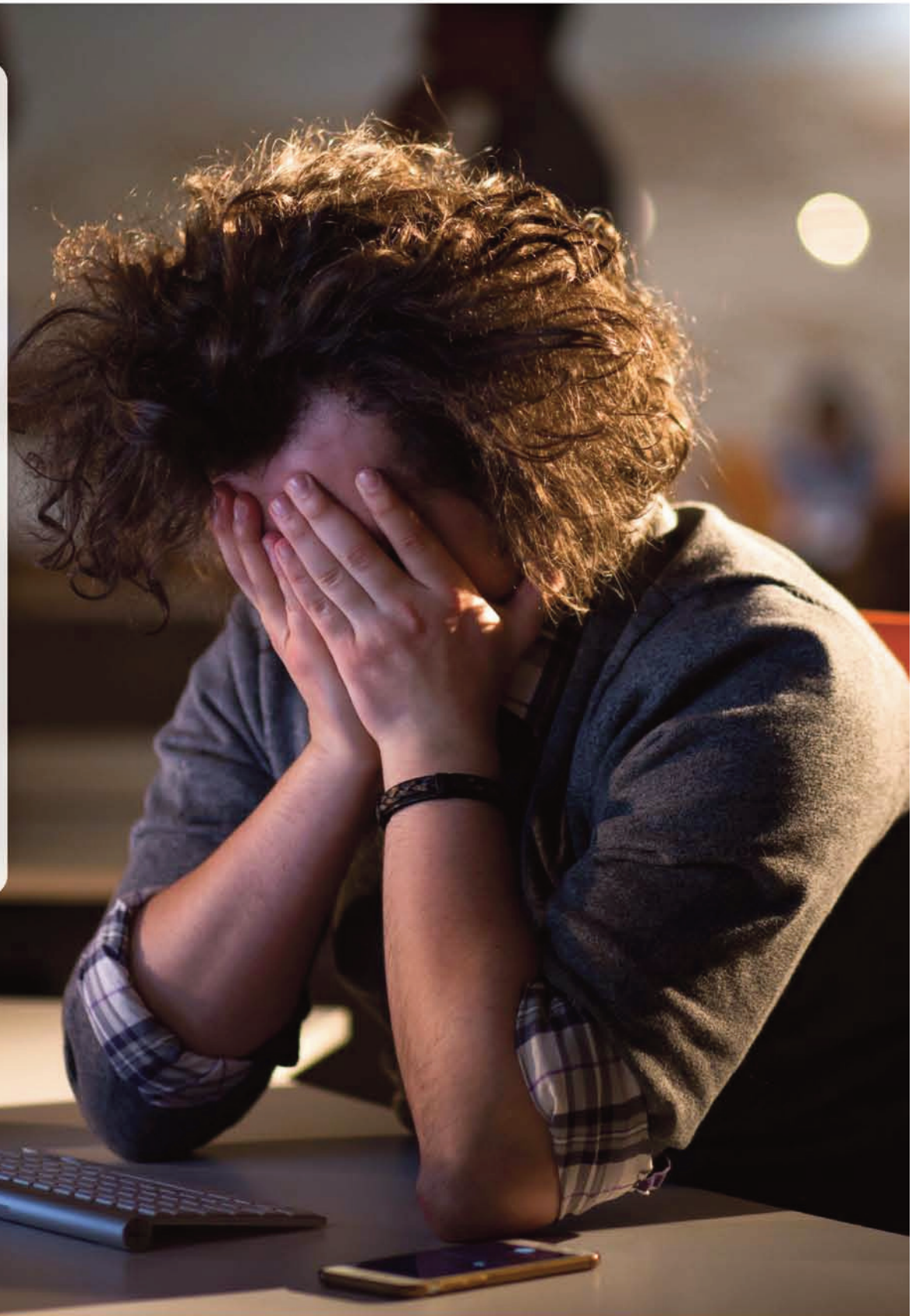
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Aging industries, *Rolling Stones* and a little hope

This month, as the drycleaning industry officially turns **205 years old** (see the front page story on **Thomas L. Jennings** and *dry scouring*), here are some words of wisdom from one of pop culture's wisest ageless journeymen — **Keith Richards**, songwriter and guitarist for **The Rolling Stones**.

As he explains it, "Getting old is a fascinating thing. The older you get, the older you want to get."

The drycleaning industry apparently agrees. As **Jeff Schapiro** notes in his examination of the recently released **Cleaner's Supply State of the Drycleaning Industry 2026 Report**, "If you've been in this industry for any length of time, you don't need a report to tell you it has been a challenging few years. Disruptions caused by COVID, staffing issues, the rise of work-from-home and customers dressing more causally than ever forced drycleaners to adapt."

Despite the difficulties of drycleaning's recent mid-life crisis, it appears drycleaners themselves are very interested in keeping the industry alive and well... and they are actually quite a bit optimistic about it.

So, with that in mind, we will preview some of the "greatest hits" you can find by reading the report, which begins on page 6, and we'll do so with a helpful playlist of The Rolling Stones.

The first song would have to be *Time Is On My Side* (Track 1). The latest Cleaner's Supply report, which surveyed 867 drycleaning owners across the U.S., revealed that **84% of cleaners anticipate that sales will remain stable or even increase in 2026**. In other words, no more *Doom and Gloom* (Track 2) or *Living in a Ghost Town* (Track 3); cleaners are feeling better with the challenges of recent years seemingly in the rear view mirror and are hoping to see sales reflect that.

Then, there's one of this industry's other tough challenges — the ongoing

staff shortage issues plaguing many cleaners across the country. For 42% of the industry, *You Can't Always Get What You Want* (Track 4) — they remain understaffed and overstaffed. However, 58% are staffed just right, which means overall drycleaners are staffed better than they were in the previous year.

Another important track in the minds of drycleaners is *Can't You Hear Me Knocking?* (Track 5) — and the answer appears to be "yes." Pickup and delivery services continue to trend up and now the majority of drycleaners (52%) said they offer pickup and delivery, up from 50% in the prior year.

In the past, drycleaners have often shown a reluctance to raise prices in order to keep up with rising operating costs; however, that fear may be *Shattered* (Track 6) as 65% of the industry indicated they **plan to raise prices once this year and 31% plan to do so twice**.

In addition to raising prices, drycleaners keep showing a propensity to reinvest in technology. What *Beast of Burden* (Track 7) do most cleaners want to add to their drycleaning plant? As Schapiro explains, "Drycleaners are thinking ahead. The majority plan to make major investments over the next three years, with drycleaning presses once again topping the list." Drycleaners are also very interested in wetcleaning equipment, software systems and other *Hot Stuff* (Track 8) pointing in the direction of automation and modernization.

Unfortunately, there is still one spot where it seems drycleaners are stuck between a *Rock and a Hard Place* (Track 9) — 56% of the industry still hold onto the belief that *investing in marketing is unnecessary*, relying largely on word-of-mouth. Perhaps even the thought of navigating social media marketing will bring on your *19th Nervous Breakdown* (Track 10) but know that some cleaners are getting results with Google Ads, Facebook and text message marketing instead of simply *Waiting on a Friend* (Track 11).

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Visit us at 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.

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NATIONAL CLOTHESLINE (US ISSN #07446306) is an independent trade newspaper published monthly by BPS Communications Inc. Periodical Postage paid at Willow Grove, PA, and at an additional mailing office. Postmaster: Send address changes to: The National Clothesline, 1001 Easton Rd., Suite 107, Willow Grove, PA 19090.

• Subscription price for anyone actively engaged in the drycleaning and laundry industry in the United States: \$35; Canada \$40 (US); All others, \$75 (US).

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by **JEFF SCHAPIRO**

New industry report shows stability and smarter growth

We're excited to share the third annual 2026 Cleaner's Supply State of the Dry Cleaning Industry Report, independently conducted by Drive Research, with 867 dry cleaning owners across the United States taking part.

If you have been in this industry for any length of time, you don't need a report to tell you it has been a challenging few years. Disruptions caused by COVID, staffing issues, the rise of work-from-home and customers dressing more casually than ever forced drycleaners to adapt.

The good news is that, according to this year's survey, those adjustments are working. The industry has regained some footing, and many operators are finally starting to feel some solid ground again.

Sales hold steady, profits improve by 5%

Sales growth in 2025 looked very similar to the year before, with **58% of drycleaners reporting higher sales.**

After all the volatility of recent years, consistency is not a bad thing.

Even more encouragingly, profits are beginning to improve. In 2025, **34% of drycleaners reported increased profits, up from 29% the prior year** (see graphic on top right).

Costs like labor, rent and utilities haven't magically disappeared, but more operators are responding with smarter pricing, utilizing technology and fewer *we've always done it this way* decisions.

Piece counts back this up (see graphic in center on right):

- **52% reported higher drycleaning piece count;**
- **43% saw an increase in laundered shirts.**

When you factor in the drycleaners who reported the same piece count as last year, it becomes clear that the vast majority of operators are seeing strong stability or growth. That points to an overall increase in industry piece count in 2025, and that's an encouraging indicator.

Fewer overall locations, smarter reach

Another trend that continues to stand out is that dry cleaners are owning fewer physical locations — and feeling good about that decision.

- **68% own one store**
- **18% own two stores**

- **The remainder operate three or more stores.**

Instead of adding more storefronts, many operators are finding smarter ways to grow by running fewer locations more efficiently and reaching more customers through routes.

In 2025, 52% of drycleaners offered pickup and delivery, up from 50% the year prior.

It's less about opening doors and more about delivering great service and coverage from a single, well-run operation.

Pickup and delivery becomes a big deal

The shift toward routes is showing up clearly in the numbers. In 2025, **52% of drycleaners offered pickup and delivery, up from 50% the year prior.**

For those offering it, pickup and delivery averages **25% of total sales**, officially making it a meaningful revenue stream, not just a "nice extra" service to offer.

Although not all operators agree with charging for this service, **26% of drycleaners do**, indicating their confidence in pricing convenience.

In a world shaped by DoorDash, Instacart and other on-

demand services, does that mindset carry over to drycleaning, where customers increasingly understand that convenience often comes with a small premium?

Pricing confidence returns

After years of hesitation, pricing confidence is finally making a comeback. More drycleaners are planning to raise prices in 2026, largely keeping increases in line with last year.

Average planned price increases for this year are projected to be **7.2%**. This is not about getting ahead — it's about keeping up.

Among those planning increases (see graphic below):

- **65% plan to raise prices once;**
- **31% plan to raise prices twice.**

Across the industry, the revenue mix hasn't changed much: roughly two-thirds of sales come from drycleaning, with one-third from laundered shirts.

Staffing: still tricky but getting better

Staffing continues to be one of the industry's biggest challenges, and this year's survey took a deeper look at starting wages for counter staff, shirt pressers, and drycleaning pressers, providing a national and regional breakdown.

Hiring is still tough, but fewer drycleaners report being seriously understaffed compared to last year. (see graphic on bottom right)

After several years of con-

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PROFIT GROWTH IS GETTING BETTER.

SALES GROWTH HAS REMAINED STEADY THE LAST TWO YEARS, BUT PROFIT GROWTH IS IMPROVING.

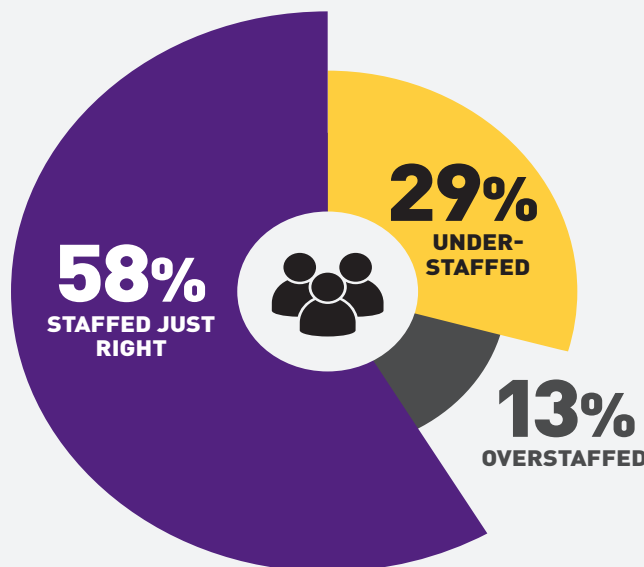


IMPROVED PIECE COUNT VOLUME POINTS TO POSITIVE OUTLOOK.

WHEN ALSO FACTORING IN THOSE REPORTING STABLE PIECE COUNT IN 2025, THIS SUGGESTS AN OVERALL INCREASE IN INDUSTRY PIECE COUNT.



FINALLY A LITTLE RELIEF.

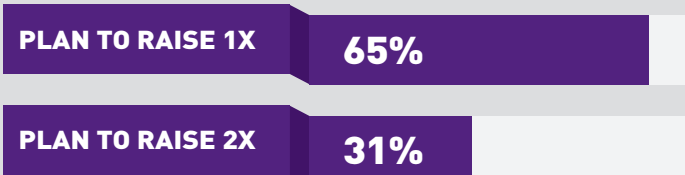


DRY CLEANERS ARE MORE FULLY STAFFED COMPARED TO A YEAR AGO.

MOST CLEANERS PLAN TO RAISE PRICES.



ESTIMATED AVERAGE PRICE INCREASE BY DRY CLEANERS WHO PLAN TO RAISE PRICES IN 2026.



FOR THOSE PLANNING TO RAISE PRICES IN 2026, MOST INTEND TO DO IT JUST ONCE.

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Jeff Schapiro

New industry report shows stability and smarter growth

Continued from page 6
stant pressure, even small improvements feel like a big win.

Where drycleaners are investing

Drycleaners are thinking ahead. The majority plan to make major investments over the next three years, with **drycleaning presses** once again topping the list.

Moving up the priority list are **wetcleaning equipment** and **software systems**, which are ranked right behind drycleaning presses — pointing to a stronger focus on efficiency, automation and

mains finding ways to increase overall business, followed closely by **ongoing expenses like rent, wages and utilities**.

To help offset those pressures, many drycleaners are leaning into additional services:

- 1) **Alterations** (the top revenue booster);
- 2) **Wash and Fold**;
- 3) **Leather Cleaning**.

These services are no longer merely *extras*; they are becoming core components of the business and substantial contributors to overall revenue.

Instead, they rely heavily on word-of-mouth and customer referrals to promote their services. That said, those who do spend on marketing are seeing results. **Google Ads** continues to lead the way, followed by **Facebook** advertising and **text message** marketing, which is gaining popularity as an easy, low-cost way to stay connected with customers.

Technology finds its place in daily operations

In this year's survey (see graphic on top right), we took a closer look at how technology and efficiencies are showing up in drycleaner's everyday operations:

- 36% notify customers when orders are ready;
- 35% send past-due order reminders;
- 16% now require pre-payment on orders.

That last number regarding pre-payments is especially interesting and may be one to keep an eye on, as drycleaners focus more on cash flow and the forgotten garments hanging in the back.

Looking ahead

Despite the numerous challenges the industry has faced, optimism is prevailing. Remarkably, **84% of drycleaners anticipate that sales will re-**

DRY CLEANERS ARE EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY & EFFICIENCIES.

PERCENT OF DRY CLEANERS UTILIZING IN THEIR OPERATIONS.

NOTIFICATIONS TO CUSTOMERS WHEN ORDERS ARE READY	36%
CUSTOMER NOTIFICATION ON OVERDUE PICK-UPS	35%
REQUIRE PREPAYMENT ON ORDERS	16%
ALLOW FOR CUSTOMER OPT IN OR OUT FOR ROUTE PICK-UPS	14%
ROUTE OPTIMIZING	13%
AUTO ASSEMBLY	9%
AUTO BAGGING	8%

Despite the numerous challenges the industry has faced, optimism is prevailing. Remarkably, 84% of drycleaners anticipate that sales will remain stable or even increase in 2026.

modernization. In other words, drycleaners aren't just fixing what's broken; they're investing in tomorrow.

Challenges: What's helping offset them

When asked about challenges, the top response re-

Marketing: Skepticism Continues to Live On

Despite the focus on growth, a significant number of drycleaners, amounting to **56%**, still hold onto the belief that investing in marketing is unnecessary.

main stable or even increase in 2026.

The takeaway from this year's report is simple: the drycleaning industry has adjusted, adapted and is moving forward with confidence.

Cleaners who prioritize pricing, efficiency, and strategic investments are not merely maintaining their position; they are positioning themselves for future success.

This is a snapshot of the findings. To explore the full 2026 State of the Dry Cleaning

Industry Report, visit www.cleanersupply.com/research-reports.

Jeff Schapiro has been the president of Cleaner's Supply for more than 32 years. Originally, the business began in the basement of his drycleaners in upstate New York. Today, it is a manufacturer and distributor of more than 20,000 drycleaning products shipped to cleaners all over the world. He can be reached by email at jeff@cleanerssupply.com.

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2026

March 18 The Drycleaning & Laundry Institute webinar on "Regulatory Update for Garment Care Professionals" at 1 p.m. EST. For more information, visit www.DLionline.org.

March 19 The Drycleaning & Laundry Institute's Marketing Masterclass. For information, visit www.DLionline.org.

March 27-29 2026 Drycleaning & Laundry EXPO West, Irving, TX (Dallas area). 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 26-28 SDA and CCA present a tour of Cleaner's Supply and presentation by Jeff Schapiro, 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.

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Dry scouring turns 205 and is aging well

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remove stains; the result was called "dry scouring" which was awarded a patent on March 3, 1821.

The achievement was announced in the *New York Gazette* on March 13 of that year.

Unfortunately, the original patent was lost in a fire that burned up over 10,000 patents.

Jennings utilized the profits he made from the patent to free his family and support a number of charities and legal aid societies, including the Wilberforce Society, the New York African Society for Mutual Relief, the Phoenix Society, the New York Vigilance Committee and the Legal Rights Association.

Additionally, he was a

local leader of the abolition movement, and his children eagerly followed in his footsteps.

Jennings' eldest son, William, was an abolitionist leader in Boston. Another son, Thomas, was a dentist who served on antislavery committees with Frederick Douglass, a towering figure who long served as one of the most im-

portant leaders in the Civil Rights movement.

Jennings' daughters were active in the Female Literary Society of New York that raised money to free slaves and promoted the rights of African American women.

His youngest daughter, Elizabeth, won an important court decision in 1854 that served as an impetus in deseg-

regating New York City's public transit system.

Jennings died in 1859 at the age of 68. In a eulogy to him, Frederick Douglass called him "a bold man of color" who led an "active, earnest and blameless life."

The epitaph on his headstone referred to him simply as a "Defender of Human Rights."

Getting your fabricare fix at DL EXPO '26

Continued from page 1
offer unique opportunities to connect with leading suppliers and industry peers.

New for 2026, Metalprog-

etti will be hosting an open house, Saturday, March 28, at 5:15 pm, at the ICC, which is open to current and potential customers.

Space is still available for a behind-the-scenes plant tour that will include Avon Cleaners, Sunshine Cleaners and Tide Laundromat in the Dallas

area, all will be included with a single ticket price of \$25 per person.

The guided tour will take place on Friday, March 27,

from 7:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

For additional information or to register for the event, visit www.dlexpo.org/dl-expo-west.

NEWSMAKERS

GreenEarth Cleaning recently announced an exclusive partnership with Nuuly, a clothing rental subscription service in the U.S. with nearly 400,000 active subscribers. Through this partnership, all Nuuly dryclean only rental garments will be cleaned exclusively with GreenEarth's patented, silicone-based solvent.



"At GreenEarth, our mission has always been to prove that sustainability and performance can go hand in hand," said **Andy Lien**, technical director at Green Earth Cleaning. "Together with Nuuly, we're showing that caring for fashion and caring for the planet can be one and the same."

"At Nuuly, we're committed to extending the life of every garment while minimizing our environmental impact," said **Tony Coccerino**, senior director fulfillment at Nuuly.

Nuuly is the leading women's clothing rental subscription service with nearly 400,000 active subscribers and growing. For \$98 per month, customers can rent any six items from 400+ brands, including Anthropologie, Free People, and Urban Outfitters,

as well as 20,000+ curated styles from well-known contemporary brands to up-and-coming designers, premium denim labels, and exclusive vintage pieces.

America's Best Cleaners (ABC) was selected as the exclusive textile and garment care partner for **The Home Trust International**, a prestigious invitation-only network for luxury home services.



This partnership establishes ABC's CoutureCare™ certified affiliates as the designated experts for all textile, home furnishing and apparel preservation needs for The Home Trust's elite global clientele. As the "Category Leader" for cleaning services, ABC affiliates will sit alongside brands like Steinway & Sons and Kravet to provide a seamless "Circle of Trust" for high-net-worth families.

"Being conferred membership into The Home Trust is a profound recognition of the mastery our affiliates bring to the industry," said **Christopher White**, executive director of ABC. "This isn't just about drycleaning; it is about 'wardrobe asset management'. Our affiliates are now the vetted, peer-recognized advisors for the preservation of a client's most precious textile investments, from bespoke couture to museum-quality home tapestries."

To maintain this status, ABC facilities must continue to undergo rigorous audits, including annual on-site inspections and quarterly mystery shopping conducted in accordance with global standards that were originally set by the **Hohenstein Institutes** in Ger-

many.

Christopher P. Ramey, founder of The Home Trust International, added: "We created The Home Trust to solve a specific challenge for affluent families: finding service and product providers who can be trusted. ABC was the clear choice because their standards are aligned with the world-class design professionals and resources in our network."

Continental Girbau West (CG West), a leading distributor of **Continental Laundry Solutions** (Continental), has officially changed its name to **Continental West** and announced its move to a new facility in Cerritos, CA.



The new name reflects the company's evolution, tighter alignment with Continental and commitment to serving the western region with a stronger brand identity.

"Changing from CG West to Continental West just made sense," said **Tod Sorensen**, vice president of Continental West. "The simplified name is cleaner, easier to remember and better represents who we are — a trusted extension of Continental Laundry Solutions and a local partner our customers can rely on."

Celebrating 17 years in business, Continental West delivers end-to-end laundry solutions and support to the textile care, vended, on-premise and industrial laundry markets across Southern California, Arizona and New Mexico.

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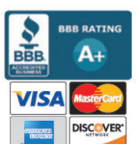
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WRENCH WORKS



BY BRUCE GROSSMAN

Keeping compressed air flowing, part IV

Last month I covered the correct piping for compressed air systems. This month, I'll be talking about other components in the compressed air system that remove water from the air stream.

[Editor's Note: For the previous three installments of this series, visit the December 2025, and the January and February 2026 issues in the archives section at www.nationalclothesline.com]

First, a note about air and temperature: the hotter the air, the more water vapor it can hold. As the air cools, this water vapor condenses into liquid water. Liquid water in compressed air systems is a contaminant that strips away helpful lubricants, degrades rubber and plastic parts, and corrodes metal components.

My experience is that liquid water is the leading cause of failure in air-operated machinery. Several devices are available to reduce the amount of water reaching the compressed air components of machinery. Compressors are often located in boiler rooms, which are typically hot and humid. Locate a compressor's air intake as close to an outside vent as practicable. Usually, installing a vent line from the compressor air intake to the outside of the boiler room is fairly simple, providing cooler, drier air to the compressor.

1) Drains and Auto-Drains. Somewhere, usually at the bottom of the tank on which the compressor pump is mounted, there is a drain valve

of some sort. Water that has condensed out of the hot compressed air and fugitive oil from the compressor pump collects in the tank.

When this drain valve is opened, this water-oil mixture is blown out of the tank, removing it from the compressed air system. This water and oil may be considered a hazardous waste.

Opening the drain valve and draining the compressor tank should be done regularly, at least once daily. Very effective, inexpensive and easily installed automatic drain valves are widely available. These include an adjustable timer that opens an electric solenoid valve at regular intervals, allowing the tank to drain.

Besides the obvious advantage of knowing your compressor is being drained regularly without you having to squat down in a hot boiler room to open, wait, and then close a hot, greasy valve, you're also spared the maintenance on this inaccessible area.

Even a small leak in the compressor drain valve can significantly affect your compressor, causing it to cycle more often, leading to greater wear and higher electric bills.

2) After Coolers and Refrigerated Dryers. Compressed air exiting the compressor pump is extremely hot and can hold lots of water vapor. As this air cools, some of the water vapor condenses into liquid water in the compressor tank, requiring the

draining procedure discussed in paragraph one. However, the air is still hot, and lots of water vapor remains in the air stream, which will later condense in the cooler air lines and equipment.

In the drycleaning plant, the most effective way to reduce the remaining water vapor before it condenses and travels into the machinery is to further cool the air flow. The

simplest method of achieving this is using a device called an *aftercooler*. An aftercooler is usually a finned coil with a fan mounted on it. Compressed air leaving the compressor pump enters the tubing with fins attached, while the fan blows air across the coil, cooling the compressed air and condensing out much of the remaining water vapor.

A variant of this method

uses a water-cooled heat exchanger instead of a finned air-cooled coil. **Refrigerated dryers** are the most effective devices for removing troublesome liquid water from the compressed air stream.

They apply the same principle as the aftercooler, but a refrigeration system is used instead of using air or water to cool the compressed air. Refrigeration provides a much lower condensing temperature, hence a lower level of water vapor in the compressed air stream. Keep in mind that you will still need some type of drain on any system used. Aftercoolers and refrigerated dryers must be appropriately sized to the air compressor. I'll be continuing 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 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. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

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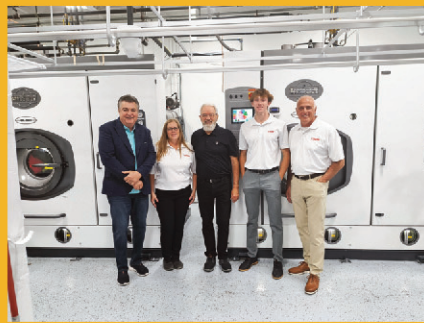


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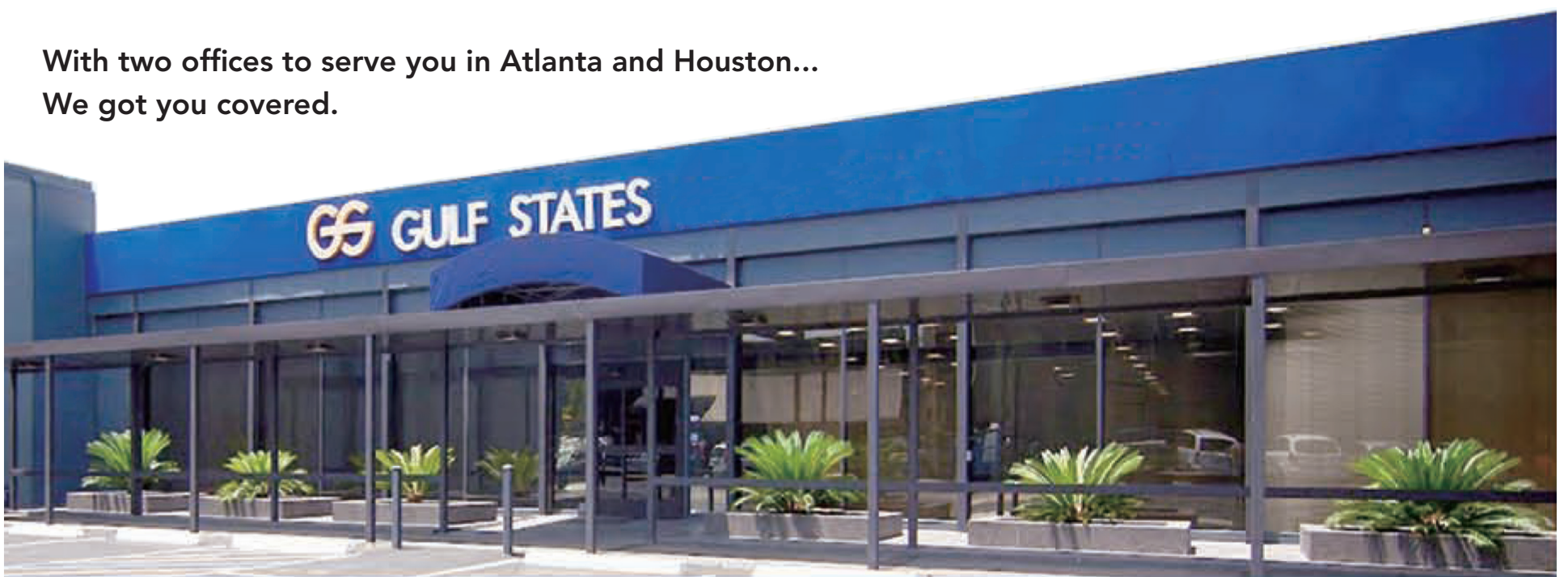
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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

When pricing items, know what you're selling

Back when I started doing shirts, it was 1978. Retail, the price was typically under a dollar.

At this point, I have no way to analyze the costs to determine whether or not that price ever made sense. One thing that I believe is certain, costs rose at a disproportional rate than the price.

The first time I was ever published in any publication — it was *National Clothesline* circa 1991 — I lamented about how retail drycleaners were so

resistant to raise their retail price beyond \$0.99. I called it the *dollar barrier*. Once cleaners

whatever.

Now, shirt prices are finally where they should be. Prices

that shirt prices are in line with the work involved. This is great news for industry.

things, and that's what I want to talk about today.

I just moved from Massachusetts to Rhode Island. Up here in the land of tiny states, that is only a seven-mile move, but, as is always the case when one sets up a new abode, there are things to buy. I have found myself shopping — by price — every day. Am I looking for the best deal? *Absolutely.*

In some cases, this is easy. In those cases, it is easy to see that retailer A and retailer B are offering the same exact item for, say, a 15% price difference. Things get complicated when the consumer gets the false impression that the products are the same when they are not.

If you want to buy a new shirt press and two dealers are offering the same machine at different prices, it is a certain bet that both machines are identical and the savings are clear. Things get muddy if one dealer justifies his higher price by stating that his price includes rigging, shipping, installation and start-up training. *What is the value of that?* That is difficult to calculate and therein lies the point of this column.

Charge what you think is fair for your product. Offer as much as you can for it. Just make sure that your customers understand what they are buying and school them on what you're selling.

You need to make sure that when a customer or a potential customer compares you to the dime-store cleaner down the street, it is very obvious that you are not selling the same product. It might look like it on the surface, but behind the curtain, you are offering so much more. Make a list right now.

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.

Charge what you think is fair for your product. Offer as much as you can for it. Just make sure that your customers understand what they are buying and school them on what you're selling.

broke through it and priced their shirts at, say \$1.10, it was so easy to go to \$1.25, \$1.40,

range from three to over five dollars. Boutique cleaners charge over \$25. *Really.* I think

It is OK to price shop for anything. I am not the most frugal person. I prioritize other



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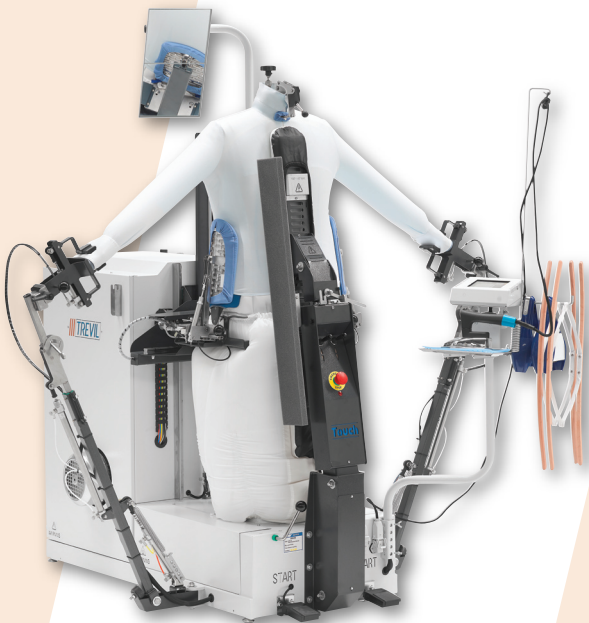


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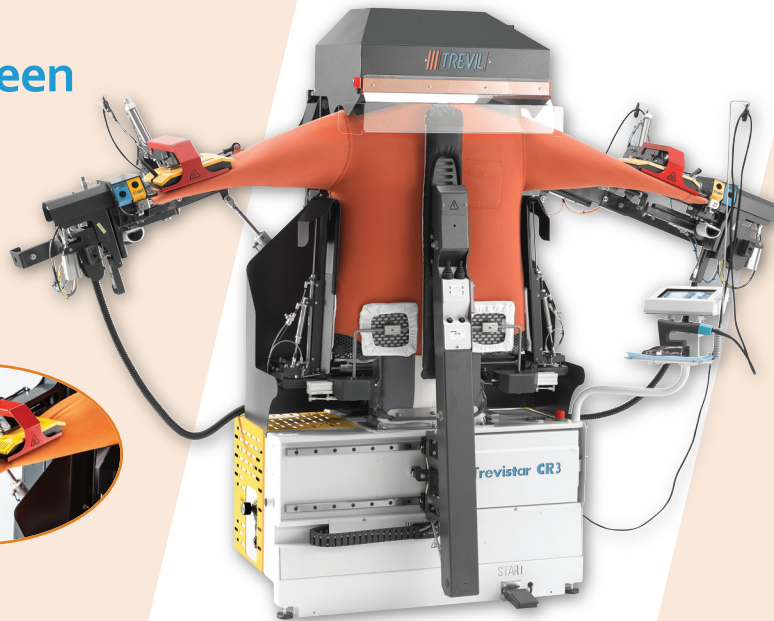
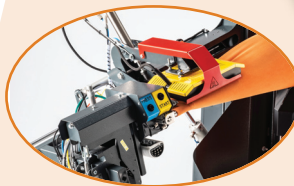
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/// NEW MODEL

/// NEW MODEL



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NEWSMAKERS



Pictured (left to right): Paul Mastrola (Sanitone), Bruce Kloter (Swiss Cleaners), Cohen Wills (Sage Cleaners, Cleaner Marketing), Sandra Haralson (Haralson Consulting), Peter Blake (NEFA), Jeff Jordan (Sanitone), Tony Milto (Milto Cleaners), Jeff Schwegmann (Sunshine Cleaners), Arthur Anton Jr. (Anton's Cleaners), Emily Machesney (Pratt Abbott Cleaners), Sam Taylor (Cleaner Marketing), Jo Ann Clare (General Cleaners), Terry Dermody (Dermody Cleaners), Heather Burbeck-Rodriguez (General Cleaners), Tim Targett (Targett Cleaners), Scott Nanfelt (Delken Cleaners), David Machesney (Pratt Abbott), Jessica Mattson (Swiss Cleaners).

In late January, the New England Sanitone Licensees held their annual meeting in Boston, MA.

The longest-running independent group of drycleaners celebrated their 80th year together at the Four Seasons Hotel with special guest speaker Cohen Wills and Sam Taylor from Cleaner Market-

ing.

The meeting also served as an opportunity for owners to discuss industry trends, the labor market, best practices and lessons learned.

The open-discussion format encourages honest exchanges between owners giving them an opportunity to bring up topics that are impor-

tant to their businesses.

Included in this discussion was an update on DLI and the drycleaning industry presented by NEFA Executive Director Peter Blake.

The New England Sanitone Licensees meet every January in Boston.

The meeting is open to all current licensees across the

country.

Value Drycleaners of America, LLC (VDA) announced recently that it has named **Mike Weisel** as president/CEO, overseeing its operations, as well as those of **ZIPS Franchising LLC**, franchisor of the **ZIPS Cleaners** brand, and **Gemini Cleaners**

LLC, franchisor of the **Mulberry's Garment Care** brand. His title applies to all three entities.

Weisel joined ZIPS in mid-2024 as vice president of operations and continuous improvement.

He previously held senior roles at Tide Cleaners, including franchise development director.

He also spent two years at Rent the Runway as senior manager of drycleaning operations, and earlier ran his own drycleaning businesses for more than 30 years.

Weisel succeeds **Bob Barry**, who arrived in 2021 to strengthen and grow the ZIPS chain as the country emerged from the COVID pandemic and garment care faced the challenge of changing attire trends.

Barry is departing a much stronger organization than he inherited; he will shift his focus back to the restaurant/hospitality field where he spent much of his career.

"I am immensely honored to be granted the privilege of building on the leadership and success that Bob has brought to this company," he said.

"His will be tough shoes to fill, but I'm confident that my past experience coupled with such a strong, cohesive and dedicated corporate team and committed corps of franchisees will let us continue elevating our system and stores to achieve even greater success," he added.

Weisel also announced that **Kathleen Razmus**, a nine-year veteran of the ZIPS organization who most recently served as director of technology and IT security, will become vice president of IT, operations and training.

Jaici Kelly, who joined ZIPS in 2019 as store profitability manager and has served as franchise operations manager since 2024, will now hold the title of director of operations and store development, reporting to Razmus.

"Over the past two years I've worked closely with both Kathleen and Jaici and know they will both excel in these new roles," said Weisel. "They both possess many years of experience at the store and corporate level, have the respect of our entire system, and are steadfast in their commitment to helping every location achieve its full potential. I am grateful to have them on our team."

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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Is your company focussed on profits, sales or value?

Some owners focus on growing profits, while others obsess over sales goals. Have you ever considered making it your primary objective to build a business that can thrive and grow without you?

These are principles discussed in past articles on **Value Building**. The goal is simple: increase the value of your business — whether you are not ready to exit yet or want a more valuable company when you do.

A business that is not dependent on its owner is the ultimate asset. It gives you control over your time, allowing you to choose the projects you take on and the vacations you take. When it comes time to exit, a business that operates independently of its owner is worth significantly more than an owner-dependent company.

Below are five ways to set up your business so it can succeed without you.

1) Give Employees a Stake in the Outcome

Jack Stack, author of *The Great Game of Business* and *A Stake in the Outcome*, wrote the playbook on creating an ownership culture inside a company. The concept is straightforward: be transparent about financial results and allow employees to participate in financial success. The result is having employees who act like owners — even when you are not around.

For many owners, this is a difficult idea to accept. *Share real numbers with my employees?* I am not suggesting you give everyone equity, but you should share numbers in a way that clearly connects effort to results. How can employees know how they are performing without understanding the numbers tied to their roles?

The simplest metric to start with is hourly or daily PPOH (pieces per operator hour). Just yesterday, an owner told me, “We used to do that, but the slowest got picked on.” If that is the case, then post numbers by department instead. Set standards and manage to them.

Managers and supervisors should also see labor numbers, supply costs, utilities and revenue. How can you expect people to manage in the dark?

I enjoy walking into one of

our stores where the manager knows *exactly* the revenue needed to hit one of three bonus tiers for the month. That is power.

you.

One proven way to do this is to create recurring revenue. Build a model where customers buy from you automat-

(EBITDA).

This multiple can transfix entrepreneurs. Many owners want to know their multiple and how they can jack it up.

There are often several adjustments like this that will boost your profit and, by extension, the value of your business. This is more art than science, and each adjustment must be defensible.

Any expenses a buyer would not incur should be isolated clearly on your P&L.

Common adjustments include above-market rent (especially when you own the building), startup costs, one-time lawsuits or insurance claims, and non-recurring professional fees.

Your multiple matters — but adjusting EBITDA is where much of the hidden value is unlocked.

If your goal in 2026 is to increase the value of your business, look closely at how customers pay you.

Since you have a transaction business model where customers pay once for what they buy, expect your company's value to be a single-digit multiple of your Earnings Before Interest Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA).

This could include a wash/dry/fold subscription. Buyers pay a premium for recurring revenue because future income is visible and predictable long after the owner exits.

If your first reaction is, “This won't work in our industry,” know that the same thing has been said in every industry. Most are already familiar with the subscription model.

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.

A business that is not dependent on its owner is the ultimate asset. It gives you control over time, allowing you to choose the projects you take on and the vacations you take. When it comes time to exit, a business that operates independently of its owner is worth significantly more than an owner-dependent company.

2) Teach Employees to Think Like Owners.

If opening the books makes you uncomfortable, there is a simple management technique you can use. Respond to employee questions with the same question every time: “If you owned the company, what would you do?”

I have used this technique for years. By forcing employees to step into your shoes, you train them to think the way you do. Over time, they begin making the same decisions you would make. When they do not, it becomes a teaching opportunity. Either way, they learn.

Eventually, employees solve their own problems. That is when you know it is working.

3) Vet What You Sell.

Identify the products and services that require your personal involvement to make, deliver or sell. Make a list of everything you offer and score each item on a scale of 0 to 10 based on how easy it is to teach an employee to handle it.

Assign a 10 to offerings that are easy to teach. Give lower scores to anything that depends on you personally.

Commit to eliminating the lowest-scoring product or service on your list. Repeat this exercise quarterly.

Over time, you will sell what can be taught and deliver a more consistent experience. The alternative is poorly trained services that disappoint customers.

4) Create Automatic Customers.

Are you the company's best salesperson? If so, you will eventually need to fire yourself as the rainmaker if your business is going to run without

ically. Consider service contracts that fulfill ongoing needs on a regular schedule.

Many operators have created wash/dry/fold subscription programs. Others have added home care services. Route delivery services already fit this model. The past two years have pushed many of us in this direction — and for good reason.

5) Document How the Business Runs.

Every valuable business comes with instructions.

Write an employee manual, or what MBA-types call Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). These provide clear rules for handling repetitive tasks.

When you are not around, employees have a playbook to follow. When someone leaves, you can replace them quickly without losing momentum.

Payoff of You-Proofing

You-Proofing your business creates enormous benefits. It allows you to build real value and have a life. Your company can scale because it is no longer bottlenecked by you. Most importantly, it will be worth significantly more to a buyer when you are ready to sell.

At that point, you are no longer selling a job — you are selling something closer to a franchise.

If you want to estimate what your business might be worth, start by looking at what acquirers are paying for similar companies. Most businesses trade at a multiple of pre-tax profit.

For smaller businesses, this is typically **Sellers Discretionary Earnings (SDE)**. For larger ones, it is **Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization**

After all, if your business has \$500,000 in profit, and it trades for four times profit, it is worth \$2 million; if the same business trades for eight times profit, it is worth \$4 million.

Obsessing Over the Multiple

Obviously, your multiple will have a profound impact on the haul you take from the sale of your business, but there is another number worthy of your consideration as well: the number your multiple is multiplying.



Many owners believe profit is purely objective — something an accountant calculates. In a sale, that is not true.

Profit is adjusted to estimate how the business will perform under new ownership.

This process of adjusting or recasting the earnings — and how you defend these adjustments to an acquirer — is where you can dramatically spike your company's value.

Consider a business with \$3 million in revenue where the owner pays themselves \$200,000 per year.

If a competent manager could run that business for \$100,000, you can reasonably argue that the company would generate an additional \$100,000 in profit under an acquirer. At a five-times multiple, that single adjustment adds \$500,000 in value.

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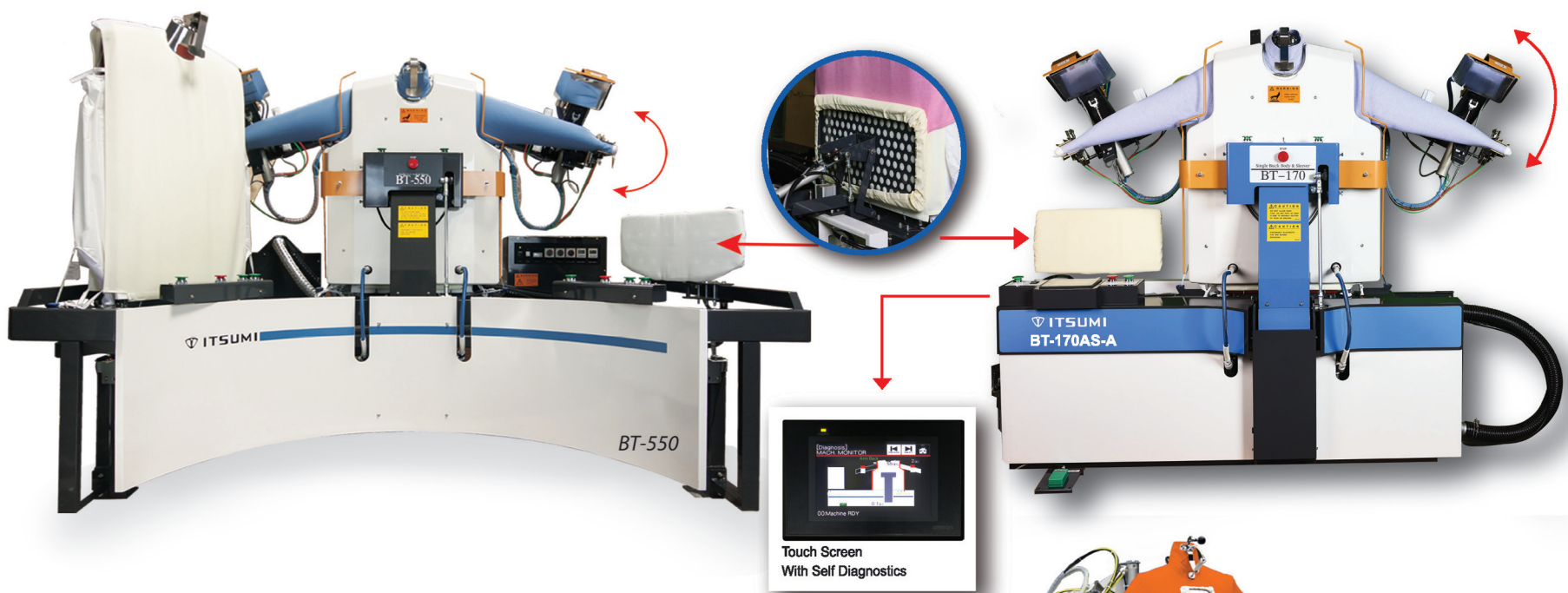
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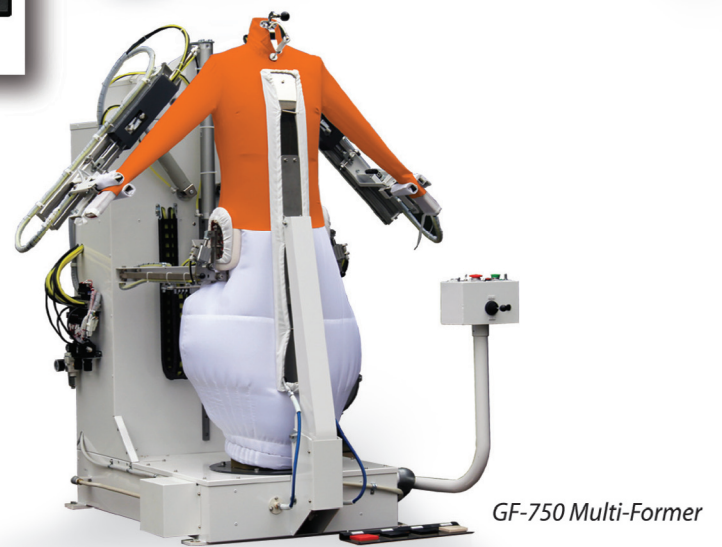
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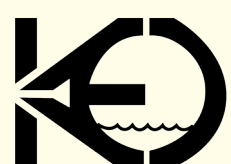


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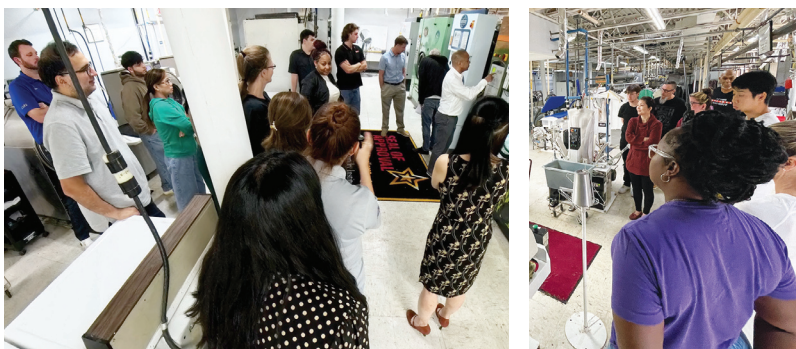
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March 16 - 28	Advanced Drycleaning
April 14 & 16	Virtual - Fibers & Fabrics
April 21 & 23	Virtual - Customer Service Course
May 5, 7, 12, 14	Virtual - Advanced Stain Removal Course
June 9, 11, 16, 18	Virtual - Basic Stain Removal Course
July 13 - 17	Introduction to Drycleaning
July 20 - 31	Advanced Drycleaning
August 11, 13, 18, 20	Virtual - Advanced Stain Removal Course
August 18, 20, 25, 27	Virtual - Spanish Basic Stain Removal Course
September 15 & 17	Virtual - Leadership Course
October 5 - 9	Introduction to Drycleaning
October 12 - 23	Advanced Drycleaning

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—Nadine Rana
Style & Grace Cleaners in Toronto, Ontario

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Expanding your customer service narrative

Most people think of business suits and evening gowns when they think of drycleaning, which doesn't even come close to covering the robust services we offer. Within the walls of our businesses lies a wealth of expertise capable of much more, but what are we missing out on when we don't get creative with changing the traditional narrative stuck in our clients' heads?

At Sudsies, we are constantly thinking up ways to broaden our service narrative so our guests (and new customer segments) aren't missing out on all the ways we can make their lives easier. We make sure our marketing campaigns are expanding how our guests think about how we can help them.

The "Everyday Luxury"

Many customers perceive drycleaning as a service for special occasions or formal attire. Our expertise extends to the everyday items that contribute to a comfortable and well-maintained lifestyle.

- **Casual wear.** We emphasize the benefits of professional cleaning for everyday gar-

ments and explain how our techniques can preserve the quality and longevity of favorite sweaters, jeans and casual jackets, surpassing the results of home washing. (Plus, we can save them time with our pickup and delivery.)

- **Children's items.** We promote our services for children's clothing, including delicate fabrics and stain removal for those inevitable spills. We also highlight the safety and hygiene aspects of professional cleaning for infant and toddler items.

- **Sports gear.** We showcase our ability to clean and refresh specialized sports apparel, from ski jackets and golf attire to performance fabrics. We like to showcase all the interesting places around the world our clients visit — which makes them remember to come to us to freshen up their gear before they pack for their next trip.

During the marketing process, we emphasize the removal of odors and the restoration of technical properties.

Elevating Home Comfort

Our expertise extends to home textiles and special occasion items, offering opportuni-

ties to create a luxurious experience for our customers.

- **Linens and bedding.** We position our services as a way to recreate the *hotel experience* at home, and we highlight the crispness and freshness we can achieve with professional linen cleaning, transforming bedrooms into sanctuaries. We also educate our guests about how properly cleaning duvets and other bedding, as they might be harboring allergens and germs that regular cleaning can't remove.

- **Tablecloths and napkins.** We promote our services for cleaning and pressing tablecloths and napkins, perfect for dinner parties and special gatherings. It's important to remind them of this service all-year round, as holidays, birthdays and other events happen often. We also emphasize the convenience and the impeccable presentation we can provide.

- **Special occasion items.** We reinforce our expertise in handling delicate items such as wedding dresses, baptismal clothing and heirloom pieces, and our meticulous care and preservation techniques.

Unlocking these new markets lies in effective communication. People just don't know, or don't remember, all that we offer, so we have to get creative. We also have to be repetitive without getting redundant. Here are some things we suggest you do to keep your full range of services in front of your customers:

- **Visual merchandising.** Update your storefront and website to showcase the full range of services. Use high-quality images of various items, not just suits and gowns.

- **Educational materials.** Create brochures, flyers, and online content that explain the benefits of professional cleaning for different types of items.

- **Social media engagement.** Share before-and-after photos, customer testimonials and behind-the-scenes glimpses of your cleaning processes.

- **Personalized recommendations.** Train your staff to ask customers about their needs and offer tailored recommendations based on their lifestyles and wardrobes.

- **Partnerships.** Form partnerships with local businesses, such as event planners, hotels and sports retailers, to reach new customer segments.

- **Specialize.** Create packages for different types of customers. For example, a package for new parents, or a package for people who want to keep their sports gear in top shape.

You already offer valuable services beyond traditional cleaning, such as expert alterations and custom embroidery. Now, it's time to ensure your customers are fully aware of these offerings. Integrate these services prominently into your marketing materials, website and in-store displays.

Educate your staff to proactively mention these options to customers, whether it's suggesting monogrammed towels to new homeowners or offering to alter a slightly too-long dress. By consistently reminding your clientele of these valuable additions, you enhance their experience, increase customer satisfaction and unlock new revenue streams within your existing customer base.

Frontline Ambassadors

Crucially, your valets are your frontline ambassadors. They aren't just pickup and delivery personnel; they're educated consultants. Empower them with comprehensive training to discuss the full

spectrum of your services.

Equip them to recognize various fabrics, identify potential stains and confidently explain the benefits of professional cleaning for every item. Encourage them to engage in conversations, ask probing questions about customers' needs and offer personalized recommendations.

By transforming your valets into knowledgeable advisors, you create a seamless and informative customer experience, reinforcing the value of your expanded service offerings and building stronger client relationships.

Beyond the storefront, active community engagement plays a vital role in educating potential clients about the breadth of your services. Participating in local sports events, fashion shows, charity galas and other gatherings provides opportunities to interact with your target audience. Set up booths, showcase before-and-after examples of various cleaned items and engage in conversations that highlight the versatility of your capabilities. These events allow you to demonstrate that your services extend far beyond traditional suits and gowns. By becoming a visible and active member of your community, you solidify your position as a trusted and comprehensive cleaning solution, expanding awareness and driving new business.

By expanding our service narrative and effectively communicating our capabilities, we can move beyond the traditional image of a drycleaner and become a trusted partner in our customers' lives, offering solutions for everyday needs and special occasions alike. Let's embrace the opportunity to showcase the full potential of our expertise and capture new markets.

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



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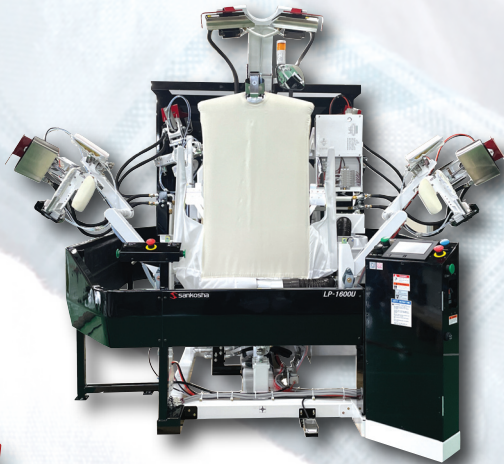


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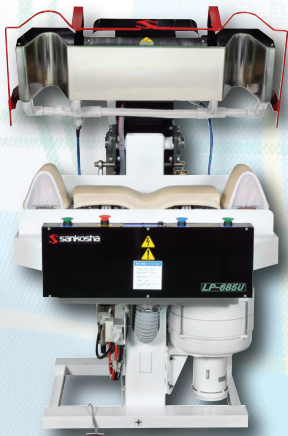
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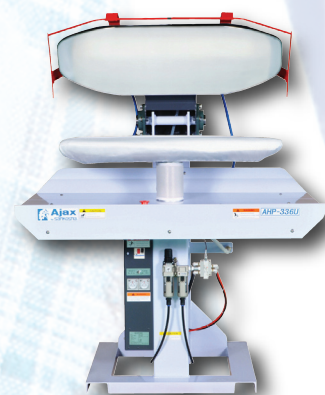
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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

Route driving: an *easy* gig with a lot of responsibility

To many, running a route can seem like a pretty easy gig. Load up your van, start it up and go from A to B to C and so on. **SMRT** and **SPOT** have good driving apps that allow almost anyone to run the route.

As a driver, you are unsupervised, unmanaged and have the whole day to yourself. You can take a break when you want to as well as having the pleasure to have positive interactions with customers.

You have the luxury of being outside, as well as working half your time in a controlled atmosphere with heat or air conditioner anytime you want it.

You also have the luxury of listening to whatever music you want to or favorite talk show without worrying about someone else changing the channel.

So, why then do some operators struggle with hiring someone to do a position that anyone would enjoy doing?

The position of being behind the wheel involves a lot more than simple driving directions, routines and doing whatever you want to do day in and day out.



There are responsibilities, decisions, attitude checks and a whole lot more. Simply put, a route driver does have a lot more on their plate than a lot of people think and the position should be treated as so.

They deal with road rage, having to stay focused and develop the route with sales and retention. At least, they *should* be utilized to build the route.

We always say that you should look at the route as a store on wheels and the individual running the route wears

three hats: customer service, operations and sales.

Too often, drycleaners look at the position as a plug-and-play opportunity for anyone with a driver's license. They struggle and it leads to the demise of the route, customer service experiences and the overall stoppage of route growth.

Too often, I see route drivers who look just like delivery drivers and do not exhibit any responsibility, professionalism or care about the position at hand. They are the face of the company — in fact, they are more of a mobile billboard than the van itself.

Owners should seriously take a look at the current situation and decide on a plan as they enter 2026 with the goal of growing — thriving instead of surviving. You could go back to the hundreds of articles I've written in *National Clothesline* and see that drivers must do more than just drive — they are one of the most important

positions for your company.

[Editor's Note: Visit our Archives section online at www.nationalclothesline.com for every National Clothesline issue dating back to January of 2018.]

Drivers become complacent largely due to how the owners and managers get involved in the route operations. Make this year your best year as you either develop your current route driver, or you embark on a new marketing and sales campaign to ensure growth for years to come.

Here is how you know you have gotten complacent or are doing things that hinder growth.

1) *Are you more concerned about getting clothes back to tag in?* This one kills growth.

You would never close a drop-store early to ensure clothes get back quicker. Do not have the same mentality for the routes.

2) *Are you running store shuttles with the same van?* If you are, then you are destined for

limited to no growth.

3) *Are your drivers off on Wednesday?* If so, then you are not having meetings, time for vehicle maintenance and marketing days.

The bottom line is the route driver position is one of the most important positions in the company, yet, many focus on saving money and not growing.

Those with a strong route presence are growing day by day; those who have their route on autopilot will run out of gas.

Keep the pedal to the metal and keep growing.

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

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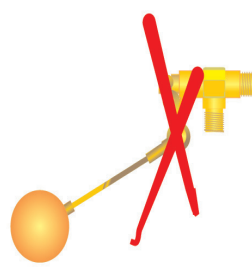
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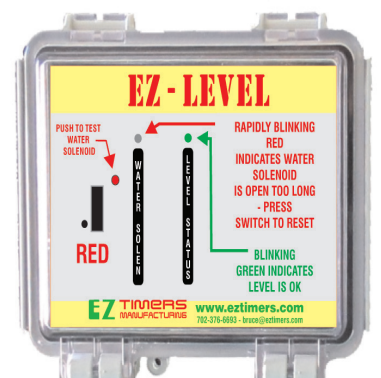
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