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NC DEQ study sheds light on PFAS source

PFAS may be colorless, odorless and invisible, but their regulatory footprint continues to be increasingly evident. PFAS are a large group of synthetic chemicals that were first used in the 1940s.

They are often called *forever chemicals* because they do not tend to break down easily in the environment or the human body.

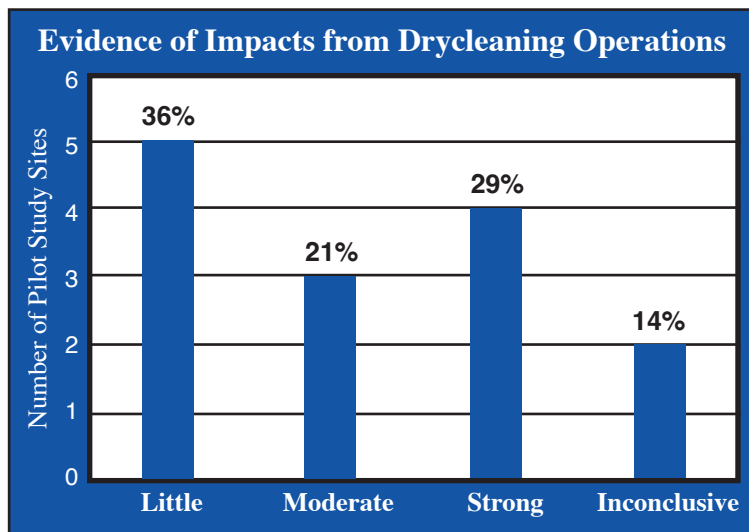
In 2025 alone, more than 350 PFAS-related bills were introduced across 39 states as concerns continue to grow over the chemicals' links to serious health issues and contamination of global water, soil and food supplies.

A 2023 pilot study from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

recently published results that show PFAS are moving through wastewater systems largely unchanged. The study aimed to assess how PFAS move through treatment systems, testing 37 facilities and 19 land-application fields with the purpose of informing future regulations.

One of the study's clearest conclusions is that conventional wastewater treatment does not effectively remove PFAS. Instead, 87% to 98% of PFAS passes through treatment plants and is discharged into surface water.

Only 2% to 13% is captured in biosolids. So, wastewater treatment plants are not eliminating PFAS — they are simply redistributing it.



This will likely have direct implications for regulators, who are increasingly looking upstream at potential contributors to the PFAS problem. Many regulations focus on banning PFAS from consumer products.

The Primary Source for the PFAS Problem

On the positive side, the study suggests drycleaners are

not a primary driver of contamination even though PFAS and PFOS (synthetic chemicals within the PFAS family used to make products resistant to stain, grease and water) were detected in background (up-gradient) groundwater at all 14 drycleaning sites in the study.

At nine of those sites, however, the levels exceeded regu-

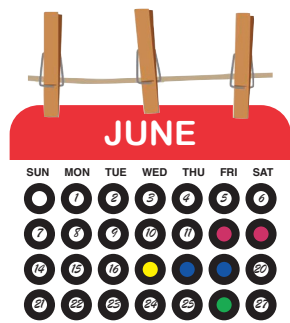
latory thresholds *even before* considering any potential contribution from drycleaning operations.

Part of the reason is that drycleaners are often located in urban and commercial corridors where PFAS contamination from multiple sources — such as firefighting foam, manufacturing and wastewater — already exists. Any environmental investigation must account for this background noise before attributing contamination to a specific facility.

The NC DEQ study categorized sites based on the evidence of PFAS contributions from drycleaners as follows (see graphic): 36% showed little to no evidence; 50% showed moderate to strong evidence; and 14% were inconclusive.

It is important to note that

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Coming soon...

Industry events in June

(KFA) on June 12 and 13 in Louisville, KY.

There will be a group tour of Louisville's best bourbon distilleries on Friday night that will be close to the host hotel, The Galt House. For those not inclined to take part in bourbon tasting, there will also be a tour of **Nu-Yale Cleaners** in Jeffersonville, IN (just across the river from Louisville), who will open its doors for an open house from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. that day. Afterwards, KFA will host a welcome reception that evening.

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The **Drycleaning & Laundry Institute (DLI)** and its partner regional associations will present a multitude of opportunities for drycleaning professionals to learn, grow, and connect this month, including **NextGen Expo 2.0** hosted by the **Heartland Fabricare Association**

Clean 2027 opens exhibitor registration

The Clean Show has officially opened up registration for its 2027 installment — set to take place for perhaps the final time in Las Vegas — from July 15 to 18.

An important date for exhibitors to remember is Nov. 26; that's when

exhibitor service opens up to allow booth planning on the portal.



Another important date to track is January of 2027 — that's when Clean Show hotel room blocks become

available.

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Spot on for 150 years and counting



R.R. Street & Co., Inc. first opened its doors in 1876, the same year the telephone was invented. **Robert R. Street**, a young Scottish immigrant, recognized the potential of establishing a catalog business that could supply parts and dyes to the Midwest textile industry. Over time, the company recognized the potential of growing in size and scope to better help the textile care industry. To read the full story of **R.R. Street & Co.**, go to page 6.

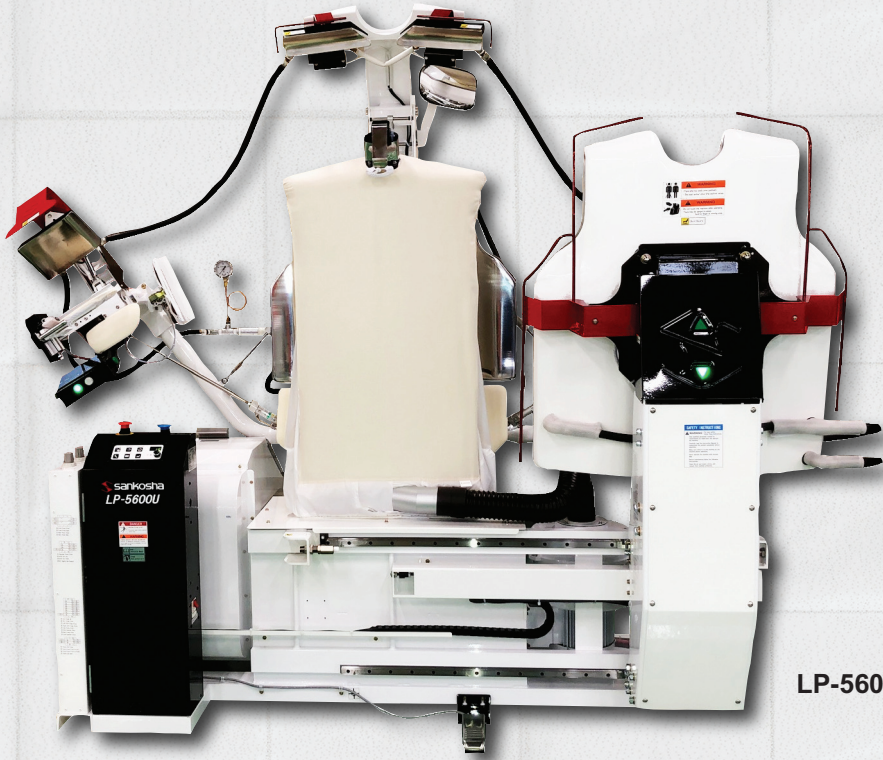


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PFAS have the makings of a *forever problem*

While it is always nice to see scientific research indicate that drycleaning is **not** the primary source of a toxic environmental contamination, the recent study on PFAS by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (see the front page story) suggests that more studies need to be conducted.

When it comes to PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), we're still learning quite a bit. However, what we've learned so far hasn't been positive news and it's an issue that needs to be addressed.

To be clear, PFAS are manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s. They were widely used in everything from non-stick cookware and stain resistant fabrics to cosmetics, food packing and firefighting foam.

Unfortunately, PFAS go by another name — *forever chemicals* — because of their tendency to break down extremely slowly in the environment. Not only do they pose a threat to human health, they also pose a direct threat to our water supply.

To put things in perspective, there are more than 15,000 unique PFAS chemicals. When the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the eleventh round of public water system testing data for PFAS earlier this year, it revealed that there are now over **9,700 sites** with **PFAS** in **50 states**.

The EPA data also confirmed that **176 million people** in communities throughout the U.S. have drinking water that has tested positive for PFAS. That is alarming, to be sure, but they are not immediately deadly. Instead, they don't break down in the body and continue to accumulate over time. They are hazardous to your health with long-term exposure.

So, with that in mind, it seems the PFAS problem is not simply going to go away. It has the makings of being a *forever problem*. The recent North Carolina DEQ study showed that wastewater treatment plants have been largely ineffective in removing PFAS, so that is not a viable solution we can rely on at this time. Already, many regulators have worked to curb the problem upstream, which certainly makes sense. After all, just as the best way to remove an impossible stain is to prevent it from ever happening in the first place, it is best to prevent PFAS at the source.

In many cases, states are taking the initiative to develop their own standards to stay on top of the matter.

At this time, more than 20 states already have phaseouts in place for consumer product sale of items with intentionally added PFAS, although Maine was the first to do so in 2021. Their sweeping law requires manufacturers to phase out all intentionally added PFAS in products by 2030, but they will allow certain exemptions for "currently unavoidable uses" — meaning that it will be acceptable when the use is both critical for health or safety and a safer alternative is not available.

Other states with phaseouts in place for various products with intentionally added PFAS (often with **unavoidable use** exceptions that require special warning labeling or packaging) include: Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Vermont and Virginia.

Other state regulations have focussed on environmental monitoring and remediation requirements. For example, Illinois now requires major wastewater treatment facilities to conduct periodic, comprehensive sampling for PFAS. In Virginia, sewage treatment works must analyze biosolids for PFAS using accredited labs.

Upstream solutions will certainly help the drycleaning industry, who is not a primary source of the problem; the industry's role is typically that of an **unintentional passive receiver** of PFAS that come off of treated clothes during the washing process and leave into local wastewater systems.

Drycleaners may recall back in 2019, the **Florida Department of Environmental Waste Cleanup Program** launched a pilot study involving 15 drycleaning facilities eligible for the state-funded cleanup. That study, completed over the course of 26 months, found PFAS to be present in soil and groundwater above Provisional Cleanup Target Levels at 10 of the 15 sites.

The researchers found relatively low PFAS levels in raw solvents and detergents but dramatically higher level in spent solvents, separator water, waste drums and laundry effluent after garments had been processed. Thus, they also concluded that PFAS were leaching out of treated fabrics during the drycleaning and laundry process and then accumulating in waste materials.

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R.R. Street & Co. celebrates 150 years

When R.R. Street & Co. first opened in Chicago – the legend says it happened on July 4 – it was a completely different world. There were no planes or cars just roads made of dirt (or mud) and wooden planks with horses everywhere and very few electric streetlights. People communicated largely by letters and telegraph (the Internet of its day) since the phone had only been invented by Alexander Graham Bell in May.

It had been just over a decade since the Civil War, so America was still in a healing, rebuilding process, as was the Windy City, which had been devastated by the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and was becoming a major transportation hub with the railroad. Robert R. Street, a young Scottish immigrant, recognized the potential of establishing a catalog business that could supply parts and dyes to the Midwest textile industry.

“He started selling what ended up being the largest catalog and mail delivery service for textile manufacturing at the time,” noted James Mayberry, vice president of business development for Street’s. “They offered everything from I-beams to build the factories, to giant pulleys for dyeing things to the littlest things like needles, bobbins and glove stretchers. That’s how he built the business, starting from the Midwest and then eventually distributed throughout the U.S.”



During the 1930s, a cleaner uses brush spotting on a spotting table – how spotting was done before the invention of spotting boards and spray guns (see ad on right).

“Some fun trivia is we still have Street’s first account book literally from 1876,” he added. “It’s really neat to see them build and, like any other business, your first year is not in the back yet. You are struggling. But, on the first page, I want to say about the fifth or sixth entry was a donation to Civil War veterans.”



At the time, drycleaning had only been around a little over 50 years and many of the ornately-constructed and highly fashionable garments often required redyeing as cleaning processes that used camphene, benzene and gasoline to remove grease were not the best methods to do, but were at the time.

Street’s focus continually narrowed on the drycleaning industry. “Fairly early on, Street’s had an R&D department and developed better dyes to start with, and then eventually better detergents and stain removal products,” Mayberry explained. “That really became a cornerstone of who Street’s was and is. We’re still that way in the sense of we look and we say, ‘Drycleaning is hard. What can we do to make it easier, better, more profitable for the people on the ground who are doing the hard work of drycleaning? And, what other technologies are out there that we need to be looking at? What are the chemistries out there? It’s kind of in our blood and it’s just part of our regular to-do list – to try and look at these things.’”

Early in the 1900s, the company developed the first pressure filter for drycleaners. In the 1940s, they launched Staticol® and introduced a two-gun spotting system, the earliest form of spray spotting

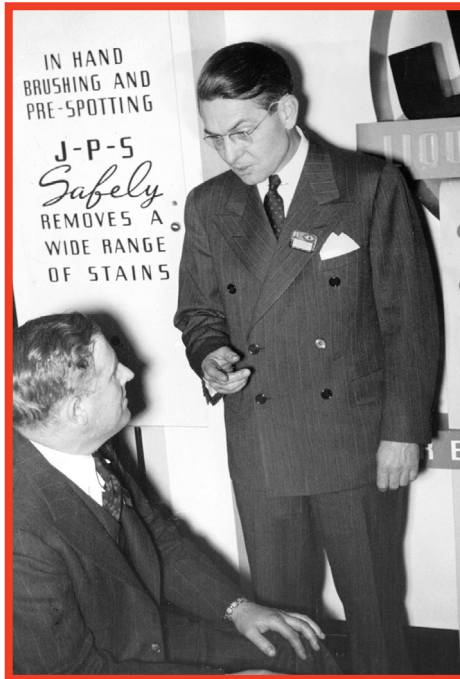


Photo Top Left: Mr. Warren, nephew to Robert R. Street, helped grow Street’s drycleaning department using education as a key component.

Photo Top Right: Paul Warren and J.L. Mayberry, Sr. dig in at the groundbreaking ceremony for Street’s headquarters in Oakbrook, IL.

Photo Right: In the 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Ernestine Hirschhorn and others conducted research on “The Kinetics of Water Exchange” – leading to innovations in detergency and conductivity control for industry equipment.



touted in the graphic below.

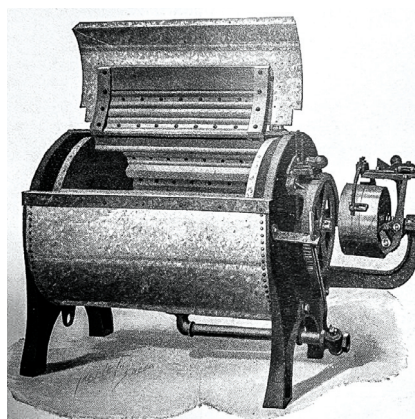
Any cutting edge technology that could help the industry, Street’s would learn how to adapt it.

“From the products that actually work to helping our customers solve problems and get results, to ensuring operators are educated about proper processes, we just want to help drycleaners and launderers achieve results that help guarantee customer satisfaction,” added Mayberry.

Street’s launched a school for distributors in the 1950s, published groundbreaking studies on micelles and conductivity and invented the ex-



From Street’s 1900 catalog



tractor rinse unit as a result.

During the following decade they began sponsoring scholarships for the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute – then known as the National Institute of Drycleaning.

During the 1980s, Street’s research helped make cartridge filtration become the benchmark for solvent maintenance. Perhaps the most important innovation, though, was the creation of the company’s Training, Research and Education Center to facilitate employee and distributor education, research and development.

“We’re seeing younger people still getting into the industry, looking at drycleaning franchises as an opportunity... but with some of those transitions to younger owners who maybe haven’t been in this industry, we see the risk of losing knowledge,” noted Kristen Vos, executive vice president for Street’s.

“Over the years, we’ve really grown our knowledge about it – the depth of our knowledge of this industry is huge and we need to make sure that’s available for this

new generation who may not know as much. It’s really important that we document that knowledge that we have and make it accessible to the industry, so we’ve really built up online videos for how we do stain removal.”

While there are numerous reasons for why R.R. Street & Co. has lasted 150 years – its innovation, adaptability and industry acumen – but Mayberry believes there is another key ingredient.

“It takes a lot of individuals to make an organization live this long. It’s not one person; its many individuals working hard and being creative and caring. So, we really have an appreciation for all those people who went before us,” he said.

“One thing that we would just want to maybe add is our gratitude to this industry and the people of this industry... to our customers, to our distributors, to other vendors that we work with, to all of the allied trades. It’s working in partnership with them and the trust that our customers and distributors have given to us – it has supported us,” Vos said.

Street’s once sold a Metal Shell Dry Cleaning Machine (left).

Timeline of milestones:

- 1876: Telephone (invented by Alexander Graham Bell)
- 1876: Street's 1876
- 1926: Television (design created by Philo Taylor Farnsworth)
- 1927: First TV
- 1974: Home PC (the Altair 8800 microcomputer)
- 1976: Street's 150th Anniversary
- 2017: Artificial Intelligence (AI explosion)
- 2026: Street's 150th Anniversary

Both R.R. Street & Co. and the telephone (invented by Alexander Graham Bell) came to existence in 1876. Street’s longevity has lasted through numerous other technological milestones such as the first TV in 1927 (design created by Philo Taylor Farnsworth), the first popular home computer (the Altair 8800 microcomputer) in 1974, and what experts call the modern AI explosion, referring to a paradigm technological shift and widespread adoption that happened in 2017.



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NC DEQ study sheds light on PFAS source

Continued from page 1

even at drycleaning sites with stronger evidence, PFAS concentrations were significantly lower — by roughly two orders of magnitude — than levels found at major industrial sources like manufacturing plants or fire training areas.

The NC study concluded that PFAS are not originating from the cleaning solvents themselves. Instead, drycleaning operations may act as a transfer pathway for PFAS al-

ready present on textiles.

This suggests that PFAS enter the system through treated textiles — specifically fabrics with stain-resistant, water-repellent or performance finishes added during the manufacturing process. The PFAS contamination at drycleaning sites is very likely imported into the plant via customer garments with resistant and repellent finishes that come off in the cleaning process.

Other interesting take-

aways from the study include:

- **Wetcleaning:** No significant PFAS detected in wastewater, although detection limits were high.

- **Spotting agents and detergents:** Some PFAS were found in opened containers, but not in new products from distributors.

- **Mister systems:** Results were inconclusive; more data is needed.

- **There is no correlation between PFAS levels and PCE**

contamination.

- **There is no clear relationship between PFAS levels and years in operation.**

Regarding the last point, facilities in operation primarily before the late 1960s — prior to widespread PFAS use in textiles — showed little evidence of contamination.

Similarly, a solvent distribution facility with no active cleaning operations showed no PFAS, reinforcing that the cleaning process itself (i.e. con-

tact with garments) is the key pathway.

While the future of PFAS regulations still remain murky, drycleaners can take some comfort in knowing that the industry does not appear to be a primary PFAS polluter and that new solvents and products appear to be PFAS-free.

For more information on the NC DEQ study, visit www.deq.nc.gov/deq-study-pfas-wastewater-and-biosolids.

Coming soon... industry events in June

Continued from page 1

The topics for the educational opportunities that will be presented on Saturday will range from plant efficiencies to leadership to reaching your customer base.

There will be various allied trade vendors present at the tabletop display area.

For more information, or to register, visit www.heartlandfabricare.org.

Next up will be a program

offered by the **North East Fabricare Association (NEFA)** on June 17 that will include a tour of **Best Cleaners** in Connecticut plus a Meet and Greet dinner. For more information, call (617) 791-0128.

From June 18 to 19, **NEFA** will team up with the **Mid-Atlantic Association of Cleaners (MAC)** for its **Summer Summit** event.

It will feature a number of educational seminars includ-

ing one on “Striving for a Great Customer Experience” by the Cleaners Supply team.

There will also be tours of **Cleaners Supply** and **Wedding Gown Preservation**. For more information or to register, call (617) 791-0128.

During the following week, the **California Cleaners Association (CCA)** and the **Southwest Drycleaners Association (SDA)** will be hosting a tour of **Cleaner’s Supply** in Reno, NV on June 26.

There will also be a presentation provided by **Jeff Schapiro**, owner of **Cleaner’s Supply**. For more information, visit DLonline.org.

Clean 2027 opens exhibitor registration

Continued from page 1

According to **TCATA Executive Director Luci Ward**, “The layout of Clean 2027 is expected to be very similar to the last time the show was in Vegas. One change that they made was removing the lounge area that was in the middle of the floor to increase booth space,” she said.

Messe Frankfurt has plans to host **Clean Show 2029** in New Orleans, LA, and **Clean Show 2031** in Atlanta, GA, before the venue shifts to either Houston or Dallas in 2033 — negotiations are still in progress at this time.

After those dates, Orlando and Las Vegas will no longer be options and the Clean Show will rotate between three venues: New Orleans, Atlanta and either Houston or Dallas if negotiations succeed.

For exhibitors, the booth payment schedule will be as follows: 20% is due on application submission; 40% is due on Sept. 15 of this year; and the remaining 40% is due on Feb. 15, 2027. For more information or to register for the Clean Show, visit the official site located at www.cleanshow.com.

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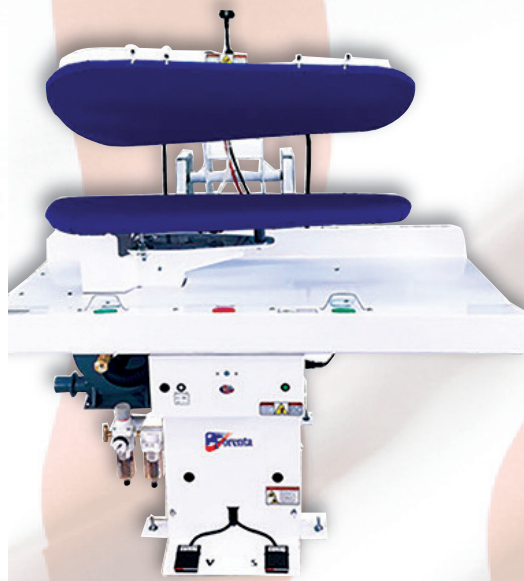
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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

Five things you should already be doing in delivery

For all the talk about innovation in pickup and delivery, drycleaning has barely changed in 25 years. The customer still gathers clothes, places them in a bag, waits for a driver or visits a storefront, hopes the order is tagged correctly, and then waits again for the garments to come back.

The phone call may have become an app tap, and the paper receipt may have become an email, but the experience itself remains almost exactly the same.

That is strange because nearly every other local service transformed before the drycleaning industry. Food delivery offers live tracking, instant substitutions, photos, ratings, loyalty offers, and predictable ETAs.

Grocery delivery lets customers select replacement items, approve changes in real time, and choose delivery windows. Rideshare turned a vague taxi wait into a visible route, driver profile, fare estimate and receipt.

The industry has added

technology in house *and* in the hands of a driver, but the core of routes is still the simple benefits and the customer experience.

While some of the point-of-sales provides online communication, mobile apps, text reminders and cashless payment, routes are still about customer spending more than 25% than they do at the store and give the operator less costs with increased loyalty.

The broader online laundry

service market is growing quickly, with Grand View Research estimating the U.S. online laundry services market at \$8.28 billion in 2023 and projecting a 33.4% growth rate from 2024 to 2030.

Custom Market Insights similarly projects strong global growth for online on-demand laundry services, driven by doorstep pickup, smartphone adoption and digital payments.

Oddly enough — as many

of you know — my great grandfather delivered laundry right after World War I (see picture below left).

But, growth is not the same as reinvention. In most cases, the app is just a prettier version of the old counter.

A customer still has limited visibility into what happens after pickup. They often do not know when garments are inspected, whether stains were found, which items require

providers promote convenience, but convenience is no longer just *we come to your door*. Convenience now means confidence.

The next era of drycleaning pickup and delivery will not be won by simply offering pickup. That is now the baseline.

So, here are the five bottom line things we learned 25 years ago that you should have already put in place.

Growth is not the same as reinvention. In most cases, the app is just a prettier version of the old counter.

special handling, whether pricing changed, or exactly when the order will return.

The biggest gap is communication. A drycleaner handles valuable, personal, and often expensive items: suits, dresses, uniforms, coats, heirlooms and garments tied to important events. Yet, the customer experience is often less transparent than ordering a sandwich.

If a stain cannot be removed, a button is missing, a hem needs attention, or an item requires extra time, the customer may not learn that until pickup or pre-delivery. Sometimes we don't know if we cause a stain due to less inspection.

The route model is also largely unchanged. Twenty-five years ago, cleaners ran neighborhood routes with drivers who stopped at homes and offices on certain days.

Today, many still do the same thing. The difference is that customers may schedule through a website or a text reminder. The workflow remains built around the cleaner's convenience rather than the customer's expectation for flexible, responsive service. But, does it really need to be?

Costs dictate having a routing on both ends. Some consumers still don't respond to texts like we wish.

This matters because consumer expectations have moved far ahead of the category. People now expect transparency, speed and control. They want to know who is picking up their order, when it will arrive, what it will cost, and whether anything changed along the way.

Laundry and drycleaning

1) **They still value trust.** They still want to save time. But for today's customer, the service begins before the garment is cleaned. It begins when they decide whether the process feels easy enough, reliable enough and transparent enough to trust. If drycleaners want to grow beyond legacy routes and occasional convenience orders.

2) **Drivers must do more than just drive.** Retention and route awareness are the highest priorities. Those *saving money* with a driver only mentality will not grow.

3) **Customers stay more loyal, spend more and do not care about coupons on the route compared to the store.** Convenience is what the value the most.

4) **A van can do more in sales than a drop-store... if you still look at a route as additional cost; odds are you will never need an additional van — thus, no growth.**

5) **Consumers give up personal touch for personal time.** This may encompass everything in a nutshell, but two round trips to the cleaners is way more cumbersome than the two seconds it takes for them to put the bag on the front porch.

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.



THE ORIGINAL ROUTE PRO John Wilhelm Peuster, great grandfather of James Peuster, is pictured with two horses and a buggy that he used to deliver clothes that his family cleaned in their home.

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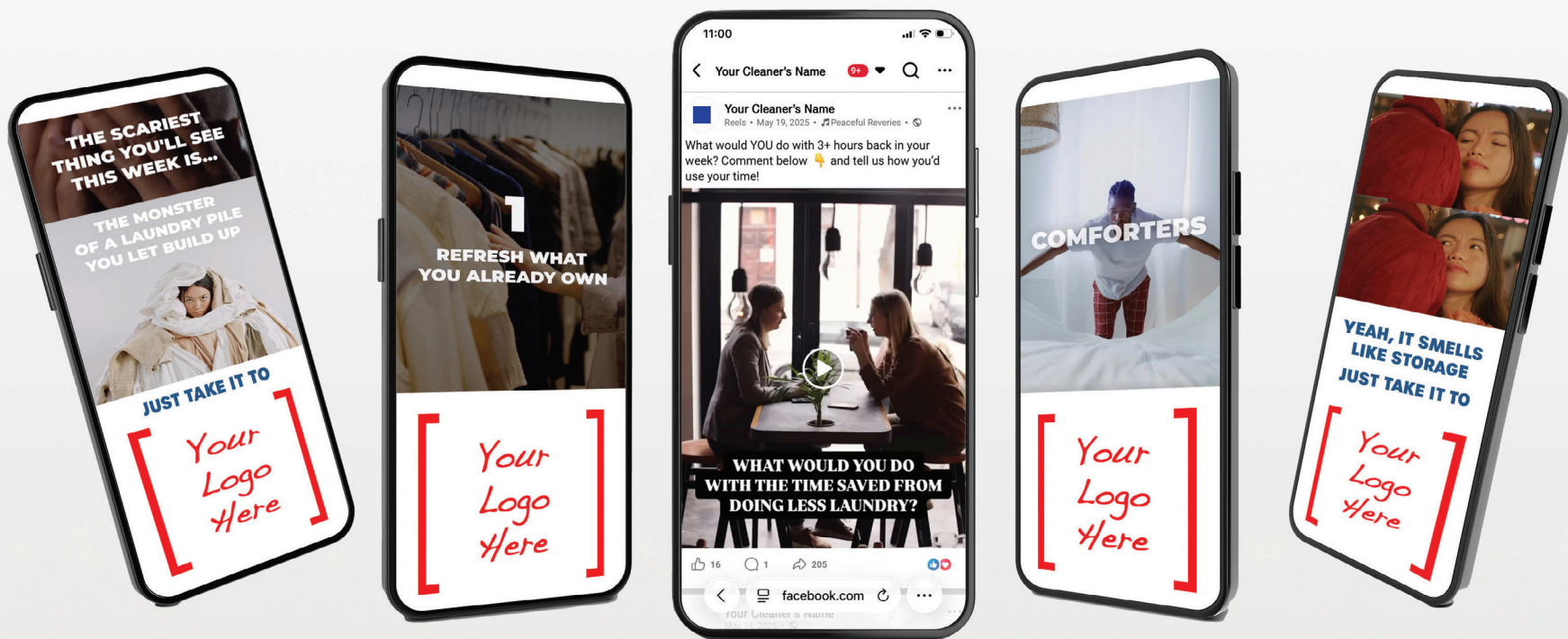
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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Six power ratios that you should start now

Those who know me and the work we do at Methods for Management (MfM) know I enjoy numbers. Through MfM, we measure nearly 150 KPIs relating to our drycleaning clients. Today, I would like to introduce six new numbers to track in your business.

Baseball's leadoff batters measure their "on-base percentage" — the number of times they get on base as a percentage of the number of opportunities they have.

If you've ever seen the movie *Moneyball* starring Brad Pitt, then you've seen this concept discussed and implemented on the big screen.

Acquirers also like tracking ratios, and the more ratios you can provide a potential buyer, the more comfortable they become with the idea of buying your business.

Better than the blunt measuring stick of an aggregate number, a ratio expresses the relationship between two numbers, which gives it power.

If you're planning to sell your company one day, here's a list of **six ratios** to start track-

ing in your business now:

1) Employees per Square Foot. By calculating the number of square feet of office space you rent and dividing it by the number of employees you have, you can judge how efficiently you have designed your space. Commercial real estate agents generally use a rule of 175 to 250 square feet of usable office space per employee.

I have been in many plants over the years. Some use space very efficiently, while others have hired layout consultants who believe in spreading everything out to fill the available space. The result is often too much walking around to complete tasks.

2) Ratio of Promoters and Detractors. Fred Reichheld and his colleagues at **Bain & Company** and **Satmetrix** developed the **Net Promoter Score®** (NPS) methodology. It is based on asking customers a single question that is predictive of both repurchase and referral.

Here's how it works: survey your customers and ask them, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how

likely are you to recommend (your company name) to a friend or colleague?" A follow-up question should also be asked: "Why did you score the way you did?"

Figure out what percentage of the people surveyed give you a **9 or 10** and label that your ratio of **promoters**. Calculate your ratio of detractors by determining the percentage of people surveyed who gave you a score of **1 to 6**. Then calculate your Net Promoter Score by subtracting your percentage of detractors from your percentage of promoters.

The average company in the U.S. has an NPS between **10 and 15 percent**. Reichheld found that companies with an above-average NPS grow faster than average-scoring businesses.

I did this and found one of my stores had an NPS of 100%, with zero detractors. I would like to think this is because of my leadership, but in truth, it is because of our phenomenal store manager, Joan. Joan is a wonderful person, a huge asset to our team and understands our vision. Her customers feel

welcome and appreciated.

Calculating your NPS — and identifying both areas of success and opportunities for improvement — can exponentially improve both your customer experience and the profitability of your business.

3) Sales per Square Foot. By measuring your annual sales per square foot, you can get a sense of how efficiently you are translating your real estate into sales. Most industry associations have a benchmark. For example, annual sales per square foot for a respectable retailer might be \$300.

With real estate usually ranking just behind payroll as one of a business's largest expenses, the more sales you can generate per square foot, the more profitable you are likely to be. Use this number to evaluate your front space or drop stores. You may find you need much less space than you thought. Finding the perfect-sized space may take some time. I have seen successful drop stores as small as 500 sq ft, including an ADA-compliant bathroom.

4) Revenue per Employee. Payroll is the number one expense for most businesses, which explains why maximizing your revenue per employee can quickly translate to the bottom line.

Google, for example, enjoyed revenue per employee of more than one million dollars in 2015, whereas a more traditional, people-dependent company may struggle to surpass \$100,000 per employee.

5) Customers per Account Manager. How many customers do you ask your account managers to manage? Finding the right balance can be tricky.

Some bankers are forced to juggle more than 400 accounts and therefore do not truly know each of their customers, whereas some high-end wealth managers may have just 50 clients to stay in close contact with.

It's hard to say what the ideal ratio is because it is highly dependent on your industry. Slowly increase your ratio of customers per account manager until you see the first signs of deterioration — slowing sales or a drop in customer satisfaction. That's when you know you have probably

pushed it a little too far.

For the drycleaning owner, this ratio can also be applied to route customers. A very common question is: "When will I know it's time to split a route?" Conversely, "Can I combine two routes and save the cost of a driver and vehicle?"

6) Prospects per Visitor. What proportion of your website visitors opt in by giving you permission to email them in the future? **Dr. Karl Blanks** and **Ben Jesson** are the co-founders of **Conversion Rate Experts**, which advises companies like Google, Apple, and Sony on how to convert more website traffic into customers.

Dr. Blanks and Mr. Jesson state there is no such thing as a *typical* opt-in rate because so much depends on the source of traffic. Rather than benchmarking yourself against a competitor, they recommend to benchmark against yourself by carrying out tests to improve your site's current opt-in rate.

Although we benchmark MfM KPIs, I have always felt it was more valuable to compare yourself to yourself. Am I improving in this area, or am I falling backward?

Acquirers have a healthy appetite for data. The more data you can give them — especially in the ratio format they are accustomed to examining — the more attractive your business will become in their eyes. Until next time, enjoy building value.

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 30 years. His current position as managing partner and business coach with them allows him to share his extensive background in strategic planning, finance, process improvement, succession planning, acquisition and disposition analysis, packaging and branding, corporate culture, employee training programs, profitability, quality and production standards, cost analysis and development of management KPIs as well as being a Certified Value Builders Coach. Contact him at kengh@mfmi.com.



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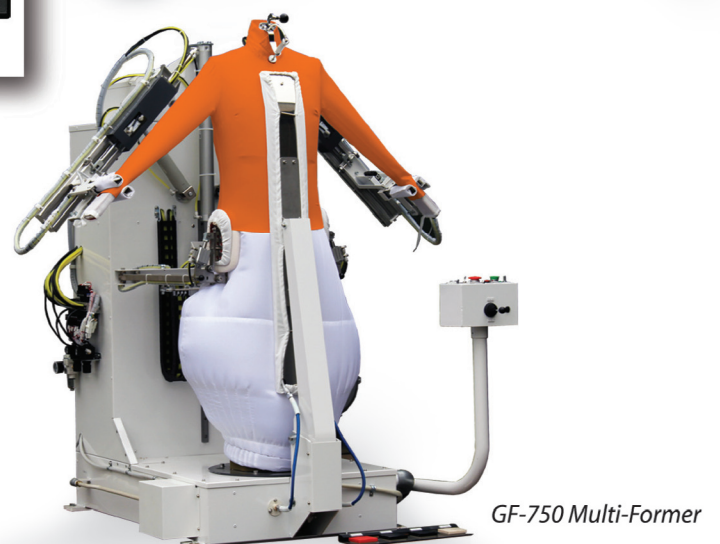
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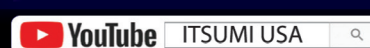
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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

Handling poorly dyed silk fabrics

Silk continues to be a troublesome fabric for many drycleaners.

My Independent Garment Analysis Service has received many such silk garments ranging from color loss due to oxidation and spotting procedures.

The dye choice of the manufacturer and its application determines the fastness of the dye.

Poorly dyed silk fabrics can still be processed but the inspections, spotting and cleaning methods must be changed.

Inspection

If you go into a retail store and examine silk garments on the rack, it will enlighten you to the extent that fading can occur.

Simply compare unexposed areas to exposed areas such as on the shoulder. This same inspection should be done at the counter.

Examine for discolorations on the underarm area, as well as weak areas.

Silk fabrics are highly sensitive to chloride salts found in deodorants and perspiration.



Safe Spotting Techniques

Flushing. Always place an absorbent towel under the fabric when flushing with the steam gun. This will prevent dye transfer and indicate the stability of the dye to water and wetside agents.

If you go into a retail store and examine silk garments on the rack, it will enlighten you to the extent that fading can occur. Just compare unexposed areas to exposed areas such as on the shoulder. The same inspection should be done at the counter.

If you flush into a screened area, the wet area of the silk will not indicate dye loss until it is dry. If dye transfer occurs readily the method of stain removal must be modified.

Lubrication. If dyes are stable to flushing, the garment is placed on a towel and a neutral lubricate is applied. Tamp area with a soft spotting brush and note stability of dye.

Digesters. If dyes are determined to be weak, the safest spotting agent available is a powdered enzyme. This is good for protein and albuminous stains, as well as some

tannin stains.

Alkali in protein formulas will bleed dyes on silk. Liquid enzymes have lubricants in their composition and require extensive flushing which is not quite as safe.

To use powdered enzymes

are generally safe to the dyes on silk.

Protein and Albuminous Stains. Refer to the section on digesters.

Bleaching. Last traces of staining can usually be removed with a mild hydrogen peroxide. This is the only neutral based bleach available.

Sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate are alkaline in nature and will discolor silk dyes.

Although testing is required before using peroxide, it is generally safe. Apply hydrogen peroxide with a q-tip and allow it to be exposed to the air for 20 minutes. Then flush and repeat the method if it has been showing results.

Feathering. Many cleaners are adept at feathering by flushing the area and forced drying the wet area from the outside toward the center.

The only problem with this method is that the forced drying can remove dye from the silk garment as well as chafing the yarns.

I would rather use the

put ½ teaspoon of digester in a pint of warm water (100 to 120°F). Add a teaspoon of glycerin or neutral lubricant for better penetration and also keep the area wet.

Place this mixture on stained area for 20 minutes before flushing. This method is considered to be as safe as just applying plain water.

Tannin Stains. Most tannin formulas are safe to dyes on silk.

If the lubrication tends to bleed the dye when mechanical action is applied, use a chemical action of the tannin formula.

Apply to stain and heat with a steam gun and then flush.

Acetic acid can also be used for chemical action. Test oxalic and rust remover which

are generally safe to the dyes on silk.

Protein and Albuminous Stains. Refer to the section on digesters.

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I would rather use the

method of steaming the outside area of the ring and wiping the wet area with a towel so it blends into the dry area. This is the safest and most efficient way of feathering a silk fabric.

Leveling Agents. Difficult feathering can be avoided by applying a leveling agent. It is also interesting to note that some manufacturers offer a tannin and enzyme-based protein formula with a built in leveling agent. This means that after spotting the area can be feathered or just hung to dry and then recleaned.

Dryside Stains. I would rather use a mild oily type paint remover than a strong one. You can judge the strength by the color of the paint remover. The light colored paint removers are mild while the darker ones are stronger.

The problem with oily type paint remover is that water present in the paint remover will activate the alcohol that is present in its composition causing color loss. Oily type paint remover should also be used with amyl acetate which aids in dryside stain removal as well as diluting the strength.

Drycleaning Poorly Dyed Silk

The routine drycleaning process should not affect dyes on silk. If moisture is present the dyes will bleed and discolor. The problem I have observed in my consultations is that a small load of silk is subjected to the same amount of soap injection as a large load.

Detergent is injected based on the amount of solvent in the wheel rather than garment weight. Batch injection detergents contain a great deal of moisture and small silk loads subjected to the moisture can bleed and discolor.

Dan Eisen is the former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association and also an inductee of the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's Hall of Fame, the highest honor the association can bestow on an individual. For questions and concerns, he can be reached at (772) 579-5044, or by e-mail at dan-eisen39@gmail.com or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.



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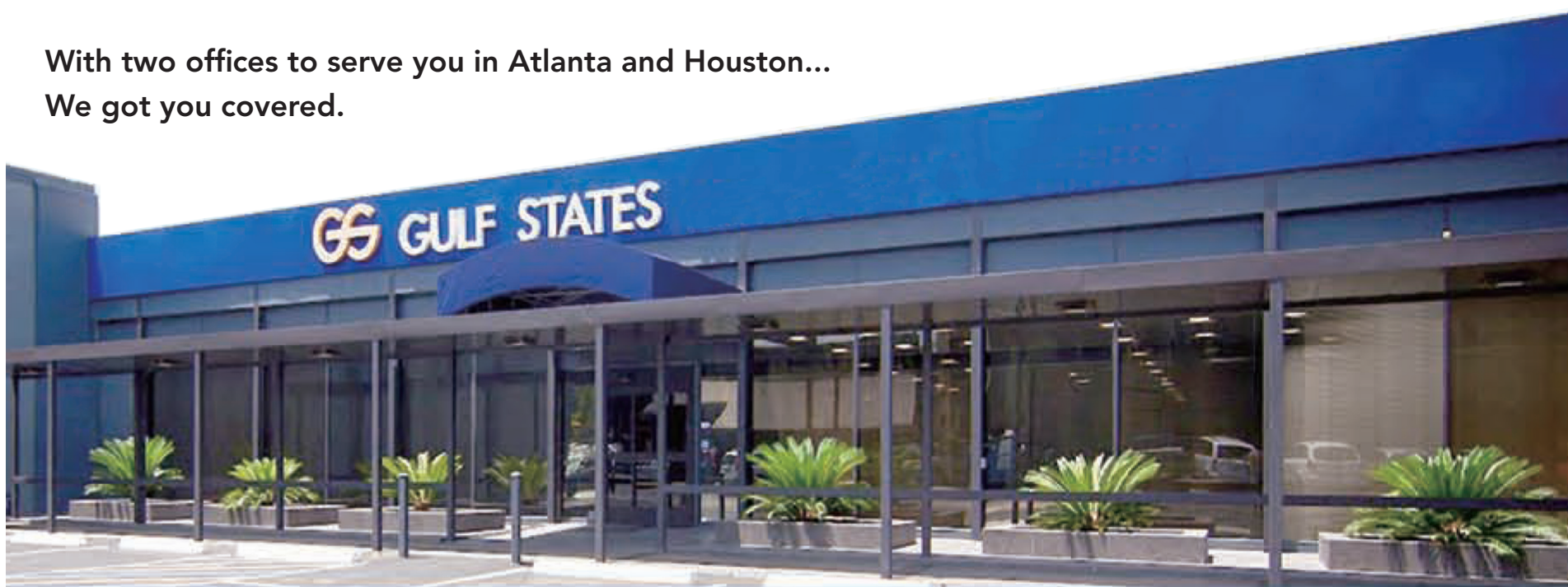
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WRENCH WORKS



BY BRUCE GROSSMAN

Buck valve operations and maintenance part 1

One of the most common — and costly — issues encountered in finishing machinery is **continuous steam leakage through the buck valve of a press**. This condition can result in the following problems:

- Fabric becomes excessively damp, preventing effective vacuum drying;
- Pressing results become inconsistent;
- Surface defects such as shine, impressions or water spotting may occur;
- The service life of the press pad is significantly reduced;
- Operators are unable to consistently achieve a crisp, professional finish.

If not corrected, this condition will result in increased rework, higher finishing costs, and potential customer dissatisfaction.

To address this issue, this series of articles will provide detailed information on buck valve operation, troubleshooting procedures, and the techniques, parts, and tools required for proper repair.

Before proceeding, it is important to understand how

this family of valves operates. For reference, this guide uses the **United Brass Works buck valve**, which is commonly installed as a cost-effective replacement for the more expensive versions supplied by original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

Although this valve is air-operated, its function is similar to that of many mechanically operated buck steam valves. Differences between designs will be addressed only when they are relevant to valve operation.

Two primary types of presses are commonly found in drycleaning plants:

1) Drycleaning Press (Soft Finish Press). This type of press is used for most drycleaned garments that do not require a hard finish, such as trousers, coats, jackets, skirts and dresses. It is equipped with steam control valves located in both the head and the buck:

- **Head:** The upper section of the press that closes to apply pressure to the garment

- **Buck:** The stationary lower section against which the head closes

These valves regulate the flow of steam through the garment during the pressing cycle, ensuring controlled, consistent finishing results.

2) Laundry Press (Hard-Finish Press). This type of press is used for garments that are typically washed and for fabrics that require a hard finish, such as shirts, uniforms and flatwork. Unlike the drycleaning press, it typically has either no steam valves or only a head steam valve.

In this configuration, the buck does not normally control steam flow. Instead, it plays a critical role in drying and finishing by evaporating residual moisture from

the garment.

Drycleaning Press Buck Construction

Let us begin by examining the construction of the typical buck found in drycleaning presses. At first glance, the buck appears to be a simple oblong metal component with a series of holes across its surface. Steam passes through these holes when the operator activates the foot pedal.

In reality, the buck is a more complex assembly designed to distribute steam evenly and facilitate effective moisture removal. Several internal components work together to achieve this function.

Internal Construction and Function

Steam Chamber. Beneath the surface of the buck is an internal steam chamber. This chamber heats the buck and is connected to the buck valve. When the steam valve is activated, steam is released and evenly distributed across the entire surface area of the buck.

Perforated Surface (Top Plate). The outer surface contains multiple small holes that allow steam to pass uniformly through the garment. Even distribution is critical to prevent uneven pressing or water spotting.

Screen or Diffuser Plate. Many bucks include a screen or diffuser positioned above

the top plate. This component helps distribute steam evenly and prevents concentrated bursts that could damage fabric or cause water spotting.

Padding and Cover (Pad). The buck is covered with padding and a fabric cover, commonly called the pad.

These layers:

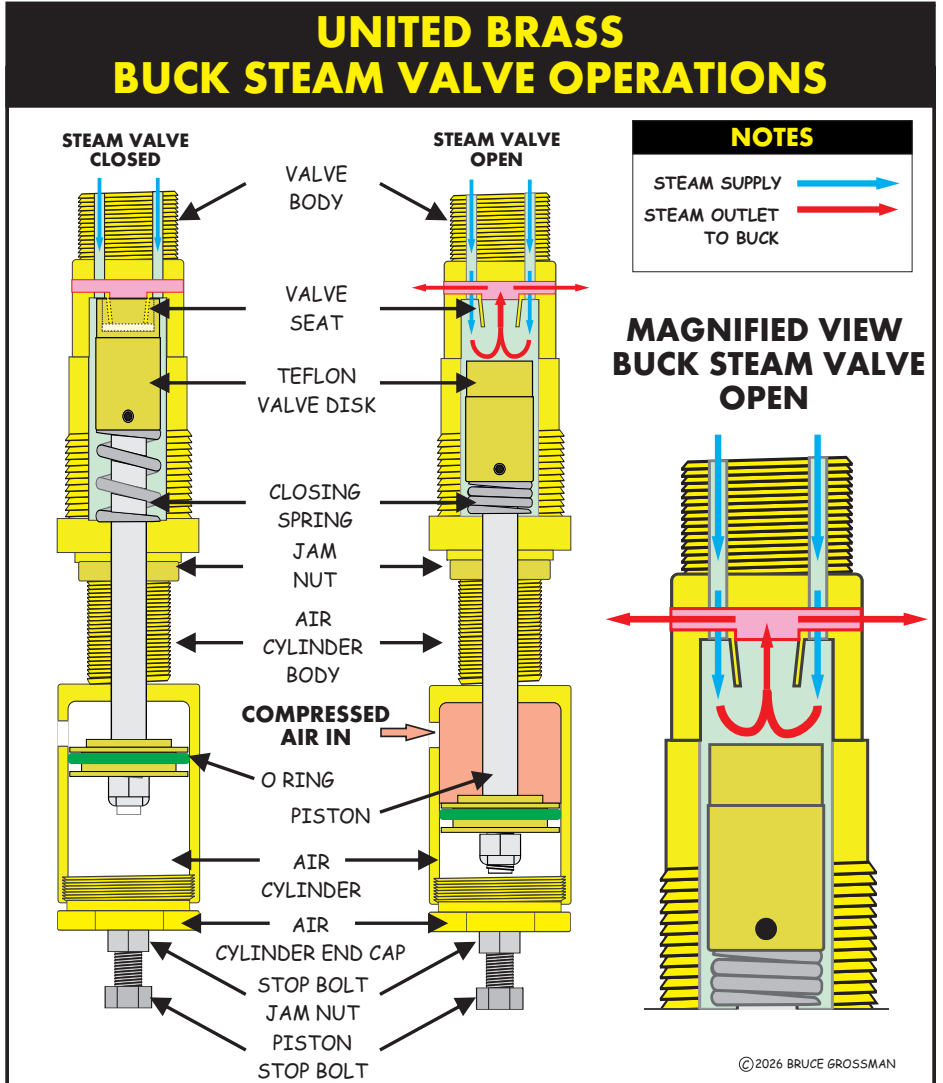
- Protect the garment from direct contact with the metal surface;
- Help distribute pressure evenly;
- Allow steam to pass through while maintaining proper shaping support.

A vacuum section is also incorporated into the buck design; this will be addressed in a subsequent section.

Operational Note: Proper buck performance depends on uniform steam distribution. Any obstruction, leakage, or uneven flow within the buck can result in poor finishing quality, excessive moisture retention and fabric finish defects.

Now that we've covered the basics of what a buck is, let's drill down and discover just how the buck valve actually controls the steam flow through the buck (use the accompanying illustration to more easily visualize the operation of the valve).

With air (pneumatically)
Continued on page 20



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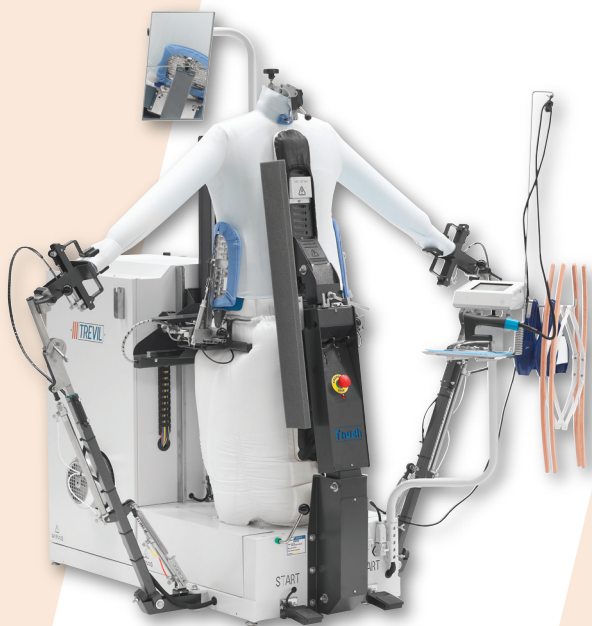


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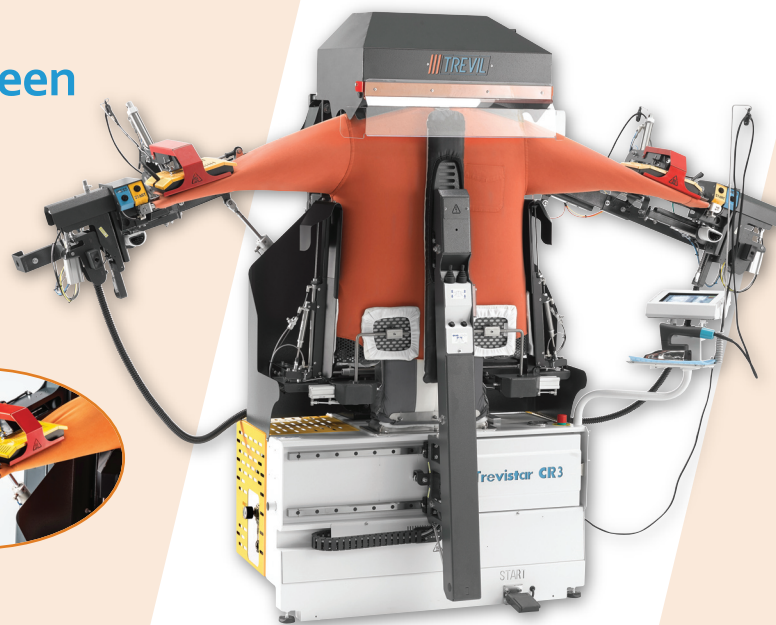
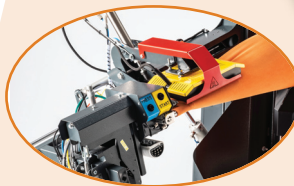
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Bruce Grossman

Buck valve operations and maintenance part 1

Continued from page 18

operated valves, there are two modes of valve operation: **open** or **shut**. When the valve is shut, the Teflon valve disk is held firmly against the valve seat by the closing spring, preventing steam from flowing through the valve body into the buck.

When the valve is in the open position, compressed air is introduced into the air cylinder, pushing the piston into the cylinder, overcoming the force of the closing spring pulling the valve stem and Teflon disc away from the valve seat. As the disc moves off the seat, a flow path is created through the valve body, allowing steam to pass into the buck's external steam chamber. From there, the steam is evenly distributed across the buck surface and throughout the garment.

Actuation Sequence:

- 1) The operator activates the control pedal or button.
- 2) The pneumatic control system directs compressed air to the air cylinder.
- 3) Air pressure forces the valve stem downward, compressing the closing spring.
- 4) The Teflon disc lifts off the valve seat, opening the valve.
- 5) Steam flows through the valve body and into the buck.

When the control is released:

1) The air supply to the actuator is vented.

2) The closing spring forces the valve stem and disc back onto the seat.

3) Steam flow is immediately shut off.

Operational Note: Proper valve performance depends on smooth movement of the valve stem and a tight seal between the disc and seat. Any wear, contamination, or misalignment can result in incomplete closing and continuous steam leakage. These conditions will be explored in a following issue.

That concludes this month's installment. In the next issue, we'll take a closer look at the most common buck valve failure points — and the practical steps you can take to diagnose and correct them before they impact production quality and costs.

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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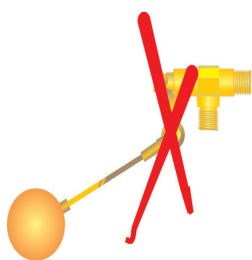


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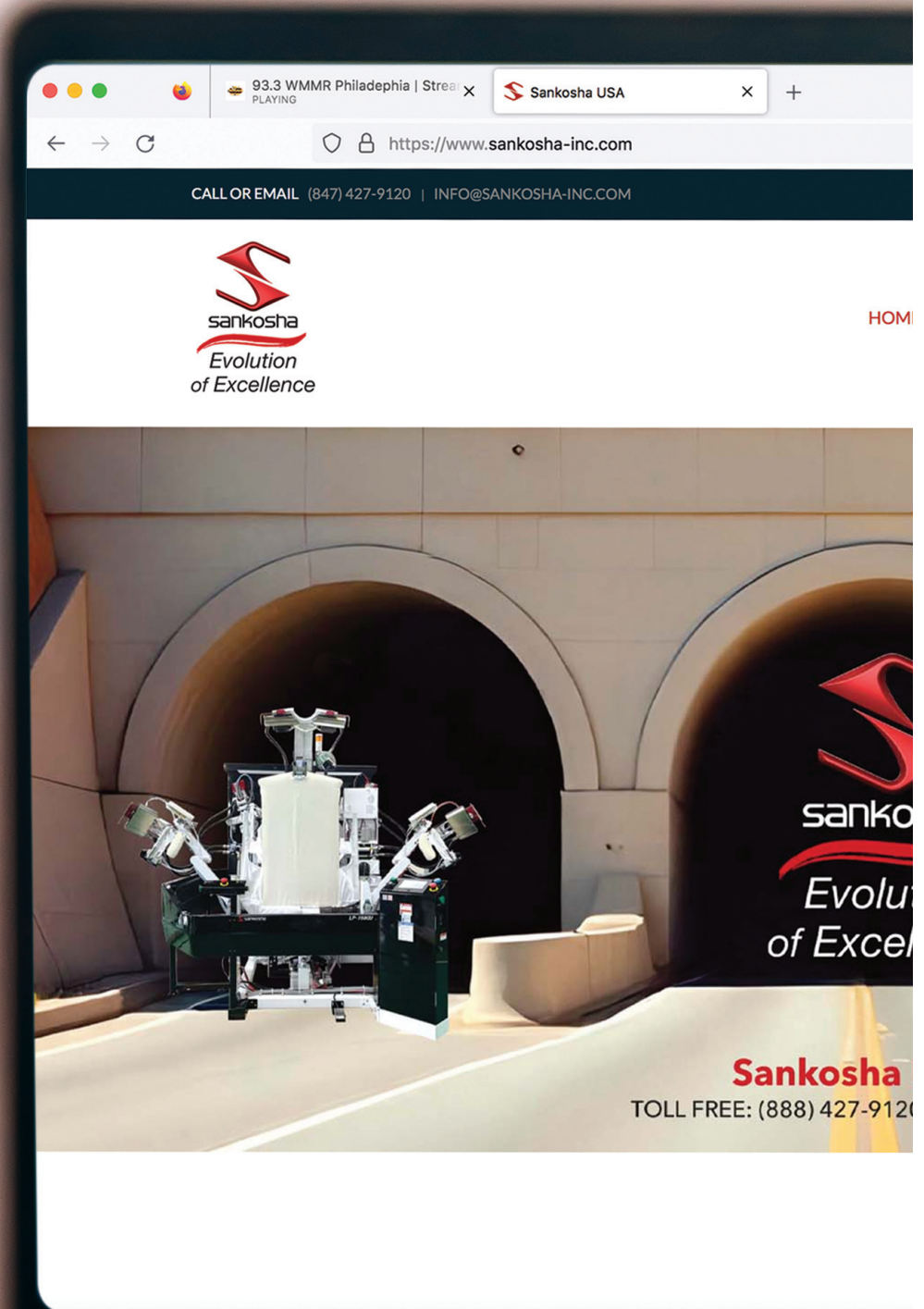
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NCL Profile: Life goes on
 For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yonkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution (during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated). An old article from the Herald Tribune reads: "The Bodin family, who had been in Yonkers for 10 years, had been in Kiev for 10 years." [Read More](#)

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, appers and... [Read More](#)

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... [Read More](#)

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... [Read More](#)

Don's wishlist to St. Nick: 2021 edition
 by Don Derosiers
 BH appy 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... [Read More](#)

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... [Read More](#)

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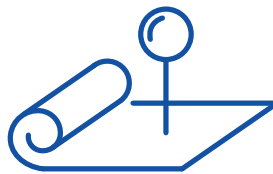
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