



National

# Clothesline



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## MAC, PDCA will co-host East Coast Leadership Conference

Early next month, the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association (PDCA) and the Mid-Atlantic Association of Cleaners (MAC) will present an East Coast Leadership Conference at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court in Baltimore, MD.

The theme for the conference is "Explore... Equip... Energize." It will take place on Saturday and Sunday, June 3 and 4.

The schedule will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday morning with welcoming remarks and an introduction of the various sponsors and tabletop exhibitors.

At 9 a.m., Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners will present a 90-minute program on "Exploring Strategies That Drive Sales and Profits." Following at 11:15 a.m., Cohen Wills of Cleaner Marketing will present a session on "Energizing Your Business Through Innovative Marketing Techniques."

Those programs will be followed by a lunch roundtable discussion of "Industry Best Practices" as attendees network and exchange ideas.



tive Director Peter Blake will present an informative presentation on "The State of the Industry and How to Do More with Less."

Also, throughout the day there will be time set aside for visiting exhibitors and networking. The day's activities will conclude with a cocktail reception that evening.

On Sunday morning, Jennifer Whitmarsh of The Route Pros will begin the day's educational sessions with a program on "How to Motivate and Delegate: Cultivating Your Dream Team" at 9 a.m. The program will run for about three hours with time for an intermission in the middle.

MAC and PDCA have secured a discounted room rate at the Royal Sonesta Harbor Court of \$199 per night with no resort fees.

Reservations can be made by calling (410) 234-0550 and mentioning the rate for the conference.

For online reservations, just click on the links from either host's website, pdcclean.org or macassociation.org.



Dave Coyle

Cohen Wills

Jennifer Whitmarsh



Mike McKay



Peter Blake

After lunch, there will be another roundtable discussion that will be moderated by Maryland State Senator Mike McKay who will be joined by various industry leaders on the topic of "Exploring the Future of Laundry and Drycleaning. The panel will take place from 1:45 to 3:15 p.m.

At 3:20 p.m., MAC Execu-

## DLI heads west for stain removal course

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI), in conjunction with the California Cleaners Association (CCA), will be offering a special installment of its Stain Removal course on the West Coast in Anaheim, CA. The class begins in June.

The six-day course will combine the convenience of virtual sessions with in-person hands-on training by DLI Director of Education

Brian Johnson. Students will meet online for two hours on five different days before heading to the live spotting board portion for a full-day of on-site practice.

The virtual meetings of the course will take place via Zoom on June 1, 6, 8, 13 and 15, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. PST. For the live training students will have a choice of attending at U.S. Western

DLI Director of Education

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DLI's Director of Education Brian Johnson (pictured) gives students a hands-on spotting lesson at the DLI School of Technology in Maryland. Next month, however, he will head West to Anaheim, CA, for a special DLI course where some sessions will be hosted at U.S. Western Multitech's facility while others will be attended virtually via Zoom.

## Storeless in San Mateo



James Roh and Julianna Mo, owners of Press On Cleaners of San Mateo, CA, closed down their only physical location last year, leaving them storeless for several months during the pandemic. The couple pressed on and eventually purchased Pacific Heights Cleaners, but it wasn't the first setback they've faced. Read their full story on page 6.

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## Balancing new technology with human interaction

American author Louis L'Amour prolifically produced 89 novels during his lifetime (most of which were westerns), but before he became such a successful storyteller, he endured an adventurous journey working as an elephant handler, a fruit picker and a professional boxer. Perhaps that is why this quote of his rings so true: "The only thing that never changes is that everything changes."

While nobody needs to be reminded just how much change was required to keep their drycleaning and laundry businesses running in recent times, it probably still remains to be seen just how much the collective American psyche has changed. Much has been said of the pandemic forcing entrepreneurs to modernize their strategies and technology in order to keep up with consumers craving more and more convenience. In fact, many cleaners have chosen to invest in automation technology hoping to increase efficiency, overall production and profitability in a time when the labor pool is often too shallow to depend upon.

Certainly, automation technology can greatly improve your business, but lately it seems like more advanced AI technology is trying to outright replace it. Recently, the company Presso out of Atlanta, GA, has made headlines with its "robotic drycleaning machine" that it says cleans and sanitizes clothes within five minutes. The kiosk-like device is being sold for use in hotels and to media companies with big costume/wardrobe cleaning bills (they claim one device can clean up to 150 a day). What makes this technological competitor different than others in the past is its utilization of artificial intelligence (AI). It's the AI brain that allows the device to stretch the garment in order to press it with much better quality than such machines in the past.

Will consumers be willing to embrace such a technology? That will depend on how effective they believe it to be. The convenience of having a machine in a hotel hallway that can clean a garment in a hurry will always have some customer base. However, ultimately, it will probably not take significant market share unless it does a comparable job to that of a professional cleaner.

In terms of trusting technology, Americans are still ambivalent overall, but

with ChatGPT and other similar applications gaining popularity recently, it's clear that there will always be those willing to try AI to do tasks they don't have any interest in doing. For those who do not know, ChatGPT is a very sophisticated chatbot AI that can do everything from have a convincing conversation to writing a term paper for a student.

As a test, we asked ChatGPT how it could provide some assistance and support to this industry. Within 30 seconds it had generated a lengthy response focusing on five ways, including: in customer service as a virtual assistant to handle customer communications; it can analyze data and provide personalized recommendations for detergents and washing cycles; it could be used for predictive maintenance to analyze when equipment needs to be fixed before it breaks down; data analysis to identify customer trends and preferences and areas where the business can improve; and it can be used as an innovate tool to test new marketing strategies and identify market opportunities. In its own words, it summarized: "Overall, ChatGPT can help the dry cleaning and laundry industry to improve customer satisfaction, reduce costs, and increase efficiency. It can also help the industry to stay competitive in a rapidly changing market."

Then, we asked how this technology could hurt the industry. It responded by warning that, if used improperly, such technology could also cause problems such as: open the door to security risks; create a dependence on technology; cause job displacement for human employees; it will have the potential for bias and ]the possibility that its recommendations could prove unreliable.

The last paragraph of the response though was the most interesting: "Therefore, it is essential to use ChatGPT responsibly, ensure proper security measures are in place, and ensure that customers' needs and expectations are met while utilizing the technology. Additionally, it is important to maintain a balance between human interactions and technology to provide the best customer experience." In other words, even the latest technology says it requires human interaction for it to perform at peak capacity. Ultimately, automation – including that guided by AI – can never fully replace humans, but it can be incorporated as a tool that can greatly enhance the overall customer experience.

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Visit us at [www.nationalclothesline.com](http://www.nationalclothesline.com) for additional coverage of the drycleaning industry and issue archives going back to January of 2018.

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# How Many Dry Cleaners Has Your Insurance Agent Handled? One or Two? Three?

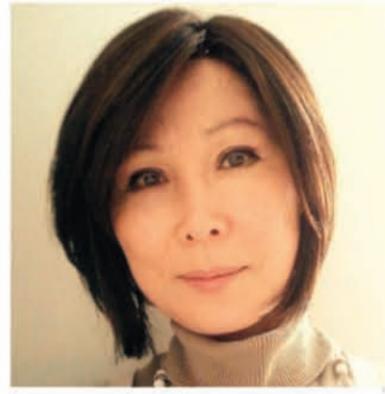


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# Pressing on

From the start, there was a plan. While Julianna Mo had earned her law degree and was ready to take the bar and pursue her own path, her husband James Roh would invest in a new drycleaning business with a partner. In 2006, he purchased Snow White Cleaners in San Mateo, CA — a business they would rename to be Press On Cleaners. Then the plan hit a few snags.

“James and his partner bought the store and then it got pulled into a legal matter so I ended up helping him with that,” Julianna recalled. “Then, I ended up just staying and helping him. We built the business together.”

Meanwhile, James had developed rashes while working with the plant’s hydrocarbon system so the couple decided to remove the equipment and switched to 100% wetcleaning.

“James told me there’s a water-based alternative that’s supposed to be non-toxic and much healthier, and he saw a long-term vision in it,” Julianna added.

The couple teamed up with Hans Kim of Miele and had the new cleaning system up and running in July of 2008. Initially, however, they were afraid to tell their customers that they had switched to wetcleaning.

“Even today, a lot of people don’t understand wetcleaning. The consumers think it’s laundry. We didn’t want to scare people into thinking, ‘Oh my god... are you laundering my clothes? What is this?’” Julianna recalled as the company kept the switch a secret for the first six months. “Customers loved it. They said, ‘It smells clean. It feels great. The color is just wonderful.’”

From the start, James and Julianna had decided they were going to do things the right way with the business which is why it became the first Green Business Certified Drycleaner in San Mateo County.

It also became evident that customers fully embraced wetcleaning — with many seeking it out specifically — so, being greener had a greener effect on the bottom line. In 2010, the company enjoyed an 80% sales growth.

“We have loved wetcleaning. We’ve never looked back,” Julianna emphasized. “We absolutely love it.”

She was enough of a proponent to become secretary of the Professional Wetcleaners Association, prompting her to speak of her experience with wetcleaning to fellow cleaners often. She even spoke about the subject at the roundtable hearing discussion on care labeling hosted by the Federal Trade Commission.

While she enjoys being an ambassador for wetcleaning, she’s still a bit mystified why more cleaners aren’t willing to fully embrace it.

“Yes, it’s a different training and you have to have more knowledge of different things — and there’s more work involved, too, but the results are so much more worth it,” she explained.

“When I see how our silks come out or when I see how our cashmere sweaters come out for our customers... it’s just a great satisfaction knowing

that when people dig their faces into their comforters after we’ve cleaned it and they say, ‘It smells so good!’ Or, when they get their wedding gowns back and they go, ‘Oh my gosh, it’s so much cleaner than when I first bought it.’ — that’s a comment I hear often when people pick up wedding gowns. We do a much deeper, thorough clean-

the positive and how to find a solution to things,” Julianna said. “So, even without a store, we said we’ll press on, just as our store was named. And, that’s what we did.”

In April of 2022, the long wait for a store opportunity finally ended in an unexpected way.

“A fellow wetcleaning colleague in

to grow and expand. We see a lot of opportunity still in the industry and we’re excited.”

While the business has currently achieved a nice balance, customers back in San Mateo still inquire about opening a store again.

“A lot of people keep asking us, ‘Are you going to open up another location



**James Roh  
and  
Julianna Mo**  
Pacific Heights Cleaners  
San Francisco, CA

ing, but we also condition the clothes so that it preserves the color of the fabric better. So, we treat our customers’ garments just like we would our own family members.”

**“Even without a store,  
we said we’ll press on,  
just as our store was  
named. And, that’s what  
we did.”**

Fifteen years after first signing a lease on the store in San Mateo, the plan hit a major snag.

The couple, undecided on whether to renew the lease — the current location did not allow room for growth — were given a 30-day notice in November of 2021.

Fortunately, Julianna holds a realtor license and found a bigger space on a better property... which also had a snag. This time, it was a doozy.

“We had acquired two other press machines and we had bought another boiler system and we had to install all of that, but we found out that it had less electrical power than the old store — so it was completely inadequate. We had to scrap that at the last minute,” she recalled. “We had to put all our equipment into like three different storage rooms, and then we had to rely upon the mercy of our colleagues — other wetcleaning colleagues. We had everything processed there for about five months.”

It would have been easy to give up on the business at that time, but James and Julianna dug in deeper and decided they would keep going for all of the customers who had kept going to them for so many years.

“James and I always try to look at

Sausalito and San Francisco said, ‘I’m retiring. Do you need any equipment?’ And, I said, ‘No! I already have three huge storage rooms of equipment. I don’t need additional equipment. I need your store! So, literally, within a month we had all the paperwork done and on May 1, we took over his two stores.’”

The name of the business they purchased was Pacific Heights Cleaners, which was originally founded in 1969. Up until last year, it had always been owned by the Huie family. Now, it represents a new opportunity for James and Julianna to expand their business even as they continue to serve Press On customers from San Mateo with pickup and delivery routes.

Initially though, the couple were a little nervous about whether Pacific Heights’ clientele would come to accept them as the new owners after dealing with the same familiar family for 52 years.

“I thought they would look at us with a side eye, like *who are these people?*” Julianna laughed. “But, for the most part, they have just been so welcoming and supportive. Even today, they come in and go, ‘We’re so glad you guys took over and are servicing our drycleaning.’ It’s always just a nice warm fuzzy feeling to hear that.”

Despite hitting more than their fair share of snags over the years, James and Julianna feel very fortunate and grateful that their cleaning business is going strong after so many years.

“We’re being productive. We’re in the plus not the minus — I know a lot of drycleaners are complaining about being in the minus and the don’t know whether to just toss in the key because they can’t sell it, or none of their children want to take over. They’re just kind of stuck,” Julianna said. “But, we’re lucky. We have plans to continue

here?’ They want a physical location where they can come in and see us sometimes,” Julianna added.

“There’s still people that can’t understand the pickup and delivery concept,” she continued. “They’ll call and be like, ‘Where’s your store? I’ll come to you.’ And I say, ‘No. We’re doing pickup and delivery.’ And they’re like, ‘No, just tell me where your address is. I can meet you at your store or anywhere.’ And, I’m like, ‘No, it doesn’t work that way. We come to you.’ I guess they’re just so used to the whole concept of us having a physical store.”

Whatever snags the future may hold for Pacific Heights Cleaners, it seems quite likely that James and Julianna will find a solution and adapt. It might be their greatest strength as business owners.

“I think it’s always important to be positive and to think about *how to make things work* instead of just complaining about *why it doesn’t work*, right?” Julianna said.

While the drycleaning industry is difficult enough to frustrate just about any entrepreneur, Julianna believes that sometimes cleaners can be a contributing source to their own frustrations.

“They’re supposed to be business owners, right — and business-minded means that you’re open to opportunities and growth and taking certain risks, but it’s always surprised me how so many drycleaning owners are not that way. They’re just very set in their ways,” Julianna explained. “They just want to be comfortable and they’re not searching for growth or new opportunities. A lot of them have that ‘if it ain’t broke, why fix it’ kind of mentality.’ It’s really sad because if they could experience what professional wetcleaning can do for their business, their customers and just all around, it would be such an eye-opening and positive experience for them.”



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★★★★★  
 Mitch: Drake Cleaners Jan 25 2022  
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# PDCA, NEFA plan full-day program in New York

The North East Fabricare Association (NEFA) and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association (PDCA) will be working together to present a full day program titled "The Art of Stain Removal and Customer Communication."

The program will take place on Friday, June 9 at Wedding Gown Preservation Co. in Endicott, NY.



Admission is free for member cleaners who are encouraged to bring as many on their staff as they wish.

The day will begin with a light breakfast and tour of Wedding Gown Preservation Co., originally founded in Endicott, NY, in 1913.

Afterwards, it will be time to hear from a pair of expert industry speakers – Jane



Bob Edwards

Jane Zellers

Zellers of JCZ Training & Consulting and Bob Edwards of A.L. Wilson, who will present a stain removal solutions and techniques clinic on "How Do

I Get This Out?"

Attendees will learn how to recognize a problem garment before it becomes one, as well as about fibers and fabrics and their limitations.

Additionally, garment classification will be discussed as well as bleaching, dye stripping and digesting stains.

After lunch, Edwards will continue his presentation while Zellers will focus on how to create the most efficient lines of communication be-

tween your front counter and your production department, how to converse with customers about potential issues and how to keep everybody on the same page.

Afterwards, there will be a Q&A session before attendees can enjoy an exclusive tour of nearby Cleaner's Supply.

The program is a free benefit for all DLI members. Non-members may attend for the cost of \$99 per plant – which can be put towards DLI membership. For more information, visit [DLIonline.org](http://DLIonline.org).

# DLI heads west for stain removal course in June

*Continued from page 1*

Multitech in Anaheim on either June 21, 23 or 23. That training session runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST.

Students are required to attend all five virtual meetings prior to attending the in-person training in Anaheim.

Topics to be covered will include: removing ink, grease and other stains; using bleaches without damaging the fabric color; using specialty products such as digesters; and identifying various fabric constructions.

The cost to attend is \$645 for DLI members and \$845 for non-members. Space is limited to a maximum of 24 slots so

registering early is recommended.

### DLI Programs in May

Other upcoming offerings on the association's schedule include a virtual education session on May 17 that will explore the topic "How to Maximize Customers with Pay-Per-Click and Google Ads."

It will be presented by Cohen Wills of Cleaner Marketing and it will take place at 1 p.m. EST via Zoom.

Also on May 17, DLI will host its Marketing Lab Peer-to-Peer meeting at 3 p.m. EST. The monthly meeting gives members a chance to discuss marketing strategies and tac-

tics. Those who can't make the events live can access the presentations once they become available in the members' Archive section.

Additionally, DLI will continue to host its weekly Peer-to-Peer Zoom meetings every Tuesday at 11:30 a.m. EST throughout the month of May.

### Summer Course Schedule

The next installments of DLI's signature Introductory to Drycleaning and Advanced Drycleaning courses are set to take place from July 17 to 21 and July 24 to Aug. 4, respectively.

The one-week Introductory to Drycleaning class is geared toward those with less than

one year of production experience.

It covers a wide variety of topics, including: sorting loads for drycleaning, cleaning silk, satin and other fabrics; operating a drycleaning machine; removing coffee, ink, grease and other stains from clothing; pressing pants, coats and skirts; and using tensioning equipment to improve finishing quality.

The Advanced class is for graduated of the first, or who already have hands-on production experience. More advanced topics are covered, such as: identifying cotton, silk, polyester and other fabrics; using bleaches without damaging color; pressing blouses, dresses, ties, pleated garments, silks, velvets and corduroy; wetcleaning wool, silk and more; maintaining and changing filters; customer service techniques; pressing laundered shirts, designing a drycleaning plant with the most efficient work flow; understanding the differences between drycleaning solvents, including perc, GreenEarth, hydrocarbon and Solvon K4; cleaning and preserving wedding gowns and more.

Tuition for the Introductory course is \$1,195 for Budget or International members; \$956 for Standard members; and \$717 for Gold members. The cost for non-members is \$1,595.

Tuition for the Advanced course is \$1,695 for Budget and International members; \$1,356 for Standard members; and \$1,017 for Gold members.

The cost for non-members is \$2,195.

Those who opt to take both the Introductory and Advanced courses concurrently can pay a reduced tuition of \$1,995 for Budget and International members; \$1,596 for Standard members; and \$1,197 for Gold members.

The non-member price for both is \$2,895.

In addition to DLI's summer offerings of its signature courses, the association will offer both once more in the Fall.

The Introductory course will meet from Oct. 16 to 20 and the Advanced course will meet from Oct. 23 to Nov. 3.

For more information on any of DLI's upcoming events or to register, visit them online at [DLIonline.org](http://DLIonline.org).

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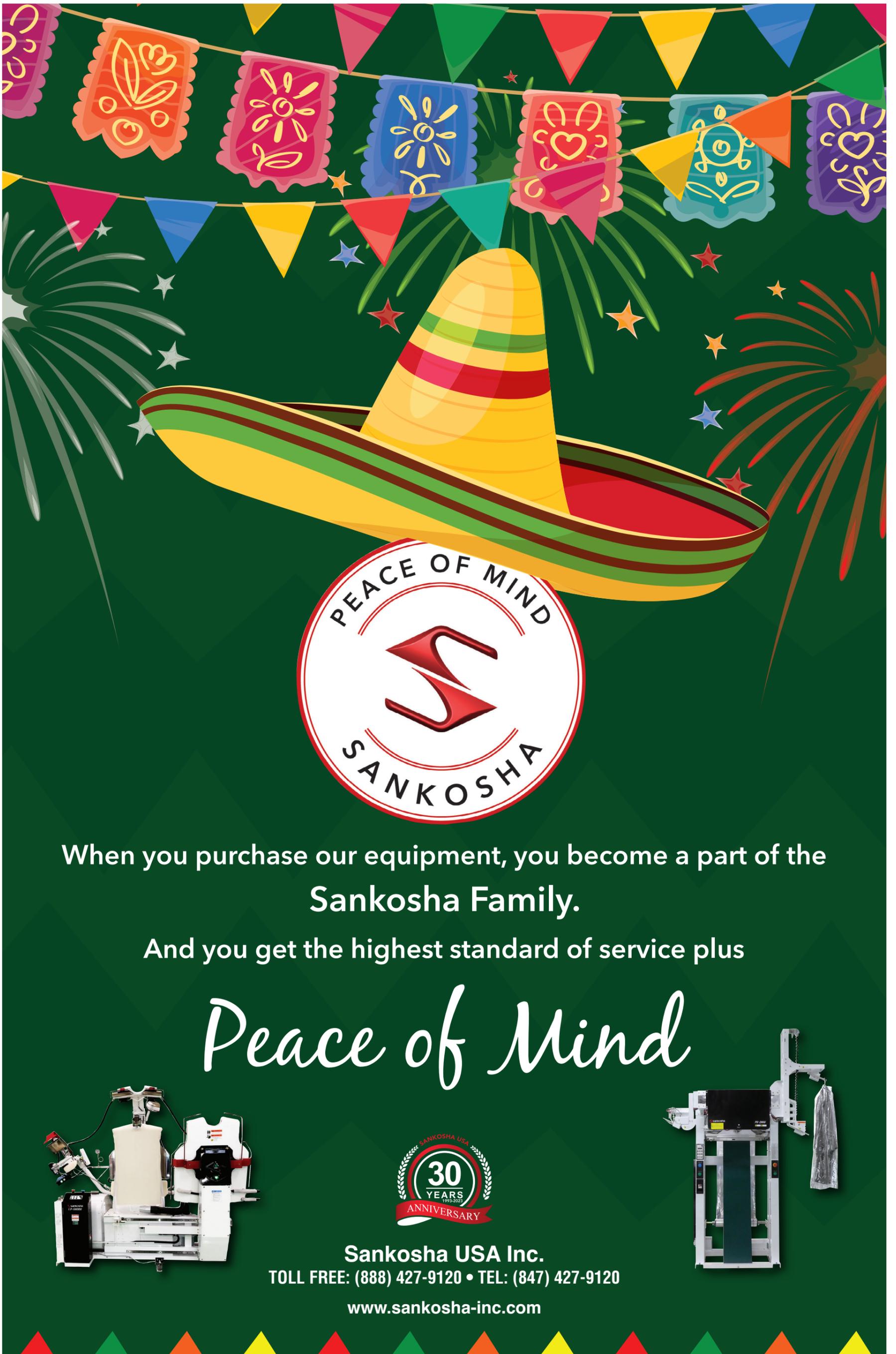
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During a recent trip to the Washington DC, area, Forenta CEO Rusty Smith (far right) stopped by DLI headquarters to donate new equipment for the association to use. Pictured with Smith are Jon Meijer, DLI's director of membership (left) and CEO Mary Scalco.



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# THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

## Methods for effective bath bleaching

In order to do bath bleaching effectively you should know what it can do and what it can not do. You should know the fabric you are bleaching and use of correct concentration, heat and time for bleaching.

### Facts about bleaching

Bleaching entails the use of oxygen to change or make the molecules of staining or yellowing colorless. The two major types of bleaching are oxidizing and reducing.

Oxidizing bleaches put oxygen into a fabric or stain and make it colorless. Reducing bleaches are completely opposite since they remove oxygen from a stain and also make it colorless.

Oxidizing bleaches work primarily on whitening fabrics and removing last traces of tannin, protein and dye. Reducing bleaches work primarily on dye but also have characteristics of whitening fabrics and removing other staining. Bleaches are not effective on soil, dirt and dry-side stains.

### Rules of bleaching

- 1) Metal accelerates

bleaching. Always bleach in a non-metallic basin or pail.

2) Every 18 degrees rise in temperature doubles the chemical action. Use water temperatures at 100°F.

3) Oxidizing and reducing bleaches are chemically opposite. Never put both in the same bath.

4) If a color change occurs with an oxidizing bleach, rinse and use a reducing bleach. The same process should be done if a reducing bleach causes a color change.

5) Test safety of bleach before immersing garment in bleach bath. Also test effectiveness of bleach on fabric and stain.

6) Always add a lubricant when bleaching for better penetration of bleach.

7) Rinse and neutralize bleaches when necessary.

### Hydrogen Peroxide

Hydrogen peroxide is characterized by a chemical formula that releases free oxygen. It is near to neutral and does not have to be neutralized. It is the safest bleach to use when bleaching off color wools, silks and

color-sensitive fabrics. It can whiten fabrics and remove last traces of tannin and protein. For bath bleaching, use a 14% concentration or a pre-mix sold by some manufacturers.

### Bath method

1) Add two ounces of peroxide per gallon of water and one ounce of lubricant per gallon of water.

2) Water temperature - 100°F.

3) Soak for a half hour.

4) Rinse.

### Sodium perborate and sodium percarbonate

These two oxidizing bleaches are similar in nature and both are alkaline based. Drycleaners have found that sodium percarbonate is a little more effective and provides better results. Sodium percarbonate also dissolves easier in cooler water. These bleaches are long-term bleaches and garments can be soaked overnight. It is effective for whitening fabrics and last traces of staining.

### Bath Method

- 1) It may be necessary to

use hot water to dissolve the bleach but bleaching temperature when soaking should be 100°F.

2) Use two ounces of bleach per gallon of water.

3) One ounce of neutral lubricant per gallon of water.

4) The soaking time is gauged according to fabric and staining.

5) Soak overnight to whiten fabric.

6) Rinse after bleaching.

7) Make up a sour bath of one ounce of acetic acid or oxalic acid per gallon of water. Soak for 10 minutes and rinse. Use the lubricant in the sour bath to ensure better penetration and mixing.

### Sodium Hypochlorite

A strong oxidizing bleach that is alkaline by nature, it cannot be used on wool and silk. Household bleach comes in concentration of 5.25%. When using we dilute the 5.25% to 1%. It is an effective bleach for removing mildew, many stains and whitening fabrics such as cotton, linen and rayon.

### Bath Method

1) Use one ounce per gallon of 1% in warm water.

2) Add a neutral lubricant.

3) Rinse.

4) Use an acid bath (oxalic or acetic). Use one ounce per gallon of water with a neutral lubricant.

5) Rinse.

The acid bath is used to accelerate the bleach so it is removed from the fabric.

### Potassium Permanganate

It is a strong oxidizing bleach, comes in purple crystals or sold in liquid form by some manufacturers. It has a use for removing mildew, whitening fabrics and removing last traces of difficult protein, tannin, ink and dye.

It may leave a brown discoloration that can be removed by hydrogen peroxide and some reducing bleaches.

### Bath Method

1) Add bleach according to manufacturer's instructions.

2) Add a synthetic detergent.

3) Soak five minutes.

4) Rinse.

5) Remove last traces by making up a bath of peroxide and acetic with a little detergent.

6) Rinse again.

### Reducing Bleaches

These bleaches remove oxygen from fabrics and stains. They are very effective for dye stains and sometimes whitening fabrics. All reducing bleaches are acid by nature.

### Sodium Bisulphite

It is a very mild reducing bleach and sometimes can be used on fabrics with color.

### Bath Method

1) One to two ounces of bleach per gallon of warm water (100°F).

2) Add a synthetic detergent.

3) Soak 15 minutes.

4) Rinse thoroughly.

### Sodium Hydrosulphite

It comes in powder form and sold by various manufacturers. It removes dye and whitens fabrics. It is also an anti-chlor which restores yellowing caused by chlorine bleach. It has a strong pungent odor.

### Bath Method

1) Use one to two ounces per gallon of warm water.

2) Add two ounces of synthetic detergent per gallon of water.

3) Soak 10 to 15 minutes.

4) Rinse thoroughly.

### Titanium Sulfate Stripper

It is purchased as a purple liquid. It removes dye stains when other strippers do not. It does not whiten fabrics. It reacts with other chemicals to form discoloration. The discoloration can be removed with rust remover.

### Bath Method

1) Add titanium according to manufacturer's directions or judge concentration by intensity of color.

2) Add a synthetic detergent.

3) Soak a short time, depending upon color of fabric and stain. A colored fabric may only need a few seconds in a diluted solution.

4) Rinse in warm water.

Some manufacturers may recommend adding a little rust remover to the bleach solution to lighten the color of the bleach and intensify the strength of the bleach solution. Thorough rinsing is very important for this mixture.

**Dan Eisen, former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association, can be reached at (772) 579-5044, or by e-mail at cleandan@comcast.net or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.**

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# SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

## Maximizing production with a single buck unit

**T**here is a rhythm to running a single buck shirt unit that seems to have gotten lost in the soup somehow.

Most pressers do something that is close, but not close enough to make for good productivity.

You may have heard statements suggesting fast pressing breeds poor quality. Not knowing how to run your single buck shirt unit is the root of beliefs such as

these.

A certain method of running the equipment will yield a particular productivity rate.

That rate is randomized by the abilities of individual employees. But, a fast presser won't give you 50-60 per hour if their method is wrong.

Fix their method, and you will improve productivity, perhaps dramatically.

If your presser is produc-

ing 25-30 shirts per hour, there is more wrong there than method.

If you train them to press with a more efficient method, you may get a 20% to 30% increase in productivity, but that is nowhere near good enough.

Something else is wrong — perhaps a bad attitude, slow metabolism or carelessness. I am not going to be able to help you with this.

Still, getting pressers to do things the right way can only be a good thing. It is an

I remember meeting a presser in Illinois five to six years ago who had a great

**A certain method of running the equipment will yield a particular productivity rate. That rate is randomized by the abilities of individual employees.**

important first move that can't be sidestepped.

attitude, but had no idea how to run the single buck shirt unit assigned to her. It was actually a double-buck unit, but with one operator.

She was (pardon the metaphor) like a fly on garbage. She landed on one machine and it was anybody's guess which direction she would be off on next.

After, for example, lowering the press head on the collar and cuff machine, she was liable to move to the sleeve press next, or the body press, or the collar cone. Who knew? It was painful to watch... and she worked way too hard.

I spent 30 minutes with her and she soon said that she was having the best day that she ever had at work. The reason is simple: She didn't need to think.

I don't want employees to think. I hope that doesn't sound gross. It isn't meant to be disrespectful. I am paid to think. Managers are paid to think. Employees are paid to do. Again, no disrespect intended.

Henry Ford said: "Thinking is the hardest job of all." It's true, you know. If a presser constantly thinks, "What next?" that person's job becomes stressful. Remove that, and they become a "pressing machine."

For this script, we will use as an example: a conventional, three-piece, single buck unit.

The first thing to understand about a single buck shirt unit is that there are seven steps; seven stations on the track.

Each shirt moving through the pressing unit moves through it, one "station" at a time.

The stations are: the damp box, the sleeve press, the collar and cuff press, the hook, the body press buck,

*Continued on page 16*

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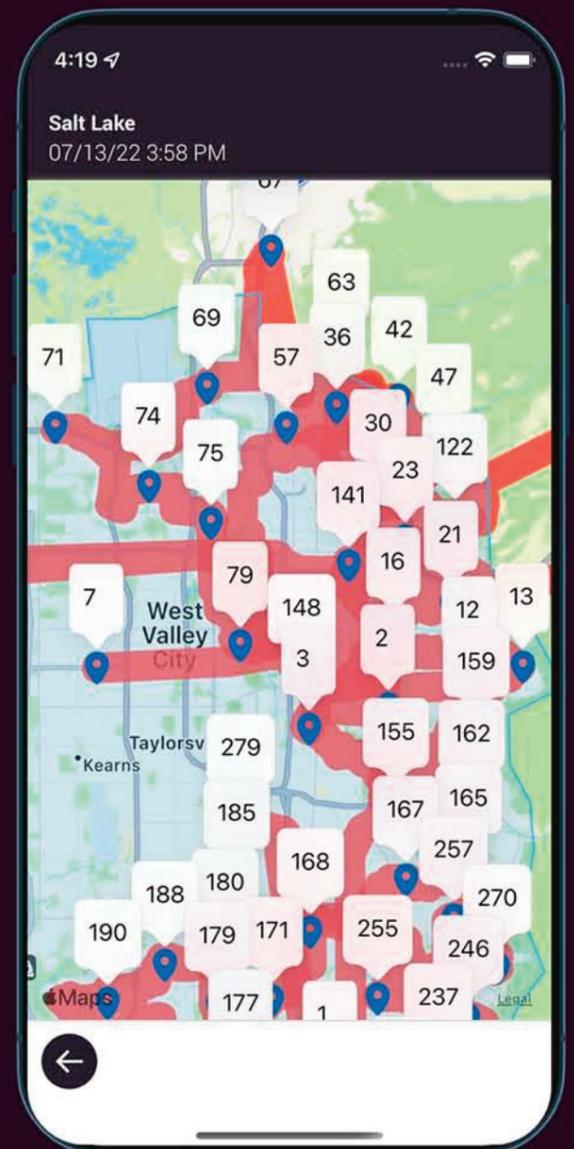
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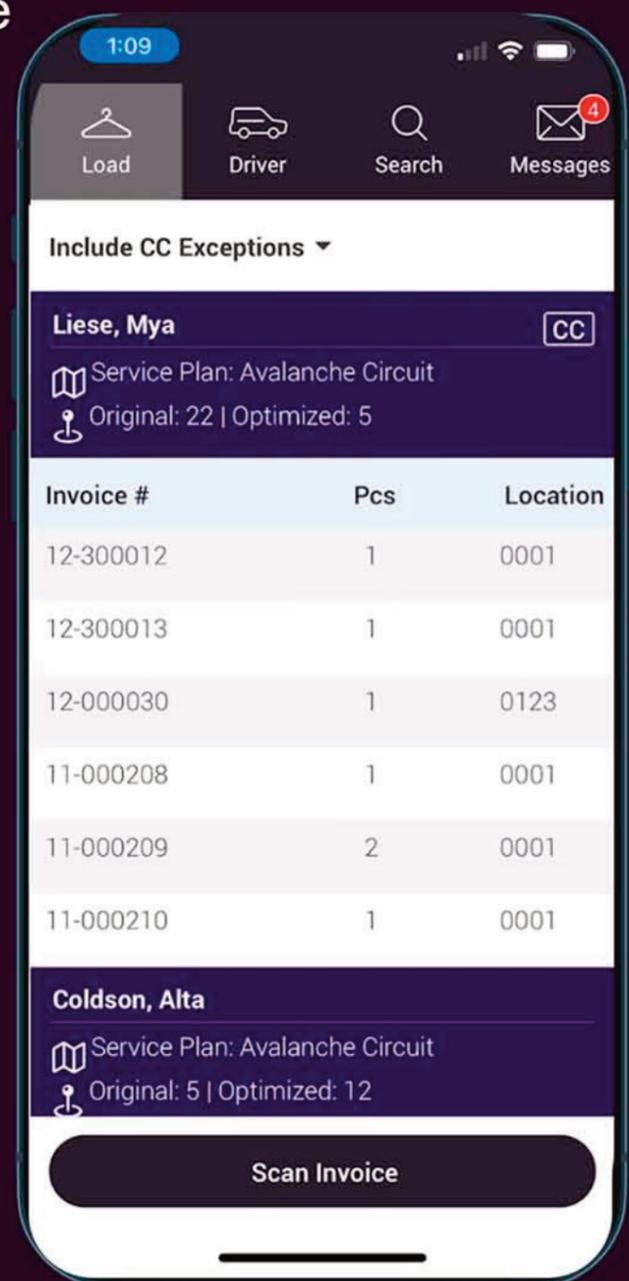
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## Don Desrosiers

# Maximizing production with a single buck unit

*Continued from page 12*

the collar cone and finally, whatever sort of conveyance is used after the collar cone. This could be a screw conveyor or a slick rail or whatever. We'll simply call this the "rail."

Remember, it may be that the "rail" is actually a dispatch conveyor at your shop. We will get to how to begin the entire cycle, but for now, let's visualize one singular shirt, pending at each station.

**1) The Damp Box.** You have a damp box stocked with shirts that await pressing.

**2) The Sleeve Press** — a shirt on this press. The sleeves have been pressed and are awaiting transfer to the next station.

**3) The Triple Head Press.** On this machine is a shirt that has pressed sleeves and now, a pressed collar and cuffs. The head has released.

**4) The Hook.** This is the hook on the side of the body press cabinet. A shirt that has a pressed collar, cuffs and sleeve hangs here awaiting the final step.

If you are concerned about shirts drying out here, it's probably because you've seen it happen.

If shirts dry out here, it is

either because productivity is too slow and, as a direct result, the shirt hung here too long, or because shirts are being "stockpiled" or one shirt has, for one reason or another, lingered at the bottom for far too long.

nents, the ones with good production use the hook for the purpose that it was intended and those that get poor production don't use the hook at all — and they theorize that the hook will slow them down (still more)

discussing the hook that some of you may have removed or not even knew existed because when you finish reading this and head out to your shirt laundry, this is the fault that you are most likely to find.

Each shirt moves up one "notch" to the next station. It's simple really. Often, though, this happens by accident, not by force. It takes an effort to make this happen. In order to establish this rhythm, you must begin like this:

1. Load the sleever and wait. That's easy. There isn't anything else to do at the moment.

2. When the sleever's cycle ends, unload the sleever and load that shirt on the collar machine.

3. Reload the sleever. There will be a wait until the shirt on the collar machine's cycle finishes.

4. When the collar machine releases, that shirt must be placed on the hook. That is the next station on the track.

Here is where most pressers "jump the track." They immediately dress the body buck. This is wrong.

5. Remove the shirt from the sleever and load the collar machine.

6. Now, reload the sleever. 7. Dress the body buck with the shirt that was just placed on the hook.

8. Unload the collar and cuff press.

9. Load the hook.

10. Unload the sleever.

11. Load the collar and cuff press.

12. Load the sleever with a shirt from the damp box.

13. You're almost there. Load the collar cone.

14. Now you have a shirt on every station (except the rail).

With a shirt on each station, the presser can begin the rhythm described earlier. Rhythm is the key to good productivity.

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

**Of all the plants that I have ever visited in seven countries and three continents, the ones with good production use the hook for the purpose that it was intended and those that get poor production don't use the hook at all — and they theorize that the hook will slow them down (still more).**

Lingering shirts on this hook leads to terrible productivity because it brings about the need for spraying, which drastically cuts productivity.

This hook is not for hand bags, employee clothing or ornamentation. This is the most often overlooked step in the process, but for some reason that I can not really put into words, much less type into a keyboard, *it is the most likely cause of reduced production.*

Of all of the plants that I have ever visited in seven countries and three conti-

— all the while they struggle just to achieve marginally below average productivity.

In fact, fast pressing productivity is only one roadblock away; their own stubbornness. My best guess as to why it makes a difference is the saving of ½ to 2 ½ steps combined with the reduction in twisting of the torso, which breeds fatigue and therefore lower productivity.

I can't do much better than that other than to say, "Believe me, it makes a difference!"

I spend a bit of time here,

Further, you will get an argument about it from the presser. Hold your ground. It's just a new habit that needs breaking in. You will get better productivity and the presser will ache a lot less at the end of the day.

**5) The Body Buck.** Here a shirt awaits removal now that it has gone through its last pressing operation.

**6) The Collar Cone.** The fact that your collar cone probably isn't being used correctly is a subject for another day. We'll assume that it is.

A completely pressed shirt hangs on the cone awaiting delivery to inspection now that all of the pressing and curing processes are complete.

**7) The Rail.** There may or may not be a shirt here, as a conveyor will, of course, move a shirt away from here, but the rail itself is an important cog in the wheel.

OK. So, there you have it. One shirt at each station. This is what you need to start this smooth rhythm that is good pressing productivity.

To help explain this smooth rhythm, I will describe the processes at each station as simply "load sleever" and "unload sleever" rather than repeatedly describing each step.

1. Unload the collar cone.
2. Load the rail.
3. Unload the body press.
4. Load the collar cone.
5. Unload the hook.
6. Load the body press.
7. Unload the collar and cuff press.
8. Load the hook.
9. Unload the sleever.
10. Load the collar and cuff press.
11. Load the sleever with a shirt from the damp box.
12. Restart the process by unloading the collar cone.

**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. The Tailwind web site is at www.tailwindsystems.com.**



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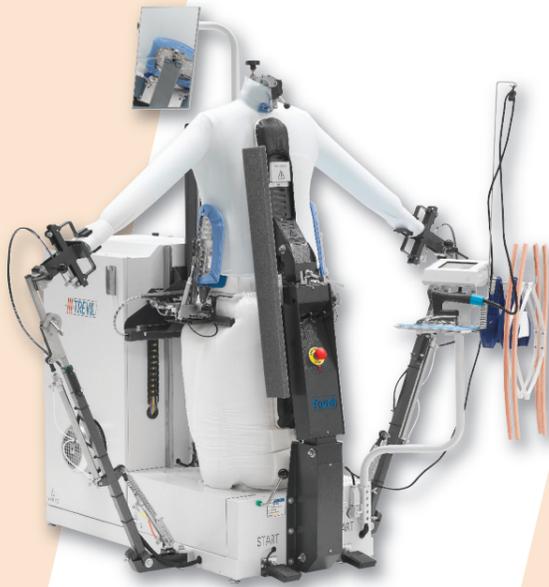


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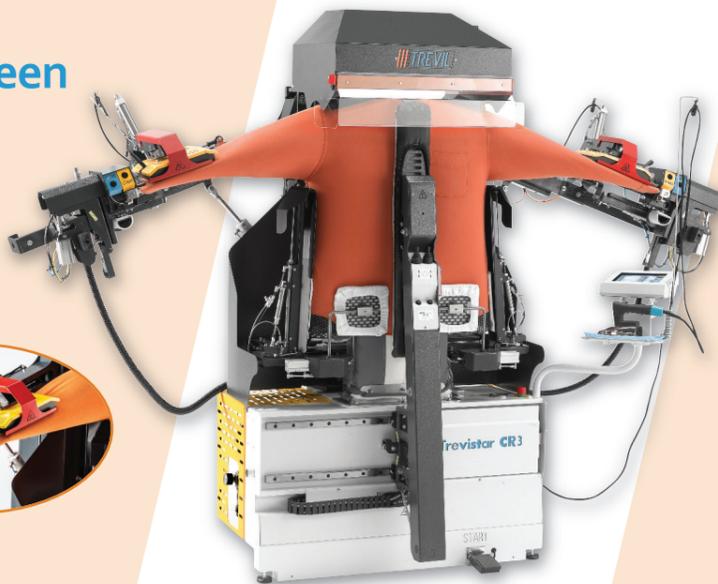
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# WRENCH WORKS



BY BRUCE GROSSMAN

## How to replace your boiler sight glass

One of the most common repairs required on boilers is the replacement of the water column sight glass. This is an easy repair that *must be done with the boiler cold*.

When changing the sight glass, be sure to use new parts and a length of glass that exactly matches the specifications for the water column on your boiler. I recommend a heavy-walled, red-striped Borosilicate 3.3 Industrial Grade glass as pictured in the accompanying illustration. Not only is this type of heavy-walled glass safer, but it will also significantly outlast the thinner-walled types.

Then, spray the compression nuts and the upper and lower sight glass fixture valves generously with Blaster or Liquid Wrench penetrant. Allow 15 to 20 minutes for the penetrant to work.

2) Remove any protective rods surrounding the sight glass, then unscrew the sight glass compression nuts and slide them towards the center of the sight glass. When the compression nuts are clear of the fixtures, push the sight glass upward until the lower end of the sight glass clears the lower fixture, tilt the sight glass outward, and slide it down; when it clears the upper fix-

**When changing the sight glass, be sure to use new parts and a length of glass that exactly matches the specifications for the water column on your boiler.**

You will require two gaskets, two washers and two compression nuts. Here's the procedure to replace the sight glass:

1) The night before the scheduled repair, blow the boiler down completely. Always wear gloves as well as face and eye protection when repairing anything on a boiler. The following day, be sure the blow-down valves are open and there is no pressure in the boiler.

ture, remove it.

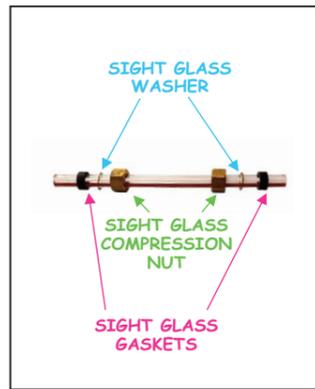
3) Examine the upper and lower sight glass fixtures and be sure old gaskets aren't stuck to them. Clean any scale or debris from the threads on the fixtures. Check to be sure there aren't any glass chips or debris in the lower sight glass fixture.

4) Assemble the sight glass components as shown in the illustration. Tilt the sight glass and slide the assembled sight glass into the upper fix-

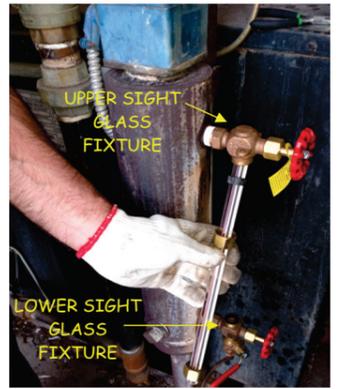
### REPLACING A SIGHT GLASS



When choosing a sight glass select one that is thick walled with a red line like the one on the left.



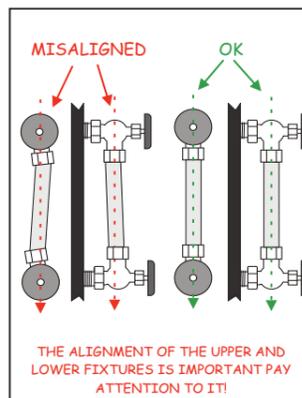
Assemble the sealing components on the sight glass as shown.



Insert the sight glass assembly into the upper fixture then slide it down into the lower fixture until it bottoms.

#### DANGER!

**DO NOT ATTEMPT TO WORK ON THE SIGHT GLASS OR ANY OTHER PART OF A BOILER IF IT'S HOT OR PRESSURIZED**



Tighten the compression nut a bit more than finger tight and eyeball the vertical alignments as shown. If the fixtures are off in alignment the sight glass will leak. After the alignment is OK then tighten the compression nuts until they are very tight.

ture. Then, align the sight glass over the hole in the lower fixture and allow it to slide down until it stops. Provided the sight glass is the proper length, there will be enough area on both ends to allow the sight glass gaskets to seal properly.

5) Tighten the sight glass compression nuts a bit more than finger-tight and visually check the alignment of

the fixtures relative to the sight glass, as shown in the accompanying illustration. If the fixtures are more than slightly off, the sight glass may leak.

6) If you are installing a red line sight glass, be sure to rotate the glass so the level will be visible to an observer. Position the glass, and, while holding it, alternately tighten first the top

and then the bottom compression nut. It's difficult to describe how tight to torque them down, but almost very tight is my best explanation. Although we don't recommend it, they can easily be tightened further after the boiler has a head of steam (see step #7). Otherwise, further tighten the compression nuts when no boiler pressure is present.

7) Turn on the boiler. When it comes up to pressure, check for leaks. If there are leaks, cautiously tighten the compression nut about a quarter turn at a time until the leak stops. This must be done cautiously while wearing gloves, as well as face and eye protection. Be sure you have a clear exit path from the boiler room. When satisfied, replace the guard rods.

Bruce Grossman is the Chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing. EZtimers manufactures machines that make your machines run better. For those needing to replace Zero-Waste or Galaxy misters, see our SAHARA 2 model. For those with boiler problems, check out our EZ-Level and EZ-Dose machines. For more information on EZtimers products, visit [www.eztimers.com](http://www.eztimers.com). Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to [bruce@eztimers.com](mailto:bruce@eztimers.com) or call (702) 376-6693.

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# Amping up wash-dry-fold for more revenue



By Stucky Szczotka

Progressive operators are cashing in on one of the hottest growing revenue streams in textile care: residential wash-dry-fold (WDF).

The key to growing this sector and boosting revenue is to go beyond over-the-counter WDF sales to also establish pickup and delivery routes.

The first goal is to convert existing over-the-counter sales to pickup and delivery. Then, expand to new customers.

Finally, with the right equipment, pursue residential flatwork and commercial accounts for maximized revenue.

## Route software

Before initiating a residential route, do your homework. In-

vest in a route software program or website that allows online ordering and facilitates easy route management, tracking, reporting and payment processing.

There are several good options on the market. For operators already running drycleaning routes, it's simple to expand services to include WDF and flatwork.

Some operators have established stops from which they don't vary, regardless of whether there is a pickup or not; others do on-demand only when the customer requests service. Both solutions work, but on-demand is more cost effective because it conserves operating costs like labor, gasoline, time, etc.

## Pricing

When it comes to pricing, several options, or some combination of options, work well, including cost-per-pound, subscription and by-the-bag. The problem with traditional cost-per-pound is that sometimes customers don't have a clue what they are spending until after delivery. Thus, they might

shy away from using your service.

Another way of pricing is by subscription where a customer is committed to a specific amount (dollar, bag or poundage) every week or month. Their credit card is automatically charged for that set amount whether anything is picked up and processed or not.

Finally, there's *by-the-bag*. I know an operator – Sheldon Cleaners in Kentwood, MI – who is extremely successful charging by-the-bag. Most customers enjoy knowing upfront what they are spending. Sheldon Cleaners offers three different sized laundry bags at \$25, \$35 and \$50 per bag, with some households asking for multiple bags.

## Equipment needs

Before launching a route, it's smart to consider your goals and the types of services you'll offer because each step to higher service requires different machinery. Check out my recommendations:

### Step One: Residential Route WDF Only.

Step One is to serve route WDF residential customers only. In this scenario, you're washing mostly clothing, towels, blankets and sheets, which can all be processed in a standard commercial washer and dryer with basic programming.

The problem many drycleaners run into is that they only have one washer and dryer for processing all laundry. Oftentimes it's necessary to add to that lineup with larger capacities or multiple pockets for processing more laundry pounds.

The 35-pound capacity commercial machines work well for this level of service. Your equipment distributor is a great resource for assisting you with appropriate machine sizing.

### Step Two: Residential Route WDF and Flatwork.

Step Two is to serve route WDF customers and iron their flatwork sheets, duvets and tablecloths at a

premium price. To do this, you can hand iron or use a hot-head press at huge labor costs.

The other option is to invest in a flatwork ironer that also has folding capability. [See Stucky's column in our August 2022 issue available in our website's archives.]

## I know several operators who have successfully created multiple revenue streams using these techniques.

If you plan to expand into commercial work for catering companies, small hotels, spas or vacation rentals, an ironer is also essential. So, think ahead. The good news is some only require a 200-square-foot space for installation and operation.

Royalty Cleaners, in Royal Oak, MI, invested in a 125-inch ironer because it took them 5 to 15 minutes to iron one sheet using a hot-head press. Now, it takes 20 seconds.

The ironer paid for itself in a year and launched the residential flatwork side of their business to make up 20 percent of total revenue. Now that is their most profitable business segment.

### Step Three: Commercial Work.

Step Three is to serve commercial accounts, including spas, vacation rentals, small hotels, moving companies and catering companies.

To do this well and to properly remove oils and stains, a highly programmable commercial washer and flatwork ironer *are a must*. The washer should offer larger capacities, higher water temperature options, automatic chemical injection and variable rinses, baths, soaks, water levels, mechanical action and extract speeds.

There are also machines on the market with 10-inch touchscreens and corner indicator lights that illuminate in different colors depending on the status of the load. When selecting a flatwork ironer, be sure it irons sheets, duvets and table linens directly from the washer while still damp.

It should dry, iron and partially fold goods in one automated step. This improves production, saves labor time and helps eliminate dryer bottlenecks.

Step Three also demands a commercial, programmable dryer with moisture sensing to

prevent over-drying. Once again, your equipment distributor can assist with sizing and options.

### Step Four: Commercial Work using Wet Cleaning.

Finally, if you want to simultaneously alleviate the burden on your drycleaning machine(s) and process commercial work, consider purchasing a wetcleaning machine, rather than a commercial washer. Then add a flatwork ironer as described previously.

A good wetcleaning machine offers sophisticated programmability and can clean "dryclean only" garments using water while also processing residential and commercial laundry.

New technology dryers are also key. They give you the ability to remove moisture quickly and reduce tumbling by controlling g-force and drum action.

Some can hit high drum temperatures extremely quickly in order to evaporate moisture without as much tumbling, and offer programmable moisture sensing that ensures items dry to correct moisture levels.

Look for dryers with phased control over the drying process.

Each phase should allow programmability of drum rotation speed, drum rotation interval, moisture level, timed reversing, input air temperature, drying temperature, heating temperature, drying time and time limit.

The goal for "dryclean only" items is to wet clean them, dry them to a set moisture setting of about 10 percent, and finish them as normal.

## Build your own success

With the right tools and equipment, the sky's the limit. I know several operators who've successfully created multiple revenue streams using the techniques described in this article, including Peerless Cleaners in Fort Wayne, IN; Huntington Cleaners in Huntington Woods, MI; and Perfect Cleaners in Detroit, MI.

Today, these operators not only enjoy amped revenue, they capitalize on business from an array of accounts, including military bases, casinos and medical offices.

Questions? Please contact me anytime at [stucky@eaglestarequipment.com](mailto:stucky@eaglestarequipment.com).

**Michael "Stucky" Szczotka, owner of Eagle Star Equipment in Troy, MI, is a textile care, drycleaning and wetcleaning expert with more than 45 years of hands-on industry operations experience. He is a frequent contributor to industry journals and associations.**

## Steps for Amping Up Your Wash/Dry/Fold Business

1

Step One: Residential Wash/Dry/Fold  
35-Pound Capacity Commercial Washer & Dryer



2

Step Two: Residential Ironing  
Add a Flatwork Ironer



3

Step Three: Commercial Accounts  
Programmable Commercial Washer, Dryer & Flatwork Ironer



4

Step Four: Alleviate Burden on Dry Cleaning Machines  
Wet Cleaning Machine, New Technology Dryer & Flatwork Ironer



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# BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

## Using customer financing to fund growth

**H**ow many times have you heard that *Cash is King*? The past three years have proved it over and over. Many of you may still be sitting on PPP, ERTC or EIDL money from Covid programs. Great. Just remember that the EIDL money is a loan and not forgiven and that ERTC money is taxable. Your CPA will help you with that. If you are not sitting on cash currently, then the following is for you.

When it comes to financing the growth of your business or staying alive, you may face a choice between the lesser of two evils. Selling shares in your business can provide an immediate cash injection, but it means giving up some of your valuable equity stake. If you ever had a partner in your business, lots of things change and not always for the better.

Borrowing from a bank can be costly to repay, limit your growth, and nearly always requires that you provide a personal guarantee.

Then, there is customer financing, which involves convincing customers to prepay for some or all of your products or services, providing you with working capital to drive growth. This can be a great alternative to selling equity or taking on bank debt and gives you access to cash without sacrificing ownership or paying interest.

In 2015, Brad Lorge founded Premonition, a technology company that provides logistics software to streamline delivery operations for large enterprise companies. While working with big businesses brought in good revenue, large enterprise customers were slow to make purchasing decisions. When they did decide to buy, getting them up and running was slow and costly. If an implementation failed, Premonition risked losing months of work for nothing.

Rather than the traditional approach of financing Lorge asked customers to prepay, which allowed Premonition

to fund its growth. By March of 2022, they had grown to \$3 million in Annual Contract Value (ACV) when Shippit acquired it for \$20.5 million—an implied valuation of just under seven times ACV. Because they used customer financing, Lorge and his partners still owned 80% of the equity in the company when they sold it.

If you're considering getting your customers to prepay, like Lorge, start by understanding their needs and motivations. Consider what is in it for your customer. Could you guarantee delivery times in return for a service deposit? Could you offer incentives or discounts that make sense for you and your customers?

### Productize Your Service

If you offer a service, consider productizing it. A productized service is a type that has been standardized and packaged as a product with a defined scope, price, and deliverables. It's essentially a pre-defined service that is

delivered repeatedly to multiple clients with a fixed set of deliverables, processes, and pricing. Examples include Wash-Dry-Fold and household subscriptions, pre-paid gift cards with an incentive of discount and 100% pre-paid bridal preservations. Recently, many have gotten into patio cushion cleaning. Paid when cleaned, before delivery. Be creative.

The goal of productizing a service is to simplify the sales process, increase efficiency, and provide a predictable customer experience. By creating a standardized offering, dry-cleaning operations can reduce the amount of time and effort required to close a sale, as well as minimize the need for customization, which can be time-consuming and expensive.

When it comes to products, we are accustomed to paying in advance (e.g., you pay for that cereal at the store before you dig in). Therefore, if you package

your service offering into a product, your customers will be more inclined to pay up front for some or all your offering. Productizing your services or asking customers to pre-pay can be effective ways to obtain the cash your business needs to grow while keeping a tight grip on your equity and avoiding the obligations of a hefty bank loan. Until next time, continue building value.

Kermit Engh has been an owner/operator in the drycleaning industry for over 30 years and has been a Methods for Management member for over 27 years. His positions as managing partner of MfM and as a Certified Value Builders Coach allow him to share his extensive background in strategic planning, finance, process improvement, packaging and branding, employee training programs, profitability, cost analysis, acquisition analysis and succession planning. To find out more about how Kermit can help you maximize the value of your business, contact him at [kengh@mfmi.com](mailto:kengh@mfmi.com).

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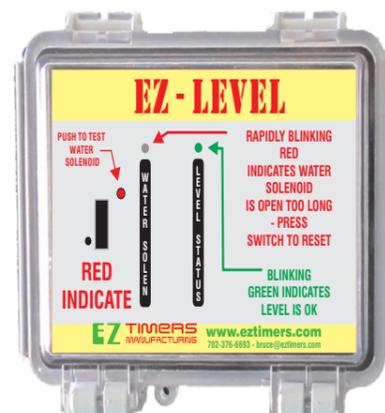
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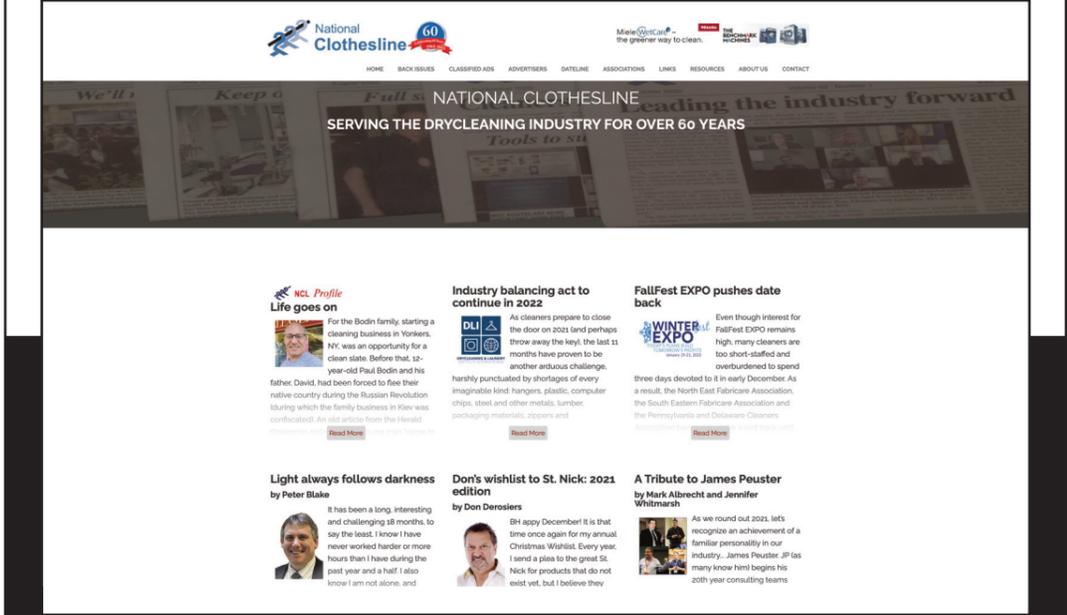
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