



National

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An emerging emphasis on education



During a June program offered by NEFA and PDCA, Jane Zellers (wearing the lab coat in the picture above) of JCZ Training and Consulting was joined by Bob Edwards of A.L. Wilson for “The Art of Stain Removal and Customer Communication” at the Wedding Gown Preservation Co. in Endicott, NY.

While knowledge and skill have always played a big role in the success of the drycleaning industry, there seems to be an emerging trend of a greater emphasis on education in the wake of the pandemic.

Of course, the industry has always emphasized education —proper cleaning and stain removal require plenty of science, after all. But, after live learning events took a hiatus during lockdowns for much of 2020 and 2021, the industry has since responded with an insatiable appetite for all kinds of new knowledge in live social settings.

Certainly, the virtual shows and seminars offered by various industry associations and groups helped fill the void in their absence; however, the post-pandemic live offerings have since exploded as if a kinked hose had been quickly let loose.

Major industry schooling

institutions like the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) and the National Cleaners Association (NCA) have returned to full curriculum offerings, both in person and with new online offerings.

In fact, DLI began hosting “blended” classes for the first time — taken via zoom and in-person together — and more recently, the association hosted sessions of its Stain Removal class in Anaheim, CA, another first for the association. They will still host one more installment of their signature Introductory and Advanced Dry Cleaning courses this year at its school in Laurel, MD, beginning next month. Visit dlionline.org for more information.

Meanwhile, NCA will be hosting its own first — Virtual TexCare 2023, set to take place on Nov. 4 and 5. For information, visit nca-i.com or call

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Drycleaners hope for a Hollywood ending

For some drycleaners who typically rely on garments from local television and movie productions, it has been a harsh few months since the Writers Guild of America strike began in early May.

They were later joined by SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists), grinding Hollywood

to a veritable halt.

Film and television productions, publicity appearances, awards shows and even office work are all on hiatus for an indeterminate time. For some local businesses that rely on those buildings being full of working people, it has been a shaky summer.

While southern California has been hit the hardest, the

strikes have also had huge negative impacts on other production hubs for television and movies such as Georgia and New York.

According to news website *Axios*, such productions spent a total of \$4.4 billion in Georgia during the 2022 fiscal year, and the film and television industry comprises 6.5% of New York City’s GDP.

At the 100-day mark since the writers first began the strike, it was estimated that the dual strikes had already had a \$3 billion impact on California’s economy.

Robert Schapiro, manager of Milt & Edie’s Dry Cleaners of Burbank, CA, told *The Guardian*: “Business is down 20% because of the hit we’ve taken to our studio accounts.

What really sucks is that business was finally back to normal [after the pandemic]. We were finally hitting our pre-Covid numbers.”

Another Burbank cleaner facing a big dropoff is Toluca Lake Dry Cleaners. Manager Tom Malian believes the nearby studio buildings and offices (including Warner Bros.

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Making miracles in Michigan

During her junior year in high school, Tami Parks’ science fair exhibit focussed on man-made fibers and how to remove stains from them. Today, she is a full-on garment whisperer and fashion historian whose magic can restore any wedding dress back to new — even when the bride hiked all around Yellowstone Park in it. See the before and after photos of that dress on the right. For Tami’s story, go to page 6.



Sneak Peek Inside

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One question — if you don’t have the right answer — can quickly derail a plant sale: Why are you selling?
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Cleaners shouldn’t try to be “everything to everyone,” says John Rothrock. They should simplify their focus.
- 24 Cleaning classic clothing**
Vintage garments can be big business, but only if you know the proper cleaning methods they require.



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A cleaner's need for education never subsides

During a webinar earlier this year presented by the National Cleaners Association (NCA), Dr. Lorynn Divita discussed what the cleaning industry can expect from Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) as they enter the workforce. Dr. Divita is an associate professor of apparel design and merchandising at Baylor University, and has seen many Gen Z'ers in her classroom. "They tend to be connected, very pragmatic and driven by values," she said. "They absolutely have no time for things that do not serve them or lack utility, but what they see as being useful is not necessarily what we would."

One thing they tend to greatly value is their wardrobes. They dislike fast fashion and love to go thrifting for vintage garments. However, a poll conducted by OnePoll and Swash Laundry detergent last year found that 68% of Generation Z dread doing laundry and 41% believe it is easy to mess up their clothing during the cleaning process so they limit how often they wear their favorite outfits. Still, their buying preferences are a big part of the reason why the resale market for apparel, footwear and accessories has reached about \$120, according to Dr. Divita, and it is anticipated to grow considerably in the coming years.

That will inevitably lead to more work. It will also inevitably lead to more need for education. Not only do cleaners have to keep up with the latest in technological developments and fabrics these days, they must also learn about old fabrics and manufacturing methods from long ago, as well.

As mentioned on the front page story, there indeed seems to be a trend of greater emphasis on education for the cleaning industry. Certainly, there has never been a shortage of educational opportunities, but there seems to be a greater need for more of it in the wake of the pandemic. After all, the cleaning industry that emerged on this side of it does not really resemble the one that preceded it. It is a much leaner, more efficient industry, with much less room for error. So, with vintage fashion making a comeback, it is never a bad idea to take a refresher course on proper cleaning procedures for them.

This month, instructor Dan Eisen discusses how to properly clean several kinds of vintage garments based on which fabrics they are made of (including

imitation Persian lamb!?) and other complexities they may contain like beads and trimming. See page 24 for his column.

Unfortunately, these days, just having all the knowledge and cleaning skills is not enough. Plant owners and managers have to become better leaders. One way they can do that, according to columnist James Peuster, is to be willing to lead by example to build trust and inspire your team to work better. In a time when many drycleaners still struggle to find new employees, keeping your current ones become much more important. Read his column on page 8.

Even if your cleaning skills are solid and your staff is filled, it can still be difficult to navigate your way to profitability. As Don Desrosiers writes this month, "We have become an industry of survivors." With that comes a tendency to absorb costs in fear of raising our prices, but that will only hurt the value of your product in the long run. Find out how and why on page 10.

Raising prices is not the only adjustment cleaners can make to become more profitable; you can also limit your service offerings. As John Rothrock writes this month, trying to be everything to everyone makes it very difficult to control production efficiency. However, if cleaners are willing to simplify their services and focus on what they do best, it can prove to be a very successful and profitable strategy. See page 18 for more details.

The most profitable strategy in the world means very little, though, if your boiler isn't working. This month, Bruce Grossman continues his series on keeping your boiler going with a look at blow-down procedures and all the things you need to look for and do to make sure it runs uninterrupted. His column is on page 12.

Lastly, we would be remiss if we did not draw your attention to an Online Exclusive column this month on our website. Frank Kollman shares some of his solid labor law advice on making sure your business does not run afoul of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). You can do this by engaging in an interactive discussion with employees if they require a specific accommodation. To read his full column, visit www.nationalclothesline.com.

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

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A garment whisperer

Long before she owned Great Lakes Clothing Care & Wedding Gown Specialists in Holland, MI, Tami Parks grew up around laundromats and cleaning plants belonging to her grandfather and parents.

"I started working when I was 12 or 13 in the laundromat," she recalled. "The summer I was 14, I managed an entire laundromat all by myself, and then I slowly began to learn all the other parts of the business. I would do the assembly and I would press the shirts. My best friend came and worked with me. She and I would press shirts all morning. We'd run home to my parent's house at noon, jumped in the swimming pool because we were so hot, have a quick lunch, and then we'd run back to work and finish pressing shirts in the afternoon."

There were certainly worse ways to spend a summer for a young girl who was quite passionate about fashion.

"I've always loved clothes. My mom was also a seamstress, and so she would make me clothes," Tami said. "I loved to go to the fabric store and pick things out. I learned pretty quickly the difference between types of fibers and fabrics. My junior year of high school, I took Chemistry and my science fair project was on man-made fibers and how to remove stains from them."

In fact, she's still friends with the science teacher today. "I remind her frequently that she had a big part in my career choice," she laughed. "Now, I do that science project every day."

Tami watched her parents develop Lemon Fresh Cleaners into a much bigger and stronger brand.

"They started in the 1970s. They had a couple of laundromats," Tami recalled. "Then, my mom started really getting into professional drycleaning. She became quite excellent at spot removal and handling vintage items and wedding gowns. This was in the 1980s so there were all sorts of silks and dyes and things that didn't play nice. She took a lot of time researching and learning them and they really built up a great business."

Tami's mother retired for health reasons early this century, leaving nobody able to handle the intricate wedding gown preservation portion of the business. At the time, Tami was raising two children at home, so the business began sending the wedding gown work down to a specialist in Mississippi.

"Then, Hurricane Katrina hit and just decimated their plant. That was about the time my kids started school," Tami explained.

She decided to take on the work with a new business she created in 2006 called Great Lakes Wedding Gown Service. It was a completely separate business from the one owned by her parents.

"Then, in 2007, one of my bridal boutique customers that I had wholesaled for closed their doors. I reopened that bridal boutique," she added.

She owned both businesses until 2014 when she sold the bridal boutique. At that point, she focussed her energies

on cleaning and preserving gowns, something she has worked tirelessly to master. In addition to being trained by the the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute and the Association of Wedding Gown Specialists, she also wasn't afraid to experiment on her own.

"I would go buy old wedding gowns from thrift stores," she said.



greatlakesclothing.com

"Then, I'd take them home and I'd try to destroy them. Then I'd try to fix them. I'm not going to experiment on customers' gowns, obviously, but I did a lot of experimenting on what worked and what didn't work."

Over time, Tami has honed her cleaning skills and has become a fashion historian to better understand how to work on vintage garments. One time, her garment whispering skills had to deal with one wedding gown that needed to be worn by three different sisters.

"It was grandma's gown and both mom and aunt had already worn it... and then they came to us. Three sisters who were all of marriageable age... and they all wanted to wear it," she noted. "But, the gown had also not been stored properly so the lace was wanting to shred more each time we cleaned it. So, we ended up completely backing all the lace with a really sheer fabric, and then quilt-stitching all of that together so it wouldn't fall apart while it was being worn and handled."

Then, to make things easier, she incorporated a removable train, as well as detachable sleeves and sashes so each bride could customize it to their own preferences. "That one was really something," she said.

Another difficult job that stands out in her mind involved a bride who hiked in Yellowstone National Park for her wedding. "She had a full, long white lace gown that had a train on it," Tami recalled.

Once the wedding was over, her dress barely resembled its former glory. "It literally looked like it was an ombre gown, like the top was white and the bottom was black," she added.

"In between the two, the lace had just acted like a sponge and it had just dragged up — I think — all the mud from the entire park of Yellowstone," she added. "It was so bad. We got it so

clean we actually took a picture." (See the front page photo for a side by side comparison of before and after Tami working her magic.)

In 2020, Tami rebranded her business as Great Lakes Clothing Care and Wedding Gown Specialists, and began accepting a much wider scope of

very creative and empowered team of strong women who will not complain, but at some point, you kind of get tired of stepping over wedding gowns all day long."

On top of having the two businesses share the same location, Tami also recently held a grand opening for a new bridal boutique, dipping her toes back

Tami Parks

Great Lakes Clothing Care &
Wedding Gown Specialists
Holland, MI

garments for cleaning and restoring.

Part of the reason for the name change was to emphasize that her business doesn't just clean the garments.

"We're caring for your clothes. We're going to sew the buttons back on that popped off. We're going to make sure the hooks are tight," she said. "If you have a hem that's coming loose, we're going to make sure it gets tacked up. It's not just throw this in a washer and hang it up. It's caring for your clothes and making sure they last longer and look good on you."

"The [wedding dress] lace acted like a sponge and dragged up — I think — all of the mud from the entire park of Yellowstone. It was so bad."

According to Tami, the way to offer that is to hire excellent people, something she wishes she could see more of in the industry.

"We need to hire excellent people. We need to pay them well," she said. "A lot of drycleaners I know... they don't pay well. They get away with paying a little bit and then those employees aren't always being trained."

Currently, things are a getting a bit cramped in the plant that houses both Tami's clothing care business and her separate wedding gown care business.

"The next project is to find a space and separate out the wedding gown care business because we currently have 200 wedding gowns in a 1,500 sq. ft. plant. Literally, I have room to dry 12 gowns at a time," she said. "We are a

into the world of retail.

"It's going to be different than most bridal boutiques. I wanted stuff for people who really don't want to walk into a traditional bridal boutique and see everything white, size 10," she explained. "We are offering a vintage collection of gowns that I've curated. I find them. I clean them. We fix them up and resell those. We also do a couple of independent designers who do gowns in different colors, some unusual fabrics — and also, we dye gowns. We've got quite a collection of wedding gowns that are in pinks and peaches and blues and blacks — different colors that people want and can't find anywhere else. We also offer some gender neutral options. We have a beautiful line of suits that can be worn by men or women."

Whether she's selling, cleaning or restoring a garment, Tami still continues the science experiment that she began back in high school. She has found it to be quite rewarding.

"I love working with clothes. I love solving problems for people and I especially love the wedding gown industry, too," she said. "I've managed to find a way to put all those together and do what I like and what I'm good at."



Above, Tami dances in the street in a Dutch costume (of her own making) during Holland's Tulip Time Festival.

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Automate the Ordinary so you can Personalize the Extraordinary
1:00 PM - 1:50 PM



Yash Patel
BeCreative360
Reputation, AI, and Google Reviews' Impact on Customers
2:00 PM - 2:50 PM



Jason Loeb
Sudsies Garment Care
Building your Brand & Brand Evolution
3:00 PM - 4:15 PM

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2023



Jeff Barnes | Walt Disney
Walt Disney and the Power of Resilience | 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM



Ryan Fish
Red Hanger Cleaners
Choose Your Hard | 11:00 AM - Noon



Jason Loeb
Sudsies Garment Care
Brand Evolution | 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Panel Discussion: Moving Forward Together as an Industry 4:15 PM - 5:30 PM



Peter Blake | Moderator
DLI Association
Services Program
Director



Kathy Benzinger
DLI President and
Benzinger's
Clothing Care



Tom Zengeler
Zengeler Cleaners



Mack Magnus
M & B Hangers



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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2023



Jeff Schapiro | Cleaner's Supply
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Wash Dry Fold - Winner or Loser?
11:15 AM - 12:15 PM



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THE ROUTE PRO



BY JAMES PEUSTER

Quit trying to manage routes from a desk

Leadership plays a pivotal role in guiding and inspiring your route team towards achieving organizational goals. While leading from behind the desk has been a conventional managerial approach, there is a growing recognition that leading by example is far more effective and impactful. By embracing active leadership, leaders can foster a culture of inspiration, motivation and collaboration, resulting in stronger teams and improved organi-

zational outcomes.

1) Building Trust and Credibility. Leading by example establishes trust and credibility among route personnel. When you actively engage in the tasks and challenges faced by your team, you demonstrate your commitment and dedication. By participating alongside employees, you will show that you understand the balance of selling and retention and you are willing to invest time and effort to achieve success. This builds trust,

enhances respect, and motivates team members to follow suit.

2) Inspiring and Motivating Others. Actions speak louder than words. By actively participating in the work, a hands-on route manager will inspire and motivate your team. When employees witness you tackling challenges, demonstrating resilience and embracing a strong work ethic, they are more likely to feel motivated to do the same. Leading by example ignites a

sense of purpose and passion in your team members, creating an environment that fosters high performance and continuous improvement.

3) Fostering a Culture of Collaboration. Leading from behind the desk often creates a hierarchical barrier between leaders and their teams. However, active leadership breaks down these barriers by promoting collaboration and teamwork. When you actively engage with your employ-

ees, you encourage open communication, idea sharing and problem-solving.

This collaborative approach cultivates a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, leading to a more engaged and cohesive route department.

4) Developing Skills and Mentoring. Leaders who lead by example have the opportunity to develop the skills of their team members through hands-on mentorship. By actively participating in tasks and projects, you can provide real-time guidance, share your expertise and offer constructive feedback. This approach helps employees learn and grow, fostering a culture of continuous learning and development.

5) Cultivating Ethical Behavior. Ethical leadership is crucial for building a strong organizational culture. Leading by example sets the tone for ethical behavior and integrity. When you consistently demonstrate ethical conduct, your employees are more likely to follow suit. This fosters a culture of trust, fairness, and transparency, enhancing employee morale and overall organizational reputation and leads to greater employee retention.

The Bottom Line. While leading from behind the desk has its place in certain managerial functions, leading by example is undeniably a more impactful and effective leadership approach. By actively engaging with their teams, leaders building trust, inspiring motivation, fostering collaboration, developing skills, adapting to change and cultivating ethical behavior.

Embracing active leadership not only strengthens the connection between leaders and their teams but also drives organizational success by creating a culture of excellence, innovation and shared values. By the way, if you can't do this, hire or develop a route manager now!

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

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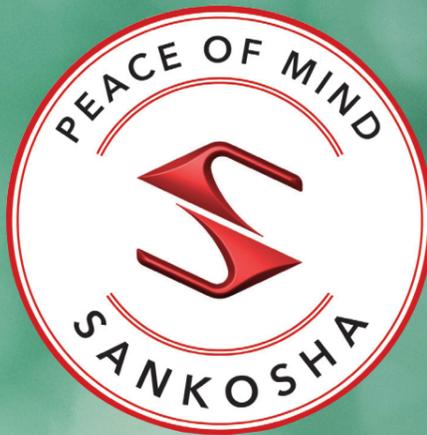
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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Are you giving more than you used to or less?

I was in a hotel one morning putting sugar in my coffee when I came up with the idea for this column. If you read the writings of a frequent contributor of virtually any publication, I bet that one time or another, sooner or later, you wonder how the author continues to come up with ideas for columns, month after month. I'm always thinking. So, for me, I come up with ideas all the time and those ideas are sparked by an infinite array of triggers. This column was triggered by sugar in my coffee.

When I pour coffee into a standard size mug, I put four packets of sugar in, as well. I know that I have just made some of you nauseous and some of you are thinking things like, "Hey Don, do you like a little coffee in your sugar?" and other such *wise guy* remarks, but bear with me for a minute. I have a point to make.

It used to be that a packet

of sugar contained "one level teaspoon." It said so on the package. It doesn't say that anymore and has not, actually, for years. It also used to be true that a pound of coffee actually weighed, well, one pound. It doesn't, and has not for years.

prices haven't gone up as sharply as they actually have. I haven't a clue what a restaurant pays for a case of sugar packets now or what they paid for them in the old days.

My point is that they are giving you less. They may

expensive?

Have you reduced the wages of your employees so that you can charge less for shirts or so that you can make more profit?

Have you begun to underportion your detergent with the hopes that customers

those costs — even once — can have deadly consequences.

If we are resistant to increasing prices, we, in turn, fear that our customers view rising prices like we do.

We have become an industry of survivors. This may have come about because we view one supplier as pretty much the same as his competitor. Both sell hangers that do the same thing. *I'll buy the cheaper one.* Both sell poly. *What's the difference? I'll buy the cheaper one.* You'll buy a truckload of things from the catalog because you'll save a bundle. As a direct result, we assume that our customers will go elsewhere to save a dollar here and there.

You may be quick to insist that they will. Although in my heart of hearts, I want to disagree — let's go with your thought that they will drop you without a second thought.

You must believe that when they visit your competitor, they will notice a difference. What kind of a difference will it be? You have control over this if you think about it for a minute. If you fear that your customer will be more pleased with your competitor than they are with you, then you really need to raise your standards, don't you think? Maybe your "packet of sugar" no longer contains "one level teaspoon."

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

Don Desrosiers has been in the drycleaning and shirt laundering business since 1978. He is a work-flow engineer and a management consultant who provides services to shirt launderers and drycleaners through Tailwind Systems. He is a member of the Society of Professional Consultants and winner of DLI's Commitment to Professionalism award. He can be reached by cell phone (508) 965-3163, or email to: tailwind.don@me.com. The Tailwind web site is at www.tailwindsystems.com.

It continually costs more and more to maintain our desired level of service and quality, regardless of how high or how low our standard may be. Absorbing those costs — even once — can have deadly consequences.

When a packet of sugar contained a teaspoon of sugar, I used two of them. When I actually bought a pound of coffee — a real 16 oz pound — it went 25-30% further than it goes now. The people who sell these items — arguably — aren't deceiving you. It says 13 oz on the coffee can and it doesn't say "one level teaspoon" on the sugar packet. No deception is involved, but perhaps it's a clue that

want to fool you for as long as they can, but in reality, they have reduced what you get and charged you more for it.

Are you doing that with your shirts?

Have you stopped replacing buttons to keep the costs of a button inventory and a button machine out of the equation?

Have you stopped repairing your shirt equipment because the parts are too

won't notice the shirts getting a little bit dingier month after month?

Have you stopped using the collar cone because the light bulb burned out and replacing it simply isn't in the budget?

Have you quit replacing pads and covers with the knowledge that customers never see that shredded cover or blown-out air bag?

Have you quit attending trade shows, seminars or peer group meetings because they offer no value?

Have you started to stuff 10 shirts into a poly bag to keep that budget in line?

Have you quit using hot water, arguing that you are simply flushing it down the drain?

Have you become an innovator and decided to reuse mark-in tags by simply hand-writing a new number on the back of the old one?

My bet is that you haven't done a single one of these things. In fact, you have continued to do everything that you have always done in order to be certain that your customers get the same thing that have always received from you. Yet, because of the pressures from the world around us, we drag our feet when it comes to raising prices. I submit that this is because we aren't prepared to explain why, if and when we are approached.

The reasons why are simple. It continually costs more and more to maintain our desired level of service and quality, regardless of how high or how low our standard may be. Absorbing

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WRENCH WORKS



BY BRUCE GROSSMAN

Boiler water testing — Part two

There is a long list of impurities in water entering a boiler. However, in the drycleaning and laundry industries, the major ones affecting the operation of boilers are dissolved solids (known as TDS, or total dissolved solids) and oxygen, which is dissolved in the new, city water entering the return tank. This oxygen combines with carbon dioxide to form carbonic acid, a destroyer of the metal in the boiler and piping throughout the steam/return systems.

The pH indicates the concentration of acids in boiler water (pH is a scale used to specify how acidic or basic [or alkaline] a water-based solution is). Measuring TDS and pH levels indicate the condition of the treated water entering and inside the boiler, allowing us to adjust the blow-down frequency and the volume and timing of boiler compound addition to the return tank to prevent boiler damage.

Establishing the correct blow-down procedure

Blow-down and com-

ound addition are the two most important factors in maintaining the proper boiler water chemistry. No matter how efficient the water treatment program is, water entering the boiler (feed water) will contain impurities such as salts and suspended and dissolved solids. The process of boiling away water to generate steam leaves these impurities behind, accumulating inside the boiler during daily operations.

Blow-down uses gravity and steam pressure to expel this accumulated debris, residue, and other impurities before they adhere to and/or corrode the internal surfaces of your boiler and steam system piping. Sometimes it seems like every boiler manufacturer and/or operator has their own idea about how and when to blow down their boiler.

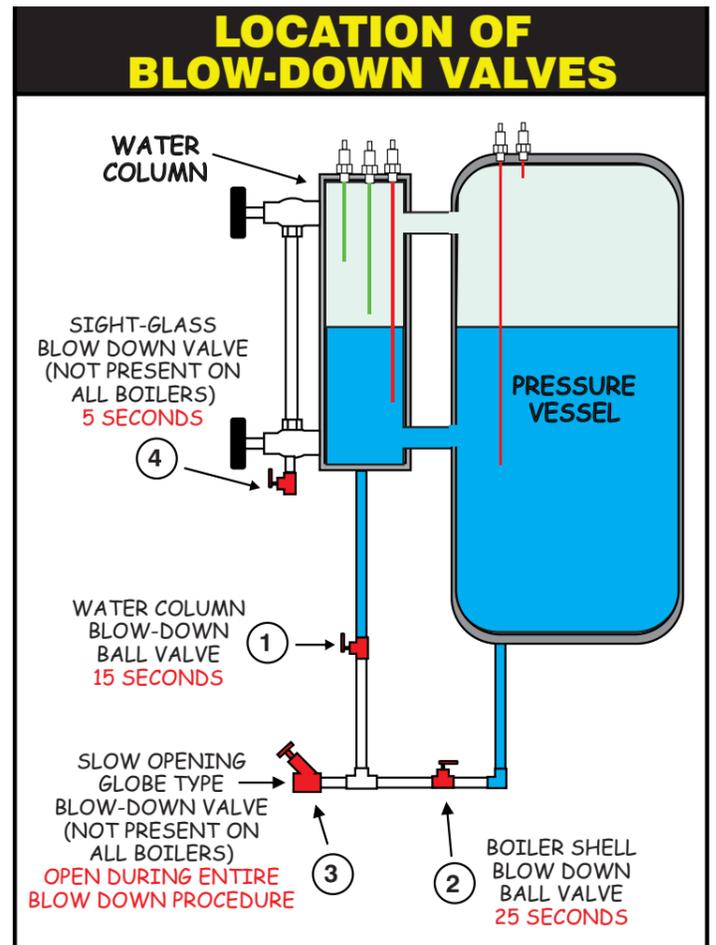
The recommendations I will be making are based upon several years' experience in troubleshooting and repairing boilers of many different manufacturers in arguably the worst area for

boiler water impurities in the country and maybe differ from those recommended by the boiler manufacturer. When in doubt, follow the manufacturer's procedure.

When to blow down

Under normal circumstances, two daily blow-downs are sufficient: one in the morning and the other in the early afternoon (never leave the boiler or return tank empty overnight). While the boiler is shut down, much of the particulate matter, being heavier than water, will settle to the bottom of the boiler in an area where the blow-down is very effective.

The morning blow-down would be done shortly after the boiler is started up. Wait until the steam pressure rises to about 30 to 40 PSI, then, start the blow down. For the afternoon blow down, shut down the boiler while you're still using steam so boiler pressure drops quickly. Initiate the blow-down procedure when boiler pressure drops to about 30 to 40 PSI. You will



quickly determine the length of time after a blow-down until steam pressure rises sufficiently to resume production. Use this recovery period to calculate the best timing to minimize production loss by timing blow-downs. Hence, the recovery period occurs during an employee break or lunch period would be shortly after the boiler is started up.

How to blow down

Boilers used in drycleaning and small laundry operations usually have two to four blow-down valve locations. The first (1) is below the water column; the second (2) is at the bottom of the boiler shell (pressure vessel). If the boiler is specified to run at pressures over 80 PSI there is usually a large "Y" type slow-opening globe valve (3); there may also be a small valve (4) at the lower end of the sight glass fixture, which can also be used to drain water samples for testing.

The most effective part of the blow-down is during the first several seconds. Therefore, short blow-downs are recommended. Always open valve (3) if it is present before any blow-down, and shut it after the blow-down procedure is complete. Use blow-down durations of about 15 seconds for the water column valve (1), 25 seconds for the boiler shell valve (2) (pressure vessel), and five sec-

onds for the sight glass valve (4) — if a valve is installed for that purpose.

The location of these valves is shown in the illustration. Slowly open a valve and start the timing after the valve is fully open. (If the boiler is specified to run at pressures over 80 PSI, there is generally a slow-opening globe valve, valve (3), that must also be open during blow-down). Blowing all the water out of the boiler and/or draining the return tank and refilling with city water is **not necessary**. It's a waste of water softening capacity and boiler compound. When the blow-down is complete, reset the valves for regular boiler operation.

Next month I'll be discussing how to measure the level of impurities present in your boiler water using inexpensive TDS and pH meters.

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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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

The most important question when selling

These past two years have been incredibly interesting to me. Personally, I have never seen so many business transactions, both buying and selling within the industry. For the acquirer, there have been many opportunities.

Covid contributed to this trend, which prompted smaller and weakened operators to consider retirement instead of continuing the battle. Additionally, age has played a significant role for those who believe the time is right to sell. Regardless of the reason behind selling, it's crucial to maximize the value of your business, and that may require one to three years of preparation.

In previous editions of *National Clothesline*, we've delved into the "Drivers of Value," highlighting the key elements that contribute to maximizing the worth of your business [Editor's Note: go to nationalclothesline.com for full archived issues dating back to 2018]. However, it's essential to understand that selling your business isn't simply passing the baton in a relay race — once you're finished running, you get to relax.

On the contrary, buyers often insist on a transition period ranging from three

months to five years, during which you continue working in your business to help them capitalize on their investment.

This is particularly true when the buyer comes from outside the industry. Looking back at my own experience 31 years ago, I received only one month of transition time from the seller, and I quickly realized it wasn't

have one foot out the door.

While honesty is crucial, there is a right and wrong way to answer this question. Responses such as "I want to slow down a bit," "I want to travel," or "We've got a baby on the way, and I want to spend more time at home" may convey to potential buyers that you plan on winding down once they take over.

next level, we need to find a partner with more sales, people, distribution, geographic reach, or capital, which is what your company brings to the table."

If you're between 40 to 55 years old:

Most people will understand the need to shore up your personal balance sheet.

You can express this by saying, "I've reached a point

value. For instance, you can state, "I'm at a stage where retirement planning has become a priority. It's a long way off yet, but I want to be proactive and ensure a smooth transition for the future."

This is the time to polish the business operations and the financials to be prepared to a new owner or add to your net worth.

Remember to rehearse your answer to this question so that it becomes a natural response when inevitably asked by a potential acquirer. Understanding your "why" is crucial for evaluating your company's preparedness.

Obtaining your Value Builders score will identify areas to strengthen and enhance. As a seller, you typically only have one shot to get it right.

It's worth noting that an attorney I have worked with has indicated that nearly 80% of deals fall apart, often due to sellers not being adequately prepared. Don't find yourself in that group.

By adopting a direct and confident approach, backed by clear and concise language, you can effectively address the most important question and position yourself for success in selling your business.

If you want to learn more about growing value in your business or have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Until next month...

Let's address the most important question that prospective buyers will inevitably ask during the selling process: "Why do you want to sell your business?" These seemingly innocuous eight words have derailed more deals than any others.

enough, given my limited knowledge about the drycleaning industry.

Now, let's address the most important question that prospective buyers will inevitably ask during the selling process: "Why do you want to sell your business?"

These seemingly innocuous eight words have derailed more deals than any others. Buyers ask this question to assess your commitment and willingness to stay on-board or if you already

Instead, they want to hear your intention to help them unlock the untapped potential within your business.

To craft an effective response, consider the following suggestions based on your age.

If you're under 40:

You clearly aren't ready to "retire" so you need to communicate that you see an upside in merging your business with theirs.

For example, you can say, "In order for us to get to the

in my life where creating liquidity from the value I've built so far is important, while also finding a partner who can help us elevate our business to the next level."

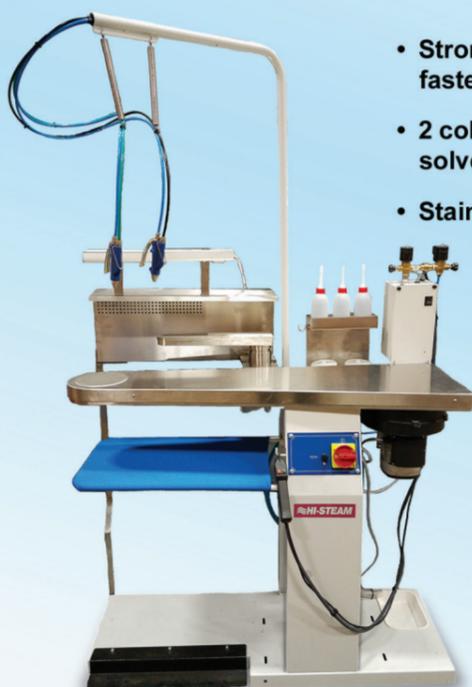
If you're over 55:

You can start to talk about retirement, but you want to make sure you communicate that you still possess abundant energy and passion for your business.

This is the stage where owners should focus on creating maximum personal

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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.



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BY JOHN ROTHROCK

TURNAROUND TIME

Simplifying success: The power of focus

Last month, I embarked on a multi-part series in which I introduced a thought-provoking concept called **The Focus Method** to the industry for consideration. If you haven't done so already, I encourage you to read that column first before continuing, as each subsequent article will build upon the previous one.

As you examine The Focus Method diagram, the first thing that catches your eye is the bold infinity symbol. Its weighty presence immediately draws your attention to its endless loops, devoid of obvious starting or ending points. This intentional design signifies a key concept.

Positioned at the center of each loop are two distinct and competing business goals: **Market Share** and **Operational Efficiency**. As seasoned operators are aware, these two goals often find themselves at odds. Concentrating on operations can lead to a decline in sales, while focusing solely on sales might result in reduced operational efficiency and increased labor costs.

Traditional drycleaning business models make it challenging to effectively manage both objectives simultaneously. But here's the encouraging news: there is an alternative approach. The Focus Method, when fully implemented, equips operators with the strategies and tools necessary to effectively balance and manage both business goals. If you're anything like me, you may wonder, "Where should I begin?"

"Begin with the end in mind."
— Dr. Stephen R. Covey

As a drycleaning business owner, your primary goal is to make a profit by delivering professional garment care to the communities you serve. Unfortunately, in today's market, characterized by ever-increasing labor costs and seemingly decreasing demand, it can sometimes feel like the industry is navigating rough waters. This ongoing cycle, spanning over the last two decades, has led many industry leaders to adopt the mantra of "Let's clean everything for everyone" to compensate for the decline in piece count volume. While the idea of catering to a wide array of customer needs might be enticing, setting a goal of "cleaning everything for everyone" may not be the most practical or effective approach for a drycleaning

business. Here's why:

1) Resource Allocation. Striving to clean everything for everyone stretches already limited resources, including equipment, staff training and inventory. Focusing on a specific area allows you to allocate resources more effectively and maintain consistent quality.

2) Expertise and Specialization. Drycleaning businesses often excel when they specialize in particular garment types or speed of service. Becoming an expert in a specific niche enables the delivery of higher-quality cleaning and care for those items, leading to enhanced customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth referrals.

3) Efficiency. Specialization often results in more streamlined workflows and quicker turnaround times as your staff becomes adept at handling specific garments and materials.

While the idea of catering to a wide variety of customer needs might be enticing, setting a goal of "cleaning everything for everyone" may not be the most practical or effective approach for a drycleaning business.

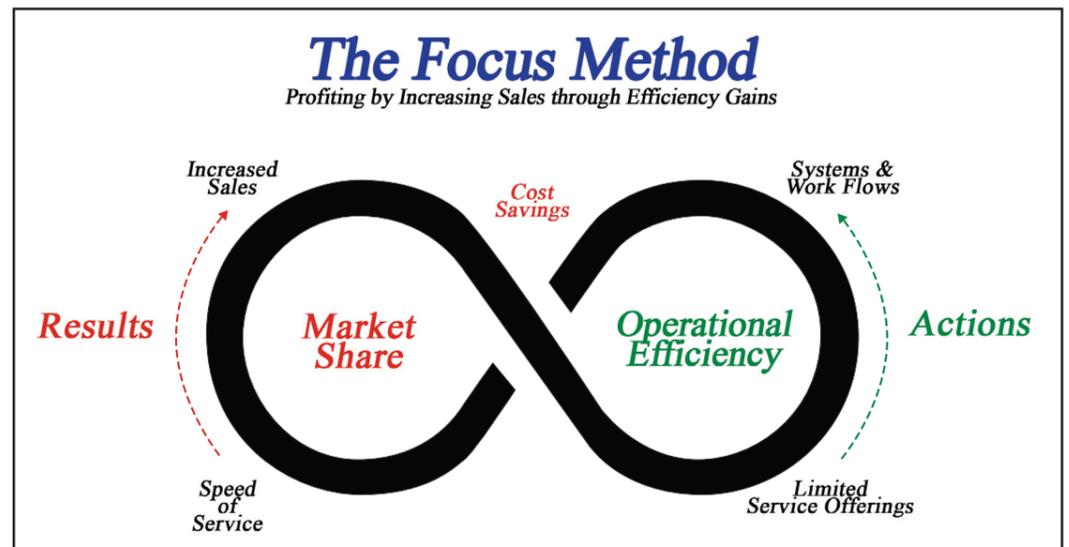
4) Quality Control. Attempting to handle a wide range of items can lead to inconsistency in cleaning methods and quality. Specialization allows for refining and perfecting processes, leading to more dependable outcomes.

5) Brand Identity. Specializing in a particular niche helps establish a clear brand identity. Customers are more likely to remember and trust a business renowned for its expertise in a specific type of cleaning or service.

Rather than aiming to clean everything for everyone, consider streamlining your service offerings to optimize efficiency and profitability. This approach prioritizes providing customers with swift turnaround times and consistent quality. Such a focused strategy can help establish a loyal customer base and build a strong reputation poised for rapid growth.

Limited service offerings

The concept of limiting your service offerings may initially seem counterintuitive. How can narrowing your services actually lead to increased sales? To illustrate this point, Todd Graves, the founder of



Raising Cane's Chicken, puts it succinctly: "Do one thing, and do it better than anybody else...consistently do it great. Customers will come back."

Think of McDonald's — you think of burgers and fries. Ruth's Chris brings to mind sizzling steaks on a 500-degree

always this way.

During our central plant era, we did it all. We not only cleaned drapes, but we also sold and installed them. Alterations? No problem. We even had a fur cold storage vault for grandma's winter coats. We followed the very same "clean everything for everyone" business model that some industry experts still advocate today. As a company, we were lost and struggling because we lacked specialization. So, what prompted change?

Motivated by the threat of bankruptcy, Yale's leadership team chose to challenge the status quo. They refused to do things just because they'd always been done that way. Uncertain where to begin, the team started studying the profitability and popularity of the services we offered.

For instance, we conducted a study to identify which services led to the highest number of unclaimed orders. The results might surprise you: Alterations. Too often, when customers dropped off items for alteration, the orders were eventually abandoned for various reasons. After extensive consideration and team discussions, Yale Cleaners stopped offering alteration services at one location. The outcome? No customer complaints, and same-store sales increased by 10 percent year over year.

The decision became evident, and the service was eventually phased out across all locations. This process was replicated for all underperforming services to optimize our service mix. This newfound insight enabled us to focus solely on providing highly demanded and profitable services, while minimizing high-risk, low-reward services like drapes, leathers and furs. We eventually realized that, to be a highly suc-

cessful drycleaning company, we didn't need to "clean everything for everyone."

So, here's a question for you. Why did you enter the drycleaning business? Was it to become a drycleaning expert capable of professionally cleaning any fabric-based item? To clean everything for everyone? Or, was it to generate profit by offering a valuable service to your community? Simply because an item can be cleaned doesn't mean your company must clean it.

I present you with a challenge today. Go to your point-of-sale system and generate several reports. Create a list of services that are either unprofitable or experience high rates of abandonment. Then, systematically remove them from your service offerings. This will free up time for you to concentrate on services and activities that genuinely contribute to your profits and business sustainability. Sounds straightforward, doesn't it?

While I can't dictate which services you should eliminate from your organization, I can share what has proven successful for Yale Cleaners. Utilize this straightforward yet powerful strategy to immediately streamline your business. It incurs no costs, has the potential to save you thousands and will enable your store to focus on the services that make you the most money.

John Rothrock is the president and CEO of Yale Cleaners, a family drycleaning business in Broken Arrow, OK, that is focused on providing high quality, same day drycleaning with exceptional customer service. He earned a degree in Business Administration in 2005 from the University of Oklahoma. He is a graduate of the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute, and is a Certified Garment Care Professional (CGCP).

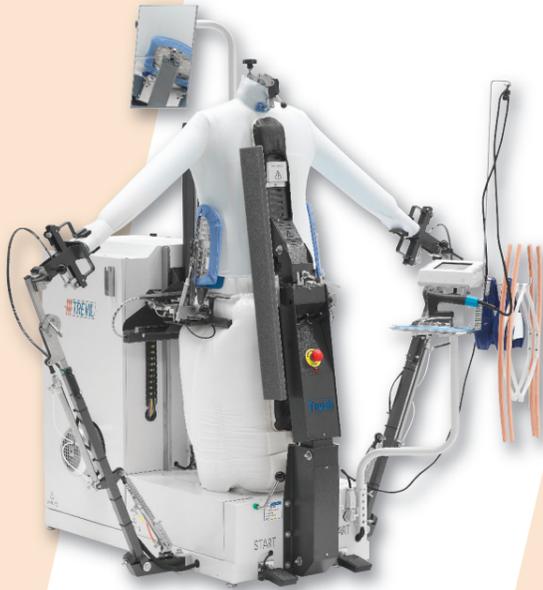


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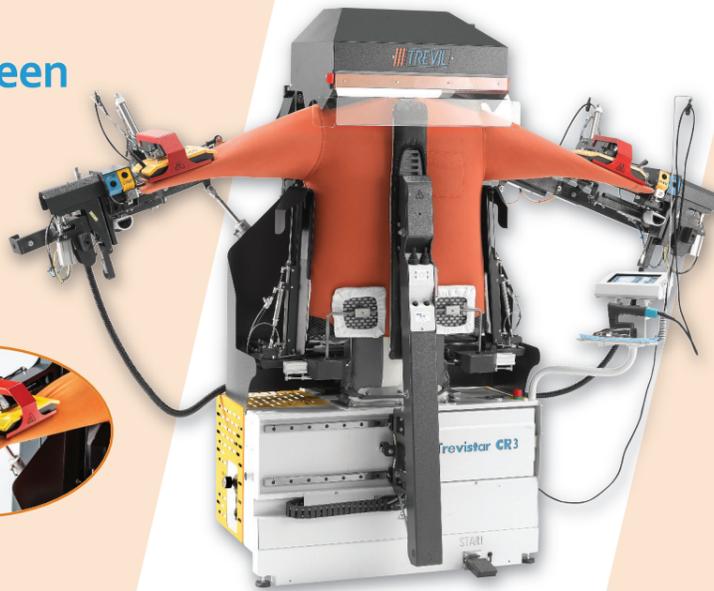
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An emerging emphasis on education

Continued from page 1
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New Programs, New Topics

In recent months, there have been dozens of new and interesting programs presented by various industry consultants and groups, ranging from the Illinois Professional Drycleaners and Launderers' (IPDL) first Education Extravaganza to the Mid-Atlantic Association of Cleaners (MAC) teaming up with the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association (PDCA) for the inaugural East Coast Leadership Conference.

Another popular event that debuted recently was a W-D-F Workshop hosted by the Coin Laundry Association (CLA) and DLI last year.

It was so popular that it will return next month. The Wash-

Dry-Fold 2023 Workshop will be from Oct. 4-6 in Nashville, TN. Visit coinlaundry.org for more information.



Other Programs Coming Up in the Fall

Also just around the corner will be Fabricare 2023, which will be hosted by the California Cleaners Association (CCA) from Oct. 6 to 8 at Harrah's Las Vegas Hotel.

Many might recall that CCA's Fabricare 2021 show — held in October of that year in Las Vegas — was the first major live

event after a long absence during the pandemic.

Hoping to build on the excellent turnout of that event, the association has enlisted keynote speaker Jeff Barnes, who will speak on "Walt Disney and the Power of Resilience."



Other experts lined up to present include Dave Coyle, Yash Patel, Jason Loeb, Ryan Fish, Jeff Schapiro and Norman Way. Also on the schedule will be a panel discussion moderated by Peter Blake

that will discuss the topic of "Moving Forward Together as an Industry."

The cost to attend is \$299 per person. For more information, visit calcleaners.com.

On the heels of Fabricare 2023 — though on the opposite coast — will be the North East Fabricare Association's (NEFA) ProfitFest 2023 scheduled from Nov. 4 to 6 in Salem, NH.

The event will take place at The Artisan Hotel at Tuscan Village. For details, be sure to go to nefabricare.com.

Also just around the corner is Success 2023 presented by Methods for Management (MfM), the consulting firm that will celebrate its 70th anniversary this year at the Hilton Chicago Miracle Mile.

The event will be held from

Oct. 26 to 28 and will feature two keynote speakers: Steve Baker, vice president of the Great Game of Business, and Jeff Butler, a speaker, author and workplace strategist.

Additional speakers scheduled to appear include: Bob Clements, co-founder of Benchmark Business Group; Jennifer Whitmarsh of The Route Pros; Bill Albers, president of SMRT; Toran Brown, vice president of SPOT; and Jeff Gude of MfMBI.

Late next month, the Southwest Drycleaners Association will host a meeting at the Embassy Suites in downtown North Phoenix, AZ from Oct. 20 to 22. It will feature a program by Dave Coyle of Maverick Drycleaners, who will divulge "Five Leadership Secrets Create an Empowered Team."



The meeting is free to attend. To register or learn more information, visit online at sda-dryclean.com.

Cleaners hope for a Hollywood ending

Continued from page 1
and Disney studios) provide about 70% of his business.

"If nobody's in the office, no clothes are coming in. It's as simple as that," he told AFP. "It's hurting everybody at this point."

It has proven difficult for such cleaners to keep employees with shortened hours, though some businesses have already had to force layoffs. Tom Malian of La Cienega Studio Cleaners of North Hollywood told a reporter for *Deadline* that this is his third Hollywood strike, and it is by far the worst. Recently he laid off 17 of his 56 employees.

"We are down to one soap opera, two reality shows and three commercials compared with the 65, 70 shows I used to do a month," he said. "The longer it's going to take, more people will struggle. That's all it is. It's just a struggle."

For now, that struggle has no clear ending in sight. Even at the 100-day mark, the WGA strike was only the fourth longest in history. It still has a way to go to surpass the longest: the one in 1988 lasted 153 days.

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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

How to properly clean vintage garments

Vintage garments are fashionable and big business. I deal with many people who buy, restore and sell older garments.

One such project was the restoration of Colonel Sanders' (Kentucky Fried Chicken) white suits that he wore while he cooked his famous fried chicken. After restoration, one of the suits was auctioned off for \$82,000.

As a garment analyst for 37 years, I have tested many of the original fabrics which have now turned vintage.

Cleaning vintage garments

Rayon — It was used years ago and was never a fabric that could be wet-cleaned. The rayon used was termed *viscose rayon* which would shrink excessively when put into water. This rayon should only be drycleaned.

Crepe — This is a fabric with a rough texture created by tightly twisted yarns. Vintage crepe fabrics should

never be wetcleaned or put into water because excessive shrinkage is likely to occur. This fabric should only be drycleaned.

Vintage garments are fashionable and big business. After restoration, one of Colonel Sanders' white suits that he wore while he cooked his famous fried chicken was auctioned off for \$82,000.

Moire — This was a fabric with a water grain or wood grain pattern put on a fabric by manufacturers who used heat, pressure and engraved rollers.

Moire fabrics were made of rayon, acetate, polyester and nylon. Only polyester and nylon moire fabrics can be wetcleaned.

Imitation Leather, Suede and Wet Look Fabrics — This was popular in the 1970s and 1980s. Manufacturers use vinyl and polyurethane plastic.

It was very difficult to differentiate between two

plastics. The vinyl plastic should be wetcleaned. The only solvent that would be safe for cleaning vinyl is GreenEarth.

For safety these fabrics should be wetcleaned.

Gortex — I originally tested Gortex when it first came out. Most Gortex used for outerwear can be wetcleaned.

To retain the water repellent properties, it requires thorough rinsing. Some vintage Gortex made was only drycleanable due to fabric construction.

Velvet — The vintage velvet used is mainly rayon, acetate and silk. This can only be drycleaned.

Gold and Silver Coated Fabrics — This was popular

in the 1980s. When the coating is only on one side of the fabric, it should be wetcleaned.

When the coating appears

through and through the fabric, it should be drycleaned.

Rayon Matte Jersey — An expensive knitted fabric that was popular in the 1980s. This can only be drycleaned.

Imitation Persian Lamb — This was popular in the 1960s. Manufacturers glued on fibers to a fabric and made it look like fur.

This should only be sent to a professional furrier for cleaning.

Ultra-Suede — This is an expensive imitation suede fabric that I tested when it first came out on the market.

This fabric can be wetcleaned or drycleaned depending upon the fabric construction (e.g. lining, trimming, etc.)

Pouf or Pouffe — This is a French word to describe a vintage styling, accentuated by a double layered fabric. Flounces, gathers and ruffles gives a balloon or puffed effect. This should only be drycleaned.

Flocked Print and Coated Fabrics — A popular older fabric used was imitation velvet print or a velvet look created by gluing fibers on the surface of the fabric.

This fabric was often un-serviceable to drycleaning and sometimes to wetcleaning.

It was often mislabeled as drycleanable. GreenEarth solvent would be the safest way of cleaning this fabric.

Hologram — Older styling by American designers such as Daang Goodman and Tommy Hilfiger.

They used prints and fabrics that created kaleidoscopic and a three dimensional look. These fabrics should be hand washed.

Bonded Fabrics — A pop-

ular old styling was bonding a urethane foam onto a fabric.

This gave the fabric bulk and was still a lightweight fabric. Age and oxidation will deteriorate the urethane foam.

Any cleaning would be dangerous and should only be attempted with the customers written permission.

Micromattique — This was the original micro polyester fiber from DuPont. This fabric was serviceable to wetcleaning procedures.

My original testing of the fabric showed that sometimes drycleaning procedures would remove the fluorescent dye causing a dulling and loss of brightness.

Beaded Trimming — The plastic trimming used was un-serviceable to both chlorinated and petroleum solvents.

The safest way to handle any older beaded garments would be in wetcleaning. GreenEarth solvent would be the only way to dryclean these fabrics.

Angora Sweaters — This was a popular fabric in the 1980s and 1990s.

This fur fiber had strong shrinkage characteristics when drycleaned. This should be wetcleaned by hand for safest results.

Matelasse — A raised design on a fabric usually created by a bonding process. Age will deteriorate the bonding process and this garment should be drycleaned with the customers permission and risk.

Trimming attachment — Beads and other trimming were attached with a chain stitching.

One broken strand can cause loss of all the trimming. Check the stitching thread carefully before cleaning.

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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NEWSMAKERS

America's Best Cleaners (ABC) recently partnered with **Dress for Success Pittsburgh** for the launch of EmpowerWear. ABC will assist in collecting gently used women's professional and casual attire via a pilot program with its local affiliate, **Owl Cleaners**.

The partnership with Dress for Success Pittsburgh will allow drycleaning customers to easily donate clothing via their regular scheduled delivery.

The EmpowerWear partnership seeks to provide professional and casual attire to women in need, helping them achieve economic independence and access employment opportunities.

Dress for Success Pittsburgh CEO Tanya Vokes added, "Dress for Success Pittsburgh is proud to partner with ABC through the new EmpowerWear initiative, a powerful collaboration aimed at ensuring women have the cloth-

ing and employment readiness support they need as they take the next important step in their career journey. Appropriate clothing is the basic foundation every woman needs to look and feel confident as she showcases her skills and abilities in an interview or new job."

In 2023, **Tide Cleaners** has opened four stores in **Charlotte, NC**.

These new stores are in addition to the three existing stores and home delivery services from the Charlotte franchisee.

"Our mission has always been to free the burden of drycleaning and laundry from our customers, and by opening four additional stores in Charlotte, we will do just that," said **Robert Lyons**, CEO of Consolidated Cleaners, Inc.

"This community in Charlotte has much to offer and we can't wait to give them the opportunity to not worry about their drycleaning

and laundry and instead enjoy their everyday life," he added.

Consolidated Cleaners, Inc. has been recognized by Tide Cleaners as the Tide Franchisee of the Year six times, and as Rising Tide award winner eight times.

"We are proud to set ourselves apart in Charlotte by delivering quality and convenience to our customers," Lyons said.

Earlier this year, **Javier Garcia** became the owner of the **Lapels Cleaning of Buckeye, AZ**, located at 1510 S. Watson Rd.

"Lapels Cleaners has been received very well here in Buckeye and we're excited to continue that with the environmentally friendly cleaning methods Lapels has developed," said **David Grippi**, Lapels Cleaners' chief operating officer.

Lapels Cleaners is part of Clean Brands, whose corporate offices are located in Naples, FL.

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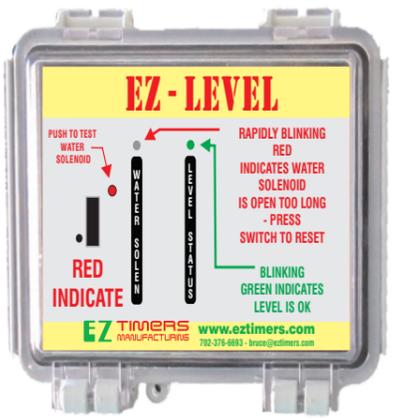
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Travis Unema, Owner
Brio Cleaners, Bellingham, Washington

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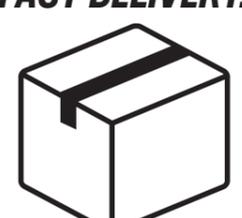
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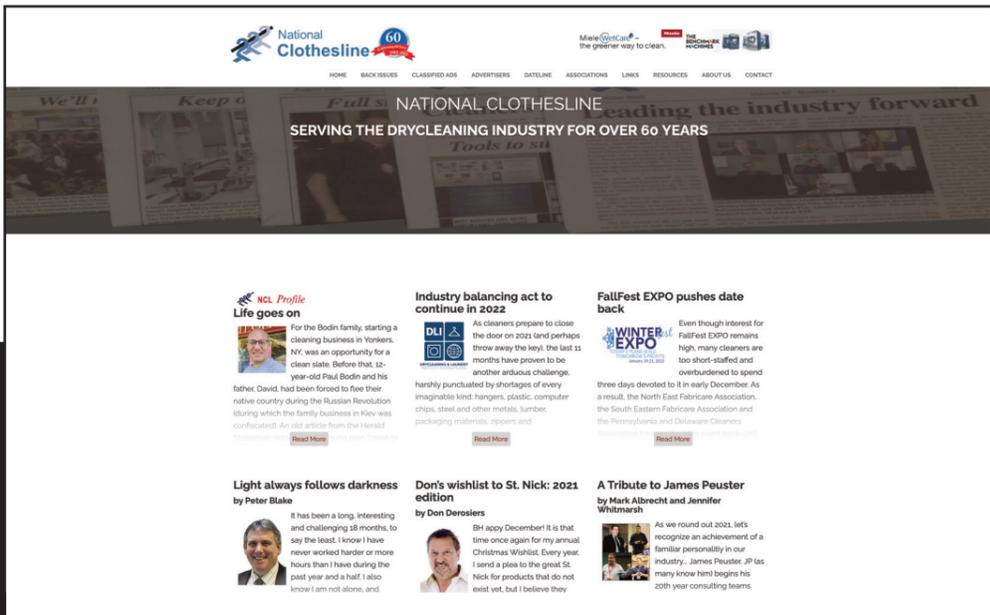
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NCL Profile
 Life goes on
 For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yorkers, NY was an opportunity for a clean state. Before that, 12-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian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

Industry balancing act to continue in 2022
 As cleaners prepare to close the door on 2022 (and perhaps throw away the key), the last 11 months have proven to be another arduous challenge, heavily punctuated by shortages of every imaginable kind: hangers, plastic, computer chips, steel and other metals, lumber, packaging materials, zippers and...

FallFest EXPO pushes date back
 Even though interest for FallFest EXPO remains high, many cleaners are too short-staffed and overburdened to spend three days devoted to it in early December. As a result, the North East Fabricare Association and the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association have agreed to...

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

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

A Tribute to James Peuster
 by Mark Albrecht and Jennifer Whitmarsh
 As we round out 2021, let's recognize an achievement of a familiar personality in our industry. James Peuster, 39 (as many know him) begins his 20th consulting teams...

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