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NEFA's ProfitFest '23 heads to New Hampshire next month

It won't be long now until the North East Fabricare Association (NEFA) will host ProfitFest '23 in Salem, NH. The event will take place on Nov. 4 and 5 at the Artisan Hotel at Tuscan Village.

This year's theme will be "Innovation, Inspiration and Intuition Drive Growth."

The educational programs will begin early on Saturday morning when DLI CEO Mary Scalco will discuss the current state

of the drycleaning industry starting at 8:30 a.m.

Afterward, Kevin Dubasik of MetalProgetti will discuss "Proven Strategies for Au-

tomation and Diversification" from 9:30 to 11 a.m.

Following a half hour break for attendees to visit exhibitor showcases, NEFA will present a program on "Driving Profits Through Revenue Streams" from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

During lunchtime, there will be a special brainstorming roundtable for cleaners to take part in from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

At 2 p.m., Glen Gould of Drycleaning Connection will discuss the value of enthusiasm-based leadership with a one-hour program that will be called "Operator Spotlight: Fired! With Enthusiasm."

The final program for the day will be a panel discussion on "Diversity or Die" that will be moderated by Mike Nesbitt, president of MW Cleaners of Texas.

At 4:30 p.m., NEFA's ProfitFest Committee will offer a wrap-up for the day.

Then, the association will host its Saturday Night Cocktail Reception and Silent Auction from 5 to 7 p.m.

There will be an additional two educational programs on Sunday morning.

One will focus on "Developing Effective Communication Strategies" from 9 to 10:15 a.m.

At 10:30 a.m., there will be a final 90-minute program that will focus on "Exploring the Dynamics Between Fashion and Fabricare."

Those who register for the entire event will pay \$290

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Mary Scalco



Glen Gould

A football fan's fantastic day

This month's profile, Todd Sankes of Martinizing Dry Cleaning in Fairport, NY, recently played host to the filming of a large NFL commercial at his plant, giving the lifelong Buffalo Bills fan an opportunity to meet safety Damar Hamlin, who is featured prominently in the ad. Read the full story on page 6.

Photos by Todd Sankes



CINET hosts next round of global awards in 2024

While the domestic drycleaning industry has strongly emphasized more education recently (as noted in our September 2023 issue), there are still excellent learning opportunities that are being missed by most: education on a global level.

Those who have never participated in the Global Best Practices Program offered by CINET are missing the chance to learn from the best cleaners in the world. Fortunately, the sixth installment of the program arrives next year.

The event has grown considerably since it first began nine years ago when cleaners from six countries participated.

That number rose to over 30 by 2018, but COVID-19 made it impossible to meet publicly in 2020. As a result, CINET hosted a virtual version of the program that attracted an audience of over 26,000 followers.

Since then, the Global Best Practices Program has continued to grow in popularity and scope, and there is a lot of good information being shared, according to Peter Wennekes, president and CEO of CINET.

"The situation that we



Last years winner of CINET's Global Best Practices Award for Excellence in Entrepreneurship, Jan Barlow, poses with her husband Dave.

see today in every country is there are very sophisticated, good examples of companies who are really doing the best job thinkable," he explained. "You see that market demand has changed strongly in many aspects. They are not ready for that yet. So, what we see is that some companies who are really advanced are really making takeovers and that sort of thing. The same process is also in the U.S., and there we expect a 20% loss of companies, 15 to 20% on the European base, and for some

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Gaining a global perspective on the industry

It should be noted that, at this time, we have no intention of becoming *International Clothesline*. After all, covering the domestic cleaning industry keeps us very busy as it is. Still, that does not mean there isn't much to be learned from the rest of the world — it just means it's simply not always logistically possible.

However, the central part of our mission at this publication is to be a resource of information, education and advice to cleaners — which sometimes may require examining things from a global perspective.

This month, we are encouraging our readers to consider taking part in the next CINET Global Best Practices Awards program, featured in an article on the front page. The awards themselves aren't anything new; in fact, they've been around for about a decade now, with winners chosen every other year, recognizing the best cleaners in the world in three categories: sustainability, innovation and overall.

During the first year, there were participants from six countries altogether. Since then, it has grown to include participants from about 50 countries altogether. CINET even managed to draw 26,000 followers online during a virtual installment of their awards ceremony that took place during the pandemic.

Each installment of the awards begins on a national level where the winning companies for each country are invited to compete internationally at TexCare in November of 2024 in Frankfurt. Winning is nice, but we dare say that is not really the point of this endeavor. Ultimately, CINET collates an impressive amount of data from all of the companies from every competing country and shares it back to the global industry.

The organization does not require you to be a member to participate, either. They simply want to be open to as many cleaners as they can so they can collect as much information as they can.

"We feel the most important part is to get to know each other better, and the interchange of information," CINET CEO Peter Wennekes noted.

Those who decide to participate need only to visit them online at www.cinet-online.com and fill out a form on the website — including as much information and media (photos, videos, etc.) you wish.

The process may help you learn a little bit about your own company and how it might be perceived. However, there's a lot more to learn from watching many of the presentations depicting how differently some companies from outside the U.S. are doing things successfully and how they are addressing challenges in their own market.

For example, Fornet — a company from China that won the Overall Best Practices Award in 2018 for Retail Textile Cleaning (RTC) — impressively handles all the work from Y Closet, an online women clothing rental service with tens of thousands of garments. Daily, the company can handle as many as 60,000 garments, yet still they make sure they are all clean, bright and feel like new.

Another impressive past winner is GCS-BIH77 from France, who took home the Overall Best Practices Award in 2020 for Industrial Textile Services. They process between 24 and 30 tons of hospital linen daily; more importantly, they have found a unique solution to a low labor market by recruiting people who are disabled or in precarious situations and then help properly train them — all the while, they monitor their health and well-being.

One last example is the 2020 winner for Overall Best Practices in RTC-B from the UK — Oxwash. The company uses sustainability as its driving force. It manages to reuse 60% of the potable water used in its wash cycles and the company also filters 95% of the microfibers released using its own filtration method. There are so many more examples — too many to name them all.

The truth is, there are a lot of American companies that can learn from many other participants, just as there are a lot of participating companies that could benefit learning from some of our companies' methods. So, hopefully, we will see a lot more participation on our end during the next round of awards. Stay tuned for more details as we get them.

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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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Finding a franchise

After spending nearly a quarter of a century working for the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester, NY, Todd Sankes found himself at the age of 48 without a job and facing the prospect of starting all over again.

Having studied business and computer science during college, Todd had worked 24 years in the IT department for Kodak and had loved the family atmosphere of the company.

"When you looked at the Eastman Kodak directory, it was nothing but families here," he laughed.

However, Kodak couldn't keep up with the times when consumer reliance on film dissipated with the advent of digital cameras.

"When I started, 68,000 people worked for Eastman Kodak, and when I left a little over 12 years ago, it was a thousand," he recalled. "So, it wasn't much fun watching people lose their jobs and seeing Kodak not being able to turn it around."

Wanting more control of his work situation, Todd opted to look into franchise businesses in which to invest.

Based on his background, he had a variety of suitable options, including a fitness center — a seemingly good fit for a man who played basketball at Dowling College. However, only one franchise gave off the family atmosphere that he felt when working at Kodak: Martinizing Dry Cleaning.

In 2011, he started a new Martinizing location in Fairport, NY, a suburb of Rochester, which had no on-premises drycleaners at that time. The location was strategically sound, but there was a lot of work needing to be done.

"Nobody had been in that space before. Basically, when they opened the doors and showed us, it was a dirt floor with just a shell of a store," he noted. "From there, they designed the whole plant for me so it was brand spanking new when it opened, as far as lobby to equipment to everything."

Martinizing helped with a marketing plan to attract customers and Todd went to work.

"I just started out with myself and one presser who did the pants, the silks and the shirts and me at the front counter," he said.

From the start, there was definitely one kind of business that Todd wanted to avoid being: a discount cleaners.

"I did not want to be a drycleaner who offered coupons and the lowest price," he explained. "My thing was customer service and quality and that's one thing I learned at Eastman Kodak. They taught me those traits, especially in customer service."

In terms of competitiveness, that was never a problem for Todd. Playing Division II men's basketball had honed that quality in him, not to mention it fostered an appreciation for teamwork.

Those qualities have helped Todd's Martinizing location grow over the years, but even businesses on solid footing struggled mightily during the pandemic.

"When the pandemic hit, we went down 80% even though we were an essential business," he recalled. "Driving into work, I was basically the only one on the road sometimes in the morning. It really hit hard."

Since then, business has improved quite a bit, but Todd isn't taking any chances with its future.



martinizing.com/fairport

Todd Sankes

Martinizing Dry Cleaning
Fairport, NY

"I think now you have just got to keep up with the technology and your online presence. You have to keep your Facebook page and all that up-to-date because if you go to somebody's Facebook page and they don't post in a month or two, it doesn't reflect well on the business," he emphasized.

When a business casts an impressive reflection, however, there's no telling what might happen. Not long ago, Todd was approached by the L.A.-based film production company PF100 to use his cleaners as a site for an NFL commercial by the sports apparel company Fanatics. Originally, he was confused and thought they were selling him an ad.

The NFL commercial's script featured Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin, who many might recall suffered a cardiac arrest on the field during a game against Cincinnati on Jan. 2 of this year.

For Todd, it was like a dream come true. "I'm a big Buffalo Bills fan. I went to one of their Super Bowls. I have season tickets and everything," he said.

In order to use his business as the commercial setting, it would require it to be closed all day on a Monday (the busiest of days, naturally) for a 12 to 14 hour shoot, plus the crew would need another seven hours on Sunday to set everything up properly.

"They basically compensated me for the revenue I lost," Todd said. "But, when she showed me the script — literally, they needed parking spots for 32 RVs and two technical trucks. I was like, 'This is major. Wow!' And then they're shipping in 600 NFL uniforms — this is the real deal!"

On the day of filming, work began at 6 a.m. By that time, Todd's Martinizing plant had been covered on the outside and none of his lights inside were even turned

on. The crew had their own. Even though the Martinizing store featured state-of-the-art technology, the commercial didn't really show much of it.

The ad features two drycleaning plant employees discussing some of the exciting storylines in the NFL season ahead — humorously trying to avoid jinxing any team in the process.

family got to meet Damar Hamlin who was on set that day to be featured in the ad's final scene.

"We met him — what a nice young gentleman, really down-to-earth, well grounded," he noted. "We said, 'Welcome to Martinizing,' and he said, 'Glad to be here. Thank you.'"

Throughout the process, several

While the imagery revolves around a sea of multi-colored jerseys moving along on conveyors, other details in the commercial suggest a less tech-savvy plant. The tailor works with an old sewing machine. There is a service bell at the counter.

"It looks like a 1980s drycleaners," Todd said. "It looks more like a city drycleaner."

In fact, the exterior of the fictitious "Fanatics Cleaners" was taken from another less modern plant in the area.

All day long, Todd had a front row seat to the filming. As an additional highlight, he and his

takes were required for each scene, often doing the same scenes over and over again but often with different lines of dialog. Such was the case with the end scene featuring Hamlin.

"The one I liked is the one when they just handed him the uniform and said, 'Welcome back.' I told my son, 'I hope they use that one. It really hits home because of what happened to him,'" Todd said. "And, sure enough, when I saw the commercial, that's the one they used."

For those who would like to view the commercial in its entirety, go to YouTube.com and type in "Fanatics Cleaners" in the search engine.



The commercial crew brought their own lighting with them (left photo) to Todd's Martinizing store. Todd and his family enjoyed spending the day watching the filming and having the opportunity to meet Damar Hamlin, who plays safety for the Buffalo Bills (photo below) and has recovered from his on-field cardiac arrest earlier this year.



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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

A quality product is determined by the details

Some plant owners seem to be too busy to run their plants. They get caught up in the day-to-day trials and tribulations.

They are the quintessential, textbook reactive managers. This happens because they are behind the error curve.

message them. Shirts are unwearable, so they need to be rewashed and repressed.

Complaints lead to refunds. Dissatisfaction climaxes and customers will be lost, therefore dwindling piece counts always need to be addressed, one way or another.

problems caused by poor quality, perhaps the real problem was that an employee needs to be retrained, a wrench needed to be turned or a pad needed to be replaced.

But, a manager caught up in the vortex of attempting to cure symptoms while in the midst of mounting operational issues, doesn't see the root causes of problems. He only deals with the results. We commonly refer to this as a firefighter.

It is difficult to see the minutia, much less, deal with it. It takes a skilled manager to always seek out the root cause of a problem. It often requires a manager that has skills in every job in every department.

I am able to accept that some managers will never have this skill set and will need to rely on the competence of their staff for certain things.

Still, I see evidence that managers run their plants with blinders on.



It's hard to understand what you see in this photo above. This is not an anomaly. I have seen this and photographed it several times.

Allowing this is a result of being so caught up in the big picture that you no longer see the details.

I hear managers say, all too often, that they don't worry about the little things. They admit to looking at the big picture, only. This is hazardous. Every procedure in every department exists for a reason and its enforcement is critical.

Read this column as a whole with this adage in mind: *How do you prevent big problems? Take care of the little ones!* I can't be sure what happened to the pictured shirt. Was it repressed? If so the result was reduced productivity.

Was it sent to touch-up? If so, unnecessary effort and labor is a direct result.

Was the presser corrected? If so, follow-up supervision

is essential. If not, there is little guarantee that this will not recur.

The key is to go back to basics. Understand the need for the details and underscore their importance.

Every procedure has a reason and every detail contributes to the bottom line is its unique way.

"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 laundries 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.

A manager caught up in the vortex of attempting to cure symptoms while in the midst of mounting operational issues, doesn't see the root cause of problems. He only deals with the results. We commonly refer to this as a firefighter.

An elementary example of this is the manager who spends a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the end result of, say, poorly pressed shirts.

Employees are hired and trained to inspect and touch up. Customers are complaining, so he needs to

If a careful analysis ever does take place in order to isolate the root cause of the problem, at times it is found to be something that is far, far easier to remedy than dealing with what that problem has caused — customer dissatisfaction.

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CINET hosts next global awards in 2024

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countries like Holland, it will be over 20%.”

One global trend of cleaning business owners noticed by Diana Vollmer, executive board member of CINET, is a willingness to invest in the latest technology.

“What we see with successful cleaners is they are embracing AI (artificial intelligence) and they are embracing automation and they are embracing new ideas that the industry has been traditionally very reluctant to invest in,” she said. “And most cleaners, traditionally, thought they had to be face to face with clients, but the customized communication is so good now. The industry is still resisting the state-of-the-art approach.”

Participating in the program

Taking part in the CINET Global Best Practices Program is easy and it’s open to all cleaners. “You just apply by filling out a form – include as much data on your company as you would like to have evaluated. Pictures, animations – all those things – are helpful,” Wennekes explained.

After the submissions are sent in, a winner will be picked for each country by a panel of 20 independent jury members that do not evaluate their own country’s submissions. “The top end score is the winner. No discussions,” Wennekes said. “By doing so, we try to be as independent and as neutral as possible to give everybody a chance.”

Winners of each country’s

contest will be invited to compete on an international level during Texcare International 2024 in November of next year in Frankfurt, Germany. There are three separate award categories – Sustainability, Innovation and Overall Award – and each award is granted for three business types: small, medium and industrial.

It’s hard to imagine that anybody who participates actually loses. After all, there is much to learn from other countries as CINET also shares presentations of all of the valuable insight that it gained from all of the competing cleaners since the beginning.

“We have so many really outstanding cleaners in North America and they’re just not participating at a level that

they should be,” Vollmer noted. “I think they need to know how much they can learn from the rest of the world. I think, generally, we’re pretty insular.”

“So, not only is it a learning experience for everybody no matter how good they are, it is a sharing experience for everybody to open their eyes to what happening in the rest of the world and how people are making it work. I mean there is a Dutch company that is using the post office as their delivery,” she continued.

Even winners of the program stand to learn a lot from other companies across the world. Last year’s winner in the category of small retail cleaners – Jan’s Professional Cleaners of Clio, MI – has

found it to be an enlightening experience overall.

“Was it fun to be the best in the country and the best in the world? Absolutely. It was quite an honor,” noted owner Jan Barlow. “If you look at the scoring – I didn’t win by a lot. Some of these other things these other companies are doing and the community service – it is huge! It is so cool!”

“As Americans, we think we’ve got the corner of the market, but I don’t know – not so much in the drycleaning/laundry industry,” she continued. “Participating opened my eyes to the possibilities in the global drycleaning and laundry marketplace to concepts I had never imagined. We have lots of similarities between our businesses, but there are also initiatives stretched beyond anything we had seen.”

Mike Harris, owner of Oceanside Cleaners in Jacksonville, FL, strongly agreed with Barlow. His was the first North American company to win the Global Best Practices Award for Retail Dry Cleaners in 2020.

“It is unbelievable what some of these – not only American companies, but internationally – what we’re trying to do with sustainability,” he said. “I mean, we don’t have an endless supply of water. It is finite. Sustainability – internationally – they are probably years ahead of us. It’s pretty amazing what they are trying to do over there.”

Perhaps the best reason to participate, though, is to be able to meet people from other countries who share the common language of drycleaning.

“It’s amazing. You see people who have never met each other coming from all over the world become best friends in just one day,” Wennekes laughed. “They communicate with each other and build up their personal network.”

In turn, CINET compiles a wealth of knowledge from the world’s most successful cleaners and passes it along to the entire industry.

Still, Wennekes would also like to see more participating from cleaners from this country.

“I think the U.S. has a lot to offer the world and can teach the other parts of the world in some aspects,” he said.

For more information, visit CINET’s official website at www.cinet-online.com where you can obtain a submission form and register your business to be eligible in the Global Best Practices Awards.

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BY DAN EISEN

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5) Solvent relative humidity — less than 80%.

Spotting Chemical Quality

The chemicals that I teach their spotters are environmentally safe and efficient. The quality and efficiency of spotting chemicals vary from company to company.

1) **Neutral lubricant.** This is one of the most important spotting agents that spotters use for effective stain re-

moval. Proper use of neutral lubricant avoids using more aggressive chemicals for wet side stain removal.

To achieve the highest standards in drycleaning all loads are run with a white test sample fabric.

Neutral lubricants should be diluted with at least half water to insure that flushing is quick and efficient. Concentrated lubricants cause spotters to hold the steam gun too close for flushing and more apt to cause rings.

2) **Tannin formulas.** The tannin formulas used are slightly acid and blended with a high quality lubricant.

3) **Protein formulas.** The protein formulas used are slightly alkaline and do not contain ammonia. They are safe on silk and other delicate fabrics.

4) **Oily type paint removers.** We used those agents that do not contain trichlorethylene and can be flushed wet or dry. These agents are slightly alkaline in nature.

5) **Oily type ink removers.** We used an acid-based environmentally safe agent that can be flushed wet or dry. They can be used with a tannin formula and other dry side agents to help remove difficult ink and stains.

6) **Lanolin-based ink removers.** They are slightly alkaline in nature and can be combined with a protein formula for more effective results.

7) **Leveling agents.** We used a soy bean-based leveling agent for removing rings from wet side spotting.

Wetcleaning

Most drycleaners wet-clean using anionic detergents with a softening agent to achieve a better feel on silks and other fabrics. A cationic detergent is used with a softening agent.

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

Recently, **GreenEarth Cleaning** named **Tim Maxwell** as its chief executive officer. Since 2003, Maxwell had previously served as president of the company. In his new role as CEO, he will continue oversight of GreenEarth and the company's network of affiliates. At this time, GreenEarth's proprietary products and processes are available at more than 6,000 points of consumer contact around the globe.



“What has been most gratifying to me over the past 20-plus years, has been the commitment by so many members of both the affiliate network, and the staff at GreenEarth to innovate the system to not only reduce energy and additive usage, but provide the lowest overall operational cost to garment care providers,” said Maxwell. “Expansion of our affiliate network has been deliberate and measured over the past 24

years. We are proud to include some of the finest garment care providers in the world among our Membership — whether that be a 7-Star hotel in Dubai, the holder of the Royal Warrant in England, or a family-run counter in Minneapolis.”

Maxwell also added, “Providing a kinder clean in even more markets in the coming years is a challenge accepted for the GreenEarth Team.” For more information, visit greenearthcleaning.com.

America's Best Cleaners (ABC) hosted its first live studio event for its WorkFlow suite of programs and training and development services on July 20-22, 2023, in Chicago, IL. Led by ABC Senior Consultant **Liz Davies** and Executive Director **Chris White**, the three-day event was built around the principles of production management for cleaners. Sixteen leaders from across the ABC affiliation came together to build a community exchanging best business practices, systems development and coaching techniques for team success.

In response to the rapidly

changing labor landscape and the loss of technical knowledge in the drycleaning industry, ABC created the WorkFlow suite of products and services to support its affiliates in developing strong and sustainable leaders within their organizations.

“This event marks the first in a series of WorkFlow Studio live events, which complement our WorkFlow Connect Leadership monthly meetings and our WorkFlow customized systems development and training materials,” noted White. “Our affiliates who deal with high-end couture fashions daily need to continuously develop and implement systems and skills to keep up with the ever-changing fashion landscape and the latest technologies. These trainings ensure they stay at the forefront of providing the premium service our clientele expects.”

The training events were hosted at the Sankosha USA headquarters in Chicago, IL, where attendees could take advantage of Sankosha's state-of-the-art training facilities and production lab.

ProfitFest heads to NH next month

Continued from page 1
(members) or \$340 (non-members). The cost for additional registrants is \$240 (members) or \$290 (non-members).

Attendees may also choose to register for just the Saturday or Sunday sessions only.

The cost is \$240 for members and \$265 for non-members for Saturday.

For Sunday sessions only, members pay \$60 and non-members pay \$75.

NEFA has also acquired a special discounted room rate

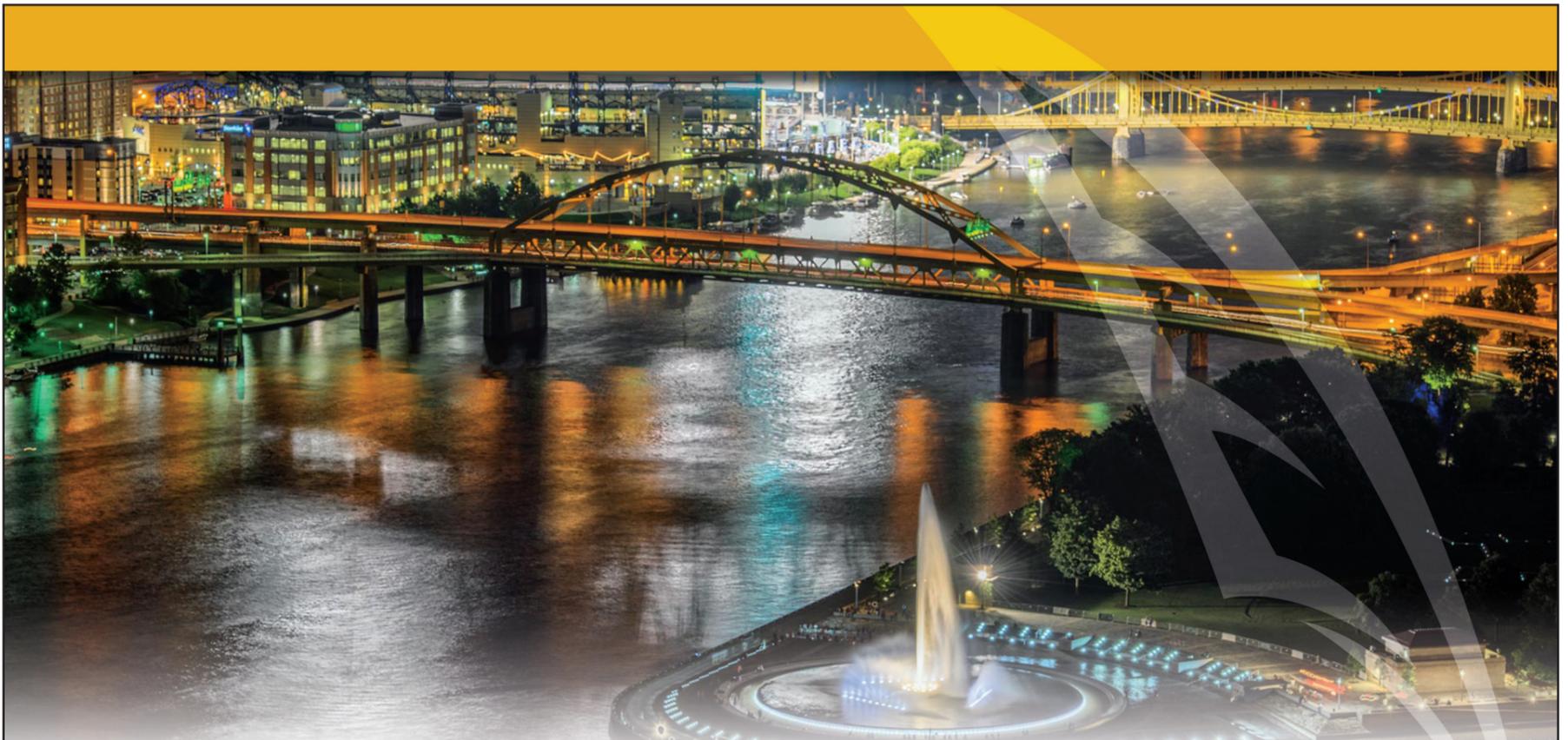
at the Artisan Hotel at Tuscany Village for those attending ProfitFest 2023.

There is a nightly rate of \$189 based on double occupancy for the Artisan, which is the Marriott's Tribute Portfolio hotel in New Hampshire and is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2023.

For links to hotel reservations and conference registration, visit the association at www.nefabricare.com or contact them directly by calling (617) 791-0128.



Dan Eisen (second from left) presents an Award of Excellence to Carlos Gonzales (holding award), Moses Diaz (far left) and Ray Sanchez (far right) for their work at First Class Cleaners of Orlando, FL. Diaz works as director of production, Gonzalez is the spot removal technician and Sanchez is supervisor of the cleaning department.



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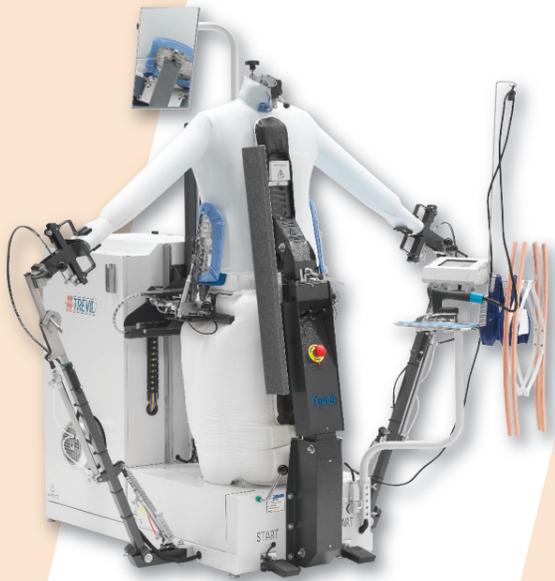


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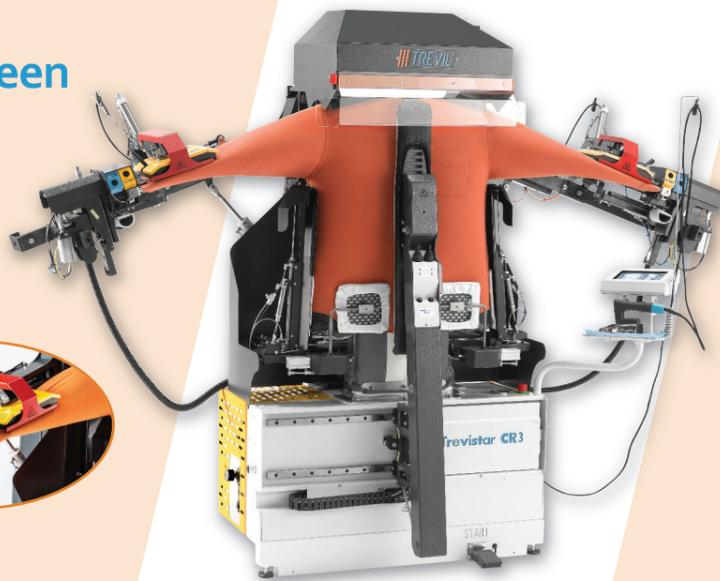
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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Learning how to better value your time

Time. It is one of the only things you can never get back. You can never go back and recapture what has passed. Isn't that why we work as hard as we do — to have the time to do what we want?

However, I see many around me in this industry who work and never find the time for themselves. There always seems to be an excuse, or they don't know how. I look back at my career in this industry and can't believe that a little over 31 years have passed by so quickly.

Recently, I read a book that helped me do a reset on how I look at the time I may have left and how to make the most of it.

All Methods for Management members have also read this book since. It came highly recommended by our Canadian Bureau member, Kathleen Crouse of Crouse Cleaners. The title of this life-changing book is *Die with Zero* by Bill Perkins.

I highly recommend that every business owner read it; it may change how you look at

your time's value.

I bring this up because it may change your view on using your time, talents and treasure. We tend to be hoarders in these areas without always seeing how we can affect those around us. But, in reality you need to

Much of this thought process became abruptly apparent this past March 4th. That was the day my 98-year-old father moved into our home. We are fortunate to have been able to say "Yes" when he called to see if the offer was still open.

Philippines.

He was to be the Skipper (Captain) of an LCT or Landing Craft Tank at the age of 21, serving in the South Pacific through the war's end.

They don't make them like they did back then. They

soon-to-be six) buildings. WWII veterans who can still make it in to visit are treated like royalty.

Now, we have stories and history we never would have had. This interview is now permanently available at the museum for anyone to watch.

Charlie has also forced everyone in the family to slow down a little bit. He's 98 years old, folks. He doesn't move very fast.

I plan an extra 30 minutes for any trip or errand, which gives me more time to talk.

This move has also allowed him to get to know his five great-grandchildren, even swimming with them.

Well, maybe *swimming* is a little generous... let's say *floating*.

He has also been able to experience the success of my three children and his grandchildren.

He asks about the brewery daily, which is another story entirely.

Next month, we will return to Building Value in your company and for those around you.

Until then, get the book, make some time, and read. I promise you will be happy you did.

[Editor's Note: For more information about the World War II Museum located in New Orleans, LA, go to their site at: www.nationalww2museum.org]

After we care for ourselves, we should look for ways to impact those around us. It reminds me of the instructions you receive on an airplane: "Put your mask on first before helping others."

take control, whether it is with family, causes, charities, or church, so you can witness what you can provide.

After we care for ourselves, we should look for ways to impact those around us.

It reminds me of the instructions you receive on an airplane. I've certainly heard many times, "Put your mask on first before helping others."

You are useless to anyone if you are not in the best condition to help others.

Six months have now passed, and what a blessing it has been — although, not without many challenges. Steps, diet, health issues, and the numerous doctor appointments require adjustments.

But, how many of us get the honor of caring for our parents?

As he wants to be called, *Charlie* is a World War II Navy veteran.

He was pulled out of his second semester of senior year at Wadena High School in Minnesota to enter the Navy V-12 Officer training program.

Then, he went to Midshipman school in New York City and shipped to the

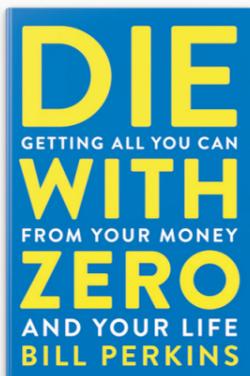
have been called "The Greatest Generation" for good reason.

Along with my two brothers this past July, we escorted Charlie to New Orleans to visit the National WWII Museum.

I have found that WWII vets rarely talk about their experiences in that war. But there we were, with a personal guide while Charlie got whisked off for a two-and-a-half hour video interview.

The gentleman conducting the interview had plenty of experience finding ways to pull memories out of that head of his.

This museum is an amazing place housed in five (and





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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@mfi.com.

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KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

New regulations will favor unionization

I am writing this column several days after that Monday holiday in September that celebrates working people. While most people call it Labor Day, I prefer to call it Management Day. Managers are working people, and in many cases, they work harder than the people they supervise.

Even when a manager does not have to exert more physical energy than a rank-and-file employee, the additional stress makes the manager's job more difficult. I see no reason not to celebrate managers and business owners with their own holiday or give them a fair share of Labor Day.

Unfortunately, managers and business owners are rarely congratulated for their hard work. The Republican Party hardly does anything to protect supervisors and managers when they are in power, and, when they try, they are thwarted by the Democratic Party.

When the Democrats are in power, they make it harder and harder for managers to supervise employees by enacting laws that

protect poorly performing workers from discipline or discharge. When their efforts are resisted, the Democrats take advantage of the government agencies to enact regulations that could not pass Congress if they were put up for a vote.

Recently, we were presented with two such examples of government agencies acting like a legislative body to enact onerous regulations or make decisions that could not possibly pass Congress. The first involves the Department of Labor; the second involves the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Allow me to explain. There is nothing preventing Congress from amending the Fair Labor Standards Act to provide for fewer overtime exemptions for salaried employees. Under longstanding regulations, salaried employees making more than \$684 per week may be exempt from overtime based on their duties.

Congress could very easily raise that salary amount, but it just has not. In fact, the Senate has yet to con-

firm the nominee for Secretary of Labor, who enforces the Fair Labor Standards Act. Yet, that very same acting secretary has proposed regulations to raise the salary amount to \$1,059 per week. The last time this was attempted under the Obama Administration, the Courts blocked its implementation. Nevertheless, unless the Courts act the same this time — no guarantee of that — the change will become enforceable law. Future increases tied to inflation will be automatic.

The National Labor Relations Act was passed in 1935, and it provided a mechanism for employees to vote in secret whether they wanted to be represented by a union. The NLRB has conducted elections pretty much the same way since 1935. The NLRB under the Obama Administration was captured by organized labor and enacted some improper and horrible regulations to make it easier for companies to be unionized. These regulations were based on the principle that if unions were losing elections by secret

ballot, then the election procedures were the problem, not unionization itself.

Effective Dec. 26, 2023, new regulations will make it harder to resist unionization with strong arguments made to their employees that unions are not the answers to their concerns.

In fact, unions would prefer to have unionization determined without secret ballot elections, just like managers would prefer to terminate bad employees without the risk of discrimination lawsuits. The NLRB, however, tried, and for the most part, the worst regulations were abandoned during the Trump era. In case you were not paying attention, Joseph Biden is now president, and he claims to be the most pro-union president in history.

Effective December 26, 2023, (unless blocked by the Courts or Congress), new regulations will make it harder for employers to resist unionization with strong arguments made to their employees that unions are not the answer to their concerns. Elections will be held quickly, and any issues on eligibility to vote will be handled after the election, not before.

In other words, imagine holding an election for president where everyone gets to cast a vote — unregistered voters, tourists, children and animals — and the government decides which votes to count after the election is over. In addition, there is no time for any of the candidates except the one favored by unions to explain why he or she deserves your vote.

I have saved the best for last, however. The NLRB decided a case in August that favors union organizing by card check instead of a secret ballot election. To get an election, a union must have signed authorization cards from at least thirty percent (30%) of the unit of employees it is seeking to represent.

In most cases, unions get signed cards from more than half the employees because it needs a majority to win any election held. Importantly, it is easier to pressure

an employee to sign a card than convince an employee to vote for the union in a secret ballot election.

The Board has held that when a union demands recognition with a majority of employee-signed cards, the employer must either recognize and bargain with the union or petition the NLRB itself for a secret ballot election. If the employer does not file a petition for an election, the union becomes the representative of the employees without an election.

The Board also ruled that if the employer committed an unfair labor practice that would require setting aside the election, the NLRB will no longer order a second election. Rather, the Board will issue a bargaining order, in effect throwing out the employer's petition and nullifying the votes of the majority of employees.

Going back to the presidential election analogy, if the government decides that something happened during the election that unfairly influenced voters, it can ignore the vote and order that the loser be made president. In the case of the NLRB, it has become so insanely pro-union that every time the union loses an election, the Board will undoubtedly want to find that the employer unfairly influenced voters. Let's hope the Courts slam the NLRB, but that could take years.

Let me end with some advice. If you have any inkling of union attempts to unionize your workers, hire an experienced management labor attorney immediately to get advice.

In the "old days," there was time to educate employees about the downsides of unionization, and the NLRB was not composed of rabid anti-employer zealots who cannot possibly understand why people might not want a union. Unless you want to be unionized overnight, get advice as soon as you can.

Frank Kollman is a partner in the law firm of Kollman & Saucier, PA, in Baltimore, MD. He can be reached by phone at (410) 727-4300 or fax (410) 727-4391. His firm's web site can be found at www.kollmanlaw.com. It has articles, sample policies, news and other information on employee/employer relations.

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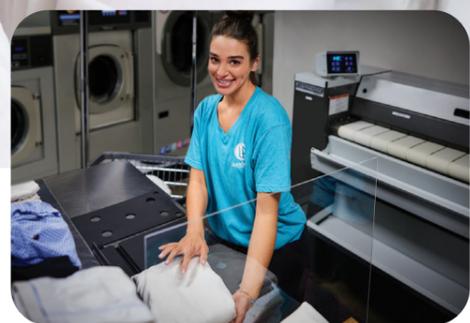
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TURNAROUND TIME



BY JOHN ROTHROCK

Perfecting focus: systems and workflows

Welcome to the third installment of a series exploring the concept, **The Focus Method**. If you haven't read the previous articles, I highly recommend starting there. [Editor's Note: see Aug. 2023 and Sept. 2023 under our back issue archives online at www.nationalclothesline.com]

Now, we dive into the challenging and often divisive topic of **Systems and Workflows**. Let's put aside the centralized vs. decen-

tralized production debate, as even the most astute operators will admit that decentralized package plants are far more efficient. Our focus is on how production moves through your plant and how to streamline the process for efficiency and cost savings, regardless of your business model.

Drycleaning plants often grapple with complex processes, rising labor costs, and the need for impeccable customer service. These

challenges can be addressed through well-designed systems. Every plant and operator has unique systems and workflows for moving production. These systems have been developed over many years, often through the sweat equity of owners and team members, as well as capital constraints.

Lessons learned through trial and error have guided many of these decisions. Consequently, even small changes can evoke strong

emotional responses from key stakeholders that can halt changes before they begin or sabotage them, leading to limited or no success. However, there are strategies to mitigate this pushback if you decide to make changes.

Furthermore, changing equipment, plant layout, building flow, computer systems, and team member training can be costly and time-consuming. Thus, most owners shy away from mak-

ing any changes, regardless of the financial costs involved. If you aspire to become an exceptional operator, you and your team must become comfortable with change to the extent that it becomes part of your company's culture.

Perfecting company systems and workflows is crucial for the long-term sustainability of both your business and the drycleaning industry. Avoiding necessary changes in your systems and workflows can be costly in the long run.

There are several essential components to improving drycleaning systems and workflows. We will begin by examining how clothing moves through your facility.

Recently, I had the opportunity to tour a plant in another state. One of the first things that caught my eye was the numerous signs on the walls. One of the most prominent read: "One Day Service Available by Request; drop off by 9 a.m., ready by 5 p.m." However, due to COVID, this company no longer offered the one-day service touted by the sign. As I would later discover, next-day service was the quickest option (by request only), with their typical speed being three days. What a confusing message to send to customers.

My initial tour was self-guided. I decided to approach it as a new employee with no prior experience, attempting to determine how production flowed through the building. Behind the call office wall was a labyrinth of walkways and work areas. Throughout the building, red and blue bags and buggies were scattered about, and there were even separate areas at each workstation labeled "rush" service in red.

Clothing zig-zagged back and forth across the building multiple times during the cleaning process alone, not to mention the finishing and inspection areas. Respectfully, it was a jumbled mess that even an experienced operator would struggle with, let alone a new hire.

One surprising discovery was the work left unfinished. Not only did every workstation have a stack of unfinished clothing waiting, but there were also half-pressed garments left on the presses! It appeared as

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John Rothrock

Perfecting focus: systems and workflows

Continued from page 22
though the shift bell had rung, and everyone immediately stopped what they were doing, clocked out, and left for the day.

After my walkthrough, I spoke directly with a CSR who was on-site assisting with the tour. I learned approximately 60% of the customers each day requested next-day service and were regular customers. This meant that 60% of the work performed each day was considered a "rush service" or an exception to their normal way of doing things.

Without criticizing the well-intentioned owner, the policy of having two speeds of service inadvertently penalizes their loyal customers. From an outsider's perspective, regular customers have to essentially beg, or rather, request, the faster service they desire. Remember, the market judges you not based on what you can do for exceptions but on what you typically do on average. Consequently, this operation is perceived by the community as a three-day cleaner.

I requested a walkthrough of the plant with the owner,

giving them an opportunity to explain how items moved through the building. It turned out to be overly complicated.

This operator and their management team spent most of the day managing exceptions and activities rather than systems and workstations. Can you imagine how many times a day team members ask, "Are these clothes due today?"

Now, imagine this same company making one simple change: processing all orders received today the following day, without making any exceptions.

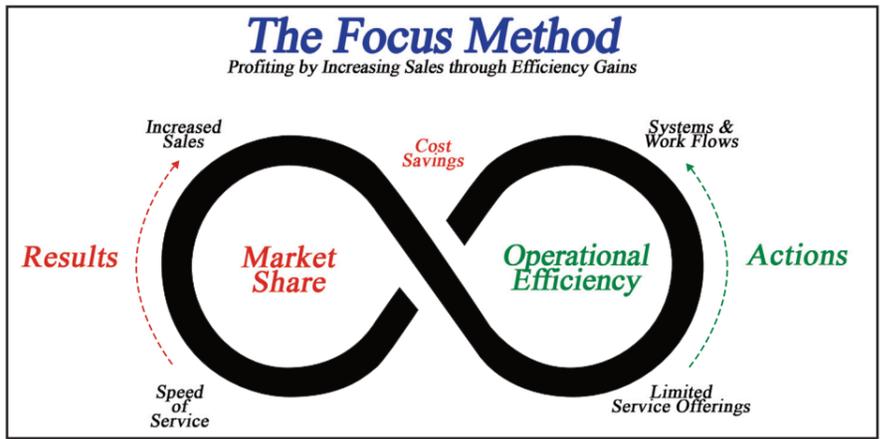
There would be no more red and blue buggies. No more asking customers when they needed clothes. No more rushing 60% of the work through the cleaning process. No more answering questions "When is this due?" Consider how many fewer problems this company would have each day.

In reality, this approach would involve processing the same volume of work each day, only changing when the work is performed and how it moves through the building. While this is an extreme example, I'm

confident readers can identify similar operational deficiencies with an honest self-evaluation of their plant.

My challenge to you this month is to examine your operation, evaluate how clothes move through your building, and determine if you're guilty of maintaining multiple speeds of service. Look for ways to enhance how orders move through the cleaning process.

Ideally, the workflow should move throughout your building in a large circular pattern: starting at the counter, moving to inspection/cleaning, then to the appropriate finishing area, followed by inspection/assembly, and finally completing the circle by being moved to storage near the counter. If possible, there should be separate workflow circles for each cleaning method (i.e., drycleaning and laundry) that never intersect.



To achieve the best results, clothes should be sorted by cleaning method at the "mark-in" workstation before being moved to the back of the house for cleaning. This will enable you to maintain separate workflow circles for each cleaning method, and customer orders can be reunited and hung together in the final storage area.

Streamlining workflows can result in better resource allocation, increased efficiency, and reduced stress. Concentrating on core services (as discussed last month) simplifies operations and boosts customer satisfaction.

Taking a fresh look at how clothes move through

your cleaning process is an excellent place to begin your journey toward efficiency improvement as it forms the foundation of every successful company. Even the smallest changes to improve the workflow can yield surprising results.

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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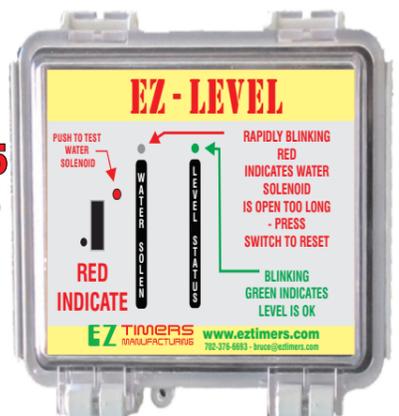
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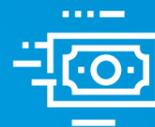
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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Water and steam: What's it all about?

This month begins a series of articles that will cover boilers and the most common type of steam system used in drycleaning and laundry operations. Steam systems are designed to provide heat to finishing equipment, coils to use heat air and moisture, and heat for conditioning garments to facilitate wrinkle and spot removal.

The essential parts of this system are as follows:

- 1) Boiler
- 2) Regulators
- 3) Steam piping
- 4) Equipment that uses steam
- 5) Steam traps
- 6) Return piping
- 7) Return tank

Let's begin with the essence of the steam system, which is **water**. As we all know, water can exist in three forms called states. The solid state is ice, the liquid state is water, and the gaseous state is steam. We will only be concentrating on water's liquid and gaseous states. For our pur-

poses, the most exciting and important qualities of water take place during the *change of state* from liquid (water) to gas (steam) and then back again to water (condensate).

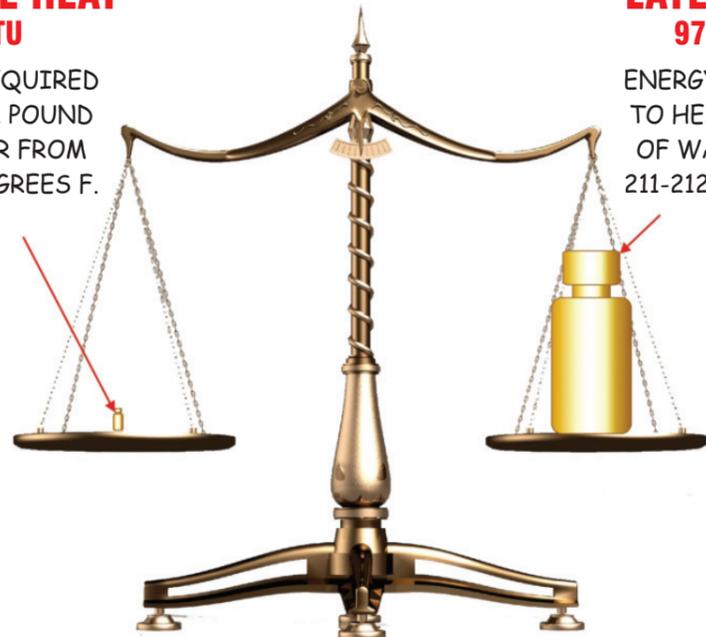
This latent heat effect allows heat energy to be stored in the form of steam and delivered to areas where it is needed via steam piping.

We need to take a short course in energy measurement to understand these changes better. Let's talk about the BTU. The BTU (British thermal unit) is a quantity of heat energy that will raise one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit. Water boils and turns

SENSIBLE AND LATENT HEAT COMPARISON

SENSIBLE HEAT 1 BTU

ENERGY REQUIRED TO HEAT 1 POUND OF WATER FROM 210-211 DEGREES F.



LATENT HEAT 970.5 BTU

ENERGY REQUIRED TO HEAT 1 POUND OF WATER FROM 211-212 DEGREES F.

to steam at 212° F. (at sea level). Let's do a little arithmetic. Say you have a pot with a pound of water in it (a little over 15 oz). It came out of the tap at 65° F, and you want to boil it. You

would subtract 65 from 212 and come up with a 147-degree difference.

One would think that by adding 147 BTUs of heat energy to the water, you would turn that pound of water into steam. That would be correct except for a unique property of water called **latent heat**, and it's that latent heat that makes steam systems so effective.

The heat energy added to raise the temperature of the pound of water from 65° F to 147° F is called **sensible heat**, and up to 212° F it works just fine. That indeed took 147 BTUs worth of heat energy, and you've now reached 212° F, the temperature at which the water changes state to steam. However, pushing that pound of water over that threshold and converting it into steam will require an addition of 976.57 more BTUs of heat energy. This 976.57 additional BTUs is the **latent heat**.

Over 6.4 times the amount of energy is required to change that pound of water at 212° F to steam (the temperature of which is also 212° F) than it took to heat that same pound of water from 65° to 212° F. Therein lies the *magic* of steam.

Conversely, when that steam changes back into water, a process known as condensation (what boiler

people call condensate), which we call return water. That 976.57 BTUs of latent heat energy is released to its surroundings. For example, heating the head of that legger you're pressing pants on, or the fins of the coil used to heat the air during the drying cycle of your cleaning machine, or, if you're unlucky, providing you with an instant burn when you rest your elbow against a steam pipe.

This latent heat effect allows heat energy to be stored in the form of steam and delivered to areas where it is needed via steam piping, releasing the heat energy to perform work by condensing it back into the water.

The water is then returned to the boiler return tank as condensate.

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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How do you know when automation is needed?

by **JIM GROSHANS**
Guest Columnist

If you were like most kids, you probably watched cartoons. Do you remember *The Flintstones*, the modern Stone Age family? What about *The Jetsons*? Over 60 years ago, *The Jetsons* captivated audiences with futuristic technology and automation. Who knew back then we would see some of the technologies depicted in cartoons become a part of our daily lives?

After recently revisiting *The Jetsons* via YouTube, this author noticed things like Smart watches, flatscreen TVs, video calls (we now know as Zoom meetings) and moving sidewalks.



Fast forward to 2023 and focus on the garment care industry. If you have been around the industry for many years, you've probably seen some technology and automation advances. Just in case you are more like Fred Flintstone than

George Jetson, keep reading as this article discusses some automation benefits that may help you improve your business operations and profits.

First, let's define *automation*: the technique of making an apparatus, a process, or a system operate automatically. Second, think about the many elements involved in running and managing a successful business. If you carefully walk through your process, can you see the efficiencies and inefficiencies?

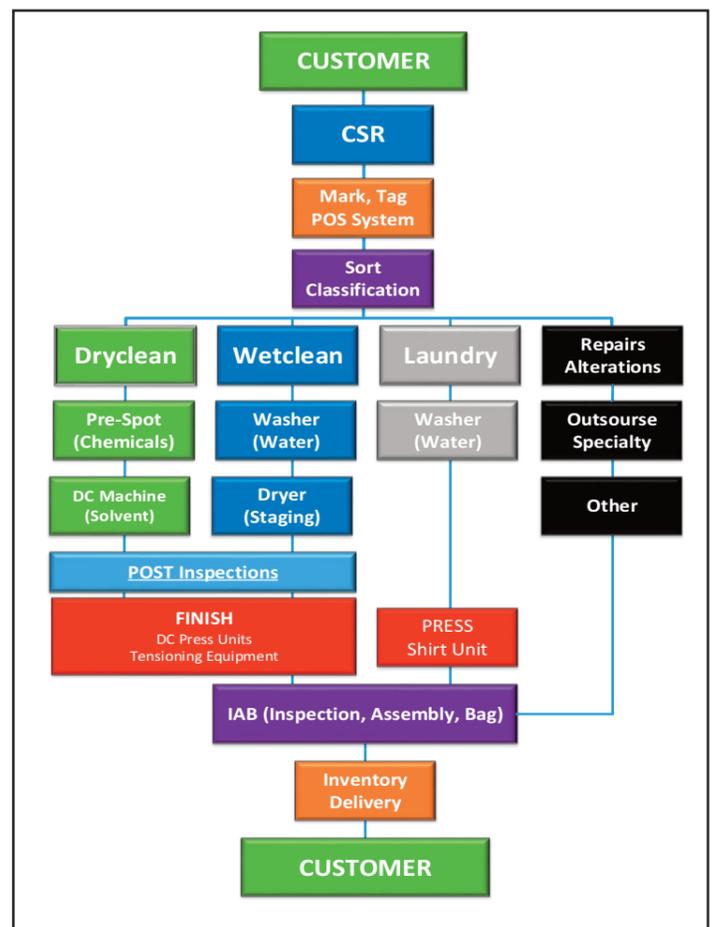
Evaluate the basic three P's: **Product**, **Process** and **People**. What can you do to improve the product? What can you do to improve the process? What can you do to improve people? Analyze how many times a garment is "touched" in your operation. At any point, are there areas where you can touch garments less? Next, consider whether technology and automation can help improve any inefficiencies you have in your operation.

Many, if not all, businesses are doing more with less. More volume, more

profits, and more challenges with less people, less experience, and hopefully, less touches. Every time you touch a garment there is a cost associated with that touch. When processing garments, there is a specific flow from the front of house, through back of house operations to return the finished garments to the customer. Less touches, more automation and more profits.

The plant workflow graphic shown on the right is typical of most garment care operations and shows many of those touchpoints. When it gets to finishing and pressing, your operation may have opportunities to reduce touchpoints through automation. Additionally, fashion and labor can or will dictate if you need to invest in more automation. Here are few examples why you should consider automation:

- **Steam cabinets.** Fashion is weaving more synthetic blended fabrics into the operation. Install a steam cabinet near the area prior to finishing. This technology can easily pass over 300 pieces per



hour and produces less heat than a steam tunnel. After the short cycle, many garments will bypass the finishing area and go straight to IAB (Inspection, Assembly, Bag). Once again reduce the number of garments to be finished. Less touches.

- **Automatic garment baggers.** Baggers are definitely labor reducing as they can package over 200 bundles per hour and will cut the perfect length of poly every time. Auto-baggers pair well with auto or quick sorting systems by assembling orders prior to packaging.

- **Shirt units.** This is an area where fashion and labor both drive engineering changes. Shirts are different than 20 years ago. New shirt units produce more consistent shirts, improved quality, with fewer touchups. With the touch of a button, arms on the equipment automatically adjust to accommodate small, fitted shirts.

The arms drop approximately five inches lower than a standard classic fit shirt preventing a crease or hard bow near the upper arm. Less touchups require less operators and, of course, reduces touches.

- **Tensioning equipment.** Wetcleaning has moved more volume away from solvents. Wetcleaning is more than washing in water; it is a system. The system incorporates controls: chemistry,

temperatures, mechanical action, and proper finishing.

The best wetcleaning process typically has 2 to 4% shrinkage, and tensioning equipment will restore the garments to original shape and size. Tensioning equipment allows for less experienced labor. Many garments require little actual pressing once removed from the tensioning equipment.

No-crease pants are very fashionable. No crease means *no crease*, not a crease on the side of the leg. Tensioning pants toppers easily accomplish the proper finish. At the end of the cycle, hang the pants and touch up any hem clamp marks.

Hopefully, you've enjoyed this blast from the past. Remember don't be a Fred Flintstone; don't be stuck in the Stone Age. Be a George Jetson! Embrace technology. Utilize automation to improve your operation and profits.

Jim Groshans has spent over 40 years gathering business and drycleaning knowledge. He grew up working in his family's business, Sauk Valley Cleaners in northern Illinois. Additionally, Jim has obtained all the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) certifications: CPD, CPW and CED. As sales manager with Unipress Corp., Jim continues to provide results for clients seeking consistent quality and productivity expectations for their pressing matters.

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 Life goes on
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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, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association have decided to move the event back...

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, JF has many know him begins his 20th year consulting teams...

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