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DLI launches drycleaning industry Hall of Fame

The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute's (DLI) Board of Directors recently announced the creation of the DLI Hall of Fame Award, a recognition aimed at honoring outstanding individuals and businesses within the drycleaning and laundry industry.

This all-new award is set to become the industry's highest honor, celebrating excellence in leadership, business operations, community involvement, environmental stewardship and a deep-seated passion for the industry.

"At a recent board meeting, we all thought of people in the industry who helped us grow personally and professionally, and how we might honor them," explained Norman Way of Puritan Cleaners, who is director of District 2. "We know others feel the same and the DLI Hall of Fame

Award seems like the perfect way to commend and recognize these impactful leaders who left a lasting effect on us all."

Inaugural inductees into DLI's Hall of Fame will include past recipients of the association's Diamond Achievement Award. That distinguished group is comprised of Barney Deden, Stan Golomb, Chris Edwards, Jeff Miller, Sid Tuchman, Don Fawcett, Walter "Buster" Bell and Milt Chortkoff.

That elite group of eight of the drycleaning industry



Fawcett Miller Chortkoff Tuchman



Bell Edwards Golomb Deden

on April 1, DLI will begin accepting nominations for its Hall of Fame Award from and for any industry participant,

regardless of membership in any organization. Nomination forms will be made available on DLI's website.

The DLI Board will review all applications and a decision will be announced to the industry by Sept. 15 of this year.

Mary Scalco, CEO of the association, expressed her enthusiasm for the new initiative. She said, "Professional

drycleaning and laundry operators from all over the world contribute to the betterment of our industry every day. Our goal with the Hall of Fame is to recognize contributions made by any professional in our industry who has made a positive impact and honor them as examples for other members of the industry. All cleaning professionals, regardless of membership, are welcome to nominate industry professionals they see as inspirational for the award."

To be eligible for nomination, candidates must have a minimum of ten years experience working in the drycleaning and laundry industry. The selection process will involve a two-stage voting process by DLI's Hall of Fame Committee, and the awardees will be publicly announced and celebrated. For more information visit www.DLionline.org/HoF.

Competing for a chance to be the world's best

Early in January, the International Committee of Textile Care (CINET) were present at two U.S. events as part of the association's Global Best Practices Awards program.

The first was held on Jan. 9 and hosted by Hallak Cleaners in Hackensack, NJ; a second event took place on Jan. 12 at Margaret's Cleaners in San Diego, CA. The events are a way for U.S. cleaners to display

and see its latest achievements in terms of sustainability, technology and innovation.

Later this year, CINET will present the winners of the 6th edition of its Global Best Practices Awards during TexCare International in Frankfurt, Germany. For more information on the program, contact DianeVollmer@AscendConsultingGroup.net or call (415) 577-6544.



At the CINET event hosted by Hallak Cleaners of Hackensack, NJ, attendees were able to learn more about the organization's Global Best Practices Awards program which honors the latest achievements in sustainability, technology and innovation for the cleaning industry.

Closing in on a century of cleaning



Since 1927, the Eck family have cleaned clothes for Williamsport, PA, and the surrounding areas, including fourth-generation owner Michael, who took over the reins right before the pandemic. See page 6 for the full story.

Sneak Peek Inside

- 8 An illuminating visit to India**
Following a trip overseas, Bob Edwards shares some of his thoughts on India's growing cleaning industry.
- 12 From drab to fab**
It's time to take a hard look at your business to find the areas that require some freshening up.
- 20 Second-in-Command**
It is much harder to sell your business when everything comes through you — it's time to relinquish command.
- 26 Avoid wage-related audits**
Keeping abreast of all the state and federal wage-and-hour laws can help you avoid making mistakes.

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Taking time to honor some industry GOATs

In the world of sports, fans love to make their cases for who they believe is the GOAT (greatest of all time) for a particular sport. In basketball, is it Michael Jordan? Magic Johnson? Bill Russell? Bird, Lebron, Abdul-Jabbar? The list goes on and on, as does the debate. The same is true of football. Tom Brady is sure to get a big share of the votes, but others might prefer Jerry Rice, Walter Payton or Lawrence Taylor. Fans absolutely love to assert evidence for their player of choice, whether it's Wayne Gretzky, Babe Ruth or David Beckham.

Now, the industry will have a chance to do the same with drycleaners. The Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI) has announced the creation of the DLI Hall of Fame — a place where all those individuals who could be considered a GOAT reside. DLI's first recipients of the honor are an elite group of eight cleaners. The association opted to automatically induct those who have won its highest Award of Excellence in the past: the Diamond Achievement Award.

First up is **Barney Deden**, who received it in 1999. He and his wife Patty were former teachers who invested their lifesavings in their Martinizing drycleaning business in Omaha, NE, in 1981. In the 1990s, Barney was instrumental in leading the charge to improve and protect the industry through his legislative efforts. He was a big advocate for the industry, perhaps most known for his tenacity in advocating the "Barton bill."

The next Diamond Achievement winner was **Stan Golomb** in 2001. He passed away the following year at the age of 77, having spent most of his life in the drycleaning industry in some form or another. He began at his family's cleaning business in Boston at the age of 8. Later, he founded The Golomb Group and would become a profound marketing and advertising mentor for many.

In 2005, **Chris Edwards** of A Cleaner World in NC became another recipient of the distinguished honor for his work enhancing the industry's image through community service programs such as Read to Ride, Give a Kid a Coat and a hanger recycling program that, at the time, had already raised \$50,000 to purchase trees to be planted in the community. Additionally, he had played a key

role in helping drycleaners through the FabriCare Foundation and in developing a state cleanup fund.

The next winner, from 2007, was **Jeff Miller**, owner of Miller's Fine Drycleaning of Hendersonville, NC. He was widely known for his role as creator of the Honor Flight network that raises money and assists war veterans in visiting memorials, including all of the travel requirements, free of charge.

In 2011, **Sid Tuchman**, a former owner of Tuchman Cleaners in Indianapolis, IN, won the Diamond Achievement Award. In He began work as an industry consultant in 1987 by starting the Tuchman Advisory Group so he could pass along his business acumen and knowledge to many cleaners who deeply enjoyed working with him and credited him for much of their success.

In 2015, DLI designated **Don Fawcett** as a recipient of its highest honor. As a second-generation owner of Dependable Cleaners in Massachusetts, he grew his father's business exceptionally well even while volunteering to serve on numerous industry boards, including a stint as president of DLI. His body of knowledge was only surpassed by his willingness to share it with others.

Walter "Buster" Bell was announced in 2018 as a Diamond Achievement winner. He joined the family business, Bell Laundry & Cleaners in Spartanburg, SC, in 1954, and was always particularly inquisitive about new methods and technologies for garment care, making him one of the industry's sharpest minds.

Also announced as a winner that year was **Milt Chortkoff**, who started Milt & Edie's Drycleaners at the age of 17 and would successfully run it for more than seven decades. He was quite popular for his warmth, sense of humor and generous spirit and was honored with the award posthumously.

And that's just the first eight. There are so many other amazing individuals out there who have greatly mattered to this industry. It is nice to have a chance to throw out some of your own GOATs and nominate the people you feel deserve to be inducted among the industry's best. Who will you pick? It's time to go plead your case.

Contents

News & Features

- 6 Closing in on a century** Since 1927, the Eck family have cleaned clothes for the people of Williamsport, PA.
- 8 A visit to India** Bob Edwards offers his perspective on the cleaning industry in India following a recent trip.
- 22 Dateline**
- 30 Classifieds**

Columns

- 10 Dan Eisen** Follow these proper spotting procedures in order to keep your chemical usage efficient.

- 12 John Rothrock** Take a good look at your entire plant; then take another. What needs to be updated?

- 14 Don Desrosiers** Are you ready to impress every customer who walks through your door? You should be.

- 20 Kermit Engh** Selecting a strong second-in-command will go a long way in helping you free up your time.

- 24 Bruce Grossman** Let's take a look at how your boiler delivers steam to your machinery.

- 26 Frank Kollman** Keeping up with wage-and-hour laws can help make sure you're paying employees properly.

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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FAXON CLEANERS

Close to a century

For close to a century, the Eck family have cleaned clothes for the people of Williamsport, PA, and the surrounding areas. The family's history in the industry began 97 years ago.

"My great-grandfather Maurice bought a drycleaning business back in 1927," explained Michael Eck, who currently owns the business. "I think he had seven boys. Around the 1930s, he changed the name to X Cleaners."

Originally, it was known as Handy Dollar Cleaner. At one point, another of the local family-owned business went by the name Eck's Cleaners and Dyers.

"Fast forward a whole bunch of years, my grandfather and one of his brothers had some drycleaners and they took over their dad's shop and opened a couple more," Michael added. "Then, they kind of consolidated all of those locations in 1956 when we moved to the current location for Faxon Cleaners."

Regardless of the name, the mission was the same: offer quality cleaning at an affordable price. Achieving that often meant all hands on deck.

"My dad had three brothers and two sisters, but the boys were always working at the plant as kids. It's kind of the way we've always done it," Michael said. "The way my dad explains it, they did a lot of rug cleaning back then so they would always be cleaning rugs and hanging them up to dry and that kind of stuff. Then, in the summers, they'd go hang out in the cold storage because we had our own in-house fur storage then. We had a vault and it was the only air-conditioned place they could get to so they'd hang out in a vault in the summertime."

Many years later, Michael carried on the tradition as he helped out around the plant to spend more time with his father.

"I was here every Sunday for a couple of hours doing maintenance and raking the stills at eight years old," he said. "I guess me and my dad are really close, so if he was doing something, I wanted to do it."

During high school, Michael performed a lot of property maintenance work for his uncle, as well. After graduation, he moved west to earn a degree from the University of Colorado and

become a civil engineer. His first job out of college was an interesting one.

"I actually ran an earthquake simulation research lab for the University of Colorado for three years," Michael recalled. "It was really cool. We had the second largest centrifuge in the country. We could build small-scale models and spin them really fast to basically am-

a bit of a draw. I like managing people even though it's what makes me want to pull my hair out some days — which is why it's buzzed really short," he laughed.

Michael also really enjoyed the fast pace of managing the business and the overall challenge. After discussing it with his father, he moved back to

store," Michael said. "So, we cover a huge area doing that. We'll go over an hour to service customers that way."

In addition to expanding their service reach, Faxon Cleaners has also widened its service offerings throughout the decades, always trying to keep up with changing fashions.

"Just like our logo says, 'We do it all.'



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Michael
Eck

Faxon Cleaners
Williamsport, PA

plify gravity. We could build mock buildings and then shake them. We'd run actual earthquake waveforms over them and see what they would do to the building."

It was enjoyable work to test the safety limits of structural engineering, but an unfortunate accident required Michael to come back home to Williamsport.

"My dad was mountain biking and he had a really serious accident — blew his leg apart like a stick," Michael said. "Basically, a stick went into a shin as he pedaled downed. The stick was attached to a log... it went into his shin bone, rode up his shin bone until it hit his knee, and it just obliterated the top of his tibia and fibula."

While his father rehabilitated his leg, Michael found himself enjoying being back in his hometown working at Faxon.

"I liked how everybody knew Faxon Cleaners — you know what I mean? Not that it's a glorious business, but everybody knows us because we're one of the biggest games in town. That was

Williamsport in 2010 to work full-time with the family business. Then, in 2019, he purchased it and became a fourth-generation owner.

Fifteen months into his new role as owner, Michael had to contend with the problems created by the pandemic. When lockdowns were announced and work slowed, he had to send employees home. On top of that, Pennsylvania originally declared that cleaners were not "essential" businesses.

"So, I scrambled for 24 hours to get an exemption because I wasn't shut down. We serviced a lot of police, doctors, hospital accounts — that kind of stuff," Michael recalled. "The next day they put out a revised list and we were on it. My dad and I worked the counter. I ran a couple of deliveries a week. Then, I would clean and press. And, then when we got busy enough, I started bringing in pressers for a couple of days a week."

Today, the business has close to two dozen employees and four delivery vehicles running on the road almost daily. While Williamsport is about 3 1/2 hours from cities like Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore and Pittsburgh, the local market is much smaller.

"We don't have the luxury of 9 million people, but we also don't have the burden of 40 competitors, either," he said.

While Faxon has always offered home pick up and delivery, the delivery vehicles have been an excellent way to branch out into neighboring towns that are not large enough to host a drop store. Instead, Faxon Cleaners came up with a creative solution.

"It's a lot of small towns here. We'll go to another business in a town we're not in — so, we'll go into a hardware store or a pharmacy and say, 'We will give you X percentage if you just allow us to run pickup and delivery from your

We just have diversified and made sure we're still relevant, and then look to expand it... *not at every opportunity* — because we've had some we've passed up — but when it's right, we take the chance," Michael said.

When it comes to customer service, though, Michael would prefer not to take any chances. Good thing he has an ace in the hole.

"The luxury I have is my dad is here at least five or six days a week. Even though I bought him out, he still shows up at 8:30 a.m. every morning and doesn't leave until at least 4 o'clock," Michael said.

If the cleaners is understaffed that day, he's happy to fill in. If not, there is always something to do.

"If we have a three-day weekend, my dad calls me after the second day, saying, 'Let's go to the shop. Let's figure out something to do. Do we have anything to fix? Do we have anything to work on?'" Michael explained. "It's just his mentality and it's been ingrained in me since I was a toddler that work is not a four-letter word. If you enjoy it, it's what you do."

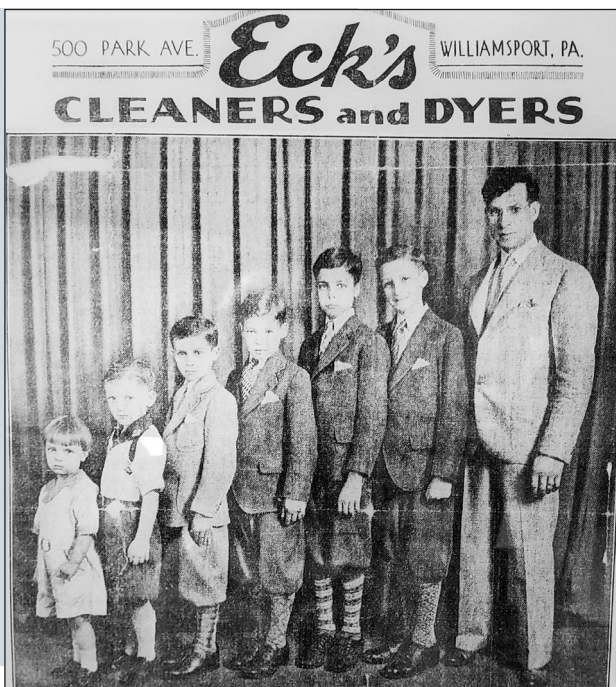
Even as the third generation of Eck family still assists with the business, Michael has continued an old family tradition with his 14-year-old daughter.

"She comes in and cleans with me on Sundays when I do all of my maintenance. Then, in the summer, she works the counter when she's not in school," Michael noted.

With a potential fifth generation to take over Faxon Cleaners some day, Michael hopes to keep the company in the best position possible to ensure success in the future.

"There's always concerns but, at the same time, I feel like where we're positioned and the relationship we have with the community that we're in a good spot," he said.

An advertisement for Faxon Cleaners (then known as Eck's Cleaners and Dyers) strongly emphasizes family participation in the Williamsport, PA, business. The ad noted, "There are eight reasons why we are changing our trade name to Eck's Cleaners and Dyers." The Eck family have been conducting cleaning business in Williamsport, PA, since 1927.





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Special Contribution**Lessons learned from the cleaning industry in India****By Bob Edwards***Regional Vice President
A.L. Wilson Chemical Co.*

December 3rd began with an early morning 100-mile drive to South India's Madurai Airport to catch a domestic Indian airline flight to New Delhi. My vacation in South India had ended, and the second half of my trip would be working with Wotek India, a Wilson Chemical distributor.

Wotek is headquartered in Dubai, UAE (United Arab Emirates). They service the laundry and drycleaning industry in many countries in the Middle East and now handle all of India, as well. Wotek conducts much of their Indian business by utilizing subcontractors to warehouse, sell and distribute products which are imported by Wotek.

These products are then sold to end users in the laundry and drycleaning market in India. Two of Wotek's key players in India are Vishal Dewan, director, and Shashi Srivastava, national sales manager. Both of these gentlemen are headquartered in New Delhi.

When I landed there, I was met by Vishal and his sales coordinator, Ms. Deepika.

It had been four years since I was in any major city in

India, so it was with a little trepidation that I got into Vishal's car and we headed into traffic.

The highway lanes are well marked, but lines in the road are practically a suggestion. Any lane can be occupied by three or more vehicles simultaneously, plus or minus an extra motorcycle or scooter.

It is quite commonplace to occasionally nick the next car's side view mirror without creating a disturbance in the flow of traffic. I saw that happen at least three times when using Uber cars in Indian cities.

It took about an hour for us to reach the Courtyard Marriott. Vishal assured me that India was working on developing its infrastructure (roads and elevated train projects) to keep up with the pace of industrial development.

I invited Vishal and Deepika to lunch at the Courtyard. Afterward, we found a table in the lounge where Vishal asked me to give him and Deepika an introduction to Wilson Chemicals.

I gave them my detailed presentation, including pictures of problem garments and solutions for troubleshooting. Then, we reviewed Vishal's objectives for our proposed six days together. We were to meet

up with Shashi Srivastava, national sales manager, work two days in New Delhi, then travel together to Mumbai for one day before going to Bangaluru for three days to make presentations and work with Wotek's subcontractors and end users.

This was going to be a very busy six days, which included late flights and early meetings. I was immensely impressed how Vishal and Shashi had thoroughly thought out and planned our itinerary.

Some meetings were in hotels where we were staying, where different vendors met us for coffee or for lunch, and we did presentations. Other sales calls were to hotel laundries and drycleaners and commercial laundries.

One major presentation took place in a rented hotel banquet room in Bangaluru where Wotek personnel also joined our meeting.

I was impressed with Shashi's knowledge of his customers, as well as his technical acumen. The three of us felt that our six days together was time well spent, which would translate into end user problem solving.

So, one might ask, "Why India?" The answers lie in the push by Mr. Modi, India's prime minister, to bring India



During a recent business trip to India, Bob Edwards (top picture) speaks to employees of Wotek, a Wilson Chemical distributor in India. Also included are two pictures of some of the typical stains that come across the spotting board in India.

into the modern world to compete with countries that were once considered "more developed."

This push is highly visible as one enters the beautiful, new Indian airports — a huge change from when I was in India four years ago.

Secondly, as I traveled I was shocked to see the sight of incredibly large manufacturing and warehousing facilities, as well as corporate headquarters and offices in very tall, new buildings. To a degree, it made me feel that this looked just like business in the U.S.

India is experiencing a huge increase in industrial production and trade. As a consequence of this growth in industry, we also see tremendous growth in the institutional market: many new and modern hotels, new hospitals, new commercial laundries, new huge drycleaning chains, as well as new schools, etc., have been created.

The Indian government has also prioritized development of tourism, creating world-class airports, and encouraging hotel development.

Demand is high; Vishal tried to get us a hotel in Mumbai. He told me that the best ones were sold out, so we took a 2-star rated hotel instead.

This rapid growth actually

has had a dynamic impact on the laundry and drycleaning industry of India, and substantial investments have been made in these industries.

All of the following new markets in India provide a reasonable incentive for manufacturers to consider India as the next new frontier: OPL (on-premise laundry) in hospitals and hotels, linen rental facilities, retail laundry franchising with government help to new business, environmentally friendly guidelines for laundry, drycleaning and wetcleaning.

I finished my six days with Vishal and Shashi with the certainty that we had accomplished an enormously important trip for Wotek India. There was a hunger for new information in the people we visited.

All in all, this would not have been as successful were it not for Shashi and Vishal's extensive knowledge of industry players, and their ability to draw people in for an in-depth presentation.

My thanks go to Mr. Naresh Verma, president and CEO of Wotek, for supporting our venture, and to Shashi and Vishal for their excellent organization and participation.

To contact Bob Edwards, send email to: BobEdwards@al-wilson.com.

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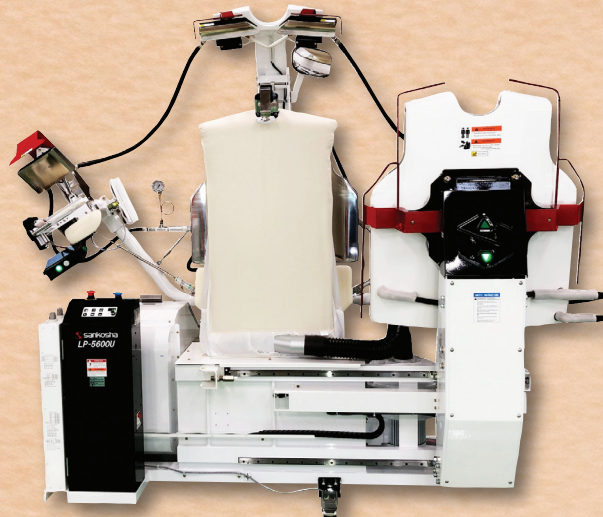
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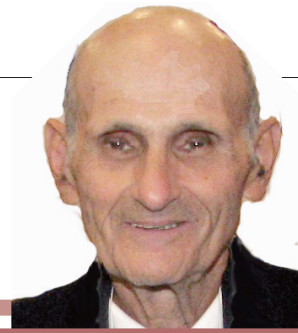


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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

More ways of cost-effective chemical use

The drycleaner today is using chemical formulations that have made spotting and wetcleaning more efficient, easier and safer.

These chemicals have improved over the ones that were used years ago.

There are differences between various manufacturers. It would be beneficial to try different products and determine the one that suits your needs.

The spotting procedures that I taught years ago — and are still being taught by NCA and DLI — has to be changed due to costs and the advancement in chemical chemistry.

You were always taught that you work a stain on the dry side first and then the wet side. This is not the best method to use for several reasons.

1) The drycleaner encounters more wet side stains

than dry side.

2) The most costly spotting products are dry side.

stains, especially ones used in combinations with wet side.

You were always taught that you work a stain on the dry side first and then the wet side. This is not the best method used for several reasons.

The wet side lubricants used today are also efficient in taking some dry side

3) In most cases you would be saving spotting steps. The neutral lubricant

you use is going to be your most important step.

The first thing to do is dilute your lubricant with water. A concentrated lubricant has very little effect on staining. It needs water to activate it.

Add four to six parts water to one part lubricant. This would also make flushing out the area easier.

The other thing we must do is to keep the steam gun at least 6 inches from the fabric in order to avoid setting the stain.

Spotting Procedure

- 1) Flush
- 2) Neutral lubricant
- 3) Mechanical action
- 4) Flush
- 5) Tannin formula
- 6) Mechanical action
- 7) Flush
- 8) Protein formula
- 9) Mechanical action
- 10) Flush
- 11) Citrus-based spotting for dry side stains
- 12) Mechanical action
- 13) Flush
- 14) Oily type paint remover — non-solvent based
- 15) Flush
- 16) Hydrogen peroxide

Dan Eisen, former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association, can be reached at (772) 579-5044, or by e-mail at danneisen39@gmail.com or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.



HENRY'S CLEANERS of Greenville, MS, purchased a new Union HXL-8025C Class 111A hydrocarbon machine from Laundry South Systems & Repair. Present at the installation were (left) Robert Harris of Laundry South Systems & Repair with Lenny Smith (right), owner of Henry's Cleaners.

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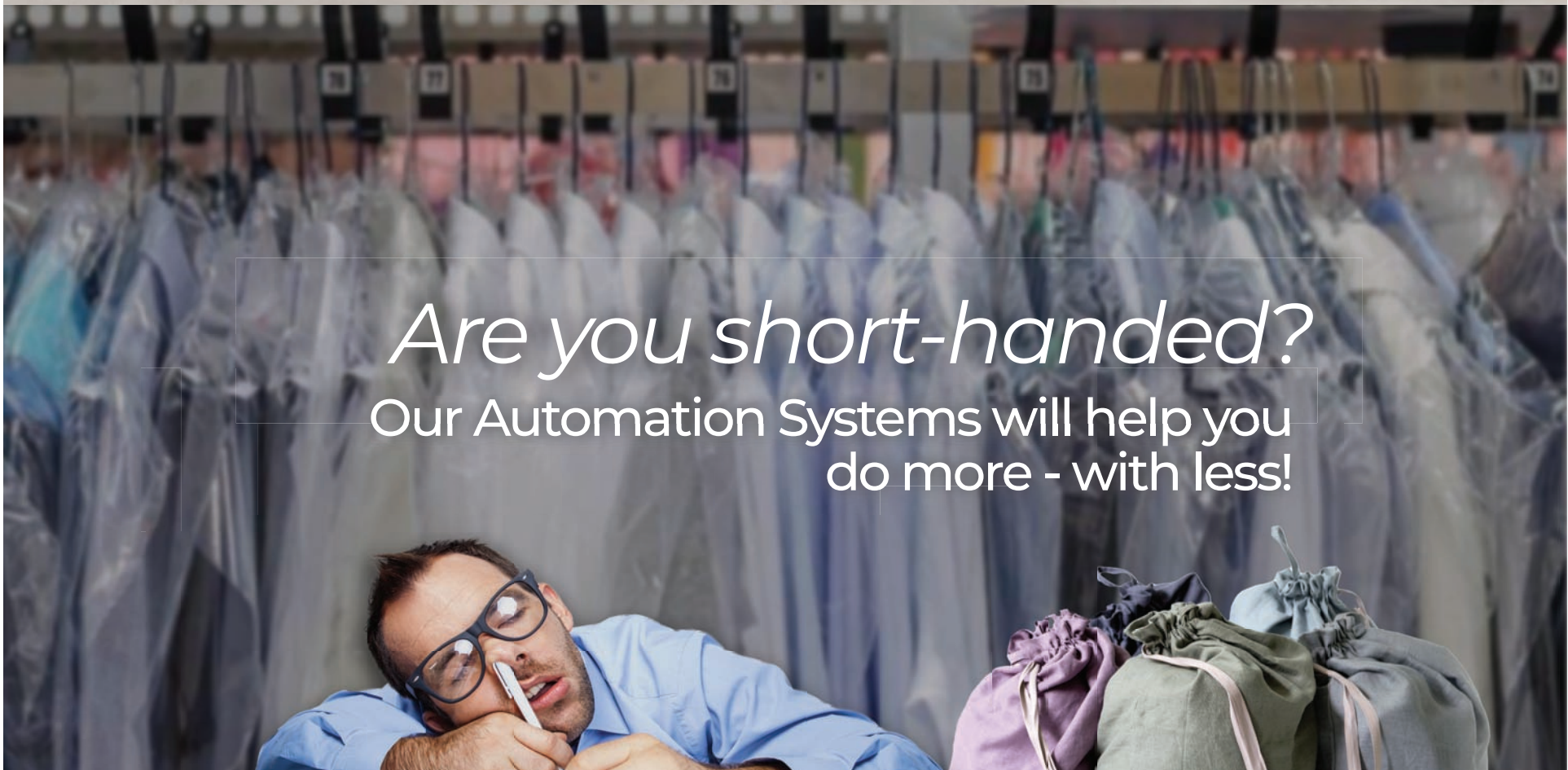
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TURNAROUND TIME



BY JOHN ROTHROCK

Flipping from drab to fab in 2024

In Tulsa, renowned for its iconic greasy hamburger joints, each local hotspot boasts a unique charm that makes it stand out. From Bill's Jumbo Burgers to Ron's Hamburgers and Chili, these establishments hold a special place in the hearts of locals, offering distinct flavors and nostalgic experiences.

Much like the rich history of Tulsa's burger joints, our drycleaning facilities also play a crucial role in the community — each with its unique story to tell.

Growing up, I was a regular at Tulsa's best burger spots, courtesy of my dad. Recently, it dawned on me that I hadn't shared these historic joints with my own kids.

During the past holiday break, when both kids joined me at work for our Coats for Kids program, I decided to rectify that.

The nostalgia hit us as we indulged in chili cheeseburgers, fresh root beer, and jalapeno fried okra dipped in gravy. The experience was awesome and the kids were hooked, asking to go back many times since.

However, during that lunch, I couldn't help but notice the run-down condition of the restaurant, something I had knowingly overlooked as a regular customer. The ceiling tiles, tinged yellow with age, sagged, and the heavily stained carpet and torn vinyl on our booth were impossible to ignore.

Despite the restaurant having a decent crowd, it wasn't as busy as it should be during a weekday noon rush. What caught my attention the most, though, was the aging clientele, devoid of any families.

Now, you might be wondering what this has to do with drycleaning.

Over the past ten years, many of Tulsa's historic burger joints have closed, leaving a void in the city's culinary landscape.

The remaining few, while still delivering quality prod-

ucts and old-fashioned service, struggle with run-down facilities and a dwindling customer base.

The parallel between these iconic burger joints and our drycleaning businesses is striking.

Our facilities, if left neglected, risk becoming relics of the past. If we don't address the signs of decline, we might find ourselves facing the same fate as those historic eateries that were unable or unwilling to adapt.

In the drycleaning industry, we also face the challenge of maintaining the essence of our establishments in the face of changing times.

Just like those nostalgic burger joints, our facilities, if left neglected, risk becoming relics of the past.

If we don't address the signs of decline, we might find ourselves facing the same fate as those historic eateries that were unable or unwilling to adapt.

As owners, it's easy to become accustomed to the daily operations of our facilities, overlooking clutter, dated surroundings, and deferred maintenance.

However, we must view our businesses through fresh eyes, just as I did with that burger joint, to identify areas that require attention.

It's crucial not only for the sake of maintaining a positive customer experience and strong employee morale, but also for the long-term survival of our businesses.

Evaluating Your Facility Critically

Begin by evaluating your facility with a critical eye. Don't limit your critique to the customer waiting area; instead, analyze your entire facility, including the parking lot, front entrance, call office, production areas, boiler room, break area and bathrooms.

Your goal is to make a comprehensive list of everything that should be addressed. In my experience, creating this list involves

walking the entire property several times, each with a different focus.

Walk the property like you are a very picky first-time customer looking for a reason not to drop off your clothing.

Next, walk the property as a maintenance man looking for work. Walk the property as if you were going to give a plant tour to a prospective employee, showcasing the work environment. Heck, walk the property like you are a state inspector or an insurance underwriter looking for violations and exposure.

Each time you walk your store, you will find more issues that could be addressed. The point of this exercise is not to be overly negative about the state of your facility but to get an honest assessment.

The mission is to create a comprehensive list that, when time and money allow, you can address. Believe me, we all have things that need to be improved in our stores.

Once you have your comprehensive list, prioritize each problem in order of importance using a scale from 1 to 5.

Any critical safety concerns or violations of federal, state, or local laws should always be addressed immediately.

In my opinion, general housekeeping and cleanliness should be taken care of next. My dad always said, "It takes someone with a college degree to know when to throw something away."

While his statement is tongue-in-cheek, the point remains that most team members do not feel empowered to throw things away.

This results in piles in the corner and shelves filled with obsolete or broken

tools, parts, equipment, and supplies. Purging your building of this hoard will go a long way to improve the employee working conditions and the appearance to customers.

Now, cleaning up the

shop doesn't have to cost a lot of money, though if you have the budget, it's certainly a wise investment in your future.

In 2024, I want to encourage you to set a goal of removing at least one small or medium thing from your list each month. Strive to remove one big item each quarter and one major item by year's end.

The Importance of Presentation

Ultimately, clients of any age seek to do business with successful companies.

Like it or not, the appearance of your shop is how you are being judged by the community. No one wants to work in a dirty, dark, and hot dungeon, and customers certainly don't want to leave their clothes there, either.

For months, I have discussed how providing faster service will attract more customers. But if your qual-

ity and service aren't an issue, maybe it's time to look in the mirror.

Are your loyal customers knowingly overlooking the condition of your store? You just might be a coat of paint and some new carpet away from appealing to a lot more customers.

Preserving the essence of our drycleaning businesses involves more than delivering quality service. It's about creating an environment that not only meets but exceeds customer expectations.

Taking a critical look at our facilities, addressing maintenance concerns, and investing in cleanliness and presentation are steps toward securing the longevity of our businesses.

In the end, a visually appealing and well-maintained shop not only attracts customers but also fosters employee morale, setting the stage for sustained success in the ever-evolving drycleaning industry.

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).



C&C IRONING of Enid, OK, recently purchased a new Columbia Sensene drycleaning system from GoHard Group. At the startup is (left) Chris Hogard, Western U.S. Sales manager with C&C Ironing owner Sal Alvarado.

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*"Reach high, for stars lie hidden in you.
Dream deep, for every dream precedes the goal."*

~ Rabindranath Tagore

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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Are you ready to impress new customers?

There are times in this business — in fact in all businesses — that present themselves as opportunities to impress new customers. Sometimes, they happen because we initiate them. Other times, they happen by chance. We can put a sign in the window that reads: This week only — Shirts 5 for \$15! (or something like that). We can promote any aspect of our business. We can announce our hours of operation, or that we are open on Sunday or the up-

coming holiday.

convenient hours or anything hardly necessary to get them to

There are times, though, that we have the opportunity to impress a new customer that we did not initiate. Are we ready for this? It can happen at any minute for any reason.

The whole idea — and this should not be news to you — is to entice a new customer into trying your service. The hope is that a new customer — brought in by a low price or

else that you think contributes to your success plan — clearly sees value in doing business with you and that the enticement that you have offered to get them in the first time is

return. The best plan will have them thinking: “This place is a bargain at twice the price.”

You have underpriced your product to get them in the store, probably pricing shirts

below cost “this week only,” but that’s OK because you should have earned your customer’s trust and respect and now they will return to pay full price and contribute to company profit.

This is one of the primary ways to earn new business. Find any way to get them in the door. Prove to them that you are worth doing business with. Earn a customer for life, in spite of the price. But, can something go wrong? Oh, yes!

Price seems to be the way we get them in the door, and shirts are usually the sacrificial lamb. It happens that I disagree with both of the points in that sentence. I don’t want to get into it today, but I’ll touch on it. Shirts are one of the trickiest items we have to service. Yet, we use that good we can be. We had better do a good job, always. If we forget a button, will that be a valid demonstration to our customer (maybe, a new customer) of our work ethic?

Price isn’t the only way to attract customers, either. It could be your convenient hours, your home delivery, your friendly staff or your prompt service. Do not make the mistake of assuming that price is all that your customers care about.

There are times, though, that we have the opportunity to impress a new customer that we did not initiate. Are we ready for this? It can happen at any minute for any reason.

My wife’s SUV had two flat tires today. The right front tire and the spare tire were both deflated, although I could limp along for a few miles if I put air in the front tire. My wife and I headed to my local tire shop first thing in the morning. I have been going to Henry’s Tire Shop for over 25 years. Henry and I went to high school together. I have no idea if he cost more or less than his competitors. I always get good service. My car is always done on time. He always has what I need in stock. My children have now become customers.

The fact is that I have never had any reason to go elsewhere... until today. When I pulled into Henry’s today at 8 am, the doors were locked even though they should have already been open for 30 minutes. Shortly, my wife realized that it was a federal holiday — President’s Day — and we de-

Continued on page 18



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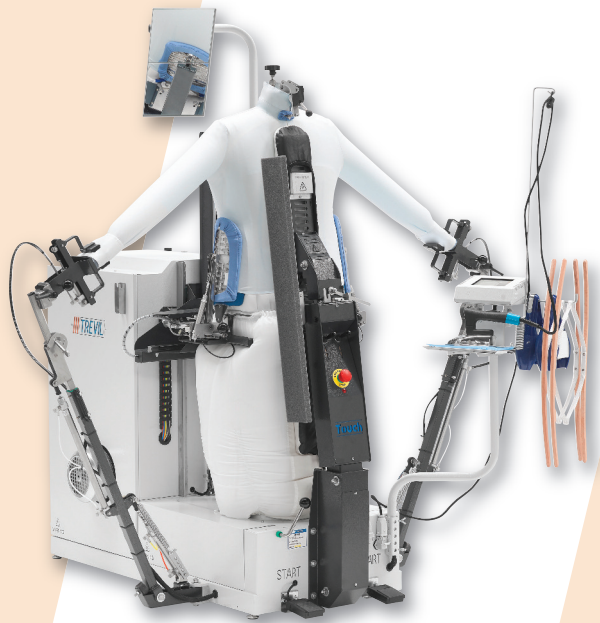


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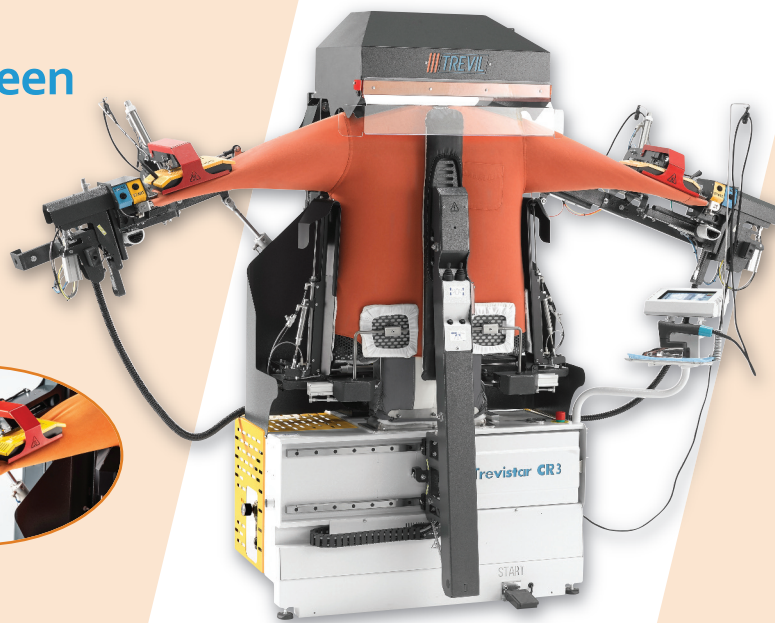
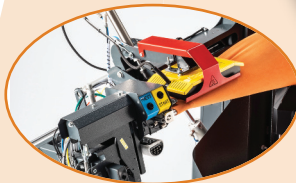
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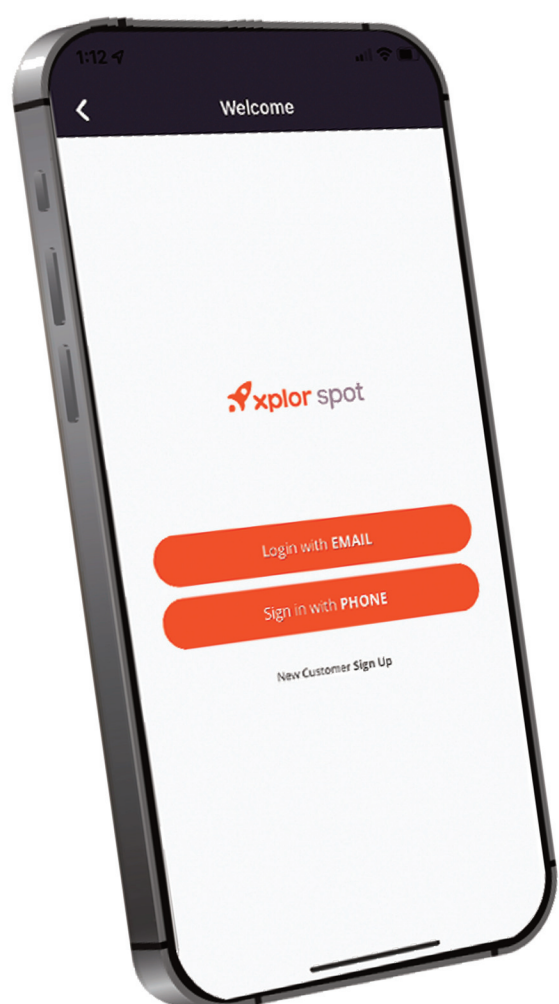
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Don Desrosiers

Are you ready to impress new customers?

Continued from page 14
duced that Henry's would not open today. Desperate for tires, we headed to a competitor's place a few miles away. Unknown to them, they had the picture-perfect opportunity to impress a new customer that they otherwise would have virtually no chance of ever attracting. Given a track-record of years of good service and quality, I wasn't going to drop Henry's like a hot potato for a few bucks off on a tire. But today, by no fault of Henry's Tire, I went to Sullivan Tire instead.

Now, before I tell you this story, let me remind you that some new customers are easier to impress than others. If Joe Smith comes to your counter for the first time because he is fed up with his regular cleaner after numerous failures, you don't have to do a whole lot to win him over. If he is used to poor, your mediocre may be perceived as great. But this is going to be the exception.

So, I go to the new tire shop. I am the first customer of the day. There are two men at the counter. One is drinking coffee and the other is on the telephone. As I approach them, I greet them with a "Good morning." They do not reciprocate. Strike one. What, pray tell, is so hard about returning such a simple greeting? My guess is

that if I had been a regular customer — someone that they recognized — I would have received a cordial welcome. The guy with the coffee ignored me

need tires?

"Can't you just fix them?" I asked. Maybe this guy was clairvoyant. I got the feeling that he was a crook. I told him

sent the car this way. I wasn't. He realized his error and fixed it, all the while I waited. As I said, I had suggested that I was in a hurry.

offended as a customer than when I am ignored at the counter.

If something is going to take 90 minutes, say 90 minutes. When I was told 30 minutes by the phone guy, he knew it wasn't going to be that quick. Don't tell a customer that his shirts will be done in an hour when you mean three hours. One hour may sound great to the customer at the time that you speak the words, but you will risk looking like a liar or a clown when the truth comes out. Conversely, if you say that his shirts will be ready in three hours and he comes back in two hours and 45 minutes and the shirts are ready, he will be impressed.

If your work area — including the front counter work area — is visible to customers, make doubly sure that what they see is impressive. Try to look it from a customer's perspective. When in the business of cleaning, having clean equipment is paramount.

The tire guys gave me the impression that they were dishonest as soon as they began speaking. If someone brings you five shirts and you immediately begin telling them how non-standard his shirts are and the related upcharges, he will not feel comfortable if the wrong words are used. "We charge \$1.90 per shirt, but starch is extra, French cuffs are extra, cold-water wash is extra and same-day service cost a dollar more per shirt."

A customer will feel uneasy hearing this in the wrong context even though an employee may feel professional and thorough. In the end, realize the importance of treating every customer as though he or she is your best customer. Remember that they become a "best" customer when you make them feel special, not routine, inconsequential, inconvenient or disruptive.

"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.

My wife and I went next door for breakfast when we were told the car would be ready in 30 minutes. After breakfast, we still waited more than an hour.

while I waited for the man on the phone to get through with what was obviously far more important than a customer. If you wish to defend them and argue that perhaps the coffee man wasn't trained to wait on customers and that the phone man was on some kind of high-level corporate, heavy-hitter teleconference, I will counter with this: Every customer needs to be recognized at once, even if its just an up-pointing index finger indicating "I'll be with you in one minute." Pretending not to notice a customer is gross.

The coffee guy left and I finally reached the top of the phone guy's "to-do" list after a minute or two. I told him that I had two flats. He said that it looked like I needed two tires. He went out to the car to see what kind of tires they were to see if he "had them in stock." I was already taken aback. How does he already know that I

to install two new tires because I want my wife to be safe, but I doubt that this was my only option. I politely indicated that I was quite busy today and fast service would be appreciated. I certainly didn't feel like I was asking for anything much. There were no other customers.

My wife and I went next door for breakfast when we were told that the car would be ready in 30 minutes. After breakfast, we still waited more than an hour. It took over 90 minutes in total. While waiting, I watched my car being serviced through the observation window in the back. It was annoying. The guy that was doing the job wasn't working. He was talking with a co-worker. My car was on a lift. His apparent inattentiveness caused him to mount the spare tire on the front of the car rather than on the tailgate. The rims are quite different and I feared that I would be pre-

Management obviously could not wave a magic wand to replace my tires, but you'd think that a hapless employee that was too busy with friendly conversation to work at normal speed would be within the power of management to correct. They remained clueless. My wife sat in the seating area and read a magazine. This lounge was a failed attempt to make waiting customers comfortable. It cannot replace careless employees and incompetent management. The only time I got a cordial tone of voice was when I was asked for a check for \$199.25 and then was thanked for it. I never got mad. I never got agitated. But, I left with reasonable certainty that I wouldn't return.

Surely, you see my point. This same thing can happen at your store and maybe it happened today. The two guys at the tire shop probably think that they did just fine. I came to their store, they took care of me, they charged me. I paid them.

My perspective is different, of course. I never felt comfortable in there. I was in unfamiliar surroundings. I needed help to feel comfortable. The phone guy and the coffee guy ignored me because they didn't recognize me. They would have greeted someone else that they knew, I firmly believe.

When someone comes to your counter with five shirts that need to be done quickly, you may do it for the guy who comes in every week, but if it's someone you don't know, you're more likely to scoff at the idea of bending over backwards for this guy, when in fact, he could become a "heavy hitter" customer. Maybe, this is your opportunity to show him what you're made of. It just may be that the guy that you've never seen before is exactly the guy that you should impress. He could be your competitor's regular customer.

So you can't greet him by his first name, but you can greet him. Making this guy feel unimportant will get you nowhere. Making him feel important and welcome *might* get you somewhere. There is nothing wrong with "might." Personally, I am never more

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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Strategies for independence and management

Whether you plan to sell your company sometime soon or in the future, now is the time to ensure that your business isn't all about you. From the latest Value Builder Score* research involving over 50,000 companies from around the globe, here are two key factors linked to the probability of getting an offer for your business when it's time to sell.

1) You're almost twice as likely to get an offer if your business can survive the hit-by-a-bus test.

For those who have been Methods for Management members, this phrase should put a smile on your face. This topic has been the subject of several Bureau meeting assignments.

If you were out of action for three months and unable to work, would your business keep running smoothly?

Just imagine that scenario, if you will. Conversely, what if you wanted to take a trip for one to three months?

It's the same question. The more your staff and customers need you, the less valuable your company will be to a potential acquirer.

One good way to start

making your business more independent is to spend less time at the office.

Start by not working evenings or weekends; don't reply if employees call.

A tactic I started using many years ago was to ask anyone who asked me a question, "What would you

do if I was not here?"

defines who you are. **2) Companies with a management team (as opposed to a sole manager) are getting offers at almost twice the rate.**

If you don't have a management team, hiring a 2iC is an excellent first move. A second-in-command can

help you balance the demands of running your company and advance your targeted exit time. Here's a four-step plan for hiring a 2iC, thanks to advice from Silicon Valley-based **Bob Sutton**, author of *Good Boss, Bad Boss*.

1) Identify someone internally. "The research is clear," says Sutton. "Unless things are screwed up, internal candidates have a strong tendency to outperform external leaders."

2) Give your 2iC prospect(s) a special project that allows them to demonstrate their leadership skills to you and the rest of your team.

At the same time, wrap your arms around those you passed over and clarify how much you value their contribution.

3) Communicate your choice. If you pick a 2iC from an internal pool, explain your choice to the rest of your team.

4) Shift from manager to coach. "The transition from manager to coach is a gradual evolution where the goal is to ask more questions, spend more time listening, and spend less time talking and directing," says Sutton.

As we've explored in this article, the key to making your business attractive for potential buyers lies in two fundamental strategies: ensuring business continuity independent of your personal involvement and establishing a robust

management team. The **hit-by-a-bus test** is more than a thought experiment; it's a critical measure of your company's resilience and independence.

By empowering your employees to make decisions and reducing your day-to-day involvement, you create a business that can thrive autonomously. Similarly, a strong management team, especially a capable second-in-command, significantly enhances your company's appeal to buyers.

These strategies, drawn from extensive research and expert advice, are not just about preparing for a future sale. They're about creating a sustainable, resilient business model that can withstand time and change.

Implementing these steps now will increase the likelihood of receiving an attractive offer when you're ready to sell and ensure your business's continued success in your absence.

Remember, the ultimate goal is to transform your business into an autonomous entity that transcends personal identity, becoming a valuable asset in its own right.

*The Value Builder Score is a cloud-based software tool that allows a business owner to assess the "sellability" of their company. The researchers at The Value Builder Score analyzes the data from over 50,000 companies in a variety of countries to understand trends in the business market, with a special focus on the liquidity of privately-held businesses.

If you don't have a management team, hiring a 2iC is an excellent first move. A second-in-command can help you balance the demands of running your company and advance your targeted exit time.



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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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“The meetings are amazing, being able to share with and learn about a lot of ideas from other peers in this specialized service, as well as spending time with some really terrific people.”

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NEWSMAKERS

With more than a dozen combined locations in Minnesota and California, **Mulberrys Garment Care** has now expanded its service to the nation's capital, opening its first East Coast store. The debut is part of a strategic expansion plan set to bring the first-class concept to markets throughout the East and across the country.

Mulberrys is distinguished by its upscale interiors, attentive and assistive staff and a "high-touch" clothing care process. Hallmarks of the luxury offering include green cleaning, complimentary shirt collar stays and reusable wooden hangers, and a 10-step-per-item detailed inspec-

tion process in which trained personnel check buttons, hem and zippers and make repairs as needed. Customers receive their items back looking and feeling like new.

"We are delighted and proud to be debuting our first East Coast store in the District," said **Dan Miller, Mulberrys' CEO**. "The area is teeming with politicians, businesspeople, dignitaries and others who dress to impress and highly value a concierge level of service. We are custom-made to cater to that category of clientele, delivering a sophisticated VIP experience that will leave them feeling honored and appreciated and their

items looking like new."

For more information, visit www.mulberrys.com.

Clean Brands recently announced the opening of a fourth **Martinizing Cleaners** location at 2602 South Cherry Lane, Fort Worth, TX. The site had previously been Cherry Lane Cleaners.

Aledo resident **Eric Monroe** is the owner of Martinizing Cleaners of Cherry Lane. He also owns three other Martinizing



Monroe

Cleaners locations in Fort Worth.

"We're extremely excited about our new location for a number of reasons. First, there's a built-in need for a cleaner in that area and I can't wait to bring the Martinizing way of cleaning to previous Cherry Lane customers," said Monroe. "Just as importantly, we've experienced tremendous growth at all our locations over the past five years. The equipment at the Cherry Lane location will help us provide even better service for our customers at all four locations."

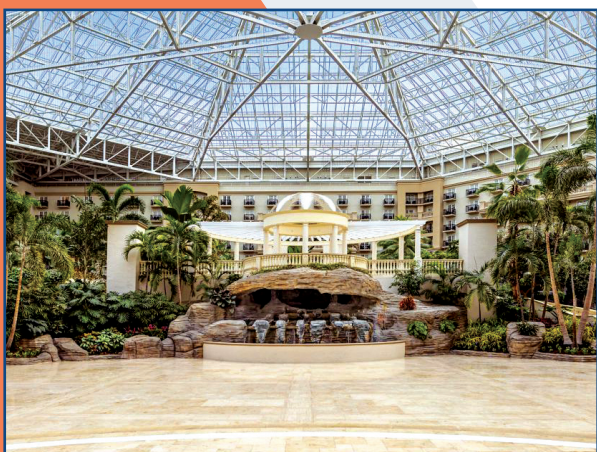
Martinizing Cleaners offers a wide array of cleaning

services, including but not limited to: drycleaning, shirt laundry, alterations, wash & fold, bulk laundry, leather cleaning, wedding gown cleaning and wedding gown preservation; and comforter cleaning.

In its five-year history in Ft. Worth, Martinizing Cleaners has established a reputation for doing good in the community. That includes offering complimentary drycleaning services for unemployed people looking to get their interview clothes cleaned prior to their appointment. For complete information on the Martinizing Cleaners franchise opportunity, visit online at www.martinizing.com.

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or Peter Blake at peter@sefa.org

The **Association of Wedding Gown Specialists (AWGS)**, a not-for-profit trade association of cleaners in eight countries who focus on caring for specialty gowns and luxury garments, recently launched an all-new website.

Designed not only to appeal to wedding couples but also to provide AWGS members with a seamless and enriching experience, the new website includes a members' only section featuring information and resources.

To celebrate the new site, AWGS is offering membership in the association at half the initial fee plus free registration for the annual meeting that will take place February 22-25, 2024, at Dublin Cleaners in Columbus, Ohio.

Key features of the website and the special membership offer include exclusive trademarks and logos, training and technical support provided by industry leaders, as well as access to resources, insights, and industry knowledge. Members also benefit from gown care labels referring brides to them, deeply discounted costs for vendor listings on top wedding websites, and special pricing on archival-quality wedding chests for preserving cherished gowns.

"The meetings are amazing, being able to share and learn about a lot of ideas from other peers in this specialized service, as well as spending time with some really terrific people. Together with our son Brian we look forward to hosting the meeting in February," noted **Greg and Margaret Butler of Dublin Cleaners**.

The special membership offer expires February 28, 2024. For more information, please contact AWGS at info@weddinggownspecialists.com.

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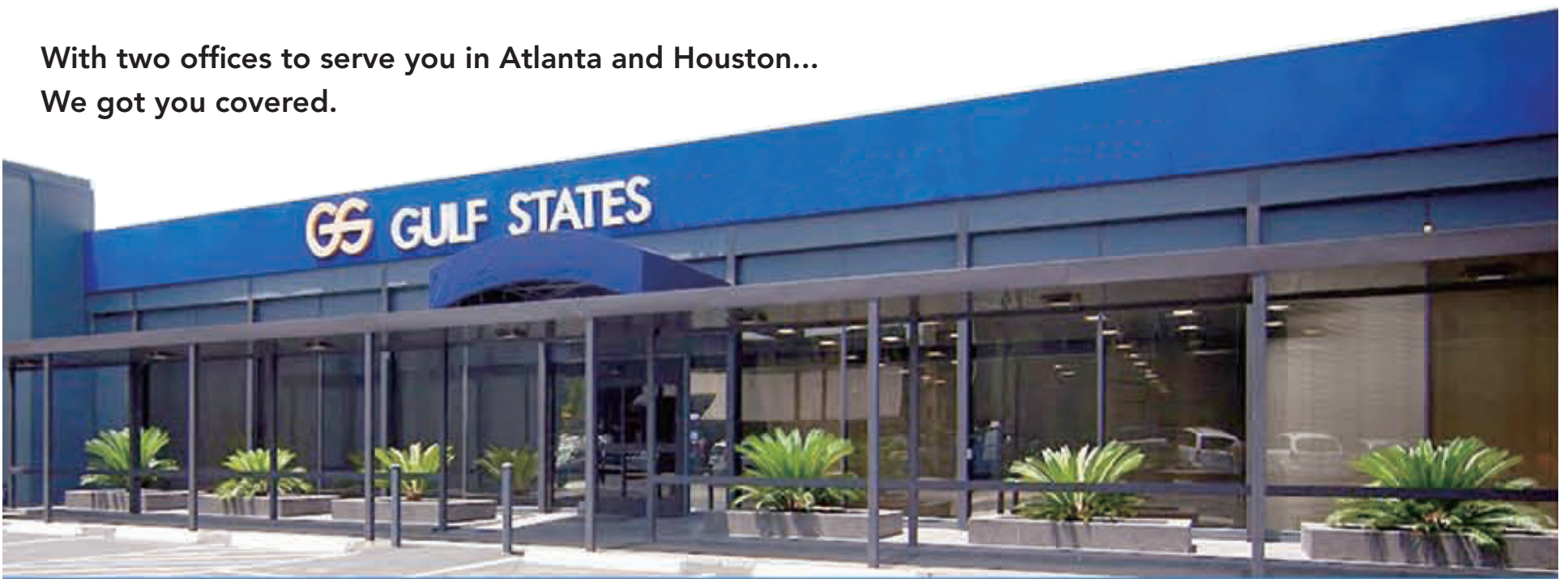
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WRENCH WORKS



BY BRUCE GROSSMAN

Controlling your boiler water level III

Now that we've learned how to generate steam by controlling the water level and the fire in a boiler, let's see how delivering this steam to the machinery and returning the condensed steam, called condensate, back to the boiler is done.

Steam Delivery System

Now, let's examine what happens to this steam in a drycleaning/laundry operation.

Steam exits the boiler through a **shut-off valve (1)** into a large main pipe called the **steam header (2)**.

The shut-off valve is usually a multi-turn round-handled globe-type valve, which is called the "steam header shut-off valve."

You may find it surprising that steam will step along at least a brisk 80 ft. per second minimum (55.5 mph) through this header pipe. It's a good idea to open and close this steam header shut-off valve once a month to keep it operating freely, and like all boiler maintenance, do this when the boiler is not under pres-

sure for safety reasons.

Branching off the steam header are smaller **drops (3)** connecting the steam header to the steam inlet of individual machines.

Each drop should have its own **shut-off valve (4)** between the header and the machine. Shut-off valves in the drops are usually of the "90 degree or 1/4 turn to shut" ball valve variety.

Now that we've got the steam to the machine let's tackle the dynamics in a pressurized vessel like a press head, press buck, or heating coil. Steam is cooled by contacting the metal of the vessel (I'll call it the machine from now on), and it changes state back to liquid water (I'll call this water condensate from now on).

This change of state releases large amounts of latent heat energy.

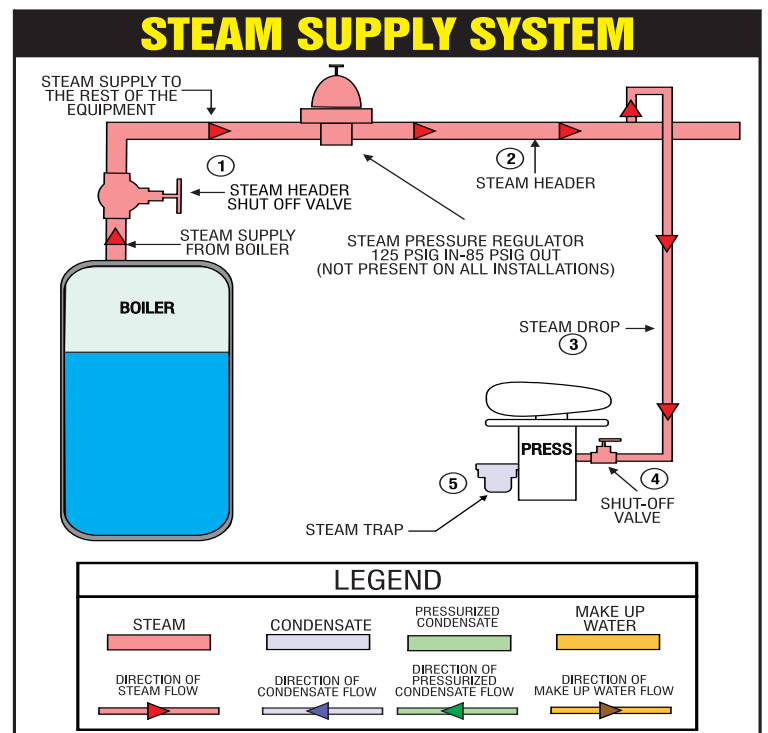
Steam contains almost all the heat energy and condensate almost none, yet they exist at the same temperature and pressure. So, as the condensate accumulates in the pressurized vessel, steam has less space to enter and re-

lease heat energy.

I'm jumping slightly ahead here, but that is the reason why when a steam trap is blocked, the machine will not heat up or just be warm.

A device called a **steam trap (5)** removes the condensate from the machine, allowing more steam to enter. Without getting into the internal workings of different types of steam traps, an **inverted bucket trap** — sort of a cylindrically shaped device, or a **thermostatic**, also called **thermodynamic trap**, which is shaped like a small rectangular block of metal or an oversized hockey puck — is almost always used in drycleaning and laundry operations.

These devices are located at the lowest point of the machine and open when activated by the accumulation of condensate, allowing the pressure of the steam entering the machine to blow the condensate out of the machine into the piping, which returns the condensate to the boiler blown

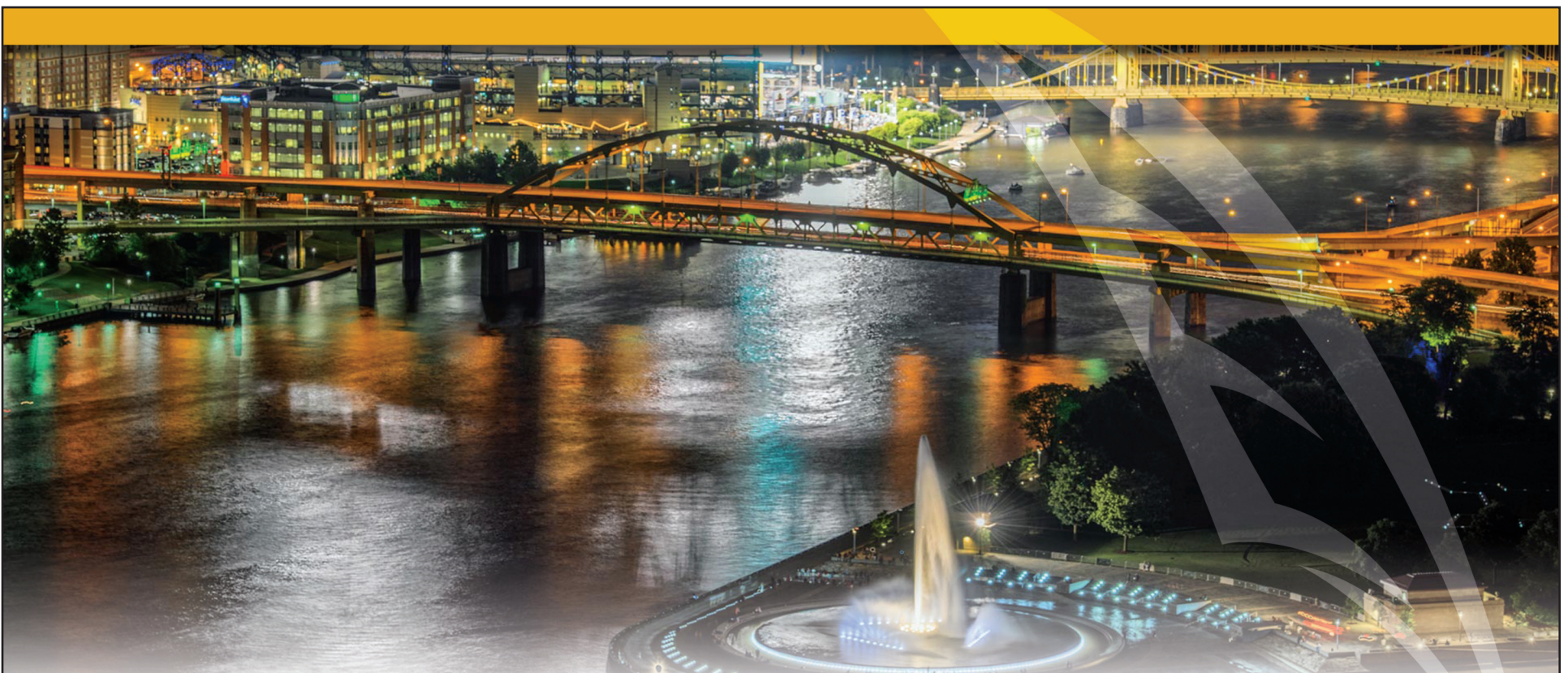


through the lines by a small amount of steam which escapes when the trap opens.

The system that conveys the condensate back to the boiler is called the condensate return system and will be covered next month.

Bruce Grossman is the Chief of R&D for EZtimers Manufacturing. EZtimers manufactures machines that make your ma-

chines run better. For those needing to replace Zero-Waste or Galaxy misters, see our SA-HARA 2 model. For those with boiler problems, check out our EZ-Level and EZ-Dose machines. For more information on EZtimers products, visit www.eztimers.com. Please address any questions or comments for Bruce to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.



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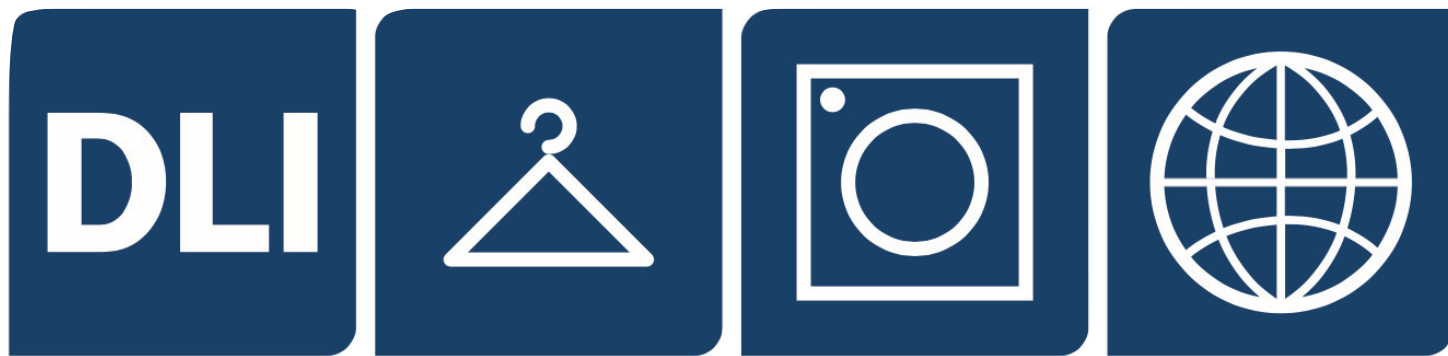


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- Learn more about the program at DLIonline.org/HoF

KEEP IT LEGAL



BY FRANK KOLLMAN

All the ins and outs of wage-and-hour laws

I saw an ad on television this morning that reminded me why many people hate lawyers. A plaintiff's attorney was seeking employees (clients) who had not been properly paid under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and state law. He said that most people do not know if they are being compensated properly, which is unfortunately true. He was more than happy to take a look at their pay stubs and ask them a few questions, all with a view toward suing their current employers. He sounded so concerned and helpful.

Congress passed the FLSA in 1938, establishing a minimum wage and a forty-hour workweek as the legal basis for overtime. While the concepts of overtime and minimum wage seem simple, the FLSA is perhaps the most complex labor law in the land after the Family and Medical Leave Act. I guarantee your company, no matter how sophisticated and careful, is violating the FLSA in some way.

For example, were you

aware that non-exempt employees must be given at least a 30-minute non-interrupted lunch hour if the company does not want to pay them for the time?

I once had a client who allowed employees who needed nicotine to take 10-minute smoke breaks outside, two times a day. He wanted to know if he should have them punch out so he would not have to pay them.

He was absolutely flabbergasted when I told him that because the breaks were less than 30 minutes, he had to pay the employees whether they punched out or not. Then again, he did not have to give them breaks at all. I never found out if he discontinued the smoke breaks or decided to dock the employees despite my legally sound advice.

The two biggest areas of contention in the wage and hour arena involve (1) hours worked and (2) exemptions from minimum wage and overtime. With respect to the hours-worked issue, employees must be paid for such things as: interrupted

lunch hours; time worked before and after a shift; time worked at home; time spent laundering uniforms (though not in all cases); travel (although not usually commuting time); training; and on-call time, except under certain circumstances.

Ironically, an employer can fire an employee for punching in early or punching out late, but he cannot refuse to pay the employee if work was performed. The law says that if you "permit" an employee to work, you must compensate him. Not stopping him from working is virtually the equivalent of permitting him to work.

As to the exemptions from overtime and minimum wage, there are regulations issued by the Department of Labor that are just as complex as the Internal Revenue Code.

First, the exemptions vary as to their coverage: some employees are exempt from minimum wage and overtime, some only overtime. Second, there are various tests that employees

have to meet to be exempt.

Third, exempt employees can lose the exemption, either temporarily or permanently, depending how they are actually compensated. Fourth, the exemptions are based on what the employee does, not how much he or she is paid, or how he or she is paid.

One thing about exemptions is relatively clear: hourly employees are rarely, if ever, exempt, unless they are computer programmers making a high hourly wage. Exemptions are for salaried employees. As one might imagine, salary issues arise all the time:

1) Can I dock a salaried employee without losing the exemption?

2) Where do commissions come in?

3) How much must the salary be?

Hourly employees making \$200,000 a year may be entitled to overtime while salaried employees making \$50,000 may not. On the other hand, merely paying an employee a salary does **not** make him exempt. That employee's exempt status is based on his duties, responsibilities, and place in the organization. In almost all cases, the exempt employee must exercise independent judgment.

Employers are well-advised to stay on top of the wage-and-hour laws for a variety of reasons. Employees and former employees can sue for back pay up to three years, an equal amount in liquidated damages, and attorneys' fees. Further, employees cannot agree to accept less than the amount to which they are entitled under the FLSA, even if the wage arrangement was the employee's idea. And, employees cannot settle wage-and-hour claims for less than the amount they are entitled to receive, even if they settled with the advice of an attorney. In other words, an employer can settle a wage-and-hour case, and then be sued again because the settlement amount was insufficient.

Wage-and-hour complaints by employees, including lawsuits, are protected activity under the FLSA. If an employee complains about her pay, she cannot be disciplined, even if she was wrong about the pay

practice. The theory is that employees should be able to question pay practices without fear of retaliation.

Most states have their own wage-and-hour laws. The state minimum wage can be higher than the federal. State law covers more employers, especially small ones currently exempt under federal law because the Department of Labor has determined that they are not engaged in interstate commerce.

Where state laws are different, including a higher minimum wage or different rules for exemptions, the state law trumps federal law. Federal law permits states to enact stricter wage-and-hour laws, as well as provide for a higher minimum wage. Therefore, complying with federal law is no guarantee that you are paying your employees properly. An exemption under federal law does not mean an exemption under state law.

Finally, some employers hire current employees as independent contractors to do tasks such as painting, housekeeping, or maintenance work after hours. Keep in mind that the Department of Labor takes the position that this "independent contractor" is still an employee covered by the FLSA. If the extra work puts the employee over the 40-hour threshold, the DOL wants the employee compensated at time-and-a-half.

The government allows you to set a different rate for different work, but overtime is calculated based on what work was being done when the employee worked past 40 hours.

Do not wait until you are audited or you fire an employee who goes to that TV lawyer in retaliation. Review your policies and practices now. If you have questions, get legal advice. If you cannot afford a lawyer, at least go to www.dol.gov and read the regulations pertinent to how you pay your employees.

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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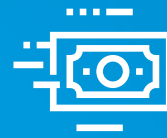


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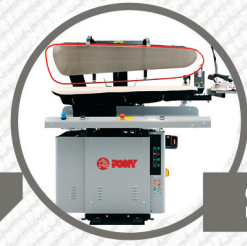
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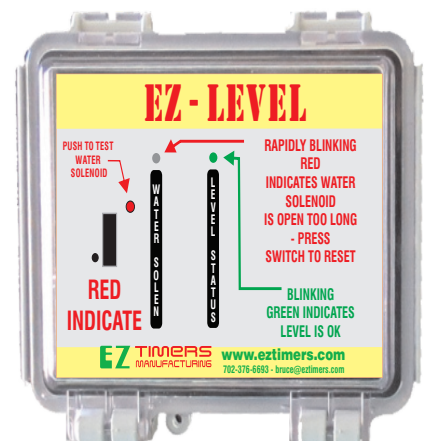
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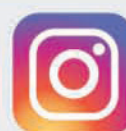
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Index of Advertisers FEBRUARY 2024

A.L. Wilson.....10	Laundry Owners Mutual...24
Association of Wedding Gown Specialists.....21	Methods for Management.....18
BeCreative 360.....7	Mosena Enterprises.....30
Cleaners Business System.....3	Newhouse Specialty Co...30
Cleaner's Supply.....30	NIE Insurance.....5
DLI.....25	North American Bancard..27
Drycleaning & Laundry Expo East.....22	NY Machinery/Pony.....28
Ehrenrich & Associates....30	Patriot Business Advisors.....30
European Finishing.....20, 32	ProsParts.....30
EZ Timers.....28	Realstar.....14
EZProducts.....28	Route Pros.....28
Firbimatic.....29	Sankosha USA.....2, 9
Forenta.....13	Tailwind.....26
Garment Management System.....11	Trevil America.....15
Gulf Coast.....27	Union Drycleaning Products.....31
Gulf States.....23	Unipress Corporation.....19
Iowa Techniques.....8	Xplor SPOT.....16, 17

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