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DL EXPO East draws crowd of cleaners to Kissimmee

By Peter Blake

The South Eastern Fabricare Association's (SEFA) inaugural Drycleaning and Laundry EXPO East show that took place in early June was a huge success when measured with every industry metric.

SEFA opted to forgo the traditional regional show format, and instead worked on creating an event that was designed to attract participants from all over the eastern seaboard. Fortunately, it did not disappoint.

Overall, there were over 700 attendees and exhibitors at the event. Altogether, drycleaners from 32 states and three countries showed up. The DL EXPO East proved to be appealing to an industry thirsting for knowledge and networking.

Not only did the show have a new name — it was previously known as the Southern Drycleaners and Launderers Show — but it also had a new venue and style.

SEFA made the decision to move the show from a traditional exhibit hall to a high-end resort — in this case, the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center in Kissimmee, FL.

That decision made it so everything you needed was under one roof — the show floor, the hotel rooms, the banquet facilities, and the dining options. There was no need to leave the property and people took advantage of it.

In fact, family members were nearby swimming and playing at the resort while work was being conducted on the show floor.

"By all accounts, the EXPO East was better than we had hoped for," said SEFA President Jason Windham. "We had a 30% increase in attendance over our last show in Birmingham, AL, back in 2018. To me that is amazing since, by all accounts, our industry has shrunk by 25% since then. The

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Over 700 attendees and exhibitors showed up to the first DL EXPO East event, presented by the South Eastern Fabricare Association (SEFA) whose board members cut the ribbon during its opening ceremony (top photo). Whether on the show floor (bottom left photo) or in the educational sessions (bottom right photo), attendees were there to do business or work on their business. Also during the weekend, Kyle Nesbit (bottom center photo) began his new term as president of DLI.

DL EXPO West makes plans to impress in Las Vegas

With the first half of the new regional show format experience a success — the DL EXPO East drew a large number of cleaners to Kissimmee in June — attention now turns to the second half. Expectations are big for the DL EXPO West, which will debut from Oct. 4 to

6 in Las Vegas. It will be at the Horseshoe Hotel and Casino.

Registration for the event is free to all drycleaners.

There will be a Sneak Peek Welcome Reception from 5 to 7 p.m. on Friday evening down in the exhibit hall. It will officially open from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday.

The educational sessions will begin on Saturday morning at 8:15 a.m. with a program by Brian Wallace, CEO of the Coin Laundry Association. He will discuss the "Top Trends in Wash-Dry-Fold and Pickup and Delivery."

He will be fol-



Gibson

In the afternoon, Jeff Schwarz, the "Stain Wizard" from Wilson Chemical, Co., will present a session on "The Magical Power of

lowed by Andy Gibson, CEO of Tide Services, who will speak at 9:15 a.m. on a topic still to be determined.

Bleaches" from 1:30 to 2:15 p.m.

Then, Bruce Grossman of EZtimers Manufacturing will present a program on "Machine Problems? Find it. Fix it. Forget it!" from 2:30 to 3:15 p.m.

Grossman

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Giving charity, gaining clarity



In May, DLI President Kathy Benzinger (left) made many new friends at the Orphanage Estado 29 in Ensenada, Mexico. She joined a group of charitable cleaners on a recent trip south of the border to support and spend time with some of the nicest kids on the planet. For the full story, go to page 6.



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The word "coupon" is not a dirty word; however, you have to use them strategically to be effective.
- 16 Running hot and heavy**
The hotter temperatures mean your machinery is under greater pressure. Read these tips to keep it cooler.
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Do your customers really care if you are offering the lowest price on the market?
- 22 Empowering employees**
Why do employees often struggle to sell as much as owners, and how can you change that?

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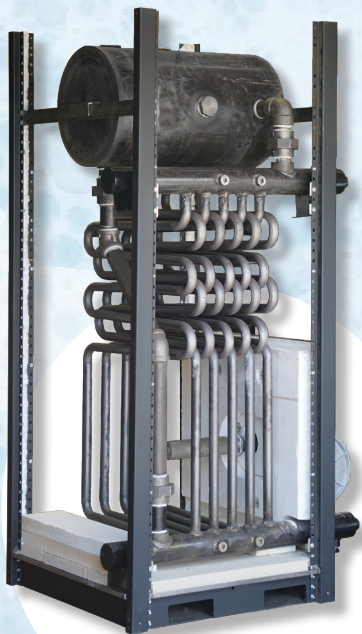
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for drycleaners and launderers
July, 2024
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Summertime when the cleaning is not easy

Summer has begun and there’s a lot on the mind of our columnists... including coupons. If you are not a fan of the coupon, you can blame Coca-Cola. The soda company is credited with giving out the first coupon in 1887. The offer was for a free glass of Coke (which retailed for five cents at the time). The goal was simply to get consumers to try the new product and it worked well, to say the least. Between the years of 1894 and 1913, the company gave out 8,500,000 free drinks. It was estimated that one in nine Americans had used a coupon for a free Coke. Today, the company has a net worth in the ballpark of \$270 billion.

Of course, the offer would have been a monumental disaster if people had not liked the coke and decided they would not try it again. Even with the success from that initial usage, it wasn’t until the Great Depression that coupons became more popular when people tried to save money any way they could.

So, if you are not a fan of the coupon, you might be in the minority view. In America, at least, it’s a time-honored tradition of the vast majority. According to Discount Marketing Statistics compiled and released by CapitalOne Shopping Research, 91% of all Americans used at least one coupon in 2022. Additionally, 177.9 million U.S. adults redeemed digital coupons that year.

Some other interesting findings included only 17% of Americans claim their shopping behavior is unaffected by coupons. As for those who do use them, 38% of American consumers said they buy more than they intended with a coupon and 67% will make an unplanned purchase because of a coupon.

In other words, don’t discount the use of coupons. There is no question that they are extremely effective. The only question is how to utilize them. This month, columnist John Rothrock offers a thoughtful examination of how drycleaners can successfully use coupons to grow their business. As he emphasizes, “Coupons aren’t about sacrificing profit margins; they’re about strategically attracting new customers and encouraging existing ones to spend a little more.” Honestly, even if you do not like giving discounts, read his column on page 10. It is absolutely worth every second of your time.

Please keep in mind, though, that before offering any coupon discounts, you should make sure that your services are already priced appropriately. Perhaps you are like too many cleaners who have absorbed rising costs over the years in fear of losing customers. In his column this month on page 20, Don Desrosiers notes, “If saving a dollar a week was the last reason that a customer was coming to you, then you are missing something. You need to completely re-evaluate your store and ask why any of your customers come to you.”

Hopefully, your customers come to you because of your impeccable quality. Speaking of which, professional cleaners are expected to revive and restore garments to their original luster, part of which includes restoring the finishing agents that manufacturers used while making the garments. Our spotting expert Dan Eisen will walk you through the art of restoring those finishing agents in his monthly column on page 12.

Another consideration at this time of year is how hot your drycleaning machine is running as outside temperatures continue to rise. Bruce Grossman offers a great guide on page 16 that will walk you through how to avoid cooling problems and breakdowns during the hottest months of the year.

It is also a good time to brush up on some of the essential things that every supervisor of employees should know, according to legal expert Frank Kollman who always give solid advice. Make sure you’ve taken care of everything on the list on page 18.

Lastly, even if your business is running on all cylinders at the moment, are you selling your services the best you can? More importantly, are your employees empowered to do the same? This month, Kermit Engh explains why employees often struggle to sell as well as the owner, and what can be done to rectify it. For his column, go to page 22.

So, as it gets hotter and hotter, sit back, have a Coke and enjoy one of the best things in life that’s been free for over 60 years and counting... your monthly issue of *National Clothesline*. Enjoy!

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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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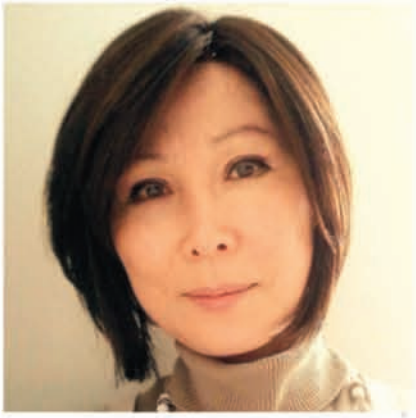


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Continuing a charitable collaboration for kids

As president of the Drycleaning and Laundry Institute (DLI), Kathy Benzinger was well aware of the longtime efforts of many California drycleaners who had generously donated time and money to help improve the lives of the children of Orphanage Estado 29, located in Ensenada in Mexico.

However, with her Benzinger's Clothing Care business located in New York state, she had never been able to make a trip before.

Back in May, she decided to rectify that matter just a few weeks before she'd officially pass the DLI president's gavel to Kyle Nesbit of Tide Cleaners. Fortunately, she had some seasoned tour guides along for the ride, including Bobby Patel of Kona Cleaners and Ray Rangwala, owner of Esteem Cleaners and one of the founding amigos of the 3 Amigos Orphanage Foundation that has supported Estado 29 for over 20 years.

In all, 14 volunteers embarked on the four-and-a-half hour trip south of Los Angeles to Ensenada.

Once they crossed the border, Benzinger noted that it was a "sobering experience, marked by the stark contrast of poverty and hope."

According to the Mexican organization CONEVAL (a.k.a. the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy), 36.3% of the country's population were in a state of poverty in 2022.

While the sight of extreme impoverished conditions can be hard to bear, there is also plenty of hope in places like Orphanage Estado 29.

It was founded in 1957 by

Mexican minister Jose Acosta Zamora who housed five orphans originally.

Since then, it has always served as a haven for children of various ages and backgrounds who have faced unimaginable hardships. At times, it has housed as many as 90 children ranges in ages from 2 to 17.

The children who live there study for school, complete chores and even play as a small dedicated staff takes care of their daily needs and helps prepare them for life on their own when they become adults.

Benzinger witnessed much of that dedication firsthand.

"I spent a lot of time in the kitchen because, number one, I don't know how to speak Spanish so it was hard for me to communicate with the kids," she explained. "I'm not real crafty. I don't like to bake, but my skill set is I can wash dishes and I can peel potatoes. So, I spent a lot of time in the kitchen and I was just trying to understand how one person could feed 24 people every day, day in and day out."

Through the use of the translation skills of Google, she asked the staff member.

"I said, 'How do you do this every day?'" Benzinger continued. "She said, 'Many days I get tired, but then I think of the children and it keeps me going.'"

Meanwhile, the children themselves keep going despite no TV or cell phones. Instead, they spend time with a loving staff, which, perhaps not surprisingly, includes former residents of the orphanage who wish to give back to the place that made them feel safe.

In addition to all the usual



For over 20 years, the 3 Amigos Orphanage Foundation has raised funds to support the Orphanage Estado 29 located in Ensenada, Mexico. Volunteers for the charity took part on a recent trip, including (top right photo, left to right): Hiten Shah, owner of Fantastic Cleaners; Bobby Patel, owner of Kona Cleaners; Kathy Benzinger, owner of Benzinger's Clothing Care; Johny Ng and Ray Rangwala, owner of Esteem Cleaners and one of the three amigos who originally founded the fundraising venture.

activities of daily life, the children often receive fun visits from their American friends who help keep the orphanage funded. This time out, all of the kids were given a special treat: a night out at a nice restaurant.

"This was one of the things that we wanted to do for them," Benzinger said. "We took them to this lovely farm to table restaurant – 24 children. I was fortunate enough to be in the last seat at the table, so I sat with all of the children.

"The behavior of these children and the appreciation that they had... *there wasn't any leftover food*. Their manners were *impeccable* despite all that

time they had to wait for their meals because it was such a large group. Remarkable! They are the nicest children in the world."

Also during the visit in May, the children spent time baking cookies, face painting, making friendship bracelets and playing games of Skip-Bo, Uno and basketball.

The food pantry was fully restocked with supplies from the local grocery, and two dentists and three dental volunteers were brought along to examine and treat each child. For many, it was their first encounter with a dentist ever.

Once the visit ended and Benzinger returned back home, the raw emotions from

the experience followed her. Even now, it's difficult to discuss without choking up.

"I want everybody to feel the way that I felt because there's nothing in this world that you could buy or earn or have that gives you this feeling," she said. "I think we're all chasing something, but we don't know what that something is, and it was just nice to stop chasing and to realize that I have everything I need and that others don't. So, I provide that. How can I make a difference?"

Those who wish to help make a difference with the 3 Amigos Orphanage Foundation can visit them online at www.3aof.org.

NEWSMAKERS

Last month, **Martinizing Cleaners** unveiled an updated logo to reflect the brand's celebration of its 75th anniversary. Since its 1949 founding in Buffalo, N.Y. by **Henry Martin**, the brand has grown to more than 350 store locations operating across seven countries including the U.S. and Canada. The new logo includes a silver 75 behind the iconic royal blue Martinizing Cleaners logo.



"Celebrating 75 years of franchising the Martinizing brand showcases the remarkable collaboration between our franchise owners and corporate team over the years," said **Kevin DuBois**, CEO of **Clean Brands™ LLC**, franchisor of Martinizing Cleaners.

Henry Martin founded Martinizing upon the belief that smaller, full-service drycleaning plants could be more cost-effective while providing faster local service. The company began franchising and grew its footprint into Europe, and by the 1950s, Martinizing had already become an

international household name.

In 2021, Martinizing was purchased by Clean Brands™ LLC, a multi-brand drycleaning and laundry entity that also includes Lapels Cleaners, 1-800-DRY-CLEAN, Pressed4Time, Dry Cleaning Station and Bizziebox.

"Martinizing Cleaners has defined our industry since its inception, but at the same time we have constantly evolved," said DuBois, "While the clothes we wear and our cleaning needs may have changed, our dedication to service has not."

Value Drycleaners of America LLC (VDA), the company

that franchises the **ZIPS Cleaners** brand, announced recently it has become the exclusive developer of **Mulberrys Garment Care** franchise locations throughout the U.S. Mulberrys has 13 locations across San Francisco and Minneapolis. This agreement will expand the brand into new markets — initially in the Baltimore/ Washington D.C. region.

Members of the ZIPS corporate team will now support existing ZIPS and Mulberrys franchisees in opening and operating new locations, while courting additional investors to join the ZIPS/Mulberrys family. Mulberrys' founder **Dan Miller** is continuing as an

advisor to VDA and operator of existing Mulberrys locations in San Francisco.

"Both of these brands meet a need in the market and combined, provide excellent options for both consumers and franchisees," he said.

"The garment care industry is growing and changing as consumer preferences, demographics, and lifestyles are shifting. This partnership allows us to offer franchise opportunities that can be customized for each geographic area to meet the needs and preferences of consumers in these regions," said Bob Barry, president/CEO of VDA, Gemini Brands and ZIPS.

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See you at DryCleaning & Laundry EXPO West October 4-6 • Las Vegas

DL EXPO East draws crowd of cleaners to Kissimmee

Continued from page 1

attendance was really great all weekend. I think the resort had a lot to do with it.”

“I spoke to each vendor personally,” he added, “and everyone of them expressed what a great show they had, how impressed they were with the traffic flow on the floor, and how much they valued the quality of the attendees. They were there to do business, and to work on their businesses.”

Saturday morning kicked off with two excellent educational presentations. First up

was Terry Brock and Gina Carr from Stark Raving Entrepreneurs.

They explored the use of AI (artificial intelligence) in small business marketing.

Their program offered valuable insight into how to use the technology and they included some real-world examples of how it can be used effectively.

Next up was Glen Gould of Drycleaning Connection in Peachtree City, GA, who has a unique background as a former teaching golf professional

at world-renowned courses, and as an entrepreneur in many successful ventures, including as a successful speaking professional.

While his presentation explored some of that storied background, it really explored the relationship you have with your teams, with the people you depend on — and what motivates them.

Attendees learned how they need to relate to their teams, and more importantly, how to lead them.

During the exhibit hall

hours, there were often crowds of people in the aisles taking a close look at all the latest in industry technology. There were constant equipment demonstrations happening throughout the day.

Sunday morning opened with two more dynamic presentations, the first was by Keith Prader of Armada Corporate intelligence.

He started the morning off with an exploration of the economic trends we have been witnessing in recent times and what economic scenarios likely lie ahead.

The economic issues we have been facing — the job market, inflation, interest rates — have kept many business owners on the edge of their seats. The prognosis for the future, however, was still a positive one.

Prader shared his belief that the future holds vast opportunities and that people will see things loosening towards the 4th quarter.

Next up was Brian Rashid

of Brian Rashid Global. He is an expert social media marketer, filmmaker and storyteller.

He explored the power of using video in your marketing and he strongly urged those reluctant to use it to consider the tremendous upside — but only if you can get beyond those self-imposed limitations.

He also showed how some new AI technology makes editing and creating video content extremely easy.

The new program — that is still under development — is an easy-to-use tool that can turn everyone into a filmmaker. To illustrate his point, Rashid took a few short videos of one of the participants, interviewed him, then uploaded the content and edited it into a final piece right there, demonstrating the ease of use of the program and the professional-looking results.

It should be noted that SEFA is working on developing a full-day workshop on the AI editing tool in the future.

Forenta acquires GMS

Forenta President Rusty Smith and Garment Management Systems (GMS) President Brett McLeod recently announced during the DL EXPO East exhibit show in Kissimmee, FL, that Forenta has acquired GMS.

Currently located in Little Rock, AR, GMS is the producer of the Quicksort assembly conveyor, the 27/7 Express conveyor and the QuickTag labeling system.

The relocation has begun to move GMS’s operations in Little Rock to Forenta’s 85,000 sq. ft. plant located in Morristown, TN.

To ensure a smooth transition over the next few

years, Forenta will retain the services of McLeod, who founded GMS, and key GMS employees.

“The primary product we were interested in acquiring from GMS is a garment/conveyor/kiosk system that allows a drycleaning customer to pick up and drop off his or her clothes any time of the day or night by using the kiosk touchscreen,” Smith noted. “The kiosk controls the garment conveyor by bring the customer’s clothes in line with a window that only allows access to that particular conveyor slot. This is becoming very popular around the country, in partic-

ular, the larger cities which employ more professionals.”

For more information on Forenta, visit them online at www.forentausa.com.



Forenta President Rusty Smith (left) places his company's logo on a Garment Manufacturers Service kiosk as GMS President Brett McLeod (right) looks on.

EXPO West plans to impress in Vegas

Continued from page 1

Both Saturday afternoon programs will be repeated on Sunday, as well. Schwarz is slated to speak from noon to 12:45 p.m. and Grossman will speak from 1 to 1:45 p.m.

Earlier on Sunday morning, there will also be a program presented by Chris White, executive director of America’s Best Cleaners.

He will examine to topics of “Fashion Circularity and You” from 9 to 10 a.m.



A discounted room rate has been secured by the sponsoring associations — California Cleaners Association and Southwest Drycleaners Association — through Sept. 12.

There is a direct link available from the official show website — located at www.dl-expo.org — that can be used to access a secure reservation link.

Otherwise, attendees should call the reservation center directly at (800) 358-8777. They should mention the Drycleaning and Laundry EXPO West show; the code is SBDLE4.

DLI plans two July stain removal classes

This month, the Drycleaning & Laundry Institute (DLI) has a pair of stain removal programs on the schedule, including the beginning of a special West Coast Stain Removal course in Anaheim, CA.

It will feature five days of online training and one day on on-site training at U.S. Western Multitech, in Anaheim, CA.

The online sessions will run for two hours each on July 24, 29, 31, August 5 and 7. Students must attend all five sessions before choosing Aug. 14 or 15 for their live in-person

training day at the Multitech facility.

Prior to the start of that course, DLI will offer a fully online Virtual Stain Removal course.

It will offer a seven-day mix of live lectures, videos and hands-on activities. It will take place on the dates of July 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25 and 30 from 1 to 3 p.m. EST.

For more information on any of DLI’s upcoming programs, call (800) 638-2627 or visit them online at DLIonline.org.

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-Mike Astorino, Fabricare Cleaners

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TURNAROUND TIME



BY JOHN ROTHROCK

Don't discount the power of coupons

Coupons are not a dirty word. Let me repeat that, *coupons are not a dirty word*, but instead a valuable tool.

Many in our industry believe offering coupons to current or potential customers puts them in the same category as those “discount cleaners.” If you find yourself in that camp, keep reading. If you're open to the potential benefits of actively promoting your business with coupons or other discounts, the following information could help you achieve huge results.

This article isn't another coupon chorus, simply repeating what has worked for me, but trying it in your market. Instead, we will examine the reasons coupons work and then build an effective coupon strategy based on market research that delivers measurable results. Once you know the why, you will be able to tailor this strategy to meet your company's specific needs, with the potential to boost your business significantly.

The Case for Coupons

The humble coupon is a remarkable tool yet it is misunderstood by so many in drycleaning. When used properly, it will attract new customers while helping to keep existing clients loyal.

Coupons tap into our desire for a good deal, making your drycleaning service instantly more attractive.

Beyond a simple discount, coupons are a versatile tool to boost sales in a variety of ways. Coupons allow you to essentially have two different price lists: one for price-sensitive clients and one for those who are not.

They can also encourage customers to bring in more garments than they normally would. Coupons can incentivize customers to come in during off-peak periods. Launching a new service? A discount coupon can spark interest and encourage customers to give it a try. Of course, coupons aren't a magic bullet. Drycleaners must balance the reduced profit margin per cleaning with the increased customer volume

coupons can bring.

They also need to avoid customers becoming reliant on discounts and waiting for coupons before using the service. By strategically using coupons and considering the potential drawbacks, drycleaners can unlock a powerful marketing tool to grow their business and keep customers coming back for more.

Coupon Psychology

Coupons are effective because they use targeted marketing strategies that tap into consumer behavior to achieve a desired business outcome. Rest assured, these are not just empty promises.

Below are five tried and true tactics you can leverage with the right offer to increase your sales:

1) Price Sensitivity. People are naturally attracted to discounts. Coupons offer a way to save money, which can incentivize a purchase they might have otherwise hesitated on.

2) Perceived Value. A coupon creates the feeling of getting a good deal, increasing the perceived value of the service. This can make customers feel more satisfied with their purchase.

3) Trial and Discovery. Coupons can encourage customers to try a new drycleaning service they might not have considered before. This is a great way to gain new customers.

4) Increased Sales. Coupons can motivate existing customers to dryclean more garments or try additional services, leading to higher sales volume for your business.

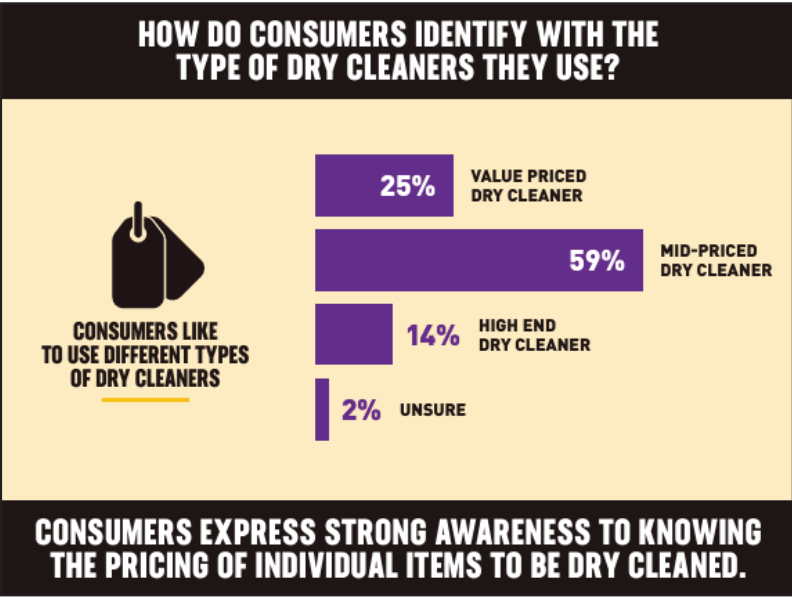
5) Strategic Targeting. Coupons can be targeted to specific demographics or needs. This allows you to attract new customers or incentivize existing ones to use underutilized services (use mailing lists or targeted

online ads).

Data Drives Decisions

Market research is crucial for crafting effective coupon strategies. According to the 2023 Cleaners Supply Consumer Sentiment Study, the market overwhelmingly prefers mid-priced drycleaners by a two-to-one margin.

The study also highlights a key insight: customers strongly believe they know how much various items cost to be cleaned.



However, when asked what they were paying for specific items, their answers were all over the place, meaning that customers truly don't know their drycleaner's unit prices. Remember this nugget of wisdom for later.

Several years ago, Yale Cleaners conducted our own consumer research study that focused on these same issues. While our study produced similar results, we took the questioning a little further. Our respondents were asked how much money they typically spent on each drycleaning visit, how confident they were in their answers, and what that number was. Our cohort responded they were very confident they knew exactly how much they spent on each visit.

Next, we took the dollar amount they provided and were able to cross-reference it to their actual spending history. Unlike the unit price answers, our study found that this time, customers were correct. They know exactly how much they spend each time they visit the cleaners. Now, combining

these insights to build our coupon program, we are ready to move forward.

A Winning Strategy

To recap, the goal is to provide a coupon (offer) to future or current customers, incentivizing them to bring in more items to be cleaned, thus increasing our daily piece count volume. The offer must be easy to understand and simple to implement. It needs to have an expiration date to create the illusion of missing out on the deal. Lastly, we need a way to control and track the offer, so customers don't become reliant on the discount.

From the research, we learned that customers don't know what specific items cost,

and we want our offer to be inclusive. So, a “bring in four laundry shirts, get one free” won't work. Plus, this offer could exclude female customers. For the same reasons, “Pants Special \$3.99, Regularly \$6.99” won't work, either.

Ditch the Unit Price Focus. Traditional coupon structures that focus on specific garments or discounted unit prices are ineffective because customers are largely unaware of unit pricing.

Leveraging Customer Habits. We can use the average spending per visit data to create targeted offers that incentivize customers to spend more without discounting their usual cleaning routine.

Putting It into Practice

Let's say your point-of-sale system reveals an average spend of \$37 per visit. We can use this data to design a strategic coupon offer.

Our coupon offer is: **Take \$10 Off, \$45 Minimum Order.**

At face value, this is a 22% discount, which is enough to get new customers in the door.



Current customers will initially see that they can get more clothes cleaned for a little less than they normally pay. But, since neither customer group knows unit prices, they will have to guess. Current customers will likely put “a few more items” into the bag, just to be sure.

In the end, most customers' total is higher than the \$45 minimum, and their average discount is less than 22%. The result is a win-win; the current customer gets a deal and you get more volume. New customers get a deal while giving you more volume and the opportunity to win their future business with your high-quality and amazing service.

While there's a lot more to developing a comprehensive coupon strategy, these basic principles should help you design offers that not only meet your goals but also entice customers into your store.

Coupons aren't about sacrificing profit margins; they're about strategically attracting new customers and encouraging existing ones to spend a little more. If implemented correctly, coupons can be a powerful tool for growing your drycleaning business.

John Rothrock, a University of Oklahoma alumnus and Certified Garment Care Professional (CGCP), leads Yale Cleaners in Tulsa, Oklahoma. John is passionate about exceeding customer expectations and innovation in the drycleaning industry. His expertise extends beyond garment care, with a viral video educating viewers on the drycleaning process. Currently, he leverages his industry knowledge by serving as the second vice president of the Southwest Drycleaning Association (SDA).



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THE SPOTTING BOARD



BY DAN EISEN

The fine art of restoring finishing agents

I read a recent article concerning a controversy over the term *sizing and retexturizing*. This prompted me to write this article to expand the concept, clarify and, hopefully, not *confuse* the issue. The proper term that describes agents or procedures that are added to fabrics to enhance the properties of the fabric is called **finishing agents**.

Manufacturers use finishing agents when producing fabrics and drycleaners restore these finishing agents that may be lost during wear, drycleaning or wetcleaning.

The drycleaner's job in restoring finishing agents is not an easy one since the desired look and feel of the fabric must be considered before application.

The problems associated with not using proper finishing agents might prompt these common complaints from the customers:

- 1) Garment lost its feel;
- 2) Feels limp and looks like a rag;
- 3) Looks wrinkled and can not be properly pressed.

Finishing agents provide fabrics with the following desirable characteristics:

- 1) Feel and hand;
- 2) Drape;
- 3) Sheen and luster;
- 4) Softness;
- 5) Water repellency;
- 6) Presses easier and holds the press longer.

from the luster, but enhances it and gives rayon a nice hand and drape.

Softening agents lend themselves to wool while synthetic resins lend itself to silk. Heat, moisture and pressure have a significant role in the feel and look of a fabric. For example, if I press cotton damp it

We now dryclean these fabrics using a drycleaning detergent and the garments will have a soft feel and lustrous look. We can also add a sizing either in a batch or charge and the fabrics will have added characteristics that enhance the look and feel of the fabric.

We can now add a dry side

heat and pressure for additional stiffness. Use a spray sizing to increase the stiffness of the fabric further.

Problem Solving

Sometimes loss or breakdown of finishing agents used in manufacture can create serious fabric problems. The following problem solving procedures can be attempted.

1) Difficult rings on satins and polyester

Cause. During manufacture, synthetic resins are used that may break down during wear or cleaning.

Solution. Pre-spot the area with amyl acetate.

2) Shrinkage on wool

Cause. Excessive heat, moisture and mechanical action.

Solution. In order to attempt stretching and correction, the wool fiber must be impregnated with a softening agent. I had several wool sweaters sent to me with problems of excessive shrinkage. I soaked them for 15 minutes in Laidlaw's Soft-n-Brite and Soften All. I did not rinse them, but merely extracted them.

The garments were soft and pliable, which made them easier to stretch and restore to original size.

4) Discoloration on rayon

Cause. The sizing used on the rayon breaks down, causing a whitish or discolored area.

Solution. Use the fogging method. Hold the steam gun three to four inches from the fabric and steam the area.

Use air to dry the fabric. This will cause the disturbed sizing to blend in the discolored area. The garment can also be steamed on a press, lightly sprayed with water and pressed using head pressure.

On another note, I am now taking orders for my new and complete manual *The Art of Wetcleaning* which is very much in demand. The price is \$95 which includes shipping and handling. With every order I will be sending you a card which entitles you to a free wetcleaning kit from Laidlaw.

Dan Eisen, former chief garment analyst for the National Cleaners Association, can be reached at (772) 579-5044, or by e-mail at dannyeisen39@gmail.com or through his website at www.garmentanalysis.com.

Manufacturers use finishing agents when producing fabrics and drycleaners restore these finishing agents that may be lost during wear, drycleaning or wetcleaning.

The finishing agents that provide these characteristics are starch, vegetable-based sizing, gelatins, synthetic resins, softening agents, and (heat, moisture, pressure).

These products can vary greatly when applied to some fabrics better than others. For example, starch- and vegetable-based sizing give cottons and linens a nice crisp feel. Gelatin is used on rayon because it does not detract

will result in a stiffer feel than if I pressed it when the fabric was dry. The use of finishing agents may come in a disguised form, such as detergents. For example, we are familiar with drycleaning a load of wools and silks in clear virgin solvent. The result is the wools and silks have a harsh and dry feel, lack luster and generate a lot of static electricity. We refer to this condition as *squeaky clean*.

sizing either in a batch or charge and this adds further characteristics to the fabric. The sizing is not used to create a stiff feel but merely to give the fabric additional body, making it easier to press and to retain the press.

It is equally as important to use the proper finishing agent in wetcleaning. A professional cleaner must first determine the look and feel that the fabric should have and use the products accordingly.

Example 1. Wools and silks that require a soft feel would entail the use of a cationic or nonionic cleaning agent. The use of a cationic softening agent will add to the soft feel and hand of the fabric.

After processing, the garment should be tumbled in a warm dryer for one to three minutes. The heat of the drying process is necessary to activate the softening agents left in the fabric. I have experimented many times using this procedure and it can be documented that the finishing agents used reduces the fabrics potential for shrinkage.

Example 2. A pair of jeans is received for processing. If the jeans require a soft look and feel, the same procedure should be used as outlined with the wools and silks. Dry garments on low heat and press when thoroughly dry.

Example 3. A pair of jeans are received for processing and a stiff feel is requested by the customer.

Procedure. Wetclean using a highly versatile wetcleaning detergent (such as Power Brite from Laidlaw Chemical Co.). Add a sizing product (i.e. Aqua Size). Dry garments to 90% dry and press with high

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WRENCH WORKS



By BRUCE GROSSMAN

Cooling problems during hot weather

With summer upon us, your drycleaning machines' cooling system will be under greater stress. It doesn't matter if you are using a water tower, chiller, or city water for cooling; conditions that weren't an issue during the cooler months may become problems as the ambient (surrounding) temperature rises.

Most of the cooling issues will rear their heads during the drying segment of the drycleaning cycle. Drying in the drycleaning machine is all about moving and transferring heat energy. The media that removes this heat inside the machine is called a refrigerant (usually a member of the Freon family of chemicals).

Some coolant (generally water or a water and glycol mixture) is used to remove the heat from the hot Freon gas, condensing it back to a liquid and transferring the heat to the outside environment. This condensation process uses a device called a refrigeration condenser that changes hot, vapor-rich Freon gas back to liquid Freon, which is recycled during the drying segment of the drycleaning cycle.

The Three Methods of Supplying Water

1) City Water. Water from the city main is forced through the drycleaning machine's refrigeration condenser by existing city water pressure. The exiting water is then sent down the drain.

2) Water Tower. A pump circulates water through the machine's refrigeration condenser over an evaporative cooling media (it looks like corrugated plastic cubes), which has air forced through it to aid in evaporation, into a sump where the suction inlet of the pump is connected. The water's evaporation from the media's surface cools the remaining water, which drops into the sump for recirculation through the machine's cooling system.

3) Chiller. Water or a mixture of water and glycol (called a brine) is circulated by a pump through the drycleaning machine's cooling system, cooled by a separate refrigeration system, and recirculated through the cooling system.

No matter which

method is used for cooling and circulating the coolant through the cooling system, the efficiency of the process depends on two factors:

1) Coolant Flow: The amount of coolant moving through the condenser.

2) Heat Transfer Efficiency: The ability of the condenser coil to move heat to the coolant.

These factors can be monitored using pressure and temperature as indicators of what is happening in the coolant system. A pressure gauge and thermometer at the inlet and outlet of the coolant system located near the machine are vital for monitoring performance.

Now, let's see what the pressure gauge can tell us about the coolant system's condition. The pump must push enough coolant at the proper pressure through the components that require cooling. In most machines, this cooling system includes the still condenser, refrigeration condenser and solvent cooler. Unfortunately, there's no hard, fast rule for what the pressure readings should be. The best way to get the "numbers" is to note the inlet and outlet pressure and temperature when the drycleaning machine works properly for future reference. Here are possible scenarios for different combinations of qualitative data:

1) Inlet pressure high/outlet pressure low.

A. Check for blockage inlet flow path — a clogged Y strainer between the pump and the machine;

B. Heavy scale build up — an accumulation of scale inside the piping and heat exchange surfaces of the drycleaning machine.

2) Inlet and outlet pressure rapidly changing.

A. Low coolant level in the pumping system.

3) Low inlet/high outlet pressure.

A. Open bypass valve on pumping system.

4) Low inlet/low outlet pressure.

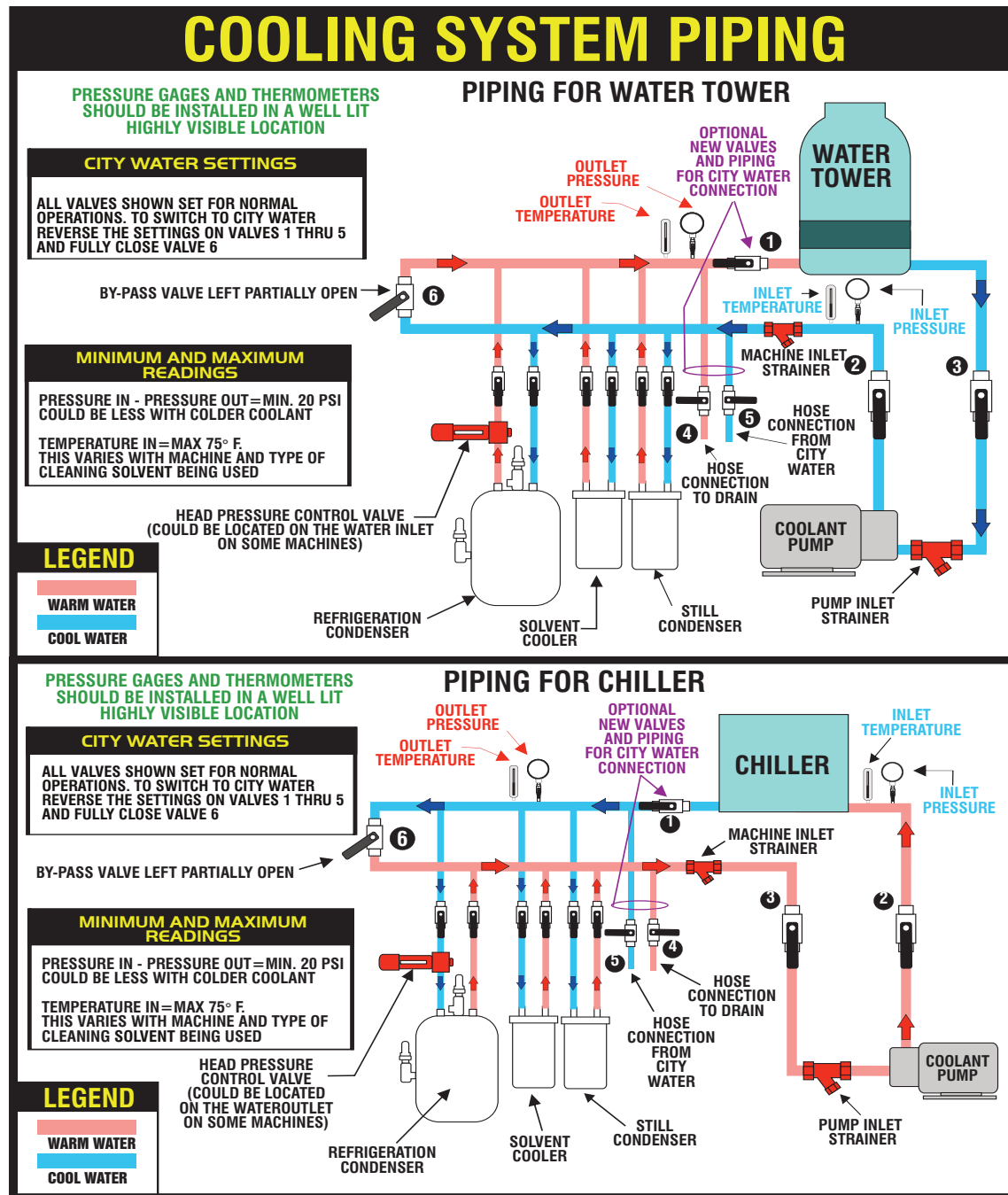
A. Pump off.

B. Clogged inlet strainer.

5) High inlet temperature/high outlet temperature.

A. Water tower fan not working/chiller refrigeration system faulty.

B. Pump off.



6) Slightly higher than normal inlet temperature/high outlet temperature:

A. Heavy scale build up — an accumulation of scale inside the piping and heat exchange surfaces of the drycleaning machine.

B. Excessive heat source — still boil over or steam sweep valve open; steam supply valve to steam boost coil or carbon adsorber.

Keep in mind, problems with the cooling system will likely appear during the dry cycle — more specifically, towards the end of it when it goes into cool-down mode. During the drying mode, the exchanger coil transfers much of the heat from the Freon to the air stream, and only a small portion of the heat load is dumped into the refrigeration condenser. In the cool-down mode, solenoids and/or dampers channel nearly the entire heat load into the refrigeration condenser. This type of problem is indicated by the refrigeration compressor entering a high-pressure con-

dition and tripping the refrigeration high-pressure safety switch.

On most machines, this causes an error message on the programmer screen and requires a manual reset of the refrigeration high-pressure safety switch. This condition is almost always caused by a clogged Y strainer or excessive scaling inside the refrigeration condenser. There is a head pressure adjusting valve on most refrigeration systems that controls the refrigeration compressor's head pressure by varying coolant flow to the condenser. This valve is adjusted to give sufficient refrigeration head pressure for efficient refrigeration system operation.

When scale builds up in the condenser, past the point that normal adjustment of the head pressure adjusting valve can compensate for, many cleaners mistakenly open it wider, believing they have fixed it. They have merely kicked the can down the road until the refrigeration high-pressure safety switch

continually trips, which can cost a lot of money in solvent and energy, and can possibly damage the compressor.

The above illustration is a schematic for typical cooling water installations used with water towers or chillers, with the addition of valves 1, 2 and 4, which are used when a city water hook-up is included in the installation. This hook-up provides an emergency backup for continuing operations when the normal cooling system fails (it will not help if excessive internal scaling is the cause).

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 to bruce@eztimers.com or call (702) 376-6693.

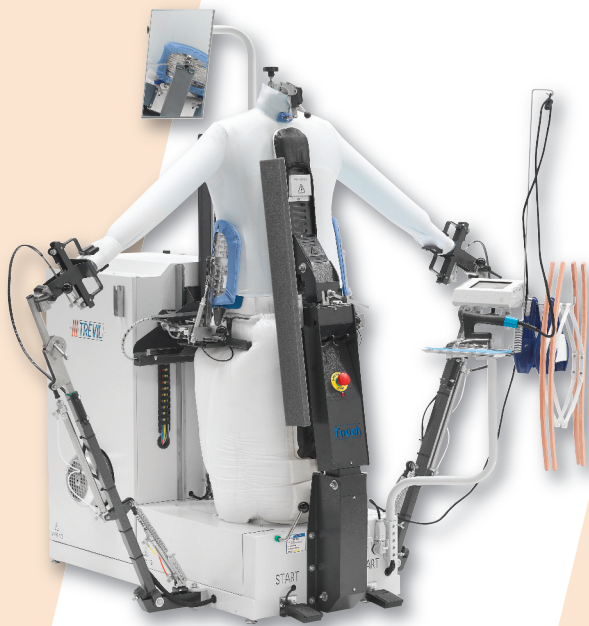


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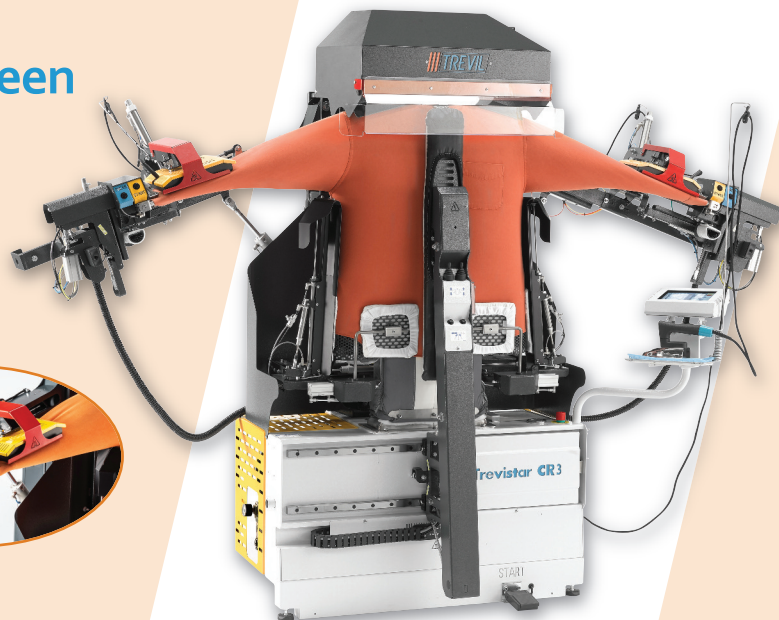
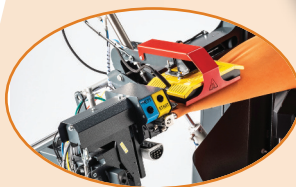
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KEEP IT LEGAL

BY FRANK KOLLMAN

Eleven essentials your supervisor should know

Like lists, as you probably know. They help me focus. So, in no particular order, here is a list of things that every supervisor — new or experienced — needs to know:

1) There are no secrets in the workplace. Benjamin Franklin once remarked that the only true secret was between a person and a dead man. Agreed. There is no quicker way to get information out into the workplace than to tell a gossip employee not to tell anyone.

Besides, if the secret involves wages, benefits, or working conditions, it may be a violation of federal law to require rank-and-file employees not to discuss it. It is entirely possible that your employees know more than you do about what's going on in the workplace.

2) Employees cannot agree NOT to be paid for hours worked. Employees cannot waive their right to be paid under the Fair Labor Standards Act, even if the idea is the employee's. Employees can be disciplined for making mistakes or causing more work, but they cannot be required to redo work at their expense. If a non-exempt employee is required or permitted to work, he or she must be paid for the work, even if that means paying the employee overtime.

3) Words matter. Supervi-

sors need to understand that comments made to employees, even in jest, can be used later to prove discriminatory intent. While calling an older worker *old man* may not be enough to prove age discrimination

Supervisors need to know what questions can and cannot be asked during job interviews. If the answer to a question is not going to be used to make a hiring decision, the question should not be asked.

alone, it can be used — with other factors — to prove age discrimination. Cultural references and stereotypes, including responses to joking cultural references made by the employee, should also be avoided.

4) Written words matter even more. Supervisors must be taught how to write disciplinary notes, job descriptions, and other personnel documents in a way that convinces the reader the documents are absolutely job-related and do not suggest unlawful discriminatory intent.

Supervisors, in written documents, should explain what happened in simple English, avoiding words that are vague and lawyer-like.

5) Employees respond better to inspiration than heavy handedness. Read *Tom Sawyer*, especially where Tom

convinces his friends to do his chores. The best supervisors inspire employees to work harder. The worst supervisors browbeat good employees into quitting or doing *the least they can do*.

Supervisors need to know what questions can and cannot be asked during job interviews. If the answer to a question is not going to be used to make a hiring decision, the question should not be asked.

6) Talk to your employees. While supervisors need to understand that there are no secrets in the workplace, they must also understand that rumors and lack of information can have a devastating effect on morale. Employees need and want to know what is going on.

Bad news is better than no news and the resulting insecurity. Talking to employees can also foster loyalty to a supervisor. Many times, employees have decided not to file charges against their employer because of the respect they had for their supervisor.

By the same token, disloyalty can result in more charges. Instead of putting employees on a "need to know" basis, share information that makes them feel like part of the organization.

7) Know what laws affect

your decisions. Any more, supervisors seem to need a law degree to understand all the laws regulating labor and employment issues. While that is impractical, supervisors need to be trained on the law.

Some of the laws they should be familiar with are the National Labor Relations Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and state and local fair employment practices acts.

8) Firing an employee stinks, so get over it. Stated differently, supervisors need to understand that they are part of management, and that they owe no one an apology for being part of management.

Firing an employee is never pleasant, but it can be done with dignity, and it is almost always the employee's fault. Supervisors need to realize that by firing a bad employee, they are making work easier for the good employees

and themselves.

9) Do not publicly humiliate employees. Discipline needs to take place in private. Yelling at an employee in front of co-workers will only lead to hostility and resentment.

I am reminded of a story involving the manager of the Giants' franchise when Willie Mays played for that baseball team. Whenever he wanted to dress down a player at a team meeting, he would start out by yelling at Mays that he wasn't hustling, trying hard enough, or helping out the team. Then, when the manager addressed a lesser player's actions, he would not be humiliated because he was in the same boat as Willie.

Unless you have Willie Mays working for you, conduct such sessions in a non-public place. [For readers under 60 years old, search "willie mays catch" on YouTube.]

10) Ask job related questions at interviews. Supervisors need to know what questions can and cannot be asked during job interviews. If the answer to a question is not going to be used to make a hiring decision, the question should not be asked.

11) Employee evaluations should be meaningful. Too often, evaluations are rendered meaningless by a supervisor afraid to give a satisfactory evaluation to a merely satisfactory employee. It is the rare company whose every employee is "outstanding."

As I have said before, supervisor training is often overlooked by employers. Companies will not allow supervisors to spend \$25 without approval, but they are allowed to hire and fire employees, exposing the company to thousands of dollars in liability, without a single minute of training. Perhaps 2024 is the year for your company to adopt a supervisor training program.

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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SHIRT TALES



BY DON DESROSIERS

Do customers really go for the lowest price?

During a recent job in the Great White North, a client asked me to attend a meeting of his franchisees and do a presentation explaining what I do and how the job that I had just completed for this client benefited them. He had recently purchased this company and called this meeting to introduce himself and explain to these fine folks exactly what he intended to do in exchange for the franchise fee they pay. It was a very nice gathering at a terrific French restaurant.

As things often go under new ownership, my client had, just the week before, submitted to these franchisees, a new price list. I had been a little prepared to give my presentation, but when the franchisees began lamenting the price increase, I knew I was going to have lots to talk about.

As the attendees arrived, I was introduced and before the meeting officially commenced, I began talking shop with each of them. They spoke about all of the

usual subjects — employees are hard to find, hard to keep interested and difficult to motivate; that is when they come in to work, of course.

They also talked about customers who were hard to please and equipment issues were brought up by at least half of the attendees. It all sounded awfully familiar to me — just the same as the issues that American drycleaners face, to be sure.

sounded familiar.

I never buy into this, but I do hear it often enough. My contention has always been that if you do, indeed, lose a customer over 25 or 50 cents, something is very wrong with your business.

Don't think so? Look at it from this angle: If a customer stops going to you because your shirts cost 20 cents more than a competitor's (a dollar a week for the

pletely re-evaluate your store and ask yourself why any of your customers come to you.

You should come up with reasons like: *I do very good quality work and I am always trying to get better at what I do; or, I have a very knowledgeable customer service staff. Or, I almost always have my customers' shirts (and drycleaning) ready when I said that I would. Or, I keep my store*

wanted. My *trap* worked like a charm. I got answers like this: "My customers want good work" or "Good quality." A couple of the people said (perhaps because they saw where this was going), "The best possible work at the lowest possible price." Good answer. In fact, this is probably the right answer for anything... nobody wants to spend **too much** money for anything, even if frugality is not your strong suit.

The answer that I liked *best* is this one: "A customer wants to deal with someone they can trust." What a great answer that is! The fact is, that is something that they can not go without when dealing with a drycleaner.

Not one of these franchisees said that they believe that their customers were looking for a low price. It is true that we, as drycleaners, do look for a low price on, say, shirt hangers. We want to feel that we aren't being taken to the, uh.... (how does that cliché go?). We want to feel that we aren't paying too much for anything. So, in an attempt to put you in the shoes of your customer, let me ask you this: Are you paying the absolutely lowest price possible for the supplies that you buy?

The honest answer is probably "I'm not sure." You will likely only start shopping for a lower price when something else is wrong! The fact is, you probably don't care about a lower price if you are dealing with a supplier you trust. Keep this very important guideline in mind the next time you feel the need to adjust your prices.

If you do want 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.

If saving a dollar a week was the last reason that a customer was coming to you, then you are missing something. You need to completely reevaluate your store and ask yourself why any of your customers come to you.

One of the shop owners, certainly not a shy one, attacked my client regarding the price increase. He said that, with his competition, his customers would be sure to gripe when faced with a 25- or 50-cent increase on various items. This too,

average customer with 5 shirts), something else had to be wrong. If saving a dollar a week was the last reason that a customer was coming to you, (take that away and I'm outta here!) then you are missing something. You need to com-

clean and neat. Or, my call of-fice makes my customers feel good about being here and doing business with me.

I don't think that anybody ever actually says, "Customers come to me because, since I am 19 cents cheaper on shirts, they can save almost a dollar a week here." But, I think that we have all subconsciously feared that this may be true. I know that I have. I have feared raising prices because I didn't want to lose any customers.

I think that this has happened because we are survivors. Over the years, no matter what was been thrown at us — be it hazardous waste disposal, sewer user tax or skyrocketing solvent cost — we have, for some reason, absorbed much of the costs without passing them on to the consumer. Why? I don't know. What I do know is that breaking this cycle, and making up for loss time, is a herculean task. The last thing that you want to do is to continue that trend.

What is most important to understand is that our customers are not the same way. They are not visiting you to try to save money; they are coming to you to spend money on a service that they *want*. This is entirely different than trying to save money on a service (or product) that you *need*.

When it was my turn to speak at the meeting, I asked the plant operators one by one what their customers



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BUILDING VALUE



BY KERMIT ENGH

Empowering employees to sell more

In today's competitive market, having a team that can effectively sell your services is crucial. However, many business owners find themselves heavily involved in the sales process, which can limit their business's overall growth and value. If you're directly involved, your business may be less valuable than it could be.

Investors and acquirers hesitate to invest in a business where the owner is the

primary rainmaker. The Value Builder System™ team analyzed over 70,000 businesses, revealing that companies able to sustain a three-month owner absence are more than twice as likely to receive a premium acquisition offer (greater than 6x pre-tax profit). In other words, to maximize your business's value, you need others to handle the selling. This can be challenging but is achievable with the right approach.

Why Employees Struggle to Sell Like the Owner
Young recruits, whether delivery drivers or customer service reps, often need help to sell at the same level as the founder. Besides your experience, you have the advantage of your job title and age. Founders often sell by offering customers a great experience, which is credible coming from them. You're the industry expert; you control who works on each project, and if something

goes wrong, customers know they can call you directly. This hub and spoke model, where the owner is central to everything, can be problematic.
When junior salespeople use your company's reputation for customer service as a selling point, it may sound insincere. Matt Dixon, author of *The Challenger Sale*, suggests arming new salespeople with a compelling answer to the question: "Why should your prospects

buy from you?" The answer should rely on something other than customer service.
Crafting a Great Selling Proposition

A powerful selling proposition includes three elements: 1) It must be something customers care about; 2) It must differentiate you from competitors; and 3) It must be believable.

One resource to help develop these elements is Simon Sinek's TED Talk, "Start with Why." Visit TED.com and search for Simon's name or the program's title. I've watched it many times. It always challenges me to define the *why* of my business and my life.

Another excellent resource is the concept of mini games from Jack Stack's book, *The Great Game of Business*. It is essential for anyone looking to enhance their business operations.

In conclusion, arming your salespeople with a compelling point of differentiation enables them to sell independently, ultimately enhancing your business's value. This is easier said than done and requires a strategic approach to ensure that your team can effectively communicate what sets your business apart from the competition.

As the managing partner of Methods for Management, I see many cleaners struggle with this issue. Developing a strong selling proposition and empowering your employees to convey it effectively can significantly impact your business's success and longevity.

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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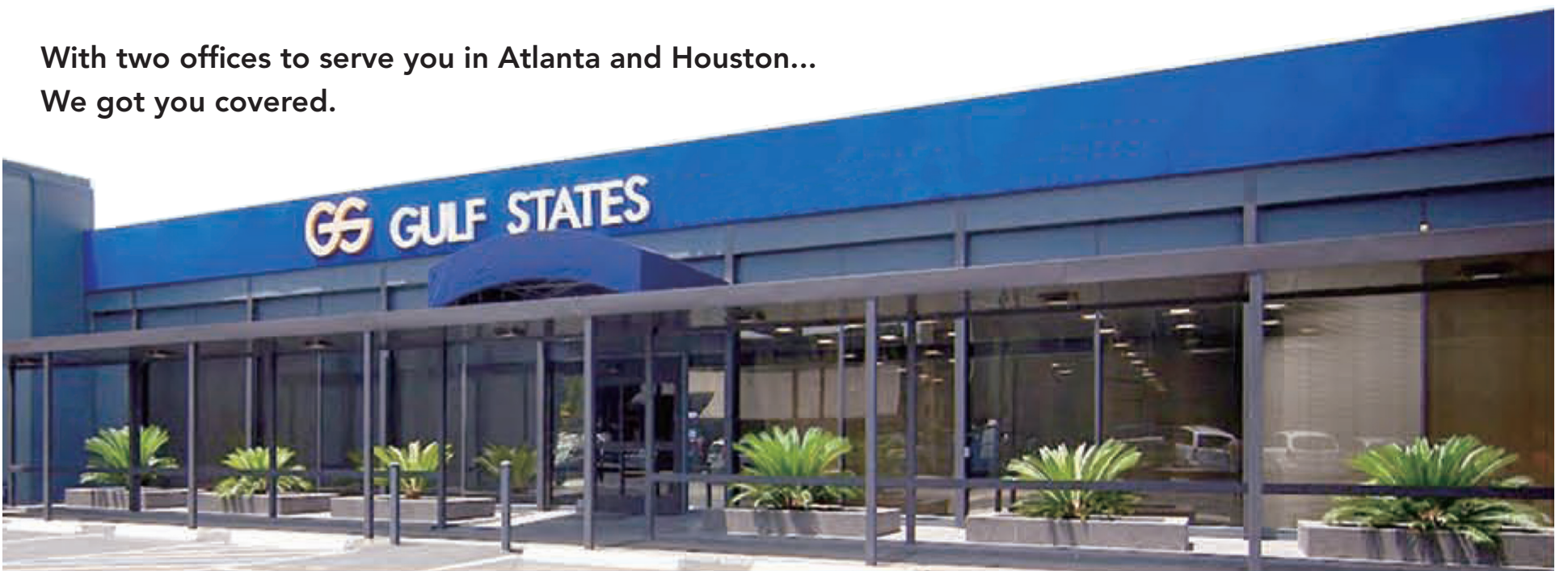
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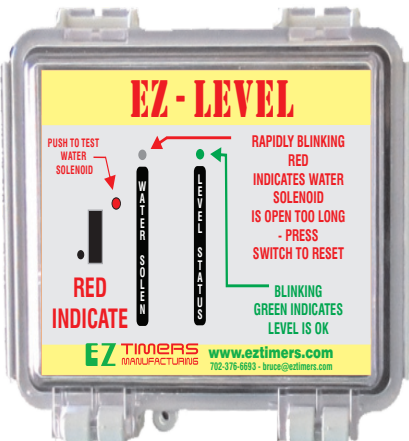
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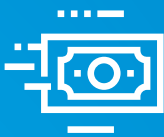
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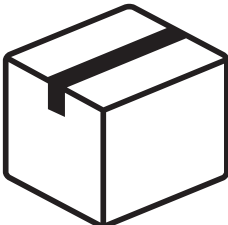
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NCL Profile
Life goes on
For the Bodin family, starting a cleaning business in Yorkers, NY, was an opportunity for a clean slate. Before that, 52-year-old Paul Bodin and his father, David, had been forced to flee their native country during the Russian Revolution during which the family business in Kiev was confiscated. An old article from the August 2023 issue of National Clothesline.

Industry balancing act to continue in 2022
As cleaners prepare to close the door on 2021 and perhaps throw away the key, the last 11 months have proven to be another arduous challenge, harshly punctuated by shortages of every imaginable kind: hangers, plastic, computer chips, steel and other metals, lumber, packaging materials, zippers and more.

FallFest EXPO pushes date back
Even though interest for FallFest EXPO remains high, many cleaners are too short-staffed and overburdened to spend three days devoted to it in early December. As a result, the North East Fabricare Association, the South Eastern Fabricare Association and the Pennsylvania and Delaware Cleaners Association have decided to push the date back to January 2023.

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 appy December! It is that time once again for my annual Christmas Wishlist. Every year, I send a plea to the great St. Nick for products that do not exist yet, but I believe they

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

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