

The Southwest Drycleaners Association

Spring 2020

# THE Southwest Press

*Serving the Professional Drycleaners of Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma & Texas*

## RE-Inventing the Dry Cleaner



Plus...

**Wash & Fold is Gold**  
**Increasing Revenue Streams**  
**...and More**

## Revenue Stream Edition

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# The Times They Are a Changin'

by Danny Bahlman, Bahlman Cleaners



Indeed they are Bob Dylan, and leaving us to wonder what might have been and what did we miss.

If not for the current pandemic, many of us would be anxiously awaiting the arrival of equipment we purchased at the SDA Cleaners Showcase, or possibly learning the procedures and nuances of delivered and installed updated technology. We would have attended training sessions, heard educational and motivational speakers, renewed and strengthened long time relationships and made new ones. Optimism would be on the upswing. Unfortunately, those events were forfeited, despite the incredible Showcase that Chairman Jess Culpepper and the Committee organized, yielding record breaking pre-registration. The annual SDA general membership meeting that includes the installation of new directors and Executive Committee Members was rescheduled to the July meeting. The SDA Board of Directors is grateful for your support and understanding of the incredibly difficult decision to cancel the Showcase.

I want to express my deep gratitude to Craig Campbell for his servant leadership and dedication as he ends his term as the first two-year SDA Board President. His insightful writing always had excellent and timely advice revealed in the President's Messages published in Southwest Press. His demeanor has been a calming presence during the current chaotic events.

On May 25, 1961, President Kennedy stood before Congress and proposed the US "should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to Earth." Eight years later the almost impossible-sounding dream became reality when Neil Armstrong stepped off the Lunar Landing Module as the first person to walk on the surface of the Moon, famously stating "that's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

President Kennedy challenged every segment of American society and conventional wisdom to commit to achieving that goal. There were many obstacles to overcome, often leading to temporary setbacks. Failure was never an option. New processes and technologies resulted from that monu-

mental achievement, changing the way we live and work today. Many of those developments we now take for granted.

Over the last few months I have received multiple questions about what lies ahead for us as an industry. I wish I had a crystal ball to answer those questions. Each of us can recall times of varying difficulty and struggles to succeed during our individual business experiences and remember those that helped guide us through those trying times.

Although I do not know what lies ahead, I do know what direction will get us there - forward. As an industry, we have shown great resolve and tenacity to overcome every obstacle and fashion change with adaptations that created today's firm presence. With determination, we have developed more efficient processing methods and innovated new revenue streams. We continually adjust to ever changing customer service demands. As you read through this issue of Southwest Press, you will find suggestions and ideas from fellow members on ways they continue to evolve their business models and enhance their service offerings.

During the discussions leading to the eventual cancellation of Cleaners Showcase, there were comments like, "We just cancelled our biggest membership service," and, "We just cancelled our biggest party." This was followed by, "Our biggest membership service is about to begin." SDA directors and committee members, in association with DLI, are committed to helping every member reach informed decisions as we face the current challenges. There are many sources of timely information available for you through your joint membership on both the SDA and DLI websites and frequent webinars. Just as many varied groups and individuals worked diligently together to safely send Apollo 11 to the Moon and back, there has never been a time when it was more important for us to work together as an industry in order to take "one small step" together, forward.

*Danny Bahlman*

Vice President, Southwest Drycleaners Association



# Wash & Fold is Gold

By James Peuster, The Route Pro



PC...Pre-COVID-19. This may be the new way we forever talk about our industry. As most of us were prepared to attend the SDA Showcase, I was excited about the presentation I was to give about wash-dry-fold. We were all set to talk about marketing, presenting, pricing and selling this service. But now most of us are spinning our wheels on deciphering PPP rules and applications, labor saving ideas and watching for the next update on when things are going to return to “normal”!

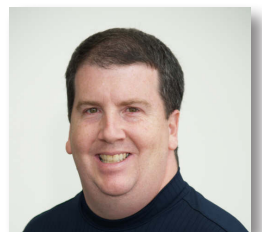
First of all, I don't think the new normal will be exactly where we left off PC. Many of you are fighting the continual battle of trying to make sensible decisions in order to not let your fears dictate your next steps. So this leads up to where I was at preparing for the presentation; wash-dry-fold (WDF) is still a service that everyone can do. Look at it this way. Everyone can be a potential customer no matter what is going on around them. They can always use home, free pick-up and delivery. Their occupational wardrobe doesn't necessarily dictate how much we can service. This is why the time is now to implement an aggressive home service.

Many operators were slow to get a van and start delivering; now they may be late to the party. This is the same thing that I see in the WDF world. With many staying home and not having any dry cleaning needs, many operators have turned to the home laundry service as their saving grace. With the PPP loans in place, you can now have your staff stay busy by picking up, cleaning and delivering wash-

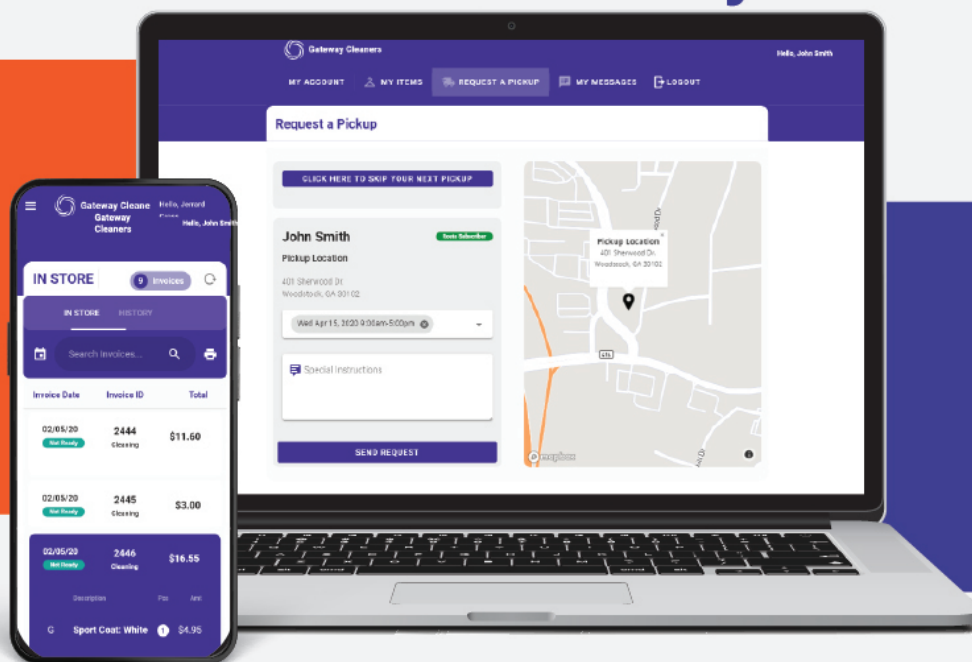
dry-fold. Simply put, you have the opportunity to get your foot in the door in the one service that can carry through and beyond the COVID-19 crisis. The longer you delay, your chances of getting new customers decrease. This lesson learned should have hit those who haven't been focusing on pick-up & delivery. Remember, you are competing with laundromats who also can service their customers at home.

WDF is easy to inject right in your current route schedule—providing you are doing routes right. The turnaround time cannot be longer than three days, so the typical Monday/Thursday or Tuesday/Friday route schedule will suit your customers just fine. We are seeing a decline in professional garments, but an increase in the demand of home services. Hit this moving target head on by getting going on laundry delivery. Your future may depend on it. While you may pick up a dry cleaning bag once every two to three weeks; you may pick up a WDF every route day. The bottom line is - the time is now for you to decide on whether or not you plan on doing wash-dry-fold. One quick tip is to out-source it if you don't feel like you have the facility or time to do it. Most of you do—so make it happen and utilize this service to get you and your team through this.

*James Peuster (james@therouteupro.com) is CEO of the Route Pro, a consultancy firm specializing in working with dry cleaners to increase revenue by establishing a route service.*



# Introducing Fabricare Customer Gateway



## Connect With Your Customers

Connect with your customer through our Fabricare Customer Gateway.



### Customer Messaging

Allow customers to send email and text messages directly to the store within the application.



### View Invoices

Our system allows your customer to view their past invoice history and current in-store invoices.



### Pickup Request

Allow on-demand and regular route customer to request their pick-up days based on location.



### Update Customer Info

Through the Customer Gateway, customers can update their account, preferences, and **credit card on file** information.



# Wash & Fold

with

# Laundromats

and dry cleaners



## Valet Cleaners & Laundry

Eight years ago, Valet Cleaners and Laundry, of Temple, TX, joined the wash & fold scene and only anticipates more revenue to come from that market. “Laundry is the most hated chore. It used to be that mainly divorced men ordered this service, but now it’s traveling professionals, the elderly, double-income professionals and people who are just too busy,” explains Allan Cripe, owner of Valet Cleaners, in Temple, TX.

In Cripe’s case, aside from the dry cleaners, they also own a laundromat in the same complex (under the same roof), which makes the process easier. At Valet Cleaners, they have one full time employee that works the laundromat and also works with all the wash & fold orders. They don’t use net bags, but separate the laundry, just as someone would do at home. Cripe explains that the profit margin is pretty high even with the utility costs and charging a very competitive \$1-\$1.50/lb. Wash & fold normally contributes 15% of the laundry revenue and during the pandemic, that rose to 25%. Overall laundry revenue is 60% and dry cleaning is 40% of their overall income.

Being situated close to Scott and White Hospital, Valet Cleaners has already processed its fair share of COVID-exposed garments. Cripe also provides delivery service of wash & fold to area hotel guests, in addition to regular drycleaning.

When asked what drycleaners should do if they want to start providing wash & fold, Cripe says, “Presentation is where it’s at. We first started by simply putting folded clothes in the poly bags we used for drycleaning. Now we use a bundler and stretch wrap to bundle 5-10 lbs together in a nice presentation. We also separate the kids’ clothes as a convenience for the customer and provide clothes on hangers from our recycling pile on request.” Cripe also suggests, “I’ve heard of some dry cleaners successfully partnering with coin laundries to provide wash



& fold. This could be a good first step. Lastly, Cripe adds, “Being in the south where laundry is already comprising the majority of the workload for dry cleaners, taking advantage of this segment makes good sense.”

## Peerless Cleaners

“Having wash & fold through our laundromats have saved our bacon through the COVID-19 pandemic, just as it did after Hurricane Harvey. Professional services dropped 60%, while our laundromat income has remained steady,” Doug Johnson of Peerless Cleaners stated. Peerless has 12 locations in the Corpus Christi/Aransas Pass area in Texas.

Managing laundromats along with their drycleaners wasn’t part of the plan in the beginning. After some failed franchise arrangements, Peerless took over management of the laundry establishments. According to Johnson, adding the laundromats worked well for the area clientele and diversifying revenue.

“You’ve got to know your customers and the demographics of your cleaners,” Johnson explains. “The Corpus area doesn’t have many millennials, but it has so many workers that temporarily work at the refineries and need a wash and fold service.”

Peerless is open 7 days/week, from 6:30 am to 10:00 pm to accommodate its customers who don’t have the typical 9 to 5 work day. Johnson admits, “We don’t have a traffic issue in the Corpus area, so we don’t have routes and customers pick up their cleaned clothes.”

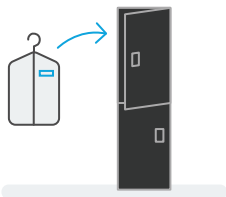


## Contactless Delivery with DropLocker Laundry Lockers

With DropLocker laundry lockers, you can provide your customers a secure and hands-off way to receive orders and your drivers an efficient and contactless delivery point.

Lockers available for purchase

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### Contactless Delivery

Orders are delivered to the secure lockers.



### Notification

DropLocker system or your POS sends the recipient a delivered notification and access code via email & text.



### Contactless Pickup

At their convenience, the recipient uses the code to pick up from the lockers.

## How do DropLocker laundry lockers provide contactless delivery and pickup?



### Social Distance without Sacrificing Security

No person-to-person contact is involved in delivery or pickup. Orders are kept secure until the recipient picks up.



### Mobile and Web App

Customers can place orders and manage preferences and payments directly from the Customer and Web App. If your POS solution doesn't offer this we can show you how easy this can be.



### Fast and Simple

Pickup and delivery take under :30 seconds each. Users get in and out quickly.



Lockers are easily cleaned and sanitized.



### No Keys, No Fuss

Completely key-free system, no device management needed.

\*<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>

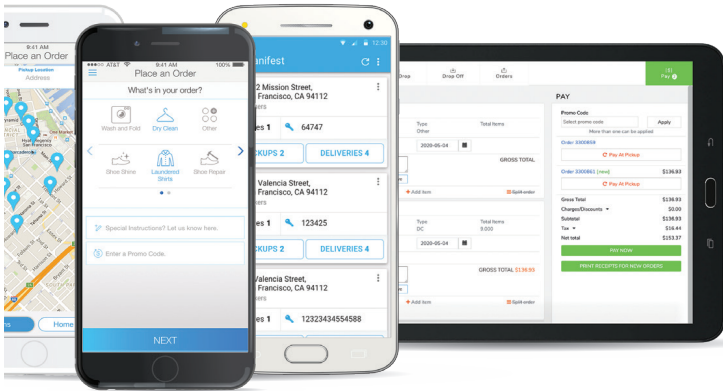
\*<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

\*<https://www.cdc.gov>

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## From Drop Stores to Lockers, and Everything in Between

The DropLocker platform has all the tools you need to get the best out of your Laundry and Dry Cleaning operation.

### Thought we were just lockers? Think again...



#### Counter Store

Full featured POS, multiple store and register support



#### Delivery Routes

Mobile delivery apps, master route management tools, mapping and location GPS tracking



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Scheduled and time window delivery. Integrations with the best last mile providers



#### Wholesale

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#### Concierge

Attended and unattended location drop off support. Location specific tools for bulk order drop



#### Lockers

The premiere locker delivery and code supported delivery tools in the market

### Why DropLocker?

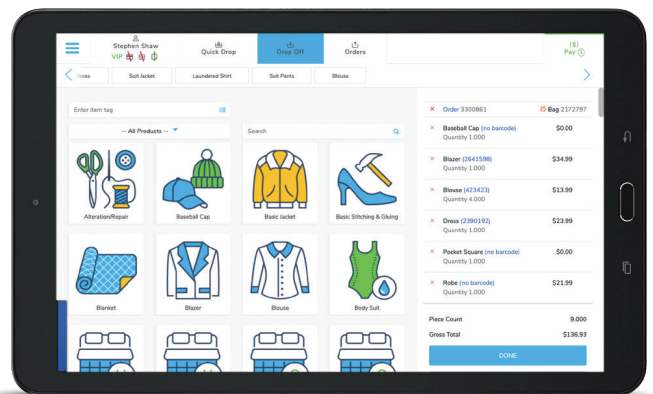
- Branded customer, web and driver apps included in subscriptions
- No proprietary equipment to buy or hardware restrictions
- Choose your own payment processor
- Integrates with Matalprogetti, Quicksort and Fabricare assembly systems
- Deep customization to fit your business needs
- Best in class promotion, email and CRM tools
- Full plant and production management tools
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- Always free customer support

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# Reinventing the Dry Cleaner

## Going 100% Routes with all Services



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fox Cleaners' routes accounted for 30% of the total revenue and wash & fold was at 20%. "When this all hit, I first considered closing down our lower performing stores. Then I decided to shift our entire business model," Maggie Fox, owner of Fox Cleaners in Tulsa, OK.

Like many cleaners, Fox had cut back staff hours and eventually closed the stores, keeping the plant running with her route clientele. That got her thinking long-term. "I want to be able to do more with less and capitalize on the new contactless culture." Fox explained that her staff had already shrunk to the core dedicated employees and since there's no traffic in the store, it's a perfect time to make changes.

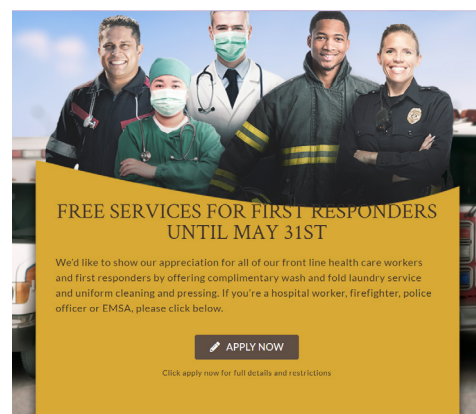
"We are going 100% routes and servicing our clients through pick-up and delivery only. We are reinventing ourselves, which will also appeal to the millennials and future generations." Fox gave her landlords notice that she'll be out by May and is moving her entire operation under one roof. Fox Cleaners already has an app for people to use and will incorporate that into her new marketing material.

"We can't be all things to all people, so this allows us to concentrate on what we do best, which is top-service clothes cleaning. No more shuffling clothes from

one place to the other and fewer staffing issues. We are getting lean and more efficient. It's always been a desire for me to have everyone in one location. I'm excited about starting over and giving the business a re-boot."

### Wash & Fold at Fox Cleaners

Getting down to the nitty-gritty, this is how Fox provides wash & fold to their customers. They have one 80 pound washer, two 60 pound washers, one 45 pound washer, one 30 pound washer, and four 45 pound dryers. Fox uses net bags to wash and dry the laundry, then follows it up with packaging the folded laundry wrapped in plastic. They also charge by the pound, like many cleaners.



*Through May, Fox Cleaners is offering free wash & fold service (up to 20 pounds) and uniform pressing to first responders. This image pops up on the Fox Cleaners website.*

“Every business should be thinking like a startup now, no matter how large the corporation. While it is a rough and stressful situation to rethink your business strategy, this time period offers a good opportunity to look at how your product or service is fitting into your customers' lives.”

"Why you should think like a startup during the pandemic," by Yasin Abbak, FAST COMPANY, 4/15/20



# SDA Annual Membership Meeting

July 10-11, 2020

Lone Star Court / Austin, TX

**FREE FOR SDA MEMBERS**

**Details & RSVP at [www.sda-dryclean.com](http://www.sda-dryclean.com)**

In this fluid time, we are continuing to move forward with the SDA Annual Membership Meeting and Board Meeting this July. Knowing this could change, we recommend you don't make travel arrangements yet, but RSVP and let us know if you'd like to attend.

SDA will let you know when you can make hotel reservations at the hip Lone Star Court, at the Domain, in Austin.

Contact Liz Williams at the SDA office for questions. 512-873-8195 / [staff@sda-dryclean.com](mailto:staff@sda-dryclean.com)

## Membership Includes

### ✓ Effortless Web Products

A smartphone-ready website, automated post to your brand's Facebook page and engaging email marketing to your customers.

### ✓ Apps For Dry Cleaners

Apps prepare your staff for any question stain or fabric. Search any drycleaning topic or send DLI pictures of damaged garments for analysis. (you may not be liable)

### ✓ DLI Experts on Demand

We hire the experts so you don't have to. If you have any technical problems or questions, we'll solve it in one call, email or online chat.

### ✓ Industry Advise, and Discounts

Dry cleaning news, marketing techniques and warnings on problem garments. Members have access to industry discounts, networking events and much more.

Join today at  
[www.DLionline.org](http://www.DLionline.org) 800-638-2627





# Increasing Revenue Streams

## Wedding Gown Preservation

Memories Gown Preservation began its journey preserving wedding gowns as Nesbit's Cleaners, later known as MW Cleaners, and now Tide Cleaners. After serving customers across their own counter, the Nesbits began providing the service regionally through a partnership with Prestige Preservation. In 2009, as part of Men's Wearhouse, they secured a deal with David's Bridal. That was the catalyst to officially launch Memories Gown Preservation into selling its wholesale services to drycleaners, bridal salons and tux shops across the U.S.

"We've been cleaning and preserving wedding gowns for 40 years," Kyle Nesbit, SVP Business Development, Compliance of Memories explains. "To preserve a gown properly, a cleaner has to find the time and have a large clean space to set up. A typical drycleaner with one location potentially cleans five gowns a year. To be an expert, you need to have a multitude of hours in the craft. Our employees touch six gowns an hour. We are proud to call them experts and our final presentation speaks for itself."

Drycleaners can provide gown preservation to their customers and keep about fifty percent of the cost to their customer (retail is \$250). "You can have a beautifully finished product that you are proud to give your customers," Nesbit explains. "It's a high-end product with all profit and no risk."

One unique feature that can take the revenue stream to a new level is the co-branding that Memories offers. They can customize the gown preservation packaging to include a drycleaner's name and logo and provide marketing materials. Drycleaners can exhibit at local

bridal shows, make arrangements with wedding consultants or venues and build more revenue for their business.

### How to Get Started

To start, call 866-492-GOWN (4696) or email Kyle Nesbit at [knesbit@tdc-edittx.com](mailto:knesbit@tdc-edittx.com). You will be sent a starter kit with five prepaid labels, order forms, and shipping containers. When Memories receives the first gown, they will obtain your credit card to place on file. When you receive a gown, simply fill out the order form, place gown in the provided container and ship it to Memories. The gown can be sent back to the drycleaner or to the customer, whichever you choose. Turn-around time is two-four weeks.







## Tuxedo Rental

Grady Golden, owner of Hygienic Cleaners and Golden Tuxedo in the Topeka, KS area has run the gamut of ways to manage formalwear rentals. Beginning in the 1940s, Hygienic has cleaned tuxes up to 1991. In 1991, the Tuxedo retailer built his own dry cleaning plant inside a newly built Tuxedo and Bridal Gallery and he cleaned his own. When he sold the business in 2001, the new owner contracted with him to begin cleaning again in about 2006. In 2001, Golden started by drycleaning tuxes and gowns for a Tuxedo and Bridal Gallery through 2006.

In 2008, he remodeled his drycleaner and added 20 mannequins wearing tuxes and a few bridal gowns in the store. The first weekend he rented 87 tuxes and sold 3 wedding gowns, along with drycleaning from those sales. Soon after, he purchased three tux stores with all the inventory and acquired another with a colleague. However, in 2010, Golden shut all the stores down due to complications with his partnership.

In 2011, Golden remodeled their 6000 sq. ft. plant for Hygienic Cleaners to include a lobby for a display of tuxes. With the additional room, he created Golden Tuxedo. He started the business slow and grew the business by exhibiting at bridal shows and networking locally with schools, colleges, and the community.

"Entering into the formalwear rental business was an easy transition. Everything has to be cleaned, altered and the wedding gowns need to be preserved. It's like we're a one-stop shop," Golden explains. "The national chains are actually a benefit because they bring awareness and high prices. A local guy like me already has the relationships in the community to gain business and it's easy to make relationships with a few other markets."

To maximize efficiency, Golden cross trains his customer service staff to book weddings and take alterations, yet a family member is always engaged in the transaction. "We are able to compete with the national companies because the locally owned and operated nature of our business. We guarantee a perfect fit and style and have the alterations staff on hand for those last minute tweaks."

"Clothing has a high mark-up, so the profit margin is really good. Plus, it gets young people in the door," he explains. Since most drycleaners have a lobby and staff that's not always utilized, Golden recommends displaying some mannequins and put up signs for an easy start. Drycleaners can visit the retail shops to see how best to display the product.

### How to Get Started

"You want to look for a quality wholesaler, like Paul Morrell ([www.paulmorrell.com](http://www.paulmorrell.com)) to partner with." Lastly, Golden suggests, "If a drycleaner wants to get into the business, I'd suggest hiring a consultant so you don't have to reinvent the wheel." For further conversation, contact Grady Golden, [grady@goldentuxedo.com](mailto:grady@goldentuxedo.com).



## Leather Care

Robert Gershon, one of the pioneers of leather care, learned the trade in the 1950s and crafted the art from the Arrow Cleaners plant in Kansas City, MO. From there, Arrow Fabricare mastered cleaning smooth leather capeskins, Marlboro jackets, cowhides and gloves to furs, coats, handbags, Uggs, fine linens and more.

Bruce Gershon entered the business in 1974 and soon created partnerships with designer labels like Mark Buchanan, Donna Karan and Oscar de la Renta to start their mail order leather cleaner business. At one point, Arrow worked with Ralph Lauren's release of the Double RL jeans. "We stained 475,000 jeans that year," Gershon marveled.

A firm believer in partnerships, Gershon started calling drycleaners to provide wholesale leather services. After mastering the process, Arrow now works with 600 cleaners all over the U.S., providing them with wholesale prices on leather care, re-weaving torn items, fur storage and repair, re-coloring and cleaning handbags, luxury linen, French laundry and even more items.

"We have decades of experience with leather care and hard-to-repair items. We are a problem-solving source for our drycleaners," Gershon said. "We provide promotional material, an online portal and phone app. We also run promotions with our drycleaners. For example, this April we are rebating 20% for all sales."



### How to Get Started

There is no cost to start offering leather care and specialty cleaning items from Arrow Leathercare. Simply call their office at 800-542-7769, tell them you want to offer their services and you'll

be set up in Arrow's SMRT System as a wholesale customer. When a customer has an item you need to send to Arrow, complete the information in the SMRT System, print the PDF, and ship the item with the PDF to Arrow with the FedEx label that they supply. Once received, the item will be in the plant 4-5 days and sent back to the cleaner.



## Shoe Repair

My Shoe Hospital (MSH) launched its shoe repair service to drycleaners at the 2014 Cleaners Showcase, in Fort Worth. Starting in 1905 in Houston, MSH has mastered the craftsmanship to provide quality shoe repair, along with brick and mortar stores in Austin, Houston and Dallas. After realizing that shoe repair and drycleaners have many of the same clientele, MSH thought it was a natural fit and currently have 75-100 drycleaners nationwide that provide shoe, boot, and handbag repair services through MSH.

The process is pretty simple. A customer comes into the dry cleaner with their items for repair, completes an order for the repair needed (aptly named a 'prescription') using MSH's one-of-a-kind shoe repair kiosk that

is prominently displayed in your store. The customer then provides the customer service agent with their items for repair. The dry cleaner sends the shoes to MSH in Austin. Lastly, the shoes return to the dry cleaner within two weeks. MSH covers the shipping both ways and the dry cleaner can set their own price on the repair services offered, which averages 40% above wholesale.

After several years of having this service provided by drycleaners, MSH realized the drycleaner had to continually train staff on shoe repair terminology and repairs. "We developed the shoe repair kiosk so staff doesn't need to be continually trained and there is less opportunity for mis-information. Also, if we have an issue with the shoe, we can contact the customer directly and not put that burden on the drycleaner," Wil Kelly, Vice Presi-

*continued on next page*



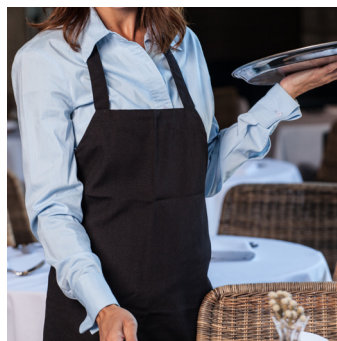
## Textile Rentals

In the 1940s, drycleaners recognized the need for restaurants to need clean, fine linens on a continual bases and provided linens and cleaning services for that market. So, it's not a stretch to think that drycleaners can create a revenue stream today from doing just that.

According to Rob Hunt, Vice President of Sales for Hunt Textiles (HT), "Drycleaners can provide an advantage that other rental agencies can't. They are a local point of contact, responsive to customer requests and can deliver on-time to the customer."

HT has been working with drycleaners since the 1990s to expand income streams and locally provide textile rentals locally. Based in Irving, TX, HT has been suppliers of wholesale linens since 1977. They sell and rent a vast array of products, from gym towels, aprons, and tablecloths to sheets, patient gowns and mattress pads.

Getting involved in textile rentals is extremely easy. HT provides you with marketing material, such as images, swatches, samples and customizable catalogues. The drycleaner orders the items at wholesale prices through HT and receives the products in 1-2 days. There are no minimum orders and you set the retail prices, for which HT can provide guidance. "Drycleaners have the freedom to provide their own price packages. You can bundle rentals or sales with a cleaning package or



each service separately," Hunt explains. "You can get creative and choose where the profit is."

A drycleaner can start with one restaurant or hotel, find the process/packages that works for them and grow from there.

### How to Get Started

To launch into renting and selling textiles, simply call 800-458-9445 or email [rob@hunttextiles.com](mailto:rob@hunttextiles.com).

dent of My Shoe Hospital, explained. "The kiosk has a beautiful 42" touchscreen which also has the ability for the drycleaner to upload their own business marketing onto it." See photo on right for an example of the kiosk and visit [www.shoerepairkiosk.com](http://www.shoerepairkiosk.com) to see how simple the process is.

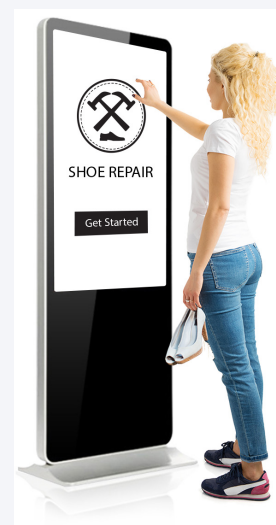
### How to Get Started

There is no cost to be a dealer for MSH and the starting point is to visit [www.offershoerepair.com](http://www.offershoerepair.com). The website contains a host of information, including training, and registration for you to become a dealer. Next, you will take a course to familiarize yourself with the general types of shoe repair, pricing strategies, how to manage your account and other topics to get started.

The second step is to register on [www.shoerepairkiosk.com](http://www.shoerepairkiosk.com). The deposit for the kiosk is \$500 and the remain-

ing \$2000 can be paid through your account with an arrangement you decide, up to 36 months. At this time, a drycleaner is not obligated to purchase a kiosk, but there may come a time when it's necessary. Once a cleaner registers, they will receive a phone call from MSH to launch.

Contact:  
[support@austinshoehospital.com](mailto:support@austinshoehospital.com)  
877-471-SHOE (7463)



SOUTHWEST DRYCLEANERS ASSOCIATION  
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