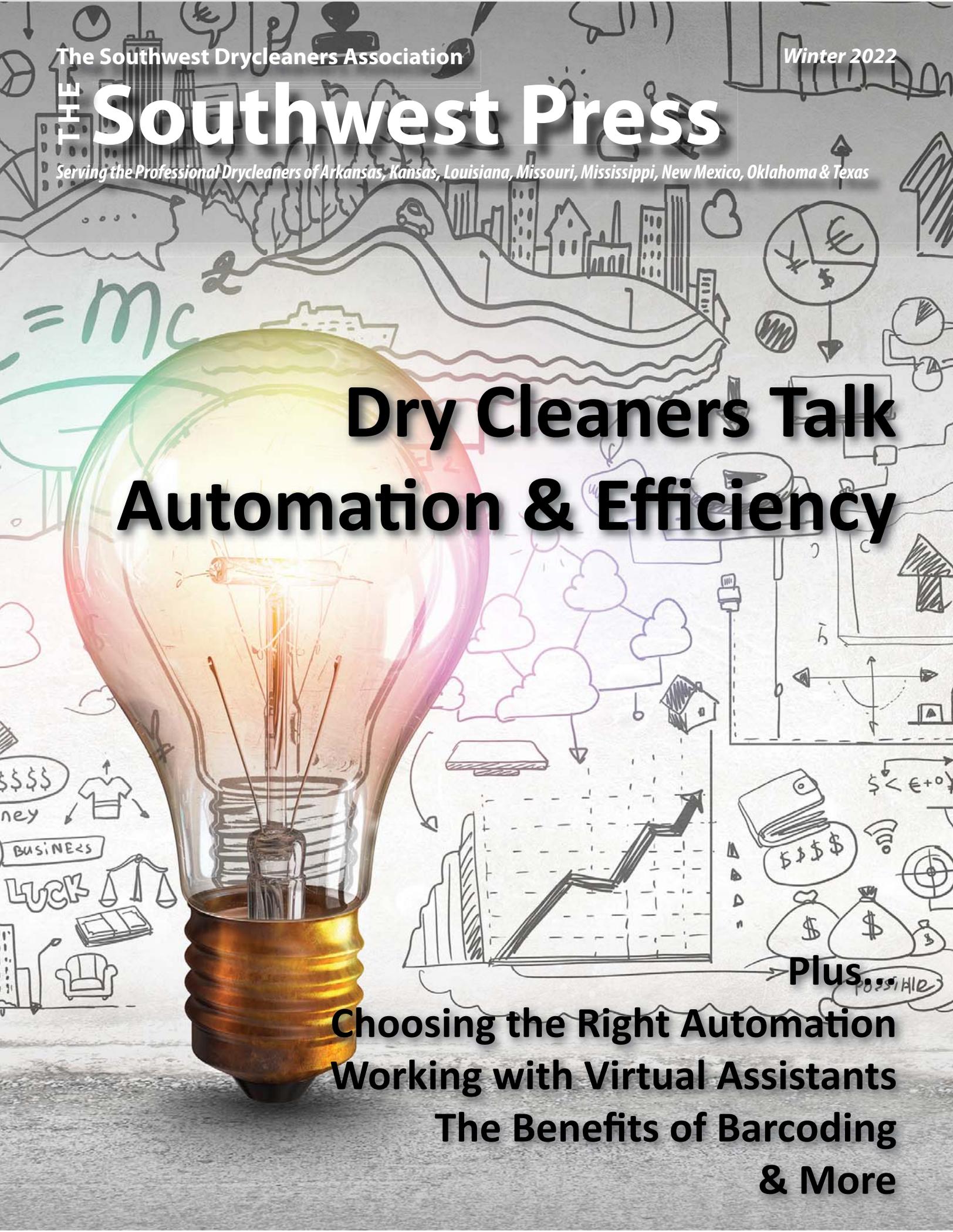


The Southwest Drycleaners Association

Winter 2022

THE Southwest Press

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



Dry Cleaners Talk Automation & Efficiency

Plus

Choosing the Right Automation
Working with Virtual Assistants
The Benefits of Barcoding
& More



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President's Message

Normal?

by Danny Bahlman, Bahlman Cleaners

Like many of you, I spent some time on December 7 reflecting on the events 80 years ago. What was normal on December 6, 1941 was no longer the normal of December 8, 1941. Most of us have no personal memory of that day, but we all remember where we were September 11, 2001, and realize that normal had changed our lifestyle once again.

For almost two years we have experienced the often-devastating results and life altering events brought about by the Covid-19 virus. Visiting with many of you during recent months, a recurring question has been “are you returning to normal?” What is normal? We all realize that normal is an almost daily changing occurrence.

As a second-generation member of the industry and over 50 years of personal involvement, I am often asked about the changes I have seen and experienced. I usually mention two changes that have had tremendous impact on our industry — fashion (design & fabrics) combined with relaxed dress codes, and technological advances in equipment and operations.

Pneumatics have replaced physical effort and electronics control in almost every phase of our daily operations. Point of sales systems provide much more than just invoicing incoming orders, providing options for texting and e-mail. Assisted to fully automated assembly and mark-in procedures continue to see improvements in their efficiencies through bar coded garments. Personal customer service is even seeing changes as operators introduce the concepts of 24/7 access to their clientele and routes are plotted by GPS for a more efficient delivery schedule.

This issue of Southwest Press is dedicated to helping us look forward to “a new normal” created by emerging technologies, processes, and automation. Several of your fellow SDA members are providing articles discussing the pros and cons, pain points, impact on daily operations, and successes of their

moves to increased technologies and automation. Investigate the potential of adding these technologies to your daily operation and anticipate a future as these applied sciences continue to emerge.

Just as our business operations change, so does the membership of the SDA Board of Directors. Currently the Nominating Committee is diligently considering the membership of the next Executive Committee and possibilities of adding new board members. I encourage each of you, as an SDA member, to attend the Annual Membership Meeting March 4-5, 2022, in San Antonio and exercise your vote and input in the association as the incoming Executive Committee and Board members are selected.

It has been my honor to serve as President of SDA the previous two years. I have been privileged to serve with a group of dedicated professional drycleaners interested in promoting and improving the industry, as well as your individual situation. Admittedly, there is a bit of nostalgia remembering the members who are no longer serving on the Board, and I thank them for their guidance while being excited about the new members and the direction and ideas they will bring to this great association.

History will always teach us we cannot anticipate everything the future holds and that has certainly proven true, but the consequences of planning and implementing changes creates methods for greater success. It is my hope and prayer each of you continue to be successful in all your endeavors. I look forward to remaining involved with you as we go forward, improving through change.

Danny Bahlman

President, Southwest Drycleaners Association





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There are few things in our industry that I would call game changers and barcoding garments is certainly one of them. It is a practice that generally the top operators in the country abide and live by but can benefit anyone of any size and scale.

I have laid out my personal experience with barcoding and implementing such practice at our operation at Orchid Cleaners, which we did in June of 2017. These are just a few of the benefits of changing over to a barcoding tagging system.

Benefits

- **Garment details**

Using a permanently fixated barcode to a garment gives us the ability to have greater detail in the garment's description. We identify the garment by its type, manufacturer, color, pattern, and size. Furthermore, we take a photo of each garment, this is a slam dunk when trying to identify misplaced or mis-detailed items.

- **Photo identification**

Taking a photo of each garment gives our clients a tremendous amount of transparency and comfort, in particular those clients we engage with outside of our stores. E.g., pick up and delivery, locker, etc. (This may be a limitation as some software's do not offer this option to take photos, we operate with SMRT Systems)

- **Auto/assisted assembly**

Using the barcoding assisted assembly process is more efficient in time and space compared to a classic tag/lot assembly method. Moreover, it is more accurate than a

traditional method as it removes some of the "human error" element out of the equation. Training a staff member for assembly also becomes a night and day difference and literally something anyone can learn and be effective in a matter of minutes.

- **"Tagging" Speed**

Once most of your clients' items are barcoded and described, this will not have to be done again. The individual intaking the garment only needs to scan a barcode and all the information will be there within a matter of a second. The tagging process time will be reduced and simplified.

- **Scalability**

There are many other variables that would be required for one to scale their operation. But I am confident when I say that barcoding gives us the ability to do so with more ease. I was able to triple our operation in sales and piece count in the past 4 years once we implemented the barcoding process. This gave us the confidence to expand without compromising control.

As with everything else in the world, there is a give and take when it comes to change. How you manage your lot system may have to change as you do not have the luxury of information tags (e.g., due date, location, etc.) on each garment/item. But I see this as a benefit as it will force you to be more organized and/or quicker at processing your garments. In addition it helps accomplish what I call "FIFO" first in, first out for the garments.

Daniel Cha - Orchid Cleaners Orlando, FL

More of our Satisfied Customers...

Information about a garment is saved and retained to the barcode that is adhered to the garment. When barcodes are properly adhered they remain on the garment during cleaning, and aid in the automation process. Information will only need to be entered once for a garment, then the barcode tracks it for us.

In tandem with the MetalProgetti, you only need to scan the barcode and put the item in any available location on the conveyor. It then registers the location it was placed in. After all the pieces for an order have been scanned to the conveyor, it will pull those items off, bag them, and then send them up to storage. This saves labor and time over a person manually sorting items to tickets and bagging them. The automation of the MetalProgetti can also drop certain groups of orders, which saves labor and time over a person manually sorting and finding.

David Cass - Martinizing Cleaners Waukesha, WI



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We have been using the barcodes since April of 2019. The initial setup takes time to do with putting in a description and mfg. The invoicing is much easier after that. To track items is also an easier process you can track the HSL number to find who the garment belongs to. We also use the assisted assembly which is a much faster process than looking at tags like we did with the lot system.

Don Saccol - Monarch Cleaners Altoona, PA

Regency Cleaners has been using heat seals for almost 10 years. We started using heat seals as a way to save time on our detailing process and ended up recognizing savings in many more ways.

Heat seals provide the following benefits for our company:

1. Reduction in errors in detailing garments. Once the item is detailed, employee time is quickly saved each time the item is returned.
2. Cost savings in purchasing multiple tags and pins for hand tagging and ticketing items.
3. Time and labor savings in assembly of the garments. The increase in the automation available to drycleaners today and the use of heat seals for garment identification can reduce your labor by 1 or 2 persons per assembly system.
4. Inventory control and garment age identification can reduce claims and identify missing items or items left out of orders.
5. Heat seal presses are very user friendly and have a small footprint for ease in use on a detailing counter.
6. Training for heat seal application and use is extremely easy and speeds up the training process.

Regency Cleaners strives to embrace the use of new technologies to enhance our customer experience and to identify the most strategic opportunities for our operation. The use of heat seals in our detailing process continues to propel our operation forward through the reduction of labor, supplies and costly errors.

Rita Foley - Regency Cleaners Durham, NC

The barcodes cost us what?? .04c a piece or less. That's super cheap considering they are reusable for many cleanings. I've seen some reused over 30 cleanings.

They take 10 seconds to seal onto the garment. Depending on what the garments are, we are able to put 1-4 items on the press at one time.

For our stores, once we assign a barcode to a garment, the garment, color, name brand is instilled in our system. We can then track how many times the garment has been cleaned and each time it has been cleaned before.

Once the garment is complete, the garment gets scanned through our auto assembly (ADAC) and we are able to add to the barcode (no crease) (fold) etc.. and goes back to the customer.

They save time because you don't have to continually put tags on clothes and take tags off of clothes. Customers come in and you just scan the barcode on the garment and it adds it into the system if it has previously been put in. It eliminates putting clothes in wrong names as long as it is put in correctly the first time. Any information on a particular garment is stored in the system making it easily accessible to CSRs and easy to catch before it goes back to the customer if the assembler can see it as well after they scan for assembly.

Tim Vicks - Vicks Cleaners Kinston, NC



EzPi Recommended Barcoding Notes

1. Once you start barcoding, you cannot stop - it's mission critical to have vendors that can deliver on-time quality products.
2. A vertical color stripe (blue, red, green, gray or black) can be added to your barcodes for a visual reference. The most popular sizes are .25" x 1" and .25" x .6875". Barcode labels come with a dot tack or not.
3. Easy formula for your first order per location: amount of labels per day you will use x your days open x 6 or 8 = first order total. (clothes come back generally in 6-8 weeks).
4. Some prefer to put both paper tags and barcode labels on before going live in their POS system- to simplify the learning process of POS.
5. Heat seal presses and barcode labels work with all POS systems. You need to know your POS' preferred symbology and starting number requirements. Do not repeat any numbers. Buy quality safety certified presses only, do not try to cut costs here.
6. Buy presses that can quickly apply barcode labels to fabrics like cotton, silk, satin, polyester, wool and denim. You are not applying thick emblems or patches that require more time and temperature.
7. Do not try to apply labels directly to velour, velvet, pleather, leather or sequins. Spandex and some new fabrics are tricky.



Choosing the Right Automation

By Brett McLeod, Garment Management Systems

Are you having issues with hiring enough employees to operate efficiently? Are you spending all your time working in the plant or drop store instead of managing your business? It may be time to look at ways to decrease labor through automating portions of your business.

Assembly Area

If you don't have any automation in your assembly area, this is the area where you will most likely get the biggest bang for your buck. Based on size and staffing, a cleaner can save between one to three or more persons by going to some type of auto/assisted assembly. All the auto/assisted assembly methods require the use of bar codes.

Before we get into the different types of automated assembly systems, let's talk about bar coding. A bar code on each garment is required if you want to switch to an automated assembly system. Heat seal bar codes are by far the most effective, cost-efficient option for bar coding garments for most cleaners. While some operators have concerns about customer satisfaction with the placement of heat seal bar codes on garments, customers rarely notice the tag as long as it is placed properly. Switching to a heat seal bar code system does take some effort; however, within a few months cleaners typically notice the significant advantages of faster mark-in time, tracking of garments, and consistently captured upcharges. An exception may be pre-pay cleaners who do not detail each garment or desire to take the extra time to describe each garment. For those operators, a paper printed bar coded tag, if supported by the POS system, will allow for automated assembly without using the heat seal bar coded tags.

Bagging Manhours

There are different levels of automation and can vary in price from less than \$5000 for the POS based assisted assembly to over \$150,000 for a

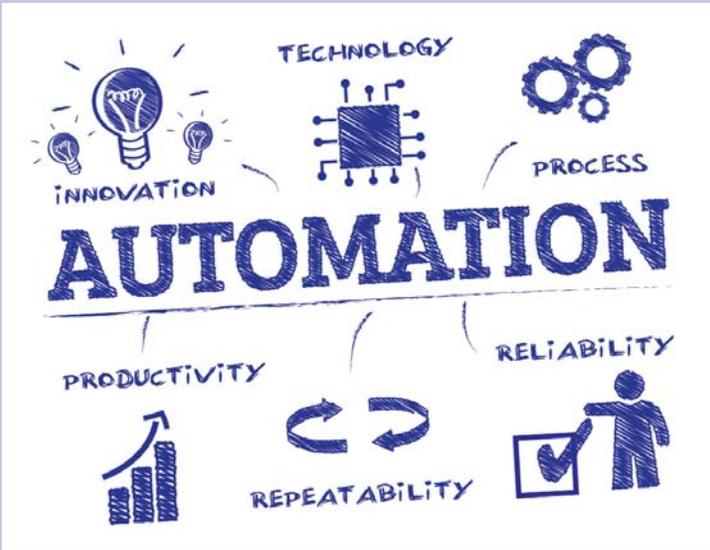
fully automatic system. Matching the right amount of automation to your business is critical. You must carefully look at your labor for mark-in, assembly, and bagging to determine what level of automation provides the best ROI. To properly assess what level of automation is appropriate, it's very important to count every assembly/bagging man hour. Many cleaners only count the manhours of the employees assigned to assembly and bagging, but near the end of the day they have 2 to 3 employees help for an hour or so to finish assembling and bagging. Those additional manhours need to be counted as part of the total assembly and bagging manhours.

Types of Automation for Your ROI

Once you have determined your total assembly and bagging manhours, you are ready to determine what level of automation will provide you with the best ROI. There are basically three levels of automating your assembly area: 1) assisted assembly; 2) auto assembly by order; and 3) fully automatic assembly by piece with an integrated automatic bagger. All these systems require a Point of Sale (POS) system. Assisted assembly systems are sold by POS vendors (though not all POS vendors offer assisted assembly); the other options are sold by a third-party vendor and require an interface with the POS system. Most POS vendors have existing interfaces with the most popular automated assembly options. Consultation with the POS vendor prior to purchasing an automated assembly system is always recommended. An automatic bagger can be added to the first two options to provide additional labor savings.

The rule of thumb is that smaller cleaners (less than 600 pieces per day) are best suited for assisted assembly, medium size cleaners (600 to 2000 pieces per day) for the auto assembly by order method and the large cleaners (greater than 2000 pieces

(Continued on next page)



Automation for the Win

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Choosing the Right Automation (Cont)

per day) may benefit most with the fully automatic assembly. No two dry cleaners are alike, so there are plenty of exceptions to the above rule of thumb. The most important number to look at to determine what assembly method is best for your particular operation is your assembly/bagging manhours and how much labor you can actually save. Take caution not to spend more than you need to. If you are limited to pressing 100 garments per hour, it does not make sense to spend an additional \$100,000 plus on a system that is designed to process over 300 garments per hour. In this case, you would not see any additional labor saving between the order assembly method and the fully automatic, but the price difference between the two systems is significant.

To summarize, if you don't have any type of automation in your assembly area, this represents

the area of your operation that will be the easiest to automate and give you the best ROI. As labor shortages continues and labor rates go up, you will need to continue to evaluate this area. What may have been an unacceptable ROI, at last year's labor rate, may be an acceptable ROI at current labor rates.

Brett McLeod is the owner and president of QuickSort and Garment Management Systems. The companies offer innovated automation solutions to the dry cleaning and casino/hotel markets. He can be reached at (501) 216-8093, brett@garmentmanagement.com.



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Dry Cleaners Talk about Automation

Brian Robertson Classic Dry Cleaners, Inc.



The labor shortage has every dry cleaner owner seriously re-thinking their operations and investigating how to automate tasks and possibly eliminate an FTE. Those that have not consid-

ered auto-assembly for years are now considering it. For twelve years now Brian Robertson, owner of Classic Dry Cleaners, Inc., in Corinth, TX, professes to every dry cleaner about his Quicksort automated assembly system, "I've never done anything in the entirety of my business that increased my efficiency and started paying for itself on day one. It's the best labor and operation decision I've ever made."

Robertson admits he was able to eliminate one laundry assembler with the auto assembly system and one CSR with the bar coding system. In addition to the cost savings, the automated system actually takes up less space, especially since it eliminates the assembly rails. The system then leads extremely well to utilize an automatic bagger. Many rave that auto assembly not only saves time, but eliminates human error that frequently happen with paper tags.

Preparing for Installation

Robertson implemented the heat seal and bar coding system six weeks prior to the auto-assembly and recommends doing this method. Take time to determine where to install the equipment. In the end, every piece of clothing will flow to one spot, which makes it a good time to implement an automated bagger.

With most machine installations, you have to move everything to place them in the plant. However, Brian's whole system was operational in just four hours. "I expected a major headache when we launched the system, but it's mind boggling how smooth the transition was," Brian admits. The bar code system easily syncs with most POS systems too.

The equipment Robertson has is a Quicksort automated assembly system from Garment Management Solutions and a heat seal and bar coding system from EZPI which works with his Fabricare Management POS. Dry cleaners can contact Brian Robertson at classicdc1998@gmail.com with questions.

Paul Hoodless Rose Cleaners



Rose Cleaners, based in San Antonio, TX, recently purchased their dry cleaning automation and according to owner Paul Hoodless, "We took to it pretty easily. We were using it 100% the day after installation." Paul said they started to bar code two months prior to the automation, which assisted with the transition.

Rose Cleaners also purchased the Quicksort System, which was installed in one day, including training his employees. "I visited other cleaners with this system to make sure it was the right machinery for us. We ordered the biggest we could fit in the space we had," said Paul. Though it's too early to tell on the labor time saved, Paul reports that they system has made their plant more efficient and cleaned up their tickets.



Staff shortages continues to have an impact on the industry

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How to Retain Top Talent & Reduce Turnover

By Francis Flair, Flair Consulting Group



Since the pandemic, companies have struggled with hiring and retaining top talent. With many open positions, it can seem like people don't want to work, but that may not be the case at all. Recently, in an Uber, I talked to Chase, the driver, and we struck up a conversation about why he drives for Uber. He was a manager at a chain restaurant, and why he left surprised me. He drives for Uber now because he didn't feel valued as a manager. He then continued to explain that he couldn't do his job because his boss wouldn't let him do his best for his employees. WOW!

Is it a labor shortage?

People don't want to work because in an employee market, as we find ourselves, people want more than just a paycheck. They need to feel valued and have a greater purpose. Yes, it may seem like a labor shortage, but it is a turnover crisis when you look deeper at what is happening—using Chase as an example, he left his job because of his boss and again reaffirmed that people don't quit jobs, but bad bosses. It is crucial now more than ever to have a plan to retain quality talent and improve employee engagement.

It starts from the top.

To start the process, you need a plan to make team members feel valued and appreciated, beginning with a clear idea of what each leader must do. Your team needs to feel leadership cares about them personally and professionally and is interested in their growth and development as a person. I strongly recommend one-on-ones to leaders with their direct reports. Often, I get managers rolling their eyes at the idea but are more than happy they committed to it -- these

meetings should be structured with employees coming prepared to discuss; they can be a way to reinforce concepts, procedures, and processes. Leaders must commit to this because an employee's relationship with their immediate manager solely determines if they leave an organization or stay.

Great culture is by design, not accident.

Outstanding service organizations do a great job dictating their culture and not leaving it to chance. Companies must make the conscious effort to foster a culture conducive for employees, a place where employees can learn to improve, operate at their best, and love their jobs. Focusing on culture can improve all aspects of a business, from productivity and hiring to customer relations and employee satisfaction. Your greatest asset as an organization is your people, and your ability to retain top talent and improve employee engagement is the best investment you can make. Your employees first, customers second (since your staff are your first customers anyway). Take great care of them, and they will take fantastic care of your customers.

Francis Flair is the President of Flair Consulting Group, a firm helping businesses improve customer service with a proven plan that makes price irrelevant to grow, thrive, and stand out from the competition. You can contact him at francis@flairconsultinggroup.com.



A dynamic splash of blue water against a white background, with many small droplets scattered around the main splash. The water is captured in mid-air, creating a sense of movement and freshness.

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Large Stains

By Jeff “The Stain Wizard” Schwarz

Often times when a stain is too large to be removed on the spotting board, soaking in whitening agents or a digester is the answer.

As I call upon drycleaners, often I am challenged to help fix a problem garment. “Get me a clean bucket or 5 gallon pail so I can mix up a bleach bath.” Almost always, after a frantic search and about 15 minutes, an old worn out dusty, dirty, grimy container will be presented to me. “Is this clean enough? Can you make this work?”

Tips for Large Stains

1. Keep and clean 5 gallon buckets and their lids from your old laundry soap.
2. Label the containers. Some whitening agents are acid, some are alkali. Labeling and using a dedicated container eliminates residual chemical from hampering the effectiveness.

Here’s an example (I see this all the time). Let’s say you have a men’s laundry shirt that has dye fade on it and you want to use a reducing agent (like YellowGo). You find an old soap bucket and as you start putting water in it, soap bubbles are everywhere. Because YellowGo is alkali, the residual laundry soap will negate the effectiveness of the stripper/reducing bleach.



3. When using sodium perborate or digesters, use an insulated container or ice chest. It will hold the water temperature longer, enabling the chemical to work better.
4. A digester is not a bleach. Digesters are using live enzymes to break down protein bonds (anything that comes from your body). In doing so, it makes an insoluble stain, soluble.

4 W’s when using a digester

1. Warm over 100 degrees. Don’t use live steam from the spotting gun directly on the digester. Warm the water, then add the digester (SoGo1). Using an ice chest keeps the water warmer much longer. If you have to use a pail, always use the lid to help keep the heat inside. Get yourself a digital temperature gun. It’s a great tool to have to check steam traps’ water temps, dryer temps, etc. They are really inexpensive.



2. Wet the garment has to be submerged. Put a clean, white towel over the garment to hold it down. Wait....Digesters takes time - a minimum of 1 hour. Depending on the stain, it might take hours.

3. Without any other chemicals must be flushed out of garment before using digester. Use one ice chest for alkaline agents and one for reducing agents.

4. Why? There are 8 different bleaches used by cleaners and launderers (3 on the reducing side and 5 on the oxygen side). Teach your CSR staff NOT to use the words “bleach” (use the term “whitening agent”) or “wash” (use “wetclean”). When the customer hears the word “bleach”, they think of chlorine. If they hear the term “wash,” they think they can do the process at home.

The use of bleaches and digesters can be invaluable tools for stain removal. Your customers expect their garments to be returned like new. Your knowledge using advanced stain removal agents can help you achieve that.

Jeff Schwarz is Regional Vice President at A.L. Wilson Chemical Company and can be reached at jeffschwarz@alwilson.com.



Working Smarter with a Virtual Assistant

A Success Story from Ian's Dry Cleaning & Laundry Services



Ever feel like you could do so much more marketing and customer service if you and your staff weren't inundated with incorrect data and menial tasks that consume your time?

Ian Noble, owner of Rick's Cleaners and Ian's Dry Cleaning & Laundry Service, in Austin, TX, and his staff decided to proactively tackle this issue and hire a virtual assistant. Operations Director Lucindia Osbourn notes that though virtual is not something that comes naturally to dry cleaners, since Covid, it's a much more viable and palatable option.

"When you think about what you pay your executive team and they have tasks that anyone can do, you have to ask yourself, 'Is it smart to pay this much for this task?' We need to work smarter," Lucindia states.

"We use our virtual assistant 20-25 hours a week and she normally inputs data for us, creates spreadsheets, preps social media campaigns and whatever else we need." We all know that customer data sometimes has to be altered and errors fixed before it can be used in another software - assistants do this as well. They also contact customers with faulty data and request they contact the office or update their information on the website portal. Their assistant also pre-sorts the next day's route based on the previous day and coordinates monthly statement billing for corporate accounts.

How to Hire a Virtual Assistant

Lucindia works with Remote Co-Worker, which is international, but there are other companies, like Wing Assistant, who employ U.S. workers. "There's never been a language barrier working with our assistant. They want to work and be good at their job, so they have a good grasp of English."

At the beginning, they set up a few virtual interviews and selected an assistant. "She works on our schedule, so we chose that she be available 8am - 12pm, M-F. We pay her \$7/hour and she clocks in through a shared software that also shows what tasks she's working on, so you know you are paying for actual hours worked," says Lucindia.

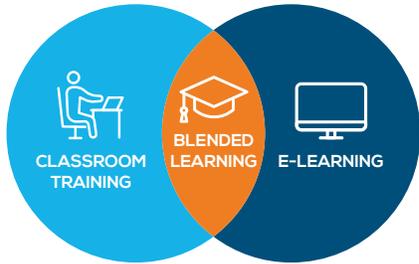
They started with 4-5 critical tasks to do every day, then added more tasks as she became proficient. Lucindia says they went through two assistants until they found the right fit with the third one.

How to Work with Your Assistant

"We spent about two weeks meeting with our assistant every day via Zoom, but now we rarely meet. If she has questions, she emails me. I created training videos through Panopto, illustrating tasks like how to log in and use our email marketing software. This was critical so our assistant can refer to it and not need to contact me with many questions. In the long run, it saves us time!" Lucindia also created some generic emails for her to use like billing@ianscleaners.com and also log-in credentials for the different softwares we use.

On the benefits she's seen from using a virtual assistant, Lucindia says, "It's eye-opening how many ideas you have for what you can do for your customers. Once someone else is crunching your data, you see how you can use that data and have it work for you."

Lucindia encourages other dry cleaners, "Just try it. There's no contract and you can cancel at any time. You'll see a significant change in your day and have time to promote the business."



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BASIC – \$1,195
INTERNATIONAL – \$1,195
STANDARD – \$956
GOLD – \$717
PREMIER – FREE
NON-MEMBERS – \$1,595

COURSE DATES
 March 7 - 11
 August 8 - 12
 October 17 - 21



ADVANCED DRYCLEANING COURSE TEN-DAYS ON-SITE

This ten-day Advanced Drycleaning Course is for individuals who have completed the Introduction Course or have hands-on production experience and knowledge of basic stain removal and finishing techniques. The advanced course covers:

- Identifying cotton, silk, polyester and other fabrics.
- Using bleaches without damaging the fabric color.
- Pressing blouses, dresses, ties, pleated garments, silks, velvets and corduroy.
- Wetcleaning wool, silk and more.
- Maintaining and changing filters.
- Troubleshooting problems with the drycleaning machine.
- Using tensioning equipment to improve finishing quality.
- Current regulations facing the drycleaning industry.
- Customer service techniques for drycleaners.
- Getting clean, white laundry.
- Cleaning and preserving wedding gowns.
- Understanding the differences between solvents including perc, GreenEarth®, hydrocarbon and SOLVONK4.
- Pressing laundered shirts.
- Designing a drycleaning plant with the most effective work flow.

BASIC – \$1,695
INTERNATIONAL – \$1,695
STANDARD – \$1,356
GOLD – \$1,017
PREMIER – FREE
NON-MEMBERS – \$2,195

COURSE DATES
 March 14 - 25
 August 15 - 26
 October 24 - November 4



GENERAL DRYCLEANING COURSE FIFTEEN-DAYS ON-SITE

This fifteen-day general course is made up of the Introduction and Advanced Courses. These classes also can be taken individually, but DLI affiliates save when taking them together.

BASIC – \$1,995
INTERNATIONAL – \$1,995
STANDARD – \$1,596
GOLD – \$1,197
PREMIER – FREE
NON-MEMBERS – \$2,895

COURSE DATES
 March 7 - 25
 August 8 - 26
 October 17 - November 4



BLENDED LEARNING INTRODUCTION TO DRYCLEANING COURSE SEVEN-DAYS VIRTUAL / TWO-DAYS ON-SITE

New for 2022, DLI is offering its Introduction to Drycleaning Course in a blended learning format, composed of seven days of virtual training and two days of on-site training at DLI's School of Drycleaning Technology in Laurel, Maryland.

The course includes all the traditional aspects of the Introduction to Drycleaning Course.

BASIC – \$1,195
INTERNATIONAL – \$1,195
STANDARD – \$956
GOLD – \$717
PREMIER – FREE
NON-MEMBERS – \$1,595

COURSE DATES
INTRODUCTION TO DRYCLEANING (9 DAYS)
 June 7, 9 (virtual)
 June 14, 16 (virtual)
 June 21, 23 (virtual)
 June 28 (virtual)
July 14 - 15 (on-site)



STAIN REMOVAL COURSE SEVEN-DAYS VIRTUAL

Seven days of everything from fiber identification and characteristics to stain removal chemistry and procedures to using bleaches and specialty products such as digesters, amyl acetate and acetone to assist in the spotting process.

BASIC – \$495
INTERNATIONAL – \$495
STANDARD – \$394
GOLD – \$297
PREMIER – FREE
NON-MEMBERS – \$695

COURSE DATES
STAIN REMOVAL (7 DAYS)
 April 26, 28
 May 3, 5
 May 10, 12
 May 17
 September 13, 15
 September 20, 22
 September 27, 29
 October 4

Automatic for the People*

By James Peuster The Route Pros

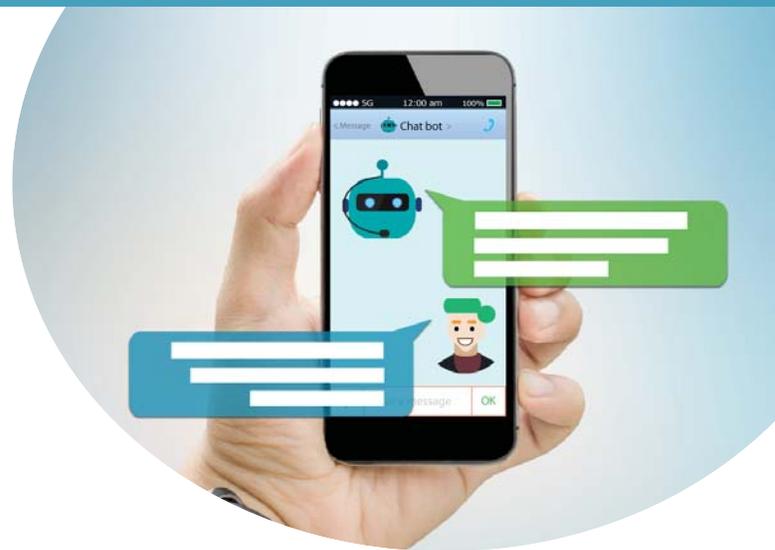
In 1992, R.E.M. came out with the album “Automatic For The People”*. Oddly enough it stems from a diner in their home base of Athens, GA, whose response for any customer request was automatic for the people! Fast forward 30 years later and the big question is how can automation make our lives easier and does it assist and enhance customer service? Also, how can that apply to routes?

There’s still the human element of picking up and delivering clothes, as well as driving from A to B to C to D. At age 54, I’m in the internal tug-of-war between old school ways of doing business and what is available in today’s world. From a consulting point of view, I see arguments for and against automation, which is also compared to technology. I’m going to challenge you with this article and simply say - do what’s best for what you believe in, what matters to your profit, as well as the customer service experience.

Let’s start with operations. There are some excellent ways of having your clothes ready through automatic assembly options. Optimization can automatically put your route in order for that day and most point of sales (POS) will automatically charge the customer’s credit card to ensure payment. These are all great, but the challenge is the “not if, but when” situations arise and something in the chain snaps. In all automation; you must be prepared how to handle and troubleshoot situations so that the customers are still serviced in a timely and accurate manner.

When it comes to customer service, this is where automation sometimes replaces the personal touch that many strive for. I believe this is where you must balance both equally, otherwise the personal touch is gone or customer attention is neglected. Most POS systems provide options for new customer welcoming, core customer specials and missing customers’ awareness by generating automatic emails, text messages, or both. I’m a huge fan of text reminders before the route and truly believe this can grow your business 8 to 10% automatically. I’m not a huge fan of neglecting the personal touch many consumers miss since there is only contact with automatic text messages or emails. Again, balance both and you’ll be able to provide automatic and personal touch options for your customers.

* Automatic for the People (1992) by R.E.M., released by Warner Brothers Records



The one thing that I will never be a fan of are drones or automatic delivery drivers in the form of a robot. While this may seem far-fetched; it could be closer than we think as we look at the future with unknown projections. If it ever gets to that point, I doubt dry cleaning in general will be around.

As far as sales and marketing, anything done automatically needs to be supported with a live person. Unless you get to 70 to 80% of marketshare, you are still in a position where you need to build the business externally.

The bottom line is this, automation doesn’t automatically work and doesn’t automatically always increase your bottom line. With growth, there is the human element of making decisions, fixing mistakes, and manually overriding the handful of situations in which a live person must step forward and rectify the situation. I’m personally torn on optimization since not all addresses can be found, causing more human error in the eyes of the consumer. Many drivers learn the routes backwards and forwards and now rely on GPS. This is where technology and optimizing automation kind of go hand-in-hand - it may not apply to the concept or definition of automatic.

Maybe this is just the old school in me, but when you hear the saying, “your best asset is your people,” I automatically revert back to our motto, developing your people to develop your business.

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



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