

THE Southwest Press

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

Enter the Restoration Realm

Plus...

SDA Milestones

Return Bar Riches

How to Choose Your Next POS

Ink & Lipstick Loads

& More



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SDA Milestones

by Kyle E. Nesbit, President, Edit-TX, LLC, a
Tide Cleaners Franchisee
Memories Gown Preservation



As I sit down to write my final 'SDA Letter from the President,' I can't help but think how time flies when you're having fun! I feel so blessed and grateful that I was afforded the opportunity to represent our Board of Directors and SDA membership as your President.

When I accepted the nomination to join the SDA Board, and then the SDA Executive Committee, I had a clear objective – to let the Lord direct my steps in hopes of making a positive impact on the industry and the SDA Board as a whole. Time will tell if the milestones completed over the past two years accomplished that objective, but as I promised at my inauguration - I gave it my entire heart, mind, and soul.

Looking back over my tenure I believe I can point to three major accomplishments:

- After months of negotiations, the Southwest Drycleaners Association (SDA) became a 10 state 'Super Association' when on January 1, 2023, we announced the new union between the Western States Drycleaners & Launderers Association (WSDLA) and Southwest Drycleaners Association (SDA).
- We successfully threw the biggest, baddest, and only dry cleaning equipment show of 2023. The SDA had 828 industry folks register for the Showcase (553 attendees and 275 exhibitors). We had 720 people actually attend and walk the show floor, with 464 being attendees and 256 exhibitors. And yes, the show during my tenure produced more revenue for the association than my father's show!
- In an unprecedented move, the SDA and the California Cleaners Association (CCA) will be

combining forces to strengthen regional exhibitions, by producing The Drycleaning and Laundry Expo West (DLE Expo West), an action-packed live equipment tradeshow going forward. This year the event will be held October 4-6, 2024, at the Horseshoe Resort and Casino, in Las Vegas, NV, and then will be back to Irving in 2026. (See details on page 9.)

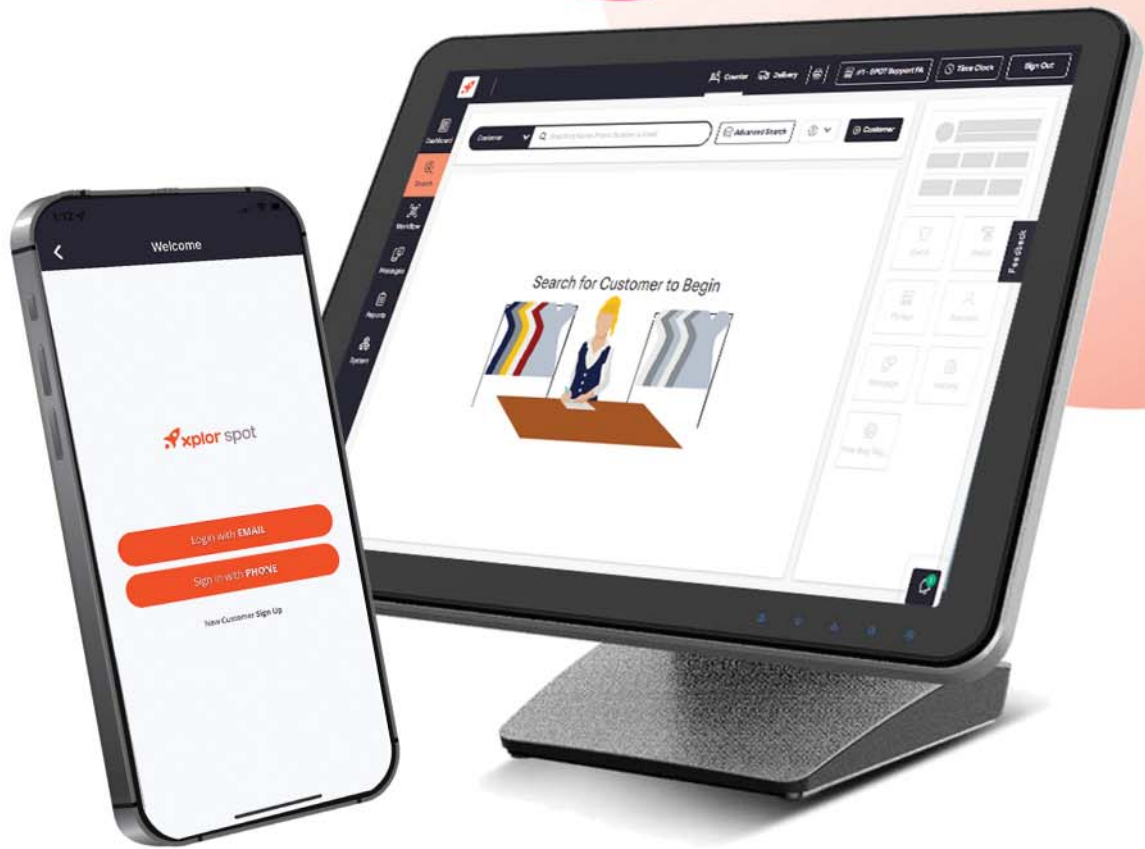
All three accomplishments are not mine alone and would never have happened without the incredible team on the SDA Board and Executive Committee. As I transition into the BOD Chairman, I'm excited to pass the gavel onto Mrs. President Erika Paine from Oak Park Cleaners in San Antonio, TX. A second generation dry cleaner, Erika grew up working in Oak Park Cleaners for her father and returned fourteen years ago to take the helm. True to tradition, her boys also worked at Oak Park through school and college. Erika has a huge heart for serving and is going to be a great leader and voice for our membership base.

Until we all see each other again on March 8-9, 2024, in New Orleans, LA – may the Lord bless you, your families, and businesses!



Kyle E. Nesbit

SDA President
DLI President-Elect
President, Edit TX, LLC,
a Tide Cleaners Franchisee
Memories Gown Preservation



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Return Bar Riches

Dry Cleaners' Cash Opportunity

Ever wonder what you could do with the extra space on your conveyors? What if you could make money utilizing that capacity? That is exactly what Mike Nesbit, Nesbit Consulting, began thinking after he stepped out of the Presidency of EDIT TX LLC, a Tide Cleaners Franchisee.

Every dry cleaner knows the challenges today: fewer dry cleaning pieces, a bustling work from home culture, a new generation that rarely wear suits and more nuances causing more dry cleaners to sell or close their doors altogether. "Without a pivot from the current business model, we may not be here," Nesbit explained. He began exploring ways dry cleaners can use the resources they already have to sustain their businesses. That's when he dove into the logistics of clothing returns.

The return of goods purchased online has become a significant expense for on-line retailers and brands. It is estimated that over \$25B in expenses is being borne by the parties today. Most returns today are handled by taking to the nearest UPS, Fed EX or USPS. The retailer pays to ship the return and/or process it at a counter, plus the shipping from the counter to a concentration/rework Hub, then shipping to their warehouse. The cost of shipping is about half of the expense incurred by retailers.

The most significant need of retailers is a network of return counters in a configuration that reduces the shipping expenses of the retailer. Nesbit has collaborated with Xplor Spot to create The Return, a platform and network of counters through a coalition of dry cleaners to satisfy these needs. Xplor Spot will be connected to the various Return platforms through a proprietary gateway (R4) owned by The Return.

The Return is recruiting dry cleaners across the country to act as a subcontractor to accept goods at their counters as return bars. The goods will be ac-

cepted, inspected and reworked by the dry cleaner using existing personnel and systems. This incremental revenue for the dry cleaner is very attractive due to the declining market for dry cleaning. In addition, this service can be added with limited capital investment and very limited additional expense.

Nesbit states, "We aren't creating a new thing, but a better business model than what's out there today. Dry cleaners are in a unique position no one else can copy. The challenge will be to get 2500 cleaners to sign up. The more cleaners we have, the more appealing the program will be to retailers."

This network is set to be the only nationwide full-service return network in the world, enabling brands and retailers to join the circular economy. With so many locations doing on-site cleaning, repairs, and re-fulfillment, the cost to clothing retailers and garment rental companies should be significantly less than other return bar networks—at the highest quality. The boxless, fraud-proof system will be not only the most economical, but the most sustainable, extending the life of textiles, diverting waste from landfills, and providing brands and retailers with an additional revenue stream.

"Investors are interested, management software companies are interested and people in the reverse logistics business are interested. It's exciting to see this project that could help secure the future for many dry cleaners," regards Nesbit.

The Return is in the test pilot phase and plans to have the program implemented across Texas by mid-year 2024. If you are interested in learning more about it, you can contact Mike Nesbit at 832-928-6325 or mnesbit@tdc-edittx.com. You can also see him speak at the SDA/SEFA meeting in New Orleans, March 8-9, 2024. Visit www.sda-dryclean.com for details.

Forenta

"Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought with ardor and attended to with diligence."

~ Abigail Adams



SDA/SEFA
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Introducing the Drycleaning & Laundry Expo East & West

In an unprecedented move, the four largest regional drycleaning and laundry trade shows in the country are collaborating to strengthen the industry's exhibitions and produce two action-packed live equipment tradeshow. Though both are under the banner of the Dry Cleaning and Laundry Exposition (DLExpo), each will be run independently and retain their local flair. The South Eastern Fabricare Association (SEFA) and Pennsylvania Delaware Cleaners Association (PDCA) are co-branding shows to create the DLExpo East and the DLExpo West will be organized by the California Cleaners Association (CCA) and Southwest Drycleaners Association (SDA).

"This is a great move for the industry," observed SEFA President Randy Parham, "and one we think will only strengthen each show. These shows are important. Without them, drycleaners don't have the opportunity to see all the new and innovative products and services geared specifically towards our industry. By reducing the number of regional tradeshow from four to two, we have made it easier for vendors to commit to exhibiting, have a much bigger presence and showcase the best of the industry."

The Drycleaning and Laundry Expo East will be held on June 7 - 9, 2024, at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center, in Kissimmee, FL. The Dryclean-

ing and Laundry Expo West will be held October 4-6, 2024, at the Horseshoe Resort and Casino, in Las Vegas, NV. Moving forward, the DL Expo East will move to the Baltimore/Washington area and the DL Expo West will be held in Irving, Texas, in 2026.

In addition to live equipment exhibits, the shows will also feature top quality educational sessions and unique networking opportunities. These conventions are designed for the everyday drycleaner to experience the best of the industry and to explore ways to run more efficiently, more productively, and drive more profit. With a greater anticipated attendance, the shows will have more resources to bring in great speakers and leaders to share their stories.

"This is an exciting opportunity for the entire industry," offered CCA Convention Chair Toran Brown. "I think by limiting the shows to only two, each will be bigger, have a greater attendance, and will be a better experience for everyone. With all the changes in the industry, we feel four shows was just too much. These will be tremendous events and I am confident the value will resonate with our members – and the entire industry." For more information, visit the joint website: DLExpo.org.

Who is your industry hero?

Introducing

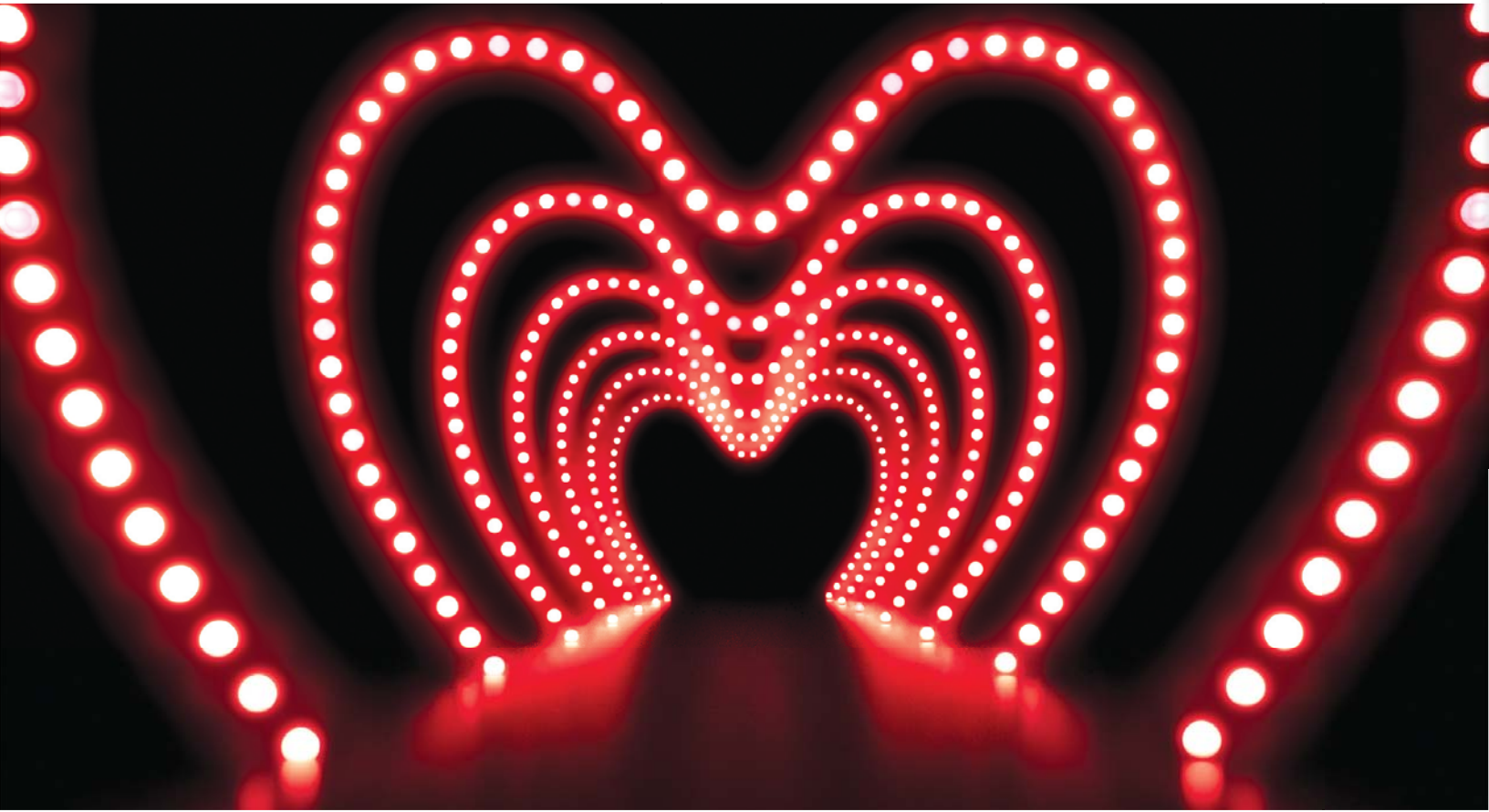


DRYCLEANING & LAUNDRY
INSTITUTE INTERNATIONAL

HALL OF FAME

- Nominations open April 1
- Recipients will be announced later in 2024
- Open to all drycleaners, launderers, allied trades, consultants or any professional involved in the drycleaning and laundry industry
- Association membership not required to nominate or receive award
- Learn more about the program at DLIonline.org/HoF

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Enter the Restoration Realm

Diversify Your Revenue by Cleaning Textiles and Items after a Disaster

As dry cleaners look to diversify their income streams, some have found great success in the restoration business. Some operators claim to make more than \$100k/month, but the results can vary greatly based on location and the extent of items your business cleans.

After a fire, flood or disaster, a homeowner contacts their insurance company to restore or replace their belongings. Your dry cleaner can be a part of the solution to get that person back on their feet. You can restore items as a part of a network of restoration experts, like CRDN or FSTeam, but you can also choose to restore independently.

The Independent Route

Obviously, the first step to restoring textiles is to be trained. Different disasters and items require different cleaning methods. There are certifications for leather, upholstery, fire, odor, water, etc. One resource for certification is the Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC – www.iicrc.org), which offers training on everything you need to restore, deodorize and clean textiles and flooring.

Fran Stone-Beale, owner of A-Town Cleaners, in Abilene, TX, has been restoring textiles for more than thirty years. In fact, she started in the business as a textile restoration expert before owning a dry cleaner.

Stone-Beale advises, “Meet with your local insurance agents and tell your customers that you provide restoration services. Though the insurance company recommends a restoration company, the homeowner has the right to choose who cleans their clothes and

belongings. If you take good care of a customer who has been through a disaster, you’ll have a customer for life.”

A-Town Cleaners’ hands-on approach is to work with the customer to provide the best service they need. Sometimes the customer drops off the items to be cleaned, but many times the team goes to the home and collects the items to clean, which are cataloged by room. A-Town will also assess what can be salvaged, what can’t, and what will cost more to clean than replace.

Clothes are processed separately from other clothes brought into the company to be cleaned. They are treated as a separate company, marked in separately and processed separately. Typically, the price to clean restoration items is double the price of cleaning a normal article of clothing. Another tip Stone-Beale shares is to receive payment with delivery of the items. Staying on top of receivables is key to making a profit.

Continued on next page



Restoration (con't)

The Franchisee Route

If going the independent route doesn't seem like the right choice for your dry cleaner, you can choose to become a franchisee with a company like CRDN (Certified Restoration Drycleaning Network). Franchisors carry the benefit of shared expertise spanning decades, as well as marketing and agreements with insurance companies that will list your business as a restoration expert with prices already negotiated. Franchisors will also provide marketing for your business, a network of other franchisees as a resource and home office to assist with issues that arise.

CRDN Founder and CEO, Wayne Wudyka, explains, "Textiles are expensive to replace and are placed under the content section of the claim. It's easy for a homeowner to run out of money if textiles are replaced and not restored. Restoration is a high value proposition to the insurance company."

According to Wudyka, prior to 2001, the industry was fragmented and there was no procedure for the homeowner or insurance companies to deal with restoration of textiles, which were an afterthought. CRDN was birthed almost by accident through Huntington Cleaners in 1992 as they defined a solution to become part of the restoration team. By becoming part of the process, it streamlined claims, defined fair pricing and made the whole process easier for everyone involved.

It's no secret that insurance companies look for a national solution for their homeowners to utilize, as it provides 24-hour service, documentation and long-term service. "In a sense, the insurance company is lending their brand name to CRDN when they refer us to their homeowners," Wudyka said.

If you consider becoming a franchisee of a larger network, there will be different criteria to meet in order



CRDN Franchisees at 2022 International Convention in Phoenix, AZ. Courtesy of CRDN

to do so. CRDN specifically looks for dry cleaners who have a full plant, those who are able to scale a business, follow their process and fit into their culture. Extensive background and credit checks are also required for business owners. As Wudyka explains, "We keep the entry fee low for franchises. New franchisees are expected to attend a two-week training in Michigan and with IICRC, as they will need to complete all licensing first. Space needed for processing items is between 5,000 – 100,000 sq ft., depending on the location. After training, an operator can be up and running within 60 days."

CRDN began with textile restoration, but added electronic restoration in 2015 and art restoration (which includes photos and family heirlooms) in 2020. In 2024, it's expected that 100% of their franchisees will have the ability to restore 100% of the contents in any damaged home. According to *Franchise Times Magazine*, CRDN was the fastest growing restoration company in 2023.



Photo courtesy of CRDN

Wudyka explains, "Restoration is a strong strategy to diversify your business through many economic challenges, as it has proven to be housing crisis proof and pandemic proof. One of our first franchisees whose investment in 2001 was \$40K, just sold for \$4 million."


If you'd like information on CRDN franchise opportunities, you can contact Wayne Wudyka directly at 810-602-1963.

The world of dry cleaning is evolving and for those seeking to diversify income streams, venturing into the restoration business presents a lucrative opportunity. Whether choosing the independent route or opting to be a franchisee, the potential for success is evident with hard work and organization. The key lies in offering exceptional service to customers in their time of need, ensuring a lasting impact on both your business and the lives of those you assist.



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How to Choose Your Next POS

By Rick Mungo, SMRT Systems

Software is a critical piece of any modern business. If your current system has been in place for many years, you may be thinking about a change. But how do you choose a new software partner?

The early stage

Before you request a product demo you should think about where you want your business to go and what is most important to you.

- Is efficiency your top priority?
- Do you plan to expand your operations?
- Are you starting or growing your route business?
- How do you communicate with customers and is that working?
- What is your tagging process and do you want to change it?

Be prepared - make a list of things you need and like about your current system and also compile a list of features you wish you had.

As you start the process of looking for a new system, stay open-minded. Understand that over the years there have been technological advances that may change the way you are used to doing things. But trust that in the long run, they will make your business more efficient.

A good rule of thumb is to find 2-3 companies to request a demo with. You can find options with a simple Google Search, trade publications, or by searching posts about dry cleaning POS systems in Facebook groups. Talk to other dry cleaners and find out which system they use and what the pros/cons are. Check reviews on Capterra, Google, etc., and rule out any that have red flags or are not keeping up with the latest technology and security protocols. You can also

reach out to the Southwest Drycleaners Association to find out what POS companies are allied members.

The demo stage

Once you get to the demo, ensure the owner or decision maker is present along with a store manager or key employee with experience with your current POS.

Focus on the daily functions because they are the most important. Do not waste time talking about that one item last year that came in and caused issues during processing. There are always going to be exceptions that will have to be dealt with when they occur.

During the demo, here are a few topics to cover:

- Is your existing hardware compatible with the new system?
- What is the implementation process like?
- Will all or part of your data be transferred over?
- What is the cost to convert systems? Request a detailed quote.

Making a decision

You've talked to a few companies and now must choose one. Before you decide, ask for references, preferably ones that converted from your current POS. Ask them about their experiences and, most importantly, how the support after the installation has been. If you are on social media, check for chatter about your top options.

Here are some other important things to think about before inking a deal:

- Do you connect with your salesperson? They will be involved with your business even after you are up and running.

Continued on page 16



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Choosing POS (con't)

- What does support look like before, during, and after implementation? If you don't hear great things about the support team, will you feel comfortable putting your business in their hands?
- Ease of use: How easy is it to do the things you do a couple of hundred times a day, like detailing and order processing, customer pickup, and delivery routes? Remember you will be training new employees frequently and you want that to be as easy as possible.
- Reporting: What numbers do you look at daily? Can the POS software you are looking at show you these numbers quickly and clearly?

Finally, be prepared for some bumps in the road during the conversion process. There is a lot that goes into adopting a new system. But, the first test of the company you choose will be their ability to handle those bumps quickly and efficiently and to leave you confident that you've made the right choice. Good luck to you!

Rick Mungo is General Manager at SMRT Systems and former owner of Liberty Computer Systems. He can be reached at rick@smrtsystems.com.



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2024

Education Guide



INTRODUCTION TO DRYCLEANING COURSE FIVE-DAY ON-SITE

DLI's On-Site Introduction to Drycleaning Course is suited for experienced individuals or those who are new to the industry.

- Sorting loads for drycleaning.
- Cleaning silk, satin and other fabrics.
- Removing coffee, ink, grease and other stains from clothing.
- Operating a drycleaning machine.
- Pressing pants, coats and skirts.
- Using tensioning equipment to improve finishing quality.

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

COURSE DATES
March 4 - 8
October 7 - 11



ADVANCED DRYCLEANING COURSE TEN-DAY 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 11 - 22
October 14 - 25



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 4 - 22
October 7 - 25



STAIN REMOVAL COURSE SEVEN-DAYS VIRTUAL

Stain removal training with no travel. This online course is spread over seven two-hour sessions. The course covers important stain removal skills your staff needs to make customers happy, including:

- Removing coffee, ink, grease, and other stains from clothing.
- Identifying cotton, silk, polyester, and other fabrics.
- Using bleaches without damaging the fabric color.
- Using specialty products such as digesters, amyl acetate, and acetone in stain removal.
- Identifying fibers and fabric construction.

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

COURSE DATES
STAIN REMOVAL (7 DAYS)

<i>Spring</i>	<i>Summer</i>
April 30, May 2	July 9, 11
May 7, 9	July 16, 18
May 14, 16	July 23, 25
May 21	July 30

<i>Fall</i>
September 10, 12
September 17, 19
September 24, 26
October 3

Ink and Lipstick Loads



By Jeff “The Stain Wizard” Schwarz

Few things are as disheartening in the drycleaning business as opening up your machine only to find all the garments have been affected by lipstick or ink pen exploding. It changes your whole day. After cursing the devil and all his demons, what do you do next?

As I have stated over and over again, stain removal starts at the front counter. Just like quality is everybody’s job, so is stain removal. If your counter staff is responsible for checking all the pockets, how do you know for sure they are doing that? One way is to rabbit ear pants’ front pockets. Do the same with rear pockets.

If you find a hole in any of the pockets, now you have to painstakingly check the bottom of the lining for items that have fallen through. I am amazed with the number of cleaner spotters that won’t double check pockets for missed items. I hear, “I’m too busy already” and “It’s not my job - counter people are supposed to do that.” “That’s right,” I respond, “but when a whole light load has lipstick on every single garment, who has to fix the problem? Does the counter person come back to rectify the situation? No.”

A drycleaner outside Denver, Colorado had a dry erase board in his office with numbers on it. When I asked what they mean, he replied, “This is the board I use to keep track of claims we had to pay on garments that were compromised. Employees will come in and say, “I need to make more money.” I reply, “Yes you do, but in order for me to pay you more money, I need to make more money. This board shows money I had to pay for our mistakes because somebody didn’t check pockets. This is money I could have used for pay for raises/bonuses; but instead, it was paid to replace garments.”

Resolving the Issue

Kenney Slatten (industry consultant, trainer, writer, and lifelong friend, who passed away too soon) would always tell me, “Dang Nabbit! If it happens in drycleaning, you have to fix it, in drycleaning.” Alas, that’s not always the case.

When you have an inkload/lipstick load, the next thing you do is test the ink/lipstick to see if it’s wetside or dryside soluble. If it responds to your wetside, P.O.G. (paint, oil, grease remover), then the best solution might be wetcleaning those affected garments.

If the ink/ lipstick doesn’t move, test it by using your ink remover or dryside P.O.G. Lastly, try Amyl Acetate or Acetone.



After deciding which tool might work best, you might be able to reclean it in your machine by batching the load.

Perc Machines

- Put in affected clothes
- Add 1 quart of TarGo Dry (Dryside P.O.G)
- Bring up your clean solvent and soap
- Shut off circulating pump and “Batch” the load for 30-45 minutes
- Drop solvent, so it can be distilled and run 10-15 minutes on filters.

I used this method to remove permanent Sharpie Magic Marker on a 60 lb. load of light silks. It saved all but 2 garments.

Continued on next page



The Do's & Don'ts of a Termination Interview

by Frank Kollman
Kollman & Saucier, P.A.

Words matter. If you decide to fire an employee, make sure you do it right. First, tell the employee why he or she is being discharged. If it is for misconduct, describe what the employee did. If it is for performance reasons, describe the performance problems, including any previous counseling for the need to improve. Second, do not debate or argue with the employee, stating that the purpose of the meeting is to give the reasons, not discuss them.

Never give a false reason or sugarcoat the reason to make the employee (or yourself) feel better. If there is cause for termination, do not call it a layoff or corporate reorganization to avoid the unpleasantness. If the employee later claims the firing was motivated by illegal discrimination, raising the true reason for the discharge as a defense will hurt more than help. Courts have found that changing the reason for a termination can be evidence of improper motive.

Even if you are brutally honest to the employee, and I am recommending that, never try to soften the blow

by saying you are sorry, you feel bad, you wish you didn't have to do it, or it was someone else's decision. You only open yourself up to claims that you were sorry or felt bad because you were breaking the law, or that you disagreed with the decision that was made by someone else. It is the employee's fault, not yours, and you should never forget that.

Finally, get advice from an attorney if you are uncomfortable with a discharge decision. Better to do it right than defend a lawsuit down the road.

Frank Kollman of Kollman & Saucier, P.A. is the DLI "Ask the Legal Expert." SDA/DLI members can enter the member's only section at www.dlionline.org to access this member benefit.



Ink and Lipstick Loads (con't)

HydroCarbon or Alternative Solvent Machines

Use the same method as above, but you might need to add 1/2 gallon of P.O.G to get the same results (that's because the Kb value of alternative solvents is lower than Perc).

If you haven't had an ink/lipstick load lately, knock on wood. You have done a great job training your staff. If you have had this issue lately, I hope this helps. As Mike Nesbit would say, "Keep the Main Thing....the Main Thing."

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



SDA & SEFA MEETING



CREATING A CONTAGIOUS BUSINESS CULTURE
- JASON LOEB -

UNVEILING THE VISION OF INCREASED PIECE COUNTS
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