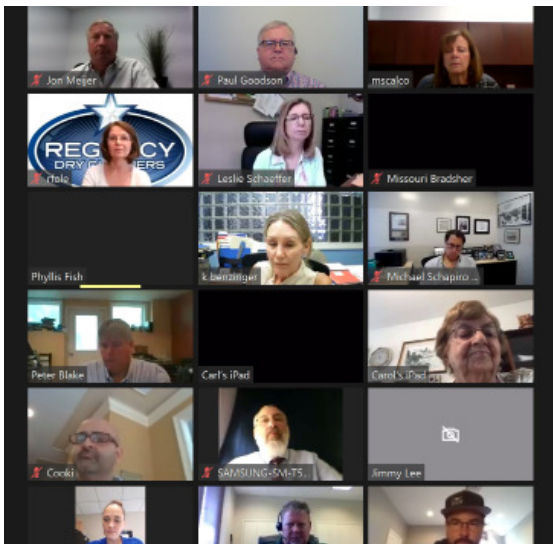


Headlines & More



Working Together to Overcome COVID Calamity



EVERYTHING CHANGED AS SPRING WAS STARTING. THE NOVEL CORONA VIRUS EPIDEMIC BLOOMED INTO A FULL-BLOWN GLOBAL PANDEMIC AND THE ECONOMY STALLED.

Drycleaning sales across the U.S. and world dropped as much as 85% virtually overnight. The industry has since been in a long, slow recovery. This downturn is lasting longer than most drycleaning business owners first imagined.

From the start of the pandemic in mid-March, NEFA and DLI began an ongoing effort to offer a host of COVID-19 updates and links to all professional cleaners we could reach, members or not. DLI quickly decided that COVID-related information was too important to the public health to restrict access and openly shared with the entire industry.

Almost immediately after regional shutdowns started, NEFA and DLI worked with others and advocated to public officials that drycleaning and laundry services are essential and should not be closed as industry services help destroy viruses. Health and safety guidance on handling items for cleaning was quickly collected and shared through all of DLI's communications channels.

CONTINUING EFFORT

Our efforts did not stop there. The associations moved to mobilize all available resources to create a constant flow of vetted and verified information and business assistance tools.

"This has been like no other time in our history," said Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President. "The industry as a whole needed NEFA & DLI more than any other time I can remember. We understood right away that the only way to get through this is by pulling everyone together. Our mission is to help cleaners succeed and we're proud of what our team has accomplished in just a few short months."

Continued from page 6

North East Fabricare Association
www.nefabricare.com

JULY/AUGUST, 2020

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE...

Lessons Learned During Global Pandemic

SLOWLY, MOST OF THE COUNTRY IS STARTING TO RE-OPEN AND BEGIN THE PROCESS OF RETURNING TO LIFE WITH MORE ROUTINE AND NORMALCY.

While each region and state may be doing things differently and with different timetables, people are trying to get back to business from restaurants, to stores, to entertainment venues – people are looking to revive their lifestyles. The goals of many small businesses, including drycleaners, are the same: cut through the noise, let customers know they are open for business, and develop practices that will bring the customers back. Are you ready to re-open? Have you made significant changes in your business and your brand?

Throughout these challenging times we have learned some valuable lessons about how the world is going to move forward and through those lessons we can position ourselves for success. Here is my first lesson:

#1: COMMUNICATION IS CRITICAL

This cannot be stressed enough. Update your digital presence and make sure you are in tune with your customers and your target market. As people return to work, to the community, and life – it is critical to communicate safety precautions and contactless options like drive-up service, free pick-up and delivery, and curbside service while creatively and strategically rolling out new services.

When making business choices or evaluating what companies to do business with consumers head right for their smart phones, apps, and computers. If you have not updated your information, claimed your google location, and monitored the information on all your platforms, you are falling behind. You need to keep monitoring your info and your reputation. Update your website and social media platforms with the new policies and procedures you have implemented to help keep your staff and your customers safe. Make sure you have high-quality signs in your call offices. Make sure your customers can see you are committed to their safety.

There have been many diverse studies on the effectiveness of some of these safety measures, and there is a wide variety of what is required in different areas. I urge you however, to err on the side of caution. Demonstrate a commitment to safety. The safer and more serious you are taking these issues; the more apt customers are to feel comfortable entrusting you and your staff.

There is a hesitancy to push this information due to “information overload”, but it is critical you have policies and procedures listed to help demonstrate your commitment to your community's safety. This leads me to Lesson number 2:

#2: NO ONE IS ALONE: COMMUNITIES COMING TOGETHER

There has been an outpouring of support for buying local, and so small businesses like drycleaners and launderers need to embrace that trend and establish themselves as cornerstones of the community. We are just now beginning to understand that customers have an extraordinarily strong desire in doing businesses with local companies and brands that share their values and concerns. That statement is truer today than ever before.



*Peter Blake,
NEFA Executive Director*

Continued on page 4

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Lessons Learned From Global Pandemic

Continued from page 2

By shaping our messaging, signage, and our activities we can highlight just how invested we are in the success and safety of the communities we are a part of. I am deeply humbled as I hear the stories of Industry members coming to the aid of people and organizations that need help. From cleaning donated facemasks for local hospitals, to free cleaning of First Responders garments, free cleaning for local shelters, food donations – members of our industry have stepped up and continue to do so.

Years ago, Safety-Kleen had a promotion for the industry: “Caring for the Fabric of Life”. I do not think there is a more fitting motto for our industry. You all are in the business of keeping your communities safe and clean. Get involved, and your activities will translate to more support as things continue to re-open.

I am starting a new section of our websites dedicated to our members who are supporting their communities. I need to hear from you. Send me information on how you are participating and “Caring for the Fabric of Life” and I will add you and your services to the list. Now here is my third lesson.

#3: THE POWER OF GRATITUDE

Sometimes it takes incredible hardship for us to realize how important people and services are to our everyday lives. Take this time to say thank you to your customers and your staff and show them that you care. A little gratitude goes a long way.

I am on weekly conference calls with our members hearing ideas and stories from across the country. One of the most consistent messages I hear is how powerful a simple thank you has been. A few companies have taken the time to handwrite a personal thank you message for their best customers expressing how much they care, and how much they thank them for their loyalty. Those messages more often than not have resulted in even higher sales the following weeks.

I have seen members hosting Customer Appreciation events like free lunches, hot dogs grilled in front of the store. I know some members who have assembled “welcome back gifts” for their customers that have included incentives and specials, lint rollers, facemasks, hand sanitizer, and a host of other small gifts.

Now is the time to stand out and make an impression. Use this time to reconnect on personal levels. Finally, here is my last lesson.

#4: YOUR BIGGEST ASSET IS A STRONG TEAM

You are only as good as your personnel. You need to keep investing in their professional development and continue to foster their company pride. All of the things I have talked about in this article from communication, community involvement, and gratitude extends to your team as well. You need them to embrace these ideals and help you to reach out to your customer base.

Do not take them for granted, especially now. You need to show them you care for them as well. One way is to arrange employee appreciation events. That can range from buying lunches to just working in the trenches with them. An iced-down towel or a cold milk shake on a hot humid day can go a long way to showing your employees you understand their challenges. It does not have to

be huge grand gestures, but small personal ways of saying thank you, and small efforts to try and make their job as comfortable as possible will go a long way to helping keep morale high, and help your employees stay invested in your success.

When times get difficult, we often start taking it out on those closest to us. We often do not see their world and without even realizing it, we begin to take people for granted. Take time out of your day just to talk to your team. Listen to them, and you may find ways you can help each other.

I wish I could tell you this will all be ending soon. The great unknown is how long we will have to endure these hardships. It would be infinitely easier if we had a timetable, a date where we knew this would be behind us, but the truth of the matter is, we do not have that luxury. We need to keep adapting, planning, and being vigilant to keep up our guard and do the best we can to keep moving forward. All indications are that the industry is continuing the same slow steady climb back to prior success – but it is not going to be as quickly as we wish. It is a long road back to recovery.

I am here for you – and if I can help you strengthen your business in any way, please reach out. Let me know what steps you have taken to adapt your business, and please let me know how you are being active in your community. You may be featured on our new “Caring for the Fabric of Life” webpage! I wish you the best of luck as you begin a new chapter in your business.



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Take Action Need to Help NEFA/DLI Preserve the Care Label Rule



THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION (FTC) IS CONSIDERING REPEALING THE CARE LABELING RULE.

According to the notice published in the Federal Register, the FTC is considering repeal because manufacturers - even if not required

- would still provide care instructions, the definitions of care processes, i.e. drycleaning, may place limitations on innovations in cleaning technology, and repeal would give manufacturers more flexibility in providing care instructions which may be less confusing to consumers.

“Your assistance and attention to this is vital”, warned Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President, “and we need to make a strong

decisive demonstration of how important this rule is. Without the rule, manufacturers will have no requirement to test serviceability, or to provide consumers, and professionals, with instruction on cleaning. Regardless of solvent innovation, this rule is critical to help care for fabrics, and it is imperative we keep the rule viable.”

Comments must be received by September 21, 2020. Comments can be submitted online at www.regulations.gov website. Enter 2020-13919 in the search bar and that will take you directly to the comment section.

The main concern for the FTC is the economic impact of repeal of the care labeling rule. Sample comments can be found on our website. Please feel free to use these as a guideline. There is a 5,000 character limit for the comments. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for your help.

It is important we let the FTC know that repeal of this regulation will have a significant and devastating economic impact not only on our industry but for consumers as well. To simplify the process, DLI has placed five different comments online at DLIonline.org. You can use the sample comments and the link provided. Act Now!



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DLI/NEFA Working to Help Cleaners Through Pandemic

Continued from page 1

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

By the end of March, when “normal” became a thing of the past, DLI launched a new initiative to help industry professionals share ideas. DLI also started producing a stream of management and training videos, conference calls, employment guidance, video updates, and more.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, DLI produced and archived the following resources:

- Over 60 member-to-member Zoom meetings for sharing ideas, challenges, and opportunities
- 57 ready-made social media and print marketing designs (three more added weekly)
- 25+ COVID related links and bulletins on DLIONline.org
- 19 business development webinars ranging from marketing and branding to critical maintenance
- Developed an online Facebook Community connecting 850+ DLI members
- 16 webinars sifting through small business relief programs including PPP, EIDL Loans, Main Street Lending Program, Em-

ployee Retention Credits, and Workforce opportunity Credits

- 8 live technical training webinars on spotting and finishing
- 5 live stain removal trainings webinars in Spanish

Recordings of each DLI webinar are available on DLIONline.org. Each week, DLI continues to produce and share more webinars and ready-made marketing materials. “Business is recovering slowly,” Scalco said. “DLI is focused on helping cleaners survive until we start seeing better days by banding together and sharing as much information as we can as quickly as we can. And as we move into those better days and they will come we will continue to be there for industry.”

WHAT LIES AHEAD

NEFA and DLI will continue to provide weekly Zoom Conference calls, live technical training programs, and business development programs through the end of the year.

NEFA is also planning a major virtual conference to take the place of its popular Fall Fest Conference. This new program will expand the conference’s long standing tradition of educational excellence and will provide even more value to all participants. Look for more information coming shortly!

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MA ERP FORMS DUE September 15



ANY DRYCLEANER USING PERC IN THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS IS REQUIRED TO SUBMIT AN ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS PROGRAM CERTIFICATION BY SEPTEMBER 15TH.

Due to government shut downs caused by Covid-19, the Department is looking to extend the deadline to October 15, but no announcement has been made as of yet.

The forms are a self-certification that you are in compliance with all the rules and regulations regarding perc use. It is a multi-media checklist incorporating Air, Water, and Hazardous Waste regulations facing drycleaners. The Certification is a snap shot of your compliance with all the regulations, and also serves as a great

reminder of exactly what you need to be doing each week. The workbook that goes with the cert form is a valuable resource and is a great tool to help make sure you are doing everything right.

WORD OF CAUTION

“Many cleaners have forgotten the significance of what these self certification forms mean,” warned Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Vice President. “I fear there are operators who may just be using the previous year’s forms as a guide and filling them out without comprehending the importance of the information.”

The ERP forms are a signed statement that you are doing all the MANDATED leak checks, temperature readings, and other specific requirements. The DEP is then using the information you provide to help ascertain compliance. You need to be careful, and make sure your certification is accurate and complete.

FORMS ONLINE

The forms should be filled out online and can be found at the DEP website: edep.dep.mass.gov.

Any cleaner needing assistance in filling out the forms is urged to contact Peter Blake at 603-635-0322.

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How to Keep Going When You Want It All To Go Away

Written By John Graham, Graham Communications



HOW LONG WILL THE DAMOCLES SWORD OF THE PANDEMIC HANG OVER OUR HEADS? AS THE DAYS DRAG ON, WILL IT THREATEN TO UPEND US INDEFINITELY?

Even though we try to avoid thinking about the troubling possibilities, they keep creeping into our minds, creating more stress, clouding our ability to stay focused, and leaving us irritable, angry, less effective—and tired.

It's not a pretty picture, not one we could possibly imagine ever facing. So, when we're confused and uncertain about the future, what are we to do? Here are some of my thoughts on the question:

1. DON'T LISTEN TO YOURSELF

Why does it always happen when we're trying to get to sleep at night? But that's the way it is. What's so upsetting is that the per-

son who causes the anxiety and does the damage is the one who lives inside our head. We are never our own best friend in the middle of the night.

So, stop listening to yourself. It's time for a personal fact-checker, but neither Alexa nor Siri qualify. This is a job for someone you trust. "This is what's concerning me. Am I on track or off the rails?"

2. LOOK FOR NEW POSSIBILITIES

The good news is that life is not a matter of choosing the right fake Zoom background to convince ourselves (and others) that we're more than just OK. It amounts to more than that.

Recently, an editor sent me one of my sales articles. He had kept it until he found the right place for it. Recognizing that it had been around for about a year, he asked if I would look it over to see if it needed updating. Well, my first reaction was less than positive. But, swallowing my pride, I read it and was shocked at what I found! In a relatively short time, the world changed dramatically and the article needed updating to reflect what had transpired.

People are no different, so it may be time to ask yourself a tough

Continued from page 10



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When You Just Want It All To Go Away

Continued from page 9

question, “Am I dated?” Think about it. What can you do to “update” yourself? Sure, you may know your job “backwards and forwards,” but that doesn’t count anymore. Focus on figuring out to revise your performance. How can you make what you do more relevant? What can you do to enhance your value? Think about the possibilities.

3. GET BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH YOURSELF

If you really want to get to know yourself as you really are, you might want to spend time in Wyoming. But be prepared, Wyomingites aren’t subtle. They don’t tip-toe around; they’re not afraid to tell it like it is, no matter who you are. Having lived there, I speak from experience. For example, I recall the memorable words of a motorcycle-riding English professor from the UW: “If you can’t write it, you don’t know it.” Got it!

Here’s the point. If you want to get better acquainted with yourself, jot down life experiences from your early memories to what’s happening now. Don’t just remember them, get them on paper. Write them down as they come to mind. Ideas never come all at once. If you really want to know yourself, start writing. You may like what you discover.

4. BE READY FOR THE UNEXPECTED

How many times in the last six months have you heard someone say, perhaps wistfully, “I’ll sure be glad when life gets back to the way it was.” Even though we may not have said it out loud, most everyone has harbored the thought more than a few times. It’s just

too much to let ourselves think that going back is not an option.

If we’ve learned anything from the pandemic, it’s that we should learn to keep an eye out for surprises and the unexpected, or, as the slang would have it, they come from “out of left field.”

Even though we may not like to think that everything is up for grabs because of the pandemic, it is: the way we live, work, play, learn, shop, think, do business, and behave. It’s all changing and will surely continue to evolve. Keeping an eye out for the unpredictable will make living easier and more rewarding.

5. CHANGE THE PICTURE OF YOURSELF

Add continuing uncertainty to the pervasive impact of COVID-19 and it’s more than enough to distort our picture of ourselves and crush our self-confidence. It’s too much to let ourselves think about what could possibly be coming next.

Perhaps not. How we happen to view ourselves is not a given or chiseled in stone, unless, we allow ourselves to look at it that way. In a wonderful essay, “Homo Sapiens: The Unfinished Animal,” physicist George Stanciu, Ph.D., writes, “Nature gives human beings no specific way of life—no fixed occupation, no fitting dress, no appropriate emotional profile. It’s as if nature grew tired when she fashioned Homo sapiens and left this one species unfinished.”

And that’s good news! In spite of everything, what we do with what we’re given has not been written or handed to us. Our story is unfinished—and it’s in our hands.



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“ DLI has done an **excellent** and **timely** job educating members. DLI's response to the crisis has been **spot on, fast, and continuous.** ”

Gary Maloney

Nu Yale Glacier Cleaners
Jeffersonville, IN

“ DLI keeps every **member apprised** of changes and offers **training** to owners, operators, and employees. What you put in is **multiplied** in return **many times over.** ”

Danny Bahlman, CGCP

Bahlman Cleaners
San Angelo, TX

“ DLI is helping us **navigate unprecedented times.** The weekly **webinars** and **conference calls** provide much-needed **guidance.** The **networking** and **professional relationships** are also **tremendous assets.** ”

Rhonda Eysel

Master Kleen Dry Cleaners
Columbus, GA

“ My favorite things about DLI used to be the **problem garment bulletins** in the back of the magazine. Now, it's the **live spotting web series.** Do it! **It's well worth the money.** ”

Angela Rowekamp

Mascari Cleaners
Indianapolis, IN

“ DLI assists us with **marketing ideas, news articles, blogs, and webinars** to help us cope with this pandemic. With our **busy work schedules**, we don't realize we're working with **blinders on.** DLI helps us **focus** on the creative insights we often overlook. ”

Angelo Nguyen

British Dryclean Club
Santa Ana, CA

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Update: COVID Fears and Returning to Work

Written By Raleigh F. "Sandy" Seay, Jr., PHD, Chairman of The Seay Management Consulting Firm



THE SEAY MANAGEMENT TEAM REVISITS OUR PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER "I'M AFRAID OF THE VIRUS AND I'M NOT COMING TO WORK!" (THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE IS LOCATED ON WWW.MACASSOCIATION.ORG)

Due to the evolving landscape on this issue, we are providing an updated look at some of the challenges in this

area that employers and their workforce face with the pandemic.

The FFCRA and associated legislation were passed by Congress so quickly that many of the employment and HR issues were unclear, ambiguous, or, in some cases, unaddressed. Seay Management Consultants has observed, "They created the rules but are still working on the rule book!" The Department of Labor has clarified some of these issues so we have a better understanding of how management applies these benefits to certain situations. The three specific benefits are:

1. Up to 80 hours of paid sick leave for employees who experience certain COVID-19 events.
2. An additional 10 weeks of extended FMLA for employees with children whose school or daycare is closed or is otherwise unavailable.
3. Extended unemployment compensation, for those employees who qualify.

There is still some confusion about how to respond to employees who refuse to come to work owing to one of two reasons. The first is when an employee is afraid that they (or their child) will contract the virus, even though he or she does not actually have any symptoms of it. The second is when the employee claims that he or she can receive more money on unemployment than by working.

CASE #1 – FEAR OF COMING TO WORK

In the first case, the regulations are clear that the paid sick leave benefits apply only to those employees who qualify for one of the six COVID-19 events, as specified on the FFCRA poster. Neither fear of contracting the virus nor being in a non-specific "at-risk" group qualifies an employee for the sick pay or extended FMLA benefits. If an employee refuses to come to work under either of these circumstances, this is a voluntary quit on the part of the employee, with no good cause attributable to the employer. The employee should not be eligible for unemployment benefits. On the other hand, on the basis of Best Practices, a specific "at-risk" employee situation could fall under the ADA regulations so it may be a good idea to try to make "reasonable accommodation" to

high-risk employees, such as moving the employee to a different job or location or allowing the employee to use accrued vacation time. Also, it is possible that an employee may qualify for unpaid FMLA, due to a serious health condition.

Special Alert – Washington State has issued regulations requiring specific attention to high risk employees, when requested by the employee, and continuation of health insurance until the employee is "deemed eligible" to return to work. Some other more progressive states may follow suit. We will continue to follow this phenomenon but do not expect it will be widespread.

CASE #2 – REFUSING TO COME TO WORK BECAUSE OF UNEMPLOYMENT PAYS MORE

An employee does not have the right to refuse to come to work just because he or she can receive more money from unemployment compensation than from actually working. If you have work for the employee, and if the employee refuses to come to work, then this is a voluntary quit on the part of the employee, with no good cause attributable to the employer. Employees who refuse to work under these circumstances are not eligible for unemployment compensation. You should inform the employee of this fact and, if he or she continues to refuse to come to work, you should notify your local unemployment office. On a level playing field, this employee would not have a job at your company and would not receive unemployment compensation. The additional \$600 federal unemployment compensation expired on July 31, 2020.

In a recent August 8th memorandum, President Trump has offered \$300 per week in additional federal unemployment benefits for states that agree to contribute \$100 of their own funds. The program, referred to as Lost Wages Assistance (LWA), is funded through FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund. The benefit would be paid to eligible individuals beginning with weeks of unemployment ending on or after August 1, 2020, through no later than December 27, 2020.

The LWA program may terminate before December 27th if:

- FEMA exhausts the \$44 billion from the Disaster Relief Fund that Trump designated for the LWA program;
- The total balance of the Fund decreases to \$25 billion; or
- Congress enacts legislation to provide additional Federal unemployment benefits.

States will have to develop a self-certification process with a timeline indicating a deadline of September 10 to apply for the LWA funding.

Please contact your Seay Management Consultant if you have any questions about how the FFCRA and associated regulations are affecting your employees: (407) 426-9484, or Sissy Egan at sissy@seay.us.

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