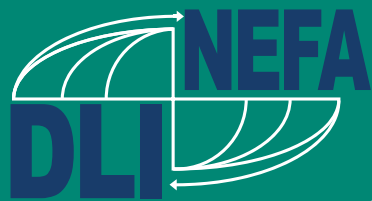


Headlines & More



North East Fabricare Association
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NEFA Hosting Spotting and Pressing Classes in January



EDUCATION AND TRAINING ARE A NEFA PRIORITY IN 2019. THE ASSOCIATION IS STARTING OFF 2019 WITH TWO TERRIFIC PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS.

“We are looking to make Education a cornerstone of our menu of membership benefits in 2019”, stated Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Director. “We will be reaching out with classes through out the region including both technical classes and business development programs. Starting with Profes-

sional Finishing and Stain Removal in January, and followed by Boiler License Training Program coming in February, we are off to a strong start.

PROFESSIONAL DRYCLEANING FINISHING

This program is scheduled for Wednesday January 9th at Dependable Cleaners in Quincy, MA, and will run from 2:00 pm - 7:00 pm. The cost of the program is only \$149 for members, and \$200 for non-members and includes dinner.

The program is being taught by Training Expert David Grippi. The hands-on class will demonstrate how to produce quality work, while maximizing efficiency. Since it is a hands-on class with expert guidance working on the presses, the class size is strictly limited to the first 10 enrollments. The program is perfect for all levels of experience from the beginner looking to learn how to produce improved quality to the seasoned veteran looking to explore ways to increase their production.

PROFESSIONAL STAIN REMOVAL 101

This program is scheduled for Thursday, January 31st at Dependable Cleaners in Quincy, MA, and will run from 2:00 pm - 7:00 pm. The cost of the program is only \$149 for members, and \$200 for non-members and includes dinner.

The program is being taught by Training Expert Mike Achin who was part of the former DLI Certified Instructor Program. Mike will explore the basic chemistry of spotting, the proper use of tools and equipment, and provide a strong foundation of stain removal procedures. Under his expert guidance, attendees will not only learn the basics, but will explore tips and techniques to solve complex stains. This class is perfect for the novice through intermediate spotters. Since it is a hands-on class with expert guidance working on the spotting boards, the class size is strictly limited to the first 10 enrollments.

Visit www.nefabricare.com to register or for more information!

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2018

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message: Count Your Blessings2

Achieving Customer Service Excellence, Pt. 2.....4

NEFA Joins HCDLA Holiday Luncheon.....5

Past DLI Presidents Invited to Recent DLI Meetings6

Seay Management Report: Take Your Dog to Work Day8

Is an Exit Plan in Your Future?10

Allied Trade Members11

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Count Your Blessings

AS THE YEAR WINDS DOWN, HOPEFULLY WE ARE BEING REFLECTIVE ON ALL THE BLESSINGS THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. WHETHER YOU CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS, HANUKKAH, KWANZA OR EVEN FESTIVUS, PLEASE STOP FOR A MOMENT AND COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS.



Larry Fish, NEFA President at NEFA's Fall Fest Management Conference

It has been a challenging year for me -- as I am sure it has for many of you. Personally and professionally we all go through times of struggle, but as we reflect back, we have to keep in mind all the blessings we do enjoy. Even through the hardships, I can still count my blessings, and know I have the support of my peers, a great family, and am part of a terrific industry.

I am looking forward, and this coming year should be an exciting one as well. A lot of changes have occurred within our industry such as software companies merging, a large cleaning operation rebranding itself as a national name brand, Tide Cleaners, and the continuing decline of smaller, owner-operator locations.

Many of us have said for years that there were too many cleaners around. Well, we need to be careful because what we wished for has happened. As I talk to cleaners throughout the country, this trend will continue well into 2019.

Finally, in terms of looking forward, I have a few predictions. Most people do this funny business every year around December just to see what actually might come true the following year so I'm no different in that regard. I predict the Clean Show in New Orleans will actually exceed the numbers that the Las Vegas Clean Show produced. I don't have any hard evidence as to why this may happen, I just believe this because the venue is closer to the east coast this time and that will allow for more cleaners to travel to it.

I am also predicting that numbers will start to flatten out for cleaners in terms of piece counts. What I mean by this is that unless you are acquiring someone else, your numbers will start to flatten as most of us have seen a bit of increase in the last few years. NEFA and DLI have great programs to help members answer those challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities out there. Contact NEFA if you need assistance. I also predict some great NEFA classes in 2019. In fact, predict we will have more educational classes this year than we have ever had.

NEFA is looking to make a strong, diverse education schedule in 2019 that will include technical training programs like pressing and Spotting, as well as, management programs on Marketing, Employee Relations, and Business development. Have ideas? Thoughts for programs in your areas? Let us know, we are committed to your success.

Larry Fish

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Achieving Customer Service Excellence, Pt.2

Written by Jim Groshans, FabriCoach, LLC



MAYBE YOU'VE SEEN SOME OF THE FARMERS INSURANCE TV COMMERCIALS. THEIR TAGLINE IS: "WE KNOW A THING OR TWO BECAUSE WE'VE SEEN A THING OR TWO."

After being in the dry cleaning industry for over 30 years, I've seen a thing or two, so I feel like I know

a thing or two. And, there's nothing I like better than to share that knowledge with others.

This is my second article on achieving customer service excellence. The first article can be found on www.nefabricare.com in the Headlines&More Archives for the July/August issue, or by visiting my website FabriCoach.com and look under NEWS (https://0n.b5z.net/i/u/16000234/f/CCA_JulyAugust_2018.pdf page 4). In that first article, I discussed how customer service should be a part of your business philosophy and the importance of deciding on the level of service you will deliver.

Think of a business that delivers legendary service. What hotel chains come to mind? What restaurants? What cruise lines? How do they achieve the level of customer service excellence that makes them legendary? Well, certainly it starts with a business philosophy, but it takes so much more!

CUSTOMER SERVICE: JOB OR SKILL?

I think the answer is "both!" Customer service is simply providing service to the customers before, during and after a purchase. Of course, the product or service must meet the customer's expectations, and the customer's interactions with your team will determine the level of their satisfaction. These activities and interactions are touch points. Touch points can add value and impact the customer's experience. A service breakdown can occur at any touch point. In your dry cleaning operation, every employee has touch points with the customer even if they never have a face-to-face encounter with the customer. How can that be you ask?

The back-of-the-house team members can impact the quality of the service by knowing more about the "story" of each garment and the customer's expectations. For example, it's very helpful to know about specific stains and combination of stains. A coffee stain is one thing, but coffee with crème and sugar is another challenge. Another example is garment finishing preferences: No creases means just that: no creases. Replacing buttons, repairing zippers, seams, or hems, and the list goes on. Lastly, it's very important for those processing a garment

to know if it has been returned for some "re-work." It's one thing to fail at service once; it's another thing to fail a second time. So really, every job in your cleaning operation is a customer service job — not just the team members at the front counter.

Someone asked me if people are born with good customer service skills or do they learn how to deliver customer service excellence. I believe that some people do have a natural affinity and personality for customer service, and I believe some skills can be taught.

What are the skills one needs in order to deliver customer service excellence? Helpful, caring, and courteous come to mind, followed by patient, respectful, and positive attitude. Those with direct, frequent customer contact, need to learn how to communicate clearly, effectively, and emphatically. They will need good listening and problem-solving skills. They will need to understand your business philosophy for service recovery, and they need to be able to execute in such a way that the customer feels good about both the interaction during service recovery as well as the resolution of the service failure. Many of these are things that can be taught, and if reinforced through accountability, they become habits making consistent customer service delivery second nature to the employee. Wait... did I mention, the plant manager will need to role model these same customer service skills and behaviors? They must lead by example!

You can hire for some of these customer service skills, and FabriCoach LLC can help you coach your team to deliver customer service excellence. It will take teamwork! From the front of the house to the back of the house, your employees must work together, communicate, and be committed to customer service excellence. If you need help, contact me at jim@fabricoach.com.



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NEFA Joins HCDLA Holiday Luncheon



NEFA JOINED TOGETHER WITH THE HARTFORD COUNTY LAUNDRY AND DRYCLEANING ASSOCIATION (HCDLA) TO CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS, AND TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF THE ASSOCIATION.

The HCDLA is one of the oldest local trade groups for drycleaners in the country with roots going back over 80 years. The association still meets on the third Thursday of each month excluding the summer. The association played a vital role in getting the CT Clean-up Fund back in good running shape, and partners with NEFA to act as an industry watchdog for the fund and other industry issues throughout the capitol region.

The luncheon this year was a departure from the traditional Holiday party they have always held, but it provided a great opportunity to look ahead at what role the association will have moving forward.

“This is a great organization,” offered Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Director, “and I really enjoy working with them, and supporting them in every way I can. I try and make as many meeting as I can throughout the year, and it provides me the opportunity to share, learn, and spend time with great friends I have made throughout the years. I am glad they are going to keep moving forward, and keeping up a great tradition.”

NEFA will be coordinating with HCDLA to plan and promote workshops at least 2-3 times per year in Connecticut. The meeting times will probably move off the current schedule in order to be more flexible and attract a greater audience. The programs will be open to all NEFA Members and Drycleaners throughout the region, and the hope is to attract cleaners from the surrounding areas like Western Massachusetts and Eastern Connecticut.

“We really want to bring some added value to the program, and to provide some Educational opportunities for the industry,” Blake concluded. Keep watch for upcoming programs, and any cleaners in the area are invited to call Peter Blake at 603-635-0322 and request topics to be discussed



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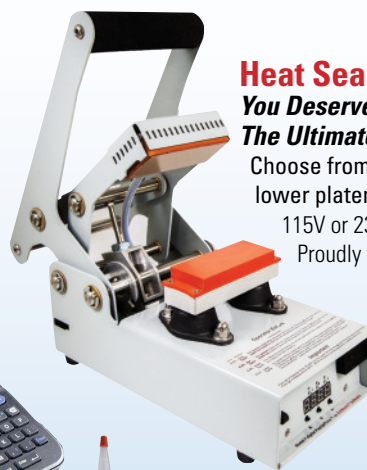
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Past DLI Presidents Invited to Recent DLI Meetings



TWELVE PAST PRESIDENTS (THREE OF WHICH HAILED FROM SEFA) GATHERED AT THE LAUREL, MD, HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE DRYCLEANING AND LAUNDRY INSTITUTE LAST MONTH, DURING THE FALL BOARD MEETING HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PENNSYLVANIA AND DELAWARE CLEANERS ASSOCIATION TRADE SHOW IN NEARBY BALTIMORE.

The past presidents toured DLI's facility and caught up with their colleagues and the DLI staff and were invited to attend the fall board meeting and share input and perspectives with the current board.

Pictured in the front row starting from left are Lang Houston

(2001-2002), Crest Cleaners, Cocoa Beach, FL; Ed Robinson (2008-2009), Ed Robinson Laundry and Drycleaning, Columbia, SC; Donald Fawcett (2005-2006), Dependable Cleaners, Quincy, MA; Jim Nixon (1992-1993), Nu-Way Cleaners, Greeley, CO; Eric Kloter (1999-2000), Swiss Laundry, Rockville, CT.

In the back row are Allan P. Johnson III (2014-2015), Peerless Cleaners, Corpus Christi, TX; Rick Kasperbauer (2010-2011), Kasperbauer Cleaners, Carroll, IA; Dan Martino (2004-2005), Martino's Master Drycleaners, Kenosha, WI; Greg Myers (2015-2016), Southside Cleaners, Lakeland, FL; David Beatty (2016-2017), Murrys ville Cleaners, Murrys ville, PA; and Gary Dawson (2005-2006), Belleair Bluffs Cleaners, Belleair Bluffs, FL. Not pictured, Dave Machesney, Pratt-Abbott Cleaners, Portland, ME.

We are very proud of the NEFA legacy," observed Eric Kloter, former NEFA and DLI President, "of sending great representatives to the DLI Board. The fact we have such a great turnout of past DLI Leadership really demonstrates NEFA's commitment to the industry. I really applaud all these representatives for their time, devotion and leadership throughout the years. I am so very impressed with what DLI is doing and in the leadership they have on staff. Mary Scalco and Jon Meijer are doing an amazing job leading DLI and the Volunteer leadership. DLI is doing GREAT things, and it was really great to be invited in to see the progress we have made as an industry and as an association. Great job."

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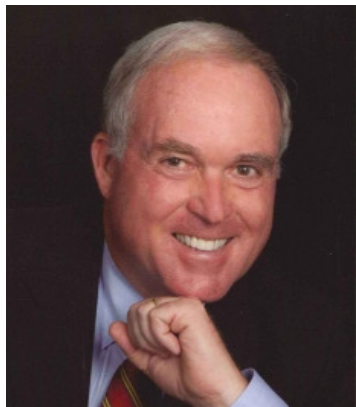
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Take Your Dog to Work Day

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



ON A RECENT TRIP TO LONG TIME CLIENT, I WAS SURPRISED BUT PLEASED TO SEE SEVERAL DOGS WANDERING AROUND THE WORKPLACE.

I am a dog guy myself and enjoyed watching them and, yes, petting them when they came up to me. The dogs provided a sense of pleasure and of calmness and the em-

ployees really liked having them around. Allison Allen is the Executive Director of the Quality Pro initiative at NPMA and also serves as "Dog Deputy" and has graciously written this fine article.

ARTICLE SUBMITTED BY ALLISON ALLEN:

Each year, during our most stressful season, the National Pest Management Association (NPMA) conducts an employee satisfaction survey. On the survey, employees are asked to rank the benefits of working at NPMA. Year-after-year, having dogs at work hovers near the top. "In addition to keeping employees happy, having dogs at work is one of the best expressions of our core values which include life balance, fun, passion, and teamwork," says CEO Dominique Stumpf.

For many years there was an understanding that if you needed to bring your dog to work for a day, it was fine. Having a dog greet you at the door was an exception rather than a daily occurrence. But after a few well-behaved pups started coming every day, NPMA formalized a "Dog Friendly Workplace Policy." "The policy was not created in response to an incident, rather we wanted to make sure the practice of having our furry friends at work would be fair and safe for years to come," says Stumpf.

THE POLICY

The Dog Friendly Workplace Policy ensures the office is a productive work environment that is safe and fun for employees and animals alike. In order to bring their dogs to work, employees need to submit an application that covers the topics of vaccinations, training, and disposition. In addition, employees must agree to hold an insurance policy that covers dog bites and communicate with the "Dog Deputy" when they want to bring in their pet to ensure there are never more than 4 dogs in the office at once.

THE PROS

"Nothing takes the edge off a stressful meeting like having a dog give a big ol' yawn and roll over on his back to stretch. Just being around them takes the edge off," says NPMA employee Megan Moloney.

In addition to stress reduction, having dogs around promotes employee bonding. People who don't usually work together will take

a moment to chat while giving a belly rub. When employees post pictures of office dogs to social media, inevitably friends comment "I wish I worked there!" In today's tough job market, anything that gives an employer an edge is great. NPMA would accommodate an employee, vendor or visitor who doesn't like dogs, but so far this hasn't been an issue.

THE CONS

Luckily, having a policy in place has proactively protected NPMA against liability, fairness issues and having dogs that are more stressed at work than they would be at home. Even though most people in the office of 25+ employees have dogs, people know their pets and understand that not every dog is suitable for a workplace. "As we learn little things, we update the policy. For example, no squeaky toys," says Stumpf.

Inevitably, having lots of dogs in the office adds a level of allergens and dirt, so NPMA has the carpets cleaned at least once a year and carpet cleaner is on-hand just in case there is an accident. The only other ever-present concern is making sure the dogs that come often don't get fat. Most employees keep treats in their desks. From time-to-time owners need to put a pause to the treat-giving or provide healthy treats in lieu of pup-peroni!



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Is an Exit Plan in Your Future?

Written By Judith Stone, a principal of Dry Cleaning Plus, NEFA Silver Member (see ad on page 4)



AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE YOU WILL LEAVE THE HELM OF YOUR BUSINESS. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER OR NOT YOU WILL BE PROPERLY PREPARED FOR THE TRANSITION EITHER WITHIN THE FAMILY, TO CURRENT EMPLOYEES OR BY SALE. NO MATTER HOW

THE CHANGE IS COMING, YOU NEED TO PROPERLY PREPARE YOURSELF AND THE BUSINESS.

There is an assortment of reasons why businesses change hands:

- You are ready to retire. You have worked hard and are “burnt out”.
- You are bored and want to seek a new challenge.
- You have health issues and need to focus on getting better.
- You want to pass your business to an heir.

An Exit Plan goes a long way to simplify the process of selling and will make it less stressful. It enables you to maximize the value of your asset. Even if your exit is several years away, you can have peace of mind if you are prepared for life’s expected and unexpected surprises.

SO WHAT EXACTLY IS AN EXIT PLAN AND HOW DO YOU PREPARE ONE?

The basic function of an Exit Plan is to prepare your business to be sold at maximum market value. A smooth operation is more attractive to a buyer; an operation that makes sense to an inexperienced buyer enlarges the market for your business.

As you go through the steps of an Exit Plan, you will almost always see things that can be improved. These changes can be implemented immediately so you get the benefit of a better business while you are still the owner. Improvements or changes may contribute to an increase in your profit and the value of your asset.

An Exit Plan looks for places to improve your bottom line and increase sales. One place to start is making sure your record-keeping is up-to-date. You ought to know your profit margin and you should be able to prove it. Get in the habit of using the report function in your point-of-sale computer system; you will find valuable information that helps you make better business decisions.

Doing an Exit Plan demands that you look at your physical plant with a critical eye. Is it clean, is it organized, is your equipment in tiptop shape? Too many cleaners forget that we are in the CLEANING industry. Treat your space to a thorough spring-cleaning. Discard accumulated junk; sort through the rail filled with garments that have no home; hire a cleaning service to remove greasy dirt on walls, lighting and ceilings; give your call office a face-lift. This doesn’t require a major outlay of money, just ingenuity and elbow grease.

If you are thinking of selling, the most important conversation to have is with your spouse. Talk about a timetable for exiting the business that is agreeable to both. Talk to your accountant to discuss potential tax obligations stemming from a sale of your business. Advise your attorney that you are prepping for a future sale and if you don’t have an attorney, look for one that handles retail business transactions and understands that the goal is to protect you, but finish the sale.

“... an Exit Plan demands that you look at your physical plant with a critical eye. Is it clean, is it organized, is your equipment in tiptop shape?”

Know where your important documents are. This includes your lease, insurance policies, environmental reports, advertising contracts and other commitments you have made. Read your lease so you are clear about terms, increases and the process of assignment. Learn how your state’s environmental rules may affect a sale so you can be proactive at addressing any issues.

All of the above are just part of a professional Exit Plan. Take these steps over time or hire a professional to guide you in the right direction and make certain it gets done. An Exit Plan is the surest method of experiencing a smooth and profitable business sale.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Judith Stone, a principal of Dry Cleaning Plus, is an experienced dry cleaning consultant and business matchmaker. She and her partner, Richard G. Stone, offer Business Matchmaking and Brokerage, bringing people together for mutual profit; Exit Plans that consider a fair market value of the business and appraisals for estates, prenuptials or to discover if an offer on the table is the right one. On the consulting side, Judith collaborates with clients to upgrade and streamline operations offering suggestions to improve the bottom line through increased efficiency, improved productivity and better customer service. Services provided are always directed toward helping our clients achieve their goals. For more information visit our website, www.drycleaningplus.biz and see our ad on page 4 of this newsletter.

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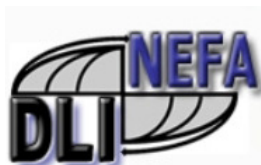
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