



# THE Messenger

## MD Legislature Eyeing Big Sales Tax Changes



THE MD LEGISLATURE IS CURRENTLY EXPLORING MEASURES THAT COULD HAVE A BIG IMPACT ON DRYCLEANERS AND LAUNDERERS THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

### SALES TAX EXPANSION

The Democrats have announced an initiative to expand the state sales tax to all services. This would directly impact Drycleaners, Launderers, Wash-dry-fold, everyone now performing services for the public. The estimate for this change is a \$2.8 Billion increase in taxes. The largest in MD history.

“This will effect everyone including the middle class and working poor,” cautioned Mike McKay, MAC President and MD Delegate. “These are the people that can least afford these types of increases. We are not talking about luxuries, or discretionary income -- we are talking about life staples. People need to have their drycleanables drycleaned for health and wellness. Many people use laundry and wash/fold services because they are busy working two jobs, and trying to put the food on the table.”

MAC is strongly opposed to this measure and will be reaching out to drycleaners throughout the state to enlist your support. For more information visit [www.macassociation.org](http://www.macassociation.org).

### THE PINK TAX

Another new initiative is an effort to end the so-called “Pink Tax” where women get charged more for the same item or service. MAC has long been preaching the need to price based on garment type -- not gender. While it is perfectly acceptable to charge more for an item that requires extra attention, or needs special handling, it is NOT acceptable to publish and charge prices due to gender. “Men’s Shirts” and “Women’s Blouses” should never be part of a pricing strategy.

“I have met with the sponsor” offered McKay, “to explain that DLI and MAC association has for years educated our members on how not to gender price but develop the price to clean and press based on labor, construction of garment, etc. I have shared my price list as a example and the MAC Association statement on non gender pricing”

This bill has traction and will advance. It is MAC’s intention to make sure that more labor charged (hand ironed vs. mass production) for garments are allowed. This will be considered a win for the Association. Updates will be posted to [macassociation.org](http://macassociation.org).

JANUARY/FEBRUARY  
2020

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE...

# Take Advantage of Your New Opportunities

DLI IS IN THE LAST STAGES OF IMPLEMENTING ITS NEW DATABASE, AND THE NEW SYSTEMS PROVIDES YOU WITH SOME GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP YOU GROW.

First off, if you haven't already done so, go in and update your user name and password. Your user name is the main email address you have associated with the account. DLI will no longer be using the member number, but rather the user name (email) you have registered with the account. If you are like me -- that is a GREAT thing, I can never seem to remember my member number when I need it. In order to do this, just visit [dlionline.org](http://dlionline.org), and log in with your email and click "forgot password". You will then be sent a temporary password that you can use to log-in and create your own.



*Peter Blake,  
MAC Executive Director*

## EMPOWER YOUR STAFF

One of the great new opportunities is for you to grant access to your employees. You can edit your own membership information and add in the emails of your key staff people, and then they will also be able to create their own password and will have individual access to the database. This is a great new feature, and it will allow your managers to explore all the things DLI has to offer and ways they can help make you more successful.

Too often all the information is only sent to the main contact -- the owner/general manager. For many reasons, that information is seldom shared with the people who may be able to use it the most. There is no extra cost to add in employees to your account, and if their job status ever changes you can easily remove them from your account and take away access.

## FIND A CLEANER

The popular "Find a Cleaner" feature of the DLI website is back, and even better than ever. You will have access to your own listing and will be able to update it with critical information. You will want to put up a picture of your location, make sure all the information you want displayed is correct, and then add in your hours of operation. The more information you share, the better you will look when consumers are searching for options in your area.

DLI is working to make sure "Find A Cleaner" is displayed prominently whenever consumers are searching online for garment care. We want our members to be visible and we are looking to drive consumers to your website and business.

## DLI APPS

If you haven't noticed yet, the old apps are obsolete and are no longer functioning. With the new database, they are all part of the DLI website. Once you have logged into the system from a mobile device. Locate the "Drycleaning Encyclopedia" and you can then create a shortcut to it on your device. You can then do the same for the stain removal tool and the Garment Analysis service. If you need help, call me and I can walk you through it!

**Peter Blake**

MAC Executive Director  
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## M & B Hanger Spotlited in Recent Article

(Excerpt from article originally found on Vox.com)



SEFA MEMBER M & B HANGERS WAS RECENTLY FEATURED AS PART OF A RECENT EXPOSE ON THE "HISTORY OF THE WIRE HANGER".

While the complete article discusses the origins of the wire hanger, and the way the industry has changed

over the last 150 years, it also included a great profile of one of the few companies still making hangers right here in the US.

"This was a great article, and I encourage you to read the full text," offered Peter Blake, NEFA Executive Director, "It is great to see such a strong supporter of the industry featured in a positive way."

### FROM VOX.COM: "THE GOODS"

When Milton Magnus III was a boy in Alabama, a friend asked what his father did. Magnus told his friend that his father, just like his father before him, manufactured and sold wire hangers. His friend was taken aback. In his childhood naivete, he had never considered that they were manufactured or sold at all. "Everybody doesn't think about it until someone says, 'I make hangers,'" Magnus says, "and then: 'Oh my goodness, I guess somebody has to.'"

Magnus is now president of M&B Hangers, the company his grandfather, also named Milton Magnus, co-founded in 1943 after a local dry cleaner complained that the war effort's steel consumption had led to a shortage of wire hangers. (The eldest Milton and his business partner, Roy Brekle, had previously been reselling used bottle caps to soda makers.) Magnus III had at first pursued a veterinary career until in college, he says, "chemistry and biology and I didn't really agree." He began loading M&B trucks during summer breaks and has been with the company since; his son, Milton IV, is now an M&B sales associate, the fourth generation in America's preeminent wire hanger dynasty.

"We don't worship them or anything like that," says Magnus III, whose email signature touts M&B's "unbending commitment." "We just know that our livelihood depends on it."

Not long ago, the Magnuses had more domestic company in the industry. As recently as the mid-2000s, the US boasted seven major wire hanger manufacturers; by the end of that decade, M&B was the last such company standing. (At least two others, Indy

Hanger and U.S. Hanger Co., have since emerged.) In a common story of modern capitalism, the wire hanger industry's contraction is tied to increased global competition. In the early 2000s, Chinese manufacturers began flooding the market with cheaper products that many feared were intended to drive out US competitors."

In 2007, M&B successfully petitioned the US International Trade Commission to issue a report recommending tariffs on Chinese imports. The ITC's findings were stark: between 2005 and 2007, Chinese wire hanger imports had increased from one billion hangers annually to 2.7 billion, bringing their share of the US market up from 36 percent to 81 percent. At the same time, as stateside manufacturers folded, the domestic industry's production capacity halved.

The George W. Bush administration, which had declined such action in its first term, imposed tariffs on Chinese wire hanger imports. That drove up prices — an imported box of 500 leapt from around \$17.50 to nearly \$40 — and triggered a rare wave of media attention concerning its potential effects on dry cleaners and their customers. Although, as Magnus III argued to NPR at the time, "If I pay \$12.95 to have my suit cleaned and that hanger cost [the cleaner] a cent and a half more, that's \$12.96 and a half. It's not a factor."

A follow-up report from the ITC last year illustrated the tariffs' effects. In 2018, just 25.9 million wire hangers were imported from China, or less than 1 percent of the pre-tariff total. Yet imports themselves still totaled a sizable 1.45 billion, and their shifting sources over the preceding decade had produced a game of regulatory whack-a-mole: There are now also Obama-era tariffs on hangers imported from Taiwan and Vietnam, where it was determined that Chinese products were being shipped and repackaged to evade US customs. In 2011, two Tijuana-based importers received jail time in California for similarly rebranding Chinese-made, US-bound hangers as products of Mexico.

Two years ago, a crackdown on one such fraudulent manufacturer in Southeast Asia disrupted the usual supply chain. Suddenly without a significant source, importers flooded legitimate makers with orders, creating months-long shipment backups. "It was panic time," says Mike Ross, owner of Massachusetts-based dry cleaner supplier AristoCraft. Did prices go up as a result? "They did," Ross says. "Not dramatically, though." In other words, it's unlikely anyone else noticed.

Full article can be found at:  
[vox.com/the-goods/2020/2/6/21113481/wire-hangers-history-use](https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2020/2/6/21113481/wire-hangers-history-use)

**Save the Date: MAC Spring Leadership Conference and Spring Board Meeting**

**May 1 & 2, 2020  
Virginia Beach, VA**

# How to Sell your Dry Cleaning Business

Written By Jeff Carnahan, LPG President, EnviroForensics



WE'VE TALKED SEVERAL TIMES IN THIS FEATURED COLUMN ABOUT WHAT TRIGGERS AN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP, AND YOU KNOW BY NOW THAT PROPERTY TRANSFER IS THE MOST COMMON CATALYST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUPS.

While businesses are put on the market routinely, there are several factors at play today that have resulted in higher than normal transaction activity amongst dry cleaners.

## THE DRY CLEANING MARKET DOWNTURN

A downturn in the dry cleaning market has been brewing for a couple of decades, but the biggest hit began during the 2008 recession created by the housing lending market. Unemployment rose and many service businesses, dry cleaners included, were heavily impacted by a tightening of discretionary spending by consumers. Profit margins were reduced across the industry as customer spending decreased, and many smaller operators were not able to weather the storm. To make matters worse, the environmental concerns related to the use of many dry cleaning solvents were on the rise. Dry cleaners were being pressured by property owners, regulatory agencies, and consumers to switch to less problematic solvents. This is not as easily said than done since making the switch means buying expensive equipment, which compounds the burden of already depressed profits. Some dry cleaning business owners who had been prosperous in previous years and who were nearing retirement age took the clue that it was time to sell. Others just couldn't make the numbers work anymore and started looking for larger operators to sell their business to without much hassle.

Now that the national economy has been in slow recovery for around ten years, rent is on the rise. For those dry cleaning operators who don't own their property and are still waiting for business to pick back up, this further compounds the problem. Property investors are renovating and improving many retail centers to substantiate the higher rents, and some dry cleaners are losing their leases unless they make a solvent change away from Perc. Retail property owners want to be associated with "green" dry cleaners.

## FACTORING IN THE POTENTIAL CONTAMINATION

Whether you are considering a sale of your dry cleaning business or considering a purchase of a dry cleaner whose owner may be implementing an exit from the business, the fear of contamination will need to be addressed during the process.

Selling or buying a dry cleaning business is no different than the mergers or acquisitions that you may read about involving much larger companies. When one business buys another, there are assets and liabilities that must be transferred, held, or dispersed.

Buyers will want to pay a fair market rate for the positive assets of a company and try to avoid taking the liabilities as part of the deal. Liabilities typically carry with them a negative monetary value and serve to lower the purchase price.

Contamination issues are always on the liabilities list. From the seller's perspective, they want to be able to get the full value for business and be able to walk away from the liability as well. Many dry cleaner deals fall through when the negative value of the environmental liability offsets the positive value of the business assets to the extent that the sale price is no longer motivating to the seller.

In order to save the deal, the environmental liabilities can be separated from the sale such that the buyer only purchases the assets of the dry cleaner at fair market value under a new corporate entity and the seller retains the environmental liability. This allows the deal to go through and maximizes the value of the sale, but the seller is left holding a bag of liability with a huge potential negative price tag. This is not Plan A and will not provide the most value.

The fact that a dry cleaner's old commercial general liability (CGL) insurance policies are viable positive assets to the business often goes without consideration. If a business is sold leaving the corporate entity intact, those old policies will transfer as well, thereby offsetting the negative value of the environmental liabilities. Similarly, if a business is sold as an asset-only acquisition into a new corporate entity, the old CGL policies will remain with the policyholder who retains the environmental liability. The fact that your historical CGL policies can play so monumentally into this process is a testament to finding and utilizing them.

## THE THREE STEPS TO SELLING YOUR BUSINESS

There is some good news out there for dry cleaners and the garment and textile market as the industry changes and adapts to meet the changing needs of their customers. Some operators are even looking to take advantage of shrinking competition and double-down on a consolidation strategy. If you are looking to sell your business within the next couple of years, take the time to do some planning so that you can maximize your returns and avoid surprises that could kill a deal to sell your business. It's a buyer's market right now, so give yourself a fighting chance.

1. Assemble a team that will work together effectively to provide you with the experience and specific knowledge you need to make sure nothing gets missed.
2. Do a business evaluation to understand the good, the bad and the ugly by taking inventory of the company's assets and liabilities.
3. Develop what your objectives for the sale.

For more information on these 3 critical steps to preparing for sale, visit [sefa.org](http://sefa.org) for a complete reprint or read more on the EnviroForensics blog:

<https://www.enviroforensics.com/blog/how-to-sell-your-dry-cleaning-business-in-three-steps/>

# A New Year, A New Plan

Written By Dan Miller, CEO Mulberry's Garment Care (originally submitted to American Drycleaner)



## THE END OF THE YEAR IS ALWAYS A DIFFICULT TIME FOR US AS BUSINESS OWNERS.

We're frantically trying to make sure we meet our 2019 goals. In addition, there's usually a bunch of year-end paperwork and other filings that seem to gobble up the hours. It's a classic case of the "urgent" crowding out the important.

With the end of year chaos going on, it's very easy to postpone, delay, or outright cancel the most important thing you can do at the end of the year: strategic planning. Yet, taking the time to craft, execute and communicate a robust, coherent strategic plan is arguable the most critical step you can take as a business owner to make sure your team members know where your company has been in the last year and where it's headed in the year to come.

There are countless ways to develop a strategic plan for the new year and everyone has their own opinion on how it can and should be done. At my company we have a process that we've used for over a decade that works well for us, but at the end of the day I would encourage you to find whatever approach works best for you and your team. My preferred strategic planning approach is built on four core tenets:

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Before you can even begin to think about where you want your company to go, you must first force you and your team to take a hard look at where you've been. To guide this approach I recommend using the strategic plan that you created the previous year (if you have one). Specifically, go one by one through the goals that you laid out last year and check off the goals you've achieved and highlight the goals that still remain.

This enables you to refresh your memory regarding what you were hoping to accomplish this year and to what extent you've succeeded in reaching those goals. I also recommend that you begin this year in review process at that start of Q4 because it will give you time to get laser-focused on completing the goals from the previous year that have gone unaddressed.

The other side benefit of taking this self-inventory is that it tends to boost morale substantially. In the flurry of activity that characterizes a typical year, it's easy to forget how much you and your team have accomplished. But when you sit down and take the time to do a year in review you and your team will realize how much you've done and be reenergized about completing whatever is left undone.

## COLLECT OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Once you've completed a comprehensive look back, now it's time for you and your team to look forward to the year ahead. At the

core of any good strategic plan is one word: improvement. A year in which we're not improving is not a year worth having, so the driving theme of your strategic plan should be one question: how do we improve?

In my experience, the greatest difficulty in this part of the process is collecting an authentic list of the company's opportunities for improvement. This is the case for a number of reasons: Employees may not want to be seen as criticizing their current colleagues or management. They may fear change. They may have never been taught how to identify and solve problems. They may be just shy.

To counteract these challenges I recommend formally soliciting opportunities for improvement from your staff, but in a totally anonymous way. This can be as simple as handing out notecards and collecting them in a box or sending out a Google forms or Survey Monkey survey. The key here is making sure that staff understand that their opinions will be confidential, and to ask probing questions to maximize the likelihood of insight. For example, "What makes your job more difficult than it needs to be", "what annoys you about working at our company", "what would make your work experience better", "how can we make our customer's experience with us better." "How could we improve quality". "What do you wish you knew more about".

Continued on page 10

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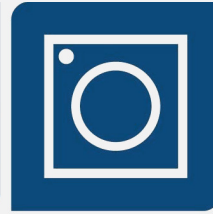
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## MAC Announces New Webinar Series



MAC IS PARTNERING WITH CCA, NEFA, PDCA, AND SEFA TO PRESENT A SERIES OF WEBINARS DESIGNED TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND PROFITABILITY.

These programs are free for all members, but there is a nominal charge for non-members. The webinars will be held bimonthly for the next year and then the program will be re-evaluated based on participation and feedback from participants.

“We were energized by the response we got for the EnviroForensics Webinar last year,” stated Peter Blake, MAC Executive Director. “The response for the program and the feedback after were all positive. I think we need to be flexible in how we offer our educational opportunities, and this is a great way to reach members, who for a variety of reasons may not be able to attend other programs. Our goal is to offer high value programs from industry leaders that focus on ways we can all be more successful. This is not to replace live education programs, but to augment what we offer.”

### THE FIRST WEBINAR

The first program is “The Secrets of Finding and Hiring the Right People” presented by James Peuster of 21DC and The Route Pros. It is being held on March 25th from 2:00 - 3:00 EST.

The workshop explores ways to combat the labor shortage. Breaking the “I can’t find good people” paradigm is essential to running a successful business.

Participants will learn where to look and how to recruit the RIGHT people. They will also learn how to develop hiring strategies and how to be creative in a competitive job market.

This remains one of the biggest challenges facing small business today, and we are helping you uncover secrets that you can use to help fill your staffing voids. Registration information is on the next page!

### LOOKING AHEAD

We are currently developing the schedule for the next full year. Future speakers/topics include: Jane Zellers, Mike Tatch, EnviroForensics, DataMining, and more. If you have any suggestions or requests, email [peter@macassociation.org](mailto:peter@macassociation.org) or call 800-235-8360.



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## MAC Announces a New Webinar...

### Secrets of Finding and Hiring the Right People!

*Presented by Management Expert*  
**James Peuster, 21DC**



Management Expert, James Peuster of 21DC leads a workshop focussing on ways to combat the labor shortage. Breaking the "I can't find good people" paradigm is essential to running a successful business.

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## A New Year, A New Plan

Continued from page 6

Asking these questions and giving folks a safe space to communicate their thoughts will give you a laundry list of opportunities for improvement, which you can then synthesize into a plan

### CREATING THE PLAN

Now that you have a clear understanding of what your company needs to do, it's time to make a plan on how to execute on that in the coming year. In order to ensure execution it's important to first synthesize your list of opportunities for improvement into larger tasks. There's countless ways to do it, but in my experience I've found a few categorizations are critical. First, It's extremely helpful to differentiate between truly complex problems and "quick wins". The quick wins like "getting a new coffee maker" or "new paint in the front lobby" should be assigned out and allocated to whoever is responsible right away. For the complex problems, I recommend setting aside some significant time at your strategic planning to make sure you are all able to dig in and come up with preliminary ideas on how to go about solving them.

After you've taken that first cut at categorization the other critical piece in strategic planning is accountability. Every task should be clearly assigned to someone in your company with a specific timeline and metric to make sure it is achieved. In addition, you should be sure to confirm that that person has the resources necessary to achieve their objective. Without accountability, clear dead-

lines, and the resources to achieve your goals, a strategic plan isn't worth having.

### COMMUNICATING THE PLAN

If I had a dollar for every time I've seen a company craft a strategic plan and then fail to roll it out, I could retire. A strategic plan can be an incredibly powerful tool in driving the culture of your company in the coming year, but in order to do so it must be communicated to every single person in the organization. Otherwise, it's a ghost.

In our company we communicate our strategic plan through an all-staff annual meeting. At the meeting we spend time reviewing the previous year; where we succeeded and where we came up short. We then allow different team members to present our priorities for the year and where we hope to go. This ensures that every single person, from the presser, to the store associate, to the President of the company are all on the same page as to what we're trying to achieve.

This year, do yourself the favor of setting a course for your team by creating a comprehensive strategic plan. It's a lot of work, but I promise it will pay off in spades.

*As they say, a year is a terrible thing to waste!*



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