



The Messenger

www.macassociation.org

PDCA's Expo in Baltimore is a Huge Success



THE PENNSYLVANIA DELAWARE CLEANING ASSOCIATION'S RECENT EXPO CONVENTION AND EXHIBIT WAS A TERRIFIC SUCCESS.

MAC members demonstrated how valuable exhibits like this can be for their business. The number of attendees from the MAC territory helped make Expo one of the best attended regional shows in the country. The total number of attendees exceeded those of PDCA's recent events held in Atlantic City, and breathed some renewed life into the Expo and the industry.

"This was a first class exhibit," offered Peter Blake, MAC Executive Director, "and our membership was fortunate to have such an opportunity right in their own back yard. They were treated to tremendous educational opportunities and exposure to some of the most unique and innovative products and services in the industry. I am proud of the positive response for Expo and I am looking forward to supporting it again if they return in 2020. I think the strong showing of our membership was indicative of the value these events bring, and how big a void there was since we had our own event a decade ago."

EXPO IN REVIEW

With 100 booths and close to 600 attendees, Expo exceeded everyone's expectations. The show was crowded, and was always busy with interested buyers and people thirsting to learn more about the industry.

Marketing expert Brian Rashid, CEO of A Life in Shorts, headlined a terrific line-up of speakers that included Labor Law Expert Frank Kolman, Jim Groshans of FabriCoach.com, and Management Expert James Peuster.

"This line-up of speakers", continued Blake was one of the strongest I have seen on a local level. Brian Rashid is a gifted speaker and his content is compelling. I urge everyone to check out his video series on the DLionline.org. Hiring good people remains the biggest issue facing small business, and James Peuster helped attendees navigate a myriad of pitfalls and useful recruitment tools."

In addition to the speaker platform, there were also on floor demonstrations, raffle basket give-a-ways, and more that led to an exciting weekend. Visit www.pdclean.org for more!

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER
2018

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'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.



*Peter Blake,
MAC Executive Director*

It has been a challenging year for many, and I constantly hear from members going through hardships. Both personally, professionally, and even health wise. I know it can get tough, but being a part of a great association like MAC means that you have people you can turn to and help support you and your efforts. Even through the hardships, I hope you can join me in still counting our blessings. I know I have the support of my peers, a great family, and am part of a terrific industry -- and I sincerely hope you know you do too.

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 industry is slowly gaining strength, and there is a great deal of interest in new and innovative technologies.

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. MAC and DLI have great programs to help members answer those challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities out there. Contact me if you need assistance. I also predict some great MAC classes in 2019. In fact, predict we will have more educational classes this year than we have ever had in a long time.

MAC 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.

Peter Blake

MAC Executive Director
(617) 791-0128

Are All Cleaners the Same?

THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE OVER THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF OUR PROFESSION LATELY.

At the heart of the discussion were recent reports that aired on television news stations about recent "investigative reporting" efforts on different cleaners in the Houston, TX area. There have been numerous similar reports throughout the country that seem to show there is little difference between cleaners, and yet a great deal of pricing discrepancies. The consumer is left with an impression that there is no difference in levels of services. The reports were based largely on surveys of customers. While the methodology is distinctly flawed, as an industry, we can take some lessons from the reports. Drycleaners, like all small businesses, are faced with the basic pricing question: What level of service and quality will I deliver, and how much will that level of service cost.

Think about Starbucks who charges up to \$6.00 for a latte, and contrast that with the local corner donut store who charges \$2.00. Is there a difference? If you are a coffee drinker, and a frequent customer of Starbucks-- you bet there is. But if you don't go out for coffee much, or are used to the corner donut store, I bet you would not see the value in going to Starbucks.

There is a direct correlation to our industry. What market share are you trying to attract? Who are your primary customers? They probably understand the differences. But to the one and done customers, or the very infrequent drycleaning customer they probably fail to understand the difference between concepts. Packaging,

pressing, inspection, level of finishing, are all factors that can affect the price of the garment. Some cleaners will prioritize speed over quality. In order to keep the costs down to a one-price structure, or low-cost/high volume plant, you need to make decisions on what level of service you can produce, and your customers expect.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Reports like this one can be very damaging to the industry. When they base conclusions on surveys and feedback, you will not get the typical consumer of a high end drycleaners. You will be much more likely to get feedback from consumers who tend to chase price and don't use a specific drycleaner.

What we as an industry need to do is to continue to educate our consumers. We need to keep promoting the industry and the quality we deliver. There should be a difference between drycleaners and the products we deliver. If you are a higher priced drycleaner, you need to be able to demonstrate the difference. You need to educate your customers, and potential future customers, what "Quality Drycleaners" are, and what they deliver.

There are a number of discount cleaners that do a great job, and there is room in the industry for all pricing strategies. We as an industry can embrace them all, but we can also make sure the public and consumer knows what quality drycleaning is and what to look for. MAC is looking to develop more tools and information for our members to use to help educate the public and to understand the benefits of professional drycleaning. Please contact Peter Blake at peter@macassociation.org and let us know your thoughts!

SAVE THE DATE...

Spring Leadership Conference Set for Return to The Founders Inn & Spa in Virginia Beach



MAC HAS CHOSEN TO RETURN TO THE FOUNDERS INN & SPA IN VIRGINIA BEACH, VA FOR THE ASSOCIATION'S SPRING LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE. THE PROGRAM IS SET FOR MAY 4 AND 5, 2019 AND WILL AGAIN FEATURE TOP QUALITY SPEAKERS AND WILL FOCUS ON BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR THE INDUSTRY.

This is the third annual Leadership Conference in Virginia Beach,

and the Board recently voted to move the weekend earlier in May.

"We felt the change in dates would allow for a greater participation" offered Mike McKay, MAC President. "The new weekend is a little earlier in the season so the program can help us prepare and be ready for the upcoming busy season. Additionally, by moving a little further away from memorial Day weekend, we felt more drycleaners would be able to break away from their businesses."

"We are excited to be returning to the Founders Inn", explained Peter Blake, MAC Executive Director. "This was a perfect conference facility. The meeting rooms were perfect for this type of conference and the staff and amenities were all conducive to a great event. The hotel recently joined the Hilton family of hotels, so there have been some upgrades that attendees will enjoy."

MAC is now working on solidifying the speaker line-up and are in the planning stages of the seminar topics. Now is the time to provide your input on topics you would like to see addressed. Contact MAC today and let us know your thoughts and suggestions!



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MAC Sweepstakes Winners Announced



AT THE RECENT EXPO IN BALTIMORE, THE MAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS AWARDED TWO SWEEPSTAKES PRIZES. FIRST, A NON-MEMBER WAS AWARDED A ONE YEAR FREE SILVER MEMBERSHIP TO MAC/DLI. SECOND, ONE CURRENT MAC MEMBER WAS AWARDED TWO REGISTRATIONS TO

ITS SPRING MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE IN VIRGINIA BEACH.

Winners were chosen from all attendees to the Expo from the MAC region. All members and non-members that visited the DLI/PDCA/MAC booth at the exhibit were also given an additional entry for the sweepstakes to double their chances of winning.

“We were really excited about the Expo being in Baltimore and we really wanted to support the show,” offered Mike McKay, MAC President. “We sincerely wanted to help attract more people to the show, and to reward drycleaners for attending the event. We be-

lieve events like this are incredible opportunities to learn ways to improve your business, and it was a perfect opportunity to see all that is new in the industry.”

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

The winner of one free Silver Membership for 2019 is: **Harry Bias of Heritage Cleaners in Purcellville, VA.**

Heritage Cleaners will also be assigned Board member from their state to act as a mentor during the first year.

“We believe the mentor program”, observed McKay, “is an integral part of the program. We want to ensure the new member understands the membership and all the programs that are available to them. The mentor will reach out to the new member throughout the year and will work with them on using all the benefits DLI/MAC have to offer.”

The winner of the two free registrations for MAC’s Spring Management Conference is: **Dianne Lee of The Press Drycleaning & Laundry in Fairfax, VA.**

The winner is eligible to send anyone from their plant, and will receive information as the event draws closer.



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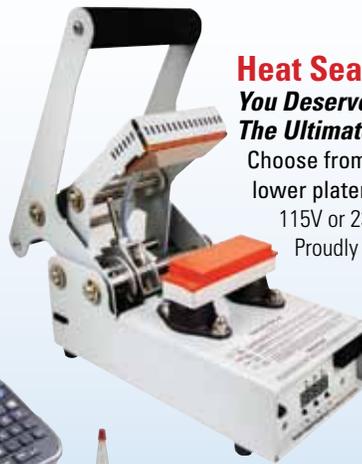


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Achieving Customer Service Excellence, Pt.2

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.macassociation.org in the The Messenger 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. 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jim Groshans, FabriCoach.com, is an expert in the drycleaning industry. The FabriCoach approach is team-based using personal hands-on training to help clients and their teams achieve maximum efficiency and productivity without sacrificing quality.

To learn more about coaching opportunities, visit www.fabricoach.com, or reach out to Jim directly at (954) 850-3618. He can also be reached via email: jim@fabricoach.com.

The Next Mid-Atlantic Association of Drycleaners Board Meeting

MAC Spring Board Meeting
Saturday, May 4, 2019
Founders Inn, Virginia Beach, VA



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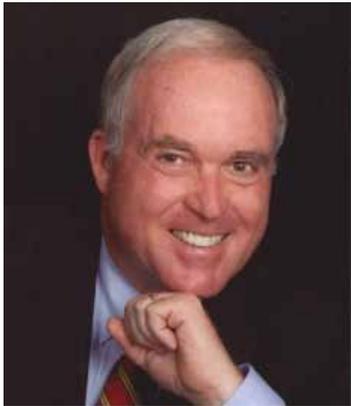
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Take Your Dog to Work Day

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



ON A RECENT TRIP TO OUR LONG TIME AND GREATLY VALUED CLIENT, THE NATIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION IN VIENNA, VIRGINIA, 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 employees 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, which I know you'll enjoy reading. Maybe this is a new employee benefit for your organization!

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, even if it's just a day or two a year, 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-poni!

FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE

Please contact Sandy or your Seay Management Consultant if you have any questions or concerns when dealing with employment issues. Seay Management Consultants are under retainer by DLI to assist DLI/MAC members in HR and Management issues.

Members are invited to call 888-245-6272 when they have questions or need advise in dealing with employee relation issues. The cost of initial conversations are included as part of your membership!

Is an Exit Plan in Your Future?

Written By Judith Stone, a principal of Dry Cleaning Plus



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.

Past DLI Presidents Invited to Recent DLI Meetings



ELEVEN PAST PRESIDENTS GATHERED AT THE LAUREL, MD, HEADQUARTERS 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), Murrysville Cleaners, Murrysville, PA; and Gary Dawson (2005-2006), Belleair Bluffs Cleaners, Belleair Bluffs, FL.

We are very proud of these volunteer's legacy," observed Mike McKay, MAC President, "of building DLI into what it is today. The fact that so many of the past presidents accepted the invitation, and returned to DLI is indicative of their love and support of both DLI and the industry. I applaud all these representatives for their time, devotion and leadership throughout the years. DLI has had some rough times, and it is these very individuals who helped steer us through and helped us retain our foundation as the leading association for the laundry and drycleaning industries. Thank you!"

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