

Gelomb Group

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FOR THE ELITE OF THE DRYCLEANING INDUSTRY

Five Steps to Better Your Customers' Experiences

“Staying ahead of the competition”



**BY
DENNIS MCCRORY**

Everything is changing when it comes to customers. To lock in loyalty, drycleaners need to think differently about how they interact with consumers.

The combination of increased customer expectations and declining budgets are placing more demands on your customer service than ever before. But new best practices hold the key to lower costs and enhanced

customer experiences.

Anyone looking to improve customer experience should understand and comply with certain underlying realities. Let's take a look at what they are, and how you can use them to your advantage.

Every Interaction Creates a Customer Reaction

Experiences are totally in the eyes of the beholder. The same exact experience can be good for one person and bad for another. As a matter of fact, it can be good for someone at one point in time and then bad for that same person at another point in time. Basically, trying to design the same experience for everyone will satisfy no one.

- While it may not be possible to individualize every interaction, focusing on several different types is important.

- Since you need to design experiences for specific types of people, experiences will become optimized for those customers. This requires you to have a very clear picture of your important, and not so important, customers. Customers should be prioritized.

- Design a *Voice of the Customer* program to get customer feedback about their individual experiences.

- Employees need to be empowered. Since every situation can be somewhat different, the needs of customers may vary each time. That's why front-line employees need to have the latitude to accommodate the needs of key customers.

You (or your counter-personnel) need to understand each customer's personality and, thus, their perspective.

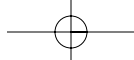
People Are Instinctively Self-Centered

Customers care intensely about their own needs and desires, but they don't generally know or care about how your business works. They just know they want to be satisfied.

Unless instructed otherwise, employees will make work-related decisions

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FIVE STEPS TO BETTER YOUR CUSTOMERS' EXPERIENCES
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based on what is most practical for the company and not what works best for the customer.

- You know more than your customers: just deal with it. You can't eliminate your frames of reference, but it's important to understand that customers usually don't understand the process steps required to process and deliver their clothes.
- Always try to build customers experiences from the customer's point of view. Look at all interactions as an opportunity to help customers.
- Don't make customers jump through hoops just because it makes it easier for you to run your business. Your job is to make life easier for your customers.

Make the shift from self-centeredness to customer-centeredness.

Customer Familiarity Breeds Harmony

Not many people wake up in the morning saying, "Today, I want to make life miserable for our customers." Yet, every day, employees make decisions that end up frustrating, annoying, and upsetting customers. Often, it's not their individual actions that cause the problems – it's the lack of coordination and cooperation within your organization that

causes the problems. Given that most people want their company to serve customers better, a clear view of what customers need, want, and dislike, should dictate their actions.

- Once employees tune into the individual needs of key customers, they will make better decisions on how to create harmony between the customer and your business.
- While we all know that front-line employees affect customer experience, almost everyone in your company also has some impact on how customers are treated. Successful drycleaners think of their companies as large production crews making the stars (front-line employees) shine on stage, during customer interactions.

An external focus is the best way to solve internal problems.

Unengaged Employees Can't Create Engaged Customers

If you want to improve your customers experiences, then it might seem obvious to focus on customers. For most drycleaners, though, that's not the right approach. Where should your focus? On employees. While you can make some customers happy through brute force, you cannot sustain great customer experiences unless your employees buy into what you're doing and

are aligned with the idea. If employees have low morale, then getting them to "wow" customers will be nearly impossible.

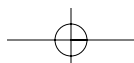
Back in 1994, three Harvard marketing professors published their Service-to-Profit Chain. In it they said: *"Profit and growth are stimulated by customer loyalty. Loyalty is a direct result of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction is largely influenced by the value of services provided to customers. Value is created by satisfied, loyal, and productive employees."*

- Just about any change to customer experience requires some employees to change what they do and how they do it. You can't just change a few rules and processes and hope that customers will be treated better. It takes a lot to re-train employees.

• If it's hard for employees to do something, they are less likely to do it – and more likely to get frustrated. Give your employees the authority to do the right things to help customers.

- If you want to have employees feel like they're a part of your company, you need to tell them what's going on. Develop a communications plan that not only tells employees what the company is doing, but also explains why you're doing it. And it helps if you sincerely solicit feedback.

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Who Cares!



BY ED ROTH

Last week I went to a medical facility to get an MRI. Karin, the receptionist, took care of the paper work and then handed me a survey form to fill out, rating the treatment I

received from check in, to check out. She mentioned kindly that, "If you would like to fill this out, it will help us in determining how well you've been treated here." This told me several things.

#1 was that the owners cared about how their employees treated their patients.

#2 was that there was an "eye in the sky" watching the facility and making sure that I was treated right.

#3 was that the employees were on notice that they'd better be as nice as can be because the owners took care that every patron had the ability to write something nice or critical.

I felt great about the facility, and I left having the perception that it was a well run facility, with a management team that cared about its clientele. I wondered how many people I would tell about the great service at this facility.

As you can tell, I love when I get a survey from a store. We got one at the Weber Grill in Chicago at the last Golomb Group seminar. We got one from the hotel we stayed at, too. I'm the guy who always fills it out and runs out of room praising an employee or describing some episode of poor service. But, emotionally, I'm really pleased that someone cares. I always feel that someone is really reading these surveys, and really cares about the way I've been treated. That is my perception, and thus it's my reality.

In my store I try to make sure that I have some type of survey out there at least once a year. It's very simple, and very inexpensive. I first asked Dennis for some samples of surveys cleaners have used in the past. He has plenty of them. I then molded one to fit my store and my services. You can have them printed inexpensively and simply attach them to outgoing orders. You can mail them to customers, or just leave them on the counter. I prefer a combination of attaching them to outgoing orders, leaving some on the counter, with a nice sign about filling them out and being entered to win a monthly prize. You can give a premium gift like a pen or lint roller for handing them in, or you can have a contest like picking one survey each month and offering a free dinner at a local restaurant or \$50 free cleaning (which

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We'll be changing these from time to time, so keep posted!

WHO CARES!

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might be a good incentive during this recession). If you advertise that restaurant on your survey, make sure they give you a discount for the dinner.

Recently I saw my friend and fellow Golomb Group member Joe Greenfeld at a meeting. Joe has sent surveys to his clients through the mail, in the past, and is currently planning to send a new one. Joe says, "There's no question that it sends a positive message to your customers."

It's been said, by marketing experts, that emotions help us make more than 95% of our decisions. Use this emotion to help your business. Every time a client comes into your store you have a chance to make a deposit into an emotional bank. As I tell my new employees during training, "Every deposit in the customer's emotional bank helps to retain the customer." When you go to make a deposit into your local bank, you go to where your money is. When you go to drop clothes off at your local drycleaner, you go to where your emotions lead you. You have no ties to the store except your emotions.

When the Masters of Marketing Group visited Golomb Member David Whitehurst's beautiful store in Alabama, we were shown a "Locker Room" that was open 24 hours a day for David's customers. The room was filled with short and long lockers. It was a separate room right off the call office. If a customer could not get to David's store during regular hours, they called David and he put their clothes into a locker and gave them the combination. It worked with drop offs, too. The room had a code to enter like a bank ATM. Did a lot of people use this convenience? Not really. But having this separate room showed the people that David Whitehurst cared about his customers' con-

venience. Emotionally, they were glad they had a back up. Emotionally they felt that David was an astute owner who wanted his customers to be happy and always have the latest technology to be at their beck and call. The room was just one more deposit in their emotional bank.

In today's world it seems that more and more people are only out for themselves. Thirty years ago it was the "Me Generation." That morphed into the

"What s-In-It-For-Me" Generation. And recently I heard from several people that the current generation was referred to as the "What s-In-It-For-Me-And-F---Y — Generation." It may be blunt, but that's exactly how some people perceive things today. My friend Diane Gottlieb explains it this way, "Ed it used to be that when you were driving on the highway, and wanted to change lanes, you put your blinker on, and the car behind you slowed up to let you in their lane. Today, when you put your blinker on, the car behind you speeds up to prevent you from entering their lane." I think it's a very good

description of how people react today. Many times it's the owner of a business who is feeling the same way on the highway as in his store. He's speeding up and not caring about the car wanting to enter his lane (or his store).

I was told an interesting story by one of the most respected people in the industry. He was driving with his friend and they stopped for his friend to drop off shirts at Cleaner ABC. They then dropped off the dry cleaning at a different cleaner. My friend asked the obvious question. The answer was,

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It really doesn't take much today to stand out from the competition.

No For Now...



BY JAMES PEUSTER

A recent study showed that the secret behind sales is that 81% of deals closed happened after the 4th or 5th touch. Duh, I think we pretty much already knew this, but we still don't want to

believe it. We look for secret methods to close the deal now and sometimes we accomplish this task, however, we later find out that the prospect said "Yes," just to get rid of you. Thus, our retention is lower than 50% and that doesn't make for a solid route customer. So what are we supposed to do?

The biggest hurdle that I have found lately is accepting "No" as an answer, and be willing to go back later in order to get them on the route. Many times sales personnel will keep track of the houses or businesses they have been to and not go back because they were told "No" or some other form of not interested. Well, if the first sentence of this article is true, then what are we supposed to do? Well it is quite simple, you go back again and again.

What is the worst thing they are going to do, say "No?" Ok, and yes, they may even get mad, but this is the risk you must take in order to build a successful route. Brad Paluck of Mt. Hood Cleaners, put it this way. "No may just mean no for now!" It is so true. It may take weeks of seeing the van in the neighborhood or a negative incident at the cleaner the prospect is currently using. Maybe they don't understand how the service works or thought you were in the carpet cleaning business. There are so many reasons why prospects say no, we just have to not give up

and try, try again.

I know of many stories of customers signed up after the 7th or 8th time of being approached, and they turned into great customers. Our job is to make sure that they don't go elsewhere. Sometimes, they were approached by your competitor and it was just dumb luck on your part. Any way you look at it, don't give up. We must follow-up: non-stop.

This is why I do not recommend gridding - which is documenting every door knock. The sales person will look at the no's and not go back. I have seen this time after time. Why keep track of the multitude of no's when it is the sign-ups and follow-ups we strive for? You only want positive results. "Don't you want to know if they are going out?" I get asked this all the time. Sure you do, but if they are getting you 10 to 20 customers a week, do you care about the rest. You need results, not excuses. If they say that they are going out 10 to 20 hours a week and getting only 3, then they either are lying to you or they stink at sales.

The bottom line is this, building routes is a marathon, not a sprint. This does not give your sales effort reasons for slow growth and limited results. But follow-ups are just as, if not more, important than the monitored results for that week. If you have a bad week, once in a while, know that more customers are just around the corner. Stay positive and turn those maybe's into yes's! ♦

James Peuster is a nationally known author, speaker, trainer, and coach who specializes in route development through Marketing, Management and Maintenance training. James has costs groups specifically designed for route costs and growth and his website is www.therouteapro.com

Irwin Mandel

New Canaan Cleaners

New Canaan, CT

Irwin Mandel is the proud owner of New Canaan Cleaners in New Canaan, Connecticut. The story of how Irwin came to his present status as one of the most respected cleaners in Connecticut, is fascinating, at times futile, and looking back on it after 40 years, quite funny.

In 1969, the rage in the New York metropolitan area was

“slot car racing.” Stores were opening up that were set up with slot car speedway. Fathers and sons, and friends and neighbors, would bring their customized slot cars to these centers and race them against each other. It

was fun, furious and profitable. Irwin Mandel was a young entrepreneur and saw a great opportunity. He borrowed lots of money from family and friends and with his millionaire brother-in-law set up four race car centers in the most affluent areas of the NY Metropolitan area. Timing is everything, and just as Irwin had the stores ready to go, the fad of slot car racing suffered a quick and sudden death. Irwin was out of business, bankrupt, and owed his family and friends lots of money. He owned a home in Bayside, New York, had two children, a wife, and was out of a

job. He really felt what it meant to be depressed. He had nowhere to go each morning, and desperately sought a new career opportunity.

What opportunity did Irwin, a nice Jewish boy, from Queens find? What else? Selling roast pork, of course. Irwin laughs as he tells the story of putting boxes of roast pork in his air

conditioned car, which doubled as his refrigeration unit when he turned up the A/C. He even hired a man to deliver the roast pork while he began finding new accounts to sell. Unfortunately, the Health Department had put in some stringent conditions on the kind of dyes used to color the ends of the roast pork red, and Irwin was once again bankrupt and out of business, feeling very depressed with nowhere to go each morning, and a wife, two kids, and a mortgage.

loved it. Unfortunately, Irwin knew nothing about dry cleaning. However, early one morning, Irwin woke up, sat up in bed, and decided, “If Julie could do it, then so could I.” With this somewhat crazy idea to open a business he knew nothing about, Irwin searched for a store and found Piermont Cleaners in an affluent neighborhood in Hewlett Harbor on Long Island. He went to his family and friends, sat them down, and told them the bad news. “I can’t pay you back. If you want to get your money back, you’ll have to lend me more money.” The Jewish phrase for this is “Chutzpah” which means “Nerve.”

Fortunately, these were the days before Bernie Madoff, and Irwin’s friends and family believed him. With his nerve and his family’s money he bought Piermont Cleaners. He got help from the NCA and from local salesmen. He met a man who had owned a store, was retired and spent six months of the year in Florida. Irwin hired him, and for six months he taught Irwin all he knew, then spent the next six months in Florida. Irwin chuckled as he told me the note for this first store was \$587 a month. Soon the store became profitable through Irwin’s hard

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One day Irwin ran into an old army buddy named Julie. Julie owned a cleaning store and

MEMBER PROFILE
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work. When the store next to his became available, Irwin rented the extra space. He set up a fur vault, cold storage system and soon was storing over 1,000 coats a season in this upper class neighborhood. He also taught his son David to clean and glaze coats on the premises. Irwin paid his son \$2 a coat to clean, brush, and steam out the coats. The fur business was very profitable, with some customers dropping off as many as five furs for cleaning and storage each season. How great was this? And still he was paying his son only \$2 a coat. It was so successful, that Irwin even began selling furs from the store.

Even though business was good, the customers in this neighborhood were very demanding. Irwin became frustrated in that every customer wanted only “to see Irwin.” He got so tired of the “I gotta speak to Irwin” routine that he decided to open a store near his apartment, on the East Side of Manhattan with hopefully less demanding clientele, and sell the Hewlett store. After a few years in Manhattan, he decided to buy his present store in New Canaan, Connecticut. Unfortunately, the original store in Hewlett Harbor was not doing well, as the clientele could no longer “speak to Irwin,” and the owner defaulted on the note leaving Irwin to take back the store. He now was driving 160 miles a day commuting from his home in New Jersey to his store on Long island, and then to the new store in Connecticut. Again, it was difficult to sell the Long Island store as everyone just wanted “to speak to Irwin.” Eventually, the Hewlett Harbor store was sold again, and Irwin was able to live a normal lifestyle with his present operation in the lovely town of New Canaan. He brought his son and nephew into the operation to help with the daily workload of a growing business.

Irwin s store is an upscale store in an upscale suburban neighborhood. He loves his customers and they appreciate the attention to detail that Irwin and his son give each item. Irwin has taken a role that is more in production while his son, David, has taken the role of schmoozing at the counter. Irwin and David have 20 employees and treat them like family. They started a bonus plan two years ago whereby the employees put \$5 away each week in a Christmas Club type bonus plan and Irwin matches it. At Christmas time, each employee will get a bonus of \$500 (\$250 from the employee and \$250 matched by Irwin). According to Irwin, “They love it, and when they receive the \$500 they feel like I ve given them a million dollars. It s a real winning program for me and for the employees.” This year the employees bragged that the government s 401K s are down but Irwin s Christmas Club is up.

The plant does over 4,000 shirts a week at \$2.47 each. He loves his new Unipress Lightning shirt unit. He claims that “there s no difference between the Lightning s blown sleeve and the pressed sleeve from the older units. I have 2 collar and cuffers and love the production from the Lightning.” Suits are \$16.58 and pants are \$8.18. “I like to keep the prices all varied, this way the customers never know what the prices are, and never realize when they are increased.” Irwin also has a 3% environmental fee tacked on to every invoice. In response to any questions about the environmental fee Irwin tells his customers that, “All cleaners charge extra for environmental costs, but most just incorporate into the prices. I like to be up front and let you know what you re paying for.” He says that when it s explained this way they appreciate his candor.

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WHO CARES!

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“Cleaner ABC does a great job on shirts at 99 cents, but they do a terrible job on the cleaning. Stains and double creases all over the place. So I bring my cleaning to a more expensive cleaners to get it done right.” My friend was in a bind since he knew the owner of ABC and knew some owners want to kill the messenger instead of reacting to the news. Nonetheless, he put his best foot forward and told the owner of ABC the story. The owner made some put down of these “lousy customers” who go to the cheapest place, whereupon my friend explained that his friend was actually going out of his way to a more expensive place, and that he should look at his quality, and double creases especially.

As Trudy Adams explains in her seminars, “A complaint is a gift and should be treated as such.” However, the owner just pooh-poohed the story and grumbled something under his breath. It’s been about a year since this incident took place. ABC was once one of the best cleaners in my area doing one of the biggest volumes. It is now burned down, with no current plans to reopen. Amazing, but true.

The owner was obviously not paying attention to his quality, or attention to his customers.

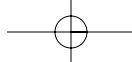
Through his words he put his customers down and showed disdain for them. He no longer has any customers. The store was doing over a million dollars a year, just a few short years ago.

Caring, being nice, smiling, and helping a customer to the car in the rain (or handing them a free umbrella) seems to be a thing of the past. When was the last time you had your oil checked or your windshield cleaned, for free, while buying gasoline? Imagine how surprised you’d be if an attendant cleaned your windshield, checked your oil or, even, pumped your gas!

It really doesn’t take much today to stand out from the competition. I like saying that I have no competitors, that I am my only competition. If I show I care about my customers, most of them will return. Putting out a simple survey sends the message that you care. ♦

Ed Roth is the owner of U.N. Cleaners in Flushing, NY. He is an active member of the Golomb Group. If you have comments or questions about Ed’s articles, please contact him by e-mail: edrothun@aol.com or tel:(718) 969-0207





FIVE STEPS TO BETTER YOUR CUSTOMERS' EXPERIENCES
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You Can't Fake It

You can fool some people some of the time but, eventually, you run out of customers to churn through, and people figure out what's real and what's not. This shows up in a couple of ways. First of all, employees can sense if the customer's experience is not really a top priority with the executive team. Additionally, no matter how much money you spend on advertising, you can't convince customers that you provide better experiences than you do.

- If you're not committed to bettering customer experiences – don't start. It is a lot of hard work. And if good customer experiences aren't a top priority, the initiative will likely fail, and result in frustrated employees.
- Since customers ultimately know how they are treated, the best you can do with marketing is to reinforce the truth. If you want to change how your business is perceived, start by treating customers better and use advertising to reinforce the new way that they're being treated.

By carefully applying these five steps, you will better position your company to deliver highly effective customer experiences and empower your employees to deliver great experiences to your customers. ♦

THE GOLOMB GROUP WELCOMES THIS MONTH'S NEW MEMBERS

Craig Goulian
Emerson Cleaners
 Emerson, NJ

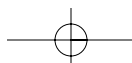
Dan Smith
Dapper Dan's
Absolut Cleaners
 Ankeny, IA

Shane Smith
\$3.00 Cleaners
 Marietta, GA

Bill Lewis
California Cleaners
 Santa Barbara, CA

Kevin Johns
Garfield's Cleaners
 Starke, GL

Marty Moore
D & M Cleaners
 Pharr, TX



MEMBER PROFILE

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Several years ago Irwin and his son David saw the bonus of adding routes. They currently have two truck routes with each truck going out 4 days a week. The routes were started when David and Irwin noticed certain customers hadn't been to the store in several weeks. They would call the customers and invariably there was some difficulty in the customer getting to the store. "No problem Ms. Jones, we'll put you on our Tuesday route and pick up your clothes with our new truck." At the time there was no truck or Tuesday route, but they gave the customer what they wanted, and the route business was born. They converted more and more store customers to the route and now find that route customers are much more loyal, more steady, more dependable, and tend to fill their route bag each week instead of cutting back on their orders.

As the years have passed, David has taken the baton from Irwin in schmoozing with the customers, while Irwin starts each day at the production end of the plant. David loves to play golf and invariably is invited to play golf with his customers on his day off. He has been invited to some of the most prestigious courses and loves playing at these professional courses like Winged Foot. David also has a wonderful bobble head doll collection of sports figures that his customers add to as they visit new stadiums and events.

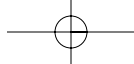
Some of Irwin and David's promotions are quite unique. They send every new move-in a VIP bag that is mailed inside a plastic tube. The offer is to fill the bag and get it cleaned for free. The tube and free bag make an excellent presentation. They also send new customers a

personalized letter of thanks after their first visit. They are currently mailing a 6X9 card to new prospects with the Golomb Group that is being sent to hand picked carrier routes. At each community event they give out a gift certificate for \$150 - \$200. They clean the local school's theatre costumes for free and recently discovered that several new prospects have become good customers because of word-of-mouth within the school community.

Irwin is also a member of the prestigious Prospector's Cost and Management Group. The group meets every month and has been in existence for over 45 years. The cleaners help each other by brainstorming ideas and thoughts. They invite industry spokespeople and cutting edge speakers to address the group every other month. They also create a safety net for any member that might need help due to some emergency. With his willingness to share ideas, friendly manner, experience and exciting promotional ideas, Irwin is one of the most respected members of the group.

One of Irwin's greatest assets is his positive attitude. Although he is looking forward to his 70th birthday this year, he has no thoughts of slowing down or retiring. He explains his future plans by saying "I saw too many people get old too quickly when they stop working."

During these times when most cleaners are complaining and pessimistic, Irwin's perspective on life and the drycleaning industry is something to be admired. It's really a pleasure to know Irwin and enjoy his spirit, his energy, and his upbeat outlook. ♦



How To Tell If Labor Is Too High

By Don Desrosiers

How can you tell if your labor is too high? You probably already think that you know. But isn't there a way to tell for sure if your production labor is higher than it should be? There is. If others in your peer group tell you that their labor percentage of gross sales is a certain number, is that the ultimate litmus test? Definitely not.

Some plant owners compare labor percentages and believe that this stat tells all when in reality it tells almost nothing. I have heard of labor percentages over 50% and under 20% and everything in between. The very thing that you're thinking about right now is one of the reasons that this percentage figure is useless. What's included in that? Who knows and who cares? Some say that their figure is high because it includes "everybody." Others defend their numbers because "we do a really good job." Some scoff at the low percentage offered by others saying that "my number would be that low too, if I only included the pressers."

It's a game that nobody wins.

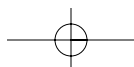
Furthermore, the percentage of gross sales method is flawed from conception. For example, I have clients that do wholesale shirts for under a dollar and pay illegals under-the-table less than \$5 per hour. What's their labor percentage? At the same time I have clients that charge over \$15 per shirt and pay pressers over \$20 per hour. What's their number? Beats me. The average price per piece coupled with the cost of the available labor pool cause this statistic to be lost in ambiguity. The only true measure of productivity is pieces produced vs. production labor hours.

So how do you really tell? It takes just a couple of minutes, 2 steps and a cheap calculator. First, each and every drycleaning presser should average 30 pieces per hour. This doesn't mean that they all press 30 pieces, it means that 3 pressers produce 90 per hour. Typically, a pants presser does more than 30, silks & linens, less than 30 and a utility presser presses about 30. In the shirt department, you need to get 50 shirts pressed per presser per hour. We all know that there is more to this business than just pressing, so now we need to consider the other employees. We will refer to them as "support" staff. They include drycleaners, washers, inspectors, assemblers and the like. Production employees that don't press. Every single one.

If your production is lower than it should be, you already have your answer – your labor cost is too high. And don't run to that safe house that preaches that you need to go slowly in order to do a good job. That's pure fantasy and you are paying to be in that dream. Now, assured that your production rate is where it should be, count the number of production employees in your drycleaning department. Some will be pressers, others won't be. If there are more pressers than support people (don't forget to include them all!), you are running a tight ship (again, assuming that you have the right production level). If you have more support people than pressers, your labor cost is too high and you are throwing money out the window. It's that simple. You didn't even need the calculator.

"If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got."

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Time Is More Valuable Than Money

Mentioning “time” in advertising can increase sales considerably more than mentioning “money.” According to Jennifer Aaker, Professor of Marketing at Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Because a person’s experience with your service tends to create feelings of a personal connection with it, referring to time typically leads to more favorable attitudes and to more purchases.

Here are a couple of interesting research results:

A lemonade stand-operated by two six-year olds used three different signs: “Spend a little time and enjoy C&D’s lemonade”; “Spend a little money, and enjoy C&D’s lemonade”; and “Enjoy C&D’s lemonade.” After displaying only one sign at a time, customers were told they could pay between \$1 and \$3 for a cup of lemonade; the exact amount was up to them. The result: The sign stressing time attracted twice as many passersby—who were willing to pay almost twice as much—than when the money sign was displayed.

College students who owned iPods were either asked: “How much time have you spent on your iPod?” or “How much money have you spent on your iPod?” Students asked about time reported more favorable attitudes toward their iPods.

Bruce Temkin, Principle Analyst at Forrester Research, surveyed more than 4,500 US consumers about how they select the companies that they do business with. It turns out that customer service was considered more important than price across all 12 industries that he examined.

This is all good news for drycleaners, since it lessens the need to emphasize price. Also, it reinforces just how important customer experience is as an added value.

The bottom line: If you value customers’ time, they’ll find you more valuable.

