

BERLIN EXPRESS LAUNDRY

FULFILLING A PURPOSE



APRIL 2013 • By Haley Jorgensen

"I want to be a philanthropist when I grow up," said Jeff Lindemann, who recently purchased and renovated a two-bay car wash and coin laundry in Berlin, Wis. "It's not my intention to buy this property and drive around in a sports car," he added. "I just want to give back to the community."

In his view, the revenue gleaned from Berlin Express Laundry – equipped with high-speed Continental ExpressWash™ laundry equipment – will allow he and his wife, Mandy, to pursue their love of giving back.

Owners of a successful 8-year-old business – Heaven's Touch Photography – they're already part of the Lay Me Down to Sleep Organization, in which they volunteer to take heirloom photos of terminally ill children for families.

As Berlin Express Laundry gains momentum during its first years, the Lindemanns hope to do something worthy with its revenues; perhaps experiencing mission trips, sponsoring area teams and organizations, or helping in other ways within the community.

Fulfilling a Community Need—Berlin Express Laundry

Inspired by the idea of owning a car wash and laundry to fill a desperate need in their community, the couple purchased a building with a run-down coin laundry crying for new equipment and renovations. An adjacent two-bay car wash, which came with the deal, lacked mechanical equipment. The bank had repossessed the equipment prior to their purchase. "I got the original car wash equipment back and upgraded components to make it more efficient," said Lindemann. "It was a no-brainer to bring it back in."

Meanwhile, the City of Berlin showed support of the laundry endeavor ...

Financing the Laundry Came Easy

"The city was willing to come aboard and help us with equipment financing, providing that we purchased new laundry equipment," he said. "There were eight months in which the community was without a laundry; the city knew it was a big need. We got a nice loan with low interest rates."

With financing secured, the Lindemanns explored the possibilities ...

Developing the 'Green' & Express Vision

Following extensive research, a "green" laundry concept emerged, complete with the offering of an express wash and dry in 60 minutes or less. They drew on the industry experience of Fritz Baenen, of Belson Equipment, in Green Bay, Wis., who helped with equipment selection and installation, marketing and pricing. "At the end of the day, Continental equipment rose to the surface because of the utility savings," said Lindemann. Also critical to the equation was that the equipment made it possible for customers to wash and dry laundry in less than an hour.

While customers relish the 60-minute wash and dry, the Lindemanns enjoy lower utility costs, and because of them, the ability to economically sustain lower vend prices.

"When it comes to the machines and what they do, the customers are completely happy," they agree.

The Full Picture

Open six months, Berlin Express Laundry offers the area's fastest wash and dry—all within 800-square-feet; boasts Continental Girbau high-speed ExpressWash Washers and ExpressDry Dryers; features soap, snack and soda vending machines;



offers free Wi-Fi and coffee; and delivers quick cash access via an on-premise ATM machine. It's open 24/7 and monitored with video surveillance.

Customers Wash & Dry in Less Time

Berlin Express Laundry delivers the whole enchilada with its line up of ExpressWash Washers, including 20 20s, six 40s and two 55s; and ExpressDry Dryers, including 10 30-pound capacity stacks.

The washers are stingy on water and energy and reach extract speeds of up to 354 G-force. They outperform traditional



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hard-mount washers, which only produce 75 to 200 G-force extract speeds. And, as a result, they deliver a much quicker dry. ExpressWash Washers remove more water from every load, and thereby, cut resulting dry time by 40-50 percent. This allows customers to complete laundry sooner; decreases energy and natural gas costs associated with running dryers; reduces dryer wear-and-tear; and helps boost customer turnover.

"We try to do something here that's different than the average laundry," said Lindemann. "Doing laundry is a necessary evil. The best we can do is minimize the time our customers spend doing laundry and make their experience pleasurable." And cut time he has. Customers complete laundry in around 54 minutes.

Moreover, as freestanding machines, ExpressWash Washers slide into place without need for bolts and concrete foundations, unlike hard-mount machines, which require both. That simplified the process of following the same footprint as the old machines during the renovation.

Faced with a Dilemma Early On

The new washers offer customers Cold, Warm, Hot, and SuperWash options. Simultaneously, they provide storeowners total control over the wash process. The Lindemanns can program each washer's G-force extract, mechanical action, wash temperature (by degree), water levels and wash/rinse/extract time in each phase. The programmable control also allows multi-level vend pricing based on the time of day, or day of the week.

The ability to select just the "Cold" wash came into play shortly after the



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laundry opened. Two months into operation, an in-ground hot water pipe ruptured. Lindemann considered closing the laundry until it was fixed. "Do we shut down the laundry or just offer cold-water washes?" Lindemann wondered. "We didn't have the heart to shut it down because there was such a need for it in our community. So, we left the laundry open and just offered the cold wash option on the washers. Many customers told me how surprised they were that the cold water washes got their clothes so clean," he added. "The reason their laundry got so clean is because the washers have great mechanical action."

Dollar Wash Grand Opening

Tapping into the washers' flexible programming, the Lindemanns offer dollar washes certain days of the week. The dollar wash promotions, only on the 20-pound capacity machines, were a critical component of the laundry's grand opening. Advertised through a local radio station and store signage, the event included complimentary cuisine, giveaways and on-site radio commentary. "The dollar wash was so popular I didn't want to take it away," said Lindemann. So they have

continued the specials on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. "It keeps it from being super packed in the store on the weekends," he said. No wonder the 20-pound capacity washers turn an average of 3.5 times per day.

Straightforward Pricing

During the rest of the week, no matter which wash option customers choose on the 20-pound capacity machines – Hot, Cold, Warm or SuperWash – the price stays constant at \$2.75 a wash. Similarly, the 40- and 55- pound capacity washers vend at \$4.50 and \$6.00, respectively.

"We wanted the pricing to be easy to understand for the customer," said Lindemann. "We worked with Fritz to figure out where pricing should be so it was the same across the board. We wanted it to be affordable for our customers and economically sustainable for us," he said.

Their approach works. Berlin Express Laundry draws renters and homeowners alike, with many people washing big, bulky rugs and comforters.

Six months in, it's exceeding revenue, owner and customer expectations. "Our intention with the laundry was that it sustain itself," said Lindemann, who is more focused on fulfilling a community need than making loads of money. And it does. Business revenues easily cover the cost of loan payments, taxes and utilities – promising a quick return on investment and more opportunities for giving back.

To discover more about the Express Laundry Center, visit www.lindeslaserwash.com and click on Berlin Express Laundry.

To discover more about Continental laundry equipment, visit www.continentalgirbau.com, or call 800-256-1073.