

Insider Info

Industrial Laundry Solutions
with Brennan Pollnow



PPOH What it is & How to Maximize it

Pounds Per Operator Hour, or PPOH is a critical benchmarking measurement that shows the average laundry pounds processed by a single employee in an hour. It's likely the most important efficiency metric used by laundry operations. This is because a laundry's greatest cost savings is always gleaned from reducing the labor hours used to deliver the product. So I urge you, if you haven't already, to calculate your laundry's PPOH. Then, look for ways to maximize it.

Maximizing PPOH

There are many things you can do to maximize PPOH, including the improvement of equipment, programming, workflow, employee training and automation, among others. But, you've got to determine where you are before you determine where you want to be. Read on for some suggestions ...

Step 1: Find out where you stand

Calculate your laundry's PPOH. Take laundry volume in pounds and divide by labor hours required to perform the work. Divide the resulting number by the total number of people required to produce the product. It might be beneficial to break your laundry out and calculate PPOH by sections — wash/dry line, ironing line, folding and stacking, etc. Then, calculate total PPOH for everything.

Step 2: Make sure your equipment programs are effective

Do an audit with your chemical provider to ensure your laundry uses the correct wash programs to produce your product. Do the same for other equipment — dryers, ironers, folders — with help from your equipment distributor. Make any necessary changes.

Step 3: Ensure operators are using equipment correctly

Reach out to your equipment distributor and ask them to validate that operators are properly using equipment to maximize production. Retrain operators if needed.

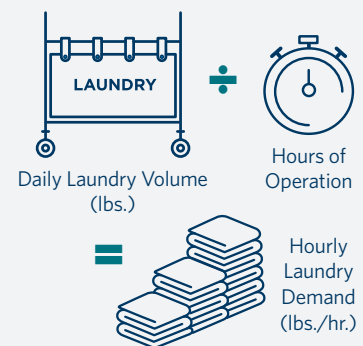
Step 4: Benchmark again

After you've made cycle, programming and equipment operation changes, calculate your PPOH again. How did it improve? In general, if you are evaluating only the wash/dry/hand-folding line, a good benchmark is around 100 PPOH.

Step 5: Consider adding automation

Now determine how PPOH might be improved by adding automation. An investment in just one piece of equipment can dramatically improve a laundry's overall PPOH and product quality. In your PPOH audit you realized that the finishing area — folding and stacking — results in your lowest PPOH. Those are the areas I would focus on first. Sheets and towels are finished in a couple different ways. Towels are washed and dried, then folded. Sheets are washed, then typically ironed without ever seeing the dryer. The next sections will show how automation can impact finishing these two item types, and simultaneously, maximize PPOH.

Calculating PPOH



Towel Folder

The most compelling reasons to move from hand folding to an automatic folder is improved production, enhanced quality and labor efficiencies. Laundries processing 250-500+ laundry pounds per hour should consider adding a towel folder. Generally, a typical laundry operator can sort, fold and stack different-sized towels by hand at a rate of 120 pieces per hour. By adding an automatic towel folder, a laundry can sort, fold and stack up to 680+ different-sized pieces per hour, with just one operator.



All-in-One Ironer

When a laundry gets above 180 washing pounds per hour, consider a machine that automatically feeds, irons, folds and stacks to process sheets. Large piece folding automation eliminates almost all hands-on folding and stacking. When compared to hand finishing, a person can consistently fold about 60 sheets per hour. Introduce automation and that same person can iron, fold and stack close to 150 sheets per hour.



Notes: PPOH represented is based on individual machine production.

Step 6: Calculate PPOH again

You've done your due diligence, tweaked wash cycles, equipment programs, retrained operators when needed, and installed automation. That means it's time to calculate your laundry's total PPOH again. How has that number improved and how does it compare to where you started?

Step 7: Establish your functional benchmark

Now, determine if your recently calculated PPOH is a functional goal for your operation. If your answer is yes, you've just established your benchmark PPOH — the number from which you'll continually work to improve in coming months and years.



Brennan Pollnow, North American business manager for Girbau Industrial, assists commercial and industrial laundries with laundry room design and workflow, proper equipment mix and sizing, as well as automation and efficiency recommendations. He interfaces closely with local distributors and customers to ensure seamless communication, installation and startup. Please contact him with any questions at bpollnow@cgilaundry.com or call 800-256-1073.