

Insider Info

Textile Care Solutions
with Jeff Quail



The Value of a Good Distributor

As the owner of a dry cleaning business, you want to be as certain as possible that your money and efforts result in a successful, profitable outcome. As you look to develop, improve or purchase a dry cleaning plant, there are multiple critical factors to consider that will ultimately shape your business' success. Nobody understands those factors — site selection, plant layout, work flow, equipment mix, financing, services and design — more than your local distributor.

As textile care experts who know the markets they serve, distributors can and should become lifetime business partners who've got your back — and provide ongoing services — before, during and after the equipment sale.

Do your research, interview distributors in your market and make sure the distributor you select checks all the boxes.

Location Selection & Estimating Sales Volume

Early on, your distributor works closely with you to evaluate any potential sites for your new plant by analyzing competition, traffic flow, visibility and demographics. Distributors understand their local markets well and will be able to tell you if the above factors are favorable for success. Once a site looks solid, your distributor should then estimate your plant's sales potential by applying value to your demographic data, competition, equipment mix and utility costs. This tells you whether or not you move forward with that location.

Equipment Mix, Utilities, Services, Workflow & Design

Once the location is a go, your distributor works to conceptualize your plant's equipment mix, utilities, design and workflow. Whether you're developing a new plant, or revitalizing an old one, a good distributor will take you through equipment sizes, types and performance levels, while factoring in criteria like efficiency, accessibility, productivity and programmability. Together, if your business model calls for it, you'll plan space for additional services/revenue streams, including commercial and residential laundry services and pickup and delivery. Finally, your distributor should provide detailed line drawings of the plant.

Cashflow Summary & Financing

At this step, good distributors can take all this data and generate a cashflow summary. This overviews a new plant's capital outlay, return on investment, income, losses, expenses, and more. This summary is essential to securing favorable financing.



Plant Buildout

Once financing is approved, you and your distributor will typically engage an architect and a general contractor to perform necessary plans, process for permits and buildout your space. The GC coordinates subcontractors and your distributor provides equipment and ancillary items.

Training

Once the equipment is in place, a good distributor will provide training on maintaining, operating and programming machines, serving customers and providing services such as residential and commercial wash/dry/fold. Some distributors offer hands-on training, as well as preventative maintenance schedules and service contracts.

After the Sale Services

Of course, a quality distributor also delivers after-sale services including preventative maintenance, technical repairs and replacement parts. Finally, your distributor business partner should always be looking for ways to help improve your business' profits — even 2, 5, 10 and 15 years down the road!



Jeff Quail is a fabricare, dry cleaning and wet cleaning expert with more than 30 years of hands-on industry operations experience. He is a frequent contributor to industry journals and associations.