

Insider Info

Vended Laundry Solutions
with Tod Sorensen



Boost Efficiency & Profits with 'Makes Sense' Programming

Most laundry owners don't look extensively into washer programming. Perhaps they should. While many washer brands offer controls allowing for various levels of programmability, some laundry operators default to factory settings. In doing so, they might miss out on opportunities to cut utility costs, generate additional revenue and fuel store profits.

In this column, I delve into how washer programmability can work to benefit a laundry's bottom line.

Understand the Control

The first step in programming is to understand your washer control and its capabilities. Check out the manufacturer's website for programming tutorials and brochures; talk with your equipment distributor to sort through programming questions; understand your alternative payment system's offerings; and find out if an upgrade kit is available for your control. A simple-to-install upgrade kit will offer more functionality at a fraction of the cost of a new washer. At the end of the day, owners can make needed program tweaks to boost efficiency and profits, without sacrificing wash quality.

Integrated Networking

Most washer controls integrate networking, remote programming and payment-system interface to make quick programming possible. Owners can program washers directly from the keypad, or in combination with an alternative payment/management system using a computer, tablet or cell phone. It's easy and effective.

Capabilities

A highly flexible washer control will allow programmability at the smallest levels. For instance, a quality control will allow owners to configure pricing and specials, run reports, monitor revenue and schedule routine maintenance flushes; adjust water levels, mechanical action, cycle times, extract speeds and water temperatures by degree; and add or delete baths, rinses and spins; among others. These controls sometimes offer multi-level vend pricing on the same machine depending on the wash program selected, time of day, or day of the week. Such flexibility allows owners to tweak programs to meet the needs of a given demographic, lower utility usage and costs, and heighten revenue and profits.

Individually Modifiable Programs

Generally, a washer control offers several programs, which can be individually modified, including Hot, Cold, Warm, etc. Think about adjusting the following parameters within each option:





Wash Temperature

Turning cold water to hot water is extremely energy-intensive. Heated water accounts for about 90 percent of the energy needed to run a washer, according to Energy Star. Plus, many garment manufacturers don't recommend washing in high temperatures and retail detergents have been modified accordingly. Default temperatures are approximately 104°F for Hot and 86°F for Warm cycles. Dial those down a few increments for utility cost savings that will add up.



Extract Speed

During extract, washers spin at a specific force to remove moisture from laundry. Higher extract speeds remove more moisture, which in turn, shortens drying time and dramatically extends linen life. When dry time decreases, so does resulting natural gas usage and costs. Some high-speed washers generate 400 plus G-force. Ensure washers are set for their max G-force output. Customers will enjoy the quicker dry, you'll improve customer turnover, and dryers will last longer because they operate less often. By increasing extract speeds, you'll boost profits, while speeding customers through your laundry.



Program Time

This is the time it takes to complete a program, such as Hot, Warm, Cold and SuperWash. Longer program times consume more energy and create higher utility costs. They also contribute to bottlenecks at the washer during busy laundry periods. The default settings for program time are generally elevated. Lower wash, rinse and spin time by seconds or minutes to serve more paying customers per day and, simultaneously, use less energy.



Number of Rinses

Some programs offer up to four rinses. Evaluate the programs and decide if it's possible to produce quality results with fewer rinses. Eliminating one rinse on a 30-pound capacity washer can save up to 6-8 gallons per fill. Over the course of a year, at three turns per day, this saves up to 8,760 gallons. Imagine the water and dollars saved for an entire laundry.



Bath Level

The water level of each bath (prewash, wash or rinse) can also be adjusted for significant savings in water costs. Continental's ProfitPlus® Control, for example, offers five levels, from 0 "without water" to 4 "extra-high level." A slightly lower water level will likely produce the quality results customers expect, at a lower cost.



Automatic Detergent Dosing

A few washers on the market allow for automatic dosing of detergents, bleach and softeners. There's high profit potential in offering this convenience to customers. Automatic dosing can be programmed into compatible washers. For more information, contact your equipment distributor.



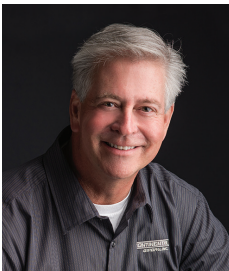
Vend Price

Of course, each program can be assigned a vend price depending on the utilities consumed and customer demand. For example, an owner might charge more for the Hot and Warm cycles. Some controls also allow time-of-day and day-of-week pricing. This allows the automatic modification of the programs during busy and slow periods based on a calendar or promotion. Smart vend pricing can help laundries draw customers and offset energy costs. Similar to the car wash industry some laundry owners are choosing to raise prices during busy periods and offer standard pricing during non-peak periods.

Modifiable Extras

Occasionally, washers go beyond the normal program options of Hot, Warm and Cold by offering an "extra" wash, rinse or spin. While the "extras" come preprogrammed with factory default settings, owners can tweak those variables to further conserve utilities and improve profits. In doing so, they can adjust water levels and temperatures, wash/rinse/extract times, extract speeds and vend prices. And, each time a customer selects an "extra," the vend is a bit more for that load. Extras can significantly contribute to greater revenue per turn and improved store profits.

At the end of the day, it's important that any program tweaks make sense. Evaluate how each change might impact your customer, as well as your laundry's bottom line.



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