

Insider Info

Vended Laundry Solutions
with Tod Sorensen



Small Upgrades with Impact

Don't wait to elevate your laundry until it's time for a complete retool. Think about how you can make little upgrades along the way. Why? Because small improvements in technology and offerings can make a big difference in how well you attract and retain customers. Always be on the lookout for ways to differentiate your laundry, improve processes and boost revenue. In this column, I've detailed some smaller laundry upgrades with big impact.

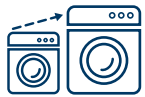
Family Read, Play & Learn Space



Consider adding a Family Read, Play & Learn Space (RPL) in your laundry to help improve childhood literacy. While you might not get immediate rewards, your customers will thank you, and hopefully, choose your store over others because of it. RPLs are available via laundrycares.org and designed to create safe, fun and engaging places for children and families in laundromats. "Family Read, Play & Learn" spaces come in a variety of sizes and can be ordered as kits to fit your needs and budget. They feature literacy-rich materials to support children's early brain and language development. Russ Arbuckle added an RPL to one of his two Tuscaloosa, Ala., Express Laundry Centers. "It's a huge hit with the kids and allows parents to get laundry done while their children enjoy a place of their own," he said. "We encourage them to take a book home, and for some, it's the only book they own. The impact on community is huge. I think it's positively impacted business, but the purpose was to create space for kids and get them interested in reading and improving their academic skills."



A Big Washer



If you don't have a 90- or 130-pound capacity washer in your laundry, get one! Better yet, get two! No floor space? Consider removing two smaller machines to make room. It's worth it. An extra-large capacity washer helps your store stand apart from competitors. Plus, large-capacity washers are otherwise not accessible to homeowners and renters. Additionally, if you offer drop-off laundry or process any volume of commercial laundry consider large-capacity washers that have the programmability to switch from a vended control to an on-premise laundry (OPL) control offering hotter water temperatures, multiple bath exchanges and automatic chemical injection. If you pick the right washer, it can transition quickly from vended to OPL and OPL to vended. In my experience, the 90s and 130s bring big revenue to vended laundries, and more often than not, are used by customers more than any other



machine on the floor. "Customer demand is the ultimate reason for the big machines," said multi-store owner Nick DiLiberio, of Neptune Laundromat, in Revere, Mass. "My first store had 75s and people fought over who was next in line to use them," he said. "Within two months I ordered a third one." Over time, DiLiberio has gone even larger, replacing most of his 75s with 90s. The newest Neptune Laundromat features six 90s and two 130s.

Automatic Chemical Injection



While not all vended washers have the capability to automatically inject detergents, softeners and disinfectants, some do, including Continental Girbau washers. If your washers have this capability, then consider activating this feature, especially on your larger machines. There are new chemical injection products on the market designed specifically for vended laundries that automatically dispense specially formulated detergents, brighteners, softeners and disinfectants into compatible washers. One is called Express Clean. "Express Clean eliminates the hassles of lugging and loading your own detergents and prevents spills and messy machines," added DiLibero. "People come from miles away to use the big machines with automatic detergent injection," he said. "That's why we get eight turns a day from them."

Upgrade Washer Controls



Some equipment manufacturers offer control upgrades on their washers. The upgrade kits are inexpensive, easy to install and allow storeowners to offer "extra" cycles that add to overall vend price. Continental, for example, offers the ProfitPlus® Control. It's standard on all new Continental vended washers and it's available as a retrofit kit for most older model Continental washers. It offers four primary cycle options, plus allows the customer to add an EXTRA WASH, EXTRA RINSE/SANITIZE and/or EXTRA SPIN. Each time customers choose an "extra," the vend price goes up - contributing to increased revenue. It's a win-win. Customers enjoy having more control over how their laundry is washed, while owners enjoy the additional revenue that comes with every "extra" customers choose.

Ozone Sanitization



Store owners have seen a dramatic increase in business from adding ozone sanitization. It works with a washer's automatic chemical injection capability to introduce ozone gas into the wash cycle. It naturally eliminates nearly all viruses, molds and bacteria from laundry. Sanitization is something customers can't get at home (without bleach), at their apartment's central laundry, or at other vended laundries. It's also a differentiator if you offer drop-off wash/dry/fold service. Add it to an entire laundry, or just to a couple of machines. "The sanitization makes the store smell fresh and clean," said Jeb Belise, of Love Your Laundry, in Hyannis, Mass. "Customers get educated in our store and it's a happy surprise and value point of sale that locks them in. Retention is really strong."

Point-of-Sale System (POS)



If you haven't invested in a quality POS system for managing your wash/dry/fold business, you might seriously consider it. It will likely allow you to significantly grow your business, while ensuring accuracy and streamlining management hours. A good POS manages wash/dry/fold from beginning to end; allows customers to schedule, track and monitor orders online, allows owners to view and print revenue reports; and sometimes includes a website or marketing assistance. Plus, some are available to owners for a monthly fee - making it easier to budget. When searching for a POS, make sure you get references and that services include initial staff training, as well as ongoing training and updates.



Tod Sorensen is a regional business manager at Girbau North America and vice president of Continental Girbau West, a full-service distributorship serving the Southern California vended, on-premise and industrial laundry markets. He holds more than 20 years of experience in vended laundry development and market analysis. Please contact him with any questions at tsorensen@gnalaundry.com or call 866-950-2449.