

Royalty Cleaners Launches Residential Flatwork Business

Ironing Automation Key to Success



By Haley Jorgensen

John Harris, owner of Royalty Cleaners, in Royal Oak, Mich., recently launched revenue and profits thanks to a single piece of equipment — a Poseidon 20-inch Flatwork Ironer. Since investing in the ironer, the residential bed and table linen business has become Royalty Cleaners' most profitable revenue stream. Even better? The ironer's return on investment was less than a year.

"In the past, we pressed sheets by hand using a hot-head utility press, just like everyone else," said Harris. "But, it took 5 to 15 minutes to finish one sheet and 20 minutes to press a duvet."

That process was so time-consuming, Harris ended up subcontracting the work out. But the resulting cost — \$1,400-\$4,000 per month — gouged profits.

Installation of Poseidon Ironer

That changed when Harris reached out to Michael Szcotka "Stucky," of Eagle Star Equipment, in Troy, Mich. Eagle Star Equipment provides commercial laundry and dry cleaning solutions to an array of businesses, including Royalty Cleaners.

"I explained that a new flatwork ironer would solve a lot of his problems, likely pay for itself in a year, improve the quality of their end product, and open doors to considerably more flatwork business," said Stucky.

"I bought the machine," said Harris, "and now we're jam-packed busy doing sheets." That's a good thing, especially since the other sectors of his business were hit hard by the pandemic. While shirt laundry and dry cleaning demand declined, residential flatwork demand soared. People wanted clean, sanitized and perfectly finished bed and table linens. And, according to Harris, they were willing to pay a premium price for the service.

How the Poseidon Ironer Works

The Poseidon Ironer is simple to run, said Harris. Using two operators, it automatically dries, irons and partially folds sheets, pillowcases, duvets, tablecloths and napkins. Situated in a small, 200-square-foot area, it processes linens straight from the washer while they're still damp. Because linens by-pass the tumbling action of the dryer, they experience less linen loss. Meanwhile,

Royalty Cleaners saves on natural gas costs to operate the dryers, while simultaneously improving production. "Now it only takes 20 seconds to iron and fold a king sheet or duvet straight out of the washer," said Harris. "It's a game-changer for our business."

Residential Flatwork Generates More Profit

And it's profitable. Royalty Cleaners charges \$14 for an ironed sheet, compared with \$3.50 for a laundered and pressed dress shirt that demands significantly more labor time. Doing the math, there's no comparison. "I ran the numbers yesterday and our residential flatwork revenue has grown to make up 20-25 percent of total revenue," he said. "It's the most profitable segment of my business and it just keeps growing."



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