

Lyons Cleaners Boosts Productivity and Embraces Wetcleaning with Programmable Soft-mount Washers

By Jordan Lander

When Joel Lyons, president of Lyons Cleaners in Memphis, Tenn., decided to test his entrepreneurship skills in the laundry industry eight years ago, he had no idea his business would grow into a one-stop-shop providing drycleaning, wetcleaning and restoration work. Today, Lyons Cleaners handles thousands of pounds of laundry each week, servicing customers across Tennessee, Arkansas and Mississippi. The key to the company's success is its effective equipment mix and the addition of soft-mount, highly programmable wetcleaning machines. By replacing his hard-mount washers with Continental high-efficiency soft-mount washers, Lyons Cleaners tripled laundry productivity using less energy and utilities. Today, 75 percent of business is wetcleaned, including restoration work on items like wedding dresses, shoes, purses and stuffed animals.

From Drycleaning to Wetcleaning

Lyons broke into the laundry industry eight years ago by running a simple wash-dry-and-fold business from a four-bedroom home using one top-load washer and one dryer. Business at Lyons Cleaners grew quickly, mandating new facilities. The company is located today in an 11,500-square-foot warehouse that handles restoration, wetcleaning and drycleaning. Another 4,000-square-foot plant is just for drycleaning. The warehouse serves as the center for restoration work, where thousands of pounds of items exposed to smoke, mold and water—window treatments, purses, shoes, luggage, stuffed animals, wedding



Lyons Cleaners, in Memphis, Tenn., handles thousands of pounds of laundry weekly. The operation encompasses wetcleaning, restoration work and drycleaning.

gowns and more—are restored and cleaned each week. The drycleaning plant handles over-the-counter work for hotel guest laundries and employee uniforms, and staff uniforms for the Memphis Grizzlies NBA team.

Lyons asserts the monumental growth of his business would not have been possible without replacing his hard-mount washers with soft-mount washer-extractors, two years ago. The change in equipment tripled productivity and resulting profits. “The old equipment was extremely antiquated and inefficient,” he explains. “The hard-mounts were only operat-

ing at 70-150 G-force, removing very little water. We had to remove each load

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from the washer and place it in a separate Bock hydro extractor before we could dry it, costing us severely in time and energy.”

Russ Arbuckle of Wholesale Commercial Laundry Equipment in Southside, Ala., introduced Lyons to Continental soft-mount washers, and after purchasing a 30-pound Continental Pro-Series Soft-Mount Washer-Extractor, he became addicted. Ultimately, Lyons purchased one 30-pound and three 55-pound capacity Pro-Series washers, one 50-pound capacity L-Series Hard-Mount Washer-Extractor and three 80-pound drying tumblers.

Boosting Productivity and Slashing Utilities with Soft-Mount Washers

“With our Continental equipment, our productivity has increased immensely,”



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Lyons says. “We tripled our capacity and the soft-mount machines’ 380 G-force extract removes far more water than the hard-mount machines. This eliminates the tedious step of using a separate extractor. We slashed the time it takes to complete a load in half, and then some.” The change in equipment also secured Lyons place in the wetcleaning market.

By decreasing the amount of time and energy used by an additional extractor, Lyons also slashed utilities. The Pro-Series’ no-sump design saves money on each fill by reducing water and sewer volume. Also, because more water is removed due to higher extract speeds, resulting dry-time is also reduced—decreasing gas consumption. “Our overall cost of utilities now is the same as it was with the old equipment, except we run three times as many loads within the same timeframe,” he says. “Our productivity is superb. We are not waiting around for the clothes to finish the wash cycle so we can put them in the dryer.”

Easy Installation

Not only has the soft-mount equipment boosted productivity, it also provides flexibility for relocation, according to Lyons. Hard-mount machines must be bolted to a concrete foundation. The bolt-free installation of soft-mount machines reduces time, cost and construction requirements—an appealing quality for a growing business.

“We are actually in the market for expanding right now. We are looking to move to a 20,000 to 30,000-square-foot facility,” says Lyons. “Having soft-mounts means we have the capacity and flexibility to consolidate both our restoration work and drycleaners under one roof. It is beneficial because we don’t have to worry about repouring concrete, unbolting, and all of the other hassles associated with hard-mount machines.”

Unmatched Programmability

The soft-mount washers also feature Continental’s Premier Microprocessor (PM) Control, offering advanced, yet easy-to-use programmability, according to Arbuckle. This is a very important feature for the success of Lyons’ business.

“In restoring items, we need to be able to tweak the programming of the machines perfectly,” says Lyons. “It’s important to understand that laundry is a science, not just washing clothes. You need to regulate temperature, mechanical action, time and many other elements of the wash so you can control what the machines are doing. The Continental products give you that flexibility to manipulate the machines and do

everything from wetcleaning to restoration to regular loads of laundry.”

Lyons uses 30-50 different programs to ensure items are washed precisely every time. “The washers are programmed for each unique material type,” says Lyons. “We have programs for khakis, fragile items, wool, polyester and anything else you can think of for our restoration work. We also have programs for items like cotton, jeans and dress shirts for our drycleaning business. Each material requires a certain mechanical action, temperature and chemical injection. The ongoing

chemical advancements of the detergents injected into the washers at different phases of the wash cycles are helpful in removing stubborn stains and odors.”

Advantages of Wetcleaning

The wetcleaning process using Continental soft-mount washers is so effective at removing stains and odors, it has become the preferred method for cleaning at Lyons.

“Many people don’t know the benefits of wetcleaning, but we’re really tapping into that market. We dryclean only 25 percent of our customer’s laundry and wetclean 75 percent,” he says. “Wetcleaning does a better job of removing heavy odor and stains than drycleaning because most stains are water-soluble. Most heavy stains need mechanical action and the flexibility of a programmable machine to manipulate factors such as wash time and temperature.” Moreover, wetcleaning, attests Lyons, is a better alternative than drycleaning because it doesn’t involve releasing as many toxic chemicals, making it safer for the environment, and costs less. “Wetcleaning allows the flexibility to manipulate the chemistry of the wash cycles to improve efficiency and cut utilities, making us more profitable,” he says.

Lyons says purchasing the Continental Pro-Series soft-mount washer extractors has been one of the best decisions for his growing business. ▀

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New Continental soft-mount washer-extractors have successfully tripled Lyons Cleaners’ wetcleaning capacity, dramatically cut dry-time and improved productivity.