

Soft-mount Washers Boost Rental Company's Production and Savings



Mats for You President Rodney Rixey stands next to his new line of five 90-pound capacity Continental soft-mount washer-extractors. The soft-mount washers cut dry time from 28 minutes to 16 minutes per load—a 43.9 percent savings.

By Jordan Lander

At Mats for You, a 15-year-old textile rental company in Midlothian, Va., the addition of five 90-pound capacity soft-mount washers significantly reduced utilities and boosted laundry productivity. For a company that processes an average of 30,000 pounds of laundry per week, success in the laundry room means success for the business. Mats for You learned first-hand how the simple switch from hard-mount to soft-mount washers rendered significant improvements in their laundry process and profits.

The Growth of a Company

Mats for You provides mops, aprons, linens, kitchen towels, napkins and entrance mats to businesses such as convenience stores, medical facilities, retail stores and high-end restaurants. When the company started in 1992, the business operated out of a garage, according to President Rodney Rixey. "My partner and I would take the laundry to a local drycleaner and then bring it back to the garage to fold," he says. After six months, the business was large enough to relocate to a 9,000-square-foot warehouse and handle its own laundry. Since its founding, Mats for You has tripled business.

"When Mats for You first decided to do laundry on-premise over sending it out, they were operating with all used, hard-mount washers," says Bob Hessler, regional manager for Commercial Laundry Equipment, a laundry equipment distributor in Richmond, Va. Mats for You relied on two 85-pound washers, three 100-pound washers, and one 125-pound washer, all hard-mounts. As business surged, it was clear the equipment fell short. "The used equipment was good enough to get the business going," says Hessler, "but they really needed something new to improve productivity."



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A Switch to Soft-Mount Equals Hassle-Free Installation

That's why in 2002, the management began substituting the used hard-mount washers with 90-pound Continental Pro-Series soft-mount washer-extractors. Today, the on-premise laundry features five of the soft-mount, high-speed extract washers for improved productivity. The soft-mount design of the Pro-Series machines was a welcomed change from the hard-mount design of the previous washers, according to Rixey. "Soft-mount machines can be installed on almost any floor and easily relocated. For the hard-mount washers, you need to bolt the machine into 18 inches of concrete or it will bust loose," he says. In turn, Rixey avoided costs associated with pouring additional concrete or digging up the existing floor. Installation was hassle-free and if the washers need to be moved in the future, relocating them would be a breeze, according to Rixey.

High-Speed Extract Reduces Dry Time and Utilities

But, the new washers' freestanding design wasn't the only plus. Rixey maintains that the most notable benefit of

switching to Pro-Series comes from the high-speed extract. "Pro-Series spin faster than hard-mount washers, which means they extract more water," he says. Because Pro-Series washers reach up to 387 G-force, less time is needed in the dryer.

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"We have cut our dry-time from 28 minutes to 16 minutes a load—a 43.9 percent savings," says Rixey. Less time in the dryer also means savings in utilities. "Even as our number of clients increases by about 10 each year, thanks to our new washers, our natural gas consumption has stayed the same," says Rixey. The combination of high-speed extract and reduced dry-time amplifies productivity, and less labor is required to finish the laundry. "Of our 15 employees, we only need one handling all of our laundry," Rixey says.

Features Enhance Ease of Use

The design and programmability of Pro-Series make the machines easy for virtually anyone to use, he maintains. The washers are equipped with a microprocessor control that allows for the adjustment of wash and rinse temperatures, water level and three pre-programmed rotation options. "We use a lot of different pro-

grams," says Rixey. "We have special programs for all types of materials, such as colored items, mops and delicate items." The machines have five automatic chemical injection connections that dispense just the right quantity of liquid chemicals at the appropriate water temperature, level and cycle, Rixey adds. This ensures a consistently clean wash every time, which is key for undertaking the multiple types of items Mats for You handles.

Quality Equipment for a Quality Business

As the equipment mix modifies with the success of the business, Mats for You's high-quality service remains constant, according to Hessler. "Even with its growth, it is still a business that will focus on quality personal service," he says. "Mats for You will personally deliver linens to clients if asked to."

Rixey agrees. "Our company has grown to 315 customers, but we still focus on small businesses," he says. "Our competitors, who tend to go after large chains, are excluding the small operations. I've found that delivering quality service to these neglected companies is our niche."

With a successful business that shows promise to progress its growth, Mats for You plans to continue upgrading its laundry equipment. "The goal for the company is to have an entire wash line of soft-mount washer-extractors," says Hessler. ▀



The Pro-Series Continental washer-extractors feature a soft-mount design and reach extract speeds of up to 387 G-force.