

Pieces Per Hour: The curse of true quality cleaning



130 years ago Frederick Taylor introduced the business world to the concept of Scientific Management.

Scientific Management is the idea that factories would measure precisely what their workers were doing. Use a stopwatch. Watch every movement. Adjust the movements until productivity goes up. Re-organize the assembly line for more efficiency. Pay workers by the piece. Get rid of the people who can't keep up. Make the assembly line go faster.

About 120 years later, dry cleaners woke up to the "productivity implications" of Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management principles.

So they started gluing or heat sealing **bar codes** onto all their garments and household textiles. And they justified their actions by telling you that bar codes will enable them to "better track your garments and household textiles through their production system."

Truth is, few dry cleaners invest in these technologies **solely** to "better track your garments and household textiles through their production system."

Instead, **they do it because there's a greater economic payoff.**

And that payoff comes from implementing Frederick Taylor's 130 year old idea.

Only now it's not called Scientific Management.

It's called Pieces Per Hour.

Pieces Per Hour is the lifeblood of value and ordinary cleaners

If there's one statistic that value cleaners (discount cleaners) and ordinary cleaners (middle market cleaners) love to track it's pieces per hour (PPH).

At it's most basic, PPH is the number of garments (or pieces) a presser can bang out on a press in one hour.

Value cleaners and ordinary cleaners typically track PPH by the hour, by the day and by the week.

Here's an example:

A value or ordinary may have a "standard" of 37 pants per presser per hour - irrespective of whether they are wools, silks, cottons or linens, lined or unlined, ceases or no creases, pleated or unpleated, cuffs or no cuffs. And a standard of 23 non-pant garments per presser per hour - again, irrespective of whether they are wool sweaters, silk ties, cotton blouses or linen blazers.

That means that every minute of the day those pressers (actually piece workers) are under the gun to achieve the minimum PPH - a situation reminiscent of the sweat shops of old.

If they consistently meet or exceed those minimum standards, **they're hailed as heroes.**

If they consistently fail to meet or exceed those minimum standards, **they're out the door** - even if they're talented pressers, even if they can hand

iron a white cotton blouse with a large collar and extensive ruffles to perfection.

(BTW, if you're a talented presser who can hand iron a white cotton blouse with a large collar and extensive ruffles to perfection, please call us. We'll **create** an immediate opening for you, even if we're not actively looking for another presser).

The key to tracking PPH are those heat sealed or glued on bar codes that value cleaners and ordinary cleaners attach to every garment and household textile they process and bar code scanners that are mounted above each press.

As soon as the presser "completes" a garment (irrespective of the quality of that finish), that piece is scanned and recorded.

Now, if you think that the concept of PPH is limited to value cleaners and ordinary cleaners only, you'd be mistaken.

Pieces Per Hour should be an anathema to extraordinary cleaners

At RAVE FabriCARE, the mere mention of PPH sends chills down our back.

PPH is the domain of value cleaners (discount cleaners) and ordinary cleaners (middle market cleaners). There are even a number of wannabe, high-end cleaners, some of whom bill themselves as "couture care specialists", who are fanatical converts to the PPH religion.

One more important point: if a cleaner tracks PPH, you can rest assured that the pressers **are being paid by the piece** — sweat shop style. The higher their PPH, the more a presser earns; the lower their PPH, the less a presser earns.

It's axiomatic that pressers will give you what gets measured, particularly if their wage - and their job - depends on meeting or exceeding PPH.

In other words, if you measure and pay for PPH, **what you'll get is quantity and mediocrity.**

Damn the dry cleaning standards (if they even exist). Damn the shirt laundry standards (if they

even exist). Damn the client's fine garments. Just move 'em out the door as quickly as possible.

Bottom line: If you employ talented pressers, treat them well and compensate them well, you'll get **quality**.

If you measure and pay for PPH, you'll get **quantity and mediocrity**.

It's just that simple. And that complicated.

At RAVE FabriCARE, our attitude towards PPH is completely different: **We believe that PPH kills true quality.**

Fact is, we wouldn't waste one minute of time debating the merits of PPH, let alone one minute implementing such a system.

We'd sooner lock the doors, throw away the keys and move to the Coast.



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RAVE FabriCARE, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, cares for fine garments, household textiles and accessories and serves clients in the USA and Canada and in other selected countries throughout the world. Stu is the author of various Position Papers, White Papers and Ebooks on these subjects, all of which are available from ravefabricare/downloads/free-stuff. He is an evangelist for true quality cleaning and is a contributor to and editor of True Quality Cleaning, RAVE FabriCARE's blog.



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