

“In the cutthroat world of business, it is so rare that you meet people who are committed to an honest approach,” wrote satisfied buyer Andrew Briller, of Andrew Howard Dry Cleaners & Tailors in Syosset, New York. “I will continue to recommend, to anyone interested in purchasing or building a drycleaning plant, to consult with [Dry Cleaning Plus] first.”

Industry Innovators

By Ian P. Murphy, Special to *Fabricare*

The drycleaning industry in America has never been driven by just one company or just one operator—widespread innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit keep it going. But inside this highly individualistic industry, many companies stand out as forces that have contributed greatly to drycleaning, through all of its changes and challenges, in the past, present and future. These are just a few of the companies that evolved alongside the industry and helped it survive and thrive along the way. These are Industry Innovators.

DRY CLEANING PLUS: The Art of the Deal

Richard and Judith Stone established Dry Cleaning Plus in 1989 to help drycleaning operators run their businesses better and ease the transition when it's time to sell out and move on. The business matchmaker and consultant has served hundreds of drycleaning operations from Maine to Florida, matching buyers and sellers to keep the industry vibrant and vital.

Cutting deals in 15 states and Costa Rica, no other firm has sold more drycleaning plants and stores on the East Coast. Working with professionals in the legal, environmental and accounting fields, Dry Cleaning Plus always ensures a smooth transaction and transition.

Dry Cleaning Plus goes beyond the listing to permit buyers' and sellers' personal goals guide the deal, offering ideas on enhancing the business before and after the sale, and crafting terms to satisfy all parties. After discussing the possibility of a sale with the Stones, a few potential sellers regained their enthusiasm for the business and stayed in it.

Also active in marketing and advertising, Dry Cleaning Plus offers a direct-mail option called the Plus Pac, and designs logos and advertising materials for industry suppliers. The Stones offer public relations, product evaluations, and promotional products, helping clients win attention for their business.

Before becoming business brokers, the Stones owned and operated drycleaning plants, stores, and routes serving an upscale market. Richard Stone previously worked in advertising and public relations and equipment sales, designing and building numerous stores in and around New York City. Judith Stone is a former manager of high-volume drycleaning operations, and specializes in efficiency, customer service, and cost structures. As consultants, they can speak to issues involving management, customer service, plant layouts, and cost control.

Dry Cleaning Plus offer sellers services such as sale preparation, appraisals, marketing plans, and exit strategies, screening buyers so no one wastes their time looking at an operation that won't be a good fit. Dry Cleaning Plus can create a plan for any selling circumstance, including partner buyouts, retirements, estates, divorces, and other family situations. Dry Cleaning Plus has worked with major companies such as Anton's, Unilever, and Zoots on acquisition strategies.