

# Ironer Investment Pays Off, Paris Cleaners Bumps Total Revenue Up Eight Percent

By Haley Jorgensen

Paris Cleaners and Laundry, in Kalamazoo, Mich., has realized an eight percent jump in total revenue thanks to a single piece of laundry equipment—a Continental Pro-Series Heated-Roll Flatwork Ironer. Installed in 1997, that ironer became the first of Continental Girbau's comprehensive line of flatwork ironers to be sold in North America.

## The First Ironer Sold

Although the ironers, manufactured by Continental's parent company, Girbau S.A., have benefited industrial and commercial laundries throughout Europe for years, the line hadn't yet been introduced to the North American market. Luckily for Paris Cleaners, 1997 marked the year they finally became available.

A 100-year-old, family-owned business, Paris Cleaners caters to high-income families and business people who take advantage of the company's personal service and attention to detail, according to owners Elaine and Wil Weidenaar.

## The Problem

For years, Paris Cleaners struggled to keep pace with customer requests for ironed table linens and sheets. "It took us forever to do a tablecloth on our old hot-head press," says Wil. "We kept having to move the linens around, re-lay them and press them. The quality wasn't there because even the pressed sections ultimately got wrinkled." The old press was also painstakingly slow, as each tablecloth took up to 15

minutes to iron. "We only ironed linens as a special favor to good customers," adds Elaine. "It was just too time consuming and labor intensive."

Customers who were desperate to avoid ironing linens themselves, however, gladly forked out the \$25 per tablecloth, despite inconsistent results, says Elaine.

The 1997 Clean Show turned things around at Paris Cleaners. It was the first year Continental Girbau made its full line of ironers available to the North American market. Wil and Elaine liked what they saw ...

## The Decision to Invest in a New Ironer

"We bought a Pro-Series Ironer off the showroom floor," says Wil. In doing so, new opportunities opened up for Paris Cleaners. No one in Kalamazoo, other than commercial laundries, offered linen finishing services. "People don't want to take their fine table linens to a commercial laundry," says Wil, "and commercial laundries don't want to mess with individual orders." He knew if he could find the right equipment, he could efficiently cater to a profitable niche market. And that's exactly what he and Elaine did.

"We've only had one tiny maintenance issue with the ironer in seven years," says Wil. "We had to scrape a little carbon off a sensor. It has literally run every time we've wanted it to." And thanks to the ironer's wax-less technology, the hassles associated with wax application and stripping are eliminated.

More than anything, the ironer has

simplified life and boosted business at Paris Cleaners, where operators finish bed and table linens for B&Bs, high-income customers and the occasional

hotel and restaurant. Recently, the company came to the aid of an area hotel by washing and finishing 175 tablecloths in four hours. The hotel's ironer had broken down. "We processed an average of 45 tablecloths per hour," says Will—a far cry from the four per hour processed using the old press.

## Boosting Production & Reducing Labor

Pro-Series Flatwork Ironers make it possible to by-pass dryer conditioning—cutting 20-40 minutes off processing time. Linens are fed straight from the washer to the ironer, according to Will, because the ironer can automatically adjust temperature and ironing speed based on the type of fabric and its moisture content.

"We run a five-minute, high-speed extraction on the washer and then feed the linens straight through the ironer," says Will. "It works excellent and the machine controls the speed."

## Quality Results in One Pass

In doing so, Paris Cleaners has significantly increased ironing production—a key reason Wil and Elaine opted for the Continental. Also critical was achieving a five-star finish. Pro-Series Heated-Roll Ironers use a strap tensioning system to apply 3.5 times more force against fabric than traditional stretch-type ironers, which makes for an even finish in one pass.

"We make sure linens come out perfect," says Elaine. "They are very high quality—much better than high-volume commercial laundries produce."

Since installing its Continental ironer, Paris Cleaners has significantly increased production and revenue. During the holiday season, from October through January, the company processes more than two dozen tablecloths daily, at \$25 each. The result is a \$600 bump to the company's daily revenue on tablecloths alone. Not bad, says Wil, especially since the ironer paid for itself in two years! ▀

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