

## IMPROVING USER EXPERIENCE WITH STORE ENHANCEMENTS



Kathryn Q. Rowen

As an equipment distributor with almost a decade of experience in the laundry industry, John D. (J.D.) Dixon, president of Nashville-based National Laundry Equipment, has seen his fair share of vended laundries.

After years of identifying and following trends, and helping his customers give their stores a face lift, Dixon put his experience to a personal test in 2014 when designing his own Laundromat.

Does a thoughtfully designed, well-organized, aesthetically pleasing store actually make a difference in customer experience?

He purchased an existing, run-down store in Dickson, Tenn., incorporated his own design ideas, and found out for himself.

### A CLEAR VISION

“The worst thing a store owner can do is to have ‘just another Laundromat’ that gets lost among the competition,” says Dixon. “Signage, aesthetics, colors, equipment—these are all things to think about when creating a Laundromat’s unique brand to ultimately help it stand out.”

No matter how large or small their budget, Dixon urges store owners to envision what their dream store will ultimately look like, and how customers will feel after visiting.

To arrive at this vision, owners should consider each and every individual element that makes up the store.

From the moment they walk in the door to when they leave, each of these elements—from folding tables to the equipment they use to wash and dry their clothes—will contribute to the customer’s experience and perception of the store.

“It’s hard to compete with a store with a clear brand,” Dixon adds. “If all components work together, customers are more likely to remember it and keep coming back.”

With a clear vision for his new Laundromat in mind—a simple, yet elegant, store that gets customers in and out quickly—Dixon transformed the existing 3,600 square feet over 90 days.

He replaced lighting and flooring, painted, and replaced equipment and added machines.

The layout was also improved to provide a more cohesive user experience and “reduce the number of steps a customer must take in the store.”

Additionally, flat-screen televisions were added to continually run a video that provides instructions on how to operate equipment, while modern signage provides additional instructions.

“Everything is automated and designed for maximum efficiency,” Dixon continues.

Another key element of Dixon’s brand was the addition of a credit card system to complement his new equipment’s controls.

This system also incorporates a loyalty card program, giving customers a reason to return by earning points toward discounted washes.

### THE NUMBER ONE CONSIDERATION

No matter how cohesive-looking the space, a Laundromat is only valuable to a customer if its equipment is dependable and delivers the expected result: clean laundry.

Thanks to capabilities that maximize revenue and reduce utility usage, updating a store’s equipment should always be a consideration when undergoing a “laundry-lift,” Dixon says.

He adds that store owners won’t see the return on investment they’re looking for by replacing just one or two machines.

“It’s always beneficial to update equipment, but you have to think large scale. That’s when you’ll see benefits to the bottom line.”

Due to a new offering from his preferred manufacturer, Dixon did not have to sacrifice design or dependability when selecting replacement equipment.

In fact, the new equipment’s aesthetics actually complemented his vision for his store’s look.

“Unlike laundry equipment for the home, which comes in all colors and sheens, equipment for today’s Laundromat is typically generic and lacks flair,” says Dixon.

“Huebsch now offers modern and unique control panel colors and chrome elements that add greater value



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to a store's appearance, and, ultimately, the customer's experience."

Dixon selected "Cityscape," a gray control panel complemented by a splash of vivid green, while a polished chrome door handle and chrome door ring add shine.

"I truly believe if you place a machine with Cityscape and chrome next to a more generic-looking machine, the customer will choose the former. My customers frequently comment on how gorgeous the equipment is—that it's exciting, that it's modern-looking. It has personality."

Just as a home's washer and dryer can add character and serve as an attractive focal point in a laundry room, Dixon says his new

forming a store's brand," he says.

For example, Dixon says replacing older tube lighting with more efficient LED lights is an inexpensive way to draw attention to specific elements of the store.

Store owners can shine lights directly on machine features, or highlight the cleanliness of the space.

"I deliberately shine lighting on the Cityscape control panels and chrome doors. It adds another level of brightness."

Replacing old flooring and ceiling tiles is another way store owners can enhance the overall theme.

For a "warehouse feel," a trend Dixon says has become popular in recent years, he recommends staining concrete rather than



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equipment with Cityscape complements the Laundromat's gray-and-blue color scheme and adds personality.

While seemingly simple, when chosen thoughtfully, paint is one element of a store's brand that can make a big difference at a relatively low cost and set a store apart.

### EXPERT SUPPORT

While Dixon's job as a distributor provides him a wealth of knowledge on equipment and design elements that work well, he says the process for undergoing a remodeling doesn't have to be intimidating to owners with less industry knowledge.

To help focus their design vision, Dixon recommends store owners rely on their equipment manufacturer's design team, equipment distributor or even interior designers.

Additionally, he urges store owners to file and reference ideas from trade publications and other mediums.

Visiting other Laundromats is another good way to see what works well and what doesn't.

"It's easy to notice the positive difference when revamping an entire store, but even small changes can go a long way in trans-

installing traditional vinyl tile that requires constant polishing to maintain its look.

### RETAIL IS DETAIL

Dixon frequently reminds store owners that when honing in on their vision and brand, "retail is detail," and that, ultimately, the real detail to focus on at all times is customer impression.

The little details can add up to the difference between a customer choosing one Laundromat versus another.

"As store owners, we have the ability to speak to customers in many ways—through colors, cleanliness, layout, and equipment," says Dixon. "If every single element is on point and adds value and personality, customers will notice and reward you with their business." **ACO**

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