

Dry cleaner gobbledygook: How to separate the wheat from the chaff



The internet is wash with dry cleaners whose websites spew superlative-laden, jargon-sprinkled gobbledygook.

It's the perfect way to communicate absolutely nothing while appearing to say something.

Here are a few of our favorites:

- We focus on the details.
- We deliver top quality at a competitive price.
- We deliver the quality our customers demand.

Let's examine each of these morsels of gobbledygook in some detail.....

"We focus on the details"

There are over 26,000 cleaners in the USA and over 400 in the metro Phoenix area. And every single one will tell you that they "focus on the details."

Your intuition and experience should tell you that the vast majority of these claims are, at best, nothing more than puffery.

So couple your intuition and experience with this thought: true quality cleaning is not about a few details.

It's about hundreds of details.

And, specifically, it's the **combination of those hundreds of details** that produces true quality dry cleaning and true quality shirt laundry.

The difference between true quality cleaning and ordinary cleaning is akin to the difference between a little black dress by Yves Saint Laurent and a forty nine dollar knockoff by Candie's Creations.

Here's another key point:

How can a cleaner claim that he "focuses on the details" when his entire operation is geared to same or next day service?

How can a cleaner claim that he "focuses on the details" when your garments are in by 9:00 and out by 5:00; or picked up on day 1 and delivered on day 3?

How can a cleaner claim that he "focuses on the details" when he charges \$12.50 or \$17.50 for a two piece suit and \$2.25 or \$3.75 for a laundered shirt?

"We deliver top quality at a competitive price"

Is there's a **strong correlation** between the **quality of the product** your cleaner delivers and the **price they charge** for that product?

You bet there is.

So if your cleaner that tells you that they can **consistently** deliver a **high quality garment at a low or competitive price** they're being disingenuous.

Many would call it bluffing. Others would call it lying.

Just like any other service, there are poor quality cleaners that charge a low price; average quality cleaners that charge an average price; and true quality cleaners that charge a high price.

The problem for you as a consumer of dry cleaning, shirt laundry and related services, is that it's sometimes difficult to assess whether you're paying an **average price** for a **poor quality product** or a high price for an **average quality product**.

That's why it's important to investigate your cleaner's position on the quality-price spectrum.

RAVE FabriCARE, for example, is not a "value-priced" cleaner or a "competitively priced" cleaner. We don't offer discounts, coupons, specials and loyalty programs.

Nor do we offer a 3 tier quality and pricing system, one level of quality and price for your "less fancy" garments, one level of quality and price for your "fancier" garments, and one one level of quality and price for your "most fancy" garments.

To anyone who knows anything about fine garment care, **the entire concept is absurd**.

Why?

Because a 3 tier quality/price system impossible to implement.

Employees get frustrated because they don't understand what quality of the product they need to deliver to different clients. **Clients** get confused about the quality of the product they believe they're paying for. And the **management** has no idea how to allocate their resources to serve clients who have three very different positions along the quality-price spectrum.

At RAVE FabriCARE, we deliver one level of quality: extraordinary care for fine garments, household textiles and accessories. And we price our services accordingly.

As a national and international leader in quality care for fine garments, household textiles and accessories for over 35 years, our prices are set at a level which affords us the opportunity to concentrate **solely on the quality of our work**.

By contrast, the focus of the vast majority of ordinary cleaners can be summed up in two words: **quantity and speed**.

Essentially, this means pushing more and more garments (quantity) faster and faster (speed) through their "production system". They're in by 9:00 and out by 5:00; picked up on day 1 and delivered on day 3.

At ordinary cleaners, production efficiency is the holy grail of their entire operation.

Of course, no ordinary cleaner will admit to this.

Every cleaner will tell you that they produce "top quality at a competitive price" or "exceptional quality at a fair price".

But given their consistently lower price structure it's clear that, despite their claims to the contrary, **the long-term economic viability of their enterprise depends on quantity and speed. Not on the quality of their work**.

Which is fine if you're manufacturing **standardized** widgets. But absolute heresy when you've been entrusted with the custom cleaning and finishing of a client's fine garments, household textiles and accessories.

It's for this reason that we always tell our clients that while it's important to know **what you're paying**, it's even more important to know **what you're paying FOR** - as defined by the "ins" and "outs" and "hows" and "whys" of the processes and craftsmanship that produce the end product.

This begs the question: if you don't have detailed, written information about your cleaner's processes, craftsmanship and product quality standards, how do you know what you're paying for?

At RAVE FabriCARE, setting prices **is the easy part**. Consistently delivering on our commitment to extraordinary care — every item, every order — **now that's the complicated part**. And that's the difference between true quality cleaning and ordinary cleaning.

"We deliver the quality our customers demand"

What utter nonsense!

Who sets the dry cleaning quality standards and the shirt laundry quality standards at your dry cleaning facility, Mr. Cleaner?

The **once-a-week** customer who wants his garments back the same day?

The **once-a-month** customer who drops off her cleaning with the comment that she'll be back in a week?

Or the **once-a-year** customer who needs his shirt, tie and suit "cleaned and pressed" for an upcoming event in one month?

What about the **price sensitive customer** who wants to know the price of every garment before he leaves your facility?

Or the **quality oriented customer** who meticulously details her requirements for every garment she drops off?

And what about the customer with a **minimal investment in their wardrobe** who believes that the garments sold at The Mens Wearhouse and Jos. A Bank are way overpriced?

Or the customer with a **significant investment in their wardrobe** who favors bespoke tailors, custom clothiers and upscale department stores and clothing boutiques?

No, Mr. Cleaner, **your customers don't set your product quality standards.**

You do.

So, Mr Cleaner, how can **you** possibly staff your plant with the right mix of technical skills if **you** haven't set the product quality standards?

How can **you** equip your plant with the right mix of equipment if **you** haven't set the product quality standards?

How can **you** establish a pricing structure if **you** haven't set the product quality standards?

How can **you** market your services if **you** haven't set the product quality standards?

How can **you** clean, finish (aka press), inspect, repair and package your customers' garments and

household textiles if **you** haven't set the product quality standards?

We could go on and on but we won't. You get the drift.

No, Mr. Cleaner, **your customers don't set your product quality standards.**

You do.

Lewis & Wayne, one of London's long established cleaners, has a great slogan: **"We Clean To A Standard. Not To A Price."**

True quality cleaners clean to a standard, not to a price. Value cleaners, ordinary cleaners and wannabe cleaners clean to a price, not to a standard.

Value cleaners (discount cleaners), ordinary cleaners (middle market cleaners) and wannabe cleaners who claim that they clean to a standard are being disingenuous.

What are the standards? Are those standards in writing? Are those standards posted for all clients and employees to see?

If their quality standards have not been codified in writing, **then they don't exist.**

And if their quality standards are not posted on their website or in the lobby of their facility, **then they don't exist.**

When was the last time **you** asked your dry cleaner or shirt laundry for a written list of their product quality standards?



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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.com/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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