

Finish Line

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MIDWEST CARWASH ASSOCIATION

SECOND QUARTER 2018 | VOLUME 88

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EDUCATION / NETWORKING

INSIGHT

JUNE 19-20, 2018

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BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

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MCA is a membership organization that promotes the interests of Midwest Carwash Operators through interaction, education and information. The Finish Line is a quarterly newsletter published by the MCA. Opinions expressed by guest writers do not necessarily reflect views of the MCA. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement or approval of the product or service advertised. All articles submitted will be considered for publication and accepted at the approval of the editor and MCA Board. The MCA reserves the right to edit submissions for accuracy, clarity and length.

Please send address changes, membership inquiries, and advertising requests to the address listed above.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Midwest Carwash Association
120 N. Washington Square, Suite 110A
Lansing, MI 48933
Phone: 800.610.4512 Fax: 517.371.1170
www.midwestcarwash.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT



By Joe Chatel, *Ride the Tide Carwash*

Summer is here! The traditional end to the washing season has come and gone. We can turn our focus to next season and the improvements that are needed to maintain a first class wash.

Spring brought a successful ICA Car Wash Show in Las Vegas and directly points the Midwest in our direction for the unveiling of the new and improved MCA wash expo, *Wash Insight!*

Wash Insight is the MCA perfecting the industry standard to meet our association and its operator/vendor membership core values and needs. For too long, the industry standard tells tales of a strict booth crawl show and forgets the individual relationships that a regional association holds to be so important, beneficial and important. The MCA has thrown that old standard out as we work toward emphasizing the importance of networking and learning. Our rapidly changing industry doesn't wait for anyone, so why wait yourself? *Wash Insight* is the perfect mix between old and new.

Wash Insight offers traditional vendor booth space, social events, education round table sessions and a hands on view with our popular wash bus tour. Our return to FireKeepers Casino Hotel allows us the opportunity to feature an all-new strolling dinner and reception at the nearby Air Zoo. A night of networking, great food and drink along with exploration of the Air Zoo awaits industry leaders. Transportation will be included so all can enjoy the evening to its fullest.

As the MCA continues to evolve and find its best course to serve its membership, we will continue to focus on the core of what the association offers and is best at providing. Networking and relationship building is key to successes in the industry. Operators and vendors are very different, yet share many similarities. Relationships allow for a comfort in

knowing your business is taken care of the right way from the most expensive and intricate renovation projects down to the availability of a phone call. With the reinvention of our Expo and our continued pride in offering unique social events, we look forward to years of continued success and growth to offer our best to each and every member we have the pleasure of serving.

I look forward to seeing everyone at *Wash Insight* June 19-20 in Battle Creek. My hope is to speak to many attendees and continue to work toward the perfect event. Please feel free to reach out to myself or others on the board of directors for information, concerns, comments and suggestions.

Thank you



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BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

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Car Wash Products | Social Events | Industry Experts | Bus Tour

SCHEDULE

MONDAY, JUNE 18TH

1:00 PM - 7:00 PM Exhibitor Set-Up

TUESDAY, JUNE 19TH

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Networking Breakfast

12:00 PM - 5:00 PM Trade Show Open

12:45 PM - 1:45 PM Lunch on the Floor

2:00 PM - 4:00 PM Educational Sessions

5:00 PM - 11:00 PM Exhibitor Tear Down

6:00 PM - 10:00 PM Air Zoo Exploration

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20TH

7:00 AM - 12:00 PM Exhibitor Tear Down

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Continental Breakfast

10:30 AM - 2:30 PM Carwash Tour

*THIS SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR THE MOST UP TO DATE SCHEDULE.

BUS TOUR LOCATIONS

AIR ZOO EXPLORATION

Join us June 19th for an evening of networking and exploration at the Air Zoo in Kalamazoo. The Air Zoo is a highly charged, multi-sensory atmosphere that goes beyond anything you've ever seen. It's like no place else on Earth!

Voted the "Best Place to Take Out-of-Towners" and "Best Place to Spend a Day with Your Family" three years in a row, the Air Zoo features more than 50 rare and historic aircraft, amusement park-style rides, Full-Motion Flight Simulators, RealD 3D/4D Missions Theater, as well as historical exhibits and educational activities.

A strolling dinner, drinks, and inter-active rides are included. Transportation to and from the Air Zoo will be provided. Tickets are \$55 per person.

Each registered exhibitor can receive one complimentary ticket, see details on registration form.

- Ric & Stan's (Otsego)
- Crystal Car Wash (Portage)
- Remington's Car Wash (Battle Creek)

CURRENT MCA MEMBERS RECEIVE ONE COMPLIMENTARY SHOW PACK. ONE COMPLETE SHOW PACKAGE INCLUDES: TICKET FOR THE TRADE SHOW FLOOR WITH VENDOR SESSIONS AND LUNCH; AIR ZOO DINNER TICKET; AND BUS TOUR TICKET

Registration available at
www.MidwestCarWash.com

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DIXMOR
DRB Systems
eGenuity
Erie Brush & Manufacturing Corp.
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General Pump
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Innovative Control Systems
International Drying Corporation
Kleen-Rite Corp.
Laguna Industries, LLC

McNeil & Company
Michigan Cleaning Fund / RPS Regency
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NI Buying Group
PECO Car Wash Systems
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THE ANSWER TO CAR WASH PROFITABILITY: DO IT BETTER

From Express to Full Service, it is all about the customer experience

By Del Williams

With new express washes sprouting up seemingly everywhere, how will these operators survive and compete when there may soon be one on every corner in some locations?

At the opposite end of the spectrum, how will the decreasing number of full service car washes succeed against such competition when labor costs are inevitably rising to as much as \$20 per hour, including employee benefits?

While cost cutting has long been the focus of many in the industry, operators from both ends of the spectrum have begun to realize that you cannot drive growth by “pinching pennies,” which can lead to a sub-par customer experience.

Now a counter-trend is occurring as a growing number of operators seek to add value by providing a better wash and experience from start to finish, so the customer is greeted with a smile and leaves with one. The goal is a simple one: when competition is stiff, outperform the other guy down the street.

“Car washes will be more profitable when operators pay attention to the details that customers care about,” says Dan Pecora, an expert on brush materials and CEO of Erie Brush in Chicago, IL—a brush, cloth, foam and detailing supplier to the carwash industry since 1948. “When they do this correctly, customers are willing to pay a little more, return more often, and tell their family and friends about you.”

DO IT BETTER: BEGINS WITH EQUIPMENT

In terms of doing the best job possible for customers, every detail of the wash should be considered from the water condition, to the equipment adjustment, to the quality and types of brushes used.

In express and full service washes, for instance, one hazard of choosing the cheapest brushes is how

quickly they can accumulate grit and particles from recirculated water, which can mar paint finishes, according to Pecora.

“Recirculated water carries sand and other particles that can act like sandpaper if they build up on the surface of the washing material,” says Pecora. “To save a little on material costs, cheaper cloth has larger gaps between the fibers. However, these gaps can trap sand and grit, which is a major cause of paint marring, particularly of black mirrored finishes.”

To prevent this, Pecora says it is better to utilize cloth brushes with very small gaps between the materials. The gaps should be too small to allow such particles to lodge.

Pecora cautions that the wash machines in the tunnel must also be properly adjusted, so they “just tickle the vehicle.”

“Car washes will be more profitable when operators pay attention to the details that customers care about”

“You do not want the machines to push too hard,” he says. “That would push any particles on the cloth, filament, or foam harder into the vehicle’s paint surface.” Overly aggressive machines with harder brush materials could also give customers the impression that their vehicles are being ‘beat on’ on the ride through the tunnel, which could scare them away, he says.

In full service washes, owners often direct employees to hand wash certain spots, typically with various handheld brushes on a stick. However, employees cannot do the job properly without the right tools.

continued on page 8

Profitability

In this regard, cheaper brushes tend to have a hard core which can accidentally “bop” the vehicle, causing customers to question whether damage was done and potentially chasing the customer away. Better brushes, however, are designed with no hard brush core exposed and have softer bristles or materials that will not bang, or leave a mark, on the vehicle.

A SOFTER, QUIETER TOUCH

While express and full service washes can do a good job with filament, cloth or foam brushes, it is important that these provide a softer, quieter touch that still thoroughly cleans the vehicle and eliminates the grit problem. Using a softer brush with better lubrication can accomplish this.

“The softer the brush filament used, whether cloth, closed cell foam or hog’s hair, the easier it is to release grit, and the quieter the wash” says Pecora. “Tough cloth or foam might last a long time, but won’t clean the car’s nooks and crannies. Soft cloth or gentle foam, when utilized correctly, is gentler on paint and will clean hard to reach areas.”

Since foams can squeak when rotating without adequate lubrication, he also suggests using enough soap and water for a quieter customer experience on the ride through the tunnel.

According to Pecora, an exterior car wash using a high-quality “gentle foam” with smooth car wash equipment, can reduce damage claims to near zero, while offering a quieter wash and better final polish. Unlike typical foam, which is usually offered at standard levels of softness, gentle foam significantly increases the level of softness.

“I’ve noticed that Erie’s Gentle Foam doesn’t catch and pull on mirrors, antennas, license plates, or loose moldings like cloth sometimes can,” says Bill Seniw, owner of Beverly Hills Car Wash in Chicago, Ill. “It’s so soft and stretchable. I’ve had no damage claims since I opened my express wash almost three years ago.”

Along with softness, Seniw credits the gentle foam with providing a quiet wash that puts his customers’



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minds at ease when they ride through his tunnel. "The gentle foam is so quiet that customers can't even really hear it. So they know we're being gentle on their vehicles."

For any trouble spots that commonly need to be touched up on the conveyor wash, such as around headlights, license plates and door handles, Pecora recommends using a hog's hair brush at the car wash entrance.

"Hog's hair – actual hair that comes from hogs – has the smallest diameter tapered filament, which helps to make it the softest," says Pecora. "Since it is soft, tapered, and feathered at the tips, it tends to release grit when properly lubricated and will not grind it into the car surface. Because of the taper, the hairs still retain stiffness for washing up close, if scrubbing is needed."

LARGER VEHICLES, BIGGER WHEELS

Another challenge to the car wash industry has been how much the market has changed since many facilities were constructed. With light truck sales, including vans, SUVs, pick-ups and crossovers accounting for almost 60% of all U.S. vehicle sales last year, it is clear that consumers now prefer larger vehicles over the sedans of the past.

In this regard, the problem has been greater difficulty in efficiently cleaning tires and wheels, which have become significantly larger and more intricate than in previous decades. High-pressure sprayer systems, in general, have raised costs while failing to sufficiently remove all the accumulated dirt and debris without scrubbing and friction.

"Previously, full service washes required a lot of help to wash tires and wheels, and other washes tended to let them go out dirty," says Pecora. "High-pressure sprayer systems lack the ability to scrub tough-to-remove dirt and grime as well as add a shine. The creation of wheel brushes with varied filament lengths basically eliminates the need for labor and costly high-pressure sprayer systems to clean wheels."

Beginning with unique names like the "Poodle Brush," which Pecora coined because it resembles a well-manicured poodle, and the "Wheel Wonder" these brush filaments vary in size between three to seven



The creation of wheel brushes with varied filament lengths basically eliminates the need for labor or costly high-pressure sprayer systems to clean wheels.

inches in a wave-like pattern. As vehicles travel through the conveyor car wash, the longer bristles reach deep into wheel crevices while the shorter bristles clean the tire and wheel surface.

Such brushes are now helping to save money and bring more return business, as labor is saved and tires and wheels emerge from conveyor washes cleaner.

For conveyor washes, brushes are also available that can apply a tire shine automatically to save labor. For this, Pecora advises using an engineered rotating brush utilizing cloth or filaments to better hold the tire shine liquid.

In a similar vein, to enhance efficiency at full service washes, brushes also exist that can be adapted to foam feed, as well as include a water nozzle.

The bottom line to remember from all this is that professionalism will be rewarded, even as the competition gets tougher and the number of express washes continues to rise.

In the end, operators who pay attention to the details that customers care about, add value, and improve efficiency will attract more business, improve profitability, and gain market share from those simply "pinching pennies."

Del Williams is a technical writer based in Torrance, California.

To Catch a Collision: The Social and Financial Cost of a Connected Customer

When a regular customer posted a video of their in-tunnel collision, no one expected what would happen next

Nick was just a guy who wanted a clean truck.

Nick took his 2014 Silverado to an express exterior car wash and wound up behind a vehicle with obvious mechanical trouble. The car stopped moving, and all Nick could do was honk his horn and watch as his truck slammed into it over and over. It's the same pileup story you've heard a hundred times before, but with one little wrinkle: Nick had his dashcam running during the incident. After he posted his video on Reddit, the response was immediate. Nick's pileup footage was viewed over 200,000 times and appeared on some of the biggest websites in the automotive world, such as Jalopnik and The Grand Tour.

When Nick fell victim to an in-tunnel collision, he wasn't looking to tear down a car wash. He just wanted to share his shocking and aggravating experience online. The effect, however, was huge. Commenters left and right were saying "no thanks" to visiting that car wash. Many people had horror stories of their own, and each one ended the same way: "I'll never use an automated car wash again."

YOU ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR WORST

For customers, the experience of an in-tunnel collision lingers long after the initial shock. They will tell their pileup story to family and friends for years to come, and your brand will always set the scene.

With modern social media, these pileup stories no longer live in a vacuum. Nick's experience is only one of countless others shared repeatedly online. In Miami, Amber Martinez fell victim to a car wash collision while running last-minute errands for a wedding. Miami news covered the accident after Amber was told she'd be paying for the majority of



Dashcam footage of an in-tunnel collision.

the damage. Amber's story has since been shared across the Internet for thousands to see. Just like Nick's, the response to Amber's ordeal was to avoid car washes altogether.

Or, in the words of Jalopnik's Patrick Jones, you should just "...stick to the bucket."

The idea of 'one bad experience equals one lost customer' might sound right, but it's dead wrong. A single customer has more power than ever to influence your potential business. The reach of one Facebook user, who, according to Pew Research, has direct access to over 200 other people on average, is impossible to ignore. Combine this with the fact customers are more likely to share a bad experience than a good one, and you have a lot of people taking their business elsewhere.

The influence of a single customer extends beyond reach. More than any ad, we trust the opinions of people we know. A lot. Nielsen found 83% of

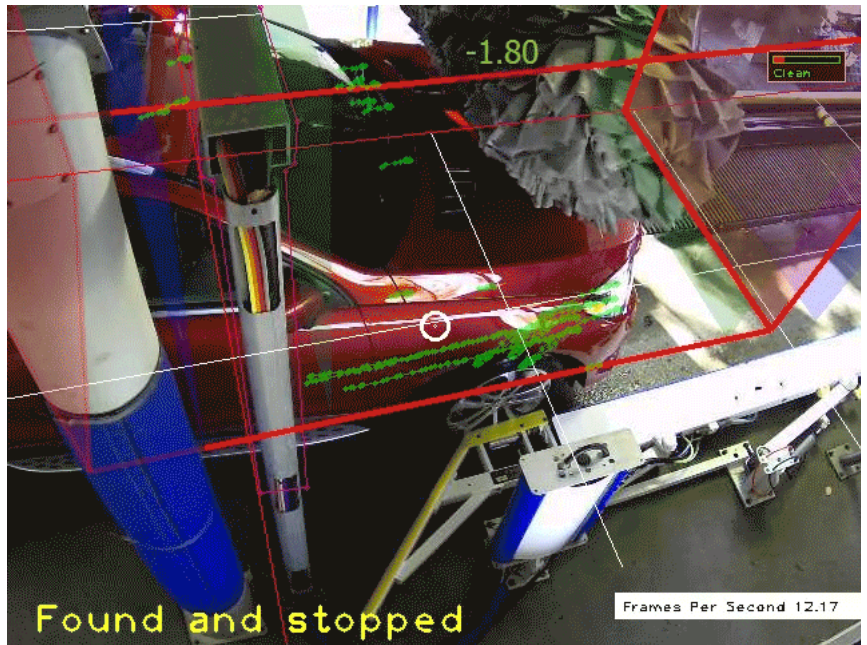
customers say they trust the advice of a personal acquaintance when buying a product or service. No other method of advertising or outreach comes close. Just as the good word of one happy customer can bring new people in, one dented bumper can drive them away. The cost of a collision might seem like a simple one-and-done write-off at the time, but the damage to your reputation can ultimately cost you more than the price of a repair.

CAR WASHES NEED A BETTER SAFETY SOLUTION

'I'll just stick to the bucket' isn't the only response people have to a story like Nick's. There's one other comment that gets repeated over and over: "Isn't there some way to prevent this?" For every person swearing off car washes for life, there's someone who recognizes the best way to handle collisions is to keep them from happening in the first place.

Thankfully, the latest advancements in pileup prevention finally meet the levels of safety customers already expect. Automated anti-collision systems utilizing camera footage and integrated software can prevent collisions like Nick's before an attendant ever notices there might be a problem.

The speed and reliability of this new wave of anti-collision extend beyond simply safeguarding your reputation. Customers can feel confident knowing the video they saw on Youtube won't happen to them. When they ask about the stories they read online, your attendants can say, "that doesn't happen here. We have a system that keeps you and your car safe." That peace-of-mind stays with a customer, and you can bet they'll share it with the people they know.



Automated anti-collision system preventing an accident.

It's easy to think you have collisions under control, but that won't make your customers feel any better. A single tapped brake or turned wheel might be something you're ready to shrug off, but the lingering impact doesn't go away. Customers, even loyal ones, lose confidence when they see a pileup in front of them or plastered all over their favorite website. If someone they trust says, "stay away," they listen.

Full-tunnel collision prevention systems are a first step in rebuilding faith in customers shaken by incidents like Nick's and Amber's. When a customer hears the whoosh of sprayers and the rumble of scrubbers, the last thing on their mind should be 'what if.'

Steve Everett

Territory Manager
W 800.843.SOAP (7627)
C 810.624.3069
severett@diamondshine.com
www.diamondshine.com



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