

Cleaned up and sewn up in Essex



DryStream's Jonathan Beach chats with Clean and Sew Dry Cleaners and Launderers' Stuart Barnicott about his business and the future

With a background in engineering, Stuart Barnicott, owner of Clean and Sew Dry Cleaners, entered the laundry and drycleaning industry some 15 years ago. Barnicott initially learned the business from an established firm and after several years training and running a shop in Waltham Cross, Essex, he opened Clean and Sew Dry Cleaners in Harlow, Essex, which he still runs today with his wife, Angie.

Clean and Sew enjoys a fantastic position on the Tesco Superstore site in Church Langley, a neighbourhood of Harlow New Town. There's a second branch at Bishops Stortford about 20 miles north of Harlow and a third unit in Mill Court, a new precinct near Harlow New Town railway station.

Conceived as one of several relief towns for post war London's expanding population, Harlow itself has a varied demographic. Located about 30 minutes north east of London it attracts city commuters and has its own sizeable local business community plus an abundance of residential property in private and council housing. It also has

direct road and rail links to the new Olympic village in East London.

Stuart Barnicott would be the first to say he's often surprised at Clean and Sew's clientele catchment area. As well as the expected local Tesco shoppers the business also draws in visitors from as far afield as Chelmsford, Epping and Colchester 20 miles away or more.

It was during a major refit in 2003 that Barnicott invested in DryStream. He knew the drycleaning industry was inevitably moving towards computerisation at the point of sale and he could see all the benefits that a system of his own would bring. The right EPoS system would unobtrusively help him run the business better and help increase income. And with his first DryStream system successfully installed, it did just that.

"We now have all the information we need to price correctly and manage our business for extra profit and we have a complete and useful history of all our customer's activities," he says.

Early in 2010 during some reorganisation at the shop the EPoS system was taken out of commission for a short while and later re-instated.

"The effect was

remarkable," observes Barnicott. "Firstly, customers were wary of hand written tickets. In this day and age our customers expected something more than a ticket book and a biro and were unsettled that their order might not be handled professionally. That's not the image we wanted to project.

"After reinstallation we immediately noticed the difference at the till. DryStream automatically applies the correct price for everything and therefore, despite our best efforts with the ticket books, we noticed a direct and immediate positive impact as soon as we reinstated the system."

Clean and Sew's new Mill Court shop opened earlier this year and Barnicott is optimistic for its success once other commercial units open there and collectively start attracting significant customer traffic.

"From the experience we had with DryStream at Church Langley we knew that the new shop had to open with the same system in place," he explains, "and so DryStream installed a new touch screen EPoS system there early in 2010."

Now Barnicott can track the business through the shop and monitor progress as the business there grows.

As for most drycleaners, time for Stuart Barnicott is precious but he understands the

marketing benefits that DryStream provides and the value of making every effort to benefit from its capabilities. It makes no sense to advertise offers on posters to customers who would normally use the advertised service anyway. You want to attract new business and to do that you need to reach selected useful recipients of every promotion however large or small.

He comments: "We carried out a simple and successful marketing exercise recently so I extracted from my DryStream system a list of all customers who have had suits drycleaned recently. The information was there instantly at my fingertips. We then sent an exclusive offer mailer to just those people offering them shirt laundry. It was a finely tuned, carefully targeted promotion and was a great success."

Clean and Sew will be doing more of these mini campaigns in the very near future.

Being on the Tesco site, Barnicott has frequent discussions with the Tesco branch managers who themselves apply great importance to customer profiling and footfall analysis:

"They're impressed with the wealth of data that our DryStream system collects and can see how that helps us build the business, particularly in

these difficult economic times. It's about having access to that information that can help us succeed."

In 2011 Barnicott is considering operating a loyalty card scheme which should bring in additional revenue and ensure customer loyalty. The good news is that the software required to run such a scheme is a standard feature of all DryStream EPoS systems.

"I love the idea of being able to easily contact customers regularly to keep them apprised of what we're doing and presenting tightly focussed offers to increase business," he says.

He will continue to do that by mail and by text messaging, which is another inclusive feature of all DryStream TOUCH EPoS systems.

We discussed that the large retailers pay great attention to 'incremental footfall'. Winning even just a few customers here and there over time makes a huge difference to the bottom line. The same is true at every drycleaning outlet and that can only be achieved with a system

such as DryStream.

And what for 2011 and beyond? Clean and Sew's Mill Court shop deserves a steady increase in business as neighbouring units are occupied and the new precinct becomes more and more popular.

Barnicott sees that much of the current economic negativity that exists is often amplified by the media with adverse effect, but as the economy pulls itself out of recession through 2011 and beyond, so business will improve for the stronger enterprises that survived the downturn.

2012 brings an Olympic year to London and the South East and Harlow is fortunate to be on the Olympic doorstep with many training and activity venues just around the corner.

"Hotels are already booking for 2012 and we anticipate that will be a good year for us all" says Barnicott.

DryStream is poised to help him maximise the profit opportunities that exist and to help any other drycleaning business run more efficiently and more profitably than ever.



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"It's about having access to information that can help us succeed," says Stuart Barnicott



Clean and Sew's smart exterior in the new Mill Court precinct near Harlow New Town railway station

Tracey Dunn finds the DryStream system easy to operate at Mill Court

