

## OPL 101

# Providing more than equipment—Distributor service and support

Partner with equipment distributors to operate successful laundry rooms

BY BILL BROOKS

When managing an on-premises laundry (OPL) operation, it's important to find a distributor that will provide you with the right equipment to meet your business needs, as well as reduce operational costs and maximize efficiency. However, beyond providing equipment, your distributor should be a trusted partner who provides additional support and services to help you run a successful laundry operation.

Whether building a new laundry room or managing an existing laundry operation, your distributor is a laundry expert who can help you manage every aspect of your laundry room. Read on to learn more about how your distributor can help you determine the best equipment mix and laundry room design; improve efficiencies and lower utility costs; finance the operation; as well as provide service and maintenance to help machines run efficiently.

## EQUIPMENT MIX AND LAUNDRY ROOM DESIGN

Distributors have extensive knowledge of laundry equipment and the industry. They know what it takes to run a successful OPL operation and will work with you to determine the best equipment mix to meet your laundry room needs. Whether your priorities are high efficiency levels, low utility usage, lowest cost per pound or lowest equipment price, your distributor will make a recommendation on the best equipment mix to meet these needs.

Your distributor will also help determine the right equipment size for your business. Based on the size of the facility, number of rooms and number of beds, your distributor will advise you on the best quantity and sizes for your washers and dryers. Additionally, an important factor to consider when making an equipment purchase decision is the type of linens you'll be washing.

"To help customers make a decision on the type of equipment that will help achieve their desired efficiency levels, we need to know what type of linens they are washing," says Mark Hubbard, president of Universal Laundry Machinery, Westland, Mich. "If they are washing a lot of towels, for example, the fabric will hold a lot of water and therefore the speed in high-extract equipment might be best because it can help cut down drying times by 30%, which has a large impact on a company's utility savings over time."

In addition to helping customers determine the mix of equipment, your distributor can also provide recommendations on the best layout for your laundry room. It is important to keep in mind how to design your laundry room to decrease the amount of steps that any worker may need to take to complete the laundry processing, as well as the proper workflow to clean soiled linens. If a new room is being built, a distributor will

work closely with the architect to develop professional drawings of the layout that can be used throughout construction.

## UTILITY USAGE AND SAVINGS

A priority in the industry is equipment and technology that minimize gas, water and energy usage to help OPL managers reduce overall costs. To help determine which equipment is right for you, your distributor can help you better understand the utility usage and savings associated with different equipment models and your unique needs by providing an operating analysis estimate.

Laundry operating analysis reports provide an estimate on the cost per pound to process laundry. The analysis clearly identifies the impact of the equipment performance on labor and utility expenses, which can help a customer better understand the differences in equipment. If a customer is making a decision between equipment based on the purchase cost, analyzing the operating analysis may be beneficial in the decision-making process.

"Laundry equipment has advanced significantly in recent years, and there are many green technologies available to help reduce water and energy usage by preventing over-drying, minimizing water usage in rinse cycles and reducing overall cycle time," says Hubbard. "Not only do these advancements help the environment, they also reduce costs for companies, and these savings have a large impact on the annual expenses associated with laundry room operation."

## TECHNICAL TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Service-trained distributors are laundry experts who can educate you on varying equipment offerings. They will train the laundry room manager, chemical expert and employees on the equipment, including the operation, technology and cycle settings, as well as the maintenance and cleaning required to help the equipment maintain quality and efficiency.

"It is important that all employees who will use the machines undergo training so that they use the equipment correctly, from the proper loading techniques to customizing cycles," Hubbard says. "With so many recent technological advancements, it's even more important for employees to be trained on the equipment so that they know all of the benefits of their equipment and how it can help improve the overall laundry room operation and reduce their own time processing laundry."

Additionally, training will differ depending on the type of OPL setting. For example, Hubbard says that for the healthcare industry, they spend time training employees on the health standards and requirements to ensure the proper workflow is followed to keep equipment used for processing soiled linens separate.

## EQUIPMENT SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE

Your distributor is your resource for any maintenance and service required for your equipment and will offer original equip-



(Image licensed by Ingram Publishing)

ment manufacturer (OEM) parts, as well as trained service personnel to provide you with the support you need.

Whether it is a regularly scheduled service visit or a sudden issue that arises, your trained service personnel can offer assistance over the phone to diagnose the problem and help problem-solve, or they will provide in-person assistance to fix the machine as quickly as possible, so that business is affected as little as possible.

Distributors will also schedule preventative-maintenance visits, which can be on a monthly or quarterly basis. During these visits, service personnel will clean and lubricate equipment, adjust belts and much more to ensure that the equipment runs smoothly and efficiently. These preventative visits can ultimately help extend the life of the equipment.

"The service department has the most contact with our customers, as once a sale is made, it will be many years before the equipment needs to be replaced," says Hubbard. "Because of this, we spend a lot of time training our service personnel, and it is critical to ensure that they are friendly and provide customers with the help they need during each visit."

Your distributor can also provide recommendations on when it might be time to replace equipment. If older machines continually break down or have issues that require service, it may be more cost-effective to replace them with new and more efficient equipment. Your distributor can help break down the costs to show the difference of servicing versus purchasing a newer model.

## FINANCING

There are many financing options to consider when investing in equipment, and your distributor can help you with this process. From deciding between a commercial bank, leasing company or financing through your equipment

manufacturer, your distributor can help connect you with the lending option that best suits your unique needs.

There are many benefits to choosing a lender in the laundry industry to finance your operation because they have an understanding of the industry and the needs of your laundry room. They may also be able to offer financing options that a bank could not.

It's important to use your distributor as a resource when making this decision, as they can serve as the liaison with your financing lender to make sure you have all of the information you need throughout the process.

## FINDING SUPPORT IN YOUR DISTRIBUTOR

When it comes to laundry room management, you are not alone. Your distributor can advise you on almost every aspect of your operation, and their support begins before an equipment purchase has even been made by working together to determine the best equipment mix and laundry room layout, and extends throughout the lifetime of your equipment.

"When working with a customer, I put myself in their shoes and think through their needs. This helps me better understand the customer—their questions, concerns and expectations—and helps my team exceed those expectations," Hubbard says.

As equipment and technologies continue to evolve, it is even more critical to work with your distributor and turn to them for service and support to ensure you stay ahead of the latest innovations and understand how these advancements can improve your laundry room operation. **ALN**

Bill Brooks is North American sales manager for UniMac, a provider of on-premises laundry equipment. To learn more about UniMac, visit [www.unimac.com/opl101](http://www.unimac.com/opl101) or call 800-587-5458.



Brooks