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Supplier experience and relationship strengthens customer value for Rental Uniform Service

Greenville, N.C. – January 10, 2023 – Longevity is an admired hallmark of a successful business. Now in its 74th year of operation, Rental Uniform Service has reached this point by making deft and correct decisions time after time. One of its recent pivotal moves was selecting [UNX-Christeyns](#) to return as its washroom chemistry partner, a decision that has produced significant benefits in a short window of time.

“We began a review of our wash chemistry situation in late 2021, did extensive research and narrowed it down to two companies that we met with personally,” recalled Danny Lawrence, the longtime CEO for Rental Uniform Service. “it was remarkable that cost-wise, there was not much difference between the two. But it was evident from the beginning the UNX-Christeyns folks genuinely wanted our business, and they had the technology and service we were looking for.”

[Rental Uniform Service](#) has an intriguing history. The North Carolina family-owned company began as a small operation in Bluefield, VA., with a 2,000 square-foot building and one truck in 1949. James E. Waggoner and his brothers sold many of their possessions to fund their start-up, and steadily grew their business with persistence and a sincere dedication to their customers.

Today, Mr. Waggoner’s legacy lives on. His four daughters serve as the company’s Board of Directors and other family members hold vital roles. CEO grandson Danny Lawrence is married to Paula, the company’s Controller. Robert King, the Director of Corporate Development, is the husband of Mr. Waggoner’s granddaughter, Susan-Hager-King. And Holly Benfield, the Director of Human Resources, is Mr. Waggoner’s great granddaughter.

When Benfield joined the company out of college in 2007, she became the first fourth-generation family member to serve on the management team at Rental Uniform Service. That is an impressive accomplishment few companies can claim. According to Harvard Business Review statistics, a staggering 70% of family-owned enterprises either fail or are sold before the second generation becomes involved.

Lawrence emphasized that having family members learn the business from the ground up is one of the keys to why Rental Uniform Service has been successful for so long.

“I’ve been in the linen and uniforms industry my entire life. I became a full time employee here in 1978 after working in the plant for my apprenticeship. I was promoted to assistant plant manager in 1981 and promoted to general manager at our Sunshine Rental Uniform Service facility in Gastonia in 1988,” said Lawrence, who has guided the company as its CEO since 2000.

About the time Lawrence was elevated to assistant plant manager in 1981 is when UNX-Christeyns first became a Rental Uniform Service supplier. Known then as UNX – which later merged with and became UNX-Christeyns in July 2022 – they became involved during a growth spurt.

“I was heavily involved in the washing technology operations at that point,” acknowledged Lawrence. “It became apparent their service was always quality oriented and their pricing was fair. The relationships we had at that time were second to none.”

Those moments were remembered during the recent selection process. Rental Uniform Service is now a more diversified organization with 145 employees. They utilize 200,000 square feet of space between their headquarters in Statesville N.C., a processing facility in Gastonia, N.C., and distribution centers in Mills River, N.C. and Florence, S.C., putting them in favorable proximity to an expansive client base. Management also operates a employee-friendly schedule, running ten hour shifts four days a week.

Rental Uniform Service also understands that working with the food, healthcare, hospitality and manufacturing industries, as well as government, municipalities and others, requires different and specialized wash formulas for each.

“We provide the highest quality product for our customers. That involves utilizing good modern chemistry with natural soap,” explains Robert King, Director of Corporate Development. After working for General Electric he joined Rental Uniform Service in 1999, first in sales before switching to marketing and then as the GM in Gastonia. He’s been instrumental in growing the company’s sales and technology efforts in his current position.

“We wanted the highest quality product possible so the goal was to create advanced wash formulas that were unique to each of our customer segments,” continued King.

“For example, we partnered with UNX-Christeyns to develop a low pH dispensing formula. In simple terms, since the wash cycle environment is less harsh the goods are going to be brighter, they will last longer and they are going to wear better. We have always been known for the quality and comfort of our garments. Now, with skilled input from UNX-Christeyns, we have been able to achieve an even higher level of comfort and appearance for our customers. This innovative treatment environment makes it better and we didn’t have that process prior to working with them.”

King acknowledged that working with an experienced, technically proficient UNX-Christeyns staff generates better results.

“They have a smart group of laundry industry professionals. People like Graham Skinner (Vice President of Field Engineering) and others who have actually worked in our industry and know what they’re doing,” he commented. “Their Area Supervisor, Nicholas Vangelakos, visits our plants regularly and we consider him like family. He’s developed a trusted work relationship with our facility managers.

“UNX-Christeyns was able,” added King, “to provide significant efficiencies by reducing the number of steps in our wash formula processes from the beginning to the end. They’re making sure we are being trained properly on their equipment and making any necessary adjustments. They also just finished constructing a unique rack system for the chemical dispensers, which provides efficient product injection while reducing mechanical components. The end result is we have a better looking and cleaner product, in addition to the tangible benefits of using less energy, natural gas, electricity and water.”

Those benefits include improved effluent (wastewater), which is always an important goal for industrial laundries. They have provided real-time, in-house reporting capability that tracks pertinent management data, such as determining the cost-per-load and other vital daily production numbers. King says that looking at the big picture, it's better chemistry with UNX-Christeyns that ultimately benefits their customers.

"You can get a uniform from anybody, but what our customers get from us and our vendor partners is better service and quality that can't be found elsewhere. Our customer's expectation is they want a clean and comfortable product, not one that was run through a solvent process," he noted.

"We invest more money than most of our competitors because we require our wash process to deliver the highest quality product for our customers. They know we have an experienced service team that is providing the best care in the industry. We treat our employees and partners like family and that's why many of them have been with us for three decades. That is what truly impacts the relationship with our customers, not just numbers on a page.

"Some of our most loyal customers," King concluded, "are those who have previously used our competition. Once they experience our superior quality level, the dramatic differences become apparent and we never lose them. Thus, we are pleased that we have found a solid partnership with UNX-Christeyns. They get it. They have the same goals and with their support, we make happier customers."

About UNX-Christeyns

Based in North Carolina, the recent partnership of UNX and Christeyns brings together more than 100 years of experience in the textile care industry. Specializing in commercial quality cleaning chemicals for the laundry, housekeeping, warewashing, and dry and wet cleaning markets, these products are supported with custom designed dispensing equipment to produce high efficiency results for customers. Learn more by calling 800.869.6171 for more information or visit the [website](#).



Rental Uniform Services uses advanced UNX-Christeyns wash formulas to clean garments and provide the highest quality product for their customers.



UNX-Christeyns Area Supervisor Nicholas Vangelakos explains details of the wash chemistry program to Rental Uniform Services employees at their Statesville, N.C. facility.