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Innovative Chemistry Program Helps Imperial Linen Services Earn the Trust of Houston’s Business Community

Greenville, N.C. – April 27, 2023 – If you have stayed at a major chain hotel property in Houston, chances are you’ve experienced having bright white linen and towels courtesy of [Imperial Linen Services, Inc.](#) (ILS). Located in suburban Stafford, Texas, they have played a major role in Houston’s hospitality sector for 80 years. For the past decade, ILS has teamed with [UNX-Christeyns](#) as its washroom chemistry partner to deliver a superior solution that is winning over their customers.

Leadership of the family owned and operated company begins with President Gayle Page and his son Michael, who serves as vice president and comptroller. Gayle assumed control of what was then known as Imperial Laundry & Cleaners, Inc., after his father died in 1973. He ended the drycleaning portion of the business, and in 1993 started Imperial Linen Services, Inc., dedicated solely to commercial laundry services.

Michael joined the company full time in 1996 after earning a Finance degree at the University of Houston. Combined, the two have steadily built up the business over the years with expansion in mind and an eye on the future.

“My father focused on the dry cleaning and uniform side of the business after he opened it in 1943. I would help out after school and during the summer,” recalled Gayle. “After graduate school, I was in Chicago for a year and came back to work here.”

In those days, Imperial Linen Services operated on Houston’s east side from a 20,000 square foot building. Through the years, they have worked with a wide range of companies in the food service and healthcare industries, as well as with some in the events and fitness markets. But the majority of their customers today are in the hospitality world, and ILS moved to their gleaming new 50,000 square-foot home in Stafford in 2015.

“Most of the hotels we service are in Houston, but several are in Austin and we recently expanded to include the San Antonio market. This facility was constructed with two phases in mind,” revealed Gayle Page. He’s now in his mid-80s but still goes to work every day and proudly shares building blueprints with some visitors. “We have enough land behind this building to connect and add another 50,000-75,000 square-feet to our operation.”

Persistence and perseverance pays off

As the hospitality market continues to strengthen, so goes business at ILS. The COVID pandemic deeply impacted the Houston community three years ago in 2020. The fourth largest city by population in the U.S., the cancellations of convention business and tourism travel led to major cutbacks with any business tied to hospitality. Houston is recognized as a top 10 U.S. hotel market, but occupancy rates had fallen to only 22% in April 2020.

In 2021, the recovery period began with month-by-month improvement led by utility companies and others in the critical energy sector. The bounceback was later bolstered by strong convention traffic, business meetings and the return of business travelers themselves. Combined with tourism visitors, figures by the end of 2022 had rebounded to the point where they exceeded pre-pandemic levels.

“Hospitality is a seasonal business and during the summer months, we are very busy,” acknowledged Michael Page. “We survived the COVID pandemic and in 2022 processed 21 million pounds of laundry. We anticipate that number will rise to 23 or 24 million this year.”

“We have been really fortunate,” added Jessica Garland, ILS’s VP of sales & marketing, “to develop strong personal relationships and partnerships with our hospitality customers. Our clients are very loyal, and many of them have been with us for over 10 years. I think our response time is a key component because they know if there is an issue, we will fix it quickly.”

In addition to the new building easily handling the workload, it was designed with capacity and other important things in mind. Energy conservation, environmental issues and employee considerations are three key areas that were addressed and are paying dividends.

Partnership built on better chemistry

The partnership with UNX-Christeyns began as an association through Houston-based distributor Team Systems. Mike Moore sold his company to UNX-Christeyns in 2017 and has since retired. But his son, Adam – who like Gayle Page, started working in the industry during his high school days – continues to service the ILS account.

“I was not happy with the product and service of our previous chemistry partner,” recalled Gayle Page. “I knew Mike for 20 years and he introduced us to UNX-Christeyns. They have been a true blessing and we have developed a close, amicable relationship with company president Rudi Moors. Between him, Adam and Bradly Bolton (vice president, business support), if we need something they are here for us.”

Moors explained how the positive relationship with ILS allowed UNX-Christeyns to take their wash chemistry program to the next level - together.

“Linen, utilities and operating costs have risen significantly in recent years and is impacting our customers’ revenues,” said Moors. That’s why we work to bring our customers a complete concept, not just chemicals. By using our unique wash chemistries, dosing equipment, water re-use systems and our washroom management information systems together, they now have a complete package to help manage the entire process more effectively.”

Kevin Stromatt, ILS’s vice president of operations, agrees with Moors.

“When we switched to UNX-Christeyns, you could see the difference in the quality and color of the linens,” emphasized Stromatt, which includes bedsheets, pillowcases, towels, washcloths and food and beverage items such as napkins and tablecloths. He started at ILS as the service manager in 1999. For the next 10 years during his free hours, he simultaneously worked part-time for the Houston Astros as the ballpark manager and supervised their laundry operations.

“The chemistry program UNX-Christeyns developed for us produces bright white linen, and alleviates the need to use bleach except for heavy duty stains,” said Stromatt. “Since the switch, we are able to produce the bright whites at a lower temperature and the great chemistry keeps the cotton blends in place. The chemistry basically pays for itself.”

In reducing peroxide amounts by 25-30% and extracting heat out of wastewater, ILS is lessening their impact on the environment, saving on energy costs and extending linen life. They do it with top of the line equipment, and with UNX-Christeyns’ controlled pH-balanced chemistry system, they have lowered the water consumption rate by more than 40% compared to the previous suppliers.

Capacity expansion to meet equipment demands

Their wash equipment includes a pair of Milnor continuous batch washers (CBW) utilizing either a press or washer-extractor; a third CBW is slated to be up and running later this year. Also on the floor are six Chicago Dryer Company models, with four more being added to the mix.

Like the hotels, there are no days off at ILS. Running and maintaining the equipment requires a highly skilled team, and the company’s investment in their employees is on par with the technology in the building. With a 24-hour turnaround commitment to their customers, the 150 employees typically work 10 or 12 hour shifts three or four days a week, depending on the volume the facility receives each day. Many have worked at ILS for 15, 20 or 25 years, including a majority who returned to work after COVID restrictions eased.

“Gayle and Michael Page have given us the opportunity to be successful and the ability to grow, and I think that accounts for the longevity we have in our building,” reflects Stromatt. “We understand success begins with our employees, and Gayle has a gift for communicating and being on the same page with everyone here.”

“We have cultivated a family environment,” adds Garland, who has worked at ILS for over seven years. “Our employees refer friends and relatives to work here and I think that’s due to several things. We have a clean and modern work environment, offer flexible hours, and still do traditional things like holiday work parties and lunches for birthdays. Doing these little things is beneficial to retaining our workers, which is really important in a tight labor market.”

Stromatt says all of these elements are connected to ILS being well positioned in the marketplace.

“Our hospitality customers are happy because the linen life is extended and the cost of replacement is reduced. That’s huge in an industry that operates on thin margins,” said Stromatt. “The UNX-Christeyns chemistry system creates a brighter white product and presents a crisp presentation in the hotel rooms. We receive a lot of positive feedback about this from our hotel customers. This has resulted in a great partnership with UNX-Christeyns.”

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](https://www.unxchristeyns.com).



PHOTO 1

Imperial Linen Services projects processing between 23 and 24 million pounds of linen this year.

PHOTO 2

Adam Moore (far left), of UNX-Christeyns, with the ILS management team: President Gayle Page; VP and Comptroller Michael Page; and Vice President of Operations Kevin Stromatt.





PHOTO 3

Servicing hospitality customers in Houston and Austin requires a steady commitment from the 150 employees.