

Distributor Spotlight:

Great Lakes Commercial Sales



In 1992, Great Lakes Commercial Sales began serving the commercial laundry market of southern Wisconsin as a Maytag Commercial Laundry distributor under the name Badger Commercial Sales. And the company's three original employees worked out of a tiny office in Milwaukee.

Today, the Great Lakes' sales and service territory has grown to include several states throughout the Midwest, including lower Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and northern Kentucky – as well as Wisconsin, of course. These markets are served by a much larger Great Lakes staff than 23 years ago, along with six office locations in Brookfield, Wis.; Wyoming, Mich.; St. Clair Shores, Mich.; Dayton, Ohio; Indianapolis, Ind.; and Illinois.

In addition to being an authorized Maytag, Whirlpool, Wascomat, Electrolux and Continental Girbau (Wisconsin only) equipment distributor, Great Lakes boasts a well-stocked parts department, full delivery and installation teams and factory-trained service technicians ready to serve their customers. Self-service laundry owners also will find Great Lakes to be a "one-stop shop" for ancillary items, such as bill changers, water heating systems, soap vending machines, laundry carts, folding tables and signage.

What's more, several times throughout the year, the company will offer free service schools and

business improvement seminars as continued support of its customers.

Great Lakes' Dan Naumann recently discussed his views on the self-service laundry business with *PlanetLaundry*:

What is the most pronounced trend you're currently seeing in the industry, especially in your specific region of the country?

What I'm seeing in the industry in our markets is the continuing trend toward larger, well-run coin laundry businesses. I'm seeing full operations combined with all of the amenities you see in today's modern self-service laundries.

What are you most excited about in 2015?

In 2015, I believe we will continue to see the trend of laundry owners becoming more efficient with new equipment, and I think that's an exciting and positive development for the entire industry as a whole.

What are you most concerned about, business-wise?

Business concerns are increasing utility costs – especially electricity, which has become a "sleeper" cost increase for many store owners. Water and sewer rates continue to be a way for municipalities to raise revenue without a so-called "tax increase"

– just raise the water and sewer rates to make more money for the municipality.

Where do you see the self-service laundry industry headed in your particular market?

I see an increase of investors who are experienced in other businesses. These new investors see the self-service laundry business as a predictable, long-term cash flow business. I also think new mobile payment system acceptance will have an impact in our industry.

What's the biggest reason for laundry owners in the Midwest to be optimistic?

All of the vended laundries that are updated and run well will continue to gain market share and grow. Also, equipment innovation will provide smart operators with distinct advantages over their competitors.

What are the keys to successful laundry ownership today?

The keys to success are fairly simple – know your customers, and give them what they want in terms of equipment and other services. Also, successful store owners will provide an environment where customers can get their laundry done quickly and in a safe, comfortable setting.

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