

Smart and sophisticated small dryers delivering big results

Primed for growth, Huebsch Services now
has 10 LAVATEC FL633 machines since
installing three more in the last six months

LAVATEC 
Laundry Technology Inc.



Key members of the Huebsch Services production team stand in front of the new LAVATEC gas dryers in the Eau Claire facility. From left: service manager Brian Lanners, uniform production lead Lacie McCann, president and CEO Jim Vaudreuil, and production supervisor Cory Knutson.

Companies like Huebsch Services in Eau Claire, Wisconsin don't prosper for more than 125 years by accident. They evolve over time, making adjustments with intuitive and calculated decisions to support philosophical foundations that position themselves for success in the marketplace.

The family operated uniform rental and floor mat company is also unique with fourth generation management in charge. As president and CEO, Jim Vaudreuil has endorsed lean manufacturing techniques since he joined the company in 1980.

Three years ago, he determined Lavatec Laundry Technology's front-loading FL633 gas dryer was the right choice for its high efficiency, smart engineering and other reasons. After buying three additional units at the CLEAN Show six months ago, 10 machines are now in operation in Eau Claire.

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Jim Vaudreuil, President and CEO

Exhibiting a pattern of success over time

Huebsch Services originally began in 1891 to service a growing lumber industry in west central Wisconsin. Throughout the years, needs have changed and so has Huebsch. In 1990, they developed the rental industry's first integrated bar code tracking system. Eleven years later, they did the same for the mat rental industry using RFID technology.

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Uniform production lead Lacie McCann adjusts a programmable temperature control that prevents garments from overheating, thereby extending the lifecycle of customers' garments.

They currently have over 6,000 customers in two states. The 55,000 square-foot corporate office and production facility in Eau Claire also takes care of other Wisconsin customers in Chippewa Falls, La Crosse and Rice Lake, in addition to Red Wing and Winona, Minnesota. After entering the Twin Cities market in 1985, Huebsch Services later built a 20,000 square-foot production and service center in Eagan, Minnesota, just minutes from customers in Minneapolis and St. Paul and its suburbs.

Vaudreuil recalls the journey with LAVATEC's FL633 dryers began nearly four years and over 4,000 miles ago.

"I was at the Texcare (International) show in Germany when I first talked to them. A friend of mine had bought their equipment and they were very happy with it. I thought it might also work for us.

"First of all, there were not many choices for equipment in this size category. We started out looking at what's called a CBW dryer, which is a small, high efficiency dryer that is normally hooked up to a continuous batch washer. The problem is the material handling is very difficult."

Not satisfied with those results, Vaudreuil saw the small dryer in the LAVATEC booth. It led to more conversations and there were several factors that figured into his decision to buying the first FL633's.

"Number one, it's the size of the machine. We were looking for relatively small dryers, in the ratio of two to one times the washer size," he said. "It actually fit exactly right. And two, it has the sophistication of any of the larger dryers in the industry as far as efficiency of drying. So it didn't really require much thinking when we had the right size and the efficiency."

Vaudreuil indicated his company prefers not to mix and match equipment. "We try to stay with one standardized machine. When we buy the first, it's either going to become junk if it doesn't work out or that's what we are going to stick with. If we find this to be the best option, that's what we're going to buy even if we can get something cheaper."

If he needed more convincing, Vaudreuil found it when he started adding things up.



Uniform production associate Jeremy Lawrence unloads material from a high efficiency LAVATEC FL633 gas dryer.

“We’re concerned with gas consumption and time, and these dryers dry very fast,” he said, drawing a comparison to make his point. “I did a load of laundry at home and it took 40 minutes to dry blue jeans. With the LAVATEC dryer, it takes 17 minutes so it’s really, really fast.

“I think it’s because of some of the design features,” he continued. “There are some things they are doing to make the FL633 that way. Some of it might be common for a lot of manufacturers but not with this small dryer, even though it is more expensive than something else that is the same size. But LAVATEC can show customers the time is meeting the gas consumption. It is a sturdy unit, so it’s worth buying the better dryer.”

Expectations, performance and results

The FL633 gas dryers on the floor in Eau Claire all look like they were put into operation at the same time – even the older ones. The machines run for ten hours a day, four days of the week, handling work wear that consists of all cotton, denim and polyester blends. The well-lit facility is exceptionally clean, reflective of an overall purpose that includes taking great care in doing preventive maintenance.

But their success is driven by the attention to small details that impact performance. Vaudreuil says it all begins at the front of the operation.

“The energy consumption is a big deal, but it’s also the fact that we keep getting the loads in and out fast. We wash everything in small batches so it’s important that the washing matches up with the dryer size,” he says proudly of his Taiwanese made washing machines and their lifecycle. LAVATEC’s reputation for equipment longevity is also well known, with some equipment still running after 25 years.

“These washing extractors have been in service for 17 years and we just rebuilt them. Because we use the same machine, we can take one off, swap it out with another and rebuild them. We make a point of taking care of our equipment and that’s why it lasts. I don’t know if these dryers are that heavy duty, but I certainly expect to get 17 years out of them.”

Vaudreuil says another key feature of the FL633 gas dryers is allowing the work wear to last longer.

“What’s important for us is the temperature control so we’re not scorching the garments. That’s our whole business,” he



remarked. “It’s hard to see day to day, but we noticed the garments are softer as a result because they don’t get overheated. It can be programmed that way, so part of the sophistication is that it’s a small dryer that is every bit as good as any of the best big dryers.”

Another winning factor with Vaudreuil is LAVATEC’s responsiveness from president Mark Thrasher and sales representative Jim Stiles.

“Even though it is German made equipment, I talk with Mark so I’m dealing with a U.S. company. We’re not importing from anyone, we are actually buying from a U.S. company and getting true quality,” he said.

“I’ve gotten to know Mark and have a good personal relationship with him. He and Jim Stiles have been very responsive and

their support has been very good. We made some design modifications after they worked with us to further improve the dryer. Overall we are very pleased.”

Vaudreuil concluded by saying this experience is keeping him open minded to other LAVATEC solutions.

“LAVATEC has really good technology and engineering to make these dryers so efficient. So the less gas we burn, the better off we are. I’m sure their larger dryers are really good, too,” he says before explaining his situation.

“We have a large dryer (from another manufacturer) that seemed like it was going to be really efficient when it was sold to me. It’s been very disappointing. I can compare it to what we get from the FL633, so I’m certainly going to take a hard look at bigger LAVATEC dryers in the future.”

About Lavatec Laundry Technology, Inc.

Delivering dependable commercial laundry equipment engineered for higher returns throughout their lifecycles has always been the Lavatec Laundry Technology (LLT) mission statement. A rarity among manufacturers of continuous tunnel washers, Lavatec LT offers center transfer, bottom transfer and double-drum construction options, plus a full range of readily integrated, end-to-end laundry system components: washer extractors, extraction presses, centrifuges, dryers, conveyor systems, pickers, feeders, ironers and folders. Simple design, durable construction, user-friendly operation and low maintenance are hallmarks of Lavatec LT machines. A global leader with equipment in laundry operations throughout Europe, the Far East, South and North America, in the United States alone, over 6,000 Load Warriors are in place. For additional information, visit www.LLTusa.com.

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