

# MOVING FROM FAST FOOD TO FAST LAUNDRY!



JANUARY 2015 • By Haley Jorgensen

Waters Express Laundry Center is fast! Showboating a 60-minute wash/dry/fold, the new card-operated laundry saves customers time and money. It's also green, convenient, secure and clean.



Located in Tampa, Fla., the high-speed store is the brainchild of Phil Irwin, a former McDonald's franchise owner looking to slow his pace. "I wanted a business where I didn't have to be hands on everyday," he said. "I wanted the freedom to do other things."

He ousted fast food for fast laundry when he discovered the Express Laundry Center® brand. A turnkey solution for new vended laundries, the Express Laundry Center brand teams high-speed Continental equipment with branded services, marketing assistance and management support. Irwin, who appreciates the power of a brand, liked that franchise-like concept. He appreciates the fact that although it may resemble a franchise in its business model and offerings, Express Laundry Center is free of fees and restrictions.

Like all Express Laundry Centers – but unlike the laundries nearby – Irwin's store boasts a 60-minute wash/dry/fold promise and is equipped for superior energy-efficiency, customer turnover and profit potential.

## Developing an Express Laundry Center

Developed with help from Carlos Noriega of Laundry Pro of Florida Inc., in Lakeland, Waters Express Laundry Center is located in a rental-rich area of Tampa on a busy intersection. The 3,200-square-foot store features a line up of Continental high-speed ExpressWash® Washers—four 90s, four 55s, 12 40s and 24 20s. There are also four 75-pound capacity, single-pocket

dryers and 16 each of dual-pocket 45- and 30-pound capacity stacks. Waters Express Laundry Center also offers full-service Drop & Shop (fluff and fold), Platinum Linen Service (commercial wash/dry/fold) and drop-off drycleaning.

"We've got 16 security cameras for safety, 24 parking spaces, three egresses, skid-resistant tile, LED lighting, free WIFI, vending machines and granite tables," said Irwin. Adding to its wow factor, Waters Express Laundry Center also houses five 47-inch televisions.

Everything in-store, including the bathrooms, are managed and/or accessed using the laundry's Card Concepts Card System.

The card system allows Irwin to quickly change washer programs or vend prices; track turns per day and income by machine; run operational reports; execute pricing specials and promotions; as well as build customer loyalty. "From my home computer, I can log into the store and change any aspect of any washer program anytime," said Irwin. The card system and its management interface works seamlessly with the store's high-speed washers.



2500 State Road 44 • Oshkosh, WI 54904  
920-231-8222 • Fax 920-231-4666  
800-256-1073 • [www.continentalgirbau.com](http://www.continentalgirbau.com)



## Customers Enjoy More Wash Options

Waters Express Laundry Center is among the first laundries in the country to feature the new ProfitPlus® Control, which is now standard on all ExpressWash Washer-Extractors. The control offers four primary cycle options: SUPERWASH, an extra-long cycle for heavy soil; HOT, for whites; WARM for colorfast and permanent press items; and COLD for colors. Moreover, it allows the customer to add an EXTRA WASH, EXTRA RINSE and/or DELICATE CYCLE. Customers enjoy having more control over the wash process, according to Irwin.

"ProfitPlus has been a boon for us," he said. "Anytime you can offer customers more choices and options, it sets you apart from the competition. The control is absolutely impacting our bottom line." Customers select an extra wash, extra rinse or delicate cycle 28 percent of the time, and with each selection, pay an additional 50 cents.

## 60-Minute Promise

While customers enjoy more control over their laundry, they also relish finishing it sooner. No other laundry in the area allows customers to completely wash, dry and fold in under an hour. This marketing hook – a promise to finish laundry in 60 minutes – sets Waters Express Laundry Center apart. Additionally, customers feel good knowing they are supporting a green-focused operation where saving water, natural gas and electricity are a priority.

All Express Laundry Centers are equipped with ExpressWash Washers—high-speed machines that generate

extract speeds reaching 384 G-force. The washers remove considerably more water from each load, when compared with traditional hard-mount washers. Thus, laundry loads come out of the washer with less moisture—shortening subsequent dry time by up to 50 percent. Dryers run less often, which conserves natural gas and electricity. Simultaneously, water-stingy washers, a highly efficient Hamilton water heater, LED lighting and low-flow faucets and toilets contribute to ensure utility costs are measly—making up just 9.7 percent of store revenue.

There's no doubt Waters Express Laundry Center boasts the area's largest washers at 90-pounds of capacity. The hefty machines – which take on bulky comforters, rugs, sleeping bags, moving blankets and family-sized loads – feature automatic injection of hypoallergenic detergent and softener. As a result, customers just load and press start.

Irwin added automatic chemical injection on half of his 55s as a result of the 90s' popularity. "I get more turns out of the 55s with the auto inject," he said. "Customers started asking for it on the 40s so I added it on a couple of them. Those washers are doing well and are used a lot for our Drop & Shop service."

## Robust Drop & Shop Service

Full-service Drop & Shop and Platinum Linen Service already make up 20 percent of store revenue. Irwin expects that percentage to steadily grow as his laundry pursues additional commercial accounts. "We have a caterer who is thrilled with our stain management because it saves him purchasing new inventory," said Irwin. "The main thing with commercial is

getting out and showing small business people our convenience and cost savings."

## Consistent Marketing Key to Building Business

That's why spreading the word through marketing is critical. Irwin cleverly intertwines the laundry's unique benefits into messages heard and seen in and out of the store. Attendants are trained to deliver scripted customer tours that overview equipment and card system operation; point out laundry benefits; and boost awareness of full-service offerings. Meanwhile, similar marketing messages are delivered via direct mail advertising, signage, social media, public relations and the laundry's website. Most of the marketing pieces and campaigns are developed with help from Continental Creative Services, a firm specializing in the laundry industry.

"I allocate 5 percent of revenue to marketing," said Irwin. "We're currently gearing up for a media push to increase Drop & Shop sales," he said.

Through targeted marketing and unique offerings, Waters Express Laundry Center has filled a niche in Tampa. In just 10 months, its recipe for success has resulted in an average of 6.2 turns per day on the self-service side, and a growing full-service business segment making up 20 percent of total store revenue.

*Discover more about Waters Express Laundry Center at [www.watersexpresslaundry.com](http://www.watersexpresslaundry.com).*

*Find out more about Express Laundry Centers at [www.continentalgirbau.com](http://www.continentalgirbau.com) or call 800-256-1073.*