**Making Service & Support “PC”—a “Personal Commitment”**

**Braun and the philosophy & practice of superior customer service**

*Scott Paton*

Built-in obsolescence. Products that are cheaper to replace than repair have become the modern-day norm. Computers, appliances and televisions, just to name a few, are among our tech essentials that are now more likely headed to the scrap heap than a repair shop. But for the professional laundry concern, where a single component of the wash-side/finishing process may be valued well into six-figures, reliable, consistent equipment is not only demanded by professionals, it is critical.

Odds are that the TV that you are watching is not 50 years old. Nor is the car you’re driving unless, of course, it has an historic license plate affixed to it. But around the world, there are washing machines and dryers, assembled a half-century ago –with the G.A. Braun imprimatur affixed—that are still rendering textiles as clean and dry as they did five decades earlier.

“It amazes me,” says David Clark, Braun’s VP of Aftermarket Operation & Customer Service, “how much of our vintage equipment is still in service around the world. Getting a request for replacement parts for a 50-year-old machine from a laundry in Africa is astonishing, but not entirely uncommon.”

Superior craftsmanship, of course, is essential to the long life of any product, but professional service and maintenance are the key components to sustaining even the best-manufactured equipment. However, according to [a recent study](https://www.conference-board.org/publications/publicationdetail.cfm?publicationid=7193) from the corporate-research organization The Conference Board, among the professions facing the largest percentage risk of labor shortages are plant and system operators—skilled technicians and engineers charged with running and maintaining industrial-grade machinery.

The laundry industry is not exempt from this prevailing trend, and a majority of leading wash & finishing equipment providers must outsource their support and service provision to independent contractors. But not Braun, says Dave Clark. “We have 21 field service techs situated around the U.S. and Canada, and strategically located to provide rapid support to the highest concentration of our clients nationwide. We have comparable operations enabled overseas. Every one of those techs are Braun, factory-trained and certified employees; we don’t subcontract out to other service providers.”

Felipe Carrasco, Manager of Laundry Operations for the MGM Grand in Las Vegas says that proximity, however, is not the predominant factor in the quality of service he receives from Braun—it’s commitment. “I have the direct cell number to our Braun support engineer. When we’ve had a question or needed any kind of service assistance, he responds immediately—always within hours, and certainly always thesame day. I’ve never needed to call higher up in the management chain. Our relationship is more than that of a vendor and client—it’s personal. We share a mutual respect, a friendship.”

"In Summer 2014, we made the decision to purchase new equipment. We shopped and received quotes from several manufacturers and, after checking references, we chose Braun. Our decision was not based upon price alone, we considered service (before and after the sale), reliability of the equipment, availability of parts and technical assistance. These are just as important as the price.

“The equipment has been all that was promised. Our Braun sales representative went above and beyond what was expected. He was here the entire time the equipment was being installed and came back several times over the next several weeks to ensure our complete satisfaction. He continues to stop and inquire about our needs, the performance of the equipment and to offer any advice that can help us become more efficient.

“I would not hesitate to refer Braun equipment to any other industrial laundry.”

**Todd Deaton, Executive Vice President**
[Wildman Uniform and Linen](http://wildmanuniform.com/)

“Our field reps are indeed talented and superb individuals,” echoes Braun’s Dave Clark, “but frequently, simply a phone call to our support line can resolve a majority of questions or issues. We have three people on our Help Desk 24/7. In troubleshooting a client’s service issue, we initially will talk with a member or two of their own maintenance crew. We attempt to diagnose the problem at-hand, and then walk them through procedures to correct it. Failing that, we will get their area Braun Service & Support rep out to their facility, often the same-day.”

Braun’s Help Desk is a free-service which clients can access for as long as they have purchased Braun equipment in their wash or finishing aisle. Additionally, upon the installation of any new or Braun Certified Remanufactured Equipment, Braun provides on-site training for their clients’ staffs—not only operational instruction –wet-side to finishing—but aspects of basic maintenance, general repair and trouble-shooting.

But perhaps Braun’s most unique offering is their General Service School, which welcomes clients, free-of-charge, at their manufacturing plant in Syracuse, New York. These two-to-three-day seminars are held twice a year –spring and fall—and address the aforementioned aspects of operation, maintenance, service and more.

The MGM Grand’s Felipe Carrasco took advantage of this extraordinary offering. “Yes, we sent our Chief Engineer, Senior Washer and Plant Manager to Braun’s headquarters for training. “It was quite valuable in enabling us to handle matters of routine maintenance and preventing any problems before they occur.”

Above and beyond these free initiatives, VP David Clark emphasizes that Braun will provide *any* degree of service and support that their customers may request. “Our *Custom* Service School is a billable, advanced training program that can be held at our clients’ facilities or locations of their choosing. And this initiative is tailored *specifically* to the customer’s unique needs and their equipment on-site.

“We also provide maintenance contracts that can be customized to meet the demands of any size enterprise, wherever they may be located. Some prefer the periodic visits entailed in our Site Wellness Program. These are scheduled equipment checks to ensure the consistency of their operations. We can provide these diagnostics bi-weekly, monthly, quarterly –any degree of frequency—at their discretion.”

Braun provided complete training for our team, both our operations and engineering professionals. We appreciate Braun’s level of commitment to the customer and their attention to detail.”

**Banba Niang, Director of Environmental Services**
St. Joseph's Healthcare Laundry - Savannah, GA

And what of the aforementioned Braun Certified Remanufactured Equipment? Certain perceptions characterize the term “remanufactured” as used or second-hand. We weighed in with another Braun client for *his* perspective.

NorthStar Mat Service of Wixom, Michigan is currently celebrating its 50th Anniversary, servicing the Healthcare, Hospitality and Property Management industries. John Sloan is the president and owner, helming a successful enterprise founded by his father in 1968. Since joining the family business at the tender age of 14, John has witnessed the evolution of wash technology first-hand. And in recent years, he has had the opportunity to avail himself of it.

“In 2013, we purchased three Braun washers and two dryers. The products were remanufactured. Braun’s rep never attempted to sell us anything more than we needed but, honestly, the equipment looked brand new.”

Dave Clark chimes in. “We pride ourselves on our Braun Certified Remanufactured Equipment. We strip it down to its basic steel housing, refinish it, replace components, re-wire it and it’s virtually new. We had a customer a few years back who took delivery on a remanufactured product and, immediately upon delivery, he called us and said, ‘There must be a mistake. You sent us a brand new machine!’ We got a kick out of that.”

NorthStar’s John Sloan describes the impact that upgrading to Braun equipment had on his enterprise.“Just five years ago, our employees would have to manually hoist soaking wet, 20-foot floor mats from split-pocket washers onto the industrial equivalent of old-fashioned clotheslines. After the installation of the Braun equipment, sling bags of mats are automatically lifted directly from washers to dryers.”

“We immediately began to be able to wash and finish our products up to three times faster which, of course, translates to faster turnaround, as well as being able to increase our volume. Things like that are measurable. Elements that *aren’t* are things like employee morale. When you provide them with superior equipment and the training to use it to its full potential –making their jobs easier *and* more productive—I can assure you—you’ve got a happier staff. What we *really* bought with Braun equipment and their ongoing service and support was efficiency.”

Of course, superior products and service are only two-thirds of a successful equation. When a vital equipment part is required, machines come to a screeching halt until that part is sourced and implemented. Who are you going to call? If you’re a Braun customer—the Braun Parts Desk. Remember that 50-year-old machine in an African laundry? “We may still have that vintage part that someone needs,” says Dave Clark. “But if not, we’ll help them find it. The Parts Desk phone line is manned from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm EST, or if customers know precisely what they need, they can go to our website and order there, 24/7.

“Our extensive inventory consists of Braun, OEM (Original Equipment Manufactured) parts, not secondary-market,” clarifies Clark. “Many of the latter are sourced and fabricated overseas, often resulting in substandard quality and long-wait times for delivery. Our refurbished parts (R-Parts) are of comparable quality to our Braun Certified Remanufactured Equipment and, of course, are fully warrantied. Many of our field service vans may have the needed parts nearby but, if not, any part in our warehouse in upstate New York is only an overnight package away.”

Braun clients calling either the Help or Parts Desk are often startled to be greeted by a customer service rep who greets them by name, and with a working knowledge of what they may need. Again, VP Dave Clark. “Our in-call receiving system is state-of-the-art. We monitor how many times the phone rings before a customer is greeted by a rep or goes to voicemail. We not only capture the origin of the call, we can instantly retrieve their call history and detailed information on their service issues. And even if a message is not left in voicemail, we will return the customer’s call the same day if received during business hours.”

We have had a 32-year partnership with Braun that has served us extremely well. Over this period of time they have supplied us with complete plant solutions from batch tunnels, conventional washers, to finishing equipment. In each case we have found their product to be indestructible, and the cost of ownership and operation very low.

What has impressed me most about Braun is that they always visit me and my staff to make certain things are well, and they do this regardless of whether I am buying equipment or not. This is not only a partnership, but a friendship! I will continue to work with Braun!

**Mr. Jung, President**
Ambassador Laundry, Eujong Group - Seoul, Korea

As Manager of Laundry Operations of one of the biggest hospitality concerns in the U.S., we asked Felipe Carrasco if he often receive entreaties from Braun’s competitors. “Oh yes, constantly,” Felipe chuckles. “On one occasion, a rep from another big brand offered me a multiple-month, trial use of a $200k machine—for free!” Carrasco, however, was not tempted. “Braun’s products, their support and response, and our relationship is far too valuable to our operations here at the MGM Grand and to me personally.”

John Sloan seconds that sentiment. “I can’t say enough about Braun products, service and support. They’ve truly been game-changers for NorthStar Mats. Honestly, I wouldn’t do business with anyone else.”

David Clark, Braun’s VP of Aftermarket Operation & Customer Service, is humbled by these testimonials, but confesses that he is not surprised. “Good service pays dividends; ultimately, it does not cost the provider. At Braun, we believe that our commitment to exceptional service is not only our best investment, it truly *is* a personal commitment. If we are fair, reasonable and reliable partners with our clients, we win together.”

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