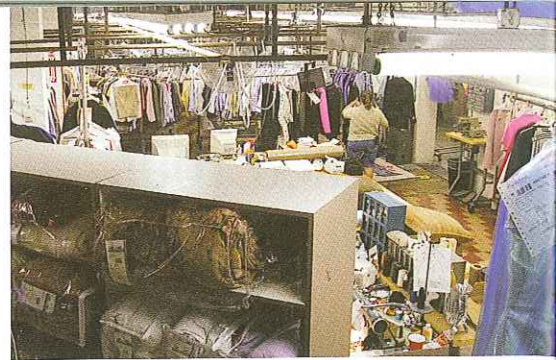


award of excellence



Arrow Fabricare earned all nine Award of Excellence icons, making it one of only a few drycleaning businesses to complete the program. Top, a view of Arrow's production facility. Lower right, Plant Manager Jim Roddy and President and CEO Bruce Gershon pose by the Award of Excellence poster displaying all nine icons.

Arrow Fabricare Flies Straight and True

Exceptional Business Hits Bullseye with All Nine AOE Icons

By Harry A. Kimmel III, Senior Editor

Everything about Arrow Fabricare in Kansas City, Missouri, is aimed at excellence. In 95 years of growth the Gershon family never failed to reinvest in quality cleaning, excellent service, new equipment, and new technology. Perhaps even more critical to Arrow's success is the overall Gershon philosophy of taking care of the people who make the company run. Offering top customer service, benefiting the community that supports the company, and being an employer of choice ensure Arrow Fabricare hits the bullseye.

Part of being an employer of choice means taking care of your people. Arrow's President and CEO Bruce Gershon said training goes a long way toward showing respect for employees. In fact, sending one of their top employees to DLI's School of Drycleaning Technology for the ten day Advanced Drycleaning Course not only demonstrated his trust in his Plant Manager, Jim Roddy, but it also helped Arrow land all nine of the Award of Excellence icons. Arrow Fabricare is only the third drycleaning company to accomplish this quasi-Herculean task.

"We're definitely proud of all we've accomplished," Gershon said. "I attended the meeting that launched the Award of Excellence program in 2005 and we signed up right away" As Arrow took stock of the requirements for AOE status, Gershon realized that the minimum wasn't enough for him. He had to go all the way.

"As we were going through the application process we wanted to learn more about the qualifications for the Award," Gershon said. "As we went through it we realized we were already doing most of the things we needed to do, such as Community Service projects and continuing education."

EDUCATION

Gershon earned his Certified Environmental Drycleaner standing a few years ago and wanted to expand. "I decided to take all of the tests and become a Certified Garment Care Professional," he said. "Another employee attained his Certified Professional Wetcleaner. We then determined that we and Jim would benefit from his taking the Advanced Drycleaning Course at DLI's school." Roddy graduated DLI's school in August only two points shy of a perfect score in the class, said Brian Johnson, DLI Director of Education and Technical Services.

"I won't say that was the hardest icon to achieve," Gershon said, "but it was the most expensive. Sending an employee to a two-week training course incurs a lot of costs. First there's airfare, then hotels, the cost of the course itself, and then the employee's wages while he's away from the plant." Gershon added that though the price tag was high he is certain Roddy's training will repay the company many times over.



Three certifications, continuing education, civic and environmental responsibility, supreme service, inspections, and excellent cleaning and stain removal all help distinguish AOE plants.

STAIN REMOVAL

Perhaps the most difficult challenge in gaining acceptance to the Award of Excellence is the stain removal swatch. A delicate silk swatch is prepared with six difficult stains and five of them must be completely removed. This alone has proved itself to be too much of a challenge for many cleaners. Cleaners who cannot successfully complete the stain removal competency test are given multiple opportunities to try again. Those who fail are denied entry to the program. These are perhaps the program's sharpest teeth.

Though it may be too much of a challenge for some, many cleaners have been able to completely remove all six of the stains and earn the Exceptional Stain Removal icon. Arrow is one such company.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Arrow Fabricare generously contributes to the community in which it operates. Gershon said the company teamed up with nearby cleaners to provide more than 11,000 coats for kids during a recent campaign. The coats will be distributed at area schools.

INSPECTED FACILITY AWARD

Gershon was sponsoring a stain removal seminar lead by Jane Rising when he got an idea. "Since we were having a DLI instructor come to our plant, I thought, why not have her do an inspection? That would help us see if we're lacking anywhere and help with the Award." The plant passed with flying colors. A look at some of the photos Gershon provided show a stunningly clean and hyper-efficient plant. Gershon said the company employees a full-time janitor to keep the plant sparkling.

EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

All employees of Arrow Fabricare receive medical, dental, and vision insurance. Perhaps that explains why many of them have been there for longer than ten years. "When unemployment was at an all-time low and it was very difficult to find and keep good employees I realized that I'm not just competing with other drycleaners for good people, I'm competing with some large companies such as UPS who offer incredible benefits," Gershon said. "This is a business that can't just be picked up very quickly. There is a lot to it

and having good people who know what to do is priceless."

By offering benefits and paying higher wages Gershon is able to defeat the high cost of turnover. "We had two people retire after 19 years with us. It takes a lot to try to replace the knowledge they had. It is very costly to train an employee to get them up to that level and we do that when we have to."

Gershon's secret is to treat the company the same as family. "We're just a big family," he said. "We treat everyone with respect and our employees know how much we value them. We have two route drivers who have been with us for 16 years. A lady who helps us with marketing joined in 1985 and recently retired. She is now helping out part time when we need her. Our longest-term employee, aside from my father and I, is approaching her 30th anniversary with the company. These people really do become part of your family. It's an honor to work with them."

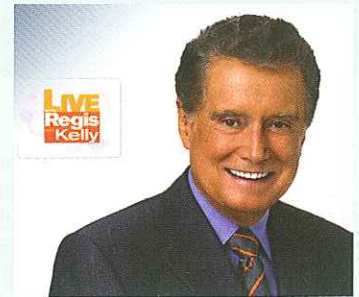
ON THE MARK

Arrow Fabricare is celebrating its 95th year in business. Joseph Gershon, Bruce's grandfather, founded the company as Arrow Cleaners and Tailors in 1914. In 1945 the company moved to the building that serves as the mid-section of the current complex. In 1947 Bruce's father, Robert Gershon, joined the company upon his return from World War II. Robert focused primarily on the leather and fur cleaning side of the operation in the mid-1950s.

"Dad is still here. He's 83 and still going strong," Gershon said. "He lives to come to work and it is wonderful to be able to work with him."

Over the years the company grew through acquisitions or just natural growth. Gershon said. "But we never changed our business model, and that is to keep a centralized location and bring the cleaning in with route trucks." Gershon himself started at the age of 19 as a route truck driver before working his way up to his present role of de facto General Manager.

Today Arrow Fabricare encompasses nearly an entire city block. The company provides solid jobs with exceptional benefits for 75 employees and is known from far and wide as the go-to cleaner. See the sidebar on Regis' wife's jacket for proof that their services are known from coast to coast.



Regis Philbin's Reaction Demonstrates Arrow's Excellence to National Audience

ONE DAY IN 2001 A PARTICULARLY INTERESTING GARMENT ARRIVED AT ARROW FABRICARE. BRUCE GERSHON TELLS THE STORY:

Here's how it happened. Joy Philbin (Regis' wife), during a cooking demonstration on an earlier show, spilled oil on a beautiful and very expensive leather jacket. Show production personnel, after researching where to get the jacket cleaned and restored, learned from North Beach Leather's Manhattan store in New York City, that Arrow Leathercare of Kansas City was universally recommended as the best in the nation for fine leather cleaning.

So, the jacket was shipped to us...quickly cleaned & restored...sent back to New York...and was opened by Regis & Kelly during the show the next day. They found a perfect job... Our many thanks to Regis Philbin and his wife for the wonderful coverage and very kind words.

Regis actually opened the box on live television saying, "This better be good Arrow Fabricare." After he opened the box his eyes popped and he smiled saying, "The stain is gone! Very nice job! Thank you Arrow!"