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TOP TEN SECRETS FOR KEEPING TENT TOPS CLEAN

1. **WILLINGNESS TO CHANGE THE MINDSET**

Many times, you can use what you already have, often for little or no money. Doing this requires focusing on efficiencies; developing systems and analyzing what does and doesn't work. When implementing new systems, make them repeatable and trainable. You might also want to consider mechanizing; eliminating the labor that is repetitive, mundane and morale-busting.

2. **HAVE & USE THE RIGHT CHEMICALS**

If you're going to keep tent tops clean, you have to have the right chemicals for YOU. Each city or region has its own type of dirt—what works in California will not necessarily work in Texas or New York.

- Water quality can vary greatly from region to region, and since cleaning chemicals are usually mixed with water, it's important to realize this. Soft water is usually the best to work with while hard water is often the worst; hard water requires special chemicals or machines that make the water soft so that the chemicals will be effective.
- You might find that certain chemicals work well for cleaning but are hard on the material, the vinyl or the webbing or stitching.
- Another big thing to consider is rinse-ability. You need to always thoroughly rinse all chemicals from the tent. Chemical build-up is bad for the material and can compromise or weaken the stitching.
- Know that the right chemical or cleaning solution for you may cost more, but in the long run, if it cleans better, requires less labor and time, it will be a worthwhile investment.
- And finally, take the time to test different chemicals to figure out what works best!

3. **CONTROLLING MOLD**

Mold is the enemy and it develops quickly, depending on what part of the country you're in. The key to keeping your tents mold free is keeping them DRY.

- If you don't have to take a tent down wet—don't! If the weather might be rainy, you can ask your customer up front if you can keep the tent up for another day or two to let it dry.
- Consider developing a system for a temporary second shift. If you know it's going to be raining when you're taking tents down, assemble a second shift to wipe the tents down. By utilizing this second shift, you are also utilizing floor space that would not typically be in use at that time.



- You might want to re-design the layout in your warehouse, not creating new space but creating drying racks with beams on them so the tents can go up quickly and hang squarely. Then, add ceiling fans and/or fans that can blow air from the floor up. Hang the tents at 6pm; by 6am, they should be dry.
- Develop a system that starts with creating a position. Some companies have a “fabric manager,” especially if they use a lot of medium or larger size tents. This person can coordinate all the cleaning as well as the systems and locations as to how and where the cleaning will be done. This puts a concentrated effort on everything that’s coming back in and allows for quicker turn-around times.
- You could also consider getting a tent dryer. A tent dryer will dry everything in a set amount of time no matter how busy you are.

4. MAXIMIZING YOUR CURRENT SPACE

Ask this question: What would it be like if I could wash and dry all my tent tops when I need them, in my current space? If you ask this question, you really have to have a willingness to change and think outside the box. The #1 complaint/challenge we hear when it comes to washing and drying tents is that there isn’t enough space to keep up. Again, systems can be developed and implemented to remedy this. The following scenarios can help you maximize your current space:

- With a second shift—utilize that space at times it wouldn’t normally be used.
- Use high-efficiency drying racks
- Use a “table system” for washing and drying. Set up large tables, put the fabric on them, spray or mist on high-end chemicals and then wipe off. This can work well because it can be set up quickly, gets the tents clean and they don’t have to be dried. It’s a little more cumbersome to deal with but you’re eliminating the drying and you’re not having to create any extra space in the building to do it.
- Another system to consider: Implement a “just in time” washing system. You could store the tents dirty, then run a second shift and wash the tents right before they have to go out.
- Tent Washing Machines are a great option; they offer great turn-around times and take up far less space than is required to hand wash.

5. TRACK YOUR FLOW COSTS

Understand and evaluate all the costs of dirty tents and then take that money and use it to develop and invest in better systems to help you gain control, be consistent and eventually, ultimately, eliminate many of the flow costs. Questions to ask yourself while examining these costs:

- What would it be like if I could control the costs and eliminate my off-season washing by 90%?
- What would it be like if I could keep up in the busy season; reduce my dirty pile by 80%?
- What would it be like if my employees had a better attitude about washing?
- What would it be like if we had systems and tools to get and keep tops in A-grade condition and as a result, not have to buy new tops every year?
- What if I could reduce the number of employees it takes to wash, and if we got more washing done in the same amount of space?



- What would it be like to have better employee retention and not have to constantly hire new people?

6. GET YOUR TENTS PROFESSIONALLY CLEANED

We recommend doing this at least once or twice a year; in between, you can hand wash and spot clean. The professional cleaners will offer the deepest clean possible and can help eliminate or greatly reduce your winter washing. Here are some helpful tips on dealing with professional cleaners:

- Check both their reputation and methodology. Are they using the equipment properly-- loading things in the right way, washing and rinsing in the right temperatures and do they put pin-holes in the material? They may have the right equipment, but if they're not using it correctly, it could cause you problems.
- Do they return materials completely dry? The possibility of mold is the chief concern here.
- Has the material been thoroughly rinsed, leaving no chemical residue? Chemical build-up is bad for material and stitching.
- If they are not able to dry the material, do you get a discount or better rate? (you would also get them back faster)
- Bear in mind timing. If you send material in during the beginning of the slow season, it's likely that more time will be taken with it and that you'll get it back faster. If you have to have things cleaned in the busy season, it's a good idea to call in advance and schedule a time. Also, tell them what kind of load you're bringing (how much) so they'll know what to expect and be better prepared.

7. DON'T GET THE TENT TOPS DIRTY

Sure, this seems obvious and of course some dirt is inevitable but there are ways to keep it to a minimum and it's in the training. Train your employees to use drop cloths or bags to put down and to handle the tops in a way that they don't get as dirty.

8. THE RIGHT TOOLS & TRAINING

Training gives employees the chance to do a better job by improving morale and reducing fatigue; it will also help improve employee retention. The same school of thought can be applied to using the right tools—and using tools right (correctly).

- Use a terry cloth rag for cleaning—it gets into the nooks and crannies better and takes less effort.
- Wash on a smooth surface! This will help keep your tents from getting so torn up in the washing process. Smooth concrete works great.
- Use a soft bristle brush, not a stiff one. A stiff bristled brush can harm the vinyl. You want to use a finer brush with very light pressure.
- If using mops, go to a roofing supply store and buy the heavier mop—it will pick up and retain more dirt and the actual weight of the mop itself will offer better cleaning pressure.
- If the environment is hot (summer), have your employees work at night or in the early morning as opposed to working in the heat of the day.
- If you use a floor polisher, buy a good one—one that's light-weight and with lower RPM's and use the softest pad you can. Train your employees how to



properly and effectively use the polisher; if it's used incorrectly, you risk damaging tearing up the tent. If used correctly, it should do a decent job cleaning your tents.

9. TENT WASHING MACHINE

A tent washing machine will give you the most thorough clean, can work 24/7, never complains, and gives consistent results and control. These machines are designed specifically for tent washing and are available in many different sizes for all sized companies. You'll be able to keep you're A-grade tops in A-grade condition for an average of 5-7 years and increase your inventory utilization by 80-90%.

10. DON'T RE-INVENT THE WHEEL

If you have an issue or problem, call a company similar to yours in the region. You can also call your peers—you can find them through the IFAI, the ARA, MANTRA or TRAM—any organization that has tent rental people involved with it. Or, call us and we will do our best to link you up with someone! Keep in mind, that if you call on your peers, you will need to be open to new practices and sharing your experiences. Also keep in mind that you can call us for a free consultation—we'll be glad to listen to where you are and help with getting where you want to be!

P.S. How about eliminating dirty tents from your business all together?! Take advantage of this free offer to learn how hundreds of tent rental companies across the world have done just that. GO To www.teecosolutions.com/tent-cleaning-book-free-offer TO FIND OUT HOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FREE RESOURCE!