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Cloister Wash and Lube

The Building of the World's Largest Car Washes

A Study of What Has Made Cloister Successful

By Bob Ruhe

On September 6, 2005, I stood with Mike Mountz on the 8 acre site of his newest “world’s largest car wash,” a 44,000 sq. ft. under roof facility on Rt. 724 in Reading, PA. This is the second time in the last five years he has built the “world’s largest car wash”. The first time was in Lancaster, PA in 1999. The Lancaster facility was 40,000 sq. ft. under roof on 3 acres at the intersection of Rt. 30 and Manheim Pike. There was nothing like it when Lancaster opened, and according to Mountz, Lancaster will pale in comparison to the new Reading complex. Mountz owns two other facilities in Ephrata and York, PA. The size of the Cloister facilities is impressive, but this is not a study on size. This is a study on how an entrepreneur took a vision and made it a reality. This is about how a man and his team followed rules and broke rules and created a business unlike any other before it. This is about doing the right things (often in the face of high risk), and how gearing a business to delight customers leads to financial success.

It is impossible to disconnect Mountz from Cloister or Cloister from Mountz. They are inextricably linked. I know this because I have known Mike Mountz for 30 years; I knew his family and worked with Mike and his father at Morgan Corporation, the world's largest manufacturer of truck bodies. I have talked at length with long standing employees of Cloister. I even worked at Cloister in 1999 and 2000 during the time the Lancaster car wash was launched. I recently spent two days with Mountz to collect information for this paper, and learned how his deep religious faith inspires and guides him. This business and Mike Mountz found each other. There is a unique fit between the owner and the business, a synergy unlike any I have seen, and it's the first lesson to take away from this study. Take the time to know your strengths and weaknesses and your personal likes and dislikes. Find a business that is in harmony with what you are good at and with what you like to do. If an entrepreneur can find this fit they can create magic. All you have to do is visit one of the Cloister facilities and you will see this magic at work.

Mike Mountz was born in 1952 in Morgantown, PA. His family owned Morgan Trailer Manufacturing (now called Morgan Corporation). Mike was dyslexic and dropped out of school after the 9th grade. Dyslexia wasn't understood as it is today, and Mountz struggled for years wondering if he had the intellectual skills he would need to forge a career outside of plant work. Mountz overcame his poor reading and writing skills by using skills he was blessed with— an extraordinary amount of common sense, a keen eye for people and what they wanted, a hunter's instinct for tracking down information, and mechanical abilities that would amaze the most highly trained engineer. He worked for

Morgan until the early 80s in various roles including time as Human Resources Manager—the position he held when he left the company. His background in HR will serve him well in 2006 when Cloister’s full and part time peak employment will approach 1000 people. Mountz found work where he could after leaving Morgan, including a stint as a lumberjack. He looked for a business to buy for years, often knocking on doors to inquire, and that tenacity would lead him to a small and run-down car wash in Ephrata, PA. Mountz bought the Ephrata Car Wash in 1984.

This is not a paper on the building of Cloister just because the facilities are the largest of their kind in the world. But it is important you understand the size of the operation. There are four car washes in Ephrata, York, Lancaster, and Reading, PA. The Reading facility is scheduled to open mid-December of 2005. Each location has a lube shop except York. The lube facilities also do state inspections, but they do not do the work if the car does not pass inspection. The Reading facility will feature a motorcycle wash and a pet wash. The pet wash idea got started in California and is starting to catch on throughout the country. The Ephrata facility is the only “average” facility. The size of a car wash is measured by the number of cars washed per hour. Mountz told me 100 cars per hour is considered good by ICA (International Car Wash) parameters. The Ephrata facility can wash 150 cars per hours, York 175 cars per hour, Lancaster 185 cars per hour (370 per hour if you operate both tunnels), and Reading is designed to do a whopping 220 cars per hour. When Reading is fully operational sales will approach \$13,000,000 per year, and the projected car count through the wash and lubes will be close to 700,000 per year. While this is not General Motors in scope, it is massive when compared to industry

standards, and size has never gotten in the way of quality or customer service. How did Mountz build this impressive operation geared to volume, while at the same time taking customer service and quality standards to a new level?

Overcoming Adversity and the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Overcoming adversity and the entrepreneurial spirit is the foundation cloister is built on. Add two other ingredient—perseverance and enthusiasm, and you have a high-powered formula for success. I asked Mountz if he ever thought of giving up or selling his company. I know he has had more than his share of adversity. His answer was a resounding “never,” with a tone that made it clear the thought has never entered his mind. Mountz has overcome his share of obstacles: he is dyslexic, he has fallen into states of depression that he almost didn’t return from, he was sent to death’s doorstep after a serious bout with Lyme Disease, he has fought with Townships for variances so he could build his facilities the way he wanted, he has suffered construction overruns that would have sent less confident men and their banks into a tailspin. His business is dependent on the weather, and for many years weather conditions played havoc on a company that was tight on cash. But through all of these problems Mountz just kept at it—never backing off and always forging one step closer to his vision, a vision you can see when you look at the photos included with this paper. Perseverance and overcoming adversity are a big part of entrepreneurial success—it’s the guts part of the journey, but there’s a lot more to it than that. An entrepreneur needs to be tough and work hard, but he also needs vision and wisdom and that’s what I want to explore next. What fundamentals of successful

entrepreneurship did Mountz follow that allowed him to build a car wash and lube company that is the envy of his industry? Here are five fundamental business building attributes that Mike Mountz exemplifies:

- Follow your vision at the risk of losing security. Mike Mountz had the security of a family business. But Mountz had a dream to own a business by the time he was 30. Once he found the business his vision kicked in. Mountz told me that the most difficult challenge he had in the beginning “was to get people to see his vision.” This was most frustrating to him when he was trying to recruit or retain top-notch people to work at his car wash. “Let’s face it, a car wash is not a glamorous place to work,” Mountz said. Mountz laughs when he reflects on this today. Because his vision has become a reality, and others can see it, he has no trouble recruiting top notch professionals to work for Cloister.
- Get it done. In addition to vision, Mountz has incredible focus. He is efficient and demands that the job be done right, but more important, he is effective because he focuses on working on the things that impact the business most. Mountz will tell you his strengths are the ability to put it together and the ability to get it done. Successful entrepreneurs like Mike Mountz don’t talk about it—they do it.
- Learn from others. Mike Mountz is one of the most innovative people I know—he is an idea man, but he also learns from others. Mountz seeks out leaders in his field to test new products, production methods, and marketing ideas. He knows that good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from good and bad decisions. Mountz is quick to use the experiences of others to guide him with decisions he makes for his business.

- Give Your Customer What They Want. Mountz charges premium prices at his facilities. For example, the average ticket amount in York is \$16.70. He can command high prices because he understands his target customer. His target customer is a professional, with little time to spare, who drives a nice car and likes nice things. Cleanliness, choice, and comfort are important to Cloister's target customer. He also knows his target customer doesn't want to be "nickel and dimed" to death. A Cloister facility is an experience to visit—clean, beautifully landscaped, with antiques and original art everywhere. Employees wear uniforms, there is a no tipping policy, and there's no charge for refreshments.
- Inch by inch it's a cinch. Patience isn't typically thought of as a quality of a successful entrepreneur. Mountz always knew the vision he had when he purchased the Ephrata Wash in 1984 would be decades in the making. He methodically pursued his vision—one change, one innovation, one new product or service, one customer, and one location at a time. Mountz has been appropriately patient, which has allowed him to build his business on a foundation of bedrock. He has always been prepared to wait in order to do it right.

How Attention to Detail Helped Build the Business

Mike Mountz tinkers. He tinkers with the appearance of his facilities, he tinkers with production processes, he tinkers with chemicals, he tinkers with coupon packages, he tinkers with ad concepts, he tinkers with the merchandising he does in Customerland, he tinkers with artwork, he tinkers with signs, he tinkers with community service

programs... he just tinkers, and this attention to detail has helped to separate his company from the competition. His penchant for getting things just the way he wants can be maddening, but his 6th sense for what will work or make a difference to a customer has led him to breakthroughs even experienced operators advised him not to pursue. Visit any location and you'll see attention to detail at work. The buildings and grounds are as clean as the cars that leave them. Flowers are everywhere. Signs aren't just signs, they are works of art. Everyone is friendly and professionally dressed. There's more behind the scenes. For example, Mountz has formulated a window cleaner that creates a lot of foam when applied to windows. I asked about the foam and Mountz told me it was designed so customers who are watching their car get cleaned know a generous amount of cleaner is being applied to the windows. Other examples of attention to detail can be found at the Reading facility. Workspaces with Internet connections are being installed in Customerland. Drains are being installed on the floor at the refreshment areas so anything that spills is collected. This prevents slipping and helps keep the lounge area clean. Mountz made an interesting comment when we talked about his penchant for details. He agreed that uniforms, flowers, signage, cleanliness, etc are very important details, but he added another the customer can't see—constantly challenging his employees to do their best. He said "I know what sticks to put in the wood chipper. People are the wood chippers. Some are big wood chippers and some are small wood chippers, and I always know how many sticks to put in the chipper so it's pushed but never stalls."

The Role Image and Awareness Plays in Creating a Unique Customer Experience

The roll image and awareness has played in growing revenue and building market and customer share for Cloister can't be overemphasized. Mountz has created an image and a "look" for his business that is deeply imprinted on the Lancaster and York county marketplace. He has done this in several different ways:

- Appearance of facilities. The facilities are more than clean. They are strategically laid out, well lit, beautifully landscaped (each spring more than 25,000 flowers are planted), aesthetically designed, and decorated in a way that makes you feel like you are home. Entrances and exits are also designed to make it easy to get in and out of any one of the four complexes.
- Appearance of employees. Dress and appearance standards are clearly called out in the employee handbook. To assist the employee the company provides shirts, cold weather jackets, shorts, belts, hats, and headbands. The handbook details the company's policy on jewelry, tattoos, and hair length and style. The end result is a workforce that includes part timers and teenagers that look and act professional and conduct themselves as confident and capable business people. Mountz told me how his experience in the Military changed his opinions about personal appearance. Mountz recalled arriving at boot camp and noticing the long hair and sloppy appearance of many of his fellow recruits. He formed opinions about these people without meeting them and was astounded at how his opinions changed when he met them again; clean shaven, with short hair, and in military uniform. Mountz believes you do only have one chance to make a positive first impression

and he makes sure the dress and appearance standards outlined in Cloister's employee handbook are followed.

- Use of high quality graphics on all communications. Mountz has taken this to a level not found at companies 10 times the size of Cloister. Everything that communicates a Cloister message is visually arresting and easy to understand. This includes ads, website (www.cloistercarwash.com), signage, murals, company vehicles, literature, and the color scheme of the different facilities and buildings. The "look" of Cloister including the design of murals and the construction of signage is under the leadership of Wayne Fetro. Wayne is a highly regarded mural and graphic artist that Mountz recruited to join Cloister. Fetro's background and work can be viewed by visiting Google and entering his name.
- Consistency of advertising message. Mountz will tell you that the message he wants to convey is clean-- super clean, spotless clean, new-car clean. "Clean breeds clean," he likes to say. The company's slogan is "Feel good, drive a Cloister clean car." There's a second part to this message. If you visit the facilities and pay attention to the images that are part of the interior and exterior of all the buildings, you will get the feeling of being home. The themes of clean and a place you want to visit are a part of all advertising messages. You feel that Cloister is a friendly place, a place to visit even if you didn't want or need their services. You're invited to sit down and be comfortable. You're invited to bring your family. You're invited to shop, and you're invited to stop by over the holidays. Every message the organization sends speaks to these themes. Mountz will also tell you he wants woman and children comfortable coming to Cloister,

something he has been successful doing because of the “being home” feeling he has created. This is a business you want in your community, and because you want Cloister as your neighbor you support them.

How Outstanding Customer Service Allows Cloister to Charge Premium Prices

Customer service is an art form at Cloister. Let’s walk through a full service wash at a Cloister facility to get a sense of the experience and to understand how Cloister can charge premium prices in a high volume operation. When you enter a facility well designed signage guides you to the lube shop, hand bays, or the wash tunnels. You are greeted by friendly and well dressed attendants. The wash package choices are clearly explained, as well as options like undercarriage protection or air freshener. There is no high pressure selling—Mountz insists on this. In fact there is no commission paid to any customer service person in the organization. After you make your selection you pay. Tipping is absolutely forbidding at Cloister and an employee will be terminated if they are caught taking tips. Next you enter clean and well lit tunnels to get your car washed. Mirrors are overhead so it’s easy to see if your wheels are aligned with the tracks. After you leave the exterior wash area you leave your car to a finishing team who does the interior cleaning and windows while you are escorted to Customerland. Customerland is a combination of a Hallmark gift shop, an art gallery, and a members’ lounge for a major airline. You can purchase numerous items including Cloister’s unique line of window cleaner and air fresheners. If you like to watch you car being serviced you can look into an area painted with beautiful murals depicting turn-of-the-century service stations. If

you want to relax while you wait you can sit in one of the many comfortable rocking chairs in the lounge, or help yourself to free refreshments including bubble gum for the kids. In Reading you can plug into the Internet and sit at comfortable work stations. This all happens fast enough to not try your patience and slow enough to do a high quality job. Prices have increased 20 times in the last 22 years and every cloister location charges exactly the same prices. It is easy to spend a \$20 bill visiting a Cloister facility. But when you drive away you feel you got more than your monies worth. I asked Mountz to summarize his customer service philosophy and how it impacts on what he can charge for services. “We make it a memorable experience to do business with us,” he said, “and we don’t nickel and dime our customers.”

How Innovations in Marketing and Product Delivery Helped to Build the Business

Mike Mountz is an innovator. Here is a short list of innovations he has introduced that have improved operations, improved customer service, or have increased sales and/or profits.

- Converted from a marketing/pricing strategy historically dependent on coupons to a discount strategy designed to increase traffic between 7-9AM and 5-7PM – the slowest periods of the day. This has helped to even out production and staffing and saved \$140,000 per year on coupon advertising
- Introduced his own line of window cleaner and air fresheners

- Designed, built, and installed a conveyor system for interior cleaning that allows the service team to travel with the car. This cuts down on employee fatigue and reduces customer wait time
- Designed the “hot house,” a massive automated drying system that is far superior to the traditional practice of hand drying cars
- Included motorcycle and pet wash facilities at the Reading location
- Changed the public’s image of the car wash industry and the people who work in it by creating clean, comfortable, family friendly facilities that are staffed by well groomed and well trained employees
- Made waiting for your car a pleasant experience by creating Customerland—a place to relax, work, or shop while you wait for your car
- Introduced a no tipping and no commission policy
- Expanded the services at his three lube shops to include Vehicle State Inspections
- Created “experiences” when visiting Cloister facilities including holiday events like free pumpkins at Halloween
- Plans to build and operate a greenhouse to supply the tens of thousands of flowers he plants each year
- Plans to construct a building to manufacture and service production equipment and mix chemicals which will cut operational costs

Mountz does not take his ability to innovate for granted. He has taken a number of trips with his staff to Walt Disney World to check out innovations Disney has introduced to improve customer service and the customer experience. Don’t be surprised if you read one day that Disney personnel make the same kind of trip to Cloister.

Giving Back to the Community and its Impact on the Success of the Business

Mike Mountz will tell you the amount of goodwill generated by his community service efforts have done as much to build the business as anything else Cloister has done.

Mountz carries this philosophy to his personal life, too. He and his wife Rhoda have established the Grace Network. In two years, when Mountz turns 55, his personal assets including the business will be transferred to Grace. Grace's mission is to use the income from these assets to support worthy causes that have been approved by the Grace Board. Mountz describes this as a Will that is opened while he is alive. Grace will support an organization Mountz has founded called *dad*—dyslexics achieve distinction, to help the many people who suffer from the disorder Mountz has overcome. Cloister's Helping Hands Fund Raising Program has raised over \$1.5 million for local non-profit groups. Car wash or lube tickets are sold for a one month period and half the proceeds are given to the organization. Organizations can take advantage of this program up to two times per year. Mountz said that close to 1500 organizations used Helping Hands since it was created in 1994, and close to 400 organizations will use the program in 2005 alone. Three other programs have had a recent impact on the Lancaster and York County communities. Mountz opened his exterior service buildings on Labor Day 2005 and donated all the proceeds to the Red Cross to help Hurricane Katrina victims. Employees volunteered their day off to help run the operations in Ephrata, York, and Lancaster. At the end of the day \$39,162 was turned over to the Red Cross. In addition, Mountz will sponsor his 2nd Grace for Vets day on November 11, 2005. If you are a Vet your car is washed free on Veteran's Day. Mountz and Cloister were recognized by the International Car Wash

Association for this effort in 2004 and Cloister now makes information kits available to other car washes interested in doing a Grace for Vets program in their town. In addition, numerous publications serving the car wash industry will run full page ads acknowledging the car washes across the country who participated in the program. Cloister's patriotic attitude doesn't stop there. During the election in November of 2004 Cloister gave a free exterior car wash to anyone who voted. The free wash was given based on something Mountz lives by—the honor system. If you said you voted that's all Cloister needed to hear. The Lancaster New Era awarded Cloister the coveted Red Rose Award for this effort. Cloister's community service efforts are driven by the faith based belief Mountz has in helping others. But never forget Mountz is an exceptional businessman, and he knows service to his community is simply good business. In the last few years Cloister's community service efforts have not gone unnoticed. They were awarded the ICA's 2005 Community Service Award. Prior to that, Cloister and Mountz were given the 1999 Community Development Award by Manheim Township (Lancaster) and the Conservation of Natural Resources Award for Lancaster County in 2000.

How a No Excuse Quality Control Program Builds Customer Loyalty

Quality control-- this gets the attention of Mike Mountz. This is where you see his tough side. Mountz knows that the quality of the finished product must exceed the expectation create by the experience of being at a Cloister facility. Quality control starts with Mountz but is quickly transferred to his site managers. Equipment is constantly examined to make

sure there is no opportunity to damage a car. There is ongoing experimentation with chemicals to find the perfect balance between environmentally friendly and the cleanest possible wash. Cars are routinely examined as they leave both the exterior tunnel and the interior cleaning buildings to make sure they are perfect. If they are not they are run through the process again. Cloister constantly experiments with equipment speeds, water pressure, types of towels, chemicals, window cleaners, air fresheners, even lighting, to make sure product quality is as close to perfect as possible. Mountz routinely surveys customers to make sure they are more than satisfied, and he is proud of the thick file of letters and e-mails from satisfied customers. A letter from Howard S. in Mohnton, PA is a typical example of how people feel about Cloister quality. Howard wrote how he always gets his van washed in Berks County, but in July of 2005 he had the good fortune to stop in at Cloister's Lancaster facility. He raved about the service, particularly in the lube shop, and concluded his letter with this:

I do have one complaint. We have only used car washes in Berks County. After using your car wash I realized how bad my vehicle looks when it is actually washed correctly. I guess the car washes in Berks thought they were doing me a favor by hiding the scratches. You are going to kick butt when you come to Berks County.

How a Fair, Firm, and Consistent HR Policy Created an Extraordinary Workforce

Mountz grew up in a manufacturing environment. Being around manufacturing equipment, production processes, scheduling, material management, and R&D served

Mountz well in building the bricks and mortar part of Cloister. But it is his HR experience that gave him the employee relations skills that have helped build an extraordinary workforce of skilled managers working with a well trained full-time staff and a large part-time team of hardworking, enthusiastic, and friendly teenagers. Mountz describes his style as fair, firm, and consistent. Cloister is a great place to work, but poor job performance, absenteeism, dishonesty, and the inability to work as a team are quickly dealt with and those that can't work within Cloister guidelines are dismissed. Team Cloister is no idle slogan. Mountz is not looking for rebels, he is looking for people that are willing to live and work within the high standards Cloister has set. How did Mountz create this extraordinary workforce of adults and young adults in an industry that is not known for the quality of its employees? There are many things you would expect, including company sponsored social events like picnics, but a look inside the company's January 2005 handbook gives you deeper insight. Here are a few of the key policies and procedures that help to separate Cloister employees from the rest of the car wash and lube industry:

- Mountz makes it clear that he is a Christian and views all aspects of his life from a Christian perspective. It is also made clear that the organization does not discriminate on the basis of religion or religious beliefs
- The categories of employment are clearly spelled out as well as the pay grades
- You understand right from the beginning the performance review process and how it ties to wage increases
- The benefit package is clearly spelled out including the bonus for recruiting new employees, the anniversary bonus, and the 401K program

- The attendance policy is clearly explained, as well as disciplinary action
- Employee dress code and appearance is explained using graphic illustrations so there is no misunderstanding of what is expected
- Privacy issues are spelled out including use of phones, e-mail, and voice mail while at work
- Finally, rules and regulations involving discipline; drug, alcohol, and tobacco use; safety and workplace violence; and employee theft, are clearly explained and strictly followed

The benefit package at Cloister is very competitive with pay ranges running from \$9.94 per hour (the high end of the lowest grade) to over \$65,000 per year for a salaried grade 1 employee. This combination of competitive benefits and wages and a firm, fair, and consistent HR policy allows Cloister to attract talented people from all kinds of business backgrounds, not just people working in the car wash industry.

A Review of the Risks

The building of Cloister Wash and Lube has been no easy task, and there have been risks that would make any businesspersons' stomach do somersaults. I recall reading about what is an acceptable debt to equity ratio. The answer was whatever your stomach and your bank will allow. Mike Mountz has a strong stomach and his bank has an unparalleled belief in his ability to do what he says he will do. Mountz has never been afraid to borrow, and he has never managed money for the short term. He is always about his vision, a vision that is clearly taking form with the building of the Lancaster and

Reading facilities. He has committed all his personal assets as security against borrowings, borrowings that started with the expansion of Ephrata in 1984 and led to a \$10 million dollar project in Reading in 2005. There were serious construction overruns during the \$7 million Lancaster project, and for many months valued suppliers had to wait for their money. His business has one huge inherent risk—weather. Mountz has learned to live with the unpredictability of the weather and has developed a number of programs to pre-sell services to improve cash flow. The lube shops have reduced the dependency on the washes and took some weather related risks out of the business. Mountz has added a pet wash in Reading that will generate additional revenue. Mountz is making rain his friend by designing and installing a rainwater retention system in Reading that will significantly reduce municipal water costs. But there are always risks. His program to stop marketing via coupons could have backfired. The millions of dollars he has spent on facility beautification and giveaways might have returned nothing. His high volume and high price philosophy is unheard of in his industry, but it worked. Mountz minimizes risk with this simple approach: he starts with a vision, followed by a well thought out plan. He gets the commitment of everyone around him and he gets going, never thinking for once that failure is a possibility. Where does this confidence come from? Mountz will tell you it's his faith. But there's also a good doze of experience, know-how, guts, and the ability to get others enthusiastic about the risks he is willing to take. Most successful entrepreneurs are risk takers and Mountz is no exception. Business people from around the world are approaching Mountz about joint ventures including the possibility of building Cloister facilities throughout North America. Mountz

would supply the expertise and they would supply the capital. Now the capital risk shifts to someone else. The risks Mike Mountz has taken for 21 years are paying off.

Driving Change: How Cloister Keeps Expanding and Improving

Mike Mountz would be perfect to play the role of the Eveready Bunny—“he just keeps going and going and going”. He is a change agent-- for his company, his community, and his industry. He has set the standard and now every car wash operator has their eyes on Cloister. He has to keep changing to keep competitors off balance. His workforce has become highly recruitable, so Mountz must make sure the quality of life of his employees improves or they might be lured away to another company. He needs to change to attract talent. The bigger Cloister gets the more skilled the leaders in his company must be. He must continue to change to find ways to reduce his dependency on the weather. He must change to find ways to take costs out of operations. Most of all he must change to keep the fire in his belly burning. Mountz loves to be tested. He is by no means ready to back off at age 53. I suspect there will be more Cloister Locations after Reading, and you can be sure there will be changes in how they are built and how they operate.

The objective of this study was to analyze the reasons for Cloister’s success. Mike Mountz and Cloister have given us a business building roadmap to follow. Here is a summary of the 10 key qualities or characteristics covered in this paper:

- 1. The entrepreneurial spirit and the energy to overcome adversity.** Here’s the formula: start with a vision of what you want to accomplish. Add perseverance

and enthusiasm. Hang tough when things inevitably go wrong. Have an action orientation—get the right things done. Learn from others everyday. Sell what the customer wants.

2. **Tinker with everything.** Facilities, hiring practices, product lines, product quality, equipment, advertising, promotions, signage, and on and on and on. Work until you get everything as “right” as you can and never stop doing that. It’s the little things that fall through the cracks that kill a business. Pay attention to the details.
3. **Image is important.** Pull into a Cloister Car Wash and Lube and enjoy the flowers, enjoy the rocking chairs, enjoy the no tipping policy, enjoy the free sodas and bubble gum, enjoy the original art, enjoy the friendly and well groomed employees and enjoy the cleanliness of the facilities. When you find out the product quality lives up to the image you become a customer for life.
4. **Treat the customer like they’re your boss.** It is an experience to do business with Cloister Wash and Lube. You are treated with friendliness and respect and your senses are treated. Mountz has proved that when customer service is top-notch in a high volume operation you can charge top-notch prices and the customer will think they got a bargain.
5. **There is always a better way.** Mike Mountz is an innovator. He has developed innovations in facility construction, product handling, chemicals, water management, customer and employee relations, marketing, community relations, pricing and advertising that are copied around the world. We are not all blessed

with the innovation skills Mike Mountz has, but we can encourage others to always look for breakthrough ideas. Innovations invigorate a company.

6. **Community service is one of the best investments you can make.** From Cloister's unique fund raising program that has risen over \$1,500,000 for local organizations to Grace for Vets that says thanks to veterans with a free car wash on Veterans' Day, Cloister community service efforts have played a big part in the goodwill it has built in the marketplace.
7. **Be tough about quality.** Mike Mountz can be tough. There is no place this is more evident than in his passion for quality. He is relentless in demanding that everything about the organization is geared to delivering superior operational quality and superior product quality. Cloister's tag line—Feel good, drive a Cloister clean car, is no empty tag line. Product quality is a cherished competitive advantage, and Mountz watches over it like an Army drill sergeant.
8. **Be firm, fair, and consistent with employees.** In a company the size of Cloister there are the normal employee issues like absenteeism, job performance, and even employee thief. Mountz deals with these issues swiftly and emphatically. The trouble spots are the exception to the rule. How did Mountz build such a top-notch workforce in a business noted for the low quality of its employees? He created an environment that makes you feel proud to work in a car wash. He treats employees with the same respect he expects them to show to customers. He provides a work environment that makes it a pleasure to come to work. He encourages people to grow and he treats everyone equally.

9. Be prepared for the risks. Mike Mountz has taken big time risks. So have the banks that have financed the expansion of his facilities. He has had construction overruns, weather challenges, cash shortages, investments in unproven techniques or technologies, and equipment failures. Through it all he has kept his faith and believed in his vision. If you believe in yourself, your vision, your product, your employees, and the experience you offer customers, you will succeed despite the risks.

10. Change is necessary for growth. There are a lot of expressions about change. The one Mike Mountz would probably quote is “if you’re not changing you’re dying.” Mountz is paranoid about standing still. He knows that he must drive change in order to stay on top of what his customers want and a step ahead of competitors. Mountz will tell you to always look for ways to improve even if there is no apparent reason to do it. Do more than is expected and offer more than is asked for. A leader that changes rarely falls out of the lead.

The 21 year journey of Cloister Wash and Lube is a study about doing the right things for the right reasons. From the outside; quality, cleanliness, value pricing, delivering a memorable customer experience, and a top-notch work force explain the reason for the company’s success. From the inside; the deep spiritual faith of Mike Mountz, combined with his perseverance, enthusiasm, and willingness to take thoughtful risks, would explain the growth of the company. In the end, the blending of both of these views has made a splendid recipe for success.

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