

# How to Start Wash and Fold Services Whitepaper

Attract more customers and grow your business with laundromat wash and fold services.



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# The Wash & Fold Market

The demand for premium laundry services is increasing, and these services are no longer exclusive to high-income, white-collar areas. Based on the geography, income level, and even relationship status of potential customers in an area, premium laundry services are becoming more sought after, and supply is lacking. Diversifying offerings with wash and fold services creates opportunities for laundromats to differentiate themselves from one another.

There is a significant opportunity for self-serve laundromat owners to grow their businesses by taking advantage of the demand for wash and fold services. In fact, **60% of surveyed laundromat owners** who offer wash and fold expressed that customer levels increased from 2022 to 2023<sup>1</sup>. Wash and fold is currently an underutilized market with revenue potential through which laundromat owners grow their businesses, and without it, achieving further growth can be challenging.

## The Customer Perspective

Many laundromat owners decide where to focus their wash and fold services based on the geographical radius around their store. Potential customers, however, are not concerned about the number of miles from their home to your laundromat. Rather, they are concerned about convenience and time it takes to drive there. **This is a subtle but important distinction.** Depending on your metro area, it can take 15 minutes for a customer to drive one mile or five minutes to drive five miles.

The other common misconception about wash and fold is that it should be treated the same as self-serve laundry by the owner. **The primary factor for self-serve laundry is price.** Customers may drive further for the laundromat that is a little bit cheaper.



# The Customer Base

The typical understanding is that only white-collar, high-income neighborhoods will utilize premium laundry services like wash and fold. This couldn't be further from the truth. There is actually a wide customer base in need of laundromats that offer wash and fold services but are underserved within their communities.



## Blue-collar

Among blue-collar communities, many are busy, dual-income households who benefit from a premium laundry service that eliminates the tedious at-home laundry process.



## Mid- to high-income singles

The market that includes mid- to high-income single people tends to be slightly younger, and therefore are more accustomed to an on-demand world and place higher importance on personal time. These factors create a willingness and an ability to outsource tasks—such as laundry—to a convenient, high-quality provider.



## Homeowners

Even though homeowners are more likely to have a washer and dryer, they are also typically in a higher-income bracket and could have children and pets that result in greater laundry needs.



## Commuters

This market is one that can be very interested in the convenience of dropping off their laundry on the way to work and picking it up at the same location on the way home, already washed, dried, and folded.

# What You'll Need

Diving into the world of wash and fold laundry can be intimidating and surprising if you don't know where to start. Here are some of the basic necessities to get started:

## Staff & Labor

A traditional, self-serve laundromat can run efficiently and effectively with few or even no attendants, but implementing wash and fold services will require more staffing. As you bring on more staff, you'll want to keep in mind that a larger team is only a small portion of the requirements of staffing and labor. You'll need proper training protocols for different roles, a reliable clocking and payroll system, and successful methods for employee retention.

If you already have employees, they are likely focused on floor tasks like cleaning up and monitoring for malfunctioning machines. **As you move into wash and fold, customer service skills will be a higher priority for staffing** so that your team is prepared to provide the most streamlined and efficient experience for new and returning customers.

## Space, Facilities & Equipment

**This new service will require more space than a traditional self-serve laundromat.** You'll need room to store in-house washing and drying materials, as well as separate areas for customers' dirty and clean laundry. Additional machines and other equipment may also be necessary to ensure that you can offer premium, efficient turnaround times without interfering with self-serve customers. Keep in mind that overinvestment in more machines only yields a high ROI if you keep those machines turning.

## Technology

Laundromat owners scaling from a self-serve laundry to wash and fold will benefit from a more robust laundromat management system, complete with a point-of-sale, time tracking and team management, online ordering, and marketing designed specifically for the laundromat industry. The existing system you have in place may have worked fine for a service that required limited customer interactions and very few employees, but as you grow, so should your laundromat operations.

**It is much easier and more cost-effective to start with the most streamlined, comprehensive laundromat management system** in the first place than to start with a limited one and need to switch down the line. Even if you're unsure where your business is going, or you're positive you will never go further than wash and fold, circumstances and markets change, and you'll need a solution that can grow and scale with you.

# Marketing Your Wash & Fold Services

By starting with value and understanding your customer base, you can take your approach to marketing in phases. At launch, tailor your messaging to your ideal customer in your area and market that your laundromat is providing a new, high-quality, convenient wash and fold laundry service. After allowing your newly trained staff to settle in and for your service to gain some traction, utilize data and analytics to identify what is working, as well as opportunities to fill in gaps.

## Identify Your Customers

Based on where you're located, there can be a wide range of customer personas that may be attracted to your laundromat's wash and fold services. **Become very familiar with your key target demographic so that you can tailor your marketing directly to them.** For example, if your target market within your area is made up of predominantly busy, blue-collar workers in dual-income households, you may want to focus your messaging to highlight the speedy convenience of wash and fold that will give time back to their families. However, if your target demographic is mainly high-income, single individuals, it may be more effective to tailor your messaging around the value of personal time and on-demand lifestyles.



## Determine Your Value

One of the most important elements of marketing wash and fold is understanding that **this is a premium service**, different from self-serve laundry. The ideal customer for wash and fold is not a price-sensitive one, unlike the self-serve customer. With this in mind, the best way to compete and market your wash and fold services is to highlight quality, value, and convenience—not cost. Remember, your wash and fold laundry service does not only offer to do something for customers that they could do for themselves; your service does laundry better than your customers can.

**PRO TIP:** A laundromat management system that integrates with your marketing efforts and CRM can help you collect and analyze important data to better understand customer behavior and market more effectively.



## Important Things to Consider

Where you take your wash and fold services is up to you, but there are a number of key considerations to keep in mind as you plan to expand your service offerings.

### Intent to Grow

Expanding into wash and fold services can open the doors for even greater growth and scalability for your laundromat. Before even launching wash and fold, envision the scalability of the business and consider the growth possibilities. It's possible you may have no vision beyond wash and fold. But why limit yourself? You may find very quickly that many of the processes and technology required to master wash and fold can easily be applied to other premium services that can boost your bottom line with minimal adjustment.

### Consider Commercial Laundry

Commercial laundry is a common growth step for laundromat owners after mastering wash and fold. Since only 51% of laundromats offer commercial laundry<sup>1</sup>, there is opportunity for growth into this much-needed service. For laundromats that are located in close proximity to other businesses, commercial laundry can be very profitable and is minimally different from basic wash and fold services. When planning to integrate wash and fold into your service offerings, consider the cost and ROI comparisons of investing in commercial machines vs. large traditional machines to be able to offer this service to local businesses.



## Offer Pickup & Delivery

Another important growth tactic for laundromat businesses to consider is offering pickup and delivery alongside wash and fold services. Wash and fold provides an essential baseline for entry into pickup and delivery because—without wash and fold—there is nothing to deliver. For laundromats offering wash-dry-fold, only 38% of laundromats offer pickup and delivery<sup>1</sup>, meaning there is extensive opportunity for laundromats to take up space in this important service area. Growing into pickup and delivery services enables laundromats to draw from a larger customer pool by extending the radius of influence.



## Hiring & Training Employees

As mentioned, you might need specially trained staff beyond a self-serve laundromat. This includes more floor attendants, customer processing, and staff to wash, dry, and fold. As the laundromat owner, the best way to ensure your staff is adequately trained is to first become an expert in processes and technology yourself, then train your employees to be experts in their own rights. Bringing on and training a responsible team also benefits your laundromat beyond wash and fold; additional attendants and customer-facing employees can ensure cleanliness, optimize machine functionality, and assist self-serve customers to streamline efficiency throughout the entire laundromat operation.

Creating an efficient, reliable employee experience is essential to employee retention, and developing a thorough training program is only one element. Implementing a streamlined laundromat management system that displays employee output can empower your staff to do their best work. In addition, it can help identify gaps and breakdowns in employee operations that can be used to make improvements in communication, processes, and the overall employee experience.

# Technology for Wash & Fold

Having the right technology in place from the start is essential to create the most effective and integrated wash and fold service model. A laundromat management system like Cents is designed specifically for the laundry industry and uniquely suited to the complex needs of a laundromat business.



## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

The **Business Manager** is a web-based platform that gives you seamless control over operations so you're free to focus on growth.



## POINT OF SALE

Simplify in-store operations that processes wash and fold orders at every stage so you never have to miss or lose an order.



## TEAM MANAGEMENT

Track hours worked, sales value, orders processed, and tasks completed at the team member level.



## PICKUP & DELIVERY

Reach new customers and offer an elevated experience with or without your own fleet of drivers.



## COMMERCIAL INVOICING

Accept online and ACH payments, automate your follow-up, and provide a professional client experience.



## MARKETING TOOLS

You'll have everything needed to attract, retain, and re-engage—from a website to email and SMS marketing.

Whether you have well-laid plans for wash and fold already in the works, or offering wash and fold only seems like a distant pipe dream, learn more about how Cents' software can help you and schedule a demo today.