TOUCHFREE CLEANING TRIFECTA

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Courtesy of Blendco

There are many opinions out there regarding the best way to produce the cleanest car with a touch free automatic. If you doubt this, just hang out at a trade show for a while or visit any of the popular car wash forums. Some people claim that you have to have a "Brand X" machine, or you are missing the boat. Some might say that only "Brand Y" chemicals are capable of getting the job done, while others may throw all forms of "home cooking" into the discussion. Although equipment and chemicals, and how they are used, may define the quality of clean you offer at your wash, it can get a little confusing trying to arrive at the right formula. Too many people seem to get hung up on only one piece of the puzzle, sometimes to the exclusion of all others. Something that may help keep you on track is what I refer to as the touch free "Trifecta".

Most operators recognize the importance of water quality and temperature in the wash process and others may be limited by their equipment to make improvements in these areas, so I will focus on the three basic components that all touch free automatics utilize to achieve results: chemical, dwell time and water impingement. Best results demand the right chemicals at the right strengths, proper dwell time for chemicals to attain their maximum effectiveness and good water impingement to blast away both chemical and dissolved soils. All three play a crucial role in touchfree cleaning. Your task is to find the best balance among them. Start by closely examining each of these areas for possible improvement.

Although it may not be in exact proportions, bear in mind that, as you make adjustments, if you add or subtract from one area, you may need to compensate by adjusting another in order to achieve the proper balance. For example, if you were to increase the strength of your presoak, you might be able to decrease dwell time and/or increase machine speed (less surface impingement) and still get a good result while increasing your machines' throughput. If your results aren't satisfactory, yet you feel that your presoak is being applied at adequate strength, maybe your dwell time is "out of balance" and needs to be increased in order to achieve optimum results. If this doesn't do it, try checking nozzles for wear or slowing the gantry down to achieve better impingement. Don’t be afraid to try different combinations.

The wide variety of influencing factors and equipment designs dictates that there really is no "one size fits all" solution. Although you might make a case that there is more to consider while seeking maximum performance in a touch free environment, it's surprising how many times this simple approach will reveal the answer or, at the very least, get you thinking your way to it.

Once you have applied this technique, it may benefit you to take things a step further by breaking each of these three basic components down and "rebalancing" your machine based on your findings. By using this systematic approach, you might just wash your confusion down the drain!

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