

Case Study: Solvent Cleaning – Vacuum Degreaser

Proper training leads to more reliable process.

The Challenge

Ask quality managers and they'll tell you that 'Configuration Drift' can be a real problem with significant consequences. Improper modifications to process — or simply failing to maintain them — can lead to breakdowns and elevated costs.

Hubbard-Hall was recently asked to assist a metal finisher who was having trouble with their vacuum degreasing cleaning system. About five years earlier, they had switched from n-propyl bromide (nPB) to perchloroethylene (perc). After a few years of reliable performance, two vacuum degreasers purchased during the transition were starting to have trouble. So much so that the system was down 20% of the time, costing the company big money.

The Approach

Hubbard-Hall's team was called in to look at the cleaning system's equipment and chemistry and diagnose what went wrong.

We discovered that an internal gap in solvent cleaning process knowledge and maintenance had allowed the solvent to acidify, resulting in pinholes in the degreasing equipment cooling coils as well as leaks in the oil/water separator.

To remedy the problem, we immediately trained company staff on proper process management. This included illustrating how to adequately apply the proper ratios of stabilizer to prevent acidification of the solvent.



Cleaning
the Hard to Clean

Executive Summary

Hubbard-Hall helped a metal finish improve a troubled cleaning process through investigation and education.

- On-site audit of system equipment, processes and knowledge
- Deep training on process management and maintenance
- Operational consultation on assembling the right team

We further assisted in helping the metal finisher establish an operation team to support a single point person who would be “champion” of the solvent cleaning process. This ensured both accountability for the effective use of the equipment and chemistries and a team to help the ‘champion’ meet requirements.

The Outcome

Through education, training and working with the company set up its staff to succeed, Hubbard-Hall was able to help them get their vacuum degreasing equipment back online and working properly. We also put checks in place to ensure their solvent remained stable and that the system would continue to operate at capacity over time.

“Hubbard-Hall gave us a very viable recommendation that improved our cleaning efficiency, reduced the possibility of rejects and resulted in a better product.”

**Tech Manager
Metal Finishing Company**



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